



CSCP Support Materials
for
Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 2



Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)
Superstition and Magic

For examination in 2021-2023

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Information about several of the pictures in this booklet, together with useful additional material for the Theme, may be found in the support available online for **Cambridge Latin Course, Book I, Stage 7** and **Book III, Stages 22-23**.

Theme B: Superstition and Magic

Candidates are expected to be familiar with the following aspects of the theme:

- the work of an augur,
- the work of a hauspex;
- defixiones (curse-tablets).

Candidates should study the pictures in the [Eduqas Prescribed Material Booklet](#), one or more of which will be used as a basis for questions in each question paper. Candidates will also answer questions on the texts in the [Eduqas Prescribed Material Booklet](#).

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Introduction

The Roman world was filled with gods and their landscape was filled with ritual. A pool might be the home of a nymph, a tree the home of a dryad; the threshold of every building held significance and every crossroad might be a meeting place of spirits. There was a world in which you interacted with the divine and the supernatural on a regular basis.

State religious practices and worship of the main gods was organised by prescribed ritual and conducted by colleges of priests. These religious practices were often held in public, but for the most part the people played a fairly passive role, unable to enter most temples or to take a direct part in the ceremonies. There were also regular festivals and rituals throughout the year, observed by the population as a whole and which marked out the Roman calendar.

In addition to public and collective interactions with the divine, an individual might choose to be initiated into a cult such as those of Isis or Mithras, often undergoing training or a series of tests before reaching the status of initiate. These cults enabled worshippers to establish a more personal connection with a specific power and perhaps to hope for a reward in return for their devotion. These cults were tolerated in Roman society provided that they did not interfere with an individual's participation in the rites of the established Roman religion.

Any individual might experience direct contact with the divine or supernatural in other ways. Dreams were held in great esteem as tools of divination, whether you believed they were messages and instructions direct from the gods or symbols to enable you to make sense of your life. Dream manuals survive from the Roman world which show us that people regularly consulted on the meanings of their dreams. In fact the Romans made use of a wide range of divination techniques. For Platonists and Stoics, everything in the world was imbued with the cosmic soul and therefore could be used to tell the future. Acts of divination were as varied as casting sand into the wind and observing the patterns it made as it fell, or observing the patterns of flames in a fire.

This selection of sources looks at some of the different ways in which the Romans experienced contact with the world of superstition and magic: through forms of divination; through their perceptions of supernatural creatures; and through their attempts to control this world with spells and curses.

Exploration of the theme

In this theme, the following topics will be covered:

- communication with the world of the divine
 - sacrifices
 - appeasing the dead
- divination
 - the work of an *augur*
 - the work of a *haruspex*
 - dreams
 - omens
- curses
 - *defixiones*
 - spells
- warding off evil
 - sacrifices
- the supernatural
 - depiction of witches and witchcraft
 - werewolves
 - spirits
 - some magical places and artefacts

Students will undoubtedly have their own knowledge which they can bring to this topic. Explorations which compare ancient and modern attitudes towards magic and superstition are to be encouraged.

Ways to start might include establishing what superstitions they know from their own experience, e.g. black cats crossing your path, saying 'bless you' after sneezes, avoiding walking under ladders, breaking a mirror etc. They may also know ways of 'telling the future' (tarot, for example).

Modern depictions of werewolves are very similar to ancient ones, and so students may well have a clear idea of how they look and act. Comparisons of ancient depictions of witches with later European witch trials is illuminating in terms of similar prejudices against women.

It may be useful to tackle the source material thematically. The texts are presented in the booklet in alphabetical order according to author in order that the teacher is free to use their professional judgement in presenting the material to their students in whatever order seems best.

Sources

Source	Type	Writer and Context	Subject and Themes
Images			
Picture 1: Road surrounded by tombs	Via dei Sepolcri, Pompeii		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appeasing the spirits of the dead magical artefacts and locations
Picture 2: A <i>defixio</i> (curse tablet)	lead tablet		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicating with the divine magical artefacts
Picture 3: Preparations for a sacrifice	altar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role of a priest how a sacrifice is carried out
Picture 4: Bronze model of a liver	bronze model		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role of the <i>haruspex</i> divination through haruspicy
Picture 5: Romulus and Remus' augury	print		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> divination through augury
Picture 6: Augustus (centre) as an <i>augur</i>	altar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> divination through augury the objects and dress of an augur
Text			
Horace <i>Odes</i> 3.27.1-16	poetry excerpt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writer of poetry in a variety of styles the poet wishes good omens upon a friend departing the city on a long voyage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the poet gives a list of bad omens
Martial <i>Epigrams</i> 7.54	poetry whole work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writer of short poems (epigrams) on various subjects the poet addresses Nasidienus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the poet takes bad dreams very seriously evidence for how to ward off bad omens

Ovid <i>Amores</i> 1.8.1-18	poetry excerpt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writer of love poetry • the poet is writing as though he is hiding on the threshold of his girlfriend's home • describing the old woman he sees talking to his girlfriend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the poet describes a Roman witch and what powers she was supposed to have had
Petronius <i>Satyricon</i> 61-62	prose excerpt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writer and member of the imperial court • an excerpt from a novel • a first person account told at a dinner party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the author describes an encounter with a werewolf
Pliny <i>Letters</i> 5.5	letter excerpt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lawyer, politician and writer • letter to his friend • writing about the death of the writer Gaius Fannius 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a dream is described and interpreted
Suetonius <i>Divus Iulius</i> 81	prose excerpt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writer of biography • writing about the death of Julius Caesar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a haruspex warns Caesar of his impending assassination • an unfavourable sacrifice is performed • there are further bad omens
Virgil <i>Aeneid</i> 4.504-521	poetry excerpt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writer of epic poetry • the queen of Carthage prepares a curse for Aeneas • the setting is the legendary past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a description of the ritual surrounding a curse • magical artefacts are described • the appearance of a practitioner of magic

As is usual with Latin literature, we should bear in mind that the authors we are hearing from are male and upper-class.

Suggestions for reading and teaching

Key aims are:

- Understanding the meaning of the Latin
- Literary appreciation
- Developing an understanding of the topic

It is often useful to adopt the following approach when introducing students to original literature:

- Read the Latin aloud to emphasise phrasing and stress word groups
- Break up more complex sentences into constituent parts for comprehension
- Focus on comprehension of the text and understanding the content through questioning and using the vocabulary
- Look closely at how the Latin is expressed and the ways in which the literary devices enhance the meaning.
- Although a sample translation is provided in the course resources, teachers might want to encourage their students to make their own version after various options have been discussed and evaluated. The first step is a literal translation, then something more polished in natural English that is as close to the structure and vocabulary of the original Latin as possible. Students will soon see that a degree of paraphrasing may be required when the Latin does not readily translate into correct and idiomatic English.

About the Teacher's Notes

The following *Notes* focus on language, content, style and literary effect. The *Discussion* and *Questions* focus mostly on literary appreciation and interpretation. Rhetorical and technical terms are used throughout the notes. Some of these may be unfamiliar to teachers new to teaching Latin literature; a definition will be supplied. As the teacher is free to teach these sources in any order they wish, there will be duplication within the notes from time to time.

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 should not feel that they need to pass on to their students all the information from these notes; they should choose whatever they think is appropriate.**

Some of the information contained in the 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.**

The Teacher's Notes contain the follow:

- An **Introduction** to the author and the text, although students will only be asked questions on the content of the source itself.
 - **Notes** on the text to assist the teacher.
 - **Discussion** suggestions for students and overarching **Themes** which appear across more than one source.
 - **Suggested Questions for Comprehension, Content, Style and Culture** to be used with students.
 - **Further Information and Reading** for teachers who wish to explore the topic and texts further. None of this is intended for examination.
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Further reading on Magic and Superstition

Cambridge Latin Course Book 1, Stage 7, pages 93-95 (Roman beliefs about life after death)

Cambridge Latin Course Book 3, Stage 22, pages 34-35 (Magic and curses)

Cambridge Latin Course Book 3, Stage 23, pages 48-53 (Roman religion, including divination)

B. Ankarloo and S Clark, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Vol. 2: Ancient Greece and Rome* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999)

Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome Vol. 1: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome Vol. 2: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (John Hopkins University Press, 2006)

D. Ogden, *Night's Black Agents: Witches, Wizards and the Dead in the Ancient World* (Bloomsbury, 2008)

Picture 1: road surrounded by tombs

This picture shows the tombs lining the road out of Pompeii towards Herculaneum. These marble tombs were in a prestigious location, as this was also the main route to and from Rome itself, and they commemorate important citizens and families who played an active role in the life of the town.

Key information for students

Roman burials took place outside towns as the dead were seen as having a *miasma* or contagion which could pollute the living. The Romans were concerned about being forgotten after death, however, and so the dead also required contact with the living and regular visits to keep them happy. Roman tombs often have dining rooms or gathering areas attached which would have been used on special occasions.

If the dead became unhappy, they could cause trouble for the living. Tombs were also seen as a place where the living could make contact with spirits and could use them for magical purposes.

Aside from the magical atmosphere of the necropolis, these areas often presented the traveller with real dangers as they provided cover and housing for bandits and robbers.

Additional notes for teachers

The Romans had specific rites and rituals to keep spirits happy, and to deal with angry spirits if needed. The *Parentalia* was a nine-day festival in February to honour the dead ancestors. It concluded with the public festival *Feralia* and offerings of food, wine and flowers.

The restless dead, however, especially those without family to perform ceremonies for them, would not be appeased by these actions and would need to be dealt with during the *Lemuria* festival in May when evil spirits were driven out. Ovid describes the ceremony in the *Fasti*, saying that the head of the household must get up at midnight and walk around the house

with bare feet, casting black beans over his shoulder and chanting “These I send; with these beans I redeem me and mine”. He would do this nine times, and then the whole house would loudly beat bronze whilst commanding the spirits to be gone.

The tombs of the untimely dead (victims of suicide, child deaths etc.) were seen as a suitable place to deposit curse tablets: the spirit, bitter at its own fate, might be more likely to come to your aid. The *miasma* could also be harnessed by removing objects from the tombs to be used in spells: this often meant that tombs were raided for their bones. Disturbing a tomb was punishable by death.

Picture 2: a defixio

This picture shows one of the curse tablets found at Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) in the reservoir under the King's Bath. It is 6.8 cm square, made of lead, with an inscribed text which has been written in Latin with each word reversed.

It says "May he who has stolen Vilbia from me dissolve like water. May she who has devoured her be struck dumb, whether it be Velvinna or Exsupereus or Verianus or Severinus, Augustalis, Comitianus, Catus, Minianus, Germanilla or Jovina."

Key information for students

Defixiones, were written on lead then folded or rolled, often pierced, then deposited in a magical location. The victim needed to be clearly identified, a divine power invoked and magical words used. The words might be arranged into a magical shape, and mystical pictures might also be included.

Additional notes for teachers

It is not clear exactly what the Romans themselves called these tablets. They appear all across the empire, and were used by pre-Roman societies as well.

Most *defixiones* are lovers' curses, although many relate to trade and sporting competitions. Unusually, most of the tablets found at Bath are appeals for justice, mainly relating to stolen property.

Defixiones seem to be particularly a way to achieve restitution for poorer individuals who were unable to afford or expect justice through the law courts.

There are some features common to most *defixiones*. They were usually written on lead (the Romans believed that some materials had sympathetic properties – the cold hard materials would invoke the cold finality of death and the coldness of the spirits being called upon – and they are folded or rolled, often pierced with a nail (this is

to 'bind' and 'fix' the magic, not to keep the contents secret). They were then deposited in a magical location. This was frequently a grave or chthonic sanctuary in order to invoke the spirits therein, or in a body of water.

The language used to write a *defixio* is also specific: a victim and a divine power should be identified. Then the tablet is made more magical by the use a range of devices: using *voces magicae*, magical words which have no obvious meaning; mixing up the alphabet being used – e.g. Greek and Latin letters; arranging the words into shapes, especially triangles and winged shapes; writing upside down, or in spirals or as a 'boustrophedon' text (i.e. with lines read in alternate directions); including mystical pictures such as demons, bound figures and mummies. As can be seen from these examples, 'twistiness' was seen as inherently magical.

