

2023 VCE Classical Studies external assessment report

General comments

The 2023 VCE Classical Studies examination consisted of two sections.

- Section A – Individual Study: students were asked to answer three questions each on two works they have studied from a selection of eight works, 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 works. Students were given one question for each of the eight pairs of works and were assessed using the published expected qualities on the VCAA website at <https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/classical/ClassicalStudies-crit-descriptors-w.pdf>. These criteria are to be used until December 2024.

Students showed an awareness of the course content and the requirements of the exam. There was obvious knowledge of the works in both sections of the exam with a mixture of both written and material works being referred to by students. Most students attempted both sections of the exam, yet some did struggle with time management and understanding the specific demands / key words of each question. In Section A the responses of many students to the questions about their second individual study were of a lower standard than their responses to the first individual study. This suggests that too much time may have been spent on the first individual study. Students are reminded of the need to have a clear time structure in mind and stick to it. Students should also note that they can do the different sections of the paper in any order, beginning with Section B if they prefer.

There was a tendency for some students to include all the information they knew about a work in their response, regardless of the actual question being asked. So, while they wrote a lot of information, they often failed to address the key words such as grief, pathos and horror in the questions for the Homer passage in Section A. This meant that students who obviously had a strong understanding of the works or material culture didn't always provide relevant discussion. More examination practice and topic analysis during the year could 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 allocated marks. This was particularly evident in part c. of Questions 1–8, where students often were unable to refer to the required number of sculptures/reliefs in the material culture questions or explore the significance of the passage with enough references to the rest of the chosen work. It is advised that students look at past examinations to understand the wording of the questions in this section, where words such as 'significance', 'depictions' and 'representations' are commonly used.

In Section B students also struggled to interpret the questions in a manner that allowed them to construct an argument that enabled them to show their knowledge. Absolute terms such as 'nothing', 'every' and 'complete', or comparative words such as 'more' and 'also', gave students the option of agreeing or disagreeing fully or partially with the question. Students tended to focus on the nouns such as 'decision', 'vengeance' and 'threats', and write an essay illustrating those ideas in the works, rather than constructing an argument as to the extent/degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement about the two works. Students are encouraged to critically examine the questions.

There was a tendency for students to write more on one of the two works, often only allocating a few lines to the second work. Often there was a lack of comparison of the techniques used in the two works. Since analysis of techniques used to express ideas 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.

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 their handwriting often became more difficult to read, reflecting time issues.

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 of more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Individual study

First selection

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	17	38	32	11	2.4

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	4	15	25	30	17	5	3.5

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	5	12	18	21	22	12	6	2	0	5.1

Second selection

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	12	38	34	12	2.4

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	5	18	31	27	12	4	3.3

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	3	5	8	18	20	19	15	7	2	0	5.0

All Greek works had 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 *Suetonius*.

While nearly all students demonstrated sound knowledge of the works, many failed to address the key concepts in the question such as dramatic tension and beliefs of Roman society, and as a result did not fully answer and address the question. High-scoring responses used the wording of the question, such as ‘describe the circumstances that have led to grief in this passage’, to frame their answer and ensured that all discussion came back to the key word.

Questions about techniques allowed students to show their extensive knowledge of techniques such as dramatic irony, digressions, imagery, sculptural symbolism etc. But while students showed that they knew what techniques were employed by the writer or artist, they did not always answer the question, leaving out how these techniques ‘create pathos’ or ‘create horror’. Students must also remember that they are dealing with works in translation, so techniques such as alliteration and punctuation are not rewarded as they are the work of the translator, not the original creator of the work.

The significance/representation in part c. of the questions often had a specific area, such as characterisation or beliefs, for which students were required to look at both the extract/work printed in the examination, and the prescribed work as a whole. This meant that students needed clear and considered references to other sections of the work or other material culture works from the list. Often references to other sections and other material culture works were slight and not always related to the key words of the question. Some students seemed to have pre-prepared supporting examples and used them whether they were relevant or not. For example, using what the reliefs said about the beliefs of Roman society to only discuss war or the imperial system, rather than a variety of beliefs.

