

## Three Categories of Humor in Latin Pedagogy

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### ABSTRACT

Making the Classics relevant in a contemporary classroom setting has been a perennial problem in Latin language instruction for the past few decades. Humor, by contrast, has found increasingly widespread acceptance and direct application in the classroom. This study selects several examples of Latin epigram and satire by canonical authors of suitable difficulty from approximately the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. These passages are classified by the mechanism of their comedic import. The three main sources of humor are identified as arising from incongruity, superiority, and release. Pedagogical methods are devised to reflect this categorization, enabling students to grasp background knowledge of Roman history and culture by analyzing the corresponding operation of humor. Students will also be encouraged to discern the moral implication of the passages and to relate the lessons to their own experience. In this way, texts will be used to fulfill the Horatian definition of poetry: both delighting students and instructing them.

### KEYWORDS

Latin, humor, pedagogy, Martial, Catullus, Horace

As educators have recognized the advantages learning Latin can bring, many more schools have been implementing Latin into their curriculum. Matthew Potts, formerly Admissions Counselor of the University of Notre Dame, has even gone so far as to say, “If Latin were dead, every Western culture and language would be also bereft of life.” With this rising interest in Latin has come an increased effort to make Latin and Roman culture more applicable to this day and age. Mythology especially has been espoused as the ideal tool to teach even young students about how the Romans explained events in their lives, and about how various myths have seeped into our own art and literature (Conte 1). While such efforts are successful to a limited extent, this does not preclude developing them further. One method is to promote the use of humor. In order to make Latin seem more approachable, humor can be used to stimulate interest where it might be otherwise lacking and to motivate students to attain the many benefits of Latin study. Humor can also be employed to aid students to form cognitive connections through challenging word play or histori-

cal references. In particular, by dividing comic Latin texts according to the nature of their humor—incongruity, superiority, release—and exploring the passages in the context of this classification, teachers can use the categories of humor present in the selections to guide their students to explore different facets of the Latin language and Roman culture.

### **BENEFITS OF HUMOR**

As a pedagogical tool, humor has found increasingly widespread acceptance and application in the classroom. Humor has measurable medical benefits for students: laughing triggers the brain to start producing catecholamine, a drug that increases alertness. Laughter also reduces stress because the brain discharges endorphins, the body's natural painkillers (Shade 97). On a more psychological level, humor has been thought to provide the mind with momentary respite “from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naïveté and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality” (Michelson 29). By laughing, we free ourselves from social tensions and whatever constraints we feel in everyday life. Laughter therefore is a healthy and fun way to improve students' motivation.

Furthermore, humor provides cognitive benefits by training students' minds to make associations quickly between many subjects in a conceptually valuable way. Laughter is generated when the joke taxes the student's brain; humor that is too easy or too hard to understand will not result in the same degree of mirth. Humor comprehension requires the ability to condense material and to become aware of and identify the incongruities in logic that render the joke funny. Understanding the joke also requires social, political, or historical background knowledge of the subject; humorous texts can therefore bring delight and be used as a portal into new subjects. Furthermore, according to Shade, the use of humor triggers “the meaningfulness of the material and enhance[s] the learning and retention of such material by increasing associations between material to be learned and material students already knew” (Shade 47). The use of humor not only allows students to become inventive thinkers and analysts, but also to learn and have fun at the same time.

Humor is especially applicable in the classroom, because laughter can help students learn about social boundaries. As Saracho states, “humor seems to be an important tool for young children to feel and construct togetherness, as well as to feel agency of the self and to test limits and boundaries in social relationships”

(Saracho 289). Students feel a sense of unity by laughing together at one common joke. By trying to make each other laugh, students also learn what is allowed to be ridiculed and which topics do not generate the laughter they expect (Raskin 19). A culture of mutual respect is developed through the use of humor and the development of a classroom atmosphere that allows for this opening up (Lytle 199). Motivation and unity are thus enhanced through humor.

### THREE TYPES OF HUMOR

This potential application of humor becomes especially clear when we consider the following categorization. In his book *On Humor*, Simon Critchley offers three theories of different types of humor to explain why we laugh under different circumstances (Critchley 2). The first is incongruity theory, according to which we laugh when there is a break between what we would normally expect and what we read. This was recognized in classical antiquity as *para prosdokian*. In his *Problematika*, Aristotle even wrote, “Laughter is a sort of surprise and deception” (*Probl. 965a*). For example, “There are two fish in a tank. One turns to the other and says, ‘Do you know how to drive this?’” Initially, we think that two fish are in a fish bowl. However, the joke subverts our expectations through the double meaning of the word “tank,” and we laugh at the surprise.

