

For centuries Western education comprised the study of Greek and Latin and their surviving literary monuments. But at a time when Western civilization and its values are under attack, the need for the classics is as urgent today as it was in the past. A familiarity with classics provided an understanding of the roots of Western culture, the key ideals, ideas, characters, stories, images, categories, and concepts that in turn made up a liberal education, or the training of the mind to exercise the independent, critical awareness necessary for a free citizen in a free republic. People are still interested in antiquity: translations of classical texts still sell well, and popular films, such as *Gladiator*, bear witness to an enduring fascination with the ancient Greeks and Romans.