



# NEWSLETTER

No. 23, Spring, 2002

## Integrating Culture into the Latin Classroom

by Carlene Craib, Westford Academy, Westford, Massachusetts

For veteran *CLC* teachers integration of culture studies into the Latin curriculum is a *sine qua non*. But perhaps you are a new teacher or a “convert,” plunging into *CLC* for the first time. You may be the product of a grammar-translation education who, despite your love of the language, ability to parse and scan, read, and maybe even write Latin, may still be a bit fuzzy on types of gladiators, ancient glassmaking methods, or the role of Agricola in the conquest of Britain! This is quite natural. After all, Latin teachers LOVE Latin. They love the language; they probably even love grammar. What about our students, however? I don’t know about yours, but I can count on one hand those of mine who are nascent Latin teachers, and the rest . . . well, they like Latin, and tolerate grammar, but they **really** enjoy the culture. So if you are looking to increase your numbers, to reach all your students, and to bring your Latin program into the 21st Century, turn your thoughts toward integrating culture seamlessly into your curriculum.

The ACTFL National Standards and the National Standards for Classical Learning agree that the study of culture is an inherent part of the study of any language. For the philosophical foundation for my argument I recommend that you read the above document, as well as the



Carlene Craib addresses the ACL Institute in San Antonio, June, 2001. This article is a condensation of the illustrated paper she delivered on that occasion.

excellent articles by June K. Phillips (“National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Culture, the Driving Force”)<sup>1</sup> and Ken Kitchell (“Latin II’s Dirty Little Secret: Why Johnny Can’t Read”)<sup>2</sup>. It is my practical observation, moreover, after 20 years of watching my program grow and strengthen, that it is our obligation to fill the early

years of our students’ study of Latin with so much “culture study” that if they complete only one or two years of Latin they have more than **amo, amas, amat** as a memory, and that if they do go on to the upper levels, they have a high degree of cultural literacy, which can then be activated by judicious review and prompting. In doing so we will reach the National Standards relating to culture completely, and enliven our students’ study of Latin as well.

How do we achieve this fusion of culture and language? Here are a few suggestions:

- Always “do culture” in conjunction with text. e.g. The illustrations accompanying the model sentences in *CLC* Stage 10 are a rich source of cultural material. As I read the text we talk about arches, road-building, engineering, farming techniques, sculpture techniques (materials, tools, subject matter), painting techniques and subject matter, theater masks, battle formation, armor types, who might be fighting whom, **latrinae**, and finally a typical schoolroom scene. Some of this might be review, some new. Some is mentioned in passing, some in more detail according to the interest of the students. But it all provides cultural enrichment for this reading and those to come.

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## Integrating Culture cont.

•Put a visual culture “tidbit” related to readings on a worksheet and then discuss it when you go over the worksheet. e.g. For homework during a unit that has the words **aeneus**, **argenteus**, and **aureus**, and **lectus**, I put a picture of a **lectus** with a Latin caption about it which has all the above words. Students then connect the word **lectus** with its picture, and also learn about what Romans might have made **lecti** from.

•Use primary sources whenever possible as readings in Latin or in English. When we do elections, we read authentic election slogans and see pictures of the extant ones in Pompeii. We look at the illustration of Caecilius’ tablets in “Claimed by Vesuvius” by Walter Marx and talk about Roman handwriting and writing implements. When students get to Stage 26 and are studying the Roman fort, I then introduce Vindolanda and the tablets found there, reminding them of what they know about Caecilius’ tablets. When doing a Latin II unit on city life and country life, I have them read in English Juvenal’s comments on living in Rome and Horace’s comments on country life.

•Relate culture study to modern culture. Show slides of the model of the city of Rome and then show the ruins. Ask what kinds of monuments we have and how they reveal our national characteristics. Discuss what a modern writer might have to say about a contemporary city after reading Juvenal (3:232 ff.) or Martial (12.57).

•Relate your culture study to language. When discussing the Roman Forum, mention that if you were going to meet someone at the Forum, you meant the main forum, not one of the auxiliary fora around the city. When discussing slaves,

talk about why we translate **servus** as *slave* and not *servant* and what connotations that differentiation has. With advanced students, analyze a poet’s choice of word and

students can reach the standards relating to culture completely, and leave their study of Latin with lasting memories of a people and language far from dead!



Carlene answers questions and distributes handouts to an eager audience

do dictionary studies of synonyms to see what variations in meaning a word can have. Consider why the Latin word **hospes** means both *host* and *guest*. Look at inscriptions and consider what they reveal about the people and their values by the language on them, and, of course, use all those datives on monument inscriptions as examples of indirect objects.

