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**Latin  
Prescribed Text  
Pliny Letters**

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## Pliny Letters

### Letter VI.16 – Pliny sends his greetings to Tacitus

#### Extract 1

##### In English

You ask me to write to you about the death of my uncle, so that the account you hand down to future generations is as reliable as possible. I am grateful to you, for I can see that his death will be remembered forever if you write about it.

#### Extract 2

##### In Latin

erat Miseni classemque imperio praesens regebat. nonum kal. Septembres hora fere septima mater mea indicat ei apparere nubem inusitata et magnitudine et specie. usus ille sole, mox frigida, gustaverat iacens studebatque; poscit soleas, ascendit locum ex quo maxime miraculum illud  
5 conspicui poterat. nubes -incertum procul intuentibus ex quo monte (Vesuvium fuisse postea cognitum est) -oriebatur, cuius similitudinem et formam non alia magis arbor quam pinus expresserit. nam longissimo velut trunco elata in altum quibusdam ramis diffundebatur, credo quia recenti spiritu evecta, dein senescente eo destituta aut etiam pondere suo victa in  
10 latitudinem vanescebat, candida interdum, interdum sordida et maculosa prout terram cineremve sustulerat. magnum propiusque noscendum ut eruditissimo viro visum.

iubet liburnicam aptari; mihi si venire una vellem facit copiam; respondi studere me malle, et forte ipse quod scriberem dederat. egrediebatur  
15 domo; accipit codicillos Rectinae Tasci imminente periculo exterritae (nam villa eius subiacebat, nec ulla nisi navibus fuga): ut se tanto discrimini eriperet orabat. vertit ille consilium et quod studioso animo incohaverat obit maximo. deducit quadriremes, ascendit ipse non Rectinae modo sed multis (erat enim frequens amoenitas orae) laturus auxilium. properat illuc  
20 unde alii fugiunt, rectumque cursum recta gubernacula in periculum tenet adeo solutus metu, ut omnes illius mali motus omnes figuras ut deprenderat oculis dictaret enotaretque.

iam navibus cinis incidebat, quo propius accederent, calidior et densior; iam pumices etiam nigrique et ambusti et fracti igne lapides; iam vadum  
25 subitum ruinaque montis litora obstantia. cunctatus paulum an retro flecteret, mox gubernatori ut ita faceret monenti “fortes” inquit “fortuna iuvat: Pomponianum pete.”

### Extract 3

#### In English

At Stabiae, on the opposite side of the bay formed by the gently curving shore, Pomponianus had loaded his belongings onto ships before the danger arrived; it was already visible and as it intensified, it seemed very close. He intended to set sail as soon as the unfavourable wind dropped. That wind  
5 carried my uncle to shore, where he embraced his terrified friend, to console and hearten him. To calm Pomponius' fears he acted as if unafraid, and asked to be shown to the bathhouse. He bathed and ate dinner, quite relaxed – or at least appearing so, which is equally remarkable.

### Extract 4

#### In Latin

interim e Vesuvio monte pluribus locis latissimae flammae altaque incendia relucebant, quorum fulgor et claritas tenebris noctis excitabatur. ille agrestium trepidatione ignes relictos desertasque villas per solitudinem ardere in remedium formidinis dictitabat. tum se quieti dedit et quievit  
5 verissimo quidem somno; nam meatus animae, qui illi propter amplitudinem corporis gravior et sonantior erat, ab iis qui limini observabantur audiebatur. sed area ex qua diaeta adibatur ita iam cinere mixtisque pumicibus oppleta surrexerat, ut si longior in cubiculo mora, exitus negaretur. excitatus procedit, seque Pomponiano  
10 ceterisque qui pervigilaverant reddit. in commune consultant, intra tecta subsistant an in aperto vagentur.

nam crebris vastisque tremoribus tecta nutabant, et quasi emota sedibus suis nunc huc nunc illuc abire aut referri videbantur. sub dio rursus quamquam levium exesorumque pumicum casus metuebatur, quod tamen  
15 periculorum collatio elegit; et apud illum quidem ratio rationem, apud alios timorem timor vicit.

### Extract 5

#### In English

They tied cushions to their heads as protection against the deluge of rocks. Elsewhere in the world, it was daylight; but there the darkness was blacker and denser than any night. However, they had torches and various lamps. They decided to make for the shore, to see from close up if they could put  
5 to sea; the water remained as choppy and stormy as before. He rested on a discarded sail, and asked for cold water; he drank once or twice. A strong smell of sulphur preceded the flames; then came the flames themselves, causing others to flee, but restoring him. With the help of two loyal slaves he stood up, but straightaway collapsed. As far as I can tell, his breathing  
10 was obstructed by thick, dusty air, and his windpipe, which was weak and narrow, rather easily blocked, simply closed over. When daylight returned two days later, his body was found intact and undamaged, still dressed in the clothes he had been wearing. He was like a man asleep, rather than dead.

