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Editorial

What does it mean to make classics matter now?

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That was the question at the heart of my previous editorial, and it is one that has stayed with me as I have put together this current issue of the *Journal of Classics Teaching*. The answers are many and varied. They include the need to face the challenges currently confronting Classics education, some of which can be profoundly dispiriting, but also the ways in which those very challenges can reinforce the sense of why the subject matters, and why it is worth fighting for.

One particularly powerful answer came from Catherine Perkins, whose contribution appeared in the previous issue. Writing in the aftermath of sudden redundancy and the loss of the career she had embarked upon, Catherine turned to Ovid and to the theme of exile, producing a poem for the Classical Association's 2025 *Write | Speak | Design* competition, a competition for under-25s that she was herself encouraging her students to enter. Her poem was a reminder that Classics can provide not simply something to study, but a language through which to make sense of experiences that are painfully contemporary (Figure 1).

I encountered this soon after becoming Editor of the journal, when I was invited to London for the finals of the 2025 competition. What struck me most was hearing young people describe what Classics meant to them and the impact it had on their lives. Again and again, I heard the same message in different forms: Classics resonates; it speaks; it transforms. These were not simply arguments for the subject's usefulness. They were accounts of what happens when learners encounter classical antiquity and discover new ways to think about themselves, their communities and the world around them (Figure 2).

That experience also prompted a question for this journal. If the *Journal of Classics Teaching* is concerned with how best to teach Classics, should the journal not also be listening to the people who matter most in that process: the learners themselves? This issue offers an emphatic answer. Following on from Catherine's contribution in the previous issue, finalists and winners of the *Write | Speak | Design* competition were invited to revise their entries for publication in *JCT*. I am delighted to present three more of them here.

Alexander Walker, runner-up in the Intermediate Category, offers an expansive account of the diversity of Classics and the range of skills it develops. Particularly striking is his attention to the potential benefits of Latin for younger learners, including learners who may find conventional approaches to language learning more challenging, and his argument that translation can develop the problem-solving and 'code-cracking' skills that have applications well beyond the Classics classroom (Figure 3).



Figure 1. Catherine Perkins performs her poem Manifesto at the Classical Association's Write | Speak | Design Finals, Friends House, London, March 2025. Photo ©ClassicalAssociation.

Writing at the age of sixteen from a state school without Classics provision, Isla McGuire takes up the question of access with particular urgency. Her essay makes the case for Classics as a means of developing critical thinking, linguistic analysis, debate and source criticism at a moment of political polarisation and misinformation. At the same time, she refuses to overlook the inequalities embedded in access to the subject itself. Her discussion of gendered and class-based disparities makes the case not simply

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Figure 2. Poster advertising the Classical Association Write | Speak | Design competition for Under 25s. Photo ©ClassicalAssociation.



Figure 3. Alexander Walker with judge Sana van Dal at the Classical Association's Write | Speak | Design Finals, Friends House, London, March 2025. Photo ©ClassicalAssociation.

