Aeneid Analysis Essay, Research Paper

Aeneid Analysis

The definition of an epic hero is : a figure of imposing stature, of national or international importance, and of great historical orlegendary significance. Aeneas fits this definition perfectly. Aeneas fits this definition perfectly. Aeneas’ character is one of great importance. Known far and wide for his many achievements and adventures, Aeneas receives, appropriately, an incredible amount of respect and admiration from many significant characters throughout this book. As far as history and legend goes, Aeneas plays a huge role in both of these. Aeneas influences history through his adventures which are eventually excepted as Rome’s national epic, teaching generations to come. Also, Aeneas holds an enormous stake in legends. As a part of legendary literature, Aeneas’ adventures come to life, contributing greatly to the legends of today. Aeneas’ life is strongly influenced by the many, and often opposing, gods. Throughout his journeys, Aeneas is affected, both positively and negatively, by the gods. Venus, the goddess of love and mother of Aeneas and Cupid, is one of these influences. As a concerned mother, Venus desperately longs for her son’s safety and goes to extreme lengths to aid him and

keep him unharmed. One major action she takes that dramatically impacts Aeneas is to conspire her other son, Cupid, to create a love between Aeneas and Queen Dido of Carthage. Wishing to keep Aeneas from harm along his fated journeys, she used Dido as a distraction to keep Aeneas in Carthage. Aeneas’ sudden love for Dido does keep him in Carthage for some time and takes his thoughts away from his fate and upon his new love. Aeneas’ unnatural love is also encouraged by Juno, the wife of Jupiter (King of the gods) and queen of the gods. Juno does not wish Aeneas to fulfill his destiny. Juno’s favorite city is Carthage and Juno knows Rome’s fate is to destroy Carthage someday. If Aeneas fulfills his destiny, Rome will become powerful enough to destroy Carthage and Juno wants to stop this. So, Juno purposely stands as an obstacle to Aeneas in every way she possibly can. Mercury, yet another god, involves himself with Aeneas and Dido’s love. Mercury comes to Aeneas and reminds him his destiny is not with Dido but

lies elsewhere. It is then that Aeneas again begins to follow his destiny. Jupiter, the king of the gods, also plays a large part in Aeneas’ adventures. Jupiter is the god in charge of fulfilling destinies. Aeneas’ destiny, of course, being instrumental to the

story and more specifically important to Aeneas himself, is obviously key to the plot line. Jupiter is also the only god in the story with the supreme power. He is the one completely in charge of the happenings on earth. So, Jupiter was primarily responsible for Aeneas’ destiny. Throughout the story, Aeneas is constantly affected by the gods in such dramatic ways as these. This is instrumental in understanding Aeneas’ decisions and actions. Dido

Being a successful and effective Queen of Carthage, Dido was a strong woman. Her power is exhibited in the first scene we are introduced to her. In this scene, without being aware of Aeneas’ presence she is generous with Aeneas’ men by treating them as her own devoted subjects with no bias. This portrays to the reader a genuine sense of goodness and kindness and sets up an admirable relationship with this character. Dido goes through quite a bit of emotional turmoil throughout her life and within this story. Having lost a husband and vowed to never love another again, her confusion and dismay with having fallen

in love with Aeneas is understandable. Dido invokes a certain amount of pity from the audience because she has little control over her love for Aeneas, because of Cupid.

Dido is a powerful woman and this is exhibited through the description of her lands and her court. But her power can notcontrol fate. Her intense anger and unhappiness when Aeneas leaves her is understandable. Her intense love for Aeneas could not keep him with her. She had given herself to him fully and now he leaves her. This explains her angry curse she places upon Aeneas in her fit of rage. Having lost the only two men she had ever loved, Dido sees no alternative but to commit suicide. This portrays Dido’s weaker and more vulnerable aspect.

If the story had not been about Aeneas and if the war had been seen from Turnus’ side, Turnus would have been the hero. Turnus, the Rutulian prince, was a brave and fierce warrior. He defended his cause till the end and took pride in himself. He

was courageous. All these are characteristics of a hero. But Turnus was against Aeneas and his motives were purely selfish. Turnus was used as the enemy. Although both were heroes in their own right, their heroic qualities were viewed quite differently. Turnus was not only selfish, but cruel and unmerciful as well. This leads the audience to their distaste for the harsh character.

Within the poem, Aeneas encounters many conflicts. He has a conflict with his father, Anchises. Conflict arises in Aeneas because of Dido and Jupiter. The final and most obvious conflict is between Aeneas and Turnus. The reason that these conflicts occur is because of the battle between love and fate. Aeneas father, Anchises, refuses to leave their home in Troy. He feels that it is his destiny or fate to die there. Aeneas has

the choice to leave his father or stay with him. Aeneas refuses to leave him because he loves him too much to let him die. A character who is not strongly bonded by love for the hero would not have caused such a conflict. Aeneas could simply leave him there to die. Aeneas is acting out of love while Anchises is acting out of destiny. These two components in the poem cause conflict. When Aeneas is with Dido, she assumes that the two were bonded by love. It is made clear that he is now her husband,

therefore he can t leave her. Then Jupiter steps in and tells Aeneas that it is his destiny to leave Dido and lead to the founding of the city of Rome. Aeneas is now faced with the conflict of following his destiny or staying with his love. Dido has a strong

hold of love for the hero, making his decision very difficult. In this conflict, Aeneas is acting out of fate and Ddido is acting out of love. Turnus has a very physical conflict with Aeneas. Aeneas wants to settle in Italy so that he can lead to the founding of the city of Rome. Therefore, he wants to fufill his destiny. Turnus doesn t want his homeland invaded by the Trojans. He loves his country too much to let it be taken over by a foreigner. Both men fight each other in order to defend their own purpose. A big

war follows causing the conflict to be a very strong one. Aeneas acts out of fate and Turnus acts out of love. There are some major conflicts in the poem. There is one between Anchises and Aeneas. Another one involves Dido and Jupiter with Aeneas being caught in the middle. The most physical conflict is between Turnus and Aeneas. All of these

conflicts occur through the battle between fate and love.

The epic poem, The Aeneid, was written by Virgil as a glorification of ancient Rome. The references to the people in the journey to Hades (Book ) were people who Virgil admired to try to bring Rome back to their original roots in Rome. Virgil includes themes that allow the reader to explore ancient Rome in a depth that could not be achieved by simply writing a chronology of Rome. The first theme that we will explore is fate and destiny. Aeneas is told (in Book I of The Aeneid) that he is destined …for Carthage to become the capital of nations, if the fates would just consent… (Book I, lines 28-50). After the publication of Virgil s most famous epic, the story of the quest to form the capitol of nations turned into a pseudo-religion, attracting all people to dive deeper in depth into ancient Rome.

Human nature and love also played a large part in the epic. In Book II, Aeneas is enticed into falling in love with Dido, queen of Carthage. This ends in tragedy, as many future works would (i.e. Shakespeare s Romeo and Juliet). Linked with this love

is the first theme that was explored, fate and destiny. Virgil writes: Dido-doomed to face catastrope-can t sate her soul,inflamed by what she sees (Book II, lines 994-1007). The love ends when Aeneas sails off and Dido kills herself with

Aeneas sword. The final theme that we will explore is death. To anyone who has even read a shortened version of The Aeneid can see that death occurs in every book of the epic. The many deaths that occur during the story all wind down to the final death–Aeneas

getting revenge on Turnus for killing his good friend and warrior, Pallas (Book XII).