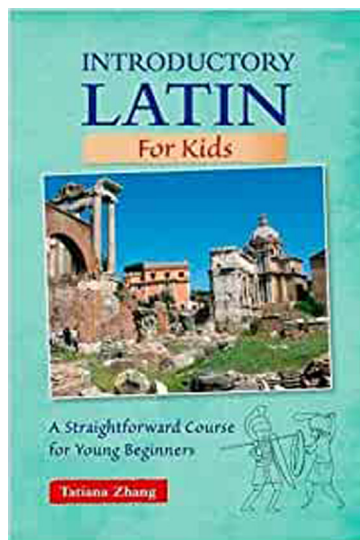


Introductory Latin for Kids. A Straightforward Course for Young Beginners

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While most learners first engage with Latin in a school or university with an instructor, *Introductory Latin for Kids* is crafted around a student choosing to learn independently through self-study. Considering that audience, Tatiana Zhang (a high school student herself when she wrote this) is faced with the daunting task of creating a text that can assume the role of a teacher by providing clear explanations, appropriate exercises, and creative treatments. Zhang

occasionally misses this target, but frequently utilises her sensitivity to the mind of a student to provide the highlights of the work.

To provide accessibility to a self-directed learner, Zhang engages with her nearly comprehensive scope of topics in a uniform, consistent chapter structure. Initially, lessons focus on verbs, and that topic extends throughout the course of the 24 chapters. By the end, a reader has encountered all six tenses, infinitives, imperatives, participles, gerundives, and the passive voice. Zhang gives attention to some finer details of verbs by addressing eight key irregular verbs as secondary topics in several chapters, and addressing deponent, semi-deponent, impersonal, and defective verbs as primary lesson topics. The only obvious element that appears to be missing from the scope of her work on verbs is the subjunctive mood; this omission seems unusual, as the rest of the book seems to be designed with the intention of preparing readers to take on Latin literature. The inclusion of such fine details as semi-deponent verbs and impersonal verbs seems to only serve the purpose to prepare a reader to negotiate those words when encountered in a text. Uses of the subjunctive, however, should be more commonplace in Latin literature and their appearance and constructions can be as off-putting to an attentive learner as the rarer forms that are addressed.

The remaining parts of speech are addressed as far as a learner would need with explanation and examples. Explanations on all topics, including verbs, are clear and typically written in a very accessible, student-friendly way. Each lesson contains examples of use, both in Latin and in English, paradigms when appropriate, and translation suggestions. Many explanations are simplified and focused on what a student must know to be successful: functions of

noun cases, for instance, are limited to essential ideas, and the details that are unnecessary for comprehending and reading are glossed over or ignored. While the student-oriented discussion is typically a strong point of the book, there are some inconsistencies that it presents: on several occasions throughout, Zhang utilises her own colloquialisms and idioms that she has learned to use due to her own interests, learning, and instruction. These instances can provide confusion for a learner who isn't familiar with her language and way of thinking, especially when learning without an instructor to ask. Overall, however, Zhang's treatment of topics is generally very sound and pointed to the essential needs of the student, and her discussions always indicate a grounded familiarity with the subject matter; however, that same familiarity occasionally leads to lapses in consistency as the discussion builds around her own idiom as a learner.

A major strength of the book is Zhang's consistent structure for each lesson. Every chapter is framed like a teacher might frame a lesson: objectives are clearly stated at the beginning and a reflection and summary on the content of the lesson are presented immediately after that content. These features are well-written and clear, providing a reader with a better awareness of what they are meant to retain from a lesson and a checkpoint to assess their own understanding. When the book is used by a self-directed learner as intended, these features will doubtlessly make the process of learning without an instructor much easier. Each chapter also contains a vocabulary list, a 'Dazzling Derivatives' section highlighting key English connections to the vocabulary, and a section of Latin expressions to help the learner grow as a more literate reader. Each lesson also contains three sections of exercises, always containing ten sentences for English to Latin translations, ten for Latin to English translations, and ten more Latin to English translations that could be complete sentences or could be phrases depending on the needs of the unit. These translation sections generally rely on the vocabulary list of the chapter and are always focused on the grammar topics of the lesson. All exercises are supported with answers for checking work, and the comprehensive glossaries provide both English to Latin and Latin to English vocabulary support when the learner needs it.

In all, Zhang's debut effort has many strengths that make it accessible for her readers: lessons have clear outlines and learning goals, explanations are generally tuned to a knowledge and skill level appropriate for a language learner, and a variety of opportunities for students to make connections with the content. For a self-directed student looking to engage with Latin in a traditional, grammar-translation style, Zhang's work provides an appropriate alternative to existing options or provides a useable supplement to other systems. For a classroom teacher, this book could be used as a supplementary resource, functioning either as review material for higher level students or as additional explanations and exercises focused on a teacher's instructional targets.

The book does, however, have some pieces that will make it difficult for some learners to engage fully: the number of items in each vocabulary list could be lessened to allow for increased retention and more targeted practice on fewer words, explanations can be provided for the exercise answers, and exercises could include extended texts that focus on narrative and comprehension skills rather than simply on direct translation. Zhang, as a young scholar and content creator, will hopefully find opportunity and ambition in the future to create new editions of this book or separate alternatives entirely that address some of the elements that this book is lacking while retaining the strengths that it has.

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