



## Passages and Guiding Questions for Challenging Classroom Discussions

Challenging and courageous conversations recently have become prominent in classical organizations, including the National Latin Exam (NLE). In the last four years, these conversations at the NLE have led to the adoption of multiple initiatives with the shared aim of more thoughtfully and effectively affirming the identities of students who participate in the NLE's programs. The NLE has discarded several future exam passages as well as removed access to some past exam passages deemed controversial or even harmful. We are now sharing those passages with the broader teaching community to provide materials and opportunities for courageous classroom conversations about challenging but important topics in classical studies.

The stories in these exam passages, while not appropriate for a national exam, nevertheless allow students to explore sensitive topics under the guidance and direction of a teacher. Such sensitive topics may include:

- socioeconomic inequities
- slavery
- corporal punishment
- race-based prejudice and oppression
- gender-based prejudice and oppression
- xenophobia
- colonialism and imperialism
- sexual assault and predation
- invective and derogatory language

These topics are important for Latin students to think about not only because they are part of the classical world these students study, but also because classical antiquity, warts and all, has shaped the present. But while the NLE finds these topics important for students to reflect on and discuss, it does not thereby condone them. These topics, after all, are of varying degrees of moral complexity. For example, while sexual assault is never permissible, socioeconomic inequality is a much more complex and murky issue.

Conversations about these passages, which we are providing below with guiding questions, may be difficult, so teachers will want to foster a safe and inclusive community in their classrooms. To ensure that students feel empowered to contribute to those discussions, it is recommended that teachers provide students with an English translation of the passage even after helping them render their own careful reading or meticulous translation of the Latin. To facilitate these conversations, teachers are encouraged to think through the sorts of questions they might raise to their students. The NLE has accordingly provided an English translation, as well as a set of guiding questions, for each passage.

The guiding questions are given in logical order, beginning with questions about concrete plot points before inviting deeper analyses of the feelings and motivations of the characters. The final questions invite more abstract reflections on complex human relationships, sometimes considering possible plot alternatives. Some of these more abstract questions may not be helpful for certain students and classrooms given their developmental maturity. It is therefore up to the discretion of the teachers to use these questions in whatever way promises to enrich understanding while also respecting students and their differences of opinion. Teachers will also need to check that the guiding questions they wish to pose to students are consistent with applicable state- and school-specific curricular mandates.

The number and complexity of these guiding questions reflect a point that cannot be understated, namely: the discussions these passages are apt to provoke should not be carried out in haste. They, like the topics they explore, deserve time and attention. Indeed, these topics can be risky to discuss. They can cause discomfort, and discomfort tends to stifle open discussion. But, more importantly, these topics risk causing harm. There may, for example, be students in the classroom who have been sexually assaulted, and discussing a poem involving sexual predation can be re-traumatizing for them. Other passages may trade in harmful stereotypes that risk being perpetuated by incautious discussions about them. In other words, teachers should use their discretion when considering which passages and guiding questions are appropriate for their students and school.

Two years ago, the NLE Writing and Steering Committee decided to share passages that had been used or considered in the past, but that we have since deemed inappropriate for use on a 45-minute exam and better suited for classroom discussions facilitated by a teacher. The entire NLE Writing and Steering Committee as well as some of its consultants discussed the passages to share on this document. While we don't claim to be experts, we are providing teachers with these useful resources for their classrooms. With support from the NLE WSC and NLE Consultants, this guide was written by Carlo DaVia and Ian Hochberg. Carlo DaVia is an instructor at the CUNY Latin/Greek Institute, as well as a lecturer at Loyola Marymount University. Ian Hochberg is on the Writing Steering Committee of the National Latin Exam and teaches Latin at Yorktown High School in Arlington, Virginia.

