

From Caecilius to Aeneas:

Thoughts on Growing a Successful Latin Program Using the *Cambridge Latin Course*.

I am often asked what textbook I prefer by people starting a new Latin program or those fresh out of teacher training. Let me state for the record that I believe a textbook is just a tool, not the end-all for good teaching. Good teaching has to start from within and embodies a philosophy that includes not just Latin but the students being taught Latin. Furthermore, it includes a vision of what the goal is: to enable others to read Latin—in fact, to read Latin *with pleasure* both silently and aloud.

Many people will extol the virtues of the *Cambridge Latin Course* for young students and students who struggle with a second language—the entertaining storyline, the gradual learning curve with regard to grammar in the first two books, and the emphasis on reading (as opposed to the more rigorous facility of being able to go from Latin to English and English to Latin) all make this book appealing to beginning students. Likewise, many devoted, respected teachers of Latin also consider these weaknesses for preparing a serious student of Latin. Having taught upper levels of high school Latin for several years now, I strongly disagree. In fact, I wish to discuss particular aspects that make the *Cambridge Latin Course* highly suitable for the student that not only enjoys the stories of Caecilius and his family but who wishes to read about Aeneas and his quest for founding the Roman race in Vergil's own words.

But before discussing what the *Cambridge Latin Course* has to offer for building a budding Vergilian, I should describe the things that I believe are important for learning Latin in my classroom:

- good pronunciation

- vocabulary recognition in context
- morphology recognition in context
- lots of high interest, continuous reading material

To me, the *Cambridge Latin Course* offers:

- A. Natural opportunities for oral reading and questioning
- B. Strong vocabulary development
- C. Conscientious development of literary patterns and phrasing
- D. Copious amounts of reading material

A. (Let us begin with) Opportunities for oral reading and questioning

Because the material in the *Cambridge Latin Course* is clearly designed to be read out loud or indeed acted, one can develop from the beginning a keen awareness of vowel length, syllabification, and accentuation. Indeed these become critical issues by the time one is reading Vergil and should be addressed and reinforced early on with practice and conscientious discussion. Admittedly, I begin each year with a few days of express instruction on pronunciation and syllabification for every level of Latin.

The things that I do throughout the year include:

- reading stories expressively out loud to students as part of a prereading activity
- having students read the text chorally with me as part of a postreading activity
- having students read individually in turn
- using simple questioning and answering to practice pronunciation and reinforce grammatical structures, as well as...

- having recitations per stage (or chapter) based on the stories at hand. (For more on these, please see pages 5-8 in your handout)

When we learn new endings and new vocabulary, I stress *not* memorizing macrons but learning how to *hear* long versus short vowels, discussing that Latin was a language meant to be heard, a language that was conversed in, and whose poetry is dominated by sound because it was meant to be read out loud. Scanning lines of Vergil without macrons (as students will need to be able to do on the AP exam) is not nearly so difficult if vocabulary has already been internalized with how each words sounds (long versus short vowels, where the accent properly falls in a word, etc).

B. (Next) Strong vocabulary development

The *Cambridge Latin Course* will not put in its stage vocabulary lists any word that has not been seen already at least three times *in context*. Repetition *in context* is a key to true mastery, because we all know that students can learn vocabulary items for the day of the quiz and not remember those words two days later when seen in a story. More traditional vocabulary quizzes often reinforce this problem because they are treating vocabulary in isolation as dictionary entries and not how they will be appearing in context. In contrast, all of my vocabulary quizzes are in context, requiring students to provide a definition that includes changes in meaning determined by morphology. In the beginning of level 1 Latin it may be simply recognizing the difference between singular and plural nominatives and accusatives, or 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person with regard to verbs. In time the complexity increases.

In order help students gain skills needed to succeed on these quizzes, I use warm-ups to expressly teach students to circle endings and such so they will slow down and contemplate the implications of the morphology. In addition, I offer paper practice quizzes for level 1 and online

quia.com practice quizzes for levels 2-4/AP to aide the student in focusing on details. (Please refer to pages 9 and 13-16 of your handout.)

