Reimagining Latin Class: Using the *Reacting to the Past* Pedagogy in the Intermediate Latin Course

Christine L. Albright
University of Georgia

Abstract

In an attempt to rethink how intermediate Latin classes are taught, during fall semester, 2012, the author incorporated a *Reacting to the Past* game called *Beware the Ides of March: Rome in 44 B.C.E.* by Carl A. Anderson and T. Keith Dix into class and required students to compose formal speeches in Latin as part of the game. To measure the effectiveness of using the pedagogy, the author conducted a qualitative study based on students' anonymous responses to two questionnaires. Results of the study showed that the game was most students' favorite activity of the semester, that students learned a significant amount about Roman history, that students learned more about Roman authors in general and became more engaged with Latin texts, that the composition exercises were effective for improving Latin skills, and that an overwhelming majority of students felt that their Latin skills improved during the semester despite the time spent playing the game.

Keywords

Reacting to the Past, Latin pedagogy, role-playing, Latin composition, intermediate Latin

Intermediate-level Latin classes can be challenging to teach.[1] First, students in these classes often move from reading passages which have been heavily edited for beginners to reading actual Latin texts such as Cicero's *In Catilinam I* and Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*, and many struggle with this transition. Second, many students take their first intermediate class after a summer of reading no Latin at all. The hiatus necessitates a time-consuming review of basic material and frequently compounds already slow progress through a text. Third, students in intermediate classes often are so focused on dissecting each Latin sentence in order to arrive at a correct translation that they miss the overall meaning of the texts themselves and do not become engaged with the actual content. The format of these classes usually involves instructors asking students to translate aloud passages which have been assigned as homework and then following up with questions about vocabulary and grammar. Students quickly become bored with the daily class routine of translating and parsing, and, after several weeks, class becomes rather stale. At my own institution, where we have a fifteen-week semester, keeping students motivated for the whole term is especially difficult. In an attempt to rethink how intermediate classes are taught, during fall semester, 2012, I incorporated a *Reacting to the Past* game into my Latin class and conducted a qualitative study of students'

1 This article benefitted greatly from discussions with Sherry Clouser and Denise Domizi of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Georgia. I would also like to thank Carl A. Anderson of Michigan State University and T. Keith Dix of the University of Georgia for their unpublished game materials and general advice about the game; Emily Luken at the University of Georgia Libraries; Peter A. Appel, who read and commented on several drafts of this article; and the students who were enrolled in my Latin 2001 course during fall semester, 2012.

THE CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MIDDLE WEST AND SOUTH CAMWS

experience. While in the future I hope to measure students' progress in Latin more specifically by means of quantitative analysis, for this study I focused on students' self-assessment.

The *Reacting to the Past* Pedagogy

Reacting to the Past is a pedagogy which was developed at Barnard College in the 1990s by Mark Carnes.[2] This pedagogy uses historical simulation and game dynamics to engage students more deeply with primary texts. Students assume the roles of various historical figures and compete by making arguments in front of their fellow classmates. At this point, the *Reacting to the Past* catalogue includes games which focus on many different periods and events in history. There are published games about Athens in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War, France during the Revolution, the English Reformation, and the trial of Galileo, for example, and there are several new games in development which deal with subjects such as the expulsion of American Indians from the Southeast, the fight for civil rights, and the problem of acid rain in Europe. In the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy, classes primarily are run by students. The instructor acts as an advisor for students and serves as the general Gamemaster, but he or she does not actively direct the class. Students who participate in a *Reacting to the Past* game not only become familiar with history but also develop skills in critical thinking, improve their writing, and cultivate their ability to articulate oral arguments.[3] Students also interact with each other much more readily than in traditional classes, and, overall, they become more invested in their own education (Carnes *Pedagogy* 1; Higbee 68-71).

In my Latin class, I used a game written by Carl A. Anderson of Michigan State University and T. Keith Dix of the University of Georgia called *Beware the Ides of March: Rome in 44 B.C.E.*[4] This game is still under development but has been tested at conferences and in classes. Students play Roman senators in the days immediately following the assassination of Julius Caesar, and each class constitutes a meeting of the senate. For each meeting, a student formally convenes the senate by submitting a *relatio* as well as an appropriate meeting place in Rome, and, if the submission is accepted by the Gamemaster, the student disseminates the information to the other students in time for them to prepare their positions. Voting is accomplished by actual *discessio*, where everyone gets up and moves to one side of the room or the other. There are both Republicans and Caesarians, but these are only loose categories. Each character has an individualized agenda for the game. For example, Publius Cornelius Dolabella must act to ratify his position as consul and also to deal with his enormous debt. Tiberius Claudius Nero must attempt to restore the earlier reputation of his family. Lucius Scribonius Libo must promote the interests of Sextus Pompeius, and Marcus Terentius Varro must endeavor to establish a public library in Rome. All characters strive for power in the vacuum left by Julius Caesar. In keeping with the nature of the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy, success in the game generally depends on both written and oral work (Anderson and Dix "Curriculum" 452). This game is particularly exciting for its cast of famous figures: Octavian, Marcus Antonius, Lepidus, and Cleopatra all appear in the game.

