


**A Level Classical Civilisation Recommended Pre-Reading & Tasks**

Welcome to A Level Classical Civilisation. This selection of tasks and reading has been compiled to help you prepare for the A Level. You do NOT have to do every task on this list - please treat it as more of a pick and mix selection and select what appeals to you the most. It is recommended that you do at least one task/read one book from each category and those items in bold are particularly good starting points.

Furthermore, please do NOT go out and buy everything on this list (the Amazon links are there to help you identify the items). Make sure you check your local library service as many now offer digital lending as well as physical books.

A reminder of the exam components that we will be studying:

1. **The World of the Hero** - and in-depth and comparative study of Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*.
2. **The Invention of the Barbarian** - an exploration of how the Ancient Greeks saw themselves as different from their neighbours, culminating in a study of the wars between Greece and Persia and their depiction in art and literature.
3. **Greek Religion** - a study of the nature of the gods and their relationship with mortals alongside the practicalities of religious ritual, and the role it played in society.

1. Start to familiarise yourself with the prescribed texts.	2. Familiarise yourself with Greek and Roman mythology.	3. Familiarise yourself with the Greek and Roman world.	<i>Optional:</i> Read a novel set in the classical world.	<i>Optional:</i> Watch some relevant films and TV series
<p>Over the next two years we will be reading both Homer's <i>Iliad</i> and Virgil's <i>Aeneid</i>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p>Reading these texts for the first time can be a very challenging experience so you may wish to read the sparknotes version of each epic:  <i>Iliad</i>:  <a href="https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/iliad/">https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/iliad/</a>  <i>Aeneid</i>:  <a href="https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/aeneid/">https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/aeneid/</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p>Try to read the first two books (chapters) of the <b>Aeneid</b> (and the first book (chapter) of the <i>Iliad</i> as well if you can). Do not worry if these texts feel a little bit overwhelming at the moment - there's a reason we will be spending a year on each one. The Penguin editions used by the exam board that you should buy &amp; write your notes into are:</p>	<p><b>It is vital that you know who each of the following Greek gods are and how to identify them:</b></p> <p><b><i>Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hades, Athena, Ares, Apollo, Demeter, Hephaistos, Hestia, Hermes, Dionysus, Aphrodite and Artemis</i></b></p> <p><b>(You may wish to create a digital document or a scrapbook to collate this information)</b></p> <p>A very thorough website on mythology is:  <a href="https://www.theoi.com/">https://www.theoi.com/</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p>Recommended introductory reads on mythology:  <i>Mythos</i> by Stephen Fry  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mythos-Greek-Retold-Stephen-Fry/dp/0718188721">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mythos-Greek-Retold-Stephen-Fry/dp/0718188721</a></p>	<p>Recommended introductory read on Greece:  <i>The Ancient Greeks: Ten Ways They Shaped the Modern World</i> by Edith Hall  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Ancient-Greeks-Shaped-Modern-World/dp/009958364X">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Ancient-Greeks-Shaped-Modern-World/dp/009958364X</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p>Recommended introductory read on Rome:  <i>SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome</i> by Mary Beard  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/SPQR-History-Professor-Mary-Beard/dp/1846683807">https://www.amazon.co.uk/SPQR-History-Professor-Mary-Beard/dp/1846683807</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p>If you want to read something much lighter try the following books from the <i>Horrible Histories</i> series by Terry Deary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Groovy Greeks</li> <li>- Rotten Romans</li> <li>- Ruthless Romans</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p>	<p>A good historical novel can be an excellent introduction to the ancient world.</p> <p><b><i>For the Most Beautiful by Emily Hauser</i></b> -  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Most-Beautiful-Emily-Hauser/dp/0857523147">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Most-Beautiful-Emily-Hauser/dp/0857523147</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p><i>Dido</i> by Adèle Geras –  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dido-Adele-Geras/dp/0385615175/">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dido-Adele-Geras/dp/0385615175/</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p><i>Lavinia</i> by Ursula le Guin –  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lavinia-Ursula-K-Guin/dp/0753827840">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lavinia-Ursula-K-Guin/dp/0753827840</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p><i>The Praise Singer</i> by Mary Renault –  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Praise-Singer-Virago-Classic-Classics/dp/1844089606/">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Praise-Singer-Virago-Classic-Classics/dp/1844089606/</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p><i>The Wooden Walls of Thermopylae</i> by Nick Brown  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/Wooden-Walls-Thermopylae-Nick-Brown/dp/1909477613">https://www.amazon.co.uk/Wooden-Walls-Thermopylae-Nick-Brown/dp/1909477613</a></p>	<p>Television Series - <i>Myths</i>:  The Great Greek Myths:  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07PN7MNLW">https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07PN7MNLW</a>  The Great Greek Myths (Season 2 - the Trojan War):  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B07Z3ZB3DS/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r">https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B07Z3ZB3DS/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r</a></p> <p><b>Jim Henson's The Storyteller: Greek Myths</b>  Search on Youtube or  <a href="https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B07NMQ4QYF/ref=atv_dp_b07_det_c_8DXrcX_1_1">https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/video/detail/B07NMQ4QYF/ref=atv_dp_b07_det_c_8DXrcX_1_1</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p><u>Documentaries:</u></p> <p>Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit series:  <a href="https://youtu.be/GYjnRAFFy4g">https://youtu.be/GYjnRAFFy4g</a></p> <p>Ancient Greece: The greatest Show on Earth (with Prof. Michael Scott -  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAKLWQUbG8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAKLWQUbG8</a></p>

