

LANGUAGE FAIR 2026  
UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

POETRY

Level 3

*Why is Selius so sad?*

Quod fronte Selium nubila vides, Rufe,  
Quod ambulātor porticum terit seram,  
Lugubre quiddam quod tacet piger voltus,  
Quod paene terram nasus indecens tangit,  
Quod dextrā pectus pulsatur et comam vellit:  
Non ille amīcī fata lūget aut fratris,  
Uterque natus vīvit et precor vīvat,  
Salva est et uxor sarcinaeque servīque,  
Nihil colōnus vilicusque decoxit.  
Maerōris igitur causa quae? Domī cenat.

(FROM: M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton libri / recognovit W. Heraeus. Martial.  
Wilhelm Heraeus. Jacobus Borovskij. Leipzig. 1925/1976, unabridged)

Though, Rufus, you see Selius with clouded brow; though you see him walking late in the porticoes; though you see his heavy look conceal some mournful feeling, his ugly nose nearly touching the earth, his right hand striking his breast, and tearing his hair, he is not bewailing the loss of a friend or brother. Both his sons are alive,----and I pray they may continue to live! Safe and sound is his wife too, and his furniture, and his slaves; nor has his farmer or his bailiff wasted any part of his property. What then is the cause of his sadness? He dines at home.

Martial, Epigrams. Book 2. Bohn's Classical Library (1897)