

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *Athenaze*. An Introduction to Ancient Greek

*Workbook I* pp. 240. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Paper, £19.99. ISBN: 978-0190607685.

*Workbook II* pp. 336. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Paper, £19.99. ISBN: 978-0190607692.

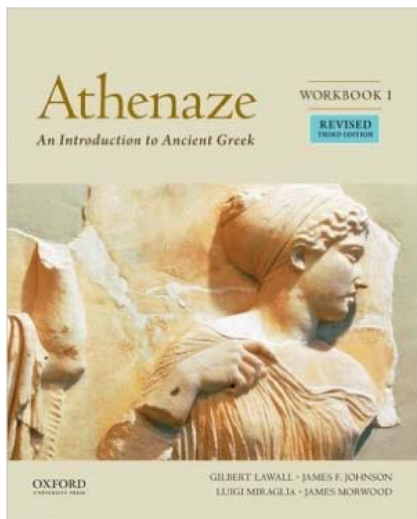


Figure 1. | *Athenaze*, Workbook I.

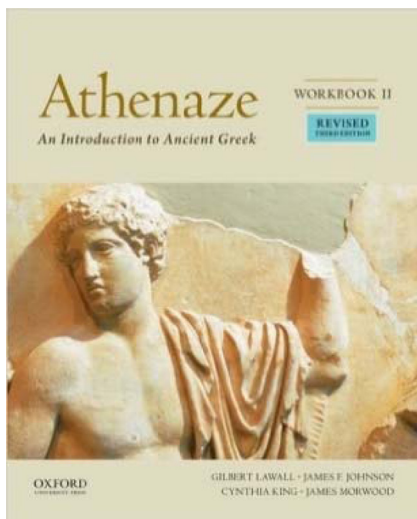


Figure 2. | *Athenaze*, Workbook II.

Having reviewed the new edition of the *Athenaze* course for an earlier edition of JCT, I now turn my attention to the workbooks. These workbooks are designed to work in conjunction with the textbooks, but you would have to dig deeply into your pockets or departmental purse, as they cost £19.99 each. Are they worth the investment?

If you are an independent learner of Greek following the *Athenaze* course, and working at undergraduate level or above, these workbooks may well be worth their weight in gold. They provide extra morphological exercises, further passages for translation and handy vocabulary lists to aid your progress through the course. These vocabulary lists are clear and arranged by parts of speech, and would prove particularly beneficial to students trying to build their knowledge of vocabulary at speed. At regular points throughout the workbooks, there is supplementary grammar, offering an extra opportunity to consolidate the grammar introduced in the course. The authors have even included a helpful key at the back of the workbooks, thus making them invaluable to the independent learner. I am not sure, however, that your average teenager would be able to demonstrate the self-discipline required to resist taking a sneaky peak at the answer section. The workbooks may well serve as extra weapons in the teacher's arsenal, though. The passages could be adapted for assessment and examination practice, and the manipulation exercises might provide inspiration for the new language requirements of the GCSE examination. In a school context, these workbooks could well provide something akin to a study guide for public examination candidates, proving useful to worried students and their parents alike.

What is beyond doubt is the fact the authors have created a fully comprehensive Greek course in the new look *Athenaze*. As a package, it certainly doesn't come cheap, but I would argue that it is value for money, especially for those students learning Greek independently. It may be of limited use in schools, though, where teachers are under increasing pressures of time to cover courses and specifications. On the other hand, it would certainly provide a welcome breath of fresh air for older students looking for an

alternative to other Greek courses on the market.

*Holly Eckhardt, Manchester Grammar School*

Wilson (N. G.)

*Herodotea: Studies on the Text of Herodotus*

pp. xxvi + 202. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Hardback, £50. ISBN: 978-0-19-967286-8.

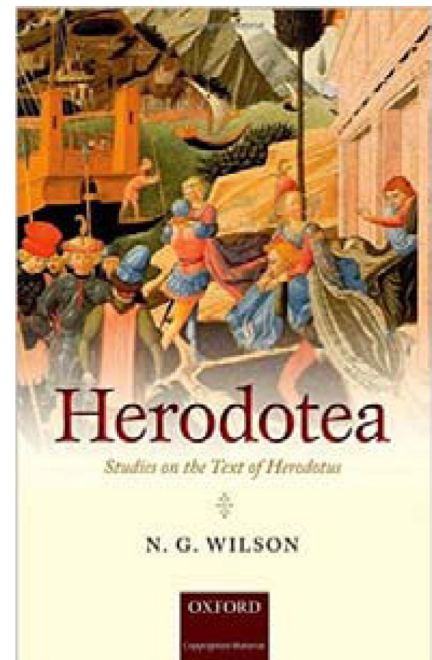


Figure 3. | *Herodotea: Studies on the Text of Herodotus*.

I had assumed that this volume would be a collection of essays. In fact, its distinguished author is also the editor of the OCT *Herodotus* and this is a companion volume, as is carefully explained in an admirably succinct Preface. W. also states that Herodotus is often thought to be an easy author, but that the copious body of notes in this volume disproves this. The volume is, therefore, an extremely useful adjunct to the text of a popular author.

