



## Latin 3b 2026 Word Study1 Compilation

As you read through  
each word study,  
carefully evaluate each

element on the following scale:

- 1=100% (truly excellent) I'm humbled and amazed  
2=92% (pretty good—there was something great that got my attention)  
3=84% (neither here nor there—got the job done but barely)  
4= 76% (**not** a good job— there was something poorly done that got my attention in a big way)  
5= (68%) evaluation element is extremely poor or missing entirely

As you go through these studies, remember that *the goal is to help your classmates create scholarly assessments*. This is best done by providing helpful remarks and avoiding overly inflated praise or thoughtless, generic commentary. *There is never a situation in which personal comments are warranted or beneficial. I reserve the right to eliminate any and all such commentary from reviews.* Remember that your conduct as a reviewer needs to be as professional as your study and will be assessed accordingly. Every study has something good that can be praised and some improvement that can be suggested.

I, your trusty Latin teacher, will also be providing feedback as well. Feedback from all of us SHOULD **accurately** reflect the work and thought put into each study.

### *These are the things you'll be ranking:*

- **Provided good examples so that I better understand how the word is used**
- **Provided good, useful, and accurate translations and citations so that I can go and find it**
- **Defined the word clearly based on examples (adapted well to the data presented)**
- **Analysis of the word was helpful -- made good observations and drew relevant and appropriate conclusions**
- **Final overall impression of this word study – a “gut feeling” response to this work**

On the survey form there is a “**Free Response**” section for each essay. Provide a couple specific sentences of written feedback to help each writer improve his or her word study next time. Such comments should be primarily polite and useful critiques, not fluff like “this is really great.”

**Do NOT evaluate your own word study!**

Skip the rating grid and leave the comment box completely blank for YOUR word study.

Proceed with caution.

Evaluations must be completed no later than

**March 10**

Get it there  
or be square

Go here to submit your evaluations:

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Please remember to adhere to all instructions because this makes the grading compilation so much faster for me. The faster I do this the sooner you get it and the more time I have for grading other stuff.

## Word Study 1

### Bearing in Mind the Fruit of *Fecundus*

Derived from the Proto-Indo-European word \*d<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>1</sub>y-cundus, meaning to be fertile/fruitful, productive, the Old Armenian դիմ (diem) word meaning “to suckle or nurse,” and the Old Church Slavonic word доити (doiti) meaning “to nurse, give milk, and nourish,” the Latin word *fecundus* means fertile, fruitful, productive/imaginative. While the word describes something physically fertile or fruitful, Latin authors also used *fecundus* to describe the state of someone’s mind or soul in an intellectual sense. *Fecundus* retained the same meanings throughout ancient Latin and is still used today in many of its descendant languages.

One of the earliest uses of the word *fecundus* appears in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, where he uses the word *fecundus* in a metaphorical sense. *Fecundum concute pectus,/disice compositam pacem, sere crimina belli:/arma velit poscatque simul rapiatque inventus*. Shake your imaginative mind, scatter settled peace, sow the offenses of war: let him desire weapons and let him demand and seize them, having found them (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 7.337-40). In this passage, the definitions “fruitful” or “fertile” could have been used; however, the word “imaginative” better describes the meaning of the metaphor. Virgil is talking about a mind full of ideas circling, and he is telling those men to shake their minds, in other words, to disregard or clear their overwhelmed minds and focus their thoughts on things of war.

Around thirty years after Virgil wrote the *Aeneid*, Ovid wrote his *Metamorphoses*, which employs *fecundus* in a physical sense. *Et iam Iuni Laeva parte Samos (fuerant Delosque Parosque relictæ), dextra Lebinthos erat fecundaque melle Calymne*. And now Junonia was on their left side at Samos (Delos and Paros were left behind), on the right side was Lebinthos and Calymne, fertile with honey (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8.20-21). In this passage about Daedalus and Icarus, the only definitions that make sense would be “fertile” or “fruitful.” These two words most accurately describe the physical richness of the land, making it “fertile” enough to produce honey. Using a word like “productive” or “imaginative” would not make sense in this context because it does not pertain to the mind.

In 50 A.D., around forty years after the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella wrote his *Columella* or *De Re Rustica*, a work primarily on agriculture. In his work, the word *fecundus* describes the physical fertile upbringing of a tree. *Eas terebrari gallica terebra convenit, atque ita in foramen viridem taleam oleastri arcte immitti. Sic velut inita arbor fecundo semine fertilior extat*. He brings her to be bored through with a Gallic drill, and therefore to be inserted into the fresh hole of the wild oak tree. Thus, just as the tree, from a fruitful beginning, grows forth with more fruitful seed (Lucius Junius Moderatus, *Columella*, 5.9.77-79). Just as in the *Metamorphoses*, the words “productive” or “imaginative” would not make sense to use in this passage, because the author is describing the physical process of drilling a hole into wood, and explaining how a tree from a “fruitful” beginning or a healthy, fertile beginning makes the process easier.

About thirty years later, in his *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny the Elder uses the word in a metaphorical sense, much like Virgil. *Medio vero terrae salubri utrimque mixtura fertiles ad omnia tractus, modicos corporum habitus magna et in colore temperie, ritus molles, sensus liquidos, ingenia fecunda totiusque*

*naturae capacia*. Truly, both the middle healthy land and the mixture fertile, having been dragged everywhere, bodies of a moderate character and with great temperance in color, gentle dispositions, pure senses, with productive minds, and capable of all nature (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, 2.81.8-10). Pliny is using the word *fecundus* in an intellectual sense and also employing an agricultural metaphor. He emphasizes that people who are balanced in every respect are the best off in life. *Fecundus* could be translated as either “fertile” or “fruitful.” However, the word “productive” best captures what Pliny is trying to say. A fruitful mind *is* productive. A fruitful mind thinks of new ideas, and a fruitful mind is most of all wise.

