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ANSWER KEY

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LESSON I

TEACHING NOTES

Homework Questions: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15

Quiz Questions: 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14

Discussion Focus Questions: 1

THOUGHT QUESTION

If students have read the introduction, they likely know that Cicero was certainly a man of both experience and education. Wealthier Romans did not have universities in the contemporary sense, but often were tutored by senators or other men of learning. Cicero would later travel to Athens and Rhodes to further his philosophical studies and a young man. A practical Roman, Cicero was also a man of experience. He entered the political scene in his mid-20s, defending Sextus Roscius from spurious charges of patricide leveled by a close associate of the dictator Sulla. He then successfully won the Quaestorship and entrance into the Senate at age 31 in 75 B.C. Cicero was a Homo Novus, or “New Man”: the first in his family to be a senator. Students may articulate the false dichotomy between experience and education. Possible arguments for experience might include: the value of learning by doing, better understanding one’s own context (in

contrast to the context of a teacher or book), and the ability to begin with a “blank slate” uninfluenced by previous philosophers’ failures. Possible arguments for education might include: the ability to gain multiple “experiences” through different teachers and books, the value of learning from others’ mistakes, and the ability to evaluate your own ideas in light of what has come before.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. “... nature has given to mankind such a compulsion to do good, and such a desire to defend the well-being of the community, that this force prevails over all the temptations of pleasure and ease.” (Sect. 1)
2. “Yet it is not enough to possess moral excellence as a kind of skill, unless you put it into practice. You can have a skill simply by knowing how to practise it, even if you never do; whereas moral excellence is entirely a matter of practice.” (Sect. 2)
3. “Its most important field of practice, moreover, is in the government of a state, and in the achievement (in reality, not just in words) of those things which our friends in their shady nooks make such a noise about.” (Sect. 2)
4. “For nothing is laid down by philosophers—nothing right and honourable at any rate—which has not been brought into being and established by those who have drawn up laws for states.” (Sect. 2) The various virtues Cicero lists (devotion, religious observances, etc.) come prior to the examination of philosophers.

LESSON I: The Republic, Book 1.1-13

SYNOPSIS

Book 1.1-13 Preface

fr. Obligations of the individual to the state

fr. Importance of both experience and theoretical education

2-12 Anti-Epicureanism: refuting arguments against political engagement

13 Cicero’s experience and learning as qualifications for writing

I. THOUGHT QUESTION:

Which do you think is more important preparation for writing political philosophy, experience or education?

II. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What overcomes all enticements of pleasure and ease?

1.1

Nature has given men a need for virtue and a desire to defend the common safety.

2. What is moral excellence and what is it not?

1.2

Moral excellence is not some kind of knowledge to be possessed without using it. It consists entirely in its use.

Note: This is a peripatetic view.

3. What is the most important use of moral excellence?

1.2

The most important use of moral excellence is the governance of states and the accomplishment in deeds rather than words of the things about which philosophers talk.

4. Why is law superior to philosophy?

1.3

The law compels everyone to do what philosophy can persuade only a few people to do.

5. Why are statesmen superior to philosophers?

1.3

Just as cities are superior to villages, men who lead cities should be considered far wiser than philosophers who have no experience of public life.

6. What causes men to be eager to make human life better and safer?

1.3

Nature itself

Lesson I: The Republic, Book 1.1-13 13

5. "So then, the statesman who, by official authority and legal sanctions obliges everyone to do what barely a handful can be induced to do by philosophy lectures, must take precedence over the teachers who theorize about such matters." (Sect. 3)
6. "... we are spurred on by nature herself to fulfil this purpose." (Sect. 3)

TEXT NOTES

Cicero's *The Republic* is patterned after Plato's work of the same name, but we already see some key differences in Book 1. Unlike Plato, Cicero begins each of the six books with a preface in his own voice, providing commentary on his own thought and framing his argument before beginning the dialogue. We have extant evidence of these prefaces for each book, except for Book 2 and Book 6. It is possible that Cicero wrote a preface for each "day" of the dialogue, which would explain the absence in Book 2. In the preface to Book 1, Cicero provides the justification for his work. He attempts to address the arguments of those opposed to political engagement on any level. Much like in our own day, politics of ancient Rome could be corrupt and had its fair share of bribery, demagoguery, and dead-lock.

Section 1

Students might notice the lost leaves at the beginning of Book 1. Cicero's *Republic*, as indicated in the introduction, does not have as many sources as other

classical works, and gaps, or *lacunae*, are frequent. Encourage students to focus on what is present, rather than worry about the missing text. We pick up Cicero's preface with a discussion of history. Cicero is providing examples of virtuous men, engaged in politics despite personal risk, who saved the Republic. The key attribute of these men is virtue, or moral excellence. This moral excellence is a gift of nature. Cicero does not use nature in the modern sense. Nature is not the physical world with its biological laws; nature, rather, is the rational system of the universe, designed by a rational "Divine Mind," which gives to humanity intrinsic moral laws. Nature, as Cicero uses the term, is closer to the concept of "Natural Law."

