



Eduqas GCSE Latin
Component 3A

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

Section I

For examination in 2022 and 2023



Section I

Alcyone and Ceyx, transformed

Notes and Discussion

The moment of transformation for Alcyone is whilst she is in motion: as she makes her way into the sea towards the body of Ceyx. By the time she reaches him, the metamorphosis is complete.

This metamorphosis is presented as an explanation for the name and nature of the kingfisher. The Latin for kingfisher ('halcyon') is linked to Alcyone's name.

Students may know other myths which have similar themes (e.g. Narcissus, Echo, Arachne, Cygnus); myths which offer explanations for place names (e.g. Rome, Herculaneum); or myths which have transformations which save the characters from some danger or death (e.g. Daphne).

There are other references here to the behaviour of kingfishers, according to the Romans. They believed that the sea became calm for **seven days** either side of the winter solstice so that kingfishers could hatch their eggs. They called these days 'halcyon days' (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 2.47). Alcyone is also described as brooding **on the surface of the water with her wings stretching out over her nest**. The Romans believed that kingfishers laid their eggs in a ball-like floating nest (Pliny *Nat Hist* 10.47) but in reality they lay their eggs in holes at the edge of the water.

Questions

1. Think about Ovid's description of kingfishers in this section. How similar do they seem to be to Alcyone and Ceyx when they were people?
2. Ovid does not tell us which god caused the transformation or why they did it. What do you think?