

Quintus Titurius Sabinus: A Comparison of Blame and Praise in Books Two, Three, and
Five of Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum*

The frantic debate and subsequent debacle of Caesar's legates, Quintus Titurius Sabinus and Lucius Aurunculeius Cotta in Book Five of the *Bellum Gallicum*, are now studied by Latin students every year in the Advanced Placement curriculum. It is well known that in Book Five Caesar blames the Roman disaster on Sabinus and his seemingly reckless Gallic gullibility, however, the events of 54 B.C. are not the first time that this lieutenant is mentioned in the *BG*.

Caesar comments about Titurius Sabinus in three separate instances within the *BG*, each with an extreme variance of command ability and literary length dedicated to his actions, ascribing both blame and praise to him. In Book Two, Sabinus sees the enemy close at hand and prudently acts in conjunction with Caesar's orders ([*Caesar*] *certior factus ab Titurio*), while in Book Three he appears to display timidity and indecisiveness (*tantamque opinionem timoris praebeuit*) in an overly convincing ruse to the enemy and even his own men, then exhorts his soldiers (*suos hortatus*) to victory when his camp is attacked. Caesar disparagingly remarks on Sabinus' leadership, yet he subsequently also commends the actions of his lieutenant, an assessment that seems contradictory within the passage itself. These actions of Sabinus as a competent and brave lieutenant are also in contrast to Book Five, where he shrieks in panic (*clamitabit*) to Cotta and his general staff as they argue the proper course of action in the face of fear. In order to understand these discrepancies, a distinction must be made between Sabinus' decisions versus how and when Caesar reported them. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is two-fold: first, by comparing and expanding upon T. P. Wiseman, Max

Radin and Kathryn Welch's conclusions, I intend to show that Caesar's portrayal of Sabinus' ability to command in Books Two and Three, compared to his panicked reasoning in Book Five, was influenced by the date of the *BG*'s composition. In addition, I will analyze the inconsistent account of Sabinus' command within *BG* 3.17-19, and show how Caesar lays the literary groundwork for Sabinus' eviscerating portrayal later in Book Five when he, Cotta, and his legionaries were ambushed.

Bibliography

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