

## Classics A Level Preparation



Classical Civilisation studies is a mixture of English Literature, History and bonkers stories that you make you wonder if the ancient Greeks and Romans were completely barmy!

If you enjoy reading, finding out about the world and how life as we know it today started, you'll love Classics.

In year 12 you will study 3 units:

- The World of the Hero: The Odyssey
- Greek Religion
- Greek Theatre

### World of the Hero

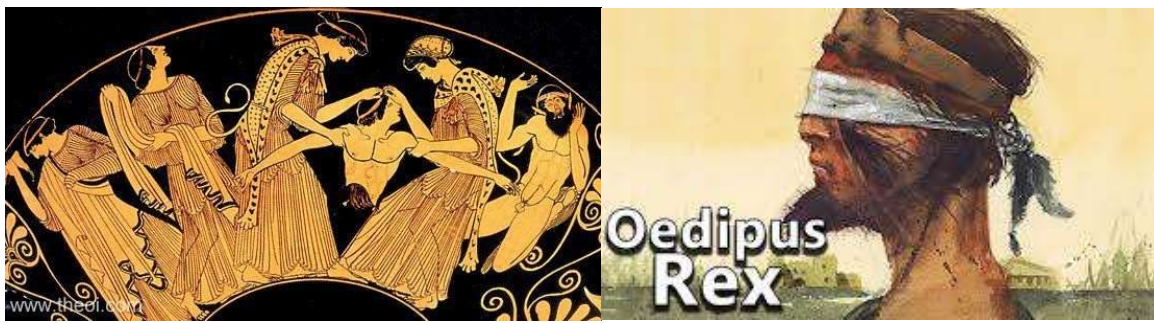
We will be studying two classical literary texts, one Greek and one Roman, the Odyssey and the Aeneid respectively, which have had enormous significance in shaping Western literature; they are also excellent reads!

The epic poems of the Greek poet Homer, with their heroes, gods and exciting narratives, have been in continuous study since their conception, and remain popular with learners today, while the Roman poet Virgil, drawing inspiration from Homer, as

well as from his own cultural and political context, explored what it was to be a hero in the Roman world and created a work which has endured as a mighty piece of literature!

We read both texts in an English prose translation. We will be starting our study of classical literature with the *Odyssey* and as transition work students should complete the following research tasks and so as much wider reading - or listening - as they can as preparation for the start of the course. The idea is to immerse yourselves in the world of Greek and Roman gods and mythology and find out as much about these exciting, and often outrageous stories as you can! I hope you will enjoy reading about the scandalous stories of the gods and build on the knowledge you probably already have.

### Greek theatre



For this unit we study 3 ancient Greek plays: 'Oedipus Tyrannos' by Sophocles (Year 12), 'The Bacchae' by Euripides (Year 13) and 'Frogs' by Aristophanes (Year 13).

We study these in translation and within these you will find the origins of many modern stories from film, tv and theatre. We also look at various examples of Greek art which show us how important theatre was to the Greeks.

### Greek religion



Here we look at the Gods and Goddesses of the Greek world and how they influenced the lives of Greek people. We also study the impact of religious ceremonies and sacrifices which underpinned everyday life and the philosophical ideas which dominated their thinking.

### Wider reading and set texts to get you started

- The 2 main texts, 'The Odyssey' (translated by David West, Penguin classics version only) and 'The Aeneid' (translated by E.V.Rieu, Penguin Classics). I wouldn't read these until later so that you have a solid background about the context of the times they were written in first as it will make so much more sense and be loads more enjoyable.
- A perfect introduction to the world of the gods and Greek mythology comes in the form of 2 books by the actor, comedian, writer, mental health champion and all-round clever guy, **Stephen Fry's** 'Mythos', 'Heroes' and Troy.

These are both very easy reads and tell the stories of the Greek gods, the creation of the world, as far as the Ancient Greeks were concerned (this epic tale forms the first part of Mythos) and some of the mortal or semi-immortal heroes who battle against adversity.

- **Natalie Haynes'** books are also very easy to read and as a stand-up comedian, often very amusing! Her books always give the alternative take on the Classics, often from a female perspective which is often lost in other publications!

Her books include:

'Children of Jocasta' which tells the story of the females in Oedipus Tyrannus (Greek theatre unit).

