



Eduqas GCSE Latin  
Component 3A

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

Section D

For examination in 2022 and 2023



## Section D

### *A sudden storm and sudden alarm!*

In this passage Ceyx is halfway to his destination when a sudden storm arises. The captain and his crew react swiftly and professionally, but the power of the storm soon overwhelms their efforts.

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#### 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.*

**1-2** The translation is **medium** (the middle) **aequor** ([of the] sea) **aut** (either) **minus** (less) **aut** (or) **certe** (certainly) **non** (not) **amplius** (more than) **secabatur** (was being cut) **puppe** (by the ship), **-que** (and) **tellus** (the land) **erat** (was) **longe** (far away) **utraque** (on both sides)

The ship is roughly halfway across the open water. The drawn-out description over these two lines, stressing how far away the land is, sets the scene for what happens next.

**3** **albescere**: the sea turns white as the foam is whipped up.

**coepit**: there is a sudden switch into the present tense here (*vivid historic present*) which makes the scene appear to be playing out with the reader watching. This use of the present tense continues for the rest of the section.

**4** **eurus**: the south-east wind (in some texts, the east wind), and the bringer of storms.

**5-6** The use of direct speech, and especially the imperatives (**demittite ... subnectite**), is dramatic and adds urgency. The captain appears to be decisive, although the inverted word order (the words **cornua** and **velum** are key to the commands, but they are left until the end of each command and line) may imply some panic.

The commands are to furl the sail, to put it away so that the wind will not catch it and either rip it apart or cause the ship to be blown around out of control. Unlike later sailing boats, Roman and Greek boats were designed so that this could be done without climbing up onto the yard.

There is a diagram below in which the parts of a Roman ship are labelled.

**7** **hic iubet**: the short statement mimics the urgent commands of the captain.

**adversae iussa procellae:** the word order here mimics the way in which the orders are surrounded and swept away by the opposing winds. This is similar to **vocem fragor aequoris ullam** in line 8.

- 9-10** In these lines we see the professionalism of the sailors as they hurry to their tasks despite being unable to hear their captain. The emphatic position of **sponte** at the beginning of the line emphasises this. They work efficiently despite the chaotic situation: the lack of conjunctions (*asyndeton*) shows their speed, whilst the use of **alii...pars...pars** shows how the sailors swiftly split up into groups to complete the work, the list of three (*tricolon*) working with the other techniques to increase the impression of a great deal of toil.

The sailors are pulling oars inside the ship and then blocking up the oar holes to prevent the water coming in through them. Others are reefing the sails, making the sail smaller either by folding or rolling. Ovid may be imagining a Roman sail which can be reefed by a system of pulleys and ropes.

- 11-12** These lines focus in on individuals and give us some isolated snapshots in the midst of the general haste. The repetition of **hic...hic** makes it seem as though Ovid is pointing individuals out to his audience, as if we were all watching it in front of us. The first man's task seems especially futile: the repetition of **aequor** gives the impression that the sea is everywhere.

In line 12 suddenly there is a change in the storm, signalled by the change in focus and mid-line sentence end. The storm is encroaching on the sailors' work. The phrase **sine lege** implies both that the sailors are working without being ordered, and without order.

- 13-14** The translation is **aspera** (the violent) **hiems** (storm) **crescit** (grows), **-que** (and) **e omni parte** (from every direction) **feroces** (fierce) **venti** (winds) **bella gerunt** (wage war) **-que** (and) **indignantia** (angry) **freta** (waves) **miscent** (mix together/ join battle)

The list of three (*tricolon*) shows how the threats are coming from many different sources. The descriptives are menacing (**aspera...feroces...indignantia**) and the storm is personified as an opposing army, beginning an analogy which will continue across several sections.

- 15-16** The translation is **rector** (the captain) **ratis** (of the boat) **ipse** (himself) **pavet** (is afraid) **ipse** (he) **fatetur** (confesses) **se** ([that] he himself) **scire** (knows) **nec** (neither) **qui** (what) **status** (the situation) **sit** (might be) **nec** (nor) **quid** (what) **-ve** (either) **iubeat** (he should order) **-ve** (or) **velit** (he should want)

The captain's fear shows us that we should also fear for the safety of the ship and its crew. His distress and helplessness is shown through the list of three (*tricolon*) in his reported speech, the repeated conjunctions (**nec...nec, -ve...-ve**) emphasising how much he does not know.

- 17 The translation is **tanta** (to great) **est** (is) **moles** (the size) **mali** (of the calamity) **-que** (and) **tanto** (so much) **potentior** (more powerful) **arte** (than his skill)

The repetition (*polyptoton*) of the words **tanta** and **tanto** stresses how overwhelmed the captain and the ship are by the situation, the alliteration of **mali moles** emphasising the phrase 'size of the calamity'. The *elision* of **arte est** (where the final **e** of **arte** is run into the first **e** of **est**) creates an apprehensive gulp.

- 18-19 Ovid focuses in on the sounds of the scene: the men are shouting, the ropes are creaking, the air ringing with thunder. The verb **sonant** is to be understood with each phrase, all the noises competing. This competition is also shown by arranging the man-made noises in line 18, the natural noises in line 19. The inversion of the word order in each phrase, with the nominative put last, emphasises the noises, e.g. **clamore**.

- 20-21 The translation is **pontus** (the sea) **erigitur** (is raised up) **fluctibus** (by the waves) **-que** (and) **videtur** (seems) **aequare** (to be level with) **caelum** (the sky) **et** (and) **tangere** (to touch) **inductas** (the gathered) **nubes** (clouds) **adspergine** (with spray)

From this point in the text humans vanish from the description of the storm until the ship is finally overwhelmed by the sea. Again, Ovid uses a list of three (*tricolon*).

