



# CSCP Support Materials for Eduqas GCSE Latin

Component 2: Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)

Theme A: Romans in the Countryside

*Horace: The pleasures of country living*

For examination in 2024-2026

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.

The Teacher's Notes contain the follow:

- An **Introduction** to the author and the text, although students will only be asked questions on the content of the source itself.
- **Notes** on the text to assist the teacher.
- **Suggested Questions for Comprehension, Content and Style** to be used with students.
- **Discussion** suggestions and questions for students, and overarching **Themes** which appear across more than one source.
- **Further Information and Reading** for teachers who wish to explore the topic and texts further.
- **Acknowledgements** of the works used in preparing these notes



## Notes

metre: iambic (each line of iambic trimeter is followed by a line of iambic dimeter)

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- 1 **beatus:** an expression of congratulations on having good fortune (the ellipsis of *est* is characteristic of such expressions). These are usually underscored by a rejection of alternate lifestyles.

**negotium:** can be translated as trouble or worry, although pupils are more likely familiar with translating it as business. *negotium* usually has negative connotations in Horace, especially when used to describe city life.

- 2 **ut:** note the translation of *ut* as like (without a subjunctive).

**prisca gens mortalium:** Horace suggests that the past was happier due to living a rural life. The idea of a toil-free rural golden age ushered in by Saturn is found in several Augustan works.

- 3 **paterna:** another cherished notion that one inherits land from family (as opposed to the tenant-farmer who works someone else's land). Horace did not inherit his land from his father. His father's land in Venusia was confiscated and given to Augustus' veterans. He would later be given land in the Sabine Hills by his patron, Maecenas.

- 4 **solutus omni faenore:** It was not unusual for farms to be expropriated due to debt. The first 4 lines of *Epode 2* are fanciful. They present a Roman fairytale of reaping the rewards of the ancestral land, free from debt.

- 5 - 6 **neque ... neque (line 6):** Horace begins to list negative lifestyles that should be avoided. He repeats the negative *neque* to emphasise how unfavourable these lifestyles are.

**excitatur classico miles truci:** Horace compares farming to warfare, stating it is better to live in the countryside than be at war. The trumpet was traditionally blown at the onset of battle. The juxtaposition of farming and warfare is a common trope in Latin literature. It is often suggested that peace is necessary for farming. There is a more complex link between farming and warfare as armies are traditionally drawn from agriculture and farmers are said to be the best soldiers.

Horace did fight in the battle of Phillipi in 42 BC so would be familiar with this noise.

- 6 **horret iratum mare:** Horace's second comparison – farming is better than seafaring. is a particularly vivid way to express the fear (shown by the *horret*) of a stormy and dangerous sea (*iratum mare*). The sea is personified as *iratum* 'angry' which suggests it is unpredictable and dangerous. Horace may be tapping into an idea that it is against nature to seek to gain control of the sea in crossing it via boat. Farming, in contrast, does not endanger life.

7 **forumque:** the site of Rome's political, legal and commercial activities (see Stage 4 of the Cambridge Latin Course for more information). Horace finishes his list of 3 (*tricolon*) places he would rather not be compared to farming: soldiering, seafaring and in the city.

8 **superba ... civium potentiorum limina:** this is referring to *salutationes* (see Stage 31 of the Cambridge Latin Course). Each morning a *cliens* would visit their *patronus* to complete the *salutatio*. A *cliens* may receive aid from showing favour to his *patronus* and the *patronus* would gain prestige from such display of favour towards them. It is interesting that rather than the patron being described as *superba* it is the *limina* itself – the steps. This may refer to the treatment of clients by the slaves working for the patron's household. Regardless, *superba* is nearly always negative in Horace and when referring to the powerful.

Lines 9 to 22 of *Epode 2* have been omitted here and the extract continues at line 23 (numbered 9 in this extract). In the missing lines, Horace describes other farming tasks.

9 **libet:** *libet* is in a prominent position at the beginning of a couplet. This places emphasis on the delight of the countryside.