Students need to use the reading time efficiently to plan their answers for Section A. Many students considered parts b. and c. for some works to be the same, and thus repeated ideas from the technique question in the significance/representations question. This meant they often did not get to discuss the whole work / other examples.

Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 22

Question 1a.

Students struggled with this question, possibly due to it being very early in Book 22. In fact, many students placed the passage later in the book when Hector decides to face Achilles. The main issue was that students who were able to explain the plot did not always connect it back to the grief of Priam and Hecuba. They needed to explain how the events led to the emotions of Priam and Hecuba. For example, students could have referred to the fact that Hector was waiting for Achilles despite the pleas of both his parents, thus triggering their grief as they knew he would die. Some students talked about how Hector had gone back

outside the walls of Troy despite the pleas of his parents, or said this was after he had been chased around the city three times. Students should be clear as to the order of events in their works.

Question 1b.

High-scoring responses showed understanding of how Homer has created pathos in the passage through his techniques. In such responses students were able to explain how Hecuba's pleas as a mother with the baring of her breast and the repetition of 'my child, dear child' emphasised her future grief when she would mourn her child. The reference to Andromache and the foreshadowing of Priam's horrific death by the 'rushing dogs' was used to illustrate the pathos of the scene, as all who love Hector are helpless to 'shake his fixed resolve'. Many students were able to identify the techniques in the passage, but then did not explain how the suffering and pity for the characters is revealed by those techniques.

Question 1c.

It is important that students read the key words in the question carefully. As this question was very similar to last year's exam question, some students failed to see that it was only about Hector and the significance of his characterisation in Book 22. Some students failed to discuss the way the extract is important to our understanding of Hector in the whole of Book 22, discussing only the passage.

Many students used Hector's adherence to the heroic code/ethos as their starting point, which gave them a chance to explore how his loyalties to the code and family are at odds. Stronger responses were also able to use the references to Achilles in the passage to highlight the character of Hector as a man when compared to the god-like Achilles. However, some students then wrote more on Achilles than on Hector himself. Students had to refer to specific events in the rest of Book 22 rather than generic statements such as 'Hector loses his nerve but then decides to fight.'

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The characterisation of Hector in this extract defines his conflicting duties between city, glory and family, while showcasing his heroic excellence, making it a significant extract in the book as a whole. 'The fixed resolve of Hector' repeated in the passage foreshadows the bravery the hero will return to as he flees an oncoming Achilles. Hector loses his chances of dying his fateful death gloriously. Tricked by Athena the Trojan hero becomes the brave man he once was, the 'helmet flashing' a symbol of his heroic characteristics seen within this passage, which foreshadows his later actions (facing Achilles head on). The extract conveys the concerns of both Priam and Hecuba, which represent Hector's duty to the city and his family. This lament justifying his internal conflict following the extract 'no way out. thanks to my reckless pride'. This constant conflicting duty the hero faces is a reoccurring motif throughout the book, confirming its significance. Hecuba mentions Hector's wife Andromache 'generous woman' alluding to how Hector is a family man as well as hero of Troy. This showcasing of his wife is a foreshadow of the grief she feels at the end of Book 22; 'it was you Hector ... who shielded us from the long wall of Troy', a confirmation that Hector in the Iliad was the city's last hope. Bookended by Priam's grief 'all wounds are a mark of glory' his cries in the work's conclusion depict the responsibilities and excellence of Hector. His characterisation in this extract holding deep gravity to book 22 in its entirety.

Herodotus, *The Histories*

Question 2a.

Most students were able to describe Croesus's rise to power, the questioning of Solon and the oracle of Delphi. Stronger responses explored how this scene fitted into the Croesus narrative arc because it is the end of the logos.

Question 2b.

Students tended to focus on a small range of techniques such as direct speech and foreshadowing. While this is correct, it limited their discussion and led to repetition. Stronger responses pointed at the tension created by the delay of the death by conversation and even the comedic impact of the attempts to put out the fire. They also looked at the irony of the moment of self-realisation of Croesus, which gave him an almost tragic quality.

