

Essay on classical culture: does the character of achilles change

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



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The life and character of Achilles, the greatest warrior, is significantly changed as a result of the things he say (he is a man who means his words and can go to the extremes so as to achieve his mission), the things he does, and the choices he make (the choice of fate of death over shame). His character changes significantly all through the poem due to the sufferings that he goes through including the loss of his greatest friend Patroklos. His decisions, actions and omissions dictate the destiny of other warriors. This is brought out clearly right from his quarrel with Agamemnon all through to the death of Patroklos and Hektor.

Achilles fight with Agamemnon sets off his anger. A plague is put by Apollo on the Achaean soldiers who was killing them off and the only way to stop this is to give back the priest's daughter who was captured. Since Achilles girl is to be given in return of the captured priest's daughter, Achilles honor could be disgraced. So, he pulls out of the war after releasing the priest's daughter. Much of his anger is a direct result of this. However, his greatest anger is seen after the death of his best friend Patroklos

The greatest thing that has shaped the character of Achilles is the death of his greatest friend Patroklos. As a result of this greatest loss, he feels so much lonely and sad. This propels his desire to avenge. His anger is then switched from King Agamemnon to the killer of his friend, Hektor. This anger makes him kill Hektor.

The slaughtering of Hektor, hanging him by his ankles and dragging him around the burial site of Patroklos reveals the extent of anger and how bitter Achilles is. Failing to give the body of Hektor to his father, Priam, for proper

burial, is completely horrible and indicates how inhumane he was. Deciding that Hektor's body is to be eaten by the dogs shows Achilles anger and brutal nature. However, this never came to be as Hektor's body was protected by gods.

Paradoxically, when Priam comes for the body of his son Hektor, he is welcomed by Achilles like a friend. Cease-fire is called so as to give Hektor proper burial. The Achilles depicted here is kind and caring, a complete contrast of the expectation. His thirst for vengeance is completely lost and he accepts to mourn with Priam. This brings out some maturity in him, as compared to the previous nasty dejected Achilles who does not have even a single sense of reasoning.

The principles of Achilles are far much beyond any reasonable doubt all through the poem. He is portrayed as a 'no nonsense' man. We can see this in his argument with Agamemnon. He is brought out as a man who stands his ground, and whose principles are far much beyond the desire for fame.

However, when Achilles allows Patroklos to go into war and refuses to join him, he compromises his morality. It is clear here that he is compromising his loyalty and love for his friend with idiotic pride.

The choice he makes finally is a real hero's decision - the choice of fate of death over shame. The final Achilles is wiser than initially. This is perhaps due to the lessons he has learned - lessons that only death can teach.

In conclusion, Achilles is seen as a horrible and a harsh person who can kill brutally and desecrate a dead body. However, Achilles character changes ironically into a kind and caring person and shows a sign of maturity as he mourns with Priam. Achilles character is also seen to change when he compromised on his principles and allowed Patroklos and his men to go on war without his company. He does this to achieve his foolish pride. Another instance where we see a change in Achilles character is when he decides to surrender the priest's daughter and instead of giving up his girl, he quits the war. This is however not expected from a bold, great warrior like Achilles. A change in Achilles character is also seen when he switches the target of his wrath from King Agamemnon to Hektor, who killed his dear friend Patroklos. With all these changes in character of Achilles we cannot say that he is a static character. He is completely different at the end of the poem from the way he was at the beginning. Death has made him learn a lot of lessons and he looks wiser at the end of the poem than at the beginning. He has learnt to change his stand when conditions dictate him to do so.