

Examiners' report

GCSE

LATIN

OCR Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in Latin

J282

For first teaching in 2016

J282/03 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 3 series overview

This report relates to Latin GCSE Prose Literature B (J282 03), which includes the Cambridge Latin Anthology texts of *Messalina* and *A day in the life of Pliny the Elder*.

The standard of the candidates' work was impressive. The vast majority of the candidates had a good knowledge of the set text and they seemed to find the subject matter of the texts enjoyable to study. Some candidates, however, needed to have a more precise knowledge of the text and lacked the detailed knowledge required in some of the questions, particularly the 4 and 8 mark textual analysis questions. Candidates must be sure to quote the Latin when asked to do so and demonstrate to the examiner that they understand the meaning of the Latin. Below is a short summary of what is expected of each of the types of questions found in the Prose Literature B examination paper.

Short Comprehension questions: these questions are generally worth 1 or 2 marks. Candidates should look carefully at the Latin lemma in the question to make sure that they are getting their response from the correct section of the Latin. These questions only require a short response and the number of lines provided in the exam paper should be sufficient for the candidate's response. Where only one answer is required, candidates should avoid giving multiple responses. The first answer only will be marked.

Empathetic questions: there are two of these questions in the paper. These questions require candidates to interpret from the Latin how a character in the text is feeling and then give a reason for their answer. Candidates should make sure that their response is not vague in either part of the question. They should give a specific feeling or emotion and back this up with evidence from the text. Personal response is required by candidates as the marks are given for AO3.

4 mark analysis questions: there are two 4 mark analysis questions in the paper, one which includes a translation of the Latin and one which does not. When answering the question which has the translation included, candidates should comment only on the style of the Latin. However, when answering the question that does not have the translation, candidates can analyse both the style and content of the Latin. In both 4 mark questions, candidates must give a short, focused Latin quotation, make clear the meaning of the Latin, preferably by translating the quotation, and they must then explain how their chosen Latin quotation answers the question. Some candidates commented on the content of Latin in the 4 mark question which includes the translation, rather than the style of the Latin, and therefore dropped marks. Two responses are required for each question and candidates should avoid giving more than the required two answers. The first response only in each of the response spaces will be marked. Guidance is given in the mark scheme as to how examiners will mark questions where candidates have given more than the required number of responses.

8 mark analysis question: there is one 8 mark analysis question in the paper, and this is usually the best differentiator of the paper. Candidates must analyse the passage of Latin, quoting the Latin, showing that they know the meaning of the Latin and explaining how each Latin quotation answers the question. In order to score in Level 4 (7-8 marks), candidates should aim to make five points, of which at least two should be style points. To score in Level 3 (5-6 marks) they should aim to make at least three or four points of which at least one is a style point. This means that if a candidate makes no style points at all in their response, their maximum score is four marks out of eight. This affected a small number of candidates who did not refer to the style of the Latin at all in their response. Some candidates also did not gain marks as they did not quote the Latin in some or all of their points. It states clearly in the question that candidates should refer to the Latin in their response. Candidates should aim to make five full points in this question to give them the greatest chance of scoring in the top level. These points should be detailed and should answer the question specifically, rather than being brief or vague. Although the quality of points is of the utmost importance, candidates who make five or more points are

most likely to have covered the text in sufficient breadth. However, the examiner is judging the response on both breadth and depth of points, so candidates who make fewer but more detailed points could potentially score in the highest level.

