A Critical Evaluation of Pupil Response to Latin Poetry at GCSE: a case study with a Year 11 group at an independent school

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Introduction and Context

As a PGCE trainee teacher currently placed at an independent co-educational school, I was curious to find out why a class of relatively high-achieving Yr 11 pupils should be disengaged with the literature component of their Latin GCSE, and the poetry in particular. Their regular Latin teacher had identified this problem and discussed it with me, and subsequent lesson observations backed up his account of their response. This research looks at pupil perceptions of the problem and assesses ways in which these attitudes could both be influenced and influence positively the ways in which Latin literature is taught at GCSE.

The presence of literature as an examinable element of the GCSE is a controversial one historically: today Latin is the only GCSE subject other than English Literature to include it. This study opens by reflecting upon arguments put forward over the past fifty years for literature's continued inclusion on the GCSE syllabus, assessing also the projected aims promoted by OCR - the main examination board offering Latin GCSE. It then focuses upon pupils' experience of learning Latin literature, investigating the opinions of

a Yr 11 class as to what they think they get from studying it, and considers the range and depth of their responses before, during and after an experiment carried out to challenge them to engage directly with Latin poetry. While the reasons for including literature as part of the Latin GCSE examination have been discussed at a philosophical and pedagogic level, little research has been published enquiring into its impact on pupils themselves. This case study explores one class's responses to studying Latin literature and their views on the degree to which they feel they achieve the aims identified for them by those debating the virtues of Latin literature at higher levels.

To carry out this study I obtained a range of data including: conversations identifying the focus of study with their regular Latin teacher; lesson observations of the class meeting new Latin literature; a questionnaire to gauge pupils' individual views of their study of Latin GCSE and the role literature plays in the course; a group interview to probe in more depth their broader views; a relatively brief (double-lesson length) experiment aimed at engaging the pupils closely with their least-liked literature – love poetry; followed up immediately with a final group interview asking pupils to evaluate the activity.

The school in which this research took place is a rural independent co-educational boarding and day senior school (which has Prep and Pre-Prep schools and a nursery within its grounds). According to the ISI report of November 2008 (ISI, 2011), the senior school has c.350 pupils, of whom 200 are boys, 150 girls; of these, 99 boys and 61 girls

are boarders. The average ability of pupils is 'above the national average'. There are no SEN pupils, 45 pupils with a recognised learning disability or disorder, and 66 EAL pupils. The 'quality of the educational experience provided throughout the school for all its pupils is good, with many outstanding features'. Latin is offered in the Prep School for Years 7 and 8 following the traditional grammar-translation method suited to the Common Entrance syllabus. Latin class numbers in the senior school are generally lower than those for National Curriculum subjects: there are currently fifteen Yr 9 pupils, ten Yr 10 pupils and nine Yr 11 pupils.

By the time I arrived at the school in January 2011, Yr 11 had already worked through most of their verse set texts following the OCR syllabus - a small OUP anthology of poetry entitled 'Love and Loss'. They were about to complete this with an extract from Ovid's *Tristia*, before meeting the prose set texts. Their predicted GCSE grades range from A*-C. Given the expectation for them to perform relatively highly in Latin, and their apparent contented relationship with their regular teacher, it was a surprise to discover that this class was reluctant to engage with the literature set for the course. In this context I decided I wanted to explore further their views on GCSE literature and to see if they could be engaged using different pedagogic techniques. My original focus was to explore primarily methods of teaching and learning. During the course of this study, however, evidence emerged of pupils' concerns regarding the wider aims and practicalities of studying literature at GCSE level that might prove fruitful for

consideration by those like myself who wish to continue to inspire pupils with an appreciation of Latin literature.

The literature review below examines why Latin poetry is part of the GCSE course. It goes on to look at the reality of teaching literature for assessment by examination. The rest of the case study investigates why this group of individuals chose to study Latin, their preconceptions, the reality for them and its impact on their attitude towards Latin literature.

Literature Review

A new role for Latin literature – the historical debate

The wave of sociological change that swept the 1960s and '70s made a great impact not only on the school system in England, with the introduction of comprehensive schools, but also on the teaching of Latin literature. Traditionalists were to mourn the plight of the primacy of textual criticism, syntactical analysis and translation in the face of a new vision for Classics which advocated the study of Latin literature for the purpose of greater cultural and historical understanding. *Didaskalos* – a journal launched by the Joint Association of Classical Teachers in 1963 – provided an excellent central forum for the discussion of classical issues and concerns around the world, from school to university level and beyond, and for the first six years of publication it ran an ongoing debate on the need to reappraise the values of a classical education. Contributing to this

journal, champions of the new approach such as Bolgar saw that 'the greatest reorientation would have to occur in our approach to literature' (Bolgar, 1963, p.21). He identified 'O' level Latin as the real battleground, contending that a Latin language-only qualification would benefit only those proposing to continue with their studies at a higher level: what was needed for 'O' level was 'to understand the values and the interpretation of life implicit in a particular text, and how these compare with what we think today' (Bolgar, 1963, p.25). In other words, in order to survive, school Latin needed to be sociologically relevant, and the study of Latin literature held the key.

Members of this 'new wave' tirelessly lobbied the 'old school' approach, with academics such as Doughty ruing the fact that pupils were 'accustomed to regard all essays into the literature as ultimately a test of language' (Doughty, 1966, p.35), and Balme – a Housemaster at Harrow School - demanding that classical authors be 'treated as literature rather than as a matter of linguistic exercise alone' (Balme, 1966, p.46). Some were concerned not to throw the baby out with the bathwater: Peters was worried that when 'fluency' became the main aim of reading literature then there was a real danger of 'sacrificing … the virtues … of … accuracy, clarity, care and precision' (Peters, 1967, p.10). Colin Dexter, secretary of the ODLE, criticised vociferously the new directions taken by Latin teaching in an address to the board published later in the *Latin Teaching* journal in 1973 (Dexter, 1973). In response, Sharwood-Smith countered that 'pupils should learn Latin in order to read Latin authors with understanding, not in order to study and practise the forms of language' (Sharwood-Smith, 1975, p. 2). In 1977, he

went on to expound the new approach at greater length in his book *On Teaching Classics*, in which he championed the idea that Latin literature should be seen essentially as a Humanities rather than a Language subject. The views of Sharwood-Smith and others were to be profoundly influential in the world of Classics pedagogy as we shall see below. The role of Latin literature at examination level was no longer to be considered primarily a linguistic test, but an area for wider appreciation aesthetically, personally, historically and culturally.

More recently, with the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 and its omission of Latin as a core subject, the discipline once again faced crisis and numbers of candidates sitting Latin GCSE fell dramatically from 16,023 in 1988 to 9,948 in 2007 (see Weeds, 2007). More recently there has been a spate of discussion within the media of the relevance of Latin, prompted by its newfound status as a curriculum language option for the English Baccalaureate introduced in 2010. With the redesign of the examination specifications (for full certification from June 2011) a more academic-level debate about the 'value' of Latin GCSE has re-emerged, with the study of Latin literature once again thrust into the spotlight. To understand the current situation better we need to look at the new examination specifications as they offer the main framework for why, what and how Latin literature is studied at this level. We shall then examine the pedagogic challenges debated in meeting these aims to provide a fuller context for understanding the situation faced by the Year 11 class of this case study.

The current aims of GCSE Latin literature

When AQA stopped offering Latin in 2006, OCR became the only examination board for

Latin GCSE. Because it was a subject not included in the National Curriculum, the school

syllabus thus came to be dictated by OCR together with Chris Maynard – a modern

linguist who was Latin subject manager for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Since 2010 the number of examining bodies has increased to three, although take-up of

alternatives to OCR (not all of which offer qualifications classified as GCSEs) has been

low (on which see the survey by Hunt and Foster, 2011).

All pupils for the full OCR GCSE course are required to take two language papers and

two out of three remaining options: Prose Literature, Verse Literature and Sources for

Latin, with all papers equally weighted at 25% of the total marks. A literature

component to the full GCSE is therefore compulsory. Both literature papers test

'understanding and an appreciation of literature and/or other sources related to society

and values of the classical world through analysis, evaluation and response': using the

same terminology for literature as that applied to the Sources for Latin paper tellingly

shows how the skills developed through studying literature are categorised with those

developed studying primary historical sources.

The specifications (OCR, 2011) for the prose and verse literature papers identify four

identical areas for assessment - candidates need to demonstrate linguistic skill through

translation, appreciation of literary technique, knowledge of cultural and literary

context, and personal response. Moreover, in response to mandatory citizenship studies at KS4, OCR outlines the contributions that Latin GCSE makes, which can be achieved by pupils 'through comparison of Roman values with their own values and those of society today' – a key aim championed by Sharwood-Smith *et al* in the 1970s. OCR claims that one of the Latin GCSE learning outcomes is to encourage candidates to 'develop an awareness of the continuing influence of the classical world on later times and of the similarities and differences between the classical world and later times' (although no aspect of this is directly assessed in the language or literature examination papers). Latin's contribution to citizenship studies promotes the literature as a mirror for our own social self-reflection. The impact of the reappraisal in the '60s and '70s of the 'aims' of studying Latin is evident.

