

2021 VCE Classical Studies external assessment report

General comments

The 2021 VCE Classical Studies examination consisted of two sections. Section A – Individual study asked students to answer two questions, each with three parts on two texts they have studied from a selection of eight texts, covering both written and material culture of the Classical World. Section B – Comparative study asked students to meaningfully compare the ideas in a chosen pair of texts. Students were given one question for each of the eight pairs of texts and were marked on the published assessment criteria and expected qualities, which include demonstration of knowledge of the classical works and relationships of those works to their sociohistorical contexts, analysis of the ideas and the techniques used to express those ideas in the classical works, comparison and evaluation of the ideas and techniques used in classical works and construction of an argument based on relevant evidence.

Most students answered the questions in the order they appeared on the examination paper and seemed to have divided their time appropriately so that all questions were answered in reasonable detail. Responses were mostly relevant and generally displayed sound knowledge of the material studied.

In Section A, students must carefully read the question and consider what is being asked, then decide on the best material to use in their response. Some students did not tailor their responses to the specific question and repeated material in Parts b. and c. of the question.

Some strong responses were limited by a lack of discussion of the techniques of the particular text they were discussing. Discussion of techniques is required in ‘how does ...’ questions in Section A and is one of the assessment criteria in Section B. Some Section A questions asked students to identify and explain persuasive techniques, but many instead explained the argument in their own words with little reference to specific techniques.

There was evidence of some confusion between the requirements of Section A and Section B. In Section A, it is important to answer the three parts of the question. Some students appeared to be writing to the published expected qualities for Section B, including lengthy descriptions of the sociohistorical context when they were asked to discuss characterisation or the significance of the extract to the work as a whole. While higher scoring responses will usually demonstrate the student’s ability to draw on Classical ideas and culture, inclusion of material that is not relevant to the question will not help the student earn marks. Students should use past examinations to familiarise themselves with the requirements of the examination.

Generally, students who demonstrated an awareness of authorial intent and understood how the author composed the work for their Classical audience tended to perform better. Comments on how a 21st century audience may interpret the work is not necessary and does not address any of the criteria.

Specific information

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Individual study

First selection

Question	None	Homer	Thucydides	Aeschylus	Vases	Virgil	Cicero	Ovid	Reliefs
%	0	75	0	2	0	19	0	2	1

Part a.

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	8	24	33	33	2.9

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	1	13	31	31	17	7	3.7

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	0	3	8	11	21	24	17	11	3	1	5.7

Second selection

Question	None	Homer	Thucydides	Aeschylus	Vases	Virgil	Cicero	Ovid	Reliefs
%	1	4	12	38	21	1	0	4	19

Part a.

Mark	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	8	22	43	26	2.9

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	2	7	28	28	26	6	3.8

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	2	3	5	13	14	23	21	8	4	1	5.4

Students were able to correctly identify the moment conveyed in their extract or identify the images. They understood what was happening and the key ideas that were conveyed. Responses that scored highly analysed the ideas contained within the works and how those ideas were presented, moving beyond description and narrative. Students should aim to answer the questions specifically and with detail, moving beyond explaining what is happening in the extract or image, or listing quotes without relevant explanation.

For Part a., most questions asked students to describe the events or circumstances leading to the extract. Most students were thorough, and the highest scoring responses carefully selected the most appropriate material for discussion.

Responses need to be specifically about how ideas are presented, rather than offering a summary or quotes with no explanation or comment. Very general references such as to the 'use of phrase' or 'strong language' were not specific enough, especially when only accompanied by single-word quotes. Some students listed techniques without discussing how those techniques present ideas or characters, or without consideration of whether the techniques are relevant to the question. Students do not need to discuss features that are particular to the English translation, such as punctuation or sound effects such as alliteration, assonance and sibilance.

It is important that students plan their responses before they begin to write. Part b. often scaffolds how they might respond to Part c. Students should ensure they are selecting the most appropriate points for each question to ensure they avoid unnecessary repetition or inclusion of discussion in Part b. that might be more appropriate for Part c.