The book contains a 15-page Introduction, laying out in detail the manuscript tradition and the history of textual transmission and associated scholarship; this is lucid, readable and deals honestly with the sticking-points of a text probably produced in Athens, written in an Ionian dialect.

That said, this is a very scholarly book and the profusion of abbreviations

and multiple references and cross-references might be difficult. It is, however, inevitable, given the nature of the book, which is, properly speaking, a sort of concordance of notes and suggestions on the text. Thankfully, many readers will use the book encyclopedically, as it were, and will dip into particular books or stories; they will find detailed and comprehensive elucidation, but no scholarly comments are translated and W. presumably assumes that those who consult his book can cope with this. Add to this, the Index, which for a book this detailed and comprehensive, a book which does its author a great service, is paltry. Readers are also directed for further elucidation to others of the W.'s companion volumes, which, I hope, are available in their libraries.

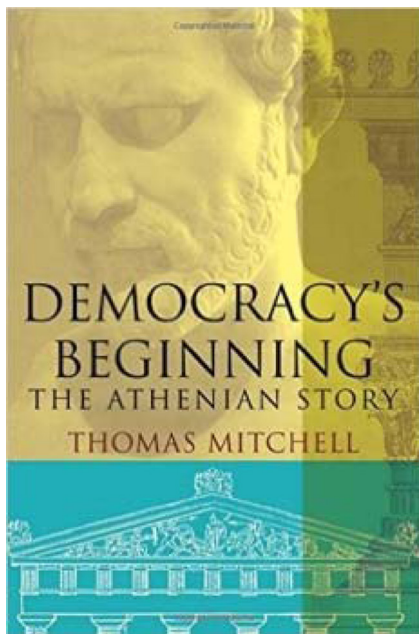
This book is a boon for Greek and historical scholarship, but, once again, the cost may put a few prospective buyers off. The lunate sigma is used throughout.

*Terry Walsh, Ratcliffe College*

**Mitchell (Thomas N.)**

*Democracy's Beginning: the Athenian Story*

pp. xvi + 350. Yale University Press, 2015 Hardback, £25 ISBN: 978-0-300-21503-8.



**Figure 4. | Democracy's Beginning.**

The author is a well-respected writer on both Greek and Roman history and known, in particular, for a magisterial

biography of Cicero. This book seems to be aimed primarily at the curious (but educated) general reader, as the title might suggest, and is, in fact, a history of Athenian democracy from its inception in the late 6<sup>th</sup> to its demise in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

The book is an eminently readable account and covers the usual personalities and the usual ground in quite good detail; it includes a deal of general material which one would not normally find in a scholarly work, but is, nonetheless, very well written, including as it does, for example, copious notes and an excellent and up-to-date bibliography. M.'s asides on art, architecture and the intellectual atmosphere are useful and informative.

There is some discussion of the possible links between the growth and expansion of democracy and the artistic and political renaissance of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. However, M. misses the opportunity to pursue these themes beyond surmise. He could have dealt more specifically with, for example, the nascent democracy and the rapid, contemporary switch from the Archaic to the Classical or the link between the Melian campaign of 416 B.C. and the production of Euripides' *Troades* in the following year: surely the play alludes to the campaign? That M. does neither is not a blemish, but merely suffices to show the limitations of the book. In fact, he categorically denies that tragedy was anything else than a multi-dimensional entertainment of the whole populace.

M. is very good, however, on the reconstitution of the legal and political basis of democracy in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century; he also uses this to expatiate on the minutiae of democratic procedure and your reviewer learnt a lot from this section. The book finishes with a section of Achievements and Shortcomings, which is comprehensive and will be a boon to many an essay, and an Epilogue serving as both an examination of the influence of ancient on later democracy and as a disquisition on the problems facing today's democratic states.

Throughout, the book we find an uncontroversial, slightly recidivist and occasionally glowing apology for Athenian democracy, as the forebear of the modern variety; in his Introduction and Epilogue, M. makes it clear that he sees a direct and simple link between the two. There are

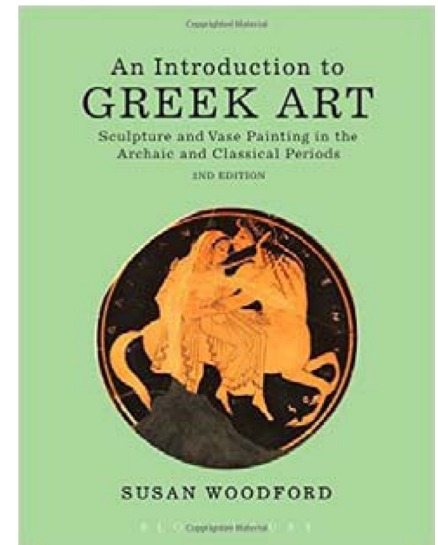
very few typos and slips, although I counted two in two lines on p. 116.

*Terry Walsh, Ratcliffe College*

**Woodford (S.)**

*An Introduction to Greek Art. Sculpture and Vase Painting in the Archaic and Classical Periods, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.*

pp. 224. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. Paper, £19.99. ISBN: 978-1472523648.



