

The Late Republic

A Soap Opera of Classic Proportions

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A word or two about *The Late Republic* in its inception and implementation

Charged with not only teaching Latin, but also with bringing Latin to life, the modern-day Latin teacher faces a brave challenge. *The Late Republic* is an attempt to aid in this quest of piquing the interest of, particularly, Latin II students who would choose not to read the thousands of pages of history or the wonderfully compelling tales of Colleen McCullough in their spare time. If Latin students do choose to research the years 133 – 44 BC (from the Gracchi through the assassination of Caesar), what they would find is an amazing world full of intrigue and intellect and characters so full of personality, depth and deception, that not any author could hope to compete in creating them from mere imagination. What the students would see is a soap opera of classic proportions.

The Late Republic teaches about the fall of the Roman Republic and the people that surrounded it. Particularly, the audience is introduced to the person of Caesar in his most daring and audacious form first, as he is captured by pirates. The rest of the plays are centered around Julius Caesar as the prime mover of the time period, but only after Marius and Sulla are introduced in the first play during the aftermath of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. The Gracchi are to be dealt with primarily in an introductory lecture, which introduces the parameters of the first play, *Marius and Sulla*. It would be beneficial to create a large timeline of events placed on a wall in the classroom to help students keep track of this convoluted and confusing time period. One certainly cannot expect his or her students to remember every name and date included in the duration of the soap opera, so have it displayed for them.

The Late Republic can be presented in its entirety or in small pieces. Each play is written to be self-contained for that end. In presenting the entire soap opera, perform the plays over a period of several months as is appropriate in the curriculum. Each time an episode is performed by the class give the script to the students ahead of time and assign parts. The episodes should be taped with a camcorder and then viewed the next day so that the events will be solidified in the students' head. Each play has a detailed explanation of the time period and following events in order to give context and most plays have an explicit list of possible discussion topics that can structure a follow-up lecture. After viewing the episode in class, discuss the events and the people with the kids. Concentrate on concepts and not on dates and specific facts.

When preparing each episode, clearly visible nametags (or masks), scene cards, and the necessary props need to be prepared.

After the teacher has directed the first few episodes, it is suggested that the kids be allowed to direct the remaining installments. Split the class in half so that there are about 10-15 students in each group and have them assign parts, make scene cards and nametags, and film the episode.

The interpretation and presentation of events and characters may certainly be arguable, but the best effort has been made to recreate the late Republican time period as accurately as possible. As teachers, we rely on second hand information to form the

events of the past and in this case, *The Late Republic* owes its content and charisma to two sources alone: the writings of Colleen McCullough (The First Man in Rome, The Grass Crown, Fortune's Favorites, and Caesar's Women) and also Christian Meier's brilliant and authoritative biography, Caesar. Each of these works yields an incredibly specific and correct account of the events surrounding the late Republican period.

Bibliography

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5. Meier, Christian. Caesar. Translated from the German by David McLintock. United Kingdom: BasicBooks, 1982.

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