

World Literature: Classics

Second Edition

High School Coursebook



Oak Meadow

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Coursebook



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Introduction

Welcome to *World Literature: Classics*! In this course, we will be reading great literature from around the world. In the process, we will learn about some of the thoughts and feelings of human beings throughout history. In addition, you will have an opportunity to further develop your grammar and composition skills through varied writing projects on many different topics.

You might wonder how reading what someone wrote hundreds of years ago in another country is relevant to your life today. But as you read these stories, you might find that many of the questions you think about today have always been part of the human experience. People have been thinking and writing about these very same questions for thousands of years, and some of their insights can be very meaningful to us today.

Content warning: The classic texts in this course describe events that portray danger, sorrow, and trauma in an accurate, realistic way. You will encounter disturbing material. As with all material in this course, please approach the topic with sensitivity and kindness to the authors and cultures you are studying as well as to yourself. If you are struggling emotionally with the topics in this course, please contact your teacher or another trusted adult.

Learning Outcomes for This Course

Upon successful completion of the course, you will:

- Be able to compare various translations of the same poem and identify the ways in which the poem is changed and possibly enhanced by literary devices and word choice decisions.
- Construct an original short story modeled after classic short stories.
- Describe the literary tools used in literature and poetry that make the stories and characters so captivating for the reader.
- Draft and revise an original play using storytelling and playwriting techniques inspired by authors from around the world.
- Describe themes and make connections to the worldwide human experience through classic poetry, short stories, and plays.

Course Materials

The following materials are used in this course:

- *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* by Eliot Weinberger
- *A Book of Women Poets from Antiquity to Now*
- *The Odyssey* by Homer, translated by Robert Fagles
- *The Odyssey* by Homer, translated by Emily Wilson
- *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain* by George Saunders
- *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen
- *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe
- *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka
- Blank journal

This course also uses some online resources, which can be easily accessed at oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links. Visit this page to familiarize yourself with how to locate the online resources for this course, and then bookmark the page for future reference.

What to Expect in This Course

This coursebook provides all the instructions and assignments you need to complete the course. When you begin each lesson, scan the entire lesson first so you have an idea of what you will be doing. Take a quick look at the number of assignments and amount of reading. Having a sense of the whole lesson before you begin will help you manage your time effectively. Use the assignment checklist at the beginning of each lesson to keep track of your progress. Check off tasks as you complete them so you can see at a glance what you still need to do. Follow this process for each lesson.

This full-year course is divided into 36 lessons, and each lesson is designed to take one week to complete. In the lessons, you will find the following sections:

An **Assignment Checklist** lists the assignments, which are fully explained in the lesson. You can check off assignments as you complete them.

Learning Objectives outline the main goals of the lesson and give you an idea of what to expect.

Lesson Introductions provide background information or questions to guide your learning.

A **Reader's Journal** is used throughout the course to help you keep track of key story elements and details.

Reading assignments include a wide range of classical texts from around the world.

Writing Assignments highlight important literary elements, develop your analytical skills, and help you gain deeper insight into the literature.

Rubrics are found in each lesson and provide criteria that can be used to guide and assess your work. These rubrics can help clarify the skills you are working on and expectations regarding the quality of your work.

Share Your Work provides reminders for students who are submitting work to a teacher.

This course is designed for independent learning, so hopefully you will find it easy to navigate. However, it is assumed you will have an adult (such as a parent, tutor, or school-based teacher) supervising your work and providing support and feedback. We will refer to this person as “your teacher” in this course. If you have a question about your work, ask them for help.

Academic Expectations

The appendix contains important information that you will need to read and incorporate into your work throughout the year. Take some time to familiarize yourself with the resources in the appendix. You will find information about original work guidelines, tips on how to avoid accidental plagiarism, and details on citing sources and images.

A Note About the Workload

Students vary greatly in terms of reading speed, reading comprehension, and writing ability. Some might find the reading in this course takes longer than expected; others might find the writing assignments take a great deal of time. In general, you can expect to spend about five to seven hours on each weekly lesson.

Keep an eye on the workload as you progress through the course. If you find you are struggling to complete the work in a reasonable time frame, discuss your options with your teacher, who might modify certain lessons depending on particular learning goals or challenges you are facing.



