

Augustan Writers Introduction

Augustus was the first of the Roman Emperors. Originally named Octavian and born in 63 B.C. he was the grand-nephew of Julius Caesar – a highly successful politician, general, and eventual dictator of ancient Rome.

In 44 B.C., Julius Caesar was assassinated as the Roman senators believed he was planning to crown himself king – the Romans weren't a fan of kings since they got rid of the last of their 7 kings in 509 B.C. and founded a Republic. However, Caesar had named his grand-nephew Octavian as his heir before his death.

Octavian initially played a coy political game of cat and mouse with another of Caesar's supporters, Mark Antony. But eventually joined forces with him and formed a political alliance called the 2nd Triumvirate (an alliance of 3 powerful men – the 1st was with Julius Caesar). They dominated Roman politics and successfully defeated and killed the assassins of Caesar, Brutus and Cassius, at the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C.

After the defeat of their enemies it was only a matter of time before Octavian and Mark Antony went to war with each other. They attempted to maintain peace in 40 B.C. but 9 years later they had gone to war and Octavian had won, defeating Mark Antony and the Egyptian Queen, Cleopatra, at the Battle of Actium.

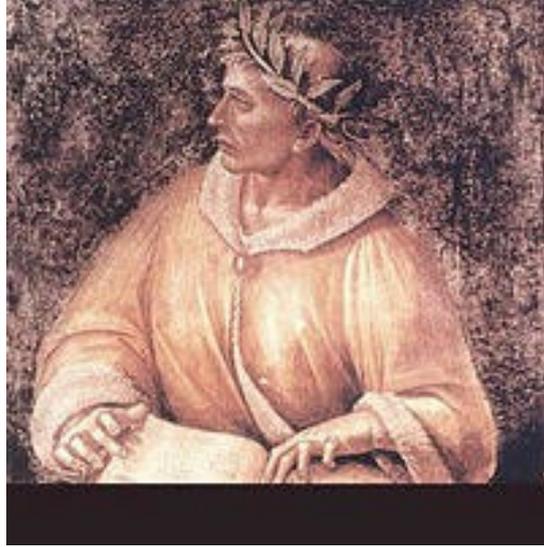
After his victory Octavian made careful plans to turn the Roman Republic into an Empire, with himself on top.

However, the Romans were very suspicious and hostile to one-man rule – just look at what they did to Julius Caesar. So, Octavian had to play a careful game giving the impression that he was revitalising the Republic but changing the way it worked so that he held most of the power behind the scenes. This included giving himself a new name, Augustus, limiting the power of the senate over the army and provinces, but the surrender of the power of a dictator in favour of tribune and imperial powers (powers to veto laws and control the army – effectively an emperor).

Another way Augustus gave the impression that he was revitalising the old Rome – “making Rome Great Again” – was to patronise or have his friends patronise the arts and poetry.

In this Topic, you will study 4 Ancient Roman poets, learn about the themes of their poems, their ways of life, and more about the Roman world around them – a world that was violent, unjust, and rapidly changing politically and socially.

Propertius and Ovid



Propertius

Short Bio and his Poetry:

Propertius was part of the inner circle of Maecenas, his patron, and so was a contemporary and probably acquaintance of Horace and Virgil. He wrote 3 books of Love Elegies (Love poems).

Very little is known of Propertius' life. He was probably born in 55 B.C. He was from Assisi, in Umbria. It is likely that his father died while he was young, and that the family estate was confiscated for payment to Octavian's veterans – as with Virgil and Horace.

It is likely that his mother sent him to school with the intention of him entering public office – Propertius' poetry and the fact that he lived on the Esquiline Hill (an expensive neighbourhood) tells us that he had a very high-class education.

While there, it is possible that he met the “older” Cynthia – the love interest of his poems. Although, most modern scholars are reluctant to read ancient poetry as autobiographical – other poets such as Catullus and Horace certainly do mention real-life events in their poetry, but often embellish, exaggerate, or even fabricate things too. For this reason, it is possible that Propertius' account of his affair with Cynthia is purely fictional – a poetical devise –; it may be simply a relationship he creates in order to facilitate his poetry. This is supported by the fact that their relationship is extremely inconsistent, and Cynthia is inconsistent as a character – at times she appears to be a noble women, a young women, or a meretrix (courtesan). Propertius is never specific about her. Furthermore, Cynthia is an alias (nickname) – it is a word that connects to Mount Cynthia on the island of Delos, sacred to Apollo the god of poetry and Artemis his sister. It was quite common for Love poets to use such poetic aliases.

Propertius is very clearer modelling his poetry off his predecessor Catullus – an earlier elegiac poet known for his deep affection for a woman Catullus called Lesbia, an alias for a woman called Clodia. Lesbia's personality and life match the real Clodia too much to doubt their correlation; however, Catullus was known for exaggerating and embellishing this relationship. Might Propertius not be doing the same – possibly even to the extent of pure fabrication? Is Cynthia an alias for a real girlfriend or is it just poetry itself?

At the very least, Propertius is often discussing the theme of love, exaggerating circumstances or fabricating events in the relationship to explore his poetry.

For the purpose of the Leaving Cert, it is advisable to discuss Propertius general attitude to love and to discuss the type of relationship he depicts in his poetry – whether it is based on real relationship or not, **it is the depiction of a relationship**. This relationship is unhealthy, inconsistency, imbalanced, and toxic in many ways. But by appreciating the nuances in his

poetry, you will more likely add some depth and insight to your answer. You will more likely appreciate Propertius' attitude to love itself and this character Cynthia.

Note on Roman Attitudes to Love:

While it is not essentially to discuss the Roman attitudes to love independently in your essay – it is best to focus on the text only and avoid too much discussion of context without evidence – it is important to understand the cultural and historical context of these poets and poems in order to properly interpret and discuss the texts and answer your essays.

If you read Propertius poems, and interpret a poem out of the historical and social context – without regard to the distrust the Romans had of love or what they considered to be a “normal” man – you will find it much harder to properly explain and discuss your reading of Propertius' poem. The easiest way to analysis the poems is to do so in context.

Roman attitude to love is that it is a condition – a sort of mental, even physical illness. They did not consider Romantic love a positive force but rather destructive. Consider Dido and Aeneas – Love almost prevents Aeneas from coming to Italy and fulfilling his duty, which would have meant the non-founding of Rome; it drives Dido insane and to kill herself.

If you have read much Greek and Roman mythology, you may have learnt how Cupid/Eros is one of the most feared Gods or Venus one of the most feared Goddesses. The Story of Troy for example is the dangers of desiring and loving the most beautiful woman outside wedlock – a ten-year war and many death ensue. Or consider Medea: she is driven mad with love of Jason, hurt by his betrayal, a subject to her emotions for him.

The Romans had a very similar attitude to love. It could distract a man from his resolve, his career in politics, in the military, or discipline. It took a man away from a life of duty, piety, and virtue

Romans in fact considered sexual – unromantic – love a more stable indulgence. Brothels were quite common – even the famous Roman stoic and conservative, Cato the elder, praised a young man for indulging in a brothel; he simply condemned the young man for going again the next day, believing such indulgences should be sparingly fulfilled. Roman men were also presumed or even expected to have extra-marital affairs – just not with other men's wives. Women on the other hand were expected to be remain faithful and chaste.

Note of Roman Values (Virtues)

Again, for context it is useful to consider the Roman values – what were their beliefs? If not for inclusion in your essay, then at least to help you properly interpret the texts and add some insight to your answers.

Romans had a list of virtues, here are some examples: *virtus* (manliness), *gravitas* (seriousness), *dignitas* (dignity), *pietas* (piousness: loyalty to one's family, one's country, and the gods), *clementia* (mercy). These virtues or values are how the Romans built their society; they are what they consider the best of their people (the men) should embody.

Note that the virtues are all masculine. Feminine traits were considered weak. Women should be as masculine as they could and chaste but could never be as virtuous (virtue itself comes from the Latin word for man: *vir*.)

We see Roman poets play with the what it means to be a *normal* Roman male on several occasions. Horace has already done so – often portraying himself as weaker for a joke. Propertius challenges the image of male and yet at times tries to play the role himself too.

Propertius' Poems

Poem 1:

Two Requests



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This is a simple declaration of Love and his **passion** for Cynthia: "O you who are beautiful, you who were born to hurt me, to be loved, to be beautiful."
- However, there is also an edge of obsession to Propertius' declaration: "O you alone born to be all these things, please let me come and see you more often."
- This, to us today, probably reads as a man who is obsessed and perhaps even a little bit insane. And to a Roman reader it is perhaps even more so – remember that a *good* or *normal* Roman male would not be this obsessive or emotional; in fact, the hyperbole (exaggeration) of Propertius' declaration could be read as almost **comical** in its self-deprecation. Propertius is not acting like a normal Roman man – in fact he is quite the opposite.
- The second stanza is Propertius making a declaration about his poetry: "My poetry shall make your beauty famous... Please, Calvus and Catullus, have mercy and let me write even better poems than you did!"
- This is not uncommon: poets would often refer to their predecessors in the genre and declare their intentions to be better.
- Of course, it is Cynthia who will allow Propertius to do this.

Glossary:

- **Calvus:** an orator and poet, a friend of Catullus and probably writing in the same genre.
- **Catullus:** one of the most famous of the Roman Elegiac poets – famous for his devotion to his love, Lesbia. He was born in 80 B.C. and died in 50 B.C. Both poets were an inspiration to later Elegiac poets like Propertius.

Poem 2:

Susceptibility



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- In contrast to Propertius first poem, Propertius here is acting like “a player”; he is falling in love with many women, many women who are not Cynthia – who he just declared his devotion to in the previous poem. “You know, Demophoon, that yesterday I looked at many girls, in fact at girls everywhere, and every one I loved.” Now Propertius is **passionate** for many women – as a **normal Roman male should**.
- There are clear signs that Propertius is being *inflicted* with love as an illness too: “You want to know, Demophoon, why any girl can catch my eye. Love has never heard that silly word *Why*.” – in other words, Propertius cannot explain why he falls in love at all. – **love is inexplicable**.
- Once more, we see the infliction of love driving Propertius and other men to extremes – just as a sickness might –: “some men slash their arm with holy knives or cut themselves upon the thigh at the goading of the Phrygian flutes –” This is not men in love cutting themselves, but Propertius does heavily imply that those who go into trances to flutes are no different to men in love – who likewise hurt themselves. It emphasizes the **pain** of love and his **passion**.
- And if there was any doubt: “**We’ve all a madness** somewhere in us awry, and in my case, it’s wanting an infinity of wives.” Propertius is mad with love – and looking for multiple partners too.
- It can also be noted that Propertius sees women in a very superficial way: “If a girl lifts her arms, white arms tenderly outspread,” the focus is on their beauty – which **intoxicates** Propertius with **passion**.
- Propertius in this poem is more in line with a *normal* Roman, pursuing multiple partners, but is still perhaps overindulgent and “mad” with love.
- Propertius is also very clearly a poet of passion in both this poem and the earlier: his devotion to love is clear – even to the point of it being dangerous.

Glossary:

- **Demophoon:** a friend of Propertius.
- **Phrygian flute:** a type of instrument.

