

I live and work in the shadow of Grace Irwin. Every time I open my desk, I see the embroidered Honour H the Humberside student body gave her when she retired in 1968. When I teach the school motto, I do so from her dog eared copy of Vergil's Georgics, filled with hand written reminders and underlined noun adjective pairs, and every morning when I walk past her smiling portrait and into the classroom she called home for 38 years, I catch sight of a written tribute that reminds me what being a Latin teacher was like in days gone by. It observes, *Miss Grace Irwin remains a symbol of a bygone age when teachers stayed in a school over the duration of a career. This was a time when teachers themselves became institutions and gave the school building life.* This is the example that inspires me, and it is the one I have been following for the first five years of my tenure as Humberside's Latin teacher. As a result our Classics program continues to do very well, and is growing.

This year there are 170 students taking Latin, and another 60 students in Classical Civilizations. In May we will be taking a full complement of 45 students to the Ontario Student Classics Conference, where HCI has recently begun to enjoy success in Academics (in addition to Athletics). As the program grows I've started to look beyond my subject, to the school as a whole, and wondered how I can best impact the HCI community in order to give the school building life. With the encouragement of my former principal, June Stavropoulos, I am working to complete my combined Honours Specialist qualifications in Classical Studies and History.

I used the Grace Irwin Award to cover the cost of the first half of this combined specialist program. In February of 2013 I enrolled in the history honours specialist course at Queens University. As the only student with any experience or expertise teaching ancient history I fell into a pattern of using Greek and Roman examples for every lesson and project we were assigned. As a result I was able to develop a number of lessons I had always intended to make, and share them with colleagues who were grateful to be learning about a time that had always intimidated them.

The course challenged me to justify why I teach the way that I do. For example, I realized that when teaching a high school class I must start with the familiar. The life style and culture of Rome is so far removed from students that it seems as real as science fiction. Initially, it is hard for my Grade 11s to see that we are studying real people, at least until we start reading the primary sources. When Seneca writes to his friend complaining

about noises in the bath beside his house we have to laugh, because we too have heard others grunt when lifting weights to impress the spectators, or walked into an empty room and talked in a loud voice just to hear the echo. When we see Catullus go from loving Lesbia to hating her over the course of a few poems we understand, because that is the plot of every love story that doesn't end happily ever after.

"Ladies, if you have a round face it is better to leave your hair up so that your forehead and ears both show". Is that advice from the current Cosmo, or The art of Love by Ovid? When students realize it is the latter (Bk III, Part III), they see the people of Rome as real. As human. It is not so much that we are forcing ourselves to look through their eyes - rather we begin to realize that the Romans are still looking through ours. The moment when students are startled by how little has changed in the last 2000 years is the moment they become eager to learn more.

The most exciting project in the course required me to design 'my ideal field trip'. I planned an itinerary for a March break trip to Greece, and in four months I will get to see it become a reality when I travel with 34 students from Humberside to see the land that inspired Grace and continues to inspire me.

*Matthew Skinner*