

World historical approaches to teaching and thinking about Graeco-Roman history offer distinct benefits for reconceptualizing what we do in the classroom and in our scholarship. When undertaken with methodological sophistication—as more than just an inexorable march through one civilization after another—world historical approaches involve self-conscious application of theory to develop trans-regional and comparative unifying themes. Teaching world history forces Graeco-Roman historians to adjust our periodizing, our scope, our canon of sources, our sense of interconnectivity to the rest of Afroeurasia, the topics we consider, and the definitions we develop. This paedagogical adjustment produces radical results for rethinking our scholarship, as well.

As a case study, this paper explores how world historical frameworks and methods clarify the need to look beyond the Mediterranean and its relationship with immediate neighbors to see the trans-regional nature of what is going on when ideas about what counts as "magic" were developed in the Graeco-Roman world. For example, world-systems models for exchange networks suggest how "fall off" in information systems between Rome and India might account for the exoticizing of spices formerly used in simple cooking recipes but later incorporated into *PGM* spells. Creolization models suggest that the development of what makes "magic" is not just the result of selective hegemonic absorption of local traditions on the boundaries of empire, but rather a more complex dialectic. While world historical perspectives certainly do not offer the final word on how concepts of "magic" developed in the Graeco-Roman world, this broader lens certainly adds to the discussion of what "magic" is, providing new scope to a definitional debate that has raged among classicists, religious studies scholars, and anthropologists alike.