

Cardinal virtues in the epic of gilgamesh essay



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The Epic of Gilgamesh enables the reader to identify the cardinal virtues that could be valued in the ancient world. In particular, one should speak about courage, moderation, and a sense of justice.

The author highlights the importance of these virtues by describing the transformation of the major characters, especially Gilgamesh. The protagonist acquires these positive qualities in the course of his journey, and the readers can see these changes in his behavior. This is the main question that should be discussed in this paper.

This epic poem emphasizes the importance of temperance by contrasting the behavior of Gilgamesh during different periods of his life. In the beginning, he is portrayed as a strong, yet the ruthless person who does not care much about the needs of other people. This is how he is described by the author, "As king, Gilgamesh was a tyrant to his people" (Mason 12). Moreover, he exercises his kingly right to choose 'a virgin bride' (Mason 12).

However, through his friendship with Enkidu Gilgamesh learns to value the needs of other people. Moreover, he sees that moderation is vital for a king. Therefore, the author of this poem illustrates the benefits of moderation by describing the positive changes in the behavior of the protagonist.

Nevertheless, temperance or moderation is not the only virtues that the main character develops in the course of the journey. Much attention should be also paid to courage.

As it has been said before, Gilgamesh is described as a powerful warrior, but one can say that he has courage or fortitude. It should be taken into account

that his quest for eternal life could be motivated by the fear of death. The author of this poem highlights the importance of fortitude through the words of Enkidu who reminds Gilgamesh that he should be courageous. One should refer to the following quote, " Don't be afraid, said Gilgamesh.

We are together. There is nothing we should fear" (Mason 28). To a great extent, Enkidu makes the protagonist discover true courage. In the course of his journey, Gilgamesh learns to accept his mortality and in this way, he rejects some of his fears. Nevertheless, one should also mention the sense of justice which is also one of the cardinal virtues.

Overall, one can argue that Gilgamesh begins to appreciate the importance of justice while interacting with Enkidu who is not afraid of confronting a goddess Ishtar that oppresses people.

Moreover, this character is not afraid of Ishtar's curse (Mason 45). In turn, Gilgamesh understands that a ruler is supposed to protect people who are under his command. Admittedly, such a concept as justice is mention in the text of the poem, but the readers can that fairness plays a key role in this text.

Thus, it is possible to argue that the Epic of Gilgamesh is supposed to be a moral lesson for the readers. This literary work prompts people to reject arrogance, indulgence, and egoism. The author wants to show through his quest Gilgamesh changes of various aspects of his behavior.

In the beginning, he can be viewed as a ruthless tyrant who cares only about his desires. However, friendship with Enkidu and his later journey help him

understand the importance of cardinal virtues such as moderation, courage, and justice.

Mason, Herbert. *Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003. Print.