



# INTRODUCTION

*Latin for the New Millennium*, Level 3, introduces you to six authors of the classical period, Caesar, Catullus, Cicero, Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, and several authors from later centuries. Why should you devote so much effort to reading the works of these authors in the original Latin texts? Reading Latin literature in translation will allow you to understand the thoughts of the ancient authors—thoughts that have shaped the culture of our world—but reading the same authors in Latin allows you to see the subtleties and nuances of language and word order that often cannot be captured in a translation. Examples illustrating this point follow.

In Poem 5 Catullus invites Lesbia to enjoy life and to love; Lesbia is the focal point of the “living” and “loving” as is suggested by her occupying the center of the line.

*Vivāmus, mea Lesbia, atque amēmus*  
“Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love”

He next requests that she discount the rumors of rather stern old men. The repetition of “s” in lines 2–3 subtly suggests the sound of the whispers of those very individuals who would disapprove of his and Lesbia’s love; all such rumors are to be valued at one cent:

*rūmōrēsque senum sevēriōrum*  
*omnēs ūnius aestimēmus assis!*  
“and all rumors of rather stern old men  
let us assess at one cent!”

We can replicate the “s” sound in English to a certain extent, but it is difficult to do so in the sustained way that Catullus accomplishes in his poem.

To reinforce his point that Lesbia should embrace love, Catullus reminds her of life’s brevity by juxtaposing the renewal of nature against the inevitability of death for humankind (*nōbis, . . . nox est perpetua ūna dormienda*, lines 5–6). The repeated “re-” (which, as a prefix means “back” or “again”) in line 4, a repetition that cannot be achieved in our English translation, calls to mind nature’s cycles:

*sōlēs occidere et redire possunt;*  
“suns are able to set and to return;”

Play on sound and syllables as well as the word order all contribute to the impact of Catullus’s poem.

In Book 2 of the *Aeneid* lines 524 and following, Vergil describes how Achilles’s son Pyrrhus first kills one of Priam’s sons in front of Priam and his wife and then kills Priam himself. The Latin passage cited below paints a heartrending picture of Priam trembling (*tremementem*) from rage and old age and slipping repeatedly—for this is what the participle *lāpsantem* suggests—in the copious blood of his son: