

# CLASSICAL GREEK

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Paper 9787/01  
Verse Literature

## Key messages

- Candidates showed a sound knowledge of the set texts.
- Successful answers fully addressed the question.

## General comments

The standard was very high this year. Most candidates answered on Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Only a few candidates chose to tackle the paired text option in Section C; most chose the Unseen Literary Criticism option. In answering the various types of question, candidates were able to demonstrate excellent knowledge of their set text and the ability to analyse the texts in a sophisticated and compelling way.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

Most candidates clearly knew the text well and were able to translate accurately.

### Question 2

- (a) Candidates wrote well about the dramatic tension between Oedipus and Teiresias in the opening lines of the passage. They also had interesting things to say about Oedipus' speech in lines 5ff., specifically noting how quickly Oedipus moves to blame Creon and Teiresias, and how disparaging he is about Teiresias.
- (b) This was very well answered. Candidates were able to trace how Oedipus characterises himself in contrast to Teiresias. That characterisation is established in relation to the skill Oedipus claims to have shown in solving the sphinx's riddle, as against Teiresias' failure. Oedipus speaks in threatening tones.

### Question 3

- (a) In this passage Oedipus is trying to put together what happened at the crossroads. The passage is ominous mainly because of Jocasta's contributions, e.g. her observation that Oedipus' physique is similar to that of Laius, and that – in lines 7 and 10 – she uses the same verb meaning 'I shrink from'.
- (b) The drama of these lines lies in the way that Oedipus begins to understand the truth, though, even now, he does not know the whole truth (dramatic irony is present here). Oedipus' need to see the servant is urgent.

### Question 4

For the most part, well translated.

### Question 5

- (a) Well answered by the few who chose this question. The extraordinary nature of a meeting between the old Trojan king and the prime Greek warrior, one responsible for the death of the king's favourite son, was well observed. In particular, candidates were able to draw out how strange the simile is in lines 4–7, as well as Achilles' surprised reaction.
- (b) Candidates were able to see that much of the pathos of these lines derives from the relationship between father and son. Priam has lost many sons, but he has still come for the corpse of Hector. His appeal to Achilles is based on the father-son relationship.

### Question 6

Too few candidates attempted this question to make specific comment appropriate.

### Question 7

This was the more popular of the *Oedipus* essays, with candidates demonstrating excellent knowledge of the text. They were also able to organise their answers well, allowing room for some sophisticated critical analysis. There was a good understanding of the 'hero' in Greek myth and culture (some candidates referred extensively to the Homeric hero as well). More specifically, candidates observed that Oedipus is, in some ways, an unusual hero, because his heroism is partly based on his intellectual qualities.

### Question 8

Fewer candidates chose this essay, though there were some good answers, which traced the stubbornness of Oedipus' intellect. How rational Oedipus is was perhaps slightly less successfully dealt with. Part of the power of the play is that Oedipus' response to each new piece of information is psychologically plausible.

### Question 9

Too few candidates attempted this question to make specific comment appropriate.

### Question 10

Though few chose this essay, there were some good answers, which demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the concept of 'the tragic'. Answers tended to concentrate on father-son relationships, on the one hand, and on fate, on the other.

### Question 11

Candidates gave due attention to what the passage means rather than to discussing (sometimes spurious) sound effects. Candidates were able to draw out the various ways in which Euripides' represents Orestes' mental disturbance and his sense of shame. Candidates also analysed Orestes' striking criticism of Apollo and the pathetic image of Orestes' dead father appealing to him not to kill his mother.

### Question 12–15

Very few candidates chose the paired text option and, of those that did, all wrote on Homer, and specifically on the hero as represented in *Iliad* 16 and 24 (Question 14). Again, considerable sophistication of understanding and analysis was on display.

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Paper 9787/02  
Prose Literature

## Key messages

- Candidates should be reminded of the need for legibility, and to write their translations on alternate lines.
- Candidates should ensure their answers remain focused on the question.

## General comments

The majority of candidates answered on Herodotus. Most candidates demonstrated that they were very familiar with their chosen text. When answering essay questions, candidates should be able to cite details from the text which do not appear in the commentary or translation questions.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

Most translations were accurate and fluent.

