PHILIP S. PEEK Ancient Greek I A 21st Century Approach



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Cover image: Athenian Fragmentary votive sculpture of Dionysus (?) Greek Ashmolean Museum. Photograph by Mary Harrsch, CC BY-SA. Cover design by Anna Gatti.

Module 1 The Greek Alphabet

The Alphabet

About 300,000 years ago *homo sapiens* regularly used fire—one of our greatest technologies, enabling us to create many more technologies dependent upon it. The agricultural revolution dates to about 12,000 years ago. Before this revolution, we hunted and gathered in small bands requiring vast territories to sustain us. Farming enabled our species to feed many more mouths per acre and for ever-increasing numbers of us to settle in small areas. It also enabled the first empires, which date to about 4000 years ago. The administration of a large state required written records, and so in this period we see the rise of various writing systems, none of which were alphabetic, instead relying on ideograms and syllabaries. Today there are dozens of alphabets with no set characteristics. The Khmer alphabet, which represents Cambodian, has 74 characters. The writing systems of most languages, such as English, are based on the Latin alphabet, which was derived from the Greek, and have 24–26 characters. The alphabet made possible a vast number of additional technologies dependent upon writing.

The origin of the Greek alphabet dates to about 800 BCE, though there is disagreement on exactly when it was invented. When the Greeks adapted the Phoenician syllabary, which represented consonants only, they introduced a refinement, taking the symbols for glottal stops, which do not appear in Greek, and using them instead to represent vowels. The new alphabet gave the Greeks the ability to represent in their entirety each sound that made up a word. Exactly how, when, and why the adaptions occurred is uncertain and the story of how it happened is fascinating and not without its oddities. Some of the consonantal adaptions of the Phoenician syllabary to the Greek alphabet represent a correspondence between sounds, just as the sound of the English consonant **l** is similar to the sound of the Greek consonant λ . One oddity is that the sounds of the Greek letters chi χ and phi ϕ were not represented at all, though they easily could have been, and were added to the alphabet much

later. Oddities aside, the most astounding feature of the new invention was the adding of vowels to the syllabary. It is one that in retrospect seems obvious. It was not. The Greek inventors took a syllabary of a Semitic language, outside the Indo-European family tree to which Greek belongs, and adapted it, creating something novel. The innovation was discontinuous and revolutionary. Due to the addition of vowels, the Greek alphabet is called the first true one.¹

Throughout Greece and its many independent city-states, there were over twenty different dialects in use and a number of variations in the alphabet. Some Greek letters differed from one district to the next and a few disappeared, notably digamma **F**, a w-sound, koppa **Q**, a q-sound, and san **M**, or sampi **3**, whose sound is unclear. In about 400 BCE Athens officially adopted the 24-letter Ionian alphabet, which is the one presented in this book. The ancient Greeks wrote in all capitals. We owe the lower-case letters to a later time of Byzantine scribes and the ingenious printers of the Renaissance. Look over this alphabet and notice that you are familiar with many of the letters and the sounds they make. Many of the English words have been chosen to present as accurately as possible the rendering of the Greek sound. For example **spot** for **π** is pronounced with no aspiration accompanying the p-sound.

Alphabet Chart

Sound equivalents are bolded.

Letter	Name	ὄνομα	Pronunciation	Transliteration
Αα	alpha	ἄλφα	long $\bar{\alpha}$: f a ther short α : a bout	a
Ββ	beta	βῆτα	bit	b
Гγ	gamma	γάμμα	g 0	g
Δδ	delta	δέλτα	dot	d
Εε	epsilon	ἒ ψιλόν	always short: b e t	е
Zζ	zeta	ζῆτα	wi sd om	Z
Нη	eta	ἦτα	always long: a te	е
Θθ	theta	θῆτα	th eater	th
Iι	iota	ίῶτα	long ī: m ee t short ι: b i n	i
Кк	kappa	κάππα	s k in	k, c
Λλ	lambda	λάμβδα	lit	1
$M\; \mu$	mu	μῦ	meet	m

¹ For detailed information on the invention of the alphabet, see Roger D. Woodard, 'Phoinikēia Grammata: An Alphabet for the Greek Language', in *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language*, ed. by Egbert J. Bakker (Malden: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 25–46.

