



[Horace, Odes IV.14.1-52](#)

Drusus and Tiberius and the superiority of Imperial Rome

Name of the author: Horace

Date: 15 BCE

Place: Rome

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Literary genre: Poetry

Title of work: Odes

Reference:

IV.14.1-52

Commentary:

This passage was written in celebration of Tiberius's victory over the Vindelici (a Celtic tribe) in 15 BCE, and complements *Ode* IV.14 to Drusus, the emperor's stepson, who is acknowledged in verses 14 and 29 of the present *Ode*. However, it is addressed to Augustus, and he is clearly the focus. Horace begins by announcing that the Senate (*patres*) and the people of Rome, referred to here as Quirites in reference to Quirinus, the title given to Romulus on his deification, will immortalise Augustus's virtues in celebration of the defeat of the Vindelici. Titles (such as *Augustus*, *divi filius*, *princeps*) and memorial plaques will be lavished upon the emperor, and the entire inhabited world (the *oikoumene*) will know of Rome's power and laws (verses 3-8), which Tiberius and Drusus's campaigns of 15 BCE enforced. As far as Horace and his fellow Romans are concerned, those lacking in Roman law are barbaric and unruly. While Augustus was not personally involved in these campaigns in the field, as verse 9 makes clear, the armies were still under his imperial command, and so the ultimate glory belonged to him. This is reinforced in verse 16, which speaks of the favourable omens behind Tiberius and Drusus in battle, the phrase *auspiciis...secundis* reminding that the omens ultimately belong to Augustus – the young Neros are merely acting under him. Indeed, it was under his authority that Drusus and Tiberius defeated the Genauni, Breuni, and Raeti (tribes from the Tyrolean Alps on the River Inn), who are all described as formidable foes with strong defences (verses 9-15). The Rhaetians are described as *immanis* (savage, wild), which corroborates Strabo's description of this tribe, said to murder all male captives of captured towns, even children and women pregnant with males (according to their seers). Tiberius "mows" down the barbarian troops, completely wrecking their defences without suffering any casualties in his own army, but once again, his victory is credited to Augustus, to whom belong the victory, the troops, and friendly onlooking gods (verses 31-34) (on the inferiority of Tiberius and Drusus, see Richard Lyne, *Horace: Behind the Public Poetry*, p. 201). Augustus had taken Alexandria from Cleopatra's rule fifteen years prior, and since this date, Horace claims, the goddess Fortune has continued to grant the ruler successful imperial military campaigns (35-40). Just as Tacitus will do later on (*Histories* I.1), Horace sees the Battle of Actium as a pivotal point in history. This success is now supported by a list of barbarian peoples (Parthians/Medes, Indians, Scythians) who marvel at Rome's military might and Augustus's far-reaching power – even the rivers and oceans themselves are in awe, and the fierce Iberians, Gauls, and Sygagri (Germans defeated in a personal campaign by Augustus and Tiberius after their encroachment into northern Gaul) can do nothing but put down their weapons and worship the *princeps* (verses 41-52). As is highlighted by Ellen Oliensis, verse 43 describes Augustus as a guardian who is *praesens*, a term often used of a god that is "present" and offering assistance (Horace uses this notion of Augustus in [Ode III.5.2](#)) (see Ellen Oliensis, *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*, p. 151). Richard Thomas suggests that the term *praesens* may in this instance emphasise that Augustus is still living, i.e. it is prior to his deification (see *Horace: Odes Book IV*, p. 257).

Keywords in the original language:

- [Alexandrea](#)



- [Augustus](#)
- [auspicium](#)
- [barbarus](#)
- [bellum](#)
- [Britanni](#)
- [Dauni](#)
- [Drusus](#)
- [fortuna](#)
- [Gallia](#)
- [gens](#)
- [Hister](#)
- [honor](#)
- [imperium](#)
- [Indi](#)
- [Italia](#)
- [Latinus](#)
- [Medi](#)
- [miles](#)
- [Nilus](#)
- [pater](#)
- [princeps](#)
- [Quirites](#)
- [Roma](#)
- [Scythae](#)
- [Tigris](#)
- [titulus](#)
- [victor](#)
- [virtus](#)

Thematic keywords in English:

- [Alexandria](#)
- [Augustus](#)
- [barbarians](#)
- [Britain](#)
- [citizen](#)
- [Danube](#)
- [Drusus](#)
- [fame](#)
- [Fortune](#)
- [Gaul](#)
- [glory](#)
- [honor](#)
- [imperialism](#)
- [Indians](#)
- [king Daunus](#)
- [Medes](#)
- [Nile](#)
- [omen](#)
- [prince](#)
- [Roman army](#)
- [Roman law](#)
- [Scythians](#)
- [senate](#)
- [Spaniards](#)
- [Tiberius](#)
- [Tigris](#)
- [war](#)



Bibliographical references: Oliensis, Ellen, [*Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
Lyne, Richard O. M., [*Horace: Behind the Public Poetry*](#) (London: Yale University Press, 1995)
Thomas, Richard F., [*Horace: Odes Book IV and Carmen Saeculare*](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
Garrison, Daniel H., [*Horace: Epodes and Odes: A New Annotated Latin Edition*](#) (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991)

Other sources connected with this document: Text

[Horace, Odes III.5.1-56](#)

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