

First & Last Name

Professor Martin

World Literature I S.01

26 January 2005

Text: *Gilgamesh*

Passage: “Siduri said to him, ‘If you are that Gilgamesh who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, who killed the watchman of the cedar forest, who overthrew Humbaba that lived in the forest, and killed the lions in the passes of the mountains, why are your cheeks so starved and why is your face so drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey? Yes, why is your face burned from heat and cold, and why do you come here wandering over the pastures in search of the wind?’” (Gilgamesh 32)

Question: At the beginning of *Gilgamesh* we see a king who is strong and powerful, yet here we see one who is weak and broken; what series of events causes this lost of favor with himself?

Issue: Issue of cause and effect. The question ask that the reader examine Gilgamesh at both the beginning and ending of the poem, and then track his progression along the way so that they might be able better grasp not only his journey but the effects that it has had. Issues of cause and effect deal primarily with gaining a better understanding of a characters behavior, so this naturally leads itself to the question at hand. This particular issue will help the reader to examine Gilgamesh’s action and come to their own conclusion of how he got to where he is at this point in the poem.

Critical Approach: The Postcolonial approach works best for this question since it deals with literary stereotypes and their experiences that force them to become damaged. Gilgamesh, who is a tragic hero, suffers a series of blows that force him to reexamine his own existence. It is this fact that allows the Postcolonial approach to be affective.

Answer: One can easily claim that it is the death of Enkidu which forces Gilgamesh into a world of self-inflicted torment. While this event might be the catalyst to Gilgamesh's self-destruction, it is not the only source of his pain. He can no longer see himself as he once did, a God among men. Gilgamesh now knows that being two thirds god is not enough, and it is this that sparks his journey. In the passage presented, we see one of the all knowing gods doubting Gilgamesh's claims to who he is; his appearance is no longer that of who he used to be. As Gilgamesh allows himself to see more and more of his human qualities, he begins to lose touch with what made him so great. He no longer sees the powerful and awe inspiring demi-god, but instead a human who cannot escape the trappings of humanity. The weakness he feels on the inside now manifests itself on the outside with his appearance. He is a man who is deeply tortured by his own mortality and his inability to fully protect those closest to him, despite all of his power he was not able to save Enkidu. Like all tragic heroes Gilgamesh has a tragic flaw, his was the overestimation of his powers, which leads to his struggle in accepting who he is.