The pedagogical challenges

At first sight, then, Latin succeeded in surviving the crises of the latter half of the twentieth century. The new GCSE syllabus appears to reflect well the aims of the pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s. In a short article in *Didaskalos* in 2005, however, Bob Lister had urged the classical community to reappraise Latin GCSE in light of AQA's dropping of the subject. Within this brief manifesto, he identified literature as the ongoing controversial aspect of the GCSE, daring to ask 'whether set texts should continue to be part of GCSE examinations at all' (Lister, 2005, p.2). Hot on his heels came an article submitted J. Taylor entitled *The Tyranny of the Set Texts*, which opens 'Reading great literature in the original should represent the broad sunlit uplands of our

profession. In practice it is often a dispiriting grind.' (Taylor, 2005, p.1).

Acknowledgement had come that the ideals of a classical education espoused by earlier

radicals and now firmly embedded in the examination specifications, were in reality

extremely hard to put into practice. In the following year, Coe published results from

CEMC research at Durham University showing that at GCSE it was significantly harder to

achieve a 'C' grade in Latin than in any of the other thirty-three GCSE subjects (Coe,

2006, p.9). A recent analysis of examination entries, moreover, shows that, while

numbers of candidates for the suite of classical subjects are up, numbers for Latin GCSE

alone have remained in decline with an annual decrease since 2000 (Weeds, 2007, p.8);

it concludes that Classics needs yet again to 'formulate a new identity based on a clear

vision of what it is' (p.12), echoing the new rallying cry from other practitioners and

champions of the classical cause. The main areas of pedagogic challenge demanding

reconsideration were the enabling of pupils to understand the texts (i.e. translation),

and eliciting personal responses. We consider each below.

Translating original Latin texts at GCSE is of a different order of challenge for pupils

compared to the carefully-prepared passages for translation set in the language papers.

The examination papers acknowledge this by expecting translation only from candidates

for the Higher Tier. Much of the vocabulary is unfamiliar to GCSE pupils, and as for the

grammar - 'every author bends the rules that have been so carefully learnt' (Hunt, 2008,

p. 109). An understanding of the text, however, is crucial not only for accurate

examination translation but of course also for answering questions about style and

literary technique, as well as cultural or historical context, and without understanding the text no 'personal response' can be made with any confidence (or evidence). As Taylor witheringly concluded 'Candidates are asked to study Horace odes containing scarcely a word that features in their prescribed vocabulary. They can understand neither the syntax nor the thought nor the emotions. The inevitable result is … a numbing passivity' (Taylor, 2005, p.1).

One challenge posed by translating the literature from the original comes in the form of teaching time available. Latin GCSE takes at least 250 hours to teach – 'twice the 120-140 hours of contact time expected for a GCSE' (Griffiths, 2009, p.1; Lister, 2007, p.95). Much Latin is taught 'off-timetable', giving way to mandatory National Curriculum subjects. The result appears to be the guiltily agreed secret that, in reality, pupils are firmly teacher-led and tend to resort to 'rote learning of standardised notes and translations' (Taylor, 2005, p.1; see also Lister, 2005, p.2).

Directly related to the problem of translation is the question of how one encourages pupils to achieve what is considered by many to be the ultimate aim of reading literature – a personal response. Personal response is described sometimes as 'enjoyment' or 'satisfaction', a personal pleasure to be encouraged by the teacher acting as Muir's oft-quoted 'midwife' between pupil and text (Muir, 1974, p.515). This is hard enough for GCSE pupils when considering a text in their native language (see, for example Richards-Kamal (2008) on similar problems faced by English literature

teachers), but with Latin pupils are faced with even more pronounced barriers of language and culture. According to the OCR level indicators, a grade 'A' literature candidate should display 'a detailed knowledge and thorough understanding of prescribed texts in the original language. They make an informed personal response to an author's ideas, opinions and literary techniques' (p.31); a grade 'C' (and below) candidate, however, is not expected to make any sort of personal response. This implies that personal response is a skill only higher-achieving candidates are expected to master.

The paradox of 'teaching' a personal response was highlighted by Sharwood-Smith in the 1970s (Sharwood-Smith, 1977) p.75), but the paradox remains today, especially when aiming to help pupils achieve as high a grade as possible for an examination within notorious timetabling constraints. The very need to translate first the (for a pupil, sometimes impossibly 'difficult') text establishes the problem from the outset. The text's initial inaccessibility renders the learning experience teacher-led, the teacher as unique key-holder, the focus one of (for pupils an 'objective') linguistic accuracy. These circumstances do not foster subjective and personal analysis by pupils. Doughty warned teachers that everything depended ultimately upon the teacher's 'ability to create a situation where a powerful first response to poems can be a reality' (Doughty, 1966, p.26). Deciphering a challenging text does not lend itself well to this. As for poetry, Quinn warned against 'prosing away the poetry' through translation, risking losing the 'meaning' and the ability to appreciate it. (Quinn, 1966, p.3). Few could dispute the

value of spontaneously responding to Latin literature and poetry, but the practicality from a teacher's point of view at Latin GCSE sits uneasily with the attainment of such skills of appreciation. As Taylor complains – 'Pupils are now being expected to run before they can walk' (Taylor, 2005, p.1).

As the brief review above shows, those interested in Classics at many levels have identified literature as a controversial element of the Latin GCSE. Academics, examination boards, curriculum advisory boards and teachers have struggled over the past fifty years to find the right 'solution' to Latin GCSE that both fits the aspirations of the subject, properly promoting its 'values', to being teachable in a classroom. This case study aims to add some pupil perspective to the debate.

Research Focus

At the senior school in this study, pupils follow a mixture of parts of the *Cambridge Latin Course* Books 2 and 3 in Yrs 9 and 10 alongside a number of other text books with passages of Latin set at suitable standards for each level of grammar and vocabulary acquisition; paralinguistic material is generally ignored. By Yr 11, lessons focus on brushing up weaker areas of grammar, continued translation practice and reading the prescribed Latin texts, starting with the poetry.

In the Yr 11 class in this study there are nine pupils, comprising three girls and six boys, with three of the latter belonging to their Latin teacher's tutor group; there are no SEN or EAL pupils. They receive four Latin lessons of forty minutes per week, half of which, since January, focus on literature, and all of which are taught by their regular Latin teacher. Lessons are held in the school's Latin-dedicated classroom, which also acts as the teacher's tutor group room. The layout of the classroom is relatively traditional: four rows of three separate double desks face the teacher's desk at the front, situated centrally in front of a white board. Yr 11 Latin literature is taught in a double lesson first thing on Tuesdays. The study of the texts typically follows a particular pattern: the text is translated extremely carefully in class – it is a slow but thorough method, with the teacher ensuring that pupils have an accurate translation in their exercise books for revision purposes. The lessons are teacher-led, and Yr 11 – like the other classes I observed – very much revere their teacher for his breadth and depth of knowledge. As the text is translated the teacher explains historical and culturally-specific references. When the text is translated, pupils are set written questions to test their comprehension of each passage. On a couple of observed occasions pupils were encouraged to work on small sections of translation in groups, but invariably continued to work independently.

Outside of gathering observational data, this research took place over a two week period in March 2011 and formed the first part of the pupils' revision process: two double lessons were employed. All pupils in the class consented to participate, some with much enthusiasm. Their anonymity in the research findings was emphasised at

each stage of the research. Week One consisted of the following elements: a

questionnaire, a group interview, a revision lesson on three 'love poems' by Catullus.

Week Two included a brief recap of *Catullus 8*, an activity created to focus specifically on

engaging personally with the text, and a plenary group interview to analyse their views

of the activity.

Methodology

I chose to use case study methodology for this research because it asks *why* the pupils in

this Yr 11 class show so little engagement with Latin literature, and poetry in particular.

A case study is a useful 'exploratory strategy' and demands a 'full variety of evidence –

documents, artefacts, interviews and observations' (Yin, 2009, p.6). To understand

better how my own teaching practice could be improved, I wanted to investigate not

simply the teaching methods adopted with this class, but pupils' broader perceptions of

the course to find out what sorts of preconceptions they held and motivation they felt

for the experience of studying Latin GCSE: a case study offered a chance within strict

time limits to discover causal links and influences that might inform their attitude to the

set texts, rather than testing a proposition based on academic/teacher observation

alone.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was introduced at the start to get a 'snapshot' of the pupils' thoughts and attitudes towards Latin GCSE and literature in particular (see Appendix 1). It offered the particular advantage of establishing both discrete *individual* responses and *initial* responses in a process that would go on to probe the reflections of a group in more depth. The individual 'profiles' created would act as a source of evidence that might not only stand up to scrutiny in areas where group homogeneity was later established, but also contextualise individual responses at the analytical stage of research. As Munn and Drever note, the questionnaire is also an 'efficient use of time' (Munn & Drever, 1999, p.2) and it gave me an opportunity to ask pupils what they felt about a broad range of issues that might be significant to the research focus, before choosing to investigate specific issues.

