

Latin sounds boring, why would I be interested?

Find out from Dwane! Below is a Q & A with the teacher of Visual Latin talking about his interest, approach, and insight on language learning:

How did your interest in learning languages begin?

Dwane: My dad was in the U.S. Air Force. We moved a lot when I was a kid. I grew up in Europe, mostly. My friends often spoke multiple languages. Naturally, I wanted to speak multiple languages as well.

How many languages do you know?

Dwane: I speak, read, and understand Latin, Greek, German, Spanish, and English with varying degrees of proficiency. I am still working on all of them.

From your experience, does being familiar with multiple languages affect day-to-day life?

Dwane: It does. We use words daily. Knowing how to use words well gives an edge. Ironically, learning more languages, and therefore more words, has taught me to simplify my speech and writing. Brevity is the soul of wit.

What is the importance/benefit of learning languages?

Dwane: There are many reasons. I will list a few. First, bilingualism expands thinking power. Words are the tools of communication. The more tools you have, the more you can do. Of, course, knowing how to use the tools is also important. Second, when you speak other languages, you often gain insight into life that is not gained from just one language. When I discovered that Spanish used the word *dedicas* to ask about profession, something profound happened in my mind. Your work should be what you are *dedicated* to.

Why Latin?

Dwane: I have my reason. Learning languages makes me happy. I love the process. I love the discovery. I love interacting with foreign words. I love seeing the worldview behind the words. Did you know that lousy Roman potters would sometimes cover defective pots with wax? In Latin, wax is *cera*. *Sine* means without. A true craftsman would never hide flaws in his pottery with wax. His pots were *sine cera*. From this Latin phrase English derives the word *sincere*. How cool is that? How would I know that if I had not studied Latin?

I am going out on a limb here. After all, I do have a series of Latin videos for sale. Why should you study Latin? Well, if you have no interest at all, you shouldn't. That's right. Latin isn't for everyone. Latin is hard. You will make many mistakes. Your brain will hurt. But, maybe you are like me. You love words. You love to write. You love to read. You wonder where words come from. You wonder why we use certain words. You find the history of the English language absolutely fascinating. You watch great speakers and wish you could speak like them. You read great books and wish you could write like them. You listen to amazing comedians and wonder how they do it. How do they take common, everyday experiences, re-word them, and make those experiences so funny? How do all of these talented wordsmiths do what they do? If you find yourself in love with words, then maybe Latin is for you.

What's so different about Visual Latin than all the other curriculums I hear about?

Dwane: I have been through hundreds of language courses. I have been studying languages for over 20 years. Almost without fail, each course was dry, dull, and boring. I pushed through because I loved

languages, not because I was enjoying the content. When we decided to produce Visual Latin we had two goals. *First, Visual Latin had to be enjoyable, or even fun. Second, it had to be comprehensive.* By the time students are finished, they should be able to read the Vulgate.

Why does Visual Latin focus on usage when most other curriculums emphasize memorization?

Dwane: Learning to play baseball is far more about playing baseball than it is about memorizing baseball statistics. Visual Latin teaches the grammar of Latin, to be sure, but students must actually speak to learn. They will not learn Latin if they simply memorize a list of words and a grammar concept.

Why does it seem easier for kids to learn languages than adults?

Dwane: Simple. Kids have more disposable time. Time is the key when learning a language. Do not allow your kids to sit in front of a television or video games for more than an hour or so a week. Have them learn a new language. They will thank you someday.

Beyond learning a new language, how will learning Latin benefit my kids (or me)?

Dwane: Latin makes learning other languages so much easier. Latin spawned over 25 languages, and these languages spread around the world. Not only that, but Latin and German married and produced English. Mastering English is easy if you learn Latin; Latin teaches the roots of tens of thousands of English words.

English is a massive, confusing worldwide language. Knowing Latin makes this wild language (English) more calm. Not only that, but Latin, like math is a detail game. Little mistakes add up. Sloppy work in Latin leads to confusion. Latin trains the student to see the details, thus, to be precise.

How do you make language-learning part of the everyday life of your family?

Dwane: My kids and I study German together every morning during breakfast. We try to use it throughout the day. They sometimes attend my Latin classes during the day. As they fall asleep at night, they listen to audio recordings in other languages. Currently, they are falling asleep listening to the Vulgate, which is in Latin.

Can that be fun?

Dwane: Sometimes it is fun. Sometimes it is just plain hard work. The trick is forward motion. Even when you don't feel like it, just keep going. The real reward comes when you start to use the language fluently. My kids can switch into German when they do not want their cousins to understand what they are saying.

What is another one of your favorite subjects?

Dwane: I am crazy about two other subjects: reading and mountain biking. Is mountain biking a subject? I read constantly. I read as much as I can. The world is a fascinating place. So many people are saying and doing so many interesting things. I can't read enough about it all.

Do you have a favorite ancient Roman story?

Dwane: The Romans were extremely superstitious. They prayed to everything, and deified everything. Before Romans would go into battle they would consult the 'Holy Chickens'. They would throw feed on the ground in front of the sacred chickens. If the chickens ate, they fought. If the chickens did not eat, the Romans would not attack. Once, in a naval battle, the poor seasick chickens refused to eat. The impatient naval commander muttered, 'If they will not eat, perhaps they will drink!' He then threw the sacred chickens overboard. The Romans lost the battle. That story makes me laugh.