



CLASSICS

Matters

AUTUMN 2023

Welcome to the third issue of the Classics Department newsletter -

CLASSICS Matters.

Here we aim to offer a snapshot of what happens each term in Classics at The Abbey and beyond.

Should you have any questions or wish to discover more about this subject, feel free to email us at loprestiva@theabbey.co.uk

Nos autem beatam vitam in animi securitate et in omnium vacatione munerum ponimus.

We for our part deem happiness to consist in tranquillity of mind and entire exemption from all duties.

(Cicero, De Natura Deorum, 1, 53)





Bay of Naples Trip

Jess, Lower V

During half term a group of students from Lower V to Upper VI took a trip to the Bay of Naples. Our trip was amazing! It had a collection of different activities varying from food and nutrition activities and Latin visits and talks. Even though we couldn't climb Mount Vesuvius because of the bad weather conditions we still had an amazing time and everyone enjoyed their time in Sorrento.



For the Food and Nutrition aspect of the trip we visited an olive oil grove and factory to see how olive oil is harvested and made. We tasted their oils in so many flavours. We went to a mozzarella farm where we saw mozzarella being made and enjoyed lunch. We watched ice cream making and tasted fresh lemon sorbet and collected their recipe and certificate. On the last day we went to a lemon grove and saw the lemons and oranges ripening. We tasted their jams and sorbet. During these visits we learned about how olive oil is made and collected without machines or chemicals, how mozzarella is made from the cows at the farm and how they plait it, and at the lemon grove we learned about how they deal with the weather conditions and at which time of the year they collect the lemons.

We also tried lots of gelato throughout our trip, comparing how some of the flavours differed from others. An example of a difference we noticed was at the lemon grove the lemons gelato was very sweet compared to others. Finally, we had an amazing visit to a pizza restaurant where we were all taught how to make traditional pizza dough and enjoyed our own pizza whilst watching some traditional dancing.

For the Latin and Classics side of the trip we enjoyed a visit to an important villa called The Villa Oplontis and then Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Naples Archaeological Museum. We had a visit and tour of Pompeii from a guide which helped us learn lots of interesting facts about the daily life of the people of Pompeii and how they worshipped their gods.

The visit to Herculaneum was my favourite part of the trip. It consisted of free time to explore the ruins and take photos. This was very interesting and I loved looking at the buildings and trying to figure out what it would have been used for. Ms Lopresti read the first hand account from Pliny the Younger in Latin, in the form of a letter written about his uncle who experienced the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Finally at the Naples Archaeological Museum we had free time to roam around and look at all the statues found in Pompeii and the Herculaneum we had just visited. This just made the experience very special, seeing items that were there almost 2000 years ago.



Ovid Competition Fair

This term, the Upper III Latin students have been immersed in the enchanting myth of Echo and Narcissus. Our exploration extended beyond the classroom as we delved into the evolution of this myth's representation and significance across various art forms throughout the years.

Students were not just passive learners; they were catalysts for innovation. Encouraged to reimagine the myth, they unleashed their creativity across diverse media, including creative writing, performance, artefact creation, and animation.

The department has diligently selected the finest pieces from each category to represent The Abbey in the prestigious Ovid Competition, hosted by Cambridge University.

Now, take a moment to marvel at the exceptional work crafted by these talented students! Their interpretations breathe new life into the timeless narrative of Echo and Narcissus.

A Poet's Entreaty to Narcissus

*To be fooled by a mere reflection,
To live with vanity and self obsession,
May lead you to pride and pleasure,*

*But to be refused and rejected,
To be shunned and neglected,
Fills one with loneliness and isolation.*

*To live with the pain of repeating the last words of others,
To live with the pain of not being able to express your love,
Is a terrible punishment.*

*But to live with self love and conceit,
To live with arrogance and superiority,
Is far worse due to your ignorance*

*So, take your loved one by the hand,
Love them with all your heart,
Or let them perish in the forgotten darkness....*

~ Janani Iyer



LIV Trip to Bath

Our trip to Bath was extremely successful. Lots of learning as well as lots of fun made the day very enjoyable.

We learnt many things including the reason the famous baths were built where they were, and discovered Bath has a natural hot spring (naturally hot river water). We had to determine whether Bath was a special place, and to help form our opinion, we were able to touch real Roman artefacts.

We also went on a tour with audio guides. First we saw the Great Bath which was enormous and 1.5 metres deep. Some of the statues were from the 3rd century. Then we saw the frigidarium (cold plunge), tepidarium (warm room), caldarium (hot room) and lastly the apodyterium (changing room). That was followed by an ice cream!

