

Teacher Prep: New Ideas, New Approach

In the recent CAMWS session “Rethinking How We Prepare Latin Teachers: An Open Forum” in Madison, WI, we raised some very important and perhaps sensitive issues regarding precollegiate teacher preparation. Among the topics discussed were the needs of teachers to have read particular authors, namely authors met in Advance Placement (AP) Latin (Vergil, Ovid, Catullus, Horace, and Cicero). This can be a thorny topic, but if CAMWS is to be the “Classical Association of the Future” (in past-president Jeff Buller’s words), this should not be seen so much as a problem but an *opportunity* to address how to meet the needs of future teachers without stifling the variety and range of courses taught at the university level.

The span of Latin literature does not begin and end with AP exams. The educational experience at the university is about opening doors, removing the constrictions of secondary coursework, and discovering new, rich literature to feed the mind and the soul. One should be able to read Pliny, Livy, Seneca, Plautus, Augustine, Petronius, Caesar, Sallust, Propertius, Lucretius, Lucan, Ennius, Aquinas and even the Vulgate Bible. There is nothing, absolutely nothing better than taking a course from a professor who is passionate about his or her subject matter.

With that said, we cannot dismiss the issue of preparing future teachers to teach the authors they may be expected to cover in their very first year in the classroom. Vergil, Ovid, Catullus, Horace and Cicero should not be met for the first time, as can happen, the summer before (or worse, the week before) one is expected to teach AP. Smaller colleges and universities, however, as well as larger universities often cannot guarantee that these authors will be covered in class offerings. To do so would be to sacrifice the quality of the college experience not to mention stifle the interest and research of the professors providing the courses. Therefore, what should be done?

There is the old standby of *nothing*. Nothing should be done. We carry on as we always have done because that is *tradition* and that is *precedence*. What we have done in the past to train teachers has been sufficient. Change costs money, is inconvenient, and is—we tell ourselves—probably unnecessary.

But consider instead this possibility:

The chief goal of a bachelor’s degree in Latin should be achieving a certain level of *fluency* in reading Latin. Perhaps college programs should honestly examine what they are doing to this end (*nosce te ipsum*). That is, how many courses being taught at the beginning and intermediate levels are teaching *reading skills*? How many instead are merely covering the required lines? I know that when I was an undergraduate no one ever asked me *how* I went about my reading, whether I read from left to right, how many reference books I had on my desk when I was working on lines, whether I recognized certain patterns and sentence structures peculiar to poetry or to prose, how I sought to improve vocabulary acquisition, etc. Was I just covering the lines, or was I truly learning

to read with fluency? No, of course I wasn't reading with fluency nor would I understand that it was even possible to do so for another 10 years.

I noted when examining some prominent classics department websites that there are a few graduate courses for developing extensive reading skills but none that I saw at the undergraduate level. *Why not?* Why not teach a reading skills course, instead of feeling pressured into teaching the AP? Why not work on building the skills so that anyone studying Latin can become a lifelong learner, willingly picking up a Latin text and reading it for pleasure without feeling the need to reach for grammars and translations?

Am I asking too much? Actually, I think this can be dealt with very easily. Require that all Latin students take a one hour reading lab, *Fluent Latin 101*. The main text for this lab would be Dexter Hoyos's *Latin: How to Read it Fluently*.¹ The goal of this lab would be to understand and practice Dexter's 10 rules for reading Latin prose.² An easy text/reader should also be used to practice extensive reading to begin with (as opposed to the intensive reading we do for our regular classes). An excellent place to start would be Oerberg's *Lingua Latina*³ series which is entirely in Latin. Eutropius and other authors

¹ *Latin: How to Read it Fluently* is currently available from CANE publications at <http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~glawall/cane.htm>. It is currently listed for \$7.

² Hoyos's Ten Rules for Prose:

- Rule 1 A new sentence or passage should be read through completely, several times if necessary, so as to see all its words in context.
- Rule 2 As you read, register mentally the ending of every word so as to recognize how the words in the sentence relate to one another.
- Rule 3 Recognize the way in which the sentence is structured (its Main Clause(s), subordinate clauses and phrases). Read them in sequence to achieve this recognition and re-read the sentence as often as necessary, without translating it.
- Rule 4 Now look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary; and once you know what all the words can mean, re-read the Latin to improve your grasp of the context and so clarify what the words in this sentence do mean.
- Rule 5 If translating, translate only when you have seen exactly how the sentence works and what it means. SUB-RULE Do not translate in order to find out what the sentence means. Understand first, then translate.
- Rule 6 a. Once a subordinate clause or phrase is begun, it must be completed syntactically before the rest of the sentence can proceed.
b. When one subordinate construction embraces another, the embraced one must be completed before the embracing one can proceed.
c. A Main Clause must be completed before another Main Clause can start.
- Rule 7 Normally the words most emphasized by the author are placed at the beginning and end, and all the words in between contribute to the overall sense, including those forming an embraced or dependent word-group. A word-group can be shown by linking its first and last words by an "arch" line.
- Rule 8 The words within two or more word-groups are never mixed up together: "arches" do not cut across one another. But an "arch" structure can contain one or more interior "arches"; that is, embraced word-groups.
- Rule 9 All the actions in a sentence are narrated in the order in which they occurred.
- Rule 10 Analytical sentences are written with phrases and clauses in the order that is most logical to the author. The sequence of thought is signposted by the placing of word-groups and key words.

