

## PYRAMUS AND THISBE

In ancient Rome, the first contact the public was likely to have with a new poem or a completed section of a longer poem would be not through reading it in a book but through listening to it at a public reading (*recitatio*) given by the poet in a private house or theater or recital room. Some enterprising poets even tried to gather an audience in the Forum, at the Circus, or in the public baths. The large public baths often contained, in fact, libraries and reading rooms and thus catered to the minds as well as the bodies of their patrons. Martial complained of a boorish poet who pursued him wherever he went, reciting his verses: "I flee to the baths; you echo in my ear. I seek the swimming pool; you don't allow me to swim."

After the adventure with the thief, Marcus, Sextus, and Eucleides relax in the library at the baths and enjoy listening to a recitation of one of the most famous love stories of the ancient world. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe, set in ancient Babylon and made familiar to English readers by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was originally part of a long narrative poem, the *Metamorphoses*, by the Latin poet Ovid (43 B.C.–A.D. 17).



Legendary lovers of antiquity

Illustration by Mahmoud Sayah

Olim Babylōne habitābat adulēscēns quīdam pulcherrimus, nōmine Pȳramus. In vicinā domō habitābat virgō cui nōmen erat Thisbē. Pȳramus hanc virginem in viā forte cōspectam statim amāvit. Et Thisbē, Pȳramō vīsō, amōre capta est. Sed ēheu! Parentēs et virginis et adulēscēntis, quoniam multōs iam annōs inter sē rixābantur, eōs convenīre vetuērunt. Pȳramō Thisbēn nē vidēre quidem licēbat. Valdē dolēbant et adulēscēns et virgō.

Erat pariēs domuī utrīque commūnis. Parva tamen rīma, ā nullō antea vīsa, ab amantibus inventa est. (Quid nōn sentit amor?) Quam ad rīmam sedentēs inter sē sēcrētō colloquēbantur, alter alterī amōrem exprimēns. Sed mox, ōculis parietī datīs, valedicēbant invītī.

Tandem novum cōsiliū cēpērunt. Cōstituērunt enim, parentibus īnciīs, domō nocte exīre, in silvam convenīre, sub arbore quādam cōsīdere. Itaque Thisbē silentiō noctis, cum vultum vēlāmine celāvisset, fūrtilm ēgressa ad silvam festināvit. Quō cum advēnisset, sub illā arbore cōsēdit. Ecce tamen vēnit leō saevus, ōre sanguine bovis aspersō. Quō cōspectō, Thisbē perterrita in spēluncam, quae prope erat, cōfūgit. Et dum fugit, vēlāmen relīquit. Quod vēlāmen leō ōre sanguineō rapuit, sed mox dēposuit.

Haud multō post Pȳramus ex urbe ēgressus, dum ad arborem eandem prōgreditur, vēstīgia leōnis vīdit. Subitō puellae vēlāmen sanguine aspersum cōspexit. Timōre tremēns, "Quid accidit?" clāmāvit.

1 **Babylōn, Babylōnis**, f., *Babylon*

**Pȳramus**, -ī, m., *Pyramus*

2 **virgō, virginis**, f., *maiden*

**Thisbē, Thisbēs**, f., *Thisbe*

4 **rixor, -ārī, -ātus sum**, to quarrel

7 **uterque, utraque, utrumque**, each  
(of two), both

**rīma, -ae**, f., *crack*

9 **ōsculum, -ī**, n., *kiss*

8 **sentiō, sentīre, sēnsī, sēnsus**, to feel, notice

9 **exprimō, exprimere, expressī, expressus**, to press out, express

**valedicō, valedicere, valedixī, valedictūrus**, to say goodbye

15 **aspergō, aspergere, aspersī, aspersus**, to sprinkle, splash, spatter

17 **prōgredior, prōgredi, prōgressus sum**, to go forward, advance

11 **cōsiliū, -ī**, n., *plan*

**cōsiliū capere**, to adopt a plan

**īnciūs, -a, -um**, not knowing

13 **vultus, -ūs**, m., *face*

**vēlāmen, vēlāminis**, n., *veil, shawl*

14 **ōre sanguine aspersō**, his mouth  
spattered with blood

15 **spēlunca, -ae**, f., *cave*

## Exercise 45a

### Respondē Latīnē:

1. Ubi habitābant Pȳramus et Thisbē?

2. Quandō Pȳramus Thisbēn amāvit?

3. Placuitne amor Pȳramī et Thisbēs  
parentibus?

4. Quid erat inter duās domūs?

5. Quid faciēbant amantēs ad rīmam

6. Quid fēcerat Thisbē antequam ad  
silvam festināvit?

7. Quid Thisbē in silvā vīdit?

8. Quid vīdit Pȳramus ex urbe ēgressus?

“Eheu! Ego tē occīdī, mea Thisbē, quod tē iussī in silvam noctū sōlam venīre, nec prior venī. Sine tē vīvere nōlō.” Gladiō igitur strictō, sē vulnerāvit atque ad terram cecidit moriēns.

Ecce! Metū nōndum dēpositō, Thisbē ē spēluncā timidē exit, Pȳramum quaerit. Subitō corpus eius humī iacēns cōspicit; multīs cum lacrimīs, “Pȳrame,” clāmat, “quis hoc fēcit?” Deinde, suō vėlāmine cōspectō, iam moritūra, “Ō mē miseram!” clāmat. “Vėlāmen meum tē perdidit. Sine tē vīvere nōlō.” Et gladiō Pȳramī ipsa sē occīdit.

Parentēs, dolōre commōtī, eōs in eōdem sepulcrō sepelīvērunt.

