

# 2022 VCE Classical Studies external assessment report

## General comments

The 2022 VCE Classical Studies examination consisted of two sections.

- Section A – Individual study: students were asked to answer three questions each 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: students were asked to meaningfully compare and contrast the ideas in a chosen pair of texts. Students were given one question for each of the eight pairs of texts and were assessed using the published adjusted expected qualities for 2021.

Students showed an awareness of the course content and the requirements of the exam. There was obvious knowledge of the written texts and material culture studied in both sections of the exam. However, while most students attempted both sections of the exam, they struggled with time management and understanding the specific demands of each question. Some students put in all the information they knew about a work, including socio-historical and modern reader interpretations of the texts, regardless of the actual question being asked. So, while they wrote a lot of information, there were irrelevancies that took time from a more pertinent discussion. More examination practise and topic analysis during the year would assist in this area.

In Section A, students struggled to use their time efficiently, often writing too much for the questions that had the least marks allocated, leaving themselves very little time to fully expand their answers for Part c. This meant that while students attempted all questions, they often were not able to do the comparison with the required number of sculptures/reliefs in the material culture questions or explore the significance of the passage with enough comparisons from the rest of the chosen work. Students should look at past examinations to understand the wording of the questions in this section and what is required from their response. This is particularly important in Part c., where words such as ‘significance’ and ‘representations’ are commonly used.

In Section B, students also struggled to unpack the questions to construct an argument that allowed them to show their knowledge of both texts equally. There was still a tendency for students to write more on one of the two texts, often only allocating a few lines to the second work. Often there was a lack of discussion of the techniques used in the two works for comparison. As techniques is specifically mentioned in the expected qualities it is essential that students make observations on how the works are constructed. High-scoring responses not only compared the techniques but used the genre differences in some of the pairings as the starting point for their discussion.

It was evident in many responses that students had run out of time. Students should note that both sections are weighted equally, and therefore are encouraged to dedicate equal time to each section.

Students are encouraged to work on improving their handwriting as assessors can only mark what they can read. As students worked their way through the paper often their handwriting became more difficult to read, reflecting time issues. Clarity of handwriting and expression is an advantage for students as it ensures that assessors can clearly read and understand the points being made.

## Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

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

#### Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	26	30	23	14	2.1

#### Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	4	20	34	23	14	4	3.3

#### Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	5	9	16	22	22	15	2	2	1	5.2

### Second selection

#### Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	19	30	32	13	2.3

#### Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	3	17	30	30	15	2	3.3

## Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	2	5	11	13	21	19	16	7	1	0.2	4.9

The Greek texts were the most popular in this section, with all Greek texts having responses. Nearly 75 per cent of students answered the *Iliad* question; the second-most popular work was the Greek sculptures, followed by *Agamemnon*. From the Roman list, the *Aeneid* and the reliefs were the most popular, with no student writing on *Cicero*.

Students demonstrated sound knowledge of the texts and were able to correctly identify the moment conveyed in their extract or identify the images. The highest-scoring answers understood what was happening and the key ideas that were conveyed, showing an understanding of why the assessors chose this passage or material culture for them to explore. High-scoring responses used the wording of the question to scaffold their answer and used quotes and/or specific examples to support their discussion.

Questions about techniques tended to draw lists of examples and labels such as Homeric simile, contrapposto or low relief with no discussion of how these techniques allowed the writer/artist to explore ideas. This meant that students didn't always answer the question, leaving out how these techniques 'create tension or create irony'. Students must also be specific in their labelling of techniques, with phrases such as 'strong verbs and engaging tone' adding little to their discussion. Students must also remember that they are dealing with works in translation, so techniques such as alliteration and punctuation are not valid points to make.

Part c., the significance/representation question, required students to look at the work/material cultures as a whole, which needed clear and considered references to other sections of the work or other material cultures from the list. Often students only referred to sections on the exam and thus were unable to show an understanding of the whole work(s) they had studied and the ideas and issues that they reflected. For example, what the sculptures said about the way women were viewed and represented in the Classical world or how grief was depicted in both the mortal and immortal realms. In some of the questions, students were explicitly asked to refer to other sections of the work or list of works yet failed to do so or did so in very generic terms. While students are not expected to quote from other sections, their references should be explicit. Some students used quotes and ideas from historians/critics to support their discussion. This is not needed and was often irrelevant or simplistic and didn't add to the analysis.