Letter	Name	ὄνομα	Pronunciation	Transliteration
Νν	nu	νũ	neat	n
Ξξ	xi	ξĩ	box	х
0 0	omicron	ὂ μικρόν	always short: th ou ght	0
Ππ	pi	πĩ	spot	р
Ρρ	rho	ϸῶ	rr at (slight roll)	r, rh
Σσς	sigma	σίγμα	s et (ς replaces σ at the ends of words)	S
Ττ	tau	ταῦ	sting	t
Yυ	upsilon	ὖ ψιλόν	long ū: m u se short u: p u t	u, y
$\Phi\varphi$	phi	φĩ	fit	ph
Xχ	chi	χĩ	lun kh ead	kh, ch
Ψψ	psi	ψĩ	u ps et	ps
Ωω	omega	ὢ μέγα	always long: t o tal	0

Pronunciation

The equivalents given above represent a close approximation of the sounds each letter made, though some sounds have been chosen because native speakers of English find them easier to pronounce. Except in these few cases, this text uses the same pronunciation as does Mastronarde in his text and on his website,

AtticGreek.org Pronunciation Guide.²

For the differences between this text and the website, see the Introduction, Pronunciation.

A tenet of this book is embracing change, difference, and diversity. Since no one knows exactly how ancient Greek was pronounced, below are a few alternative pronunciations. Should you wish to adopt them, note the following differences, which follow the pronunciation system used by JACT in their *Reading Greek* series.

H η: hair Θ θ: toy (note the exhalation of breath when pronouncing the *t*). O o: pot Y υ: French lune or German Müller Φ φ: pool (note the exhalation of breath when pronouncing the *p*). Ω ω : saw

² http://atticgreek.org/pronunc/pronunc_guide.html.

Memorize the Names of the Alphabet

In this module your goal is to memorize the alphabet and know it as well as you know the English alphabet. As a first step, memorize the names of the letters by singing or chanting them as you did when you first learned the English alphabet. Chunking the names into groups of four may make the task more manageable.

ἒψιλόν, ζῆτα, ἦτα, θῆτα

- alpha, beta, gamma, delta ἄλφα, βῆτα, γάμμα, δέλτα
- epsilon, zeta, eta, theta
- iota, kappa, lambda, mu ίῶτα, κάππα, λάμβδα, μῦ
- nu, xi, omicron, pi
 νῦ, ξῖ, ὂ μικρόν, πῖ
- rho, sigma, tau, upsilon ἡῶ, σίγμα, ταῦ, ὖ ψιλόν
- phi, chi, psi, omega
 φĩ, χĩ, ψĩ, ὦ μέγα

Long and Short Vowel Sounds

Greek vowels have **length** or **quantity**; their quantity is either long or short. Long vowels take approximately twice as long to pronounce. Say out loud the English word **drama**. Note the difference in the amount of time you take to pronounce the first syllable **dra** and the second syllable **ma**. The **a** of the first syllable takes longer to pronounce, just as in Greek the long alpha takes longer to pronounce than does the short alpha.

Greek has five long vowels and five short vowels. Eta and o-mega (**big o**) are always long. Epsilon and o-micron (**little o**) are always short. Alpha, iota, and upsilon can be long or short. A long mark or macron ($\mu\alpha\kappa\rho\delta\nu$) is placed above these vowels when they are long, as in $\bar{\alpha}$. Short vowels and vowels that are always long (η , ω) are not marked. When you read out loud, pay attention to the vowel sounds and their quantity. Hearing quantity is especially important when attempting to feel the rhythm of a line of poetry or of a prose sentence.

Long	g Vowe	ls	She	ort Vowels	
long alpha	ā	f a ther	short alpha	α	a bout
eta	η	ate	epsilon	3	b e t
long iota	ī	m ee t	short iota	ι	p i t
omega	ω	t o tal	omicron	0	th ou ght
long upsilon	ΰ	m u se	short upsilon	υ	f oo t, p u t

1. Note that in authentic texts macrons are not used. In this textbook macrons are used in the paradigms. Otherwise they are typically omitted.

