

The Satyricon of Petronius / The Apocolocyntosis of Seneca Study Guide

The Satyricon of Petronius / The Apocolocyntosis of Seneca by Petronius

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Introduction: The Satyricon

Introduction: The Satyricon Summary

The introduction was written by the book's translator, Professor J. P. Sullivan. The *Satyricon* was written by Titus Petronius who served in the court of the Roman ruler, Nero. Although this work survives centuries, there is controversy about the authorship of it. Some scholars doubt that the *Satyricon* was written by Petronius, Nero's courtier. However, there is no consensus among the doubters as to its actual authorship. The writing style and language point to the first century AD as do the economic and historical references. What is obvious is that the author was a highly literate individual. Due to his place in Nero's court—Nero having strong literary ambitions—Petronius would have been viewed as a talented writer. Petronius ultimately became the Arbiter of Elegance in Nero's court, which was a recognition of his sophistication and talent. Petronius apparently had great influence over Nero.

Sullivan explains that the surviving work is fragmented and has missing sections—perhaps quite a few. However, he explains that he has kept his translation in chronological order and has not attempted to fill the obvious gaps that are created from missing portions of the work.

Although considered risqué in earlier times, the *Satyricon* will not be offensive to the modern reader. At one time the *Satyricon* was deemed inferior literature, it more recently has been recognized as worthy literature. It is described in a wide-range of ways from a collection of comic sketches to an elaborate satire to the first realistic novel in European literature. The work is difficult to classify however, due to its fragmented state. Sullivan does see a direct link to Menippean satire, which was popular during Nero's time. Menippean satire combines "a moralistic and humorous melange of prose and verse." Petronius did not invent a new genre with the *Satyricon*, although there are similarities in construction to the modern novel. Sullivan also sees parallels between the *Satyricon* and other Roman satire, Ovid's mocking lament in *Amores* and even the Greek romances.

Unlike the typical satirist, however, Petronius does not create a character who sets the stage for a moralistic lecture. Rather, he seems detached and uninterested in morality. Although he obviously chose satire as his genre, his failure to link "the failure of man" to his "lack of morals," sets Petronius apart from other satirists. What the satirist would portray as the sordid, Petronius blunts with humor.

Sullivan explains his method in translating the *Satyricon* which was based on an amalgamation of several other much earlier translations. He describes his careful and respectful method in staying true to the original work.



Introduction: The Satyricon Analysis

In the introduction, Professor J. P. Sullivan, who translated *The Satyricon*, relates that there is controversy over the true identity of the work's author. It was written so long ago in the time of Nero that a clear "paper trail" just doesn't exist. However, he does provide evidence that is strongly in favor of Titus Petronius being its author. Sullivan explains that the version of *The Satyricon* that survived to modern times is fragmented with many parts and chapters missing. It is important for the reader to know this piece of information as there are seeming jumps and gaps that would leave the reader puzzled unless he understood that the existing work is a fragmentation of the original.

In earlier times, *The Satyricon* was considered risqué. Although modern readers will not find it as offensive, the work is filled with descriptions of sexual activities. While the work was once looked down upon by the literary world, it is now recognized as a worthy piece of literature. Its style is linked to Menippean satire, which is a mix of ethics and humor and verse and prose. Petronius stands apart from other satirists of the day. Unlike the others, he is disinterested in morality and is not concerned with sending a "message;" rather, he just tells a story.



Puteoli

Puteoli Summary

Encolpius is the narrator of the *Satyricon* and also a main character. He complains about the professors and all their empty rhetoric. The students become worthless people. Encolpius compares these students with those of Sophocles or Euripides, who developed proper language skills in their students. Encolpius stresses that without adherence to the rules, the language faces death. But teachers are in a difficult spot. They have to be engaging and lure their students into the classroom. As Cicero said, "They will be the only ones in the schools" unless they (the teachers) win the approval of their students. So the professors make compromises. Encolpius also places blame on the parents of the students. They want their sons to be great orators so they rush them into their studies before they are ready. They become inferior adults who never recover from the bad behaviors they learned in school.

On this subject, the teacher Agamemnon, recites a few lines of poetry from Lucilius. In essence, the poem stresses the importance of discipline in writing and the arts. The student must refuse invitations to drunken dinners and other distractions from his work. The student must write with his heart and be inspired by the great Roman and Greek writers. Only then will the student's talents advance.

Encolpius loses interest in Agamemnon's recitation and leaves to look for his friend Ascyltus who had slipped away earlier. Encolpius asks an old woman about their living quarters. To his astonishment, the old woman leads him to a brothel. He runs into Ascyltus, who had also been tricked by the old woman and brought to the whore-house. A man, who had already paid the old woman for favors, had made advances to Ascyltus. Luckily, he was stronger than the man and got away. He saw that everyone was drinking aphrodisiacs.

Encolpius finds his other friend, young Giton, who is weeping. Giton claims that Ascyltus tried to rape him. Encolpius becomes enraged at Ascyltus and confronts him. Ascyltus pretends to be outraged and flings accusations and insults back at Encolpius. Ascyltus accuses him of praising Agamemnon to get a free meal while he, Ascyltus, left to get his own food. He would not falsely praise him like Encolpius—he could not listen to his rubbish just for the sake of a meal. The two friends wind up finding the whole thing hilarious and collapse into laughter.

The next day, however, the two friends agree to part their ways. Encolpius will be happy to have dear little Giton to himself again. Later, when Encolpius is alone with Giton, he begins kissing and holding the boy but is caught by Ascyltus who breaks down the door to the apartment. Ascyltus accuses Encolpius of hypocrisy.

In the market place, Encolpius and Ascyltus plan to sell a cloak they had stolen. They spot a man carrying the tunic that had been stolen from them earlier. When it was taken,



their money was in one of the pockets. They could see that the money was still in the pocket. Ironically, they had stolen the cloak they were selling from the man. The two sides have a tussle over the clothes, but eventually each recovers its stolen item.

The next day, the woman who had accompanied the man with the stolen tunic is at the door. She is the maid of Quartilla who then enters the apartment. She is sad and crying and tells Encolpius that he had violated her religion by barging in on one of their mystical ceremonies. She therefore had to seek a remedy from Encolpius. He apologizes and promises to never again violate nor reveal the secrets of her religion. The maid puts aphrodisiacs in the boys' drinks. A male prostitute is brought in and assaults the boys until Quartilla makes him stop. The boys are continuously fondled and molested during the evening by the women and other men summoned by Quartilla. Quartilla decides to bring in a seven-year old girl and has Giton marry her. He and his seven-year-old bride are pushed into the bridal chamber while Quartilla and Encolpius watch them through a peep hole.

Puteoli Analysis

Encolpius is the narrator throughout *The Satyricon* and is also a character. Encolpius and his two friends, Ascyltus and Giton, are students who have recently arrived in Puteoli. Petronius uses this story as a vehicle for his own misgivings about how well the students are being taught in schools. Oratory had been reduced in importance in education at the time, and, some thought, filled instead with empty rhetoric that leaves the students ill-prepared for real life challenges. These sentiments are expressed in the character of Encolpius in his complaints to his teacher, Agamemnon.

The two older students, Ascyltus and Encolpius are both in love with the younger boy, Giton who is described as sixteen years old. Ascyltus accuses Encolpius of being a "sponger", meaning a parasitic type person. This type of character was frequently used in comedies and was known to be shrewd and charming, perhaps an indication of Encolpius' character.

