



CSCP Support Materials: Translation

Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 3A

Latin Literature (Prose option)
Suetonius: Nero

For examination in 2024 - 2025

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Cover image: Silver Denarius of Nero, Rome, AD 64 - AD 65 American Numismatic Society

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Using this Document

Each section of the Latin text is displayed in three columns.

In the left-hand column is the Latin text. Line numbers corresponding to the official examination text are indicated in square brackets.

In the centre column is an accessible interpretation of its English meaning (not a literal translation). The purpose of this is to help students enjoy and engage with the meaning of the poem.

Where the interpretation in the central column is significantly different from a literal translation of the Latin, a literal translation is provided in the right-hand column. Where this occurs, the relevant words of the Latin text, English meaning and literal translation are all marked with a dotted line underneath. This is intended to form a bridge for the teacher between the Latin and the English interpretation, and to make it possible for any student who wishes to do so to see how the Latin gives rise to the English meaning.

Please note that students will not be expected to translate a section of text in this examination, although they are expected to show detailed knowledge and comprehension of the text throughout, and that they understand the meaning of any quotations they use.

Where a word in the English meaning column enhances readability, but is not explicitly included in the Latin, it is given in square brackets: [...]. There are also a number of occasions where, in order to make the passage read more naturally in English, Latin verbs in the (historic) present tense have been translated as if they were in a past tense.

N. B. The coloured passages in italics are summaries of events to support understanding of the narrative. They are not part of the prescription.

Suetonius: Nero 8, 9, 10, 11, 26, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 47, 48, 49, 50, 57

Nero was born in Antium, south of Rome, on the 15th December AD 37. There were many unfavourable comments about his birth, and even his father, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, said that any child born to him and his wife, Agrippina, could be nothing but detestable and a danger to the public. The young Nero's early life was difficult, as his uncle Gaius (Caligula) seized the boy's inheritance and banished his mother. He was then brought up by his aunt, Domitia Lepida.

When Claudius became emperor in AD 41, Nero regained his inheritance and received a legacy from his stepfather. His mother was recalled from exile, and her influence in court caused some to view him as a rival to Claudius' son, Britannicus. It was rumoured that Claudius' wife, Messalina, made an attempt on his life, and that the boy was only saved when a snake slithered from beneath his pillow. When Claudius married Agrippina in AD 54, Nero was adopted by the emperor, and three years later married Octavia, Claudius' daughter.

A (Nero 8)

Nero was nearly seventeen when Claudius' death was announced. In the afternoon he went to meet the guards since, due to bad omens, no earlier time was suitable. He was hailed as emperor in front of the palace steps and was taken in a litter to the camp of the Praetorian Guard where he briefly addressed the soldiers. Then he was taken to the Senate, where he stayed until evening, while they heaped endless honours on him; he refused only one, the name 'Father of his Country', because he felt he was too young.

