

A Level OCR Latin Set Texts Guide

Pliny, Letters (Selections)

A Level Prose Literature (Group 2) 2025–2026

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Introduction for Teachers

About this guide

This guide is intended to help candidates with the prose section (Pliny option) of Latin A Level H443 for examination in 2025 and 2026. The Latin set text for Pliny is *Letters of Pliny: A Selection* by Carl Hope, published by Bloomsbury. It has a general introduction and supporting notes which should be read in conjunction with this guide. This guide will steer learners through the translation of the *Letters* and set each in its context together with discussion of Pliny's style.

Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

The selection prescribed from the *Letters of Pliny* is:

Pliny, *Letters* 1.9, 3.16, 4.2, 4.19, 8.8, 8.16, 8.17, 9.6
English: Pliny, *Letters* 1.12, 2.6, 2.20, 3.14, 5.8, 7.5, 9.12

Expectation from the examination board

The **expectation** of learners, as set out in the OCR specification, is that they are able to:

1. demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of the prose set texts studied
2. understand and appreciate the literary context from which the set texts have been taken by reading an appropriate selection of ancient literature in English translation
3. understand and appreciate, as appropriate, the social, cultural and historical contexts for the set texts, their authors and audiences
4. identify, analyse and evaluate literary techniques, characterisation, strength of argument and literary meaning in the set texts
5. use appropriate technical terms in English to describe the literary techniques and features of the set texts
6. demonstrate appropriate historical and/or cultural knowledge when necessary for the understanding or evaluation of a given phrase, sentence or passage
7. appropriately select relevant information from the material studied to support their argument and analyse and summarise their findings
8. present relevant information in a clear, concise and coherent manner while writing at length, using appropriate terminology in English

In addition, learners will be **required to**:

1. understand and respond to passage(s) from a set text
2. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the wider context of a set text
3. translate passage of each set text into English
4. critically analyse the literary style, characterisation, argument and literary meaning of a passage from a set text
5. write at length, drawing upon a study of a set text as well as material studied in translation

The text of Pliny's *Letters* in this guide is taken from the R A B Mynors 1963 edition, which entered public domain in January 2020. All of Pliny's *Letters* can be found at: <http://www.attalus.org/info/pliny.html> The text has been subsequently checked to match the Bloomsbury edition.

The main aim of this guide is to complement, rather than replace, the prescribed edition. The *Letters* are presented as a whole (with the exception of the longer *Letters* 3.16 and 8.8) with a translation, grammar and translation notes, and context and style notes on each Letter. At the end of the guide, the *Letters* are arranged by themes and wider topics are discussed. There are also sample questions based on the different tariffs with a suggested Mark Scheme.

Translation and Grammar

The translations in this guide attempt to give the basic meaning. Latin sometimes omits words, or uses them in two senses, necessitating additions to the translation to bring out the full meaning. As learners at this level will be aware, Latin is constructed differently from English, and sometimes this makes strictly literal translation difficult, but the translation tries to keep as close as possible to the text for examination purposes.

Note that alternative translations or bracketed versions are **not accepted** by OCR unless they are equivalent, so always prefer the literal version to be on the safe side, unless it is clearly stated that marks will be given for good English. Learners should also check their answers carefully to ensure that all the words in the passage are translated, particularly 'small words'.

The Bloomsbury text has its focus on the grammar. In this guide, to help learners understand the translation, some grammar notes have been included. These are not intended to be a full word-by-word analysis but to try to explain how the translation has been achieved and to help learners construe some of the Latin for themselves.

Candidates will not be required to comment on grammar and syntax in the examination.

Stylistic Analysis

Candidates **will** be expected to comment on features of Pliny's style. It is most important for students to quote all the Latin words when illustrating stylistic points (i.e. don't put the first and last words with dots in between), and to offer a translation or at least to show that they have understood fully the meaning of words or phrases used as examples. It may make it clearer to examiners to write out a line and underline words or even letters which support a point. In addition, use a **range** of stylistic examples: four examples of alliteration do not gain 4 marks.

June 2023

Pliny: A biography

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus is also known as Pliny the Younger. He was born in Comum (modern day Como), which is in the north of Italy. Pliny lived during some of the most important years of the Roman Empire. Born in AD 61 or 62, when Nero was emperor, he was the youngest son of a senator. He became a senator (a class of Roman society with wealth of one million sesterces) in AD 88. His mother's brother was the famous naturalist Pliny the Elder, and, as a young man, he witnessed the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 when his uncle was killed, trying to organise the evacuation of the (wealthier) communities on the slopes of the volcano. Inheriting his uncle's name, Pliny the Younger enjoyed a successful career as a public official.

As with many members of the senatorial class, Pliny was a wealthy landowner. Some of his success was due to the fact that his uncle had worked closely with the emperor Nero. Pliny experienced difficult times when the emperor Domitian was on the throne, but he worked successfully with the emperor Trajan. Pliny's skills were in civil engineering rather than the military, and he was especially experienced in hydraulics. He followed the *cursus honorum* (promotional tree for senators) and became *consul* in AD 100. In AD 111 Pliny was sent by the Emperor Trajan to Bithynia, which is modern north-west Turkey, where he died in AD 113.

We know so much about Pliny and his life from letters which he wrote to his friends and family. He published them when he was about 40 in AD 97. In all he wrote 10 books of letters on a wide variety of topics which would have been of interest to those of the senatorial class.

Pliny's *Letters* as a personal commentary on Roman life

Pliny the generous

Pliny continued to increase his wealth as a result of grateful gifts from various people who he had defended in his court cases, mainly those involving inheritance disputes. However, Pliny did not hoard his wealth, but often made donations. One of his donations to his native town, Comum, one of which was to provide money to hire teachers for the poor who had to travel to Milan for their education. Elsewhere he describes how he travelled to Egypt for health reasons, and we learn that Pliny had donated a farm to his friends. The letter is the prescribed Letter 8.16 where he describes his humanity towards the poor and to write wills and in setting some of them free.

Pliny the family man

He was also very much a 'family man', for when his mother begs him to flee and leave her behind, he refuses to leave her. We will discuss how much he has done, and this is probably unusual as most marriages in Rome were arranged. Marriage was a bonus, rather than the main reason for getting married. For this type of letter, see Letter 4.19 and Letter 7.5.

Pliny is not Mr Modest

However, modesty was one of Pliny's virtues, for on two separate occasions when a friend identifies him as Pliny. Pliny also states, in the prescribed Letter 7.33, that he was a great pleasure to his legal speeches and used to hide behind a curtain in order to avoid the public. In addition, Pliny states that she learned his works off by heart, as he did to music, and loved his fame, which was one of Pliny's aims. In Letter 7.33 Pliny refers to Tacitus: 'I prophesy... that your histories will become immortal and be included in them.'

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Pliny the good judge of character

He is an excellent judge of character. In this group are prescribed the Regulus, Corellius Rufus, Letter 1.12; Arria, Letter 3.16. The letters in this selection of Corellius Rufus, the infamous activities of the legacy hunter Regulus, probably experience of the laws on inheritance, the murder of Larcus Macedo, Letter 9.6, could be a day at the races, Letter 9.6.

Life in the senatorial class

Pliny was very conscientious and took his daily duties and responsibilities seriously. 1.9 how he regularly attended coming-of-age ceremonies, engagement parties and legal cases. At the races, Letter 9.6, Pliny reveals a rather snooty attitude, a tendency for supporting the team colours, rather than the riders' skill, status and colours, the crowd would still support that colour and transfer their support to that colour. Against this, he criticises a host for reserving the best wine for himself and giving inferior wine to the rest of the guests, Letter 2.6.

How Pliny reflects his position in Roman society and the image he projects
Caveat lector! Reader beware! We need to look at Pliny's *Letters* with caution and carefully for publication. These are not purely personal letters. A personal letter like this:

Just as I said would happen, has happened. It was dreadful. Marcus turned up and...

In this type of letter, we do not know Marcus or Clodia. We do not know what exactly happened. Only the writer and receiver of the letter really know.

Pliny revised his *Letters* so that his audience would understand what was going on. He left fewer unexplained personal details. We learn much about his life but remember the *Letters*:

1. He was a member of the senatorial class, and he wrote to other members of the class. He has shared his values.
2. He published his letters and so revised and edited them. He would not want to show his private life.
3. We only get his own subjective commentary on Roman life.

Activity

Pliny is keen to give a positive image of himself. As you read collect examples of this.

- Pliny takes his role as a member of the senatorial class seriously
- Pliny is a kind master
- Pliny is a fair patron
- Pliny gives sound advice
- Pliny does not just 'follow the crowd'
- Pliny considers the other side of an argument

The information above can be used in responses which require discussion of the image of Pliny.

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Narrative and Descriptive Technique

Needless to say, when revising the *Letters*, Pliny also took care with his narrative in order to present each point in the best light possible. He was a lawyer by training and used the techniques of public speaking to enhance his written work. Here are some techniques to help with translation:

Literary features which enhance poetry or public speech (prose)

alliteration: the repetition of the same initial or consonantal sound in adjacent words. **sibilance:** use of the letter 's' making a hissing sound, often expressive of something sometimes exciting.

anaphora: the repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive sentences.

antithesis: where two words or phrases are contrasted for emphasis.

apostrophe: a direct appeal to a named person.

assonance: the repetition of the same vowel sound in nearby or connected words.

balance: the careful placing of words within a line for effect.

bathos: an effect of anticlimax. After highly cultured references, a third even more trivial one may be used to humorous effect.

chiasmus: a-b-b-a pattern of words (i.e. noun – adjective – adjective – noun).

ellipsis: the omission of what the writer considers to be superfluous words.

enclosing order: where two words which agree with each other, e.g. noun and adjective, begin at the beginning and the end of a longer phrase or sentence, thus enclosing all the words in between.

hyperbole: exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.

juxtaposition: being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect.

metaphor: a word used not in its own sense, but resembling it, e.g. He is a lion.

metonymy: the substitution of the god/goddess for that of the thing meant, e.g. to drink wine.

onomatopoeia: where a word imitates the sound of the thing referred to, e.g. buzz.

periphrasis: an indirect or a roundabout way of writing about something.

polyptoton: the repetition of a word with the same root, but in a different case.

polysyndeton: the piling up of examples linked with *et/-que*.

repetition: the repetition of an idea in different words.

simile: comparing an action or person with another, e.g. She was like a lioness.

synecdoche: using part of something to express the whole thing, e.g. a nice car.

tricolon: three parallel clauses, phrases or words, which happen to come in a row.

variatio: variation. The author uses different ways of saying the same thing.

Activity

Copy and complete the table below. You will find examples in the **Context** text.

Pliny often puts the verb at the start or in the middle of sentences	
The use of the present tense and historic infinitive	The present tense
Note the adjectives, of which Pliny seems to be very fond	
He is very fond of chiasmus and other balancing phrases	
Repetition of the same word is also frequent	
The sentences are short, which was a style popular in the late first century and early second	

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Translation and Notes

Letter 1.9: The rat race

C. PLINIUS MINICIO FUNDANO SUO S

mirum est quam singulis diebus in urbe ratio aut constare videatur aut non constet. nam si quem interroges: 'hodie quid egisti?', respondeat virilis interfui, sponsalia aut nuptiae, aut si me rogaveris: 'haec quo die feceris, necessaria, eadem fecisse te rogamus' illa videntur, multo magis cum secesseris. tunc enim sublegetur: 'quot dies quid in frigidis rebus absumpsi!' quod evenit mihi, postquam in Lauro aut lego aliquid aut scribo aut etiam corpori vaco, cuius fulturis animus sustinetur. audio quod audisse, nihil dico quod dixisse paeniteat; nemo apud me quemque sermonibus carpit, neminem ipse reprehendo, nisi tamen me cum parum conloquor. O rectam sinceramque vitam! O dulce otium honestumque ac paene opulchrius! O mare, O litus, verum secretumque *μουσείον*, quam multa invenitis, quam multa dictatis! proinde tu quoque strepitum istum inanemque discursum et multos labores, ut primum fuerit occasio, relinque teque studiis vel otio trade. satius est Atilius noster eruditissime simul et facetissime dixit, otiosum esse quam nihil

Activity

To help you get used to translating Latin, this YouTube presentation analyses the lines of this letter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2r2B-translate>

Translation

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Minucius Fundanus.

It is extraordinary how on individual days in Rome the account book of life does not balance, and on several successive days it does not balance! For if you were to ask: 'What did you do today?', he would answer: 'I was present at a coming-of-age ceremony, an engagement or wedding. X asked me to the signing of a will. X asked me for advice. These things, on the day you have done them, (seem) to be of no account; you consider you have done these every day, seem pointless; much more so when you are at home. For then comes reflection:

'How many days have I spent on such dreary things? It occurs to me all day long. I am either reading something or writing something, or even when I am free, I am idle whose support the mind is sustained. I fear nothing which I regret having said. There is a man at my house who slanders anyone with blame no one can defend. When I do not write well enough, I am hassled by my friends. I am troubled by gossip. I talk only with myself and with my little books. O sweet and honest leisure and more beautiful than almost all business. O sacred Hall of the Muses how many things you find, how many things you dictate, how much of the pointless bustle and very silly tasks at the first opportunity and give you leisure. For us it is better, as our Atilius has said very learnedly and very wisely, to be idle than to do nothing. Farewell.

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Grammar and translation notes

Notice the standard way for Romans to address letters. The formula is first case, *C. PLINIUS*, in the nominative, followed by the addressee in the dative *SUO*, 'to his', tells us that Pliny is probably writing to a friend or close acquaintance, 'sends greeting'. Unlike modern letters, the recipient knows who has sent the letter. The letters then only need a *vale* at the end.

- 1 *mirum est quam*: *quam* introduces a comparative question. *ratio... constet*: the ratio is transferred to everyday life. Can an individual day Pliny can give an account of his life spent but it is unhelpful if he looks back over time, as if the account was for the future.
- 2 *interrogetur... respondeat*: the verbs are in the subjunctive mood as Pliny is describing a scenario for the future.
quem is for *aliquem*, 'someone'.
ille: the demonstrative pronoun invites us to imagine Pliny pointing to the person.
- 4 *haec*: referring to the previous list of demands on his time. *quo die*: ablative of time. *feceris*: future perfect (as is *secesseris* in line 5).
- 5 *multo magis*: ablative of degree of difference. *secesseris*: this is a technique for when wealthy Romans left Rome and went to their villa in the country.
- 6 *quot*: this is an interrogative word used in an exclamation. *frigidis*: the days are lifeless and cold and come to mean 'dull'.
- 7 *vaco*: *vaco, vacare*: have time for, devote time to. *quid* is: *futura, futura*.

Examination-style short question

corpore vaco: why does Pliny think it is important?

- 8–9 *audisse... quae... sinistris sermonibus*: ablative of means.
- 11 *otium... negotio*: *otium* is a deliberate effort not to do business, more or less. Notice how the word 'business' is 'not leisure', *neg-otium*. *O... O... O...*

Activity

From lines 2–11, make a list of verbs in the first person singular. Include verbs in the past tenses. Make sure you translate each verb. You will find that Pliny repeats some verbs.

- 13 *proinde*: this is used to sum up. The advice or point of the letter is then used as an adverb. It is used with *ineptos*.
- 15 *eruditissime... facetissime*: superlatives.

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Context and style notes

Minicius Fundanus: like Pliny, Fundanus was a senator and worked with Pliny. Pliny also mentions their friend *Atilius* (line 15) who was regarded as funny.

