

FORWARD WITH CLASSICS

CLASSICAL LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Edited by
Arlene Holmes-Henderson, Steven Hunt and Mai Musié

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

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First published in Great Britain 2018
Reprinted 2018, 2019

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Holmes-Henderson, Arlene, editor. | Hunt, Steven (Classicist), editor. | Musié, Mai, editor.

Title: Forward with classics : classical languages in schools and communities / edited by Arlene Holmes-Henderson, Steven Hunt & Mai Musié.

Description: London : Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Non-Latin script record

Identifiers: LCCN 2017056914 | ISBN 9781474297677 (pbk.) | ISBN 9781474295956 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Greek language—Study and teaching. | Latin language—Study and teaching.

Classification: LCC PA74 .F679 2018 | DDC 480.071—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017056914>

ISBN:	HB:	978-1-4742-9595-6
	PB:	978-1-4742-9767-7
	ePDF:	978-1-4742-9597-0
	eBook:	978-1-4742-9596-3

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.
Printed and bound in Great Britain

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FOREWORD

Mary Beard

Fightback of Classics

A decade or so ago, I bravely – or foolishly – agreed to appear on a reality TV show to teach elementary Latin to a group of sixteen-year-olds who had failed to achieve what was then the government target of 5 GCSEs (including English and Maths) at grade A to C. Called ‘Dream School’, it was the brainchild of the well-meaning celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, who hoped to show that if you exposed a clutch of bored and unsuccessful youths to some celebrity teachers – from Cherie Blair to Simon Callow and Robert Winston, plus the obligatory old Latin lady (me) – you might just inspire them to greater things.

The programme had its popular and controversial moments, notably when David Starkey, the history teacher, chose to call one of the kids, to his face, ‘fat’ (whether Starkey’s play to the gallery with a knowing bit of political incorrectness was worse than the cries of outrage from some equally knowing politically correct viewers, I still haven’t decided). But the truth was that if the aim had been to educate the pupils, the people who learnt most were those of us hired to be the teachers. True, most teachers don’t have to cope with the television cameras on the back row, or with a savvy group of kids well aware that the way to launch a career from reality television is to behave very badly indeed. But most of us untrained enthusiasts soon learned that making a lesson work in the face of juvenile disenchantment, or of the seductions of new technology (to make our job that bit harder the TV company had issued every pupil with an iPad), was almost beyond us. I was only one of these ‘pretend’ teachers who went away with an intense admiration for the ‘real’ teachers of the ‘real’ classroom.

But I learned more than that. I struggled through a couple of hours with modest success on David Beckham’s Latin tattoos (I think that most of the kids sensed that the teacher’s heart was not quite in it, though the cameras loved it). I secured almost zero attention when I tried to introduce them to some ‘real Latin’ (most of them, understandably, thought that it was at best quaint, at worst laughable, that we were about to read some of the real words of Martial written 2,000 years ago: so what ...?). I had, however, two surprising and instructive successes that were sadly never shown on television.

The first was when I turned to the names of British towns. Had they noticed, I asked them, how many ended in something like ‘... chester’ or ‘... caster’? Indeed they had, and could reel off the names of Lancaster, Manchester, Doncaster and so forth. Did they know why? Did they know that all these place names came from the Latin *castra* (for ‘military camp’) and that centuries ago they had all been ancient Roman forts? Of course, they didn’t.

I have always been a bit sniffy about the pleasures of etymology. But I couldn’t help being just a little moved by the sight of these children having – as the cliché would have it – a ‘light-bulb’ moment. Something they had vaguely noticed, but never thought actually to ask about, now fell into place. I nerved myself to say that one day they would explain this factoid to their own children, and probably tell them a bit about that quirky old Latin teacher on the television

programme they were once on. For the first time, most of them smiled with some degree of warmth.

