



2004 Classical Societies and Cultures Examination GA3: Written Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The overall impression received from this year's papers was one of confidence. Most students explicitly addressed the criteria, particularly in Section A of the examination. There was still some confusion about the distinction between ideas, issues, values and techniques; for example, in phrases such as 'the technique of pollution' and 'the technique of Roman values'. The majority of students divided their time according to the distribution of marks; however there were still a number of papers where the analyses and the essay were the same length. As always, there were some very short papers where students appeared to be unprepared, but there were a corresponding number of outstanding responses, particularly to the Greek art essay, that were impressive to read. The influence of the film *Troy* was apparent in some responses, for example '*Homer's Iliad was set in the C13 BC, a time when the Greek empire was expanding*'. '*The language Homer uses in this play is very descriptive and graphical particularly of the fighting battles. When Paris Hektor's brother, shoots Achilles in the ankle with an arrow and kills him he uses very descriptive elements of writing*', was the most obvious, given that this scene is not even in the *Iliad* let alone the passage provided. Students should be reminded that they are studying the text not just the story.

The major reasons for students not scoring well were discursive responses and misunderstanding of criterion 3 (importance to the whole work) of Section A, or a poor choice of essay topic at Section B. There were still some students who included historical context in Section A and others who left it out of Section B. Fortunately, very few students compared two prescribed or two non-prescribed texts this year.

There were many responses that relied on 'English style' answers for both Section A and Section B, possibly a reflection of the popularity of *Oedipus* as a choice of text to write on. Such responses concentrated on interpreting the characters' words and actions, rather than explicitly identifying and explaining the ideas being explored and supporting the analysis with quotes. Students need to understand the difference between a discursive English response and the textual analysis required for Classical Societies and Cultures.

Expression was a minor problem this year. Spelling was also still an issue, for example 'sinbyl', 'litriture', 'simily', 'shovenistic', 'aincent', 'sophrasene', 'Peracles' and 'agonisation', as was inaccuracy. Statements like '*Hector had to choose a short glorious life rather than a long boring one*', '*Oedipus grandfather killed Oedipus marrying his wife and having two sons*', '*[The mosaic is] somehow distorted by the image of one of the characters putting two straws up his nose and with two fellow actors looking on – one startled the other laughing*' and '*Trojan Women performed in approximately 415 BC... and written shortly after the capture of Troy*' are problematic at the end of a year's study. Students should also be discouraged from inserting gratuitous esoteric Greek or Latin terms into their responses; for example, '*In [the Iliad] we see multiple themes and values...value and revenge for the kaloskathos (combative warrior)...the remorse and despair of the warriors death is felt throughout the oikos and especially the genos...this barbaric act is seen as entirely disrespectful and in violation of the rules of physis (rules of the universe). Achilles excessive behaviour is caused by his rapacious sparagmos (blood lust)*'.

The most popular Greek option was *Iliad 22*, followed by *Oedipus*, *Crito*, Greek architecture and *The Frogs*. The most popular Roman text was *Aeneid*, followed by *Annals*. There were few responses on the mosaics, *Phaedra* or *The Satires*. There was even more concentration on the epics this year, and fewer Greek/Roman combinations.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section A

First Question Chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	0	56	19	2	4	1	12	0	5	0	0

Second Question Chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	1	6	43	10	15	5	4	0	14	1	1



Students need to be reminded that Section A requires a literary or art analysis that looks at the works **aside from** their historical context. It is an opportunity to appreciate the works for their own sake rather than as the cultural products from a particular society. A discussion relevant to, and focusing on, the passage/work was required.

A number of students began their analyses, very impressively, with a list of the main ideas, issues and values which they then went on to discuss more fully, and/or an explicit attempt to state the importance of the passage to the work as a whole. Some still used up valuable time with redundant information, for example historical context or plot summaries, for which there is no criterion in Section A.

There was still a tendency in the weaker responses to retell the story, summarise the passage, or describe the artworks, leaving the reader to identify ideas, techniques and the importance of the passage/artwork to the whole work/style. Students need to be actively taught the difference between a summary, a comprehension exercise and an analysis. Most students quoted from the passages or referred to specific details, but not always to support their analysis. The following comment, for example, is descriptive rather than analytical, with quotes forming part of the response rather than being used to support a point being made about ideas or techniques in the passage: *‘The passage begins with “Nero had long desired to drive in the forum chariot races” and ends with “here every form of immorality competed for attention and no chastity modesty or vestige of decency could survive”’.*

Students should be encouraged to underline and annotate passages/artworks both throughout the year and on the examination paper, which should help to keep them focussed on that passage or artwork and to identify relevant ideas, issues, values and techniques. Practising passages from unseen works is a valuable form of preparation, both to encourage students to work from that passage or artwork and to give them the confidence to rely on their skills rather than their memories.

Less appropriate responses tended to:

- summarise the whole work/style with reference to the passage/artwork
- narrate/describe rather than analyse
- be implicit rather than explicit
- **identify** ideas, issues, values, aesthetic qualities and especially techniques, rather than **explain** them
- use quotes as the discussion or as identification of a technique rather than to support the analysis
- discuss ongoing significance, or significance to classical society, rather than the importance of the passage to the whole work
- contain redundant information that does not ‘work’ for the criteria, for example, socio-historical context.

More appropriate responses tended to:

- focus on the passage, then link to the whole work
- **analyse** rather than **describe**
- be explicit rather than implicit
- explain ideas, issues, values, aesthetic qualities and techniques
- use quotes to support discussion
- discuss the importance of the passage to the whole work or the relationship of the artwork to its style
- use all information to ‘work’ for the criteria, for example, by combining ideas, techniques and importance.

Criterion 1. Knowledge of ideas, issues, values, and/or aesthetic qualities in the passage/work.

First Question Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	0	1	8	30	38	22	3.7

Second Question Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	2	11	33	32	20	3.5

All of the following counted toward this criterion:

- identification and explanation of ideas, issues, values and/or aesthetic qualities specific to the passage/work
- use of quotes and specific references to support analysis
- inclusion of relevant historical context only if applicable to the ideas in the passage/work, for example, for Crito or Tacitus.



Criterion 2. Analysis of techniques used to emphasise ideas, issues, values and/or aesthetic qualities in the passage/work.

First Question Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	6	17	36	25	14	3.2

Second Question Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	9	23	35	21	9	2.9

Correct identification, explicit explanation of the impact of the technique and consistent use of supporting quotes counted toward this criterion.

Most students focussed on what the author/artist had done to achieve the effect produced by the passage/work. This year, more students attempted to explicitly identify techniques, though not always accurately or with relevance to the point being made. For example, ‘*The use of satiate implies criminal qualities, forcing the reader to consider Nero’s actions as inhumane*’ or ‘*Homer uses such techniques like nature based similes “like a dog” and direct speech “my ears never hear such a thing” epithets “swift footed Achilles” and symbolism “Achilles shield” to support the notion that the greatest suffering came from the separation of loved ones*’.

‘Language’, without some descriptor such as ‘vivid’ or ‘emotive’, is not of itself a technique. Descriptive statements such as ‘Tacitus begins (quote) ... continues to write (quote) ... goes on to write (quote) ...ends (quote)’ only imply that the structure of the passage is a relevant technique, but leaves the analysis up to the reader. There were some, but not many, very inappropriate statements about techniques, for example, ‘*Sophocles uses different techniques such as words highlighted in italics*’ and ‘*Another technique that is often used in this passage [Crito] is the placing of the question mark*’. It should also be noted that alliteration need not be identified in works that are English translations, such as in, ‘*Flat the fields, flattens the crops*’ is a great use of the letter “f”’.

Criterion 3. Evaluation of the importance of the passage to the work as a whole, or of the work to its cultural form.

First Question Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	10	26	31	21	9	2.9

Second Question Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	10	26	30	20	8	2.7

The majority of students attempted an explicit response to this criterion, usually in an introduction or a conclusion. A number of students, though, still confused the importance to the whole work or style with importance to the society, or with the ‘ongoing significance’ criterion of the Catalogue. For example, ‘*The annals is the most important text of its time and today we use it as evidence of how the Romans lived*’ and ‘*In conclusion Homer’s skills... serve to make the retelling of this tale unique and also explains many values (present in book 22) of Greek society which are evident to modern audiences as well as Homer’s contemporaries*’. A number used valuable time to unnecessarily cover importance to the society and ‘ongoing significance’ as well as importance to the work as a whole. Comments such as ‘found throughout the book/play/dialogue’ without supporting evidence, such as references to other parts of the text, do not really fulfil the requirements of criterion 3. Neither do summaries of the work, or statements such as ‘this passage is significant because it has...’ (a list of ideas, issues and values in the passage).

Explicit comments about the importance of the passage/work, and references to specific intratextual (as distinct from intertextual) links to support the analysis were characteristic of the better responses. The following are good examples:

If this passage were not here, the dramatic emphasis would not have been able to be placed on Andromache’s mourning. Instead a vital moment of displaying the consequences that Hector’s death has had on family would have been [lost] and some degree of emotion could not have been felt by the listener or reader. (After comparison with book 6) It is not until the end of book 22 that the impact of Hector’s death on the family has become particularly emphasised.

It is from the initial conversation between Crito and Socrates...[It can be] seen in this passage that Plato is able to set up a Socratic dialogue...This passage found in Crito...sets up the characterisation of Socrates that is continued throughout the dialogue...also initiates the condemnation of ‘most people’.