Students need to use the reading time efficiently to plan their answers for Section A. Often the questions are designed to lead a student from retelling of plot to analysing and explaining the significance of the passage/material culture to the work as a whole. Many students believed that Parts b. and c. for some works were the same and thus repeated ideas from the technique question to the significance/representations question with little development or added sophistication.

## Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 22

### Question 1a.

Students struggled with this question, possibly due to it being very early in Book 22. They either wrote too much, going back to the death of Patroclus, or not enough, saying that Hector was awaiting Achilles. Some students used the references to Polydamas and Helen as a starting point for a long discussion on the whole epic. Students needed to refer to the fact that Hector was waiting for Achilles despite the pleas of both his parents, Priam and Hecuba. Achilles was speeding across the plain after Apollo revealed to him that he had been following the god rather than the Trojan Agenor, desperate for revenge. The passage is the point at which Hector decides to remain outside the walls of Troy and hence is the trigger for the rest of the Book. Students are only ever expected to demonstrate understanding of the prescribed text, in this case Book 22

only. Many students wrote lengthy answers to this question referring mostly or sometimes solely to events outside Book 22, which often could not be rewarded by assessors as the responses were not relevant to the prescribed text.

### Question 1b.

High-scoring responses showed understanding of how Homer has created tension in the passage through his techniques. These students not only gave examples of the techniques, but also explained how they created the tension. For example, they explained how the internal dialogue of Hector, in which we see quick changes of mind from 'what if I put down my shield' to 'no way I can parley with that man', gave the audience a sense of the internal conflict between the heroic/shame culture and his role as protector of Troy that he was facing. Many students misread the Homeric/extended simile at the start, believing that the snake was Achilles not Hector. They then used this error as the basis for their discussion of the tension and carried it into Part c. on characterisation as well.

### Question 1c.

It is important that students read the command words in the question carefully. In this case, the question was about the significance of the extract to the characterisation of both Hector and Achilles in Book 22. Higher-scoring responses used the passage as a starting point for a discussion of the way both men are depicted in the whole work (i.e. how their characters are developed). They talked about the way Achilles is depicted as godlike and noble in his heroic abilities by Hector, but then this idea is contrasted and challenged by his treatment of Hector's body in the later sections of the work. Or they discussed how Hector's indecision in the extract is contrasted by his fatal decision to face Achilles even after realising his betrayal by Athena. Some students failed to discuss the way the extract is important to our understanding of the two heroes in the whole work, discussing only the passage or only focusing on Hector or Achilles.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

*This extract is significant for the characterization of both Hector and Achilles as it continues a common theme throughout the book of making Hector appear more human while making Achilles appear less human. Just prior to this passage the audience gets to hear Priam's vision of Hector as a brave, noble warrior who steadfastly faces death. In this passage, the audience are given a look inside Hector's mind as he 'probed his own brave heart'. This dialogue shows how Hector facing Achilles is less motivated by glory and more by his desire to avoid the people of Troy 'heaping disgrace' on him due to what he views as his 'own reckless [pride]' which destroyed his army. This revelation not only characterizes Hector's love for his city by showing how high in regard he holds their opinion of him, it also makes him more human. By showing his fear of shame as his primary motivator, Homer presents a more cowardly image of Hector than seen later in the book, but one that is more human and relatable to his audience. This relatability both makes Hector's later decision to flee appear less disgraceful and show the nobility of Hector even more when he chooses to fight. This is as it is clear to the audience what inner turmoil he has overcome. If this extract makes Hector more human it makes Achilles less so. His description as 'gigantic in power' not only showcases the immensity of Achilles skill and prowess, but also draws comparison to monsters such as giants. This comparison highlights Achilles descent to less than human in his rage. Similarly the juxtaposition between Hector calling Achilles 'noble prince Achilles' in his daydream of parlaying with him and the reality of the Achilles who 'will cut Hector down' and 'so no respect for his rights' draws attention to the extent of Achilles descent. Once he was a noble follower of the heroic code who could be reasoned with and trusted, now he has become an unstoppable monster consumed by his rage who even disrespect Hector's body after the duel.*

## Herodotus, *The Histories*

### Question 2a.

Students tended to focus on Herodotus's explanation of his methodology that precedes this extract, and while this was a valid point, it was not the core of the question. The question asked for 'the events' discussed. These events were the cycle of retributive kidnappings of women. Students needed to explain the sequence from Io to Europa and Medea. Reference to Helen, who is mentioned at the start of the extract, was also acceptable.