Homer, '*Iliad*' Originally translated by EV Rieu. Revised and updated by Peter Jones & DCH Rieu. (Penguin)  
<https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/35371/the-iliad-by-homer-transev-rieu-ed-peter-jones/9780140447941>

or

'Homer: *Iliad*, translated by A.S. Kline, online at Poetry in Translation

Virgil, '*Aeneid*' translated by D. West (Penguin)

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Aeneid-Penguin-Classics-Virgil/dp/0140449329>

or

Virgil, 'The Aeneid', translated by A.S. Kline, online at Poetry in Translation

<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Virgilhome.php>

**Another good introduction to the *Iliad* is Rosemary Sutcliff's children's novel "Black Ships before Troy":**

<https://www.abebooks.co.uk/book-search/isbn/9780711215221/used/>

If you would like a more structured introduction, the Open University are offering free introductory online course on the *Aeneid*:

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/introducing-virgils-aeneid/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

*Heroes* by Stephen Fry  
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Heroes-Mortals-Monsters-Quests-Adventures/dp/0241380367>

Any childhood collection or compendium of Greek and Roman mythology should be sufficient to help you start to build up your background knowledge:

*The Mythology Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained* by DK

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mythology-Book-Ideas-Simply-Explained/dp/1465473378>

or

**Mythology – Edith Hamilton**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythology\\_\(book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mythology_(book))

(For MCU fans there are additional Norse myths in here – which you do not need to read, but are also brilliant)

The Open University are offering a free introductory online course 'Introducing the Classical World':

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/classical-studies/introducing-the-classical-world/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

There are **Ted Ed videos** that you may also enjoy (very short to watch):

e.g.

[https://ed.ted.com/ted\\_ed\\_collections/myths-from-around-the-world](https://ed.ted.com/ted_ed_collections/myths-from-around-the-world)

<https://ed.ted.com/search?q=greek+history>

<https://ed.ted.com/search?q=roman+history>

Films - Greece & Mythology:  
Troy (2004)

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Troy-DVD/dp/B000621OMK>

Films & TV Boxsets - Rome:  
Cleopatra (1963)

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cleopatra-DVD-Elizabeth-Taylor/dp/B004G6TCVC>

**Very accessible & funny Youtube summaries** by classicist MoanInc.

**Iliad:**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTcpeN-uTIVqMYRE8tK6hzVDivX11QV9>

**Aeneid:**

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTcpeN-uTIXI1x9v8hTMm0Kpyv3aV\\_Jy](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTcpeN-uTIXI1x9v8hTMm0Kpyv3aV_Jy)