

A Level

# Classical Civilisation

OCR



**Classical Civilisation involves the study of a broad range of topics centred on the worlds of ancient Greece and Rome. Whilst of particular interest to students of literature and history, it is a subject taken and enjoyed by students of all disciplines.**

## Course Content

### Year One

In their first year, students will study a range of Greek literature, namely:

**Homer's *Odyssey*:** This tells the story of how Odysseus, the man whose clever idea of the Wooden Horse enabled the Greeks to defeat the mighty city of Troy, came to return to his home in Ithaca. On the way he encountered many fearsome obstacles including the one-eyed Cyclops and the magical Circe, losing all his men in the process. And when he did reach home, he found over one hundred suitors attempting to win over his beautiful wife, Penelope. What could our hero do in the face of such insurmountable odds? One of the earliest examples of Western literature, the *Odyssey* is a tale of adventure and revenge, set in the mythical realm of the Homeric hero.

**Greek Theatre:** In addition to learning about its physical appearance and theatrical conventions, students will study three of the great plays of 5th Athens:

***Oedipus the King* by Sophocles:** This is the tragic tale of how Oedipus, the man who having been exposed at birth by fearful parents, returned to his native land of Thebes where he inadvertently killed his father and unknowingly married his mother. The play centres on his efforts to alleviate a plague which had befallen the people of Thebes and his discovery of his own terrible history and the even more terrifying consequences for himself and his family.

***The Bacchae* by Euripides:** Pentheus, the arrogant king, did not believe that the upstart Dionysus was a true god and sought to persecute his priests and worshippers. It was an act of hubris which was to have devastating consequences both for the king and his unfortunate mother.

***The Frogs* by Aristophanes:** Athens is suffering in a war and there are no good poets left to offer inspiration to the city and to extract them from their slough of despair. Dionysus determines to go down to the Underworld to bring back one of the great poets of the past who can inspire the people, only to find that the recently dead 'new kid on the block', a guy called Euripides, feels it should be him. How will Dionysus decide?



Only through one of the weirdest literary competitions ever seen.

At the end of the first year, there will be an exam on these two units.

### Year Two

In their second year, students will study aspects of the Roman world, namely:

***Virgil's Aeneid*:** The national epic of the Roman people, the *Aeneid* tells of how Aeneas led the defeated survivors from Troy to their promised land in Italy. He too faced formidable obstacles, not least a year-long dalliance with the charismatic Dido, before finally reaching Italy, but on arrival faced a deadly war to secure his people's destiny and to set in motion what one day would become the Roman race. How did he cope and just what was the great destiny, promised for his descendants by the mighty Jupiter?

**Politics of the Late Republic:** 1st BC was one of the most turbulent periods of any people's history. After learning about how the system of government we call the Roman Republic came into being and began to assume control of much of the lands around the Mediterranean, students will study how the actions of men like Cato, Cicero and Caesar brought about the internal divisions which ultimately brought about the collapse of this government and paved the way for the introduction of Augustus and the subsequent emperors of Rome.

At the end of their second year, students will take three exams, one on a combination of their work on the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* and one each on Greek Theatre and the Politics of the Late Republic.

# Classical Civilisation

## Methods of Teaching

We use teacher-led discussion, with students being actively encouraged to contribute ideas. We use visual resources extensively, whilst students are given specially prepared reading material to complement their study. We study each text in a modern translation so students do not need to know the ancient languages. Students work as a class, in small groups and individually, researching, asking critical questions, making connections and comparisons and drawing conclusions. We place great emphasis on students' taking responsibility for their own workload.

## Methods and Patterns of Assessment

During the course, students are required to complete a series of formal written assignments covering all areas of the specification. These assignments are aimed at giving students practice in the skills needed to succeed in the exams. Students will also undertake a series of short tests and other less formal exercises to assess their understanding of the material. Where appropriate, students' work is assessed according to guidelines provided by the subject examiners.

## Financial Implications

Each student receives a series of essential reading material, which is studied in depth. Students may require additional notes for which they may be asked to pay a small charge to cover photocopying costs. Students are expected to provide their own copies of some of the set texts as specified at the start of the course, together with materials for note-taking and essay writing. A Student Support Fund is available which may be able to help students who are in financial difficulty. There is a list of recommended background reading from which students may, if they wish, buy one or more books, although all the main titles can be borrowed through College.

Traditionally we have offered students the opportunity to visit some of the key classical sites in Greece to support their work in the Art unit. Should the Art unit be included in the new specification, we would hope to run similar trips. The cost of such a trip would be dependent on various factors, but as an indication, our Easter trip will come in at around £750.

## Career Possibilities

Classical Civilisation is widely accepted for university entrance whether or not students continue their studies in it. Where students choose to do so, either solely or in combination with another subject, courses no longer insist on their having studied Latin and/or Greek, although many will offer the opportunity to study an ancient language as part of the course. Whilst Classical Civilisation leads directly to few careers, it does provide transferable skills (such as dealing with complex ideas, researching and extracting relevant information and writing critically), which can be used in many areas of administration, finance, law and management.

## Minimum Entry Requirements

**5 GCSEs at grade A\* - C, including Maths and English.**

**You do not have to have studied Classical Civilisation before and, because all the literature is studied in translation, no previous knowledge of Latin or Greek is necessary.**

Apply online: [www.psc.ac.uk/apply](http://www.psc.ac.uk/apply) t: 01962 857555 e: [admissions@psc.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@psc.ac.uk)

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