**Getting to know Primigenia**

CIL 4 10241   (Sepulcrum #22)

Primigeniae / Nucer(inae) sal(utem). /

Vellem essem gemma (h)ora(m?) non amplius una(m?), /

Ut tibi signanti oscula missa darem

We like this graffito because it provides access to a lot of interesting potential class discussions

and connections to multiple other relevant graffiti. Some examples are listed below:

Written in Pompeii to someone referred to as ‘Nucerian’, the inscription raises interesting questions about travel in the Roman world (Nuceria is one of the closest towns to Pompeii in the region). The poem also references signet rings in the author’s metaphorical wish, offering a convenient avenue for the teacher to address the significance of the signet ring in Roman social, political, and business culture as both a tool and marker of social status. The poem has heavy echoes of a line from Ovid’s Ars Armatoria III 223 (and we see similar riffs on this line in other graffiti in Pompeii). These graffiti could be introduced to students together as a way of prompting a conversation about the degree and type of readership of Ovid’s poems and the impact/value they may have held for the contemporary Roman. Finally, this poem could be linked with other graffiti from Pompeii which makes reference to the name “Primagenia” (with at least one sharing the same connection of location (Nuceria). The teacher could share multiple of these graffiti with students and promote a discussion revolving around how these different graffiti might tell a story about this ancient Roman woman, and about whether we should or should not imagine them as all referring to the same person.

Regardless of which aspect of the graffito a teacher discuss with his or her class there are many ancillary project possibilities. Students could compose an historical fiction account of the relationship between Primigenia and her lover in Latin or write a comparable graffito in English (referencing a well-known modern piece of literature or lyric). Students could also design their own signet ring or even plot out a potential journey from Pompeii to Nuceria using ORBIS ([http://orbis.stanford.edu/](http://orbis.stanford.edu/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)).

Related graffiti:

CIL 04, 8356: 2nd Nucerian Primigenia

10676: Hemeros to Primigenia

8769: Pittiacus cum Primagenia

8770 Primagenia cum Prima

7464 Primagenia election poster

3905 Hirtia Suae Primageniae

Regio I 01698 Pompeii:  Gemma(m) velim fieri hora non(a)