

Gilgamesh



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Gilgamesh The Epic of Gilgamesh, one of the earliest known works of literature in the history of man, deals with the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. In this epic poem, the various characters deal with questions of life and death, and the quest for immortality is one of the central themes of the work. Gilgamesh's distraught reaction to Enkidu's death in the later stages of the story clearly brings out the theme of death and immortality, and the protagonist makes a hazardous journey to meet Utnapishtim in order to find out the secret of eternal life. " Gilgamesh is seeking Utnapishtim, the Babylonian Noah who survived the flood and was granted immortality, in order to gain the secret of immortality for himself." (Maier, 112) In a careful analysis of the epic, it becomes obvious that the story of Gilgamesh is important in that it suggests how come to terms with death. This paper makes an analysis of how the characters in the epic deal with questions of life and death, how humans come to terms with death, whether immortality is possible and desirable to humans, and how these ideas compare to the notions of another culture. First of all, it is fundamental to recognize that the characters in The Epic of Gilgamesh deal with questions of life and death, and it is best suggested through the story of the hero, Gilgamesh who is dedicated to learn the secret of eternal life. All through the work, the protagonist is unable to realize the realities of death. Specifically, it is Enkidu's death which leads Gilgamesh to seek a means to escape from death and to achieve immortality. Significantly, his struggle with grief, his clinging to death and mourning, his confused identification of death and life, his quest for immortality, etc suggest how much this character is engaged with the questions of life and death. " At one level the text indicates that Gilgamesh finds a kind of immortality after all, but only the relative

immortality earned by a physical creation – the wall of Uruk – that will outlast him.” (Kovacs, xx) All through the epic, the protagonist is confronted with a struggle to realize the realities of death and the human’s incapacity to achieve immortality. Siduri plays a crucial role in this struggle as she helps him straighten out life from death, and she advises him to enjoy life. Siduri’s speech in the epic expresses a rejection of Gilgamesh’s desire to attain immortality. “ The quest is futile: immortality is reserved for the gods; mankind cannot attain immortality. Hence, enjoy life.” (Maier, 112) Thus, it is essential to comprehend that Siduri helps Gilgamesh transform a grief in the form of clinging to the dead, urge for immortality, etc. and celebrate life through the everyday activities. In a reflective analysis of the questions of life and death in The Epic of Gilgamesh, it becomes lucid that the work establishes that death is essential reality of human life and that immortality is neither possible nor desirable to humans. Gilgamesh’s distressed reaction to Enkidu’s death as well as his realization of the realities of death is central to the entire plot. His quest for immortality is proved to be meaningless and undesirable. “ Through Enkidu’s death Gilgamesh becomes aware of death as a human reality. Enkidu’s death is reflected, as it were, onto Gilgamesh’s human existence.” (Kluger and Kluger, 160) A profound exploration of the underlying themes of the epic suggests that the characters in the story recognize the crude realities of life and death, and it is not desirable for humans to wish for immortality. The only desirable thing is to accept the realities of death and life and to enjoy and celebrate life through the daily activities. Works Cited Kluger, Rivkah Scharf and H. Yehezkel Kluger. The Archetypal Significance of Gilgamesh: A Modern Ancient Hero, Volume 1991, Part 1. Daimon. 1991. P 160. Kovacs, Maureen Gallery. “ Introduction.” The <https://assignbuster.com/gilgamesh/>

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