Sidonius Apollinaris’ *Epistulae* were written nearly four centuries after Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia*; the word *fecundus* is employed in much the same way in order to capture the intellectual sense in the passage, although this time, he uses an agricultural metaphor. *Nam moris est eloquentibus viris ingeniorum facultatem negotiorum probare difficultatibus et illic stilum peritum quasi quendam fecundi pectoris vomerem fingere, ubi materiae sterilis argumentum velut arida caespitis macri glaeba ieiunat*. For it is the custom of an eloquent man to test the task of innate talent through difficulty, and there the skilled stylus sets the plough of the fertile mind, where the evidence, with barren timber, lies like a dry clump of the rough grassy ground (Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, 8.10.9-11). Here, Apollinaris uses *fecundus*, simultaneously depicting the physical sense, but also the intellectual sense of the passage. He compares a stylus to a plow, employing the metaphor of a fertile mind, meaning an imaginative or well-kept mind: as the plow loosens and turns the soil before sowing, so too does the stylus of a writer loosen and turn the soil of the mind, so that seeds may be sown. Therefore, because this excerpt technically means both physical and intellectual fertility, any of the definitions, “fertile,” “fruitful,” “productive,” or “imaginative,” could be used to properly articulate Apollinaris’ meaning.

The Latin word *fecundus* has survived throughout history, with its root belonging to many contemporary languages. A few descendants include: English, French, and Italian. In English, the word “fecund,” an adjective, means to be highly fertile, but also means leading to new ideas or innovation. In French, “fécond” means fruitful or abundant. In Italian, “fecondo” means to be fertile or prolific. Every descendant derives from the original meanings, the definitions of which are literal or figurative. Thus, while different authors in ancient Latin have used the word *fecundus* to describe physical fruitfulness in an agricultural context, others have used the word to describe the mind; because the definitions vary, for instance, with *fecundus* meaning “fertile” earlier in works, but also in later works as well, the word has retained the same meanings of being “fruitful,” “fertile,” and “productive/imaginative” throughout history.

## Word Study 2

### A Keen Observation of *Acies*

The noun *acies*, *aciei*, literally means a sharp edge or point, but it has transferred meanings of the idea of “keenness” applied to other concepts as well. In particular, *acies* can refer to the sharp conflict occurring during a battle, and hints at sharp weaponry used in military. The purpose of this word study is to explore the ways *acies* took on those other meanings over time.

Cicero, living in the first century BC, often referenced military operations in his writings. He emphasized the idea of sharpness and bitter conflict by referring to a battle as *acies*. *Nam, etsi quem*

*exitum acies habitura sit divinare nemo potest...* For, even if nobody is able to prophesy what outcome a battle should have (Cicero, *Familiares* 6.3.2). Cicero uses the subtle imagery of *acies*, which literally refers to sharp instruments, to call to mind the imagery of sharp swords and spears used to fight the battle. At the same time, *acies* refers to the conflict between the armies as a whole, being better, sharp, or fierce.

Livy's writings, in the decades following Cicero's work, also specialize in describing military campaigns because of Livy's many experiences with Roman civil wars in his teenage years. In Livy's account of the Romans' battles against Hannibal, he uses a more precise meaning of *acies*. *Hannibal spem nanctus facturos copiam pugnandi consules, dirigit aciem lacessitque Numidarum procursatione hostes* Hannibal, having entertained a hope [that] the consuls would be about to prepare the troops for battle, arranged his lines and provoked the enemies of the Numidarans with a skirmish (Livy, 22.44.4). In this passage, Hannibal is literally arranging his "sharp edges," meaning his lines of soldiers, in preparation for battle. *Acies* refers to these lines as units, like sharp blades that Hannibal will use to cut through the Roman opposition.

Later in the same battle account by Livy, Hannibal moved his units of soldiers to the geographical line where the battle would take place. *Hannibal luce prima quosque in acie locabat* At the first light, Hannibal arranged each one on the battle-line (Livy, 22.46.1). This time, with the battle lines already formed, which Livy called *acies* before, Hannibal again arranges the *acies*, but this time it makes the most sense in context translated as a location of conflict rather than a means thereof. This indicates that *acies* is multifaceted in its meaning, and could be unclear as to what precise object it refers to when several ideas in a given sentence could be considered keen or sharp.

However, Ovid, a contemporary with Livy born only a few years later, uses *acies* in the literal sense. He tells the story of how Agenor was instructed by Pallas, Athena, to plant the teeth of a serpent in the ground. As Agenor finds in this passage, the teeth grow into armored men. *Inde (fide maius) glabrae coepere moveri, / primaque de sulcis acies apparuit hastae, / tegmina mox capitum picto nutantia cono...* from there (a greater [thing] with belief) the clods began to be stirred, / and first sharp spears appeared out of the furrows, / and soon nodding protections of [their] heads from the decorated cone (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.106-108). In this passage, *acies* is used in an adjectival sense to describe the literal sharp weapons. This indicates that, though most usages of the word in Latin are the transferred sense that refers to battle or general keenness, *acies* also retains its literal sense in some contexts.

The word *acies* is cognate with the Ancient Greek *ἀκίς*, which more specifically means a pointed or sharp object, without the same metaphorical connotations as found in Latin. This suggests that the word acquired its transferred meanings as it transitioned from Greek into Classical Latin, because Classical-period authors in the mid-first century BC use *acies* almost exclusively with its transferred sense.