The second was even more surprising. In some desperation, for one of the last lessons I planned to do Roman numerals, and I had not expected much interest. But, in fact, I presented the intricacies of the Is, the Vs, the Xs, up to the Ls and Cs and Ds, to the closest thing to a wrapt audience that I had seen in the whole series of lessons. When we had finished, and the cameras were off, I said to them words to the effect of: ‘You have texted, played on your iPads, chatted and messed around almost every time we have met, and then we do this boring session of Roman numbers and you sit there quietly and write it all down, could you please explain?’. ‘That’s easy’, said one, ‘the date of television programmes is written at the end in Roman numbers – if you don’t understand them, you don’t know when the programme was made’. Simple, eh?

There are any number of reasons for engaging with the ancient world and classicists, as this book demonstrates, are eloquent in arguing the case: ranging from the excitement of getting to grips with the stunning and challenging literature to uncovering the day-to-day eating habits of the inhabitants of the Roman empire (on the basis of their lavatory contents) or the political challenges laid down by Plato or Cicero. But, even if few people would now put the intricacies of Roman numerals high on their list of priorities, what those naughty pupils were expressing so succinctly – half-engaged as they appeared to be – was one basic tenet of the subject: that those who have the opportunity to study the ancient world find themselves not only looking back into a far distant past but also looking at themselves and their own culture in a new way. Of course, the cultural traditions of the West do not owe everything to the Greco-Roman past and its interpretations. Happily we are a much more diverse culture than that, with many more inheritances, both ancient and modern (none of us would want to return to antiquity, thank you very much). But Classics opens up a debate with some of the foundations of our own certainties. What does democracy mean? Why do we represent the human body as we do? Or even what makes us laugh? Knowing about the numerals at the end of a television programme, or the roots of the geopolitics of Britain, is part of that.

That said, classicists have to confront all kinds of misleading myths. One of the most strident is that Classics has always been for ‘toffs’, a weapon of the elite for keeping the lower orders in their place by excluding them from the study of ‘dead’ languages. The fact is that Greek language may always have been on the agenda of only a small minority, partly, but not entirely, defined by wealth and status. But (as Edith Hall’s essay shows in a slightly different way) Classics has always been a part of popular culture, classical literature has always been read by millions in translation and everyone – yes everyone – still knows more about the ancient world than they often claim. The success of popular ancient movies, stretching back a century or more, shows that (‘I don’t know anything about Rome’, says someone; ‘yes you do; you have seen *Gladiator*’, we reply). This myth sometimes takes the alternative form that Classics is a difficult subject, and therefore only for the very clever. That is not true either. To be sure, there are some extremely difficult things written in Latin and Greek. Parts of Thucydides are virtually untranslatable, and I have often thought that getting learners to read Tacitus after a couple of years of Latin was the equivalent of making *Finnegans Wake* a set book for beginners’ English. But that does not put the more general challenge and pleasure of exploring the ancient world out of the reach of anyone. Classics is no harder, or easier, a subject than any other.

Foreword

Then there is the politics. Another myth is that the Roman empire underpinned the British empire and that therefore Classics is somehow inseparably linked to imperialism and exploitation, the intellectual arm of a past that we would rather forget. There were, of course, British imperialists who saw a correlation with the Roman version of world power. But many Roman writers themselves were concerned to subvert, not promote, the very idea of empire. Or, to put it another way, the most effective criticisms of Roman imperial power came from Romans ('they make a desert and call it peace', as Tacitus put it in the second century AD, a better summation of 'conquest' than anyone has come up with before or since). The related stereotype is that Classics has always been deeply conservative, a bastion of the Right versus the Left. Again, it is true that the old and new Right have often tried to claim Classics for themselves sometimes powerfully (and they are doing so vociferously now). But the long history of Classics challenges that. For every Goebbels, with his enthusiasm for Greek tragedy, there is a Marx, whose doctoral dissertation was on ancient philosophy. It is important not to forget that many of the biggest social political reforms in the West, from universal suffrage to gay rights, have been launched (for good or, occasionally, bad motives) on classical principles.

