Horace was born in Venusia (south central Italy) on December 8, 65 BCE. His father (or grandfather) had been a slave in the important Horatii gens of Rome, and, according to standard Roman practice, upon his manumission his family adopted the Roman name. While Horace was pursuing his education at Rome and later Athens, civil war erupted between Caesar and Pompey. Unfortunately, Horace joined the wrong side, Pompey’s, and ended up losing his family farm but was spared by Caesar.

Maecenas, the secretary of the arts for Octavian (soon-to-be Augustus), took the penniless Horace under his powerful wing and began supporting the fledgling poet as part of the imperial program fostering the native arts in Rome, including poetry written in Latin. Horace would never know hunger and poverty again. Augustus would try to convince him to become more active in the government, but Horace preferred the simple pleasures and joys of life: friendship, travel, the lighter side of love, the scenery of nature.

Our excerpt comes from Horace’s second book of Sermones (“Conversations”), satirical poems on a multitude of topics. The sixth is a hymn to his contentment with his farm and the simple life he leads in the country. In the first part of the poem, Horace sits around the campfire with friends, and someone praises wealth. One of Horace’s companions, Cervius (“Bucky”), recounts a tale of a country mouse who invited a friend from the city to dinner only to be told that his way of life is narrow and shabby.

Olim
Once upon a time,

**rusticus** urbanum murem mus paupere **fertur**
a country mouse is said to have received a city mouse

**accepisse** cavo, veterem vetus hospes amicum,
in his poor hole, an old friend (and) old guest,

**asper** et attentus quaesitis, ut tamen artum
unrefined and attentive to his supplies, (and) although frugal,

**solveret** hospitiis animum. quid **multa**? neque ille
he could relax his basic nature for guests. Why (say) more? He did not

**sepositi** ciceris nec longae invidit avenae,
be grudge the select chick-pea nor the long-grained oat,

[continued on the next page]
and he offered a dried grape seed and half-eaten morsels of bacon carrying (them)

frusta dedit, cupiens varia fastidia cena
in his mouth, hoping to overcome with various food

vincere tangentis male singula dente superbo,
the disdain of the one hardly touching (them) one by one with a haughty tooth,

cum pater ipse domūs paleā porrectus in hornā
after the master of the house himself, having stretched out on (a bed of) this year’s chaff,

esset ador loliumque, dapis meliora relinquens.
was eating spelt and darnel, leaving behind the better parts of the banquet.

tandem urbanus ad hunc “quid te iuvat” inquit, “amice,”
At length the city (mouse) said to that one, “What fun is it for you, (my) friend,

praerupti nemoris patientem vivere dorso?
to live (in such) suffering on the edge of a rough pastureland?

vis tu homines urbemque feris praeponere silvis?
Don’t you want to put men and the city before the savage woods?

carpe viam, mihi crede, comes, terrestria quando
Seize the way, trust me, pal, since things on earth

mortalīs animas vivunt sortita neque ulla est
have been allotted mortal souls and there is no

aut magno aut parvo letī fuga: quo, bone, circa
escape from death for either the great or the small: therefore, good (fellow),

dum licet, in rebus iucundis vive beatus,
while one may, live happy in pleasant circumstances,

vive memor, quam sis aevi brevis.”
live mindful of how short-lived you are.”
Worksheet – Horace, The City Mouse and the Country Mouse, Part 1

a. The questions below pertain to the forms underlined in the passage

b. When you’re asked to change a word from one form to another, change only that form of the word. For instance, if you’re asked to change habet to the passive voice, make habet passive but leave it in the 3rd person singular, present indicative.

1. What case is rusticus and why? ____________________________

2. Change fertur to perfect subjunctive plural. ____________________________

3. Make accepisse passive (nom. masc. sing.). ____________________________

4. Make asper plural. ___________________________________________________________________

5. Make solveret pluperfect. ___________________________________________________________________

6. What case is multa and why? ___________________________________________________________________

7. Make ciceris plural. ___________________________________________________________________

8. Change invidit to present. ___________________________________________________________________

9. What case is ore and why? ___________________________________________________________________

10. Make dedit future plural. ___________________________________________________________________

11. What mood is vincere and why? ___________________________________________________________________

12. Change tangentis to perfect subjunctive (2nd pl). ___________________________________________________________________

13. What mood is esset and why? ___________________________________________________________________

14. Make meliora superlative. ___________________________________________________________________

15. Make amice plural. ___________________________________________________________________

16. Make patientem future passive. ___________________________________________________________________

[continued on the next page]
17. Make **praeponere** perfect passive (nom. sing. neut.). _______________________