Picture 3: preparations for a sacrifice

This relief from an altar is housed in the museum in the Royal Palace in Stockholm.

Key information for students

This is a typical scene of sacrifice. The flaming altar stands in front of the temple. The *victimarius* with his sacrificial axe leads the willing victim, decorated lavishly, to be slaughtered. The priest, head covered, stands at the altar, ready to conduct the ritual. Beside him, a figure holds a tray ready to conduct offerings, such as the *mola salsa* – sanctified grain which would be sprinkled on the animal's back as a sign of dedication to the gods.

Additional notes for teachers

The Roman sacrifice had six phases, each of which had to be carried out smoothly for it to be deemed a success.

The victim, usually a domesticated animal such as an ox or pig, is led in a parade (*pompa*) towards the altar. This victim must be blemish-free and garlanded, and should behave calmly throughout, giving the impression that it is in some way 'willing'. Next offerings and prayers are made at the altar. This might take the form of a libation (pouring out of wine) and the burning of incense. The prayers must be completed without any stumbling over the words, otherwise it would have to be started afresh. Once this was completed, the victim was dedicated to the gods. This was done through a ritual which symbolically took it out of our world and placed it into the world of the gods. Wine and *mola salsa* (sacred grain) were poured over the animal, and the knife passed over its back.

The killing was carried out by a team of people, although only the *victimarius* is depicted here. The victim would be stunned (some sources show a mallet being used) then the throat of the animal was cut and it was bled to death. If the animal struggled then it was a bad portent.

Once the victim was dead, the entrails would be inspected by a *haruspex* for any signs of blemishes or abnormalities which would indicate that the offering was ill-omened. If this was the case, then they would start again with a fresh animal. If all was well, the entrails were burned as an offering to the gods and then the remainder of the animal cooked and portioned out to the gathered crowd. This would not happen in all sacrifices; animals were sometimes offered in their entirety to the gods (a *holocaust*).

Picture 4: bronze model of a liver

This is a life-sized bronze model of a sheep's liver, found in Piacenza in Italy (ancient Etruria) and dating from the 2nd century BC. The inscriptions are Etruscan, although the people would have been speaking Latin by this time.

Bronze is associated with magic; iron was, in contrast, for warding off magic.

Key information for students

This model would have been used by a *haruspex* as they read in the entrails of a sacrificial victim in order to tell the future. They would be checking for blemishes or abnormalities which would indicate misfortune or an unfavourable sacrifice.

Additional notes for teachers

The *haruspices* were a college of priests who interpreted unusual events and prodigies, including lightning and monstrous births as well as the reading of entrails. The origins of this priesthood seem to be Etruscan (pre-Roman Italian tribe), and the practice shares elements with Hittite and Babylonian practices. Similar models to this one have been found from Mesopotamia (one particularly good example is in the British Museum). It is possible that the Romans even fostered the idea that the *haruspex* was in some way foreign in order to demarcate these rites from other priesthoods which carried out divination.

After an animal had been sacrificed, the innards would be read by the *haruspex*.

This model liver is probably a guide to interpreting the organ. It is marked out to show a map of the heavens, each section inscribed with the name of a god. This indicates to the *haruspex* the relationship between the liver and the world of the divine. If there was a blemish, the sacrifice would be carried out again unless it was impossible to do so.

By the 1st century BC, there seems to have been some scepticism surrounding this form of divination, even though augury and dreams were still followed. Cicero is frequently sarcastic about *haruspices*, and quotes Cato the Elder as saying "How can two *haruspices*, upon meeting, not laugh at each other?"

Picture 5: Romulus' and Remus' augury

This picture is a print by Giovanni Battista Fontana dating from around 1573. It shows the legendary brothers Romulus and Remus using augury to resolve their dispute over who should be the ruler of their new city.

Key information for students

Romulus and Remus had decided to found a city but, being twins, could not reach a decision who would rule. It was agreed therefore that the gods should decide and that augury (the reading of bird signs) would be the method of determining their will. Romulus climbed to the top of the Palatine Hill to make his observations, and Remus climbed to the top of the Aventine.

Remus was the first to receive a sign, seeing six vultures. But whilst they were reporting this sign, Romulus saw twelve vultures. Each declared himself the winner, Remus because he had received a sign first and Romulus because he had seen the greater number.

At this point, according to Livy, the competition dissolved into taunts and violence. Eventually Remus was killed and thus the city became Romulus' and Rome was its name. The famous version of the story is that Romulus himself slew his brother after Remus had jumped over the new walls whilst mocking him and his nascent city.

Additional notes for teachers

For more on augury in general, see the notes on picture 6.

Picture 6: Augustus (centre) as an augur

This picture shows the *Vicus Sandaliarius* altar from Rome, now on display in the Uffizi gallery in Florence.

It was dedicated in 2 BC and was dedicated to the *lares Augusti* –the imperial cult. Augustus himself is in the middle, flanked by a member of his family to the left (probably Gaius Caesar) and a female figure on the right (perhaps Livia but more likely a priestess of the *Magna Mater*). Unusually, the *lares* themselves are on one side of the altar rather than on the front.

Key information for students

The *augur* is in the middle, head covered, holding an augural staff (*lituus*). This was used by an augur to mark out the sky into sections in order to observe the behaviour of birds. The left-hand side was generally considered unlucky. At his feet is a chicken pecking at the ground. This indicates another aspect of augury: the observation of birds eating.

Additional notes for teachers

The emperor Augustus is depicted with his head covered (he has pulled his toga over his head at the back, *capite velato*). This was traditional when acting in a religious role. In his left hand he holds a scroll: a volume of religious instruction. In his right hand he holds a curved augural staff, the *lituus*. The observation of chickens pecking was part of the *tripudium*, the military auspices taken before a campaign. In 2 BC Gaius led a military campaign to Asia Minor, Parthia and Armenia.

Augures were mainly concerned with the observation of bird signs, but they also read signs in thunder and lightning, and the behaviour of animals. The ceremony and observation itself would be carried out by the magistrates who wished to know the will of the gods, the *augur* advising and confirming that

everything had been carried out correctly.

The *augur* used his *lituus* to mark out a religious space called a *templum*. Any place designated a *templum* was a window of communication with the divine. A building could be a *templum*, but so could any space.

Interestingly, Roman *augures* tended to face south when they marked out divine sections, and so the east –the lucky direction- was on his left (*laevus* = left / lucky). Greeks, however, faced north and so for them left was unlucky (*sinister*). Roman authors, especially the Augustan poets, confuse the whole matter by describing things as if they themselves were actually Greeks, so the left-hand side is unlucky in the texts we have here!

HORACE *Omens good and bad* (Odes 3.27. 1-16)

The poet light-heartedly describes the bad omens which may befall a traveller.

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65BC-27BC) was a lyric poet writing under the emperor Augustus. Horace was born in southern Italy, at that time an area still closely associated with the Greek world, and he grew up steeped in Hellenistic culture. Although as a young man he lived in Rome, he soon moved to Athens where he continued his education. The turbulence of the era impacted upon him greatly: following the assassination of Julius Caesar he was recruited by Brutus to fight against Antony and Octavian (the later Augustus). Horace later accepted a pardon from Octavian and returned to Italy, but his family estates had been confiscated. He was able to turn his hand to writing and real success followed when he received the patronage of Maecenas, one of Augustus' closest advisers.

This selection is taken from the beginning of *Ode* 3.27. The full poem is 76 lines in total and our part focuses on a journey being undertaken by Galatea, a one-time love of Horace. She is making her way south from Rome, along the Appian Way, past Lanuvium, and towards Brundisium where she will sail for Greece. It seems that Horace is teasing her gently for her superstitions whilst writing a poem which is also an affectionate farewell (a *propempticon*). She should not worry about bad omens, they are for the wicked. The omens, good and bad, which Horace refers to are frequently jumbled up and less than serious: his Roman audience would have recognised this and enjoyed the silly spookiness of the poem.

The text is unadapted.

Notes

metre: Sapphics

- 1 **impios:** usually a *propempticon* (sending-off poem) would start with good wishes. Horace is subverting this by wishing *bad* omens upon the wicked.
parrae: an ill-omened nocturnal bird, probably an owl. The owl is often used in Latin poetry as an omen of death.
- 2 **ducat:** here a jussive subjunctive ('let...escort'), the verb **duco** would usually suggest a protective escort. By using it alongside the ill omens, it sounds mocking.
- 2-4 The translation here is **rava lupa** (the tawny she-wolf) **decurrens** (running down) **ab agro Lanuvino** (from the region of Lanuvium). The interwoven words add interest to the lines, and also start us on a very specific journey. Galatea would have set out from Rome along the Via Appia, and Lanuvium is about 20 miles south of Rome on a low hill. The poem references points along Galatea's imminent journey.

praegnans canis...rava lupa...fetaque volpes: the animals in this series are all supposed ill omens, although most ancient texts seem to focus on birds rather than mammals. They are all female (women are more closely linked to magic in the ancient world than men) and two are mentioned as being pregnant (in the ancient world there was a pollution or stain associated with birth, similar to that surrounding death). Notice that it is a list of three (*tricolon*), this also being a number associated with magic and power. The string of conjunctions (known as *polysyndeton*) adds to the impression of the negative omens piling up.

feta and **praegnans** are not quite synonyms. **feta** has more of a sense of 'having just given birth' or being in the act itself.

- 5 **rumpat:** the subjunctive ('let it interrupt') again suggests Horace imagining ill omens befalling others, especially those who did not heed the earlier signs and actually continued their journey. The verb **rumpat** is violent and suggests not a polite interruption but an aggressive halt. The emphatic position at the beginning of the line and sentence mirrors the sudden 'jumping in' which the snake is doing in the text.

serpens: whether a snake was a good or a bad omen depended in large part on what it was doing and where. They were considered protective, and often featured on *lararia* (shrines to the household spirits); here, however, it is clearly less favourable as it is causing problems for the traveller. Most omens required contextual analysis.

- 6 **per obliquum:** there is an implied verb of motion here.

similis sagittae: the *sibilance* (repetition of s sounds) conjures up both the hissing snake and the whistling arrow. The *simile* suggests the speed of the snake darting across and also the shape.

- 7 **cui** is here standing for **ei cui**. **ei** is dative with **suscitabo** (line 11), 'I will bring forth for her. **cui** is dative with **timebo**. 'for whom I am worried'.

mannos: these were the fast ponies used for pulling carriages.

- 8 **providus auspex:** an *auspex* performed a similar role to an *augur*. They watched for bird signs, but they did so for private occasions such as weddings. The *augur* carried out the duties for public ceremonies such as a general leaving for battle. The **providus** seems a little redundant, but stresses the ability of the **auspex** to see the future. The phrase is clearly meant to be humorous: Horace does not want us to really imagine he is able to tell the future, he is still teasing Galatea and her superstitions.

- 9 **repetat:** potential subjunctive – the action will be forestalled by Horace's prayer.

stantes...paludes: the poem continues to follow Galatea's route towards Brundisium': the Pomptine Marshes were about 50km down the Appian Way, until they were drained by Mussolini's regime in the 1930s. They are described as **stantes** ('standing'), still and stagnant. The gloomy place is a suitable location for gloomy omens.

- 10 imbrium...imminentum:** according to Cicero and others, when birds whose habitat was the sea or marsh splashed into water it was a sign of impending storms. Horace imagines that he will forestall the bird on its way to the marshes. The *hyperbaton* (inverted or discontinuous word order) and rhyming of **imbrium** and **imminentum** draw attention, whilst the delay of the participle also mirrors the fact the rains are awaited in real life also.
- 11 oscinem corvum:** the adjective **oscinem** means ‘prophetic through cries’. Its sounds were observed as well as its flight. The repetition of ‘c’ in these words suggest the ‘caw’ of this prophetic bird.
- suscitabo:** if we were unsure as to whether Horace was being playful or sincere his exaggerated claim here surely puts that question to rest.
- 12 solis ab ortu:** a direction signalling good omens.
- 13 mavis:** irregular form of the 2nd person of **malo**
- 14 memor nostri...vivas:** **memor** is an adjective describing Galatea, **nostri** the genitive (‘mindful of us’), with the poetic plural **nos** standing for Horace himself. **vivas** is subjunctive, expressing a wish.
- Galatea:** we finally have the name of the addressee, presumably a love-interest as is typical of women in poems by Horace! She is leaving Horace and Rome, but there is no ill-will in this poem, just teasing and affection.
- 15 te...vetet ire:** accusative and infinitive construction. **vetet** is subjunctive, expressing a wish.
- te:** emphatically placed at the start of the line to emphasise the contrast between the ill omens for the wicked, and the good omens which *you* (Galatea) will have.
- nec...nec:** the emphatic negative stresses the contrast again between the luck Galatea will have and the bad omens which befall others.
- laevus...picus:** this ill-omened woodpecker is described as being **laevus** (‘on the left’). Horace is following the Greek tradition of the left being unlucky.
- 16 vaga cornix:** the arrival of this stray magpie (or crow – see Further information) with no clear flight-path, could be worryingly ambiguous to the traveller.
-

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each line, phrase or sentence, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

lines 1-4:

- What kind of people is Horace talking about here? What is the omen he is wishing upon them?
- What are the three other animals mentioned in these lines?
- What detail is given about the dog?
- What colour is the wolf? Where is the wolf running down from? Why do you think Horace mentions specific places?
- What detail is given about the fox?

lines 5-8:

- What animal is mentioned in the first line? What is this animal going to break or interrupt?
- Where is it coming from? What is it described as being like? (*the simile could be followed up here*)
- What has it done? How does Horace feel? Who does he feel this for? (*This will need some unravelling, as he does not care about the **impious** mentioned in line one but Galatea, who has not yet been mentioned. Students may be able to extrapolate that he is worried for someone he considers **pius** – the opposite of those **impious** travellers*)
- He describes himself as an **auspex**. What is this and why might they be considered **providus**? Do you think that Horace is really an **auspex**?

lines 9-12:

- In line 10 we have another animal – what is it? How is it described? What kind of weather does it predict?
- In line 9 we find out how it predicts the weather. Where does it go?
- In line 11, what does Horace say he will do? How will he do this? What kind of creature will he conjure up? What direction will this come from? Is this a good or a bad sign? *Students should be able to work out that this is a good sign, based on the fact that Horace is attempting to look after a person he worries about.*

lines 13-16:

- What does he wish upon this person?
- What is her name? What does he want in return? For how long does he hope she will remember him?
- What two birds are mentioned here? What detail is given about the woodpecker? What detail is given about the magpie? What does Horace want them **not** to do? Do you think these are good or bad omens?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-4) How does Horace create an exciting opening to this poem through his choice and arrangement of words?
 2. (lines 5-7) How does Horace, through his choice of words and style of writing, create an exciting description of the snake and its actions?
 3. (lines 7-8) For whom is Horace concerned?
 4. (lines 9-10) Explain the omen being described by Horace here.
 5. (lines 11-12) Is Horace describing a good or a bad omen here? Explain how you know.
 6. (line 13-14) How do we know from the content and style of these lines that Horace and Galatea are friends?
 7. (lines 15-16) Explain why these would have been considered bad omens by the Romans.
-

Discussion

Themes: omens, the work of an *augur*

Students could start by thinking about the ‘bad omens’ they have heard of (e.g. a black cat crossing your path). They may also know the old counting rhyme ‘one for sorrow, two for joy’, based in superstition surrounding the observation of magpies. Horace’s poem can then be used to create a similar list for the Romans. Depending on the time available, students could carry out their own observations of animal behaviour (perhaps on their walk to school) and interpret either in line with Horace or contextually (like the interpretation of the snake in the poem). This activity will help them to appreciate the omnipresence of omens in Roman life, if you were attuned to looking for them.

General questions on the passage and theme

1. What does Horace describe as being bad omens? Do any of them have specific meanings?
 2. Do you think that Romans took omens such as these seriously, or not? What evidence is there for both points of view in this poem?
-

Further Information and Reading

Journeys were dangerous undertakings in the ancient world and omens concerning them would have, in general, been taken seriously. Other authors do not mention mammals often as being propitious, it is much more commonly birds. There were different types of signs in the ancient world: some signs were deliberately watched for (such as when an *augur* watched the skies in response to a particular question); others just happened (such as most of the ones listed here). With these latter signs, the context would tell whether it was a good or a bad sign and what it indicated.

There is some uncertainty over the exact birds being specified in this text. From other sources it seems that **cornix** may indicate a common crow and **corvus** a raven. Crows and ravens were both prophetic birds, and both were oscines, birds whose cries were observed for signs.

R.G.M. Nisbet and Niall Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace Odes Book 3* (Oxford University Press 2004)

David West, *Horace Odes 3: text, translation and commentary* (Oxford University Press 2002)

Gordon Williams, *The Third Book of Horace's Odes* (Oxford University Press 1967)

MARTIAL Cures for bad dreams (Epigrams 7.54)

A series of bad dreams is plaguing Martial's life

Marcus Valerius Martialis (c.AD 40 – c.AD 103) was born in Spain and moved to Rome in his mid-twenties. He wrote twelve books of epigrams (short poems) on a variety of themes, often writing with biting humour and critical observations.

This particular poem was published around AD 92. In this work, Martial addresses his friend, Nasidianus, who has been having portentous dreams about the poet (although Martial does not go into the content of these dreams). Martial satirises common Roman superstitions by claiming to be ruining himself financially in his futile and expensive attempts to dispel the bad luck. In the end he concludes that there is nothing for it but for Nasidianus to either avoid sleeping or to keep his dreams to himself.

The entire poem is only 8 lines, and is organised into three distinct sections: lines 1-2 are an introduction to the scenario; lines 3-7 detail Martial's reaction; line 8 is a punchy, witty, apotropaic (warding off evil) conclusion.

This text is unadapted.

Notes

metre: elegiac couplet

- 1 The translation here is **semper** (always) **mane** (in the morning) **narras mihi** (you tell to me) **mera somnia** (entire dreams) **de me** (about myself).

semper is emphatically placed at the beginning of the line and poem to stress Nasidianus' persistence in reporting these dreams to Martial

mane mihi de me mera somnia: the repetition of the alliterated 'm' recalls the repetitive daily dream reports which Martial is receiving. These reports are also coming to him 'in the morning': Nasidianus cannot wait to pass on the bad news which is also all about 'me', as emphasised by the juxtaposition (placing beside) of **mihi de me**.

mera: meaning 'undiluted' or 'unadulterated', often used to describe wine. The common Roman practice was to dilute their strong wine with water. This is a rare usage here specifically with **somnia**, but there are other instances of it meaning 'complete' or 'entire'.

narras: at this point students will become aware that this poem is addressed to a specific person ('you describe').

- 2 **moveant animum...meum:** the phrase 'move the soul' is fairly common in Latin and means 'creates fear'. The verbs **moveant** and **sollicitent** are both in the subjunctive here because the clause is describing general characteristics of all the dreams, rather than talking about a single specific dream. This makes it apparent that *all* Nasidianus' dreams induce panic in our poet. The splitting of

meum from **animum** and moving it to the end of the line help to emphasise it and in turn to emphasise the fear which Martial is moved to.

3 iam prior...sed et haec vindemia: both **prior** and **haec** describe **vindemia**.

The **faex** were dregs of the wine, the liquid at the very bottom of the amphora and the stalks and grape-skins which may have been left in. Martial has used up all his wine and this is all that is left.

vindemia venit: emphatic alliteration. There is *nothing* left of his wine at all.

4 The translation here is **dum** (while) **saga** (the soothsayer) **exorat** (tries to soothe) **tuas noctes** (your nights) **mihi** (for me).

exorat: this verb is common in entreaties and prayers.

noctes...tuas: the delay of **tuas** ('your') until the end of the line emphasises how Martial is the one enduring all this trouble due to the dreams of his friend – they are not even *his own* dreams.

saga: as usual, magic is the domain of women. Expiatory (making amends for something) sacrifices were either carried out by the person having the dreams or by a practitioner of magic on their behalf. The **saga** was a wise-woman who often appears in literature, and Martial in particular (see also Martial 11.50), as a figure who can purify bad omens, especially dreams. Like other women engaged in magical arts, they are frequently characterised as drunken (c.f. Ovid's description of Dipsas). This particular wise-woman has consumed all of Martial's wine whilst cleansing him of the pollution of Nasidianus' dreams!

5 salsas molas: ('salted grain') these were ritual flour cakes used in sacrifices.

que...et: an archaic form of **et...et** which creates an elevated tone here, sounding sombre and serious.

turis: this is incense from resin of the *Boswellia sacra* bush, commonly known as frankincense. This was grown in the south of Arabia and the east of Africa and imported to Rome through Syria. It was costly and the **acervos** ('heaps') of this adds to the impression of Martial's impoverishment.

6 frequens: ('constantly') the emphatic position at the end of the line and the hyperbole (obvious exaggeration) add to the humorous effect in this line.

7 non...non...non: the anaphora (repetition of word at beginning of successive clauses or phrases) in this asyndetic (lacking conjunctions) list is a rousing and emphatic conclusion to the description of Martial's repetitive attempts. There is absolutely nothing left at all.

8 aut...aut: the pair of adversative conjunctions serve to reduce Nasidianus' options down to two. This creates a conclusion to Martial's anguish, and also attacks Nasidianus for being the source of his problems.

vigila...dormi...tibi: the imperatives (direct commands) continue this attack. Martial has done all he can, now it's up to Nasidianus. The first option, 'stay awake', is obviously ludicrous and therefore the second is the only real option for him, 'keep your sleeping to yourself', or rather 'don't tell Martial what you've been

dreaming about'. The dative **tibi** is used here to express that he should 'sleep for himself'. Delaying the **tibi** until the end of the line emphasises it, as the only real solution, and has a real 'mind your own business' tone to it. Martial has therefore solved his problem in a typically witty manner!

Nasidiane: the spelling of this name varies in the surviving manuscripts and it is often seen as Nasidienus. However this man's name is spelled, his identity is otherwise unknown. The name does not appear elsewhere in Martial's poems.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each line, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

lines 1-2:

- What is his friend describing to him? How often does he do this? When does he do this? What are these dreams about?
- What do these dreams do?

lines 3-7:

- What is **vindemia**? There are two types mentioned in this line, **prior** and **haec**. When are these vintages from? All this wine has come **ad faecem**. What does this mean?
- What is a **saga**? What is she trying to do?
- What things has Martial used up?
- What has decreased? What has been happening to his lambs? How many lambs has this happened to?
- What animals are mentioned in this line? What has happened to them all?

line 8:

- Who is Martial talking to? What two commands does he give to him?
-

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) How does Martial, through his style of writing, emphasise how common Nasidianus' reports of dreams are?
2. (lines 3-7) Explain how Martial has been trying to ward off the evil from these bad dreams.
3. (lines 3-4) Explain why all of Martial's wine has been used up.
4. (lines 5-7) How does Martial, through his choice and arrangement of words, emphasise how much of his resources he has used up?
5. (line 8) How can we tell from the style of this line that Martial is fed up with hearing about Nasidianus' dreams?

Discussion

Themes: dreams, witches, warding off evil

Martial is approaching dream interpretation with his usual comic twist: he is taking things to the extreme. It must, however, be based on reality otherwise it would not be effective satire. Everything he does is an actual Roman response designed to ward off evil omens: it is just that Martial is ruining himself in the process.

Throughout history there have been lots of things which people have done to dispel evil or protect themselves from magical harm – such as walling up cats in doorframes and fireplaces to prevent witches getting in. Students may be able to suggest other examples. Martial's poem could then be used to create a 'guide' for Romans on how to do this.

General questions on the passage and theme

1. What can we learn from this poem about the seriousness of dream interpretation in Roman society?
2. What can we learn about the Roman methods of warding off evil?
3. How does the **saga** described here compare with the **sacerdos** in Virgil and the witch in Ovid?
4. Do you think that Martial himself is taking these superstitions seriously? How can you tell from the text?