Question 2c.

Students had many examples that they could use to explore the overall characterisation of Croesus. Stronger responses explored how his overreaching and fatal misjudgements were used to create both a sense of tragedy and comedy. Discussion of Croesus's tendency to ignore advice, citing the evidence from Solon and Apollo, was used by students to show how his understandings are distorted, leading to his downfall. Thus stronger responses were able to show how there is an inevitability in Croesus's downfall, as his character consistently led him to make fatal decisions.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

Question 3a.

Most students were able to identify that this passage occurs after the Watchman's speech, though few identified it as the end of the first choral entry song. Students were able to refer to the events described in the play before this passage, such as the crimes of Helen and Paris that lead to the 10-year war, and the demands of Artemis. Stronger responses also noted that Clytemnestra was already present making offerings to the gods.

Question 3b.

Many students struggled with this question as, while they knew the techniques, they did not connect them to the way they create dramatic tension. The imagery of the 'glance' simile and the yearling depicting the innocence of Iphigenia and the violence being done to her is an example of the drama created in this speech. The description of her saffron gown pouring on the sand, as her life blood was about to, is another example well used by students. Some students did not use the whole passage, stopping at the end of the choral ode. The exchange between the Leader and Clytemnestra gave students a chance to discuss how the Chorus's lack of understanding of her meaning, and their misreading of her, adds to the tension for the audience as they know what is to come. Some responses showed an awareness of audience and were able to incorporate that into their answers.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

As the men hoist Iphigenia onto the altar for her death, Aeschylus portrays the tense mood of her sacrifice with his similes describing her 'glance like arrows showering wounding every murderer with pity'. By demonstrating how the men are forced to sacrifice an innocent woman, feeling sorrow for their actions, Aeschylus demonstrates how 'murderers' do not wish to act in such a way, thus establishing dramatic tension as they are forced to kill by Agamemnon. Aeschylus portrayal of Iphigenia's past with nostalgic language, reminiscing over how she used to sing 'over the feast, her voice unbroken', suggests that there was once a time of peace for the young girl, a time in which the men who are now ordered to kill her were present. In this way, the sharp contrast between the previous beauty of her voice and the fact she is now gagged further creates tension in this scene as she is unable to escape her sacrifice. Just as they are about to reveal how Iphigenia died, the Chorus cut off their portrayal of the past declaring 'what comes next? I cannot see it', leaving the audience wondering as to how she is killed. In this way Aeschylus brings the extract to its climax only to move to the present, thus building dramatic tension. As the Chorus

now addresses Clytemnestra, the playwright portrays their uneasy natures with honouring their queen, declaring 'we're loyal, we want to hear, but never blame your silence'. As such they seem to conform to her every wish, unsure of where to turn to please her, thus finalizing the tension in this passage.

Question 3c.

As the choral entrance song and part of the first interaction between the Chorus and Clytemnestra, this extract sets up many of the ideas, symbolism and characterisations that are borne out in the rest of the play. The conflict between the vengeance cycle and the 'Justice which turns the balance scales' was one of the ideas explored well by students. They were able to explain how the murder of Iphigenia was a trigger/justification for Clytemnestra's later actions. Stronger responses used evidence such as how her power over the kingdom that was hinted at by the Watchman is shown in her sarcasm to the Chorus, asking 'Is that clear enough?'. They often went on to discuss how her characterisation as 'a single-minded queen' clearly sets her up as the driving force for the rest of the play's action. The symbolism of fate seen in 'the gag, the flowing robes', which is later reflected in the carpet scene and the nets of doom, was also discussed by students. Some students did not refer to specific events from elsewhere in the play and thus did not fully answer the question.