**Figure 5. | An Introduction to Greek Art.**

Like many Classicists of my generation, my degree was rather old-fashioned in that it focused very much on the classical languages – with a sprinkling of ancient history and little or nothing on the material culture of the ancient world. Therefore, nearly 20 years ago, when I found myself teaching A Level Classical Civilisation Art and Architecture, I was faced with a very steep learning curve indeed. Susan Woodford's *An Introduction to Greek Art. Sculpture and Vase Painting in the Archaic and Classical Periods* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1986) was of great assistance to me in climbing that hill and since then has been my steadfast companion as 'set text' for countless A Level groups. In her Preface to the 1986 edition, W. (in class we tend to refer to her more informally as Susan!) stated 'The purpose of this book is to make the beauty of Greek Art more readily accessible and comprehensible.' This aim was eminently well achieved in the first edition and this remains equally true of the 2015 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

A significant difference between the two editions lies in what one might call

'production quality'. Given the visual nature of the subject, the improvement in the quality of the photographs is in itself sufficient to justify the new edition. In the second edition, many of the rather tired looking black and white pictures of vase paintings (it was always something of an irritation to source colour depictions of these vases from elsewhere for teaching purposes) have been transformed into rather marvellous and very good-quality colour photographs. The Ajax and Achilles Black Figure (p. 24) by Exekias, the Heracles feasting red figure by the Andokides Painter (p. 59) and the girl picking apples white-ground by the Sotades painter (p. 107) are particularly effective examples, though there are many more. In contrast, for reasons of clarity, for so we are told, the majority of the depictions of sculptures have been retained in black and white (though considerably sharper and better-quality photographs than the 1986 edition) – the archaic korai (pp. 52 & 54) are pleasant exceptions. Another nice touch is the change in colour of the lines showing how the anatomy is used to create symmetry across the torso of the New York kouros (p. 42) and the contour lines created by the pose of the Discobolus (p. 88) or the contrapposto evident in the pose of the Diadoumenos (p. 134). The use of red rather than white or black is certainly clearer and more effective.

I was less pleased that the photograph of the actual west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia is no longer shown beneath a line drawing reconstruction of the scene, though the line drawing is considerably clearer. Considerable attention to detail has gone into the 2015 edition, an example of which might be on p. 116 where we are now told sections of the west frieze were only removed from the building in the 1990s – in 1986 they were, of course, still in situ! However, across the first 12 chapters there have been minimal changes to the text between the two editions and little attempt to reflect in a significant way any reinterpretation of vase paintings or sculptures that has come from the scholarship of the past 30 years. This is not a criticism; this sort of reinterpretation is not at all the purpose of this new edition and, indeed in the epilogue and the appendix (there are some interesting and useful additions – notably on establishing dates BC and on temple plans and layouts) W. directs us

most helpfully towards where we can find the latest interpretations and a list of the questions scholars are asking about works of art and which all students of classical art should be asking themselves. W. has, however, added a welcome analysis of the frieze of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus as an addition to her Chapter 12 on the sculpture of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Here W., with her usual brevity and perceptiveness very effectively focuses our attention on some interesting contrasts between this frieze and those of the Parthenon, particularly around pace, variety of pose and action, sense of movement, perspective and so forth; she even draws into the discussion a nice comparison with several freestanding sculptures from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC regarding proportion. It is this ability to draw together wide-ranging strands of analysis with sharpness and clarity which makes this book such a valuable reference and class text.

Perhaps more significantly, W. has added an extremely interesting entirely new chapter on Art in Greek Society – this chapter alone makes this new edition worthy of the cover price and fills a gap in the first edition made glaring by the comparison. I do not think I have read a more coherent concise overview of the links between art, myth, politics and religion and the same is true of W.'s concluding survey of the place of the various art forms within Greek society. I did wonder if this chapter might be more helpful at the beginning rather than the end for an A Level teacher using W. This chapter is perhaps a good place to start a course encompassing the history of sculpture or vase painting.

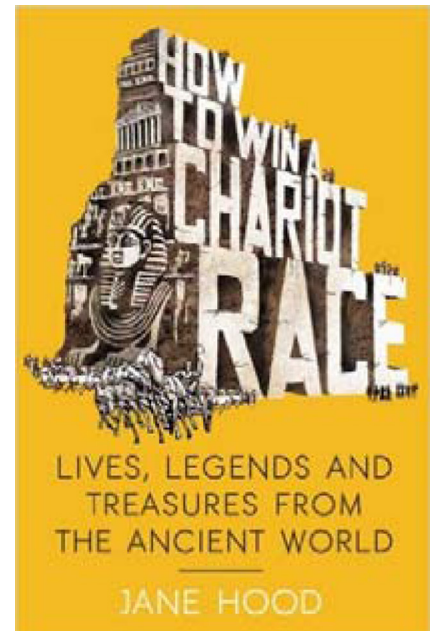
*An introduction to Greek Art* provides an extremely clear and coherent overview to a very complex aspect of Greek culture and is at the same time replete with sophisticated and subtle analysis. In the Preface to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition, W. wrote '...I have attempted to provide a systematic approach and an analytic framework that will help the novice – student, traveller, art lover – not only to develop understanding and appreciation, but also, I hope to discover and enjoy the splendour of Greek art.' The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition lays an even stronger claim than the 1<sup>st</sup> for this work to be the *vade mecum* of any student of Greek art whether novice or veteran.

