



The Latin Road to English Grammar

Volumes I-III

Schola Publications

www.thelatinroad.com

The Latin Road to English Grammar (LREG) is a systematic, well organized, thorough, and easy-to-implement program that will take you and your student from the Latin alphabet to the Latin Vulgate in (plus or minus) three school years. Upon completion of the third level, students should be able to work through any Latin work. A very complete scope and sequence of each level is available at www.thelatinroad.com.

Developed by a former Writing Road to Reading instructor, LREG is more than just an in-depth study of Latin. Through the process of compiling an extensive Latin notebook, you and your student will develop a deeper understanding of English grammar, both its similarities to and differences from Latin. Mrs. Beers assumes no prior knowledge of English grammar, and while her explanations are thorough, some children (and parents!) may need extra help in comprehending abstract concepts. An English handbook is an excellent resource to have on hand, and A Beka and Rod and Staff publish top-notch handbooks. In addition to Latin and English grammar, your student will expand his or her vocabulary by studying thousands of Latin words as well as their English derivatives. And by studying those words and keeping a notebook, your student will improve his or her spelling and handwriting as well (so long as you keep your eyes on the notebook!).

The author's intent was for her program to take the place of all these separate language areas; in a sense creating a sort of language arts unit study centered on Latin. There are some proponents of classical home education who would not advise this method, advising rather separate studies of English grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. My opinion is that LREG covers English grammar quite thoroughly, although there are no diagramming, punctuation, or composition exercises. The author says she taught her students mechanics as needed during their Latin study, and she believes that good writing blossoms through a solid foundation in language and grammar. Many excellent composition programs are available to meet this need. As for diagramming, you can certainly require your student to diagram new sentence structures as they are encountered. Two resources I especially like are *The First Whole Book of Diagrams* and the accompanying *Elementary Diagramming Worktext* by Mary Daly.

A teacher manual, a student text, worksheets, tests, answer keys, audio CD's, flashcards, and charts are all included in the basic curriculum set for each level. A good deal of copy work is required for the notebook, and it is best if each student has his own textbook. Each additional student text includes worksheets and tests, or you can purchase additional worksheets and tests separately. The teacher manual becomes your personal Latin notebook, but you will need to

provide a separate notebook with 10 tabs for each student. Vocabulary cards are color-coded, and using colored paper (pink, blue, yellow, and white) and colored pens (black, blue, red, green, brown) makes the notebook even better. A notebook page master is included that you can photocopy in each of the three colors. Or, if you prefer, a prepared notebook kit is available complete with a high-quality binder, 10 preprinted tabs, enough colored notebook paper for one level, colored pens, and a Latin reference chart.

The program is laid out so well that a parent with no Latin background can lead her child through, so long as she is willing to do the work. Everything, and I mean everything, is laid out clearly in the teacher manual. It is just a matter of putting one foot in front of the other, and soon you'll be reading, writing, and speaking Latin. Because LREG uses a parts-to-whole method, you may feel a little overwhelmed if you look at lesson one in Level 1 and then look at the end of Level 3. "How will I ever get from A to B?" you'll wonder (I did). But by faithfully plugging away, you'll be surprised how quickly you start to understand Latin. One thing that kind of jump-starts things, though, is that you practice reading from the very beginning in order to learn pronunciation. Somehow reading and memorizing the songs, prayers, and Scriptures makes you feel like you are going somewhere!

The author says it will take about an hour a day to complete each lesson, and my experience concurs. The first half of the time is spent explaining new concepts and drilling vocabulary, and the second half is devoted to creating notebook pages. A weekly lesson plan tells exactly how much to do each day if you plan to do one volume per year, but you can always modify that amount to suit your needs. Levels One and Two have about 140 lessons each, and while Level Three does not offer day-by-day lesson plans, a suggested pace is two weeks for each of the 18 chapters. The author's intent was for her students to complete their Latin study before entering high school, thus allowing them to use their knowledge across the curriculum. Her students often went on to study a modern language at a local junior college under the instruction of a professor fluent in that language. Younger students may need to take four or five years to go through the program, while older, self-motivated students may be able to work through it more quickly. The author says that strong English students should be able to finish the program in two years: Levels One and Two the first year and Level Three the next. As a college graduate with a B.A. in French, I found that I could easily do two, and sometimes three, lessons at a time.

According to Mrs. Beers, the program can be used as early as fifth grade, but I would like to share my experience. My daughter did the California State Star test last year (fourth grade) and scored "Advanced" in language arts. She is an excellent reader and quite articulate for her age. So I quite naturally assumed that she would do just fine with LREG. Not so. After consulting online with other LREG moms and with the author herself, I think I understand the problem (and the solution). I had never completed a phonics program with my daughter because she took off reading when we were halfway through. Spelling was not a high priority either, as I was under the erroneous impression that good readers make good spellers. And since we relied more on oral narration than written, actual writing was not a high priority either, except during a five-minute daily handwriting exercise. So take a child who reads well, but is not used to writing much and cannot spell well, and put her into an intensive Latin program that requires a lot of writing - I think you can probably guess that I heard a lot of

moaning for two months. Now, the content was more or less accessible to her, but the actual mechanics of the notebook were beyond her. Since I knew that the notebook is an integral part of the program, I decided to go back a step and work on spelling and writing - lots and lots of writing - copy work, dictation, and original compositions. I am also taking her through Rod and Staff English, because I think at least a good solid year of basic English grammar before starting LREG is an advantage.

If you are starting from scratch in both Latin and English, I think many children will be overwhelmed. I recommend that anyone beginning this program with a younger child (fifth or sixth grade) make sure he or she has laid a solid foundation in spelling and writing, not just reading. Mrs. Beers will soon be releasing a K-4 curriculum based on her years teaching The Writing Road to Reading, but with a Latin emphasis, so those of you with very little ones can look forward to what I expect will be a thorough and excellent foundational language arts program. And for the rest of us trying to catch up in our pursuit of classical education, remember that the goal is not a certain amount of acquired knowledge, but a lifetime of learning.

New to The Latin Road program are teacher training videos/DVDs! While you could certainly get away without one added expense, they really are good. The teacher guide has much the same information, but many of us do best with a live instructor. Probably the biggest advantage I saw in these video workshops was the constant encouragement and reminders Mrs. Beers offers along the way. She may suggest allowing your student to use an open book for this worksheet, or remind you not to be too bogged down with this new concept because it will be more fully explained in Level Two. I need this kind of pep talk when I embark upon something new! If cost is an issue (and it is for most of my friends and I), I suggest at least using the Level One videos/DVDs. They will ease you into the program and help you learn the ropes.

For more information about this excellent Latin resource, contact Schola Publications at www.thelatinroad.com.

-- Product Review by: Heather Jackowitz, The Old Schoolhouse Magazine