### Question 2b.

Students handled the techniques in this passage well. High-scoring responses focused on Herodotus's use of sources as well as the chronological sequencing of events that lead to the 'troubles' that he is writing about. Many students were able to discuss Herodotus's claims of not passing judgement while making observations about how the 'only obvious thing is to take no notice'. Students were not expected to use the Greek terminology of *akoue* or *opsis* but many who did were able to use them correctly.

### Question 2c.

Students who wrote successfully in this question were able to talk about how females were used as objects in the politics of the time. They used evidence from the passage to reflect on the lack of agency that many females had and the way that Herodotus refers to them as 'girls', 'young women' etc. Students were expected to refer to the sections that follow this extract and discuss the unnamed wife of Candaules and her objectification. Higher-scoring responses made the point that the fact that she is unnamed reflected how females were depicted. Some students even made the point that the lack of depictions of females in the work reflected how they were viewed. Students should note that the word 'females' was used in the question as it was in the Greek sculpture question to allow reference to female Gods where applicable.

## Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

### Question 3a.

Most students were able to identify that this passage occurs just as Agamemnon arrives home, immediately prior to the tapestry scene and his fatal decision to walk on the tapestry. Events such as the lighting of the beacons, the Chorus singing of the departure to Troy and Iphigenia's death and the return of the Greeks with the Herald scene just before this were referred to. Higher-scoring responses were able to discuss what had happened on the stage prior to this scene, as the question asked, not just provide a timeline of events or a retelling the mythological background. This was done by making reference to things such as how the Chorus had referred to the curse on the house rather than saying there was a curse.

### Question 3b.

Some students struggled with this question, as while they were able to select the correct quotes/sections that contained irony, they were often unable to explain how 'this creates irony'. This was partly due to the fact that some students tended to think that the second part of the passage was not spoken by the Chorus or reflect on how little the Chorus actually knows. This meant they could not explain how lines such as 'a good shepherd knows his flock' were ironic, as the audience is aware of how in the next section Agamemnon is fooled by Clytemnestra's manipulation, even if they identified the line correctly. High-scoring responses realised that the Chorus is actually referring to Helen and Paris in this passage and made connections to what was about to occur.

### Question 3c.

This question gave students scope to discuss a wide range of ideas, such as themes and plot, when exploring how this passage is important to the play as a whole. Higher-scoring responses discussed how the passage is a moment of hope for the Chorus before they see Agamemnon, due to hubris and arrogance, fall victim to Clytemnestra. This allowed students to discuss the issues of justice, revenge, fate and freewill that the passage refers to and how those ideas are used as motivation and justification by characters in the following scenes. Many students focused on Clytemnestra and how this passage can be seen to characterise her as a Fury and how that characterisation is borne out in the rest of the play.

## Greek sculpture

### Question 4a.

Students were challenged by this question, with many seeming to be unprepared for a socio-historical question on a material culture despite it being a key skill and knowledge. Many students could not name the works correctly, or give their artistic period and the period's date, which was the minimum needed. The focus for many was on the myth of the Dying Niobid, with passing reference to the religious aspect of the Pelops Kore. Some students tried to explain that the difference in nudity between the works reflected an increase in societal freedoms for women, suggesting a limited understanding of the purpose of the use of nudity in the depiction of the Dying Niobid. Higher-scoring responses made reference to the influence of culture, such as Egypt, on the kore and the developing sense of confidence of the mid fifth century with the building of the Parthenon and the growth of architectural sculptures on the Niobid.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

*Image A is the Pelops kore sculpted by the Rampin master in 530 bce during the archaic period. The sociohistorical context can be seen influenced by their desire to create order within the chaos the Greeks felt and the fear around fate and the gods with works of religious meaning. The archaic period was also influenced by Egyptian sculptures. Image B is the dying Niobid by an unknown artist. The Dying Niobids context is seen in the influences on the Classical period. There is an increase in wealth through the Delian League and the suppression of its members which resulted in the formation of Athens as an Empire and the use of their wealth to create beauty such as this sculpture in their city. There was an increased sense of confidence and superiority due to earlier Victories in the Persian wars ...*

