

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/01
Verse Literature

Key messages

All candidates took the option of Greek tragedy rather than that of Homer. The standard was very high. Candidates clearly knew their set texts extremely well, and were able to translate accurately, as well as comment on and interpret the text. The standard of the analysis in the Unseen Literary Criticism option was very high (see remarks below on specific questions).

General comments

See above.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was very well translated, with most candidates achieving full marks. One problem encountered by candidates was to translate line 11 with its repetition of 'high up' and 'from high up'.

Question 2

Most candidates chose this commentary question. In nearly all cases it was clear that candidates knew *Bacchae* extremely well. Most did not waste time on specious commentary on the sound effects of the language.

- (a) Most were able to comment in detail on the contemptuous and dismissive nature of Pentheus' attitude towards Dionysus and the rituals associated with him. Candidates were also able to say interesting things about the way Pentheus seems to see himself as a leader; how, for instance in lines 12 – 13 he states in clear terms what he has already done to deal with the threat and, in lines 14ff., what he intends to do. More could have been made of the moral vocabulary that pervades the passage and which gives us further indications of Pentheus' self-image (as a leader).
- (b) Again, candidates clearly knew the passage well. They were able to show that Pentheus' view of Dionysus is extreme and also very specifically so. Candidates did not see just how exotic and strange, as well as threatening, the picture Pentheus gives of Dionysus actually is. The description Pentheus gives is full of very choice descriptions, and mixes observations about Dionysus' looks, his origin, his status as a *goes* etc. There was good commentary on Pentheus' contemptuous dismissal of Dionysus' claimed divine origins.

Question 3

Relatively few candidates attempted this commentary question. The passage is so famous, and so rich. It was well done by those who did attempt it.

- (a) Candidates were alert to the way that the relationship between Dionysus and Pentheus has been transformed. Good points were made about Pentheus' (comic?) concerns about cross-dressing and having to don the other accoutrements of Dionysiac garb. Not much was made of the way that the Pentheus of earlier in the play, who at least seemed decisive, has become someone who uses a polite optative (in line 7). And perhaps more could have been made of how in the last 7 lines, Pentheus seems to be reasserting himself, though even that seems at Dionysus' prompting.

- (b) Candidates wrote well on how these lines show a sharper, more aggressive Dionysus (note hunting in line 19, and the simply declared promise that Pentheus will pay the penalty). Candidates could have made more of how relentless Dionysus seems in these lines while, at the same time, acknowledging that he still addresses himself as though a separate person). The themes of frenzy and madness were well observed, as was Pentheus' wish to avoid mockery. More, again, could have been made of the stark description of Dionysus' contrasting qualities in the last line.

Section B: Essays

Candidates, for the most part, clearly knew the set texts well. This allowed them to include appropriate and relevant references in what were mainly well-argued essays. Quite a few candidates had knowledge of other relevant texts and secondary literature (though see some of the remarks about essay 7). Generally, essays were well organised and fluent.

Question 7

Most candidates chose this essay. Detailed knowledge of the set text was evident in just about all the essays. However, most candidates took Aristotle's *Poetics* as their guide as to what could constitute 'tragic'. This meant that essays tended to be structured in similar ways, namely, (a) Aristotle states that a tragic figure is such and such; (b) Pentheus is (or is not) a tragic figure in this sense. Few candidates seemed able to acknowledge that Euripides wrote his play before Aristotle was writing and that the sense of what constitutes the tragic might have been rather different in late 5th-century Athens. Candidates' knowledge of the *Poetics* was very good though. More could have been said about the inevitability of Pentheus' death, with reference to the prologue, Pentheus' persistent obstinacy, and his conflation of Dionysus with desire.

Question 8

Fewer candidates chose this essay. Those that did wrote well, arguing effectively about the subversive nature of Dionysiac religion (certainly as perceived by Pentheus). Candidates wrote about how it is women who are most affected by Dionysus in the play, and that that is another sign (certainly for Pentheus) of political disruption and instability. Less was made of Cadmus' advice to Pentheus, and of his view that the accommodation of Dionysus and his religion may be necessary for political stability (however paradoxical that might seem).

Section C

Most candidates chose the Unseen Literary Criticism option.

Question 11

In the past this Unseen Literary Criticism has not always been successfully tackled, claims about sound effects or about the semantic effects of stylistic features such as alliteration and assonance are not necessary. Fewer pieces were written in this vein. Instead candidates focused on the meaning of the text.

More specifically, most candidates were able to write convincingly about the pathos of this passage, in which a great hero questions and remonstrates with himself about his future course of action. Most candidates were also good at writing about the concerns that lie behind Ajax's self-questioning: his fear of being mocked, his worries about his relationship with the gods and with the Greeks, his anxiety about what his father will think of him. Some good linguistic points were made as well, e.g. about the enjambement in line 3, about the repetition of the vocabulary of hate in lines 9–10, and of being alone in line 18.