It was a great trip and we would both definitely recommend it.



Emilia's object



This is the Gorgon's head which would have been found carved into the pediment, sitting 15 feet above the entrance to Minerva's temple. It interests me because no one quite seems to know what it is meant to represent. On one hand, it could be a gorgon, even if most gorgons are female, that was combined with Celtic imagery. On the other hand, it could be the image of a water god, as it has many similarities with other water gods.

Manya's Object



I found the Sacred spring really interesting as it was the heart of the site. It was known as a place of great respect for the local people before the Romans came. The Romans believed that back in their time that the sacred pool is where the spirits of the Goddess Minerva dwelt and the hot waters from the sacred spring were used by the Romans later on to supply the other baths in the building. The Romans completed the bathhouse and the temple by 76 AD. Along with touching up and connecting the sacred springs to them to make hot water flow all throughout the place.

This is Minerva's head by Jennifer



The bronze head of the goddess Sulis Minerva is one of the best known objects from Roman Britain. Its discovery in 1727 was an early indication that the Roman site at Bath was not a typical settlement.

Zayba's Object



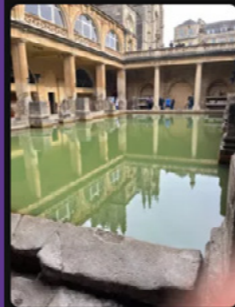
This altar was dedicated to Minerva Sulis and to the deities of two emperors called Marcus Aurelius and Verus. This was put up meaning Gaius Curvatus Saturninus willingly and rightfully fulfilled his vow/promise for his family and himself. The altar was used for sacrifice and prayers. This interests me as I wanted to find out what the latin script meant and what the altar was used for.

Georgia's object



Head of the lady
This head was thought to have decorated the tomb of the wealthy lady. Her hairstyle was quite fashionable in Rome in the later 1st century AD.

The actual Roman Bath by Jennifer



This bath was built about 2000 years ago, and the water is also this age!

Anayah's Object (Religious Mask)



This is a religious tin mask with sockets for glass eyes and rivet holes where it was fixed to a wooden backing. It would sometimes be carried by a priest in procession. It was found in a Roman drain from the Sacred Spring.

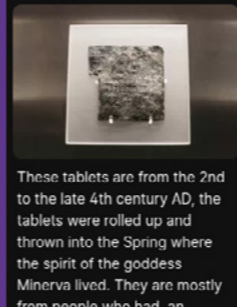
It interested me because it was something which you wouldn't see in the modern day although we still have processions nowadays. It also caught my eye because it stood out as it was different to the religious items we see in our modern day.

Diya's object - skeleton from Roman baths



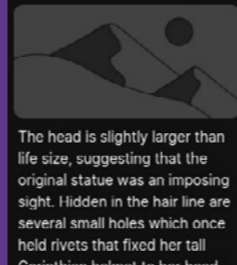
This skeleton from the Roman baths was able to be used to identify who this skeleton was. Above the head of the skeleton you can see a replica of what this man would have looked like. They also know he was wealthy because of the holes in his teeth, meaning he had honey in his diet.

Roman curse tablets (by Aadya)



These tablets are from the 2nd to the late 4th century AD, the tablets were rolled up and thrown into the Spring where the spirit of the goddess Minerva lived. They are mostly from people who had an injustice, asking for revenge. It interests me because of the connection between the people and the goddess, also the way they used to write is very different from us.

Minerva's head by Lily



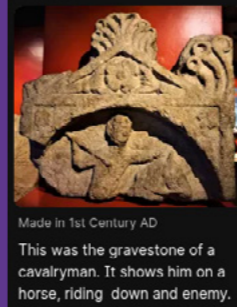
The head is slightly larger than life size, suggesting that the original statue was an imposing sight. Hidden in the hair line are several small holes which once held rivets that fixed her tall Corinthian helmet to her head. Examination of the head has revealed that it has six layers of gilding. This interests me because I find Minerva a very interesting person and her head is a very special object.

Zahra's object- Coffin/tomb



This is the tomb accompanying the skeleton. The tomb is thought to be the tomb of a traveller or trader. The tomb has decreased in size of the centuries and was dug up near Syria making the archaeologists and historians that uncovered it believe that the traveller was trading around that area. It has interested me because after doing some research it is said that two bodies were found in the tomb which is relatively small.

