



CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

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

Horace: *Finished with love*

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.

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

Text

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

laevum marinae qui Veneris latus 5
custodit. hic, hic ponite lucida
funalia et vectes et arcus
oppositis foribus minaces.

o quae beatam diva tenes Cyprum et
Memphin carentem Sithonia nive, 10
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.

$\begin{array}{cccccccccccc} \nu & - & \nu & - & - & || & - & \nu & \nu & - & \nu & \nu \\ - & - & \nu & - & - & || & - & \nu & \nu & - & \nu & \nu \\ & & \nu & - & - & - & \nu & - & \nu & & & \\ - & \nu & \nu & - & \nu & \nu & - & \nu & - & \nu & & \end{array}$

- 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:

<i>laevum</i>	<i>marinae</i>	<i>qui</i>	<i>Veneris</i>	<i>latus</i>
adjective accusative	adjective genitive		noun genitive	noun 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?

Memphim 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?
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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?
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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](#)).

Resources used:

Rudd, N. & Nisbet, R.G.M. (2004) *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book III*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

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