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**PERSONAL STATEMENT – COURSE IA #1**

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## Personal Statement ~ Classics IA

Excavating at Vindolanda, I was the first person in almost 2000 years to hold a preserved piece of goat-skin tent panel. Moments before I had delicately peeled back layers of mud to reveal this artefact, which seemed to us just a scrap, but to the Roman soldier who lived here formed a vital barrier between him and the cruel and perishing cold. This was one of the most profoundly moving moments in my life and the closest to the Ancient World I had ever been, spurring on my burgeoning interest in the lives, language and history of the Ancient Greeks and Romans.

I constantly find studying both Greek and Latin to be illuminating when studying the Ancient World; reading original texts allows me to view them in ways that translations sometimes dull. Reading Iliad 24 in Greek independently, I found that the text was peppered with details which previously escaped me, such as the precise connotations of various words. I also enjoyed reading the novel 'Callirhoe' in Greek after a lecture by Tim Whitmarsh. Chariton alludes to parts of Homer and Sappho I have read: by participating in the same literary tradition I feel an intense human connection to Chariton and his work. I try to read texts in Latin and Greek as much as possible not only to augment my A-level studies but to bring me closer to the ancient world. At university I aim to read as much as possible in the original to be able to enter the thought-world of the Ancient World. I have also been taking Old English lessons at night school, and attempting to teach myself hieroglyphics to understand language better.

An archaeological approach to the ancient world, as well as a linguistic approach, means that I can gain much more insight into the lives of the Greeks and Romans. In a lecture given by Lyndsay Coo I was enthused to see a synthesis between these approaches in the reconstruction of papyrus fragments, and how this is making profound contributions to Classics. I am ready to take new approaches to learning about the ancient world: at the 2017 JACT Greek Summer School I took part in the chorus of Sophocles' Electra, and by performing in Greek and by physically enacting ancient traditions I felt closer to the ancient chorus and therefore understood them better.



In Bettany Hughes' 'Helen of Troy' I was particularly struck by how crucial Helen is as a character in Western history, and how her character has been altered by later authors to critique the concept of womanhood and the idea that the Trojan War was the fault of women. At a lecture by Edith Hall entitled 'Did Virgil frame Dido?', exploring how the myth of Dido was altered by Virgil, I was surprised to hear the Carthaginian myth showed Dido as a hero, not a love-corrupted witch. However, in Beard's 'Women and Power', I recognised that mythological tropes are still used today, showing to me how mythology is often used as a point of reference: indeed, in the Trump campaign where Clinton's head was replaced with Medusa's. Through this I became interested by how women in history have been denigrated through the medium of classical reference and continue to be so, and how my experiences of public speaking and leadership are shaped by ancient ideas of rhetoric.

I take every opportunity to engage with Classics: in Year 8 I started to learn Greek, and at A-level I do every Classical subject my school offers. I have taken a leading role in the reinvigoration of Classics Society, giving lectures on Renaissance Art, Ancient Homosexuality, and my archaeology at Vindolanda. I have also given these talks in Humanist assembly. For five years, I have written and helped to direct a play for the 'Ludi Scaenici' competition. This demonstrates my commitment and desire to communicate the study of Classics. I was also highly commended in the Latin section of the 2018 CICERO competition, and am one of five senior prefects. I am hugely excited at the prospect of discovering new aspects of the ancient world at university.