10 mark overarching essay: The overarching 10 mark question was generally well answered and candidates seemed to have enjoyed the subject matter of the set texts. Candidates need to avoid vague responses. They should give their own personal response in order to answer the question and they should then back up their point with a specific reference to the text. Latin quotations are not required. Candidates should aim to refer to at least some parts of the texts that are not referred to in the exam paper; some candidates clearly looked back over the paper and referred only to the passages given in previous questions, and these responses tended to be limited in scope. These candidates would have scored more highly if they had referred more widely to different sections of the text. For the top level (9-10 marks) candidates should aim to make at least six points. However, the marking is about both breadth and depth of points, so candidates who make fewer but more detailed points could potentially score in the highest level.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• had a good knowledge of the Latin set texts • quoted the Latin where necessary and ensured that their quotations were focused and concise • in the 4 mark question with the translation provided, they made style points only • made at least five full points, with Latin quotation, translation and analysis, in the 8 mark question • made five to six full points in the 10 mark question, giving both their personal response and detailed examples from the text • in the shorter comprehension questions, they ensured that their response was taken from the line references and lemma given in the question • made sure they left themselves enough time to complete the final question of the paper, the 10 mark overarching essay.	• did not have a full understanding of the meaning of the Latin texts • did not include Latin quotations where asked to do so, i.e. in the 4 and 8 mark questions • gave vague responses in the 10 mark questions, without giving in-depth examples from the text • ignored the line references given in the questions • omitted words in the translation question or added in words that were not in the Latin. Added words were penalised as a 'Harmful Addition'. • did not leave themselves enough time to complete the final question of the paper, the 10 mark overarching essay. Some of the 10 mark questions appeared to be rushed, with the candidates running out of time.

Question 1 (a)

1 Read the passage and answer the questions.

Messalina novo et quasi insano amore incensa est. nam in C. Silius, iuventutis Romanae pulcherrimum, ita exarserat ut Iuniam Silanum, nobilem feminam, matrimonio eius exturbaret liberoque adultero potiretur. neque Silius flagitii aut periculi nescius erat: sed intellexit exitium, si abnueret, fore certum et, si consentiret, nonnullam facinoris celandi spem esse.

5

Tacitus, *Messalina*, lines 1–7

(a) *Messalina ... incensa est* (line 1): what do we learn about Messalina here?

.....
 [2]

This was very well answered. Nearly every candidate scored full marks in this question. Some candidates omitted reference to 'new' or 'mad', which was required for the second mark. Candidates must be sure to translate all the potentially relevant material in the comprehension questions.

Question 1 (b)

(b) *nam ... potiretur* (lines 1–3): what did Messalina do because of her love for Gaius Silius? Make **two** points.

1

 2
 [2]

This was very well answered. The common error was the omission of 'from her marriage' which was required for the mark.

Question 1 (c)

(c) *neque ... nescius erat* (line 3): what was Silius aware of?

.....
..... [1]

This was also well answered. There were two possible answers which made this question more accessible.

Question 1 (d)

(d) *sed intellexit ... esse* (lines 3–5): why do you think Silius chose to continue the affair?

.....
.....
.....
..... [2]

Another question that was well answered. However, some candidates only made one point in a question that is worth two marks. Candidates should look carefully at how many marks are available for a question and answer accordingly.

Question 2*

2* Read the passage and answer the question.

illa non furtim sed multis cum comitibus ventitat domum, egredienti adhaeret, dat opes honoresque; postremo servi, liberti, paratus principis apud adulterum saepe videbantur. at Claudius matrimonii sui ignarus. iam Messalina propter facilitatem adulteriorum ad novas libidines versa est. Silius, sive fatali insania an ipsa pericula remedium imminantium periculorum ratus, abrumpi dissimulationem urgebat: quippe non exspectandum, dum princeps senesceret.

5

Tacitus, *Messalina*, lines 8–17

What makes this such a vivid description of the affair between Messalina and Silius?

In your answer you may wish to consider:

- the increasingly bold actions of Messalina;
- the way Tacitus describes Silius responding.

You should refer to the **Latin** and discuss Tacitus' use of language.

[8]

The 8 mark question was generally the best differentiator of the paper. To score in the top level, candidates should aim to make approximately five points, of which at least two should be style points. Some candidates who made four excellent points scored in the top level, but the range of points of other candidates who had made only four points made it harder for them to score in the top level. Candidates should plan their response before writing to make sure they make the strongest points using the best Latin quotations. Some candidates wrote a general commentary on the passage without focusing on the question; points that were not directed at the question received little credit. A common error was for candidates to omit Latin quotations in their response. Content and style points are accepted in the 8 mark question, so candidates can comment both on the content, examining what has happened in the passage which makes it particularly vivid, and on the style, examining how the author's style of writing creates a vivid description of the affair. As with every question on the paper, a good knowledge of the Latin is necessary, and it was noted by examiners that a number of candidates' translations of the Latin were incorrect, or the wrong section of Latin was quoted for the candidate's translation. A good knowledge of the Latin is absolutely necessary.

