



# Classics A Level Preparation

In year 12 you will study two units:

- **The World of the Hero**
- **The Politics of the Late Republic**

For the **'World of the Hero'** examined unit we will be studying two classical literary texts, one Greek and one Roman, the Iliad and the Aeneid respectively, which have had enormous significance in shaping Western literature; they are also excellent reads! The epic poems of the Greek poet Homer, with their heroes, gods and exciting narratives, have been in continuous study since their conception, and remain popular with learners today, while the Roman poet Virgil, drawing inspiration from Homer, as well as from his own cultural and political context, explored what it was to be a hero in the Roman world and created a work which has endured as a mighty piece of literature! We read both texts in an English prose translation.

We will be starting our study of classical literature with the Iliad and as transition work students should complete the following research tasks and so as much wider reading – or listening - as they can as preparation for the start of the course. The idea is to immerse yourselves in the world of Greek and Roman gods and mythology and find out as much about these exciting, and often outrageous stories as you can! I hope you will enjoy reading about the scandalous stories of the gods and build on the knowledge you probably already have.

Work can be completed on paper or in Word documents - I make some suggestions about how you could approach each set of tasks which could help you learn - or submitted online as best suits you.

Enjoy your studies! Mrs Munn email [l.munn@thepolesworthschool.com](mailto:l.munn@thepolesworthschool.com)

First the **wider reading, listening and watching recommendations**

A perfect introduction to the world of the gods and Greek mythology comes in the form of 2 books by the actor, comedian, writer, mental health champion and all-round clever guy, Stephen Fry:

1. Mythos
2. Heroes

These are both very easy reads and tell the stories of the Greek gods, the creation of the world, as far as the Ancient Greeks were concerned (this epic tale forms the first part of Mythos) and some of the mortal or semi-immortal heroes who battle against adversity. Both books are widely available on Amazon for around £7.50 each. I fully recommend these books – they are highly entertaining!



## Listening recommendations – free

BBC Radio 4 broadcast a series of half hour radio programmes delivered in a very accessible way by writer, broadcaster, comedian and classicist (she is a Cambridge Classics graduate) Natalie Haynes which are available as podcasts under the heading Stand Up for Classics. In each of these episodes she makes both serious and amusing remarks about historical people and texts from Ancient Greece and Rome assisted by other experts and classical scholars.

To access these programmes, you have to set up a BBC account but this is very straightforward. **You should at the very least listen to the podcasts on:**

1. The Iliad
2. Helen of Troy

As extension tasks you could listen to her broadcast on Roman poet Ovid, who told many tales of characters who underwent transformations as a result of encounters with gods, and her broadcast on Roman poet Virgil whom we study in Year 13.

You should also listen to at least 1 of the Radio 4 programmes, also available as podcasts, in the In Our Time series. This is a series of BBC radio discussions exploring a huge range of cultural and historical topics presented by broadcaster, writer and current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, Melvyn Bragg. Almost 900 episodes have been broadcast, so if you have time on your hands.....! Each episode is about 45 minutes long and involves scholars and experts in debate which is quite high level. **You should at the very least listen to the podcasts on:**

1. The Trojan War
2. The Iliad
3. The Greek Myths

As extension tasks, just scroll the menu of In Our Time podcasts and listen to whatever takes your fancy in terms of History, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, whatever, but you may be interested in the programmes on: The Odyssey (the other great work by Homer – allegedly – see below), The Epic, Romulus and Remus, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar.

If you Google BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour Helen of Troy there is an interesting podcast on the beautiful woman who triggered the whole 10 year Trojan war.

## You Tube recommendations

Google You Tube Introducing the Iliad Oxford University and you will find 5 short clips about the Iliad and Homer introduced by scholar Brabara Graziosi, whose work on Homer we look at during the course, and Anthony Verity. **Watch them all.**

As extension tasks there are plenty of other You Tube clips on Homer and the Iliad to explore. You could look at The Iliad Classics TL;DR which is a clip by the University of Oxford introducing the story behind the Iliad.

Below are your study/transition tasks. Take your time over each one and try to learn the material as you go along.

