

CHAPTER 61

THE BATTLE OF PHARSALUS (PART I)

Objectives

- to introduce Caesar as a writer and man of war
- to introduce some conventions of Roman warfare
- to present the use of the ablative case with special deponent verbs

Background

1. The selections in this and the next chapter are taken from the *De bello civili*, Caesar's three books of commentaries, or memoirs, describing the events of the civil conflict from its outbreak early in 49 B.C. until Caesar's arrival in Alexandria, Egypt, in late 48. Caesar is believed to have composed the *De bello civili* during the course of the conflict for the purposes of propaganda, perhaps to win over opponents to his anticipated regime. Like his earlier and more famous commentaries on the Gallic wars, which established a new literary genre, these are written in a straightforward and lucid style and have been studied as handbooks of military science by generals such as Napoleon. The episodes presented in Chapters 61 and 62 are intended not only to illustrate something of Caesar's masterful generalship, but also to reveal his more human side as an observer of human nature.
2. Students should be asked to read carefully the presentation on the Roman army found on pages 76–77 of the student's book. This will introduce the many technical terms found in the readings of this and the following chapter. Students have already begun to appreciate the extent and affect of Roman military might through their readings in the Frontier Life sections of Books I and II. Further information on various aspects of Roman military science may be found in the following:
 - a. *The Military Institutions of the Romans*, a translation of a fourth century A.D. treatise on Roman military science by Flavius Renatus Vegetius, includes much anecdotal information about the recruitment and training of a legionary soldier.
 - b. "The Roman Army," *Roman Civilization Sourcebook II*, pp. 490–531, provides ancient sources in translation.
 - c. *The Roman Army* includes illustrations and ancient sources describing the individual sol-

dier, life in camp, the army in battle, and the life of the soldier after discharge.

- d. *Warfare in the Classical World*, especially pp. 144–187 on the wars of the Republic, is a wonderfully illustrated history, which covers all aspects of Greek and Roman warfare and includes many battle plans and artist's reconstructions of the weaponry of individual soldiers and of warships and artillery.
- e. *Ancient Rome* by Eyewitness Books provides wonderful photographs of Roman military artifacts found in the British Museum. See especially pp. 10–15.

Additional resources include the following:

- a. Students may enjoy reading translations of Caesar's dramatic accounts of the sieges of the Gallic strongholds Avaricum and Alesia in Book VII of the *De bello Gallico*. See especially "Siege of Alesia (51 B.C.)" in Hildegarde Roberts's excellent source reader *Classical Rome Comes Alive*. Excellent reconstructions of the siege of Avaricum can be found in *Imperial Rome*, pp. 89–97. "Conqueror's Path to Mighty Empire," *Greece and Rome*, pp. 372–434, presents a beautifully illustrated account of Caesar's conquest of Gaul, including a colorful artist's rendering of the siege of Alesia, pp. 412–414.
 - b. Those teachers who wish to construct a Roman catapult or ballista or who have students who are fascinated by the engineering design of Roman artillery are directed to *Catapult Design, Construction, and Competition*, and to the illustrated article "Ancient Catapults" in *Scientific American*, March 1979.
3. The Romans experienced the fratricidal horror of civil war three times in the final years of the Republic. The civil war between Caesar and Pompey (49–45 B.C.) was so stirring that the imperial poet Lucan devoted to it an entire epic, the *De bello civili (Pharsalia)*. Feeling the oppression of Nero's regime, Lucan saw in the battle of Pharsalus and Caesar's subsequent dictatorship the final loss of freedom and the triumph of military rule. Lucan summarized the power struggle between Caesar and Pompey with the saying **Nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarve priorem, Pompeius parem**, printed on page 67 of the student's book.
 4. After defeating Pompey's armies in Spain and accepting the surrender of Massilia, Caesar determined to pursue Pompey in Greece. The engagement of the two armies at Dyrrachium (modern Durazzo), a town on the west coast of Macedonia, ended in a stalemate, with Pompey pursuing Caesar to Pharsalus in Thessaly (for which, see

the map on page 12 of the student's book). The actual site of the battle is uncertain; Caesar himself never mentions the name Pharsalus. The battle was probably fought on the northern bank of the Enipeus river, with Pompey's camp to the west of the plain, which was encircled by hills (see the battle plan on page 83 of the student's book). For details about the battle and subsequent events, see, "Pharsalus," *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, pp. 810–811, and "War in Greece, Egypt, and Asia (48–47 B.C.)," *From the Gracchi to Nero*, pp. 142–144. For Lucan's compelling description of the battle itself, see the Loeb translation.