Previously, I had used *Reacting to the Past* games and other role-playing activities in classical culture classes with great success. I found that role-playing helped the students develop a

2 For a complete list of games, visit http://reacting.barnard.edu/.

3 For general impressions and formal studies of the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy, see, for example, Carnes, "Minds on Fire;" Higbee; Lightcap; and Stoessner, Beckerman, and Whittaker.

4 I used the unpublished Student Manual and Instructor's Manual which are dated August, 2011. Access to game materials is available http://reacting.barnard.edu/.

deeper understanding of Greek and Roman civilization. Amy Richlin has recently written about using role-playing exercises in her courses on Roman civilization and Roman comedy to help students appreciate the diverse nature of Roman society (Richlin). In my own culture classes, I had used the *Reacting to the Past* games at the end of the semester, and it had always been my experience that the games brought some real energy into the last period of the term. Students frequently wrote on course evaluations that playing the game was the best part of a class. It had also been my experience that, in preparing for their daily arguments and writing assignments, students became much more engaged with the literature than they did in classes taught only in the traditional lecture format. In using the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy in my Latin class, I had two primary goals. First, I wanted to break up the monotony of the traditional routine and give students the opportunity to learn Latin in a more multifaceted approach. Second, I wanted to help students understand the larger significance of the Latin texts they were translating. I hoped that the earlier success I had experienced with *Reacting to the Past* games would extend to the language classroom as well.[5] Nevertheless, I wanted to measure the success of the endeavor through more formal means than my own impressions.

Introducing *Reacting to the Past* into Latin Class

At my institution, we typically read Caesar and Ovid in the first class of our intermediate Latin series. Most instructors divide the semester into two parts, with the first half devoted to prose and the second half devoted to poetry. To accommodate the game, I divided the semester into thirds. For the first five weeks of the term, we read Caesar, using *A Caesar Reader: Selections from Bellum Gallicum and Bellum Civile, and from Caesar's Letters, Speeches, and Poetry* by W. Jeffrey Tatum. I decided to use this reader because it features passages from both *Bellum Gallicum* and *Bellum Civile* as well as relevant selections from Cicero and Suetonius. For the next five weeks, we played the game. The Student Manual for the game was posted on our class website. I did not require that the students purchase specific books for this portion of the class, but I recommended several texts for use during the game, including, most notably, Jo-Ann Shelton's *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, Ronald Syme's *The Roman Revolution*, and *Handbook to Life in Rome* by Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins. I also directed the students to our departmental library to find primary texts and additional secondary resources. For the last five weeks of the semester, we read parts of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. I used Richard LaFleur's *Love and Transformation: An Ovid Reader* for this portion of the class. Thus, I focused on the same authors we usually read in intermediate Latin but structured the entire course around the game.

Even though we did not actually play the game until the sixth week of the semester, I introduced the game in the first few days of the term and assigned individual roles. I had taught about half of the students in elementary Latin courses, so I was fortunate to know several students quite well, which made the process of assigning roles much easier. I chose highly motivated students for important roles such as Marcus Antonius, Dolabella, Lepidus, and Cleopatra. I chose a student who already had a law degree to play Cicero, and I chose a student who was majoring in English and who had exhibited a trenchant sense of humor in earlier classes to play Catullus. I assigned leading Republican roles to students who were regularly outspoken and opinionated about contemporary politics in class. For the students I did not know well, I distributed roles randomly.

5 For suggestions of less elaborate role-playing exercises which can be used in language instruction, see Livingstone. For information about the general importance of students' engagement and environment, see Ambrose, Bridges, DiPetro, Lovett, and Norman.

I directed students to start reading the game materials right at the beginning of the term. In addition to instructions for playing the game, Anderson and Dix have provided in the Student Manual essential information about the life of Julius Caesar, Roman names and families, Roman political offices, procedures of the Senate, and the Roman legal system, for example, and there are useful supplemental readings from authors such as Sallust, Cicero, Suetonius, and Plutarch. To make sure that students read the game materials thoroughly, I used the fourth weekly quiz to test students on the historical and cultural information in the Student Manual. To prepare for the game, I also spent part of one class during the first week of the semester lecturing briefly on general Roman history and the events leading up to the assassination of Caesar. Setting up the game at the beginning of the semester helped students focus on the late Republic and on Caesar as a political figure as we started reading his works.

