

Examiners' report

GCSE

CLASSICAL GREEK

**OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in
Classical Greek**

J292

For first teaching in 2016

J292/06 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 6 series overview

There was an overall high standard of responses in this year's Greek Literature and Culture paper. Candidates appeared well prepared, provided more comprehensive answers than in previous years, and generally demonstrated confidence in making specific references to sources. The majority of candidates exhibited strong evaluative and analytical skills, responding particularly effectively to the two written and one visual unseen sources (Sources B, C, and E), which were notably complex and detailed.

The importance of visual sources cannot be overstated, and the examiners were pleased to note a number of high-quality, detailed responses that engaged closely with Sources B and D, as well as with other artefacts studied during the course.

Candidates who articulated their ideas in depth and substantiated their arguments with well-chosen examples from the available evidence typically performed very strongly.

The examiners were not unduly strict regarding the spelling of complex Greek names or titles of texts.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• drew reasoned inferences from the evidence presented • incorporated both the sources provided in the Insert and relevant prior knowledge to inform their responses • used source material to justify their arguments, even in responses to the shorter-answer questions • referred to visual sources as well as written ones where appropriate • read the questions carefully and tailored their responses accordingly • employed appropriate Greek terminology accurately and effectively • applied analytical skills to identify authors' use of stylistic and literary techniques, commenting on their intended effect on the audience • expanded on general statements (e.g. <i>'this would have been spectacular to look at'</i>) by explaining the reasons behind such claims • addressed the higher-mark questions with thorough and detailed responses • attempted all questions, with no significant omissions.	• retold or paraphrased the source material without evaluating the information it conveyed • limited their extended responses to the sources provided in the Insert, without incorporating evidence studied elsewhere • adopted a narrative approach rather than justifying their opinions with reference to evidence • focused predominantly on written evidence and neglected visual sources • did not use appropriate Greek terminology where expected • omitted discussion of Euripides' literary techniques in their response to Question 5 • repeated general statements drawn from the question without providing explanation or justification • provided only brief answers, even to questions worth 6, 8, or 12 marks • left whole questions unanswered, where even a partial attempt might have gained some marks.

Question 1

1 Read **Source A**.

'But when my child was born, I began to trust her.'

Why were ancient Athenian couples unlikely to know each other before they married?

Give **one** reason.

.....
 [1]

The majority of candidates scored the mark for this question, focusing on either the way in which Athenian marriages were arranged, the secluded lives lived by girls at that time or the large age gap between the bride and groom.

Question 2

2 What evidence does **Source A** reveal about how a wife was expected to behave?

Make **four** points.

1

 2

 3

 4
 [4]

There was a range of answers that candidates could include here, based on the information from Source A, and most responses were awarded full marks. It was seen as good practice that some responses included a quotation from the source in each bullet point; this had the effect of anchoring the answer in the evidence, making it highly accurate and justifying the choice of answer. Candidates were not expected to quote the source, but in doing so they tended to make their answers all the more accurate.

Assessment for learning



The more detailed references that a candidate makes to the evidence, the better. This applies to short-answer questions such as Question 2 as well as the extended responses such as the 8 or 12 mark questions.

Question 3

3 What can we learn about ancient Athenian houses from **Source A**?

Make **three** points.

- 1
- 2
- 3

[3]

Candidates answered this question well and inferred plenty of details about Athenian houses from the speech by Lysias. Since there were nine potential points available from Source A, the examiners did not allow two separate marks for '*men lived downstairs*' and '*women lived upstairs*', although they allowed a mark for '*men and women lived on separate floors*' and (as an example) '*women lived upstairs*'.

The question focused on Athenian houses as buildings, so responses that focused on the management of the interior (such as '*the wives/slaves cleaned the house*') were not credited – this had been part of the focus of Question 2.

Again, it was good practice to see candidates quoting the evidence to support each point.

Question 4

4 Study **Source B**.

How does this source show that Hegeso was probably a wealthy woman?

Make **three** points and refer to **Source B** in your answer.

1

.....

2

.....

3

.....

