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Preface

Benvenuti!

Benvenuti to *A vicenda*, a comprehensive Italian language program for intermediate-level students. The authors, Romana Capek-Habecović and Claudio Mazzola, have developed this communication- and culture-based program for intermediate Italian in response to their own desire—and that of their students—for engaging, contemporary materials that present current issues, situations, and language as points of departure for dialogue in the classroom. The readings and activities in *A vicenda* address topics that interest students and have an impact on their lives, from globalization and Italy's role in the European Union to college life and relationships with peers.

Class-tested materials

As the authors began developing, and then testing in their classrooms, the materials that would later become *A vicenda*, they quickly discovered how many Italian language instructors were seeking a similar program, and *A vicenda* soon became a reality. The authors shared their materials as they were being written, which resulted in other instructors and their students reviewing and classroom-testing activities and other features of the text. The suggestions and critiques of these instructors and students have greatly enhanced the material, and the authors are grateful for their gracious and generous participation in this process.

The *Lingua* and *Cultura* volumes

A vicenda is a two-volume program. *A vicenda: Lingua* is the core volume, and focuses primarily on language acquisition and the development of all four language skills. The contextualized grammar sequence is based on practical communication and contains a wealth of activities that promote skill development in Italian. *A vicenda: Cultura* is the companion volume, and it offers authentic readings from Italian newspapers, magazines, and literary texts, along with author-written texts, accompanied by reading strategies and activities, as well as additional vocabulary development and language practice. By separating the culture and grammar components of *A vicenda* into two distinct yet complementary volumes, the authors have been able to develop in greater detail the thematic fabric of the respective volumes, thereby providing students with a broader context for learning Italian. Instructors can use both volumes or only one, depending on the goals of their course and the number of contact hours they have with students.

Motivating students

After years of teaching, the authors realized to what extent challenging, creative, and culture-based language exercises motivate a student toward proficiency in a foreign language. They found that exercises limited to repetitive drills and simple answers do not solicit students' opinions and quickly lead to boredom and passivity. *A vicenda* is an interactive text where discussion-based activities are culture-inspired and prompt students to converse and share opinions.

A vicenda and the "Five Cs"

A vicenda is a user-friendly, flexible, and engaging language program that consistently addresses the "Five Cs" of foreign language learning, as expressed in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning**: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities, all of which enable students to build on and perfect their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while developing the cultural competence and sense of global citizenship so necessary in today's world. By presenting Italy through the eyes of Italians, the author team of *A vicenda* has devised a program that enables students to gain proficiency in Italian as they identify with the interests, worries, and aspirations of their Italian counterparts, and learn the idiomatic words and expressions commonly used in Italy today.

Hallmark features of *A vicenda*

Years of teaching experience have shaped the authors' belief that an intermediate language program in Italian should have the following attributes, all of which are found in the pages of *A vicenda*.

- **Focus on life in Italy today** Chapter themes deal with social issues, such as the changing role of family and demographic makeup of Italy, and present the Italian perspective on the given issue.
- **Build on first-year grammar** Students often view second-year language courses as recycled first-year material. A certain degree of recycling cannot be avoided and is pedagogically justified, but what *A vicenda* offers goes beyond a simple review of already mastered patterns. Structures are grouped in ways that give students the necessary tools for immediate communication. For example, the simple past tense *passato prossimo*, which is a cornerstone of the language, is presented in Chapter 3 of *Lingua*, and such grammar points are expanded upon for the intermediate student by introducing new elements and fine-tuning those already touched on in first-year texts.
- **Offer a broad cultural context** *A vicenda* presents Italy as a complex country where traditions sharply contrast with modern-day life. In a world where technology allows information to be exchanged between cultures in an instant, students of Italian now have greater access to learning about Italian popular culture. *A vicenda* answers the questions that

*The executive summary of *The Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* can be found on the website of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, at www.actfl.org.

students are curious to ask—such as what everyday life is like for a college student in Italy. Pop culture references and Internet-based activities provide students with the means to find out more about a particular subject.

- **Provide a wealth of authentic and author-written readings** Most intermediate-level students enjoy the challenge of reading texts that are more complex than those offered in an introductory program. *A vicenda* has an abundance of such texts, each dealing with a topic interesting to and appropriate for today's students. Each reading is followed by a series of activities that fosters communication and solicits students' opinions on a particular issue by asking them to compare and contrast their country's customs with those of Italy.
- **Focus on the development of writing skills** An important part of developing writing skills in intermediate-level students is choosing topics that are of personal interest. Each chapter ends with the *Scriviamo!* section, which provides topics related to the chapter theme. Students are guided through the writing process and are given the opportunity to be creative and freely express their opinions and ideas in their compositions.

Also available to students

Manuale di esercizi

The *Manuale di esercizi* that accompanies *A vicenda* is thematically coordinated with the *Lingua* volume and offers an abundance of aural and written exercises. All the activities included in the *Manuale di esercizi* are designed to provide practice of the vocabulary and grammar presented in *A vicenda* as well as further develop students' writing skills through additional writing assignments.

Audio Program

The Audio Program provides the recordings that accompany the *Manuale di esercizi*. These recordings are available free of charge on the *A vicenda* Online Learning Center. They are also available for purchase on audio CD.

Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/avicenda)

The Online Learning Center to accompany *A vicenda* provides students with access to the complete Audio Program.

Available to instructors

Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/avicenda)

The Instructor Edition of the Online Learning Center provides access to the Audioscript (a transcript of the Audio Program), as well as the answer key to the *Manuale di esercizi* and other instructor resources. Instructors can also access the student content from the instructor side of the Online Learning Center.