

BOOK REVIEW

Introduction to Latin. Second Edition. By SUSAN C. SHELMDERDINE. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2013. Pp. xvi + 376. Paper, \$34.95. ISBN 978-1-58510-390-4.

The many users of Shelmerdine's introductory Latin textbook will welcome this new edition. It retains the good qualities of the first and revised editions, and also introduces some improvements.

The second edition is again arranged in 32 chapters and can be covered in two 12-week semesters with a class meeting four times per week. In a short preface to the second edition Shelmerdine details the changes she has introduced. It is clear that she has responded to criticism of aspects of her first edition. She has integrated the changes in a sensible way. Thus the passive voice is introduced earlier, as are participles and the subjunctive. These changes will enable students to come to grips with more complex texts earlier and thus provide more reading practice in the last weeks of the course. Such practice is offered. The last three chapters omit translation-into-Latin exercises and concentrate on reading Latin. More reading practice comes in four "Reading Chapters" where some of the continuous passages have comprehension questions. These chapters recapitulate the work in the preceding chapters and contain exercises involving derivatives as well as Latin phrases and abbreviations still used in English.

Overall the approach remains as in the first edition: each chapter contains explanations of morphology and syntax as well as exercises. The exercises are still mostly translation from Latin or from English to Latin, but many of the sentences are taken from Latin authors (sources listed on pp. 302–6) and thus students are gradually familiarized with the style of ancient authors and spared the artificial constructions of many introductory Latin textbooks. The number of other exercises where students are to supply endings or to identify agreement, case usage or parts of speech has been increased. The new vocabulary introduced in each chapter is again at the end of the chapter, but is followed by an additional section on derivatives. This aspect of learning Latin was confined to the "Reading" or revision chapters of the earlier edition and will be of use to students in memorising meanings by linking them to English. Another welcome addition is the increased

(from 38 to 48) number of “Readings.” These passages of “real” Latin from Classical authors, (the sources are indicated on pp. 301–2) are initially adapted to suit the level of the student, but later presented with minimal editing. These passages are very valuable in preparing students for the transition to the next level of Latin where they will probably be reading complete works of unadapted Latin.

I have been teaching beginners’ Latin to university students for more than forty years and Shelmerdine’s new edition is the best work I have come across for introducing students within one academic year to basic Latin morphology and syntax and providing them with a reasonable amount of reading practice. At the back of the book there are several sections containing reference materials. These form summaries of what appears in the rest of the book: complete paradigms of the morphology, the vocabulary covered, first by chapter and then in two alphabetical lists, English to Latin and Latin to English and, last, an Index. This book on its own provides a solid foundation that equips students to move to the next level where they start reading complete books of Latin authors like Cicero or Virgil. However, this textbook now comes accompanied by a wealth of further materials that the teacher may choose to use or point students to using.

First, there are materials online, available at the resource page: <http://www.pullins.com/Books/03904/resources.html>. A certain amount of material, such as flashcard vocabulary exercises, is offered free of charge and, if more exercises are desired, they may be purchased. An *Instructor’s Guide* and a *Student’s Course Guide* ensure that everyone will know how to use the exercises. It is possible to link these exercises to Moodle so that the instructor is able to follow and measure students’ progress.

For those who prefer to work with the printed page, there are further resources: there is a Workbook by Ed DeHoratius (ISBN 978-1-58510-674-5) which is closely linked to *Introduction to Latin*. It follows the chapter pattern and, by offering different exercises and approaching the same material (new morphology and syntax plus new vocabulary) from other angles, should help students who struggle to absorb the work. There is an answer key at the back of the book so that students get feedback, as they do in a different way in the online exercises. A second book that should prove most exciting to students who are learning Latin to use as a tool in studying archaeology or history is *By Roman Hands* (ISBN 978-1-58510-402-4), a collection of Latin inscriptions and graffiti, collected and edited by Matthew Hartnett. This introduction to epigraphy is a most welcome extension of basic Latin reading material for beginners. It is attractively presented and provided with the necessary vocabulary and notes.

I recommend all of these books concerned with giving Latin learners access to authentic Latin texts. They make the teacher's task lighter and should make it easier for students to master reading the ancient language.

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