



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



## Tacitus: Boudica For examination in 2022 and 2023 Section G

## Section G

### *Boudica rallies her troops with an inspiring speech*

In this passage, Boudica delivers a speech to the assembled Britons, reminding them of her reasons for going to war and how the Romans had demonstrated their true nature towards them. She also reminds the Britons of their previous successes, and the 'all-or-nothing' situation they are in.

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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.*

- 1-6** The translation is **ut** (as) **Boudica** (Boudica) **vehens** (driving) **filias prae se** (her daughters before her) **curru** (by chariot) **accesserat** (approached) **quamque nationem** (each tribe) **testabatur** (she bore witness) **quidem** (indeed) **solitum** ([it was] usual) **Britannis** (for the Britons) **bellare** (to wage war) **feminarum ductu** (under the leadership of women) **sed tunc** (but at that time) **ut** (as [would be natural for]) **ortam** (one sprung) **tantis maioribus** (from such great ancestors) **non** ([she was] not) **ulcisci** (seeking revenge) **regnum et opes** (for her kingdom and wealth) **verum** (but truly) **ut unam e vulgo** (as one of the people) **libertatem amissam** (for her lost liberty) **corpus** (for her body) **confectum verberibus** (battered by blows) **contrectatam pudicitiam** (the stolen chastity) **filiarum** (of her daughters)
- 1** **filias prae se vehens**: just as before, Tacitus is careful to point out the women in the battle. This would have been shocking to the Roman audience, and a sign of how different the Britons were from them. This is emphasised in line 3 when Tacitus says that it was usual for the Britons to wage war **feminarum ductu** ('under the leadership of women').
- 3-6** Boudica delivers a speech which is rhetorically persuasive and emotive. She uses a balanced structure (lines 3-4 **non ut...verum ut** 'not as...but as'), contrasting **tantis maioribus** ('such great ancestors') with **vulgo** ('the people'), and seeking revenge for lost **regnum et opes** ('kingdom and wealth') with the lost honour she values more highly. These affronts to honour she lists in a swift but vivid *tricolon* (list of three), using emotional vocabulary (such as **contrectatam** which not only means 'stolen' but has undertones of 'violated') to draw out a passionate response from her audience.
- 6-9** The translation is **cupidines** (the desires) **Romanorum** (of the Romans) **provectas** (had been driven) **eo** (to such a point) **ut** (that) **non relinquunt** (they did not leave) **corpora** (bodies) **ne quidem** (not even) **senectam** (old age) **aut virginitatem** (or virginity) **impollutam** (undefiled)  
The actions of the veterans and the procurator are presented here through Boudica's eyes as typical Roman behaviour. They are characterised as driven by their **cupidines** ('desires'), something which Tacitus implies throughout his

work should be kept in check. Boudica stresses that no one is safe from them, pointing out **senectam** ('old age') and **virginitatem** ('virginity') alike were defiled, using the separation of **ne...quidem** ('not even') to emphasise the word **senectam**.

- 10** **cecidisse legionem**: a reference back to the IX legion under Cerialis.
- 10-11** **ceteros occultari**: the II legion was still at Glevum (*Gloucester*), the rest of the XX legion had been left to guard the north-west of the province, and the remnants of the IX legion were in Lindum (*Lincoln*).
- 11-13** the British battle-cry was intended to instill fear into their enemies. Boudica's point is again balanced, with **strepitum...et clamorem** ('noise and shouting') balanced with **impetus et manus** ('attack and might'), and **ne...quidem** ('not even') again used for emphasis.
- 13-15** The translation is **si** (if) **secum expenderent** (they were to weigh up with themselves) **copias armatorum** (the forces of armed men), **si** (if [they were to weigh up with themselves]) **causas belli** (the causes of the war) **vincendum esse** (they must conquer) **illa acie** (in that battle-line) **vel** (or) **cadendum** (they must fall)  
Another balanced sentence, with **si + accusative + genitive** repeated in the first half, and the **gerundive + vel + gerundive** in the second. The consistent balancing of phrases continues to suggest the speaker is thinking and speaking logically. The gerundives **vincendum...cadendum** ('must conquer...must fall') give additional force to her words.
- 16** Boudica's speech ends with two short and punchy remarks showing her resolve and spurring the others to action. The placing of **servirent** at the end of the speech returns to the main theme from the beginning: the lost liberty of the Britons.

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## Discussion

This section takes the form of reported speech. The longer sentences and unfamiliar structure will be challenging for students. It will be useful to concentrate on making a list of the main points made by Boudica in order to ensure comprehension.

Tacitus is creating this dramatic speech without a source to provide him with what was actually said and therefore much of this owes a lot to his own views on the decline of Roman morality and his concern that the Roman people were increasingly motivated by desire rather than duty.

Time permitting, students could compare this speech with that given by Calgacus in Tacitus' *Agricola* 30-32, where the author expands upon this theme in more detail. A fairly accessible translation can be found [here](#). For a modern interpretation of Tacitus, the BBC TV show *Dr Who* tackled some of these themes in a Tacitus-inspired episode named 'The Eaters of Light' which contains several speeches with very familiar lines. The episode can be found [here](#) (UK only).

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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 1-6:

- What was Boudica driving in? Who was in front of her?
- Who did she approach? What was she bearing witness that it was usual for the Britons to do?
- What did she say she was not seeking revenge for? What kind of person does she say might seek revenge for the loss of kingdom and wealth?
- What does she say she is one of? What three things is she seeking revenge for?

### lines 6-9:

- What has been driven to such a point that the Romans are behaving as they are? What are they not leaving undefiled? What two types of bodies does she particularly mention to make her point?

### lines 9-11:

- Who does she say would be present? What type of revenge are they present for?
- Who had fallen? What had they dared to do?
- Where were the rest skulking? If they weren't skulking, what were they doing?

### lines 11-13:

- What would they not even endure? Whose noise and shouting would they not even endure? What would they endure still less than the noise and shouting?

### lines 13-15:

- What two things does she suggest they weigh up? If they weigh up these things, what must they do? If they fail to conquer, what must they do?

### line 15:

- What does she say this is? What two things does she suggest the men can do?
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## Questions on Content and Style

### 1. (lines 1-6):

- a. (lines 1-3) What parts of this description of Boudica would seem particularly strange to a Roman audience?
- b. (lines 3-6):
  - i. Explain in your own words the point Boudica is making here about her motivations for fighting the Romans.
  - ii. How does Tacitus emphasise this point through the style of her speech?

### 2. (lines 6-9):

- a. Explain what Boudica thinks drives the Romans to behave the way they do towards the Britons.
- b. How does Tacitus show her disgust through the vocabulary she uses and the style of her speech here?

### 3. (lines 9-11):

- a. What does Boudica say about their gods?
- b. Explain the reference to the '**cecidisse legionem**'.
- c. What does she say that the rest of the Romans are doing?

- d. To what extent are Boudica's statements in these lines true?
- 4. (lines 11-13): what does she think the Romans will not be able to bear?
- 5. (lines 13-15):
  - a. What does she think that the Britons should weigh up?
  - b. What conclusion does she think they will reach if they weigh up these things?
- 6. (line 15): explain how Boudica uses references to her gender in this line to encourage her troops.
- 7. (whole section): how does Tacitus create a compelling and persuasive speech for Boudica here through the content and style of his writing?