

**KAREN FOLEY:** The Arts Hub was an online interactive event. And you're about to watch a session from that, but I wanted to explain to you how it all worked. You're about to see the video stream of the studio, but our audience participated online through chat and through interactive widgets. And those ideas were fed through into the studio from the social media desk. Of course, because you're watching it on catch up, you won't be able to do those activities, but I do hope that you enjoy the discussion that follows.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Hi and welcome back to the Arts Hub. Well, it's Saturday afternoon, at 12:30, which means lunch time. And so luckily, I have fabulous guests here-- Henry Stead and Jessica Hughes. And we're going to be talking about why study the classics.

And I've been told you have a picnic, which I'm delighted about because I've just been in a boxing match with the philosophy department, which actually went a lot better than I thought it would.

**JESSICA HUGHES:** We were watching. We were very impressed and wondering how on earth we could follow that.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, well, now's your opportunity. So we've heard a lot about classics. And I wondered if you could give us an example. You've brought lots and lots of books here, so tell us then about studying the classics.

**JESSICA HUGHES:** So in 2014, we were very lucky because we were able to offer a single honours classical studies degree for the first time. And what we've brought along today is basically the bare bones of that degree, by which I mean the printed materials, which, of course, are supplemented by online materials and audio/visual materials.

But of course, you can take it. We've put them into sort of module piles. You can take the modules on their own as well or you can take the whole classical studies degree. You can start off with AA100. I'm pretty sure that many people watching will be familiar with Cleopatra, and that's one of the books of AA100.

And then, you'd move onto second level. There are various options. So we have a brand new

classical Latin module.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Right.

**JESSICA HUGHES:** Lovely and shiny. That's one of the books from there. You also have the option of studying classical Greek, Greek language and literature. And if languages aren't your cup of tea, you can always study one of our second level cultural history module, which is, I think, one of our most popular, Experience in the Classical World. You can do all of them if you like.

And then, you've got third level as well. We've got the myth module, Classical Myth. That's the one that I teach at the moment.

And then, we've got another brand new module. It has just finished its first year of presentation. And that's A340, The Roman Empire. And if you do all of those, well, you'll know quite a lot about the classical world.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Wonderful. So there's lots and lots of options. And a lot of our students are at level one or two. And in particular, what we wanted to focus on is students having just done A100, A105 maybe. They're starting to think, I'm interested in things, but maybe aren't sure quite which way to go.

So why is studying the classics good? Why is it a good idea?

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, to be honest, this just because the cultural products that arrive to us, survive to us, from the ancient world are just so good. It's a very obvious and simple point to make, but they've stood the test of time. And so for me, my way in really was to-- because I love poetry. And I was talking yesterday about poetry a bit.

And so through my study of poetry and through my love of poetry, I started to look back and keep going back through the ages until we got to the Romans. And that's where I really met the poets that were writing the most beautiful poetry I could imagine. And that's why I'm still studying it.

**JESSICA HUGHES:** That's a really good point because since so many people have been inspired by classical literature, and mythology, and culture, when you do a degree in classical studies or a module in classical studies, you're not just looking at the ancient world, but you're actually getting access and a deeper understanding of everything that's come after that as well between antiquity and the modern day, whether it's paintings by Titian or operas by Wagner or modern productions of Greek tragedy, which make them relevant in a new way for the modern world.

So it's this vital bloodstream of European culture and world culture now as well. And so, yes, it's very, very diverse. It's also an inherently interdisciplinary topic, so an approach that people will be familiar with from AA100 and A105. You don't just do literature, art, archaeology, philosophy. You do all of those things, so you're almost like an anthropologist who's going back into the past and exploring this new world and learning its language, whether that's the verbal language or the visual language.

And so it's an immensely exciting discipline to be involved with.

**KAREN FOLEY:** HJ and Rachel, have we got any people who are interested in studying classical studies?

**RACHEL:** Absolutely. We do. We've got Owen and Lucy and Sylvie and Sharon. And they're all discussing the modules themselves and what modules to study. Owen has said the myth module was fantastic. He took it last year. Excuse me.

Lucy also said when she started level one, AA100, I didn't know what the classics was. And she didn't understand how it differed from ordinary history and things like that. So there's a lot been going on here.

Sharon is asking questions about what the myth module covers. What kind of myths? What kind of Greek? All those kind of things. And last but not least, we've also got Davin who's joined us. And he's also discussing the end of module assessment for the myth module.

