



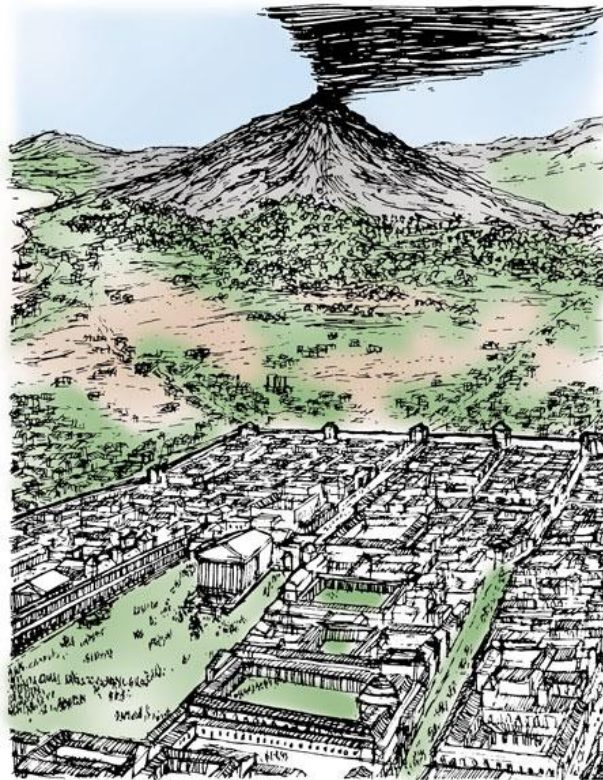
CSCP Support Materials

for
Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 3A

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

For examination in 2020 and 2021

Section F



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As the situation gets worse, Pliny's uncle and Pomponianus' household make a plan to escape.

Notes

1 **diaeta:** Pliny's bedroom seems to have been self-contained rather than in the house itself as it was accessed through a courtyard.

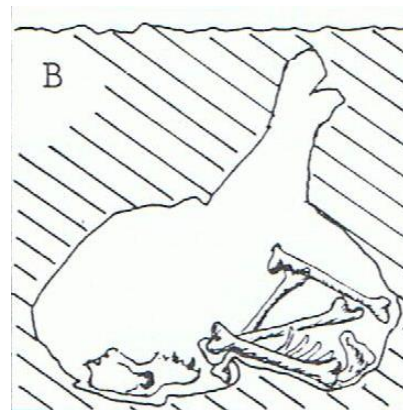
1-2 **cinere mixtis que pumicibus:** the word order is very effective, with the two substances (*cinere* and *pumicibus*) bracketing the participle (*mixtis*) which holds them together.

The towns around Vesuvius, notably Pompeii, were eventually buried by a similar mixture. When the hot substances hardened, the shapes of organic matter - including human and non-human bodies - were preserved. By the use of Fiorelli's process, plaster casts of these could be made. Giuseppe Fiorelli was an Italian archaeologist who directed excavations at Pompeii from 1863 – 1875.

