

HOW EFFECTIVE A LEADER DO YOU CONSIDER AENEAS TO BE?

On meeting Aeneas for the first time, he appears to be in a very vulnerable situation as he is in the middle of a storm. This is emphasized by the phrase, “his limbs grew weak” as it puts forward the fact that Aeneas, despite his power and status is like every other normal human being. My first speculation on whether or not Aeneas is a good leader comes from the use of the word “*I*”. In his first speech he says, “Why could *I* not have fallen to your right hand and breathed out my life on the plains of Troy”. Here, although Aeneas is in suffering with all his men, he is selfishly regretting the option of dying a heroic death in the battle of Troy, as it would lead to him to be a figure of great history. This in my opinion does not qualify Aeneas as a good leader, as his actions can be perceived to be self-centred.

Contrary to my first perception of Aeneas, is his sense of dedication. Through this, a positive sign of leadership is presented to us on his arrival “on the coast of Libya”. At this point, he takes it upon himself to search for his missing men. “Aeneas climbed a rock to see if there was any trace of the storm-tossed Antheus”. “Capys perhaps or the Caicus” armour.” Virgil emphasizes Aeneas’ desperation to find his men and his great compassion by the use of the word *Perhaps*. Similarly, Aeneas proves himself to be a very comforting and reassuring character to his men in times of loss.

In his sufferings, he makes it his duty to fend for all his men by finding food for them. “He did see three stags wandering; he stopped in his tracks and *snatched* his bow” and then “he took down three leaders”. Aeneas’ quick thinking is made evident here by the use of the verb, *snatched* as it conveys his abilities to make quick logical decisions, a feature which makes him stand out amongst others. Virgil goes further on to tell us that Aeneas has killed “seven huge carcasses, one for each ship”. This gives an in-depth insight into Aeneas’ sense of organisation and well structured nature.

Self-sacrifice is another quality that Virgil builds in Aeneas’ character, which qualifies him as a good leader.” “He showed them the face of home and kept his misery deep in his heart”. Here Aeneas is able to put his men’s emotions and feelings first in line at the expense of himself as he is aware of their needs at this moment; a figure of strength and good composition. He later has to get away from his men to mourn “the loss of eager Orontes and Amycus”. Through this, Aeneas shows great *Pietas* as he shows devotion to his men and Virgil stresses this by constantly referring to him as *dutiful*.

In Jupiter’s speech about the Aeneas’ destiny, his *Pietas* is further developed, as he is destined to “build walls for his people”. This makes us aware of Aeneas’ loyalty to his homeland and to the men. The language used in this speech reflects Aeneas as a Homeric hero, similar to other great warriors, such as Achilles. “He would wage a great war in Italy and crush the fierce tribes”. The use of the word, *crush*, emphasizes Aeneas’ power, might and fearlessness over their enemies. Considering the time in which the poem was written, Aeneas would have been a figure of great gratitude due to the fact that he is the preserver of the Trojan race. One can argue that the wiping out of this so-called “fierce tribes” is disadvantageous on the path of Aeneas’ character as it presents him as inconsiderate. This

is because he himself has experienced such misfortune of losing a homeland and should therefore not be the person to deprive others of theirs.

Aeneas makes his cautious nature in the book 1 which, informs us about his concern for the security of his men and himself. "They burned with longing to clasp the hands of their comrades..., but stayed hidden in their cloak of cloud." This emphasizes his cleverness, as he is able to withhold his feelings and emotions in case of any danger. In this instance, while Aeneas is hidden in his Venus' fog, he confirms the possibility of any safety and help from Dido by examining "Antheus, Sergestus, brave Cloanthus and the other Trojans", as they have come to "plead their case". Another example of Aeneas' cautious nature is when he leaves "the ships hidden in the wooden cove under the overhanging rocks" in case there is any form of harm or destruction.

Aeneas' character is further proved as a very good leader by the speech by Ilioneus. "Our king was Aeneas. He had no equal for his piety and his care, for justice, and no equal in the field of battle". Here Virgil, through the character of Ilioneus creates a balance in between the two extremes; the typical Homeric hero, whose main source of leadership is through physical strength and the other, whose leadership is based intellect and personality. This further delineates Aeneas' uniqueness and Virgil skills as a good writer. In my opinion, this is what would make Aeneas likeable by people today and the people who Virgil was writing to.

In book 2, Aeneas begins to present a case against himself by admitting to his lack of knowledge and stupidity. The first action put forward is when he accepts the fact that he himself and all the other Trojans had been very gullible to the lies and cunningness of Sinon. "We carried on and paid no heed" and "we spared him and began to pity him". Contrary to the earlier perception of quick thinking and cleverness, Aeneas' thought does not drift to the possibilities that Sinon is a tool of the evil of the "Greek arts and stratagems", neither does he consider the sayings of the "Laocoon" or Cassandra as truth.

Furthermore, Aeneas' disregard for the advice of Hector in his significant supernatural omen and Panthus to escape portrays his lack of caution, a careless sign of leadership. "Mindlessly I put on my put on my armour... and suddenly it seemed in a noble thing to die in arms". Virgil stresses here once more, Aeneas' stupidity with the use of the word, **mindlessly** as it makes evident his lack of straight- thinking. Also, once more, we are faced with this selfish thinking of dying a heroic death, not with the intentions of saving the land, but the desire to be remembered in history.

Finally, Aeneas unfair treatment and little consideration for the safety and well- being of his wife, Creusa counts as a disadvantage on his path as a good leader, as it makes evident his injustice and biased nature. "Young Iulus can walk by my side and my wife can follow in my footsteps at a distance". This is because he is prepared to treat his father, Anchises and son, Ascanius with more respect and love, probably due to the fact that they have a form of blood linkage or rather, the fact that Creusa is a woman. As expected, Creusa is lost in the escape route is "never seen again".

In conclusion, I particularly think that Virgil succeeds in presenting a good leader, as he is able to take responsibilities for all his actions no matter the enormity. This view of mine is exemplified by the fact that Aeneas is able to admit and also tell a true tale of all his

mistakes to Dido, bearing in mind that he is trying to win over her sympathy and also the fact that she is going to draw a conclusion on his character based on his past history.