

2023 NCEA Assessment Report

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| Subject: | Classical Studies |
| Level: | Level 2 |
| Achievement standard(s): | 91200, 91201, 91203 |

General commentary

The 2023 Level 2 examination required candidates to choose one question from four available options. The ability of the candidate to choose appropriately and respond to the question using primary-source evidence was reflected in the grades awarded.

Integrating primary-source evidence and appropriate terminology is a crucial part of achievement at all levels in Classical Studies. Candidates should be encouraged to engage directly with source material and use this effectively in responding to their chosen question.

Pre-prepared responses continue to be utilised by some candidates. This can result in responses that do not reflect the question being asked. Candidates are encouraged to respond to the question as written, using key words from the question to shape an appropriate answer.

Candidates are encouraged to explain, rather than describe. The narration of story needs to be utilised as a tool to respond to the question. Likewise, quotations and the use of terminology need to be carefully integrated into responses, adding substance to responses.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91200: Examine ideas and values of the classical world

Assessment

The examination included four questions from which candidates were required to select one to respond to. The questions covered the themes specified in the 2023 Assessment Specifications, which were leadership and / or heroism, social and cultural traditions, influence on other cultures, and social relationships and / or the role of the individual.

The questions required candidates to apply their understanding of the ideas and values of the classical world as communicated through a classical literary text.

Commentary

Candidates who plan their responses continue to be the most successful in this standard. It was clear which candidates had thought about and planned their responses before writing as their responses were specific to the selected question and used relevant examples. These were also less likely to be too long and tangential, or too short and lack a depth of understanding.

Candidates who used non-literary texts (e.g. histories) struggled to apply the texts to most or all of the questions in a way that adequately reflected the standard. Some candidates also struggled to link the relationship to the values being challenged.

Some responses to Question Two examined more than one relationship. Some relationships used for the question were poorly chosen, e.g. Odysseus and the gods. This was most successfully done with the relationship between Creon and Antigone.

A number of responses for Question Three misread the question and, rather than examining how burial or xenia (for example) were demonstrated, they wrote about the importance of the tradition (eg how burial / xenia was shown to be important) without providing many details about how the tradition itself was demonstrated. This was a particular problem in responses that used Antigone and burial, and limited achievement for some candidates.

Candidates that responded to Question Four and used examples of Odysseus when he was with his men or Creon as king were most successful. Some candidates misinterpreted the question and wrote about how a character's leadership was reinforced or undermined by other characters, not the character's actions. Candidates who used Odysseus as the character often wrote about heroism without linking heroism to leadership, or used examples where Odysseus showed great skills (e.g. charming Calypso and building the raft), but did not show leadership. Candidates who used Antigone as a leader struggled as they did not explain how Antigone was a leader given her gender and status.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- showed understanding of the intention of the text and made links to the question
- used the correct terminology and character names
- explained information and made obvious connections to the question
- utilised explanations that were not detailed and were only related to the text
- had one or two recognised examples, which they fitted to the question.

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

- used a range of examples from the text that were both explained and supported with other primary source evidence
- included in-depth detail, but not necessarily consistently
- included direct reference to the question, often continually referring back to it within the response
- demonstrated clear, informed, or sound knowledge of the ideas and values of the classical society
- demonstrated implied understanding of the nuances within the ideas and values of the classical society (exceptions or loopholes or points of contradiction) that were significant to the story
- provided in-depth responses supported well by relevant examples, which were accompanied by explanation
- included superfluous information (e.g. overly long descriptions of the action in the text, information that was not well linked to the question or argument, or tangential information that was unnecessary).

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

- integrated the knowledge of the text with wider examples from society and other sources

- showed understanding of the text through continually referring evidence back to the question and explaining any statements with relevant examples
- demonstrated a high level knowledge and understanding of the ideas and values of the classical society, relevant to themes from their chosen text; it was clear that they had studied and really thought about the text and its meanings
- responded well to the specific question at hand, showing perception or insight - often by comparing with other classical texts or events / historical contexts that may have inspired aspects of the plot
- used detailed, specific, and relevant evidence throughout their response and thoroughly explained how it pertained to the question, often with a level of analysis – such responses tended to avoid a straightforward narrative
- explored the nuances around the specific ideas / values – not in a simplistic “good xenia / bad xenia” way, but in a way that examined some of the grey areas that were important to the story and the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not demonstrate an understanding of the ideas and values related to their chosen text (and sometimes did not mention any classical values at all)
- provided a pre-prepared essay that did not relate to the question
- provided a plot summary or narrative with little or no reference to the question
- did not provide specific evidence and got details in examples incorrect
- chose a question that did not allow them to show their understanding.

Achievement standard 91201: Examine the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world

Assessment

The examination questions were drawn from the features of works of art as identified in Explanatory Note 5 of the Achievement Standard: form and function, style, techniques, artistic and / or historical context, and influence on other cultures.