Although level 1 quizzes usually only target a singular vocabulary item at a time, by the time students are in level 2 and 3 they frequently have to translate whole participial phrases or similar that includes the target vocabulary item plus other words which they should have mastered. My AP Vergil vocabulary quizzes take this to extremes, forcing students to acknowledge phrasing and at the same time exposing them to the concept of “chunking,” which is used to grade translations on the AP exam. (Please see pages 11, 17, 19, and 21 of your handout.)

One aspect of the *Cambridge Latin Course* that I have come to admire greatly is the inclusion of tricky vocabulary early on in the series. For instance, *invītus* meaning “unwilling,” though more often mistakenly taken to mean “invited,” appears as early as Unit 2 in level 1 Latin. Likewise *cōmis* and its adverbial counterpart *cōmiter* meaning “courteous or friendly” also appear in Unit 2. In Unit 3, *innītor, innīti, innīxus sum*, meaning “to lean on or rest,” appears and is easily related to *adnīxus*, “to lean against,” which beginning AP students will find in book 1, lines 144-145 of *The Aeneid: Cymothoē simul et Trītōn adnīxus acūtō / dētrūdunt nāvēs scopulō*... “And at the same time Cymothoe and Triton, having leaned against the ships dislodge them from the sharp rock.” These are just a few small examples. I am constantly thrilled to realize yet another perhaps tricky word found in Vergil has appeared early on in this well-planned textbook series.

C. (Now let’s look at the) Conscientious development of literary patterns and phrasing

Critics of the *Cambridge Latin Course* bemoan its initial strict sentence patterns of Nominative + Accusative + Verb and Nominative + Dative + Accusative + Verb. But it’s this

very focus on patterns from the beginning that helps to develop in students a sharp awareness of the significance of word order. Once students have had time to internalize endings, variations are introduced, word order changed, and thus new emphasis is presented for students to ponder.

Students still need considerable help, which is where I find metaphrasing to be extremely useful in training students to focus on the endings. A simple metaphrasing sentence would be

“Someone verbed something to someone”—where there are words holding the place for a nominative, an accusative, and a dative (disregarding, momentarily, the possibilities of ablative and genitive). (Please see page 1 of your handout.) Thus, in warm-ups I give my students words like these: [*read Latin first, then say “which students would metaphrase as:”*]

- **multōs servōs** > Someone verbed **many slaves** to someone.
- **mercātor** > **The merchant** verbed something to someone.
- **latrōnibus** > Someone verbed something **to the robbers**.
- **ālae** > **The wings** verbed something to someone; someone verbed something **to the wing** (unlikely).

Particularly I will use words appearing in the day’s story, in this case from “mercātor Arabs” in Unit 2:

mercātor ōlim cum merce pretiōsā Arabiam trānsībat.... **multōs servōs** quoque habēbat, quī mercem custōdiēbant....mercātor servīque **latrōnibus** ācritter resistēbant, sed latrōnēs tandem servōs superāvērunt.... subitō mōnstrum terribile in caelō appāruit; **ālae** longiōrēs erant quam rēmī, unguēs maiōrēs quam hastae.

Metaphrasing is a useful warm-up or prereading activity and simple enough with level 1 Latin, but can be used with somewhat more sophistication in level 2 when working participial phrases:

- **militēs, gladiīs hastisque armātī**, > **The soldiers, armed with swords and spears**,
verbed someone.
- **arcam, pecūniā complētam**, > Someone verbed **the chest, filled with money**, to
someone.
- **statuam meam, ā fabrō Britannicō factam**, > Someone verbed **my statue, made by a
British craftsman**, to someone.
- **senex, amulētum aureum tenēns**, > **The old man, holding the golden amulet**, verbed
something to someone.
- **fūr, senem cōspicātus**, > **The thief, having caught sight of the old man**, verbed
something to someone.

