

You don't allow us to play and be lovers.

You don't want to allow anything to me, but everything to you.

You criticise, oversee, complain, sigh away,

And your anger barely draws a line at caning.

If I put on Tyrian attire and perfume my locks,

You declare, 'Your father never did anything like that.'

And you keep a count on our glasses of wine with furrowed

brow –

As if the wine jar had come from your own cellar.

Stop it! I can't abide a freedman playing at Cato.

My girlfriend will tell you that I am now a man.

(b) Suetonius, *Claudius* 2.2

For a long time – and even after he attained his majority – he was under guardianship and in the charge of a pedagogue. Claudius himself complained in a petition that the man was a barbarian, a part-time muleteer deliberately entrusted with him, to discipline him as savagely as possibly for any reason under the sun.

4.2 The noise of the schools at Rome

Martial's depiction of the noise of the schools at Rome may be typically exaggerated, but should serve to remind us that education was usually carried on outdoors in the ancient world. His offer to pay off the primary schoolmaster (the *ludi magister*) also recalls that fees were paid on a short-term basis only and were notoriously low.

Martial, *Epigrams* 9.68

What is your beef with us, ratbag schoolmaster,

A hateful sight to boys and girls alike?

The crested cocks have not yet broken the silence

But you are already thundering with savage roar and whips.

It's as loud as the echo of bronze struck on the anvil,

When a workman is preparing to place a lawyer on the middle of his horse.

There is less mad shouting in the great amphitheatre

When the winning Thracian is cheered on by his crowd of

supporters.

We neighbours of yours plead for some, not a whole night's, sleep:

It's nothing to be woken, but to be always awake is a pain.

Send your pupils home. Would you be willing to take as much,

Loudmouth, as you get for shouting simply to shut up?

4.3 The use of eel skins for punishment

Corporal punishment was normally restricted to slaves and non-citizens as demeaning for Romans. However, as children were regular thrashed as part of their upbringing, citizen children (*praetextati*) too could be flogged rather than suffer the normal monetary penalty for misdemeanours.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 9.77

Vedius Pollio, a Roman knight who was one of the friends of the divine Augustus, found in this animal [the moray] a way to display his cruelty, tossing condemned slaves into fish pools full of them. It wasn't because land animals were insufficient for this purpose, but because there was no other way that he could view the whole man being torn apart at once. They say that they are particularly driven into a fury by the taste of vinegar. Their skins are particularly fine, while those of common eels are thick, and so Verrius says that they were regularly used for flogging the children of citizens [*praetextati*] and, hence, it was unusual for them to be fined.

4.4 Advice to avoid the use of force in education

Although thrashing seems to have been a regular part of primary education (4.2 and 4.3 above, there is a tablet in the Berlin Staatsmuseum with the line to be copied: 'Pay attention, boy, or else you will get it'), writers on educational principles were less happy at treatment that equated children with slaves and tended at best to decrease their sense of responsibility and might even lead to worse consequences.

(a) Pseudo-Plutarch, *On the Education of Children* 8f

In addition, I assert that one should lead children to decent behaviour by encouragement and advice, and certainly not by blows and humiliations. For this seems to be more appropriate to slaves than to the freeborn. As a result they act stupefied and shudder at their tasks, partly from the pain of the blows and partly because of the indignity of it all. But praise and criticism are more useful than any ill-treatment in the case of the free, the former encouraging them towards the honourable, the latter holding them back from what is disgraceful.

(b) Quintilian, *The Education of the Orator* 1.3.14–17

In fact I am in no way in favour of the thrashing of pupils, although that is the established practice and Chrysippus is in favour of it, first because it is ugly and only fitting for a slave and definitely an outrage (this would be

accepted if you changed the age of the sufferer). Then there is the fact that, if anyone is so base in spirit that he cannot be corrected by reproof, he will also be hardened to blows like the worst sort of slaves. Next, there will not even be any need for chastisement if a supervisor continuously keeps watch on his studies. Now by the inattention of their pedagogues things are usually turned around so that children are not forced to do what is right, but are punished because they haven't done it. Finally, when you have controlled the small child by thrashing, what will you do with the youth, to whom you cannot apply this terror and who must be taught more important things? In addition, many things that are unpleasant to mention and that will be a matter of shame in the future often happen to those who are beaten from pain and fear – the humiliation breaks and crushes their spirit and encourages a disgust with and willingness to flee life itself. If then there has been insufficient care in evaluating the character of their guardians and teachers, I will hesitate to mention the vile acts those unspeakable creatures use that power of beating to achieve and what opportunities this fear among the pitiful children also on numerous occasions offers to others. I will not dwell on this topic – that's more than enough for it to be understood. So it is sufficient to say this: no one ought to be allowed too much power over those of a tender age who are open to damage.

4.5 A schoolboy's letter to his father

The following letter shows the problems faced by a student who has gone off to a larger urban centre for higher education: uncertainty about obtaining an adequate teacher of whom his father will approve and a concern not to waste his money on fees. He appears to be in contact with a friend of his father's or relative (Philoxenus) who can offer some advice, and has the services of a slave, who could bring in some revenue to offset the cost of rent. He also has the occasional food parcel from home. Still, there are signs that all is not as it appears: suggestions of bad behaviour in the theatre, the slave running back to the father to report on his charge, and money being saved on fees and grooming that is presumably being used for other activities. See Rea (1993).

Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 18.2190 (c. AD 100)

To Theon, my lord and father, greetings.

You have rescued us from the greatest despondency by showing us that what happened in the theatre is of no concern to you, but I hoped by hurrying in sailing down that I would find fine opportunities – but what have I achieved for my enthusiasm? Even now I am looking for a teacher [*philologos*] and I have discovered that Chairon the teacher [*kathêgêtes*] and Didymus, son of Aristocles, with whom I have hoped that I might make

progress, are no longer in the city, but only junk [*katharmata*] through whom most have taken the direct road to ruin. Previously I wrote to you, whom I wrote to Philoxenus and company, to deal with the matter, and I just as I wrote to Philoxenus and company, to deal with the matter, and I was introduced by them to someone who looked suitable. But you immediately rejected him, although he had begged for Theon's pardon, on the ground that you know him personally and he is totally lacking in ability. When I passed on your judgement to Philoxenus, he thought the same, saying that he pitied the city only for this lack of rhetors, but Didymus had sailed down [to Alexandria], apparently a friend of his who ran a school and would look after the others – and in particular he persuaded the pupils of Apollonius, son of Herodas, to transfer to him. They have up to now been seeking such a teacher of a higher education after the teacher they had enrolled with had died. But I, having prayed not to even look at Didymus from a distance if I found teachers worth mentioning, am depressed by this very fact: that he who used to teach in the country is setting himself up in competition with the others here.

So knowing this – that, apart from paying more fees in vain, I have gained nothing from my teacher but have achieved something by myself – please write back as soon as possible saying what you think. I have Didymus, as Philoxenus will also say, always available to me and offering whatever help he can. Furthermore, by auditing the public performances, including those of Poseidonius, if the gods are willing I will quickly make good progress.

But it is my despondency about those things that forces me to disregard my physical appearance, as it is not necessary for those who are not engaged in work to care about these things, especially when they don't have anyone to bring in some money. For once upon a time after a few days the helpful Heracles – woe of woes – would bring in some obols, but now along with his being put into restraints by Isidorus, he has run away and gone off, so it appears, to you. Be well aware that he isn't averse to plotting against you if he has the opportunity. For he is not ashamed especially to spread tales of events in the theatre and the city with alacrity and to babble out lies that no prosecutor would declare – and he has done this although he hasn't suffered anything such as he deserved, but had been let roam and was acting like a free person in all matters.

But all the same you can hire him out to a builder if you don't send him back, as I hear that a young man can make 2 drachmas a day. Or assign him some other task, where he can earn more money, so that the wages collected by him can be sent to us from time to time. For you know that Diogas is studying literature as well. In the time it takes you to send the young fellow, we will look for a bigger place in a private house: in order to be Dionysius' neighbours, we have been living in a very small place.

We received the basket that had all that you wrote about safe in it: all the jars with the half-cadus, in which we found not 18, but 22 choes. And

I sent a half cadus with a letter to all you wrote about. I got the six measures of whole lentils and a Coan jar full of vinegar, and 126 pieces of salted meat, plus those in the jar, and 30 pieces of cooked meat.

Farewell. [30 November]

4.6 Setting up a public trust fund to hire an educator

The difficulties in finding suitable teachers who would stay in an area and the problems associated with sending youths off to be educated (as seen in the previous passage), often led to the establishment of permanent positions in education in the major cities of the Roman world. While, at Rome, these were imperial benefactions, in other cities (and even minor towns such as *Comum*) these were supported as acts of philanthropy. As with his fund for support of the children in his hometown, Pliny the Younger is here seeking to ensure the appropriate expenditure of his funds in the future by involving the locals in his trust.

Pliny, *Letters* 4.13

Gaius Pliny to his friend Cornelius Tacitus, greetings.

I am glad that you have come to the city safely; besides, you have now come, if ever, at a time when I especially need you. I will still linger on for a few days at my Tusculan villa to complete the little piece that I have in my hands. For I'm afraid that, if I put off this effort when it is now approaching completion, I will have difficulty in turning back to it. In the meantime, in case my bustle should cool down, I am going to ask in this letter that is acting as a forewarning the advice that I will seek from you when I am present. But first let me tell you the reason for asking, then what it is I am after.

