

ESSAY P. 104

Poem 8 is characterized by striking verbal repetition. In a short essay identify the repeated language and discuss how it is used by Catullus to organize his poem.

Support your assertions with references drawn from throughout the poem. 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.

Students might begin their essay by pointing out that the beginning, middle, and end of the poem (lines 1–2, 11, and 19) are devoted to a rational Catullus admonishing an irrational Catullus (i.e., Catullus the lover) to be firm and accept the fact that the affair is over, with quite similar language reinforcing the connection (*Miser Catulle, dēsīnās ineptīre*, line 1; *sed obstīnātā mente perfer, obdūrā*, line 11; *Catulle, dēstinātus obdūrā*, line 19). The repetition at lines 11 and 19 occurs at key points in the poem, where memories of Catullus’s loving Lesbia intrude to such a degree that encouragement to stay the course is needed (*vīve* at the end of line 10 recalls *vīvāmus* just three poems earlier in Poem 5, where living and loving are synonymous notions). Within this structural framework, nearly identical lines 3 and 8 frame the section that deals with Catullus the lover’s past happiness. Perhaps some students may remember the “suns” of Poem 5, and Catullus’s joyful exhortation there to Lesbia to enjoy life and to love. Catullus’s past happiness in lines 3–8 is set against the prediction of his lady’s future unhappiness without him in lines 14–19; this section is defined by the repetition of *at tū* and coheres through the rhetorical questions and repetition of the interrogative adjective *quī, quae, quod* or pronoun *quis, quid*. The erotic memories contained within this passage, though, really are a prediction of Catullus’s future unhappiness without Lesbia, and they lead naturally to the final directive for firmness and resolve at the poem’s end.

Some students may observe, too, that not only do the nearly identical lines 3 and 8 frame the section on Catullus’s past happiness, but these same lines individually are framed, with *dūcēbat* in line 4 recalling *dūcās* in line 2 and *nōn volt* and *nōlī* in line 9 recalling *volēbās* and *nōlēbat* in line 7, thereby making the individual lines 3 and 8 even more prominent (these words are underscored in the chart above). They may note other verbal parallels, too, such as that the farewell to Catullus’s *puella* in line 12 recalls the occurrence of the noun *puella* twice in the section on Catullus’s

