



Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 3A

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

Section E

For examination in 2022 and 2023



Section E

The storm

The storm begins in earnest, battering the ship from every angle. In this dramatic and descriptive passage Ovid paints a picture of the sea which is rich in imagery and violence.

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.

All the verbs in this section are *vivid historic present*, bringing an urgency to the scene and helping the reader to imagine standing alongside Ceyx as the ship is battered by the storm.

- 1 Trachinia puppis:** the 'Trachian ship' comes from Trachis, Ceyx's kingdom in Thessaly.

This ship is being pushed around helplessly by the storm, and Ovid's writing throughout this section emphasises this. The passive verb **agitur** introduces this idea here, which is highlighted and supported by the word order in this line. The verb is in the very centre, the ship (**puppis**) has been pushed to the end far from its pronoun **ipsa**, separated from it by **his vicibus** ('by these turns').
- 2 nunc...nunc** (line 4): events change from moment to moment.
de vertice montis...in valles (line 3): the dramatic waves of the heaving sea are briefly outlined in the very vivid, and ironic, simile comparing the sea to mountains and valleys on land. Ovid is not original in using this imagery, but he employs it within a wide range of techniques and adds his own powerful adjectives to make it most effective.
- 3 Acheronta:** the Acheron was one of the rivers of the Underworld (land of the dead). It is an appropriate word, emphasising the depth of the furrow whilst drawing upon images connecting water and death.
- 4 demissam:** this participle ('sunken') describes the ship (**puppis** from line 1). The ship is in a trough in the sea at this point in the text, but the word foreshadows its later destruction. The sea towers over the ship, and the word order of **curvum circumstetit aequor** mirrors this, with the sea surrounding the verb. The alliteration of 'c' in this line recalls the creaking of the timbers as the sea batters the boat.
- 5 inferno summum:** the contrasting words for 'the lower regions and 'highest' are placed next to each other (*juxtaposition*) to emphasise the distance between the crest and trough of the waves. The closeness of the words

suggests too that the boat is being tossed suddenly from one extreme to the other. The words **summum...caelum** ('the highest heavens') surround **gurgite** ('whirlpool') which paints a vivid picture of the depths surrounded on all sides by walls of water.

gurgite: a watery word whose pronunciation recalls its gurgling meaning (*onomatopoeia*).

The contrast between the ship sitting at the top of a wave and then plunged deep into a trough is brought out by the language used in both descriptions, and the arrangement of the words.

Each description is introduced by the word **nunc**. In each description, the boat is personified: it is shown looking down or up, using related words, (**despicere...susplicere**). In both descriptions, words for height and depth are repeated, and references to the depths being the Underworld. This also gives the impression of the ship being *at the same time* high above and down below, as if it is gazing at itself.

- 6 The translation is **saepe** (often) **icta** (struck) **latus** (in respect of its side) **fluctu** (by a wave) **dat** ([the ship] gives) **ingentem fragorem** (a mighty crack)

The word **saepe** ('often') shows the frequency of the battering the boat is experiencing. We can hear the waves striking and the mighty cracks in the repetition of 'c' and 't' in the words **fluctu latus icta** ('struck on the side by a wave').

- 7-8 **quam ferreus olim cum laceras aries ballistave concutit arces**: 'than when sometimes an iron battering-ram, or a ballista, violently shakes shattered citadels'.

Both battering-rams and ballistae were staples of Roman siege weaponry. Battering rams were used to beat down gates. The ballista was essentially a huge crossbow mounted on a frame, using torsion to hurl bolts and other projectiles with precision and power. Ovid uses this violent war simile to show how the boat is under siege from the waves, hammered at relentlessly with death on the horizon. Again, the alliterated 'c' immerses us in the sound of the scene. The simile is effective but anachronistic: the might of the Roman war machine in a mythological Greek setting.

- 9-10 The translation here is **utque** (and as when) **feri** (fierce) **leones** (lions) **sumptis** (having gathered up) **viribus** (their strength) **incursu** (with their attack) **solent** (are accustomed) **ire** (to go) **pectore** (chest-first) **in arma** (against the arms) **-que** (and) **tela** (the weapons) **protenta** (directed at them)

Immediately Ovid employs another simile, this time running over two complete lines. This simile is in a style typical of epic poetry, using nature as a reference point (often for actions in war). The waves here are being

likened to the wild lions, and the ship to the arms wielded by men defending themselves from the onslaught.

- 11 The translation is **sic** (in this way) **ubi** (when) **unda** (the surf) **se admiserat** (had let itself go) **ventis coortis** (after the winds had risen)
- 12 **in arma ratis**: both similes (lines 7-8, and lines 9-10) are picked up again briefly here by the choice of **arma**.
- 13 **iamque labant cunei, spoliataque tegmine cerae**: the hulls of Roman ships were made of planks joined end to end and secured using mortise and tenon joints pinned in place with dowels. The joins were then sealed with a mixture of pitch and wax to waterproof them. This short essay explains it all with an excellent diagram.
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/shipwrecks/0/steps/7964>. The **cunei** (wedges) in our text are the mortises.
- 14 **patet praebetque**: the plosive alliteration ('p') and juxtaposition of these two verbs highlights the moment at which the ship starts to fill with water and break apart. The sound also mimics the cracking noises made as the joints of the ship pull apart.
- letalibus undis**: the use of **letalibus** ('deadly') foreshadows what will happen next.
- 15 **ecce**: Ovid calls out to us as if we were standing together on the ship's deck. This brings the reader inside the action and is reinforced by the use of **credas** ('you would believe') in the next line.
- 15-17 The dramatic imagery here continues the theme which we saw in Section D of a sky and a sea both filled with storm and water and increasingly mixed with each other. The near identical word order in lines 16-17, (*inque + accusative*) (*X*) (*accusative adjective*) (*infinitive*) (*accusative*), emphasises how the sky and sea are becoming indistinguishable.
- 18 **caelestibus undis**: the rain
- 19 **caret ignibus aether**: as well as creating a dark and foreboding atmosphere this short, ominous statement tells us that Lucifer, Ceyx' father, is not watching from his place in the heavens.
- 20 A line which intensifies the foreboding, dark atmosphere. The choice of **caeca** to describe the night: rather than simply 'dark', this word has connotations of leaving the viewer unable to see. **premitur** ('is made heavier') is oppressive, the dark sky seeming to sink down towards the earth. The use of **-que...-que** gives a sense of the shadows piling up.
- hiemisque suisque**: Ovid makes the darkness seem more oppressive by telling us that it is actually 'two darknesses': a storm *and* night.

