C·S·C·P Cambridge School Classics Project

CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

Component 2 Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)

Theme B: Love and Marriage

For examination in 2024-2026

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Cover Image: Lovers from Arretine vase. Photograph by Roger Dalladay

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This document refers to the official examination images and texts for the Eduqas Latin GCSE (2024 - 2026). It should be used in conjunction with the information, images and texts provided by Eduqas on their website:

Eduqas Latin GCSE (2024-2026) Component 2 Theme B: Love and Marriage

Useful additional material relevant for this Theme, may be found in the

Cambridge Latin Course fourth edition, Book V, Stage 38

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Introduction

Specification

Candidates are expected to be familiar with the following aspects of the theme:

- the various forms of Roman marriage;
- rituals at Roman weddings;
- attitudes towards women, as suggested by the material prescribed for study in the Eduqas GCSE Latin prescription.

Candidates should study the pictures in the Eduqas Prescribed Material Booklet, one or more of which will be used as a basis for questions in each question paper. Candidates will also answer questions on the texts in the Eduqas Prescribed Material Booklet.

Exploration of the theme

In this theme, the following topics will be covered. While the main bullet points below coincide with the Eduqas specification, those further indented do not constitute part of the syllabus but are suggested here as a means of exploring the main themes:

- the various forms of Roman marriage
    - The purpose and expectations of marriage
    - Marriages contracted with and without *manu*
    - Divorce and remarriage
    - Relationships beyond marriage

- rituals at Roman weddings
    - The bride's attire
    - The wedding ceremony and *iunctio dextrarum*
    - The wedding procession

- attitudes towards women
    - *Matronae* and the social expectations of Roman wives
    - Chastity and fidelity
    - Love poetry and women as objects of conquest
    - Moral reform and adultery

This introduction contains notes on all these topics to assist in the teaching of the literature. **Candidates will only be examined on the content of the prescribed material.**

Some links between texts and images and the theme's three bullet points are suggested in the following sections.

Forms of Roman marriage

Marriage was an important duty for Roman men and women, an act of piety to the gods and a means of producing legitimate children for the empire (see **Epitaph to Claudia**). Girls usually married in their late teens or early twenties (sometimes even younger), Roman men in their late twenties. Elite marriages were arranged affairs, usually negotiated by the *paterfamilias* and sometimes by respected *matronae* (for example, **Pliny, To Calpurnia Hispulla, his wife's aunt**). Marriage contracts could serve to formalise a match (see **picture 2**), but Roman law did not officially require them: a couple needed only to express their intention to marry and to live together.

Roman law recognised two types of marriage, those contracted with and without *manu* (meaning 'hand'; **see picture 2**). A marriage contracted *cum manu* meant that the bride passed from the authority of her father into that of her husband, but by the first century BC, marriages contracted *sine manu* were the norm. In this arrangement, a bride remained a member of her father's family and under his legal jurisdiction, likely offering her more protection and some financial independence from her husband.

Although Roman society celebrated the ideal of the *univira* – the one-man woman (like Penelope in **picture 5** and **Martial, Power of Love**) – remarriage was often necessitated by the death of a spouse. Divorce was common and carried no stigma, much to the frustration of some Roman moralists (**Seneca, Changing Morals**).

Of course, intimate relationships also existed beyond the formal ties of marriage. One of our sources depicts passionate feelings and love between couples of the same sex (**Martial, An Enigma**). Meanwhile, even though complete fidelity was expected of Roman wives, elite men were free to form relationships with anyone of low social status (*infamis*), including enslaved people, actors and sex workers (**as in picture 6**).

Rituals at Roman weddings

The Roman wedding introduced the new couple to the community and marked their entry into the duties of married life. Brides put away their childhood possessions, symbolising their transition to adulthood. Roman wedding ceremonies took place at the home of the bride's parents. The bride would typically wear a white dress and a *flammeum*, a flame-coloured veil intended to invoke the life-long fidelity of the wife of the Flamen Dialis, the chief priest of Jupiter, as depicted on the funerary vase in **picture 4**. Her hair was parted with a spear in an unusual ritual and plaited into six individual braids.

As **pictures 2 and 3** show, a key part of the marriage ceremony was the *iunctio dextrarum*, the joining of the couple's right hands to signify trust and commitment to their marital obligations. The couple's family and friends attended and brought gifts, and an ox was sacrificed to invoke the gods' blessings for the couple and their life together (as in **picture 1**).

Afterwards, the bride was taken to the house of her husband in an elaborate procession. The revellers sang and danced, and a torch of white pine was lit in honour of Ceres, the goddess of the hearth, harvest and fertility (**picture 3**). In the reliefs shown in **pictures 1 and 2**, the torch is held by the god of marriage, Hymen. The bride used the torch to light a fire in her new home, a symbol of the children it was hoped the match would produce.

Attitudes towards women

The ideal Roman woman was a *matrona*, a term that denoted her married status and motherhood. Women were bound by the traditional expectations of conservative Roman society; it was hoped they would bear children for the family and as a civic duty to the state (**Epitaph to Claudia**). The Romans celebrated historical and literary paradigms of the good and faithful wife, including the Sabine Women and Odysseus' wife Penelope (**Martial, Power of Love** and **picture 5**). Exemplars like these were praised for loyalty, bravery and fidelity: in one story told by Pliny, a virtuous wife was even willing to die for her husband (**Pliny, Faithful unto death**).

Chastity and fidelity were difficult attributes to prove, so *matronae* were expected to signal them through their behaviour, by dressing modestly, working wool (**picture 5**), good household management and taking an interest in their husband's affairs (**Pliny, To Calpurnia Hispulla, his wife's aunt**). Subservience was highly prized; Cicero criticised his sister-in-law Pomponia for putting her own feelings first (**Cicero, A Family Matter**). A wife's commendable behaviours reflected well on her husband and were her contribution to the family's honour and status.

By the late republican and early imperial period, some considered the model of the austere Roman matron a little old fashioned. Many elite women freely attended the baths, seaside resorts (**Martial, Power of Love**) and lavish dinner parties (**Seneca, Changing Morals**), impressing their companions with their learning and lively conversation. The Roman love poets may have been besotted with sophisticated elite women, but they were typically no less misogynistic than the traditional moral culture they claimed to reject. Catullus viewed women like Lesbia as changeable and deceptive (**Catullus, Poem 8 and 70**), and Ovid saw women as creatures to be 'tamed', 'worn down' and 'conquered' (**Ovid: Advice to a rejected lover**). Horace asked Venus to punish Chloe for not loving him, showing how little the Romans respected women as individuals with free choice (**Horace, Finished with Love**).

For the Roman moralists, the gap between reality and the traditional ideal created fears about moral decline. In 18BC and 9AD, the emperor Augustus introduced marriage legislation which not only penalised the elite for failing to marry and have children, but also punished adulterers. Under these laws, Augustus' own daughter, Julia, for whom the laws were named, was exiled. Seneca claimed that fashionable women were responsible for high rates of adultery and divorce (**Seneca, Changing Morals**; see also **Martial, Power of Love**). This seems ironic to us now, given how free Roman men were to pursue extramarital relationships (**picture 6**).

Some suggestions for further reading on *Love and Marriage*

Useful additional material relevant for this Theme, may be found in the Cambridge Latin Course fourth edition, Book V, Stage 38.

An accessible overview of Roman marriage ideals and expectations in the imperial period can be found here.

U.E. Paoli, *Rome: its people, life and customs* (1967), Ch.9: a concise summary of the position of women in Roman society, the various types of marriage, and details of wedding ceremonies.

The World of Rome (edited by P. Jones and K. Sidwell, CUP 2008) offers perceptive insights for the legal and social aspects (pages 208-217, 227-229) .

Jérome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (Penguin, 1991), Ch.4, provides thorough treatment of the whole theme, especially good on the changing role of women, marriage and divorce.

Suggestions for teaching

Key aims are:

• Understanding the meaning of the Latin

• Literary appreciation

• Developing an understanding of the topic.

It is often useful to adopt the following approach when introducing students to original literature:

• Read the Latin aloud to emphasise phrasing and stress word groups

• Break up more complex sentences into constituent parts for comprehension

• Focus on comprehension of the text and understanding the content through questioning and using the vocabulary

• Look closely at how the Latin is expressed and the ways in which the literary devices enhance the meaning.

Although a sample translation is provided in the course resources, teachers might want to encourage their students to make their own version after various options have been discussed and evaluated. The first step is a literal translation, then something more polished in natural English that is as close to the structure and vocabulary of the original Latin as possible. Students will soon see that a degree of paraphrasing may be required when the Latin does not readily translate into correct and idiomatic English.

Students will bring their own knowledge of love and marriage to this topic. Explorations which compare ancient and modern attitudes towards women, love and marriage, will help with student engagement and can cast fresh light on attitudes in both periods, although some of the more sensitive issues raised in this prescription should be approached with care.

It may be useful to tackle the source material thematically. The texts are presented in the booklet in alphabetical order according to author in order that the teacher is free to use their professional judgement in presenting the material to their students in whatever order seems best.

About the Teacher's Notes

The following *Notes* focus on language, content, style and literary effect. The *Discussion and Questions* focus mostly on literary appreciation and interpretation. Rhetorical and technical terms are used throughout the notes. Some of these may be unfamiliar to teachers new to teaching Latin literature; a definition will be supplied. As the teacher is free to teach these sources in any order they wish, there will be duplication within the notes from time to time.

The notes are designed to provide for the needs of a wide spectrum of teachers, from those with limited knowledge of Latin and who are perhaps entirely new to reading Latin literature, to teachers experienced in both language and literature. It is hoped that all will find something of use and interest. **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.**

Some of the information contained in the notes is for general interest and to satisfy the curiosity of students and teachers. **The examination requires knowledge outside the text only when it is needed in order to understand the text.**

The Teacher's Notes contain the following:

• 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.

• Discussion suggestions for students and overarching Themes which appear across more than one source.

• Suggested Questions for Comprehension, Content, Style and Culture to be used with students.

• Further Information and Reading for teachers who wish to explore the topic and texts further. None of this is intended for examination.

• Acknowledgement of resources used.

Picture 1: wedding ceremony

State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

This picture, carved on a large sarcophagus (a stone coffin), shows a marriage ceremony, with the bride and groom in the centre standing on either side of an altar. The ceremony is presided over by many different gods and goddesses: the goddess of Harmony stands between the bride and groom, behind the altar. To the left of the bride, stand Venus, the goddess of Love, and her son, Cupid (with his bow and arrows). Next to Cupid is Hymen, the god of marriage, holding the torch carried during the marriage procession which guided the bride to her new home. On the right, the bridegroom – for whom the sarcophagus was made – is being crowned by the goddess of Valour, holding a palm branch in her other hand, a symbol of victory, which suggests that he may have had a military career.

Other attendees depicted on the sarcophagus are the friends and family of the newly-weds, carrying various gifts and symbols of marital harmony and fertility. The ox would have been sacrificed to the gods during the ceremony to invoke their blessing for the new marriage.

Points for students

Large, ornately decorated sarcophagi and burial monuments were an important way for wealthy Romans to commemorate themselves and their family, in order to be remembered after their death. These were placed outside the city along roadsides, so that anyone entering or leaving the city would have the opportunity to see them and remember the people buried there. Many of these monuments are still visible today when visiting an ancient town or city such as Rome or Pompeii.

Additional notes for teachers

Inhumation began to replace cremation for wealthy families in the late 2nd century AD. This sarcophagus is dated to the third century AD. Jupiter, Juno and Minerva are also carved on the lid, suggesting that the deceased wished to call the principal gods to witness his good deeds during life.

Piety to the gods and duty to Rome, by engaging in marriage and providing the empire with children, were qualities much praised by Romans. The torch held by the god Hymen was a symbol of the hearth, and the bride would use it to light a fire in the fireplace of her new home. The torch was dedicated to the goddess Ceres, the goddess of harvest and fertility, to call upon her favour and ensure the bride produced many children for her husband.

Further information can be found in the museum catalogue.

Picture 2: iunctio dextrarum

British Museum

This picture shows another sarcophagus relief, this time detailing a key part of the marriage ceremony. It depicts the *iunctio dextrarum* (the joining of hands) of the bride and groom. Originally four figures accompanied the pair, of which two are now lost. The hand on the bride's side is the only surviving part of her companion. The young god of marriage, Hymen, who must have been squeezed in between the bridal pair, is evidenced only by the flame of his torch on the lower part of the bride's dress. A female figure stands between the couple, with her arms around the shoulders of the bride and groom, in a pose similar to that depicted on the sarcophagus in Picture 1, suggesting that this too is a depiction of the goddess Harmony. The groom holds a scroll in his hand, which may be the marriage contract, traditionally signed by ten witnesses. The identity of his companion is unclear.

Points for students

The relief depicts the joining of hands, a key part of the ceremony in traditional *cum manu* marriages, signifying the handing over of the bride from her father to the groom. The next part of the ceremony would be the torch-lit procession from the bridal home to the husband's home, accompanied by traditional songs, dancing and merriment.

Additional notes for teachers

Carved reliefs provide essential evidence for a Roman marriage ceremony, alongside literary sources which describe the event in detail. This sarcophagus relief is from Rome, dated to the second century AD. It is unclear whether it is a memorial to the bride or groom, but the inclusion of the wedding ceremony on the sarcophagus could be a reminder that this individual has done his/her duty to marry and produce children.

The museum catalogue for this item, along with high-resolution images, can be found here.

Picture 3: cremation chest

British Museum

The inscription reads: 'Vitalis, freedman and Private Secretary of the Emperor, to Vernasia Cyclas, his most excellent wife; she lived for twenty-seven years'.

In the relief: The letters 'FAP' that appear between the two figures signify *Fidelissimae Amantissimae Pientissimae* 'To this most faithful, loving and devoted woman'.

This relief is from a cremation chest made by a husband for his wife. She lived for only twenty-seven years, so it is likely that her husband, as a freedman of the Emperor, was older.

The central panel depicts the couple's marriage ceremony, with the joining of the hands also seen in **Picture 2**. It is flanked on the left and right-hand sides by two burning torches – a reference to the torches used during the marriage ceremony to invoke the goddess of fertility, Ceres.

Points for students

The inscription on this chest tells us as much about the husband as it does about his deceased spouse. The wording is standardised, praising the expected characteristics of the ideal wife. The only aspect of her life that her husband wishes to commemorate is her role as his wife; she needs no further praise than that, for, in her husband's eyes and those of the world, this was her most important function.

Cremation was more common than burial among the Romans, and family tombs would be filled with small urns or cremation chests containing the ashes of beloved family members.

Additional notes for teachers

Like most funerary reliefs, this uses standardised phrasing for the inscription, which may appear to lack emotion when compared to other reliefs, such as the *epitaph to Claudia*. However, a key aspect of being a good Roman wife was to adhere to traditional expectations and not to seek recognition beyond this. Women who were unremarkable were seen as being deserving of the highest praise

The relief also contains many standard decorative carvings, such as wreaths and garlands, and in the top corners there are two dolphins. Dolphins were associated with the goddess of Love, Venus, so make a nice addition to this marriage scene. The Romans, and particularly the emperor Augustus, claimed descent through Aeneas from this goddess, so her inclusion on a funerary monument by one of the emperor's freedman may bring to mind this claim, as well as the more obvious link to the idea of love.

The British Museum catalogue entry for this item can be found here.

Picture 4: bridal procession

Metropolitan Museum, New York

This painting, on the side of a funerary vase, shows four women – a bride and three attendants – who are helping her to prepare for her wedding day. The bride is the central figure in a white dress. One attendant hands her a bright red veil, which was a key part of the bride's costume. The attendant behind the bride seems to be holding a mirror, so that the bride can check her appearance.

Points for students

The wedding ceremony would take place at the house of the bride's parents, and there were key rituals to be followed. The bride would put away her childhood things and prepare for her move to her husband's house. She would wear a dress (usually white) and a bright, flame-coloured veil, called a *flammeum*, which signified her life-long commitment to her new husband. Her hair was also separated into six braids, using a spear, which was believed to ward off evil spirits.

