Suburani

Teaching Notes

Chapter 1: Subūra

Contents

Chapter overview

Language development

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons singular of the present tense
- Reading Latin from left to right

Cultural context

- The Subura
- The population of the city of Rome
- Women at work
- Living in an insula

History

- Rome in AD 64

Character/plot development

We meet Sabina, her aunt Rufina and her father Faustus, living and working in the Subura, a noisy and dangerous district of Rome. Manius, an old beggar, stops Lucilius, a young nobleman, who is saved from a falling roof tile by Sabina. And at night there's a thief or two at work in the bar.

Introduction

Chapter 1 presents life in the Roman district of the Subura. Set the geographical context by first investigating the map of the Roman Empire (pp. 2–3) and establishing the location of Rome, then locate the Subura within the city of Rome (pp. 4–5). The three Latin stories give us snapshots of a typical day in the Subura and are set respectively at dawn, the eighth hour (about 3:30 p.m.) and night.

Story 1: Sabīna (pp. 7-11)

Synopsis

As dawn breaks over a noisy Subura, Rufina and Faustus are hard at work. Sabina, meanwhile, thinks she has found a quiet place to hide away and read.

Aims

- To introduce Sabina, Rufina and Faustus
- To introduce 1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular verbs, present tense
- To begin to explore the Subura and insulae

Main sentence patterns

- **Subūra est clāmōsa.**
- **ego sum in popīnā.**
- **tū in īnsulā labōrās?**
- **amita intrat!**

Character development

We meet three of our main characters in this first story: Sabina, her aunt Rufina and her father Faustus. Encourage the students to ask and consider questions which can't necessarily be answered from the text itself or from the images.

Sabina sets the scene for the reader and introduces us to her aunt before she introduces us to her father. Does that suggest anything about Sabina's relationship with her aunt? And with her father? Rufina works hard in a bar. Do students think she owns it, or just works there? Sabina appears uncertain how best to describe her father (**pater est … negōtiātor**). What does that suggest about Faustus? When we first meet Faustus he is asking Rufina (his sister) where she is and if she's still asleep. Do students think he is genuinely unsure or is this friendly teasing? And he asks Rufina where Sabina is. Why might Rufina know if Faustus doesn't? Again, what does that suggest about Sabina's relationships with her aunt and with her father? Sabina has found an empty room in the top of the **īnsula**. She tells her aunt she's working, but confides to us that she isn't. Rufina suspects (correctly) that Sabina is reading rather than working. What work might Sabina have been supposed to be doing? What might Sabina be reading? Do students imagine she can read fluently or is she learning, or struggling to read? And why do Faustus and Rufina feel it's necessary to check up on Sabina in person, rather than trusting her word?

Why might Sabina's mother not be present? Has she died? Is she already at work elsewhere, away on an errand, living with someone else?

Ideas for specific images

The images are designed, so far as is possible, to support the students 'understanding of the Latin. As a general principle, therefore, explore the images before exploring the associated Latin texts.

Image 1

Before approaching the Latin, study the image of Sabina with the students. How old do the students think she is? What sort of characteristics might she have?

When looking at the Latin, some possible questions might include:

- What's the name of the girl in the picture?
- What do you think she is saying? What are her actual words?
- How would you say 'I am [name]?'

Image 2

This image presents an opportunity to begin to establish what life was like in the Subura. Can students identify Sabina in the image? Where is she? There is plenty to explore, from the washing hanging between buildings, to the wooden balconies, to the windows (is there any glass, do they all have shutters?), oxen pulling a cart (what could be in it?), the lady in the doorway (what could she be doing there?), someone cleaning graffiti from the wall (what might it say?), various foods

for sale (what specifically?), a range of animals (which?), an argument breaking out (over what?), the different skin tones of the population, the types and colours of the clothing worn, and so on. What time of day do the students think it is?

Spend as long or as little as you wish on this image before transitioning to the Latin and take the sentences one at a time.

- **ego in Subūrā habitō.** In what district of Rome does Sabina say she lives?
- **ego sum in īnsulā.** Look at the picture. What sort of building is Sabina in? So what might '**ego sum in īnsulā.**' mean?

Image 3
Use the image of Sabina, top left, to remind students that Sabina is narrating.

Romans divided daylight into 12 hours, with the first hour starting at sunrise and the last hour ending at sunset (so the length of an hour varied across the year).

- First, start by ensuring the students can see that it's dawn: 'Look at the picture. What time of day is it?' The students may be surprised, given the activity in image 2.
- Then move to the Latin. 'What do you think **hōra prīma est** literally means? Why might the Romans have called dawn 'the first hour'? When might 'the last hour' have been? The Romans divided daylight up into 12 hours. What effect would that have had on the length of an hour?'

Image 4
We return to the street scene, but pan left. Notice the bar (apparently called **ad psittacum**) with a parrot on a beam, prices of drinks displayed on the wall, people drinking and playing dice, and a lady standing behind the bar ready to serve the customers.

- What do you think it would smell like if you were there?
- **Subūra nōn est quiēta.** Is it quiet?
- **Subūra est clāmōsa.** How would you describe the scene?

Image 5
Establish that this is a close-up of the bar (**popīna**) before approaching the Latin. Questions might include:

- What type of business is shown here?
- The bar is in which part of Rome?
- So what might '**popīna est in Subūrā.**' mean?

Image 6
- What's the name of the lady in the bar?
- Where is she?
- What is she doing there?
- Look at the picture in more detail. What might the smell be like in the bar and the area around it? What sounds would be heard?

Image 7
- How old do you think this man is?

- Does he look rich, poor, weak, strong, kind, unpleasant?
- What's his name?
- How is he related to Sabina?

