



JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2000

CLASSICAL STUDIES

HIGHER AND ORDINARY LEVELS

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL

1. Introduction

The Junior Certificate Examination Higher Level Classical Studies paper comprises questions on ten topics. Five topics are drawn from the Greek World and five from the Roman World. Students are expected to have studied five topics – two from the Greek World, two from the Roman World, and one further topic from either the Greek World or the Roman World. Questions are set on each of the ten topics. Each topic carries 80 marks. Questions set in Section (b) of each topic are less difficult on the Ordinary Level paper than on the Higher Level paper. Questions set in Sections (a) and (c) on each topic are the same at both levels. The total number of marks for the paper is 400.

2. Performance of Candidates

A total of 419 students sat the Classical Studies Higher Level Paper in 2000. This is a decrease on last year and part of a continuing trend in recent years, as **Appendix 1** shows.

The percentage results of the 2000 Higher Level examination were as follows:

A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
13.4	30.3	29.1	19.1	5.5	2.6	-

This represents a C+ rate of 72.8% and an E- rate of 8.1%

These results are in keeping with those of recent years, as shown in **Appendix 1**. The percentage results of 1997, 1998 and 1999 are shown in that Appendix.

3. Analysis of Paper

Topic 1. The Wrath of Achilles

This is one of the most popular topics and is usually taken by more than 80% of candidates. In general, the response of the students this year to the questions on this topic was excellent. In Section (a), the questions were very well answered, with the possible exception of (vi).

In Section (b) very good answers were presented on the character of Achilles. There was evidence of a high level of debate and discussion in class time as well as a detailed knowledge of facts. Candidates demonstrated a familiarity with the text and consistently achieved high marks in this section.

Section (c) was also answered very well by the majority of candidates. A small number had difficulty identifying the comparison between the waves and the Trojans sweeping over the walls in (ii). As a consequence, their answers to (iii) were also vague.

Topic 2. Greece and Persia

This is the least popular of the topics, taken by only a very small number of candidates. In general, it was not well done. Candidates had difficulty with some of the factual questions in (a); this is unusual at Higher level.

Section (b) also proved challenging as some candidates did not seem to have the required depth of knowledge.

Examiners noted that in Section (c) the process of ostracisation was not clearly understood by a number of candidates.

Topic 3. The Life and Death of Socrates

This is a popular topic, chosen by almost one third of the candidates. Section (a) was answered well in general. However, question (ii) proved problematic as few candidates could identify Socrates' 'earliest accusers'.

Answers to Section (b) displayed excellent imaginative responses together with a firm understanding of Socrates' beliefs and of the Socratic method.

Section (c) was also very well answered, although a small number of students were unclear as to the nature of a Sophist.

As in previous years, the examiners noted the manner in which teachers bring this topic alive and engage the imagination of the pupils.

Topic 4. Mycenae and Troy

This is also a popular topic. Almost 40% of candidates chose it. Section (a) was quite well answered. The examiners were surprised to see that a number of candidates did not know the answer to (i), the modern location of Hisarlik. The least popular question was (iv) but those who did attempt it, knew the correct answer.

In Section (b) many of the answers to question (i) contained little or no reference to the historical and archaeological background to the find. Those answers indicated a less than clear knowledge of Schliemann's finds at Troy and Mycenae and his contribution to archaeology. On the other hand, answers to (iv) displayed an impressive knowledge of carbon dating, stratigraphy and dendrochronology.

The questions in Section (c) were answered satisfactorily in general. However, the identification of the 'throne-room' proved problematic for some.

Topic 5. The Athenian Acropolis.

Almost 60% of candidates take this topic. It is a topic where really excellent responses are given by a number

of candidates each year. On the other hand, a small number of candidates seem to find the architectural and artistic terminology problematic. This creates a wider spectrum of results than in most other topics. This year was no exception.

In Section (a), questions (iii), (iv) and (v) proved difficult for some candidates. In (v) there was some confusion between Greek and Roman drama: Plautus and Terence were cited as Greek playwrights.

There were some excellent answers to Section (b). There were also quite a few candidates who showed little familiarity with the Ionic order of architecture.

Again, in Section (c) there were candidates who gave excellent responses and many others who were not familiar with the Parthenon frieze.

Section B The Roman World

Topic 6. The Quest of Aeneas.

This topic is very popular. Almost 75% of students study it. In Section (a) the questions were well answered, with the exception of (i) on the Judgement of Paris. Candidates showed little knowledge of this item.

Section (b) gave ample opportunity to candidates to show their knowledge of the Fall of Troy. Most students did just that but a small minority confused Virgil's account with their reading of the **Iliad**.

Section (c) was particularly well answered, with many creative responses to question (iii). Some students displayed an impressive understanding of issues such as the nature of *furor*, *pietas*, friendship, Virgil's pacifism, pathos and Augustan propaganda.