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 work, despite it being a similar question to that of 2022. Students this year were asked to **describe** rather than **identify**. Many students could not name the works correctly, or give their artistic period and the period's date, which was the minimum needed. Higher-scoring responses referred to the influence of culture, such as Egyptian, on the kouros and the encouragement of the arts by politicians such as Pisistratus. The role of the influence of the Athenian Empire's increasing wealth and Pericles' citizenship laws on the grave Stele could also be discussed.

Question 4b.

With image A being free standing and image B being a relief sculpture, students were given clear comparative points from which to answer this question. Yet while students were able to discuss the techniques used in each statue, many failed to make comparative points beyond one being naked and the other using drapery. Those who did successfully compare made reference to the Kouros statue being in the round v. the limitations of the stele due to its being a relief, the archaic schema v. the more 'life-like' depictions in the stele, classical elements such as contrapposto and chiastic pose in the stele v. the stiffness and formality of the Kouros. Students studying material cultures need to be able to go beyond a list of techniques, to being able to use the techniques for a discussion of style and periods.

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

The Aristodikos kouros displays a more advanced use of techniques than what Archaic period sculptures typically displayed, owing to its sculpting at the very end of the Archaic period. Hegeso's grave stele, contrarily bears the typical hallmarks of a Classical period sculpture.

The Aristodikos kouros has a stiff unnatural posture with the legs positioned one in front of the other without a bend in the knee or a twist in the hips. In contrast to this, the depiction of Hegeso and the unnamed servant are more realistic, demonstrating natural posture with loose shoulders and bent knees. Hegeso's grave steel also displays more advanced facial techniques, as Hegeso's line of sight is clear, and her face is serene. The Aristodikos, while not as prominent as other statures from its period, has the archaic smile characterized by almond eyes and a rigidly carved mouth. Finally the two statues have

been carved in different styles. The Aristodikos kouros is carved in the round complete from all sides and Hegeso's grave stele has been carved in relief.

Question 4c.

The word 'commemorated' in the question did seem to baffle a lot of students, who struggled to see that it went beyond celebrating a person who had died, into celebrating someone who had achieved something or done something of merit. Many students ended up repeating points they had made in Question 4b. rather than looking at what the sculptures were saying about the achievements that the society valued enough to commemorate in its art.

The choice of the comparative works was important. Students who used the Zeus/Poseidon and talked about depictions of gods missed the point of the question being about individuals, whereas students who used the Moschophoros to discuss the role of sacrifice in the lives of mortals to worship their gods made a better choice. Students who chose sculptures from different artistic periods and male and female, such as the Peplos Kore and the Discobolus, gave themselves far more scope to show their understanding of the material culture works. 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 the works on the exam paper and left themselves with only enough time to make passing references to the other works.

Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book 12

Question 5a.

Students had a lot to discuss in this question as the passage is near the end of Book 12, and they showed excellent textual knowledge. Students covered how Aeneas and Turnus had met in single combat to decide the outcome of the war after signing a treaty. Strong responses identified how Juturna breaks this treaty, encouraged by Juno, and the battle resumes. Juturna takes Turnus away from the battle, though he asks to be allowed to fight. The reconciliation between Jupiter and Juno allowing Aeneas to be victorious was just prior to the start of this passage. Strong responses discussed how these events were the build-up to the events of the extract.

Question 5b.

The key to this question was the idea of horror and how it was created by the techniques. Some students had a clear understanding of the techniques and were able to list them, but were not able to explain how they led to the horror in the passage. Stronger responses were able to discuss how the imagery/description of the Furies, with their multiple heads covered in coiling snakes, and their origin story added to the horror of the passage, as Virgil makes it clear that the Dirae/Furies are frightful and otherworldly. This unsettling feeling is further exacerbated by the description of the bird attacking Turnus's face, 'screeching and beating his shield with her wings', which creates a sense of unrelenting horror. Finally, the 'strange numbness' that Turnus feels shows the impact of the horror on the hero.

Many students used the words 'fear' or 'terror' instead of 'horror' in their discussion. Thus, they did not precisely answer the question, as they discussed the reaction to the horror, not how the horror was created.

Question 5c.