### Question 2

Part (a) caused little trouble, with most candidates picking out key points. Part (b) needed to be quite thorough to access the higher marks. Most considered the obvious issues, but the stronger candidates considered more wide-ranging themes, such as *xenia*, the use of Homer, the idea of 'foreign-ness', and so on.

### Question 3

Too few candidates attempted this question to make specific comment appropriate.

### Question 4

Not many candidates chose Plato, but translations were generally accurate.

### Question 5

Part (a) elicited some good answers, mostly focusing on the language of 'risk'. The best answers to part (b), along with analysis of language and the context, addressed the question of whether or not the analogy is entirely appropriate to making Socrates' point.

### Question 6

Too few candidates attempted this question to make specific comment appropriate.

### Question 7

Very few attempted this question, but those who did managed to situate the passage neatly within the wider context to make their points.

**Question 8**

There were some effective responses to this question. Candidates took different approaches, but most considered whether or not Herodotus believed that power corrupts, and provided a good range of examples.

**Question 9**

By far the majority of candidates chose this question, and most handled it extremely well. There were many insightful essays that questioned the question, provided evidence for the idea that there may be an overarching structure and a number of underlying themes, as well as displaying familiarity with secondary literature.

**Question 10**

Too few candidates attempted this question to make specific comment appropriate.

**Question 11**

The majority of candidates answering on Plato chose this question. Some candidates attempted this question with enthusiasm and flair. However, the temptation to wander off-topic seemed overwhelming to a few candidates. Better answers considered the ideas of new sophism vs. old sophism, to point to the use of language as well as general principles and came to a conclusion with a reasonably convincing argument.

**Question 12**

Too few candidates attempted this question to make specific comment appropriate.

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Paper 9787/03  
Unseen Translation

## Key messages

A sound understanding of Greek grammar and a good working vocabulary are the most important pre-requisites for success in this paper. In addition, candidates should try to do as much general reading of Greek prose and verse as time allows: the experience thus gained will make a huge contribution to their ability to translate at sight, and will be at least as valuable as the working of a long succession of practice passages, if not more so. Up to five marks are awarded for stylistic fluency in the translation of the prose passage, and the accurate scansion of two lines from the verse passage attracts a further five.

## General comments

Neither of these unseens was without its own difficulties, and some candidates managed to create some even where there were none: such problems were usually the result of uncertainties over vocabulary. Even so, there were a good number of fluent and largely accurate versions; and the scansion question was generally well done.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

This passage of Thucydides was well handled by many candidates. Where it was not, a greater familiarity with the author's writing style would probably have helped.

**τῆ δὲ ὕστεραία ... ναυμαχήσουσιν:** the meaning of ἀνάγομαι ('I put out to sea') was problematic and only a few either knew or could make a decent stab at working out πλώιοι ('sea-worthy'): intelligent guesswork is an important weapon in the unseen translator's armoury.

**οἱ δὲ ... ξυμβεβηκότα:** the first half of this sentence was generally well handled but προσγενημένος and τὰ ἄπορα ξυμβεβηκότα in the second half produced a number of versions more creative than accurate!

**τὸν δὲ ... ποιήσασθαι:** some made οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι the subject of διεσκόπουν. Apart from that there were occasional problems with δεδιότες ('fearing') and quite a common determination not to translate λελύσθαι as the passive it is. Otherwise the sentence was well done, and there were lots of good renderings of the final phrase, πείραν ποιήσασθαι.

**πέμψαντές τε ἔλεγον ... ἀνταιρόμενοι:** on the whole this section was well translated, except for some confusion over the tense of both ἀδικεῖτε and ἀνταιρόμενοι (both present) and about the meaning of τιμωρόμαι + accusative.

**εἰ δὲ ὑμῖν ... πολεμίοις:** the temptation to construe πλεῖν with its neighbour βουλόμεθα, rather than with κωλύειν, proved irresistible to many, and a number could not quite put into simple words ἢ ἄλλοσε εἴ ποι βουλόμεθα ('or anywhere else we want').

