



CSCP Support Materials

for

Eduqas GCSE Latin, Component 3A

Latin Literature (Narratives) Ovid, *The Flood*

For examination in 2020 and 2021

Teacher's Notes: Section E



Section E

The effects of the flood (*Metamorphoses* 1.291-312)

Ovid describes the effects of the flood on the earth and how the waters have transformed the previous order of things for humans and animals alike.

Notes

- 1-2** **mare...pontus...ponto**: note the use of two different words for sea. The same two words are used again in lines 18-19.
- 3-6** **hic...alter...ille...hic**: Ovid describes the experiences of different humans during the flood.
- 3** **occupat**: the first verb of this section which is in the historic present tense. Other examples in this section are *sedet* (line 3), *dicit* (line 4), *navigat* and *deprendit* (line 6), *figitur* (line 7), *terunt* (line 8), *ponunt* (line 10), *mirantur* (line 11), *tenent* (line 12), *incursant* (line 13), *nat* (line 14), *vehit* (lines 14 and 15), *prosunt* (line 16), *rapitur* (line 21) and *domant* (line 22). *decidit* (line 18) is likely to be (historic) present tense too, given the number of historic present tense verbs in this section, but as it is impossible to distinguish between the present and perfect tense (third person singular indicative active) forms of this verb, it could also be perfect tense
- 6** **navigat**: Lee (see under “Further Reading”) notes that this word could mean “swim” as it does in *Heroides* 19.47.
- 6-7** **ulmo...ancora**: these two words are delayed by Ovid perhaps to emphasise the strange nature of what is happening: as a Roman heard the words in order he would perhaps be surprised on getting to these two, which reveal how extraordinary the situation has become due to the flooding: one would not expect fish to be found in trees, or an anchor in a meadow.
- 7-13** In these lines Ovid switches from discussing the experiences of humans above the waterline to describing what was happening beneath. The reader is perhaps prepared for the transition by the mention of *pisces* in line 6.
- 8** **carinae**: the *carina* was literally the keel of a ship, but was often used in poetry to refer to a ship as a whole. This figure of speech, where the word for a part of something is used to refer to its whole, is called synecdoche.
- 10** **phocae**: this word again seems delayed for effect – its delay leaves the reader wondering what animals have replaced the *capellae* of line 9 – even if a change is anticipated by the adjective *deformes* (contrasting with *graciles* in line 9). We will discover more about “non-marine” animals in lines 14-18.
- 11** **-que**: note the use of this conjunction twice at the end of the line – an example of polysyndeton.

- 12 **Nereides:** these were sea-nymphs, daughters of Nereus. As the subject of *mirantur* this word is again significantly delayed.
- 14-18 ***lupus...oves...leones...tigres...apro...cervo...volucris:*** Ovid's focus is now on animals and how the flood is affecting them.
- 14-15 ***vehit unda...unda vehit:*** note the repetition, which emphasises what is happening.
- 15 ***fulminis:*** the word *fulmen* literally means “thunderbolt” but here seems to refer to the boar's weapons, i.e. its tusks.
- 16 ***prosunt:*** this verb needs to be taken twice, i.e. *nec vires fulminis apro prosunt nec crura velocia cervo ablato prosunt*.
- 17-18 The subject of these lines is *volucris*; line 17 contains an ablative phrase to explain why the bird has “tired wings”. *mare* in line 18 should be taken as being in the accusative case, so *in mare* is “into the sea”.
- 19-20 ***obruerat...pulsabant:*** each line begins with a verb which places emphasis on the actions. The subject of line 19 is *immensa licentia ponti*.
- 20 ***novi montana cacumina fluctus:*** note the chiasmic interweaving of subject and object here: subject (*novi*) object (*montana*) object (*cacumina*) subject (*fluctus*).
- 21 ***unda...unda:*** important to note that the first use of *unda* in this line is ablative singular, whereas the second use is nominative singular.
- quibus unda pepercit:*** this is a relative clause describing the *illos* of line 22; *quibus* is dative as the verb *parco* (*pepercit* here) takes the dative.
- 22 Ovid delays the nouns in this line, revealing the adjectives first: *longa* describes the subject (*ieiunia*), whereas *inopi* describes *victu* (the ablative which tells us the instrument used by the subject).

Anderson (under “Further Reading”) notes that Ovid could be seen as injecting “little emotion into his description... Instead, he assumes a clear distance from the scene”, but that “we fail badly if we conclude that the poet lacks sympathy and is merely displaying his wit inopportunistly. Our discomfort with this objective account (which reflects the gods' viewpoint, not ours) is a response designed by Ovid” (p. 176).

Questions

1. Look at lines 1-2 (*jamque...ponto*): how does Ovid make clear in these lines the extent of the flooding?
2. Look at lines 3-6 (*occupat...ulmo*): what four human experiences are described here?
3. Look at lines 7-13 (*figitur...pulsant*):
 - a. What is described in these lines?
 - b. How does Ovid emphasise the extraordinary nature of what is happening here?

4. Look at lines 14-18 (*nat...alis*): how does Ovid use the experiences of animals to emphasise the remarkable effects of the flood here?
5. Look at lines 19-22 (*obruerat...victu*): what consequences of the flooding are described here?