Cavalryman Gravestone - Julia

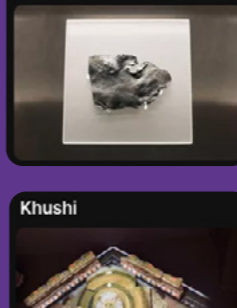


Made in 1st Century AD

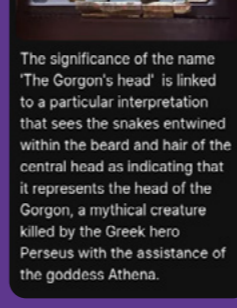
This was the gravestone of a cavalryman. It shows him on a horse, riding down and enemy. It was a popular theme in this man's time.

I am unsure of why he was here, and what his name was, but it looked like he showed some importance, as a few more cavalrymen appeared with him.

Some parts of curse tablets (by Aadya)



Khushi

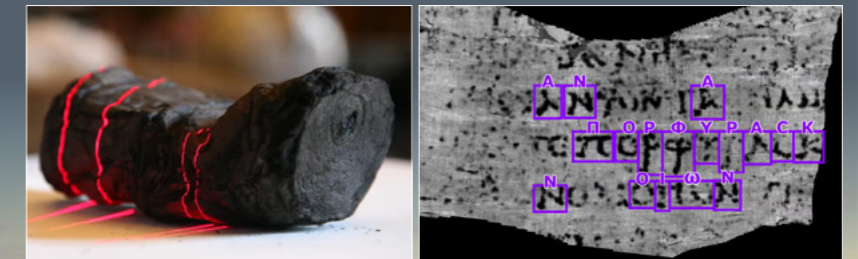


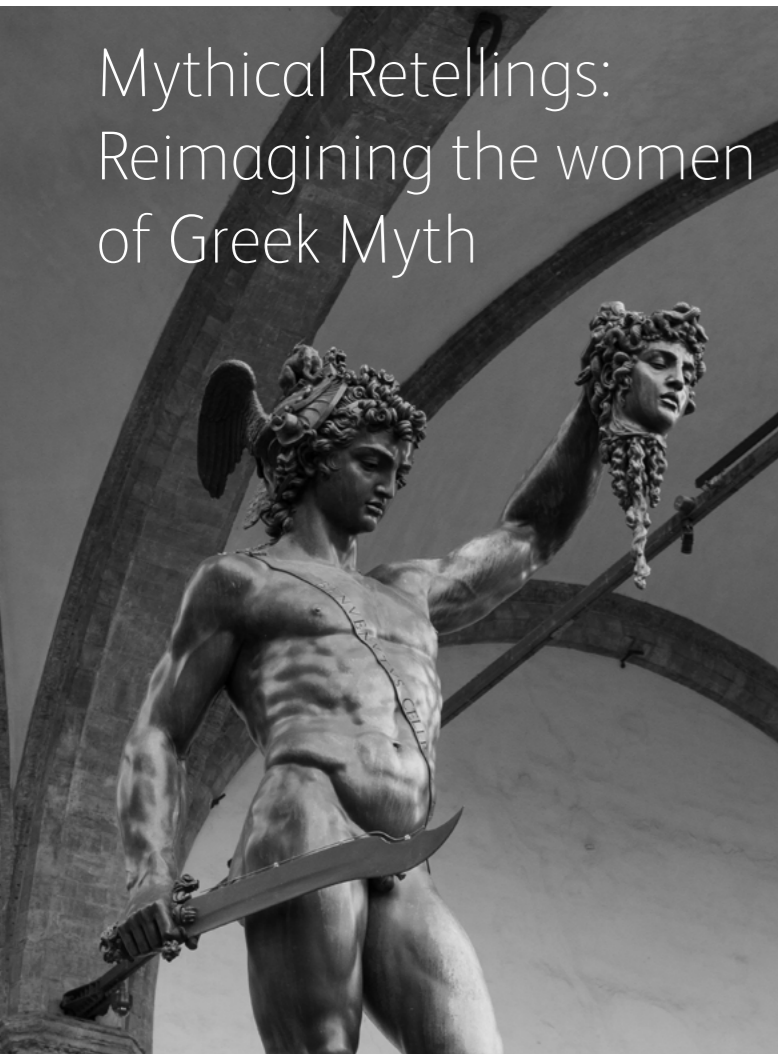
The significance of the name 'The Gorgon's head' is linked to a particular interpretation that sees the snakes entwined within the beard and hair of the central head as indicating that it represents the head of the Gorgon, a mythical creature killed by the Greek hero Perseus with the assistance of the goddess Athena.

