

Essay #3

Epic/ Heroic poetry can be easily defined through comparing and contrasting the exploits and relationships of the characters Achilles and Partrioclus from the Iliad and that of Gilgamesh and Enkindu. Their relationships furthermore help to define heroic/epic poetry through their similarities and differences. The characters also help in clarifying this definition in both the idea and nature of their heroism. Both Gilgamesh and Achilles also reiterate the definition of heroic/epic poetry by their differences and similarities in their own styles of heroism. By tracing these elements of the two heroes and their relationships with their close friends, not only is the definition of epic/heroic poetry clear, but the fundamental differences between epic poetry and lyrical poetry become evident.

The exploits of both pairs of characters from the two stories help define epic/ heroic poetry, because the exploits of both characters fall in line with the definition of epic/ heroic poetry. Epic poetry is known as the one of the earliest forms of literature and was first told orally and then latter written down. These stories were about heroes that show godlike qualities, personal power, patriotism and loyalty. We find that both pairs possess these qualities, in some of the same ways and in some ways that are different. At the beginning of the pair's adventures we see a difference the reason of what they are fighting for. Gilgamesh had just gained a friend that was similar to him and he wanted to go out and make a name for himself by conquering the unconquerable. Achilles however, was fighting to bring home the beautiful woman of their land. Through the exploits we see more differences, Achilles is driven by war and pride for his country and through this he obtains greatness. Whereas Gilgamesh goes out in search of greatness for example, in Gilgamesh's and Enkidu's first adventure they cut down the cedar forest just to defy

Humbaba and prove they can do it. A similarity is seen along Gilgamesh's quest for recognition and Achilles quest of for control of what was rightfully his, both end up losing a friend. Both men take the fault on themselves for the loss of their friends. Achilles believes that it is his fault because when Patroclus dies he is wearing Achilles armor. Gilgamesh thinks that the death of Enkidu is also his fault because he turned down the Goddess that in turn killed Enkidu. Even though they have their differences and similarities, both relationships express qualities of epic/heroic poetry.

The definition of heroic/epic poetry is also evident in the area of loyalty, this is shown in the relationship similarities and differences that Gilgamesh has with Enkidu and Achilles has with Patroclus. We see that the relationships that both heroes have are the same, in that they stay true to their friends even after death. In this part is where we also see a difference in their loyalty. Gilgamesh's approach to dealing with the grief of Enkidu's death is to find immortality and try to bring Enkidu back to life. Achilles' approach to dealing with Patroclus' death was to risk his life and reenter the war for vengeance. The relationships are similar in that women play a part in both of the pair's lives and the deaths of their companions. Enkidu is brought into Gilgamesh's life because he gives himself to a harlot who tames him and is then ironically taken out of Gilgamesh's life because Gilgamesh won't give himself to a woman. Achilles is fighting for a woman and in turn Patroclus is killed because he is thought to be Achilles because of the armor he is wearing. A difference in the relationships of the pairs is seen in what they mean to each other. Enkidu is brought to Gilgamesh to be his downfall, but through Gilgamesh's strength Enkidu is won over and they become friends for what they can do for each other egotistically. Whereas Patroclus has been a longtime friend of Achilles and their friendship and loyalty was built over time.

The definition of epic poetry is shown through the nature of the four characters' "heroism" because through this they display godlike qualities and personal power. They all show "heroism" through their godlike qualities because of their direct association with God's of their time. A similarity in the heroism exists because of the mortality of the companions of Gilgamesh and Achilles. A similarity is that both Enkidu and Patroclus had God-like and heroic characteristics, thought to exist because of their friendships. Another similarity is found in the way this is proven untrue. It seems as though the Gilgamesh and Achilles carry on and act as though they are immortal because of their greatness in battle and part-Goodness. Through the death of their friends they realize that these are not qualities that they possess and this leads them down different roads, which in turn brings them death. For Gilgamesh this brings the fame that he searched for, but cost him his life. For Achilles, true vengeance came with the price of his own life. Either way these characters ends fulfill the qualities of heroic/epic poetry.

