

GCSE (9–1)
Set Text Guide

CLASSICAL GREEK

J292
For first teaching in 2016

Set Text Guide

Prose Literature A - Herodotus



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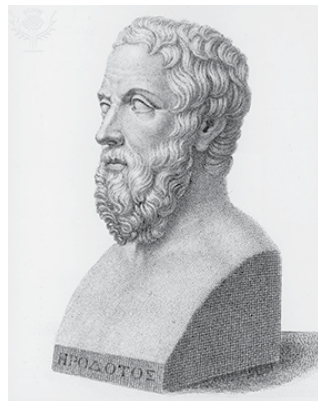
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Herodotus

Herodotus was born at Halicarnassus in Ionia, on the west coast of modern day Turkey. The traditional date of his birth is 484 BC. Most of what we know about his life comes from the Suda, a medieval encyclopaedia of the ancient world. His parents were from the upper class of the city and he had aristocratic connections. When the Persians conquered Halicarnassus in 545 BC they installed a series of tyrants. In his mid-20s, Herodotus took part in a failed revolt against one of these tyrants, Lygdamis II.

The revolt failed and Herodotus went into exile on the island of Samos. Although Lygdamis was eventually overthrown a few years later, Herodotus never returned home. Instead, inspired by earlier travel-writers, he spent the next ten years of his life travelling around the ancient world. He visited places as far apart as Egypt, Scythia, the Italian peninsula and mainland Greece, writing down the local stories and traditions which he heard. He settled for a time in Athens, where he was paid well for reciting parts of his work-in-progress.

In 443 BC Herodotus settled in the Athenian colony of Thurii in southern Italy. For the next 20 years he continued to give readings of his work and editing it. He may have revisited Athens, but probably died at Thurii in the late 420s BC. The work that he left us, the Histories, is a valuable source for the wars between Greece and Persia which took place in the first part of the 5th century BC. It also provides us with a rich account of the traditions and folklore of the ancient world.



Herodotus

The Histories

Before Herodotus there had been a tradition of travel writing by educated Ionians. Mostly, they would record the local legends and myths of the places they visited. This might have been the aim of Herodotus at the start of his career, but his finished work developed into something so novel that it gave birth to a new genre of literature: history. The term 'history' comes from the first words of his book:

“Ηροδότου Ἀλικαρνησέος **ἱστορίας** ἀπόδεξις ἥδε’

‘This is the publication of the **enquiry** of Herodotus of Halicarnassus’

Herodotus' work was ground-breaking because, like a modern historian, he tried to link cause and effect. The earlier writers had merely listed events without looking for any links between them.

Despite his pioneering achievements, Herodotus has been criticised since antiquity for his methods: he displays a clear bias towards his dear Athens whenever the Athenians feature in his stories; he often explains world events through the actions of one or two individuals, ignoring the complex nature of politics; he has a conservative view of religion and is often happy to credit the gods with having a direct hand in human affairs. These criticisms do not detract from the size of his accomplishment.

The Histories was at some point divided into nine sections, or books. Book I starts in the realms of Greek myth and Book 9 ends after the Battle of Plataea in 479 BC. Herodotus starts out seeking to explain the causes of Greece's hostility with Persia, and then records the actual conflicts between them. While doing so, he includes a great deal of colourful stories, or digressions, which enrich his work. The prescribed material for this topic comes from Book I, and concerns Croesus, king of Lydia, who was defeated by the Persian king Cyrus the Great in 547 BC.

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>What are the methods and sources used by modern historians? Which of these would have been available to Herodotus?</i></p>	<p>The availability of sources for today's historian depends on the period being covered. There was about as much time between Croesus and Herodotus as there is a between today and Victorian times. A historian of that period has newspapers, photographs, paintings, letters and artefacts to help her. Herodotus would have had none of these, except possibly some inscriptions.</p>
<p><i>Herodotus is often criticised for portraying individuals as the cause of global events. Can you think of any figures in more recent history who are claimed to have changed the world?</i></p>	<p>People generally like to attribute historical change to a single figurehead, even though the politics behind any change is often a lot more complex. Martin Luther King, Stalin and Bob Geldof have all been the public faces of much wider movements, involving a myriad of other people whose names are far less well known, or were not recorded by history.</p>
<p><i>Does it matter that Herodotus had links to the aristocracy? How might that shape his view and recording of historical events?</i></p>	<p>As a member of the upper classes, Herodotus would have had access to people, time and resources which the average 5th century Greek would not have had. Perhaps as a result of his relatively noble status, his works focuses on the ruling classes of each of the places he visits, such as Cyrus, Croesus and the Egyptian pharaohs.</p>

CONTEXT

Greece, Lydia and Persia

Ancient Greece was not a country but a collection of city states (poleis), each with its own army, laws and government. These cities shared similar religious beliefs and spoke a common language. This civilisation was centred in and around the Aegean Sea. In the 8th century BC, migrants from mainland Greece had settled the eastern shore of the Aegean in an area subsequently known as Ionia, establishing Greek city states similar to the ones they had left behind.

To the east of Ionia lay the ancient kingdom of Lydia, established some 500 years earlier. The Lydians had their own language and religion and, according to Herodotus, invented coinage. Through the military exploits of Alyattes (619–560 BC), Lydia obtained an empire which stretched across the whole of western Anatolia (the Turkish peninsula). Alyattes was succeeded by his son Croesus.



Map of Ancient Greece

To the east of Lydia, Cyrus the Great established the Persian Empire in the mid-6th century BC. The growth of this empire was rapid, as a succession of other powers, such as the Medes and the Babylonians, were conquered by the Persians. In 547 BC, following the Battle of Thymbra, Lydia itself came under Persian rule. In 499 BC, with military support from Athens and Eretria, the Greek cities of Ionia revolted against the tyrants which had been installed by Persia. It took the Persian king, Darius I, six years to subdue this and the various other Greek rebellions in western Anatolia.

When a peace had been drawn up, Darius decided to deal decisively with the threat posed by Greece by launching a huge invasion of the Greek mainland in 492 BC. He was finally defeated by an outnumbered Athenian army at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC. His son Xerxes I also invaded mainland Greece, in 480 BC. Despite occupying and devastating Athens twice, the Persians' campaign was ended by the Greeks at the Battle of Salamis and the Battle of Mycale in 479 BC. After this, Greece, especially Athens, flourished for the next 50 years.

The legend of Croesus

Croesus was the king of Lydia from c.560–47 BC. He succeeded his father, Alyattes, to the throne and was a member of the powerful Mermnad dynasty. He conquered the Greek cities along the coast and collected tribute (a form of tax) from them. He is said to have created the world's first system of coinage. Most of what we know about him comes from Herodotus.

In the wars between Persia and Greece, which are the focus of Herodotus' work, Croesus should probably have little more than a passing mention. However, Herodotus uses the character of Croesus as a parallel for Xerxes, the Persian king who invaded Greece in 480 BC. Both men enjoy extraordinary wealth and power, only to experience subsequent great loss.

Despite his fabulous wealth, which became proverbial in English ('the riches of Croesus'), Croesus is a tragic figure. He spends a good deal of his time and money on oracles, only to be deceived by them. He is inadvertently responsible for his son's death and oversees the collapse of the Lydian empire.

Croesus probably burned himself to death after the Lydian capital, Sardis, fell to the Persians in c.546 BC. In the prescribed text, we see that Herodotus relates a more optimistic outcome. According to other sources, Croesus either went to Egypt or became an adviser at Cyrus' royal court after the flames of his pyre (a fire for burning dead bodies) were extinguished.