### Question 4b.

Students showed a very good knowledge of the techniques of each period. However, the question asked students to compare and while all students were able to say how the sculpture was composed, some didn't make any comparative points. Areas of comparison included the frontal versus in the round, body implied versus body explicit, block-like structure versus the use of contrapposto and a chiastic pose. However, some students incorrectly referred to the lost wax method as the construction for the Niobid. The Niobid is a marble statue, not a Roman copy of a lost Greek bronze as with other pieces on the list.

### Question 4c.

Students were able to make some very relevant points about how females (the term used to allow for discussion of immortal beings) were represented in the periods studied. Higher-scoring responses discussed the way the sculptures represented the roles of women, the religious with the Kore, the domestic with the Grave Stele, the vulnerable and victim with the Niobid or the Centaurs and Lapiths. By discussing the roles the sculpture represents, students were able to avoid repeating technique points they made in the previous question. It also enabled students to discuss the views of females that were connected with such representations.

Students must ensure that they have time to discuss the two other sculptures, as required by the question. Often students spent too much time on one of the works on the examination and left themselves time to only make passing references to the other works.

Some students decided to compare the female sculptures to male ones, which was acceptable. This allowed them to discuss concepts such as active versus passive and athlete/hero versus victim representations. However, at times the discussion focused more on the representations of the male form rather than the female, as the question asked. Often students got fixated on the issue of nudity in the works, especially if comparing male and female representations. While a valid point, it did not constitute a complete or comprehensive response.

## Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book 10

### Question 5a.

Students were able to recognise where this passage was from in the examination text. They were able to explain how Jupiter has called a council of the Gods to discuss the war that is playing out before them. Venus argued for the Trojans (Aeneas is her son), while Juno argued for the Latins and Rutulians. Jupiter, sick of their fighting, declared that he would no longer intervene. While the council is taking place the Latins continue their siege of the Trojan fortress, and Aeneas journeys back toward the battle, in ships supplied by Tarcoon. On the voyage back, Pallas sits next to Aeneas, reflecting their father–son relationship. Turnus spots the ships approaching and leads his troops toward the beach to confront them. The Trojans disembark and Pallas rushes into battle.

### Question 5b.

This question enabled students to show their knowledge of the techniques used by Virgil, though many ended up listing the techniques rather than explaining how they were used to enhance plot, characterisation or themes. Careful choice of discussion points is required so as to not repeat ideas in Part c. Most students were able to identify the extended simile, metaphor, direct speech, and the juxtaposition of scenes on earth and the immortal realm. Some students made the error of saying the lion in the extended simile referred to Pallas not Turnus, which affected their whole response. Higher-scoring responses not only identified but were able to explain how the switch in location added to the pathos of the scene and increased tension as we saw the events through the eyes of Hercules.

### Question 5c.

Students realised that this passage was a turning point in the epic, as it was the scene before the death of Pallas that led to Aeneas's ultimate victory over Turnus. Students were able to discuss key ideas such as fate, role and limitations of the gods. Points that were made were ideas such as the killing of Pallas having the immediate effect of stirring anger (and possibly guilt) in Aeneas, who goes on a murderous rampage, and how this rampage showed the dark side of Aeneas. How Jupiter's turning away and not intervening, sealing the fate of Pallas, added to the pathos of the scene but also emphasises how fate can't be avoided but decisions made on the battlefield by the combatants added to their tragedies.

Some students correctly discussed the idea of fathers and sons with reference to the irony in Pallas's comment that father will bear his death well as he died a warrior. This is ironic as Mezentius begs to be buried with Lausus's body at the end of Book 10. However, some students only focused on this, thus limiting their discussion.

## Cicero, *On Duties*, Book 3

### Question 6

No students attempted this question.

## Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

### Question 7a.

The small number of students who undertook this text did a very good job of the passage. Their responses placed it accurately, explaining how Epaphus, the child of Io and Jupiter, taunts Phaethon for the assertion that his father was Apollo. Phaethon challenges his mother (Clymene) who tells him to go to the house of Apollo to ask for proof. Apollo promises to fulfil any request and Phaethon foolishly requests to be allowed to drive his chariot for a day despite Apollo's pleas to change his request. Phaethon takes the chariot but loses control of it and almost sets fire to the whole world. Jupiter sends a thunderbolt to stop him and causes his death as described in the passage.

### Question 7b.

All students were able to identify techniques, though higher-scoring responses explored how they were used by Ovid to create this scene. Students referred to techniques such as tricolon, simile, personification, ecphrasis, hyperbole and irony. High-scoring discussions focused on how the language, such as the adjectives of fire, were used to create pathos through his 'glowing locks' and his 'charred features', as well as the emphasis on grief and the 'vain tributes of tears and lamentations'.

### Question 7c.

Students handled this question in a variety of ways. Some students focused on the general concept of grief in the passage, comparing it to the grief in other sections of the work such as:

- the grief of Inachus for Io
- the grief of Jupiter for Io
- the grief of Apollo for Hyacinthus
- the grief of Venus for Adonis
- the grief of Galatea for Acis.

However, higher-scoring responses analysed and compared the different types of grief that Ovid explored in the stories prescribed for study. These included family grief, female grief, immortal grief and the relationship between grief and metamorphosis. By using such types of grief, students were able to address the command word of 'evaluate' far more effectively and to make references to aspects of the work outside the extract. This allowed students to discuss the universality of grief, the transformative nature of grief and the way Ovid creates pathos for his grieving characters.

## Roman reliefs

### Question 8a.

Students handled the socio-historical aspect of this question well. They were able to clearly identify the time of each relief's creation and explain the reasons for the works. Students explained the marriage ceremony on the sarcophagus and the apotheosis of Titus and when and by whom this work was constructed.

## Question 8b.

The techniques, especially the symbolism in each relief, were described well by students. Discussions of the techniques of high relief with its drapery, Classicising style, scale and perspective and protruding limbs in the sarcophagus and the combination of low relief and some high relief (in the head) on the column were accurately identified. Higher-scoring responses compared the two works, as the question asked for, referring to the difference in purpose and shape of the works, referring to the curved and shadowed nature of the Apotheosis of Titus when compared to the sarcophagus.

## Question 8c.

Students were able to describe in detail what was depicted on the two works and even explored the public versus private nature of both works. The highest-scoring responses worked with the idea of 'how Rome commemorated an individual's life' and why that commemoration was important to this civilisation.

Students needed to explore how reliefs were vital in commemorating a person's life. They might be a visual listing of the achievements of a lifetime, as in the first image, or used to glorify a figure for political advantage, as in the second image.

Students needed to discuss two other reliefs. The choice of comparative reliefs was important as the works that enabled students to compare and contrast the commemoration of an individual's life in the works rather than just describe it added to their response. Works that allowed students to comment on the importance of military imagery in commemorations, both of ordinary individuals and emperors, which show the individual's prowess or their ability to protect the people and defend or expand the empire, were good choices.

The following is an extract from a high-scoring response.

*The depiction of individuals in art was closely linked to their family and role in Roman society. The apotheosis of Titus and the apotheosis of Antonius Pius and Faustina ( 161ce) demonstrates this in the public art and the Roman marriage ceremony and the Tomb of the Haterii demonstrate this in private art. The commemoration of Emperors in public art involved making them look impressive in order to validate the Imperial systems. Both the apotheosis of Tltus and of Antonius Pius and Faustina were commissioned by their successors Domitian and Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus respectively. The 2 reliefs show a difference in third commemoration, however. Titus is the only figure on his relief lifted up to the gods on the back of an eagle symbolizing Jupiter whereas the other apotheosis is about the imperial couple ...The apotheosis of Antonius Pius and Faustina is far more than a mere individuals life but a representation of the glory of Rome through the apotheosis of its leaders...In the Roman Marriage ceremony a couple is shown being married an important part of their life significant to them. In the tomb of the Haterii also form the second century the family matriarch is depicted as a crane symbolizing the family business of building. Thus commemorating the events that matter to them and their family. There is a distinct divide between the way private citizens commemorate their lives as opposed to the Imperial family. The art of private people afforded through the wealth of Rome depicted then as they lived, whereas public art glorified them and the state in a mythological event.*

## Section B – Comparative study

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	1	2	3	7	4	5	5	5	9	11	9	10	10	8	3	5	2	0	0	10.8

Most students were able to write a response that showed an understanding of the topic and the comparative texts. There were some challenging topics this year and most students grappled with the key words and ideas behind the topic effectively. The structure of the essays differed, with some students comparing the

texts in each paragraph while others wrote about the texts individually and then compared. Each format was acceptable if it allowed students to cover all the expected qualities.

