

METER: fifth asclepiadean (a "greater" asclepiadean line that adds an extra choriamb (— — — — —) to the regular line). The pattern is: — — — — — || — — — — || — — — — —. Note that this longer line has two diaereses.

- 1 **Tū nē quaesieris**: "Please don't ask" (the perfect subjunctive with **nē** is a more personal way of making a negative command than **nōlī** with the infinitive). Horace is addressing Leuconoe (2). **nefās**: supply **est**. **quem . . . finem** (2): = **quem (finem) mihi, quem finem tibi. . .**
- 2 ***dī**: = **deī** (nominative plural). **dederint**: what mood, tense, and construction? **Leuconoē, Leuconoēs** (f), the literal meaning of this name in Greek is "white-minded." Other possible meanings in the context of this poem are "clear-minded" or "simpleminded." **nec**: = **et nē**. **Babylōnius, -a, -um**, Babylonian. **Babylōniōs . . . numerōs** (3): Babylonian astrologers were well known for their "numerical" calculations and predictions of the future.
- 3 **temptāris**: = **temptāveris**. Same use of the perfect subjunctive with **nē** as in line 1. **Ut melius**: "How much better" (+ infinitive). **quicquid erit**: object of **patī**. **quicquid**: neuter nominative singular, "whatever." **patior, patī** (3), **passus sum**, to endure, accept.
- 4 **tribuō, tribuere** (3), **tribui, tribūtum**, to assign, allot. **ultimus, -a, -um**, final, last. **ultimam**: supply **hiemem**.
- 5 **quae**: what is the antecedent? What gender, number, and case is **quae**? **oppositis . . . pūmicibus**: "upon the opposing pumice rocks." **dēbilitō** (1), to weaken, wear down. **pūmex, pūmicis** (m), pumice, a soft volcanic rock commonly used for smoothing surfaces (see the note to line 8 in Catullus 22). Pumice would be worn away more easily by the sea than another type of rock such as granite. Horace, possibly, is suggesting that the rocks, in addition to the sea, are being worn down.
- 6 **Tyrrhēnus, -a, -um**, Tyrrhenian (name of the sea west of Italy, also called the Etruscan or Tuscan Sea). **sapiō, sapere** (3), **sapivī**, to be sensible, be wise. In what mood are **sapiās, liquēs, and resecēs** in lines 6–7? Why? **liquō** (1), to remove sediment from, strain. **spatium, -ī** (n), space, length (of time). **spatiō brevī**: "with space (allotted for our hopes) being short," "with the length of time (for our lives) being short."
- 7 **resecō** (1), to cut back, prune. **invidus, -a, -um**, envious, jealous, greedy.
- 8 ***aetās, aetātis** (f), age, (here) time. **carpō, carpere** (3), **carpsī, carptum**, to pluck, seize, grasp, enjoy. **quam minimum**: "as little as possible." **crēdulus, -a, -um** (+ *dat.*), trusting in. **posterum, -ī** (n), the future, time to come, next day.

Carpe Diem.

The following poem expresses a popular request in Western literature, that a young woman indulge in the present and not put enjoyment off to a future time. In lines 1–3, what is Horace urging Leuconoe not to do? What reason(s) would he have for telling her this?

- 1 Tū nē quaesieris, scīre nefās, quem mihi, quem tibi
- 2 finem dī dederint, Leuconoē, nec Babylōniōs
- 3 temptāris numerōs. Ut melius, quicquid erit, patī,
- 4 seu plūrēs hiemēs, seu tribuit Iuppiter ultimam,
- 5 quae nunc oppositis dēbilitat pūmicibus mare
- 6 Tyrrhēnum. Sapiās, vīna liquēs, et spatiō brevī
- 7 spem longam resecēs. Dum loquimur, fūgerit invida
- 8 aetās: carpe diem, quam minimum crēdulā posterō.

1. What do the words *hiemēs* and *ultimam* in line 4 stand for in terms of human life? What effect does the winter have on the sea? What could the sea symbolize in this situation? Try to explain the strange inversion that Horace makes, that the sea does not wear down the rocks but instead is worn down against the rocks.
2. What advice does Horace give to Leuconoe in lines 6–7? Specifically, what activity is meant by the words *vīna liquēs* (6)? The original meaning of the verb *sapere* is “to taste,” and the verb *resecāre* means “to cut back.” How do these two words reinforce the message contained in the phrase *vīna liquēs*?
3. Why is time called *invida* in line 7? What tense is *fūgerit* and why is this choice of tense significant?
4. The root meaning of the verb *carpere* is “to pluck.” Why is it a good choice of words for the pithy and famous expression, *carpe diem*?
5. Read the poem in meter. Is it slow or fast? Why does the beat work well with the message of the poem?
6. Compare and contrast Horace’s entreaty to Leuconoe here with Catullus’ plea to Lesbia in poem 5. Which poem is more direct? How do you account for your answer?
7. Read the following well-known poem by Robert Herrick (1591–1674). To whom is it addressed? What is requested of them? How is that request different from those contained in Horace I.11 and Catullus 5? Where else, especially in the use of words and images that suggest the passage of time, is this poem different from those of Horace and Catullus?

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may:
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he’s a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he’s to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times, still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while ye may, go marry:
For, having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.