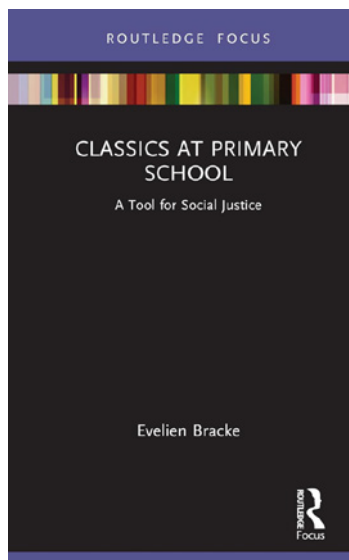


## Classics at Primary School: A Tool for Social Justice

Bracke (E.), Pp. 148, New York: Routledge, 2022. Hardback, £35.99. ISBN: 978-1032135359

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Classics can often be seen as an elitist and exclusionary subject; however, this book aims to tackle this by presenting a toolkit to teach Greek in a primary school context as a method to empower students who might not normally have access to a classical education. The author provides practical steps based on pedagogical research and self-reflection to transform the teaching of Classics at primary school into one that promotes social justice.

With justice being added to the same conversation as equality, diversity and

inclusion, *Classics at Primary School: A Tool for Social Justice* provides a very convincing argument as to how and why the study and teaching of Classics can be employed to further social justice and equity. With a reflection on deprivation in education starting off the book, it provides a helpful background for readers. This also states the effect that that deprivation can have on students' aspirations. The approaches discussed are research- and community-based, and the author spends much of the book discussing how Classics can provide learning experiences that engage effectively with students and the wider local communities in which they are situated.

Self-reflection is at the heart of this book, which is in itself important for effective teaching practice. This book emphasises how much it is at the heart of social justice education, which is evident by the author's reflection on her own practice, and what lessons can be learnt more widely with the goal of improving teaching and widening the perspectives of those who teach. Each chapter helpfully ends with a useful reflective tool, providing the reader with practical steps to implement in their pedagogy.

This book is particularly helpful to any stakeholders within primary education who are currently teaching Classics in some way, and for those who are interested in introducing the subject to their primary school classes. While the focus of the book is on primary school education, there are strategies that can be relevant for those who are teaching Classics in Key Stage 3 (ages 11–14).

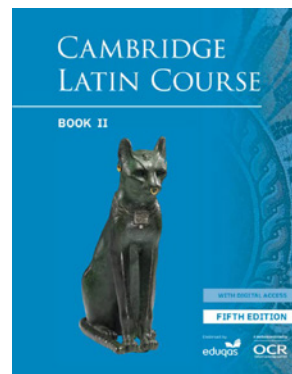
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## Cambridge Latin Course: Book II (UK Fifth Edition)

Cambridge School Classics Project, Pp. viii + 254, colour ills, colour maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Paper, £19.95. ISBN: 978-1-00-916268-5.

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How to teach Latin? The debate continues to excite and polarise viewpoints. The perpetual tug of war between grammar-translate aficionados and supporters of the reading method and of almost – but not quite – comprehensible input, has been joined by the passionate swell of those espousing teaching Latin in much the same style as a modern foreign language.

The *Cambridge Latin Course* (*CLC*), first published in 1970 draws on a 'familiar' vocabulary of derivatives, largely incomprehensible now to the average comprehensive pupil that makes up my classes. For many of them, reading a book is a dull task forced on them irregularly by school. The textbook provides passages in English which the modern-day year 7 or 8 often struggles to read. It is a yardstick to measure the shift in educational priorities. Having said that, it could be argued that all too few pupils were, in the 1970s, even offered Latin. So, to some extent the *Cambridge Latin Course* offered a hope of something more democratic.

Book II has always been controversial. I know many teachers who have abandoned the *CLC* after Book I, citing the hugely off-putting length of passages – far beyond the requirements of GCSE, the unengaging story, etc. They have moved to *de Romanis*, toyed with the *Oxford Latin Course*, explored the new and defiantly plebian-based *Suburani* or created their own courses. I myself have stayed with *CLC* Book II, but have always adapted the material – creating easy exercises using Stage 1 and 2 vocabulary to consolidate grammar, including the ablative along with the genitive when it can no longer really be ignored in Stage 17, and so on.

Consequently, I was intrigued by the UK fifth edition of *CLC* Book II and wondered to what extent these aspects had been addressed.

Like the UK 5th edition of Book I, the book now takes a broader interest in the lives of the women and others oppressed by the Romans, even in the first set of 'Model sentences'. There have been significant changes to the texts. In Stage 13, for example, the very long 'Bregans' text has, mercifully, been split into two sections. 'tres servi' has been replaced by a story providing the background to Salvius' 'coniuratio'. The omission of 'tres servi' means of course, that should you wish to show the video, you may need to supplement it with a worksheet giving the original text.

Disturbingly for those of us who have well established resources for learning vocabulary for each stage, there have been significant changes to the vocabulary checklists and about a third of the words

in Stage 13, for example, are different. The 'error' in the name Cogidubnus has at last been amended. He is now, correctly, 'Togidubnus' and has acquired an anachronistic Queen Catia.

