

LANGUAGE FAIR 2024
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS
POETRY
Level 4

How to impress a girl with your speech

[Dē ēloquentiā litterārum]

Disce bonās artēs, moneō, Rōmāna iuventūs,
Nōn tantum trepidōs ut tueāre reōs; 460
Quam populus iūdexque gravis lēctusque senātus,
Tam dabit ēloquiō victa puella manūs.
Sed lateant vīrēs, nec sīs in fronte disertus;
effugiant vōcēs verba molesta tuae.
Quis, nisi mentis inops, tenerae dēclāmat amīcae? 465
saepe valēns odiī littera causa fuit.
Sit tibi crēdibilis sermō cōnsuētaque verba,
blanda tamen, praesēns ut videāre loquī.

OVID, *Ars amatoria* BOOK I, 459-468

Translation

Roman youth, I'm telling you, go learn the good arts
not only to protect trembling defendants:
like the people, and the serious judge, and the chosen senate,
the girl will surrender, defeated by your fluency.
But hide your strength-don't wear your eloquence on your sleeve;
your speech should flee from words that sound affected.
Who but a total dunce would declaim to a tender girlfriend?
Often a forceful letter was reason for hatred.
Your diction should inspire trust, using everyday words-
flirtatious, though, so you seem to be speaking in person.