

# CAPVT XXVI

## Comparison of Adjectives; Ablative of Comparison

### GRAMMATICA

#### COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES

The adjective forms you have learned thus far indicate a basic characteristic (a quality or quantity) associated with the modified noun, e.g., *vir beātus*, *a happy man*. This is called the **POSITIVE DEGREE** of the adjective.

In Latin, as in English, an adjective may be “compared” in order to indicate whether a person or thing being described has a greater degree of a particular characteristic than some other person(s) or thing(s), or more than is usual or customary. When comparing a person/thing with just one other, the **COMPARATIVE DEGREE** is used: *vir beātiōr*, *the happier man*. When comparing a person/thing with two or more others, the **SUPERLATIVE DEGREE** is employed: *vir beātissimū*, *the happiest man*.

#### Formation of Comparatives and Superlatives

The form of the positive degree is learned from the vocabulary. The comparative and superlative forms of regular adjectives add suffixes to base of the positive:

Comparative: base of positive + **-ior** (m. & f.), **-ius** (n.); **-iōris**, gen.

Superlative: base of positive + **-issimū**, **-issima**, **-issimū**

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
cārus, -a, -um ( <i>dear</i> )	cāriōr, -ius ( <i>dearer</i> )	cārissimū, -a, -um ( <i>dearest</i> )
lōngus, -a, -um ( <i>long</i> )	lōngiōr, -ius ( <i>longer</i> )	lōngissimū, -a, -um ( <i>longest</i> )
fōrtis, -e ( <i>brave</i> )	fōrtiōr, -ius ( <i>braver</i> )	fōrtissimū, -a, -um ( <i>bravest</i> )

fēlix, gen. fēlicis (happy)	fēlicior, -ius (happier)	fēlicíssimus, -a, -um (happiest)
pótēns, gen. poténtis (powerful)	poténtior, -ius (more powerful)	potentíssimus, -a, -um (most powerful)
sápiēns, gen. sapiéntis (wise)	sapiéntior, -ius (wiser)	sapientíssimus, -a, -um (wisest)

Some adjectives are compared by adding *magis* (*more*) and *maximē* (*most*) to the positive, especially those like *idōneus*, -a, -um (*suitable*) whose base ends in a vowel: *magis idōneus*, *maximē idōneus*.

### Declension of Comparatives

The declension of superlatives simply follows the pattern of *magnus*, -a, -um. Comparatives, however, are two-ending adjectives of the third declension, but are not i-stem's (i.e., they do not have the -ī abl. sg., -ium gen. pl., or -ia n. nom./acc. pl. endings that characterize other third declension adjectives, as seen in Capvt XVI). Memorize the following paradigm, taking special note of the endings printed in bold:

	Singular		Plural	
	M. & F.	N.	M. & F.	N.
Nom.	fórtior	fórtius	fortiōrēs	fortiōra
Gen.	fortiōris	fortiōris	fortiōrum	fortiōrum
Dat.	fortiōri	fortiōri	fortiōribus	fortiōribus
Acc.	fortiōrem	fórtius	fortiōrēs	fortiōra
Abl.	fortiōre	fortiōre	fortiōribus	fortiōribus

### Usage and Translation

Comparative degree adjectives are commonly translated with *more* or the suffix *-er* and superlatives with *most* or *-est*, depending on the context and English idiom, e.g.: *fēmina sapiētiōr*, *the wiser woman*; *urbs antiq̄uor*, *a more ancient city*; *tempus incertíssimum*, *a most uncertain time*; *lūx clāríssima*, *the brightest light*. Though there is no direct connection between the forms, it may be helpful for mnemonic purposes to associate the Latin comparative marker *-ōr-* with English "more"/"er" and the superlative marker *-ss-* with English "most/-est."

The comparative sometimes has the force of "rather," indicating a greater degree of some quality than *usual* (*lūx clārior*, *a rather bright light*), or "too," indicating a greater degree than *desirable* (*vīta eius erat brevior*, *his/her life was too short*). The superlative is sometimes translated with "very," especially when comparing a person/thing to what is *usual* or *ideal*: *vīta eius erat brevíssima*, *his/her life was very short*.

