The Aeneid

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF VIRGIL

No biography of Virgil from his time survives, but scholars have pieced together his probable life story from commentaries on his works. He was probably from a well-off, landowning family, because they had the money to send him to study throughout Italy. He studied primarily philosophy. At around age 28, he began writing his first major work, the *Eclogues*, a collection of ten pastoral poems. On the surface, these poems are about singing shepherds and countryside life, but they already contain the themes of love, heartbreak, and loss of homeland that run throughout so much of Virgil's work. His second major work, the *Georgics*, follows the form of earlier didactic Greek works, supposedly teaching lessons about farming. Again, though, the *Georgics* are more complex than they first seem, as the work shifts between praising the ease and joy of farming, and highlighting the tragedies of disease and natural disasters. Virgil worked on the *Aeneid* from approximately age 39 to his death at 50. He cared so much about its perfection that he reportedly only wrote a few lines a day. He died of an illness he caught on a trip to Greece before he'd finished revisions.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Virgil composed the *Aeneid* during a turning point in Rome's history. The old system of the Roman Republic, governed by two leaders called consuls, had crumbled during the time of Julius Caesar. First, Caesar had unofficially set up a three-man leadership system called the Triumvirate. After a civil war, Caesar had proclaimed himself the sole dictator of Rome. Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC by men who wanted to preserve the Republic. Octavian, a young man who had been adopted into Caesar's family, created the Second Triumvirate along with Marc Antony and Lepidus to avenge Caesar's death. The Second Triumvirate was successful and divided rule of the Roman Republic between themselves, but soon began to fight. Octavian, now called Augustus, defeated Lepidus and sent him into exile, and defeated Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium, after which Antony and his wife Cleopatra committed suicide. By 31 BC, Augustus was the sole ruler of Rome, changing the Republic into an Empire. A smart and image-conscious leader, he ushered in a 200-year-long period of peace, and the arts flourished under his reign. Virgil, Ovid, and Horace wrote poetry, and Livy wrote his monumental history, in this era now called the Golden Age of Latin literature.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Greek oral legends perfected and recorded by Homer probably around 600-800 years before Virgil) hugely influenced the *Aeneid*, in structure, topic and even meter (both poems are in dactylic hexameter). Indeed, Virgil deliberately tried to create for Rome what the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were for Greece: an epic about a great hero to define and ennoble his nation. Like Homer, Virgil wrote about a war and Mediterranean wanderings, though he switched Homer's order, describing wanderings first and war after. The Trojans in the *Aeneid* travel to many of the same places as Homer's Greeks, such as the Cyclops's island, the strait of Scylla and Charybdis, and the Underworld. To a lesser extent, the texts share some characters—though Ulysses, Achilles and Hector only get a few mentions in the *Aeneid*. In fact, Aeneas himself is a character from Homer. In the *Iliad*, Aeneas appears as a captain in the Trojan War and both Apollo and Neptune save him for his destined future as leader of the Trojans. Other Roman authors also wrote stories about Aeneas before Virgil, but none came close to the *Aeneid* in creativity and influence.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The *Aeneid*
- **When Written:** 29-19 BC
- **Where Written:** The Roman Empire
- **When Published:** After 19 BC
- **Literary Period:** Classical (Augustan)
- **Genre:** Epic poem
- **Setting:** Troy, Carthage, Italy, and the Mediterranean Sea, in 12th century BC
- **Climax:** The defeat of Turnus
- **Antagonist:** Juno, Turnus
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Virgil's Last Wish: Right before Virgil died, he demanded that the unfinished manuscript of the *Aeneid* be burned. Fortunately, Augustus ignored this, and the version we have of the *Aeneid*, despite its occasional unfinished lines, has not undergone any significant post-Virgil editing. It's still controversial whether Virgil might have been planning to end his poem on a more positive note.

Virgil the Wizard: In the Middle Ages, scholars believed that Virgil had predicted the birth of Jesus in one of his Eclogues. Because of this, they thought his texts had magical powers, and used them for fortune telling. The Virgil that guides Dante

through Hell in the *Divine Comedy* comes out of this mystical tradition.

PLOT SUMMARY

After the fall of Troy, Aeneas leads the remaining Trojans as they sail near Sicily on their quest to reach Latium, an Italian region where their descendants are fated to one day found the city of Rome. Juno, who hates the Trojans because it is also fated that they will one day destroy her favored city of Carthage, wants to stop them from reaching Latium. She goes to Aeolus, the god of wind, to raise a storm to destroy them. However, Neptune notices the storm and calms it, and the Trojans land at a North African city called Carthage.

As Aeneas and his friend Achates walk through the forest toward the city, Aeneas's mother, the goddess Venus, appears in disguise and tells them the story of Dido, and how she came to be the founder and queen of Carthage. When they reach the city, Dido welcomes the Trojans and Aeneas. At the feast that night, to ensure Dido's hospitality toward her son, Venus sends down Cupid, disguised as Ascanius, to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas. At the feast, Aeneas tells the whole story of the fall of Troy and his wanderings, resulting in a long flashback.

Aeneas describes how the Greeks tricked the Trojans with their gift of the Trojan horse, which secretly housed Greek warriors inside it. He further tells about the death of Priam, how he (Aeneas) lost his wife Creusa while fleeing the defeated city of Troy, and then about his and his followers' misadventures around the Mediterranean Sea, including encounters with the Harpies and the Cyclops, and the death of his father Anchises. Back in the present time, Dido falls madly in love with Aeneas, who only mildly returns the feeling. Juno plots to get Dido and Aeneas alone together during a trip in the forest, and then officiates a wedding for the couple, which Dido uses to justify her behavior. However, Aeneas doesn't even realize the wedding has occurred. When the god Mercury reminds Aeneas that he must go and follow his fate, Aeneas leaves Carthage with his men. Dido, devastated, commits suicide.

Unaware of Dido's death, Aeneas and the Trojans return to Anchises's burial site and play funeral games in his honor. Some of the Trojan women, encouraged by Juno and sick of traveling, try to burn the Trojan ships. Aeneas stops them in time, and leaves behind those who want to settle down.

With his strongest followers, he continues to Cumae, near Naples, where Sibyl, an oracle, guides him to the Underworld. There, he encounters Anchises's ghost and learns of the glorious city and empire his descendants will found: Rome. The Trojans continue to Latium, where they meet the king of the Latin people, Latinus, who's learned from signs that his daughter Lavinia will marry a foreigner, as opposed to the local king of the Rutulians, Turnus, who wants to marry her. The Latins and Trojans are on the verge of making peace when Juno sends down Allecto, a fury, to cause conflict. Allecto turns Queen Amata against Aeneas, then fills Turnus with rage. The fighting and first deaths begin when Ascanius (following his Allecto-enchanted hunting dogs) shoots a stag that was a beloved pet of some Latins. Turnus raises an army, and Aeneas, taking the advice of the god of the river Tiber, goes upriver to find allies. He encounters the Arcadians, who are enemies of the Rutulians and agree to help him. Evander, king of the Arcadians, sends his son Pallas to fight for Aeneas, and advises Aeneas to go get the Tuscans on his side as well.

While Aeneas is traveling, two Trojans, Nisus and Euryalus, make a brave night raid through the Latin camp, but Euryalus is captured and they both die when Nisus tries to free him. The next day, the Latins attack the Trojan fortress and Ascanius makes his first kill. Up in the heavens, Venus and Juno argue their sides to Jove, who decrees that the war's outcome should be left to fate. Aeneas returns to the battle with Tuscan troops to help him. Pallas fights Lausus, a youth his age on the Latin side and the son of the captain Mezentius. But Turnus intervenes and kills Pallas, taking his belt as a trophy. Aeneas, hearing of Pallas's death, goes on a killing spree, but Juno removes Turnus from the battle by tricking him to get on a boat. Aeneas kills Lausus and Mezentius. Aeneas plans a huge funeral for Pallas, and Evander mourns his son. Both sides agree on a twelve-day truce.

Among themselves the Latins discuss how they want to make peace, but Turnus stirs up the fighting again. Camilla, Queen of the Volscians, comes to help Turnus in his fight, but a Trojan ally named Arruns kills her. Turnus decides he must duel Aeneas directly in a fight to the death. Amata and Latinus try to convince Turnus not to, but he knows he must. Juno sends down Juturna, Turnus's sister, to help him. Juturna sees that Turnus is weaker than Aeneas and stirs up war again. Aeneas is injured but Venus heals him. Amata, seeing the Trojans attack Lavinium, believes that Turnus has died and commits suicide. Aeneas and Turnus duel, but Turnus realizes he's missing his sword, which was made by the god Vulcan. He tries desperately to find it. Meanwhile, Jove asks Juno when she'll give up fighting fate—and finally, she does. Aeneas wounds Turnus, who begs for mercy. Aeneas almost spares him, but then he sees that Turnus is wearing Pallas's belt. Aeneas kills Turnus.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Aeneas – Aeneas is the protagonist of the *Aeneid*. He is the son of Anchises and Venus. He is the father of Ascanius, with his Trojan wife, Creusa, who died at Troy. He has a fling with Dido, the queen of Carthage, before leaving her (to her despair) and continuing on to reach his destined home in Italy, where he'll

marry Lavinia and become the forefather of the Latin-Trojan people, whose descendents will found Rome and include Julius and Augustus Caesar. Aeneas is famous for his piety—his devotion to his friends, the gods, and, most important, fate. When he faces difficult decisions, he piously choses his fate over his own wants or any other human emotion. But at the end of the *Aeneid*, his anger overcomes him and he mercilessly kills Turnus. Despite his piety and great leadership, he's a complex and imperfect man.

Juno – Juno is a goddess, the wife of Jove and therefore queen of the gods. She loves Dido and Carthage, acting as a patron for that city. She also loves the Latin people and Turnus. (In Virgil's day, she was worshipped as the patron goddess of the Roman Empire.) She often sends her messenger, Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, to deal with affairs on earth. Juno is Aeneas's main antagonist throughout the *Aeneid*. She hates the Trojans for a number of personal, rather petty reasons, including the fact that the Trojans Ganymede and Paris had once offended her pride. She is a wrathful, proud and vicious force, tirelessly harassing Aeneas and the Trojans, even though she knows that she can't ultimately stop them from achieving their fate.

