

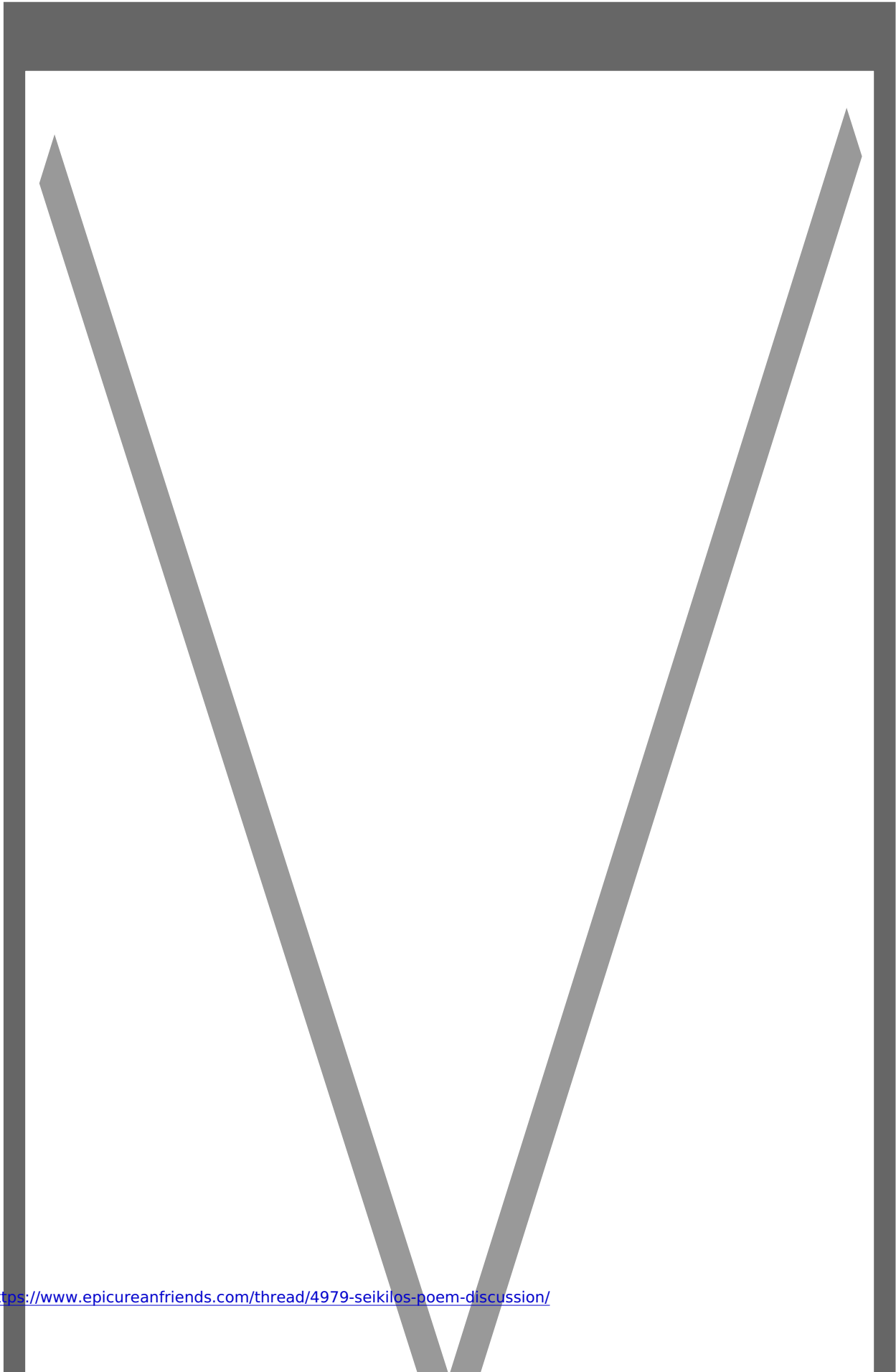
Seikilos Poem - Discussion

Post by “Cassius” of March 17, 2026 at 2:34 PM

We have a graphic on the forum to which Eikadistes added some commentary. I'm not sure that discussion is findable through the gallery, so I am setting up this thread to make discussion about it easier to find.

Here's the graphic:

Image not found or type unknown



[Seikilos Poem - Epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com)

www.epicureanfriends.com

And I'll paste some of the discussion here too.

Post by “Cassius” of March 17, 2026 at 2:35 PM

Eikadistes' commentary on the poem:

Thread

[Seikilos Poem - Discussion](#)

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/wcf/gallery/im...oem/#comment777>

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Cassius

March 17, 2026 at 2:34 PM

Post by “TauPhi” of March 17, 2026 at 9:38 PM

This is cool. I didn't know about its existence. Thank you @Eikadistes . It reminds me of something I wrote to myself some time ago. I rarely share my personal scribbings with anyone but I'll make an exception on this occasion:

Radiate, pulsate and be alive.

Face your fears and smile.

Embrace the passage of time.

It is worth your while.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4979-seikilos-poem-discussion/>

Post by “Eikadistes” of March 18, 2026 at 12:20 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

This is cool. I didn't know about its existence.

That's a great stanza, and awesomely similar to the epitaph, very cool!

You know, I first came across it when I took a Humanities class 20 years ago, and the Greek transcription became my first tattoo a few years later, many years before I took up a study of Epicurean Philosophy. I'm jazzed, decades later to learn about the shared influences.

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

Post by “Eikadistes” of March 18, 2026 at 12:27 PM

And for the sake of a visual aid, here's [this](#).

Usually, scholars rearrange the original lines to reinforce the rhyme scheme to students (AABB). *Rarely* is the lyrical poem analyzed according to the line breaks the poet originally chose.



Post by “Eikadistes” of March 18, 2026 at 12:28 PM

And *not like anyone asked* but I'd be remiss if I didn't take a swing at my own translation:

While you live, glow!

Suffer you never a sorrow!

For fleeting it is to withstand

the ending that time must demand.

Post by “Don” of March 20, 2026 at 1:55 PM

Here's Luke Rainieri singing the epitaph in four historical pronunciations:

<https://youtu.be/AL9KQ-trY00?si=JU9AgdZEDyzlsqm3>

One of the things I find fascinating about the epitaph is that the musical notation is intact. Not notes per se, but the tune is recoverable.