Achilles heroism is different than Gilgamesh's because his purpose is different. Achilles has a reason to fight; he cares not what people think of him, but fights for what he believes, and has an army to back his cause and therefore is looked upon as a hero by his people. Gilgamesh goes out alone in search of his fame and glory hoping to create a legacy. Gilgamesh stakes a claim as a hero by creating the situations that make a hero. It seems as though if these two stories took place in the same era, that Gilgamesh would be after Achilles head for fame of having the upper hand over another god-like being.

Gilgamesh and the Iliad with both their plot and character similarities and differences help to create the definition of epic/heroic poetry. Both these stories show characters with god-like qualities, personal power, patriotism and loyalty. Each story's characters and plots express these ideas differently in the way that the stories are carried out, but they do possess the qualities

that make up such a story. Fundamentally after breaking down epic poetry it is easy to see how it differs from lyrical poetry. Lyrical poetry is much more universal in time and subject matter. It describes love, and feelings that are unchanging through time. To compare the two, the ideas of epic poetry are outdated, for example we don't look up to George Washington as a God-like person even though he was a great warrior. With lyrical poetry however, we can read it anytime and compare the issues to issues in our own lives.

Essay #2

The shield that Hephaestus makes for Achilles depicts Greek culture of both the Heroic and Homeric age and also foreshadows the future of the Greek civilization. The shield and its significance also seems to presage the coming of the Golden Age of Athens in its details. There are many reasons also as to why Homer took such pains to include this telling description of Greek culture though this poem. Homer's description of the Greek culture is accurate in it has all the ages combined because in the detailed description all the ages work together to form the shield as do they to make the Greek culture. He uses the knowledge that he has of the past, depicts the era that he is living and uses all of this to project the future.

The shield that Hephaestus made for Achilles depicted the culture of the Heroic age in several ways. The shield depicts the whole world and all of its entities as well as the mortal people that lived there and their civilization. The types of interpretations that are on the shield that represent the Heroic Age are those of the city at war. There are several very descriptive areas that the shield depicts that are very common of war time. A dispute over the death of a man and what exactly caused it and who there is to blame is a perfect illustration of this time. It also seems that there is always peace that surrounds war to remind the people of what the men are

dying for. It also seems that the agriculture is there also to remind the civilization of their roots and what brings them their prosperity. It isn't evident that there is a hero in this area of the shield, because I think that Achilles is the hero and he holds the shield as it is a key to the peaceful future.

I also think that there are areas on the shield that Homer is trying to describe the time that he is living in. These times seem to be those in between the city at war and the city at peace. This is era of coming of age for the Greek society. They aren't exactly dancing celebrating the prosperity yet but, they aren't in a terrible war anymore. Homer seems to think that the world is most beautiful when it is at peace, but he still glorifies bravery of men at war and their heroic deed. I think this shows a time where the Golden Age is on the horizon, but ties still bind them to the ways of the past.

Through the depiction of the city at peace, Homer is describing the Golden Age of Athens. This is a point in time where the city is most prosperous and the people are living in peace and happiness. A wedding procession on the shield is a perfect picture of this. In this city it seems to me what is happening, is exactly what the soldiers at war were fighting for. There is a flourishing economy and an up rising of education and culture. It's befitting that the city of war is in the middle of the city at peace, almost as a constant reminder of where they came from and be sure not to fall back into it.

Homer took such time and pain to depict all of this in Achilles shield not just as a beautiful lyric but also for a power learning tool. I think the reason behind his detailed description was to educate on the beauties of peace and not war. He made the shield a full circle to symbolize the importance of learning from history, and trying not to repeat it. I also believe that this circle representation was done to show the people just how far they have come and to

show them how far they can go. I also think Homer could have completed such a detailed description to show the people of his time, that they have a lot to look forward to and the Golden Age was coming,

I think that Homer was most accurate in his description of the Golden Age and the future of Athens. His description of the Heroic Age was more toward the negative and he depicted mostly the evils of it. I don't think that everything about that time was dark and that it had no heroes, because Achilles lived then and brought some hope during that time. I think that Homer was most accurate in describing the Golden Age because of the prosperity of the people and how fast they advanced in all aspects of society. I think that Homer described the Greek civilization as it was, one of the greatest civilizations of all times.