

Grammar: Uses of *quam*

Overview

quam is a small word that can cause problems in translation as it has a range of uses. The main ones are listed below.

quam as a relative pronoun

quam in the indefinite pronoun

quam as an exclamation

quam in the phrase *quam ob rem*

quam as a correlative

quam in temporal phrases

quam in the comparison of adjectives and adverbs

Quam as a relative pronoun

quam is the feminine accusative singular of the relative pronoun *qui, quae, quod*.

In this context, it means 'which' or 'whom'.

I see the house which I love.

which in Latin would be:

video villa, quam amo.

or

I see the girl whom I love.

which in Latin would be:

video puella, quam amo

If *quam* is being used like this, there will be an antecedent noun or pronoun also in the feminine singular to which you can relate it.

Quam in the indefinite pronoun

quam can be added on to the end of *quis*, *quid* to make the indefinite pronoun *quisquam*, *quidquam* = 'anyone, someone', as summarised in the table of pronoun uses.

Quam as an exclamation

quam can be used as an exclamation meaning 'how ...!' with a noun or adjective.

e.g. How lucky!

which in Latin would be:

quam felix.

Quam in the phrase quam ob rem

The phrase *quam ob rem* literally means 'on account of which thing', and is translated 'wherefore' or 'on this account'. It is sometimes written as one word: *quamobrem*.

Quam as a correlative

quam can appear with *tam* to mean 'so/as ... as ...'.

For further information, see the page on correlatives.

Quam in temporal phrases

quam can be used with the prefixes 'post, ante, prius' to make temporal phrases.

postquam	after(wards)
antequam	before
priusquam	before

These can be split into two words and need not always be placed

next to each other.

Quam in the comparison of adjectives and adverbs

quam can be used to relate two or more items in a comparison. All the terms compared are then put in the same case.

e.g. Poets are more learned than orators.

which in Latin would be:

poetae doctiores quam oratores sunt.

For further information, see the separate page on the comparison of adjectives and adverbs.

Examples drawn from the exercises

In which way is *quam* being used in each of the following?

The number after each question indicates the exercise from which it has been drawn, so that you can look at the example in context.

1. turren denis pedibus quam murus altiores sunt.

Exercise 10

2. unam Septimios misellus Acmen mauult quam Syrias
Britanniasque

Exercise 8

Further examples drawn from Cicero

1. quam ob rem alteram parten causae sic agemus ut vos
doceamus, alteram sic ut oremus; *Pro Cluentio* I.4

2. quam ob rem a vobis, iudices, ante quam de ipsa causa dicere
incipio, haec postulo; *Pro Cluentio* II.5

3. efficiam profecto ut intellegatis nihil esse homini tam timendum
quam invidiam, nihil innocenti suscepta invidia tam optandum
quam aequum iudicium ... *Pro Cluentio* III.7

4. accusavit Oppianicum: quam constanter et quam diligenter,
postea dicam. *Pro Cluentio* VII.20
5. atque hunc tantum maerorem matri prius hominum rumor quam
quisquam ex Oppianici familia nuntiavit. *Pro Cluentio* IX.28
6. nec diutius vixit quam locuta est. *Pro Cluentio* X.30
7. Quid? illa caedes Asuvi Larinatis, adolescentis, quam clara tum
recenti re fuit, quam omnium sermone celebrata!
Pro Cluentio XIII.36
8. quam gravis atque intolerabilis arrogantia!
Pro Cluentio XXXIX.109
9. Quare velim, ut scribis, ceteris quoque rebus quam plurimis eum
locum ornes. *Ad Atticum* 1.IV
10. Quid agas omnibus de rebus, et quid acturus sis, fac nos quam
diligentissime certiores. *Pro Cluentio* 1.VI