These are just a few suggestions, and you will have many more. Perhaps you might share some in future editions of the newsletter!

The integration of culture into the classroom of course means different things to a Classics teacher and to a teacher of modern languages. We can’t take our students to ancient Rome and have them wear the clothes, eat the food, observe the local religious customs, and take part in their festivals - or can we? It is my contention that given appropriate materials, a rich cultural atmosphere, and a teacher committed to culture in the classroom, our

1 Phillips, June K. (1998) “National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Culture the Driving Force.” pp. 1-11 in Lange, D.L., Klee, C.A., Paige, R.M., Yershova, Y.A. (1998) *Culture as the Core: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Culture Teaching and Learning in the Second Language Curriculum*. University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

2 Kitchell, Kenneth (2000) “Latin II’s Dirty Little Secret: Why Johnny Can’t Read.” *New England Classical Journal*, November 2000.

## Join the Listserve

Want to comment on the thoughts expressed in this issue? Join the Cambridge Listserve at <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CambridgeLatin>>

# Confessions of a Grammar Thumper

by Joyce Clark, Phelps Center for the Gifted, Central High School, Springfield, Missouri



When Stan Farrow asked me to write an article for this newsletter, I was stunned. I recall being in the room with the “revision team” at the ACL conference this past summer and feeling like I’d been admitted to Mt. Olympus, even more so when Stan read the new **venatio** story from Stage 7.

I must begin by confessing that I like grammar. Mrs. Fern Westbrooke, belle of Memphis long removed to the evil north, made sure I was well acquainted with particles, gerunds, infinitives and other bits of nonsense at the tender age of 15. Mrs. Mildred Hulse, my high school Latin teacher who regularly terrified me, furthered my indoctrination. It took. Long after I’d forgotten major pieces of literature, I could discuss an infinitive which lacked the “to” in English and was delighted to find any audience willing to hear about a passive periphrastic.

I must credit Ed Phinney with the term “grammar thumper.” He used it at a *CLC* workshop I attended in Ohio to describe people who were excessively fond of the grammar-translation method of teaching Latin. While I don’t quite “thump,” I do teach more grammar than the *CLC* probably deems appropriate.

I arrived at the teaching of Latin through the back door. When I was a junior in college, majoring in elementary education, Dr. Curtis “Call-Me-Cut” Lawrence suggested that, with a few additional education classes, I could be certified to teach Latin. I graduated, tried to abandon teaching altogether, and then taught juvenile delinquents for five-and-a-half years. When I returned to my hometown, the local school district called me to ask that I apply for a part-time Latin teaching job. And so it began.

I taught one section of Latin I from the *Cambridge Latin Course*. I read the little teacher’s manual with great interest (and disappointment) and solemnly swore to advance what I perceived as the “hide the grammar” method of teaching Latin. I learned more about daily life in the first three months I taught Latin than I had in my entire student career. We finished the material of the first semester with a few weeks to spare, so I resorted to teaching grammar for lack of anything else with which to fill the time. It was an eye-opening

experience. One of my students actually said, “Why didn’t you tell us that before?” For several of the students, it made a real difference in their skills.

I moved on to teach part-time in another high school. I was the second Latin teacher in a high school where the other Latin teacher was reputed to sleep during class from time to time. Rumor had it that the exams were passed around in class before they were taken. That might have accounted for the large Latin enrollment. The fact that those things didn’t happen in my class might have accounted for my departure after only two years. Having learned my lesson at the expense of my first class, I taught grammar from the beginning. No in-depth stuff (Sorry, Mrs. Westbrooke.), but my students learned parts of speech and the official names for assorted grammatical phenomena. I taught only Latin I, so all of my students went on to the sleeping Latin teacher if they chose to continue their Latin careers.

The year after I left that school, I ran into one of my students who had gone on to the sleeping Latin teacher. He thanked me for having taught him grammar. After he administered CPR, I asked him why. He said that there was a notable difference between the students in Latin II who had had the sleeping teacher (who taught no grammar) and the ones who had had the evil teacher.

That pretty much sealed my fate as an adder of grammar.

In the eight years I taught high school Latin, eventually teaching levels I-IV, I continued to teach grammar faithfully. I developed a format for a Latin Notebook, which included a section frankly labeled “grammar.” I made my students learn noun endings and verb endings (although not by individual conjugation). I gave quizzes on irregular verbs. Some students never learned it; some reveled in it. I did not teach all of the grammar I had been forced to learn. Much of it pertained primarily to composition and I have not taught composition to my students. I did not make them learn the sequence of tenses or a summary of uses of the ablative. I wanted them to be able to READ Latin and I taught what I believed would help them the most.

