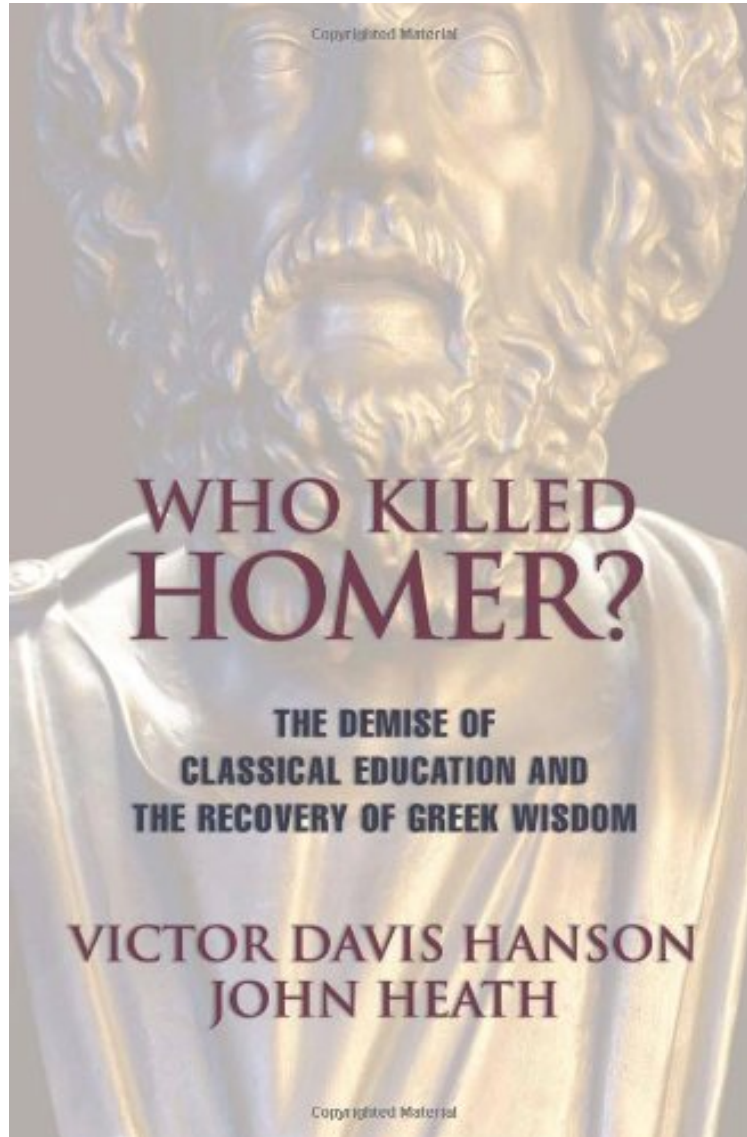


# Who Killed Homer: The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom

*Victor Davis Hanson, John Heath*  
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**Victor Davis Hanson, John Heath : Who Killed Homer: The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Who Killed Homer: The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. What's Still Wrong with Research-University Humanities Departments By Nathan P. Gilmour Hanson has without a doubt become a polarizing figure in the 16 years since "Who

Killed Homer?", but that does not take away from the strong critique of publish-or-perish humanities culture in this book. If you can cast your imagination back to a day before 11 September, this is really a fun book to read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Why We Study Ancient Greece and Rome*. By Customer Fascinating book about the decline of the classics - which seem to be missing in American education. 11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. *The Fight for the Greeks*. By AaaVictor Hanson's polemic "Who Killed Homer?" is a convincing but exhausting explanation of why and how Classicists are ruining the teaching of Greek and why and how it should be changed. Hanson gives evidence of how perverted the study of classics has become ("there are now five or six Classics professors in the country for every senior Classics major, over thirty articles and books each year for every graduating student"). He describes the abandonment of undergraduate teaching and the abuse of faculty privileges. The section I found especially interesting was his defense of why we should learn and study the Greeks. In short, Greek civilization is the wellspring from which all of Western civilization flows, and since Western civilization is both the most dominant civilization in the world and the civilization that characterizes our country, it is worth dedicating serious effort to. Greek knowledge can enrich our lives and build up our character. The tone of his book is aggressive; Hanson knows who his enemy is and attacks without hesitation. If you find such reading off-putting, then you won't like this book, but I found it invigorating to read the thoughts of someone who can back up his ideas and is unafraid to stand behind them. Reading this book has bolstered my interest in the classics, but also importantly, helped me to become better attuned to the pitfalls (or sinkholes!) of academia.