Many students had extensive socio-historical knowledge; however, this tended to be used not to support their argument but rather to cover that key skill and knowledge. As a result, there was a lot of irrelevant information that did not add to the discussion of the texts or topic. Students need to take care to include relevant and accurate information. Many students based their discussion of the socio-historical context of *Antigone* on the premise that it, like *Electra*, was performed during the Peloponnesian War. Such inaccuracies meant that many of the points made were not valid. As this was the most popular pairing (with over 40% of students writing on this pair), such errors made some students' essays less successful than students who included accurate details. Students must ensure that if they are quoting historians or critics on the pairing, that the references are relevant to the topic. It should be noted that historians' or critics' quotations are not expected in Classical Studies and are not mentioned in the expected qualities. Students are, however, rewarded for quoting from the texts under study.

Students needed to address the examination topic and not adapt it to a pre-prepared response or the topic they wanted to write on. This was evident in topics such as Question 8, where the ideas of fear and optimism were substituted with the ideas of order and chaos, and in Question 3, when the discussion of pride changed to discussion of loyalty. Higher-scoring responses clearly set up the argument and understanding of the topic in the introduction and used the key words of the essay in their response to ensure the essay answered the topic. All the topics were contentious, yet many students agreed completely and then found it challenging to prove the statement in their discussion. Higher-scoring responses showed that the statements were not always accurate and provided the examples/exceptions that proved this idea.

This is a comparative task, yet there are students who appeared to be more familiar with one text than the other. This leads to an unbalanced essay, with explicit quotes and references for one text and scant and vague references for the other. As the essays are marked holistically using the expected qualities, this can lead to less success for students. Students must look more at the genres and time periods of the text. There are obvious points of comparison between a comedy and a history, or a tragedy and a philosophical dialogue that students should use to help lead into discussion of the techniques of each work.

## Question 1 – Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* and Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*

This was a difficult topic at first glance, partly due to the lack of references to women in Thucydides in comparison to *Lysistrata*. Many students seemed to have wanted a topic on war and its costs and used their introduction to reframe the question. This resulted in responses that skirted the topic instead of addressing it explicitly.

However, students who thought about the question were able to see that the topic was about the people who make the decisions and those who are the victims of those decisions and often how their lack of agency meant there were no solutions. Students either wrote a paragraph on the role of men in creating and solving problems and then one on women and how they didn't create problems or solve them. Some students tackled the topic by discussing those who create problems and then those who solve. *Lysistrata* the character was well used in this second format as she was presented by students as the person who created problems for the men, especially the magistrate, but then was able to solve them. Students who then discussed how *Lysistrata* the play was a farce on the 'solving' of the war by women and Aristophanes' plea to his immediate audience showed a clear understanding of both the genre and the context of the play. Higher-scoring responses were able to use the lack of references to women in Thucydides, except for the Funeral Speech and Corcyra, as an argument for their inability to solve problems. This question enabled students to not only look at the actual events of the Peloponnesian War but also the social expectations on women. Some students showed little awareness of these gender expectations of Classical Athens and critiqued both works with a twenty-first-century outlook. This is not relevant to Classical Studies and students

are instead encouraged to consider the intentions and ideas of the authors who are writing in a particular milieu.

## Question 2 – Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* and Plato, 'Apology'

This topic was handled well by most students, who saw that the topic was to explore the other fates of the characters such as punishment and torture, suffering for others' sins and maintaining their morality or not. Responses that did not score well only discussed the death of the principal characters, which as Prometheus is immortal, was a questionable point. More definition of the term 'death' here was needed. Most students showed excellent knowledge of the texts, using quotes to support their argument. While there were good points made about the techniques of the tragedy, there could have been more on Plato's devices.