Image 8

- What is Faustus doing in this picture?
- What do you think the graffito might say? (Don't be tempted to give the students the answer at this point, just get their ideas. The third story in the chapter, **nox**, introduces the word **fūr**, so you may wish to return to this image once you have read that story.)
- What two questions does Faustus ask Rufina? Is he genuinely unsure or is this friendly teasing? And he asks Rufina where Sabina is. What does that tell us about Sabina's relationship with her aunt, as opposed to her father?
- Where does Faustus work? What is the difference between '*My dad works in the apartment block.*' and '*My dad is working in the apartment block.*'?
- Sabina appears uncertain how best to describe her father (**pater est … negōtiātor**). What does that suggest about Faustus? How do you think Sabina feels about her father's work?

Image 9

- What relation are Rufina and Faustus? So what relation is Rufina to Sabina?
- Are the students surprised that the bar is already busy as the day dawns? What does that tell us about life in the Subura? Do people stop for drinks on the way to work today?

Image 10

- What question does Faustus ask Rufina?

Image 11

- How does Rufina respond?
- What various translations can students think of for 'vah!'? What does its use tell us about how Rufina is feeling?
- What might '**semper**' mean in '**ego semper labōrō!**'? Is there a difference in meaning between '*I always work*' and '*I'm always working*'?
- What sort of life does Rufina appear to lead?

Image 12

- What question does Faustus ask his sister?
- Why might Faustus not know where Sabina is? Why might he be asking Rufina?

Images 13-15

- From Rufina's expression in image 13, what do you think she's thinking?
- What question is Rufina asking in 14? And in 15?
- In what tone of voice do you think Rufina is speaking as she asks these questions? Does it change between the two?

Images 16 and 17

- Look at the images. What building is Sabina in? And where are Rufina and Faustus?
- In 15, Rufina asked Sabina '**tū es in īnsulā?**'. In 16, where does Sabina confirm she is?
- **ego sum in īnsulā.** Which word might Sabina stress here?
- **tū legis?** Rufina has a hunch about what Sabina is up to. What does she ask Sabina if she's doing? (Look at image 17 again for a clue.)
- In 17, why do you think Sabina uses the word '**minimē**'?

Image 18

- What does Rufina ask Sabina? Which word might she be stressing here?

Image 19

- What does Sabina shout to her aunt that she's doing?
- Why does Sabina use the word '**certē**'?
- Look again at the picture. Where does Sabina tell us she is?

Image 20

- **ego in cellā legō.** We know Sabina is in the attic. What does she tell us that she's doing there? And what does she confide to us that she's *not* doing?
- What might she be reading, or trying to read? If it's a letter, who might have sent it? And to whom? Do students think that Sabina could read? Or was she trying to learn to read? Could her father and aunt read? Why might Sabina not want to tell her father and aunt what's she's really doing?

Images 21-22

- Look at Sabina's expression in 21. Who comes in in 22? What's Sabina's reaction likely to be? What might '**hercle!**' literally mean? What are some modern equivalents today?
- In 22, what does Faustus point out to his sister? How do you think Faustus and Rufina feel?

Image 23

- Sabina has told her aunt and father one thing, but is doing something else. What do we call people who don't tell the truth?
- What do you think the parrot says?
- How does Sabina sum up the apartment block? And the Subura more generally?

Linguistic review

Once the students have a good understanding of the story and its characters, and before studying **Language note 1: Who's doing what?**, explore the language of this story in more detail. Try to encourage the students to spot patterns in the language and suggest reasons for those patterns. It will be sufficient at this stage to spot the **-ō**, **-s**, and **-t** endings and draw conclusions about their use. This is unlikely to be the time to discuss the concept of conjugations.

Some possible techniques include:

1. Ask the students to identify sentences where 'I' am (or am not) *doing* something (as opposed to *being* something) and write them on the board:

    - **ego in Subūrā habitō. (2)**
    - **ego nōn dormiō. (9)**
    - **ego semper labōrō! (11)**
    - **ego nōn legō! (17)**
    - **certē ego labōrō. (19)**
    - **ego in cellā legō. (20)**
    - **ego nōn labōrō. (20)**

    Similarly, identify and display those sentences where 'you 'are (or are not) *doing* something:

    - **tū dormīs. (8)**
    - **tū labōrās. (10)**
    - **tū legis. (16)**
    - **tū in īnsulā labōrās. (18)**

    (It may help to remove the question marks and present them as statements, so that students are not unnecessarily distracted at this point.)

    Ask the students if they can spot any patterns. You may need to use leading questions, such as 'In Latin the verb often comes at the end of the sentence. Look at the last word in each sentence. Do you notice anything about the letter it ends in? What letter does a verb end in if it means 'I 'am doing something? And if it means 'you 'are doing something?'

    If students ask about **ego** and **tū**, confirm that they are not strictly necessary and are normally only used for emphasis, but are here employed to help students read the language. They will gradually be phased out in later chapters.

    Use a similar approach to investigate sentences where 'he 'or 'she 'is doing something:

    - **Rūfīna in popīnā labōrat. (6)**
    - **pater in īnsulā labōrat. (8)**
    - **amita intrat! (21)**
    - **pater intrat! (21)**
    - **Sabīna legit! (22)**

2. Ask the students to look back at images 8 and 9, recap what Faustus and Rufina are saying, then pull out and compare:

    - **tū dormīs? (8)**
    - **ego nōn dormiō. (9)**

Similarly, return to 10 and 11 to study more closely:

- **tū labōrās? (10)**
- **ego semper labōrō! (11)**

You may also want to include **Rūfīna in popīnā labōrat. (6)**

Images 16, 17 and 22 provide further possible examples:

- **ego nōn legō! (17)**
- **tū legis? (16)**
- **Sabīna legit! (22)**

As in approach (1) above, ask the students to look for any patterns and to suggest reasons for those patterns.

Sample translation

Sabina

1. I am Sabina
2. I live in the Subura. I am in the apartment block.
3. It's the first hour.
4. The Subura isn't quiet. The Subura is noisy.
5. There's a bar in the Subura.
6. Rufina is in the bar. Rufina is working in the bar.
7. My father is Faustus.
8. 'Rufina, where are you? Are you sleeping?' My father works in the apartment block. Dad is a … businessman.
9. 'Hi, brother! I'm not sleeping. It's the first hour. I'm in the bar.' Rufina is my aunt.
10. 'Are you working?'
11. 'Vah! I'm always working!'
12. 'Where's my daughter?'
13. –
14. 'Sabina, where are you?'
15. 'Are you in the apartment block?'
16. 'Hi auntie! I am in the apartment block.'

