



# CLASSICAL LITERACY EXAM - LEVEL II

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## Actaeon



Actaeon was a famous hunter from Thebes. One day while out hunting he came upon Artemis while she was bathing. As a punishment, Artemis transformed him into a stag and Actaeon was torn apart by his own hunting dogs.

## Ad astra per aspera

A Latin phrase that means “To the Stars Through Difficulties”. It is the motto of Kansas.

## Ad lib/ad libitum

A Latin phrase that means “at one’s pleasure”. In music and drama it refers to improvisation.

## Adonis

Adonis was a youth of remarkable beauty, a favorite of Aphrodite. As a child he was put in the care of Persephone, who refused to allow him to return from the underworld. Zeus ruled that he should spend a third of the year with Persephone, a third with Aphrodite, and a third on his own. He became a hunter and was killed by Ares, Artemis, or Apollo in the shape of a boar. In answer to Aphrodite's pleas, Zeus allowed him to spend half the year with her and half in the underworld. An “Adonis” can also be a term for an attractive young man.



## Aeolus

Aeolus was the king of the winds in Greek mythology. He was the ruler of the Island of Aeolia. In the *Odyssey*, he helps Odysseus to almost get home by giving him a bag containing the winds.

## Affidavit

A sworn statement in writing made especially under oath before an authorized magistrate or officer.

## Agamemnon

Son of Atreus, brother of Menelaus, husband of Clytemnestra, and king of Mycenae. Elected commander in chief of the Greeks in the Trojan War. When the war was over, he sailed home where he was murdered by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. Odysseus speaks to his spirit in Hades.



## Alba Longa

An ancient city in central Italy, southeast of Rome. It was destroyed by Rome around the middle of the 7th century BC. Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome, had come from Alba Longa.

## Amphitrite

Poseidon's wife; goddess of the sea. Her counterpart in Roman mythology is Salacia, the goddess of saltwater.

## Andromache

The wife of Hector and mother of Astyanax. After the Trojan War, she was made the concubine of Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles.

## Andromeda

The daughter of King Cepheus of Ethiopia. As a punishment for a boast her mother made, Andromeda was given as a sacrifice to be eaten by the sea monster Cetus. Fortunately, Perseus was returning from slaying Medusa. He saved Andromeda and then married her.

Andromeda is also the name of a galaxy.

## Ars gratia artis

A Latin phrase that means “Art for the sake of Art”. It is the motto of Metro Goldwyn Mayer.



## Ars longa, vita brevis

A Latin phrase that says “Art is long, Life is short”, meaning “There is so much art to learn and so little time to learn it”. This phrase is a Latin translation of a Greek aphorism by Hippocrates; “Life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting, experience deceptive, judgment difficult.”

## Attica

A 1,000 square mile promontory in southeast central Greece, the location of Athens. It is a rugged terrain that yielded high-quality marble and potter's clay as well as silver and lead.



## Augean Stables

The fifth Labour of Heracles was to clean the Augean stables. These stables had not been cleaned in over 30 years, and over 1,000 cattle lived there. However, Heracles succeeded by rerouting the rivers Alpheus and Peneus to wash out the filth.

## Augury

A sign of what will happen in the future; an omen.

## Ave, Maria

A traditional Catholic prayer asking for the intercession of the Virgin Mary--“Hail Mary”.

## Basilica

In Roman architecture a courtroom, rectangular in plan with an entrance usually on a long side. In Christian architecture, a church somewhat resembling the Roman Basilica usually entered from one end and with an apse at the other.

## Beware of Greeks bearing gifts

Do not trust enemies who bring you gifts - they could very well be playing a trick. The saying is from the words of Laocoon from the story of the Trojan Horse in the Aeneid; “Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes”

## Caduceus

The staff carried by Hermes in Greek mythology. The same staff was also borne by heralds in general.

It is a short staff entwined by two serpents, sometimes surmounted by wings. The caduceus is often mistakenly used as a symbol of medicine and medical practice, due to historical confusion with the traditional medical symbol, the rod of Asclepius. The Rod of Asclepius has only a single snake and no wings, so is similar in form to the caduceus with its two snakes and often with wings.



