



# CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

## Component 2: Latin Literature and Sources (Themes) Love and Marriage

### Catullus 5, 8, 70 and 85

#### For examination in 2024-2026

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

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

The Teacher's Notes contain the follow:

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

## 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.



- 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 emphasise 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. 5  
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, 10  
sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.  
vale puella, iam Catullus obdurat;  
nec te requiret nec rogabit invitam.  
at tu dolebis, cum rogaberis nulla.  
scelestas, vae te, quae tibi manet vita? 15  
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).*

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

- 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. *candidi* 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)*

—     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —     $\begin{array}{c} v \\ \text{—} \end{array}$   
                  —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —    | —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —     $\begin{array}{c} vv \\ \text{—} \end{array}$  | —

- 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 unsuspecting 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)*

–     $\underline{v}v$  | –     $\underline{v}v$  | –     $\underline{v}v$  | –     $\underline{v}v$  | –     $vv$  | –     $\underline{v}$   
                  –     $\underline{v}v$  | –     $\underline{v}v$  | –    | –     $vv$  | –     $vv$  | –

- 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 forcefully 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 chiasmic 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.

odi et amo ...  
... sentio et excrucior.

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.

— vv | — — | — vv | — — | — vv | — —  
— vv | — vv | — | — vv | — vv | —

---

### 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](#)

## Acknowledgements of resources used

Fordyce, C. J. (1961) *Catullus: a commentary*, OUP  
Merrill, E.T. (2014) *Catullus*, Wentworth Press  
Quinn, K. (1998) *Catullus: The Poems*, BCP  
Ellis, R. (2010). *A Commentary on Catullus*, CUP