

## Lupus in Fabula

“Eheu! Acheronta movi!” (Trans: Oh no! I raised hell!)

### **Materials and People:**

Printouts of the puzzles

A teacher or facilitator to lead players through the puzzles, and confirm whether or not the students’ answers are correct

Paper and pencils (for notes)

Cheat sheet (for players who need brushing up on Latin, or for players who have never taken Latin before)

George Manes and Cyrus Yuen present... *Lupus in Fabula!* In this escape box game, students use Latin incantations to banish a demon (which they summoned... oops). You can pitch the game to your students with the following text:

“You got a little bored of Latin homework and decided to summon demons, which didn’t end up working out too well. Now, you must use your knowledge of Latin and of Roman history to locate texts from the library’s dustiest and most anachronistic corners. Only upon deciphering these texts may you send these vile beasts back to hell!”

*Lupus in Fabula* or “the wolf in the story,” is a collaborative, roughly 45 minute long game for 4 to 8 players, assisted by a facilitator. Our game is aimed at beginner Latin students with a basic understanding of the first year of high school-level Latin. It will be a little goofy, and require a lot of imagination. There are thematic elements such as archaic texts, ancient wisdom, verbal magic, and demons. To increase economic accessibility, all materials are printable and publicly available.

### **Learning Objectives:**

This game emphasizes practicing Latin through recalling vocabulary, direct translation, and error correction. Practicing Latin is connected to our game theme because it takes place in a library where it would make sense to have Latin texts to piece together. The mystery and puzzle-solving elements will work together to reflect what translation feels like at times, decoding something that is incomprehensible slowly, unraveling the mystery in front of you.

### **Accessibility:**

The game will consist of just pieces of paper, so that the game can be more accessible for more players. Also, we will create cheat sheets to allow players who need a bit of help to figure out how these puzzles go together.

### Setup:

To set up the game, cut along the lines around the letters of the word “senex,” cut out the image of a roman villa, and cut out each individual “knife” numbered I to V. Then arrange all other puzzles in a face-up pile according to the number on the corner of the page, with 5 on the bottom and 1 on the top somewhere your students can’t see. Then put the knives and villa on top of the fifth puzzle, and then the letters you cut out on top of the entire pile.

Text in **red** should be read aloud when prompted

After your students come together to play this game, read the following text:

“**Salvete discipuli! That means: ‘Hello students!’ Did you know that lupus in fabula, meaning the wolf in the story, is the Latin equivalent of “speak of the devil?” And lupus in fabula, because you have summoned a demon! You were trying to do your homework in the library, trying to translate a bit of text, and in doing so, you said the wrong word in the wrong way. Latin is a very powerful language after all. The room erupted in flames, and a vile demon emerged. Before you had a chance to think, it flew out of your sight to go and wreak havoc in the halls. Just that day, a former classmate of yours advised you against summoning demons, as it didn’t go well for them. They handed you an envelope, and said, ‘you’ll need this later.’ At the time, you thought it was boring, uncool. Now, you think it might save your– no, everyone’s lives. You rustle through your bag, praying you didn’t lose it, and Eureka! Here it is.**”

Now you show your students the first puzzle and the letters on top of it, but before they can open it, present them with the first puzzle, and say:

“**Your classmate was well versed in Latin-based magics, so this envelope is sealed by a secret word. Your job is to find it, and utter it aloud.**”

Now you can release your students onto the first puzzle.

When your students solve the first puzzle, you can now present your students with the next puzzle, and to preface it, you must say: “**The envelope’s binding magic is lifted.**” And now hand them the paper numbered 2.

The students will have five true or false statements in front of them. If they do not know already, remind them that “ita” means yes, surely, and that “minime” means no, least of all. They are supposed to chant “ita” and “minime.” Once they chant the correct answers, say that a new puzzle appears before them.

Your students will check their answers with you, and if the students try to confirm an incorrect solution with you, say:

“**Nothing happens in the room around you. It looks like you’ll have to try figuring out the incantation again,**” then to your discretion, offer them a hint to nudge them in the right direction.

Canis currit.

**Ita!** Minime.

lectus in culina est.  
Ita! **Minime.**  
cera in latrinae est.  
Ita! **Minime.**  
mercator vendit.  
Ita! **Minime.**  
ianua circumspemat.  
Ita! **Minime.**

The incantation these students need to chant is “Ita! Minime! Minime! Ita! Minime!”

