



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV1D Women in Athens and Rome

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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CIV1D *Women in Athens and Rome***General Comments**

CIV1D had a similar number of candidates to summer 2009 and continued to be the most popular option in CIV1. Examiners were pleased to see some improvement in the overall standard of performance this year.

The most common weaknesses were

- difficulties in sustaining an evaluative argument that was focused on the exact wording of the question
- a failure to explain the judgements with reference to sufficient well-chosen details over the whole scope of the essay
- relying too heavily on generalisations instead of critical examination of the prescribed primary sources.

However, the questions also elicited a good number of structured and informed arguments which demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding and a sophisticated ability to analyse and evaluate. Clearly many candidates had not only approached this area of study with enthusiasm and commitment, but had also developed both appropriate academic skills and perceptive insights into an aspect of the classical world.

Section One**Option A**

Candidates made a sound start by demonstrating accurate and relevant knowledge of *Women at the Thesmophoria* in answer to Questions 01 and 02, but they often had greater difficulties responding to the exact wording of Questions 03 and 04. In the former, candidates who understood the term parody generally supported their argument with apposite examples (although some included irrelevant material from earlier in the play), but others revealed their lack of understanding by failing to provide sufficiently detailed explanation or an argument with a clear point of view related to the question. In Question 04, there was a tendency to concentrate on just a few scenes and so to give a one-sided view of the question, but there were also some very good essays which took account of the whole play and put forward a more rounded assessment of Aristophanes' portrayal of women.

Option B

Option B was by far the more popular option in Section One, with more than two-thirds of candidates choosing it. Although only about half of the candidates gained all three marks in Question 06, the majority gained two marks, as they also did in Question 05. In Question 07 most candidates showed some knowledge and understanding of Livy's version of the Lucretia legend; what distinguished the best answers - and the standard was generally slightly higher than in the corresponding Question 03 - was the ability to use this knowledge and understanding critically in an argument that addressed the exact terms of the question.

Question 08 produced a similar standard of answers to Question 04. Of the relevant sources, the eulogy for Turia was the least well known and Sallust's views on Sempronia were often misunderstood. However, the best answers provided a clear analysis of the exceptional circumstances and limited terms in which women were praised for acting like men, and sustained an argument with discussion not only of well chosen details from a range of examples but also of the motives of the various authors.

Section Two

Option C

Candidates who attempted Question 09 generally demonstrated sound knowledge of relevant Athenian laws but, apart from Euphiletus' speech, were much less precise on specific cases. Frequent shortcomings in dealing with Cicero's treatment of Clodia led to many essays being unbalanced. The topic is based on the study of specific sources, and generalisations about Athenian (often too widely referred to as Greek) and Roman marriages were no substitute for an analysis of the prescribed primary material.

Option D

Nearly twice as many candidates chose Question 10 as chose Question 09, and the overall standard was noticeably higher. Pliny's letters to and about Calpurnia were generally very well known, those about Arria and Fannia less so. Most candidates attempted to give due weight to both Pliny and Ischomachus, although sometimes candidates remembered too few details of the latter's conversation with Socrates to sustain a fully developed comparison. Most candidates, too, spent some time on discussing the nature of the evidence, although this tended to come in the form of learnt statements which were not specifically linked to the question. The best answers discussed, in a carefully structured argument, both differences and similarities, and looked beneath the surface to explore the implications of Ischomachus' and Pliny's words with subtlety and insight.