

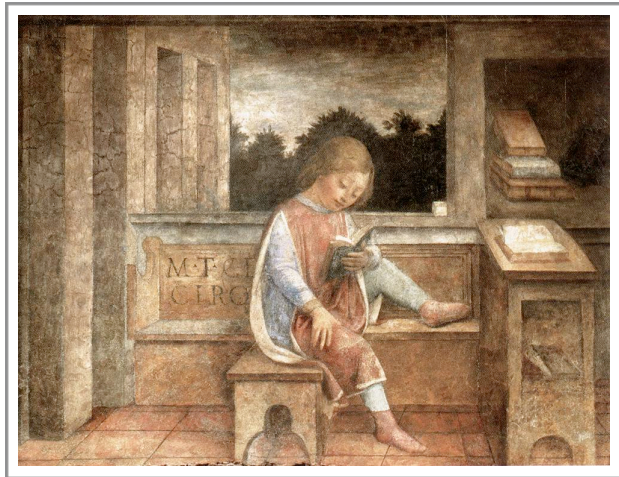
Greek and Roman History

Assignment 27

- Read Chapters 40–43 of E. M. Sewell's *The Child's History of Rome*.
- Read the biography of Cicero in Plutarch's *Lives*, pages 398–406.
- Read the letter (and introduction) of Cicero to Atticus.
- Below is a picture drawn of Cicero as a young boy.

Letter of Cicero to Atticus

Marcus Tullius Cicero was born on January 3, 106 B.C. Educated under the best teachers in the Greek culture of the day, he won a speedy reputation at the Bar and developed a keen interest in the various schools of Greek philosophy. His able and intrepid exposure of Catiline's conspiracy brought him the highest popularity, but he was attacked, in turn, by the ignoble Clodius, who obtained his banishment in 58 B.C. In the ensuing conflict between Cæsar and Pompey,



Cicero was attached to the party of Pompey and the senate, as against Cæsar and the people. He kept clear of the conspiracy against Cæsar's life, but after the assassination he undertook an oratorical campaign against Antony, and was entrusted with the government of the city. But on the return of the triumvirate, Octavianus, Antony, and Lepidus, Cicero's name was included in the list of those who were to be done away, and he was murdered in the year 43 B.C., at 63 years of age. The correspondence of the great Roman advocate, statesman, and man of letters, preserved for us by the care of his freedman Tiro, is the richest and most interesting collection of its kind in the world's archives. The many-sided personality of their writer, his literary charm, the frankness with which he set down his opinions, hopes, and anxieties, the profound historical interest of this period of the fall of the republic, and the intimate glimpses which we get of Roman life and manners, combine to make Cicero's "Letters" perennially attractive. The series begins in B.C. 68, when Cicero was 38 years of age, and runs on to within a short time of his death in B.C. 43. The letters, of which there are 800, are addressed to several correspondents, of whom the most frequent and important is Titus Pomponius, surnamed Atticus, whose sister had married Cicero's brother Quintus. Atticus was a wealthy and cultivated man who had lived many years in Athens. He took no side in the perilous politics of the time, but Cicero relied always on his affectionate counsel, and on his ever-ready service in domestic matters.

To Atticus

There is nothing I need so much just now as someone with whom I may discuss all my anxieties, someone with whom I may speak quite frankly and without pretenses. My brother, who is all candor and kindness, is away. Metellus is empty as the air, barren as the desert. And you, who have so often relieved my cares and sorrows by your conversation and counsel, and have always been my support in politics and my confidant in all private affairs, the partner of all my thoughts and plans--where are you?

I am so utterly deserted that I have no other comfort but in my wife and daughter and dear little Cicero. For those ambitious friendships with great people are all show and tinsel, and contain nothing that satisfies inwardly. Every morning my house swarms with visitors; I go down to the Forum attended by troops of friends; but in the whole crowd there is no one with whom I can freely jest, or whom I can trust with an intimate word. It is for you that I wait; I need your presence; I even implore you to come.

I have a load of anxieties and troubles, of which, if you could listen to them in one of our walks together, you would go far to relieve me. I have to keep to myself the stings and vexations of my domestic troubles; I dare not trust them to this letter and to an unknown courier. I don't want you to think them greater than they are, but they haunt and worry me, and there is no friendly counsel to alleviate them. As for the republic, though my courage and will toward it are not diminished, yet it has again and again itself evaded remedy. If I were to tell you all that has happened since you went away, you would certainly say that the Roman state must be nearing its fall. The Clodian scandal was, I think, the first episode after your departure. On that occasion, thinking that I had an opportunity of cutting down and restraining the licentiousness of the young men, I exerted myself with all my might, and brought into play every power of my mind, not in hostility to an individual, but in the hope of correcting and healing the state. But a venal and profligate verdict in the matter has brought upon the republic the gravest injury. And see what has taken place since.

A consul has been imposed upon us whom no one, unless a philosopher like ourselves, can look at without a sigh. What an injury that is! Again, although a decree of the senate with regard to bribery and corruption has been passed, no law has been carried through; and the senate has been harassed beyond endurance and the Roman knights have been alienated. So, in one year, two pillars of the republic, which had been established by me alone, have been overturned; the authority of the senate has been destroyed and the concord of the two orders has been violated.