

Assessment Report

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Part A: Commentary

Candidates who applied their knowledge of the classical world to their chosen question tended to reach higher levels of achievement compared with candidates who did not adapt their knowledge to the question. Candidates who used the planning page and spent some time grappling with the question before writing their responses stood out, as they were more discerning with regards to what knowledge was relevant to the question, subsequently producing focused responses that were concise, well-structured, and more likely to demonstrate depth or insight.

Selecting the most appropriate question to demonstrate their understanding of the classical world was a key factor that helped enable or stifle candidates' levels of achievement. Candidates are strongly encouraged to read all of the questions carefully before selecting the one that is most suitable to their knowledge.

Similarly, sticking to the parameters set within a question improved the quality of a candidate's response. When candidates discussed more than one example (for instance, more than one moral dilemma, or art work, etc.) the responses lacked depth when compared with the responses of candidates who adhered to the question.

Part B: Report on standards

91021: Demonstrate understanding of ideas and values of the classical world

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- made very general comments about ideas and values without expanding; for example, everyone thought the gods were important
- included unnecessary plot details
- described details of the text generally, using few specific phrases or supporting references and / or quotations
- did not stay within the scope of the question, for example, wrote about two or three conflicts instead of 'a conflict'
- relied on rote-learned answers and did not engage with the question
- did not engage with all parts of the question
- compared ideas and values to modern society and, therefore, focused less on how their substantiating evidence reflected ideas and values of classical society.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- wrote plot summaries
- did not connect plot details to ideas and values of classical society
- did not address the question
- referenced either film versions or back stories, not the texts themselves
- wrote explanations about ideas and values that were overly simplistic or inaccurate.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- demonstrated connections between text details and ideas and values of classical society clearly
- used specific text references, phrases, or quotes as examples
- compared ideas and values to modern society and, therefore, focused less on how their substantiating evidence reflected ideas and values of classical

society

- referenced the importance of text aspects to the gods, but did not explore the significance of this for the classical society
- made some relevant connection to social, cultural, and political events and / or ideas, and why this was of significance to the classical society.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- clearly engaged with the text and appreciated how it conveyed ideas and values of classical society
- integrated text details with explanations of how the details demonstrated ideas and values
- demonstrated understanding of social, cultural, or political events and / or issues of the classical society for which the text was created, and explained in a thorough and convincing manner how the text reflected these
- applied discussion of wider cultural context to their chosen question
- appreciated the complexity of ideas and values in the text and explained in detail how these reflected, challenged, contradicted, etc.
- demonstrated a thorough understanding of classical society, and explained how key aspects were important to the society as a whole.

Standard-specific comments

Answers that were situated in the context of the classical society generally achieved higher grades than those that applied modern society's standards, beliefs, and values.

Many candidates made overly general and simplistic evaluations of important societal aspects; for example, candidates discussed gender roles in an oversimplified manner – 'woman had to stay inside', 'women only did cooking and cleaning', 'woman were not important'. Applying a more holistic approach to aspects of how a classical society was structured and what traits or roles were desirable or valued is necessary to reach the higher levels of achievement.

Similarly, comments about why characters made choices or behaved in a certain way were often simplistic; for example, 'the laws of the gods were important and must be followed'. There was often little discussion about why the classical society had such strong religious beliefs.

Additionally, many students discussed important social conventions as being important to the gods but did not go on to discuss why they were also important to classical society; for example, 'xenia was important because Zeus oversees it' etc. but there was no discussion of why xenia was important to the people of classical society – difficulties of travel, building alliances, passing on news, enhancing family ties, etc.

While it was pleasing to see candidates showing an awareness of wider cultural contexts, many responses included this type of information without explaining how it was relevant to answering the question.

