



Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 2: Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)
Travel by Land and Sea



CICERO
*The governor of
Sicily tours his
province*

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.

The examination requires knowledge outside the text only when it is needed in order to understand the text.

The Teacher's Notes contain the following:

- An **Introduction** to the author and the text – though students will only be asked questions on the content of the source itself.
- **Notes** on the text to assist the teacher.
- **Suggested Questions for Comprehension, Content and Style** to be used with students.
- **Discussion** suggestions and questions for students, and overarching **Themes** which appear across more than one source.
- **Further Information and Reading** for teachers who wish to explore the topic and texts further.

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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 III, Stage 24, pages 66-69.**

CICERO, *The governor of Sicily tours his province* (in *Verrem* II.5.26-27)

Verres governs from the comfort of his litter

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106BC- 43BC) was a prominent orator and statesman whose work influenced European writing and thought from his own time until ours. He came from an equestrian family in Arpinum, initially struggling in his political ambitions due to his lack of familial influence and connections. His reputation was established due to a risky case he undertook (*pro Roscio*) and successfully defended. Once his career was underway, in 70BC he took up another high profile case, this time against Verres, the former governor of Sicily.

Cicero had served as quaestor (a junior administrative position) in Sicily in 75BC and had gained a reputation of being fair and just. Therefore it was to him the Sicilians turned in order to prosecute Verres for corruption and various other crimes whilst in power. Cicero's first speech was so devastating that Verres' lawyer advised him to go into voluntary exile before the rest of the case could be heard. Cicero subsequently published the speeches which he had been unable to deliver. He would later go on to become consul and would direct the actions of the senate throughout the turbulent years of the end of the Republic.

This text is from near the beginning of the fifth section of the second oration which concerns Verres' greed and seeks to present him as both contemptible and ridiculous. It is edited slightly for length.

Notes

1-2 the translation is **laborem** (the effort) **itinerum** (of journeys) **iste** (that [man]) **reddidit** (made) **facilem** (easy) **et** (and) **iucundum** (pleasant) **sibi** (for himself) **ratione** (by method) **consilioque** (and planning).

1 **laborem itinerum**: travel would indeed have been a fairly onerous part of a governor's job, but one which a good Roman was supposed to approach with a sense of duty. By placing the word **laborem** emphatically at the start of the sentence Cicero is being sarcastic: he has already established in the rest of the speech that Verres avoids doing any real work if he can.

iste: this demonstrative pronoun is stronger than **ille** (that). It implies the speaker is also pointing, aggressively or mockingly, towards the person being described. The hissing of the first syllable enhances this effect. It is important to remember that a speech is designed to be performed: the sound of the text and the actions they imply are therefore very important.

facilem et iucundum: by using two words where one would have done Cicero stresses how easy Verres makes his journeys.

- 1-2 *ratione consilioque*:** this phrase really only expresses one idea ‘methodical planning’ but Cicero has lengthened it using ‘and’ for greater impact (this is called *hendiadys*). This is ironic: Verres works hard to make his life easy!
- 4 *urbem Syracusas*:** Syracuse was the Roman capital of the province of Sicily and was a city with a long and distinguished history. Located in the south-east of the island, it controlled a prosperous port and had played an important role in the wars between Rome and Carthage for control of Mediterranean trade.
- 4-7** the translation is ***elegerat*** (he had chosen) ***urbem Syracusas*** (the city of Syracuse), ***ubi*** (where) ***iste bonus imperator*** (that fine commander) ***vivebat*** (lived) ***ita*** (in such a way) ***ut*** (that) ***non facile*** (it was not easy) ***quisquam*** (for anyone) ***viderit*** (to see) ***eum*** (him) – ***non modo extra tectum*** (not only outside the house), ***sed*** (but) ***ne..quidem*** (not even) ***extra lectum*** (out of bed);
- 5 *iste bonus imperator*:** the sarcasm in this phrase is heavy. Not only do we have the ***iste*** and the ironic use of ‘good’, but Cicero calls Verres an ***imperator***, a term which in this period of Roman history means both ‘any person who gives commands’ and ‘a military commander’. This is a sarcastic rebuttal to Hortensius, the lawyer for the defence, who had argued that because Verres was a ‘***bonus imperator***’ he should be acquitted. Cicero reuses this phrase throughout the speech to devastating effect as he proves time and again that Verres was anything but a ‘fine commander’.
- 6 *non modo...sed*:** this balanced construction is typical of Cicero’s phrasing. Careful constructions make his arguments sounds more convincing and logical.
- extra tectum...extra lectum*:** the rhyme helps to emphasise the ridiculousness of the governor not even being out of bed during the winter months.
- ne...quidem*:** the separation of the two parts of ***ne quidem*** helps to emphasises both the ‘not even’ and the words contained within (***extra lectum***).
- quidem quisquam*:** the alliteration draws attention to the exaggerated ‘anyone’.
- 9-10 *non...neque...sed*:** typical Ciceronian balanced phrasing again. The use of a list of three here (two negatives followed by the positive) lends weight to the final item.
- 10 *Favonio*:** Favonius was the West Wind (also known as Zephyr) which brought in warmer weather and was therefore associated with the coming of spring. Verres, of course, cannot tell that the West Wind is blowing as he does not venture outside. He is also, therefore, not able to tell the season ***ab aliquo astro*** (‘by some star’) – presumably Arcturus, part of the constellation Bootes, whose arrival in the skies of the northern hemisphere coincides with Spring. Instead Verres can only tell the season because of the ***rosam*** (‘rose’) he has seen, not flowering on a bush but scattered across the couches at one of his banquets.
- 11-12** these lines are heavily ironic. Verres is described as devoting himself to ‘work and to journeys (***labori atque itineribus***), being so ‘hardy and energetic’ (***patientem atque impigrum***) in what he was doing. This is reinforced by the alliteration of ***p*** in line 12, and the use of ***adeo*** (‘so’). The joke is then revealed: he has simply moved from the couch to the litter.