**Rod Jackson, Head of Upper School,  
The King Alfred School**

Hood (J.)

*How to Win a Chariot Race: Lives, Legends and Treasures from the Ancient World.*

pp. x + 224. London: Icon Books Ltd, 2015. Paper, £8.99. ISBN: 978-1-84831-946-2.



**Figure 6. | How to Win a Chariot Race. Lives, Legends and Treasures from the Ancient World.**

This is an entertaining, interesting book, written in a lively, engaging style. It covers a wide range of different material from Alexander the Great in India, through to an ancient Greek computer and papyri in Herculaneum. It offers readers an opportunity to engage with areas of the ancient world which are not always that accessible, not least because of the breadth of its coverage, both in relation to topics and time-span. In this respect it has something for everyone – science, philosophy, literature, religion, daily life and medicine all feature, not to mention some of the more recent controversies such as the Elgin Marbles. The sections on the discovery of the ancient world – such as that dealing with Liddell and Scott – offer a further perspective on the study of the past. Key characters such as Callimachus who get very little airtime at school level also feature, thereby introducing some new, important ideas and people to those who are looking to pursue the subject further. It is, therefore, a book which will appeal to a teenage audience – although some may feel that

the odd topic is more suitable for the upper end of the age range. This book has potential not only for students themselves to read, but also for teachers to use to offer their students a few interesting facts to throw into the mix as they teach.

There are one or two points at which the book seems slightly less thorough than it might have been – for example, the section on Modern uses of Latin could have been more fully developed, and the ‘Short Written Tests’, on occasion, bear little relation to what has been covered in the book – something which might put off the more astute teenage reader. Some of the coverage is, perhaps, a little thin in places, such as the very quick treatments of some early Christian figures, which might have profited from further development.

Overall, however, this is a publication which offers teachers and their students a new dimension to their Classical studies, and should engage a wide audience. It has the potential to enthrall those who may be uncertain about studying the ancient world, whilst giving the ardent Classicist an opportunity to discover more about daily living, both practical and more abstract, in ancient times.

*David Hodgkinson, School of St. Helen and St. Katharine, Abingdon*

MacDowall (S.)  
*Catalaunian Fields AD 451: Rome's Last Great Battle.*  
 pp. 96, b/w & colour ill., colour maps. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2015. Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-4728-0743-4.

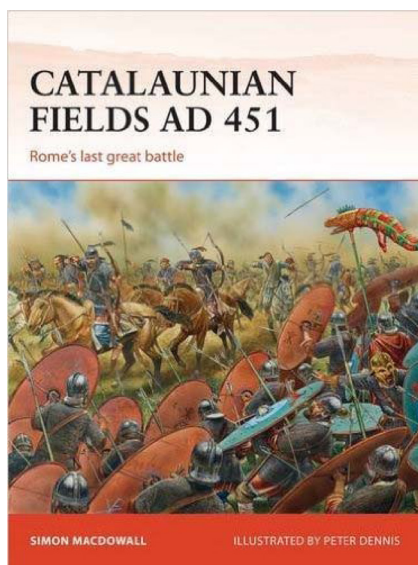


Figure 7. | Catalaunian Fields.

This book, which is part of the Osprey military history series (Campaign no. 286) is written by Simon MacDowall and illustrated by Peter Dennis. As with other books in the Osprey series it has a good combination of maps, drawings and photographs in either colour or black and white. All the maps are in colour. There are several battle plans as well as photographs of the battlefield as it is today. There is an interesting selection of mosaics, reliefs and other artworks which are thought to depict arms and armour of the time (ranging from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> Century) as well as some pictures of original surviving pieces (and modern reconstructions worn by Spanish re-enactors).

The chapters are divided into: ‘Origins of the Campaign’ (which is subdivided into an ‘Introduction’; ‘The Huns and Goths’; ‘Roman Gaul’ and ‘Causes of war’); Chronology; Opposing Commanders (‘The Romans and their allies’; ‘The Huns and their allies’); ‘Opposing Forces’ (‘Numbers’; ‘Aetius’ army’; ‘Attila’s army’); ‘The Campaign’ (‘Virgins, bishops and saints’; ‘The sieges of Orleans’; ‘Attila’s retreat from Orleans’); ‘The Battle’ (‘The Battlefield’; ‘The opening moves’; ‘Deployment for battle’; ‘The clash of battle lines’; ‘Turning the tide’; ‘The day after’; ‘Aftermath’; ‘The Battlefield Today’; ‘Bibliography’ and ‘Further Reading’; and an ‘Index’.

The Battle of the Catalaunian Fields (‘sometimes erroneously known as the Battle of Chalons’) occurred on the 20<sup>th</sup> June AD 451, in which the Huns and other peoples were defeated by a combined army of Romans, Goths, Alans and others.

Despite its significance, M. notes that there is actually very little evidence for the battle itself and, like most battle sites, the precise location is uncertain. Given how much landscapes are likely to have changed due to farming, any speculation about where the battle took place is also highly problematic. Despite this, M. (p. 57) later goes on to claim that ‘there is little doubt’ that it was about five Roman miles west of Troyes (following the unknown author of the *Chronical of Prosper*).

