Perfect Tense Verbs; Perfect Stem, Perfect Tense Active of All Conjugations; Perfect Tense of *Sum* and *Possum*; Dative of Possession

Oil painting of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. Jean Baptiste Genillon (1750–1829).

MEMORĀBILE DICTŪ

Quid sī nunc caelum ruat?

"What if the sky should fall now?" (Terence, *The Self-Tormentor* 719)

A proverbial saying for anything regarded as improbable and beyond our power.

READING

Born into a wealthy northern Italian family in about 61 CE, Gāius Plīnius Caecilius Secundus is known to us as Pliny, and specifically as Pliny the Younger, to distinguish him from his uncle and adopted father Pliny the Elder (ca. 23/24–79 CE). His career in public administration culminated in his governorship of Bithynia, a province in what is today Turkey. He appears to have died in around 112–113 CE.

An individual of immense learning and oratorical talent, Pliny has left us ten books of letters that offer a vivid picture of upper-class life during the Roman Empire at the height of its prosperity and power.

The following passage is an adapted and abbreviated version of the sixteenth letter in his sixth book of letters. Here he describes the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, which destroyed the towns of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae on the Bay of Naples in 79 CE. In this letter he also relates the death of his uncle, author of the *Historia Natūrālis*, "Natural History," a multi-volume encyclopedia of lore about the human as well as natural world.

DĒ MONTIS VESUVIĪ INCENDIŌ

1 Avunculus meus Mīsēnī erat classis praefectus. Eō diē, quō tantae
   clādis initium fuit, avunculus forīs iacēbat librīsque studēbat. Māter
   mea eī nūbem subitō ostendit novam et inūsitātam, quae in caelō prope
   montem Vesuvium vidēbātur esse. Nūbēs fōrmam habuit similem

5 fōrmae, quam in arboribus saepe vidēmus. Nam summa nūbēs in
   multās partēs sīcut in rāmōs sēparābātur. Avunculus, homō rērum
   nātūrae valdē studiōsus, causam nūbis intellegere cupīvit. Iussit igitur
   nāvēs parārī: nam ad lītus nāvigāre cupīvit, quod est prope montem
   Vesuvium. Deinde nauta epistulam avunculō dedit. "Fēmina," inquit

10 nauta, "quae prope montem Vesuvium habitat, epistulam ad tē mīsit."
   Avunculus epistulam lēgit et statim intellēxit in monte Vesuviō esse
   incendium magnum: fēminam perīculum timēre nāvibusque fugere
   cupere. Animus fortis avunculō erat. Cōnsilium igitur novum cēpit. Ad
   hominēs nāvigāre dēcrēvit, quī prope montem Vesuvium habitābant, et

15 eōs perīculō magnō līberāre. Nam saxa et cinerēs calidī ē caelō in eōs
   cadēbant. Illūc igitur nāvigāvit, sed numquam revēnit. Ibi enim fūmus
   fūnestus et cinerēs eum cum multīs aliīs oppressērunt.

READING VOCABULARY

*avunculus, avunculī, *m.* – uncle

*caelum, caelī, *n.* – sky, heaven, weather

calidus, calida, calidum – hot

*causa, causae, *f.* – cause, reason

cēpit cōnsilium – he made a plan

*cinis, cineris, *m.* – ash

*clādēs, clādis, *f.* – disaster

*classis, classis, f. – fleet

cupīvit – wanted, desired

dēcrēvit – he decided

dedit – gave

eō diē – on that day

*fēmina, fēminae, *f.* – woman

forīs (*adv.*) – outside

fuit – was

*fūmus, fūmī, *m.* – smoke

*fūnestus, fūnesta, fūnestum – deadly

habuit – had

*igitur (*conj.*) – therefore (*usually the second word in its clause*)

illūc (*adv.*) – to that place, thither

*incendium, incendiī, *n.* – conflagration, eruption

initium, initiī, *n.* – beginning

intellēxit – understood

inūsitātus, inūsitāta, inūsitātum – strange, unusual

iussit – he ordered

*lēgit – read

*lītus, lītoris, *n.* – shore

*māter, mātris, *f.* – mother

Mīsēnum, Mīsēnī, *n.* – Misenum, *a base for the imperial Roman navy in the Bay of Naples*; **Mīsēnī** – at Misenum