## Calliope

The muse of epic poetry. She is the daughter of Zeus and Mnemosyne, and the mother of Orpheus. She was the lead muse. She is always seen with a writing tablet, and sometimes with a scroll, book, or gold crown. A calliope is also the name of a steam powered musical instrument.



## Calypso

The beautiful nymph who falls in love with Odysseus when he lands on her island-home of Ogygia. She holds Odysseus prisoner there for seven years until Hermes persuades her to let him go.

## Cardinal

Being or denoting a numerical quantity, but not order. It can also mean most important.

## Cassandra

A prophetess in Troy during the Trojan War whose predictions were true but were never believed. The daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy, her beauty caused Apollo to grant her the gift of prophecy. When she refused Apollo, he placed a curse on her so that she would never be believed.

## Castor and Pollux

Castor and Pollux or Polydeuces were twin brothers, together known as the Dioscuri. Their mother was Leda, but Castor was the mortal son of Tyndareus, king of Sparta, and Pollux the divine son of Zeus. Though accounts of their birth are varied, they are sometimes said to have been born

from an egg, along with their twin sisters Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra. In Latin the twins are also known as the Gemini. When Castor was killed, Pollux asked Zeus to let him share his own immortality with his twin to keep them together, and they were transformed into the constellation Gemini. The pair was regarded as the patrons of sailors and were also associated with horsemanship.

## Causa belli

The reason of war. It can also be used to refer to justification for fighting.

## Caveat emptor

"Let the buyer beware" - A commercial principle that without a warranty the buyer takes upon himself the risk of quality.



## Censor

A person who supervises conduct and morals or who examines materials for objectionable matter. In ancient Rome, one of two magistrates, assessors, and inspectors of morals and conduct. They conducted the census.

## cf./confer

"Compare". Confer is from Latin conferre, meaning "bring together". Cf./confer is used to refer to other material or ideas which may provide similar or different information or arguments. It is mainly used in scholarly contexts such as in academic articles or legal texts.

## Chimerical

Produced by a wildly fanciful imagination, absurd. Comes from the mythological Latin Chimaera.

## Cincinnatus

A Roman dictator who was chosen by the Romans to defend their lands from attack. Later, he willingly gave up power and was thus considered an ideal leader by the Romans.

## circa

Circa (from Latin, meaning "around or about"), usually abbreviated c. or ca., means "approximately," usually referring to a date when not precisely known.

## Circe

A sorceress who detained Odysseus on her island of Aea and turned his men into swine.

## Cleopatra

Queen of Egypt (51--30 BC), renowned for her beauty: the mistress of Julius Caesar and later of Mark Antony. She killed herself with an asp to avoid capture by Octavian.

## Cogito ergo sum

Cogito ergo sum (English: "I think, therefore I am") is a philosophical Latin statement proposed by René Descartes, a French philosopher. The simple meaning of the phrase is that something, an "I", exists to do the thinking. However, this "I" is not the permanent person we call "I". It may be that the something that thinks is purely momentary, and not the same as the something which has a different thought the next moment. The phrase was perceived to form a foundation for all knowledge. While other knowledge could be a figment of imagination, deception or mistake, the very act of doubting one's own existence serves as proof of the reality of one's own existence, or at least that of one's thought.

The statement is sometimes given as *Dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum* (English: "I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am").

## Concatenation

A series of things depending on each other as if linked together. From Latin *concatenare* "to link together"

## Constantine

Emperor of Rome who adopted the Christian faith and stopped the persecution of Christians (280-337). He also moved the capital of Rome to *Byzantium*, renaming it Constantinople.

## Corpus delicti

The body of evidence that constitute the offense, facts proving that a crime has been committed (e.g. the dead body in a murder). There must be *corpus delicti* in order for someone to be convicted of crime.

## Corrigenda

A list of printing errors in a book along with their corrections, things to be corrected.

## Cosmos

In the general sense, a cosmos is an orderly or harmonious system. It originates from the Greek term *κόσμος* (*kosmos*), meaning "order" or "ornament" and is antithetical to the idea of chaos. Today, the word is generally used as a synonym of "Universe."