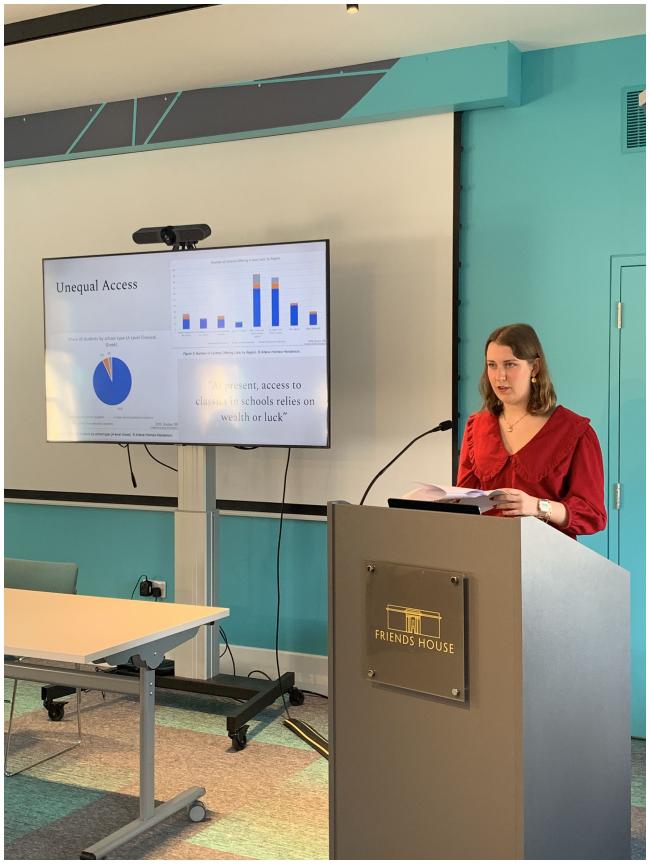


Figure 4. Isla McGuire reads her competition entry at the Classical Association's Write | Speak | Design Finals, Friends House, London, March 2025. Photo ©ClassicalAssociation.

for the value of Classics, but for the importance of asking who gets to have access to that value (Figure 4).

Lorna Lee's winning senior entry brings together research and personal experience to make a similarly passionate case for the continuing importance of Classics. For Lorna, the subject's remoteness is not a weakness but part of its attraction: its distance from the present creates space for conversation, questioning and discovery, while the intellectual pleasure it offers provides a powerful reason for its continued place in education (Figure 5).

The issue then turns to the perspectives of educators, with two articles that approach teaching from different directions. Angeliki Markoglou examines the teaching of ancient Greek texts, exploring how teaching might move beyond formalistic and examination-driven approaches towards more interpretative and critical engagement. Christopher Lyes, meanwhile, takes readers out of the text and into the museum, with a case study of an undergraduate workshop using the Corsi Collection at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. His article explores how object-based learning can develop observation, material literacy and historical understanding. Together, these two articles invite us to ask what happens when a move is made beyond established pedagogical habits to create different kinds of spaces for students to encounter antiquity.

From here, the journal moves to the first themed collection to appear in the *Journal of Classics Teaching. Teaching Late Latin: Past*

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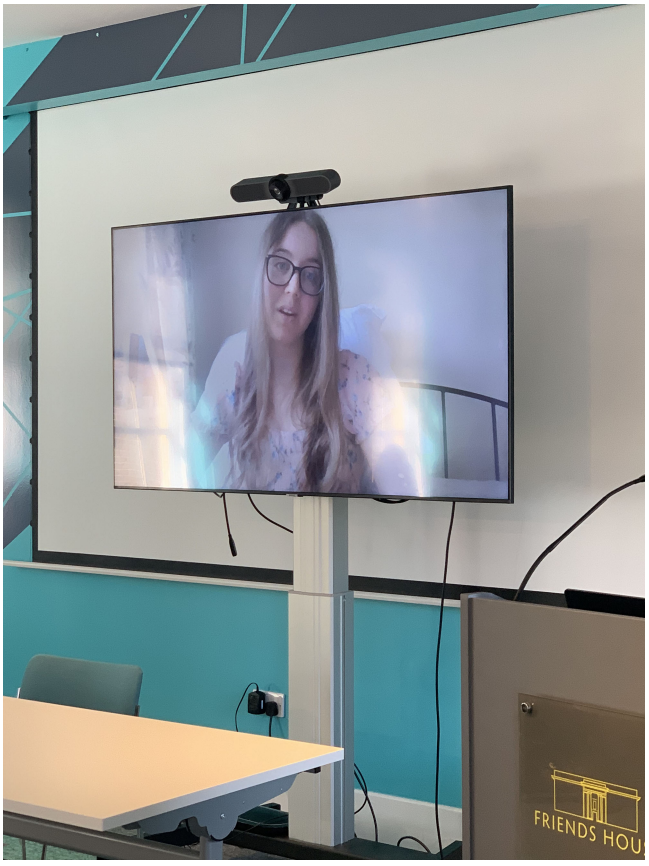


Figure 5. Lorna Lee reads her competition entry via video link at the Classical Association's Write | Speak | Design Finals, Friends House, London, March 2025. Photo ©ClassicalAssociation.

and Present, Challenges and Prospects, introduced by Caterina Guardamagna, Laura Delfina Zambianchi and Francesca Cotugno, brings together contributions on the teaching of Latin across very different times and places. Its two sections, *Ars docendi antiqua* and *Ars docendi nova*, look both backwards and forwards, and invite comparison between past and present approaches to teaching.

