

Passages for Recitation  
Copley Latin Day  
University of Michigan  
March 30, 2022

**Overview:** Empire brought many new peoples and much prosperity to Rome. It also offered a variety of outposts for citizens who had become inconvenient to those in power, whether they chose to leave Rome for their personal safety or were banished through the machinations of others. Many of these exiles landed in the eastern provinces, among them the statesman Cicero as the Republic was coming apart and the poet Ovid as the principate was taking hold. In exile, they wrote letters to friends and family back at Rome, expressing their feelings about their situation and angling for a way to come home. The passages for recitation below are excerpted from two letters, one written by Cicero, the other by Ovid.

**Suggestions for recitation:** A student may recite one of the passages or both, a passage could be shared between two students, or the two passages could be recited by a pair of students. Students are encouraged to use gestures to illustrate the writer's emotions. Students are also welcome to "stage" the recitation; for example, a student could impersonate the writer as he composes his letter or the recipient in the act of reading the letter somewhere in Rome. The passages could even provide a starting point for staging the journey that the exile took across land and sea – complete with towns and ports, and at the mercy of the winds for which Latin has many names. Perhaps students will have their own ideas for how to animate the voices of these famous exiles from Rome!

### **Passage 1: Cicero, *ad Familiares* 14.1**

*Context:* Cicero's condemnation of the Catilinarian conspirators in 63 BCE, came back to haunt him five years later when Clodius, a supporter of Caesar, engineered a law that would punish anyone that had put a Roman to death without a trial. As a supporter of Pompey, Cicero was on the losing side of the civil factionalism at Rome at this moment (and not for the last time). His property was destroyed and his journey, as his letters tell us, took him from Brundisum (in the foot of Italy) across the Adriatic sea to Dyrrachium (in modern day Albania) to Thessalonica (in Macedonia) and back to Dyrrachium before he could safely return to Rome almost two years later. The letter excerpted below was composed on November 28, 58 b.c.e (a.u.c 696) as Cicero was headed east to Dyrrachium. While the letter is addressed to his wife and shows Cicero as a loving father, Caesar and Pompey are not far from Cicero's mind.

TULLIUS TERENTIAE SUAE, TULLIOLAE SUAE, CICERONI SUO SALUTEM DICIT. Et litteris multorum et sermone omnium perfertur ad me incredibilem tuam virtutem et fortitudinem esse teque nec animi neque corporis laboribus defatigari. Me miserum! te ista virtute, fide, probitate, humanitate in tantas aerumnas propter me incidisse, Tulliolamque nostram, ex quo patre tantas voluptates capiebat, ex eo tantos percipere luctus! Nam quid ego de Cicerone dicam? qui cum primum sapere coepit,



nec tibi pampineas autumnus porrigit uvas,  
cuncta sed inmodicum tempora frigus habent.  
Tu glacie freta vineta tenes, et in aequore piscis 15  
inclusus tecta saepe natavit aqua.  
Nec tibi sunt fontes, laticis nisi paene marini,  
qui potus dubium sistat alatne sitim.  
Rara, neque haec felix, in apertis eminent aruis  
arbor et in terra est altera forma maris. 20  
Non avis obloquitur, nisi silvis si qua remota  
aequoreas rauco gutture potat aquas.  
Tristia per vacuos horrent absinthia campos  
conveniensque suo messis amara loco.