



National
Qualifications

**Latin
Prescribed Text
Ovid Metamorphoses IV and VIII**

For use in National Qualifications
Latin (Higher)

Valid from August 2014

This edition: August 2015 (version 2.0)

Publication code: BB6904

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Ovid Metamorphoses IV and VIII

Metamorphoses IV – The Story of Pyramus and Thisbe

Extract 1

In English

Pyramus and Thisbe, he the most handsome of young men, she the most desirable girl in the East, lived next door to each other in the towering city of Babylon that Semiramis is said to have surrounded with brick walls. Being neighbours, their first childhood steps brought them together and in time their love grew. They would have married too, but their parents said no. They were both on fire with love for each other, something no parent can forbid. There was no one they could confide this to; they communicated by nods and signs, and the more it was hidden, the more the fire of love burned.

Extract 2

In Latin

fissus erat tenui rima, quam duxerat olim,
cum fieret, paries domui communis utrique.
id vitium nulli per saecula longa notatum.
quid non sentit amor? primi vidistis amantes
5 et vocis fecistis iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant.
saepe, ubi constiterant hinc Thisbe, Pyramus illinc,
inque vices fuerat captatus anhelitus oris,
“invide” dicebant “paries, quid amantibus obstas?
10 quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi
aut, hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?
nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur,
quod datus est verbis ad amicas transitus aures.”

taliter diversa nequiquam sede locuti
15 sub noctem dixere “vale” partique dedere
oscula quisque suae non pervenientia contra.
postera nocturnos Aurora removerat ignes,
solque pruinosas radiis siccaverat herbas:
ad solitum coiere locum. tum murmure parvo
20 multa prius questi statuunt, ut nocte silent,
fallere custodes foribusque excedere temptent,
cumque domo exierint, urbis quoque tecta relinquunt,
neve sit errandum lato spatiantibus arvo,
convenient ad busta Nini lateantque sub umbra
25 arboris: arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis,
ardua morus erat, gelido contermina fonti.
pacta placent; et lux, tarde discedere visa,
praecipitatur aquis, et aquis nox exit ab isdem.

callida per tenebras versato cardine Thisbe
30 egreditur fallitque suos adopertaque vultum
pervenit ad tumulum dictaque sub arbore sedit.
audacem faciebat amor. venit ecce recenti
caede leaena boum spumantis oblita rictus
depositura sitim vicini fontis in unda.

Thisbe sees the lion and hides in a cave, leaving her scarf behind. The lion picks it up in its bloody mouth, but drops it. When Pyramus arrives at the tree he sees the lion's tracks and the blood-stained scarf. He jumps to the conclusion that the lion has killed Thisbe and blames himself. In tears, he decides to kill himself.

Extract 3

In Latin

- quoque erat accinctus, demisit in ilia ferrum,
nec mora, ferventi moriens e vulnere traxit.
ut iacuit resupinus humo, cruor emicat alte,
non aliter quam cum vitiato fistula plumbo
5 scinditur et tenui stridente foramine longas
eiaculatur aquas atque ictibus aera rumpit.
arborei fetus adspergine caedis in atram
vertuntur faciem, madefactaque sanguine radix
purpureo tinguit pendentia mora colore.
- 10 ecce metu nondum posito, ne fallat amantem,
illa redit iuvenemque oculis animoque requirit,
quantaque vitarit narrare pericula gestit;
utque locum et visa cognoscit in arbore formam,
sic facit incertam pomi color: haeret, an haec sit.
- 15 dum dubitat, tremebunda videt pulsare cruentum
membra solum, retroque pedem tulit, oraque buxo
pallidiora gerens exhorruit aequoris instar,
quod tremit, exigua cum summum stringitur aura.
sed postquam remorata suos cognovit amores,
- 20 percutit indignos claro plangore lacertos
et laniata comas amplexaque corpus amatum
vulnera supplevit lacrimis fletumque cruori
miscuit et gelidis in vultibus oscula figens
“Pyrame,” clamavit, “quis te mihi casus ademit?”
- 25 Pyrame, responde! tua te carissima Thisbe
nominat; exaudi vultusque attolle iacentes!”
ad nomen Thisbes oculos a morte gravatos
Pyramus erexit visaque recondidit illa.

Extract 4

In English

When she recognised her scarf and saw the ivory scabbard was empty, without its sword, she said, “Poor boy, your own hand and your love have destroyed you! I too have a hand strong enough for the one thing I have to do, and I too have the love which will give me the strength to make the

5 wound. I shall follow you in death, and they will say I was the most unhappy companion and cause of your fate. You, who could only be taken from me by death, death cannot take away. Nevertheless I ask this for both of us, O our poor parents, mine and his, do not deny us, whom certain love and the final

10 hour have joined, the right to be laid in one tomb. And you, the tree that now covers one poor body with your branches, and soon will cover two, always keep the signs of our death, and bear fruit in a dark, mournful colour, a reminder of the blood we have both shed.” Saying this she placed the point beneath her breast and fell forward onto the blade, still warm with his blood. Her prayer touched the gods, and touched her parents too;

15 the colour of the berry when fully ripe is dark purple and what was left from the funeral pyres rests in a single urn.