Recently, when I was in my hometown, the young son of a townsman of mine came to greet me. 'Are you studying?' I asked. He replied, 'Certainly.' 'Where?' 'Milan.' 'Why not here?' His father, who happened to be with him as he had brought the boy personally, replied, 'But we have no teachers here.' 'Why don't you have any? It's of the utmost importance to those of you who are fathers' – there happened to be a number of fathers listening – 'that your children are educated here for preference. Where can they stay more happily than in their hometown or be kept under better moral control than under the eyes of their parents and with less expense than at home? It is a tiny outlay to pool your resources and hire teachers and to add on by way of payment the money that you now spend on board, travel costs, and everything that is costly to buy (anyway, everything *is* costly to buy). So then, I myself who have no children am however ready to give to you, for the upkeep of my town, as if for a daughter or a parent, a third of what you decide to contribute. I would promise the lot, except that I'm afraid

that my gift might in the future be ruined by self-interest, as I have seen occurring in many places where teachers are hired by the community. There is only one cure for this problem: for the right of hiring to be left to the parents alone and if they have added to their duty of making the right choice the need to contribute to the cost. Those who might be unconcerned about others' money will certainly take good care of their own and will make every effort that only a worthy applicant will receive my money, if he is also going to receive theirs. So talk it over and come to a joint decision, and take heart from my aim – I want the sum I need to contribute to be as large as possible. You cannot make a more noble contribution for your children or one more appreciated by your town. Those who are born here will be educated here and right from infancy will learn to love and enjoy their native soil. If only you were to bring here teachers so famous that the people in the neighbouring towns would seek their education here and, just as now your children head off for foreign places, so foreigners will soon head to this place!

I thought that these things should be traced far back, almost to their source, so you would be more aware of how grateful I would be if you were to undertake what I'm imposing on you. I am making this imposition and requesting in accordance with the importance of the matter that from among the crowd of the educated, who flock to you from their admiration for your intellect, you should look for teachers whom we can approach – but with this proviso, that I will not offer my guarantee to anyone. I am keeping everything open to the parents: they will decide and they will choose; I am only claiming the supervision and expenses for myself. Hence, if you should find anyone who trusts in his talent, he should go there on this condition, that he is bringing nothing settled except for his faith in himself.

Goodbye.

4.7 Public appointments in the empire and their limitations

Competition for the services of teachers and doctors, which might increase the status of small towns such as Pliny the Younger's *Comum*, could also be financially ruinous. Hence the limitations set down in the second century by Antoninus Pius.

Digest 27.1.6.1–2, *Modestinus, Excuses* book 2

Teachers of grammar, teachers of rhetoric, doctors of the type called general practitioners have immunity from tutelage and curatorship, just as they are exempt from other impositions. The number of rhetors and doctors in each city who have exemption from liturgies amid their selection is limited by law, as is shown by the letter of Antoninus Pius written to the province of Asia, but applicable to the whole empire. This is the main injunction:

The smaller cities are able to have five doctors exempt, and three teachers of rhetoric and an equal number of teachers of grammar. The larger cities may have five physicians and four teachers of either type. The greatest cities may have ten doctors and five teachers of rhetoric and an equal number of teachers of grammar. Not even the largest of cities may offer immunity in excess of this number.

It is probable that the largest number applies to capitals of provinces, the middle number to cities that have legal assizes, and the third to the rest.

4.8 A non-conformist teacher

The career of the slave Palaemon ('Wrestler'), who was probably born at the end of the first century BC and lived under all the Julio-Claudian emperors, is portrayed as not only revealing an intelligent slave's inventiveness (combining a career in clothing manufacture with one in education), but also a 'freedman's temperament'. His arrogance is matched only by his extravagance; his entrepreneurial skills (including success in the risky business of viticulture) go hand in hand with a vulgar lewdness. As with other successful freedmen (cf. 1.41, 3.27), his very success is likely to have inspired stereotyping anecdotes. Jokes about teachers were also a favourite theme in the ancient world (see 4.10).

Palaemon is viewed by Suetonius as a teacher of literature and grammar, a *grammaticus*, rather than a teacher of oratorical skills (*rheto*r), especially as such education would be seen as the preserve of the freeborn. In reality, the two professions tended to overlap and it is clear that Palaemon's ability encouraged the enrolment of children of sufficiently high status in his school to earn the disapproval of two emperors.

As is the regular Roman fashion, the name of his mistress is not given, but it is likely that she was the daughter of a Quintus Remmius – hence Palaemon's freed name.

Suetonius, *On Teachers of Grammar and Rhetoric* 23

Quintus Remmius Palaemon, from Vicia, was a houseborn slave of a woman. He first (so it is said) learnt to be a weaver, then, while accompanying his mistress's son to school, learnt to read and write. Later, when he had been freed, he taught at Rome and achieved the top rank among teachers [*grammatici*], although he was held in ill repute for every type of vice and Tiberius and later Claudius had publicly stated that there was no one less to be entrusted with the education of boys or young men. But he would win men over by both his memory of details and his fluent speaking style and even used to produce poetry on the spot. In fact he wrote in all sorts of difficult metres. Such was his arrogance that he called Marcus Varro

'the pig', boasted that literary appreciation was born and would die with him, and declared that his name didn't occur in the Eclogues by accident, but that Vergil was predicting that one day a Palaemon would be the judge of all poets and poetry. He even used to boast that brigands had once spared him because of the glory of his reputation. He so indulged his extravagance that he would bath several times a day, and, although he earned 400,000 sesterces annually from his school and almost as much from his private investments, it did not cover his expenses. He took especial care of these private investments: he ran workshops that produced garments for sale and paid such attention to his land holdings that it is accepted that a vine planted by his own hand produced grapes 365 days a year. But he paid greatest attention to his desires – in the case of women, even earning a reputation for oral sex. It is said that he was put down by a very funny remark coming from someone who was unable to avoid him in a group, although he had turned away when Palaemon was approaching to kiss him: 'Professor,' he said, 'do you like to swallow every time you see someone in a rush?'

