



# CLASSICS at OXFORD and CAMBRIDGE



## Some number crunching...

Successful Caterham Classicists into Oxbridge since 2011:	<b>25</b>
Percentage of Oxford Classics applicants who are invited to interview	<b>96%</b>
Percentage of Oxford Classics applicants awarded places (highest hit-rate of any subject)	<b>38%</b>
Percentage of Cambridge Classics applicants awarded places (highest hit-rate of any subject)	<b>50%</b>

### Why study Classics at University?

*“With room for specialists and generalists, the Greco-Roman world offers something for everyone. Pots and plays, Plato and Pausanias - the range of areas Classicists study is exhilarating, offering a great base from which to branch out, alongside a grounding in an inherently fascinating area with excellent travel opportunities. The magic of ancient objects and the thrill of tracing their importance throughout history have inspired people for generations. Enhanced linguistic aptitude, sharp critical skills, excellence in creating and dissecting rhetoric, and a sensitive approach to intercultural issues make Classicists interesting people with excellent employment prospects - a group it’s well worth joining.”*

Dr Cressida Ryan, University of Oxford, quoted in *The Independent*, 30/7/11

As you can see from the figures above, those of you considering reading Classics at Oxford or Cambridge (hereafter “Oxbridge”) stand a good chance of being awarded a place. We will give you all the support you need but, despite what the figures might suggest, you will need to work as hard as in any other subject to stand a chance of success, and - most importantly of all - you will need to demonstrate your commitment to Classics with a significant amount of extra reading and study over the next couple of years.

**Latin Prose** (LPC) is an important requirement for those of you contemplating an Oxbridge application in Classics. Some of you may already have started some LPC in the Fourth and Fifth Year; if you haven’t yet done any English to Latin and think that you might be contemplating Classics at University then you should see Mr Waite as soon as possible with a view to fixing up classes in September. If you wish to be considered as a potential Oxbridge Classicist then weekly after-school enrichment classes will begin in January 2023.

## To Greek or not to Greek?

Having Greek at some level is also desirable (but not compulsory) for potential Oxbridge classicists. If you do not currently study Greek (either on timetable or extra-curriculum) but are contemplating an Oxbridge Classics application then you would have to learn Greek from scratch at Oxford or Cambridge if you were offered a place. Mr. Waite and Mr. Owen have, on occasion and in exceptional circumstances, run a GCSE short-course in Greek for interested Oxbridge Classicists over two years in the Sixth Form. Be prepared, though: this course requires a significant after-school commitment, both in terms of extra classes (twice a week) and extra-curricular work (learning vocabulary, translation exercises etc.) Late converts are invited to ask for further details.

The **Bryanston Greek Summer School** runs for two weeks in July-August of every year and is aimed at Sixth Form Classicists of all ranges of ability in Greek (it regularly attracts upwards of 300 students). It is an excellent way of perfecting your language work, meeting potential university tutors and fellow classicists, and reading a much wider range of Greek authors and texts than might otherwise be the case. If you are contemplating an Oxbridge application then your attendance at this is **very strongly recommended**. More details can be found here:

<http://www.greeksummerschool.org>

Application forms should be submitted from January 2023 onwards.

## Oxford or Cambridge?

Put simply, it doesn't really matter. The Classics courses in both are first rate. Some people make their selection for family reasons; for others the four year course in Oxford is more appealing than the three year course in Cambridge. You should try and visit both cities during the summer holiday to give you a feel of each, and try to see as many different colleges as you can (most of them don't mind your looking around if you tell them that you are a prospective student).

As far as your choice of college goes then, again, various factors come in to the equation. Do you want to be in town or slightly out of town? Do you want to live in college for one year, or longer? Does a small college appeal more than a large one? If you need any help or advice on this then we are always happy to help.

We are hoping to arrange visits to both cities during the course of the Lower Sixth, to give you a chance to meet Classics dons and admissions tutors. There is also an annual **Sixth Form Oxbridge Classics Conference** which is held alternately in Oxford and Cambridge (in March 2023 it will be held in Oxford), where you can find out more about how to apply, have lunch in a college, and chat to tutors.

Another essential for your diary are the annual university **Open Days**, usually held in Oxford over two days during the last week of June, and in Cambridge over two days in the first week of July. Many colleges require booking for this, but these are important days for you to attend (in one, or both cities): you will get the opportunity, again, to chat to college dons about the nature of the Classics course and find out more about what is involved in the application process. You should

check on-line for booking: dates and information usually appear in March. Note that your choice of college for open day does not in any way affect your final choice of college when it comes to making your application.