When asked to evaluate the significance of an extract or artwork in relation to the work / prescribed material as a whole, precise and relevant references to moments in the text or details in other images outside what is included in the examination is required to achieve the highest marks. Students don't necessarily need to quote from outside the extract, but the reference must be detailed and must be linked to the idea/focus of the question. To be able to evaluate the significance successfully, students must show an understanding of how the extract works within the whole text. For example, when asked about characterisation in the work as a whole, they need to explore whether the characterisation presented in the extract is supported or contradicted by the rest of the work, or how the depiction of a hero is supported or challenged in other examples.

Where students used Greek words, they were unnecessarily or incorrectly used. These words were often used to replace analysis and explanation. It is incorrect to label any description as *ekphrasis*, and the word 'description' would have sufficed. Responses that scored highly explained the nature of the description. Students are better served by sticking to an elaborative response in English.

Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 6

Question 1a.

Students handled this question well and had a lot to say. Some students treated the events chronologically and showed good knowledge, with the highest scoring responses highlighting circumstances that were particularly pertinent. Some students began with the instruction of Helenus as the catalyst for Hector's departure from the battlefield, then went backwards to explain why the Trojans were so desperate, and later forwards to describe the events within the city walls. Students showed their knowledge and understanding by identifying the extract as taking place within the Scaean Gates or by recalling what Andromache had just said to Hector.

Question 1b.

Responses that scored highly showed understanding of the emotion and tragedy of this moment, understanding that this young family will soon no longer be together. They indicated the Greek audience's

awareness that Hector was soon to die and of the tradition surrounding Astyanax's death. Students commented on the emphasis on the youth of Astyanax, the emotional release of the laughter, the gentleness of Hector with his son and the tragic irony of Hector humbly beseeching Zeus to make his son a greater man. High-scoring responses also explained what Homer was doing to create this pathos at the forefront.

Responses that did not score well tended to narrate the extract. Some students misunderstood and misused quotes from the extract, accusing Hector of hubris for saying he wouldn't be hurled down to death before his time or saying the pathos comes from our pity for his family as he is so heartless towards them.

Quite a number of students were not confident writing about pathos and wrote about the characterisation of Hector for this question.

Question 1c.

Responses that scored highly established the two sides to Hector that are presented in Book 6: the warrior and the family man. These students noted his humility in this extract and made good use of the significance of this moment where he removes his helmet, contrasting it to his tension and warrior demeanor elsewhere. Students explored Hector's adherence to the heroic code, although they were sometimes a little vague and contradictory as to what that entailed. They showed the conflicting obligations Hector faces.

It was acceptable to use some of the same evidence in this response as students used in Part b., but the analysis of that evidence needed to be specific to Hector's characterisation.

Responses that did not score well narrated the extract and did not establish how this moment shows a different side of Hector. The highest scoring responses were able to place this in the context of the characterisation of Hector in Book 6 as a whole. In order to evaluate the significance of the extract, students needed to form an argument about the extract's significance for the characterisation of Hector, considering both the significance of this moment and evaluation of its connection to or departure from other aspects of Hector's character, drawing on evidence from elsewhere in Book 22.

It is important that students read the question carefully. A significant number of students explored the general significance of the ideas in the extract, not considering the specific instruction to discuss the characterisation of Hector.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*

Question 2a.

Students generally answered this question well, most starting with an explanation of the pretext for the Athenian decision to sail to Syracuse. Some students also noted the dissolution of the Peace of Nicias. The highest scoring responses were also able to contextualise the prescribed extract from Alcibiades' speech by explaining the arguments made by Nicias in his preceding speech.

Question 2b.

Students had a tendency to summarise the arguments made by Alcibiades, without consideration of what features of the argument might make it persuasive or the persuasive techniques that he employs. Some noted that he used rhetoric to persuade but didn't give any examples. Some students identified every technique they could see but didn't consider whether they were persuasive, for example identifying Alcibiades' reference to his youth as boastful language, which in itself isn't persuasive. The highest scoring responses were able to demonstrate how Alcibiades is taking Nicias' preceding argument and turning it on its head, suggesting that his youth is of benefit, and the like.

Question 2c.

