



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



Tacitus: Boudica For examination in 2022 and 2023 Section J

Section J

The Roman reinforcements

In this passage, Tacitus tells us in detail how the Romans built up their armies in Britain once more, and how the Britons themselves began to starve.

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 -2 The translation is **deinde** (then) **omnis** (the whole) **contractus exercitus** (assembled army) **habitus est** (was held) **sub pellibus** (under hides) **ad perpetranda** (to finish) **reliqua belli** (the rest of the war).
sub pellibus: literally 'under hides'. The Roman tents were made of leather sections sewn together.
- 2-4 The numbers of men recruited to bolster the forces in Briton demonstrates how seriously Nero (**Caesar**) was taking the attempted rebellion. Tacitus emphasises this by placing the verb **auxit** ('increased') out of usual word order and at the very beginning of the sentence. This is immediately followed by the forceful alliteration of **copias Caesar**.
- 4-5 **nonani**: the IX legion was reconstructed rather than disbanded.
- 6 **hibernaculis**: Roman military campaigning season was usually from March to October (occasionally wars were deliberately fought in the winter when it gave the Romans a tactical advantage e.g. in forested areas, or in desert areas). The legions then returned to winter quarters in camps. This was mainly logistical (it is easier to feed an army on the move when you can rely on the land to be producing food rather than having to carry all your provisions with you).
- 7 **ambiguum aut adversum fuerat igni atque ferro**: Tacitus uses balanced phrases here (**ambiguum aut adversum** and **igni atque ferro**) to show the disciplined and thorough response of the Romans to any further signs of uprising. The **a** alliteration draws attention to the fact that even a reluctance to cooperate is now dealt with decisively.
- 8 **vastatum**: dramatic verb choice which recalls **vastarentur** in Section C.
- 8-10 The translation is **sed** (but) **nihil** (nothing) **aeque quam** (as much as) **fames** (hunger) **adfligebat** (struck down) **incuriosos** (those who had been careless) **serendis frugibus** (in sowing crops) **et** (and) **omni aetate** (with every age group) **versa** (engaged) **ad bellum** (in war) **dum** (while) **destinant** (they intended) **nostros commeatus** (our supplies) **sibi** (for themselves)
-

Discussion

Tacitus describes the decisive behaviour by the Romans in the first half of this section, his specific numbers reflecting the methodical organisation and deployment of the Roman army. He then passes judgement on the lack of planning by the Britons, which contrasts here yet again with the disciplined Romans. The Britons had sent their entire communities to engage in war and therefore agriculture and other necessities of life had been neglected. Tacitus lays the blame for this squarely at the feet of the Britons themselves. Tacitus appears unaware of the irony of disapproving of the British plan to steal **nostros commeatus** ('our supplies'): these Roman provisions would originally have in large part been taken from the British communities.

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 1-2:

- What was assembled? Where was it assembled? What does **sub pellibus** mean?
- Why was it assembled?

lines 2-5:

- What did Caesar increase?
- What did he send? Where from?
- What two other reinforcements did he send?
- What happened to the Ninth Legion at their (the reinforcements) arrival?

lines 5-8:

- Where were the cohorts and cavalry units located?
- What were some of the tribes showing? What happened to those who showed this? How were they laid waste?

lines 8-10:

- What was nothing equal to? What was the famine doing? What had the Britons been careless in doing?
 - What had they been engaged in instead? Who had been engaged in war?
 - What had the Britons been intending?
-

Questions on Content and Style

1. (lines 1-5):

- a. What did the Romans do with the army next and why?
- b. Explain in detail how Caesar increased the forces.
- c. Why did the Ninth legion in particular need to be strengthened?
- d. How does Tacitus, through his style of writing, emphasise the organisation of the Romans?
- e. How accurate do you think that Tacitus' numbers are here?

2. (lines 5-10):

- a. Why were the cohorts and cavalry units put into winter quarters?

- b. Explain what happened to some of the tribes and why.
- c.
 - i. What struck down even more Britons than the battles with the Romans?
 - ii. Explain why this was the case.
 - iii. Why had the Britons behaved like this?
- 3. (whole section): how does Tacitus, through the style and content of his writing, emphasise the contrast between the organised Romans and the disorganised Britons?