

## Suicide Prevention for Virgil's *Aeneid*: Curriculum Pilot Program

This workshop is centered around a curriculum created to support Latin instructors as they teach Book Four of the *Aeneid*. The curriculum provides a framework for an introductory lesson on suicide prevention with risk factor and warning sign identification activities. The introduction to suicide prevention uses current, psychological understandings of suicide to establish a fact-based, baseline understanding of suicidal ideation. Then students will identify Dido's risk factors and warning signs within the *Aeneid*. Dido is an appropriate character to analyze because she is easy to sympathize with, so her death is often read as a preventable tragedy rather than an immoral action. Using such examples of a suicidal individual helps to decrease moral judgements of suicidal individuals that hurt those grieving a loss to suicide and increase shame (a risk factor for suicide) in those already experiencing suicidal ideation. This aids in the destigmatization of conversations about mental health that are crucial for suicide prevention.

All materials for this workshop will be reviewed by University of Washington's Forefront Suicide Prevention before presenting. In order for the curriculum to be ethically shared for individual classroom use, it must first be proven safe and effective through a pilot study. A pilot study is being conducted this year with supervision from Forefront.

The goals of this workshop are to share progress on the pilot program, gather feedback from attendees, and spread awareness of adolescent mental health challenges. To start I will explain why suicide prevention should be taught with the *Aeneid*, the state of young adult mental health in the US, present the curriculum, and report on the current progress of the pilot study.

Live or written statements will be provided by Texas Tech Professor Syd Roa and University of Wisconsin graduate student Rachel Andrews. Professor Roa will explain the role of instructors as both teacher and trusted adult to students facing life challenges. Ms. Andrews taught the *Aeneid* for the first time shortly after a student died by suicide. She will share how she felt that Book Four could be used to help her students in the wake of tragedy, but wasn't sure how to best approach the topic.

Despite the specificity of this workshop, individuals of all backgrounds are encouraged to attend. Current and former teachers and professors are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the curriculum and implementation to improve the curriculum for future use. Current instructors are also encouraged to share what support they might need to use this curriculum.