Students were generally well able to describe and contrast the prominent characteristics of Alcibiades and Nicias, such as Nicias' moderation and the reportedly extravagant and populist behaviour of Alcibiades. They demonstrated very good understanding of these key personalities, but few offered evidence from the prescribed material to support their general observations and very few evaluated the significance of the extract within the overall characterisation of the two generals. Responses that did not score well wrote only about Alcibiades and didn't discuss Nicias at all.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

Question 3a.

Students responded to this question well, dealing with both the events of the play so far and the events told through the Chorus. They identified the sacrifice of Iphigenia as the key motivation for Clytaemnestra, and some identified the curse on the House of Atreus as the catalyst for the cycle of events. Students covered key elements of the plot such as the ominous mood created by the Watchman, the beacon fires, the return home of Agamemnon with Cassandra, the crimson tapestry and the murder.

Question 3b.

Students did a very good job at identifying various techniques used within the extract.

Many referred to examples of imagery and explained how they created a sense of horror, such as the feeling of entrapment evoked in the net imagery.

A broad range of techniques were chosen for discussion and students generally followed through by explaining the technique they identified. Some stopped at identification and did not show how the techniques they identified were connected to horror. Quoting and commenting on specific aspects of Clytaemnestra's words was more successful than simply identifying her words as Aeschylus' use of monologue. Some responses that scored highly showed how horror was created through the cold calculation evident here and from Clytaemnestra's reveling in her deed. Some responses even noted theatrical conventions, such as that the violence appears off-stage, going on to demonstrate how it is evoked in the extract through the language and imagery.

Question 3c.

The highest scoring responses placed this moment at the climax of the play and the culmination of Clytaemnestra's plan. Some noted earlier evidence of Clytaemnestra's premeditation that becomes clear at this point and compared her character here to how she has presented herself before this point. Some responses that scored highly picked up on the imagery in the extract, discussed it as recurring imagery and explored the ideas the imagery represents, connecting this moment to the key ideas of the play. There was some excellent discussion of key ideas that appear in the extract, but the answers needed to also place this extract within the context of the play and consider it in terms of how ideas are developed. A number of responses included unnecessary sociohistorical context material that was not related to the question.

Greek vases

Question 4a.

Most students started by identifying both vases as black figure and describing what that entailed. The highest scoring responses continued to describe a range of techniques visible on these vases, such as the way

incision was used, the use of coloured slip and the composition. Responses that did not score well did not move past explaining the overall technique used to create black figure vases, without any explicit reference to the two vases in the examination. Some focused on which vase they deemed better than the other, which was unnecessary and limited their ability to discuss the techniques. Some students incorrectly identified one as black figure and one as red figure, basing their comparison on the differing techniques of each style.

Question 4b.

Students had to write about both vases, but were not expected to connect the same ideas to both. They were knowledgeable about the myths that were represented and responses that scored highly wrote with detail and specificity. However, some students spent a very long time narrating the myths and did not manage to get to the ideas. They did not move beyond very brief, and sometimes vague, identification of an idea represented on one or both of the vases. Some explanation of the ideas was required beyond identifying broad themes such as that a vase depicts heroism or that it shows the role of women. Responses that scored highly defined what the vase is conveying about key ideas, what aspect of heroism it conveys or what it is saying about the role of women.

Question 4c.

Some students wrote largely the same thing in Part b. as they did in Part c. Responses that scored highly to both parts of this question were able to specifically analyse the depiction of masculinity here. Students tended to use the terms masculinity and heroism interchangeably. While many points about heroism are relevant here, students often didn't take pause to consider what aspects of masculinity were depicted on their prescribed vases. Responses that scored highly referred closely to specific evidence from the vases rather than only focusing on the ideas presented in the myths the vases depict.

Students were also required to refer to two other vases in their discussion, which some students did not do. Responses that did not score well made a brief statement and then stated which vase supported this statement with little analysis of how the images on the vase support their contention. Responses that scored highly carefully chose vases to support their contention and moved beyond identifying the scene and showed how ideas of masculinity were presented through elements of the scene and choices made by the artist. They also included thoughtful discussion on a range of presentations of masculinity, such as strength and physicality, cunning and honour.

