



# Chapter 7

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Epic of Gilgamesh



# Gilgamesh Notes

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Gilgamesh: world's first superhero

Ruled Uruk, one of largest cities of Sumer (2600 BCE)

Described as wild, self-centered man who fights a monster named Humbaba in a far-off land

Wanted to be famous

Gilgamesh kills monster, welcomed back to his city in triumph

Goddess of Ishtar falls in love with him

He rejects and insults her

Gods punish Gilgamesh for his pride and strike his partner, Enkidu, with a disease

Gilgamesh has a dream in which he “sees” life after death

Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh refused to allow him to be buried

hoped his friend would “come back to life”; finally he accepts his friend's death

Gilgamesh longs for immortality to escape death

# Notes Continued

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Rejects a wise innkeeper's advice that he'll never find immortality

Meets Utnapishtim who tells him about a flood that the god of Ea told him was coming

Utnapishtim had built a huge boat and boarded it before the flood began

God of Ea had promised him immortality but Gilgamesh could never be immortal because the gods promised never to flood the world again

Utnapishtim tests Gilgamesh: stay awake for 7 days but Gilgamesh SLEEPS for 7 days!

Utnapishtim gives Gilgamesh clues to a plant that could make him young again

Gilgamesh finds it, is careless and leaves it, it is stolen by a snake

Sin-leqe-unnini's story ends with Gilgamesh going home

Realizes he is content with living a mortal life

# Aftermath

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Mesopotamians talked of Gilgamesh for 1500 years before Sin-leqe-unnini recorded it in his 3000 line poem

Music probably accompanied storytellers as they told Gilgamesh's story

Probably done at Mesopotamian banquets

Gilgamesh a story of ideas

What is a hero? Why do people die? What is the meaning of friendship? How can we live the good life?

# Words to Know

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Eanna: Sumerian residence of Ishtar

Teeming: giving birth to, producing

Aruru: Ninhursag? (Ninmah, Mami) Earth fertility goddess

Zikru:

Zikrtt:

Ninurta: god of hunting and war

Ashnan: goddess of grain

Sumukan: god of animals

Igigi: Younger sky gods, created by Marduk (the “complaining stars”...)

# Discussion Questions

1. Who is the most immortal character: Enkidu, Gilgamesh, or Utnapishtim?
2. Is Gilgamesh justified in his fear and obsession with death? Why or why not?
3. How are gods/goddesses portrayed in the story? Why are they portrayed this way?
4. How do you feel about where and how the story ends? Does Gilgamesh “repent?” Could the ending have been “better?”
5. What does the story teach about justice? Can we find justice in this story? If so, where? If not, why?
6. Is Gilgamesh a “hero?” Why or why not?
7. What does the story seem to say is the best way to live?
8. Is Gilgamesh a good king or a bad king?
9. To what extent is it meaningful/ distracting to discuss Biblical parallels in analyzing the Epic of Gilgamesh?
10. Was Utnapishtim’s test for Gilgamesh a fitting one?