

From Village to Empire: an Introduction to the History of Rome

Workshop 2: gobbets and the
importance of close reading

Level 4

One gobbet ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the marks) and
one essay ($\frac{2}{3}$ of the marks)

Gobbet (20 minutes)

Essay (40 minutes)

How best to approach a text

1. Author

Who is the author? When did he live? What was he writing? What was the purpose of the work? Who was the intended audience?

N.B. When writing an analysis of a passage of text for an assignment or in an exam, do **not** simply write a biography of the author. **Only** mention details of the author's life and times **if** they are **immediately** relevant to the passage, and only mention those details which are **immediately** relevant.

2. Historical and literary context

Where? When? What factors may have influenced what and how the author wrote?
What is the context of the specific passage itself (i.e. in the book)? What is the context of the book itself (in the work as a whole)?

3. Textual analysis

A close reading of the evidence: what is the author actually saying?

4. Conclusions

Livy 10.11.11-10.12: In the beginning of this year Lucanian envoys came to the new consuls to complain that the Samnites, since they had been unable by offering inducements to entice them into an armed alliance, had invaded their territories with a hostile army and by warring on them were obliging them to go to war. The people of Lucania, they said, had on a former occasion strayed all too far from the path of duty, but were now so resolute as to deem it better to endure and suffer anything than ever again to offend the Romans. They besought the Fathers both to take the Lucanians under their protection and to defend them from the violence and oppression of the Samnites. Though their having gone to war with the Etruscans was necessarily a pledge of loyalty to the Romans, yet they were none the less ready to give hostages.

[12] Discussion in the senate was soon over. Every opinion was for entering into a treaty with Lucania and demanding satisfaction of the Samnites. The Lucanians received a friendly answer, and the league was formed. Fetials were then sent to command the Samnites to leave the country belonging to Rome's allies, and withdraw their army from the territory of Lucania. They were met on the way by messengers, whom the Samnites had dispatched to warn them that if they went before any Samnite council they would not depart unscathed. When these things were known at Rome, the senate advised and the people voted a declaration of war against the Samnites.

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Livy 10.30: Great is the glory of that day on which the battle was fought in the district of Sentinum, even if a man hold fast to truth; but some writers have so exaggerated as to overshoot the credible, and have written that in the army of the enemy – including, of course, the Umbrians and Tuscans, for these, too, were present in the battle – there were six hundred thousand infantry, forty-six thousand horse, and a thousand cars; and, to enlarge in like manner the forces of the Romans, they add to the consuls as a general Lucius Volumnius the proconsul, and his army to their legions. In the majority of histories this victory is reserved to the two consuls, and Volumnius is waging war at the same time in Samnium, where, having driven the Samnite army up Mount Tifernus, he routs and scatters them, undeterred by the difficulties of the ground.

Reflection

1. How much were you able to write in 20 minutes?
2. How much of what you wrote was focused on the gobbet itself? How much was background information?
3. How much relevant outside material were you able to bring in to your analysis? Just *how* relevant was this material?
4. How systematic was your approach to the gobbet? How systematic/ comprehensive was your discussion?
5. Did you miss anything important?
6. How coherent was your discussion?
7. How legible is your handwriting? (Ask someone else).
8. If you were marking your own work, what mark would you give yourself?
9. How do you think your answer may be improved?
10. What would you do differently next time?