

“Thesaurus Linguae Harvardianae?”
 (“The Harvard Dictionary”): Latin Salutatory,

by Anne Ames Power '16

Thesaurus Linguae Harvardianae

Praeses Faust, Decani notissimi, Professores doctissimi, Hospites clarissimi, Familiares diu patientes, atque Condiscipuli carissimi: Salvete omnes!

Tanto hanc diem egrediendi diu exspectatam miramur, quanto hunc morem mirari oportet ob quem sedentes sub sole ardente orationem audimus in lingua iam obscura omnibus. Sed quamquam lingua orationis meae mortua est, tamen hic in teatro tercentenario illa res vix mirabilis est. Nam nos qui nunc in mundum verum egredi parati sumus non modo diplomata ac sedes ex sacco favarum factas auferimus, sed etiam illam carissimam atque rarissimam rerum, scilicet thesaurum linguae Harvardianae.

Hic non est libellus sicut ille Catulli, qui arida modo pumice expolitus fuit. Immo vero est quaedam tabula mentis quae multa nomina verbaque et ioca arcana continet. Etiam si haec tabula nihil aliis significat, tamen nobis est sicut testimonium saeculorum nostrorum apud hanc Universitatem.

Linguam Harvardianam statim discere incepimus cum primum in hunc campum ingressi sumus. Dum turpes sodales cubiculi atque professores timendos atque vias tortas Cantabrigiae navigamus, perplexis quoque significationibus sententiarum singularium contendimus. Egone sera vel “in tempore Harvardiano” sum? Quid “grex extremus” est? Similisne congregationi discentium? Sed ut linguas alias, sic etiam linguam Harvardianam optime usu didicimus. Ita vero

nos intra tres menses declamare poteramus de virtutibus Disciplinae Communis et de maiestate Pinnochionis et de istis viatoribus qui sint inter te et Nummos Sidereos.

Anno primo perfecto tenentes thesauros verbis studiose congestis plenos egressi sumus. Iam bene sciebamus solum unum Flumen et unum Campum et unum Ludum esse, quibus apposita imponere non necesse est. Sciebamus etiam quaedam verba vim duplicem habere posse. “Sedulitas” quidem in lingua Harvardiana significat et cursum proprium discendi et id quod mane die Veneris in schola deest. Novus Portus similiter et urbs et domus infesta hostium est.

Praeterea multi nostrum in anno ultimo verba velut “theses” vel “longissimas theses” plures significationes habere didicimus. Quamquam haec audivimus cum primum venimus, tamen solum nunc intellegimus thesin esse et nomen et verbum et modum vivendi. Quattor hos annos thesauris Linguae Harvardianae credidimus qui nos bene curaverunt.

Nunc autem mundus ut dicitur verus nos vocat cum lingua veriore ac terribiliore quam hac Latina hodie dicta vel nostra lingua Harvardiana. Nam verba, horrida verba sicut “pensio” et “negotium” et “nexus faciendus” efficiunt ut lingua Harvardiana condemnari videatur. Clamare vis: “O Juppiter, cur hebdomas temptandi cursus vitae non est?”

Sed ut quivis discipulus antiquae Graeciae et Romae confirmare potest, quamvis lingua esse mortua videatur, tamen lingua esse non desistit. Nam lingua vel vivens vel mortua nos trans tempora semper coniungere potest. Itaque cum solitas disciplinas laudemus, etiam in vulgaribus disciplinis linguae Harvardianae gaudeamus. Sine quaestionibus vel responsis scriptis nos sermonem docuit cuius gratia praeterita transferre et praesentia explicare et futura salutare possumus.

Valete!

The Harvard Dictionary

President Faust, most notable Deans, most learned Professors, delightful Guests, long-suffering Families, and dearest Students: welcome to all!

The arrival of commencement at last is almost as amazing as the fact that, as part of our celebration, we all sit here in the boiling heat and listen to a speech delivered in a language that nobody actually understands. And yet, here in Tercentenary Theater a speech declaimed in a dead language makes a certain amount of sense. After all, as we prepare to enter the “real world,” not only do we depart with our diplomas and bean-bag chairs but we also take that most precious and esoteric of objects: our Harvard dictionary.

This is not a little book like Catullus’, “newly polished with dry pumice.” Rather, it is a mental catalogue of names, phrases, and inside jokes that might mean nothing to others but for us stand as testament of our time as Harvard students.

We began our education in Harvardian language the minute we stepped on campus. As we navigated squalid roommates, terrifying professors, and the twisting streets of Cambridge, we also had to contend with the ambiguous meaning of specialized phrases. Am I late, or am I on “Harvard Time?” What’s a “final club”? Is that like a study group? But as with any language, the best way to learn it is by speaking it. Thus, by December, we could discourse on the merits of

General Education, the brilliance of Pinocchio's, and *those* tourists who stand between you and Starbucks.

Our first year behind us, we sallied forth, our dictionaries replete with phrases and concepts zealously collected. We knew that there was only one River, only one Yard, and only one Game, and thus they needed no qualifiers. We also knew that some entries could have double meanings. For example, at Harvard a "concentration" can be defined as "an individual course of study" as well as "what you lack in Friday morning class." Similarly, New Haven is both "a city" and "the crime-riddled home of the enemy."

Moreover, in our final year, many of us learn that some words, such as "thesis" and "dissertation" even have multiple meanings. Although we've heard these words since we first arrived on campus, only now can we truly appreciate the fact that "thesis" can be a noun, a verb, and a state of being. For the last four years, we have put our trust in our Harvard dictionaries, and they have served us well.

Yet today the real world calls with a language that is scarily real, especially compared to the Latin spoken here today and the specialized vocabulary of our time at Harvard. Now as we face words, horrible words like "rent," "job," and "networking," our Harvard language seems doomed to become yet another dead language. "Oh Jupiter," you want to cry, "why is there no 'shopping week' for life?"

Yet as any Classics concentrator can tell you, just because a language is dead doesn't mean that it ceases to be a language; living or dead, it still has the power to bring us together across time and space. Therefore, as we celebrate our formal education, let us also rejoice in our informal education in the language of Harvard. Without the use of exams or response papers, it

has taught us a dialect with which we are able to translate the past, define the present, and greet the future.

Farewell!