The historical contributions take readers on quite a journey: Paola Cotticelli-Kurras and Francesca Cotugno introduce Notker Labeo and the teaching of Latin through another language; Pietro Carlo-Maria Giusteri takes readers to medieval Wales and the *Liber Commonei*; and Michele Longo goes further north, to medieval Iceland, where Latin learning developed alongside a rich vernacular culture. Together, these contributions show the ingenuity and adaptability involved in teaching Latin to learners for whom it was not an everyday language.

The second half of the collection brings the discussion into the present. Silvia Tantimonaco considers the place of Vulgar and Late Latin in schools and the possibilities of expanding pupils' encounters beyond the familiar texts of the Classical canon. Guardamagna and Zambianchi explore the teaching of Latin in Catholic secondary schools and colleges in Northern England, where conversations with teachers reveal that tradition does not necessarily guarantee provision. The collection then moves to Finland, with Timo Korkiakangas and Tommi Alho exploring the changing place of Vulgar and Late Latin in university education and Korkiakangas examining the contemporary teaching of the subjects at the University of Helsinki.

Read together, these contributions reveal how differently Latin has been taught, and how closely teaching practices are shaped by particular learners, institutions and circumstances. Across the collection, familiar questions emerge: how can learners be helped to approach something difficult or unfamiliar? How can teaching accommodate variety while retaining a connection with what has come before? And how might past approaches inform the challenges of teaching Classics today?

There is a fruitful connection here with the young people's contributions earlier in the issue. Both sets of papers look beyond a fixed conception of Classics or Latin, considering what happens when the subject is opened out to different learners, languages, historical periods and ways of learning. As the *Ars docendi antiqua* and *Ars docendi nova* papers demonstrate, this is not a new challenge: teachers of Latin have always had to negotiate between inheritance and innovation, continuity and change, constraint and creativity. Finally, this issue contains a larger-than-usual selection of book reviews, giving readers the chance to discover a particularly rich range of recent publications. As regular readers will know, our reviews consider not only the scholarly merits of a book but also what it might offer students and those who teach them, and how it might work in the classroom. The unusually full selection in this issue therefore offers a welcome opportunity to highlight the wealth of new work available to teachers and students alike.

The present issue is only part of what the *Journal of Classics Teaching* has to offer. Articles appear on *FirstView* online ahead of their appearance in an issue, so the website is always worth visiting for the latest scholarship and reflection on Classics teaching.

From the voices of young people encountering Classics, through the experiences and experiments of teachers, to reflections on how Latin has been taught across centuries, this issue is remarkably varied. Yet its contributions share a conviction that teaching Classics is not simply about transmitting a body of knowledge. It is about creating encounters – with texts, objects, languages, histories and ideas – and enabling learners to discover what those encounters can make possible.

Perhaps, then, this issue offers a partial answer to the question with which it began. Classics matters not because there is one definitive account of its value, but because different learners continue to find different things in it: intellectual challenge, critical tools, pleasure, cultural understanding, a sense of connection, or simply the possibility of seeing the world differently.

Perhaps the strongest evidence lies in their voices (Figure 6).

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Figure 6. Winners, finalists and judges at the Classical Association's 2025 Write | Speak | Design Finals, Friends House, London, March 2025. L to R Back: Catherine, Peter, Paige, Emma, Alexander, Isla, Samia, Alexander, Reuben, Sharon Marshall (judge), Sana van Dal (judge). Front: Thomas, Aryan, Rohan. Photo ©ClassicalAssociation.

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