Section 2

Significant to Cicero's understanding of moral excellence is the importance of action. There is no room for hypothetical virtue, hence "moral excellence is entirely a matter of practice." This is in direct response to the objections of the Epicureans, whom Cicero refers to as "our friends in their shady nooks." Epicureans believed the best life was one lived free of pain, subsequently rejecting the trials that came with a life in politics. Also in Section 2 we see Cicero quote Ennius for the first time. Ennius was one of the earliest Roman poets, writing in the early 2nd century. Cicero admires him greatly, and often quotes from his epic poem on Roman history *Annals*. Much of Ennius' work has been lost to history and known through secondary sources like Cicero.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

7. (1) "... the hardships which have to be endured ..." Cicero dismisses this "flimsy objection" and points out the hardships of family life and occupation. (Sect. 4)
(2) "... the dangers of public life, using the despicable fear of death to deter brave men ..." Cicero cites great leaders, from Miltiades to himself, who have suffered these dangers. He responds by saying that life must be "given back to nature" (Sect. 4) and it is a gift to sacrifice it for one's country. Cicero further explains that the Epicureans risk dangers in the pursuit of knowledge (Sect. 6) and are inconsistent in their accusations.
8. That countries do not expect maintenance, but "serve our convenience, providing a safe haven for our leisure and a quiet place for our relaxation." (Sect. 8)
9. "... it reserved the right to appropriate for its own purpose the largest and most numerous portions of our loyalty, ability, and sagacity ..." (Sect. 8)
10. (1) Critics argue it is demeaning to be classified with worthless politicians, futile to check the madness of the mob. (Sect. 9)
(2) Cicero argues that there could be no "stronger reason for entering politics" than attempt to save the state in such an event.
(3) Further, he rejects their proviso: "And how could I have been consul if I had not followed from boyhood the career that would bring ... me to the highest office?" (Sect. 10)
11. "So the opportunity of rescuing the country, whatever the dangers that threaten it, does not come suddenly or when you wish it, but only when you are in a position which allows you to do so." (Sect. 10) "I should still think it quite wrong for him to neglect the art of politics; he ought to have everything at his fingertips, for he never knows when he may have to use it." (Sect. 11) Cicero argues that philosophers cannot be content to intervene during a period of crisis, but must ever be engaged.
12. "I have planned and undertaken a discussion of the state." (Sect. 12)
13. "... because they studied and wrote extensively about it." Further, citing the "Seven Sages" of the pre-Socratic period who "played a central role in political life." (Sect. 12)
14. "Nor, indeed, is there any occupation which brings human excellence closer to divine power than founding new states and preserving those already founded." (Sect. 12)
15. "Since I have had the good fortune to achieve something of note in government, and also possess a certain ability in expounding political principles not only as a result of experience but also through my enthusiasm for learning and teaching I am not unqualified for this task." (Sect. 13)
7. List the arguments made against taking part in public life in Sections 4-6, and Cicero's refutation of each.
1.4-6
Note: Epicurus recommended avoiding politics, but many Romans were both Epicureans and politicians.
• The labor it takes to defend the commonwealth: It is a minor burden for an alert and vigorous man.
• The danger to one's life (supported by examples of political/military disasters such as Miltiades or Themistocles): To fear death is disgraceful. Death is inevitable, and it is far more miserable to be worn away by nature and old age than to lay down one's life for one's country.
• The danger of exile, including Cicero's exile as an example: Those who make these arguments also went overseas during the civil wars.
8. What does Cicero list as false claims about why the country gives birth to its citizens?
1.8
To serve our convenience or provide a safe refuge for our relaxation and a quiet place for rest.
9. What claim does Cicero assert a country makes on its citizens?
1.8
She has a claim on the largest and best part of our minds, talents, loyalty, and judgment for her own use, and leaves us for our private use only so much as is beyond her requirements.
10. List the arguments made against taking part in public life in Sections 9-10, and Cicero's refutation of each.
1.9-10
• Those who take part in public life are worthless men; to be paired with them is low, and to fight against them is dangerous.
• Good and brave men should not allow themselves to be subject to wicked men or allow wicked men to ravage the commonwealth while they are capable of helping it.
• A wise man will take no part in public affairs unless a crisis compels him.
It is impossible to bring aid to the state in a crisis if you are not already in a position to do so.
11. Why does Cicero believe that philosophers should not neglect knowledge of public administration?
1.11
They ought to prepare in advance for whatever they might need.

12. What does Cicero state is his goal in writing *De Re Publica*?

1.12

His goal is to provide a discussion of the state and to advocate involvement in it.

13. Why does Cicero believe that classical philosophers who did not hold office perform an important public function?

1.12

They did much research and writing about government.

14. What human virtue does Cicero believe most closely approaches the divine?

1.12

Founding new states or preserving existing ones.

15. Why does Cicero believe he should be considered an authority on his topic?

1.13

Some earlier figures were skilled in argument but performed no public actions, while others were admirable in deeds but poor in exposition. Cicero has achieved something memorable in his public career and has a capacity for explaining the principles of civic life.

TEXT NOTES

Sections 4-7

Epicureans had ample sources to indicate the danger and futility of political engagement. Cicero responds to some of their best examples in Section 4. Miltiades, Cicero's first example, was a general for the Athenians at the battle of Marathon. He successfully swayed the commanding general to attack the Persians and could be credited with saving Athens from Darius' wrath. But when an expedition the following year failed, Miltiades' political rivals exploited the chance and leveled a tremendous fine upon him. The hero of Marathon died an ignominious death in prison. Cicero notes that Epicureans even cite him as an example because of his involvement in the "Good Goddess Affair" and later exile. Cicero refutes these examples. While he may have suffered to a degree, he notes that the honor and glory he attained for saving the Republic and the joy he gained from the respect of citizens far outweighed the hardships.

Section 10

The Epicureans recognize that their life of peaceful reflection rests to some degree on the stability of the state around them. They therefore permit the proviso of political action in a time of crisis. The Roman constitution did permit the appointing of a dictator to quell a crisis, but Cicero does not discuss

this here. First, the practice had become extremely rare, with the last dictator appointed in the 3rd century prior to Sulla. Second, a dictator could exacerbate a crisis, as evidenced in Cicero's own lifetime with Sulla and Caesar. This is why Cicero prefers good men who, through life-long political involvement, are already in a position to serve during a crisis.