



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV3A Mycenaean Civilisation

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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CIV3A: Mycenaean Civilization

General Comments

The examiners were pleased to see a substantial number of candidates for this examination in its first year. The standard of the best work was extremely high, and there were some scripts of outstanding quality. Many candidates had well-developed analytical skills which they demonstrated in their answers to the 10 and 20-mark questions. There was little evidence of difficulty in time-management, though a few candidates devoted too much time to the 20-mark essay at the evident expense of the 40-mark synoptic question. There was encouraging evidence of sophisticated judgement, sensitivity and perception, and of some excellent and committed teaching. However, all the examiners noted some candidates with extremely poor writing and spelling skills. There is a visible tendency for a few less sophisticated candidates to provide narrative rather than analytical answers, or to use everything they remember about a particular topic, whether appropriate to the question or not. The examiners were interested to see the outcomes of a return to this as a conventionally examined unit from its recent life as a course-work topic

Option A

Option A was the more popular of the structured questions, probably reflecting an understandable engagement with the sizeable body of knowledge and speculation on palace cultures. Most candidates could date Pylos to around 1300 BC, identify its megaron system and archive room, and extend this knowledge into a comparative discussion of these and other features at Pylos, Mycenae and Tiryns. Most candidates also noted the absence of major defensive structures at Pylos, and commented on the second megaron system and evidence of possible manufacturing, cult and warehousing activity. Good answers to Question 04 extended this evidence into an evaluative discussion of its probable implications: a centre for an agricultural, manufacturing, trading and military economy operating as the administrative centre for a small and essentially self-sufficient kingdom.

Option B

There were fewer answers on the Warrior vase: most could identify the location in which it was found and assign it an approximate date of 1200 BC. Most could also identify the scene as the departure of a line of armed warriors, carrying and wearing their kit, including their very distinctive helmets, waved off by a single female, who probably represents the domestic circumstances being left by the warriors as she would in later Greek vase pictures. There were rather fewer good responses to Question 07, which was expecting some discussion of contemporary representation of the three dimensional human figure in a flat format, including the frontal chest and profile heads and legs, and the characteristic long-nosed profile face with a full-face eye. Some answers did make observations about the use of pattern and some were also able to discuss other types of activity depicted. There were some good answer to Question 08, which used other kinds of visual material to look at the incidence of representations of military activity and linked this to the layout of known sites and their probable defensive or aggressive purposes.

Option C

Good answers to Question 09 recognised the very real split between evidence for cult practice and for belief, and recognised that belief can only be deduced from practice, unless there is a theological literature, largely lacking here. Candidates were well-informed about the evidence for ritual practice, its sites, cult objects and infrastructure, and largely handled the question well.

Option D

There were fewer answers to Question 10, although many of those which were seen were able to reflect on both the established approaches via the remains of palaces to a view of the Mycenaean elite, and newer ones from more recent evidence provided by shipwrecks, survey and aerial photography. Better answers were also able to use the evidence of surviving objects to speculate about their makers and the place of craftsmen and women in Mycenaean society.