Turnus – The king of the Rutulians, an Italian nation located about 20 miles from the eventual Rome, and Aeneas's main mortal enemy. He hoped to marry Lavinia, daughter of Latinus, and become king of the Latins. Juno, via the fury Allecto, enchants Turnus so that he'll fight Aeneas instead of accepting fate. He becomes the leader in the battle of Latins against Trojans. Despite all this, he's not extremely villainous, his main fault being his anger. He's a brave, powerful warrior. Often, his seeming cowardice is due to the attempts of Juno or his sister Juturna to save his life.

Dido – The founder and queen of Carthage, a city in modern-day Tunisia. She fled from Tyre after her greedy brother Pygmalion, who was the king of Tyre, killed her husband, Sychaeus, in order to steal his wealth. A favorite of Juno, she's a great leader to her people until Aeneas arrives in town. Venus enchants her, via Cupid, to fall in passionate love with Aeneas, and when Aeneas follows his fate and leaves Carthage, she kills herself in despair.

Virgil – Virgil often interjects in his story. Sometimes he addresses characters directly, other times he asks rhetorical questions or comments on the action. In this way, he acts as a character too—this is "Virgil as storyteller," becoming a part of his narrative like the ancient storytellers of the oral tradition, such as Homer.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Venus – The goddess of beauty and the mother of Aeneas. She watches over him and helps him, such as enchanting Dido to love him, and getting Vulcan, her husband, to craft him special armor.

Ascanius – Aeneas's son. Also known as Iulus, which connects him to Julius Caesar and his Caesar's adopted relative Augustus. Ascanius comes of age during the poem—a young boy in Troy, he makes his first kill in battle in Book 9.

Anchises – Aeneas's father. Beloved and wise, he dies in Book 3 but reappears as a "ghost" in the Underworld in Book 6.

Pallas – The beloved son of Evander, he fights for Aeneas and is killed by Turnus in Book 10. Aeneas avenges his death in the final scene of the poem.

Jove – The king of the gods and husband of Juno. Also called Jupiter. He doesn't take sides in the Trojan-Latin conflict, instead letting fate run its course, but tries to keep Juno and Venus in check.

Vulcan – The god of fire and volcanoes, and Venus's husband. With his cyclops helpers, he forges Aeneas's fortune-telling **shield** and other armor. He had also crafted Turnus's father's sword, which Turnus loses right before his duel with Aeneas.

Aeolus – The god of the winds, he lets Juno convince him to stir up a storm against the Trojans.

Apollo – The god of music, poetry, and oracles. He gives Aeneas a prophesy in Book 3.

Mercury – The messenger god who spurs Aeneas to leave Dido.

Neptune – The god of water and oceans, he ends Juno's storm in Book 1.

Mars – The god of war.

Minerva – The goddess of defense and wisdom.

Iris – The goddess of the rainbow and Juno's messenger.

Allecto – A fury, or goddess of discord, who helps Juno start the Latin-Trojan war.

Priam – The elderly king of Troy.

Laocoon – A Trojan priest of Neptune who doesn't want to accept the Greeks' wooden horse.

Sinon – A young Greek man who tricks the Trojans into accepting the wooden horse.

Creusa – Aeneas's wife and mother of Ascanius. She died during the fall of Troy.

Achates – Aeneas's trusty right-hand man.

Palinurus – Aeneas's navigator, taken by Neptune as a sacrifice in exchange for safe seas.

Acestes – King of the Sicilian land where Anchises is buried and the Trojans play funeral games.

Sibyl of Cumae – An oracle (fortune teller) of Apollo who lives in Cumae (near Naples) and guides Aeneas to the Underworld.

Latinus – The king of the Latin people in Latium, Italy, father of Lavinia, husband of Amata, and destined father-in-law of Aeneas. His city is called Lavinium.

Lavinia – Latinus and Amata's daughter, destined wife of Aeneas. Turnus also wants to marry her (and in the process become king of the Latin people).

Amata – Queen of the Latins, wife of Latinus and mother of Lavinia. Juno enchants her to hate Aeneas.

Mezentius – A cruel Tuscan/Etruscan king who fights for Turnus's side. Father of Lausus. Killed by Aeneas.

Lausus – Mezentius's son, an enemy warrior second only to Turnus. Battles Pallas in Book 10. Also killed by Aeneas.

Camilla – Queen of the Volscians and a formidable warrior fighting on Turnus's side. Beloved by the goddess of the hunt, Diana.

Evander – King of the Arcadians, who live on the future site of Rome. Father of Pallas and Aeneas's ally.

Nisus – Best friend of Euryalus. A daring warrior who meets a tragic end.

Euryalus – The younger, less experienced, but equally brave best friend of Nisus.

Juturna – Turnus's sister, Juno's helper, a nymph.

Augustus Caesar – Virgil's real-life patron and emperor of Rome. He appears in the Underworld in Book 6, and on Aeneas's **shield** in Book 8.

Anna – Dido's sister. Anna encourages Dido to let herself love Aeneas for both personal reasons (so Dido won't be lonely) and for political reasons (to help Carthage gain allies).

Sychaeus – Dido's first husband, who died sometime before Aeneas reaches Carthage.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

FATE

In the *Aeneid*, fate (or destiny) is an all-powerful force—what fate decrees will happen, must happen. It is Aeneas's fate to found a city in Italy, and so that he will do. Characters can, and do, have the free will to resist fate. But ultimately, such resistance is futile. Juno can delay Aeneas reaching Latium for a while, but not forever. Dido can get Aeneas to stay in Carthage for a while, but not forever. Turnus can fight Aeneas off temporarily, but not forever. And while, for the gods, resistance to fate seldom seems to have consequences, for mortals such as Dido and Turnus, efforts to resist fate end disastrously, suggesting that resistance to fate is seen in a negative light. Though the predestined fates may seem to kill the suspense of the storyline, there's a different kind of drama at work in the *Aeneid*—whether and how the characters accept their fates, and in the particulars of their journeys to fulfilling their fates.

The theme of fate also helps to link the story of Aeneas with the real-life time of Augustus Caesar, who ruled the Roman Empire when the *Aeneid* was written. Aeneas's destiny is to begin the civilization that will become Rome, and to begin the line of kings that will result in Augustus. Therefore, the poem endows Augustus's government with invulnerable, divinely sanctioned power: Augustus was fated to rule, in a destiny that stretches all the way back to his great ancestor! Anchises makes this point clear in the Underworld, when he shows Rome's future leaders to Aeneas. Fate justifies not only the poem's plot, but also Augustus's government.

THE GODS AND DIVINE INTERVENTION

The gods actively intervene in the lives of the mortals, often using the characters like chess pieces to carry out their own power struggles. Juno hates the Trojans and does her best to stop Aeneas from fulfilling his destiny, even setting up the war that fills the second half of the poem. Venus tries to protect and help her son. Neptune just gets annoyed that some other god thinks he can mess with the ocean. Yet it's a matter of continued controversy whether the gods are meant to be fully-fledged characters, like superpowered humans with their own motivations, or whether they have a more symbolic role and act as a way for Virgil to enter into the humans' emotions and decisions. In many cases, it's difficult to tease apart where godly influence ends and human free will begins. Maybe Dido was too heedless in her passion—or maybe it was Venus's enchantment that made Dido too reckless in love. Maybe Turnus never would have wanted a war at all, without Juno's involvement. Or maybe there's no need to decide what comes from the god and what comes from the human, because even those acts of the gods are really just a way of poetically examining the irrationality of the human spirit.

In any case, within the world of the poem, the characters do believe in the gods. Faced with the constant, and sometimes invisible, intervention from the gods, all that mortals can do is pray for divine signs to guide them, try to get on the gods' good sides in times of difficulty, and appeal to seers and oracles to get a better view of the gods' desires.

PIETY

Pietas is a Latin word that can be translated as piety or devotion, and refers to someone's dutiful acceptance of the obligations placed on them by fate, by the will of the gods, and by the bonds of family and community. From the first lines of the poem, Virgil describes Aeneas as being remarkable for his piety, and "pious" is the

most-used adjective to describe Aeneas throughout the poem. Aeneas always places these obligations above his own feelings or desires. When the winds blast his ships and he wishes he had died defending Troy, he nonetheless pursues his fate. When Juno torments him, he is sad but not defiant. When Dido's love tempts him to stay in Carthage, he deserts her because he feels he must. To be pious does *not* mean to lack free will. In contrast, to be pious all the time is a choice, a difficult choice, and one that other characters do *not* make. Dido tries to thwart fate in order to preserve her love. Turnus refuses to accept that fate demands that Aeneas will marry the woman Turnus wants. For both characters, things end disastrously. In the *Aeneid*, it's only by being pious, by freely choosing to sacrifice ones own desires to the larger forces of fate, the gods, and family, that one can be heroic.

Yet it is worth noting that some scholars suggest that Virgil did not in fact view Aeneas as a perfect hero. What about his sneaky, unsympathetic departure from Dido? Why does he exit the Underworld through the gate of false dreams, instead of the gate of the true and pure? And why does the *Aeneid* end not with an image of Aeneas's leadership in his destined land, but with his frenzied murder of a defenseless man who begs him for mercy? Whether such arguments are the product of our modern society, which does not value the same things that Virgil's did, or whether Virgil himself saw a dark side to total piety, is a matter of continued debate.

ROME

Rome stands at the center of the poem. The city's founding, and the empire that will grow from it, is the endpoint of Aeneas's fate. Once Aeneas learns of Rome explicitly in Anchises's descriptions of it in the Underworld, the city comes to symbolize for him the pinnacle of his eventual achievement, spurring him on through all of his subsequent trials and tribulations. For Aeneas and his people, Rome also stands as an embodiment of a new home to replace the one they lost in Troy, a place where he and his people can build a community, can worship their gods, can play out their fate. In short, a home is the source of identity, the place where they can build all the things that are worth being pious to.

