Learn Latin from the Romans

Learn Latin from the Romans is the only introductory Latin textbook to feature texts written by ancient Romans for Latin learners. These texts, the 'Colloquia', consist of dialogues and narratives about daily life similar to those found in modern-language textbooks today, introducing learners to Roman culture as well as to Latin in an engaging, accessible, and enjoyable way. Students and instructors will find everything they need in one complete volume, including clear explanations of grammatical concepts and how Latin works, both British and American orders for all noun and adjective paradigms, 5,000 easy practice sentences, and over 150 longer passages (from the Colloquia and a diverse range of other sources including inscriptions, graffiti, and Christian texts as well as Catullus, Cicero, and Virgil). Written by a leading Latin linguist with decades of language teaching experience, this textbook is suitable for introductory Latin courses worldwide.

ELEANOR DICKEY was educated at Bryn Mawr College and the University of Oxford, has taught in Canada and the United States, and is currently Professor of Classics at the University of Reading in England. She is a Fellow of the British Academy and of the Academia Europaea and has published widely on the Latin and Greek languages and how they were studied in antiquity, including *Greek Forms of Address* (1996), *Latin Forms of Address* (2002), *Ancient Greek Scholarship* (2007), *The Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana* (2012–15), *Learning Latin the Ancient Way* (2016), and *An Introduction to the Composition and Analysis of Greek Prose* (2016). She is a dedicated and passionate language teacher with extensive experience of teaching both Latin and Greek at all levels and has brought this experience to bear on her adaptations of ancient Latin-learning materials for modern students.

Learn Latin from the Romans

A Complete Introductory Course Using Textbooks from the Roman Empire

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Dedicated to Latin students and Latin teachers
who put their hearts and souls into the subject

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Preface: What This Textbook Is

During the Roman empire many speakers of Greek and other ancient languages learned Latin. To do so they used materials known as 'colloquia', short dialogues and narratives for reading and speaking practice. First created in the first century AD or earlier and greatly expanded in later centuries, the colloquia were heavily used throughout antiquity and still employed in the middle ages and early Renaissance, but they largely disappeared from Classicists' awareness after that point.[1]

As language-learning materials the colloquia have great advantages, for they were composed by native speakers of Latin specifically for learners. English-speaking Latin learners normally have to choose between reading 'fake' Latin composed by modern teachers, which is easy but inauthentic, and 'real' Latin composed by Romans for other Romans, which is too difficult for beginners. But the colloquia offer an ideal compromise: having been written for beginners by native speakers, they are both authentic and easy. Their language is idiomatic, their grammar simple, and their sentences short. Moreover, their subject matter is daily life in the Roman empire (shopping, bathing, banking, dining, going to school, engaging in litigation, visiting friends, etc.); such material is highly interesting to modern students and far more accessible than much Latin literature.

In their original form, however, the colloquia do not completely meet the needs of a modern student. They consist only of reading material, without any grammatical explanation; of course grammars of Latin were also composed for the ancient learners, and some of these survive today, but those grammars are not suitable for most English speakers since they presume knowledge of ancient Greek. Moreover the colloquia are not long enough to form a complete Latin course; ancient students used them only at the beginning of their Latin study and then moved on to reading literary texts accompanied by full running vocabulary lists. And some portions of the colloquia are unreadable today, either owing to textual corruption or because enthusiastic users expanded them into gigantic vocabulary lists, hopelessly obscuring the original narrative. Lastly, many passages use post-Classical Latin grammar and syntax, including forms that could cause serious confusion for beginners.

In this book, therefore, the colloquia are presented in a format suitable for modern students. The most readable passages have been selected, vocabulary is glossed as

[1] For more information on the colloquia and other texts used for learning Latin in antiquity see E. Dickey, *The Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana* (Cambridge 2012–15) and *Learning Latin the Ancient Way* (Cambridge 2016).

necessary, and any non-standard grammar and syntax that might make it harder for a beginner to learn Latin has been standardized. The texts have then been embedded in the framework of a modern textbook.

In fact the purpose of this textbook is twofold: to enable today's students to learn Latin using the ancient materials, and to meet the need that I and some other Latin teachers have felt for a particular type of book. There are many different ways to learn Latin, of course, and none of them is best for everyone; the choice of method needs to depend at least in part on the age, background, and goals of the student. But it seemed to me that many Latin students fell into a group not ideally served by any of the available books: students who have a certain intellectual maturity and want to understand fully everything they learn, but who do not necessarily have any background knowledge of grammar or of the ancient world; who want to master the essentials rapidly in order to move on to reading real texts as soon as possible, but who nevertheless need to have a firm grasp of those essentials to avoid fear and confusion; who want lots of practice exercises but do not want to buy or carry around extra workbooks; who want interesting reading material but disagree completely with one another about what counts as interesting; and who would like the people designing their Latin course to pre-select the most important concepts for learning rather than pouring out a deluge of details.