Poem 4:

Love and Peace



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- In this poem, Propertius expands on the theme of love and equates it to peace – you can read both love and peace as the same thing in this poem: “love is a god of peace, and peace is adored by lovers.” In contrast to these is war: “I’ll have no wars save wars of love.” It is ironic that Propertius refers to love as “wars of love”; this reminds us of the **pain** and struggle that comes with love in Propertius’ mind.
- It is important to note before reading the poem that being a pacifist is not the *norm* of Ancient Roman society; in fact, the ideal *man* would be a soldier. Propertius provides a strong criticism of Roman values in this poem – a stark criticism of what it would have been to be normal in Roman society.
- Propertius associates the normal Roman values for war with **greed** and the seeking of wealth: “I own no lust for **murderous gold**, I ask no jewels to bubble through wine... your ruin tossed me no bronzes, Corinth.” – Corinth was a city sacked by Rome and their bronze was highly regarded in the ancient world.
- Propertius says that it is in man’s nature: “Ah, young earth stubborn in Prometheus’ hands! **Too roughly he shaped our hearts.**” Prometheus is the god who created man – Jupiter breathed life into them. Propertius says that from that very beginning man has been **violent**: “And now the tempests throw us anywhere. Any foe will do. War, War! For death we cry.” Propertius is emphasising the weakness of human hearts and minds, our lust for violence and war.
- Propertius then gives us a glimpse into his attitude to death: “There’s no coin you can carry on the ships of Hell; you fool, you will be naked there, Victor flung with victim.” Propertius asserts that there is no need for war, no need for the wealth which war brings, because – in a similar attitude to Horace – death is inevitable, and no earthly possessions will accompany us there. **We will all be the same in death.** Instead Propertius argues that “**one death alone is good: when those who have loved life well in fullness die.**” He again is arguing for the peaceful, happy live of pleasure – which will bring the only death worth dying.
- His next two statements reinforce what a life lived well is in his opinion: “**My joy is this: song I loved in youth, and fingers twined in music’s dances./ My joy be this: with coronals of wine to tangle my mind, Spring-roses tangled round my mind.**” It

is a life of music, dancing, and drinking wine that will be the joys of his youth, a life of the lover.

- The second half of the poem is interesting. Propertius argues what he will do when he is old. What is most interesting is that it seems to be almost the life that both Virgil and Horace assert is the best life for all people of any age – **the quiet reflective life**. Perhaps, Propertius was poking fun at them? OR is Propertius actually valuing the quiet, simple life of the other Augustan poets? Both readings are viable.
- At any rate, Propertius will live a life considering the gods, the changing of the seasons, “how the moon is pared and how it grows round again” where the winds go, how the rains come – how the weather works – whether there will be an end to all days, “Why the sun’s horses are at times caparisoned black” – why there are eclipses – why the oceans don’t drown us all, what there are four seasons, and what is the nature of the underworld: is there a three-headed dog, does Sisyphus push his rock up the hill for eternity, are their furies with “snake for hair”. Propertius says: “These are some of the things I’ll settle before I die”. Propertius is basically saying when he is an old man and cannot be a lover anymore, he will consider the bigger issues – he will live the life of a philosopher.
- The last line is a final joke at the soldier’s expense: “But all of you who are so mad on battle, get off and bring the standards of Crassus home.” Crassus was an ally of Julius Caesar who died in a horrific defeat to the Parthians (people from modern Iran, who came after the Persians) at Carrhae in 53 B.C. His eagle standards – precious symbols of Roman superiority – were lost and taken by the Parthians. Many generals in Rome attempted to get the standards back through campaigns or diplomacy. Augustus eventually succeeded. **Propertius is jokingly poking fun at the soldier’s life – calling it wasteful.**

Glossary:

- **Campanian:** region in Italy.
- **Corinth:** city in Greece.
- **Prometheus:** god who created man from clay.
- **Pindus:** mountain in Greece.
- **Pleiades:** a constellation of stars.
- **Tityos:** a giant who tried to rape Leto but was killed by Leto’s children, Artemis and Apollo. He was tortured in the Underworld in a similar way the Prometheus.

Poem 4:

Gone



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- *Gone* gives us insight into Propertius' passion, his attitude to love, and his relationship with Cynthia.
- Just as with *Love and Peace* when Propertius highlights the hostilities of being a lover "I'll have no wars save the wars of love." This poem emphasizes the duality of the Cynthia-Propertius relationship: **"There are no enemies save those we love..."** This hostility emphasizes that unhealthy bond he has – **the inequality of their relationship**. And this inequality and unfairness leads Propertius to be overcome with passion and anger **"kill me and my anger would be less."** He becomes possessive and jealous "O can I see her leaning on another, who was **mine**, who was **mine**, so lately? Then I could say 'you are **mine**' to her aloud..." The possessive pronoun *mine* is repeated again and again to emphasize the passion he has for her.
- However, the focus of this poem is also on the impact of love on the lover: how the lover must suffer and be a fool. **"But love's king of yesterday become by fate tomorrow's Fool. That is the way of love."** Propertius says how a lover can one day be a king with all right in the world, and the next suffer the fool when all goes wrong. He reinforces this notion by comparing the lover's fall with two pieces of history/mythology the sacking of Thebes and of Troy. The former sacked by Alexander the Great, the latter by the Greeks. Paralleling his misfortune in love with the horrific sacking of two major cities – many people's lives being destroyed in these circumstances – is an **exaggerated way of emphasising his own pain**.
- His final line reemphasises the inequality of his relationship with Cynthia and redoubles the pain **"yet all that time I had her, she would never say the words 'I love you'."** Obviously, if one person in a relationship writes poems for the other and the other doesn't even say 'I love you' there is an inequality in their relationship. **This is perhaps the best evidence of their unhealthy relationship.**

Poem 5:

Gone to Clitumnus



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This is another poem similar to *Love and Peace* that could be seen as supporting the quiet life – though rather than one of philosophical reflection this poem is in support of the simple country life. It could however be somewhat tongue in cheek – perhaps the virtues of the simple, chaste country life are actually being jokingly mocked by Propertius. It's hard to say.
- What is very clear is that Propertius presents more of his possessive jealous attitude towards Cynthia – and portrays himself in a somewhat less than normal unmanly way: very un-Roman like.
- Propertius begins by extolling the countryside **“the farm-lands are quite chaste. They harbour no seducers to flatter you and turn your mind to vice.”** Propertius extolls to countryside, but it seems to be as a mere chaste harbour for his unfaithful lover, Cynthia – which could be seen as somewhat belittling the idyllic country values of Virgil and Horace; they saw it as virtuous and idyllic in a serious way, Propertius sees it as a place where his lover will be hidden from vice, if only temporarily.
- He emphasises this further when he says: “alone, without me, you will gaze at the lonely hills, the cattle, and some peasant’s poor domain.” This pleasant chaste view of the country is contrasted with the view of the typical urban area – one that has places that may tempt his love: “There you will find no theatres to corrupt your morals, no temples (where you have so often sinned).” Both these locations were places where lovers would typically meet – Cynthia apparently would meet many lovers aside from Propertius at these locations.
- The next few lines are very similar to lines from Virgil and Horace when they extol the country life, Propertius doing something similar: “There you will watch the bull ploughing, hour after hour, and see the vines barbered by skilful hands, at the ride shrine you will burn an occasional candle when, at the rural altar, falls a kid, and then shorten your dress to join the dancing chorus, but catch no possible lover’s roving eye.” Perhaps, Propertius is genuinely extolling this lifestyle too – he as a

lover finds value in the chaste rural setting. Or perhaps he is making a slight joke at its expense?

- The next few lines show Propertius self-deprecating humour: **“I myself shall go hunting – changing my allegiance from Venus to Diana, chaste and fair.”** (*Notice how he may be admitting to infidelity himself since he was not chaste while a follower of Venus*). **“I quite look forward to the kill... of course I shall not try to challenge horrid lions, or, face to face, encounter rustic boars. No I shall think if very bold to catch a delicate Hare, or neatly shoot a sitting bird,”** Propertius is once more challenging the norms of what a Roman male ought to value: he does not wish to hunt or risk his life – just like he wished not to go to war – he would rather go for something safer, more “delicate”. This can very clearly be seen as a joke at his own expense.
- In the last few lines, Propertius once more reveals his possessive attitude to Cynthia – if perhaps less than he does in other poems. He reminds her to be chaste. It is telling that the final line is: **“for every absent man has enemies.”** This reminds us that Propertius is insecure in his love; his lover Cynthia is not loyal, there is an imbalance in their relationship.

Poem 6:

Cynthia Is Dead



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- In this poem Propertius tells of the haunting ghost of his dead lover coming to visit him in the night.
- If we read the poem biographically, Cynthia had died in a fire at some point during their relationship and Propertius now writes of her ghost. Whether she was a real person or not, what can be read from this poem is that the relationship between Cynthia and Propertius was so intense that Cynthia’s ghost haunted Propertius beyond the grave – literally or figuratively.
- The poem begins with Propertius in bed thinking of the burial of his lover that day **“Interred that day beside the highway’s roar”** – *all Roman burials were outside the city on the roadside* – **“Still sleepless, brooding on my mistress’ funeral, I loathed**

the chilly empire of my bed.” And then his mistress appeared to him as an apparition.

- When reading this poem focus on the vivid imagery: “Her hair just eh same... her eyes the same; her dress scorched down one side; the fire had eaten at her favourite beryl ring; her lips had tasted Lethe” – *Lethe was a river of the Underworld; Souls drank from it to forget their past lives* – “and were pale. **She spoke, in a voice panting with life and passion: her hands quivered meanwhile, the frail knuckles snapped.**”
- In many ways, we can see in this poem Propertius attitude to love as a haunting, painful experience; it is **dangerous and eternal.**

Poem 7:

The God of Love



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- No poem of Propertius better emphasises the dangerous and powerful nature of love than the poem *The God of Love*. This poem describes the god Cupid – a god who all Romans and Greeks respected and feared as a god who could inflict them with the ailment or illness of love.
- Some of the imagery to describe Cupid in this poems shows this: “a quiver from each shoulder hands, and **shafts he holds with barbed fangs, because he strikes us unaware that any enemy is there.**” Barbed fangs are a type of arrowhead that makes it very difficult to pull from the body once hit. Notice how there is an emphasis on Cupid’s ability to remain hidden: “Love in boyish guise... neither can we ever know the quarter whence the wind will blow.” Showing the power of love to strike when least expected.
- The poem also shows the imbalanced nature of love – perhaps reflecting Propertius’ own relationship with Cynthia: “**Tempestuous wings he gave him too, well knowing that we lovers toss on waters where wild currents toss.**” This recalls Propertius own portrayal of himself as a jealous and untrusting lover.
- However, the final emphasis of the poem is the **pain** that comes with love: “**Once hit we’re never free from pain, in me his arrow still remain, his image haunts me everywhere.**” Love – as noted earlier – to Ancient Romans is an overpowering force

that is inflicted on us; it is something that brings anguish, uncertainty, and pain. It is haunting. The god Cupid, the personification of this force, is to be feared likewise.

Poem 8:

Cynthia

Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This final poem presents us with Propertius' more authoritarian personality: his violent, possessive, passionate, and controlling nature. "So take your clothes off when you go to bed or I'll tear them off; and then you'll know what my hands feel like on your body; and **if my temper grows too hot you'll have bruises to show your mother in the morning.**" The emphasis is on Propertius' sexual passion for Cynthia; however, it is also clear that he is possessed by an imbalanced **temper** that can lead to **violence** towards her.
- Propertius then focuses on Cynthia's physical beauty: "What have you got to hide? Your breasts are firm; for childbirth hasn't left its telltale mark on you." (Apparently, Cynthia had a child) Propertius is overcome with a desire for her body – a **violent and passionate sexual desire.**
- The final lines are clear evidence of Propertius' passionate need for her: "As we cling to each other like this bind us with a chain so strong that time will not dissolve it." Propertius wishes not only to be with Cynthia, but he never wants to be without her. In fact, he wishes them to be **eternally** possessing each other. Once more, **eternal is the pain of (Propertius') love.**

Ovid

Short Bio and his Poetry:

Ovid is the latest of our poets in the reign of Augustus. Unlike Virgil and Horace, the emperor Augustus was not a fan of his work.

Ovid was born in 43 B.C. in Sulmo in central Italy to a middle-class family – the *equites* or knights. He was educated in Rome. And although his father wished him to study law, after his brother died at the age of twenty, Ovid gave up law and travelled to Greece, Sicily, and Asia minor. He had a small civil service job but began to pursue poetry from around 29 B.C. His patron was Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus – a friend of Maecenas, the patron of Virgil, Horace, and Propertius.

