

*Caesar DĒ BELLŌ GALLICŌ 1.2:  
The Conspiracy of Orgetorix,  
Leader among the Helvetians*

Caesar introduces Orgetorix, a leader among the Helvetians, his conspiracy, and the Helvetians' desire to leave their own territory for new dwelling places. Caesar will eventually decide that they must be stopped, enter Gallic territory, and thus begin a war that will take another eight years to complete. Caesar likely did not expect the war to last so long. His command was initially for only five years, and he later had to negotiate for more time to finish the job. But Caesar does not explain any of this at the beginning. His focus is instead on one people at a specific time at the beginning of his governorship, and his actions on behalf of Rome in reference to this event. He writes as if he allows us to read his report to the Senate. The focus of the narrative is quite narrow, and does not take up the issue of a larger war. The larger war will instead be presented as flowing quite naturally in a chain of events from this first event. Caesar's narrative presents Caesar as someone who reacts effectively to events in the moment, as opposed to someone who shapes his reaction to smaller events for a larger strategic purpose. In this way, Caesar avoids the larger and much more important issue: his motivation and justification for the conquest of Gaul.



Lake Geneva , called *Lacus Lemannus* in Caesar's day, and the surrounding mountains proved a formidable challenge for the Helvetians in their quest to move westward.

[1.2] *Apud Helvētiōs longē nōbilissimus fuit et dītissimus Orgetorīx. Is Marcō Messālā, et Marcō Pūpiō Pisōne cōsulibus rēgnī cupiditāte inductus coniūrātiōnem nōbilitātis fēcit et cīvitātī persuāsit ut dē finibus suis cum omnibus cōpiīs exirent:*  
 5 *perfacile esse, cum virtūte omnibus praestārent, tōtīus Galliae imperiō potirī.*

**coniūrātiō, -ōnis, f.** [coniūrō, swear], a swearing together; plot, conspiracy.

**cōn-sul, -sulis, m.,** consul, one of the two chief magistrates elected annually at Rome.

**cupidi-tās, -tātis, f.** [cupidus, eager], eagerness, desire, greed.

**dīves, dīvitis, adj.,** rich, wealthy. *Superl.: dītissimus.*

**ex-eō, -īre, -iī, itum** [eō, go. App. §84], go from, leave.

**imper-ium, -ī, n.** [imperō, order], right to command; authority; jurisdiction; supreme military command.

**in-dūcō, -dūcere, -dūxī, -ductum** [dūcō, lead], lead or draw on, induce; influence, instigate; cover.

**Marc-us, -i, m.; Messāl-a, -ae, m.,** Marcus Valerius Messala, consul in 61 BCE.

**Marc-us, -ī, m.; Pis-ō, -ōnis, m.,** Marcus Pupius Piso Calpurnianus, consul with Messala in 61 BCE.

**nōbil-is, -e, adj.** [nōscō, know], well-known, distinguished; of noble birth.

**nōbili-tās, -tātis, f.** [nōbilis, well-known], fame; noble birth, rank; the nobility.

**perfacil-is, -e, adj.** [facilis, easy], very easy.

**potior, 4** [potis, powerful], become master of, get control or possession of, obtain, capture.

**prae-stō, -stāre, -stitī, -stātum** [stō, stand], stand or place before; show, exhibit, supply; be superior, excel, surpass.

**Pūpi-us, -ī, m., see Pisō.**

1. **nōbilissimus:** predicate nom.; see App. §§156–157.

2. **Messālā et . . . Pisōne cōsulibus:** abl. absolute; see App. §150. Consuls served for just one year, so their names were used to identify the year in which events occurred. This conspiracy, thus dated to 61 BCE, began three years before Caesar arrived in Gaul.

3. **rēgnī:** objective gen.; see App. §98. Gauls did not have kings, so Orgetorix aims at leadership and power.

**coniūrātiōnem:** according to Caesar (but how did he know?), Orgetorix aims to convince the Helvetians to emigrate with himself as their leader.

4. **cīvitātī:** dat. indirect object with an intransitive verb; see App. §115.

**ut . . . exirent:** subjunctive in a substantive clause of purpose (or indirect command); see App. §228, a. This is an example of *SYNESIS* (breaking strict grammatical rules for the

sake of sense), as Caesar follows the sing. state (or tribe) with a pl. verb that must refer to the people in that state; see App. §301, h.

**omnibus cōpiīs:** this means everybody, the entire population: men, women, children.

5. **cum . . . praestārent:** “since they were superior in manliness”; subjunctive in a causal clause; see App. §239.

**virtūte:** abl. of respect or of specification; see App. §149.

**omnibus:** dat. with compound verb; see App. §116, I.

**tōtīus Galliae:** in other words, ironically enough, Orgetorix wanted to do what Caesar eventually did: conquer all of Gaul.

5–6. **perfacile esse . . . potirī:** indirect statement dependent on *persuāsit*; see App. §266.

6. **imperiō:** abl. with a special deponent verb; see App. §145.

