

Classics and Ancient History Suggested Reading

Classics is much more than just reading Latin and Greek! It is the study of the literature, history, art and culture of the ancient world, and of philosophy across the ages. **You do not need to have studied Latin or Greek before to study Classics.** Universities offer language tuition for beginners in both languages (check the course outline for specifics) and if you aren't so interested in the literature, you can opt for similar courses such as Classical Archaeology and Ancient History.

The ancient world laid the foundations for modern political systems, warfare, literature, art, architecture, and almost every other aspect of our culture you can think of. The study of this period is therefore vital if we are to understand how our civilisation has developed, and where it came from.

1. **Rubicon**, by Tom Holland is a history of Rome as a Republic, before Augustus and the imperial age.
2. **Lives of the Caesars, by Suetonius** continues the story of Rome through some of the empire's best known leaders. His no holds barred expose on these powerful men starts with Julius Caesar and ends with Domitian, and at times has a remarkable contemporary tone.
3. **Mothers, Murderers and Mistresses** is a documentary Professor Catherine Edwards made for the BBC examining the role of the imperial women in the history of Rome. A hugely entertaining and interesting series. Here Professor Edwards explains her fascination with the women of imperial Rome, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b021n60p/features/women-and-power>.
4. **Treasures of Ancient Rome, BBC.** This BBC documentary about Rome discusses some of the most famous and important works of art and architecture that the civilisation produced. This is the first of three, but they are all fantastic and are available on youtube. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8WR_Z-wEE4
5. **The British Museum.** If you want to find out more about the ancient world then head to the British Museum. The museum holds the Parthenon Frieze, Nereid Monument and hundreds of incredible exhibits from the Classical period – all completely free to see. They are an amazing visual guide to ancient world and show how Graeco-Roman culture spread from Rome and Athens across the Mediterranean and Near East, metamorphosing as it went.
6. **Homer on Life and Death**, by Jasper Griffin, is a very accessible text that is relevant to anyone studying Classics, whether you have read Homer in English or Greek, and has a wide focus rather than the narrow view you get from just reading extracts. Griffin shows you that the Iliad is at its base an exploration of the human condition.
7. **Female of the Species, Semonides.** Very obscure, and a great example of the strange places Classics can take you! This book is a translation of an obscure poem from 6th century BC Greece - one of the only full pieces of literature written in this period, and proof of how advanced society and thought was on a random island in the Aegean. Fascinating on the role, or perceived role, of women in the ancient world.
8. **Ovid's Metamorphoses** is richly fantastical book with a wicked sense of humour.
9. **Homer's Odyssey** follows the Greek hero, Odysseus's, journey from the Trojan war back to his home on Ithaca. Another fantastic piece of Ancient literature and a must read even for non-Classics.