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Therese Sellers,  
with illustrations by Lucy Bell Jarka-Sellers,  
*Alpha is for Anthropos.*

Boston, Massachusetts: Ascanius, The Youth Classics Institute, 2013. Pp. 56. Cloth  
(ISBN 978-1-62847-491-6) \$35.00.

*Alpha is for Anthropos* looks and feels like a children's picture book, the kind an adult can look through in a minute. As the title promises, it contains twenty-four little poems in Greek, one for each letter of the alphabet. The vocabulary is elementary; red-figure animals and children illustrate each poem. However, like most good picture books, first appearances are deceiving. Even for an adult with Greek, this one takes a few readings before you appreciate the subtle connections between the texts and illustrations. *Alpha is for Anthropos* provides both simple material for the child being read to, and more complex material for the adult reading to the child.

The text is printed in a generously sized small letters (titles in caps), with accents and punctuation, and a small-font English translation. "Handsome", I thought, as I scanned my eyes over Ο ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ and Ο ΒΙΟΣ. But when I read Η ΓΕΦΥΡΑ, the picture, a Medusa running over a bridge, her head facing front, held my eye. The poem says, "ἡ γέφυρα καταπίπτει" three times, but the bridge is not falling. The last line is ὦ δέσποινα. I had missed something simply translating when I should have been reading. I recognized that bridge! It is in London. Feeling foolish, I looked back at Α α and Β β and re-read, aloud, listening to the poems. The rhythms were as familiar as London Bridge, but I could not figure them all out.

Enter the Key, a list of the English childhood songs and rhymes which Therese Sellers mined for her poems. I think at some time all teachers of Latin and Greek have tried using familiar songs for declensions, conjugation, or memorizing lines of hexameter. I found some success with that, but it does not work for every student. However, the targeted audience of *Alpha is for Anthropos*, is children down to four years old, who will perhaps more uniformly respond to the songs.

The basic grammar of the poems flows in the simple nursery rhythms. Most importantly, the words come from a child's vocabulary (for the most part; βοδοδάκτυλος excerpted). Words repeat, making the poems perfect for children to

internalize Greek vocabulary as easily as they learned the English models. That is Therese Sellers's intent. This is Greek for children, well-conceived and beautifully executed.

Reading along, alerted and attentive, I enjoyed the illustrations even more. Some are just images, such as the pretty, uncomplicated pair of girls next to ΦΙΛΟΣ/ΦΙΛΗ. One girl, with her hand, describes something she's hiding to a friend. ΕΓΩ, on the other hand, shows a boy looking into a stream. Until I spotted ΗΧΩ floating behind him, I did not recognize Narcissus, and yet how foolish of me! Who else would you expect to illustrate ΕΓΩ? Many of the paintings contain similar visual puns and/or support for understanding the poem as well as subtle nods to famous moments. The fun begins with the cover illustration, Oedipus confronting the Sphinx, but I am not giving away the connection with the alphabet. Nor will I spoil the rest of the references to Greek literature and myth, but I can promise satisfying recognitions.

Therese Sellers teaches Greek to children as young as four; the observant and talented illustrator, Lucy Bell Jarka-Sellers, is an upper-lever teacher of Latin and Greek. They have produced a labor of love that many of the adult type and of the child type will love, too. The publisher is Ascanius, a Boston group promoting Latin to younger students. Ascanius used a small, local printer and didn't skimp on paper, reproduction, or lay-out. The book feels substantial. Though there are only two colors in the illustrations, the simple black print on white paper balances the spreads. The final result is a visually and intellectually satisfying children's book for adults wishing to cuddle with a child. I have done that, but I know the book will become a vital introduction to Greek in my Latin classroom.

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