The second and most commonly used is superiority theory, according to which we laugh at others’ faults because doing so asserts our superiority. To illustrate, consider this classic “superiority joke” that takes the form of Q & A:

*Q: What do you call a lawyer who has gone bad?*

*A: A senator.*

We laugh because we can assert our moral superiority over politicians, whom many of us find difficult to relate to.

The third category of humor is release theory, which was suggested by Sigmund Freud. Freud believed that jokes and humor represented a way in which people could release their pent-up thoughts about death, sex, marriage, authority figures, or bodily functions in a socially acceptable way. In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), Freud describes three different sources of laughter: joking, the comic, and humor. “In joking, energy used to repress hostile feelings can be released in laughter. In the comic, cognitive energy used to solve an intellectual challenge is released. In humor, emotional energy is released by treating a situation

in a non-serious manner” (Smuts). The following is an example of a joke that fits this theory: A woman told her friend, “For eighteen years my husband and I were the happiest people in the world! Then we met.” The woman is able to express her supposed frustration at married life by making this joke, which dilutes the possible severity of her statement through laughter. Theoretically, it is possible to divide all forms of humor into these three categories.

The three distinguished theories of humor can potentially apply to a single complex joke. For example, the following joke has been voted “The Winning Joke” on LaughLab, a year long project to discover the world’s funniest joke: “Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He doesn’t seem to be breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy whips out his phone and calls the emergency services. He gasps, ‘My friend is dead! What can I do?’ The operator says ‘Calm down. I can help. First, let’s make sure he’s dead.’ There is a silence, then a shot is heard. Back on the phone, the guy says ‘OK, now what?’” Professor Wiseman explains how the joke makes us laugh: “we feel superior to the stupid hunter, realize the incongruity of him misunderstanding the operator, and the joke helps us to laugh about our concerns about our own mortality” (Wiseman). We laugh because the combination of various psychological factors triggers a physical response.

Through the process of studying these three types of humor in Latin texts, therefore, students can recognize a deeper understanding of the semantic range of words and learn otherwise less engaging features of Roman culture. Each type of humor offers its own particular pedagogical advantages.

- If a student would like to focus on the lexical range of a word and to understand how Romans manipulated language, for example, the incongruity approach may be emphasized. Incongruity humor, the surprise coming from a violation of expectations, can tell students what the Romans’ initial expectations would have been and what the Romans considered funny or witty.
- If students would like to explore the Romans’ social attitudes, then the instructor may guide them to passages with the superiority approach. Superiority humor used by Roman poets will teach students about whom the Romans considered to be outsiders and the different stereotypes extant in imperial Rome.

- Finally, if the instructor would like to have his or her students investigate the social pressures surrounding the Romans, then the focus should lie in passages containing release humor. Release humor, the laughter that frees us from constraints of conventionality, is most apparent in satire, which in turn reveals Romans' opinions about their political climate and their social mores. The same passage may contain all three types of humor, but focusing on a particular category will guide students to a more specific path of knowledge. Humor thus provides entertainment and education.

The editors of *Wheelock's Latin* and more modern textbooks such as *Learn to Read Latin* understand the need for more humorous texts in the Latin classroom, as shown by the abundance of excerpts from Martial's *Epigrammata* instead of contrived Latin sentences or passages from Livy. The next step for instructors is to think about how to organize such texts and to teach them properly. The following part of the paper contains several examples of humorous Latin epigram and satire by canonical authors from approximately the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Not all of these texts are present in *Wheelock's Latin*, but they are meant to be of suitable difficulty for beginning Latin students with basic knowledge of grammar and for intermediate students who wish to further explore Roman culture and Latin syntax. These passages are classified by the mechanism of their comedic import: incongruity, superiority, and release. Studying these texts with a more critical eye will enable students to grasp the operation of humor as well as corresponding background knowledge of Roman history and culture. Through group critical reading, instructor elucidation, and small group discussions fostering self-examination, students will be further encouraged to discern the moral implications of the passages and to relate the lessons to their own experience. The short analysis following each text is merely a guide as to how the instructor may help students interpret the passages; for those further interested, the annotated bibliography will lead to scholarly studies that explore the texts in depth.

