

**“Asta ac Perlege: Teaching Latin with Roman Inscriptions”**  
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**The Roman Funerary Inscriptions Project**

**Description:**

Funerary monuments, damaged though most of them are, are original documents that come from all areas of the Roman world, record the great and the powerless, and encompass hundreds of years of Republican and Imperial history. Funerary inscriptions add breadth, depth, and texture to the corpus of literary sources from Rome. Composed by people from all walks of life, women as well as men, they allow us to "see" and "hear" the otherwise silent many who are on the margins of Roman society, particularly women. However, commemorative inscriptions, couched in formulaic terms and standardized phrases, frequently preserve a culture's most conservative sentiments and expectations.

**Objectives:**

- Acquaintance with the field of epigraphy through the study of funerary inscriptions
- Appreciation of the value of funerary monuments as textual and visual evidence for women's lives
- Composition of an interpretive text-commentary for intermediate-level Latin students

**Getting Started:**

- Read the Introduction to Paul Shore's *Rest Lightly: An Anthology of Greek & Latin Tomb Inscriptions* (pp 1-7).
- Read John J. Dobbins, “Steps in Reading a Latin Inscription” <<http://pompeii.virginia.edu/tti/eb-insc/eb-insc-list.html>> and follow the instructions online.
- Visit the “Roman Funerary Inscriptions Project” in the *Online Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women* <[http://www2.cnr.edu/home/araia/Raia\\_inscriptions.html](http://www2.cnr.edu/home/araia/Raia_inscriptions.html)> for the resources you will need (including Monument Options and \*Project Bibliography). Please take careful note of the successful Student Projects listed below; they will serve as your guide for your finished project.

**Project Instructions:**

1. Select *up to three inscriptions* from the list of Monument Options <[http://www2.cnr.edu/home/araia/Raia\\_inscriptions2.html#mon](http://www2.cnr.edu/home/araia/Raia_inscriptions2.html#mon)>. Each student will prepare *one* inscription. Every effort will be made to accommodate your first choice.
2. Consult print and Internet sources (in the \*Project Bibliography) to familiarize yourself with the conventions of the genre, especially inscriptional abbreviations and formulaic expressions.
3. Compare the image with the photocopied excerpts from *CIL* supplied, and consult the online databases of Roman inscriptions, beginning with Clauss-Slaby (in \*Project Bibliography). Transcribe the inscription into a Word document, keeping the line and word arrangement in all caps, and resolving all the abbreviations, using brackets and lower-case letters.

4. Describe your funerary monument in detail (e.g., date, origin and appearance of the stone, including lettering and decoration). If possible, locate and compare one or more similar monuments to determine what is conventional and what may be original and specific to your monument. Models for descriptive analysis and transcription may be found in Harvey's *Roman Lives* (see \*Project Bibliography).
5. Translate your inscription.
6. Write a gloss for each word of the inscription that you think would offer difficulty to an intermediate Latin reader and/or for which you have found important background information (models for lexical and interpretive assistance can be found in Raia et al., *The Worlds of Roman Women* (Focus 2005) and the annotated texts in the *Online Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women*).
7. Try to locate information about the individuals named in the inscription, including their relationships and status.
8. Using all the information gathered above, prepare an introductory essay describing the monument and inscription, placing it in its historical and cultural context, and explaining what evidence it provides for women's lives.
9. Make a 15 minute oral presentation of this assignment to the class.
10. Submit a written and electronic version of your project using the student projects posted on the webpage as your guide (transcription, monument photo, introductory essay, translation of inscription, lexical and interpretive commentary).

### **Student Projects**

- Lara Carlson, University of South Dakota, 2011
  - Funerary Tablet for Hilara
- Alison Bressler, Furman University, 2009
  - Funerary Tablet for Claudia Lachne
- Chelsea Brewer, Furman University, 2009
  - Funerary altars dedicated by Anicia Caecilia
- Katie Phillips, Furman University, 2009
  - Funerary Tablet for Cornelia Frontina
- Danielle DeLancey, The College of New Rochelle, 2007
  - Columbarium niche cover for Pinnia Didyma
  - Cinerary urn for Pilia Philtata
- Erin Daley, The College of New Rochelle, 2007
  - Funerary tablet for Vitellia Prima
  - Cippus for Vernasia Cyclas

**\*NB:** The Workshop handout contains selected works from the online Project Bibliography