

Ovid – a day at the races – revision notes

Pick out the two adjectives in line 1.

Which adjective describes ego?

Which adjective describes the horses? What does it mean?

Where is the speaker?

Who is he sitting next to?

What is his attitude to chariot-racing?

Why has he come to the Circus?

What age do you think the speaker and the person he is addressing might be?

Which words emphasise that the speaker is focusing all his attention on the woman he is speaking to?

In lines 5-6 what suggestion does Ovid make?

Study lines 5-6. In what way are Ovid and the girl different?

In what way are they similar? Show how Ovid, by his use of language, highlights the similarity and the difference.

In lines 5-6 how does Ovid emphasise the enjoyment which both he and his neighbour feel?

Look at lines 7-8. Ovid describes a charioteer as *fēlīx*. Which charioteer is this and why does Ovid think he is *fēlīx*?

Lines 9-14

Here Ovid is imagining what he would do if he should have the charioteer's good luck.

What does he imagine happening?

Look at lines 9-13. Pick out two details which make the description of the race vivid and exciting. Quote the Latin words and translate them.

Lines 15-18

Who was the praetor? (Or, explain if the students do not already know this.)

What did he do?

Where had the horses been before the praetor sent them out to the track?

Pick out the two-word phrase which describes the track before the horses appeared. Translate it.

What did the spectators think about what they were seeing? (Hint: a two-word phrase tells you this.)

Which word describes the horses? So, what does quadriugōs equōs mean?

Which word describes the starting gate?

How do the horses react to the girl's presence?

Look at lines 15-16. Write down three facts about chariot-racing which are mentioned in these lines.

Look at lines 17-18. Which charioteer is Ovid looking at? How are Ovid's words designed to flatter the girl he is talking to?

How does Ovid's style of writing convey his excitement in lines 17-18?

Lines 23-32

Are the girl's wishes granted?

Are Ovid's wishes granted?

Study lines 30-31. How does Ovid bring out the contrast between himself and the girl he is trying to seduce?

Explain the difference between *sint rata vōta* (line 30) and *sunt rata vōta* (line 31). (You can do this by translation.)

How does the style of writing emphasise the difference?

General questions and activities

Show how Ovid blends reality and fantasy in this poem.

What evidence for chariot-racing is contained in this poem?

How does the style of writing convey a sense of the excitement felt by the crowd watching the chariot race?

Compose your own monologue chatting up a girl (or boy), transposing Ovid's pick-up lines to a more modern situation e.g. a football match or a rock concert. Try to match Ovid's ingenuity.

Imagine you are the girl. Write an account of her response - it could be in the form of a conversation with a friend, a diary entry, or a speech in reply to the young man.