**Quam with Comparatives and Superlatives**

When *quam* follows a *comparative* degree adjective it functions as a coordinating conjunction meaning “than,” linking two items that are being compared; the same case or construction follows *quam* as precedes:

Hī librī sunt clāriōrēs quam illī. *These books are more famous than those.*

Dīcit hōs librōs esse clāriōrēs quam illōs. *He says that these books are more famous than those.*

When *quam* precedes a *superlative*, it functions adverbially and indicates that the person/thing modified has the greatest possible degree of a particular quality:

Amīcus meus erat vir quam iūcundissimus. *My friend was the pleasantest man possible or as pleasant as can be.*

**ABLATIVE OF COMPARISON**

When the first element being compared was nominative or accusative, *quam* was often omitted and the second element followed in the ablative case, the so-called **ABLATIVE OF COMPARISON** (which should be added to your now extensive list of ablative case uses):

Cōnsilia tua sunt clāriōra lūce. *Your plans are clearer than light.* (Cf. *cōnsilia tua sunt clāriōra quam lūx*, which means the same.)

Quis in Italiā erat clārior Cicerōne? *Who in Italy was more famous than Cicero?*

Paucōs felicitàres patre tuō vīdī. *I have seen few men happier than your father.*

**VOCĀBVLA**

As you review this list, practice the new grammar by writing out the comparative and superlative forms, including the nominative singular for all genders and the English meanings, for a few of the adjectives, such as *superbus* and *trīstis*, then check your work by comparing with the samples in the chart on p. 210–11. As always—*ut semper*—learn all these new items by focusing on their spelling, listening to them online (or on the CDs), and repeating them aloud: *audī atque prōnūntiā!*

cēna, cēnae, f., *dinner* (cenacle; cf. cēnō)

fórum, fóri, n., *marketplace, forum* (forensic)

lēx, légis, f., *law, statute*; cf. iūs, which emphasizes *right, justice* (legal, legislator, legitimate, loyal, colleague, college, privilege)

līmen, līminis, n., *threshold* (liminality, subliminal, eliminate, preliminary)

- lūx, lūcis, f., light* (lucid, elucidate, translucent, illustrate, illuminate)
- mēnsa, mēnsae, f., table; dining; dish, course; mēnsa secūnda, dessert* (the constellation Mensa)
- nox, nōctis, f., night* (nocturnal, nocturne, equinox, noctiluca, noctuid)
- sōmnus, sōmnī, m., sleep* (somnia, somnambulate, somnambulist, somniferous, somniloquist, somnolent, insomnia, Somnexus)
- quīdam, quaedam, quiddam* (pron.) or *quōddam* (adj.), indef. pron. and adj.; as pron., *a certain one or thing, someone, something*; as adj., *a certain, some* (gen. *cuiusdam*, dat. *cuidam*, etc.)
- pudīcus, pudīca, pudīcum, modest, chaste* (impudent, pudency, pudendum; cf. *pudicitia, modesty, chastity*)
- supērbus, supērba, supērbum, arrogant, overbearing, haughty, proud* (superb; cf. *superāre*)
- trīstis, trīste, sad, sorrowful; joyless, grim, severe* (tristful; cf. *tristitia, sorrow*)
- tūrpis, tūrpe, ugly; shameful, base, disgraceful* (turpitude, turpitudinous)
- urbānus, urbāna, urbānum, of the city, urban; urbane, elegant* (urbanity, urbanization, suburban; cf. *urbs*)
- prae, prep. + abl., in front of, before* (frequent as a prefix, App. p. 488, e.g., *praepōnere, to put before, prefer*; sometimes intensifying, e.g., *praeclārus, praeclāra, praeclārum, especially famous, remarkable*; precede, prepare, preposition)
- quam, conj. after comparatives, than; adv. before superlatives, as . . . as possible: quam fortissimus, as brave as possible* (do not confuse with *quam, adv., how*, or with the f. acc. sg. of the rel. pron. or interrog. adj.)
- tantum, adv., only* (tantamount)
- invītō, invītāre, invītāvī, invītātum, to entertain, invite, summon* (invitation, invitational, vie)

## LĒCTIŌ ET TRĀNSLĀTIŌ

After careful study of the new grammar and vocabulary, search through the following readings for all the comparative and superlative degree adjectives and occurrences of the ablative of comparison construction. Listen to the CDs, if you have them, and read aloud before translating.

### EXERCITĀTIŌNĒS

1. Ille dux nescivit cōsiliū nūntiatū esse et sē imperiū prōtinus susceptū esse.
2. "Quīdam," inquit, "imperiū quondam petēbant et liberōs virōs opprimere cupiēbant."

