

STUDENTS AS SCHOLARS: Teaching with *Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women*

Maria S. Marsilio

Title Slide: #1

Good afternoon. I am Maria Marsilio and I am here to tell you about a Latin classroom activity that has proven satisfying on many levels. While instructions for the activity are on the *Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women* website and on your handout, I want to share with you my experiences of the opportunities for collaboration that it offers -- between teacher and student, among students, and with colleagues in the field.

(#2 slide) <https://feminaeromanae.org/>

Before I describe in detail how I have incorporated the Latin Text Commentary Project into my Latin courses, let me say just a few words about *Companion* for those who are unfamiliar with the site. *Online Companion* was unveiled in June, 2006, as a digital adjunct to the intermediate Latin print anthology *The Worlds of Roman Women* (March, 2005) -- hence its name. Nurtured by collegial interaction, the site has achieved its promise, as you may have read in the review posted on the website of the *Society for Classical Studies*.

(#3 slide) Review @ <https://classicalstudies.org/node/22518>.

Companion offers linked illustrations of ancient artifacts, pop-up glosses to assist reading and comprehension, and, most importantly, an array of Instructional Resources

(#4 slide) <https://feminaeromanae.org/instruction.html>

that support active student learning and engagement through independent research, mentoring, creative exercises and peer collaboration.

Clicking on “Activities for Classroom Use” opens a page that begins with Suggestions

(#5 slide) <https://feminaeromanae.org/activities.html>

for assignments designed to make use of the resources available on *Companion*. Below these is

(#6 slide) a section on **Semester Projects** containing two main options. The first is an activity involving Roman Funerary Inscriptions; clicking on it brings you to a page of **guided instructions** for analyzing funerary epigraphy and sculpture, unpublished monument options for adoption, a bibliography of epigraphic sources, and model student projects.

The final category on the Activities page contains links to instructions for exercises tested by contributors and designed for the Worlds in which *Companion* Latin texts appear.

Let's move on now to the main focus of today's presentation -- the Text Commentary Project.

(#7 slide) https://feminaeromanae.org/raia_commentary.html

The instructions for the commentary project (on your **handout**) ask students to choose a Latin passage from a critical edition to annotate; to consult published commentaries as models for writing lexical and grammatical glosses; and to research events, persons, and ideas they find in their text. In sum, advanced Latin students are invited to become virtual teachers, scholars, and mentors by annotating a text for intermediate-level Latin readers.

Faculty who adopted the project reported their students demonstrated greater engagement in research and reflection and improved facility with the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical elements of Latin. It is important to note that The Text-Commentary Project aligns closely with one of Saint Joseph's University's top priorities in the College of Arts and Sciences: to ensure that all undergraduate students have the opportunity to participate in one or more experiences, namely Internships/Co-ops, Study Abroad, Service Learning, and Student Research. Since 1995, when I became Classics Program Director, I have mentored our majors and minors in many projects of independent research, collaborative research, and co-publishing with me. Since engaging in this project furthers my personal instructional goals for my students, I include it in my Saint Joseph's University annual reports for myself and for our Classical Studies Program.

Because I am persuaded that the implementation of the instructions is as important to success as the instructions themselves, I want to share with you how I integrated the project on Horace *Odes* 3.23 (Phidyle) into my Fall 2021 upper-division course on Latin Lyric Poetry. I intended the project to emerge out of collaborative assignments which students would present in class and then prepare for critique and editing by *Companion's* editorial team of experts in Latin literature. The anticipated outcome was publication of my students' work in *Companion*.

I also wish to clarify that there were two reasons for the choice of Horace's Phidyle poem as the focus of our Latin Text Commentary. First, naturally, Horace was one of the lyric poets my class would

read during the semester, and second, Dr. Raia confirmed that she wished to have more text commentaries for *Companion* in the World of Religion. So, the Phidyle poem was perfect for us.