This question required students to look at the characterisation of both the gods and Turnus in the passage and the whole book. Some students only discussed the gods or Turnus and therefore did not fully answer the question. Stronger responses were able to connect the depiction of the gods and the characterisation of Turnus as a victim of their decisions and fate.

Higher-scoring responses were able to see how Turnus is characterised as a victim when Juno gives up her support of him, despite his nobility and heroism. In Book 12 Turnus is also portrayed as consumed by fury that leads him to his destiny and his tragedy. He is described as the lesser hero through the imagery of his fear in this passage and references by characters such as Latinus to Turnus's youth, implying that he is not worthy enough to defeat Aeneas. Yet at the end of Book 12 he fights bravely and honourably, which stands in contrast to the dishonour of the gods who deserted him.

Suetonius, *Life of Nero*

Question 6

No students attempted this question.

Catullus *The Complete Poems*

Question 7

No students attempted this question.

Roman reliefs

Question 8a.

Most students were able to clearly describe the two reliefs, explaining the characters and actions being portrayed. Some students did however start discussing the symbolism of the scenes, which was information better suited to Question 8b. A few students only named the reliefs, often not using the title of Relief B that is listed in the prescribed works list, which is 'Arch of Constantine: *adlocutio* and *suovetaurilia*'. High-scoring responses were able to clearly describe what was happening in these two scenes. Stronger responses made the observation that part of the Tellus panel was not shown, reflecting a very good knowledge of the work.

Question 8b.

Some students used the difference in purpose of the two works to frame their response. Techniques such as symbolism and naturalism were in both, though some students made the distinction between the idealism of the Tellus panel through its depiction of the divine figure v. the more realistic portrayal of figures in the reliefs from the Arch of Constantine. Other techniques that were discussed included the use of *contrapposto*, high relief and narrative composition. Students also referred to the use of *spolia* in Image B as a distinguishing difference in the two works. Yet while most students were able to discuss the techniques used in each relief, some failed to compare the techniques in the works, which was the core of the question.

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

Both the Tellus Panel and the Adlocutio/Suovetaurilia use extensive symbolism. In image A the sow and the ox as well as the abundance of fruit symbolize the agricultural prosperity of 27 BCE under the Pax Romana under the Augustan principate 27-17BCE. On the other hand the reliefs in image B use more military symbolism through the military standards which are carved in low relief in the background. These standards symbolize Rome's military might and power made possible under Marcus Aurelius/Constantine. Both reliefs are created in the classicist style. In image A, the drapery of the chiton folds over the outline of the body of both Tellus and the left nymph reflecting the natural depictions of the human form. Further the balanced composition adds to the classicizing style as it creates an almost triangular shape here the viewers eyes are drawn toward Tellus the central figure. Similarly, classicism is used via drapery in Constantine's toga to outline his body through the folds. However, a difference is that Image A uses

allusion. The Nymph on top of the dragon alludes to Mark Antony's submission to Augustus in 31BCE. Whereas both reliefs in Image B use spolia. By remodelling/recarving the face of Marcus Aurelius to Constantine, the relief has been reused. This thereby places Constantine in the life of a good emperor suggesting his leadership will mirror that of Marcus Aurelius.

Question 8c.

Students needed to identify the ideas contained in 'beliefs' that they were going to discuss and then look at both the two reliefs in the exam and two others from the 2023 Classical works list to illustrate these beliefs. Students explored a range of beliefs, from the role of the military and the Emperor, to the family, the greatness of Rome and Augustan ideology and Pietas and religious beliefs. If students set up what belief/s they were going to discuss it gave their response a framework that prevented them from repeating ideas from Question 8b. The careful choice of two further reliefs was important as the works chosen needed to enable students to evaluate different depictions of beliefs rather than just describe two other works. Some students only managed to talk about the reliefs in the exam and thus didn't complete the question as required.

