

Teacher Notes: Case 3: Death by Dormouse

Story summary

A crooked merchant is poisoned at a feast. Which of the guests is guilty? Was it the slaves he mistreated, his business partner whom he cheated or his jealous wife? Cosmo defends the slave from crucifixion, to the shock of the establishment, as slaves have no rights. Themes explored include daily life in Ancient Rome, dining customs, the role of slaves and of women, trade, religion, law, citizenship and the military.

The Crime

By the end of Case 3, the true facts of the case are discovered to be as follows:

JUSTINIA laid out a lavish feast for NUMERIUS, CASSIUS and FLUVIA. She had musicians play, while the slaves in the kitchen prepared many courses of exotic Roman foods. Feigning anger at the kitchen slaves, she got up late into the meal and stormed into the kitchen to berate them for slow service and failure to clear the last course, sending them all out into the dining room. While the kitchen was clear, she poured water of laurel over a platter of grilled dormice. JUSTINIA'S intention was to poison FLUVIA. When the slaves returned carrying the remains of last course, JUSTINIA demanded that GRUMIO take the dormice into the dining room. She instructed him clearly to offer them first to the guests. Poor GRUMIO did as instructed but greedy NUMERIUS, catching sight of his favourite dish, leapt up and swiped a handful ... dying painfully of cyanide poisoning in moments.

Key characters

COSMO - our hero, a wisecracking public advocate who fights for justice;

NUMERIUS, corpse – A prosperous plebeian merchant, planning to divorce his wife Justinia and marry Lady Fluvia; he's now dead, poisoned by Justina.

JUSTINIA, widow – The jealous former wife of Numerius, fearing divorce, she tried to poison her rival, Fluvia, at dinner. Her husband, Numerius, ate the poisoned dish instead.

ANNA and GRUMIO, slaves – household slaves of Justinia and Numerius. Abused by their nouveau riche owners, now accused of murdering the *pater familias* of the household. If Grumio is convicted of poisoning Anna, then all the household slaves are to be executed by crucifixion.

CASSIUS, oil trader – long-suffering business partner of Numerius. Bullied by his former colleague, he seems to get over Numerius' death very quickly.

FLUVIA, patrician – daughter of one of Rome's oldest families, she's looking for a husband who can bring fresh money into the family coffers. Her sister is a priestess of Bona Dea, the

good Goddess.

PRIESTESS OF BONA DEA – a religion for women only, the Priestess knows that Justinia is a regular attendant at the Temple. She wanted the Goddess to help her conceive, but instead the Goddess revealed to her that her husband was a regular visitor to a house directly across from the Temple.

(MARCUS LICINIUS) CRASSUS – the richest man in Rome and one of the richest in world history.

(MARCUS TULLIUS) CICERO – Cosmo's mentor and ardent defender of the Republic. Cicero can't help Cosmo much in this case, as he is shocked to learn that the three most powerful men in Rome have openly formed an alliance, placing Caesar in the top job as Consul. A populist conspiracy to install a tyrant...or is Cicero losing his mind?

Curriculum links

Case 3 of QED: Cosmo’s Casebook will assist students to meet the following requirements of the Australian Curriculum.

Year 7 History: The Ancient World, c.60,000 BCE–c. 650 CE

Curriculum requirement	Questions explored in QED: Case 3
<p><i>Key inquiry questions:</i></p> <p>What emerged as the defining characteristics of ancient societies?</p> <p>What have been the legacies of ancient societies?</p>	<p>Which social classes are represented by Numerius, Grumio, Lady Fluvia and Cassius?</p> <p>Which aspects of current law can you recognise from Case 3?</p>
<p><i>Key concepts:</i></p> <p>Evidence, perspectives, empathy, contestability</p>	<p>What evidence will prove that the slave Grumio is innocent of murder? (evidence, contestability)</p> <p>What was life like for Anna as a woman and a slave? (empathy, perspectives)</p>
<p><i>Historical knowledge and understanding (Overview):</i></p> <p>Key features of ancient societies, e.g. farming, trade, social classes, religion, rule of law</p> <p>Locating the ancient civilisations of the ancient world; when and where they existed and the evidence for contact between them</p>	<p>What business was Numerius in?</p> <p>How was Numerius helped by having a patron?</p> <p>Why did Lady Fluvia feel she was blessed by the Good Goddess?</p> <p>Where did the action take place? (e.g. Forum, Appian Way, Aventine Hill)</p> <p>In what period did Grumio’s trial take place?</p>
<p><i>Historical knowledge and understanding (Depth Study 1, Rome):</i></p> <p>Roles of key groups in Roman society e.g. patricians, plebeians, women, slaves (ACDSEH038)</p> <p>The significant beliefs, values and practices, e.g. everyday life, warfare, death and funerary customs (ACDSEH039)</p>	<p>What rights did Grumio and Anna have compared with freemen?</p> <p>Why would Numerius have received different funeral rites than a slave?</p> <p>What was the cult of Bona Dea based on and who was it open to?</p>

