

# XIII. *Scriptōrēs Latīnī* *Latin Authors*

## *Part I: Ancient Latin Writers*

**W**hen you study an ancient work of literature, it is often helpful to know a little about the author's life. It can be interesting to know where he was born and where he spent his life. Let's consider the lives of some of ancient Rome's best known writers.

Students of Roman history know **Gaius Iūlius Caesar** as a general, political leader, and revolutionary. Students of Latin also know him as the author of *Commentārii dē Bellō Gallicō* and *Commentārii dē Bellō Cīvili*. Caesar was born and grew up in Rōma. As a young man, he was forced to flee the city for a time to avoid persecution by the dictator Sulla. Later, Caesar fought in Asia in the war against Mithradates, King of Pontus, and studied on the island of Rhodus under the orator Apollonius Molo. In 61 BCE, Caesar served for a year as *propraetor* (governor) in Ibēria. From 58 BCE to 49 BCE, he conducted a series of successful campaigns in Gallia. Afterward, he fought to support the claim of Cleopatra to the throne of Aegyptus in the Alexandrine War and eventually to defeat the supporters of Pompey in the Civil War. Some of Caesar's most famous victories include the Battle of Pharsālus in Graecia, the Battle of Zela in Pontus, the Battle of Thapsus in Africa, and the Battle of Munda in Hispānia.

Unlike Caesar, **Marcus Tullius Cicero** is known as an orator and essayist, not as a soldier. Cicero was born in the town of Arpīnum, sixty miles southeast of Rōma. Cicero's family moved to Rōma when he was still a child, and there, he grew up, studied oratory, and began his career as an advocate. In his late twenties, Cicero journeyed to Graecia accompanied by his brother Quintus. In Athēnae, Cicero visited his old friend Titus Pompōnius, who had made his home there. Pompōnius was so thoroughly at home in Athēnae that he was given the name Atticus, because Athens lies in the region called Attica. Atticus remained in Graecia for the rest of his life, but he and Cicero exchanged frequent letters and remained close friends.



Upon his return from Graecia, Cicero acquired a house in Rōma as well as two country villas, one at Tusculum and the other at Formiae. In the years that followed, Cicero's career took him to Sicilia, Thessalonīca, and Cilicia. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Cicero supported Pompey, and after Pompey's defeat at Pharsālus, he was forced to retire to his villa in Tusculum. When his enemy Mark Antony came to power, Cicero tried to escape to Graecia. He boarded a ship, but bad weather forced it to return to shore, and he was assassinated not far from his villa at Formiae.

If you have read Cicero's *Prō Caeliō* or Catullus' Poem 49, you know that **Catullus** was Cicero's contemporary. Catullus was born near Vērōna in Gallia Cisalpīna, but he came to Rōma as a young man. Later, he was appointed to the staff of the Roman governor of Bīthŷnia. While on this assignment, he visited his brother's tomb near Trōia. After his service in Bīthŷnia, Catullus lived in Romā although he also spent time in the villa he owned outside of Rōma. Catullus often used geographical references in his poems so you may find the maps of Graecia and Ītalia helpful when you translate his works.

Like Cicero and Catullus, the poet **Horace** was not born in Rōma. His birthplace was the small town of Venusia in Āpŭlia. Like Cicero, Horace spent time in Graecia as a young man. In fact, he fought in Brutus' army at the battle of Philippī. When Augustus granted amnesty to his former enemies, the supporters of Brutus, Horace gratefully returned to Ītalia. He lived in Rōma, and *Satire* 1.9 describes an encounter with a boring acquaintance in the Forum. Another poem, *Satire* 1.5, records an uncomfortable journey Horace took from Rōma to Brundisium. We also know from Horace's *Odes* that he owned a villa in the hills outside of Rōma.

**Vergil**, who is the most celebrated of Latin poets, was born in a small town called Andes near Mantua in Gallia Cisalpīna. He came to Rōma as a young man, but spent most of his adult life near Neāpolis. Although he wrote vividly about the wanderings of the epic hero Aeneas, Vergil was not a great traveler himself. In fact, one of his rare journeys was a visit to Graecia in 19 BCE. It was on this trip that he became fatally ill. He returned to Ītalia but died in Brundisium and was buried in Neāpolis.

**Ovid**, the author of the *Metamorphoses*, was born in the mountain town of Sulmo in what is today the Abruzzo. Ovid's father moved the family to Romā when Ovid was still a child. Ovid spent time in his youth in Athēnae. He also visited Trōia. He then lived in Rōma until he was involved in a scandal and exiled to Tomi, a town on the Pontus Euxīnus near the mouth of the Dānuvius. Here, Ovid spent the last years of his life and died still hoping to be recalled to Romā.