Once they have chanted the answers to this first puzzle, say:

“It’s working! The pages on the table begin to levitate, but it’s still not enough. A page flies out from one of the books, and inside it is:”

Now present them with puzzle 3.

The solutions are as follows.

The cook berates the father’s dog.  
coquus canem patri vituperat.

The dog is angry  
canis iratus est.

The father of the dog berates the cook.  
pater canis coquum vituperat.

and “The cook berates the father’s dog. The dog is angry. The father of the dog berates the cook.”

Once they have chanted the answers to this next puzzle, say:

“It’s working! The pages on the table begin to levitate, but it’s still not enough. Perhaps chanting these incantations together will be powerful enough to find the book!”

Once your students have chanted enough for you, you should give them the book they’ve been looking for, and at your discretion, you can choose to just hand it to them, or pretend it is levitating magically towards them (by your hand).

The puzzle is as follows:

discipuli sunt in horto. discipuli filiam patri spectant. filius discipulos salutant. leo hortam intrat. discipuli et filium perterriti sunt. filius patrem petit. pater intrat. pater leonem vituperat. leo e horto currit.

The students are meant to figure out which words are incorrect, and correct them. They will find one-letter errors, and correct them. The corrections they make will spell out the phrase “**lupus in.**” They may get stuck with the second letter, which is in the word “filiem.” If they get stuck on the gender of the word, remind them that the context of the surrounding sentences can clue them in on if “filiem” should be filiam or filius. If they do not get this in any short period of time, you can try to nudge them in the right direction however you please, depending on if you think your students are capable of solving the puzzle alone or not.

When they solve the puzzle, put on a silly voice, and tell them:

“It’s me! The demon. Lupus in VILLA est!”

Go back to your regular voice and say:

“With a great whoosh, the room around you gets brighter, and brighter, until all you can see is light. The library, the books, and the chairs you were sitting in fade away to blinding light. And that blinding light is replaced by dark. Slowly your eyes adjust, and you see painted *muri*, and *lecti*, and *ianuae*, you’re in a Pompeiian villa! From above you, a *cura*, a wax slab, floats down to your feet. On it are inscribed the only words that can get rid of this demon, and maybe even send you back home. In the corner are a pile of knives numbered I-V.”

Present them with this text:

in horto lego. Tum triclinium circumspicio. Deinde in tablino sedeo. ad atrium eo et in atrio scribo. Postremo in culina cenam peto

They should put the numbered knives on the illustration of the villa, the knife labeled I should go in *horto*, because it appears first in the text, knife labeled II on *triclinium*, etc.

If your students do not finish the puzzle in the allotted time, either give them a little more time and offer them a hint, or wrap it up for them to finish on another day.

If your students finish the final puzzle in the allotted time, read the following:

“You have found the incantation and the artifacts you need to banish the demon, now it is time to act. Say the incantation!”

Once they do, say:

“And the room begins to shake, inexplicable light comes streaming forth from the windows, and the magic book that the demon came out of appears before you, and begins to flip through its pages by itself. The pages advance slowly, and then faster, and faster. With the turn of each page, a little bit of the villa fades away, and the familiar sights and smells of the library appear out of thin air. You hear a *whoosh* from outside, followed by a deep, bellowing scream of anguish, of desperation. You have returned to the library, but the demon has too. You have to start chanting!”

As they are once again chanting, you should encourage them to continue, and once you are finally content, wordlessly raise your hand, or do some action to silence your students.

“The demon flies through the doorway, foot first. Your chants are pulling it towards the book with a great force. It scratches at the door frame, pleading not to go back, pleading to let its reign of terror continue, but it is not enough. The demon’s claws leave marks on the door, on the floor, on the shelves, as it tries to resist the power of your words. With a flash... the room falls silent. The book begins to hover, and mid-air, it *slams* shut, as the last traces of demon are sealed away inside it. You did it. You can return to your friends, or more likely, your homework, this time with a fair bit more caution than before.”

If the students ask why the demon led them to banish him, say that he actually really likes Latin, and wanted to teach them about how it’s such a cool language

Now it is time to debrief with your students. Some questions you could ask are:

- What did you learn from this game?
- Is there anything you think you needed to brush up on?
- Was there a moment where a classmate helped you that you would like to share?
- Is there anything you’d like me to review?