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Advanced Latin: Republican Prose

Prose composition exercises

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
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Purpose

- Translating into Latin is a real test of one's active command of the language
- Trying to translate to match a specific author's style will make you more aware of the many options they discard
- Improve your assessment of the author's stylistic choices and underlying reasons

Prose composition exercises

- There are three formative prose composition exercises available
 - Warm-up: translation into Latin of a specifically constructed, short historiographic narrative – submit for individual feedback and then watch the vidcast discussing one potential solution
 - An ancient text you know: translation back into Latin of a short passage from either Sallust or Cicero, based on an English translation – do this independently only
 - A modern text: translation into Latin of a short paragraph from the introductory chapter of Ronald Syme's *The Roman Revolution* (1939) – submit for individual feedback

In the style of a specific author

- Syntactical practice
 - Think about what constructions your author favours or avoids
 - e.g. consider the difference in Cicero and Sallust in their use of archaisms
 - Typical areas of variation:
 - preference for paratactic or hypotactic constructions
 - preference for long or short periods
- Stylistic practice
 - Think about your author's preferred stylistic features, and whether they are suited to your passage
 - For Cicero, cf. Ruth's lecture on style in the first speech against Catiline...
- Aspects of prose rhythm and set phrasing
- Vocabulary

Examples from Caesar De Bello Gallico

- Ablative absolute at the opening of a chapter:
 - *hac parte Galliae pacata* (6.5.1)
- Time reference at the opening of a chapter:
 - *Cum Caesar in Galliam uenit* (6.12.1); *Caesar, postquam per Ubios...* (6.29.1) etc
- Decision making: *constituit* + *inf* (*Rhenum transire constituit*, 6.9.2; *constituit non progredi longius*, 6.29.1)
- Relative connection: opening a clause with a relative pronoun
- Stylistically pointed use of indirect and direct speech

Tools for working with syntax

- To remind yourself of the rules of Latin syntax, you can
 - Draw on your initial Latin textbooks (e.g. *Reading Latin*)
 - Consult syntactical handbook aimed at students at advanced levels: these are often older (or revised editions of older handbooks): e.g. Woodcock's [*A New Latin Syntax*](#) (1959) or Menge's *Lehrbuch der lateinischen Syntax und Semantik* (rev. Burkhard & Schauer 2000). Older editions of these works are often available online via archive.org
 - here's [the old version of Menge](#)
- It is worth remembering that Latin syntax is still a subject of considerable scholarly analysis – have a look, for example, at Philip Baldi's *New Perspectives on Historical Latin Syntax* (2009 onw) and Pinkster's newly completed *Oxford Latin Syntax*.

Vocabulary

- Begin by trying to use vocab and phrases that you have already seen in Latin texts similar to your passage
 - Don't be afraid of simplifying a statement: bear in mind that your source translation is in idiomatic English
- To polish your work, double-check that your vocabulary and your construction do occur in Cicero/Sallust or as near in time to them as possible
 - Use the online *ThLL* or Lewis-Short to check! In the online *ThLL*, the 'citations' mode of displaying occurrences for each lemma will be quite useful...

Reverse exercise

- ...and if you find this a fun task, do it in reverse: try to re-write the words of your author with constructions and phrases he does NOT use
- *e.g.* pick words noted in the dictionary as mostly used in poetry, or constructions identified as common in Late Antiquity...

...and remember

- Working sentences to be translated through analytically is key
- Identifying subject and verb is the starting point: everything else follows from this
- Once that is sorted, you will see that there are many different options both in vocab and in constructions – we might very well get several different but equally correct versions between us!