

### Comparing Interpretations of Ovid Exemplar Response

The myth of Daedalus and Icarus, a cautionary tale of failure, has been told and retold in many different variations throughout history. Authors and artists have retold this story time and time again, choosing to focus on its many different elements. All three texts reveal ideas about man's failure, capturing different elements of the original story written by Ovid.

Pieter Bruegel brings the story of Icarus to life in his painting "Landscape with the Fall of Daedalus and Icarus." Bruegel chooses to focus on Icarus' fall and man's indifference to suffering in order to bring to life the idea that man is apathetic towards another's plight, particularly when that plight is caused by man's own failure. Bruegel chooses to include both Icarus' fall and the hot sun in his painting but removes any details regarding the maze and Daedalus' constructing of the wings. These included, and omitted, details work to put the focus of the work squarely on Icarus' fall and, by extension, his failure.

William Carlos Williams' ekphrastic poem by the same name supports Bruegel's central idea by focusing mostly on the aloofness of the other subjects in the painting. The longest sentence in the poem is about everyone and everything but Icarus. The sentence covering Icarus drowning, "This was Icarus drowning," includes a paltry four words, whereas the sentence describing the scene spans more than thirty words. This underscores the idea that man is aloof and unsympathetic towards another man's failure.

Still, W.H. Auden uses "Musee des Beaux Arts" to showcase man's indifference to suffering and failure. For Auden's speaker, failure is a rite of passage, an inevitability. Auden includes many of the same details as Bruegel and Williams, such as the hot sun and the drowning of Icarus. Auden also references "the old masters" as if the idea of interpreting and memorializing man's failure has been around for ages.

Each text covers the basic elements of the myth, with slight variation, but all work to develop the central idea of man's indifference to suffering and failure.