The woman, Quartilla, complains to Encolpius that he violated her religion by barging in on a ceremony. The god of her religion is Priapus, who is the ancient god of sexuality and fertility. Encolpius is plagued by this god in portions of the story as evidenced by his problem with impotency. This particular section, Sullivan feels, was possibly out of order from the original work and therefore its seeming irrelevancy to the preceding part of the story is understandable.



Dinner with Trimalchio

Dinner with Trimalchio Summary

Encolpius and his friends are invited to a dinner to be held by Trimalchio who is known to be a "terribly elegant" gentleman. Giton has agreed to pretend to be his friends' butler for the evening. At the party, they see eunuchs—one of whom carries a silver pissing bottle around for Trimalchio. The old host is playing ball with some young long-haired boys. Trimalchio is then wrapped in felt and placed into a litter. He is carried away with his favorite young boy accompanying him. Encolpius and his friends follow the litter.

The dining hall has a mural of Trimalchio along with the gods Mercury and Minerva. Elegant appetizers and delicious main courses are served at the dinner. Finally, the host, Trimalchio, is carried in and placed at the head of the table. He is dressed in a red coat, purple scarf and is wearing ornate jewelry. Eggs are distributed to the guests who crack them open and find plump and seasoned fig peckers inside. The slaves bring out a large platter with images of all the signs of the Zodiac. Above each sign were various delicacies that had been requested by guests. Trimalchio explains what people born under each sign can expect in their futures. For example, those born under the Ram will have lots of herds; those born under the Bull will have cow-herds; and, those born under the Leo will be bossy and greedy.

The chef brings in a newly roasted pig; however, he had forgotten to remove the guts. Trimalchio is outraged and has him stripped. The guests all plead for mercy for the chef. Trimalchio allows the chef to gut the pig in everyone's presence. The whole episode is a farce. When the chef opens the pig, sausages and puddings come spilling out and everyone applauds the clever ruse.

Trimalchio's accountant reads a list of statistical and financial statements about Trimalchio's estate which points to Trimalchio's great wealth. After that, the acrobats arrive. A boy tumbles down on Trimalchio's couch and bruises his arm. Then a troupe of actors puts on a play. They recite the lines of the story of Achilles and Ajax in Greek while Trimalchio sings the lines along in Latin. A large cow is served next then Trimalchio asks Niceros to tell those gathered about the adventure he had. Niceros tells of a beautiful woman he was attracted to. The day her husband dies, he goes off to claim her. He runs into a soldier friend in the woods who takes his clothes off and becomes a wolf. When he sees the woman she tells him a wolf was just on her property and tried to attack the livestock but was speared by one of her slaves. When he returns home, he finds his soldier friend wounded and being attended to by a doctor. He then realizes that his friend is a werewolf.

Several kinds of desserts are served, one of which looks like a fat goose. But it is another trick. It turns out to be entirely made from pork. After dessert, boys came around with perfumed cream and rub the guests' feet. Trimalchio announces that upon his death, his slaves will all be free. He will leave them property as well. He asks that



they take care of his wife, Fortunata, after he dies. Trimalchio asks that his grave be tended to and that a monument is constructed in his honor. He would like a statue of his wife and his dog as part of the monument. He reads an inscription he wrote for the monument, praising his life. Thinking of their host's death, everyone is in tears.

After taking baths to relax, the guests return to more wine and food. Trimalchio dismisses his slaves so they can eat. A young boy comes in and Trimalchio begins kissing him. Fortunata becomes jealous and calls him names. Trimalchio in turn throws a glass in her face. He becomes upset and says that he no longer wants Fortunata's statue at his memorial. He becomes tearful then and tells the guests about his long life and how he came to his fortunes. Even though he faced many disasters, he always persevered. He lost all his fortune once when a fleet of his ships wrecked. Fortunata even sold her jewelry to help purchase new ships. Trimalchio was able to regain his lost fortune and much more. He has depended heavily upon astrology to help him throughout his life.

Trimalchio announces that he has thirty years, four months and two days to live. He orders a slave to bring his shroud which he has everyone inspect for quality. He lays on a couch and tells everyone to pretend he is dead and say something nice about him. The coronet players strike up a death march. Encolpius, Ascyltus and Giton take the opportunity and sneak away.

Dinner with Trimalchio Analysis

The wall in Trimalchio's dining hall is decorated with a mural of the god Mercury and the goddess Minerva. Mercury was the god of trade and thieves and Minerva was the goddess of wisdom. These were apt symbols for Trimalchio who was a rich man who made his fortune from the shipping industry and by cheating competitors. Trimalchio was fond of higher education thus the image of Minerva was fitting as well. Since Trimalchio was not born in wealth, his tribute to both wealth and education is a sign of things he longed for in his younger days but were not available to him.

Trimalchio's explanations of the Zodiac signs combines the popular superstition with the astrological symbolism. The exotic delicacies that Trimalchio has served to his guests represent the wealth and sophistication of the man. He is boastful and flaunts his riches in their faces. He entertains his guests with acrobats and trickery and interesting tales. He relates to his guests the difficult time he had working his way up to his wealth. He tears up when he speaks of losing his fortune in a shipwreck at one time, although he recovered that wealth and far surpassed it.

Trimalchio wants to be loved and honored. He is buying the affection of his guests with the elaborate dinner and entertainment. He has his finance man read a listing of all his wealth—he wants to impress his guests with his riches. He describes the monument he wants made on his behalf and its inscription which praises him and lauds all his accomplishments. At the end of the story, Trimalchio lays on a couch and pretends to be dead. He tells his guests he wants them to say something nice about him.



Eumolpus

Eumolpus Summary

Encolpius, Ascyltus and Giton make their way home. Encolpius is so drunk that he doesn't notice when in the middle of the night Ascyltus steals Giton away to his bed. The next morning Encolpius feels like killing them both but instead tells Ascyltus to leave. Ascyltus declares that since they share all their loot, they should share the boy as well. He takes his sword and threatens to cut Giton in half. Encolpius draws his sword and challenges Ascyltus to a duel. Giton pleads for them to kill him rather than hurt each other. Ascyltus declares that Giton needs to choose which lover to be with. Giton chooses Ascyltus and Encolpius is rendered heartbroken.

Encolpius travels to the seaside. He is alone and miserable. He mourns over the loss of Giton and feels betrayed by Ascyltus. He plans revenge but a soldier he encounters takes his sword from him, dashing all thoughts of revenge. He visits a local museum and encounters an old man, Eumolpus, who is a poet and an intellect. Eumolpus later becomes his mentor.

When Encolpius is in Pergamum, he accepts quarters at an elegant home because the host has a very attractive young son. Encolpius tutors the boy and escorts him to the gymnasium. In the evenings when the boy falls asleep, Encolpius kisses him and fondles him. He vows that if the boy doesn't awaken, he will bring him presents each morning. On the third night he vows that if he can realize full satisfaction, he will bring the boy a thoroughbred. The next day, Encolpius cannot find a thoroughbred although the boy is demanding one.

The boy is upset for a while but Encolpius makes up with him. The boy wants gifts for his favors but Encolpius doesn't have anything to give him. The boy tells him to leave him alone or he'll wake his father and tell him what's been going on. However, they soon begin having relations again. This time it is the boy who can't be satisfied. He keeps waking Encolpius up for more sex. At last, Encolpius is exhausted and can't take anymore. When the boy wakes him again, he tells him to go to sleep or he'll wake up his father and tell him what's been going on.

Encolpius asks his mentor why art and love of art is on the decline. His mentor, Eumolpus, places the blame on people who are overly concerned about money. There no longer is caring about the quality of art. Concern is centered on how much money a man can make. Eumolpus gives a long recitation of his poetry but people tire of his words and begin throwing stones at him. Encolpius tells Eumolpus that if he continues his poetry recitation that he too will throw stones at him. Eumolpus agrees to tone down his poetic rhetoric for the day. Encolpius then agrees to have dinner with him and arranges for his landlord to prepare the meal.