Additional notes for teachers

The flame-coloured bridal veil was thought to invoke the wife of the Flamen Dialis, the chief priest of Jupiter, who could not divorce her husband and was committed to him for life. Traditionally, wives were supposed to remain with their husbands and not divorce them, though divorce was a common occurrence by the imperial period.

This painting is taken from a funerary vase found in Sicily, dating to the 3rd–2nd century BC. The vase was not made to be used; it was designed to decorate the tomb of the deceased. It has no inscription and its function was purely decoration; it may have been placed in the tomb of a young woman who died before she was able to marry, or in the tomb of an older matron to commemorate her marriage day.

Further information can be found in the museum catalogue here.

Picture 5: Penelope and the suitors

Pinturicchio (c.1509), National Gallery, London

This fresco ingeniously references several separate episodes from Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus' wife Penelope is working at her loom, when a band of suitors arrive to press her for her hand in marriage. Since her husband has been away for twenty years, fighting in the Trojan War, they assume he is dead. The roughly dressed figure coming through the doorway holding a staff is probably Odysseus himself, returning in disguise. On the wall behind Penelope hangs the bow she will shortly make the suitors try to string to win her hand – a challenge that Odysseus himself eventually wins. Meanwhile, scenes from his earlier adventures during the return from Troy are framed in the window. In the centre, he is bound to the mast of his ship to save him from being lured to his death by the sirens' song, while to the left of the scene, his crew are transformed into pigs by the sorceress, Circe.

Points for students

Penelope's fidelity was so proverbial that Ovid, in *Advice to a rejected lover,* jokes that, with enough perseverance, a lover could even 'win over Penelope herself'. In Martial's epigram *The power of love,* the initial chastity of its subject, Laevina, is emphasised by comparison with Penelope.

Additional notes for teachers

Penelope was considered a model wife, who exemplified the traditional female virtues of chastity and fidelity. This image also demonstrates two examples of her ingenuity: her challenge to the suitors to string a bow that she knows only Odysseus can string, and her weaving and nightly unravelling of her father-in-law's shroud, which she tells the suitors she must finish before she can remarry – playing for time while she hopes her husband will return.

The fresco once decorated a reception room in the Palazzo del Magnifico in the Tuscan city of Siena, and was part of a series of eight depicting classical themes, many dealing with the themes of chastity and fidelity. It was commissioned by Pandolfo Petrucci, the ruler of Siena, to commemorate the wedding of his son to the niece of Pope Pius III, and painted around 1509 by the early Italian Renaissance artist Pinturicchio. The work emphasises the challenges Penelope and Odysseus faced during their twenty-year separation, and celebrates marital fidelity – an appropriate choice of theme for the newlyweds for whom the fresco was painted.

For more information and a high resolution view, see the catalogue listing on the National Gallery's website here.

Picture 6: scene at a dinner party

House of the Chaste Lovers, Pompeii

This fresco depicts a group of scantily clad revellers lounging on a couch in the middle of a drinking contest. The male figure to the right of the scene has already passed out, while his challenger takes another sip from a drinking horn, encouraged by his female companion, who supports his head and helps him lift the horn. The companion of the unconscious guest seems to be indicating that she would like another drink. The figure in the background on the right is probably an enslaved attendant waiting on the group.

Points for students

Both husbands and wives attended Roman dinner parties at home and in the houses of friends, but only the men would attend a drinking party like the one depicted here. The women in the scene are half naked, which indicates that they are not wives but professional sex-workers. Whilst absolute fidelity was expected of a Roman wife, it was considered socially acceptable for Roman husbands to engage in extra-marital relationships, provided these relations were with people of lower social status and not adulterous ones with the wives of other respectable Roman men.

Students might find it interesting to compare this image with the text *Changing morals*, in which Seneca blames the behaviour of Roman wives for the moral collapse he perceives in Roman society.

Additional notes for teachers

Party scenes like this one are quite common in the Roman world and appear in contexts where all members of the household, male and female, enslaved and free, could see and engage with them. This fresco was one of three dinner-party scenes decorating the *triclinium* in the 'House of the Chaste Lovers' in Pompeii. It was painted on the east wall, slightly later than the others, which date from the 40s AD. (The house takes its name from the central scene on the north wall which shows two lovers kissing.)

More images and information for the House of the Chaste Lovers can be found on the Pompeii archaeological website here (scroll down below the map).

ANON: epitaph to Claudia

An inscription extolling the virtues of Claudia

This funerary inscription (CIL 1.2.1211) was found in Rome and dates from c.150 BC. It would originally have been part of a tomb set up alongside a public road.

It belongs to a class of epitaph set up by husbands in praise of the virtues of their late wives. The virtues listed are often similar and represent the Roman ideal: this was how **matronae** were supposed to be, particularly in the higher social classes. There is no evidence to indicate whether the inscription gives a true or idealised account of the dead woman, though the informal, conversational tone gives it an air of authenticity lacking in other, more formal eulogies.

The Latin has been lightly adapted to remove archaic and phonetic spellings.

Content note: this text refers to the burial of a child.

Text

hospes, quod dico paulum est; asta ac perlege.

hic est sepulcrum haud pulchrum pulchrae feminae:

nomen parentes nominarunt Claudiam.

suum maritum corde dilexit suo.

natos duos creavit: horum alterum

in terra linquit, alium sub terra locat.

sermone lepido, tum autem incessu commodo,

domum servavit, lanam fecit. dixi. abi.

Notes

1 **hospes:** the tomb itself addresses anyone passing by, creating a conversational tone.
paulum: the passer-by is persuaded to stop, as it will not take long to read this.
asta ac pellege: the prefixes change the tone of the verbs, and when taken with the imperative form make the appeal to the reader stronger: 'stand *still* and read it *through*'.

2 **sepulcrum ... pulchrum ... pulchrae feminae:** this line is arranged noun-adjective-adjective noun (*chiasmus*) to draw attention to the play on words which contrasts the beauty of Claudia with the lack of beauty in the tomb. This contrast is emphasised further by placing **haud pulchrum** next to **pulchrae** (*juxtaposition*).

3 **nomen ... nominarunt: nomen** is unnecessary but focuses the reader's attention on the first important fact about the dead woman: her name. Probably her name is given first because this was assigned to her at birth, and the inscription catalogues in sequence the main stages of her life: birth, marriage, childbirth and maintenance of the home.

Claudia was a family name: this woman would have shared it with all the women in her family. Rather than giving her a personal identity, the focus on her name therefore tells us which family is being commemorated here. Notice how **nomen** and **Claudiam** begin and end the clause, giving maximum emphasis to her name.

nominarunt for nominaverunt

4 **suum ... suo:** notice again the same framing technique as in line 3; she 'possesses' the other words by enclosing them.

corde dilexit suo: the word order suggests that her heart was full of love. Marriages were usually arranged by parents and the ideal was that a couple would grow close over time rather than fall in love first.

5 **natos:** the provision of sons was the primary purpose of marriage. Claudia has therefore fulfilled her most important role

6 **in terra linquit:** she leaves one son 'on' the earth, as opposed to the other one under it – i.e. one is alive, and the other has died. It is probable that this was a death in infancy: it is estimated that between 20-35% of children died before they reached 5 years old.

7 **sermone lepido ... incessu commodo:** these attributes stress how 'appropriate' Claudia's behaviour was. Although she demonstrated 'charming conversation', this would have been in private or in a narrow range of circumstances: a 'good wife' was expected to be silent when politics or business was discussed, or when away from the home. Her way of walking was also appropriately ladylike.

8 **domum servavit:** maintenance of the household was the second most important responsibility of the **matrona** after childbirth. These two simple words confer high praise on Claudia.

lanam fecit: this too was one of the traditional domestic responsibilities of the virtuous **matrona**. Students may well be unfamiliar with what this phrase means: there are some links below to provide some assistance. The students may know some myths which revolve around the skills of weaving and textile production (Penelope in the *Odyssey*, the tale of Arachne).

dixi. abi: the final short words mirror the short imperatives in line 1 and send the reader back on their journey.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each sentence, clause, or phrase, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

hospes…asta ac perlege (line 1):

- Who does the epitaph address? What does it say about its own message?
- What two things does it tell us to do?

hic…pulchrae feminae (line 2):

- What is here? How is it described?
- Whose is it? How is she described?

nomen…Claudiam (line 3):

- What was her name? Who gave her this name?

suum…suo (line 4):

- Who did Claudia love? What did she love him with?

natos…terra locat (lines 5-6):

- Who did she bear?
- Where does she leave one of them? Where is the other one?
- What does this mean has happened to each of the two children?

sermone… fecit (lines 7-8):

- How is her conversation described? How is her way of walking described?
- What two things did she spend her time doing?

dixi. abi (line 8):

- What does the tomb say it has done?
- What does it now tell the reader to do?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) How does the epitaph encourage the passer-by to read it?
2. (lines 3-6) What do we learn about Claudia's family here?
3. (lines 7-8) What do we learn about Claudia here?
4. (line 8) How does the text make it clear that we have reached the end?
5. (whole text) How does the author, through the style of his writing, draw our attention to what he considers important about Claudia?

Discussion

Themes: marriage, expectations of women, children

The informal introduction and ending frame a serious message: the deceased woman fulfilled all the expectations imposed by a conservative society on the materfamilias. Students should discuss what these expectations appear to be, based on this text, and how this compares to what they observe in their other sources.

Students may notice the number of lines devoted to discussion of the family rather than Claudia. This public declaration of Claudia's qualities would have reflected well upon the husband, who would have been considered an effective paterfamilias, and the wider family who had instilled these values and attributes in Claudia.

Students could extend their discussion by considering the extent to which they see gendered representations of 'good' partners in the media today, and whether they perceive there to still be expectations around motherhood and 'appropriate' behaviour. This is a sensitive topic and will need to be handled with care.

The informal language of the epitaph might also suggest that there is genuine affection here. To what extent do the students agree with this conclusion?

Questions on the whole passage

1. Why do you think that a family would set up an epitaph like this one?
2. What can we learn from this text about the expectations for Roman wives?

Further Information and Reading

The Cambridge Latin Course Book V Stage 38 focuses on Roman marriage and contains a detailed discussion in English. A digital version of this section can be found here.

A small selection of other epitaphs for women, including translations and notes, can be found here. Some further examples, with translations but no notes, can be found here. These epitaphs show a range of styles and other information which was included on tombs, and provide a contrast with Claudia's relatively personal and elegant epitaph. They also reflect many of the same themes, in particular the focus on the family.

For more on women and weaving, this site offers a range of discussion and primary material relating to the Greek world which heavily influenced Roman depictions of the 'good wife' in the household. This article discusses Roman women and textiles, although it focuses more on trade.

Cicero: ad Atticum 5.1 – A family matter

Cicero witnesses a family argument.

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC- 43 BC) was a prominent orator and statesman and a prolific author who published many volumes of his correspondence with public figures and friends.

This text is from a letter written by Cicero to his friend Atticus in the spring of 51 BC, shortly after Cicero had left Rome to make his way to his governorship of the province of Cilicia. He began the journey by travelling to his estate at Arpinum, the town of his birth, about 60 miles south-east of Rome. Here, he was met by his younger brother Quintus and his family.

Quintus' wife, Pomponia, was Atticus' sister. She joined Cicero and Quintus for the first part of their journey. Atticus had previously written to Cicero, describing his sister as having a difficult character. Cicero responds in this letter, giving details of what he considers to be an example of unacceptable behaviour by Pomponia.

The Latin is adapted.

Text

nihil vidi tam mite, nihil tam placidum quam meus frater illo die erat in sororem tuam. si offensio fuerat ex ratione sumptus, non appareret.

postridie Arpino profecti sumus et prandimus in Arcano. humanissime Quintus 'Pomponia' inquit 'tu invita mulieres, ego viros arcessam.' nihil potuit dulcius, non modo verbis sed etiam animo ac vultu. at illa, audientibus nobis, 'ego ipsa sum' inquit 'hic hospita' – id ex hac causa, ut opinor, quod antecesserat Statius ut prandium nobis videret! tum Quintus 'en' inquit mihi 'haec ego patior cotidie.' id me valde commovit: sic illa absurde et aspere verbis vultuque responderat. itaque discubuimus omnes praeter illam. Quintus ei aliquid de mensa misit, quod tamen illa reiecit. quid multa? nihil meo fratre lenius, nihil asperius tua sorore mihi visum est; et multa similia praetereo.

Notes

1 **nihil ... nihil**: the strong negative gives a forceful start to Cicero's account, further strengthened repetition of nihil at the beginning of each clause (anaphora).

2 **illō diē**: i.e. on the day that they met at Arpinum.

in sorōrem: 'towards' or 'in relation to' your sister.

3-4 **fuerat ... appāruit**: the indicative indicates that it was an open question whether he had taken offence or not.

offēnsiō: i.e. offence taken by Quintus at the amount of money spent by his wife.

5 **prandimus in Arcānō**: Arcanum was the name given to the estate of Cicero's brother, Quintus, which lay about four miles south of Arpinum. Progress was clearly slow.

hūmānissimē: the superlative and the word's position at the start of the sentence give emphasis to Cicero's argument that Quintus' behaviour was exemplary.

tū invītā mulierēs: a normal division of labour: Pomponia was to gather the womenfolk together to have lunch. As the villa belonged to her husband, it was natural for her to act as hostess.

7 **nihil potuit dulcius**: supply *esse*.

9 **id**: supply *dīxit*.

10 **antecesserat Statius**: Statius was probably a freedman, sent on ahead by Quintus to see to the preparation of lunch. Pomponia took offence at this, regarding it as a slight to her position as *māterfamiliās*, one of whose responsibilities was to oversee meals and organise the household servants.

13-14 Note the double alliteration of *absurdē* ... *asperē* and *verbīs vultūque*. The effect of the former may be to emphasise Cicero's shock at Pomponia's words and of the latter, to reflect the aggression in Pomponia's conduct.

16 **quid multa**: a standard expression to put an end to detailed exposition, lit. 'why (say) many (words)?'

17 **nihil ... nihil**: Cicero ends as he began, with a forceful anaphora of nihil, to emphasise the contrast between Quintus and Pomponia. This is further strengthened by the chiasmus *meō frātre lēnius* ... *asperius tuā sorōre*.

18 **mihi vīsum est**: this parallels the *vidi* in the first sentence. *multa* similia *praetereō*: the suggestion that this was only one example of many gives a strong conclusion to this part of the letter. The remainder of the letter recounts how Pomponia refused to sleep with Quintus.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

nihil vidi tam mite, nihil tam placidum quam meus frater illo die erat in sororem tuam. (line 1-2)

- How does Cicero describe the behaviour of his brother towards the sister of Atticus (i.e. Quintus' wife)?

si offensio fuerat ex ratione sumptus, non appareret. (line 2-3)

- What possible cause of offence between Quintus and his wife was not apparent?

postridie Arpino profecti sumus et prandimus in Arcano. (line 4)

- Where was the group setting out from and what did they do when they reached Arcanum?

humanissime Quintus 'Pomponia' inquit 'tu invita mulieres, ego viros arcessam.' (line 5 – 6)

- What did Quintus tell Pomponia to do? How does Cicero claim he spoke?
- What was Quintus going to do himself?

nihil potuit dulcius, non modo verbis sed etiam animo ac vultu. (line 6-7)

- Cicero mentions three ways in which Quintus' statement could not have been sweeter. What are they?

at illa, audientibus nobis, 'ego ipsa sum' inquit 'hic hospita' – id ex hac causa, ut opinor, quod antecesserat Statius ut prandium nobis videret! (line 7-9)

- Who does Cicero say is listening when Pomponia speaks?
- What does Pomponia claim to be?
- What does Cicero suggest may have caused Pomponia to feel her role at the meal had been taken from her?

tum Quintus 'en' inquit mihi 'haec ego patior cotidie.' (line 9-10)

- How often does Quintus say he suffers similar behaviour?

id me valde commovit: sic illa absurde et aspere verbis vultuque responderat. (line 10 – 11)

- How does Cicero say that he feels?
- What is it about the way that Pomponia answered Quintus that makes him feel this way?

itaque discubuimus omnes praeter illam. (line 11-12)

- Who was the only person who did not recline ready to eat?