Ovid was married three times, divorced twice by the time he was thirty. He had one daughter who had grandchildren.

Ovid's early poetry was mixed. His most famous work was the *Metamorphoses* a series of loosely connected mythological stories which had a central theme of *change* – people changing into animals or trees etc. He also wrote the *Amores* a series of erotic love elegies similar to Propertius poetry – but perhaps a little less **inexplicably** passionate (over the top) and a bit more practical and **explicable**. He also wrote the *Ars Amatoria* (The Art of Love) a series of poems over 3 books: the first two instruct men on how to seduce multiple women, the third is for women on how to attract men. This poem was very subversive: Augustus was very conservative and had brought in strict marriage laws – including making adultery illegal – for Ovid to write a poem advising people on how to commit adultery could be seen as very controversial.

In the year 8 B.C., Ovid was exiled by Augustus. It is unclear why. Ovid tells us that it was due to a *carmen et error* – a poem and a mistake. The poem *Ars Amatoria* may have made him unpopular with Augustus, but it was published 10 years prior. The real reason could have been Ovid's knowledge of plot to kill Augustus, which the poet failed to tell the emperor; or it may have been Ovid having an affair with Augustus' granddaughter, Julia. All we know is that Augustus exiled both Agrippa Postumus and Julia, his grandchildren, at the same time.

Ovid lived the rest of his life in Tomis, a town by the Black Sea – in modern Romania. While there, he wrote more poetry including the *Tristia* – which were several poems on the misery of his exile. The tone of Ovid's poetry, which was once so light and powerful, was now much more negative.

Ovid died in exile in 17 A.D.

Note on the Roman Republic to Empire

Historically the period in which all our poets write is of huge importance to the history of Rome and Europe. For 5 centuries the Romans had ruled themselves by means of a Republic – a semi-democratic system that mixed elements of monarchy, aristocracy (lords and ladies), and democracy. This was the system that would inspire the founding father of America, the revolutionaries of France, and the Republicans of 1798 and 1916 in Ireland.

However, in Rome by the mid-1st century B.C. (circa 50 B.C.) this system had been corrupted by greedy and ambitious politicians, class-warfare, and supposedly moral degradation. This was all driven by the Roman expansion: further conquest led to more land and gold, but it was not distributed fairly among all.

This led to the rise of Julius Caesar – who became a dictator for life (dictator was a traditional political office used by the Romans in a emergency: one man would take command for six months to sort out a problem). Julius Caesar was only one in a long line of politicians who dominated Roman society in the 1st century B.C. But, of course, he was assassinated by his rivals in 44 B.C.

Several more years of civil war ensued, till only Octavian and Mark Antony – both allies or family of Caesar – remained. At the battle of Actium in 31 B.C., Octavian defeated Mark Antony, and there were no more rivals to Octavian's power. Soon in 27 B.C. Augustus would proclaim himself *imperator* – emperor – and effectively rule the old Republican system as an Empire.

Augustus funded many artistic and architectural projects in an attempt to support the idea that he was **rebuilding Rome** from the ashes of the civil war. And even though his predecessor Julius Caesar was somewhat of a *progressive*, Augustus was very conservative. He believed in Rome conserving those older Republican values – even if the system was no longer the same. And so, he supported the conservative writings of Horace and Virgil; even though, sometimes their writings did lightly (or subvertly) criticize his regime.

Later in his reign, Augustus became so concerned with conservative Roman values that he brought in laws to try and control the personal lives of the Roman noble classes – his marriage laws. This was an attempt by Augustus to curb the so-called *moral degradation* of Roman society at the time. Ovid's poems more outwardly subvert these laws and show more contempt. This is why he was less welcome to Augustus, who, now in the latter years of his reign, was much less tolerant of freedom of expression and criticism of his policies.

Poem 1:

Baucis and Philemon



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This poem is from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is a very pleasant poem on the themes of **love, morality, and piety**.
- The poem is set in Phrygia. This is a land in Ancient Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The narrator (not Ovid) tells how there is an oak and a linden tree there that grow closely together and are surrounded by a low wall. Not far off is a stagnant pool – once habitable country. The story goes that Jupiter and Mercury once visited there and went from door to door looking for hospitality. Remember that Jupiter is the god of **Xenia or hospitality to strangers** – an important custom of the ancient world to ensure that people could travel and trade safely. It was so important the Jupiter himself, king of the gods, was the overseer of this law.
- Jupiter and Mercury found that all the people of the land had there “**homes bolted and barred against them**” – refusing to abide by the law of *Xenia*.
- However, one house, the house of Philemon (husband) and Baucis (wife) took them in. They had been married and lived together in their small cottage since their youth. Ovid says the “**by confessing their poverty and accepting it contentedly, they had eased the hardship of their lot.**” This enhances to humility of the couple and the respect one has for them – to be content with their humble lot. Their humility is further emphasised by the line: “**It made no difference in that house whether you asked for master or servant – the two of them were the entire household: the same people gave the orders and carried them out.**” This contrasts with the wealthy household of the ancient world – or even households with a modest income – which would often have at least one slave. But Ovid highlights the humble modesty of Baucis and Philemon who act as master and slave.
- Philemon and Baucis reacted to their guest with courtesy: preparing a fire, putting cloths on the tables and chairs, and ushering their guests to seats. Moreover, they provided food – and some meat which would rarely be eaten by those living on humble means; **a sign of the generosity to share the best they had with strangers.**

- Then, Ovid goes into a little detail on the cottage: a couch made from willow-wood covered by the old couple with cloths they use for solemn holidays, **“even so, the stuff was old and cheap”**; the table with three legs, one leg shorter than the other which is corrected with a tile by Baucis. In both cases, he showing their poverty.
- In the following lines, Ovid then describes the meal in detail: “mottled berry... cherries... endives and radishes and a piece of cheese, and eggs... all these were set out in clay dishes...” The attention here is given to the variety of the spread from such humble means. Ovid continues to refocus on their poverty with the following lines “a flagon with a raised pattern, just as much silver as their dinner service, was set on the table, and beechwood cups, lined inside with yellow wax.” The emphasis is on the lack of silver or decoration on the cutlery.
- Ovid describes the wine as **“of no great age”** to bring attention to the cheapness of their offerings. And further to this he provides detail on their humble desert: “...nuts, a mixture of figs and wrinkled dates, plums and fragrant apples in shallow baskets, and black grapes, just gathered. A shining honeycomb was set in the midst of these good things...” Again, this spread is **varied and yet humble** – desserts that were likely gathered from the land rather than an elaborate meal one might see in a wealthy household; certainly not what the gods would usually eat.
- But above all else what Baucis and Philemon give their guests is **“cheerful company, and bustling hospitality, far beyond their means.”**
- Soon Philemon realises that the flagon continued to refill itself of its own accord as the meal progressed. Baucis and Philemon’s reaction was to be **“awed and afraid. Timidly stretching out their hands in prayer, they begged the gods’ indulgence for a poor meal, without elaborate preparations.”** Ovid brings attention to Baucis and Philemon’s pious reaction to fear and respect the gods. They immediately go about trying to sacrifice their one goose to the gods, but the gods refuse.
- **“We are gods’ they said, ‘and this wicked neighbourhood is going to be punished as it richly deserves; but you will be allowed to escape the disaster.”** The reason gods say this is because all the other people in the region failed to honour Jupiter’s law of *Xenia* except Baucis and Philemon.
- With the rest of the neighbourhood flooded, the humble cottage is turned into a temple with **marble columns, “the thatch grew yellow, till the roof seemed to be made of gold, the doors appeared magnificently adorned with carvings, and marble paved the earthen floor.”** The richly decorated temple contrasts with the previous image we were given of the humble poor cottage.
- Jupiter (Son of Saturn) then offers the two a reward for their piety, and once more proving their **piety and virtuous humility**, the couple ask only that they serve the gods’ temple till the day they die – and showing their deep **affection and love** for each other – that neither should die before the other.
- The wish was granted. And then, Ovid describes their transformation into the trees and their last words to each other **“Goodbye, my dear one!”**.
- The moral of this story is fairly simple: live humbly, live piously, and the gods will reward you. Baucis and Philemon embody this humility – a trait praised by Romans and Greeks alike – and they embody piety in their honouring of *Xenia* and their commitment to the god’s temple. One could also argue their generosity – which is related to this honour of *xenia* and their providing the strange guests with more

than they could afford – this is above and beyond mere *xenia*. And finally, their affection and commitment to each other till the end is a sign of their deep love.

Poem 2:

Ovid's Misery in Exile



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- In contrast, to the uplifting tone of *Baucis and Philemon*, *Ovid's Misery in Exile* is largely negative. It is an expression of Ovid's resentment and depression in a land of "barbarians" that hinders his ability to write poetry. **"You bid me write to amuse the tedious hours and save from withering my poetic powers. Hard is the task, my friend, for verse should flow from the free mind, not fettered down by woe."**
- Ovid immediately recalls his sorrow: **"Restless amidst unceasing tempests [storms] tossed, who'er has cause for sorrow, I have most."** He compares his sorrow to Priam, who lost many of his sons in the Trojan war, and to Niobe, who's twelve sons and daughters were cut down by Artemis and Apollo because Niobe had insulted the gods' mother Leto. This exaggerated comparison is to drive home Ovid's own miserable circumstances.
- He then claims that even if he were as wise or resolute as Socrates – who faced his own death without fear – he would soon **"sink beneath such woes as mine"**, **"My sufferings would have laid the wisdom low."** For as Ovid says, **"what is human strength to wrath divine?"** Ovid is once more trying to draw attention to the magnitude of his own misery – inflicted upon him by the "divine" emperor Augustus and so miserable that the wise could not endure it.
- "Could I forget me country; thee and all, and even the offence to which I owe my fall." Ovid's misery is the exile from his home, and yet it is more for him because as Ovid claims: **"Yet fear alone would freeze the poet's vein.... Ill fares the bard in this unlettered land."** It is Ovid's difficulty in writing poetry in his exile that brings him most misery; this difficulty he blames on the people's lack of appreciation for his poetry and their "rude" language.
- And yet, in his exile he still writes: **"even her the Muse disdains confinement, and attempts her former strains."** The Muse refers to his poetic inspiration, and yet:

“the strong desire is not the power, and what her taste condemns the flames devour.” In other words, wanting to write poetry is not enough, and those failed attempts of poetry by Ovid end up as scraps of paper in the fire.

- This poem is only one part that “escapes the doom” and “finds a friend at Rome.” – possibly referring to his patron in Rome or his reader.
- But ultimately, poetry is cruel to Ovid in his exile “**But oh the cruel art, that could undo its votary this! would that could perish too!**” Ovid is the votary of poetry, a devoted servant to poetry. And he wishes that his own difficulty in writing poetry could be over and his own death on the fire come too.

Poem 3:

Myself

Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This poem is from one of Ovid’s earlier poetic works, the *Amores*. It is a very simple poem: Ovid is dedicating himself to his lover. “Take me, and I your slave will be as long as life endure: constant in my fidelity and in your service sure.”
- It is followed by a humble reflection upon his own modest standing: “Mine is no name of ancient might nor have I lands untold; my father’s but a simple knight and careful with his gold.” This is perhaps a bit ironic; knights were not poor.
- Ovid then brags of his own abilities – despite his lack of noble birth: “But Phoebus and the Muses nine come ever to my call.” In other words, he can write brilliant poetry. “And Bacchus, finder of the vine, and Love, who gives me all.” He is a drinker, party person, and a lover.
- And lastly, Ovid talks of his own pure sense of goodness: “My life is pure and free from stain, my heart is sound and true. No gallant I, of conquests vain, but faithful still to you.” Ovid’s last appeal is not arrogant, controlling, or passionate – it differs greatly from Propertius. Rather it is a humble and simply put request for affection from his lover.
- Ironically, Ovid is perhaps the least loyal lover – as we will see – and so his outward loyalty and genuine appearance in this poem may be tongue in cheek; it contrasts with his other love poems.

