

Romans, Gods, and Historians: A look at Livy and Caesar

This paper will use the suggested AP topic of the relationship between gods and men to examine two passages: one from the required reading list Caesar, the second from another historian, Livy. Asking students to respond to the same question with regard to two different authors can be a challenge, but it is a particularly valuable aspect of the AP Latin Exam: it helps students prepare for very similar sorts of assignments which they will face in college classrooms.

Caesar:

In *De Bello Gallico* 6.17, Caesar discusses the Gauls' relationship with the gods Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva. Mercury and Mars receive the greater part of the discussion: Mercury, for the services he provides; Mars, for the importance of honoring him with spoils of war. The emphasis throughout is on the seriousness with which the Gauls take their responsibility to the gods.

Livy:

In the *Ab Urbe Condita*, 1.21, Livy presents the actions and motivations of the second king of Rome, Numa Pompilius, in establishing religious ritual and affecting the character of the Roman people. The Roman people who previously were defined by the lineage as the children of Mars – warlike and dominant militarily – are now respected by other peoples for their devotion to the gods.

In both passages, the character of the people is defined by their devotion to the gods. Yet Livy presents Numa's establishing of religion as a way to control a primitive people, whereas Caesar provides less commentary on the religious practices of the Gauls, even reporting in a prior passage that they perform human sacrifice. By offering a close analysis of the Latin and

the evidence that students should use from each passage to formulate an argument, this paper hopes to demonstrate the ways in which preparation for the AP Latin exam provides college students with a roadmap for good argumentative writing.

The results of an assignment in which third-semester college Latin students, who are reading Livy 1, will be asked to write about the two passages (handling the Caesar at sight) will be presented.