The questionnaire was completed within ten minutes and so little time was given for reflection. I used ten multiple choice and response scale questions to gather information about their preconceptions, preferences and future plans. It worked well for generating a broad source of descriptive material for further investigation and later triangulation with other sources of data.

Group Interview

A semi-structured group interview with the class was conducted immediately following the questionnaire. While they had been asked to complete the questionnaire at

separate desks, I rearranged the classroom for the group interview, pushing the tables to the edges, and forming a circle of ten chairs (one for myself) to introduce a change of atmosphere – one which was more conducive to group discussion. There was some surprise at this departure from the norm, but as a group they engaged with it positively and cooperatively. I used a relatively unobtrusive CD-recorder and flat microphone for recording the discussion of the eight questions I had prepared for exploration (see Appendix 2). This allowed me the freedom to concentrate on probing their responses in greater depth, and ensuring that quieter pupils were being encouraged to participate fully. For both this activity and the questionnaire, their regular teacher was absent from the classroom to allow pupils to respond more freely, confining the identity of the respondents to the research project.

The aim of the interview was to conduct some qualitative research to help analyse and explain why they responded to Latin literature in the way they did. I decided to interview them as a group for a number of reasons: I wanted to observe their 'group dynamics' outside of a formal regular learning experience; I wanted to see if peer discussion would help them to explore their answers; I hoped to see which issues, if any, they shared opinions on. A group interview had the potential to shed a different light on why these individuals should appear *as a group* to lack engagement with the set texts.

The interview started with three 'factual' questions that were designed partially to 'warm them up' to the process of reflection and analysis, partially to gather background

data, but also to hear *how* they were answering these questions – what these

'technicalities' meant to them as experiences. The next two questions asked them to

explore their preferences and experiences. The remaining three questions were more

hypothetical, encouraging pupils to explore alternative realities where they had control

over 'higher-level' debates and decisions. Pupils responded thoughtfully, and all

participated. The interview was later transcribed.

Literature Revision Lesson

Immediately following the interview, I conducted a revision lesson on three of Catullus's

'love poems'. For the purposes of both the pupils' revision schedule and my own

research, I needed to ensure we revised some of the verse set texts and prepared pupils

for the activity the following week. A noticeable adjustment was made following the

return of the classroom to its regular layout, and my role as 'teacher' as opposed to

observer/neutral researcher was at first slightly awkward. As pupils had already

translated the poems, I chose to use this lesson for two aspects of my research: to

assess how they responded to the texts, and to use different teaching techniques to see

if these affected their responses.

I used a Powerpoint presentation projected onto the whiteboard to present the texts

with translations alongside. The brevity of the first poem – *Catullus 85* – offered the

perfect opportunity to project simultaneously three separate translations on the

whiteboard, which I used to ask pupils which they preferred and why. The second text –

Catullus 70 – was again brief and I had hoped to use it to get a discussion going about how Catullus and his *mulier* ('woman') came over to them in this poem. Finally we looked at *Catullus 8*, for which I needed to give each pupil a handout with a copy of the text and an English translation alongside since these could not both fit legibly onto the whiteboard. Having read through it in English, we used the whiteboard-projected text to demonstrate visually with coloured pens different sections of the poem, emphatic words, changes in tone and a sense of progression and circularity.

'Engagement With The Text' Activity and Group Analysis

The aim in the following week was to challenge the pupils to engage fully with and respond to a set verse text. We picked up the previous lesson by re-capping for fifteen minutes the text of *Catullus 8* using the same materials (PowerPoint and handout). The regular teacher was again absent for this double-lesson, but it was observed by a visiting Faculty PGCE mentor. Pupils were not told in advance that the text of *Catullus 8* was to be used in a later activity.

The activity was devised with the deliberate intention of pulling pupils as far away as possible from viewing the text as a translation challenge – a dilemma with Latin poetry discussed above. By changing the environment, working methods and objectives, I hoped to distract the pupils from their normal associations with studying poetry and focus hard on the task in hand. To lighten the tone I created an exercise that involved teams (not 'groups' – a word that had little impact on the way these pupils worked in

the classroom), gave secret instructions and set the objective for their written work – a guessing game to be enacted at the end.

I held up three sealed envelopes and explained to the class that they were going to do a completely new activity: I was going to divide them into three teams of three and each team would receive an envelope with a different set of written instructions inside (see Appendix 3); they were to follow the instructions which would involve working as a team (they were warned that if they didn't, they were less likely to do well at the end); they were given a twenty-five minute deadline by which to produce a short piece of writing to bring back and present to the class; each team had a secret identity known only to themselves and the others would have to guess who they were from their presentations; the use of the text as direct or implicit evidence would be crucial to all three teams; I would be circulating between the groups and available to help in any way.

The teams were chosen in advance according to friendships and skills. I tried to make sure each team had a member who was confident with translating (and all teams used the text and translation from their handouts). Team A's instructions were to submit a report on Catullus, adopting the persona of his 'regular psychiatrist'; the team consisted of Pupils G and L – a boy and a girl – whom I felt would most appreciate a more detached, clinical approach towards reading the poem (unfortunately a planned third team member was absent from this lesson). Team B were to write a 'talking heads'

account of Catullus's mother describing to her closest friend her thoughts about her son

and his girlfriend in light of this 'new' poem; team B comprised two relatively high-

achieving female pupils – E and S – and Pupil H who enjoys personal response questions.

Team C consisted of three male pupils – P, M and X – who are good friends and quite

reluctant to answer personal response questions; they were asked to imagine that they

were Catullus's best friend out for a drink with him to discuss his love life and offer

advice.

Two teams were placed at opposite ends of the classroom, and a third worked in the

quiet corridor outside the classroom to enable the private discussion essential to the

activity. I circulated to observe and help each group throughout the activity, and to

ensure strict timing. Towards the end I was able to quickly rearrange the classroom back

to the layout of the first group interview, ready for our plenary assessment. The teams

were reconvened to the circle of chairs. The presentation of their written work and the

subsequent discussion of its value was recorded and later transcribed. The aim of both

the activity and the recorded plenary discussion was to provide evidence for the class's

potential ability to engage with Latin love poetry, to experiment with different

pedagogic techniques to motivate them, and to investigate what value, if any, they had

identified for themselves in the activity. The results are discussed below.

Findings and analysis

Pupil's preconceptions of studying literature

Answers to the first question in the first group interview – 'Can you remember back to when you first heard you were going to study Latin literature?' - highlighted the intensity of the emotion attached to the subject. All pupils began speaking at once, there were very negative comments and a strong sense of negative group memory, but on probing nobody could agree when they had actually been told – whether it was just before they started reading in Year 11 or in Year 9 before they took the course. The general response was summed up by Pupil G – 'I think a lot of us find it a bit hard in English, and so – in Latin…', and Pupil S – "It wasn't a happy memory". Pupil F alone – who is expected to achieve an A*, has excellent translation skills and is determined to study AS Latin next year - voiced the opinion that he had thought that as it was 'something new' it might be a bit interesting.

This emotional response appeared to match a seeming contradiction in some of the questionnaire results. When asked to rate how much they enjoyed activities in different subject areas of the Latin GCSE, reading stories and following and discussing characters received high results, but reading/discussing the set texts (one category in the 'stories' subject area) received significantly unfavourable responses (see Appendix 4, Question 5). When asked later in the questionnaire about specific individual set texts, the results were surprisingly neutral, and sometimes positive (see Appendix 4, Question 6).

Tacitus's short extract on *Pythius* was a clear favourite. Prose texts were generally

preferred to verse texts. In line with Taylor's damning evaluation noted above (Taylor,

2005, p.1), Horace's *Ode I.8* was not enjoyed by any pupil. But surprisingly, despite the

observations of the teacher, nobody claimed an active dislike of Catullus's poetry. In

short, when asked to remember and judge *specific* texts, rather than being asked

generally how they felt about Latin literature, responses were noticeably more positive:

their accounts of their feelings about studying literature did not seem to equate with

the sum of the parts that they had experienced.

When probed about studying English literature in the interview, the group's responses

matched their notably negative responses in the questionnaire (see Appendix 5). They

disliked the emphasis on essay-writing, what they perceived to be over-analysis of the

texts, and particularly the subject matter which they felt was interesting to adults but

not themselves. In contrast, surprisingly few responses given at any point during the

research identified similar issues for Latin literature. Their regular teacher had

suspected the type of literature studied – love poetry – to be an influential factor in a

class primarily consisting of boys. However, the most important concern identified was

the challenge of translation, perhaps reflecting the amount of time necessarily

dedicated to this aspect of reading Latin literature.

