

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

### **Abstract**

This research examines why a class of relatively high-achieving Yr 11 pupils at an independent school appeared disengaged with the literature component of their Latin GCSE, and poetry in particular. It 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 assessing the arguments put forward over the past fifty years for literature's continued central inclusion on the GCSE syllabus, reviewing 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.