

*Latina*

*Rident stolidi verba Latina.\**

—Ovid

ISTOCK

*\*Fools laugh at the Latin language.*



by Lily Liu-Krason

# Going Ancient with Junior Classical League

**W**hen I learned that I was required to take three years of Latin at my high school, I wasn't thrilled. I was confused. Why was it so important to learn a language that nobody speaks anymore?

Fortunately, it didn't take long for my reluctance to turn into appreciation. My Latin education began with a challenging class taught by a passionate teacher. Although I struggled at first with Latin's many rules and challenging structure, I soon found that I could understand not just Latin, but Spanish and even English better than I had before. Before learning Latin, I couldn't identify a pluperfect verb, and I struggled with conditional tenses of verbs, but now I could apply most of what I learned from Latin to the other languages I was studying.

I was already gaining a lot from Latin when our teacher offered extra credit for joining the Junior Classical League (JCL). I jumped at the chance to earn extra credit while exploring classics. Once I started attending the meetings of my school's JCL chapter, I found a range of activities that allowed me to immerse myself in the classical world.

## **Invenio Exultationem et Insignem** **(I discover Joy and Passion)**

A student-run organization, JCL hosts events for members at the local, state, and national levels. My school's chapter, BLS JCL, is a member of the Massachusetts JCL, which in turn is a member of the National Junior Classical League.

Through my school's chapter, I attended many state JCL events throughout the year. I joined our school's novice Certamen team and competed in scrimmages against other schools. One of the most popular and intense activities in JCL,

Certamen is similar to the game *Jeopardy!* but with all questions related to Greek and Roman history, language, mythology, and literature. I also attended Classics Day, an all-day event at Boston University that brings about 400 JCLers together to attend morning lectures given by BU professors and watch afternoon performances of student skits. And in the winter, I joined JCLers from across the state once again for the semi-formal dance known as the Snowball.

The most memorable event for me, though, was the Massachusetts JCL convention, held over a weekend near the end of the school year at a school in Cape Cod. There were academic contests in such subjects as Latin Grammar, Mythology, Derivatives, Roman History, Greek, and MAQ (Mottoes, Abbreviations, and Quotations). There were art competitions for acrylic painting, sculpture, and photography—all with a classical theme, of course! Participants could also compete for prizes in dramatic interpretation (reciting a Latin passage expressively), sight reading, and a mythological costume contest. There were even Olympika events—track and field, swimming, and chariot races—to win points for your school.

Of course, one of the most exciting events was the Certamen. Though my novice team made it only to semifinals, I did earn points for my school by winning ribbons in the Mythology, MAQ, and Roman Culture contests. For the Dramatic Interpretation contest, I earned second place for an excerpt I had practiced reciting for weeks from a piece about an Italian woman who loved her

## The National Junior Classical League

*If you're hooked on classics, the NJCL has something for you. Here are a few highlights of NJCL's offerings of activities, events, and opportunities for recognition. Learn more about these and see what else NJCL offers at [www.njcl.org](http://www.njcl.org).*

### Certamen

Certamen is a fun, competitive, fast trivia game about ancient civilizations, their people, and their languages. Competitions take place at the NJCL convention. Teams are composed of four players with up to four alternates. There are three divisions of competitive Certamen: novice, intermediate, and advanced. Questions are derived from four categories: language skills, mythology, history of the ancient world, and literature.

### Latin Honor Society

Students who maintain an A average in a Latin class, are members in good standing of the NJCL, and exemplify good citizenship are eligible for the Latin Honor Society. If accepted, members receive an official certificate with a gold seal and a membership card, and are eligible for the NJCL Latin Honor Society Scholarship.