[3]

This question was more challenging than the previous three questions because Source B does not feature in the OCR prescribed sources booklet. Nonetheless, it was generally answered very well, and candidates showed the ability to use visual evidence effectively to reach valid conclusions.

Many candidates cited the presence of a slave as evidence of Hegeso's wealth. Although this is true, it was typically not given credit as this information was drawn not from the source itself, but rather from the title of the image, provided by the examiners, which identifies the girl as her slave.

Candidates were skilled at pointing out salient features of the image as justification for their answers to this question.

Assessment for learning



Visual evidence is crucial for understanding the ancient world, and the more that candidates are encouraged to discuss what they can see in a contemporary visual source, the better. Images really enrich our understanding and can often be more directly accessible to candidates than written sources that have been translated from the original Greek and possibly amended. It was evident from the quality of responses that most candidates have been encouraged to do this in their study of Greek culture.

Question 5*

5* Read **Source C**.

In this passage, how does the speaker highlight the difficulties faced by wives in ancient Greece?

In your answer you should include discussion of Euripides' use of language.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

Medea's speech is highly persuasive because of the word choice and style that Euripides uses, and the role of the candidate is to unpick this carefully. This question was often answered very well, and the highest scoring responses included three technical features with a direct quotation from the evidence and some brief evaluation of their effect. Examiners were not necessarily expecting the formal names of certain stylistic techniques and accepted terms such as 'the rule of three' as readily as 'tricolon'.

Exemplar 1

Euripides uses the superlative, saying 'women are the most miserable of all', suggesting that women are worst off out of everyone - the exclamation mark conveys Medea the wife's frustration. He writes 'taking a master to rule over our bodies' - the word 'master', often referring to slaves, suggests that women have no autonomy or freedom, and 'rule over' furthers this, as they have no control. He writes: 'a ~~woman~~ woman must' become a prophet to know what sort of man [she will marry]. As this is ^{near} impossible, to become a prophet, it conveys a woman's uncertainty in marriage. He uses lots of words of uncertainty - 'unfamiliar' ^{and} 'no information'. He says that if a woman has a bad husband 'we'd be better off dead.' This dramatic phrase suggests that a bad marriage [6] is worse than death. ~~this idea is~~ He also contrasts men and women's freedom - the word 'but' signifies a change. Women are 'forced to love one partner' - the word 'forced' further conveys a lack of autonomy. Finally he writes, 'I would rather face the enemy three times over than bear a child once!' - this comparison suggests the brutality of birth, comparing it to a battle, making being a wife seem difficult.

This response was given 6 marks. The candidate refers closely to the text, identifying a range of particular words and phrases in a granular way that shows a careful and analytic engagement with the material. In the case of each stylistic feature, the candidate explains the impact on the audience/reader. They use phrases like 'suggesting that...', 'it conveys ...', 'signifies...', throughout the response in a way that signposts to the examiner that they are exploring and evaluating the Greek carefully and developing their response beyond the initial point.

The response starts at the beginning of Source C, rather than in the middle and then working backwards and/or forwards through the extract. This enables the examiner to identify a logical progression of argument from start to finish.

Misconception



6 mark questions that contain the following phrase '*In your answer you should include discussion of's use of language*' signal that the focus of the question is very much on literary criticism.

Candidates should apply the technical requirements of GCSE/IGCSE English Language and Literature to this paper: this type of question expects references to literary techniques such as metaphor, alliteration, repetition and word choice, rather than simply a paraphrase of Medea's speech.

Question 6*

6* 'Athenian husbands always respected their wives.'

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

You should use **Sources A, B and C** and include details from other sources you have studied.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [8]

The standard of response for this 8 mark question was high, and the vast majority of candidates were awarded between 6 to 8 marks. The key factor that the examiners were looking for was a detailed and analytical use of sources

Many candidates identified Source B as evidence that Hegeso's husband must have respected her because he paid for an expensive grave *stele* to commemorate her memory. While this is a very valid point that was credited by the examiners, the highest scoring responses tended to question whether the *stele* was actually commissioned by Hegeso's husband (rather than father or other family member), and wondered whether the tomb might show more about a man's expectations of a dutiful wife and his desire to demonstrate it to the wider world than it shows about Hegeso herself.