**JESSICA HUGHES:** Yeah. That's a really good one because you get the chance to do basically a dissertation in EMA, whereas the second level modules and indeed our other third level have an exam at the end. One of the reasons I particularly like A330 is that there's this chance to do an extended essay at the end. And it might be on a particular mythological figure who's captured your attention or a big theme.

Is myth moral? Is it used as a moral paradigm? That might be the one that came up last year. And so that's really good. Students can really get their teeth into it. And it's an example of independent learning, independent study. And I think that when they finish that longer essay, they really feel like they've owned it. They've produced a really meaty piece of work.

And we really enjoy reading them at the end of the year. It's one of the highlights of the year for the myth team.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I know we've got a picnic, which I'm very much looking forward to. But before we start on that, because I think that's going to demonstrate, hopefully, some of the things that people would learn about, this idea then of studying. How is studying the classics different?

So we've talked about from level one being very interdisciplinary. Now we've got subject-specific things. Very interesting, very exciting. How do we study that?

**JESSICA HUGHES:** I think you develop some of the skills that you have encountered at level one. So there's a lot of source analysis still, looking deeply at extracts of literature or particular coins or vases. Essays as well are still a fundamental part. And I think most of the assessments that you'll encounter on all of these modules will be a mixture of detailed close read and source analysis and then grappling with these harder questions.

But of course, the level of detail and the level of engagement increases as you move up through the levels. Secondary literature becomes increasingly important. And I think by the time you get to third level, we really want to see some quite detailed engagement with what other scholars have said as well, that you might not have done quite so much at level one.

But you know the basic bread and butter of classical studies assessment is very much this source analysis and essay writing.

**KAREN FOLEY:** OK. Wonderful. Well, let's pack the books away and get on with the picnic. I'm ravenous. I don't know about everyone at home. Watch the rhinoceros through. Just if you keep them away.

**JESSICA** OK.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Because sometimes they can--

**JESSICA** Yeah. Well, I hope you're not going to be disappointed by our choices.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Actually, should I offer you a drink from my drinks cabinet?

**HENRY STEAD:** Oh.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I have some juice here I've brought to the picnic as well.

**HENRY STEAD:** Thank you.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And some glasses. And what have we here?

**JESSICA** Well, can I offer you-- this is the siren mug that I briefly mentioned yesterday. Or would you  
**HUGHES:** like a rude?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, a rude motif. Wonderful. So what have we here? I used to study these. I used to love all of these vase paintings. They were filthy, weren't they?

[LAUGHTER]

Not as bad as Shakespeare's sonnets, as Richard demonstrated earlier.

**JESSICA** Right. Now, may we offer you an olive as an appetiser?

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, olives. Of course Greek olives. That's a standard.

**JESSICA** Yeah.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** I would have expected that. Excellent.

**JESSICA** There's now slightly wilted lettuce that I bought on Thursday.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Is that for the rhino? He's already eaten.

[LAUGHTER]

Vegetarian.

**JESSICA** It is quite a vegetarian lunch actually.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** OK.

**JESSICA** We needed a super food in there as well, didn't we?

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** Oh, yeah. So we've got a pomegranate.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So what's a pomegranate then got to do with anything? I mean I can--

**HENRY STEAD:** Good question. Yeah.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Actually, the lettuce I'm not so sure about either.

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, really, this is Jess's area I should say.

**JESSICA** Well, you picked the radishes, didn't you?

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** I did. I did.

**JESSICA** Henry's got an amazing story about radishes. I'm glad I'm not telling that one. But I picked a  
**HUGHES:** pomegranate because it's got, well, mythological significance. Blood of Adonis. It was meant to-- we looked at some pictures of pomegranate trees earlier. And we could really get the sense of how this myth had come about, that it was meant to be Adonis, the beautiful hunter who got killed and then his blood kind of turned into pomegranate flowers and the fruits.

And there's another myth about Persephone, who gets abducted and taken taken to Hades. Do you know that one?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah.

**JESSICA** And she gets tricked into eating pomegranate seeds. And she has to stay in Hades for six  
**HUGHES:** month of the year. So it's a fruit that's really resident with mythical significance. And it was also given as votive offerings, so religious as well. And it tastes really nice, and it's very good for you. But I'm going to get out Henry's radishes.

