



# CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

Component 2: Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)

Theme A: Romans in the Countryside

*Ovid: A rustic festival*

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.

## Ovid: *Fasti* 2.641-658 – A rustic festival

*Rustic families conduct rituals in honour of the god of boundaries, Terminus*

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Publius Ovidius Naso (43BC – AD17) was born in Sulmo, inland from Rome, to a wealthy equestrian family. His works include love poems, the *Metamorphoses* (a collection of myths around the theme of transformation), laments, letters and his *Fasti*, the Roman calendar. In the *Fasti*, Ovid lists day-by-day what Roman customs are observed and how they began. Each book of the *Fasti* covers a month but only the first six months were ever published, because in 8 BC Ovid was exiled by the emperor Augustus.

In this text, he observes the private religious rites to *Terminus*, the god of boundaries, as carried out in the countryside (not the public ritual carried out by the state). *Terminus* is represented by either a post or stone in the ground on the boundary between two properties. The landowners from either side and their families, dressed in white, conduct rituals such as placing garlands and sacrificial cakes, creating an altar, throwing crops and honey-comb into fire, libations and blood sacrifices, before singing a prayer. It is likely that Ovid chose this setting to show the countryside as the 'repository of old-fashioned Roman virtues' (Robinson, 2011 p. 412).

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### Text

Termine, sive lapis sive es defossus in agro

stipes, ab antiquis tu quoque numen habes.

te duo diversa domini de parte coronant,

binaque certa tibi binaque liba ferunt.

ara fit: huc ignem curto fert rustica testo [5]

sumptum de tepidis ipsa colona focis.

ligna senex minuit concisaque construit arte,

et solida ramos figere pugnat humo;

tum sicco primas irritat cortice flammis;

stat puer et manibus lata canistra tenet. [10]

inde ubi ter fruges medios immisit in ignes,

porrigit incisos filia parva favos.

vina tenent alii: libantur singula flammis;

spectant, et linguis candida turba favet.

spargitur et caeso communis Terminus agno, [15]

nec queritur lactans cum sibi porca datur.

conveniunt celebrantque dapes vicinia simplex

et cantant laudes, Termine sancte, tuas.

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## Notes

*metre: elegaic couplets (pairs of lines, one of six feet, followed by one of five feet)*

—  $\frac{vv}{-}$  | —  $\frac{vv}{-}$  | —  $\frac{vv}{-}$  | —  $\frac{vv}{-}$  | —  $vv$  | —  $\frac{v}{-}$   
—  $\frac{vv}{-}$  | —  $\frac{vv}{-}$  | — | —  $vv$  | —  $vv$  | —

**1** **Termine:** *Terminus* is the god of boundaries. This god is particularly important in the countryside where it was necessary to be clear on who owned what land and especially in early Roman history when society was predominantly agricultural. Numa, a king of Rome after the legendary Romulus, created public and private boundaries, made it a serious offence to remove boundary markers and created the first temple to *Terminus*. By the time of Ovid, land confiscations had been an unpopular and widely used practice.

**1 - 4** **Termine ... ferunt:** the vocative *Termine* alongside repetition of *tu* in different cases (*polyptoton*) indicates that this is a prayer to *Terminus*.

**1 - 2** **lapis ... defossus ... stipes:** note that grammatically *defossus* agrees with *lapis* and *stipes*, so both the rock and post are fixed in the ground. Care is taken to list the different forms of the god, presumably to show reverence to the god.

**2** **ab antiquis:** *Terminus* has strong associations with early Roman history. Ovid chooses to mention his ancient origins but is vague, not naming any particular time in the past.

**quoque:** in addition to other more famous gods, so emphasising *Terminus'* importance by favourably associating him with more prominent gods.

3 **domini:** refers to the landowners but literally translates as 'masters' i.e. masters over their land. By using *dominus* rather than *agricola* or another synonym for farmer, Ovid is clear about the autonomy of the farmers.

4 **binaque ... binaque:** repetition. A *pair* of each item is given because each landowner offers one of each item to the god on his side of the post/stone. This shows harmony in the countryside.

**liba:** a cake of cheese, flour and eggs. Both the cake and garland are traditional offerings to the gods.

5 - 12 **ara ... favet:** This scene of rustic piety is a family affair, involving the *domini* (landowners), a *senex* (old man) presumably the *dominus'* father, *colona* (the wife), *puer* (the boy) here the son of the farmer and *filia* (the daughter). All ages take part, from old to young.