Exemplar 1

Tacitus describes Messalina's audacity when ~~she~~ 'illa non furtim sed multis cum comitibus ventitat domum' (she not secretly but with many companions comes frequently to his house). The use of litotes to understate her boldness when Tacitus writes 'non furtim' (not secretly) emphasises the recklessness within their affair, creating tension.

Also, Tacitus conveys that the affair is an outrage towards Claudius when 'paratus principis apud adulterum saepe videbantur' (property of the emperor was often seen at the house of her lover). This creates a vivid sense of shock towards Messalina's unfaithfulness, which is emphasised by the plosive alliteration in 'paratus principis' (property of the emperor).

In this extract from the 8 mark question, the candidate has made two good points which both received full credit. The candidate has quoted the Latin for each point, has shown the examiner that they have understood the meaning of the Latin and has analysed their quotation in order to answer the question. Both points made are style points commenting on Tacitus' use of litotes and the use of alliteration.

Question 3 (a)

3 Read the passage and answer the questions.

exim Calpurnia (id alteri paelici nomen), ubi datum est secretum, ad genua Caesaris provoluta nupsisse Messalinam Silio exclamat; altera paelice haec confirmante, Calpurnia cieri Narcissum postulat. qui 'discidiumne tuum' inquit 'novisti? nam matrimonium Silii vidit populus et senatus et milites; ac nisi celeriter agis, tenet urbem maritus.'

Tacitus, *Messalina*, lines 35–41

- (a) *exim Calpurnia ... haec confirmante* (lines 1–2): how did Claudius find out that Messalina had married Silius?

.....

.....

..... [2]

Many candidates omitted information from their response that was required according to the mark scheme. Candidates needed to refer to the fact that a 'private' interview was granted, and that the other concubine 'confirmed' what the first had said. Candidates must take care to include all relevant information in their response.

Question 3 (b)

- (b) Pick out and translate the **Latin** word in line 3 which Narcissus used to suggest that Claudius' marriage was over.

Latin word:

English translation:

[2]

A number of candidates gave more than one Latin word. Candidates should be careful to read the question carefully, which asks for 'the Latin word'. A number of candidates did not know the Latin well enough and the Latin word they gave did not match up with their English translation.

Pick the Latin word / phrase and translate

Candidates should read the wording of this question carefully, as it varies from year to year. Sometimes candidates are required to provide a Latin phrase, sometimes (as in this year) a Latin word. This year, when a Latin word only was required, responses that gave a Latin phrase were automatically marked as incorrect, even if the correct Latin word was included in the phrase given. Reading the question carefully and methodically is essential.

Question 3 (c)

(c) *ac nisi ... maritus* (line 4): according to Narcissus, what would happen if Claudius did not act on his advice?

..... [2]

This question was well answered.

Question 4

4 Read the passage and answer the question.

atque interim, tribus omnino comitantibus – tam repens erat solitudo – postquam per urbem pedibus ivit, vehiculo, quo purgamenta hortorum eripiuntur, Ostiensem viam intrat. nullam misericordiam civibus commovit quia flagitiorum deformitas praevalebat.

Tacitus, *Messalina*, lines 49–53

How does Tacitus show the terrible situation Messalina was in?

Make **two** points, each referring to the **Latin**.