**οἱ δὲ ... ἤλομεν:** this final section was usually well done, the most regular problem being τοῖσδε, too often joined with ξυμμάχοις rather than with Κερκυραίοις.

## Question 2

- (a) There were many fluent translations of this passage. Most of the candidates who found the passage challenging still managed to keep the translation moving in the right direction, even if total accuracy over details proved more elusive.

**ὄλωλα ... λόγους:** on the whole this section was well dealt with; such problems as there were centred upon δειλῖος (confused with δειλός), ἔα (not recognised as the imperative of ἔάω) and the phrase μηκύνειν λόγους, where the verb's connection with the noun μήκος was not always appreciated.

**τί γὰρ ... τυγχάνειν:** some level of general sense was usually maintained here, but there were some issues with details: more often than not candidates did not realise that τί needed to be construed with κέρδος, and the meanings of μεμειγμένων, πρόθεσ and εἶκος caused unexpected difficulties.

**ἄποπτον ... ψυχῆς πέρι:** though its precise significance ('out of our sight') sometimes remained unexpressed, the general sense of ἄποπτον ἡμῶν was usually recognised; but a surprising number of candidates did not see λυτηρίον's pretty clear links with the verb λύω – to the overall detriment of their final versions. The next two lines were generally well done, though just a passing acquaintance with the principles of accentuation might have prevented one or two from translating ὁ ἀγών as if it were ὁ ἄγων.

**τί δ' ἐξ δόμους ... θάνης:** the first two lines of this section were universally well translated, though in the second couplet there were failures of imagination with μὴ τάσσε (What was 'do not draw up' meant to mean in this context?), and ταύτῳ was inevitably confused with τοῦτῳ.

**ἦ πᾶσ' ... ἄκρος:** the first couplet here was generally competently handled, though not everyone saw that τὴν στέγην is actually the subject of ἰδεῖν, whilst in the final line the full sarcastic force of τὰ γοῦν σ' ('Well, yours anyway!') and an appropriate meaning for ἄκρος ('tip-top' *vel sim?*) eluded all but the strongest candidates.

- (b) Both lines of scansion were well handled, most candidates gaining all or most of the marks available.

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<p>Paper 9787/04 Prose Composition or Comprehension</p>
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## Key messages

- Candidates need a secure grammatical knowledge to perform well in this paper.
- Full detail must be given in answer to comprehension questions.

## General comments

Most candidates chose to try the prose composition. The standard was very high indeed, with a number of candidates demonstrating not only a good understanding of Greek accidence and syntax, but also a feel for word order, connection and idiom.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1**

#### First sentence

Many candidates were able to use the idiom *es tosouto* in order to convey 'in a state of such confusion'. 'Inside' proved problematic for some candidates, but 'at the approach of the enemy fleet' was often well translated using a genitive absolute.

#### Second sentence

Well translated.

#### Third sentence

This sentence caused a few more problems, especially the clause 'unless there were Athenian ships in support'. There were a variety of ingenious recastings, such as *with no Athenian ships helping* (genitive absolute).

#### Fourth sentence

This longer sentence also caused a few difficulties. The opening subordinate clause was mainly well handled, though some candidates struggled with 'in a thoroughly disorganised way'. However, once again, some candidates were able to recast the clause in a variety of ways, some of which included some excellent choices of vocabulary.

#### Fifth sentence

Most candidates understood the syntax of fearing clauses, and some were eager to show their understanding of the sequence of mood by using an optative. Many candidates coped well with 'there was a growing panic throughout the city'.

#### Sixth sentence

In this final sentence, most candidates were able to translate 'despite their naval victory' using *kaiper*, and were also able to subordinate in a convincing way.

### **Question 2**

Few candidates attempted this option. But it is important to note that, in order to achieve high marks, the comprehension questions must be answered very precisely. For instance, to achieve full marks for **Question 2(c)**, a candidate would have to have given the following answer: (Solon) was held in honour/by everyone. He was no longer able or willing/to speak or act in public/in the same way as before/because of old age.

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As far as the grammatical questions were concerned, the various identifications – contracted verbs, genitive absolutes, -mi verbs etc. – were well done. Cases and moods were mainly correctly identified, but not always correctly explained.