mīsit – sent

*mōns, montis, *m.* – mountain

nāvigāvit – he sailed

*nāvis, nāvis, *f.* – ship

*nūbēs, nūbis, *f.* – cloud

*numquam (*adv.*) – never

*oppressērunt – overwhelmed, suppressed

ostendit – pointed out

*pars, partis, *f.* – part

praefectus, praefectī, *m.* – prefect, commander, chief

rāmus, rāmī, *m.* – branch

rērum nātūra, nātūrae, *f.* – nature

revēnit – he returned

*studeō, studēre, studuī, —— + *dative* – to study, be eager for, be interested in

studiōsus, studiōsa, studiōsum + *genitive* – interested in, a student of

summus, summa, summum – the top of

Vesuvius, Vesuviī, *m.* – (Mt.) Vesuvius

*Words marked with an asterisk will need to be memorized later in the chapter.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What event interrupted the studies of Pliny's uncle?

2. What did Pliny's uncle decide to do?

3. What changed his mind?

4. What happened to Pliny's uncle at the end of the story?

LANGUAGE FACT I

PERFECT TENSE VERBS

In the Latin reading passage there are some new forms of verbs already treated in earlier chapters. These are forms of the perfect tense, a tense that refers primarily to past time:

> *cēpit* "s/he/it took" (perfect tense of *capiō*)
>
> *dedit* "s/he/it gave" (perfect tense of *dō*)
>
> *fuit* "s/he/it was" (perfect tense of *sum*)
>
> *habuit* "s/he/it had" (perfect tense of *habeō*)

In the same passage there are also perfect tense forms of verbs that have not appeared in previous chapters.

> *lēgit* "s/he read" (perfect tense of *legō*)

The meaning of the perfect differs in subtle ways from the imperfect—the past tense introduced in Chapter 11. While the imperfect tense refers to a **continuing** action or state in the past, the perfect indicates either a single act in the past or a **completed** action.

For example, *dīcēbat* means "s/he was saying" (i.e., a continuing action), but *dīxit* (the same verb in the perfect tense) usually means "s/he said" or "s/he did say" (once and for all).

But the perfect has yet another distinctive meaning. It can refer to an action completed just before the present time. In English the auxiliary verb "have" or "has" indicates this distinction. In Latin this nuance is clear from the context (e.g., adverbs may indicate that an action has just been completed). In the following sentences the verb *legere* ("to read") is used in the imperfect tense and in both meanings of the perfect tense.

> *Librum legēbat.* "S/he was reading the book."
>
> *Librum legēbat. Deinde dīxit: "Librum tandem lēgī."* "S/he was reading the book. Then s/he said: 'At last I have read the book.'"
>
> *Librum lēgit.* "S/he read the book."

When the past action is negative, or is to be emphasized, "did" is used in the translation.

> *Librum nōn lēgī.* "I did not read the book."
>
> *Librum lēgī.* "I did read the book."

▶ EXERCISE 1

Find and translate nine more perfect tense forms from the Latin reading passage.

VOCABULARY TO LEARN

NOUNS

avunculus, avunculī, *m.* – uncle

caelum, caelī, *n.* – sky, heaven, weather

causa, causae, *f.* – cause, reason

cinis, cineris, *m.* – ash

clādēs, clādis, *f.* – disaster

classis, classis, *f.* – fleet, class (of people)

fēmina, fēminae, *f.* – woman

fūmus, fūmī, *m.* – smoke

incendium, incendiī, *n.* – conflagration, eruption

lītus, lītoris, *n.* – shore

māter, mātris, *f.* – mother

mōns, montis, *m.* – mountain

nāvis, nāvis, *f.* – ship

nūbēs, nūbis, *f.* – cloud

pars, partis, *f.* – part

ADJECTIVE

fūnestus, fūnesta, fūnestum – deadly

VERBS

legō, legere, lēgī, lēctum – to read, choose

opprimō, opprimere, oppressī, oppressum – to overwhelm, suppress

studeō, studēre, studuī, —— + *dative* – to study, be eager for, be interested in

ADVERB

numquam – never

CONJUNCTION

igitur – therefore (*usually the second word in its clause*)

▶ EXERCISE 2

Find the English derivatives based on the Vocabulary to Learn in the following sentences. Write the corresponding Latin word.