## A SELECTION OF HUMOROUS PASSAGES

### *Incongruity Humor*

If the teacher wants students to focus on the lexical range of a word, then the incongruity approach would be suitable. Incongruity humor is semantically illumi-

nating in a way that will be useful for students of the language. The double meaning of a word can create laughter by subverting our initial expectations that were fostered by the original use of the word. Martial was especially conscious of his use of incongruity in his epigrams, of the “unexpected contrast between perfection or completeness, previously conceived by the mind with or without the aid of external presentation, and imperfection or incompleteness of too trifling a character to cause serious emotion” (Craig 9). Studying the operation of this type of humor will force a student to seriously think about how language can be manipulated. Through these examples of word play explained below, students will learn to keep an open mind when approaching literary texts.

***Martial Epigrammata 2.38***

*Quid mihi reddat ager quaeris, Line, Nomentanus?*

*Hoc mihi reddit ager: te, Line, non video.*

*You ask what the land Nomentanus yields to me, Linus?*

*The land gives this to me: I do not see you, Linus.*

Teachers of this passage would want to emphasize Martial’s usage of the word *reddat*. In the first line, Linus uses the word *reddat* in its agricultural and economic sense: “yield.” Consequently, we expect Martial to reply with some discussion on money or agricultural harvest. However, Martial reduces the word into its most basic definition: *red-* “back” and *-do* “give.” This word play creates the gap between the expected discussion on economics set up by Linus’s question and the resulting insult by Martial. When we investigate the Latin further, we also discover that the name Linus “serves as a more generic butt for insults, with a noticeable tendency toward the sexual and the financial” (Williams 143).

Teaching the humor in this passage to students would require a combination of self-investigation and instructor elucidation in the classroom. First, with no context given, the students should be allowed time to translate the epigram on their own with some grammar or vocabulary help from the teacher. Even with reading *reddat* as “give back” both times, students would find the epigram funny because the split in tone between the first part of the epigram and the last four words is already clear. Students will then be encouraged to go to the dictionary and find out all the possible definitions of *reddat* apart from the most basic meaning of “give back.” They will discover the extent of its semantic range and figure out one of its secondary mean-

ings: “yield, make a return, produce” (OLD, *reddo* 15). Finally, they will understand the pun and recognize why Romans would have found this epigram so amusing. Through this process, students will thus learn to appreciate the multiplicity of meanings present in one word and begin to understand the correct interpretation of both Latin and English. Furthermore, students will retain the imparted lesson better in the context of this funny passage, thus bringing laughter to learning. As an exercise, the students might be instructed to make their own pun with a word they find from a dictionary.

***Martial Epigrammata 3.9***

*Versiculos in me narratur scribere Cinna.*

*Non scribit, cuius carmina nemo legit.*

*Cinna is said to write little verses against me.*

*He doesn't write, whose poems no one reads.*

After the first line, the reader expects Martial to contest the claim and say that Cinna doesn't write poems about Martial. Indeed, Martial starts the second line with *non scribit*, which causes us to expect denial. Martial, however, redefines the word *scribit* in its philosophical context: if you write something but no one reads your work, are you actually writing? While no meaning is lost in translation, Martial thus gives two distinct definitions of the same word and creates laughter by subverting our expectations.<sup>1</sup>

This text, as well as each of the following passages, can be taught as one would teach Martial *Epigrammata* 2.38. In the case of this epigram, however, a dictionary would not be able to capture a range of connotations present in *scribit*. The definition of *scribit* as “writing, the act that depends upon someone reading the written work” is not a meaning represented in a dictionary. While *reddo* demonstrates the openness of language as represented by the dictionary, *scribit* teaches that language evolves beyond the dictionary. Students will realize that there is no need to always reach for the dictionary to find a humorous pun. Understanding the context will force them to think beyond the confines of grammar and syntax.

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<sup>1</sup> The humor is further heightened by the irony of the situation. Martial is criticizing Cinna, just as Cinna is said to do. In this case, however, Martial proves himself right because we are reading this epigram two thousand years later while none of this Cinna's writing remains.

### ***Superiority Humor***

Superiority humor is especially useful in the classroom because it gives access to Roman language and culture in an amusing way. From the Latin passages, students can learn about elements of Roman social history—whom the Romans considered strangers or inferiors and who deserved to get insulted when they overstepped certain social boundaries. In many cases, incongruity humor is used as a means to further the insult introduced through superiority humor. The word play sets the stage for the final blow in the latter part of the texts. Students can thus learn about Roman social attitudes and explore the lexical range of a Latin word at the same time.