The translation challenge

From the number of responses that returned to the topic of translation, it appeared that this aspect of the literature was the pupils' greatest concern (see Appendix 6). They found studying literature difficult in English and brought those concerns with them to Latin; they identified the extra barriers to understanding posed by having to translate the complex original language and know about a different culture. According to the questionnaire (and from my own classroom observations), the practice of translation into English in their language lessons was not particularly disliked by the class. That literature translation was an exercise different to what was expected of them in the language papers however was an important point to the pupils. As Pupil F put it: 'It's not like it's made so you can translate it. It's more like they wrote it. So it's harder.' Pupil G added that the vocabulary was unfamiliar, which Pupil P elaborated upon: 'You have to try to match the words with the English words. 'Cause I know some stuff in English and then when you try to find the Latin word you can't find it so you, like, have to know what every word means'. The phrase 'every word' echoed Pupil S who had earlier explained how you could translate the gist of a language passage, but with literature 'every word counts'.

When we came to discuss poetry, pupils became particularly animated and recognised a number of difficulties not necessarily shared by translating prose works. They defined prose (stories) against poetry, rendering the poetry seemingly harder to translate because one cannot 'guess' the content of the next line. Metaphors and similes were

firmly associated only with poetry. The authors' emotions presented difficulties for one

pupil, who saw them as something to be 'guessed'. Pupil F noted that 'it's not a

standard structure in the sentence'. The unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammar,

sophistication of expression, sense of 'authorial intent' and cultural distance all

rendered the process of even a surface translation a 'guessing game'. The muted and

somewhat plaintive way in which responses were given by the pupils gave the

impression they felt this was an 'unfair' or unreasonable expectation.

Despite the unique challenge of translating the poetry, however, four pupils would keep

literature as part of the GCSE if it was in their power, or choose it if it were optional:

Pupil X   … but not as much as we do. It's, like, recently that's all we've done and

     … um… I think we shouldn't do poetry.

[…]

Pupil P   I just find it interesting. I'm not very good at it but it's just interesting, so.

     It kind of makes Latin more than just translating stories.

[…]

Pupil F   I think it's, like, an important part of Latin. And also … if you apply to do

     Latin in the future – AS Latin – then it's good to have the techniques

     already.

Pupil H   I was gonna keep it because, well mostly because I'm quite good at it …

     Also because I think you learn more about the culture itself from that

     kind of study rather than from stories which are, like, made up by the

examiners or whatever, for the little translations you have to do in the

language papers.

These pupils could see that Latin literature offered both useful skills for later study and

an authenticity not available elsewhere. When asked if English translations of the texts

should be provided in the examination, discussion became particularly heated (mostly in

favour of this idea) (see Appendix 7). Pupils noticeably produced poetry-related

arguments for this: it would be easier to 'actually look at the poem', and to 'pick it

apart'. They also pointed out that it would still mean they could glean cultural

information from the texts and help with the problem of the mass of unknown

vocabulary. It was deemed 'helpful' by pupil H since 'some people will make mistakes in

the translation *which is not where you're being examined* so will lose marks in the final

exam' (my italics), adding later that 'we could always refer to the Latin'. The pupils

demonstrated clearly that they felt that there was more to be valued from the set texts

than a translation activity, but felt strongly that this aspect was a real barrier to them

doing so.

Engaging with the poetry

Given the lack of enthusiasm and participation observed in Latin literature lessons, part

of this research was to see if alternative teaching methods could encourage pupils to

engage with the set texts, especially the poetry. The revision lesson on Catullus's poetry

produced polite participation, with some genuine interest observable in the activity that

asked pupils to judge for themselves the 'best translation' out of three offered for

Catullus 85 ('*odi et amo…*'). There was, for example, unanimous dislike of the third

translation, which was the most long-winded, and employed relatively archaic language.

Pupils were surprised to discover it had been written in 2002, and there was an

animated brief discussion on why the translator had tried to make it sound 'old', and

why this was, in their view, counterproductive. The preferred translation was the

second, mainly because it was so succinct: they had valued the pithiness of Catullus's

poem, and Pupil F remarked that it was 'best in Latin' for its ability to say so much so

briefly. It was a promising start.

The class activity the following week was greeted with unfeigned delight, especially

when it transpired that it would take the form of a game. They participated without

hesitation. I made two main observations during the activity. Firstly, they worked really

well in their unfamiliar teams; the time limit for producing the written work meant that

there was little time to waste and they worked with impressive focus together.

Secondly, once the initial start had been made (I needed to guide them gently to know

where to start and encourage each team throughout to keep them on-track), all pupils

read the text avidly to inform what they were going to write next: the act of discussing

their suggestions with each other meant that they were needing to produce 'evidence'

for their ideas from the text to be peer-tested. All three teams managed to complete

their tasks well (see Appendix 8), and came back and delivered them. The presentations

and subsequent discussion were conducted in high spirits, with pupils offering

unprompted praise to their peers – 'I thought that was very good!', 'Well done!', and (a self-evaluation) 'I thought that was quite good!'. Teams appeared proud of their work, with some element of friendly competition arising about whose was 'best'.

In the discussion that followed, pupils appeared unconstrained in offering their opinions of the poem and poet. Following the 'psychiatrist's report', one pupil responded that he would himself have been 'more sarcastic', another would have diagnosed that 'he's too obsessed with her. That it's unhealthy'. Following the 'best friend's advice', pupils started to chip in with additional suggestions such as 'Pull yourself together!', 'Make your mind up!' and 'Shut up!!'. Responses appeared honest and were immediate. The 'best friend' team started to argue about how 'essay-like' their presentation had been at the end and how that was not what they had intended, to which an observing pupil commented 'He really thought it was his friend talking!', to which in turn a team-member protested 'No, no! I was giving him advice!', reflecting how he had adopted the 'persona' well. One female pupil whose role was Catullus's mother offered that 'I enjoyed being a girl', which raises an interesting question about her perception of a valid response being perhaps a 'neutral' or male voice, as if a 'female' response was not something she had consciously contemplated before.

When evaluating the activity, the class confirmed they had found starting to be the hardest part – deciding what 'take' to adopt, after which 'you just had to have your own

ideas and start writing (Pupil P). They valued the confidence that working in groups gave

them:

Pupil E: I think having a group meant that if you had an idea and someone agrees

                with it you can feel more confident about it as an idea…

Pupil S: …You feel less stupid saying it because you've all agreed on it.

They also liked the idea of the range of adopted views that were generated by the

activity, best summarised by Pupil G: 'I say it was good to approach the poem from

somebody else's perspective that was different to yours. It gives you all different ideas

about ways that you could look at the poem, rather than just your way of looking at it'.

From the point of view of the activity as a revision help, the responses were mixed,

reflecting pupils range of concerns about what was expected of them in the examination

(see Appendix 9). Some saw it as helpful for understanding the big picture of the poem,

which would in turn help with trying to translate difficult lines; others felt it would not

help them with remembering the unfamiliar vocabulary. One appreciated its value as an

evaluative and analytical experience: 'I think it was useful for revision. I think it's a good

way of making us think about it. Because normally it's just the teacher talking about it,

telling us what it's about' (Pupil L).

Despite the adopted personae and the creative writing giving the activity a 'fictional' air

to it, pupils did recognise that their personal responses informed the work they

presented. Pupil S described the experience in terms of personal response: 'We actually said what we think. Like G and L [the psychiatrist team] wrote down that they actually thought Catullus was a little bit crazy. That wouldn't really get you a mark in the exam. So you got to, kind of, express your feelings about the poem through someone else'. Pupil L similarly contrasted her expectations of what the examination expected with this activity in terms of personal response: 'I think in exams you always have to write what the examiners want to read whereas now we could actually write what we actually thought. Not what we actually learnt in the lessons'. Neither pupil believed that an honest response would receive credit under formal assessment. Surprisingly, a number of pupils valued the activity for enabling them to get a better 'historical' perspective on the poem, making them consider its contemporary reception - something not assessed in the GCSE examination (see Appendix 9).

Why study Latin literature?

The questionnaire investigated why they had chosen Latin GCSE (see Appendix 10). As a class, they tended to weight immediate concerns over considerations for their future: the main reasons were that they were good at the language, that they were interested in the ancient world, and the teacher (- the three pupils in the teacher's tutor group cited this as a very important factor in their decision). Two girls felt that Latin GCSE was very important for their plans for the future (though neither plans to take it after GCSE), with one adding the comment that Latin is 'considered a good and academic GCSE'. In their responses to what they felt they got out of studying Latin, they identified closely

with it honing skills traditionally associated with the subject, namely those of logic, analysis and 'intellectual rigour' as well as linguistic skills useful for studying modern languages. In short, they strongly valued the study of Latin for the linguistic ideals promoted by the traditionalists in the earlier part of the twentieth century.

This source of data, however, could lead to a simplistic and misleading conclusion. In the questionnaire itself (see Appendix 11), 'Roman Life'-related topics were consistently most enjoyed by the class; and within the language-related activities, 'understanding derivative words' received most positive responses. In the discussion after the 'Engagement with the Text' activity discussed above, it was an 'historical' perspective that some pupils had identified as useful or enjoyable. This Yr 11 class (not always explicitly) appreciates the role of literature in offering this window onto the ancient world. As we saw, four out of nine pupils wanted to keep literature on the syllabus; prose was discussed in the group interview as 'more interesting because you can learn about Roman life' (Pupil P), but literature in general was recognised as offering 'background and cultural context', helping them 'learn more about how they [i.e. the Romans] lived' (Pupil L). While Pupil F openly stated he found the poetry 'more interesting' because he learnt about verse literary techniques, another found value in it for its historical value: 'It kind of makes things a bit more interesting because you're learning. I like history, so kind of link it in with history sort of things. So it's more interesting than just learning about modern day poetry […] It's about how people lived and about their cultures and about some historical facts' (Pupil P).

Moreover, while the spectre of the translation dominated the majority of pupil responses in my research, and the debates about preferences for prose texts or the availability of English translations in the examination centred on making their course 'easier', this was not necessarily a criticism that literature should be removed from the GCSE. As we saw in the questionnaire, the challenge of the GCSE and its perceived status as a difficult and academic subject, harder than other subjects, were valued by pupils. In the group interview, pupils suggested an English translation alongside the Latin to help them evaluate and analyse the poetry, where they would still need to know the Latin well to refer to it in evidence for their examination answers.

Conclusion

How Latin literature is introduced to pupils is important – this Yr 11 class were initially apprehensive about Latin literature, bringing to it their experiences from English literature lessons. They saw real value, however, in studying Latin literature, but identified the need to translate the texts as presenting the biggest barrier to appreciating them as the cultural keys that Sharwood Smith and others identified. Pupils were particularly daunted by the linguistic sophistication posed by their verse set texts, which happened to be their first experience of Latin literature and perhaps influenced their attitude to the rest of their literature study. Nevertheless, they positively

welcomed the challenge of the Latin GCSE, in contradiction to Weeds's fear that 'it can't help the cause of Classics if public perceptions are that it is difficult' (Weeds, 2007, p.11). Their views align better with Morwood: 'it should be a major strength of Latin that, as opposed to any other language apart from English, it involves the study of great literature at GCSE' (Morwood, 2005, p.10).

Pupils also offered some constructive suggestions as to how to improve the experience of studying literature at GCSE. One was to incorporate the prose into the language papers, as it 'fitted' with other 'stories'. Two other pupils made a strong case for separating the GCSE into two GCSEs:

Pupil M   They should be separate GCSEs like in English.

Pupil S   Yes! 'Cause we have, like, FOUR exams. Whereas in RS or Geography

there's two, whereas in Latin we have to take four!

[Group murmurs in agreement]

Pupil S   In English we have to take lots of exams but then we are getting two

GCSEs - English Lit and English Lang, whereas in Latin, it's just the one.

Pupil M   There should be two Latin GCSEs!

This has been recently addressed by the introduction of the Level One and Level Two certificates by the WJEC; it reflects also the number of teaching hours needed to complete the current GCSE (see Griffiths, 2009).

The activity proved that this Yr 11 was more than capable of enjoying actively engaging with, and responding personally to, Latin poetry. It was especially notable that the female pupils S and E who rarely speak in Latin lessons were very vocal in both group interviews, needing no prompting to participate. Pupil M, moreover, who is predicted the lowest grade in the class, and who often made references to how overwhelmed he was by translation, dominated the plenary session following the activity with real enthusiasm, asking on three separate occasions if the exercise could be repeated for other poems. The activity also showed, as a revision exercise, that Doughty's view noted above that personal response must be an 'initial' or immediate response to a text (Doughty, 1966, p.26) is not necessarily true.

I felt that the activity merits being repeated with other classes. Perhaps, with a class with less history of anxiety about engaging with the Latin texts, more of an emphasis on citing the text as direct evidence for responses could be adopted, with more time factored in for subsequent peer assessment. One mistaken guess at the identity of the 'psychiatrist team' – that of 'publisher' - offered an interesting persona to include; a report by 'an historian' could be another. Part of the success of the activity relied on having the space for the teams to discuss what they were going to write, and in a smaller classroom with more pupils this could prove more difficult an exercise than it was here.

As an activity in itself, this research confirmed for me the value in investigating pupils'

responses, and showed that 'pupil voice' could usefully inform not only the ways in

which schools are run, but also pedagogic approaches and debate.

Appendix 1: LATIN QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer each of the questions below. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers – I am looking for honest responses. Your anonymity will remain absolute - personal responses will not be shared with anyone.

1. **Are you:**

   Male   Female

   (Please underline or circle one answer)

2. **Do you think that learning Latin is:**

   Easier than other subjects   The same as other subjects   Harder than other subjects
   (Please underline or circle ONE answer.)

3. **When you were choosing Latin GCSE, how important were the following in helping you make your decision**? Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

   1= very important   2= important   3= quite important   4= not important

   a) Your interest in the ancient world   1   2   3   4

   b) How it fitted with your other subjects   1   2   3   4

   c) Your plans for the future   1   2   3   4

   d) The opinions of family   1   2   3   4

   e) The opinions of friends   1   2   3   4

   f) The teacher   1   2   3   4

   g) How good you were at the subject   1   2   3   4

   h) Other (please specify e.g. no alternatives on timetable, wanted to be with friend etc.)

   _____

   _____

4. **Please state the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements about learning Latin at GCSE.** Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

    1= Strongly agree   2= Agree   3= Disagree   4= Strongly disagree

    a) It improves your logical/analytical skills

        1   2   3   4

    b) It improves your ability to write well in English

        1   2   3   4

    c) It improves intellectual rigour

        1   2   3   4

    d) It improves your ability to learn related modern languages such as French, Spanish or Italian

        1   2   3   4

    e) It gives you a deeper understanding of the English language

        1   2   3   4

    f) Studying the ancient world helps you to look at the modern world in new ways

        1   2   3   4

5. **Which of the following activities do you enjoy when learning Latin?**

    Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

    1= I enjoy this a lot   2= I don't mind this   3= I don't like this

    LANGUAGE:

    a) Learning vocabulary   1   2   3

    b) Translating Latin into English   1   2   3

    c) Translating English into Latin   1   2   3

    d) Understanding Latin grammar rules   1   2   3

    e) Seeing how Latin grammar affects modern languages   1   2   3

    f) Understanding word derivations from Latin   1   2   3

    g) Knowing how to pronounce Latin words   1   2   3

STORIES:

a)	Following stories with familiar characters	1	2	3
b)	Translating picture stories	1	2	3
c)	Answering comprehension questions	1	2	3
d)	Discussing characters in stories	1	2	3
e)	Acting out mini-dramas/plays	1	2	3
f)	Reading/discussing Latin poetry	1	2	3
g)	Reading/discussing Latin prose	1	2	3

ROMAN LIFE:

h)	Background – learning some Roman history	1	2	3
i)	Seeing illustrations of the Roman world	1	2	3
j)	Comparing Roman culture with our own	1	2	3
k)	Visiting Roman sites or museums	1	2	3

6. To what extent did you enjoy studying the following Latin literary texts?

Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= I enjoyed this a lot   2= I didn't mind this   3= I didn't enjoy this

a)	Sulpicia 1	1	2	3
b)	Horace *Odes* 1.8	1	2	3
c)	Catullus's love poetry	1	2	3
d)	Catullus's poem to his dead brother	1	2	3
e)	Ovid *Tristia*	1	2	3
f)	Tacitus *Pythius*	1	2	3
g)	Cicero *Clodia*	1	2	3
h)	Tacitus *Germanicus and Piso*	1	2	3

7. **If literature was an optional part of Latin GCSE, would you choose that option?**

Yes   No

(Please underline or circle one answer)

8. **To what extent do you enjoy studying <u>English literature</u>?**

Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= I enjoy this a lot   2= I don't mind this   3= I don't like this

a) Poetry   1   2   3

b) Prose   1   2   3

9. **People have different learning 'styles'. Try to think about the ways in which you learn things most effectively – circle the number below which best describes how effective each of the following learning styles are for you:**

Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= very effective   2= effective   3= not effective

a) Being given information by the teacher   1   2   3

b) Researching things for yourself   1   2   3

c) Working with other pupils   1   2   3

d) Saying things aloud   1   2   3

e) Drawing/looking at illustrations   1   2   3

f) Watching films/documentaries   1   2   3

g) Writing things in your own words   1   2   3

h) Other (please specify)_____

10. **Would you consider taking AS Latin next year?**

Definitely   Yes   No   Definitely not   Not sure

(Please underline or circle one answer)

Thank-you for taking part in this questionnaire

Appendix 2: YR 11 Latin literature Group Interview questions

Question One

Can you remember back to when you first heard you were going to be studying Latin literature? How was it presented? What did you think? Why?

Question Two

How have you studied your Latin literature so far? Is there a particular teaching method used? Spec: cultural context, translation, literary techniques, personal response.