As usual, most students had not looked at Latin since the previous spring semester, so I offered a review of basic grammar at the beginning of the course. After a few days, we started working our way through selections from *Bellum Gallicum*. I taught the class in the traditional format, asking students to translate and parse passages they had prepared at home. The material was difficult for the students, and our progress through the passages was sometimes painfully slow. Eventually, we turned to *Bellum Civile*, which the students found even more difficult, and to other material in the reader. To keep them interested, I frequently started short general discussions of Caesar's works. For example, I asked the students to consider Caesar's agenda in writing about his own accomplishments, and I asked the students to think about how Caesar characterizes his enemies. Because I had assigned individual roles for the game early in the semester, I also asked students to consider certain passages in the texts from the perspective of their characters. Thus, students practiced their Latin skills while at the same time developing a basic understanding of Caesar's military and political endeavors in preparation for the game. In general, I found that students asked more general questions about the texts themselves rather than just questions about grammar and vocabulary and seemed to appreciate that the Latin we were reading was part of a text with actual historical significance.

For the next five weeks of the semester, we played the game. There were twenty-six students in the class, which is a large number for a *Reacting to the Past* game. In the Instructor's Manual for the game, Anderson and Dix recommend a maximum of twenty-four students (6). In keeping with the authors' recommendations, there were roughly twice as many Caesarians as Republicans (6). Most students fully embraced their roles in the game. The student who played Cicero, who had several years of experience working as an attorney and had a naturally booming voice, delivered consistently impressive speeches. The student who played Cleopatra, a character who is not allowed to speak in the senate unless sponsored by a senator, wore a gold crown and sat at her desk every day with an appropriate regal expression. The student who played Dolabella actually grew a beard to demonstrate his grief for Caesar and came to every class dressed in a toga. The student who played Catullus composed and recited witty and highly entertaining poems about various happenings in the senate which frequently made everyone laugh. Some roles in the game are more developed than others, and many students who had been assigned less developed roles took advantage of the opportunity to shape their own characters. At times, in talking to these students, I was surprised at the amount of detailed research they were doing to justify decisions they had made about their characters.

It has always been my experience in using a *Reacting to the Past* game that, after the first somewhat awkward class meeting, students start to engage with the historical situation. That had

been the case when I used the games in classical culture classes, and the same held true in my Latin class. At first, students were a bit confused about how to act and reluctant to speak in front of the class. By the second session, however, students were lining up to be recognized by the presiding senator, and they were spending many hours outside of class preparing for the next meeting. Each class was full of energy, and the excitement grew as the game developed. As I approached the classroom each day, there would always be several students talking in the hall about what was going to happen that day and urgently making deals with each other. The student who played Quintus Pedius later told me that he and the student who played Lepidus worked together at the main library on campus and that, for those five weeks, the two spent most of their time on the job strategizing about the game. The issues students debated in our game included whether to give Caesar a state funeral or to throw his body into the Tiber River, whether or not to attack the Parthians, basic qualifications for becoming a senator, and the possible deification of Caesar. Although *Reacting to the Past* games strive for historical accuracy, the outcomes of the games are often not in keeping with history, and this was certainly the case in my class. On the last day of our game, Lepidus and Quintus Pedius unexpectedly marched on Rome and set Marc Antony up as Dictator. One student who had been recruited by them to announce their arrival contributed to this dramatic end by showing up dressed head-to-toe in a Roman centurion's uniform.

The main challenge I faced in using the game in a Latin class was that I had to somehow incorporate Latin, and my experience with *Reacting to the Past* games to that point only had been in classes taught in English. Others have used *Reacting to the Past* games successfully in language classes. Jim McKinley at Sophia University in Japan has used *The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.* to help his students develop skills in English (McKinley), and Peggy Schaller at Georgia College and State University required her students to read and speak French when playing the game about the French Revolution (Schaller). However, unlike students learning English or French, students at my institution do not learn to speak Latin. We require that students learn to pronounce Latin correctly, and some of our instructors use a bit of conversational Latin in the elementary classes. Still, while the idea of using only Latin for the game is compelling, I did not feel that it was a real option.