Quintus ei aliquid de mensa misit, quod tamen illa reiecit. (line 11-12)

- To whom did Quintus send something from the table?
- Did she accept what he sent?

quid multa? nihil meo fratre lenius, nihil asperius tua sorore mihi visum est; et multa similia praetereo. (line 13-14)

- What do you think Cicero means by 'quid multa?'
- Cicero says nothing seems to him to be milder than his brother? What equivalent statement does he make about the sister of Atticus?
- What does Cicero say he is leaving out of his letter?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (line 1-7 **nihil ... vultu**) How does Cicero through content and style emphasise his approval of the nature and behaviour of Quintus?
2. (line 7-9 **at illa ... videret**) How does Cicero, explain Pomponia's reply to her husband? What do these lines tell us about her expected role in relation to the meal?
3. (line 9-14 **tum ... praetereo**) How by his style and choice of vocabulary does Cicero show that he believes that Pomponia is habitually difficult?

Discussion

Themes: marriage, expectations of women, qualities of a wife, relationships between husbands and wives

From Cicero's description of this interaction between his brother and sister-in-law we can deduce a good deal about the expectations of behaviour for an aristocratic husband and wife. Cicero writes approvingly of the patience and restraint of Quintus in dealing with Pomponia. The second sentence of the text may imply that there has been some disagreement over expenditure, but that Quintus is not causing any unpleasantness over it. This circumspect behaviour in front of his companions contrasts with what later comes across as Pomponia's lack of sensitivity to the comfort of guests by complaining in their hearing ('*audentibus nobis*'). She is clearly expected to hide her own feelings, despite Cicero, and presumably her husband, realising that she feels slighted because Statius has usurped her role in making arrangements for the meal. It seems Pomponia's was expected to accept that her needs and feelings were secondary to the decisions of her husband. A wife of good character would be more subservient and would also prioritise the comfort of guests before her own. Pomponia's efforts to make Quintus aware of her feelings are perceived as a flaw in her character that requires immense patience from Quintus and draws sympathy for him from Cicero. It is likely that Roman readers would sympathise with this view though students may see their lack of respect or empathy as patronising and unjust. We do not have any corresponding accounts of the behaviour of married couples from the perspective of women, but it is possible that Roman women too would have seen Pomponia as badly behaved.

Questions on the whole passage

- What does this passage tell us about the expected roles and behaviour of husbands and wives from the equestrian class?
- Compare Pomponia's description here with that of Pliny's wife in his letter to Calpurnia Hispulla. What picture emerges of virtues and vices in Roman wives?
- Write an imagined account of this incident from the perspective of a female friend of Pomponia. Take into account the virtues that would be expected in a Roman wife at that time.
- Considering all relevant texts in the Love and Marriage prescription, what impression can we form of the lives of married women?

Further Information and Reading

The Cambridge Latin Course Book V Stage 38 focuses on Roman marriage and contains a detailed discussion in English. A digital version of this section can be found here.

It may be helpful to read the rest of this letter in translation from the second paragraph onwards to see that Atticus has cautioned Cicero about his sister, Pomponia, before this incident, and that Cicero is hoping to enlist Atticus' help in improving her behaviour. The letter and notes can be found on the Perseus Digital Library at Tufts University site here.

Catullus: Poems 5, 8, 70 and 85

Four love poems

Gaius Valerius Catullus (c. 87 B.C. – c.54 B.C.), known as Catullus, wrote poetry on a wide range of topics, but those concerning a girl he calls 'Lesbia' have become the most famous of his works. Most scholars believe that 'Lesbia' was really a lady named Clodia who came from a distinguished family and was married to an equally distinguished husband named Metellus.

Catullus seeks to disguise Clodia's identity by referring to her as 'Lesbia'. This name refers to the Greek poetess Sappho, who lived on the Greek island of Lesbos more than five centuries earlier.

Some readers of Catullus believe that the poems faithfully reflect the ups and downs of the Catullus-Clodia relationship in real life, almost as if they were Catullus' autobiography. Other readers believe that it is impossible to tell whether (or how far) the poetry is based on actual events. The order of the poems tells us nothing about the order of events; they are mostly organised (by Catullus himself or someone else) not according to their content but by grouping together poems of similar length and metre.

Catullus 5

Catullus encourages his girlfriend kiss him and forget other cares!

Text

vivamus mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum severiorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis!
soles occidere et redire possunt:
nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda.
da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum.
dein, cum milia multa fecerimus,
conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,
aut ne quis malus invidere possit,
cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.

Notes

metre: hendecasyllables (each line has 11 syllables)

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1 **vivamus ... amemus:** the two exhortations neatly enclose the line, emphasising the strength of Catullus' emotional outburst.

2-3 Note the extended alliteration of -s- (sibilance) throughout these two lines, perhaps to indicate through the hissing sound either his disapproval of his critics or their disapproval of him.

2 **rumoresque senum severiorum**: the 'rumours' are the gossip generated by their affair, which would have been frowned upon by the older generation, whom Catullus describes as 'rather' or perhaps 'too' strict. Catullus had little time for the traditional Roman virtues such as *dignitas* and *gravitas*, that were so important to men like Cicero.

3 **omnes unius**: by carrying omnēs over into the next line and placing it next to ūnius, Catullus generates a powerful antithesis.

unius assis: genitive of value. The *ās* was a low denomination bronze coin.

4 **soles**: the plurality of suns (i.e. days) is intended to contrast with the singularity of the *lūx*. Note also the position of the word, at the start of line and sentence, again contrasted with *lūx*.

5 **nobis**: dative of person interested. *brevis lūx*: the 'light' of life.

6 **nox**: note again the position of the word. Coming at the start of the line it is effectively next to *lux*, its opposite: another strong antithesis, heightened by the monosyllabic form of both words.

perpetua una dormienda: Catullus gives no thought to the possibility of a welcoming afterlife, such as that developed by Virgil in Book 6 of the Aeneid. He likens death instead to an endless sleep. Note the contrast again between *ūna* and the enormous numbers that follow.

7 **da mi basia** (*da mihi basia*): having established the principle that life is too short to waste, he delves into his central theme, of unbridled passion. The sequence of thousands and hundreds suggests counting on an abacus, moving back and forth between the two spindles for the two number powers.

9 **usque**: 'without a break'.

10 **fecerimus**: used regularly in the sense of reaching or making a total.

11 **conturbabimus**: again the allusion is to the abacus: a swipe with the hand would 'mix up' the beads, and the tally would be lost. A more technical meaning is to 'confuse the accounts' (to conceal fraud). In this sense the verb is normally used intransitively and therefore one would need to take *illa* with *nē sciāmus*: 'so that we do not know them' (i.e. the total number).

ne sciamus: the idea is that, if you count up your blessings, you lay yourself open to the evil eye or to the intervention of fate to redress the balance.

12 **quis malus**: anyone evil, i.e. anyone who, for whatever reason, objects to their affair.

invidēre: either simply 'be jealous', or more probably 'cast the evil eye' (the original meaning of the word); this latter gives more sense in the context.

13 **tantum sciat esse basiorum**: partitive genitive. The idea is a continuation of that of *nē sciāmus* two lines above: if an evil-wisher knows the precise number of their kisses, it gives him power over them, so that he can 'cast the evil eye'.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

vivamus … amemus (line 1):

- What two things does Catullus say that Lesbia and he should do in line 1?

rumoresque … severiorum (line 2-3):

- What should they value as a single *as*? What is an *as*?
- How does Catullus describe the old men?

soles ... dormienda (line 4-6)

- What can suns do?
- How is the light described? What has it done?
- What is to be done in the everlasting night?

da ... deinde centum (line 7-9)

- How many kisses does Catullus ask Lesbia to give him in these three lines?

dein ... basiorum (line 10-13)

- How many kisses does Catullus say he and Lesbia will have had?
- What will they do with the numbers then?
- What will this prevent Lesbia and Catullus from knowing?
- According to line 13, when would any wicked person be able to envy Catullus or Lesbia, or cast a curse on them?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (line 1) Explain how Catullus makes use of emphatic word position this line.
2. (line 2-3)? In these lines, there is a lot of sibilance. What effect is Catullus hoping to achieve?
3. In line 4 Catullus uses *sol* in the plural, despite the fact that there is only one sun. Why does he do this?
4. (lines 5-6) In these lines, how does Catullus emphasis the sudden way in which life is replaced by death?
5. (line 7-13)? How does Catullus emphasise the vast number of kisses through these lines?

Discussion

Themes: infidelity**,** relationships between men and women, stereotyping of women, the pain of love, passion

This poem sees Catullus, or at least the persona he creates in this poem, eager that he and his girlfriend, Lesbia, make the most of their brief love and brief lives together. Catullus' metaphor of suns and everlasting night might bring to mind more recent sayings such as 'make hay while the sun shines' or 'gather ye rosebuds while ye may' or even *carpe diem*. He is in a hurry to pile in as many kisses as he can with Lesbia before something or someone snatches their happiness away.

The measuring of their own happiness, in terms of the number of kisses they enjoy, itself seems to threaten its continuance. Despite this, Catullus has set out a remarkably precise plan detailing the numbers of kisses he and Lesbia are to have. They are to overcome the threat by mixing up the numbers after they have had them so that they don't know their quantity themselves. This shows a childlike naivety and joy in the enterprise. Meanwhile, though he professes not to care about the disapproving rumours that old men may spread about the lovers' affair, he still fears that he and Lesbia may be cursed by anyone who know their happiness. Love for this poet is a precarious and probably short-lived pleasure. Whether this poem accurately reflects the reality of threats to Catullus' affair with the married and notoriously unfaithful Clodia, or whether the poet's situation here is a humorous caricature of their situation is open to debate.

Questions on the whole passage

1. How through content and style does Catullus emphasise the closeness he claims for his relationship with Lesbia in this poem?
2. From this poem, what do we learn about the emotions which could be excited in affairs? Is this similar to or different from marriage?
3. Read the poem aloud Do you think that this is a passionate poem or a jokey one? Is it neither or both?

Catullus 8

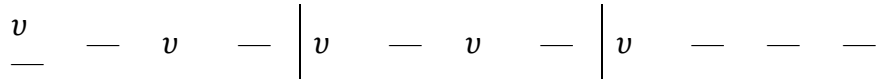
Catullus gives himself a strict talking to

Text

miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,
et quod vides perisse perditum ducas.
fulsere quondam candidi tibi soles,
cum ventitabas quo puella ducebat
amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla.
ibi, illa multa cum iocosa fiebant,
quae tu volebas nec puella nolebat,
fulsere vere candidi tibi soles.
nunc iam illa non vult: tu quoque impotens noli,
nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser vive,
sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.
vale puella, iam Catullus obdurat;
nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam.
at tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.
scelesta, vae te, quae tibi manet vita?
quis nunc te adibit? cui videberis bella?
quem nunc amabis? cuius esse diceris?
quem basiabis? cui labella mordebis?
at tu, Catulle, destinatus obdura.

Notes

metre: scazon or limping iambus (an iambic trimeter with a spondee at the end).



1 **miser Catulle:** for most of the poem, Catullus addresses himself; only in lines 12- 18 does he switch to addressing Lesbia. Throughout the poem there is a tension between these 'two' personas: one, who is urging the other to get over Lesbia, and the other who has a lingering emotional attachment.

The overall structure of the poem is:

1-2 exhortation to himself

3-8 reminiscence about the past with his girlfriend

9-11 stronger exhortation to himself

12-18 addressing his girlfriend, beginning with a confident farewell but being pulled back into misery by his own thoughts

12-13 he says farewell

14-15 he cruelly jeers at her loss of him

16 he questions who will love her

17 he questions who she will love

18 he speculates about what she will do with her new lover

19 exhortation to himself

Notice too that the first word is **miser**, immediately setting the tone for the rest of the poem.

desinas ineptire: the verb **desinas** is a subjunctive which can be used in a similar way to an imperative verb but has a much softer tone: 'let it go' rather than 'let go!'.

2 **vides perisse perditum ducas:** the order of these words, with the pairs of instructions arranged so that they mirror each other (*chiasmus*) create a bitter plosive alliteration in the centre. **ducas** is another subjunctive verb.

3 This line begins a reminiscence. Note that **fulsere** is not an infinitive but the shortened form of **fulserunt**. Poets probably used these shortened forms mainly for metrical reasons.

candidi soles: the plural could be used to mean 'sunshine' (Fordyce), or it could be an allusion to the *sōlēs* of Poem 5; a third possibility is a simple emphasis on the (many days') duration of their affair. *candidī* is 'bright' both in its literal sense and in the figurative sense of 'delightful' or 'pleasant'.

4 **ventitabas**: this form of the verb is called the frequentative, and it is used to imply repetition of the action. Along with the imperfect tense, this gives us the sense of a long period of time, although it could be debated whether this is reality or Catullus stretching out the time through dwelling on it.

puella ducebat: this image of Catullus following his girlfriend around suggests an unequal relationship. In Roman society, it was expected that the man would be in a dominant position in a heterosexual relationship. This was partly because the expectation was that a Roman man would follow logic rather than allow his emotions to get the better of him. Here, Catullus inverts this convention, with the girl leading him.

5 **nulla**: note how this word is emphasised by its placement at the end of the line and sentence.

6 **ibi, illa multa cum iocosa**: the skipping meter with short first syllables to each foot echoes the happiness of those times

7 **quae tū volēbās**: this redresses the balance upset by line 4 with the man being dominant.

nec puella nōlēbat: the negation of the contrary (litotes) is stronger than the simple positive.

8 The repetition of line 3, with **quondam** replaced by the stronger **vere** (which also creates a pleasing calm sound by repeating the -**ere** of **fulsere**) rounds off the section of the poem devoted to reminiscing.

9 **nunc iam**: 'as things are now'.

impotēns: Catullus is 'powerless' in the sense that he no longer has any influence over Lesbia and cannot achieve what he desires.

nōn vult ... nōlī: these negatives parallel the positive **volēbās** and **nec ... nōlēbat** of two lines above (line 7), with the persons inverted.

10 – 11 **sectāre**: another frequentative verb, with the sense of 'chase after'.

This is the first of four imperatives in lines 10 and 11 that together give a sense of urgency to the actions the poet should avoid (line 10) or take (line 11). Notice now that the subjunctive have become imperatives. Catullus has not been listening to his own advice and the jussive subjunctives used at the start (lines 1 and 2) are not strong enough now; only undiluted commands can stir him to action.

vīve: 'live', here probably meaning little more than simply 'be'.

perfer, obdura: there is little difference between these two verbs; probably the second simply strengthens the first.

12 **valē puella**: Catullus switches from addressing himself to apostrophising Lesbia, relegating himself to the third person. This creates a vivid picture, in which the reader is able to share his vision of the girl.

obdūrat: the repetition of the sound of the same verb in the same position as in the previous line emphasises that he is carrying out the command he has just given himself.

13 **requīret ... rogābit**: again two verbs of very similar meaning are used. The difference is that *requīret* means 'go in search of', while *rogābit* means 'ask her out'.

14 **rogāberis nūlla**: if this reading is correct, *nūlla* must be a colloquial usage, meaning not at all, i.e. a little more than just *nōn*. Perhaps Catullus chose this to parallel line 5, where however the word has its more usual meaning. Perhaps Catullus chose this word instead of *nōn* to be able to place it at the end of the line and sentence for maximum emphasis: there is absolutely no chance she will be asked out.

