Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 2: Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)

Travel by Land and Sea

JUVENAL
The unpleasantness of city traffic

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, although 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 may wish to explore the topic and texts further.

This document refers to the official examination images and texts for the Eduqas Latin GCSE (2021 - 2023). It should be used in conjunction with the information, images and texts provided by Eduqas on their website:
Eduqas Latin GCSE (2021-2023)

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.

JUVENAL, *The unpleasantness of city traffic* (*Satires 3.234-248*)

Juvenal compares his own wretched journey on foot with that of the wealthy man in his litter.

Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis (Juvenal) was a writer living in the city of Rome in the 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ century AD. There is very little information surrounding his life which is not disputed in the various biographies which survive from the ancient world, although it appears that he was born in Aquinum and moved to Rome, studied oratory and law, and was exiled briefly. He is best known now for his Satires, 16 poems arranged into 5 books, which are a scathing account of life and mores in his time. He is the source for several eternal maxims, including *mens sana in corpore sano* ('a healthy mind in a healthy body' 10.356) and *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* ('who will guard the guards themselves?' 6.347-48).

Our section comes from the middle of Satire 3 which was probably composed around AD110. The poem is written as a monologue suspposedly delivered by one Umbricius, a friend of Juvenal. Umbricius is leaving Rome and moving to the countryside at Cumae and as he leaves he delivers this attack on the city, complaining about everything from litter to the poor quality of the housing. In these lines he complains about the chaos of the Roman streets, and the ways in which the wealthy avoid having to deal with crowds. Umbricius and his departure may or may not be rhetorical devices: the satire is similar in style and content to the others delivered in the persona of Juvenal. Either way, it should be approached in the same way as any satirical text; with the assumption we are dealing with an exaggerated form of real life.

The text is unadapted.

Notes

metre: dactylic hexameter

1   **meritoria:** these lodgings were 'rooms for rent', and were less than respectable. The rhetorical question ('for what lodgings permit any sleep?') expects the answer "none", from the general audience.

2   **magnis opibus:** this ablative of price draws attention to one of the main themes of Umbricius' rant: the contrast between the lives of the rich and the poor. The wealthy would have the option of living away from the bustling streets in quieter neighbourhoods, in villas where the sleeping quarters were away from the street-side of the house, or even in villas outside the city.

   dormitur: in order to keep the streets moving wheeled traffic was banned from the city during the day. The only vehicles allowed were those used for public works. The result was that throughout the night the streets of Rome were loud and crowded with vehicles. The impersonal use of the passive verb form is a fairly common construction in Latin.

   in urbe: Rome

3   **raedarum:** a **raeda** was a heavy, four-wheeled carriage used for longer journeys.

3-4   **arto…in flexu:** the separation of the noun and adjective mimics the twisting of the narrow streets ('in the narrow winding [alleys]'). Other sources tell us that some of the streets in Rome were so narrow that inhabitants could have reached out of their windows and shaken hands with the neighbour opposite.

   There were many streets where carriages were simply not able to pass (**transitus**) each other. There was no one-way system in Rome, and so a slave or assistant would be send ahead of the carriage to the far end of the street to stop traffic until the carriage had navigated its length.

4   **metre and elision:** (at GCSE students are not expected to know how to scan Latin metre) this *spondaic* (long, heavy sounds) line has two elisions (vowel sounds which are not pronounced – vicor~um~ and flex~u~. The slowness of the metre mimics the slowness of the traffic, and the elisions create a stuttering stop/start feel to the line.

   stantis convicia mandrae: translated as 'abuse from a standing herd of cattle'. In the city there is a herd blocking the road. The phrase could be read as abuse being directed **at** the herd from the crowd who are trying to pass by, or abuse being shouted **by** the herdsmen at the crowd.

5   **eripient:** a vivid choice of word ('will steal') emphatically placed at the start of the line.

     Druso vitulisque marinis: the **Drusus** mentioned here is probably Tiberius Claudius Drusus, the name of the Roman emperor Claudius before his elevation. He was apparently notorious for his drowsiness. The Romans thought that seals (**vitulisque marinis**) were a particularly sleepy animal.

6-7   the translation is **si** (if) **officium** (duty) **vocat** (calls) **dives** (the rich man) **vehetur** (will be carried along) **turba cedente** (while the crowd gives way) **et** (and) **curret** (he will run) **super ora** (over their faces) **ingenti Liburna** (in his huge Liburnian galley).

     The narrator now moves on to the noise and traffic of the street in the daytime.

7   **ingenti…super ora Liburna:** a 'Liburnian galley' was a type of Roman warship which was around 33 metres long. It has been suggested that there was a type of large litter named after the warship, although here Juvenal is keen to stress the lively image of the wealthy man sailing across the sea of the faces of the poor. The metaphor is continued later (line 11).

8   **leget aut scribet vel dormiet:** it was possible to work or even nap in a litter (see note below). By using a *tricolon* (list of three), the narrator gives the impression of a long list – the man inside the litter can do all kinds of activities ('read or write or sleep').

9   **lectica:** 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 litter was a popular mode of transport for the upper class Roman: it was private and allowed them to avoid the hardship of travel by horseback (see also our Cicero text *The governor of Sicily tours his province*).

     clausa…fenestra: the sides of the litter had curtains which could be closed for privacy.

