

LAT 311

Paper #2 – Literary Commentary

The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to practice writing a **philological** commentary on Caesar's Latin. This commentary will be an **expansion** of the kind of commentary you wrote earlier in the semester. Instead of *just* identifying words syntactically, you will also comment on what is significant or meaningful about those words. In brief, you will **choose TEN items from chapters 59-60** of our text and: **1) FULLY IDENTIFY** any individual words you choose and then **2) COMMENT on what is SIGNIFICANT or MEANINGFUL about these words**. The commentary is due at the beginning of class on **Monday, November 24th**.

A few things to keep in mind:

- Unlike the previous commentary assignment, there are no limits as to what kinds of features you can choose. Variety is still nice, but not necessary, so choose things that stand out to you.
- You need to provide a **complete morphological identification** and a **complete syntactical identification** for any individual words you choose. Anywhere that you choose to talk about a whole sentence, a full identification is unnecessary, but if you focus on a clause, please, at least identify what type of clause it is. Similar to last time, provide Bennett number for features you identify.
- The BIGGEST KEY to this assignment is to think about **WHAT the effect of the Latin text is**. That will help you figure out what to say as your "comment" on the passage.
- My recommendation for the "comment" portion of your responses is to try to write a **minimum of two sentences** for each item. Usually just one sentence will be insufficient to show me what you think is significant about that word/feature.
- NOTE that "it's cool" and "it's interesting" on their own are not appropriate comments. You need to tell me **WHY** these things are cool or interesting. (Note, however, that you should state the reason as a fact, **not** literally say "it's cool because...")

Your commentary needs to be typed, but it can simply take the form of a list in which you write out the Latin words, provide the identification, Bennett number, and write out your comments on what is significant about these words.

Here is an example from the chapter we have recently covered (ch. 44):

Omnem apparatus... tormenta ibi collocaverat (ch. 44, lines 2-3): *omnem apparatus, tela, arma, tormenta* – all of these are accusative, direct objects (**B172 and 175**) of the verb *collocaverat*, which is 3rd person singular, pluperfect active indicative in a *quod* causal clause (**B286.1**). Caesar first notes that Pompey had gathered "*omnem apparatus*", the all-inclusive term, before continuing with a list of three specific things gathered: *tela, arma, tormenta*, moving between the specific (*tela, tormenta*) and the general (*arma*). Caesar here employs both pleonasm (note the redundancy of *tela, arma*) and asyndeton (note the lack of coordinating conjunctions) to highlight his abundant use of near synonyms here. The effect of these lines is to stress the careful level of preparation employed by Pompey in advance of this battle. This sets up Dyrrachium as the potentially decisive battle and, since Caesar's attempted siege ultimately fails, the presence of this hyper-abundance of Pompey's apparatus of war in the narrator's language will mitigate Caesar's failure to some extent.

Check out this extremely helpful guide compiled by Tim Moore, a former UT prof:

<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~timmoore/stylechecklist.html>

But here are a few more things that you could look for to help get you started:

1. Consider **what is usual or unusual** about this sentence compared to “typical” Caesarian sentences. Are they long or short? Does it have a lot of subordinate clauses or strings of coordinate main clauses?
2. **Word Order** – Consider both the whole structure of the sentence and placement of clauses and the placement of words that modify one another.
3. **Grammatical Features** – Are there unusual case uses / structures that you would not normally expect?
4. **Word Choice** – Does Caesar use his standard vocabulary for things or does he use unusual words to describe things? Are words repeated? Are words left out? Are there extra, unnecessary words?
5. **Relation to Caesar’s Historiographic Purpose** – How does this sentence advance or undermine Caesar’s historiographic concerns? Does he give reasons for why he or others take certain actions? Think especially about how he portrays his men and his enemies. Note the presence of reported speech, a common way that Caesar can build the characterization of people into his narrative.
6. **Metaphors / Imagery** – *How* does Caesar describe things or people? Is he concerned with how they look, sound, feel, etc.? Does he compare them to other things? It is often helpful to read the section out loud to hear what it would sound like.