



CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

Component 2: Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)

Theme A: Romans in the Countryside

Livy: Cincinnatus, summoned from the plough

For examination in 2024-2026

Teachers should not feel that they need to pass on to their students all the information from these notes; they should choose whatever they think is appropriate.

The examination requires knowledge outside the text only when it is needed in order to understand the text.

The Teacher's Notes contain the follow:

- An **Introduction** to the author and the text, although students will only be asked questions on the content of the source itself.
- **Notes** on the text to assist the teacher.
- **Suggested Questions for Comprehension, Content and Style** to be used with students.
- **Discussion** suggestions and questions for students, and overarching **Themes** which appear across more than one source.
- **Further Information and Reading** for teachers who wish to explore the topic and texts further.
- **Acknowledgements** of works used in preparing these notes.

Livy: History 3.26 – Cincinnatus, summoned from the plough

Cincinnatus, while busy working on his land, is summoned to restore the Roman state.

Titus Livius (59 BC - AD 17) was born in Patavium (modern day Padua). He was a historian and his work *Ab Urbe Condita* (From the Founding of the City) covered Roman history from the legends of the origins of Rome's founding to historical accounts of Livy's own times. The work covers up to the year 9 BC in 142 books but not all of these survive.

In this text, Livy explains how Cincinnatus was made dictator temporarily in 458 BC to restore the Roman state. When he is summoned to this duty, he is found busy in attending to his farmland. Having donned his toga, Cincinnatus is hailed as dictator. It is uncertain whether this episode is legendary or historical.

Text

vis Sabinorum ingens prope ad moenia urbis infesta populatione

venit. foedati agri, terror iniectus urbi est. tanta trepidatio fuit

quanta si urbem, non castra hostes obsiderent. itaque civibus

dictatorem dici placuit qui rem percussam restitueret, et Lucius

Quinctius Cincinnatus consensu omnium dicitur. 5

spes unica imperii populi Romani, Quinctius trans Tiberim,

contra eum ipsum locum ubi nunc navalia sunt, quattuor iugerum

colebat agrum, quae prata Quinctia vocantur. ibi ab legatis – seu

fossam fodiens palae innixus, seu cum araret, operi certe (id

quod constat) agresti intentus – salute data in vicem redditaque 10

rogatus est ut togatus mandata senatus audiret. admiratus

rogitansque 'satin salve?' uxorem togam propere e tugurio

proferre iubet. qua simul absterso pulvere ac sudore velatus

processit, dictatorem eum legati gratulantes consalutant, in

urbem vocant; qui terror sit in exercitu exponunt. 15

The text is adapted.

Notes

- 1 – 3 vis Sabinorum ... obsiderent:** the peril and fear of the Romans in the city is emphasised in the opening sentences of this extract to show how important Cincinnatus' leadership will be.
- 1 vis Sabinorum ... populatione:** the Sabines were a group of people living north-east of Rome with whom Rome had been intermittently in conflict since the legendary founding of the city by Romulus. The size and destructive nature of the attacking force is emphasised by *ingens* (huge), *infesta* (terrible) and *populatione* (devastation).
- 2 foedati agri:** understand *sunt*: 'the fields [were] laid waste'. *foedati* is a particularly evocative word which suggests the fields have been defiled or polluted.
- 2 iniectus est:** a passive form, literally 'terror was instilled in the city.'
- 2 – 3 tanta ... obsiderent:** there was such great panic (*tanta trepidation fuit*) as much as if (*quanta si*) the enemy were besieging the city (*urbem ...hostes obsiderent*), not the camp (*non castra*).
- 3 – 4 itaque ... restitueret:** *placuit civibus* (it seemed good to the citizens) introduces an indirect statement with the accusative *dictatorem* and passive infinitive *dici* (a dictator be named). See the vocabulary sheet for less familiar meanings of *placet* and *dico*. *qui ... restitueret* is a purpose clause 'so that he would restore the shattered state'.
- 4 – 5 Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus:** According to Livy, Cincinnatus was summoned to be dictator temporarily in 458 or 457 BC. He then took 15 days to assemble an army, defeat the enemy and lay down the office to return to his plough. Cicero claims that Cincinnatus was summoned from the plough in 439 BC and this may be a second incident or a disagreement in chronology. These and various other differing versions of similar episodes suggest that the story of a leader coming from the farm to serve his people, only to relinquish power when he is no longer needed, is an important tradition in Roman culture.
- 6 – 15** In the remaining paragraph, Livy emphasises Cincinnatus' agricultural lifestyle and humility, suggesting that these traits are closely linked with his qualities as a leader.
- 6 spe unica imperii populi Romani:** Cincinnatus' unique importance to the restoration of the state is emphasised through Livy's description of him as the only hope (*unica spe*) of the Roman people.
- 6 – 8 Quinctus trans ... vocantur:** there are a number of interrelated clauses here that might be best read separately before bringing them together.
- Quinctus quattuor ... iugerum colebat agrum:** Cincinnatus was cultivating four acres of land. (This is equivalent to about 600 parked cars or a little less than three football pitches).
- quae prata Quinctia vocantur:** which are called the Quinctian meadows.