## Cum grano salis

"With a grain of salt," an idiom which means to view something lightly. The phrase comes from Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*, regarding the discovery of a recipe for an antidote to a poison. In the antidote, one of the ingredients was a grain of salt. Threats

involving the poison were thus to be taken "with a grain of salt," and therefore less seriously. The Latin word *salis* means both "salt" and "wit," so that the Latin phrase "*cum grano salis*" could be translated as both "with a grain of salt" and "with a grain of wit." The phrase "*cum grano salis*" is not what Pliny wrote. It is constructed according to the grammar of modern European languages rather than Classical Latin. Pliny's actual words were "*addito salis grano*" (the addition of a grain of salt).

## Cupid and Psyche

A myth found in Lucius Apuleius' "The Golden Ass".



Aphrodite sends Eros to curse Psyche because of her jealousy. Eros falls in love with her instead. Aphrodite curses Psyche herself, declaring that she will never find a husband. Eros gets upset and goes on strike until Aphrodite lets him have Psyche for himself. Psyche is whisked away to a great palace where she is well-treated, but is never allowed to see the face of her lover. Her sisters convince her that he must be a monster, so she breaks the rule and looks on his face to find out. Eros is angered and abandons her. Heartbroken, Psyche appeals to Aphrodite, who sets her all manners of impossible tasks to complete. In the final task, her curiosity again gets the better of her and she is sent into a deep sleep as a result. Eros, no longer harboring any ill will, cures her, marries her and makes her a goddess.

## Curriculum vitae

A Latin expression which can be loosely translated as *the course of life*. It is a summary of your academic and work history, similar to a resume.

## de facto - de jure

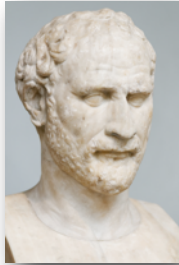
Latin expressions that mean "concerning fact" and "concerning the law." De facto means existing in fact whether with lawful authority or not. It is commonly used in contrast to de jure. When discussing a legal situation, de jure designates what the law says, while de facto designates action of what happens in practice.

## Defenestration

The act of throwing someone or something out of a window.

## Demosthenes

Athenian statesman and orator (circa 385-322 BC) who tried to warn the Greeks of the threat Macedon posed. He opposed Philip and revolted against Alexander, from whom he met his demise.



## Deucalion and Pyrrha

The only two survivors of the flood caused by Zeus. The flood of Deucalion was caused by the cannibalism of Lycaon, king of Arcadia. Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha were the only virtuous people, so Prometheus told them to make an ark. This tale closely relates to the Biblical story of Noah.

## Dum spiro, spero

"While I breath, I hope." - Cicero. The motto of South Carolina

## Ecce Homo

"Behold the Man" - The words used by Pontius Pilate in the Vulgate translation of John 19:5, when he presents

Jesus Christ. In art, anything that portrays the Passion of Jesus.

## Echo

A nymph who loved her own voice. She was cursed by Hera to only be able to repeat the words of others. She fell in love with Narcissus, who rejected her. She was so sad, she pined away until only her voice was left.

## Errata

A list of printing errors in a book along with their corrections, things to be corrected.

## Europa

The daughter of the king of Phoenicia. Zeus morphed into a bull to kidnap her because he loved her. He took her to Crete and married her. Her children included Minos and Rhadamanthus. The continent Europe was named after her.

## ex post facto

"After the fact," used to refer to a criminal law that applies retroactively, thereby criminalizing conduct that was legal when originally performed.

## ex tempore

Latin for "out of the moment" - without preparation, on the spur of the moment (extemporaneous).

## exit/exeunt

"He goes out/they go out" (used in theatrical contexts)

## facta non verba

"Deeds, not words," actions speak louder than words.

## fiat

Latin for "let it be done" - a legally binding command or decision entered on the court record (as if issued by a court or judge). In policy debate, a concept that allows an affirmative team to avoid the probability of an action being enforced.

## First Triumvirate

A political alliance between Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey.

## Friends, Romans, Countrymen...

According to Shakespeare, the opening quote by Marc Antony as he is giving the eulogy for Caesar's funeral.

## Gracchi Brothers

Tiberius and Gaius were Roman plebeian nobles who both served as tribunes. They attempted to pass land reform legislation that would redistribute the major patrician landholdings among the plebeians and give free grain to the poor. Generally considered to be among the most significant of the populares, the Gracchi have been considered the founding fathers of both socialism and populism. After achieving some early success, both were assassinated for their efforts.

