



CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

Component 2: Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)

Theme A: Romans in the Countryside

Pliny: A day's hunting

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.

Pliny: Letters 1.6 – A Day's Hunting

Advice to a friend: a writing expedition

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, better known to us as Pliny the Younger (c. AD 61- c. AD 113) was a Roman politician from Comum. Most of his life was spent in Rome, as an orator in the courts, senator, and friend of the emperor Trajan. His wealth came from the country estates, mostly inherited, that he owned all over northern Italy, worked by a large number of tenant farmers.

In this letter, Pliny writes to his friend, the historian Tacitus. At the time of the letter, he was senior to Pliny in terms of senatorial rank and was a leading advocate in the courts. Pliny describes how hunting and being in nature are particularly stimulating for his writing, advising Tacitus that he should also find inspiration in this way.

Text

C. PLINIUS CORNELIO TACITO SUO S.

ridebis, et licet rideas. ego, ille quem nosti, apros tres et quidem
pulcherrimos cepi. 'ipse?' inquis. ipse; non tamen ut omnino ab
inertia mea et quiete discederem. ad retia sedebam; erat in
proximo non venabulum aut lancea, sed stilus et pugillares; 5
meditabar aliquid enotabamque, ut si manus vacuas, plenas
tamen ceras reportarem. non est quod contempnas hoc studendi
genus; mirum est ut animus agitatione motuque corporis
excitetur; iam undique silvae et solitudo ipsumque illud silentium
quod venationi datur, magna cogitationis incitamenta sunt. 10
proinde cum venabere, licebit auctore me ut panarium et
lagunculam sic etiam pugillares feras: experieris non Dianam
magis montibus quam Minervam inerrare. vale.

Notes

- 1 ridebis et licet rideas:** Pliny uses repetition of forms of the word *ridere* (*polyptoton*) to show that the idea of Pliny hunting is laughable as he is well-known as someone who enjoys spending time writing rather than being active outdoors.

rideas is subjunctive after the verb *licet + ut*.

nostis: this is a shortened version of *novisti* – strictly in the perfect tense ('you have known'), but frequently used with present sense ('you know').

- 2-3 apros tres et quidem pulcherrimos cepi:** Pliny emphasises the number (*tres*) and quality of the boars caught (*pulcherrimos* is superlative). It is not entirely clear whether Pliny literally caught three boars or whether the boars were captured by the rest of the hunting-party, for which Pliny claims the credit.

This would be a good opportunity to refer to Picture 6 in the prescribed material, which gives a good representation of the activity of a boar-hunt like the one Pliny describes.

- 3 'ipse?' inquis. ipse:** Pliny uses an imaginary exchange with Tacitus to emphasise how usual it is for him to hunt. Notice how *ipse* has different meanings according to the speaker: first Tacitus' expression of surprise: 'You?', and second Pliny's reply '[Yes], me'.

- 3-4 non tamen ut ... discederem:** 'but not with the result that...' This is an unusual result clause, missing the usual signpost of a correlative before *ut* + subjunctive (*discederem*).

The emphatic *omnino* along with the two words, *inertia* (inactivity) and *quiete*, (peacefulness) used to express one idea (*hendiadys*) make clear Pliny's usual preoccupation with studying and writing. This explains why Tacitus will be surprised to hear of him hunting.

- 4 sedebam:** note that Pliny is sitting rather than standing ready for action next to his nets. These were used to trap the animal before killing it with a spear or javelin. The hunting equipment – *venabulum* (hunting spear) and *lancea* (javelin) – are contrasted with writing equipment, *stilus* (stylus) and *pugillares* (writing tablets). A stylus was used to make marks into wax on wooden boards.

- 6-7 meditabar ... ut si ... reportarem:** a purpose clause with *ut* + subjunctive (*reportarem*).

Notice the pattern (*chiasmus*):

noun (*manus*) adjective (*vacuas*), adjective (*plenas*) ... noun (*ceras*)

with both noun-adjective pairs as objects of the verb *reportarem*. The contrast is strengthened by the inclusion of *tamen* within the second pairing.

- 7-8 non est quod contemnas hoc studendi genus:** *non est quod* + subjunctive (*contemnas*) is a Latin idiom meaning 'there is no reason for you to.'

studendi is a verbal noun (gerund) meaning 'studying'.

- 8** From this point on, Pliny extolls the benefits of countryside pursuits for his thinking.

- 8-9 mirum est ut ... excitetur:** *ut* here means 'how' (not 'so that') and is followed by a subjunctive (*excitetur*), in what amounts to an indirect question.

Pliny mentions both *agitazione* and *motuseque corporis* (movement of the body) to suggest the single idea of strenuous physical activity that stirs up his thoughts.