Thus, to incorporate the language into the game, I had the students compose two formal speeches in Latin—350-400 words each. I knew that this assignment would be quite challenging for students in an intermediate-level class. Other than a few basic exercises in our elementary-level classes, students do not generally practice composition as undergraduates in our program. (In fact, I myself did not attempt serious Latin composition until I was in a doctoral program.) I recommended that students consult the English-to-Latin section of *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* and also *Allen and Greenough's New Latin Grammar*, both of which were available to students in our departmental library. Because these assignments were so demanding, I arranged for eleven first-year graduate students who were enrolled with me at the same time in a course on Latin teaching methods to serve as tutors to help the intermediate-level students polish their speeches. The arrangement thus gave the graduate students some valuable teaching experience. In general, however, the undergraduates themselves were responsible for rendering their English speeches into correct, idiomatic Latin. The first speech was due at the beginning of the game, and most students spent several weeks working on it, with most of them meeting several times with their graduate tutors to work on their compositions. Students could turn in their second speech at any point later in the game. All of the compositions had mistakes, but it was also clear from the speeches that many of the students were learning to deal properly with new vocabulary and grammatical constructions.

During the game, students delivered the first part of these formal speeches to their fellow senators in Latin. I did not have them deliver their speeches in their entirety in Latin because it was a large class and this would have taken too much time. At first, most students simply went to the podium and read their speeches with little emotion or emphasis, often stumbling over and mispronouncing words. Many of these initial deliveries were, frankly, a bit agonizing to hear. A few students delivered their speeches with surprising power and feeling, however, and the rest of the class reacted to these deliveries by snapping their fingers, which in general we used instead of applause to keep from disturbing nearby classes. After the rest of the class heard these few powerful deliveries, students started practicing their deliveries and reading their Latin speeches as real orations. Thus, even though we were not speaking only Latin for the game, students did get to experience Latin as a living language rather than only as ancient text.

In listening to the students' deliveries, I noticed that many students who had trouble translating in class were nevertheless skilled at giving their Latin speeches. I had taught one of these students in an intensive elementary Latin course the summer before, and he had struggled in that class. When I told the students at the beginning of the semester that we would be playing a historical game as part of our intermediate Latin course, this student had told me that he really enjoyed learning about history. It turned out that he was a particularly dedicated and skilled player during the game. Whenever he went to the podium to read his Latin, his orations were consistently filled with emotion and fiery gesticulation. He sometimes mispronounced words, and his Latin was far from perfect. Still, I believe that the experience of successfully composing and delivering his own speeches as part of the game helped this student feel more positive about learning the language itself. In general, delivering their own Latin compositions in the context of the game seemed to make the language come alive for many of the students.

In addition to the two speeches, I also encouraged students to compose political graffiti as well as any documents which figured in the game in Latin by offering a small amount of extra credit. About a fourth of the students did post graffiti on our class website and on posters they hung on the walls of our classroom. After the student who played Marcus Antonius announced that he possessed the *acta* of Caesar, for example, the following graffiti (rendered verbatim) appeared on the class website:

M. Antonius mendax est.
Non confidunt Marcium Antonium.
Marcus Antonius est foedus medax qui solum beneficium sibi petit.
Non habet commodum Romae prope cor.
Acta Caesaris non sunt.

Although only some of the students posted graffiti, the graffiti which were posted were of interest to the other students. Graffiti were often the subject of students' conversations before class meetings, and, on a few occasions, I overheard students talking about how a posted statement had been composed incorrectly in Latin.

During the last week of the game, I assigned an exercise which would expose students to the general corpus of classical literature. I wanted the students to understand that they were learning Latin to be able to read original texts, not just to regurgitate memorized forms. So, I asked them to write a short paper in English about the three classical texts which their character would most likely own. About half of the students chose the easy path and wrote about at least one of Caesar's works, which to some degree defeated my goal of exposing the students to authors they would not

typically encounter in early Latin classes. These students delved into Caesar's works more deeply than we had in class, however, and they had to think about how Caesar's works relate to other texts of the period. Many students wrote about authors such as Lucretius, Cornelius Nepos, and Cato the Elder, and a few students even wrote about Greek texts such as the Homeric epics and Hesiod's *Theogony*. Thus, I feel that the writing assignment motivated students to learn more about classical literature in general, and I think it helped underscore that the passages we had read in Latin during the first part of the semester were elements of larger, meaningful texts.