...allows the audience to see the differences in the writing [style] between Aeschylus and Euripides which is the whole point of the second act of the play. It would appear that this passage informs the audience that Euripides is not the poet to save them and that Dionysus is starting to feel that way as well.



Students could be encouraged to think about:

- the impact on the whole work if the passage wasn't there
- the importance of the passage to the plot; characterisation; and ideas, issues, values, techniques and aesthetics of the whole work.

Similarly, art students could think about how typical the work is of:

- the subject matter
- the ideas
- the techniques associated with the style it represents.

Section B

Essay Chosen	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	1	20	10	5	22	5	0	3	6	2	27

The most popular essays were 10, 4 and 1, followed by 2, 8, 5 and 7.

Choice of an appropriate question to suit the pair of texts that have been prepared for the essay is crucial, especially for the relevance criteria. For example, for Question 4 students struggled to make an Oedipus/Bacchae comparison that focussed on war. In Question 10 it was necessary to explain what a true hero was and to demonstrate why the chosen characters could be considered heroes, before exploring whether their heroism was a result of accepting the consequences of their actions or due to other factors. Many who wrote about Socrates forgot to do so, and those who chose to discuss Nero were really pushed.

For Question 5, which included both poets and philosophers, students rarely introduced poets, instead concentrating on comparisons of Socrates in different works. Likewise for Question 9, which introduced soldiers as well as poets and philosophers.

In Questions 1 and 2, students tended to agree with the quotations without considering other factors which may have been involved in suffering or the determination of destiny. While the *Iliad* worked well for these questions, students had trouble sustaining an argument with texts such as *Nero and his Helpers*, *The Bacchae*, *Trojan Women* and even *Oedipus*. Students should be encouraged to challenge the premise of the question, define terms and mount a sustainable argument that covers all parts of the question.

Failure to comply with the instructions on the paper, such as choosing two prescribed or two non-prescribed texts, ignoring 'Roman' or 'Greek' restrictions and writing pre-prepared responses that did not attempt to answer the question, attracted penalties for criteria 1, 5 and 6.

Where students have prepared texts, such as Greek/Roman comparisons, which are excluded by a question (for example Questions 3, 7, and 8), they should attempt an alternative non culture-specific question, or manipulate the question by explicitly justifying their choice of texts. The following is an example of an introduction which introduces an argument, challenges the premise of the question and explicitly justifies the choice of technically non-allowable texts:

The architecture and art of Greek temples served many functions and was not simply designed for the worship of the gods. This can be seen in the Parthenon. Further evidence of the use of religious temples for the promotion of the city can be seen in the temples of Rome which have many of the classic Greek temple elements. Even though they are not located in Greece their Greek inspiration attests to the promotion of cities which began in Athens.

Students could be encouraged to 'unpack' and plan essay topics on the exam paper, as well as during the year. There was more evidence of planning on the blank pages of examination booklets this year, but many were long and some had complete paragraphs. Students would do well to practise five minute plans in point form during the revision period.

While the instructions for the essay state 'Discuss this statement by comparing at least two works you have studied this year', it should not be taken that students need to write on more than two works. The instruction is there for the artworks, where the prescribed texts often comprise multiple works, rather than for written texts. Fortunately, fewer students wrote on three or four texts this year. This is pleasing, as these responses tend to be list-like, superficial and less likely to cover all criteria. Brief cross-referencing to other works, rewarded at criterion 6 as evidence to support an argument, is better.



Criterion 1. Development of a relevant argument and/or response.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	3	14	28	32	22	3.6

Responses needed to be relevant to the topic selected and address all the terms of the question. For example, in Question 2 the concept of ‘destiny’ was rarely addressed but rather assumed. Nor were students always clear about what they meant by ‘determined’, and factors other than family, such as the gods or self will, were rarely introduced into the discussion. When students bypassed the topic, or only referred to the topic while answering a question from a previous exam paper, it led the examiners to suspect that they were pre-prepared responses. The best responses ‘unpacked’ the topic by addressing all terms, and sustained a relevant argument throughout the essay with progressive conclusions that related the discussion back to the topic. This is not to be confused with a ‘debating style’ response, where connections between the discussion and the topic are merely asserted throughout. The extent and nature of developments and differences (criterion 5), or the relationship of the works to their contexts (criterion 4) formed the argument in the best responses.

Criterion 2. Knowledge of the ideas, issues, values and/or techniques in the works.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	2	7	27	36	27	3.8

This year it was pleasing to see that even more students thought beyond plot and included the use of characters and other techniques, and the different emphasis given to ideas, issues and values in their response to developments and differences between the works.

