

ESSAY P. 388

The story of the star-crossed lovers Pyramus and Thisbe is poignant and tragic. Ovid suggests several reasons for the tragic outcome. In a short essay, discuss what you believe are the major causes of the tragedy.

Support your assertions with references drawn from throughout lines 65–166. All Latin words must be copied or their line numbers provided, AND they must be translated or paraphrased closely enough so that it is clear you understand the Latin. Direct your answer to the question; do not merely summarize the passage. Please write your essay on a separate piece of paper.



TEACHER BY THE WAY

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Students are asked to consider the major causes of the tragic deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe. Even though they are being asked their opinion, they should substantiate their responses by referring to passages in the text. Note that this essay requires that critical thinking skill “evaluation,” which crowns the hierarchy of Bloom’s taxonomy.

In the introduction to the story, it is revealed that the parents opposed the marriage of Pyramus and Thisbe. This opposition provided the catalyst that led to the lovers’ plan for a nighttime rendezvous (lines 83–92), which sets events in motion that lead to a heartbreaking conclusion. Bad karma or fate also played a part in the tragedy: first, the unfortunate appearance of a lion, fresh from a kill, which caused Thisbe to flee and hide in a cave (lines 96–100), and, second, the lion’s discovering, rending, and bloodying the veil Thisbe inadvertently left behind as she fled (lines 100–104). Pyramus’s late arrival, misapprehension, and impulsivity clearly are also major causes of the tragedy. After he sees the bloodied veil (lines 107–108), he engages in self-blame for departing from his home later than Thisbe (lines 110–112). Additionally, he assumes the worst about Thisbe’s fate, which results in his impulsively committing suicide (lines 115–121). One calamity leads to another. On discovering Pyramus close to death and seeing her bloodied veil, Thisbe realizes what has happened and blames herself for Pyramus’s death; she then compounds the tragedy by also committing suicide (lines 133–163).

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