

ROMAN INSULTS (AS TOLD BY LAURA GIBBS)

Latin insults were a basic part of Roman life, and they are also a great way to practice your Latin grammar. Given that insulting language is usually directed at another person, it gives you practice with the vocative and different noun forms. For example, "stulte!", "you idiot!" is the vocative form of stultus, idiot. The superlative also comes in handy: "stultissime!", "you total idiot!" -- but you have to get your gender right. If you are speaking to a woman, the form of this adjective is stultissima! The same is true for nouns: sometimes there is a masculine form, like ructator, a guy who burps -- or ructatrix, a woman who burps. You can also make group insults, using plurals instead of singulars: "stultissimi!", "you total idiots!" Insults are also good for practicing verb forms too, especially imperatives - and also subjunctives. This is because you can give commands in the imperative, "tace!", "shut up!", and also in the subjunctive, "taceas!", "shut up!" So, make sure you get your grammar right... or else you will turn out to be stultus (or stulta...) - this handout should help give you some ways to get off to a good start.

<i>cucurbita!</i> you pumpkin!	<i>asine!</i> donkey!	<i>stulte!</i> idiot!
<i>fungi!</i> you mushrooms! (for group insults)	<i>nebulo!</i> trash!	<i>fatue!</i> fool!
<i>caudex!</i> you blockhead! (stump)	<i>nugator!</i> pipsqueak!	<i>stolide!</i> dummy!
<i>frutices!</i> you blockheads! (frutex = bush)	<i>vappa!</i> scum! (sour wine)	<i>malum!</i> jerk! (malum is neuter: bad <u>thing</u>)
<i>matula!</i> you blockhead! (pot)	<i>nugator ac nebulo!</i> trashy pipsqueak!	<i>malus nequamque!</i> no-good jerk!
<i>bucco! buccones!</i> you big-mouth! big mouths!	<i>vappa ac nebulo!</i> scumbag!	<i>pessime et nequissime!</i> totally no-good jerk!
<i>ructuose!</i> belcher! (full of burps; ructus is burp)	<i>spurce!</i> filthy!	<i>caenum!</i> filth!
<i>ructabunde!</i> gas bag! (full of burps, big burper)	<i>spurcissime!</i> totally filthy!	<i>stercoreus!</i> stinky! (manure-smell)
<i>ructatrix!</i> womanish gas bag! ("burp-ress")	<i>spurcifer!</i> scumbucket! ("filth-bearer")	<i>sterculinum publicum!</i> you public toilet! (public manure heap)
<i>oraputide!</i> bad breath! (mouth-stinker)	<i>impure!</i> nasty!	<i>luteus!</i> filthy! (muddy)
<i>homo putide!</i> stinker!	<i>impudice! impudens!</i> shameless!	<i>lutulente!</i> filthy! (muddy)
<i>tramas putidas!</i> stinking trash!	<i>propudium!</i> disgrace!	<i>pediculose!</i> full of lice! lousy! (pedis = louse)

One of the most interesting aspects of Roman insults is their connection with slavery and criminal culture. Many insults are based on the Roman idea of "scelus," which roughly means "crime" in English, but scelus also has deeper connotations: a scelus is a kind of pure wickedness, an outrageous violation of the moral order. This is hard to translate into English, but the insults sure sound good in Latin: you can just call some a "scelus!", or "sceleste!", or "scelerum caput!". Other insults are based on punishments that were inflicted on criminals and rebellious slaves, especially whippings and crucifixion.

scelus! outrageous! (literally, "crime")	verbero! hangdog! (whipping boy)	fugitive! jailbird! (run-away slave)
sceleris plenissime! totally outrageous! ("most full of crime")	verberabilis! hangdog! (whip-able)	fur! trifur! thief! triple-thief!
scelerum caput! completely outrageous! (chief of crimes)	verberabilissime! total hangdog! (most whip-able)	furcifer! trifurcifer! gallows-bird! triple-gallows-bird!
scelerose! sceleste! outrageous!	flagritriba! hangdog! (wearer-out-of-whips)	cruciarus! gallows-bird! (someone to be crucified)
scelestas! scelestissima! outrageous! (fem. vocatives)	mastigia! hangdog! (whips)	legirupa! law-breaker!

And here are some more insults for you to use - what a great way to practice imperatives and subjunctives and other verb forms!

tace! shut up!	taceas! shut up! (subjunctive for imperative)
bliteus belua es! you're a beastly idiot!	tace atque abi! shut up and go away!
nequam quidem es! you are really no good!	supprime tuum stultiloquium! stop your blathering!
frustra es homo! you're a worthless sort of person!	nugas garris! you're talking nonsense!
nihil nequius est te! there's nothing that is more useless than you!	nugae! gerrae! fabulae! nonsense! poppycock! fiddlesticks!
nihil spurcius est te! there's nothing that is more filthy than you!	somnias! you've got to be kidding! (you're dreaming)
quis est haec simia? who is this monkey?	dormis! dream on! (you're dreaming)

abi igitur! so go away!	vapula! vapules! go hang yourself! (go get whipped)	vae te! vae tibi! woe is you!
amove te! get yourself out of here!	vapulabis! you're in for a whipping!	Iuppiter te perdat! damn you!
vah apage te a me! go on, get away from me!	i in malam crucem! go to hell! (go to the bad cross)	te Iuppiter dique omnes perdant! Juppiter and all the gods damn you!
abi sis, belua! just go away, you beast!	fugite in malam crucem! get the hell out of here!	mihi molestus ne sis! don't bother me!