Crucially, archaeological evidence for the battle (arms, armour or skeletons) is lacking – other than the ‘treasure of Pouan’ (40 km NW of where M. thinks the battle took place). The ‘treasure’ is itself very unconvincing, as this is just two swords and several pieces of gold jewellery dating to sometime in the 5<sup>th</sup>

Century – hardly evidence of a great battle. This might suggest that the battle was elsewhere.

M. has a difficult task in convincing his audience of the significance of the battle. The Battle of the Catalaunian Fields is neither particularly well known, nor as strategically significant as the Battle of Adrianople (or Hadrianopolis) of AD 378. The fact that M. has to cite Sir Edward Creasy from 1851 as evidence of the importance of the battle indicates just how outdated this notion is. As long ago as 1928, Bury convincingly demolished the argument for the significance of the battle and more recent books, even those which focus on the ‘barbarian’ perspective, such as Heather, tend to gloss over this battle. M. admits this in his bibliography, which provides a useful list of ancient as well as modern accounts which mention the battle, with a short one- or two-line summary of each book, though he doesn’t convincingly argue against it in his conclusion (‘Aftermath’). As M. notes (p. 91), all the major protagonists (Aetius, Attila, Theodoric (who died in the battle), his son Thorismund, and the emperor Valentinian) were themselves dead within three years of AD 451; nor did the battle prevent Attila from going on to sack the cities of Aquileia, Milan and Pavia the following year, as M. also notes.

Another problem is the size of the armies. M. (p. 40) notes that ‘a detailed breakdown of Attila’s forces is impossible’ but this does not prevent him from making his own estimates of 5,000 to 10,000 Ostrogoths, a similar number of Gepids, and 10,000 to 15,000 Huns – though how he arrives at these figures he does not say.

Similarly, for Aetius’ army, M. admits that both figures and battle order are ‘speculative’. M. estimates that the Visigothic contingent in Aetius’ army was about 10,000 to 15,000 strong with 10,000 to 20,000 from the Roman army (actually comprising Galls, Franks, Armoricans, Saxons, *laeti* and *ripaenses*) with just 1,000 to 3,000 Alans. Again, these figures are simply plucked out of thin air, with no explanation as to how he has arrived at them. This is essentially a response to modern audiences (and possibly editors) who aren’t satisfied with ‘we don’t know’, but if one is going to provide alternative figures then some discussion of how he arrives at them is necessary.

M. is right to question Jordanes’ estimates of 165,000 casualties on both

sides. Ancient sources for army sizes are always grossly exaggerated – dividing by ten is usually a good start. M. notes that it was rare, in practice, for armies of this period to exceed 20,000 (as opposed to the exaggerated figures which our ancient sources provide). The reason for this is simply one of logistics – a comparison with modern armies from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards would have been useful here. If the Romans, with all their infrastructure had difficulty in getting together and supplying an army of 20,000, then M. is surely right to question the notion that Attila could have supplied an army in the hundreds of thousands just by foraging. M. is equally right to estimate that Attila’s army was in the tens of thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands.

Interestingly, contrary to what many historians believe, M. does not think that it was beyond the technical ability of Attila and his army to besiege cities, noting that siege engines *were* used by Attila at Orleans, and that it was only the arrival of the Roman army which forced him to break off the siege.

*James Tuck, PGCE Student, University of Sussex*

Harris (R).  
*Dictator*.

pp. 464. London: Hutchinson, 2015.  
Hardback, £8.99. ISBN:  
978-0091752101

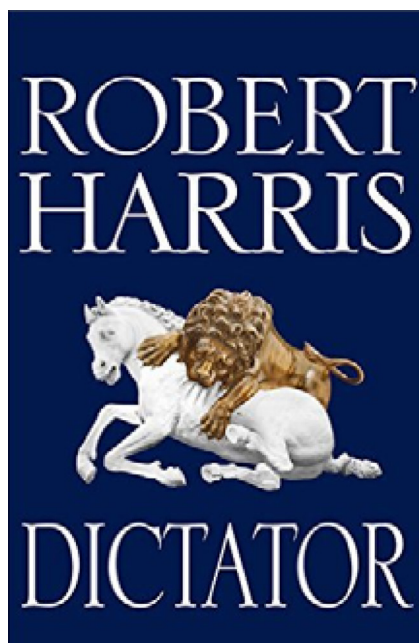


Figure 8. | Dictator.

*Dictator* – the third novel in Robert Harris’ Cicero trilogy – has been long awaited. In the years between the publication of *Lastrum* and its successor, while Harris was packing the bookshops with *The Fear Index* and *An Officer and a Spy*, some of us were wondering when he would get back to the great republican.

The book is divided – unlike Gaul – into two parts. *Exile* goes beyond Cicero’s actual exile to the Civil War and the death of Pompey; *Redux* moves swiftly from Caesar’s dictatorship to his assassination and its terrible aftermath. Harris has Tiro, Cicero’s amanuensis and biographer, continue the narration begun in the foregoing volumes, and this remains his stroke of genius. We believe in Tiro (whose own biography was lost), and so we believe in his picture of Cicero.

