

Greek Influence on English Literature

Learning Objectives

This course will give students a firm background in Greek literary forms, such as the lyric, epic, tragedy and myth, so essential in understanding some of the greatest works in the English language. Keats' odes, Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, Shakespeare's tragedies, and Thomas Hardy's novels all have Greek antecedents. Students will begin with a reading of mythology and Greek literature, such as the myths and Homer's *Odyssey* and then read English and American works that borrow from the Greeks. They will also examine how Western art, music, and philosophy were shaped by the content and forms of Greek literature.

Grammar and Writing

The student will write about the literature or about topics suggested by the literature:

- Three 2-page compositions
- One 10-page paper and oral report on any topic dealing with the literature we have read
- Student will write a dramatic presentation on the literature read.
- Student will write his own music, poetry, or prose work based on the Greek literature that he has read.

Vocabulary

- Student will learn words taken from the literature read.
- Student will learn the Greek etymology of many English words.

Reading

Student will read the following works and discuss them in class. Students will be tested on the study guide and lecture material. They will select several of the texts and write critical papers on them. Student will be given reading comprehension exercises designed to practice the student's skill in scanning text for details, making inferences, and discovering the meaning of a word in its context.

- Edith Hamilton's *Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* or Thomas Bulfinch's mythology.
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Paradise of Children"
- Excerpt from Hesiod's *Works and Days*
- Book IX from *Paradise Lost*
- Stories from Rudyard Kipling
- Swinburne, "The Garden of Proserpine"
- Homer's *Odyssey*
- Alfred Tennyson, "Ulysses," "Tiresias," and "Land of the Lotus Eaters"
- Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* (Translated by Diskin Clay and Stephen Berg)

- John Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale,” “Ode to Psyche,” “Ode to Melancholy”
- Thomas Hardy, *Mayor of Casterbridge*

Other Art Forms and Critical Works

- Debussy’s “Syrinx” (Music)
- P. D. Q. Bach’s satire of Greek myth in “Oedipus Tex” (Music)
- Production of Oedipus Rex, starring Christopher Plummer (Theater)
- Albert Camus, “Myth of Sisyphus” (Philosophy)
- Excerpt from Aristotle, *Poetics* (Literary Criticism)
- Essays on *Hamlet* by T.S. Eliot and C. S. Lewis (Literary Criticism)

Literature and Literary Analysis

- Student will learn the biographies of the various authors studied.
- Student will study the history of Greek tragedy and comedy.
- Student will examine various important Greek, English and American works, and write on their themes, techniques, and interpretation of myth. Student’s understanding of the text will be tested.
- Student will study the influence of Greek myth and literature on Western literature from the Middle Ages to present.
- Student will learn the various approaches to understanding Greek myth, including moral, historical, and psychological interpretations.
- Student will be tested on the literature in regular tests.