

Lexicon and Grammar Exercise for Analecta Technica

You may complete this exercise while you are enrolled in a Greek or Latin course, or you may choose a text you have already worked with and complete the exercise independent of a course. The exercise is designed to familiarize you with two of the tools Classicists use to study texts, and practice asking the kinds of questions those tools can help you answer. The general goal is to choose a word or phrase from any text which you find puzzling or interesting, and then to investigate.

Lexical investigation will introduce you to the joys of the LSJ or the OLD: the standard (large) dictionaries for the field. There are copies in the Classics Lounge, as well as in the reference section of the library. In addition, the Perseus website links all words in their Greek electronic texts to the electronic LSJ (although in my experience these links do not always work; analog technology is more reliable, even if you have to know the alphabet to use it). The Latin texts are linked only to Lewis and Short, which can't really substitute for the OLD. Both of these lexica allow you to see not only the semantic range of a particular word and its varying forms, but point you to citations that let you see how ancient authors used it. Thus you can use the lexicon to determine subtleties of diction: is this usage unusual in the context? Does it recall some other passage in this text or another? Is it associated more commonly with prose or poetry? Etc.

Grammatical investigation will increase your familiarity with Smyth or Gildersleeve and Lodge, the standard reference grammars in the field. Like the lexicon, the grammars give examples from many authors of particular usages that will allow you to get a clearer sense of the connotations of particular constructions: are they exceptional? Do they imply a particular tone? Will the grammar allow multiple interpretations of the same word group?

Your report should start with the question you formulated, and explain why it is an interesting one. You should go on to detail the resource(s) you used to answer it, the answer you came up with, and how that answer has helped you to a fuller understanding or appreciation of the text. If your investigation suggested further questions, as interesting investigations often do, include these as well. *Your report should be one to two double-spaced pages long.*