As *Dictator* opens, we are shown a Cicero crushed, on the run, fleeing Clodius and his thugs. Caesar, who by making Clodius tribune had given him power to introduce laws, has departed for Gaul; but Cicero knows that Clodius is Caesar’s instrument.

In the following months, turning or having been turned away from one haven after another, Cicero becomes gradually more depressed. Eventually finding refuge in Thessalonica, he languishes there until Tiro has been to see Caesar in Gaul – and there can finally be a return to Rome. At the end of *Exile*, Tiro records a telling conversation.

*Cicero*: Doesn’t it require a vote of the Senate?

*Caesar*: I **am** the vote of the Senate.

The Dictator speaks.

Back in Italy, Cicero is met by cheering crowds. His renewed determination enables him to cope with the ruin of his property, the physical attacks of Clodius, and the new political challenges of the era. Through Tiro’s shrewd eyes Harris shows us the end of the triumvirate, the downfall of the republic, the death of Caesar and the ensuing chaos. Throughout this period, walking a fine line as he interacts with powerful men, Cicero holds to his ideal of the republic and the rule of law.

The Republic is probably the best-documented time in the ancient world, and Harris makes good use of his sources, especially the letters and speeches of Cicero. He links real and imagined incidents in a credible fashion, moving easily between references to features of Roman life such as *haruspices*, *aediles*, the *Carcer* and the *Comitium*, and the colloquial language of a blunt message from the triumvirate:

“And the gist of it is this: *shut up, Marcus Tullius!* Shut up to the Senate about Caesar’s laws. Shut up trying to cause trouble between the Three . . . Shut up generally, in fact”.

Cicero is brought to complex life in these pages, with his despair, resilience, political insight and personal affection. We see his friendship with Atticus, his love for Tullia, his see-saw relationships with both Caesar and his nephew Octavian. Harris uses an actual speech to give us a flavour of Cicero’s skill and timing, when the trial of Caelius Rufus allows him to insult Clodia.

“Now . . . I am on terms of great personal enmity with this woman’s husband . . .’ he snapped his fingers in exasperation. ‘I meant to say brother: I always make that mistake.’”

At the age of 63 Cicero temporarily becomes a popular leader, and uses his position to speak against Antony; but by the end of the book the republican cause is lost and the Second Triumvirate is in power. Although Cicero comes close to winning, he is a marked man. Harris vividly describes the savage death which Cicero meets with dignity.

‘We are not born for ourselves alone’, wrote Cicero in *De Officiis*, one of the works which occupies him towards the end of his life: and this could be seen as his ultimate credo. Julius Caesar, the Dictator of the title, looms large over the novel, with his charisma, his volatility and his frightening power – yet it is still Cicero who absorbs our attention. Harris shows us that Tiro loved Cicero. He also clearly loves the man, and causes us to mourn him, too. Sometimes sensational, sometimes funny – *Dictator* is a moving

farewell to Cicero; but its reading is greatly enriched as the culminating volume of Harris' trilogy.

Helen Lawrenson

Coats (L.)

*Beasts of Olympus: Beast Keeper.*  
pp. 121, ills. London: Piccadilly Press,  
2015. Paper, £5.99. ISBN: 978-1-  
84812-439-4.

Coats (L.)

*Beasts of Olympus: Hound of Hades.*  
pp. 122, ills. London: Piccadilly Press,  
2015. Paper, £5.99. ISBN: 978-1-  
84812-440-0.

Coats (L.)

*Beasts of Olympus: Steeds of the Gods.*  
pp. 138, ills. London: Piccadilly Press,  
2015. Paper, £5.99. ISBN:  
978-1-84812-452-3.

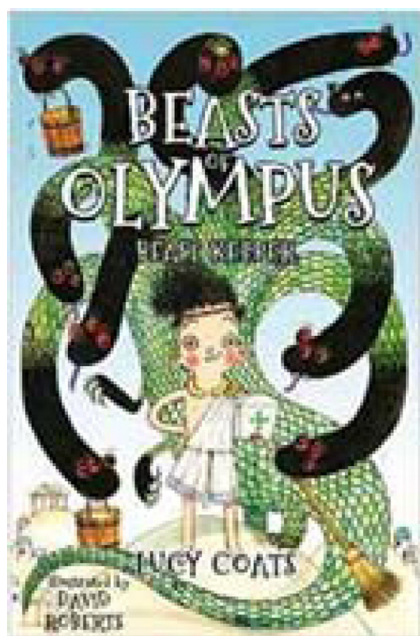


Figure 9. | *Beasts of Olympus: Beast Keeper.*

Lucy Coats is the writer of more than 30 books, many of them for children. In line with recent practice, no target age group is stated on the jacket of her new *Beast Keeper* series, but the feel is middle range fiction (roughly 8-12). The premise of the *Beast Keeper* series is that the boy Pandemonium (Demon to his friends) is the son of the god Pan and a mortal woman. He is very good with animals, so good, in fact, that when a post becomes vacant on Olympus, he is just the lad for the job. Pan swoops down and carries him off to become *Beast Keeper* to the gods.