By having students metaphrase whole phrases I am emphasizing the importance of seeing word units and not words in isolation. In this instance, we would also discuss the difference between present active, perfect active, and perfect passive participles, not to mention ablative of means versus ablative of agent.

Indeed, I have found metaphrasing particularly handy in quickly clarifying Vergilian phrasing. Take, for instance, this passage from Book 2 of the *Aeneid* (which you will find on page 2 of your handout):

diffugimus vīsū exsanguēs. illī agmine certō

Lāocoonta petunt; et prīmum parva duōrum

corpora nātōrum serpēns amplexus uterque

implicat et miserōs morsū dēpascitur artūs;

post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac tēla ferentem

corripiunt spīrīsque ligant ingentibus;

Starting in line 212, *illī*, the serpents, are the subject of all the action. But students rarely hold such information in their heads for more than a line or two. By the time they hit line 216 they are suddenly struggling to make sense of what is going on. Yet consider if we metaphrase one word at a time as we meet them reading from left to right:

- **post** > afterward/behind (our textbook contains a note that it's adverbial)
- **post ipsum** > afterward someone verbed [Laocoon] himself
- **post ipsum auxiliō** > afterward someone verbed [Laocoon] himself with help (or to/for help)
- **post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem** > afterward someone verbed [Laocoon] himself coming with help [*if pressed for time say, "and so forth"*]
- **post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac** > afterward someone verbed [Laocoon] himself coming with help and (possibly connecting to another participle since this falls after one)
- **post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac tēla** > afterward someone verbed [Laocoon] himself coming with help and verbing weapons (or weapons verbed something, but a nominative makes no sense here)
- **post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac tēla ferentem** > afterward someone verbed [Laocoon] himself coming with help and bearing weapons
- **post ipsum auxiliō subeuntem ac tēla ferentem corripiunt** > afterward they [the serpents] snatch [Laocoon] himself coming with help and bearing weapons....

And with luck, students already trained to see participial phrases as units merely saw this breakdown:

- **post**

- **ipsum auxiliō subeuntem**
- **ac**
- **[ipsum] tēla ferrentem** [“with ipsum understood”]
- **corripiunt.**

And this is nothing more really than an extended ACC + Verb pattern, with the nominative understood.

Another feature of the *Cambridge Latin Course* that I’ve come to admire over the last several years is how they build up from simple to more complex phrasing. For instance, let us consider the phrase “after he said (or heard) these words.” One of the earliest phrasings for this occurs in Stage 21 of Unit 2: *postquam haec verba dīxit*. Simple enough. But if we follow how this phrase and similar are used subsequently, we see the following progression (*please see pages 2 and 3 of your handout*):

1. Memor, postquam haec verba dīxit, statim obdormīvit. (“Lūcius Marcius Memor” Unit 3 8)
2. Latrō, haec verba locūtus, exiit (“Vilbia” Unit 3 20).
3. Vilbia, simulatque haec audīvit, irāta fontī appropinquat (“amor omnia vincit: scaena tertia” Unit 3 37).
4. haec verba locūtus, rēgī poculum obtulit (“in thermīs II” Unit 3 48).
5. senex, haec locūtus, lentē per iānuam exit (“Britannia Perdomita” Unit 3 54).
6. cum Dumnorix haec dīxisset, Quīntus rem sēcum anxius cōgitābat (“Quīntus cōnsilium capit” Unit 3 68). [*If pressed for time, “and so forth.”*]
7. Belimicus, cum haec audīvisset, gladium dēstrictum ad iugulum servī tenuit (“Salvius cōnsilium cognōscit” Unit 3 72).