Of course, Catullus, Horace, Vergil, and Ovid are far from the only Latin poets of note. **Tibullus** and **Propertius** are celebrated for their elegiac poetry; **Juvenal** and **Martial** are known for their stinging satire. Not one of these writers was born in the city of Rōma although each spent a large part of his life there. Tibullus was probably born at Pedum, a small town near Tibur (Tivoli) while Propertius was born in Umbria north of Rōma, perhaps in Asisium (Assisi). Juvenal was born in Aquīnum, which is not far from Rōma in the region of Latium. Martial was actually born in Bilbilis, in Hispānia, not far from the modern town of Zaragosa.

In addition to her poets, Rōma can boast of two great writers of comedy, **Plautus** and **Terence**. Plautus' birthplace is thought to be Sarsina, a small town in Umbria in northern Italy. Terence, on the other hand, was born in Carthāgō. He was sold into slavery and brought to Rōma where his master eventually freed him.

Other well known Latin writers include the historians **Sallust**, **Livy**, **Suetonius**, and **Tacitus**. Notice once again that none of these authors claimed Rome as his birthplace. Sallust, for example, was born in Amiternum, a town sixty miles northeast of Rōma. Sallust wrote about the Catilinarian conspiracy and about the war with Jugurtha, a North African king. Livy, whose great work *Ab Urbe Conditā* tells of the early history of Rome, was born in Patavium (Padua) in Gallia Cisalpīna. Suetonius' birthplace was a North African town called Hippō Rēgius in what is now Algeria, while Tacitus was probably born in Vasio, a town in Gallia Transalpīna.

Additional ancient writers of prose include a biographer, a scientist, and a letter writer. You may know that Catullus dedicated his book of poems to a man called Cornelius. This was **Cornelius Nepos**, a writer of biography. Nepos also wrote a history entitled *Chronica*, but the manuscript of this work has been lost. Like Catullus, Nepos



was born near Vērōna in Gallia Cisalpīna. **Pliny the Elder** was yet another native of Gallia Cisalpīna. You may remember that Pliny the Elder was the admiral in charge of the Roman fleet on the Bay of Naples at the time of the eruption of Vesuvius Mōns and that he actually died trying to rescue victims of the eruption. Pliny was also a man of science whose *Hīstoria Nātūralis* was read for hundreds of years. He was born in the town of Cōmum, and so was his nephew and adopted son, known as **Pliny the Younger**. The younger Pliny was the author of numerous letters on various topics, including the two letters with his eyewitness account of the eruption of Vesuvius, written at the request of the historian Tacitus.

