

Latin

Component 2: Literature

Wednesday 18th January 2023



Today

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- LO: to translate and understand 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*

**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;*

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**neque excitatur classico miles truci,
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*neither a soldier, roused by the fierce war-trumpet,
nor [one who] dreads the angry sea,
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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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- 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.

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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.

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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.

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

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Meanwhile streams glide between high banks,

birds chatter in the woods,

springs gurgle with trickling sprays of water,

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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.

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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.

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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.

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



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Homework questions - due Monday 30th January

beatus ille qui procul negotiis (lines 1):

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

ut prisca gens mortalium (line 2)

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

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

paterna rura bobus exercet suis (line 3)

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

solutus omni faenore (lines 4):

- What is the farmer free from?

neque excitatur classico miles truci (line 5):

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

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neque horret iratum mare (line 6):

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

forumque vitat (lines 7):

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

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

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

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

libet iacere modo sub antiqua ilice (line 9):

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

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

- Where else might the farmer lie?

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

labuntur altis interim ripis aquae (line 11):

- What is on either side of the waters?

queruntur in silvis aves (line 12):

- What is chattering in the woods?

fontesque lymphis obstrepunt manantibus (line 13):

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

somnos quod invitet leves (line 14):

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