

BOOK REVIEW

A Latin Picture Dictionary for Everyone: Lingua Latina Depicta. By JAMES W. CHOCHOLA and DONALD E. SPRAGUE. Illustrations by LYDIA KOLLER. Mundelein: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishing, 2017. Pp. viii + 205. Paper, \$22.00. ISBN 978-0-86516-749-0.

In setting out to create a resource, as the title states, “for everyone,” James Chochola and Donald Sprague have assigned themselves a monumentally difficult task. They seem to realize how inherently conflicted a goal this is when, in their foreword and introduction, they call it both “a useful and enjoyable *entry* into Latin” (emphasis mine) and “a basic yet rather comprehensive though by no means exhaustive list of vocabulary *as well as*...a means for practicing and internalizing the vocabulary in the form of exercises” (v). The authors further claim that with the 1,200 vocabulary items provided, “this one picture dictionary provides approximately 60% of the words one needs for a functional Latin vocabulary” (v). They say that they “had *both* the traditional Latin student *and* the non-traditional Latin student in mind; *both* a classroom setting *and* a non-classroom setting” (vii); that their choice of vocabulary is “a starting point from which someone might enhance their modern conversational facility with Latin or someone might practice with a more grammatical focus” (vii). In trying to cater to so many audiences at once, Chochola and Sprague seem to have created a product that leaves each of them wanting—and, unfortunately, some of them quite confused.

The dictionary itself is divided into fifteen chapters, each presenting a group of thematically-linked vocabulary items. Chapter titles include: (1) Animals and Numbers; (2) Colors; (3) Family; (4) Buildings; (5) Vehicles and Transportation; (6) Home; (7) Furniture; (8) Pastimes; (9) Professions; (10) The Military; (11) Parts of the Body; (12) Clothing; (13) Kinds of Food and Shopping; (14) Preparing Food; and (15) The Arts. Then follow four appendices on: (A) Pronunciation of Classical Latin; (B) Major Parts of Speech and Their Uses; (C) How Latin Words Work: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives; and (D) Grammatical Outline; and finally a Pictorial Glossary of Additional Latin Vocabulary and Synonyms. According to Chochola and Sprague, “the chapters come in an order that facilitates repetition and reinforcement of previous vocabulary...

Exercises in any chapter may refer back to previous chapters of utilize vocabulary from previous chapters” (vii). In making this choice, the authors have automatically limited the flexibility with which (especially new) students can approach their text: if she does not go in order, the average student will not be able to avail herself of the exercises that have been expressly designed to increase exposure and heighten learning.

Even so, despite the authors’ efforts to “make them understandable enough for the non-traditional Latin student but also grammatically focused enough that ... [they] may supplement and enrich a teacher’s classroom rather than be additional work to an already full curriculum,” their exercises likewise expect a facility with numerous grammatical points to “reinforce previous Latin knowledge and experience” (vii). Let us take a look at the very first set of exercises in Chapter 1 to determine how successful they are in achieving their dual goals of constructing them “(1) so that the person with absolutely no Latin experience is not daunted by, but rather able to complete, the exercises successfully; and (2) even for someone thoroughly familiar with Latin, [to have] eliminated the ‘complexity of exercise’ as a variable in most places” (vii). Without any reference either in the chapter or anywhere else in the book to any words other than a few numbers and animals, the authors expect the non-traditional Latin student to be able to comprehend and answer the question, “quot animālia efficiuntur, si duōbus būbōnibus adduntur quattuor zebrae?” This reviewer wonders how well someone with no Latin experience will be able to navigate the passive voice, 3rd-declension i-stems, and adjective-noun agreement (including the irregular numbers 1, 2, and 3) without the aid of a teacher or experienced tutor. Even if the answer is just a simple, even indeclinable, number, the question is so complexly composed as to obscure this simplicity. Furthermore, in chapter one no full dictionary entries are provided (as becomes standard practice in later chapters), despite the fact that three different declensions of nouns are used in the nominative, dative, and ablative cases all.

Again, the inherent difficulty of serving multiple audiences with vastly divergent goals undermines achieving any of them satisfactorily. Even if a reader is willing to flip back to the appendices and figure out, e.g., what case certain words are in by inspecting charts (which is a big ask), how is she supposed to know what “quot animālia exstant, si ex novem būbōnibus dempti sunt duo būbōnēs?” means? The second exercise in the first chapter is much more manageable; questions such as, “delphīnus _____ habitat,” for which the very obvious answer “in ōceanō” is a clearly-labeled picture on the same page, are much more

suited to a first introduction to the language. But first impressions, not second, are what keep the learner reading rather than turning away in frustration.

Exercises aside, let us assess the success of this dictionary as a dictionary. The premise—namely, to use pictures to illustrate meaning rather than direct English translations—is one that has been utilized successfully before, most notably in Hans Ørberg's generally well-regarded *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata*, first published in 1990. In a picture dictionary, two dimensions will obviously be of paramount importance: the choice of which terms to include; and the ability of the pictures to effectively and unambiguously convey the meaning of those terms to the reader. *A Latin Picture Dictionary for Everyone* achieves only limited success on both counts.