Memorize the Long and Short Vowel Sounds

Memorize the alphabet and the sounds the letters make.

- Write out each vowel from memory.
- As you write out each vowel, pronounce the sound it makes out loud.
- Pronounce the sound of each vowel out loud as you write it in your mind or in the sky.
- When you pronounce each sound, picture the corresponding letter.
- Reproduce from memory the above chart.

Diphthongs

Some pairs of vowels, called diphthongs, are pronounced together, producing a combined sound of two vowels in a single syllable. The English words *loud*, *loin*, and *lair* all have diphthongs that produce a combination of two differing vowel sounds. Greek diphthongs function similarly. The second letter of a diphthong is always iota, ι , or upsilon, υ . For meter and accentuation, diphthongs are considered long with one exception. The diphthongs $\alpha\iota$ and $\sigma\iota$, when final or the last two letters of a word, are short except in the optative, a mood learned in Part II of the *21st-Century* series. Note that the breathing and accent, explained below, are placed over the second vowel of the diphthong: $\alpha\iota\theta\eta\rho$, $\eta\dot{\upsilon}\rho\sigma\nu$.

Pronunciation of Diphthongs

Except for pronouncing the diphthong **u** like the **wi** sound of **wi**, instead of combining the rounded vowel **ÿ** with semivocalic **i** as Mastronarde recommends, this text uses the same pronunciation for diphthongs as does Mastronarde.

Diphthong	Pronunciation	Transliteration
αι	fine	ai, ae, e
ει	ei ght	ei, e, i
οι	b oy	oi, oe, e, i
ບເ	wit	ui
αυ	sc ow l	au

Diphthong	Pronunciation	Transliteration
ຍບ	(ε + υ: f ew ; f eu d)	eu
ηυ	(η + υ: h ey + y ou)	eu
00	b oo t	ou, u

 All diphthongs are long with these exceptions: -αι and -οι, when they are the last two letters of a word (final -αι and -οι), are short for purposes of accentuation except in the optative, a mood learned in Part II of the *21st-Century* series. As you work through the text, the short quantity of final -αι and -οι will make sense. Note that ει and η are pronounced alike, as are ou and v.

Follow this link to listen to a chanting and a singing of the alphabet by me and by Dr. E. Del Chrol of Marshall University, followed by me pronouncing the long and short vowels and diphthongs:

Alphabet, Long Vowels, Short Vowels, Diphthongs.³

Memorize the Sounds of the Diphthongs

Memorize the diphthongs and their sounds so that you know them by heart.

- Write out each diphthong from memory.
- As you write out each diphthong, pronounce out loud the sound it makes.
- Pronounce the sound of each diphthong out loud as you write it in your mind or in the sky.
- When you pronounce each sound, picture the corresponding diphthong.
- Reproduce from memory the above chart.

Rough and Smooth Breathings

Greek also has an h-sound, which occurs only at the beginning of certain words. This sound is not indicated by a separate letter but by the symbol (`) called a rough breathing. Say out loud the English word, **hi**. Notice the sharp exhalation of breath. The technical word for this exhalation is aspiration. Say the word **pea** out loud while holding your hand in front of your mouth. Note that when you make the sound of the letter **p** at the start of words, you expel air. Now say the word **hope** and note that you do not expel air. The **p** of **pea** is aspirated and the

³ https://loom.com/share/4b0c8a33da2e49f6a265d4295fc4aeb5.

p of **hope** is unaspirated. In Greek the **h** sound appears only at the beginning of certain words.

ἑξάγωνον	hexagon
Έλένη	Helen

Note that the rough breathing is placed above lower-case letters and before upper-case ones.

Words beginning with a vowel or diphthong, which do not have the h-sound, have a smooth breathing (') indicating the absence of the h-sound.

ό λιγαρχία	oligarchy
'Ηλέκτρα	Electra

Contrast the placement of the breathing over the lower- and upper-case vowels with its placement over the second vowel of a diphthong:

εί ρωνεία	irony
εἵλως	helot

All words beginning with an upsilon have a rough breathing.