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
%	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	6	7	9	8	12	13	9	10	7	5	3	3	1	0	11.3

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic and the two works studied. Most students were able to deal with the key words and ideas behind the topic. Students are allowed to agree, disagree or partly agree with the topic. Many students who took the topics as fact struggled to construct a convincing argument. The structure of the essays differed, with some students comparing the works in each paragraph while others wrote about the works individually and then compared them. Both formats were 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 address that key skill and knowledge. As a result, there was a lot of irrelevant information that did not add to the discussion of the works or topic. Students need to take care to include relevant and accurate information for both works. Students should make any points about the context of the works, be it social, historical or genre, relevant to their comparison of the two works as well. For example, whether *Lysistrata*, which was performed to an audience during the Peloponnesian War, has an immediacy when compared to Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which was written to be reflected on. 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.

Students often failed to support their discussion of the ideas of the works with specific references to techniques. Sentences such as 'Antigone is stubborn and headstrong in her decisions' would have been improved with reference to techniques and specific quotes. For example, 'Antigone's constant reference to herself and her values, for example "All these would say what I did was honourable", reflects her stubborn belief in the right of her decisions'. In doing so, students would be able to cover more fully the expected qualities with little additional writing.

Students needed to address the examination topic and not adapt it to a pre-prepared response or a topic they wanted to write on. Focusing only on the nouns in the questions such as 'suffering, contempt, consequences' can lead students to ignore the angle of the question that is contained in the absolute terms such as 'nothing' or the comparative terms 'more complex'. All the topics were contentious, and 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 still students who appear more familiar with one work than the other. This leads to an unbalanced essay, with explicit quotes and references for one work 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.

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

This was a very accessible topic, which allowed students to explore how the two works portray the Peloponnesian war and explain the differences between the works. Students did deal well with the ideas, with most focusing on the cause and cost of war. They discussed the cost of war in terms of the loss of life and morality and the impact this had on Greek society. Some students embedded the role women played in war in their discussion, for example, comparing the active involvement of women in the Corcyra civil war to *Lysistrata*'s major role in bringing peace.

Yet by focusing only on the ideas that were similar, students didn't give themselves enough scope to discuss the differences. Many students glossed over the clause 'are different in every way', which was in the question, dismissing it with a brief reference to genre. Specific discussion of the purpose, style and techniques of the two works allowed students to explore how similar themes were treated so differently. Many essays, for example, managed to talk about Aristophanes' depiction of the war with little specific references to the types of humour, such as farce and slapstick, involved in his work. Some essays did discuss Thucydides' use of speeches, facts and hearsay as the way he depicted the war. As a result, the essays were not fully comparative.

Purpose was also an idea that few students dealt with. There is an immediacy in the play as it is performed to an audience of people who have suffered and are suffering from the war, whereas Thucydides' work was, in his own words, '... not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of the immediate public but done to last forever'. Higher-scoring responses were able to discuss how this difference in purpose impacted the depiction of the war as well.

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

Many students found it hard to deal with all the key words of the question. Most had ideas about revenge and justice and how there are conflicts with people's perceptions of their actions in both works. Students could confidently talk about the vengeful characters of Zeus and Socrates' accusers, who actually don't appear in the works. They could explore the agendas of these characters that desire vengeance rather than justice. More confident responses also discussed the sense of justice in Socrates and Prometheus. A few students used the terms justice and vengeance interchangeably, which did mean their arguments were not clear.

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 work. Comments made about the context of Aeschylus, such as that Aeschylus fought at Marathon, needed to be tied more to the play. For example, how Aeschylus' pride in his part in Athens' fight against the Persian tyrant at Marathon is reflected in Prometheus' pride in his knowledge that one day Zeus will be defeated.

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

Aeschylus and Plato both find that under tyranny justice is not justice, rather it is simply a search for vengeance. However, the two authors display a very different kind of tyranny and a very different version of vengeance and injustice. For Plato the idea of tyranny leading to injustice and vengeance is reflected in the leaders of the democracy reflecting the socio- historic context in the democracies of Plato's time.

