

# How the aeneid portrays caesar augustus



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

One obvious notion of pro-Augustan propaganda that almost serves as a blunt reminder of the original purpose of the epic shows up in Book Six, where Aeneas travels to the underworld and talks with Anchises. Anchises begins to talk of future heroes of the Roman world, and in the midst of the his prophecy, he begins of Caesar Augustus by saying, "Here, here is the man, Whom many a time thou hearest promised to thee, Augustus Caesar, the son of a being divine. He shall renew once more the Ages of Gold, in the ploughlands of Latium lorded by Saturn of old, Beyond Garamantes and Indians stretching his empire" (6 791-796) This section may obviously be supportive of Augustus, but it is the plain truth of how Augustus wants his citizens to view him. The quote brings up the point that Caesar Augustus is the son of God (Apollo), how he has brought peace among the Roman Empire, and how Augustus has and will continue to spread the empire. The quote also provides a sense of assurance by saying that Augustus was meant to be the ruler before he was even born.

Throughout Book Two of the Aeneid, over the destruction of Troy, Aeneas shows his great characteristic of piety – the loyalty to the gods and to family. In the book, he rescues his father and the Trojan gods, the Penates, from destructive mayhem at Troy – falls by carrying them by himself on his shoulders. These brave acts are clear example of piety. This reflects positively on Augustus, who is also well known for his piety. It is a trait that Augustus spent much of his leadership showing to the people of Rome by creating a more family-friendly and religious city by building more housing, temples, and places for social gatherings. The text shows a connection between both Augustus and Aeneas, where both of these men put piety high

into their priorities. It also prophecies that Augustus will be a great leader for Rome just like Aeneas was for the Trojans.

Another Character trait they both share is that they seemingly lack the desire for power. After showing no signs of wanting to lead others Aeneas says, "From all sides they had come there, ready at heart, with their chattels, for whatever lands I might take them to, over the sea." And Aeneas, even after all the encouragement, hesitated to accept for a while before accepting to be leader of the Trojans. This is an obvious parallel with Augustus. Augustus was extremely reluctant to accept the position of consul several times even though he was elected. Looking at this parallel allows the explanation that in both cases the people unanimously wanted Augustus or Aeneas to lead them, however neither preferred to lead at first. This trait can be looked at in a positive or negative manner, however there is a clear connection between Augustus and the Virgilian character, Aeneas.

However, in Book Four less positive notions are being placed upon the view of Augustus. In her final madness, Dido curses the Roman people for an "unknown avenger" to follow the Trojan settlers fire and with sword, to-day, to-morrow, whenever strength shall be given. (624) It seems likely that she speaks of true events to come. Representing the wars between Rome and Carthage which was to never end until one or the other was destroyed. In Book One, Virgil talks about Carthage describing it as a Republic structure much like Rome's. And since Rome did come out victorious the curse of Dido symbolizes the destruction of Carthage.

Back to Book Two there are some more pessimistic observations within the text. Virgil describes the scenes of the assassination of Priam during the destruction of Troy by saying the following:

Then Pyrrhus replied  
Now die. The trembling old man, who  
slipped in his son's very blood; In his left hand he coiled Priam's hair,  
with his right drew aloft his glittering blade, and sank it in Priam's side  
right up to the hilt. So perished the fortunes of Priam; Such his allotted end,  
to see Troy set afire and Pergamus fallen, he who aforeside was lord of Asia,  
adorned with so many a nation and land. He lies on the shore now, a mighty  
trunk and a head shorn from its shoulders, a body without a name. (545)

The death of Priam marked the fall of Troy. However, this gruesome death is very similar to that of Pompey when he was assassinated by the orders of Julius Caesar. Mills describes the parallel by saying, "As the death of Pompey marked the end of one period in Rome's political struggles, so the death of Priam also marked the end of an age in history." (165)

Therefore, Augustus's father Julius Caesar was the killer Pompey and therefore, ultimately the killer of the Republic. Since Augustus is the adopted son of Julius Caesar, it brings up a negative point towards Augustus by saying that he could become like Caesar and kill anyone one who stands in his way without any remorse against his enemy.

Turnus appears as a somewhat humble character, who initially denies the option of going to war against the Trojans and does retain a lot of pride despite his power. However, the intervention of Allecto, causes him to launch the attack on the Trojans. But, Turnus's humble character is shown at the

conclusion, when Turnus pleads and begs for Aeneas to save his life and keeps no pride. He is unarmed, but is still wearing a trophy item from a man of Aeneas that he killed, thus Aeneas kills him in rage. In the last line of the Aeneid Virgil writes, "He angrily buried his sword full in the breast of his foe; the body of Turnus grew limp and cold, and down to the shadows below, moaning in protest against it, his soul fled away." When looking at Aeneas like he is Augustus, the story ends very pessimistically. Aeneas had gone against his father's word that he should be merciful and this is also very counter-Roman by acting in such a barbaric manner. This is implying Augustus uses tactics that are not respected or supposed to be used by any Roman in order to receive his political power and military strength. Virgil is claiming that Aeneas went about his way to getting his desires in a very immoral manner. Simply put, Augustus receives his power in the same way as Aeneas receiving his reward of the princess Lavinia through the unjust murder of Turnus.

Perhaps one of the most pessimistic, but subtle text is the one about the Gate of Ivory in Book Six. Virgil refers to the journey of Aeneas exiting the underworld. Aeneas has the choice between two specific gates in order to leave the underworld. One called the Gate of Horn which would simply bring him back to the real world and the other is called the Gate of Ivory where those who enter, enter a world of false dreams. And with the guidance of his father Aeneas walked through Gate of Ivory.

When using the representation of Aeneas as Caesar Augustus, Virgil does not view Augustus as a wise man or great hero. By sending Aeneas in the Gate of Ivory Virgil is claiming that Augustus is using his power in a manner that is

virtually filled with false dreams, and that he convincing citizens and senators to follow him by giving them false hope.

This might also create false hope among all of the empire. This text clearly disagrees with almost everything that Augustus stands for. With Anchises guiding him foreshadow of what disappointments are sure to occur. Anchises attempts to warn Aeneas to be merciful to everyone showing how Virgil disagrees with Augustus's methods of unnecessary violence and foreshadows Aeneas killing Turnus.