

## SCANNING PRACTICE — CATULLUS 8 &amp; MARTIAL 14.37

A poet does not live on hexameter and pentameter alone. He also has a variety of “lyric” meters. Literally, “lyric meters” are “(sung to) the lyre” and could generally be said to refer to poetry that mixes various kinds of rhythmical units, not just repeating the same kind of rhythm over and over, often forming larger, rhythmically varied stanza. The meters used by Roman poets who wrote lyrics in Latin were based on meters used by Greek poets, whose poems were in fact usually sung to the lyre or another stringed instrument.

## BASIC RULES OF SCANNING LYRIC METERS

The basic rules of when a syllable is long or short remain the same regardless of the meter employed. See the first Scanning Practice Handout if you need to review.

## CATULLUS 8

This poem is written in **choliamb**s, which consists of five iambs (U —) and a spondee (— —). Originally pioneered by the Greek insult-poet Hipponax (fl. late 6th century BCE), the spondee in the last foot gives the otherwise brisk meter a heavy, slow ending, and so it is often referred to as a *scazon* or “limping verse”. Its basic pattern is represented thus: (N.B. X indicates an *anceps*, a syllable that can be either long or short)

X — U — X — U — U — — —

Valē, puella — iam Catullus obdūrat. 12

...

Scelesta, vae tē! Quae tibi manet vīta? 15

Quis nunc t'adībit? Cui vidēberis bella?

Quem nunc amābis? Cuius esse dīcēris?

Quem bāsiābis? Cui labella mordēbis?

At tū, Catulle, dēstinātus obdūrā.

Why is “tē adībit” in line 15 rendered here as “t'adībit”? Try saying “tē adībit” quickly without pausing between the vowel sounds. Notice how the ‘ē’ and ‘a’ blend together, with the ‘a’ taking prominence over the ‘ē’? This is called *elision*. The first or *elided vowel* is generally not pronounced and is not counted metrically. You can represent elision thus: tē adībit.

### MARTIAL 14. 37 (OPTIONAL)

This poem is in hendecasyllabics, another lyric meter descended from Greek poetry. Its name derives from its having eleven syllables. Its insistent iambic second half gives a colloquial, vernacular tone reminiscent of common speech and slang. Its basic scheme is represented thus:

X X — U U — U — U — X

Sēlectōs nisi dās mihī libellōs,

admittam tineās trucēsque blattās!