Criterion 3. Analysis of the ideas, issues, values and/or techniques in the works.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	5	19	34	27	12	3.2

The best responses demonstrated knowledge relevant to the topic through selection and analysis, rather than by adopting a narrative/descriptive approach. While more students included an analysis of techniques, such as the use of characters to voice different viewpoints, there were a number of generic essays that either neglected the topic or asserted connections between their material and the topic that had not been evidenced through their discussion. Students need to make sure that their discussion of character, ideas and techniques is relevant to the topic and not just included for the sake of demonstrating knowledge of the texts.

Criterion 4. Evaluation of the relationship of the works to their socio-historical contexts.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	9	11	21	25	19	2.9

The majority of essays covered this criterion, but some students left it out of essays that were otherwise very good. A few still left out all reference to context, particularly if they had included it gratuitously in Section A. For some years now, the Assessment Reports have reiterated that, since the prescribed and complementary works ideally come from different time periods, comparison of their historical contexts makes a good starting point; it is the first point of difference.

Most students dated the works and described contemporary events or values, usually in the second paragraph of the essays. Some asserted that differences in context accounted for developments and differences between the works. Only the best students included specific evidence throughout the essay to link their discussion of the works to the context in which they were produced. Likewise, it was only the better responses that suggested whether the works reflected, questioned, or supported the society and times in which they were produced, thereby sustaining an argument about developments and differences between the works.

The following examples show that students need to take care with the accuracy and sense of their material:

‘Homer, believed to have been born in 750 BC’, ‘Homer, which regretfully is all we know about him, aside from composing the Aeneid too’, ‘It is known that the “Iliad” was written to get Athens out of the Dark Ages’, ‘King Oedipus was written in 327 BC after a great plague had ravaged Athens’, ‘Oedipus...written during a monarchy in which kings/queens ruled...during a long period of 30 years’, ‘Oedipus was written at a time in Athens where the people needed a good leader to bring them back up after losing Pericles to the plague. Oedipus has stepped up to the challenge... [He] was a democratic leader’, ‘Trojan Women performed in approximately 415 BC...and written shortly after the capture of Troy’, ‘Trojan Women [was] written in 419 BC when Athens was at a high point. They were fighting Sparta and sent a navy to Sicily which was neutral’, ‘Written by Vergil between 27 BC’, and



'Thucydides the philosopher...', *'Crito written about 100 years after Agamemnon in C5 BC'* or *'"Crito" ...360 around the time Pericles was in power'*.

Criterion 5. Understanding of developments and/or differences between the works.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	8	17	29	29	13	3.2

A good choice of topics and texts underpins this criterion; for example, to sustain a comparison of the *Iliad* and *Antigone* about war for Question 4 was impossible. It was also hard to make a case for Nero suffering because of a separation from loved ones, or that Aeneas, a reluctant leader, was in 'pursuit of power'. While most students attempted comparison this year, there were still a number who merely included two works in their discussion. Every topic carries the instruction, 'Discuss this statement by comparing at least two works you have studied this year'; comparison is a basic requirement of the essay. Although the language of comparison should be employed, for example 'however', 'on the other hand', 'in contrast to', 'a different approach', 'similarly', 'likewise' and 'conversely', the language alone is not enough. Rather than assert contrasts, students need to demonstrate similarities and differences with specific references to the works.

Most responses discussed works that dealt with the idea or issue raised by the topic, with the best concentrating on the ways the author/artist presented them. The majority of responses generalised about developments between works or the different emphasis given to ideas, issues or values in the plot, while the best discussed the ways, and the extent to which, the two works differed in terms of specific elements of the style, design, plot, characters, ideas/issues/values, techniques or contexts. It was pleasing to see more students attempting comparisons within the one paragraph, as students who write sequential discussions often forget to compare. Students should also be careful not to include too many works; such essays tend to read like a list and lack depth.

Criterion 6. Use of relevant evidence to support an argument.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	6	18	31	26	17	3.3

The best responses used quotes, specific references to the works and, where appropriate, the interpretations of critics to support their arguments. Weaker responses just retold the plot, included lots of information (relevant or not), or inserted quotations where they had little bearing on the argument. The evidence should be accurate and meaningful, unlike the following examples: *'An example of the further rejection of values is the cutting of the phalices throughout Athens'*, *'Crito's fear of loosing loved ones will be a source of great suffering but seeing Socrates doesn't die...'*, *'The 8th century at a time in Greece where the development of Linear B alphabet enabled the development of trade and commerce, as well as the recording of poetry'*. Perhaps the worst example was *'The sophistication of society which allows the chaotic to speak articulately comes from the introduction of Linear B which advances society artistically and politically'*. It should be noted that there is no need for students to use footnotes or other forms of citation in the examination.