8. sollicitus erat quod in epistolā, quam ad Agricolam mīserat, multa falsa scrīpserat
 (“in p̄ncipiīs” Unit 3 107).
9. deinde renovāvit ea quae in epistolā scrīpserat (“in p̄ncipiīs” Unit 3 107).
10. haec cum audīvisset, Agricola respondit, “sī tālia fēcit, eī moriendum est”
 (“tribūnus” Unit 3 111).
11. haec ubi dīxit Agricola, Salvius respondit irātus, “quam caecus es! quam longē
 errās!” (“contentiō” Unit 3 112).
12. quod cum audīvisset, Salvius, “ego” inquit, “nōn Cogidubnus, aureōs tibi dedī
 (“cēna Salviī” Unit 3 150).
13. Belimicus hīs verbīs perturbātus, “nimium bibistī, mī amīce,” inquit (“Belimicus
 rēx” Unit 3 152).
14. quae cum audīvisset, Haterius adeō gaudēbat ut dē tignō paene dēcideret
 (“polyspaston” Unit 3 198).
15. hīs verbīs audītīs, praecō, quī Eryllum haudquāquam amābat, magnā vōce,
 “Eryllus!” inquit (“salūtātiō II” Unit 3 220).
16. tum Messālīnus, simulatque haec Epaphrodītī verba audīvit, occāsiōne ūsus, “satis
 cōnstat,” inquit, “nūllōs hostēs ferōciōrēs Germānīs esse, nūllum ducem Domitiānō
 Augustō esse meliōrem (“cōnsilium Domitiānī II” Unit 4 57).
17. quibus verbīs sollempnibus dictīs, Pōlla postēs iānuae oleō unguis fascinātiōnis
 āvertendae causā (“cōnfarreātiō III” Unit 4 71).
18. quibus audītīs, Salvius spērāre coepit sē ē manibus accūsātōrum ēlāpsūrum esse
 (“cognitiō” Unit 4 105).

19. hīs dictīs impēnsō animum flammāvit amōre / spemque dedit dubiae mentī
solvitque pudōrem (*The Aeneid* IV.54-55).

20. quam simul ac tālī persēnsit peste tenērī / cāra Iovis coniūnx nec fāmam obstāre
furōrī / tālibus adgreditur Venerem Sātūrnīa dictīs: (IV.90-93).

The transition from a simple *postquam* clause through various subjunctive clauses to ablative absolutes (and those using a *qui*-transitional, no less) was gradual but meaningful, supporting a pattern already in place and thus developing into an expectation within the student's mind.

Repetition with slight variations reinforces both structure and meaning so that by the time you get to Vergil (or other authors), such phrases are second nature.

This is one of many progressions from simple to more complex grammar that the *Cambridge Latin Course* does well. I offer up, to those interested, tracing the type and phrasing of participles, *quī* transitionals, the use of *ille*, the position of genitives, and the use of *versus* and *conversus*. If conscientious teachers recognize and support through exercises or discussions these progressions, their students will become efficient readers of Latin.

D. (And finally, let's discuss the) Copious amounts of reading material

The observations I made above about the progression could not have been done if I only assigned one story per stage out of the 4 to 6 provided. The trick is to remember the material in the *Cambridge Latin Course* is meant to be read and treated as literature, not constantly written out in English translations as if deciphering a secret message. While I do require small sections of written translation on tests, in class I want students to focus on phrasing and seeing the bigger picture with time left over for rereading and reinforcing what has been read, especially by Latin 3. Consider that in Latin 1 students are reading up to 800 words of Latin per stage by the end of Unit 1; in Latin 2 and 3 it is closer 1000-1100 words. Admittedly I spread most those 1000 plus

words over 2 weeks in my level 2 and 3 classes, while pushing my AP students to read about 700 words a week of Vergil.

The glory of the approach I take to teaching Latin, I feel, is that I can develop true reading skills from the beginning with step by step supports (via paraphrasing and the like), which enable a larger number of students to succeed in Latin as compared to classes that are front loaded with grammar. And by the time they are reading Vergil, these students have practiced repeatedly on the large quantities of reading many skills which make them solid readers of Latin.