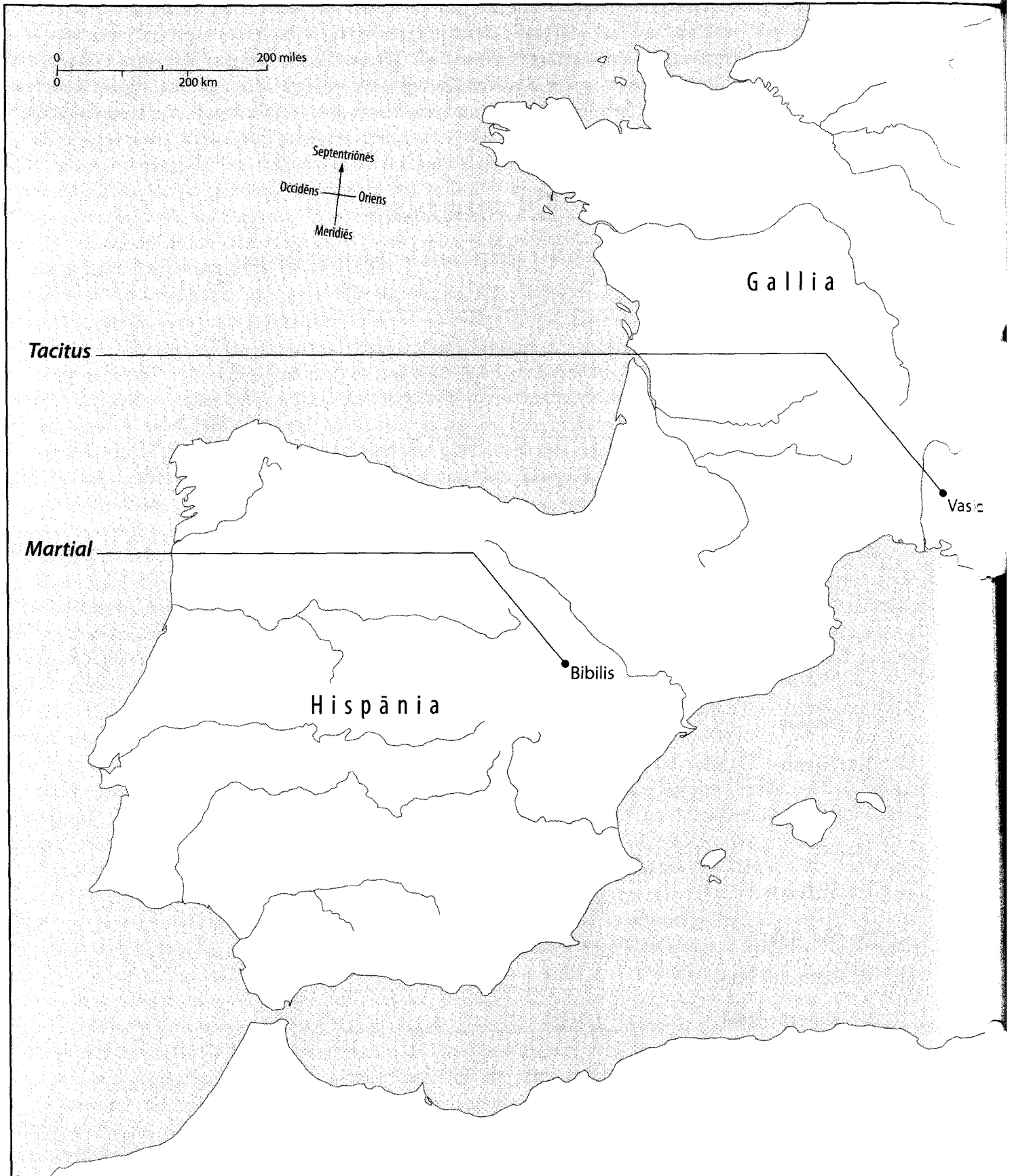
## EXERCISES

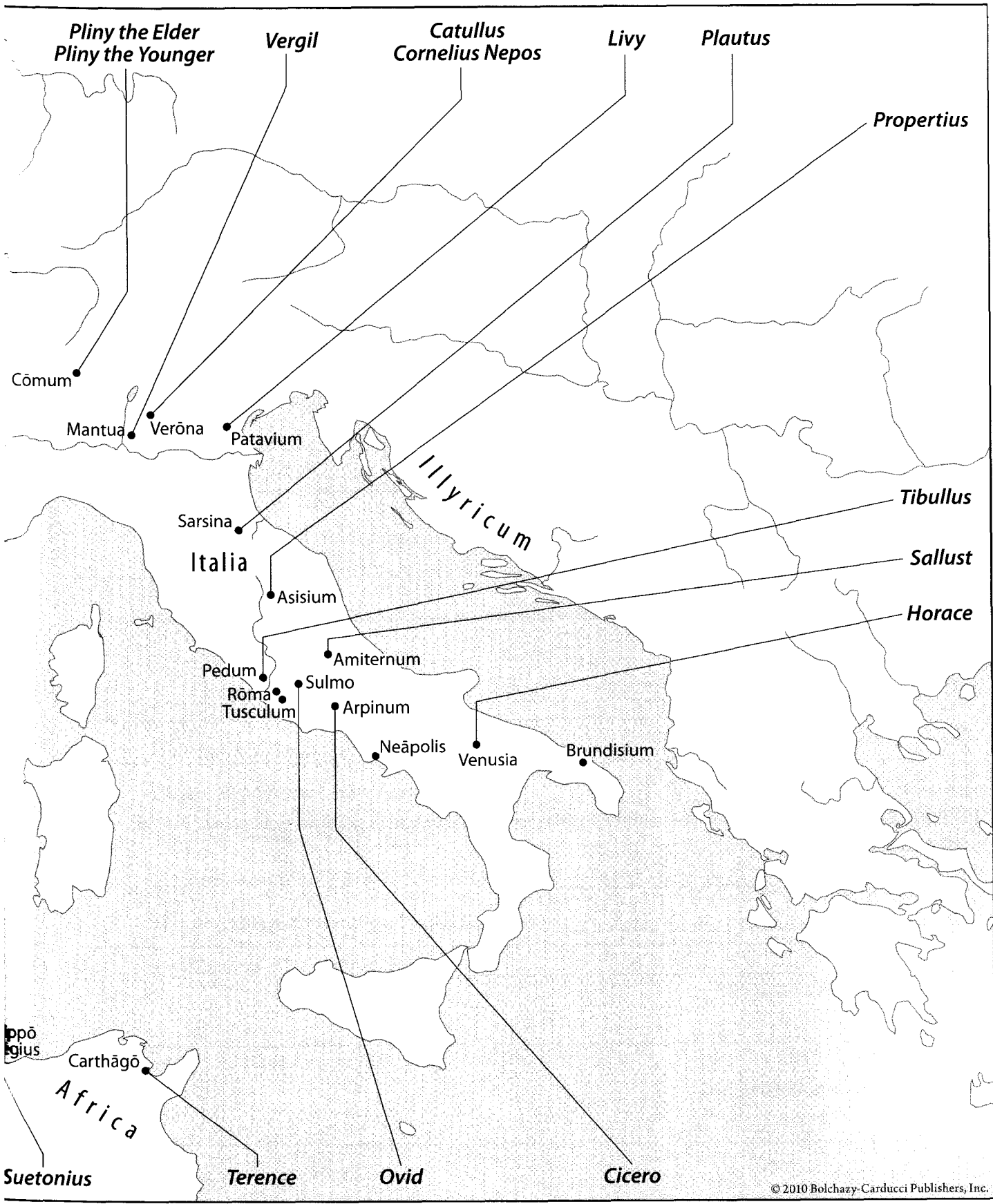
I. Give the birthplace of each author. Then highlight each birthplace on the map.