Higher-scoring responses used the minor characters in the play, such as Hephaestus, to explore the way that people act in the face of tyranny, which lead into the comparison with Socrates's own actions in the real court of Athens. These students were able to construct an argument around the fact that while both Prometheus and Socrates 'die', they themselves acknowledge and reflect on how that is the least punishment according to their morality.

The socio-historical context of the tragedy itself is debatable, so all valid explanations were accepted when contextualised to the fifth century. The higher-scoring responses not only explored the socio-historical context of Socrates's trial but also showed an understanding of Plato's purpose and perspective in writing the text.

The following is an example of the introduction and a paragraph from a high-scoring response.

*In Prometheus bound and the Apology death is not an outcome to be feared. In both works, Aeschylus and Plato suggest that submitting to forces of injustice is worse than corporal punishment. Meanwhile in the proceedings of justice that the texts present, the accusers are presented with their own terrible fate—that of political instability. In this way Plato and Aeschylus concur that the worst fate of all is submission to injustice*

*As a consequence the writers suggest that those who punish the just will in turn be punished as they too are dealt with fates worse than death. In Prometheus Bound, Prometheus abandons all hope of reconciliation with Zeus and instead awaits his downfall. Aeschylus switches from the conditional to future tense in describing how Zeus will be unseated from his Olympian throne as Prometheus declares he 'shall' fall as a consequence of refusing to release him. Plato presents a different outcome for the Athenian polis as he implies that Socrates' death will undermine the political harmony of the city. As revenge for the death of their mentor Socrates' younger and harsher followers will plague the inhabitants of the polis. Thus in both texts the protagonists' accusers are consigned to punishments that are unnecessary. While Zeus' downfall is predicated as a result of his punishment of the one god who could save him, the Athenian Polis brings hardship in itself by ridding itself of its 'public benefactor'. In this way Plato and Aeschylus present another fate worse than death, as the loss of political stability threatens the established power structures of the texts.*

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

This was the most popular topic, and while most students were able to construct an argument around the idea of pride, only the higher-scoring responses dealt with the key words of 'poison' and 'all'. Students who were able to explore how Electra's pride poisoned her relationships and her perspective as well as exploring the same idea with Creon showed a more sophisticated understanding of the topic. Some students even discussed the ways that if the pride was based on a value system of self-pity this also poisoned the character. Similarly, students who challenged the topic by discussing those characters who weren't poisoned by pride, such as Ismene and the farmer, showed a broader understanding of the texts and the topic. Some students gave lengthy and accurate descriptions of the proud characters, rather than building an argument around the

topic. Students sometimes substituted the concept of hubris for pride, with its more complex meaning than just excessive pride, including the ideas of transgressing against gods and fatal misjudgment. For Creon this was a valid and sophisticated discussion, Antigone transgressed 'man's laws', not those of the gods, so to use hubris was incorrect in this case.

Many students talked about dramatic techniques in general, rather than referring to specific differences to make comparative points, such as the chorus being male or female, the use of the *Deus ex Machina* in one and not the other etc. For example, high-scoring responses were able to refer to how Euripides's use of a 'female' voice in his Chorus, who criticised Electra as much as sympathised with her, added to how the audience viewed her pride as blinding her to assistance and support. This was in contrast to how the 'male' voice of the Chorus in Antigone added to her isolation.

The socio-historical aspect of the texts challenged many students, as did the fact they were both tragedies. Errors in placing *Antigone* during the Peloponnesian War rather than correctly prior to the war meant that students were unable to explore the differences in the Athenian society to whom the plays were performed. Most students were able to refer to the more cynical tone and outcome of *Electra* and how that reflected the time in which it was performed. The dating of *Electra* is varied, but most students did refer to the Sicilian expedition and the war.

Students needed to take more care when discussing Clytemnestra, as many seemed to be writing on the Aeschylean version rather than the Euripidean portrayal. Higher-scoring responses used her well when talking about how Euripides subverted the earlier version to highlight the flaws in his own creations.

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

No students attempted this question.

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

Students who challenged the question prompt from the outset were able to construct more convincing arguments. These students acknowledged the fact that slaves were an oppressed group but dealt with the ideas of 'only', going on to argue that women and non-aristocrats were also oppressed groups. Students often couched their oppression in terms of being treated like 'slaves', in terms of the entrenched dominance of males or the autocratic rule of the emperors. These students showed a great deal of knowledge about Livy and Tacitus, and their perspectives.