## DAPHNE

*A beautiful nymph reacts to being pursued by a god.*

Ōlim erat nympha pulcherrima nōmine <u>Daphnē</u> quae in silvīs habitābat.	1	<b>Daphnē</b> is nominative
Pater Pēnēus, deus flūminis, filiam amābat et volēbat eam esse laetam.	2	
Ergō licēbat nymphae errāre līberē inter arborēs. Ūnō diē, Daphnē	3	
vīsa est ā deō Apolline. Apollō statim ad terram dēscendit quod <u>Daphnēn</u>	4	<b>Daphnēn</b> is accusative
in mātrimōnium dūcere voluit. Daphnē, tamen, nōn Apollinem amābat, et	5	
uxor eius esse nōluit. Daphnē, ab Apolline fugiēns, per silvās celerrimē	6	
cucurrit, sed Apollō, <u>amittere</u> eam nōlēns, <u>secūtus est</u> . Tandem, Daphnē	7	<b>amittere</b> = to lose; <b>secūtus est</b>
dēfessa patrem invocāvit: “Pater, volō esse laeta! Sī Apollinī	8	= followed
<u>nūbam</u> , trīstior omnibus aliīs puellīs erō. Adiuvā mē!” Pēnēus, quī	9	<b>nūbam</b> = I will marry (+ dat.)
vōcem filiae audīvit, pedēs eius tetigit, et subitō pedēs factī sunt <u>rādīcēs</u> .	10	<b>rādīcēs</b> = roots
<u>Paulātim</u> tōtum corpus mūtātum est; Daphnē facta est arbor laurea. Apollō	11	<b>Paulātim</b> = Little by little
postea semper arborem lauream amāvit et arborem esse sacram sibi dēcrevit.	12	

Adapted from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

### Guiding Questions:

1. How is Daphne depicted in appearance?
2. What expectations are placed upon Daphne because she is female?
3. Ovid makes Apollo's bad intentions in his pursuit of Daphne very clear. Why do you think he chooses to portray the god in this manner?
4. How does Ovid mean for the reader to feel about the characters of Daphne and Apollo by his portrayal of them?
5. What do you think about Peneus' solution to help his daughter by turning her into a tree?
6. Why do you think Peneus turned her into a tree? Why not into a man or a dove?
7. If you were Daphne, how would you want the story to end?
8. Look at Book 1 lines 452-567 from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. How do these stories compare?

### Translation:

Once upon a time there was a very beautiful nymph, Daphne by name, who was living in the woods. Her father Peneus, the god of a river, loved his daughter and wanted her to be happy. Therefore, it was allowed for the nymph to wander freely among the trees. One day, Daphne was seen by the god Apollo. Apollo immediately descended to Earth because he wanted to lead Daphne into marriage. Daphne, however, did not love Apollo and did not want to be his wife. Daphne, fleeing from Apollo, ran through the woods as quickly as possible, but Apollo, not wanting to lose her, followed. Finally, tired Daphne invoked her father: “Father, I want to be happy. If I will marry Apollo, I will be sadder than all other girls. Help me!” Peneus, who heard the voice of his daughter, touched her feet and suddenly her feet were made roots. Little by little, her whole body was changed; Daphne was made a laurel tree. Afterwards, Apollo always loved the laurel tree and decreed the tree to be sacred to him.

## LESSONS IN BEHAVIOR

*King Louis (Ludovīcus) has encounters with two attendants.*

Quīdam **famulus** probus cum vīdisset **pediculum** in veste rēgiā **serpentem**, flexīs genibus et sublātā manū, significāvit sē **officium** minimum **exsequī** velle. Ludovīcō **sē praebente**, sustulit pediculum et clam abiēcit. Rēge rogante quid esset, **puduit** cōnfītērī. Cum **īnstāret** rēx, cōnfessus est fuisse pediculum. Rēx iussit liberāliter prō officiō numerārī dēnāriōs quadrāgintā. Paucīs postēā diēbus alter quīdam, quī vīderat tam humile officium illī fēliciter **cessisse**, similī gestū appropinquāvit rēgī, et rūsus rēge sē praebente, improbus simulābat sē tollere aliquid ē veste rēgiā, quod mox abiceret. Cum urgeret rēx ut dīceret quid esset, mīrē simulātō pudōre, tandem respondit esse **pūlicem**. Rēx, intellectō **mendāciō**, “Num tū,” inquit, “mē esse canem cōgitās?” Iussit capī hominem improbum ac **prō** expectātīs quadrāgintā dēnāriīs īnflīgī quadrāgintā verbera.

