Horace, *Sermones* 2.6: The Country Mouse and the City Mouse, Part 2

Our campfire tale continues as the humble country mouse is seduced with promises of the “good life” from the haughty tooth of his urbane friend. The lap of luxury has its rough spots as we travel with these tiny rodents to town and see the other side of the proverbial fence. If the ultimate pleasure was to be free from anxiety, then to subscribe to this restrained kind of hedonism taught by the Epicurean philosophers is the real moral of Horace’s story. But perhaps the country mouse does not have the last word after all, nor does his city cousin; for seldom in Roman history do we find either mice or men who are able to straddle both worlds as successfully as did Horace.

haec ubi dicta
when these words

agrestem pepulere, domo levis exsilit; inde
struck the country (mouse), lightly he scampers from the house; next

ambo propositum peragunt iter, urbis aventes
both finish the journey (as) planned, desiring at night

moenia nocturni subreperc. iamque tenebat
to creep under the walls of the city. And now the night

nox medium caeli spatium, cum ponit uterque
was holding the middle of the sky’s expanse, when each (mouse) sets

in locuplete domo vestigia, rubro ubi coco
(his) footsteps in a rich house, where a coverlet

tincta super lectos canderet vestis eburnos
dyed with reddish-purple glowed on ivory couches.

multaque de magn~superessent~ fercula cen~
There were left over from a great dinner many trays (of food),

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quae procul exstructis inerant hesterna canistris.
which (were) last night’s (and) were in wicker baskets piled up across the room.

ergo ubi purpure~porrectum in veste locavit
Then, when he seated the country (mouse who) stretched out upon the purple

agrestem, veluti succinctus cursitat hospes
coverlet, just like (a servant with his tunic) hitched up, the host scurries back and forth

continuatque dapes nec non verniliter ipsis
and prolongs the banquet and officiously performs these

fungitur officiis, praelambens omne quod adfert.
(very) duties, licking beforehand everything which he brings.

ille cubans gaudet mutat~sorte bonisque
That (mouse) reclining rejoices in (his) changed lot and (surrounded) by good

rebus agit laetum convivam, cum subito ingens
things, plays the satisfied guest, when suddenly a monstrous

valvarum strepitus lectis excussit utrumque.
rattling of the double doors shook both off (their) couches.

currere per totum pavidi conclave magisque
Frightened, they run through the entire room and even more

exanimes trepidare, simul domus alta Molossis
breathless(ly) they tremble, when the lofty mansion resounded

personuit canibus. tum rusticus: “haud mihi vit~
with Molossian hounds. Then the country (mouse) said: “I have

est opus hac” ait et “valeas: me silica cavusque
no need for this (kind of) life” and (adds) “Good-bye! The forest and (my mouse) hole

tutus ab insidiis tenui solabitur ervo.”
safe from sudden attack, will comfort me (in spite of its) scanty vetch.”
**Worksheet — Horace, The City Mouse and The Country Mouse**

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 *domo* and why? __________________________________________________

2. Make *exsilit* future. _________________________________________________________

3. What case is *propositum* and why? __________________________________________

4. Change *peragunt* to subjunctive. ____________________________________________

5. Make *tenebat* pluperfect. __________________________________________________

6. Make *domo* locative. ______________________________________________________

7. Make *canderet* perfect. __________________________________________________

8. Change *superessent* to a perfect infinitive. __________________________________

9. Make *exstructis* present (active). __________________________________________

10. Change *locavit* to subjunctive passive (masculine singular). _____________________

11. What case is *agrestem* and why? __________________________________________

12. Make *ipsis* genitive. _____________________________________________________

13. What case is *officiis* and why? ____________________________________________

14. Make *cubans* future passive. ______________________________________________

15. Make *sorte* genitive plural. ________________________________________________

[Continued on the next page]
16. Change agit to plural imperative. _____________________________________________

17. What case is lectis and why? _______________________________________________

18. Make conclave plural. ______________________________________________________

19. Make examines ablative singular. _____________________________________________

20. Change personuit to imperfect subjunctive. _____________________________________

21. What case is canibus and why? ______________________________________________

22. What case is mihi and why? _________________________________________________

23. Make hac dative singular. __________________________________________________

24. What mood is valeas and why? ______________________________________________

25. Change solabitur to future perfect (masculine plural). ___________________________
Horace, “The City Mouse and the County Mouse” — Notes and Vocabulary