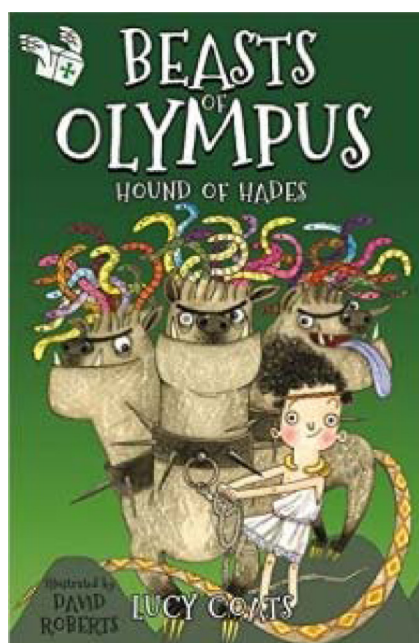


Figure 10. | *Beasts of Olympus: Hound of Hades.*

Rather as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead* is to *Hamlet*, the stables on Mount Olympus form the backstage to many of the Greek myths. C. has ingeniously decided that the monsters and mythical beasts need to go somewhere during periods when they are not laying waste the countryside below or fighting with heroes. Demon's job is to muck them out and to see that they are fed. He also has to patch them up after they have been damaged by heroes and within the stories this is the main source of challenge for our hero. Understandably, the beast-mauling Heracles becomes his *bête noire* (no pun intended).

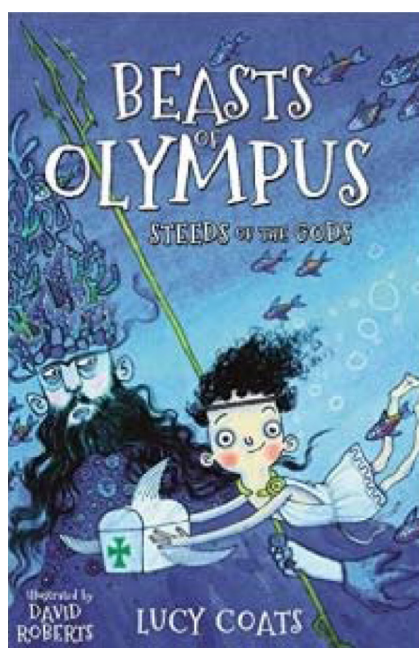


Figure 11. | *Beasts of Olympus: Steeds of the gods.*

The books are well written with an almost poetic start to the first book. There is also some age appropriate humour – the Cattle of the Sun are flatulent since ambrosia disagrees with them. There is, in addition, a slightly uneven inclusion of new technology within the books – gods and their guests are transported swiftly about the place by 'Iris express'; the workshop of Hephaestus employs 'forge robots'.

At the start of each chapter, there is a charming, stylised black and white illustration by David Roberts and the attractive cover designs burst with colour and incident.

The books are well researched and accurate in their accounts of myths and of the characteristics of gods and I never doubt C.'s knowledge of her subject material. The books certainly represent a sure-handed introduction to the Olympian gods and a wider breadth of mythology. My main question about them is whether there is enough danger and conflict to keep the readers turning the pages. The books each have the capacity for compelling plots but duck the possibility of true threat to the hero. The first time Demon is clawed by a griffin, his magical snake necklace immediately heals him, before the tender reader will have had time to muster even a scintilla of anxiety. In the first book in the series, *Beast Keeper*, it is page 80 (out of 121) when Demon hits his first real problem, i.e. one that is not immediately solved for him by a helpful god or Olympian 'technology'. Demon encounters his main challenge earlier in the following book, *Hound of Hades*, but still not until nearly half way through.

Nor is there any unanswered question about Demon's character nor mystery about his origins. In short, young Demon is an open book – there is no fundamental question about him that needs to be resolved.

So if the *Beast Keeper* series is not plot-driven and is not character-driven, but is full of facts and descriptions, that leaves only one possibility – it must be didactic. Certainly, it will appeal to young Classics nerds – they will gleefully identify and learn more about gods and heroes to whom they have already been introduced. Definitely, it will appeal to parents as a worthwhile educational book (and remember, it is the parents who actually buy the books). The ambling nature of the plot and lack of suspense, however, is likely to limit its appeal.

I would like to nominate these books, however, as very appropriate academic prizes for younger students of Classics – they will help handsomely to develop the interest they already have.

Clare F Harvey, *Watford Grammar School for Boys*

**Variatio Part I: A Scholarship Latin Course.** Clarke (E. A.)

pp. 184. Amazon: UK. 2015. Paper, £12.99.

**Variatio Part II: A Scholarship Latin Course.** Clarke (E. A.)

pp. 154. Amazon: UK. 2015. Paper, £12.99.