*Socrates sarcastic invective describing Meletus, a leader of a democracy, as 'high principled and patriotic' represents his tyranny. He is able to utilise the democracy as a tyrannical object in order to settle a score. This idea is further evoked by Socrates' personification of Truth through his statement 'Truth will condemn (Meletus) of depravity and injustice'. There is also great tyranny in the democracy itself as described through the catalogue of ways in which Socrates describes how they come to a decision, 'envy, love of slander...(and) merely passing on what they have been told by others'. These tyranny of democracy and its leaders evidently leads to justice only being centred around revenge. This can be seen through the treatment of Socrates. Socrates is hated and put on trial not because he has done wrong but because the jury has been convinced by Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, a play which mocked Socrates during his time, and through Socrates' connections with the 30 tyrants. They convict him because they hate him for his connections. Furthermore, as displayed by his ironic praying 'by dog', when he means by god, his charges are completely unjust in and of themselves because he is not an atheist. As with Plato, Aeschylus finds that tyranny often leads to injustice rather than justice and often it leads to justice simply being about revenge. However the tyranny is not that of democracy, but rather it is the tyranny of a dictatorship and the vengeance and injustice is different. Tyranny can be seen through Zeus who literally uses Strength and Violence personified to rule within the play. Equally, he has a metaphorical 'rule of might'. In any case, his version of justice is not justice but rather a search for vengeance. Prometheus is punished for 'transgressing right' and going beyond Zeus' rule.*

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

This was the most popular topic, and successful responses considered the process of decision-making and what hurdles, both external and internal, characters had to overcome. Some students struggled to construct an argument that dealt with the reasons why the decisions men and especially women make are difficult in the times of the play. Students were better positioned for success if they considered the process of decision-making and what hurdles, both external and internal, had to be overcome. Most students did construct arguments about the roles of men and women in society and how that influenced their ability to make decisions. They looked at how, for *Antigone*, her role as a woman and the expectations of her part in the burial of her brother are different to the expectations of Creon, who is trying to regain stability for Thebes. This worked for Sophocles, but when students tried to apply the same framework to Euripides they struggled. They did not explore how Euripides is subverting the expectations of women through *Electra* as she illustrates the conflicts of women who are excluded or unable to act or live as they wish. Whereas Orestes, who has the expectations of the avenger placed on his shoulders, struggles to complete his purpose.

Some students talked about the difference in agency between men and women, as women are expected to stay in the female spaces of birth, death and marriage and not enter the polis or political spheres of men. Higher scoring responses then argued that this meant that women had to often be manipulative to achieve the outcome of their decisions, which adds a level of complexity to their actions. A few students only focused on the decisions made by women and thus failed to fully answer the topic.

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. With *Antigone*, students needed to refer more to the fact it was written in a time of relative peace in 441 BCE, though the fear of the return of tyrants and conflicting loyalties to state and family are reflected in the play.

Question 4 – Cicero, ‘First and Second Catilinarians’ and Sallust, ‘Catiline’s War’

No students attempted this question.

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

Students tended to agree completely with the premise of the topic, often disregarding the external threat to Rome in one sentence in their introduction. While it is possible to agree, disagree or partly agree with a topic, students do need to give their reasons if they go completely for or against a topic. This led to many essays becoming a list of examples of internal threats rather than a discussion of which was the ‘greatest’, as required by the topic.

Many students wrote versions of essays they seemed to have done before, with lengthy discussion of the women such as Tullia and Agrippina as examples of a threat to the greatness of Rome with their immorality and plotting against the leaders of the Empire. There were also discussions of the infighting over succession and the tensions between class that threatened the political and moral structure of Rome. Some students discussed the internal threats to Rome and then looked at those people such as Brutus and Corbulo as people who saved or at least tried to save Rome from its destructive leaders. This was a valid idea, but needed to be tied more to the idea of whether this was an internal or external threat. Student could have used the external threats to Rome seen in the constant wars, as the backdrop for the actions of those who threaten the internal stability, as the power of the Empire was shaped by the wars it fought. So that even when an Emperor murdered his mother the institution of the Imperial system stood firm.

