

Read Latin Better with Rhythm

Roma Parva



Reading aloud is easier if we have a concept of the rhythm of the language. Often we speak of a “foreign accent” when we mean the speaking rhythm which a person’s native language has given him or her. Examining the chief poetic or metrical pattern of a language often yields clues to that language’s rhythm. The “natural” or most prominent, rhythm of English is iambic —one short syllable followed by one long. English syllables below marked long are emphasized, or stressed; the other syllables are not.

˘ – ˘ – ˘ – – ˘ – ˘ –

“When I/ see wil/ lows ben/ding in/ the breeze”

In Latin, long syllables are literally held longer than short ones. The most prominent rhythm of Latin is arguably dactylic— one long followed by two shorts, with in-line variations:

– ˘ ˘ – ˘ ˘ – – – – ˘ ˘ – –

“Arma vi/rumque ca/nō Tro/iae quī /prīmus ab/ ōrīs”

Teacher and students should read the following sentences aloud carefully, paying attention to syllables which have long vowels or which are followed by two consonants. Either of these will make the syllable long. or in English terms, stressed. The slashes indicate a slight pause between sections to help with clear pronunciation.

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The people who founded the city of Rome were very few. Everybody worked together to build the little city.

Ölim Rōma parvum oppidum Ītalīae erat.

Omnēs Rōmānī oppidum condere labōrāvērunt.

Populus Rōmānī fortis oppidum amāvērunt.

Saepe oppidum mūnīvērunt/ et arma cēpērunt/ et patriam dēfendere parāvērunt.

Victōriīs magnīs patriam dēfendērunt et auxērunt.

Deīs multīs grātiās ēgērunt/ et templa magna aedificāvērunt.

Multās patriās cēpērunt; magnum numerum colōnōrum in multīs terrīs mīsērunt. Multās terrās in prōvinciās fēcērunt,/ et multōs annōs bene rēxērunt.

Terrae multae linguam Latīnam et modōs Rōmānōs accēpērunt.

Orbis terrārum Rōmānus factus erat.

The teacher or a chosen reader should now dictate the above passage aloud for all students to write down in Latin, marking vowels long or short as they write. After the dictation paper has been checked against a master copy (perhaps on the overhead) everyone should read it aloud in unison. Then individual students should read sentences aloud.

The following questions can be answered orally or in writing.

Respondē in Latīnā

Quid erat Rōmā ōlim?

Cuius oppidum erat?

Quālis populus erat Rōmānī?

Quae Rōmānī saepe cēpērunt?

Cūr?

Quibus patriam dēfendērunt?

Quibus grātiās ēgērunt?

Quod in multīs terrīs mīsērunt?

Responsa

Parvum oppidum

Ītalīae erat

Fortis

Arma

Patriam dēfendere parāvērunt

Victōriīs

Deīs

Magnum numerum colōnōrum

English questions and answers.

What was Rome once?

A small town

Whose (Of whom) was the town?

It was Italy's (of Italy)

What kind of people were Romans?

Strong

What did Romans often take (up)?

Arms

Why?

They prepared to defend the country.

With what did they defend the country?

With victories

To whom did they give thanks?

To the gods

What did they send to many lands?

A great number of colonists.