10 *Id hōc facilius eīs persuāsit, quod undique locī nātūrā Helvētīi continentur: ūnā ex parte flūmine Rhēnō lātissimō atque altissimō, quī agrum Helvētium ā Germānīs dīvidit; alterā ex parte monte Iūrā altissimō, quī est inter Sēquanōs et Helvētīōs; tertiā lacū Lemannō et flūmine Rhodanō, quī prōvinciam nostram ab Helvētīīs dīvidit.*

**alt•us, -a, -um, adj.**, high, deep.

**dī•vidō, -videre, divisī, divisum**, divide, distribute, separate.

**Iūr•a, -ae, m.**, the Jura mountains which stretched from the Rhine to the Rhone, separating the Helvetians from the Sequani.

**lac•us, -ūs, m.**, lake.

**lāt•us, -a, -um, adj.**, wide, broad, extensive.

**Lemann•us, -ī** (often with **lacus**), *m.*, Lake Lemannus, Lake Leman, or Lake Geneva.

**mōns, montis, m.**, mountain; mountain range.

**nātūr•a, -ae, f.** [**nāscor**, be born], nature; character.

**Sēquan•us, -a, -um, adj.**, of or belonging to the Sequani; *pl. as noun, Sēquanī*, the Sequani.

**undique, adv.** [**unde**, whence], on all sides, everywhere.

7. **Id**: i.e., his plan of action.

**hōc**: abl. of cause; see App. §138.

**locī**: gen. of possession; see App. §99.

**nātūrā**: abl. of means; see App. §143.

7–8. **quod . . . continentur**: the Helvetii felt boxed in, and, because Caesar himself provides this analysis, he uses the indicative mood in a causal clause to let readers know that he is not merely reporting someone else's analysis; see App. §244.

8–11. **ūnā ex parte . . . flūmine Rhodanō**: another geography lesson; Caesar describes territory that corresponds roughly to territory today occupied by Switzerland.

9. **ā Germānīs**: abl. of separation; see App. §134.

9–10. **alterā ex parte**: "on the second side."

11. **tertiā**: ellipsis of *ex parte*; "on the third side."

11–12. **prōvinciam nostram**: Roman territory is just across the border. Is the conspiracy a danger to Rome? Later in Book One, Caesar will argue that the Germans would occupy Helvetian territory, if it were left empty, and Germans, as we learned at the beginning, were more warlike than Gauls. Readers are left to draw their own conclusions, but Caesar's prose guides their thoughts.

15 *His rēbus fiēbat ut et minus lātē vagārentur et minus facile finitimīs bellum inferre possent; quā ex parte hominēs bellandī cupidī magnō dolōre adficiēbantur. Prō multītūdine autem hominum et prō glōriā bellī atque fortitūdinis angustōs sē finēs habēre arbitrābantur, quī in longitūdinem milia passuum CCXL, in lātītūdinem CLXXX patēbant.*

**ad•ficiō, -ficere, -fēcī, -fectum** [ad + **faciō, do**], affect, inspire; **magnō dolōre afficere**, to annoy greatly.  
**angust•us, -a, -um, adj.** [angō, squeeze], compressed, narrow.  
**bellō, l**, wage war.  
**CCXL, sign for ducenti et quadrāgintā**, two hundred forty (see also App. §47).  
**CLXXX, sign for centum et octōgintā**, one hundred eighty (see also App. §47).  
**cupid•us, -a, -um, adj.** [cupiō, desire], eager, desirous.  
**dol•or, -ōris, m.** [doleō, grieve], grief, distress, pain, anguish.  
**finitim•us, -a, -um, adj.** [finis, limit], bordering on, neighboring.

**fortitūd•ō, -inis, f.** [fortis, brave], bravery, courage.  
**glōri•a, -ae, f.**, glory, reputation.  
**inferō, inferre, intulī, illātum** [ferō, carry. App. §81], carry into, import, inflict, cause, produce; cast into.  
**lātē, adv.** [lātus, wide], widely, extensively.  
**lātītūd•ō, -inis, f.** [lātus, wide], width, extent, breadth.  
**longitūd•ō, -inis, f.** [longus, long], length, extent; long duration.  
**pate•ō, -ēre, -uī, —**, lie or be open, be passable; extend.  
**vagor, l** [vagus, roaming], roam around, wander.

**13. His . . . fiēbat:** “as a result of these factors”; *lit.* “by means of these things it (*note the impers. construction*) happened that.”

**ut . . . vagārentur:** subjunctive in a substantive clause of result; see App. §229, *b*.

**14. quā ex parte:** “and for this reason”; *con-junctio relativa*: the rel. is used as a conj., and the phrase is thus equivalent to *et dē eā parte*; see App. §173, *a*.

**bellandī:** gerund used with the objective gen.; see App. §§ 287, 291.

**14–15. hominēs . . . cupidī:** “as people (*hominēs*, not *viri*) eager for waging war.” Caesar will eventually attack all the Helvetians, not just the men.

**16. angustōs . . . finēs:** “narrow boundaries” = “too small a territory.”

**sē:** acc. subject of the inf. **habēre**; see App. §123.

**finēs:** acc. object of the inf. **habēre**; see App. §124.

**17. arbitrābantur:** How does Caesar know all this? Caesar tells the story from his own point of view and for his own purposes, but he would have had reports from Gallic spies, traders, defectors, and, after his victory, prisoners.

**milia:** acc. of extent of space; see App. §130.