Further Information and Reading

Dreams offered the opportunity for everyone to have direct contact with the divine or supernatural. Even Cicero, who scoffed at the art of the *haruspex*, took dreams seriously. There were specialists who could tell you the meaning of your dreams and also handbooks which could be consulted.

Artemidorus of Daldi produced a famous manual to dream-interpretation, the *Oneirocritica*, in the 2nd century AD. It contains descriptions of dreams which he collected from those who consulted him, his interpretations, and, in some cases, an account of what happened next in the patient's life based around their response to his interpretation. This was far from the only volume available to ancient Romans, although it does seem to have been particularly thorough.

Meaningful dreams could be induced in certain circumstances in order to achieve a specific goal. The Sanctuary of Asclepius (a god of medicine) at Epidaurus in Greece is one place where this happened and there was a dedicated area for sleeping within the temple precinct, the invalid covering himself with the skin of his sacrificial victim in order to prompt a divine cure for whatever ailed him.

Guillermo Galan Vioque (trans. J.J. Zoltowsky) *Martial Book VII A Commentary* (Brill 2017)

OVID *Dipsas the sorceress* (*Amores* 1.8.1-18)

Ovid describes a 'witch' he has encountered.

Publius Ovidius Naso (43BC – AD17) was born in Sulmo, inland from Rome, to a wealthy equestrian family. He is famous for his love poems which he wrote whilst living in Rome. The *Amores* were begun around 26BC when he was 18 years old, and are composed around episodes from relationships. In 8BC, Ovid was banished from Rome by the emperor Augustus. Ovid writes that it was because of *carmen et error* ('a poem and a mistake'). The poem was the *Ars Amatoria* (the Art of Love), but scholars still debate what the mistake may have been. Ovid spent the rest of his days in exile at Tomis on the Black Sea (modern Romania). He never returned to Rome.

This poem (*Amores* 1.8) is the longest in the *Amores*. The section here is taken from the very beginning of the poem, introducing the context and the characters. Ovid, it transpires later, is lurking in his mistress' doorway. He is eavesdropping on Dipsas, who is explaining to his girlfriend why she should abandon Ovid (he's too poor).

This text is unadapted.

Notes

metre: elegiac couplets

1-2 est quaedam...est quaedam: the repetition creates an accusatory tone from the outset: he is pointing out to us the source of all his trouble.

In Latin love poetry the **lena** ('procuress' / 'brothel-keeper') represents one form of the opposition to the poet's love: he desires his girl, the procuress wants payment! This one also happens, according to Ovid, to be a witch.

2 audiat: jussive subjunctive "let him hear". This sets up a gossipy tone to the poem: Ovid will be writing as though he is recounting an incident to an avid audience.

Dipsas: her name is from Greek and translates as 'thirsty', implying that she is an alcoholic. Overindulgence, especially in alcohol, was seen as a very 'female' vice. Her age is pointed out (**anus**) specifically to create that contrast between the desirable *puella* and this aged *lena*. This ageism is frequent in depictions of witches: when they have lost their sexual power, they turn to magical power.

3 ex re nomen habet: her nature is that of an alcoholic and so she was named appropriately.

3-4 the translation here is **illa** (she) **non vidit** (has not seen) **parentem** (the parent) **nigri Memnonis** (of black Memnon) **in roseis equis** (on her rosy horses) **sobria** ([whilst] sober).

nigri... Memnonis: Memnon was a legendary Ethiopian king and the son of Eos, goddess of the Dawn (**parentem Memnonis**). The implication is that Dipsas has never been awake at daybreak apart from as the result of a heavy night of

drinking. Note the alliteration of 'n' in **nigri non** to emphasise the negative. She has *never* seen the dawn whilst sober.

4 **roseis...equis**: in epic, Eos is often referred to as 'rosy'. The 'horses' are a reference to the mythological chariot which drove the sun across the sky. Notice how the word **sobria** been delayed for impact.

5 **magas**: the usual word for 'magical' is *magicus*. This is a rarer form and therefore adds to the epic tone as well as adding mystery.

Aeaea was the legendary island home of Circe, the famous witch from Homer's *Odyssey* who transformed Odysseus' men into pigs. Circe's brother Aeetes (who ruled over Aea in Cochis) was also a witch, as was his daughter Medea. Aeaeian as an adjective can refer to all of them. The **carmina** here are therefore spells rather than songs or poems.

6 the hyperbaton (inverted or discontinuous word order) of **liquidas...aquas** with **arte** in-between mimics the disruption which her 'skill' has on the 'flowing rivers'.

7 **quid...quid...quid valeat**: "what power...has". The anaphora (repetition of word at beginning of successive clauses or phrases) of **quid** emphasises this tricolon (list of three) and helps to create an increasing impression of varied terrifying powers. Whilst each item in the list is connected with magic, they get progressively more unnatural as the list progresses.

gramen: herbs for use in spells. The collecting of these was carried out in a ritualistic manner (see the prescribed passage from Virgil).

rhombo: the *rhombus* was a magical tool used to tap into magical power and attract it to the user. Scholars differ on the exact definition in Latin texts: Romans may have used the word to refer to a wheel-like device with threads to cause it to spin like or to a tool similar to a 'bull-roarer' which was swung through the air in a circle to create a roaring sound.

8 **virus amantis equae**: the fluid from a mare in heat was used in love charms. It is not necessary to go into detail on this, beyond perhaps noting that this is a normal by-product from a mare and not something mystical invented by Ovid! The alliteration of **valeat virus** draws attention to these words.

9-10 **cum voluit**: **cum** here is being used as an indefinite relative ('whenever'), introducing a conditional relative clause. The condition is translated as if it were present tense: it is a generality. The repeated phrase stresses the power of the witch's will.

9 The witch is able to interfere in events which ought to be well beyond the remit of mortals. Her power is highlighted by the hyperbaton of **toto...caelo**, her actions split the sky apart with clouds in the text as well as in 'reality'.

10 **dies**: being used to mean 'sun' i.e. 'daylight'.

As before, the hyperbaton **puro...orbe** shows how the witch has the ability to pull apart the natural world – although here Ovid surprises us by ending the line emphatically with **dies**. He is making the point that even when the day appears to be normal, it is only because the witch is allowing it to be so.

- 11 **sanguine...sanguine (line 12):** the emphatic position of **sanguine** at the start of the line sets the tone for these lines, the repetition emphasising the horror. Ovid is, of course, describing a normal (albeit extraordinary) lunar phenomenon. A Blood Moon happens when the Earth's Moon undergoes a lunar eclipse. Depending on the amount of dust in the Earth's atmosphere, the Moon will appear different shades of red. The next Blood Moon visible from Europe is on the 16th May 2022. Throughout history the distinctive Blood Moon was seen by different civilisations across the world as ominous and magical.

si qua fides: supply **est** 'if [there is] any trustworthiness [in me]'.

sanguine...si...stillantia sidera: the malevolent hissing of this sibilant line adds to the tone of horror.

vidi: placed emphatically at the end of the line, the verb stresses Ovid's claims of truthfulness. In line with his deployment of elegiac tropes in the rest of the *Amores*, he of course intends his educated audience to view these protestations as entertaining: they all know this witch is not real but a stereotype.

- 12 **purpureus:** although the root of the English word 'purple', the colour should be imagined as more of a dark scarlet.

- 13 the translation here is **ego suspicor** (I think) **hanc** (she) **versam** (having changed shape) **volitare** (flies) **per nocturnas umbras** (through the nocturnal shades). This is an indirect statement (accusative and infinitive construction), which is also why we have **tegi** in the infinitive in line 12.

nocturnas...umbras: the Romans believed that magical events tended to take place at night: cf. the prescribed material on Martial, Petronius, Pliny and Suetonius.

versam volitare: **volitare** is the frequentative form of the verb (formed by the addition of **-it-** after the stem) and means 'to flit about repeatedly'. The vivid vocabulary choice helps the scene to come alive. The alliteration here perhaps also suggests the sound of a wing beating, as well as drawing attention to the key words in the line. Transformation was a typical part of an ancient witch's skill set.

- 14 **susplicor et...susplicor et (lines 15):** continuing the gossipy tone established at the outset.

- 15 **fama est:** by creating imagined support for his point of view, Ovid again protests that he is telling the truth.

oculis: locative usage 'in her eyes'.

pupula duplex: the 'double pupil' was an indication that a person could cast the 'evil eye' (a harmful curse caused by a malevolent glare). It is difficult to work out exactly what a 'double pupil' was, as it is not a real eye condition. It has been suggested that perhaps it refers to people who have different coloured irises in each eye, or have an eye condition which makes it look as though the iris is split. Whatever the truth, supernumerary features have a long history of being connected with evil.

16 fulminat: ‘flashes lightning’, dramatic vocabulary emphatically positioned at the start of the line to create excitement.

lumen: Roman writers talk of light being emitted from the eyes, rather than it being seen by them. Here Ovid takes this to the extreme and has the light emitting from the witch’s eyes in sinister beams (Roman laser-vision!).

17 evocat...proavos atavosque: necromancy (causing the dead to live by magical means) was another proverbial power of ancient witches. By choosing specific revered members of a family (‘great-grandfathers and great-great-grandfathers’) Ovid is again highlighting the witch’s power to disrupt Roman institutions and the familial customs of ensuring peaceful rest for the dead.

antiquis...sepulcris: the hyperbaton of these words mimics the witch splitting the tombs apart with her magic, with the **proavos atavosque** inside. This is mirrored in the hyperbaton in line 18 **solidam...humum**, the witch positioned with her spells in the middle (**longo carmine findit**) mimicking the meaning of the line.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each line or couplet, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

lines 1-2:

- What is the name of the person Ovid is talking about? How old is she?
- Who does he say should listen to him? What is a **lena**? Do you think that Ovid will be writing positively about Dipsas?

lines 3-4:

- What does she have from her nature? (*this link between her name and nature will need explaining*)
- Who has she never seen? Who is this person the parent of? What detail are we given about Memnon? What animal does this parent own? What unusual colour are these? (*this would be a good point to explain who Eos is*) She has actually seen the dawn, but she has never seen it **sobria**. What does this mean?

lines 5-6:

- What two things does Dipsas know, according to Ovid?
- What are **liquidus aquas**? What can Dipsas do to them?

lines 7-8:

- She also **scit bene** –what does this mean?
- She knows well what power **gramen** has –what is this?
- She also knows the power of **licia** - what are these? They are described as **concita** –what are they part of?
- She also knows the power of some fluid. Where has this fluid come from? (*This may require a brief explanation*)

lines 9-10:

- What can she gather and where? When can she do this?
- What can she cause to shine and where? When can she do this?

lines 11-12:

- What did Ovid claim to have seen? What were they dripping with?
- What else did he see? What colour was it? What caused it to be this colour?

lines 13-14:

- He suspects she does some other things. At what time of day? What has she done to herself? So that she can do what?
- What exactly has she done to her old woman's body?

lines 15-16:

- As well as Ovid's suspicion, what else does he say this is?
- What body part is he now focusing on? What is strange to see about it?
- What does he think comes out of them? Where exactly does the light come from?

lines 17-18:

- Who can she summon? Where can she summon them from?
- What can she split open? How is the ground described? How does she do this?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) How does Ovid draw the reader in through his style of writing?
2. (lines 2-3) Explain why Dipsas' name is appropriate for her.
3. (lines 3-4) What does Ovid mean that Dipsas has never done, and how does he emphasise this through his style of writing?
4. (line 5) What are *Aeaea carmina*?
5. (line 6) How does Ovid use the arrangement of his words to show the witch's ability to change the natural order of the world?
6. (lines 7-8) Explain how a witch would have used each of these items, according to the Romans.
7. (lines 9-10) How does Ovid, through his arrangement of the words in these lines, emphasise the witch's ability to change the natural order of the world?
8. (lines 11-12) How does Ovid make these lines particularly vivid?
9. (lines 13-14) How does Ovid, through the content and style of his writing, make these lines particularly grotesque?
10. (lines 15) Explain why pointing out '**suspikor, et fama est**' might help Ovid to convince the audience that he is being truthful.
11. (lines 15-16) Explain what Ovid is accusing Dipsas of here.
12. (lines 17-18) How does Ovid use word order to make the meaning vivid in these lines?

