



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



Tacitus: Boudica For examination in 2022 and 2023 Section F

Section F

The two armies are drawn up for battle

In this passage, Suetonius gathers together what forces he can before selecting a place to meet the Britons in battle.

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.

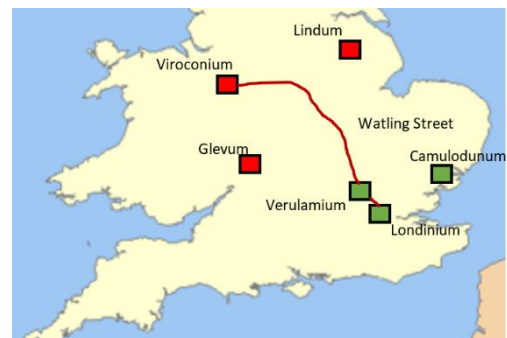
- 1** **iam** in his retreat along Watling Street, Suetonius has gathered whatever auxiliary forces he could. There were no additional legions to be had as Boudica had already defeated the IX legion near Camulodunum and the II legion (based in Gloucester) had ignored his summons.
vexillariis: these detachments were veteran soldiers who had re-enlisted and were separate from the normal cohorts of the legion.
- 3-4** **cum omittere cunctationem et congregari acie parat:** the location for the battle between the armies of Suetonius and Boudica is unknown but was probably in the Midlands. That the Britons were pursuing the Romans down Watling Street can be worked out from the fact that they appeared soon after the Romans stopped their retreat. Meeting in an organised pitched battle was the Romans' best chance against the vast guerrilla army. The discipline of the Roman troops is reflected in Tacitus' short and simple phrasing here, the finality of the decision through the firm alliteration of 'c'.
- 4** **deligit:** the superiority of Roman tactics is again emphasised: this place was carefully considered by Suetonius. This is supported by **cognito** ('got to know') in line 5.
- 4-5** **artis faucibus et a tergo silva clausum:** see lines 5-6 and the diagram below to see how the landscape was used by Suetonius.
- 5-6** The translation is **cognito** ([he had] got to know) **satis** (sufficiently well) **esse** (there was) **nihil hostium** (nothing of his enemies) **nisi in fronte** (except in front [of him]) **et** (and) **apertam planitiem** (open plain) **sine metu insidiarum** (without fear of ambush)
The Romans were outnumbered by the Britons and there was a real danger of them being outflanked and surrounded. Suetonius used the wooded slopes to provide protection on the wings and prevent this.
- 7-8** The translation is **igitur** (therefore) **legionarius** (the legionary force) **adstitit** (stood) **frequens ordinibus** (close together in rows) **levis armatura** (with the lightly-armed troops) **circum** (around) **conglobatus** (the massed) **eques** (cavalry) **pro cornibus** (on the wings)

See the diagram below for how the troops were drawn up. Their organisation is reflected in Tacitus' carefully organised list of three (*tricolon*) describing the **legionarius...levis armatura...eques**.

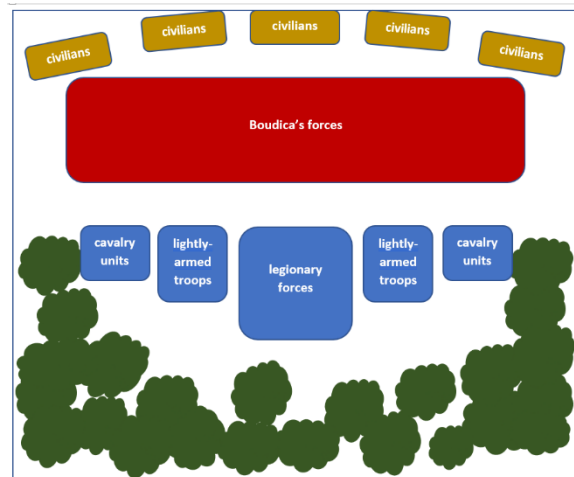
- 8** **at** ('but') suggests a contrast between the two forces. This is emphasised by Tacitus' choice of vocabulary to describe each side. The Romans 'stood' (line 9 **adstitit**) but the Britons 'were rushing about wildly' (line 11 **exultabant**). The Romans were 'close together in rows' (line 7 **frequens ordinibus**) but the Britons were 'all over the place' (line 9 **passim**). The Romans are organised, with the legionary force in the centre 'with the light-armed troops around and the massed cavalry on the wings' (lines 8-9). The Britons, on the other hand, are a chaotic mass with the forces 'amongst their infantry and cavalry groups' (line 9).
The sentence structure reflects the contrast as well. Whilst the Romans were described in a neat *tricolon* in lines 7-8, the Britons are described in a longer, sprawling sentence over lines 8-13.
- 10** the alliteration of **animo adeo** emphasises their ferocity of mind.
- 11-13** Tacitus draws attention to the position of the civilian baggage train. This ultimately will hinder any retreat which the Britons could have attempted, and ends up falling victim to the victorious Romans.

Discussion

This map shows where the legions in Britain were stationed. The XX and XIV legions were stationed at Viroconium (Wroxeter). The IX legion was at Lindum (Lincoln) and the II legion was at Glevum (Gloucester). All the active legions had been stationed on what was the edges of the province, demonstrating the extent to which the Romans thought of the south as subjugated. This was causing Suetonius serious problems in opposing Boudica. The XIV legion was with him already. He had taken as many of the XX legion as he could, leaving garrisons to protect the north. The IX legion had been seriously weakened by Boudica's forces and were unable to muster. The II legion refused to come, surrounded by hostile tribes and under frequent attack (this refusal would have serious repercussions for those in charge). As he retreated north along what is now known as Watling Street, presumably still in hope of reinforcements which would never actually appear, he gathered any auxiliary forces he could but was still severely under strength.



The tactical decisions Suetonius took in deploying his troops in these circumstances gave him the best chance of success. This diagram shows how the two armies faced each other. Throughout this section Tacitus draws contrasts between the two forces, and by inference a contrast between the two societies. He has a great deal of admiration for Suetonius in general, calling him 'hardworking and judicious' (*Agricola* 1.5).



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:

- Which legion does Suetonius have? Who else does he have with them? How many armed men does this make?
- What did he prepare to stop? What else did he prepare to do?

lines 4-8:

- What did he choose? What kind of entrance did this place have? What was it closed in by?
- What had he got to know sufficiently well?
- What was the land like in front of them? What was this land without fear of? What does this mean?
- How did the legionary force stand? Who was around them? Who was on the wings?

lines 8-13:

- What were the British troops doing? Where were they rushing about?
- What about this crowd was 'unlike any other'?
- Who had they brought with them? Why had they brought them? Where had they stationed them? Where had they positioned these wagons?

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-4):

- Which forces did Suetonius have with him?
- How did this compare with Boudica's army?
- Why did Suetonius find it difficult to get reinforcements?
- How does Tacitus, through his style of writing, show Suetonius' decisiveness?

2. (lines 4-6):

- Describe the place Suetonius chose to draw up his battle lines.
- In what ways was this a good place to choose?

3. (lines 7-8): Explain how the Roman forces were arranged.
4. (lines 8-13):
 - a. How does Tacitus, through the content and style of his writing, emphasise the following:
 - i. the chaos of the Britons
 - ii. the ferocity of the Britons
 - b. Why did the Britons bring their families, according to Tacitus?
5. (Whole section):
 - a. What do we learn about the character of Suetonius in this section?
 - b. How does Tacitus, through the content and style of his writing, create a contrast between the Romans and the Britons in this section?