15 **scelesta, vae tē**: as he strengthens his defences against Lesbia, he is able to curse her.

quae ... vīta: this serves as a general introduction to the following personalised rhetorical questions, which all exemplify the life that he visualises remaining for her now that she has abandoned him.

16 **quis**: the answer to this and the succeeding questions is, Catullus hopes, 'no one'. The reality, of course, is that it will be her next lover. The questions appear to steadily become more passionate and intense, perhaps reflecting Catullus' difficulty controlling his emotions.

18 **cui**: dative of advantage, best translated as 'whose'.

19 **at tū**: as in line 14, *at* indicates the abrupt transition from one argument to another. Here it also introduces the reversion to addressing himself, neatly rounding off the poem.

obdūrā: repeated from line 11, this reaffirms Catullus' determination to be strong and forget Lesbia. The reaffirmation is necessary because lines 16- 18 show him lapsing back into fond reminiscence of the time when the answer to the questions was 'me' and his heartache that he will soon be replaced by another.

Notice how the repetition shows that little has changed for Catullus between the beginning and the end of the poem. Instead, the reader has gained understanding over his situation and emotions. The point is that he is trapped in a cycle.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each sentence, clause, or phrase, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

miser … ducas (line 1-2):

- What does the poet tell Catullus to stop doing?
- What does the poet tell Catullus to accept?

fulsere … nulla (line 3-5):

- For whom did the sun once shine brightly?
- Who used to lead Catullus?
- What did Catullus say that his girl was loved more than?

ibi ... soles (line 6-8)

- What sort of things were happening 'then'?
- Who wanted those things? Who did not refuse them?
- For whom did the then sun truly shine brightly?

nunc ... obdura (line 9-11)

- Who does not want [those things] now?
- What does the word impotens mean here?
- Whom should Catullus not chase?
- What sort of life should Catullus not live?
- What two things should Catullus do?

vale ... invitam (line 12-13)

- After he bids the girl farewell, what does Catullus say he is doing?
- What two things does he say he is not going to do?

at ... nulla (line 14)

- What does the poet say the girl is going to do?
- When is she going to do that?

scelesta ... vita (line 15)

- What does Catullus call the girl?
- What does he ask her?

quis ... mordebis (line 16-18)

- How many questions does Catullus ask the girl in these lines?
- What answer do you think Catullus hopes to hear for all these questions?

at ... obdura (line 19)

- What does the poet tell Catullus to do once he has stood firm?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) How does Catullus set up the despairing tone of the poem?
2. (lines 3-8) How does the poet emphasise the happiness of past times here?
3. (lines 9-12) How does the poem bring out the contrast between the past described in lines 3-8 and the present and future seen in these four lines?
4. (line 13-18) What effect does this direct address to Catullus' girlfriend have? What emotions does it suggest in the speaker?
5. (line 19) What echoes from earlier lines can be found in this closing advice to Catullus?

Discussion

Themes: betrayal, infidelity, relationships between men and women, stereotyping of women

This poem describes a situation that would be familiar to most readers then and now: when a lover rejects you, how do you get over it? Lapsing into nostalgic reminiscences of the good times you shared is not going to help, but is inevitable. The strength of will necessary to abolish these memories is easy to conceive but hard to maintain against the assault of pleasant memories. The precise nature of Catullus' relationship with Lesbia is not easy to define just on the evidence of this poem: at one moment he follows her lead, at another he seems to have made the choices. But Lesbia was the one who ended the relationship, and Catullus is torn apart by this.

The question of persona in poetry (and other forms of art) might be an interesting area to explore, although outside the expectations of GCSE. We have here at least two versions of the poet: is there also a third version who is observing the others and writing about them? Students who engage with social media and semi-scripted reality TV shows will be familiar with the idea of constructing identity through sharing words.

Questions on the whole passage

1. Sum up in not more than six words the advice Catullus gives himself. On the evidence of the poem, how capable do you think he is of following his own advice? Why?
2. Would it have been better if Catullus had addressed the whole poem to himself? If so, why? Or has he made it more effective (if so, how?) by switching in line 12 to address the girl, then switching back to address himself in line 19?
3. How serious is the poem? People have disagreed greatly about this. (One English writer said it was one of three poems by Catullus that he could not read without tears; others have felt Catullus is making fun of himself.) A good test is to read it aloud (or listen to it being read) twice, once in an intensely emotional way, then in a cool dry tone. Which way seems to you to suit the words better?

Catullus 70

Catullus reflects on the words said by his girlfriend.

Text

nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle

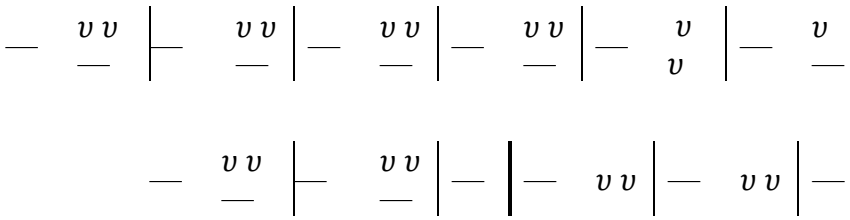
quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat.

dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti,

in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.

Notes

metre: elegiac couplets – each couplet is made up of a line of dactylic hexameter (six feet), followed by a line of dactylic pentameter (five feet)



1 **nulli:** this is emphatically placed at the start of the line and poem to stress the alleged importance of Catullus to his girlfriend, Lesbia. As the poem develops, we will see that this is *ironic*.

mulier: Catullus usually refers to Lesbia as **puella**. Here he has replaced it with **mulier**, which seems deliberately to imply something more permanent than just a girlfriend.

alliteration of 'm' and 'n': in verse, *alliteration* with these letters often suggest warm emotions.

dicit: this word seems unsuspicious here, but when we reach line 3 we understand what is actually meant.

2 **quam mihi:** placed at the beginning of the line and balancing **nulli** in order to emphasise the strength of what Lesbia is saying.

Iuppiter ipse: this sounds like a proverbial expression, but there is a double meaning implied here. Although Jupiter, the King of the gods, would be a powerful suitor, he is also famed for his numerous affairs and continual lying to Juno. His word is no more believable than Lesbia's.

alliteration of 's' and 'p' throughout this line makes the words seem suspicious and harsh.

3 **dicit:** this word is repeated and emphasised at the start of the line, and is isolated. It draws immediate attention to what it means. This is what she 'says', it is not what she 'means'. The point of change in the poem.

sed confirms the change of direction.

mulier…quod dicit: Catullus seems to move from a specific situation to a general point.

cupido…amanti: some commentators have seen here a comment on the role of the lover in provoking dishonesty- has he pressured her into saying what he wants to hear? This is typical of Catullus, casting himself in a poetic persona.

4 **in vento et…aqua:** the two nouns enclose the rest of the line, just as the winds and water sweep over the words. This sounds proverbial, but the concept of writing in water only appears in Greek literature. Latin usually has wind and water snatching away words. This is not a cliché, and therefore more powerful.

scribere oportet: ambiguity here- who is doing the writing?

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

nulli se…quam mihi (lines 1-2):

- Who is **mea mulier**? What is she doing?
- Who does she say she would prefer to marry?

non si…petat (line 2):

- Who is **Iuppiter**?
- She would prefer to marry no one than Catullus, not even if what were to happen?

dicit..aqua (lines 3-4):

- What does **dicit** mean?
- Who does Catullus imagine his **mulier** is speaking to?
- Where should what she says be written?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) How does Catullus emphasise the strength of feeling that Lesbia claims for him in these lines?
2. (line 2) Why is the use of Jupiter as an example of a potential husband ironic?
3. (line 3) What is the effect does the positioning and brevity of the word **dicit** have here?
4. (line 3) What does the remainder of this line **sed … amanti** suggest about Catullus feelings for Lesbia?
5. (line 4) How does Catullus emphasise his lack of trust in Lesbia's claim to prefer him to other potential husbands?

Discussion

Themes: betrayal, infidelity, relationships between men and women, stereotyping of women

Catullus has had occasion to distrust Lesbia's promises, perhaps fearing or suspecting that she is carrying on other affairs at the same time. Whether he was ever really hopeful of marrying her we cannot tell, from this or any other poem. Of course, saying 'There is no one I would rather marry than you' falls far short of a commitment to marriage. But his sense of betrayal is strong enough to evoke bitterness in his generalisation.

This is a poem which should be read at least twice. The first time through, we are surprised by the change in tone in line 3. On the second and subsequent readings, we can see hints of what is to come in the first two lines.

Questions on the whole passage

1 Is Catullus' comment on the words of women in this poem completely bitter and cynical? You might consider:

   a. Does any phrase in line 3 suggest that sometimes a woman tells a lie because she is being pressurised to say what her listener is desperate to hear?

   b. Does this excuse the lie?

   c. Should Catullus be given credit for being honest enough to recognise the situation?

Catullus 85

Conflicting emotions.

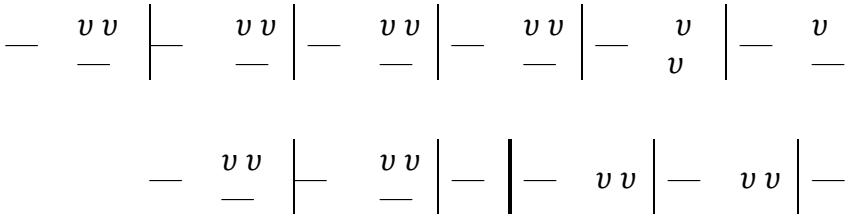
Text

odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.

nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

Notes

metre: elegiac couplets – each couplet is made up of a line of dactylic hexameter (six feet), followed by a line of dactylic pentameter (five feet)



1 **odi et amo:** Catullus opens this poem forcefully and briefly. The short verbs are not embellished and appear to be opposites, setting up the whole premise of the poem.

quare id faciam: it is important to note that he is not ignorant over the source of these feelings (a lover, presumed to be Lesbia), but the reason why he is being pulled apart by his conflicting emotions.

faciam fortasse: as the line continues, the force of the first two words seems to fade away. The *alliteration* here softens the sounds, reflecting the softer, reflective sentiments.

requiris: the reader / listener is given a role in the poem: we are a friend enquiring after Catullus.

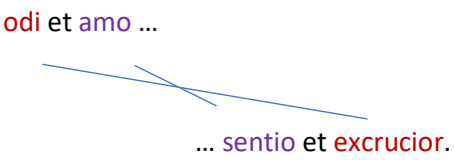
2 **nescio:** the second line opens as forcefuly and briefly as the first. In this one blunt statement we understand that he has thought about the situation and is utterly at a loss.

active passive: Catullus begins this poem with *active* verbs describing his behaviour (**odi…amo…faciam…nescio…sentio**) but as the poem ends, these give way to *passive* verbs (**fieri…excrucior**). This clever use of verbs shows how he is passively becoming swept along, losing his ability to act and think for himself, emphasised by the use of the verb 'do' (**faciam…fieri**) in both the active and passive form.

excrucior: the last word of the poem is violent and suggestive of physical pain. This verb was used to describe actual torture in the Roman world, especially the use of the rack (a torture device used to pull a person in two opposite directions). Catullus is linking the way in which he is pulled apart by his emotions to a literal, physical pulling apart.

1-2 **chiastic structure:** the whole poem is arranged in an interesting *chiastic* or crossing-over structure, which brings tension to the poem and a sense of a balanced pull in opposing directions.

The negative and positive verbs at the beginning and end of the poem are in mirrored word-order.



This creates an overall feeling of balance throughout: he is equally torn between the two opposing feelings, but he is also trapped by them and unable to change.

metre: the metre across the two lines is very regular and repetitive. This reflects the idea in the poem that Catullus is torn equally in two, and also reinforces the sense of his helplessness- he is being carried along by his feelings in the same way that the metre marches on without changing.

— ⏑ ⏑ | — — | — ⏑ ⏑ | — — | — ⏑ / ⏑ | — —

— ⏑ ⏑ | — ⏑ ⏑ | — ‖ — ⏑ ⏑ | — ⏑ ⏑ | —

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

odi … requiris (line 1):

- What two emotions is the poet having?
- What question does Catullus imagine the reader asking him?

nescio…excrucior (line 2):

- What is Catullus' one-word reply to the question?
- What does Catullus say he feels? What does this feel like to him?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (line 1) How does Catullus engage the reader in line 1?
2. (line 2) Explain what Catullus claims he 'does not know'.
3. (whole text) Which different emotions can you identify throughout this short poem?
4. (whole text) How does Catullus make effective use of contrast in this poem to show how he feels?
5. (whole text) 'Confused and tormented': do you think this is an accurate summary of Catullus as he describes himself in this poem?

Discussion

Themes: infidelity, relationships between men and women, stereotyping of women, the pain of love

The poet describes his emotions in the first person, telling some imaginary listener or us readers how torn he feels between love and hate for his lover (presumably Lesbia). He claims not to understand why he feels both these emotions though perhaps this is not unrelated to the threat of lost happiness hinted at in Poem 5 or the untrustworthy nature of women described in Poem 70. It may even foreshadow the abject misery of Poem 8, depending on the order in which these poems are read. At this point though, the poet only knows for certain that he feels both love and hate and that they cause him burning agony.

Further Information and Reading

For more information on Catullus and his works, including a useful very brief summary, see the Britannica entry here: Catullus

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Acknowledgement of resources used

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Horace: Odes 3.26 – Finished with love

A poem in which Horace declares he is done with love – or is he..?

Quintus Horatius Flaccus **(Horace,** 65 – 8 BC**)** was one of the Roman Empire's leading poets during the early reign of the Emperor Augustus in the first century BC. Following the assassination of Julius Caesar, he fought alongside Brutus against Mark Antony and Octavian (the later Augustus). Some of his poems touch on the atrocities of war and the gift of peace, but he is also well-known for his love poems.

In this poem, Horace declares that he has had enough of love and is dedicating his weapons in the 'war of love' to Venus, the goddess of Love. However, the end of the poem is ambiguous, and we are left to wonder whether Horace is indeed done with love, or whether there is more to come.

Content note: this poem makes brief allusion to possible violence against women

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Text

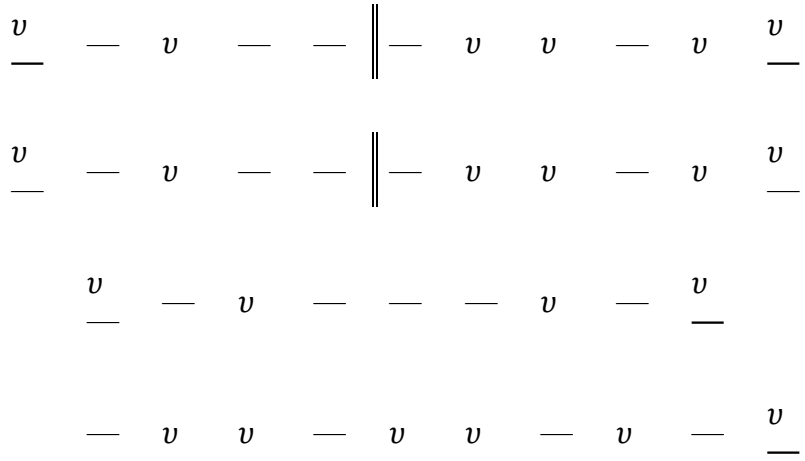
vixi puellis nuper idoneus
et militavi non sine gloria;
    nunc arma defunctumque bello
    barbiton hic paries habebit,

laevum marinae qui Veneris latus
custodit. hic, hic ponite lucida
    funalia et vectes et arcus
    oppositis foribus minaces.

o quae beatam diva tenes Cyprum et
Memphin carentem Sithonia nive,
    regina, sublimi flagello
    tange Chloen semel arrogantem.

Notes

metre: Alcaic metre, named after the Greek poet Alcaeus. Stanzas of four lines, the first two with 11 syllables, the third with 9, and the fourth with 10.