## Summer Open Days: information and booking

### Oxford

[clasoutreach.web.ox.ac.uk/oxford-university-open-days](http://clasoutreach.web.ox.ac.uk/oxford-university-open-days)

### Cambridge

[www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events/cambridge-open-days](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events/cambridge-open-days)

In the meantime, it has never been easier to investigate courses and colleges from the comfort of your armchair. There are numerous on-line sites which you can find out more about Classics at Oxford or Cambridge:

### Oxford

[www.classics.ox.ac.uk](http://www.classics.ox.ac.uk)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literae\\_Humaniores](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literae_Humaniores) (course details)

### Cambridge

[www.classics.cam.ac.uk](http://www.classics.cam.ac.uk)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical\\_Tripes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Tripes) (course details)

## The Oxbridge Sixth Form Classics Programme

The aim of our Oxbridge programme is to give you a wider range of experience of Latin authors than simply the ones which we study on the A level syllabus. You will have the luxury of a full year to learn new vocabulary and read as widely as possible. You will also be required to submit a degree of additional written work during the course of the year.

First and foremost, you need to be passionate about Classics and dedicated to the cause! The workload will be heavy, as you will be signed up for at least two extra after-school or lunchtime classes a week (Oxbridge Latin and Greek) from January 2020; and taking the Latin Prose Class (LPC) in addition would be a great advantage. All of these classes carry their own extra commitment of writing and learning. Please keep other engagements to a minimum and do **NOT** believe for a minute that you need to participate in every extra sport and activity going in the Sixth Form to enhance your university application. Tutors in an Oxbridge interview are only interested in one thing: your commitment to the Classics.

Those of you making an **Oxford** application should bear in mind that you will need to sit formal prose and verse unseen translation papers in school (in Latin, and Greek if you are taking Greek to A level) in late October/ early November of Upper Sixth. This is usually during half term, so please don't make wide-ranging holiday plans! These papers are then sent to Oxford for marking. After this, you will almost certainly be called to interview in early December, but the marks which you gain on these papers will certainly contribute towards the strength of your application, and it is important that you perform well on them. If you are applying for **Cambridge** then you will need to take a written assessment in Latin (and Greek, if you have any) as part of your interview.

For both Oxford and Cambridge applications, you will also be asked to submit some written or project work to your chosen college in advance, so that tutors can get an idea of your interests and level of ability. With this in mind we shall ask you to submit an original essay for one of the **University Classics Essay Competitions** on a topic of your choosing during the Easter Term of the Lower Sixth. The three main competitions are the ones from St. John's College, Oxford; Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. For more details:

[www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/study/working-schools/study-days](http://www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/study/working-schools/study-days)

[www.classics.cam.ac.uk/prospective/undergraduate/essay-competitions](http://www.classics.cam.ac.uk/prospective/undergraduate/essay-competitions)

### **Applications Guides on You Tube**

Both Oxford and Cambridge University now have a heavy presence on You Tube, with material ranging from advice about the applications process to interview tips. The following links are especially helpful:

#### **Oxford**

[www.youtube.com/user/oxford](http://www.youtube.com/user/oxford)

Helpful links and short films concerning to *How to Apply*, *Choosing a College* etc.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVpwZYyif6s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVpwZYyif6s)

The Classics Course at Oxford.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDIb6G-9N3g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDIb6G-9N3g)

A day in the life of an Oxford student.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=X48UpbidOZw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X48UpbidOZw)

Information about the Classics and English Course.

## Cambridge

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxe9psG0F54](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxe9psG0F54)

Good introduction to the Classics course at Cambridge.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QxQ75PVJco](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QxQ75PVJco)

The Cambridge admissions process explained.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kiTAeTvI9M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kiTAeTvI9M)

Preparing for interview at Cambridge (also of some use for Oxford interviews).

## Oxbridge interviews

As well as giving you mock interviews ourselves, we will aim to provide mock-interview practice in November with colleagues in schools in Reigate Grammar School and Tonbridge School.

