

SATIPS

Support and training in Prep, Primary and Senior Schools

Classics

Editorial

By the time that this publication reaches schools I am sure that the new academic year will be well underway, and I hope that it is an enjoyable and successful one for all. A number of exciting initiatives are underway at SATIPS, and the same is true in the classical world. The development of an additional Scholarship resource will, I am sure, be met with interest, and I look forward to the growth of the potentially-invaluable IAPS Classics website.

Jason

Bob Bass has recently updated his Jason reader, which is now available for free download on the IAPS Classics forum. Bob writes:

This reader is a consolidation volume which originally led on from the three-part Ab Initio/Latin Practice Exercises course but which is equally suited to any pupils either at the top end of their prep school or at pre-GCSE level at secondary school who have recently covered the major grammatical constructions. It was originally published as The Jason Story in A5 format by the ISEB in 2006. Its aim is to improve pupils fluency in reading continuous Latin prose and their familiarity with the major constructions by the inclusion of these in a narrative context. The manageable size of each passage will hopefully allow some classroom time to be devoted to developing elegant translation techniques. The major constructions come thick and fast, and some of the Latin will be found challenging. The Latin-English sentences which follow each passage reinforce further the major constructions and the challenging English-Latin sentences are intended to stretch the more able. There is no grammatical progression. The exercises in Section Two are intended to consolidate yet further the major constructions. For each construction there are four Latin-English exercises, progressively increasing in difficulty.

I hope the technology works, and that you will find it of interest! Feedback, in due course, is always welcome.

IAPS Classics Forum- Join now! It's free!

It is the frequent moan of many prep school Classics teachers that they have no colleague with whom to share ideas and materials. For this reason this past May I set up a forum for IAPS members: iapsclassicsforum.co.uk. Though well received, it was not received by many. Same old problem how to spread the word?

The IAPS administration agreed to put an announcement in their regular newsletter, *Headline*, which is emailed to member schools. Unfortunately, only some 35 teachers got as far as registering. Where did the information drip-down stop? I know not. A forum is of use only if it is actively used by members, and I understand that there are several hundred IAPS schools. So, if you have not already done so, register now and have a look at the forum, and if you have some comment or moan to make, I, and hopefully many others, will be delighted to read it and respond to it.

IAPS will be holding its annual Classics conference on Friday 29th April 2016 at the Oxford Hotel, Godstow Road OX2 8AL. Main topic: to review merits of the various course books and resources currently available for prep schools.

In the run-up to the conference, the forum would be an ideal way to letting me know of any particular areas or themes you would like to be raised at the conference.

Indeed afterwards, the forum will be an ideal way to let colleagues know about the day's proceedings in April for those who are unable to attend.

Fred Pragnell
IAPS Classics adviser & course director

Variation: A Scholarship Latin Course

Ed Clarke explains the rationale and development behind his new Variatio course.

I started work on Variatio in late 2012, having just taken my first full-time teaching post at Cranleigh School in Surrey. My reasons behind the project were largely practical. Despite the longevity of the subject in British schools, I was amazed by 🐜

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what I felt to be a narrow range of resources available to the contemporary Latin teacher.

First and foremost I knew that I wanted to approach Latin in an orderly, thorough and grammatically sound fashion. This immediately ruled out many of the more modern textbooks such as the Oxford Latin Course, Minimus, Ecce Romani and the Cambridge Latin Course. I can understand the desire to make Latin fun and approachable, and am grateful that the aforementioned books have proved an entertaining induction into the classical world for many children over the years. Nevertheless I believe that true fluency cannot be obtained in Latin without a proper linguistic grounding from the beginning. It is all very well to know that *Caecilius est in horto* means *Caecilius is in the garden*, but a student can only make genuine progress in the language if he or she knows why it means that. What difference would it make if the phrase were *Caecilius erat in horto*? Why does *hortus* end with the letter *o* when *Caecilius* does not? Without answers to these basic questions the student is hugely limited in his or her understanding and more dangerously runs the risk of being lulled into a false sense of security. Both my parents learnt Latin from the CLC in the late 1970's and tell the same story initial confidence and enjoyment, but subsequent confusion and dejection as the rigours of O-Level set in and they found themselves out of their depth. I was determined not to proceed on those lines.

Having set aside courses of that nature, precious few remained. Books adopting a more grammatical stance tend nevertheless to leave out some of the more complex syntactical constructions, or areas of the language not included in CE or GCSE syllabuses (the future perfect tense, for example, is frequently passed over). Often English to Latin sentences do not feature, and continuous *proses* are very rare indeed.

There was one thorough introduction to Latin still available in L. A. Wilding's trusty Latin Course for Schools, in three volumes, with which I had been taught at prep school in the late 1990's and early 2000's. It is a very clear and well-structured course, and having been in print for sixty-five years has evidently stood the test of time. Yet with the first volume published in 1949, the veteran primer has begun to show its age, and while I still supplement my teaching with some of its early exercises, words and phrases such as *rout*, *spy out*, *take by storm*, *ravage*, *whither and whence* can prove somewhat bewildering to the 21st century student.