1 **vixi:** the first word of Horace's poem parodies that of an epitaph for a deceased person – Horace is bidding goodbye to his exploits in love. He may be encouraging us to feel sympathy (*pathos*) for him.

idoneus: an interesting word choice. *idoneus*, rather than simply highlighting Horace's handsomeness, has connotations of physical fitness and attractiveness to women. It is also placed at the end of the line for emphasis.

2 **militavi:** Horace here is not talking about his time as a soldier in the civil war, but instead is continuing a common poetic theme of *militia amoris* (the war of love). His use of the past tense highlights that he feels his participation in this perpetual war is coming to an end.

non sine gloria: Horace emphasises that he experienced great success in his sexual exploits before now. His use of the word *gloria* invites us to draw comparisons between military battle and success in amatory conquest.

3 **arma:** Horace is laying aside his weapons, but he will go on to list these in lines 6-7 and it becomes clear he is talking not about military weapons, but the tools he used to conduct his love affairs.

4 **barbiton:** the lyre was the instrument of choice for the love poet, used to serenade a lover. Horace highlights the romantic nature of this instrument by using the Greek word, strengthening his association with the Greek love poets of old, and creating a nice contrast (*juxtaposition*) to his mention of war and weapons.

hic paries habebit: it was customary for objects of value to be dedicated to a relevant god or goddess once they were no longer needed by the owner. Horace will hang his lyre and weapons on the wall of Venus' temple both in thanks for his previous successful love affairs and as a gesture signifying that he no longer needs them.

5 **laevum marinae qui Veneris latus:** the irregular word order here (*hyperbaton*) could be a reflection of the mental anguish Horace is feeling at the end of his latest love affair, but the balance of words also nicely reflects the way that the wall (*paries*) of the temple will guard (*custodit*) his offerings, hanging on the *latus laevum* of sea-born Venus' temple. The phrase is also chiasmatic:

laevum	*marinae*	*qui*	*Veneris*	*latus*
adjective	adjective		noun	noun
accusative	genitive		genitive	accusative

6 **hic, hic:** the repetition here gives this stanza a sense of urgency – Horace has made his decision and is keen to get the dedication of his possessions over with.

ponite: Horace is addressing his enslaved people, who are presumably carrying the items he is about to list, and the direct instruction adds a sense of vividness and immediacy to this scene.

lucida… arcus (6-7): the items which Horace now lists are not the weapons of war we may have been expecting, but rather the tools with which he used to carry out his clandestine love affairs – torches, crowbars to prise open doors, and a bow, perhaps to threaten the guards who were keeping him away from the object of his desire.

7 **et…et:** the repetition of *et* here (*polysyndeton*) further adds to Horace's urgency, and emphasises just how many tools Horace had at his disposal for breaking into his lover's houses.

8 **oppositis foribus** minaces**:** a common theme in Latin love poetry is that of the 'locked-out lover' – Horace must prove his desire for his girlfriend by breaking into her house and evading the guards whom her husband (or father) have placed there to protect her virtue. The placement of *minaces* at the end of this stanza reminds us that this is not a romantic endeavour but a conquest: violent effort was necessary in order for this love affair to be carried out.

9 **o (…) diva:** the direct address to Venus here is a surprising twist, given that Horace has just declared he is done with love. The poem now becomes an invocation to the goddess.

o…Cyprum: the jumbled word order (*hyperbaton*) reflects Horace's confusion and indecision – is he done with love or not?

Cyprum: Cyprus was the island upon which Venus was said to have been washed ashore after her birth from sea-foam. It was her home island and was strongly associated with her worship.

10 **Memphin:** Memphis was a city in Egypt where there was a temple to Venus in her Eastern guise as the goddess of fertility, Astarte. Memphin is a Greek accusative form.

carentem Sithonia nive: Memphis, in Egypt, is obviously warm and lacking in snow from Thrace in northern Greece. The mention of Thrace here (Sithonia) is a reference to Chloe, the Thracian girl he will soon mention, and the snow is a metaphor for her coldness towards Horace in his attempt to seduce her.

11 **regina:** another direct address to Venus, highlighting Horace's invocation of her during this final stanza of the poem.

flagello: a harsh weapon – Horace asks Venus to strike Chloe with her raised whip, perhaps as punishment for her new-found indifference towards him as a lover. Horace wants Chloe to hurt as much as he does. Venus' whip may also be her way of striking humans with feelings of love (the equivalent of Cupid's arrows) – Horace does not quite say that he wants Venus to make Chloe fall in love with him, but he may be asking the goddess to inflict her with unrequited love, so that she may experience a taste of the rejection she has inflicted upon Horace.

12 **tange:** a direct instruction to the goddess, which may suggest a long-standing relationship of familiarity between Venus and Horace during his many love affairs.

Chloen: Chloe is the subject of Horace's invocation to the goddess, and the object of his desires. She is mentioned by him in 3 other poems, but in this one, she does not appear to be returning his interest. The Greek name Chloe (Chloen is the Greek accusative form) has connotations of youth, innocence, and the unfurling of buds and flowers in spring.

semel: Horace qualifies Chloe's rejection of him by stating that this is the first time. She has previously been open to his advances, but now she is cold like the Thracian snow.

arrogantem: Horace's placement of this word at the end of the poem emphasises just how dismayed and angry he is with Chloe's indifference towards him. It is the role of the man to hold the power in a Roman love affair; the woman is supposed to be flattered and submissive. Chloe's rejection of Horace and her claiming of power here has rather pulled the rug out from under Horace's feet. The strength of feeling in this invocation does not seem to fit with Horace's initial declaration that he is finished with love!

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

vixi puellis nuper idoneus (line 1):

- Who does Horace say he was attractive to, until recently?
- What word does he use to describe himself?

militavi non sine gloria (line 2):

- What kind of 'battle' do you think Horace is referring to here?
- What type of 'glory' or success did he achieve?

nunc arma defunctumque bello barbiton hic paries habebit (lines 3-4):

- What does Horace say will hold his weapons?
- What instrument will he place alongside his weapons?

laevum marinae que Veneris latus custodit (lines 5-6):

- Who's temple does the wall 'guard'?
- On which side of Venus is the wall?

hic, hic ponite… (line 6):

- Who might Horace be instructing?

lucida funalia et vectes et arcus (lines 6-7):

- What three items does Horace dedicate to Venus?
- Are these the 'weapons of war' we might have been expecting?

oppositis foribus minaces (line 8):

- What does Horace tell us these weapons were actually used for?

o diva quae Cyprum beatam tenes (line 9, word order adjusted):

- Which goddess is Horace invoking here?

Memphin carentem Sithonia nive (line 10):

- What does Horace say Venus' temple in Memphis is lacking?

sublimi flagello tange (lines 11-12):

- What item does Horace ask Venus to use?
- How does this differ from the usual weapon that Cupid uses to inflict love?

Chloen semel arrogantem (line 12):

- What is the name of the girl that Horace wishes Venus to strike?
- How does he describe her?
- Has she always behaved this way?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) How does Horace emphasise his success in love?
2. (lines 2-3) Horace discusses his love affairs as though they were a war: what impression does this give the audience of Roman attitudes to love? Is this approach surprising, given that most Roman men were also soldiers?
3. (lines 6-8) The 'weapons' that Horace dedicates to Venus are not those we might expect: what does this tell us about Horace's approach to romantic affairs?
4. (lines 9-10) How does the tone of the poem change at this point?
5. (lines 11-12) Do we still think of Horace as a man who has given up on love by the end of the poem?

Discussion

Themes: love, unrequited love, love as war, goddess of love

This poem changes quite dramatically over its three stanzas, taking us from Horace's supposed retirement from his battles in love, to an invocation of the goddess of love herself to inflict punishment on the woman who has now rejected him. Students may wish to discuss whether they think Horace is truly finished with love, as he claims, or is he merely sulking because Chloe will not give him what he wants?

The lyre and 'weapons' which Horace dedicates to Venus tell us much about how Roman men approached the game of finding a romantic partner. Students should discuss what each of these items would have been used for. What impression does it give a modern reader of 'dating' in the ancient world. Could Horace and his contemporaries use a similar approach today? This is a sensitive topic and will need to be handled with care.

Horace's invocation of Venus, and his request that Chloe be punished in some way, suggest that women were not respected as individuals with free choice. Is there anything in Horace's words which may suggest that he respects her as a romantic partner, or does Horace's poem have a different focus? Students may also wish to consider other sources they have looked at and compare Roman men's attitudes towards women, both as wives and as girlfriends/lovers.

Questions on the whole passage

1. Are you surprised by Horace's attitude towards love in this poem, given the Romans' traditional and conservative approach to women and marriage? How does this fit with the other sources you have studied?
2. What can we learn from this poem about how Romans conducted their love affairs? How might this differ from how Romans conducted themselves within marriage, and how they attracted a marriage partner?

Further Information and Reading

The Cambridge Latin Course Book V Stage 38 on Roman marriage 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 place of love poetry in the context of Augustan society and Ovid's fate. A digital version of this section can be found here.

Scholar Suzanne Dixon has written a short article here, which gives some details on Roman women's lives, and the prevalence of adultery and casual relationships.

Teachers wishing to read more about love, marriage and extra-marital affairs could start with this article. It offers a brief outline of other Latin love poems, but does include some erotic frescoes from Pompeii as illustrations, so may not be suitable for sharing with all pupils.

Teachers may also find it useful to read up on the Augustan Marriage Laws, the first of which was introduced during Horace's lifetime, to further add to the context of extra-marital activities in first-century BC Rome. This article gives a short overview. This website has two useful short articles on the Augustan Reformation and expectations of marriage.

This article in Omnibus Magazine (a resource written by scholars for GCSE and A-level students) will give students a brief introduction to Latin love poetry.

Teachers wishing to read further on the subject of *militia amoris* in Latin elegy (particularly Ovid, Propertius and Tibullus) may find this article by M Drinkwater helpful (accessible by request here).

Acknowledgements of resources used

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Drinkwater, M. (2013) 'Militia amoris: Fighting in love's army' in *The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy* p.194-206, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Martial: Epigrams 1.62 – The Power of Love

Marcus Valerius Martialis (c.AD 40 – c.AD 103) was born in Spain and moved to Rome in his mid-twenties. He produced twelve books of epigrams (short poems) on a variety of themes, often writing with biting humour and critical observations.

This epigram is built around stark contrasts (juxtaposition) that culminate in the transformation of its subject, Laevina, from faithful to unfaithful wife.

Text

casta nec antiquis cedens Laevina Sabinis
et quamvis tetrico tristior ipsa viro
dum modo Lucrino, modo se demittit Averno,
et dum Baianis saepe fovetur aquis,
incidit in flammas: iuvenemque secuta relicto
coniuge Penelope venit, abit Helene.

Notes

metre: elegiac couplets – a line of dactylic hexameter (six feet), followed by a line of dactylic pentameter (five feet)

—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑	—	⏑ / —

—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	—	⏑ ⏑	— / ⏑	⏑	—

1 **casta … Sabinis:** In Roman literature, the Sabine women were traditional models of chastity, a virtue expected of Roman wives and daughters. According to Livy (1.9-13), shortly after Rome's founding, Romulus and his men abducted unmarried women from the neighbouring Sabine people to be their wives. The ensuing war only came to an end when these women threw themselves between the opposing armies and demanded that the fighting cease.

Note that, in addition to its translation as 'not being inferior to', *nec… cedens* could be translated 'not yielding', possibly a play on the literal meaning of chastity.

2 **et … viro: '**and more austere herself' (*et ... tristior ipsa*) 'than her ever so severe husband' (*quamvis tetrico ...viro*).

The Sabine women were sometimes described as *tristis* ('serious' or 'austere'), but by Martial's day women who presented themselves this way were considered rather humourless and old fashioned. That Laevina is more austere than her already stern husband is not intended as a compliment. Instead, Martial sets Laevina up for a fall, by heightening the contrast between her character at the beginning and end of the epigram.

3 **dum … Averno:** The Lucrine Lake is an inlet off the Bay of Naples, near Puzzuoli, while Lake Avernus is some 500 metres further inland. Both are volcanic lakes about a mile from Baiae (see line 4 below). In Martial's day, the lakes and were a popular holiday resort where people came for boating.

Notice that the repetition of *modo* ('sometimes') in this line, and of *dum* ('while') here and in line 4, suggesting the easy rhythm of life at the lakes.

demittit: Martial's verb choice here implies in the simplest sense that Laevina 'lowers herself' into the water or perhaps into boats on the lakes, but he also implies that by her life of leisure and luxury, Laevina 'lowers herself' morally as well.

4 **et … aquis:** Baiae was a fashionable seaside resort on the western side of the Bay of Pozzuoli, famous for its hot springs and luxurious bathing complex. The mineral waters of the hot springs were known for their health-giving properties (see for example, Pliny, *Natural History* 31.4-6), but by the late Republic the resort had become a notorious party town.

Propertius calls the place *corruptas… Baias* ('corrupt Baiae') and begs his lover Cynthia not to stay there, fearing that she will fall in love with someone else and abandon him (1.11) just as Laevina abandons her husband in this epigram.

fovetur: Martial tells us that Laevina spent her days at Baiae being 'warmed up' or 'pampered' in the hot baths. This pampering contrast with her 'austere' (*tristis*) character in line 2 and prefigures her fall into the 'flames' of love in the next line.

5 **incidit in flammas:** a sudden contrast with the leisurely mood of the preceding two lines emphasised by the assonance on 'i' in the first two words. There is a joking connection here between the 'flames' of passion and the hot waters at Baiae. The Greek poet Sappho was perhaps the first to use the metaphor of fire to describe her desire for her female lover (fragment 31), and Catullus translated Sappho's words into Latin when describing Lesbia's effect on him: *tenuis sub artus flamma demanat* ('a subtle flame steals through my limbs': Catullus 51, (not in these materials). Martial playfully pokes fun at this tradition with his pun on the heat of the baths.

5-6 **iuvenemque secuta relicto coniuge:** Notice that Laevina is presented as following her young man into adultery (rather than being the instigator), and as a consequence of this her husband is left behind. The mirroring of word patterns (*chiasmus*) in *iuvenemque secuta* (noun, participle) with *relicto conjuge* (participle, noun) emphasises her shift from the influence of one man to another.

6 **et Penelope venit, abit Helene:** Martial's punchline is also emphasised by the construction of the closing four words, where *Penelope venit* (name, verb) is mirrored (*chiasmus*) by *abit Helene* (verb, name).

Again, Martial's humour relies on stark contrasts (juxtaposition): Penelope is the faithful wife of Odysseus, dutifully awaiting his return from Troy in the face of her persistent suitors, while Helen's adultery with Paris was the fabled cause of the Trojan war. By the close of the epigram, Laevina has been transformed from one wifely paradigm into the other.

Discussion

Themes: adultery, marriage and fidelity, qualities of a wife, moral decline, chastity

This poem reveals a good deal about the expectations placed on Roman wives. Like Laevina at the start, good wives were expected to be chaste and faithful, as Martial's comparison with the Sabine women and Odysseus' wife Penelope imply. Since faithfulness and chastity were difficult virtues to prove, wives were expected to signal them through their outward appearance and behaviours. This meant staying at home as much as possible and dressing simply.

There is often a gap between the 'ideal' and the reality, and this was true in Roman society too. In Martial's day, women often ventured beyond the home, went to the baths and to parties, and impressed acquaintances with their learning and conversation. This gap created fears for some about moral collapse, which Martial explores and pokes fun at here.

Martial's poem seems to imply that love and desire are forces that, like fire, cannot be controlled. Notice that Laevina's actions are presented almost as a natural consequence of her self-indulgence at notorious Baiae and the surrounding lakes. Moralists like Seneca (see *De Beneficiis* 3.16: 'Changing morals' in this prescription) expressed concern that luxurious living led to moral decline, particularly the moral decline of women, who were believed less capable than men of self-control.