Pliny lists the activities which a senator might typically perform when in his villa on personal and family occasions:

<i>officio togae virilis</i> : coming-of-age ceremony	A Roman boy aged 14–16 put on his toga and registered to vote
<i>sponsalia</i> : engagement	A contract was signed between parents
<i>nuptias</i> : wedding	Various legal contracts followed by the bride's home before going to the groom's
<i>ad signandum testamentum</i> : signing of a will	Seven witnesses were needed
<i>in advocacionem</i> : legal assistance	This refers to professional work in court
<i>consilium</i> : advice	Senators with legal expertise could advise magistrates

Activity

Do you think Pliny means it when he says: '*quot dies quam frigidis rebus abestis*'? From the point of this letter see this very short presentation: zzed.uk/12128-1

Do you agree that these activities are dull or pointless?

3–4 *ille... ille... ille*: Pliny uses anaphora and alliteration to show the demand for his villa.

6 *in Laurentino meo*: Pliny has many homes! Here he is referring to his villa near Ostia. His language conveys the fact that he likes his stays, but as a well-known senator he probably would miss Rome. He does not describe the villa itself in great detail in this letter (which he does in another letter) but talks about the activities he enjoys there: reading, writing, exercise. He also reinforces what is pleasant by emphasising what negative features are missing.

7–8 *nihil audio quod audisse, nihil dico quod dixisse paeniteat*: notice the balance and care with which this is written, the polyptoton of two verbs and the anaphora of *nihil*. The balance and care is one of the indicators of Pliny revising his *Letters*. Revision is also indicated in the same section with the sibilance, *sinistis santonibus*, representing the whispered gossip, and the heaping up of negatives: *nemo... nisi* and the tricolon: *nulla... timore sollicitor, nullis rumoribus inquit*. Pliny is trying to emphasise the peace he enjoys in his seaside villa.



* Explanation of plan:
1. Villa.
2. Garden.
3. Walk around.

A plan of Pliny's villa.

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- 11 Again, an indication of care and revisions is seen in the run of exclamation *vitam! O dulce otium honestumque ac paene omni negotio pulchrius! O mare* *μουσεῖον, quam multa invenitis, quam multa dictatis!*
- 12 *μουσεῖον*: the traditional 'hall of the Muses' was Mount Helicon in Greece which gives similar inspiration. As part of a wealthy boy's education, Greek was in the curriculum. The empire in the east was principally Greek speaking and senators to hold official positions there, Greek was necessary. However, by the time, knowledge of Greek was not as strong. Pliny, though, likes to show his learning by adding in a few Greek words. These words were very familiar to many Romans as they are familiar with and use words in French (e.g. *en suite*, *à la maison* etc.) but may not have a deeper knowledge. *μουσεῖον* was a common place of inspiration. Our word 'museum' is linked to the original Greek.
- 15 Superlatives are used frequently in Pliny.

Activity

1. Make a list of all the negative words applied to life in Rome. What does he imply that city life has, by mentioning their absence at Laurentum?
2. Assess how useful this Letter is in telling us about the life of a senator.
3. Would Pliny be tired of Laurentum if he stayed there?

These following Letters (1.12, 2.6, 2.20, 3.14, 5.8, 7.5 and 12) are part of the English. The Letters in English have been integrated into this guide as they are for examination. There is an expectation in the longer questions that responses should be from both the Latin and English text. The Letters also appear in both languages intended them to be read in both. This will help learners to appreciate the variety of Latin and English and how Pliny has organised his Letters which have a significance. (The Letters in English theme at the end of this guide.) The Letters in English were translated in 19th century and the language has been adapted for the modern reader. Words underlined indicate where the English is included.

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Letter 1.12: The death of Corellius Rufus

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Calestrius Tiro.

I have suffered a most grievous loss, if loss is a word that can be applied to my distinguished a man. Corellius Rufus is dead, and what makes my grief the more his own act. Such a death is always most lamentable, since neither natural cause nor responsible for it. When people die of disease there is a great consolation in the fact that they have prevented it; when they lay violent hands on themselves, we feel a pang at the thought that they might have lived longer. Corellius, it is true, felt driven to death by Pain and Reason in a way that amounts to Necessity with philosophers – and yet the inducement of his own fame did not seem to him to live. His conscience was stainless, his reputation beyond men's esteem. Moreover, he had a daughter, a wife, a grandson, and sisters, and many genuine friends. But his battle against ill-health had been so long and his rewards of living were outweighed by the reasons that urged him to die.

I have heard him say that he was first attacked by gout in the feet when he was young. He had inherited the complaint, for it often happens that a tendency to disease is passed on in qualities in a sort of succession. While he was in the prime of life he overcame the attack by restrained and pure living, and when it became sharper in its attacks against it with great fortitude of mind. Even when he suffered incredible torture – for the pain was no longer confined, as before, to the feet, but had begun to spread – he went to see him in the time of Domitian when he was staying at his country house. He came from his chamber, as they always did whenever one of his more intimate friends came, his wife, a lady who might have been trusted to keep any secret, also used to retire. He said: 'Why do you think I endure pain like this so long? It is that I may outlive a single day.' Could you but have seen him in a frame fit to support his resolution, you would have been the object of his desire. However, the god heard his prayer and granted it, and without any further delay, as a free man ought, he snapped the bonds that bound him. Many, he perceived, would have died.

His malady had become worse, though he tried to moderate it by his careful diet. But as it continued to grow, he escaped from it by a fixed resolve. Two, three, four days he ate no food. Then his wife Hispulla sent our mutual friend Caius Geminius to tell me that he was determined to die, that he was not moved by the entreaties of his wife and daughter, and that he was the only one left who might possibly recall him to life. I rushed to see him, and had almost reached him when Hispulla sent me another message by Julius Atticus, saying that now even I could do nothing. He had become more and more fixed. When the doctor offered him nourishment, he refused it, and the word has awakened within me not only a sense of loss, but of admiration. What a manly friend is now lost to me. He was at the end of his seventies, but even for the stoutest of us. True. He has escaped a lifelong illness; he has died before his time, and knowing that the State, which was dearer to him than anything else, would miss him. I know all this. And yet I grieve at his death. I should at the death of a young man grieve – you may think me weak for so doing – on my own account too. For I have lost a guide, philosopher, and friend of my life. In short, I will say again what I said before: my grief was for myself as well as for him. I am afraid I shall not live so well ordered a life now.' Send me no consolation, I do not say, 'He was an old man, or he was infirm.' These are hackneyed words; such words are potent to ease my trouble, that I cannot find in books or hear from my friends, but they and read occur to me naturally, but they are powerless in the presence of my

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Classical references

Calestrius Tiro: he was a friend of Pliny when Pliny was doing military service *honorum*. He then went on to be a colleague as Pliny rose up the promotion

Corellius Rufus: we do not know much about this senator. He apparently had died from starving himself in AD 97.

in the time of Domitian... It is that I may outlive him: Domitian was emperor when Corellius Rufus achieved his objective. Letters during his reign include Pliny's Letter 2.17. All hated Domitian. Domitian's reign was one of terror, mainly because of his cruelty in the last three years of his life. He became very cruel and had many people executed, even knights, often for very trivial reasons. On the one hand he increased the lavish show to the public and carried out large building programmes, but he took from the wealthy. He was suspicious and is regarded as a tyrant as he was almost like professionals, and used the law of treason liberally. People were afraid of anything, so literature became virtually non-existent. Corellius Rufus lived under Domitian. In fact, he died almost a year after Domitian was murdered, so his letter even by a single day was generously answered.

his wife Hispulla: we think this is Calpurnia Hispulla, who will feature in Letter 2.17 as the aunt of his third wife.

Caius Geminius and Julius Atticus: a friend from the wider circle of Pliny.

my friend Calvisius: Calvisius Rufus was a close friend from Comum in northern Italy, his hometown as Pliny. Pliny wrote Letter 2.20 to him (see page 14).

Discussion

The character in this Letter, Corellius Rufus, is a *Stoic*. Roman philosophy was based on Greek philosophy. There were different types or 'schools' of philosophy. In Imperial Rome, Stoicism was the most popular, and Stoic ideas appear in Roman literature, such as in Pliny and, some time after him, the emperor Marcus Aurelius.

The economy of early Rome before the emperors was agricultural and military, and stressed simplicity, strength and toughness, which are all needed for the army. Under the emperors, Romans regarded and somewhat idealised their agricultural life as a source of good character. As a result, one of the principal Stoic values was *virtus*, which in Latin means the word *vir*, and so 'manliness'. For this reason, Stoics believed in 'toughening' themselves. An important idea the Romans derived from the Stoics was their idea of the *logos*, the rational order of the universe ordered by a god and this order is the *logos*, a 'rational order' of the universe. The course of history itself; the course of history which caused civil war in the Roman Republic and the fall of the Empire was seen as the divine will working out its purpose in the world.

Every event, physical and historical, has a place in this larger rational order. The world is rational and meaningful, that means nothing happens which is not part of the plan. A Roman had two choices: accept the circumstances or resist. Therefore, a Roman, whether an agricultural or military man, can be adapted to any situation or position. The Romans had a duty, *officium*, to fulfil in this larger project; the key to performing this duty was acceptance, the role and strength, *virtus*, in the face of adversity.

Activity

1. This YouTube presentation gives another overview: [zzed.uk/12128-Stoicism](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzed.uk/12128-Stoicism)
2. What Stoic principles are shown in this Letter?

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Letter 2.6: A snob discriminates at dinner

Gaius Pliny sends greeting to his Avitus.

It would be a long story – and it is of no importance – to tell you how I came to be a particular friend of his – with a man who thought he combined elegance with ease, but in fact was both mean and lavish, for he set the best dishes before himself and a few friends, and cheap and scrappy food for the rest. He had apportioned the wine in small decanters of three to give his guests their choice but so that they might not refuse. He had one kind of wine for his less distinguished friends. But he is a man who classifies his acquaintances as freedmen and guests. The man who sat next to me noticed this and said no. 'Then how do you arrange matters?' he asked. 'I set the same before all friends to dine, not to grade them one above the other, and those whom I have at home and on my couches, I treat as equals in every respect.' 'What! even the freedmen?' 'Then I regard them as my guests at table, not as freedmen.' He went on: 'It must be done. Then how do you manage it?' 'It's easily done; because my freedmen do not drink the same that they do.' And, by Hercules the fact is that if you keep off gluttony it is not expensive to entertain a number of people to the fare you have yourself. It is the same with wine, to be reduced as it were to the ranks, if you wish to cut down expenses, is to consult your own moderate living than to care about the nasty things people may say. Just this, that I don't want you, who are a young man of great promise, to be overcome by extravagance with which some people load their tables under the guise of economy. For instance comes in my way it becomes an example of my affection. I feel obliged to avoid by giving you an example. So, remember that there is nothing you should associate with extravagance and meanness; they are no admirable qualities when they are combined, more so when you get a combination of them. Farewell.

Classical references

Junius Avitus is a letter of advice. Avitus was preparing to enter public life.

Discussion

Within Roman society, even a man's friends (always men) were graded in

- *soldalis, contubernalis* – Very close friends
- *familiaris* – Close friends
- *amicus* – An acquaintance, someone in a man's general social circle

This Letter shows the importance of social order to the Romans. Pliny has someone who is not in his social circle, but who may be hoping to be! However, further: *for I invite my friends to dine not to grade them one above the other*, means 'marked' (the original Latin has *nota*) as socially inferior. He is alluding to the census, who checked property qualification carefully and added to names of expelled

In addition, there is the treatment of the freedmen, who were often invited to dine or simply to make up the numbers.

Activity

How are the freedmen treated in this Letter? What is Pliny's approach?

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The poor treatment of freedmen by patrons is a common theme in satire but (revised) reality.

Why is Pliny telling his young friend all about this? Senators spent a fair amount of money on wine. Pliny writes many letters of advice. We are not sure how welcome this advice was. Pliny felt it was his duty to pass on advice, though he also highlights the excesses of the aristocracy which is often different from others. In this case, Pliny does not go so far as to say that senators should not drink wine, but he is prepared to have less expensive wine. *'It's easily done; because I drink the same wine as they do.'* And, by Hercules the fact is that it is not at all ruinously expensive to entertain a number of people to the fare you have

Activity



To what extent does Pliny give a positive impression of himself in this Letter?



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Letter 2.20: The outrageous behaviour of N

This is the first of several letters about Regulus. The prescribed Latin Letter

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Calvisius.

Get ready your penny and I will tell you a golden story, say, more than one, for of some old tales, and it does not matter with which I begin. Verania, the wife of the Piso who was adopted by Galba, Regulus paid her a visit. First mark the man to see the invalid, for he had been her husband's bitter enemy and she loathed that might not if he had been called, but he actually sat down beside her on the day and at the hour she had been born. On being told he puts on a grave look on his lips, works his fingers and makes his reckoning, but says nothing. Then a tenterhooks, wondering what he would say, he exclaims: 'You are passing through pull through. Still, just to reassure you, I will go and consult a soothsayer with you. He goes off at once; offers the sacrifice and swears that the appearance of the warning of the stars. She, with all the credulity of an invalid, calls for her table Regulus; subsequently she grows worse and exclaims as she dies, 'What a rascal perjured wretch, thus to have sworn falsely on the head of his son!'

That is Regulus's trick, and he has recourse to the scandalous device constantly of the gods, whom he daily outrages, upon the head of his luckless son. Velleius stricken with the illness which carried him off, and was desirous of changing his will, capable of hoping for anything from an alteration of the will because he had no chance of a legacy, begged and prayed of the doctor Long Blaesus's life. When the will was signed he took quite a different turn. He changed his tone and said, 'How long do you intend to torture the poor man? Why do you grudge him an easy death? him life?' Blaesus dies, and though he had heard every word, he leaves Regulus

Two stories quite enough. Or do you ask for a third, on the rhetoricians' part, you. When Aurelia, a lady of great means, was about to make her will, she put on handsome tunics. When Regulus came to witness the signing he said, 'I beg you to thought the man was joking, but he was serious and pressed the matter. Well, he compelled the poor woman to open the tablets and leave to him the tunics she was wearing. He watched her as she wrote and looked to see whether she had written it rightly. He forced her to make that legacy as if she had been on the point of death. Yet then he inherited the inheritances and legacies as though he deserved them.

But why do I worry myself when I live in a country where villainy and rascality are less but far more handsome rewards than modesty and virtue? Look at Regulus, being poor and lowly, has now become such a rich man. Their villainy that he was consulting the omens as to how soon he would be worth sixty millions of sesterces, of entrails, which were a token that he would be worth 120 million. So, he will has begun, dictating wills which are not their own to the very people who are about the most dishonest kind of forgery imaginable. Farewell.

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Classical references

Calvisius: this is Calvisius Rufus, a landowner from Comum, Pliny's home town. He also receives Letter 9.6 in Latin on page 45.

Get ready your penny and I will tell you a golden story: the Romans had professional storytellers who stood in the forum and tell a story in return for an *as*, a coin translated as 'penny'.

Verania: as Pliny explains, she was the wife of *Piso*: Calpurnius Piso, who was a friend of the emperor *Galba*, who was the emperor after Nero. Galba and Piso were killed by Otho, who became the next emperor. By the time the Letter was written, Verania was widowed, childless and old.

Regulus: Marcus Aquilius Regulus was a lawyer (like Pliny). He is also discussed on page 25. He prosecuted senators for treason when Nero was emperor, and Crassus, the brother of Piso. *for he had been her husband's bitter enemy* shows that Verania was bitter after Nero's death.

works his fingers and makes his reckoning: the Romans counted on their fingers.