And, more than that, Classics as an educational discipline has been one of the best of all at radically reinventing itself with new questions and new audiences. It is true that there is an occasional chorus of gloom that presents the heyday of classical learning as lost in the past, and the subject as in slow but terminal decline. Indeed no one who has classical interests at heart should be remotely complacent about the position of classical subjects in the school curriculum across the world. But anyone who fondly imagines that Classics in (say) the late nineteenth century was in better shape than now would be well advised to go and take a look at some of the exam papers sat by university students at the time, which to be honest often appear easier, less challenging and far less interesting than our own. In some ways, the subject is flourishing as it has never done before. At my own university more students are studying Latin and Greek than ever (to be sure, Classics is studied by a smaller proportion of our undergraduates, but in terms of raw numbers it is at an all-time high – partly thanks to a relatively new pathway open to students who have not had the opportunity to study ancient languages at school). And the contributions to this book offer exciting glimpses into the initiatives that lie behind the subject's success, in many countries of the world, whatever the difficulties it may face: from new methods of teaching at every level and in new media, to a glorious commitment to set no limit on the places and people that the subject can and should reach – far beyond my own efforts, valiant and occasionally enjoyable as they were, with place names and Roman numbers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Classics in Communities project was launched with funding from the University of Oxford Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund and the John Fell Fund. Since 2013 the project has received funding from a number of donors. Thanks are due to the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, the Classical Association, the A. G. Leventis Foundation, the Institute of Classical Studies, the University of Oxford Faculty of Classics, the University of Cambridge Faculty of Classics and Classics for All. In addition, the project would like to thank its associate partners, The Iris Project, The Latin Programme: Via Facilis and *Minimus*, for their invaluable support.

INTRODUCTION

Arlene Holmes-Henderson, Steven Hunt and Mai Musié

What is ‘Classics in Communities’?

The Classics in Communities project is a partnership between the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge and the Iris Project. It was set up in response to the primary curriculum reforms, which were implemented in England from September 2014. In the key stage 2 (KS2) Languages curriculum policy, for the first time, Classical Greek and Latin can be chosen for study by pupils aged six to eleven in place of a modern language. The project particularly targets schools where classical languages have not previously featured on the curriculum. It has twin aims: to equip teachers in primary schools with the skills and knowledge necessary to teach these languages; and to conduct parallel research to determine the impact of classical language learning on children’s cognitive development.

Activities of the Classics in Communities project

Website

The Classics in Communities website (classicsincommunities.org) acts as a hub for teachers interested in introducing Latin and Greek in their classrooms. It includes a summary of published resources for classical languages, an overview of the funding available from various sources, details of university departments offering outreach around the UK, as well as resources requested by teachers including skill progression grids for primary Latin, ‘how to get started’ guides for Latin on the curriculum and as a club, and pedagogical videos to support teachers in their professional practice.

Conferences

The project held a launch conference at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in November 2013. This event attracted a wide range of participants including primary teachers, secondary teachers (of Classics, Languages, History and English), academics, trainee teachers, outreach officers, subject association representatives, educational policy advisors and school leaders. More than 100 delegates attended, including colleagues from South Africa, the United States and Europe. Keynote speeches were given by Professor Edith Hall (KCL) and Dr Michael Scott (University of Warwick), both of whom are contributors to this volume. In addition to plenary sessions, parallel sessions covered a wide range of Classics education topics, including working with museums, teaching literacy using Greek literature in translation, empowering older students to lead junior Latin clubs, collaboration with Classics teachers across Europe and boosting community cohesion through Greek drama.

Forward with Classics

A second Classics in Communities conference was hosted by the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Classics in September 2015. Again, more than 100 participants came from a variety of contexts, including adult educators, publishers and charity representatives. Some delegates had travelled from Australia, the United States, Ireland and Sweden to be part of the one-day event. Professor Tim Whitmarsh (University of Cambridge) and Tom Holland (celebrated author and broadcaster) gave the keynote addresses. High on the agenda for this event was the sharing of strategies to widen access to the study of classical languages and civilizations for all learners. In addition to an open roundtable discussion, we heard from teachers setting up new Latin hubs in Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Coventry, as well as representatives from Classics for All and the Kallos Gallery who want to support the learning and teaching of Classics at all levels. Many of the projects discussed at the conference are explained in more detail in this volume.