In this epigram, no one is immune from Martial's biting satire. He belittles the female exemplars that were cherished by Roman society, but he hardly thinks better of the men involved, who remain nameless figures of fun. Part of the purpose of Martial's satire is to hold a mirror up to society so it can see itself in all its contradiction, warts and all.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

casta nec antiquis cedens Laevina Sabinis (line 1)

- Who does Martial claim is no less chaste than the Sabine women of old?

et quamvis tetrico tristior ipsa viro (line 2)

- How does Martial describe Laevina's husband in this line? How does he compare Laevina with him?

dum modo Lucrino, modo se demittit Averno (line 3)

- Which two places does Martial tell us Laevina visited?

et dum Baianis saepe fovetur aquis (line 4)

- What does Martial tell us is happening to Laevina at Baiae?

incidit in flammas: iuvenemque secuta (line 5)

- What two things does Martial tell us Laevina did in these words?

Penelope venit, abit Helene (line 6)

- Who does Martial tell us Laevina resembles when she leaves Baiae, and who did she resemble when she arrived?

Questions on Style

1. (line 1) How does Martial emphasise the significance of Laevina's chastity in this line?

2. (line 2) How does he describe Laevina's character in this line?

3.(line 3 and 4) How does Martial emphasise Laevina's leisurly lifestyle at the lakes and Baiae in these lines?

5. (line 5 -6 to conjuge) How does Martial convey the power of love and desire in this line?

6. (line 6 from Penelope) How does Martial emphasise Laevina's transformation in this line?

7. (whole poem) Compare and contrast the ways in which the qualities of a Roman wife are described in this poem and in Pliny Letters 6.24 ('Faithful unto death' in this prescription)?

8. (whole poem) Compare and contrast the ways in which chastity and adultery are described in this poem and in Seneca De Beneficiis 3.16 ('Changing morals' in this prescription)?

Further Information and Reading

For more information on Martial and his works, including a useful very brief summary, see the Britannica entry here https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martial-Roman-poet

A guardian article from October 2021 describes archaeological finds that provide insight into Baiae's reputation as a 'party town': https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/30/baiae-naples-ancient-rome-party-town-

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Acknowledgement of resources used

Howell, Peter (1980). *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial.* The Athlone Press, London (page 253 to 257).

Martial: Epigrams 12.46 – An enigma

Marcus Valerius Martialis (c.AD 40 – c.AD 103) was born in Spain and moved to Rome in his mid-twenties. He produced twelve books of epigrams (short poems) on a variety of themes, often writing with biting humour and critical observations.

It is not known to whom this poem about conflicting emotions is addressed. It is similar in style and sentiment to Catullus Poem 5 (also in the prescribed group of texts for Love and Marriage) and Martial may well have been influenced by the work of this earlier poet. As line 2 shows (see below), Martial also drew on Ovid's poems when crafting his own.

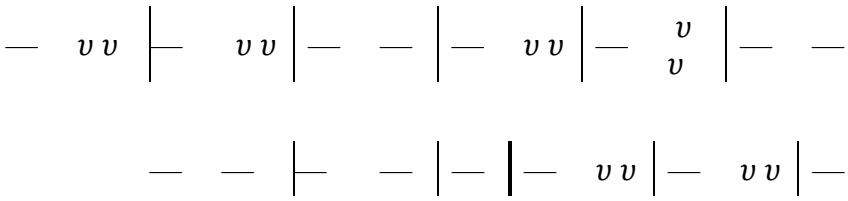
Text

difficilis facilis, iucundus acerbus es idem:

nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te.

Notes

metre: an elegiac couplet – a line of dactylic hexameter (six feet), followed by a line of dactylic pentameter (five feet)



This simple couplet is built around contradictions.

1 **difficilis facilis, iucundus acerbus**: the poem opens with two pairs of adjectives placed close to each other to enhance their contrast (*juxtaposed*). Each pair also rhymes due to their matching declensions. This immediately sets up the theme of the poem: the contrasting character traits of the object of Martial's affections inspire contradictory reactions in the poet, and simultaneously!

difficilis facilis: Martial uses this same pair of juxtaposed adjectives in *Epigrams* 1.57 (not in the Love and Marriage prescription) saying that he wants a girl who is neither too 'difficult' nor too 'easy' (*nolo nimis facilem difficilemque nimis*) so that she neither tortures nor satisfies him (*nec volo quod cruciat, nec volo quod satiat*). It is likely these words are used in the same sense here. Pupils may, of course, suggest different interpretations of their own – e.g. perhaps 'difficult or easy to get on with'.

iucundus acerbus: the endings of these adjectives are masculine, telling us that Martial is talking to, and about, a male lover.

idem: emphasises that the strongly contrasting character traits are found in one and the same person.

2 **nec tecum … nec sine te**

the contrasting *nec tecum* and *nec sine te* bracket *possum vivere* to which both refer as if pulling in different directions. Neither the speaker's longing for togetherness (*tecum*) nor for separation (*sine te*) can outweigh the other and so they remain in tension. The reversal of the order of pronoun and preposition – *te cum* and *sine te* - emphasises this tension.

There is a very similar line (not in the prescribed materials) in Ovid's *Amores* (3.11b.39) in which Ovid's speaker describes himself being torn between drawing back from the love that ties him to an unfaithful girlfriend and throwing himself fully into the affair:

sic ego nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum

This earlier work may have inspired Martial's line. At any rate, both these poets express the same dilemma regarding the objects of their affection.

Discussion

Themes: conflicting emotions, relationships between men, the pain of love

Like Catullus 85, this poem deals with the conflicting emotions felt by a lover for the one he loves. It may be a good idea to teach the two poems at the same time and draw comparisons between them. In *Epigrams* 12.46, Martial describes a lover's emotions in the first person, addressing his words to the man he loves, while Catullus addresses his woes about his girlfriend to an imaginary listener. It seems that the discomfort of love is common to both and not only inspired by the stereotypical loose behaviour of women, but also by inconstant attitudes in a man.

Same-sex relationships were common in the ancient world, although the ways in which they described them are very different from more modern labels. It is not necessary for students to understand the complexities of ancient social attitudes, simply to acknowledge that passionate feelings, including love, existed in relationships which were not only between a man and a woman.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

difficilis facilis, iucundus acerbus es idem (line 1)

- Martial uses two pairs of adjectives to describe the lover he is addressing. What opposing pairs of English adjectives might you choose to translate them?

nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te (line 2)

- What two things does Martial say he can't do?

Questions on Style

1. (line 1) How does Martial emphasise the changeable nature of his lover in this line?

2. (line 2) How does he emphasise the speaker's conflicting emotions in this line?.

3. (whole poem) Compare and contrast the ways in which the experience of love is described in this poem and in Catullus 85?

Further Information and Reading

For more information on Martial and his works, including a useful very brief summary, see the Britannica entry here https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martial-Roman-poet

Students may find it interesting to hear similar lyrics to those in the second line of this poem in the U2 song: 'With or without you' that can be found on YouTube.

Acknowledgement of resources used

Bowie, M. N. R. (1988). *Martial Book XII : a commentary* [PhD thesis]. University of Oxford. Available here (page 220).

Carter, A. & Parr, P. (2014) Cambridge Latin Anthology Teacher's handbook. Cambridge University Press (page 26).

Ovid: Ars Amatoria I.469-478 – Advice to a rejected lover

Ovid advises young men that the key to success in love is perseverance

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Publius Ovidius Naso (43BC – AD 17) was born outside Rome, in Sulmo, to a wealthy equestrian family. He is most famous for his love poems, which he wrote whilst living in Rome. In 8 BC, Ovid was banished from Rome by the emperor Augustus. Ovid writes that the cause was *carmen et error* (a poem and a mistake). The poem was probably the *Ars Amatoria* ('The Art of Love'), but scholars still debate what the mistake may have been. Ovid spent the rest of his days in exile at Tomis on the Black Sea (modern Romania). He never returned to Rome.

The *Ars Amatoria* is a poetic instruction manual in love. This poem is devoted to giving advice to young men about winning the heart of a girl and it reveals a great deal about Roman attitudes towards women. Here, Ovid has turned to the art of letter-writing. In the lines before this passage, he advises the reader to make sure to use appropriate language when writing to his loved one. He now deals with the problem of a letter being returned unread.

Text

si non accipiet scriptum inlectumque remittet,
lecturam spera propositumque tene.
tempore difficiles veniunt ad aratra iuvenci,
tempore lenta pati frena docentur equi.
ferreus assiduo consumitur anulus usu,
interit assidua vomer aduncus humo.
quid magis est saxo durum, quid mollius unda?
dura tamen molli saxa cavantur aqua.
Penelopen ipsam, persta modo, tempore vinces:
capta vides sero Pergama, capta tamen.

Notes

metre: elegaic couplets – pairs of lines with six feet in first line and five in second

—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ / —

—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	⏑ ⏑ / —	—	— / ⏑	⏑	—	⏑ ⏑	—

This poem is structured in pairs of lines (*couplets*). Each couplet takes a new theme:

1-2 a letter is rejected

3-4 animals which can be worn down by persistence

5-6 the erosion of iron

7-8 rock worn down by water

9-10 the Trojan War

1-2 The metre here is very heavy and plodding, filled with long syllables (*spondaic*). This reflects the content: the repetition of rejection and efforts.

si non accipiet: the subject is a woman who is being pursued by a would-be lover.

non accipiet scriptum inlectumque remittet: these words are arranged in a mirroring pattern (*chiasmus*): verb-participle-participle-verb. This draws attention to the sequence of events (she does not accept what has been written, and, not having read it, she will return it). It also mimics the 'bouncing back' of the letter. When recited, the words **scriptum inlectumque** would have been 'elided' – i.e. run together (**scriptinlectumque**). The lack of a pause between the words suggests the speed with which the letter is sent away.

2 **lecturam spera:** in full this would be **spera eam scriptum lecturam esse**. The idea is that the lover should send the letter again and again, until she gives in and reads it.

3-8 **tempore ...:** Ovid here embarks on a series of parallels drawn from everyday life, serving the same function as similes. His argument is that, just as in many areas of life, a hard, resistant creature or material will eventually be worn down by constant efforts or erosion, so in time an unwilling girl will also be worn down.

3-4 the rhythm is unusually fast in these two lines, providing a startling contrast with lines 1-2. The aim is to emphasise that the process of wearing down resistance will happen sooner rather than later. The quick metre contradicts what is actually said in the lines (**tempore** suggesting slowness and **lenta … frena,** being held back) - an example of Ovid's sense of humour, aimed firmly at his educated audience.

3 **tempore:** note the emphatic position of this word, which of course is the key to his argument. The word is given the same force in the next line.

difficilēs: 'difficult' in the sense of being resistant to control.

iuvencī: bullocks were regularly used for drawing ploughs, right up until mechanisation. Note how the subject is deferred to the end of the line, for emphasis; the same is true of *equī* in the next line, helping to complete the parallelism between the two lines.

4 **lenta:** lentus is a difficult word, with many apparently contradictory meanings. The meaning here is 'long-lasting' and so 'persistent' or 'unyielding', a usage found in verse and prose.

5 **ferreus ... anulus:** rings, worn by both men and women, were exclusively of iron until the late republic, when gold rings became the mark of the rank of a senator, and later of the eques as well. Of course, Ovid chooses iron here because it was the hardest of the metals used for rings.

assiduo usu: perhaps simply the wearing of it, but Ovid may also be thinking of the use of many rings to sign documents. Note the emphatic repetition of **assiduā** in the same position in the next line, but with a different meaning.

6 **assidua:** literally 'constant', 'unremitting', and so by extension 'unending': the ground never ceases to need ploughing.

7-8 After four parallel lines, Ovid switches to a rhetorical question, followed by a refutation of the obvious answer to the question. Note also the arrangement in a mirroring pattern (noun adjective … adjective noun) in *saxō dūrum ... mollius undā,* emphasising the contrast between the two.

8 **dura ... molli saxa ... aqua:** a good example of an interlocking of the word order beloved of Roman poets. The aim is often, as here, to provide a pair of contrasts by placing opposites more or less next to each other.

9 **Penelopen:** the long-suffering wife of Odysseus, who waited patiently for twenty years until her husband returned from the Trojan War; she became proverbial for uxorial loyalty. During her wait, she resisted the advances of a host of suitors, who never gave up trying to persuade her to abandon her marriage and choose one of them. Picture 5 in the examination prescription shows Penelope at her loom working on the shroud that she weaves and unpicks to delay making her choice. Ovid's argument here is that even Penelope's resistance would have been worn down eventually; the fact that she was famous precisely for not being persuaded might be expected to have raised doubts in the reader's mind about the logic of Ovid's argument.

persta modo: in urgent commands, *modo* regularly has the force of 'only be sure to'.

tempore: neatly rounding off the series of parallels by relating time to the task in hand and echoing its use in lines 3 and 4.

10 Ovid cannot resist one final parallel, to complete the couplet.

Pergama: Pergama, or Pergamum, was the citadel of Troy, famously captured after a ten-year siege by the Greeks. In poetry, the word for a part of something is often used to refer to the whole thing, and here Ovid uses the citadel to mean the entire city.

sero: Troy was captured after a ten-year siege. The moral is that, because they never gave up, the Greeks finally won.

capta … **capta tamen:** The striking repetition of *capta* and the emphatic closing *capta tamen* hammer home the message of the poem: capture may be delayed but, with persistence, it will certainly happen.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each sentence, clause, or phrase, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

si non accipiet…tene (lines 1-2):

- What does she not receive? What does she do with it instead?
- What does Ovid instruct the reader to hope? What does Ovid instruct the reader to stick firmly to?

tempore difficiles…equi (lines 3-4):

- What kind of young bulls are mentioned here? What do they come to? When do they do this?
- What animals are mentioned next? What are they taught to do? How are the reins described? When do they do this?

ferreus assiduo… humo (lines 5-6):

- What kind of ring is mentioned here? What happens to it? What causes this?
- What kind of ploughshare is mentioned here? What happens to it? What causes this?

quid magis… aqua (lines 7-8):

- What does he ask about rock? What does he ask about water?
- What happens to the hard rock? What causes this?

Penelopen ipsam…capta tamen (lines 9-10):

- What does Ovid instruct the reader to do now? Who does he say the reader will win over? When will this happen?
- What does he say about Pergamum?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) How does Ovid's style of writing in these lines reinforce their meaning?
2. (lines 3-4)
    a. How does Ovid use animals here to explain his point?
    b. How does Ovid use repetition in these lines to emphasise his point?
3. (lines 5-6)
    a. Explain how Ovid makes his point clearer by using the images of a ring and a ploughshare.
    b. How does Ovid use repetition again in these lines to emphasise his point?
4. (lines 7-8) How does Ovid's style of writing in these lines reinforce their meaning?

5. (lines 9-10)
    a. Explain Ovid's references to Penelope and Pergamum.
    b. Does using epic references here fit in with the rest of his poem?
6. (whole text)
    a. How does Ovid use persuasive techniques in this poem to convince the reader to pay attention to his advice?
    b. Consider all the examples Ovid used here to prove his point about persistence. How effective do you find them?
    c. Throughout this poem, Ovid uses techniques which reflect the meaning of the text. Think about the following techniques and explain how Ovid uses them here:
        i. repetition
        ii. chiasmus
        iii. interlocked word order
    d. Ovid wrote this as a light-hearted poem for his Roman audience. What would have made this text light-hearted for his audience?

Discussion

Themes: finding a partner, stereotyping of women

The *Ars Amatoria* is not always easy for a modern audience to read, and students are likely to have strong reactions to, and opinions on, Ovid's advice here. Ovid's own Roman audience will need to be distinguished from a modern reaction to this material, which will enable students to explore the extent to which attitudes have changed over time.

Ovid here describes how persistence will eventually wear down the object of your affection and here he encourages men to continue sending letters. Students may well be familiar with this type of persistent messaging and how to make a point by leaving messages unread.