Historical skills:

Use historical terms and concepts

Locate, compare, select and use information from a range of sources as evidence

Draw conclusions about the usefulness of sources

What key historical terms appear in Case 3?

What sources of evidence establish Grumio's guilt or innocence?

What are the strengths and limitations of Case 3 as a source of historical evidence?

Key Lore

CARCER

The Latin word for prison was 'carcer'. We have the English verb 'incarcerate', meaning to jail someone, from this ancient word.

DEATH MASK

Romans believed that their ancestors watched over them from the afterlife. Wealthy Romans would have waxen masks made of their dead forebears. These masks would be kept in the study of the paterfamilias. When a family member died, the masks would be paraded through the streets as part of the funeral procession.

FUNERAL COIN

When a dead Roman was prepared for cremation, a low-denomination coin (an obol) was placed in the mouth of the corpse. It was intended to pay Charon, the ferryman who would take the deceased soul across the river from the world of the living into the land of the dead.

JUPITER

Jupiter was the greatest of the Roman Gods. He watched over the state machinery of Rome to prevent corruption and injustice. His personal symbols were the eagle and the thunderbolt.

LARARIUM

Romans believed that the gods of the household watched over their family and their house. The Lararium was a shrine to these domestic guardians, the Lares Familiares. Each day, candles were lit and food was offered to the spirits. When a young man grew his first beard, it was traditionally presented as an offering to the Lares as part of rites of manhood.

PATRON

Rich Romans would become patrons to other Romans as their clients. The patron would provide business contacts and even money to the clients. In return, the patron could count on the client's support and, most importantly, their vote.

SLAVES

As Rome expanded, the Republic's conquering armies would send a steady supply of slaves back to Rome. By the first Century BCE, it is estimated that up to one-third of the city's population were slaves. Slaves were not Roman citizens, and had no rights whatsoever. A slave's life was hard, but not all owners were cruel. The quality of a slave's life very much depended upon the quality of their owner. While the practice of slavery is inherently cruel, Romans did believe that slavery was a station in life from which an individual could rise.

TEMPLE

Men were not allowed into the Temple of Bona Dea. Inside was a statue of the Good

Goddess, holding a horn of plenty (cornucopia) and a coiled serpent. The cult of Bona Dea was led by the Vestal Virgins, who were powerful and influential priestesses in Rome.

TRADERS

Roman traders would import goods from all around the world. As the armies of Rome conquered, they sent new commodities back to the capital. Wealthy traders began to emerge as a new tier in Roman society. While the traders had money, they lacked the societal connections of the old Roman families. Patronage was a way to link new money to old power.

WOMEN (legal rights)

Roman women did not have the same rights as men. They could not vote or be elected to the Senate or other public positions. They had no legal rights over their own children. Even more shocking, in the Roman Republic a woman could be legally killed by her father or husband if she questioned his authority.

Learning activities

Using Case Three: Death by Dormouse and its Lore as a reference, complete the following activities. Cite further sources where needed.

As a class, debate one or more of the following topics:

- Grumio would have been fine without Cosmo defending him in the trial.
- If Numerius had treated his slaves with more compassion he would not have been poisoned.
- Despite their differing status in society, Justinia and Anna were equals, as women had few rights under Roman law.