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

Livy’s The Rise of Rome. Written in 29-14 BCE, and Tacitus’ The Annals of Imperial Rome, written in 109-117CE, agree that the greatest threat to Rome are internal rather than external. Tacitus, having experienced the paranoid leadership of Domition from 81-96AD, views the largest threat as imperial dynastic rule. Whereas for Livy having lived through civil war such as the battel of Actium, he views the largest threat to Rome as civil war. Although despite these differences, internal threats in both Livy’s and Tacitus’ Rome stem from the abuse of power. This involves abuse of political power; however it extends to ideological power when women have too much influence over Roman men. However, both historians also explore the external threats which Rome faces. This includes wars with foreign enemies. But these threats do not materialize, due to Roman leadership where characters exemplify traits of bravery and manliness in the face of conflict. Thus thereby supports the view that despite internal threats, Rome remains the greatest Empire in the world, unable to be defeated via external forces.

Question 6 – Juvenal *Satires* and Petronius *Dinner with Trimalchio*

The students who answered this question grappled with the idea of ‘fellow Romans’, clearly identifying that this meant mainly freed men and women, but the idea also referred to the emperors Nero and Domitian. They were able to provide clear examples of the way both writers ridicule these groups through techniques such as the absurd displays of wealth of Trimalchio and the offensive and demeaning language that Juvenal uses to refer to women, which makes clear his disrespect for this section of Roman society. However, the students tended to accept the word ‘contempt’ as a given: they did not explore whether the works were contemptuous or, in the case of Petronius, more comical. A discussion of the purpose of the two works would have helped tease out this idea, as many students wrote as if the two authors were personally contemptuous of their fellow Romans rather than what their works were saying about these people.

Question 7 – Pergamon Altar and Trajan’s Column

Students tended to ignore the concept of indifference in this topic and wrote detailed essays exploring the depiction of suffering in the two monuments. The essays reflected extensive knowledge of both monuments and the techniques as well as the socio-historical context of the works. Yet many students’ discussions skirted the topic rather than specifically addressing it. Students tended to focus on the representations of the victims rather than the depictions of the victors and how they showed indifference to those they were defeating. It could be argued that in Trajan’s Column the Dacians are presented as worthy foes to reinforce the victory of the Romans and therefore little indifference is shown, whereas in the altar the highly dramatic depictions of the pain of the giants and the lack of emotion on the faces of the gods did show indifference.

Stronger responses used specific examples from the monuments rather than generalised statements to highlight the students’ points. Comments such as ‘the giants on the eastern frieze depict great suffering’ needed to be more specific as to how the suffering is shown, e.g. ‘Alkyonos’ left leg extends outwards, crossing over Athena’s striding form. His face, with its wrinkled brow and open mouth, exaggerates his suffering.’ This observation enabled the student to clearly connect Athena’s focus on victory and her indifference to the suffering she was causing as she ‘strode across the battle’.

Question 8 – Virgil *The Aeneid* Book 4 and Euripides *Medea*

Very few students attempted this question. Those who did tended to focus on the consequences for Dido in *The Aeneid*, and the children and Glauce in *Medea*, rather than exploring the idea of ‘consequences for all’. In *The Aeneid* in particular, students could have looked at the impact on the peoples of Rome and Carthage of this mythological story in the wars to come. It could be argued that the consequences for Medea, with her murder of her children, though being a pyrrhic victory, are less severe than those on the people around her.

Most students did try to explain why there was a lack of understanding between the genders. They were able to give evidence supporting the idea that Jason did not understand Medea and that his arrogance led to Medea’s ability to cause such destruction. They tended to struggle more with Aeneas. His lack of understanding could be argued to be more due to his destiny, as it is stated that ‘he struggles with his desire to calm and comfort her’. The difference in the nature of the misunderstandings and the consequences was a point that students could have developed more.

The genre difference of the works and their different socio-historical context, while referred to by most students, could have been extended. Discussions of the dramatic techniques in the tragedy compared to those of the epic could have given students more scope to address the key words of the topic.