5. **Acies** (B:11, C:1 and 6) was the front line of an army drawn up in battle formation and conceived by the Romans as the edge of a knife or sword (the literal meaning of the word). For the technical military terms presented in this reading, see the reading notes. Here is a list, for reference, with the location of each word's first appearance:

acies (55C:2), **centuria** (A:13), **cohors** (C:1), **cornu** (55C:3), **equitatus** (B:10), **equites** (55C:2), **exercitus** (55B:5), **funditor** (C:5), **gladius** (26:30), **imperator** (60C:1), **legio** (55A:7–8), **manipularis** (A:8), **ordo** (B:7), **pilum** (B:1), **primus pilus** (A:7), **proelium** (55A:5), **sagittarius** (B:9), **signum** (57B:6), **telum** (B:6), **tuba** (A:5)

For further information on matters pertaining to the organization of the Roman army, see *The Roman Army*, "Soldiers of the Emperor," pp. 3–20, "Life in Camp," pp. 21–35, and "Open Battle," pp. 42–43, and the sound filmstrip "Caesar's Army" published by Clearvue/EAV.

Teaching the Text

1. It is, of course, important to "set the stage" for the readings in these two chapters by reviewing what the students already know about the historical context of the battle of Pharsalus. Especially useful for this purpose are Chapter 55, readings B and C. It would also be useful for the teacher, if time allows, to provide the student with readings in translation from Caesar's *De bello civili* as historical background for the text, especially the chapters describing the stalemate at Dyrrachium (III.39–57), the scene in Pompey's camp just prior to the battle (III.82–84), and the preliminaries to the fighting (III.85–89). Be sure to remind students that Pharsalus is located in Greece; see the map on page 12 in the student's book.
2. A gold mine of creative ideas and materials for teaching Caesar will be found in Fred Mench's article "Caesar in the Curriculum—Some New Approaches." This article contains a valuable annotated bibliography of current books and historical novels, a list of audio-visual aids, and suggestions

for historical, thematic, and literary approaches to teaching Caesar. Also, the American Classical League Teaching Materials and Resource Center makes available to the teacher a packet of mimeographed items written by teachers, scholars, and students on subjects relevant to the study of Caesar (Mimeograph Packet M1). See also "A Selected Bibliography of Recent Work on C. Julius Caesar."

3. Rather than dwelling on details of the fighting, the teacher should use the readings to build an appreciation of Caesar as both writer and soldier. (Mench's article is especially useful for this purpose.) Class or individual biographical study of Caesar could precede reading and discussion of these chapters or could be left until the end of Part III and introduced in connection with the reading that describes Caesar's death (page 96 in the student's book). The readings given in these chapters provide vignettes that will allow the teacher to guide students toward an appreciation of Caesar's propagandistic style, e.g., his interesting digression on the vainglory of Pompey's men at Pharsalus in the next chapter (Reading C:1–6).
4. The teacher may ask students to underline or highlight the technical military terms appearing in the essay on pages 76–77 or listed above in note 5 or to discuss the vocabulary of the reading prior to translation. The following words appear frequently during the six readings in these two chapters and should be learned by the student (first appearance in parentheses): **cohortor** (A:1), **conficio** (A:9), **procurro** (A:12), **animadverto** (B:1), **consisto** (B:3), **cedo** (B:10) and its compounds, **circumeo** (B:11), and **adorior** (C:7).
5. For a fine example, on film, of the tactics of Roman legions on the battlefield during the late Republic, see the feature length movie *Spartacus* (1962). The movie *Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) also has some lively battle scenes of the Romans against the barbarians in the 2nd century A.D. Students should become aware of Caesar's tendency to focus on a particular individual amidst all the maneuvering of units and the heat of battle (in the manner, again, of film-making). A photograph of a model of a legionary soldier of the late Republic is provided on page 77 of the student's book. For a well-illustrated appreciation of the individual Roman soldier, see *The Roman Legionary*, and see also "Directions for Making a Costume of a Roman Legionary." For an interesting look at the life of a soldier, see the translation from Livy "Career of a Humble Citizen-Soldier (200 B.C.)," *Roman Civilization Sourcebook I*, pp. 452–454, and the various historical novels available through the American Classical League Teaching Materials and Resource Center.