The Latin text commentary project supported 9 of the 14 learning objectives I established for students in my course, specifically the first 7 and the last 2:

(#8 slide) Learning Objectives: In this course, students will:

- demonstrate mastery of Latin vocabulary, morphology, grammar, and syntax.
- produce an accurate English translation of a grammatically and syntactically complex Latin text.
- apply metrical rules to reading aloud Latin poetry.
- comment meaningfully on the ideas of a Latin text.
- examine the Latin poems of Catullus and Horace within their social, historical, economic, political, religious, philosophical, or legal context.
- identify basic themes, ideologies, and/or stylistic features of Latin lyric and elegiac poetry.
- incorporate material from classical art and architecture into the interpretation of Latin lyric and elegiac poetry.
- recognize and translate basic Latin terms in epigraphic and numismatic material.
- make connections between Classics and other academic disciplines devoted (partly or wholly) to the study of the ancient world, such as history, archaeology, philosophy, and theology.
- demonstrate awareness of the importance of the classical world for more recently developed disciplines, such as psychology, gender studies, and film studies.
- explain the significance of Latin for English and the Romance languages.
- discuss how classical antiquity has shaped western thought and culture, in particular literature, art, architecture, theater, cinema, law, politics, and social structures.
- produce cogent, well-organized, and thoroughly researched presentations (written and/or oral) by investigating primary and secondary sources.
- formulate meaningful and original interpretations about ancient texts and Greco-Roman culture.

From the first day of class on August 24, 2021, my students knew that this project would be a course requirement, and would be valued at 20% of their final course grade. They were also aware that the project offered the possibility of co-authorship of a publication on the *Companion* website. There was an immediate buy-in for the students. In spite of some trepidation because almost all 13 students in the class were new freshmen, they expressed initial excitement. They saw this project as a challenging, creative, collaborative way for them to demonstrate what they had learned in the course. The Latin Text Commentary Project was a welcome assignment that replaced the standard final examinations of many of their other courses. Here is how I described the project in my course syllabus:

(#9 slide): Syllabus Description

Dr. Marsilio's scholarly research and publications in Catullus and Roman poetry will support her mentoring of her students in her fall 2016 course LAT 305: Lyric Poetry as they prepare and publish a new Latin text commentary of Catullus, *Carmina* 34 in the *Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women* (edited by Ann R. Raia and Judith L. Sebesta): (<https://feminaeromanae.org/>). The online *Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women* introduces undergraduate Latin readers to Roman women, through un-adapted Latin texts, essays, and illustrations from the early Roman

Republic to the late Empire. Each Latin passage is introduced by its own image and essay that contextualize the reading. Latin expressions are hyperlinked to glosses that appear in small pop-up windows; they contain lexical, rhetorical, poetic and syntactic aids. SPQR links provide vivid images of ancient artifacts. Each student will individually prepare Latin glosses and commentary for assigned lines of Catullus 34, and will develop ideas for the introductory essay. Dr. Marsilio will offer criticisms and suggestions that she will discuss and debate with them in class and in outside class meetings. The students then will revise their work in collaboration. The editorial review process will entail the submission of the Latin text commentary and introductory essay, critical review by the *Companion* editors and other experts in Latin literature, revisions, and final editing.

The class read selected poems of Catullus and Horace in my course, Catullus in the first half of the semester and Horace in the second half. This meant that we were not scheduled to read Horace's *Odes* 3.23 until November 23, in the last two weeks of fall classes. However, I wanted to introduce my students to *Companion* as soon as possible and to give them a template for their future work on the Horace project. My purpose was to let them see that several of my previous Latin classes had produced Latin text commentaries that were now online on *Companion*. So, when we were scheduled to read Catullus poem 36 in late September, I showed my students Catullus 36 on *Companion* which my former Latin students had worked on and submitted for publication:

(#10 and #11 slides) <https://feminaeromanae.org/catullus36.html>

As my Latin Lyric Poetry students prepared for the class in which we read and analyzed Catullus poem 36, I asked them to consult their course texts: the Garrison edition of Catullus and the Allen and Greenough *New Latin Grammar*. Additionally, I asked them to review the *Companion* webpage on Catullus *Carmina* 36 so that they could appreciate the benefits of an online text and have a model for the commentary they would prepare on Horace *Odes* 3.23.

During the class in which we read Catullus 36 together, I projected the *Companion* text on the large screen in our classroom. The students were responsive and enthusiastic. They also smiled when I informed them that two of the student authors – Kerry Horleman and Lindsey Stamer—are currently high school Latin teachers. I witnessed them working with *Companion* in a real-time classroom experience as they discovered the advantages of a multi-level approach to the Latin poem: an introductory essay to contextualize the poem, especially as it relates to Roman women; focus on vocabulary as well as grammatical, metrical and syntactical issues through hyperlinked glosses; targeted reference to literary, historical, archaeological and cultural matters.