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| 1.  | Caesar            |  |
| 2.  | Cicero            |  |
| 3.  | Catullus          |  |
| 4.  | Horace            |  |
| 5.  | Vergil            |  |
| 6.  | Ovid              |  |
| 7.  | Tibullus          |  |
| 8.  | Propertius        |  |
| 9.  | Juvenal           |  |
| 10. | Martial           |  |
| 11. | Plautus           |  |
| 12. | Terence           |  |
| 13. | Sallust           |  |
| 14. | Livy              |  |
| 15. | Tacitus           |  |
| 16. | Suetonius         |  |
| 17. | Cornelius Nepos   |  |
| 18. | Pliny the Elder   |  |
| 19. | Pliny the Younger |  |



### ANCIENT LATIN WRITERS







## II. List the following.

1. one (1) biographer:

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2. one (1) letter writer:

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3. one (1) scientist:

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4. two (2) satirists:

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5. two (2) writers of comedy:

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6. five (5) historians:

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7. five (5) poets:

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## III. Cōgitā dē nōminibus oppidōrum, urbium, insulārum parvārumque in grammaticā Latinā. Tum respondē breviter Latinē.

1. Ubi Cicero natus est?

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2. Ubi Vergilius natus est?

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3. Ubi Ovidius mortuus est?

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IV. Īre ulterius

1. Find information about Caesar’s most important victories: Alesia, Pharsālus, Zela, Thapsus, and Munda. Give the name of Caesar’s opponent along with the date and location of each:

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2. Why did Cicero’s *Philippics* inflame Mark Antony’s enmity toward Cicero? Why are these orations called *Philippics*?

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3. Explain the opening line of the inscription on Vergil’s tomb: “Mantua mē genuit; Calabri rapuēre; tenet nunc Parthenope . . .”

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4. How far from Rome was each author’s birthplace?

Cicero: Arpīnum = ? miles from Rome \_\_\_\_\_

Catullus: Vērōna = ? miles from Rome \_\_\_\_\_

Horace: Venusia in Āpūlia = ? miles from Rome \_\_\_\_\_

Vergil: Andes near Mantua = ? miles from Rome \_\_\_\_\_

Ovid: Sulmo = ? miles from Rome \_\_\_\_\_



## TRANSLATION OF EXERCISE III

Cogitā de nōminibus oppidōrum, urbium, insulārum parvārumque in grammaticā Latinā. Tum respondē breviter Latinē = Think about the names of towns, cities, and small islands in Latin grammar. Then answer briefly in Latin.

1. Ubi Cicero natus est? = Where was Cicero born?
2. Ubi Vergilius natus est? = Where was Vergil born?
3. Ubi Ovidius mortuus est? = Where did Ovid die?