There were quite a few responses that appeared to be prepared essays, where connections to the question were added at the beginning and end of the paragraph, but the paragraph itself was not relevant to the topic. For example, a paragraph on Nero that ended with the argument he was oppressed by his mother, or a paragraph arguing that Brutus was good and therefore not oppressed.

The students knew the socio-historical context of the two texts well, though there were some lengthy paragraphs on the socio-historical context in which the relevance of the material was not made clear. Some essays began with biographies of the writers which had little connection to the topic or the following paragraphs.

The following is an example of the introduction and part of a paragraph from a high-scoring response.

*Oppression and tyranny are prevailing themes in Livy in The rise of Rome ( 30-17 BCE) and Tacitus The annals in Imperial Rome ( 109-117CE) of which many members of Roman society fall victim under. AS such slaves were not the only victims but in fact the subject of oppression can vary form those in the upper class households including respectable members of society such as women, senators and everyday plebians. In both historical accounts, highlighting the devastating consequences of excessive*

*power in leadership positions. Furthermore those who serve for the benefit of Rome can also fall victim to oppression of tyrannical rule in systems where absolute power corrupts the perpetrators itself.*

*Both historians depict members of the monarchial or imperial households that fall victim under oppression showing that slaves were not the only ones to suffer. In Livy's the Rise of Rome, Lucretia a respectable women of the upper class household of Collantinus, falls victim under the oppression of kingship. Livy characterizes Sextus Tarquinius, who violates the 'vanquished' Lucretias resolute chastity as depraved and morally bankrupt when he explores Tarquinius evil desire to debauch Lucretia. Clearly demonstrating Lucretia as the victim of oppression through the juxtaposition of her innocence and pudicitia of 'working by lamplight' with Tarquinius 'evilness'. As she is not allowed to utter a word under his sword blade and he threatens to damage her reputation in death by murdering a slave ad putting her next to her. As such Tarquinius is the symbol of corruption and oppression associated with excessive power that the monarchy holds.....In contrast Tacitus believes that Rome's 'sickness' will only exacerbate itself in a vicious cycle as single dynastic rulership without meritocracy is damaging Rome. this is manifested in the evil use of power under Emperor Nero and his mother Agrippina with Agrippina 'inflamed by all the passion of illgotton tyranny, deliberately posing Britannicus as a threat to Nero's throne. Britannicus' speech of his dislocation from the throne 'arousing sympathy' caused jealousy from Nero who ruthlessly murdered Britannicus using unmanly poison. As such similar to Lucretia Britannicus a member of the Imperial or upper-class household falls victim under the oppression of tyrants who mercilessly murder people to maintain their power or to gain it.*

## Question 6 – Suetonius, 'Claudius' and Seneca, *The Apocolocyntosis*

No students attempted this question.

## Question 7 – Pergamon Altar and Trajan's Column

Students had extensive knowledge of both monuments and the techniques used to create them. They were able to clearly articulate the socio-historical context of the works and tried to connect it to the topic.

Significantly, many students changed the topic of this question from fear and optimism to order and chaos. While many of the points made were valid to both topics, students must answer the topic set, not write on one from previous years. This question required students to argue whether the works would reveal optimism or fear to those who viewed them.

Many students did handle the question well, making interesting arguments suggesting that the Atalids were insecure and fearful and used the Altar to legitimise their position. Some students argued that the Romans were afraid of the Dacians, which showed little real understanding of the power dynamic at the time. To the Romans, Trajan's column represents a very famous victory over the enemies who threatened their borders on the river Danube and the conquest of new valuable territory. Hence, it makes them optimistic that the furthest reaches of the Roman imperium were not threatened. Many students accepted that the two monuments were used to create fear, thus not challenging the topic.

The highest-scoring responses explored specific evidence from the monuments to support and enhance their discussions, using techniques to help support their ideas. Students who simply described the monuments struggled to go beyond the most obvious points. Higher-scoring responses considered the overall purpose of the two works and those who commissioned them.

## Question 8 – Aristophanes, *The Acharnians* and Plautus, *The Swaggering Soldier (Miles Gloriosus)*

No students attempted this question.