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Latin		English Meaning	Literal Translation
<p>spectaculorum plurima et varia genera edidit: iuvenales, circenses, scaenicos ludos, <u>gladiatorium munus</u>. iuvenalibus senes quoque consulares anusque matronas recepit ad lusum. circensibus loca equiti secreta a ceteris tribuit commisitque etiam camelorum quadrigas. ludis, quos pro aeternitate imperii susceptos appellari maximos voluit, <u>ex utroque ordine et sexu plerique ludicras partes sustinuerunt</u>;</p> <p>notissimus eques Romanus elephanto supersidens per catadromum <u>decucurrit</u>; inducta Afrani togata, quae incendium inscribitur, concessumque ut scaenici ardentis domus supellectilem diriperent ac sibi haberent; <u>sparsa et populo missilia omnium rerum</u> per omnes dies: singula cotidie milia avium cuiusque generis, multiplex penus, tesserae frumentariae, vestis, aurum, argentum, gemmae, margaritae, tabulae pictae, mancipia, iumenta atque etiam mansuetae ferae, novissime naves, insulae, agri.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">C (Nero 10 continued - 11)</p> <p>He gave a great many of different sorts of shows: youth games, chariot races at the Circus Maximus, stage plays, a <u>gladiatorial display</u>. To the youth games he welcomed old men as well as men of consular rank, old ladies and married women. At the chariot races he set aside seats for the equites away from the rest of the people and even raced chariots drawn by four camels. At the games, which he wanted to be called 'the greatest [ever] undertaken' for the sake of the permanence of his reign, <u>most of the roles were taken on by men and women of the senatorial and equestrian orders</u>;</p> <p>one very well-known Roman equestrian riding an elephant, <u>entered on a [sloping] tightrope</u>. When he staged a Roman play by Afranius which was called <i>The Fire</i>, it was allowed for the actors to keep for themselves the furniture which they had snatched from the burning house. On every single day [on which there were games], <u>gifts of all sorts [were] scattered upon the crowd like missiles: every day</u> [there were] 1,000 birds of different types, numerous food parcels, tokens for grain, clothes, gold, silver, jewels, pearls, paintings, slaves, pack animals and even tame wild beasts, finally [tokens for] ships, tenement buildings and land.</p>	<p><u>a show of gladiatorial [things]</u></p> <p><u>many [people] from both ranks and sexes took on stage parts</u></p> <p><u>ran down [from it] When a play by Afranius which was called <i>The Fire</i>, had been staged, it was allowed for the actors to snatch the furniture of a burning house and keep it for themselves.</u></p> <p><u>presents of all sorts thrown by the Emperor [were] scattered on the people.</u></p>

Nero introduced a lot of positive improvements to Rome. Amongst other things he adapted the architecture of Roman houses so that there was a fire-fighting platform in front of them. He held gladiatorial combats in the Campus Martius where no one was to be killed, though he famously inflicted punishments on Christians. He also forbade charioteers to wander the streets after dark robbing passers-by, and seems to have made attempts to stop the forgery of wills. Nero visited Greece, where he tried to have a canal cut through the Isthmus of Corinth and he took part in musical contests and theatrical performances, at which he always seemed to do rather well. However, not everything he did was good.

Latin		English Meaning	Literal Translation
<p>petulantiam, libidinem, luxuriam, avaritiam, crudelitatem sensim quidem primo et occulte et velut iuvenili errore exercuit, sed ut tunc quoque <u>dubium nemini foret</u> naturae illa vitia, non aetatis esse. post crepusculum statim adrepto pilleo vel galero popinas inibat circumque vicos vagabatur ludibundus nec sine pernicie tamen, <u>siquidem redeuntes a</u> <u>cena verberare</u> ac repugnantes vulnerare cloacisque demergere <u>assuerat</u>, tabernas etiam effringere et expilare; <u>quintana domi constituta</u>, ubi <u>partae et ad licitationem</u> <u>dividendae praedae pretium</u> absumeretur.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">D (Nero 26)</p> <p><i>At first, he practised petulance, desire, extravagance, greed and cruelty at least gradually and both in secret, and as if [they were] youthful mistakes, but even then, so that <u>no one was in any doubt</u> that those things were faults of his character, not of his age. Immediately after dusk having grabbed a hat or a wig, he would visit the taverns and wander about the streets in playful mood, not however without mischief, for if [<u>he came across some people</u>] coming home from <u>dinner</u>, he used to attack them and if they fought back he would stab them and drop them down into the sewers, he also used to break into shops and plunder them; after he had organised a street market in his home and when the plunder was divided into lots for bids, the <u>proceeds</u> were squandered.</i></p>	<p><i><u>there was doubt for no one</u></i></p> <p><i><u>he was accustomed to attack [those] returning from dinner</u></i></p> <p><i><u>with a street market organised</u></i></p> <p><i><u>the proceeds of the plunder acquired and divided into lots for bids</u></i></p>

E (Nero 33)

Nero began his reign of slaughter with Claudius; though not responsible for his death, he was certainly aware of it, nor did he pretend otherwise, as he used to praise mushrooms, (in which the poison had been administered) as the 'food of the gods', according to the Greek proverb. He poisoned Britannicus, out of envy of his voice and through fear that the boy was held in more affection by the people because of the memory of his father. The poison came from Locusta, an expert poisoner; and as it acted too slowly (having only a laxative effect on Britannicus), he beat the woman complaining that she had administered medicine rather than poison. She explained she had used a milder dose to avoid suspicion. Nero made her mix more which he tried on goats and pigs until the animals died. The potion was added to Britannicus' wine, and he dropped dead immediately, while Nero explained that this was due to seizures which he had suffered from for years.