1. Celestial phenomena greatly interest me.

2. Archaeologists found several cinerary urns at that site.

3. These people are introducing a totally subjective mode of thinking in which causality plays no role.

4. Terrible destruction was caused in the city by incendiary bombs.

5. Naval architecture is a very exacting science.

6. Karl Marx advocated an entire philosophy of history based on class conflict.

7. Your teacher has a very avuncular manner.

8. The littoral region here sustains a wide variety of plant and animal life.

9. This part of the hospital is the maternity ward.

10. Underprivileged people in the Roman world were cruelly oppressed.

11. The gender of this noun is feminine.

12. The carpet in the apartment was so dirty it had to be fumigated.

13. Why were you not present at the lecture?

14. I agree with you only partially.

15. I will be a lifelong student.

▶ EXERCISE 3

Translate each sentence with special attention to the previously discussed meanings of the perfect tense verb in parentheses.

Example: "Perīculum nōn intellēxī (first person singular), sed nunc intellegō," inquit avunculus. "Iam igitur dēcrēvī (first person singular) ad hominēs, quī prope montem habitant, nāvigāre."
"I did not understand the danger, but now I understand <it>," said uncle. "Therefore I have already decided to sail to the people who live near the mountain."

1. Nautae prope lītus manēbant. Caelum semper cōnspiciēbant. Deinde cōnsilium cēpērunt (third person plural). Nāvem parāre dēcrēvērunt (third person plural).

2. Epistulam ad hominēs, quī in viā exspectābant, statim mīsimus (first person plural), et eōs ad nōs venīre iussimus (first person plural).

3. Nautās exspectābāmus. Nunc eōrum nāvēs vidēre possumus. "Nautae," inquit amīcus meus, "vēnērunt (third person plural)!"

LANGUAGE FACT II

PERFECT STEM, PERFECT TENSE ACTIVE OF ALL CONJUGATIONS

The perfect is not only distinctive in its meaning; it has a series of forms that are very distinctive too.

You have already learned that **the principal parts** of a verb are used to make different verb forms. Most verbs have four principal parts. The first and second principal parts are important for the present, imperfect, and future tenses discussed in previous chapters. But the forms of the perfect active tense are derived from the **third** principal part of any verb.

Below are the principal parts of a verb from each conjugation. Note carefully the third principal part: this principal part is the form of the first person singular of the perfect active indicative.

> First conjugation: parō, parāre, **parāvī,** parātum – I prepare
> Second conjugation: teneō, tenēre, **tenuī,** tentum – I hold
> Third conjugation: dīcō, dīcere, **dīxī,** dictum – I say
> Fourth conjugation: audiō, audīre, **audīvī,** audītum – I hear
> Third conjugation (–*iō*): capiō, capere, **cēpī,** captum – I take

Learning the perfect forms is much easier than it might at first appear, because the perfect active endings are the same for **all** four conjugations. These endings are added to the perfect stem, which is found by dropping the –*ī* found in the third principal part.

Here are some general patterns for forming the perfect stem:

- Many first conjugation verbs form their perfect stem by adding –*v*– after the –*ā*– in the present stem (*parāvī*).

- Many fourth conjugation verbs form their perfect stem by adding –*v*– to the –*ī*– in the present stem (*audīvī*).

- Many second conjugation verbs have a perfect stem that ends in –*u*– before the –*ī* of the perfect ending (as in *tenuī* above).

None of these patterns is absolutely consistent.

Remember: add the same endings to the perfect stem of any verb, regardless of conjugation. Here is the perfect active of *parō* and *capiō*. Since the endings are the same, you do not need to learn different paradigms for all conjugations.

Perfect Active: *parō*			
		Singular	
First person	parāv-ī	parāv**ī**	I prepared, did prepare (or) I have prepared
Second person	parāv-istī	parāv**istī**	you prepared, did prepare (or) you have prepared
Third person	parāv-it	parāv**it**	s/he/it prepared, did prepare (or) s/he/it has prepared
		Plural	
First person	parāv-imus	parāv**imus**	we prepared, did prepare (or) we have prepared
Second person	parāv-istis	parāv**istis**	you prepared, did prepare (or) you have prepared
Third person	parāv-ērunt	parāv**ērunt**	they prepared, did prepare (or) they have prepared

Perfect Active: *capiō*			
		Singular	
First person	cēp-ī	cēp**ī**	I took, did take (or) I have taken
Second person	cēp-istī	cēp**istī**	you took, did take (or) you have taken
Third person	cēp-it	cēp**it**	s/he/it took, did take (or) s/he/it has taken
		Plural	
First person	cēp-imus	cēp**imus**	we took, did take (or) we have taken
Second person	cēp-istis	cēp**istis**	you took, did take (or) you have taken
Third person	cēp-ērunt	cēp**ērunt**	they took, did take (or) they have taken

STUDY TIP

When you learn a new verb, learn all four principal parts. The endings of the perfect active are themselves very simple, and the same for all the conjugations.