4.9 The life of a Greek teacher

Most of our knowledge of *grammatici*, who taught principles of grammar and literary criticism, is derived from Suetonius' work on Roman teachers. But there were also their Greek equivalents, such as Epaphroditus, an Alexandrian ex-slave who moved to Rome under the patronage of Mettius Modestus and who wrote commentaries on Homer and Callimachus' Aetia, as well as a general work (*lexeis*) on linguistic questions. His statue with inscription is preserved in the Villa Altieri at Rome: from his extant memorial, his ability to own two houses, and his extensive library, it is clear that Epaphroditus was much more successful than most teachers, who were often regarded as leading a hand-to-mouth existence in the capital.

(a) Suda, *sv Epaphroditus*, c 2004

Epaphroditus: from Chaeroneia, a teacher of grammar. The foster-child of Archias, a teacher of grammar from Alexandria; educated by him, he was purchased by Modestus, the prefect of Egypt. After educating Modestus' son, Petilius, he was held in high regard at Rome from the time of Nero up to that of Nerva [c. AD 54–98]. This was the period of Ptolemy, the son of Hephaestion, and many other famous names in education. He continually bought books and owned more than 30,000, including significant and recondite works. He was tall and dark, like an elephant. He lived in the area called Faenianocoria [Hay-hides] where he owned two houses. He died aged 75 after falling ill with dropsy. He left a fair number of works on grammar.

(b) *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.9454

M[arcus] METTIVS
EPAPHRODITVS

GREEK TEACHER OF GRAMMAR

M[arcus] METTIVS GERMANVS HIS FREEDMAN SET THIS UP

4.10 Some student (*scholastikos*) jokes

A series of jokes from an anthology compiled in late antiquity (but as old as the hills) not only mocks students but also casts light on other social material (for instance, the treatment of animals, the purchase of slaves, manumission, and eagerness to claim inheritances). The *scholastikos* mocked has been translated as 'student', although the term covers anyone claiming higher knowledge (the absent-minded professor as well as the know-it-all of modern humour).

Philogelos, (fifth century AD)

9. A student who wanted to teach his ass not to chew on things stopped giving him food. When the ass died from hunger, he said, 'What a disaster! Just when I had taught him not to chew, he goes and dies on me.'
12. A friend asked a student who was travelling overseas, 'Could you please buy me two slaves, each 15 years old.' He replied, 'If I can't find what you want, I'll buy you one who is 30.'
13. A couple of good-for-nothing students were complaining to one another that their fathers were still alive. One said, 'How about we each kill our father?' 'No way,' said the other. 'That would make us parricides. But if you like, I'll kill yours and you can kill mine.'

16. A student had been looking for his book for many days and unable to find it. He just happened to eat a salad and turned around and saw the book lying in a corner. Later he met a friend who was crying because he had lost all his clothes. 'Don't be down-hearted,' he said, 'but buy a salad and eat it; then turn around and look in the corner: you'll find them there.'

18. A fellow ran into a student and said to him, 'The slave you sold me has died.' 'By the gods,' he replied, 'he never did anything like that when he was with me.'

25. A student was on a voyage and a storm sprang up. When his servants started wailing, he said, 'Don't wail. I've left you all your liberty in my will.'

32. A student invited to a meal didn't eat. When one of the guests asked him why he wasn't eating, he replied, 'In case I appear to have come for the food.'

54. A student writing to his father from Athens, thoroughly proud of what he had learnt, added, 'I hope I will find you charged in a capital case, so I can show you my skill as a lawyer.'

57. When a student produced a child by a slave girl, his father advised him to kill the infant. But he replied, 'When you've first buried your own children you can then tell me to get rid of mine.'

61. A student who was working as an elementary teacher [*khamaidaskalos*] suddenly glanced at the corner and roared, 'Dionysius in the corner is acting up.' When someone said that he was absent, he replied, 'Well, he will be when he's here.'

4.11 The self-educated as obscurantists

Writing in the second century AD, Aulus Gellius frequently mocks the culturally ignorant and partially educated – a similar butt of humour to the *scholastikos* of Philogelos. In particular, the self-educated are satirised as the nouveaux riches of the literary world, interlopers who have not undergone the full programme of indoctrination of schooling under the grammarian and rhetor. Like Sabinus (5.2), the subject of this passage has not adequately internalised the rules of the game and so uses outrageously archaic words in an attempt to impress. A *bovinator* is probably a 'blusterer', but the actual meaning of the word was clearly long lost by the second century AD when Gellius was writing.

Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 11.7

The use of words that are either too archaic and *recherché* or unusual and harsh and unattractive in their novelty appears to be the equivalent of a mistake. But in fact I think it is nastier and more blameworthy to utter words that are invented, unknown, and obscure, than ones that are common and coarse. By 'appearing to be novel' I also mean words that are unusual and obsolete, even if they are of old ancestry. Indeed that is a regular fault of self-education, which the Greeks call late learning [*opsimathia*] – to make the utmost effort, whenever you have first learnt them, to utter, at every opportunity and when talking about any subject, words that you have never learnt and of whose existence you have long been in ignorance. So at Rome in our presence a man who had long been eminent in legal affairs, but possessed a rather haphazard education, was speaking before the urban

Roman writing, the former will come into Greek society, the latter into Roman. Also many Romans have married Greek women and Greeks Roman women after seeing a dream of this sort. I know of someone who dreamt that he was learning to read Roman writing and was sentenced to [public] slavery. For a slave is taught nothing in Greek. To dream of being able to read barbarian writing well and fluently indicates coming into barbarian territory and society and doing something significant there. To read barbarian writing badly indicates doing badly among the barbarians or to be delirious when ill, because of the strangeness of the sounds. If someone is unable to write or read writing, he will be unemployed according to the writing: if it is only a little, it will be for a few days; if more, for months.

4.14 The value of literate soldiers

Although the handbook of Vegetius dates from the late fourth century AD, its comments on the need for literacy among at least some of the legionaries must apply to earlier periods also. Because of the need to communicate with other centres and to maintain appropriate accounts, it is likely that the army would have a higher level of basic literacy than the general civilian population, a view that is reinforced by the generally greater epigraphic remains from military provinces (Harris 1989).

Vegetius, *Handbook of Military Matters* 1.2.6, 19, 20

6. It should be understood that there must be ten cohorts in a legion. But the first cohort surpasses the others in number and quality of soldiers: it requires the best soldiers in terms of physique and literacy ...

19. Since there are numerous training schools in the legions, which require literate soldiers, it is reasonable for those who check the recruits to consider their height, physical strength, and mental agility in all cases, but to single out some of them on the basis of knowledge of the alphabet and their ability to calculate and reckon ...

20. ... In addition [to the individual accounts for each of the ten cohorts] there was an eleventh one to which the whole legion contributed for burial costs: so if any of their comrades died, the costs of his burial were provided from the eleventh account. This account was kept in a strongbox by those who are now called standard-bearers. And so not only reliable, but also literate men were chosen as standard-bearers so they would know how to guard the deposits and offer an account to each soldier.

4.15 An Italian writer of wills

While wills might be made orally in front of witnesses, it was simpler for the illiterate or those not used to writing regularly to hire the services of a scribe, such as the freedman Philadespotus, whose pride in having mastered the legal form is shown on his tombstone. Cf. 8.12, where Castor has written his will himself.

Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae 7750 (Venafrum)

TO PUBLIUS POMPONIUS PHILADESPOTUS
FREEDMAN OF PUBLIUS
SCRIBE, WHO WROTE WILLS
FOR 25 YEARS
WITHOUT USING A LAWYER

4.16 The importance of having some literate overseers on the farm estate

The level of literacy among the Roman workforce, particularly the overseers, is the subject of controversy. While Cicero expects the heads of an urban or rural workforce to be literate, it is clear from Columella that many would prefer their overseers to be skilled managers, but ones who would be limited in their ability to control the business by their lack of writing and mathematical skills. Tenants on Pliny the Younger's estates could regularly send him requests (although they may have used scribes to draft their petitions).

(a) Cicero, *On the Republic* 5.3.5

Scipio: 'So just as the overseer [*vilicus*] knows agriculture and the accountant [*dispensator*] knows how to read and write, but both of them turn back from the pleasure of their knowledge to the practicalities of making use of this. So too our ruler will be interested in the law and in studying individual laws, and will certainly have looked at the reasons why they originated, but he will not tie himself up in giving opinions and reading and writing to prevent himself from acting as a virtual steward of the state and its bailiff, so to speak ...'

(b) Columella, *On Agriculture* 1.8.1-4, 12-13

So it's my advice not to choose an overseer from slaves of the handsome sort, and certainly not from the type who have the refined skills of the city - they are a lazy, drowsy type of slave, used to leisure, the Campus, the circus, the theatres, gambling, fast-food joints, and the brothels, who dream about nothing other than the same sort of nonsense. If they are transferred

to farming, the master will take a loss not as much with respect to the slave himself as in his whole estate. You should choose a man who is hardened to country labours from childhood and tested by practice. If there is no such man, put one of those in charge who have withstood hard labour, who has now left his youthful period behind, but has not yet entered old age. This is so that youth does not lessen respect for his authority, as older workers disdain obedience to a young man, and in case his age is unable to cope with the most physical of tasks. He should be of an age between these two and of strong physique, skilled in agriculture and of the utmost diligence, so he picks things up very quickly: it's not our method of working to have one man giving orders and another telling the workers how to do the task. A man who learns from a subordinate what needs to be done and how is incapable of properly controlling the work. He may even be illiterate: as long as he has a very reliable memory, he can reasonably control affairs. Cornelius Celsus says that an overseer of this type more often than not brings in money, rather than just the ledger to his master: because he is illiterate, he is too frightened to cook the books himself and do it through another because this involves an accomplice in his fraud ... He should not allow anyone to leave the estate unless he has sent him and he should not send him unless there is a very good reason indeed. He should not do business on his own behalf or invest the master's funds in animals or other transferable goods. This type of business diverts the supervisor's attention and prevents him from balancing the master's books – when an audit is made, he will produce goods, not cash.