#### ***Martial 5.47***

*Numquam se cenasse domi Philo iurat, et hoc est:*

*Non cenat, quotiens nemo vocavit eum.*

*Philo swears that he has never dined at home, and this is true:*

*He does not dine, as often as no one has invited him.*

The incongruity humor in this epigram lies in Philo's self-conceived image, as opposed to the truth as given by Martial. The reader is led to think that Philo is so popular that he always has friends willing to treat him to dinner. However, we learn in the second line that Philo is so stingy that he will not even eat dinner if he has to pay with his own money. Howell offers a slightly different explanation that concisely summarizes the epigram's effect: "This epigram deals with the traditional butt of humorous attack, the parasite ... if no one else feeds him, he cannot afford to feed himself, and goes hungry. The first line gives Philo's hyperbolic boast, and then arouses our interest by confirming its truth, so that the second line can deliver the explanatory blow" (131). The superiority humor gives the incongruity a comic edge that it otherwise wouldn't have if Philo didn't seem to be such a boastful stooge or a pitiful parasite.

In order for the students to understand this epigram properly, some elucidation from the instructor is needed. The incongruity humor is not hard to comprehend, and students can easily recognize that Philo is being maligned. However, the insult against Philo reveals far more than his supposed stinginess. In Roman society, the culture of the *cena* required reciprocation from all parties. When one noble invited another to dinner and entertainment, it was expected that the guest respond by

becoming the host at a *cena* at his own home. Declaring that he never dines at home shows that Philo is abusing the system of mutual respect and gift exchange. Philo does not understand this language of social equality and must be reprimanded. By the time the teacher explains the background information above and demonstrates how the superiority humor is enhanced recognizing the importance of the *cena*, students will have explored a large part of Roman dining culture and forms of etiquette.

**Catullus 39**

*EGNATIVS, quod candidos habet dentes, 1  
renidet usque quaque. si ad rei uentum est  
subsellium, cum orator excitat fletum,  
renidet ille; si ad pii rogum fili  
lugetur, orba cum flet unicum mater, 5  
renidet ille. quidquid est, ubicumque est,  
quodcumque agit, renidet: hunc habet morbum,  
neque elegantem, ut arbitror, neque urbanum.  
quare monendum est te mihi, bone Egnati.  
si urbanus esses aut Sabinus aut Tiburs 10  
aut pinguis Vmber aut obesus Etruscus  
aut Lanuvinus ater atque dentatus  
aut Transpadanus, ut meos quoque attingam,  
aut quilubet, qui puriter lauit dentes,  
tamen renidere usque quaque te nollem: 15  
nam risu inepto res ineptior nulla est.  
nunc Celtiber es: Celtiberia in terra,  
quod quisque minxit, hoc sibi solet mane  
dentem atque russam defricare gingiuam,  
ut quo iste uester expolitior dens est, 20  
hoc te amplius bibisse praedicet loti.*

*EGNATIUS, because he has snow-white teeth,  
smiles all the time. If you're a defendant  
in court, when the counsel draws tears,  
he smiles: if you're in grief at the pyre  
of pious sons, the lone lorn mother weeping,  
he smiles. Whatever it is, wherever it is,*

*whatever he's doing, he smiles: he's got a disease,  
 neither polite, I would say, nor charming.  
 So a reminder to you, from me, good Egnatius.  
 If you were a Sabine or Tiburtine  
 or a fat Umbrian, or plump Etruscan,  
 or dark toothy Lanuvian, or from beyond the Po,  
 and I'll mention my own Veronese too,  
 or whoever else clean their teeth religiously,  
 I'd still not want you to smile all the time:  
 there's nothing more foolish than a foolish smile.  
 Now you're Spanish: in the country of Spain  
 what each man pisses, he's used to brushing  
 his teeth and red gums with, every morning,  
 so the fact that your teeth are so polished  
 just shows you're the more full of piss.  
 (A. S. Kline, trans.)*

Teachers will use this epigram to show which neighbors the Romans considered to be inferior. Catullus cites *aut Sabinus aut Tiburs/ aut pinguis Vmber aut obesus Etruscus/ aut Lanuvinus ater atque dentatus/ aut Transpadanus* “a Sabine or Tiburtine or a fat Umbrian, or plump Etruscan or dark and toothy Lanuvian, or from beyond the Po” as the non-*urbani* considered socially acceptable in Roman society. The farther away from *urbanus*—both literally the “city-dweller” and figuratively “sophisticated”—the list moves, the more foreign the *Celtiber* “Spaniard” is, both geographically and socially (Nappa 79). Thus, students will discover how much Roman history and culture they can learn from one funny, insulting poem.