Some students made references to vases that were not on the text list in 2021. It is important that students show knowledge of the prescribed works and are working from the current year's text list.

Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book 10

Question 5a.

Students wrote accurate summaries of the events leading up to the extract. Responses described how Turnus has been led to the battlefield and how Aeneas has been enraged by Turnus' killing of Lausus. They noted that Mezentius has been wounded, causing Lausus to take his place. Some of the best responses described the influence of divine intervention on the circumstances leading to this moment.

Question 5b.

This question was well answered by most students. Students showed a strong understanding of pathos and how it is created by the author. They examined the poignant descriptions of Lausus' death. Responses noted the emphasis on Lausus' youth, dealing well with small details such as the robe his mother made for him, now covered in his life's blood, and some noting the ease and brutality of his death, showing the mismatch

between himself and Aeneas. Some responses that scored highly also examined the moment when Aeneas, looking at Lausus, is moved to pity, and the pathos created by Aeneas' words.

Question 5c.

This question was generally well handled. Students used the extract well, exploring details such as the extended simile and the various ways it characterises Aeneas. As well as discussing the characterisation of Aeneas in the extract, students were also able to show points of difference to his earlier characterisation in Book 10, along with other examples of out of character behaviour as he is overcome by *furor*. Responses that scored highly were able to show the duality of Aeneas' characterisation in Book 10 and the extract as both a father and a warrior.

Cicero, *On Duties*, Book 3

Question 6

Students did not answer this question.

For Question 6a., students might have made use of the specific references to historical figures in the extract (Panaetius, Cratippus and Marcus Cicero, the author's son) and they could have used the content of the extract, in particular the argument about Phalaris and 'autocrats' in the first paragraph. Students could also have added information about the author and the circumstances of composition, specifically the political situation in Rome.

For Question 6b. students could have identified the metaphors in the extract and explained their intended persuasive effect on the audience. Phalaris, and dictatorial rulers in general, are likened to gangsters, to pests (locusts, feral animals or the like), to beasts and monsters and to useless limbs on otherwise healthy bodies. Students could also have examined the rhetorical style, the use of hyperbole, repetition and the use of exempla.

The extract comes from just after the start of Section IV, 'Difficult Moral Decisions', the last of the introductory sections in which Cicero defines and justifies his main topic before going on to consider various kinds of 'test cases' (such as from myth and history, from the world of business). For Question 6c., students could have evaluated the significance of the idea of moral conflict, which the author describes as a conflict between 'right' and 'advantage'. Students could examine these terms, using evidence from the extract and other parts of Book 3.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Question 7a.

Students were able to describe how Hyacinthus was mortally wounded. As well as explaining the main events, responses that scored highly emphasised that the force of the blow (coming from a god) caused the mortal wound.

Question 7b.

The highest scoring responses explained how pathos is created for **both** Hyacinthus and Apollo. Students made good use of the techniques in the extract, such as the simile and imagery, and noted the irony that Apollo, despite his association with medicine and healing, cannot save Hyacinthus. They noted Apollo's grief and sorrow at being bound by the laws of fate. Some students also noted the emphasis on Hyacinthus' youth as creating pathos. Some students were not so selective with the techniques they chose to discuss, explaining that this was an aetiological myth, which did not add to their answer on pathos.

Question 7c.

Responses tended to define the love between Hyacinthus and Apollo as pure and true, linking this story with Deucalion and Pyrrha under the guise of 'true/pure' love. Responses that scored highly argued that Apollo has been neglecting his duties due to his infatuation with Hyacinthus, and that relationships between gods and humans never end well. They noted that this isn't simply a romantic and idyllic story. The highest scoring responses evaluated the range of different depictions of love in Ovid and considered what Ovid might be saying about love.

Roman reliefs

Question 8a.

Students were not expected to compare throughout their response, but at least one salient point of comparison was expected, as set out in the study design. Many students compared the use of low and high relief in the creation of the two images and some were able to note that Image A was stamped terracotta and Image B was carved marble. Responses that scored highly were able to note a range of techniques used in the creation of the images, such as how a sense of perspective was created, or highlighting elements of their composition, such as the crowdedness of the Ludovisi or its individualised faces.

Question 8b.

Many students started by contextualising chariot racing as Roman entertainment and the higher scoring responses explored the nature of Roman entertainment. For Image B, students mainly focused on ideas around the suffering of war and the idea of civilisation conquering barbarism. There was some repetition of points between Parts b. and c., but most students managed to successfully separate ideas for discussion in Part b. from a discussion of beliefs and values for Part c. Responses that scored highly specifically connected the points they were making to elements of the scenes depicted on the reliefs, such as the fallen charioteer showing the bloodlust of the Games, or the scale of the Ludovisi in which barbarians are much smaller than Romans, thus reflecting the triumph of the Roman army.

Question 8c.

Responses that scored highly didn't simply identify Roman values, but were distinguished by their ability to show how these ideas were represented in the prescribed reliefs. For example, how the Ludovisi's elevation of the Romans over barbarians, or the polished finish and classicising proportions of the Roman faces in contrast to the deeply chiselled unshaven barbarian faces, celebrate the superiority and triumph of Roman civilisation. Students were also required to refer to two other reliefs in their discussion. Some students neglected a second example. Responses that scored highly carefully chose reliefs that supported the point they were making about the images that appeared on the examination, such as analysing the Arch of Titus as another example of the commemoration of glory in war, or Marcus Aurelius' Column as an example of a more philosophical approach to war, one in which the suffering to humans is displayed clearly in the individualised faces and gestures. An alternative approach taken was considering the function of the reliefs, pairing the Ludovisi Sarcophagus with another funeral relief.

Section B – Comparative study

Question selection

Question	none	Aeschylus Herodotus	Aristophanes Plato	Sophocles Euripides	Cicero Sallust	Livy Tacitus	Suetonius Seneca	Altar Column	Aristophanes Plautus
%	1	13	22	44	0	12	0	8	0

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	1	0.5	1	1	2	1	1	3	5	5	7	8	11	11	18	12	6	3	3	0	0	12.0

Most students engaged with the question and wrote sustained, and in some cases lengthy, responses. The texts were generally treated comparatively, using a range of different comparative structures, all of which were acceptable as long as explicit and detailed comparisons were made. There was a clear imbalance in some students' knowledge of one of their comparative texts, which made their comparative essays less successful.

Some students wrote essays that did not link any of the points to the sociohistorical context or add any details of the sociohistorical context. This was particularly evident in the Greek pairings. There are a range of ways students could link the works to their sociohistorical contexts, either by weaving the information into the essay or including it in a separate paragraph. Lengthy sociohistorical paragraphs containing irrelevant information are not required, but students should be able to connect their argument to the sociohistorical context. For example, students arguing against the statement that Aeschylus' only aim was entertainment framed his depiction of war in terms of his close connection to the events described and his witnessing of the suffering of war. Some students contextualised Euripides' cynicism in his presentation of his characters and their loyalties as due to his lived experience of an over-confident warring Athens.

Some students did not analyse any techniques used to express ideas. Connection of the work to its sociohistorical context, techniques used to express ideas and comparison and evaluation of ideas and techniques used in classical works are part of the assessment criteria. Omitting reference to sociohistorical context and/or techniques meant that otherwise strong responses were sometimes limited in the marks they could achieve.

This year there also seemed to be a tendency for students to offer two to three prepared points of comparison that they did not specifically link to the question. While a proportion of the material was usually relevant, students did not make that explicit in their argument.

Some students simply took the statement in the question at face value, agreed with it and attempted to illustrate the question's statement. However, the wording of some questions invited challenge: responses that scored highly recognised that entertainment is not the **only** aim for Aeschylus and Herodotus and that the Pergamon Altar and Trajan's Column do not merely serve to glorify violence. If students tried only to prove these statements correct they were limited in the scope of their response. Few students were able to argue that loyalty was not the main motivation for some of the characters in *Antigone* and *Electra*.

Question 1 – Aeschylus, 'The Persians' and Herodotus, *The Histories*

Most students simply agreed with the statement and were then rather limited in their ability to fully explore the aims of the two works. Responses that scored highly identified a range of (sometimes contrasting) aims.

