



Eduqas Latin GCSE

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

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 (2024-2025)

Eduqas 2024-2025 Latin Narratives 3A Prose

Suetonius: Nero 8, 9, 10, 11, 26, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 47, 48, 49, 50, 57.

Nero was born in Antium, south of Rome, on the 15th December AD 37. There were many unfavourable comments about his birth, and even his father, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, said that any child born to him and his wife, Agrippina, could be nothing but detestable and a danger to the public. The young Nero's early life was difficult, as his uncle Gaius (Caligula) seized the boy's inheritance and banished his mother. He was then brought up by his aunt, Domitia Lepida.

When Claudius became emperor in AD 41, Nero regained his inheritance and received a legacy from his stepfather. His mother was recalled from exile, and her influence in court caused some to view him as a rival to Claudius' son, Britannicus. It was rumoured that Claudius' wife Messalina made an attempt on his life, and that the boy was only saved when a snake slithered from beneath his pillow. When Claudius married Agrippina in AD 49, Nero was adopted by the emperor, and three years later married Octavia, Claudius' daughter.

A

Nero was nearly seventeen when Claudius' death was announced. In the afternoon he went to meet the guards since, due to bad omens, no earlier time was suitable. He was hailed as emperor in front of the palace steps and was taken in a litter to the camp of the Praetorian Guard where he briefly addressed the soldiers. Then he was taken to the Senate, 5 where he stayed until evening, while they heaped endless honours on him; he refused only one, the name 'Father of his Country', because he felt he was too young.

B

orsus hinc ab ostentatione pietatis Claudium apparatissimo funere elatum laudavit et consecravit. memoriae Domiti patris honores maximos habuit. matri summam omnium rerum privatarum publicarumque permisit. primo etiam imperii die signum excubanti tribuno dedit 'optimam matrem' ac deinceps 5 eiusdem saepe lectica per publicum simul vectus est. Antium coloniam deduxit, ascriptis veteranis e praetorio additisque per domicili translationem ditissimis primipilariis, ubi et portum operis sumptuosissimi fecit. atque ut certiore adhuc 10 indolem ostenderet, ex Augusti praescripto imperaturum se professus, neque liberalitatis neque clementiae, ne comitatus quidem exhibendae ullam occasionem omisit.

C

spectaculorum plurima et varia genera edidit: iuvenales, circenses, scaenicos ludos, gladiatorium munus. iuvenalibus senes quoque consulares anusque matronas recepit ad lusum. circensibus loca equiti secreta a ceteris tribuit commisitque etiam camelorum quadrigas. ludis, quos pro 5 aeternitate imperii susceptos appellari maximos voluit, ex utroque ordine et sexu plerique ludicras partes sustinuerunt; notissimus eques Romanus elephanto supersidens per catadromum decurrit; inducta Afrani togata, quae incendium inscribitur, concessumque ut scaenici ardentis 10 domus suppellectilem diriperent ac sibi haberent; sparsa et populo missilia omnium rerum per omnes dies: singula cotidie

milia avium cuiusque generis, multiplex penus, tesseræ frumentariæ, vestis, aurum, argentum, gemmæ, margaritæ, tabulæ pictæ, mancipia, iumenta atque etiam mansuetæ 15
feræ, novissime naves, insulæ, agri.

Nero introduced a lot of positive improvements to Rome. Amongst other things he adapted the architecture of Roman houses so that there was a fire-fighting platform in front of them. He held gladiatorial combats in the Campus Martius where no one was to be killed, though he famously inflicted punishments on Christians. He also forbade charioteers to wander the streets after dark robbing passers-by, and seems to have made attempts to stop the forgery of wills. Nero visited Greece, where he tried to have a canal cut through the Isthmus of Corinth and he took part in musical contests and theatrical performances, at which he always seemed to do rather well. However, not everything he did was good.

