

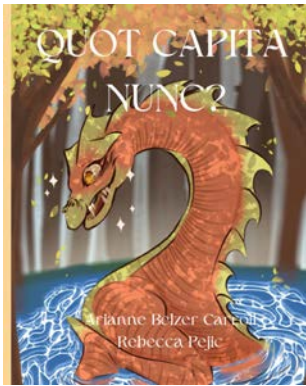
## Book Review

### Quot capita nunc?

Belzer-Carroll (A.) and Pejic (R.) Pp. 47.  
Independently published, 2023. Paper, £11.57.  
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The rise of the Latin novella has begun, as we have seen in several recent articles in this and other journals. And this one neatly fits into the very earliest of a sequence of learning, with merely 50 Latin words. Essentially, a Latin counting book, the entertaining illustrations vividly support the Latin, but leave enough ambiguity for the pupil to have to read the Latin to gain full comprehension. While character development in a book this simple may be hard to achieve, Arianne Belzer-Carroll

manages to do so, and manages with flair and humour. The book took me five minutes to read, but I found myself wanting to read on and finish it (not always the case with some books, I am sorry to say!) and I am sure that young pupils in the first year of learning Latin will want to read on as well. One could even see real Latin enthusiasts using this book with their own, small, children, pre-school. The story of Hercules and the Lernaean Hydra is well-known. This version is not quite the same, and has a twist at the end. That makes it satisfying.

As I have said, the book uses a mere 50 words: the repetition is an essential component of the design to develop reading fluency – it is meant to be easy. Out of those 50 words a narrative is created which is satisfying and surprisingly meaningful. Most of the Latin is in the present tense. There are some changes in morphology: the present and future tenses are both used (though the latter not extensively) and the third declension, including neuters. There are even a deponent verb and infinitives and imperatives. Don't be worried about them: the sense is perfectly clear (as we know when the focus is on meaning rather than on grammar). For those who wish to look them up, there is a glossary of all the words at the back of the book, with all forms used shown. The combination of easy reading, vivid illustrations and occasional noises such as *Tax!* [Thwack], *Vah!* [Drat!] and *Ecce* [Check it out!] add an element of fun – perhaps one could use this with a small group on several occasions re-reading and enjoying the making of noise at the right moments – or even making a recording to share round the class.

At the end there is also a note about Roman numerals and how the Romans counted and sequenced things.

Overall, a good example of how to make a lot out of a little.

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