



Shrewsbury School

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2016

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

(1 Hour)

Instructions to candidates:

Answer QUESTION 1 and QUESTION 2. Each is worth 25 marks.

Answer on lined paper.

I. Read the following passage and answer the questions.

Athene arrives at the palace of Odysseus.

She found the insolent suitors sitting in front of the door on the hides of oxen they themselves had slaughtered, playing with counters; their squires and pages were busy round them, some blending wine and water in the mixing bowls, and others carving meat in lavish portions and wiping down the tables with sponges before they set them ready.

The first to see her was Telemachus the godlike youth, who was sitting disconsolate among the Suitors, imagining how his noble father might come back out of the blue, drive the Suitors headlong from the house, and so regain his royal honours, and reign over his own once more. Full of these visions he caught sight of Athene and set off at once for the porch, ashamed that a stranger should be kept standing at the gates. He went straight up to his visitor, grasped his right hand, took his bronze spear and gave him cordial greetings.

‘Welcome, friend!’ he said. ‘You can tell us what has brought you here when you have had some food.’

With this he led the way and Pallas Athene followed. Once inside the lofty hall, he took her spear and put it by one of the great pillars in a wooden rack among the many spears of the patient Odysseus. He then conducted her to a beautiful carved chair, over which he spread a linen cloth, and seated her there with a stool for her feet.

HOMER, *Odyssey* I, 107-131

- a) What typical Greek custom is Telemachus showing Athene here? [1]
- b) Why does nobody recognise Athene? Give **two** details. [2]
- c) Why has Athene come to Ithaca? [2]
- d) How skilful and effective are Homer’s powers of description and characterisation in this passage? Refer closely to the text in your answer. [20]

TOTAL: [25]

2 Read the following passage and answer the questions.

The Roman historian Tacitus, writing about 50 years after the events happened, describes the efforts of the Emperor Nero to keep his subjects happy.

In an effort to get credit for himself that as far as he was concerned, nowhere was as pleasant for him as being in Rome, Nero prepared banquets in the public places, and used the whole city as his private house. Of these entertainments, the most famous for its luxury and reputation was the one prepared by Tigellinus*, and I shall now describe it as means of an example, so that the same levels of extravagance may not have to be described too often. He built a pontoon on Agrippa's lake, on which a party was put on-board, and it was moved by other vessels towing it. These tug vessels were decorated with gold and ivory, and the degenerate rowers were arranged according to age and their knowledge of vices. He had sought birds and beasts from remote countries, and sea creatures all the way from the ocean. On the edges of the lake stood brothels packed with ladies of nobility, and on the opposite bank there could be seen naked prostitutes – whose gestures and gyrations were already obscene. And now that darkness was approaching, all the nearby groves and surrounding buildings resounded with song, and grew bright with lights. Nero, polluted by activities – some legal, others taboo - had not left out any debauchery by which he could act more debased, had he not a few days later been given in marriage to one of that herd of perverted people (his name was Pythagoras) in the manner of solemn weddings. The bridal veil was put over the emperor; soothsayers were sent; the dowry, the bridal couch and the wedding torches were all there – in short, everything was plainly open to view; acts which, even when it is a conventional wedding of man and wife, darkness covers.

TACITUS *Annals* XV.37

**Commander of the Praetorian Guard, (the Emperor's bodyguard)*

- a) From reading this passage, what do you think is the attitude of the writer towards Nero? [5]
- b) How trustworthy is this account? Would you say that Tacitus is fair or biased? [10]
- c) How skilful are Tacitus' powers of description and characterisation in this passage? Refer closely to the text in your answer. [10]

TOTAL: [25]