Croesus King of Lydia

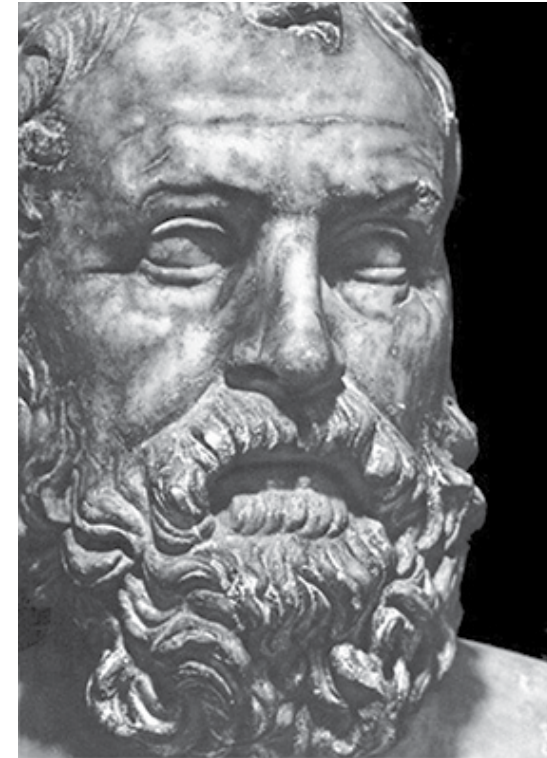
Solon and Alcmaeon

Solon became archon of Athens in c.594 BC. It was the highest political office a person could hold at the time. A member of the ruling elite, the Eupatrids, he introduced a series of economic and political reforms which brought greater freedom to ordinary Athenians.

By the time Solon came to power, the inequality gap between rich and poor had widened so much that many Athenians found themselves being ushered into slavery by a small number of very wealthy landowners. Solon cancelled a large number of existing debts and prevented any future borrowing which risked a person's freedom. Furthermore, his political reforms meant the ruling class were not simply chosen according to who their parents were. This laid the foundations for the famous democracy which Cleisthenes would introduce at the end of the century.

After his reforms, Solon is said to have travelled the ancient world for ten years, visiting places such as Egypt and Cyprus. He is unlikely to have met Croesus (who did not come to power until c.560 BC), but Herodotus is perhaps focusing on the tradition of Solon as one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece.

The second part of the prescribed text tells a story about Alcmaeon, son of Megacles. His family, the Alcmaeonids, were a powerful aristocratic family from ancient Athens. Herodotus says that the Alcmaeonids freed Athens from tyranny, and the founder of democracy, Cleisthenes, was one of their most famous sons. The story of Alcmaeon is a digression in Book 6 of the Histories, by which Herodotus seeks to explain how his family became rich. Alcmaeon is portrayed as dutiful, helpful, greedy and clever; but perhaps more interesting is the reappearance of Croesus and the other sides to his character which Herodotus shows here.



Solon

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>Ancient Greece was not a country, but groups of peoples united by a common language and religious views. Can you think of any other modern or historical parallels to such an identity?</i></p>	<p>Italy was not a distinct country until unification in the 19th century, and for a lot of its history the Italian peninsula was populated by autonomous or semi-autonomous city states who shared a common language. Students may think of other examples, but true parallels with Ancient Greece are very few.</p>
<p><i>Although Croesus probably committed suicide after the capture of Sardis, legends quickly sprung up about how he survived the fire. Can you think of any other stories where a character lives on after their supposed death?</i></p>	<p>Returning from the dead is a common motif in many stories. Vlad the Impaler (Dracula), Gandalf (Lord of the Rings) and Jesus (the New Testament) are examples of fictional and historical characters who come back from the dead. Supposed sightings of dead public figures is not uncommon, and are something Roman emperors have in common with Elvis Presley.</p>
<p><i>Bearing in mind his own life story, why might Herodotus be particularly interested in writing about the travels of Solon?</i></p>	<p>Solon was considered one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece. By recounting the travels of Solon, Herodotus may have wanted to elevate his own travels by association.</p>

THE TEXT

Passage 1: Solon and Croesus

Having laid down his laws for the Athenians, Solon is travelling the Aegean region. He arrives at Sardis, the capital of the Lydian Empire and the seat of the king Croesus. Croesus shows off his wealth before asking Solon who is the most blessed man in the world. Solon's answers frustrate the proud king.

