

In this paper, I argue that the life and writings of Demosthenes, as they are selectively presented in the progymnasmata, offered students an ideal, practical role model whose successes they could hope to emulate both now and in their adult lives: the self-made man who, after much sacrifice and single-minded devotion to his studies, became a powerful political leader, a public benefactor, and a friend even to his enemies. In the imperial period, itinerant sophists, local teachers, and advanced students declaimed on quasi-historical themes that presented Demosthenes as a political and oratorical superhero who defeated death and his enemies to preserve the values of Hellenism. Before they could learn to turn history into fiction, however, students first received a thorough grounding in the public speeches of and biographical tradition about Demosthenes. We know few of the details of this education before the fourth and fifth centuries C.E., when Libanius and his students and imitators vigorously promoted Demosthenes in their prose composition courses. The Demosthenes envisioned in this curriculum teaches students that hard work in their studies, though often painful, ultimately confers societal rewards (Lib. *Progym.* 3.3.29-34; cf. [Hermog.] 8, Aphth. 6), if along the way they steer clear of such distractions as wine ([Lib.] *Progym.* 9.8.12) and love affairs ([Lib.] 3.4.10). The student who travels the same path as Demosthenes will be a valuable asset to his local polis not only for his frankness of speech (Lib. *Progym.* 8.4.8), but also, if he shows wisdom in his personal finances, for his public benefactions ([Lib.] *Progym.* 4.3.1-2, 6). Demosthenes is obviously a far better role model than the dastardly Aeschines (Lib. *Progym.* 8.5, 9.4, 10.3), but he is also a better model than Pericles, in that Demosthenes arose from more humble circumstances and overcame more difficult personal and political obstacles on his path to greatness (Ps.-Nicol. *Progym.* 10.14). Furthermore, he illustrated his magnanimity in the compassion that he showed to Aeschines when the latter fled Athens in disgrace (Severus of Alexandria, *Ethop.*; Theodorus of Kynopolis, *Ethop.*). The life and writings of Demosthenes thus played an important role in the educational experience of students in the Greek east, forging a unique link between the world of the classroom and the world outside.