

Student 5: Low Achieved

Lucretia was written about as the perfect wife from a Roman point of view, no taint, nothing sullied.

She was not viewed as the perfect wife for naught. *Inde cito passu petitur Lucretia. Nebat: ante torum calathi lanaque mollis erat.* “At a swift pace, Lucretia was sought.” (1) She was spinning. Before the bed were baskets of soft wool.” While some of the other wives, the king’s daughters-in-law, were drinking the night away she was in her chambers spinning, making sure the slave-girls got through “their allotted stints” of wool and urged them on. She is doing what was expected of a good wife – getting the chores done and also making a cloak for her husband and all by a low light, no wasting of oil.

Beauty was an expected attribute. *Forma placet niveusque color flavique capilli quique aderat nulla factus ab arte decor.* (2) Sextus Tarquinius was so attracted by her beauty and goodness that he raped her and was the cause of her suicide. Her golden hair “flavi capilli” would have been unusual. (3)

In short Lucretia was very loyal. She was and she was expected to be as everyone assumes you have to be in a marriage. She was loyal of body along with loyal of mind.

Terentia was a real wife. Not ideal but real, mishaps, mistakes and all. Although the marriage slipped in some of the later years leading to the divorce she still did her wifely duties. (4) Cicero writes to tell her to put a tub in the bathroom *labrum si in balineo non est, ut sit.* (5)

Terentia’s loyalty was shown in the way that she stuck with Cicero and stayed supportive in his exile which equalled about 10 years. (6)

Clodia was not the ideal wife, nor the wife people would wish for in any capacity. She was pretty but also had a lot of partners on the side among them Catullus. We know she was not loyal to her husband and apparently not to Catullus either.

In one of his poems Catullus compares her beauty to another woman’s. Catullus is drawn in by her beauty. (7) This shows that beauty was important to Roman men.