

Appendix II: Colors

amber ēléctric·us -a -um

black: dull black ā·ter -tra -trum;
glossy black ni·ger -gra -grum;
pitch-black píce·us -a -um

beige flávid·us -a -um

blond flāv·us -a -um

blue: azure blue vénet·us -a -um; **dark blue** cýāne·us -a -um; **leaden blue** lívid·us -a -um; **sky-blue** caerúle·us -a -um (*esp. of eyes*)

bluish subcaerúle·us -a -um

bluish gray caési·us -a -um (*often referred by the Romans to blue eyes*)

brown fulv·us -a -um (*ranging from dull yellow to reddish brown; applied to hair, wine, sand, gold, stars, jasper*); **bright brown** spādíce·us -a -um; **dark brown** fusc·us -a -um [**Note:** brúnne·us -a -um is of Germanic origin.]

chartreuse chlōrín·us -a -um

chestnut spād·īx -ícis; bádi·us -a -um (*applied to horses only*)

color col·or -óris *m*; **to color** colōráre

cream-colored ebúrne·us -a -um

crimson coccíne·us -a -um

dark colored pull·us -a -um

dun-colored gilv·us -a -um (*ranging from almost neutral brownish gray to dull grayish brown, applied to horses*)

flame-colored flámme·us -a -um

flesh-colored cárne·us -a -um

golden auréol·us -a -um; aúre·us -a -um (*applied to hair*)

gray: ash-gray cinére·us -a -um; **dark gray** pull·us -a -um; **light gray** cān·us -a -um (*esp. hair*); **to be gray** cáneō -ére -uī; **to become gray** cānēsc·ō -ere; **to be gray-haired** cānō cápite esse

grayish cānēsc·ēns -éntis

green vírid·is -is -e (*most common term; vir·ēns -éntis, virídul·us -a -um, are shades of this*); **bright grass green** prásin·us -a -um; **emerald green** smarágdin·us -a -um; **grass green** herbáce·us -a -um; **olive green** oleváce·us -a -um; **(deep) sea green** vénet·us -a -um; **(light) sea green** glauc·us -a -um (*a dull green, passing into graying blue*); **very green** pervírid·is -is -e; **to be green** (*of green foliage*) vír·eō -ére -uī; (*of things growing*) vir·ēns -éntis, vírid·ēns -éntis; **to become green** virēsc·ō -ere

greenish subvírid·is -is -e

hazel (*light to strong brown*) fulv·us -a -um; (*strong brown*) spād·īx -ícis

lavander lavanduláce·us -a -um; (*pale blue, with a slight mixture of gray*) caési·us -a -um

mauve violáce·us -a -um

ochre siláce·us -a -im

orange auránti·us -a -um, lúte·us -a -um; **dull orange** armeníac·us -a -um (*apricot-color*)

pink róse·us -a -um, pūnice·us -a -um

pinkish subróse·us -a -um

purple (*dull red with a slight dash of blue*) purpúre·us -a -um [*purpura was originally the name of the shell fish itself; later the name of the dye.*]

This varied according to the shellfish used and the processing applied. The epithet purpúreus came to cover various red colors; now it embraces colors between red and violet: purple, scarlet, crimson, rosy red)

red rūf·us -a -um (*all shades*); ru·ber -bra -brum (*common term for any pure red*); **blood red** sanguíne·us -a -um; **bright red** rútil·us -a -um; **cardinal-red** cardinál·is -is -e; **dark red** rúbid·us -a -um; **cherry-red** cerásin·us -a -um; **deep red** coccíne·us -a -um; **pure lively red** phoeníce·us -a -um, pūníce·us -a -um

reddish súbru·ber -bra -brum, rubéll·us -a -um; subrúf·us -a -um, rúful·us -a -um (*of hair*); rubicúnd·us -a -um (*of the skin: flushed*)

rust-colored rubiginós·us -a -um

sandy (hair) fulv·us -a -um

scarlet miniát·us -a -um; **dull scarlet** phoeníce·us -a -um

silvery argénte·us -a -um

snow-white *see white*

strawberry-blond fulv·us -a -um

tan fulv·us -a -um

tawny fulv·us -a -um (*dull yellow, with a mixture of gray and brown*); cervín·us -a -um (*is a darker shade of it*)

turquoise túric·us -a -um

vermilion coccíne·us -a -um, miniát·us -a -um

violet violáce·us -a -um

white: dead white alb·us -a -um; **dull white** crētáce·us -a -um; **shiny white** cándid·us -a -um; **snow-white** níve·us -a -um (*the purest white*)

whitish subálb·us -a -um, álbul·us -a -um, subálbid·us -a -um

yellow flāv·us -a -um (*commonest term, a pale yellow*); **deep yellow** (*like egg yolk*) lúte·us -a -um or vitellín·us -a -um; **golden yellow** aúre·us -a -um; **lemon yellow** cítre·us -a -um (*purest yellow, without any brightness*); **pale yellow** gilv·us or gilb·us -a -um, lútéol·us -a -um

yellowish flávidus -a -um; subflāv·us -a -um (*of hair, approaching blond*)

yellowish gray rāv·us -a -um

yellowish orange gilv·us -a -um

[**Note**—The prefix sub- means “somewhat”, “almost” and can often be rendered by the English suffix “-ish.” Thus, **albus** means “white” and **subálbus** means “whitish.”

The vagueness of Latin color terms is due to the origin of colors out of dyestuff and pigments. The colors of minerals vary, and dyes produce different effects according to the mode of preparation and the materials dyed. Their applications have to be guessed from literary sources, which for the most part are incidental and vague. Color names used by poets tend to be applied metaphorically or indefinitely.

To get a better idea of how the Romans applied color terms, it is necessary to cite the objects to which colors were attached. For example, when Horace describes Augustus as being transformed into a god, he speaks of the lips of the deified Augustus as **purpúreus**, indicating his health. **Purpúreus**, at least there, is crimson, not purple.]

When asking what color something is, the Romans used either the genitive or ablative of description; e.g.

What color is the house? Quō colóre est domus tua?
or Cuius colóris est domus tua?