ὑπόθεσις hypothesis

Likewise, all words beginning with rho have a rough breathing. Say the English word **rooster** and note that when you pronounce the letter **r** you expel breath. Now say the word **bird** and note that you do not expel any breath when you pronounce the **r**. Initial rho is pronounced like the **r** in rooster. Note that the rough breathing is captured in the English spelling of **rh**etoric and **rh**ythm.

ῥ ητορική	rhetoric
ϸυθμός	rhythm

Memorize the Letters of the Alphabet

Memorize the letters themselves. For each letter, memorize the upper- and lower-case symbol. To assist you in memorizing the letters, try these techniques:

- Write out the upper- and lower-case letters from memory.
- Picture the upper- and lower-case letters in your head as you write them.
- Write out the upper- and lower-case letters as you say the name of the letter.
- Write out the upper- and lower-case letters as you pronounce the sound the letter makes.
- Reproduce from memory the alphabet chart.

Practice Pronouncing the Words Below. Note that macrons mark the long vowels and short vowels are unmarked.

Quantity	Greek	Equivalent	Quantity	Word	Equivalent
ā, α	δρᾶμα	drama	α, ι, ā	καρδίā	heart
η, ο	δῆμος	people	٤, ٤, ٥	ἕτερος	other
ī, α, ω	νīκάω	I conquer	l, 0	βίος	life
α, ω, ο	ἄνθρωπος	human	ο, η, ο	ʹΌμηρος	Homer
ΰ, ω	λύω	I free	α, υ, α, ο	ἀδύνατος	unable

To hear the words pronounced, follow the link:

Practice Pronouncing.⁴

Orthography

In the above in addition to the rough and smooth breathing marks, certain vowels have marks over or in front of them, $\tilde{\alpha}$, $\tilde{\eta}$, $\dot{\alpha}$, $\dot{\nu}$, \dot{i} , \ddot{c} , $\dot{\nu}$, $\dot{\nu}$. These marks are accents, indicating a special intonation given to the vowel's pronunciation. In Greek, three accents—acute, grave, or circumflex—mark a raising (acute) or a neutral (grave) or a raising and lowering (circumflex) of pitch. In English, instead of raising or lowering a syllable's pitch, we place an emphatic stress on one **syl**lable. Pronounce the word **rhetoric** and note that the syllable **rhe** is stressed.

⁴ https://loom.com/share/ce863b2b5e9d4ce4a820a5958f56af60.

Originally, ancient Greeks wrote using all capital letters, no punctuation, and often no spacing. Eventually as cursive writing became more common, lower-case letters replaced upper-case and accents were added as part of the spelling. Accents and their marks will be explained in Modules 3, 5, and 11. Learning accents will assist you in reading the language out loud, in distinguishing forms that are identical but for accent, and in identifying forms that are difficult to decipher.

More Pronunciation Practice.

Greek	Equivalent	Derivative
γαῖἄ	earth	Gaia
δεινός	awesome, terrible	dinosaur
ποιέω	I make	onomatopoeia
ναύτης	sailor	nautical
γονεύς	parent	gonad
ηὗρον	I found	eureka!
πλοῦτος	wealth	plutocracy
ἄνθρωπος	man	anthropology
βίος	life	biology
γλῶττἄ	tongue	polyglot
διδάσκἄλος	teacher	didactic
ἐνθουσιἄσμός	enthusiasm	enthusiasm
ζῆλος	zeal	zeal
ἦθος	character	ethos
θεός	god	theology
ἱστορίā	investigation	history
καρδίā	heart	cardiac
λόγος	word	logic
μετἄφορά (ā)	metaphor	metaphor
ναῦς	ship	nautical
ξένος	foreign	xenophobia
ὀφθαλμός	eye	ophthalmology
πατήρ	father	paternity
ϸινόκερος	nose-horn	rhinoceros
σοφός	wise	philosophy

Greek	Equivalent	Derivative
τύρἄννοs	tyrant	tyrant
ὕβρĭς	insolence	hubris
φόβος	fear	phobia
χρόνος	time	chronology
ψεῦδος	falsity	pseudonym
ὥρᾶ	hour	hour