Poem 4:

Advice to Women



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This poem is meant as practical advice to women on how to pick up men: it is from the third book of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* or Art of Love. "Maidens give ear and you shall hear what is your chiefest duty, pray listen well and I will tell you how to keep your beauty."
- Ovid first compares the care that a woman ought to give her looks to the care for the land: "'Tis care that makes the barren earth produce the ripened grain. 'Tis care that brings tree-fruit to birth with grafting and much pain." This is ironically comparing the cultivating of one's own appearance – something the Romans considered unworthy – to the cultivation of the land or farming, which, as we saw with Horace and Virgil, was considered the a worthy and noble pursuit.
- The last verse tells the women outright that they should take care of their appearance: "**Things that are cared for always please, and now each man's a dandy, a girl must be as spruce as he and have her powder handy.**" Dandy means a person who is obsessed with their looks – a **derisive term for a man in ancient Rome** – and yet here Ovid jokingly says all men were so and that women must keep up and wear make-up. This was quite a subversive idea in Rome which was so very conservative and uninterested in physical beauty. This is perhaps one of the most contrasting values of Greece and Rome: Greek art explored beauty and revered physical beauty, Romans abhorred it and preferred to focus on duty, hardship, and dedication to the state.

Poem 5:

The Art of Love



Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This – as the title suggests – is from Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*, Art of Love. It is a very straightforward poem: Men should do as their women like: if the woman laughs, cries, or denies, the man should too. If they play a game of dice or dominos, the man should let her win. “Yield to rebuff: yielding will win the day;” In other words, to be a happy lover, you must do as the woman says. This shows that Ovid believes there is a practical guide that can **explain** to the lover how to be a lover.
- Likewise, a man should be ready to spend money on her for her birthday – be ready to listen to what she wants and buy something accordingly. And **“Yet there are cultured girls, a breed most rare, and girls not cultured but who wish they were. Both should be praised in song: a pleasing voice can make the meanest poetry sound choice.”** Ovid argues that a man ought to be ready to adapt his approach to his lover depending on the type of girl his lover is. If she is cultured the man can give her a gift of a poem, if she is more superficial, than he ought to buy her elaborate gifts – which she will indicate she desires.
- This verse telling a man to write love poetry to girls who are cultured or believe themselves cultured, is a way of Ovid **humorously explaining** how to be a love poet – like Propertius. In contrast to Propertius who says being a lover is inexplicable. Ovid’s poem is the **practical guide on how to be a lover – and even on how to be a love-poet.**
- Ovid’s attitude to women is of course quite derogative: “Ten tongues, ten months – still could I not convey the unholy tricks that all such women play.” Women to Ovid – and indeed reflecting the general Roman attitude to women – are naturally **deceptive and dishonest.** Ironically, Ovid is encouraging the young male lover to be dishonest too; to lie to the woman to get what he wants.

Poem 6:

Unfair

Quotes: - Add any quotes from the poem you feel are appropriate (they should be short, easily memorable, and relevant to the themes).

Notes:

- This last poem reinforces the attitude we saw in the *Art of Love*. It is very self-explanatory – so I won't go through the whole poem in detail.
- What should be noted is that the poem is from Ovid's *Amores* (earlier than *The Art of Love*). But, it shows the same practical, dishonest nature of Ovid's attitude to love. Ovid is trying to convince his lover that he has not been unfaithful – and accuses her of being suspicious: "but with your random charges and your vain suspicions, you make your anger seem pointless and cheap."
- Considering the previous poem discussed how Ovid advises young men to manipulate the lovers through being dishonest, it seems unlikely that Ovid is being genuine; it is unlikely that he is making a genuine plea of innocence or indeed has been innocent of infidelity. (in fact – though unfortunately the poem is **not** on the course and **cannot** be referenced in LC essay: in the poem which comes after this poem in the original collection, Ovid claims to have deceived his lover into thinking he had not cheated on her. Clearly, showing that this poem is not truthful.)
- The best way to describe Ovid's attitude to love is that he is practical, dishonest, and void of the passions of Propertius. Love, to Ovid, is simply something else that can be taught or learned – it is **explicable**. In contrast to Propertius, who believes it is a way of life that is inflicted upon us and **inexplicable**. There is none of the fear or pain in Ovid's attitude to love; there is none of the seriousness. Perhaps, all that they have in common is their sense of humour. Both do make fun of themselves through self-deprecation; and both can have a light-hearted tone to their poetry.

Horace



Short Bio

A lot more is known about Horace than many of the other poets, because his poetry is very autobiographical.

Horace was born in 65 B.C. in the town of Venusia in the Samnite region of southern Italy. **Horace is a descendant of a freedman** (person freed from slavery). His father was probably an Italian taken captive during the Social War (91-88 B.C.). This war was over providing equal citizenship rights to all Italians – before this there were Roman citizens and Latin (other Italian) citizenships; the latter had more rights.

Horace's father gained his freedom and became either a tax collector or auctioneer – he became very wealthy through the success of his career. He spent a lot of money on his son's education, eventually accompanying him to Rome. **Horace was very close with his father and wrote a poem as tribute to his father** (*Satire* 1.6).

Horace later, at the age of 19, moved to Athens and **joined *The Academy*** – a school of philosophy founded by Plato. At this time it was dominated by philosophers of the Stoic and Epicurean schools. These had a great impact on Horace.

As you saw with Virgil, **Epicureanism** follows the following principles:

- All things are made from matter.
- There is no life after death so there is no need to fear it.
- The gods are immortal but do not interfere with man.
- Man should try to emulate the life of the gods by seeking a state of tranquillity free from physical pain.
- One achieved this by having a simple life finding joy in simplicity and isolation from the world of politics, wealth, military, and public life. One ought to be content and happy with oneself.

Stoicism is very similar, and has a common root ideology to Epicureanism, but differs on some fundamental principles. They believe:

- All things are made of matter.
- The gods are not anthropomorphic (formed like people) but their image is symbolic of a divine function – weather, love, agriculture, death etc.
- They believe that all these gods are in fact part of a greater whole.
- This god is in all living things; he is an energy force throughout the universe.
- When we die the atoms return to the system, and the divine energy returns to the greater whole: God.
- The greatest virtue in life is to dedicate yourself to public service (the greater good) – second to this is to study philosophy.
- All people should live on little; they should be humble and live in self-imposed poverty.
- They also believe all things in life are predetermined, so there is no need to fear death.

- Finally, they believe that all emotions ought to be controlled: one should rationalise one's anger or love or hate.

Like Epicureanism they believe in a material world and a simple life, however, they value public service and have no problem with pain. They also believe that one should fear death, but have a very different idea of what lays beyond death.

Clear examples can be seen in Horace's writing of both philosophies – however, he is more likely Epicurean.

While in Athens Horace spent time with young Roman men like Marcus Cicero (son of the famous Roman lawyer, republican politician, and orator).

When Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C., Brutus – his assassin – came to Greece looking to gather supporters and young men for his army. He would attend lectures in the schools of philosophy and **while there recruited Horace into military service.**

Horace's good education allowed him to start military service at the high ranking position of **Military Tribune** (there are 6 per legion). This apparently caused his fellow officers of noble birth to become somewhat jealous of the son of an ex-slave in such a high ranking position.

Horace, however, chose the losing side and at the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. he apparently ran away having thrown away his shield.

As soon as Octavian offered amnesty for his opponents, Horace accepted and returned to Italy. However, as with Virgil in north Italy, **his father's estate had been confiscated by Octavian to pay his veterans.** Horace claims this reduced him to **poverty** and he then took a job as a *scriba quaestorius* or civil servant.

At this time he began to write his *Epodes* and *Satires*. It took time, but as he began to publish his poems he gained some support from Octavian's supporters, and was eventually introduced to the inner circle of **Maecenas** via his close friend **Virgil**. Maecenas became Horace patron, and soon mutual respect led to a close friendship.

Horace seems to have accompanied Maecenas to various places on Octavian's campaigns. He journeyed with Maecenas and Virgil to **Brundisium** in 37 B.C. for very important peace talks between Mark Antony and Octavian. He journeyed with Maecenas on Octavian's campaigns against Sextus Pompeius – who had amassed a fleet to challenge Octavian and Mark Anthony – and he may also have been at **Actium in 31 B.C.**, when Octavian defeated his rival Mark Anthony and the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra.

By this time Horace had received the honours that of an **equites** or *knight*, and a gift from Maecenas of a **Sabine farm**, allowing Horace to either entirely or at least partially retire.

Horace continued to compose more poetry during this period, composing his *Odes*, his *Epistles* (Letters), and his *Ars Poetica* (Art of Poetry).

Horace's early poetry is very apolitical; however, it becomes more political as Horace wrote more. As the name suggests, his *Odes* would often praise Augustus and his victories. However, this was as much due to the genre as anything else. **Horace most often praises a simple apolitical life of peace.**

He died in 8 B.C., apparently not long after the death of Maecenas, and was buried beside his patron and friend.

How to Study Horace:

For the purpose of studying Horace, you can divide the poems into two categories: the purely philosophical poems (poems that present his philosophy of life) and the Satires (Funny poems).

The types of questions are always based on his philosophy, a theme such as humour, use of imagery, or on a specific poem.

If you study Horace, make sure you study **all** his poems, as any can come up individually on the paper.

Keep in mind that the Satires also follow Horace's philosophy and can be very useful for answering any question on his philosophy.

Philosophical Poems

The Philosophical Poems of Horace outline for us his main philosophical principles – influenced by the philosophies of Epicureanism and Stoicism.

Horace's philosophy can be explained under the following categories: *Carpe Diem* (Enjoy the present), *the Inevitability of Death* (and therefore that it ought not to be feared), *the Simple-life*, *Friendship*, and *Love*.

Poem 1:

Gather ye Rosebuds



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- This poem is very simple and short.
- Horace asks his readers not to concern themselves with reading the will of the gods, not to concern themselves by consulting astrologers, or what bad things might happen. He is emphasizing that the future is unpredictable and that all we can be certain about is that we will eventually die, and so we should instead focus on enjoying the present.
- Horace asks his readers to “drink free” and “be wise!”. We ought to *seize the day* (*Carpe Diem*) or enjoy the present. “This day's thine own: the next may be denied.” He asks them to not expect a long life because time is slipping by: “Whilst we are talking envious time doth slide.” All we have is the *now*.

Glossary:

- **Leuconoe:** this is the person to whom Horace is addressing the poem.
- **Tyrrhene waves:** this is one of the seas that surrounded Italy and is known for a volatile nature (storms).

Philosophy:

- This poem is heavily influenced by the Epicurean and Stoic Philosophies. Both emphasize that death is inevitable and thus not worth fearing; both encourage us to live in the present. This is Horace's philosophy of *Carpe Diem* or living for the present.
- Perhaps what is a little more Epicurean is Horace's encouraging his audience to drink and be free – or to enjoy one's life. Personal pleasure and happiness was more of a focus in the Epicurean philosophy.

Poem 2:*Enjoy The Present Hour*

Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- This poem, longer than *Gather Ye Rosebuds*, has more to analysis, but still remains focused on the same philosophy. Horace simply expands on it.
- Horace begins by describing a winter scene: “behold yon mountain’s hoary height made higher with new mounts of snow... and streams with icy fetters bound...” This scene immediately reminds the reader of death – the inevitable end.
- However, rather than wallowing in pessimism, Horace suggests “with well-heaped logs dissolve the cold, and feed the genial hearth with fires: produce the wine that makes us bold, and love of sprightly wit inspire.” Horace asks us to accept death, to enjoy what we have now, drink and be merry.
- The next stanza recalls that there is no point trying to figure out the gods or the gods’ designs because “let Him alone, with what He made, to toss and turn the world below... He bids them cease and calm returns, and all is peace.” In other

words, we cannot control our fate, and we cannot know what the gods intend. We can only enjoy our life.