Chochola and Sprague explain that their choices as to which terms to include were made by consulting and cross-referencing the highest-frequency vocabulary from five recent spoken-Latin vocabulary and/or dictionary publications and spoken-Latin *conventicula*, yet the result is uneven. One wonders how exotic animals like armadillos, giraffes, and zebras make the very first list of terms while cows, chickens, and frogs (and even cats and dogs!) are relegated to the “Additional Latin Vocabulary and Synonyms” section at the very back of the book. An otherwise invaluable resource, this final section needs an additional round of editing to prevent inconsistencies such as: (1) words appearing both in the actual chapter and again in the “Additional Words” section (e.g., the crocodile, in chapter one); (2) having several words labeled not as “Synonyms” but as “Additional Words” without reference to their synonyms (e.g.: all the additional color words for chapter two, even *caesius*, which uses the same picture of an ocean as *caeruleus* in the main chapter; and *emporium* and *pantapōlium*, which use the same picture as the *macellum* in chapter four); and (3) synonyms accidentally being included in the “Additional Words” section rather than the actual “Synonyms” section (e.g.: *indusium* and *camisia* for chapter twelve). In general, the formatting of this final glossary section is much clearer than in the chapters proper; here each term is unambiguously located immediately beside the corresponding picture, whereas in the main chapters, usually full-page montages of pictures with terms written now above, now below, now beside the picture they are supposed to label, often lead to unnecessary confusion.

This reviewer challenged several friends and colleagues not versed in Latin to both (a) link terms with their corresponding pictures, and (b) guess what those terms and pictures were supposed to mean in English. In a resource such as

this, neither success rate should be below 100%, yet it was. On the full-page montage of illustrations on page 31 in chapter four, not a single person not already versed in Latin whom I polled was able to correctly identify any of the following buildings from their pictures alone: *caupōna*, *taberna*, *dēversōrium*, *popīna*, *lūdus*, *īnsula*, *palātium*, or even *lātrīna*. Part of the problem is rooted in what is a very laudable idea, namely to present pictures that correspond to authentic renderings of ancient buildings (e.g.) based on archaeological research and reconstructions. Unfortunately, out of context, this choice renders some pictures ineffective in conveying meaning, and therefore unhelpful.

Significantly more troubling, however, is the basic lack of clarity of some of Koller's illustrations themselves. Presented with another full-page montage (150), those I polled demonstrated an inability to correctly identify what several simple items were based on the illustrations presented to them. Most thought that *puls* was soup, *ficus* garlic, and *anguilla* snake. As for *lūcānicae*, no one was able either to pair it with the correct picture or to realize that that picture was in fact sausages hanging obscurely behind some more prominent pictures. Opting for the more wallet-friendly black-and-white presentation of pictures in understandable, but given that choice, one would hope that all the illustrations were crystal clear. They are not. And while Chochola and Sprague sometimes use this to their advantage (as when they effectively turn an exercise in chapter two into a coloring book), the book as a whole generally suffers from this decision.

While macrons are included throughout the work, even the list of errata that Bolchazy-Carducci provides on their website is far from comprehensive. I submit the following macron-omissions as representative of what the reader will encounter not infrequently as she makes her way through the text: *papyrī* for *pāpyrī* (34); *lararium* for *lārārium* (69); *oryza* for *orȳza* (144); *malum* for *mālum* (3x, 150). More fundamentally problematic is the assertion that in Classical Latin the short "a" is pronounced "like the *a* in the word 'sat'" (Appendix A, 180). A few additional rounds of punctilious editing by different sets of eyes would improve the current edition significantly.

In general, this reviewer's main critique of *A Latin Picture Dictionary for Everyone* is that it simply tries to do too much. That said, there really is at least something for everyone. Different audiences will alternately laud and excoriate the decision to include, e.g., both ancient and modern sub-sections within chapters four and ten (on "Buildings" and "The Military," respectively). While some will choose to use only the vocabulary lists themselves, those who wish to comple-

ment their grammar lessons with some themed vocabulary will find the “Grammatical Outline” in Appendix D useful in determining which chapter’s exercises correspond with those in their own textbooks. As detailed above, the exercises are uneven both in quality and in expectation. Even so, I was pleased to encounter such varied exercises as (a) a full passage of Augustine’s *Confessions* on gladiatorial games in chapter eight (on “Pastimes”) to be used first to practice pronunciation, then for derivatives and vocabulary, and finally for reading comprehension; and (b) a section on the *suāsōria et contrōversiae* [sic] in chapter ten (on “The Military”) that asks students to consider quotations from Vergil and Vegetius on war. Such nuggets as these may prove to inspire both teacher and student alike to expand the range of activities they use to promote and achieve learning.

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