

Martial 1.109 (adapted and abridged)

Issa est passere improbior Catullī,
Issa est pūrior ōsculō columbae,
Issa est blandior omnibus puellīs,
Issa est cārrior Indicīs lapillīs,
Issa est dēliciae, catella Pūblī.
hanc tū, sī queritur, loquī putābis;
sentit trīstitiamque gaudiumque.
collō nīxa cubat capitque somnōs.
ignōrat Venerem; nec invenimus
dignum tam tenerā virum puellā.



Roman bronze statuette. 2nd–3rd century AD.
H. 3 3/8 in. (8.6 cm). Metropolitan Museum of
Art. 62.10.3. Edith Perry Chapman Fund, 1962.

Vocabulary:

passer, passeris, m.	sparrow
improbus, improba, improbum	naughty
pūrus, pūra, pūrum	pure
ōsculum, ōsculī, n.	kiss
columba, columbae, f.	dove
blandus, blanda, blandum	alluring, charming
lapillum, lapillī, n.	small stone, pebble
dēliciae, dēliciārum, f. pl.	darling, delight
catella, catellae, f.	(female) puppy
queror, querī, questus sum	to complain, whine
collum, collī, n.	neck
nītor, nītī, nīxus sum (or nīsus sum)	to lean on, rest on (+ abl.)
cubō, cubāre	to lie (down), recline
somnus, somnī, m.	sleep
ignōrō, ignōrāre	not to know, to be ignorant of
tener, tenera, tenerum	delicate

Background on “Catullus’ sparrow”

Catullus 2.1-4

Passer, dēliciae meae puellae,
quīcum lūdere, quem in sinū tenēre,
cui primum digitum dare appetentī
et acris solet incitāre morsūs,

Catullus 3.1-5

Lūgēte, ō Venerēs Cupidinēsque,
et quantum est hominum venustiōrum:
passer mortuus est meae puellae,
passer, dēliciae meae puellae,
quem plūs illa oculis suis amābat.



Greek marble grave stele. ca. 450–440 BC.
H. 31 3/4 in. (80.6 cm). Metropolitan
Museum of Art. 27.45. Fletcher Fund, 1927.

Vocabulary:

passer, passeris, m.	sparrow
dēliciae, dēliciārum, f. pl.	darling, delight
quīcum	= quōcum
lūdō, lūdere, lūsī, lūsus	to play
sinus, sinūs, m.	lap
digitus, digitī, m.	finger [<i>prīmus digitus</i> ‘fingertip’]
appetō, appetere, appetī(v)ī, appetītus	to attack
incitō, incitāre	to incite, provoke
morsus, morsūs, m.	bite
lūgeō, lugēre, lūxī, lūctus	to mourn, lament
venustus, venusta, venustum	charming, elegant
morior, morī, mortuus sum	to die