- Horace then asks us to reject pondering *what may be*: “Tomorrow and her works defy” and rather “lay hold upon the present hour, and snatch the pleasures passing by.” For tomorrow may not be, and we can only enjoy today: “whate’er thou gettest today is gain.”
- Horace then behoves those who enjoy their youth to do so, because “the best is but in season best.” In other word, pleasures and love are only best when young – *in season*.
- His final stanza recalls that moment of the “half-unwilling, willing kiss”; that moment when two lovers are about to kiss. This is Horace’s way of emphasising the pleasure and pure happiness of the present, the moment. A fleeting thrilling moment which then passes.

Glossary:

- **Hoary:** greyish.
- **Fetters:** a chain or manacle.
- **Genial:** kind, gentle.
- **Hearth:** fireplace
- **Sprightly:** full of energy
- **He, Tomorrow, Fortune, Love, Time:** these nouns with a capital letter are more about the personification of these things – the abstract thing is referred to as a person.

Philosophy:

- The philosophy of this poem is very self-explanatory: *Carpe Diem, seize the day*.
- Death is inevitable; old age is inevitable; we do not know what fate has in store for us – this is a particularly Stoic attitude. So, don’t worry about the future, enjoy the present and the opportunities life presents to you.
- Horace also may be emphasising the pleasure of friendship when he encourages us to light a fire, drink wine, and enjoy witty conversation. This is a very Epicurean attitude.
- Do this while you are young – before time and old age sour to taste of these pleasures. The seeking of pleasure (or rather simple pleasures) is a focus of Horace’s philosophy of life – something that was central to Epicureanism.
- Enjoy life’s fleeting moments like you would a first kiss. This is an analogy for the fleetingness of life, and of simple pleasures which we should always seize when opportune.

Poem 3:

We All Must Die



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- The language can be a little difficult in this poem. But once this is overcome, it's a very self-explanatory poem.
- It begins in a similar way to Horace's poem "Gather ye Rosebuds". Horace's emphasizes the fleetingness of life and the pointlessness in trying to avoid death. "Alas, dear friend, the fleeting years in everlasting circles run, in vain you spend your vows and prayers, they roll, and ever will roll on."
- The first 5 stanzas reiterate this point, saying how death cannot be avoided and we all must face this end.
- The second last stanza emphasizes another thing: whatever you have in life "your shady groves, your pleasing wife, and fruitful fields..." will be gone and no pleasure to you when you are dead.
- The last stanzas say that what we do not enjoy in life our heirs will instead once we are dead: "the wine you kept with so much care along the marble floor shall flow." Horace is encouraging us to enjoy the simple pleasures of life rather than hoarding them – because we may not have a chance to if we don't.

Glossary:

- **Pluto:** God of the dead, King of the Underworld.
- **Dye:** this is a reference to the blood from the sacrifice dyeing the altar.
- **Inexorable:** impossible to stop.
- **Din:** noise
- **Main:** ocean
- **Sirius:** The brightest star in the sky, usually seen as an omen.
- **Sultry:** hot, humid
- **Stygian:** deathly – from River Styx, river of the dead.
- **Danaus:** Danaus was a mythical king of Libya who had 50 daughters. King Aegyptus came with his 50 sons and forced the girls to marry them. Danaus

ordered them to murder to new husbands on their wedding nights. The daughters were punished in the afterlife for eternity.

- **Cypress:** a tree associated with death and the Underworld.
- **Lavish:** rich, luxurious.

Philosophy:

- The inevitability of death is a focus in all ancient philosophies: particularly in Stoicism and Epicureanism. The unchangeable nature of fate is a particularly strong idea in Stoicism.
- However, this poem also reminds us of Horace's emphasis that we should enjoy the simple pleasures of life rather than others (or our heirs). The wine is an important symbol of the pleasures of life. Pleasure is an Epicurean virtue – Stoicism was rather more anti-pleasure.

Poem 4:

Cease to Mourn



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- In this poem Horace reminds a morning friend that “Not always... from the bursting cloud on ruffled plain descends the rain.” Or not always are things sad – even if when we mourn it might feel so.
- Horace uses a lot of natural imagery as an analogy for the pain and it's passing. He also makes some mythological references to the War of Troy to remind his friend that even those great heroes who lost someone in war did not mourn for long.
- Instead, Horace asks his friend to join the celebrations of the day – the triumphal celebrations of Caesar.

Glossary:

- **Valgius:** a friend of Horace's

- **The Caspian Main:** the Caspian Sea
- **Armenian Shore:** Armenia – east of Turkey in the Caucasus mountains (very cold).
- **Mystes:** someone initiated in the mysteries (religious cult) referring to the woman (girlfriend, sister, daughter?) Valgius lost.
- **Hesper:** The evening star.
- **Phosphor:** the morning star.
- **Ilion:** Troy
- **Nestor and Antilochus:** Nestor was the oldest general in the Trojan war (with many sons), Antilochus was one of his sons who fought and died in the war.
- **Phrygian:** Trojan.
- **Troilus:** A Prince of Troy who was killed by Achilles.
- **Caesar's Trophies:** Presumably the triumphal parades that celebrated Augustus Caesar's campaigns.
- **Niphates:** mountains in Armenia.
- **Euphrates:** a river in the middle east (border of Roman empire with the Parthian Kingdom).
- **Median:** Persian or Parthian.

Philosophy:

- The philosophy is very similar to the previous poems. If death is inevitable, then why should we fear it? And when we lose someone, rather than wasting away with mourning, Horace encourages us to embrace the positives and enjoy life.
- This is related to the concepts of death in both Stoicism and Epicureanism.
- The emphasis on friendship (Horace's address a friend directly) and on enjoying the pleasures life presents us is more Epicurean.

Poem 5:

The Good Man Need Fear Nothing



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- This poem is a very simple poem in many ways.
- Horace argues that if a man is happy and at peace with themselves – at peace with their own soul – then they need not fear tyranny or death. Even “if in fragments were shattered the world, him its ruin would strike undismayed.”

Glossary:

- **Auster:** the south wind and the wind of storms.

Philosophy:

- Ancient Philosophies, both Stoicism and Epicureanism, preoccupy themselves with overcoming fear by enlightening the soul. Stoicism in particular rationalises that death and pain are inevitable because they believe all life is pre-destined. So, there is nothing we can do about these evil things beyond our control.
- Epicureanism on the other hand focuses on the attainment of personal enlightenment and tranquillity of the mind/soul and body as a means to ensure pure happiness. If one does this one need not worry about tyranny or death.

Poem 6:

Enjoy Your Possession While They Are Yours



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- Similar to other poems of Horace, this poem argues that we must enjoy the pleasures of our lives while we may: “While age, and wealth, and the black fateful threads of the three Sisters join to suffer us.” These threads are the

threads of life that intertwine while we live and will be cut by the three sisters, or Fates, when we die.

- Horace uses the delightful imagery of wine and the garden as a way to encourage us to enjoy what we can before we die “and he will seize upon the hoarded gold” that we neglected to use in life for our own pleasure and happiness.

Glossary:

- **Poplar:** a type of tree.
- **Unguent:** perfume.
- **Three Sisters:** the three Fates.
- **Threads:** the thread of life that the Sisters cut when we die.
- **Tiber:** the River that runs through Rome and Latium (land around Rome).

Philosophy:

- This poem is again another mix of Epicureanism and Stoicism. The Epicureans encourage us to enjoy the simple pleasures of life such as nature and wine to ensure our own happiness, while the Stoics remind us that all of us are fated to die and cannot avoid it.

Poem 7:

Ode to Spring



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- This poem is full of natural analogies for life and death – or pathetic fallacy (when the weather reflects a mood).
- Horace talks of Spring and contrasts it with the other seasons: “Treads of Summer sure to die, for hard on hers comes Autumn... then back to wintertide: when nothing stirs.”
- In contrast to the fleetingness of Summer and Autumn and the cold nothingness of winter (analogies for life and death), Spring is full of imagery of youth, nature, and life.

- Horace reminds us that the joys of Spring are temporary: “The swift hour and the brief prime of the year say to the soul, *Thou wast not born for aye.*”
- This reflects Horace’s previous poems and philosophy which discussed the shortness of life, inevitability of death, and how we must enjoy the present while we can.
- The second half of the poem primarily deals with the past – the mythological and legendary origins of Rome. He references the ancient kings and founders of Rome now “dust and dreams.” And the legendary hero of the republic Torquatus, now gone. Horace reminds us of the past, which is now passed, so he can encourage us to make the most of life: “Feast then thy hear, for what thy heart has had the fingers of no heir will ever hold.”
- Once more Horace reminds us that what we do not enjoy in life another may – for we cannot take these pleasure with us in death. “Not thy long lineage nor they golden tongue, no, nor they righteousness, shall friend thee more.” All that made us great men in life (politics and virtues) are no use to us in death.
- In the end we will be like Hippolytus or Pirithous: dead.

Glossary:

- **Nymphs and Graces:** Beautiful magical women.
- **Thou wast not born for aye:** You were not born to live forever.
- **Tullus and Ancus:** Kings of Rome.
- **Aeneas:** Legendary Trojan hero who fled to Latium, Italy, from Troy as it was sacked and whose descendants founded Rome.
- **Torquatus:** Famous and legendary Roman General from the Republic – idolised by the Romans for his virtue.
- **Hippolytus:** the legendary son of Theseus, King of Athens. He was a virgin follower of Diana (Artemis). He was killed when his father Theseus wrongly accused him of seducing his wife, Phaedra.
- **Theseus and Pirithous:** both were chained to seats in the Underworld by Pluto as punishment for attempted to steal Proserpina (Persephone) – Plutos wife. Theseus was eventually freed by Herakles but Pirithous was left behind.

Philosophy:

- The philosophy of this poem very nicely sums up the other poems (**N.B. This makes this poem very useful – it also comes up as a single poem question.**): Life (Spring) is short, Death (winter) is inevitable, so enjoy the pleasures of life (Spring) while you may, because in death you won’t enjoy any of it – you’ll be like Hippolytus or Pirithous. What you don’t enjoy an heir will.
- This is a very Epicurean poem as Horace encourages us to seek pleasure but insists that the virtues of our lives (are political achievements) will not affect our death. Stoicism believed all virtuous returned to god. Epicureans believed the only virtue was joy in simple pleasures.

Poem 8:

A Quiet Life



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- Horace begins this poem by listing all those who desire a quiet life but have not one: the sailor: "Show me at sea the boldest there who does not wish for quiet here."; the soldier: "For quiet, my friend, the soldier fights."; Politicians and the rich: "since wealth and power too weak we find to quell the tumults of the mind". The images of storms and tumults (confused noise) is the opposite of the tranquil life that Horace believes all men strive for.
- "Happy the man with little blest." This man, who has little in life, has less to worry his mind and can more easily find peace.
- "What then in life which soon must end can all our vain designs intend? From shore to shore why should we run, when none his tiresome self can shun?" Nothing we do in life, such as running all over the world, can help us escape our problems "for baneful care will still prevail and overtake us under said."
- Instead Horace says we should "If then thy soul rejoice today, Drive far tomorrow's cares away. In laughter let them all be drowned; no perfect good is to found." We must strive for happiness and forget our worries.
- "One mortal feel fate's sudden blow, another's lingering death comes slow; and what of life they take from thee the gods may give to punish me." Death comes suddenly and unexpected. What you think is good is not good to Horace: One may enjoy "wealthy stock, a fertile glebe, a fruitful flock, horses and chariots for thine ease, rich robes to deck and make thee please." Some enjoy the rich luxuries. But Horace says that "For me, a little cell I choose, fit for my mind, fit for my Muse, which soft content does best adorn, shunning the knaves and fools I scorn." Horace means he rejects the rich and wealthy and chooses a simple modest life away from those who indulge in luxuries.

