

## Teaching Vergil's *Aeneid* at the College Level: Studies and Strategies

Teaching the *Aeneid* in college-level courses can be challenging. Many students read the *Aeneid* in translation as part of an introductory literature or culture/history course, and these students often come away from the class with a limited understanding of the poem and without real appreciation for its wealth of meaning. Other students first encounter the poem in Latin, most often translating it in an intermediate-level course. Many of these students have limited experience with real Latin texts and struggle with the poetic language. Because they are so set on recognizing grammatical constructions in order to translate accurately and because they move slowly through just a small portion of the text, these students frequently fail to develop an understanding of the text as a whole. Some students have read the poem in high school and may approach it with preconceptions, thinking that they already know everything there is to know. The proposed pedagogical panel will offer experiences and observations, strategies, and evidence collected in formal studies about teaching the *Aeneid* to college students both in Latin and in translation. It will be of interest not only to those who teach the epic at colleges and universities but also to high school teachers who teach it as part of the AP curriculum.

The first paper, "*Quod accidit in spēluncā, in spēluncā manet: Adapting Aeneid 4 for College-Level Introductory Latin*," describes a system for introducing selections from Book Four of the poem into an elementary Latin curriculum, thereby giving students an early opportunity to engage with real Latin literature. The presenter creates adaptations of the poem which complement the primary textbook the students use, starting out with simple daily sight readings which provide an overview of the plot and characters and, eventually, working up to readings which incorporate Vergil's own language. As they learn basic vocabulary and grammar,

students develop an appreciation for how Latin text in particular can communicate with its audience in multiple ways. This system is adaptable to any elementary textbook.

The second paper, “Learning Vergil with Little Data,” presents evidence which will be collected in a formal study carried out in an intermediate-level Latin course in early spring semester, 2016. The study seeks to determine which preparatory methods are most effective when students read the *Aeneid* at this level and will be carried out with input from social scientists. The author hypothesizes that, if students concentrate on vocabulary acquisition and on working their way through edited versions of the poem before attempting Vergil’s own text, they will be better prepared to read the original. The presentation will offer both quantitative and qualitative data.

The third paper, “Approaching the *Aeneid* through Art,” also focuses on teaching the poem in Latin at the intermediate level and also will offer evidence collected in a formal study (this study will be conducted during fall semester, 2015). The author presents a thematic model for a gateway course on the *Aeneid* which focuses on the importance of art and ekphrasis in the poem. Students translate ekphrastic passages from Books One, Five, Six, Eight, and Ten as they read the entire poem in translation for context, and writing assignments help develop students’ engagement with the Latin they translate. With the thematic approach, students notice specific language and see how seemingly disconnected artistic instances in the poem work with each other and with the larger narrative. Data presented in this paper will be based on a qualitative study of students’ experiences in the course.

The final paper, “*Aeneids* in English,” focuses on teaching the poem in translation. The presenter offers a pedagogical method for helping students realize that multiple readings of the *Aeneid* exist and for helping them develop their own reading and appreciation of the poem.

Students create charts which outline relationships between characters and ideas, for example, allowing them to see important themes and motifs. They build upon their charts as they make their way through the text, noting changes in patterns and unstable oppositions. Students' previous experiences with classical literature and the Latin language are brought into the larger discussion as points of critical inquiry, and students emerge more aware of the power of their own intellectual investigation.

Finally, the respondent to the panel is a prominent Vergilian scholar who is also interested in Latin pedagogy. Thus, the respondent's comments should greatly enhance the presentations and lead to a dynamic, robust discussion about teaching the *Aeneid*.