

Why study Latin?

As we can see from the illustrious list above (with one exception), the world of Latin and Greek does not solely belong to eccentric teachers and pedantic academics. Studying Classics can inspire one to write song lyrics or literary masterpieces, argue logically in the world of politics and journalism and even design computer programs.

Many argue the point (ad nauseam) that Latin and Greek are pointless dead languages with no relevance to the world today. They are living in Cloudcuckooland (Aristophanes). Let us focus on Latin. Latin provides the root of 50% of English words and wholly enriches our language. We can tell our mother, daughter, girlfriend or wife that she is pulchritudinous or we can ask her to stop vituperating us or perhaps ask her why she is being lacrimose.

Of course Latin is also the root of several modern languages (e.g. *exempli gratia*) Spanish, Italian, French, English (50%) Romanian and Portuguese. Nb (*nota bene*) the following:

- amicus (Latin)
- amico (Italian)
- amigo (Spanish)
- ami (French)
- ami (Romanian)
- amigos (Portuguese)

amicable (English from Latin))

friend (English from old German)

So more complex English words come from Latin. Studying Latin therefore improves your English vocab.

For the record simple English words (e.g. friend) tend to be Germanic in origin.

Latin in its true form remains ubiquitous today. We distinguish a.m (*ante meridiem*) from p.m (*post meridiem*) and *vice versa*. We earn a certain amount of money *per annum* or on a *pro rata* basis. We have a *referendum* as to whether to keep the *status quo* or not. We live in the year 2016 *Anno Domini* and we write a PS (*post scriptum*) or an *addendum*. We go to an *arena* (sand in Latin- the substance on which gladiators fought) or a *stadium* (plural *stadia*!) and we repeat things *verbatim*. We use the chemical symbols Pb (*plumbum*) Fe (*ferrum*) Au (*aurum*) Ag (*argentum*) etc. (*et cetera*- and the rest). I could go on *ad infinitum*. Then there are the numerous pithy mottoes ranging from *e pluribus unum* (USA) to *arte et labore* (Blackburn Rovers) and *audere est facere* (Spurs).

Latin grammar is a challenge in itself- the ultimate jigsaw puzzle and a test of logic, precision and memory. The ability to tackle the syntax and endings of Latin provides the platform to understanding the mechanics of any language (including those of the IT world). I am indeed an advocate for retaining the challenges of translating from English into Latin.

Finally of course there is the plethora of literature available for us to read- if possible in its original Latin or Greek. We can appreciate the rhetoric and politics of Cicero and the satirical wit of Juvenal and Martial. We can empathise with the unrequited love of Catullus for Lesbia and investigate the intrigues of Imperial Rome in the writings of Tacitus and Suetonius. We can marvel at the epic qualities of the Iliad and the Odyssey and enjoy Herodotus' description of mummification in Ancient Egypt. We can examine the propaganda of Horace's Roman Odes (*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*) and analyse the pathos in Virgil's Aeneid. How important and relevant these metaphors are!

Tempus fugit (Virgil)—time flies

Carpe diem (Horace)-- seize the day

Amor vincit omnia (Horace)-- love conquers all

The one phrase that is certainly **not** applicable to Latin or Greek is R.I.P (requiescat in pace)