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English & Classics**

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When I first came to Valpo in the fall of 2000, I had no intentions of being a Classics major. I had taken Latin in high school, but I was already set on getting an English degree, and the job prospects seemed slim enough as it was...at least to my parents! But after my first semester of Latin—translating Cicero with the inimitable Professor Helms—I was having too much fun to stop there. Plus, the prospect of reading the Bible in Greek had always fascinated me, and seeing Professor Kumpf's slides of the summer Greece trip sealed the deal. So I decided to double major in English and Classics and see what happened.

I'm happy to report that while I haven't unlocked all the mysteries of the Bible or unearthed the shield of Achilles (yet), my classical education has given me a number of tools that have come in handy over the last nine years. For one thing, the analytical skills I acquired trying to wrap my mind around the intricacies of the Greek and Latin languages did wonders for my ability to think and write in English. In my first job doing communications and fundraising work for an international non-profit organization, I had to be clear and precise in my writing in order to be successful. Everything from grant proposals to speeches to web copy required careful word choice, accurate grammar, and a compelling overall message to win us precious donor dollars. My Latin also helped me quickly acquire bits of French, Spanish, and Haitian Creole as I traveled to Haiti and the Dominican Republic to visit our programs there.

Studying the classics also gave me a fresh perspective on life. Never have I felt so much a part of history as when I spent three weeks in Greece with a dozen other Valpo students, seeing and touching and tasting the things I had only read and dreamed about in Greek class. Everywhere I went in Greece, I was reminded that we are each just a tiny part of a huge human story, yet the things we do and believe and create are carried into the future through the telling of that story.

In various Classics, English, and Christ College courses, I continued to develop an understanding of the importance of story to human life. It was that which inspired me to launch Firelight Freelancing ([www.firelightfreelancing.com](http://www.firelightfreelancing.com)), a writing business that emphasizes storytelling in non-profit and business communications, in fall 2008.

Admittedly, there aren't many other classicists in Albion, Nebraska, the small town where my husband Mike and I moved last summer as he began his ministry as a Lutheran pastor. But storytelling is a universal language, and I think I speak and comprehend it better because I am grounded in the most fundamental of stories: Homer, Virgil, Aristotle, the Bible, and countless others that are part of a classical education. I would encourage anyone who is looking to understand where they came from and figure out where they're going to study the Classics at Valpo.