Adapted from Erasmus’ *Convivium Fabulosum*, Asteus

- 1 **famulus** = attendant; **pediculum** = louse (singular of lice)
- 2 **serpentem** = crawling; **officium** = service
- 3 **exsequī** = to perform; **sē praebente** = turning
- 4 **puduit** = he was embarrassed | (to him)
- 5 **īnstāret** = insisted
- 6
- 7
- 8 **cessisse** = had turned out
- 9
- 10
- 11 **pūlicem** = flea
- 12 **mendāciō** = the lie
- 13 **prō** = instead of
- 14

### Guiding Questions:

1. How are attendants depicted in this passage?
2. What do you think the moral of this story is supposed to be? (To tell the truth rather than lie? Be humble rather than boastful? Generous rather than greedy?)
3. What do you think about the fairness of the rewards and punishments in this story? Do you think the second attendant deserved to be punished? Why or why not?
4. What do you think the king should have done to the second attendant?

### Translation:

A certain attendant, when he had seen a louse crawling on the clothing of the king, with knees bent and hands raised, he indicated that he wanted to perform a very small service. When Louis was turning to him, he lifted the louse and secretly threw it away. When the king was asking what it was, he was embarrassed to admit it. When the king insisted, he admitted that it had been a louse. The king generously ordered that for his service forty denarii be counted. A few days later a certain other (attendant), who had noticed that so humble a service had turned out favorably for that one, approached the king with a similar gesture and again with the king turning to him, the bad man pretended that he was lifting something from the clothing of the king, which he soon threw away. When the king urged that he say what it was, with wonderfully pretended shame, at last he responded that it was a flea. The king, with the lie understood, said, “Surely you don’t think I’m a dog?” He ordered the bad man to be taken and to be inflicted with forty lashes instead of the expected forty denarii.

## THE MONKEY AND THE DOLPHIN

Graecī antīquī cum simiīs et canibus saepe itinera faciēbant. Ōlim nāvis Graeca ad urbem Athēnās nāvigābat. Sed, ēheu! Nāvis prope oppidum Pīraeum, portum Athēnārum, naufRACTA erat. Ibi delphīnī erant amīcī hominibus, praecipuē cīvibus Athēnārum. Ūnus ē delphīnīs simium in aquā vīdit et sēcum dīxit, “Est vir!” Clāmāvit, “Ascende, vir, in tergum meum! Tē servābō!” Simius laetus in tergum ascendit et delphīnus ad terram natābat. Delphīnus rogāvit, “Nōnne tū es cīvis Athēnārum?” “Ita vērō!” simius respondit. “Familia mea est nōbilissima in urbe!” “Ergō,” dīxit delphīnus, “saepe Pīraeum vīsītās.” “Ita vērō! Pīraeus est amīcus meus optimus!” respondit simius. Respōnsum simiī erat inopīnātum delphīnō. Simium propius aspexit. “Tū nōn es vir!” dīxit. Itaque simium sōlum in pontō relīquit; postea hominibus vērīs auxilium dedit.

From *Aesop's Fables*

- 1 **simiīs** = monkeys
- 2 **ēheu** = oh, no!; **oppidum** = town
- 3 **naufRACTA** = shipwrecked
- 4 **praecipuē** = especially
- 5 **sēcum** = to himself; **tergum** = back
- 6
- 7 **natābat** = began to swim
- 8 **nōbilissima** = noblest; **Ergō** = Therefore
- 9
- 10 **optimus** = best; **inopīnātum** = surprising
- 11 **propius** = more closely;
- 12 **pontō** = sea; **postea** = afterwards;  
**vērīs** = true

### Guiding Questions:

1. What is the moral of this fable? Is it about boasting, lying, or something else?
2. What do you think of the dolphin's treatment of the monkey? What if these were two human beings?
3. If we bear in mind that the word for “monkey” was sometimes used as a derogatory term for a person of color, how does that change your understanding of the fable?
4. In order to avoid these negative connotations, what animal would you cast in place of the monkey?
5. Based on the dolphin's words and deeds, how can this passage be used to perpetuate racist beliefs?

