

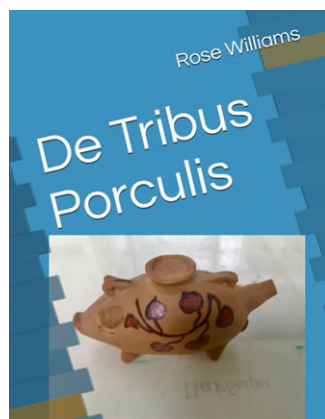
Book Review

De Tribus Porculis

Williams R. Pp. 40. Independently published, 2023.
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De Tribus Porculis [The Story of the Three Little Pigs] by Rose Williams is, as its name suggests, a Latin version of the famous children's story – the one in which the big bad wolf comes along and blows the piglets' houses down (all but one). This is one of the new number of novellas that are becoming increasingly popular, certainly in the USA, and beginning to interest teachers in the UK and the rest of Europe. In this respect, this review reviews the novella

not just for its subject content/story, but also for a number of other interesting aspects which teachers should be aware of for the use of such works.

Williams has written quite a few textbooks and uses her experience as a Latin teacher to provide some interesting material which goes strictly beyond the standard format that Latin developers have usually taken. *De Tribus Porculis* is in a large-scale format A4 size with 40 pages of text, divided into a number of interconnected sections. The first section is the story of the three little pigs itself, in Latin, using well-spaced, large-font vocabulary, as is the tradition for Latin novice readers. Both the frequent illustrations providing dual-coding of the events described and the familiarity of the story (for most pupils) are supports for reading comprehension, which is important at this stage in the pupils' learning. The choice of the three little pigs is a good one for the beginner because its repetitive storyline means that vocabulary can be returned to again and again in similar but each time slightly more elaborate circumstances. This aids the development of reading fluency because the student can anticipate what is going to happen and is rewarded by being able to read that it does in fact

happen. There are no surprises in this version of the story, unlike some of the other stories which twist the standard narrative around, and after various huffing and puffing the wolf ends up in the cauldron of boiling water in a satisfyingly gruesome ending. I think is a good thing for the novice reader: there's just enough grit to make the story worth reading, but not too much to make it over-challenging.

There is some variety in grammar: present and future tenses make their appearance, and also *possum* plus the infinitive. There are some genitives and datives in the text which do not cause significant blocks to understanding as the context is nearly always perfectly clear. The text itself is relatively short covering a mere 13 pages. No vocabulary help or glossing is provided on any of these pages, but all forms of every word used is in a glossary at the end of the book.

Section 2 is where things go beyond the standard novella – a series of different activities which ask pupils to use the vocabulary and sentence structures/storyline as a base for further exploration of the Latin they have already been reading. This revisiting the story and reusing of the vocabulary is an interesting step on from the traditional novella and the examples might provide inspiration for what teachers could do with other novellas once pupils have put them aside.

In Section II, each exercise is based on the story. Pars I requires pupils to complete the Latin sentence from a choice of three words; Pars II requires pupils to complete the sentence, choosing their own word(s) from the story; Pars III is a series of questions 'responde Latine'. In Section III pupils are encouraged to rewrite the story, using it as a frame, but changing the characters and some of the particulars (extra vocabulary is given, with illustrations for dual-coding). In Section IV, there are four short (one-page long) Latin dialogues between the the Little Pigs' Mother, the Little Pigs and the Wolf, which recycle the vocabulary and reuse the original storyline, but in yet another way. It's this variety of activities and the changes in genre of the original story that mean that pupils should become increasingly fluent readers of Latin, because they are receiving several shots of vocabulary input and straightforward sentence structures without getting bored by just doing the same thing again and again. The focus is always on the Latin – not on correcting English. Even the questions are in simple Latin.

Notes and answers to the questions are given in the remaining part of the book.

In all, this book provides an excellent example of the sorts of linked and carefully sequenced activities which a teacher might employ elsewhere – even with the earlier stories from commercially-produced course materials like the *Cambridge Latin Course* or *Suburani*.

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