

***Wheelock's Latin Reader (Second Edition)***  
*Selections from Latin Literature*  
**By Richard A. LaFleur**

**Preface to the Revised Edition**

In many respects *Wheelock's Latin Reader* (originally titled *Latin Literature: A Book of Readings*) is one of the very best intermediate Latin texts published in the last generation. When the book first appeared in 1967, reviewers extolled the accessibility and comprehensiveness of its readings from Cicero, Livy, Ovid, and Pliny, praised its incorporation of selections from medieval Latin and the Vulgate as "a particularly happy innovation," and hailed the volume as "a solid companion" to *Wheelock's Latin*, the author's best-selling beginning Latin textbook.

The book's primary virtues were, and remain, these two: the wide range of selections from both classical and medieval Latin -- about 3,400 lines altogether -- and Professor Wheelock's judicious annotations. From Cicero are included a rich and diverse sampling of his widely varied works, constituting nearly half the volume's readings: the extensive excerpts from Cicero's orations against Verres, the corrupt governor of Sicily whom he courageously prosecuted in 70 B.C., provide valuable insights into the political and judicial proceedings of the late republic and a marvelous specimen of Ciceronian rhetoric; the selections from two of his philosophical treatises, the *De Officiis* and the *De Amicitia*, probingly examine ethical and moral issues that continue to be of great concern to us today; and the several letters (most of them included in their entirety), addressed to family, friends, and associates, give us some remarkably candid glimpses into the personal and political life of that most famous orator and statesman.

The selections from Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, which include the story of Romulus and Remus and other legends of early Rome, as well as an account of Hannibal's assault on Italy during the Second Punic War, are at once invaluable historical documents and lively, captivating narratives. The four transformation tales from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* -- the tragic love stories of Pyramus and Thisbe, and of Orpheus and Eurydice, the myths of Daedalus and Icarus and of Midas' golden touch -- make for delightful reading and provide an ideal introduction to classical Latin poetry. The selections from Pliny's literary epistles present an interesting contrast with Cicero's more spontaneous letters and contain important and interesting information on social and political institutions of the early empire, as well as detailed evidence for both the catastrophic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in A.D. 79 and the Roman government's policies regarding practices of the early Christian church during the reign of the emperor Trajan.

The passages from St. Jerome's Vulgate edition of the Bible, including the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Prodigal Son, and others, are an excellent introduction to that profoundly influential document and to the vulgar Latin (the Latin of

the *vulgus*, the common people) of the early fifth century. And finally, the several selections drawn from Latin literature of the Middle Ages demonstrate the evolution of the language from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries as well as the remarkable diversity of matter and manner seen in such disparate works as Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, the allegorizing tales of the *Gesta Romanorum*, the sometimes reverent, sometimes raucous *Carmina Burana*, and the hypnotic power of that most powerful of medieval hymns, the *Dies Irae*.

It would be difficult to improve upon so rich a selection from Latin literature, ranging as it does over the prose and verse of some 1,400 years and including ample material from which to pick and choose for a semester's course in college or, if read straight through, for up to two college semesters or a year's work in high school. Thus I have made few changes to the content of the reading passages. Here and there I have restored some of the Latin that Professor Wheelock omitted, but only when the level of interest was high and the difficulty low, and often in order to reconstitute a continuous, unexcerpted passage (as, for example, in some of the letters, the Ovid selections, and all the readings from the Vulgate). In a very few instances I have deleted passages that seemed to me inordinately difficult for students at the intermediate level (including the notoriously abstruse preface to Livy's history). Perhaps most obviously, the layout of the Latin text has been entirely redesigned and set in a more legible 12-point font.

The layout of the notes has likewise been redesigned, removing them from the back of the book and setting them in a larger font on pages facing the text. I have made considerable changes to the content of the notes as well, deleting some that seemed to provide unnecessary information, adding others where intermediate students might need more help. The glossing of vocabulary has been systematized; within each unit definitions are provided for words that students are not likely to have encountered in their previous study (including words not found in the Latin-English end vocabulary to *Wheelock's Latin*) and whose meanings cannot be easily deduced based on English derivatives; several definitions are usually given in each gloss, so the student must select the one that best suits the context; vocabulary glosses, usually including the nominative singular for a noun and the second principal part for a verb, are provided at a word's first occurrence within a unit and are repeated at the first occurrence in subsequent units, since some teachers and students may not read all the selections in the text or may not read them in the order in which they appear. In any case, as noted earlier in Professor Wheelock's preface, nearly every word in the text is defined in the extensive end vocabulary, which has been expanded in this edition and indicates those words that occur five or more times in the text and which therefore should be memorized.

Difficult or unusual grammatical constructions, figures of speech, and poetic and rhetorical devices that merit comment are printed in SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS LIKE THESE to...