Are we allowed to be rude? Are we allowed to say rude things?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yes. I think it's to be expected. Don't you?

**HENRY STEAD:** OK. Well, I have to say I was horrified to--

**KAREN FOLEY:** We aren't allowed to show brands though.

**JESSICA** Oh.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** No, it's fine. [LAUGHTER]

**HENRY STEAD:** When I saw the list of what was going to be in the basket from Jess, it was pretty disturbing. Because radishes-- though not radishes quite like this. These are very kind of small and bulbous.

**JESSICA** Modern.

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** Modern radishes you could say.

**JESSICA** Modern radishes. Evolved.

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** And I think the ancient radishes that come up in ancient literature and drama I think were larger and probably more like a carrot sort of styled thing. I'm afraid I'm going to lower the tone horrendously.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Go on then.

**HENRY STEAD:** Because they were used as a punishment. And actually, they come up in a beautiful poem I think. Beautiful-- need to be qualified a little bit here. But it's by Catullus. And he talks about how--

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, we have this. The postman was here earlier.

**HENRY STEAD:** Yes. Well, that's actually-- that's a different one I'm afraid.

**KAREN FOLEY:** All right. Yeah. Yeah.

**HENRY STEAD:** This one is a kind of threat of punishment. So the radishes were used to punish adulterers particularly for--

**KAREN FOLEY:** Do we want to know how or not?

**JESSICA** You can probably guess.

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah, well--

**KAREN FOLEY:** No? [LAUGHTER]

**HENRY STEAD:** So we can start. I'll continue with this story. So Catullus is telling his friend Aurelius, I think it is, to keep away from his boy, the boy that he loves.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Right.

**HENRY STEAD:** Because he doesn't want his pure boy to be spoiled. And so he says to keep away from him. But if you do go anywhere near him, we're going to bind your legs and pull them upwards to expose your nether regions, I suppose we could say. And then insert both-- not only radishes but also--

**KAREN FOLEY:** I thought this would be so civil. It's a massive disappointment. I'll be honest.

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, you asked for it.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I was really thinking-- [LAUGHTER]

**HENRY STEAD:** OK. And don't forget the mullets as well. They were also used.

**JESSICA** As well as the radishes.

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** OK. So it's not only Catullus. He's drawing on Aristophanes *The Clouds*. And actually, one of our poets, Alcaeus, is he actually was rumoured to have died through this punishment. We don't know if that's true, but it's pretty horrendous, isn't it?

**KAREN FOLEY:** It's awful. It makes the modern world seem very civilised.

**HENRY STEAD:** But it's good for lunchtime though.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, I'm not sure it is.

**JESSICA** Would you like a radish?

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** No, thank you! I am a bit more interested in the wine. What's everyone talking about in the chat room, HJ and Rachel?

**RACHEL:** Well, Lucy's mentioned the rhino. Lucy wants to know if the rhino's house trained.



**KAREN FOLEY:** He hasn't been too much of a problem. Oh.

**RACHEL:** We've also got a lot of discussion about pomegranates since this kind of just popped up in the food. We've got-- about their significance in history in the classics. Sylvia said when she went to art galleries, she saw paintings of the Virgin Mary holding a pomegranate.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yes.

**RACHEL:** That is?

**JESSICA** That's absolutely true. yeah And in Paestum in the south of Italy, which is a site that you'll  
**HUGHES:** meet if you study A219, next to the archaeological excavations, there's a little chapel to Our Lady of the Pomegranate. And people think that's because it was actually built on the site of an ancient sanctuary of Hera, and the pomegranate was her sacred fruit. So, yeah, good point.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Fantastic.

**HJ:** We also got some comments from Davin. He's interested to know whether classical studies look at the technologies and inventions of the time, which is very interesting.

**HENRY STEAD:** That is.

**JESSICA** Yeah.

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah. Is that true? I have to come clean. I've only been at the Open University for a month, so I'm still learning.

[LAUGHTER]

**KAREN FOLEY:** A bit lovely though.

**HENRY STEAD:** It's great. It's great. I've had the chance to look through some of the materials. And particularly for the A276, I'm very jealous actually. I wish I had studied that course. It's just extremely rich.

**JESSICA** Oh, yeah. But I don't know about this particular technological question.

**HUGHES:**

**JESSICA** Anything in particular? I mean aqueducts? Would that count?

**HUGHES:**

**HJ:** We'll ask Devin about his interest in aqueducts then, see if he's interested in that. But Sylvia also says she's really interested in studying ancient medicine. So does that pop up by any chance.