Discussion

Themes: witches, witchcraft, magical places, magical artefacts

This poem provides us with a vivid description of a witch-type figure. Ovid also lists some of the main proverbial powers of Roman witches: she can make rivers flow backwards; she can use herbs, magical devices, and charms; she can compel the clouds, the stars, and the moon; she can transform her shape; she can cast the evil eye; she has the power of necromancy. His list also makes it very clear that the witch is interested in reversing nature: she makes night into day; she makes rivers flow the wrong way; she make the dead alive once more.

In his description, Ovid makes use not only of stereotypical features of witches and witchcraft in the ancient world but also plays with misogynistic depictions of elderly women, especially those with power or influence who are not under the control of a male figure. These attitudes and imagery were at work in much later depictions of witches, and of course can be found in the literature surrounding witch hunts. This is an interesting area to explore and topics for discussion could include:

- the extent to which the description of a witch has stayed the same or changed throughout history
- the fact that most witches are women
- the type of language used to describe the elderly, especially elderly women, in a range of media

(02:55) Video clip on seventeenth century witch trials:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/z9stfrd>

Your History Department may well be teaching this material at A-level and be able to assist with resources if you wish to take the discussion further.

General questions on the passage and theme

1. Describe Dipsas' physical appearance in as much detail as you can.
 2. What objects would she have owned, according to this passage?
 3. What powers did she allegedly possess?
 4. How much of her power involves interfering with and changing the natural order of things?
 5. To what extent does Dipsas come across as a terrifying figure?
 6. Do you think that this is supposed to be a serious description, or is it supposed to be comical?
 7. Consider the witch as she is depicted in the different sources. What seem to be the most common features of a Roman witch?
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Further Information and Reading

The *lena* was a figure in Roman Comedy as well as a figure in elegiac poetry and is a stereotypical depiction of a woman working outside the social norms of Roman society and challenging masculine desires. She overindulges (here it is alcohol - this was seen as typical feminine excess) and her appearance is not attractive to the male viewing her (she is old, she has a 'double pupil', she could conceivably become covered in feathers!). She interferes with and subverts the natural order of the world (here through spells which cause the world to function against normal rules, but often Roman men level this charge against women who transgress in less mystical ways - a useful source for this is Cato's speech on women Livy *History of Rome* 34.2-4).

The *lena* also represents what his *puella* will become in the future as she grows old: to Ovid the *puella*'s worth is in her beauty and youth, the *lena* has neither.

Guy Lee, *Ovid's Amores* (London: John Murray, 1968)

A.D. Melville, *Ovid: the Love Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

W Turpin, *Ovid Amores Book 1*

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/348#page/1/mode/2up>

PETRONIUS *A spooky story* (*Satyricon* 61-62)

An encounter with a werewolf

Gaius Petronius Arbiter (c. AD 27-66) was a courtier who lived during the reign of the emperor Nero and is widely agreed by scholars to have been the court 'judge of good taste' (akin to a modern stylist or fashion adviser). Although initially a favourite of the fickle emperor, his influence gained him many enemies at court, including the powerful Tigellinus, commander of the imperial Guard. These enemies convinced Nero that Petronius was involved in treasonous plotting, and he was immediately arrested. Petronius chose to take his own life, theatrically dining and socialising whilst he did so in order that he should end his life as he had lived it.

The *Satyricon* is, as the name implies, a satirical piece. It takes the form of a novel narrated by the main character Encolpius, a retired gladiator, who tells of a series of adventures and encounters (usually bizarre and often sexual). This section is from the famous *cena Trimalchionis* (Trimalchio's feast). During the dinner party, one of the guests (Niceros) is invited to tell his tale. It is set in Magna Graecia (the areas of southern Italy settled by Greeks), emphasising that this is a Roman parody of the Greek novel form and also playing on the stereotype of the gullible Greeks who will believe any old nonsense. Niceros describes what happened when he took a nocturnal journey to visit a girlfriend and his travelling companion suddenly transformed into a werewolf.

The text here is slightly abridged and adapted for content and language.

Notes

1 **servirem:** the speaker is now a freedman, but this tale took place whilst he was still a slave. There was a Roman stereotype that the lower classes were more prone to superstition.

Melissam: she is the wife of an inn-keeper. **Melissa** is the Greek for 'honey' and was also the name of several famously attractive figures from history and legend.

1-2 **uxor Terentii cauponis... contubernalis:** this is a little confusing. One reading is that Melissa is the **uxor** of Terentius - he is a freedman (running the inn on behalf of his former master). She also had a **contubernalis** - this is the word used for 'partner' when traditional marriage could not take place because both parties were slaves and therefore could not marry. This would suggest that Melissa has a husband who was a freedman **and** a partner who was a slave and ran his master's farm (**ad villam**), where he has now died, clearing the way for Niceros. An alternative reading is that Niceros is simply using the wrong vocabulary – Melissa only has one partner, Terentius, an innkeeper who just happened to be at the farm when he died.

- 2 **pulcherrimum bacciballum: bacciballum** is a compound of **bacca** ('berry') and **ballum** ('something round'). The context shows us that it is a term of affection, and the tone is suggestive. The speaker uses the superlative **pulcherrimum** to show just how appreciative he is of her beauty.
- 3 **per scutum per ocream egi:** an *asyndetic* (lack of conjunctions) proverb implying much the same as 'by hook or by crook'. It has been suggested that it originated with gladiators putting every effort into arming themselves for combat in the arena. Again this continues the colloquial tone of this account.
- 4 **aginavi** the *asyndeton* and half-rhyme of this verb and the preceding **egi** gives this whole clause the sound of an everyday phrase.
- 4-5 **in angustiis amici apparent:** the alliterative sound suggests this might be another proverb: 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'.
- 6 **dominus:** a reminder that the speaker is a slave. His master's convenient absence gives him the opportunity for his adventure.
His master has gone to **Capua**, a town to the north of Naples which was connected to Rome by the *Via Appia*. The town was associated with trading and business, particularly bronzes.
- 8 **quintum miliarium:** every Roman mile (roughly 1.5 km or 0.95 of a modern mile) was marked along the principal roads by a stone.
- 8-9 **fortis tamquam Orcus** foreshadows the immense magical strength of the werewolf. By using the word **Orcus** the scene is also set for the supernatural: **Orcus** was the personification of the punishment aspect of the Underworld.
- 9 **apoculamus** a compound of *apo* (Greek: 'away') and the obscenity *culus* (Latin 'arse'), suggesting a meaning of "arsed off" similar to the colloquial American 'hauled ass'.
gallicinia: 'cock-crow' was about two hours after midnight.
luna lucebat: the soft *l* alliteration draws attention to the night time setting and adds to the relaxed tone at the start of the journey.
- 9-10 **tamquam meridie:** the full moon has made the night into day (nature has been reversed) suggesting magical forces at work. The full moon was not explicitly linked to werewolves in Roman times, but the moon in general was linked to magic and supernatural happenings.
- 10 **inter monimenta:** they are just outside the city, the streets lined with tombs (see note on picture 1). This is a suitable place for a supernatural encounter.
homo meus: this creates a friendly tone.
- 10-11 **coepit ad stelas facere:** the phrase **ad...facere** is translated as 'go towards'. This is a shortened form of the late Latin phrase **se facere** meaning 'to take oneself to a place'.

- 11 **sedeo ego:** the singsong rhyme suggests what Niceros is doing and continues the light-hearted nature of the scene.
cantabundus stelas numero: the implication is that the soldier is taking his time and Niceros has to amuse himself. This jovial mood is suddenly changed with the verb **respexi**.
- 12 **ille exuit se:** the removal of clothing is seen in ancient werewolf tales as a step in shedding humanity. It is also used in this text as a halfway point in the transformation: our narrator knows that something unusual is happening but does not yet fully understand what.
- 13 **mihi anima in naso esse:** the Romans believed that on the point of death a person's soul left through either the nose or the mouth. The speaker's soul is on the point of departing! Students may need some help with the dative of possession here, especially as it is also found here with a historic infinitive **esse** – this is a colloquial usage of the infinitive found in narrative (it stands in for the imperfect tense) and again helps to add to the tone of a *fabula* being told.
- 14 **tamquam mortuus:** the sudden change from the previous light-heartedness to horror is emphasised with the simile.
circumminxit vestimenta sua: a humorous detail, linked to the Roman belief that werewolves needed access to their old clothes to turn back to their human form again. Here the man marks his territory (like a wolf!) with a protective circle before he turns into a werewolf.
- 15 **subito lupus factus est:** the brief statement, coupled with the use of **subito**, marks a dramatic moment in the text.
nolite me iocari putare: an acknowledgement of the fantastical nature of his story, and again a reminder that our narrator is addressing an audience at a dinner party.
ululare: a vividly onomatopoeic word ('to howl') which brings the scene to life.
- 16 **in silvas:** the woods are, like the necropolis, places where magical events take place. This is no doubt rooted in genuine fears of wild animals and ambushes, and can be observed in a wide range of folk tales from across the world.
- 17 **lapidea:** building on the concept that the clothes need to be protected, this is a detail unique to Petronius' werewolf account.
- 19 **gladium...strinxi:** iron was believed to dispel magic and to drive away magical beings – in contrast to bronze (mentioned in our Virgil text), which encouraged magic. Here, his attempts are presented as comically futile.
- 20-22 **ut larva...refectus sum:** a vivid description and suitable for the supernatural situation.
- 22-23 **Melissa mea mirari:** the soft alliteration mirrors the calming effect of Melissa's presence upon the speaker and also mimics her sense of wonder. At this point in the story Niceros gets a moment of calm: this allows for greater impact when it is shattered moments later when Melissa tells her tale.

- 25 tamquam lanius:** the simile is very effective: it is simple and clear yet manages to convey both the professionalism of the kill and its savagery (the **lanius** is no surgeon, the root of this word is in verbs meaning 'tear, shred' and it is cognate with **lacer** 'mangled').
- 28 luce clara:** we can see here the continuation of a common theme - supernatural threat is more likely at night and so our speaker will not venture out until day. It will become apparent that the werewolf has also changed back to human form now that it is daytime.
- 30 nihil inveni nisi sanguinem:** the placing of **nihil** at the beginning of the sentence shows us the speaker's wonder and relief as soon as he came upon the location of his previous adventure, whilst the delay of **sanguinem** demonstrates how he slowly realised what he was looking at as he surveyed the scene. Petronius is also using this word order, mimicking the order of the actual events being described, as it is common in spoken language.
- 31 tamquam bos:** another brief and effective simile. With one word the speaker conveys the strength and size of the soldier, whilst reminding us that he is also an animal - even when he outwardly appears human! The word order here is also reversed in a similar way to line 30, showing us the order in which the speaker took in the scene he saw.
- intellexi:** the emphatic word position at the start of the sentence shows the sudden, dramatic realisation of the complete truth. Students may question how it took so long for Niceros to reach this conclusion, but he has been characterised as slightly dim-witted throughout the text.
- 32 versipellem:** literally a 'skin-changer'. It is not always linked to werewolves: Apuleius (*Metamorphosis* 2.22) uses this term when describing how witches in Thessaly can change their appearance (in a similar way to Dipsas in the Ovid text).