Responses that showed a coherent line of reasoning (e.g. 'Yes, husbands respected their wives' and the counter-argument 'No, they didn't') and worked logically through the three sources from the insert and then mentioned others that they had studied tended to score the highest marks.

Typically, candidates referred to wider sources from the OCR prescribed sources booklet, including Lysistrata talking about her husband threatening her with violence (A1 (iii)); the wedding pyxis showing the bridal couple in a wagon (A2 (iii)); Aristotle talking about women's mental inferiority to men and his quotation of Sophocles on silence being women's greatest adornment (A1 (i)); Thucydides quoting Pericles about women's greatest quality being their silence (A1(ii)); Xenophon's *Oikonomikos* (A2 (iv)).

Exemplar 2

In ~~On the Murder~~ source A, it is suggested that wives were somewhat respected - Euphiletos says that 'I began to trust her', and trust is often hand-in-hand with respect. He talks about her quite respectfully, saying 'she was the best of all women' and 'she was... intelligent and thrifty', suggesting respect. However, Lysias would likely write this speech to make the husband seem as caring and ~~betrayed~~ ^{blindsided} as possible, to help him seem more innocent, which makes this source less reliable. Source B could suggest that Heges^{now} was respected by her husband, as her husband would have had to buy her the slave-girl, and he might not have done so if he didn't respect her, but there is less information or context in this source. In Xenophon's Oikonomikos, ~~a man~~ Ischomachus seems to show some respect for his wife, saying that ~~they~~ their marriage was a partnership and repeating the word 'common' to convey that they shared everything.

On the other hand, source C suggests that many husbands didn't respect their wives - ~~some~~ ~~many~~ many treated ~~there~~ their wives poorly, to the extent that their wives would ~~rather~~ 'be better off dead'. In Politics by Aristotle, he says that women were [8]

inferior to men, a view echoed in *Work and Days* by Hesiod, where he calls women possessions, *Oikonomikos* by Xenophon, where he talks about 'taming' and 'domesticating' a wife, like she's an animal and *Lysistrata*, where ~~women's~~ ^{a wife's} opinions are ignored and not valued by her husband - her husband threatens to abuse her. All of these sources convey a lack of respect for women and wives from men, as they believed that they were better than women.

Overall, I disagree with this statement - many sources show us that women were mistreated and disrespected by their husbands. Some wives, however, might have been respected.

This exemplar was given 8 marks. The candidate divides the answer into two clear halves, arguing for and against the statement. In each case they use fairly brief references to the sources to illustrate their argument. In total, the candidate includes references to seven separate pieces of evidence (one is used twice to argue both sides). There is also some mention of the validity of Source A given that the speaker is attempting to exonerate himself from a murder charge.

Assessment for learning



Candidates who question the validity of sources tend to write more rounded and evaluative answers than those who take them at face value. This applies particularly to the context of a source e.g. Aristophanes aiming to make his audience laugh, a philosophical speech trying to argue a particular viewpoint, or a vase painting designed to attract a buyer.

Misconception



8 mark questions that contain the following phrase '*You should use **Sources A, B and C and include details from other sources you have read***' signal that the focus of the question expects clear and detailed references to the specified evidence in the Insert as well as other material that candidates have studied in lessons.

Several excellent responses were not awarded the full 8 marks because they only focused on Sources A, B and C and omitted any mention of other evidence.

Candidates are free to include discussion of visual images as well as written evidence – as we have seen from Source B, archaeological artefacts can prove invaluable. Given that visual evidence can be difficult to identify, the examiners are happy to accept responses that include phrases such as '*in a vase painting showing a marriage scene...*' or similar.

Question 7

7 Study **Source D**.

What was the purpose of the Propylaia?

..... [1]

There was a little confusion with this question, and several candidates thought that the Propylaia was a form of temple.

Question 8

8 Study **Source D**.

What had happened to the old Temple of Athene?

.....
 [1]

This question was typically very well answered, although some candidates assumed that it had been destroyed to make way for the building of the larger and more impressive Parthenon.

Question 9

9 What was the significance of the statue of Athene Promachos to the Athenians?

Make **two** points and refer to **Source D** in your answer.

