

Critique of gilgamesh as a king in the epic of gilgamesh



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A Critique of Gilgamesh as a King in The Epic of Gilgamesh There are some characteristics that most great kings have. All of the great kings did not have all of these characteristics, but they had some of them. Gilgamesh did not have many of these traits. Although he was a powerful king, he was not a great king. He had some good traits, such as being a leader, and fighting evil powers. He tormented his people, oppressed them, exhausted them in daily life and in combat, and he gave himself the right to sleep with any unmarried woman. Gilgamesh uses his strength to get anything he wants. He especially uses his power to get women. He "demands to be first with the bride, the king to be first and the husband to follow."(68) To celebrate every newlywed couples, Gilgamesh sleeps with the bride first before letting the husband, which is rape unless the bride consents. In modern times, he would be arrested and maybe jailed for raping all those women. He uses his strength to do this, until Enkidu tries to stop him from entering the newlywed bride's home. Enkidu becomes a great friend to Gilgamesh. He lets him know of his destiny to become a hero and famous. He informs him that his destiny is to kill Humbaba, the "watchman of the forest" who frightens all who explore the depths of the forest.(71) Gilgamesh listens to Enkidu and goes to kill Humbaba. He says, "I will go first although I am your lord."(71) This is a good trait of Gilgamesh being a king because he is showing leadership skills and his ability to conquer his fears. Gilgamesh was selfish; leaving his people to find everlasting life. He did not find it, but he did come across the plant that Utnapishtim told him about. Utnapishtim said, "There is a plant that grows under the water, it has a prickly like a thorn, like a rose; it will wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which restores his lost youth to a man."(116) Gilgamesh was strong enough

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to take a piece of the plant, but a serpent stole it from him, so he went back to having nothing. He always wanted to help himself rather than help his people, which is what a king's job is. Overall, Gilgamesh is a horrible king. His biggest problem is his selfishness. He uses his godly position to obtain whatever he wants. His people are overworked, he rapes women to celebrate their marriage, and he does not work for the people. Gilgamesh was more of a despot should not be considered a great king.