18. What case is **silvis** and why? ________________________________

19. What mood is **carpe** and why? ________________________________

20. Change **sortita** to future perfect indicative (3rd sing.). _______________________

21. Make **leti** ablative plural. ________________________________

22. Make **licet** imperfect. ________________________________

23. Change **vive** to present subjunctive. ________________________________

24. What case is **beatus** and why? ________________________________

25. What mood is **sis** and why? ________________________________
Notes/Vocabulary–Horace, City Mouse and Country Mouse, Part 1

79. olim: (adverb) once upon a time

80. rusticus: rusticus, -a, -um: of or belonging to the country
   urbanum: urbanus, -a, -um: of or belonging to the city
   mus: mus, muris, m/f.: mouse
   paupere: pauper, -eris: poor (with cavo in the next line: “in [his] poor hole”)
   fertur: “(a country mouse) is said”; lit. “is conveyed (in conversation)”

81. cavo: cavum, -i, n.: (mouse) hole
   veterum: vetus, -eris: old
   hospes: hospes, hospitis, m.: host

82. asper: asper, -era, -erum: rough; here, unrefined
   attentus: attendo, -ere, attendi, attentum: careful, attentive
   quaesitis: lit. “things having been sought out”; here, supplies
   ut tamen: although
   artum: artus, -a, -um: frugal

83. solveret: solvo, -ere, solvi, solutum: relax; i.e. his normally frugal way of life
   hospitius: “when guests visited,” lit. “for friendships”
   quid multa: “Why (say) many things?,” i.e. “Why go on?”
   neque ille: a colloquial phrase, “No, he (i.e. the country mouse) was not the mouse to
   hold back on…”

84. sepositi: sepositus, -a, -um: select
   ciceris: cicer, -eris, n.: chick-pea (genitive with invidit)
   invidit: invideo, -ere, -vidi, -visum: begrudge ; + somebody (acc.) something (gen.)
   avenae: avena, -ae, f.: oat
   longae…avenae: long-grained oat

85. et: (treat as if postpositive; translate before aridum)
   aridum: aridus, -a, -um: dry
   ore: os, oris, n.: mouth
   acinum: acinus, -i, n.: grape seed
   semesaque: sem/esa: sem(i) = “half”; esus (from edo, -ere, edi, esum: eat); half-eaten
   lardi: lardum, -i, n.: the fat of bacon

86. frusta: frustum, -i, n.: morsel
   varia: varius, -a, -um: various
   fastidia: fastidium, -i, n.: disgust; plural for singular; object of vincere (87)
   cena: cena, -ae, f.: meal, food
87. **male:** (adverb) hardly  
   **singula:** singulus, -a, -um: one by one; here, neuter plural substantive  
   **dente:** dens, dentis, m.: tooth  
   **superbo:** superbus, -a, -um: haughty

88. **palea:** palea, -ae, f.: chaff  
   **porrectus:** porrigo, porrigere, porrexī, porrectum: lie stretched out  
   **horna:** hornus, -a, -um: recent, this year’s

89. **esset:** edo, esse, edi, esum: eat  
   **ador:** ador, -oris, n.: spelt (an old kind of wheat)  
   **loliumque:** lolium, -i, n.: darnel (ryegrass)  
   **dapes:** daps, dapis, f.: banquet

90. **tandem:** (adverb) at length

91. **praerupti:** praerumpo, -ere, praerupi, praeruptum: break off in front; here, rough  
   **nemoris:** nemus, -oris, n.: pastureland beside a wooded area  
   **dorso:** dorsum, -i, n.: back; here, on the edge (locative ablative)

92. **vis tu:** idiom: “Don’t you…?”  
   **feris:** ferus, -a, -um: savage  
   **silvis:** Silva, -ae, f.: woods

93. **carpe:** carpo, -ere, carpsi, carptum: pluck out; enjoy; here, seize  
   **comes:** comes, comitis, m/f.: companion; here, pal  
   **terrestria:** terrestris, -e: (things/creatures) of the earth  
   **quando:** (adverb) when; sometimes causal: since, because; here, postpositive

94. **mortalis:** mortalis, -e: mortal; here, *mortalis = mortales* (acc. pl.)  
   **vivunt:** = sunt  
   **sortita:** sortior, -iri, sortitus: allot

95. **leti:** letum, -i, n.: death; here, genitive with *fuga* (“escape from”)  
   **fuga:** fugus, -ae, f.: escape  
   **quo...circa:** quocirca: therefore

97. **memor:** memor, -oris: mindful; + genitive  
   **aevi:** aevum, -i, n.: life-time  
   **aevi brevis:** genitive of description