Velleius Blaesus: we do not know who he was. *he leaves Regulus nothing at all* means that Regulus would be left something, being his *amicus*.

Aurelia: from an aristocratic family.

Discussion

We have seen in the last Letter that men in Roman society had a range of acquaintances. In the previous Letter (2.6, page 17), Pliny did not know the man. The man was probably hoping for some social advancement by being friends. This was the true point of a relationship, *amicitia*, rather than financial return for favours and being a 'friend', it was expected that money would be used for the benefit of the friend. This was abused, especially towards the wealthy and elderly but especially towards the elderly. This was known as *captatio* or legacy hunting, and this Letter has three stories used by Regulus to induce elderly people to leave him a legacy.

Activity

1. 'This Letter grabs our interest.'

How does Pliny make this an interesting letter? Complete the table below. Space has been left for some ideas of your own.

Content	
Pesters an old lady	Friendly opening
Astrological details	Fast-paced
	Exclamations (not e...)
	Use of direct speech
	Use of present tense

2. How does Pliny portray the character of Regulus in this Letter? Start by looking at the first paragraph to form a basis for your answer.

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Letter 3.14: The brutal murder of a man

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Acilius.

A shocking affair, worthy of more publicity than a letter can bestow, has befallen a man of praetorian rank, at the hands of his own slaves. He was known to be an overly one who forgot – or rather remembered too keenly – that his own father had his villa near Formiae, when he was suddenly surrounded by his slaves. One after another struck him on the forehead, and others smote him in the chest, belly, – in the private parts. When they thought the breath had left his body, they fled to see if he was still alive. Whether he was insensible, or merely pretended to move, and when they were at full length, he made them think that he was actually dead as though he had been overcome by the heat and handed him over to his mistresses ran shrieking and wailing to his side. Aroused by their cries and in the room where he lay, he opened his eyes and moved his limbs, betraying there was then safe to do so. His slaves took to flight; most of them have been captured and hunted for. Thanks to the attentions he received, Macedo was kept alive for a satisfaction of full vengeance before he died, for he exacted the same punishment usually taken when the victim of a murder dies. You see the dangers, the affront, and no one can feel at all secure because he is an easy and mild-tempered man who deliberation murders masters.

But enough of that subject! Have I any other news to tell you? Let me see! No, I would tell you, for I have room enough on this sheet, and, as today is a holiday, to write more. But I will just add an incident which I wish to recall that happened to him. When he was in one of the public baths in Rome, he was seized and – the event had happened to him. Macedo's servant, who had slapped a Roman knight with his hand for them to pass, and the knight turned round and struck, not the slave who had slapped himself, such a blow with his fist that he almost felled him. So, one may be certain that the scene first of humiliation to him and then of death. Farewell.

Classical references

Acilius: he was a wealthy friend of Pliny from northern Italy.

Praetorian rank: this is highly unusual. Pliny tells us that Macedo's father had descendants of slaves were banned from being even equestrian for three generations. Macedo was a senator and had been a praetor, one of the ranks of the *cursus honorum* ladder for senators.

Formiae: Macedo's villa was on the coast south of Rome. It was a big enough bath complex.

had the satisfaction of full vengeance: in the murder of a master, it was usual for the slave to be put to death. This helped to ensure that a slave would not be tempted to commit a crime against their master.

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Discussion

The murder of a master by slaves filled the Romans with horror. The number of slaves to Roman citizens varied over time but was approximately one citizen to six slaves to keep them under control. This was done mostly by fear. Pliny documents this in Letter 8.16, rounded up.

Notice his attitude towards slaves. Slaves do not have a reasoning but just use force. *deliberation murders masters.* He says Pliny is a slave, though he says in another Letter (Letter 8.16, page 39).

Activity



What does Pliny reveal about his own attitude towards slaves? (Despite what other Letters, his prejudice can be seen.)

Did Macedo deserve this? In Pliny's eyes, Macedo is held partly responsible for the *cruel master* which Pliny attributes to the fact that he forgot or was only too happy to *be a slave*. Clearly Pliny does not want to be thought of as a master such as Macedo.

Activity

Highlight or list words which Pliny uses to express his horror.

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Letter 3.16: Arria the Elder

This Letter is quite long and has been divided up for ease of translation. It has the following sections:

1–2: Introduction

Pliny makes his observation

3–6: Arria conceals the death of her son

7–13: Arria follows her husband to Rome

She is determined to die

Pliny proves his respect

Sections



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C. PLINIUS NEPOTI SUO S.

adnotasse videor facta dictaque virorum feminarumque alia clariora esse alia confirmata est opinio mea hesterno Fanniae sermone. neptis haec Arriae illius et solacium mortis et exemplum fuit. multa referebat aviae suae non minora obscuriora; quae tibi existimo tam mirabilia legenti fore, quam mihi audienti

Translation

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Nepos.

I seem to have noticed that (regarding) the deeds and words of men and women and others more important. My opinion was confirmed by yesterday's conversation with the granddaughter of that Arria whose husband was both a consolation and an example. Fannia told me many things of her grandmother not more insignificant or more obscure. I think it will be as amazing for you when you read them as I heard them.



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Grammar and translation notes

C. PLINIUS NEPOTI SUO S.

Pliny wrote a few letters to Nepos (NEPOTI is dative). He was a senator, but

- 1 *adnotasse*: a shortened form of *adnotavisse*. A perfect infinitive meaning 'I had noticed'.
- 2 *illius*: referring to 'that' famous Arria – the one all Romans knew about.
- 3 *et*: 'and'.
- 4 *fore*: a shortened form of *futurum esse*, future infinitive after *existimo*. *legenti* is a participle in the dative.



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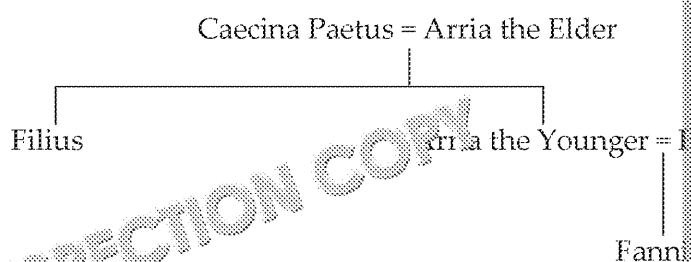
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Context and style notes

This opening section is introductory. The family tree is set out below.



Arria the Elder, Fannia's grandmother, *aviae* in line 3 above, was not wholly certainly known about her husband's role in the conspiracy which is over living in widowhood in near poverty (her husband's property would possibly even exile, quickly earned her a place among women whom the Roman

- 1 *alia clariora esse alia maiora*: notice the balance of this phrase where Pliny will go on to prove his point with three examples. In schools of rhetoric *lege scholastica* that, to prove a point, three examples had to be given. Pliny uses three examples of Arria's bravery to prove that some words and deeds are more famous than others.
- 2 Fannia was granddaughter of Arria the Elder, a Stoic, who committed suicide. Caecina Paetus, was condemned to death in AD 42 by the emperor Tiberius. Arria the Younger, Fannia's mother, was stopped from doing as her mother had done. Her husband, P. Clodius Thrasea Paetus, was condemned in AD 66, under Nero, but returned after his death and became a friend of Pliny. Pliny is writing about events that happened more than a half-century earlier.
- 3 *solacium mortis et exemplum fuisse*: this phrase would need no explanation for a modern audience needing the historical background as explained above. Pliny does not use this in his opening claim but balances it with opposites *non mihi* and *non tibi*.
- 4 The careful presentation of the Letter is shown here with the balanced *quae tibi existimo tam mirabilia legenti fore, quam mihi audienti fuerunt*. *quae... quam* and *fore... fuerunt*.

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Sections 3–6: Arria conceals the death of her son

- aegrotabat Caecina Paetus maritus eius, aegrotabat et filius, uterque mortiferus
 filius decessit eximia pulchritudine pari verecundia, et parentibus non minus
 quam quod filius erat. huic illa ita funus paravit, ita duxit exsequias, ut ignoraret
 quin immo quotiens cubiculum eius intraret, vivere ⁶¹filium, atque etiam commu-
 5 simulabat, ac persaepe interroganti, quid ageret, respondebat; 'Bene quod
 cibum sumpsit.' deinde, cum diu colligeret lacrimae vincerent prorumperent
 egrediebatur; tunc ⁶²se dabit; satiata siccis oculis composito vultu redibit
 orbitatem ⁶³amississet. praeclarum quidem illud eiusdem, ferrum stringere
 pectus, extrahere pugionem, porrigere marito, addere vocem immortalem ac
 10 'Paete, non dolet.' sed tamen ista facienti, ista dicenti, gloria et aeternitas ante
 quo maius est sine praemio aeternitatis, sine praemio gloriae, abdere lacrimas
 luctum, amissoque filio matrem adhuc agere

Translation

Arria's husband, Caecina Paetus, was ill, and their son was ill, each, it was
 died – (a son) of exceptional beauty and equal modesty and was dear to his
 other than because he was their son. Arria took care of the funeral for this
 ceremonies in such a way that her husband was unaware. Moreover, every
 she pretended that their son was alive and improving. To her husband asked
 was doing, she used to reply: 'He has taken food, well, he has taken food with
 her tears, suppressed for so long was beginning to overcome her and break
 she used to give herself to her sorrow. Having had her fill, with dry eyes, (she
 she returned if she had left her bereavement outside the door. That was
 woman to take the dagger, to plunge it into her breast, to withdraw the dagger
 husband to add the immortal almost divine phrase, 'Paetus, it doesn't hurt
 those things (and) saying those things, glory and immortality were before
 was, without the reward of immortality, without the reward of fame, to his
 and still play the part of a mother after she had lost her son.

Grammar and translation notes

- eius* refers to Arria the Elder.
- eximia pulchritudine pari verecundia*: ablative of description. These are the
 not named.
- ita...ita...ut*: a result clause.
- quotiens cubiculum eius intraret*: the perfect subjunctive is used here
quin immo: are particles of conjunctions.
- simulabat*: the perfect subjunctive is used to pretend something is when it is not
 son is *agere* better when he has in fact died. *quid ageret*: this is a common
respondebat: remember the imperfect can also be translated with 'used to'
- se dolori dabat*: *dolori* is dative.
- orbitatem*: the word is used for the loss of a child. *praeclarum quidem illud*
 refers to her stabbing herself. *eiusdem* is Arria the Elder.

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Examination-style short question:

tamquam orbitatem foris reliquisset: explain what Pliny means by this phrase

- 11 *quo maius*: is exclamation: 'how much greater'.
- 12 *matrem adhuc agere*: *ago, agere* is almost used in a theatrical sense. Her s... the part' of a mother.

Context and style notes

- 1 *Caecina Paetus*: was a Roman senator, who was condemned to death for organising a revolt against the emperor Claudius. The event in this section takes place in AD 42. Pliny will come on to it in 7–13. The asyndeton emphasises the tragedy: *Caecina Paetus maritus eius, aegrotabat et filius*. We do not know the name of the son.
- 2 *eximia pulchritudine pari verecundia*: the pattern is adj, noun, adj, noun, and nouns and asyndeton to reinforce the good character of the son.
- 3 *huic illa ita funus paravit, ita duxit exsequias*: notice the careful balance. Pliny then the chiasmic word order places the two verbs next to each other. Pliny then the funeral but she also led it.

Examination-style short question:

Study lines 5–8: *bene...reliquisset*. How does Pliny create a moving account? Both content and use of language in your answer.

- 7 Notice the sibilance in this line representing the holding in of her sobs

Activity

Notice the use of asyndeton here: 'Many...you think Pliny uses this technique: *ferrum stringere, perfodere pectus, extrahere pugionem, porrigere marito, caecum paene divinam*.

- 10 'Paete, *adieu*!' When Caecina Paetus was sentenced it was agreed that he should kill himself. However, when the time came, Paetus could not go through with it. He turned to his wife first to give him courage and handed him the dagger saying 'Paete, *adieu*!' such a famous phrase that the poet Martial wrote the following epigram:

When the chaste Arria handed to her Paetus the sword which she had drawn forth from her heart, 'If you believe me,' said she, 'the wound gives me no pain; but it is that which *you* will make, Paetus, that pains me.'

Martial

Activity

A carved marble sculpture held at the Musée de la Ville de Paris depicts the scene of the suicide of Caecina Paetus in AD 42. It was carved in 1685 by French sculptor Pierre Lepautre. The famous scene can be viewed in a 3-minute presentation: zed.uk/121

- 11–12 *sine praemio laetitiae, sine praemio gloriae*: the anaphora and asyndeton emphasise the selflessness of the sons. Notice the balance of *abdere lacrimas operire luctum* and *matrem agere*.

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Sections 7–13: Arria's death

Scribonianus arma in Illyrico contra Claudium moverat; fuerat Paetus in partem
Scriboniano Romam trahebatur. erat ascensurus navem; Arria milites orabat
imponeretur. 'nempe enim' inquit 'daturi estis consulari viro servolos aliquos
5 manu cibum capiat, a quibus vestiatur, a quibus calcietur.' omnia sola praestare
impetravit: conduxit piscatoriam nauculam, in qua navigium minimo secum
apud Claudium uxori Scribonianae, cui se ad profiteretur indicium, 'ego' inquit
cuius in gremio Scribonianus occisus est, et vivis?' ex quo manifestum est ei
pulcherrimum mortis non subitum fuisse. quin etiam, cum Thrasea gener eius
ne mori pergeret, interque alia dixisset: 'vis ergo filiam tuam, si mihi pereunda
10 mecum?', respondit: 'si tam diu tantaque concordia vixerit tecum quam ego cum
volo.' auxerat hoc responso curam suorum; attentius custodiebatur; sensit et
inquit; 'potestis enim efficere ut male moriar, ut non moriar non potestis.' dum
exsiluit cathedra adversoque parieti caput ingenti impetu impegit et corruit.
'dixeram' inquit 'vobis inventuram me quamlibet duram ad mortem viam, si
15 negassetis.' videntur haec tibi maiora illo 'Paete, non dolet', ad quod per haec
est? cum interim illud quidem ingens fama, haec nulla circumfert. unde colligitur
initio dixi, alia esse clariora alia maiora. vale.

Translation

Scribonianus had taken arms against Claudius in Illyricum; Paetus had
conspiracy. When Scribonianus was killed, Paetus was being dragged
to board the ship. Arria begged the soldiers that she should be put on board.
'Naturally you will,' she said, 'assign to a man of consular rank some young
he might take food, by whom he might be dressed and by whom he might
shall take care of all these (tasks).' She did not succeed; she hired a small fish-
big ship in her tiny boat.

The same woman, in the presence of Claudius, said to the wife of Scribonianus
volunteering evidence, 'Am I to listen to you, in whose lap Scribonianus was
alive?' From this it is clear that her plan of a very glorious death was not abandoned.

Indeed when her son-in-law, Thrasea, begged (her) not to go through with
things had said to her: 'So, would you wish your daughter, if it were necessary
with me?' she replied: 'If she had lived for so long a time (and in such great
Paetus, I wish (it)).' By this answer she had increased the concern of her household
more carefully; she noticed this and said: 'You are achieving nothing; for you
die painfully, (but) you cannot bring it about that I do not die.' While she
out of her chair and dashed her head with great force against the wall head
shesaid: 'I am telling you that I should find a path to death, however hard
easy (one).