Encolpius encounters Giton, who is depressed and confused. Giton asks Encolpius to get him away from Ascyltus who he considers a criminal. Giton only chose Ascyltus because he was afraid of his sword. Encolpius brings Giton inside his apartment where they embrace and realize they still love each other. Encolpius forgives Giton for abandoning him. Eumolpus comes by for dinner. Encolpius is irritated when he sees that Eumolpus is attracted to Giton. Eumolpus had been at a bath and was stoned again for reciting his poetry. After leaving the bath, he ran into a naked man looking for another boy. Encolpius keeps quiet about the incident, guessing that the naked man was Ascyltus looking for Giton. Encolpius chides Eumolpus for reciting poetry after having promised not to. Giton admonishes Encolpius for being disrespectful to an elder.

Eumolpus makes a play for Giton, telling him he will write poetry for him and become his teacher and guardian. Encolpius is relieved the soldier took his sword away, else he would put it in Eumolpus' spleen. Giton leaves the room to relieve the tension. Encolpius calls Eumolpus lecherous and tells him to leave. Eumolpus leaves the room to look for Giton. Locked in the room, Encolpius hangs himself but is saved from death at the last minute by Giton. Giton is angry at Encolpius and tells him he thought of suicide first. He snatches a razor from Eumolpus' slave and slashes his throat and collapses. But the razor is a practice razor and Giton suffered no wound.

The landlord enters with more food, but seeing Giton on the floor accuses all of them of being drunk. The drunken Eumolpus yells back and strikes the man. The landlord throws a jug at him and cuts his forehead. The man runs out followed by Eumolpus, who grabs a candlestick which he uses to flog the man repeatedly. Neighbors come to the defense of the landlord and Eumolpus is pummeled repeatedly but is able to fight them all off. Encolpius locks Eumolpus out to have Giton to himself. Giton wants Encolpius to save Eumolpus. Instead, Encolpius strikes Giton on the head and watches Eumolpus' misery through a peep hole. Giton is in tears.

The town crier passes by outside announcing an award of one thousand sesterces for finding Giton. Encolpius sees Ascyltus alongside the town crier. Encolpius tells Giton to hide under the bed. Ascyltus, accompanied by a policeman, arrives at Encolpius' apartment. The police uses an ax to open the door. Encolpius pleads with Ascyltus to let him see Giton again. The policeman checks under the bed with a long rod, but Giton, clutching the webbing of the bed, isn't discovered. After they leave, Eumolpus comes back in announcing that he will win the one thousand sesterces because he intends to tell Ascyltus where Giton is. Encolpius tells Eumolpus that Giton escaped into the crowd. Eumolpus is almost convinced until Giton sneezes three times under the bed. Eumolpus says, "God bless you, Giton" and then scolds Encolpius for lying.

Encolpius pleads with Eumolpus to forgive him. He begs him not to turn Giton over to Ascyltus. Eumolpus agrees and announces that he will take them and sail away on a trip. Encolpius still resents that Eumolpus is attracted to Giton. But he confesses that every wonderful thing in nature is free to all, including Giton. When they get to their quarters on the ship, Encolpius hears a man and woman talking about him. It is the owner of the ship, Lichas of Tarentum, and the lovely Tryphaena. Encolpius tells Eumolpus that they must escape as these people are looking for him and Giton due to



some past sexual dalliances. They think of different ways to escape and different disguises. Finally they settle on Eumolpus' plan to have his barber shave their heads and even their eyebrows, after which Eumolpus will stain their foreheads with marks identifying them as slaves.

In a dream, the god Priapus tells Lichas that Encolpius has been sent to him and is aboard the ship. Tryphaena dreams that Giton is on the ship as well. Eumolpus tries to calm them, reminding them that wise men condemn reliance on dreams. A man who had seen the boys having their heads shaved tells Lichas what he saw. Lichas is upset that the boys had their haircut on his ship as it is considered to bring bad luck. He demands that they be brought to him immediately. Lichas decides they should get forty lashes. After just one strike, Giton cries out. His voice is recognized by Tryphaena and her maids. The maids all cry that it is Giton and demand that he not be hurt. Lichas then recognizes Encolpius. Tryphaena is crying because of the branding on their foreheads. Lichas calls her simple-minded for not knowing it is just a temporary stain.

Eumolpus tries to smooth things over. He tells Lichas that Encolpius and Giton want to make amends, which Lichas does not believe. Since they disguised themselves, they must have wanted to deceive him. Lichas is still convinced that they should be punished. Lichas shouts at Encolpius to speak up for himself, but Encolpius is speechless. Eumolpus stands between Lichas and the boys to protect them. Encolpius declares that the only person who should be punished is Tryphaena for her indiscretions. She becomes enraged and brings the entire staff of the ship into the argument. They take her side and the fight begins—some are hurt on each side. Encolpius threatens to cut his throat with a razor. Giton threatens to cut off his genitals, which compels Tryphaena to immediately pardon them. There was no danger as the razor was the dull, practice razor that could not cause harm. A truce was orchestrated by Tryphaena. Lichas agrees not to ask where Encolpius is sleeping else he pays two hundred denarii. Tryphaena agrees to not force Giton into any sexual acts else she pays two hundred denarii.

The maids gave Giton a wig and new eyebrows and Encolpius a yellow wig. Eumolpus tells the tale of a woman who loved her husband so much that she refused to leave his tomb, staying by him and refusing to eat. A soldier who guards the bodies of the crucified, discovers her and is taken with her beauty. He convinces her to eat and then seduces her in the tomb where her dead husband lies. Their affair continues for several nights. One morning, one of the bodies is missing from its cross. The soldier is certain he will be executed for not doing his duty. So she does not lose another man she loves, she has the guard take the body of her husband and hang it on the cross.

A storm rises up and Lichas is thrown overboard and sucked under water. The slaves put Tryphaena in a boat with her luggage. Giton and Encolpius tie themselves together so they will at least be able to die together. However, they wash ashore along with the remains of the ship. Eumolpus is busy writing poems in the captain's cabin. Giton and Encolpius drag Eumolpus ashore to the fisherman's cottage.



Eumolpus Analysis

Encolpius and Ascyltus continue their feud over the young Giton. When Giton chooses Ascyltus over Encolpius, Encolpius is in despair. He leaves town but plans revenge. His thoughts of revenge do not seem to be heartfelt. A soldier easily takes his sword away from him and his plans of revenge are dashed. He puts up little resistance and does not plan another way to avenge his loss. In the city of Pergamum by the sea, Encolpius meets the older Eumolpus who is an intellect and a poet. Although the story is written by a poet, Petronius, it is ironic that Eumolpus is continually pummeled with rocks when he recites his poetry. Encolpius tells him not to act like a poet or an intellect because people do not like them. Petronius no doubt encountered those in his own life who found his intellect and literary abilities less than engaging. Here he is able to address this bias against intellectuals with irony and self-effacing humor. He also addresses the decline in the love of art for the love of money.

In a comical incident with a young boy, Encolpius' impotency issues emerge. The young boy wants gifts in exchange for sex. When Encolpius runs out of gifts, the boy warns him to leave him alone or else he will wake his father and tell him. Ironically, the boy begins wanting sex more than Encolpius and keeps waking him up. Finally, the exhausted Encolpius tells the boy to leave him alone or else he'll wake up the boy's father and tell him. This section, though comical, foreshadows a later story where Encolpius' impotency needs treatment.