### Translation:

Ancient Greeks were often making journeys with monkeys and dogs. Once upon a time, a Greek ship was sailing to the city Athens. But, alas! The ship near the town Piraeus, a port of Athens, was shipwrecked. There, dolphins were friendly to people, especially the citizens of Athens. One of the dolphins saw a monkey on the water and said to himself, “It is a man!” He shouted, “Climb onto my back, man! I will save you!” The happy monkey climbed onto his back and the dolphin began to swim to land. The dolphin asked, “You are a citizen of Athens, aren't you?” “Yes!” responded the monkey. “My family is the noblest in the city!” “Therefore,” said the dolphin, “you often visit Piraeus.” “Yes! Piraeus is my best friend!” responded the monkey. The response of the monkey was surprising to the dolphin. He looked at the monkey more closely. “You are not a man!” he said. And so he left the monkey alone on the sea; afterwards he gave help to true people.”

## A POET'S COMPLAINT

Cynthia prīma suīs miserum mē cēpit ocellīs,	1
contactum nullīs ante <u>cupidinibus</u> .	2 <b>cupidinibus</b> = desires
Tum mihi constantīs dēiēcit lūmina <u>fastūs</u>	3 <b>fastūs</b> = pride
et caput impositīs pressit Amor pedibus,	4
<u>donec</u> mē docuit <u>castās</u> ōdisse puellās	5 <b>donec</b> = until; <b>castās</b> = chaste, pure
<u>improbis</u> , et nullō vīvere consiliō.	6 <b>improbis</b> = wicked
<u>Ei mihi</u> , iam tōtō furor hic nōn deficit annō,	7 <b>ei mihi</b> = Oh, me
cum tamen <u>adversōs</u> cōgor habere deōs...	8 <b>adversōs</b> = hostile
nam mē nostra Venus noctēs exercet <u>amāras</u> ,	9 <b>amāras</b> = bitter
et nullō vacuus tempore <u>dēfit</u> Amor.	10 <b>dēfit</b> = is lacking

Propertius *Elegies* 1.1-8, 33-34

### Guiding Questions:

1. How does Love affect the poet? How is Love described in this poem? How is the poet described?
2. How does the poet feel about Cynthia and about Love?
3. What is the poet accusing Love of doing to him?
4. Do you think the poet is justified in blaming Love for these things? Why or why not?
5. In what ways does this passage depict healthy or unhealthy emotions?

### Translation:

“With her little eyes, Cynthia first captured miserable me, having been touched before by no desires. Then for me wicked Love cast down (my) eyes of constant pride and he pressed (my) head with his feet having been put on top until he taught me to hate chaste girls and to live by no plan. Oh me, now this madness has not failed the whole year when still I am compelled to have hostile gods...for my Love trains me for bitter nights and empty Love is lacking at no time.”

## A SURPRISING PROPOSAL

...Erat quīdam iuuenis ā pīrātīs captus, quī scrīpsit patrī suo prō <u>redēptiōne</u> .	1	<b>redēptiōne</b> = ransom
Pater nōluit eum redimere <u>sīc</u> , <u>quod</u> iuuenis multō tempore in carcere erat	2	<b>sīc, quod</b> = with the result that
<u>mācerātus</u> . Ille, quī eum in vinculis habēbat, quandam pulchram filiam...	3	<b>mācerātus</b> =weakened
genuerat,... quae saepius incarcerātum vīsītātum īvit ac cōnsōlābatur.... Accēdit	4	
quōdam diē, <u>quod</u> , cum puella eum vīsītāret, āit iuuenis eī: "Ō bona puella,	5	<b>quod</b> = that
utinam vellēs prō meā līberātiōne labōrāre!" Quae āit: "Quōmodo poterō hoc	6	
attempāre! Pater tuus, quī tē genuit, nōn vult tē redimere, ego vērō, cum sim tibi	7	
<u>extrānea</u> , quōmodo dēbērem hoc cōgitāre! <u>Et</u> sī tē līberārem, offēnsiōnem	8	<b>extrānea</b> =a stranger; <b>Et</b> =
patris meī incurrerem, quia tuam redēptiōnem <u>perderet</u> pater meus.	9	<b>Etiam</b>
Vēruntamen mihi ūnum concēde, et līberābō tē." Āit ille: "Ō bona puella, pete ā	10	
mē, quid tibi placuerit! Sī mihi est possibile, ego concēdam." At illa: "Nihil aliud	11	
petō prō tuā līberātiōne, nisi quod mē in uxōrem dūcas tempore opportūnō."	12	
Quī āit: "Hoc tibi firmiter prōmittō."	13	

