

LATIN METER II: HORACE

by Michael Hendry

Horace's odes are mostly written in stanzas of four lines, and all but one (4.8) are written in multiples of four lines, even when the meter repeats every line or every two lines.

1. AEOLIC METERS

These are Horace's favorite meters, borrowed from the Greek poets Sappho and Alcaeus, after whom they are named. They lived on Lesbos in the sixth century B.C. and wrote in the Aeolic dialect of Greek. The indentations will help you to recognize them. The Greater Sapphic is a rare variation on the Sapphic: the longer line is just a Sapphic line with an extra choriamb.

Alcaic:

$$\begin{array}{l} \underline{u} - u - - | - uu - u - \underline{u} \\ \underline{u} - u - - | - uu - u - \underline{u} \\ \underline{u} - u - - - u - \underline{u} \\ - u u - u u - u - \underline{u} \end{array}$$

Sapphic:

$$\begin{array}{l} - u - - - | uu - u - \underline{u} \\ - u - - - | uu - u - \underline{u} \\ - u - - - | uu - u - \underline{u} \\ - u u - \underline{u} \end{array}$$

Greater Sapphic:

$$\begin{array}{l} - u u - u - \underline{u} \\ - u - - - | uu - | - u u - u - \underline{u} \end{array}$$

Horace uses these meters in the following poems:

	Alcaic	Sapphic	GrSp
I	9, 16-17, 26-27, 29, 31, 34-35, 37	2, 10, 12, 20, 22, 25, 30, 32, 38	8
II	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13-15, 17, 19-20	2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 16	
III	1-6, 17, 21, 23, 26, 29	8, 11, 14, 18, 20, 22, 27	
IV	4, 9, 14-15	2, 6, 11	

2. ASCLEPIADEAN METERS

There are four 'Asclepiadean' lines, but the differences are minor. The first three consist of a spondee at the beginning, an iamb at the end, and either one, two or three choriamb in between. The fourth is the same as the first, but one syllable shorter. (As with Sapphics and Alcaics, these are named after the Greek poets who invented them.)