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F (Nero 34)

When he was first emperor, Nero felt so weighed down by his mother's influence that he threatened to remove all her power and then expelled her from his palace. He continued to threaten her with lawsuits until she left Rome for Baiae where he continually sent people to drive and sail past her house while shouting abuse and mocking her. At last, he decided to kill her, but discovered that she had been taking antidotes, so poison did not work. Firstly, he arranged for her bedroom ceiling to fall on her, but she learnt of the plot; he then contrived a collapsible cabin on a boat and invited her to dinner near Baiae promising reconciliation. He had the vessel which brought her wrecked and offered her the booby-trapped boat for her return journey. The next morning, news was brought to him that the plan had failed; his mother had swum to safety. Nero sent men to kill his mother and claimed it was suicide. He then disposed of his aunt, Domitia.

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Latin		English Meaning	Literal Translation
<p><u>uxores praeter Octaviam duas postea duxit, Poppaeam Sabinam quaestorio patre natam et equiti Romano antea nuptam. deinde Statiliam Messalinam Tauri bis consulis ac triumphalis abneptem. qua ut poteretur, virum eius Atticum Vestinum consulem in honore ipso trucidavit. Octaviae consuetudinem cito aspernatus, corripientibus amicis 'sufficere illi debere' respondit 'uxoria ornamenta.' eandem mox saepe frustra strangulare meditatus, dimisit ut sterilem, sed improbante divortium populo nec parcente conviciis, etiam relegavit, denique occidit sub crimine adulteriorum adeo impudenti falsoque, ut in quaestione pernegantibus cunctis Anicetum paedagogum suum indicem subiecerit, qui fingeret dolo stupratam a se fateretur. Poppaeam duodecimo die post divortium Octaviae in matrimonium acceptam dilexit unice; et tamen ipsam quoque ictu calcis occidit, quod se ex aurigatione sero reversum gravida et aegra conviciis incesserat. ex hac filiam tulit Claudiam Augustam amisitque admodum infantem.</u></p>	<p>5</p> <p>10</p> <p>15</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">G (Nero 35)</p> <p><u>After Octavia, he married two more wives, Poppaea Sabina, the daughter of a father of quaestorial rank, who was formerly married to a Roman equestrian; then Statilia Messalina, the great-great-granddaughter of Taurus, [who was] twice a consul and had been awarded a triumph. In order that he might acquire [Statilia] as a reward for himself, he murdered her husband Atticus Vestinus, the consul.</u></p> <p><u>He quickly rejected intimacy with Octavia, and when his friends criticised him, he replied 'It ought to be enough for that woman to have the trappings of a wife.'</u> <u>Soon [after that] he considered strangling her, [but] in vain, and he divorced her [saying she was] unable to have children, but since the people disapproved of this divorce nor did they hold back with their complaints, he also exiled her. At last, he killed her on a charge of adultery so shameless and false that since even under torture everyone strongly denied her guilt, he bribed his own tutor, Anicetus to falsely confess as a witness that he had, by trickery, had an affair with her. He married Poppaea on the twelfth day after his divorce from Octavia and was very much in love with her;</u> <u>however, he killed her also with a kick of his heel, because she, [while she was] pregnant and in bad health, approached him with complaints when he had come in late from a chariot race. From her he had a daughter, Claudia Augusta whom he lost when she was a very small child.</u></p>	<p><u>Afterwards he married two wives besides Octavia, an ex-quaestor father</u></p> <p><u>'The trappings of a wife ought to be enough' having considered</u></p> <p><u>with the people disapproving and not holding back complaints</u></p> <p><u>who would lie</u></p> <p><u>He loved a great deal Poppaea [whom he] married on the twelfth day</u></p> <p><u>produced</u></p>

H (Nero 35 continued)

Nero drove his tutor, Seneca, to suicide even though the old man frequently begged to retire and offered to give him his estates. In place of cough medicine which he had promised, Nero sent poison to Burrus, the prefect of the guard. He was no less cruel to those outside his household. After a comet foretold the death of a prominent person, Nero, advised by his astrologer, executed a large number of the nobility to avert the omen. This was an easy decision because he had recently discovered two conspiracies against him. The alleged conspirators were arrested and admitted their plot, saying that there was no way to help a man as evil as Nero, except to kill him. All the children of the conspirators were banished from Rome and then killed by poison or starvation.