trans Tiberim, contra eum ipsum locum ubi nunc navalia sunt: across the Tiber, opposite the very place where the docks now are.

The detail of a specific location in contemporary Rome, would add vividness and realism to the account and would remind Livy's audience that, in the past, the city of Rome itself contained agricultural land.

9 – 10 seu ... intentus: these words describe what Cincinnatus is doing on the farm when he is found. Livy uses a list of three (*tricolon*): leaning on a spade, digging a ditch or ploughing. This, along with the final phrase, 'certainly engrossed in some farming task (as is generally accepted)', emphasises the numerous tasks Cincinnatus carries out on the farm and his diligence in completing them. He displays the agricultural virtue of persistent hard work.

10 – 11 salute data ... reddita: Both the envoys and Cincinnatus display awareness of Roman social norms and courtesy.

8 – 12 ibi ab legatis ... audiret: returning to the the beginning of the sentence on line 8, we have: There (*ibi*), he was asked (*rogatus est*) by the envoys (*ab legatis*) that (*ut ...*), wearing his toga (*togatus*), he should listen to (... *audiret*) the commands of the senate (*mandata senatus*).

The envoys indicate that Cincinnatus should dress in a toga before hearing them. A toga was a formal piece of clothing, reserved for events such as addressing the senate so Cincinnatus realises that the message is important. This explains why he is bewildered (*admiratus*) and the concern he expresses with '*sat in salve?*' (is everything all right?).

12 – 13 uxorem ... iubet: Cincinnatus asking for his toga from his wife lets the reader know that Cincinnatus is a family man and that his wife was possibly already present with him in the fields.

13 – 14 qua simul abstergo ... vocant:

qua ... velatus: dressed in which (i.e. the toga).

simul abstergo pulvere ac sudore: an ablative absolute construction indicating he had wiped off the dust and sweat before putting on the toga with **simul** suggesting the haste with which he cleaned himself.

That he needed to wipe off dust and sweat confirms his hard physical work on the farm. He makes sure that his appearance is appropriate for entering into political activity.

15 qui terror ... exponunt: they explained (*exponent*) what terror there was (*qui terror sit*) in the army (*in exercitu*). *qui* with the subjunctive is used for this indirect statement.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then re-read each line or couplet, asking questions so that the class is led to comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

vis Sabinorum ingens prope ad moenia urbis infesta populatione venit (lines 1-2).

- What came almost to the walls of the city?
- *infesta populatione*: what did they come with?

foedati agri, terror iniectus urbi est (line 2)

- What happened to the fields?
- What feeling was instilled in the city?

tanta trepidatio fuit quanta si urbem, non castra hostes obsiderent (lines 2-3)

- The enemy were actually besieging the camp but what does Livy say the fear they provoked was as great as?

itaque civibus dictatorem dici placuit qui rem percussam restitueret (lines 3-4)

- What did the citizens feel it was good to do?
- What did they want this person to do?

et Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus consensu omnium dicitur (lines 4-5)

- By whose consent was Cincinnatus chosen?

spes unica imperii populi Romani, Quinctius (line 6)

- How is Cincinnatus described?

trans Tiberim, contra eum ipsum locum ubi nunc navalia sunt (lines 6-7)

- Where was Cincinnatus' land?