Giton runs away from Ascyltus and seeks forgiveness from Encolpius who gladly takes him back. Giton tells Encolpius that Ascyltus has been assaulting him and that the reason he chose him was out of fear. It is obvious that Encolpius probably didn't care why Giton was returning—he was just happy to have him back. But Ascyltus is chasing Giton and has a reward out for him. To escape Ascyltus, Encolpius and Giton leave with Eumolpus who promises to take them on a trip by sea. When Encolpius realizes that the owner of the ship is Lichas who is looking for his young companions for having sex with his wife, Eumolpus makes up an elaborate scenario to shield their identity. In a comic turn, he shaves their heads and eyebrows and stains their foreheads with the branding of slaves. Lichas sees through this silliness but the boys are saved when the maids hear Giton's voice and realize who they are. Eumolpus makes a truce between Lichas and the boys. If Lichas' wife tries to have sex with Giton, she has to pay two hundred denarii and if Lichas asks where Encolpius is sleeping, he has to pay. Apparently, these boys are as appealing to women as they are to men.

Before any further high jinks have time to happen, the ship runs into a horrible storm. Lichas is swept into the water and sucked underneath. Giton, Encolpius and Eumolpus survive the shipwreck and make it to shore for the next adventure.



The Road to Croton

The Road to Croton Summary

Encolpius and his companions are sweating their way up a mountain and see a town in the distance. They inquire about the city and are told that it is Croton. The man tells them that it is a city unconcerned with education and a place where decent living is not held in esteem. It is divided into two classes—those with fortunes and those hunting fortunes. No one raises children there because those with heirs are not invited out socially. Eumolpus is attracted to the possibilities the city might offer. Giton and Encolpius agree to a plan devised by Eumolpus. Eumolpus will pretend to be a man who had just buried his son. He was so sad and depressed that he left his town to avoid memories about his beloved son. Eumolpus will lie and say that he had been shipwrecked and lost a good deal of money but still has millions. Giton and Encolpius will portray his slaves. To complete the farce, Eumolpus will appear addled-brained and ill.

Eumolpus tells his young companions that poetry is the only adequate way in which to capture historical events. He then recites a lengthy poem covering all of Roman history up to that time.

The Road to Croton Analysis

The ever devious Eumolpus devises a scheme to fool the people of Croton. After hearing that the townspeople cater to rich people, he plans to pretend to be a wealthy man who just buried his son. He will portray himself as rich, addle-brained and in ill health. He convinces Giton and Encolpius to pretend to be his slaves and to vow not to reveal the truth to anyone.

After an apparent gap in the fragmented story, Eumolpus tells his young companions that poetry is the only adequate way in which to capture historical events. He then recites a lengthy poem covering all of Roman history up to that time. Perhaps this is another reflection of Petronius' real-life feelings.



Croton

Croton Summary

When the trio arrives in Croton, they are asked for their identity. They tell their lies to the people who immediately begin catering to the "wealthy" Eumolpus. Eumolpus begins to believe his own lies, boasting about his importance in Croton. Encolpius is not enjoying their stay, however, he is worried that their scheme will be exposed.

Encolpius is approached by a maid who declares how sexually attractive he is. She wonders if he sells himself or gives it away. Her mistress is very interested in him. Encolpius thinks it is the maid herself who wants him. She laughs and tells him she only has relations with knights. Encolpius thinks it strange that the mistress is attracted to slaves while the maid, a slave herself, only goes for the higher class. The maid brings the woman to Encolpius. She is breathtakingly beautiful. She tells him she learned that he has a boy he loves. He is so taken with her that he vows to give up the boy if he can have her. She tells him her name is Circe and that a god has brought them together. Circe then seduces Encolpius, telling him he is safe from prying eyes and that Giton is not nearby.

After they attempt to make love, Circe asks Encolpius if she somehow offends him—does she have a bad odor—making him impotent or is he still reluctant to give up Giton. He tells her to disregard such thought for he is totally bewitched by her. But Circe is hurt and rushes off. Encolpius keeps his word and does not touch Giton. Chrysis, Circe's maid, brings Encolpius a letter. In the letter Circe tells him he is sick and weak and will die. The prescription he needs to get well is to send Giton away at least for three days. If not, Circe will settle for a man she cares less about. He writes back of his love for her and begs for her forgiveness.

Chrysis brings a witch to the woods to meet Encolpius. She casts a spell on him that will test his virility. The test finds him to be virile. Encolpius then goes to Circe but he still cannot perform. Circe then has Encolpius strung up and beaten. He does not protest since he deserves it. Back at his apartment, he hides his wounds from Eumolpus and Giton. He is upset about the abuse he took and feels betrayed by Circe.

The witch, Proselenus, comes to see Encolpius and brings him into a temple. She is upset with him for not giving up Giton. She herself is suffering since she is the one who told Circe that he was virile. She brings him to an inner room and thrashes him, purposely hitting at his groin. A priestess, Oenothea, enters. Proselenus tells her that Encolpius was born under an evil star. She declares that he left Circe's bed without having had any pleasure. Oenothea declares that she is the only one who can fix his problem. She will sleep with him and make it as stiff as a horn.

Oenothea begins kissing him and then places a table on the hearth heaped with red-hot coals. She gathers beans and an ancient piece of pig cheek. Oenothea orders him to



open the beans with his hands. After she cuts a piece of the meat, she stands on a stool to put the meat back in the cupboard. The stool breaks and she falls into the fire, burning herself and extinguishing the fire. She leaves to get a fire pot to re-light the fire. While Oenothea is gone, three geese enter the room and attack Encolpius. He takes a table leg and beats off the most aggressive goose and kills him. The other geese eat some of the beans.

Encolpius decides to leave, but is too late as he sees Oenothea coming with the pot of fire. Oenothea is very upset because the goose Encolpius killed is the favorite pet of all the ladies. Proselenus returns and is just as upset as Oenothea. Encolpius does not understand their despair and offers them two gold pieces as compensation. Oenothea tells him they fear for his life and will pray for him. She cuts the liver from the goose which she will use to tell his fortune. To hide Encolpius' crime, she cooks the goose and makes a feast for him. Oenothea uses some equipment in an effort to sexually arouse him. She then soaks his genitals in a brew and whips him, especially below the navel. Encolpius escapes and runs away with the two crones chasing him yelling, "Stop thief!"

He prays that he can be with Circe again. Giton tells Encolpius that an elegant woman was by to see him. After some small talk, she told Giton that he should suffer as a slave. Chrysis then appears and embraces Encolpius, telling him that she loves him madly. A matron, Philomela, entrusts her son and daughter to Eumolpus. He will teach them and be their tutor. When she leaves, he wants to have sex with the girl but he had told the town that he had weak loins. To ensure that his lie is not exposed, he has his slave, Corax, lay under the bed and push his legs up and down on the bottom of the bed while the girl sits on top of Eumolpus. The brother approaches Encolpius, who has sex with him.

Encolpius is returned to full health, with the help of Mercury. To prove it, he lifts his tunic to Eumolpus, who is horrified. To convince himself, he holds in both hands the gift of the gods. Eumolpus asks that Encolpius close his eyes for one hour of disgust.

Croton Analysis

This episode seems to have continuity of storyline from the last story. When the trio reaches Croton, they tell the townspeople the lies they had devised. Encolpius comes to the attention of a lovely woman in Croton. Her name is Circe and she is the most beautiful woman he's ever seen. She did some investigation and learned that he is in love with Giton. Encolpius is so taken with Circe, however, that he vows to give up Giton. When they attempt to make love, he is unable to perform. Circe takes it personally and feels that Encolpius' feelings for Giton will stand in the way of their relationship.