D

petulantiam, libidinem, luxuriam, avaritiam, crudelitatem sensim quidem primo et occulte et velut iuvenili errore exercuit, sed ut tunc quoque dubium nemini foret naturæ illa vitia, non ætatis esse. post crepusculum statim adrepto pilleo vel galero popinas inibat circumque vicos vagabatur 5
ludibundus nec sine pernicie tamen, siquidem redeuntes a cena verberare ac repugnantes vulnerare cloacisque demergere assuerat, tabernas etiam effringere et expilare; quintana domi constituta, ubi partæ et ad licitationem dividendæ prædæ pretium absumeretur. 10

E

Nero began his reign of slaughter with Claudius; though not responsible for his death, he was certainly aware of it, nor did he pretend otherwise, as he used to praise mushrooms (in which the poison had been administered) as the 'food of the gods', according to the Greek proverb. He poisoned Britannicus, out of envy of his voice and through fear that the boy was held 5
in more affection by the people because of the memory of his father. The poison came from Locusta, an expert poisoner; and as it acted too slowly (having only a laxative effect on Britannicus), he beat the woman complaining that she had administered medicine rather than poison. She explained she had used a milder dose to avoid suspicion. Nero 10
made her mix more which he tried on goats and pigs until the animals died. The potion was added to Britannicus' wine, and he dropped dead immediately, while Nero explained that this was due to seizures which he had suffered from for years.

F

When he was first emperor, Nero felt so weighed down by his mother's influence that he threatened to remove all her power and then expelled her from his palace. He continued to threaten her with lawsuits until she left Rome for Baiae where he continually sent people to drive and sail past her house while shouting abuse and mocking her. At last, he decided to kill her, 5
but discovered that she had been taking antidotes, so poison did not work. Firstly, he arranged for her bedroom ceiling to fall on her, but she learnt of the plot; he then contrived a collapsible cabin on a boat and invited her to dinner near Baiae promising reconciliation. He had the vessel which brought

her wrecked and offered her the booby-trapped boat for her return journey. 10
The next morning, news was brought to him that the plan had failed; his
mother had swum to safety. Nero sent men to kill his mother and claimed it
was suicide. He then disposed of his aunt, Domitia.

G

uxores praeter Octaviam duas postea duxit, Poppaeam
Sabinam quaestorio patre natam et equiti Romano antea
nuptam. deinde Statiliam Messalinam Tauri bis consulis ac
triumphalis abnepem. qua ut poteretur, virum eius Atticum 5
Vestinum consulem in honore ipso trucidavit. Octaviae
consuetudinem cito aspernatus, corripientibus
amicis 'sufficere illi debere' respondit 'uxoria ornamenta'.
eandem mox saepe frustra strangulare meditatus, dimisit ut
sterilem, sed improbante divortium populo nec parcente 10
conviciis, etiam relegavit, denique occidit sub crimine
adulteriorum adeo impudenti falsoque, ut in quaestione
pernegantibus cunctis Anicetum paedagogum suum
indicem subiecerit, qui fingeret dolo stupratam a se fateretur.
Poppaeam duodecimo die post divortium Octaviae in 15
matrimonium acceptam dilexit unice; et tamen ipsam
quoque ictu calcis occidit, quod se ex aurigatione
sero reversum gravida et aegra conviciis incesserat.
ex hac filiam tulit Claudiam Augustam amisitque admodum
infantem.

H

Nero drove his tutor, Seneca, to suicide even though the old man frequently
begged to retire and offered to give him his estates. In place of cough
medicine which he had promised, Nero sent poison to Burrus, the prefect of
the guard. He was no less cruel to those outside his household. After a
comet foretold the death of a prominent person, Nero, advised by his 5
astrologer, executed a large number of the nobility to avert the omen.
This was an easy decision because he had recently discovered
two conspiracies against him. The alleged conspirators were arrested
and admitted their plot, saying that there was no way to help a man as evil
as Nero, except to kill him. All the children of the conspirators were 10
banished from Rome and then killed by poison or starvation.

He showed no greater concern for the people and, pretending that the
ugliness of the buildings and the narrow, winding streets of Rome offended
him, he set fire to the city so openly that several former consuls spotted his
closest slaves on their property with kindling and blazing torches but dared
not stop them. Nero also coveted the sites of the stone granaries near the 5
Golden House. He demolished them and set them alight. The
disastrous fire raged for six days and seven nights and people were
compelled to take refuge in tombs. As well as the large number of tenements
which burned down, the houses of former leaders, still adorned with the

spoils of war, were burnt, as were the temples of the gods back to the time 10
of the kings and every memorable monument from antiquity that had
survived. Nero watched the fire from the gardens of Maecenas and
delighted, as he said, by the 'beauty of the fire', he sang 'The Sack of
Troy' while wearing his tragedian's costume.