► EXERCISE 4

Change each infinitive into the perfect active form indicated in parentheses. Translate the changed form.

Example: iubēre (perfect active second person singular)
iussistī   you ordered/did order/have ordered

1. sēparāre (perfect active third person plural)

2. legere (perfect active first person plural)

3. discēdere (perfect active third person singular)

4. tangere (perfect active second person singular)

5. ārdēre (perfect active third person plural)

6. respondēre (perfect active second person plural)

7. cadere (perfect active second person singular)

8. dēlēre (perfect active third person plural)

9. opprimere (perfect active third person singular)

10. neglegere (perfect active first person plural)

11. stāre (perfect active third person plural)

Daylight view of Pompeii's forum, with its Capitoline Temple flanked by triumphal arches, with Mt. Vesuvius in the background.
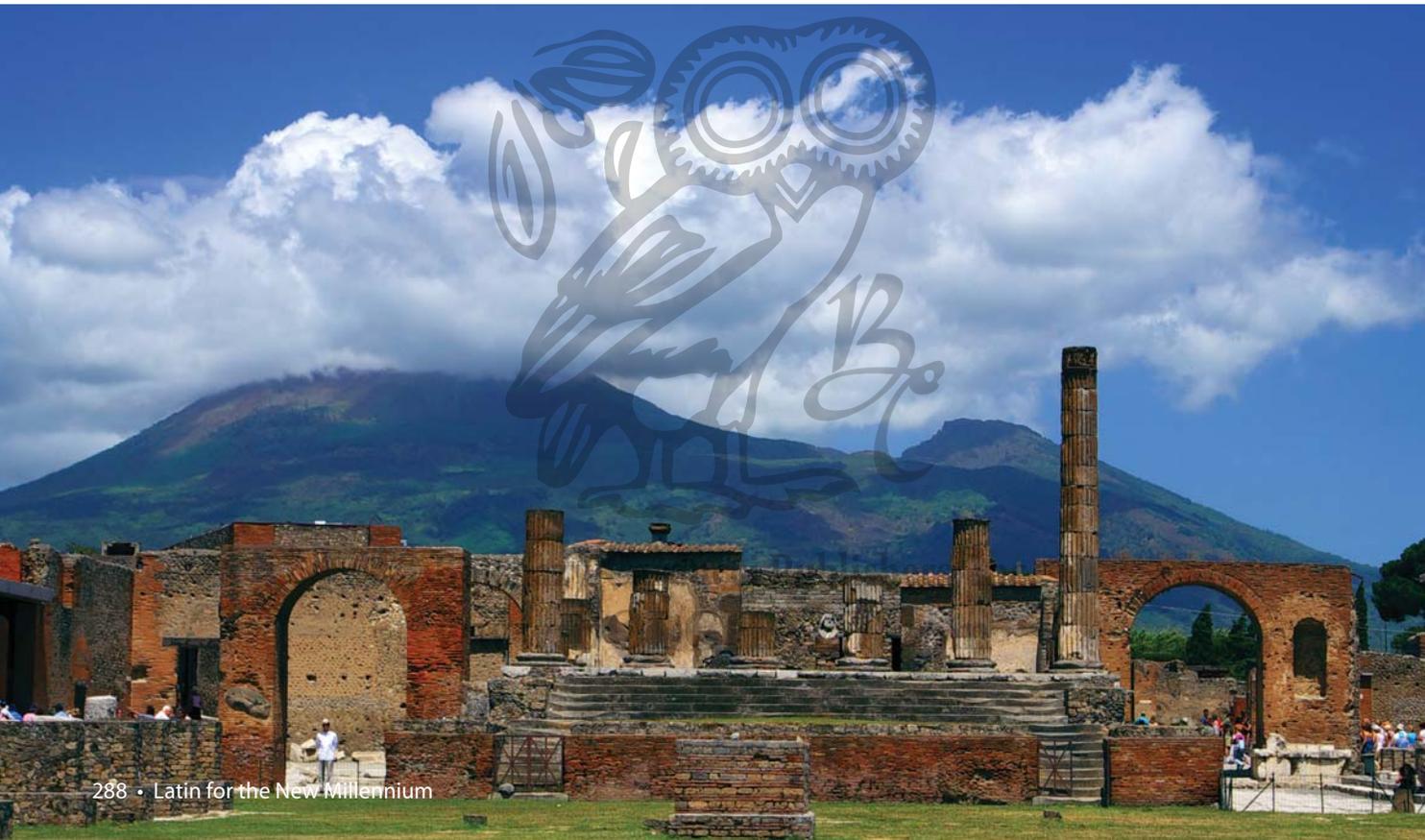
▶ EXERCISE 5

