

Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) was a Roman poet born in Sulmo on March 20th, 43BC. He died in Tomis, Moesia (modern day Romania) in 17AD. He was a provincial, born into a respectable family, and he was sent to Rome with his brother, where he was educated, studying rhetoric. His teachers and father tried to push him to pursue his potential as an orator, but poetry was his real passion, so he ignored their advice. Due to his class he was expected to have an official career, but first he travelled to a finishing school in Athens, then Asia Minor and Sicily. He then started off in some minor judicial jobs but soon found that this was not what he wanted to do, and from then on he devoted himself to poetry.

Ovid's first work, the *Amores*, written in about 16BC, was immediately successful, followed by similar success with others. He wrote largely on romantic themes, but he himself had had two short and unsuccessful marriages. His third marriage, however, was successful. Ovid socialised with many of his poet contemporaries, including Horace, and asserted himself in a position which led him to write more adventurously, culminating in poems like the *Metamorphoses*, which was nearly finished in 8AD when the emperor Augustus exiled him to Tomis. This showcased Ovid's willingness to go against conventions of his times; after Virgil's *Aeneid*, other, lesser works of historical poetry, seemed to be automatically discounted, but Ovid set about writing an epic of a genre which was then unique to him. The *Metamorphoses* is a collection of myths and legends, told in chronological order, and it comprises of 15 books and nearly 12,000 lines, written in hexameter verse. After his exile to Tomis, Ovid became depressed, turning ever more to his poetry to relieve this. During this time he wrote works such as the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, before his death in 17AD.

Ovid is known for pioneering a technical advance in Latin poetry, due to his ability to adapt the Latin language to fit with dactylic Greek metres, allowing him to use both hexameter and the elegiac couplet. His poems are fluent but artificial, and unusual in their use of innovative vocabulary and linguistic structures. His hexameters, particularly in the *Metamorphoses*, are very good examples of vivid and fast-paced narrative. Due to his rhetorical talents he was often criticised for his seeming cynicism and emotionlessness. However, he is known as one of the greatest poets of all time, based on his incredible ability to create fantastical parallels to the real world, something which was individual to him. He was very popular during his lifetime and this has continued to be true since his death, with his works influencing others such as Shakespeare.