Don't these words seem to you more noble than the 'Paetus, it does not hurt
that statement was reached? Yet, while that saying is indeed widely famous
circulation. From where it is concluded, what I said at the outset, that (regard
of men and women, some are more famous and others more important. For

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Grammar and translation notes

- 1 *moverat*: the verb *moveo* is used for taking up arms.
- 3 *nempe enim*: conveys the idea of 'of course', 'naturally', one of expectation. *servolos/servulos*: diminutive for *servus* called depreciation. The tone is one of contempt.
- 4 *calcietur*: a senator would not kick his shoes as they had been through. Therefore, he would have them put on by a slave, hence the use of the lowest rank in a Roman household.
- 5 *minime*: referring to the smallest boat, this is an instrumental ablative.
- 6 *apud Claudium*: learners may be familiar with the meaning of *apud*, 'at the' 'in the presence of'. Paetus actually appeared before the senate and Clau-

Activity

Using verbs from lines 2–7, list the ways in which Arria supports her husband.

- 9 *gener*: Thrasea was married to Arria the Younger, *filiam tuam*, in line 9 and so was a son-in-law.

Examination-style short question:

vis ergo filiam tuam, si mihi pereundum fuerit, mori mecum? Explain what has

- 11 *auxerat ... sensit*: it is not unusual for Pliny to have verbs at the beginning especially for dramatic effect.
- 13 *adverso*: here the meaning is 'head-on'. 13. *focilata*: *focilor* is a metaphor for the idea of 'reigniting', 'waking up', a fire. *focilor* is related to *focus*, with.
- 15 *negasse ... negavissetis*, second person plural pluperfect subjunctive before her.
haec... per haec: *haec* refers to the three incidents (examples) Pliny has
- 16 *unde colligitur*: Pliny uses this phrase to sum up the evidence he has used.

Context and style notes

- 1 *Scribonianus*: he was part of a revolt *contra Claudium* which took place in 42. Paetus was involved, as indicated by *in partibus*. Scribonianus was stationed in command of two legions in the Roman province of Dalmatia which covers northern Albania and a large part of Croatia (roughly, the area across the sea from the east of Italy). The revolt in Rome was started by some senators against the emperor Claudius, and Scribonianus decided to support it. It did not succeed as his own army did not support it. Scribonianus had fled to the east.
- 2 *ascens*: Paetus was brought back by ship to Rome for trial.
- 3 *consulari viro*: Paetus had been a consul in AD 37. He was a 'replacement' for another during a term of office and a senator who took office in these circumstances was known as a *consul suffectus*.

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- 3–4 *quorum e manu cibum capiat*: this is not unusual. Most food for dinner was prepared in the kitchen of the Roman household and served ready to eat. The Romans did not have spoons with a pointed end to dinner parties. This is shown in the illustration.
- 5 *ingensque navigium minimo secuta est*: notice the contrast between the huge size of the boat in which she follows.
- 6 *uxori Scriboniani*: she was called Vibia. '*ego*' '*laudiam*': the juxtaposition of these words contrast the different attitudes of the two women.

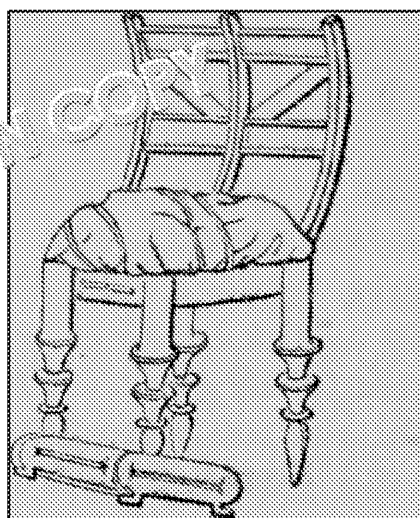
Activity

Lines 5–8: What do you think Vibia had done wrong, in Arria's opinion. Do you think she was right?

- 7 *cuius in gremio Scribonianus occisus est*: according to some sources, Scribonianus was killed in his wife's arms. The image is made more dramatic by the suggestion that he died in her arms. He was killed by a soldier from his own army. The historian Tacitus even suggests that he was killed by a soldier from his own army.
- 9 *ne mori pergeret*: Arria was not expected to commit suicide in this case. Claudius's wife, Messalina. *Thræsea*: the family must have been one of the most prominent in Rome. Thræsea was condemned for treason, under the emperor Nero. Thræsea was ordered to choose the manner of his death. This happened at the events described in this Letter. Thræsea chose suicide and Arria was a good example. She did not, though, for the sake of her daughter Fannia.

- 8–10 Notice the very few instances of *et* in these lines. The asyndeton makes the events which happen more dramatic.

- 12 *male moriar*: the *male* alliteration of *male* emphasises the contemptuous nature of a slow death. This was regarded not as a good death but a bad death, *male*. '*potestis ... ut male moriar, ut non moriar ... potestis*.' The chiasmus heightens the drama.



A cathedra

- 13 *cathedra*: a chair used mainly by women.

Activity

- How far do you find lines 8–16 too theatrical? Use words and phrases to support your answer.
- How does Pliny show his admiration for Arria the Elder? You should use the text to support your answer and consider both the content and the style.

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Letter 4.2: The death of Regulus's son

C. PLINIUS ATTIO CLEMENTI SUO S.

Regulus filium amisit, hoc uno malo indignus, quod nescio an malum putet. est ingenii sed ambiguus, qui tamen posset recta sectari, si patrem non referret. hunc emancipavit, ut heres matris existeret; mancipaturum (vulgo ex moribus hunc loquebantur) foeda et insolita parentibus (Regulus tunc simulatione captabat.

- 5 Regulum cogita. amisum tamen nunc esse. habebat puer mannulos multos solutos, habebat canes, aves minoresque, habebat lusciniās psittacos merulae. Regulus cum illam trucidavit, nec dolor erat ille, sed ostentatio doloris. com-
10 mira celebritate. cuncti detestantur oderunt, et quasi probent quasi diligant, et frequentant, utque breviter quod sentio enuntiem, in Regulo demerendo Regulus tenet se trans Tiberim in hortis, in quibus latissimum solum porticibus im-
statuis suis occupavit, ut est in summa avaritia sumptuosus, in summa infamia vexat ergo civitatem insaluberrimo tempore et, quod vexat, solacium putat. de-
ducere uxorem, hoc quoque sicut alia perverse. audies brevi nuptias lugentis
15 quorum alterum immaturum alterum serum est. unde hoc augurer quaeris? non affirmat ipse, quo mendacius nihil est, sed quia certum est Regulum esse factum quidquid fieri non oportet. vale.

Translation

Gaius Pliny sends his greetings to Attius Clemens.

Regulus has lost his son. He did not deserve this one misfortune, which I think is a misfortune. The boy was of sharp intellect but unreliable, who could not be honest ways if he did not resemble his father.

Regulus gave him legal independence so that he could become his mother's son. Once sold off (so they generally said from the man's character) with the indulgence unnatural for parents. It is incredible but remember – it was Regulus who lost his boy madly.

The boy had many little ponies, both harnessed for driving and free for riding. He had smaller dogs. He had nightingales, parrots and blackbirds. All these Regulus had. And that was not grief, but a show of grief. People gathered to him and detest him, but as if they approve, as if they love him, they flock and so I briefly describe what I feel, in paying flattering attention. To Regulus, they all

He keeps himself in his gardens, across the Tiber, in which he has taken up immense porticoes and the river bank with his statues, as he is extravagant and boastful in his utmost reputation.

Therefore, he stays in the city in the very unhealthy time of year, and the more he regards his son's loss as a consolation.

He says he wants to marry and (he says) this also, just like the others, who hear of the wedding of the mourner, the wedding of an old man; of these I am late. How you ask do I predict this? Not because he himself confirms this, full of lies, but because it is certain that Regulus will do what ought not to

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Grammar and translation notes

- 1 *hoc uno malo indignus*: as with *dignus*, *indignus* requires the ablative. an indirect question.
- 1–2 *acris ingenii sed ambigui*: genitives of quality describing Regulus's son.
- 3 *ut heres matris existeret*: purpose clause.
- 4 *simulatione*: *simulatio* is the pretence, but something is when it is not. Pliny
- 5 *mannulos*: diminutive of *manus*, a Gallic horse. The image below shows the Celtic goddess Epona. Notice that if she were to stand up she would be taller than the horses, which were a small breed.
- 7 *rogum*: a funeral pyre was made up of logs and branches laid across each other. The deceased was placed on the top and then torches lit the pyre. The remaining ashes of the departed were then placed in an urn. This type of funeral is still practised in some religions today.
- 7 *convenitur*: literally 'there was a gathering'. This is the impersonal use of the passive and more naturally translated as 'people gathered'.
- 8 *et quasi probent quasi diligent*: a conditional clause of comparison. *et* means 'but', here. The scholar *...* states that it is equal to *tamen* here.
- 9 *enuntiem*: first person present indicative, *enuntio*, as this is a purpose clause after *ut*.
- 11 *statuis*: probably not statues of himself as they are more likely to be not really mean 'bad reputation' but is more the fact that there is 'no re
- 12 *vexat*: he annoys people as they have to travel across the Tiber to see him for them. *insaluberrimo tempore*: August/September was a 'very unhealthy
- 14 *unde hoc augurer?*: indirect question.
- 15 *quo mendacius nihil est*: *quo* is an ablative of comparison 'than which'.



Epona

Examination-style short question:

quod nescio an malum putet: what do these words suggest about Pliny's attitude from what Pliny goes on to say?

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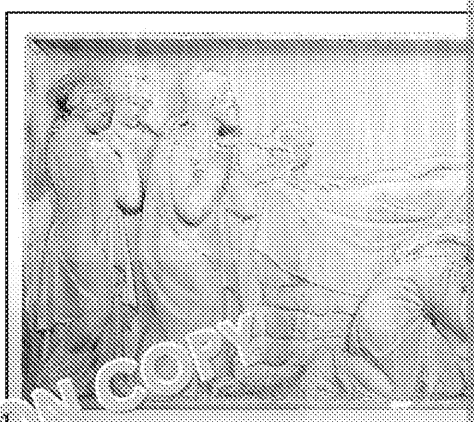
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Context and style notes

ATTIO CLEMENTI: Attius Clemens is not known elsewhere.

- 3 *emancipavit*: a boy could not inherit money while still in the control of his father. Regulus had the boy 'freed' legally from his control (and so technically from his own household) so that the boy could inherit money. The process involved handing the boy over to another person who each time would 'free' the boy free – *manumittere*.
- 4 *captabat*: the reference is to legal 'trickery', which we have seen in a previous letter with the old and dying men hoping for something in their will, which Pliny's process filled with disgust. Pliny claims that Regulus even practised this on his own sons.
- 5–6 the lavish nature of the funeral is described using *habebat... habebat...* to show the balance *habebat canes maiores minoresque, habebat* and asyndeton *lusus* as over the top as Regulus!
- 7 *trucidavit*: the slaughtering of animals at a funeral pyre (*rogus*) was practised for heroes of the great stories of Homer. The image, right, shows Hector, the leader of the Trojans, placed on a pyre. Pliny feels that for Regulus's son this is an unnecessary spectacle and not suitable an event for respectable Roman society. However, Regulus had been growing up under the emperor Nero, when such outrageous spectacles were common.
- 8 *cuncti detestantur oderunt, et quasi probent quasi diligant cursant frequentant* and the balance of *detestantur ... probent and oderunt, ... diligant*. This of course shows the behaviour of the crowds at the spectacle.
- 10 *trans Tiberim*: this was not a particularly smart area of Rome.
- 11 *in summa avaritia sumptuosus, in summa infamia gloriosus*: asyndeton and the balance of *in summa avaritia sumptuosus, in summa infamia gloriosus* shows that a good reputation a person could not plead in court and, as Regulus was a senator, this caused him problems. *infamia* could be part of a sentence in a trial or a punishment through their occupation. Disreputable occupations were acting and being a gladiator. In this case it is only Pliny's *opinion* on the character of Regulus.
- 12 *insaluberrimo tempore*: at the time Pliny was writing, people of his class were being brought malaria and so escaped to the country. This has been seen in previous letters.
- 13 *nuptias lugentis nuptias senilis*: a juxtaposition again to emphasise Pliny's disapproval.



Mourners attending a funeral

Activity

Pliny's hostility towards Regulus is an exception. Pliny normally writes to his friends. What impression does Pliny give of Regulus? You should refer to his use of language.

This question can be extended to include details from Letter 2.20.

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Letter 4.19: My lovely wife

C. PLINIUS CALPURNIAE HISPULLAE SUAE S.

cum sis pietatis exemplum, fratremque optimum et amantissimum tui pari car
filiamque eius ut tuam diligas, nec tantum amitae ei affectum verum etiam pa
repraesentes, non dubito maximo tibi gaudio fore cum, si loveris dignam pa
dignam avo evadere. summum est acumen summa sollicitudo; amat me, quod
5 indicium est. accedit his studium, quod ex mei caritate concepit. me
habet lectitat ediscit etiam sollicitudine cum videor acturus, quanto co
afficitur! de qua quantant sibi quem assensum quos clamores excitarim,
iudicii tuler. eadem, si quando recito, in proximo discreta velo sedet, laude
avidissimis auribus excipit. versus quidem meos cantat etiam formatque citha
10 aliquo docente, sed amore qui magister est optimus. his ex causis in spem cert
adducor, perpetuam nobis maioremque in dies futuram esse concordiam. non
meam aut corpus, quae paulatim occidunt ac senescunt, sed gloriam diligit. ne
tuis manibus educatam, tuis praeceptis institutam, quae nihil in contubernio
sanctum honestumque, quae denique amare me ex tua praedicatione consue
15 matrem meam parentis loco vererere, me a pueritia statim formare laudare, te
nunc uxori meae videor, ominari solebas. certatim ergo tibi gratias agimus, ego
mihi, illa quod me sibi dederis, quasi invicem elegeris. vale

Translation

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Calpurnia Hispulla.

Since you are the most devoted family devotion, and since you loved (your) excell
to you with affection, and you love his daughter as your own, and since
of an aunt to her, but also of a lost father. I do not doubt that there will be for
you know that she is turning out worthy of her father, worthy of you and w

Outstanding is her intelligence, outstanding her careful budgeting. She loves
of her virtue. She adds to these the study of literature which has come out
books, reads them again and again, even learns them by heart. With what
appear to plead in court, with what great joy when I win! She posts (people
approval, what cries I have excited, and what outcome of the trial I have a
I recite, sits nearby screened by a curtain, and she takes in my praises with
she even sings my poems, and regulates the rhythm on the lyre with no on
love which is the best teacher.

For these reasons, I am drawn to the most certain thing that marital bliss w
greater from day to day. For it is not my body, which are declining
old, that she loves but my reputation. Nothing else suits a woman brought
your principles, who has seen nothing in your household except the pure
become acquainted finally to love me on your recommendation. For since
the place of my parent, and you used to guide and encourage me from my
predict that I would be such as I seem to my wife.

In competition therefore, we both thank you: I because you gave her to me
her as if you had chosen us for each other. Farewell.

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Grammar and translation notes

- 1 *cum sis*: this introduces a set of three causal clauses: *cum sis... dilexeris... tui*: objective genitive after *amantissimum*.
- 3 *maximo tibi gaudio*: double dative. *fore* = *futurum esse*, future infinitive after *dubito*. *cognoveris*: literally, 'when you shall have discovered / found out'.

