

Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.139-156: The Art of the Lover

This passage was written by Ovid so that he might inform young men looking for love how they might most easily catch a girl's attention at the Circus and in other public arenas. Ovid suggests sitting as close to the girl as possible, touching her whenever the opportunity presents itself, and fluffing her pillow. He also suggests that women will be impressed by a man who applauds Venus, the goddess of sex and love. According to Ovid, those who follow this advice will easily find themselves in the arms of the girl they want.

Text and Translation

Proximus a dominā, nullo prohibente, sedeto,
Sit close to your mistress, with no one preventing (you),

Iunge tuum lateri quā potes usque latus; 140
Join your side close to her side as much as you can;

Et bene, quod cogit, si nolit, linea iungi,
And (it is) easily done, because the line compels you to be joined, (even) if she should be unwilling,

Quod tibi tangenda est lege puella loci.
Since you must touch the girl by the law of the place.

Hīc tibi quaeratur socii sermonis origo,
Here you should seek the start of a friendly conversation,

Et moveant primos publica verba sonos.
And open the conversation with words everyone can hear.

(continued on the next page)

Cuius equi veniant, facito, studiose, requiras:
Make sure that you, eager (lover), ask whose horses are entering:

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Nec mora, quisquis erit, cui favet illa, fave.
And without delay favor whoever it is whom that girl favors.

At cum pompa frequens certantibus ibit ephebis,
And when the procession crowded with disputing youths comes,

Tu Veneri dominae plaude favente manu;
You should applaud for Mistress Venus with a favoring hand;

Utque fit, in gremium pulvis si forte puellae
And as often happens, if by chance dust falls into the girl's lap,

Deciderit, digitis excutiendus erit:
It must be brushed off with your fingers:

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Et si nullus erit pulvis, tamen excute nullum:
And if there is no dust, nevertheless brush off none:

Quaelibet officio causa sit apta tuo.
Let whatever you like be a suitable cause for your attention.

Pallia si terrā nimium demissa iacebunt,
If her cloak, having been let down, lies on the ground too much,

Collige, et inmundā sedulus effer humo;
Collect it, and bear it carefully from the dirty ground;

Protinus, officii pretium, patiente puellā
At once, a prize of your attention, with the girl permitting,

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Contingent oculis crura videnda tuis.
Your eyes will happen to see ankles.

Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.139-156 – Worksheet

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. What case is **nullo** and why? _____
2. What mood is **iunge** and why? _____
3. Make **potes** perfect. _____
4. Make **latus** nominative. _____
5. Change **cogit** to perfect passive. _____
6. What mood is **iungi** and why? _____
7. What case is **tibi** and why? _____
8. Make **tibi** plural. _____
9. Change **socii sermonis** to ablative plural. _____
10. Make **cuus** the same gender, number, and case as *dominae* (line 148). _____
11. Change **veniant** to a present active participle modifying *equi* (line 145). _____
12. Change **erit** to imperfect subjunctive. _____
13. Make **illa** agree with *loci* (line 142). _____
14. Change **favente manu** to genitive plural. _____
15. Change **deciderit** to present imperative plural. _____
16. What case is **digitis** and why? _____
17. What tense and mood is **erit** and why? _____

(continued on the next page)

18. What case is **nullum** and why? _____
19. What mood is **sit** and why? _____
20. Make **demissa** modify *pulvis* (line 151). _____
21. Change **iacebunt** to pluperfect subjunctive. _____
22. Make **effer** indicative. _____
23. What case is **pretium** and why? _____
24. Make **patiente** agree with *officii* (line 155). _____
25. Change **contingent** to pluperfect passive (fem). _____

Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.139-156 – Notes and Vocabulary

Line Note/ Vocabulary

139. **a:** lit. “from”
sedeto: future imperative (2nd sing.)
140. **lateri:** *latus, -eris, n.:* side
quā potes: lit. “as to which you can,” i.e. as much as you can
141. **Et bene:** lit. “and it is well”
linea: *linea, -ae, f.:* line
143. **socii:** *socius, -a, -um :* social, friendly
origo: *origo, -inis, f.:* source, opening
144. **sonos:** *sonus, -i, m.:* sound
145. **facito:** future imperative (2nd singular)
studiose: *studiosus, -a, -um:* eager
146. **Nec mora:** lit. “Nor is there a delay”
quisquis: *quisquis, quidquid:* whoever, whatever
favet: *faveo, -ere, favi, fautum:* favor (+ dat.)
147. **pompa:** *pompa, -ae, f.:* procession
frequens: *frequens, -ntis:* frequent, crowded, busy
certantibus: *certo (1):* dispute
ephebis: *ephebus, -i, m.:* youth; a Greek loan word
148. **plaude:** *plaudo, -ere, -si, -sum:* applaud (+ dat.)
149. **gremium:** *gremium, -i, n.:* lap
forte: *forte, adv.:* by chance
150. **deciderit:** *decido, -ere, -cidi:* fall down; future indicative in a future more vivid condition
(see Wheelock, p.156)
digitus: *digitus, -i, m.:* finger
excutiendus: *excutio, -ere, -cussi, -cussum,:* brush off
152. **quaelibet:** *quilibet, quaelibet, quodlibet:* any (you like)
153. **pallia:** *pallium, -i, n.:* cloak

154. **inmunda**: *inmundus*, -a, -um: dirty
sedulus: *sedulus*, -a, -um: careful
humo: *humus*, -i, f. ground
155. **protinus**: *protinus*, adv.: at once
156. **(quae sunt) oculis...videnda tuis**: passive periphrastic, without the form of *esse* expressed; lit. “ankles will befall to be seen by your eyes.”
crura: *crus*, *cruris*, n.: ankle