

Classical Civilisation Curriculum Intent

Department Philosophy: *The young Oedipus consults the Delphic Oracle, when told that he is not his father's son!: gnothe seauton, 'know thyself', the Oracle replies. Similarly, Pindar, the famous 6th century BC poet writes that, 'through study we learn who we are'. Whilst Odysseus needs to travel around the world to discover himself. The link, some form of pursuit makes your life a magical journey of 'discovery'.*

By the end of Key Stage 5 our students will know:

1.The World of the Hero (there are two parts to this component {Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid*}; you will be studying the second one (*Aeneid*) in year 13):

i)Homer's *Iliad*: *In this module we read the most famous epic ever 'written': Homer's *Iliad*. This is the oldest surviving western epic (probably the first ever written). However, what makes the book so wonderful is the world that Homer creates.*

*We will consider the time when the *Iliad* was created (8th century B.C.). We will also look at how, in a largely illiterate culture, the *Iliad* came to be written down. Our main focus, though, is the wonderful story itself, where we find out about the great 'Trojan War' (e.g. how it started and who was involved). Along the way, we get to meet many interesting characters, such as the semi-divine Achilles (Achilles), the cunning Odysseus, the brave Hektor, and Helen, 'the face that launched a thousand ships'. Of course, the gods, such as Zeus, Apollo and Athene, also play a vital part in the epic. Superficially, the story seems to be about war, yet there is much more to this masterpiece, and through its study we shall learn to appreciate characterisation, and narrative and descriptive techniques, and cover themes such as heroism, the role of women, and Fate and the Gods.*

ii) Vergil's' *Aeneid*: *the classical world was hugely influenced by Homer's great epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. However, some 700 years later after these were 'written' the classical world had begun to change, and now Rome was the dominant culture. In response to Homer's masterpieces, a Latin (Roman) writer, named Vergil, wrote a Roman epic to challenge the epics & cultural dominance of Homer and the Greeks.*

*The *Aeneid* is about the Trojan hero, Aeneas, who comes to found the beginnings of the Roman empire. You have already met Aeneas in the *Iliad*, but only briefly. Basically, he fights in Troy, but must leave as it is his destiny to flee the devastated city, save the few of his companions who have survived the Trojan War, & establish what will be the early beginnings of Rome in Italy. We travel with Aeneas through many lands, and see him being tested by the gods in his quest. On the way, Aeneas falls in love, retells the story of Troy's Fall, visits the Underworld, and battles with a great army. In these ways, Vergil has written something of a Roman epic, combining parts from Homer's *Iliad* (your knowledge of the *Iliad* will really help) and the *Odyssey*. However, Vergil also takes the opportunity to rewrite history, as his work is also about how Rome came to become a great empire. Vergil was patronised (sponsored) by Augustus, the Roman emperor at the time, therefore, his work, although epic, has a very political 'spin', too. (So, we get to study some Roman history, such as Antony and Cleopatra, the murder of Julius Caesar and Rome's war with Hannibal – and his elephants).*

2.Greek Theatre: Greek Theatre (there are three parts to this component {Greek Drama, Visual/ Material Sources - Greek Theatres, Visual/ Material Sources - Greek Vases}):

i)Greek Drama: *The most fruitful time for Greek tragic writing was, as with Greek comedy, the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. We will consider the historical and political background of the time to help us appreciate how the plays were relevant to ancient audiences. We will also consider how old myths were used in tragedy. However, the main focus of our work will be the plays themselves.*

*Sophocles' *King Oedipus* is one of the most famous Greek myths. It is a tragic story about a man who unwittingly kills his father and 'marries' his mother.*

*In Euripides' *Bacchae*, you will meet a young ruler who foolishly rejects the god Dionysus, and pays the ultimate price, again, courtesy of his mother!*

The plays are fascinating as in each one we see how 'great' people bring themselves to ruin. The playwrights also use mythological settings to explore issues such as love, lust, the role of women, arrogance and the limits of 'man'. Exciting stuff.

Aristophanes, *Frogs* - *Greek culture had a lighter side, too. In this module we also study one of the works of the most famous Greek comic writer, Aristophanes. Aristophanes wrote during the 5th-4th centuries B.C. In the *Frogs*, we meet some very funny and interesting characters. We embark on a fantastical journey with the god Dionysus (and his cheeky slave) to the Underworld, a place where corpses answer back, dead playwrights argue, and poetry is weighed on scales (imagine being able to actually quantify quality!) - oh yes, and frogs sing. However, through studying this comedy we will see there are some more serious messages (for you to discover), and we will also get a chance to look at the world that Aristophanes lived in, to really appreciate his jokes.*

ii) Visual/ Material Sources: *To fully understand these cultural phenomena requires study of not only the plays but the context in which their form and production developed. To develop this understanding involves the study of the physical theatre space used by the Greeks to stage their dramas, and also depictions of this staging in the visual/material record. This part of the component adds a different type of magic to your classical studies, as you begin to appreciate further non-literary aspects of the ancient world, whilst developing your ability to 'read' in other ways.*

*The visual/ material aspects includes study of areas ranging from the ancient **Theatre of Thorikos and the Theatre of Dionysus** in Athens (where all the plays we study were originally performed about 2500 years ago),*

iii) *to the **Greek vase** depictions of famous stories, such as Oedipus, Medea & Penheus.*

3.Love & Relationships: *There are a number of themes and authors to study: i) Men and women, ii) Plato on love and desire, iii) Seneca on love and desire, iv)Sappho the poet from Lesbos (hence, 'Lesbian'!), v) (Naughty) Ovid, and love and relationships in his poetry. This component is slightly different in that the focus is more thematic that specifically text based. Themes within this module include:*

i)Men & Women - Greek and Roman *thinking on the ideal qualities of men and women and the relative status of men and women domestically, civically and legally, etc.*

ii & iii) Plato's & Seneca's ideas about love and desire, *including: the definitions of love; the physical symptoms of desire; the differences between love and desire, etc.*

iv)Sappho's *purpose and intended audience of her poetry; the social and poetic context including the genre of the work; the issues of fragmentary material, etc.*

v)Ovid's, *use of themes and motifs; use of mythology; use of humour, etc.*

NB. For more detailed content, see OCR, Classical Civilisation A Level (H408)