    'Are you reading, Sabina?'
17. 'No, I'm not reading!'
18. 'Are you working in the apartment block?'
19. 'Absolutely, I am working.' I am in a room.
20. I am reading in the room. I'm not working.

21. ‘By Hercules!’ Her aunt comes in! Her dad comes in!
22. ‘Sabina’s reading!’
23. ‘You’re a liar! You’re a liar!’

    ‘Absolutely, Sabina is a liar!’

    The apartment block is noisy. The Subura is not quiet.

The Subura (pp. 12-13)

This section may be best studied in class as a follow-up to reading the story **Sabīna**. Students will have gained some idea of the character of the Subura from the images in the story. It is best to concentrate on the Subura and leave studying the image of the insula from Ostia until later. Ask students to locate the Subura on the map of Rome (pp. 4–5).

Focus discussion on the character of the Subura and its inhabitants - discussion of the buildings themselves should be reserved for later exploration of the insula and the popina. Start by summarising what students have learnt from the story **Sabīna**:

- What different types of people lived and worked in the Subura?
- What activities were taking place early in the morning?
- What do you think it smelt like?
- How dirty were the streets?
- What sorts of noises were there?

Follow up by asking what the text on p. 12 adds to their knowledge. Students will easily pick out the point that the Subura was dangerous and violent at night. They should also note that many of the streets in the Subura were narrower than those depicted in the story. Ask them to imagine how it might have felt to walk down one of these unlit, crooked alleyways, with tall buildings either side, at night when there were few people around. Students may point out that image 2 shows a wheeled cart, and the text says wheeled traffic was banned. Ask what they think the cart is carrying? The cart is loaded with stones, so these must be building materials. Ask why they think wheeled traffic was banned during daylight hours. Follow up by asking why an exception was made for carts carrying building materials.

Juvenal

Focus on the quotation from Juvenal, to introduce students to the use of literature as evidence for our knowledge of Roman life. As this is the first piece of literature in translation the students meet, and it is a challenging text, they may need additional help. The text in the student’s book is accompanied by questions, but students may need support to answer them. First, read the text aloud. Then, one of the following approaches could be used:

1. Read the text again, this time stopping at intervals to ask questions. For example:
    - Lines 1–6: what two dangers are mentioned here?
    - Lines 7–12: why does Juvenal mention making a will? According to Juvenal, what sort of person might go out at night without making a will?

- Lines 13–15: what is a chamber pot? If you need a clue look at the picture and the accompanying text on p. 19. What is the third danger mentioned here? Why might the tenants empty their chamber pots into the street?

2. Display the text on a screen and ask students to pick out the words and phrases that show the dangers.
3. Divide students into groups and give each group a copy of the text for them to highlight, perhaps with questions attached. Tell them to look at **Sabīna** image 2 and the photograph of a chamber pot and accompanying text on p. 19 as they read.

Emphasise that Juvenal was writing satire, so he wanted both to criticise and to entertain. It is likely that students will not be familiar with the term 'satire', so be prepared to provide examples from TV programmes they may have seen or cartoons, or show them a satirical political cartoon from a newspaper. Try to elicit from the students what are the distinctive features of satire - exaggeration, distortion, humour. Does satire need to have an element of truth in order to work?

The risk of being killed by a falling roof tile is not a product of Juvenal's imagination. There is literary and epigraphic evidence that such accidents did occur. Study of the Juvenal text could be followed by comparison with one or two of the sources from the *Additional evidence: The Subura* study sheet on the website. The funerary inscription of Papirius Proculus records the death of a boy killed by a fallen roof tile. The poet Ausonius (fourth century AD) tells how his grandson was killed by a roof tile. Children must have played in the crowded streets, exposed to the dangers of falling debris and traffic accidents.

Juvenal, *Satire* 3.268–277:

> respice nunc alia ac diversa pericula noctis:
> quod spatium tectis sublimibus unde cerebrum
> testa ferit, quotiens rimosa et curta fenestris
> vasa cadant, quanto percussum pondere signent
> et laedant silicem, possis ignavus haberi
> et subiti casus improvidus, ad cenam si
> intestatus eas: adeo tot fata, quot illa
> nocte patent vigiles te praetereunte fenestrae.
> ergo optes votumque feras miserabile tecum,
> ut sint contentae patulas defundere pelves.

Martial

The quotation from Martial has been edited (by omitting a few words) to make it possible for students to understand the Latin. If the students have read the story **Sabīna**, they will have met all the vocabulary other than **errās**; they have, however, met the 2nd person singular form of the verb. If they question the word order in **clāmōsā in Subūrā,** tell them that, as in English, the word order of Latin poetry is less fixed than prose. The full quotation is:

> **dum tū forsitan inquiētus errās**
> **clāmōsā, Iuvenālis, in Subūrā**
>
> *While you, Juvenal, are perhaps wandering restlessly in the noisy Subura*

Martial *Epigrams* 12.18.1–2

Further information

The Subura was a district of Rome close to the centre, just north of the Roman Forum, in the valley between the Viminal and the Esquiline Hills. Although in Rome rich and poor generally lived side by side, some districts, especially the Esquiline and Palatine Hills, were more upper-class: the emperor and the wealthy elite had their town houses there. Most of the residents of the Subura were poor. However, it is known that a few high-ranking people lived there. Julius Caesar had a house in the Subura and Martial mentions a consul, Stella, who lived there (*Epigrams* 12.3).

Language note 1: Who's doing what? (p. 14)

If possible, ensure that the students have already explored at least some of the ideas covered in this note before they approach it. See 'Linguistic review 'for the story **Sabīna** (above) for ideas.