Immediately after we finished playing the game, I conducted a post-mortem. We spent one class talking about what actually happened right after Julius Caesar's assassination. Anderson and Dix have included a short summary of important events and dates in their Instructor's Manual, and I used this as my general guide (89-91). The students were still quite energized by the exciting last day of the game, so I followed Mark Carnes' recommendation in his *Pedagogy Manual* and made the post-mortem relaxed and fun in order to foster the spirit of community which had developed during the game (23-24). Many students brought food to share, and everyone was eager to learn about the fates of the characters they had played. In looking ahead to the poetry we were going to read next, I spent the last part of our post-mortem talking about the events leading up to Augustus' reign. Because we were going to read the story of Daphne and Apollo in Book One of the *Metamorphoses*, I also briefly lectured on the importance of Apollo in the Augustan Age. Thus, the students were better prepared to consider the political context of the poetry they were about to read than most students in intermediate Latin classes.

When we started reading Ovid for the last part of the class, I again ran the class in the traditional format, asking students to translate and to parse. The transition back to the traditional format was a bit bumpy. Most students had lost some speed in reading during the five-week game, and, for many students, this was a first attempt at reading poetry. At first, we made extremely slow progress through the text, but, after a few days, everyone seemed to be moving more quickly through the Latin. During the game, many students had formed bonds with each other, and the class indeed had become a real learning community. Students often made plans to meet for lunch or coffee outside of class to prepare for the next class meeting. This sense of community continued after the game. When students stumbled with a section of Latin text, for example, other students offered helpful hints, and when students successfully translated a difficult portion of the text or correctly answered difficult parsing questions, the other students cheered for them by snapping their fingers just like they had for good speeches in the game. Because the students were more familiar with the history leading up to the Augustan Age and because we had talked about the importance of Apollo to Augustus, the students were able to think about the story they were translating in a larger context. They often made interesting observations about the potential political elements of the story and asked thoughtful questions about the *Metamorphoses* as a whole during class. We did not have time to read the passage in Latin, but we did briefly discuss the apotheosis of Julius Caesar at the end of the *Metamorphoses*. Again, their experience in the game helped generate meaningful class discussions about the poem. Although the time away from the traditional routine slowed down the students' speed a bit, the experience of playing the game helped maintain energy in the classroom and generate enthusiasm for the language late in the term when students' interest usually wanes.

Assessment

In assessing students' performance in the course, I used the same measures I had always used in intermediate classes and then added a few elements to account for the game. In previous in-

termediate classes, I had measured performance by means of weekly quizzes, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Overall, students' grades in this course were determined by weekly quizzes (15%), a midterm exam given at the end of the first five weeks (20%), a final exam (25%), the two formal Latin compositions (10% each), the writing assignment (15%), and class participation (5%). For the weekly quizzes, which were given while we read Caesar and Ovid but not during the game itself, students were asked to translate and parse words from passages they had worked through in class. (As discussed above, one quiz covered the historical and cultural information in the Student Manual rather than the Latin we had read that week.) The midterm exam covered the Latin we read during the first five weeks of the semester. Students were expected to translate and parse words from two passages they had seen before and also to translate at sight a passage from Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*. The final exam was cumulative and included material from the game. Students were asked to translate passages and to parse words from the passages we had read in Caesar and Ovid. They were expected to translate one Latin passage at sight, and they could choose between Caesar and Ovid for this exercise. Students also were asked to write a long essay about the late Republic; for the essay, students could focus on the history or the literature of the period.

I graded the Latin compositions according to both content and presentation. One-third of the grade for each composition was determined by the actual argument and evidence presented in the speech. I took into consideration whether or not each speech supported the goals of a student's character, the quality of the evidence which was presented, the rhetorical organization, and the polish of the speech. Two-thirds of the grade for each speech was determined by the quality of the Latin. Because these exercises were challenging, I allowed students to make three errors in Latin without penalty, but, after the third error, I deducted points for each mistake. Because graduate students had been available as tutors for the undergraduates while they worked on their Latin speeches, I did not allow students to revise the compositions after I graded them. For the writing assignment in English, half of the grade was derived from content, and half was determined by how well the paper was written. Students not only had to demonstrate that they had examined the corpus of classical literature, but they had to construct reasonable arguments for why the texts which they chose would be meaningful to their own Roman characters. As with any writing assignment, I expected effective organization and argumentation, and I deducted points for sloppy writing, incorrect grammar, and misspelled words. The Latin speeches and the writing assignment served as the primary graded work for the game.