I adapted to what had initially seemed a very strange order of presentation in the *Cambridge Latin Course*. In the first years, I told my students about the ablative case just because I could. I frightened them with unnecessary references to verb tenses, moods, and voices.

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## Grammar cont.

Later, I discovered that it was okay to wait. The children who were more observant asked and I privately answered their questions. Now I tell my children that I heartily endorse the order of presentation in *CLC* as being a good reflection of the usage in real Latin. I also tell them that Latin is a very complicated language, but very systematic. The presentation of the grammar in the traditional charts (with blanks for what is “not yet learnt”) has helped them see the order.

I left high school Latin to try what I’d originally set out to do, teach elementary school. I did this for nine years. A few years ago, I began class work toward a master’s degree in gifted education. Last spring, I was hired to teach Latin to profoundly gifted middle school students. I was given complete choice as to what textbook I wished to use, and I chose *Cambridge* without hesitation.

In preparation for returning to Latin, I consulted the Internet. I was amazed at what was there. One of the best things I found was Latin Teach, a list serve for Latin teachers. There I sought and received guidance on purchases to make for my classroom. Later, I found the Cambridge Latin Teachers list serve. Although I no longer belong to Latin Teach, I still regularly read and reply to Cambridge’s list serve. It is there that I go for information that I either have forgotten or never knew. (I’m always a bit apprehensive, as I know that Dr. Stephen Rosenquist, the college Latin teacher who taught me to love Latin, is reading what I ask and write.) There I find the collegiality I miss by being the only Latin teacher in my school and, usually, the only Latin teacher I see more than two or three times a year.

## Director’s Message

by Stephanie Pope

Greetings, friends! I sincerely hope that the sad events of the end of 2001 are being tempered a bit by the coming of spring and the recent Olympic Games. Though not without controversy, these Games have still helped us to focus on the powerful legacies of Roman and Greek civilizations. Through the joys of their victories and the agonies of their defeats, these Olympic athletes have showed us their character and resolve to face obstacles as they come and to deal with them to the best of their abilities. These are great lessons to share with our students and families.

I hope that your summer plans include some enrichment activities. Cambridge University Press and NACCP will once again provide a *Cambridge Latin* presence at the 2002 American Classical League Institute to be held at the University of Wisconsin in Madison from June 27 to June 29. CUP and NACCP will have booths in the book display room. On Friday, June 28 at 10:00 a.m., **Norah Jones** and I will be presenting a panel discussion entitled: Cambridge Latin: a program “ab ovo usque ad mala.” We sincerely hope that you will be able to join us as we discuss how the *Cambridge Latin Course* takes students from their first day of Latin all the way to the rigors of an Advanced Placement Course.

The work of the revision team remains on schedule, and the components of Unit 3 will be available for use in schools this fall. Visit the ACL booth to view new copies of the Student’s Textbook, the Omnibus Workbook, the Teacher’s Manual, and the Stage Tests. The team is currently refining the Student’s Textbook for Unit 4.

We hope that you will enjoy the new offerings from the Resource Center and will find the materials helpful for your classes.

My best to you for a wonderful spring and an exciting summer! I look forward to sharing with you this fall new developments for NACCP. Vale!

## CLC at Dartmouth College

**Cynthia King**, our NACCP executive member who keeps tabs on the university scene, reports that *CLC* is being used successfully in two intensive beginning Latin courses at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. The program description calls the *CLC* “the best whole-language method available for Latin: it combines a carefully-sequenced program of graduated readings with accurate background information on the history and culture of the Empire during the first century C.E.”

**Prof. Margaret Graver**, who has adapted the *Course* for college use, reports that her students appreciate and enjoy being taught by a reading-based program, and that they feel the cultural content makes the study of Latin more engaging than other methods. While she has had to provide more detailed grammar explanation and extra practice work for her students’ level of maturity, she also feels that the *CLC*’s “less is more” approach to formal grammar makes it more adaptable to all levels of study, from elementary school to university.

Some idea of the “intensity” of the courses can be gained from the following timetable: examination on Unit 1 after two weeks; three more weeks to cover Unit 2; goal at the end of the ten-week unit: Stage 28. The second ten-week course covers the rest of Unit 3 and most of Unit 4. At least one and a half hours of preparation per class period is recommended.