In paragraph 1, ask the students which **two** features help us to see that **I** am doing something in the sentence (**ego** and **-ō**). Repeat with **tū** and **-s**. You may wish to explain to the students that **ego** and **tū** aren't strictly necessary and that the **-ō** and **-s** endings are sufficient to indicate who is carrying out the action, or you may choose to leave that for now.

In paragraphs 3 and 4 pay particular attention to the three possible translations of **est**.

There is no need here to introduce the terminology of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd persons unless you wish to do so.

If the students ask about the plural forms of the verb, confirm that they will meet them in subsequent chapters (3rd person plural in Chapter 3; 1st and 2nd persons plural in Chapter 4).

Language note 1+ extension activity (online)

This activity investigates the forms of the first three persons of the present tense of the four main conjugations. You may wish to use the extension activities with the whole class or with a smaller number of students.

Language practice (p. 14)

Exercise 1: practice in translating sentences with verbs (other than **esse**) in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular, present tense. **ego** and **tū** are supplied. Encourage the students to supply '*a* 'or '*the*', and discuss the difference in meaning between '*I live in an apartment block* 'and '*I live in the apartment block*'.

Sample translations

a. I live in a block of flats/apartment building.
b. You work in a bar.
c. Sabina enters.
d. I read in the room.
e. You are not sleeping.
f. I work.

Exercise 2: practice in translating sentences with **sum**, **es** and **est**. Again, **ego** and **tū** are supplied. In (b) and (d) the students may need to be reminded to make their translations sound natural.

Sample translations

a. I am in the block of flats/apartment building.
b. The businessman is in the Subura.
c. You are in the bar.
d. The Subura is not quiet.

Image
It isn't necessary at this stage to go into any details about the Forum, as students will learn about it in Chapter 2. For now it will be sufficient for them to know that the Forum was like a public square in the centre of a city.

The population of the city of Rome (p. 15)

This section introduces students to some basic numbers for the composition and size of the population of ancient Rome. Both the size and the composition of the population of Rome are still contested; guesses as to the percentage of the population that was made up by slaves, immigrants, women, children and freedmen are derived from sparse evidence that is hard to interpret. The quotation from Seneca is taken from *To Helvia*, 6 (abridged):

> aspice agedum hanc frequentiam, cui uix urbis inmensae tecta sufficiunt: maxima pars istius turbae patria caret. ex municipiis et coloniis suis, ex toto denique orbe terrarum confluxerunt: alios adduxit ambitio, alios necessitas officii publici, alios imposita legatio, alios luxuria opportunum et opulentum uitiis locum quaerens, alios liberalium studiorum cupiditas, alios spectacula; quosdam traxit amicitia, quosdam industria laxam ostendendae uirtuti nancta materiam … 'unde domo' quisque sit quaere: uidebis maiorem partem esse quae relictis sedibus suis uenerit in maximam quidem ac pulcherrimam urbem, non tamen suam.

Population size: the grain dole

Although the Romans kept a census, and possibly a population register, that would have detailed very precisely who lived where, none of these records have survived. The total population of the city is calculated on the basis of the grain dole (the handout that citizens living in the city received), dating from the Augustan period. These grain dole figures suggest that in the most inclusive distributions 320,000 people might have received grain. These would be free, male, citizens, so the number is usually multiplied by two to account for their dependants (wives and children), to guess at a figure of about 640,000 for the size of the **plēbs frūmentāria**. However, recipients of the grain dole did not include foreigners and slaves, and probably also excluded wealthier families who may not have registered for the dole.

Students might enjoy an activity interpreting the grain dole figures for themselves and debating how to extrapolate from it, and which difficulties the figures present, such as:

- Who did and did not receive the dole? Might there have been a cap?
- The numbers recorded vary wildly (between 150,000 and 320,000) - why might this have been? What could this tell us? (One guess is that the lower figure excludes freedmen, and the higher includes it.)

- How many dependants, on average, might a free male citizen have had? Is multiplying the number of male citizens by two sufficient?
- Can we extrapolate from figures from Augustus' time to Nero's time safely?

It is questionable whether the city could have grown significantly in the decades and centuries following the reign of Augustus. The limits of the city as seen from the archaeological record indicate that one million people would have made for a very densely populated city already, when considering the parts of the city that we know were made up by imperial residences, fora, parks, baths and temples. A population much over one million would have struggled to be accommodated in the available remaining space.

Evidence bias

While we have good evidence for the number of elite families living in Rome (number of political offices held, plentiful epigraphic evidence for this segment of the population, percentage of the city made up by rich **domūs**), they made up a relatively small percentage of the total population. The vast majority of the population was made up of freeborn citizens, freedmen and freedwomen, immigrants and slaves. It is much harder to guess at their numbers, but by working from a figure for the total population, then subtracting the elite figures, some gross numbers can be estimated.

Composition of the population

The percentage of the population which was made up of slaves and freedmen can only be guessed at, but epigraphical records illuminate the great number of freedmen who made up the population (recognized through their distinctive names), and from there the number of slaves can be estimated too, even if with only limited confidence.

The number of immigrants who lived in Rome is also contested, and is particularly hard to calculate given that the epigraphic record does not tend to preserve people's geographic origins. Certainly some Romans perceived the city to be full of foreigners, leading to the conclusion that they made up a significant part of the population:

> *One day would not be sufficient to enumerate the number of cities within heavenly Rome.* (Athenodorus 120c)

> **cīvitās ex nātiōnum conventū cōnstitūta**
> *A city made up of the joining of nations* (Quintus Tullius Cicero, *Handbook on Electioneering* 54)

> **omnēs Rōma quās tenet gentēs**
> *Rome which contains within it all peoples* (Martial, *Epigrams* 8.61)

> **quae tam sēposita est, quae gēns tam barbara, Caesar, ex quā spectātor nōn sit in urbe tuā?**
> *What people is so remote or barbaric that a spectator from there can't be found in your city, Caesar?* (Martial, *On the Spectacles* 3)

> **[Rōma] quae velutī commūnis potest dicī.**
> *[Rome] which may in a sense be said to belong to all.* (Seneca, *To Helvia* 2-3)

Students may find it interesting to compare and contrast these quotations and work out what they might tell us about Roman conceptions of immigrants (key to such discussions will need to

be the type of people who are writing here and what is at stake for them) and comparing these ideas with contemporary attitudes to immigrants and newcomers.