Change the following present tense verbs into the perfect, keeping the same person and number. Translate the changed sentence. The Reading Vocabulary may be consulted.

Example: Ad hominēs nāvigāre dēcernō.
Ad hominēs nāvigāre dēcrēvī.   I decided to sail to the people.

1. Ego et avunculus librōs legimus.

2. Nūbem novam in caelō cōnspicimus.

3. Hominēs rērum nātūrae studiōsī causam nūbis novae intellegunt.

4. Dīcit nauta: "Mē iubēs nāvēs statim parāre."

5. Perīculum valdē timētis. Novum igitur cōnsilium capere dēbētis.

6. Saxa et cinerēs calidī ē caelō subitō cadunt.

7. Eōrum epistulam iam legō.

LANGUAGE FACT III

PERFECT TENSE OF *SUM* AND *POSSUM*

You have already learned the principal parts of the irregular verbs *sum* and *possum.* You will remember that they lack a fourth principal part, but each has a third principal part, which is the first person singular of the perfect tense.

> sum, esse, fuī, —— – to be
>
> possum, posse, potuī, —— – to be able

BY THE WAY
Sum and *possum* have no passive forms.

Now it is easy to supply all the forms of the perfect active for each verb.
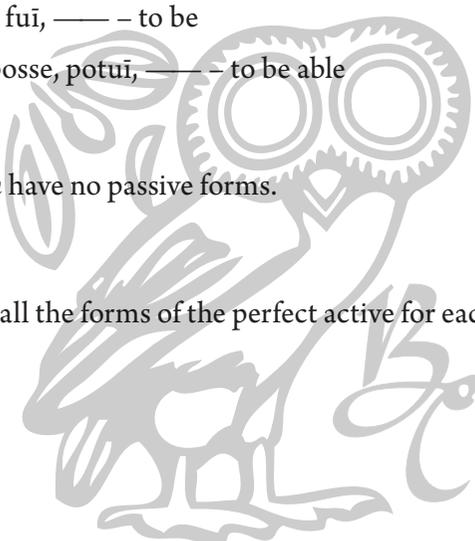
Perfect Tense of *sum*

Singular

First person	fu-ī	fu**ī**	I was (or) I have been
Second person	fu-istī	fu**istī**	you were (or) you have been
Third person	fu-it	fu**it**	s/he/it was (or) s/he/it has been

Plural

First person	fu-imus	fu**imus**	we were (or) we have been
Second person	fu-istis	fu**istis**	you were (or) you have been
Third person	fu-ērunt	fu**ērunt**	they were (or) they have been

Perfect Tense of *possum*

Singular

First person	potu-ī	potu**ī**	I was able, could (or) I have been able
Second person	potu-istī	potu**istī**	you were able, could (or) you have been able
Third person	potu-it	potu**it**	s/he/it was able, could (or) s/he/it has been able

Plural

First person	potu-imus	potu**imus**	we were able, could (or) we have been able
Second person	potu-istis	potu**istis**	you were able, could (or) you have been able
Third person	potu-ērunt	potu**ērunt**	they were able, could (or) they have been able

Statue of a dancing faun in the *impluvium* of the atrium in the House of the Faun in Pompeii.

▶ EXERCISE 6

Translate into Latin. The Reading Vocabulary may be consulted.

1. Were you (plural) able to see the stones and hot ashes in the sky?

2. At that time you were able to send a man to the people who lived near Mt. Vesuvius.

3. We were not able to read the woman's words.

4. Then there was suddenly a conflagration in the mountain.

5. I have already been able to read the letter of the woman. Now I am preparing the ships.

6. You were able to free the people from great danger.

LANGUAGE FACT IV

DATIVE OF POSSESSION

In the passage at the beginning of this chapter you might have thought the following sentence was distinctive. Here you see a usage of the dative case that has not been discussed so far.

