

# *Building Bridges from Rome to the Present—Latin and the Senses*

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This presentation, stressing the essential human qualities of the culture being studied, examines short passages of Latin literature which involve sense impressions that reflect universal experiences of humankind. Specific pictures, objects, and sounds will be introduced as reinforcement to the recognition and use of the words, sentences, and passages from the great Roman authors. Such exercises can help students to understand and identify with people of the ancient world.

Good literature does not tell us; it shows us. These passages do not describe the sense impressions: they evoke them. In each section:

1) read aloud the Latin literature passage, then the simple Latin paraphrase, examining the pictures or objects. (To save time the samples called for in III, IV, and V can be handed around at the beginning).

2) Next comes a second reading of the passage.

3) Written questions are in English because, while simple facts are relatively easy to express in a foreign language, feelings can be very difficult. Students write English answers to the questions for each passage. These can be read aloud, then Latin comments and impressions can be given by students.

## I) Visus:

### 1) *Horace Odes 4,7*

**Diffugere nives, redeunt iam gramina campis  
Arboribusque comae**

*(The following explanation uses simple Latin. The teacher can point to the nix, gramen, and canis so that the students will comprehend as much as possible without English)*

**In pictura una, canis est in nive. In pictura dua, gramen, non nix, est in terra.**

**Nives diffugere[diffugerunt]. Gramina redeunt. In pictura una, color terrae est alba.**

**In pictura dua, gramen in terra est viridis. Folia, comae arborum, quoque sunt virida.**

*(Draw a stick figure for the tree; The poet Kilmer says that leaves are a tree's hair)*



Reread the passage, defining words students do not yet understand.

## I. Question:

a) Why does Horace use the phrase **gramina redeunt**, not **gramina veniunt**?

b) What do the two pictures and Horace's words express about the world we live in ?

## II) Auditus:

### *Catullus 3: 9-10*

#### 2) *Passer*

**Sed circumsiliēns modo hūc modo illūc  
Ad sōlam dominam usque pīpiābat.**



**Passer est avis parva. Puella avem amat. Avis puellam quae est  
domina eius amat. Circumsilit et ad puellam pipiabat.**

After reading the poem and the simple paraphrase, read the passage again, defining words students do not yet understand.

#### II Question:

- How does the first line express by sound what the bird is doing?
- The second line?

## III) Tactus:

### 3) *Catullus' Sirmio Cat. 31: 9,10*

**Labore fessi venimus larem ad nostrum  
Desideratoque acquiescemus lecto.**

**Vir laboravit; vir fessus est; dormire cupit. Domum [larem] venit et in lecto dormit.**

Revisit passage with definitions.

Ancient beds were very different from ours. This picture shows one idea of the bedroom of Aeneas the Trojan.

Our bedclothes are synthetic blends. Roman ones were not. Feel of and examine the linen and cotton squares and try to imagine the "feel" of this Roman's couch.

*(Provide COTTON & LINEN SQUARES for examination)*

#### III. Question:

- Explain the relationship of the words "fessi labore" in the first line and "desiderato lecto" in the second.
- Why does the bed feel especially good?



## IV) Gustatus:

### 4) *Philemon et Baucis cenam ponunt. Ovid Meta. 8: 674-677*

Hic nux, hic mixta est rugosis carica palmis  
Prunaque et in patulis redolentia mala canistris  
Et de purpureis collectae vitibus uvae.  
Candidus in medio favus est.

(Provide DICED DATES, FIGS, WALNUTS, APPLES, GRAPES, or HONEYCOMB or picutres)

Cena est. Nuces, caricae, palmae, pruna, mala, uvae, in canistris sunt,  
et favus in medio est.

(In this reading, hold up the foods as they are named).

Read the passage again. Small portions of a few foods are needed for distributing and tasting. Ask the students to sniff the food before they eat as a preparation for the next sense.

### IV Question:

- What two colors are named in the passage? (They are in the last two lines).
- What kind of contrasting mental picture do they make?
- What one word could describe the taste of all but the nuts?

## V) Odoratus:

*Foods above*

### 5) *From Horace Ode 2.3*

Huc vina et unguenta et nimium brevis  
Flores amoenae ferre jube rosae  
Dum res et aetas et sororum  
Fila trium patiuntur atra.

(Provide SWEET OILS ON COTTON NATURAL & DERIVED THREADS)



Horace dixit, "Vina, unguenta, rosas portate. Dum possumus, nasibus nostris fruamur illis, quod vita brevis est et tria fata omnibus hominibus veniunt."

Read the passage again. This quote is more complicated, and includes a full poetic idea rather than just a sense impression.

### V Question:

- Horace is famous for his CARPE DIEM poem. What does "carpe diem" mean?
- How does this poem fit with that idea?
- Why is the "nimium brevis flores amoenae rosae" especially fitting here?
- Horace obviously associates the sense of smell with pleasure. What other uses has it?

## VI) Catella Publi Martial 1. 109, 8-9:

*Collō nīxa cubat capitque somnōs,  
Ut suspīria nūlla sentiantur.*



**Catella Publi parva est. In collo Publi catella cubat et dormit. Timida non est; infelix non est, quod Publius adest.**

### VI Question:

- How many senses are employed in the picture? Explain
- Here we have gone from simple sense impressions to feelings toward another creature and interpretation of its feelings. Explain.

### Activities for all sections:

- read each quote while looking at the picture, action, drawing or objects.
- restate each quote in very simple Latin
- re-read and discuss quote
- answer the questions in each section.
- Students may write a simple English sentence describing sense impressions about each passage; then, with the use of a Latin dictionary, try to express these in Latin.

## VII) Latin phrases in modern use – students can identify with the persons

Draw stick figures for the following:

### 9) Culpa est mea

*(one figure with head bowed before another)* Eram mala; culpa est mea.

### 10) Persona non grata

*(one figure pointing another toward the door)* Discede! Tu es non grata.

### 11) Condemnant quod non intellegunt [Quintilian –first public school teacher]

*(two figures shaking their fingers at a third.)*

**“Tu es mala.” “Sed causae erant, quas non intellegitis.”**

In this section give time for going back to write answers and to discuss them.