

# Humanities



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**Aeneid Passage** The passage under analysis occurs towards the beginning of the fourth book. In book two Aeneas landed in Carthage and met with the Queen of the region – Dido. Aeneas relays his journeys beginning at the fleeing of Troy, and the hardships he has experienced before being brought to Carthage. Dido finds herself falling in love with Aeneas, but concerned because she swore to never love another after her ex-husband Sychaeus was murdered by her brother Pygmalion. The beginning of the book shows Dido's sister, Anna, attempting to console Dido and convince her that a marriage to Aeneas would have great benefits for Carthage.

The passage itself is situated almost directly after Anna finishes speaking to Dido and is relayed by the narrator. The passage is highly complex as multitudes of competing meanings are occurring. The narrator begins, “Across the city/ She wanders in her frenzy—even as a heedless hind hit by an arrow when a shepherd drives for game.” Here the narrator is comparing Dido to a sheep that has been struck by an arrow. This is significant as one of the major themes of the Aeneid is the force of the god's on human existence, and by using the arrow as a element of love, Virgil is showing that Dido's ‘frenzy’ isn't necessarily of her own doing. Indeed, Juno has conspired to bring Aeneas and Dido together to forestall Aeneas' journey to Italy, and has made Dido an unknowing volunteer in the ploy.

However, the passage continues, “with darts among the Cretan woods and, unawares, from far leaves the winging steel inside her flesh.” In this regard, one must consider that Aeneas, rather than Juno or Cupid, is the shepherd that has wounded Dido, as Aeneas is the most ‘unaware(s)’ of the lasting effect has had on Dido. In this sense, one must consider a passage from book two when Aeneas is watching the Greek's ravage Troy and compares

himself to a shepherd,

When among standing corn a spark falls with a fierce south wind to fan it, or the impetuous stream of a mountain torrent sweeps the fields, sweeps the joyous crops and the bollocks' toil, and drives the woods headlong before, in perplexed amazement a shepherd takes in the crash from a rock's tall summit.

In this regard Aeneas is the shepherd watching the in amazement as nature takes its toll symbolically on the fields – literally Troy. The different positions – Dido as sheep and Aeneas as shepherd – are significant as it demonstrates Aeneas steadfast resistance to outside factors that might hinder his path toward Italy. In this regard one might accuse Virgil of misogynism.

The passage continues, “ she roams the forests and the wooded slopes of Dicte/ the shaft of death still clinging to her side/ So Dido leads Aeneas around the ramparts/ displays the wealth of Sidon and the city.” The shaft lodged in Dido's side alludes to the torment she is experiencing by the pangs of love, and the past anguish she has encountered through love because of the death of Sychaeus. The death clinging to her side is a highly ambiguous line. One meaning it holds for the reader is that by ‘ lead(ing) Aeneas around the ramparts’ she is disgracing the death of Sychaeus and also causing the death of her city. By witnessing Dido with Aeneas, the citizens lose respect for Dido and she also loses influence with potential suitors. The other more obvious interpretation of ‘ death clinging to her side’ is that it is foreshadowing Dido's eventual suicide. In this regard, leading Aeneas around is not physically the death clinging to her side, but is the emotional manifestation of what would become, upon Aeneas departure, the anguish that will cause Dido to start a fire and murder herself.

In conclusion, by comparing Dido to a wounded sheep, the passage is drawing a comparison between Dido and the ultimately fatal effects of love on her life. It is ultimately indicative of one of the most lasting elements of the Aeneid, specifically the all-pervasive nature of love and Dido's characterization as mythologically consumed by it.