Other attitudes and stereotyping can be seen through Ovid's choice of metaphors: women are 'difficult', needing to be tamed, 'worn down' and 'conquered'. Students may be able to draw parallels with more modern presentations of romance.

Ovid is aiming to present his material with a humorous tone. His examples of resistance are almost epic in scope: indeed the subjects of the final couplet are clear references to Homeric epics. The examples are also a parody of didactic poetry, out of proportion with the context. The fact that Ovid is not entirely serious in his argument is shown by his inclusion of Penelope among the exempla.

Questions on the whole passage

1. What can we learn from this text about Roman attitudes towards finding a partner, and especially male attitudes towards women?
2. Do you think that Ovid believes in his own advice here? (Think about the humour he is using: who do you think he is poking fun at?)

Further Information and Reading

A.S. Hollis, *Ars Amatoria*, Book I Oxford Clarendon Press 1977

Research has been carried out on the possible link between exposure to media which equates persistence with romance, and problematic behaviors and attitudes. A summary of some findings from the work of Julia Lippman, University of Michigan, is given in this interview.

Pliny: Letters 4.19 – To Calpurnia Hispulla, his wife's aunt

Pliny praises his wife's virtues and thanks Hispulla for her part in her niece's upbringing

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Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, better known to us as Pliny the Younger (c.AD 61-c.AD 113) was a Roman politician from Comum, a city in Northern Italy. He is most famous now for the huge numbers of letters he wrote and subsequently published. These include a great deal of official correspondence with the Emperor, gossip about well-known figures, and commentary on life at the time for upper-class citizens of the Roman empire. His most famous letters are the eyewitness accounts he gave of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

Pliny wrote this letter shortly after his third marriage, to Calpurnia, who was probably no more than about 15 at the time, though Pliny was over 40. Such marriages were normal in Rome, at least among the upper classes. Calpurnia had lost her father and, as a result, was taken under the wing of her aunt, Calpurnia Hispulla, to whom the letter is addressed. The marriage appears to have been a happy one though they did not have any children, lasting about ten years until Pliny's death in Bithynia in about AD 113.

The Latin is adapted.

Text

cum sis pietatis exemplum, filiam fratris tui ut tuam diligis nec tantum amitae ei affectum repraesentas verum etiam patris amissi. maxime igitur gaudebis, cum cognoveris eam dignam patre, dignam te, dignam avo evadere. summum est acumen, summa frugalitas; amat me, quod castitatis indicium est. praeterea studium litterarum ex mei caritate concepit. meos libellos habet, lectitat, ediscit etiam. quanta sollicitudine afficitur cum ego acturus sum, quanto gaudio cum egi! disponit qui nuntient sibi quem assensum quos clamores excitaverim, quem eventum iudicii tulerim. eadem, si quando recito, in proximo discreta velo sedet laudesque meas avidissimis auribus excipit. versus quidem meos cantat formatque cithara, non artifice aliquo docente sed amore, qui magister est optimus.

his ex causis in spem certissimam adducor perpetuam nobis maioremque in dies futuram esse concordiam. non enim aetatem meam aut corpus, quae paulatim occidunt ac senescunt, sed gloriam diligit. nec aliud decet puellam tuis manibus educatam, quae amare me ex tua praedicatione consueverit. ergo tibi gratias agimus, ego quod illam mihi, illa quod me sibi dederis. vale.

Notes

1 the translation is **diligis** (you care for) **filiam fratris tui** (your brother's daughter) **ut tuam** (as your own)

pietatis: dutifulness was one of the great Roman virtues. It meant duty to parents, husband, Rome, the gods and any other worthy recipient. Here Pliny refers to the exemplary way Calpurnia Hispulla has taken care of her niece.

exemplum: a 'model' in the sense of a paragon.

fratris tui: Hispulla's brother had been Calpurnia's father.

2-3 the translation is **repraesentas** (you show) **ei** (her) **nec tantum** (not only) **affectum** (the affection) **amitae** (of an aunt) **verum etiam** (but also) **patris amissi** (of her lost father)

patris amissi: Hispulla has taken responsibility for Calpurnia following the death of her father.

3-4 **dignam patre, dignam te, dignam avo**: a list of three (*tricolon*) emphasising Calpurnia's worthiness, the repetition (*anaphora*) of **dignam** fixing the word in the mind of the reader. The lack of conjunctions (*asyndeton*) creates a punchy feel to the list.

4 **avo:** teachers may be interested to know that Calpurnia's grandfather was Calpurnius Fabatus, an eques and respected councillor of Comum (Pliny's home town).

evadere: notice the present tense here: she is still 'turning out' as the marriage continues to develop.

acumen: shrewdness in managing the household, rather than 'academic' intelligence.

4-5 **summum…summa:** Pliny emphasises her qualities by repeatedly describing them as 'great'. Throughout this letter, he uses hyperbolic vocabulary to describe Calpurnia, and also Hispulla's imagined reactions to learning of her niece's virtues.

5 **frugalitas:** thrift in terms of personal expenditure was valued in a wife.

castitatis: love was a bonus in Roman marriages between people of the upper classes. These marriages were often arranged for convenience, and often at a very young age. There was also often, as here, a large age-gap between the partners. Pliny's point is that the fact that Calpurnia loves him indicates that she will be faithful to him.

6 **ex mei caritate:** Pliny is clearly delighted that Calpurnia wishes to share in his own interests. Pliny's reaction also suggests that he would not have expected his wife necessarily to be interested in literature.

7 **libellos:** literally 'little books' and so 'writings'. Pliny published a wide variety of work over the course of his life, including speeches, poems and, most famously, letters.

habet, lectitat, ediscit: the *asyndeton* and *tricolon* create a swift, ascending list: not only does she have the books, she reads them; not only does she read them, she learns them by heart.

lectitat: the frequentative form of the verb shows that she read the works repeatedly.

7-8 **quanta…quanto:** note the contrast here, established by the repetition of this word.

8-9 the translation is **disponit** (she sends out) **qui** (people to) **nuntient** (tell) **sibi** (her)

acturus sum: much of Pliny's work involved working in the law-courts giving speeches. These speeches were as much a form of entertainment as legal arguments. Calpurnia is worried that his speech may not be successful.

gaudio: this suggests that his speeches are generally successful.

10 **recito:** Pliny recited his own works in front of small audiences.

10-11 **in proximo…sedet:** the audience at recitals would have been exclusively male. If a woman wished to listen, decorum would have required her to avoid being seen. Calpurnia would have sat in a neighbouring room.

11 **discreta velo:** internal doorways in Roman houses generally had curtains instead of wooden doors.

laudesque meas: notice how Pliny believes that his wife is more interested in the praise his recitals generate than their content, showing her loyalty to him.

12 **versus:** Pliny wrote at least two books of poems, now almost all lost.

cantat: verses were often chanted to the accompaniment of a cithara, a guitar-like instrument.

12-13 the translation is **non** (not) **artifice aliquo** (with some expert) **docente** (teaching)

14-15 the translation is **nobis** (for us) **futuram esse** (there will be) **concordiam** (a harmony)

perpetuam (lasting forever) **maioremque** (and greater) **in dies** (day by day).

perpetuam…futuram esse: since many marriages ended in divorce (see the text 'Seneca: changing morals), Pliny is expressing the simple hope that theirs will last. It did: she accompanied him to Bithynia in AD 111, leaving only to return to Italy on the death of her grandfather. Pliny himself was to die in Bithynia shortly after this.

15-16 **aetatem… corpus:** Pliny was over 40 at the time of writing. He was realistic enough to accept that a girl of Calpurnia's age would hardly be likely to find him attractive.

16 **senescunt:** Pliny had about another ten years to live, dying at the age of about 51. This is relatively young for a man of his class. He is probably speaking figuratively rather than literally here, however.

17 **gloriam:** for a Roman, distinction in life was something to be sought and openly proud of when achieved. Since Roman women were not encouraged to have any sort of official public life, they could often only achieve distinction outside the home through their husbands.

tuis manibus educatam: Hispulla has taught Calpurnia how to be a model wife.

18 **praedicatione:** athough Roman marriages were arranged and the weight of social expectation would have been on the woman to accept these arrangements, the marriages were not usually forced. Hispulla, once the betrothal had been made, would have praised Pliny's qualities as a way of persuading Calpurnia to accept her husband-to-be.

19 **ego ... illam mihi ... illa ... me sibi:** a neatly-balanced conclusion to emphasise how suitable Pliny believes the match to be, with equal beneficial outcomes for both himself and Calpurnia.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

cum sis…amissi (lines 1-3):

- What does Pliny say Hispulla is a model of?
- Who did Hispulla care for? How did she treat her?
- What kind of affection did she show Calpurnia? What had happened to Calpurnia's father?

maxime igitur…evadere (lines 3-4)

- How will Hispulla feel? Why?
- Who has Calpurnia turned out to be worthy of?

summum est…ediscit etiam (lines 4-7)

- What two aspects of Calpurnia's character does Pliny describe as great here?
- How does Calpurnia feel about Pliny? What does he think this is a sign of?
- What has Calpurnia taken up the study of? Why has she done this?
- What does Calpurnia have? What else does she do with them?

quanta…tulerim (lines 7-10)

- What does Calpurnia feel? When does she feel this?
- What does she also feel? When does she feel this?
- Why does Calpurnia send people out? What three things does she want to hear about in particular?

eadem…est optimus (lines 10-13)

- What activity of Pliny's is he talking about here?
- When Pliny does this, what does Calpurnia do? Where does she do this? How is she hidden?
- What does she listen to? What does she listen with?
- What does she sing? What does she accompany the singing with?
- Who didn't teach her to do this? What did teach her? What does Pliny say about this teacher?

his ex causis… consueverit (lines 14-18)

- Which reasons is Pliny referring to? What have these reasons led him to? What two hopes does he have for the future about their harmony?
- What two things does Pliny say Calpurnia does not love him for? What happens to these things gradually? What does Calpurnia love him for?
- What does nothing else befit? What has Calpurnia grown to do? What caused her to do this?

ergo…vale (lines 18-19)

- Who thanks whom? Why does Pliny thank her? Why does Calpurnia thank her?
- How does Pliny sign off his letter?

Questions on Content, Style, and Culture

1. (lines 1-3) How does Pliny compliment Hispulla in these lines?

2. (lines 3-4) How does Pliny emphasise how pleased he is with his wife in these lines?

3. (lines 4-7):

    a. What examples of her behaviour does Pliny use to praise his Calpurnia?

    b. How does Pliny emphasise her behaviour through his style of writing?

4. (lines 7-10) Describe Calpurnia's behaviour whenever Pliny is speaking in court.

5. (lines 10-13):

    a. How does Pliny show his wife's devotion to him through his writing?

    b. How does Pliny emphasise her devotion through his style of writing?

6. (lines 14-15) How does Pliny show he is confident that their marriage will continue to be happy?

7. (lines 15-18):

a. What does Calpurnia love about Pliny, according to the author?

b. Why is this a relief to him?

8. (lines 18-19) Explain how Pliny uses his style of writing to show how both he and his wife are equally pleased with their partnership.

Discussion

Themes: marriage, expectations of women, qualities of a wife, relationships between husbands and wives, the upbringing of women

From this letter we learn much about Pliny and Calpurnia in particular, but also much about contemporary attitudes towards women and marriage. Pliny is delighted at the suitability of the match between himself and Calpurnia: that is to say that Calpurnia's behaviour as it is described here reflects well upon Pliny.

Upper-class Roman marriages were probably arranged rather than forced, and it certainly seems here that Calpurnia had some opportunity to refuse the match. We can speculate as to how much pressure she would have been under from family and society to accept. She does appear to understand the expectations.

Although Roman readers would probably have found little to surprise them here, a modern reader may draw the conclusion that Pliny is both patronising and lacking a genuine emotional bond with his wife. However, he clearly is delighted that Calpurnia is developing a genuine affection for him and is keen to share his interests, which is more than a Roman husband could generally expect from his wife. Perhaps it is too early in their married life for Pliny to have begun to see Calpurnia as an (almost) equal; in some ways she probably seems more like a daughter.

Questions on the whole passage

1. How does Pliny use praise of his wife to highlight his own achievements?

2. What does this passage suggest about the desirable qualities of an upper-class Roman wife in Pliny's day?

Further Information and Reading

Pliny wrote several letters which are addressed to Calpurnia herself: Book VI, letters 4 and 7, and Book VII letter 5. In VI.4, Pliny describes how much he misses her and is worried for her health; in VI.7, he describes how glad he is that she misses him as much as he misses her; and in VII.5 he explains that he is throwing himself into his work to avoid thinking about her absence.

Sherwin-White, A. N. (1966) The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Radice, B. (2006) The Letters of Pliny the Younger (2nd edition), Penguin

Walsh, P. G. (2006) *Pliny the Younger: Complete letters,* Oxford, Oxford University Press

Pliny: Letters 6.24 – Faithful unto death

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus, better known to us as Pliny the Younger (c.AD61-c.AD113) was a Roman politician from Comum. He is most famous now for the huge numbers of letters he wrote and subsequently published. These include a great deal of official correspondence with the emperor, gossip about well-known figures, and a great deal of commentary on life at the time for upper-class citizens of the Roman empire. His most famous letters are the eyewitness accounts he gave of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79.

Pliny wrote this short letter to his friend and fellow senator, Calpurnius Macer, who perhaps also came from the area round Comum. The purpose of the letter, besides telling an interesting story, was to make the point that noble deeds – though they tend to be publicised only if they involve well-known people – can be done by ordinary people too. The couple described in this letter were unknown to Pliny, and so he only heard about the episode long after it occurred.

The Latin is lightly adapted.

Content note: this text describes a suicide. It may be appropriate for teachers to inform their Head of Department and Welfare team that they are teaching a text with this theme and to ask for support or guidance.

Text

navigabam per Larium nostrum, cum amicus ostendit mihi villam atque etiam cubiculum quod in lacum prominet: ‘ex hoc' inquit ‘olim femina quaedam cum marito se praecipitavit. maritus ex diutino morbo ulceribus putrescebat. uxor ut corpus inspiceret exegit; neque enim quemquam fidelius indicaturum num posset sanari. vidit desperavit hortata est ut moreretur, comesque ipsa mortis, dux immo et exemplum et necessitas fuit; nam se cum marito ligavit abiecitque in lacum.

Notes

1 **Larium nostrum:** now Lake Como. Pliny’s home town of Comum lay on its shore. The use of nostrum may suggest that Calpurnius Macer, Pliny’s correspondent, also came from there: alternatively, the plural may be used simply to convey Pliny's affection for the place.

2 **etiam cubiculum:** this detail is carefully pointed out to foreshadow what will happen next.

in lacum prominet: wealthy Romans were fond of constructing their luxury villas right on the water’s edge, and even, as here, projecting out over the water. This fact is important for what follows.

ex hoc: from the bedroom

3 the details in this letter lend credibility to the situation as described by Pliny. There is a real location, and the story is told in language which sounds believably like an **amicus** recounting a tale he has heard, in particular the use of **olim** and the fact that the couple are unnamed. Pliny's friend also seems keen to make the tale as dramatic as possible to engage and entertain.

4 **maritus ex diutino morbo ulceribus putrescebat**: the husband was suffering from septic sores and must have been in considerably distress and pain. The text emphasises this with the use of **diutino** and the vivid verb **putrescebat**. In words that have been removed from the examination text, Pliny explains that these sores were around the husband's genitals, possibly the result of sexually transmitted disease.

4-5 **uxor ... inspicere:** evidence that a wife would not necessarily expect to see her husband's naked body on a regular basis.

5 **fidelius:** doctors, when faced by a terminal illness, would sometimes attempt treatments and promise recovery in order to gain greater rewards from their patient. The wife may be pointing out that she has no (financial) incentive to lie to him, or perhaps she is simply assuring her husband that she will not hide whatever she sees.

