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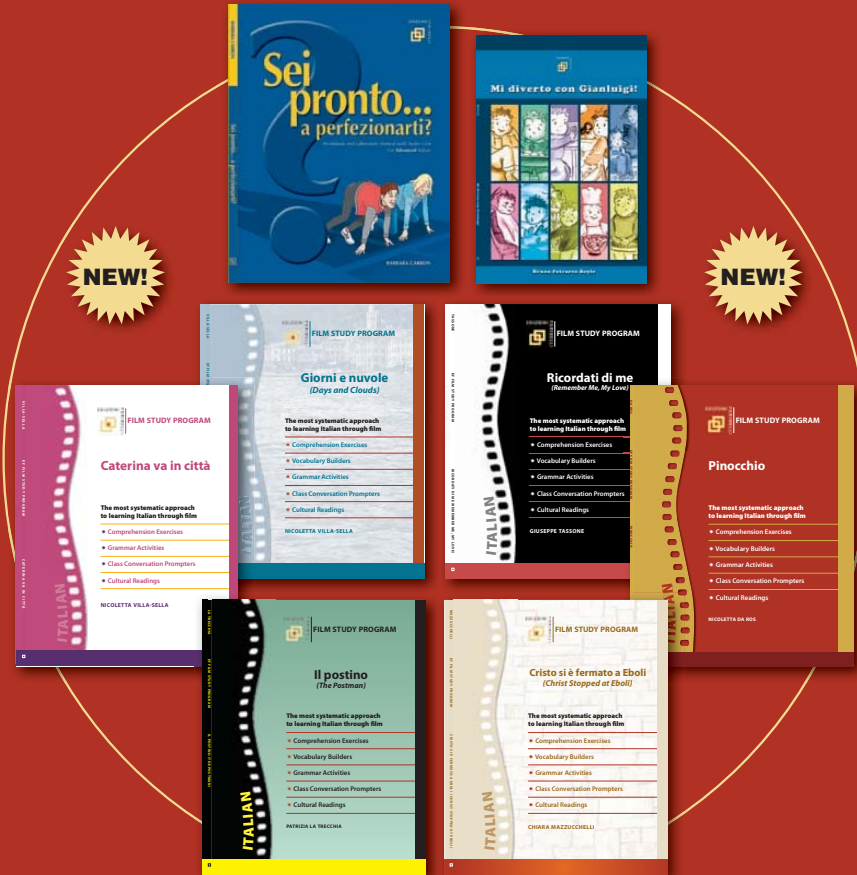
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IN THE CLASSROOM

Melissa Fini

Melissa Fini is passionate about teaching Italian. She is a charismatic teacher who brings a visible commitment to her level 1 to 4 classes at Mayfield High School in Mayfield, Ohio, a Cleveland suburb, where she has taught for more than five years. More than 300 students in grades 8 to 12 study Italian in 50-minute classes five days a week. About 60% of Italian language students are of Italian heritage.



Q. How do you typically teach?

A. I'm not a textbook teacher. I teach through literature and readings and I also use mnemonic devices and chanting to help students learn word endings. A textbook for me is a resource; it doesn't drive my curriculum. I use charts a lot to help students remember grammar principles. Vocabulary is taught through gestures. I try to use only Italian in my classes and revert to English mainly to explain a grammatical principle. I'm also a storyteller. For example, in my level 4 honors class, if we are talking about commands, I'll often explain them through a relevant story.

Q. What's the most challenging part of being an Italian teacher?

A. Combating student apathy. I think a lot of kids take Italian because they need to fulfill a language requirement and sometimes they don't have the passion or the interest in truly learning the language. My challenge is to arouse their interest and get them to enjoy learning Italian. Sometimes you win that battle; sometimes you lose. I try to address the needs of all my students and I try to do this through my personality. We laugh a lot in class which often gets them interested.

Q. What's it like to be a student in your classroom?

A. It's a classroom in which I'm your biggest cheerleader. You are greeted with a smile. You'll laugh. You'll learn about each other. You'll make friends with other students that you never met before. I think that for a lot of kids, it's a class they look forward to. I love to teach indirectly. I love to teach through questioning, writing and getting them to talk; I'm a listener. I try to build a classroom of confidence where I tell the students to stick with their gut instinct on how to say something in Italian – don't worry if you make a mistake, because if you don't make mistakes, I don't have a job. I think my students like this approach because they gave me a t-shirt that says: "Stick with your gut" which I occasionally wear in class.

Q. What do your students complain about?

A. My tests are too long. The class ends so fast. We can never just do nothing; we always have to learn every day. And that I'm very tolerant but I have rules and I enforce them.

Q. What is it about those students who are successful in learning Italian that is different from those who are not as successful?

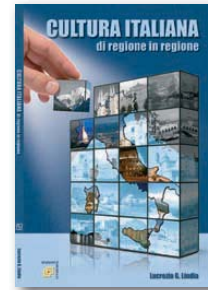
A. Effort, interest and motivation. Some foreign language students are not the strongest students overall – they just enjoy language class and they excel because they really like it. A lot of success comes from sustained teacher interest... sometimes something as simple as seeing a student in the hall and saying "Come stai?" When they want to learn more and you take steps to encourage that, their interest increases even more and it grows with their exposure to the language. It's really about self motivation.

