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TOP SCHOLAR



Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Scholarship 2025 Classical Studies

Time allowed: Three hours
Total score: 24

ANSWER BOOKLET

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

Write your THREE answers in this booklet. Start your answer to each question on a new page. Carefully number each question.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–23 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

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93409

Q8:

Homer's women are reflective – keenly placed mirrors of all that surrounds them. The varying array of women in the Iliad exemplify successive stages of a Greek woman's life; a wife, a mother, a widow, a captive. By encapsulating roles such as the 'prize', or the desperate wife, a lack of agency and tragic existence is revealed; "evil" and suffrage is essential to their very being.

One mortal woman, swamped by guilt can play the role of the scapegoat. Helen, a regretful, beautiful woman is attributed blame for the Trojan war itself. While Homer does not discuss the origins of the conflict overtly, Helen herself only speaks of guilt and sorrow – yet holds little to no presumed agency. In book 3, Helen sits, tearfully embroidering a war scene. At the walls of Troy, as a battle for her hand occurs below, she is literally at the sidelines of her own life. "She embroidered the battles of the horse taming Trojans, and the bronze-shirted Achaeans, which they endured at the hands of Ares, because of her". She holds blame throughout these lines, consumed by guilt – a unique display of femininity. Embroidery, a traditionally female task is used to construct the image of a battle, a sphere she cannot enter. By constructing this scene in a conventionally feminine way, she is illustrating involvement in something she cannot enter. Furthermore, this demonstrates that her gender is interwoven with her guilt. Helen's beauty is why she was presented as a prize by Venus at the judgement of Paris, her epithet "white-armed" is only elsewhere used for divinity. Her extreme femininity and beauty is important to her character, it is how the war began. Embroider is therefore a double-entendre here, she is the one who created this war – she is embroidered with guilt, creating the destruction. She expresses extreme self-loathing at this, calling herself a "Ice-chilled bitch that I am!". Yet, Helen presents the lack of agency held by women in the ancient world altogether, particularly as she argues with Aphrodite. As the goddess tells her to make love to her husband, Helen cries "Great lady, why do you want to fool me so? Where will you lead me now, perhaps to great Phrygia?". Here Aphrodite may act as a physical manifestation of human's subjugation to forces larger than themselves, such as desire. Logically, Helen does not wish to leave, yet love (or its incarnation) leads her to the bed chambers. Mortal women hereby can express larger ideas, not only of their own lack of choice, but of fate, free will and divinity.

Mortal women can fulfil the role of the 'prize', acting as physical manifestations of glory to be traded and sold. This is most evidently presented through concubine figures, Chryseis and Briseis. Chryseis, the daughter of priest of Apollo, Chryses, is taken as spoils from the sacking of a town by war general Agamemnon – as is Briseis by fearsome warrior Achilles. Here the figures clearly do not have agency, expressed by their capture. However, divine connection offers a sort of refuge. Chryses intently demands the return of his daughter, begging Agamemnon. Upon his refusal, Phoebus Apollo rains plague on the Achaean camp. While Agamemnon must begrudgingly return his "prize", he demands retribution. He exclaims, "If our generous Argives can bring me a prize, a match for all my desires, well and good". The insinuation of "a match for all my desires" is violating and dark, clearly the role of these particular mortal woman is to entertain men; a sort of boastful, defiling ritual. Importantly, Agamemnon takes the woman already owned by Achilles, Briseis, causing a major rift between the pair. Achilles here is outraged because Briseis is embodying *timē*, an object acting as a physical manifestation of honour. *Kleos*, or "everlasting glory", is perceived as a life beyond death. While the constraints of the mortal world crumble away, one's name lives on in forever. Therefore, by revoking Achilles' woman, Agamemnon is imposing on his honour – is robbing him of life. Here the role of a mortal woman in unknowingly powerful. Women control the lives of men purely by existing; Briseis' may

93404

possess no agency, yet she defines the story of the trojan war itself. Achilles' reaction is extreme, refusing to fight, leading to the death of countless comrades, and even his beloved Patroclus. In this sense, the role of mortal women is obscenely powerful; unwillingly controlling outcomes of the war with greater impact than many gods.

