

Lesson 3: Working with texts: applying grammar, using a dictionary, thinking about meaning

Carolingian riddles: how Charlemagne's son, Pepin and Alcuin asked each other riddles

"In 804 Alcuin, a Yorkshireman, died in his abbey [...] at Tours, in his seventieth year. He was master of the cathedral school at York, and so famous a scholar that Charlemagne persuaded him to come to [...] France."

- Helen Waddell, *A book of medieval Latin for schools*, London, 1931 (1971)

Quid est littera?	Custos historiae.
Quid est homo?	Mancipium mortis, transiens viator, loci hospes. ¹
Quid est somnus?	Mortis imago.
Quid est luna?	Oculus noctis, roris larga, praesaga tempestatum.
Quid sunt stellae? ²	Nautarum gubernatores, noctis decor.
Quid est nebula?	Nox in die.
Quid est mare?	Audaciae via, limes terrae, divisor regionum, hospitium fluviorum, fons imbrium, refugium in periculis, gratia in voluptatibus.
Quid est aqua?	Subsidium vitae, ablutio sordium.
Quid est nix?	Aqua sicca.
Quid est hiems?	Aestatis exul.
Quid est ver?	Pictor terrae.
Quid est autumnus?	Horreum anni.
Quid est annus?	Quadriga mundi.
Quis ducit	Nox et dies, frigus et calor.

eam?³

Quis est auriga
eius?³ Sol et luna.

Quid est navis? Navis est domus erratica, vicina arenae.

Quid est arena? Murus terrae.

Quid est herba? Vestis terrae.

Quid sunt
holera?² Amici medicorum, laus coquorum.

Quid est quod
amara dulcia
facit? Fames.

Quid est
amicitia? Aequalitas animorum.

Quid est miles? Murus imperii, timor hostium, gloriosum
servitium.

¹ *transiens* is a participle, used as an adjective with *viator*

² This is medieval Latin and *quid* is used even for plurals.

³ *eam* and *eius* both refer to *quadriga* and are accusative (for the object) and genitive respectively, from *is*.

Questions

1.

1. What case are the nouns in the questions? (Ignore Question 20.)
2. What two cases are most of the nouns in the answers?

2. Using a dictionary, find:

1. the genitive singular of the nouns that are italicised and underlined;
and
 2. the nominative singular of the asterisked nouns.
3. In Question 20, what cases might *amara* and *dulcia* (adjectives) be? What are they likely to be here? Can you find them in the dictionary? The form of the question should help.

quod here = "that which".

4. Can you find the meaning of the questions and answers? Think about the ideas which each 'answer' expresses!

Which questions are in a different form from the others? Find the verbs in the dictionary.