



Lesson Plan: Martha Marchina Teacher's Guide to "De Puero Jesu"

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Editor's Note: These teaching materials were graciously provided to Project Nota by Rachel Beth Cuning so that we might share them with our community free of charge. You are highly encouraged to visit bombaxpress.com for more resources created by Ms. Cuning, including a teaching guide to many of Marchina's poems, available for \$30.

Martha Marchina (1600-1646) wrote Latin poetry, and her work was published posthumously by the Spada family, a powerful family in Rome. Her poetry often had deeply religious and symbolic themes that placed women, particularly Mary, in positions of power. She also tended to describe Jesus when he was an infant, juxtaposing Jesus's infancy with his death. In "De Puero Jesu," though, she focuses on Jesus as a boy and the role that his parents had in raising him. She plays with two meanings of the word *regere* in this poem, which makes for rather delightful reading.

Although I personally tend to dislike religious poetry, Martha is different. I particularly enjoyed this "De Puero Jesu" poem for its word play and emphasis on family. If teaching religious poetry is up your alley, this one could be a great one to teach students and then to connect with. An outline for two day's worth of activities are included here for you to teach this poem to your students. This poem is suitable for use in Latin 3 and 4 but may also be suitable at the end of Latin 2.

De Puero Jesu – The Poem

De Puero Jesu

Inter Beatissimam Virginem, ac D. Josephum Incedente. Epig.

Dextrâ hinc Virgo, senex puerum regit inde sinistrâ,

Qui imperio terras, aequora & astra regit.

Quae majora putas miracula? posse puellum

Hunc Orbem regere, an sic voluisse regi?

Translation

On the Boy Jesus

Walking between the Blessed Virgin and the Master Joseph. Epigram

Translated by Rachel Beth Cunning

Here, from the right, the Virgin guides the boy, there, the left, the old man,

Who rules the lands, the seas, and the stars with authority

Which do you think the greater miracles? That a little boy

could rule this orb, or that he had wished to be guided?

Teaching Activities for “De Puero Jesu”

These activities prepare students to read “De Puero Jesu” and help students make connections to their own lives.

1: Circling with Personal Questions (Day 1)

Start by **writing the word *regit*** and asking students what it means. (If you’re students don’t know what it means, now is the perfect time for them to learn). Make sure students have these two definitions for *regit*: Guide & Rule. Write both of the English definitions on the board as it will be useful for you later. Generate examples of things, places, or people, that may be guided or ruled before moving into the next step.

Ask students: “Quid tu regis?” Point specifically at the word rule. Circle through several students. Encourage them to be silly or creative. Ask both open-ended and close-ended question. (Do you rule the school? Do you rule this pencil? Do you rule your cat or does your cat rule you?)

After you have circled through some examples of what students may rule, ask students how they rule it. It might be useful to first generate some words that show how you might rule something (kindness, anger, a fist, a carrot, whatever). Add this question into your circling.

Ask students: “Quis te regit?” Point specifically to the word guide on the board. Circle through several students and encourage them to be silly or creative. (Does a celebrity

guide you? Do parents guide you? Which friend guides you? Why?) Introduce the concept of dextra et sinistra as it relates to primacy and whose guidance is superior.

It might be helpful to use some props (this is great if you have stuffed animals). Have students choose two stuffed animals that guide them. Place one under a sign that says inde sinistra and one that says dextra hinc. Students can stand near the stuffed animal under the dextra hinc sign and say "Dextra hinc cattus me regit. Inde sinistra rana me regit." Encourage pointing gestures for hinc and inde.

After you have circled these questions, have students complete the fill-in-the-blank activity on the next page, formatted so you can print multiple per page and cut the page to save paper. Collect them for use on the second day.

Nomen mihi est:

Dextrâ hinc _____ me regit, _____ me regit
inde sinistrâ,
 (Quis te regit?) (Quis te regit?)
sed ego _____, _____ &
_____ rego.
 (Quomodo tu regis?) (Quid tu regis?) (Quid tu regis?)
(Quid tu regis?)

Nomen mihi est:

Dextrâ hinc _____ me regit, _____ me regit
inde sinistrâ,
 (Quis te regit?) (Quis te regit?)
sed ego _____, _____ &
_____ rego.
 (Quomodo tu regis?) (Quid tu regis?) (Quid tu regis?)
(Quid tu regis?)

Nomen mihi est:

Dextrâ hinc _____ me regit, _____ me regit
inde sinistrâ,
 (Quis te regit?) (Quis te regit?)
sed ego _____, _____ &
_____ rego.
 (Quomodo tu regis?) (Quid tu regis?) (Quid tu regis?)
(Quid tu regis?)

2: Story Listen & Draw (Day 1)

To wrap up the day, describe and draw a brief picture about Jesus based on the first two lines of the poem. (*Dextra hinc virgo, senex puerum regit inde sinistra / qui imperio terras, aequora & astra regit*). Label some of the targeted phrases, like *dextra hinc* and *inde sinistra*. Try to represent visually and label most of the words in the first two lines. When you are finished, project the blank sheet that the students just finished and ask them to fill in the blanks *de Jesu Puero*. When drawing, make sure that the *virgo* is pictured on Jesus' right, which will appear reversed to your students. You can play with this by having students raise their right hand or their left hand or various body parts.

With the blanks completed ask students to turn to a partner near them to discuss this question: *Quae miracula miracula erant maiora?* (1) *Jesus puer rexit/regit orbem*, aut (2) *Jesus puer voluit parentes regere eum*. If you want, you can have a quick class vote on the question, but that's definitely up to you!

3: Warm up with Reading Student Responses (Day 2)

Project the collected responses and compile them into one document with any needed edits. Read through the examples that students gave. Ask some comprehension questions in Latin for others to answer about their peers. Read as many as students are engaged with before moving onto projecting Martha's poem.

4: Read Martha's "De Puero Jesu" (Day 2)

Students should be comfortable reading some of the poem by this point, particularly the first two lines. Read the first two lines together chorally and then pause. It may be helpful to write out the questions from yesterday here and then to rewrite the word *putas* in parentheses before the last part of the poem. It may also be useful here to pause to review *regere* vs. *regi*. When you believe your students are confident enough with the vocabulary in the last two lines, read through the poem together again chorally.

5. Draw 1-2-3 (Day 2)

When you are done reading the poem together, have students complete a Draw 1-2-3 for the poem. They should draw one picture, write two speech or thought bubbles, and write a three sentence description of the scene. They should also respond to Martha's question asking which they think is a greater miracle and why they think that. If you want, you can collect the Draw 1-2-3 poems to project and discuss them further with the class.