Apps for Classics Teaching and Learning

by Emma Adams, Sarah Capewell, Caron Downes, Steven Hunt and Cressida Ryan

The following ideas spring from a Facebook conversation between teachers about how they have been using apps in their Latin and Classical Civilization classes.

Book Creator

I have found this really good for school trips. Recently we went to the Verulamium museum and theatre at St. Albans. Before we set off we put the students into groups of three or four and gave them an iPad for the day. The groups had to produce an eBook to explain what life was like in Roman Britain in the first century. The only instruction they were given was that they must use pictures of the artefacts and archaeological remains. During the coach ride to the site they familiarized themselves with how the app worked, and then, on arrival gathered the required information. During the journey home, they created the final product for presentation in class the next day. SC.

Explain Everything

I have used this for GCSE Latin Literature to encourage my pupils to engage more closely with the text. It was really useful for revision (especially as it meant we then had ready-made revision material) but it could also be used earlier on during the teaching. The pupils took a picture of the clean text. Then they used the highlighting or underlining tools to record themselves explaining how to translate it and any relevant stylistic points. The videos could be exported as MP4 files and saved onto the school network so that pupils could access them whenever and wherever they wanted. SC.

Video and camera apps

Again I used this for Latin literature for revision. In small groups, I got my pupils to create a 10 mark question. They then asked me the question and recorded my response (I had the text on the IWB so could point out relevant words/quotations). In their small groups, they then watched back my answer and (using the mark scheme criteria) recorded themselves justifying what mark they would give me and suggesting how I could improve my answer. All of these videos could be saved as MP4 files and saved on the school network. SC.

Educreations / Show Me / Explain Everything

I use these three apps for most things. I like the ability to draw on photos or images so I get students to take photographs then annotate them with as many Latin words as possible as vocabulary revision. I use *Show Me* as a mini interactive whiteboard to annotate Latin with small A Level classes. I also like writing out example sentences then recording myself highlighting a key feature like participle and noun pair to use in class to test students as a plenary. Then I email it to them to help with revision or homework. I also like taking photos of lessons and then drawing on them through these apps. CD.

Simplemind

For mind maps this is great. My class made them for Cicero revision last year and emailed them to each other. CD.

Morfo Booth

This is a fun app which makes photos talk. I like to get my students thinking about what characters might say at the end of a story which we have read in Latin / English during class, and they can easily create a quick sentence in English or Latin and get them speaking it through *Morfo*. I use it sometimes to get Caecilius to tell a class to get books out and so on, and to give a class instructions when they come into the room. CD.

Morfo Booth can be quite an engaging way to practise memorization activities: students photograph someone from a book or each other and record themselves chanting verb or noun tables. By making

the voices high or low, or in different accents, they play them to each other competitively to see who can create the most appropriate (for the character) or the funniest in their group. Unwittingly they are saying and hearing the tables again and again. SH.

iMovie

Not very revolutionary, but in Cambridge Latin Course Book 3 I like getting the class to make adverts with *iMovie* on the Salvius plot line which we watch at the start of the next chapter on Salvius to remind them about the story.

Honestly, even though I use my iPad in some way in every lesson, I haven't found anything I couldn't do with another device or pen and paper. But the ability to keep and share work easily is good and iPads are extremely easy to use and students enjoy using them. EA

I think there are some great ideas to be had - the photographing of a book or text and annotating with Latin or videoing short sections of text to illustrate adjective / noun pairs is really good.

I've done the same just videoing me talking through a text - but I have to keep them short or they're not much use to see afterwards. I think I'm going to establish a set of grammar points as a revision bank.

Also I like the idea of *morfo* as a way of getting the pupils to respond to the narrative.

iMovie also has a '*make your own movie trailer*' section, with pre-set genres, such as horror, romcom and even Bollywood. At the end of Stage 12 CLC my students leapt up and immediately started making trailers of the story of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the havoc it caused to '*five ordinary young Romans.*' The beauty of the app is the speed with which one can create a semi-professional-looking trailer. All the title pages are ready-loaded, and all the student has to do is to film the video clips and slot in the names of the characters. An excellent way of capturing the moment – and, of course, reminding them of the storyline, as well as encouraging them to think about how the media manipulates the viewer into what it does and what it doesn't get told. Shades of Tacitus, and any other historiographers, here – maybe a long shot! SH

Action Movie FX

This simple app allows you to upload a short video and subject the contents to any number of special effects, such as alien invasions, attacks by giant spiders, or death by plummeting boulders. It has momentary value and entertainment! SH

Memrise (available as an app and online)

I have created lists for all the GCSE vocabulary that comes up at Year 8 – 10. Vocabulary learning is a big problem for the majority of my boys, but consistent use of *memrise* massively pulled up the marks of my low vocabulary - scoring Year 11s last year. It has given me the impetus to spend a lot of time improving the lists this year. What I think makes it better than other vocabulary testers is that *memrise* provides short, sharp bursts of learning (which you can create your own '*mems*' or reminders for - the students can add pictures in the revising stage to help them remember words, or they can write their own little rhymes or derivation connections) and then short bits of testing, in numerous combinations of multiple choice - Latin to English, English to Latin - then more learning and more testing. Then in 24 hours it reminds you to 'water your plants' and then a couple of days later you 'harvest' them. This is to remind the students to go back and test themselves again. It really seems to help the students to lay down long term memory. The teacher can also create your own lists of words you want to learn. Teachers can set up lists for students to revise and you can track their progress on a leader board. The student moves up the scale of *mem* from *member* to *mempee* to *memmoth* to *memperor*! Some of the boys have even admitted to becoming slightly addicted to vocabulary learning, but apparently *Klingon* is really hard. EA

A few further thoughts. The leader-board used to be quite a good way to motivate students to keep learning vocabulary, because they got competitive about it. Now the designers have changed the system, so it does not work as well. The courses are a bit wobbly - so the one I used had '*hestitate*' for dubito which annoyed me as I had to learn to type in the wrong thing. This is obviously down to the accuracy of the inputter though. For some words you have to type in the whole string of possibilities, for others only the first one, but you never seem to be able to type in, for example, the second one in a list. The computer system does not seem to be sophisticated enough. Some courses it insists on delivering alphabetically, which makes it as annoying as a vocab list. When it works, however, it divides words up more arbitrarily, which feels more sensible than the idea that "this week we will learn all the A-words." The '*overwater*' function is useful for revision. I've used it to learn modern languages too and really like it. I have it on my iPhone and iPad, and both of these are a little temperamental, which is annoying as it can mess up your 'garden' when it either doesn't work or doesn't synchronize with the main website. Having the same system available through multiple devices is quite useful though, as it means there is always a way to check in and just spend a few minutes topping up. CR

Puppet Pals

This simple animations website is free in its most basic form, but for you to get the most benefit out of it, you need to buy the (not very expensive) upgrade. It's basically a simple cut-out animations app, so you take a photo of your background and then move pictures around it while recording voices or music. You can increase of decrease the size of the pictures, and swap them back to front, so there's just enough flexibility to keep it interesting. We have taken pictures of our favourite characters from the CLC and you can 'cut round' them so that you are left with an easily-moveable image. The way we have used them is to recreate the stories we have translated. The still shows a scene from the hippopotamus story at the end of Cambridge Latin Course Book 2. The animations can be saved in a variety of formats and uploaded onto a VLE for example. SH

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