Many argued that entertainment was the objective of drama, but not of a historical enquiry, which isn't entirely true of Herodotus' work. These responses also identified other aims of Aeschylus' play beyond entertainment, such as portraying the suffering of war, scrutiny of monarchy or idealising Athenian values. Some students said he wrote the play to show the Persian side of the war, which isn't really supported by much of the evidence from the play.

While it was pleasing to see many students referencing his own stated aims at the opening of his work, many included little or no further specific evidence from Herodotus. As a whole, students were much less knowledgeable about Herodotus. A lot of students said Herodotus was more factual or that his 'aim' was to be factually correct, which is problematic given his distance from his sources and is not representative of his own stated aims. Students found common ground between the works in the presentation of Xerxes, but didn't often connect the presentation of Xerxes to the **aims** of either the tragedian or historian.

A few students connected the aims of the works to their sociohistorical contexts, noting Aeschylus' possible presence at the action. There was little sense of the differences between the genres of the works, with many students referring to both works as plays or only generically as 'works'. Responses that scored highly conveyed the differences in the genre and style, referencing the techniques used to present ideas. Omitting discussion that addresses the assessment criteria limits students in the marks they can achieve.

Question 2 – Aristophanes, *The Clouds* and Plato, 'Crito'

Students knew a lot about these texts and were able to write in detail about the works and form many connections and comparisons. There was a good balance between the texts, though some students were clearly better able to utilise evidence from *The Clouds*. Responses that did not score well tended to show rather than argue. There was certainly scope for arguing common ground between the texts, but some students observed similarities between them without any argument in response to the actual wording of the question. The highest scoring responses carefully selected the material for discussion, allowing them to contextualise the works in terms of their key ideas, the societies that created them and the genres of the works. These answers were able to explicitly and clearly address all the assessment criteria. Points around justice, sophism and rhetoric were particularly useful in allowing students to place the texts in their sociohistorical contexts and analyse techniques.

Responses that scored highly compared the presentation of philosophy and sophism and the parodying of philosophical dialogue in *The Clouds*. Responses that did not score well didn't move beyond illustrating the differences between the character of Socrates in the two works. Higher scoring responses argued that Aristophanes used Socrates as the face of sophism and that the presentation of him in this comedy is caricature. Some noted Plato's personal relationship with Socrates and the effect of his attitude on his presentation of him.

Question 3 – Sophocles, 'Antigone' and Euripides, *Electra*

Almost all students agreed with the statement without challenge. They then proceeded to illustrate how each main character was motivated by loyalty. Responses that scored highly clearly defined what the characters were loyal to, and their levels of loyalty or their conflicting loyalties, such as loyalty to the gods and their laws, the state, family etc. Many argued that loyalty to the gods was the main feature of both texts, and then found themselves limited in their ability to provide evidence from *Electra*. Very few responses challenged the statement and argued that loyalty is **not** the main motivation of the characters, although the question certainly allowed for this. The highest scoring responses conveyed a sense of Euripides' cynicism and linked it to his presentation of the characters' motivations, arguing *Electra* was motivated more by restoring her status, or even self-preservation. Some even argued the seeming lack of motivation in the case of Orestes. Many responses on this text pairing did not connect the works to their sociohistorical contexts.

Quite a number of responses simply set out to illustrate the main ideas of the texts, without outlining an argument in relation to motivation or loyalty. They tended to talk in general terms and failed to create an argument they could then prove with discussion of ideas and techniques to express those ideas.

Students did not often refer specifically to techniques used within these texts beyond identifying them both as tragedies. The responses didn't tend to give much sense of the genre or the marked differences between the style and feel of the two plays.

Question 4 – Cicero, 'First and Second Catilinarians' and Sallust, 'Cataline's War'

Students did not answer this question.

