

NOX LEPORIS (“Night of the Lepus”): Latin Participles & Their Translation

FABULA

canis ingēns leporem parvum caudā pulsāvit.
cum irā, lepus canem momordit. Brūtus ea vīdit
et in agrum cucurrit; leporem pulsāre cupīvit.
canis, dum lepus spectāvit, ex agrō fūgit. lepus
Brūtum momordit. iste tyrannus mordendus erat!

PLOT

A big dog struck a little bunny with her tail.
Angrily, the bunny bit the dog. Brutus saw these
things and ran into the field; he wanted to beat
the bunny. The dog, as the bunny watched, fled
out of the field. The bunny bit Brutus. Serve him
right, the bully!

PASSIVE PERFECT

The participle agrees with the person or thing *to whom* the action has been done; the action is finished at the time of the main verb. The person *by whom* the action is done, if expressed, is expressed by the prepositional phrase a (+ ablative).

lepus, caudā pulsātus, magnam canem momordit. The bunny, struck (in a state of having been struck) by the tail, bit the big dog.

PRESENT ACTIVE

The participle agrees with the person *doing* the action; the action is ongoing at the time of the main verb; the participle can take a direct object (the person or thing the action is done to). Translate the participle as “VERBing.”

Brūtus parvum leporem magnam canem
mordentem in agrō vīdit.

Brutus saw the little bunny biting the big dog in
the field.

FUTURE ACTIVE

The participle agrees with the person *going to do* the action; the action has not yet happened at the time of the main verb; the participle can take a direct object (the person or thing the action is done to). Translate the participle as “going to VERB/about to VERB.”

Brūtus leporem pulsātūrus in agrum cucurrit.

Brutus, about to beat the bunny, ran into the
field.

FUTURE PASSIVE

The participle indicates that the action *ought to be done to* the person or thing it agrees with; the action has not yet happened at the time of the main verb (and may never happen). The person who ought to do the action is expressed by the dative of agent (without a preposition). Translate the participle as “must be VERBed/ought to be VERBed.”

Brutus: “Iste lepus mihi pulsandus est!”

Brutus: “That dang bunny ought to be beaten (is in a state of having to be beaten) by me.”

SUMMARY

lepus, *morsūrus* Brutum (**dīcentem** “Iste lepus mihi PULSANDUS est!”), vīdit canem MORSAM ex agrō fūgisce.

The bunny, *who was about to bite* Brutus (**who was saying**, “That dang rabbit OUGHT TO BE BEATEN by me!”), saw that the BITTEN dog had fled out of the field.