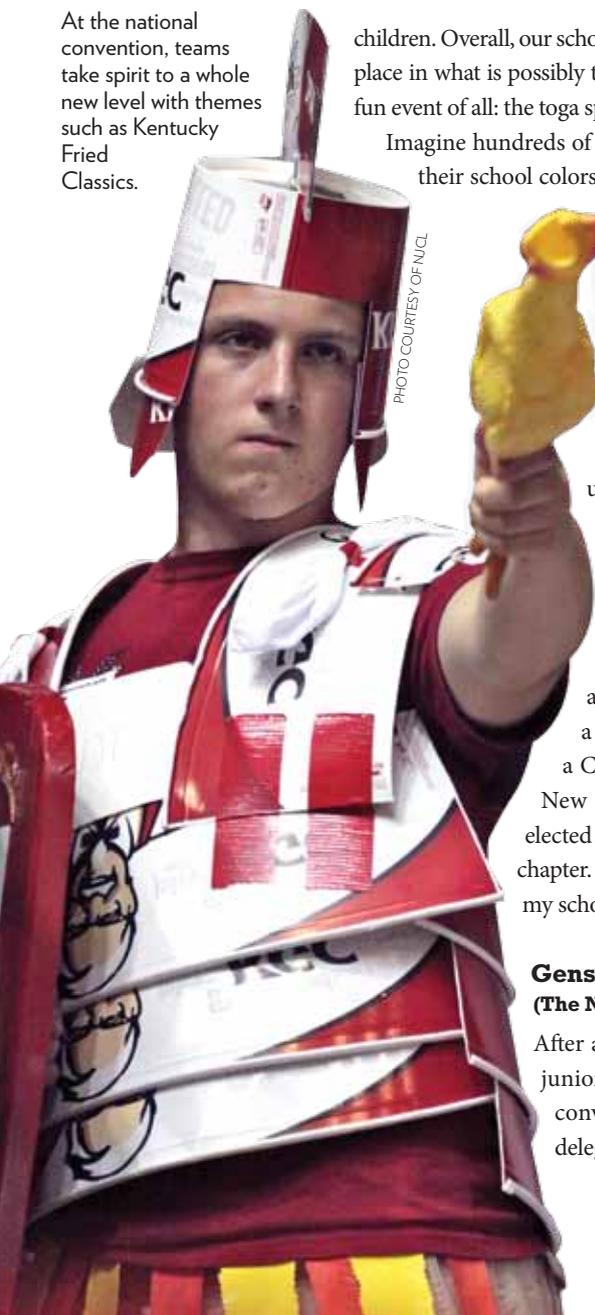
### NJCL Scholarships

The NJCL annually awards nine scholarships between \$1,500 and \$2,500 to applicants at the summer convention. Scholarships are awarded based on financial need, academic record, recommendations from teachers and other adults, and JCL service at the local, state and national levels.

### Online Exams

The NJCL has several online exams available. The National Classical Etymology Exam (NCEE) and the National Roman Civilization Exam (NRCE) are both 50-question multiple-choice exams designed for students in grades 6–12. The NCEE tests students' knowledge of the usage of Latin and Greek derivatives in the English language, and the NRCE tests students' knowledge of ancient Roman history. Both exams are administered through Quia.com and may be proctored by any sponsoring administrator or teacher.

At the national convention, teams take spirit to a whole new level with themes such as Kentucky Fried Classics.



children. Overall, our school placed in many events including first place in what is possibly the most dorky but definitely the most fun event of all: the toga spirit parade.

Imagine hundreds of high schoolers all dressed in togas of their school colors, marching around the school waving

banners and yelling cheers at the top of their lungs. Participation is mandatory, and teams are rewarded for best overall spirit. At first I was reluctant, thinking that I was too cool to march around in a toga and yell. But as I marched, the mood was contagious, and I quickly became caught up in JCL spirit.

That experience stayed with me, and I resolved to get more involved. Over the next two years, I climbed the JCL ranks as I attended more and more state events and became more active in my school chapter. I designed a website for my school chapter, planned a Certamen scrimmage between several New England boarding schools, and was elected one of the triumvirates of my school's chapter. Along the way, I made great friends at my school and across the state.

### Gens Nationalis (The National Crew)

After attending the state convention in my junior year, I decided to attend the NJCL convention. Because the Massachusetts delegation isn't as big as some other states,

this opportunity is open to anyone who attends the state convention. However, there are rigorous tryouts for the Certamen teams, and team members and alternates practice over Skype. Meanwhile, individual students are encouraged to work on projects that can be entered in one of the many competitions.