## Extract 6

### In Latin

interim Miseni ego et mater – sed nihil ad historiam, nec tu aliud quam de exitu eius scire voluisti. finem ergo faciam. unum adiciam, omnia me quibus interfueram quaeque statim, cum maxime vera memorantur, audieram, persecutum. tu potissima excerpes; aliud est enim epistulam aliud  
5 historiam, aliud amico aliud omnibus scribere. vale.

## Letter VI.20 – Pliny sends his greetings to Tacitus

## Extract 7

### In Latin

ais te adductum litteris quas exigenti tibi de morte avunculi mei scripsi, cupere cognoscere, quos ego Miseni relictus (id enim ingressus abruperam) non solum metus verum etiam casus pertulerim:

*“quamquam animus meminisse horret ... incipiam.”*

profecto avunculo ipse reliquum tempus studiis (ideo enim remanseram) impendi; mox balineum cena somnus inquietus et brevis. praecesserat per multos dies tremor terrae, minus formidolosus quia Campaniae solitus; illa vero nocte ita invaluit, ut non moveri omnia sed verti crederentur.

## Extract 8

### In English

My mother rushed into my room; I was already getting up to rouse her, if she were still sleeping. We sat in the courtyard of the house, near the buildings and the sea. I don't know whether I should call this courage or foolishness on my part (for I was only seventeen) but I called for a volume of Livy and  
5 went on reading as if I had nothing else to do; I continued taking notes. A friend of my uncle's, who had newly arrived from Spain to join him, came up to us. When he saw us sitting there and me actually reading, he scolded us both – me for my foolishness and my mother for her calmness. I just concentrated on my book.

## Extract 9

### In Latin

iam hora diei prima, et adhuc dubius et quasi languidus dies. iam quassatis circumiacentibus tectis, quamquam in aperto loco, angusto tamen, magnus et certus ruinae metus. tum demum excedere oppido visum; sequitur vulgus attonitum, quodque in pavore simile prudentiae, alienum consilium suo  
5 praefert, ingentique agmine abeuntes premit et impellit. egressi tecta consistimus. multa ibi miranda, multas formidines patimur. nam vehicula quae produci iusseramus, quamquam in planissimo campo, in contrarias partes agebantur, ac ne lapidibus quidem fulta in eodem vestigio quiescebant. praeterea mare in se resorberi et tremore terrae quasi repelli  
10 videbamus. certe processerat litus, multaque animalia maris siccis harenis detinebat.

## Extract 10

### In English

On the opposite side of the bay, a terrible black cloud was split by branching, twisting surges of fire. It burst open, revealing huge tongues of flame; like bolts of lightning, but much bigger. Then my uncle's friend from Spain spoke even more sharply: "If your brother, if your uncle is still alive,  
5 he will want you both to be safe; if he is dead, he would want you to survive. Why, then, delay your escape?" We told him that we would not consider our own safety as long as we were unsure of his. Without further delay, our friend rushed off, and hurried out of danger as fast as he could.

## Extract 11

### In Latin

nec multo post illa nubes descendere in terras, operire maria; cinxerat Capreas et absconderat, Miseni quod procurrit abstulerat. tum mater orare hortari iubere, quoquo modo fugerem; posse enim iuvenem, se et annis et corpore gravem bene morituram, si mihi causa mortis non fuisset. ego  
5 contra salvum me nisi una non futurum; dein manum eius amplexus addere gradum cogo. paret aegre incusatque se, quod me moretur.

iam cinis, adhuc tamen rarus. respicio: densa caligo tergis imminebat, quae nos torrentis modo infusa terrae sequebatur. "deflectamus" inquam "dum videmus, ne in via strati comitantium turba in tenebris obteramur." vix  
10 consideramus, et nox non qualis illunis aut nubila, sed qualis in locis clausis lumine extincto. audires ululatus feminarum, infantum quiritatus, clamores virorum; alii parentes alii liberos alii coniuges vocibus requirebant, vocibus noscitabant; hi suum casum, illi suorum miserabantur; erant qui metu mortis mortem precarentur; multi ad deos manus tollere, plures nusquam iam deos  
15 ullos aeternamque illam et novissimam noctem mundo interpretabantur.

## Extract 12

### In English

Some people even added to the real dangers by inventing additional terrors: some reported that part of Misenum had collapsed or was on fire; and though these stories were untrue some people believed them. Gradually it grew brighter, but we thought this was a warning of the encroaching fires rather than returning daylight. Still the flames remained some distance away; but it grew dark once again, and ash rained down, this time in heavy showers. Time after time we got up and shook it off, otherwise we would have been buried, and crushed by the weight of the ash.

## Extract 13

### In Latin

tandem illa caligo tenuata quasi in fumum nebulamve discessit; mox dies verus; sol etiam effulsit, luridus tamen qualis esse cum deficit solet. occursabant trepidantibus adhuc oculis mutata omnia altoque cinere tamquam nive obducta. regressi Misenum curatis utcumque corporibus suspensam dubiamque noctem spe ac metu exegimus.

*Earthquakes continued for many hours, and there was widespread terror when the scale of the disaster at last became visible. Pliny and his mother, however, would not leave the area until they heard news of the fate of their beloved relative.*

[END OF TEXT]