More recently, isotopic data on remains from burial grounds outside of the city show a high percentage of immigrants (people who had grown up in a climate different from the Mediterranean), and from these remains scientists estimate that, if their samples are representative, well over one third of the lower-class population of the imperial city was not born there.

Image

Bust of Seneca, now on display at the Altes Museum, Berlin.

One side of a double herm, the other side is Socrates.

Story 2: Lūcīlius (p. 16)

Synopsis

It's the evening and a wealthy young nobleman, Lucilius, is travelling through the Subura in a litter. When Sabina steps in to defend a local beggar from one of his slaves, Lucilius begins to intervene, only to narrowly escape a falling roof tile.

Aims

- To introduce Lucilius and Manius, a beggar
- To establish an association between Lucilius and Sabina
- To draw attention to the dangers of life in the Subura
- To provide further practice with 1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular verbs, present tense

Teaching suggestions

You may wish to start by looking at the two images. What can we assume about the person being carried in the litter? What might be the status of the men carrying him? What does he appear to be doing? What are some of the features of the litter? How big do the students think the Roman **tegula** (*roof tile*) is? (This one is 37 cm x 30 cm and about 2.5 cm thick.) How heavy might it be? (A modern roofing tile is much smaller, but would nevertheless make a good prop for this story.) What might be the connection between Lucilius (the man in the litter) and Roman roof tiles?

Read the story aloud in class, or listen to the audio online. Do the students already have a sense of some of the storyline?

As you read or listen to the story together, try to ask questions that require the students to think beyond straight comprehension of the Latin. For example:

- In line 1, what time is 'the eighth hour' in our system of measuring time? (About 3:30 p.m.)
- In line 2, who normally works in the bar, and why might Sabina be working there now?
- In line 3, why might the slave be walking ahead of the litter?
- In line 4, how might Manius feel about the litter approaching?
- In line 8, what point is Sabina trying to make to the slave?

- In line 9, why does Lucilius get out of the litter?
- **Lūcīlius est perterritus** (line 11). How do Lucilius' and Sabina's reactions to the falling tile differ? Why might that be?
- **Lūcīlius ērubēscit. Sabīna rīdet.** (line 13). Why do you Lucilius blushes? And what does Sabina's reaction suggest?

This story lends itself to acting out. Whether or not the students do act it out, ask the students to change the narration into direct speech for characters to deliver. Look back at the first story for help if required. For example:

- **Faustus est in īnsulā.** could become **ego sum Faustus. ego sum in īnsulā.**
- **fīlia est in popīnā. Sabīna in popīnā labōrat.** could become **ego sum Sabīna. ego sum in popīnā. ego in popīnā labōrō**.

You could also add in dialogue. For example:

- How would Manius acknowledge that he is blocking the road? **ego in viā obstō.**

Discussion

Although the Subura was a mainly poor district, the wealthy travelled through it on their way between their larger residences on the Esquiline or Viminal hills and central Rome and the Forum Romanum. Our Lucilius is imagined to be the son of the Lucilius to whom the philosopher Seneca addressed his **Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium** (*Moral Letters to Lucilius*), so he is a young nobleman with powerful family connections (Seneca was an adviser to Nero).

Discussion might therefore include why Lucilius gets out of his litter when he hears or sees Sabina step in to defend Manius. Almost immediately Lucilius leaves the litter, the tile falls – was that just an accident? What was the series of events that led to Lucilius' litter being stopped? And who apparently saved Lucilius' life? What different interpretations might there be for what happened in the story?

Sample translation

Lucilius

It's the eighth hour. The Subura isn't quiet. The Subura is noisy. Faustus is in the apartment block. His daughter is in the bar. Sabina is working in the bar. A slave is in the street. The slave is walking in front of a litter. A young man is in the litter. The young man is Lucilius. A beggar is in the street. The beggar is Manius.

Manius Hello! I'm a beggar!

Slave You're in our way!

Sabina comes out of the bar.

Sabina Manius is an old man!

Lucilius gets out of the litter. By Hercules! A tile falls.

Sabina Look out!

The tile falls in the road. Lucilius is terrified.

Sabina The Subura is dangerous! Clearly you don't live in the Subura.

Lucilius blushes. Sabina laughs. Manius does not laugh.

Image

Interlocking Roman roof tiles from Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

Women at work (p. 17)

Evidence for women at work is largely confined to the funerary inscriptions of non-elite women. A good number of these survive from both Rome and Ostia, and in the latter case show women in professions ranging from midwives, wet-nurses and hairdressers (professions in which we might expect women to feature more regularly), to shopkeepers, cobblers and butchers. Graffiti from Pompeii and Herculaneum also show women cropping up in a wide variety of occupations, even if they are vastly outnumbered by men in nearly all spheres of work. Whether this is due to the Romans preferring not to talk about women working, or whether this suggests that indeed it was not common, we can only guess at. The amount of time women would have spent in domestic activities such as childrearing and making clothes should not be underestimated, whether women lived in the cities or in the country. We may assume, however, that a woman running an establishment, as Rufina does, even if it might legally be under the ownership of a male relative, was not exceptional, and was perhaps even commonplace.

An excellent introduction to some of the difficulties in interpreting evidence for women working is found in the *Romans in Focus* video *Rethinking women and work*, which is supported with ideas for classroom activities, study sheets and weblinks. Students could then debate for themselves whether or not they think Rufina's running a popina was unusual, exceptional or commonplace.

Living in an insula (pp. 18-19)

Our knowledge of Roman insulae comes from a variety of sources: archaeology, inscriptions, literary evidence and legal writings. Chapter 1 contains a selection for the students to study, and there is additional material in these Teaching notes and in the *Additional evidence: Living in an insula* study sheet on the website if teachers wish to supplement what is in the student's book.

