

BOOK REVIEW

Learn to Read Greek. By ANDREW KELLER and STEPHANIE RUSSELL. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. Part I: Textbook. Pp. xxiv + 384. Paper, \$45.00. ISBN 978-0-300-11589-5. Workbook. Pp. xi + 632. Paper, \$32.00. ISBN 978-0-300-11591-8. Part II. Textbook. Pp. xvii + 512. Paper, \$45.00. ISBN 978-0-300-11590-1. Workbook. Pp. ix + 544. Paper, \$32.00. ISBN 978-0-300-11592-5.

This latest entry among beginning textbooks for Greek continues in the vein of expansively detailed presentations geared toward making students highly sophisticated readers of Classical Greek. Teachers who consider this book should be certain that this approach matches their teaching style and students' learning abilities. Teachers who find this level of detail overwhelming may yet find the supplementary workbooks a valuable resource.

Keller and Russell offer across two volumes comprising sixteen chapters, each with very full and precise presentations of grammar and reading samples, mostly gnomic utterances (the "short readings" from Chapter 3 onward) and samples of mostly high literary and philosophical texts ("longer readings," usually a short paragraph, from Chapter 6 on). These selections form a trove of interesting material, and teachers of intermediate or advanced Greek classes might find them valuable for review or as sight passages. Unfortunately the readings are often not congruent with what students have been learning and practicing in the grammatical material. For example, the first readings (seven short sentences) conclude Chapter 3, where students have been introduced to the present, imperfect and future tenses, indicative and infinitive moods, in the active, middle and passive voices, of $-\omega$ verbs. All the verbs in the reading, however, are present indicative (except for one aorist, which is glossed). The sentences do manage to work a range of noun forms (Chapter 2 introduces nouns of the first declension, including variations, and the second declension, along with the full definite article), although there is nothing like the range of the fourteen case usages described in Chapters 1 and 2. A couple of instances of $\kappa\alpha\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$ constitute their exposure to the adjective forms (also included in Chapter 2). Even more extreme is the introduction of the paradigm of $\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ (p. 48), which does not appear in a

reading until Chapter 7 (p. 233) and not with any regularity until Chapter 8 (pp. 261ff.). The correspondence of the vocabulary lists (one in each chapter) to the readings is no better. By Chapter 3, students have met 98 words in the vocabulary lists (many with extensive notes), but only 25 of these (+ the definite article) are used in the first readings, even though the authors have to gloss an additional ten words so students can read even these seven sentences.

Keller and Russell present a phenomenal amount of detail, but narrowly and sometimes overlooking other crucial details. Thus they include lunate sigmas (in alternate chapters) and Ionic dialectical forms, but Koine Greek (and most post-Classical Greek) is kept to a minimum. Keller and Russell boast that they used the *TLG* search engine to root out vocabulary items that are rare in Attic Greek (pp. xv–xvi), but they have given little thought to high-frequency material. Thus students learn 2nd-declension nouns in Chapter 2 and begin seeing the regular noun οἶνος in the readings starting in Chapter 3 and repeatedly thereafter in Part 1 (Chapters 1–9), which is fine, except that οἶνος does not appear in a vocabulary list until Part 2 (Chapter 12). Many high-frequency words are delayed until Part 2, presented alongside much less common material. Excessive schematization sometimes trumps what is in students' best interests as beginners. Thus Chapter 3 presents the relatively rare future passive forms before Chapter 5 introduces the very common forms of εἶμι, and common –μι verbs are delayed to Part 2, mostly in the final three chapters, meaning that students meet forms like the aorist optative passive before they meet the simplest forms of δίδωμι, τίθημι, ἵστημι, and ἴημι. Granted that this is a problem found in a number of beginning Greek textbooks, but that is no reason to repeat the mistake in a new one.

To Keller and Russell's credit, they have also put their attention to detail and thoroughness to good use in the supplementary workbooks. Numerous exercises provide opportunities to practice forms and translate (both Greek to English and English to Greek). While the drills are numbered and keyed to the chapters in the grammar, many of them can stand alone as exercises for practice or review. Generally there is a shortage of such straightforward practice and drill resources for Greek, so teachers seeking such materials can consider the workbooks even if they are not using the textbook.

The present reviewer has not had the opportunity to use this book in the classroom, but two teachers have generously offered their perspectives for this review. Independently they agree that students successful with these books will be formidable readers of Greek. Conversely, the books can be unforgiving for students who do not control the details. They also agree that chapters are of une-

qual length and difficulty. Ultimately, preference depends on the value a teacher puts on the detail work. Those who favor the comprehensive, detailed presentations in beginning Greek textbooks should consider the presentation in this book. Teachers put off by detail will find nothing attractive here.

Finally, there is a broader issue to consider. In an age when students look to their phones and tablets for information, these books dwarf all other Greek textbooks in mass (2,000+ pages across four volumes, all 8½" by 11") and weight (more than 10 lbs. total). Inside, despite the efforts of the press, the graphic presentation of the grammatical material, no matter how clearly demarcated and presented, is not an appealing read. It is the great challenge of the digital age to be faced with huge amounts of data and then to find a mechanism for navigating it in a meaningful way. Keller and Russell have embedded an enormous amount of valuable data here. Perhaps they will have an opportunity in the future to embed it in an interface that will make it accessible to a wider range of teachers and students.

WILFRED E. MAJOR

Louisiana State University, wmajor@lsu.edu