Examination-style short question:*cum sis... amissi* (lines 1–2)

- (i) Why was Pliny's aunt angry with her up by her aunt?
- (ii) Write down a 3-word Latin phrase which tells us this information.

- 4 *evadere*: understanding *illam*, 'that she is turning out...'

Activity

From lines 1–4 pick out and translate the verbs in the second person singular.

- 6 *lectitat*: from *lego, legere*, 'read'. The ending *-ito* is used to indicate an action done over and over. *afficitur* is used with *qua ... sollicitudine* and *quanto ... gaudii sollicitudine* is then enclosing order, as the anxiety surrounds her).
- 7 *disponit*: the verb begins the sentence. This is not necessarily for emphasis as might have been in previous years. The strict rule of verbs being at the end of sentences was much more relaxed by the time of Pliny.
- 7–8. *qui nuntient*: relative pronoun introducing a purpose clause. *excitarim* and *tulerim* are in the perfect subjunctive so 'have ... have achieved'. The subjunctive is used with *ut* and *quod*. *quem... quos... quem* are indirect objects.
- in proximo*: *in* before *proximo* is common in Pliny.
- 9 *formatque cithara*: *formo* is used for regulating the metre of poetry by strumming a stringed instrument. To the right is a wall painting from Pompeii showing a lady playing the cithara.
- 11 *in dies*: 'from day to day'.

Activity

Read through lines 1–11 and pick out the adjectives in the superlative.

- 15 *in contubernio tuo*: *contubernium* was originally used of soldiers sharing a tent. By Pliny's time the term was used more generally of a household.

Activity

Write out the words associated with love in this Letter.

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Context and style notes

Calpurnia Hispulla: the Pliny family came from Comum on Lake Como in Northern Italy. Here they had a more traditional (some said old-fashioned) view on life from the countryside. Family devotion and loyalty were prized.

- 1 *pietatis*: this is the highest compliment which could be given to a marriage. The meaning of devotion not only to the family, but also to the gods!

dilexeris... diligis: polyptoton. Love is so important to this Letter.

- 2 *filiam*: she is also called Calpurnia. She is Pliny's third wife and was probably quite old when Pliny married her. Pliny himself was about 40. In this Letter, Pliny praises his new wife, Calpurnia Hispulla. It is clear she lost her father when young and this is why she has been brought up by her aunt. Roman marriages were often arranged between families who knew each other. Pliny gives us an idea of what an ideal in a wife. The object of such marriages was to produce children and to maintain the family standing; affection between husband and wife was considered a fringe benefit. Pliny hopes the marriage will last. He had had two previous marriages which ended in divorce (grounds for a Roman divorce). In fact, Calpurnia would go on to have a son and was very ill as a result.

- 3-4 *dignam patre dignam te dignam avo evadere*: the tricolon here is used for emphasis. The use of anaphora and asyndeton. Pliny's wife is indeed worthy!

Examination-style short question:

dignam patre dignam te dignam avo evadere: Give and explain two qualities which make her dignam.

- 4-5 *avo*: her grandfather was Calpurnius Piso, a man of equestrian rank. *acumen summa frugalitas*: asyndeton and anaphora again, used to emphasise her qualities.

- 6 *habet lectionem*: asyndeton and a tricolon of abilities as Pliny's wife.

- 8-9 *quem admodum quos clamores excitarim, quem eventum iudicii tulerim*: this shows how much interest Calpurnia has in his work. Pliny, as a lawyer, pleads in the *Centumviri*. Roman courts were full of drama and acting. Hence the interest. This would be the shouts of the crowd in response to his 'acting' (*actum*). For some scholars, the court was similar to a showbusiness event. There is a sense of drama. Pliny is still inexperienced socially as she is affected by worry and she sits by him at public readings.

Examination-style short question:

Study lines 4-8 (*summum... tulerim*). In what ways does Pliny's style of writing praise his wife's good qualities? You should discuss three examples.

- 14 Notice how carefully Pliny has constructed the unusually long sentence. *nec aliud decet tuis manibus educari, quam neceptis institutam*: asyndeton. *viderit, ... quae ... consuevit*: asyndeton. Pliny obviously feels that his wife has a good education.
- 15 *matrem meam*: Pliny's mother was called Plinia.

Activity

1. Pliny gives a large amount of praise to Hispulla. Make a list of the qualities he praises.
2. Why do you think Pliny chose Calpurnia?
Do you think that Pliny was marrying to help Calpurnia and her family?
How genuine do you think Pliny is?

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Letter 5.8: Writing history

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Titinius Capito.

You urge me to write history, nor are you the first to do so. Many others have given me advice, and I am quite willing to follow it, not because I feel confident that I shall do it, but because it would be presumption to think so until one had tried – but it because it seems better to let people be forgotten whose fame ought never to have been, and to perpetuate the fame of one's own. Personally, I confess that there is nothing on which I have secured a lasting reputation, and the ambition of attaining any one for any man, especially for one who has not having committed any wrong, is no cause to fear being remembered by day and night. I shall find a way 'to raise myself above the ordinary dull crowd' – but it is quite beyond my dreams 'that my victorious name shall be on every mouth.' 'Alas, alas!' – but I am quite satisfied with the fame which history alone reaps but a small reward from oratory and poetry, unless our eloquence is really good, which seems to charm people in whatever style it is written. For men are naturally carried away by the baldest relation of facts, and so we see them carried away even by little.

Again, there is a precedent in my own family which impels me towards writing history. also my father by adoption, was a historian of the most scrupulous type, and if one can do nothing better than follow in the footsteps of one's ancestors, proving the right path themselves. Why, then, do I hesitate? For this reason, that I have doubts of serious importance, and it is my intention to revise them carefully – though they are only slight – lest, in spite of all the trouble they have given me, they should be of receiving the last polishing and additional touches. For if you have a view to perfection, that is not absolutely finished must be classed as incomplete matter. You will be writing your pleadings and compose history at the same time.' I wish I could, but each of us must think I had done very well to have finished either.

I began to plead in the forum in my nineteenth year, and it is only just now that I am an orator ought to be. What would I have been were I to take on a new task in addition to my history have many things in common, but they also differ greatly in the points of difference. There is no real difference in the style, but of a different type; the humblest, meanest and most ordinary; the one requires research, splendour, and dignity. In the one you may use the force and nerves of the body, in the other brawny parts and flowing manes. In oratory a sustained attack; in history the charm is obtained by copiousness and agreeable style. Lastly, the words used, the forms of speech, and the construction of the sentences. Thucydides remarks, it makes all the difference whether the composition is to be for declamation for the moment; oratory has to do with the latter, history with the former.

Hence it is that I do not feel tempted to hopelessly jumble together two dissimilar things, one another just because of their great importance, and I am afraid I should be writing a terrible medley and write in the one style just where I ought to be employing the other. Therefore, to use the language of the courts, I ask your gracious permission to do so. However, please do be good enough even now to consider the period which I have chosen. Shall it be a period of ancient history which others have dealt with before me, and which is ready to hand, but the putting them together would be a heavy task. On the other hand, the period which has not been dealt with, I shall get much shall thanks and am bound to do so besides the fact that the general standard of morality is so lax that there is much to be praised, you are sure to be called me, for you praise and too censorious if you have been lavish of appreciation and scrupulously guarded in reproach. However, I beg of you to stay me, for I am not at all ashamed of my convictions. I only beg of you to prepare to write, as you urge me to do, and choose a subject for me, so that, when I am at length able to write, no other overpowering reason may crop up to make me hesitate and delay my progress.

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Classical references

Titinius Capito: he was an official belonging to the *equites* class but he was an imperial official. He was in charge of any letters and commands between the emperor and the governors of provinces and army commanders. By the time this Letter was written, Capito was in charge of the fire service in Rome, known as the *praefectus vigilum*. Pliny was below Pliny, Capito was older, and they had similar interests in writing.

'that my victorious name should pass from mouth to mouth.': Pliny is using a quotation from his uncle whose work was taught in Roman schools.

'And yet - !': another quotation from Virgil, this time from a boat race in *Aeneid*. The character in the boat race, cries out: 'I no longer seek the first place – and yet I do not seek to be famous, but it might be quite nice!

My uncle, who was also my father by adoption, was a historian of the most scrupulous accuracy: Pliny the Elder. He was an early natural scientist who wrote several volumes on the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 when he ordered a boat to have a closer look at the volcano, trying to save residents from their villas on the coast.

I began to plead in the forum in my nineteenth year: this is not particularly unusual for a young man under the guidance of a more senior orator.

Thucydides: he was a Greek historian. The quotation is from his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Pliny wants his writing to be ornate, but Thucydides wanted his to be clear and concise.

Discussion

This Letter gives us some valuable information about Pliny's life.

Activity

Answer the following questions to piece together a brief biography of Pliny.

- Who inspired Pliny?
- When did Pliny start his career?
- For what is that person famous?
- Apart from oratory, what else was Pliny interested in?

The first paragraph of this Letter also gives us an insight into Pliny's desires and ambitions, which will be long-lasting. Notice the number of times he refers to this:

... It seems to me a very proper thing not to let people be forgotten whose names are famous and to perpetuate the glories of others together with one's own. ... there is no set my heart so much as to win a lasting reputation, ... who ... has no cause to be remembered by posterity. ... my ambition ... is ... 'that my victorious name should pass from mouth to mouth.' ... but I am quite satisfied with the fame which history alone secures.

Notice also the pros and cons which Pliny identifies regarding the writing of history and oratory.

Pro	
Pliny has been urged by several people to write history	Pliny is revising his opinion on oratory and history
Pliny is confident that he will succeed	Oratory and history are both difficult
People are curious and delighted to read the stories from history	Not sure which period to write about
It is good to follow in Pliny's uncle's footsteps	It is difficult to get the time to write

Activity

According to Pliny, how do history and oratory differ?

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Letter 7.5: Lovesick Pliny

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Calpurnia.

You would scarcely credit how much I miss you and long to see you again. My cause of this longing, and the fact that we have not been used to being away from each other. Hence it is that I spend a great part of my nights awake, not thinking of you, as I used to visit you, I find my feet carrying me – in the literal sense of the term – sick and sad at heart, and feeling as though I had been refused admittance, I try to get away. At one time only am I free from these tormenting pangs, and that is when I am with my friends. In writing to you, how wretched is my life, when I find my rest being harassed and anxious. Farewell.

Classical references

Calpurnia: this Letter is addressed to his wife.

Discussion

As Pliny's third wife, Calpurnia was expected to produce children. She had suffered several miscarriages and went to Pliny's seaside villa to recuperate from her work in the courts: *when I am in court and busy pleading for my friends*.

Activity

How does Pliny convey his love for Calpurnia?

Has this Letter changed your opinion of Letter 4.10 on page 28?

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Letter 8.8: The Fountain

This Letter is quite long and has been divided up for ease of translation. It has
Original Latin Sections

1–4 The fountain

5–7 The temple and religious site

Sections 1–4: The fountain

C. PLINIUS ROMANO SUO S

vidistine aliquando Clitum fontem? si nondum (et puto nondum: alioquin
mihi), vide, Clite ego (paenitet tarditatis) proxime vidi. modicus collis assurgit
cupressu nemorosus et opacus. hunc subter exit fons et exprimitur pluribus
5 imparibus, eluctatusque quem facit gurgitem lato gremio patescit, purus et vit
numerare iactas stipes et relucentes calculos possis. inde non loci devexitate,
copia et quasi pondere impellitur, fons adhuc et iam amplissimum flumen, at
navium patiens; quas obvias quoque et contrario nisu in diversa tendentes tra
perfert, adeo validus ut illa qua properat ipse, quamquam per solum planum,
adiuvetur, idem aegerrime remis contisque superetur adversus. iucundum ut
10 iocum ludumque fluitantibus, ut flexerint cursum, laborem otio otium labore
fraxino multa, multa populo vestiuntur, quas perspicuus amnis velut mersas
adnumerat. rigor aquae certaverit nivibus, nec color cedit.

Translation

Gaius Plinius writes to his Romanus.

Have you ever seen the source of the Clitumnus? If not yet (and I think not
have told me) see it; a thing which I have done very recently. (I regret leaving
rises, well wooded, and dark with an ancient cypress tree. At the foot of the
forced out through several channels, but of unequal size and after breaking
which it makes, it spreads out into a broad sheet, pure and glassy, so that
that have been thrown in and gleaming pebbles. From there it is forced from
the ground, but by its own volume and sort of weight, still a spring and not
permitting ships, meeting and also pulling in different directions through
carries across and conveys. So strong is the Clitumnus that, in the direction
through level ground, there is no advantage from oars and that the same river
can be managed with the greatest difficulty with oars and poles. For those
and amusement either task is pleasant, whenever it is to change course, to put
effort to ease. The banks are clad with many and so many a poplar tree, with
if submerged in a green image. The colour of the water could rival the snow

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Grammar and translation notes

- 1 *Clitumnum fontem*: these two nouns are in apposition, which may be a Latin phrase *urbs Roma*, 'the city of Rome'. So here the translation is 'the *alioqui* here means 'otherwise'. *narrasses* is a conditional subjunctive. 'Then you would have told me'.
- 2 *paenitet tarditatis*: the impersonal verb of feeling is followed by the noun *me* is 'understood'.

Activity

Lines 2–5 and 12. Translate adjectives used to describe the spring.

- 4 *eluctatusque... gurgitem*: the verb is deponent so taking an accusative is.
- 5–6 *devexitate... copia... pondere*: these are all ablative with *impellitur*.
- 7–8 Pliny is quite economical with his words (referred to as *brevity*), and this cause scholars to wonder what he means. The idea here is two boats are Pliny may also be giving detail about small boats struggling under the (accusative) *obvias ... tendentes ...* (agreeing with the boats). (the river) *indeo validus ut* (result clause).
illa qua: both words are ablative and *via* is 'understood' *illa via qua*.
- 9 *superetur*: still subjunctive after *ut*.
- 12 *certaverit*: the perfect subjunctive reflects necessity.

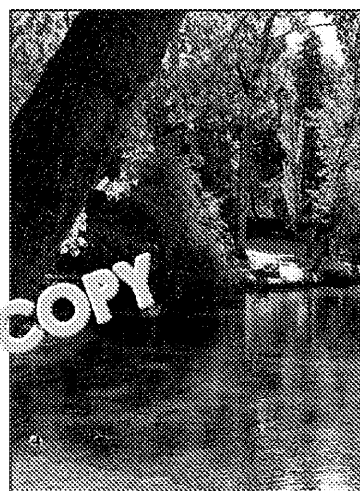
Examination-style short question

What does Pliny mean? *... quae certaverit nivibus, nec color cedit?*

Context and style notes

ROMANO: a friend who had been promoted to the rank of senator. They lived together under the famous grammarian Quintilian.

- 1 *Clitumnum fontem*: the Clitumnus was, and still is, a small stream which flowed into the Tiber, the modern Topino, a tributary of the river Tiber, which flows through Rome. There is still a small village at the source of the stream called Le Vene where the water emerges from limestone rock. It was a famous beauty spot and also famous for its white cattle.
- 5 *iactas stipes*: it is a common practice to throw coins into fountains. A fountain in the Clitumnus was a *fons sacer*, a sacred fountain (even visited by the emperor Claudius). The coins here were intended as sacred offerings to the river god.