Students needed to evaluate whether Cicero and Sallust suggested Cataline exposed the weakness of the Roman political system. They could have argued that Sallust suggests that Catiline shows the weaknesses of the Roman political system. Sallust himself says that Rome's success came from the outstanding character and ability of some among the elite, and that with the lack of such men the Republic could stumble on for a while based on what they had built, but not forever. The system itself cannot be maintained without an elite that is virtuous. Despite his personal cynicism about the Republic, Cicero is more positive about the Roman system in his speeches and so he blames Cataline more as an individual. Or alternatively students might argue that both focus on moral failings rather than systemic ones, and so neither really identifies any weakness in the Roman system directly, but both only argue how people have failed that system, especially as the system was in an imagined, ideal past. Students could place these texts within their contexts and compare the techniques of Cicero's contemporary orations to Sallust's historical narrative written some 20 years later.

Question 5 – Livy, *The Rise of Rome* and Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*

Students showed a great deal of knowledge about Livy and Tacitus, but the wording of the question wasn't always well addressed. Some students wrote detailed accounts of the presentation of key ideas in the two works, without arguing what Livy and Tacitus were warning the Roman public about.

Many points were relevant, but the argument was not always explicitly linked to the question. Curing Rome is not the same as warning Rome. Responses that scored highly defined what the historians were warning the public about, such as corruption or the dangers of hereditary rule and autocratic systems. Points on this text pairing were generally well linked to the sociohistorical context, though there were some lengthy paragraphs on the sociohistorical context where the relevance of the material was not made clear.

Question 6 – Suetonius, 'Claudius' and Seneca, 'Apocolocyntosis'

Students did not answer this question.

Students could have responded to the statement by evaluating the presentation of the emperor Claudius in Suetonius' biography and Seneca's satire. Seneca mocks Claudius' physical appearance and speech and satirises him as an emperor who is arbitrary in his judgements, ordering numerous executions. The primary focus of the play is ridiculing the emperor's deification and his descent to Hades. Students might examine Seneca's personal reasons for disliking Claudius. On the other hand, Claudius does not come out quite so badly in Suetonius' historical 'life', though he does certainly delight in detailing the many ways and reasons for which Claudius was ridiculed. Suetonius also says more about Claudius' reign as an emperor, which was marked by relative stability and good government, though Suetonius tends to attribute his successes to the influence of others.

Question 7 – Pergamon Altar and Trajan’s Column

Responses that did not score well accepted the question without challenge and discussed depictions of violence, limiting the scope of their discussion. The question’s use of the word ‘merely’ invited challenge. Some students offered a range of functions of the monuments. As well as glorifying war or violence, they serve to glorify their civilisations (and the triumph of civilisation over barbarity) and their leaders. Some students challenged the idea that they glorify violence at all and argued that they instead glorify war strategy. Some noted that they glorify piety through depictions of religious observances and students also identified other functions, such as Trajan’s Column serving as a war document.

The highest scoring responses were distinguished by the depth of their discussion of ideas and ability to explore specific evidence from the monuments, exploring the techniques used to present ideas. Responses that did not score well explained what was depicted on them rather than how the ideas were depicted.

There was a broad misconception among students about the Gigantomachy frieze. The Pergamon Altar’s Gigantomachy displays a fight between the Gods and the Giants, not the Titans. Though Gaia, a Titan, fights on the side of her Giant children, many more Titans fight on the side of the Olympian gods, led by Zeus and Athena (for example Phoebe, Rhea and Themis).

Question 8 – Aristophanes, ‘The Acharnians’ and Plautus, ‘The Swaggering Soldier’ (‘Miles Gloriosus’)

No students answered this question.

Students could have evaluated whether there is a message and found common ground between the two comedies as ridiculing warfare and those who wage it. The question of how ‘serious’ this message is could be evaluated, examining the comedic style of both comic poets. In the seventh year of the Peloponnesian war, Aristophanes voices many contemporary concerns and makes allusions to contemporary events. The play introduces a number of characters who each show what is wrong with Athens in wartime. The portrayal of Lamachus shows that there is no gain in the bellicose temper, and Lamachus can be equated with Cleon. On the other hand, the many comedic twists and turns, along with the bawdy slapstick of Plautus’ work, might be played more for entertainment value rather than serious messaging and his portrayal of a pompous soldier might be part of his overall tendency to subvert Roman values.