## Part II: Later Writers of Latin

The barbarian invasions of Italy coupled with a sharp decline in the population spelled the end of Rome's domination of Western Europe. But even as Rome fell, Latin remained alive. It served as the common language of all educated people in Western Europe for hundreds of years. Churchmen like the Venerable Bede, historians like William of Tyre, poets like Petrarch, and scientists like Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler all wrote in Latin.

Let's turn to the map of Europe and note some of the places identified with famous writers of late Latin. For example, the **Venerable Bede**, a Benedictine monk, lived and wrote near Newcastle on Tyne in northern England in the late seventh century and early eighth century. Bede's most famous work is his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglōrum*, ("The Ecclesiastical History of the English People"). He is called "the Venerable" because he was greatly revered by later writers.

**Einhard**, who served the Holy Roman emperor Charlemagne at his court in Aachen, Germany, was a contemporary of the Venerable Bede. Although he came from a humble background, Einhard was educated at a monastic school where he had studied Latin grammar and literature. He was attracted to Charlemagne's court, where administrators fluent in Latin were welcome because Latin was the official language of Charlemagne's empire. Einhard is best known for the biography he wrote of Charlemagne, *Vita Caroli Magni* ("The Life of Charlemagne").

**Peter Abelard** was born in Brittany in 1079. Brittany is a rugged peninsula in northwest France that juts into the English Channel south of Normandy. Abelard went to Paris as a young man; there he became a respected teacher and theologian. Unfortunately, Abelard fell in love with Heloise, a young woman whom he was tutoring. Abelard tells the story of their star-crossed love in his autobiography, *Historia calamitatum mearum* ("The Story of My Sufferings"). The letters of Abelard and Heloise written in Latin can still be read.

**William of Tyre** is the author of a history of the Crusades in Latin called *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*. ("The Narrative of Deeds Done in Regions across the Sea"). He came from a family that had taken part in the earliest crusades. He was born in Jerusalem, but spent much of his adult life in Tyre where he served as archbishop. He died in Tyre in 1185.

**Petrarch**, one of the best-known scholars and authors of the early Renaissance, was born near Florence in 1304. He spent much of his life in Avignon in southern France, where the papal court was located from 1307–1377. Petrarch wrote his famous sonnets in Italian, but many of his other works such as *Africa*, an unfinished epic about Hannibal, and *Dē viris illustribus*, a series of biographies, are in Latin. Petrarch was so steeped in the works of ancient authors that he once wrote a letter addressed to Cicero, who had been dead for more than a thousand years!

**Lorenzo Valla** was born almost a century after Petrarch, but like his learned predecessors, Valla wrote and lectured in Latin. In fact, Valla was very interested in Latin grammar and is known for his essay, *Ēlegantiarum linguae Latīnae librī sex* ("Six Books of Proper Uses of the Latin Language"). He lived much of his life in Naples, where he served as secretary to the court of Alfonso of Aragon.

The famous Renaissance writer **Erasmus** was born in Rotterdam ca. 1466 but travelled widely throughout his life. He was ordained as a priest, but he criticized the Catholic clergy in his satire *Stultitiae Laus* ("In Praise of Folly"). A dedicated and gifted scholar, he prepared a new Latin translation of the New Testament based on a close reading of the Greek manuscripts. This task took him to Basel where he worked closely with his publisher. A list of his correspondents is a "who's who" of his day.

**Thomas More** was an English contemporary and friend of Erasmus. More served King Henry VIII as a diplomat and later as Chancellor, but he is probably best known as the author of *Ūtopia*, a treatise in Latin that describes an ideal state. More opposed Henry VIII's divorce from Katherine of Aragon and Henry's asserting supremacy over the church. He retired to his home outside of London but soon was imprisoned in the Tower of London. He was finally beheaded in 1535.



Have you ever wondered how historians today learn about the early exploration of the New World by European explorers like Christopher Columbus? In fact, much of the information scholars still rely on comes from the work of **Petrus Martyr**, who was born in Italy in 1457. He was the chaplain at the court of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in Barcelona, Spain. In this capacity he had access to Columbus' letters and was also able to interview later explorers. Although he never visited the New World himself, his *Dē orbe novō* ("Concerning the New World") is a useful resource for historians.

**Juan Sepúlveda**, was born in 1494. Like Petrus Martyr, Sepúlveda served the king of Spain at the court in Barcelona. Sepúlveda was a theologian and scholar who translated several of Aristotle's works into Latin. He is known for arguing that Spain had the right to colonize the New World and that the native inhabitants of the newly discovered lands should be treated like children!