I included a grade for class participation to motivate students to work diligently during the game. Because I had never used the game in a Latin class and because some characters are more developed and easier to play than others, I did not feel comfortable assigning letter grades for students' individual daily arguments or skills in oration. Thus, for the grade in class participation, I took into consideration the number of times students spoke in class, whether or not their speeches were appropriate for their characters' goals, and regular attendance during the game. To earn a high grade in this area, students were expected to speak in front of the class at least five times and to have prepared their arguments thoroughly before coming to each senate meeting. Students who missed more than one senate meeting during the game lost points. As an extra incentive to participate fully in the game, I offered to the winning student or students a bonus of three points towards the final grade for the course. In selecting winners, I considered whether or not students accomplished their individual objectives, how diligently students seemed to be conducting research for their arguments, and how accurately students portrayed their Roman characters. I chose three winners from this class. Another student had played almost as well, so I awarded him two

extra bonus points. The bonus points turned out to be an effective incentive: I often heard students talking among themselves during the game about how much they wanted to win the extra points.

Results of the Study

The qualitative study I conducted involved two questionnaires and relied on students' anonymous self-reporting. Students were asked to complete the first questionnaire immediately after the game, and they were asked to complete the second questionnaire at the end of the semester. Students could choose whether or not to participate in the study, and there were no special incentives for participation. On the days when I handed out the questionnaires, I also distributed an informational letter which described the study and which explained that, although there were no incentives for participation, students' participation might improve education in Latin classes. I hoped that all students would complete both questionnaires, but several students chose not to participate. Eighteen out of twenty-six students participated in the first part of the study, and fourteen out of twenty-six students participated in the second part of the study. I asked students to complete the second questionnaire during the last few days of class; thus, the fact that there were fewer respondents to the second questionnaire than to the first was due to end-of-semester absenteeism rather than an increase in the number of students opting not to participate in the study. The study produced the following results.

When asked which activities they enjoyed most during the semester, 85.7% of students who responded reported that they most enjoyed playing the game. One student wrote: "I enjoyed coming to class in general because of the overall class enthusiasm. Class and all activities were super difficult[;] thus, it was hard for me. But the game was quite enjoyable." At the end of the semester, several students asked me about other opportunities in the Classics Department to take classes which use the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy. Another student sent me an email after the class, and this is what he had to say:

> *I just wanted to let you know that this game has been one of the coolest things I've ever done in all of my school. And I'm not saying that to try and suck up or anything [;] this has seriously been such a fascinating informative experience and I'm really sad that it's over!! But I will never forget our time spent in the senate. Please keep doing this with your classes[. I]t's been so awesome and I appreciate you giving us the opportunity to try something so different.*

Thus, the game was a clear hit among the students.

When asked whether they felt that they had learned a significant amount about Roman history by playing the game, 88.8% of the students who responded indicated that they had indeed learned a significant amount. Responses included:

> *Definitely! I considered myself a Roman history buff prior to the game, but, as we played the game, I found myself doing more and more research to advantage my own character as well as others.*

> *Absolutely…I'd write more but I'd wear my hand out. I'd say I improved 100% in my knowledge of Roman history.*

> *Definitely. Although the game doesn't have to follow history, the research required to play the game correctly includes a lot of research on Roman history.*
>
> *Yes. I know the punishment for patricide, the cursus honorum, and lots of stuff about Roman culture I never would have known otherwise.*
>
> *Absolutely! This is the area in which I think I learned the most. From understand[ing] the Roman political system to concepts such as the cursus honorum.*

Only two students reported that they had not learned a significant amount about Roman history. One of these reported that he already knew a significant amount about Roman history before starting the game and that his knowledge improved only slightly in that he learned more about individual historical figures. The other student wrote: "Not a significant amount but a good bit. I learned a lot about the way things work in the Roman Senate, which I found interesting."

When asked whether they had learned more about Roman authors in general, 88.8% of respondents reported that they had. Similarly, 85.7% of respondents reported that they felt more engaged with Latin texts after playing the game. Responses included:

> *I understood the circumstances in which these works were written.*
>
> *I read a lot of Roman and Greek historians such as Suetonius, Sallust, [and] Polybius describing various aspects of Roman politics [and] warfare.*
>
> *I did some research on Cicero and a few other authors for the paper, and I did not have much prior knowledge of them.*
>
> *I feel more interested in the writings current to my character, specifically Cicero's work.*

Several students reported that the writing assignment in particular contributed to greater engagement with Latin authors and texts. In talking with students throughout the semester, it was apparent that many students had never thought about which authors were writing at the time of significant historical events such as the assassination of Julius Caesar or the foundation of the principate. In general, students seemed to realize during the course of the term that the ablative absolutes, passive periphrastics, and jussive noun clauses which they were dissecting in class added up to texts which carried real meaning for understanding Roman history and culture. Because one of my goals was to get students to contextualize the Latin we were translating in class, I was pleased with these results.

