

Text-Commentary Project

I first used this assignment as a final semester project with 4th semester and advanced Latin students in my "Roman Women" class. Its success with the students as a learning tool prompted me to adapt it for other Latin classes. What follows are my goals and the steps I have used to achieve them.

- to increase student competence in Latin, specifically in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax
- to increase student confidence in interpreting Latin through reading, research, visualization, application
- to contribute to intermediate-level Latin text-commentaries about women on the web (*qui docent discunt*)

Step I: identify texts for this assignment by browsing the lists at [Puella](#), [Matrona](#), [Meretrix](#), [Amica](#) or any of the sourcebooks on Roman women in translation and checking that no intermediate-level commentary exists. Choose passages appropriate in length and difficulty to the level of your students (see the variety of passages at [De Feminis Romanis](#), where graduate and undergraduate text-commentaries are posted).

Step II: have each student choose a text from your list and copy it from one of the several on-line Latin sites: [Ad Fontes Academy: The Latin Library](#), [Bibliotheca Augustana](#), [Forum Romanum: Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum](#), [The Perseus Digital Library: Greek and Roman Materials](#). Advise your students to check the Latin against a critical edition in print.

Step III: select and discuss with the class the merits of intermediate-level commentaries that might be consulted as models (e.g., your class text, *On-Line Companion*, *Worlds of Roman Women*, LaFleur's *Love and Transformation: An Ovid Reader*, Ciruolo's *Cicero: Pro Caelio*, AP Latin texts).

Step IV: provide each student with a start-up list of sources, both print and Internet, and your preferences for dictionary and grammar research (see [Companion Resources](#) for online tools). To encourage students to begin research on the project, give a bibliographic survey and annotated bibliography assignment due in the middle of the semester.

Step V: establish your expectations of the commentary project; my list follows:

1. **An introduction** to the passage that contains information about the author's life and work, the genre of the selection, and an overview or outline of the work from which the passage is taken
2. **A reflection**, based on research, about the woman/women described in the passage and the circumstances in which she/they find themselves.
3. **A literal translation** of the Latin passage in the student's words
4. **A bibliography** of print and internet sources consulted
5. **A print-out** of images that illustrate the text, referenced with URL's
6. **Comments to the text** arising from student reading, such as:
 - complete dictionary entries for less-common words with the recommended translation for the word, as it is used in the immediate context, placed first, followed by a range of possible meanings
 - explication of grammatical forms, syntax, word order, rhetorical devices, meter
 - identification of people, places, events, references (browse [Companion Resources](#))
 - interpretation of ideas in the text and meaning that is not readily apparent

Step VI: set an early date for submission of a first draft which you will critique and return in time for the students to make (usually substantive) revisions.

Step VII: select and edit those commentaries that you consider superior using the format of the texts on *Companion*. Obtain permission from your student(s) to submit them in your student's name to *Companion* for possible addition to the site (I have found the possibility of E-publication a powerful student motivator).

Student Project

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Mrs. McCall, Merion Mercy Academy, Merion, Pa, 2015

Text Commentary Project: [Vergil, Aeneid: II.771-795](#)

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Syllabus: [Roman Women 2007](#), [Roman Women 2002](#)

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