- 9-10 iam ... sunt:** Pliny includes a list of three (*tricolon*) aspects of hunting that are useful for stimulating the mind: being in the woods, solitude and silence. The silence appears to be a particularly important aspect, emphasised with both *ipsum* and *illud*.
- 11 proinde:** introduces Pliny's summing up with some advice to Tacitus.
- 11 cum venabere:** *cum* means 'whenever' with a future indicative (here deponent) verb.
- 11-12 licebit ... feras:** *feras* is *subjunctive* after the verb *licebit* + *ut*. Pliny suggests bringing together writing with hunting and outdoor refreshments: *panarium* (basket of bread) and the diminutive *lagunculam* (small bottle).
- 12-13 experieris ... inerrare:** an indirect statement *experieris* (you will discover) *Dianam* (Diana) *non inerrare* (does not roam) *magis quam Minervam montibus* (more than Minerva on the mountains). Diana is the goddess of hunting and Minerva of wisdom. This metaphor implies that both hunting and intellectual activities such as writing can equally be undertaken on the mountainside.

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.

ridebis, et licet rideas (line 2)

- How does Pliny suggest Tacitus will react to his letter?

ego, ille quem nosti, apros tres et quidem pulcherrimos cepi (lines 2-3)

- What did Pliny catch? How many were there and how are they described?

'ipse?' inquis. ipse; non tamen ut omnino ab inertia mea et quiete discederem (lines 3-4)

- What was Pliny not abandoning?

ad retia sedebam (line 4)

- Where was Pliny sitting?

erat in proximo non venabulum aut lancea, sed stilus et pugillares (lines 4-5)

- What was not near Pliny? What was near Pliny?

meditabar aliquid enotabamque, ut si manus vacuas, plenas tamen ceras reportarem (lines 6-7)

- What was Pliny doing?
- What did Pliny hope to bring back with him?

non est quod contemnas hoc studendi genus (lines 7-8)

- What should Tacitus not frown upon?

mirum est ut animus agitatione motuque corporis excitetur (lines 8-9)

- What rouses the mind?

iam undique silvae et solitudo ipsumque illud silentium quod venationi datur, magna cogitationis incitamenta sunt (lines 9-10)

- What three aspects of the hunt stimulate thought?

proinde cum venabere, licebit auctore me ut panarium et lagunculam sic etiam pugillares feras (lines 11-12)

- What does Pliny say he permits Tacitus to take with him when he next goes hunting?

experieris non Dianam magis montibus quam Minervam inerrare. vale. (lines 12-13)

- Does Diana roam on the mountains more than Minerva?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 2-4) How does Pliny emphasise his reputation as a reluctant hunter?
2. (lines 4-7) How does Pliny show the importance of writing to him?
3. (lines 8-13) Does Pliny persuade the reader of the benefits of hunting for writing? Refer to Pliny's style and content.
4. (lines 4-12) Does Pliny suggest that country living is strenuous or leisurely?
5. (lines 12-13) Is the countryside a place only for people who enjoy hunting?

Discussion

Themes: hunting / writing / benefits of country living

In this letter, Pliny brings together the activities of hunting and writing. Both require equipment and both are productive, whether through catching a boar or successfully completing a passage, and both can be successfully undertaken in the countryside.

By carefully reading the first part of the passage, students may be able to visualise a typical hunting scene, seeing the process of putting out nets and waiting for prey which can then be killed with weapons. Students may also contrast the exertion of the hunt with the sedentary nature of writing and with taking time for leisurely eating in the countryside.

Pliny believes that his writing benefits from being carried out in the countryside because he finds the exercise and setting stimulating. Students may wish to consider their own experiences of the countryside and the idea of studying there. How would the relative quiet of the countryside compare to the usual sights and sounds of where they live? Many students will now work while listening to music through headphones. Would they prefer the sounds of nature over their own usual working habits? Do they find that exercise helps to clear their minds so they are able to get on with more academic activities?

Questions on the whole passage

1. According to Pliny, what aspects of the countryside are enjoyable?
 2. How does Pliny's description of countryside pastimes in this passage compare with those in other texts in the 'Romans in the Countryside' prescription?
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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](#).

Acknowledgement of Resources used:

Edwards, R. (2008) 'Hunting for boars with Pliny and Tacitus', *Classical Antiquity*, 27(1), pp35-58.

Gibson, R.K. and Morello, R. (2012) *Reading the letters of Pliny the Younger: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sherwin-White, A (1969) *Fifty letters of Pliny. Selected and edited with introduction and notes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sherwin-White, A. (1998) *The Letters of Pliny. A Historical and Social Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sherwin-White, A., & Price, S. (2012). Pliny (2) the Younger. In *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. : Oxford University Press.