

Gilgamesh – mythology and god



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Over the past hundred years, mythology has aroused to be a key method to understanding life's confusions and events. In The Epic of Gilgamesh, written by an anonymous author, but translated by N. K. Sanders, lies a hero who is the King of Uruk, scared of oblivion.

From story to story, heroes can experience either what they call a journey or struggle. Gilgamesh, the hero in his tale, travels through the whole hero's journey quest, discovering what his purpose in life was. Over time, Gilgamesh transforms his appearance as he undergoes many experiences throughout his journey. Through three main stages; departure, initiation, and return Gilgamesh successfully followed the hero quest journey because of his heroic characteristics and transformation into a better version of himself.

In the beginning, Gilgamesh is far from perfect because he only cares for himself, rather than his people. The king, Gilgamesh continually oversteps his bounds as a ruler. His people, upset over the liberties (Sanders 4). As a king, one would expect the decisions he would make would be based on his people's opinions, however Gilgamesh did not play by this rule. He thought of himself as a higher individual and would do anything to please his choices and desires. In response to the king's poor decision making, the gods send a match for Gilgamesh (Sanders 5). The gods decide send down Enkidu after they realize Gilgamesh's choices are getting out of hand. They hoped this would make Gilgamesh pay attention to his poor decision making by having someone help him with his choices. All heroes do not start off making perfect choices however, they grow from their mistakes, morphing into a stronger individual over time.

The road Gilgamesh begins to follow can be described as a trial of tasks, tests, or ordeals that he must undergo to begin his transformation. When Gilgamesh and Enkidu have to fight the Bull of Heaven, you can see Gilgamesh's supportive side come out as he tells Enkidu keep fighting, together we are sure to win (Sanders 3). Not long after successfully defeating the bull, Gilgamesh's confident attitude is restored. At this point in the story, we see the arrogant king express his supportive side. The next big test the Gilgamesh faces that ultimately shows his transformation in his character is when he says, Let the gods accept these, let them welcome my friend and walk at his side in the underworld, so that Enkidu may not be sick at heart after the loss of Enkidu (Sanders 4). He lost his other half and is devastated. Gilgamesh acts in a very selfless manner as he offers his personal treasures and goods to the underworld gods in order to make sure Enkidu is welcomed. Not only is Gilgamesh expressing vulnerability and sympathy, but also is offering his own values to benefit someone other than himself.

The death of Enkidu sent Gilgamesh on an adventure to challenge death, but ended up ultimately learning his main lesson from Utnapishtim, a man who became immortal. Utnapishtim tells him [you] will assemble the gods for your sake, so that you may find that life for which you are searching (Sanders 9). After Utnapishtim tells him how fortunate he is, Gilgamesh learns how to appreciate his life every day and that death is supposed to happen to everyone. He takes this information back to his kingdom, fully understanding that death is simply just a part of life. Gilgamesh returns home noticing one third of the whole is city, one third is garden, and one third is

field, with the precinct of the goddess Ishtar. These parts and the precinct are all Uruk (Sanders 10). When Gilgamesh arrives back to Uruk he admires his town and how unique it is. He has a new outlook on his surroundings, appreciating the life he has been given. Originally Gilgamesh was set out on a journey to conquer death and instead came back as with a perspective.

From the beginning to the end of Gilgamesh's story, one can see a complete transformation in Gilgamesh's character. The strong and arrogant king expressed vulnerability after the death of his second half, sending him on a journey to overcome his fear of oblivion and death. In the end, Gilgamesh learns to appreciate his life until he dies and that death was simply apart of life. Gilgamesh's obvious flaws and the journey he went through does not make him a hero, but the fact that he learned has morphed and grown into a stronger individual does. People change in this world sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worst, but in this case Gilgamesh changed for the better.