



Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 3A

Latin Literature (Narratives) Ovid, *Ceyx and
Alcyone*

Section B

For examination in 2022 and 2023



Section B

Ceyx assures Alcyone of his safe return

In this passage, Alcyone begs to go with her husband. Although Ceyx is moved by her words, he does not want to put her in danger, nor delay his voyage. He tries to comfort her and promises to return soon.

Notes

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.

- 1 tua si flecti precibus sententia nullis:** the interlocking words here suggest how her prayers (**precibus**) have pierced as far as they can into his purpose (**tua...sententia**), but to no avail. The emphatic positioning of **nullis** at the end of the line emphasises his resolution.
- 2 care...coniunx:** the loving tone continues as Alcyone addresses Ceyx as her 'dear husband'. The pause between the adjective and noun emphasises the 'dear', as does the 'c' alliteration and its emphatic position at the beginning of the line.
- 3** The emphatic position of **me quoque** at the beginning of the line highlights Alcyone's desire: take 'me too'. The command (*imperative*) **tolle** ('take') continues the feeling of urgency. The use of **simul** ('together') and **una** ('together') stresses the fact that Alcyone and Ceyx share a single identity as a couple.
- 4** The alliterative **nec nisi** sounds final and decisive. The repetition of **pariter** again stresses the unity of these two characters.
- 4-5 feremus...feremur:** a neat little play on the active and passive forms of the same verb. They will *actively* 'endure' and *passively* 'be carried', but always together. There is another play on meaning here: they *will* be carried over the seas together in the end but as birds.
- 6 Aeolidis** reminds us that Alcyone is the daughter of Aeolus, the immortal whose job it was to look after the winds. In epic literature, he is often responsible for storms at sea or for preventing them (Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey* for example).

movetur is a *vivid historic present*.

7 **sidereus coniunx**: a reference to the fact that Ceyx's father was Lucifer, the personification of the 'Morning Star'. This name was given by the Romans to the planet Venus when it was visible in the sky just before dawn.

8 The translation is **enim** (for) **neque** (neither) **est** (was) **ignis** (the fire) **in ipso** (in him) **minor** (less).

The words for 'fire' in Latin are often synonymous with passionate feeling, usually love. It is also here possibly a play on his connection with Lucifer: **ignis** is also a synonym for 'star'. **est** is a *vivid historic present*

9 **vult** is a *vivid historic present*

10 The translation is **respondit** (he replied) **multa** (many [words]) **solantia** ([which] try to soothe) **timidum pectus** (her fearful heart).

respondit is a *vivid historic present*.

11 **causam probat**: this phrase is more common in legal language than in epic or elegiac poetry. The metaphor here implies that he has delivered a persuasive speech (like in a law court), but it has failed. Ovid is not interested in telling us this part of the conversation: he is much more interested in the emotional ending. **probat** is a *vivid historic present*.

13 **nobis**: Ceyx deliberately points out that he feels the same: this is equally hard for them both.

14 **per patrios ignes**: to swear *by* something is a standard formula in Latin. Here, Ceyx swears by the light of his father Lucifer (see the Introduction for more information).

si me modo fata remittant: an ironic statement, given that he will not return.

15 **quam luna bis impleat orbem**: (ie the moon will become full twice) a poetic way of saying two months

Discussion

We can see the difference in the two characters coming out here. Alcyone expresses her love through her emotional speech, beseeching Ceyx using emotive language and stressing their inseparability. Ceyx, on the other hand, feels as passionately as she does but seems to express himself in a more structured way, employing formal language.

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:

- Who is Alcyone speaking to and what does she call him? What has she been trying to change? What has she been trying to change it with? Is his purpose able to be turned by prayers? What is he absolutely certain of?
- What does she tell him to do?
- What shall certainly happen to them both? How shall she feel unless she suffers these things with him?
- What does she say they will do together? Where shall they be borne and how?

lines 6-12:

- How is her husband described? What was he moved by and whose were they?
- What was no less in him? What does this mean?
- But what did he not want to put off? What else did he not want to do?
- How much did he reply to Alcyone? What were his words trying to do? What did he, however, not manage to do?
- What did he also add to these reasons? What effect did this have on his loving wife?

lines 13-15:

- What does he say about this whole delay? What does he swear to her by? Of whom does he say 'if only they might allow me'?
- What does he say he will do? This will be before the moon does what twice? What does this mean?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-3):

- a. Pick out the two Latin words Alcyone uses to describe Ceyx.
- b. What does Alcyone want Ceyx to do?
- c. How does Alcyone, through her choice of language and style of speaking, attempt to persuade Ceyx to agree?

2. (lines 3-5):

- a. Explain Alcyone's reason for being afraid.
- b. How does Alcyone emphasise the fact that they should face everything as a couple?

3. (lines 6-7):
 - a. Explain why Ceyx is '**sidereus**' and Alcyone is '**Aeolidis**'.
 - b. What effect has Alcyone's speech had on Ceyx?

4. (lines 7-12):
 - a. What does the phrase '**neque enim minor ignis in ipso est**' tell us about Ceyx?
 - b. What two reasons does Ceyx have for not agreeing to any of Alcyone's requests?
 - c. Which **three** Latin words in line 11 tell us that he was not successful in soothing her feelings?

5. (lines 13-15):
 - a. What promise does Ceyx make to Alcyone?
 - b. How does he, in these lines, stress how seriously he takes this promise?

6. (whole section):
 - a. How does Ovid create a dramatic tone in this section through his use of epic language? Think about the descriptions he uses and the vocabulary choices he makes?
 - b. How do we know that Alcyone and Ceyx have strong feelings for each other through their words and actions?