> *Animus fortis avunculō erat.*
> My uncle had a brave spirit.

This sentence has been translated with the verb "have," even though the Latin verb "to have" is not present. The person who owns or has something may be expressed in the dative case with some form of the verb *esse* ("to be"). Here the Latin literally says "For/to my uncle there was a brave spirit." The dative of possession emphasizes the fact of possession.

Another example:

> *Mihi sunt multī librī.*
> I have many books.

BY THE WAY

You can, of course, express possession using the verb *habeō*. In this case, the dative of possession is not used:

> *Multōs librōs habeō.*
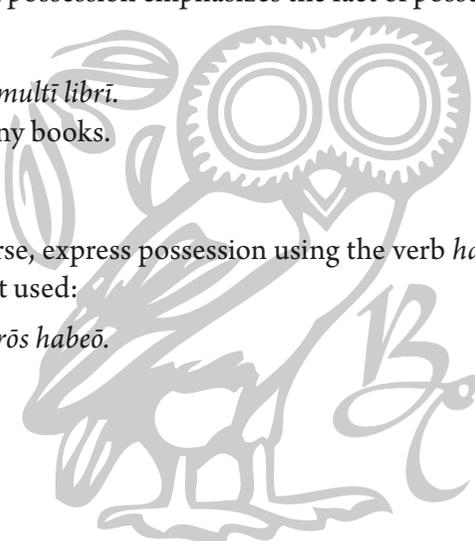
▶ EXERCISE 7

Translate into English.

1. Avunculō multī librī fuērunt, quibus per vītam suam studuit.
2. Puer verba avunculī audīvit et multōs librōs lēgit.
3. Avunculus dē clāde audīvit et cōnsilia cēpit. Nam auxilium aliīs dare dēbēbat.
4. Incendium, fūmus, cinis montem et lītus oppressērunt. Avunculō tamen animus semper fuit fortis.
5. Avunculus nautīs dīxit: "Nāvem parāvistis. Nunc classem parāte!" Nautae verba avunculī audīverunt.
6. "Nōlīte timēre!" omnibus dīxit avunculus. Sed timor multōs tenuit.

▶ EXERCISE 8

Translate into Latin in two ways, using both the verb *habeō* and the dative of possession.

Example: I have many friends.
Multōs amīcōs habeō.　　Mihi sunt multī amīcī.

1. Do you have an uncle?
2. He has a small mouth.
3. We have cruel enemies.
4. What names do you (plural) have?
5. They have rustic villas.

A street in excavated Pompeii. Note the narrow road, the sidewalk, and in the middle of the street the raised stones that allowed people to cross the road, which might be filled with water or garbage.

▶ EXERCISE 9

Translate the following passage into English. Refer to both the Reading Vocabulary and the words explained below.

Plīnius: Nūbem magnam, quae est in caelō prope montem Vesuvium, iam cōnspexit māter. Nūbemne, avuncule, vidēre potes?

Avunculus: Nūbem vidēre possum. Sum senex, sed mihi sunt oculī bonī atque validī.

Plīnius: Quae est haec nūbēs? Eius fōrma mihi vidētur esse nova. Tālis forma arboribus, nōn nūbibus esse solet.

Avunculus: Ubi prīmum māter tua nūbem mihi ostendit, eam esse inūsitātam intellēxī. Ad montem igitur nāvigāre causamque nūbis investīgāre cupīvī. Sed cōnsilium mūtāvī.

Plīnius: Cūr cōnsilium mūtāvistī?

Avunculus: Fēmina, cūius vīlla ā monte Vesuviō nōn longē est, epistulam ad mē mīsit, in quā dīxit flammās ē monte venīre: saxa cinerēsque calidōs in hominēs cadere: ibi esse perīculum magnum.

Plīnius: Tūne igitur dē hominibus, quī ibi habitant, cōgitāvistī?

Avunculus: Ita vērō.

Plīnius: Quid faciēs?

Avunculus: Illūc nāvigābō hominēsque perīculō magnō līberābō.

