
CLASSICAL STUDIES

9274/42

Paper 4 Classical Literature – Sources and Evidence

October/November 2017

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

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General

Any critical exploration as an answer to a Paper 4 question will necessarily encompass differing views, knowledge and argument. Thus the mark scheme for these questions cannot and should not be prescriptive.

Candidates are being encouraged to explore, in the exam room, a theme that they will have studied. Engagement with the question as set (in the exam room) may make for limitations in answers but this is preferable to an approach that endeavours to mould pre-worked materials of a not too dissimilar nature from the demands of the actual question.

Examiners are encouraged to constantly refresh their awareness of the question so as not to be carried away by the flow of an argument which may not be absolutely to the point. *Candidates must address the question set and reach an overall judgement, but no set answer is expected. The question can be approached in various ways and what matters are not the conclusions reached but the quality and breadth of the interpretation and evaluation of the texts offered by an answer.*

Successful answers will need to make use of all three passages, draw conclusions and arrive at summative decisions.

Question	Answer	Marks
1	<p>Explore critically how accurate it is to claim that tragedy covers ‘a disastrous event foretold and anticipated from the start’. In your answer you should consider the passage above and your wider reading of tragedy, as well as the two passages below:</p> <p>Specific</p> <p>Candidates are expected to be familiar with Aristotle’s idea of a ‘single’ plot, e.g. one event focusing on one character, the resolution of which flows with tragic inevitability from its beginning point or whatever seeds have been sown prior to the action of the play itself. The Oedipus myth is itself a very good example, with the circumstances of Oedipus’ birth and each significant moment in his life from then on all bringing him towards first the killing of Laius and marriage with Jocasta, then his reversal in the plays themselves upon his recognition of this. Candidates may be able to set out without too much trouble the way this story, and its treatment in both plays about Oedipus, is ‘a disastrous event foretold and anticipated from the start’; weaker candidates may confuse the event with the murder of Laius, stronger ones may recognise that the recognition of his fate is the crucial moment.</p> <p>The two plays do, nonetheless, treat the story differently. The first extract, with the opening lines of Seneca’s play, supports the opening passage nicely, neatly setting out Oedipus’ coming recognition of what he has done. Candidates may wish to contrast the way Seneca and Sophocles handle this; in Sophocles, Oedipus also has the opening lines, but is still utterly unaware of his true nature. Both plays to a degree conform to the idea of the prompt passage, and so in each the idea may be argued to be effective, but stronger candidates are likely to differentiate degrees of effectiveness, most likely that Sophocles has a more sophisticated and nuanced development of the single disastrous event. This does not mean that candidates may not argue for other merits of Seneca’s play, e.g. its vivid evocation of horror and its piteous scenes.</p> <p>The second extract allows, even encourages, a contrasting view. The <i>Medea</i> opens with a premonition of some harm to the children, but Medea’s initial plan, as stated here, is in fact quite different from what she finally does. Her original idea to kill Jason is replaced, following the Aegeus episode, with one to kill the children instead. Since it is the killing of the children that is really the disastrous event, Euripides departs from the idea in the prompt passage, misdirecting the audience after his opening anticipation of harm to the children, only to return to it later. Candidates may also observe a significant moral dilemma, in the scene where Medea deliberates with herself over whether to kill the children or not. Candidates may argue that the shock of Medea’s change of plan, reinforced by the Chorus’ withdrawal of support for her when they realise this, and her own deliberations, are in fact highly effective ingredients of the play.</p>	50

Question	Answer	Marks
1	<p>Candidates may also observe that this is an unusual pattern; certainly the <i>Agamemnon</i> conforms strictly to the idea of the single, inevitable, event, and indeed much of the play is devoted to prophecy and foreshadowing of Agamemnon's (and Cassandra's) murder.</p> <p>Candidates may interpret the question in two slightly different ways, either exploring whether having one single disastrous event is effective, or exploring whether it is true that tragedies cover only one disastrous event. As long as candidates approach the question in an evaluative way with appropriate responses to the texts, a breadth of possible answers is to be welcomed; all responses will be assessed on their individual merits alongside the marking grids.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
2	<p>Explore critically what, if anything, gods contribute to ancient epic. In your answer you should consider the passage above and your wider reading of epic, as well as the two passages below:</p> <p>Specific</p> <p>The prompt passage invites the candidates to consider what it is that the gods bring to epic, considering that the stories could be constructed without them. Candidates might start from various points in considering where the gods do seem to have significant roles – perhaps Poseidon’s pursuit of Odysseus or Athene’s aid in the <i>Odyssey</i>; Aeneas’ divine mission sponsored by Jupiter and opposed by Juno in the <i>Aeneid</i>; or the wrath of Apollo that begins the chain of events in the <i>Iliad</i>. In these areas they may argue that divine causation is so apparent that they disagree with the opening statement. It is possible to take the view that, even if the action of the poems is essentially mortal (and that this is where its interest derives), the gods provide a framework and causation that is certainly helpful for the framing of the story and plot, if not essential. (Very good candidates might take a formalist/narratological approach to story and plot but this is certainly not essential even to a top band answer.)</p> <p>The first extract on the question paper should directly prompt consideration of how far Odysseus has to act independently versus how much he benefits from divine assistance, and candidates may well consider how divine assistance contributes to heroism, arguing this in various ways. All arguments based on textual evidence and showing awareness of contemporary attitudes should gain credit, but those that are highly speculative or lack evidence, or those that lack awareness of ancient ideas of heroism, may do less well.</p> <p>The second passage should prompt consideration of divine purpose or orchestration. Divine mission is highly relevant to the <i>Aeneid</i>, but less so in Homer and candidates may profitably explore the difference here. Homer of course considers issues of fate, such as the inevitability of the deaths of Sarpedon and Hector, or Odysseus’ return home, and there are clear illustrations of how far the gods may or may not intervene. But overall Homer lacks the sense of a divine mission that Virgil incorporates into the <i>Aeneid</i>, and candidates may consider what this adds to the <i>Aeneid</i>, or whether Homer seems poorer in comparison. Candidates may also consider the extent to which the gods can influence fate.</p> <p>Candidates may well like to consider particular incidents in which the interventions of gods figure prominently, for example Juno sending Allecto to stir up Turnus, Athene assisting in the killing of the Suitors, or Athene and Apollo deceiving Hector in his duel with Achilles. As such they may argue again that the gods are an important ingredient of the epic world, whether for the functioning of the story or for adding interest to the narrative. The light hearted nature of some of the scenes with the gods could be argued to bring relief from the tension and drama within the <i>Iliad</i> for example Aphrodite crying over her wounded hand.</p>	50

Question	Answer	Marks
2	But candidates might be expected to develop such an argument to evaluate what it is that the gods bring, and in particular how it adds to our understanding of human characters and the struggles they face against forces of fate, destiny, or other difficulties. There may be discussion of double determination; there may also be an awareness that in every divine intervention it is the human response that gives a poem its emotional content, for example we are moved by Aeneas' difficulties with his mission, not the mission itself, or by Turnus' ultimate sacrifice as a pawn in a divine game, and not really by Juno's struggles against fate.	