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I (Nero 38)

He showed no greater concern for the people and, pretending that the ugliness of the buildings and the narrow, winding streets of Rome offended him, he set fire to the city so openly that several former consuls spotted his closest slaves on their property with kindling and blazing torches but dared not stop them. Nero also coveted the sites of the stone granaries near the Golden House. He demolished them with siege engines and set them alight. The disastrous fire raged for six days and seven nights and people were compelled to take refuge in tombs. As well as the large number of tenements which burned down, the houses of former leaders, still adorned with the spoils of war, were burnt, as were the temples of the gods back to the time of the kings and every memorable monument from antiquity that had survived. Nero watched the fire from the gardens of Maecenas and delighted, as he said, by the 'beauty of the fire', he sang 'The Sack of Troy' while wearing his tragedian's costume.

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In AD 68, the general Galba and the Spanish provinces revolted against him. Nero was inconsolable, and he was soon plagued by omens and dreams which were not favourable to him.

Latin		English Meaning	Literal Translation
<p><u>nuntiata</u> interim etiam ceterorum exercituum <u>defectione</u> <u>litteras</u> prandenti sibi <u>redditas</u> <u>concerpsit</u>. <u>sumpto</u> a <u>Locusta</u> <u>veneno</u> et in auream pyxidem <u>condito</u> transiit in hortos <u>Servilianos</u>, et tribunos centurionesque praetorii <u>de fugae</u> <u>societate</u> temptavit. sed partim tergiversantibus, partim aperte <u>detrectantibus</u>, uno vero etiam proclamante: "usque adeone <u>mori miserum est?"</u> varie agitavit sed tandem obdormivit. <u>sic</u> <u>cogitatione</u> in posterum diem dilata ad mediam fere noctem <u>excitatus</u>, ut comperit stationem militum recessisse, prosiluit e <u>lecto</u> misitque circum amicos, et quia nihil a quoquam <u>renuntiabatur</u>, ipse cum paucis hospitia singulorum adiit.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">J (Nero 47)</p> <p>Meanwhile, after a report of the revolt of the rest of the armies was brought to him while he was eating breakfast, he ripped it up. He obtained</p> <p>poison from Locusta and after he had hidden it in a little golden box, he crossed into the Gardens of Servilius, and he urged the tribunes and centurions of the praetorian guard to escape with him; some were evasive, others openly refused, with one even declaring, "At this point, Is it so wretched a thing to die?" He was greatly distressed but at last he fell asleep. So, he put off his decision until the following day and he woke at about midnight, when he found that his bodyguard of soldiers had withdrawn, he jumped out of bed and sent [messages] around his friends; because nothing was heard back from anyone, he himself approached the lodgings of each of them with a few companions.</p>	<p>with the revolt ... having been announced he ripped up the letters that had been received</p> <p>poison having been received from Locusta and placed in ...</p> <p>about escape as a group; with some evasive and others openly refusing and one indeed even proclaiming: in this way, the decision having been put off...</p>	

Latin	English Meaning	Literal Translation
<p>verum clausis omnium foribus, respondente nullo, in cubiculum rediit, unde iam et custodes diffugerant, direptis etiam stragulis, amota et pyxide veneni; ac statim Spiculum murmillonem vel quemlibet alium percussorem, cuius manu periret, requisivit et nemine reperto: 'ergo ego,' inquit, 'nec amicum habeo nec inimicum?' procurritque, quasi praecipitaturus se in Tiberim.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">J (continued)</p> <p><i>However, with the doors of all of them closed and nobody answering he returned to his bedroom, from where by now his guards had scattered, and even the bed linen had been plundered and the little box of poison removed. He searched immediately for Spiculum the gladiator or some other murderer, by whose hand he might perish and having found no one, he said, "So do I have neither a friend nor an enemy?" and he rushed forward as if he were going to throw himself into the Tiber.</i></p>	<p><i>Indeed</i></p>

