

A Level Classical Civilisation

Classical Civilisation is the study of the culture, history and society of ancient Greece and Rome. It is one of the most varied and interdisciplinary of all subjects, involving the study of literature, history, politics, philosophy, art and religion. Our central aim is for students to develop a deep and wide-ranging knowledge of the ancient world; by the end of the course they will have acquired an understanding of the entire sweep of ancient history, from archaic Greece in the time of Homer to the Roman Empire under Nero. The set texts and topics for the OCR A Level provide a specific focus for our study, but it is our belief that students should appreciate and understand the connections and links between the source material and specified topics so that they are able to construct their own narrative of the ancient world.

Our intent is therefore not only to teach the appropriate examination specification but also to:

- Provide students with the opportunity to study a wide range of topics and sources which will inspire and motivate them to deepen their engagement with the Classical world
- To encourage students to respond critically and engage with a wealth of sources and ideas, thus equipping them with advanced analytical skills
- To engender and foster a love of and genuine interest in the Classical world, regardless of prior knowledge and/or study
- To encourage students to develop an awareness and appreciation of the links between modern society and that of the Classical world.

We follow the OCR Classical Civilisation course; currently the units studied are: The World of the Hero, Greek Theatre and Love and Relationships.

We begin the course with a unit that we have devised: 'Classical World: The Necessary Knowledge'. This has been designed to ascertain levels of prior understanding and then to equip students with the relevant prior knowledge needed to access the A Level OCR specification. As part of this, we look at a diverse range of texts and topics, including but not limited to: Athens, democracy, Herodotus, Lysias, stoicism, Persia and the Augustan poets. It is our belief that students need cultural capital to be successful in the subject, hence our decision to begin with this broad focus on relevant contextual knowledge.

The teaching of the three exam units is shared between the two A Level teachers, in order to encourage students to appreciate the links and connections between texts, topics and contexts. For example, one teacher might study 'Frogs' by Aristophanes as part of the Greek Theatre unit, while another teaches Euripides' 'Bacchae' and Sophocles' 'Oedipus the King', but both teachers will make synoptic links that enable students to understand the Athenian institution of theatre as a whole.

Our curriculum is designed in a way that allows time for teachers to return to the three examined units once they have been taught initially. In practice, this would typically involve a piece of critical reading or wider reading being used as a means to go back and recap the content of a text in the period before a key assessment or mock exam. This enables us to work on long term memory and retrieval of knowledge, while ensuring that our students are continually developing and evolving their cognitive understanding.

We supplement our curriculum with high quality super-curricular experiences and opportunities. In the past, this has involved guest lectures from outstanding academics, such as Edith Hall, or trips to sites of cultural interest, such as the British Museum. We also run a Greek Club for those students who wish to learn the ancient language in order to broaden their study of the ancient world.