**antiqua ilice:** the idyllic past is prominent in this poem (see lines 2-3) and shown here through the *ancient* tree. The *illex* can grow to a great age.

**modo ... modo (line 10):** repetition of *modo* gives a sense of choice, freedom and fullness.

10 **tenaci:** the grass is deep enough to wrap around the person, just as how you might imagine yourself sinking into a sofa.

11 **labuntur altis interim ripis aquae:** gliding streams are a stock element of the rural idyll. *Interim* 'between' is literally placed between the noun and adjective. The *aquae* here is distinct from the *fontes* later.

12 **queruntur in silvis aves:** both birdsong (*aural imagery*) and woods are conventional features of the idyllic landscape. The verb *queror* is used elsewhere in Horace to mean lamentation or complaining which could be giving a discordant tone (and perhaps hinting at the surprise at the end of the poem).

In lines 9-12, each line finishes with a noun – *ilice* (holm-oak), *gramine* (grass), *aquae* (waters), *aves* (birds). Each line finishes with Horace's shopping list of key ingredients for the rural idyll.

13 **fontesque ... lymphis:** two words for water in quick succession. The water is central to Horace's idea of pleasure.

**obstrepunt:** usually a loud noise, an alternative translation could be 'roar'. Another suggestion perhaps that the scene is not as relaxing as it first seems.

14 **somnos quod invitet leves:** consecutive relative clause with the subjunctive *invitet* 'that which invites gentle sleep'. It is not clear what the *quod* is which induces "slumber", whether it is referring to all of lines 11-14 or just line 13. It could be read as a *tricolon* (list of 3) which lead to sleep. The adjective *leves* adds a new level – the sleep is carefree and easy.

## Suggested Questions for Comprehension

Read the entire text aloud, emphasising phrasing and word groups. Then reread each line or couplet, asking questions so that the class is led to comprehend the meaning of the Latin text. It may be desirable to produce a written translation once the students have understood the Latin.

Lines 9 to 14 of this poem describe scenes of the countryside. It may be helpful for students to draw what Horace describes or to listen out for the noises he mentions if a suitable location or recording is available so that they can imagine enjoying the literary ambience Horace creates, the literary trope of the pleasant place.

### **beatus ille qui procul negotiis (lines 1):**

- What word describes the farmer and what does it mean?
- What is the man far from? Can you suggest more than one interpretation for this word?

### **ut prisca gens mortalium (line 2)**

- What is the life of the farmer compared to?
- What does this suggest about life in the past?

### **paterna rura bobus exercet suis (line 3)**

- Who did the farm previously belong to?
- What does the farmer do to the land and with what?

### **solutus omni faenore (lines 4):**

- What is the farmer free from?

### **neque excitatur classico miles truci (line 5):**

- What occupation is compared with farming here?
- What symbolises this occupation?

### **neque horret iratum mare (line 6):**

- What does the farmer not have to dread?
- How is the *mare* described?

### **forumque vitat (lines 7):**

- What place does the farmer avoid?
- What does the *forum* represent?

### **(vitat) superba civium potentiorum limina (lines 7-8):**

- What else does the farmer avoid?
- Who would visit the *civium potentiorum*?

### **libet iacere modo sub antiqua ilice (line 9):**

- Where is it pleasant to lie?
- How is the tree described?

### **(libet iacere) modo in tenaci gramine (line 10):**

- Where else might the farmer lie?

**labuntur altis interim ripis aquae (line 11):**

- What is on either side of the waters?

**queruntur in silvis aves (line 12):**

- What is chattering in the woods?

**fontesque lymphis obstrepunt manantibus (line 13):**

- What else might the farmer see and hear in his rural idyll?

**somnos quod invitet leves (line 14):**

- What can all the sights and sounds of the rural countryside do for a person?
- How is the sleep described?