(c) Pliny, *Letters* 9.15

Pliny to his friend Falco, greetings.

I had taken refuge on my Tuscan estate to be able to do every thing as I wanted. But I couldn't achieve that even in Tuscany. I am being bothered by numerous petitions from the country folk, full of such complaints, which I read considerably more against my will than my own compositions. I am handling appeals over little squabbles, which after the passage of time is a nasty, thankless task. The accounts are being ignored, as though I was an absentee landlord. Sometimes I mount my horse and play the head of the household to the extent that I travel through part of the farm holdings for exercise. Make sure you follow your habit and send a detailed account of urban affairs to us the country bumpkins.

4.17 Inscriptions and dedications in public areas

Although there were numerous honorary decrees and inscriptions throughout the civic centre of Rome, it is clear from the passage below that copies were not regularly preserved in the state archives and in the event of a catastrophe

(such as the fire that destroyed the temple of Jupiter to whose walls the bronze tablets would have been attached) would need to be restored from copies in the possession of the honorands. Their practical application could only be haphazard, as when the cities of Asia vied for the glory of being the site of a temple to Tiberius and his mother, each using republican decrees to support their case (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.55–6).

Suetonius, *Vespasian* 8.5

The city was looking dreadful from fires and collapses from long ago. Vespasian allowed anyone to take squatter's rights over empty lots and build on them, if the owners were no longer to be found. He himself undertook the restoration of the Capitol and made the first effort in clearing the debris, taking away some material on his own shoulders. He undertook the restoration of 3,000 bronze tablets that had burnt along with the Capitol, searching out copies from everywhere. These were the finest and oldest documents of the Roman empire, in which were contained, dating back from nearly the origin of the city, decrees of the senate and decisions of the people about alliances, treaties, and privileges granted to various individuals.

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therefore learning a foreign language and so must be a Latin speaker in the Western empire.

Two children have a squabble, apparently without intervention from the teacher. Ancient classrooms were fairly noisy, what with the sound of children performing their readings and recitations in front of the teacher(s) and other children practising their own readings or recitations, and this noise would have made it harder for a teacher to hear children talking to each other. It is also likely that the teacher was not constantly looking at the class, as he would have had to concentrate on the individual currently performing in front of him. Nevertheless teachers tried to keep the pupils under control as best they could (cf. Philogelos joke 61 in chapter 11.1).

In this classroom the pupils are divided into three groups. The youngest ones are at the syllable stage of learning to read (i.e. they have learned the alphabet but not yet progressed to whole words); they are taught by one of the older pupils, who writes out syllables for them to practise reading – or perhaps dictates syllables for them to write down to practise writing. The middle group, working with the teacher's assistant, has reached the stage of writing words and verses, while those in the top group, to which the narrator belongs, work with the teacher himself and try to decipher longer passages. The narrator prepares his passage with a commentary, glossary, and grammar; these aids suggest that the passage is in a foreign language but do not absolutely prove it, since a difficult piece of poetry in the child's native language could also have required such resources.

The narrator's passage is probably from a tragedy or comedy, as part of the reader's task is working out who the speakers are; the teacher first explains who is speaking and then asks the child to say who the words are addressed to, in order to test his overall comprehension of the scene. The child's grammatical knowledge is tested in multiple ways: by identifying the parts of speech of words in the passage, by listing the various different forms that the nouns used in the passage could appear in ('declining' nouns), and by giving a complete grammatical explanation of a verse (e.g. what the subject and object are, the names of the forms in which each word occurs, and the reasons for the particular constructions used; this is known as 'parsing' a sentence or verse).

2.3 A MODEL CHILD

Roman education made heavy use of examples of good and bad behaviour; the idea was that a child who saw good actions praised and bad ones censured would grow up to imitate the good rather than the bad. Often the virtues and vices concentrated on were ones peculiar to adults: the brave soldier who risked his life to save the state versus the coward who shirked battle and faced opprobrium, the wise and honest statesman who led the people successfully through difficulty and could not be bribed versus the criminal or thug, etc. But in this story of a perfect schoolboy (Colloquium Stephani 1–39) the virtues in question are ones suited to children: the boy is perfectly clean, neat, and well behaved as well as being an excellent student.

Read well!

What did you do today?

When I was woken up in the morning, I called my slave boy. I told him to open the shutters, and he did so quickly. I got up and sat on the frame of the bed, asking him to bring my shoes and leggings, for it was cold. Once I had my shoes on he gave me a clean towel and a little jug of water to wash my face. I poured it first over my hands and then washed my face, remembering to close my mouth, and I scrubbed my teeth and gums, remembering to spit rather than swallow. I blew my nose, and when I was completely clean I dried my hands, arms, and face. It is important for a free-born boy to be clean when he goes to school.

Then I asked someone to bring my book and stylus, and handed them to my slave boy to carry to school for me. When I was all ready I went forth in auspicious fashion, with my paedagogue following me. I went straight through the colonnade that led to the school. Whenever I ran into people I knew, I greeted them, and they greeted me in return. When I came to the staircase, I went up it one step at a time, without running, as a boy should. Arriving in the school vestibule, I took off my cloak and hung it up, and I smoothed down my hair.