*Acies* is primarily formed from the prefix *ac-*, which is shared by other Latin words such as *acuo*, to sharpen to a point, and *acus*, a needle or dagger. These Latin relatives emphasize the literal sense of a sharp tool. In contrast, one English derivative of *acies* is *acid*. That English cognate firmly assumes the transferred sense, of something with a sharp taste or smell, rather than a physically sharp point. Together, these cognates suggest that the development of *acies* is the stage at which the root gained the transferred metaphorical meaning, diverging from other Latin words derived from the *ac-* prefix.

Overall, the Latin *acies* is a transition word in etymology. It bridged the shift from a nearly exclusively literal meaning of the word's root in Greek and earlier languages, to the exclusively generalized English definition of something sour or tart. Because of this transitional nature, *acies* can

serve in either meaning given the context: either the specific idea of a sharp blade, or the general sense of anything sharp or keen.

### Word Study 3

#### WS1 - Too Many Ways to Fall

The Latin noun *cāsus*, from *cado* meaning “to fall”, shows how a simple definition of physically falling transformed into a flexible abstract term. *Cāsus* evolves from falling to a simple occurrence, to accident and catastrophe, and to a grammatical term. However, throughout this expansion in definition, the core meaning is still a falling metaphor: of something falling upon a person, a nation, or the end of a word. By tracing *cāsus* through time and literature, the widening circle of metaphors based on physical descent shows itself, and how Romans perceived events as things “falling” into their life.

*Cāsus* and *cado* originated from the Proto-Indo European root \*kad- meaning “to fall.” In Latin, there are many words based off of *cāsus* that have some sense of falling. *Accido*, a third conjugation verb, means “to happen”, but translating the word from the roots, it means “to fall onto.” *Occasio* is a noun meaning opportunity, or more literally, falling toward some circumstance or chance. *Occasus* means the setting of the sun and “falling” below the horizon. Each of these words is tied to the idea of falling, as with a number of English words. Occasion, meaning a series of events falling together; accident, meaning an unexpected thing falling upon you; and coincide, meaning to fall upon together, all carry traces of the root *cāsus* and the verb *cado*.

Lucretius was a first century BC author known for his works *De Rerum Natura*, a work about physics and philosophy. In one passage, he reflects on death and uncertainty. *Posteraque in dubiost fortunam quam vehat aetas, / quidve ferat nobis casus quive exitus instet.* And the future remains in doubt, what fortune time may bring, what chance may befall us, or what end awaits (*De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius 3.1085-1086). Here, *cāsus* means unpredictable events “falling” upon people, emphasizing uncertainty.

At the same time which Lucretius was writing, Julius Caesar was off toppling the Republic. His most famous work, *De Bello Gallico*, is a piece chronicling how he conquered Gaul. Caesar frequently used *casu* in the ablative case to describe unforeseen developments. *Ita sive casu sive consilio deorum immortalium quae pars civitatis Helvetiae insignem calamitatem populo Romano intulerat, ea princeps poenam persolvit.* Therefore either by chance or by the plan of the immortal gods, that part of the Helvetian state which had brought a remarkable disaster upon the Roman people, that part first paid the penalty (*De Bello Gallico*, Caesar 1.12). Caesar frames *cāsus* in opposition to divine planning, presenting history as either random occurrence or purposeful design. This is similar in meaning to Lucretius.

*Cāsus* changes meaning again a few decades later with Livy, a respected historian who wrote about the history of Rome. In his passage describing the panic of the Carthaginian’s army during a snowstorm, Livy uses *cāsus* to mean “fall.” *Fessis taedio tot malorum nivis etiam casus, occidente iam sidere Vergiliarum, ingentem terrorem adiecit.* To those tired by the weariness of so many hardships, the fall of snow, as the constellation of the Pleiades was now setting, added huge terror (*Ab Urbe Condita Libri*, Livy 21.35). Here, *cāsus* no longer means “by chance,” but an actual falling of snow. In contrast with Lucretius and Caesar, *cāsus* means physical fall.

Vergil, a contemporary of Livy, wrote the famous epic Aeneid about Aeneas's mythical journey to Italy. In Book 2 of the Aeneid, Vergil used *cāsus* to mean a tragic downfall. *Quis cāsus Hectora traxit ad ignes / et me in funera misit?* What downfall dragged Hector to the flames and sent me to these funerals? (*Aeneid*, Vergil 2.369-2.370) Vergil intensifies the weight of *cāsus* to have a sense of inevitability: "what fate-like disaster dragged Hector..." Vergil uses the word as a destined misfortune, in direct opposition to Caesar's definition of random events.

Writing shortly after Vergil, Ovid published his *Metamorphoses* as a collection of Greek and Roman myths. In one story, he tells the story about Macareus and the disasters of Greece. *perpetimur Danai cumulumque Capherea cladis, / neve morer referens tristes ex ordine casus, / Graecia tum potuit Priamo quoque flenda videri.* We Greeks endure the heap of disaster at Caphareus, and so that I don't delay by recounting in order the sad misfortunes, Greece at that time could even have seemed worth weeping for to Priam (*Metamorphoses*, Ovid 14.472-474). Here, *cāsus* is a misfortune that fell upon Greece, a disaster so terrible even their enemy, King Priam, would have had pity for them. Vergil and Ovid might have used *cāsus* in similar ways, but the tone differs slightly. Vergil shows *cāsus* as fated tragedy while Ovid narrates it as a sequence of disasters.