At the same time, the *Aeneid* holds up Aeneas as a justification of Rome's greatness. Virgil wrote the poem during the "Golden Age" of Rome, and the poem stands as a founding myth that both connects Rome to the ancient Greek tradition of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, and, by showing how Roman is founded on the values of piety and just leadership exemplified by Aeneas, explains how Rome surpasses that tradition. In the Underworld, Anchises goes so far as to explain Rome's superiority to the Greeks and all other nations. He explains that Rome has the unique capacity to spare the conquered and overcome the arrogant. In other words, Rome's greatest virtue is the ability not just to conquer new territories, but also to make them a part of the peaceful whole. And Anchises is right! Rome really was exceptional for that very reason. Rome managed to conquer much of the known world, including all the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, and sustained two hundred years of peace, a feat that no other civilization since has ever matched.

WAR AND PEACE

War is everywhere in the *Aeneid*. The Trojan War begins Aeneas's journey by forcing him from Troy, and war concludes his journey on the fields of Italy. The characters constantly contend with the possibility of violence, giving gifts and forming alliances to try to avert it, or proving their bravery by rushing into it. And these wars are never purely tactical, fought just to gain land or power or wealth. Instead, the wars are often the results of personal, petty things, like insults or grudges. The Trojan War begins because of three goddesses' squabble about who's the most beautiful. The war in Italy begins because Turnus gets mad that a stranger is marrying the girl he likes, with Juno fanning the flames for a whole host imagined slights. These frivolous-seeming beginnings lead to warfare that offers the chance for glory, but which Virgil also regularly depicts as brutal and senseless, separating mothers from sons and sons from fathers.

Yet in Anchises comment in the Underworld that Rome will have the unique ability to spare the conquered (in extreme contrast to what the Greeks did to the defeated Trojans), the *Aeneid* suggests that the Romans, through Aeneas, will bring something new to war—that they will wage war in order to create peace.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE HOUSEHOLD GODS

The Household Gods, called Penates in Latin, are the guardian gods of Trojan domestic and family life that Aeneas carries all the way to Latium. They embody the Trojans' ancestors and past, and, as Aeneas establishes them in Italy, they align Aeneas's new home with Troy and tradition. (Romans during Virgil's time kept shrines to their own Penates in their homes, which provided an outlet to remember and worship their forefathers.)

THE GOLDEN BOUGH

Any living person voyaging to the Underworld needs the golden bough to get there safely, to present as a gift to the Underworld's queen, Proserpina. But

only those with the right fate can remove the bough from the tree by the Underworld's entrance near Naples. Aeneas manages to take the bough, which comes to symbolize his extraordinary fate.

AENEAS'S SHIELD

Venus convinces Vulcan to forge armor for Aeneas, including a mighty shield that depicts Rome's glorious future, including the battle of Actium in 31 BC, where Augustus defeated Mark Antony and thereby became the sole ruler of the empire. As the carrier of a shield that depicts Rome so fully, the shield directly relates Aeneas's fate to the future of Rome—he truly carries Rome's future on his arm. But it's also striking that the object most linked to Rome's future is a shield, not a sword. Rome's destiny is shown, literally, on the object that protects Aeneas, suggesting the Roman Empires future role as a creator and protector of peace.

THE GATES OF WAR

The Gates of War are, in the *Aeneid*, both a metaphor and a real, physical set of doors in Lavinium. (The Rome of Virgil's time also had physical Gates of War, which they closed, with much festivity, at the end of wars. Augustus famously closed the gates three times in his reign, more than they had ever been shut in Roman history.) The Gates are part of the temple of Janus, a two-faced god of beginnings and endings. When the war of the Trojans against the Latins begins, Latinus doesn't want to open the gates of war in Lavinium, so Juno does it for him. The Gates connect Rome's mythological past to the time of Augustus, and graphically demonstrate the extent of Juno's meddling.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *The Aeneid* published in 2006.

Book 1 Quotes

Wars and a man I sing.

Related Characters: Virgil (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.1

Explanation and Analysis

In many Greek and Latin epic poems, the first words of the work are meant to set the stage for what follows. Here, by beginning with the words "wars" and "man," Virgil immediately introduces both the context and the protagonist of his tale. Into a society beset by constant warfare, Aeneas will fulfill his own fate as well as, ultimately, bring an end to the conflicts with which the poem begins.

Homer, the great Greek poet with whom Virgil would have inevitably compared himself, began both his *Odyssey* and *Iliad* by talking about the individual "men" that the poems would follow. By adding the general idea of war to this heritage, Virgil emphasizes the social implications of his tale. This will not only be a story of one man's heroic fight with or against fate: instead, it will be closely bound to the very history of the place where Virgil is now writing.

A joy it will be one day, perhaps, to remember even this.

Related Characters: Aeneas (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.239

Explanation and Analysis

Immediately after setting out to sea, Aeneas and his men had been beset by storms and chaos, a plague sent by Aeolus, the god of winds, following the wish of Juno. Having lost some of their men to the sea already, the group now rests on an island and takes stock of their situation. Aeneas attempts, here, to rally his men and encourage them, even while acknowledging the real pain and grief that they have already experienced.

This now-famous line suggests Aeneas's mature, critical distance to suffering. He does not let himself be overwhelmed by difficulties, but rather steps back and convinces himself and others that such difficulties serve a broader purpose. If, as he claims, the group is fated to ultimately succeed, they will look back on this moment as an inevitable step on the way to that final victory. Aeneas thus shows his willingness to remain devoted to a cause greater than his own personal grief or suffering, as well as a willingness to persuade others of the righteousness of this attitude.

A woman leads them all.

Related Characters: Venus (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.442

Explanation and Analysis

Aeneas and Achates, traveling through the woods, have come across Venus in disguise, who tells them about another leader who led a group out of danger and into safety. This time, though, it was a woman - Dido - who did so, and who went on to found the city of Carthage. We have already learned that Aeneas is fated to go on to found the city of Rome: here, Venus reveals that there is precedent for such an act of strength, of drawing peace out of war. Venus thus stresses that Dido is at least an equal to Aeneas - a surprising sentiment in a culture in which leadership in war is restricted to men.

Even here, the world is a world of tears and the burdens of mortality touch the heart.

Related Characters: Aeneas (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1.558-559

Explanation and Analysis

As he is led through the city of Carthage, Aeneas stops at a temple to Juno and examines a portrayal of the Trojan War, with some of his friends and fellow combatants depicted on the walls. Aeneas is incredibly touched by this depiction, recognizing that a struggle that had seemed so unique to him and his fellow fighters is actually known far away. While people tend to disagree on the exact meaning of this passage, what is certain is Aeneas's feeling of solidarity with people and societies that are not his own, and that indeed are far displaced from what he knows. He may well be affected by the realization that the suffering of the Trojan War is actually not at all alien to foreign peoples, because war and death are things that all people experience; but he is still moved to know that people far away care about what happened to him. Aeneas thus shows himself once again to be thoughtful and careful in judgment, always considering the broader meaning of symbols and actions.

Book 2 Quotes

I fear the Greeks, especially bearing gifts.

Related Characters: Laocoon (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 2.62

Explanation and Analysis

Aeneas has begun to tell the long story of the Trojan War to his companions, including Dido, in Carthage. Here, he begins with the tale of the Trojan Horse, a hollow "gift" from the Greeks that actually hid warriors inside it. Laocoon, a priest, actually warns the Trojans that the Greeks may well be deceiving them. Given the mutual animosity and suspicion between the two peoples, Laocoon urges his fellow men to be vigilant and not to let down their defenses. Laocoon's words remind the listeners that the Trojans and Greeks lived in a constant state of uncertainty and insecurity, never knowing when an all-too-fragile peace might be interrupted.

Book 3 Quotes

Search for your ancient mother. There your house, the line of Aeneas, will rule all parts of the world.

Related Characters: Apollo (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3.17-18

Explanation and Analysis

Aeneas and his followers have sailed to Ortygia, a land under the guidance of Apollo, and Aeneas has prayed to the god for guidance. Apollo has largely stayed out of Aeneas's affairs before, but here his piety in humbling himself before the god, rather than presuming to know exactly what to do and how to act, prove impressive to Apollo. As a result, he does intervene, not just revealing to Aeneas his fate but giving him advice on what to do. Of course, the two are inextricable, since Apollo knows that Aeneas's fate is indeed to found Rome, but Apollo takes pity on Aeneas enough to want to steer him towards this fate more easily.

Indeed, this passage is composed of one part guidance, one part foretelling. Rome is described as Aeneas's "ancient mother," an interesting phrase that suggests that it is not something to be created out of nothing, but rather a place preexisting Aeneas's search, in close relation to his life and simply waiting to be discovered. Only once Aeneas can surmount the difficulties in his path and find this "ancient mother" will his house become the world's most powerful.

Book 4 Quotes

❝ Rumor, swiftest of all the evils in the world. She thrives on speed, stronger for every stride, slight with fear at first, soon soaring into the air she treads the ground and hides her head in the clouds.

Related Characters: Virgil (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4.220-223

Explanation and Analysis

Juno has created a storm to drive Aeneas and Dido together in a cave, where she presides over a wedding between them. Not long afterward, rumor begins to spread around the world regarding the shameful union between the two: they have shirked their duties as leaders in the interest of romantic love. Rumor is personified here, as important traits often are in the *Aeneid:* it is described as a timid but soon powerful woman, racing swiftly across the world even as she remains impossible to fully see or understand (just as people never know exactly where rumors come from or how true they are).

For Aeneas, there is an extra layer of shame to his marriage, since he knows that his fate is not to remain in Carthage with Dido, but rather to leave and continue his journey to found Rome. He cannot undo fate, of course - and if anything, it is Juno's intervention that has steered him away from his fate - but by remaining in Carthage he is tempting fate, suggesting that he *can* put it off rather than embrace it as his duty. This is thus one of the few cases in which Aeneas's piety is weakened by his individual desires.

Book 5 Quotes

❝ You trusted—oh, Palinurus—far too much to a calm sky and sea. Your naked corpse will lie on an unknown shore.