Celebration of Greek language and culture education

Together with the Greek ambassador to the UK and the High Commissioner of Cyprus to the UK, the Classics in Communities project hosted a 'Celebration of Greek' event in summer 2016 in London. This event raised the profile of teaching Greek in schools with the aim of boosting the number of children with access to the language and its associated rich historical, literary, philosophical and visual culture. The event brought together those people currently teaching some form of Greek in diverse contexts. These included classicists, theologians, philosophers, ancient and medieval historians, modern Greek linguists and members of the Hellenic community in the UK. For more information about the strategies identified to promote and extend the reach of Greek language and culture education, see Mitropoulos and Holmes-Henderson (2016).

Classical languages regional teacher-training workshops

Given that the KS2 Languages curriculum reform expressly named Latin and Greek as languages suitable for study in the primary phase, the Classics in Communities project sought to equip primary teachers, through training events, with the subject knowledge and confidence they needed to teach Latin and Greek in their schools. In 2014–2015, one-day teacher-training workshops were held at KCL, the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, Lordwood School Birmingham, the University of Glasgow and Queen's University Belfast. These training days brought together those primary teachers interested in (but hitherto unfamiliar with) teaching Latin and Classical Greek with experienced teachers and academics. This cross-sectoral structure was selected to ensure a degree of self-sustainability in the regions – it was crucial for primary teachers to meet experienced teachers and academics so that they felt supported in their new classical adventure. Equally, secondary teachers and academics in universities enjoyed the opportunity for dialogue and were keen to establish open channels of communication for knowledge exchange across educational phases. The events were publicized to the local educational authorities by the local university, by the University of Oxford outreach team and by the Classics in Communities project (by email and through social media). Full bursaries were available for teachers, thanks to the generosity of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies. Glasgow was the most

popular venue, with twenty-two participants. Belfast had the fewest attendees, just ten. The training day was broadly divided into two: Latin in the morning and Greek in the afternoon.

After a welcome from the local host and an introduction from the Classics in Communities team, the benefits of teaching Latin in the primary classroom were discussed, as were some of the challenges of setting up a new language in a school. Participants had the opportunity to try out some Latin learning of their own and asked a number of questions about which pedagogical approaches were suitable for teaching a classical language. One of the sessions included a thirty-minute talk from a local primary teacher who outlined their top tips for introducing Latin at key stage 2. The cascade of this information from a fellow teacher who had actually been through the process was particularly valuable for participants and allowed them to have many practical questions answered.

The afternoon was spent introducing teachers to the Classical Greek alphabet and helping them transliterate accurately. Exercises exploring vocabulary, derivations and present tense verbs gave them a flavour of the content of Classical Greek at key stage 2. Various resources were shared and their suitability for use with children at key stage 2 were discussed.

Feedback from the workshops, together with more information about the subsequent implementation of Latin and Greek in primary schools, can be read in Holmes-Henderson (2016).

Educational research

Alongside its training focus, the Classics in Communities project is conducting an educational research study into the impact of learning Latin on children's cognitive development. It is a longitudinal study in which quantitative attainment data are being collected from a number of schools, in partnership with the Iris Project and the Latin Programme. In order to get a better understanding of the impact of learning Latin beyond baseline and progress measures of cognitive attainment, qualitative research methods are being used in school visits to hear the situated perspectives of key stakeholders including pupils, teachers, school leaders and parents.

Initial analysis of the data reveals positive trends in the development of literacy skills, when a classical language is used as the medium for (or supplement to) literacy learning. The impact of learning Latin on children's development of critical skills and global awareness is also being explored. Data collection and analysis are currently ongoing and detailed results will be published in due course.

Digital resources

In response to requests from teachers, teaching resource videos have been produced to help less experienced teachers of classical languages to see the content and pedagogical elements of a 'model lesson'. These exist for teaching Latin cases, teaching Latin verb tenses, teaching the ablative absolute, teaching the indirect statement, introducing the Greek alphabet and teaching the definite article in Greek. They can be viewed on the Classics in Communities website. Making these freely available online has been beneficial to teachers currently delivering Latin in their schools but has been particularly useful to those without previous experience of teaching Latin and Greek. Teachers have welcomed the opportunity to learn about effective pedagogy from experienced practitioners.