Circe sends a witch, Proselenus, to check his virility. She confirms to Circe that he is virile but when Circe and Encolpius attempt to have sex again, he is still impotent. Proselenus is angry with Encolpius since she told Circe that he was not impotent. A priestess, Oenothea, tells Encolpius that she can fix his problem. She tries to arouse

him in artificial ways and applies herbs to his sexual organs. She then whips him in the genitals.

It is not clear how much help the two old crones were as the story jumps to the end. Mercury restores Encolpius' health. To prove his recovery to Eumolpus, he lifts his toga and shows him "the gifts of the gods." Eumolpus' reaction is astonishment. He asks Encolpius to shut his eyes while he enjoys an hour of disgust. From that, one can assume that Eumolpus performed oral sex on the well-endowed Encolpius. The story of *The Satyricon* ends there. The storyline containing the Circe thread is never referred to again and there is no resolution of Giton and Encolpius' relationship.



Introduction: The Apocolocyntosis

Introduction: The Apocolocyntosis Summary

There is little doubt that Seneca the Younger wrote *The Apocolocyntosis*. Minor objections are raised about his authorship due in part to its strange title which translates to Transfiguration of a Pumpkin-head, a term synonymous with empty-headedness and stupidity. Some scholars think that Petronius, who wrote *The Satyricon*, was the actual author. However, they were both courtesans of the Nero court at the same time and the traditions of language and colloquialisms account for their similar styles. Timing is a factor in determining the identity of the author. Claudius had just died a year before *The Apocolocyntosis* was written. Effective satire is typically written about a "current subject." The over-done praise of Nero seems most fitting at the beginning of his reign. The likeliest scenario is that the author was of early Neronian time. The author is skilled at both verse and prose, which fits the known talents of Seneca the Younger as well as Petronius. But the case that the authorship belongs to Seneca is the stronger one.

Seneca was born in Spain to a wealthy family. He was accused of adultery and exiled by Claudius to Corsica. He was returned from exile to tutor young Nero, who would later become Emperor. Although his early works are lost, his writings in exile display a practical and political foundation. Some of his writings are subtle criticisms of Claudius' attention to rules and tyrannical behavior—both providing satirical themes for *The Apocolocyntosis*. Some scholars point to the vulgarity of *The Apocolocyntosis* as proof that Seneca was not its author. But there are other Seneca works, like *On the Happy Life*, that refute that theory. Others feel that *The Apocolocyntosis* is too light and humorous to have been written by Seneca. However, beneath the lightness there are serious themes including his harsh discrediting of Claudius.

The piece could have been a subtle reproach to Claudius for exiling Seneca for eight years. The work was apparently written hastily but is still of good construct and quality. Unlike the *Satyricon*, *The Apocolocyntosis* is not missing much text. The hurried ending is thus attributed to the author's design and not due to a gap of continuity. The translator, Sullivan, attempts to place a modern spin on the story without compromising the story.

Introduction: The Apocolocyntosis Analysis

Most scholars believe that Seneca the Younger wrote *The Apocolocyntosis*, although some think Petronius was the author because of the similar writing styles. The author is both skilled at verse and prose, which is descriptive of Seneca's abilities. Sullivan, the translator, feels quite certain that Seneca is the author. Since the emperor Claudius sent Seneca into exile for a number of years, it follows that he might have had a grudge against the ruler. *The Apocolocyntosis* is a scorching critique of Claudius' character probably written by someone not very fond of him.



Some scholars feel that Seneca would not have written something as light and vulgar as *The Apocolocyntosis*. But Seneca has other works that refute this argument. Additionally, underlying the lightness of *The Apocolocyntosis* are very serious accusations against the deceased emperor.

Unlike *The Satyricon*, *The Apocolocyntosis* is mostly intact and not missing many parts.



The Apocolocyntosis of the Divine Claudius

The Apocolocyntosis of the Divine Claudius Summary

The 13th of October is the day that Claudius begins to gasp his last breath. Mercury takes one of the three Fates aside and pleads for Claudius to be taken out of his misery. He is sixty-four years old and the astrologers have been predicting his death every month of every year since his birth. Clotho responds that he was given more time to grant citizenship to the few aliens still left. During his rule, Claudius had tried to get every Greek, Gaul, Spaniard and Briton into a toga. But it is agreeable with Clotho to leave a few aliens for the next ruler. However, she will make sure Claudius, who is used to being surrounded by followers, not die alone. Baba and Augurinus will die in close proximity to Claudius.

After Clotho casts her spell, Claudius does appear dead—ironically expiring while listening to comic actors. There are records on what occurred on earth after Claudius died. The following is an account of what went on in heaven. Jupiter is informed that a visitor has arrived. The visitor is large with white hair. When asked his identity, the visitor responds in an inaudible fashion. Jupiter instructs Hercules to determine who this visitor is. Hercules, who has never been afraid of any monster before, is rattled by the image of the visitor. The visitor has a strange appearance and a weird walk. His strange voice is more fitting to that of a sea monster. On closer inspection, Hercules sees that it is a man. The man indicates he is Caesar.

The goddess Fever is nearby and calls the visitor out for lying. Claudius becomes angry. He orders Fever to be taken away and decapitated. He has forgotten where he is! Hercules becomes angry. He tells Claudius to tell the truth or he will knock the nonsense out of him. Seeing Hercules' physique, Claudius softens. He realizes that he does not have the same power in heaven as on earth. Claudius appeals to Hercules, declaring that he thought he would have his support since he paid homage to Hercules' earthen temple.

A debate arises among the gods. What sort of god does Claudius want to be? A stoic god? He's got neither head nor heart. The debate goes off topic into all different directions. Jupiter stops the discussion, telling the gods that they are making the conference into a shambles. Claudius is dismissed and Janus takes the floor. Janus rambles on too long and not all of his speech is recorded. In summary, he speaks of the high status of gods and that the honor should not be granted to ordinary people. He proposes that no one who "eats the harvest of the tilth" shall become a god. Any such person declared a god shall be handed over to the gladiators and beaten with rods in the arena.



Next, Diespiter, son of the goddess Vica Pota, speaks. Since the Divine Claudius is related by blood to both the Divine Augustus and Divine Augusta, he proposes that Claudius be made a god. There is much discussion and it seems that Claudius is winning, but Hercules soon turns the tables. Hercules, who feels he has a real stake in the outcome, anxiously asks his fellow gods to listen to him. As much good work as Hercules has done to bring peace to the earth, Claudius has been evil, killing men as easily as a roll of the dice. Although Claudius has hid behind Hercules' name all those years, he betrayed him and killed Hercules' great granddaughters and great-great grandson.

It is Jupiter's role to determine if these murders were for justified causes. But how did Claudius justify his actions when he had no facts and pronounced no specified charges? That kind of injustice has no place in heaven. Claudius even killed his wife and many others, including members of the aristocracy. Hercules is astonished that the gods would want to make him a god. Who would worship him? The gods would lose their credibility by making Claudius a god. Hercules proposes that Claudius be made to pay for his wrongdoing. Hercules moves that for all those he murdered, Claudius be severely punished, be denied any immunity from trial and be deported, leaving heaven within thirty days and Olympus within three.

