

Reading a passage in Greek

[this worksheet accompanies the video 'Reading a passage in Greek' by Emma Woolerton. It is aimed at students who have watched the first six beginners' language videos on greeksummerschool.org/resources]

Tackling a passage

- As a passage contains extended ideas – it communicates a story, or a theory, or represents a conversation or a series of events – you should think about it as a whole, and should always read it through a couple of times before trying to write out a translation. Ultimately our aim when learning a language is to be able to use it just the same as a language we already know, and reading through the passage before thinking, "I know what that word means in English" will help you to start doing this with Greek.
- Once you've read it through, think about the sort of passage it is. What sort of text is it from – philosophy? History? Fable? If you have just the passage, often it will have a short summary at the top – think about what that is telling you to expect in the passage.
- Try to work out what words mean in context in relation to one another – if you can't remember a word, what is happening in the rest of the sentence may help you remember it or work it out (just as you do when reading in other languages)
- Think about the smaller units within the passage – sentences and clauses – and use e.g. punctuation marks to help you work out the flow of the passage and e.g. which verbs go with which nouns.

Now have a go at the passage – we hope you enjoy it!

The vocabulary is almost all that used in the practice sentences in the videos. A few words have not been used yet in the videos; these are listed on the next page, along with a basic translation for you to check yours against.

Athena surprises a good messenger

έν ἀργῷ ἐστὶν ἄγγελος ἀγαθός. ὁ μὲν ἄγγελος φωνὴν ἀκούει, ὁ δ' ἀγρός ἐστὶν

ἐρῆμος. καὶ καλὴ ἐστὶν ἡ φωνή. ἐξαίφνης δ' ἐν ἀργῷ ἐστὶ θεά. ἔστιν ἡ Ἀθήνη. ὁ

δ' ἄγγελος τὴν θεὰν θαυμάζει. καὶ ἡ Ἀθήνη λέγει· "άνηρ καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς εἶ." καὶ

δῶρα τῷ ἀγγέλῳ παρέχει.

Vocabulary

μέν...δέ...

when used in two clauses that follow one another these words draw a contrast between those two clauses. A helpful but clumsy first translation is 'on the one hand... on the other...'; use that first – then try to make the English flow a bit better

δέ

and, but

έρημος, -η, -ον

empty, deserted

έξαίφνης

suddenly

καί

and

Translation

In a field, there is a good messenger. The messenger hears a voice, but the field is deserted. And the voice is beautiful. Suddenly, a goddess is in the field. It is Athena. The messenger is amazed at / in awe of the goddess. And Athena says: "You are a fine and good man." And she provides gifts for the messenger.

[This is a very literal translation, to help you see how the Greek fits together. Think about how to make it read more smoothly in English]