The questions required candidates to examine the significance of the features of one or more chosen classical art works or buildings. Candidates who responded directly to the question, utilising appropriate evidence from the artwork in their response, were most successful.

To enjoy success in this standard, candidates tended to find a balance between engaging with the question, providing relevant evidence from the art work(s) or building(s), and linking appropriate context in which the work was created.

Commentary

Candidates responses that were well structured tended to unpack the questions appropriately. Those who did so fully and provided primary-source evidence from artworks were able to achieve at higher levels.

Candidates need to be reminded that the focus is on analysing the features of classical art and architecture. When responding to Question Four, candidates who discussed the influence of a classical art work on a later piece of classical art had ability to draw in-depth conclusions

about ancient art and architecture. Those candidates detailing later works rather than those from within the classical world struggled to reach the standard.

Pre-prepared essays are not successful. Candidates should ensure they write responses as the questions direct, and not respond to the essay statement they hoped for. Some candidates wrote on topics from previous years. These were tenuously linked to this year's questions, which meant that candidates wrote limited explanations or unbalanced responses for the art work(s) or building(s) chosen.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- demonstrated accurate knowledge and drew general conclusions as to the significance of the chosen work
- produced an unbalanced response that may have only partly addressed the question
- demonstrated knowledge by covering many pieces without clearly relating them to the statement
- produced responses that were heavily based on a myth or belief and were minimally on the work of art or architecture
- focused on non-classical works and did not showcase classical evidence to confidently meet the standard.

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

- addressed all aspects of the question, although treatment could be slightly unbalanced
- provided consistently detailed analysis of one or two works of art or architecture
- identified and unpacked art-historical terminology in a way that allowed deeper explanation and conclusions to be drawn, e.g. Realism, idealism, symmetry
- integrated the question statement successfully to showcase knowledge of the artwork or architecture
- showed some insight, but the response was unbalanced.

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

- engaged fully with all aspects of the question
- formed a lucid argument in their response
- provided consistently detailed analysis of one or two works of art or architecture, making reference to context where relevant
- wrote with depth to demonstrate detailed and insightful knowledge of a work of art or architecture
- addressed and unpacked the question and underlying concepts in relation to their content knowledge
- interwove contextual or mythological knowledge where relevant, without letting that detract from the primary evidence or addressing the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided a limited / general explanation of the features of the chosen work, but not enough specific explanation for this level
- demonstrated limited understanding of the work in overly short responses
- focused on the historical / mythological / political context of the work and did not sufficiently examine the features of the work itself in relation to the context

- chose a question that did not fit well with their knowledge or tried to mould a question to suit them.
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Achievement standard 91203: Examine socio-political life in the classical world

Assessment

The examination questions were drawn from the themes identified in the 2023 Assessment Specifications: citizenship and society, culture and identity, empire and power, and social and political conflict.

Commentary

Primary-source material and subject-specific terminology is an expectation of the standard. Candidates who otherwise displayed a general knowledge of the topic that responded to the question did not achieve due to the lack of primary-source material. Candidates who were able to attribute quotes and use Latin or Greek terms tended to gain higher grades.

Popular topics were the Greco-Persian Wars, death of Julius Caesar, Battle of Actium, Solon's Reforms, Conflict of Orders, Spartacus' Revolt, and differences between the way classes participated differently in Rome.

There were more candidates using secondary-source quotations this year, including Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. While this could potentially add to the response, the candidates were not rewarded for this if they were the only quotations used, and candidates who gained higher grades refrained from using them.

Candidates who wrote about source limitations seldom gained higher marks unless they integrated the critique into their argument. Candidates who talked about why a source might or might not be reliable rarely gained higher grades unless there was an obvious need to do so.

Candidates who included the words from the question in their response were more focused and able to draw clear conclusions as a result. For instance, when responding to Question One some candidates failed to clearly state what the conflict they were writing about was.

Candidates who chose to explain, rather than narrate, were more likely to gain higher grades.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- included some Greek or Latin terms, correctly used, and may have included quotes / paraphrasing
- focused on one aspect of the question
- wrote straightforward responses that did not go into extra detail
- had short, simple conclusions.

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

- included detail, such as names, dates, and solid facts, in their response, though these might not have been linked to a wider cultural context
- included relevant and attributed primary sources in their response, though they might not have been explained in depth

- included more explanation than narrative (though narrative may have been included).

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

- wrote structured responses that used the words of the question and stayed focused
- included consistently relevant primary-source evidence that was explained and linked to the question
- concentrated on explanation over narrative
- included consistently relevant detail that was explained and clearly linked to the question
- showed depth of knowledge and understanding of the context and question
- linked discussion of the wider cultural context to the question.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not respond to the question
- wrote everything they knew about a context (e.g. slavery) without linking it to the question
- did not write enough, or wrote irrelevant responses
- did not include any primary sources or subject-specific terminology
- chose the wrong question for their knowledge.