



A Natural History of Latin

Tore Janson

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No known language, including English, has achieved the success and longevity of Latin. French, Spanish, Italian, and Romanian are among its direct descendants, and countless Latin words and phrases comprise the cornerstone of English itself. *A Natural History of Latin* tells its history from its origins over 2500 years ago to the present. Brilliantly conceived, popularizing but authoritative, and written with the fluency and light touch that have made Tore Janson's *Speak* so attractive to tens of thousands of readers, it is a masterpiece of adroit synthesis. The book commences with a description of the origins, emergence, and dominance of Latin over the Classical period. Then follows an account of its survival through the Middle Ages into modern times, with emphasis on its evolution throughout the history, culture, and religious practices of Medieval Europe. By judicious quotation of Latin words, phrases, and texts the author illustrates how the written and spoken language changed, region by region over time; how it met resistance from native languages; and how therefore some entire languages disappeared. Janson offers a vivid demonstration of the value of Latin as a means of access to a vibrant past and a persuasive argument for its continued worth. A concise and easy-to-understand introduction to Latin grammar and a list of the most frequent Latin words, including 500 idioms and phrases still in common use, complement the work.

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