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each sentence, clause or phrase, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

cum adhuc...bacciballum (lines 1-2):

- What was the status of the person speaking when this story took place? What did he begin to do? What two things do we learn about this Melissa?

huius...obiit (lines 2-3):

- What do you think 'met his last day' means? Where did this happen?

itaque...apparent (lines 3-5):

- What did the speaker try to do? There is an idiom here, what does **per scutum per ocream** mean? Do you think it means he tried very hard or not at all? Can you think of a way to translate this phrase to show the meaning?
- In what kind of circumstances does he say friends appear? Do you agree?

forte...veniat (lines 6-8):

- Who does he start talking about now and where has he gone? Why has he gone there?
- What does **occasionem nactus** mean? Where is the speaker planning on going? Who does he persuade? How far does he persuade him to go?

erat...Orcus (lines 8-9):

- What was this person's job? What quality do we learn about him?
- Why do you think the speaker wants a companion like him on the journey?

apoculamus...meridie (lines 9-10):

- What time did they leave?
- What was shining in the sky? How bright was it? How do you know?

venimus...numero (lines 10-11):

- Where did they arrive?
- Who is the person described as **meus homo**? Where did he go?
- What two things did the speaker do to entertain himself?

deinde...posuit (lines 11-13):

- What did our speaker happen to do next? What surprising thing did his companion do? Where did he place his clothes?

mihi...mortuus (lines 13-14):

- Where does he say his soul was? This is another idiom. Do you think it means he was very afraid or not afraid at all? Why?
- How does he say that he was standing?

at ille...factus est (lines 14-15):

- What strange thing did the soldier do next?
- What suddenly happened?

nolite...fugit (lines 15-16):

- What does he ask the listeners not to do? Why do you think he says this?
- What two things did the wolf do?

ego primo...facta sunt (lines 16-18):

- The speaker says he didn't know something: what was it? What do you think he means by this phrase?
- What did he do next? Why couldn't he pick up the clothes?

paene...pervenirem (lines 19-20):

- What did he almost do? What caused this?
- What did he draw? What did he slash at? Where were these shadows?
- Where was he heading?

ut larva...refectus sum (lines 20-22):

- What did he do when he got there? How did he enter?
- What does he claim he had almost poured out? What do you think this means?
- What feature does he mention next? Where was it pouring?
- What body part does he now mention? What are they described as being? What do you think this means?
- What did he hardly do?

Melissa...ambularem (lines 22-23):

- He calls her **mea Melissa**. What does this mean? How does she feel? Why is she surprised?

si ante...traiecit (lines 23-27):

- Who is speaking?
- What does **si ante venisses** mean? What does she say he could have done if he had come sooner?
- What animal is mentioned? What did this animal do first? What did it attack?
- What is it described as being like? What did it drain like a butcher?
- What did it not do? What did it manage to do?
- Whilst it was fleeing, who appeared? What did the slave have with him? What did he do with the spear?

haec ut...sanguinem (lines 27-30):

- What does **haec ut audivi** mean? What was he not able to do any longer when he heard this? Why do you think he was no longer able to close his eyes?
- What did he do? Where did he flee? When did he flee home? Why do you think he waited for **luce clara**?
- Where does he reach as he rushes home? What is in that place? What material had the clothes been made into? What does he find there instead of the clothes?

ut vero...curabat (lines 30-31):

- Where does he arrive next? Who does he find there? What is he doing? What is he like?
- Which part of him does the speaker mention? Who else is there? What is this person doing? Can you work out an explanation for this scene?

intellexi...occidisses (lines 31-33):

- What did the speaker now understand about the soldier?
- What does he say he was not able to do after that? Why does he add “not if you killed me?”

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-5) How does Petronius create the impression that this is going to be a less than serious tale?
2. (lines 6-9) Why do you think that Niceros has asked this man to accompany him?
3. (lines 9-10) Why do you think that we are given details about the time of day and the moon?
4. (line 10) Why is this an appropriate location for a supernatural event?
5. (lines 10-11) How does Petronius, through his style of writing and vocabulary choices, make this scene seem relaxed and light-hearted?
6. (lines 11-14) How does Petronius emphasise the sudden dramatic turn of events?
7. (lines 14-18) How does Petronius use a variety of techniques to make the transformation vivid and dramatic?
8. (lines 19 -22) Describe the narrator in detail as he enters Melissa’s house.

9. (lines 22-27) Describe in detail what had happened earlier at the house.
 10. (lines 27-30) How does Petronius convey the panic which Niceros felt?
 11. (lines 28-30) Describe what Niceros found when he reached the tombs once more.
 12. (lines 30-31) How effective do you find Petronius' description of what Niceros found once he arrived home?
 13. (lines 31-32) Describe all the evidence which has led to Niceros' conclusion.
 14. (lines 32-33) How do Niceros' closing remarks show his shock at what has happened?
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Discussion

Themes: werewolves, magical places

The Roman werewolf was not entirely different from the werewolf of modern fantasy and horror stories (more information for teachers can be found in Further Information and Reading). Students could be asked to create a brief guide to spotting werewolves, or to compare Petronius' account to a modern depiction. There are many fictional accounts of werewolves, and students may have encountered them in Young Adult fiction: familiar examples might include Remus Lupin in the Harry Potter series, Jacob Black in the Twilight series, and various depictions in The Mortal Instruments series.

General questions on the passage and theme

1. What seem to be the features of a Roman werewolf?
 2. What is the tone of this piece of writing? Does it change throughout the text?
 3. How does the speaker attempt to convince his imaginary audience that he is truthful? Do you find his attempts persuasive?
 4. How do you think that his audience would react at different points in this story?
 5. How is Niceros characterised throughout this story?
 6. Do you think that this piece of writing is meant to be taken seriously?
-

Further Information and Reading

The *Satyricon* is a satirical novel (written in verse and in prose) which attacks the attitudes and ideas of the Romans in Petronius' time. It takes the form of a *fabula Milesiae*, a Milesian Tale. This was a popular genre of episodic writing which usually incorporated adventures whilst travelling, erotic and comedic elements, and unusual characters.

There are plenty of stories from the ancient world of individuals being transformed into animals. The wolf is specifically mentioned in many of these tales, as is the idea of the wolf-man, where features of a man are retained or the ability to change between the two states is mentioned. The wolf was, of course, a creature long associated with the Romans, playing a central role in the foundation myth of Romulus and Remus. The most famous Roman accounts of the *versipellis*, along with our text, are from Ovid and Pliny.

The story of Lycaon is told by Ovid in *The Metamorphoses* 1.199-243. Lycaon of Arcadia attempted to trick the king of the gods by offering up human flesh at a banquet, believing that his guest was merely impersonating a divinity. Jupiter transformed Lycaon into a wolf-man, so that his barbarity would be mirrored in his shape.

Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 8.34) discusses werewolves and states that they are a common tale but ought not to be taken for fact. He mentions several Greek authors who describe individuals being transformed into wolves for long periods of time (around nine or ten years), before reverting to their original shape. One of the tales is again linked to the eating of human flesh.

Both authors point to the Greek tradition and indeed there are more Greek accounts on werewolves, including Herodotus (*Histories* 4.105) and medical texts describing how to treat lycanthropy. The Greek tradition varies a little from Petronius: there is a link with cannibalism, and the transformation is either permanent or long-lasting. It seems that Petronius is working with a more 'folk' tradition: the transformation is temporary, there is no link with food, the clothes must be protected (they may act as a catalyst for the werewolf to regain human form). Although there is a full moon in this text, there is no clear link until later in history between this and the werewolf's transformation. The ancient texts unsurprisingly make no mention of silver bullets!

Modern depictions of werewolves are often metaphorical depictions of change (especially adolescence) and marginalisation. Famously, J.K. Rowling has said that Remus Lupin's lycanthropy in the Harry Potter series is a metaphor for living with AIDS / HIV (the depiction is not unproblematic and any discussion should take account of this). Whilst this is not true of ancient depictions, the story of Romulus and Remus reminds us that the Romans were also interested in the duality of the wolf-man and of the tension between human and animal.

Courtney, E. *A Companion to Petronius* (Oxford University Press 2001)

Prag, J. and Repath, I. ed. *Petronius A Handbook* (Blackwell, 2009)

Ruden, S. *Petronius' Satyricon (A translation)* (Hackett, 2000)

Smith, M.S. ed. *Petronius cena Trimalchionis (a commentary)* (Clarendon, 1982)

PLINY *An alarming dream comes true* (Letters 5.5)

Pliny relates a story of an author who foretold his own death.

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (61AD – c.112AD), commonly known as Pliny the Younger, was born in Comum in northern Italy. He was a lawyer and politician, and a prolific letter writer. His correspondence was curated and published in ten volumes, nine volumes whilst he was still alive and the tenth after his death. They give us a fascinating insight into the life of a remarkable man, including his famous description of the 79AD eruption of Mount Vesuvius letters and his communications with the emperor Trajan.

In this letter, Pliny is writing to his friend Novius Maximus. In letter 4.20 we learn that Novius has given Pliny some of his work to read; work which Pliny describes as 'beautiful'. By the time of this letter, however, Pliny has received the news that their mutual friend, the writer Gaius Fannius, has died. Apparently Fannius had been writing a work describing in detail the crimes of the emperor Nero, who was by now long dead – a work which Pliny describes as 'very beautiful'. In a disturbing twist, it seems that Fannius had dreamed – correctly, as it turned out – that he would die before his work was completed, and Pliny relates the dream in detail. Consequently Pliny urges Novius to work with all haste to ensure that he leave none of his writings unfinished.

This is the second half of the letter. The Latin is unadapted.

Notes

- 1 Gaius...Fannius:** a writer who composed three books of a work detailing the men executed or banished by the emperor Nero. He has died before finishing it.
- 2 visus est:** this tells us that we have entered a description of his vision.
nocturnam quietem: night is a recurring theme as a time suitable for magical events.
- 3 compositus in habitum studentis:** Pliny says elsewhere that it was typical to lie down to compose, having either a scribe on hand or a small writing desk.
- 4 Neronem:** emperor from AD54 to 68. Whilst Nero's reign is an interesting topic to explore, it is enough for students here to know that it was characterised in later years by the execution of rivals and those suspected of conspiring against him.
- 4-7 venisse...resedissee, prompsisse...revolvissse...fecisse...absisse:** the whole vision is told in indirect statement (accusative and infinitive construction). The repetition of the perfect infinitives with very little embellishment and few conjunctions creates a fast and factual tone. The name **Neronem** is held back until after the verb to create a little suspense, then the whole dream is told chronologically. The plosive alliteration (p) of **prompsisse primum** adds to the dramatic brevity of the retelling.

- 6 **ad extremum revolvisse:** the books would have been individual scrolls on rollers. To ‘unroll [it] to the end’ would therefore be ‘to read it right through’.
- 7 **expavit:** Gaius’ reaction is sudden, the verb emphatically placed at the very start of the sentence to highlight this. The use of the prefix **ex-** on the verb also stresses that he was terrified ‘from his core’.
- 8-9 the translation is **tamquam** (as though) **scribendi finis** (the end of his writing) **futurus esset** (would be) **idem** (the same) **sibi** (for himself) **qui** (as that which) **fuisset** (it had been) **legendi** (of the reading) **illi** (for him *i.e.* Nero). The ghost of Nero read three scrolls because there would only ever be three: Gaius would die before he got any further. As Pliny states, this is exactly what eventually happened.
- 10-11 **quantum...quantum:** the *anaphora* (repetition) of **quantum** stresses Pliny’s despair at the events, emphasised by **frustra** delayed until the end of the sentence. The verb **exhauserit** is a vivid choice to imply the hard work which has ultimately, in Pliny’s eyes, been squandered.
- 11 **occursant animo:** inversion of word order, with the verb coming first, shows the thought leaping into the sentence and also into Pliny’s mind. The anaphora of **mea** puts the focus back on Pliny himself, the repetition adding an air of urgency. At the time of this letter, Pliny was about 43 years old.
- 12 **te:** this letter was written to Novius Maximus, also a writer, who has shared his work with Pliny. Novius seems to have been older than Pliny.
- 13 **pro istis quae inter manus habes:** Novius’ current work is unfinished.
- 14 **dum vita suppetit:** for ancient writers, their immortality was linked to the survival of their work. The emphatic superlative **quam paucissima** shows the strength of feeling which Pliny has on this.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each sentence, clause, or phrase, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

Gaius...praesensit (line 1):

- Who is this letter about? What did he predict? How long before it happened did he make this prediction?

visus est...solebat (lines 2-4):

- Does **visus est** suggest this was really happening or not? If it wasn’t actually happening, what might it have been?
- What time of day is it in his vision? Where was he? How was he sitting? What was in front of him? Was this normal for him?

mox...abisse (lines 4-7):

- Who did he imagine had come in? (*this would be a good place to explain who Nero was*) What was the first thing this person did? What did he ask for? What was this book about? What did he do with this book? (*Students will need to know that these books are scrolls*). How many books did he read through in the same way? What did he do then?

expavit...fuit idem: (lines 7-9)

- How did Gaius feel after this vision? Did he ignore it or did he think it was significant?
- What did he think his vision was about (**scribendi finis**)? Think about the dream. What might it mean about Gaius' writing? What would the end of his writing be the same as? Did the vision come true?

quod me...frustra (lines 10-11):

- What emotion fills Pliny? What is he doing which makes him feel like this?
- He is thinking about Gaius and the effort he had put into his work. What does Pliny say which shows Gaius worked hard? Does Pliny think it was worth it?

occursant...scripta (lines 11-12):

- What two things come to his mind? Why exactly do you think Pliny is worried?

nec dubito...habes (lines 12-13):

- How does he think 'you too' (*his correspondant will need to be mentioned*) will feel? What will be terrifying 'you'?
- He is thinking about what his correspondant has **inter manus**. Think about the whole letter. What must this refer to?

proinde...inveniat (lines 13-15):

- When should his correspondant act? What should we try to act against? What is death able to do? What should we ensure that death finds?
- What does this mean that Pliny and his friend should try to do?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-9) How does Pliny through his style of writing create a sense of excitement in his description of the dream?
2. (lines 10-15) How does Pliny convey his worry through the style of his writing?