Nearly a century after Ovid, Tacitus wrote many historical works about the Roman Empire in an infamously terse and compressed style. His introduction to Emperor Tiberius uses the word *cāsus*. *Casus prima ab infantia ancipites; nam proscriptum patrem exul secutus.* His circumstances from earliest infancy were uncertain; for having followed his proscribed father into exile... (*Annales*, Tacitus 6.51). Here, *cāsus* means fortune or circumstances. This is a similar definition as Lucretius and Caesar's writing.

Lastly, the example from Varro, a learned Latin author who wrote hundreds of books, uses *cāsus* in a unique way different from other authors. His work *De Lingua Latina* is a comprehensive grammar book about Latin. He says *nominativus est primus cāsus* the nominative is the first case (*De Lingua Latina*, Varro 5.62). *Cāsus* means a grammatical word ending, or something that "falls off" the end of the word. This is quite different from the other meanings of *cāsus* like disaster, falling, or circumstance.

In conclusion, *cāsus* has many diverse meanings across different time periods, authors, and contexts. From physically falling to figuratively falling, *cāsus* always implies descent. In Lucretius and Caesar, it describes chance events that "fall" into life. In Livy, it means literal falling of snow. In Vergil and Ovid, it becomes tragic misfortune that falls upon heroes and nations. In Tacitus, it refers to uncertain circumstances. Finally, in Varro, the word takes on a technical meaning as a grammatical case, a form that "falls" onto a base word. Although the contexts change, the underlying meaning remains the same. Whether describing chances, accident, or inflection, *cāsus* always carries the metaphor of something descending or falling into place. Its development over time shows not a break in meaning, but a widening application of one central idea.

## Word Study 4

### The Symbol of Mortality

The Latin language took pride in the storytelling of myths, battles, prophecies, and love; however, it is in those battles that a specific word stood out. Julius Caesar wrote firsthand accounts of the Gallic War and the war against Pompey, Livy wrote about the Punic Wars against Hannibal, Marcellinus wrote about the Battle of Adrianople, and many more examples exist. In every single example, there is the

notion of the loss of battle, not just the men, but the blood. To accurately describe this blood, Latin gave forth the word *cruor*. At a crude definition, *cruor* means blood in the form of gore; however, this word is much more versatile. *Cruor* can be used to describe battles, sacrifices, the loss of losing a loved one, and blood itself. Moreover, it serves as a distinct compatriot to another well-known word that also means blood, *sanguis*.

The word *cruor* originates from the Proto-Indo-European root *kreu* meaning raw flesh or blood. Inflections of the word *cruor* are *cruentus* (bloody) and *cruento* (stain with blood). Additionally, several other words are based on the root *cru*: *crudus* (raw/bloody), *crudelis* (cruel), and *andcrudarius* (raw ore that is not yet melted). As mentioned before, the typical example of *cruor* in action is in a conflict. *Cn. Lentulus, tribunus militum, cum praetervehens equo sedentem in saxo cruore oppletum consulum vidisset*: Gnaeus Lentulus, the tribune of the military, when riding he saw the consul by a rock covered with blood (Livy, *Ab urbe Condita*, 22.49.6). This section was a pivotal moment in the battle of Cannae fought between Hannibal and the Romans. The latter were badly beaten and after a slaughter, Livy (59 B.C. to 17 A.D.) describes a consul treading at the remnants of the battle. The word *cruore* signifies the blood that was spilled from the fight, a symbol of the violence that occurred at Cannae.

While there are many examples of using *cruor* to mean blood, *cruor* can be used to describe what kind of blood. *Cernit propulsa cruore Flumina*: He sees the rivers driven by blood (Lucanus *Pharsalia*, 7.789-790). This is a line taken from Lucanus's epic *Pharsalia* (*De Bello Civili*). At the climax of the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 B.C.E, Caesar defeats his former ally Pompey in a brutal battle. Lucanus (39 to 65 A.D.) highlights the dictator Caesar and his unrelenting will to fight by using *cruore* to signify the gore of the battle. Beyond just the battle, Lucanus drives the point that a massive amount of thick and dirty blood is the river itself. *Cruore* serves as a metaphor for the blood.

In some works, *cruor* can be served as a direct contrast between *sanguis*. While *cruor* refers to blood that is spilled, *sanguis* refers to blood that is alive. In the story of Thisbe and Pyramus, Ovid (43 B.C. to 17 A.D.) makes clear this difference. *quoque sanguinis haustus*: having drunk the blood (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.118). Thisbe and Pyramus are lovers, but their parents forbid their love. Having planned a secret night out, Thisbe encounters a lion. Fortunately, Thisbe escaped, but the lion grabbed onto her veil. Pyramus upon seeing the bloodied veil took it upon himself to die as he felt he could not exist in a world without Thisbe. He cried tears, gave kisses, and exclaimed that since he had drunk the blood, supposedly on the veil, he should take his life. The use of *sanguinis* is in talking about blood as a life-source running through a person. Ovid is not telling of a sacrifice or slaughter that ends with gore, but he calls on the blood of the veil as that of Thisbe's life.

*cruor emicat alte*: blood spurted out high (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.121). In the following lines, Pyramus takes a sword and plunges it into his groin as if he was the loss in the battle. The use of *cruor* isn't in a symbolic sense as the blood of Pyramus is not his vitality, but rather the blood is gore resulting from a sword. This is entirely distinct from the use of *sanguis* just three sentences before as the blood of Thisbe is that of her own essence.