Metamorphoses VIII – The Story of Baucis and Philemon

Extract 5

In English

Not far from there is a swamp, once habitable land but now a stretch of water, the home of diving-birds and marsh-loving coots. Jupiter came here, disguised as a mortal, and Mercury, the descendant of Atlas, put aside his wings and accompanied his father, carrying the caduceus. They approached

5 a thousand houses, looking for a place to rest: a thousand houses were bolted and barred. But one took them in. It was indeed humble, roofed with thatch and reeds from the marsh, but god-fearing Baucis, and Philemon who was the same age, had been married in that cottage when they were young, and they had grown old together there. They made light of poverty

10 by admitting it, and bearing it contentedly. It was no matter there if you asked for owner or servant: the two were the whole household. The same people gave the orders and carried them out equally.

Extract 6

In Latin

ergo ubi caelicolae parvos tetigere penates
summissoque humiles intrarunt vertice postes,
membra senex posito iussit relevare sedili;
cui superiniecit textum rude sedula Baucis
5 inque foco tepidum cinerem dimovit et ignes
suscitat hesternos foliisque et cortice sicco
nutrit et ad flammam anima producit anili
multifidasque faces ramaliaque arida tecto
detulit et minuit parvoque admovit aeno,
10 quodque suus coniunx riguo conlegerat horto,
truncat holus foliis; furca levat ille bicorni
sordida terga suis nigro pendentia tigno
servatoque diu resecat de tergore partem
exiguam sectamque domat ferventibus undis.

The hosts set to work making their guests comfortable, by turning a mattress into a couch.

Extract 7

In Latin

adcubere dei. mensam succincta tremensque
ponit anus, mensae sed erat pes tertius impar:
testa parem fecit; quae postquam subdita clivum
sustulit, aequatam mentae tersere virentes.
5 ponitur hic bicolor sinceræ baca Minervæ
conditaque in liquida corna autumnalia faece
intibaque et radix et lactis massa coacti
ovaque non acri leviter versata favilla,
omnia fictilibus. post haec caelatus eodem
10 sistitur argento crater fabricataque fago
pocula, qua cava sunt, flaventibus inlita ceris;
parva mora est, epulasque foci misere calentes,
nec longae rursus referuntur vina senectae
dantque locum mensis paulum seducta secundis:
15 hic nux, hic mixta est rugosis carica palmis
prunaque et in patulis redolentia mala canistris
et de purpureis conlectae vitibus uvae,
candidus in medio favus est; super omnia vultus
accessere boni nec iners pauperque voluntas.

Extract 8

In English

Meanwhile they noticed that whenever the mixing bowl was empty it refilled itself unaided, and the wine appeared of its own accord. Amazed by this new event they were afraid, and with their palms upwards Baucis and Philemon timidly uttered a prayer, and begged forgiveness for the meal and their unpreparedness. They had a single goose, the guard for their tiny cottage: as hosts they prepared to sacrifice it for their divine guests. But, quick-winged, it wore them out as they were old and slow, and for a long time it escaped them. At last it appeared to take refuge with the gods themselves, who told them not to kill it. “We are gods,” they said, “and this godless neighbourhood will get the punishment it deserves, but you will be given immunity from that evil. You must leave your house, and accompany us as we climb that steep mountainside together.” They both obeyed, and leaning on their sticks to ease their climb, they struggled up the long slope. When they were as far from the summit as a bowshot might carry, they looked round and saw everywhere else drowned in the swamp; only their own home remained. And while they stared in amazement at this, weeping for their neighbours’ fate, their old cottage, tiny even for two, turned into a temple. Columns took the place of pillars, and the thatch grew yellow until the roof appeared golden, the doors richly carved, and a marble pavement covered the ground.

Extract 9

In Latin

talia tum placido Saturnius edidit ore:
“dicite, iuste senex et femina coniuge iusto
digna, quid optetis.” cum Baucide pauca locutus
iudicium superis aperit commune Philemon:
5 “esse sacerdotes delubraque vestra tueri
poscimus, et quoniam concordēs egimus annos,
auferat hora duos eadem, nec coniugis umquam
busta meae videam, neu sim tumulandus ab illa.”
vota fides sequitur: templi tutela fuere,
10 donec vita data est; annis aevoque soluti
ante gradus sacros cum starent forte locique
narrarent casus, frondere Philemona Baucis,
Baucida conspexit senior frondere Philemon.

iamque super geminos crescente cacumine vultus
15 mutua, dum licuit, reddebant dicta “vale” que
“o coniunx” dixere simul, simul abdita textit
ora frutex: ostendit adhuc Thyneius illic
incola de gemino vicinos corpore truncos.
haec mihi non vani (neque erat, cur fallere vellent)
20 narravere senes; equidem pendentia vidi
serta super ramos ponensque recentia dixi
“cura deum di sint, et, qui coluere, colantur.”

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