**JESSICA** Oh, yes, it absolutely does. And actually, our head of department, Professor Helen King, is a  
**HUGHES:** leading expert in ancient medicine. And she's-- I'm thinking particularly of MA level. There's an awful lot about ancient medicine there because there's a whole module on the body. But also A330, the myth course, we have an audio, which is about myth and medicine. Yeah.

I'm sure you encounter it on some of the other modules as well. But the beauty of classical studies is that you can find your own passion. And mine, particularly, is the art history, the archaeology. Henry is the poetry. But there's also ancient medicine and lots of things that you might not even think about before you start to delve into the classical world.

**KAREN FOLEY:** A real picnic. of delights.

**JESSICA** It is. It's a picnic of delights.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Now when were off camera, Jess has poured us some of this. What is this? It may or may not be alcoholic.

**JESSICA** It is alcoholic.

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** Yes, it is. It's retsina.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Retsina?

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah. A Greek white wine.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Ooh.

**HENRY STEAD:** With a slight essence of sock.

**KAREN FOLEY:** How long has this been open.

**JESSICA** Two days.

**HUGHES:**

[LAUGHTER]

**HENRY STEAD:** You know, I've been preparing it.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And you've only drunk that much. OK. So I'm not sure about that.

**HENRY STEAD:** It's not to your taste?

**KAREN FOLEY:** It's quite, um--

**JESSICA** It's lovely.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Do you think?

**HENRY STEAD:** It takes a little bit of time to get used to, I think. And actually--

**KAREN FOLEY:** It's very earthy.

**HENRY STEAD:** --there is a rumour. There's an apocryphal rumour that the Greeks, they changed the taste, put pine resin in it.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, OK.

**HENRY STEAD:** Because they were worried about the Italians stealing all their wine.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yes.

**HENRY STEAD:** So they put this weird taste in it, which I think of as the essence of sock, but is meant to be apparently-- or maybe wet dog. But it depends. You can get good stuff in vats though.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I haven't tasted wet dog.

**HENRY STEAD:** This one is kind of nice, isn't it?

**KAREN FOLEY:** So where do you get this then?

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, I got this from the airport in Kos.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Right.

**JESSICA** You can it in Sainsbury's.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** So people are still drinking it? And so the idea was to, I guess, to be acclimatized to a certain taste that other people didn't like so they wouldn't nick your wine.

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, that's the myth. I think it's probably unfair because it actually has-- well, I think it's really nice.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Started by the Italians.

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Yeah. But wine has been really important.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yes, of course.

**HENRY STEAD:** Well in both Greek and Roman worlds. And in the Roman poetry, it comes up a lot. So I will bang on about Catullus quite a lot, but also Horace. He talks about wine a lot.

And so you start to build up ideas about different kinds of wines from different areas. But ultimately, you get quite frustrated because the way that they describe the wines, like the Falernian and the Caecuban, they're often described as dry or sweet or strong. But actually, they become interchanged because really, when they're writing the poems, they're not trying to teach you about wine, but just trying to find the right word to explain what is happening.

**KAREN FOLEY:** But isn't that interesting? That experience? Because when you're talking about that, having tasted that, you sort of guess what is it. And it's really hard to teach that sort of thing. You can't just-- I mean, maybe you do say, students, go out and get hold of some of this. And while you're doing that, think about this. But actually, classics is so rich with all of these various aspects. It's very, very imaginative, very interesting to describe. But actually tasting something like that adds a really different dimension to it.

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I'm still going to drink it.

[LAUGHTER]

**HENRY STEAD:** It is stiff. By the end you'll be--

**KAREN FOLEY:** I think by the end, it will be fine.

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah. All right.

**JESSICA** If you want something that's a bit more challenging--

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Right. What have you got there?

**JESSICA** This is-- well, it's a fish sauce. And I put it in a plastic bag just in case of accidents because I  
**HUGHES:** once spilled some of this on a wooden floor with floorboards. And it was a rented accommodation. I'm not sure the landlord has actually managed to rent it out since. It's really pungent.

But you've probably heard of garum. You can smell it through the plastic bag. Garum was-- it's sometimes called the Roman tomato ketchup. And it was a condiment. They added it to everything basically.