A third use of *cruor* is in sacrifices to identify the blood that has been spilt primarily for a spiritual purpose. *sed versus retro per ora multus sanguis atque oculus redit... non levi motu, ut solent, agitata tripdant exta, sed totas manus quatunt novusque prosilit venis cruor*: But towards the back much blood flows through the mouth and the eye returns. not with a light movement, as they are accustomed to, the shaken entrails tremble, but they shake the whole hands and new blood jumps out from the veins (Seneca, *Oedipus*, 1.349-55). Seneca's *Oedipus* is a tragedy revolving around King Oedipus of Thebes,

who renounced his prophecy to kill his father and marry his mother. Because Oedipus sinned by rejecting his destiny, a plague descended upon Thebes. To find the cause, Oedipus recruits a blind prophet Tiresias and his daughter to make a sacrifice. Here Seneca (4 B.C. to 65 A.D.) provides another example on the differences between *sanguis* and *cruor*. In lines 349-350, the word *sanguis* is used to signify pure blood flowing in real time through the body. However, as the sacrifice is completed in lines 354-355, the blood is writhing around, signifying its unpure nature. Curiously, Seneca might have used *cruor* to form a connection between the dirty blood and Oedipus's tainted bloodline. The use of *cruor* is that it makes a direct contrast with the blood mentioned in the previous lines; it is the tainted gore from the sacrifice.

While *cruor* can reference the blood in sacrifices, it can also showcase the sacrifice's dark nature. *voce vocans Hecaten, Caeloque Ereboque potentem. Supponunt alii cultros, tepidumque cruorem suscipiunt pateris*: calling out with a voice to Hecate, powerful in the sky and Erebus. Others suppose knives, and receive lukewarm blood in bowls (Virgil, Aeneid, 6.247-8). This section of Virgil's Aeneid is concerned with the future of Rome. The Sibyl, a priestess of Apollo, ventures to the Underworld to guide Aeneas to meet his father, who will reveal his destiny and the path for Rome. To gain entrance into the Underworld, the Sibyl sacrifices four black bulls to Hecate, the goddess of magic. Virgil (70 B.C. to 19 B.C.) uses *cruor* to signify what it takes to get to the Underworld. It is not just a sacrifice to the gods; it is a wish for passage into a dark place. Therefore, it requires blood as a result of violence not of life as *sanguis* would suggest. Virgil uses another word to further this idea, *tepidum*, which translates to lukewarm. Essentially, he makes a point that the blood is lukewarm, meaning it has just left the animal.

Throughout these examples spanning the Golden Age and the Silver Age of Latin, *cruor* has maintained one concrete definition of blood as a symbol of death; however, the uses of this word have manifested into various works. *Cruor* can be used in battle, in moments of losing loved ones, in sacrifices, and in undertakings toward dark parts of the world. Additionally, authors use *cruor* in distinction with *sanguis* for the reader to understand the significance of the blood. *Cruor* is the everlasting symbol of mortality.

## Word Study 5

### An Essay Hinging on *Cardo*

Doors are made up of three important parts: the main body of the door itself, the doorknob, and the door hinges. All three are integral to the functions of a door. Just like English, the Romans had a word for door hinges: *cardo*. In English, door hinges are such a significant part of an important fixture of buildings that they are part of a common phrase: something (such as a plan) can hinge on a specific, important thing just as a door can stand on its hinges. Romans placed the same importance on hinges: not only does *cardo* mean the hinges of a door but also anything that something important relies on.

In the Aeneid, Virgil uses *cardo* to simply mean door hinges. *ipse inter primos correpta dura bipenni / limina perrumpit postisque a cardine vellit / aeratos*; He himself among the first ranks with a double-edged battle axe, having seized the sill he forces through gate and tears the bronze doors down by the hinges. (Virgil Aeneid 2.479-81) In this passage, Virgil showcases Pyrrhus' strength by means of the brute force that he exhibits when he pulls a door off its hinges. Here, hinges are a solid and important part of a door, and it is impressive that Pyrrhus can pull the door from its hinges.

Another, more metaphorical use of the word *cardo* is in the poem *Pyramus and Thisbe* by Ovid. The two doomed lovers have agreed to meet near the tomb of Ninus, and Thisbe is sneaking out of her house so that she can go to the meeting place. *Callida per tenebras, versato cardine, Thisbe / egreditur fallitque suos, adopertaque vultum / pervenit ad tumulum dictaque sub arbore sedit.*, Clever through the shadows, the hinge having been turned over, Thisbe / goes out and eludes her parents, and having covered her face / she comes to the mound and having spoken she sits under the tree. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.93-5) In this passage, Ovid uses the imagery of a hinge having been turned to descriptively represent Thisbe going through a door. The turned hinge is a metonym for the door. Metonyms are common in poetry, and hinges are often used to represent doors without having to say the word ‘door’ itself.

In Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia* he speaks of the Hyperboreans and how they live in the northernmost parts of the earth. He also says that *ibi creduntur esse cardines mundi extremique siderum*, it is believed that the hinges of the world and the farthest of the stars are here, (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 4.12.26). This is an abstract use of the word *cardo*. Pliny does not mean that the world literally has hinges, but that the Hyperboreans are at the very edges of the world, just like hinges are on the very edges of a door. It also emphasizes the importance of the world’s ends, as hinges are needed for a door to function.

The word *cardo* has survived into the modern day through other languages. In French word *charnière*, the Italian word *cardine*, and the Welsh word *corddyn* all mean hinge. *Cardo* has a core meaning that varies from literal to metaphorical, depending on the author and the context. Overall, the Latin word *cardo* means a hinge or a part of something which is integral to that thing’s overall function.