3. Eōdem diē decem mīlia hostium ab duce fidēlissimō āversa ac pulsa sunt; multī mīlitēs vulnera recēperant et in agrīs iacēbant.
4. Morte tyrannī ferōcis nūntiātā, quisque sē ad orātōrem potentissimum magnā spē vertit.
5. Rīdēns, scrīptor illius fābulae sapiēns aliquid iūcundius dehinc nārrāvit.
6. Hīs rēbus audītis, adulēscētēs geminī propter pecūniae cupiditātem studium litterārū relinquent.
7. Rēgīna fortissima Carthāginis postea ostendit fidem semper esse sibi cārīorem dīvitiis.
8. Negāvit sē umquam vīdisse servam fideliōrem quam hanc.
9. Iūcundior modus vītae hominibus nunc quaerendus est.
10. Crēdimus illōs vīgintī liberōs virōs fēmināsque vītā quam iūcundissimā agere.
11. Imperātor centum mīlitēs fortissimōs prae sē heri mīsīt.
12. Lūx in illā casā nōn fuit clārissima, quod familia paucās fenestrās patefēcerat.
13. Amīcōs trīstēs excēpit, ad mēnsam invitāvit, et eis per fugium ac sōlācium hīc dedit.
14. What is sweeter than a very pleasant life?
15. Certain men, however, say that death is sweeter than life.
16. When these three very sure signs had been reported, we sought advice and comfort from the most powerful leader.
17. In that story the author says that all men seek as happy lives as possible.
18. This light is always brighter than the other.

### SENTENTIAE ANTĪQVAE

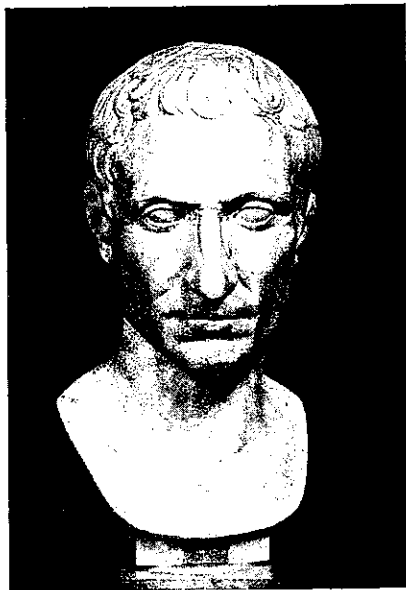
1. Senectūs est loquāciōr. (Cicero.—loquāx, gen. loquācis, *garrulous*; "loquacious," "loquacity.")
2. Tua cōsilia omnia nōbīs clārīōra sunt quam lūx. (Cicero.)
3. Quaedam remedia graviōra sunt quam ipsa perīcula. (Seneca.)
4. Eō diē virōs fortissimōs atque amantissimōs reī pūblicae ad mē vocāvī. (Cicero.—amāns reī pūblicae, i.e., *patriotic*.)
5. Quī imperia libēns accēpit, partem acerbissimā servitūtis vītāt. (Seneca.—libēns, gen. libentis, *willing*; "ad lib.;" here, as often, the adj. has adverbial force.)
6. Iūcundissima dōna, ut aiunt, semper sunt ea quae auctor ipse cāra facit. (Ovid.)
7. Beātus sapiēnsque vir forum vītāt et superba limina potentiōrum cīvium. (Horace.)
8. Quid est turpius quam ab aliquō illūdī? (Cicero.—illūdō, -ere, *to deceive*; "illude," "illusion.")
9. Quid enim est stultius quam incerta prō certīs habēre, falsa prō vērīs? (\*Cicero.—falsus, -a, -um; "falsify," "fault.")

10. Saepe mihi dīcis, cārissime amīce: "Scribe aliquid magnum; dēsidiōsissimus homō es." (Martial.—dēsidiōsus, -a, -um, *lazy*; "desidioso.")
11. Verba currunt; at manus notārii est vĕlōcior illis; nōn lingua mea, sed manus eius, labōrem perfēcit. (Martial.—notārius, -ī, m., *stenographer*; "notary," "note."—vĕlōx, gen. vĕlōcis, *swift*; "velocity."—perficiō, -ere, -fēcī, -fectum, *to complete*; "perfect," "perfection.")
12. Multī putant rēs bellicās graviōrēs esse quam rēs urbānās; sed haec sententia mūtanda est, nam multae rēs urbānae sunt graviōrēs clāriōrēsque quam bellīcae. (Cicero.—bellicus, -a, -um, *adj. of bellum*; "bellicose.")
13. Invītātus ad cēnam, manū sinistrā lintea negligentiōrum sustulisti. Hoc salsum esse putās? Rēs sordidissima est! Itaque mihi linteum remitte. (Catullus.—lin-teum, -ī, n., *linen, napkin*; "lint."—neglegēns, gen. -gentis, *careless*; "neglect," "negligent."—salsus, -a, -um, *salty; witty*; "sauce," "saucy," "sausage."—sordidus, -a, -um, *dirty, mean*; "sordid.")