I asked the students to begin work on Horace's Phidyle on November 23. Their first step was to translate the poem, analyze grammar and syntax, and discuss the larger questions the poem raised. As it is my custom in all my Latin literature courses, I prepared and distributed a preliminary grammar review

for Horace's Phidyle which they used as they prepared their translations of the poem. They produced their own grammar notes to supplement mine as we translated and discussed the poem in class.

(#12 slide)

LAT 305: Lyric Poetry

FALL 2021

Horace, *Odes* 3.23 (Phidyle)

Dr. M. Grammar Notes

Line 1: **tuleris**: future perfect active indicative, 2nd person singular (*fero*). With **si** in a protasis of a future more vivid conditional sentence.

Line 2: **nascente** (present active participle, ablative singular feminine from *nasco, nascere*). With **luna** in ablative absolute construction.

Line 3: **tus, turis**, n. "incense." Ablative of means.

Lines 3-4: **horna fruge....avida porca**: ablatives of means.

Line 3: **placaris** = **syncopated placaveris** (future perfect active indicative, 2nd person singular from **placo**). With **si** in a protasis of a future more vivid conditional sentence.

Line 5: **sentiet**: future active indicative, 3rd person singular. In the apodosis of future more vivid conditional (**tuleris** and **placaris** are in the protasis).

Line 17: **tetigit**: perfect active indicative 3rd person singular (**tango**). Protasis of a simple fact past conditional sentence.

Line 19: **mollivit**: perfect active indicative 3rd person singular (**mollio**). Apodosis of a simple fact past conditional sentence.

The next step was to break the class into small groups to work collaboratively on the verses I assigned them. There were 13 students in this upper-division Latin class, with an uncommon composition of 12 new freshmen and 1 sophomore; two of the 13 were Classical Studies majors. Most often we have a mixed-level upper-division Latin class of all class years. So, this project with nearly all freshmen would present unique challenges. All the freshmen in the course were placed at this level on the basis of their four years of Latin in high school. I invited the students to organize themselves into four groups: all but one group was composed entirely of freshmen. I made sure that the two Classical Studies majors were in separate groups. I asked each group to elect one member who would agree to serve as leader (and cheerleader) but did not assume primary responsibility for the group. Very quickly, each group decided to assume primary responsibility for the major contributions they wished to make to the Latin Text Commentary Project: translation, glosses on vocabulary and grammar, literary criticism and commentary, the lead essay, SPQR images, and the Alcaic Strophe meter of the poem. I set up a separate module on Canvas for Horace's Phidyle, which contained the commentaries on the poem by Daniel Garrison (our class text), Kenneth Quinn, Matthew Santirocco, and R.G.M Nisbet and Niall Rudd. I also directed them to the Perseus site if they needed assistance on vocabulary and grammar.

I instructed the students to work in groups during the last class session before Thanksgiving break, November 23, in which we completed the initial translation and literary analysis of Horace's Phidyle. By

this time, the students were already reading and translating Horace's *Odes*, according to the schedule of our course syllabus.

As the students worked together in groups on Phidyle, I circulated among them, answering their questions, facilitating discussion, helping them wrestle with problems. Their questions were not about vocabulary and grammar, but about proper interpretation of the historicity, class and status of Phidyle, about Roman religious practice, and about how to understand the message and tone of the poem. They wished to know more about agricultural and sacrificial practices essential for a healthy farm, and they were intrigued by the poem's suggestion that rich offerings were not necessary to propitiate the *Di Penates*, but that simple, honest, and pure offerings would grant prosperity to the household. In short, my students said that they were moved by the message of the poem, and were inspired to embrace it, delve deeply into the study of its language and cultural elements that would form their text commentary. I suggested that they read the scholarly commentaries on Horace's Phidyle that I had posted on Canvas. As well, I urged them to consult additional scholarly commentaries and studies that were important for understanding this poem. They selected other commentaries and articles from the bibliography on my course syllabus, and they also did their own independent research to discover other studies that facilitated their understanding of the poem. These bibliographic sources were acknowledged in *Companion*.