Showing the students one of the videos linked from the website is a good way to introduce the topic. Then turn to the images in the student's book. Study the cutaway drawing on pp. 18–19, the photographs on pp. 12–13, and the picture story on pp. 7–11, especially images 2–4, 19 and 23. Discussion could include:

- What was the building like? How many storeys? What materials was it built from? Would all the rooms have windows? Would there be glass, shutters or curtains?
- What was it like to live in an insula? What amenities, such as heating, lighting and cooking facilities, were there? What furniture was there?
- Comparison between an insula and modern housing.
- How do we know what insulae were like? What evidence is there?
- As the manager of the insula, what jobs do you think Faustus might have to do?

Martial's poem about the eviction of Vacerra, in the *Additional evidence: Living in an insula* study sheet on the website, lists Vacerra's few worthless possessions, including items of furniture. As an extra activity, give students a copy and ask them to list Vacerra's possessions.

Further information

Rome solved the problem of a growing urban population not by expanding outwards but by building upwards. Only the very rich owned a self-contained house (**domus**); most people lived

in apartments. Some were quite grand sets of rooms on the ground and first floors of insulae. Higher up, units of one or two rooms were occupied by single families, sometimes divided up by wooden partitions, and sublet. At the top of the building were small cell-like rooms, often accessed by a corridor; some of these rooms would be lit only by an opening above the door onto the corridor. A single small room could have been lived in by a family or a single person, or shared between a group of men. Many free men in Rome would have been employed as manual labourers, either in construction or as porters carrying goods from the warehouses by the Tiber to the construction sites, shops and workshops in the city. Many of these urban poor would have rented temporary lodgings in a building similar to a hostel, and possibly the distinction between lodgings and a hotel/hostel was blurred. This is the conclusion that can be drawn from the scene in Petronius '*Satyricon* (81, 94-96) where Encolpius rents a room (**locus**, **cella**) in an inn (**dēversōrium**). The inn seems to have a mixture of temporary and permanent residents. Food is cooked and served on the premises, and there is a manager (**prōcūrātor īnsulae**), who is probably a freedman (he speaks in a foreign accent).

Our knowledge of Roman insulae comes from a variety of sources: archaeology, inscriptions, literary evidence and legal writings. Chapter 1 includes a selection for students to study:

- photograph of remains of an insula from Ostia;
- photograph of an oil lamp;
- photograph of a chamber pot;
- Juvenal *Satires* 3. 268-282;
- photograph of inside of an insula;
- photograph of a roof tile.

These can be supplemented by some of the additional resources on the website.

Juvenal (*Satire* 3.194 ff.) and Cicero provide evidence of poor construction and the dangers from fire. Insulae were built of brick on a timber frame, and later of brick-faced concrete. The roofs were constructed of wood, covered with flat terracotta tiles (**tēgulae**). Often there were balconies projecting from the upper floors and the streets were so narrow that the balconies touched those on the other side of the street. Some streets were so narrow that the buildings had no balconies. Generally insulae had between two and five storeys, although some were even higher. The Insula of Felicula (or Insula Felicles), built in the second century, had eight storeys but it was regarded as remarkable (Tertullian, *Against the Valentinians* 7). In the first century there were height restrictions on domestic buildings. Emperor Augustus introduced a limit of twenty-one metres, and this was reduced to eighteen metres by Trajan.

The remaining insulae in Rome and Ostia only partially survive and are difficult to interpret. The best surviving insula from Rome is the Insula dell 'Ara Coeli at the foot of the Capitoline on via Giulio Romano, which dates from the second century AD. This insula, shown in the photograph on p. 19, is not typical because it was built into the hillside and it is possible that the top storey could have been accessed directly from there. It has even been suggested that the top floor was a single large apartment - this would have been exceptional. Other scholars speculate that the top floor accommodation was similar to, or even more slum-like, than that on the fourth floor. On the ground floor there are remains of shops, with mezzanines and arched openings, as in the popina in the story **Sabīna**. On the third floor were larger apartments and above them on the fourth floor are cell-like rooms, separated by narrow corridors. The insula has been the subject of a research project based at the Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton. In 2014 a digital recording of the insula was made by means of laser scanning of the remains and a virtual record was produced. See the website for links to further information about the insula from the University of Southampton and other sources.

Most of the archaeological evidence for insulae comes from Ostia, just a few miles down the River Tiber from Rome, where archaeologists have found the remains of several insulae. However, it is difficult to determine the function of the rooms and the status of the occupants. Were they relatively poor or well-off? Some of these insulae have shop or workshop units on the ground floor, usually with a mezzanine. Others have a ground-floor apartment, the best in the building, with mosaics on the floor and paintings on the walls. The upper floors often have rows of small rooms opening off long corridors. The photograph on pp. 12-13 shows the insula known as the House of Diana, built in the time of Trajan (AD 98-117). This insula was three storeys high and was built around a central courtyard with a fountain. On the ground floor there was a communal lavatory with space for nine or ten people. The rooms on the ground and first floors were decorated with wall paintings. However, it has been suggested that this may not have been an apartment building at all; it could have been a hotel or the seat of a guild or had a religious function.

One of Faustus 'jobs is manager or landlord (**vīlicus/īnsulārius**) of an insula. Free (and former slave) middlemen such as Faustus may have been common, acting for rich owners such as Cicero. The word **vīlicus** is used by Martial (12.32.23) and Juvenal (*Satire* 3.195) to refer to the person who supervised the letting of an apartment for the owner. It is also the word used for the manager of a farm or country estate. Another term which could be used is **īnsulārius**. Petronius (*Satyricon* 95.8) describes the keeper of an insula as **īnsulārius**, but he also calls the manager of a lodging house **prōcūrātor īnsulae** (*Satyricon* 96.4). There is also evidence from tombstones of slaves employed in the imperial household to look after property - these are called **īnsulāriī**. The terms may have been interchangeable. Pomponius (*Digest* 7.8.16) says there isn't much difference between a **vīlicus** and an **īnsulārius** (**nōn multum abest ā vīlicō īnsulārius**). There is also another figure involved, the rent-collector (**exāctor ad īnsulās**), who was probably often a slave.

