

Martial, Part 2: Issa (I.109)

In a poem written more than one hundred years after Catullus wrote his eulogy for Lesbia's pet sparrow, Martial dries the tears of those who mourn a deceased pet in any century. Issa, the lap-dog of his friend Publius, however, is still very much alive. Although often sharply satirical, Martial's description of this pampered pooch and the adoration of her owner, appears affectionate and sincere. Or is it?

Text and Translation

Issa est passere nequior Catulli,
Issa is naughtier than the sparrow of Catullus,

Issa est purior osculo columbae,
Issa is purer than the kiss of a dove,

Issa est blandior omnibus puellis,
Issa is more seductive than all the girls,

Issa est carior Indicis lapillis,
Issa is more precious than Indian diamonds,

Issa est deliciae catella Publi, 5
Issa is the darling of Publius, his tiny puppy.

Hanc tu, si queritur, loqui putabis.
If she whines, you will think (that) this girl is speaking.

Sentit tristitiamque gaudiumque. . . .
She feels sadness and joy.

et desiderio coacta ventris 10
and (when) compelled by the impulse of her bladder

gutta pallia non fefellit ulla,
not a single drop has befouled the covers,

sed blando pede suscitāt toroque
but with her sweet paw she nudges (you) and from the couch

deponi monet et rogat levari.
forewarns (you) that she needs to be put down and asks to be lifted up.

Castae tantus inest pudor catellae,
There is a very great sense of modesty in this virtuous little puppy,

ignorat Venerem; nec invenimus
she does not know Love; nor do we find

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dignum tam tenerā virum puellā.
a mate worthy of a girl so delicate.

Hanc ne lux rapiat suprema totam,
In order that (her) last day not snatch her altogether,

pictā Publius exprimit tabellā,
Publius portrays (her) in a painted picture,

in quā tam similem videbis Issam,
in which you will see an Issa so similar

ut sit tam similis sibi nec ipsa.
that she herself is not so similar to herself.

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Issam denique pone cum tabellā:
In short, place Issa alongside (her) picture:

aut utramque putabis esse veram,
either you will think that one is real,

aut utramque putabis esse pictam.
Or you will think that the other is painted.

Worksheet - Martial, Part 2: Issa

a. The questions below pertain to the forms underlined in the passage

b. When you're asked to change a word from one form to another, change only **that** form of the word. For instance, if you're asked to change *habet* to the passive voice, make *habet* passive but leave it in the 3rd person singular, present indicative

1. Make **nequior** superlative. _____
2. Make **purior** positive. _____
3. What case is **puellis** and why? _____
4. What case is **carior** and why? _____
5. Make **est** imperfect subjunctive first person plural. _____
6. What mood is **loqui** and why? _____
7. Change **Sentit** to pluperfect subjunctive second person. _____
8. Change **coacta** to present active. _____
9. Make **pallia** genitive. _____
10. Change **fefellit** to a future active participle modifying *gutta*. _____
11. What case is **pede** and why? _____
12. Change **monet** to imperfect subjunctive. _____
13. What mood is **levari** and why? _____
14. Change **tantus...pudor** to ablative plural. _____
15. Change **invenimus** to a future passive participle (acc. pl. neut.) _____
16. What mood is **rapiat** and why? _____

17. Make **quā** modify *Publius*. _____
18. Change **videbis** to a present passive infinitive. _____
19. What mood is **sit** and why? _____
20. Make **ipsa** dative. _____
21. What mood is **pone** and why? _____
22. What case is **tabellā** and why? _____
23. What case is **utramque** and why? _____
24. Change **putabis** to future perfect passive (nom. sing. fem.) _____
25. What case is **pictam** and why? _____

Notes and Vocabulary - Martial, Part 2: Issa

Line Note/ Vocabulary

1. **Issa, -ae, f.:** island in the Adriatic Sea; here, the name of the pet bird
passere: *passer, -eris, m.:* sparrow
nequior: *nequam* (comparative of indeclinable adjective): naughty
Catulli: *Catullus, -i, m.:* Roman poet; see Worksheet for Chapter 25

2. **purior:** *purus, -a, -um:* pure
osculo: *osculum, -i, n.:* kiss (diminutive of *os*, “mouth”)
columbae: *columba, -ae, f.:* dove

3. **blandior:** *blandus, -a, -um:* flattering; here, seductive

4. **carior:** *carus, -a, -um:* dear; here, precious
Indicis: *Indicus, -a, -um:* Indian
lapillis: *lapillus, -i, m.:* little gem (diminutive of *lapis*, “stone”); here, diamond

5. **deliciae:** *deliciae, -arum, f.:* (Latin plural for English singular): darling
catella: *catella, -ae, f.:* little dog (feminine diminutive of *catulus*, “young animal”)
Publi: *Publius, -i, m.:* Roman name

6. **queritur:** *queror, queri, questus sum* (deponent verb): whine
loqui: *loquor, loqui, locutus sum* (deponent verb): speak

7. **tristitiam:** *tristitia, -ae, f.:* sadness
gaudium: *gaudium, -i, n.:* joy

10. **desiderio:** *desiderium, -i, n.:* impulse
coacta: *cogo, -ere, coagi, coactum:* compel
ventris: *venter, ventris, n.:* stomach; here, bladder

11. **gutta:** *gutta, -ae, f.:* drop
pallia: *pallium, -i, n.:* coverlet
fefellit: *fallo, -ere, fefelli, falsum:* deceive; here, befoul
ulla: *ullus, -a, -um:* any; here, a single

12. **blando:** see above, note #3; here, sweet
pede: *pes, pedis, m.:* foot; here, paw
suscitat: *suscito* (1): arouse from sleep; here, nudge
toro: *torus, -i, m.:* couch

13. **deponi:** *depono, -ere, -posui, -positum:* put down

- levari:** *levo* (1): lift up
14. **castae:** *castus, -a, -um*: morally pure; here, virtuous
inest: *insum, inesse, infui* (+ dative): be in
pudor: *pudor, -oris, m.*: sense of modesty
catellae: see above, note #5; dative with *inest*
15. **ignorat:** *ignoro* (1): not to know
Venerem: *Venus, -eris, f.*: goddess of love; here, (sexual) love
nec: (negative particle) not; here, nor
16. **dignum:** *dignus, -a, -um*: worthy
tam: (adverb) so
tener_: *tener, -era, -erum*: delicate
17. **lux ... suprema:** literally, “last light”; euphemism for death
totam: here, altogether
18. **pict_:** *pingo, -ere, pinxi, pictum*: paint
exprimit: *exprimo, -ere, -pressi, -pressum*: portray
tabell_: *tabella, -ae, f.*: small painting (diminutive of *tabula*, “tablet”)
21. **denique:** (adverb) in short
pone: *pono, -ere, posui, positum*: place
- 22-23. **aut ... aut:** (conjunction) either ... or
utramque: *uterque, utraque, utrumque*: one, the other