1

.....

2

.....

[2]

Most candidates used the source carefully and responded with accuracy to Question 9. The focus of this question was primarily on Source D, although examiners did also accept points that highlighted the emotive power of the statue. Although Source D is fairly limited in its scope because it is a site plan, nonetheless it shows the central position of the statue on the Acropolis, the fact that it would have been the first thing that visitors would see on emerging from the Propylaia, its relative proximity to the Parthenon and the enormous size of the statue's base.

Question 10*

10* Read **Source E**.

What features of the statue of Athene Promachos would have made it spectacular to look at?

You should include specific references to **Source E** in your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

Source E provided a number of points that candidates could use to answer this question, as Nicetas describes the statue of Athene Promachos in depth; indeed, most candidates responded very well and used this previously unseen source to support their points.

Stronger responses evaluated what would have made the different features of the statue impressive to onlookers, explaining their choice of examples from the text. By contrast, the less successful answers involved brief references to Nicetas' source but simply stated that each one 'would be spectacular to look at', without explaining why.

Most candidates demonstrated the knowledge that the bronze used to make Athene Promachos had originally been Persian armour that the Athenians had melted down for the purpose. Although making the whole statue out of the metal represented a significant cost, it would not have been as expensive as some candidates may have thought.

Exemplar 3

The statue of Athene Promachos would have been an amazing sight to behold in Ancient Athens. Nicetas states that "it rose to a vertical height of about thirty feet." The sheer size of the statue would have placed it far above any of the onlooking visitors, belittling them, and causing viewers to be awstruck in admiration at the grand scale of the statue.

Furthermore, another reason it would have been a spectacle is the fact it was made out of bronze. Nicetas says that "it was dressed in a robe of bronze." Bronze would have been a relatively expensive and shiny material, something that would have caught the eye of many onlookers and visitors, furthermore, saying that she was "dressed in a robe" of this expensive material connotes elegance, and majesty, making the statue seem regal.

Lastly, the features that the statue portrayed would have also been quite impressive. It is said that her breasts were a covering in the form of an "aegis," which portrayed the "Gorgon's head." The Gorgon, being Medusa, is, in itself an impressive sight as it remind viewers of Athenas great authority and dominance over monsters, further, this detail of Medusa's head would have been very detailed and intricate, and surely hard to sculpt, making it, in its craftman ship, an amazing work of art.

This response was given 6 marks out of 6. The candidate structures the response logically into three short paragraphs, each focusing on one main point. To illustrate their idea, they quote from the extract at least once and explain in some detail what would have been remarkable about the sight of each feature.

Misconception



Questions that focus on a previously unseen texts do not need rephrasing or 'translating' into English. Instead, candidates should use the information they contain as supporting evidence that justifies the points that will best answer the question.

Question 11

11 Read **Source F**.

What aspects of living in Athens does Pericles celebrate in this extract?

Make **three** points and refer to **Source F** in your answer.

- 1
- 2
- 3

[3]

This was a straightforward source-based question on evidence from the OCR prescribed sources booklet that candidates were likely to have previously studied. The majority of candidates were able to identify three positive aspects of living in Athens in the 5th century. As with Questions 2, 3 and 4, some of the strongest answers included direct quotation of or reference to the source for additional clarity.

Question 12*

12* 'Pericles was wrong to propose such an expensive rebuilding programme on the Athenian Acropolis'.

Using the sources you have studied, discuss to what extent you agree with this opinion.

In your answer:

- you should include references to a range of ancient sources
- you may make limited use of the sources in the Insert.

[12]

Although this 12 mark question was ostensibly focused on a single aspect of the prescribed Athenian Society topic, it was sufficiently open-ended to allow for a range of valid approaches. Candidates were able to draw on their broader understanding of fifth-century Athenian life and politics, and many did so to good effect. The strongest responses addressed both the advantages and disadvantages of Pericles' building programme, engaging with differing contemporary and later opinions, and supporting their arguments with a wide range of ancient sources.