Sepúlveda and Petrus Martyr wrote about the New World, but in the sixteenth century people in western Europe were interested in the Orient as well as the Americas. Born in 1536, **Petres Maffei** was a Jesuit who lived in Lisbon, Portugal, and wrote about Jesuit missionaries in distant places, including China and Japan. His *Historiae Indicae* ("History of India") became enormously popular because people were eager to learn about the faraway lands he described. All of Maffei's works are in Latin because Latin continued to be the language of educated people in all parts of western Europe.

Scientists especially relied on Latin when they wanted to publish their findings or discuss their discoveries with colleagues. For example, **Nicolaus Copernicus**, an astronomer who was educated at the University of Krakow in Poland, wrote his famous treatise *Dē revolutiōnibus orbium caelestium* ("About the Revolutions of the Celestial Bodies") in Latin. This work set forth Copernicus' landmark theory that the earth is not the center of the universe but instead revolves around the sun. Seventy years later, in 1610, the Italian astronomer **Galileo Galilei** was the object of persecution because he promoted Copernicus' theory. Galileo, who had taught at both the University of Pisa and at the University of Padua, was summoned to Rome twice for questioning. He was convicted of heresy in 1633 and required to live in seclusion, first in Siena, later in the small town of Arcetri where he died in 1642. Ironically, these years of house arrest were some of his most productive.

Like Copernicus and Galileo, **Johannes Kepler** was a renowned astronomer who wrote in Latin. As a young man, Kepler taught mathematics and astronomy in Graz, Austria. Here, in 1594 at age 23, he published *Mystērium Cosmographicum* ("The Cosmographic Mystery") defending Copernicus' theory. Later, Kepler moved to Prague, where he wrote *Astronomia Nova* ("New Astronomy") which defined the laws of planetary motion. In addition to these serious scientific works, Kepler also wrote a work of fantasy called *Somnium* ("The Dream") which involves space travel.

Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler were all highly educated. They wrote in Latin as a matter of course. It is, therefore, surprising to see that a number of important discoveries in microbiology were made in the seventeenth century by a Dutch lens crafter named **Antōnius dē Leeuwenhoek** who knew no Latin. Leeuwenhoek, a native of Delft, was an expert at making powerful magnifying glasses. He used the lenses to examine muscle fibers, blood flowing in capillaries, and his own saliva. He was fascinated by the animalcules or microorganisms that were invisible without the use of his lenses. Because he did not know Latin, Leeuwenhoek wrote letters about his discoveries in Dutch to the Royal Society of London, and one of the society's members translated the letters into Latin!

As we have seen, Latin was the language of educated people for hundreds of years, whether they lived in England like the Venerable Bede or in Poland like Copernicus. It is perhaps fitting that we should conclude this discussion with the man who is considered the "Father of Danish Literature," **Ludvig Holberg**. Born in Copenhagen in 1684, Holberg became a professor at the University of Copenhagen. He wrote comedies and satires in Danish, but one of his best known works is in Latin: *Iter subterrāneum* ("The Underground Journey"). The hero of the story is a young man who finds his way underground to a land full of talking trees!



## EXERCISES

I. Give the name of the city most closely associated with each of the following writers:

1. Bede \_\_\_\_\_
2. Einhard \_\_\_\_\_
3. Abelard \_\_\_\_\_
4. William of Tyre \_\_\_\_\_
5. Petrarch \_\_\_\_\_
6. Valla \_\_\_\_\_
7. Erasmus \_\_\_\_\_
8. Thomas More \_\_\_\_\_
9. Petrus Martyr \_\_\_\_\_
10. Sepúlveda \_\_\_\_\_
11. Maffeius \_\_\_\_\_
12. Copernicus \_\_\_\_\_
13. Kepler \_\_\_\_\_
14. Leeuwenhoek \_\_\_\_\_
15. Holberg \_\_\_\_\_