Stylistic Features

Polyptoton (a6-15): ὀλβια...ὀλβιώτατον...ὀλβιώτατος...ὀλβιώτατον

Contrast (a10-12): ὁ μὲν ἐλπίζων...Σόλων δέ, οὐδέν ὑποθωπεύσας

Superlatives (a18, 21): τελευτή...λαμπροτάτη...ἀπέθανε κάλλιστα

Irony (c15): ὁ Κροῖσος, κάρτα δόξας ἀμαθὴ εἶναι



Croesus and Solon

Glossary of Key Terms

καλοὶ τε κάγαθοί (a.16)

Literally 'fine and good', but in practice the qualities requisite in a gentleman, and thus referred to members of the upper classes.

Νέμεσις (d.1)

Nemesis, the personification of divine retribution. The Greeks believed Nemesis fell upon men who had become overly proud or presumptuous due to their prosperity. Much like Croesus in this passage.

Sophrosyne (σωφροσύνη)

While this word is not directly mentioned in the passage, its essence permeates the philosophy of Solon. It means something like 'self-control and prudence' and is perhaps best embodied in Solon's description of Cleobis and Biton when he says their life was ἀρχῶν ('sufficient'). It is the opposite of Croesus' hubris.

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>Why do you think Croesus reacts to Solon's words in the way he does? What does this tell us about him?</i></p>	<p>Croesus becomes increasingly angry as he thinks himself far superior to the 'nobodies' Solon upholds as the most blessed. He comes across as egoistical and shallow. His rejection of Solon also makes him appear a rather simple man.</p>
<p><i>To what extent do you agree with Solon's criterion for happiness?</i></p>	<p>Students might not agree with Solon's choice of the happiest people to have lived, but most will probably have some sense that money is not a guarantee of happiness. The fact that a person's good fortune can rapidly turn bad can be illustrated with any number of modern parallels.</p>

THE TEXT

Passage 2: How Alcmaeon was enriched by Croesus

In a digression about the origins of the Alcmaeonid family, Herodotus tells how their forefather Alcmaeon was rewarded by Croesus for assisting Lydians abroad, and for his love of gold.

Stylistic Features

Contrast (1-2): μέν καί πάλαι λαμπροί..καί κάρτα λαμπροί

Like many of Herodotus' stories, the narrative of this tale is unelaborate and straightforward, with plenty of repetition. It is important for Herodotus to get across the main points of the story, particularly when his audience might have trouble hearing the performance in a busy town centre.

Glossary of Key Terms

Ἀλκμαιωνίδαι

The Alcmaeonids were a very distinguished Athenian family who played a big part in Athenian politics throughout the 6th and 5th centuries BC.

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>What do you think of Alcmaeon's behaviour? Why reasons might he have had to act in a more restrained way than he did?</i></p>	<p>Students might think that Alcmaeon is greedy and opportunistic, or they might think he is clever and resourceful. Perhaps he is running the risk of incurring the wrath of Croesus if he is seen to be taking advantage of his generosity.</p>
<p><i>How does Croesus' character here compare to the Croesus we saw interviewing Solon? Can you account for any differences?</i></p>	<p>Both stories concern Croesus and his wealth. Perhaps his character here is like the Croesus at the start of the Solon story, but his anger and the tragic events which befall him then are completely absent from this tale.</p>

ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT TASKS

Activities

Gold coin of Croesus

BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/7cEz771FSeOLptGIElaquA>

A webpage with details on a gold coin which might have been minted by Croesus. As part of the BBC's History of the World in 100 Objects series, there is an accompanying podcast.

In Our Time: History of History

BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00gryrx>

Melvyn Bragg hosts a discussion about the history of history writing with some of Britain's leading classicists and historians. The programme helps to link the work of Herodotus to the modern method.

There are also In Our Time episodes available for Thermopylae and Thucydides – both of these provide some context for the writings of Herodotus. All are well worth a listen.

Herodotus on the Perseus website

Tufts University

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D30>

The original, unabridged, version of the Greek text, along with an English translation. This may help the more diligent student, but beware the differences between this and the prescribed text. Useful for looking up words quickly.

Create a synopsis

Create a skeleton synopsis for each of the passages in the prescription by writing out just the subject and verb of each main clause. Add a limited amount of detail to fill it out.

Create a storyboard

Create a storyboard for each of the passages in the prescription. Give each cell in the storyboard a short caption using the Greek text.

Write a practice question

Write an extended style question based on the prescribed text.