## Word Study 6

### Mulling over *Mollio*

The Latin verb *mollio* means to soften, make soft, moderate, or mitigate (Lewis, *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*). It is a regular verb in the fourth conjugation. The infinitive is *mollire*, the perfect is *mollivi*, and the perfect passive participle is *mollitum*. In *Metamorphoses*, when writing his story of Daedalus and Icarus, He says “*flavam modo pollice ceram / mollibat,*” which can mean “Now he was softening the yellow wax with his thumb” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 198-9). Ovid uses *mollio* to talk about a child softening or smudging wax with his thumb. After this in the same work Ovid also says: “*Rapidi vicinia solis / mollit odoratas, pennarum vincula, ceras.*” which can be translated “His vicinity to the sun made soft the fragrant [wax], the bond of feathers, the waxes.” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 225-7). Now he uses it to say that the sun makes the wax soft, meaning that the bonds that are held together with wax fall apart. These are examples of *mollio* being used in a literal sense of softening a material.

However, this is not the only way it can be used. The word *mollio* comes from this adjectival case of *mollis*. This in turn comes from the Proto-Italic *mol-dus*, which means soft or weak. This means that *mollis* and therefore *mollio* by extension can be translated as “soft” or “weak”. Horace, writing near to when Ovid writes, uses *mollio* as a participle. In his Odes 1.37, he writes “*accipiter velut / mollis columbās aut leporem citus / vēnātor in campīs nivālis / Haemoniae*” (Horace, *Odes*, 1-37.17-20). This can be translated: “just as the swift hawk [hunts] the weak doves or the swift hunter [hunts] a hare in the snowy camp of winter”. Here we see *mollio* in the adjectival case *mollis*. Now *mollio* is being used to express a quality of an animal.

It can be interpreted in two ways, 1: that the dove's texture is soft, 2: that the dove is weak. Given that *mollio* has been thus far used to describe a material being softened physically, it can be assumed that *mollis* in this context means that the dove itself has a soft texture. The use of the adjectival case as meaning weak lends credence to both interpretations of the quotation about the hawk and the dove, but mostly strengthens the idea of the dove being weak. Therefore, the translation has been written to say "weak".

In addition, *mollio* can also mean "to make unmanly" or "to render effeminate" (Lewis, *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*). The Latin word *mollio* lives on in the Spanish word *mollo* and Italian *mollio* which both mean some variation of making something soft. It also has a few descendants in English. For example, the mollusk, or the phylum thereof called Mollusca, comes from *mollis*. This is because Linnaeus named this phylum from the latin *molluscus* meaning "thin shelled". *Molluscus* comes from *mollis* (Etymonline, *Mollusk*). Although this means soft, mollusks have hard shells, and this is because the phylum did not originally include mollusks.

There are other terms in English that relate to this. For example, to "mull" or "mull over" something means to "work over" something. This comes from a variety of different languages, and has a few meanings, one supplied by the middle English *mollen* meaning to soften or dissolve something. This in turn comes from French. This in turn comes from Latin *molliare* meaning to steep something. And this in turn is a variation of, like *mollio*, the Latin word *mollis*. *Mollio* is a diverse word which can both mean to soften a substance as in *Metamorphoses* and also to soften one's character as in Horace's *Odes*. It derives from a source word *mollis* that descends into many languages and lives on. It is used in the scientific context of animals and in the context of thinking. *Mollio* itself has died off with Latin, but derivatives and cognates in other languages last to this day.

## Word Study 7

### Word Study 1 – The Purity of *Virgo*

The Latin noun *Virgo -inis*, is often used and represented as a sign of innocence and purity, typically referring to an unmarried woman or a woman who has yet to consummate her marriage. *Virgo*, historically associated with two main English meanings, maiden, and virgin, has come to possess alternate and interesting denotations throughout its usage in Latin, which, as in much of Latin poetry and prose, extend beyond their literal meanings.

It can be used in a somewhat poetic context as a reference to a divine being such as a goddess or muse. As Catullus writes to Cornelius in his poem wishing that his little book may be preserved forevermore, *quare habe tibi quidquid hoc libelli—qualecumque, quod, o patrona virgo, plus uno maneat perenne saeclo!* Therefore, have for yourself whatever kind this little book is, whatever sort, which, O patron virgin, may it remain everlasting for more than a century! (Catullus *Carmina* 1.8-10). Catullus, though he mocks the importance of his book before Cornelius in his ironic poem, knows the quality of his own writing, and believing that Cornelius alone will not be able to preserve his work, he prays to a patron virgin, likely Calliope/Calliopea, the muse of poetry to fulfill his desire. *Virgo*, as a result of Catullus's usage of the word patron, here refers to either a muse or a goddess: a young divine woman who can uphold his great poetry throughout all time.

In Livy's *Romulus et Remus*, he describes the evildoings of Proca's son Amulius: *Addit scelere scelus: stirpem fratris virilem interemit, fratris filiae Reae Silviae per speciem honoris, cum Vestalem eam legisset, perpetua virginitate spem partus adimit*: he adds crime to crime, he kills his brother's male family, and in the semblance of honor, he takes away the hope of offspring from his brother's daughter, Rhea Silvia, by perpetual virginity when he chooses her as a Vestal Virgin (Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.3.11). *Virgo*, here in the form of a derived adjective *virginitate*, together with *Vestalem*, Vestal Virgin, portray Amulius's cruelty as he attempts to secure the kingdom for himself. The Vestal Virgins were six priestesses who were tasked with maintaining the fire in the Temple of Vesta, goddess of the hearth who, and as the name suggests, they were obligated to take oaths to remain virgins, much like the goddess Diana and her followers. This passage highlights an important detail which often repeats itself in Latin poetry in prose: when Livy writes *Vestalem*, the word *virgin* is implied within it: he writes *Vestalem* as opposed to *Virginem Vestalem*. Conclusion, *Virgo* can have an implied meaning in certain contexts. Since the Vestal Virgins were commonly known as the Vestals, and their elite status likely implied that even the average Roman knew them, Livy refrained from including the extra word in his writing.

