



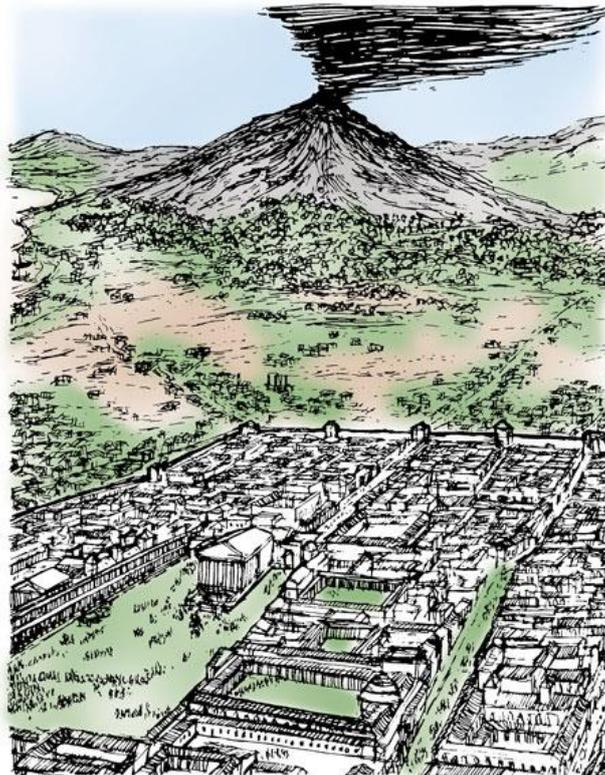
CSCP Support Materials

for
Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 3A

Latin Literature (Narratives) Pliny, *The Eruption
of Vesuvius*

For examination in 2020 and 2021

Section E



Section E

Pliny describes how his uncle reaches Pomponianus and tries to encourage him and the others as they wait for the situation to improve.

Notes

- 1 **quo:** 'to that place', i.e. Stabiae.
secundissimo: supply *vento* – 'on a very favourable wind'. The breeze which was preventing Pomponianus from leaving worked in Pliny's uncle's favour.
- 1-2 **complectitur...consolatur hortatur:** use of the historic present tense to create an immediate and vivid account. There are no connectives here (asyndeton) – Pliny the Elder is quick to comfort his friend.
- 2 **trepidantem:** supply *virum* or *amicum*. Unlike the elder Pliny who is described as *solutus metu* (section C line 12), Pomponianus is trembling.
timorem eius sua securitate: an effective chiasmic phrase which emphasises the contrast between the two men.
- 3 **deferri... cenat:** even in the midst of a crisis, Pliny's uncle keeps to his usual routine as described by his nephew in Letter III:5. Again, Pliny makes use of the historic present (*iubet... cenat*).
- 3-4 **aut hilaris... hilari:** *similis* is followed by the dative. Pliny is either genuinely cheerful or pretending to be. Whichever is the case, his nephew praises him.
- 4-6 **interim... excitabatur:** Pliny draws a contrast between the normality of his uncle's routine which he has just described with the far-from-normal effects of the eruption.
- 6 **ille:** i.e. Pliny's uncle
agrestium: the whole of the area was farmed as the volcanic soil was extremely fertile. A wall painting from Pompeii shows the slopes of Mount Vesuvius covered in vines.
trepidatione: an echo of *trepidantem* in line 2 emphasising the reaction of most people.
- 7 **in remedium formidinis:** Pliny's purpose in pretending that the fires were simply farmers' bonfires was to soothe the fear of those around him, presumably Pomponianus and his household.
- 7-8 **tum se... somno:** in contrast to the surrounding terror, Pliny is able to fall asleep. Unlike his cheerfulness earlier (lines 4-5) which may have been simulated, his sleep was genuine enough, emphasised by the superlative *verissimo*.
- 9 **propter amplitudinem corporis:** Pliny attributes his uncle's heavy and noisy breathing to the stoutness of his body: he probably suffered from asthma which later contributed to his death.
- 9-10 **ab iis... audiebatur:** bedrooms in Roman houses normally had a curtain across the doorway rather than a solid door.

Discussion

The focus is once more on Pliny's uncle (*avunculus meus*) as he arrives in Stabiae. Pliny draws the contrast between Pomponianus' fear and his uncle's apparent lack of concern as he keeps to his normal routine of bathing and dining with a cheerful demeanour. Pliny suggests that his uncle may have been putting on a good face but commends him for doing so.

In lines 4-6, Pliny builds up a vivid picture: *e Vesuvio monte pluribus locis* – 'from more places on Mount Vesuvius', *latissimae flammae altaque incendia relucebant* – 'very extensive flames and fires rising up high were

blazing out'. The tricolon, use of the superlative adjective and the virtual synonyms *flammae* and *incendia* all contribute to the powerful description. There is further contrast between the brightness and glare (*fulgor et claritas*) and the darkness of the night (*tenebris noctis*).

After this description, Pliny quickly refocuses on his uncle who tries to explain the flames away. He is sufficiently relaxed to fall asleep and there is a touch of affectionate humour as Pliny describes his uncle's snoring which those outside the bedroom are able to hear.

Questions

1. Look at lines 1-2 (*quo tunc... leniret*):
 - How did Pliny the Elder manage to reach Stabiae?
 - What did Pliny do when he saw Pomponianus?
 - In lines 2-3, what evidence is there that Pomponianus was frightened? You should refer to Latin words and phrases to support your view.
2. Look at lines 3-4 (*deferri... hilari*):
 - Give **two** ways in which Pliny's uncle tried to create a sense of normality.
 - Pliny suggests that his uncle may have been pretending to be cheerful, but if so, this was just as brave. Do you agree? Explain your view.
3. Look at lines 4-6 (*interim... excitabatur*): show how Pliny creates an effective impression of the effects of the eruption. You should refer to specific Latin words or phrases and explain your choices.
4. Look at lines 6-7 (*ille... dictitabat*):
 - Pliny's uncle tells his companions things that are not true. Pick out and translate the three-word Latin phrase which explains why he did so.
 - Was Pliny right to tell a lie in these circumstances? Give a reason for your view.
5. Look at lines 7-10 (*tum... audiebatur*): explain in your own words how the people in the house knew that Pliny was genuinely asleep and not simply pretending.