The Clitumnus

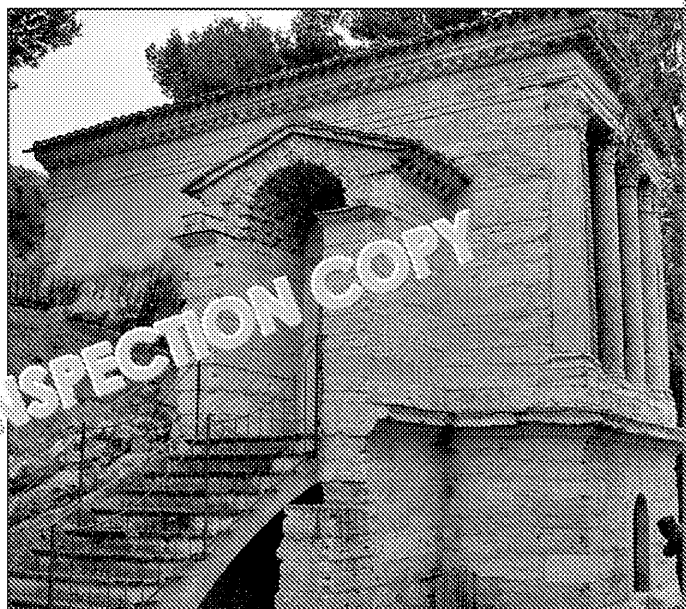
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- 7 *navium patiens*: this seems to be an exaggeration. The river was only narrow. However, it appears there is a strong current as they have difficulty passing.
- 8–10 Pliny cleverly uses chiasmus to emphasise the two different experiences of the river.
- 10–11 *ripae fraxino multa, multa populo vestiuntur*: the chiasmus continues with *multa* being emphasised.

Activity

1. Mark the chiasmus in the following lines:
8–9: *ut illa qua non potest transire, ... remis non ... aegerrime remis contisque*
10: *lento ... m ... m labore*
2. How does the spring personified in lines 1–12? Think of the use of verbs. Could some of the nouns and adjectives apply to people too?
3. This Letter is one of a very few which describe a nature spot for its own sake. To help, find as many literary devices as you can used by Pliny to enhance the description.



The remains of the temple

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Sections 5–7: The temple and religious site is described by Pliny

adiacet templum priscum et religiosum. stat Clitumnus ipse amictus ornatuse
 praesens numen atque etiam fatidicum indicant sortes. sparsa sunt circa sacer
 totidemque di. sua cuique veneratio suum nomen, quibusdam vero etiam fons
 praeter illum quasi parentem ceterorum sunt minores. prope discreti; sed flum
 5 quod ponte transmittitur. is terminus sacri quoque: in superiore parte nat
 infra etiam natare concessum. Jam tunc dispellates, quibus illum locum Divus
 dono dedit, publice utuntur, praebent et hospitium. nec desunt villae quae se
 amoenitate sibi soli insistent. in summa nihil erit, ex quo non capias volupt
 studebis quoque: leges multa multorum omnibus columnis omnibus parietib
 10 quibus fons ille deusque celebratur. plura laudabis, non nulla ridebis; quam
 quae tua humanitas, nulla ridebis. vale.

Translation

Standing nearby is a temple, old and with an air of sanctity. There stands C
 and adorned with a toga praetexta, and the oracular responses show that a
 prophetic. Dotted around are several little chapels, and just as many gods.
 each and a particular name, and for certain ones there are even springs. For
 the parent of the others, there are lesser ones set apart from the chief one; b
 river, which is spanned by a bridge. This is the boundary of the sacred and
 part it is only permitted to go by boat. below it is permitted to swim even.
 whom the Divine Augustus gave to the people as a gift, provide a public bath
 accommodation too; not far from the edge, attracted by the temple, are villas
 all, there will be no place from which you cannot take joy. For you will be
 the many gods of many people on all the columns and all the walls, by w
 worshipped. Very many you will commend, at some you will laugh; altho
 none, such is your human understanding. Farewell.

Grammar and translation notes

Activity

Lines 1–3. List and translate all the words associated with religion.

- 3 *sua cuique veneratio suum nomen, quibusdam vero etiam fontes: est* needs to be translated after *veneratio*.
- 4 *minores*: refers to lesser springs.
- 5 *transmittitur*: meaning the river is crossed by a traveller or that travelled by the bridge.
- 6 *profanum*: means non-religious and is not as strong a word as 'profane'.
- 7 *nec desunt*: 'not missing' or 'not lacking' are the villas.

Examination-style short question:

What does Pliny say which shows that the source of the Clitumnus was popular?

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- 9 *leges*: a verb, from *lego, legere*, 'read'. *multa multorum*: the genitive plural than *inscripta*.

Activity

From lines 8–11 identify the verbs in the future tense.

Context and style notes

- 1 *templum*: the image on page 36 shows the site of the temple described in the text. It was later converted into a church but the actual building dates probably from the 12th century.
- stat Clitumnus*: this is the image of *Jupiter Clitumnus*, standing in the temple of Umbria, where the spring was. Most river gods were depicted with fish scales to convey the idea of fluidity in sculpture. Clitumnus was possibly associated with the river Tiber and was portrayed with a toga.
- praetexta*: a *toga praetexta* was worn by boys, magistrates and the upper classes. It was a toga with a purple stripe. The toga is a real one, not a sculpture. It was made of real clothes.
- 2 *sortes*: these were strips of wood and supposed prophecies were written on them, put into a vessel and drawn out and read as required.
- 5–6 Notice the balance:
in superiore parte (A)...*navigare* (B)... *infra* (A) ...*navigare* (B). The sentence is balanced like the water being described.
- 6 *Hispellates*: the town of Hispellum, now called Sello today and is about 120 km from Rome.
- 7 *publice praebent, proderunt hospitium*: notice the juxtaposition. Pliny is providing the amenities that the town have made for tourists.

Activity

1. Is Pliny more successful in writing about the source of the Clitumnus than about the individual characters?
2. How much do you think Pliny's friend, Romanus, would have enjoyed reading this?

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Letter 8.16: My household slaves

C. PLINIUS PATERNO SUO S.

confecerunt me infirmitates meorum, mortes etiam, et quidem iuvenum. solacia
nequaquam paria tanto dolori, solacia tamen: unum facilitas manumittendi (v
non omnino immaturos perdidisse, quos iam liberos nunc habui), alterum quod p
quoque quasi testamenta facere, eaque ut iussus custodio. mandant rogant
5 visum; pareo ut iussus. dividua quodammodo relinquunt, dumtaxat intra domum; n
publica quaedam etiam in servitium domus est. sed quamquam his solaciis acqui
debilitor etiam per eadem illa humanitate, quae me ut hoc ipsum permittere
ideo tamen velim durior fieri. nec ignoro alios eius modi casus nihil amplius v
damnum, eoque sibi magnos homines et sapientes videri. qui an magni sapient
10 nescio; homines non sunt. hominis est enim affici dolore sentire, resistere tam
admittere, non solaciis non egere. verum de his plura fortasse quam debui; se
quam volui. est enim quaedam etiam dolendi voluptas, praesertim si in amicis
apud quem lacrimis tuis vel laus sit parata vel venia. vale.

Translation

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Paternus.

The illnesses of my household have had an effect on me, some are dead, and
ones. (There are) two consolations, though they are by no means equivalent
consolations, nevertheless. One is the opportunity of freedom, (for I seem to
altogether immaturely to have lost when they were now free men) and
my slaves to make sort of wills and I look after them as if legal documents
request as I think fit; I carry them out as ordered. They divide up, leave
provided that they are within the household, as, for slaves, my house is the
although by these consolations I find comfort, I feel shattered and broken by
common humanity which led me to grant them this very thing. Not that I
I am not unaware that other people call misfortunes of this kind nothing more
and for this reason seem to themselves great men and wise. Whether they
know, but they (certainly) are not men. For it is the mark of a human being
have feelings, yet even to fight back and let in consolations and not to not
these matters perhaps (I have written) more than I ought, but quite fewer than
certain pleasure even in feeling grief, especially if you are weeping in the
whom in your tears there is ready, praise or pardon. Farewell.

Grammar and translation notes

- 1 *meorum* refers to a *familia*, not a *family*, but a household, which in
the family. *sunt* is used in Pliny. In this case it is to be under
called *est* (as the omission of other words which must be 'under
unum *est* *interium*: also has ellipsis of *est*.
- 2 *manumittendi*: gerund.
- 3 *permitto*: is followed by the dative (for the person permitted) and infinitive
can do).

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4–5 *quod visum*: 'as they see or think fit'. Ellipsis again of *est*.

Examination-style short question:

solacia duo: What two things give Pliny consolation?

7 *ut hoc ipsum permetterem*: result clause.

Activity

Read through lines 1–7 again and list the *solacia* associated with sadness.

8 *velim*: present subjunctive from *volo*, a potential subjunctive.

9 *damnum* is a business loss. *qui an magni sapientesque sint, nescio*; subjunctive indirect question.

10 *hominis*: *vir/homo* also genitive of quality.

11 *non solaciis non egere*: *ego, egere* is with the genitive or, as here, ablative. *verum de his plura fortasse quam debui scripsi* is understood.

Activity

This Letter has focus on Pliny himself. List the verbs in the first person singular.

Context and style notes

PATERNO SUO: Paternus was a literary friend of Pliny. He must have had Pliny, since Pliny has already written to him (the freedman Zosimus became Letter 5.19).

2 *manumittendi*: there were three ways of freeing a slave.

per cer With the master's agreement, a slave's name was entered in the public records.

per testam Slaves were freed in the will of their deceased master.

per vindictam A ceremony in front of a magistrate where a slave was freed.

In the ceremony, right, two slaves are being freed before a magistrate (in the toga). The magistrate has a rod in his hand to touch the slaves and symbolise freedom. The slaves are wearing pointed felt caps. Once freed they had to wear these to important public ceremonies, so people knew they were once slaves.

3 *perdidisse, ... perdidit*: the use of polyptoton emphasises Pliny's feeling of loss.

Activity

non omnino immaturos is an example of litotes.

Can you find another example in the Letter?

4 *quasi testamento*: *testamentum* was not allowed by Roman law to have children's property. They were regarded as the property of their masters. Pliny, being a lawyer, could easily draw up wills which would only be valid within the household. Slaves in a household were subject to the rules of the master and so Pliny regards this as a sort of civic community of the kind a free citizen's. *publica quaedam et quasi civitas domus est*. In this attitude Pliny is very unusual.

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- 5 *dividunt donant relinquunt*: the asyndeton is used as Pliny quickly goes permitted to do, but expands after that to ensure that this only happens.
- 7 *debilitor et frangor*: Pliny often begins his sentences with verbs, here especially extreme emotions.
- 9 *sapientes*: the word is associated with the Stoics.
- 10 *homines ... hominis*: polyptoton again. Pliny is focusing on humans and their actions.
- 11 *solacia ... solaciis*: *solacia* has been mentioned in this Letter. The polyptoton emphasizes its importance.
- 12 *praesentibus in sinu defleas*: Pliny is familiar enough with Paternus and his feelings.

Activity

Using this Letter and Letter 3.14 explain what Pliny says about other masters.
 What language does Pliny use to describe other masters?
 What words are used to describe himself?

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Letter 8.17: Flooding

C. PLINIUS MACRINO SUO S.

num istic quoque immite et turbidum caelum? hic assiduae tempestates et crescentis
Tiberis alveum excessit et demissioribus ripis alte superfunditur; quamquam
providentissimus imperator fecit exhaustus, premit vallum innatat campis, quod
solum, pro solo cernitur. inde quae solet fluminis facere et permixta devehit
5 retro cogit, atque ita alienis aquis, non propriis, quos ipse non tangit. Anio, de
amnum ideoque adiacentia velut invitatus retentusque, magna ex parte
quibus inundatio pergit et rapuit; subruit montes, et decidentium mole plura
clausus, dum incertum iter quaerit, impulit tecta ac se super ruinas eiecit atque
viderunt quos excelsioribus terris illa tempestas deprehendit, alibi divitum agmina
10 gravem supellectilem, alibi instrumenta ruris, ibi boves aratra rectores, hic se
armenta, atque inter haec arborum truncos aut villarum trabes atque culmina
fluitantia. ac ne illa quidem malo vacaverunt, ad quae non ascendit amnis. nam
imber assiduus et deiecti nubibus turbines, proruta opera quibus pretiosa rura
quassata atque etiam decussa monumenta. multi eius modi casibus debilitati
15 et aucta luctibus damna. ne quid simile istic, pro mensura periculi vereor, te
tale, quam maturissime sollicitudini meae consulas, sed et si tale, id quoque non
parvolum differt, patiaris adversa an exspectes; nisi quod tamen est dolendi
timendi. doleas enim quantum scias accidisse, timeas quod aliud possit accideri.

Translation

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Macrinus.

Surely the weather isn't inclement and rough where you are as well? Here
frequent floods. The Tiber has left its channel and spills out high above the
the very far-seeing Emperor has provided draining by the canal, (the river)
fields, and wherever the ground is level is seen in place of dry ground. Con-
it is accustomed to take and to carry off mingled with its own, meeting the
and so covers with unfamiliar waters, the fields which it does not reach its
delightful of streams, and for that reason, as if invited and held back by vi-
carried off in a large part the woods by which it is shaded; it has overthrow
in by the mass of debris in several places, in its efforts to regain its lost cha-
buildings, and raised and spread itself over their ruins. Those who that sto-
saw here the belongings of rich and solid furniture, there the implements
ploughs and drivers, here herds of cattle, loose and free, and among these
beams of villas, heaped up floating far and wide. And not even those plac-
reach escaped disaster. For, instead of the river, (there are) constant rains
from the rain clouds, the deluge of walls by which their rich fields were
buildings shaken and demolished. Many have been maimed, overwhelmed
accidents of this kind, and so their material losses have been made the hea-
am much all the more in case it is similar there in proportion to the danger and
anything of that kind, to relieve my anxiety as soon as possible, and if you
me all about it. For it makes little difference whether you actually suffer dis-
except that there is however a limit to your grieving, but not to your fearing
what you know has happened, and fear over what might happen. Farewell

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Grammar and translation notes

- 1 *hic*: Pliny is in Rome. *num* expects the answer 'No', *nonne* expects the answer 'Yes'.

Activity

Line 1 contains a range of weather vocabulary: Find the Latin for:

Weather/sky

Inclement

Rough

Storms

Flooding

- 2 *Tiberis*: the river Tiber. The river Anio (now named Aniene) flows into the Tiber.

- 3 *providens*: foresight. *hic imperator*: this is the emperor Trajan. Notice the use of *hic* – Pliny is fond of using these. See also lines 5 and 16.

- 5–7 *Anio... fregit et rapuit*: the subject of the verbs in line 7 is *Anio* in line 5. *fregit* is the perfect tense of *fregisse* – to break. *rapuit* is the perfect tense of *rapere* – to carry off. This is the sentence for Pliny.

Activity

- Using lines 7–8, list the verbs which show the destruction caused by the flood. Add the meaning.
- 9–12: Draw and label in Latin pictures of what the river is carrying down.
- 15–18: Find the subjunctives in the following lines:

teque rogo, si nihil tale, quam maturissime sollicitudini meae consulas, si nunties. Nam parvulum differt, patiaris adversari, si exspectes; nisi quod non est timendi. Doleas enim quantum scissis corruisse, timeas quantum

Context and style

MACRINUS: another unknown friend.

Pliny was an expert in hydraulics and had responsibility for the Tiber in Rome. The vocabulary he uses show he had a genuine interest in the flooding, which was a major problem for Rome.

