

Examination Preparation Questions

Virgil's Aeneid

Question One

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- the immediate actions of the Trojans in response to the events recounted in this extract
- why the Trojans responded in this way.

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- the symbolism used in this extract in relation to deception or destruction.
- how this imagery is linked to other events of deception and/or destruction in Book II.

'So we gave Sinon our trust, tricked by his blasphemy and cunning. His ruse, and his artificial tears, entrapped men whom neither Tydeus' son nor Larissaeon Achilles could subdue, for all their ten years of war and their fleet of a thousand keels. 'But now, to our distress a far more momentous and frightful experience befell us, and the unexpected shock of it disordered our minds. Laocoon, who had been chosen by lot to be priest of Neptune, happened at this moment to be sacrificing a fine bull at the altar of the cult, when, and I sicken to recall it, two giant arching sea-snakes swam over the calm waters from Tenedos, breasting the sea together and plunging towards the land .. Their fore-parts and their blood-red crests towered about the waves; the rest drove through the ocean behind, wreathing monstrous coils, and leaving a wake that roared and foamed. And now, with blazing and blood-shot eyes and tongues which flickered and licked their hissing mouths, they were on the beach. We paled at the sight and scattered; they forged on, straight at Laocoon. First each snake took one of his two little sons, twined round him, tightening, and bit, and devoured the tiny limbs. They next seized Laocoon, who had armed himself and was hastening to the rescue; they bound him in the giant spirals of their scaly length, twice round his middle, twice round his throat; and still their heads and necks towered above him.'

Question Two

Discuss at least TWO characteristics of Dido from this extract and elsewhere in the Aeneid.

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- The actions and speeches she makes in this extract.
- Her relationship with Aeneas and her reaction to his leaving.

But Dido, in trembling haste and frantic at her desperate design, burst through the doorway into the inner room. Her eyes were reddened and rolling, her cheeks quivered under a flush, and she was pale with the pallor of imminent death. In a mad dash she climbed the high funeral pile, and unsheathed the Trojan sword, a gift never meant for such use as this. Her sight rested on the garments which had come from Troy, and on the bed with its memories. She paused a little for tears and for a thought; and she cast herself down on the bed, and there spoke her last words: "Sweet relics, sweet so long as God and Destiny allowed, now receive my lifebreath, and set me free from this suffering. I have lived my life and finished the course which Fortune allotted me. Now my wraith shall pass in state to the world below. I have established a noble city. I have lived to see my own ramparts built. I have avenged my husband and punished the brother who was our foe. Happy, all too happy, should I have been, if only the Dardan ships had never reached my coast!" With this cry she buried her face in the bed and continued: "I shall die, and die unavenged; but die I shall. Yes, yes; this is the way I like to go into the dark. And my the heartless Trojan, far out on the deep, drink in the sight of my fire and take with him the evil omen of my death,"

Virgil, Aeneid, Book IV

Question Three

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- what Anchises desires to show Aeneas when he reaches the Underworld.
- what Aeneas' obedience to Anchises' instructions tell us about Aeneas' character.

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- features of Misenus' funeral that reflect Roman funerary customs.
- other situations from elsewhere in the Aeneid where Virgil's explanations remind the reader that this is a Roman story.

They flew up the gateway-jaws of pungent Avernus. Here they soared swiftly, skimming through the clear air, found the perch of their desire, and settled on a pair of adjacent treetops; and there, through the-branches, shone the contrasting gleam of gold. Like the mistletoe, which, though never seeded from the tree on which it grows, encircles a round trunk with saffron-coloured berries, and is always green with young leaves amid the forest even in winter's cold, so looked the leafy gold on the shadowy holm-oak tree, and so tinkled the metal-foil in a gentle wind. Aeneas snatched it down at once. It resisted, but avidly he broke it off, and carried it to the home of the prophetic Sibyl. Meanwhile on the shore the Trojans were weeping as bitterly as ever for Misenus as they paid the last dues to his ashes, which had no power to thank them now.

Virgil, Aeneid, Book VI

Question Four

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- the portrayal of Aeneas in this extract.
- how this compares to other portrayals of Aeneas later in the text.

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- impressions given of the Greeks in this extract.
- impressions given of the Greeks elsewhere in Book II.