*Gesta Romanorum, 5*

### Guiding questions:

1. How is the girl depicted in this story? How is the young man depicted? How are the fathers depicted?
2. Why does the girl help the young man escape? What is she hoping for in return (is this a *quid pro quo* exchange)?
3. Why do you think the daughter asks for marriage rather than, say, money or friendship?
4. Do you think that the daughter is *freely* agreeing to get married? Why or why not?
5. What about the captured son? Do you think he is *freely* agreeing to get married?
6. How would you feel if you were the girl? If you were the boy? If you were the girl's father?
7. If you were in the girl's shoes, how would you handle the situation to do right by both her father and the young man?
8. How could we improve the interactions or relationships between characters in this story?

### Translation:

A certain young man had been captured by pirates, who wrote to his father for ransom. The father did not want to ransom him with this result, that the young man was weakened in prison for a long time. That one, who was holding him in chains, had had as an offspring a certain beautiful daughter, who rather often came to visit the incarcerated one and was consoling (him). It happened on a certain day, that, when the girl was visiting him, the young man says to her, "O good girl, would that you wished to work for my freedom!" She says "How will I be able to attempt this! Your father, who had you as an offspring, does not wish to ransom you, but I, although I am a stranger to you, how ought I to consider this! Also, if I freed you, I would meet the hatred of my father, because my father has destroyed your ransom. However, grant one thing to me, and I will free you." That one says, "O good girl, ask from me what has pleased you! If it is possible for me, I will grant (it)." But the girl (says) "I seek nothing else in exchange for your freedom, except that you lead me as a wife at a convenient time." He says "I firmly promise this to you."

PENTHESILEA, QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS  
*A Renaissance view of her life and accomplishments*

Penthesilēa Amāzonum rēgīna fuit. Cupiēbat fēmineum corpus	1
suum fortificāre ut arma <u>māiōrum</u> suārum indueret. Etiam aureōs	2 <b>māiōrum</b> = ancestors
capillōs tegere <u>galea</u> et latus suum mūnīre <u>pharetra</u> cōstituit.	3 <b>galea</b> = helmet; <b>pharetra</b> = quiver
Militarī, nōn muliebrī, modo currum et equōs ascendēbat.	4
<u>Ausa est</u> sē esse mīrābiliorem vīribus et disciplīna quam omnēs	5 <b>Ausa est</b> = she dared
priorēs rēginās dēmōnstrāre. Intellegentiam validam ei nōn <u>dēfuit</u> ,	6 <b>dēfuit</b> = is lacking
ut dīcunt, quod <u>secūris</u> ūsus, tempore suō incōgnitus, ab ipsā inventus est.	7 <b>secūris</b> = double-headed ax
Cōgnitō bellō Trōiānō, Penthesilēa prōvocāta cum māximā suārum cōpiā	8
auxilium contrā Graecōs statim tulit. Tot tamque <u>grandia</u> virīliter agēbat,	9 <b>grandia</b> = grand deeds
ut Hectorem ipsum, bellātrīcem saepe spectantem, in admīrātiōnem	10
suī dūceret. Tandem, mortālī susceptō vulnere, miseranda	11
inter mediōs Graecōs ā sē interfectōs cecidit. Multī hās mulierēs	12
armātās mīrantur, virōs oppūgnāre in proeliō ausās. Penthesilēa,	13
autem, et nātūram suam et sententiam eōrum exercitātiōne	14
et virtūte mūtāvit.	15

Based on Boccaccio, *De Mulieribus Claris*, 32

Guiding Questions:

1. How is Penthesilea portrayed by the author's use of gendered language (e.g. "feminine body")?
2. How does Penthesilea wish to be seen by others? What attributes matter most to her? Why?
3. What assumptions are made about gender? How are men and women supposed to look and behave according to Boccaccio? What attributes in them seem most valued?
4. What does the author mean when they say at the end that Penthesilea "changed her nature" by means of training and virtue? Why do they mention this?
5. Do you think that Penthesilea is described as a female or male? Do you think she wants to be a female or male?
6. How does Penthesilea defy or conform to societal expectations?

