

### Study Guide for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

The *Metamorphoses* is the only primary work we are reading this semester composed in writing by an individual we know something about. So who is Ovid? When did he live? In what culture did he write? Why did he write?

Note: For each character that underwent transformation, you should know what they transformed from, what they transformed to, and the reason for the transformation.

As with earlier study guides, wherever possible you want to note the family relationships between the participants and the regular descriptors of them. You also want to know the events in which they participate.

#### Gods and People in the *Metamorphoses*

Chaos

Eurus, Zephyr, Boreus, Auster

Phoebus

Daphne

Python

Cupid

Phoebe, Diana

Jove, Jupiter

Io

Juno

Argus

Mercury

Saturn

Europa

Ceres

Proserpina

Minerva

Venus

Arethusa

Dis

Syrinx

Bacchus

Iphis

Isis

Ligdus

Telethusa

Ianthe

Pygmalion

His statue/wife (named elsewhere Galatea)

Cinyras

Myrrha

Adonis

Orpheus

Eurydice

Atalanta

Hippomenes

### Sample Questions

Love and lust is at the center of a number of the stories Ovid tells in the *Metamorphoses*. Pick out one story in which sexual desire is considered wrong and how the characters deal with their forbidden passion.

The stories of Orpheus and Eurydice, Pygmalion and Galatea, and Dis and Proserpina are retold in both high and popular art, music and literature. Pick out one of the stories and one modern retelling or reference to that story and describe the differences between Ovid's telling of the story and the more modern use of it.

Hesiod's Khaos and Ovid's Chaos differ in both their nature and what they undergo. Describe one major difference and its consequences for the telling of the creation story.

Change is the theme of the *Metamorphoses*. Some characters are changed by choice, some by their own action, and some against their will. Pick out two characters who undergo permanent changes (so, for example, not one of Jupiter's temporary disguises), one by choice to change into what he or she wants to be and one changed into something they had no desire to be. Describe each change and the reasons for the changes and how they differ from each other.

In a number of places, Ovid tells his readers of what morals are valued in their shared society. Sometimes he uses the example of those who violate moral laws and sometimes the example of those who are moral exemplars. Pick one of each and describe the moral laws you can infer from his description of their lives and actions.