The gods concur with Hercules and Mercury seizes Claudius, twists his neck and hauls him off from heaven to hell. As Mercury and Claudius travel downward, they see Claudius' funeral procession on earth and the crowds surrounding it. Everyone seems to be happy except a few barristers who are in tears. Seeing this, Claudius finally realizes that he is dead. He hears a song being sung in tribute to him. Claudius is delighted to hear his praises sung and wants to watch longer. But Mercury pulls him downward and descends to the gates of Dis. There Claudius is met by all those he corrupted. They shout at him—he caused them to be in hell. He is taken before a tribunal. An indictment is served listing the following crimes: Execution of 30 Senators, 221 Roman knights, and others "to the number of the grains of sand and the specks of dust." No one represents Claudius and only one side, the prosecution, is heard. Claudius is found guilty.

Claudius is stunned by the injustice. There is much debate over his punishment. It is decided that a new punishment should be devised just for Claudius. Suddenly, Gaius Caesar appears and claims Claudius as his slave. He in turn hands him over to his freedman Menander who puts him to work as legal secretary.

The Apocolocyntosis of the Divine Claudius Analysis

Claudius dies on October 13th and he appears before Jupiter in heaven. Jupiter does not recognize Claudius as he appears large and strange looking. This is no doubt a personal stab at Claudius from the once-exiled Seneca. Jupiter dispatches Hercules to find out who this visitor is. Even mighty Hercules, who has seen all the monsters of the world, is shaken by Claudius' appearance—another not so subtle dig at the deceased



emperor. Claudius lies that he is Caesar but is called out immediately by the goddess Fever.

Realizing that the visitor is Claudius, he is taken before the council of Gods. Claudius wants to be a god. One god, Janus, argues against it. Another, Diespiter, argues in favor. Hercules then relates to the gods how evil Claudius had been on earth. This is the serious matter that Sullivan refers to in the introduction when refuting the claim of some scholars that this work was "light." Hercules tells the gods that Claudius should not be a god; in fact, he should be punished and deported from heaven.

The gods concur and Mercury spirits Claudius off to hell. On the way down, they view Claudius' funeral procession. Every one is happy except a few barristers who are shedding tears. Mercury delivers Claudius to hell. He is greeted by angrily by others led astray by Claudius. Claudius sits before a tribunal in hell which decides what his punishment will be. Claudius is ordained a slave and will be made to work as a legal secretary. Since the only people crying at Claudius' funerals were lawyers, the connection can be made that it is a punishment, or hell, to work for a lawyer. Also, the ending could allude again to Seneca's exile in which lawyers were probably advising Claudius on that action.



Characters

Encolpius appears in The Satyricon

Encolpius is the young student who is one of the main characters in *The Satyricon*. He is the story's narrator as well. The story begins in the city of Puteoli where Encolpius is a newly arriving student. When Encolpius asks a woman to show him to his new quarters, she takes him to a brothel instead. This sets the stage for the heart of *The Satyricon*, which from that point on centers around the sexual adventures of Encolpius and his companions around the Mediterranean countryside.

The introduction describes how very fragmented the ancient tale of *The Satyricon* is and how sections and parts of sections of the story are missing. There are references to Encolpius' criminal background. There are vague allusions to his stealing and even murdering a man. Details of these incidents are fragmented or missing and are impossible to fully understand. What remains of the story, however, focuses upon his love interests. As a student in Puteoli, Encolpius is in love with the young boy, Giton who at sixteen is described as younger than Encolpius. Ascyltus, who is another friend of Encolpius, is also in love with Giton. The friendship of Encolpius and Ascyltus is greatly challenged over the competition for the love of Giton. The situation comes to a head when Giton must choose between the two. Out of fear, Giton chooses Ascyltus. Encolpius is heartbroken and leaves Puteoli in despair. He then meets an older poet named Eumolpus who becomes his mentor. Soon Giton appears wanting to reunite with Encolpius. With Ascyltus chasing them, Encolpius, Eumolpus and Giton sail away on a ship which ultimately is wrecked in a storm.

The trio survives and winds up in the town of Croton where Encolpius meets Circe, the most beautiful woman he ever saw. He vows to give up Giton for her. However, when he and Circe try to make love, he is impotent. A high priestess and a witch are summoned by Circe to cure him. They make brews and cast spells to fix Encolpius' problem. In the end, Encolpius is cured but credits the god Mercury with his recovery.

Eumolpus appears in Satyricon

The main character, the young student Encolpius, meets the older Eumolpus at an art museum in the seaside town of Pergamum. Eumolpus is a poet and intellect and is eventually referred to by Encolpius as his mentor. There is a comic element to the character who loves poetry and is given to impromptu poetry recitations. However, he is generally pummeled with rocks when his recitation drags on too long. When first meeting Encolpius, Eumolpus begins to recite poetry but is short-circuited by the young student who complains that he's acting like a poet and an intellect—people don't like poets and intellectuals.



Eumolpus is older but seems to be as sexually active as his young companions. Like everyone else, Eumolpus is attracted to Giton and promises to support him and write poetry devoted to him. He and Encolpius get into a dispute about his overtures to Giton which is forgotten when they all hastily flee town. Later in the town of Croton, Eumolpus sexually assaults both a young boy and a young girl. At the end of the story, Eumolpus is drawn to Encolpius, who he asks to tolerate him for just one disgusting hour.

Eumolpus is a wily person given to schemes of deception. When he escapes with Encolpius and Giton from the angry Ascyltus, he sneaks them on a ship bound for an unknown destination. When Eumolpus learns that the owner of the ship, Lichas, is looking for Encolpius and Giton due to their sexual dalliance with his wife, Eumolpus creates a plan to deceive Lichas. He has the young students' heads and eyebrows shaved and stains their foreheads with the brandings of slaves. Lichas sees through the silly disguise, but Eumolpus is able to help his companions make peace with Lichas. Later in the town of Croton, to win their favor, he lies to the townspeople, telling them that his is a sickly, wealthy man who has just buried his son.

Ascyltus appears in Satyricon

Ascyltus is a young student and friend of Encolpius. He and Encolpius are both in love with Giton and have an on-going conflict over him.

Giton appears in Satyricon

Giton is a young student and friend of Encolpius. He is younger than his other friends and is the object of adoration of both men.

Trimalchio appears in Satyricon

Trimalchio is a wealthy gentleman in Puteoli. He holds a lavish dinner with exotic dishes and entertainment which Encolpius and his friends attend.

Proselenus appears in The Satyricon

Proselenus is the witch who is dispatched by Circe to test Encolpius' virility. She confirms that he is virile but is disappointed later to learn that he is still impotent.

Circe appears in The Satyricon

Circe is the beautiful woman that Encolpius falls in love with. When they attempt to make love, Encolpius is impotent, which she takes as a personal affront. She sends a witch to try to cure him.



Priapus appears in The Satyricon

Priapus is the god of sexuality and fertility. Encolpius offends Priapus by barging in on a mystical ceremony. Encolpius is plagued by impotence after committing this offense.

Oenothea appears in The Satyricon

Oenothea is the high priestess who, along with the witch Proselenus, tries to cure Encolpius of impotency.

Petronius appears in The Satyricon

Titus Petronius is the author of the *The Satyricon*—at least that is the consensus. Some scholars are not convinced that Petronius is the author.

Seneca appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Seneca the younger is the author of *The Apocolocyntosis*, which is a scorching critique of Claudius I. Seneca had been exiled by Claudius for several years and probably had a personal reason for excoriating the dead emperor.

Claudius I appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Claudius I was the subject of the political satire, *The Apocolocyntosis*, written by Seneca the younger.

Hercules appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Hercules is the god who convinces the other gods to refuse Claudius' request to be made a god. Claudius is then sent to hell.

Jupiter appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Jupiter is approached by Claudius in heaven. Jupiter cannot tell what the creature is who looks huge and has white hair.

Janus appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Janus argues against making Claudius a god. Ordinary men should not become gods and those that do should be turned over to the gladiators and pummeled with rods in the arena.