Related Characters: Aeneas (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 5.970-973

Explanation and Analysis

Palinurus, a skillful navigator, has been put in charge of the fleet, but at night the sleep god causes him to doze off, and he falls overboard and drowns. As Aeneas takes over the navigation, he mourns Palinurus, recognizing that his beloved friend will not be able to have a funeral ceremony that does justice to his greatness. At the same time, Aeneas seems to believe that it is Palinurus's human weaknesses that contributed directly to his death - even as the interjection, "oh, Palinurus," underlines the fact that Aeneas's rebuke comes from grief and not scorn.

Aeneas does not, of course, know about the divine intervention that contributed to Palinurus's death. Although Aeneas often does recognize the greater forces of destiny that are directing his own and others' lives, he is also at times tempted to assign individual responsibility to people's actions. As he does so, he slips away from his devotion and forgets that there are broader powers inextricably entwined in human lives, even when they seem so autonomous.

Book 6 Quotes

❝ ...The descent to the Underworld is easy. Night and day the gates of shadowy Death stand open wide, but to retrace your steps, to climb back to the upper air—there the struggle, there the labor lies.

Related Characters: Sibyl of Cumae (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 6.149-152

Explanation and Analysis

At the Sibyl's cave, Aeneas asks her how he might go down into the Underworld in order to see Anchises again. Here, she offers a general piece of wisdom before agreeing to give Aeneas specific advice regarding how exactly he can enter the Underworld. For Sibyl and Aeneas, the Underworld is a physical place, the home of the dead. Because it is not meant for the living, it is extremely difficult to return from it (even if, according to this set of beliefs, it is not impossible to visit the land of the dead and then return). But there is also a metaphorical basis to the Sibyl's pronouncement: it may be easy to descend into darkness, but it is never as easy to regain the right and proper path. It will be a test of Aeneas's piety to see whether or not he is able to embrace his former devotion enough to accomplish this task in the Underworld before returning to tell of it in the world of the living.

Others, I have no doubt, will forge the bronze to breathe with suppler lines, draw from the block of marble features quick with life, plead their cases better, chart with their rods the stars that climb the sky and foretell the times they rise. But you, Roman, remember, rule with all your power the peoples of the earth—these will be your arts: to put your stamp on the works and the ways of peace, to spare the defeated, break the proud in war. — *Anchises*

Related Characters: Anchises (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 6.976-984

Explanation and Analysis

At this crucial moment in the epic poem, Anchises shares with Aeneas the defining characteristic of the Romans, the goal toward which Aeneas and his followers should strive as they seek to find Rome and found their nation there. "Others" may well include the Greeks, who would for a long while compete with the Romans in terms of cultural and political prowess: here, for instance, Anchises refers to armor-making, sculpture, rhetoric, and astronomy. But what will distinguish the Romans will be a power and graciousness in war that no other peoples have embraced.

Even as the Romans grow powerful, Anchises says, they will never become ruthless or cruel. As a result, they will deserve even more their status as the greatest people of the world, since their moral strength backs up their political and martial might. Anchises thus justifies the establishment of Rome, even with all the suffering and difficulties that still lie in its way, by the moral superiority that the Romans are fated to espouse.

Book 8 Quotes

He fills with wonder—he knows nothing of these events but takes delight in their likeness, lifting onto his shoulders no the fame and fates of all his children's children.

Related Characters: Virgil (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 8.856-859

Explanation and Analysis

Venus has come down from the heavens to give Aeneas a shield forged by her lover, Vulcan. The shield (which bears some resemblance to the famous shield of Achilles described in Homer's *Iliad*) depicts on it many events and stories from the future peoples of Rome. This description thus gives Virgil the chance to portray what for Aeneas is the future, but for his readers is their shared past and collective memories. By inscribing those events on the shield, Virgil emphasizes that they were fated to take place, that indeed they were only waiting to be fulfilled while Aeneas sought to found Rome.

The bittersweet element of these depictions is that Aeneas, of course, will not live to see them fulfilled. He cannot understand what is depicted on the shield because it is his fate to lead his people to Rome, not to live in peace with them there. But because he is committed to a cause greater than himself, he is willing and eager to carry the "fame and fates" of all his descendants along with him, confident and happy for these future times.

Yet first the handsome Iulus—beyond his years, filled with a man's courage, a man's concerns as well—gives them many messages to carry to his father. But the winds scatter them all, all useless, fling them into the clouds.

Related Characters: Virgil (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9.361-365

Explanation and Analysis

Nisus and Euryalus have volunteered to serve as messengers to Aeneas, as the Trojans find themselves besieged by Turnus and his men while Aeneas has gone off in search of Evander. The two boys have learned to be impressed and inspired by feats of bravery in war, and they're eager to join in. They understand that the task will be difficult and dangerous, but they most likely do not fully understand that they may well die in such a task. However, Ascanius, who has been left in charge while Aeneas is away, must accept his followers' offers in order to work together against a common enemy. Virgil intrudes in this narrative, as he often does, to make a broader point about the tragic discontinuity between human desires and divine fate: despite the messengers' best attempts, nothing can prevent what is fated to happen to them.

Book 10 Quotes

Fortune speeds the bold!

Related Characters: Turnus (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 10.341

Explanation and Analysis

Turnus is cheering and encouraging his men in advance of the battle they will wage against Aeneas and his followers. As they prepare to fight, Turnus assures them that fate will be in their favor if they are brave and bold. This is one of the most famous lines in the *Aeneid,* and it is often interpreted as if it was supposed to be Virgil's own opinion, as opposed to a line from a character's mouth. In fact, Turnus's opinions on fate are hardly standard. He seems to be saying, in fact, that fortune can change depending on individuals' actions and characters.

The *Aeneid* is, in general, much more skeptical about this possibility. Virgil often stresses, indeed, that fortune and fate exist on an entirely separate plane from the desires and actions of individuals. It is this belief in the close connection between the two that will ultimately lead to Turnus's downfall, and emphasize once again the superiority of fate over human desires.

❝ Each man has his day, and the time of life is brief for all, and never comes again. But to lengthen out one's fame with action, that's the work of courage.

Related Characters: Jove (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 10.553-556

Explanation and Analysis

Pallas has prayed to Hercules to help him, but Jove has ordered the war to go on alone, with the results to be left up to fate. Here Jove comforts Hercules, even though his words might not seem all that reassuring. Jove stresses the brief, ephemeral nature of human life - a quality that contrasts with the immortality of the gods, who have an entirely different definition of life. While all the gods live forever, Jove does suggest that there is one way humans can attain immortality: by showing courage and strength in action, so that they are remembered long after their death. He suggests that Hercules need not worry about intervening in favor of Pallas, since fate will decide in his favor.

Book 11 Quotes

❝ Camilla, keen to fix some Trojan arms on a temple wall or sport some golden plunder out on the hunt, she tracked him now, one man in the moil of war, she stalked him wildly, reckless through the ranks, afire with a woman's lust for loot and plunder…

Related Characters: Virgil (speaker), Camilla

Related Themes:

Page Number: 11.914-918

Explanation and Analysis

In his fight against the Trojans, Turnus has decided to enlist the help of Camilla, the queen of the Volscians, who is beloved by the goddess Diana and who is known for her nearly unmatched skill in war. Here, we see just how eager Camilla is to enter into battle against the Trojans (and at this point, against a particular soldier named Arruns, because of his beautiful armor), even though she has no real reason to do so. Her "woman's lust for loot and plunder" is meant to contrast with the heroic, ethically sound reasons for fighting that Aeneas and the Trojans espouse. They are pursuing the noble goal of founding Rome, and, as we have already learned, the Romans will be unique for their graciousness in war.

In many ways Camilla exemplifies some of the greatest values of the time in her great battle prowess and strategic skill. That Diana admires her is a sign in Camilla's favor; but her bloodthirstiness is a sign that she can never live up to the high ideals of her enemies, the Trojans.

Book 12 Quotes

❝ I shall not command Italians to bow to Trojans, nor do I seek the scepter for myself. May both nations, undefeated, under equal laws, march together toward an eternal pact of peace.

Related Characters: Aeneas (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12.225-228

Explanation and Analysis

Even as Aeneas prepares for battle against Turnus, brave enough to embrace this fight heroically, he is mindful enough of the larger goals that he is pursuing to look past

his own individual actions. He knows that the founding of Rome lies at the end of all this warfare, and he hopes that such a goal will still be possible even if he falls. Aeneas dismisses the usual terms of defeat, that is, the complete submission of the conquered enemy to the winners, and he also hopes that the Latins will be similarly gracious. Once again, Aeneas thinks beyond himself and shows *pietas,* great devotion to the cause that he is fated to fulfill.

Now what god can unfold for me so many terrors? Who can make a song of slaughter in all its forms—the deaths of captains down the entire field, dealt now by Turnus, now by Aeneas, kill for kill? Did it please you, great Jove, to see the world at war, the peoples clash that would later live in everlasting peace?

Related Characters: Virgil (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12.584-589

Explanation and Analysis

Just as peace was about to be made, an errant throw of an arrow relaunches the battle between the Trojans and the Latins. Aeneas, frustrated that he cannot reach Turnus and settle counts once and for all, kills as many as he can as he strives to find his enemy. At other points in the book, including the very beginning, Virgil has called upon the Muses to inspire his epic and to breathe force into his tale. Now, for the first time, he expresses skepticism that even the gods can make beauty out of such senseless slaughter.

Virgil's words suggest a questioning of the idea of fate as a driving, meaningful force in life. Virgil's rhetorical question at Jove is despairing but also provocative, as he wonders whether it was just a whim to set these peoples at war (or even, perhaps, whether there is a guiding force directing these actions at all). Speaking from a later historical position, knowing that Romans would live in peace long afterward, Virgil shows himself to be part of the chosen nation of Rome, unique in its promotion of peace over war. Looking back at the destruction that preceded the founding of Rome, however, Virgil cannot help but remain aghast at the utter devastation that seemed to be motivated by little other than tragic chance.

Go no further down the road of hatred.

