

# Seikilos Poem - Discussion

Post by “Eikadistes” of March 18, 2026 at 12:22 PM

Just to re-iterate what I posted with the picture, I'm re-posting the text.

In a nutshell, my thesis is that most scholars (at least whom I've read in English) have overlooked two mid-word line breaks in the original inscription that I believe were intentional, and add a dual connotation to the final two stanzas, notably, that "time" simultaneously means "disease".

## Quote

I just found something really interesting that I wanted to bring up! I include the following in footnotes [here](#). In a nutshell, I find that it is reasonable to suppose that (1) Seikílos was a seasoned composer, and (2) He was a proper Epicurean.

(...keeping in mind that Seikílos *not only* composed **lyrical poetry**, *but also* wrote instrumental **notation**...)

On the original stele, there are only two words that Seikílos breaks. He visually chooses to squeeze extra letters in some lines, and not in others. Given that it only happens twice, it seems intentional. *He doesn't have to*. The thing I notice specifically happens on lines 8-9 with the word "olígon" and on lines 10-11 with the word "khrónos".

Here's what I find:

(1) If you split "olígon esti" (or "few is") into "oli- \ -gon e...", then you introduce the word "gone" which means "offspring", "child", "fruit", "product". So Seikílos milks *two* notions out of *one* word ("smallness" and "new life"), just by employing the poetic feature of introducing a line break in the middle of a word.

(2) He does the *same* thing two lines later with a clever connotation. If you split "khrónos" and separate "-nos" then you create an allusion to "nósos" meaning "sickness", "disease", and "plague", creating the exact opposite image. In the context, it creates a poetic link between "time" and the inevitability of "illness".

Given that the first two lines use imperative, second-person verbs (creating a tone that's a little more like "YOU! GO SHINE!" and "YOU! SUFFER NOTHING!"), there is a sense of urgency that lines 3 and 4 of the couplets need to demonstrate to support the first two lines. So, as I think I have found in the poetry, I believe that Seikílos (to native, ancient Greek ears) was demonstrating this urgency by cleverly invoking both the imagery of sick and dying children and the image of rotten fruit, as though a life spent

without "shining" is like diseased produce.

All of this fits beautifully with Epicurean fragments.

Display More