Sarah Farron claims "Homer formed his women to depict the agonies of war", exemplified by the despairing role women fill. The established purpose of a woman in the Iliad is to lament; a process defined by anguish, tearful speeches and suffering. Yet, some may see this process to be a potentially misogynistic role: when a woman only speaks of great men, her words eulogise his greatness – her suffering is preliminary step to assure his excellence, arete, and kleos lives on. The more severe a figure's loss, the greater the presence must have been. In this sense, the Iliad's women can never truly escape their own marginalisation. One may perceive this in Briseis' lament upon her three brothers who "all went on one day to destruction", or Andromache denoting that as she has no other family, Hector fulfils the role of "father, mother and brother". This is perhaps why no immortal being ever interacts with Andromache, the only value and meaning brought into her life is by Hector. These passages invoke pathos, and sympathy for mortal women, while highlighting their inescapable reliance on men. Her anguish leaves a golden, glorious shadow, yet she is left behind. It is important to emphasise that a female role cannot attain glory in this epic. Functionally, this means that a pivotal role of women is to be left behind. Andromache, the loving wife of Hector is acutely aware of this role and attempts to leave it – begging her husband to remain inside the walls of Troy. She understands that with the death of her husband, she cannot protect herself or her son. Though sympathetic, Hector assures that he must fulfil his duty, adorning his "horse plumed helmet". Solemnly, baby Astyanax is frightened by this piece of armour and is unable to recognise his father – at which Andromache "laughs through her tears". This scene is a clear representation of the tragic role women fulfil in war. With no agency, Andromache must simply laugh through her tears, hurtling towards her fate. Upon the death of Hector, Andromache is consumed by this role, "She began to tear at her hair, and cast the glowing head-covering far away. Indeed, she shrieked at the sight of her son". Lacerating her face, ripping at her hair, Andromache is defiling her own 'feminine' qualities – poignantly highlighting the impossibility of her role. She is defacing her own subjugation and lack of ability to prevent tragedy, a true moment of gendered pathos. Most devastatingly, the sight of her son causes her to shriek with horror. This terror is fueled by her understanding of violence, that without the mightiest of trojan warriors, Troy will fall. She shrieks because of what the audience already understands, quotes from Agamemnon and Nestor instruct "let every Achean rape a trojan wife" and "kill the baby in the trojan womb" – she will become a concubine, her son will be dashed against the walls of Troy.

Ultimately, the various roles fulfilled by mortal women are wide-spanning, but all possess an ultimate lack of agency and an inescapable pathos. These 'mirror' women present the world around them so broadly, one may almost forget they are doomed.

Q11: To what extent do the supernatural forces take the focus away from the human tragedy of the narrative in the Aeneid?

The supernatural forces in the Aeneid do not distract from human tragedy, they rather amplify the inevitable clutches of fate; a tragically unchangeable narrative. Not only does Virgil's Aeneid itself subversively present the pivotal attributes of a textbook tragedy – suffering, downfall of the protagonist, and an unhappy ending – all which divine presence only exemplify further.

93404

To little extent does the presence of supernatural forces take away from the devastation created by human tragedy, especially within interpersonal relationships. Loss permeates from each book of the Aeneid, with various figures meeting their fated demise. One such example, Queen Dido, upholds the argument that supernatural intervention only maximises tragedy. A capable, clever and beautiful Carthaginian queen, Dido leads the successful beginning of an empire. An epithet provided by Virgil reads "doomed Dido", utilising supernatural ideas of fate to pre-emptively explain her demise. During his quest to reach Italy, Aeneas finds himself on her shores. He is amazed. The workers of Carthage bustled like "busy bees", constructing towers, buildings, art and architecture, her ruling is clearly successful, poised and brilliant. However, the presence of the supernatural instantly begins to ruin her. Struck by Cupid, Dido is "poisoned" with love, an intentional word choice to demonstrate destruction and corruption. Cupid's arrow is even described in an epic metaphor, where Dido is a "deer with the death reed embedded in her side". Such a description is overtly tragic. A deer, something pure, innocent and well meaning, does not understand the cruel fate it will be met with. The ruler begins to obsess over Aeneas, due to forces entirely unbeknownst to her. Despite her chastity due to her deceased husband, crazed Dido is even led into a cave by Juno's interference, where she makes love with Aeneas – defiling her own duty. Human tragedy builds, as she integrates Aeneas into her life, dressed in a "purple Tyranian cloak". This emphasises wealth and excess, as the pair ignore Carthage, splurging on riches and luxury. Interrupted by Mercury, Aeneas is scolded and instructed to return to his mission, a clear example of divine intervention. Here, divine presence does not take the focus away from human tragedy, it causes it. Aeneas even states, "I sail to Italy not of my own will". Horrified, a frenzied Dido realises that she is abandoned, left to a crumbling city, a nightmare of political alliances and no child to further her lineage – she has failed. Finally, Dido is ultimately ended by supernatural presence. At her altar, the water turns a "thick black"; an omen she interprets as her own death. Thus, the queen tricks her beloved sister Anna into building a pyre, where Dido grotesquely commits a bloody suicide as her city burns. Here Dido directly fulfils tragedian works, such as Medea – a crazed queen cursed by love. Irrefutably, the tragic scene is amplified by these supernatural forces; they led her to her doom.

