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**PERSONAL STATEMENT – COURSE IIA & ENGLISH #1**

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## Personal Statement ~ Joint Schools Classics (IIA) & English

In arriving at the decision to read a literature-based degree I have come face to face with what I believe to be the fundamental tasks of literature: it is a powerful way of studying society, an important gauge of humankind and a potent tool of change. This struck me at AS Level when reading 'Reef', a portrait of Sri Lanka during vast socio-political change. What intrigues me most is how writers convey ideas by words as much as stories: as Pico Iyer says in 'The Empire Strikes Back', the gradual domination of Sri Lanka by Western culture is shown in 'Wodehousian' speech patterns replacing untranslated Sinhalese terms. This accentuated to me the inherent link between language and literature. I am interested in the problems of translation, particularly of Classics: when a text is written in a culture removed from ours by distance and time, the endeavour to remain loyal to the intentions and subtleties of the original is riddled with tensions. I enjoyed reading Rieu's and Pope's translations of the 'Odyssey', each with their different aims and effects; I believe it is vital to analyse texts both in translation and in the original to uncover the writer's intricacies separate from a translator's interpretation.

I am struck by how much literature owes to Classics, as shown by literary rebirths of Classical appreciation, particularly in Modernist works, which I love reading, such as 'Mrs Dalloway', 'Dubliners' and the poetry of Eliot. I am also interested in how the epic tradition traces cultures' literary development, from Homer to Milton. To me the reinterpretation of Classical works enriches our culture and inherent similarities in these works show humanity's permanence and its deep need of art. As well as observing the cross-pollination of ideas between my A Level English Literature and Latin studies, I have explored these intertextual links independently; I was commended by Peterhouse for my entry in their essay competition comparing the roles of minor characters in 'King Lear' and Sophocles' 'Oedipus'. I am struck whenever I read works of Classical literature by the timeless beauty of the writers' words, emphasising the seldom-appreciated likenesses of humans: when watching 'Antigone', I was moved just as my Greek counterpart would have been; this is deeply inspiring to me.

My interest in literature extends beyond English and Classics: in my German studies, I really enjoy German cinema, particularly the work of Tom Tykwer. Maths improves my logical-analytical skills, vital for accurate translation and coherent literary analysis. I study Classical Greek off-timetable, having attained full marks in the short course GCSE, and twice attended the JACT Summer School, where I helped backstage and onstage with productions of comedy and tragedy, developing my



interest in Greek theatre. I am editor of our school literary magazine and a member of the English Society and Book Club. I am also a Prefect and Head of House, roles requiring me to engage with younger pupils and teachers, and a colour sergeant in the CCF, giving me the ability to work under pressure, think tactically and lead teams, and I am keen to join the OTC at university. I am working towards Grade Five in Ballet, where I also volunteer to help younger pupils, and am choreographing a dance for a school show; I enjoy dance as another facet to the relationship between culture and the arts. I have also attained my Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

I am hugely eager to study Classics and English at university as I believe that the two subjects fundamentally complement each other: literature at any time cannot be written in a vacuum, with each generation of writers greatly influenced by their predecessors, and I believe that the understanding of literature is key to a deeper understanding of our own culture. Studying these subjects to degree level would therefore give me an unparalleled opportunity to explore my interest in culture through literature.