- 22-24 The translation is **et** (and) **modo** (at one moment) **est** (it is) **concolor** (the same colour) **illis** (as those [clouds]) **cum** (when) **vertit** ([the sea] turns) **fulvas** (the yellow) **harenas** (sands) **ex imo** (from its depths) **modo** (at another moment) **nigrior** (blacker) **unda** (than the river) **Stygia** (Styx) **interdum** (and sometimes) **sternitur** (it is spread out) **-que** (and) **albet** (is white) **sonantibus** (with hissing) **spumis** (froth).

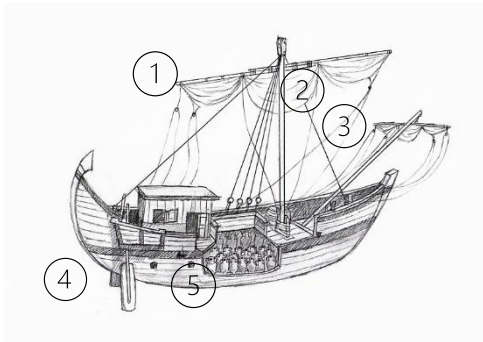
Ovid now focuses on the ever-changing colour of the sea, adding interest to his description by varying his language: **fulvas** (adjective), **nigrior** (comparative adjective), **albet** (verb). The use of **modo... modo... interdum** shows how quickly the colours are changing.

**unda Stygia**: the river Styx was one of the rivers in the Underworld (the Land of the Dead), and in the most famous Roman myths the river which the souls had to cross to enter. By using it as part of this description, Ovid foreshadows the death of those aboard the ship. Tragically, the Romans believed that those lost at sea were not able to cross the Styx until they had either somehow received the burial rites or waited for a hundred years.

The sibilance of **spumisque sonantibus** imitates the sound of the hissing froth.

## Discussion

It may be helpful for students to understand what a Roman ship looked like (Ovid is not describing a Greek boat but one with which he himself is more familiar).



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1. **antenna**: the yardarm. The sail is hung from these.
2. **velum**: the sail. A large square sail.
3. **rudens**: the ropes, or halyards. These control the yardarm.
4. **puppis**: the stern. The word is also used to mean the whole ship.
5. **remus**: oar. In this diagram, the oars have been shipped (pulled inside).

In this section Ovid moves from the chaos onboard the ship to the chaos of the water. We see the sailors swiftly reacting in a series of quick vignettes, before Ovid begins to describe the storm, focusing on the sound as well as the sight of the sea. Description is often arranged in *couplets* (two-line sections) and short lists.

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## 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 1-4:

- What was the sea being cut by? Which part of the sea was being cut by the ship? Where exactly is the middle?
- Where was the land?
- What did the sea begin to do? What was it turning white with? What time of day was it?
- Which wind was the prevailing one? What did it begin to do?

### lines 5-6:

- Who was shouting?
- What does he command the sailors to lower?
- What does he command them to furl?

### lines 7-10:

- What does the captain do?
- What were the opposing winds doing?
- What does the crash of the sea not allow?
- How do some of the sailors hurry? What do they hurry to do? What are they pulling in?
- What do another group of sailors do? What do a third group do with the sail?

**lines 11-14:**

- What is this man bailing out? What is he pouring the sea back into?
- What is this (other) man doing?
- How are these things being done?
- While these things are being done without an order, what is growing?
- What kind of winds are there? Where are they coming from? What does Ovid describe them as doing? What else joins them?

**lines 15-17:**

- How does the captain himself feel? What does he do? What three things does he confess he does not know?
- What is so great (in size)? What is it so much more powerful than?

**lines 18-19:**

- What are the men doing? What are the ropes doing?
- What is the sea heavy with?
- What is the air ringing with?

**lines 20-24:**

- At one minute, what is the sea the same colour as? What has caused the sea to change colour? Where has the yellow sand come from? What has the sea done to this sand?
- At another minute, what colour is the sea? What is it blacker than?
- What sometimes happens to the sea? What colour does it become? What is it white with?

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**Questions on Content and Style**

1. (lines 1-4):
  - a. As this section opens, where is the ship exactly?
  - b. How does Ovid make it clear that the ship is in the middle of open water?
  - c. How does the weather change at this point in the text?
  - d. Why do you think that Ovid makes the weather change **sub noctem**?
2. (lines 5-6):
  - a. What two instructions does the captain shout?
  - b. Why does the captain instruct the crew to do these things?
3. (lines 7-10):
  - a. What two reasons are given for why the crew cannot hear the captain's orders?
  - b. What three things do the sailors do?
  - c. In these lines, how does Ovid's style of writing enhance the meaning of the text?
4. (lines 11-14):
  - a. What are the two men doing?
  - b. In what three ways does the storm get worse?

- c. How does Ovid, through his style of writing, make these lines dramatic?
5. (lines 15- 17):
    - a. What three things does the captain say he does not know?
    - b. How does Ovid stress the captain's powerlessness in line 17?
  6. (lines 18-19):
    - a. What noises can be heard?
    - b. How does Ovid emphasise the noise through his style of writing?
  7. (lines 20-24):
    - a. How does Ovid stress the height of the waves in lines 20-21?
    - b. How does the sea change colour?
  8. (whole section):
    - a. How does Ovid show us the powerlessness of the people in the face of the storm?
    - b. How does Ovid create foreboding and menace in his descriptions of the storm?
    - c. How does Ovid vary his descriptions of the storm to keep the audience engaged?
    - d. Do you think that Ovid captures the terror of being caught in a storm at sea?