

A warm welcome to Y6...

Classics

Head of subject: Miss Johnson

Our Team

The Classics team at High Storrs consists of two members of staff. Miss Johnson is the Subject Leader and has been teaching at the school for thirty-eight years. She has a wealth of experience in teaching Classical Civilisation and actually taught Miss Allen, the other much younger member of the team, when she was a student at High Storrs! Miss Allen has been teaching at the school for almost five years and is our Latin specialist.

Our Curriculum

High Storrs is the only state school in Sheffield to have Classics on its curriculum and we are very proud that it's one of the school's unique selling points. Y7 students spend their Classics lessons mostly looking at Greek mythology – the creation of the world, the Olympian gods, the heroes and the Underworld. Group project work on the hero Perseus gives students a chance to be genuinely creative and sometimes even to bake cakes, shoot films and make models. Y7s also experience a short Latin taster course which introduces them to the Cambridge Latin Course that we use for GCSE. They learn vocabulary, think about English words that derive from Latin, cover some basic grammar and do some translation work.

During the course of Y8, students choose their GCSE options, and the Classics Department offers two distinct subjects. Students can choose one or both of these. The first is Classical Civilisation, which is all taught in English:

Topic 1: The Homeric World

You will study Homer's 'Odyssey'. This famous story from Greek mythology concerns the adventures of the hero Odysseus on his journey home from the Trojan War. He meets gods and goddesses, fierce tribes of warriors and man-eating monsters as he tries to return to his beloved wife, Penelope. Selected chapters are studied and students will be expected to understand the plot, the characters and their relationships, and the role of the gods.

Also, an in-depth study of the time period in which Homer's poems were set i.e. Mycenaean Civilisation. The Mycenaeans were an early Greek people living in the Bronze Age. The Trojan War took place towards the end of this period of civilisation. Our knowledge of the Mycenaeans comes from archaeological remains and you will study their citadels and palaces, their tombs and burials, their armour, weapons and methods of fighting, their system of writing and their decorative arts including frescoes, pottery, jewellery and sculpture.

Topic 2: Women in The Ancient World

An in-depth study of the position of women in both ancient Greece and ancient Rome. You will use literary, archaeological and artistic material to learn about Greek mythological figures such as Helen, Medea and the Amazons together with famous women from early Roman legend. You will consider the upbringing and education of girls, making comparisons between Athens, the military state of Sparta and Rome. You will discover how few political rights women had in comparison with men but also how important women were in religious life. You will consider male attitudes towards women and think about virtuous women in comparison with those who were considered unacceptable or even dangerous.

Our other subject is Latin:

Language: This course is based around the Cambridge Latin Course books 1 to 5. You will develop your ability to translate from Latin into English and to answer comprehension questions, in English, on Latin passages. You will do a small amount of work on English to Latin translation.

Literature: You will read some of the stories and poems the Romans wrote and answer literary style questions, in English. The literature is also accompanied by a prescribed selection of source material (e.g. paintings, mosaics, sculptures, buildings and graffiti) and you will be asked to analyse and respond to these sources, making connections between literary and archaeological evidence from the Roman world.

Roman Culture: This part of the course is entirely in English. You will have to analyse and respond to ancient source material (e.g. paintings, mosaics, sculptures, buildings, graffiti) on different aspects of Roman everyday life.

We also offer Classical Civilisation at 'A' level and, numbers permitting, Latin to 'AS' or 'A' level. We are delighted to have four students studying for the full 'A' level this year, subsidised by our 'Save Classics' fund. High Storrs students often go on into higher education to continue their studies taking subjects such as Classical Civilisation, Ancient History, and Classical Archaeology.

Our Results

Numbers of students who take classical subjects nationally are small and many of them come from private schools so exam results don't feature in national league tables that the DfE publishes. However, our GCSE and 'A' level results compare favourably with other similar subjects in the school and we have seen an improvement in Latin since we changed the exam board we use. Our students always enjoy their courses.

Our Legacy

As Classics teachers, we think that all students in all schools everywhere should have at least an introduction to the Greeks and Romans beyond the primary curriculum; they were, after all, two of the greatest, most influential and innovative civilisations ever to inhabit our planet. To make a list of all the ideas they gave the western world is to run the risk of sounding like a well-known sketch from a Monty Python film but we should consider the range of material that falls under the heading of 'Classics' and how versatile it is with regard to teaching students of different age groups.

Younger students are often drawn in by the richness and variety of Greek mythology which can be used as a springboard for all sorts of activities from creative writing to art and drama. Older students get to study some of the most enduring literature ever written, Virgil's 'Aeneid' for example. This is, in part, a tale of refugees from a war-ravaged country in the eastern Mediterranean coming to Italy seeking a new home and a new life. Two thousand years on, this epic poem could not be more relevant in today's world. Greek tragedy's very purpose was to explore the difficult questions in life - what the best form of government is, how human society should function and what its relationship with its gods should be. Art, architecture, sculpture and archaeology all feature too.

And then there's Latin which gave us at least half of our language and most of our complex words (together with Greek). It is also the foundation of several other widely spoken European languages and encourages logical thinking. Surely the benefits of learning it are obvious. The Romans occupied our country for four hundred years so they are part of our own history.

Why would we not want our youngsters to have access to this extraordinary, enriching and thought-provoking world?