II. Highlight the cities associated with each of the authors in I above.

III. Translate each title and give the author of each work:

1. *Vita Caroli Magni*

\_\_\_\_\_

2. *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*

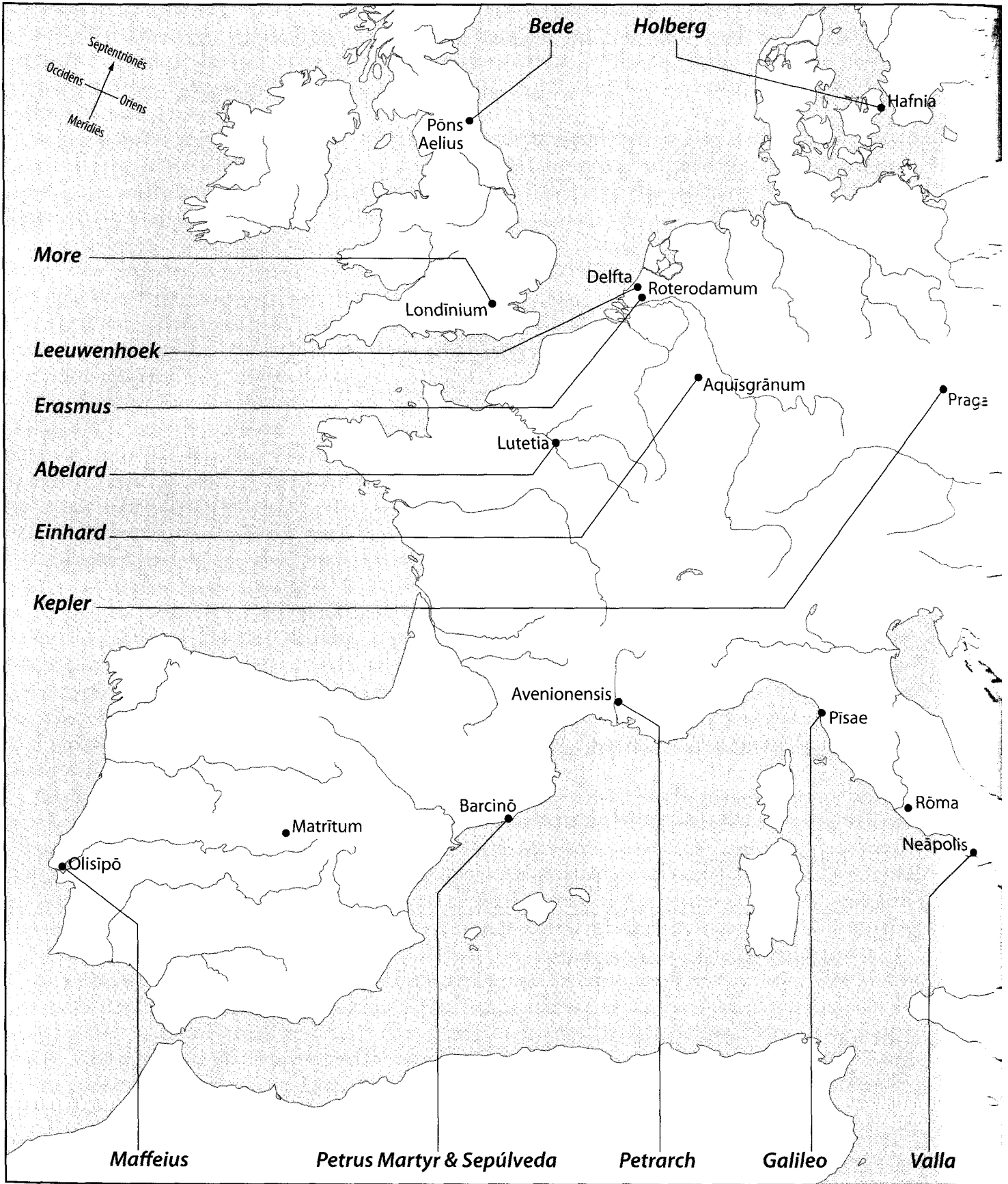
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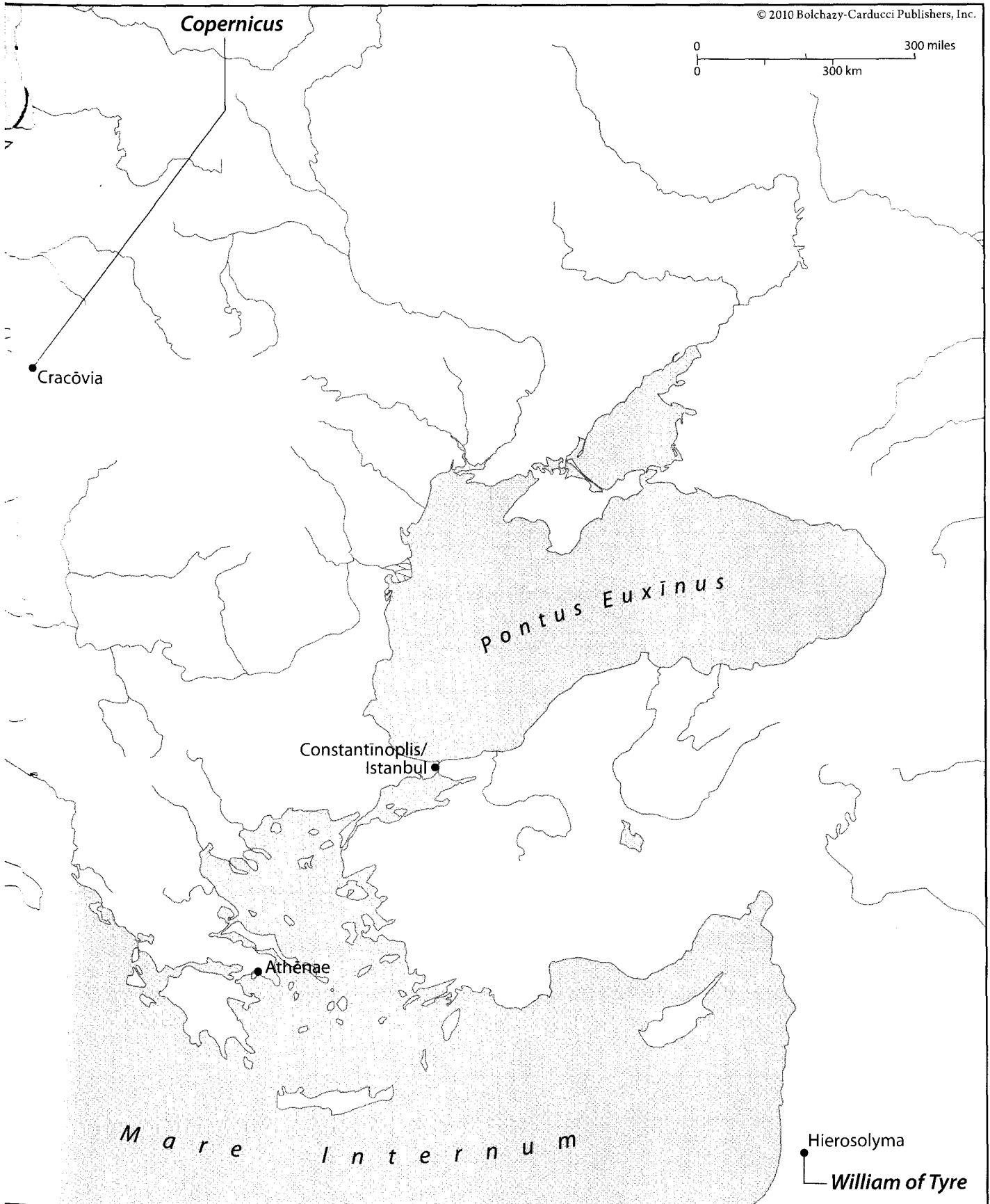
3. *Stultitiae Laus*