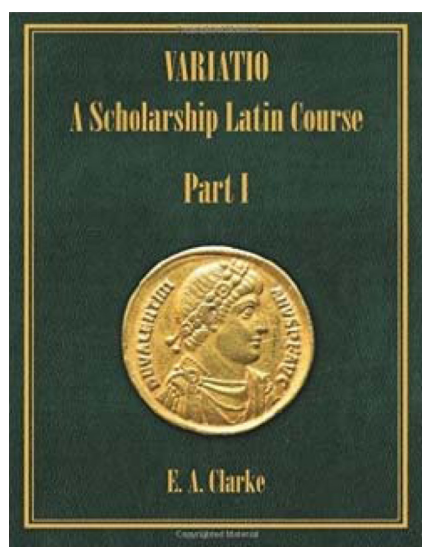


Figure 12. | Variatio Book I.

These two Latin course books are unashamedly traditionalist in approach. C. knows his prep school market well and I suspect that much of what is offered in these books will suit them. He also suggests that the books might find favour with those preparing students for GCSE, but the materials contained within them go much further than is needed for the GCSE examination and for those students who never progress further than this qualification, much time will be spent on learning information which will never be needed. This is not in itself a reason for not using the course, but teachers should be aware that its intention is very much skewed towards scholarship examinations for the UK public (i.e. independent) schools – as the title of the course books suggest. Indeed, past papers from several of them are, with permission, printed at the end of the

second book, including, slightly bizarrely, some ancient Greek test sentences from a 2005 Taunton School past paper.

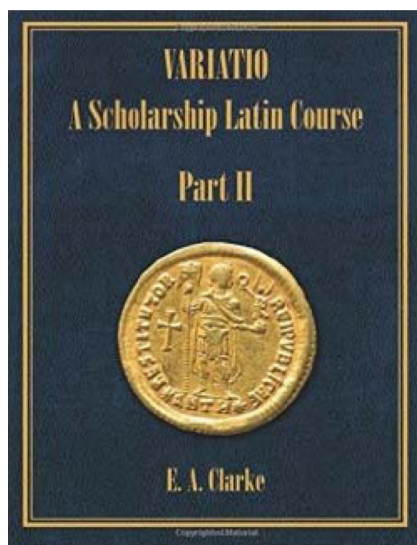


Figure 13. | Variatio Book II.

Book I contains the 1<sup>st</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> declension, 1<sup>st</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> conjugations (all tenses by p. 113 shows the pace), 1<sup>st</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> declension adjectives, infinitives and so on, explained by explicit grammar notes, with tables to learn, vocabulary to memorise and to consolidate, working through the standard sorts of Latin into English and English into Latin sentences that you would expect from this approach. A full dictionary of Latin to English and English to Latin words is provided. Because of the way in which the book follows the traditional pattern of introducing all the cases of a declension at once, sentences are often unintentionally funny (or maybe deliberately so) or bemusing; thus, many men greatly desire power, while boys avoid the wild beast's horn, and so on, while sentences in which girls are forever singing or walking with their mistresses to the shop suggest that gender stereotyping is alive and well in the Roman Empire. The vast majority of the exercises in the course are short, disconnected sentences like these. There are also some 22 continuous passages (about equal numbers in Latin to English as English to Latin), of which many are militaristic in subject matter. C. omits English background material due to there being, he says, insufficient time for teaching such topics on a prep school timetable. Some historical and cultural material is picked up, however,

through the readings themselves: stories from Roman Britain, the foundation of Rome (geese in the Capitol, Camillus, Romulus and Remus) and then a sudden jump to Caesar's death and its aftermath. Students would not gain much in the way of an understanding of the chronology of ancient Rome through using this course – but that is not the intention.

Information is presented clean on the page. C. has tried to keep ideas page-specific: the layout is designed to help the student find their way around. Exercises are there to be done and marked right or wrong; comprehension questions are very much of the factual type rather than inferential or inviting a personal response. Box outlines might have been better. Otherwise, the text is well spaced and a large page format helps visual focus on the words and comprehension – there are few occasions when examples 'run over' onto the next page. Tables of accidence are given throughout and at the back of the book.

The first 20 pages of Book II teach all the passives, including the much-neglected future perfect. Then deponent and semi-deponent verbs, irregular verbs (*nolo*, *malo* and *volo* separated from the infinitives in Book I), all participles, ablative absolutes and indirect statement (all tenses of the infinitive, all voices) with a complete set of examples. To this teacher there's a bit of an information overload – the determined student presumably is capable of holding all this information. But in order to accommodate the wealth of new forms, the number of continuous passages decreases to only 16. Students who have got this far and were intending to use the course for GCSE would be better spending their time reading more continuous passages than learning about the contracted form of the perfect active infinitive. Nevertheless, for a public school scholarship examination, the student would no doubt be well prepared for the sorts of knowledge which those papers prefer to test. No tables of accidence are given in Book II. C. suggests that *disce Latinum* should be provided as a supplementary text book.

C. has written a traditionally-minded text book for a very specific audience. In a highly competitive market, it does its

job thoroughly and relatively concisely. It is well produced, feels purposeful and does not patronise its readers. I would have doubts about its appeal to more mixed-ability classes, however, due to its lack of visual appeal and strong socio-

cultural interest. As preparation for GCSE, it slightly misses the mark – providing insufficient practice of longer passages to read, and insufficient variety of reading material. For adult self-learners, perhaps as part of an evening

class or club, the course might be attractive, provided there was a key to the exercises made available.

*Steven Hunt, University of Cambridge and Chesterton Community College*