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LESSON I: *On Obligations*, Book 1.1-19

TEACHING NOTES

Homework Questions: 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21

Quiz Questions: 3, 10, 14, 16, 19

Discussion Focus Questions: 1

SYNOPSIS

Book 1.1-19 Introduction, Obligations, Wisdom

1-10 Introduction

11-17 Obligations are an outgrowth of reason and the honorable, which is the virtues

18-19 Wisdom

I. THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Cicero asserts that we should not allow wisdom and the search for the truth to divert us from service to the community. Do you agree? Come up with a scenario in which the search for knowledge and truth diverts us from public service, and another in which the search for knowledge and truth is a public service.

II. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Cicero encourage his son to combine Latin studies with Greek studies?

1.1

It aids in the practice of oratory as well as the study of philosophy.

2. What does Cicero tell his son will enhance his knowledge of how to express himself in Latin?

1.2

Reading his father's speeches (that is, Cicero's own)

3. To what does Cicero credit honorable and base conduct?

1.4

Performing or neglecting obligations

4. What does Cicero claim is the common concern of all philosophers?

1.5

Obligation

5. On what assumption does Cicero's criticism of Epicureans in 1.5 rely?

1.5

That his readers accept courage and self-control as measures of moral worth

Note: We may very well accept these, and hence, the criticism, but the point of this exercise is to identify unstated premises.

6. Who does Cicero believe can articulate principles of obligation that are inherent in nature?

1.6

Only those who maintain that right behavior alone is worth seeking, or those who claim that it should be the chief aim for its own sake (Stoics, Academics, Peripatetics).

Note: In other words, Cicero is establishing as a premise the qualification of agreeing with him.

7. What is the twofold investigation of obligation?

1.7

The highest aim among goods and the moral guidance which can shape our daily lives.

8. In what ways can obligation be further subdivided?

1.8

Intermediate: a plausible reason for some action

Absolute: what is right