Question Three

How do you study literature in English lessons? Is it different to Latin? Why do you think that is?

Question Four

Do you prefer reading poetry or prose, or does it depend on each text? Why? Examples?

Question Five

Do you think Latin literature is hard to personally respond to? Confirm they know what personal response it. What barriers might there be?

Question Six

If you were *creating* a Latin GCSE from scratch, would you include literature for study? Why? What's the point of studying it? How different from language work?

Question Seven

Would it be worthwhile studying Latin literature in translation? Why?

Question Eight

Should other foreign language GCSEs include some original literature? Why?

Appendix 3: Written Instructions for Activity

Each team saw only their own instructions.

Team A

You are Catullus's psychiatrist. He has been coming to see you regularly for a number of years, and always shows you his poetry as he feels it might be a useful reflection of his innermost thoughts. You know well his history with his girlfriend and in today's therapy session you have heard how he has split up with her. He has shown you his latest poem (*Catullus 8*).

Write up a psychiatrist's report on Catullus for your files, based on what he has shown you in *Catullus 8*. You can include any further information about Catullus – real or fictional – but must refer directly or indirectly to the poem **as much as possible**: you need to produce as much evidence for your report as you can.

Team B

You are Catullus's mother. The two of you have always been close and Catullus does tend to confide in you about his personal life. You know things haven't been running smoothly between your son and his 'girlfriend' Lesbia, and have just this morning found his latest poem (*Catullus 8*) on his desk.

You are meeting up for lunch with your best friend whom you see regularly and who has known you since you were both very young – you share all your secrets. She asks you how Catullus is.

Write your response, based on finding the *Catullus 8* poem this morning. You can include any information about Catullus – real or fictional – but must refer directly or indirectly to the poem **as much as possible**.

Team C

You are Catullus's best friend and the two of you have known each other since you were very young. Catullus confides in you about everything, always asking for your sensible opinion.

This evening you are in a taberna (pub!) with Catullus, who asked you to meet him as he was particularly upset. He has explained the most recent string of events in his life culminating in splitting up with Lesbia, and has shown you his latest poem (*Catullus 8*) as he feels it expresses his feelings well. He asks for your advice.

Write your response. You can include any information about Catullus – real or fictional – but must refer directly or indirectly back to the poem **as much as possible**.

Appendix 4: selected questionnaire results

Latin GCSE activities (extract)

Question 5. Which of the following activities do you enjoy when learning Latin?

Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:
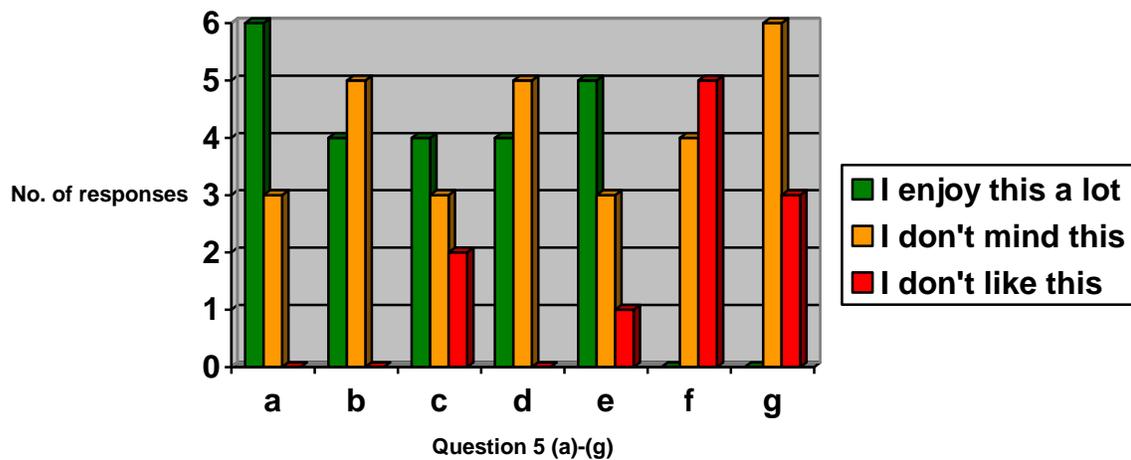
1= I enjoy this a lot   2= I don't mind this   3= I don't like this

STORIES:

a) Following stories with familiar characters   1   2   3

b) Translating picture stories   1   2   3

c) Answering comprehension questions   1   2   3

d) Discussing characters in stories   1   2   3

e) Acting out mini-dramas/plays   1   2   3

f) Reading/discussing Latin poetry   1   2   3

g) Reading/discussing Latin prose   1   2   3

Results

Appendix 4: selected questionnaire results

## Latin GCSE set texts preferences

Question 6. To what extent did you enjoy studying the following Latin literary texts?

Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= I enjoyed this a lot   2= I didn't mind this   3= I didn't enjoy this

a)	Sulpicia 1	1 2 3
b)	Horace *Odes* 1.8	1 2 3
c)	Catullus's love poetry	1 2 3
d)	Catullus's poem to his dead brother	1 2 3
e)	Ovid *Tristia*	1 2 3
f)	Tacitus *Pythius*	1 2 3
g)	Cicero *Clodia*	1 2 3
h)	Tacitus *Germanicus et Piso*	1 2 3

Results
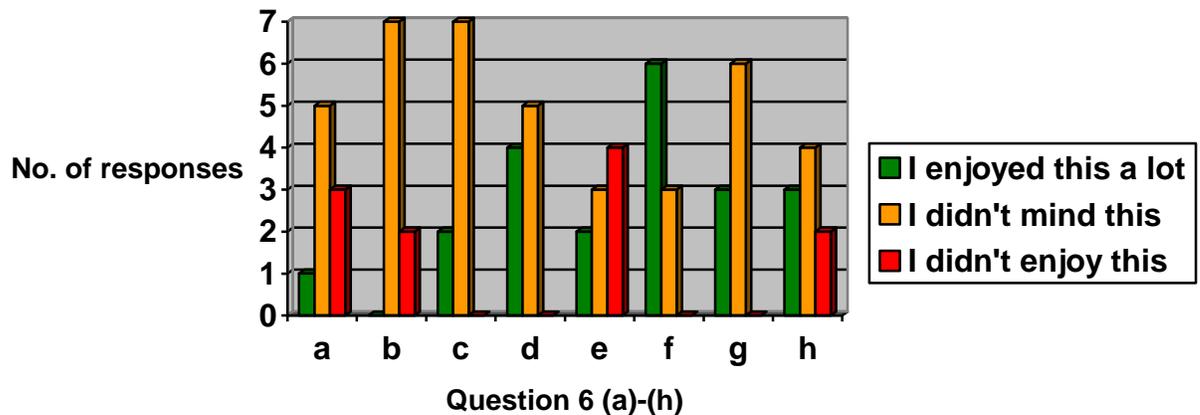
Appendix 5: extracts from responses to the study of English literature in the Group Interview and Questionnaire

GROUP INTERVIEW

Interviewer: How do you study literature in English lessons?

[LOTS OF NEGATIVE SIGHING. NO RESPONSES, BUT GROUP EXCHANGE 'MEANINGFUL' LOOKS]

Interviewer: Is it different to the way you study Latin literature?

[UNANIMOUS RESPONSE] 'Yes'

Pupil L: We read through it as a group then it's more answering questions on it, when obviously with translation we don't have to.

<p align="center">[…]</p>

Interviewer: Why do you not like it?

Pupil G: It's incredibly boring? [LOTS LAUGHTER]

Pupil E: Too much essay-writing.

Pupil S: I never really 'get' it. Like, I can tell you that there's alliteration or something but I never really 'get' what the effect of it is.

Pupil M: Mind-torturing.

Pupil S: The teacher always seems to think it's really something else.

Pupil G: Yeah. I always tend to feel that I'm picking apart something that isn't actually there.

Interviewer: You said it was 'boring'. Is it the way it's taught? Is it the content?

Pupil G: It's the books. The poetry. Yeah. Yeah – it's what we have to do.

<p align="center">[…]</p>

Pupil G: They don't really give you much choice about what you get, so it's just generally stuff that no-one really wants to do. What the examiners find interesting but no-one else does.

<p align="center">45</p>

Interviewer: **Why do they find it interesting but you don't?**

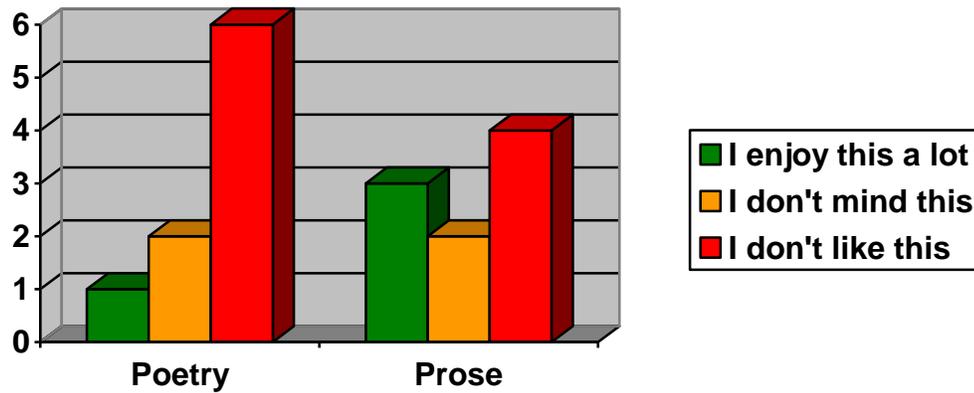Pupil P: 'Cause it's for adults.

