

Ancient World Essay Competition Report 2011

We were very pleased by both the large number of entries and the high quality of the work we received in this year's Ancient World Essay Competition. It proved a difficult, but very pleasant, job to sift through the 66 entries in order to pick the prize winners. Only a small proportion of the essays could be acknowledged and given prizes, and it is an indication of the high standard that this year we decided to send out seven certificates of Merit as well as the six certificates of Commendation which were presented at the prizegiving.

All questions were approached. Most popular was the question of whether Classical literature is timeless. This produced a really interesting variety of responses, the best delving into the rediscovery of Classics in the Renaissance, and addressing squarely lack of continuity rather than universal appeal. There was a more or less even spread amongst the other essays, showing a pleasing breadth to Classical and Ancient World interests in schools. It was also pleasing to see the diverse periods chosen for discussion, particularly when discussing ancient trade. Some essays drew on material studied within the A level syllabus. Others were clearly researched independently of school work. This latter category contained some of the most impressive work.

It was pleasing to note that almost all entrants observed the need for referencing. There was also very little sign of reliance upon unreliable material from the internet. The strongest entries showed evidence of wide reading of secondary material as well as good deployment of original sources in order to back up their arguments, and good referencing of data and ideas.

This was another very successful year for the essay competition. We will be holding the competition again next year. We hope that the entrants enjoyed researching, reading for and writing their essays as much as we enjoyed reading them.

The essay titles (with numbers of entrants in square brackets) were:

1. Is Classical literature timeless? [25]
2. 'Latin literature cannot be understood without knowledge of Greek literature.' Discuss. [6]
3. How are different stages of life presented in texts and / or images in the Ancient World? You may, if you wish, focus on one particular stage of life (eg childhood, motherhood, old age). [10]
4. How important was trade in the ancient world? Discuss with reference to any period of your choice. [10]
5. To what extent was Greece influenced by Egypt and / or the Near East? Discuss with reference to any period of your choice. [5]
6. Why should modern philosophers read ancient philosophers? [10]

Prize winners

First prize (£200): Nina O'Hare of Cleeve School Cheltenham, [essay 4]

Second prize (£100): Gabriel Hull of Eton College [essay 2]

Certificates of commendation were given to (in alphabetical order): Jessica Boyall, [essay 1] Highgate School, London; Madeleine Chalmers [essay 3], The Abbey School, Reading; Julia Gibbon [essay 3], Wycombe Abbey School; Elliot Morris [essay 4], Prior Pursglove College; Naomi Polonsky [essay 2], Stephen Perse Sixth Form College, Cambridge; Isabel Turner [essay 6], Petroc, Barnstaple.