Then I lifted the curtain over the doorway and entered the school. First I greeted the teachers and my fellow students, as a polite child should. Then I wrote my name, and waited while

those ahead of me recited, paying attention to their pronunciations and especially to that of the teacher. This is how we learn: from paying attention when something is being explained to others. In this way one both progresses and achieves self-confidence.

Then I sat down in my usual seat, extended my right hand and drew back the left one, and recited my lesson, just as I had received it to learn. I recited poetry in metre, with proper pauses for full stops and for commas, and with the sound *h* pronounced where it should be. I also gave a paraphrase of the poetry. While I was reciting the teacher corrected my mistakes, so that I would develop a better speaking style.

I came forward, handed over the tablet containing my lesson, and produced from memory an outline of the things I had done. Then, when the teacher dismissed me, I settled down in my seat. I took my language textbook and copied out conversational phrases. I asked the teacher questions, and once they had been answered I read my work aloud to the teacher, who explained the text carefully to me, until I understood who speaks which lines and what the poet's words meant. Then I read at sight, quickly, a little-known work that I had never seen before.

Everyone did such things, one by one, but with different assignments depending on the ability and level of advancement of each individual, as well as how much time they had available and how old they were. The teacher also took into account the pupils' different characters, because there are some who have a difficult attitude to hard work. And literary study is hard work, for even when you make good progress, more still remains to be done before you reach the peak of achievement.

So some were just reciting lists of nouns, and others recited poetry, according to the levels they had attained in their literary studies. They got up and stood by the words painted on the wall. Some of the beginners were taught by one of the more advanced students, who gave them basic information and taught them how to count using their fingers and counting-stones. While they did these things, I recited to the teacher. Other pupils had free time for explanations and for asking questions, in two classes, a slower group and a faster group.

A Grammar Lesson

There are five cases of nouns: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, and ablative. Nouns all have number: singular for one, dual for two, and plural for three or more. What verb is this? How many persons are there? 'You say' is second person, and 'he says' is third person . . .

A Lesson on the Trojan War

May he be a worthy descendant of the ancients we read about in Homer, the great kings who led the Greeks and who were wise, both young and old. They considered an injury to one of their citizens to be an injury to them all, so they unanimously determined that they would either punish Paris or die in the attempt. (Paris had sailed with a fleet from Troy to Greece and had been entertained as a guest by king Menelaus of Sparta, but he thought nothing of Menelaus' kindness to him, his hospitality, or indeed even basic human decency, for he acted like an unthinking barbarian and snatched away Menelaus' wife Helen and took her to the land of Troy, where his father Priam was king.) So they quickly gathered a great army and collected many ships to contain the multitudes of men they had assembled from many places both on the mainland and on the islands. The supreme command went to king Agamemnon, but there were also many other leaders, whose prowess we admire and whose wisdom we praise. These all sailed to Troy, where they accomplished many memorable deeds as they fought for nine years against the Trojans, and in the tenth year they destroyed the city. All the important Trojans were killed except Aeneas, who escaped to become the founder of the Roman state, and in this way the Greeks took Helen back. But as a result many men who were outstanding for their courage and noble birth died, either in the war itself or from storms on their way home afterward – or from despair.

Other Lessons

While we were practising these things, the time for dictation practice arrived. So I took up my writing tablets and wrote from the teacher's dictation an extract from a speech of Demosthenes, not a whole speech but as much as the time allowed. I put in the

'him' are in English two different cases of the same word), since Latin has six cases. The actual list of cases, however, contains six, including the ablative, a case found in Latin and not in Greek: evidently a later user of this text did not realise that the list of cases was supposed to apply to Greek rather than Latin and added the case he thought was missing.

The next lesson is a summary of the Trojan war (from a Roman perspective, since it emphasises the role of Aeneas). This is expressed as a story told by the teacher to the pupils; it was probably something they had to read aloud, copy out, or memorise. The passage has a very different style from the rest of the Colloquium, with long sentences containing nesting parenthetical clauses (in the original, in fact, a single gigantic sentence takes up most of the passage); it would have been extremely difficult to understand in the ancient format and would therefore have been a task suited to a particularly advanced student.

Finally the narrator undertakes a dictation exercise, from a speech of Demosthenes (another difficult text with very long sentences). The writer hastens to emphasise that the dictation does not involve a complete speech, for Demosthenes' speeches are famously long; the passage chosen is suitable to the time available. The narrator is, of course, as good at dictation as at the other types of school exercise: he is able to add correct punctuation to reflect the meaning of the words he hears.

2.4 A STUDENT IN THE GREEK EAST?

Unlike the children in the two previous Colloquia, the child in these dialogues (Colloquium Harleianum 3a-10g) is depicted as learning Latin. One might conclude on that basis that he is a Greek-speaking child in the Eastern empire, except that such children did not learn Latin at school. Probably this dialogue was originally composed in the West about a child learning Greek and then adapted for use in the East, i.e. teaching Latin to Greek-speaking adults or law students. It is difficult to tell how much the adaptor has changed: the main character is still clearly a child, a feature that has to come from the West, so the changes have not been severe – but some details of the educational environment might come from an Eastern law school rather than a Western primary school.