But this is a modern descendant of garum. And it's from Italy, from a beautiful place on the Amalfi coast called Chittara. Colatura di alici. It's made out of sardines, so it's kind of fermented sardines. And it is lovely.

Now neat like this, it is a bit challenging. But if you add it to some olive oil and just drizzle it over spaghetti, it's just such a delicious meal. And it gets quite a bad press. I think I tweeted a picture of our picnic. And people were saying, I hope there's no garum in there.

[LAUGHTER]

**KAREN FOLEY:** And there is.

**JESSICA** But we eat it all the time. And I can highly recommend it. You can get it online. But, yeah.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** That does make sense. I mean, Jamie Oliver is really into using anchovies to flavour things without actually getting any taste of fish. And so, yeah, you can see how that might work.

**JESSICA** Yeah. Very salty. Salty, but I'll try not to spill it.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** What is the lettuce for? Was that for the rhino? Or did that have a story?

**JESSICA** I think it just looked kind of nice and fresh and Roman when I passed it in the supermarket. But  
**HUGHES:** yes, it was a Roman food.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Because of irrigation. I guess that would have been quite accessible, too.

**JESSICA** Yeah. I think that Roman lettuces, again, were quite different from modern lettuces. And they  
**HUGHES:** were quite bitter. And people used them to kind of cleanse their palates initially, I think, before a meal. No, first of all, it was after a meal. And then, it became used before a meal.

Because I think in the olden days it was thought to have quite a soporific quality, so people ate lettuce to kind of bring on drowsiness. Really just wanted a nice balanced diet, really, I think.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah. No. It's important. I mean, Rachel and HJ are really jealous because for once, we've got all the food and they have none!

[LAUGHTER]

What's up with you two then?

**HJ:** You've brought this lovely picnic, and you've left it all over there. And there's nothing here.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And wine. I know. But last night, you had all-- in fact, to be fair, you did share them eventually.

**HJ:** Eventually, yeah.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Eventually. We'll bring some over for you. What are you most interested in?

**RACHEL:** Wine.

[LAUGHTER]

**HJ:** The wine perhaps, but definitely not the radishes.

**JESSICA** Dates?

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, dates! Dates. Medjool dates!

**JESSICA** Yeah. They're delicious.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, I love Medjool dates.

**JESSICA** Yeah.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** So why have you got Medjool dates? Do you want to tell us about any dates?

**JESSICA** We could.

**HUGHES:**

**HENRY STEAD:** We were just talking about dates earlier.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Were you now?

**HENRY STEAD:** Yes. But not those kinds of dates. We were talking about how, yeah, our favourite dates. And actually, Jessica just sort of said, I've got these dates. And I said-- because I was looking down reading-- and I go, what? And I just shout out 753.

And she was like, what? Oh, yeah. Well, that like these dates that stick in. If you study the classics, there are certain dates that just stick.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Ah, right, right, right.

**HENRY STEAD:** It's maybe the way you learned them or something. But yes, 753 was the foundation of Rome, the mythical foundation of Rome really, when Remus tried to, jumped over the walls where Romulus had set out the walls of Rome and then was punished for that. But that was the founding of the city of Rome. The date usually we give.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Is it hard to remember dates? I mean, I do psychology. And so the dates are very, very-- they're often of less importance, I guess. It's more sort of eras.

But obviously for something like classics and history, they are really important. I always struggled with that when I did my arts degree, was trying to remember those dates. And it's interesting you say that some stick in your mind more than others. Is that just a memory thing? Or are there sort of periods where you focus on more, in particular in some of these modules? Do you know?

**JESSICA** I don't know. I think that is some that you gain as you move through the different levels of

**HUGHES:** study. And I think I'm still getting the hang of the whole chronological and geographical

framework. I don't think you ever stop learning about it. But I think at the beginning, all the dates might seem very confusing. And you don't really know how different-- you know, things that happen in different parts of the classical world relate to one another.

But gradually, as you do more and more different years and make yourself a timeline and things, it all starts to fall into place. And you can start to make connections. But that's something that I think you have to persevere at really. And, yeah, I forget dates all the time.

But my favourite date was 312. That's kind of the other end of the empire. And that's when the Emperor Constantine saw a vision of the cross in the sky at the Battle at the Milvian Bridge. And it's such an important date because we see that as the dawn of Christianity as an official religion really. Then he made the Arch of Constantine, which is just the best monument ever in the Roman forum.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, I'm glad those are the sorts of dates you're talking about, because after the radishes story, I'm not quite so sure that either of you would stand a very good chance. Oh, ambrosia. Now, this is modern.

