

First & Last Name Doe

Dr. Martin

ENGL. 2332

22 September 2005

Text: *Iliad*

Passage: “But King Agamemnon answered him in haste, ‘True, old man — all you say is fit and proper — but this soldier wants to tower over the armies, he wants to rule over all, to lord it over all, give out orders to every man in sight’” (1.335ff).

Question: How does this exchange between Agamemnon and Nestor illustrate the negative effect of the Heroic Code?

Issue: Issue of social policy. The *Iliad* is centered on the Heroic Code and the influence that code exerted over the lives of the Greeks and Trojans. Unlike modern writers, Homer chooses not to romanticize the act of war. In this epic poem he shows the negative side of humanity, the rage, desperation, and greed that humans fall prey to from time to time. Power and aggression take precedence over wisdom and righteousness. In this manner, Homer illustrates the negative aspects of a society built on a heroic code.

Critical Approach: The reader-response approach works best on this passage since it deals with the response a reader will experience over time. Homer used the arrogance and aggressiveness of Agamemnon in this passage and ties it to the heroic code through the preceding argument with Achilles. This association, over time, should lead the reader to question the wisdom of their commanders when their authority and right to command is based on the heroic code.

Answer: Agamemnon is a bad military leader. He does not have the respect of the warrior under his command; nor does he respect or even consider external idea. Agamemnon is greedy and arrogant; looking for absolute power and authority over all man. The power Agamemnon exerts is granted by the warriors that follow him and put their faith in the heroic code. The ideals of good and evil and questioning the righteousness of an action are not mentioned in the code. The warriors are expected to follow their leaders into battle and when victorious collect mementos to increase their honor. The code does not allow the warriors to question the motives of their leaders or even require that they agree with the reason the war is being fought. As a result, one man's blood lust and homicidal tendencies can destroy the lives of thousands.