If you are lucky enough to be called for interview at Oxford or Cambridge then these usually take place at the start of December of the Upper Sixth. In Cambridge it is all over in a day; in Oxford you can look forward to a stay of up to three or four days. As well as one (or more) interviews you might also be asked to translate some Latin or offer your opinions on a short extract of Latin (or English). You can find out more information about the interview process here:

[www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/interviews](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/interviews)

[www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/interviews](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/interviews)

## Classics after University

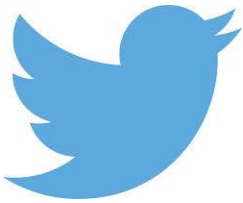
*“Despite what one might think, **people graduating from classical studies are highly valued by employers**. Thanks to their studies, they learn to think logically, to compile and evaluate evidence and to express themselves clearly and succinctly both orally and in writing. Classicists can make their way into careers as diverse as computing, the civil service, gold dealing, insurance, journalism, law, accountancy, public relations and the wine trade. Further study is common, and according to The Times’ **Good University Guide**, over one third of graduates choose to pursue a postgraduate degree. The same guide claims that 27 per cent of graduates are employed in graduate-level jobs within six months of finishing, earning a healthy average salary of around £25,000.”*

*The Independent, 30/7/11*



“Unless it’s a technical job which requires a particular degree, the fact that someone’s done Classics **will make them stand out** when compared with English or modern languages. It’s quite an unusual choice. It implies that then person is interesting, that they have followed their interests and done something off the beaten track. I think employers look upon that favourably.”

- Hardwin Jones, Milkround Graduate Recruitment, quoted in *The Times*, 2008

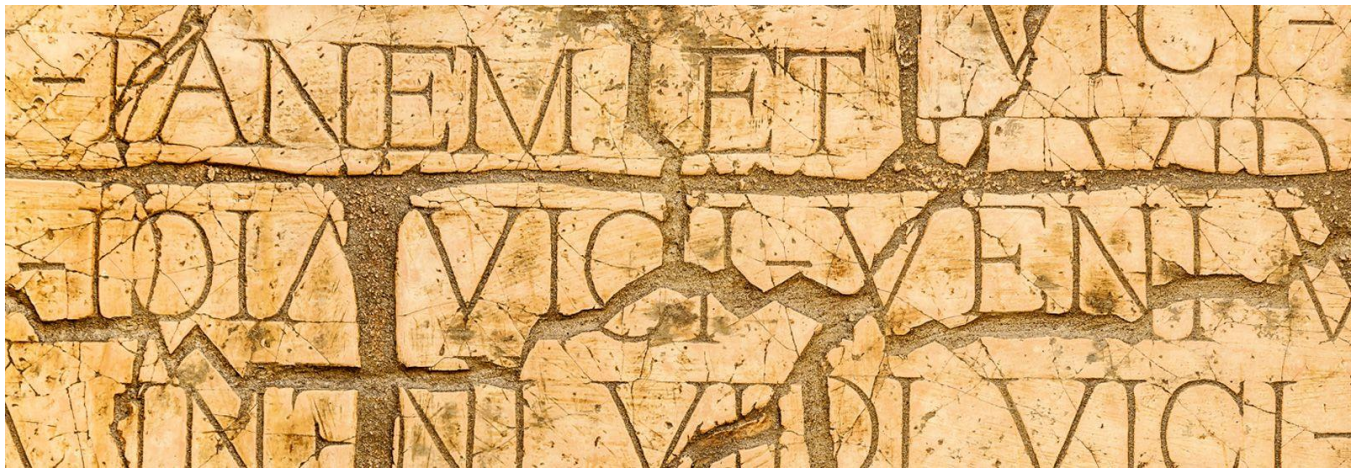


**The following Twitter feeds regularly posts information about university open days and a host of other classically related information. Be sure to check them regularly!**

**[twitter.com/oxfordclassics](https://twitter.com/oxfordclassics)**

**[twitter.com/camclassics](https://twitter.com/camclassics)**

**Caterham Classics @ pipiandum**



# OXBRIDGE READING LIST

A well-known university don, when recently asked by a member of this parish how he might improve his chances of success in applying to read Classics at Oxford, offered this thoughtful and thought-provoking reply: “Read! Read! Read!” And indeed, one of the most important things which you can do in the coming weeks and months is to expand your knowledge of all things classical.

Find an area which interests you - Rome under the Emperors, classical comedy, the Roman army, the life of Julius Caesar, the Roman historians, why the Empire finally crumbled, and so on - it’s all there, waiting to be discovered. And if you aren’t borrowing books from us on a regular basis, then you really *ought* to be.

Here are a few recommendations to get you going over the summer break. Try and read **at least three** of the books mentioned below. All are easily available in paperback versions from all good bookshops (and the usual on-line means) - they are also available to borrow from the Classics Library in CL22.