Discussion

Themes: dreams

Dreams were to be taken seriously in the ancient world. Ancient dream interpretation texts have a great deal in common with much more recent works on dreams, including seminal work by both Freud and Jung. Students could explore why dreams continue to be a focus for enquiry, and they could look at some common interpretations. This letter could be considered alongside Martial's poem in order to examine how seriously Romans took the contents of dreams.

Care should, of course, be taken when discussing Pliny's comments on mortality. It may be helpful to discuss alternative views of unfinished writing e.g. the completion of work by other authors (Stieg Larsson and JRR Tolkien are amongst a large number of writers whose work was completed and published posthumously).

General questions on the passage and theme

Do you think that Martial and Pliny would have agreed over the importance of dream interpretation?

Further Information and Reading

See the Further Information and Reading for Martial for more on dreams and dream interpretation in the ancient world.

An article condensing different theories of dreams – may be useful for teacher reference (would require editing for students): <https://time.com/4921605/dreams-meaning/>

A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 1966)

Betty Radice, *The Letters of Pliny the Younger* (Penguin, 1963; 2nd edition 1969)

P.G. Walsh, *Pliny the Younger: Complete letters* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

SUETONIUS, *The portents before the murder of Julius Caesar* (*Divus Iulius* 81)

The dictator receives many signs of his impending assassination but refuses to heed any of them.

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (c.AD70 – after AD122) was secretary at the imperial palace in Rome and is best known to us for his *Lives of the Caesars*, biographies of Julius Caesar and the first eleven emperors of Rome. Our section is part of his narrative on Caesar's death and is one of the most famous accounts of this event.

Julius Caesar (100BC – 44BC) was a Roman statesman, general and writer who was instrumental in the unravelling of the Roman republic and the rise of the Empire. Following a bitter civil war against Pompey the Great and the Roman Senate, he emerged as undisputed leader of the Romans, although he assumed titles such as *consul* as if he had been elected to positions of power in regular circumstances. As his reforms to the established systems gathered pace (changing the calendar, establishing a police force, expanding the senate etc.) the senators grew increasingly alarmed and resentful. Eventually a group of self-styled 'Liberators' orchestrated his murder at a meeting of the senate in the Curia of Pompey on the 15th March 44BC. His assassination plunged the Roman world into yet another civil war.

This text has been lightly adapted: two sentences have been removed in order to reduce the length.

Notes

- futura caedes:** this passage relates to the omens preceding the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March, 44 BC.
- proximis diebus...pridie** (line 6) **ea vero nocte** (line 9): the use of time phrases in this section offers a kind of 'count down' to the assassination. At first, we are given brief summaries of the omens which occurred far in advance, then as we draw closer to the deed itself the detail, and the tension, increase.
in traiciendo Rubiconi flumini: following disagreements with the ruling elite over the extent of his power, in 49BC Caesar led his army from his province in Gaul towards Rome to pressurise the Senate into agreeing with his demands. The Rubicon River in northern Italy marked the boundary between his province (where he was allowed to command an army) and Italy (where he was not).
- pertinacissime pabulo:** the finality of the plosive (p sound) alliteration, coupled with the superlative, mirror the absolute obstinance of the animals.
flere: like most mammals, horses only use their tear ducts to remove irritants such as dust from their eyes – they never really weep as humans do. Suetonius, however, is more concerned with the dramatic impact of the scene!

5 **immolantem:** Caesar was sacrificing when the **haruspex** gave him the omen. For more on the work of the *haruspices* see the notes on Picture 4. Note that the name **Spurinna** is Etruscan, linking to his role as a **haruspex** and giving added portentous weight to his pronouncement. The verb **caveret** is brought to the front of the clause for further emphasis.

6 **Martias Idus:** the 15th March (see the Further Information for more detail). This was the day planned for the assassination of Caesar.

7-9 the translation here is **volucres** (birds) **varii generis** (of different species) **persecutae** (having pursued) **ex proximo nemore** (from a neighbouring grove) **avem regaliolum** (a king bird) **se inferentem** (entering) **Pompeianae curiae** (the Pompeian senate-house) **cum laureo ramulo** (with a laurel twig) **discerpserunt** (tore it apart) **ibidem** (on the spot).

This omen took place in the *curia* (meeting hall) attached to the Theatre of Pompey which was where the Senate was meeting on the day of Caesar's assassination, since the Senate House in the forum was being renovated. The Theatre had a grove of plane trees next to it, which is where these birds have supposedly come from. Pompey had fought against and lost to Caesar in the previous Civil War. The omen would have seemed straightforward to a Roman audience which is why Suetonius does not waste time explaining it.

The **volucres varii generis** are the senators from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of motives. The **avem regaliolum** is Caesar: his dictatorship had brought to mind monarchy for many Romans, something they were very much against. The **laureo ramulo** is a reference to the wearing of the laurel crown, a sign of power and leadership. Suetonius (*Divus Iulius* 45) says that Caesar had been awarded the unusual honour of wearing this crown at all times. **discerpserunt** refers to the murder of Caesar which was brutal – 23 wounds delivered by a crowd of Senators (*Divus Iulius* 82) - and took place in that very Senate House (**ibidem**).

10 **nocte... quietem:** night is the time for magical happenings (cf. Martial, Petronius, Pliny)

10-11 **supra nubes volitare cum love dextram iungere:** a reference to Caesar's subsequent deification. Following his death, a comet moving across the sky was interpreted by his heir, Octavian (the future emperor Augustus) as his soul ascending to the heavens and he was proclaimed a god.

11 **Calpurnia uxor:** Calpurnia was (probably) Caesar's fourth wife. They had married in 59BC and she was around 32 years old at the time of his death.

12 **imaginata est:** as in the Pliny text, this formulaic expression indicates a dream.
fastigium: the **fastigium** was the triangular gable end of a temple, but Caesar had been voted the extraordinary honour of *fastigium in domo* (a temple gable on the house). The collapse of it in Calpurnia's dream links Caesar's unparalleled power to his downfall.

- 14 ob haec simul ob...:** the parallel phrasing here shows how Caesar was giving equal weight to the omens and the ill health. Suetonius creates tension by showing him ‘delaying for a long time’ (**diu cunctatus**). Although the reader knows the final outcome of these events, by prolonging this and by emphasising Caesar’s many opportunities to avoid his fate Suetonius adds drama to a familiar episode.
- 16 Decimo Bruto adhortante:** Decimus Junius Brutus Albinus is often confused with another of the assassins, the much more famous Marcus Junius Brutus. Decimus had served with Caesar in Gaul and was one of Caesar’s heirs, being much closer to him than Marcus Brutus. He was also a prime mover in the assassination and was active in fighting Mark Antony during the ensuing civil war. According to Plutarch, Decimus encourages Caesar by saying that the senators are **frequentes...opperientes** (crowded...waiting) in order to vote him in as king of provinces outside Italy.
- 17 quinta fere hora:** this would have been around 10am.
- 18 libellum insidiarum indicem:** Plutarch goes into more detail on this, suggesting that it was a Greek teacher of philosophy named Artemidorus who wrote down the entire conspiracy and handed it to Caesar.
- 19 sinistra manu:** the left-hand side is considered ill-omened. Of course, although Caesar is **mox lecturus** (‘intending to read it soon’) he never will – a touch of dramatic irony.
- 20 pluribus hostiis caesis, cum litare non posset:** see the Source Images notes on sacrifice, auspices, and haruspicy (picture 3, pictures 5-6, and picture 4). Before a meeting, these signs had to be observed. It was common practice for unsuccessful sacrifices to be repeated until a favourable reading was obtained. Caesar is unable to obtain a favourable reading as his fate is now sealed. Suetonius implies later in his text that the awaited sacrifice is in fact Caesar himself.
- 21-22** a tricolon of ironic participles (**spreta...irridens...arguens**) emphasises Caesar’s error as he enters the Senate House, with the verb **introiit** moved to the start of the clause to emphasise the moment his fate is sealed.
- 23-24** Spurinna presumably would have been in attendance at the sacrifices, and therefore his ability to give a laden riposte needs no further explanation. The sibilance of these lines (**adessent...is venisse...eas...sed...praeterisse**), alongside the forceful brevity of the statement, adds to the sinister tone of this famous pronouncement.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each sentence or section, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

sed Caesari...flere (lines 1-4):

- What was indicated to Caesar? How was it indicated?
- When did this portent take place? Which animals were involved? What had Caesar done to these horses? When had he done this and where? How had he let them loose? What were they refusing to do? What else were they doing?

et immolantem...proferretur (lines 4-6):

- What was Caesar doing when the next sign was revealed? Who gave him the warning and what was his job? What was Caesar warned to beware? When would it not be delayed beyond?

pridie...discerpserunt (lines 6-9):

- When did the next omen take place? What kind of bird did it involve? What was the bird carrying? Where did the bird enter? What other creatures were involved? Where had they come from? What were they doing? What brutal act did it culminate in?

ea vero...patuerunt (lines 9-13):

- When did the next set of signs take place? When it says 'he seemed to himself' what does it mean is happening? What kind of atmosphere is it? Where did he imagine he was? What was he doing? Which god did he dream about? What was he doing with Jupiter?
- Who else was imagining things? What did she imagine happened to the gable of the house? Who did she dream about? Where was he? What had happened to him?
- How quickly did the next omen occur? What part of the house are we focusing on? What did the doors of the bedroom do?

ob haec...commiscuit (lines 14-20):

- What does *haec* mean? What does it refer to? What else is on Caesar's mind? What did he do as a result of these things? What two things was he thinking of doing?
- Who makes an appearance? What did he do? What was he urging Caesar not to do? How many people were waiting for Caesar? Why might they have been getting restless?
- At what time did Caesar set out?
- What did he get given? What was the book about? When did he get it? What did he do with it? Where was he holding these other books? What did he intend to do with them?

dein pluribus...praeterisse (lines 20-24):

- How many victims (animals) were killed (*it might be helpful to explain that omens had to be read at the start of every state meeting*)? Why did they have to kill so many?
- What did Caesar do anyway? What did he scorn? Who did he mock? What did he accuse him of being? What was his evidence for Spurinna being a false *haruspex*?
- What did Spurinna say the Ides of March had done? What did he say they had not done?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1) What effect does Suetonius create by using the word **evidentibus** here?
 2. (lines 2-4) Explain the significance of the Rubicon River in the life of Caesar.
 3. (lines 4-6) How does Suetonius emphasise Spurinna's warning through his choice of vocabulary and style of writing?
 4. (lines 6-9) Explain how this omen foreshadows Caesar's death.
 5. (lines 9-13) Pick out from this sentence:
 - a) two details which create a sense of mystery
 - b) two details which create a sense of horror
 - c) two details which create a sense of drama
 6. (lines 14-20) How does Suetonius, through the structure of his writing and his choice of vocabulary, make this a particularly exciting sentence?
 7. (lines 20-24) Do you feel sympathy for Caesar in these lines as he walks to his death? Explain your opinion.
 8. How does Suetonius create tension effectively throughout the entire passage?
-

Discussion

Themes: sacrifices, the work of a *haruspex*, dreams, omens

The students will need to appreciate the significance of Caesar's murder, and the basic information concerning what happened – although questions on this will not appear in the examination, except where it is linked to the content of this text.

