

# The literary genre of epics and classics

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## The Literary Genre Of Epics And Classics

The literary genre of epics and classics deals with the theme of love, war and adventure, derived from folklore and mythology. The epics like The Iliad by Homer, Aeneid by Virgil, and Epic of Gilgamesh revolve round the same theme. Here, the first part deals with the comparison of the central characters of The Iliad (Achilles), and Aeneid (Aeneas) to unearth similarity between the same. The second part deals with the similarity and response of Gilgamesh (Epic of Gilgamesh) and Achilles (The Iliad), on the loss of their companions.

### Category I: The Iliad, The Aeneid

Both Achilles in Homer's Iliad and Aeneas in Virgil's Aeneid are legendary characters born from an immortal mother and mortal father. They possessed high fighting abilities and were blessed with mighty prophetic swords. These swords were capable to foretell the destinies of Achilles and Aeneas on various occasions. Besides, both these characters were so proud of themselves but they withdrew from the battlefield on different circumstances.

Achilles always tried to increase personal glory whereas Aeneas stood for his state, community and his own family. Achilles asks Thetis, his mother, for aid after Briseis is taken by Agamemnon. In the work- 'The Iliad' by Homer, the words of Achilles to Lord Agamemnon make clear that: "To others give now thine orders, not to me." (Homer 10) Achilles is brave enough to challenge Lord Agamemnon on his behavior towards others without considering his fearlessness and talent. He decides to join the battle in order to keep his fellow soldiers from attaining glory themselves. Aeneas never asks for help but he receives it. Besides being devoted to the Roman state, <https://assignbuster.com/the-literary-genre-of-epics-and-classics/>

he follows the will of gods not thinking about his own matters.

On the other side, Achilles struggles to get rid of his own self pity and anger while the other deals the situation with courage. So, one can easily identify that the similarity between Achilles and Aeneas is in their birth, ability and pride and both of them represent the heroic qualities of their cultures.

#### Category II: Comparative Literature

Both Gilgamesh and Achilles experience similar pain at their loss. Each of them thinks he is losing a part of himself in such a condition. They lose their ability to fight due to stress, anger and sorrow. But the relation between Gilgamesh and Enkidu is quite different from that of Achilles and Briseis. Gilgamesh's friendship and love is deep. He required Enkidu for more than just honor. For instance, in the work 'The Epic of Gilgamesh' by Maureen Gallery Kovacs, during the journey to the Cedar forest, Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu went to sleep for a while. In the night, Gilgamesh was awakened by a dreadful dream and called his companion and said: "Enkidu, my friend, I have had a dream- and the dream I had was deeply disturbing." (Kovacs 31) This incident proves that Gilgamesh was so attached to his companion Enkidu and values his companionship a lot. But Achilles does not love Briseis, which was considered as a reward. The loss of this possession was considered as the loss of his self pride. Achilles did not lament over his loss of Briseis. But he was filled with divine rage and a desire for vengeance. His love was towards his state without any human emotion and it helped him to raise his ego. When Gilgamesh moves towards humanity, the other shows godly tendencies. Both react in harsh ways- Achilles by making Agamemnon suffer and Gilgamesh by searching for a way to end his fear of mortality.

Briseis can be replaced if Achilles gets a woman who brings honor to him but

Enkidu cannot be replaced by anybody. So, one can identify that both Gilgamesh and Achilles feel miserable on loss of their companions. But their response on loss is different because they possessed extreme difference in their outlook on companionship.

So, there exist similarity between Achilles and Aeneas on their birth, ability and pride and both represent the heroic qualities of their cultures. But when one considers bravery and boldness to withstand crucial situations in one's life, Aeneas comes to the limelight of glory. On the other side, both Gilgamesh and Achilles feel miserable on loss of their companions but their response was different related to their character. So, basic instinct is above human character and it is capable to overpower any individual, who is common or legendary, without any difference.

Works cited

Homer. *The Iliad*. Wilder Publications, 2007.

Kovacs, Maureen Gallery. *The epic of Gilgamesh*. California: Stanford University Press, 1989.