For Pliny's role we have an inscription as evidence:

Gaius Pliny, a curator of the Tiber, its banks, and of the city sewers...

- 1 *istic ... hic*: the comparison is between the location of Macrinus and Pliny.

- 3 *premit valles, innatat campis, quaque planum solum, pro solo cernitur*: notice the use of *pro solo* – used to heap up the devastation caused by the flood.

- 5 *Anio*: known today as the Aniene, the Arno had a reputation for having a flood through to where it joined the Tiber. Some hundred years earlier the poet Virgil wrote as such. This Letter was written during the reign of Trajan and the valley was very agricultural. The scene contains farming equipment and animals, (line 10) *alibi in arvis, ibi armenta ruris, ibi boves aratra rectores, hic solutat et libera armenta*.

- 9–11 *alibi ... alibi ... ibi ... hic ... atque inter haec*: the image is almost cinematic, moving from one place to the next.

- 14 *multi eius modi casibus debilitati obruti obruti*: asyndeton again as Pliny lists the various disasters.

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Activity

1. This Letter has been described as 'the Counterweight to the Clitumnus'. From the prescribed Letters on marvels of nature (8.8; 8.17) there is a depiction of pleasant locations and narratives about the destructive power of nature. How, as a writer of narrative, does Pliny help the audience gaze at the marvels of nature?

Compare this Letter with the Clitumnus Letter, considering:

- The description of the location
- The surrounding landscape
- Pliny's use of imagery
- Pliny's rhetorical devices used to convey his narrative

2. Another important comparison is this Letter with Letter 8.16. Pliny's emotions are a key feature of both Letters. List the emotions felt in each Letter. Are they the same or different?

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Letter 9.6: Pliny not at the races

C. PLINIUS CALVISIO SUO S.

omne hoc tempus inter pugillares ac libellos iucundissima quiete transmissi.
'quemadmodum' inquis 'in urbe potuisti?' Circenses erant, quo genere spectare
levissime quidem teneor. nihil novum nihil varium, nihil quod non semel spectare
quo magis miror tot milia virorum tam nunc ita libentidem cupere currentes
5 insistentes curribus homines videre, quam aut velocitate equorum aut hominum
traherentur, esset videri. nunc nalla; nunc favent panno, pannum amant, et si in
medioque color hic color illuc ille huc transferatur, studium favorque transire
repente agitadores illos equos illos, quos procul noscitant, quorum clamitant
relinquent. tanta gratia tanta auctoritas in una vilissima tunica, mitto apud vulgum
10 vilius tunica, sed apud quosdam graves homines; quos ego cum recordor, in re
adsidua, tam insatiabiliter desiderare, capio aliquam voluptatem, quod hac voluptate
capior. ac per hos dies libentissime otium meum in litteris colloco, quos alii otio
occupationibus perdunt. vale.

Translation

Gaius Pliny sends greetings to his Calvisius.

I have spent all this time on wax tablets and books. 'most pleasant peace in Rome?' you say. There were the Games in the Circus, by which type of sport you were interested. There is nothing new, nothing different, nothing which would surprise you. Therefore, I am all the more surprised that so many thousands of men repeatedly go to see horses running and men standing in chariots. If, however, either by the speed of the horses or the skill of the men, there would be some side, and suddenly they will abandon those drivers and those horses, which they support, the cloth they love, and if in the actual race and the colour was transferred to that one, and vice versa, their devotion and support, and suddenly they will abandon those drivers and those horses, which they support, and whose names they shout. So great is the influence, so great the importance of the tunic, not to mention in the eyes of the mob, which is [even] more worthless in the eyes of certain eminent people; when I recall these people taking such insatiable pleasure in an event which is useless, pointless and monotonous, I take some pleasure in it by this pleasure. Besides, I am very willingly spending my leisure time on it, which others waste on most idle occupations. Farewell.

Grammar and translation notes

Activity

To help translate the first 11 lines, there is the following short presentation: www.bbc.com/learningenglish/uk/grammar/latin/letter-9.6

2 *urbe*: when used on its own, *urbs* meant Rome. *potuisti*: as in English, the

Examination-style short question:

iucundissima quiete: Why might this be a surprise to Calvisius?

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- 3 *nihil*: understand *erat sufficiat*: generic subjunctive after *nihil quod*; *non* negating the verb.
- 5–6 *si... traherentur, esset*: a good example of an unfulfilled conditional clause 'they were attracted (but they are not)..., there would be...'
- 6–9 *si... transferatur... transibit... relinquent*: normally, the main clause in a conditional sentence in the future is in the same tense and mood as the conditional clause. The use of the indicative here indicates the certainty of the main clause but 'It will transfer and then will be taken in'.
- 9 *mitto* here means 'omit'.
- 10 *vilius*: *tunica* is ablative of comparison after the comparative *vilius*.
- 11–12 *capio... capior*: note the play on words which is difficult to express in English. The first means 'I derive pleasure', the second means 'I am not captivated by the pleasure'. Bring out the play on words by 'take... taken in'.

Style and context notes

This Letter is noteworthy as it reveals the snobbish side of Pliny's character about those who like this form of entertainment.

- 1 *inter... libellos*: i.e. on writing and reading. The Games meant a public life; he did not have to perform the daily duties expected of a rich patron, which he valued. His gratitude for the peace and quiet the rest from these duties gave (superlative *iucundissima*).
- 2 *Circenses*: there were various *Circi* in Rome, the largest being the *Circus Maximus* enlarged by Julius Caesar, and which held 150,000 seats. It burned down under Nero and Domitian. The main form of entertainment there was chariot racing. Only two teams, the Red and the White; two further teams were added by Domitian, the Gold and Purple, so there were six separate chariots racing round the course.
- 2–3 *ne levissime quidem*: note how Pliny emphasises his dislike of the Games with *ne quidem*.
- 3 *nihil... nihil... nihil*: anaphora and tricolon, the third and last element being the most important. Pliny emphasises his dislike with alliteration of *n* in *nihil novum*, *nihil in semel spectasse sufficiat*.
- 4 *tot milia*: this is not exaggeration, as it might appear, for the Circus Maximus was a large place. Pliny emphasises his scorn with alliteration of *m* (a letter often used for emphasis) in *magis miror... milia virorum* and with assonance of *cu* (and, possibly, *r*) in *currentes... curribus* is another example of polypot.

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Activity

Lines 5–8: identify examples of balance and chiasmus.

- 9 *tanta*: asyndeton. *mitto apud vulgus*: Pliny's attitude towards the common people, the snobbish.
- 11–12 Note also the chiasmus of *capio... capior*.

Examination-style short question:

How does Pliny reveal his attitude towards the common people by what he says?

- 12 *otium... otiosissimis*: more polyptoton. *otium* means not only 'leisure', but leisure time often produces, and it is this double meaning which Pliny uses his own *otium* to good effect by writing or studying literature, but chariot races are a complete waste of time, in Pliny's view.

Activity

What indication is given in this Letter that Pliny and his contemporaries had the same Romans of his day?



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Letter 9.12: On the treatment of children

C. Pliny sends greetings to his Terentius Junior.

A friend of mine was thrashing his son for spending money too lavishly in boyish youth had gone, I said to the father: 'Come now, did you never commit a fault? Have you never been reprimanded? Why, of course you have. Do you not know and then still call your son would equally severely reprimand you? If your positions were suddenly changed, would you not be the father and the son? Are not all men liable to make mistakes? Does not one way and another in another? I am so struck with this man's undue severity of mind about it, out of the fact that we bear one another, so that you may never act with harshness towards your son. Remember that he is a boy and that you have been exercising your parental authority do not forget that you are a man and the father of a son.'

Classical references

Terentius Junior: Gaius Terentius Junior. Opinions differ about this recipient, but he is usually taken to be the grandson of Pliny's friend, an older member of the Terentii family.

Discussion

Here Pliny is passing on his advice: 'Never act with undue bitterness and harshness towards your son'. Pliny is very unusual in this attitude. Corporal punishment was not only common in Roman times, it was often encouraged as 'character building', an idea which lasted well into the 19th century. One wonders if this is because Pliny had no children of his own and he really found it hard to see a child being beaten. (Or is this putting a modern slant on this?)

The poet Martial, who wrote a century after Pliny, says:

Before the creak of the doors has broken silence, you roar with your savage shouts.
... Do not let your scholars, yell, and take as much for keeping quiet as for making a noise.

Excerpt from

Activity

How are the father and son portrayed? Use words and phrases from the text to support your answer.

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Topics covered by the *Letters*

Topic	Letters (either whole or parts read)
Roman society in general	1.9 The rat race (L) 2.6 Grading at dinner (E) 5.8 Writing history (E) 9.6 Pliny not at the races (L)
Women	4.19 Calpurnia (L) 9.12 Lovesick Pliny (E) <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> Activity Make extra notes on this topic by viewing Dalston: Woman, Love and Relationships, 10.11.2019. www.bbc.com/culture/2019/11/191110-dalston-pliny-wife </div>
The Roman Family	4.2 Regulus's son (L) 4.19 Calpurnia (L) 3.16 Arria (L) 9.12 The son of a friend (E)
Duty	1.9 The rat race (L) 5.8 Writing history (E)
Leisure	1.9 The rat race (L) 8.8 The fountain (L) 9.6 Pliny not at the races (L)
Character studies	4.12 Corellius Rufus (E) 2.20 Regulus (E) 3.16 Arria (L) 4.2 Regulus's son (L) 4.19 Calpurnia (L)
Slavery	3.14 Brutal murder (E) 8.16 Sickness of slaves (L)
Nature	8.8 The fountain (L) 8.17 Flooding (L)
Advice: giving and asking for	2.6 Grading at dinner (E) 9.12 Children (E) 5.8 Writing history (E)

Key:

L = Latin prescription

E = English prescription

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Recipients of the *Letters*

The 10 Books of Letters have over 100!

Letter	Sent to	
1.9	Minicius Fundanus	A junior senator who liked philosophy.
1.12	Calestrius Tiro	A senator who followed the <i>cursus honorum</i> , e.g. they did military service and quaestor at the same time.
2.6	Avitus	Received this Letter just as he was starting his public life on the <i>cursus honorum</i> .
2.20, 9.6	Calvisius Rufus	Landowner from Comum. Pliny writes to him often about his estate.
3.14	Publius Acilius	Wealthy friend of Pliny from Patavium in Northern Italy.
3.16	Metilius Nepos	A senator of consular rank and grandfather of Pliny (Maecilius, a minor senator)
4.2	Attius Clemens	Also wrote letters.
4.19	Calpurnia Hispulla	His wife's aunt from Comum.
5.8	Titinius Capito	An imperial official of equestrian rank. Wrote history.
7.5	Calpurnia	His third wife.
8.8	Voconius Romanus	Originally from Spain, he was a senator. He was promoted to the rank of consul with Quintilian together.
8.16	Plinius Paterculus	No relation. A literary friend.
8.17	Caecilius Iulianus	From Milan or Brixia. Not a senator.
9.12	Titius Priscus Junior	A young man.

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The Character of Pliny

Some scholars feel that we actually learn more about Pliny than we do about

Activity

Here is a list of words and phrases which could describe Pliny. Add details to support those you agree with. Space has been left for you to add other ideas.

Description	Detail
a good friend	
caring	
hard-working	
hypocrite	
loving	
polite	
pompous	
snob	
spiteful	
thinks his social standing is important	

Some scholars portray Pliny as a snooty type of writer and rather pompous using *sententiae* in most of the *Letters*. *Sententiae* are basically moral-type sayings, proverbs, quotations or witty phrases, in a rhetorical speech the speaker gets the listener. Pliny uses these in his letters.

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Here are some sententiae from Pliny's *Letters*. Explain what Pliny means by *Letters*. (Clue: sometimes they summarise the point he is making – but not always.)

Letter	Sententia
1.9	<i>sati^{us} est enim, ... otiosum esse qu^{am} in^{ter} agere.</i> So, remember that there is something you should eschew more than this new association of
2.6	<i>extravagantia et in^{im}itas; they are abominable</i> (Letter 1) <i>lives, when separated and single, and still more</i> <i>when you get a combination of them.</i>
3.14	You see the dangers, the affronts and insults we are exposed to, and no one can feel at all secure because he is an easy and mild-tempered master, <u>for villainy not deliberation murders masters.</u>
3.16	<i>quod initio dixi, alia esse clariora alia maiora.</i>
4.19	<i>sed amore qui magister est optimus.</i> For men are naturally curious; they are delighted even by the baldest relation of facts, and so we see them carried away even by little stories and anecdotes.
5.8	For, as <u>Thucydides</u> remarks, it makes no difference whether the composition is to be a possession for a lifetime or a declamation for the moment. The former has to do with the latter, history with the former.
8.16	<i>nim^{is} quaedam etiam dolendi voluptas, praesertim si in amici sinu defleas, apud quem lacrimis tuis vel laus sit parata vel venia.</i>
8.17	<i>doleas enim quantum scias accidisse, timeas quantum possit accidere.</i>
9.12	Remember that he is a boy and that you have been a boy yourself, and in exercising your parental authority do not forget that you are a man and the father of a man.

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As his Books of *Letters* evolve, we can note changes in Pliny's mood.

Book 1: 1.9; 1.12	In Book 1, Pliny appears more optimistic and more freedom of speech and general life and
Book 2: 2.6; 2.20	Most of the topics in these books continue when he is sad, he can cope.
Book 3: 3.14; 3.16	
Book 4: 4.2; 4.19	
Book 5: 5.8	
Book 6 (not prescribed)	
Book 7: 7.1-7.24	In a book of 24 Letters, death and serious illness in seven Letters, which is close to 30% of the change in Pliny's attitude. He is somewhat
Book 8: 8.16; 8.17 Roy Gibson calls this uncharacteristic	In Book 8 he has sunk lower. Pliny is affected in a more robust way in earlier books and to need the comfort of his visit to the religious
Book 9: 9.6; 9.12	Pliny's ninth book, in some respects, represents an optimistic attitude. Pliny seems to see a bright future will see him in a positive way .
Book 10 (not prescribed)	Official letters and responses to a letter from the emperor and matter of fact .

So, should we thank Pliny for the benefit of his will? To a certain extent, people such as Pliny in various ways: Pliny had been a senatorial and political freedmen as we see in Letter 2.6. Pliny was a 'father' to his household and welfare state or charity: Pliny gave little help from the state, except in a few people such as Pliny, the NHS, DSS / Social Services.

Activity

What impression of Pliny is given in the prescribed *Letters*?

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Guided Examination-style Question

A large proportion of marks are in the 20- and 15-mark questions.

Guided 20-mark question:

It is the wide range of characters which makes Pliny's society so interesting.
To what extent do you agree?

This question invites candidates to consider the selection from the *Letters* of individual characters. Candidates should consider:

- Regulus (Letter in Latin and English)
- Maccus (Letter in English)
- Corellius Rufus (Letter in English)
- Arria (Letter in Latin)
- Calpurnia (Letter in Latin and English)

This gives a good range of examples and covers both Latin and English.

Questions to ask:

- What impression is given of the characters?
- Why did he choose his characters?

Points to bear in mind when writing about Pliny:

- The society is upper class.
- Pliny's *Letters* were revised; what he wanted to see.

There needs to be a counterargument.
Are his 'general letters' interesting?

What about society in general?

- The daily duties in Rome.
- Attitude towards slaves.

Activity

Now write a full answer to the question above.

It is the wide range of characters which makes Pliny's society so interesting.
To what extent do you agree?