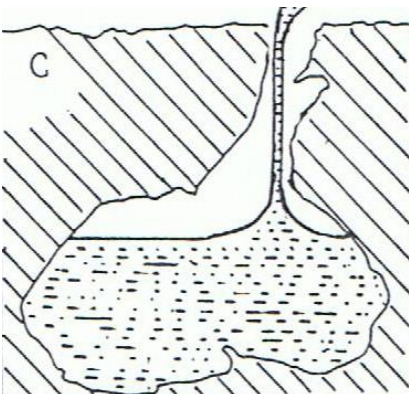
Fiorelli's process



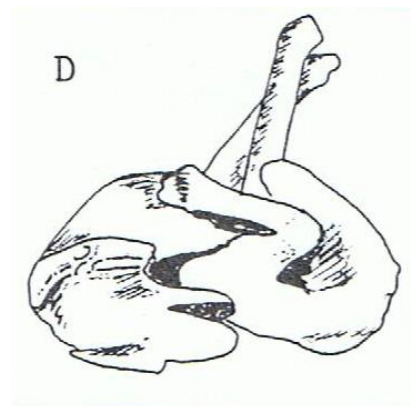
A dog dies in the eruption



In time, the body rots, leaving a cavity



Plaster is poured into the cavity



When the plaster is set, a perfect cast is left

- 2 **mora:** supply *fuisset* – ‘if there had been...’. The omission of the verb here creates a sense of urgency – speed is of the essence.
- 3 **exitus negaretur:** in section D (line 8), Pliny says the danger was not yet approaching. The amount of ash in the courtyard suggests that things had deteriorated very quickly indeed.
- 4 **pervigilaverant:** possibly because they were too afraid to sleep, unlike Pliny’s uncle.
- 4-5 **in commune... vagentur:** there are only two options – either to stay in the house or to roam about outside. The verb *vagari*, from which the English word ‘vague’ is derived through the related adjective *vagus*, suggests a lack of plan or purpose except to be out in the open. As Pliny goes on to explain, the house was starting to shake and there was a real danger that it would collapse.
- Note the continued use of the historic present (*consultant... subsistant... vagentur*) to heighten the tension, following on from those in lines 3-4 (*procedit... reddit*). Compare also *constringunt* in line 11.
- 6 **vastis:** translate as ‘huge’. In letter VI:20, passage J, Pliny says tremors were common in Campania. Obviously, this was much more serious.
- 7 **nunc huc nunc illuc abire aut referri videbantur:** an effective phrase to describe the movement of the buildings from side to side.
- 8 **rursus:** ‘on the other hand’. Pliny effectively shows that neither option was entirely safe.
- quamquam levium exesorumque:** ‘though light and porous (i.e. the pumice stones)...’
- 9 **quod tamen... elegit:** a comparison of the two dangers made them choose to leave the house.
- 10 **apud illum... apud alios:** i.e. Pliny’s uncle (*apud illum*) and the others (*apud alios*).
- 10-11 **ratio rationem... timorem timor vicit:** another chiasmus which effectively contrasts the attitude of Pliny’s uncle who made a rational choice and the others who were swayed by fear.

Discussion

As the fallout from the eruption reaches Stabiae, there is no longer any sense of normality. Pliny’s uncle has to be woken up to prevent his being trapped in his room.

There is now a crucial decision to be made; do they stay in the house and risk it collapsing around them or take their chances outside where the pumice stones are raining down?

The description of the house shaking – *crebris vastisque tremoribus* – is terrifying, even for those who live in an area where tremors are commonplace. *quasi emota sedibus* (‘as if detached from their foundations’) vividly conveys the violence of the tremors as does *nunc huc nunc illuc abire aut referri videbantur*: the buildings are now tottering from side to side.

Although the pumice is light, it remains a danger but going outside proves to be the lesser of two evils. Even then, Pliny contrasts how his uncle and the others made the decision to leave the house, one by weighing up the arguments and making an informed choice and the rest

having one fear being overtaken by a greater fear.

This passage ends with a matter-of-fact statement: the pillows tied on their heads gave some protection from falling objects.

Questions

1. Look at lines 1-3 (*sed area... negaretur*):
 - What evidence is there that Pliny's uncle's bedroom was not in the main house?
 - What new danger presented itself?
2. Look at lines 3-4 (*excitatus... reddit*):
 - What had Pomponianus and the others been doing while Pliny slept?
 - Why do you think they had acted in this way?
3. Look at lines 4-5 (*in commune... vagentur*): what decision did they now have to make?
4. Look at lines 5-7 (*nam... videbantur*): how does Pliny create a vivid picture of what was happening to the buildings at this point? You should refer to specific Latin words or phrases and explain your choices.
5. Look at lines 8-11 (*sub dio... vicit*):
 - Pick out **and** translate the two adjectives in line 8 which describe the pumice.
 - What was the danger of leaving the house?
 - What did Pliny and the others eventually decide to do?
 - In lines 10-11, how does Pliny use words and word order to convey how each person made the decision? You should refer to specific Latin words or phrases and explain your choices.
6. Look at lines 11-12 (*cervicalia... fuit*): what was the purpose of the pillows?