CLASSICS AROUND THE WORLD

Researchers use AI to read word on ancient scroll burned by Vesuvius

In AD 79, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius destroyed the ancient library of a luxury villa in Herculaneum, incinerating hundreds of scrolls. Almost 2,000 years later, researchers have used artificial intelligence to extract the first word from one of these charred texts. The discovery is a result of the Vesuvius challenge, led by Prof Brent Seales and backed by Silicon Valley investors. The challenge involved releasing 3D X-ray images of rolled-up scrolls and papyrus fragments, as well as an AI program trained to decipher the scrolls. The first word extracted is an ancient Greek word, "πορφύρας," meaning "purple." This finding has sparked excitement, and researchers are now working to read the surrounding text. These scrolls, part of the Institut de France's collection, are among the few surviving from antiquity, and their contents hold great historical and academic significance. The texts are primarily in ancient Greek, with the potential for Latin texts as well, and could reveal a wide range of knowledge, from philosophical works to lost books of Latin literature and historical documents. The research team is eager to explore the content further.





Mythical Retellings: Reimagining the women of Greek Myth



This week a group of Classics students from Lower IV – Upper VI gathered together to attend an online talk organised by the British School of Athens titled 'Mythical Retellings: Reimagining the women of Greek Myth'.

The talk featured Professor Edith Hall (Durham University) as Chair, and novelists Claire Heywood, Jennifer Saint, and Susan Stokes-Chapman as panellists, and was meant to be a thought-provoking exploration of the fascinating world of Greek mythology and its reinterpretation through the eyes of these accomplished writers.

Izzy Hunt, a Lower VI IB Latin student, tells us more:
On Monday 6 November a group of Classics students and I attended a Mythical Retellings webinar.

The webinar included three guests from the world of Classics and literature.

One of the guests was Claire Heywood – the author of 'Daughters of Sparta' and 'The Shadow of Perseus' - who read us an extract of the latter book which was about the meeting of Medusa and Perseus. We also got an exclusive on her upcoming book about the character Dido from Virgil's Aeneid.

Another guest was Susan Stokes-Chapman who spoke about her book 'Pandora' and how she retold the story in the Georgian era where Pandora's curiosity was her strength rather than weakness.

The final guest was Jennifer Saint who is the author of 'Ariadne', 'Elektra' and 'Atalanta'. She also read us an extract of one of her books and during the questions she gave an interesting insight into the increase of feminism and how this has brought these rather male dominated stories into the light from a female perspective.

Overall the webinar was very interesting and I personally would love to read Heywood's upcoming book on Dido after studying the Aeneid at GCSE.



Classics and Careers

What could you do with a Classics Degree?
Short answer: anything

Listen to this series of The Classics Podcast, where you can learn what classicists bring to the workplace (and the world!), the resonance of the #ancientworld, how to forge your own path, and where studying the past can take you

<https://classicalassociation.org/classics-and-careers/>

Dulcium Symposium

A lively mix of Lower V to Upper VI Classics students recently gathered in the Sixth Form Centre to spice up their lunch break. They dished out the highlights of their first-term exploits, turning a regular break into a mini feast of classical wisdom.

Francesca enchanted us with the allure and significance of immersing oneself in the original Greek of the Iliad. Izzy delved into the world of IB Higher Level Latin Literature, eloquently contrasting the genres, styles, and purposes of her two set texts she studied so far while sharing her personal delights from each.