Topic 7. The Roman Theatre – Comedy: The Swaggering Soldier.

This is also a very popular topic with about 50% of candidates taking it. Section (a) was reasonably well answered but examiners noted some surprising lapses. For instance, the answers to questions (ii), (iv) and (vi) were not well known while question (iii) was very badly answered in general.

In Section (b) candidates wrote well on the actions of Periplectomenus but some had difficulty recalling things he said.

Section (c) also proved problematic for a number of candidates. Very many were unable to explain the term 'stock character'.

On the whole, examiners noted a lack of knowledge of the play and of contextual issues (e.g. *scaenae frons*) on the part of a number of students.

Topic 8. The Life and Times of Julius Caesar.

Almost one third of candidates take this topic. Answers to Section (a) were uneven in that there were some excellent responses and some which displayed little or no historical knowledge.

Section (b) also called for knowledge of historical events and the same problem arose. A number of candidates were unable to differentiate between essential and trivial facts. There were, of course, those students who gave excellent answers. Those students also gave very good answers to Section (c). On the other hand, there was a significant minority unfamiliar with Pompey, Clodius and Cicero.

Topic 9. A Roman City – Pompeii.

This is one of the more popular topics, with almost three-quarters of the candidates taking it. Section (a) was very well answered in general but some candidates were challenged by questions (iii) and (v).

Section (b) was very well done also. The examiners noted that the students based their responses on facts and not 'flights of fancy'.

In section (c) candidates displayed an impressive knowledge and appreciation of the decoration and design of Roman houses.

Topic 10. The Roman Army.

Approximately 50% of candidates chose this topic. While Section (a) was well done, examiners noted that a minority of students had difficulty defining a cohort and the job of a centurion. There was evidence that a

substantial number of candidates were unfamiliar with the Arch of Titus.

Section (b) elicited a large number of very good responses.

In Section (c) questions (i) and (ii) were also well answered, but some difficulties were encountered in (iii) and (iv).

4. Overall General Comment

Candidates of Junior Certificate Classical Studies, Higher Level, continue to display a high level of knowledge and interest in the subject. As in other years, the examiners noted that the students seemed to enjoy the challenge of the paper and demonstrated enthusiasm and interest in the topics. The examiners feel that this mirrors the enjoyment the students get from their studies in the classroom. It is important to note that this interest in the subject is displayed by candidates in general and not only those who score highest in this terminal examination.

There was also a small number of students who did not do at all well on this paper. Those candidates displayed a lack of motivation and preparation. There was also evidence of insufficient care when reading and analysing questions. Those scripts were characterised by questions badly answered, and sections of topics or whole topics omitted.

5. Recommendations for Teachers and Students

- The examiners recommend that the factual knowledge base of each topic be

given due attention at all times.
- Students are encouraged to pay attention to the architectural terminology in Topic 5, **The Athenian Acropolis**.
- Students are also encouraged to appreciate the contextual background of Topic 7, **Roman Theatre**.

APPENDIX 1

Percentage results in Classical Studies Junior Certificate, Higher Level (1997-1999)

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1997	522	18.8	34.8	22.6	18.8	3.0	1.7	0.2
1998	472	16.9	26.0	26.0	19.7	8.0	2.1	0.2
1999	438	15.3	26.0	25.6	21.5	8.0	3.6	-

ORDINARY LEVEL

1. Introduction

The Junior Certificate Examination Ordinary Level Classical Studies paper comprises questions on ten topics. Five topics are drawn from the Greek World and five from the Roman World. Students are expected to have studied five topics – two from the Greek World, two from the Roman World, and one further topic from either the Greek World or the Roman World. Questions are set on each of the ten topics. Each topic carries 80 marks. Questions set in Section (b) of each topic are less difficult on the Ordinary Level paper than on the Higher Level paper. Questions set in Sections (a) and (c) on each topic are the same at both levels. The total number of marks for the paper is 400.

2. Performance of Candidates

A total of 123 students sat the Classical Studies Ordinary Level Paper in 2000. This is a slight increase on last year, as **Appendix 2** shows.

The percentage results of the 2000 Ordinary Level examination were as follows:

A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
0.8	6.5	11.4	25.2	27.6	20.3	8.1

This represents a C+ rate of 18.7% and an E- rate of 56.0%

These results are in keeping with those of recent years, as shown in **Appendix 2**. The percentage results of 1997, 1998 and 1999 are shown in that Appendix. The number of candidates scoring a grade E or less has been

consistently very high on this paper. Examiners have noted in recent years that far too many candidates approach the paper with little interest and preparation. Both sections (a) and (c) of each Topic are common with the Higher level. While it has been noted in recent years that candidates at Ordinary level have not done well on Section (a), it will be seen in the analysis of the 2000 paper that a large number of candidates also did particularly badly on Section (a).

An encouraging feature of this years' results was the number of candidates who achieved grade C+ compared to previous years.