Diespiter appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Diespiter is the god who supports Claudius' request to become a god. He points out that Claudius is related to the Divine Augustus and the Divine Augusta.

Mercury appears in The Apocolocyntosis

The god Mercury spirits Claudius off to hell once the gods agree that he should not become a god.



Objects/Places

Puteoli appears in The Satyricon

Puteoli is the town in the Mediterranean region where the story of The Satyricon begins. Encolpius the narrator and main character and his companions are newly arriving students in Puteoli.

Trimalchio's Dining Hall appears in The Satyricon

Trimalchio is a wealthy resident of Puteoli. He holds an elaborate dinner with exotic delicacies and entertainment for his guests. The dining hall is huge and decorated with murals of the gods and huge chained dogs guard the exits. There are signs posted warning slaves not to leave the premises and other signs giving instructions to guests, for example, "Do Not Enter with Your Left Foot." A person entering a doorway with his left foot would bring bad luck to Trimalchio's household. Encolpius and his companions attend the dinner.

Pergamum appears in The Satyricon

Encolpius is heartbroken when he loses his love, Giton. He flees to the seaside town of Pergamum where he meets his future mentor, Eumolpus.

Croton appears in The Satyricon

Encolpius, Giton and Eumolpus travel to Croton where Eumolpus pretends to be a sick, old wealthy man. Encolpius meets and falls in love with the beautiful Circe in Croton.

Rome appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Rome is the home of Claudius I, the subject of Seneca's political satire, The Apocolocyntosis. Both Seneca and Petronius lived in Rome as well.

Heaven appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Claudius went to heaven after he died. When Jupiter and Hercules encounter him, they cannot make out if he's man or beast.



Mount Olympus appears in The Apocolocyntosis

The gods gather in heaven on Mount Olympus to consider the case of Claudius I who has died and who is requesting that he become a god.

Hell appears in The Apocolocyntosis

The gods decide that Claudius I was an evil murderer while on earth and deny his request to become a god. He is banished to Hell.

Corsica appears in The Apocolocyntosis

Seneca was banished to Corsica by Claudius I for misconduct. Many felt certain that he wrote the harsh critique of Claudius in his book *The Apocolocyntosis* out of hatred for Claudius.

Nero's Court appears in The Satyricon

The authors, Seneca and Petronius, were both courtesans of Emperor Nero's Court. Nero was very interested in literary excellence and was influenced by the writing of these men.



Themes

Sexual Adventures

The not so subtle main theme of *The Satyricon* is the sexual adventures of Encolpius, the narrator and main character, and his companions, Ascyltus, Giton and Eumolpus. The story begins with Encolpius and Ascyltus being led to a brothel where Ascyltus must fight off a client who has paid the madame for his services. The three young students are all given drinks with aphrodisiacs and become more amenable. Encolpius and Ascyltus are both in love with Giton, who at sixteen is a little younger than his friends. They are continuously in conflict over Giton, who is stolen back and forth between the two friends. When Encolpius is accused by a woman of violating her sacred religion, his punishment and that of Giton and Ascyltus, is to be continually raped by male prostitutes until she calls them off.

The friends attend a lavish dinner at Trimalchio's residence where the old host is seen chasing young boys around and kissing and caressing them. When the older companion, Eumolpus is introduced into the story, his sexual appetite proves to be as strong as that of the younger students. In the town of Croton, he seduces both a young girl and a young boy. In the end he is drawn to Encolpius who was given "the gift of the gods" and who Eumolpus begs to shut his eyes and put up with one hour of disgust.

Encolpius has the recurring problem of impotence. He violated a religious ceremony where Priapus, the god of fertility and sexuality, presided. As punishment, he is plagued by impotency which even a witch and a high priestess can't cure. In the end, however, he is cured and credits the god Mercury with his recovery.

Deception

Of the main characters, only Giton does not have a deceptive nature. There are vague references about Encolpius being a thief and a murderer. Giton refers to Ascyltus as a criminal. Encolpius and Ascyltus, who are both in love with Giton, continuously are at odds with each other over him, lying and deceiving their way into his heart. Ascyltus draws his sword and suggests they cut Giton in half so they can both have him. When the older Eumolpus first sees Giton, he is immediately attracted to the youngster. When Eumolpus leaves Encolpius' apartment to look for Giton, he locks Encolpius in so Eumolpus can keep Giton to himself. When Giton escapes from the violent Ascyltus, Encolpius hides him under his bed. The police poke a rod under the bed but do not find Giton as he is holding onto the webbing of the bed.

The dinner at Trimalchio's is a farce. Nothing is as it appears. Lavish dishes are presented in disguised ways. A roasted pig is slit open with sausages and puddings spilling out. A large goose is served but it is actually made of pork. Eggs are served that have prepared surprise delicacies inside. Dinner guests tell tales of deception. One



guest encountered a friend in the woods who shed his clothes and became a werewolf. Another told of seducing a widow in the tomb of her dead husband.

When Encolpius, Giton and Eumolpus escape the angry Ascyltus, they board a ship with an unknown destination. When Eumolpus realizes that the ship's owner, Lichas, is after Giton and Encolpius, he disguises them as his slaves. It is an elaborate plot in which Eumolpus has the heads and eyebrows of the young men shaved off. Eumolpus uses a stain to brand their foreheads with the markings of slaves. To win the favor of the people in the town of Croton, Eumolpus falsely presents himself as a sick, addle-brained old rich man who has just buried his son.

Retribution

The Apocolocyntosis is an account of what happened in heaven and on Mt. Olympus when Emperor Claudius of Rome died. In the story, Claudius goes to heaven expecting to become a god. When first confronted with Claudius, the god Jupiter does not recognize him. His appearance is almost monster-like. Even the brave god Hercules shudders when he sees the grotesque visitor.

When the gods realize that the visitor is Claudius, they convene on Mt. Olympus to discuss the merits of his request to become a god. Some argue in favor and some against. However, it is Hercules who unleashes venom against Claudius. He tells the gods of the many people Claudius hurt on earth—how he killed his own wife, some of Hercules' own relatives and members of the aristocracy. He recommends that not only should Claudius' request be denied, he should be punished and deported from heaven.

The gods agree with Hercules and Mercury escorts Claudius to hell. There he is tried before a tribunal and found guilty of the murders of untold numbers of people. He is declared a slave of Hell.

Hercules sought retribution for the murders committed in the name of Claudius as the Emperor of Rome. Those who greeted him in hell gave him his comeuppance as well.

But there is another party who enjoyed the punishment Claudius received at the hands of the gods. Seneca, the author, had been exiled by Claudius for a number of years for misconduct and therefore did not have a warm view of the ruler. By writing this harsh criticism of Claudius, Seneca found a way to enjoy his own personal retribution against Claudius.

Style

Point of View

The *Satyricon* uses the unusual format of first-person narrator doubling as a main character in the story. There is liberal use of perspective. Depending on the circumstances of the story, the point of view switches from narrator, to first person and to third-person omniscient. The author uses bracketed introductions in some portions; for example, "[Proselenus to Oenothea, priestess of Priapus, talking of Encolpius]" is used to tell the reader that the witch and the priestess are having a conversation.

In his introduction, translator Professor J. P. Sullivan discusses Petronius' unique writing style. One of the most popular writing styles during Petronius' time was satire. While *The Satyricon* certainly falls into that category, it is set apart from other satire in that the author, Petronius, does not have a message. Rather, he tells the story and is not concerned with illustrating how the flawed human who lacks morals is punished in life. Many scholars consider *The Satyricon* the first European novel. Creating Encolpius as the narrator/main character is a modernist device no doubt providing evidence to the scholars that Petronius was way ahead of his times.