## ROMAN HISTORY

\* indicates a useful book on ancient history (Greece & Rome) in general

Ancient Rome - Simon Baker (BBC Books) - *excellent overview*

SPQR - Mary Beard (Profile) - *brilliant new one volume history of Ancient Rome*

Rubicon - Tom Holland (Abacus) - *the fall of the Roman Republic*

Dynasty - Tom Holland (Abacus) - *gripping story of the Roman emperors*

The Roman Empire - Philip Matysak (Oneworld) - *excellent, short beginner’s guide*

A Brief History of the Roman Empire - Stephen Kershaw (Robinson) - *superb!*

The Classical World: an Epic History of Greece and Rome\* - Robin Lane Fox (Penguin) - *a monster read but well worth the time and effort*

The Birth of Classical Europe\* - Simon Price and Peter Thonemann (Penguin)

Under Another Sky - Charlotte Higgins (Cape) - *the story of Roman Britain*

Carthage Must Be Destroyed - Richard Miles (Penguin) - *the life of Hannibal*

The Roman Republic - A Very Short Introduction - David M. Gwynn (Oxford)

## HISTORICAL NOVELS

Imperium - Robert Harris (Arrow) - *Cicero’s early career*

Lustrum - Robert Harris (Arrow) - *more Cicero - the sequel to “Imperium”*

I, Claudius - Robert Graves (Penguin) - *engrossing bio of Emperor Claudius*



## Classics Film Club

As part of your course, we will be showing you a seminal 13-part BBC drama series based on Robert Graves’s novel *I, Claudius* (the first Roman emperor made by Apple). Starting after October half-term, we will show you an episode per week of this brilliant tale of the early Roman emperors, with its all-star cast including Derek Jacobi, Brian Blessed and John Hurt. Be sure to come along!

## ROMAN SOCIETY AND RELATED

**The Dream of Rome** - Boris Johnson (Harper Perennial) - *a cracking read!*  
**The Ancient Guide to Modern Life\*** - Natalie Haynes (Profile) - *first rate intro*  
**Veni Vidi Vici - Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about the Romans but were Afraid to Ask** - Peter Jones (Atlantic) - *a great starting point*  
**Twelve Voices from Greece and Rome\*** - Pelling/ Wyke (OUP) - *essential authors*  
**Full Circle** - Ferdinand Mount (Simon and Schuster) - *Rome's influence on today*  
**Pompeii** - Mary Beard (Profile) - *the story of a doomed city*  
**Invisible Romans** - Robert Knapp (Profile) - *the lives of everyday Romans*  
**Latin Love Lessons** - Charlotte Higgins (Short Books) - *Latin love poetry*  
**Classics: A Very Short Introduction** - Mary Beard and John Henderson (Oxford)  
**Ad Infinitum** - Nicholas Ostler (Harper Press) - *a history of Latin and its influence*

## PRIMARY TEXTS (try to read one in translation)

### Virgil's Aeneid

*The greatest poem of them all. An epic poem of war, travel, love and loss.*  
Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. West)

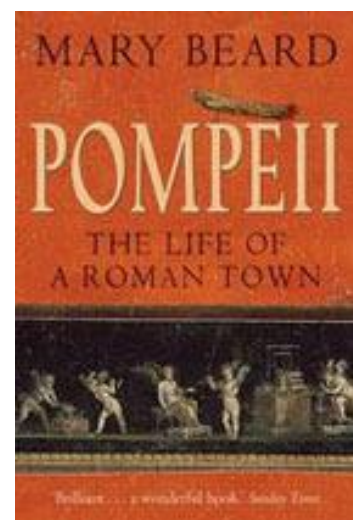
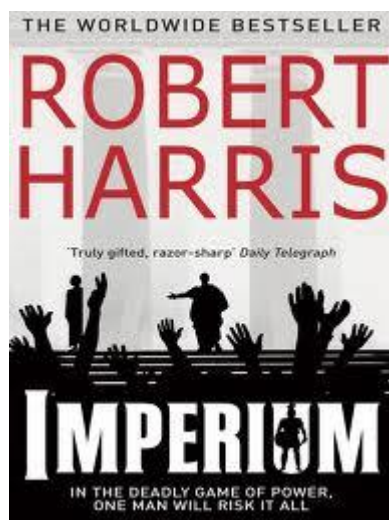
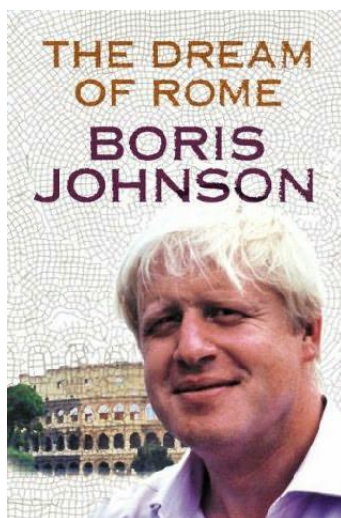
### Ovid's Metamorphoses

