



NEW COLLEGE

May 2019

Dear Student,

Preparatory reading for the Classics course at Oxford and New College.

Undoubtedly you will have other things on your mind at the moment, but before very long you will need to be thinking ahead to what you will be reading when you come up in October.

The backbone of Mods for course I candidates is made up by the Homer and Virgil papers. You will be spending the first term on the Iliad, and then studying the Aeneid during Hilary. It would therefore be an extremely good idea to make a start on reading the Iliad IN GREEK: the more you have read before you come up the smoother your whole first year will be. If you are reading the IA or IC version of the course, you should aim to have read AT LEAST the first six books. If you are reading IB, of course, it is different (and only books 1, 9, 22, and 24 are prescribed for the examination); you would be better spending your time reading the first six books of the Aeneid. Even so, if you are more than a novice in Greek, it would certainly be worth seeing how much progress you can make with the first book of the Iliad as well. Either way, it is also a good idea to read as much as possible of the Iliad and Aeneid in English, if you haven't already done so, to have an idea of the overall shape of the poem. There is a multi-volume Cambridge University Press commentary, overseen by G. S. Kirk, or a two-volume one, by M. M. Willcock with useful material on metre in the introduction. There are several very good introductory studies of the Iliad: one of the best is Mark W. Edwards, *Homer, Poet of the Iliad* (Baltimore and London, 1987), which introduces you to most of the fundamental issues. This would prepare you for the kind of essay work you will be starting on next term; but if you can't find a copy, don't worry: the key thing is to begin reading the epics in the original languages. I do stress the importance of this: the earlier you get to grips with them, the more you will get out of your study of the poems, and conversely, the later you leave it, the less satisfactory it will be.

For course II candidates, the best preparation would be to get to know the epic you will be concentrating on (course IIA: the Aeneid; course IIB: the Iliad) as well as possible, at least in English.

Please note also that you will be writing weekly essays throughout term. The first tutorial will be in first week. If you wish to see the tutorial plan in advance, this is the link: <https://www.new.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-07/Tutorial%20Plan.pdf>

Best wishes,

Professor J L Lightfoot

Fellow and Tutor in Classical Languages and Literature