6 **vidit desperavit hortata est:** the lack of conjunctions (*asyndeton*) is used to show the rapidity of the sequence of events: as soon as she saw, she knew it was terminal; no sooner had she realised this than she urged him to die.

7 **comesque ... mortis:** she would take her own life alongside him. Although **comes** suggests a secondary role for her, Pliny immediately corrects this with **dux immo**: she played the leading, not the secondary, role; **exemplum**: in fact she was a model for him to follow; **necessitas:** even a 'compulsion' because she forced his fate upon him.

This list of three with repeated **et** (*polysyndetic tricolon*) creates the sense of all these descriptions piling up, moving us towards the brief but powerful conclusion.

8 **ligavit abiecitque:** the final moments are described briefly, mirroring the swift and decisive action.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

navigabam…prominet (lines 1-2):

- Where does Pliny say he was sailing? Who was he with?
- What did the friend point out to Pliny?
- What was the main feature about the bedroom?

'ex…praecipitavit' (lines 2-3):

- What person did the friend begin to speak about?
- What did the woman do? Where did she do this from? Who did she do this with?

‘maritus…sanari’ (lines 4-6):

- What had been happening to the husband? What was causing this?
- What did the wife ask her husband?
- Why did she say she should do this?

‘vidit…necessitas fuit’ (lines 6-7):

- How did the wife feel after she looked? What did she encourage her husband to do?
- In what was she his companion?
- What other descriptions of her are we given here?

‘nam…in lacum’ (line 7-8):

- Who did the wife tie herself to? What did she jump into?

Questions on Content, Style, and Culture

1. (lines 1-2) Describe what Pliny and his friend were doing in detail.
2. (lines 2-4):
    a. Why does Pliny’s friend start telling this story?
    b. What parts of these opening lines do you think would have made Pliny interested in hearing the rest of the story?
3. (lines 4-6) Explain fully why the wife asks to inspect her husband’s body.
4. (line 6):
    a. What happened imediately after the wife inspected his body?
    b. How does the style of writing here make this moment more exciting?
5. (lines 7-8):
    a. What does the wife do next?
    b. How does the style of writing emphasise her courage?
6. (whole passage) What qualities of a wife are being praised in this text?

Discussion

Themes: qualities of a wife, relationships between husbands and wives

Fidelity was a highly valued quality in a Roman wife, and in this text the woman is very much being praised for her courage and loyalty (rather than scrutinised for murdering her husband!). She also demonstrates courage in a manner appropriate for a Roman woman: she bravely carries out a terrible deed to alleviate the suffering of her husband. Discussion around these qualities could look at the ways in which the positive qualities assigned to married women are tied into what these women are providing for men and for society.

Pliny chooses to tell the story in surprisingly few words, perhaps being more interested in the moral that he draws from these events (not included in this extract) – that remarkable events can occur on one's doorstep, but one is unlikely to hear of them unless they involve someone well known. Do students agree with Pliny's conclusion?

This text can be challenging for students, with its positive description of what a modern reader may consider a murder-suicide. The Romans believed that suicide could be noble and the right thing to do in certain circumstances. In this text, the wife is being praised by the Romans for her overwhelming loyalty to her husband. It is important that students discuss and challenge the Roman point of view.

Further Information and Reading

Sherwin-White, A. N, (1966) The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Radice, B. (1969) *The Letters of Pliny the Younger*, London: Penguin

Walsh, P. G. (2006) *Pliny the Younger: Complete letters* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Seneca: de Beneficiis 3.16 – Changing Morals

Seneca discusses the decline of chastity and respect for marriage among women

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Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 BC – AD 65), known to us as Seneca the Younger, was a Stoic philosopher, and tutor and political adviser of the Emperor Nero. After being implicated in a plot against Nero, he was forced to take his own life. He was a prolific author, and among his many works were several philosophical treatises, including *de Beneficiis* (On Benefits). The subject of this work is the nature of benefits, gratitude and ingratitude, and various problems concerned with the giving and receiving of gifts and favours.

This extract contains a small section in which Seneca discusses the rising divorce rate and adultery among women, which he perceives as a sign of moral decline in first century Roman society. He reasons in the introduction which precedes this extract (3.16.1) that harsher punishments would only lead to greater levels of debauchery, as raising awareness of what other women do would only encourage yet more women to engage in this behaviour. In the extract itself (3.16.2-3) Seneca details the women's repugnant behaviour and lack of shame, using exaggeration (*hyperbole*) to portray the sense that this is a widespread problem among elite women in Roman society.

Some minor changes have been made to the original Latin word order.

Text

num iam ulla repudio erubescit, postquam feminae quaedam
illustres ac nobiles non consulum numero sed maritorum annos
suos computant et exeunt matrimonii causa, nubunt repudii?
tamdiu istuc timebatur, quamdiu rarum erat; quia nulla sine
divortio acta sunt, quod saepe audiebant id facere didicerunt.
num iam ullus adulterii pudor est, postquam eo ventum est ut
nulla virum habeat nisi ut adulterum irritet? pudicitia argumentum
est deformitatis. quam invenies tam miseram, tam sordidam, ut
illi satis sit unum adulterorum par, nisi singulis divisit horas et non
sufficit dies omnibus, nisi apud alium gestata est, apud alium
mansit? infrunita et antiqua est, quae nesciat matrimonium vocari
unum adulterium.

Notes

1 **num:** although this text was not written as a speech, Seneca uses many rhetorical devices to strengthen his argument, starting with this negative interrogative (*surely no woman..?*) to influence his readers' thoughts from the beginning.

ulla: the use of this word (*any woman*) highlights that Seneca believes all women are engaging in what were then considered the shameful activities of frequent divorce and remarriage. Rome's women are leading the way with the city's moral decline and not one of them is blushing over it.

Seneca is of course exaggerating his assessment that all Roman women are engaging in adulterous affairs (*hyperbole*), but this is a common complaint of many authors at the time. The Emperor Augustus even went as far as introducing a series of laws which offered rewards to those who did their duty to society by getting married and having children, and dealt out punishments to those who refused to get married, or those who disrespected the marriage bond by having affairs. However, Latin love poetry also glamourised adultery, leading Augustus to exile one poet (Ovid) for writing a series of manuals on adultery. Augustus was also forced to exile his own daughter for engaging in such behaviour.

1-2 **feminae quaedam illustres ac nobiles:** Seneca here highlights that it is the distinguished noble women of Rome's elite class who are setting this example of immoral behaviour to the rest of the city's women.

2-3 **non consulum numero sed maritorum annos suos computant:** the Romans dated their calendars according to the two consuls who were elected each year. Seneca is implying here that Roman women now change their husbands so often, they keep track of the years not by the consuls in charge, but by the husband(s) they had.

3 **exeunt matrimonii causa, nubunt repudii:** a nice balanced phrase which describes the actions of Roman women in Seneca's eyes suggesting the inevitability of divorce after each marriage.

4 **tamdiu…erat:** the pairing of *tamdiu* – *quamdiu* here emphasises that Seneca feels fear (of shame) has gone now that divorce and remarriage are not unusual. The moral decline of Roman society is a common theme among Roman philosophers at this time, often centring on marriage and child-rearing, but also condemning the increasingly luxurious lifestyles of the Roman elite.

4-5 **quia nulla sine divortio acta sunt:** *acta (diurna)* were daily records of senate decisions. Here, Seneca probably exaggerates (*hyperbole*) in claiming divorce is so widespread that it is mentioned in every one.

5 **quod saepe audiebant id facere didicerunt:** Seneca blames the increased publicity and gossip surrounding divorce for inspiring other women to indulge in the same behaviour.

6-7 **num …. irritet?** With a second rhetorical question, Seneca builds an argument that declining respect for marriage has led to lack of shame for adultery. Indeed, he claims, adultery has become the primary relationship for women while husbands serve only to keep lovers frustrated.

6 **num:** Seneca repeats the opening of his first rhetorical question, inviting his readers to continue agreeing with him.

7 **nulla (…) nisi:** Seneca is exaggerating again here, trying to convince his readers that every woman in Rome is engaging in adultery. The alliteration of 'n' emphasises the expectation of a negative answer.

irritet: a key feature of the ideal Roman wife is that she should irritate no-one! Her role was to remain at home taking care of the household, and to provide her husband with legitimate children. Seneca's own wife Paulina was an excellent example of a loving and supportive wife who did not seek to overstep the boundaries of her role, and remained submissive and obedient to her husband (as far as we know). In his other written works, Seneca holds her up as an example of the perfect partner in marriage, in stark contrast to the women he mentions here.

7 **pudicitia:** a key word when describing the ideal Roman woman – this word makes an appearance as a signifier of womanly virtue on many epitaphs. Seneca highlights just how far Roman morals have fallen by using this same word as an attribute of an ugly woman who cannot find herself several lovers.

8 **tam miseram, tam sordidam:** the repetition of *tam* here (*anaphora*) with two different pejorative adjectives emphasises this disparaging judgement of Roman women who were unable to attract lovers. This contrasts with the viewpoint of the more traditional members of society who of course believed that no women should be taking lovers.

9 **satis sit:** the repetition of the *s* sound (*sibilance*) here (and with *miseram* and *sordidam*) mimics a disapproving hissing sound that people might make at the sight of these unattractive women.

9-10 **nisi (…) nisi:** more repetition (*anaphora*) which Seneca uses to strengthen the persuasive rhythm of his speech, trying here to persuade his readers that, in these debauched times, Roman women were being perceived as inadequate unless they were entertaining multiple lovers each day.

non sufficit dies omnibus: by delaying *omnibus* to the end of this clause, Seneca highlights that 'all' is probably a significant number of lovers – extremely shocking to his conservative male readers who don't believe a woman should have any lovers.

10 **apud alium (…) apud alium:** repetition with emphasis on the *a* sound (*assonance*) to highlight the multiplicity of lovers. This sentence (starting on line 8) is another rhetorical question used by Seneca to encourage his readers to feel his own sense of shock and disgust at the morally-repugnant and shameless behaviour of these women.

11 **infrunita et antiqua est:** Seneca is being especially ironic here – he of course is socially conservative and thinks everyone should respect the bonds of marriage. He views traditional Roman morals as the ideal, not as old-fashioned.

11-12 **quae nesciat matrimonium vocari unum adulterium:** the placement of *unum adulterium* at the end of this sentence draws the reader's focus to the behaviour which Seneca wishes us to condemn with this ironic punchline. Seneca seemingly ridicules those women who do not value affairs above marriage, in an attempt to provoke outrage among his (male) readers and raise their suspicions that their wives may also be indulging in such behaviour.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

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

num iam ulla repudio erubescit (line 1):

- What does Seneca suggest women no longer feel embarrassed about?
- Is he talking about just one woman, or many?

feminae quaedam illustres ac nobiles (lines 1-2):

- What two things are we told about these certain women?

non consulum numero sed maritorum annos suos computant (lines 2-3):

- How do these women count their years (their age)?
- What alternative way of counting years does Seneca mention?

exeunt matrimonii causa, nubunt repudii (line 3):

- What reason does Seneca give for women to leave the house?
- What does he say is their purpose in getting married?

tamdiu istuc timebatur, quamdiu rarum erat (line 4):

- What does Seneca think women used to be afraid of?
- Why are they no longer afraid?

quia nulla sine divortio acta sunt (lines 4-5):

- What does Seneca say always mention divorce (i.e. there are none without divorce)?

quod saepe audiebant id facere didicerunt (line 5):

- What have Roman women learned to do?

num iam ullus adulterii pudor est (line 6):

- What do women no longer feel any shame about?

nulla virum habeat nisi ut adulterum irritet (line 7):

- What reason does Seneca give for a women to have a husband?

pudicitia argumentum est deformitatis (lines 7-8):

- What is chastity evidence of, according to Seneca?

quam invenies tam miseram, tam sordidam, ut illi satis sit unum adulterorum par (line 8-9):

- What two adjectives does Seneca use to describe the women who have only a few lovers?
- How many lovers does he say are enough for these women?

nisi singulis divisit horas et non sufficit dies omnibus (lines 9-10):

- How does Seneca suggest a woman might divide her time?
- Why might a woman need to see some lovers at night?

nisi apud alium gestata est, apud alium mansit (lines 10-11):

- How does Seneca propose a women might manage to see two different lovers?

infrunita et antiqua est, quae nesciat matrimonium vocari unum adulterium (lines 11-12):

- What alternative definition of marriage does Seneca give us?
- How does Seneca describe women who don't know that marriage is eqivalent to having just one affair?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-3) Who does Seneca blame for the perceived decline of morals among Roman women? How have they inspired this change in behaviour?
2. (lines 4-7) How does Seneca portray the idea that divorce is now prevalent in Roman society? Give 3 examples.
3. (lines 7-11) How has Seneca constructed this part of his argument to inspire shock and disgust among his readers?
4. (lines 11-12) How does Seneca contrast marriage and adultery here? What impact will this have on readers who consider marriage should be respected and adultery discouraged?
5. Who does Seneca blame in this text for the perceived decline of moral standards in Roman society? How does this compare to other texts you have read? Are women always responsible for adultery? (Tip: compare with Horace and his approach to 'wooing' a lover).

Discussion

Themes: adultery, marriage and fidelity, moral decline, divorce, chastity

Seneca seems to portray a complete breakdown of marriage and fidelity in first century Roman society. He believed it was a key sign of Rome's moral decline and a move away from traditional norms which would lead to Rome's eventual downfall. Why was it so important for women in particular to be faithful to their husbands? We know that Roman men could have many relationships with other women, including sex-workers and slaves. Do you think it was acceptable for men to expect their wives to conform to different standards of behaviour? Are there different expectations now?

Seneca blames 'distinguished and noble women' for the rise in adultery and divorce, as they are seen to set an example to women across Roman society as a whole. However, the lifestyles of the Roman elite were very different to those of the lower classes, and their marriage ceremonies could also be very different. To what extent do you think these elite women were responsible for these changes in behaviour?

Seneca's text clearly assigns women an active role in the conducting of their extra-marital affairs: he says they leave the house to find new husbands only in order to divorce later and find ways to fit in multiple lovers each day. However, Latin love poetry can give quite a different impression: Horace, for example, portrays women as objects to be conquered, and uses a crowbar to break down the doors of the lovers who had been locked up by their husbands. Do you think it is fair for Seneca to only blame women for the increase in divorce and adultery?

Seneca was not the only Roman who would have preferred a return to more traditional behaviour and greater respect for the marriage bond. The emperor Augustus introduced his marriage laws (in 18BC and 9AD) to encourage both men and women to get married and have more children. The laws were not successful and attracted much criticism from the Roman people. Why do you think this was?

Questions on the whole passage

1. Do you find Seneca's arguments to be convincing? How accurate do you think his portrayal of Roman behaviour is? Why do you think he makes his argument in this way?
2. Who do you believe to be responsible for the decline of moral behaviour in Rome? Does it surprise you that Seneca portrays women as the instigators of divorce and adultery, given that they had so little control over other aspects of their lives?

Further Information and Reading

The Cambridge Latin Course Book V Stage 38 on Roman marriage contains a detailed discussion in English. A digital version of this section can be found here.

Teachers may wish to read up on Roman marriage ideals and expectations: this article provides a brief overview. The Augustan marriage laws of 17BC and 9AD were Augustus' attempts to outlaw adulterous relationships with severe punishments: further information can be found here. The same website also has an article about the adulterous activities of the emperor's daughter Julia, and the punishment he inflicted upon her, and an article about divorce in the early and later empire.

The topic of Rome's social and moral decline was addressed by numerous authors at the time: Juvenal's Sixth Satire might provide interesting points of comparison when analysing how Roman men discussed women who refused to confine themselves to the traditional and limited role of a wife.

Acknowledgement of resources used

Griffin, M. (2013) *Seneca on Society: A Guide to* De *Beneficiis* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Griffin, M. and Inwood, B. (2011) *On Benefits: The Complete Works of Lucius Annaeus Seneca* Chicago: University of Chicago Press