

Metellus died in 59 before he could go to his province, Gallia Transalpina; some say he was poisoned by his wife Clodia, although that may be hard to believe in the face of the continuing support of her family by her erstwhile brother-in-law. Nonetheless, she lived a very profligate life. Her affair with Catullus began before the death of her husband, and even the poet attests to her inconstancy. Cicero hated her for her “moral decadence” (even though she is said to have once offered marriage to him!) but also because of his enmity for her brother Clodius. In 56 BCE, Cicero pulled out all the stops in his defense of Caelius, who had been Clodia’s lover and was now accused of attempting to poison her. He called her “the Medusa of the Palatine” and even accused her of incest with her brother. Clodia was so humiliated by the speech that she retired from the political and social scene, although there is evidence she was still alive in 45 BCE.



TEACHING TIP

The teacher may wish to assign chapter 5 of RRA for reading or review. See p. 73.

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Standards 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2

TRANSLATION OF LATIN PASSAGE

About Love

My girl has a sparrow. Oh, sparrow, a pet of my girl! My girl plays with the sparrow, holds the sparrow, gives (her) finger to the sparrow, the finger is bitten by the sparrow. The girl says she loves the sparrow. The girl loves the sparrow more than (her) eyes. For the sparrow is sweet as honey. Catullus sees that sparrow is always on the girl’s lap. The sparrow always chirps to (his) mistress. Catullus, however, wants to be with the girl and to be loved by the girl. And so Catullus envies the sparrow. You, girl, need to love Catullus, not the sparrow. However, severe old men think that the girl ought not to love Catullus. Girl, we cannot care a bit about the words of the old men. For life is not long.



TEACHER BY THE WAY

The Greek Hellenistic writers were devoted to writing small poems that abounded in learned, often obscure allusions.



TEACHER BY THE WAY

One hundred sixteen poems written by Catullus survive.

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TEACHING TIP

Instruct the students to find Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid on the timeline on p. 405 (SE).