

USING THE ANCIENT SOURCES



CLASSICS PROJECT

Primary sources



- All of your projects need to be based primarily on ancient sources
 - This means that your titles needs to be chosen so as to make sure that primary sources are available and accessible – cf. feedback!
- You will use your ancient sources slightly differently depending on topic...
 - History
 - Culture
 - Literature
- ...but you will all need to get right the fundamental methodological approaches

Basics of dealing with ancient sources



WHEN?

WHO?

HOW?

WHY?

When?



- When was your primary source written/composed/compiled/created?
 - What are the problems of sources dating from the period you are interested in?
 - What are the problems of sources post-dating the period you are interested in?

Who?



- Who is your author/artist?
- What are his/her biases?
- What are those biases based on?
 - Ethnicity in the widest sense
 - Gender
 - Genre

How: Problems with your primary sources



- Transmission: has your source been through more than one stage before it reaches the shape in which we have it?
 - E.g. iconographical evidence:
 - ✦ Needs to be evaluated on a number of levels:
 - ✦ Making
 - ✦ Display
 - ✦ Finding place
 - E.g. literary evidence:
 - ✦ Collection
 - ✦ Amending: e.g. Homer

WHY?



- Again, be careful to be fully aware of the biases of your sources
- This means not just the author/artist themselves, but includes biases or limitations imposed by
 - GENRE: some things do not belong in poetry, some things do not belong in history writing: think about what you can expect your source to say
 - MATERIALS USED: what are your source's sources?

Chief tools: Using commentaries



- Yes, commentaries deal with the original language of the source
- You may need to use the commentary on your source with a translation at hand
- ...but they are your most useful resource for issues like
 - Dating
 - Parallel passages and corroborating evidence – necessary to balance out any bias that your source may have
 - Further reading on specific issues discussed in your source

...and finally



**ALWAYS READ
CLOSELY**

Prop. 2.7



Cynthia was overjoyed, of course, when that law was repealed: we'd wept for ages in case it might divide us. Though Jupiter himself can't separate two lovers against their will. 'But Caesar's mighty.' But Caesar's might's in armies: conquered people are worth nothing in love.

I'd sooner suffer my head being parted from my body than quench this fire to humour a bride, or as a husband pass by your sealed threshold, and, having betrayed it, look back with streaming eyes. Ah, what sleep my flute would sing you to then, a flute sadder than a funeral trumpet!

Is it for me to supply sons for our country's triumphs? There'll be no soldiers from my line. But if I follow the true camp of my mistress, Castor's horse will not be grand enough for me. It was in fact through this my glory gained such a name, glorious as far as the wintry Dneiper. You're the only one who pleases me: let me please you, Cynthia, alone: that love will be more to me than being called 'father'.

Lines of inquiry



- Augustan marriage laws
- Roman wedding ceremonies
- Anti-Augustan sentiment

Marriage laws?



- Cynthia was overjoyed, of course, when that law was repealed: we'd wept for ages in case it might divide us
- I'd sooner suffer my head being parted from my body than quench this fire to humour a bride, or as a husband pass by your sealed threshold, and, having betrayed it, look back with streaming eyes.
- When was this text written?
 - Post 29 BC but predates 19 BC
- What pieces of legislation might correspond to what Propertius describes here?
 - Date: 18/17 BC *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*
- How does this description correspond to other knowledge we have of the *leges Iuliae* and follow-up laws?
- The dangers of trying to make all the pieces fit

Anti-Augustan sentiment?



- *Is it for me to supply sons for our country's triumphs? There'll be no soldiers from my line.*
- *Cynthia was overjoyed, of course, when that law was repealed: we'd wept for ages in case it might divide us. Though **Jupiter** himself can't separate two lovers against their will. 'But **Caesar's** mighty.' But Caesar's might's in armies: conquered people are worth nothing in love.*
- Seemingly clear opposition to the Augustan agenda...
- **Oi!** Contradictions abound:
- Joy that the law has been repealed highlights its potential impact...
- ...and also the ability of Caesar's power to reach well beyond military matters: it is in fact a neat compliment
- The proximity of the names of Caesar and Jupiter evokes the elsewhere frequent comparison of Augustus and Jupiter
 - Cf. the Gemma Augustea

What you need to know



- Context of the poem: the nature of the elegiac narrator...
 - Rejects, superficially, normative society, but is also repeatedly shown as being a ridiculous, laughable character – can we trust him?
 - Repeatedly misrepresents both himself and his mistress: the attentive reader sees through this
 - Do we trust him to be right on the big picture when he can't even get the details of his own 'life' right?
- ...and the mistress
 - Context of the poem itself: situated between two poems where it is clear that the girl-friend is unfaithful
- The narrator and the marriage laws
- Propertius (external author) and Maecenas' patronage

Prop. 2.7 Conclusions



- This text cannot be used straight off as a source for information about Augustan legislation or the presence of anti-Augustan sentiment
- It needs to be carefully analysed as a poetic text
 - Genre
 - Narrator
 - ...etc
- ...before we can, with caution, use it as a historical source

For next time



- **Prepare a 2-minute presentation to your group on the ancient sources and evidence you are thinking of using and their problems/issues/biases**

DON'T FORGET...



1. By next Monday (28/02/11), you need to reconsider your research plan according to the feedback.
2. Make a post on the relevant Moodle forum as to how you will change your research plan.
3. **VERY IMPORTANT:** this is not a theoretical exercise. You need to research the subject more so that you get a research plan that allows for a successful project.