'Pandora's Jar' which looks at the alternative versions of women's stories in myth and legend.

'A thousand ships' which looks at the story of Troy from the women's perspective.

- If you like historical fiction 2 of the best which are highly relevant to the course are **Madeline Miller's** 'Circe' and 'Song of Achilles' which both tell the stories 2 characters that we will look at during the course.

**I have all these books in Room 46 so if you would like to borrow them over the summer please let me know and we can sort it.**

### Listening recommendations

- Free BBC Radio 4 broadcast a series of half hour radio programmes delivered in a very accessible way by writer, broadcaster, comedian and classicist (she is a Cambridge Classics graduate) Natalie Haynes which are available as podcasts under the heading Stand Up for Classics. In each of these episodes she makes both serious and amusing remarks about historical people and texts from Ancient Greece and Rome assisted by other experts and classical scholars.

To access these programmes, you have to set up a BBC account but this is very straightforward.

As extension tasks you could listen to her broadcast on Roman poet Ovid, who told many tales of characters who underwent transformations as a result of encounters with gods, and her broadcast on Roman poet Virgil whom we study in Year 13.

You should also listen to at least 1 of the Radio 4 programmes, also available as podcasts, in the In Our Time series. This is a series of BBC radio discussions exploring a huge range of cultural and historical topics presented by broadcaster, writer and current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, Melvyn Bragg. Almost 900 episodes have been broadcast, so if you have time on your hands.....!

Each episode is about 45 minutes long and involves scholars and experts in debate which is quite high level. You should at the very least listen to the podcasts on: 1. The Trojan War 2. The Odyssey 3. The Greek Myths. 4. Greek Theatre. 5. Oedipus

As extension tasks, just scroll the menu of 'In Our Time' podcasts and listen to whatever takes your fancy in terms of History, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, whatever, but you may be interested in the programmes on: The Odyssey, The Epic, Romulus and Remus, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar or Augustus.

As extension tasks there are plenty of other You Tube clips on Homer and the Odyssey to explore.

## Transition study tasks

Below are your study/transition tasks. Take your time over each one and try to learn the material as you go along.

### The Gods of Olympus

Find out who the 12 main Greek gods of Mount Olympus are and make notes on them, explaining:

- what their special characteristics are
- how some of them are related to each other (there are some interesting relationships here)
- what or whom they protect
- what they are associated with
- any special symbols attached to them
- their Roman names (these are different). The Romans basically pinched most of the Greek Gods and gave them new names so we need to know both versions.
- find out details of their parentage, their birth and how they were born - there are some fascinating stories such as how Aphrodite came into being - it could make your eyes water! Similarly, the goddess Athene has an unusual birth.

You could do this as a family tree which you will use throughout the course.

These YouTube clips may also help you:

'Ancient Greece and Greek Gods explained'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ri-AoKE42rw>

2. Watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmLIepQPqas>

Note down all the things that Ancient Greece contributed to our lives today and how they were done in Ancient Greece.

## Background to Troy task

Watch 'Troy', slightly dodgy but pretty enjoyable blockbuster from 2004. This story is the backdrop to both of the epic stories from the course- The Odyssey and The Aeneid and whilst lots of contextual details are wrong the basic story is close enough to be useful for you to know when reading our set texts. The Battle of Troy is also the plot of Homer's Iliad which precedes The Odyssey.

So, your task, if you choose to accept it, is to watch the 2004 film 'Troy' with Brad Pitt etc (NOT the Netflix series which is SERIOUSLY dodgy!).

Below I have attached an article to help with the inaccuracies in the film to save confusion. I've also attached some articles about Troy- about its existence and the probability that there was an epic war there. It's a bit like Atlantis (except a lot more likely and well documented) and scholars have spent centuries searching for the spot where Troy once stood. There's also a map showing you where Troy most likely was and so that you can get your head around the Greek states and their relation to each other.

Please email me if you are joining Classics or interested in seeing what it's all about and I will add you to the Transition Classroom group where you can submit any work, ideas or questions about anything to do with Classics.

Enjoy your studies! Mrs Bensley [emmabensley@disshigh.co.uk](mailto:emmabensley@disshigh.co.uk)