Question 12

Of the small number of candidates who chose the paired text option, all chose this essay. Candidates were able to make convincing comparisons and contrasts between the two plays. In most cases, candidates stressed the destructive effects of both Aphrodite and Dionysus, on individuals, families and society more broadly. Some argued that the two divinities were forces of irrationality which, in both plays, were shown needing accommodation within the *polis*. More specifically, candidates were able to adduce, in a relevant and appropriate way, the details that showed that Dionysus' threat to the city is more obvious and widespread than that of Aphrodite. Good points were made about the similarities of the deaths of Hippolytus and Pentheus.

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/02
Prose Literature

Key messages

- Candidates are encouraged to follow the rubric for the translation **Questions (1 and 4)** and write their translations on alternate lines.
- Candidates need to ensure their answers remain focused on the question.

General comments

The overall standard of responses was high, with some excellent recall of the text and relevant detail. Candidates had a firm knowledge of the translation of the texts, but are also advised to check that they have accurately translated every word in the passage. The questions in response to passages were well handed on both texts, with a good knowledge of the text in evidence. The essays were similarly professionally handed.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most translations were accurate and fluent.

Question 2

Part (a) was generally answered well, with most candidates noting the contrast between the motivations and characterisations of Aristides and Themistocles. The best answers to **Part (b)** offered a thorough coverage of the passage, picking up on Plutarch's use of language to emphasise Themistocles' change in behaviour after Marathon, as well as his preparations for further conflict.

Question 3

Few candidates answered this question. Most answers to **Part (a)** considered the various ways in which sorrow was emphasised in the passage, including the evocative use of language to describe those left behind, and the story of the dog. The best answers also noted the spectators' astonishment at the boldness of the act. **Part (b)** elicited a range of responses, mainly focusing on Themistocles' perceptiveness. Stronger answers also considered the ways in which Themistocles is portrayed as a shrewd political figure.

Question 4

Not many candidates chose Plato, but translations were accurate.

Question 5

There were mixed responses to **Part (a)**, with stronger answers addressing both Socrates' points and whether they found them persuasive. Better responses also noted the emphasis on the soul, the need for good teachers, and the importance of providing evidence. Most responses to **Part (b)** addressed Socrates' self-pitying tone, with the best answers also picking up on the idea of discovering for oneself as opposed to learning.

Question 6

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

Question 7

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

Question 8

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

Question 9

The majority of candidates chose this question and it was generally handled very well. Many responses were insightful, considering the various ways in which Themistocles is presented throughout the text and coming to reasonable conclusions. The best answers demonstrated excellent knowledge of the whole text and some familiarity with secondary literature.

Question 10

Very few candidates chose this question and answered it well, successfully contextualising the passage, noting that it is a prime example of Socratic *elenchus* and comparing it to the rest of the work.

Question 11

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

Question 12

There were mixed responses to this question, with better answers showing an awareness that this text is one of the earliest Socratic dialogues, and presents Socrates as 'learning' alongside the other characters, rather than being a wise man who already 'knows'.

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/03
Unseen Translation

Key messages

Both passages were generally well handled, and most candidates gained overall marks in the Distinction bracket, some of them very high. At the lower end of the scale, some candidates, perhaps more than in previous years, left blank spaces for words and phrases that they found difficult, so there was no possibility of gaining marks.

General comments

Overall, the best marks tended to be awarded to those who managed both to write fluent English and to keep quite closely to the structure of the Greek. Some versions were florid in terms of style and were not sensitive.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

All candidates made some sense of this passage of Xenophon, most managing competently to keep their translation moving in the right direction, even if some details went awry.

νῦν τοίνυν ... τοῦτων τυχεῖν: there were some problems with τὰ δεδογμένα ('what has been resolved'), with the middle imperative (μεμνήσθω), and with the meaning of τυγχάνω + genitive (here = 'to get, acquire'); some avoided the bland 'good' for ἀγαθός and offered 'brave' or 'valiant'.

ὅστις ... λαμβάνειν: there were the same problems here with the middle imperative πειράσθω (x2), but many candidates had no issues with the characteristic genitives, τῶν νικῶντων and τῶν ἡττημένων, offering well thought-out and intelligent translations.

τοῦτων λεχθέντων ... ἐρρίπτουν: the first half and the very end of this section caused no problems and elicited smooth and fluent translations; there were some issues with the indefinite ὅτου μὲν δεοίτο τις ('whatever anyone wanted') and with μετεδίδοσαν ('they shared').

ταῦτα ποιήσαντες ... ὧδε: despite the help given in the title, not all candidates appreciated that ἀριστοποιεῖμαι means 'I have breakfast'. Otherwise this section was well handled.