20 **nec**, conj., *and...not*

25 **moritūra**, *intending to die, determined*

21 **prior**, **prior**, **prius**, gen., **priōris**, *first*

*to die*

(*of two*), *previous* *older* *priority*

20 **occīdō**, **occīdere**, **occīdī**, **occīsus**, *to kill*

26 **perdō**, **perdere**, **perdidī**, **perditus**, *to destroy*

*perdition*

## Respondē Latīnē:

1. Cūr Pȳramus sē occīdit? Cūr Thisbē?
2. Cūr parentēs Pȳramum Thisbēnque in eōdem sepulcrō sepelīvērunt?

## FORMS

### Verbs: Future Active Participles

Since Chapter 20 you have seen the future active participle as the fourth principal part of intransitive verbs, e.g., **venīō**, **venīre**, **venī**, **ventūrus**.

Transitive verbs form their future active participles by adding **-ūrus**, **-a**, **-um** to the perfect passive participial stem, e.g., **portātus**; stem, **portāt-**; future active participle, **portātūrus**, **-a**, **-um**.

Deponent verbs form their future active participles by adding **-ūrus**, **-a**, **-um** to the perfect participial stem, e.g., perfect participle, **cōnātus**; stem **cōnāt-**; future active participle, **cōnātūrus**, **-a**, **-um**.

The future active participle of some verbs ends instead in **-itūrus**, **-a**, **-um**, e.g., **moritūrus**, **-a**, **-um** (from **moriōr**, **morī**, **mortuus sum**):

Thisbē...iam **moritūra**, “Ō mē miseram!” clāmat. (45:23–25)

*Thisbe...now about to die, cries, “Poor me!”*

The following is a tabulation of the participles of non-deponent verbs in conjugations 1–4:

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present	1. portāns, portantis <i>carrying</i> 2. movēns, moventis <i>moving</i> 3. mittēns, mittentis <i>sending</i> iaciēns, iacientis <i>throwing</i> 4. audiēns, audientis <i>hearing</i>	
Perfect		1. portātus, -a, -um <i>(having been) carried</i> 2. mōtus, -a, -um <i>(having been) moved</i> 3. missus, -a, -um <i>(having been) sent</i> iactus, -a, -um <i>(having been) thrown</i> 4. audītus, -a, -um <i>(having been) heard</i>
Future	1. portātūrus, -a, -um <i>about to carry</i> 2. mōtūrus, -a, -um <i>about to move</i> 3. missūrus, -a, -um <i>about to send</i> iactūrus, -a, -um <i>about to throw</i> 4. audītūrus, -a, -um <i>about to hear</i>	

## NOTES

1. The present and future participles are active in form and meaning.
2. The perfect participle is passive in form and meaning.
3. The present participle of *īre* (*to go*) is **iēns, euntis**. The participles of the other irregular verbs are formed regularly, e.g., **volēns, volentis**. There is no present participle of *esse* (*to be*).
4. The future participle of *īre* is **itūrus, -a, -um**.
5. The future participle of *esse* is **futūrus, -a, -um**.
6. Other possible translations of the future participle include: *going to, likely to, intending to, determined to, on the point of...-ing*.

7. Although the participles of deponent verbs have the same endings as those of non-deponent verbs, all the meanings are active:

<b>Present Participle</b>	1. cōnāns, cōnantis, <i>trying</i> 2. verēns, verentis, <i>fearing</i> 3. loquēns, loquentis, <i>speaking</i> ēgrediēns, ēgredientis, <i>going out</i> 4. experiēns, experientis, <i>testing</i>
<b>Perfect Participle</b>	1. cōnātus, -a, -um, <i>having tried</i> 2. veritus, -a, -um, <i>having feared</i> 3. locūtus, -a, -um, <i>having spoken</i> ēgressus, -a, -um, <i>having gone out</i> 4. expertus, -a, -um, <i>having tested</i>
<b>Future Participle</b>	1. cōnātūrus, -a, -um, <i>about to try</i> 2. veritūrus, -a, -um, <i>about to fear</i> 3. locūtūrus, -a, -um, <i>about to speak</i> ēgressūrus, -a, -um, <i>about to go out</i> 4. expertūrus, -a, -um, <i>about to test</i>

### Exercise 45b

Give the present, perfect, and future participles of the following verbs in the nominative feminine singular. Translate each form you give:

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. amō       | 6. rixor      |
| 2. moneō     | 7. polliceor  |
| 3. aspergō   | 8. sequor     |
| 4. cōnspiciō | 9. prōgredior |
| 5. sentiō    | 10. experior  |

**polliceor, pollicērī, pollicitus sum, to promise**

### Exercise 45c

Read aloud and translate. Then identify each participle, give its tense, gender, case, and number, say whether it is active or passive in meaning, and tell what it modifies:

1. Multīs hominibus subsequentibus, fūr effugere nōn potuit.
2. Sextus fūrem effugere cōnantem subsequēbātur.
3. Puerī calōrem breve modo tempus passī ē caldāriō exiērunt.
4. Sextus domum profectūrus ab omnibus laudātus est.
5. Thisbē moritūra ad terram cecidit.
6. Fūr vestīmenta surreptūrus in thermās ingressus est.
7. Pýramus ad illam arborem prōgrediēns vēstīgia leōnis vīdit.
8. Vēlāmine relictō, Thisbē in spēluncam cōfūgit.
9. Ad rīmam inter sē sēcrētō colloquentēs amōrem exprimēbant.
10. Pýramus Thisbēn secūtūrus ex urbe profectus est.
11. Sōle oriente, mercātōrēs profectī sunt ad Āfricam nāvigātūrī.
12. Multa virginī pollicitus, Pýramus eī valedīxit.

**orior, orīrī, ortus sum, to rise**