³ Ordering and publication information for *Lingua Latina* can be found at <http://www.pullins.com/txt/LinguaLatina.htm>

found in *Ecce Romani III*, the Vulgate Bible or many of the intermediate readers from Bolchazy-Carducci would also make good texts to use for developing reading skills. During this course one would focus on reading from left to right, reading with expectation, understanding and recognizing structure in periodic sentences, disambiguating cases, understanding poetic structures, etc. One should also combine serious work on pronunciation into such a course. Every Latin student should be able to read out loud with fluency and consistency.

I firmly believe that we must begin to invest time *up front* in developing sound reading strategies based on such books as *Latin: How to Read it Fluently*. If no course could be designed along these lines, then I would encourage that all undergraduates in Latin to be required (yes, *required*) to own and study this particular book because it has the power to transform one's whole approach to Latin and even build the confidence needed to pick up a new author on one's own. This in turn leads to my second suggestion regarding the covering of AP authors.

As stated above, colleges often cannot guarantee that all of the AP authors will be met in the course of acquiring a BA, which is unfortunate but understandable. Students who are declaring a desire to teach and become certified should be provided a reading list of the major AP authors and the current textbooks in use for AP. These texts, along with their teacher's manuals, should be made available to students or required for purchase *well before* their senior year at university.

One possible solution to addressing the needs of future teachers might be a survey course that would cover a little of all of the various AP authors. Students preparing to become teachers could read *extensively* outside of class, with particular attention to specific lines as guided by the instructor.

If such a survey is not possible, then the academic advisor, *always mindful of the future teacher*, could suggest which of the AP authors might complement the author or course chosen/available that particular semester. If, for instance, a student registers for a course on Tibullus or Propertius, the advisor might suggest the student read some Ovid or Catullus as well in the AP texts. Papers required for the class might have adjusted themes for students preparing for teaching—comparing and contrasting authors, patterns developed by authors of a particular period of time, sentence structure and the like.

There should be checks all along the advising process and the approval of coursework each semester to see that students are actually reading at least some in their AP texts. This could be in the form of journaling or keeping a portfolio of AP work or similar. By the time of the methods course, two to four days could be spent productively discussing these authors, specific teaching issues connected with these authors, additional ancillary materials available to the AP teacher, the whole AP testing process (for better or worse), and the impact it can have on the success and recognition of the future teacher's program.

Other key books that should be required and used in the methods course include Rick LaFleur's *Latin for the 21st Century: From Concept to Classroom*, and Paul Distler's

extraordinary *Teach the Latin, I Pray You*, which is back in print. Additional information for preparing new teachers can be found in the brochure, “So You Want to be a Latin Teacher?” (<http://www.promotelatin.org/futureteacher.pdf>).

If it takes a village to raise a child, then it takes a department to create a teacher. It should not be a duty left solely to the individual teaching the methods course. The methods course should *not* be when lapses in pronunciation and reading skills are discovered and addressed. Those issues should be addressed as early as possible, preferably during the first year the student is within the department or has declared his/her major. The methods course is a time for considering how to employ all that has been learned in order to teach Latin well. It is a time for in-depth discussions of the *art* of teaching, not fixing all that has somehow been overlooked in the previous four years.

As you think about the 2005-2006 school year, consider beginning with these changes:

- Assigning *Hoyos's Latin: How to Read it Fluently* as required reading
- Providing the flyer “So You Want to be a Latin Teacher?” to all declared future teachers
- Acquiring sets of AP texts & teacher manuals to have on hand within your department

Follow these easy first steps with a discussion at your next faculty meeting of how to track the future teachers within your department and how to incorporate additional outside readings assignments from the list of AP authors. And finally, begin your plans for designing and incorporating a Fluent Latin 101 reading skills lab. –*Ginny Lindzey, Porter Middle School, Austin TX*