91022: Demonstrate understanding of the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided some understanding of a classical art work or building, usually by naming relevant features and describing them in a basic or straightforward manner
- struggled to address the second part of a question beyond making general claims or stating the obvious (e.g., Perseus [in reference to a classical fresco painting] was aided by the gods and this shows that the classical society believed gods were more powerful than humans)
- concentrated on providing rote-learned material that was not relevant to the question
- ignored the second part of the question
- focused on more than one classical art work or building where the selected question asked for one
- provided contradictory interpretations; for example, 'the view at the Colosseum was the same for everyone because of the tiered seating ... slaves went to the back, which means they could not see'
- wrote explanations that were repetitive.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided rote-learned information that was irrelevant to the question
- provided rote-learned information that was irrelevant to the question

- named relevant features of art or architecture accompanied with ambiguous comments
- provided references to art or architecture that were mostly inaccurate or very limited in detail
- wrote responses that did not answer the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- connected relevant narrative and / or relevant wider contextual factors to features of a classical art work or building
- provided some in-depth knowledge that was relevant to the selected question, but also knowledge that was irrelevant to the question.
- wrote answers that were focused on addressing both parts of a question in balance, but did not demonstrate insight.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- wrote focused responses and seldom wavered outside the scope of a question
- understood, and were confident in addressing, the key concept(s) of a question (e.g. subject matter, layout, or composition) and integrated these concepts or applied the definitions of these concepts to their writing to generate detailed descriptions of art or architecture
- addressed both parts of a question fully
- applied relevant wider contextual factors to discussions in a meaningful way
- wrote concisely and chose words carefully to convey detailed understanding of the significance of an art work or building.

Standard-specific comments

A high number of responses were fundamentally clones of one another. While it is good to note that candidates are committing knowledge of classical art works and buildings to memory, the ability to discern what knowledge is applicable to a question is important. Focusing on the question improves the quality of a response, as candidates spend more time applying their efforts on what knowledge and explanation is relevant. Some candidates were preoccupied with, or singularly committed to, writing down everything about a classical art work or building they had memorised. Candidates who were willing to grapple with the key elements of a question generally achieved higher grades as their responses were

focused, free from irrelevant and stifling information, and more likely to display depth or insight. Spending time interpreting a question, and using the planning page effectively, improved authenticity / originality in responses, as candidates generally situated what they knew about art or architecture against the components of a question to generate explanations that showed meaningful understanding.

Candidates at Excellence level interpreted a question with a high level of confidence. Typically, these candidates clearly structured their responses to address both parts of a question in a focused, thorough, and concise manner. While most candidates across all levels of achievement sought to show awareness of a wider cultural context, candidates at Excellence level were able to situate the art work in the wider cultural context convincingly, usually by specifically showing how the art work, or features of it, were connected to relevant events, people, philosophies, or aspects of life in the classical society, etc. Often, at Achievement or Merit levels, candidates arbitrarily threw in a quote from a primary or secondary source, or described a relevant narrative, but did not go on to explain how this information helped answer the selected question, or in a manner that showed depth of, or insightful understanding.

There was a trend across some responses whereby all art in classical society was not defined as art, but solely as propaganda. While some classical art works and buildings no doubt functioned as propaganda, sometimes art was simply art (a product of the human imagination). This meant the messages or purposes of an art work were emergent, rather than predetermined. Generally, candidates who were able to treat classical art works as art, particularly those candidates who used mosaics or vases, wrote insightfully, as they used the subject matter or composition of a piece as a window to explore the nature of classical society in a meaningful, interesting, and authentic way. That is not to say that candidates who used blatant propaganda pieces, such as the Augustus of Prima Porta or the Bust of Commodus, were disadvantaged at all, but candidates who viewed all classical art solely as propaganda generally tended to write limited, oversimplified, or inaccurate responses. This was particularly the case in writing about mythological subject matter. In contrast, candidates who viewed classical art as art were more articulate, balanced, and insightful when exploring what a work indicated in terms of its functions or potential meaning in the ancient context.

Many candidates provided fruitless introductions or conclusions. Often, these introductions or conclusions provided excessive background or attribution details and then proceeded to restate the question with no interpretation or explanation as to how they intended to use the selected art work or building to respond to the

question. This was predominantly evident among many candidates who used the Colosseum.

Classical buildings used by candidates: Erechtheion, Parthenon, Colosseum, Arch of Titus.