'But now appeared Panthus, Othrys' son, who was priest of Apollo's temple on the citadel. He had escaped the Greek missiles and was running wildly to our doorway, leading his little grandson by the hand and carrying his sacred vessels and figures of his defeated gods. "Panthus," I cried, "Which is the point of greatest danger? Where do we take our stand?" I had hardly spoken when with a moan he replied, "The last day has come for our Dardan land. This is the hour which no effort of ours can alter. We Trojans are no more: no more is Ilium; no more the splendour of Teucrian glory. All now belong to Argos; it is Jupiter's remorseless will. For the Greeks are masters of our city and already it burns. The Horse stands towering within our ramparts, streaming armed men; and Sinon glorying in his triumph stirs the blaze. The main array of the Greeks,. all those thousands who come from imperial Mycenae, mass at the open gates. Others have blocked the narrow streets with weapons levelled, and their unsheathed swordpoints, a flickering line of steel, stand instantly ready to kill. Only the foremost sentinels at the gates attempt resistance, arid they fight blind."

'These words from Panthus, together with some impulse from above, sent me dashing into the fires and the fight, guided by the roaring, the shouts which rose to heaven, and the dark instinct of revenge.'

Question Five

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- the general purpose Anchises had in showing Aeneas the “descendants of my line”.
- THREE of the specific individuals or groups and their importance.

this river, like bees in a meadow on a fine summer day settling on flowers of every kind, when lilies gleaming white are sprinkled everywhere and all the fields are noisy with the hum, the souls of countless tribes and nations were flitting.

Aeneas was startled by the sudden sight, and in his bewilderment wished to hear his doubts explained, and find what might this river be which he saw before him, and who they were who crowded its banks with this numerous array. His father Anchises gave answer: 'They are souls who are destined to live in the body a second time, and at Lethe's wave they are drinking waters which abolish care and give enduring release from memory. I have long desired to tell you of them and point them out to you in person for you to see; I wished to detail them to you, these descendants of my line, that you might rejoice with me the more in having found Italy.' 'Oh, Father, am I therefore to believe that of these souls some go, soaring hence, up to the world beneath our sky and return once more into dreary matter? Why should the poor souls so perversely desire the light of our day?' 'I shall tell you, indeed, and I shall not leave you in suspense, my son.'

Anchises took up his tale and revealed each truth in due order.

Question Six

Discuss the messages delivered about Augustus in this extract.

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- At least TWO political ideas in this extract.
- How the messages delivered, relate to the reign of Augustus.

To Romans I set no boundary in space or time. I have granted them dominion, and it has no end. Yes, even the furious Juno, who now wearies sea, earth, and heaven with the strain of fear, shall amend her plans, and she and I will foster the nation which wears the toga, the Roman nation, masters of the world. My decree is made. Time in its five-year spans shall slip by till an age shall come when the House of Assaracus shall crush to subjection even Phthia and illustrious Mycenae, and conquer Argos, and hold mastery there. And then shall be born of proud descent from Troy, one Caesar, to bound his lordship by Ocean's outer stream and his fame by the starry sky, a Julius, bearing a name inherited from Iulus his great ancestor. One day you shall welcome to Heaven with peace in your heart this Julius, coming weighted with the spoils of the Orient; and he also shall be invoked to listen to prayers. Then shall our furious centuries lay down their warring arms, and shall grow kind. Silver-haired Fidelity, Vesta, and Quirine Romulus, with his brother Remus at his side, shall make the laws. And the terrible iron-constricted Gates of War shall shut; and safe within them shall stay the godless and ghastly Lust of Blood, propped on his pitiless piled armoury, and still roaring from gory mouth, but held fast by a hundred chains of bronze knotted behind his back.

Question Seven

Discuss at least TWO characteristics of Aeneas as he is portrayed in this extract.

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- How Aeneas acts as a man of *pietas* in the episodes that follow this.
- How does this compare to his moments of *furor* elsewhere in the text.