To hear the words pronounced, follow the link:

More Pronunciation Practice.⁵

Herodotos of Halikarnessos (Halicarnassus), Ἡρόδοτος ὁ Ἀλικαρνησσέος c. 484–425 BCE. Herodotos was an ancient Greek historian who hailed from Halikarnessos, a Greek city founded by the Dorians, ruled by a monarchy, and part of the Persian empire until conquered by Alexander the Great. Credited with inventing the discipline of history, Herodotos wrote in a mixed Ionic dialect. To learn more about this dialect Herodotos, see Appendix XI, Herodotos' Mixed Dialect.

Module 1 Practice Reading Aloud. Practice reading aloud the beginning of Herodotos' *Histories*, paying attention to the sound each syllable makes.

Ήροδότου Άλικαρνησσέος ἱστορίης ἀπόδεξις ἥδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἐλλησι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεᾶ γένηται, τά τε ἄλλα καὶ δι' ἢν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι.

Translation

This work of research belongs to Herodotos of Halikarnessos. So that humankind's achievements do not become forgotten in time and so that the great and wondrous works of barbarians and Greeks do not perish unsung, I have investigated a variety of things, including why they fought one another.

To hear me read, followed by Stefan Hagel's expert reading with a pitch accent, follow the link below:

Herodotos' Proem.6

⁵ https://loom.com/share/1f0ae9055a644c6e9f4d3d551d126b53.

⁶ https://loom.com/share/fc83af84a232435b80a012505e35020a.

Etymology Corner I by Dr. E. Del Chrol

Knowledge of etymology will give you control over the world

... is probably a false statement, but lots of people in the ancient world believed it. One of the earliest branches of philosophy looks a lot like modern linguistics, since those philosophers believed that if you could get to the heart of a word, the true ($\check{e}\tau\upsilon\mu\sigma\varsigma$ true, real, actual) word or reasoned account ($\lambda \acute{o}\gamma \circ\varsigma$ word, speech, story; reason, account), where it came from, and its original meaning, you could learn something profound about it. Ancient etymology was half a quest for magical power—if you learned the true name for something, you could control it—and half a quest for the machine language of the brain—languages are overlays on how we think.

What to Study and Do 1. Before moving on to the next module, make sure that you can do the following from memory: chant or sing the alphabet, write out the lowerand upper-case letters, and say the sounds while picturing or writing down the letters.

Learning Tip 1: Our Amazing Minds. We all think that we have terrible memories. For most of us this belief is self-fulfilling and destructive, preventing us from reaching whatever goals we would otherwise be able to reach. This textbook offers you specific strategies for placing new information into your medium-term memory quickly, efficiently, and effectively so that you can recall it whenever you need to. Though the majority of information I present to you in the textbook has been tested in the classroom over the past twenty-five years of my teaching career, I only started using these memory strategies in earnest in December 2020. In this short time I have found the way I think about encoding new information has completely changed. Hitherto I used the brute force of repetition, which has served me okay but often fails when I need instant and accurate recall. I came upon these strategies while looking for effective strategies for memorizing vocabulary. YouTube was the first place I looked. One video led me to an interview with Kevin Horsley, a super-memorizer and author of Unlimited Memory. This book and Tony Buzan's Use Your Perfect Memory explain most of the memory strategies I present to you in the 21st-Century series. Follow the link below if you wish to listen to Kevin's story:

Interview with Kevin Horsley.¹

Kevin Horsley has not invented these strategies but he has excelled at making them a part of his life, a feat that is all the more impressive given the story of Kevin's struggles during his formative years. When he was eight years old, Kevin's inability to concentrate and to memorize was so bad that a school psychologist thought he had brain damage. He now is a grandmaster of memory, holding the world record

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjEkwznBV7k.

for memorization and timely recall of the first 10,000 digits of pi π . Having barely graduated from high school and deemed a failure as a student, Kevin's successful implementation of these learning strategies have enabled him to build a successful life for himself, teaching others the learning and memory strategies he excels at using.