

Role of friendship in the epic of gilgamesh essay sample

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The Epic of Gilgamesh, the first and most important epical writing of Mesopotamia, narrates the efforts of finding fame and immortality of Gilgamesh, the king of the city of Uruk, and the advancement of friendship between Gilgamesh and the steppe man, Enkidu. Fame and immortality were the aims of Gilgamesh but friendship was not. While trying to get immortality, he learnt what friendship is and the unnecessary of the other efforts.

The first friendship in the story is not the companionship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Enkidu was as a protector of animals, before knowing anything about the world and he had no differences from animals. The second friendship was with the harlot, which lasted only for a few weeks. This is not an example of a real one but this caused his civilization. After that relation, he became civilized and went to a civilized place, Uruk. Up to this point, neither Gilgamesh nor Enkidu had ever had a real friend that was a man before. Enkidu knew only of animals, and Gilgamesh had never treated anyone as his equal. Both of them had been informed of the future friendship from the harlot and the mother of Gilgamesh. These came from the dreams of Gilgamesh, which were interpreted by his mother, Ninsun. “ It will be a person, she continued.... A companion who is your equal...Will never wish to leave. Gilgamesh was quiet at this interpretation. Of his dream.” (Tablet I)

The formation of the friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu was very interesting and abrupt. Upon the first meeting they fought, abruptly stopped and embraced. At this point, it seems that this friendship started as a benefit relation. Gilgamesh evaluated Enkidu, and found him enough talented and

powerful to be his companion through his aims, getting fame and immortality.

That benefit based relation turned to almost a real friendship, after a few adventures. Because; Enkidu was showing great loyalty and self-sacrifice to Gilgamesh against the events. Especially during the fights against Humbaba and Bull of Heaven, Enkidu devoted his life unexpectedly to save Gilgamesh. By taking part in those battles, he was expressing his friendship. But during these events, the hurt one was every time Enkidu, and the glorious one was every time Gilgamesh. At last, Enkidu took Ishtar's curse, and became ill. But Enkidu had never complained about Gilgamesh, he had complained about the others, such as harlot and Ishtar. At the end, Enkidu was the one who died.

Besides Enkidu's sacrifices, they showed other signs of friendship during the story. They encouraged themselves at hard times. When one of them showed weakness, the other reinforced fearlessness and reminded them of their friendship.

“ No, Enkidu cried; it is the journey

That will take away our life.

Don't be afraid, said Gilgamesh.

We are together. There is nothing

We should fear...

Suddenly it was Gilgamesh who was afraid

Enkidu who reminded him to be fearless.” (Tablet IV)

While Enkidu was in the bed of death, Gilgamesh always tried to support him. After his death, Gilgamesh was distraught with grief. He hadn't done anything but cried seven days in the hope of resurrection of Enkidu. These were the requisites of friendship that must be performed by Gilgamesh. By that way, he also had repaid his debt. ” My younger brother who saved me from, The Bull of Heaven and Humbaba, Who listened to my dreams, Who shared my pain...” (Tablet VII)

Enkidu can be observed as the real character in the first seven tablets, because he was the one who did the incredible things. Actually, he was a character, which was sent by gods to be a friend of Gilgamesh. He was the man, who will teach Gilgamesh the real beauties of the life, by the power of friendship. This friendship had stopped Gilgamesh's arrogant, selfish and harmful behaviors, and turned him to an emotional person who will go Uthanapishtim to look for immortality not for only himself but also to bring back his friend.