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91200



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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

## Level 2 Classical Studies 2025

91200 Examine ideas and values of the classical world

Credits: Four

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Examine ideas and values of the classical world.	Examine, in-depth, ideas and values of the classical world.	Examine, with perception, ideas and values of the classical world.

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

**You should answer ONE of the questions in this booklet.**

If you need more room for any answer, use the extra space provided at the back of this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–11 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in the margins (//////). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

**YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.**

Excellence

TOTAL 07

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## INSTRUCTIONS

Answer ONE of the questions below with reference to a **classical literary text**.  
You must answer using paragraphs.

## QUESTIONS (Choose ONE)

- In what ways did a hero exemplify the expectations of a classical society?
- Explain the significance of a custom in a classical text.
- In what ways was the role of an individual challenged by others?
- How has the portrayal of a classical hero influenced a later culture?

## CLASSICAL LITERARY TEXT

The Odyssey by Homer

## PLANNING

Kleos  
Bravery  
Kyrios  
Intelligence

## ANSWER

Type your answer in the space below. You should aim to write a concise answer of no more than 750–800 words. (The counter will change colour when you reach the recommended word count.) The quality of your writing is more important than the length of your answer.

Support your answer with evidence from a classical literary text.

**B** *I* U

The Odyssey by Homer is an epic poem that follows the adventures of hero Odysseus on his journey home from the Trojan War. After ten years at war, Odysseus take another ten years to return home. Odysseus exemplifies the expectations of classical society by seeking kleos (glory), being a caring and loyal kyrios (leader) to his oikos (household), by being intelligent, and by showing bravery.

Kleos was highly regarded in the classical world. It was the ultimate achievement to be cemented in history through legend beyond your death, which we see in heroes such as Hercules and Achillies. In book 9, after blinding the Cyclops, Odysseus calls out to Polyphemus to tell him that it was "Odysseus, sacker of cities, the son of Laertes who lives in Ithaca" who blinded him. Polyphemus then calls out to his father, Poseidon, to avenge him. This sets up many of Odysseus' trials on his journey home. Athena describes

Poseidon being "incensed" after Odysseus blinded his son. While this causes many troubles for Odysseus later on, it does spread the word about his heroic actions in Polyphemus' cave. A great example of the Greeks' value of Kleos is seen in Book 11 when Odysseus meets the now dead Achilles. He says "grieve no more at dying, great Achilles." This shows how much value is put on the legacy you leave behind. The story of Achilles is so well-known, that even though he is dead, his spirit is kept alive through stories and legends. Although it caused great trouble for Odysseus, he cemented his status as a Greek hero that will be remembered long after his death. Even before his journey home from Troy, Odysseus was regarded as a great warrior and ruler, so the expectation was for him to gain kleos through his actions. Here we see Homer highlighting the importance of the legacy you leave behind. Due to the lack of historical records in the classical period compared to now, being remembered in myth was one of the only ways you could make a mark on history. Human fear of mortality is evident here, hence why kleos was so sought after, to be immortalised in legend.

Another way in which Odysseus exemplified the expectations of classical society is through his actions as a thoughtful and caring kyrios in Ithaca. As the king, his job is to not only look after his family, but his whole oikos, which included servants, maids, farmers, and his soldiers. This is seen in Book 9, where Odysseus, alongside his men, escape from Polyphemus' cave. He devised a genius plan to hide under Polyphemus' sheep in order to escape from his cave. Putting his men first, he gave them each three rams to hide under, while taking only one for himself. "Each of my men thus had three rams to bear him. But for myself, I chose a full-grown ram." Not only is he taking care of his men and making sure they have enough to hide themselves with, but he also shows his selflessness by taking fewer for himself. As a leader, he is expected to take care of his men, but Odysseus exceeds that by undermining his own safety in order to ensure the safety of his men. Homer teaches the men of the classical world to treat their subordinates well, and treat them with respect and care, like family. Due to the fact that wars were common in the ancient world, Homer is teaching war generals to treat their soldiers with respect through Odysseus' actions.

Another expectation for a classical hero is courage and bravery. Odysseus displays these qualities throughout his treacherous journey home, but especially in book 11 where he goes down to the underworld. It is an unimaginable task for a mortal to go down to the underworld, but this was a necessary step for Odysseus in order to reach his home. As he came down to the underworld, he said "sheer panic turned me pale." Here we see that underneath his fearless facade, Odysseus was still human and afraid of taking on this task. However, guided by his strong loyalty to his home, he continues on to meet with the prophet, Tiresias. We see Odysseus' loyalty to his wife, Penelope, and his kingdom, Ithaca, through his rejection of the nymph Calypso in book 5 and the witch Circe in book 10. To Calypso he said "I long to reach my home, it is my never-failing wish," rejecting an immortal life with her due to his love for Penelope. Circe pointed out how Penelope is no match for her in face or figure, and while Odysseus agreed, his love for Penelope guided him in telling Circe "I am eager now to be gone, and so are all my men." With a goal in mind, guided by his everlasting love for his wife and his home, Odysseus overcame his fear of the underworld in order to continue on his journey home. The theme of homecoming is strongly present, showing the lengths Odysseus is going to in order to reach Ithaca. Through Odysseus' story in book 11, Homer encourages young men of the classical world to be guided by their values and goals, and to overcome their fears with courage. In a time when wars and battles were prominent and frequent, kleos was achieved through superiority on the battle field, so Homer encourages young men to act courageously and fight for their goals.

Another way in which Odysseus exemplifies the expectations of classical society is through his intelligence. While strength on the battlefield was highly valued in classical society, intelligence was also needed for success as a leader. A key example of Odysseus' wit is in book 9, where he outsmarts Polyphemus to get out of his cave. When Polyphemus asks him where his ship was, Odysseus recognised that "His words were designed to get the better of me," and told Polyphemus a lie about how their ship was sunk. With this lie, Odysseus spared the rest of his men, still waiting on the ship from the cyclops. Another moment where he uses his intelligence is when Polyphemus asks for his name. Odysseus replies with "My name is Nobody." After stabbing Polyphemus in the eye as per Odysseus' plan, when the nearby cyclopes call out to Polyphemus asking who is hurting him. In reply he says that Nobody is hurting him, which immediately made the other cyclopes pay no more attention to him. This clever ruse by Odysseus prevented him and his men from having to fight a whole group of cyclopes, giving them an easier way back to their ship. In this book, Homer proves the importance of intelligence and strategic planning, teaching the young men of the classical period to use their wit as well as their strength in wars and other challenging situations that may arise in their lives.

Odysseus is an exemplary classical hero, and exhibits many qualities that were valued by classical society. He not only meets expectations, but goes above and beyond for his reputation, and for the prosperity of his oikos. He chases after his glory, takes care of his oikos, is brave on his difficult journey home, and uses his intelligence to get himself and his men out of difficult circumstances.

1214 WORDS / 800 RECOMMENDED

## Excellence

**Subject:** Classical Studies

**Standard:** 91200

**Total score:** 07

<b>Grade score</b>	<b>Marker commentary</b>
E7	<p>The candidate demonstrates a thorough and perceptive understanding of Odysseus exemplifying the expectations of classical society. There is thorough and detailed knowledge of the Odyssey and strong use of primary source evidence, including quotes, descriptions, and Greek terminology. The candidate demonstrates insight through discussion of the didactic nature of Homer's work and connecting society's expectations to Odysseus as an example for young men. While not part of the marking criteria or achievement standard, the response has clear and logical structure, and good grammar and spelling. This supported the candidate to communicate their ideas clearly and convincingly.</p>