UNIT 1

Poetry and Translation: China and Ancient Greece

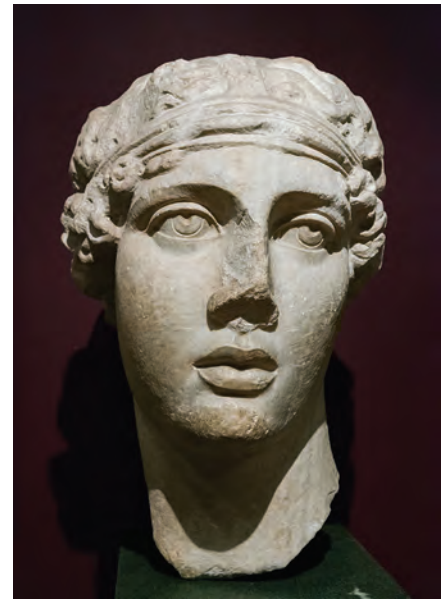
*Some say thronging cavalry, some say foot
soldiers, others call a fleet the most beautiful
of sights the dark earth offers, but I say it's
whatever you love best.*

Sappho, "The Anactoria Poem" (translated by Jim Powell)

In Unit 1, you will explore the art of translation by looking at ancient texts by Wang Wei and Sappho.



A Poet on Mule by Wang Wei



Sculpture of Sappho, Archaeological
Museum of Istanbul, Turkey
(Image credit: Eric Gaba)

Lesson

1

19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Analyze how the style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of a text.
- Analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Compare multiple representations of a story or theme.

Lesson Introduction

Most of the books you will read in this class are translated from another language. Eliot Weinberger's *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* will help you start thinking about the art of translation. In this book, Weinberger investigates 19 versions of an eighth-century poem by the Chinese poet Wang Wei. You might find it surprising that Weinberger can find so much to say about different versions of the same four-line poem. He thinks carefully about choices that translators make—choices as small as what pronoun to include or where to put a conjunction—and thinks about how this shapes his overall experience of the poem. From noticing these small details, Weinberger moves to making meaning out of these choices. Reading this book will help you develop your ability to think analytically about small details in translated literature and the effect these choices have on you as a reader.

Reader's Journal

A blank journal is included in the course materials, which you can use throughout the course to take notes on the reading. Some of your notes will be shared with your teacher and others will be used in assignments. Alternatively, you can also create an online document that you can easily share with your teacher. If you write notes by hand, take a photo of your journal pages when it is time to share them with your teacher. You can also make notes in the margins of your book and then transfer them to your journal or online document.

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Complete the reader's journal assignment.
- ☐ Read pages 3–56 in *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*.
- ☐ Create a chart categorizing translation choices.
- ☐ Explain your preference for one or more translations.
- ☐ Write an essay on the act of translating.

Before you continue with this lesson, use your reader's journal to reflect on what the idea of translation means to you. Respond to the following questions:

- What do you think makes a good translation?
- What are the purposes of translation?
- What challenges do you think there are to translating?
- Have you ever translated?

Take some notes on your thoughts or freewrite. These notes will be useful to you when you do the reflective essay assignment in this lesson.

Reading

1. Read pages 3–56 in *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* by Eliot Weinberger. (The remainder of the book is optional.)

Writing Assignments

1. In Eliot Weinberger's survey of 19 versions of Wang Wei's poem, he focuses on specific details from the poems and evaluates the choices that translators made. Select five details that Weinberger thinks are bad choices and five details that he thinks are good choices, and organize your findings into a chart. For each detail, explain Weinberger's judgment. Provide a page number for each detail that you feature.
2. Which translation (or translations) do you prefer? In choosing your preference, you might find it useful to think about these questions:
 - Which version helped you most easily envision the scene described in Wang Wei's poem? How did the translator do this?
 - Were there any translations that included phrases or lines that you thought sounded particularly pleasing? What did you like about them?

Organize your response into a paragraph and provide specific details of what you liked in your chosen translation. You do not need to agree with Weinberger's judgments, but you do need to explain your own rationale.

3. Drawing on your reader's journal notes and reflecting on your experience reading *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, write a one-page essay about your understanding of the act of translating. Has Weinberger changed your understanding of the term or the craft? How so? If not, what features of this book reflect your previous understanding of translation?

Be sure to reference specific portions of the book as you discuss your response to it. You should organize your ideas into paragraphs with evidence, but you do not need to develop a thesis statement.