A task which shows the 'count-down' to the murder will help students to appreciate the building tension across this passage. A timeline of the preceding few days could be drawn, and the portents annotated.

This piece is an excellent summary of most of the main types of divination explored in this topic and could be used at the end of the course for the class to have a go at putting their understanding into practice.

- Students could write from Spurinna's point of view: what has he seen and what does he advise?
 - Students could take on the role of a 'dream-reader' (*oneiromancer*) and interpret the dreams of Caesar and Calpurnia.
-

General questions on the passage and theme

1. What different types of warning does Caesar receive?
 2. What can we learn about Roman superstitions and omens from this passage?
-

Further Information and Reading

Suetonius refers to many incidents in the life of Caesar in this text. Here they are in chronological order with some linking background.

- 59 BC: Caesar was consul with the backing of Pompey and Crassus. Caesar's daughter Julia was married to Pompey, and Caesar himself married Calpurnia.
- 58 BC: Caesar became Governor of Gaul. He was wildly popular and successful, conquering beyond the extent of the province and even making forays into Britain. Rather than serving for the traditional one year, Caesar was originally given command for five years. When this came to an end, he was given a further five years. The Senate grew increasingly uneasy with his popularity and demanded that he disband his army and return to Rome.
- 49 BC: Caesar crossed the Rubicon at the head of his army, committing treason and beginning the civil war with Pompey.
- 9th August 48 BC: Caesar defeated Pompey decisively at the Battle of Pharsalus. He pardoned many of those who fought against him and was elected Dictator.
- April 45 BC: all remaining supporters of Pompey who refused to accept his pardon have been defeated by Caesar. He held a triumph to celebrate his military success, but many in Rome believed this to be in poor taste as those he defeated were Romans themselves.
- Between 48 BC and 44 BC: he was given an increasing number of extraordinary honours, including the honour of wearing a laurel crown and the honour of the *fastigium in domo*.
- Early 44 BC: Caesar had the Senate House rebuilt causing meetings to be temporarily moved to the Curia of Pompey.
- February 44BC: Caesar was elected 'Dictator in Perpetuity'.
- March 15th 44BC: the assassination of Caesar at a meeting of the Senate in the Curia of Pompey.

The Romans counted the days of each month preceding three key dates. The 1st day of the month was the Kalends. The Nones fell on the 7th day if the month had 31 days in it, and on the 5th for the other months. The Ides fell on the 15th if the month had 31 days in it, and on the 13th for the other months.

Plutarch *Life of Caesar* 63-65 has additional evidence which adds extra colour to this version.

Robert Graves (revised with intro. and notes by J.B. Rives), *Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars* (London: Penguin, 1957; rev. 2007)

VIRGIL *Dido prepares a curse* (*Aeneid* 4.504-521)

Dido readies herself and the materials needed to perform magic.

Publius Vergilius Maro (70-19BC) was born in Mantua in Cisalpine Gaul. His most famous work is the *Aeneid*, an epic poem of almost 10,000 lines in 12 books which describes the fates of the Trojan survivors following the war with the Greeks. The Trojan hero Aeneas, legendary ancestor of the Romans, charts a course across the Mediterranean, encountering many challenges before finally reaching Italy.

This section comes from the fourth book. Aeneas has reached the African city of Carthage and the queen has fallen in love with him (with some meddling from the gods). When Aeneas is compelled by the gods and fate to continue his journey and leave her behind, queen Dido curses him to suffer for the remainder of his days before taking her own life.

The text is unadapted.

Notes

metre: dactylic hexameter

1 **regina:** the queen mentioned here is Dido, queen of Carthage.

pyra penetrali...sede sub: the **pyra** has a double meaning: she intends to burn items in a ritual but it will double as a pyre for herself after her suicide. The plosive (p) and sibilant (s) alliteration, and elided –i on **penetrali** draw attention to these words, as well as giving an impression of a panicked and disordered mind (she is the queen and the heart of her palace is being used for magic –this is a sinister use of her position of power). The separation of **erecta** on to the next line adds to this.

sub auras: when used with the accusative, **sub** implies ‘under and up to’.

2 **ingenti taedis atque illice secta:** **ingenti** describes the **pyra**; **taedis...secta** are ablatives of instrument.

3-4 **fronde ... funerea:** this would have been cypresses, pitch trees and yews. The enjambment (running on beyond the end of a line) again adds to the impression of a disordered mind.

4 **super:** adverb with **locat**.

exuvias ensemque relictum: an item belonging to the individual to be cursed is a common feature of this type of spell. There is an alliterative, polysyndetic (lots of conjunctions) tricolon (list of three) of items to be ritually destroyed (**exuvias ensem...effigiem**)

5 **effigiem**: an image of the person being cursed in this type of ritual would be typically made from wax (so they would ‘melt with love’) or wood (so that they would be consumed by death).

6 **crines effusa**: literally translates as ‘having been loosened in respect of her hair’. This line has a heavy metre (spondaic) creating a sinister tone.

The **sacerdos** is the Massylian priestess whom Dido has summoned to work magic for her: it can also be translated as sorceress. She has her hair unbound (**crines effusa**) which not only creates a dramatic image but is common in ancient depictions of witches. Social stigma was attached to being an older woman with long, untied hair (It might be interesting to discuss whether this is still true).

7 **ter centum tonat ore deos**: ‘one hundred gods’ is the standard invocation. The addition of ‘three’ makes it seem even more magical (three is a magic number). The vivid vocabulary choice of **tonat** gives the sense that she ‘bellows out’.

Erebumque Chaosque: Erebus was the personification of Darkness who lived in the Underworld. Chaos was the personification of a void: the first thing to exist and the mother of Erebus.

8 **tergeminamque Hecaten, tria virginis ora Dianae**: the magical number three is repeated twice more, creating a tricolon and thus magnifying the power of three. Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft, was depicted as having three bodies. This seems to have been linked to the moon (the full moon, the half moon, and the new moon). The goddess Diana was believed to have three ‘faces’: the face she wore in the sky was that of the moon, the goddess Luna; the face on the earth was that of the huntress Diana; and the face she wore in the Underworld was Hecate. Diana was also known as Trivia, the goddess of the crossroads, and this seems to be how she became associated with Hecate. The crossroad was a place of mystical power and where spirits were supposed to gather. Trivia was a goddess to be feared: she served as a psychopomp (a guide of souls) who took the dead to the Underworld.

9 **latices simulatos fontis Averni**: as this passage makes clear, sometime substitutions could be made in spells for items which could not be acquired. Avernus was the entrance to the Underworld, often depicted as a lake. The water here will be poured out in an offering.

10 the translation is **pubentes herbae** (powerful herbs) **messae** (harvested) **aenis falcibus** (with bronze sickles) **ad lunam** (by moonlight) **quaeruntur** (are found) **cum lacte** (with juice) **nigri veneni** (of black poison)

The separation of words which agree (**falcibus...aenis, messae...herbae, nigri...veneni**) in these lines suggests the wildness of the scene.

falcibus...aenis: bronze was used for metal items which were used in magic and divination. Iron was used when you wished to dispel magic. The vestiges of this belief can be seen even today in the lucky (iron) horseshoe.

Line 11 is spondaic, creating a menacing tone.

The juxtaposition (placing next to) of **nigri** and **lacte** (*lac* means 'milk' or 'milky juice') extends the idea of everything being wrong. **ad lunam** is traditionally the most magically potent time. **veneni**, delayed at the end of the line, confirms our building suspicion that these herbs cannot be good.

- 13 this line is not complete. There are over 50 half lines in the *Aeneid*, proof of its unfinished state. Virgil died before he could finish editing the poem.

The **amor** being referred to is a *hippomanes*, a fleshy growth that supposedly grew on the forehead of foals whilst they were in the womb. According to legend, if a person stole it before the mare herself could rip it from her foal then that person could use its magical properties but the horse would reject her baby.

- 14 **ipsa**: this switches the view back to Dido. She is holding the **mola**, the salted flour cakes used in rituals (c.f. Martial) and **manibusque piis**, she has washed her hands in a purification ritual.

- 15 **unum exuta pedem vinclis**: 'stripped in respect of one foot by the fastenings'. In order to work magic effectively, a person had to free themselves from knots which might impede the power flowing through them. This would involve undoing hair, untying belts, and undoing fastenings elsewhere. The fact that she leaves one shoe bound is linked to the curse she is casting: she will be free, Aeneas will be 'bound' to her will.

- 16 **moritura**: agrees with **ipsa**. Dido plans to kill herself following the curse. In this way a malevolent spirit (her own) will be bound to the spell.

conscia fati sidera: the stars are commonly depicted as being witnesses to all.

- 17-18 the translation is **si quod numen iustumque memorque** (if any divine power, both just and mindful) **curae habet** (has in its care) **amantes** (lovers) **non aequo foedere** (in an unequal relationship) ...

non aequo foedere: a reference to Aeneas. Dido is deeply in love with him but he is leaving.

She does not specify a god, only asks for whoever is sympathetic to listen to her prayer. This is a common plea when asking for divine assistance.

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each section, asking leading questions so that the class comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

lines 1-5:

- What has the queen built? Where is it? How big is it? What is making it so big?
- What has she spread the place with? What has she crowned it with?
- What three items are listed here? Where has she placed them?

lines 6-8:

- What is standing around? Who else is there? What does her hair look like?
- How many gods in total does she call upon? Which ones are named here specifically? How is Hecate described? What are we told about Diana?

lines 9-11:

- What does the priestess do next? What does the water represent?
- She also has some herbs. At what time of day did she harvest them? What did she use to cut them? What material was it made from? What else do we learn about the herbs? What kind of juice do they have and what colour is it?

lines 12-13:

- A love charm is mentioned. Which animal has this come from? Where on the animal was it? How did they get the charm from it?

lines 14-18:

- Where is Dido exactly? How are her hands described? What is she holding?
- What has she done to the sandal on one foot? What has she done to her dress?
- Who does she call upon? What does she intend to do? What seems to have knowledge of her fate?
- What does she do now? What kind of god does she want to listen to her prayer? What kind of person should this god care about? What kind of lovers in particular?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-4) How effective is Virgil in setting the tone for the passage? Consider his choice of words and his style of writing.
2. (lines 4-5) What three things has Dido put upon the pyre? Why has she chosen these things?
3. (lines 6-8) Who does the priestess call upon and why are these appropriate?
4. (lines 9-11) How did a witch ensure that her herbs were powerful?
5. (lines 12-13) What was this charm?
6. (lines 14-17) Describe Dido in as much detail as possible.
7. (lines 17-18) To whom does Dido pray here?

Discussion

Themes: curses, witches, magical artefacts

This section is a piece of detailed description: students could make sense of the scene by creating a visual representation (drawing, model, animation etc.) of the text, including as much information as possible.

Students could put together from the passage a detailed description of a Roman witch (in visual or written form), including what she would look like, act like, and be carrying.

There is also a good opportunity to discuss the fact that descriptions such as these are based on misogyny – especially regarding older, unmarried women who have some skill or learning – which has proven pervasive throughout history. There is more on this in the notes on the Ovid text.

General questions on the passage and theme

1. Describe the sorceress in as much detail as you can. Does she fit with the description given by Ovid of Dipsas?
2. How does Virgil create an impression of menace throughout the entire passage?

Further Information and Reading

For more information on witchcraft and witches, refer to the notes on the Ovid passage *Dipsas the Sorceress* in this prescription.

David West, *Virgil, The Aeneid, a new prose translation* (Penguin, 1990)

R.D. Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books 1-6, edited with introduction and notes* (Macmillan, 1972; repr. Bristol Classical Press, 1996)