- 13 nemo umquam:** very emphatic, and clearly exaggeration.
- in equo sedentem:** a Roman governor was expected to represent Roman values when he was in his province. Cicero contrasts the ideal Roman, riding nobly around his province, with Verres in his 'non-Roman', decadent, litter.
- 14 Bithyniae regibus:** Bithynia was a kingdom to the east of Rome, bordering the Black Sea, and one of the newest provinces of the Roman Empire. Nicomedes IV, the last king of Bithynia, had recently bequeathed the entire kingdom to the Romans as they had restored him to his throne following the wars with Mithridates. This prompted another invasion by Mithridates and the war was ongoing at the time of this speech – Verres is being subtly portrayed as acting like an enemy of Rome. The Eastern kings were stereotyped by the Romans as being lazy, decadent, and not what upper class Romans considered 'manly'.
- lectica octophoro:** a 'litter' was a portable bed, supported on poles carried by eight men, with four upright posts so that a canopy for shade could be erected, along with curtains for privacy. The practice supposed originated in Bithynia on the Black Sea (the poet Catullus boasts in poem 10 that he has brought back 'eight straight-backed men' (*octo homines...rectos*) from Bithynia). The litter became a popular mode of transport for the upper class Roman: it was private and allowed them to avoid the hardship of travel by horseback.
- 14-15 pulvinus...perlucidus Melitensis rosas fartus:** Malta was famous in the ancient world for its linen production. It was famed for being **perlucidus** -so fine that it was actually transparent. (This also links to an accusation Cicero makes elsewhere concerning Verres importing Maltese linen in an improper fashion). The roses are mentioned again to imply decadence: they were associated with luxury, parties and the senses.
- coronam:** garlands were typically worn at feasts. To wear them at other times, and especially to wear two, (**unam in capite, alteram in collo**) would have appeared a ridiculous affectation.
- 17-18 tenuissimo lino, minutis maculis, plenum rosae:** Verres is carrying a small bag of the finest linen, filled with roses, which would have created a pleasant scent, another sign of decadence. The *asyndetic* list (lacking conjunctions) of three, use of the superlative (**tenuissimo**), and the alliteration of **m** draw attention to the fine details here, implying that if such a small object is so extravagant, imagine what the rest of the litter was like!
- 18 ad aliquod oppidum:** Cicero doesn't specify which town, making it difficult to deny and also implying this happened all the time. The use of the imperfect tense in these lines continues this impression.
- 19-20 veniebant Siculorum magistratus veniebant equites Romani:** Cicero here uses Siculi for the Sicilians. This is an old tribe which they were descended from and using it lends an additional air of seriousness to the magistrates. The equites were the Roman middle class, often very wealthy and powerful and engaged in trade.
- 21 secreto deferebantur:** the secrecy mentioned here implies corruption. Cicero establishes elsewhere in his speech that Verres accepts bribes and is rarely fair

in his business transactions. In lines 22-23, Cicero goes further and says that he is dispensing 'judgements at a price in his bedroom' (**in cubiculo preto iura**)

- 23 Veneri...et Libero:** Verres has decided that his time is, metaphorically, better spent with Venus (goddess of love and desire) and Bacchus (or Liber [pater] – god of wine and freedom).
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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 kind of effort is being discussed? How did that man make it for himself? How did he achieve this?

lines 2-4:

- What did he devise for himself? When did he devise it? What was it against?

lines 4-7:

- Which city did he choose? How does Cicero describe Verres? What was it not easy for anyone to do?

lines 7-8:

- What was the shortness of his days filled with? What about the length of his nights?

lines 9-11:

- What season now began? In what two ways did Verres **not** notice the beginning of this season? What did he see which marked its beginning for him? What did he give himself to now?

lines 12-13:

- What did he show himself to be in this? What did no one ever do?

lines 13-15:

- Whose custom was he following? What was he carried in? What was also in the litter?

lines 15-18:

- What was on his head? Where was the other garland? What three things do we learn about the sachet he was moving to his nose? Why do you think he was doing this?

lines 18-19:

- Where had he arrived? When? Where was he conveyed and how?

lines 19-20:

- Which two groups of people used to go to him? Where was Verres when this was happening?

lines 21-22:

- What were being taken to his private room? What happened shortly afterwards?

lines 22-24:

- What had he done? Where? What did he get in return? How long did he do this for each day?
- What did he think was now owed to Venus and Bacchus? Who were Venus and Bacchus? What do you think he was doing for the rest of his time?

Questions on Content and Style

1. Who is Cicero talking about in this passage?
2. (lines 1-4 **laborem...comparaverat**)
 - a) What do we learn about Verres' attitude towards travel in these lines?
 - b) Why would the winter months have been particularly unpleasant for a Roman to travel in?
 - c) What evidence is there that Cicero is being sarcastic in these lines?
3. (lines 4-8 **urbem...continebatur**)
 - a) How did Verres spend the winter, according to Cicero?
 - b) How does Cicero, through his style of writing in these lines, show us the contempt he has for Verres?
4. (lines 9-11 **cum...itineribus**)
 - a) How did Verres know that spring had arrived?
 - b) How did other Romans judge that spring had arrived?
 - c) Why might Verres' work have involved lots of travel?
5. (lines 12-18 **in quibus...rosae**)
 - a) Describe in detail how Verres travels around his province.
 - b) What details does Cicero give us to emphasise the luxury of Verres' transport?
 - c) How does Cicero's style of writing here help to create an impression of outrageous decadence?
6. (lines 18-24 **sic...arbitratur**)
 - a) How does Verres avoid walking even a few steps, according to Cicero?
 - b) Why were people coming to Verres?
 - c) In what way was Verres corrupt, according to Cicero?
 - d) Did Verres spend more time working or partying, according to Cicero? How do you know?
 - e) Why do you think that Cicero uses the phrase "Veneri et Libero" rather than telling us what Verres was doing?

Discussion

Themes: travel by litter

In this passage, Cicero is attempting to portray Verres as decadent and immoral through his mode of transport. This could be a good opportunity to discuss the judgements we make about people based on how they travel: students may offer up the private jets of celebrities such as the Kardashian Wests (and reaction to these on Instagram), the ways in which climate-change activists like Greta Thunberg travel, the gold state coach used by the British Royal Family, and indeed students' own perceptions of aspirational vehicles.

Students could be asked to compose and deliver a defence speech, explaining the benefits of travelling by litter.

On a more general note, it is essential to mention that the values being presented by Cicero in this passage are typically Roman. They demonstrate pervasive stereotyping of people and ideas from 'the East', and the Roman concept of laudable masculine traits. It is important that these are discussed and challenged.

General questions on the passage and theme

1. What impression of Verres is given by the whole passage?
2. What were the benefits for a man like Verres in travelling by litter?

Further Information and Reading



A litter, or *lectica*, was a couch borne on poles by between two to eight slaves. They became more and more popular over the 1st century BC, initially mainly used by women and invalids, and then by everyone who could afford it (*c.f.* our Juvenal text). Julius Caesar and others tried to restrict their use, but they continued to grow in popularity. Eventually enterprising Romans created public *lecticae* for hire.

They were made of wood, and transported using wooden poles which rested on the shoulders of the slaves. There was a roof covering the couch, and privacy was ensured by curtains which ran around all sides. In the imperial periods, there may also have been litters enclosed with *lapis specularis* (selenite gypsum or 'eyeglass' which the Romans used for windows) (Juvenal IV.21).

The luxury of the litter did not necessarily mean that it was the most comfortable travelling experience. The author Celsus in his *De Medicina*, says "The gentlest rocking is that on board ship either in harbour or in a river, more severe is that aboard ship on the high seas, or in a litter, even severer still in a carriage".

L.H. G. Greenwood *Cicero: the Verrine Orations* (Loeb 1989)
Scottish Classics Group *Introducing Cicero: a Latin reader* (Bloomsbury 2002)