Students will observe that the insult against Egnatius goes beyond ethnic discrimination against the Spanish. Catullus finds Egnatius to be uncouth because he does not use his mouth as a proper Roman would. The word *renidet* specifically denotes a false smile (Ellis 139). By displaying his teeth at such inappropriate moments, Egnatius is letting his vanity take the place of his rhetoric—there is incongruity in the way his mouth is used. Whilst he should be defending a client in court or offering a eulogy at a funeral, he is smiling and flaunting his immaculate teeth. Catullus adds insult to the injury by accusing Egnatius and his fellow Spanish countrymen of brushing their teeth with urine, a practice that has never been well

regarded. From the superiority humor of this poem, students will recognize how much Romans valued rhetoric and using his mouth properly.

This poem can be used as a tool to branch off into different topics of classroom discussion. The teacher could hold a geography lesson, using the names listed in this poem as a starting point to show students the extent of the Roman Empire. The teacher could engage in a discussion about rhetoric, which formed a vital part of a Greek or Roman male noble's life. Apart from pointing out parts of the poem that generate superiority humor, the teacher can thus use the poem as an introduction to a variety of different subjects as he or she sees fit.

### ***Release Humor***

The theory of release humor states that laughter sometimes arises because it allows us to free ourselves from social expectations and helps maintain homeostasis in our bodies and in society. Dirty jokes are one popular form of release humor. Society looks down upon vulgarity and discussing sex in public settings; by making a dirty joke, we laugh because we are glad to be temporarily relieved from the burden of speaking properly all the time. Besides obscene jokes, parody and burlesque and other non-sexual humor can also mock social norms. By studying this form of humor, students will be able to recognize the social tensions and concerns of the Romans.

#### ***Martial Epigrammata 2.38***

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*Hoc mihi reddit ager: te, Line, non video.*

*You ask what the land Nomentanus yields to me, Linus?*

*The land gives this to me: I do not see you, Linus.*

There are two ways the humor in this epigram can be shown to depend on relief. First, there is a release of energy when going from the complex to the simple. Linus uses the word *reddat* in its economic and agricultural senses: "yield." Martial reduces the word into its most basic definition: *re* "back" and *do* "give." The Romans and reader alike are relieved because there is no need to think so hard about words anymore. Our minds are relieved from having to search for complicated connotations all the time.

Second, it can be illustrated that Romans would have found relief from the social pressure to make the procurement of money one of their priorities in daily life. They would have laughed not only at Linus, the man who can only see the economic benefits of a country estate, but also from the relief of defying the social convention of always striving to make money. For the elite who could afford it, the countryside sometimes served to provide respite from society. Linus is further ridiculed because he intrudes into Martial's sanctuary; he does not know decorum. Students will thus benefit from learning the varying social expectations present in Roman society.

In order for them to understand release humor, the teacher must explain the cultural context behind the *ager*. Elementary schoolers will not have as firm a grasp on the concept of economics as middle or high schoolers, so this particular epigram might be suitable for students of higher grades to understand. *Epigrammata* 3.9, on the other hand, deals with the concept of writing, which any student would be able to understand more easily. Any humorous text should be analyzed thus so that students of all levels of Latin proficiency can tackle passages suitable to their level and find it funny and educational.

***Horace, Sermo 2.5.1-3***

*[Ulixes:] 'Hoc quoque, Tiresia, praeter narrata petenti  
responde, quibus amissas reparare queam res  
artibus atque modis. Quid rides?'*

*[Ulysses:] Answer this, too, Tiresias, add to what you've told me:  
By what methods and arts can I hope to recover  
My lost fortune? ... Why do you laugh?  
(A. S. Kline, trans.)*