5 - 6 **huc ... focis:** the description here emphasises the simple life (*rustica colona:* simple farmer's wife) and humble belongings of the landowner (*testo curto:* broken pot). Despite this, their life is homely (*tepidis focis:* warm hearth) and they give what they have willingly to show their piety to the god.

7 **concisaque construit:** repetition of the hard c sound mimics the sound of the wood being chopped.

**arte:** can be understood here as 'methodically' but literally translates as 'with skill'. The old man has made fires like this many times before.

8 **solida ... humo:** the festival was celebrated on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February so it would be difficult to insert poles into the cold, hard winter ground to stop the bonfire collapsing. Again, this demonstrates the effort put into showing proper reverence to the god.

9 **irritat:** an interesting choice of word. Literally it means the man 'provokes' the fire to start.

10 **canistra:** a wicker basket used for holding offerings in sacrifices.

11 **ter fruges:** the farmer gives not just one, but three offerings of crops to the god.

**immisit:** all main verbs in the passage are in the present tense other than *immisit*. This emphasises that the throwing of the crops is done before the holding out of the honey-comb. Note that we do not know who threw the crops into the fire (whether it is the boy or the landowner).

**medios ... ignes:** both plural. Literally 'into the middle (of the) fires'.

12 **filia parva:** little daughter meaning young daughter to show the contrast in ages from *senex* to *filia*.

**13 – 18** Focus now moves out from the family unit to a larger group.

**13** **vina:** plural wines or vessels of wine, which explains how they go into the flames one by one (*singula*).

**14** **linguis ... favet:** at official ritual acts heralds ordered the crowd to *favete linguis* literally 'favour [the act] with your tongues'. This effectively meant be silent so as not to interrupt or say something bad. *candida* means they are dressed in white.

**15** **spargitur ... caeso ... agno:** sprinkled with *the blood of* a sacrificed lamb.

**communis Terminus:** literally the shared *Terminus* - referring to the fact there is one boundary marker and one altar shared between two households. This alongside other words of community (*coveniunt* line 17 and *vicinia* line 18) shows the harmony in the countryside.

**16** **nec queritur:** note the anthropomorphic nature of the Roman gods, who echo human behaviour (here not complaining!).

**cum sibi porca datur:** temporal *cum* when, with indicative to define the time of the action of the main verb (*datur*). *porca* is the subject of the passive verb and *sibi* is the indirect object 'to himself'.

**17** **dapes:** it is notable that they honour *Terminus* with a feast, even while living their simple and rustic lives.

**simplex:** it may be useful to consider the phrase 'the simple life'. This phrase refers to a life with few possessions or modern luxuries but then also free from the worries of consumerism. This echoes lines 5-6 where the wife uses a broken pot to carry fire. The phrase has often been used to describe country living.

**18** **sancte Terminus tuas:** again showing reverence to *Terminus* by describing him as *sancte*.

### Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread 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.

### Terminē, sive lapis sive es defossus in agro stipes, ab antiquis tu quoque numen habes. (lines 1-2)

- What two ways can Terminus be represented?
- Since when has Terminus been important?
- What power does Terminus have?

**te duo diversa domini de parte coronant,  
binaque sarta tibi binaque liba ferunt. (lines 3-4)**

- What do the two landowners offer *Terminus*?

**ara fit: huc ignem curto fert rustica testo  
sumptum de tepidis ipsa colona focus. (lines 5-6)**

- What is made?
- Who brings the fire?
- What does she bring the fire in?

**ligna senex minuit concisaque construit arte,  
et solida ramos figere pugnat humo. (lines 7-8)**

- What does the old man pile up?
- What does he do to the branches to secure the fire?

**tum sicco primas irritat cortice flammis;  
stat puer et manibus lata canistra tenet. (lines 9-10)**

- What does he kindle the fire with?
- The farmer's son stands with what in his hands?

**inde ubi ter fruges medios immisit in ignes,  
porrigit incisos filia parva favos. (lines 11-12)**

- What is thrown into the fire and how many?
- What does the daughter hold? How is the daughter described?

**vina tenent alii: libantur singula flammis;  
spectant, et linguis candida turba favet. (lines 13-14)**

- What is offered as a libation?
- What does the crowd do? Give two details.
- What colour is the crowd dressed in?

**spargitur et caeso communis Terminus agno,  
nec queritur lactans cum sibi porca datur. (lines 15-16)**

- What two sacrifices are made for *Terminus*?
- How is *Terminus* described?

