

The East London Classics Summer School 2023

We are absolutely delighted to report that the summer school 2023 was another great success, and that we were pleased to have received another cohort of dedicated and committed students, of whom we are so proud. We welcomed students from a number of schools in the London area to an intensive GCSE Latin 5-day revision course in Hackney. We were so pleased to have been able to offer a number of full and half bursaries this year, courtesy of the Classical Association, the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, and Professor Mary Beard.

Over the course of the week, the summer school covered essential grammar from the GCSE specification in four language sessions a day in preparation for the all-important examination in 2024. Sessions were initially teacher-led, which then developed into tasks that encouraged group collaboration, as well as independent study to allow students to really get into the intricacies of the grammar in an unseen passage.

Of particular note this year was the 'Golden Time' lecture series, which welcomed university academics to our offices in Hackney to speak to the students about an aspect of the Classical world. Our first lecture was delivered by Professor Fiachra Mac Góráin from UCL, who spoke about the Greek god Dionysus, and all the wonderfully mysterious and dark features of his persona from his birth and infancy right through to ritual maenadism and his association with the afterlife. Dr Will Wootton (KCL) delivered a spectacular session on the making of ancient mosaics, and Dr Ben Kolbeck (Cambridge) spoke on the sagae Thessalae in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, which is the prescribed Prose text for the literature component of the GCSE. We were treated on the Thursday afternoon to a lecture by Professor Daniel Orrells at Kings College! Daniel spoke on the set verse text, which is the story of Ovid and Narcissus in *Metamorphoses* III. He drew our attention to the key themes of absence and presence, of desire, reflection and sex, and also spent some time talking to the students about university life and admissions, which was very welcome. He also kindly took us on a tour of the college, which included exclusive terrace views of London in the sunshine, a visit to the college chapel, and a little party at the end to congratulate the students on their hard work throughout the week! We are very grateful to all of our speakers who gave of their precious time, answered a whole array of different questions, inspiring the group of really keen budding Classicists.

A surprise appearance from Professor Mary Beard at the end of the week congratulated our students on their outstanding work ethic and dedication over the five days. She also spoke about the importance of Classics in her life and its relevance to modernity, citing empire, race, gender, and power in her message. The students were on the edge of their seats as they listened to her weighty words, and we all felt incredibly motivated.

At the end of the week, the students were presented with achievement certificates to recognise the progress they had made as well as a bespoke valedictory report detailing their strengths. Students and parents unanimously agreed that the summer school had been a very positive experience and, most notably, boosted their confidence in the subject. Some of our students also expressed the intention to continue with a Classical subject at A Level and even university, which was fantastic to hear!

I now understand the sorts of specific questions I will have to answer in the exam. Student

I really enjoyed the lectures at the end of the day and discussing the context of the stories we were translating. Student

Thank you so much for the amazing opportunity! Student

Having all the resources at hand for us to take home was very useful. Playing memory games was fun and valuable to memorise tricky vocabulary. Student

A heartfelt 'thank you' to all of our sponsors and supporters of our initiative.

We now look forward to welcoming students to our two-day Easter Revision course, which will take place on 2nd and 3rd April 2024. For further details, please visit our website: www.eastlondonclassicssummerschool.com and, if you have any questions, or would like to support us in any way, email us at eastlondoncss@gmail.com.

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