- 21** **discutiunt:** the verb, emphatically placed at the start of the line, mimics its meaning as it dramatically ‘cuts through’ to the beginning of the sentence. It also introduces the juxtaposition of the **lumen** (‘light’) with the heavy darkness described in the previous line.
- 22** This line contrasts powerfully with line 20, where every word helps to add to a sense of darkness. In this line every word adds to a sense of bright, but dangerous, light (lightning, glow, fire). **fulmina** is emphatically placed at the start of the line, running over from the previous line (*enjambment*) to heighten the impact. This also places it next to **fulmineis** (the same vocabulary but in a different form, *polyptoton*), which gives the impression of two rapid lightning strikes. These techniques are used again with **ignibus ignes** at the end of the line, creating a carefully balanced line.
- ignes:** the stars.
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Discussion

This section emphasises the power of the sea. The extreme height and depth of the waves is emphasised, and the image of the boat being under siege is continued from the previous section with the reappearance of military imagery.

Students may struggle to imagine the storm being described unless they are from a coastal community. There are many videos recorded during storms available online which might give them an understanding that, whilst Ovid’s descriptions may be poetic, he is representing what it must have felt to experience these conditions. Highly descriptive passages are excellent opportunities for students to respond to the text or represent its meaning in more creative ways: a simple yet detailed drawing of this passage, for example, with the metaphorical imagery overlaid.

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 1-3:

- What is being driven? What is it being driven by?
- What is it as if it is on? What does it seem to do? Where does it seem to look down into?

lines 4-5:

- What is the curved sea surrounding?
- What does the ship seem to do now? What is it looking up to? What is it looking up from?

lines 6-8:

- What often gives a mighty crack? What causes it to give a mighty crack?
- What is it ringing out from? What two pieces of siege weaponry is the wave compared to? What are these weapons shaking?

lines 9-10:

- What animals are the waves also being compared to? How are these animals described?
- What are these lions accustomed to do? How do they go out? What have they done before they go out?
- What are they going against?

lines 11-12:

- What has the surf done? What has caused the surf to let itself go?
- What was the surf going against? How does the surf compare to the defences of the boat?

lines 13-14:

- What is now loosening?
- What is opening? What has this crack been stripped of?
- What is the crack now offering? What is this a route for? How are the waters described?

lines 15-17:

- What does Ovid want us to look at? How much rain is there? Where is the plentiful rain falling from?
- What would you believe that the whole sky is doing?
- What would you believe the swollen sea is doing?

lines 18-20:

- What has happened to the sails? What are the sails soaked with?
- What are the ocean waves mixed with? What does this description mean?
- What is the sky now lacking? Why do you think this is?
- How is the night described? What is this night made heavier by?

lines 21-22:

- What is described as flashing? What is it cutting through? What are the flashing bolts providing?
- What are the other fires in the sky? What are the stars doing? What are the stars glowing with?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-5):

- a. Read through these lines and summarise in your own words what is happening to the ship.
- b. In line 1, pick out the **three** words which refer to the ship.
- c. Explain how Ovid creates a dramatic contrast in lines 2-5 through his style of writing and choice of vocabulary.

2. (lines 6-8):

- a. What is causing the side of the ship to give a crack?
- b. What is the battering of the ship described as being like?
- c. Do you think that this is an effective simile? Explain your answer.

3. (lines 9-10):

- a. What are the waves described as being like?

- b. Do you think that this simile is effective? Explain your answer.
 - c. Which of the similes in lines 6-10 do you think is more successful? Give a reason for your answer.
4. (lines 11-12):
- a. Why is the sea getting wilder?
 - b. How does Ovid make it clear here that the boat is beginning to fill with water?
5. (lines 13-14):
- a. Explain what is happening to the sides of the boat in these lines.
 - b. How does Ovid, through his style of writing, make this moment dramatic?
6. (lines 15-17):
- a. Why do you think that Ovid uses the word **ecce** here?
 - b. How does Ovid make it clear through his description and arrangement of words that water is now everywhere?
7. (lines 18-20):
- a. What has happened to the sails of the ship?
 - b. Explain three reasons why the sky is particularly dark.
 - c. How does Ovid through his style of writing emphasise the darkness in lines 19-20.
8. (lines 21-22):
- a. What is causing there to be light in the sky now?
 - b. How does Ovid through his style of writing emphasise the light in the darkness in lines 21-22?
9. (whole section):
- a. How does Ovid use personification to make the descriptions of the ship in the sea more dramatic?
 - b. How does Ovid make it clear through his choice of words that the ship is doomed?