This is the group whose needs I have tried to meet. Therefore a thorough grounding in grammar is provided, so that those who like to understand things can feel confident rather than confused, and care has been taken to explain major concepts clearly, sometimes at the cost of omitting, or relegating to footnotes, details whose inclusion might make a concept too hard to understand. When it comes to grammatical terminology, a middle course has been taken between avoiding any terminology that might intimidate the reader and using all the terminology employed by a full-scale Latin grammar: I have used grammatical terminology only when it is strictly necessary (i.e. when it will make the learners' task easier rather than harder). Thus readers will not find in this book names for different uses of the dative (one can understand *auxiliō eī sum* without deciding whether to call it a predicative dative or a double dative), but they will find the parts of speech, the cases, the moods, etc. All terminology used is explained clearly and explicitly, in small increments suitable for a beginner, and the explanations in the main text are supplemented by a complete glossary of grammatical terminology (chapter 65) as well as exercises on the more challenging grammatical concepts (chapter 63, with answer key in chapter 64). A student who comes to this book knowing no grammatical terminology whatsoever can use it without the assistance of any other English reference work and will emerge with an ability to understand English as well as Latin grammar. Such an understanding is widely held to be an important reason for learning Latin, as it is generally thought to improve one's ability to write good English.

One drawback to grammatical terminology is that it is not uniform across the English-speaking world; indeed even the analysis underlying that terminology is sometimes different in different countries. In the twenty-first century such local customs are no longer really local: some Americans learn from British books, and some British students from American ones, so in the production of a new book the choice of either terminological framework would be arbitrary. Having taught Latin in both these countries as well as Canada, I find that on most points where terminologies or analyses diverge they are both equally good, and that it is often helpful to teachers and students to have both; therefore I provide both whenever I consider both to work well. (The point on which this is most noticeable is the order of the cases, but it is a principle that runs throughout the book.) The inclusion of a range of terminology also makes it easier for students to move from this book to consulting major reference works such as grammars, which do not all use the same terminology. On a few points, however, I find one way of putting things distinctly more helpful than the other, and on those points I have preferred the more helpful version irrespective of its place of origin.

Many students learn Latin as their first foreign language, and therefore many users of this book will be thinking for the first time about those aspects of English that are unproblematic until English is compared with another language, such as the fact that English tenses shift in indirect speech. Some students will also be thinking for the first time about aspects of English that ideally ought to have been understood earlier, such as the difference between *girl's* and *girls'*. For this reason certain features of English are explained in some detail, and Latin and English grammatical principles are explicitly compared and contrasted. (Incidentally, the ancient Latin teachers made extensive use of such teaching methods, though the other language involved was Greek rather than English.)

The book also provides more than 5,000 modern sentences and exercises for grammatical practice, for although the colloquia make learning Latin from ancient texts easier, it still is simply not feasible for elementary students to get enough practice on every individual point purely from reading ancient texts. It is not expected that every student will translate all these sentences; most students will find that they grasp most concepts after doing fewer than half the exercises provided. The other exercises are there for those times when an individual student needs more practice in order to master a particular concept – they should be seen as an opportunity and a resource in times of need, not as an obligation. The sentences and exercises in the main chapters of the book have no answers provided, so that they can easily be set for homework. But more than 700 are revision sentences and exercises on points of grammar that students often find particularly difficult, and these are separated into an appendix for which a key is provided, to allow students to use them as and when they are needed.

A principle behind the construction of the sentences is that they should not only illustrate whatever construction is under discussion while being otherwise as easy to translate as possible, but also help students develop the right thought processes for

reading real Latin. For example, when producing sentences for beginners it is tempting to put the words in an order close enough to that of English that an English speaker can naturally make the right words into subjects and objects even if he or she does not pay attention to the Latin case endings: such word order allows students to read more easily and gain confidence quickly. But that confidence is produced at the cost of a belief that one does not need to pay attention to the case endings, something that will prove a major handicap to the student's later Latin studies. This book, therefore, starts off with sentences that cannot be correctly translated except by paying attention to the endings and thus helps students develop the skills that in the long run will be most helpful in reading real Latin texts. For the same reason macrons are not used on translation exercises: given the usual conventions for the printing of Latin texts, ability to read Latin means ability to read Latin without macrons, and many people read by word shape. Therefore people who learn to read Latin seeing words in precisely the shape that those words will have when encountered in a real Latin text have an easier time later than those whose initial learning occurs on sentences with macrons. But the absence of macrons on the sentences should not be taken as a disincentive to learning the quantities, for which much opportunity is given elsewhere: long vowels are marked on all vocabulary, on grammatical exercises, and on all Latin quoted in the main text.

