

## Student 2: High Merit

Roman men staked a high value on a woman's good reputation. Ovid has the ideal Roman wife Lucretia give up fighting her rapist after her reputation is threatened. He shows us through the quote

*"You can do nothing. I will take away your honour and your life"* (Ovid Fasti 2 807) (1) said as a last effort to make her give in by Sextus Tarquinius the king's son.

Exactly how important her reputation as a good and chaste wife is to her is underlined by the fact that she had kept fighting him even when he tried other means.

*Instat amans hostis precibus pretioque minisque* (Ovid Fasti 2 805). (2)

It is only when he threatens her good reputation that she yields which shows clearly how much value she put on it. She can hardly bring herself to tell her husband and father.

Eventually Lucretia commits suicide despite that fact that her husband and father pardon her for the forced rape. Lucretia also wants to set an example for other Roman women. (3)

Ovid's Lucretia has some duties and responsibilities that relate to her role as the perfect Roman wife. All these duties revolve around her husband and her devotion to having and maintaining a good home for him and to be a good wife to him. Her devotion to this role is symbolised by spinning wool. Lucretia's first appearance talks of her spinning by a dim light which shows her immediately to be the perfect wife, devoted to her husband and frugal, not using more oil for creating a brighter light than was absolutely necessary. Frugality was regarded by Romans as important. Ovid is creating an image of a wife completely devoted to her household and husband. (4) This idea is further reinforced by the lines

*"mittenda est domino (nunc, nunc properate, puellae), quam primum nostra facta lacerna manu."* (745-746). (5)

When Sextus Tarquinius first sees Lucretia he is overcome with lust for her. One of the reasons for this is her physical appearance. There are certain traits which Ovid points out as beautiful by Roman standards. These are white skin, fair hair and that their beauty is only natural. This shows that the Romans not only valued morals in their women but physical beauty too. Lucretia's beauty was part of inspiring Sextus's lust, a powerful emotion so it must be of great importance to Roman men. (6)

Ovid gives us a Roman man's opinion on the duties and responsibilities of a Roman woman – they are first and foremost to her husband and his care. The Roman attitude is that a woman's only duty is to her husband, and she must be utterly and completely devoted to him.

Tibullus too values beauty as he asks Delia not to destroy her looks when he is dead. (7)

*tu manes ne laedes meos, sed parce solutis*

*crinibus et teneris, Delia, parce genis.* (Tibullus 1.1 67-68)(8)