

Gilgamesh and egyptian poetry

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1. Gilgamesh could be considered a bad king at the beginning of the epic because he uses his office to bully others and to abuse his citizens. He requires all of the new brides to sleep with him before they are allowed to sleep with their husbands. He threatens and physically attacks any person that does not agree with him.
2. With the entrance of Enkidu, the classic theme of foe becoming friend is introduced. Enkidu is Gilgamesh's equal in so many ways; Gilgamesh seeks initially to vanquish him. But Enkidu is also the epitome of simplicity and loyalty. These attributes soften Gilgamesh and they become fast friends. Gilgamesh lives to conquer, preferably in the limelight so everyone can see his strength. As he matures throughout the story, this tendency fades as he becomes aware of the mortality of all living things. The three themes weave together to add flow to the epic poem.
3. Enkidu is the foil for Gilgamesh because he does not esteem worldly riches or favor. He does appreciate the advantages of civilization, having once been a wild man, but he does not seek for self-aggrandizement as does Gilgamesh. Where Gilgamesh is brazen, Enkidu is cautious and humble. The ultimate foil provided by Enkidu is his death in opposition to Gilgamesh's seemingly indestructible nature.
4. Gilgamesh encounters stone scorpions and a ferryman on his quest to obtain immortality. He is also challenged to stay awake for seven days and six nights. To varying degrees, Gilgamesh fails to overcome each of these obstacles.
5. Gilgamesh's destruction of the ferryman's boat is typical behavior for him. He is used to just shouting and bullying to get his way. In the process, he

destroys the very thing he needs to accomplish his quest. He seems like the type of character that is given to taking action before he thinks through all of the consequences of the action.

6. The gods took council against the humans they destroyed because their service no longer pleased them. Humans were created to serve the gods and do their will, but the gods were not appeased. They regretted their council after they destroyed all the living things of the earth except Utnapishtim, his wife and all the animals, gold, silver etc. Luckily one of the gods told the walls of Utnapishtim's house (not actually the human) that he should build a huge boat to hold all of these things because a flood was coming.

7. Gilgamesh fails to stay awake in paradise for six days and seven nights. He also fails to eat the magical plant that he retrieved from the bottom of the ocean. According to Utnapishtim's wife, Gilgamesh (and all men) are liars, so he could not stay awake in an honest manner. Sure enough, Gilgamesh fell asleep and tried to lie out of it. He failed to eat the plant from the bottom of the sea simply because he did not trust Utnapishtim enough to eat it right away, so a snake came along and ate it before he could.

8. Gilgamesh is an epic hero because he has superhuman strength and a commanding personality. He also sets off on an important quest and comes back forever changed.

9. Akhenaten views himself as the son of the Sun God. Traditionally this was Ra, but this new Sun God was different. He was the Father of all humans, and all those humans are given to the son of the Sun God. You can see this where Akhenaten says, " There in the Sun, you reach forth to the farthest to those you would gather for your Son, whom you love." Akhenaten is

obviously referring to himself because all is given to the pharaoh.

10. A theme that arises again and again in the Leiden Hymns is that of creation and the will of God. They speak of God as being a master craftsman and creating and knowing all. Understanding the might and will of God is important to understanding one's place in creation.

11. The themes in Love Songs all center on the attraction of men and women to one another. They are full of the inner thoughts of lover and would-be lovers. They focus on the erotic and emotional natures of attraction. Women are portrayed as passive, wishful participants while men are bolder in letting their companions know what they find attractive and pleasing.

12. I was not surprised at all by the graphic nature of some of the poems. People are the same in this manner today as they were thousands of years ago. People are attracted to writing that is beautiful and somewhat titillating. There is nothing new under the sun.