*A light-hearted and exciting retelling of Greek and Roman myths.*  
Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. Raeburn)

### Plutarch's Lives

*Good places to start are the two Penguin editions: 'Makers of Rome' and 'Fall of the Roman Republic'. The best original introduction to Roman history. 'Fall of the Roman Republic' edges it with the lives of Cicero, Caesar, Pompey etc.*  
Translation: Penguin Classics (a) *Fall of the Roman Republic* (tr. Warner);  
(b) *Makers of Rome* (tr. Scott-Kilvert)

**Apuleius' Golden Ass** - *Our only complete Roman novel, and a riotous, humorous and steamy story. Not much read by students, but very accessible and amusing.*  
Translation: Oxford World's Classics (tr. Walsh)







## FURTHER RESEARCH



There's never been a better time to investigate the Roman world in the media. We can warmly recommend the following documentaries which can easily be found on the information super-highway:

### **HISTORY**

#### **Meet the Romans (BBC)**

*A tremendous three-part series on the lives of ordinary Romans, filmed throughout Italy. Thoroughly recommended!*

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

#### **The Romans: Julius Caesar (Channel 4)**

*Excellent introduction to Rome's most famous general.*

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

#### **Hannibal: The Man Who Hated Rome (BBC)**

*The gripping story of the general who came closest to toppling the might of Rome.*

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

#### **Pompeii: Life and Death (BBC)**

*The tale of the most famous volcanic eruption of all time.*

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

#### **The Roman Invasion of Britain (Channel 4)**

*How and why the Romans came to Britain, and their lasting legacy.*

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

#### **Eight Days That Made Rome with Bettany Hughes (Channel 5)**

*A great new documentary on the key moments in Rome's history.*

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

### **ON THE RADIO**

The excellent Radio 4 series *In Our Time* has an outstanding catalogue of discussion programmes which you should download and enjoy at leisure on the train/ in the bath/ in the car etc. Listen and learn! Click here for starters (then browse and pick the topics which interest you):

[www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/archive/ancient\\_rome](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/archive/ancient_rome)

If you are serious about your Oxbridge Classics application then you should try to listen to at least one of these every month.

# OXFORD CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SUPPLEMENTARY READING



Extensive holiday reading is essential: interviewers will be keen to know more about why you want to study archaeology and gauge whether you have a genuine interest in this area. As well as the Classical History books already mentioned, it is important that you read **at least four** (and preferably more) of the following **books**, and watch **at least two** of the **DVDs** mentioned below over the summer break. They can easily be found on Amazon or ordered through bookshops.

## BOOKS

*\* indicates more specialist/ academic “university” books*

**Archaeology is Rubbish: A Beginners Guide** - Mick Aston and Tony Robinson (Channel 4)

**Time Team’s Timechester: A Companion to Archaeology** - Mick Aston (Channel 4)

**Great Excavations: John Romer’s History of Archaeology** - John Romer (Weidenfeld and Nicholson)

**Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction** - Paul Bahn (OUP)

**Home: A Time Traveller’s Tales from Britain’s Prehistory** - Francis Pryor (Penguin)

**A History of Ancient Britain** - Neil Oliver (Weidenfeld and Nicholson)

**Gods, Graves and Scholars** - C.W. Ceram (Penguin) - *the story of archaeology*

**Digging Up the Past** - Leonard Woolley (Pelican) - *classic short introduction to archaeology*

**Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice\*** - Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn (Thames and Hudson)

**Archaeology: An Introduction\*** - Kevin Greene and Tom Moore (Routledge)

**The Archaeology of Disease\*** - Charlotte Roberts and Keith Manchester (The History Press)

## DVDs

**The Very Best of Time Team Digs** (Channel 4 DVD)

**Great Excavations: John Romer’s History of Archaeology** (Channel 4 DVD)

**Time Team Digs - A History of Britain** (Channel 4 DVD)

**A History of Ancient Britain** - Neil Oliver (BBC DVD)

**Digging for Britain** (BBC DVD)

**Many Time Team Episodes  
are also on YouTube**

## PERIODICALS and WEBSITES

**Current Archaeology** magazine (monthly: find it in WH Smith etc.) is essential reading and see also [www.archaeology.co.uk](http://www.archaeology.co.uk): a brilliant related website full of up-to-date articles, features, history, controversies, dig suggestions etc.

**You should also get involved in at least one practical “dig” during the summer.** These are invaluable experience and a great source of interview stories! More information on this website: [www.archaeology.co.uk/digs](http://www.archaeology.co.uk/digs).