



BOOK IV: Augustine's Grief Over the Death of a Friend

Confessions 4.4.7 - 4.8.13; Boulding Translation, pp. 61-65

Passage Summary

Augustine recalls his grief after the death of a friend. He questions his motives for grieving, and examines the beauty and perils of friendship

App Integrations

- Digital Highlighting & Annotation
- Synchronized Audio
- In-App Commentary
- In-App Teaching Tip

Learning Objectives

- Analysis and discussion
- Listening comprehension
- Close reading of primary texts
- Personal reflection
- Use of secondary source(s)

Out-Of-Class Assignment Suggestions

- Read Augustine's account of the death of a friend in Book IV.
- Highlight the reasons Augustine gives for criticizing his friendship (or grief over his friend's death).
- Using the App Annotation, summarize those reasons.
- After reading, consult the two commentaries (Brown 4 and 5) by Grabau. Note particularly Grabau's use of the phrase "order of love" in commentary 5. Think about how this phrase applies to Augustine's account of friendship.

In-Class Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students about the value of friendship. If you have read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, compare Aristotle's view of friendship to the one found in Augustine. Alternately, invite students to discuss why friendship matters, what it is good for, and how it can go wrong.
- Read passage 4.9, where Augustine describes how "black grief" enveloped his hometown. Discuss the relationship between friendship and place.
- Invite students to cite the reasons Augustine critiques his love of his friend; put those reasons on the board. Discuss the concept of the "order of love" that is apparent in this section.
- Does Augustine's self-critique undermine the importance of friendship, or does it elevate it? Why or why not? Perhaps compare his view of friendship to today's view of friendship (e.g. virtual friends, followers, etc.).

Further Connections

Confessions: The death of Augustine's friend corresponds to the death of Monnica in Book IX, and Augustine's grief in that moment shows his progress from Book IV. The separation of Augustine from his lover in Book VI uses similar anguished imagery as that deployed in Book IV.

Augustine and Culture: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* famously treats friendship as indispensable to the life well-lived; Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* deal in themes of friendship and love; Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* likewise; C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* provides an analysis of friendship similar to Augustine's.

In-App Commentaries: The commentaries by Joseph Grabau are particularly valuable for this exercise, locating Augustine's view of friendship in antiquity as well as his later corpus.