In general, it was clear during our game that many students were actively researching various Roman laws, customs, and procedures, and in our class meetings students often referred to specific Latin texts as evidence. One moment in class stands out. The student who played Dolabella argued that Caesar's assassins should suffer the traditional punishment for parricide—namely, that they should be whipped until they bled; sewn into a sack with a dog, a rooster, a viper, and an ape; and tossed into the sea, if possible. The other students were impressed with such colorful

detail, and much noise was made after his speech. A few of the Republicans challenged him for his evidence, however. He successfully defended his information by citing Cicero's *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino*. When I asked him later how he had discovered this information, he said that he had first seen it in an introduction to a book but had kept searching for ancient sources until he found Cicero's text, a work which he had never thought about previously. He had also found a useful reference to *Justinian's Digest* in the introduction to the Loeb edition of Cicero's text.

When asked whether they thought the composition exercises helped to improve their skills in Latin, 83.3% of the students who responded reported that the exercises had helped to improve their Latin. Responses to questions about the compositions included the following:

> *Latin composition is incredibly difficult, so getting that practice helped me better understand the grammar and syntax of Latin.*
>
> *Every time I have to do a Latin composition, I feel like it gets better. It was hard, however, to employ English rhetorical devices I wanted to use and translate them.*
>
> *By writing two speeches in Latin my Latin skills dramatically improved. I mastered many constructions and other areas of grammar.*
>
> *The Latin compositions were the first "serious" composition exercises I have taken part in, and they definitely pushed my Latin skills to the limit. It was fun to be able to use all of the obscure grammar we had learned throughout the introductory Latin sequence.*
>
> *Working backwards from the way we normally practice helps a lot; I actually like it better and think you should assign more of it, especially in the beginning level classes.*
>
> *Once you have to write a speech in Latin, you really pay attention to grammar and word construction.*
>
> *The speeches…were really hard for a 2000 level class, but I am going to take away skills that I would not have normally had in a pure translation class.*
>
> *Writing the speeches really helped, but really writing anything in Latin helps me practice. It helps you to recognize which words go with each other when you go back to translating because you know how to make words agree. It was also fun seeing how I improved ([I] felt I improved) from the first to the second speech. Again, I highly recommend assigning composition in the future, even though it takes a long time. [I]t is worth it.*

When asked which exercises helped to improve their Latin skills most, 64.3% of respondents reported that composing the Latin speeches was the most beneficial exercise of the entire semester. Interestingly, 66.6% of respondents who reported that the composition exercises most benefitted

their Latin skills also reported that the composition exercises were the most difficult activities of the semester. One student, who actually reported that the composition exercises were his favorite activities of the whole term summed this up well when he wrote this about composing the speeches: "It was bittersweet; I hated it but I learned a lot."

When asked if they thought that their Latin had improved during the course of the semester, 92.8% of the students who participated in the study reported that their Latin had improved. One student reported that his Latin had only slightly improved during the course of the semester. I initially was concerned that students' progress in developing reading skills might suffer as a result of incorporating the game. Four students did report that playing the game detracted somewhat from the skills which they had developed in the first part of the semester, so this concern turned out to be legitimate. Still, overall, the overwhelming majority of students reported that their Latin had improved despite the time away from the traditional method.

Conclusion

I would definitely use the game in another intermediate Latin class. To be sure, I had taught several of the students in the class previously and thus had a natural advantage in assigning some roles. Still, I assigned most roles randomly, and most students did not know each other before taking the class. The game broke up the monotony of the traditional routine and helped breathe real life into our daily class dynamics. It not only provided context for the Latin texts we were reading but also allowed the students to experience Latin as a spoken language. The game generated excitement about learning Latin among the students, and it also generated interest in classics as a field. Several students in the class even talked to me about majoring or minoring in Latin or classical culture at the end of the semester.

In using the *Reacting to the Past* pedagogy in Latin class again, however, I would make a few changes. First, although I do not typically use much oral Latin in my classes, I would encourage some simple spoken Latin during the game. In my class, most students referred to each other by the Latin name of their character, and I noticed that, as our game developed, some students were mixing Latin words into their comments and conversations. For example, I remember one Republican turning to another after a powerful speech by a Caesarian and saying: "That was *stuprum*." So, my students were using a small amount of informal spoken Latin on their own. Anderson and Dix include a glossary of important terms in their Student Manual (49-51), and it would be easy to distribute a short list of Latin phrases at the beginning of the game which would be useful in senate meetings. Hearing even a few basic phrases regularly would help to maintain focus on the language when formal speeches were not being delivered in Latin.

