Much of our surviving evidence for women in the ancient world comes from funerary inscriptions. Typical inscriptions reference the piety of the deceased, her role as a wife and mother, her house-keeping skills, and her virtue. Few of them mention other aspects of women’s lives. What conclusions can we draw from such inscriptions?

To blessed Claudia Pieris, his most beloved and most extraordinary and incomparable wife, for her - well-deserved - Annius Telesphorus put this up here …

To Anna Isias, his sweetest mother, Sergius Asinius Phainus [set this up]

To Aelia Tryphera, an exceptional wife, pure and chaste beyond what can be expected of the average female

Here lies Amymone, wife of Marcus, most good and most beautiful, wool-spinner, dutiful, modest, careful, chaste, home-loving.

How much do you think we can learn from ancient inscriptions about women’s lives?

What conventions do we use in funerary inscriptions?

What aspects of a person’s life do epitaphs capture?