

Eduqas Latin GCSE

Prescribed text for Component 3A: Latin Literature (Narratives)

Virgil, Hercules and Cacus

N. B. The passages in italics are summaries of events to support understanding of the narrative. They are not part of the prescription.

This is the official examination text for the Eduqas Latin GCSE (2026-2027)

Eduqas 2026-2027 Latin Narratives 3A

Section B

Hercules and Cacus

Virgil Aeneid 8 152-336

Virgil's epic poem the Aeneid was written, probably at the emperor Augustus' request, in the 20s BC. It tells the story of the Trojan nobleman, Aeneas who fled from Troy and after many adventures, arrived in Italy where he was destined to settle and be the forefather of the Roman people. The arrival of the Trojans in Italy sparked a war and Aeneas needed to have allies. He was told by the god of the river Tiber, to go to king Evander and he was received kindly by the king and his son Pallas, who were in the middle of a festival in honour of Hercules. Aeneas told the king that he already had a strong connection to him as their fathers were related through their common ancestor, Atlas, and he asked Evander to help him in the war against the Italian tribes.

A

Aeneas finished speaking and Evander had been watching him closely as he talked. Then he replied thus in a few words: "Bravest of Trojans, how gladly I welcome you and recognise you. How I remember the words of your father, and the voice and face of the great Anchises! I recall when Priam, the son of Laomedon, was heading to the kingdom of Salamis to see his sister, Hesione, he went straight on to visit the cold realm of Arcadia. At that time, I was in the first flush of youth, and I marvelled at the Trojan leaders, and I marvelled at the son of Laomedon himself, but Anchises walked taller than them all. My mind was ablaze with a young man's enthusiasm to speak to him and to join my hand to his in friendship. I approached him and eagerly led him to the walls of Arcadian Pheneus. As he was leaving, he gave me a marvellous quiver full of Lycian arrows, a cloak interwoven with gold thread and two golden bridles which my son, Pallas, now has. Therefore, the hand of friendship which you seek has been joined in a treaty, and when dawn comes upon the earth tomorrow, I shall be glad to send you happily on your way with reinforcements and resources. Meanwhile, since you have come here as friends, celebrate wholeheartedly with us these annual sacred rites which it would be wrong to put off and now you begin to feel at home at the tables of your allies."

B

When he had said this, Evander ordered the food and drink that had been removed to be replaced; he himself showed the Trojan men to their grassy seats and took Aeneas, as his most important guest, to a couch with a shaggy lionskin as a cushion and entertained him on a maple-wood throne. Then some hand-picked young men and the priest of the altar competed with each other to serve the roasted flesh of bulls, piled the baskets with well-made bread, the gift of Ceres, and they poured out Bacchus' wine. Aeneas and his Trojan young men feasted together on the whole side of oxen and sacrificial entrails. After their hunger had been relieved and their desire for food had been satisfied, king Evander spoke: "These solemn rites, this established feast and this altar to such a great divine spirit have not been imposed upon us by some empty superstition and an ignorance of our ancient gods: we perform this sacrifice, my Trojan guest, because we were saved from dreadful dangers and we repeat it as a well-deserved honour.

C

iam primum saxis suspensam hanc aspice rupem,
disiectae procul ut moles desertaque montis
stat domus et scopuli ingentem traxere ruinam.
hic spelunca fuit, vasto summota recessu,
semihominis Caci facies quam dira tenebat
solis inaccessam radiis; semperque recenti
caede tepebat humus, foribusque adfixa superbis
ora virum tristi pendebant pallida tabo.
huic monstro Volcanus erat pater: illius atros
ore vomens ignes magna se mole ferebat.
attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas
auxilium adventumque dei. nam maximus ultor,
tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus
Alcides aderat taurosque hac victor agebat
ingentes, vallemque boves amnemque tenebant.
at furiis Caci mens effera, ne quid inausum
aut intractatum scelerisve dolive fuisset,
quattuor a stabulis praestanti corpore tauros
avertit, totidem forma superante iuencas;
atque hos, ne qua forent pedibus vestigia rectis,
cauda in speluncam tractos versisque viarum
indiciis raptos saxo occultabat opaco:
quaerenti nulla ad speluncam signa ferebant.

D

interea, cum iam stabulis saturata moveret
Amphitryoniades armenta abutumque pararet,
discessu mugire boves atque omne querelis
impleri nemus et colles clamore relinqui.
reddidit una boum vocem vastoque sub antro **5**
mugiit et Caci spem custodita fefellit.
hic vero Alcidae furiis exarserat atro
felle dolor: rapit arma manu nodisque gravatum
robur et aërii cursu petit ardua montis.
tum primum nostri Cacum videre timentem **10**
turbatumque oculis: fugit ilicet ocior Euro
speluncamque petit, pedibus timor addidit alas.
ut sese inclusit ruptisque immane catenis
deiecit saxum, ferro quod et arte paterna
pendebat, fultosque emuniit obice postes, **15**
ecce furens animis aderat Tiryntius omnemque
accessum lustrans huc ora ferebat et illuc,
dentibus infrendens. ter totum fervidus ira
lustrat Aventini montem, ter saxea temptat
limina nequiquam, ter fessus valle resedit. **20**

