



CONCOURS CICERO
CICERO COMPETITION
CONCURSO CICERO
CONCORSO CICERO
2011

This passage is taken from the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, written in 420AD - more than 400 years after the death of the Roman politician Cicero. This passage relates some witty and sarcastic remarks which Cicero is supposed to have made.

Cicero was proud to have been a consul in the Roman republic and you may think that some of his 'jokes' about other ex-consuls are not very kind ! He was always opposed to Julius Caesar because Caesar had so much power over the state, but he was not one of the senators who murdered Caesar on the Ides of March. After Caesar's death Cicero made a series of speeches against his successor, Mark Antony, who then had Cicero executed.

Notice the words used to denote slightly different types of wit : **urbanitas** = sophisticated wit or humour; **mordacitas** = a more sarcastic type of wit.

IMPORTANT : Use your common-sense to work out the very best meaning for words rather than relying on the dictionary. If you can't find the exact word in your dictionary look at the root meanings of words and improvise ! Watch out for metaphors, where you should not necessarily use the literal meaning.

Vocabulary and other help, in alphabetical order :

anno Vatinii / consulatu Vatinii : the Romans 'numbered' the years using the names of the consuls, who normally held power for one year.

dentes suos strinxit : *a metaphor* 'closed its teeth'

exerceo exercere exercui exercitus = cause problems

Falernum = a type of wine : very good quality and very expensive

Idus Martis = the Ides of March, the date on which Caesar was assassinated

paucis diebus = 'for a few days'

reliquiae = the leftovers after a meal - *but here used metaphorically*

People and Places referred to in the passage, in alphabetical order :

Caesar : murdered by a group of senators who believed he was destroying the republic when he became Dictator

Caninius Rebilus : a consul

Cassius : one of the senators who killed Caesar

Cicero *see above*

Damasippus : a friend of Cicero

Lentulus : Cicero's son-in-law

Leodicinus : a person from Leodice, a place which wanted its freedom from Caesar's military rule

Vatinius : a consul

CERTAMEN IN CONCORDIAM EUROPAE REGIONUMQUE ORBIS



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2011 Some examples of Cicero's sense of humour.

U6 translate the whole passage and answer the final question. L6 omit the last section.

M. Cicero, cum apud Damasippum cenaret et ille, mediocri vino posito, diceret

“bibite Falernum hoc, annorum quadraginta est.”

“bene,” inquit, “aetatem fert!”

idem, cum Lentulum generum suum, exiguae proceritatis hominem, longo gladio adcinctum vidisset,

“quis,” inquit, “generum meum ad gladium alligavit?”

in consulatu Vatini, quem paucis diebus gessit, notabilis Ciceronis urbanitas saepe circumferebatur :

“magnum ostentum,” inquit, “anno Vatini factum est, quod, illo consule, nec bruma nec ver nec aestas nec autumnus fuit“.

querenti deinde Vatinio, quod male ferret Ciceronem non ad se aegrum domum venire, respondit:

“volui in consulatu tuo venire, sed nox me comprehendit.”

Caninius quoque Rebilus, qui uno die consul fuit, rostra cum ascendisset, pariter honorem iniit consulatus et exiit : Cicero omni gaudens occasione urbanitatis increpuit:

“vigilantem habemus consulem Caninium, qui in consulatu suo somnum non vidit.”

in Caesarem quoque mordacitas Ciceronis dentes suos strinxit.

cuidam legato Laodiceno, qui Romam venerat ut Caesarem de libertate patriae rogaret, Cicero, publicam servitutem deplorans,

“si bonum eventum habes,” inquit, “pro nobis quoque ora!”

..... ***Year 13 only : translate the final section AND answer the question below***

in epistula ad C. Cassium dictatoris violatorem Cicero ita scripsit:

“vellem Idibus Martiis me ad cenam invitavisses, profecto reliquiarum nihil fuisset: nunc me reliquiae vestrae exercent.”

Year 13 students answer this question:

Explain in your own words what Cicero really means in his final sentence.