**JESSICA**  
**HUGHES:** This is pudding. So you tell us when it's time to move on to the pudding. And we've got some grapes as well.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, lovely. And did you have any sauce as well with any of this?

**JESSICA**  
**HUGHES:** Oh, yeah. We've got sauce. Yeah. Not exactly Roman sauce.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Brown sauce.

**JESSICA**  
**HUGHES:** Brown sauce.

**KAREN FOLEY:** OK. So what's sauce got to do with any of this.

**JESSICA**  
**HUGHES:** Well, "sauce" analysis we thought.

**KAREN FOLEY:** [GROAN] We don't have any sound effects either. [GROAN] "Sauce" analysis. OK. So what might we do with a source analysis? And how is that different in classics?



**JESSICA** Oh. Well, we could do a source analysis of the sauce bottle. That's not very classical. But if

**HUGHES:** you got that on your exam-- well, maybe we should ask you.

**KAREN FOLEY:** OK.

**JESSICA** What would say about that?

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, I would look at it in a number of ways. I think you can obviously look at it from its exterior. I wouldn't taste it, but I might sort of try and look at it then from the interior. I might--

**JESSICA** What about what it's made of.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** What it's made of, so the materials, where it was produced. Who is selling it? And what is it used for? And then, I might compare that to other types of sauces and see which had more sugar or fat or nasty ingredients. So I might look at it from a-- is that sort of thing you would do?

**JESSICA** That would be one possible way of looking at it. I mean, there are multiple ways. I mean, you

**HUGHES:** could look at it from kind of a socioeconomic perspective as well. Everyday value.

You could ask why the heck they putting brown sauce on fusilli pasta. Maybe?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, that's not a good idea. Mind you, that said, you two can talk.

[LAUGHTER]

**JESSICA** Clues about function and use.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah.

**JESSICA** You know, you've got this-- although normally the label is on the other way when they're like

**HUGHES:** that. Aren't they?

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah. Defective. Defective bottle.

**JESSICA** You know, the whole idea is using a single object to tell you a bigger story and to tie it into

**HUGHES:** bigger stories.

**KAREN FOLEY:** And just when you're saying that with the upside down thing, I struck by, who are we to think, well, actually, this all should be this way. You know? Could it be that way? And do our concepts about these things change in time now that it's really fashionable to have upside down sauce? Should everybody be adjusting the labels to fit that or not? And should they do that for the more expensive ones? And the value ones, have it the other way around?

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, that's a good question. But--

**KAREN FOLEY:** We'll ask the philosophy department about that.

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah, you should. Should get them back.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I believe they're still outside. No!

**HENRY STEAD:** If you imagine then saying you found that, you dug that up in the middle of the desert. And then, it was there 2,000 years ago. You can imagine how much more that complicates the idea. So already, that kind baffles us, which way up it is.

But if you sort of say, OK, well we actually know very little about the cultural and social context of that sauce bottle from the ancient world, how do you then-- you could even misconstrue it. You might think that it's a bottle that contains, I don't know, some kind of, well, anything.

**KAREN FOLEY:** No, don't go any further.

[LAUGHTER]

**HENRY STEAD:** Yeah. Yeah. I think you're right.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I am right. And so for dessert then, we have some grapes and some ambrosia rice pudding. Now I'm not entirely convinced that this is a classical food tradition, is it?

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, yes. So ambrosia was the food of the gods. It was--

**KAREN FOLEY:** Rice pudding?

**HENRY STEAD:** Not the rice pudding bit.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, right.

**HENRY STEAD:** The ambrosia. So you had nectar.

**KAREN FOLEY:** The god's brand.

**HENRY STEAD:** Yes, exactly.

**KAREN FOLEY:** OK.

**HENRY STEAD:** So this was--

**KAREN FOLEY:** The gods' choice.

**HENRY STEAD:** You know that. Devon knows how they make it so creamy is their kind of catch line.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah.

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, I happen to be from Devon.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Right.

**HENRY STEAD:** And I can confirm that even if Devon knows, Devonians don't know how they make it so creamy.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Do you?

