

# Classical Civilisation



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Information for  
students and parents

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# CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

This course is becoming increasingly popular both at school and university level and offers a variety of topics from the Ancient Greek and Roman world. You will be expected to study each topic in detail with special reference to selected texts and, since the material is all in English, you can explore the topics in depth and will have the opportunity to relate various works of literature to their social and cultural contexts. You will be encouraged to appreciate literary technique, to collect relevant evidence and to develop and present arguments based on your findings. The course is not only literary but also involves the appreciation of social values and an understanding of both the historical and archaeological background. By the end of the course you will be able to appreciate distinctive Ancient Greek and Roman ways of thought and feeling. The course also involves the aesthetic appreciation of works of art. As well as studying art and literature in school there will be opportunities to attend performances of Greek plays and to visit museums in which material remains from the Ancient World are on display.

## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There are no formal entry requirements for A-level Classical Civilisation.

## LINKS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

Classical Civilisation will be of particular relevance to those of you studying English, History, Art or Drama. The ideas formulated in the Graeco-Roman world have been fundamental to the development of medieval and modern Europe while the art and literature of that society have been dominant influences upon European writers and artists for many centuries.

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Classical Civilisation is fully recognised by University Admissions Officers. You can study it in its own right at university or in combination with other subjects including a Classical language.

# COURSE CONTENT

Exam Board: OCR

## Year 1:

### The World of the Hero

The works of Homer were considered by the Greeks themselves to be the foundation of Greek culture, standing as they do at the beginning of the Western literary canon. Study of Homer's *Iliad* provides students with the opportunity to appreciate the lasting legacy of the Homeric world and to explore its attitudes and values. Not only do we analyse the text from a literary point of view, but we also approach the epic from historical, archaeological and sociological contexts.

We study the text's oral tradition, and its transmission; the structure of the epic genre; narrative techniques; the language of Greek epic, including its formulae and similes. In this module we also focus on the concept, values and behaviour of the Homeric hero including the ideas of time (honour) and *kleos* (reputation). Pupils will have the opportunity to gain insight into Troy and the Greek war camp. Characterisation of major and minor characters, the portrayal of war, death and mortality, and *menis* (wrath, anger) are also key themes. In addition, the module also focuses on the social and cultural context in which Homer first composed the work; this includes studying moral concepts, such as justice and revenge; archaic Greek life and society as portrayed by Homer; the role of women and their position in ancient Greek society.



### Greek Art

A period of great change occurred in Greece in the 4th-6th centuries BC, and this is reflected in the art which was produced. In this component learners will gain a thorough knowledge of the selected aspects of Greek art, but they will also gain some understanding of, and insight into, the context in which it was created, particularly the areas of religion, society, values and history/politics. Learners will have the opportunity to explore and engage with a range of the visual arts produced by the Greeks in 6th-4th centuries BC, including freestanding sculpture, architectural sculpture and vase-painting.

## Year 2:

### Virgil's Aeneid

The principle focus of this module is on Rome in the first century BC, and the epic literature produced by Rome's finest poet. We study the composition of Virgil's *Aeneid*; the plot, narrative techniques and the poet's use of descriptive techniques including similes and imagery as well as characterisation. We also study in detail

the classical concepts of heroism, honour and reputation, family, women, the role of the gods, the power of fate, the portrayal of war, moral values and the role of Aeneas in Rome's imperial destiny. The social and cultural environment is important for the study of a work of his magnitude, and so we also cover the topics of Virgil's relationship to emperor Augustus, and the political strife in Rome which led to the creation of the empire and Augustus' ascension.

### **Love and Relationships**

Ideas about love and relationships are key aspects of the literature, thoughts, and ethics of any society. This component offers the opportunity for learners to recognise and relate to the passions, frustrations and delights of love in the ancient world. The ethical questions raised by these ideas continue to be wrestled over by successive generations and this unit will generate interesting and important discussions about love, desire, sex, sexuality and the institution of marriage.

Ancient ideas about men, women and marriage enable learners to discuss the reality of love and relationships in everyday life, whilst study of Seneca and Plato provides a more conceptual approach. Throughout this material, learners will be able to draw comparisons and make judgements about ideal and reality, and the nature of 'right' and 'wrong' ways to love or be loved. The study of poetry forms the second half of the unit. Sappho provides a link between the Homeric poems and the literature of 5th and 4th century Athens.

She is one of very few female voices from the ancient world; the context of her life is fascinating, and her verse is powerful and evocative. Ovid offers a lighter presentation of relationships and concentrates on the fun and flirtation of budding romances.

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