10-12 the translation is **nobis properantibus** (when we hurry along) **unda** (a wave [of people]) **prior** (in front) **obstat** (stands in our way) [and] **populus** (the crowd) **qui** (which) **sequitur** (follows) **magno agmine** (in a long line) **premit** (presses on) **lumbos** (our backsides)

10-15 dactylic metre: (at GCSE students are not expected to know how to scan Latin metre) these lines are largely *dactylic* (they mainly have a bouncy long-short-short metre) which adds to the sense of hustle and bustle about the lines.

11   the word **unda** ('a wave') continues the image created in line 7 of the crowd being like the sea.

12-13 the translation is **hic** (this man) **ferit** (hits me) **cubito** (with his elbow) **alter** (another) **ferit** (hits me) **assere duro** (with a hard pole) **at** (meanwhile) **hic** (this man) **incutit** (strikes) **tignum** (a plank) **capiti** (on my head) **ille** (that man) **[incutit** (strikes)**] metretam** (a jar)

12   the narrator conjures up the constant battering he receives in the street by repeating **ferit** ('hits')**.** An **asser** was one of the poles used to carry a litter.

12-13 hic…alter...hic…ille: the *asyndetic* (lacking conjunctions) list pointing out all the people bumping and jostling helps to create the impression of a busy, bustling scene.

13   **tignum...metretam:** the vocabulary here hints at other activities which are clogging up the streets. A **tignum** was in particular a plank or beam used for building work and a **metreta** was a cask for carrying liquid and it held about 40 litres - perhaps a bar is getting a delivery.

14   **pinguia crura luto:** ('my legs [are] thick with mud') although Julius Caesar had decreed that the streets of Rome should be paved there is little evidence to suggest that this was carried across the whole city. Even where the streets were paved, there was substantial amounts of debris in the streets. Although there was a sewer system, most Romans threw their waste out of the windows into the streets. The animal traffic left its share of dung, and the rubbish from shops would also have made its way into the streets.

15   **clavus militis:** a 'soldier's hobnail' refers to the nails hammered into the bottom of military sandals. These bound the shoes together and were to provide the wearer with grip, equip the soldier with a brutal kick, and to make a loud and intimidating noise as the legions marched.

mihi militis haeret: the sound effect of the breathless **m...m...hae**

Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each 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.

nam quae... admittunt? (lines 1-2):
- What question is being asked? What does he mean?

magnis...morbi (lines 2-3):
- What is it possible to do only with great wealth? What is the result?

raedarum...marinis (lines 3-5):
- What vehicle's crossing is mentioned? What is it crossing?
- Where are the insults coming from?
- What could the noise of these insults seize? Whom could they seize it from?

si...fenestra (lines 6-9):
- What is calling? What does the crowd do? What type of person is being carried?
- What is an **ingenti...Liburna**? What is it doing?
- What three things is the wealthy man able to do on the way?
- What does the litter cause? What has been shut?

ante...sequitur (lines 10-12):
- When will he arrive? What are we doing? What does a wave [of people] do?
- What do the people press against? What are these people doing?

ferit...haeret (lines 12-15):
- What does this man hit the speaker with? What does another man hit him with?
- What does his man strike him with? What does that man strike him with?
- What has happened to his legs? What is he trodden all over by?
- What sticks in his toe?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-2) Who are the only people who get a good night's sleep in the city and why?

2. (lines 3) What happens to some people because they cannot sleep?

3. (lines 3-5)
    a) Why would 'the passing of carriages' be such a problem in Rome?
    b) Why would a herd of cattle cause the street to become so noisy?
    c) Explain the metaphor in line 5.

4. (lines 1-5) How does Juvenal, through his style of writing, emphasise the chaos of the streets of Rome at night?

5. (lines 6-10)
    a) Why is the wealthy man going through the city?
    b) In what ways is the wealthy man's journey through the city comfortable?

6. (lines 10-15)
    a) How does the poor pedestrian have a terrible journey along the streets?
    b) (lines 10-12) How does Juvenal, through his style of writing, emphasise the size of the crowd on the streets?
    c) (lines 12-13) How does Juvenal emphasise the number of times the pedestrian gets hit?
    d) (lines 14-15) How effective is Juvenal is choosing vocabulary which brings this scene to life?

Discussion

Themes: traffic, roads, carriages and carts, travel by litter, travel by foot

This passage gives us an excellent insight into the variety of traffic crowding the streets at different times of day. Students could be asked to sketch the streets as described by Juvenal, labelling the features using the Latin from the poem. There are plenty of modern illustrations of Roman street scenes available online – students could be asked to evaluate their accuracy using this text.

Some things do not seem to change much. Students could compare Juvenal's account with some modern newspaper articles about city living to see to what extent people are still having the same problems.

Some students may question the reliability of this source, given that it is satirical. They could be encouraged to investigate further and find corroborating evidence from the archaeology, and references in other texts.

General questions on the passage and theme

1. What do we learn about traffic at night and during the day in the city of Rome?

2. What differences between the rich and the poor are discussed in this poem?

3. What hazards of travelling through a city have we learned from Juvenal?

Further Information and Reading

Although this text is satirical, a lot of its content is corroborated by other sources. This excellent article by the Museum of Pennsylvania gives some more details on the problems being presented by Juvenal.

https://www.penn.museum/sites/expedition/the-embattled-driver-in-ancient-rome/

Edward Courtney *A Commentary on the Satires of Juvenal* (California 2013)
John Mayor *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal* (Bristol 2007)
John Ferguson *Juvenal, The Satires* (Bloomsbury 1979)