

Lesson 1: Applying basic grammar to texts and comparing translations

Aeneid 2.234-242 : The Fall of Troy

The Trojans have decided to bring the Wooden Horse, full of hidden Greek soldiers, into the city.

dividimus muros et moenia pandimus urbis.
235 accingunt omnes operi pedibusque rotarum
subiciunt lapsus, et stuppea vincula collo
intendunt: scandit fatalis machina muros
feta armis. pueri circum innuptaeque puellae
sacra canunt funemque manu contingere gaudent
240 illa subit, mediaeque minans inlabitur urbi
o patria, o divum domus Ilium, et inclutum bello
moenia Dardanidum!

Translation A David West (Penguin) 1991

We breached the walls and laid open the buildings of our city. They all buckled to the task, setting wheels to roll beneath the horse's feet and stretching ropes of flax to its neck. The engine of Fate mounted our walls, teeming with armed men. Unmarried girls and boys sang their hymns around it and rejoiced to have a hand on the rope. On it came, gliding smoothly, looking down on the heart of the city. O my native land! O Ilium, home of the gods! O walls of the people of Dardanus, famous in war!

Translation B W. F. Jackson Knight (Penguin) 1956

We cut through our walls and threw our defences open. All set to work with zest. Rollers for smooth running were placed under the horse's feet and hempen ropes tied round its neck. That engine of doom, pregnant with armed men, mounted our walls. Boys and unwedded girls sang hymns around it, happy in the hope that the very touch of the ropes would bring them luck. The brute climbed on; then sank menacingly to rest right inside Troy. O Ilium where gods had their home, O my land and ramparts which Trojans held in glorious defence!

Translation C Trans by John Dryden, 1697

A spacious breach is made, the town lies bare.
Some hoisting levers, some the wheels prepare
And fasten to the horse's feet; the rest
With cables haul along the unwieldy beast;
Each on his fellow for assistance calls.
At length the fatal fabric mounts the walls,
Big with destruction. Boys, with chaplets crowned,
And choirs of virgins sing and dance around.
Thus raised aloft and then descending down,
It enters o'er our heads and threats the town.
O sacred city, built by hands divine!
O valiant heroes of the Trojan line!

Translation D Trans by Frank Richards, 1928

We breach our walls and break our town's defence;
All strain to lift the feet on gliding wheels
And strap our hempen fastenings round the neck.
Teeming with armed men, through the wall it mounts,
Engine of fate. Unwedded girls and boys
Chant round it, holding with glad hands the rope:
On moves its menace to the city's heart.
Ah, my own Ilium, ah, the walls of Troy,
War-famed, home of our gods!

Questions

1. Wherever you see *, try to guess the meaning of the Latin word: the Latin words so marked are related to English ones!

Nouns			
rota	*	murus	wall
machina	*	puer	boy [endings same as servus except in nom. sing.]
puella	girl	arma (plural only)	*

moenia (plural only)	city walls, city buildings	collum	neck
funis, gen. funis	rope	sacrum	*
opus, gen. operis	*	vinculum	bond, cord, rope, fetter
pes, gen. pedis	*	urbs, gen. urbis	*

Adjectives

fetus, feta, fetum	pregnant, breeding
omnis (gen. omnis)	*
innuptus, -a, um	*
fatalis (gen. fatalis)	*
stuppeus, -a, -um	made of flax

2. Verbs in Latin are classified into four groups, known as conjugations. Three of these conjugations are summarised here, and clicking on any of the links listed below will reveal the pattern of the conjugation.

First conjugation

amo (I love)					
		singular	person	plural	
I	amo	1st		amamus	we
You	amas	2nd		amatis	You (pl)
He/she/it	amat	3rd		amant	They

Second conjugation

gaudeo (I rejoice)				
	singular		person	plural
I	gaudeo	1st	gaudemus	we
You	gaudes	2nd	gaudetis	You (pl)
He/she/it	gaudet	3rd	gaudent	They

Third conjugation

occido (I kill)				
	singular		person	plural
I	occido	1st	occidimus	we
You	occidis	2nd	occiditis	You (pl)
He/she/it	occidit	3rd	occidunt	They

The following verbs all belong to the third group. Use the tables to say what each form is. Then translate each form. e.g., *gaudeo* (I rejoice): form: *gaudent* (line 239) = 3rd pers. plural; translation: "if they rejoice"

accingo I arm myself

cano I sing

divido I part, separate, divide

intendo I stretch, stretch out

pando I spread out, open out, throw open

subicio I throw under, put under (actually, this verb is a bit different, but treat it the same for the purpose of this passage!)