

**UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS**

*Saint Ambrose Center*

The background features a large, light gray watermark of the University of Dallas seal. The seal is circular and contains the Latin motto "VERITATEM, JUSTITIAM DILIGITE" at the top and "UNIVERSITAS DALLASENSIS • MCMLXXXIII" at the bottom. The central emblem includes a fleur-de-lis, a star, and a chalice.

**LATIN THROUGH  
STORIES  
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

Our curriculum is the only near-immersion curriculum in Latin for elementary age students. Students acquire Latin joyfully and meaningfully through songs, nursery rhymes picture talks about beautiful works of art, our unique “Little Socratic Talks”, oral mini stories (Gouin series), and classic picture books translated into Latin for this curriculum (as well as optional prayers and bible verses). The Teacher Guide is fully scripted, so teachers with no Latin background can use it too.

We are currently piloting two levels, but are planning to have six eventually, for grades K-5.

**“Children demand an early introduction to connected discourse, which is the purpose of language”**

(Frederick W. Sandford and Harry F. Scott, preface to *A Junior Latin Reader*, 1919)

## **Overview and Purpose**

- Our goal is to provide a rich and joyful linguistic environment through classical nursery rhymes, songs, poems, proverbs, prayers, bible verses and beautiful classical picture books in Latin
- Students learn gradually and incrementally a wealth of full and complete sentences in Latin – in the course of a year students will internalize about 144 sentences in the Gouin series, 7 nursery rhymes (many of them with several stanzas), 6 or more songs (again many with several stanzas), and they will learn to fully comprehend, respond to and interact with the 11 classic children’s books they will be read to in Latin.
- Vocabulary and grammar in meaningful context (sentences, not isolated words), through little “Socratic conversations” and the “Gouin Series” (see “Lesson Components” below)
- Grammar is not taught through drills but is integrated naturally through learning at the sentence level rather than isolated words.
- Instruction is aural, visual, as well as kinesthetic – includes lots of gestures and movement, as well as visual images
  - Students will constantly be doing something to interact with the material, so they will be actively engaged with their whole bodies, so this is a program that will also work well for ELL and students with learning disabilities.

**“The Study of language, especially in the young, should be joined to that of objects, that our acquaintance with the objective world and with language, that is to say, our knowledge of facts and our power to express them, may progress side by side. For it is men that we are forming and not parrots”**

(John Amos Comenius, *Didactica Magna*, 1633-38)

## **Lesson Components**

*Note:* Not all components will be present in every lesson. Ideally, schools will have Latin at least 3 times per week, 30 minutes per class. Although some Latin background would be ideal for instructors, Lessons are fully scripted to help instructors with minimal background in Latin to teach K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Instructors in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up should have a decent grasp of Latin grammar.

### **Settling into Latin**

This part constitutes the warm-up and review phase of every lesson, as it helps children settle into the language. The teacher may lead the class in a short prayer in Latin which is accompanied by gestures to help students connect words to ideas. Then, previously learned nursery rhymes, songs, proverbs, or Bible verses are reviewed and one new sentence or line is introduced through the help of pictures and gestures. Throughout this part, students are invited to make the gestures along with the teachers for as many days as needed, until they feel comfortable to join in. All poems, verses and Gouin series that have been memorized are kept active by reviewing them at regular intervals throughout the school year so that students will fully internalize the vocabulary and grammar structure.

### **Picture Study**

Beautiful works of art introduce new vocabulary and grammar and invite students to wonder about and preview the topic of the new Gouin series or Socratic Talk. New words are introduced by pointing to objects or actions in a beautiful work of art. Students are invited to help the teacher point to the right objects, imitate movements or gestures, or invent appropriate gestures for new words.

### **Little Socratic Talk**

Guided by the dialogue between Socrates and the little slave boy in Plato's *Meno*, the Teacher's Guide will include model "little Socratic talks" all in Latin. Just like Socrates, the Latin teacher will start from a concrete object, and begin with simple yes/no questions and questions that require only one-word answers. Such questions that do not require full sentence answers right away serve to provide lots of linguistic input for the students. The Teacher will then gradually move on to short answer questions. In second and third grade, the lesson might be concluded with a brief discussion in English on what the students noticed about the language, a short grammar lesson that focuses on the students' wonder and curiosity about the language.

## Little Socratic Reading

The teacher reads a picture book, which will either be a translation of a classical picture book (such as Eric Carle’s *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See*, or *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*), or a book from the “I am Reading Latin Stories” series for children aged 4-8 such as *Ursus et porcus*, by Rose Williams. The Teacher’s Guide includes instructions on how to teach interactively with a focus on comprehension of the Latin as Latin, and on how to guide students gradually toward the ability to narrate the story back in Latin.