Translation:

Penthesilea was the queen of the Amazons. She was wanting to strengthen her feminine body so that she might wear the arms of her ancestors. She also decided to cover her golden hair with a helmet and to fortify her side with a quiver. She climbed on her chariot and horses in a military, not womanly, way. She dared to exhibit herself to be more amazing in strength and discipline than all other prior queens. There was not lacking to her strong intelligence, as they say, because the use of the ax, unknown in her own time, was invented by her. With the Trojan war learned of, Penthesilea, having been called with a very great supply of her forces, immediately brought aid against the Greeks. Penthesilea accomplished so many and so grand deeds in a manly way, that she led Hector himself, often looking at the warrior, into admiration. Finally, when a mortal wound had been received, the miserable one fell (dead) among the middle of the Greeks having been killed by her. Many are amazed at these armed women, having dared to attack men in battle. Penthesilea, however, changed her nature and their opinion with her training and her virtue.



## THE PLAYWRIGHT TERENCE

PUBLIUS TERENCE AFER, Carthagine natus, servit Rōmae Terentiō	1
Lūcānō senātorī ā quō ob <u>ingenium</u> et fōrmam nōn īnstitūtus modo līberālīter	2 <b>ingenium</b> = talent
sed etiam <u>mātūrē</u> manūmissus est.... Scrīpsit cōmoediās sex, ex quibus prīmam	3 <b>mātūrē</b> = soon
"Andriam" cum aedilibus dāret, iussus est ante Caeciliō recitāre. Cum ad	4
cēnantem vēnisset, dictus est initium quidem fābulae, quod erat contemptiore	5
<u>vestītū</u> , <u>subsellīō</u> iūxtā lectulum residēns lēgisse. Post paucōs vērō versus,	6 <b>vestītū</b> = clothing;
invitātus ut accumberet cēnāvit ūnā, dein cētera percucurrit nōn sine māgna	7 <b>subsellīō</b> = bench
Caeciliī admīrātione. Et hanc autem et quinque reliquās aequālīter populo	8
probāvit... "Eunūchus" quidem bis diē acta est meruitque pretium quantum	9
nulla antea cuiusquam cōmoedia, id est octō mīlia <u>nummōrum</u> ... Post ēditās	10 <b>nummōrum</b> = coins
cōmoediās nōndum quīntum atque vīcēsimum cōnfectus annum, causā percipiendī	11
Graecōrum īnstitūta mōrēsque, quōs nōn <u>perinde</u> exprimeret in scrīptīs, ēgressus	12 <b>perinde</b> =equally as
est neque amplius rediit.	13 he would like

Adapted from Suetonius *De Viris Illustribus*

### Guiding Questions:

1. How is Terence treated in this passage? What do we learn about him and his character?
2. How does this passage create a positive message about a formerly enslaved person of color?
3. How does this passage create a negative message about a formerly enslaved person of color?
4. Do we find in this passage an appreciation of the inherent dignity and worth of a person? Why or why not?

### Translation:

P. Terentius Afer, born in Carthage, in Rome was a slave for Terentius Lucanus the senator by whom on account of his talent and appearance not only was he graciously established but also he was manumitted early... He wrote six comedies, of which when he was giving the first, "Andria" to the aediles, he was ordered to recite in front of Caecilius. When he had come to the one dining, he was said indeed to have read the beginning of the story, because he was in rather shoddy clothing, sitting on a little bench next to the couch. But after a few verses, having been invited to recline, he dined with them, then he ran through the rest not without great admiration of Caecilius. Moreover he (Caecilius) approved this one and the remaining five equally for the people... "Eunuchus" indeed was acted twice in a day and merited a price as great as no comedy of anyone previously, i.e. 8000 coins (sesterces) ... After the published comedies, having not yet finished his 25<sup>th</sup> year, for the sake of understanding the institutions and customs of the Greeks, which he did not express equally as (he would like) in his writings, he departed and did not return more (again).