Here, Caesar writes about his unfamiliarity to British marital practices, *Uxores habent deni duodenique inter se communes et maxime fratres cum fratribus parentesque cum liberis; sed qui sunt ex his nati, eorum habentur liberi, quo primum virgo quaeque deducta est*: ten and twelve men have common wives between themselves, and especially brothers with brothers, and parents with children; but those who are born from these are considered the children of the one to whom each virgin was first led (Caesar *De Bello Gallico* 5.14.4). In the British marital system then in place, the marriage of one woman to multiple men meant that after her first marriage she was no longer a virgin, an important detail at the time. It was likely believed that not only would associating these children with their individual fathers be confusing, but it would also contaminate the purity of the unions. Therefore, the emphasis that all the children take their mother's first husband as their father. Here, *virgo* best translates to virgin, as it represents the importance that a woman's chastity held, as the purity of the bloodline was highly valued.

In this passage, Horace writes poetry singing praises of various gods, *neque te silebo, Liber et saevis inimica virgo beluis, nec te, metuende certa Phoebae sagitta*: neither will I be silent about you, Liber, and about the virgin, enemy to savage beasts, nor about you, Phoebus, dreaded for your certain arrow (Horace *Carmina* 1.12.22-4). Here, *virgo* once again has an implied meaning. Despite its literal translation as virgin, considering that the poem is a song praising the gods and goddesses, *virgo* is really a reference to Diana, the goddess of the moon and the hunt. Diana, along with her band of loyal huntresses, swore an oath to never marry and embrace perpetual virginity, hence the reference to her as *virgo*. In this context, the root meaning of *virgo* is also slightly altered, as not only does it describe Diana's status as a virgin, but it also symbolizes her purity and independence, as she swore never to involve herself with men.

Ovid writes in book 1 of his *Metamorphoses*, The Four Ages, of the tragedy and destruction during the Iron age: *Victa iacet pietas, et virgo caede madentis, ultima caelestium terras Astraea reliquit*: piety lies overcome, and the virgin Astraea, the last of the heavenly, leaves the earth wet with slaughter (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.149-50). The Ages, in descending order of their prosperity, from Gold to Iron, describe the gradual collapse of society and humanity. *Virgo* references the innocence and purity of Astraea, the Greek goddess of justice, who was the last to leave behind the bitterness and vices that governed earth during the Iron Age. Here, *virgo* defers from its principal meanings, and more accurately represents the justice and righteousness that Astraea stood for. Instead of solely representing Astraea as a

virgin or young maiden, the description of her as *virgo* reflects her role as an embodiment of purity, and judgement. Upon leaving Earth, Astraea became the constellation Virgo, a permanent symbol of morality and fairness.

*Virgo* can be used to represent goddesses, muses, Vestals, and other divine entities, the common factor being that their association with *virgo* is based on an element of purity. *Virgo* is not used generally as an implied stand-in for just any goddess, but for goddesses like Vesta, Diana, and Astraea who represent chastity, purity, and fairness. It can also be dropped sometimes when its meaning is implied within another word such as *Vestalem*, since the extra definition would only provide information that is already understood from *Vestalem*. Finally, even when translated as one of its root meanings, *virgo* provides new depth and information to the passage that it is being used in. *Virgo* is generally translated as virgin or maiden, more often the former, but the depth it adds depends, sometimes heavily, on the context of the passage that it is in.

In Latin, the meaning of *virgo* is close to that of another Latin noun, *virga*, meaning twig or young shoot. The link between the words can be seen as they both represent purity, innocence, and youth: a twig cannot of course possess innocence, implying that not all the meanings overlap completely, but the connection between the words shows some of *virgo*'s etymological evolution and indicates a common lineage, despite their origins from Proto-Indo-European roots being unclear. *Virgo*, due to its astrological meaning, is also one of few Latin words that are still used directly in English without much inflection. However, the qualities that many people born under *virgo* possess, fairness, judgment, and morality, are more closely associated with the values that Astraea represented than the original meaning of the word as virgin or maiden, showing how throughout its history, *virgo* has always been used with a slightly implied meaning. Unlike many other Latin words, the direct translation of *virgo* does not vary greatly, but its meaning in context does, as it has several context-based implied meanings.

## Word Study 8

### *Fames*: A Feast of Famine

In the fourth book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid details the downfall of Tantalus, the host of the gods. After clandestinely cooking his son Pelops in a stew to serve to the Olympians at a grand banquet, the Olympians, seeing through the ruse, condemn Tantalus to eternal suffering in the Underworld. The ghost of Tantalus, eternally thirsty, stands in a pool of water up to his neck, but he cannot drink; his hungry eyes are fixed on a tree laden with rich fruit, which evades him every time he tries to eat. The Latin word *fames* encapsulates the agony of Tantalus, and of all human desire, perfectly. Spanning from physical hunger to a sparseness of literary richness, from its very roots, *fames* captures the intensity of appetite on personal, societal, and even metaphorical levels.

*Fames*, in its most basic form, refers to an appetite for food in both a person and an animal. Cicero, for instance, employs it to refer to the hunger of beasts, writing in his defense of Aulus Cluentius, *Iam hoc non ignoratis, iudices, ut etiam bestiae fame monitae plerumque ad eum locum ubi pastae sint aliquando revertantur* (Cicero, *Pro Aulus Cluentio*, 25.67): now are you not ignorant of this, judges, that a beast, moved by hunger, returns to that same place where there has been food before. Cicero defends Cluentius' habits by reminding the reader that even an innocent animal, desperate for food, returns to the

place where he found prey before. Here, *fames* refers to the appetite that drives human beings and animals alike to seek nourishment. In its simplest (and most common) form, *fames* refers to physical hunger.