Herodotus

Student task sheets

Title of activity: Creating a synopsis	
<i>Introduction to the task</i>	Create a synopsis of the text by writing down the subject and verb of every main clause in the passage. Clauses containing a subjunctive or infinitive verb should be ignored.
<i>The activity</i>	Write out two columns titled Subject and Verb . In each row, write down just the subject noun and verb in each sentence, working your way through the passage. Try and work without a translation unless you are stuck. Use a dictionary or word list to help you translate the two-word phrases once you've finished writing them down.
<i>Extension activities/questions:</i>	Write out a third column in which you can include either an object noun, or an adverb or an adjective to help flesh out your synopsis

Title of activity: Creating a storyboard	
<i>Introduction to the task</i>	Create a storyboard for the prescribed text.
<i>The activity</i>	Draw a 5x5 grid on a sheet of A3 paper. Read through the passage and draw the most notable scenes onto the grid, writing captions in Greek for each cell.
<i>Extension activities/questions:</i>	Write out a third column in which you can include either an object noun, or an adverb or an adjective to help flesh out your synopsis

Student task sheets

Title of activity: Create a practice question	
Introduction to the task	Create an exam style question.
The activity	Choose a part of the passage which is rich enough in language or drama that it could be used for an extended commentary question. Use the past paper and specimen documents on the OCR website to help you think of a suitable question. Use the past paper markschemes to give you an idea what answers your question might expect. Swap questions with a partner and compare your thoughts on each other's selection and question.
Extension activities/questions:	Write a full markscheme for your question using the specimen and past markschemes on the OCR website.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

For teachers

Perseus Digital Library (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0125>) – for word look up tool and interactive text (slightly different to the prescribed edition)

Loeb Digital Library (<http://www.loebclassics.com/>) – the complete Loeb library digitised and online. There is a 60-day free trial for NPOs and a limited amount of free views.

Tales from Herodotus (<https://archive.org/details/talesfromherodo00herogooq>) – the old version of the textbook from which the prescribed text is taken. This is the 1912 edition, but it is very similar to the 1983 edition (and it's free and searchable online). Sparse commentary, but very useful word index at the back.

The Classics Library (<http://www.theclassicslibrary.com/>) – requires (free) registration. Teacher-made resources available after registration. A mixed bag, but often worth returning to in case something useful turns up. You can, of course, contribute your own resources as well.

A Commentary on Herodotus (<https://archive.org/details/acommentaryonher-24146gut>) – a free and searchable commentary by WW How. Not recent, but with some illuminating facts concerning the prescribed passages.

For students

Online translation (<https://metaphrastes.wordpress.com/2012/08/17/tales-from-herodotus-xiv-two-stories-of-the-alcmaeonid-family/>) – not an official translation, but mostly accurate and good enough as a starting point.

Tales from Herodotus (<https://archive.org/details/talesfromherodo00herogooq>) – the old version of the textbook from which the prescribed text is taken. This is the 1912 edition, but it is very similar to the 1983 edition (and it's free and searchable online). Sparse commentary, but very useful word index at the back.

Classics Video Clips (<http://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/classics-clips.html>) – Oxford academics discussing GCSE Greek set texts, among others.

Herodotus on Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus>) – as good a starting point as any for further research into the life and works of Herodotus.

Herodotus Histories (Penguin 2014, ISBN-10: 0140455396) – if you enjoy the stories in the prescribed text and are keen to read much more Herodotus, the Penguin translation by Tom Holland is very accessible and true to the spirit of Herodotus' lively prose.





Bloomsbury Academic

Resources for OCR specifications for first teaching September 2016

Language support:

Greek to GCSE: Part 1: Revised edition for OCR GCSE Classical Greek (9–1)

John Taylor

9781474255165

Greek to GCSE: Part 2: Revised edition for OCR GCSE Classical Greek (9–1)

John Taylor

9781474255202

Set texts:

OCR Anthology for GCSE Classical Greek

Edited by Clive Letchford & Judith Affleck

9781474265485

Publication of print titles is scheduled for April and May 2016

A website of supplementary online resources is planned

All details may be revised at any time



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