Philosophy:

- Living a simple life is very much a concept in both Stoicism and Epicureanism. However, there is a slight difference. Stoics believed one should live in simple poverty (no pleasures) and dedicate oneself to philosophy or society. Epicureans believed one should live a simple life with simple pleasures. A Stoic would sit in poverty and say it is the most virtuous life; an Epicurean would instead say that you should find enjoyment in what little we have.
- Horace is probably favouring the Epicurean here: enjoy the quiet life and be happy. Life is short and the best way to enjoy it is in the simple things: the quiet life.

Poem 9:

Rustic Joys



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Notes:

- Similar to Horace's support for the Quiet Life, Horace believes that the country life is the better place to find this peace.
- "Blest as the immortal Gods is he who lives from toilsome business free, life the first race in Saturn's reign when floods of nectar stained the main;" Those who live of the land can live in peace like those in the Golden Age of man.
- "Whom no contracted debts molest, no griping creditors infest. No trumpet's sound, no soldier's cries, drive soft slumbers from his eyes... no boisterous tempest sweep the surface of the boiling deep, him no contentious suits in law from his beloved retirement draw, he ne'er with forced submission waits, obsequious, at his patron's gates." The man from the country can be free from debt, free from the toils of war and the sea, and free from law suits and from the need to work for their patron (local politician) – free from politics.
- Horace instead goes into a long description of the ideals of living in the country with nature: "Where rivulets gently purl along and, murmuring, balmy sleep prolong, whilst each musician of the grove lamenting warbles out his love, in

pleasing dreams he cheats the day unhurt by Phoebus' fiery rays." An image of a country man resting beneath a tree (grove) sleeping and listening to birds and the river. An ideal life of peace in contrast to the life of a soldier, sailor, or politician.

- Horace also discusses the joys of hunting in winter before coming home to the warm pleasures of "a frugal, chaste, industrious wife." Who will "heap the fire and milk the kine, and crown the bowl with new-pressed wine, and waiting for her weary lord."
- Horace rejects the "dainties" or luxurious foods favouring instead "herbs of which the forest nigh wholesome variety supply."
- He then talks of the feast days, when the farmer sacrifices the lambs killed by wolves to the gods and enjoys the meat left-over. And he talks of the farmer enjoying his cattle and working the fields with his slaves.
- The last verse, however, warns that not all who praise and live such a life really mean it – Alfius is the example given who praised the rural life, bought some land, "but still desires of sordid gain fixed in his cankered breast remain: next month he sets it out again." In other words, the country life can be abused by those who seek profit. Through happiness in the country life is for those who are seeking little but peace.

Glossary:

- **Saturn's reign:** Saturn (Cronos) was the father of Jupiter (Zeus). It is often believed that he ruled over the Golden Age of mankind when man suffered no pain, illness, or death.
- **Sabines:** a Italian people from just south of Rome in the Apennine mountains and who lived a rustic/frugal life.

Philosophy:

- The philosophy of this poem is very Epicurean influenced. Horace rejects all the political lives that Stoics say are best – those dedicated to the state – and instead says we should enjoy the simple life of the country, at peace and away from turmoil. Horace believes that the happiest life is one at peace in the country. It is no coincidence that Epicurus' school in Athens was called the *Garden*.
- The Stoics did also believe that a life of the country was an ideal life – but they also believed that a life dedicated to the state was the best and most virtuous life; Horace seems to reject this in favour of a life of quiet personal solitude.

Satires

Ancient Satire is a genre which has a moral message, criticizes something or someone, and uses a lot of ironic/sarcastic humour. Modern equivalents would be something like *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, or *Ross O' Carrol-Kelly*.

Horace's Satires are very philosophical. However, they are also very humorous and light-hearted.

Your focus should be to know the poems and then to discuss Horace's use of humour and philosophy.

Poem 10:

Journey to Brundisium



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Examples of Humour (Sarcastic criticisms, self-deprecating jokes etc.)

Examples of Horace's value of friendship

Notes:

- This is a kind of mock Odyssey of Horace's from Rome to the port of Brundisium in the South of Italy. The journey was one of the most important journey's of Horace's time. Maecenas, Horace's patron, was travelling to Brundisium as part of Octavian's political party to negotiate with Mark Antony coming from the east in the year 32 B.C. These were to be talks of peace; a means to ensure that another civil war could be avoided – it only worked temporarily.
- Horace's journey is a humorous one: he mocks himself, complains and critiques, and moans for most of the journey. Only the company of his friends is a joy to him.
- Example of Satire in this poem would be Horace's angry complaints and criticisms about the journey, the people, and his ill-fortune, his humorous jibes at himself and others, and his moral praise for friendship. (Criticism, humour, and morals).
- It is important to memorise the journey and be ready to discuss the themes of humour and philosophy.
- Write a summary of the plot of the journey in the section below (use the glossary to help).

Glossary:

- **Heliodorus:** a Greek companion of Horace.
- **Sallied forth:** set out.
- **Aricia:** a town close to Rome.
- **Appii Forum:** a market or travelling stop about 40 miles south of Rome.
- **With bad water mix my cup:** analogy for not mixing with bad company (Romans also mixed water with their wine.)
- **Balk it:** run away.
- **Dainty:** cowardly.
- **Brawl:** fight.
- **The mule:** mules were used to carry ferries around the lake.
- **Mauldin:** drunk.
- **Wights:** a person.
- **Feronia:** a goddess of health.
- **Anxur:** A town 56 miles south of Rome.
- **Maecenas and Cocceius:** patron and friends of Horace – they are part of Octavian's embassy – "the messenger's of peace".
- **Watery humours bleary and sore:** his eyes are bleary and sore.
- **Balsam:** a cream or medicine.
- **Sinuessa:** a city in Campania (Region south of Rome and Latium).
- **Plotius and Varius:** distinguished poets.
- **Mantua:** home town of Virgil.
- **Vulturnus:** a town in Campania

- **Capua:** the largest city in Campania.
- **Beneventum:** another city in Beneventum.
- **Apulian hills:** Apulia is the Southern province of Italy and original home to Horace and his family.
- **Trivicus:** a friend of Horace and his companions.
- **Chaises:** carriages.
- **Canusium:** a town in Apulia which Horace refers to as barbarous and uncivilized.

Summary:

Poem 11:

The Town Mouse And the Country Mouse



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Examples of Horace Humour:

Examples of Horace’s Philosophy:

Carpe Diem:

Simple/Quiet Life:

Death is Inevitable/Life is short:

Notes:

- This is a very simple poem in many ways with a simple message and some light-hearted humour. As with *Journey to Brundisium* the best way to approach the poem is to summarise it, and to find quotes to support the philosophy of Horace.

- Use the space below to write a summary.

Summary:

Note on the Moral/Philosophy of the Poem:

- While on the surface this poem seems to favour the country over the city, the country mouse's life over the city mouse's life, on a closer reading it's not so black and white. Remember that the city mouse talks about the inevitability of death and the need to embrace life – something Horace supports in his other poems. The country mouse is not living this life.
- So, perhaps there is a message for both mice: one should not risk so much and seek glory or luxuries, the other should embrace life more while he can rather than having a "tight hand on his savings."

Poem 12:

The Bore



Quotes – Add any quotes from the poem you feel are useful and relevant.

Examples of Humour:

Notes:

- This poem is a perfect example of Horace's sarcastic humour: Horace harshly describes an arrogant, self-centred, pseudo-intellectual. This is the kind of individual Horace believes to be a hypocrite and amoral. Thus, Horace writes a poem criticising him.
- You should look out for clear examples of Horace's humour: sarcasm, exaggeration (over the top characteristics), or witty remarks or jibes by Horace at the "bore's" expense.

Virgil



Short Bio

Virgil was born in 70 B.C. in the village of Andes near Mantua in northern Italy. He was born to an equestrian family (family from the *Knights* – middle noblemen; not senatorial but wealthy and influential to some degree).

He suffered from ill health most of his life and never entered public office or the military (common practice for ancient Roman noblemen).

Virgil studied in Cremona, Milan, and Rome, studying medicine, rhetoric, and astrology, but abandoning it for **philosophy**, where he studied the philosophy of **Epicureanism**.

Epicureanism is a Hellenistic Greek (Post Alexander the Great) philosophy that was very popular in Ancient Rome. The main principles are:

- All things are made from matter.
- There is no life after death so there is no need to fear it.
- The gods are immortal but do not interfere with man.
- Man should try to emulate the life of the gods by seeking a state of tranquillity free from physical pain.
- One achieved this by having a simple life finding joy in simplicity and isolation from the world of politics, wealth, military, and public life. One ought to be content and happy with oneself.

It is likely that Virgil's family estate was confiscated during the Civil Wars of Octavian and Mark Anthony against Brutus and Cassius (the assassins of Julius Caesar). **Octavian likely confiscated the land upon his return from Italy in 42 B.C.** – having defeated Brutus and Cassius at Philippi – in an attempt to pay off his veterans. This was very common practice.

The loss of Virgil's farm inspired him to write the *Eclogues* between 39 and 38 B.C. His patron may have been Asinius Pollio, a senator, consul in 39 B.C., and historian. The *Eclogues* were **idyllic** and **fantastical** poetry set in **countryside** and depicting an idealised image of **nature** and the **mythological past**. They are inspired by the early Greek genre of Bucolic poetry (Bucolic comes from the Greek for cow).

After the publication of *Eclogues* Virgil became acquainted with **Maecenas**, probably around 37 B.C. Maecenas was a close friend of Octavian and was a great patron of poets during Octavian's (later renaming himself Augustus in 27 B.C., first Emperor of Rome¹) rule in Italy. Maecenas gave Virgil patronage to write **didactic** poems (poems that teach a lesson) on **how to farm**, the *Georgics*; however, the poems also taught much **philosophy on how to**

¹ *Augustus* literally translates to majestic. The word Emperor comes from the term *imperium* which is a Latin word meaning to hold military authority. In the republic this was a temporary honour for Consuls and Praetors, but Augustus retained to authority indefinitely from 27 B.C. Meaning he could retain the command of the army and direct control of several provinces – the senate were given limited control of the less important provinces.

live a happy, prosperous yet simple country life – very Epicurean values. They were written between 37 and 32 B.C. and were likely published in 29 B.C.

Later, Virgil was commissioned by the new Emperor Augustus to write an **epic** poem – a poem that is long, grandiose, telling the tale of a mythological or legendary hero or heroes' adventures and wars – on the life of the new Emperor himself. However, Virgil instead decided to write an epic poem on the ancestor of Augustus' adopted² family – the Julians (the family of Augustus granduncle/adopted father Julius Caesar) – **Aeneas** (ancestor of Romulus and Remus also). And so, he wrote the *Aeneid* for the last 10 years of his life, but never fully completing the work. It is an epic of 12 books telling the story of how Aeneas journeyed from Troy to Italy, passing via Carthage and the Underworld. Virgil asked that the poem be burned upon his death, but Augustus had it published after Virgil's death.

How to Study Virgil:

For the purpose of studying Virgil, you can divide the poems into two categories: the thematic poems (poems focused on themes) and the narrative poems (poems focused on story).

The types of questions are always based on a general theme, use of imagery within that theme, Virgil's ability as a storyteller, or on a specific poem.

If you study Virgil, make sure you study **all** his poems, as any can come up individually on the paper.

Virgil can be the trickiest poet but write some of the most beautiful poems. You will need to use the glossaries provided to help you understand the many mythological references he makes in his poems.

He almost always comes up on the paper and the questions are quite predictable.

² Keep in mind that adoption was very common in Ancient Rome. It was not uncommon for a wealthy nobleman to adopt the son of another as his heir. The adopted male would then have two fathers, his biological father and the new adopted father. It was less about your blood ancestry as the ancestry of your family names.

Thematic Poems

These poems focus more on a general theme or themes rather than characters or narrative. Most of these are useful when discussing Virgil's attitude to nature, the past, or the future. If you keep these themes in mind while studying them, you will easily identify the best quotes to use as evidence when using them to answer an exam question.