2. Analysis of Paper

Topic 1. The Wrath of Achilles

This is the most popular topics among Ordinary Level candidates and is usually taken by more than 85% of them. Those who achieved grade D+ made a very good attempt at the questions. Both sections (a) and (c) proved problematic for the less successful candidates. Section (b) was relatively well answered as it afforded the candidates a broader canvas than the other sections, but many did not identify Achilles' followers with the Myrmidons in question (i).

Topic 2. Greece and Persia

This is not a popular topic, with fewer than 20% of students taking it. Sections (a) and (b) were rather poorly answered, in general. In Section (c) questions (i) and (ii) were rather well answered but (iii) and (iv) also proved problematic.

Topic 3. The Life and Death of Socrates

Almost 60% of candidates had studied this, and it was one of the better answered topics. In Section (a) question (ii) proved problematic as did question (iv) in Section (b). Section (c) was generally well answered.

It is interesting to note that this topic seems to capture the imagination of the vast majority of the students who take it. There seems to be less difficulty in retaining knowledge and understanding of the text than in other topics. This is seen particularly in the answers to Section (a).

Topic 4. Mycenae and Troy

This topic was chosen by about 45% of candidates. In Section (a) questions (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) were not well answered.

In Section (b) candidates displayed a rather sketchy knowledge of Schliemann and of 'other types of graves'. A minority of students did very well on Section (c).

Topic 5. The Athenian Acropolis

Approximately 35% of candidates attempted this topic. Those who did not do well had particular difficulty in all questions in Section (a). While Section (b) was reasonably well answered, the questions on the Parthenon frieze in Section (c) were very poorly done.

Section B The Roman World

Topic 6. The Quest of Aeneas.

This is a quite popular topic with 60% of candidates taking it. Both Sections (a) and (c) proved highly problematic for the students who did badly on the paper as a whole. However, a significant number of students did well on all three sections. Although Section (b) was reasonably well done by all students there was evidence of confusion between the **Aeneid** and the **Iliad**.

Topic 7. The Roman Theatre – Comedy: The Swaggering Soldier.

Almost 50% of candidates chose this topic. A similar pattern emerged here as in a number of the other topics: those who did not do well on the paper in general had particular difficulties with both Sections (a) and (c). As in other topics, there was also a significant number who did quite well on the topic. Section (b) was generally well answered, with almost all candidates having a knowledge of Palaestrio.

Topic 8. The Life and Times of Julius Caesar.

This topic was chosen by about 35% of candidates. In general, it was poorly handled by candidates, many of whom had particular difficulty in Section (c). Examiners noted that a lack of depth of knowledge of

the text was the main problem. However, it was also noted that some students had difficulty interpreting what was being asked of them.

Topic 9. A Roman City – Pompeii.

Almost 70% of students took this very popular topic. As in other topics, Section (a) was not well answered by a substantial number of students. However, Section (b) was also particularly badly answered. This was surprising as it called for a knowledge of daily life in Pompeii. The examiners would have expected the majority of students to display this knowledge.

On the other hand, Section (c) was well answered. This indicated a better knowledge of the physical surroundings in Pompeii than the way of life in the city.

Topic 10. The Roman Army.

About 30% of students presented this topic. In general Section (a) was answered quite well, with only questions (i), (ii) and (vi) presenting any difficulty.

The answers to Section (b) were disappointing in that many students had little or no knowledge of siege warfare.

As in other topics, a substantial number of candidates did not have the knowledge to do well in Section (c).

4. Overall General Comment

It is clear from the analysis in Section 3 of this report that Ordinary level candidates in Classical Studies are having increasing difficulty with the examination paper. As has already been noted, both Sections (a) and (c) are common to Higher and Ordinary Levels. In recent years, examiners' reports have highlighted some difficulties at Ordinary Level with Section (c) of each topic, but further problems with Section (a) have become apparent this year. The problem seems to be twofold: firstly, many students have not made the necessary preparation for the examination due to lack of work, motivation or interest; this results in difficulty addressing the factual questions in Section (a). Secondly, the level of comprehension required to answer Section (c) appears too challenging for some Ordinary Level candidates. In short, the common

element of this paper, which comprises 66%, proved problematic for a number of candidates.

5. Recommendations for Teachers and Students

- Students are encouraged to pay close attention to the factual base of the different topics. This would allow them to tackle the Section (a) of each topic with more success.
- Students are also encouraged to take time during the examination to read the questions carefully. This would allow them to understand more fully what is being asked of them.

APPENDIX 2

Percentage results in Classical Studies Junior Certificate,

Ordinary Level (1997-1999)

Year	Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG
1997	91	3.3	7.7	21.9	24.2	21.9	15.4	5.4
1998	60	-	3.3	13.3	26.6	25.0	23.3	8.3
1999	101	2.0	5.9	7.9	20.8	28.7	22.8	11.9