*Fames*, in its most extreme form, describes the most painful form of hunger: starvation. King Midas, whom Ovid describes vividly in the eleventh book of his *Metamorphoses*, is perhaps the best symbol of this state. Greedy King Midas entreats Bacchus to grant him the ability to turn everything he touches to gold, and Bacchus, grateful for returning his tutor Silenus, grants his wish. As soon as he wishes to eat, however, Midas realizes the cost of his mistake: even his bread turns to solid gold when he places it in his mouth. Ovid recounts, *copia nulla famem revelat* (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 11.129): no amount [of food] relieves his hunger. Midas lacks any relief and starves almost immediately. Nothing, even the richest feast, will satisfy his appetite, which now must sustain itself with brutal, inedible gold. Here, *fames* applies to the most extreme form of hunger, which no amount of food will alleviate. *Fames* often illustrates appetite in its most desperate state, an unquenchable yearning for nourishment.

*Fames* often expands beyond the personal level to describe a state-wide shortage of food. Used collectively, it describes the hunger of an entire group. Cicero uses *fames* in this sense in his oration *Pro Flacco: Caesus est virgis Cymaeus ille Athenagoras qui in fame frumentum exportare erat ausus* (Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 17): That Cymaeian Athenagoras, who dared to send out grain in a famine, was whipped. *Fames* refers to the universal hunger among the members of Athenagoras' countrymen, who publicly shamed the greedy man who sold what little food stores they had left. Used in its collective sense, as with Cicero's account of Athenagoras, *fames* refers to a food shortage that is a public crisis.

In fact, *fames* can refer to fasting as well as a personal or state-wide calamity. Even when food is available, those who abstain from it can be described with *fames*. For instance, in his *Natural Histories*, Pliny the Elder discusses Hippocrates and the custom of other physicians to give their patients as little food as possible. Pliny the Elder writes that Hippocrates is *tantum remotus ab istis qui medicinam fame exercent* (Pliny, *Natural Histories*, 22.136): quite opposed to those who make medicine out of hunger. Whereas Hippocrates suggests a gentle, but robust, diet, other physicians impose fasting on their patients. Even when food is readily available, such physicians make those who are ill suffer *fames* so they will heal. *Fames* can carry with it the connotation of voluntary fasting as well as hunger that an environmental or social crisis imposes upon man.

The broad connection of *fames* with hunger, varying from singular appetite to statewide calamity, has led philologists to determine several possible origins of the word. It is possible that the Indo-European root of *fames* is d<sup>b</sup>H, meaning "to disappear," referring to death from starvation. From this same root, the 1828 *Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language* claims, the Celts drew *feim* (meaning "to need" or "to want"), and the Greeks derived φάγω (meaning "to eat"), both of which are connected to *fames*. More contested is *fames*' connection with the Greek χάομαι, meaning "to want" or "to crave." According to *The American Heritage of Indo-European Roots* (2000), it is possible that χάομαι became *chames*, then *hames*, eventually morphing into *fames* through continued use. No matter its origin, *fames* and its contributors have always been associated with appetite and, in their ancient and darker form, to perish from hunger.

On the opposite side, *fames* can also carry a more metaphorical meaning to portray the hunger of the soul. Beyond the desire for food, *fames* describes the wayward desire for money or fame, which is often just as visceral as appetite for a meal. Vergil uses *fames* to refer to greed in the third book of the *Aeneid*, writing, *quid non mortalia pectora cogis, auri sacra fames!* (Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.57): what do you not lead mortal hearts to do, O sacred hunger for gold! Vergil uses *fames* to refer to a spiritual sensation,

an internal thirst for gold that will, indeed, make the wayward human heart do anything to gain prestige. Vergil, employing *fames* in its metaphorical sense, describes the ruinous hunger of the soul: avarice. *Fames* transcends its literal sense, physical hunger, to refer to spiritual longings as well, particularly avarice.

The metaphorical meaning of *fames* reaches its apex when it transcends the stomach entirely to describe literature completely lacking in rhetorical richness. Though a rare use of the word, the Roman author Cicero employs *fames* in his *Tusculan Dialogues* to portray the sparseness of rhetorical style among Hellenistic philosophers, such as the Epicureans. Cicero writes: *et cum obruerentur copia sententiarum atque verborum, ieiunitatem et famem se malle quam ubertatem et copiam dicerent* (Cicero, *Tusculan Dialogues*, 2.3): and when the supply of their opinions and words is shown, they say them with a dryness, so that they should simply prefer to read their own writing. Cicero mocks the philosophers' tendency to write overly dry works, calling their lack of creativity a famine, a *fames*, in literary genius. Cicero demands of the reader: why, indeed, would anyone choose the empty basket of soulless philosophy over the feast of Plato or the tragedians? At its most metaphorical, *fames* refers to a barrenness of literary talent that Cicero characterizes as a famine of ingenuity.

*Fames* describes hunger in all of its senses. From its Indo-European roots and its Celtic and Greek cousins, it refers to a food shortage on the personal and state-wide level, as well as spiritual and literary dryness. *Fames* is similarly lacking in English derivatives; only "famine" is its direct descendent. Like the fruitful boughs Tantalus was forever forbidden to touch, however, *fames* is not lacking in richness. It is just one of the vast basket of Latin words that offer innumerable flavors, both physical and philosophical equivalents. May all, invigorated by the vibrance of *fames*, continue to pluck from these boughs today.

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