(Quinctius) quattuor iugerum colebat agrum (lines 7-8)

- How many acres did Cincinnatus cultivate?

quae prata Quinctia vocantur (line 8)

- What was Cincinnatus' land called in Livy's day?

seu fossam fodiens palae innixus, seu cum araret, operi certe (id quod constat) agresti intentus (lines 8-10)

- What two activities might Cincinnatus have been doing when he was found by the envoys? What was he certainly doing?
- How is Cincinnatus' concentration on his farming work described?

ibi ab legatis ... salute data in vicem redditaque rogatus est ut togatus mandata senatus audiret (lines 10-11)

- What happened first when the envoys reached Cincinnatus?
- What did the envoys ask Cincinnatus to listen to?
- How did they say Cincinnatus should be dressed to listen to them?

admiratus rogitansque 'satin salve?' uxorem togam propere e tugurio proferre iubet (lines 11-13)

- How does Cincinnatus feel when he hears the request of the envoys?
- What question does Cincinnatus ask the envoys?
- What does Cincinnatus ask his wife to fetch quickly from their cottage?

qua simul absterso pulvere ac sudore velatus processit (lines 13-14)

- What does Cincinnatus do before he steps forward?

dictatorem eum legati gratulantes consalutant, in urbem vocant (lines 14-15)

- What do the envoys hail Cincinnatus as?
- Where do they call him to?

qui terror sit in exercitu exponunt (line 15)

- What do the envoys explain?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-5) How does Livy suggest the peril to the Roman state? Refer to style and content.
2. (lines 6-15) How does Livy emphasise Cincinnatus' role as a farmer?
3. (lines 6-15) How does Livy portray Cincinnatus as the ideal Roman leader?

Discussion

Themes: Roman identity / virtues of a Roman farmer

It may be useful to consider this text alongside Cicero's portrayal of Atilius in his defence of Roscio Amerino (also in this prescription) to see how farming and service to the state are closely linked in Roman culture.

In this extract, Livy uses the trope of the call from the plough to serve the Roman state. He characterises Cincinnatus as someone who works the land and who is therefore the ideal candidate to come to the aid of the state, in time of need.

Livy emphasises the excellent reputation of Cincinnatus before the reader first meets him at line 9. The terrible situation that Rome finds itself in and the fact that everyone agrees Cincinnatus is the best man to restore the state sets up the expectation that he is going to be an impressive person. This expectation is met when the reader finds

him working diligently on a substantial parcel of land (4 acres), seemingly without the help of enslaved people or freedmen. Attention may draw out from the text the values that Livy claims for Cincinnatus including his strong work ethic, diligence, civilised social interactions and his being a family man. They may also discuss whether these are still values that we look for in our leaders today or whether we hope for other virtues from them. It may be particularly interesting to discuss the virtues that departing prime minister Boris Johnson was claiming when, in September 2022, he referred to himself as 'a Cincinnatus' (see Further Reading below).

The idea of going back to the values of the past is discussed in a number of the examined texts. Students may discuss whether we can still learn lessons from the ancient past or whether some values or assumptions from past times are now inappropriate.

Questions on the whole passage

1. How significant is Cincinnatus for the Roman state?
2. Does being someone who works the land prepare Cincinnatus for public office?
3. What values do Romans who work the land display in Livy's text?
4. Is Livy's argument that a farming life is a good background for a leader made more or less persuasive by appealing to a historical figure?
5. Does Livy's description of Cincinnatus and his farming life agree with other descriptions of rustic folk in the 'Romans in the Countryside' prescription? Does Livy use similar or different techniques to illustrate his opinion?

Further Information and Reading

The Cambridge Latin Course, Book V, Stage 35 on Roman Country Villas contains a detailed discussion in English. A digital version of this section can be found [here](#).

Britannica page on Livy, Roman Historian: [here](#). See the useful 'brief summary' link directly under the 'Summary' heading.

World History Encyclopedia, entry on Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus: [here](#).

In September 2022, resigning UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, referred to himself as 'a Cincinnatus' in his departure speech. Students may like to consider the implications of this for his longer-term plans as a politician. A Guardian article from the time includes some interpretations: [here](#).

Acknowledgement of Resources used:

Briscoe, J. (2014). *Livy*. in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. OUP

Cornell, T. *Quinctius Cincinnatus, Lucius, 'Cincinnatus'*. Oxford Classical Dictionary. Retrieved 31 Jan. 2023, from [here](#) (no subscription required).

Ogilvie, R.M (1965) *Commentary on Livy, Books 1–5* Oxford: Clarendon Press.