### The Nations of Gaul

Gallia est omnis dīvisa in partēs trēs, quārum ūnam incolunt Belgae, aliam Aquītānī, tertiam quī ipsōrum linguā Celtae, nostrā Gallī appellantur. Hī omnēs linguā, institūtīs, lēgibus inter sē differunt. Gallōs ab Aquītānis Garumna flūmen, ā Belgīs Matrona et Sequana dīvidit. Hōrum omnium fortissimī sunt Belgae.

\*Caesar *B. Gall.* 1.1: Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.), politician, author, military commander, and ultimately dictator, remains one of the best known of all ancient Romans—not least because of the extensive memoirs he wrote on his military campaigns as gover-



*Bust of Julius Caesar*  
 Museo Pio Clementino,  
 Vatican Museums, Vatican State

nor of the Roman province of Gaul, titled the *Bellum Gallicum*, and on his subsequent conflict with Pompey and his supporters in Rome's civil wars, the *Bellum Civile*. The passage included here is drawn directly from the opening of the earlier work, which he begins by describing something of the geography and ethnography of the tribes of Gaul.—The places and peoples mentioned: Gaul, the *Belgae*, the *Aquitani*, the *Celts* or *Gauls*, and the rivers *Garonne*, *Marne*, and *Seine* (see Map 2).—*dividō, -ere, -vīsī, -vīsum*, to *divide, separate*; “dividend,” “divisible.”—*incolō, -ere, -vīsī, -vīsum*, to *inhabit*; *Belgae, Aquitānī, and (eī) quī* are all subjects of *incolunt*.—*ipsōrum linguā = linguā suā*.—*nostrā*: sc. *linguā*.—*īnstitūtum, -ī, n.*, *custom, institution*; “institute,” “institutionalize.”—*linguā, īnstitūtis, lēgibus*: ABL. OF RESPECT OR SPECIFICATION, *in (respect to their) language, . . .*—*differō = Eng.*; “difference,” “differential.”

**QVAESTIŌ:** Caesar's writing was often characterized by its direct language and succinctness; how does this excerpt typify those aspects of his style?

### The Good Life

*Haec sunt, amīce iūcundissime, quae vītam faciunt beātīorem: rēs nōn facta labōre sed ā patre relicta, ager fēlix, parvum forī et satis ōtīi, mēns aequa, vīrēs et corpus sānum, sapientia, amīcī vērī, sine arte mēnsa, nox nōn ebria sed solūta cūrīs, nōn trīstis torus et tamen pudicus, somnus facilis. Dēsīderā tantum quod habēs, cupe nihil; nōlī timēre ultimum diem aut spērāre.*

*Martial Epig. 10.47:* In this prose adaptation from one of his longer *Epigrams*, Martial shares with a friend his views of what makes for a happy life.—*rēs*: here *property, wealth*.—*ā patre relicta*: i.e., *inherited*.—*forī*: i.e., the *hustle-bustle of the business world* (the same sense of the word seen in S.A. 7 above); here gen. of the whole with *parvum*.—*arte*: here = *ostentation, pretentiousness*.—*ebrius, -a, -um, drunken*; “*inebriated*.”—*solvō, -ere, solvī, solūtum, to loosen, free (from)*; “*solve, “absolve*.”—*torus, -ī, m., bed*; “*torus*.”—*nōlī*: imperat. regularly used with an infin. for a negative command, *do not. . .*

**QVAESTIŌNĒS:** Literal translations often do not convey a writer's intent; how might you paraphrase this list of desiderata, in order to clarify Martial's meaning? Which one of his objectives is inconsonant with America's conventional “work ethic”?

### SCRĪPTA IN PARIETIBVS

Prīma, domina.

*CIL 4.8241:* Proprietors' names were often posted on their shops, as in the case of this inn or tavern (*caupōna*), situated adjacent to a small house in Reg. I, Ins. 10.—*Prīma*: ordi-