

# CERTE ABSUNT, SED NOBISCUM LOQUI POSSUNT: DE INSCRIPTIONUM USU IN SCHOLIS

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## Summarium

In *Vitā Domitiānī*, Suētōnius refert p̄ncipem illum “spectācula... magnifica et sūmptuōsa ēdidisse”, inter quae “certāmen Capitōlīnō Iovī” fuit, in quō “certābant... orātiōne Graecē Latīnēque” (cap. IV 1-4). Nihil ā Suētōniō dīcitur dē certantibus sed nōbīs nōtus est Quīntus Sulpicius Maximus ille, annōrum ūndecim puer, quī, maximō favōre in certāmine excitātō versibus suis extemporālībus, mortuus est “morbō dēfatīgātiōneque”, ut legimus in eius fūnebrī monumentō, Rōmae inventō et illīc servātō. Hoc monumentum nōbīs trādīdit versūs haud parvī mōmentī, ab illō linguā Graecā compositōs dē Phaethontis fābulā, atque ēlogia eī ā parentibus maestissimīs incīsa, Latīnē Graecēque. In hāc brevī adlocūtīōne dē hārum īnscrīptiōnum ūsū in lūdīs agētur ut magistrī eās discipulīs ostendere possint, imāginibus et exercitiīs ad hōc aptīs ūtentēs. Fābula ipsa ad tempora nostra pervēnit Ovidiō iuvante, cuius versus ad rem explānandam lēgī poterunt, etiam ex libellō pictographīcō quōdam.

## Claves

*Ars docendi, Domitianus, Lingua Latina, Ovidius, inscriptiones, Quintus Sulpicius Maximus, Phaethon, Roma, Suetonius.*

## Abstract

In “The life of Domitian”, Suetonius records how that *princeps* used to organise “wonderful and sumptuous shows”, including a *certamen* dedicated to Jupiter Capitoline where contestants took part with Latin as well as Greek orations (IV 1-4). Nothing is said by Suetonius on the contestants themselves but we have some knowledge about Quintus Sulpicius Maximus, an eleven years old child who, having gained universal praise at the contest with his improvised composition, died by “illness and fatigue”, as we can read from his funeral monument, found and preserved in Rome. Said monument also preserves his verses composed in Greek on Phaethon’s tale as well as his *laudatio funebris* inscribed on behalf of his sad parents. This short article will present a way to use this inscriptions in Latin classes, using images and exercises as well. Phaethon’s tale is mainly known from Ovid’s work, whose verses could be used in illustrating it as shown in a comics book inspired by it.

**Key words**

*Didactics, Domitianus, epigraphy, Latin, Ovidius, Quintus Sulpicius Maximus, Phaethon, Roma, Suetonius*

## 01

Ex multīs vestīgiīs praeteritīs temporibus ad nostram aetātem servātis, magnum locum habent īnscrīptiōnēs fūnebrēs quae nōbīscum aliqūō modo loquī possunt, cum gestās antīquōrum nārrent et saepissimē dē vītā et ūsīs cotīdiānīs testimōnia trādant. In hāc brevissimā adlocūtiōne dē sepulcrētō saeculō decimō nōnō exeunte Rōmae ērutō aliquid vidēbimus et quōmodo eō in scholīs Latīnī utī possīmus ostendēmus. Sententiā nostrā trēs vel quattuor hōrae in lūdō adhibendae erunt ad hōc in tribus scholīs tractandum.

## 02

Prīmum aliquid dē sepulcrētō ipsō dīcendum est. Diē vīcēsīmō mēnsis Septembris AD MDCCCLXX, quīndecim mīlia Rōmānī pontificis mīlitum dēbellāta sunt ab Italōrum exercitū, quī portā quae Pia vocābātur in Urbem intrāvit, ut Italia tōta ūna tandem fieret. Moenia ab Aurēliānō prīncipe exstrūcta magnō dētrīmentō affecta sunt et īnsequentibus annīs opera data est ut reficerentur ad prīstinum splendōrem. In illīs operibus perficiendīs, sepulcrētum sēculī I pCn inventum est in annō MDCCCLXXI, quod iam ab Aurēliānō obrutum erat, in quō multa et varia monumenta ad lūcem ēruta sunt, ex quibus magnī ponderis est cippus fūnebris Quīntī Sulpiciī Maximī cuiusdam. Monumentum ipsum variās īnscrīptiōnēs continet: maxima eius pars nōbīs refert versūs ā Quīntō Sulpiciō Maximō ipsō compositōs, quibus Lūdīs Capitōlīnīs ipse interfuit, maximō cum honōre discēdēns. In hīs versibus, Graecā līnguā īnscrīptīs, Iuppiter Apollinem reprehendēns fingitur, postquam sōlis Deus currum suum filiō adūlescentulō crēdiderat. Fābula tōta ab Ovidiō in *Metamorphoseon* lībrīs nārātur, sed nimis longa est ut in scholīs lēgātur. Pars summa monumentī nōbīs servat simulācrum puerī poētae, manū gerentīs volūmen versūs suōs Graecōs continēns, quōs legere possumus in lateribus signī suī. Pars media monumentī, latīne īnscrīpta, dēdicātiōnem Deīs Mānibus continet et nōbīs multa trādīt dē puerī parentibus et dē temporibus eius recitātiōnis. Dē hāc plūra īnfrā. In īmā parte monumentī duo epigrammata Graecē composita leguntur,

quae de pueri morte narrant et de opera sua viatorēs monent, ut huius modi inscriptiōnēs facere solent.

