



# Wallington High School for Girls

## Sixth Form

**Subject: Classical Civilisation**

**Exam board: OCR**

**Course information (all texts are studied in translation):**

Classical Civilisation A Level consists of three components:

1. *The World of the Hero (H408/11)*. You study two vital epics: Homer's *Iliad* & Virgil's *Aeneid*. Homer's *Iliad* is considered the most influential and earliest surviving piece of western literature, dating back to the eighth century BC. But, it is a very moving account of aspects of the Trojan War, dominated by famous heroes like Achilles, Odysseus & Helen, and concerned with gods, myths, and other themes like fate, & relationships between men & women.

Virgil, in a sense, picks up from Homer in his *Aeneid*. Though Roman & written about seven hundred years after the *Iliad*, Virgil tells the story of the Trojans' great second hero, Aeneas, & how he faces many epic journeys & challenges in order to establish a Trojan colony in Italy that is destined to be the beginnings of the Roman Empire. You will meet many heroes & tales from Troy again, but now with a decidedly Roman slant. Both epics, and the studies below, will really enhance your literary appreciation, analytical abilities & cultural awareness. This module is worth 40% of total A level; the exam is out of 100, & is 2hours 30 minutes.

2. *Culture & the Arts - Greek Theatre (H408/21)*. There are three parts to this component:

a) Greek Tragedy. You study Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the brilliant play which inspired Freud about a man doomed to kill his father & 'marry' his mother; & Euripides' *Bacchae*, about a young man whose rejection of a god has disastrous consequences.

b) Greek Comedy. You study Aristophanes' *Frogs*. Society is in such a poor state, Dionysus must travel to the underworld to recruit a dead poet to save mankind (though a comedy, this gives you some idea of how highly the Greeks regarded writers and literature).

c) Visual/ Material Sources. This area is divided between study of the Greek Theatre itself (the famous Theatre of Dionysus, & the Theatre of Thorikos); & the study of Greek vases, where you will learn about artists & vase painting techniques. You will also study vase paintings that are really closely connected to the wonderful stories and myths that we will explore.

3. *Beliefs & Ideas - Love & Relationships (H408/32)*. There are various aspects to this thematic component, ranging from the study of men & women in the ancient world, to studying the ideas of Plato & Seneca on love & desire. Furthermore, you will explore the fragmentary works of the rare authoress Sappho from Lesbos, and you will also study the set text of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* ('The Art of Love'). Other themes of central interest in this module are: men & women, sex, marriage, & society & values. This module is worth 30% of total A level; the exam is out of 75, & is 1hours 45 minutes.

**Summer Transition Work:**

\*Background reading over the summer

Read Homer's *Iliad*. You can read just the set chapters (which are known as 'Books') – 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24; OR the whole book. Whichever you choose, write up to two sides of A4 on what you have found most interesting in the *Iliad* (to be handed in on the first lesson in September). This could be anything; for example, a summary of the main characters – what they do, what they are like. You may want to focus on ONE specific character, such as Helen, Hektor, Achilles, Nestor, Paris, Odysseus, etc., and do a detailed study. Or you could write about the themes that have intrigued you; e.g. the role of the gods. For further *Iliad* ideas, see the Information for Students in the MLE. For other ideas of what you can read (OPTIONAL), see the 'Highly Recommended Reading' in the MLE. Also, any type of *fun* research will help, e.g. library/ internet searches on 'ancient Greece/ Rome', 'women in Greece and Rome', 'Homer', 'Aristophanes',



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etc. Equally, reading anything on Greek / Roman myths (even children's books) will be useful and give you some idea of what the ancients were interested in. You could even watch 'Troy!' (but remember two things: 1) it's based on the *Iliad*, and not *vice versa* (Latin for, 'the other way round'); 2) (most importantly) Homer didn't compose the *Iliad* for Wallington students. His intentions were far, far greater. Now it's your chance to find out, perhaps, what they really were).

**Approximate time for completion: 6-8 hours**

**Suggested Summer Wider Reading:**

Though noted elsewhere, there are a couple of books that I could not recommend highly enough. These will really help you on your classical journey: *The Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, eds. Howatson & Chilvers. This is brilliant little classical encyclopaedia, covering literature, myth, history, philosophy, etc. *Apollodorus, The Library of Greek Mythology* (the Oxford World's Classics version), tr. R. Hard. This is a fascinating handbook of all the major Greek myths, ranging from the creation story, the labours of Heracles and Jason and the Argonauts, to Oedipus, the Trojan War & the end of the heroic world.

Also, Penguin Classics Homer *The Iliad*, 0140444440

Some of you might want to do further reading/ activities. Consult the Wider Reading List and/ or you could read around anything connected to the syllabus and beyond; e.g. Classical Athens, the Roman Republic/ Empire, fruitcake Emperors Caligula & Nero, classical mythology, more classical vase-painting (especially Exekias), Homer's *Odyssey*, Apollonius of Rhodes' *Jason & the Argonauts*, Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica* (especially if you want to know what happens from the end of the *Iliad* to Troy's fall), Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Aias & Philoctetes*, Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis & Hekabe*, ancient religion ... . Visit the British Museum – see the 'borrowed' famous Elgin Marbles/ vases/ sculptures, go to Fishbourne or Bignor Roman buildings in Sussex. See a Greek tragedy at the theatre, visit Rome or Greece...