Other 20-mark questions to consider:

1. 'Pliny is a master storyteller.'
Show how this is true of parts of *Letters* you have read.
2. 'Nothing but snobbery and privilege.'
How accurate is your verdict on Pliny's *Letters*?

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The 15-mark question is based on appreciation of content and style with the instruction 'You should refer both to the content and to the language of the passage.'

Guided 15-mark question:

How does Pliny create an idyllic image in this passage?

You should refer both to the content and to the language of the passage.

modicus collis assurgit, antiqua cupressu nemorosa et opacus. hunc subter exprimitur pluribus venis sed immixtus. detatusque quem facit gurgitem lapidescat, purus et vitreus. ut emergere lactas stipes et relucentes calculos possit loci devexitate, sed insuper accipia et quasi pondere impellitur, fons adhuc et iam amplissimus. nec lacque etiam navium patiens; quas obvias quoque et contra diversa tenet. transmittit et perfert, adeo validus ut illa qua properat ipse, per solum planum, remis non adiuvetur, idem aegerrime remis contisque super adversus. iucundum utrumque per iocum ludumque fluitantibus, ut flexerint laborem otio otium labore variare. ripae fraxino multa, multa populo vestiuntur perspicuus amnis velut mersas viridi imagine adnumerat. rigor aquae certaverit color cedit.

The best approach as seen from the OCR mark schemes is to select what Pliny does that with a literary feature (AO3).

Content (AO2)	Stylistic features of the language (AO3)
Detailed description	adjectives: <i>modicus, antiqua, nemorosa et vitreus</i>
The force of the spring is emphasised	<i>exprimitur eluctatus</i>
Personification	<i>vestiuntur</i>
Sounds	onomatopoeia <i>gurgitem</i>
Activities	chiasmus <i>laborem otio otium labore</i>
Colour	<i>viridi imagine nec color cedit</i>
Sensations	<i>rigor aquae certaverit nivibus</i>
Superlatives	<i>amplissimum, aegerrime</i>

Another 15-mark question to consider:

3. How does Pliny make his account of the flood terrifying for his recipients?

Anio, delicatissimus amnium ideoque adiacentibus villis velut invitatus rex ex parte nemora quibus inumbratur fregit et rapuit; subruit montes, et de pluribus locis clausus, dum amissum iter quaerit, impulit tecta ac se super extulit. viderunt quos excelsioribus terris illa tempestas deprehendit apparatus et gravem supellectilem, alibi instrumenta curis, ibi boves armenta soluta et libera armenta, atque inter haec armenta frugos aut villarum fruges varie lateque fluitantia. ac ne illa quidem non vacaverunt, ad quae non advenirent nam pro amne imber assiduus, et ex nubibus turbines, proruta opera rura cinguntur, quassatae etiam decussa monumenta. multi eius morbo obroti obroti, et ex succubus damna. ne quid simile istic, pro mensura teque, etiam tale, quam maturissime sollicitudini meae consulas, se quoque facies.

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Suggested mark schemes for examination-style questions

OCR offer detailed instructions on marking 20-mark questions. Please see <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/533509-mark-scheme-prose-literature.pdf>

1. 'Pliny is a master storyteller.'

Show how far this is true of parts of the *Letters* you have read.

Notice that this question asks you to provide a counterargument. Details should be given in Latin and English.	
Inter range of subject matter	Character studies such as Events such as murder, rape Nature
Brevity of style keeps audience interest	Speed of description on at
Language used	Accept specific examples of superlatives, graphic verbs Clitumnus
Emotions evoked	Pathos in the description of
<i>However,</i>	
Limited to his senatorial class	The stories are those of interest not telling a story, such as
Overdetailed	Corellius Rufus character

2. 'Nothing but snobbery and privilege.'

How accurate is this verdict on Pliny's *Letters*?

Notice that this question asks you to provide a counterargument. Details should be given in Latin and English.	
Back to Pliny	
His tendency to look down on other classes	Pliny not at the races Macedo is given some of the
Many letters are only relevant to his class	Rat race Letters regarding Calpurn
He looks down on others who do not share his 'attitudes'	Regulus Letters Treatment of children Snobbery at dinner
<i>However,</i>	
Aware of his privilege	He has a duty to his slaves could be used here instead
Some Letters are of disasters which affect all (rich and farmers)	The building of the Anio

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The marking grid for the 15-mark questions can be found on the OCR website at <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/220739-unit-h443-03-latin-prose-literature-s>

3.

Content (AO2)	Stylistic features of the language
Range of words for disaster	<i>inunbratur, decidentium mole, tempestas, inter assiduus</i>
Description of ruin caused	<i>ruinae tecta, arborum truncos</i>
Contrasts	<i>delicatissimus annium</i>
Personification	<i>impulit tecta ac se super ruinas</i>
Effect of flooding on all	<i>subruit montes; alibi divitem; arboribus, ibi boves aratra rectores,</i>
Sounds	<i>debilitati obruti obtriti,</i>
Linguistic features which emphasise points	superlatives <i>delicatissimus</i> ; asyndeton
Pliny's personal response	<i>vereor, quam maturissime sollicitus</i>

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Full Examination-style Question Paper

Section A (this is worth 17 marks)

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) will be assessed for quality of answer.

1. Read the following passages and answer the questions.

mirum est quam singulis diebus in urbe ratio aut constet aut constare
iunctisque non constet. nam cum interroges 'hodie quid egisti?', in
togae virilis interitus, nuptias aut salia aut nuptias frequentavi, ille me ad signum
testamentum in advocacionem, ille in consilium rogavit.' haec quoque
ne inopia, eadem, si cotidie fecisse te reputes, inania videntur, multa
secesseris. tunc enim subit recordatio: 'quot dies quam frigidis rebus
evenit mihi, postquam in Laurentino meo aut lego aliquid aut scribo
vaco, cuius fulturis animus sustinetur. nihil audio quod audisse, nihil
paeniteat; nemo apud me quemquam sinistris sermonibus carpit, nec
reprehendo, nisi tamen me cum parum commode scribo; nulla spe me
sollicitor, nullis rumoribus inquietor: mecum tantum et cum libellis

- (a) *ratio aut constet ... iunctisque non constet.* (lines 1–2): Explain what Pliny means by this.
- (b) '*officio togae virilis ... ille in consilium rogavit.*' (lines 2–4): Why might Pliny be interested in these events?
- (c) Translate: *haec quo die feci. ... absumpsi!*' (lines 4–6)
- (d) *quot dies quam frigidis rebus evenit mihi, postquam in Laurentino meo aut lego aliquid aut scribo vaco, cuius fulturis animus sustinetur.* (lines 6–11)
Why is Pliny's life different in Pliny's Laurentine villa?

Regulus filium amisit, hoc uno malo indignus, quod nescio an malum
ingenii sed ambigui, qui tamen posset recta sectari, si patrem non re
emancipavit, ut heres matris existeret; mancipatum (ita vulgo ex me
loquebantur) foeda et insolita parentibus indulgentiae simulatione
Regulum cogita. amissum tamen luget insane. habebat puer mannulos
solutos, habebat canes maiores minoresque, habebat luscinijs psittacis
Regulus circa rogum trucidavit. nec dolor erat ille, sed ostentatio doloris
mira celebritate. cuncti detestantur oderunt, et quasi probent quasi
frequentant, utque breviter quod sentio enuntiem, in Regulo demer
tenet se trans Tiberim in hortis, in quibus luscinijs non solum porticibus
statuis suis occupavit, ut est in summa avaria sumptuosus, in summa
vexat ergo civitatem insano tempore et, quod vexat, solacium
ducere uxorem. hoc sicut alia perverse. audies brevi nuptias
quod a magno amaturum alterum serum est. unde hoc augurer
aiunt, ipse, quo mendacius nihil est, sed quia certum est Regulum
quidquid fieri non oportet. vale.

- (e)* How does Pliny show his dislike for Regulus and Regulus's behaviour?
You should refer both to the content and to the language of the passage.

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Section B (worth 28 marks)

2. Read the following passages and answer the questions.

cum sis pietatis exemplum, fratremque optimum et amantissimum tui
 filiamque eius ut tuam diligas, nec tantum amita effectum verum et
 repraesentes, non dubito maximo tibi gratias fore cum cognoveris dignam
 dignam avo evadere. summum enim summa frugalitas; amat me
 5 indicium est. accedit his studiis litterarum, quod ex mei caritate conce-
 habet lectitatio edisserendi. qua illa sollicitudine cum videor acturus, quae
 afficiat, spero ut qui nuntient sibi quem assensum quos clamores excipit
 iudicium. eadem, si quando recito, in proximo discreta velo sedet,
 10 avidissimis auribus excipit. versus quidem meos cantat etiam formatque
 aliquo docente, sed amore qui magister est optimus. his ex causis in spe
 adducor, perpetuam nobis maioremque in dies futuram esse concordiam
 meam aut corpus, quae paulatim occidunt ac senescunt, sed gloriam di-
 tuis manibus educatam, tuis praeceptis institutam, quae nihil in contumacia
 sanctum honestumque, quae denique amare me ex tua praedicatione co-
 15 matrem meam parentis loco vererere, me a pueritia statim formare laus
 nunc uxori meae videor, ominari solebas. certatim ergo tibi gratias agimus
 mihi, illa quod me sibi dederis, quasi invicem elegeris. vale

- (a)* How does Pliny show his admiration for his wife?

You should refer both to the content and the language of the passage.

confecerunt me iussus meorum, mortes etiam, et quidem iuvenis
 nec quae tanto dolori, solacia tamen: unum facilitas manum
 ne immaturos perdidisse, quos iam liberos perdidici, alterum
 5 quoque quasi testamenta facere, eaque ut legitima custodio. mandant
 visum; pareo ut iussus. dividunt donant relinquunt, dumtaxat intra domum
 publica quaedam et quasi civitas domus est. sed quamquam his solaciis
 debilitor et frangor eadem illa humanitate, quae me ut hoc ipsum per-
 ideo tamen velim durior fieri. nec ignoro alios eius modi casus nihil
 10 damnum, eoque sibi magnos homines et sapientes videri. qui an magis
 nescio; homines non sunt. hominis est enim affici dolore sentire, resistere
 admittere, non solaciis non egere. verum de his plura fortasse quam
 quam volui. est enim quaedam etiam dolendi voluptas, praesertim si
 apud quem lacrimis tuis vel laus sit parata vel venia. vale.

- (b) *confecerunt me ... pareo ut iussus* (lines 1–5)

What helps to alleviate Pliny's grief?

- (c) *dividunt donant relinquunt, ... permitterem induxit*. (lines 5–6)

- (d) *non ideo tamen velim ... laus sit parata vel venia*. (lines 7–13)

How does Pliny show that he has feelings for his slaves?

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Section C (worth 20 marks)

In your response you are expected to draw, where relevant, on material from the texts you have studied in English, as well as those parts you have read in Latin.

3* 'A clear picture of Roman society.'

To what extent do you agree with this assessment of Pliny's *Letters*?

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Mark Scheme for Examination-style Paper

Q.	Answer
Section A	
1a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On an individual day Pliny can give an accurate account of his time spent. It is unsatisfactory if he looks back over time as if the accounts do not balance. <i>ratio...constet</i>: this is a <i>constet</i> phrase transferred to everyday life.
1b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The events and ceremonies associated with the senatorial class The respondent was a senator.
1c	<p>These things, on the day you have done them, (seem) necessary, the same things, if you consider you have done these every day, seem pointless; much more so when you go to the country. For then comes reflection: 'How many days have I spent on such dreary things?'</p>
1d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He is free to read. Free for physical exercise. He hears/says nothing which he regrets having heard/said. There is no one who slanders with scandalous gossip. He is hassled by no ambition / no fear. There is just Pliny and his little books.
1e	<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He claims Regulus does not think his son's death is a bad thing. He holds a funeral which Pliny thinks is in bad taste. Pliny claims everybody hates Regulus. He claims Regulus is only interested in money as he fixes inheritances. Regulus had the house taken legally from his control, becoming the head of his household, so that the son could inherit money. Pliny claims that Regulus even practised legacy hunting on his own son. <p>Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lavish nature of the funeral is described using <i>habebat... habebat... habebat</i> anaphora and tricolon, the balance <i>habebat canes maiores minoresque, habebat</i> and asyndeton <i>lusciniis psittacos merulas</i>. Range of animals – over the top! <i>cuncti detestantur oderunt, et quasi probent quasi diligent cursant frequentant</i>: notice the use of asyndeton and the balance of <i>detestantur ... probent</i> and <i>oderunt, ... diligent</i>. This conveys the mad rush in the behaviour of the crowds at the spectacle. <i>in summa avaritia sumptuosus, in summa infamia gloriosus</i>: asyndeton and balance again. <i>nuptias lugentis nuptias senis</i>: asyndeton again to emphasise Pliny's disapproval.

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Q.	Answer
Section B	
2a	<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this Letter, Pliny praises his new bride, Calpurnia, to her aunt, Calpurnia Hispulla. The Pliny family came from Comum on Lake Como in North Italy, where family devotion and loyalty were prized. Pliny admired this. He praises the aunt as she was a good role model and gave his wife many qualities he admires. Pliny gives us an idea of what a Roman man considered ideal in a wife. Pliny lists her qualities. <p>Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>pietatis</i>: this is the highest compliment which could be given to a married Roman lady. It carries the meaning of devotion not only to the family but also the gods. <i>dilexeris... diligis</i>: polyptoton. Love is important to this Letter. <i>dignam patre dignam te dignam avo evadere</i>: the tricolon here is used for emphasis. It is enhanced by the use of anaphora and asyndeton. Pliny's wife is indeed worthy! <i>sumnum est acumen summa frugalitas</i>: asyndeton and anaphora again, used to emphasise further qualities. <i>habet lectitat ediscit</i>: more asyndeton and a tricolon of abilities as Pliny piles on his praise. <i>quem assensum quos clamores excitarim, quem eventus iudicii tulerim</i>: this time the asyndeton shows how much trust Pliny has in his wife. Pliny is pleased about her.
2b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He offers his slaves freedom. He gets comfort from them dying as freedmen. He feels that they will even if they are not legal outside his house. He carries out their orders/bequests.
2c	<p>They divide up, leave donations and bequests, provided that they are within the household, as, for slaves, my house is their state and community. But although by these consolations I find comfort, I feel shattered and broken by just that same sense of common humanity which led me to grant them this very thing.</p>
2d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He doesn't want to become harder. He doesn't think of their deaths as a loss of money. He feels for them as it is the mark of a human being to have these feelings. He has been weeping. He has written asking for comfort.

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Q.	Answer
	Section C
3	<p><i>Agree</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important record of life in Rome. Supporting detail from 1.9. • Duties of a senator 1.9. • Candidates could mention the people who are in Pliny's circle of friends – the characters such as in 3.16 and 1.1. • Social practices – discrimination at dinner + treatment of freedmen 2.6; legacy hunting 2.20. • Picture of slavery: 2.4, 3.1. • Role of women and family duties: 4.19, 7.5, 9.12, 8.16 <p><i>Disagree</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senator's view only (as with most of the recipients). • Not much on other classes, mainstream religion. • Only a glimpse of nature: 8.8, 8.17. • Looks down on the ordinary citizens 9.6. • Revision of letters. <p>Gives only a clear picture of what Pliny was interested in?</p> <p>Expect argument and counterargument. OCR says: 'An AO2-heavy response may focus on details from the material studied but not draw many valid conclusions.'</p>

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