

BOOK REVIEW

Three Abecedaria: An Alphabetical Approach to Vocabulary. By JEREMIAH REEDY, Illustrated by MARY ANN REEDY. Mundelein, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., 2018. Pp. xv + 122. Paperback, \$12.00. ISBN: 978-0-86516-856-5.

According to his Introduction, Professor Dr. Jeremiah Reedy wrote this *libellus* explicitly for High School Juniors and Seniors as a preparation for college and professional life. Reedy unabashedly asserts that the second purpose of his *opus* is to turn its “readers into logophiles or philologists, i.e., ‘lovers of words.’”

Reedy is an educator of no small repute and uses his many years of experience to present this short, informative and entertaining treatise at a level with which younger persons are comfortable. He does not speak above the targeted reader but directly to them in clearly understandable prose.

In the Introduction Reedy explains to the young reader that Latin, Greek and Anglo-Saxon all descend from Proto-Indo-European as reconstructed by comparative grammar scholars. Reedy recommends an article by Calvert Watkins in the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* for more information on Proto-Indo-European roots.

The body of the volume is divided into the *Three Abecedaria*: words derived from the Greek, words derived from the Latin and words derived from Latin phrases.

For example, he begins the Greek section with *A is for Apocalypticism*, in which he breaks down the word into “apo-,” “-calypt-,” “-ic-” and “-ism,” explaining each syllable’s meaning and re-building the word to attain the full meaning of “apocalypticism,” or the belief in what is uncovered or revealed. Other words under this heading include “eucalyptus,” “apostle,” “apostate,” “apostrophe,” “apocryphal,” “apogee” and “apotheosis.” Additionally, Reed discusses the relationship of “apotheosis” with its Latin cognate “deification.”

In the Latin *abcedarium*, *A is for A posteriori*, which leads to a discussion about the difference between “a posteriori” and “a priori” and how they both first

appeared in the Latin translation of Euclid's *Elements*. He then segues to comparative adjectives (prior and posterior) and the preposition "ab."

Reedy performs this linguistic dissection upon a word for every Greek and Roman letter from their respective *abcedaria*, as well as from an *abecedarium* of Latin phrases. It is evident that Reedy wrote this for younger persons by his choice of *draco dormiens numquam titillandus* for the letter D. Not a phrase recognized by many sexagenarians! The phrase is the motto of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry of the Harry Potter series, and with it Reedy delivers a beautifully succinct lesson about the Latin gerundives and present active participles.

Reedy provides a List of References, an Appendix: Principal Parts of Latin Verbs, a List of Prefixes and Suffixes (in both Greek and Latin), an Index of Words Derived from Greek and an Index of Words Derived from Latin.

In Appendix: Principal Parts of Latin Verbs, Reedy explains to the uninitiated the principle parts of verbs, how Greek verbs have six principal parts whereas Latin verbs have only four, and that English verbs derived from Latin come for either the second or fourth principal part, while English verbs derived from Greek come from the first principal part.

The book is short, informative and entertaining. All things beloved by the rising e-generations. Given the present state of English vocabulary, a concerted effort needs to be undertaken to place this book in the hands of every High School Junior and Senior in U.S. Latin and English teachers can use it to enhance vocabulary instruction in and out of class, as well as for SAT/ACT preparation. One hopes, also, that *Three Abecedaria* causes a reader metamorphosis from mere pupil to logophile or philologist. Gift it to your children or grandchildren.

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