## habeas corpus

The right not to be held in prison without first being charged with a specific crime. Latin for “may you have the body.”

## Hecuba

Wife of Priam; queen of Troy; mother of Hector, Paris, Deiphobus, and Cassandra.

## Helle

Daughter of Athamas and Nephele; sister of Phrixus; was saved from sacrifice by the golden ram; drowned in what is now Hellespont.

## Herculaneum

An ancient Roman city that was destroyed by Mt. Vesuvius in 79 A.D. It was better preserved than Pompeii.

## Herodotus

The ancient Greek known as the father of history, his accounts of the wars between the Greeks and Persians are the first known examples of historical writing (425-485 BC)

## Hippocratic Oath

An oath taken by a doctor to observe a code of medical ethics supposedly derived from that of Hippocrates (c. 460 - c. 337), Greek physician commonly regarded as the father of medicine.

## Horatii

According to Livy, the Horatii were male triplets from Rome. During a war between Rome and Alba Longa



during the reign of Tullus Hostilius (approx. 672-642 B.C.), it was agreed that settlement of the war would depend on the outcome of a battle between the Horatii and the Curiatii. The Curiatii were male triplets from Alba Longa and of the same age as the Horatii. In

the battle, the three Curiatii were wounded, but two of the Horatii were killed. The last of the Horatii, Publius, turned as if to flee. The Curiatii chased him but, as a result of their wounds, became separated. This enabled Horatius to slay them one by one.

## Ibid

(Latin, short for ibidem, meaning "the same place") the term used to provide an endnote or footnote citation or reference for a source that was cited in the preceding endnote or footnote.

## in absentia

Latin for “in absence”.

## facta non verba

"Deeds, not words," actions speak louder than words.

## fiat

Latin for “let it be done” - a legally binding command or decision entered on the court record (as if issued by a court or judge). In policy debate, a concept that allows an affirmative team to avoid the probability of an action being enforced.

## in hoc signo vinces

Latin for “by this sign you will conquer”. The emperor Constantine saw this in the sky before the battle of the Milvian Bridge, and won the battle after putting the symbol of the cross on all his soldiers' shields.

## in medias res

“Into the middle of things.” A Latin phrase for the narrative technique where a story begins in the middle, rather than at the beginning (ab ovo, “from the egg”). Homer always starts his epics *in medias res*.

## in situ

A Latin phrase that means “in place.” Used in many different contexts, from aerospace to vacuum technology to indicate something in its natural environment.

## in vitro

Latin for “in glass,” referring to biological tests not taken in situ, “test tube experiments.”

## interregnum

The time between two reigns, governments.

## Io

A young maiden that Zeus loved and who was turned into a white heifer by Hera. She was pursued by a gadfly and finally settled in Egypt.

## ipsa scientia potestas est

“Knowledge itself is power,” a quote attributed to Francis Bacon.

## ipso facto

By the fact itself, by the nature of the deed.

## iustitia omnibus

“Justice for all” - Motto of Washington, D.C.

## Janus



The Roman god of doorways and passages. He is depicted as having two faces on opposite sides of his head.

## Leda

A queen of Sparta who was raped by Zeus who had taken the form of a swan, mother of Helen of Sparta, Clytemnestra, Castor, and Pollux.

## Lethe

River of oblivion and forgetfulness in Hades.

## Lotus-eaters

A group of people who eat lotus leaves to stay drugged and oblivious to reality - they ensnare a few of Odysseus's men

## Macedonia

The ancient kingdom of Philip II and Alexander the Great in the southeastern Balkans that is now divided among modern Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria.



## maenad

Wild women worshippers of Dionysus that performed rituals and carried thyrsus.

## Marius

Roman general during the first century B.C.; introduced the use of paid volunteers in the army rather than citizen conscripts; elected 7 times as consul.

## Marc Antony

(January 14, 83 BC – August 1, 30 BC) A Roman politician and general. As a military commander and administrator, he was the right hand man of Julius Caesar. After Caesar's assassination, Antony formed an official political alliance with Octavian and Lepidus, the Second Triumvirate. The triumvirate broke up in 33 BC. Disagreement between Octavian and Antony erupted into civil war in 31 BC. Antony was defeated by Octavian at the naval Battle of Actium, and in a brief land battle at Alexandria. He and his lover Cleopatra committed suicide shortly thereafter. His career and defeat are significant in Rome's transformation from Republic to Empire.

## Menelaus

The king of Sparta at the time of the Trojan War, the husband of Helen of Troy.

## mens sana in corpore sano

“A healthy mind in a healthy body.”

## mercurial

Characterized by rapid and unpredictable change in mood, or relating to or having characteristics (eloquence, shrewdness, swiftness, thievishness) attributed to the god Mercury.



## Mnemosyne

The Titaness who was the goddess of memory and the mother of the muses.

## Narcissus

A beautiful young man who fell in love with his own reflection. He was loved by Echo. A *narcissist* is someone who loves themselves.

## ne plus ultra

"Nothing more beyond," the state of being without a flaw or defect.

## necropolis

A tract of land used for burials, literally "city of the dead".

## Nemesis

The goddess of divine retribution and vengeance.

## nepotism

A form of political corruption. Favoritism shown to relatives or close friends by those in power (as by giving them jobs).

## Nero

Roman Emperor notorious for his monstrous vice and fantastic luxury (was said to have started a fire that destroyed much of Rome in 64) but the Empire remained prosperous during his rule (37-68). He was an early persecutor of Christians.

## nolo contendere

A legal term that comes from the Latin for "I do not wish to contend." It is also referred to as a plea of no contest. In criminal trials in certain U.S. jurisdictions, it is a plea where

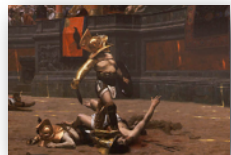
the defendant neither admits nor disputes a charge, serving as an alternative to a pleading of guilty or not guilty. A no-contest plea, while not technically a guilty plea, has the same immediate effect as a guilty plea, and is often offered as a part of a plea bargain.

## non compos mentis

Not of sound mind and hence not legally responsible

## non sequitur

Latin for "it does not follow". In formal logic, an argument in which its conclusion does not follow from its premises.



## nos morituri te salutamus

"We who are about to die salute you!" (the gladiator's salute to the emperor).

## odium

hatred, contempt; disgrace or infamy resulting from hateful conduct

## onus probandi

The burden of proof.

## otiose

serving no useful purpose, useless, futile

## Pan and Syrinx

Syrinx was a nymph and a follower of Artemis, known for her chastity. Pursued by the amorous Greek god Pan, she ran to a river's edge and asked for assistance from the river nymphs. In answer, she was transformed into hollow water reeds that made a

haunting sound when the god's frustrated breath blew across them. Pan cut the reeds to fashion the first set of pan pipes, which were thenceforth known as syrinx.

## Pater Noster

"Our Father"; Latin title and beginning of The Lord's Prayer.

## Patroclus

A friend of Achilles who was killed in the Trojan War and kindled his rage against Hector.

## Peloponnesian War

A protracted (431-404 B.C.) and costly conflict between the Athenian and Spartan alliance systems that convulsed most of the Greek world. In the end, Sparta prevailed because of Athenian errors and Persian financial support.

## per se

With respect to its inherent nature, in and of itself.

## Phaethon

Son of Helios who was killed when he attempted to drive his father's chariot too close to earth.

## interregnum

The time between two reigns, governments.

## Phidippides

A young Greek soldier who ran from Marathon to Athens with a message about the Athenian victory. Legend has it that he died of a heart attack after delivering his message. Today, the marathon race is named after his 26.2 mile run.

## Philemon and Baucis

A poor rural couple who accepted a disguised Zeus and Hermes when they were testing the hospitality of the locals. Despite their desperate poverty, they treated their guests so well that when the gods revealed themselves, the old couple was spared when the rest of the people were killed. As a reward, the gods offered them any gift. They only asked to not live without one another, so when the time came for the man to die, his wife also died and they were turned into trees with interlocked branches.

## Phrixus

Son of Athamas who was nearly sacrificed by his father; was taken to Colchis on the Black Sea by a golden ram that appeared at the last moment. The brother of Helle.