**HENRY STEAD:** I'm sure I'm stumped. It was actually-- and we were talking about dates before. So in 1917, the year of the Bolshevik Revolution, in Devon, in Lifton, a little village in west Devon, they made baby food, so they dried milk. And so they invented ambrosia. Yeah, that's what happened then.

And then later on, they developed these wonderful rice pudding products and custard.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So the food of the gods was baby food.

**HENRY STEAD:** Well, yeah. One interesting way that you could look at is actually the way that we use the classical world in branding products. And actually, they're either saying this baby food is so good, even the gods would use it for sustenance and probably feed their children on it. Yeah.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Probably. OK. What are the grapes all about then? Are they for the wine? Actually, I must take a...

**JESSICA HUGHES:** Yeah. Well, they certainly could be. I mean, grapes were the symbol of Dionysus, the Roman Bacchus. And if you see sculptures of him, he's often holding up grapes. There's grapes

somewhere around.

We found a kind of interesting classical fact earlier. Because I was thinking about myths that might be connected to grapes. And do you know the myth of Tantalus? Where his punishment is being sort of in a pool of water--

**KAREN FOLEY:** Here we go.

**JESSICA** It always ends badly.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** It does, doesn't it? They were monkeys!

**JESSICA** He's the lucky chap who gets to stand just underneath some fruit. And it always will be a little

**HUGHES:** bit out of his reach. And he's really devastatingly hungry. So the grapes reminded me of Tantalus.

Good old Google, when I was looking for some pictures to confirm my memory that there were grapes involved. I found out that in the Victorian times, there was a little kind of cabinet that you had on the side. And it had your drinks inside it. But it was locked.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Much like this.

**HENRY STEAD:** A bit. Yeah.

**JESSICA** A bit like that, but you could lock it so that nobody apart from the key holder could actually get

**HUGHES:** at the drinks.

**KAREN FOLEY:** I locked that. [LAUGHTER]

**JESSICA** Well, there you. So that's a Tantalus. And they called it that. But do know what's even

**HUGHES:** stranger? Henry's got one.

**HENRY STEAD:** Yes. Yeah. Yeah. I've got one on my mantelpiece at home. But my key's always in, so you can always unlock it.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Wonderful. Well, thank you. Have you got anything else in the picnic basket? Because we're getting very tight on time.

**JESSICA** Oh. Well, we got the figs, I suppose.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh, I thought that was the rhinoceros. I'm so confused.

**JESSICA** Yeah. No! I don't know. I mean, they are getting a bit soft and squishy now. I should have  
**HUGHES:** gone shopping this morning rather than Thursday.

**JESSICA** You cannot help it. They're so tactile. But anyway, apart from being-- I'll put them down-- a  
**HUGHES:** staple food of the Romans, there was a sacred fig tree in Rome. And this brings us back to the story of Romulus and Remus because they were washed up at this sacred fig tree. I don't think it was sacred before they were washed up at it, when they were in the Tiber in their basket or whatever.

And it was called the Ficus Ruminalis afterwards. And it became a site of veneration and the statue of the she-wolf-- rhinoceros, you can pretend to be a she-wolf-- was then put next to the Ficus Ruminalis. So, that's for him.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Oh.

**JESSICA** Again, it just shows the foods that was widely consumed often has these really interesting  
**HUGHES:** myths, origin myths, behind it. Although who knows if every time a Roman ate a fig they thought of their origins. Probably not.

**HENRY STEAD:** Probably just once a day.

**JESSICA** Maybe just once.

**HUGHES:**

**KAREN FOLEY:** They probably thought about punishing each other. Yeah. Well, thank you very, very much. That has been a really interesting insight into the classical world and how it relates to modern day things. And I'm so glad things have changed so much.

It's the one time when I think, actually, they were a difficult bunch. But how interesting to study all of those practises and to look at them in different contexts. And I guess see, you know, how all of these objects, I guess, transcending all of those different meanings into hopefully more sensible everyday uses. I'm not entirely-- it's growing on me. It is growing on me.

But thank you very, very much for coming in and talking to us, Jess and Henry. And thank you

very much to all you at home. I hope that's been a very interesting chat. You're probably having a much more interesting-- well, actually, I'm not sure if you are having a more interesting lunch than we are.

Tell us what you're eating. Tell us what you're doing. Don't forget that we have a caption competition, which I'll be showing you about in a minute. Send us any questions through the social media desk. We're going to take a very short break. And I'll be back very soon after this audio interview.

[MUSIC PLAYING]