*In AD 68, the general Galba and the Spanish provinces revolted against him. Nero was
inconsolable, and he was soon plagued by omens and dreams which were not favourable to
him.*

J

nuntiata interim etiam ceterorum exercituum defectione
litteras prandenti sibi redditas concerpsit. sumpto a Locusta
veneno et in auream pyxidem condito transiit in hortos
Servilianos, et tribunos centurionesque praetorii de fugae
societate temptavit. sed partim tergiversantibus, partim aperte 5
detrectantibus, uno vero etiam proclamante: 'usque adeone
mori miserum est?' varie agitavit sed tandem obdormivit. sic
cogitatione in posterum diem dilata ad mediam fere noctem
excitatus, ut comperit stationem militum recessisse, prosiluit e
lecto misitque circum amicos, et quia nihil a quoquam 10
renuntiabatur, ipse cum paucis hospitia singulorum adiit.
verum clausis omnium foribus, respondente nullo, in
cubiculum rediit, unde iam et custodes diffugerant, direptis
etiam stragulis, amota et pyxide veneni; ac statim Spiculum
murmillonem vel quemlibet alium percussorem, cuius manu 15
periret, requisivit et nemine reperto: 'ergo ego,' inquit, 'nec
amicum habeo nec inimicum?' procurritque, quasi
praecipitaturus se in Tiberim.

K

Nero then asked for a secluded place in which to gather his thoughts. His
freedman, Phaon, offered his own suburban villa, four miles from Rome.
So barefoot and wearing only a tunic, Nero threw on a faded travelling-
cloak, covered his head and holding a cloth in front of his face, mounted
his horse with only four attendants. Immediately he was frightened by 5
earth tremor and a flash of lightning, and heard the shouting of soldiers
in a nearby camp who were prophesying defeat for him and victory for
Galba. One passer-by said, 'These fellows are pursuing Nero', and
another asked 'Is there any news about Nero from the city?' Then his
horse was frightened by the smell of a corpse that had been thrown out 10
the side of the road making Nero drop his face-covering. He was then
saluted by a praetorian veteran. At last they came to the back entrance
to the villa; they left their horses and followed an overgrown path to the
rear wall of the house. When the slaves had tunnelled through the wall,
Nero crawled in and lay down in a meagre bedroom with an old cida 15
spread over him.

L

tunc scrobem coram fieri imperavit dimensus ad corporis sui
modulum, componique simul, si qua invenirentur, frusta
marmoris et aquam simul ac ligna conferri curando mox
cadaveri, flens ad singula atque identidem dictitans: 'qualis
artifex pereol!' ferrum iugulo adegit iuvante Epaphrodito a 5
libellis. semianimisque adhuc irrumpenti centurioni et paenula
ad vulnus adposita in auxilium se venisse simulanti non aliud

respondit quam: 'sero' et: 'haec est fides.' atque in ea voce defecit, extantibus rigentibusque oculis usque ad horrorem formidinemque visentium. nihil prius aut magis a comitibus exegerat quam ne potestas cuiquam capitis sui fieret, sed ut quoquo modo totus cremaretur. permisit hoc Icelus, Galbae libertus, non multo ante vinculis exolutus, in quae primo tumultu coniectus fuerat. 10

M

Nero was buried at a cost of two hundred thousand sesterces, wrapped in white robes embroidered with gold. His nurses Egloge and Alexandria, and his mistress Acte, laid his remains in the Domitian family tomb on the Hill of the Gardens which can be seen from the Campus Martius. Nero died in his thirty second year, on the anniversary of the day on which he had killed his first wife, Octavia. There was such widespread public rejoicing that the people ran through the city wearing caps of liberty; however, for a long time afterwards people decorated his tomb with spring and summer flowers and raised statues to him. 5