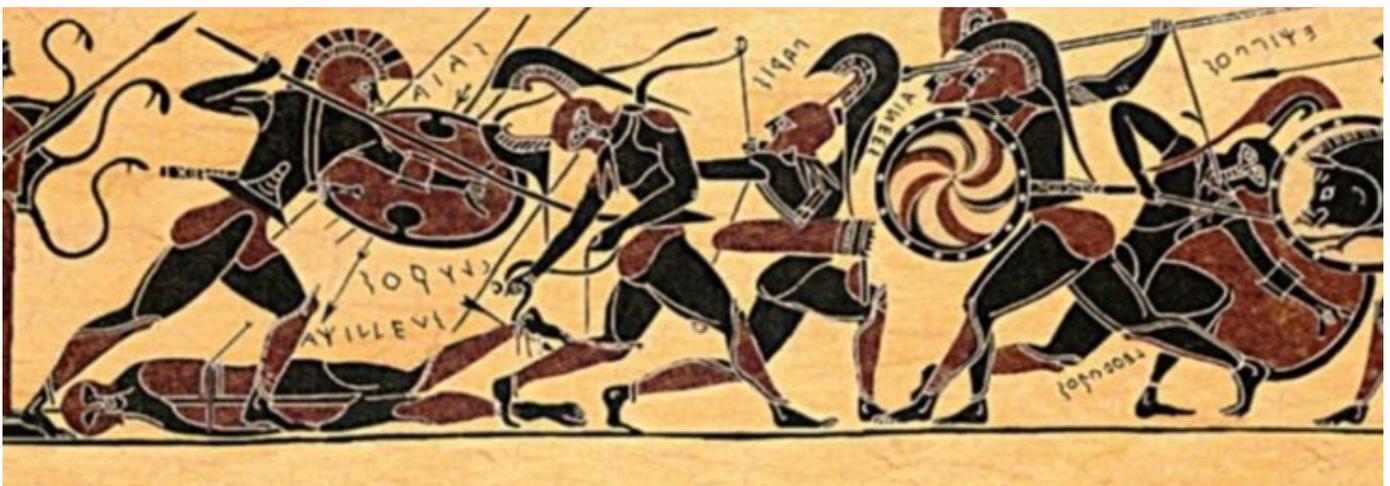
### The Gods of Olympus

Find out who the 12 main Greek gods of Mount Olympus are and make notes on them, explaining:

- what their special characteristics are
- how some of them are related to each other (there are some interesting relationships here)
- what or whom they protect
- what they are associated with
- any special symbols attached to them
- their Roman names (these are different)
- find out details of their parentage, their birth and how they were born – there are some fascinating stories such as how Aphrodite came into being – it could make your eyes water! Similarly, the goddess Athena has an unusual birth.
- There are some great images of these gods on the internet; you may wish to print them off and include them in your work.

You could set this out as a huge chart or table, you could make a series of flashcards for revision purposes (of flash 'papers' if you have no card) with name and symbol on one side, for example, and specific details on the other, so that you could be tested on them at a later date or you could just make a series of notes. If you have a special notebook to hand, you could use this to record your findings.

### The Trojan War



Homer's poem, the **Iliad** tells the tale of a series of events that take place in the tenth year of the Trojan war. Only 2 poems by Homer survive: the **Iliad** and the **Odyssey** but it is thought that these 2 poems were part of a larger collection of Ancient Greek poems, known as the **Epic Cycle** which related the story of the whole of the famous Trojan War which had taken place many hundreds of years previously. Certainly, Homer's audience would have been familiar with the tale of the Trojan War, how it began, how it ended and the many characters involved.

**Research** the myths behind the Trojan War which is both the setting for the **Iliad** and the start of the story of the **Aeneid** and write up your findings. Listen to the **In Our Time Radio 4 podcast** listed above before you start. Have paper and a pen to hand to make notes as you listen to the podcast.





The marriage of Peleus and Thetis



The Trojan Horse

You should find out about what caused the war, the key characters involved in the war and events associated with the war. This should include researching the following:

- ◇ The marriage of Peleus and Thetis as it all starts with this: who are these characters? Why was Thetis, a goddess, expected to marry Peleus, a mortal?
- ◇ The Apple of Discord: the wedding reception is interrupted in a very dramatic way when an apple is thrown among the guests! Who threw it, why and what were the consequence
- ◇ The Judgement of Paris. Paris, son of King Priam of Troy and the legends associated with Paris: what terrible dream did his mother have when she was pregnant with Paris? So what happened when he was born, who brought him up and when did he return to Troy? How did he get involved with 3 goddesses?
- ◇ Helen of Troy: listen to the Radio 4 **Woman's Hour** podcast listed above before you begin to make notes on Helen. Why was Helen famous? Who were her parents? Who were her siblings? Who wanted to marry her and what promise did her father extract from her many suitors (men who wanted to marry her)?
- ◇ What role did Odysseus play in the wedding of Helen of Troy and whom did he eventually marry?
- ◇ So who did marry Helen and how was it that she then ran away with Paris?
  
- ◇ Who was Agamemnon and how did he become involved in the war?
- ◇ According to legend, what happened when the fleet of ships gathered at Aulis to set sail for Troy, involving Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia?
- ◇ How long did the war last?
- ◇ Who was Hector and what happened to him?
- ◇ Who was Achilles, what was so special about him (check out his parents and you will begin to see how all sorts of little details fall into place) and how did he die?
- ◇ How did the war end?



