

Quetzalcoatl the King

Mexīcae longaeua canō prīmordia gentis
 Ēgrediā quae stirpe fluēns Toltēca superbit,
 Nūminis afflātū dīvinōs nacta triumphōs
 Rex dum iūra dabat Quetzāl cognōmine Cōātl,
 5 Multa diū bellō passus longōque labōre
 Pāce super, dīvis nōtās dum conderet artēs,
 Quinque ferē regnō lustrīs lābentibus almō
 Scepra tulit mīrōque genus dītāvit honōre,
 Parcere subiectīs superāns ratiōne furōrem.
 10 Pātribus hortātus, soliō vix sēderat altō,
 Rādere iussit humum rastrīs et sēmina sulcīs
 Irriguō nūtrīta solō committere ductīs.
 Nōbile sīc crēvit cācāum nectare pōtus
 Coelestī potior, nātīvaque farra comānsque
 15 Gossipium. Certās āgrīs hortisque colendīs
 Instituit lēgēs praeceptaque grāta colōnō.

TRANSLATION

Of the ancient beginnings of the Mexican people I sing
 Which, rising from the illustrious Toltec root, shines forth;
 Having gained its holy triumphs by the breath of divine will
 While King Quetzal by surname Coatl gave laws, Inc.
 Having suffered many things in war and in extended labor
 In peace besides, while he founded arts known to the gods,
 In almost five lustra (twenty-five years) slipping by, with uplifting power
 He bore the scepter and enriched the race with outstanding honor,
 Overcoming rage with reason (in order) to spare the conquered.

Encouraged by the elders, (when) he had scarcely been seated on the high throne

He ordered (the people) to rake the earth with plows and to place the seeds nourished by well-watered earth in the created (made) furrows. So he created (grew) the noble cacao, a drink more precious than the nectar of the skies,

And the native grain and the leafy cotton.

For tilling fields and gardens he established certain laws

And precepts favorable to the farmer.

GRAMMAR AND WORD USE QUESTIONS

1. Why is dactylic hexameter fitting for this poem's genre? (See Appendix 4, Latin Epic Poetry.)

It is the meter of epic poetry. As epics are long, narrative poems dealing with heroes and cultural values, the genre is appropriate for Cabrera's subject matter.

2. As the meaning of a Latin sentence is not tightly tied to word order, Latin poets often arrange words to form a picture. Horace named this *callida iunctura*—clever joining. *Divis notas dum conderet artes* is an example of this. How does it picture Quetzalcoatl?

He is in the middle of the arts that he is establishing.

3. Here are the first of many literary allusions in this work (brief and indirect references to persons or ideas that have literary significance. They are passing comments, not detailed descriptions).

Line 5 is very similar to *Aeneid* 1.5: *Multa quoque et bello passus dum conderet urbem* “also having endured many wars until he could found a city.”

Line 9 is very similar to *Aeneid* 6.853: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* “to spare the humble and war down the proud.”

Write down all four lines and compare them.

Multa quoque et bello passus dum conderet urbem—“also having endured many wars until he could found a city”

Quetzalcoatl 5

Multa diu bello passus longoque labore

Cabrera adds that Quetzalcoatl also had long labor.

Aeneid 6.853