Character's interactions and fates are the most human of all tragedy – none of which are taken away from by divinity. In fact, some moments are heavily reliant on the supernatural in order to manufacture pathos. In one such example, Aeneas reunites with his beloved father in book 6, "wrapping his arms around his father's neck"; only for his hands to simply pass through the ghostly form. Aeneas weeps, trying three times to hug his beloved Anchises, yet is unsuccessful. Here the tragedy is created entirely from supernatural elements. Similarly, Juturna, the divine sister of Rutuli warrior Turnus attempts to save him from his fate. She whisks the man away from battles, even tricking him onto a boat led by nymphs in book 11. Despite this, Turnus must instruct Juturna that her efforts are futile – even a divine figure like her cannot stop the trajectory of his life. Where this becomes pivotally tragic is within the final scene of the epic. A defeated Turnus begs for mercy, asking Aeneas to spare his life. While Aeneas initially obliges, he spots the golden belt of Pallas glinting in the sunlight. In a fit of furor, Turnus is brutally murdered, even described as an indignity in final line: "and with a groan for that indignity, his soul fled off into the gloom below". Various factors ensure the tragedy here. Primarily, that this death was entirely preventable, as emphasised in quote "For Turnus, there will come a day where he would give anything to see an untouched Pallas, and he will hate this day, hate that belt taken". The tragedy is layered by Virgil with precision. The initial death of Pallas is such a tragedy that Aeneas instructs a thousand men to

93404

carry his body home, a representation of the sheer weight of his loss. Additionally, Turnus' bloodlust and desire for war is also unwarranted – incited by the fury Alecto as instructed by Juno. Just as “the evil goddess of grief” sent violent madness and frenzy into the heart of Queen Amata, she created an intense bloodlust in Turnus. This amplifies human tragedy obscenely, because without divine intervention there would likely be no war at all. Every individual human loss becomes a devastating, unjust tragedy. Furthermore, by slaughtering Turnus, Aeneas is opposing the instructions of his father, ignoring the value of clementia (mercy); he did not “spare the conquered” as the roman arts instruct. The story ends on a note described by David Mendelsohn as “nationalistic arrogance” and “repressive violence”, not glorious at all.

Finally, supernatural forces do not take away from human tragedy when they simply do not involve themselves. Some of the Aeneid's most devastating moments originate from pure, human action; they are not overshadowed, they are highlighted. Since the majority of the epic is shrouded in divinity, supernatural qualities and intervention, the moments without hold a melancholy silence. Adam Parry claims that “The Aeneid enforces the fine paradox that all the wonders of the world's greatest establishment are by no means more important than the emptiness of human suffering”, a statement not only true regarding roman virtue – but also divinity. While the gods may play a wonderful role, they by no means overshadow that silence – the emptiness – of human suffering. This is most observable within book 9, the death of warriors Nisus and Eurylaus. The pair, loving each other deeply, die in one such moment lacking divinity. Beloved comrades sneak into the enemy camp, seeking glory and virtue, but are eventually caught. Nisus is forced to watch as his adoring Eurylaus is brutally killed, a wound described “like a purple flower mauled by a plough”. In absolute anguish, the warrior continues to fight, while his comrade is beheaded, head “lolling like a poppy in the rain”. Virgil's vivid, gory descriptions use floral imagery, juxtaposing the horrific brutality of war with the fragility of life, or even their gentle love for one another. This moment could not be overshadowed. Supernatural focuses do not need to be included here, as the only true importance is the brutal, saddening death of two young men. One may compare Lausus sacrificing himself for his father, Mezentius, or Aeneas' wife Creusa lost in the flames of Troy. Small, quiet losses are essential. The fragility of life cannot be overshadowed by godliness, only highlighted – a pause.

To conclude, Virgil's Aeneid balances the supernatural and human well, upholding the depth of tragedy, and letting it shine alone when necessary. The tragic conventions are enmeshed with the inescapable clutches of fate, demonstrating that “magic and confusion” are simply a part of the unexplainable aspects of life.

Section B Discuss at least three of the resources and the insight they give into how the greeks made use of the gods for political purposes

Various resources display the Greeks making use of gods for political purposes, whether an overt display of wealth, power, a tool to foster tension or a show of strength and victory.

Clearly there is a militaristic aspect to worship, shown by various sources in the use of the gods for political purposes. Resource A, an excerpt from historian Herodotus, displays an overt example of gods in a political context – justifying their political desires with divine means and alienating those with different customs. Evidently, a city-state would never desire to be invaded and would not wish to surrender to a foreign king. Instead of simply

93404

highlighting that they wish to maintain power and prestige, the explanation instead denotes the Persians as less godly, even barbaric. This is fulfilled by comparing honour towards gods, "For there are many great reasons why we should not do this, even if we so desired; first and foremost, the burning and destruction of the adornments and temples of our gods, whom we are constrained to avenge to utmost". A politically united front is important in order to oppose invasion. By describing the destruction of temples and adornments, Greeks may use their religious prestige to separate themselves. As a society that greatly honours piety and worship "to the utmost", they can diminish the Persians by presenting them as less holy, less pious, and therefore less civilised. This practically villainises Persians entirely, into foreign, barbaric people with no understanding of classical customs – quietly deeming them unfit to ever rule this land. Now, the peoples are ideologically opposite. With the groups now diametrically opposed, the source then states, "as long as one Athenian is left alive, we will make no agreement with Xerxes". Gods are herein used politically, a way to divide – a sort of political propaganda. Their deeper desire is expressed in the following lines, "Greeks in blood and speech... likeness in our way of life". By utilising religion to establish cultural identity, they present a stronger front. One may compare similar ideas presented in Homer's Odyssey, where Cyclopes are presented as barbaric and monstrous, in a land without gods; this justifies violence and barbarity towards them. If battle does ensue, the assertion that these peoples are inherently godless ensures a ruthless, desperate fight to expel them.

The transactional nature of worship can be clearly understood through various sources, even sometimes working as a sort of 'double' worship, strategically managing to benefit oneself and the gods simultaneously. This is quite evident in source D, a panhellenic sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, where temples were built competitively. This style of worship is particularly interesting, erecting treasuries for the sake of worship, but underlying for the purpose of personal prowess. In this way, the temple built is almost a temple for oneself – as the existence of it provides one with prestige, a degree of glory and admiration. One may note that this appears similar to the benefits a god may reap from such a structure. Essentially then, the word choice of "use of the gods" is important – not honour, nor worship, but "use". This delineates an idea of gain and strategy; emphasising that humans may intend to devote their time to religion for ulterior motivations. Resource D displays a treasury with doric pillars, a pediment and spoils from the victory of the battle of Marathon; a conventional, structured building. The metopes present images of heroes such as Herakles and Theseus, suggesting multiple ideas. Not only does this demonstrate a proximity with the gods and their offspring, but it underlines the capacity to humanise and associate with divinity. Imagery of Theseus, an Athenian hero, conversing with Athena could suggest pride and association. Ability to converse or to fight are associated with both heroes and spokespeople; drawing a connection between those worth honouring and those in power.

Power can be strengthened through associations. Resource C displays another temple, upon the acropolis in Athens, celebrating Athena Nike. Individual variations of gods can be extremely important for political purposes, such as variations of Aphrodite to present to "common people", Aphrodite Pandemos, as opposed to Aphrodite for a wealthy or established woman, Aphrodite Urania (celestial), or a spartan woman, Aphrodite Areia (of war). Just as different versions of the same gods all serve individual purposes, Athena Nike is a version particularly pertaining to victory. The friezes on the temple clearly display in depth battles, reinforcing the idea specifically. A temple may incite feelings of awe, holiness or excitement. By converging this with the success of Athens, it makes the visitor associate such feelings with the political state of Athens, becoming a stronger supporter overall. This is a clear political intention. By directly opposing scenes such as the Amazonomachy and

93404

Gigantomachy with Greek battles, it again empowers the visitor, drawing subtle associations. Just as ancestors fought in the Trojan War – a 10 year war, the Gigantomachy was too – citizens see themselves in the images of their gods. The proximity of such images creates a sense of power and possibility, just as source A utilises religion to empower a stronger, more united Athenian front. This idea of spectacle to create faith and power in the city state is again discussed in source B, where the townsfolk “believe the woman was the goddess herself”. Parades, temples, friezes, are all visual ways of uplifting a certain idea into the mind of one’s citizens. The worship of divinity and the devotion to political figures is truly not very different – therefore blurring the lines between them creates a heightened sense of belonging, strength and unity. Pisistratus tricks the Athenians to accept him as their ruler, just as the gods use temples to be accepted as powerful.

Ultimately, one can be entirely strategic with their devotion to the gods, reflecting positively upon themselves and their own ideals or plans. Power, military prowess, unity and wealth can all be used transactionally to the benefit of the Athenians