

**scripta 13.2: Cicero's loyalty to Pompey**

*This text is an adapted extract from one of Cicero's many letters to his close friend Atticus in December, 50 BC. Although Cicero would not return to Rome from his province until January 49 BC, he was well aware of the perilous situation. He writes that he fears for the Republic and thinks that his fellow citizens will give Caesar all that he wants in order to try and avoid a civil war.*

*Cicero expresses regret that he and the other senators did not realise the threat posed by Caesar sooner and even helped him increase his power. Cicero feels that he has to honour his loyalty to Pompey and speak in support of what Pompey wants, even though his personal preference is to avoid war at all costs.*

I am really worried about the Republic: nearly everyone now prefers to hand over to Caesar everything he has asked for rather than fight it out. Indeed, his demands are outrageous, but their traction is greater than was expected. Why, then, is this the moment to stand up to him for the first time? To quote Homer, *this is no greater evil* than when we extended his five year command in Gaul. Did we hand over that military power to him then so that now we could fight with a man who is battle-ready for sure?

You'll say to me, 'What are you going to do then?' I'm not going to say to you privately the same thing that I'll say publicly in the senate: personally, I think that it is necessary to do everything we can to avoid armed combat, but publicly I'll say the same as Pompey - and I won't do this in a downtrodden manner. The fact is that - even though this war is the greatest harm facing the Republic - it isn't appropriate for me to disagree with Pompey in matters of this importance.

- 1) Cicero says that Caesar's demands are outrageous; do you think Cicero believes that the Romans will stand up to Caesar or give him what he wants? Explain your answer.
- 2) What reasons does Cicero give for choosing to support Pompey publicly? How do his private thoughts differ from his public position?
- 3) What evidence is there in this letter that Cicero thinks war should be avoided?
- 4) What impression do you get of Cicero's character from this letter?