In the four years I have been teaching at Dripping Springs High School, my enrollment has gone from 40 to 160 students, including for the last 2 years a small handful of AP students. This increase is due in part to the quality and design of the *Cambridge Latin Course*, in part to my teaching style, and in part to my determination to insure that all can take pleasure in reading Latin. *Thank you.*

HANDOUT

Strengths of using the *Cambridge Latin Course*:

- A. Natural opportunities for oral reading and questioning
 - see attached recitation sheets
- B. Strong vocabulary development
 - see attached practice quizzes, quia.com print-outs
 - see attached vocabulary quizzes per level
- C. Conscientious development of literary patterns and phrasing
 - see information on **metaphrasing** and **progression** below
- D. Copious amounts of reading material

Metaphrasing:

“Someone verbed something to someone”—where there are words holding the place for a nominative, an accusative, and a dative (disregarding, momentarily, the possibilities of ablative and genitive).

Level 1

- **multōs servōs** > Someone verbed **many slaves** to someone.
- **mercātor** > **The merchant** verbed something to someone.
- **latrōnibus** > Someone verbed something **to the robbers**.
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Passage: **mercātor** ōlim cum merce pretiōsā Arabiam trānsībat... **multōs servōs** quoque habēbat, quī mercem custōdiēbant...mercātor servīque **latrōnibus** ācritter resistēbant, sed latrōnēs tandem servōs superāvērunt... subitō mōnstrum terribile in caelō appāruit; **ālae** longiōrēs erant quam rēmī, unguēs maiōrēs quam hastae. (“mercātor Arabs” Unit 2 100).

Level 2

working participial phrases:

- **militēs, gladiīs hastisque armātī,** > **The soldiers, armed with swords and spears,** verbed someone.
- **arcam, pecūniā complētam,** > Someone verbed **the chest, filled with money,** to someone.
- **statuam meam, ā fabrō Britannicō factam,** > Someone verbed **my statue, made by a British craftsman,** to someone.
- **senex, amulētum aureum tenēns,** > **The old man, holding the golden amulet,** verbed something to someone.
- **fūr, senem cōspicātus,** > **The thief, having caught sight of the old man,** verbed something to someone.

AP Vergil (Book 2.212ff):

diffugimus vīsū exsanguēs. illī agmine certō
Lāocoonta petunt; et prīmum parva duōrum
corpora nātōrum serpēns amplexus uterque
implicat et miserōs morsū dēpascitur artūs;
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- [ipsum] tēla ferentem
- corripiunt.

And this is nothing more really than a NOM + ACC + Verb pattern, with the nominative understood.

Progression:

Progression from simpler to more advanced grammar for the same or similar phrase.

1. Memor, **postquam haec verba dīxit**, statim obdormīvit. (“Lūcius Marcius Memor” Unit 3 8)
2. Latrō, **haec verba locūtus**, exiit (“Vilbia” Unit 3 20).
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7. Belimicus, **cum haec audīvisset**, gladium dēstrictum ad iugulum servī tenuit (“Salvius cōnsilium cognōscit” Unit 3 72).
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9. deinde renovāvit **ea quae in epistulā scrīpserat** (“in pīncipiīs” Unit 3 107).
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14. **quae cum audīvisset**, Haterius adeō gaudēbat ut dē tignō paene dēcideret (“polypaston” Unit 3 198).
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19. **hīs dictīs** impēnsō animum flammāvit amōre / spemque dedit dubiae mentī solvitque pudōrem (*The Aeneid* IV.54-55).
20. quam simul ac tālī persēnsit peste tenērī / cāra Iovis coniūnx nec fāmam obstāre furōrī / **tālibus** adgreditur Venerem Sāturnia **dictīs**: (IV.90-93).

- Unit 1 CLC: www.quia.com/pages/drippinglatin1a.html
- Unit 2 CLC: www.quia.com/pages/drippinglatin1b.html
- Unit 3 CLC: www.quia.com/pages/drippinglatin2.html
- Unit 4 CLC: www.quia.com/pages/drippinglatin3.html
- AP Vergil: www.quia.com/pages/drippingvergil.html

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