Pupil H: Yeah.

Pupil F: You're not an adult?

Pupil P: No. I'm not an adult.

QUESTIONNAIRE: Question 8: To what extent do you enjoy studying English literature?

Results

Appendix 6: extracts from responses to translating Latin literature in the Group Interview and Questionnaire

GROUP INTERVIEW

Interviewer: **What makes it different to a translation exercise?**

Pupil S: I think, like, you have to know to really understand it. When you, like, translate it you don't translate the meaning of the words and things: you might miss out a word and still get the sentence but with, like, the literature, like, every word counts.

[…]

Pupil F: … It's not like laid out for you. It's not like it's made so you can translate it. It's more like they wrote it. So it's harder.

[…]

Pupil G: It's the new vocab really.

Interviewer: **The new vocab?**

Pupil P: You have to try to match the words with the English words. 'Cause I know some stuff in English and then when you try to find the Latin word you can't find it so you, like, have to know what every word means.
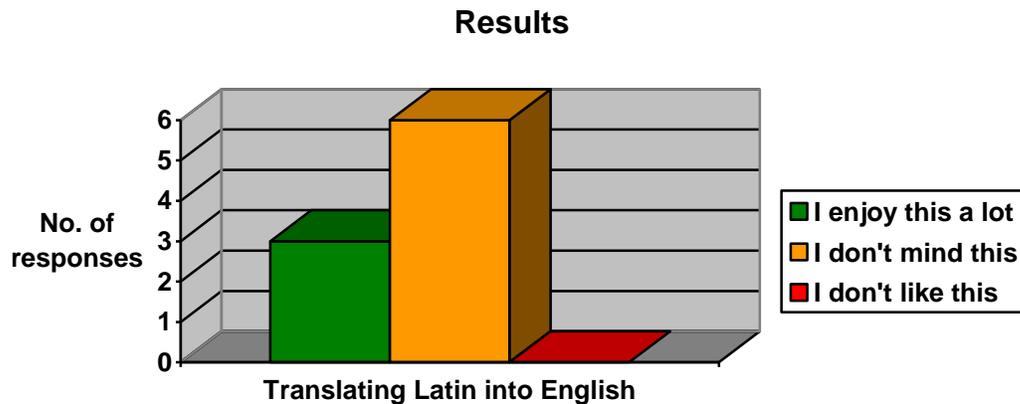
[…]

Pupil L: Well I think with poetry it's sometimes set up as so difficult, so it's just really hard to translate it.

Pupil P: There's a lot of metaphors in the poetry which you don't really get when you translate it. 'Cause it's hard to translate it and still keep all the similes and metaphors.

Pupil E: You can kind of tell what's going to happen next in the prose, whereas in the poetry you've no idea what the... you kind of, like, get the idea but you can't use the line before to help you as much.

Pupil S: It's harder to translate it and you're not really sure what's going to happen.

Pupil E: And if you don't know the main verb, it's skewed.

Pupil F: And the writers are so clever in, like, the way they do it, so it's sometimes hard… It's not a standard structure in the sentence.

Pupil P: And they write emotionally. So it's like all their emotions. So you have to guess their emotions as well.

Pupil L: It doesn't have the same impact in English. I honestly can't understand, like, what they're trying to suggest.

[…]

Pupil F: A lot of meanings are in the Latin words. The poignant things.

QUESTIONNAIRE: Question 5: Which of the following activities do you enjoy when learning Latin?

Results

No. of responses

6
5
4
3
2
1
0

Translating Latin into English

■ I enjoy this a lot
■ I don't mind this
■ I don't like this

Appendix 7: Extract from responses to including a translation of the text in the examination paper in Group Interview

Interviewer: **Would it be worthwhile studying the literature in translation?**

[GENERAL AGREEMENT – 'yeah']

Interviewer: **Let's have a show of hands – who thinks it would be worthwhile?**

[7 – yes, 2 – no]

Interviewer: **Why *not*?**

Pupil P: Um. 'Cause if it's in English you might as well just translate an English poem. Well, not translate it but acknowledge it or whatever it's called. Appreciate it.

Pupil F: It's not Latin. Latin should be in Latin.

Pupil P: Yeah. And you're reading it out of context. If it's in English and it's really in Latin then, like, any metaphors that's in it and anything like that is again lost through translation.

Pupil F: Yep. A lot of meanings are in the Latin words. The poignant things.

[SOME LAUGHTER]

Interviewer: **Is that controversial? Do others agree with that? Do you think something would be lost in it?**

Pupil H: Well, if you have a Latin translation on the side then you can still see the metaphors and that, but it would just help because otherwise some people will make mistakes in the translation which is not where you're being examined so will lose marks in the final exam.

Interviewer: **Those who said 'Yes – let's have the literature in translation' – why?**

Pupil S: You still learn about the culture 'cause you still get some of the context of it. It would help not to have to do translation of that kind of thing – the actual translation.

Pupil E: I think if you translated it – if you didn't just have a literal translation you know – if it's translated properly – like making sure that the metaphors

and the similes and the culture's still there. Like, I think you might have to change it a bit – use different words and things – but as long as the English gave out the same meaning as the Latin it would just make it easier actually looking at the poem rather than doing the translation…

Interviewer: **If it was a really good translation?**

Pupil F: No, 'cause Mr W said that there's something that you can't put into English. That there's nothing that means the same.

Pupil M: It would help because half the words are unknown, so it would help me out quite a lot.

Pupil X: Yeah. I think if you relaxed with the English translation, hopefully you'd understand some of the techniques they'd used – you could see where they got the ideas from. You don't have to understand some of the techniques of the English.

Pupil G: If you had a literal translation and then perhaps one more adapted to the English translation then it would be easier then to pick it apart like you would.

Pupil H: I said that if we start in the Latin translation, then we wouldn't lose so much because we could always refer to the Latin and it would be so much easier.

Interviewer: **How many would like to see a Latin text with the English by the side of it?**

Pupil M: Oh definitely.

[8/9 AGREE]

Pupil F: You'd lose the challenge. Keep the challenge.

Pupil X: What's wrong with not having the challenge?

Pupil F: It' supposed to be [interrupted]. But like Latin's, like [raises voice], a GCSE. That's like making it less... less… good. Less challenging.

Appendix 8: The activity presentations

Team A: Catullus's Psychiatrist

Catullus showed me his newest poem and I noticed a running theme throughout the poem. He seems to have an unhealthy interest with this girl. Catullus appears to have problems with his self-esteem, because he constantly calls himself 'stupid' and 'weak'. He's still not over her and appears to be daydreaming about his memories. He seems quite self-conscious and desperate and obviously has some sort of mental illness. He can't forgive himself. The poem shows imbalance which might relate to his mental state. He's writing the poem to try to get over her but I can see it's not effective. I told him to put down his pen and take some medication. In stead of writing poems to express his feelings he should rather talk to actual people to get advice and understanding.

Team B: Catullus's Mother

He's not at his best… I've told you about his friend. Well, I fear that things may have taken a turn for the worst. He seems quite bitter about it all. I always knew that girl would break his heart – the way he followed her around always answering to her beck and call. He never had any time to see me. But now I hear things have changed.

I believe he will make it through. At least now, back at home, he'll be properly fed. Women these days don't know what proper food looks like. She had the best and let him go. He loved her more than any other could. And he managed to break up with her, and she shouldn't have been with him– a boy of his age! And the inappropriate images of her show he was totally unsuitable for her! I do hope he doesn't go running after her – that would really be undignified.

Team C: Catullus's Best Friend

Stupid Catullus! How will this help you?! Your poem pushes her away yet you still love her! You are too harsh on yourself – you need to man up. When you say goodbye, do

not keep writing. Either tell her you love her or walk away. Make your mind up – you either love her or don't. The sun does shine on you still – you don't need her to make it shine. You use strong words to try and move on, but you need to stop beating yourself up. If you like her you need to show her in your poems. If you choose to distance yourself from her then you need to stick to it.

Although the poem is addressed to you, it is clear it is addressed to Lesbia. In line 9, I can see that your orders are pointless as you cannot fulfil them. All the questions show that you are still besotted. However, the double negative in line 7 is very effective… [unfinished].

Appendix 9: transcript extracts from final group plenary interview

Activity as revision help:

Pupil E: I think it's likely to help you remember it if you've got, like, different takes on it. And doing something slightly different with it instead of just, like, trying to learn it.