\_\_\_\_\_



### LATER LATIN WRITERS







4. *Historia calamitatum mearum*

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5. *Dē orbe novō*

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6. *Ūtopia*

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7. *Sominum*

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8. *Historiae Indicae*

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9. *Astronomia Nova*

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10. *Iter subterraneum*

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IV. Respondē breviter Latinē.

1. Quis est auctor *Africae*?

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2. Quem Heloīsa amāvit?

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3. In fābulā, *Iter subterraneum* nomine, quid faciunt arborēs?

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V. Īre ulterius

1. Why did Petrarch address Cicero as “Tully”?

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2. Find out the origin of Erasmus’ name. What is the Greek word from which “Erasmus” comes? What were his other two names? Explain why Erasmus chose each of the names.

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3. Some people teased Erasmus by saying that he was a *mūs errāns*. What does the phrase mean and why did it fit Erasmus?

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4. What is an homunculus? Where did Leeuwenhoek say he saw one?

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5. What kind of education did Thomas More give his daughters? Which daughter followed most closely in her father’s footsteps as a scholar?

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6. What is Galileo supposed to have said at the end of his trial after he had been convicted? What did he mean?

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## TRANSLATION OF EXERCISE IV

Respondē breviter Latinē = Answer briefly in Latin.

1. Quis est auctor *Africae*? = Who was the author of *Africa*?
2. Quem Heloīsa amāvit? = Whom did Eloise love?
3. In fābulā, *Iter subterrāneum* nomine, quid faciunt arborēs? = In the story, “The Underground Journey” by name, what do the trees do?