

## READING

Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) was the leading intellectual of the northern European Renaissance. Although Rotterdam, where he was born, is in the Netherlands, Erasmus considered himself “Latin,” a citizen of the republic of literature, *rēs pūblica litterārum*. He belongs to a tradition of Latin writers from outside of Italy that dates back to Roman antiquity itself, and has for centuries since then extended over the wider world. For in ancient Roman times, authors such as the younger Seneca, who came from Spain, and Augustine, who came from North Africa, nonetheless identified themselves, and were viewed, as “Latin.” Like these men, Erasmus was thoroughly steeped in Latin learning and left posterity a monumental collection of works in Latin: in his case on theology, religion, education and philosophy. While Erasmus was steadfastly devoted to the Roman church throughout his life, he criticized many of its beliefs and practices, in this way anticipating the developments of the Protestant Reformation. After the early death of his parents, Erasmus was brought up in a monastery, but later obtained a special license to live independently. He spent most of his life traveling in Europe, staying with friends who were also intellectuals. His enemies jokingly turned his name into *mūs errāns*, “wandering mouse.” And, because of his sharp tongue, Erasmus did not lack enemies. A superb Latin writer, he did not limit himself to imitations of Cicero as did many of his contemporaries, against whom he wrote a satirical dialogue called *Cicerōniānus*, “The Ciceronian.” Rather, he availed himself of all the riches the Latin language had to offer, emulating later Roman authors such as Seneca and the early Christian Fathers as well. Erasmus ranks among the most significant Latin writers, and could easily be judged an equal to Cicero. The adapted letter below provides a glimpse into Erasmus’s more personal side. He wrote it to an English friend after a traveling adventure on the European continent.

### GUILHELMŌ MONTŌIŌ COMITĪ ANGLŌ ERASMUS ROTERODAMUS S.D.

- 1 Guilhelmō Montōiō Comitī Anglō Erasmus Roterodamus S.D.  
Post iter difficillimum tandem pervēnimus. Quī Ulixēs nunc mē maior esse vidēbitur? Deī ventīs, frīgore ācerrimō, pluvīā, nive, grandine, contrā nōs pugnābant. Prīmā nocte diū pluerat; deinde pluvia
- 5 in nivem est mūtāta; vīs nivium erat ingēns; postea grandō est addita; tum subitō iterum pluere coepit. Simul ac pluvia terram vel arborēs tangēbat, glaciēs ibi fiēbat. Ubīque in terrā glaciēs cōspiciēbātur nec terra erat aequa, sed multīs in locīs altior vidēbātur. Arborēs sunt glaciē vestītae, cūius onere opprimēbantur. Itaque eārum cacūmina terram
- 10 tangēbant, rāmī scindēbantur, arborēs cadēbant et in terrā iacēbant. Hominēs, quōs in agrīs vīdimus, dīcēbant sē numquam in vītā rem similem vīdisse. Equī per glaciem et nivēs prōgredi cōnābantur.

Fortasse rogābis quid in Erasmī tuī animō illō tempore fuerit.

Sedēbam in equō et quotiēs equus aurēs ērigēbat, animum dēmittēbam;

15 quotiēs ille in genua prōcumbēbat, mihi pectus saliēbat. Sed audiās hoc.

Putābis tē verba ex fābulā audīre. Dum per montem dēscendēbāmus, ita

ventis ferrī coepī et lābī ac sī vēlificārer. Hastilī cursum moderārī sum

cōnātus. Novum nāvigandī genus!

Ita prōgrediēbāmur. Sōlem vix quartō diē aspeximus. At nunc bene

20 valeō. Tū quoque, mī optime Guilhelme, valeās!

## READING VOCABULARY

ac sī (*conj.*) + *imperfect subjunctive* – as if

\*addō, ere, addidī, additum – to add

Anglus, a, um – English

\*auris, auris, f. – ear

cacūmen, cacūminis, n. – top

comes, comitis, m. – count‡

\*cōnor, conārī, cōnātus sum – to try

cursus, cursūs, m. – course, direction, way

\*dēmittō, ere, dēmisi, dēmissum – to send down;  
animum dēmittō – to let my spirit sink, become  
dejected

difficillimus, a, um – *superlative of* difficilis

Erasmus (ī) Roterodamus (ī, m.) – Erasmus of  
Rotterdam ‡

ērigō, ere, ērexi, ērēctum – to raise, set up

\*ferrī – *present passive infinitive of* ferō, ferre, tulī,  
lātum – to carry, bear

\*fiēbat – was being made, became

\*frigus, frīgoris, n. – cold

genū, genūs, n. – knee

\*genus, generis, n. – type, kind

\*glaciēs, glaciēi, f. – ice

grandō, grandinis, f. – hail

Guilhelmus (ī) Montōius (ī, m.) – William Mountjoy

hastile, hastilis, n. – shaft

illō tempore – at that time

\*iter, itineris, n. – road, trip

iterum (*adv.*) – again

\*lābor, lābī, lāpsus sum – to slide, slip, glide down

\*moderor, moderārī, moderātus sum – to manage,  
direct, guide

nāvigandī genus – a type of sailing‡

\*nix, nivis, f. – snow

\*onus, oneris, n. – weight, burden

\*perveniō, ire, pervēnī, perventum – to arrive

pluit, ere, pluit, —, *an impersonal verb (used only in*  
*3rd person singular)* – to rain

pluvia, ae, f. – rain

primā nocte – on the first night

prōcumbō, ere, prōcubui, prōcubitum – to fall  
forward, prostrate oneself

\*prōgredior, prōgredi, prōgressus sum – to go  
forward, proceed

quartō diē – on the fourth day

quartus, a, um – fourth

\*quotiēs (*conj.*) – as often as

rāmus, ī, m. – branch

s.d. = salūtem dicit

saliō, ire, salui, saltum – to jump, leap

scindō, ere, scidi, scissum – to tear, cut

\*simul ac (*conj.*) – as soon as

Ulixēs, Ulixis, m. – Odysseus or Ulysses‡

vēlificor, vēlificārī, vēlificātus sum – to sail

vestiō, ire, vestivī, vestitum – to dress

\*Words marked with an asterisk will need to be memo-  
rized later in the chapter.

‡Additional information about the words marked with  
the double dagger will be in the **Take Note** section  
that follows the Reading Vocabulary.