

The Ancient Graffiti Project

(ancientgraffiti.org)

Featured Graffiti: Warm-Up Activities

Poetry

The following graffiti are found at: <http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/themes/Poetry>

AGP-EDR175604: Vergil's *Aeneid* 1.1

(A)rma virumque cano
Troiae qui primus ab oris

I sing of arms and a man
who first from the shores of Troy

- If possible, project the image of the original graffito on the board, or print out for students. Have students use the paleographic alphabet conventions to see if they can figure out the letters of the graffito.
- What does the fact that this line of poetry was scratched onto the wall here and in many other places (CIL IV 1282, 2361, 3198, 4757, 5002, 5337, 7131, 8416, 8831, 10059, 10086) tell us about this line of poetry and its place in the ancient world?

AGP-EDR072663: A play on Vergil's *Aeneid* 1.1

Fullones ululamque cano
non arma virumque

I sing of dry-cleaners and an owl
not arms and a man

- What is a fullo?
- Why was an owl used as the symbol of a fullo?
- How is this line different from and similar to Vergil's *Aeneid* 1.1?
- Challenge your students to come up with their own play on this line of poetry in Latin.
- You could also project the mural of the fullo with the owl from Pompeii (now in the Naples museum).

AGP-EDR175605: Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 1.9.1

militat omnis (amans)

Every lover is a soldier

- Like Vergil, Ovid was another poet often quoted in graffiti. What does this tell you about Ovid?

- What do you think Ovid means by saying, “Every lover is a soldier”?
- This poem, *Ars Amatoria*, was published around 1 BCE. In 1983, Pat Benatar sang “Love is a Battlefield.” Can you think of any other poems or songs where being in love is compared to being a soldier or being in battle?

AGP-EDR168646: Unknown poet

(Quis)quis amat valeat.

Pereat qui nescit amare.

Bis tanto pereat quisquis amare vetat.
over.

Whoever loves, may they be well.

May he perish, whoever knows not how to love.

Whoever forbids love, may he perish twice

- How does the writer of this poem feel about love?
- Do you think the writer is too hard on those who are not as lucky in love?
- How might the tone of this graffiti change if the writer’s relationship fails?
- See CIL IV 1824 for a take on love when things have not gone well.

AGP-EDR175606: Variation on a popular poem

Quisquis amat veniat.

Veneri volo frangere costas fustibus
et lumbos debilitare deae.

Si potest illa mihi tenerum pertundere
pectus,
quit (cur) ego non possim caput illae
frangere fuste?

Whoever loves, may he come.

I want to break Venus’ ribs with clubs
and incapacitate the goddess’ loins.

If she can pierce my tender heart,
why can’t I break her head with a club?

- Who is the goddess Venus in the Roman world?
- Why has this writer turned on Venus?

See **Featured Graffiti for more topics: <http://ancientgraffiti.org/Graffiti/featured-graffiti>