

Germānicus et Pisō (edited extracts from Tacitus, *Annals* 2.55-82 and 3.1-15)

Summary of the story

Tiberius sent Germanicus to the East to solve some long-standing problems on the fringes of the empire, including a crisis in Armenia; at the same time he sent Piso to Syria as governor to keep an eye on Germanicus and report back to him. The prescribed text begins after Piso and Germanicus have arrived in Syria. Germanicus, however, was more concerned with his political mission and set off for Armenia. After making a settlement in Armenia he visited Egypt. Meanwhile, in Syria Piso had reversed or cancelled Germanicus' orders. On his return to Syria, Germanicus quarrelled with Piso, then fell ill. He believed that Piso had poisoned him, and on his deathbed he asked his friends to avenge his death. Germanicus' wife Agrippina sailed to Italy, intent on revenge. Piso was in Cos when Germanicus died. Although Germanicus' supporters had appointed a new governor to replace him, Piso returned to Syria and attempted to recover the governorship by force. However, he was unsuccessful. He then returned to Rome, where he was put on trial. Although he refuted the poisoning charge, he could not answer the charge of corrupting the soldiers and abusing his position as governor. However, popular feeling was against Piso. Before the trial was concluded he committed suicide.

Text and adaptation

This version of the death of Germanicus and trial of Piso has been adapted from Tacitus' account in *Annals* II (55, 69-75, 82) and III (1-4, 11-15). Passages of Latin are interspersed with sections of English translation and summary (the summary passages are in italics). There are some omissions and the Latin has been simplified to make it more accessible to students at Key Stage 4; some sentences and phrases have been omitted, and there are alterations to vocabulary, syntax and word order. Nevertheless, the language remains close to the original.

Tacitus and history

Publius (or Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus was born in about AD 56, possibly in Gaul. Like many high-ranking provincials, he came to Rome to pursue a political career. He was a member of the Senate, became consul, and in AD 112-3 was governor of Asia. He died some time after AD 117. Tacitus wrote two major historical works, the *Annals* and the *Histories*, in which he gave an account of the history of Rome from the accession of the Emperor Tiberius to the death of Domitian (AD 14-96). About half of these works have survived.

Tacitus' account of the Julio-Claudian emperors has been known as the *Annals* (Latin *Annales*) only since the sixteenth century. Its original title was *ab excessu divi Augusti* (*From the death of the divine Augustus*). The title *Annales* is derived from the way Tacitus organised his material, describing all the events of each year before moving on to the next. This was a traditional way of organising and writing history.

Tacitus claims he is impartial (*sine irā et studiō*, 'without indignation and partisanship', *Annals* 1.1.3). The facts he reports are generally accurate, but he tends to emphasise the oppressive aspects of the imperial system and concentrate on the faults of the emperors. His hostility to Tiberius is evident; he stresses Tiberius' hypocrisy and duplicity, and favours the more sinister interpretation of Tiberius' motives.

The Romans regarded history as a branch of literature. An historian was expected to tell a good story in a highly descriptive, dramatic and emotional style. It was accepted that he would invent speeches and elaborate on circumstantial detail. Tacitus wrote his history of the

events of AD 18-20 in about AD 114, almost a century afterwards. Although he had access to contemporary accounts and records, he does not give much information about his sources, and from the level of detail it is clear that there is a large element of speculation and imagination.

People and Places

People	
Tiberius	Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus; Roman emperor AD 14-37; adopted son of Augustus, the first emperor of Rome
Germanicus	Germanicus Julius Caesar; born 15 (or 16) BC; nephew and adopted heir of Tiberius; great-nephew (by adoption and marriage) of Augustus; commander-in-chief of the Roman army in the East
Cn. Piso	Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso; governor of Syria
Agrippina	wife of Germanicus; granddaughter of Augustus
Plancina	wife of Piso; she came from a noble and wealthy family
Livia	widow of Augustus; mother of Tiberius; grandmother of Germanicus
Gnaeus Sentius Martina	governor of Syria after the death of Germanicus a notorious poisoner
Places	
Syria	Roman province on the eastern edge of the Roman empire
Armenia	kingdom on the eastern border of the Roman empire
Cous	Cos, an island off the coast of Turkey
Brundisium	modern Brindisi, the main Italian seaport for travel to and from Greece and further east

Further biographical information on some of the characters

Germanicus

Germanicus Julius Caesar, 24 May 15 (or 16) BC - 10 October AD 19. He was the son of Nero Claudius Drusus, the brother of the Emperor Tiberius. The name Germanicus had been given to his father by the Senate in recognition of his military success in conquering Germany. Germanicus was adopted in AD 4 by his uncle Tiberius, and thus became a member of the Julian **gēns**, changing his name from Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus to Germanicus Iulius Caesar. He was consul twice, in AD 12 and 18, and was successful as a military commander in Germany. In AD 17 Tiberius recalled him from Germany and gave him the command to reorganise the eastern provinces with **maius imperium** (subordinate to that of Tiberius).

Tacitus portrays Germanicus as a brilliant and virtuous hero. In doing this, he was reflecting the popular myth that had grown up around Germanicus after his death, and using him as a foil to the tyrant Tiberius. Goodyear's assessment of Germanicus' character and achievements (vol. II, p.416) is an antidote to Tacitus':

'As a general he was keen, but unenterprising, as a man warm and demonstrative, but essentially weak. His weaknesses, camouflaged by charm, may have passed as merits and helped to make him so widely loved; that does not excuse Tacitus for ignoring them here. But

I must not press the indictment too far. Germanicus had his successes and earned them, particularly in dealing with the eastern provinces and Parthia. If Rome had possessed the office of minister for foreign affairs, he would have filled it excellently. His fitness for supreme power is another question.'

Piso

Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, c. 44/43 BC - AD 20, was consul in 7 BC. He was proconsul of Africa and governor (**lĕgātus**) of Nearer Spain (appointed by Augustus). In AD 17 Tiberius appointed him governor of Syria.

Agrippina

Vipsania Agrippina, c. 14 BC - AD 33, known as 'the Elder Agrippina', was the daughter of M. Vipsanius Agrippa and Julia (daughter of Augustus), so she was the granddaughter of Augustus. She married Germanicus in AD 5, and they had nine children; one of them, Gaius, was to be the next emperor (Caligula). Agrippina accompanied Germanicus on his commands overseas, to the Rhine in AD 14-16 and afterwards to the East. After the death of Germanicus her relations with the Emperor were bad. In AD 29 she was arrested on Tiberius' orders and banished by the Senate to the island of Pandateria where she starved to death in AD 33.

Tiberius

Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, born in 42 BC, was emperor from AD 14 until his death in AD 37. He was the son of Tiberius Claudius Nero and Livia Drusilla. After her divorce from T. Claudius Nero, Livia married Octavian, later to become the first emperor of Rome, Augustus. Tiberius became the stepson of Augustus, and married Augustus' daughter, Julia. He was adopted by Augustus and succeeded him as emperor.

Magic and curses

Magic played an important part in ancient literature, but did the Romans really believe in and practise magic? In the ancient Roman world most people believed in the existence of spirits which intervened in and controlled natural processes, and that it was possible to influence these spirits in various ways, not just by prayer but by certain spells and actions. The growth of scientific knowledge led some people to believe that the world could be understood by reason, yet many continued to employ magic. Medicine is a good example. The Greek Hippocrates, who lived in the fifth century BC, had tried to remove magic and superstition from the treatment of illness, replacing it with observation of symptoms and attempts to discover the causes of diseases. Five hundred years later, despite advances in medical knowledge, Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History*, records a cure for toothache:

Burn the head of a dog that has died from rabies, then drop the ash, mixed in cypress oil, into the ear closer to the painful tooth.
(Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 30.21)

Magical practices included the use of potions, spells, incantations, curses and charms. Magic could be used for good or evil purposes, for example, charms and potions to win the love of a beloved person or to find a cure for an illness, curses to bring harm to one's enemies. To gain control of a person the witch or magician often needed something connected with them; this could be an image of the victim, something taken from them such as hair, nail clippings or a piece of clothing. Wax images would be melted in a fire or pierced with a nail, with the belief that the person would suffer pain or be melted with love. A name could also be used. Since it was considered more effective to write the name down, the name would be scratched on a

piece of lead, sometimes with a curse or magical formula added, then thrown into a well or buried in the ground, often near or in a tomb.

People at all levels of society used magic. Papyri from ancient Egypt record information about the Romans' use of magic and **dēfixiōnēs** (curse-tablets) have been found all over the Roman empire.

The penalty for employing magic to kill someone was death or exile. Using magic to cause someone to fall in love was also a criminal offence. Magic was often viewed by the authorities as dangerous, and it was outlawed. Magicians and astrologers were repeatedly expelled from Rome. Emperor Tiberius discovered a conspiracy against himself, and as a result expelled magicians and astrologers from Rome and Italy, then decreed the death penalty for non-Romans and exile for Romans still found to be practising magic.

Pliny the Elder traced the origins of magic back to the Persians, from whom it spread to the Greeks and thence to the Romans. Pliny was hostile to magic, opposing it to religion and to the norms of human behaviour. He drew attention to the bestial quality of magic: human sacrifice and drinking human blood. For the Romans human sacrifice was seen as a perversion of animal sacrifice, which they thought was a legitimate religious rite.

So universal was the cult of magic throughout the world, although its nations disagree or are unknown to each other. It is beyond calculation how great is the debt owed to the Romans, who swept away the monstrous rites, in which to kill a man was the highest religious duty and for him to be eaten a passport to health.

(Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 30.13)

Pliny regarded Druidism as magic, not religion, because the Druids performed human sacrifice. The Emperor Augustus had forbidden Roman citizens to join the Druid cult, and then banned it in Gaul.

Magic was thus seen as outside, or even opposed to, traditional Roman religion, on the one hand, and rationalism, on the other hand. However, throughout the Roman empire, magic continued to be used by people at all levels of society, alongside scientific discovery and traditional religious practices.

For further information on magic and curses see *Cambridge Latin Course*, Book III, Stage 22.

