

CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin



Component 2

Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)

Love and Marriage

Source Images

For examination in 2024-2026

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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](#)

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 newlyweds, 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).