Q. Fill in the blank. You want your Italian students to be more _____.

A. Dedicated. For many of them, good classroom habits come in ebbs and flows. If they are approaching a holiday break, they are more interested in the break and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

CULTURE



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Lucrezia G. Lindia

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Josephine Mariano Volzer

Italian Teacher

Woodbridge Senior High School, Woodbridge, VA



NON SOLTANTO UN BAULE

Edited by Concetta Perna

Foreword by Matilda Raffa Cuomo

Levels 4-5

High school – University – Self Study

This award-winning, 10-story anthology captures the struggles that millions of Italians experienced in their search for a better life outside of Italy. The immigrants' stories, told through the voices of descendants or friends, richly express the emotion, pride and heartbreak of their emigration to the U.S., Australia, Argentina and Canada.

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- Passato remoto verb table in three conjugations
- Cultural notes in English
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"A courageous book, *Non soltanto un baule* will be the joy of many students who learn Italian in order to speak to their immigrant grandparents. Many of these students are in our classes and this is the first book that leverages their strong motivation to learn. It is also the first book that takes into account a story easily forgotten, a story of pain and will, the story of Italian emigration."

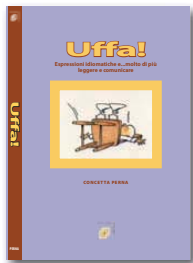
Ilaria Serra

Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

Reviewer College Board AP Central, March 2007

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Marilena Martello

Italian Teacher, La Quinta High School, La Quinta, CA

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Teresa Fiore

California State University, Long Beach

Review: Quaderni di Italianistica, 2008



DIARIO DELLA STUDENTESSA JEAN and ESERCIZIARIO

Jean Farinelli – Concetta Perna

Levels 1-2

High School – Middle School – University – Self Study

This reader and workbook, now in its 2nd edition, has become a classic to stimulate advanced beginning students to read in Italian and practice prepositions, pronouns, irregular verbs and more.

Softcover, 40-pages with 23 easily readable, brief stories ranging from memories of childhood and events of daily life to dialogues about Italian language class. Contains footnoted vocabulary with English explanations. The companion eserciziario has perforated pages so students can easily submit homework to teachers for correction.

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READER WITH EXERCISES



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Elise Magistro and Nicoletta Tinozzi-Mehrmand

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University – High School – Self Study

This lively, innovative reader is guaranteed to keep students and their teachers engaged as they encounter the complexities of Italian language. Using humorous contemporary literary readings and relying on close textual analysis, the authors focus on identifying and subsequently mastering difficult lexical and grammatical material. Students at intermediate-advanced levels will be both challenged and entertained.

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Bruna Petrarca Boyle

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Maristella Cocchiara

Chair, Department of Foreign Languages

Melrose High School, Melrose MA

"This entertaining reader offers a cultural and realistic glance into the life of a quite amusing Italian boy – students will enjoy following Gianluigi from one lively episode to the next! The exercises are varied and touch upon all aspects of the language, and the fresh vocabulary is useful for everyday conversation."

Matthew J. Papino

Italian Teacher

Nelson W. Aldrich Jr. High School, Warwick, RI



READER WITH EXERCISES



JEAN E ROSCOE VANNO A PERUGIA

Jean Farinelli

Levels 2-3

High School – University – Self Study

This entertaining reader with exercises is an excellent primer for students going abroad on study exchange programs. Its lively dialogues recount the month-long adventure of two students studying the language in Perugia, Italy while learning to cope with the Italian way of life. Students will gain insight into the Italian university registration process, coping with a public laundromat, buying a monthly bus pass and more.

- Exercises: comprehension, grammar, writing, conversation, and vocabulary
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“The text is enjoyable and easy reading. I can almost visualize Roscoe! Those of us who have been in Italy can appreciate that things will go wrong according to the American notion of how things should go right. They [Jean and Roscoe] are delightful.”

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Paola Giunchi
Professor of Language Teaching Methodology
Università di Roma La Sapienza

“...an extraordinary text that is both useful and fun... contemporary language that is appealing to junior and senior high school students as well as college students and others learning Italian.”

Natale Caruso
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Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School, New York

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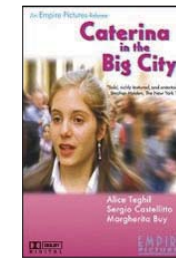
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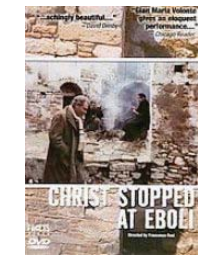
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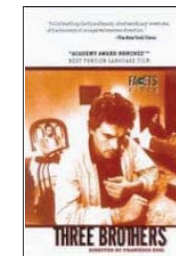
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IN THE CLASSROOM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

forget what they have to do study wise. If they are not in a good mood, they want me as a teacher to accept that behavior. I tell my students that you have to give it your all every day – especially because the habits you build now can become the habits you'll have later in life.



Q. What new materials would be useful to your students in mastering Italian?

A. Resource materials that apply to them. Not an activity in their textbook that talks about “new roommates.” These kids are freshman; they don't have roommates. We need authentic materials that high school students can relate to.

Q. If you could teach or create any Italian course, what would it be?

A. Teaching Italian through film, music, the arts or even art history; not focusing on the grammar. I'd also like to teach Italian for business.

Q. What questions would you like to ask other Italian teachers?

A. How do you get your students to speak more frequently? How do you accurately assess students? When you give vocabulary quizzes do you seek only straight vocabulary answers or do you require them to use the words in sentences?

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