THE BATTLE OF PHARSALUS (PART I)

A. Caesar exhorts his men to battle

Exercitum cum mīlītārī mōre ad pugnam cohortārētur suaque in eum perpetuī temporis officia praedicāret, imprimīs commemorāvit testibus sē mīlitibus utī posse, quanto studiō pācem petīssēt (syncope for petīvisset), neque sē umquam abutī mīlitum sanguine neque rem publicam alterutrō exercitū privāre voluisse. Hāc habitā orātiōne, exposcentibus mīlitibus et studiō pugnae ardentibus tubā signum dedit.

Erat C. Crastinus ēvocātus in exercitū Caesaris, quī superiōre annō apud eum primum pīlum in legiōne X dūxerat, vir singularī virtūte. Hic, signō datō, "Sequimini mē," inquit, "manipulārēs meī quī fuistis, et vestrō imperātōri quam constituistis operam date. Unum hoc proelium superest; quō confectō et ille suam dignitatem et nōs nostram libertatem recuperābimus." Simul respiciēs Caesarem, "Faciam," inquit, "hodiē, imperātor, ut aut vivō mihi aut mortuō gratiās agās." Haec cum dīxisset, primus ex dextrē cornū prōcucurrit, atque eum electī mīlitēs circiter CXX voluntārii eiusdem centuriae sunt prōsecuti.

Vocabulary List 61A

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1. cohortor, cohortārī, cohortātus sum | to exhort, encourage | | |
| 2. praedicō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus | to set forth, relate | | |
| 3. imprimīs | Adv. especially, particularly | | |
| 4. testis, testis M. | witness | i-stem because _____ | testis testēs |
| 5. abutor, abutī, abusus sum + abl. | to abuse, misuse | | testis testium |
| 6. privō, -āre, -āvī, -ātus + abl. | to deprive of | | testi testibus |
| 7. ēvocātus, ī M. | reenlisted or veteran soldier | | testem testes |
| 8. supersum, superesse, superfuī, _____ | to be left, remain | | teste/ī testibus |
| 9. dexter, dextra, dextrum | right (the direction) | ant. sinister | |
| 10. circiter | Adv. around, about | (<u>frequently used with numbers</u>) | |

Translations

A. When [Caesar] was exhorting his army to the fight, according to the custom of war, and was setting forth his constant services toward them, he recalled especially that he could use his soldiers as witnesses [to the fact that] with how much zeal he had sought peace and that he had never wished to waste the blood of his soldiers nor had he wished to deprive the Republic of either army [i.e., his own or Pompey's]. When he had given this speech, he gave the signal by war horn to his men, [who were] insistent and afire with enthusiasm for the fight.

Reading Notes

A.

