

Heroes and heroines of the Classical World



Above : Achilles' profile made in A Level Classical Civilisation (left) and Heroes of the Trojan war puzzle (right)

The Classical World (of the Greeks and Romans) is full of heroes and heroines. The word 'hero' is Greek in origin, originally meaning something like 'defender' and older than even the first work of Greek literature, Homer's *Iliad*. 'Heroine' was its female equivalent and the Classics is full of compelling characters of both sexes. To show that these permeate all the work we do in Classics, I decided to ask four pupils across both Latin and Classical Civilisation who their favourite hero or heroine is.

Sixth Former Tilly has studied the Classics longer than anyone in the school and is currently working towards her A Level Latin examinations. The stories she has translated from GCSE onwards have contained innumerable compelling characters, both of the heroic and the more villainous. She chose Aeneas, the most ubiquitous hero studied at Gateways. He is the central character in texts studied in the Latin GCSE and A Level, is a mythic founder studied in the Classical Civilisation GCSE, and, alongside Achilles, the most important figure in the equivalent A Level course. Pupils have met him through storyboards, profiles, Latin word puzzles and more, always with an eye to what makes him such a hero.

Eleanor from Upper 5 took me by surprise with both her answers. From her Latin set text, she chose The Sibyl, prophetess of the god Apollo. It is she that takes Aeneas down to the Underworld and Eleanor was very impressed with how she handled the Ferryman, Charon, as well as the three-headed dog, Cerberus. Journeys to the Underworld feature heavily in the

Classical Civilisation courses, unsurprisingly given this feat really proves one's heroic credentials. Odysseus, Theseus, Hercules and Orpheus are all studied at GCSE. Eleanor also chose the general, Hannibal Barca. She has met him through the stories in her Latin language course and found him to be extremely cunning. He's still studied today in military schools, so she must have a good eye for a strategist.



Left: picture frames made of scenes of the Underworld by GCSE pupils (one contains The Sibyl)

Right: battle plan to help students get their head around a tricky A Level Latin passage (later it was annotated with Latin quotes)

Sixth Former Emily also had two choices, but they come as a pair: Orpheus and Eurydice. This is Emily's favourite story and it is the power of such myths that draws many to studying the Classics. At GCSE, pupils learn about this in great depth through the Roman writer, Ovid. He wrote the exciting collection of myths, known as *The Metamorphoses*, packed full of tales. On the course we study Ovid's retelling of some of Hercules' adventures, as well as a battle against the centaurs that Theseus takes part in.



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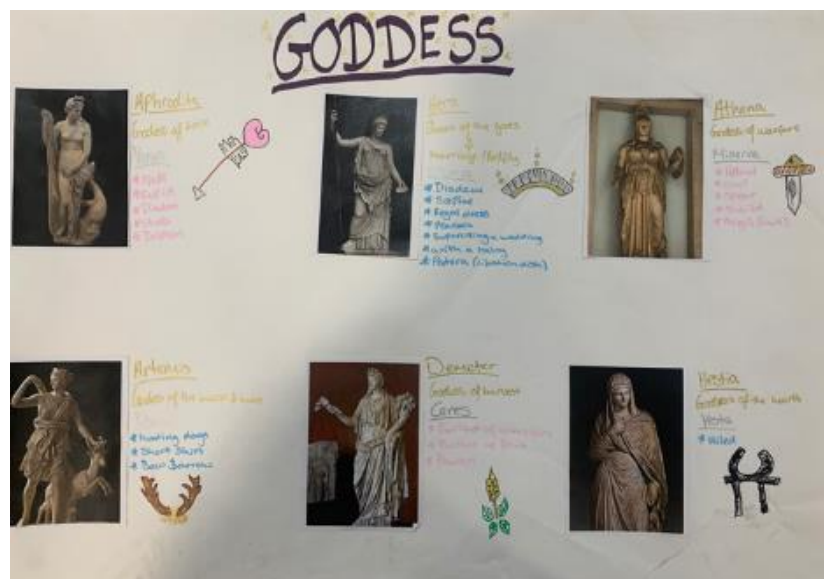
Left: *Apple to Apples* is a favourite game for GCSE and A Level pupils, getting them thinking about each character's unique attributes.

Right: a favourite meme of the current A Level class.

Finally, Sixth Former Scarlett (considered the question from the angle of those characters she found the most interesting to study. She chose Helen of Troy and King Mezentius. Helen provides the A Level class with great entertainment and her characterisation is actually rather complex. She certainly gives us a unique perspective on the stories she finds herself in. Mezentius, on the other hand, is a villain. But Scarlett enjoyed how the writer Virgil gives him a notorious reputation a long time before he takes part in the action. When he arrives, it is after much anticipation. Finally, she also wanted to give a shout out to her favourite goddess, Artemis. The gods and goddesses are at the heart of all the stories we study, and every hero and heroine may find themselves with a handy one by their side, or a scary one constantly giving them a hard time.



Left: collectible cards made for introducing heroes of the Trojan War



Right: Poster featuring goddesses made in Lower 5 to show their roles and accessories

I hope their answers give you a good idea of the sort of things we encounter in the Classics.

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