

# Sample research paper on literary analysis on virgil's the aeneid

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Virgil's Aeneid is a literary epic and the national story of the Roman Empire. The story is an attempt to link the history of the Roman Empire, and its emperor Augustus Caesar, to the ancient wanderings of the Trojan people to its establishment. By doing so, Virgil hoped to not only create a common national identity of his country's people, but to link this identity to historical symbols that people would recognize, in an effort to legitimize the Caesar and his empire. By doing so, Virgil creates a story on a grand scale that encompasses not only the history of his own people, but of the Mediterranean world as a whole. The contrasting symbolism within the story represent the deep divide between the hopes of these people to find and maintain a prosperous nation, and the realities of the world which lead to war, death, and the loss of this hope.

The ideologies that are presented within the story represent the ideals of Roman society at the time. These presentations express the intentions of Virgil in setting forth a nationally recognized story that would resonate with the Roman people at the time that he wrote the literary epic. In this way, the work is a reflection of the Roman idealizations that he saw as important, and that he wanted to reflect within the work that he created. By imbedding these ideas in the work that he created, although incomplete, he hoped to present these ideals in a way that would be recognized by everybody. " Virgil crafted his epic to stress Roman virtues" (Snodgrass 1). In doing so, he presented a national epic that reflected those of the classical civilizations before his own. This reflection is an attempt to set forth an identity for the Empire that was taking shape during his lifetime. In creating this identity, and cementing it in the ancient world, the goal was to ultimately build

legitimacy for the rule of Caesar, by extending his heritage to a past that all people would recognize.

The work is reminiscent of the ancient epics of Homer, and is indeed intended by its author to be a celebration of those very works. This is due to his attempt to link the culture of his own Roman people to those civilizations that were considered to be the pinnacle of human political achievement. In this way, he was attempting to create legitimacy in the political structure of his own day. By doing so, he hoped to strengthen the empire by solidifying a national identity and cementing this identity in the history of figures that would be recognized by those who heard the stories. The concepts and ideas of the book, in this way, reflect ideas that would have been widespread at the time that the book was written. In this way, Virgil's story had recognition, and can still be recognized as an attempt to address history through the lens of a literary epic.

The wanderings of Aeneas and his struggles to establish a homeland are something that all people of his days would recognize in relation to the works of Homer. In this way, Virgil used the concepts and structures from the earlier works in order to establish an easily recognizable framework for people to relate to when reading the epic. This is an essential element in the way that the story links to the past. Furthermore, the figures and locations that he came across throughout the story would have been recognized by most common people of his time that would have heard the story. In this way, he attempts to historically legitimize the modern Roman Empire in the eyes of those who read the work through the associations he makes between the modern rulers and these historic figures. This association helps to

cement his purpose in the identities that these individuals relate with from the classical myths to the stories that were being handed down to his own day.

Furthermore, the books are an attempt to create a history for the Roman people, and link their ancestry to Troy. In this way, he was attempting to create a historical thread that could link the past to the present. “ As one strategy among many to achieve that end, Virgil sought to link the dynasty of ancient Troy in the person of its surviving prince, Aeneas, with the newly created Roman imperium—and with the victorious heir of a man who, though perhaps emperor in fact, was never emperor in name, Julius Caesar” (Cook 1). By doing so, he hoped to achieve the creation of an epic that would highlight the legitimacy of Caesar’s rule. This is one of the essential elements in understanding the basic strategy of Virgil in constructing his work. The essential ideas, figures, and locales are representations of established norms in classic literary prose.

This is indicated by the fact that Virgil links the ancestry of both Caesar and Augustus to Aeneas. In this way, his literary work is an attempt to link the Roman world of his day to the classical civilizations that came before them. For this reason, many of the literary elements with *The Aeneid* reflect both Homer’s *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, although in the opposite order of how they occurred in those renderings. While the first half of the story represents the struggle for these individuals to find a homeland, the latter half is their struggle to turn the area they find into their home and defend it. In this way, the story is essentially rooted in the notions of conflict, and how violence shapes the political landscape and the destinies of men. The story begins in

destruction, as the movement of the Trojan people is the result of the destruction of their homeland in the Trojan War.