E

There stood a sharp point of rock with sheer cliffs on all sides, rising up at the back of the cave. It was immensely high and a convenient home for the nests of carrion birds. Hercules strained at this from the right where it leaned over the ridge towards the river on the left, he shook it, loosened it and tore it up from its roots, then, suddenly, he gave it a mighty heave and with that heave from which the vast heavens thundered, the riverbanks leapt apart, and the terrified river flowed backwards. Cacus' huge cave and palace were uncovered and exposed to view and the shadowy caverns deep within appeared. It was as if the deepest parts of the earth split apart by force, unbarred the chambers of the underworld and opened up their pale kingdoms, hateful to the gods. From above a huge abyss could be seen, and the spirits of the dead panicked as light was inflicted on them. **5**
10

F

ergo insperata deprensum luce repente
inclusumque cavo saxo atque insueta rudentem
desuper Alcides telis premit omniaque arma
advocat et ramis vastisque molaribus instat.
ille autem, neque enim fuga iam super ulla pericli, **5**
faucibus ingentem fumum (mirabile dictu)
evomit involvitque domum caligine caeca,
prospectum eripiens oculis, glomeratque sub antro
fumiferam noctem commixtis igne tenebris.
non tulit Alcides animis, seque ipse per ignem **10**
praecipiti iecit saltu, qua plurimus undam

fumus agit nebulaque ingens specus aestuat atra.
 hic Cacum in tenebris incendia vana vomentem
 corripit in nodum complexus et angit inhaerens
 elisos oculos et siccum sanguine guttur. **15**
 panditur extemplo foribus domus atra revulsis,
 abstractaeque boves abiurataeque rapinae
 caelo ostenduntur, pedibusque informe cadaver
 protrahitur. nequeunt expleri corda tuendo
 terribiles oculos, vultum villosaque saetis **20**
 pectora semiferi atque exstinctos faucibus ignes.

G

From that day, Hercules has been honoured, and generations after him have joyfully celebrated this day. Potitius the first founder with the house of Pinarii as guardians of the sacred rites of Hercules, set up in the grove this altar which is always called by us the Greatest Altar and will always be the greatest. Therefore, young men, in appreciation of such great and praiseworthy actions, wreath your hair with leaves and hold out your cups in your right hands. Call upon him who is the god of us all and offer him wine willingly.” He stopped speaking and then the green and silver leaves of Hercules’ poplar tree covered his hair, hanging down on all sides, and a sacred cup filled his right hand. Soon, everyone was happily pouring libations and praying to the gods. **5**
10

H

deveho interea propior fit Vesper Olympo,
 iamque sacerdotes primusque Potitius ibant,
 pellibus in morem cincti, flammisque ferebant.
 instaurant epulas et mensae grata secundae
 dona ferunt cumulantque oneratis lancibus aras. **5**
 tum Salii ad cantus incensa altaria circum
 populeis adsunt evincti tempora ramis,
 hic iuvenum chorus, ille senum; qui carmine laudes
 Herculeas et facta ferunt: ut prima novercae
 monstra manu geminosque premens eliserit angues, **10**
 ut bello egregias idem disiecerit urbes,
 Troiamque Oechaliamque, ut duros mille labores
 rege sub Eurystheo fatis Iunonis iniquae
 pertulerit. “tu nubigenas, invicte, bimembres
 Hylaeumque Pholumque, manu, tu Cresia mactas **15**
 prodigia et vastum Nemeae sub rupe leonem.
 te Stygii tremuere lacus, te ianitor Orci
 ossa super recubans antro semesa cruento;
 nec te ullae facies, non terruit ipse Typhoeus,
 arduus arma tenens; non te rationis egentem **20**
 Lernaes turba capitum circumstetit anguis.
 salve, vera Iovis proles, decus addite divis,
 et nos et tua dexter adi pede sacra secundo.”
 talia carminibus celebrant; super omnia Caci
 speluncam adiciunt spirantemque ignibus ipsum. **25**
 consonat omne nemus strepitu collesque resultant.

I

After the divine rites were performed, everyone returned to the city. The king weighed down by age, kept Aeneas and his son beside him and shortened the journey with varied conversation. Aeneas was amazed, constantly looking around, taking in the places, and joyfully asking questions to hear about the history of the place. Then, king **5**
Evander, the founder of the citadel of Rome said: "These woods were once inhabited by native fauns and nymphs and a race of men born from the hard wood of oak trees, who had neither established customs nor civilisation, nor did they know how to yoke bulls or gather wealth or look after what they had gathered; but fruit trees and **10**
the harsh diet of the hunt sustained them. Then it was that Saturn first came down from heavenly Olympus, fleeing the weapons of Jupiter, an exile from his lost kingdom. He gathered from the high mountains this untamed and scattered people, gave them laws, and decided that the place should be called Latium, because he had lain **15**
hidden safely within its borders. Men call this the Golden Age for he ruled his people kindly and in peace, until gradually, a worse and basely coloured age took its place along with the madness of war and the desire for possessions. Then bands of Ausonians and Sicanian tribes arrived, and the land of Saturn changed its name **20**
many times. After that there were kings, and Thybris, harsh and huge in size, after whom we Italians named the river Tiber, and the old river Albula lost its name. I had been driven from my homeland and was seeking the furthest reaches of the ocean when all powerful Fortune and Fate which no one can escape, set me in this place **25**
driven by fearsome warnings from my mother the nymph, Carmentis and the authority of the god, Apollo."