Related Characters: Turnus (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12.1093

Explanation and Analysis

After a long, drawn-out battle between Aeneas and Turnus - and between the gods who are directing the actions of both of them - Aeneas finally has his enemy on his knees, and must decide whether to kill or to spare him. Here, Turnus begs Aeneas to spare him. He seems to suggest by his words that Aeneas will act out of free will: it is up to his individual conscience to direct his next move. Of course, we as readers know that there are many more characters at play here than the two soldiers facing each other. However, we are certainly not meant to see Aeneas as passive or lacking any will of his own. Guided by fate, Aeneas must nonetheless choose how to respond to his own fate, knowing as he does that he is tantalizingly close to the goal that has defined his life.

Decked in the spoils you stripped from the one I loved—escape my clutches? Never—Pallas strikes this blow, Pallas sacrifices you now, makes you pay the price with your own guilty blood!

Related Characters: Aeneas (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12.1105-1108

Explanation and Analysis

Aeneas has carefully considered Turnus's pleading words, and he initially seems undecided. However, as soon as he catches a glimpse of Pallas's belt, which Turnus wears as a triumphant trophy, Aeneas's decision is made. His loyalty to his friend will trump any sense of mercy or forgiveness that he may have.

Here as elsewhere, Aeneas is forced to choose between competing interests - piety versus individual choice, mercy versus loyalty. Even the *pietas* for which Aeneas is so well-known, however, does not entirely help him here: part of devotion is, for him, remaining steadfast towards others whom he loves. Although the Romans will be known for their mercy and graciousness to those they conquer in war, Aeneas does not set such an example by the way he kills Pallas. And many critics have grappled with and debated

about the way the Aeneid ends here, in hate and not in joy or reconciliation.

❝ Turnus's limbs went limp in the chill of death. His life breath fled with a groan of outrage down to the shades below.

Related Characters: Virgil (speaker), Turnus

Related Themes:

Page Number: 12.1111-1113

Explanation and Analysis

As the epic comes to an end, we know that the triumph of Rome's founding is just within the grasp of Aeneas and the Trojans. It is striking, then, that Virgil's work ends not with a triumphant scene of martial victory, or even any kind of joyful celebration, but with the painful final breaths of the Trojans's final enemy. Jove has reminded Hercules that the lives of humans are brief, and by lingering on Turnus's death Virgil reminds us of that lesson. He also reminds us that however he and other Romans may think of their land as one of peace and joy, there was a much darker beginning to their people. And this history did not come into being by chance, according to the logic of the epic: instead, all that was happened was fated to do so, unfolding according to forces larger than any one individual.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1

Virgil begins with "Wars and a man I sing..." and says that he will tell the story of Aeneas, who has fled from Troy and is fated to eventually reach Latium in Italy, where he will found the race that will one day build Rome. But Aeneas's journey is made difficult by the gods, and in particular by Juno, the queen of the gods. Virgil wonders why Juno hates Aeneas, who is famous for his piety. He asks the muse, the goddess of the arts, to tell him about the source of her anger.

Virgil's beginning echoes the beginnings of the Iliad and the Odyssey, making it clear that Virgil intends to write an epic for Rome on par with those great Greek works. But unlike Homer's first lines, Virgil says he'll sing both of a man and of arms—this is a story about a hero who faces war.

Virgil gives some background about Carthage, Juno's favorite city, a rich and old Phoenician settlement located in North Africa (modern-day Tunisia). Juno wants Carthage to one day rule the world, but she has heard that a race of men descended from Trojans are fated to destroy it.

Right from the start, Virgil presents Juno as Aeneas's major antagonist. Despite what she knows about fate, she can't accept it, preferring to take out her anger on a famously pious man.

Juno fears the potential Trojan destruction of Carthage. In addition, Paris, a Trojan prince, was once asked to judge who was the most beautiful goddess, and chose Venus over Juno and Minerva. Finally, Juno remembers that her husband, Jupiter, once ran off with a Trojan shepherd name Ganymede. All of this has made Juno so despise the Trojans that she's made it impossible for many years for them to reach Latium.

Juno's anger towards Aeneas seems almost childish. It has more to do with her own personality, jealous and hot-headed, than it has to do with him. Despite her stature as the wife of the king of the gods, she cares a lot about human affairs.

Now the Trojans are sailing near Sicily. Juno angrily recalls a time when Minerva burned Greek ships. Juno, prideful about her power, wonders why she shouldn't do the same.

Juno's concerns about her own strength motivate many of her actions. In a very human way, she lacks self-confidence and takes it out on others!

Juno goes to Aeolus, the wind god, who keeps the winds in his dungeon. She asks Aeolus to send winds to sink the Trojan ships, and in return promises him a beautiful nymph for a wife. Aeolus immediately agrees, since Juno is the most powerful goddess, and unleashes the East, West and South-West winds against the Trojans.

This passage shows that Juno's fears about her own power are unfounded. She's good at negotiating, and Aeolus respects her. This makes her persecution of Aeneas seem even more unjust.

The winds blast the Trojan ships, and Aeneas prays to the gods. He then wishes that he could have died at Troy, killed by Achilles just as Hector was. Aeneas thinks that the Trojans who died defending Troy were many times more blessed than he is, who survived only to have no home. Meanwhile, his men's ships (eleven are mentioned) crash in the shallows or begin to sink.

In our first view of Aeneas, he hardly seems a great hero. He wishes he could escape his fate. Yet he also does not try to escape his fate. He prays to the gods rather than curse or rebel against them, demonstrating his piety.

The situation is desperate, but then Neptune, the god of the ocean, notices the storm and recognizes it as his sister Juno's work. He angrily commands the winds to return to Aeolus, and proclaims that he, Neptune, is the lord of the ocean. Neptune then calms the sea, just as a politician might calm an angry crowd, and the sun comes out.

The metaphor of the politician references Rome. A politician's leadership is a good thing, as it can nonviolently transform a population. Neptune is like Augustus Caesar, using his power for good.

The exhausted Trojans land their remaining seven ships at a cove in Libya, and Achates, a friend of Aeneas's, starts a fire. Aeneas hikes up a mountain to try to see if any other of his men's ships are out on the water. Instead, he spots a herd of deer. He shoots seven of them.

In a change from his previous despair, Aeneas shows he's a true leader. Despite his fatigue, he doesn't give up hope of finding his lost men, and provides for the survivors.

Returning with the deer to feed his men, Aeneas gives a stirring pep talk. He recalls their difficulties with Scylla and the Cyclops, but says that someday, they'll enjoy looking back on these events. "A joy it will be one day, perhaps, to remember even this," says Aeneas. He says that the Fates have determined that they will manage to reach Italy, so they should cheer up. Though Aeneas privately worries and grieves, he fakes a positive attitude to support his men. They eat and miss their drowned friends.

Aeneas's great leadership comes out even more clearly. He suppresses his own feelings for the good of the group—a sign of his supreme piety. And he respects his fate, and encourages his men to do the same. Like a good coach, he emphasizes the positive and looks at the bigger picture.

Jove and Venus watch the scene from the heavens. Venus asks Jove when there will be an end to Aeneas's suffering. Jove tells her not to worry, and foretells more of Aeneas's fate. Aeneas will reach Italy and found Lavinium, but he will have to battle the Italian locals first. Aeneas will then rule for three years, and after his death his son Ascanius will rule for thirty years. After three hundred years, Romulus and Remus, sons of a mortal priestess and Mars, will be born, and Romulus will found Rome, which will endure indefinitely. Even Juno will change her mind and love Rome. Eventually, Julius Caesar will bring peace—he will close the **gates of war** and bind Discord with a hundred knots.

This passage reveals the tension inherent in the concept of fate. If this is all going to happen, why should we worry about the characters? But just because something is fated to occur, doesn't mean it will occur smoothly or easily. Characters lose track of the fated future, either because they hate what will happen (like Juno) or because they're focused about the tragedies that happen along the way (like Aeneas). It's not the destination. It's the journey.

Jove then sends the god Mercury to make Dido, the queen of Carthage, and her people be friendly and hospitable to the Trojans.

Dido's sad story begins with the gods manipulating her. This creates a question: who's really to blame for her tragedy, her or the gods?

Aeneas and Achates go into the woods, where they come upon a virgin warrior, who is actually Venus in disguise. Venus tells them about Dido's past, how her greedy brother Pygmalion, king of Tyre, killed Dido's husband Sychaeus for his wealth. When she learned what had happened from the ghost of her dead husband, Dido led her friends to escape, and founded the city of Carthage: "A woman leads them all." Aeneas then recounts his difficult journey and laments his drowned men, but Venus stops him and tells him the lost ships have arrived safely at the harbor of Carthage. Venus reveals herself, and then makes Aeneas and Achates invisible by covering them in a dense mist so that they can travel safely into Carthage.

Dido's history shows her to be a loyal and brave leader, and an equal to Aeneas. Like Aeneas, she lost her spouse and fled her homeland with her people. Like Aeneas will do in the future, she founded a city. In this passage, however, Aeneas seems like the weaker leader, as he complains about his trip to his mother and focuses so much on the past that she interrupts him.

As he walks through Carthage, Aeneas envies the productive and happy town with its workers building up the city like busy bees. On the walls of a temple to Juno, Aeneas sees a depiction of the Trojan War of a large temple of Juno, including images of Priam, Achilles, and Hector, and is amazed and comforted that the ordeals of his people are known throughout the world. "Even here, the world is a world of tears and the burdens of mortality touch the heart."

This is one of the Aeneid's most famous passages, but its precise Latin meaning is controversial. Maybe Aeneas ponders generally how the same concerns touch all of humanity, or maybe he's moved more specifically that even here in a foreign land, people sympathize with his story. Most likely, the true meaning is a combination.

Dido then arrives at the temple, and is not only beautiful but shows herself to be a capable leader. Aeneas (still invisible) is astonished to see friends whom he thought had drowned standing next to Dido. He listens as one of the Trojans describes their past struggles and Aeneas's bravery, declares their peaceful intentions, and asks if they can rebuild their ships at Dido's city.

Dido's thoughtful and just leadership contrasts greatly with what she becomes. It seems that even without further divine intervention, she and the Trojans might have become great friends.

Dido generously offers them land and help in finding Aeneas. Just then, the mist of invisibility breaks away, revealing them, and Venus uses her powers to make Aeneas look extra-handsome. Aeneas praises Dido, and she welcomes him and calls for a grand feast. Achates leaves to retrieve gifts for Dido of beautiful clothing and jewels.