Second, I would include short translation exercises during the game. The five-week break we had away from the traditional routine not only negatively affected the reading speed which students had built up before the game started but also resulted in a slower start to reading poetry. Brief translation exercises would help to mitigate this effect. During the game, I would assign short readings from Caesar and other relevant authors such as Catullus and Cicero. To facilitate composition of graffiti during the game, I would assign some passages for translation from Matthew Hartnett's *By Roman Hands: Inscriptions and Graffiti for Students of Latin*. I also would post information for each senate session and any important documents in Latin rather than in English so that students would be reading Latin regularly as part of the game.

Finally, I would certainly have the students compose formal speeches in Latin again, but I would assign four or five shorter speeches rather than two long speeches. To some degree, students

were intimidated by the length of the composition exercises, and I believe the composition practice would be even more effective if done with more frequency and with more feedback. In *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, John C. Bean discusses how informal writing can be useful for developing students' ability to think critically and process information (Bean 120-145). In keeping with this idea, I would add opportunities for less formal Latin composition by requiring the students to write the proposed *relatio* for each senate session in Latin rather than English as well as any other materials they create for the game. Rather than offering extra credit for graffiti, I would require each student to post three graffiti on the class website. Encouraging students to compose short statements in Latin in addition to their formal speeches and adding opportunities for translation throughout the game would help continue the momentum of language instruction and, thus, ensure that the game enhances students' appreciation for Latin without distracting them from developing necessary skills.

Works Cited

Adkins, Lesley and Roy A. Adkins. *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print.

Allen, J.H. and James B. Greenough. *Allen and Greenough's New Latin Grammar*. Ed. J.B. Greenough, G.L. Kittredge, A.A. Howard, and Benj. L. D'Ooge. 1903. Boston: Ginn and Company; Mineola: Dover Publishing, Inc., 2006. Print.

Ambrose, Susan A., Michael W. Bridges, Michele DiPetro, Marsh C. Lovett, and Marie K. Norman. *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. Print.

Anderson, Carl A. and T. Keith Dix. "'Reacting to the Past' and the Classics Curriculum: Rome in 44 BCE." *Classical Journal* 103.4 (2008): 449-55. Print.

———. *Beware the Ides of March: Rome in 44 BCE*. August 2011. TS. Print.

Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011. Print.

Carnes, Mark C. *"Reacting to the Past" Pedagogy Manual*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005. Print.

———. "Setting Students' Minds on Fire." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 6 March 2011. Web. 6 July 2013.

Carnes, Mark C. and Josiah Ober. *The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.* 2nd ed. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2004. Print.

Cicero. *Pro Quinctio. Pro Roscio Amerino. Pro Roscio Comoedo. Contra Rullum*. trans. John Henry Freese. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930. Loeb Classical Library 240. Print.

Hartnett, Matthew. *By Roman Hands: Inscriptions and Graffiti for Students of Latin*. 2nd ed. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2012. Print.

Higbee, Mark D. "How Reacting to the Past Games 'Made Me Want to Come to Class and Learn.': An Assessment of the Reacting Pedagogy at EMU, 2007-2008." *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at EMU* Vol. 2 Article 4 (2008).Web 3 June 2013.

LaFleur, Richard A. *Love and Transformation: An Ovid Reader*. 2nd ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999. Print.

Lightcap, Tracy. "Creating Political Order: Maintaining Student Engagement through 'Reacting to the Past.'" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42 (2009): 175-179. Web. 8 July 2013.

Livingstone, Carol. *Role Play in Language Learning*. Essex: Longman, 1983. Print.

McKinley, Jim. "Reacting to the Past: A CLIL Pedagogy." *The Language Teacher* 37.5 (2013). Web. 21 September 2013.

Richlin, Amy. "Role-Playing in Roman Civilization and Roman Comedy Courses: How to Imagine a Complex Society." *Classical Journal* 108.3 (2013): 347-61. Print.

Schaller, Peggy. "Can (Role-)Playing the French Revolution En Français Also Teach the Eighteenth Century?" *Digital Defoe: Studies in Defoe & His Contemporaries* 4 (2012): 41-60. Web 10 March 2013.

Shelton, Jo-Ann. *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. Print.

Simpson, D.P. *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*. 5th ed. 1959. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1968. Print.

Stroessner, Steven J., Laurie Susser Beckerman, and Alexis Whittaker. "All the World's a Stage? Consequences of a Role-Playing Pedagogy on Psychological Factors and Writing and Rhetorical Skill in College Undergraduates." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101 (2009): 605-620. Print.

Syme, Ronald. *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939. Print.

Tatum, W. Jeffrey. *A Caesar Reader: Selections from Bellum Gallicum and Bellum Civile and from Caesar's Letters, Speeches, and Poetry*. Mundelein, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., 2012. Print.