

The warrior hero essay sample



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BUSTER**

Actor, Christopher Reeve, once said, “ What makes Superman a hero is not that he has power, but that he has the wisdom and the maturity to use the power wisely. A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. ” Everyone has his or her own idea of what makes someone a hero. Sometimes this idea has to do with one’s culture or status in society. Homer’s *Iliad*, and Virgil’s *Aeneid*, use epic literature to present and describe an idealized warrior hero in correlation to their respected cultures.

The Greeks do it for personal honor and glory but the Romans do it as a unit. Homer set the “ standard” for the Ancient Greek warrior hero through his cultural propaganda, *The Iliad*. *The Iliad* is an epic poem with an episodic plot, set during the Bronze Age. It portrays two enemies, Achilles and Hector, on opposing sides during the Trojan War. Although they are bitter enemies, these warriors encompassed similar, hero-like characteristics such as superhuman qualities and abilities, bravery, strength, and courage on the battlefield.

These characters symbolized idealized warrior heroes in the Ancient Greek culture and provided inspiration to the intended audience mostly of 18-25 year old, upper class, Grecian males and females of the twelfth century. The young men were citizen-soldiers, able to afford bronze weapons and armor. This epic inspired these men and was a model of courage, skill, and strength. One must possess these traits in order to attain personal honor and glory. The women used these characteristics as guidelines of what to look for in a mate.

A public hero would give her status in society as the one who is married to him and bears his children. Achilles, referred to as the dominant hero in the Iliad, is the strongest and most fearless Greek warrior against the Trojans in the Trojan War. He is proud and impulsive and gets angered when he thinks that his honor is being overlooked. When he was young, his mother dipped him in the River Styx, which made him invulnerable. His only flaw was his heel, the part that his mother neglected to submerge in the River, which humanized him slightly.

Achilles is faced with returning home to live with his father, but decides to stay at Troy to win glory like an ideal hero should. The male intended audience wished to embody such characteristics as these, which are associated with being the “best”. Hector, the enemy of Achilles, is considered one of the greatest fighters for Troy in the Trojan War. He bestows more human-like qualities than Achilles and is somewhat gentle and interested in peace.

This gentle side is shown between Hector and his wife and son where Hector is referred to as a “loving father” (Homer, Iliad 6. 28). This continued with “and glorious Hector, quickly lifting the helmet from his head, set it down on the ground, fiery in the sunlight, and raising his son he kissed him, tossed him in his arms, lifting a prayer to Zeus” (Homer, Iliad 6. 429-423). This humanized and created sympathy for the enemy from the male and female audience. Homer also places Hector as a strong and noble warrior who wears a “horsehair crest” (Homer, Iliad 6. 429) and is fierce and adamant on the battlefield.

He is faced with the opportunity to stay home and avoid orphaning his son, but he decides to return and fight. This is evident when he states, “ yet I would feel deep shame before the Trojans, and the Trojan women with trailing garments, if like a coward I were to shrink aside from the fighting” (Homer, Illiad 6. 441-443). This motivated the male audience and taught them to be loyal to their cause. A typical Roman male, between 18-20, looking to join the Imperial Roman Army would not understand this “ personal honor and glory” thing. Roman warriors were meant to be more stoic.

A stoic suppresses emotions and would not be tickled by Homer’s attempt at creating guilt in the audience through choosing between war and family. The Roman warrior culture prided on being a moral, practical, and skilled fighter in unity with other Roman warriors, which differed from the Grecian culture. A Roman warrior must do his duty and do it well for the sake of loyalty to his homeland and to his destiny not for honor and glory and a high rank in social status. Virgil’s Aeneid represented a different type of military hero: Roman.

Virgil “ immortalized Rome’s destiny as world ruler” (Fiero 146). The major character, Aeneas, is the mythical founder of Rome and described in the first few lines as a good man who suffers. In this epic literature, Aeneas embarks upon a long journey filled with events that ultimately test if he truly encompasses what it takes to be a Roman hero. Being a heroic Roman warrior is not about self-proclamation and personal honor and glory, it is about being virtuous. Roman warriors must have virtues such as devotion and loyalty to their homeland and to their destiny.

Aeneas practices both of these virtues but must deal with the consequences and rewards they have to offer. This epic poem portrays Aeneas as the idealized Roman hero and citizen of. He is told “ Roman, remember by your strength to rule Earth’s peoples—for your arts are to be these: to pacify, to impose the rule of law, to spare the conquered, battle down the proud (Vergil, Aeneid 4. 1151-1154). His destiny is to lead the Trojan people to the new land in Rome, Italy. Although this is a tough destiny to fill with many difficulties along the way, he does not give up.

Aeneas fights for what he believes in and remains loyal no matter what the cost may be. This gave the male audience of middle class, 18-20 year old, aspiring Roman soldiers what an idealized Roman warrior hero should be and how he should act. Aeneas was a role model and inspired these men to do their duty and complete their destiny without giving up or letting emotions take over. The same Greek audience of 18-25 year old, upper class, Grecian males and females of the twelfth century may not exactly grasp what it takes to be a Roman warrior hero.

The Greek culture was all about achieving “ kleos” – also known as personal “ honor” and “ glory” and striving upon what others knew and thought about each individual in society. Fighting as a Roman warrior would not give these benefits considering the Romans were different in many ways. The Romans prided themselves on their efficiency, morality, and military skills as a unit. What changed in Roman epic literature was that Roman culture was centered on stoicism and suppressing emotions, while the Greeks strived off of how they appeared to society.

All in all, every culture has its heroes. A few examples being Achilles and Hector to the Greeks, and Aeneas to the Romans. A hero is meant to inspire others through his or her actions in relation to the culture. Achilles and Hector showed the Greek audience that personal honor and glory came with being a Greek warrior hero. Aeneas displayed to the Roman audience that being practical and loyal to their destiny and homeland without letting emotions take over is what is took to be the ideal Roman warrior. Although different in many ways, both were successful in their duty.