**You can write up your findings as notes or word process your research but a great way of presenting all this information would be in a PowerPoint presentation with pictures and maybe a few maps to help you recall all this information. The very act of turning all this information into a different form is an excellent learning activity. You could present key fact and a who's who.....use your imaginations about how to record your findings.**

## The reality behind the Trojan War

So did it ever take place and if it did, when and where was it supposed to have happened? What evidence have archaeologists found?

*Troy excavations*



Many historians who specialise in ancient history believe that there is evidence to suggest that a huge war did like the Trojan War did indeed take place at the site of a town in Turkey. Whether it all happened as a result of a stolen wife, who knows. Heinrich Schliemann was a famous nineteenth century German businessman turned fanatical archaeologist who believed that he had found the site of ancient Troy. Frank Calvert was a nineteenth century English archaeologist who also excavated what many believe to be the site of Troy. Both men found thousands of artefacts.

**Make notes on the archaeological explorations of both men.**

**When is the Trojan War actually believed to have taken place?**

Again, you may wish to include some maps in your write-up – all this is essential background information for the course. You can see images of the excavations at Troy under Google Images.



*Excavations at the site of Troy*



## Extension work

### The Titans

The Titans were the pre-Olympian gods and the 12 children of Ouranos (as Stephen Fry calls him – also known as Uranus, the Sky) and his mother Gaia (the earth). Relations between them became troubled and Kronos (sometimes referred to as Cronus) fell out in a rather spectacular way with his father – a disturbing tale (find out what happened to Ouranos). Kronos mated with Rhea (and she was a relative, as you should find out) but had an unfortunate parental attitude - although they did become the parents of the first generation of Olympian gods! He was the father of Zeus who ultimately defeated him.

Research and make notes on the Titans. It is particularly worth knowing about Gaia and Ouranos, Kronos, Rhea, the plot hatched by Rhea, Ouranos and Gaia to save Rhea's baby, the upbringing of Zeus and Zeus' overthrow of his father. All of these tales are brilliantly told in Stephen Fry's **Mythos**.

### Tales of Greek Heroes

Find out about the stories of other well known Greek heroes – they tend to crop up as references in literature and some are mentioned in the **Aeneid**. Again, they are exciting tales. In particular, find out about:

Perseus

Hercules

Theseus

Jason and the Argonauts

Where to look for information:

As well as the obvious online source, Wikipedia, you should look at some of the following internet sites which will be useful (use the Google search tool to find them):

Spark notes: The Iliad – free online study guide; contains background information as well as analysis of the poem – a great revision guide

Cliffs Notes: The Iliad – another free online study guide to the poem

Shmoop.com: the Iliad – an American free online analysis of Homer's great work which, while written in a colloquial American style, not to be copied in an essay, gives some great and entertaining information – take a look!

Biography.com – search Homer

Britannica.com - search Homer and then search The Trojan War; also use this site to search for Greek myths

Ancient-Literature.com – search Homer and also The Trojan War

Ancienthistory.about.com/library - search for Homer, The Iliad and The Trojan War

[www.ancientgreece.com](http://www.ancientgreece.com) – search Homer and also The Trojan War

[greekmyths-greekmythology.com](http://greekmyths-greekmythology.com)

[history.com](http://history.com) – for The Trojan War and for Greek mythology

[timelessmyths.com](http://timelessmyths.com) – for the background to The Trojan War

[Just Google 'the causes of The Trojan War', the Apple of Discord and 'The Judgement of Paris' and see what appears!](#)

York Notes: the *Iliad*: this is an excellent short, inexpensive study guide to the poem which is readily available on Amazon (£7.99 new or from £0.01 plus postage, £2.80, second hand)

For gods and goddesses look at:

[www.theoi.com/greek-mythology/olympian-gods](http://www.theoi.com/greek-mythology/olympian-gods)

[www.greekmythology.com](http://www.greekmythology.com)

[greektravellers.com](http://greektravellers.com) – 30 of the most famous tales from Greek mythology

[The film \*Clash of the Titans\*](#)

And finally, why not watch **Troy**, the 2004 American blockbuster film starring Brad Pitt! Not historically accurate, or even that faithful to the *Iliad*, but good fun! Or see if you can access the recent BBC series **Troy: Fall of a City** on Netflix – really good on the start of the war.

## Politics of the Late Republic

This module is about what led to the fall of the Republic in ancient Rome. It involves looking at one of the most exciting periods of history that involves amazing people such as Julius Caesar, Cicero and Cato.

Watch the following video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mb7074GIIgc>

Answer the following questions using the video and expand on the answers by referring to any of the other information below.

