

Intro to Humanities Final

Every story has a purpose; a meaning. In the books we've read this semester, these stories are told through the lives and eyes of many different kinds of heroes. Through their trials and tribulations these heroes deliver many messages to readers that make them think about themselves and ideals they believe in. By reading about a character's experiences we sometimes can better understand and evaluate our own.

One of the many lessons Gilgamesh learns in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is not only what love is to him, but the power of love as well. Through his encounters with Enkidu, the friends push each other to evolve into better people. Gilgamesh pushes Enkidu to become less self-centered, and Enkidu teaches Gilgamesh how to control his need for power and violence. Through their friendship, Gilgamesh and Enkidu become better friends and leaders as well as teach each other what love truly is through their friendship. Many may argue that Gilgamesh and Enkidu were more than just friends, but no matter what the case it is clear through their interactions that they have a very deep love for each other. They learn that love is more about a sense of fulfillment rather than just physical, as it had been portrayed in the beginning of the novel (Enkidu becoming a man by having sex, Gilgamesh sleeping with brides before their marriages, etc.). In the story, love through friendships is also seen as more powerful than romantic love, an ideal that Gilgamesh proves in tablet VI when he is being pursued by Ishtar, the goddess of love and fertility. When Ishtar proposes to Gilgamesh he replies poignantly, "What shall I give you if I take you to wife?...What would I get if I marry you? You are a...weak stone that undermines a wall...Which of your lovers lasted forever?" (pg. 47, lines 24-42). Gilgamesh explains to Ishtar that he will reject her because she has been cruel to all of her past human lovers and he has nothing he could give to her, as she is a goddess and can have anything she could want. Gilgamesh declining this offer to marry Ishtar shows his newfound knowledge of love as being more than physical, one of the main lessons Gilgamesh learns and carries with him that leads him to become a more compassionate and understanding ruler.

In *The Odyssey*, the heroic protagonist Odysseus learns that when it comes to strengths, a powerful mind is better than a powerful body. In the story Odysseus conquers many obstacles by using his wit, an example being escaping the cyclops by tricking him into blinding himself. This is one of the main lessons we learn in the book, and Odysseus's encounter with Achilles in book 11 in the Underworld solidifies this ideal. In this quote the two men are musing which one has the better life, Achilles the hero in the underworld, or Odysseus on Earth. "But you Achilles, there is not a man in the world more blessed than you...I would rather slave on earth for another man...than rule down here over all the breathless dead." (pg 265, lines 547-558). Achilles explains that whilst he is regarded as a hero (due mainly to his acts of strength), something Odysseus strives to be, that he would much rather have a longer life, which Odysseus has achieved through cunningness rather than strength. This shows that in the long run, wit is more powerful than brute strength.

The Hobbit is a story that shows the transformation of one hobbit, Bilbo, from timid and insignificant to confident hero. The story preaches not to judge a book by its cover and that the most likely to succeed is the seemingly unlikely. The moment to me that encompasses Bilbo's