

# Achilles, aeneas, and roland

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Imagine living in a turbulent world, where people lived their day to day lives praying that they would see the next sunrise. That was life for villagers that lived during the times of the ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as during the medieval period when Germanic tribes ruled Europe. To help them get through their very insecure days, people would tell oral stories of great heroes, like those of Achilles, Aeneas, and Roland. Achilles was a Greek war hero who fights in the Trojan War, a ten year long war between Greece and Troy (present day Turkey).

Aeneas was an epic hero in ancient Roman folklore. He was a soldier who fought in the Trojan War and after surviving the destruction of Troy, he later founded the city of Rome. Roland was an epic hero of the Franks, a Germanic tribe in present day France. All three of these heroes played vital roles in giving strength and hope to the peoples of their respective cultures. The Illiad was an epic written by a Greek poet named Homer. It takes place in the last days of the Trojan War. Achilles was an integral part of the war.

He helped raise the Greek soldiers' moral, he was an excellent fighter and swordsmen, and he killed Hector, who was the leader of the Trojan forces and son of the King of Troy. It is said that Achilles was half man and half god. He is the offspring of Peleus, King of Thessaly, and the sea nymph Thetis, who had dipped her infant son in the river Styx, thus making him invulnerable except for the heel by which she held him. In the epic, Homer gave Achilles many human characteristics, including revenge, anger, and love.

He even gave him many challenges to overcome. In the beginning of the war, he did not fight because of an affront to his honor that angered him. However struck with grief when his dearest friend Patroclus is killed by Hector, he in revenge joins the war. Throughout the Illiad, this male protagonist is on a quest to reconcile selfhood and communal responsibility. After killing Hector, Achilles shows his humanity by sparing Priam, the King of Troy, when he sneaks in to the Greek camp.

He even grants the kings request by giving back his dead son's body, so that he can have a proper burial. He could have killed Priam and ended the ten year long war, however he chose to act on good virtue and morals and that showed his humanity. Aeneas, the Trojan born epic hero in Virgil's Aeneid, was Rome's mythical founder. His father was Prince Anchiseses, who was the second cousin of the King of Troy, King Priam. His mother was Venus, the god of love, beauty, and procreation.

Like Achilles, Aeneas was also part god, part man. His mission was to gather any survivors from Troy and take them on a journey to Italy, where he will establish the city of Rome. On his journey however they end up settling in Carthage where he meets and has a long affair with the beautiful Carthaginian princess, Dido. While in Carthage, the messenger god, Mercury, leaves Aeneas a message. The message was to remind him to leave Carthage and proceed to Italy and end his love affair with princess Dido.

Despite the fact that he loved Dido very much, his Stoic sense of duty overcomes his desire for personal fulfillment. That is the characteristic of a true hero. He told Dido that he never asked for any of what happened. He

said if he had his way, he would be watching over the city of Troy, and caring for his people. Also, Priam's palace would still be standing. The last thing he tells her was that he goes to Italy not because he wanted to. He was asked by the God's to move to Italy and he will not fail the duties that are installed for him.

That is what makes him a pious man. Roland, the last of the greatest epic heroes, was the nephew of Charlemagne, a Frankish chieftain who was crowned by the pope as " Emperor of the Romans. " In The Song of Roland, Roland was described as a very modest yet arrogant man. He said that he could strike great blows to the pagans with his sword, Durandel. In the story, he faced the challenge of halting the Muslim invasion of France. The Saracens were the Muslims invading France.

He was described as a model medieval hero, because he was a natural Christian leader who was sent on a holy war to stop the Muslims from invading and converting France. He was a noble Frenchman, who died at the hand of power and land hungry, Islamic forces. At the end of the story, it is said that he died while he was chasing away the pagans. To this day, in the 21st century, homo sapiens still write stories about heroes that will save them and society. The number one characteristic that describes a hero is one that has a Stoic sense of duty that can overcome the desire for personal fulfillment.

Achilles, Aeneas, and Roland were all created to create personal comfort for their people that lived in such a hectic and dangerous world. These three protagonists who were viewed by their cultures as gods also showed their

people that they did portray human characteristics (two out of the three even die) and that anyone can be like them if they tried. In a way they were used to inspire their respective residents to be better civilians in their community. If everyone could follow that, than living in a turbulent world would go from reality to fiction.