Learning Assessment Rubric

The single-point rubric below (like those in each lesson) indicates skills and elements that your work should demonstrate. You and/or your teacher can use these rubrics to evaluate your work and help develop your skills. There may be other criteria that you or your teacher will want to use to evaluate your work as well.

Evidence of Meeting or Exceeding Expectations	Expectations	Areas for Growth
	Structure Each paragraph of the essay focuses on developing one idea or theme.	
	Structure Information and supporting evidence are presented such that readers can follow the line of reasoning, organization, and development of ideas.	
	Supporting evidence Quotations and direct text references are used to support ideas.	

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback. Use the checklist below to organize your work submission.

- Chart categorizing translation choices
- Explanation of your chosen translation
- Essay on the act of translating

Check with your teacher to clarify their expectations about what you are required to do. Your teacher will let you know the best way to submit your work. If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.

Lesson

2

Sappho

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining literal and figurative meanings.
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics and compare the approaches the authors take.
- Draw evidence from literary texts to support analysis and reflection.

Lesson Introduction

The Greek poet Sappho is one of the most ancient poets in the Western literary tradition whose poetry has been translated for millennia. Her poems, which are often about themes of love and longing, have spoken to readers from antiquity to today. This enduring appeal is even more remarkable because very few of Sappho's poems have remained intact; many exist only in fragments. The selection you will read contains a few poems in full as well as several brief fragments that are all that remain of poems that have long been lost.

Reading

1. In *A Book of Women Poets from Antiquity to Now*, read the poems by Sappho that begin with the following lines:
 - “To me he seems like a god” (30)
 - “Come, holy tortoise shell” (31)
 - “My mother always said” (31)
 - “Some say cavalry and other claims” (31) (also known as “The Anactoria Poem”)

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Read a selection of poems by Sappho.
- ☐ Read two additional translations of a poem.
- ☐ Compare the three translations of “The Anactoria Poem.”
- ☐ Compare translations of another poem.
- ☐ Translate a poem into another medium.

- “Like a mountain whirlwind” (32)
- “My Atthis, although our dear Anaktoria” (33)
- “Sappho, if you do not come out” (33)
- “On your dazzling throne, Aphrodite” (35)
- “Leave Krete and come to this holy temple” (36)
- “Like a sweet apple reddening on the high” (37)
- “Someone, I tell you” (42)

2. Read the two translations below of one of Sappho’s poems:

“The Anaktoria Poem” translated by Jim Powell

“The Anaktoria Poem” translated by Richard Lattimore

All online resources in this course can be easily accessed at oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links. Bookmark the page for future reference.

Writing Assignments

1. You have read three versions of the poem by Sappho known as “The Anaktoria Poem.”
 - a. For each version of the poem, identify at least two details that distinguish it from the other translations. Then, for each detail, write a sentence reflecting on the effect it had on your reading experience. You should have at least six details and six sentences total. You might want to organize your response into a chart instead of writing full sentences.
 - b. Write one paragraph about which version of the poem you prefer. Consider word choice and phrasing as well as the literal and figurative meanings of the translations. Here are some questions to help guide you as you think about which translation you prefer:
 - Which one creates the most vivid picture in your mind?
 - Which one do you think sounds the best?
 - Which one speaks to you the most? Why?

Cite and compare specific examples from different translations in your explanation.

Learning Assessment Rubric

Evidence of Meeting or Exceeding Expectations	Expectations	Areas for Growth
	Comparison Multiple translations of a text are compared by identifying specific, key features that are similar and different.	
	Evaluation The effectiveness of the text is evaluated using personal opinion, critical analysis, and logical reasoning.	

- Choose one other poem from the reading and find another translation of it. Then, repeat the exercise from assignment 1, noting specific details and writing a paragraph comparing your response to the different versions.
- Choose another poem by Sappho and translate it into a different medium. For instance, you might use it as an inspiration for a video, a vignette (a brief prose story), a song, or a work of art. Feel free to use your imagination to make up new and modern settings for the poem or think about how to expand a fragment, though it should be clear how you were inspired by a specific poem by Sappho.

Afterward, write one paragraph about your artistic choices. What did you add or change when you represented the poem in another medium?

SHARE YOUR WORK

When you have completed this lesson, share your work with your teacher for feedback. Use the checklist below to organize your work submission.

- Translation comparison about “The Anactoria Poem”
- Translation comparison about another poem
- Artistic translation of a poem into another medium

If you have any questions about the lesson content, assignments, or submission methods, contact your teacher.