

# Aeneid



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The concept of 'fate' is arguably the most important theme in, not only book II, but the entire Aeneid. . From the very beginning of the Aeneid Fate decrees that Aeneas must reach Italy with all of his crew and go on to found Lavinium. It is important to realise just what was meant by 'Fate' - this is a completely different idea to that of the Gods. The Gods were not Fate, Fate was not their will. Even Jupiter could not alter Fate; he was merely the instrument to bring about fate of the people.

Fate is also frequently misunderstood; it was not a man's entire life laid out before him, but the start and the finish. He himself could decide the path he took to reach this pre-destined destination, all that was certain was that he would arrive here in the end. Aeneas does not have a choice in these matters; because Fate is final and cannot be altered, even by the gods - this is demonstrated when, after numerous failed attempts to foil Aeneas on his way to fulfilling his destiny, Juno is ordered by Jupiter to abandon her futile struggle against him.

The Gods can, and do, alter the path the man may take, as Juno does, and as Athena does when helping the Greeks build the Wooden Horse, and helping Sinon, the Greek agent, to convince the Trojans to accept the gift. Neptune also sends a sea serpent to kill Laocoon, who was suspicious of the horse. Apollo indirectly worked against the Trojans by giving Cassandra the ability to prophesise but also cursing her by making no one believe her. This resulted in the Trojans not heeding her warnings about the Wooden Horse.

Aeneas' dramatic description of the Fall of Troy shows how in general the Gods opposed the Trojans. In Book II, we see the very rare occurrence of a

God (on in this case, Goddess) directly influencing Aeneas. Venus, his mother, appears to him in her true form (a God or Goddess would usually take the form of another person, animal etc appearing before a mortal, not in their true form. Venus also allows Aeneas to see the other Gods in their true forms as well as herself). She says: " Non prius aspicias, ubi fessum aetate parentem liqueris Anchisen?"

Superet coniunxque Creusa, Ascaniusque puer ? " " First should you not see when where you have left Anchises, tired with age? Whether your wife, Creusa, and your son, Ascanius, are alive? " Venus then make what is, arguably, the biggest intervention by any of the gods, throughout the entire Aeneid; she orders him to leave Troy, an action that is completely against his own will. She says to him " Take flight, son, and impose an end to your toil. I will never be away, and I will set you safe in your father's house", just as she disappears into the shadow of the night.

She orders him to do this as she knows his ultimate destiny, as we shall see later, and that Troy is destined to fall, making Aeneas' current actions utterly futile. Earlier in book II, Aeneas describes Sinon as " divinely protected by an unfair Fate", again agreeing with the fact that Troy was fated to fall to the Greeks. Throughout Book II Aeneas is free to act and follow his different impulses but ultimately his not staying to fight and die is decided for him by Fate.

In this book, Hector and Creusa, and as we have seen, Venus, visit Aeneas in dreams and are representatives of Fate and through them Aeneas finds out that, although he had thought that he had free will the Fall of Troy will

happen as decreed by the Gods. Hector is the first to appear in a dream, telling Aeneas of the events unfolding around him as the Greeks wreak havoc within the walls of Troy themselves, and reminds Aeneas of his destiny. However, he takes it upon himself to ignore this reminder and, upon waking, gathers together a group of warriors and charges into the thick of the battle.

Much later in the book, Aeneas is more inclined to listen to such a warning. Creusa appears to him as a ghost and says to him: " Quid tantum insano iuvat indulgere dolori, o dulcis coniunx? Non haec sine numine divum eveniunt: nec te hinc comitem asportare Creusam fas aut ille sinit regnator Olympi.

Longa tibi exsilia, et vastrum maris aequor arandum : et terram Hesperiam venies, ubi Lydius arva inter opima virum leni fluit agmine Thybris ; illic red laetae regnumque et regia coniunx arta tibi ; lacrimas dilectae pelle Creusae. Non ego Myrmidonum sedes Dolopumve superbas aspiciam, aut Graias servitum matribus ibo, Dardanis, et divae Veneris nurus : sed me magna deum genetrix his detinet oris. Iamque vale, et nati conserva communis amorem" " What use is it to indulge so much in insane grief, o sweet husband? These things do not happen without the power of the gods: Neither is it right that you carry off your companion Creusa from here, nor does that ruler of highest Olympus allow this.

There will be a vast expanse of the sea and the vast expanse of the sea must be ploughed: and you will come to the land of the Evening Star, where the Lydian Tiber flows with a gentle current among the fertile fields of heroes.

There happy things, a kingdom and a royal wife have been laid aside for you, drive away your tears for Creusa. I will not look upon the arrogant seats of the Myrmidons of the Dolopians, nor will I go to be a slave to Greek mothers, I a Dardanian and daughter-in-law of divine Venus: but the great mother Goddess of all gods detains me on these shores.

And now farewell, and preserve the love of our sacred son" This is one of the most important points of the book with regards to fate and destiny. At first, she, as Venus and Hector have done before her, asks Aeneas of the use of indulging in such grief and reminds him that none of this has happened without the divine will. She tells Aeneas of his fate to plough the " vast expanse of the sea" that has yet been unexplored, coming to the " land of the Evening Star".

This land was what we today know as Italy; the country which Aeneas is destined to found. Creusa also hints at little Iulus' fate; to found Alba Longa. We can see that the idea of Fate and the Gods as arbiters of this pre-destined schematics of life are the most recurrent and important themes throughout the Aeneid; as Aeneas becomes involved with one event, ie the siege of Troy, the gods, who know of his fate and as arbiters of it, cause circumstances to conspire to lead to Aeneas leaving to follow his fate.