Further reading

Translations

Cynthia Damon, *Tacitus: Annals* (London: Penguin, 2012)

M. Grant, *The Annals of Imperial Rome by Cornelius Tacitus* (London: Penguin, 1971)

A.J. Woodman, *The Annals by Cornelius Tacitus* (Indianapolis, Hackett publishing Company, 2004)

Commentaries

Cambridge School Classics Project, *Cambridge Latin Anthology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Cambridge School Classics Project, *Cambridge Latin Anthology Teacher's Handbook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

D. C. Chandler, *Selections from Annals II-III, Germanicus and Piso* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)

F.R.D. Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus*, volume II: *Annals 1.55-81 and Annals 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

A.J. Woodman and R.H. Martin, *The Annals of Tacitus Book 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Modern scholarship

Rhiannon Ash, *Tacitus (Ancients in Action)* (London: Duckworth, 2006)

Fiction

Robert Graves, *I, Claudius*, chapters 20 and 21 (with a later surprise in chapter 29)

Suggestions for reading and teaching

Three key aims are:

- understanding what the Latin means
- translating the Latin into correct, natural English
- literary appreciation

Initially it is advisable to maintain a brisk pace and concentrate on establishing the narrative, postponing detailed exploration of the text until students have become more used to the style and language. Teachers can guide students towards understanding that translation is a two-stage process. First, translate the words literally. Then, produce a polished version in natural English, aiming for a style that is as close to the structure and vocabulary of the original Latin as possible while being expressed in correct and idiomatic English. Sometimes this may require a degree of paraphrase to avoid contorted 'translationese'. Although a sample translation is provided in the course resources, it is expected that each student should make his/her own individual translation after various options have been discussed and evaluated.

It is often useful to adopt the following approach before attempting a translation:

1. Read aloud - to emphasise phrasing and stress word groups.
2. Study the vocabulary.
3. Break up complex sentences into constituent parts for comprehension and translation.
4. Comprehension and linguistic questions.

As a final consolidation, it is good practice for students or the teacher to read aloud a passage which has been translated and explored.

A smartboard or projector is useful for marking up or highlighting parts of the text, e.g. split noun/adjective phrases, uses of the ablative.

Some suggestions

- Encourage students to focus on motivation by stopping at intervals during reading to ask them to think about why the characters act as they do. Some of the comprehension and personal response questions are designed to get students thinking in this way and reading between the lines as they read the story.
- Encourage students to distinguish fact from interpretation and think of alternative interpretations.
- In discussing style teachers need to bear in mind that the Latin has been adapted.

About the Teacher's Notes

The prescribed text is broken up into short sections and the notes on each section are usually followed by a *Discussion* and *Questions*. The notes concentrate on matters of language and content, but do include some comment on style and literary effects. The *Discussion* and *Questions* focus mostly on literary appreciation and interpretation.

Rhetorical and technical terms are used throughout these notes. Some of these may be unfamiliar to teachers new to teaching Latin literature; usually a definition is supplied when the term is first used.

These notes are intended to be independent of the commentary provided for students. There is therefore, a substantial overlap of material, some of it *verbatim*. The notes are designed to provide for the needs of a wide spectrum of teachers, from those with limited knowledge of Latin and who are perhaps entirely new to reading Latin literature, to teachers experienced in both language and literature. It is hoped that all will find something of use and interest. Teachers who feel they need more help with the language will find it useful to consult the student commentary as well as these notes.

Note that some of the information contained in these notes is for general interest and to satisfy the curiosity of students and teachers. The examination requires knowledge outside the text only when it is needed in order to understand the text.

Language and Style

The language has been adapted, but the passage still bears some marks of Tacitus' distinctive style, e.g. economy of expression, variety of expression (**variātiō**), asyndeton.

It might be helpful at an early stage in the reading for the teacher to gather together some examples to demonstrate the way the ablative can be used without a preposition; this is a notable feature of Tacitus' style and can be a stumbling block for inexperienced readers.

The extract contains quite a lot of reported speech, some of it extended over several sentences. Therefore, teachers may like to precede reading the extract with some revision of infinitives and the accusative and infinitive construction. There are also several present participles in the dative and genitive.

Notes on the text

Section A: Piso in Syria (*Annals* 2.55)

On arrival in Syria Piso immediately set about undermining Germanicus by fostering indiscipline in the army. His wife, Plancina, made insulting remarks about Germanicus and his wife, Agrippina. But Germanicus, although aware of their behaviour, chose to ignore it.

Notes

1-3 at ... iuvābat: before reading this sentence, ensure students have the contextual information they need to understand it. The introduction to the text provides most of the information about the relationship between Tiberius and Germanicus and Tiberius' reasons for sending Germanicus and Piso to the East. Piso had been appointed governor of Syria by the Emperor Tiberius, and had travelled there from Rome with his wife, Plancina. As governor, he would be in command of the four legions of the army which were stationed in the province. However, Germanicus, who

had been given **maius imperium** (greater power) by Tiberius, was commander-in-chief of the army in the East.

Reading the sentence aloud, with careful emphasis on the phrasing, will help students grasp the structure of the sentence. This could be followed by a few comprehension questions, such as:

- Where did Piso go?
- What/who else are we told Piso reached (**attigit**) besides Syria?
- After he got to Syria, how did he treat the legions?
- Which soldiers did he target in particular?
- Going back to the clause **quō celerius cōnsilia inciperet**, what was Piso's motive in treating the soldiers like this?

After this initial investigation, students can be asked to make a translation of the sentence (they will probably need extra help with **quō celerius ... inciperet**). A discussion of what Piso's plans were and how he might have hoped to achieve them by giving gifts to the soldiers and bribing them is best left until the next sentence has been read. However, it would be best to keep this brief and leave a full discussion until after the whole story has been read.

- 1 **Cn. Pīsō**: Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, the governor of Syria. Cn. is the conventional abbreviation of Cnaeus, an older form of the name Gnaeus.
quō celerius ... inciperet: = **ut celerius ... inciperet**. A purpose clause containing a comparative adverb (**celerius**) is introduced by **quō** rather than **ut**: literally, 'by which (action) he might more quickly begin ...'. The verb is subjunctive. This will probably be new to students, but a comprehension question (What was Piso's motive?) will lead them to a correct translation. See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 23.2, page 68.
cōnsilia: Piso's plans, allegedly on the orders of Tiberius, to undermine Germanicus' authority by blocking Germanicus' orders and, it seems, causing disruption in Syria.
- 2 **legiōnēs**: one of Piso's duties as governor of a province was to command the army stationed there. A large army (four legions) was stationed in Syria because it was a frontier province. The army had to protect the province from outside attack and from rebellion inside. There were two types of province: imperial and senatorial. Imperial provinces were generally the more dangerous frontier provinces such as Syria. The governor of an imperial province was chosen by the emperor and his official title was **lēgātus Augustī**, whereas the governor of a senatorial province was appointed by the Senate. The reason for the distinction between imperial and senatorial provinces was so that the emperor could retain control of the army.
largitiōne et ambitū: the ablative case expresses the means employed. This is the first example in this text of the ablative being used without a preposition. It might be helpful at an early stage in the reading to gather together some examples to demonstrate the ways in which the ablative can be used without a preposition; this is a notable feature of Tacitus' style and can be a stumbling block for inexperienced readers. It might be helpful to suggest to students as a rule of thumb to translate the ablative as 'in, on, by, with, from, or at'.
- 3 **iuvābat**: the imperfect tense could be conative ('tried to ..') or inceptive ('began to ...').
- 3-4 **cum veterēs centuriōnēs, sevērōs tribūnōs dēmōvisset**: the experienced and disciplined officers would have opposed Piso. The emphasis here falls on the adjectives, because of position (before the noun) and the omission of a conjunction (**et** or **-que**) joining the two phrases (asyndeton). A tribune was a senior officer in the army; he assisted the commander of the legion.

- 4 **clientibus**: Piso's clients would have been loyal to him as their patron. The relationship between patron and client was central to Roman society. A patron would do favours for his client or give him money, and, in return, the client would be under obligation to his patron.
- 5-6 **dēsidiā in castrīs, licentiā in urbibus, lascīvientēs per agrōs mīlitēs sinēbat**: students will probably grasp the meaning easily, especially if the teacher reads aloud with strong pauses at the commas and before the main verb, **sinēbat**, and they are asked 'What three things did Piso allow?' However, it is worth spending some time analysing the style of this part of the sentence, either on a first reading or at a later stage. It is a good example of a tricolon, the rhetorical 'rule of three'. However, Tacitus disrupts the balance of the tricolon. Firstly, **sinēbat** has two abstract objects (**dēsidiā, licentiā**), then one personal (**mīlitēs**). Secondly, there are three prepositional phrases; the first two are introduced by **in** and the third by **per**. This avoidance of symmetry is an example of **variātiō**, a feature of Tacitus' style. The effect is to grab the attention of the readers or listeners by disrupting their expectations.
- 6-7 **nec Plancīna ... intererat**: in acting like this Plancina was imitating the behaviour of Agrippina, Germanicus' wife, who had inspected the troops and intervened in military matters while stationed in Germany with her husband. See *Annals* 1.69. Agrippina's conduct is praised by Tacitus, who calls her **fēmīna ingēns animī**, a 'great-hearted woman'. However, Tiberius took the more traditional view, adopted by Tacitus here, that such conduct was inappropriate for a woman.
- 7-8 **in ... iaciēbat**: Tacitus (*Annals* 2.43) says that Livia, Tiberius' mother, who was jealous of Agrippina, had persuaded Plancina to persecute her. Plancina was a friend of Livia.
- 8 **nōta**: add **erant**. Tacitus often omits forms of **esse**; it is a mark of his characteristic brevity of expression.
- 9 **Armeniōs**: among the problems on the fringes of the empire which Germanicus had been deputed to resolve was a crisis in Armenia caused by a dispute over the succession to the throne. Armenia was a kingdom to the northeast of Syria, strategically important to Rome because of its proximity to Rome's old enemy, Parthia. Although not part of the empire, Armenia was under the protection of Rome and subject to Roman influence. Tiberius' policy was to establish a pro-Roman king on the throne of Armenia as quickly as possible before the Parthians could organise enough support for their candidate.

Discussion

As soon as he arrived in Syria as governor, Piso began to encourage lawlessness and insubordination in the army. This raises the question of what exactly Piso's intentions were. Tacitus does not supply an explanation for Piso's behaviour, beyond that it was to further his plans. Presumably his actions were designed to gain control of the army, win popularity with the soldiers and incite unrest among the provincials. He might have hoped to transfer the loyalty of the legions from Germanicus to himself; he could then deny Germanicus their support. Secondly, by allowing the soldiers to behave in a way that would make them unpopular in the province, he was making it more difficult for Germanicus to achieve a peaceful settlement in the East. It seems that Piso was going much further than his instructions from Tiberius allowed; Tiberius had (allegedly) ordered Piso to block all Germanicus' orders.

Tacitus' condemnation of Piso's behaviour is shown by his use of pejorative vocabulary: **largitiōne**, **ambitū**, **dēsidiā**, **licentiā**, **lascīventēs** - all in a prominent position at the head of their phrases or clauses. The verb **sinēbat** firmly puts the blame on Piso. The adjectives **veterēs** and **sevērōs** are emphasised by being placed before the nouns they describe.

Piso's wife, Plancina, plays a prominent part in Tacitus' account. Her conflict with Agrippina, Germanicus' wife, underlines the conflict between the two men, and later on Tacitus exploits the contrast between the behaviour of the two women.

The first impression of Germanicus is favourable; he takes his mission seriously and is not distracted by the behaviour of Piso and Plancina. The linking passage introduces a note of doubt; he takes his eye off the ball when he makes a sight-seeing trip to Egypt.

Questions

1. Piso had been sent to Syria to keep watch on Germanicus and perhaps block his plans. How closely was he following Tiberius' instructions? What do you think Piso hoped to achieve by treating the army in this way?
2. Study lines 1-6 (**at ... sinēbat**). How does the choice of words and the word order indicate Tacitus' attitude to Piso's behaviour? Select and comment on three words that you think are significant.
3. What do you think of Plancina's behaviour at this point?
4. What is your first impression of Germanicus?

Section B: Germanicus falls ill (*Annals* 2.69-70)

Piso's insubordination led to a quarrel with Germanicus, and soon afterwards Germanicus became ill. Believing that he had been poisoned by Piso (a belief intensified by signs of black magic found in his house), he dismissed Piso and perhaps ordered him to leave the province.

Notes

- 1-3 Germānicus ... Pīsō:** since Germanicus, as commander-in-chief of the forces in the East, was Piso's superior, Piso was directly challenging Germanicus' authority by acting in this way. Even if, as was alleged, Tiberius had secretly ordered Piso to block Germanicus' orders, Piso's behaviour was very provocative.
- 6-7 saevam ... acceptī:** the word order may be a stumbling block here. Students can be helped by a mixture of linguistic and comprehension questions and hints, such as:
- Pick out the phrase which refers to the disease.
 - Translate **saevam vim morbī**.
 - What case is **saevam vim**? Accusative, so it can't be the subject.
 - What belief was being held?
 - So, who do you suppose held this belief?
 - What effect did the belief that he was being poisoned by Piso have on Germanicus' illness?
- 7-11 et reperiēbantur ... sacrārī:** the length of this sentence may intimidate some students. Reading aloud by the teacher, with careful attention to phrasing, will help. A second reading aloud could focus on individual phrases or clauses, followed by linguistic and comprehension questions. For example:

- What does **reperiēbantur** mean?
 - What things were found?
- 7 **solō ac parietibus**: the ablatives are used without a preposition. There are two ways of interpreting these ablatives and translating the sentence:
- (i) The ablative depends on the prefix **ē-** of **ērutae** and the preposition **ē** is omitted: 'remains of human bodies dug up from the floor and walls were found'.
- (ii) The preposition omitted is **in**: 'the disinterred remains of human bodies were found in the floor and walls'.
- The translation in the CSCP Support Materials and the *Cambridge Latin Anthology Teacher's Handbook* (page 65) favour (ii); Goodyear ad loc. favours (i). Whichever translation is chosen, the main point is the same - human remains were found in the floor and walls. When the sentence is read aloud by the teacher, the phrasing will support one or other of these interpretations. Teachers can decide whether to guide their students towards one option or whether to explore both possibilities. Some students will enjoy discussing the pros and cons of the alternatives.
- For the use of the ablative without a preposition dependent on a verb with a prefix cf. line 9, **plumbeīs tabulīs insculptum**.
- 7-11 Belief in black magic was widespread and certain objects were thought to have the power to deliver people to the gods of the Underworld. These included the remains of human bodies, spells, curses and lead curse tablets with the name of the intended victim inscribed on them. For further information see the section above **Magic and curses** and *Cambridge Latin Course*, Book III, Stage 22.
- 8-9 **carmina ... insculptum**: 'magic spells, curses and Germanicus' name inscribed on lead tablets'. A distinction between these three can be made: **carmina** could refer to spells in verse, **dēvōtiōnēs** to curses in general, in verse or prose. However, all three may refer to the same thing, curse tablets inscribed with Germanicus' name.
- 9-10 **cinerēs sēmusti ac tābō oblitī**: the ashes had been taken from a funeral pyre before being fully cremated.
- 10 **aliaque malefica**: other objects of black magic (voodoo objects) might include things connected with the victim such as hair, nail clippings, pieces of clothing or wax images, because it was believed that in order to gain control of someone the witch or magician often needed something connected with that person.
- crēditur**: an impersonal passive, 'it is believed'. This may be new to students. A comprehension question would help to elicit the sense, e.g. 'What was thought to be the purpose of the objects of black magic?' The inclusion of the word **crēditur** might suggest that Tacitus did not believe in magic.
- 11 **missī**: the perfect participle is used by itself as a noun, 'the men sent'.
- 12 **incūsābantur quod ... expectārent**: the verb in the causal clause (**expectārent**) is subjunctive because the reason is alleged by the accusers: because [it was claimed that] they were waiting...! See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 23.4, page 69.
- 13 **Germānicō**: dative of agent with the passive verb **accepta sunt**. This use of the dative is common in Tacitus.
- haud minus irā quam per metum**: the ablative case (**irā**) and the preposition (**per**) both express the reason. This is a good example of **variātiō**. See the note on Section A, lines 5-6.
- 14 **compōnit**: an historic present tense (a present tense used to refer to actions which happened in the past). The effect of using the historic present tense is to make events more vivid or immediate. Here the tense, combined with the position of **compōnit** as first word in the sentence, suggests that Germanicus' response was to take action immediately. It is important that students identify verb tenses correctly so that they

can appreciate the effect of the historic present. However, retaining the present tense in English can sound awkward, particularly when the narrative switches between past and present tenses, even in the same sentence, as it does here. It is acceptable, and sometimes preferable, to use a past tense when translating into English. What is important is to be consistent, and to avoid translating past tenses as present. Some teachers might like to encourage students to translate historic present tenses as past, but put the literal translation in brackets. The historic present tense occurs frequently in this extract and will not be commented on again.

quā: = **in quā**. The use of the ablative case without a preposition to mean ‘in’ may be unfamiliar to students.

14 amicitiam eī renūntiābat: **amicitia** was the formal diplomatic relationship between officials serving in the same province. **amicitiam renūntiāre** + dative = ‘to break off diplomatic relations with someone’. Since Germanicus was Piso’s superior, by renouncing this relationship he was in effect dismissing Piso from office. The imperfect tense may be conative: ‘he tried to renounce’.

15-18 It is widely believed ... open to him: as commander-in-chief of the forces in the East, Germanicus was Piso's superior, so could have issued the order. As we learn later, in Section F line 7, Piso went only as far as Cos.

Discussion

The account of the quarrel between Piso and Germanicus is brief. The narrative concentrates instead on Germanicus’ illness, especially the gruesome and macabre details associated with black magic. Despite the atmosphere of suspicion this produces, Tacitus provides no evidence for Piso’s complicity in Germanicus’ illness. The accounts of the human remains and curses found in Germanicus’ house could have been fabricated as evidence against Piso, and it is to be expected that Piso should want to know how Germanicus’ illness was progressing. Moreover, it could be argued that the emphasis on **persuāsiō venēnī** suggests that the poisoning was in Germanicus’ imagination. Finally, Tacitus is relying on hearsay when he says that Germanicus ordered Piso to leave Syria. Nevertheless, some readers at least will have the impression that Piso was to blame. Tacitus creates this impression by concentrating on the circumstantial details of magic, Germanicus’ own belief that he had been poisoned, his fear and his dismissal of Piso, and the allegations that Piso had sent people to look for signs of worsening health.

Questions

1. The writing in lines 7-11 has a gruesome and macabre atmosphere. Pick out any details or specific words and phrases that you think contribute to creating this atmosphere and say why you think they are effective.
2. After reading this section, do you have the impression that Piso was involved in Germanicus’ illness? Is there any evidence that he was? How does Tacitus create the impression (for some readers at least) that Piso was involved?

Section C: Germanicus' last words (*Annals* 2.71)

Before he died Germanicus asked the friends at his bedside to appeal to the Senate and avenge him. His friends swore to do this.

Notes

- 1** **Germānicus ... sē crēdidit convalēscere**: students may confuse **sē** with **ipse**, especially if they are not very familiar with indirect statements with **sē**. One approach is to reorder the words: **Germānicus ... crēdidit sē convalēscere**, before asking 'What did Germanicus believe?' Alternatively, start with the comprehension question, then ask: 'What does **sē** mean?' or 'Which other word, besides his name, refers to Germanicus?' Since indirect statements containing **sē** occur several times in this text, it might be useful to do some practice with a few simple sentences. See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 29.4d, page 80.
- 3-4** **occāsio querendī ... atque invocandī lēgēs**: **querendī** and **invocandī** are gerunds in the genitive case, dependent on **occāsio**, 'an opportunity of doing something'. See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 26.1, page 82.
erit vōbīs occāsio querendī apud senatum: Germanicus uses the future tense rather than an imperative to remind his friends of their duty.
- 4-6** **decet ... exsequī**: friends have a duty not just to attend the funeral but to take action; mourning is futile (**ignāvō questū**) and pursuing justice takes more effort. This sentence presents several linguistic difficulties: the impersonal verb **decet** will probably be unfamiliar; the infinitives **meminisse** and **exsequī** are dependent on **decet**; the antecedents of the relative pronouns are omitted (**quae = ea quae**); the relative clauses **quae voluerit** and **quae mandāverit** precede the infinitives on which they depend; the perfect subjunctive verbs **voluerit** and **mandāverit**. The sentence could be reordered and expanded: **decet amīcōs nōn prōsequī ... sed [decet] meminisse [ea] quae voluerit [et] exsequī [ea] quae mandāverit**. An alternative approach is to break the sentence into parts and ask comprehension questions:
decet amīcōs nōn prōsequī dēfunctum : What, according to Germanicus, should friends not do?
ignāvō questū: Why shouldn't they do this?
sed quae voluerit meminisse: What should friends do instead? (Hint: look at **meminisse**); What should they remember?
quae mandāverit exsequī: What else should they do?
- 6** **vindicābitis vōs**: add **mē**. **vōs** is nominative for emphasis. Extra emphasis is supplied by the unusual word order (reversal of pronoun and verb) and alliteration of **v**.
- 7** **fortūnam meam**: Germanicus is referring to his status as Tiberius' heir.
morientis: the present participle is used as a noun, 'the dying man'.
- 8-9** **iūrāvērunt sē ... āmissūrōs esse**: elicit the meaning by asking a comprehension question, 'What did the friends swear that they would do?' Students have met an indirect statement containing **sē** in line 1 above, **Germānicus ... sē crēdidit convalēscere**. See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 29.4b, page 80.
- 8** **ante quam**: = **antequam**
- 8-9** **vītam anteer quam ultiōnem āmissūrōs esse**: literally, 'they would lose life rather than vengeance'. Although the literal translation is easily understood, the use of the verb 'lose' with both objects is clumsy in English. Students could be asked to suggest alternatives e.g. 'lose their lives rather than give up vengeance', 'sacrifice life rather than vengeance', 'give up life rather than vengeance', 'lose their lives rather than the chance of revenge'.