Students at a more advanced stage of study will learn to apply their background knowledge of the Greek and Roman epic tradition to find the humor in this passage. Horace's satire, written as a dialogue between Ulysses and Tiresias in *Odyssey* 11, burlesques Homer's underworld meeting between the two and exposes the Roman practice of legacy-hunting. As Juster writes, "This satire is perhaps the first great spoof of Roman literature, although there was a long tradition of parodying Homer in Greek literature" (140). Odysseus' literary image is quite complicated, but he is never portrayed as a money-grabbing thug as in this piece of satire. Knowing that Romans laughed at a humanized Odysseus displaying unheroic qualities such as greed, students will realize that even the Romans occasionally thought epic and

tragedy, as well as the values these genres advocate, to be overbearing. It's a relief when we learn that Odysseus does not have to don his heroic mantle every day. This case confirms that there are opportunities for learning through humor at multiple education levels. Even when students mature and advance to the more difficult texts, there will be yet more for them to learn. Satire may be the ideal educational tool for students of advanced levels because Roman satiric social criticism had moral content intended to engage readers into discussions (Keane 107).

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**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FURTHER REFERENCE*****On Humor***

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This book is a great source on verbal humor in general. It explores how humor only works under the right sociocultural context and discusses how jokes and other forms of verbal humor reveal aspects of English culture. The author even provides visual aids that illustrate the various components of a successful joke. Chapter 10 specifically deals with humor and education.

Attardo, Salvatore. *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 2001.

This book expounds upon the Semantic-Script Theory of Humor and the General Theory of Verbal Humor, which were developed by Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin. Most of the book is devoted to demonstrating how to apply these theories to texts.

Davies, Christie. *Jokes and their Relation to Society*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998.

This book is a comparative and historical study of jokes and other forms of humor. The main argument is that people make jokes when they feel threatened by the fear of failure and the fear that they will lose their humanity in the pursuit of perfection. The author explores ethnic jokes from all over the world and tries to discern what the nature of these jokes can reveal about the specific culture and race.

Latta, Robert L. *The Basic Humor Process*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 1999.

This book presents and defends a new theory of humor that the author calls “theory L.” The first two chapters give a general overview on humor, and the rest of the book is devoted to “theory L.” The author further argues that the incongruity theory of humor and “theory L” cannot coexist. To corroborate his thesis, the author provides an in-depth analysis on incongruity humor that instructors may find insightful.

Zupancic, Alenka. *The Odd One In*. London: The MIT Press, 2008.

This book offers a psychoanalytic approach to comedy by “philosophizing comedy.” It explores how comedy has become distant from people’s actual emotions and has made emotions distant as well. Jokes and humor “naturalize” and bring “immediacy” to man, nature, political differences, and other aspects of life; these in turn become unnatural.

### ***On Latin Literature***

Duckworth, George E. *The Nature of Roman Comedy*. 1952. London: Bristol Classical Press, 1994.

Most of this book deals with Roman comedy in its dramatic nature. It gives a comprehensive look from the characters to the meter of the lines to the stage. Chapter 11 may be of particular interest to those studying ancient and modern theories on humor.

Harrison, Steven, ed. *A Companion to Latin Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

This book offers a full explanation on every genre of Latin literature, useful for a general overview of epigram or satire.

Miller, Paul Allen, ed. *Latin Verse Satire: An Anthology and Critical Reader*. London: Routledge, 2005.

This book contains many texts and commentaries on Latin verse satire as well as a general explanation of the genre.

Plaza, Maria. *The Function of Humour in Roman Verse Satire: Laughing and Lying*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

This book also offers a comprehensive look on Roman verse satire and how the satirist uses humor to make a political statement. It contains a section dedicated to Horace’s *Sermo* 2.5.

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### ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES FOR EACH CATEGORY OF HUMOR

This list is by no measure complete. I focus on Martial, Catullus, and Horace, but many other authors have written humorously educational material as well. Persius and Juvenal are known for their satires, but I find them to be less humorous and more moralistic. For comedic novels, there are two renown ones: Apuleus's *Golden Ass* and Petronius's *Satyricon*. However, these novels are rather raunchy and proper caution must be exercised in choosing passages suitable for students.

Likewise, the categorical organization is by no means definite. Some may find elements of one category of humor in selections listed in another.

#### *Superiority*

Martial *Epigrammata*

7.3

11.92

Catullus *Carmina*

12

22

26

44

84

Horace *Satires*

1.9

#### *Incongruity*

Martial *Epigrammata*

7.3

11.92

Catullus *Carmina*

26

Petronius *Satyricon: Dinner of Trimalchio*

Chapter 36

*Testamentum Porcelli* (text found [here](#))

#### *Release*

Horace *Satires*

1.9

Petronius *Satyricon: Dinner of Trimalchio*

Chapter 41

*Testamentum Porcelli*