## 03

Quid de hoc puero nobis notum est? In inscriptiōne Latīnā legimus eum Rōmae vixisse et mortuum esse undecim annorum aetate, postquam certāminī Capitōlinō annō 94 pCn actō interfuerat, in quō versūs extemporālēs recitāvit et magnam laudem adeptus est (hominibus doctīs incertum est utrum palmam accepisset an nōn). In titulō Graecō prīmō legimus eum mortuum esse ‘morbō et fatigatiōne’, fortasse ob studium susceptīs. Parentēs ipsī versūs ā filiō compositōs inscripserunt nē nimiō amōre indulsisse in eō laudandō vidērentur et ut omnibus filiī fāma clāra nobilisque esset.

## 04 / SCHOLA PRĪMA

In scholā prīmā cum discipulīs legētur pāgina Svētōniī (*Domitiānus* 4) in quā de spectāculīs certāminibusque ab illō prīncipe institūtīs nārratur, ex quibus nostrum certāmen fortasse commemoratur, cum de compositiōnibus Graecīs Latīnisque loquitur. In eōdem textū Svētōnius etiam de amphiteātrīs, circīs, nāvālibus pugnīs, lūdīs Saeculāribus et stadiīs nōs certiōrēs facit. Discipulīs pēnsū domesticū dabitur ut tabulam locōrum ā Svētōniō memorātōrum perficiant, ‘app’ thinglink.com ūtentēs, cuius exemplum hic (<<https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1244708474164609025>>) invenīrī potest.

## 05 / SCHOLA SECUNDA

In scholā secundā tandem inscriptiō ipsa legētur et quaestiōnēs solvendae erunt. Ex inscriptiōne cognoscimus Quīntum Sulpiciū Maximum ex tribū Claudiā (CLA) fuisse, Rōmae vixisse annōs undecim (ANN XI) mēnsēs quīnque (M V) et diēs duodecim (D XII). Inter duōs et quīnquāgintā (DUŌS ET L) Graecōs poētās certāvisse et favōrem quem ab infantiā excitāverat ad admirātiōnem perdūxisse et fortasse victōrem (CUM HONŌRE) discessisse. Versus ipsōs subiectōs esse ā parentibus (PĀRENT) nē adfectibus suis indulsisse vidērentur. In līnēā postrēmā nōmina eōrum leguntur: Quīntus Sulpicius Eugramus (nōmen Graecum nobis ostendit eum Graecum libertum fuisse —id poterit explicāre cūr

dē Graecīs poētīs agātur īnscrīptiō) et Licinia Iānuāria (cui nōmen dē eius mūnere testimōnium refert), quī maestī monumentum fēcērunt (FEC) filiō, sibi et posterīs suīs (P S).

### 03 / SCHOLA TERTIA

Schola tertia dē Phaethontis ipsīus fābulā aget. Dē hōc puerō quī equōs currum Solīs per caelum trahentēs regere cupīvit et quī imperitiā suā tōtum orbem incendit et in Ēridanum flūmen cecidit, nōbīs praecipuē nārrat Ovidius ille in *Metamorphoseon* lībrīs. Nārrātiō Ovīdiāna certē nimis longa est ut in scholīs tōta lēgātur sed discipulīs ostendere poterimus breviōrēs fābellās ab Hygīnō collēctās in *Genealogiārum* librō (152a et 154). Eadem fābula ab Aloisīō Miraglīā illō in *Fābulārum Syrae* librō nārrātur et in libellō pictograficō in Batāviā ēditō, cui titulus *Ovidius - Phaethōn*. Hoc modo discipulī dē Phaethontis fābulā certiōrēs fient et dissimilitudinēs inter auctōrēs gustāre poterunt. Sed versus lepidissimī pulcherrimīque, quōs Ovidius fingit in puerī tumulō īnscrīptōs, sine morā recitandī sunt, quia tam dē Phaetonte ipsō quam dē nostrō Sulpiciō nōbīs memoriā trādunt, ambōbus iuvenibus, ambōbus fūnere acerbō mersīs:

*Hic situs est Phaethōn, currūs aurīgā paternī,  
quem sī nōn tenuit, magnīs tamen excidit ausīs.*

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