



# CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

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

### *Martial: An enigma*

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

## Martial: Epigrams 12.46 – An enigma

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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.

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### Text

difficilis facilis, iucundus acerbus es idem:

nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te.

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### Notes

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

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

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.

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## 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.

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## 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?
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### 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.

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### Acknowledgements

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).