The core of the reading material is not the sentences but 159 passages from Latin texts, 43 from the colloquia and 116 from other sources. These have all been carefully chosen for comprehensibility as well as illustration of relevant concepts and have been glossed with the information needed to understand them at the point where they are inserted. The passages come from a wide range of Latin genres, authors, and periods, for students differ greatly from one another in their interests and only a broad selection has a chance of appealing to a substantial percentage of the people in any given Latin class. Therefore literature is represented by Virgil (ten passages comprising the first ninety-one lines of the *Aeneid*, a text that ancient Latin students often used early in their studies), Martial (twenty-seven passages), Cicero (sixteen passages), Catullus (six passages), Terence (five passages), Livy (four passages), the Vulgate Bible (four passages), Apicius' cookbook (four passages), St Augustine (three passages), Plautus (one passage), Vitruvius (one passage), and Caesar (one passage);[2] documentary texts are represented by fourteen inscriptions, ten graffiti, four Vindolanda tablets, one papyrus letter, and one mosaic. Four medieval Latin songs are also included.[3] Non-standard spelling and grammar in late and documentary texts have been standardized, and some passages have been further adapted, but poetry is almost always presented in its original form.

[2] The inclusion of more Caesar has been deliberately avoided in order to prevent annoying repetition for people who read Caesar immediately after elementary Latin.

[3] See the index of Latin passages for precise details.

The passages begin at chapter 11, and at least one is found in each chapter from that point onwards, with more in the later chapters. Ten chapters consist entirely of such reading practice and introduce no new grammar. The idea of these chapters is to give students the opportunity to tackle longer passages than those provided at the ends of the other chapters: reading longer texts is an important skill, and students often find it more enjoyable than reading little extracts. These chapters also offer the teacher a certain safety valve in scheduling: if a class is under time pressure they can be postponed or even skipped without impairing students' ability to understand subsequent chapters.

The amount of vocabulary learning required has been kept as small as possible, in the belief that since an intermediate-level student reading a Latin literary text can always look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary but will have much more difficulty finding out about unfamiliar forms and constructions, elementary students need to learn grammar more than they need vocabulary. But the vocabulary that does get included in the 'vocabulary to learn' sections should be taken seriously and memorized: those words are used constantly in the sentences. As a result of the prioritization of grammar, by the end of this book most users will have a command of all the major forms and constructions and a good understanding of how to use them, but only a limited vocabulary. Therefore it is recommended that at the next level they read texts with a comprehensive glossary or word list.

The work involved in learning elementary Latin consists of two very different types of mental activity: memorization of forms and vocabulary, and practice at reading and translating. In many existing textbooks all the forms (i.e. the memorization work) are presented early in the course, with the constructions (i.e. the work that can be done only via reading practice) largely reserved for the second half. This arrangement has the disadvantage that the rate of progress in the first half of the course is restricted by the speed at which the students can accomplish the memorization. Latin has a very large number of different forms to learn, and when vocabulary is added to this (for it is undoubtedly necessary for the beginner to learn *some* vocabulary) the burden of memorization becomes so great that many students never reach the stage at which they would learn the constructions; for this reason they can never read any 'real' Latin, even after spending considerable time and effort on memorization. If one is learning Latin because one enjoys grammar, or to improve one's English, Latin-learning that never leads to independent reading is not necessarily wasted, but most people prefer the sense of accomplishment and independent enjoyment that comes from being able to read real ancient texts. In this book, therefore, forms and constructions are systematically interspersed with one another, so that the work of memorization is spread out over the entire book and constructions are introduced early; this arrangement reduces the burden of the memorization and allows the introduction of more interesting reading material earlier in the course.