International collaboration

Since 2013, the editors have collaborated with teachers and academics in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Portugal, Brazil, Canada and South Africa. International visits have been made, conference presentations have been delivered and the chapters contained herein provide a flavour of the collaborations undertaken to date.

Hunt provides an overview of the social justice agenda in UK politics over the last decade and describes its influences on Classics education in policy and practice. Hunt, in a second chapter, investigates the comprehensible input (CI) approach to Latin teaching and considers why it has grown in popularity in the United States yet remains little practiced in the UK.

Searle provides an overview of ‘access agreements’ between UK higher education institutions and the Office of Fair Access aimed to increase participation from under-represented groups into higher education. Searle offers the Oxford Latin Teaching Scheme as an example of how university Classics departments can engage effectively and successfully with the access and outreach agenda.

Jackson describes a knowledge exchange fellowship in which she provided specialist consultancy to the National Theatre in London for its production of *Medea*.

Scott evaluates the positive influence of the ‘impact’ policy agenda within UK higher education on public engagement and outreach. He describes various initiatives undertaken by the Faculty of Classics at the University of Warwick to engage local young people in the study of the ancient world.

Matters explains the developments in curriculum policy affecting the uptake of Classics in Australian schools.

Corrêa discusses the establishment and development of a Latin course for young children in São Paulo. She explains how teachers in local schools were supported by students and staff from the University of São Paulo.

Bulwer provides an overview of the teaching and learning of classical subjects in Europe. He identifies countries where Classics is supported by curriculum policy and showcases a range of creative initiatives in those countries where Classics is marginalized by educational policy.

Bell reflects on the impact of the *Minimus* series of books on the learning and teaching of Latin and Classics for young children in the UK and worldwide.

Wing-Davey describes the work of the Latin Programme, which provides Latin teaching for pupils in schools in London.

Maguire summarizes the results of introducing the teaching of Latin to primary schools in Norfolk, England.

Darby provides a personal reflection on the possibilities and pitfalls of teaching Latin as a ‘non-specialist’ teacher in Brighton and Hove, England.

Robinson charts the creation and development of the Iris Classics Centre at Cheney School and its busy calendar of Classics-related activities.

Olive and Murray-Pollock describe the establishment of the East End Classics Centre at BSix College in Hackney, London. They reflect on the challenges and triumphs of this endeavour and provide advice for others who may wish to pursue similar goals.

Sanchez and Felton highlight the educational benefits of teaching Latin on the curriculum in a socially and ethnically diverse London borough and Coventry.

Schumann and Theron chart the creation and development of the Academia Latina Centre at the University of Pretoria, which aimed to introduce Classics into South African schools and prisons.

Ryan explains how the performance of classical drama can promote community cohesion, with specific reference to the Orchard Yard players in County Tipperary, Ireland.

Richards provides a commentary on a university research project which sought to take Greek literature to the local community in North-East England.

Bracke describes a project to widen access to the study of Classics for children and their parents in Wales.

Khan-Evans researched what factors affect sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds when choosing subjects for study. She shares findings which suggest that Classical Civilisation has a broad appeal in England.

Robson and Graham describe the design and delivery of an open access digital Latin course for learners of all ages as part of the Open University's commitment to widening access to Classics.

Holmes-Henderson and Tempest interrogate the contribution of Classics to the cultivation of twenty-first-century skills. These are the skills required for school pupils and university students to flourish as citizens, employees and lifelong learners.

Hall details the history of Classics education in British schools and comments on the relationship between social class and access to Classics.

References

- Holmes-Henderson, A. (2016), 'Teaching Latin and Greek in Primary Classrooms: The Classics in Communities Project', *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 17 (33): 50–53.
- Mitropoulos, A. and Holmes-Henderson, A. (2016), 'A Celebration of Greek Language and Culture Education in the UK', *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 17 (34): 55–57.