In the middle of the summer, over a thousand classics enthusiasts united for the weeklong convention at Eastern Kentucky University. Now, instead of representing my school, I was representing my state along with 42 others ranging from seventh grade to college age! Former competitors were now teammates.

In addition to the subjects tested at States, there were academic contests in subjects such as Hellenic History and Ancient History, and there was even a decathlon of subjects. After testing, we would all split up and compete in the events we'd signed up for, including basketball (one of the Olympika Ludi), Latin Oratory, and an essay contest. Each day also offered a couple of colloquia on topics ranging from Catullus to wax tablet making. In our free time, we would reunite with friends in the student lounge to play cards and air hockey and meet other delegates. Some days there were amazing artwork exhibitions of scrapbooks, photographs, paintings, sculpture, and jewelry from students all over the country.

At Nationals, enthusiasm for classics was taken to a whole new level with spirit contests every day. Each day had a theme, which we'd learned about and prepared for before we made the trip. For example, because we were in Kentucky, one of the spirit themes was Kentucky Fried Classics. Every day, our state delegation would gather in our themed gear and march to the EKU stadium, cheering alongside the other delegations. This was just as much fun and as exciting as it was at my first state convention, but when our state placed first in spirit at the end of the week, the enthusiasm and sense of camaraderie was elevated to a whole new level.

## National Student Exams

Test your classical knowledge and earn recognition through these exams sponsored by the American Classical League.

### Exploratory Latin Exam

Students in grades 3–6 who are not qualified to take the National Latin Exam (see below) may take the ELE, a multiple-choice test on topics including derivatives, art and architecture, mottoes and expressions, mythology, geography and history, Roman numerals, and translation. Tests are administered by schools. All participants will receive ribbons, high scorers will receive certificates, and those with perfect scores will earn medallions. [www.wetclassics.org/ele.html](http://www.wetclassics.org/ele.html)

### National Latin Exam

The National Latin Exam is available to students currently enrolled in a Latin course or those who have completed a Latin course during the current academic year. Exams comprise 40 multiple-choice questions, and are available from the introductory level to Latin V–VI, including tests on poetry and prose. Tests must be administered by the student's school. Awards and scholarships are available for gold medal winners. <http://nle.org>

### National Greek Exam

The National Greek Exam is designed for high school students enrolled in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup> year Attic or Homeric Greek courses. Exams are available at all levels from beginner to advanced. Each exam contains 40 multiple-choice questions. Applications must be submitted by teachers, and the examination must be administered at the student's school. Opportunities for scholarships are available for high performers. [www.acclassics.org/pages/national-greek-exams](http://www.acclassics.org/pages/national-greek-exams)

### National Mythology Exam

This multiple-choice exam includes 40 questions for students in grades 3 and 4; 40 questions plus a 10-item subtest on an annual theme for students in grade 4–5; and 40 questions plus an additional 10-item literary subtest for students in grades 6–9. Silver and bronze medals are awarded to high scorers; gold medals are awarded for perfect scores. [www.wetclassics.org/nme.html](http://www.wetclassics.org/nme.html)

Every night, we stayed entertained and busy with swimming, themed dances, a talent show, a classics-based comedy performance, and a mini Kentucky State Fair. At the end of the day, our state delegation would gather for fellowships, when we'd reflect on the day we'd spent and plan for the day ahead. By the end of the week, these fellowships made us feel like family, and I left the convention having made some great friends.

### Prospiciens ad reliquum (Looking Ahead)

As a senior this year, I want to make the most of JCL! I plan to attend every state event, and I'm already looking forward to the national convention in North Carolina. I never imagined that I would become a "Latin geek," but the language that was once so difficult and confusing for me now resonates with beauty and meaning. The subjects I've studied through JCL—Roman history, mythology, ancient geography, and even classical jewelry making—have deepened my understanding of the classical world and allowed me to make connections to modern society. The JCL community has not only helped me appreciate such topics but has given me some of the best friends and most dynamic experiences I have ever had. While I may not major in classics in college, I hope always to keep one foot in the ancient world. **i**



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The Massachusetts delegation gets into the NJCL spirit at the 2011 national convention.