1

2

[4]

In the 4 mark question with no translation provided, both style and content points are accepted. Candidates should understand this distinction as it is sometimes easier for candidates to make content points. In the 4 mark questions candidates should quote the Latin, show that they know the meaning of the Latin, which will usually be by translating it, and they should then explain how their quotation answers the question: in this case, how their quotation shows the terrible situation Messalina was in. Some candidates quoted far too much of the Latin and such unfocused quotations did not gain credit. Some candidates also did not demonstrate that they knew the meaning of their Latin quote and therefore did not get credit for their quotation. Although relatively few lines are provided for their response, candidates should make sure that their analysis of the Latin is in sufficient depth to answer the question. Some candidates provided very little analysis other than the meaning of their Latin quotation.

Misconception



Some candidates were under the impression that they could give more than two points in this question, even though the question clearly states that only two points should be made. See the guidance below, given in the mark scheme, on how examiners mark questions where candidates have given multiple responses.

'Where candidates are required to provide a set number of short answer responses then only the set number of responses should be marked. The response space should be marked from left to right on each line and then line by line until the required number of responses have been considered. The remaining responses should not then be marked. Examiners will have to apply judgement as to whether a 'second response' on a line is a development of the 'first response', rather than a separate, discrete response. *(The underlying assumption is that the candidate is attempting to hedge their bets and therefore getting undue benefit rather than engaging with the question and giving the most relevant/correct responses.)*

Exemplar 2

1. 'tribus omnino comitantibus - tum repens erat solitudo' - (with only three companions - for so sudden was her solitude) shows the terrible situation Messalina is in by explaining just how alone she had become, suggesting the idea that she felt ~~stranded~~ stranded and so her loneliness was hurtful.
2. 'relicto, quo pergamena hortorum inprimis' - (by a cart, in which ~~was~~ were from the gardens was ~~carried~~ carried) suggests her terrible situation, as she is forced to use a ~~cart~~ cart, compared to when she was ~~empress~~ empress, strongly emphasising her fall from power. [4]

In Exemplar 2 the candidate has made two good points, scoring full marks for each. In this 4 mark question (without the translation provided) both style and content points are admissible. The candidate has given two good content points, which clearly answer the question.

Question 5

5 Read the passage and answer the question.

quod ubi Narcissus audivit et languescere iram redire amorem vidit, timebat, si moraretur, propinquam noctem et uxorii cubiculi memoriam; igitur prorumpit denuntiatque centurionibus et tribuno, qui aderat, exsequi caedem: ita imperatorem iubere. missus quoque unus e libertis: is raptim in hortos praegressus repperit Messalinam, humi fusam.

Translation:

When Narcissus heard this and saw that the emperor's anger was declining and his love was returning, he feared, if he were to delay, the approaching night and the memory of his wife's bed; therefore he rushed out and ordered the centurions and the tribune, who was present, to carry out the execution. He said that the emperor was ordering this. One of the freedmen was also sent: he quickly went on ahead into the gardens and found Messalina stretched out on the ground.

Tacitus, *Messalina*, lines 73–79

How does Tacitus, by his style of writing, make this a vivid and dramatic passage?

Make **two** points, each referring to the **Latin**.

1

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

[4]

The 4 mark analysis question with the translation provided proved once again to be the one of the most challenging questions on the entire paper. This question required candidates to analyse the style of the Latin, and content points were not accepted. Some candidates, and perhaps their teachers, did not seem aware that in this question only style points are permitted. There were plenty of style points available in this highly dramatic passage, but a sizeable minority of candidates referred to the content. Candidates should think carefully about the difference between style and content points. For example, a number of candidates commented on the use of the verb *timebat*. This was clearly a content point, rather than a comment on the style of the Latin. Candidates must think carefully about the distinction between style and content in this question.

Misconception



In the 4 mark questions where a translation is given, only **style points** are allowed. Candidates must not give **content points** as these will not be credited. A number of candidates also made more than two points in this question. Where more than one response has been given by the candidate in either response area, only the first answer will be marked. See the guidance in the mark scheme which clearly stipulates that candidates should get no advantage from giving more than the required number of responses.