Discussion

It is possible that Tacitus had access to an account of Germanicus' last words, but more likely that he invented the speech to suit his narrative, as was the custom in ancient historiography. Germanicus insists on vengeance (**vindicābitis vōs, uliōnem**) and bringing the culprit to justice, without naming either Piso or Tiberius. He does not openly voice any suspicion of Tiberius, but his request that the murderer should be brought to justice before the Senate rather than before the Emperor suggests that he thought Tiberius might be complicit. At this point it would be good to check that students remember that there were rumours that Tiberius had secretly ordered Piso to arrange Germanicus' death (see the introductory passage).

Questions

1. Look at lines 3-7, **erit ... diligēbātis**. Germanicus, on his deathbed, reminded his friends of their duty and gave them instructions. What did he want them to do?
2. Study Germanicus' speech (lines 3-7, **erit ... diligēbātis**). How do his words emphasise that he wants his friends to be *active*?
3. Do you think that this section increases the reader's suspicion that Piso (and perhaps Tiberius) was responsible for Germanicus' final illness? Does it contain any evidence of Piso's (or Tiberius') involvement in Germanicus' illness?

Section D: Reactions to Germanicus' death. (*Annals* 2.72-3)

There was widespread grief for Germanicus after his death. He was admired so much that he was even compared to Alexander the Great.

Notes

- 1 **neque multō post: multō** is in the ablative case, 'not later by much', i.e. 'not much later'. Germanicus died 10th October AD 19.
ingentī lūctū prōvinciae: 'accompanied by immense grief in the province' or 'amid great grief in the province'. Students may find the use of the ablative here difficult. Ask them 'What emotion accompanied Germanicus' death?', 'Where was that emotion felt?' 'What was the Roman province where Germanicus died?'
- 2-3 **circumiacentium populōrum exterāe nātiōnēs rēgēsque**: the 'surrounding peoples' would probably include neighbouring territories under Roman control, while the 'foreign nations and kings' would include Parthia.
- 3 **illius**: 'his'. The genitive case of **ille** may be unfamiliar to students.
- 5-7 **erant quī ... adaequārent**: the subjunctive verb in the relative clause is generic, 'there were some people (of a kind) who (would) ...', i.e. 'Some people compared ...'. See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 23.3*, page 68. Teachers could start by reminding students that **erant** at the start of a sentence can often be translated as 'there were'.
- 6 **magnō Alexandrō**: Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), the son of King Philip II of Macedon, in northern Greece. He acquired an empire which stretched from Greece to India, and founded the city of Alexandria in Egypt. He died at the age of thirty-two, Germanicus at thirty-three (or thirty-four). The cause of Alexander's death was uncertain and there were rumours that he had been poisoned. Babylon, where Alexander died, is a very long way from Antioch in Syria, but most readers in Rome would regard both as remote cities in the East.
- 7-9 **nam ... periisse**: the indirect statement has three participle clauses before the infinitive. After the initial reading aloud, it would be helpful to break the sentence

into sections and elicit the meaning with linguistic and comprehension questions, such as:

- Which word shows that this sentence is going to explain in more detail why some people compared Germanicus to Alexander? (**nam**)
- What does **affirmāverunt** mean? Who are ‘they’? (The people who compared Germanicus to Alexander.)
- Which word refers to Germanicus and Alexander? (**utrumque**)
- Pick out the three-word phrase which shows the first similarity between Germanicus and Alexander. (**corpore decōrō praeditum**). What is the first similarity?

Discussion

Instead of a balanced, critical assessment of Germanicus’ qualities and achievements, Tacitus describes the popular reaction to his death. Sympathy for Germanicus is created from the start by the focus on the grief-stricken response. The shock spread outwards from Syria like a wave; the description of the places and peoples affected is vague, but has the effect of suggesting the extent of the grief. The qualities picked out for praise are his friendliness towards his allies, his merciful treatment of his enemies, his good looks and his eloquence. Although Germanicus was undoubtedly popular, Tacitus seems to be exaggerating his good qualities here. According to Goodyear (vol. II, pages 415-6) the claim that Germanicus showed mercy to his enemies is not supported by Tacitus’ own account of Germanicus’ campaigns in Germany. On the other hand, his success in dealing with the provinces in the East and Parthia is evidence of skilful diplomacy. On Germanicus’ character and achievements see above **Further biographical information**.

The comparison with Alexander the Great perpetuates the popular myth of Germanicus’ brilliance. But, despite the superficial similarities Tacitus notes, the difference is that Alexander conquered an enormous empire; Germanicus conquered nothing. Tacitus reports the comparison (**erant quī ... adaequārent**), rather than making it himself, a technique which distances the author from his material. This could be taken as suggesting that he does not endorse it. On the other hand, he does not provide any contrasting view, which may suggest that he had some sympathy with the comparison (or perhaps that he just wanted his readers to sympathise with Germanicus). Tacitus’ assessment of Germanicus and the reactions to it could be compared to an obituary or funeral eulogy. Like an obituary or eulogy it concentrates on the virtues of its subject and ignores any faults, and there could be an element of idealisation. The language too is highly rhetorical and thus appropriate to a eulogy. For example, in the list of similarities the first three have no coordinating particle (**ob fōrmam aetātem genus**); this example of asyndeton gives weight and stress to each individual word. The final tricolon (**utrumque corpore decōrō praeditum, genere īsignī ortum, vix trīgintā annōs nātum**) repeats and expands the previous statement of the similarity of beauty, birth and youth, and the rhyme (**utrum ... praeditum ... ortum ... nātum**) echoes the idea of similarity.

Questions

1. How accurate, in your opinion, is the comparison of Germanicus with Alexander the Great? Do you think Tacitus regarded it as a fair comparison? When thinking about this, you could consider what you know about Germanicus’ military achievements, which Tacitus doesn’t mention in the comparison. You could also consider why Tacitus reports the comparison (**erant quī ... adaequārent ...**), rather than making it himself.

2. What impression of Germanicus do you have from this passage? How does Tacitus create this impression? It might be useful here to compare Tacitus' assessment of Germanicus and the reactions to his death to an obituary or funeral eulogy. What is the purpose of an obituary or funeral eulogy? What sort of thing is generally included and what is left out? How would you expect a funeral eulogy to be different from an historian's assessment?

Section E: The immediate aftermath of Germanicus' death (*Annals* 2.73-74)

There was disagreement about whether Germanicus had been poisoned or not. A new governor was appointed in Syria and Germanicus' supporters began preparations for bringing Piso to trial.

Notes

- 2** **Antioch:** Germanicus died at Antioch in Syria.
7-8 When there was a sudden vacancy in the provincial command the officials present in the province had the authority to appoint a temporary governor.

Questions

1. Does Tacitus give any indication here of whether he thinks Germanicus was poisoned or not?
2. Look at lines 8-12. (He ... arranged.) How do you think Martina might have been involved in the death of Germanicus? Why do you think Gnaeus Sentius sent Martina to Rome? Why do you think Tacitus mentions Martina and her relationship with Plancina?

Section F: the behaviour of Agrippina, Piso and Plancina after Germanicus' death (*Annals* 2. 75)

Agrippina, grief-stricken, left Syria for Rome, while, on Cos, Piso and Plancina celebrated.

Notes

- 1** **dēfessa lūctū et corpore aegrō:** there are two ways of interpreting **corpore aegrō**:
 (i) 'exhausted by grief and *by her ailing body*'
 (ii) 'exhausted by grief and *with an ailing body*' (i.e. 'ill')
 The first ablative, **lūctū**, depends on **dēfessa** and expresses the cause of Agrippina's exhaustion. In (i) **corpore aegrō** is taken to be a second causal ablative phrase dependent on **dēfessa**, 'exhausted by grief and illness'. In (ii) **corpore aegrō** is a descriptive ablative phrase dependent on **Agrippīna**, 'with an ailing body', i.e. 'ill'. The translation in the CSCP Support materials favours (i).
- 2** **quae ... morārentur;** the subjunctive verb is generic, 'anything (of a kind) which might delay ...'. See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 23.3*, page 68.
- 3** **cineribus Germānicī:** the Roman custom was to cremate the bodies of the dead on a funeral pyre. After the body was cremated, the ashes were collected and placed in an urn, which was then buried in a tomb. Germanicus was cremated in Syria, but his ashes were taken back to Rome for burial in the family tomb.
- 3-6** **ascendit ... miserantibus omnibus ... ultiōnis:** despite its length, this sentence should present no problems. Its structure is linear, and reading aloud with careful phrasing will break it into manageable sections. First comes the short, simple main clause (**ascendit nāvem cum cineribus Germānicī et liberīs**), followed by an ablative absolute (**miserantibus omnibus**) on which the rest of the sentence depends.

It is a feature of Tacitus' style to express the main idea of a sentence in an appendage to the main clause, and to build up gradually to a climax.

- 4-5 **fēmina ... pulcherrimōque mātirimōniō**: 'a woman with a very fine marriage', i.e. 'a woman who was splendidly married'
- 6 **mereret ... ferret**: the verbs are subjunctive because this is implied indirect speech; the reason introduced by **quod** is attributed to the pitying crowd, i.e. it is not Tacitus' reason.
- 7 **Pisōnem interim ... nūntius adsequitur**: the focus now changes from Agrippina to Piso. The inversion of subject and object, putting the emphasis on **Pisōnem**, makes this clear, as does the adverb **interim**. Comprehension and linguistic questions will help students understand the situation, for example:
- Which word shows that the events described in this sentence were happening at the same time as Agrippina's arrival in Italy?
 - When Agrippina was arriving in Italy, where was Piso?
 - What happened when Piso was in Cos?
 - What was the news?
 - **Pisōnem** is the first word in the sentence. Is it nominative or accusative case?
 - **Pisōnem... nūntius adsequitur**: what is unusual about the word order?
 - What is the effect of reversing the usual order of subject and object?
 - Can you think of a way of reproducing this effect in English? (As for Piso, ...)
- apud Coum īnsulam**: Cos is an island off the coast of Turkey, about five hundred miles from Syria, on the route back to Rome. Piso's departure from Syria and his deliberately slow return journey to Rome is mentioned in Section B lines 15-18.
- 7-10 **adsequitur ... caedit ... adit ... gerit ... īnsolēscit**: historic present tenses. These could be translated as either present or past tenses.
- 8 **quō gāvīsus**: = 'rejoicing at this [news]'. **quō** = **et eō**; connecting relative pronoun. Teachers might want to alert students to the common usage of the relative pronoun to connect a sentence to the previous one. **gāvīsus** is a perfect participle but sometimes it is preferable, for the sake of good English, to translate a perfect participle as present, 'rejoicing'.
- 10-11 **mortuā sorōre**: the ablative expresses the cause of Plancina's grief.
- lūctum ... mūtāvit: lūctus** here = 'mourning clothes'. Roman women wore white or black clothes for mourning and did not wear jewellery.
- 11 **laetum cultum**: i.e. dresses of other colours. The adjective **laetum** contrasts with **lūctum** and suggests Plancina's mood.