**Questions on Content and Style**

1. (lines 1-4) How does Horace try to convince the reader that the life of a farmer is blessed? How realistic might this seem to a Roman reader?
2. (lines 5-8) How does Horace show us his apparent disdain for other lifestyles?
3. (lines 9-14) How effective is Horace at portraying the tranquillity of country life? Use examples from the text to explain your point of view.
4. (lines 1-14) How does Horace argue that the country life is better than any other? Is Horace persuasive?
5. (whole text) Do you think that Horace is earnest in his belief that the life of a farmer is preferable to others?

**Discussion**

**Themes:** farm life / past vs present / city life / the rural idyll

The lines of *Epode 2* presented here fit into three sections: expressing congratulations for farm life, giving examples of negative lifestyles to be avoided and presenting the rural idyll.

This poem builds on a point raised by several other ancient authors – getting back to the old simple way of life. Students may wish to consider whether going back to what life was like in the past is something they would want to do. Does the phrase ‘rose tinted glasses’ come to mind here? Horace is considering the so called mythical ‘Golden Age’ and so is appealing to a story the Romans told themselves about the past, rather than perhaps reality.

Horace mentions inheritance of ancestral property. It is important to note the sense of identity Horace is deriving from the cultural and familial past. It may be useful to consider lines 2-4 with lines 7-8 – the ‘ancient race of mortals’ farmed the land whereas contemporary Romans spend time in the forum and at people’s doorsteps. Does this contrast persuade his readers of the benefits of going back to the ways of the past?

Horace also highlights the importance of being free from debt, which Horace relates to the life of the farmer. With the current rise of inheritance tax, expensive student loans and difficulties in getting on the housing ladder, he may have a point for modern readers!

Horace seeks to show how well the farming lifestyle compares with other lifestyles. Students may not be able to relate to the dangers of warfare, seafaring and the

cumbersome duties of contemporary Roman city life and will need to spend some time considering the drawbacks of each lifestyle. It will be clear that soldiering and seafaring would have been dangerous and therefore less appealing.

Students might wish to consider how people in our own time go to the country to relax and how cities can feel as if they never sleep. They could spend time imagining the rural idyll described in lines 9-14 – the sights and the sounds described by Horace. Is this their idea of paradise? Also, how does the idleness described in these lines fit in with the tilling mentioned in line 3? Do people who live off the land really lie in meadows and sleep listening to streams? Is this a fantasy?

It is difficult to pin down what Horace actually thinks. Is Horace's tone straightforward here? His description of farming life is almost too good to be true: family ties, the good old days, free from debt, time to laze around, always full rivers, birds in the trees, grass like a sofa! Does Horace's genuinely believe this is what life is like in the countryside or is he actually undermining the view of the countryside that is idolised? It is worth considering that Horace himself was a soldier and was given his land rather than inheriting it – so he himself did not have this way of life.

### Questions on the whole passage

1. What is the ideal lifestyle according to Horace?
  2. What are the drawbacks of contemporary Roman life for Horace?
  3. Is Horace describing a fantasy or reality of country living?
  4. Considering other texts in this collection, do you think Horace's readers would agree with what he has written in this poem?
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### Further Information and Reading

The Cambridge Latin Course, Book V, Stage 35 on Roman Country Villas contains a detailed discussion in English. A digital version of this section can be found [here](#).

The Cambridge Latin Course Book V Stage 39 provides a short introduction to Roman poets, including the patronage of Maecenas. A digital version of this section can be found [here](#).

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### Acknowledgement of resources used:

Mankin, D (1995) *Horace Epodes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Some pages can be previewed [here](#) pp62-76).

Shorey, P (1919) *Horace Odes and Epodes* (revised by P. Shorey and G.J. Laing). Chicago: Benj. H Sanborn & Co (original work published 1898).

Watson, L.C (2003) *A Commentary on Horace's Epodes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Some pages can be previewed [here](#) pp87-103).

West, D (2000) *Horace The Complete Odes and Epodes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wickham, E.C (1896) *Quinti Horati Flacci Opera Omnia The Works of Horace. Vol. I The Odes, Carmen Saeculare, and Epodes* Oxford: Clarendon Press