Poem 1:

The Song of Silenus – The Eclogues



Quotes – Add any quotes you feel are relevant and useful.

Notes:

- The poem begins with the image of a drunken Silenus.
- Silenus is playfully bound by two satyrs, who demand he sing a song. He does and a flock of fauns, nymphs, and satyrs listen intently.
- Silenus sings of the forming of the world, the forming of the landscape, the early years of mankind under the **Golden Age rule of Saturn**, and Prometheus stealing the fire from Olympus.
- Silenus then sings of a list of other glorious heroes from the mythological past, Atlanta, Phaeton, Scylla, and Philomel.
- In the middle of the poem he mentions the mythological poet, Linus, son of Apollo (the god of music), and references (shout-outs) to his friend Gallus.
- The poem ends with an idyllic image of the country as the cattle move from the fields and the sun sets and the stars come out.

Glossary:

- **Satyrs**: goat men, known for the drunken lustfulness.
- **Silenus**: a god, son of Pan or Hermes, depicted with the tail of a horse, bald, and potbellied. He was to tutor and drinking companion of Dionysus

- **Aegle:** a nymph
- **Nais:** a type of nymph, a river nymph
- **Sylvan:** woods
- **Haemonian:** Thessaly (North Greece)
- **Thracian Bard:** Orpheus, the famous hero and musician, some of Calliope one of the Muses (goddess of the arts)
- **Phoebus:** Apollo (means light)
- **Pindus:** North Greek Mountains
- **Saturn:** father of Jupiter (Cronos in Greek). Roman legend says he ruled over the Golden Age of the earth, when man suffered no illness, pain, or death.
- **Prometheus:** a Titan who stole fire from Olympus and gave it to man.
- **Argonauts:** a group of famous heroes who sailed the ship, the Argo, to retrieve the Golden fleece of a ram sacred to Hera from Colchis; led by Jason.
- **Hylas:** boyfriend of Hercules. While the Argonauts had stopped in north Turkey he was lured away and drown in a pool by nymphs. Hercules left the voyage in search of his lost lover.
- **Atlanta:** famous huntress and athlete who was tricked by Milanion into marrying her.
- **Phaeton:** son of Helios, who tried to ride the chariot sun across the heavens but lost control and was hit by a lightning bolt from Zeus. His sisters cried at his grave and turned into poplars.
- **Po:** river in northern Italy.
- **Linus:** famous legendary musician, a son of Apollo.
- **Hesiod:** a poet who wrote didactic poems, contemporary of Homer.
- **Parian:** marble from the island of Paros.
- **Scylla:** sea monster.
- **Philomel, Tereus, and Procne:** Tereus, king of Thrace, married Philomel, but raped Procne and cut out her tongue so she could not speak of it. Later when Philomel found out, she and her sister cut up the prince, her son, and fed him to her husband. They all turned into birds as Tereus chased the women in his fury.

Main Themes:

Nature: this theme is prominent throughout the poem. Virgil describes the woodland scene at the beginning of the poem, the forming of the countryside, and finishes the poem with a vivid image of the countryside.

Mythological Past: Virgil references many stories from the heroic past in Silenus song. Not always positive, but always wondrous and strange.

Music: the poem is ultimately about music and the power of music to tell stories, depict, natural scenery, and teach lesson on philosophy.

Playfulness: the beginning of the poem shows some playful banter between Silenus and his captures; he is not resentful but jokes with them instead. References the mythological, woodland creatures, also reminds the reader of the playful creatures of the countryside.

Poem 2:

Birth of a Saviour – The Eclogues



Quotes – Add any quotes you feel are relevant and useful.

Notes:

- This poem was thought to have predicted the coming of Christ in the middle ages; this is false.
- At the time Octavian and Mark Antony – the two most powerful men in Ancient Rome – both had pregnant wives. It was also a time when tension was rising between the two powerful generals, and the consul Pollio helped the two negotiate **the Treaty of Brundisium**, which was meant to keep peace between the two. **Virgil is likely hoping that the new generations of these leaders, their sons, would bring an age of peace and prosperity, returning the glories of the past.**
- Virgil mentions the **circle of the ages**, the end of the Sibylline song (books of prophecy) and predicts a new beginning. The **Iron Race** is the negative present, the **Golden Man** of Saturn is the idyllic age of the far past. The child to be born will usher in the New Age, a second Golden Age, completing the cycle.
- **Virgil uses images of nature at peace to show the growth of this peace. Each mention of the child's growth from infancy to adulthood ushers in a new, more peaceful setting.**
- Virgil also references a new Argo and Achilles, he “**great men of the past**” in reference to this heroic past; a past when Rome was great – supposedly greater than the present time.
- Virgil finishes the poem by bragging about his own ability with poetry/music. If the mythological/legendary musicians of the past, Orpheus and Linus, were alive he would out-sing them; if the god Pan were to contest with him, Arcadia – the land sacred to Pan – as a judge, Virgil would win. This is because if Virgil were to live

long enough for this new generation of peace, he would be the equivalent of these poets with worth subject matter.

- He finishes by asking the child to smile when born, as this will mean he is beloved and equal to the gods.

Glossary:

- **Consul:** the highest position in the Roman Republican government; two per term, sharing power, each term one year long.
- **Sibylline:** The Sibyl (prophetess) of Cumae (near Naples) apparently sold books of prophecy to the kings of Rome. These were kept in the temple of Jupiter and referred to when omens of good or evil occurred.
- **Iron Race:** the harsh men who lived in an age of war and strife and immorality.
- **Golden Man:** The Age of Saturn and peace.
- **Lucina:** mother of Apollo, goddess of childbirth (Leto in Greek).
- **Pollio:** Consul of Ancient Rome, historian, and probably the patron of Virgil's poem. It is not uncommon for a poet to praise their patron in their poem as a means of payment/thanks.
- **Tiphys:** helmsman (steers the rudder) of the Argo
- **Argo:** famous ship of Jason and the Argonauts; built by Hera/Juno herself.
- **Achilles:** Hero of the ancient Trojan war.
- **Jove:** Jupiter.
- **Calliope:** one of the Muses (goddesses of the arts), mother of Orpheus.

Main Themes:

Nature: this theme is very heavily used throughout the poem to depict the idyllic future. Each step of the poem has vivid imagery depicting an ideal state of nature. Virgil uses the theme to highlight peace and prosperity.

Mythological Past: less references than *the Song of Silenus*, but some key references. The reference to the idealised past is to emphasis the negative changes that have come over society of Virgil's time and yet may lead to positive changes of peace in the future.

Music: the poem makes a reference to music at the end of the poem, reinforcing Virgil's desire to be the poet of his new Golden Age – however, he seems pessimistic to any possibility it will happen.

Peaceful Future: Virgil's attitude to time is cyclical (it comes in cycles); the past was great, the present is dire, the future may bring peace once again. Ultimately, Virgil is using the other themes, the past, nature, and music, to emphasis the peace of the future – or at least an ideal future of peace which Virgil hopes/prays for.

Poem 3:

Rustic Happiness – The Georgics



Quotes – Add any quotes you feel are relevant and useful.

Notes:

- The Georgics are meant as a promotion of the farmer's life. Farming was traditionally the favoured profession in Roman society. Heroes such as the famous Cincinnatus (and yes Cincinnatus is named after this man) from their past would farm until called to battle.
- However, the poems are more than merely about farming but the nature of the world "teach me the various labours of the moon, and whence the eclipses of the sun proceed". And so, there is a clear philosophical element to the poems.
- The poems were heavily influenced by the works of Hesiod and Lucretius – both didactic poets. The former was a Greek who wrote poetry about the simple country life and the origins of the gods and the war with the Titans. The latter wrote a long didactic poem about the Epicurean philosophy.
- We see this again in Virgil's promotion of the type of live country living can bring in comparison to the city life. Virgil is calling on his readers to live the life of quite seclusion and simple rustic labour instead of the political, military, luxurious wealth-seeking life of the city – the life of most wealthy Romans of this time.
- There is a clear juxtaposition between the two lives, as the farmer's life is simple, ideal, and peaceful.
- There are also references to the past and the superiority of the past Roman times when Roman's embraced simpler values.

Glossary:

- **Bacchanals:** song/dance to Bacchus (Dionysus)
- **Haemus:** Thracian Mountains.
- **Tempe:** valley in Thessaly (northern Greece) visited by Apollo and the Muses.
- **Lucretius:** An Epicurean and poet.
- **Tumults:** fights.
- **Lucre:** shiny money.
- **Citron:** fruit.
- **Tyrian:** from Tyre, Phoenicia; usually as sign of luxury.
- **Ricks:** haystack.
- **Ewes:** female sheep.
- **Oblation:** offering.
- **Sabines:** a tribe from central Italy who were integrated into the Roman society.
- **Remus:** co-founder of Rome and brother of the first Roman King, Romulus.
- **Etrurian:** land of the Etruscans, people north of Latium (Rome); they had a huge influence on Roman culture. Some of the kings of Rome were also apparently Etruscan.

Main Themes:

The Philosophy of Country-life/simple values: the most important message of the poem is the benefits to the self of a simple life of labour on the farm in opposition to the pains of the fast-paced life of the city and the public life. Virgil promotes the peace and simple prosperity of the farmer.

Corruption: in contrast to the values of country living is the corruption of the current political and social climate of Rome. Virgil believes people of the time are selfish, greedy, vain, and power hungry. He believes this will only damage themselves.

Past: the references to the past are there to reinforce the value of Virgil's preferred life. He believes the simple times of early Rome are of more personal value than the current climate. And so, he makes references to this life.

Poem 4:***A Farmer's Calendar – The Georgics***

Quotes – Add any quotes you feel are relevant and useful.

Notes:

- This poem reinforces many of the ideas promoted in *Rustic Happiness*. Virgil begins with a description of the Farmers year, moving through summer, winter, autumn,

and spring. For each season he describes another benefit of the simple farmer's life, the joys of simple labour, the rest and festivities of winter, etc.

- He also promotes the value of connecting with nature, the early hours and the views of the shining stars of the cosmos.
- In the second part of the poem, Virgil emphasises the power of nature, describing the power of a storm and flood that can be sent by Jove, destroying all that is good.
- Virgil means to emphasize the respect one should have for the natural world, the rewards and the dangers – however, the overall impression is a positive one.

Main Themes:

Country-life/simple values: the focus of the poem is the farmer's life, the routine, the family, the labour, the benefits.

The Power of Nature: the power of the natural world to undo what the human world has tried to achieve.

Narrative Poems

These poems have a narrative running through them – sometimes a full narrative (story) other times only part of the story. They are also different because they have character or characters playing a role in the narrative. The focus is usually on how Virgil builds his story, or creates compassion or empathy for the characters, or how he creates atmosphere in his story. However, they also carry on the themes of Virgil's other poems such as nature or mythology and can be used to answer thematic questions also.

Poem 5:

Orpheus and Eurydice – The Georgics



Quotes – Add any quotes you feel are relevant and useful.

Notes:

- Virgil begins his poem/story with the death of Eurydice; he begins with the tragedy early so that the reader can immediately appreciate the suddenness of Eurydice's death; Eurydice, who died so young.
- Virgil then emphasises the variety of landscapes Orpheus journey's through in his lament – the hills, mountains, beaches, etc. Again, he uses the natural world to emphasise the harshness of Eurydice and Orpheus' fate.
- Orpheus then comes to the entrance of the Underworld in Taenarus, the most southern tip of mainland Greece and enters into the Underworld.
- There the shades gather round him in their millions as he sings – Virgil compares them to flocks of birds hiding among the leaves on a tree and scattering in the rain. He describes all the shades as being of every gender and class and age.