Classical art works used by candidates: Pediments of the Parthenon, Parthenon frieze, Athena Parthenos, Diskobolos, Kritios Boy, Nile God, Dying Gaul, Laocoön Group, Augustus of Prima Porta, Bust of Commodus, The Patrician with Busts, Nile mosaic, Lion mosaic, Alexander mosaic, Unswept Floor mosaic, Memento Mori mosaic, Centaur mosaic, Grazing Goats mosaic, Death of Pentheus painting, Perseus and Andromeda painting, Exekias Belly Amphora, Exekias kylix, Euphronios krater, Berlin volute krater, Niobid kalyx krater, Lydos column krater, Kleophrades hydria, Eleusis amphora.

91023: Demonstrate understanding of an important historical figure in the classical world

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- addressed the first part of the question only or addressed the second part of the question minimally
- used pre-prepared answers that featured large sections of material not relevant to the selected question, particularly paragraphs explaining the background or context in an irrelevant way
- focused on telling the story or making a narrative description in large parts, instead of consistently focusing on answering the question
- wrote in a very general way using vague language that lacked sufficient detail and was unconvincing, inaccurate, superficial, or oversimplified in nature
- wrote in a basic structure that clearly identified how they were answering the question
- used primary source evidence minimally – this included Greek or Latin words, minor use of quotation or attribution, or description that could be inferred as being derived from primary material.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- wrote responses that did not answer the question or misinterpreted the question

- addressed the question in a vague and / or unconvincing manner
- made inaccurate or oversimplified statements about classical society
- wrote irrelevant answers and typically did not use the key words from the questions to guide their answer
- used minimal evidence from primary sources, or provided evidence that was irrelevant or incorrect
- wrote responses that had little relevant information, lacked specific details, or were inaccurate
- used examples that were not relevant or clearly connected to the question
- wrote overly brief responses, or wrote too generically or superficially.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- addressed explicitly and substantively both parts of the question in a meaningful way, either separately or in an integrated response
- provided specific and relevant primary source evidence consistently to support their explanation, often in the form of attributed quotations; sources were clearly introduced and their relevance as supporting evidence for the question was commented upon
- structured responses effectively with key words from both parts of the question regularly linked to the response
- demonstrated depth through exploring a range of aspects relating to both parts of the question
- clearly understood the historical figure and their historical context.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- answered part of the question in a thorough and convincing manner
- answered part of the question in a thorough and convincing manner
- demonstrated insight into the motivations of the historical figure and applied the implications of this to their understanding of the question
- commented on the significance of cultural expectations or codes of behaviour in the context of the question
- showed insight by situating the response in the wider context

- demonstrated understanding of the limitations of primary source evidence and applied the implications of this to their understanding of the question
- consistently drew upon well-chosen, specific, and relevant primary source evidence in a way that enhanced the explanation
- applied appropriate structure to the response, using key words from the question to frame paragraphs
- wrote concise, well-structured paragraphs, and kept irrelevant information to a minimum.

Standard-specific comments

Candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of their studied historical figure and provided ample examples and discussion.

Candidates often struggled to address both parts of the question in their answers in a meaningful way and this hindered their progress towards higher levels of achievement.

Candidates are encouraged to thoroughly read the question and consider their response to it before beginning.

Candidates who utilised the planning space to prepare all parts of the question were generally more successful.

Candidates could benefit from focusing on using their knowledge to craft quality responses to the question rather than quantity.

More-successful candidates directly answered the questions in a convincing manner and were selective, as they included well-chosen evidence, rather than every quote or fact they memorised.

Candidates are encouraged to integrate their critique of sources into their response, as opposed to a separate and disconnected sentence within a paragraph; likewise, attempts to integrate knowledge of cultural behaviours or motivations were more effective when integrated into the answer in a manner that was relevant to the question.

Candidates who used short introductions that directly answered the question and gave a brief interpretation of how they intended to respond to the question were generally more successful.

A range of historical figures – including Caesar, Pompey, Augustus, Alexander, Leonidas, Vespasian, Spartacus, Socrates, Agrippina, and Nero – were used

successfully.

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Previous years' reports

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