In **Sabīna**, the first story, we see Faustus cleaning graffiti from the wall of the insula. He may be doing this partly because the graffito is an insult to him (**Faustus est fūr**), but also the upkeep of the building was his responsibility. Faustus has a slave, Lucrio, to do some of this work. Lucrio first appears in the story **Forum Rōmānum** in Chapter 2. The presence of enslaved people in Roman society is mentioned in the section on *Coming to Rome* (p. 15).

Most insulae were owned by the very rich as an investment. For example, Cicero owned or had a part share in ownership of several insulae, including one which was part of his wife's dowry - women often owned property through inheritance or its inclusion in their dowries. In a letter to his friend Atticus, (*Letters to Atticus*, 14.9) Cicero mentions the poor state of some property he owned:

> *Two of my shops have fallen down and the rest are cracking. So not only the tenants but even the mice have migrated.*

The fictional freedman Trimalchio in Petronius '*Satyricon* owned an insula. Describing the contents of his will he says he is leaving an insula to one of his slaves along with manumission (*Cena Trimalchionis* 71.2). This indicates that some freedmen owned insulae, although they were probably more often involved at the level of managing the property for the owners.

The **vīlicus/īnsulārius** paid for the lease of the whole building, then lived in one flat with his family and sublet the other flats and rooms at a profit. There was some risk involved in acting as a middleman in this way. The **vīlicus** had to pay in advance for the lease, which would often run for one year, or several years, from 1st July. However, most of the tenants probably paid by the

week, or even by the day. Most ordinary people had a hand-to-mouth existence and would not have had the capital to pay in advance. However, they had no security of tenure and could be evicted without notice.

Some tenants, who must have been quite well-off, paid their rent as a lump sum at the end of the leasehold period. One example is Vacerra. Martial (*Epigram* 12.32) describes the eviction of Vacerra and his family, who owe two years 'rent:

> *Oh disgrace of the 1st July, Vacerra, I saw your possessions being carried away by your wife after the landlord had refused to take them in payment for two years' rent.*

Some leases were longer. An advertisement on a wall from Pompeii refers to a five year contract for properties in the Estate of Julia Felix:

> *an elegant bath suite for prestige clients, tabernae, mezzanines and upper floor apartments on a five year contract.*

(Although there were no large apartment blocks in Pompeii, there were rented properties.)

The precariousness of life in Rome is evident in Martial's poem about Vacerra. He and his family, although without the means to pay the rent, were certainly not at the bottom of the economic pile. We rarely hear the voices of the Roman poor, but sometimes they speak to us in their epitaphs. One such is Ancarenus Nothus, a forty-three-year-old former slave:

> *My bones rest peacefully.*
> *And I am not worried that I might suddenly be hungry.*
> *I don't have aching feet, I don't have to find a deposit for the rent,*
> *And I am enjoying free lodging forever.*

In this inscription (*CIL* 6.7193a) on his tomb Nothus expresses relief that he is now free from the anxieties of life: hunger, pain and finding shelter. Nothus 'ashes were buried outside the walls of Rome in a shared tomb (**columbārium**) on Via Latina. His epitaph is popularly known as 'The Tenant's Lament'.

For many of Rome's population even a shared room at the top of a slum would be unattainable. They would have slept in the streets and under bridges or found shelter in the tombs lining the roads just outside the city. And for some the only way of staying alive was by begging; there are several references to beggars and begging in Martial and Juvenal.

Eating and drinking

Rufina runs a **popīna**. Most teachers will be more familiar with the word **taberna** for 'bar 'or 'inn'. **taberna** is also a shop, a market stall, often qualified by an adjective e.g. **taberna dēversōria** (an inn accommodating lodgers), **taberna argentāria** (a banker's stall), **unguentāria taberna** (a shop selling ointments). The word **popīna** to refer to an establishment serving food and drink is found in several authors including Suetonius (*Nero* 16.2) and Juvenal (*Satires* 8.158). It differs from **taberna** (and another term, **caupōna**), and is more suitable for the place Rufina works, in that a **popīna** did not provide lodging. Some ancient authors seem to view a **popīna** with distaste as a low-class, disreputable dive, but this may reflect the upper-class disdain of most of our sources. A funerary inscription (*CIL* 14.3709) from Tibur, near Rome, for a female **popīnāria** (bar-keeper or barmaid) from the second or third century AD offers a different

perspective. The memorial was put up for Amemone by her husband who calls her 'his sweet wife 'and a 'chaste woman'.

Images

- *Roman terracotta oil lamp showing a charioteer, from the MET, in New York.*
- *Roman chamber pot, from the Musée de l'Arles antique, in Arles, France.*
- *Inside the Insula dell' Ara Coeli at the foot of the Capitoline in Rome.*
- *A stone water fountain from Pompeii, Italy.*

Language note 2: Reading Latin (p. 20)

It can be tempting to teach the students to 'find the subject, find the verb and (later) find the object'. It's an approach which tends to work while the sentences are relatively short, but it can store up trouble for later, when sentences become more complex. Instead (or at least as well) encourage the students to read Latin from left to right (as the Romans did) and get used to the information coming in a slightly different order from that of English. Adopting such an approach from the outset will enable students better to read and understand the meaning of longer Latin sentences later in the Course. It will also make the students more sensitive to Latin word order, and to occasions where an author alters the expected word order to draw attention to a particular idea or situation.

Language practice (p. 20)

This exercise provides further practice with persons of the verb (1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular).

Answers and sample translations

a. iuvenis in lectīcā dormit.
The young man is sleeping in the litter.

b. tū labōrās, soror?
Are you working, sister?

c. ego in Subūrā habitō.
I live in the Subura.

d. ego nōn sum in cellā.
I am not in the room.

e. Sabīna in viā ambulat.
Sabina walks in the street.

f. tū in īnsulā dormīs.
You are sleeping in the block of flats/apartment building.