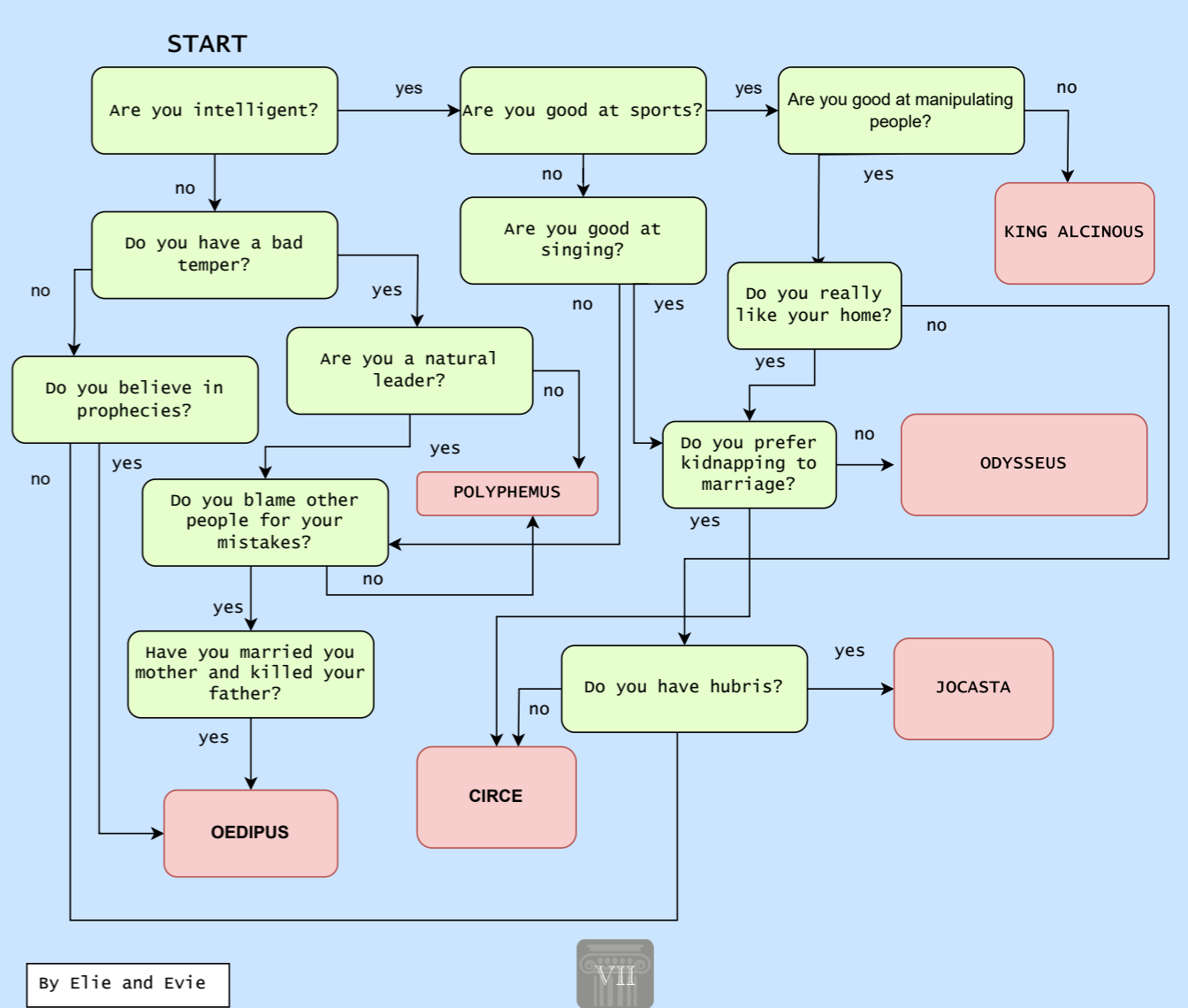
The Lower V Latin enthusiasts took the spotlight, shedding light on the enigmatic historical figure of Messalina, Emperor Claudius's third wife. But the adventure didn't stop there. Elie and Evie, the dynamic duo

steeped in Classical Civilisation, treated us to a Character Quiz inspired by the Odyssey and Oedipus King. Laughter echoed as everyone uncovered which mythological persona resonated with them.

Oh, and let's not overlook the sweetness that Mrs. Sutcliffe's delectable brownies added to the affair! Amidst the shared wisdom and mythical musings, it was an absolute treat. It could not have been a symposium of sweet things without them.

Now, turning the spotlight on you: which classical civilization character captures your imagination?"

What character from classical civilisation are you?

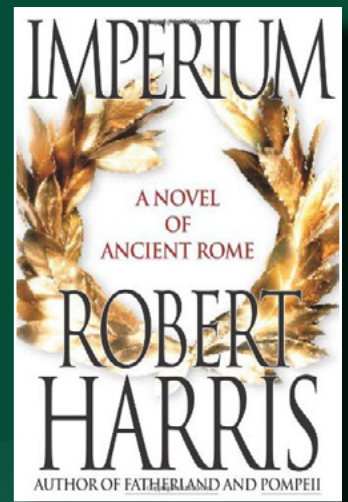


The Abbey
Classics Society



Classics-related book of the term

When Tiro, the confidential secretary (and slave) of a Roman senator, opens the door to a terrified stranger on a cold November morning, he sets in motion a chain of events that will eventually propel his master into one of the most suspenseful courtroom dramas in history. The stranger is a Sicilian, a victim of the island's corrupt Roman governor, Verres. The senator is Marcus Cicero—an ambitious young lawyer and spellbinding orator, who at the age of twenty-seven is determined to attain imperium—supreme power in the state.



This book is available in the library!

Have you checked the Classics reading lists on the Library catalogue yet?

Go to Oliver Library > Reading lists > Classics UII LIV UIV

Or scan the QR code to find out more:



What classics-related book are you reading/have you read?

Tell Magistra Lopresti about it and it may become the next “book of the term”!



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