Question 6 (a)

6 Read the passage and answer the questions.

in secessu solum balinei tempus studiis eximebatur (cum dico 'balinei', de interioribus loquor; nam dum destringitur tergiture, audiebat aliquid aut dictabat). in itinere quasi solutus ceteris curis, huic uni vacabat: ad latus notarius cum libro et pugillaribus, cuius manus hieme manicis muniebantur, ut ne caeli quidem asperitas ullum studii tempus eriperet.

5

Pliny, *A day in the life of Pliny the Elder*, lines 13–19

(a) *in secessu ... eximebatur* (line 1): how does this show Pliny the Elder's dedication to his studies?

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

This question was generally well answered.

Question 6 (b)

(b) *cum dico ... dictabat* (lines 1–2): what do you think Pliny the Younger felt about his uncle here? Give a reason for your answer.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Most candidates answered this empathetic question correctly. Candidates must be sure to answer both parts of the question. They should give their own personal response about how Pliny felt about his uncle and they should then give evidence from the text to back up their point.

Question 6 (c)

- (c) *ut ne caeli quidem ... eriperet* (lines 4–5): why did Pliny the Elder's secretary wear sleeves when he was travelling with him?

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

This was very well answered. Candidates should try to avoid overly literal translations, e.g. *caelum* in this context means 'weather' rather than the 'sky'.

Question 7

- 7 Read the passage and answer the question.

qua ex causa Romae quoque sella vehebatur. repeto me correptum ab eo, quod ambulare: 'poteras' inquit 'has horas non perdere'; nam perire omne tempus arbitrabatur, quod studiis non impenderetur. vale.

Pliny, *A day in the life of Pliny the Elder*, lines 20–23

Translate this passage into English.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

The quality of the vast majority of responses in the translation question was impressive. Omissions were the commonest error, e.g. *quoque* and *vale*. The translation of *quod* in Line 3 caused problems. Some candidates confused *has horas* and *omne tempus*.

Question 8*

8* 'Tacitus portrays Messalina and Silius as equally to blame for their downfall.'

To what extent do you agree?

You should support your answer with a range of references to the texts you have read, and you may include passages printed on the question paper. **[10]**

Candidates had a good knowledge of the Messalina set text and seemed to enjoy the subject matter. The best responses were well planned and structured with the candidates backing up their personal opinions with evidence from the texts. Candidates did not gain marks if their references to the text were vague. Candidates should aim to develop their points with careful reference from the text. Some candidates answered with little reference to the question, giving a vague narrative of the set text. Candidates must think carefully about the demands of the question before answering and bear in mind that this question demands both personal response and detailed reference to the text. Latin quotations were not necessary, and a small number of candidates answered this question as if it were the 8 mark analysis question. In general this question was well answered and candidates took the opportunity to demonstrate both the breadth and depth of their knowledge.

Exemplar 3

Tacitus portrays Messalina and Silius as both responsible for their downfall due to the daring and public display of their adultery, as well as the gradual acceptance and despair when faced with death towards the end of the text. It can be said that they are equally to blame as they both were responsible for their downfall ^{in time shape or form.}

Tacitus mentions that "Messalina was set on fire with new and almost mad love", establishing how Messalina's obsessive and uncontrollable love for Silius instigated the adultery, making ~~inevitable that~~ ~~that~~ ~~they~~ this scandalous affair inevitable which could ultimately lead to their downfall.

On the other hand, it might be argued that Silius was equally to blame as demonstrated that he was "urging concealment to be thrown off". Although seemingly daring, Tacitus here displays how Silius also played a role in making the adultery public and universally known, demonstrating that he ~~also~~ ~~has~~ some responsibility for his downfall as this public display made it more likely they would be caught.

In this exemplar the candidate has made two good contrasting points. They have given their own personal response about who is more to blame for their downfall and they have backed this up with detailed reference to the text. In each point the candidate has made sure that they have used the evidence from the text in order to answer the question.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should be aware that in the 10 mark overarching question, marks are given for both AO2 and AO3. This means that candidates need to give both their own personal response in order to answer the question, and they also need to give in-depth references from the text in order to back up their own thoughts and opinions. Planning is essential in this question and the best responses are well structured, with each point clearly referring back to the question.

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