97. **ubi**: here, postpositive

98. **agrestem**: agrestis, -e: (belonging to the) country  
**pepulere** = **pepulurunt**  
**levis**: translate as an adverb: lightly; i.e. without a second thought  
**exsilit**: exsilio, exsilire, exsilui: leap out, leap up; present tense for perfect  
**inde**: (adverb) next

99. **ambo**: ambo, ambae, ambo: both  
**propositum**: propono, -ponere, -posui, -positum: put forth, plan  
**peragunt**: perago, -ere, peregi, peractum: finish  
**iter**: iter, itineris, n.: journey  
**aventes**: aveo, -ere: desire

100. **moenia**: moenia, -ium, n. (pl.): walls (of a city)  
**nocturni**: nocturnus, -a, -um: at night; here, modifying the subject of **peragunt**  
**subrepere**: subrepo, subrepere, subrepsi: creep under

101. **spatium**: spatium, -i, n.: space; here, expanse

102. **locupletis**: locuples, locupletis: rich  
**vestigia**: vestigium, -i, n.: footprint  
**rubro**: ruber, rubra, rubrum: red  
**cocco**: coccum, -i, n.: scarlet dye

103. **tincta**: tingo, -ere, tinxii, tinctum: dye  
**super**: (adverb) on (top of)  
**canderet**: candeo, -ere, candui: glow  
**vestis**: vestis, -is, f.: coverlet  
**eburnos**: eburnus, -a, -um: (made of) ivory

104. **superessent**: supersum, superesse, superfu, superfuturus: left over  
**fercula**: ferculum, -i, n.: tray (for serving food)  
**cena**: cena, -ae, f.: dinner

105. **procul**: (adverb) at a distance; here, across the room  
**exstructis**: exstruo, -struere, -struxi, -structum: pile up  
**inerant**: insum, -esse, -fui: be in  
**hesterna**: hesternus, -a, -um: of yesterday; here, last night’s
canistris: canistra, -orum, n. (pl.): wicker baskets

106. ergo: (adverb) then
purpure ⇒ purpureus, -a, -um: purple
porrectum: porrigo, -ere, porrexii, porrectum: stretch out
locavit: loco (1): place; here, to seat, with the city mouse as the understood subject

107. veluti: (adverb) just
succinctus: succingo, -cingere, -cini, -cinctum: tuck up the clothes in the girdle
cursit: curro (1): frequentitive of curro showing repeated action; scurry back and forth
hospes: hospes, hospitis, m.: host

108. continuat: continuo (1): make continuous; here, prolong
dapes: daps, dapis, f.: banquet
nec non: and also; literally “nor not”
verniliter: (adverb) like a slave; with nec non, “officiously” (lit. “not like a slave”)

109. fungitur: fungor, fungi, functus sum: +ablative: perform
praelambens: praelambo, -ere: lick before
adfert: adfero, adferre, attuli, allatum: bring

110. cubans: cubo, -are, cubui, cubitum: recline
gaudet: gaudeo, -ere, gavisus sum: rejoice
mutat ⇒ muto (1): change
sorte: sors, sortis, f.: (one’s) lot
bonis...rebus: here, “surrounded by good things”; locative ablative

111. laetum: laetus, -a, -um: satisfied
convivam: conviva, -ae, m.: guest; agit laetum convivam: “plays the happy guest”
subito: (adverb) suddenly
ingens: ingens, ingentis: huge, monstrous

112. valvarum: valvae, -arum, f. (pl.): double doors
streitus: strepitus, -ā, m.: noise, rattle
lectis: lectus, -i, m.: (dining) couch
excussit: excutio, excutere, excussi, excussum: shake off
utrumque: uterque, utraque, utrumque: each (of two), both

113. currere = current: historical infinitive used in animated narrative
pavidi: pavidus, -a, -um: frightened
conclave: conclave, -is, n.: room

114. exanimes: exanimis, -e: breathless; i.e. from terror
trepidare: trepido (1): be agitated; here, trepidare = trepidant (see currere, 113)
alta: altus, -a, -um: high; because it is the large home of a rich man
Molossis: Molossus, -a, -um: Molossian; Molossia is an area in Greece famous for raising hunting dogs

115. personuit: persono, personare, personui, personitum: resound
canibus: canis, -is, m./f.: dog
haud: (adverb) not at all
vit~ ablative with opus est (ablative shows the thing needed)

116. cavus: cavum, -i, n.: (mouse) hole

117. tutus: tutus, -a, -um: safe; with ab insidiis, “safe from sudden attack”
tenui: tenuis, -e: thin, scanty
solabitur: solor, -ari, solatus sum: comfort
ervo: ervum, -i, n.: vetch; a plant in the pea family cultivated for silage