1. **in eum . . . officia praedicāret** (1–2): The meaning of these words might be unclear. Be sure students understand that the **officia**, *services*, are those of Caesar and that **eum** refers to the army, **exercitum**.
2. **testibus . . . militibus** (2): Ablative after **ūtī**; cf. **sanguine** after **abūtī** (3).
3. **commemorāvit . . . voluisse** (2–4): Students should note that comprehension of this sentence depends upon observing that there are three infinitive phrases in indirect statement after **commemorāvit**: **sē . . . posse** (2), **sē . . . abūtī** (3), and **(sē) . . . voluisse** (4).
4. **alterutrō exercitū** (4): Ablative of separation after **privāre** (4), *to deprive X (acc.) of Y (abl.)*.
5. **exposcentibus militibus . . . ardentibus** (4–5): This is better taken as a dative indirect object after **dedit** than as an ablative absolute. These telling words follow upon Caesar's claim in the previous line that he always looked after his men. Caesar goes on to illustrate the eagerness of his men with the story of Crastinus.
6. **in exercitū Caesaris** (6): Students should be asked to note that Caesar writes in the third person and to speculate on the reasons why he does so. Caesar's use of the third person gives the reader the illusion that the writer is someone other than Caesar himself and is, therefore, objective and unbiased.
7. **primum pilum in legiōne X** (7): **Prīmus pilus** was the term both for the top-ranking century (unit of 60 men) of the 60 centuries in each legion and the title of the senior centurion of the **prīmus pilus**. Crastinus had commanded the **prīmus pilus** of the first cohort of the 10th Legion, Caesar's favorite.
8. **superiōre annō** (6): Crastinus had probably served against Pompey's armies in Spain and during the campaign at Massilia (see *De bello civili* II.1–22 and Chapter 55B:10–12).
9. **Sequimini** (7): This word provides an opportunity for review of the imperative of deponent verbs.
10. **manipulārēs** (8): A manipule (**manipulāris**) was a military unit intermediate between century and cohort and consisted of 120 men (= two centuries). Thus: 1 legion (= 3,600 soldiers) = 10 cohorts (360 men per cohort or three maniples) = 30 maniples (120 men per manipule or two centuries) = 60 centuries (60 men per century). A century, originally, had been 100 men.
11. **dignitatem** (9): For this term, see the introduction to Part I, page 2 and Chapter 60:D5 in the student's book, and page 5, background note 3, in this guide. Caesar wanted to stand for a second consulship *in absentia* while still commanding in Gaul; after lengthy legal maneuvering, his opponents in Rome had passed legislation requiring him to give up command and return to Rome as a private citizen. By doing so, he would have been finished as a political force, and perhaps even put on trial by his enemies; consequently he would have suffered a great loss of **dignitās**.
12. **ut . . . grātiās agās** (11): Substantive (noun) clauses of result with **ut** (negative **ut nōn**) are used as the objects of verbs such as **faciō** and its compounds and **accidit**. Thus, **faciam . . . ut = I will bring it about that**.
13. **ex dextrō cornū** (11–12): The 10th Legion was stationed on the right wing of Caesar's line, opposite Pompey's left wing and his cavalry, and was led by Titus Labienus. Caesar's **lēgātus** and second-in-command during the Gallic Wars. See the battle plan on page 83 of the student's book.
14. **sunt prōsecūtī** (13): Note the inverted word order of this verb, a common occurrence in Caesar.

There was in Caesar's army a reenlisted soldier, Gaius Crastinus, a man of remarkable courage, who in the previous year had led the **prīmus pilus** in the Tenth Legion under him [Caesar]. When the signal had been given, this [man] said, "Follow me, [those of you] who were my comrades-in-arms, and give to your commander the service that you pledged. This one battle remains; after it is finished, he will regain his prestige and we our liberty." At the same time, looking back at Caesar, he said, "Today, general, I will see to it that you thank me, whether living or dead." When he had spoken this, he was the first to run forward from the right wing, and about 120 picked troops, volunteers from the same century, followed.

B. Caesar's Men React to Pompey's Tactic

Sed nostrī milītēs datō signō cum infestīs pilīs prōcucurissent atque animadvertissent nōn concurrī ā Pompeiānīs, usū peritī ac superiōribus pugnis exercitātī suā sponte cursum represserunt et ad medium ferē spatium cōstitērunt, nē cōsumptīs vīribus appropinquārent, parvōque intermissō temporis spatio ac rursus renovatō cursū pila miserunt celeriterque, ut erat praeceptum ā Caesare, gladiōs strinxerunt. Neque verō Pompeiānī huic rei defuerunt. Nam et tela missa excēperunt et impetum legiōnum tulerunt et ordinēs suōs servāverunt pilisque missis ad gladiōs redierunt.

Eodem tempore equitēs ab sinistro Pompeiī cornū, ut erat imperātum, universī prōcucurrerunt, omnisque multitudō sagittariōrum se profudit. Quōrum impetum noster equitatus nōn tulit, sed paulatim locō mōtus cessit, equitēsque Pompeiī hoc acrius instāre et se turmatim explicāre aciemque nostram ā latere apertō circumire coeperunt.