ἐγώ ... διάγω: the only issue here concerned ἐπίστασθε which some connected with πιστεύω rather than with ἐπίσταμαι.

εἰ οὖν ... πάντας ἔχων: there were many good, idiomatic translations of σωτήριον τι βουλευομένου ('taking salutary measures'), and most candidates appreciated that the best way to translate ἔχων here is the preposition 'with'.

λέξατε ... στόλον ποιῆσθαι: this section was mostly handled well. There were no difficulties with ἐν νῶ ἔχετε, though there were some with τὸν στόλον ποιῆσθαι.

Question 2

- (a) This passage contained a variety of difficulties; many of these were well dealt with, some less so.

ἀλλ' ἐξανίστω ... κτενῶ: on the whole candidates coped well with the imperative ἐξανίστω, though not all grasped the conditional force of the genitive absolute σοῦ ὃ οὐ θελούσης.

ὦ μεγάλα πράσσω ... παιδῶν ἐγώ: the initial vocative phrase was usually accurately if unimaginatively translated, though 'obey' was an insensitive translation in the context of πιθοῦ, and ἀντὶ τοῦ was regularly misunderstood as 'instead of him': only a few realised that τοῦ = τίνος (neut.), the whole phrase meaning something like 'on what account'.

οἴμοι κακῶν ... διπλοῦν: the exclamation at the beginning of this section caused some problems (οἴμοι was unknown to some), and the typically Euripidean complication of ἄχθος τ' ἐπ' ἄχθει τῶδε προσθέσθαι διπλοῦν ('and to add a second grief on top of this one') made it difficult for quite a few.

ἦτις ... νυμφεύομαι: the main problem in this section was not seeing that οἰκτρῶς is construed with πυρούμενον, not κατεῖδον (the position of τ' makes it clear); otherwise versions offered were largely smooth and fluent.

τί δῆτ' ... οἷς δοκεῖ τάδε: not all candidates saw that τί is best translated here as 'why?', nor was the proper sense of πρὸς τί χρὴ βλέπειν ('To what must I look?') widely understood. There were many excessively literal renderings of ὀφθαλμὸς βίου where something more idiomatic like 'light of my life' might have been more appropriate, and the final three words of the passage (lit. 'those to whom this seems good') proved problematic to some.

- (b) The scansion was well done, and the dactyl in line 8 was competently handled by most candidates.

CLASSICAL GREEK

Paper 9787/04

Prose Composition or Comprehension

Key messages

There was a spread of marks this year and the best were very good indeed. Possibly, the few candidates with the lowest marks might have performed better if they had chosen the comprehension option. Those candidates who can write fluent and accurate Greek will always score highly on this paper.

General comments

At the top end of the scale, candidates should remember that the aim of writing prose at this level is to produce fluent, accurate and straightforward Greek: a succession of outré words and idioms, especially those lifted from verse authors, is unlikely to produce a natural passage of prose, and offers much scope for the introduction of error. At the lower end of the scale, and as mentioned in previous years, word order and connection are important, and words and phrases which are only relevant in Modern Greek should be avoided. Once again, some scripts were very untidy and difficult to read.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Meanwhile ...the open: overall this section was treated simply and was well done. Some candidates attempted to subordinate the whole section and combine it with the next; this was only sometimes successful and often resulted in an overall loss of direction for the passage. Not everyone remembered that οὐδείς needs a singular verb; and there were many attempts, some enterprising, some long-winded, to express 'in the open': ἐν φανερωῶ seemed as good as any.

Thirty men ... in great danger: there were many opportunities in this long section to display competence and ability. All of μὲν ... δέ, ἐλάσσονες ἢ ὥστε, μὴ αὐτός τε καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται and δι' ὀλίγου were expected and were offered.

In his eagerness ... not yet present: 'in his eagerness' (something like ἄτε γὰρ πρόθυμος ὤν) caused some problems, but there were many good attempts at rendering 'the rest of the army' (τὴν ἄλλην στρατιάν was expected), and some candidates were further rewarded for knowing that after θαυμάζω 'that' is best dealt with by εἰ.

At daybreak ... lost their way: 'to seek his companions' offered an opportunity to use a future participle to express purpose, but many candidates automatically opted for the ἵνα construction. 'wandering' and 'having lost their way' were also problematic to a few candidates, though there were many ingenious (if clunky) solutions from those who did not have the right phrases at their fingertips.

Unless you return ... take the city: the conditional sentence caused some problems (though one or two candidates dealt with it very neatly by a genitive absolute with negative μή), as also 'will perish' and 'will take the city'.

So he led ... the gates: the first part of this sentence was well handled, but the second half was often dealt with by hanging nominative participles rather than by genitive absolutes, the obvious solution.

Question 2

There were too few answers to make comment appropriate.