A crucial element in the story is the search for a place to be the homeland of his people. Throughout the story, there are various reasons for him to give up his struggle and either turn back or remain where he was. This element underscores the personification of Aeneas as the ideal Roman, a man who represents not only the steadfastness of their moral character, but the courage that he had in continuously moving forward despite the obstacles or struggles that he faced throughout his journeys. In this way, Virgil was attempting to present the model character for the Roman citizen. This presents the further development of his idealizations and how he was able to convert them to literary form.

The character that Virgil develops in his hero underscores the essential difference between his own works and those previous works that were attributed to Homer. These differences are rooted in the idea of the tragic hero and the quest to seek greatness that might ultimately end in failure. The very character of his hero is, therefore, essentially different than those created by Homer. "Aeneas, the prototype of the Roman leader, is a different kind of hero than either Achilles or Odysseus, and one of the poem's radical concepts is a fundamental redefinition of the essential qualities of heroism and its cost in self-sacrifice" (Burt 1). In this way, Virgil redesigned the fundamental aspects of the epics that everybody recognized and set them out in favor of Roman idealizations and dramatic purpose. In this way, he was attempting to recreate the epics for his own modern audience.

In this way, the Aeneid is an attempt at the creation of a national identity, in

which Virgil presents his ideologies in the form of the characters within the story and the decisions they make and actions that they carry out. These representations are the fundamental aspects of Roman life that Virgil was attempting to address within the story. The ability for the hero to overcome the struggles that he is faced with presents an idealization for individuals who hear the story to relate to and to reach towards. “ Despite the allure and wealth of Dido, widowed queen of the Carthaginians, Aeneas clings to pietas, the Roman concept of responsibility and devotion to duty that motivates the voyager away from temporal pleasures and toward his divine destiny” (Snodgrass 2). The struggles of the hero and his ability to overcome them underscore the idealizations of the Roman people and the idea that their history is based in the epic struggles of histories of the recognized figures that people would recognize by name.

The ideas of sojourn and exile, the seeking to return home, is a fundamental theme in the story. In the aftermath of the violent Trojan War the people whose home was destroyed are seeking to find a new place to settle. This struggle represents an ideal that anybody could relate to, as it is a common story among many nations. In this way, the struggles of the Trojans in the story represents a common struggle that all people take part in throughout history. The search for a home and an identity that can relate to some basis in the past. This idea is present throughout the book, and the underpinning of the violence and dark tragedy throughout set the stage for this dramatic history. “ Virgil searches for the meaning of suffering and death, voicing a deep pity for mankind's woes” (Aeneid 1). In this way, the story is a presentation of the common struggles of all men in facing death, hardship,

and struggling through tragedy. The ability to move forward despite these hardships is the essential element in the character of Aeneas that Virgil was trying to present within the context of the story. By doing so, he hoped to represent the fundamental character of the ideal Roman to his audience. Furthermore, the story is the struggle of men against the elements of the world. This is presented by the struggle that the characters have with the gods that have deemed their fate towards a specific course. This creates a tension in the story that propels the characters forward in their actions. “ There is a deep ambiguity to Virgil, and a deep melancholy” (Adler 1). The deviation from this course is, of course, useless, as the end of his own life has been set by the gods and no action can undo this. The story presents the judgment of the gods over the realm of mortals, and these elements are deciding factors in the outcome of the story’s conflicts. This is a representation of the underlying conflict that permeates the epic. This is the dissidence between the fate that the world, or the gods, have in store for the characters, their struggles against this fate, and the ultimate outcome in which their struggles eventually led them to the fate that they were attempting to fight against.

The struggles of the Aeneid are representations of not only the struggles of the Trojan people, before they settled the land in Italy and created Rome, but also the struggles of individuals throughout history to establish a homeland and maintain their identities throughout the struggles that they encounter. While these struggles shape and inform the heroes of these epic dramas, they further divide them from the civilizations of which they are a part. The further these heroes struggle, and the further they go from home,

the more they stand to lose if they stop or turn back. The fact that Aeneas did not turn back is a demonstration of his moral character and the fortitude that he has as an epic hero. In setting forth these ideas, and presenting a character who is able to maintain his moral fortitude, keep moving forward, and establish his homeland despite the tragedy that awaits him, Aeneas essentially becomes the characterization of the national ideals that Virgil was attempting to set out in his epic. This identity extends to not only the Emperor, whose lineage is demonstrated in the story, but to all the people of Rome, whose struggles were represented in Virgil's epic.

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