

# Latin

## Component 2: Literature

Wednesday 18th January 2023



# Today

**Monday 6th February**

- LO: to understand the style of Horace's 'The Pleasures of Country Living'



## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 BC – 8 BC) was a lyric poet writing under the emperor Augustus. Horace was born in southern Italy. Following the assassination of Julius Caesar, he fought alongside Brutus against Antony and Octavian (the later Augustus). When Brutus was defeated, Horace accepted a pardon from Octavian and returned to Italy, but his family estates had been confiscated, as had those of many others during the civil wars. Horace later received the patronage of Maecenas, one of Augustus' closest advisers and was given a country estate in the Sabine hills, east of Rome. The *Epodes* were published in 29 BC.



## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

The text below is a section of *Epode* 2, that omits lines 9-22 where Horace describes the tasks a farmer does. In the lines selected for this text, Horace expresses the joy of being a self-sufficient farmer, like the farmers of the past. He contrasts this other lifestyles with going to war, seafaring and contemporary Roman city life which are to be avoided. Finally, he describes the beauty and tranquillity of country life, which appears to be so calming that it could induce slumber. Perhaps Horace is in fact deliberately presenting a fantasy, rather than reality as *Epode* 2 ends with the man, who imagines how delightful country life might be, actually choosing to continue being a money-lender.





## Horace: *Epodes 2. 1-8, 23-28* – *The pleasures of country living*

### Questions on Content and Style

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

**A reminder of the notes to the poem from last lesson are on the next slides**

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

beatus ille qui procul negotiis,  
ut prisca gens mortalium,  
paterna rura bobus exercet suis  
solutus omni faenore,

*Blessed is the man who, far from business,  
like the ancient race of mortals,  
tills his ancestral land with his own oxen,  
free from all debt;*

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

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

**paterna:** another cherished notion that one inherits land from family (as opposed to the tenant-farmer who works someone else's land).

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

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

**neque excitatur classico miles truci,**

**neque horret iratum mare,**

**forumque vitat et superba civium**

**potentiorum limina.**

*neither a soldier, roused by the fierce war-trumpet,*

*nor [one who] dreads the angry sea,*

*keeping clear of the forum and the haughty*

*doorsteps of more powerful citizens.*

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

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

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



## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

neque excitatur classico miles truci,

neque horret iratum mare,

forumque vitat et superba civium

potentiorum limina.

*neither a soldier, roused by the fierce war-trumpet,*

*nor [one who] dreads the angry sea,*

*keeping clear of the forum and the haughty*

*doorsteps of more powerful citizens.*

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

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

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

neque excitatur classico miles truci,

neque horret iratum mare,

forumque vitat et superba civium

potentiorum limina.

*neither a soldier, roused by the fierce war-trumpet,*

*nor [one who] dreads the angry sea,*

*keeping clear of the forum and the haughty*

*doorsteps of more powerful citizens.*

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

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

## Horace: *Epodes 2. 1-8, 23-28* – *The pleasures of country living*

**libet iacere modo sub antiqua ilice,  
modo in tenaci gramine.**

*It is pleasant to lie sometimes beneath an ancient holm-oak,  
sometimes in the firm grass.*

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

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

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

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

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

labuntur altis interim ripis aquae,

queruntur in silvis aves,

fontesque lymphis obstrepunt manantibus,

somnos quod invitet leves.

*Meanwhile streams glide between high banks,*

*birds chatter in the woods,*

*springs gurgle with trickling sprays of water,*

*to invite gentle sleep.*

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

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

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

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

labuntur altis interim ripis aquae,

queruntur in silvis aves,

fontesque lymphis obstrepunt manantibus,

somnos quod invitet leves.

*Meanwhile streams glide between high banks,*

*birds chatter in the woods,*

*springs gurgle with trickling sprays of water,*

*to invite gentle sleep.*

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

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

**14 somnos quod invitet leves:**

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

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

ETHAN

### Discussion

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

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

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

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

ZACH

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

## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

Robbie

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



## Horace: *Epodes* 2. 1-8, 23-28 – *The pleasures of country living*

Lachlan

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

## Horace: *Epodes 2. 1-8, 23-28* – *The pleasures of country living*

### Questions on the whole passage

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