



CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin Component 3A Latin Literature (Narratives)



Tacitus: Boudica For examination in 2022 and 2023 Introduction

Introduction

Tacitus: his life and works

The Roman author Cornelius Tacitus lived from around AD56- around AD120. He was a politician and orator, who turned his attention to historical writing. His most famous works are the *Agricola* (a biography of his father-in-law Agricola, the famous general and governor of Britain), the *Germania* (a study of the German lands and peoples), the *Histories* (a history of the post-Nero world up to the death of Domitian), and the *Annals* (covering the period of the Julio-Claudian emperors after the death of Augustus). He made use of official documents, read and researched widely and, at the beginning of the *Annals*, declares his intent to write without bias. As well as presenting events, he was concerned with the psychology of the individuals he was describing, and the lessons which could be learned from history.

The text

Our Latin text is from Tacitus *Annals* XIV 29-39 (first half). The Latin (14.30, 14.31, 14.34, 14.35, 14.37 (slightly edited for length), 14.38 (first half)) is unadapted. The English sections tell the remaining parts of the narrative. It is possible that Tacitus was able to draw on an eyewitness for much of his material: his father-in-law Agricola had been present in Suetonius' army.

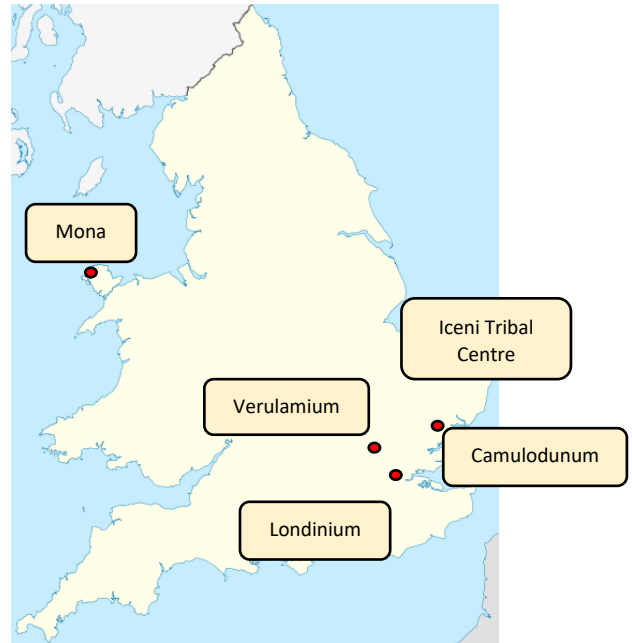
The narrative

In AD43, the Roman armies invaded Britain with the intent to stay. Those who resisted were oppressed and treaties, often punitive, made with those who chose to collaborate. Under the first governors, Celtic ways of life and belief systems which came into conflict with Roman practices were stamped out. The powerful Celtic priestly class, the Druids, wielded a great deal of power in their communities and the Romans were keen to rid their new province of their influence.

In AD 60 or 61, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus had trapped the last of the Druids upon the island of Mona (modern Anglesey). A huge battle took place at the Menai Strait (the water which separates Anglesey from the mainland), and a terrible slaughter of the Celtic people ultimately took place.

Whilst Suetonius was waging this war, far on the other side of the new province more unrest was brewing as a result of the brutal policies of the Romans. Prasutagus, the chieftain of the Iceni tribe (in modern Norfolk), had died. In line with Celtic customs, he left his kingdom to his daughters. As a ruler he had collaborated with the Romans, and he had made the emperor Nero joint heir. The Romans ignored this will, and promptly annexed the Iceni lands. According to our text, the Romans also flogged Prasutagus' widow, Boudica, and raped his daughters.

This was the final indignity for the Iceni who had also been suffering under heavy taxes and had been forced to give up their ancestral weapons. They rose up under the leadership of Boudica, with the neighbouring Trinobantes tribe swiftly joining their ranks. The Trinobantes had also originally collaborated with the Romans but their ancestral land had been confiscated to create the new Roman colony (settlement for veteran soldiers) at Camulodunum (modern Colchester) with its hated Temple to the Divine Claudius. Camulodunum became their first target, being unwalled and lacking defence due to the Roman legions being absent. The inhabitants were butchered, and the colony torched. Part of the Ninth Legion hurried from where they were stationed at Lindum (Lincoln) to aid the veterans, but they were too late and were themselves destroyed by the Celtic forces.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:England_and_Wales.svg

Boudica then led her troops towards other towns which had been established as Roman centres. Hearing of this, Suetonius marched his forces back from Mona to Londinium (London) but he realised he would be unable to defend the settlement. He abandoned the town, and then also Verulamium (St Albans) to their fates. The sources suggest that 70,000 people died in the destruction of the three towns.

Eventually Suetonius managed to engage the Celtic forces in a pitched battle. This played to the Roman strategic strengths, and, according to Tacitus, their superior tactical deployment led to their victory. The exact location of this battle is unknown, but the Celtic army was overwhelmed, with the Romans even slaughtering the civilians who accompanied them. Boudica herself died following the defeat, perhaps, as Tacitus says, by taking poison to avoid capture and humiliation.

The initial reprisals against the Britons were brutal and swift as Suetonius wished to crush any further thoughts of rebellion. Other Romans were quick to recognise that this approach would bring further unrest, rather than stability, and Roman policy in Britain became less aggressive over the subsequent years.

Themes

Tacitus is interested in the **characterisation of Suetonius and Boudica** as well as the depiction of the **Celts** and the **Romans** as a whole. He shows us the **violence** done by both sides, as well as showing **sympathy** for the downtrodden. There is also a contrast drawn between the **disorder** of the Celts and the **discipline** of the Roman legions.

Further reading

- Grant, M. *The Annals of Imperial Rome (translation of Tacitus)* (Penguin 2003)
 Scullard, H.H. *Roman Britain: outpost of the empire* (Thames and Hudson 1999)
 Woodcock, E.C. *Tacitus, Annals XIV* (Bloomsbury 1998)

Reading the Text

The key aims are:

- understanding the meaning of the Latin
- developing literary appreciation

It is often useful to adopt the following approach when introducing students to original literature:

- Read the Latin aloud to emphasise phrasing and stress word groups
 - Break up more complex sentences into constituent parts for comprehension
 - Focus on comprehension of the text and understanding the content through questioning and using the vocabulary
 - Look closely at how the Latin is expressed and the ways in which the literary devices enhance the meaning.
 - Although a sample translation is provided in the course resources, teachers might want to encourage their students to make their own version after various options have been discussed and evaluated. The first step is a literal translation, then something more polished in natural English that is as close to the structure and vocabulary of the original Latin as possible. Students will soon see that a degree of paraphrase may be required when the Latin does not readily translate into correct and idiomatic English.
-

About the Notes

The prescribed text is broken up into short sections and the notes on each passage are followed by a *Discussion* and *Questions*. The notes focus both on language and content, but also include some comment on style and literary effects. The *Discussion* and *Questions* focus mostly on literary appreciation and interpretation.

Rhetorical and technical terms are used throughout the notes. Some of these may be unfamiliar to teachers new to teaching Latin literature; usually a definition is supplied when the term is first used.

The notes are designed to provide for the needs of a wide spectrum of teachers, from those with limited knowledge of Latin and who are perhaps entirely new to reading Latin literature, to teachers experienced in both language and literature. It is hoped that all will find something of use and interest. Some of the information contained in the notes is for general interest and to satisfy the curiosity of students and teachers, and there is no expectation that all these notes need to be learned by students. The examination requires knowledge outside the text only when it is needed in order to understand the text.