Most candidates made effective use of written and visual evidence, frequently citing the views attributed to Pericles as recorded by Thucydides and Plutarch to justify his actions. The aesthetic appeal of the Acropolis and its temples was widely acknowledged, with many candidates highlighting their religious significance and their role in projecting Athenian power and prestige. The employment opportunities created for Athenians and metics were also often identified as a positive outcome of the programme. Pericles' assertion in Source F — *'future ages will wonder at us, as the present age wonders at us now'* — was commonly quoted as justification for his ambition to enhance Athens' legacy.

Conversely, many candidates identified the excessive cost of the programme as its principal weakness, arguing that the resources might have been better used to improve the quality of life for citizens. Many candidates spoke of Pericles' *'embezzlement'* of Delian League funds and explained the original purpose that underpinned it.

Less successful responses occasionally proposed implausible alternative uses for the Delian League's funds — such as freeing Athenian slaves, increasing payments to metics or improving the position of women — which, while not contextually accurate, nonetheless demonstrated an interesting application of modern perspectives to the ancient context. Several candidates referred to Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (B3 (ii)) to illustrate the relative chaos of the Ekklesia meetings, suggesting that Pericles should have prioritised reforming the political system to make it fairer and more efficient.

Overall, the quality of analysis was generally high. However, some candidates relied too heavily on narrative, particularly when discussing the Plutarch source, or quoted ancient opinions without sufficient critical evaluation. The breadth of source material used was a key discriminator: candidates who went beyond the sources printed in the Insert achieved higher marks. In summary, the standard of responses was commendable, with the majority of candidates achieving marks in the top two levels. Within those levels, the depth of detail and accuracy of source referencing were important factors in determining individual scores.

Exemplar 4

One reason why Pericles was right in proposing the rebuilding was because it greatly benefited *mekus*. Inscriptions show that *mekus* often had to work in jobs using lots of hard and sometimes unskilled labour. Therefore a programme such as this could have easily employed many *mekus* and given them work. Additionally, the Acropolis was a testament to the many victories of Athens, as well as a tribute to Athena, the patron saint of Athens. To the Greeks, it was very important to please their gods and one aspect of this was the *panathenic* procession which was a celebration of Athena. Additionally, Plutarch's biography of Pericles suggests that the Acropolis was in fact a symbol of the glory of Athens, and that it helped ~~to~~ write the Athenians in a display of superiority against the other Greek states. While the Delian League was perhaps unfair, Pericles was not wrong in thinking that this rebuilding programme would unite the Athenians and give them a common goal. Finally, in Thucydides' 'The Peloponnesian War' ~~which~~ there is an extract from Pericles' funeral oration in which he says that Athens was superior to all other nations. He paints Athens as a shining example of democracy that stood alone in fairness.

and equality, and I think this was symbolised by the Parthenon. Pericles also says that this was all possible because of the citizens, suggesting that ~~they~~ ~~we~~ he felt it was important to keep them happy and restore their pride in Athens.

However, I think that Pericles overall should not have put forward his idea. Most of the funding would come from the Delian League which was a group of states that paid a tax to Athens. Not only was this incredibly unfair but there were also many other potential uses for this money, such as military spending against Sparta or Persia. Additionally, such a programme would be very harsh and tough for slaves. In Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Hecuba laments her new life as a slave and how she is forced to sleep on the floor. This is backed up by Xenophon's *Oikonomikos* in which he uses dehumanising language such as 'make and breed' when talking about the slaves. Together, these two sources suggest that slaves were already treated harshly, and this project would lead to overworking and possibly many deaths, meaning Pericles was wrong in putting forward his idea. Finally, not every citizen was as rich as Pericles. In Aristotle's *Constitution of Athenians*, he describes how Cleisthenes created demes. These demes included

farmers and fishermen who were likely not wealthy enough to support war.

In conclusion, while this programme would unite Athenians in their military victories and provide employment for metics, it would be unfair on the slaves and other states who would have to fund it.

This exemplar was given 12 marks out of 12. It is generally well written in clear English and the candidate has structured it well, using an introduction and conclusion as well as a clear line of argument and counter-argument. Despite some factual errors, the candidate has included a wide range of over seven sources to support both sides of the argument and discusses a range of factors that show a good understanding of the socio-political context of 5th-century Athens.

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