In all of Book I, Aeneas has been a rather passive hero, pushed around by Juno's storms or helped and guided by his mother's actions. Dido's all-important first impression of him is not his real form, but an extra-fancy Venus-enhanced version.

Venus, still concerned about Juno's wrath and mistrustful of Carthaginian hospitality, sends Cupid, disguised as Aeneas's son Ascanius, to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas. Cupid brings the gifts to the feast, sits in Dido's lap and enchants her, making her forget her beloved Sychaeus as she falls in love with Aeneas. The narrator describes love as poison and fire, and says that Dido is "doomed." The Trojans and their hosts drink and make merry together and listen to music. Dido asks Aeneas to tell the whole story of his seven years of wandering.

Venus sets in motion the Aeneid's most personal and ambiguous tragedy. It's unclear if Dido is really to blame for her disastrous spiral into love. On the one hand, Venus forces Dido to feel this way. On the other hand, Venus may be more of a symbol of emotion than a character on whom we can place the blame.

BOOK 2

Aeneas begins to tell the story of his wanderings. (Book 2 and Book 3 are therefore told in first person from Aeneas's point of view.) Though it's late at night and he's anguished to recall such sad events, he'll do it for Dido. He begins his story during the Trojan war. He describes how the Greeks, who are losing the war, build an enormous wooden horse and hide soldiers inside. The Greeks then sail away from Troy to wait and hide behind a nearby island, leaving the horse behind at Troy, where spirits are high and the gates are open. Some men want to bring in the horse, while others are not sure.

At the end of Book 1, the readers hear more about Dido's emotions than Aeneas's. Here, we are again aligned with Dido, listening to Aeneas's story. Aeneas demonstrates his piety and good manners by telling the story, despite how sad it makes him to remember these events. The stories also explicitly link Aeneas, and therefore Rome, to the great Greek tradition of epic heroes.

Laocoon, a Trojan priest of Neptune, runs up, breathlessly advising the Trojans not to trust the horse, explaining it might be a Greek trick, and saying, "I fear the Greeks, especially bearing gifts." He throws his spear into the horse, and the noise reveals that it's hollow inside. Shepherds bring a young Greek man, Sinon, to the gates. Sinon describes how Ulysses hated him based on false rumors. When the Greeks were going to use him as a human sacrifice, he fled. The Trojans believe Sinon's fraudulent story.

Though Laocoon gives proof that the horse might be hiding something, the Trojans don't want to second-guess what seems like cause for celebration. Unlike Aeneas in his speeches to his men in Book 1, they don't take the long view. That the Trojans don't immediately reject Sinon and the horse shows how eager they are to be finished with the war.

Priam unbinds Sinon and asks about the purpose of the horse. Sinon says the horse is an offering to Minerva, whose help the Greeks desperately need. If the horse enters Troy, Sinon says, the Greeks will lose the war. The Trojans, tired of ten years of war, rejoice at this news.

Sinon turns the Trojans' respect for the gods against them. Keeping the gods on one's side is an inexact science, and Sinon exploits that uncertainty.

Laocoon slays a bull at the altar. Two monstrous, red-crested sea serpents swim towards the shore. They strangle Laocoon's two sons, then constrict around Laocoon, who fails to dislodge them. The terrified Trojans interpret this as punishment for Laocoon's damaging the horse with his spear, and immediately bring the horse into the city. Though the Trojan seer Cassandra tries to alert the Trojans to their impending doom, the Trojans don't listen to her, celebrating the horse and throwing a big party. During the party, Sinon, hidden by Fate, opens the horse, releasing Ulysses and other Greek warriors. Meanwhile the Greek fleet returns to the Trojan shores.

Why did the serpents come and attack Laocoon and his sons? Virgil doesn't mention a specific god sending them—they're more like agents of fate. This scene shows a miscarriage of piety and religion. The Trojans choose their favorite interpretations, and don't realize that their devotion and respect are based on an incorrect assessment of events.

The bloody ghost of Hector, a great, deceased Trojan warrior, appears to Aeneas in a dream and warns Aeneas of a fire and the enemy within the city. Troy cannot be saved, Hector says, and Aeneas should take the **household gods** and find a new home. Aeneas wakes, hearing screaming and sounds of fighting in the streets. Hector was right: the Greeks are inside and the city burns. On the street, Aeneas meets Panthus, a seer who has given up hope for Troy. Aeneas, in a panicked rage about the battle, neglects Hector's advice and joins the fight.

This is the first time that Aeneas learns that he will have to leave, wander the seas and found a new home. Bringing the household gods means that he can preserve Troy's legacy. Throughout the poem, home is closely tied to ideas of Troy. Aeneas will always carry the past with him.

A band of Trojans, led by Aeneas, slay a group of Greeks and disguise themselves in the Greeks' armor. They kill many Greeks, but then the Trojans, not recognizing them, fire on them, and many die, including Panthus. The Greeks begin to attack the royal palace, and Aeneas rallies the Trojan troops against them. Aeneas then describes Pyrrhus, the Greek warrior and son of Achilles, and says he was like a snake that hid and grew huge in the winter and now reveals itself. Pyrrhus and his comrades break into the palace, like an overflowing river.

By disguising himself, Aeneas resembles trickster Greeks such as Sinon and Ulysses. He's willing to play dirty to fight for his home and his friends—another sign of his piety, but one that shows how his moral judgment might change based on his situation. The comparison of Pyrrhus to a snake suggests that his evil is beyond human.

In the palace sits Priam, the aged king, who had put on his rusty armor and bravely attempted to fight even though Hecuba, his wife, begged him to stay with her in safety. Pyrrhus kills Polites, one of Priam's sons. Despite being in mortal danger, Priam rebukes Pyrrhus for killing his son, and, despite his weakness, throws his spear at Pyrrhus. Pyrrhus mercilessly kills Priam, telling him to complain to Achilles in the underworld about his bad behavior. Aeneas, horrified, fears for the safety of his own father, wife, and son.

This scene shows the extreme importance of family in Aeneas's world. The most important bonds are those of father and son, husband and wife. Piety doesn't have to be just devotion to the gods—it's also about family. In this culture, Pyrrhus's killing the son before the father is excessively savage.

Returning to his house, Aeneas sees Helen, the woman whose beauty started the war. He envies her fortune and longs to vengefully kill her, when Venus appears, reminding Aeneas to focus on his love for his family. She gives him a glimpse of the fight from the gods' perspective, showing how Juno and even Jove are on the Greek side, and encourages him to depart.

Venus's intervention clearly defines right and wrong. Right is love and family, wrong is pointless vengeance. (Keep this in mind at the end of the Aeneid, when Aeneas delivers some pointless vengeance!)

When Aeneas tells his father Anchises of his plans for them to leave Troy, Anchises firmly responds that he wants to stay in Troy to die, and younger people can flee. Aeneas begs him desperately to reconsider, then arms himself again, refusing to leave his father helpless. Creusa tells Aeneas that she would die with him, but he should protect Ascanius.

Anchises's words bring back the personal tragedy of the fall of Troy. Anchises feels towards Troy the same devotion Aeneas feels towards his family—he doesn't want to live without it. It is his home, and a home is what gives his life meaning.

A harmless, flamelike light illuminates Ascanius's hair. Anchises interprets this as a sign from Jove, which is then further confirmed by a shooting star. Anchises changes his mind, and the family hastens to depart. Aeneas carries Anchises on his back, with Ascanius by his side and Creusa behind.

Signs from the gods can override even the strongest human desires. As soon as he's sure it's Jove, Anchises is ready to leave Troy.

In the confusion of fleeing, Aeneas loses Creusa. Leaving Anchises and Ascanius safely hidden, Aeneas seeks Creusa in the ravaged city, but finds only her ghost. The ghost comforts him, saying that the gods have ordained it all, and that, after years of exile, he will marry a royal in Italy. She tells him not to mourn, and he tries vainly to embrace her. He returns to his father, son, and surviving Trojans.

In this scene, too, Aeneas's priorities are crystal clear. He's willing to die for his family, but he won't argue with fates or the gods' decrees, so he abandons his search for Creusa without question. Ultimately, he's pious to fate above all else.

BOOK 3

Aeneas's continues to tell his story to Dido, as before in first person from his point of view. The Trojans build a fleet, unsure where the fates will lead them. In early summer they set off, bringing the **household gods**. Aeneas directs the fleet to Thrace, a land friendly to Troy. Aeneas lands and prepares to sacrifice a steer. But when he uproots a plant to shade the altar, the stem bleeds. Frightened, he pulls up another plant, which also bleeds. He prays and pulls up a third plant, which groans and speaks, introducing itself as Polydorus.

The Mediterranean is filled with both natural dangers and Greek-friendly regions. Troy's fall has affected the Trojans both emotionally and practically—they must depend on friends and strangers for supplies. Aeneas's sacrifice, immediately after landing, demonstrates the crucial importance of the gods' favor on the Trojans' quest.

Polydorus explains that Priam sent him to Thrace so that he would be safe if Troy lost the war. Polydorus also brought gold to secure his protection, but, as Troy fell, the Thracian king killed him and took his gold. The spears that struck Polydorus became the plants Aeneas uprooted. Aeneas gives Polydorus a proper funeral before setting sail again.

Throughout the Aeneid, we'll see the necessity of proper burials. In this society, the dead are never quite gone—like the living, they need respect, and sometimes their ghosts return.

The Trojans sail to an island, Ortygia, blessed by Apollo, to a city ruled by Anius, a friend of Anchises. Aeneas goes to pray for guidance from Apollo. Apollo speaks to him, telling him to find the land of his forefathers and return to his "ancient mother," where Aeneas's descendents would rule the world.

Like Creusa in Book 2, Apollo gives Aeneas a better sense of his destiny. Notably, it's Aeneas's pious prayers that lead to this revelation. Apollo isn't Aeneas's guardian, but he'll help if asked correctly.