... She had proved a curse alike
for Troy and for her homeland; and she lurked concealed, a
hated thing, at the altar. Out flashed all the fire in me and I was
filled with a rage to avenge my home, and wreak punishment,
crime for crime. "So!" thought I, "shall she, unharmed,
again see Sparta and Mycenae the land of her birth, and enjoy
her state as a victorious queen? Shall she look once more on
her husband, her home, her parents and her children, and have
round her a retinue of Trojan ladies and lords of our land
to serve her? This, after Priam has fallen by the sword, Troy
blazed in flames, and our Dardan coast again and again sweated
with blood? Not so. There may be no great honour in killing
a woman; such victory can bring no fame. But I shall have
some credit for having stamped dead a mortal sin, and punished
a wrong which cries out for justice; and it will be joy
to have glutted my desire for the vengeance of the fire and
satisfied the ashes of all that were ever dear to me!"

Virgil, Aeneid, Book II

Question Eight

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- the characteristics of Dido as she is portrayed in this extract.
- why the reader sympathises with Dido in the Aeneid. Use evidence from Books I, IV and VI to support your answer.

... Then her fury broke: "Traitor, no goddess was ever your mother, nor was it Dardanus who founded your line. No, your parent was Mount Caucasus, rugged, rocky and hard, and tigers of Hyrcania nursed you ... For what need have I of concealment now? Why hold myself in check any longer, as if there could be anything worse to come? Has he spared a sigh or a look in response to my weeping, or has he once softened, or shed a tear of pity for one who loved him? Depth beyond depth of iniquity! Neither Supreme Juno, nor the Father who is Saturn's son can possibly look with the impartial eyes of justice on what is happening now. No faith is left sure in the wide world. I welcomed him, a shipwrecked beggar, and like a fool I allowed him to share my royal place. I saved his comrades from death and gave him back his lost fleet...The Furies have me now, they burn, they drive ... ! So, now, it seems, he has his orders from Apollo's own Lycian oracle, and next even the Spokesman of the Gods is sent by Jove himself to deliver through the air to him the same ghastly command! So I am to believe that the High Powers exercise their minds about such a matter and let concern for it disturb their calm! Oh, I am not holding you. I do not dispute your words. Go, quest for Italy before the winds ... "

Virgil, Aeneid, Book IV

Question Ten

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- Aeneas' behaviour after he receives the message that he must leave Carthage, until the time he leaves.
- the opinion that the Romans of Virgil's time might have had about Aeneas' behaviour in Carthage.

By night she flies hissing through the dark in the space between earth and sky, and never droops her eyelids in contented sleep. 10 the daylight she keeps watch, sometimes perched on the roof-top of a house and sometimes on the tall towers of a palace. And she strikes dread throughout great cities, for she is as retentive of news which is false and wicked as she is ready to tell what is true. Now, in great joy, she spread various talk among the peoples of Africa, repeating alike facts and fictions; how there had arrived one Aeneas, descended from the blood of Troy, and how the beautiful Dido had deigned to unite herself to him; and how they were now spending all the long winter together in comfort and self-indulgence, caught in the snare of shameful passion, with never a thought of their royal duty. Such was the talk which this foul goddess everywhere inserted into the conversations of men. Next she turned her quick steps towards King Iarbas, spoke to him, set his thoughts on fire, and heaped fuel on his fury.

Virgil, The Aeneid, Book IV

Question Eleven

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- Virgil's ideas about reincarnation as explained by Anchises to Aeneas.
- the connection between Anchises' explanation of these ideas on reincarnation and the pageant of heroes that follows.

Analyse in detail with supporting evidence:

- TWO other souls whom Aeneas' meets in the Underworld.
- Virgil's purpose in having Aeneas meet these characters.

'And now I belong
to the waves, and winds roll me to and fro along the shore.
So therefore I entreat you, you the Unvanquished, by Heaven's
joyous light and the airs you breathe, by your father, by your
hopes for lulus now growing to manhood, rescue me from my 5
plight. Either cast soil upon me yourself, for so you can if you
find your way back to Velia's harbour; or else, if any way there
be or if your Goddess Mother can show you how, since it is
not, I know, without divine sanction that you now prepare to
traverse the mighty rivers and float on the Stygian marsh, then
give your poor friend your hand and take me with you to
cross the waves, that at least in death I may rest at a place of
calm.' He had said his say when the Prophetess began her
answer: 'Palinurus, how dare you harbour this impertinent
desire? Shall you, before burial, look on waters of Styx, the 15
Furies' merciless river? Shall you approach the bank before
your time? Cease to imagine that divine decrees can be
changed
by prayers. But hear what I say, and remember; it may comfort
you in your hard plight.'

Virgil, The Aeneid, Book VI