Image

Wall painting from Herculaneum, Italy.
The painting is advertising the bar 'ad cucumas', next door to the Casa del Salone Nero (Ins. VI), Herculaneum.

Story 3: nox (p. 21)

Note

This story may be omitted if you are teaching on limited time.

Synopsis

It's night and Rufina's bar is crowded. Faustus has been drinking and is accusing his sister of charging too much for the wine, but there's someone else after their money.

Aims

- To provide further practice with 1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular verbs, present tense.
- To further demonstrate some of the dangers of life in the Subura.
- To provide further examples of **est** at the end of the sentence.

Sentence patterns

This story provides further examples of a delayed **est**, first met in **hōra prīma est.** (**Sabīna**, image 3):

- **Sabīna in cellā est.** (line 1)
- **turba in popīnā est.** (line 3)
- **fūr quoque in popīnā est.** (line 4)

While sentences containing **est** will usually follow the same word order as English, students should be aware that this won't always be the case.

Teaching suggestions

This is a short play which should not provide the students with too many difficulties. You may wish simply to read it quickly together as a class and spend no more than ten minutes on it, before moving on to another activity.

Alternatively, you might encourage the students to work in small groups and act the play out. Additional dialogue could be included as follows, both to create more speaking opportunities and to work in more 1st person verbs:

Sabīna: **ego nōn dormiō. Subūra nōn est quiēta. Subūra est clāmōsa.** (lines 1-2)

turba: **ubi est vīnum? ubi est Rūfīna?** (line 3)

fūr: **ego sum pauper. ego in viā habitō.** (line 4)

Rūfīna: **ego adsum. ego labōrō.** (line 6)

Faustus: **ego nimium nōn bibō.** (line 12)

fūr: **euge! ego nōn sum pauper!** (line 13)

Sample translation

Night

It's night. Sabina is in a room. The Subura isn't quiet. Sabina isn't asleep.

There's a crowd in the bar. Rufina is working in the bar. Faustus is drinking in the bar. A thief is also in the bar. The thief is poor.

Faustus Rufina! Where are you, sister?

Rufina What is it, brother?

Faustus There's a thief in the bar!

Rufina What? There's a thief in the bar? Where's the thief?

Faustus You're the thief! The wine is too expensive!

Rufina You're a fool, brother. The wine isn't too expensive. You're drinking too much!

Faustus blushes. The crowd laughs. The thief also laughs. The bar is noisy. The crowd isn't careful. The thief isn't poor.

Image

Wall painting of people playing dice, from Pompeii.
The painting is from a bar on the Via di Mercurio.

Rome in AD 64 (p. 22)

The events of the Course take place during the reign of Nero (AD 54 – 68).

Chapters 1 to 6 are set in the spring/summer of AD 64, before a flashback in Chapters 7-10 takes us to the revolt of Boudica in AD 61. Chapter 12 covers the Great Fire of Rome, which broke out on 19th July AD 64. The Course ends in Chapter 32 with the death of Nero in AD 68.

If the students already know that the Great Fire of Rome broke out in AD 64, you may wish to discuss it with them a little now, but otherwise it may be advisable to leave it until Chapter 12.

Activities

1. Create a timeline on the wall which you can add to as the Course progresses. Use it to help students see that BC year numbers decrease as time moves forward, whereas AD year numbers increase. Was there a year zero?
2. Split the class into groups and give each student in each group the year of a major event in history (some BC, some AD), then ask them to line up in chronological order from the earliest event to the latest. Or try this activity with the whole class (i.e. without splitting the students into groups).
3. Children are often used to the idea that a country might run an empire. Help them to see that Rome was just a city, rather than a country, running an empire by looking at the map and exploring the idea that countries as we know them did not exist at that time. What issues would a city of one million have had running an empire of (perhaps) 150 million?
4. Which modern countries lie inside (either totally or partially) the Roman Empire as it stood in AD 64? Have the students create a map of the modern countries of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and then shade in the area that lay under the Empire. You

could extend this activity by asking the students to investigate the official languages of the modern countries.

5. Build on the idea that AD stands for Anno Domini by asking the students to research other Latin abbreviations that we use. Create an area of wall or board space for the students to put them up on Post-it Notes.
6. Split the students into four or five groups (depending on whether or not you want them to research Nero) and set each group a project to research one of the emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and (perhaps) Nero. You could also add in Julius Caesar with the aim of helping the students to see that he *wasn't* an emperor. The students could make wall displays, social media accounts and/or websites about their emperor, or give a presentation to the class.
7. If Augustus was the first emperor in 27 BC, but Rome was founded in 753 BC, how was it ruled before there were emperors? Students could research and present on the kings and the Republic in general terms, although there will be time for more detailed study of these periods later in the Course.
8. Nero became emperor at the age of sixteen and was advised in his role by his mother (Agrippina) and advisors such as Seneca. What advice would the students give to an emperor? The students could write diary entries from the point of view of Agrippina or Seneca, talking about the advice they are giving to Nero, or write from Nero's point of view, about how it feels to be the sole ruler, not only of a city of one million people, but also of an entire empire of about 150 million stretching from northern Africa to southern Britain and from modern day Portugal (Lusitania) to Syria.

Image

Gold aureus with the head of Nero, from the MET, New York.
On the other side is the text IVPPITER CVSTOS, and an image of Jupiter seated holding a thunderbolt and sceptre.

Further reading

Beard, Mary *Pompeii: the Life of a Roman Town* (Profile Books, 2008)

Beard, Mary *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (Profile books, 2015)

Carcopino, Jerome *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: the People and the City at the Height of the Empire* (1941; repr. Pelican Books, 1956; Carcopino Press, 2007)

Connolly, Peter and Dodge, Hazel *The Ancient City: Life in Classical Athens and Rome* (Oxford University Press, 1998)

