

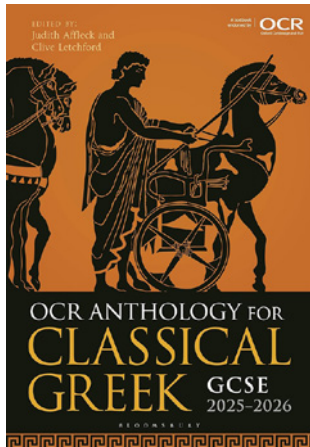
Book Review

OCR Anthology of Classical Greek GCSE 2025–2026

Affleck (J.), Letchford (C.) (edd.) Pp. 111, ills, colour map. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-350-16181-8.

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This anthology by Bloomsbury Academic is the endorsed edition covering Greek GCSE set text prescriptions examined from 2025 to 2026.

The Introduction sets out a brief account of the Hellenistic World; The Age of Heroes; The Greek Alphabet; Athens and Sparta; Democratic Athens; The Rise of Persia; The Power of Myth, and the survival of the texts reproduced in the anthology.

The 'How to use this book' section, has three parts on how the book is set out and advice on

using it, with a short list of useful books. There are two pages devoted to 'Tips for Translation' aimed at translating the set texts (prose and verse texts); translating from Greek into English (GCSE unseens and comprehensions) and translating from English to Greek. There is a timeline from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic World with important dates and a map of the ancient Mediterranean showing the extent of the Persian Empire to 500BC. There is a section 'Discussing Literary Style' which includes help with Greek on choice of words, word order, sounds, and a list of literary terms with explanations. At the end of the book is the OCR Greek GCSE Defined Vocabulary List. There are 10 illustrations showing aspects of the stories: some are photographs of objects, others are sketches from the stories.

There are selections from Herodotus. These are taken from: 'Tales of Herodotus' (ed.) Farnell and Goff. Selections from

Xenophon are taken from: Xenophon, 'The Persian Expedition', (ed.) Antrich and Usher, Book 1, Chapter 3: The Battle of Cunaxa. The Homer selection is taken from the *Iliad* 6, 370–413 and 429–502. The drama selection is from Euripides, *Medea*, lines 230–91 and 358–409.

Each of the selections begins with a heading outlining the main points of the extract. Then there is a note for the reader indicating that a colour-coding system is used: nominative words are printed in light blue and verbs in dark blue. This is followed by the text. At the end of the text is information on names and places, notable characters and cultural norms from the extracts, followed by several comprehension questions and the GCSE vocabulary to be learnt. On the facing page all the difficult phrases and vocabulary are glossed and how some words have evolved into modern English.

The editors are to be congratulated for their choices. These will be well received by both students and teachers for their variety and entertainment. The selections from Herodotus range from siege warfare to a Babylonian wife auction and to Megacles ruining his chances of marriage.

Xenophon's *Anabasis* (the March Upcountry) is an excellent choice for any students interested in the conduct of ancient warfare, battle formations, uniforms and weaponry. The choice of Homer moves the selections on from prose writing to poetry concentrating on the *Iliad*. This is a much larger text selection and would be of interest to students of the Trojan War and the 'Age of Heroes'. The section on Euripides includes some devotion to drama in ancient Greece, how this text is written and how it should be read. Students familiar with modern concerns about sexual equality, marriage and citizenship will find this of interest.

The editors have not included some of the key features of Herodotus' Ionic dialect, but have included two pages of help with Homeric Greek. This does seem justified as the texts from Herodotus are written in prose and can be understood because they have a less complex sentence structure. With the Homeric texts the student has to tackle stock epithets and constant repetition of almost identical lines, and the language does not represent any spoken Greek at any one time but is an amalgam formed over a long period.

This anthology would be a welcome addition to students and teachers working on the OCR Greek GCSE course. However, it should not be seen as the only resource suitable to support delivery and teachers should use a range of teaching and learning resources based on their own judgments. It would certainly aid students who can work independently as the colour-coding of the nominative and the verb in each sentence together with a detailed glossary with each text and the background information allow concentration on the 'few unknowns' that remain.

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