

What the Romans Thought about their Gods

Our students frequently ask how the Romans viewed their gods. This is a good question, one for which we'd all like to discover a clear-cut answer. No such clarity is forthcoming, sadly, given the complexity and variety of our surviving sources. We find some answers, however, in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, where he surveys the views of three upper-class Romans trained in Greek philosophy. In this dialogue Roman adherents of the Epicurean, Stoic, and Academic schools are portrayed discussing their theological tenets.

This paper will introduce the dialogue, and offer some excerpts that can be used in class, complete with notes on syntax and content, as well as glosses for words that are not included in the Dickinson Core Vocabulary. Because Cicero quotes liberally from his own translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, those fragments will be represented as well.