ANCIENT GREEK for EVERYONE
Unit 19
CLASSICAL READING

The Greeks developed the basics of their alphabet by modifying the Phoenician alphabet in the eighth century BCE. In fourth-century BCE Athens, the version of the Greek alphabet that you are reading became standard, and the cultural impact of writing was a hot topic. Plato, at the end of his dialogue called *Phaedrus*, dramatizes a conversation about writing between Socrates and Phaedrus. Socrates relates a legend from Egypt about the god Ammon wanting to bestow writing to the Egyptians because it improves memory and wisdom. Plato has Socrates critique this claim about the benefits of writing.

ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν ὁ τέχνην οἰόμενος ἐν γράμμασι καταλιπεῖν, καὶ αὖ ὁ παραδεχόμενος ὥς τι σαφὲς καὶ βέβαιον ἐκ γραμμάτων ἐσόμενον, πολλῆς ἂν εὐηθείας γέμοι καὶ τῷ ὄντι τὴν Ἄμμωνος μαντείαν ἀγνοοῖ, πλέον τι οἰόμενος εἶναι λόγους γεγραμμένους τοῦ τὸν εἰδότα ὑπομνῆσαι περὶ ὧν ἂν ᾖ τὰ γεγραμμένα.

ΦΑΙ. Ὀρθότατα.

ΣΩ. Δεινὸν γάρ που, ὦ Φαῖδρε, τοῦτ᾽ ἔχει γραφή, καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ὅμοιον ζωγραφίᾳ. καὶ γὰρ τὰ ἐκείνης ἔκγονα ἕστηκε μὲν ὡς ζῶντα, ἐὰν δ᾽ ἀνέρῃ τι, σεμνῶς πάνυ σιγᾷ. ταὐτὸν δὲ καὶ οἱ λόγοι· δόξαις μὲν ἂν ὥς τι φρονοῦντας αὐτοὺς λέγειν, ἐὰν δέ τι ἔρῃ τῶν λεγομένων βουλόμενος μαθεῖν, ἕν τι σημαίνει μόνον ταὐτὸν ἀεί. ὅταν δὲ ἅπαξ γραφῇ, κυλινδεῖται μὲν πανταχοῦ πᾶς λόγος ὁμοίως παρὰ τοῖς ἐπαΐουσιν, ὡς δ᾽ αὔτως παρ᾽ οἷς οὐδὲν προσήκει, καὶ οὐκ ἐπίσταται λέγειν οἷς δεῖ γε καὶ μή. πλημμελούμενος δὲ, καὶ οὐκ ἐν δίκῃ λοιδορηθεὶς, τοῦ πατρὸς ἀεὶ δεῖται βοηθοῦ· αὐτὸς γὰρ οὔτ᾽ ἀμύνασθαι οὔτε βοηθῆσαι δυνατὸς αὑτῷ.

ΦΑΙ. Καὶ ταῦτά σοι ὀρθότατα εἴρηται.

(Plato *Phaedrus* 275c-e)

VOCABULARY

ἀγνοοῖ ~ ἀγνοεῖ < ἀγνοέω be ignorant of
Ἄμμων –ωνς ὁ Ammon
ἀμύνω ward off
ἄν *marks a hypothetical situation*
ἀνέρομαι ask
ἅπαξ once, one time
αὖ "on the other hand…"
αὕτως just as it is
βέβαιος –α –ον secure
βοηθός –οῦ ὁ help, assistance
γέμοι ~ γέμει < γέμω be full of
γραφῇ "it is written"
δεῖ "it is necessary"
δέω need
δόξαις "you might think"
ἐάν ~ εἰ
εἴρηται *perfect passive for* λέγω
ἔκγονος –ον born from, descendant
ἐπαΐω perceive, understand
ἐπίσταμαι perceive, understand
εὐήθεια –ας ἡ simplistic honesty
ζωγραφία –ας ἡ painting
ᾖ ~ ἐστι
καταλείπω leave behind
κυλινδέω roll
λοιδορέω abuse, wrangle
μαντεία –ας ἡ prophecy
οἴομαι think
ὅταν ~ ὅτε
τῷ ὄντι "really" "in reality"
οὐκοῦν *sets up an expectation to agree*
πανταχοῦ everywhere
πάνυ entirely
παραδέχομαι receive
πλέον more, rather
πλημμελέω be out of tune
που somehow
προσήκει "it belongs to"
σεμνός –ή –όν holy, reverent
σημαίνω give a sign
ταὐτόν = τὸ αὐτόν
ὑπομιμνήσκω recall