(#13 slide): Images of Roman Religious Practice

During the November 30 class period, I asked them to list "talking points" they thought should be part of the introductory essay: they mentioned in particular the identity and status of Phidyle, details about the specific private, rural Roman religious practices that were mentioned in the poem, and the focus on purity, simplicity, and honesty in making offerings to the household gods to ensure the health and prosperity of the land and their households. As a means of offering additional guidance and encouragement to the students, I assured my students that *Companion* creator and editor Dr. Raia and I were in regular contact via email, Zoom, and phone to discuss their progress on the text commentary. The students greatly valued and appreciated Dr. Raia's advice and encouragement, which I think gave them the extra "push" to finish the Latin text commentary of Horace, Odes 3.23.

I asked each group of students to provide during our December 9 class brief progress reports on their ongoing work. I told them that they needed to report to me and to their classmates where they were in their progress so far, and to clarify what still needed to be done. They were on pace but admitted their struggles with the essay. I said "keep working and don't worry, it will go through careful editing by me, Dr. Raia, and the *Companion* editorial staff. This is how we improve." At this point, one of our junior Classical Studies minors, who was not in the course but learned about the project from our two Classical

Studies majors in the course, asked to join the project to help his classmates finish. He had taken three years of Latin in high school. Of course I said yes!

I gave the students a deadline of December 16 to submit to me their full drafts of their assigned portion of Horace's *Phidyle*. I asked them to verify that all students in the group had participated equally in the project. I also asked them to consult with other groups about their assigned lines of the poem, so that they could assist each other in preparing their part of the project and work with pride toward a unified project. One group was responsible for searching for images for the SPQR links. That group also emailed images to students in the other groups, in case they wanted to use them in their commentaries. Another group was responsible for checking grammar and syntax, and that group agreed to check spelling, grammar and syntax in the other groups' assignments. Two students were assigned the task of analyzing metrical issues, and also agreed to review any metrical notes in the commentaries of the other groups. Students in two separate groups agreed to work together on the lead essay, which they found to be the most challenging part of the text commentary. Most importantly, I allowed the students the authority to decide what each member would contribute to the project, as long as all members of the group were satisfied that each had made a substantial contribution. Since I already had circulated among them in groups and answered their questions in class and had regular conversations with them about the project on email, I was assured that all students took an active part in their group's work.

To my delight, all groups except those working on the lead essay submitted their work during final exam week, before the deadline of December 16. I managed to edit and return submitted drafts to the students working on the translation, images, and meter, but time constraints at the end of the semester prevented me from completing all revisions for every group. I received the lead essay on December 17 and (via email) praised them for completing the project. I graded their work, as stated in the course syllabus, and promised them that I would edit their work for submission to *Companion*. Dr. Ann Raia wished me to convey to the students her praise and appreciation for their work, which I did. I failed to finish all the editing by the close of the fall 2021 semester; however, I was quite pleased that my students finished even though we started the project in the final two weeks of the semester. Most important, the students were unanimous in their enthusiasm for the Latin text commentary project, which showed in their dedicated work. One freshman non-major wrote to me: "I loved this project and also absolutely loved this class! My love for poetry and Latin was perfectly combined. Thank you so much for an amazing semester, and I hope to have you again!"

I completed my editing of the Latin Text Commentary project on January 28 and 29, 2022, which Ann Raia next edited with my feedback and approval. In late February 2022 the web-formatted Horace,

Odes 3.23 commentary was submitted to the *Companion* Editorial Board for review, suggestions and request for approval for publication.

In conclusion, I am pleased to announce that in March 2022 Horace's *Ode* 3.23 to Phidyle was published in *Companion's* World of Religion and is available for your reading.

(#14-17 slides) <https://feminaeromanae.org/Horace%203.23.html>

The possibility of online publication and recognition outside the classroom is a strong incentive to quality student performance. While completion of the project requires students to work collaboratively and faculty to direct student research and provide correction, the final goal of publication is only achieved after the webpage has undergone external review and approval by *Companion's* Editorial Consultants.

The Latin text commentary project offers a dynamic, interactive, motivational pedagogy for undergraduate students of Latin. The project allows all students to become a collegial, collaborative community of learners. Incorporated into your course syllabus with careful design and planning, it can support student achievement of high-level learning outcomes and can help you realize your departmental and institutional priorities.

Thank you.