A New Pupil

PUPIL (*to slave boy*): Get up, boy, why are you lazing around? Pick up all the Latin books, the parchment notebook, the tablets, the casket, the ruler, the ink, and the pens. Let's go, let's greet the teacher. (*to teacher*) Hello, sir teacher! May all be well for you. From today I want to work hard, so please teach me to speak Latin.

TEACHER: I shall teach you, provided that you pay attention to me.

PUPIL: Look, I'm paying attention!

TEACHER: You speak well, in keeping with your good birth. In that case, pass me the book-stand and the book, turn to the right place in the book, and read with your mouth properly open. ... Now mark the place well, so that you can write an exercise.

Paying Tuition

TEACHER: Have you got the tuition money with you? Why not?

PUPIL: I asked my father for it, and he said, 'I'll bring it myself, soon, so that I can see a sample of your progress at the same time.'

TEACHER: In that case you need to study hard so that you'll be prepared when he comes.

PUPIL: I'm already prepared, because I lit a lamp and studied after dark yesterday.

TEACHER: You have done well, I'm pleased with you!

Problems with Writing Equipment

TEACHER: Put another coat of white paint on your tablet, sit down, and write. Why are you just standing there – don't you understand what I just said? Put long vowel marks on your letters.

Add a little water to your ink; see, now it flows better.

PUPIL: Pass me the pen and the penknife.

TEACHER: Which knife do you want?

PUPIL: I want the sharp one.

TEACHER: Why do you want that one?

An Accusation of Truancy

TEACHER: Yesterday you played truant, and at midday you were not at home. I went to look for you and heard everything you did from your nurse.

PUPIL: The person who spoke to you is lying: my father took me with him to the praetorium. The magistrates greeted him personally, and he received letters from the emperors. When he got them he immediately went up to the temple and offered sacrifice for the eternal preservation and victory of the emperors. Only after that did we come down. He's an important judge, you know: today he started hearing cases at dawn.

TEACHER: You can always think of an excuse, can't you? You don't seem to realise that time off from school results in an ignorant boy. Now show me your writing. Do you call that good? You really deserve to be flogged, but I'll let you off this time. For now, go and have lunch, and come back reasonably quickly afterwards. Have a good time!

PUPIL: May all be well for you.

This Colloquium probably consists of a set of separate dialogues, with no assumption that the same child and teacher participates in them all. The short dialogues were suitable for reading or memorisation as separate lessons. In the first one we see a student who is evidently new at the school, or newly returned after a lapse in attendance, for he has to convince the teacher to take him on as a pupil. He does this not by promising payment (though payment is required, as both parties know), but by promising hard work and agreeing to pay attention. The teacher's psychologically astute request for the attention is complemented by his lavish praise of the student once agreement is reached.

In the second dialogue a student arrives without the tuition fees due to the teacher; these were paid at the end of each period of teaching, not at the beginning as in modern fee-paying systems, so the teacher could not simply tell the child that he was not entitled to attend school until the tuition was paid. The child explains that his father intends to bring the money in person later that day. School started very early in

the morning, so the father's timing may indicate that he did not want to get up as early as his son did – but the father may also have had other commitments early in the morning, for example the early-morning greetings that traditionally took place between patrons and clients (see Martial epigram 4.8 in chapter 11.5; for another case of a father not coming with the tuition money, see the papyrus letter SB III 6262 in chapter 11.4).

The father has asked for a demonstration of his son's progress before the tuition money is paid. This type of request was common in antiquity, in part because teachers, like other professionals, had no formal qualifications. Anyone could set himself up as a teacher (or as a doctor, veterinarian, etc.), and there was no obvious way of verifying whether such people had the knowledge they claimed to have; many jokes circulated about poor-quality teachers (see Philogelos jokes 61, 140, 197, and 220 in chapter 11.1). A responsible father therefore kept a close eye on his children's education, making sure that they had actually learned something before paying the teacher for the teaching. Unfortunately for the teachers, this system left impecunious parents with considerable latitude when they wanted to evade paying fees: all a father had to do was claim that his children had not made sufficient progress, and he could legitimately refuse to pay for their education. The teacher was then faced with a choice of expelling the children from his school, thereby guaranteeing that he would never get his money, or continuing to teach them in hopes that the father would eventually decide to pay up.

Understandably, therefore, the teacher becomes nervous at the child's statement that his father wants a demonstration of his progress; he exhorts the boy to prepare carefully for that demonstration. But the boy, an exemplary character, reassures the teacher that he is already fully prepared, having done homework after dark the previous evening (or before dawn earlier that morning). Such lamp-lit study was the mark of a particularly diligent student, both because the oil needed to keep lamps burning was expensive and because lamps did not give much light. Ancient books were hard enough to read in daylight; reading by lamplight was exceptionally difficult. The teacher is therefore effusive in his praise of the boy.

The next dialogue concerns the materials used for writing and the problems that could arise with them. Painted wooden tablets needed to