1. According to mythology who founded Rome and how?
2. Who were the first Romans and how did they 'encourage' women to their settlement?
3. What geographical features made up the city? Give information about them.
4. What did King Tarquin do? What prodigy did was found when the Temple of Jupiter was built?
5. What happened to Tarquin and who was responsible?
6. How was Rome ruled after Tarquin?
7. How did the new political system work and how was this justified?
8. What drives this system?
9. What are patricians and plebians?
10. Why were there tensions between these two groups?
11. How was this solved with the Twelve Tables?
12. How did Rome expand?
13. What was a dictator and what was the role for?
14. How would you summarise the founding of Rome so far? What was it based on? What problems can you foresee?



You can write or type the information. What is not acceptable is a mass of information that has been copied and pasted.

### Information

There are many books on this topic. Three of the most accessible are;

- Beard, Mary. SPQR.
- Baker, Simon. Ancient Rome.
- Holland, Tom. Rubicon.



There are also many websites on this subject. Here some useful ones but using a search engine will provide many possibilities.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/ancient-medieval/roman-empire/v/roman-social-and-political-structures>

<https://www.ancient.eu/Rome/>

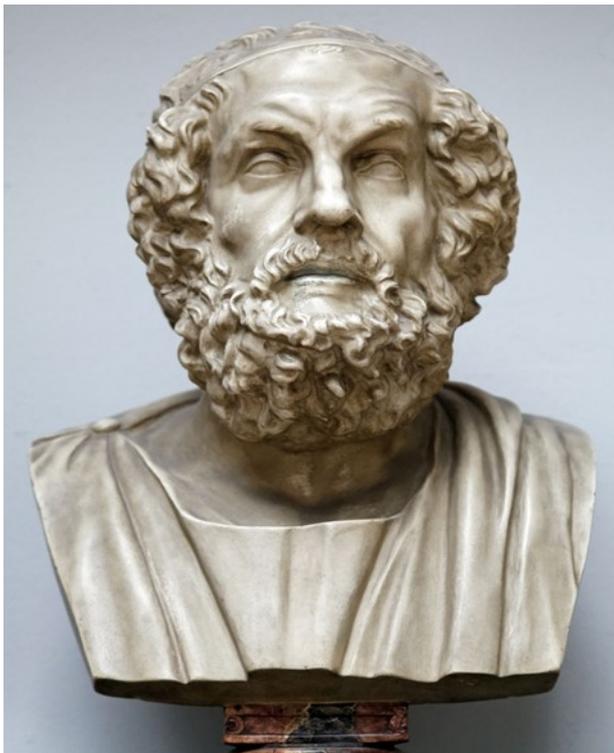
<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/months-past/foundation-rome>

<https://www.bloomsbury.com/cw/ocr-as-and-a-level-classical-civilisation/beliefs-ideas/component-33-politics-of-the-late-republic/general-resources/>

### EXTENSION

Robert Harris has written a trilogy based on the life of Cicero, one of the people we will be studying. The first is called Imperium. It can be bought quite cheaply second hand or borrowed from a library (when they open). Write a review of this book and what happens in it.

Although Homer gives his name to 2 epic poems, the **Iliad** and the **Odyssey**, there is much academic debate whether he actually existed, whether, if he did exist, he composed both poems, or whether the poems we have them were actually composed by many poets over a period of time. No one knows for certain when he lived, if he existed, or where in Greece – all a bit confusing, but actually, it doesn't matter very much! What is fact is that we have 2 exciting poems, one of which we will study in detail. Assuming Homer did exist, what is known is that time in which he was composing was a **pre-literate society** – that is, writing didn't exist! This is fascinating! How did he compose and remember the story that he had created in his mind? Well, he composed his poems **orally** by reciting and memorising what he had composed; people didn't read the poems, but went along to public performances where poetry was performed, with the poet or **rhapsode** made up the poem as he went along – amazing, isn't it? Apparently, the human brain does indeed have the capacity to memorise huge amounts of information and then pass it on to the next generation and then the next.....we don't tend to do this now as our lives are very complex, unlike the lives of people in ancient times (arguably) and we don't need to but remember that actors are used to memorising huge chunks of script when they perform in plays. And it is also easier to remember poems that **rhyme** – probably all of us learned nursery rhymes at a very young age – and Homer's poems were composed in rhyming verse. So, Homer's poems were passed on until at some point, they were written down in Greek.



*Bust of the poet Homer - not that anyone knew what he looked like!*

So now do some research on Homer and record your findings.

- ◆ But who was Homer? Look at the bust and in particular his eyes: what did some people believe about him
- ◆ Find out what you can about the life and work of the Greek poet. Did he actually exist?
- ◆ Where and **when** was he supposed to have lived? It is important to have an approximate date for him.
- ◆ What was Greece like at the time?
- ◆ What was special about the way he composed his poetry? Research how these poems were composed and then transmitted to future generations.
- ◆ What is The Iliad about? Give an overview of what

the poem is about.