Throughout this course students are encouraged to use Latin actively as well as passively, by translating into Latin as well as out of it. The reason for this practice is not a belief on my part that all students should learn to write good Latin; I do want to give students the opportunity to learn to write good Latin if they so desire, but many quite reasonably want to learn the language in order to read what the ancients wrote, rather than in order to add to our store of Latin literature. The point of translating into Latin is that good reading knowledge can never be attained without some active capacity in a language. Language learners forget material almost as fast as they learn it; individual students often see this as some peculiar shortcoming in themselves, but it is actually a feature of the way human memory works, and one has to accept it and work with it rather than being ashamed of it. The best way to deal with the problem of forgetting things, of course, is to re-learn them, and every student has to do a lot of re-learning throughout an elementary language course (though each time around is easier than the time before – this is a more fortunate feature of the way human memory works). But even with extensive re-learning, most people are unable to retain simultaneously all the material that they learn; sometimes each word that enters the brain seems to push another one out.[4] And yet it is not possible to read a page of Latin literature without retaining nearly all the material in this book.

A solution to this problem is to learn on each point somewhat more than you will actually need for reading a text; that way when you forget part of it you still have enough knowledge to read the text. Thus if you learn vocabulary from Latin to English, so that you can recognize the meaning of a word when you see it but nothing more, in a few days you will lose that recognition ability and have nothing. But if you learn vocabulary from English to Latin, so that you can produce the Latin word along with its gender or principal parts, in a few days you may lose the ability to produce the Latin, but you will retain the ability to recognize it for a much longer period. And if before losing active command of the Latin word you learn to use it in Latin constructions, you can end up with a passive knowledge of both words and constructions that is as close to permanent as anything in our memories can be. Therefore in this book the main purpose of the English to Latin translation is to enable users to acquire a basic reading knowledge that can survive the natural and inevitable process of forgetting that occurs during language learning. For this reason users are advised that if they skip the active exercises and do only the passive ones, this apparent shortcut will in the long run make learning passive reading skills harder rather than easier.

This book is designed to be used in a Latin course meeting three times a week for at least twenty-two weeks; each chapter can be completed in forty-five minutes of class

[4] This phenomenon has in fact been documented by scientists and is known as 'retroactive interference'. An understanding of memory and how it works can be very useful to language students; one good work on this topic is A. Baddeley, *Your Memory: A User's Guide* (London 1996).

time. It works best if students memorize the forms and vocabulary of each chapter before moving on to the next one, and if cumulative tests on paradigms, vocabulary, and translation skills are given at intervals. The division of the book into five parts suits a system in which five such tests are given during the year, one at the end of each part; in the course in which this book was created, one test was given four weeks into the first semester, a second four weeks later, a third at the start of the second semester (chapter 31 was designed to be done independently during the intervening vacation), a fourth halfway through the second semester, and the last at the end of the second semester. Many other schedules would, however, work equally well.

The author of this book did not have an easy time learning Latin. I struggled repeatedly with concepts that ought to have been easy, took years to reach the stage where I could read any original literature at all, and was the only member of my (originally large) Latin class who made it to that stage. I only got there thanks to dedicated teachers at the more advanced levels, who insisted that I re-learn all the grammar from scratch and helped me to do so. Throughout my time as a student and my decades of teaching since then, I have thought about what could have made my task as an elementary Latin student easier and more enjoyable: this book is the result. Probably it will not work for everyone, for different people have different strengths and there is no one best method of learning anything. But I hope that for a significant number of students this course will offer the chance to obtain more knowledge of Latin more enjoyably and with less confusion than most other available Latin courses.

Credit for whatever is good in this book – but certainly not blame for any mistakes – must be shared with, and gratitude offered to, everyone who taught me Latin, especially Mr Barako, Miss Bloch, Julia Gaisser, Jasper Griffin, David Raeburn, and Donald Russell. Particular thanks go to Philomen Probert and Stephen Colvin, who read the work before publication and made many useful corrections, and to Martin West, Harm Pinkster, Christoph Pieper, David Langslow, Jim Adams, Wolfgang de Melo, and Michael Weiss, who provided help with particular points. Any mistakes remaining in this book are definitely my own fault, not theirs. I am also grateful to my students at the University of Exeter, for their patience and good humour in testing trial versions of this book; Marion Osieyo and Priscilla Del Cima made particularly valuable contributions with their interpretive insight and sharp eyes spotting mistakes. Generous funding from the Leverhulme Trust and from a period as Spinoza Visiting Scholar at the University of Leiden provided time to prepare the work for publication. Last but not least, I am deeply grateful to Michael Sharp, Malcolm Todd, and Henry Maas for their invaluable contributions to the book's production process.

I hope very much that no mistakes remain in the published version of this book, but if any do appear, I hope even more that readers will bring them to my attention so that they can be eradicated from subsequent versions. All corrections will be very gratefully received at E.Dickey@reading.ac.uk.