

## OVIDIAN ACTIVITIES

Western Canon 1 | Brendan Shea, PhD ([Brendan.Shea@rtc.edu](mailto:Brendan.Shea@rtc.edu))

Ovid has been a huge inspiration to many writers and artists over the past few thousand years. He's also been a regular target for censorship by religious and political authorities. In this activity, you'll be doing an "imitation" of Ovid, which you'll then share with your classmates. The general requirements are as follows:

1. You should write at least 300 to 500 words, though it's fine to do more!
2. After you are done, I'd like you to leave at least TWO 50+ word comments for your peers. These should be done within TWO days after the initial post.

Here are the options:

1. **Creation myth.** Write your own "creation myth." Your myth should *somehow* involve supernatural beings, but it's entirely up to you what these beings do, and what their motivations are. You should describe (a) the creation of the physical world and (b) the creation of humans. While you are free to base your story on things we've studied (e.g., it's fine to use the Greek/Roman gods if you'd like), your version shouldn't simply be a copy of these.
2. **Letters.** Write a pretend "letter" addressed from one fictional character to another. Please choose characters covered in this class: Gilgamesh, Odysseus, Achilles, Hector, Medea, Jason, Moses, Noah etc. Gods are fair game. Ovid's "love" letters of this type were addressed from fictional women to their fictional lovers/husbands.
3. **A Pantheon.** Create your OWN pantheon of at least THREE different gods, and describe these gods and their relationships with one another. Each god should have some sort of "domain" of life that they are concerned with, and should have some sort of personality traits. Do your best to really flesh out your pantheon: what are their worshippers like? What role did each play in the creation of the world?
4. **"Epic" Love Poems.** Write a first-person "love" poem detailing a real/fictional relationship. In keeping with the Ovidian theme, you should (a) somehow reference the Greek/Roman gods and (b) make sure there are some embarrassing events for the narrator (which may or may not be the "real" you).
5. **Pyramus and Thisbe.** Write a story based on Pyramus and Thisbe (the inspiration for Romeo and Juliet). You can choose the characters, settings, etc. Just make sure it involves (a) two lovers whose families keep them apart and (b) the characters somehow dying as the result of this. Your story should somehow involve the Greek or Roman gods.
6. **To censor or not.** Write a mock "letter to the school board" or arguing FOR and AGAINST the teaching of Ovid in schools. You should focus on the parts of Ovid most likely to cause offenses (e.g., his poems involving infidelity and sex).
7. **The moral of the story.** Later readers of Ovid (particularly in Medieval Europe) often attempted to find "morals" or "messages" in each of his stories. Choose an Ovidian story, and briefly describe what happens. Now, describe what the "moral" of the story might be. That is, what do you think readers are supposed to learn from this story? Is this good? Bad? Why?