

**scripta 16.4: Death, grief and fear**

The most famous of Rome's poets show a remarkable versatility of style and topic. Many of the poems are playful or provocative, but some focus on pain and suffering. In the poems below, Catullus mourns the death of a brother, and Horace explores the terror of the changeability of Fortune. One of the most famous Latin quotations of all time - carpe diem - savour the day - is from another of Horace's poems. A recurring theme in his poetry is the advice to make the most of what is available today in recognition that tomorrow might be very different.

Brother, I have travelled through many countries and over many seas and now I have arrived at these wretched rites for the dead so that I might give you one last offering in death and so that I might speak in vain to your silent ashes. This is all because fortune has taken you, you yourself, from me. Alas, wretched brother, taken undeservedly from me, now even so receive these things which, by the ancient custom of our ancestors, are handed over as a grim gift for the funeral rites. Receive them soaked with a brother's tears. O my brother, goodbye and farewell forever.

Catullus 101

I used to be a grudging and infrequent worshipper of the gods, while I was getting it wrong, paying heed to a mad wisdom. Now I am forced to turn my sails backwards and to renew an abandoned course.

For Jupiter, cleaving the clouds on a huge scale with his flashing lightning, has driven his thundering horses and flying chariot through the pure air, a chariot with which the brute earth and the wandering rivers, the Styx and the horrible home of hateful Taenarum, and the Atlantean territory is shaken.

He has the power to swap the lowest with the highest and - as a god - he makes the lofty insignificant, raising up the lowly. With a piercing screech, rapacious Fortune snatches up a man of the highest rank from over there and delights to have put him down over here.

Horace 1.34

1) Catullus has travelled a long way in order to perform funeral rites for his brother; he seems to have mixed feelings about the value of these rites. What are these feelings and which are the details in the poem which convey them?

2) How does Catullus convey his grief at his brother's death?

3) Horace uses a sailing metaphor to describe his changed relationship with the gods. What is this change and why has Horace altered the way he worships the gods?

4) Horace describes Jupiter in a way which emphasises his power. What are the details in his description which convey this?

5) What image is used to convey Fortune's frightening power to change someone's circumstances? What is terrifying about this image?