

Latin Alive! Compared With Wheelock's Latin

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Wheelock's Latin has long been a highly respected text used widely in first-year college courses. Its success comes from its clear systematic approach to grammar and the parts-to-whole approach it provides students. It has also been a favorite due to the continual opportunities it provides students to read passages adapted from Latin literature in the reading selections and famous quotations from Romans in the *Sententiae Antiquae* [Ancient Sentences] exercises. Students do not merely learn to read the Latin, they learn to read and appreciate Latin literature.

Recently, many high school programs have turned to *Wheelock*. This may be due to the fact that most middle and high school programs that are currently available use inductive teaching methods, and schools are discovering that the traditional parts-to-whole method is more effective. Many modern programs have veered away from adaptations of Latin literature and use stories based on a fictional family. Students who grow up with Latin reading these fictional stories often find it challenging to transition into reading actual pieces of Latin literature. So it is no wonder that many in secondary education have turned to *Wheelock* to obtain a better understanding of Latin.

The challenge in using *Wheelock* for this age group, however, is that it is very much a college text intended for a college audience. In the past, I have used this text

in my own classroom and found that even my brightest students had trouble understanding the grammar lessons written in English. They had to depend on a teacher to interpret. Moreover, the *Wheelock* textbook skips over grammatical exercises and proceeds straight from the grammar lesson into translating sentences. There is a set of optional exercises in the back, but all the answers are provided there as well. Teachers can purchase a supplemental workbook with some of these exercises at an additional cost. And if they are adept web surfers, they can find supplemental materials created by other teachers for younger students. The task of hunting for materials and resources, and then cutting and pasting to create a syllabus, puts a lot of extra work on the teacher's shoulders.

In creating *Latin Alive!* our goal was to write a *Wheelock* for middle and high school students. Like *Wheelock*, the *Latin Alive!* series will provide all the grammar lessons any student would ever need in order to read Latin literature effectively. In fact, this text provides a few lessons that even *Wheelock* does not cover. Like *Wheelock*, *Latin Alive!* depends primarily on passages inspired by and adapted from Latin literature. *Book 1* contains a series of stories inspired by Livy's *History of Rome*. Where possible, we have used Livy's own words and phrasing to retell his stories. With *Book 2* students have gained the knowledge and skill necessary to tackle passages adapted from a wide variety of the Roman Empire's greatest authors. As the students' skills progress, the readings become closer and closer to the author's original script. *Book 2* also introduces its own original sentence exercises, much like the *Sententiae Antiquae* found in *Wheelock*. The

purpose of these exercises and reading passages is to train students to read real Latin literature.

Latin Alive! differs from *Wheelock* in that it specifically focuses on the learning styles and needs of students in secondary education, particularly those following the methodology of classical education. Each chapter subdivides into individual sections. Each section introduces a new grammatical concept. Following the lessons in each section are exercises to practice this new lesson. The exercises progress from practice with individual words and phrases, to practice with sentences, and finally, to practice with reading passages. Thus, the practice, for each chapter and throughout the text, is incremental. There is no need to hunt for additional resources.

This incremental approach is also evident in the preparation provided to assist students in reading Latin. The vocabulary found at the beginning of each chapter is taken directly from the reading towards the end of the chapter. The chapter reading is also a source of inspiration for many of the exercises throughout that chapter. Thus with each exercise students are preparing for a Latin reading.

In addition to teaching students to read original Latin texts, *Latin Alive!* provides students with opportunities to practice reading comprehension and literary analysis. Such exercises are not only highly beneficial to building reading comprehension skills, but also serve to prepare students for the National Latin Exam and the Advanced Placement Exam. This is a feature of *Latin Alive!* that neither *Wheelock* nor any other Latin text provides.

At the conclusion of each chapter, teachers and students will find a wealth of supplemental activities. These include oral practice exercises, English derivative exercises, Latin found in the sciences and across America, and lessons on Roman history and culture. By showing how the study of Latin integrates with many other subjects and topics, it is our hope to show students how relevant Latin is to our own culture and history. By contrast, *Wheelock's* textbook contains segments on the usefulness of Latin, but focuses only on derivative and language studies.

In summary, both *Wheelock* and *Latin Alive!* provide students with a systematic parts-to-whole approach to learning Latin. Both texts train students to read via adaptations and samplings of Latin literature. The texts differ widely, however, in that they were each written for a different audience. While *Wheelock* writes for the learned college student, *Latin Alive!* takes into consideration the learning styles, needs, and interests of younger students in grades 7 – 9.