



Cicero Philippics II

Activities

Below are some ideas for activities to stimulate maximal engagement with the text.

Activity One

Read the instructions below, taken from *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.13-14:

“The following is the order we must keep when portraying a life:

(1) External Circumstances: Descent — in praise: the ancestors of whom he is sprung; if he is of illustrious descent, he has been their peer or superior; if of humble descent, he had had his support, not in the virtues of his ancestors, but in his own. In censure: if he is of illustrious descent, he has been a disgrace to his forebears; if of low descent, he is none the less a dishonour even to these. Education — in praise: that he was well and honourably trained in worthy studies throughout his boyhood. In censure:

14 (2) Next we must pass to the Physical Advantages: if by nature he has impressiveness and beauty, these have served him to his credit, and not, as in the case of others, to his detriment and shame; if he has exceptional strength and agility, we shall point out that these were acquired by worthy and diligent exercise; if he has continual good health, that was acquired by care and by control over his passions. In censure, if the subject has this physical advantages, we shall declare that he has abused what, like the meanest gladiator, he has had by chance and nature. If he lacks them, we shall say that to his own fault and want of self-control is his lack of every physical advantage, beauty apart, attributable.

(3) Then we shall return to External Circumstances and consider his virtues and defects of Character evinced with respect to these: Has he been rich or poor? What kinds of power has he wielded? What have been his titles to fame? What his friendships? Or what his private feuds, and what act of bravery has he performed in conducting these feuds? With what motive has he entered into feuds? With what loyalty, goodwill, and sense of duty has he conducted his friendships? What character of man has he been in wealth, or in poverty? What has been his attitude in the exercise of his prerogatives? If he is dead, what sort of death did he die, and what sort of consequences followed upon it?”

Using this as a starting point (but adding to it as inspiration suggests) compile a table of Antony’s faults as enumerated by Cicero – and against each give the evidence Cicero cites for it. Comment on that evidence – how convincing is it?



Activity Two

What are the main weapons in Cicero's armoury that he uses against Antony? The list will include sarcasm, exaggeration, abuse, ridicule, allusion/insinuation. Find examples of each. Or make a list as a class and then have individual class members take responsibility for one or more categories and find examples to populate it.

Activity Three

Take an individual episode, such as that of the Lupercalia (§ 84 – 87) and analyse it as a whole:

- What point(s) does Cicero want to make from it?
- How does his narrative and commentary bring out those points?

This analysis should examine how Cicero structures his episode to put his message across to maximum effect. Try not to focus on the devices of individual sentences, except insofar as they bring out the main point(s).

Activity Four

'An eternal monument of eloquence, of rancour and of misrepresentation.' [R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, 1939, on the Philippics].

Do you think this speech would have had the effect on his audience that Cicero desired, and why? Could he, for example, assume that they were sympathetic to him?

Activity Five

As a project, attempt to construct a character study of Antony from evidence wider than just this speech. How far is it possible to assemble a credible picture? You may want to consider Cicero's letters as well as later historians such as Plutarch and Dio Cassius (who relied heavily on Cicero).