Do a SWOT chart (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) on life for women in the late Republic period in Rome. Include reference to the characters of Anna, Lady Fluvia Justinia and the Priestess of Bona Dea.

In 200 words, respond to the following statement: 'Death by Dormouse is a reminder that our legal rights are not to be taken for granted.'

Essay topic: Seneca said of slaves: 'They are not our enemies when we get them; we make them so.' Discuss this statement, citing evidence, in relation to Ancient Rome.

Produce a short script or podcast dramatising a religious ritual in Ancient Rome. Your script must be based on historical evidence.

Discuss the following statement: 'Patronage in ancient Rome was a win-win arrangement'.

See 'Curriculum links' above for more inquiry questions relating to Case 3: Death by Dormouse.

Extension/enrichment

Design a poster seeking a patron for your own unique skills.

Design a new case for Cosmo on the topic of prison life in Ancient Rome and create a storyboard for it.

Glossary

Ave, salve, vale – “Hello!” in Latin

Praetor – the title of a senior Roman magistrate, also a provincial governor.

Public advocate – a Roman barrister. [Note: Until Emperor Claudius instituted a guild (*collegia*) for legal practice, there were no qualifications required to argue law in Ancient Rome. People chose advocates based on their reputation alone.]

Appian Way – a major road in Rome, lined with tombs of wealthy Romans. The Appian Way was a major Roman road connecting Rome with southern Italy. Constructed in the Roman style, it was an important trade and travel route for centuries. In 71BCE, Marcus Licinius Crassus had seven thousand captives, surviving rebels from Spartacus’ slave army, crucified along the Via Appia.

Gaul – a Celtic person from western Europe. [Romans identified Gaul as a large tribal territory encompassing modern-day northern Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and western Germany. They were considered dangerous barbarians. In 53BCE, Julius Caesar was the first Roman general to create a legion of loyal Gaulish tribesmen. “Legio V” were a terrifying band of Gaulish warriors trained in the Roman art of war. These Gauls were loyal only to Caesar, not the Republic. This was the first time ever an entire legion of foreigners had fought in the Roman Army. Caesar used this legion to prosecute his later Civil War.]

Amphorae – terracotta vessels of varying sizes used to transport and store a variety of commodities in the Ancient World.

Patrician – a member of the oldest families in Rome. Patricians were not always the wealthiest Romans, but they had significant clout in politics.

Romulus and Remus – founding fathers of Rome. Abandoned on the River Tiber, they were rescued by a she-wolf who raised them. Romulus and Remus decide to found Rome on one of the seven hills. They can’t agree on which hill, so Romulus kills his brother, Rome gets founded and Romulus is the first king. Six kings later, Romans get sick and tired of ordered around by a tyrant and found a Republic.

Teachers Cheat Sheet

This outlines the **critical path** to collect all the evidence needed to get to the Court House.

COSMO'S STUDY

- Talk to ANNA, slave
- Go to COURTHOUSE

COURTHOUSE

- Speak to PREATOR VENATUS

PRISON

- Talk to GRUMIO
 - Gives you EVIDENCE: DORMOUSE

JUSTINIA'S HOUSE (FIRST VISIT)

- Talk to NUMERIUS' CORPSE
 - Talk to MORTUS Roman Undertaker.
 - Gives you EVIDENCE: MORTUS TESTIMONY: CHERRY LAUREL WATER
- Talk to JUSTINIA
 - Gives EVIDENCE: JUSTINIA TESTIMONY: THE BANQUET
 - Unlocks LOCATION: TEMPLE OF BONA DEA
 - Unlocks LOCATION: OIL SHOP
- Talk to ANNA
 - She cannot speak to you while JUSTINIA is present.
- Explore Atrium
 - Find EVIDENCE: BROKEN VASE
 - Find EVIDENCE: LOCKED STRONGBOX
 - Find LOCKED STRONG BOX (cannot be opened while JUSTINIA is in the house)
 - Combination [2] [10] [5] [6] can be found on BUST OF NUMERIUS.

OIL SHOP

- Talk to CASSIUS
 - Unlocks LOCATION: LADY FLUVIA'S HOUSE
- Explore location
 - Find EVIDENCE: OIL SHOP NAME

FLUVIA'S HOUSE

- Talk to FLUVIA

- Gives EVIDENCE: FLUVIA TESTIMONY: PATRON OF NUMERIUS
- Gives EVIDENCE: AMPHORA BROOCH
- Unlocks FORUM

FORUM

- Talk to CRASSUS
 - Gives EVIDENCE:CRASSUS TESTIMONY: CRASSUS AND NUMERIUS

TEMPLE OF BONA DEA

- Talk to PRIESTESS
 - Gives EVIDENCE: PRIESTESS' TESTIMONY: JUSTINIA WORSHIP
 - Gives EVIDENCE: PRIESTESS' TESTIMONY: FLUVIA WORSHIP
- Explore location
 - Gives EVIDENCE: VIEW FROM THE TEMPLE

JUSTINIA'S HOUSE

- Open LOCKED STRONGBOX
 - Gives EVIDENCE: BLUE BOTTLE
- Talk to ANNA
 - Leads to LOCATION: KITCHEN

KITCHEN

- Talk to ANNA
 - Gives EVIDENCE: ANNA TESTIMONY: ARGUMENT
 - Gives EVIDENCE: ANNA TESTIMONY: FAVOURITE FOODS
 - Gives EVIDENCE: ANNA TESTIMONY: VISITED APOTHECARY
 - Unlocks LOCATION: APOTHECARY

APOTHECARY

- Talk to NIKON
 - Gives EVIDENCE: NIKON'S TESTIMONY: JUSTINIA'S VISIT
 - Gives EVIDENCE: NIKON'S TESTIMONY: CASSIUS IN LOVE

Trial Cheat Sheet

Cassius

Round 1

Statement: "Ten years we worked together, and never a cross word between us!"

Challenge with EVIDENCE: BROKEN VASE

Gives EVIDENCE: CASSIUS TESTIMONY: ATRIUM FIGHT

Round 2

Statement: "The four of us were together in the dining room all night."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: CASSIUS TESTIMONY: ATRIUM FIGHT

Round 3

Statement: "Moments later, my business partner died! I miss him. Our shop will be a memorial to his good name."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: OIL SHOP NAME

Fluvia

Round 1

Statement: "Numerius invited me to his house for dinner."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: JUSTINIA TESTIMONY: THE BANQUET

Round 2

Statement: "As I was dining among the plebs, I did not overdress for the occasion."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: AMPHORA BROOCH

Round 3

Statement: "It was a fine party. Everyone was getting along well."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: CASSIUS TESTIMONY: ATRIUM FIGHT

Gives EVIDENCE: FLUVIA TESTIMONY: FLUVIA WAS LEFT ALONE

Justinia

Round 1

Statement: "We bought fresh food at the market and came straight home."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: NIKON'S TESTIMONY: JUSTINIA'S VISIT

Round 2

Statement: "After getting the food, we stopped by the apothecary for some fertility draught."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: BLUE BOTTLE

Round 3

Statement: "I stayed in the dining room all night."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: FLUVIA TESTIMONY: FLUVIA WAS LEFT ALONE

Round 4

Statement: "Every day I went inside the Temple of Bona Dea to pray for a child."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: PRIESTESS' TESTIMONY: JUSTINIA WORSHIP

Round 5

Statement: "The temple steps offer a fine view of Rome."

Challenge EVIDENCE: VIEW FROM THE TEMPLE

Round 6

Statement: "But I left the blue bottle in the kitchen, and it disappeared! I never saw it again."

Challenge with EVIDENCE: LOCKED STRONGBOX

Primary sources

On Roman Cuisine:

Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria*,

[<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Apicius/>]

On Slaves:

Seneca, epistles, letter 47

[<http://www.faculty.fairfield.edu/gruffini/cl116/seneca.epist.47.htm>]

On Olive Oil:

Pliny the Elder, *Natural Histories*, Book XV

[<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plin.+Nat.+toc>]

On eels:

Aelian, *On Animals*, Book VIII.4

[<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Aelian/home.html>]

On Marcus Licinius Crassus:

Plutarch, *the Life of Crassus*

[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Crassus*.html]