

Candidate 3 evidence

Classical Studies Higher Resource Sheet			
Candidate Name		Scottish Candidate Number	
<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Societal expectations - Arts reflection of life - Sappho personal hymns/poetry - Sappho broke societal standards - Signpost <p>Paragraph 1 - Worship/Prayer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contractual - Kletic hymns - Cults - Appeal to women - Personal - Christian Prayer - Religion more personal <p><i>Source 1 - Hymn to Aphrodite</i> - "Subtly bedizened Aphrodite / deathless daughter of Zeus, wile-weaver, / i beg you, empress, do not smite me / with anguish and fever / but come as often, on request, / (hearing me from afar,) / you left your father's gleaming feast, / yoked tea to car...and there they were, and you, sublime / and smiling with immortal mirth / asked me what is wrong? Why am I calling you to earth?...who, Sappho, in a word, must grow...who wronged you so...come please and in this battle / stand at my side."</p> <p>Paragraph 2 - Sexuality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contractual - Kletic hymns - Cults - Appeal to women - Personal - Christian Prayer - Religion more personal <p><i>Source 2</i> - "My craving a fire / That singed my mind, / A brand you quenched."</p> <p><i>Source 3</i> - "flame runs radiating under / my skin; all that i see is hazy / my ears are all thunder."</p> <p>Paragraph 3 - Marriage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of control - Viewed as property - Married around 14 - Expected to be virgin - Sappho work about poetry - modern arranged marriage - Modern child marriage - Still in some countries <p><i>Source 4</i> - "because there is no other girl than she, / bridegroom - a child still, of such quality"</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows women's lives - less mainstream worship - Broke norms - Reality of marriage - Mainstream and non mainstream women <p><small>Quotes taken from <i>Stung with Love: Poems and Fragments, translated poems and fragments by Sappho</i></small></p>			

Exam: Assignment Write Up
Number of words: 1655
Writing time: 86 minutes

Email:

Q: To what extent does Sappho's poetry reflect the lives of women in Classical Greece?

In classical Greece, there were very strict expectations for how women were expected to act and behave. Some parts of daily life were similar for men and women but would be taken part in differently by each, for example, worship. Other parts of daily life were unique to women in how they were supposed to act towards certain things and their role in some practices like marriage. Art is something that has been able to preserve many parts of life in Ancient Greece and shows the lives of many people living in Greece in the classical period. A poet who managed to effectively reflect the lives of women in her work was Sappho of Lesbos. Sappho wrote predominantly lyric poetry and was able to display both her own life and what was the normality for to her women within her hymns and poetry by breaking societal standards and also showcasing the realities of the standards for women at the time. In this essay I will discuss how Sappho's poetry reflected the lives of women through worship, how her approach to desire and lust differed from that of most women, and how she shows the truth about marriage practices at the time through her art.

Worship was a huge part of daily life for people living in Ancient Greece, both men and women. Worship was often quite public, and was contractual in its nature. People were expected to partake in religion, not to show their belief, but to complete their end of a deal by worshipping the gods to remain in good faith with the, often temperamental, gods. Due to the public nature of worship at the time, prayers were very common as they could be carried out in forms of song, such as hymns, or simply said aloud. Prayers were formulaic but did not have exact scripts to be followed and would often contain the worshiper mentioning past favours they had done for a god and asking for a favour in return. Sappho's poetry was, in itself, used as a form of worship, with her writing often being documents of hymns and prayers. She also had a lot of hymns which took on a kletic form. Kletic hymns were more like a plea to a god, asking to be assisted by a god through hardships

in daily life. This form of hymn was very popular within cults, as they would typically center around a closer relationship with the gods, and as a devoted follower of Aphrodite, Sappho's work also displays aspects of cult worship. In one of her few completed works, Hymn (or Ode) to Aphrodite, Sappho takes on the kletic hymn format as she prays to her beloved goddess. Source 1 describes Aphrodite as "smiling," giving her a much more friendly persona. Aphrodite also refers to Sappho by name, who is asking for Aphrodite to stand by her side in battle (referencing her love life). This displays the personal relationship that cults would offer followers. Due to the oppressive society in which women were expected to live within, cults were a common way for women of classical Greece to escape their daily lives and experience a community and closer relationships to the gods, and Sappho's poetry makes this very clear, via how she writes about things like prayer and worship.

