

Aeneid Book VI Analysis 3: More Scansion:caesura



The final step in scanning a hexameter line is to mark the caesura. This is the break between two words that falls usually in the third foot but sometimes in the fourth foot. Look at the line we scanned in the previous lesson:

pāndērĕ | rēs āl | tā tēr(ra) | ēt cā | līgīnĕ | mērsas

There is a break between two words in the third foot so mark that as the caesura.

pāndērĕ | rēs āl | tā | | tēr(ra) | ēt cā | līgīnĕ | mērsas

Now you can do the whole thing! Let's do another line for practice:

Di, quibus imperium est animarum, mbraeque silentes

Do we need to elide any syllables? Yes:

Di, quibus imperi(um) est animarum, mbraeque silentes

Now find the fifth and sixth feet by counting backwards from the end to find the last five syllables which will have the pattern: $\bar{\quad} \sim \sim | \bar{\quad} (\sim)$ NB:- *mbrae* is one syllable!

Di, quibus imperi(um) est animarum, | mbrāeq̄e sī | lēntes

Any diphthongs in the rest of the line? No.

Any vowels before two consonants? Yes *imp* and *est*.

Dī, quibus īmperi(um) ēst animarum, | mbrāeq̄e sī | lēntes

Any pairs of vowels that are not diphthongs? No.

Any final *a*'s that are ablative singular first declension words? No.

Final *i*'s or *o*'s? Yes *Di*. Which does not help us much as the first syllable is always long anyway!

Dī, quibus īmperi(um) ēst animarum, | mbrāeq̄e sī | lēntes

How many syllables are there in the first four feet? 11.

So there will be three dactyls and **one** spondee.

The first foot cannot be the spondee unless the second foot is also a spondee.¹ However, both cannot be spondees since there is only **one** spondee. Therefore we have:

Dī, qūibūs | īmpēri(um) ēst animarum, | mbrāeqūe sī | lēntes

In the same way, if the second foot is the spondee the long syllable *ēst* would have to form the second half of another spondee – but we know there is only **one**. Therefore the next foot must be a dactyl:

Dī, qūibūs | īmpērī | (um)ēst animarum, | mbrāeqūe sī | lēntes

This leaves *ēst animarum* to be divided into two feet either dactyl - spondee or spondee – dactyl. I cannot find anything in the rules that helps with this. Saying the words over (to me at any rate) makes dactyl spondee sound correct. The Caesura can then be marked between the words *est* and *animarum*. Checking with *Pedecerto* <http://www.pedecerto.eu/public/scansioni/scansioni> reveals that this is correct:

Dī, qūibūs | īmpērī | (um)ēst | | ānīm | ārūm, | mbrāeqūe sī | lēntes

Try some more lines yourself from the current syllabus and check your answers with *Pedecerto*.

¹Because *im* is long and if the first syllable was a spondee *bus* would have to be the first syllable of the next foot (and so long) with *imp* as the (long) second syllable making a spondee.