**conveniunt celebrantque dapes vicinia simplex  
et cantant laudes, Termine sancte, tuas. (lines 17-18)**

- Having come together, what is the community celebrating?
- What do they sing?
- How is the community described?
- How is *Terminus* described?

## Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1 - 4) How does Ovid show the reverence of the farmers for *Terminus*? Refer to Ovid's style and content.
2. (lines 5 - 8) How effective is Ovid at showing the simple life of the farmers?
3. (lines 9 - 14) Who is involved in the rites to *Terminus* here? What does this tell us about life in the countryside?
4. (lines 5 - 15) How does Ovid suggest that a great deal of effort is put into the rites for *Terminus*?
5. (lines 15 - 18) Is there a sense of community in the countryside? Use examples from the text to explain your point of view.

## Discussion

### Themes: country living / community / boundaries / religion / family

It may be useful to remember the passage takes the form of a prayer to the god, *Terminus*. This is evident from the use of the pronoun *tu* in different forms.

The central theme in this passage is religious ritual. The phrase 'rustic piety' is useful as Ovid has particularly chosen to have farmers making a dedication to *Terminus*. By examining the ancient rituals still completed in the countryside, Ovid also conveys the piety, adherence to tradition, and family and community cohesion that are aspects of country living.

To fully understand the passage, students will need to grapple with a fairly obscure Roman god - *Terminus*. Students should consider why the god of boundaries would be so important for country living? Why is it more important to define the confines of land owned in the countryside than in the city? This could lead to an interpretation that the significance of *Terminus* is to secure the boundaries of *private* property and lead to division. However, this is not echoed in the text which instead focuses on the unifying nature of these rites - conducted within and between families. Numa, who is credited as the originator of the rites to *Terminus*, may himself have intended this ritual at boundaries to limit greed and keep the peace. This peace and harmony is shown in the collaboration of neighbours.

The farmers give up a great number of resources in the ritual - garlands, cakes, wood, crops, honey-comb, wine, a lamb and a pig. They are choosing not to lavish their resources on themselves, but rather to invest the resources into securing a future free from any troubles from *Terminus*. Do modern people resist short term self-indulgence to invest in long term happiness? Is this a fundamental difference between 'the simple life' of the country and city life?

Ovid chooses to emphatically mention each individual from the family who is involved (grandfather, father, son and daughter) and in this way includes at least 3 generations. Is it common, in modern times, to find 3 generations of family living and sharing ritual together like this? Is Ovid suggesting that this kind of familial unity comes from country living? Could we liken this to modern day coming together for a festival, for example Christmas?

*Terminus* is said to have been considered a god 'from ancient times'. Does the ancient origin of *Terminus* make his rituals important? It is a recurring theme in the set texts that country living goes back to the simple and better life of yesteryear. The farmers here do not have vast amounts of wealth but instead live in a humble life. Does the 'simple life' portrayed in this text appeal to today's students?

### Questions on the whole passage

1. Ovid describes the wife and the community as 'rustica' and 'simplex' which can both be translated as 'simple'. What does Ovid mean when he calls them simple?
2. How does Ovid describe the lived experience for residents of the countryside in his text?
3. What values are important to those that live in the countryside in this text?
4. How does Horace show the devotion of the rustic inhabitants to *Terminus*?
5. From reading the other 'Romans in the Countryside' texts, do you think Ovid's readers would agree with his representation of people who live in the countryside?

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### 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](#).

The Cambridge Latin Course Book V Stage 39 provides a short introduction to Roman poets, including the patronage of Maecenas. A digital version of this section can be found [here](#).

The Cambridge Latin Course Book III Stage 23 contains a discussion on Roman religion. A digital version of this section can be found [here](#).

The following web links provide more information on sacrifices and Terminalia:

Roman Sacrifice in the Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World. Accessed [here](#).

Terminus in the Oxford Classical Dictionary. Accessed [here](#).

Warde Fowler, W (1899) *The Roman Festivals of the Period of the Republic. An introduction to the study of the religion of the Romans*. London: Macmillan and Co. Accessed [here](#) and search 'Terminalia'

### Acknowledgement of Resources used:

Frazer, J.G. (1929). *Fastorum libri sex : The Fasti of Ovid Volume 2 Commentary on Books 1 and 2*. London: Macmillan and Co.

Robinson, M (2011). *Ovid: Fasti Book 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.