



**General Certificate of Education
June 2011**

Classical Civilisation 2020

CIV4C: Roman Epic

Report on the Examination

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CIV4C Roman Epic

General Comments

Once again, this was by far the most popular option within CIV4. The vast majority of candidates showed some degree of knowledge, ranging from adequate to substantial, whilst just a few struggled to demonstrate more than a patchy amount. There was too often a lack of precision in the short answers, although many candidates scored high, or even full, marks. Examiners saw a particular improvement in skills for answering questions carrying 10 marks in this option, the best responses showing a balance between, on the one hand, analysis and evaluation and, on the other, illustrations of knowledge. There was a tendency in less successful 20-mark answers towards either narration of details without robust evaluation or evaluation of a general nature, without illustration. The best 40-mark essays were sophisticated, fully synoptic and packed with relevant detail. Lower down the scale were many competent attempts. A minority of candidates found it difficult to finish well in the limited time available, some doing this question first, sometimes to the detriment of their other answers. Spelling and punctuation were often poor, even by otherwise talented candidates. Overall, nonetheless, virtually all candidates showed some appreciation of what they had studied.

In Section One, Option A was by far the more popular choice, with about four-fifths of candidates choosing this option. Option C was the preferred synoptic essay, although over a third of candidates chose Option D.

Section One

Option A

The short answer questions in both Option A and Option B received many good answers notable for their precision, although relatively few gained full marks. Weaker responses were characterised by lack of precision, for example over what the signs were in Question 02. Questions 01 and 02 were answered best overall, although spelling was often approximate. Question 03 proved to be more challenging, with less than half of candidates able to score both marks.

The skills necessary for analysing passages effectively have improved thanks to good teaching practice and candidates' willingness to learn. Very few do not now refer closely to details in the set passage of their choice. The main weakness is a tendency for less able candidates to describe rather than evaluate effectiveness, for example in Question 04 simply stating that 'cries of anguish' are dramatic with no further explanation. There were, however, many excellent answers, some of the best seeing the shape of the passage and using that to structure their answers.

As Question 05 was based on a central theme in the *Aeneid*, it was possible for candidates to fall into the trap of writing an answer that was too descriptive. Some weaker answers reflected this, but most candidates made an attempt to create a central thread of argument, however tenuous at times it became. The vast majority understandably saw Aeneas' family as important to him, but few dealt really effectively with Venus and the effect her divine influence has upon Aeneas. Some lapsed into arguments about the importance of Aeneas' family to the plot rather than to Aeneas himself, which suggests candidates were trying to fit prepared answers to the question.

Option B

Performance in Option B was weaker than in Option A. Question 06 was well answered, but the sign was less well known here, with over half of candidates failing to score in Question 07. Candidates who did not remember what the sign was could not give Aeneas' interpretation in Question 08 and so gained no marks here.

As stated above, the skills necessary for analysing passages effectively have improved, and Question 09 was better answered. There were many excellent answers here, with the best again seeing the shape of the passage and using that to structure their answers, for example , by discussing how Evander's emotions are concerned successively with his old age, admiration for Aeneas and concern for his son Pallas.

Question 10 was based on a study of two central characters in the *Aeneid*. Again, some less able candidates wrote answers that were far too descriptive. Most candidates, however, did attempt to create a central thread of argument. The best answers were excellent, for example, balancing perfectly Evander and Pallas in terms of relative importance to Aeneas.

Section Two

Option C

In the synoptic essays in this option candidates are expected to show understanding of the 'religious, political, social and cultural context'. The reference to a Roman audience in Question 11 meant that candidates needed to consider the values and cultural assumptions implicit in the *Aeneid*. Too many candidates took 'Roman audience' to mean any audience, concentrating simply on Aeneas' character and actions *per se*. More successful were those who made it clear that duty / piety (*pietas*), for example, was a core value for the Romans, exploring Virgil's portrayal of Aeneas in relation to this.

Option D

The synoptic element was, perhaps, easier to spot in Question 12, with its specific direction to consider Augustus' rule. There were more Level 4 answers here than in Question 11, but overall performance on the two questions was very similar. The best answers linked Aeneas' behaviour to the Augustan context, sometimes seeing him as an Augustus figure.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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