In terms of the socio-cultural elements, there appear to be more sections, including the 'talking heads' that appear in the new edition of Book I. I think this makes the information more digestible and easier to work into lessons. There are many new and interesting illustrations, including, somewhat concerningly, a watermarked 'getty images' picture on p.84. Personally, I really like a lot of the additional material. I was thrilled to see sections on the Rosetta Stone, the Fayum portraits and extended background information on Romano-Egyptian culture and religion. The section on Roman medicine has also been hugely improved. I like the 'Thinking points' that have been added into the text and demarcated in helpful boxes. The vocabulary used in the English sections is certainly high-level and is likely to cause problems for students who struggle with reading. However, long sections tend to be divided up and the use of different fonts is likely to reduce the stress a little. In addition, a change to sans serif fonts should make reading significantly easier for many.

The textbook comes with five years' use of a 'digital resource'. It is easy to access through instructions on the inside front cover. Setting up 'Classes' however, proved complicated and I was unable therefore to work out its benefit. I had assumed that this digital resource might be a UK equivalent to the North American 'Elevate' including worksheets, videos and texts. However, what is provided is a digital, online version of the student book. The resource allows you to 'write' over the electronic textbook in red, blue, yellow, or black; bookmark pages; erase marks; and enlarge sections to display the text on an electronic board.

At £19.95 per volume the *Cambridge Latin Course* covers the whole GCSE syllabus in volumes 1 to 4. This makes it more expensive than, for example, the *Suburani* course which in 2 volumes (of £20 each) covers the whole GCSE course. However, the *Cambridge Latin Course* covers a broader syllabus than is required for the Eduqas Latin GCSE exam (and in fact WJEC Eduqas endorses this volume) so could be more suitable for those taking the OCR exam and looking towards A Level.

Even with the offputtingly long texts; and the need to revise all of my vocabulary learning, teaching, and testing resources, if my school had £600 that I could spend on text books, I would be very tempted to replace my stash of 4th edition *CLC II* and I would really enjoy teaching this new edition.

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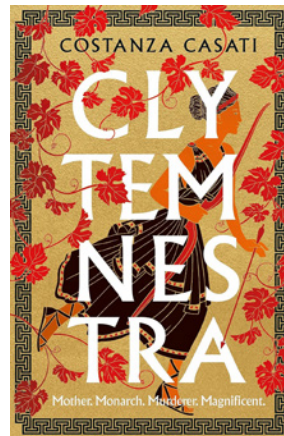
## Clytemnestra. Mother, Monarch, Murderer, Magnificent

Casati (C.), Pp. xii + 468. London: Penguin Random House UK, 2023. Cased, £16.99. ISBN: 978-0-241-55474-6.

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*Clytemnestra* joins the Classical fiction scene at a time when 'feminist' retellings are no doubt experiencing a boom, and Casati's



eponymous debut novel sits rightfully alongside its predecessors by the likes of Miller, Haynes and Saint. Coming in just shy of 500 pages, *Clytemnestra*, although slightly longer than comparative titles, manages to avoid tedium or repetitiveness, making for a narrative compelling to the novice and veteran mythologist alike.

Split into five parts each tackling a different period of our protagonist's life, the first offers an *in medias res* of sorts, in which the early adolescent Clytemnestra hunts a lynx in her native Sparta.

The childhood that shaped Clytemnestra is a detail often overlooked in the canon, though a rearing punctuated by sparring with your peers and telling stories of successful wolf hunts around the dinner table is something that Casati outlines with immense elegance. Whilst not lacking in its adrenaline, the first part is underscored with tenderness, most notably the mutually protective interactions between Clytemnestra and Helen, and their younger, typically ignored, sister Timandra. The part ends in a love marriage between Clytemnestra and Tantalus, though readers are always poised to remain on their toes. After all, *harpazein*, to take by force, is the verb Leda uses for marriage.

Parts 3 onwards explore the Clytemnestra most modern audiences will recognise, the narrative resuming after a 15-year gap in which Clytemnestra's four children to Agamemnon are born. Undoubtedly, however, Part 2's exploration of her first marriage is the book's greatest success in explicating Clytemnestra's villainous arc. To say a reader ought to sympathise with Clytemnestra is perhaps a step too far, though one can recognise her motives. It is not until the fifth and final part, in which her murders become markedly more indiscriminate and fickle, that we begin to wonder whether things have got slightly out of hand. Casati strikes a fine balance in creating a protagonist who is admirable in her conviction, yet more crucially, although pitiable in some regard, is somebody a reader never quite *actively* pities.

Casati has taken great lengths to ensure *Clytemnestra* is accessible to non-Classicalists, the narrative itself preceded by a number of auxiliary tools. Family trees of the houses of Atreus and Tyndareus (especially useful when Casati uses patronymics), a character list with brief introductory sentences on each, and a map of the narrative's setting serve as useful reference points. More impressively, Casati makes consistent use of Greek terminologies and values within the text, all italicised and with a definition seamlessly woven into the narrative. To provide further clarity, at the end of the book, an Ancient Greek glossary lists all the italicised terms in the text, from *aristos Achaion* to *xiphos*, allowing any gaps in understanding to be easily and concisely plugged.

Casati has a real fluidity to her style of writing: her language is unpretentious and unobtrusive, with regular use of dialogue helping to entice the plot along at a comfortable speed. Readers perhaps not familiar with the story of Clytemnestra ought to note that there are references to sexual assault interspersed within the narrative, and Casati does not shy away from its realities and subsequent traumas for a survivor. Physical violence against women is another reality Casati confronts, and Clytemnestra's resilience in the face of this is pinpointed as a determining motivation for her later vengeance quest. With various sexual