Discussion

The narrative now focuses on Agrippina. Tacitus creates a poignant image of Agrippina clutching Germanicus' ashes and her children as she departs, drawing a strong contrast between her previous good fortune and her current (**tunc**) vulnerability. The emotive detail of the ashes is mentioned twice (**cum cineribus Germānicī, fēralēs reliquiās sinū ferret**) and the reader is invited to share the point of view of the pitying spectators (**miserantibus omnibus**). The overall effect is to create pathos. Tacitus also shows Agrippina's steely determination and courage, brought out by another contrast, between her physical frailty and her mental strength. The emphasis is on revenge: the word **ultiō** frames the description. The final phrase in the sentence and the section, **incerta ultiōnis**, leaves the possibility of revenge hanging in the reader's mind and creates suspense.

Significantly, the next word is **Pisōnem**, the object of Agrippina's vengeance, as attention now shifts abruptly to Piso. As Agrippina is leaving Syria, Piso and Plancina, on the island of

Cos, receive the news of Germanicus' death. The juxtaposition of the the two scenes accentuates the stark difference between their reaction and the plight of Agrippina. The language suggests excess and contains explicit disapproval: **immoderātō**, **magis insolēscit**. Disapproval is also implicit in **quō gāvīsus**. The joy of Piso and Plancina is contrasted with Agrippina's grief. Plancina's behaviour is depicted as even worse than her husband's (**nōn modo ... sed etiam magis**). However, it is possible that the arrival of the news of Germanicus' death happened to coincide with the end of the period of mourning for Plancina's sister.

Questions

- Study lines 1-6, **at ... ultiōnis**. Which of these words do you think best describe Agrippina here? (You may choose as many as you like. There is no one correct answer.)
brave; dignified; admirable; pitiful; vengeful; vulnerable; determined; courageous
How does Tacitus create this impression of Agrippina? Pick out any details of language or content that you think are significant in building up the picture.
- The word for revenge (**ultiō**) occurs twice in lines 1-6. Look at where it occurs. What is the effect?
- Study lines 8-11, **quō ... mūtāvit**. Does Tacitus approve or disapprove of the behaviour of Piso and Plancina? Pick out two words which show this. Can you think of an alternative explanation for their behaviour? (Hint: think about the period of mourning.)

Section G: Reaction in Rome to Germanicus' death (*Annals* 2.82)

News of Germanicus' illness was greeted in Rome with anger. Rumours that this was why Germanicus and Piso had been sent to the East were intensified when Germanicus' death was announced. There was public mourning in Rome.

Notes

- at Rōmae**: the narrative now goes back in time to when the rumour of Germanicus' illness first reached Rome. The reader knows that at the time of the rumours Germanicus was already dead.
- ut ex longinquō**: 'as [usually happens] from a distance'
in dēterius: 'for the worse'
- dolor, īra, questūs ērumpēbant**: to help students appreciate the effect of the asyndeton, teachers could read the whole sentence aloud inserting the missing connectives: **dolor et īra et questūs ērumpēbant**. The asyndeton produces a rougher and slower rhythm, with a powerful focus on the three nouns. Also, the juxtaposition of the three nouns, followed by the forceful verb **ērumpēbant** with its four heavy syllables, emphasises the rapid progression of reactions from sorrow to anger to blame.
- 3-5 ideō ... prōvinciam**: help students recognise the indirect statements by reading aloud with careful phrasing, followed by comprehension questions:
 - People were expressing their anger. What were they saying about Germanicus? (Hint: begin with **ideō**, 'this is why'.)
 - What were they saying about Piso? (Hint: again, begin with **ideō**, 'this is why'.)

After the sentence has been translated, teachers might want to spend some time looking at the language and explaining the signs of indirect speech:

- What form are the main verbs, **relēgātum esse** and **permissam [esse]**? (infinitives)
- The subjects of the infinitives are **Germānicum** and **prōvinciam**. What is the case of these nouns? (accusative)
- If the verbs are infinitive and the subjects of the verbs are in the accusative case, what does this tell us? (reported speech)
- Now draw attention to the omission of an introductory verb of speaking, and the colon after **ērumpēbant**, which indicates that what follows is indirect speech. Latin writers often omit the verb which means 'say'. See *Cambridge Latin Grammar* 25.6, page 81.

4 **Germānicum in extrēmās terrās relēgātum esse ... Pīsōnī prōvinciam permissam:** check that students remember that Germanicus had been sent to the East by Tiberius as commander of the Roman forces there, to attend to a crisis in Armenia and other problems on the fringes of the empire; meanwhile Tiberius had appointed Piso as governor of Syria. The use of the passive voice allows Tacitus to throw suspicion on to Tiberius without naming him.

5 **permissam:** = **permissam esse**. The omission of **esse** in the perfect passive infinitive is common.

4-5 **ideō ... ideō Pīsōnī prōvinciam permissam:** the alliteration of *p* should be heard by students when the sentence is read aloud. The repetition of **ideō** at the beginning of the two clauses (anaphora) is less easy to spot; reading aloud with appropriate emphasis and pauses will help students to notice it. Ask students:

- Which words are emphasised by sound?
- Which words are emphasised by repetition?
- What do you think is the effect of emphasising these words?

The repetition of **ideō** reiterates the sudden realisation of Tiberius' motives (although Tiberius' name is not mentioned), while the striking alliteration at the end of the sentence emphasises Piso's name, and leaves the reader with the impression that he was involved in Germanicus' illness.

5-8 **hōs ... domūs:** a complex sentence composed of a series of clauses and phrases. One approach is to break it down into its constituent clauses and phrases and ask questions:

- **hōs vulgī sermōnēs:** what does this phrase refer to? ('this kind of talk among the people') What case is **hōs**? (accusative). So, is 'the talk' the subject or the object of the sentence?
- **mors Germānicī:** what does this phrase mean?
- **ubi nūntiāta est:** what does this say about Germanicus' death?
- **adeō incendit:** how did the announcement of Germanicus' death affect what people were saying? Draw the attention of students to **adeō** in the main clause (**hōs vulgī sermōnēs mors Germānicī ... adeō incendit**). What does **adeō** lead you to expect?
- **adeō ... ut:** introducing a result clause. Students sometimes have difficulty recognising a result clause, so ensure that they take these two words together, and are expecting a result to follow: '[Germanicus' death inflamed the gossip] so much that ...'.
- **ante ēdictum magistrātuum, ante senātūs cōsultum:** before what two things?
- **sūmptō iūstitiō:** what does **sūmptō** mean? ('having been taken'); What does the phrase mean? ('with a break from legal business having been taken'). At

this point students may need help to recognise the ablative absolute and translate accordingly. It will be necessary to come back to this phrase after the first translation of the sentence. Students can be asked then to rephrase in better English ('a break from legal business was taken and').

- **dēsererentur fora**: the subjunctive verb shows that this was the result of the gossip after Germanicus' death was announced. What was the result?
 - **clauderentur domūs**: another subjunctive verb, so another result. What was the second result?
- 7 **sūmptō iūstitiō**: the **iūstitium** was a break from legal business for a period of public mourning. Usually the **iūstitium** was announced officially, after confirmation of death, either by a decision of the magistrates (**ēdictum magistrātuum**) or a resolution of the Senate (**senātūs cōsultum**). On this occasion, however, there was a spontaneous outpouring of public grief before there was time for any official announcement to be made.
- 8 **dēsererentur fora**: the forums were the centre of legal and other business. **clauderentur domūs**: during a period of public mourning the wealthy would close their houses to their **clientēs**.
- 8-9 **ubique silentium et gemitus**: add **erat**. Missing out the verb **erat** makes a short sentence even shorter. This brevity is striking, especially in contrast to the preceding long, complex sentence, and makes the reader pay special attention. And on close inspection there may be something odd about what Tacitus is saying. Can silence and groaning coexist? This looks like a contradiction. This is perhaps Tacitus' compressed way of saying that in the absence of all the usual sounds of business, there was silence, broken only by lamentation.
- 9 **insignibus**: the outward signs (of mourning) e.g. change of clothes. Men wore black clothes for mourning, women wore black or white. And no jewellery was worn. **lūgentium**: 'of mourners'. The present participle, **lūgentēs**, is used as a noun, 'those mourning' = 'mourners'.
- 9-10 **quamquam ... maerēbant**: students could be asked 'How sincere was the grief for Germanicus?'

Discussion

The narrative jumps back in time to retell the illness and death of Germanicus from the perspective of the people in Rome. The series of three nouns in asyndeton (**dolor, ira, questūs**) puts the focus on the emotional popular reaction. Tacitus establishes Germanicus' popularity and, by the use of rumour, puts suspicion on Tiberius without naming him. How much truth is there in Tacitus' account of Tiberius' behaviour? Syria was certainly far away on the edges of the empire. However, Germanicus was not banished, although Tiberius may have wanted him out of the way. The Introduction says:

'Being unable to dispose of him [Germanicus] openly, Tiberius sent him to the East as commander-in-chief of the Roman forces there, to settle several longstanding problems on the fringes of the empire.'

So, Germanicus was sent to do an important job. The language is emotive (**extrēmās, relēgātum**) and there is some distortion of the truth. Nevertheless, Tacitus may be reporting accurately what people in Rome said about Tiberius' actions. The description of the reaction to the announcement of Germanicus' death concentrates on the spontaneity (repetition of **ante**) and sincerity (**altius animīs**) of grief.

Question

Consider how Tacitus describes the thoughts and emotions of people in Rome. How does the style of writing convey the strength of emotion? You could look at the choice of detail, the role of rumour, the emotive language, stylistic devices and the sound of the words.

Section H: Agrippina's arrival in Italy (*Annals* 3.1)

As soon as Agrippina's ship was sighted sailing into Brundisium, people rushed to the harbour to greet her. When she disembarked, accompanied by two of her children and carrying Germanicus' ashes, she was greeted with cries of grief.

