



General Certificate of Education

Classical Civilisation

CIV2F The Second Punic War

Report on the Examination

June examination - 2010 series

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CIV2F *The Second Punic War*

With an entry almost double that of 2009, the candidates' overall mean mark for 2010 had also increased. The division between Section One options was almost even, with just over half choosing Option B (Scipio/Fabius), which was tackled overall considerably better than Option A (Hannibal/Hasdrubal). The two 30-mark questions (Question 10 and 11), on the other hand, produced identical mean marks and a similar spread throughout the levels of achievement; slightly more candidates attempted Question 11 (Livy's presentation of Hannibal) than Question 10 (control by the Roman Senate). The short questions on Option A (Questions 01, 02 and 03) were better done than the corresponding Option B questions; on the 10-mark questions candidates choosing Question 04 (portrayal of P. Scipio) scored slightly lower than those opting for Question 08 (Fabius v Scipio). In similar vein, the 20-mark essays (Question 05) on Hasdrubal were well outscored by those on Fabius Maximus (Question 09).

Option A

Most candidates seemed unaware of where the Ticinus stood in relation to other battles. This led to very few candidates gaining both marks on Question 01, although almost every candidate successfully identified the winner of the battle in Question 02. There were some curious answers to the request for details of the battle (Question 03), but many candidates recalled the wounding of P. Scipio and his rescue by the younger Scipio and so gained both marks. About half of the answers to Question 04 reached Level 3 or above; generally these used the passage to support assertions made about P. Scipio's character, while others confined themselves to generalisations, with little if any reference to the extract. This passage conveys quite a complex picture of Scipio, and a number of candidates were confused as to whether he displayed or lacked self-confidence. Unusually, no candidate was awarded a mark of 10. The 20-mark question was a demanding one as Hasdrubal's appearances in the books set are irregular and somewhat contradictory. That said, there were a number of really good accounts, alongside a more than usual number at Levels 1 and 2. Either candidates knew where Hasdrubal contributed and expressed both sides of his performance well, or they had little idea and answered with a page or so of very general (often error-strewn) comments. The better answers tended to suggest that Scipio would indeed have had an easier campaign if faced by Hasdrubal Barca.

Option B

Scipio's proposal was well known, with three quarters of candidates gaining at least two marks for Question 06; a similar number gained at least one mark for Fabius' response, although only a third achieved two. The examination of Plutarch's portrayal of Fabius (Question 08) produced many pleasing analyses; a number those who scored marks of 7 or more started (perhaps from memory) by stating that Plutarch tended to favour Fabius, but discovered as they worked through the passage that, if anything, he tends to give a fairly unflattering picture here. Few approached this question with general statements; most made very good use of the passage, quoting regularly in support of their arguments. Similarly, on the 20-mark question (Question 09) many candidates heatedly rejected the assertion of cowardice, producing in particular incidents from the post-Cannae era to support their views. There were significantly fewer poor answers here than on Question 05, and a good number reached a very high standard. Perhaps the greater quantity of source material when dealing with Fabius (rather than Hasdrubal in Question 05) helped; many essays were a pleasure to read.

Option C

On the surface Question 10 might have seemed more demanding than Question 11, which focused on one character in isolation, but the majority of the very best 30-mark essays were written on this question. There were, however, a larger number of poor answers here also, probably because of the need to build an essay structure from a range of sources. This was too much for a number of candidates. By contrast, those who reached Level 4 showed a sound understanding of the whole period covered, selected their sources judiciously and argued their views well. Convincing arguments were produced for both cases: the Senate was a slow-reacting, out-of-touch dinosaur, struggling to keep up with a genius of an enemy, according to some; others claimed that its knack of picking the right man at the right time and failing to give in to panic at key points justified its conduct of the war. Where either argument was supported by well-chosen material, an equally high mark was awarded. Many less able candidates seemed unaware of the long gap between the end of Book XXII in 216 BC and the start of Book XXIX in 205 BC, and in particular seemed to think that Scipio Africanus' venture into Africa came shortly after the Roman defeat at Cannae. This can and does create problems of understanding in questions like 10, where having an accurate overview of the whole war is helpful.

Option D

Although generally well done, Question 11 was not quite as straightforward as it appeared. A number of candidates saw in it an opportunity simply to analyse Hannibal's effectiveness as a leader. This led to a large number of Level 3 answers. A further problem for those who did realise the need to look at the literary element of the question was an apparent determination to find Livy heavily biased against Hannibal despite all the evidence they cited to the contrary. The best answers, as ever, considered both sides of the question, came to a conclusion and, where this might have been seen as strange (for instance, that Livy seemed to favour Hannibal at times), sought explanations for this. There were some excellent answers in this vein from those candidates who reached Level 5, and good ones from those at Level 4. Livy's account of Hannibal's early life (from Book XXI) was particularly well known and well used with a great degree of verbatim quotation to support both Livy's criticism of Hannibal's barbaric tendencies and his admiration for his personal qualities. Many continued well with key (positive) references to Livy's account of the crossing of the Alps and initial skirmishes. Better scripts noted a change of tone/emphasis with the move to the second section of reading (Books XXIX-XXX) and the emergence of Scipio Africanus; many, however, faded rather at this point, leading to unbalanced accounts. That said, overall many answers were very creditable and accordingly received high marks.

The point about chronology and potential problems caused by the gap between the sections set for reading mentioned above holds good here too.