The men attempt to interpret Apollo's instructions. Anchises believes this ancient homeland to be the nearby island of Crete. After sacrificing animals to Apollo, Neptune, and the winds, the Trojans head off for Crete. But, strangely, they find Crete in the grip of an intense drought, rife with death and disease. Anchises wants to return to Ortygia to consult Apollo again. But that evening, the **household gods** appear to Aeneas in a dream, and tell him that their homeland is actually the distant Italy. Aeneas recounts this to Anchises, who recalls that Cassandra once said the same thing.

A message from the gods is a good first step, but the human interpretation of that message can still cause problems. This passage shows that even the wisest humans, like Anchises, can make blunders. It's a constant question in the Aeneid how much control the gods have over the human lives, and here it seems that the gods have very limited power—they suggest, but the humans decide the actions on their own.

The Trojans set sail again, but a storm forces them off course, and they wander for three days before landing at the Strophades islands, which is the home of the Harpies, monsters with women's faces and filthy bird bodies. The men make a feast with the goats and oxen they find on the island, when the Harpies come screaming down from the hills and destroy their food. The Trojans try to fight back, but fail. Caelano, head Harpy, scolds the men for stealing the Harpies' animals and trying to fight them off their own territory. Then she reveals their future misfortune: they won't manage to establish their city in Italy before they undergo a famine so great they will try to eat their tables. Anchises begs the gods not to bring such trouble to the pious Trojans.

Caelano makes good points. The Trojans DID steal, and they did try to take over Harpy territory. This might be a difficult message to accept from such an ugly monster, but the passage accomplishes a typically Virgilian feat of making the reader sympathize with both sides of a conflict. The Trojans' desire to follow fate at all costs will have them making debatable decisions throughout their journey. Virgil never neglects the costs of this approach.

The Trojans sail on to Actium, where they enjoy themselves with games and wrestling, happy to have sailed unnoticed past Greek territory. Aeneas leaves a shield he took from a Greek he fought as a symbol that he hasn't been defeated. Winter is coming as they continue to Buthrotum, where Pyrrhus's former kingdom is now under the rule of the Trojan siblings Helenus and Andromache.

Aeneas's symbol of defiance, the Greek shield, shows his stubbornness and his inability to forgive his enemies. A typically pre-Christian hero, his consistency, and even his occasional gloating over his victories, show strength.

Andromache, Hector's widow, is so shocked to see Aeneas that at first she thinks he might be a ghost. Andromache explains that she was the slave of Pyrrhus (the evil Greek who killed Priam), until another Greek killed him, after which Helenus inherited some of his territory. She asks after Ascanius, and Helenus leads everyone to the city, which resembles a smaller Troy.

Helenus and Andromache's home offers a kind of preview of what Aeneas hopes to build in Italy. Memory and the bonds of family and nation can help to offset the scattering effects of war.

Before leaving, Aeneas asks Helenus what the future holds, and how he can avoid Caelano the Harpy's prediction of famine. Helenus describes how to reach Italy, and mentions that Aeneas must first descend to the underworld. When Aeneas finds a white sow and piglets under an oak tree, he will have reached his final destination. The famine will not be a problem, Helenus says, but he counsels Aeneas to avoid certain unfriendly cities, and to make sure to avoid the hazardous waters near Charybdis, a whirlpool off the coast of Sicily, and Scylla, a monster that lurks near Charybdis and has the head of a woman and the body of a dolphin or whale. Helenus recommends praying to Juno and visiting the Sibyl of Cumae.

Little by little, Aeneas's fate becomes more specific. Though it might seem like Virgil is removing suspense from the story by revealing it, all these prophecies actually demonstrate that uncertainty underlies even a fated journey. Aeneas must still pray and educate himself as best as he can. He will reach his destination, but at what cost? It's still possible that the losses could outweigh the ultimate gain, a situation known as a "Pyrrhic victory."

Helenus and Andromache give presents to the men, and Aeneas, sorry to depart, thanks them and says that he hopes that his future city will be united with theirs. The Trojans head north and camp briefly, but set off again at night when Palinurus the navigator can see the constellations by which he guides their route. Soon the Trojans come within sight of Italy, where they see four peaceful white horses near the shore, and the men rejoice. They see Mount Aetna in the distance, then row furiously to escape the pull of Charybdis. They drift to the island of the Cyclops.

Despite this glimpse of Italy, the Trojans still have a long way to go before reaching their destined homeland. This so-close-yet-so-far moment brings out the Trojans' longing for home, and the fatigue of their journey.

When they arrive, a Greek man, Achemenides, dirty and ragged, begs the Trojans to take him away from the island. He describes the bloodthirsty Cyclops, and how Ulysses blinded him. Achemenides was left behind when the Greeks departed and survived by hiding. The Trojans take him aboard. As they sail away, the Cyclops hears the splashing and chases them, though they manage to reach deep waters and escape. The winds blow the Trojans towards Scylla and Charybdis, but a fortunate north wind blows them away from danger. They pass many lands.

Although Achemenides is a Greek, the Trojans are willing to show him hospitality. The scene echoes the Sinon incident in Book 2, another time when a Greek begged for Trojan help. Despite the disastrous consequences of their friendliness to Sinon, the Trojans remain hospitable and treat Achemenides well.

At Drapenum, Sicily, Anchises dies. Aeneas mourns that his father survived such great risks only to die. Aeneas then sadly remarks that neither Helenus nor Caelano warned him of his father's coming death. Finally, Aeneas has finished telling his story, and the *Aeneid* returns to Dido's court at Carthage.

Surprisingly, the tragedy of Anchises death is only briefly mentioned here—it's just one of many trials of the Trojans years of wandering. But Anchises's death will lead to Aeneas's voyage to the underworld in Book 6.

BOOK 4

Dido's love for Aeneas, described as a wound and a flame, grows as she listens to Aeneas's sad story. She eventually works up the nerve to speak to her sister Anna, describing her alarm at her passion for Aeneas, and how she had never loved anyone other than Sychaeus. Weeping, she states that she'd rather die than betray Sychaeus's memory.

Virgil uses negative, violent imagery of wounds and flame to describe Dido's love for Aeneas. His metaphors foreshadow her tragic fate, even while she piously tries to resist the passion that Venus created in her.

Anna encourages Dido to let herself love. Anna argues that a marriage with Aeneas makes emotional sense (since Dido won't waste her youth in loneliness) and tactical sense (since Carthage is surrounded by enemies, including King Iarbus of a nearby nation whose love Dido had spurned, and could use an alliance like this). Anna encourages Dido to keep Aeneas in Carthage by warning him of the dangers of sailing in winter storms. Dido's doubts easily vanish, and she gives herself to passion.

Though Venus didn't enchant Anna, Anna unknowingly helps Venus's plan. This passage illustrates the limits of divine intervention. Maybe without Venus, Dido would have found herself in the same position. Mortal decisions may still count for more than gods' endeavors.

Virgil compares "poor Dido" to a doe who doesn't realize that a hunter's arrow is still stuck in her side. Dido makes sure that Aeneas sees how wealthy she is, yet, love-struck, she can hardly bring herself to speak with him. She treasures his every word and stays up at night, lingering alone where he sat at dinner. Without her guidance, construction of Carthage comes to a halt.

Dido was once a match for Aeneas—a strong leader who'd founded a new city. Her character has entirely changed and she's allowed love to blind her to her other duties to her people. Love has made her impious.

Juno angrily addresses Venus for putting Dido in such a state. Hoping to protect Carthage and block Aeneas's fate, Juno asks to solidify a balanced union by getting Aeneas and Dido to marry. Venus feigns agreement, saying this merger of Carthage and Troy must be fate.

Here it's easy to sympathize with Juno and Dido. Venus shows disrespect for fate, another sign that she might be in the wrong.

Juno explains the wedding plans to Venus. When Aeneas and Dido join a hunting group tomorrow, Juno will create a huge storm. The couple will take refuge in a cave where Juno will marry them. Venus again pretends to agree, but has other secret plans. The following day, the hunting party sets out, including the majestically dressed Dido, and Aeneas, who is so handsome he resembles Apollo. The storm arrives, scattering the group, and Aeneas and Dido end up together in a cave, as planned. Juno presides over the wedding, with nature as the witness, while nymphs cry from the hills.

Is this a real wedding? Juno certainly wants it to be one—but here again we see the limits of her power. With no human witnesses, and a groom who doesn't realize he's been married, the wedding pushes the limits of legitimacy. Still, Virgil presents the scene seriously and calls it a wedding, so Dido's point of view might not be wrong.

Virgil doesn't mention if the couple physically consummates the marriage, but he hints that they do, writing that Dido "calls it a marriage, using the word to cloak her sense of guilt." Meanwhile, rumor, the "swiftest of all the evils in the world," spreads gossip about Dido and Aeneas's shameful union around the entire region, and about how they've forgotten their leadership roles, shirked their duties, and have spent the whole winter together.

Dido might realize that her marriage isn't quite authentic, since she's trying to cloak her guilt. Nonetheless, we see that Aeneas isn't blameless either—and perhaps he's even worse, since no god enchanted him, or since he's leading Dido on. He knows this isn't his fate, but he too has abandoned his people in favor of love.

Iarbas, the nearby king whose love Dido spurned, hears the rumors and, jealous, appeals to his father Jove to intervene. Iarbas criticizes Aeneas for becoming like a woman, perfuming himself and letting his men become "eunuchs." After checking on the situation in Carthage, Jove sends Mercury to remind Aeneas of his mission. Mercury flies with his winged sandals to Carthage. He finds Aeneas bedecked in sumptuous clothing embroidered by Dido, with an ornamental sword. Mercury asks him why he lingers here, neglecting his own future kingdom. If Aeneas doesn't care to leave, he should at least think of Ascanius, a promising future king and forefather of the Romans. Mercury disappears. Aeneas is so dumbstruck and frightened that his hair stands on end.

From one point of view, this is a positive development. Aeneas does need to get going, and Iarbas indirectly does him a favor by getting the gods to remind him of this mission. On the other hand, Mercury's instructions leave no possibility of a good outcome for Dido. We've just spent half a book in her head, and now we're expected to root for her heartbreak? The priorities are brutal here. Ascanius, forefather of Rome, deserves Aeneas's consideration. But Dido doesn't.