Prayer continues to be a major part of religion to this day, with Christianity being a religion where it is a big part of faith. In modern-day Christianity, belief and trust in God is an integral part of worship, unlike the contractual nature of classical religion. The much more personal nature of religion is seen within modern prayer as a way to connect to God. However, more rigid prayers still exist within a public setting. For example, the Lord's Prayer is often recited during public church services. Private prayer is still a more personal event however, which differs from the personal aspect of cult worship that would often be a public affair.

Sappho also wrote a lot of poetry about her lust and desire, which was unusual for the time, as typically women were expected to be quiet about any sexual topics, especially their own desires. The expectation of women to be the perfectly obedient wives, mothers, and daughters was very prevalent in classic Greek society, and expressing sexual desire was not included within these boundaries. However, through some parts of religion women could express such feelings on some occasions. For example, both the Thesmophoria and Haloa were festivals which involved either women telling each other explicit jokes, or priestesses whispering crude things into the ears of participants. Unfortunately however, these were not the norm and were special occasions granted to only some women. However, Sappho was revolutionary in her approach to writing

about such taboo subjects. Longing and desire were very common themes within Sappho's work. For example, source 2 states "my craving a fire / that singed my mind / a brand you quenched." This does not reflect the lives of most women in classical Greece due to how boldly Sappho approach the subject of her longing, but it was rare for women to be so open about their desires and lust so it does give a glimpse into how women felt at the time through something women would almost always have kept to themselves. In source 3 Sappho also details the physical symptoms of her desire, again, something most women would never express to anyone due to how frowned upon it was at the time.

The acceptance of women's sexual liberty has changed constantly throughout history, and Sappho's poetry has fallen victim to this ever changing opinion of women's freedom. During her lifetime, Sappho was widely praised due to her talent at music and writing, being referred to by many as "the poetess" (mirroring Homer's title of "the poet"), and was hailed as the "10th muse" by Plato. However, later in history, the church did not approve of Sappho's "erotic" and "lesbian" imagery that was contained within her writings, leading to a huge chunk of her writing being destroyed as a result. Despite all of this, a more liberal approach to women's sexuality that can be seen today has led to Sappho being considered one of the best love poets of all time.

This wider acceptance of women freely speaking about their love lives has also carried into modern music and literature, with singers like Taylor Swift and Ariana Grande detailing their own experiences with love and their relationships in their music. However, it is not uncommon to see backlash to such music, even today; showing that women's sexuality remains a topic that is expected to be kept private by many.

Marriage was one of the biggest aspects of a woman's life in classical Greece, and there were many customs and standards that women were supposed to follow that men were not expected to uphold. Most women were under the control of a man for their entire life, being under the control of their kyrios (head of house, usually their father) until they were married off to another man, who would then be the person in control of their wife. 14 was the most common age for a girl to be married in ancient

Greece, however, girls as young as 5 were being married off to men around the age of 30. The expectations within the marriage were also heavily geared in favour of the man. Girls were expected to be virgins when they got married, in contrast, the man was very rarely a virgin when at the time of his wedding. Monogamy was also a standard for both participants in a marriage, however men could have affairs with slaves, young boys, non Greeks, etc, freely, with little to no consequence. In comparison, some city states would revoke the citizenship of women who were caught cheating on their husbands. Sappho references these realities in some of her poetry. In source 4, a girl is being advertised by the speaker, saying: "because there is no other girl than she / bridegroom - a child still, of such quality." This showcases the lives of many women and girls in classical Greece, displaying how young girls would be treated like products to be sold to men, even when they were only children.

In modern society, most countries have laws to prevent child marriage, however this does not apply to every country (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Gambia etc), but it is not as common within western societies anymore. Arranged marriage is something that has also gone widely out of fashion within western society, however in some places (most noticeably across Asia), arranged marriage is still prevalent. However, the age women are being married has gone up to around 20 at least, rather than young children being married to men more than twice their age.

In conclusion, Sappho's poetry does reflect the lives of many women in Classical Greece. Sappho is able to showcase, not only the nature of worship, but how many women partook in worship outside of the mainstream, and how they would be intrigued by cult practices. Sappho did not always show the lives of the majority of women however, especially in terms of how she approached writing about love and desire. Although she still broke societal standards and reflected the real thoughts of many women, even if she was far more open about such topics than most women were permitted to be. We also see the grim realities of marriage practices, set out within Sappho's poetry, giving modern audiences an insight into what life was like for women and girls in ancient Greece from such a young age. Overall, Sappho was able to reflect the lives of both women who chose

to adhere to societal expectations, and women who chose to defy such ideals, very effectively in her poetry.