Thus I set to work on creating a new course of my own. I decided early on to design *Variatio* specifically for the strictures of 13+ scholarship examinations to the top senior schools, such as Eton and Westminster. To my knowledge, it is the first course of its kind in that regard.

All elements of the Common Entrance, Common Academic Scholarship and GCSE syllabuses are therefore included, along with all but three of the AS-Level language criteria (*oratio obliqua*, result clauses after *quam ut* and deliberative questions have been omitted). This means that *Variatio* can be used by teenagers (and indeed undergraduates) as well as younger pupils at prep schools and state primaries.

Topics are introduced in a logical order, and gradated exercises allow a complete comprehension of each element of grammar and syntax. English to Latin translation is included from the very beginning. Though *Variatio* is primarily linguistic in its focus, many myths and historical accounts are covered in *unseens* and *proses* ñ along with occasional stories from modern culture, ranging from *Hercule Poirot* to *The Terminator*.

The title, meanwhile, alludes to the wide selection of exercises available ñ sentences, unseen translations, prose compositions, comprehensions, verbs for parsing, grammatical questions and derivations. This prepares the student for the various formats of examinations, while affording an assortment of resources to the teacher. Both volumes contain two-way dictionaries, and summaries of topics are given at the end of each section (in addition to vocabulary summaries and an outline of *accidence* in Book I).

Variatio was reviewed in an article for *The Spectator* last September. It has also been endorsed by Bob Bass, the author of the Latin Practice Sentences series and chief exam setter for ISEB, who remarks: *mensa is back!* and this in itself summarises the *Variatio* approach: traditional, thorough and gimmick-free... This non-syllabus-specific course will appeal to anyone, from early teens to mature students, who wants a no-nonsense approach to getting stuck into this challenging but rewarding language.

A number of top senior schools have given their support too, and a collection of past papers is included in an appendix to Book II, reprinted with their kind permission. They include Eton, KCS, Marlborough, Radley, RGS Guildford, Tonbridge and Westminster.

It is my hope that *Variatio* can address the lack of rigorous and language-based Latin courses available today, and provide teachers from a broad range of educational establishments with a wide variety of resources. I would greatly welcome any feedback, advice or *corrigenda*, and can be contacted at the address given below.

[HYPERLINK "mailto:latin@highfieldschool.org.uk"](mailto:latin@highfieldschool.org.uk)

Volumes I and II of *Variatio: A Scholarship Latin Course* can be purchased via Amazon (UK, Europe or US) or through the Hellenic Book Service.

Ed Clarke
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And another thing

It is difficult to read John Davie's 2012 article *In Pursuit of Excellence: A paper on the teaching of the classics - A Parliament Street Policy Paper* without a wistful nod of approval or a CLC's sigh of exasperation. Haven't read it? It's just a click away.

Through the murk of good intentions, the OCR GCSE syllabus seems to be re-introducing translating English into Latin sentences, though only as an option. Some sample sentences:

- (a) The girls were walking to the forum.
- (b) The slave is able to work in the garden.
- (c) We greeted the son of the man.

Hardly likely to make a year 7 prep school pupil break step, let alone a Year 11 student with six years of Latin under the belt.

It has always been somewhat mystifying to me as a returner to Latin teaching after a long gap that, on the one hand, all the main sets of text books for the Common Entrance put emphasis on translation into Latin as a core activity, requiring rigour, diligence and memory, whilst, in the various levels of the CE, the sentences for translation are risibly facile, offering little motivation to schools to help develop this skill. Thus, CE level 2 pupils are expected to be able to translate:

Although there was a large crowd of angry citizens in the middle of the city, the king continued to sleep.

It is therefore disheartening for them to be asked to render into Latin at CE level 2, with all vocabulary glossed:

- (i) We see happy girls.
- (ii) The poets were watching the goddess.

The point is equally valid at level 3 where pupils are expected to be able to translate, using the imperfect subjunctive passive:

Almost all the citizens ran away to avoid being captured by the enemy.

Surely the opportunity should be available for pupils to show active mastery of constructions they have learned. Virtually the only places pupils do have to demonstrate such skills are in the scholarship papers of a few senior schools, where either prose composition or the translation of

discrete sentences into Latin remains an option.

Would it not be possible to have, if only as an option, some more demanding sentences or a short paragraph at the various levels of Common Entrance, to continue at GCSE and beyond? This would go some way to answering John Davie's and others concerns at the other end of the education ladder. Is it the case that some younger Latin teachers, for whom translation into Latin was not seen as essential at any level as they studied, should pass on that view as they return to the classroom? Once the cycle is interrupted, how difficult will it be to re-establish?

Fred Pragnell