K (Nero 48)

Nero then asked for a secluded place in which to gather his thoughts. His freedman, Phaon, offered his own suburban villa, four miles from Rome. So barefoot and wearing only a tunic, Nero threw on a faded travelling-cloak, covered his head and holding a cloth in front of his face, mounted his horse with only four attendants. Immediately he was frightened by an earth tremor and a flash of lightning, and heard the shouting of soldiers in a nearby camp who were prophesying defeat for him and victory for Galba. One passer-by said, 'These fellows are pursuing Nero', and another asked 'Is there any news about Nero from the city?' Then his horse was frightened by the smell of a corpse that had been thrown out at the side of the road, causing Nero to drop his face-covering. He was then saluted by a praetorian veteran. At last they came to the back entrance to the villa; they left their horses and followed an overgrown path to the rear wall of the house. When the slaves had tunnelled through the wall, Nero crawled in and lay down in a meagre bedroom with an old cloak spread over him.

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Latin	English Meaning	Literal Translation
<p>tunc scrobem coram fieri imperavit <u>dimensus ad corporis sui modulum</u>, componique simul, <u>si qua</u> invenirentur, frusta marmoris et aquam simul ac ligna conferri curando mox cadaveri, flens ad singula atque identidem dictitans: 'qualis artifex pereo!' ferrum iugulo adegit <u>iuvante Epaphrodito a libellis</u>. semianimisq[ue] adhuc irrumpenti centurioni et <u>paenula ad vulnus adposita</u> in auxilium se venisse simulanti non aliud respondit quam: 'sero' et: 'haec est fides.' atque in ea voce defecit, extantibus rigentibusque oculis usque ad horrorem formidinemque visentium. nihil prius aut magis a comitibus exegerat quam ne <u>potestas cuiquam capitis sui fieret</u>, sed ut <u>quoquo modo</u> totus cremaretur. permisit hoc Icelus, Galbae libertus, non multo ante vinculis exolutus, in quae <u>primo tumultu</u> coniectus fuerat.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">L (Nero 49)</p> <p>Then he ordered a grave to be made in front of him, <u>the correct size for his body</u>, and at the same time, [for] pieces of marble, <u>if any were to be found</u>, to be arranged [in it] and water and firewood to be brought together for the immediate care of his corpse. Weeping at each thing being done, he kept on saying "What 5 an artist, [yet] I perish!" <u>With the help of his secretary, Epaphroditus</u>, he drove a sword through his throat. [He was] still half alive[when] he responded to a centurion [who], bursting in, <u>placed his cloak on the wound</u> pretending he had come to help, [saying] nothing other than: "[Too] late" and "This is loyalty." In the midst of speaking, he died with his eyes bulging and glazed, to the horror and fear 10 of those who saw him. He had demanded before hand nothing more from his companions than that <u>the chance of having his head might not be given to anyone</u>, but that his body might be cremated whole <u>by whatever means</u>. Icelus, Galba's freedman allowed this. [He had] not long before [been] freed from prison into which he had been thrown <u>when the first revolt had broken out</u>.</p>	<p><u>having measured it to the size to his body</u> <u>if somehow there were to be found</u></p> <p><u>at the same time</u> <u>he repeated again and again</u> <u>with Epaphroditus helping</u></p> <p><u>with his cloak placed on the wound</u></p> <p><u>control [over] his head</u></p> <p><u>in the first revolt</u></p>

M (Nero, 50)

Nero was buried at a cost of two hundred thousand sesterces, wrapped in white robes embroidered with gold. His nurses Egloge and Alexandria, and his mistress Acte, laid his remains in the Domitian family tomb on the Hill of the Gardens which can be seen from the Campus Martius. Nero died in his thirty second year, on the anniversary of the day on which he had killed his first wife, Octavia. There was such widespread public rejoicing that the people ran through the city wearing caps of liberty; however, for a long time afterwards people decorated his tomb with spring and summer flowers and raised statues to him.

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