Get Your Students Reading Latin

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Dorothy Sayers' Advice on Latin Teaching in *Ignorance and Dissatisfaction*[1]

But ignorance has seldom prevented anybody from laying down the law about how other people ought to run their jobs, and propose impracticable solutions. So I will proceed to offer a few " constructive suggestions," as they say, for getting boys and girls reasonably well Latinised with the least possible waste of time and energy.

Catch 'em young and get the Accidence into them along with the multiplication-table (if they still learn that). Eleven years old is too late — they are beginning to think.

1. Throw that dreary man Cicero out of the window, and request the divine Virgil (with the utmost love and respect) to take a seat along with his fellow-Augustans and the First Consul, until your pupils are ready to be ushered into the presence.
2. Choose a pronunciation and stick to it.
3. Start your youngsters off upon the mediaeval syntax and the easiest and simplest mediaeval texts. (Books ? No, I know there are no books. I will come to that later.) Let the reading go as fast as possible, getting on to long, sustained extracts as soon as may be, and using a crib if necessary (except, of course, for Unseens).
4. If possible, let them speak Latin in class. Let them write simple proses — not about Caesar's Gallic Wars, but about their cats and dogs and what they do at home. Don't bother too much about style, so long as they get something down ; and if they ask what is the Latin for "Skye Terrier" or "motor-scooter," bear in mind that a trifle of that kind would not have flummoxed Abelard or Roger Bacon. The singing of Latin hymns and carols would help too. And they might write and act their own Latin Nativity Play.
5. Let them get up their classical myths and general background in English. It would do no harm to introduce them to Ovid and Virgil in a good translation, if you can find one. Caesar, if you like (though the girls won't care much about him). How about the letters of the Younger Pliny, which cover the link-up with Christianity? The most important thing is to display the people who spoke Latin as real people, living right on from Caesar's time into the Middle Ages.
6. When the time comes — that is, when they can read with ease and have a decent vocabulary — let them go on to the Augustans in the original, pointing out that these are works of literature and intended to be enjoyed as such. Pick the really exciting, moving and memorable bits, and let them express themselves freely about the sportsmanship displayed at the Funeral Games in honour of Anchises! This is your moment for wrestling with the quantitative metres, and with the difference between Mediaeval and Classical syntax. It should at worst offer little more difficulty than the difference between modern English and the English of Chaucer.

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[1] 1. Dorothy Sayers, "Dorothy Sayers Address to the ARLT 1952," *ARLT Weblog*, February 16, 2009, accessed June 15, 2023, https://arltblog.wordpress.com/dorothy-sayers-address-to-the-arlt-1952/.

Beginning of Class Liturgy

Magister: "Salvete discipuli!"
Discipuli: "Salve magister/magistra"
M: "Quomodo vos habetis?"
D: "Bene/Optime/Male/Pessime!"
M: "Et qui dies est hodie?"
D: " Hodie est dies _____ "
                    (Lunae, Martis, Mercurii, Iovis, Veneris, (Saturni), (Solis))

M: "Quale est caelum?" (individual)

D: "Caelum _____ est"
           (serenum, nubilum, caeruleum, album, canum, atrum)
   "aer calidus est"
   "ventosum est"
   "sol lucet"
   "ventus arbores movet"
   "ningit"

M: "Quod tempus anni est?"
D: "_____ est"
     Aestas
     Autumnus
     Hiems
     Ver
M: "Qui mensis anni est?"
D: "Mensis _____ est"

(Ianuarius, Februarius, Martius, Aprilis, Maius, Iunius, Iulius, Augustus, September, October
November, December)

M: "Incipiamus cum (memory work, E.G. "Pater Noster")
...
M: "Valete discipuli!"
D: "Vale magister/magistra"

Vocabula Ludi

Magister/Magistra
Discipulus/ Discipula
Schola
Ludus
Mensa
Sella

Tabula
Tabella
Liber
Graphium
Stilus

Dicta

Commands
Surgite! / Considite
Sumite _____ (ex. tabelas) / Ponite _____
Aperite libros! / claudite libros!
Pingite __ ! / Scribite __!

Helpful Questions

Quid est ...?	What is x?
Quid significat ...?	What does x mean?
Quomodo dicitur ...?	How do you say x?
Qui casus et usus est ...?	What case and function is x?
Quid agit ...?	What is x doing?
Ubi est ...?	Where is x?
Cur...?	Why x?

Grammar for Reading *Puer et Monstrum*

US / ER

	Function	Singular	Plural
Nominative	Subject	US/ER	I
Genitive	Possession	I	
Dative	Indirect Object	O	
Accusative	D.O. / O.P. (*ad, ante, post, super, apud*)	UM	
Ablative	Location (*in, cum*) Origin (*ab, ex, sub*)	O	

UM

	Function	Singular	Plural
Nominative	Subject	UM	
Genitive	Possession	I	
Dative	Indirect Object	O	
Accusative	D.O. / O.P. (*ad, ante, post, super, apud*)	UM	
Ablative	Location (*in, cum*) Origin (*ab, ex, sub*)	O	

Vocab for Reading *Puer et Monstrum* Chapter 1

ad - to, towards
ambulat - walks
campus - field
crocodilus - crocodile
cubiculum - bedroom
cum - with
dormit - sleeps
est - is
et - and
ex - out of
iam - now
in - in, on
lectus - bed
monstrum - monster
ne - is it true that?
nidus - nest

non - not
ovum - egg
ponit - puts
puer - boy
pullus - chick
quid - what
ramus - branch
rursus - again
sed - but
sedet - sits
sub - under
sumit - picks up
tremit - shakes
ubi - where
videt - sees