Notes

- 1-2** **nāvigātiōne ... appropinquat**: the narrative returns to Agrippina and her journey from Syria to Rome (Section F, lines 1-3). In the ancient world sailing in winter was considered dangerous and was usually avoided; so, by not postponing her journey until spring, Agrippina was showing how determined she was to avenge Germanicus.
- 1** **nāvigātiōne ... intermissā**: ablative absolute. Reading the whole sentence aloud with careful phrasing will show students the boundaries of the ablative absolute clause.
hibernī ... maris: 'over the wintry sea'
nēquāquam: the strong negative draws attention to Agrippina's decision not to delay her voyage.
- 2** **Brundisiō**: Brundisium (modern Brindisi), on the south-east coast of Italy, was the usual port for travelling to and from the East.
- 3-4** **militēs quī sub Germānicō stipēdia fēcerant**: veterans who had served under Germanicus in Germany.
- 4-7** **simulac ... exciperent**: this complex sentence can be approached in the usual way. First, read the whole sentence aloud with careful phrasing, then break the sentence into its constituent parts, reading each part aloud again before asking questions and/or translating.
- 6** **maerentium et rogantium**: the present participles are used as nouns, 'of people mourning and asking'. Guide students by asking 'What were the people in the crowd doing?'
- 6-7** **silentiōne an vōce ... exciperent**: = **utrum silentiōne an vōce ... exciperent**. An indirect deliberative question dependent on **rogantium**.
- 7** **ēgredientem**: add **Agrippinam**.
- 7-8** **nāvis ... solet**: ask students why ships would normally move quickly as they approached the harbour. (Perhaps, sailors and passengers were eager to reach land safely.)
- 8-9** **cūctīs ad trīstitiam compositīs**: 'with all the signs of mourning'. Literally, 'with everything arranged for sadness'. At this point ask students to suggest reasons why Agrippina's ship came in slowly. Encourage them to make suggestions by stressing that these questions do not have a single correct answer. Students might say that a slow arrival was one of the signs of mourning. Or, perhaps a more stately and dignified arrival contributes to the impression of solemnity that Agrippina (or Tacitus) wants to create. Or, it makes Agrippina's arrival more dramatic for those waiting to greet her on the shore – they had rushed to greet her but now have to wait nervously on the shore.
- 9-10** **postquam ... oculōs**: it becomes clear from the sense that the subject of this clause is Agrippina.
- 9** **duōbus cum liberīs**: probably Gaius (the future emperor Caligula, aged seven) and Julia Livilla (born in AD 18, so not yet two years old).

10-11 idem fuit omnium gemitus: this spontaneous expression of grief resolves the dilemma of lines 6-7, **rogitantium inter sē silentiōne an vōce aliquā ēgredientem exciperent.**

Discussion

The narrative now returns to Agrippina and her arrival in Italy. In order to draw students' attention to the visual and dramatic nature of the style here it might be useful to think in terms of film and tragedy. Students could be asked to consider this episode as a scene from a film. Visualising the scene as a film shot helps to show how Tacitus moves from a panoramic view of the ship in the distance and the crowd converging, to individuals in the crowd, and finally to the lone figure of Agrippina. All eyes are on Agrippina, but she looks at the ground modestly. Making **dēfixa** the finite verb rather than **ēgressa (est)** focuses attention on the emotive detail. The other visual details in this sentence, the children and Germanicus' ashes, maximise the pathos. The climax of the whole paragraph is the reaction of the crowd: **īdem fuit omnium gemitus**. The reader is invited to visualise the scene as one from a Greek tragedy, Agrippina as the heroine and the onlookers playing the rôle of the chorus. Agrippina is shown as a woman who knows how to manipulate the crowd to gain their sympathy. And Tacitus, by exploiting the tragic associations, draws attention to her determination and desire for vengeance.

Questions

1. Think about this scene as if you were making a film:
 - Which details help you visualise the scene?
 - How does the description cut from one image to another?
 - When would you use close-ups and when would you use distance shots?
 - What sound effects would you use?
2. How does the style of writing make this scene vivid and dramatic? You could look at choice of detail, vocabulary and verb tenses.
3. Consider how Tacitus presents Agrippina's arrival in Italy. How does the description evoke sympathy for Agrippina? What impression do you form of Agrippina from this episode? Look back at Section F, lines 1-6 and compare the way Agrippina is presented there.

Section I: Germanicus' ashes are escorted to Rome (*Annals* 3.2.1-2)

Tiberius sent two cohorts of the Praetorian Guard to carry Germanicus' ashes from Brundisium to Rome. In the towns the procession passed through, offerings were made.

Notes

- 1 Praetorian Guard:** the Emperor's personal bodyguard.
- 2 Calabria, Apulia and Campania:** districts of southern Italy.
- 3 his adoptive son:** Germanicus. It was the custom for an upper-class Roman to adopt a son as an heir if he had no natural son of his own. Generally this would be a relative; Germanicus was Tiberius' nephew.
- 3-10 So ... lamentations:** Germanicus' ashes were carried from Brundisium to Rome along the Appian Way.
- 4 tribunes:** army officers.
- 4-5 unadorned standards and reversed axes:** when the dead man was a magistrate the rods and axes which were a symbol of his power were carried at the head of the funeral procession. If he had won distinction in battle the military standards were also carried. It was traditional for the axes to be upside-down as a sign of mourning and

for the usual adornments to be removed from the standards. Silver or gold discs or crowns were attached to the standards of the legions as marks of distinction in battle; these were removed when the standards were carried in a funeral procession. When a Roman magistrate went out he would be preceded by lictors (bodyguards) carrying the *fascēs* (a bundle of rods, usually with an axe) which symbolised his power.

- 6 **the people clothed in black:** it was traditional to wear black as a sign of mourning.
- 6-7 **the gentry in their purple robes:** members of the equestrian class wore the *trabea*, a short purple garment, on ritual occasions.
- 7 **burnt garments, spices and other funeral offerings:** this was the usual practice at a Roman funeral.

Discussion

The transport of Germanicus' remains from Brundisium to Rome is described as if it were a formal funeral procession, although Germanicus' funeral had taken place in Syria. As the procession bearing Germanicus' ashes passed through a town, the people behaved as if they were celebrating a funeral. Elaborating the details of the procession and its reception further emphasises Germanicus' personal popularity. Tiberius plays a prominent part in honouring Germanicus in a way suitable for a distinguished soldier and imperial heir. Perhaps this was because he was afraid of offending popular opinion, which was definitely on the side of Germanicus. Although Tacitus makes no comment, the narrative as a whole exposes Tiberius' hypocrisy.

Question

There were allegations and rumours that Tiberius had ordered Piso to arrange Germanicus' death. If this was the case, why do you think that he gave orders that Germanicus should be honoured in this way?

Section J: the procession reaches Rome (*Annals* 3.2.3-3.4.1)

The arrival of the procession in Rome was greeted with an outpouring of grief as people of all classes lined the road, but Tiberius and Livia did not appear. When Germanicus' ashes were placed in the Mausoleum of Augustus there was public despair.

Notes

- 8-9 **the Mausoleum of Augustus:** the family tomb. Germanicus was the great-nephew of Augustus and was therefore honoured by being buried in the tomb of the former Emperor.
- 10-12 **Soldiers ... rulers:** they focused so much on Germanicus that they forgot about Tiberius and Livia.

Discussion

Tacitus' criticism of Tiberius (and Livia) is explicit in this section, although he only goes so far as to accuse them of being delighted at Germanicus' death – there is no hint here of any involvement. He suggests two alternative motives for their behaviour, the second explanation being the less favourable. This is a favourite technique of Tacitus, and has the effect of subtly nudging the reader towards accepting the second alternative. Tacitus often accuses Tiberius of insincerity; moreover, the statement here that Tiberius was delighted at Germanicus' death highlights the insincerity of the honours he paid him in the previous section. Tacitus states that, in claiming that Germanicus was the only hope for the survival of Rome, the mourners were speaking out freely. But he appends a sniping comment suggesting that such free expression of anti-Tiberian sentiment was potentially dangerous.

Sections I-J

Questions

1. Look back at Sections I and J. Find examples to show that Germanicus was popular with the people of Rome.
2. Study Sections I and J. How does Tacitus present Tiberius in a bad light?

Section K: anticipation of Piso's trial (*Annals* 3.11.2)

Everyone was speculating about Piso's trial and there was suspicion of Tiberius.

Discussion

Perhaps pause at the end of this linking passage to consider the way Tacitus has presented the Emperor Tiberius so far. Tiberius emerges as a schemer and a hypocrite, afraid of public opinion and jealous of the popularity of Germanicus. Much of this picture has been created not through factual statements and explicit judgements, but through reliance on allegations and rumours, and speculation about motive. Question 3 could be shared among the class, splitting the class into groups and giving each a section or sections to study, then pooling results. Some teachers will prefer to maintain pace and come back to this after the first reading of the whole text.

Questions

1. Why would Tiberius have wanted to 'suppress and conceal his feelings'? Look back at Section J if you need to refresh your memory.
2. Look at the phrases 'secret criticism' and 'unvoiced suspicion'. What do they suggest about Tiberius' regime?
3. Read quickly through the whole text so far, including the introductory passage and any linking passages in English. Collect all the references to the Emperor Tiberius, and any allusions to Tiberius without naming him. What is your impression of Tiberius? How has Tacitus created this impression?

Section L: Tiberius addresses the Senate (*Annals* 3.12.1-3,5-7)

Tiberius sets out the charges against Piso which the Senate should consider. The questions are: did Piso disobey Germanicus and rejoice in his death or did he murder him? Did Piso lead a mutiny? The Senate should give Piso a fair trial, and not be swayed by Tiberius' personal grief for Germanicus.

Notes

- 1 **Tiberius made a speech:** the Emperor was the presiding magistrate.
- 2 **my father's friend and representative:** Tiberius is referring to his adoptive father, the Emperor Augustus. Augustus had chosen Piso to be governor (**lĕgātus**) of Hispania Tarraconensis (formerly Nearer Spain), one of the three provinces into which Spain was divided.
- 3-4 **With the approval of the senate, I appointed him to assist Germanicus with the government of the East:** check that students remember that Piso was governor of Syria, while Germanicus was in command of the forces in the East. Syria was an imperial province and therefore the appointment of its governor did not strictly concern the Senate. Tacitus depicts Tiberius as an emperor keen to involve the Senate in decisions; he also implies that Tiberius was claiming that the Senate shared responsibility for the disastrous events in Syria.

- 5 the young prince:** the term ‘prince’ may be misleading. Germanicus was Tiberius’ adopted son. but there was no title associated with this. The Latin is **iuvenem**.
- 15-17 Did Piso ... force?:** students may need to be reminded that Piso had left Syria, perhaps on the orders of Germanicus (Section B, lines 15-18), and had gone as far as Cos (Section F, lines 7-8). Look back at the passage linking Sections F and G for Piso’s attempts to re-enter Syria by force and to incite the troops stationed there to mutiny after the death of Germanicus. This is a charge of treason.
- 19 my son:** Germanicus, Tiberius’ adopted son.
- 23 Drusus’ tears:** Drusus was Tiberius’ son.
- 24 the slanders people are concocting against us:** Tiberius is referring to the rumours that he had ordered Piso to kill Germanicus.