Plīnius: Animus tibi est fortis!

haec (*feminine demonstrative*) – this
investīgō, investīgāre, investīgāvī, investīgātum – to trace out, investigate
ita vērō – yes indeed
mūtō, mūtāre, mūtāvī, mūtātum – to change
tālis, tāle – such a
ubi prīmum – as soon as
validus, valida, validum – healthy, strong

TALKING

fēriae, fēriārum, f. pl. – vacation

fēriās agere – have a holiday

acta, actae, f. – the (sandy) seashore

aprīcor, aprīcārī – to sunbathe

assāre in crāticulā (assō, assāre, assāvī) – to barbecue

folle volātilī lūdō (lūdere, lūsī, lūsum) – to play volleyball

harēna, harēnae, f. – sand

natō, natāre, natāvī, —— – to swim

sōl, sōlis, m. – the sun

sōle adustus, adusta, adustum – suntanned

sub dīvō – in the open, under the sky

umbella, umbellae, f. – sunshade, umbrella

unguentum, unguentī, n. – sunscreen

natātōrium, natātōriī, n. – swimming pool

RELAXING AT THE BEACH

Helena: Quandō (*when*), Christīna, ē lītore in urbem revēnistī (*returned*)?

Christīna: Et ego et parentēs herī (*yesterday*) revēnimus. Fēriās (*holidays*) bonās ēgimus. Lītus enim valdē amāmus.

Marīa: Adusta sōle mihi nōn vidēris. Nōnne (*surely*) tū et parentēs in actā aprīcārī solētis?

Christīna: Numquam forīs (*outside*) iacuimus, nisi (*unless*) unguentō oblitī (*smeared*). Medicī dīcunt hominēs nōn dēbēre diū in sōle manēre nisi unguentīs oblitōs.

**Helena:** Quid aliud cum parentibus in lītore fēcistī?

Christīna: Parva castella (*castles*) ex harēnā aedificāvimus. Folle volātilī lūsimus. Vespere (*in the evening*) cibum (*food*) in crāticulā assāre sub dīvō semper solēbāmus.

Mārcus: Ea omnia in terrā fēcistī. Aquamne timuistī? Nōnne natāre solēbātis?

Christīna: Māne (*in the morning*) in natātōriō natāre solēbam. Hōrīs postmerīdiānīs (*in the afternoon hours*) autem saepe in actā sub (*under*) umbellā iacēbam prope mare librīsque studēbam.

Mārcus: Etiam in lītore, etiam in fēriīs librōs cūrābās! Quī homō sīc (*so*) umquam fuit dīligēns (*diligent*) ut (*as*) tū?!

Christīna: In scholā Latīnā (*in the Latin class*) ante fēriās dē montis Vesuviī incendiō lēgimus. Eō tempore, quō incendium in monte fuit, Plīnius et eius avunculus forīs iacēbant librīsque studēbant!
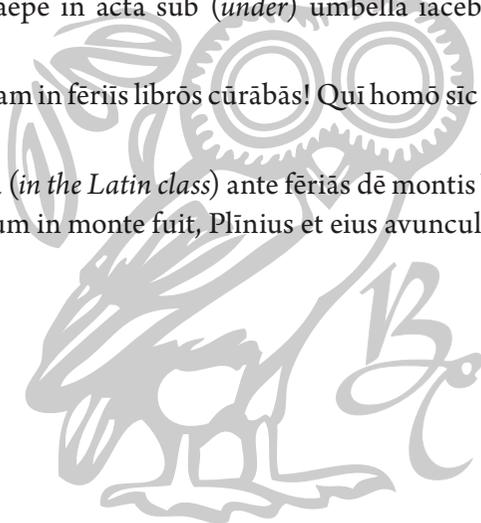
DERIVATIVES

avunculus – avuncular

caelum – ceiling, celestial, cerulean

causa – accuse, accusative, because, excuse, inexcusable

cinis – incinerate, incinerator

classis – class, classic, classical, classification, classmate

fēmina – effeminate, female, feminine

fūmus – fume, fumigation, perfume, fumarole

incendium – censer, frankincense, incendiary, incense

lītus – littoral

māter – maternal, matrimonial, matrix, matron, matriculate, matricide, matrilineal, matriarchal

mōns – mount, mountain, surmount

nāvis – naval, nave, navy, circumnavigate

pars – apart, apartment, depart, department, forepart, impart, impartial, jeopardize, jeopardy, parcel, partiality, participation, participle, particle, particular, partisan, partner, party, repartee, tripartite

legō – coil, collect, cull, diligent, election, eligibility, intellect, intelligence, lecture, legend, legible, legion, lesson, predilection, recollect, sacrilege, select

opprimō – oppress, oppressive

studeō – etude, student, studio, studious, study