

The Meaning of taking Italian as a High School Student

It's almost implausible when you stop and consider the ability to learn a second language. To think of us as high school students, raised to speak English our entire lives thus far, and now, we're taking on Italian! It's been an honor to have the opportunity, and to me it means a great deal. Not only is it thrilling to be able to call upon discourse in a language that isn't natural, but studying Italian has also been highly beneficial in other academic studies. It also offers a more worldly knowledge of Italian culture, and furthers our ability to be able to communicate in our multiethnic world. The advantages of studying Italian are countless, and because they cover such a wide variety of topics, must be better explored by looking further into some different situations for high school students.

Italian literature is as rich and cultural as the language in which it is written. Italy has brought the world some of the most impressive writers in history. Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarca, and Giovanni Boccaccio are some of the more popular names, but the list is unending. I have found that learning about such writers and poets in Italian class builds a well-structured knowledgebase for studies in all forms of literature. In my experience, Italian is also essential to know when studying plays such as Shakespeare's famous *Romeo and Juliet*, set in the Northern Italian city of Verona, and emanating Italian culture. It is also useful to be familiar with Italian words in cases such as these where etymology plays a big role in character names and their significance – such as Benvolio Montague, whose name, as a cousin and peaceful friend of Romeo's, means "well-wisher," which you could recognize from the Italian words "bene" meaning "well," and "voglio," the first-person conjugation of the verb meaning "to want." It is also clearly evident that Italian is absolutely necessary to study famous poems such as Dante's *Inferno*, *Cantico delle creature* from St. Francis of Assisi, or Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. In order to have a profound perception of literature, it's almost vital to have a sound understanding of Italian.

Almost shockingly, I have seen that Italian helps me profusely in English, as well. Italian and English are far more connected than one might think. As both languages are derivatives of Latin, a large sum of their vocabulary is closely related. So many words are cognates of each other, or have similar general spellings and definitions. Having been

brought up in America, our young minds picked up English without necessarily being specifically taught words and comprehensive definitions, so to formally learn Italian vocabulary and accurately comprehend it brings a deeper understanding to the English language. In the same way, we are not specially taught the mechanics of English grammar, and learning the specific breakdown of Italian grammar gives an excellent explanation to certain aspects of English grammar. I would not have even been able to identify an infinitive before taking Italian! The very precise teachings of elements of grammar such as the past tense or present progressive are very easy to recognize in English after solidly understanding them in Italian.

Thinking back into the history of art and its relevance to the world, Italian culture is among the initial essentials that come to my mind. The Italian Renaissance was a hugely active period in art history and began so many habits that are hugely prevalent in art today. As an avid art student, I have come to recognize that crucial methods of painting, drawing, sculpting, and architecture were introduced by the Italians, and I am able appreciate the work that I am doing from having learned about such methods in Italian class. Artists and cultural figures such as Michelangelo are hugely iconic in regard to both art and Italian culture. It is crucial to understand the correlation between art studies and Italian studies; they are absolutely inclusive of each other!

I am not a music student, but I have a number of friends involved in chorus, and I know quite well that a good portion of the music they sing is Italian. Everybody everywhere is exposed to Italian music; it's a significant part of Italian culture as well as studies of Italian. Italian music further brings the language alive and has been from periods of classical Italian music to more recent popularized Italian artists, most notably Frank Sinatra or Dean Martin or as recently as Eros Ramazzotti. Knowing and understanding Italian allows Italian music to be much better valued and grasped, and having even just a simple understanding of the language makes Italian music so much more enjoyable.

History is also an area of study that is hugely influenced by Italian studies. The history of Italy is prevalent all over the world, as Western Democracy began with the Roman Empire, which is seen all over history. Realizing singular parts of Italian history having studied it in Italian brings world history together in a greater sense, and makes it

far easier to follow when you understand events in Italian history independently. Being familiar with the Italian language, literature, arts, and music has certainly improved my studies in history, as all areas are highly inclusive. Literature introduced in Italian gives insight to the past, and information about its authors are beneficial in the way of historical figures. An enormous topic in history, the Renaissance, specifically in Italy, is an absolutely pivotal part of art history and all history in general, changing people's perceptions and appreciation for arts. As music evolves through history, language changes and different themes are expressed throughout the years. All inclusive, studying Italian as a high school student has improved my awareness in all of these areas.

I am extremely proud to be a part of Italian studies, and it is truly amazing how beneficial Italian is to all other areas of study. I am quite fervent about my language studies and I would like to teach Italian, and so it is wonderful to be able to use Italian so frequently outside of the Italian classroom. Learning Italian has certainly aided me in other parts of academic study, and I am sure that it will assist me, as well as all other Italian students, as we move on through high school and travel into the world.