## pietas

Practice of pagan worship which sought the placation of the gods through sacrifice in an effort to secure protection for the Roman state; loyalty, dutiful conduct, devotion.

## placebo

Medically ineffectual treatment for a disease or other medical condition intended to deceive the recipient. Latin for "I shall please".

## polis

A city-state in ancient Greece.

## Polyphemus

One of the Cyclopes (uncivilized one-eyed giants) whose island Odysseus comes to soon after leaving Troy. He imprisons Odysseus and his crew and tries to eat them, but Odysseus blinds him through a clever ruse and manages to escape.

## post hoc ergo propter hoc

A logical fallacy of believing that temporal succession implies a causal relation; Assuming that an incident that precedes another is the cause of the second incident. Latin for "after this, therefore because of this".

## prima facie

It seems at first sight, obvious. Used in legal proceedings.

## pro bono publico

For the public good or welfare.

## Pyramus and Thisbe

Pyramus and Thisbe is the story of two lovers in the city of Babylon who are forbidden by their parents to be wed because of their parents' rivalry. Through a crack in one of the walls, they whisper their love for each other. They arrange to meet near Ninus' tomb under a mulberry tree. Thisbe arrives first, but upon seeing a lioness with a mouth bloody from a recent kill, she flees, leaving behind her veil. The lioness drinks from a nearby fountain, then by chance mutilates the veil Thisbe had left behind. When Pyramus arrives, he is horrified at the sight of Thisbe's veil, assuming that a fierce beast had killed her. Pyramus kills himself. Pyramus' blood stains the white mulberry fruits, turning them dark. Thisbe returns, but finding Pyramus' dead body under the shade of the mulberry tree, stabs herself with the same sword. The gods change the color of the mulberry fruits into the stained color to honor the forbidden love. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Nights Dream* includes a comedic version of this story.

## Pyrrhic Victory

A victory that is won by incurring terrible losses. Comes from the Greek general Pyrrhus, whose three victories against the Romans were so devastating, he ended up losing the war.

## Pythia/Sybil

The priestess of Apollo in Delphi.

## Q.E.D./Quod erat demonstrandum

Which was to be proven; term used in logic/mathematics.

## quorum

The minimum number of members who must be present to permit a legislative body to take official action.

## referendum

A direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal.

## Rhea Silvia

Daughter of Numitor, mother of Romulus and Remus.

## rhetoric

The art of using language effectively and persuasively.

## Riddle of the Sphinx

The Sphinx is said to have guarded the entrance to the Greek city of Thebes, and to have asked a riddle of travelers to allow them passage. What creature walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three legs in the evening? Answer: Man. Oedipus finally answered the riddle successfully.

## sarcophagus

A stone coffin (usually bearing sculpture or inscriptions).

## saturnine

Showing a brooding ill humor.

## Scipio Africanus

Roman general who commanded the invasion of Carthage in the second Punic War and defeated Hannibal at Zama. (circa 237-183 BC)

## Scylla and Charybdis

A six headed, human-eating monster and a whirlpool creator who Odysseus and his crew had to pass to get home. In modern use, two equally dangerous alternatives.

## sine die

Adjourning a meeting without a date set for a further meeting.

## sinecure

An office that involves minimal duties, a position requiring little or no work.

## stentorian

Extremely loud and powerful (esp. of a voice).

## sui generis

Constituting a class of its own, unique, "of its on kind."



## Sulla

Roman general and dictator (138-78 BC), who marches on Rome, takes control of the senate, and kills all who oppose him. He tries to reestablish the Senate as the Roman body of control. He is a rival of Marius and a friend of Pompey.

## suum cuique

To each his own. Used in philosophy.

## summum bonum

The supreme good in which all moral values are included or from which they are derived, the greatest good.

## Telemachus

The loyal son of Odysseus.

## Tiberius

Son-in-law of Augustus who became a suspicious tyrannical Emperor of Rome after a brilliant military career (42 BC to AD 37); was the second Roman emperor and ruled during the time of Jesus' death.

## triumph

A successful ending of a struggle or contest, victory. In ancient Rome, A victory procession of a victorious general.

## utopia

An ideally perfect state.

## vademecum

Latin for "go with me"; a reference book.

## veritas

"Truth", the motto of many schools.