Discussion

As governor of an imperial province, Piso would usually have been punished directly by the Emperor. However, Tiberius made the decision that Piso should be tried before the Senate. The explanation implied in his speech is that he wants to act fairly by separating public from private vengeance. However, a more sinister motive is that he wanted to distance himself from Piso, because of the rumours surrounding his involvement in the death of Germanicus.

Tacitus quotes Tiberius’ speech as if he is reporting the exact words of the Emperor. (More accurately, in the original Latin Tacitus begins with indirect speech and moves into direct speech at ‘If Piso as governor ...’.) It is quite possible that Tiberius did make a speech to the Senate on the occasion, and Tacitus may even have had access to it. However, it was the practice of Tacitus, as of other ancient historians, to invent speeches. Even if Tacitus did use a speech of Tiberius as a source, it is very likely that he would have adapted it.

Tiberius outlines three main charges against Piso: insubordination, murder and treason. He makes an important distinction between the first two main issues: did Piso (a) disobey Germanicus and rejoice at his death or did he (b) kill him? The former charge can be broken down into two separate but related charges of insubordination and inappropriate behaviour after Germanicus’ death. Both, particularly the matter of his behaviour after Germanicus’ death, are minor. However, the murder charge is very serious. Tiberius makes clear that if the first and lesser charge were proved, he would renounce his ties of friendship with Piso; if the more serious charge of murder were proved, Piso would be condemned to death. He does not mention any penalty for the treason charge. Throughout the speech he stresses impartiality and fairness: the Senate are to judge Piso ‘with open minds’ and he is not to be treated any differently because he is accused of harming one of the imperial family. Tiberius also includes the possibility that the prosecution may have invented, or at least exaggerated, the treason charge. On the surface, Tiberius seems to be fair. But, in the context of what Tacitus has already said or hinted about Tiberius’ involvement and his tendency to hypocrisy, a reader might conclude that the speech itself is an example of Tiberius’ insincerity.

Questions

1. What were the charges against Piso? Which do you think were the most serious?
2. On the basis of this speech, which of these adjectives would you say describe Tiberius most accurately? Give your reasons. (You may choose more than one.)
fair insincere loyal hypocritical vengeful grieving moderate

Section M: The prosecution (*Annals* 3.13)

The prosecution accuses Piso of corrupting the soldiers, murdering Germanicus and organising a rebellion.

Notes

- 1 **crīminibus obiciendīs**: ‘for presenting the charges’. **obiciendīs** is a gerundive in the dative case. The dative expresses purpose: literally ‘for the charges being presented’. Tacitus frequently uses the dative case to express purpose, especially in a noun and gerundive phrase. See *The Cambridge Latin Grammar* 26.2a, page 82.
statuitur: used with two meanings. Firstly, ‘[a period of two days] was set aside’; secondly, the impersonal **statuitur ut** + subjunctive verb, ‘it was decreed that...’.
- 2-3 **biduum ... per trīduum**: the length of a trial would vary, but 2:3 was the usual ratio for prosecution and defence.
intervallum sex diērum: presumably to collect evidence and marshal arguments.
- 3 **trēs amīcī Germānicī**: only a private individual could bring a prosecution; there was no police force or public prosecution service.
- 3-4 **studiō ... studiō**: the word is repeated, but needs a different English translation, ‘zeal ... desire’.
- 3-8 **obiēcērunt Pīsōnem ... corrūpisse ... occīdisse ... et Pīsōnem et Plancīnam ... petīvisse**: students may need help here with the extended indirect statement. The reported speech introduced by **obiēcērunt** continues after the semi-colon and into the next sentence. Teachers could ask: What was the first charge against Piso?; What was the second charge?; What was the third charge?; Against whom was the third charge brought?
- 4 **odiō Germānicī et rērum novārum studiō**: the ablatives **odiō** and **studiō** express cause or motive, ‘because of hatred ...’. Guide students by asking: According to the prosecution, what was Piso’s motive? The chiasmic arrangement of words emphasises the assonance of **odiō** and **studiō**, putting emphasis on Piso’s motives.
rērum novārum: **rēs novae** = ‘revolution’. Literally, ‘new things’, ‘a new situation’.
- 4-5 **militēs corrūpisse**: see Section A, lines 1-6 with the note. This treason charge refers to Piso’s behaviour when he was governor of Syria before the death of Germanicus, not to his attempt to regain the governorship by force after Germanicus’ death.
- 5 **sociōrum iniūriās**: ‘ill-treatment of the provincials’
- 6-7 **et ... et**: ‘both ... and’
- 7-8 **sacra et immolātīōnēs nefandās**: see Section F, lines 8-11 for the impropriety of Piso and Plancina's behaviour when they heard the news of Germanicus' death.
- 8 **petīvisse armīs rem pūblicam**: ‘had made war on the state’. This charge refers to Piso's attempt to regain control of the governorship of Syria by force after the death of Germanicus. See the passage in English linking Sections F and G.

Discussion

After reading this section check students have a clear understanding of the three charges brought against Piso:

1. As governor of Syria he corrupted the Roman soldiers stationed there, encouraging them to behave badly and mistreat the people of the province. See Section A, lines 1-6. This is a charge of treason (**rērum novārum studiō**, ‘desire for revolution’).
2. He murdered Germanicus.
3. He made an armed attack on Rome by attempting to regain the governorship of Syria by force. This is a charge of treason.

Charges 2 and 3 are the same as those outlined by Tiberius in his speech. However, the first charge, relating to Piso's behaviour as governor of Syria, is more serious. Rather than charging Piso with disobeying Germanicus, the prosecutors focus on his treatment of the army and the provincials, claiming that his motive was wanting to stir up a rebellion.

Questions

1. Look at lines 1-2. How many days were allocated for the trial? How was the time distributed between prosecution and defence?
2. Look at lines 3-8. What allegations did the prosecution make against Piso?
3. In lines 4-8 the prosecutors use emotive language to make their case against Piso. Pick out three examples of words that you think are particularly strong.

Section N: the defence (*Annals* 3.14.1.4)

Only the charge of murder could be answered. A crowd gathered outside the Senate house demanding a guilty verdict.

Notes

- 1** **in cēterīs crīminibus**: i.e. the charges besides murder, as listed in the rest of the sentence (bribing the soldiers, mistreating the provincials, abuse of Germanicus); **cēterīs** contrasts with **sōlum venēnī crīmen** in lines 3-4. However, the serious treason accusation of taking up arms against Rome is not mentioned here.
- 1-3** **nam neque ... neque ... nē ... quidem**: teachers can steer students through this sentence with clear reading aloud and questioning, drawing attention to the structure of the sentence. For example:
- What does the word **nam** show about what is going to follow? (An explanation.) Explanation of what? (The charges.)
 - **neque ambitiō militum**: what does **neque** mean? (Hint: there is another **neque** at the start of the next clause.) What is the first charge mentioned?
 - **neque iniūria in prōvinciam**: what is the second charge mentioned? Translate the sentence so far.
 - **nē contumēliae quidem adversum imperātōrem**: what is the third charge? This time notice **nē ... quidem** instead of **neque**. What does **nē ... quidem** mean? What is the effect of using **nē ... quidem** rather than **neque**? (Emphatic, so stresses the third, charge.)
- 2** **ambitiō militum**: see Section A lines 2-3.
- 2-3** **contumēliae ... adversum imperātōrem**: see Section B lines 1-3. Cf. Tiberius' speech, Section L lines 5-6 ('his disobedience and quarrelsomeness') and lines 7-8.
- 3** **imperātōrem**: Germanicus, the commander-in-chief of the Roman forces in the East. Ensure that students do not make the mistake of thinking that **imperātōrem** here means 'emperor', and refers to Tiberius.
- 3-4** **sōlum ... Pīsō diluere**: the subject, **Pīsō**, is postponed. Help students by asking 'What could Piso do?'
- 5** **cūriam**: the **cūria** was a building in the forum in Rome for meetings of the Senate. Piso's trial took place before the Roman senators. However, since meetings of the Senate often took place in the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, **cūria** here may refer in general to a meeting place of the Senate.
- 4-5** **populī ante cūriam vōcēs audiēbantur**: **vōcēs** is separated from its dependent genitive **populī** by a prepositional phrase, and this may be a stumbling block to some students. Guide them by asking comprehension questions, such as:
- Something was happening at the same time as Piso's trial. Where was it happening?

- **populī ... vōcēs audiēbantur**: what were being heard? Whose voices?
- 5 **temperātūrōs**: = **sē temperātūrōs esse**
- 5-6 **nōn ... ēvāsisset**: reported speech, indicated by the infinitive and the colon after **audiēbantur**. Perhaps point out to students that an introductory verb of speaking e.g. **clāmābant** has to be supplied; alternatively, it may be sufficient to ask ‘What were the people shouting?’ In either case, encourage students to insert ‘shouting that ...’ in their translation.
- 6 **sententiās**: translate as singular.
- patrum**: the senators, who were known as **patrēs**.
- 5-6 **nōn ... ēvāsisset**: the hostile mob gathered outside was threatening violence against Piso if he were acquitted by the Senate.

Discussion

Piso’s position was difficult because most of the charges were upheld; the series of negatives (**neque ... neque ... nē ... quidem ... negārī**) and the vivid choice of verb (**trepidāvit**) emphasise the weakness of the defence’s case. Although Germanicus’ death remained suspicious, there was no positive evidence of poison, so the only hope for the defence was to concentrate on refuting the charge of murder. The charge of attempting to take control of the province (treason) is not explicitly mentioned here, although it is referred to in a later passage not included in this extract. Tacitus’ account of the trial is impressionistic and selective, not a detailed report. Piso’s position was made even more difficult by the popular feeling against him, based on the belief that he had murdered Germanicus; there was pressure on the senators to find him guilty

Questions

1. Look at lines 1-4. How successful was the defence in refuting the charges?
2. How does Tacitus emphasise the weakness of Piso’s position? How strong do you think the case against Piso was?
3. If you were a senator would you find Piso guilty or innocent? Give your reasons.

Section O: Piso’s death (*Annals* 3.15)

Plancina deserts Piso when she realises that there is no hope left for him. Piso too abandons hope and next morning he is found dead.