In *The Apocolocyntosis*, Seneca uses a framing device, couching his story about Claudius in terms of a first-person narrator telling a story. This allows Seneca to tell the reader how he (the narrator) is an authority on the story of Claudius' experience in heaven and that the story is a true and honest account backed up by reputable sources. When the actual tale of the dead Claudius' experience in heaven begins, Seneca abandons the first-person narrator format in favor of the third-person omniscient.

Setting

Both authors—Seneca and Petronius—were courtesans in the Nero court during the same time. *The Satyricon* takes place in various areas of the Mediterranean countryside—in the towns of Puteoli, Pergamum and Croton. The nationality of the main characters is undetermined but it is safe to say they are either Greek or Roman and therefore, the towns they visit are either in Greece or Italy. It is mentioned that the town of Pergamum is located on the sea.

In Puteoli, a lavish dinner is given by Trimalchio, who is a wealthy man and generous host. His large residence is splendidly decorated with wall murals of the gods and large dining rooms with comfortable couches and pillows for his guests. Between courses, baths are available for his guests to relax in. There are signs located within his residence. One sign forbids slaves to leave beyond a certain point. Another instructs visitors to not enter with his left foot first—doing so would bring bad luck to Trimalchio's house. Huge dogs are chained in various places disallowing anyone to exit the same door in which he entered—another misstep that brings bad luck to the household.



The main characters travel by sea in one episode. They experience a vicious storm at sea and the ship is wrecked and sinks. They fear they will die but are all washed ashore. They then "sweat" their way up a mountain where they discover the town of Croton in the next valley.

In *The Apocolocyntosis*, there are just three settings. The Emperor Claudius dies and goes to Heaven. There he visits the gods on Mount Olympus. The gods reject his request to become a god. Instead, he is sent to hell and becomes a slave.

Language and Meaning

Both *The Satyricon* and *The Apocolocyntosis* were written in the late first century. Naturally, there would be many words and colloquialisms and idioms that would be alien to the modern reader through a verbatim translation. However, the translator Professor J. P. Sullivan did a meticulous job of translating the material to an understandable version for the modern English reader all the while maintaining an eye to the integrity of the original stories. What does not translate to modern words or concepts, Sullivan handles with the many notes he supplies as cultural or historical references.

The *Satyricon* that survived the ages suffers from fragmentation and missing sections. Sullivan indicates that he avoids filling the gaps and warns that the reader will experience many incongruities within the story. The style falls loosely into the satire category, although there are modernist elements leading some scholars to view *The Satyricon* as the first European novel. Petronius relies on heavily on the use of irony, absurdity and humor in the telling of this farce.

The much shorter *Apocolocyntosis* is a political satire, a scorching critique of Claudius I of Rome. Most of its text and sections have survived the ages. This translation by Sullivan is easier to follow and understand than the fragmented *Satyricon*. The notes for *The Apocolocyntosis* contain a large number of historical references which provides the backdrop for that era as well as many literary references.

Structure

The book containing both *The Satyricon* and *The Apocolocyntosis* begins with an introduction to *The Satyricon* which covers the translation techniques used, the style of writing, the background of the author and the problems with the fragmentation of the book. The *Satyricon* tale is told in five named chapters, "Puteoli," "Dinner with Trimalchio," "Eumolpus," "The Road to Croton," and "Croton." Another section follows entitled, "The Fragments and the Poem" which contains the list of characters, reference notes and notes on the fragmented material. The poems contained in this section seem to have little if any relevance to the main story.

The adventures of Encolpius and his companions is told in *The Satyricon*; however, as the translator points out, it is in a very fragmented state and is missing parts of the story,

perhaps quite a few. He also points out that the chronology of the translated story may not be completely accurate.

The Apocolocyntosis section also begins with an introduction which covers the translation techniques, writing style and background of Seneca. Sullivan points out the controversy surrounding the authorship of The Apocolocyntosis, explaining why some scholars dispute Seneca as its author. Unlike The Satyricon, the ancient story of The Apocolocyntosis is in very good shape and apparently is missing very few portions.



Quotes

"The elevated, what one might call the pure style, is not full of purple patches and bombast: it is lifted up by its intrinsic beauty." p. 37

"Anything on which I'm set, should be hard to get; A ready-made victor never appeals to me." p. 44

"Wine has a longer life than us poor folks. So let's wet our whistles. Wine is life." p. 56

"While he was talking, a young slave dropped a cup. Trimalchio looked in his direction. 'Get out and hang yourself,' he said, 'you're utterly useless.'" p. 69

"I'll give you a piece of advice: don't let your good luck turn your head, you kite, and don't make me show my teeth, my little darling—otherwise you'll feel my temper. You know me: once I've decided on something, it's fixed with a twelve-inch nail." p. 88

"Trimalchio, showing the effects of his disgusting drunkenness, had a fresh entertainment brought into the dining-room, some cornet players. Propped up on a lot of cushions, he stretched out along the edge of the couch and said: 'Pretend I'm dead and say something nice.' p. 91

"I suspect somehow that poverty is the twin sister of talent." p. 96

"The snows cling longer in rough and uncultivated regions, but where the ground has come under the plough, the light frost vanishes from its bright expanse even while you are speaking. It's the same way with anger in human breasts: it chokes an untutored heart, but slips away from a cultivated mind." p. 109

"Fishermen came hurrying out in little boats to do some looting. When they saw there were people to defend their property, their greed was replaced by the wish to help." p. 124

"As she said this, there was such a charm in her voice, such a sweet sound caressed the enraptured air that it was as though the song of the Sirens sang through the breezes. And then in my amazement—the whole sky seemed somehow brighter—it occurred to me to ask the goddess her name." p. 143

"With this lifted my tunic and showed all I have to Eumolpus. At first he was horrified, then to convince him fully, he held in both hands the gifts of the gods." p. 159

"Hercules was badly shaken by the first sight of him—he hadn't been scared by all possible monsters yet. Seeing the strange sort of appearance and the weird walk and hearing the hoarse and incomprehensible voice that belonged to no land creature but seems more appropriate to a sea-monster, he thought his thirteenth labor had arrived. On a closer inspection, it appeared to be something like a man. p. 224



"He leads him [Claudius] before Aeacus' tribunal; he sat on cases that fell under the Cornelian legislation on murder. Peto requests that Claudius be charged and he lays out the indictment: Executed 30 Senators, 221 Roman knights, and others to the number of the grains of sand and the specks of dust." p. 232



Topics for Discussion

What meaning does the word "Apocolocyntosis" have? Who did Seneca probably have in mind when he named his political satire, *The Apocolocyntosis*?

Eumolpus is a poet and intellect. Why does Encolpius become irritated with Eumolpus when he begins reciting poetry and what advice does he give Eumolpus? What do the townspeople do in reaction to Eumolpus' recitations?

What disguise does Eumolpus dream up for Encolpius and Giton when they are caught on the ship owned by Lichas who is angry at the two boys and is looking for them?

When Giton returns to Encolpius, who is hunting for him and what reward is announced by the town crier for his return? Who wants to turn him in for the reward money?

Why is the witch Proselenus and the high priestess Oenothea dispatched by Circe? What do they do to help Encolpius?

When the gods discuss whether Claudius should be made a god, which god is adamantly against it and what are his reasons for opposing it?

What god accompanies Claudius to hell? What do Claudius and this god witness on earth as they make their way down to hell?

When Claudius is sent to Hell, what does the tribunal decide will be his punishment? Why was this punishment considered to be harsh?