Vocabulary List 61B

1. pilum, ī N. spear, lance
2. sponte Adv., actually the abl. s. noun used as an adv. e. g. sponte meā nostrā
3. cursus, ūs M. a charge (literally, a running) tuā vestrā
4. spatium, iī N. space (between the two armies) suā suā
5. ōrdō, ōrdinis M. line, rank (of soldiers)
6. profūdō, profūdere, profūdī, profūsus to pour forth der: profusion, profuse
7. equitatus, ūs M. cavalry
8. paulatim Adv. little by little, gradually
9. aciēs, aciei F. battle line, arrangement of cohorts side by side
10. latus, lateris N. side, flank

aciēs aciēs
 aciei acierum
 aciei aciebus
 aciem aciēs
 acie aciebus

B.

1. **īnfestīs pilīs** (1): This was a position where the lances (*pila*) were leveled for attack. Cf. **īnfestīs signīs** (C:2).
2. **nōn concurrī ā Pompeiānīs** (2): The impersonal passive will be discussed in Chapter 62, page 92, of the student's book.
3. **ūsū perītī ac superiōribus pugnīs exercitātī** (2): **ūsū** and **superiōribus pugnīs** are ablatives of means.
4. **spatium** (3): This word can mean an interval of space, as here, or of time, as in line 4.
5. **ut erat praeceptum** (5): Note the use of **ut** + indicative; also in line 8.
6. **huic rei** (6): Dative after the compound verb **dēsum**.
7. **equitēs . . . Pompeiī . . . noster equitātus . . . equitēsque Pompeiī** (8–10): Note the back and forth nature of the description, to illustrate the action of the battle.
8. **Quōrum impetum** (9): Students should be asked to note Caesar's frequent use of linking **quī** (cf. A:9). Pompey's cavalry outnumbered Caesar's (see *De bello civili* III.88–89 and Chapter 55C:2–6 for the relative strength of the two armies).
9. **locō mōtus cessit** (10): In Caesar, the verb **cēdō** and its compounds may be found with the ablative without a preposition denoting place from which.
10. **ā latere apertō** (11): I.e., in the space left open by Caesar's retreating cavalry. See the battle plan on page 83.

C. Caesar's Men Gain the Advantage:

Quod ubi Caesar animadvertit, quartae aciēī, quam īnstituerat sex cohortium, dedit signum. Illī celeriter prōcucurrērunt īnfestisque signīs tantā vī in Pompeiī equitēs impetum fēcērunt, ut eōrum nēmō cōnsisteret, omnēsque conversī nōn solum locō excēderent, sed prōtinus incitātī fugā montēs altissimōs peterent. Quibus summōtīs omnēs sagittāriī funditorēsque dēstitūtī inermēs sine praesidiō interfectī sunt. Eōdem impetū cohortēs sinistrum cornū pugnantibus etiam tum ac resistētibz in aciē Pompeiānīs circumiērunt eōsque ā tergō sunt adortī.

C.

1. **quārtae aciēī . . . sex cohortium** (1): Caesar had drawn up a fourth battle line of six cohorts and stationed it behind his right wing (see the battle plan), to oppose Pompey's superior cavalry. This was an unusual tactic, because Caesar normally attacked with three battle lines (**aciēs triplex**).
2. **īnfestisque signīs** (2): For military **signa**, see the illustration on page 76 of the student's book.
3. The break in the Latin text was designed to provoke curiosity about what will happen next in the battle and to generate anticipation for the readings in the next chapter.

Vocabulary List 61C

1. **fruor, frui, fructus** sum + abl. to enjoy, have the benefit of
2. **fungor, fungi, functus** sum + abl. to perform, discharge (function, perfunctory)
3. **instituō, instituere, instituī, institutus** to set up, arrange
4. **convertō, convertere, convertī, conversus** to turn
5. **nōn solum . . . sed (etiam)** not only . . . but also
6. **summoveo, summovēre, summovī, summōtus** to move away, drive off
7. **funditor, funditoris** M. slinger
8. **inermis, e** unarmed
9. **praesidium, iī** N. guard, protection