- Virgil then briefly describes the horrific scenery of the Underworld, the Cocytus, the Styx; and as Orpheus sings the Furies, Cerberus, Ixion's wheel, and all else is shook or stops their usual demonic practices.
- Virgil moves directly to Orpheus return here, mentioning the condition that Persephone had – that he not look back or Eurydice before they have left the Underworld. Orpheus journeys up and as he reaches the upper world, he forgets and in a moment of doubt looks back.
- Eurydice is then pulled back down into hell, taken across the Styx; she calls out and asks why and who has condemned her to her fate a second time.
- The ferryman, Charon, refuses to allow Orpheus to cross into Erebus a second time.
- From there, Orpheus travels the lands in lament; the natural world once again feeling his pain as he sings his “dirge” (sad song). He weeps beneath the mountain near the “lonely waters of Strymon”, he travels through Artic ice, the “snows of Tanais”, and over the “Riphaean plateaux”.
- Orpheus song of grief is compared to a nightingale who – having made her nest in the long grass – has her chicks ripped from their nest by a passing plough, digging up the field. She “weeps all night, on a branch repeating the piteous song”.
- The poem ends with a group of Thracian Bacchantes (female followers of the god Bacchus – god of wine and revelry or wild frenzying) tearing him limb from limb, jealous of his neglect of them. They throw his head into the river Hebrus – the head floats down the River still calling “Eurydice!”

Glossary:

- **Rhodope:** mountain range in northern Greece.
- **Pangaea:** entire earth.
- **Rhesus:** A King of Thrace (Bulgaria).
- **Getae:** a Thracian Tribe.
- **Hebrus:** Thracian river (river god).
- **Orithyia:** An Athenian who was abducted by the North Wind (Boreas) from Attica to Thrace. Goddess of the cold North Wind.
- **Taenarus:** the path to the Underworld, a sea cave located at the most southern tip of mainland Greece, south of Sparta.
- **Cocytus:** the swampish river of wailing in the Underworld.
- **Styx:** the river of the dead that surrounded the Underworld 9 times. 4 Underworld rivers (Cocytus and Styx included) converge to create a marsh.
- **Furies:** The Furies were three goddesses of vengeance who lived in the Underworld, particularly in Tartarus where they would punish wrong doers. They were born from the drops of blood that hit the earth when Saturn castrated Uranus.
- **Cerberus:** three headed watchdog of hell, with snakes for fur.
- **Ixion:** Ixion, who had been invited to dine on Olympus, lusted after Hera at the dinner. Zeus condemned Ixion to be attached to a burning wheel of fire for eternity and was sent to Tartarus – the Hell of the Underworld.
- **Proserpine:** Roman name for Persephone, Demeter/Ceres daughter and wife to Hades/Pluto. Queen of the Underworld.
- **Avernus:** a lake at the entrance to the Underworld in Cumae in Italy, near the bay of Naples.

- **Strymon:** Thracian River.
- **Tanais:** a Greek city on the River Don in modern Russia.
- **Riphaean:** unknown mountain range.

Main Themes:

Love: the passionate love of Orpheus and Eurydice that goes beyond death is a central theme. Virgil uses this theme to build empathy for his two central characters, as all the shades and evil of the Underworld are overcome by Orpheus' longing for the one he loves.

Music: the power of music of poetry is very evident. Orpheus uses his music to sing of his lament – to comparison to the nightingale song is an example – and this music allows him to achieve what others could not: journey to the Underworld and back again.

Loss/Death: perhaps the most obvious theme is the theme of loss or death. The poem begins with Eurydice's death and continues to depict Orpheus' grief. The poem is ultimately about death and the pain that ensues from it. The world of the dead is described in detail; the inability of Orpheus to accept his lover's fate is a central aspect of the story. Orpheus own death at the end is ultimately because he could not accept the death of Eurydice, thus incurring the wrath of others. His loss again even more apparent as his head continues to call her name posthumously.

Nature: a minor theme in this poem, but there are examples where Virgil compares things to nature, the number of shades to birds for example. Virgil always uses vivid images of nature to enhance the experience of his poetry.

Poem 6:

The Underworld – The Aeneid



Quotes – Add any quotes you feel are relevant and useful.

Notes:

- This poem is part of the larger poem by Virgil, the Aeneid. In book 6 of this epic poem, the hero, Aeneas, journeys into the Underworld. He is accompanied by the priestess and prophetess of Apollo in Cumae (near Naples), the Sibyl.
- They journey down into the “lodges of King Dis”(Pluto).
- At first they come into the opening chamber which is filled with the different woes, care, or troubles of mankind: vengeful cares, Disease, Eld (olde age), Fear, Poverty, Hunger, Death, Toil, Sleep, and Discord. Among these are also the Furies.
- Following on from here they come to a place where a “huge black knotted elm” stands; to it’s leaves cling Vain Dreams (unfulfilled dreams).
- Surrounding this elm are shades or ghostly imitations of wild monsters: Centaurs, Scyllas, Briareus (a giant), Lerna (Hydra), Chimera, the Gorgons (Medusa), and Harpies. Aeneas goes to attack these but is stopped by the Sibyl.
- From here they journey to the river Acheron, a “vast flood of thick and restless slime.” Here the ferrymen Charon carries the dead over into the Underworld.
- He is described as “That wild and filthy pilot of the marsh, Charon, from whose rugged old chin trails down the hoary beard of centuries: his eyes are fixed, but flame. His grimy cloak hangs loose rough-knotted at the shoulder: his own hands Pole on the boat, or tend the sail that wafts his dismal skiff and its fell freight along. Ah, he is old, but with that toughening eld that speaks his godhead”.
- At the bank there are many shades – shades of all kinds of people (like Orpheus and Eurydice) lingering, some crossing other forced to remain. Virgil compares their number to the “Many as leaves that fall gently in autumn when sharp cold comes or all the birds that flock at the turn o’ the year over the ocean to the lands of light.” (similar to Orpheus and Eurydice).
- Aeneas asks why some stay and others go. The Sibyl replies that only those who have been buried may embark on Charon’s ferry; the others – unburied – must remain on the dismal shore for 100 years before they can cross.

Glossary:

- **Dis:** Pluto/Hades – god and King of the Underworld.
- **Jove:** Jupiter/J Zeus.
- **Orcus:** the Underworld.
- **Eld:** Old Age.
- **Furies:** goddesses of vengeance.
- **Centaurs:** Half man half horse.
- **Scylla:** Sea monster with dogs heads round her belly and many long necks. Eats passing sailors.
- **Briareus:** hundred armed giant who helped Jupiter overcome the Titans.
- **Lerna:** the lake which was home to the Hydra – a snakelike beast who grows three heads when one is chopped off; Hercules defeated it.
- **Chimera:** Monster with Lions body, a goats head coming from its side, and a snake as a tail. It can also breath fire.
- **Gorgons:** three serpent like sisters with snakes for hair; Medusa was the most famous.
- **Harpies:** half bird, half woman.
- **Sibyl:** Prophetess of Cumae, Priestess of Apollo, and guide for Aeneas in the Underworld.

- **Acheron:** River of the Underworld.
- **Cocytus:** River of Underworld.
- **Charon:** ferryman of the dead
- **Anchises:** father of Aeneas who had died some years before Aeneas journeyed to the Underworld. Aeneas visited the Underworld because the shade of Anchises commanded him to do so.

Main Themes:

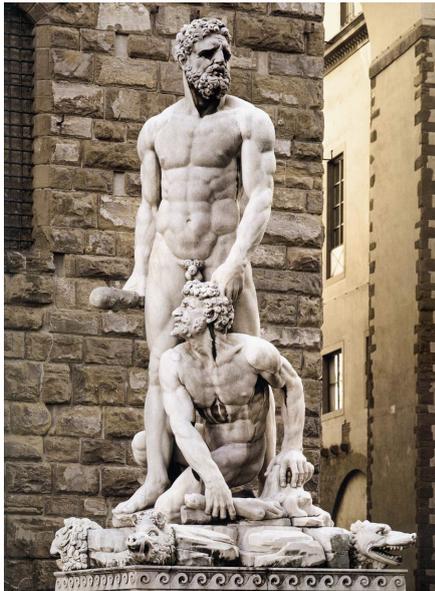
Death: this theme is fairly self-explanatory. Aeneas is visiting the realm of the dead.

Horror/Gloom: Virgil attempts to paint a picture that is gloomy and horrific, a terrifying realm where the dead live. He does this gradually by listing in detail all the horrors that reside there.

Nature: a minor theme; however, Virgil does detailed imagery of nature in this poem in comparison with the shades or in describing the rivers.

Poem 7:

Hercules and Cacus – The Aeneid



Quotes – Add any quotes you feel are relevant and useful.

Notes:

- This poem is part of the larger poem by Virgil, the Aeneid. In book 8 of this epic poem, the hero, Aeneas, journeys to Latium (the land surrounding Rome) several hundred years before Rome is to be founded. On arrival he goes to war with the

Latins and must find allies. He goes to find allies, finding them in a city of Greek colonists near the site of future Rome, near the Palatine Hill (one of the hills of Rome). While visiting there Aeneas celebrates an annual festival with them, and their king Evander, tells the tale of why they celebrate the festival, the tale of Hercules and Cacus.

- Evander begins the tale by saying that they pay the “yearly rites” on this day. He points out a high rock in the distance. This rock, once upon a time, had a cave, and in this cave lived a son of Vulcan, a half-man, Cacus.
- He describes Cacus as follows: “terrible to look at... black fire pouring from mouth and nostrils, a bulk of moving evil.
- We are then introduced to the hero Hercules, who is returning from a far off mission to capture the cattle of the three bodied giant, Geryon. Hercules herds the cattle into the valley and river. And while lingering there, Cacus decides to steal four bulls and four heifers from the impressive herd.
- Cacus drags them by their tails and pulls them into his cave backwards, so their footprints appear to be facing forward; so that it looks like the cattle came out rather than went in.
- As Hercules made to move his cattle from the valley – not having noticed the missing ones – some of the cattle lowed to those in the cave and the others lowed back.
- “Black bile burned hot in Hercules” (who is known for his frenzied wrath) and he grabbed his weapons, and his club, and rushed up the mountain towards the cave.
- Cacus swiftly shut himself into his cavern, dropping a great boulder over the entrance.
- Hercules flung his “angry strength against it, to no purpose”. “This way he faced, and that, and gnashed his teeth in sheer frustration: he wen round the mountain three times, in burning rage, three times he battered the bulkhead of the door, three times he rested...”
- Hercules thought of a new plan. There was a pointed rock overhanging the top of the mountain on a ridge. Hercules grabbed this, shook it, and hurled it down atop the mountain side, breaking a hole into the cavern – “Cacus’ den stood open, that great palace under the rock, the chambered vault of shadows”.
- Virgil compares his lair to what “an earthquake might bring to light”... the “kingdom of the world below the world, pallid regions loathed by the gods, the gulf of gloom, where phantoms shiver and quake, as light descends upon them.
- Cacus roared and howled in his cave, he – in desperation – breathed fire from his mouth “a cloud of smoke rolled out of his jaws; the cave darkened to utter blackness, thich night rolling with fitful glint of fire.
- Hercules “in his fury” jumped down through the fire, “where smoke come rolling forth the thickest, where the black hollows seethed around the cavern.
- Hercules grabbed Cacus in the darkness and choked him “till the eyes bulged out and the throat was dry of blood.”
- Hercules broke open the chamber and dragged out Cacus body: “For the gaze of man, the terrible eyes, the muzzle, the hairy chest, and the fire dead in the gullet.”
- Evander finishes his tale with: “Ever since then we keep this day, rejoicing in honour of our deliverance.”
-

Glossary:

- **Evander:** A King of Pallanteum – ally of Aeneas.
- **Geryon:** a three bodied, headed, and six legged giant who owned a divine herd of cattle. Hercules had to steal the cattle for his 10th labour.
-

Main Themes:

Monsters: Cacus.

Civilizing: Hercules' fame as a hero is his ability to rid the world of uncivilized, monstrous things.

Nature: a minor theme; however, Virgil does detailed imagery of nature in this poem when describing the natural setting; thus enhancing the reader's experience of the story.