With straightforward advice and informative readings of the great Greek texts, the authors show how we might still save classics and the Greeks for future generations. *Who Killed Homer?* is must reading for anyone who agrees that knowledge of classics acquaints us with the beauty and perils of our own culture.

.com The answer to the attention-grabbing question posed by classicists Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath in the title of this passionate defense of their field (which is also a damnation of their academic colleagues) is not a pretty one. "It was," they admit sadly, "an inside job." Why, at the end of the 20th century, should we give a hoot in the first place about a brutal, misogynist society that rose to greatness on the back of slaves? Because, they argue, it was the first place; for all the faults of ancient Greece, the seeds of what Western civilization is today were planted there. "What we mean by Greek wisdom," they explain, "is that at the very beginning of Western culture the Greeks provided a blueprint for an ordered and humane society that could transcend time and space, one whose spirit and core values could evolve, sustain, and drive political reform and social change for ages hence." But Hanson and Heath are not content to simply make a fiery, articulate case for what's right about understanding this particular ancient civilization in a contemporary world where more and more non-Western societies openly seek to embrace the democratic spirit. They go on to launch a deliciously vituperative jeremiad on what's wrong with the priorities of those entrusted with passing on this wisdom. Classics departments, as portrayed in *Who Killed Homer?*, appear to be filled with politically correct, insecure footnote fawners who, steeped in minutiae, miss the Big Picture. Hanson and Heath have a plan, sure to raise the hackles of tenured professors, for reviving classical studies that emphasizes the importance of teaching, communicating, and popularizing over publishing arcane monographs in journals not even the writer's family will ever read, insisting that the alternative--the extinction of a vivid intellectual pursuit--borders on cultural suicide. --Jeff Silverman From Publishers Weekly "To help one's friends and hurt one's enemies is the central tenet of Archaic Greek morality," write the authors. Unfortunately, one would have preferred more of the first and rather less of the second. The authors' "enemies" are the orthodoxy-honing, text-diddling academics whom many readers familiar with the culture wars already hope will follow their Scholastic forebears into oblivion. While there is a guilty pleasure to reading the lengthy excerpts that the authors include as examples of the wretched state of academic prose, these really are dead horses, well beaten. But Hanson and Heath, two classicists, each with over two decades of studying and teaching, are luckily unrepentant philhellenes, and they offer a spirited defense of the Greeks; to a lesser extent, the Romans; and the scholars whom they admire. Neatly combating the argument that because Greeks were misogynistic, slave-owning syllogists, they can be ignored, the authors try to remind readers how to think like the ancient Greeks in matters that count. While the Greeks are often blamed for encroaching materialism, avarice, self-indulgence and soullessness, we often fail to consider the countering forces of moderation, civic responsibility and unbending moral code that governed life in a polis. Hanson and Heath shine here, bringing out numerous classical admonitions and cautionary tales from Homer to Antigone, to lessons to be learned from the Greeks at war. Free speech, self-criticism, broad inquisitiveness, democracy, individualism and the like, we are reminded, are good things. Perhaps for their next book, Hanson and Heath will ignore their colleagues and address themselves wholly to the demos. It's what Pericles would have wanted. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal According to Hanson (Greek, California State Univ., Fresno; *Field Without Dreams*, LJ 1/96) and Heath (classics, Santa Clara Univ.), classicists are a dying breed, which should be cause for alarm. The authors argue that to understand our own culture, we must first understand Western civilization's origins in Greece, and "to ignore or destroy Classics is to commit cultural suicide." Hanson and Heath offer their own ideas of an ideal core curriculum for

students, which would begin with two years of Greek or Latin. They also outline new approaches to teaching the classics. It is the authors' hope that from the next generation will emerge "a new Greek, a Homer not part of a Mycenaean palace, but one accessible to, and the property of, everyone, more in the spirit of the true Greek polis." This attempt to save the classics will appeal only to those who already have deep convictions about them, while it is the "common man" they need most to convince. For larger public libraries and academic libraries. Terry Christner, Hutchinson P.L., Kan. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.