## Gouin Series

Frenchman François Gouin (1831–1896) was a Latin teacher who developed a “series method” of language learning. After repeatedly failing to acquire German despite his efforts in employing a long repertoire of “classical” methods, he realized that his young nephew had acquired his native language French, effortlessly and perfectly in the same amount of time. He noticed how the child was eager to retell new experiences as sequential actions. This led him to the insight that language is learned “sentence by sentence and not word by word.” Based on his observations and insights, Gouin developed the “series method,” also known today as “Gouin series.” A Gouin series is a series of actions that form a logical or chronological sequence. Each sentence hinges on a verb (which is “the soul of the sentence”) that can be acted out, demonstrated, or gestured. Language production is not forced immediately but develops naturally as the students assimilate the experience through action.

For young children, the Gouin series is taught over several class periods. The teacher guide explicitly lays out the procedure. Once a Gouin series is mastered, it is kept active by frequent reviews throughout the school year (during the warm up phase), so that students will fully internalize the vocabulary and grammar structure.

“What a great way to use some of the early years of schooling to establish a basic sense of the language. Your stress on known sense-based realities (rather than things like *lex, forma, bellum, culpa, consul*), and particularly the attention to animals for the youngest ones, are inspired I had never heard of the Gouin series, but I was immediately persuaded by the idea. Your colorful images are splendid. They appeal to the imagination and make the learning of Latin interesting. Congratulations on a brilliant new initiative in Latin pedagogy.”

Review of *Living Latin* by Fr. Claude Pavur,  
Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, Boston College

## Overview of Levels

### Level 1: *Bestiae Ubique/Animals Everywhere*

Students learn to understand and say sentences about what animals do in various habitats: pets in the home and backyard, animals on the farm, animals in the forest, animals in the water, and animals in the wild. Students learn content knowledge about animals, such as animal life cycles and habitats, while learning Latin!

#### Students in this level learn...

- to recite three prayers, four bible verses, six religious songs and hymns (optional components)
- to sing 10-15 traditional children's songs and nursery rhymes, many with several stanzas
- to understand and say around 16 "Gouin series" of approximately 6-8 sentences each (over 100 complete sentences)
- to understand and respond to questions about animal actions and habitats in the Little Socratic Talks (building from yes/no answers to increasingly long sentences)
- to describe dozens of beautiful works of art from Western and non-Western cultures
- to understand, act out and interact with 11 picture books in Latin

#### Students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up also learn explicit grammar:

- verb conjugations, with a focus on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural verb forms (all four conjugations are used)
- nouns in the nominative singular and plural, and accusative singular and plural (nouns used are from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> declensions) – the focus is on fully understanding the function of subject and direct object in a sentence
- adjectives in the nominative and accusative singular
- ablative of location
- throughout, sentence analysis is foregrounded (e.g. finding the subject, verb, direct object, prepositional phrase)

### Level 2: *Per Annum Latine/ Through the Year in Latin*

Students learn to understand and say sentences about their daily activities throughout the year. Not only will they learn to talk about seasons and weather in Latin, but also about what various family members do, wear, and eat throughout, and how some animals adapt to the changing seasons.

#### Students in this level learn...

- to recite four new prayers, four new bible verses, five new religious songs and hymns, while reviewing all Level 1 prayers and songs (optional components)
- to sing 12 new traditional children's songs and nursery rhymes, many of them with several stanzas, while reviewing those learned in Level 1

- to understand and say around 16 new “Gouin series” of approximately 6-8 sentences each (over 100 complete sentences)
- to understand and respond to questions about people’s daily activities throughout the seasons of the year (building from yes/no answers to increasingly long sentences)
- to describe dozens of beautiful works of art from Western and non-Western cultures
- to understand, act out and memorize parts of 8 new picture books in Latin

**Students in 3rd grade and up also learn explicit grammar:**

- a review of Level 1 grammar plus:
- complete verb conjugations
- dative of indirect object
- genitive of possession
- new prepositions with ablative and accusative
- throughout, the focus is on increasing students’ understanding the function of subject, direct and indirect object and possessive nouns in a sentence

**Teaching Materials include:**

- teacher guides
  - each lesson is fully planned and fully scripted
  - each lesson incorporates a steady review of everything learned, already planned out
  - lessons include songs from around the world (using sources such as *Mater Anserina*, *Cantare necesse est*, and *Cantate Latine*)
  - optional grammar components directly in the guide so you can use the same teacher guide for multiple grades
- a student book (intended for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up) for reading and grammar components
- audio files for all the songs, Gouin series, Little Socratic Talks, and picture books in ecclesiastical and classical Latin
- PowerPoints to accompany the “Little Socratic Talks”
- translation files for the classic picture books for each level
- additional materials such as reader’s theater versions of Gouin series or picture books

“Not one day goes by that I am not amazed by the joy that this curriculum is bringing to me and my students. Not a week goes by that I am not enthralled by how much Latin we are all learning. I say it all the time, but it bears repeating: this curriculum is amazing! I had no idea you could teach so much quality language to little kids in such a short amount of time!”

- Amy Carrillo, Latin teacher at St Joseph’s Catholic School, Killeen, TX

For more information, please read about [why we want students to study Latin](#), our [Pedagogical Principles](#), the idea of [comprehensible input](#) this curriculum is based on, why we include both [sheltered and unsheltered language](#), and get a glimpse of our [Curriculum in Action](#).