Notes

- 1 **Plancīnae invidia**: objective genitive, ‘hostility towards Plancina’, ‘hatred of Plancina’.
- 1-2 **dum ... absolūtiōnis**: the narrative goes back to an earlier part of the trial.
- 2-3 **sociam ... prōmittēbat**: ask students: What two promises did Plancina make to Piso?
cuiusque fortunae: ‘whatever his fate’. Literally, ‘of whatever fate’. Plancina means that she would follow her husband into exile if that was his punishment; this was what a good wife was expected to do.
prōmittēbat: the imperfect tense indicates that she repeated her promise, ‘she kept promising’.
- comitem exitiī**: ‘his companion in death’. Literally, ‘companion of his death’. Some Roman women even committed suicide when their husbands were sentenced to death.
- 4 **sēgregārī**: used in a reflexive sense = ‘separate herself’, ‘distance herself’.
- 4-5 **quod postquam Pisō sibi exitiābile esse intellēxit**: ‘since Piso realised that this [development i.e. Plancina’s desertion] was fatal for him’. **quod** = **et hoc**, a connecting relative pronoun; the neuter is used to refer back to the whole idea expressed in the

previous sentence. Literally 'which thing'; translate as 'this'. Plancina had been Piso's best hope of a pardon. She was a friend of Livia, the mother of the Emperor Tiberius. Livia was a powerful woman; she had great influence over her son and she hated Agrippina. Tiberius gave in to her pleas and Plancina was exonerated. However, thirteen years later in AD 33, after the death of Livia, Tiberius reopened the prosecution and Plancina committed suicide (Tacitus *Annals* 6.26).

- 5 **causam dīceret**: 'plead his case', 'defend himself'
- 6 **in posterum diem**: 'for the next day'
- 7 **pauca**: the neuter plural = 'a few things', i.e. 'a few words'.
- 6-7 **tamquam ... trādit**: perhaps ask students: What do you think Piso was writing? Encourage various guesses: a will, a letter to his children, a letter to the Emperor. Some may guess that he is going to commit suicide, so may suggest a suicide note. Come back to the question after the rest of this section has been read. Tacitus later reveals that Piso was writing a letter to Tiberius, in which he proclaimed his innocence and his loyalty, and asked him to look after his sons.
- 7 **scrībit, obsignatque et ... trādit**: the three indicative verbs joined by **-que** and **et** give a sense of a series of methodical actions. The verbs are in the present tense. Ask students: What effect do you think this has?
- 8 **solīta cūrāndō corporī**: 'he performed his bodily care routine'. Literally, 'he carried out the usual things for looking after his body,' i.e. he bathed and had dinner. **cūrāndō** is a gerundive in the dative case, agreeing with **corporī**. The dative expresses purpose: literally 'for his body being looked after' = 'for looking after his body'. Tacitus frequently uses the dative case to express purpose, especially in a noun and gerundive phrase.
- 8-9 **multam post noctem**: i.e. 'late at night'. Notice the word order; the preposition is sandwiched between adjective and noun.
- 9 **cubiculō**: = **ē cubiculō**: the ablative without a preposition denotes from a place.
- 10 **prīmā lūce**: 'at dawn'. Literally, 'at first light'. The ablative case expresses the time at which something happens.
- 10-11 **prīmā lūce perfossō iugulō, iacente ... gladiō**: reading aloud with pauses to separate each ablative phrase, followed by comprehension questions, will help students understand this long series of ablatives.

Discussion

The focus is now on Plancina. The narrative moves back to a few days earlier in the trial when the outlook for Piso looked more positive. At first Plancina promised to follow him into exile or even to commit suicide if he were condemned to death. This is what was expected of the wife of an upper-class Roman. A famous example is Arria (Pliny *Letters* 3.16). When her husband was given the chance to commit suicide instead of being executed, she took the initiative:

She drew the weapon, stabbed her breast, pulled out the dagger and offered it to her husband, adding the immortal and almost divine words: 'Paetus, it doesn't hurt'.

(Pliny *Letters* 3.16)

But gradually Plancina separates herself from her husband, withdrawing her emotional support when she sees that it isn't in her own interest. The powerful six-syllable word **exitiābile** marks the moment of Piso's surrender and Plancina's abandonment. Piso's final isolation is highlighted in the physical desertion of **ēgressā cubiculō uxōre**. Tacitus does not state explicitly that Piso committed suicide. The narrative leaves open the possibility that he was assassinated.

Questions

1. Lines 1-4 describe Plancina's attitude to her husband. What promises did she make to him at first? How did her attitude change and why? What do you think of her behaviour?
2. How does Tacitus emphasise Piso's isolation?

General discussion

The extract gives rise to many topics of discussion, some of which are outlined in the *General questions* below: was Germanicus murdered; the characters of Germanicus and Piso; the contrast between their wives; the attitude to Tiberius; Tacitus' qualities as an historian, his literary technique and political bias. Some of these are elusive and teachers will have to guide students carefully.

A good starting point would be the question of Germanicus' murder. Was Germanicus murdered? If so, was Piso responsible? What evidence, if any, does Tacitus' narrative provide? These questions are dealt with thoroughly in the Discussion and Notes to several Sections, primarily Sections B, C, E, G and N. The threads need to be pulled together and teachers may prefer to leave this until after the whole extract has been read. Essential points for students to understand include that Tacitus makes no explicit assertion either that Germanicus was murdered or that Piso poisoned him. In fact, he states clearly that Piso's defence was able to refute the poisoning charge. How, then, are some readers left with the impression that Piso did murder Germanicus? Discussing this question gives the opportunity to investigate Tacitus' methods: the reliance on gossip and allegation, the use of innuendo, the contribution of literary technique. This will lead to the question of Tacitus' reliability. The discussion could be taken further by asking students to consider what motives Piso would have had for killing Germanicus. This can be followed by the question of why Tiberius sent him to Syria and whether he was acting on Tiberius' orders.

An assessment of the fairness of Tacitus' presentation of Germanicus and Piso will be more productive if students are provided with a little more biographical information about both. (See above **Further biographical information on some of the characters.**) Students will probably have done some work already on the presentation of Germanicus after their reading of Section D, but this will need to be supplemented by putting it into the context of the whole extract. Germanicus' popularity with the army and the common people of Rome and Asia is undeniable, and it is what Tacitus' narrative focuses on. There is less evidence for his qualities as a general and administrator. His success in sorting out the Armenian problem and making a settlement with the Parthians shows he had ability as a diplomat. His sightseeing trip to Egypt could be seen as a mark against him; it could be interpreted as putting his own pleasure ahead of serious work. A case could be made that Tacitus exaggerates Germanicus' good qualities in order to cast Piso, and Tiberius, in a bad light.

In sharp contrast to his portrayal of Germanicus, Tacitus is clearly hostile to Piso. This is evident right at the start of the extract in the choice of detail and the pejorative language. (See the discussion and Questions on Section A.) But to temper Tacitus' portrait, there is evidence outside this extract to suggest another side to Piso, that he was an able man and an experienced administrator. As we have seen, the accusation of murder was not proven. But the accusations of treason against him were serious and seem to have some foundation. He certainly started a civil war in Syria when he returned there after Germanicus' death to attempt to regain control. In his defence, however, it could be argued that he had been

illegally expelled by Germanicus and that his successor as governor was not entitled to the post. The other charges, concerning his treatment of the soldiers in Syria and of the provincials, are more difficult to explain. Goodyear (vol. II, p. 362, note on 2.55.5-6) goes so far as to suggest that Piso's behaviour was irrational and the result of mental breakdown. In Piso's trial his accusers allege that he was driven by hatred of Germanicus and desire for revolution (**odiō Germānicī et novārum rērum studiō**, Section M line 4). Otherwise, Tacitus does not speculate about Piso's motives, beyond reporting the allegation that Piso, when he was appointed to assist Germanicus, had received secret instructions from Tiberius.

Students could be reminded of Tacitus' political bias and hostility to Tiberius. There is no evidence that Tiberius was behind Germanicus' death; Tacitus relies on innuendo and allegation. It is possible that Tiberius was telling the truth when he claimed that he sent Piso to the East 'to assist Germanicus'. However, because of the popularity of Germanicus and Agrippina, Piso became the target of popular anger and hostility. Tiberius did not defend Piso, but handed the decision over to the Senate, asking them to give Piso a fair trial. But was Tiberius' appearance of fairness just a way of covering up his own guilt and using Piso as a scapegoat? This is just one of the unanswerable questions posed by this episode. As Tacitus himself comments (*Annals* 3.19.2): **adeō maxima quaeque ambigua sunt** (So true is it that all the greatest events are ambiguous).

Tacitus consistently presents Plancina and Agrippina as opposites. The contrast between their wives underlines the conflict between Germanicus and Piso. The dramatic picture of Agrippina disembarking at Brundisium is followed immediately by the description of Plancina rejoicing at Germanicus' death and the final desertion of Piso by Plancina contrasts with Agrippina's fierce loyalty. Another reason for Plancina's prominence in the final scene is that her fate, as Piso's partner in guilt, is important to Tacitus. Discussion of these scenes could lead to consideration of Tacitus' reliability. Could Tacitus be embellishing the facts in these scenes in order to manipulate his reader's emotion and prejudice him/her against Piso and Plancina, and indirectly the imperial regime? The role of the empress Livia is also important.

General questions

1. **The death of Germanicus.** Do you think Germanicus was murdered? And if he was, who murdered him? Look carefully through the text to find what evidence (if any) there is for murder. If you think Tacitus gives the impression that Germanicus was murdered, consider how he creates this impression.
2. **Characters.** What impression do you have of Germanicus and Piso from Tacitus' account? How fair and accurate do you think Tacitus' presentation of the two men is? What do you think Tiberius' role was in the events Tacitus describes?
3. **Presentation of women.** Why do you think the wives of Germanicus and Piso play such a large part in Tacitus' account of the death of Germanicus and the trial of Piso? You could consider: the character and behaviour of Agrippina and Plancina, their relationship with their husbands, the way they are perceived by others, and Tacitus' attitude to them. Look also at the role of Livia, Tiberius' mother. What part did she play in events?
4. **Tacitus as an historian.** From your reading of this extract, what do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of Tacitus as an historian? You could consider: accuracy, clarity, use of evidence, impartiality, style of writing.

5. **Tacitus as a writer.** Which scenes or phrases linger most vividly in your mind after reading this narrative? What do you think are the most striking qualities of the writing?

Activities

- Write about the episode from the point of view of one of the characters: Piso, Plancina, Agrippina, Tiberius.
- Write an obituary for Germanicus.
- Draw a tombstone for Germanicus with an inscription (in English). Prepare students for this by looking at some Latin funerary inscriptions, for example those in the *Cambridge Latin Course* Book III, Stage 28, pages 140-141.
- Imagine you are a radio or television journalist reporting from the seashore where the crowd has gathered to welcome Agrippina or from outside the Senate during Piso's trial. Record your report: describe what you see and hear; report what is known; speculate about what might happen; include interviews with some of the crowd.
- Act out Piso's trial: students play the parts of the prosecutors, the defence, Piso and witnesses; the rest of the class are the jury (the senators).