Pupil S: I think it will help us remember it because it'll be, like, 'Oh yeah! That was when we all, like, talked about it and I was Catullus's mum and I can remember that she said that… That might help you approach the translation.

Pupil P: It would be useful for having an overall picture. But for individual Latin words it wasn't that helpful. But it didn't take too long to do and it gave you a better historical picture of what the poem was about.

Pupil S: The translation helped because you didn't have to worry about not understanding a word. You knew you were going to have the basic meaning.

Pupil L: I think it was useful for revision. I think it's a good way of making us think about it. Because normally it's just the teacher talking about it, telling us what it's about.

Activity as valuable for considering original reception:

Pupil S: Makes it seem a little bit more normal because it's thinking about how people at the time might have thought about it. So it kind of, like, makes it seem more real because it's, like, what his friend would have thought about it.

Pupil E: It was quite difficult to relate to it because it's, like, so long ago and if you put it in a different context…

Pupil P: 	…makes it more than just, like, a GCSE Latin poem to study.

**Interviewer:	In what way?**

Pupil P: 	Well, it's, like, it makes you actually think about how people would have viewed it at the time and, like, you also think about how Lesbia would have felt about it, and other people, like, beyond just his friends and his family and his psychiatrist…

Appendix 10: *Why Study Latin?* Extracts of results from the questionnaire

Question 3. When you were choosing Latin GCSE, how important were the following in helping you make your decision? Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= very important   2= important   3= quite important   4= not important

a)	Your interest in the ancient world	1	2	3	4
b)	How it fitted with your other subjects	1	2	3	4
c)	Your plans for the future	1	2	3	4
d)	The opinions of family	1	2	3	4
e)	The opinions of friends	1	2	3	4
f)	The teacher	1	2	3	4
g)	How good you were at the subject	1	2	3	4

h) Other (please specify e.g. no alternatives on timetable, wanted to be with friend etc.)

_____

RESULTS
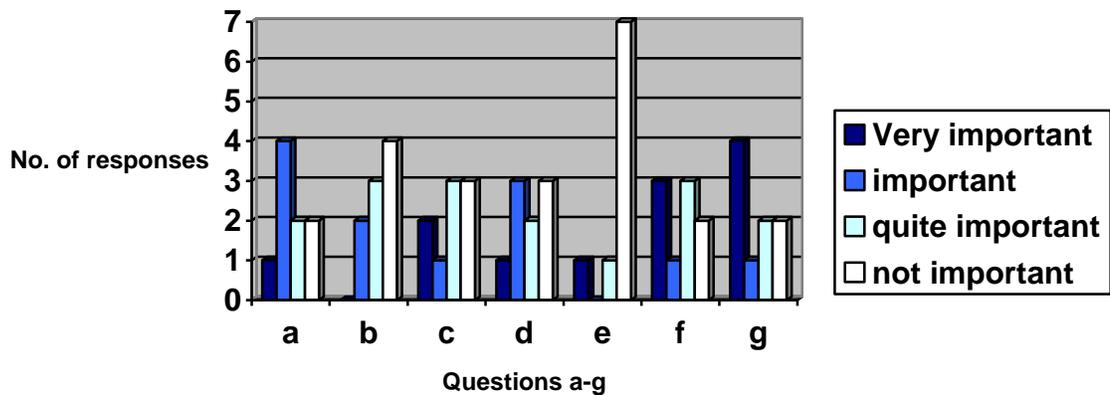
Question 4. Please state the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements about learning Latin at GCSE. Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= Strongly agree   2= Agree   3= Disagree   4= Strongly disagree

a)   It improves your logical/analytical skills

    1   2   3   4

b)   It improves your ability to write well in English

    1   2   3   4

c)   It improves intellectual rigour

    1   2   3   4

d)   It improves your ability to learn related modern languages such as French, Spanish or Italian

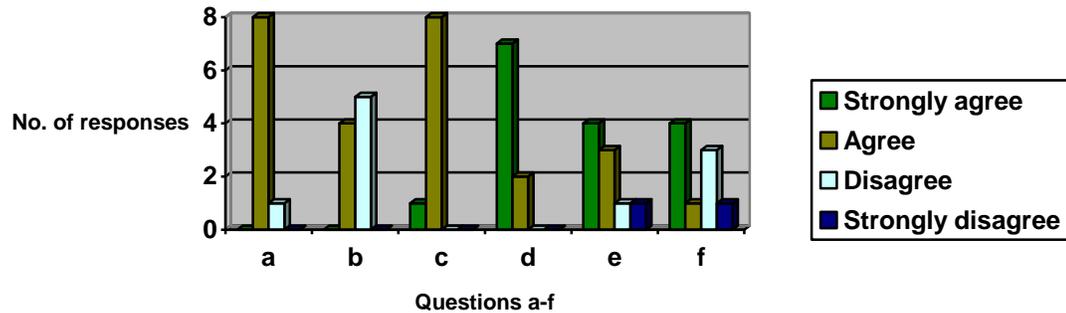   1   2   3   4

e)   It gives you a deeper understanding of the English language

    1   2   3   4

f)   Studying the ancient world helps you to look at the modern world in new ways

    1   2   3   4

RESULTS

Appendix 11: History from Latin literature

Question 5: Which of the following activities do you enjoy when learning Latin?

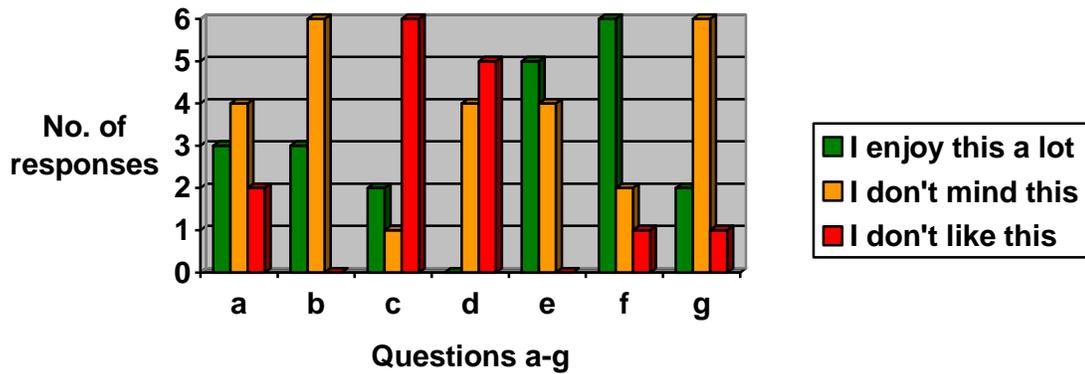Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= I enjoy this a lot   2= I don't mind this   3= I don't like this

<u>**LANGUAGE:**</u>

a)   Learning vocabulary   1   2   3

b)   Translating Latin into English   1   2   3

c)   Translating English into Latin   1   2   3

d)   Learning Latin grammar rules   1   2   3

e)   Seeing how Latin affects modern languages   1   2   3

f)   Understanding word derivations from Latin   1   2   3

g)   Knowing how to pronounce Latin words   1   2   3

RESULTS

Appendix 11

**Question 5 (continued): Which of the following activities do you enjoy when learning Latin?**

Please circle ONE number below for EACH answer where:

1= I enjoy this a lot   2= I don't mind this   3= I don't like this

<u>**ROMAN LIFE:**</u>

a) Background – learning some Roman history   1   2   3

b) Seeing illustrations of the Roman world   1   2   3

c) Comparing Roman culture with our owfsn   1   2   3

d) Visiting Roman sites or museums   1   2   3

RESULTS
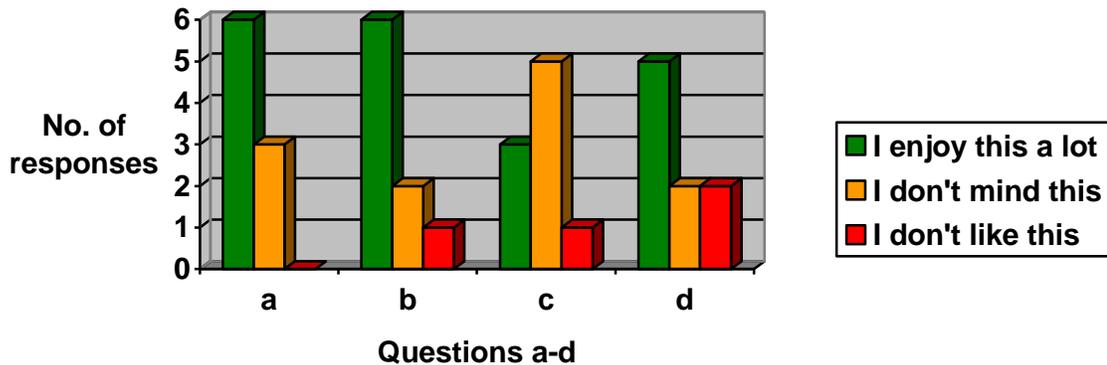
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