Aeneas struggles to decide how to break the news of his departure to Dido. He decides to prepare to leave in secret, and figure out how to tell her later. His men are happy to depart.

Aeneas cowardly choice to try to leave secretly does not reflect well on him at all, even if he is just piously obeying fate.

When Dido hears rumors that Aeneas is leaving, she comes to him in a rage, railing against him for planning to leave in secret and for breaking apart their recent marriage, asking if he really must depart during the winter, and begging for his pity. She's disgraced herself, she says, and adds that if he leaves she will end up either married to Iarbas or conquered by Pygmalion. She would at least be happier if they'd had a child together, a little Aeneas to keep her company.

Though Aeneas has come to his senses, Dido remains lost in the same overwhelming passion. She can't imagine once again being the powerful leader of an independent, growing nation. Though she has shown the capacity to thrive before Aeneas arrived, her despair (the opposite of love) will doom her.

Aeneas is sorry, but he suppresses his emotions as he remembers Jove's orders. He tells Dido that she should not have thought they were married, as he never discussed being her husband, and they never had a ceremony. If he could have controlled his fate, he says, he would still be in Troy. But since the fates call him to Italy, he must go. He explains that Mercury came to remind him. Aeneas must go, against his will.

Aeneas adds insult to the injury by saying that he would have chosen to stay in Troy rather than be with her. On the one hand, his denial of the marriage seem cruel and immature, given that he's spent the whole winter with her and knows how much she loves him. On the other, he is also simply stating that personal feelings don't mean anything in the face of piously doing your duty and following fate. If he'd followed his personal feelings, he'd have never even started on this journey that led him to Dido.

Dido insults Aeneas, saying that he's not a goddess's son, but was instead born from the earth and nursed by tigers. She describes her misery in a monologue—how she welcomed him as a stranger and split her kingdom with him, only to be spurned; how she won't try to change his decision, but her ghost will haunt him. Dido leaves, fainting, and though Aeneas has many things to say to her, he piously goes to his ships. The Trojans quickly prepare to exit the city, resembling ants that scurry away with a pile of grain. It takes them a day to get ready to leave.

Dido's insults demonstrate the importance of family and lineage. Earlier, on her temple walls, we saw how much happiness Aeneas got from being a part of the great and famous history of Troy. Here Dido attempts to separate him from the glory of the past by denying his ancestry and claiming that his behavior proves he is nothing more than a wild beast.

Meanwhile, Dido asks Anna to hurry to the shore and ask Aeneas to remain in Carthage until the winter ends and better sailing weather arrives. Anna attempts to convince Aeneas, but the fates and the heavens block Aeneas's ears so that he won't change his mind. Virgil compares Aeneas to a mighty tree, with a crown that reaches the sky, and roots that stretch to the underworld.

If Dido's insane passion is more her fault than Venus's, then Aeneas's cold-hearted disregard for her feelings should be treated as more his fault than Jove's. The only difference is: Aeneas is following fate, while Dido is trying to block it. The comparison of Aeneas to a tree represents his steadfast piety, but also suggests that he's unable to feel human emotions.

Dido prays for death. As she prays at her shrine, the water turns black and the wine turns to blood. She interprets these signs as encouraging her suicidal plans, but says nothing to Anna. Night falls, and the Trojans sleep in their ships, planning to leave the next day. Dido endures nightmares about Aeneas. Dido prepares for her death, hiding her intentions from Anna and pretending to be happy. She tells Anna that a priestess recommended ending her heartbreak by burning Aeneas's clothes and armor on a pyre. Anna prepares the pyre, and Dido decorates it and prays throughout the night. Once more, she ponders her future, seeing no escape from her sadness. Even if she went with the Trojans, she'd have been nothing more than their scorned servant. And she'd rather die than try to fight them.

Virgil doesn't tell us if Dido correctly interpreted the signs, only how she interpreted them. Her own decision is the most important thing—the signs only help to steel her resolve. It may be that omens are meaningless by themselves, and behave more like a mirror for what the human interpreters already want. Throughout the poem, Virgil leaves this possibility open, much like the possibility that the gods only have the power to suggest rather than the power to make humans actually do anything.

During the night, Mercury again appears to Aeneas, telling him to leave quickly, before the Carthaginians come to attack their ships. Aeneas wakes his men and the Trojans set sail, leaving the Carthaginian shore.

Aeneas always has a choice when he is told he must follow his fate. He can always choose not to follow his fate. But he always chooses to follow it.

At dawn, Dido sees the ships have sailed away. Crazy with heartbreak, she wishes she'd killed Aeneas when she had the chance. She prays that he will have to fight and watch his people die before founding his city, and asks that he die before reaching old age. She proclaims that her descendents will be the eternal enemies of his.

Here Virgil explains a historical conflict. A century before Virgil's adulthood, Rome and Carthage waged a major war, ending in Roman troops conquering Carthage in 146BC.

Dido tells her nurse to fetch Anna. Then, while the nurse is away, she climbs the pyre and gives a final speech. She says she's glad to have built a beautiful city and to have avenged her Sychaeus, and wishes that the Trojans had never come. She will die without having gotten revenge on Aeneas, but hopes he's sorry to hear of her death. Finally, she stabs herself.

Unlike Aeneas, who has to be reminded to follow his fate, Dido creates her (awful) fate for herself. Her final summary of her life shows how much she's accomplished—she was truly a worthy match for Aeneas, and a heroine in her own right.

Anna runs to the still-dying Dido's side, distraught that Dido had concealed her suicidal plans and gotten Anna to build the pyre under false pretenses. Anna climbs the pyre and holds her dying sister. Juno sends Iris to end Dido's slow torment. Iris offers Dido's body to the underworld, and cuts her hair, ending her life.

Juno's helpless attempt to do one final good thing for Dido, along with Anna's suffering, further shows the parallel between Dido and Aeneas. Both have loving and protective goddesses (and relatives) trying to help them—but Venus's meddling works out well, and Juno's fails. Neither goddess cares whether their interventions harm others, though Juno gets all the blame. The downfall of Juno and Dido is fate, of course, but Dido's death powerfully shows that fate isn't fair.

BOOK 5

As Aeneas's ships sail from Carthage, he and his men notice a bright point in the city, but don't realize that it's Dido's burning pyre. A storm rises, and the navigator Palinurus advises landing. Aeneas knows of a friendly land nearby in Sicily, ruled by Acestes. They land and Acestes greets them. Then Aeneas proposes a festival and various games (boat race, foot race, boxing, shooting) to celebrate the memory of Anchises, who died exactly a year ago and was buried here. The men put on garlands and make offerings at Anchises's grave. A serpent in seven coils winds around the grave but harms no one—a good sign. Aeneas sacrifices six animals.

Tragically, Dido's final wish—that Aeneas realize she's died—goes unfulfilled, for now. The poem makes a sudden jump in tone, from a scene of suicide to fun party plans. This shows Aeneas's morale-boosting leadership, but also highlights his unsympathetic blindness to the pain he's just caused.

The first day of the games dawns brightly. A crowd of locals gathers to watch. Four boats attempt the first race. The large boats and brave captains, dressed in purple and gold, are described. Gyas leads at first, but his navigator, Menoetes, fears the reefs near the cliffs and directs the boat to deeper waters, and Cloanthus gains the lead. Gyas angrily throws Menoetes overboard. The crowd laughs at Menoetes as he climbs onto a rock to dry.

These amusing scenes familiarize us with Aeneas's followers, who later we'll see again in the battles of Books 7-12. The competitions are a kind of mock-war, a lighthearted version of what's to come. They emphasize the joy of companionship and athleticism.

Another captain, Sergestus, takes the lead. Mnestheus tails him, encouraging his crew to draw strength from memories of Troy, but also acknowledging that Neptune will decide the victor. Sergestus's boat crashes on the rocks, and Mnestheus surges forward. Cloanthus prays to Neptune, promising to make offerings to him, and comes from behind to win. At the end of the race, Aeneas gives all the captains gifts. Sergestus is the last to return, embarrassed by his crash. Aeneas happily welcomes him back, and gives him the special gift of a slave woman with two sons.

Making the competition even more like a real war, the most pious captain appeals to Neptune and wins. The games also show Aeneas's balanced leadership. Since Aeneas is the forefather of Augustus, his good traits reflect on Augustus too. Virgil is showing us what good leadership looks like. Aeneas excels at paying attention to everyone, not just the winners, and he's observant of his men's different temperaments.

The Trojans and locals prepare for the foot race. Nisus and Euryalus, two great Trojan friends, join the race, as well as five others. Before they start, Aeneas reminds them that they'll all get a prize. Nisus slips and knows he can't win, but he gets up and tackles the leading runner, Salius, to help Euryalus's chances. Euryalus wins, but Salius is angry about the cheating. Aeneas decides that the race results will stand, but comforts Salius with a prize.

Aeneas confronts a slightly more difficult leadership challenge here, with Nisus's devotion to Euryalus leading to an unfair result. As before, Aeneas's solution is to acknowledge everyone's good efforts.

The boxing match is next. Dares, a muscular hero of the Trojan War, steps into the ring, and no one wants to fight him. Acestes, king of the region, goads his friend Entellus to fight. Entellus, a former champion, protests that he's too old and that he doesn't care about glory, but he gets up anyway. The spectators admire his enormous strength. During the fight, despite Entellus's slowness and age, Dares resembles a soldier attempting to attack a mountain fortress. Entellus tries to hit Dares, but Dares slips away, and Entellus falls. When he gets back up, he pounds Dares so relentlessly that Aeneas stops him. Entellus, the winner, sacrifices a bull just by punching it with his boxing glove, and announces his retirement from boxing.

Here Aeneas demonstrates the all-important trait of clemency—of knowing when to have mercy and stop the fight. He prevents Entellus from causing Dares more injuries. Entellus is a pious man, shown by his sacrifice at the end. But the passage also shows how even the most pious can get carried away in the heat of a fight, even if their enemy is quite vanquished. This foreshadows Aeneas's ruthless vengeance on Turnus in Book 12.

Next is the shooting contest, with bows and arrows. The men shoot well, and a man named Eurytion seems to have won, since he manages to shoot the targeted bird. Acestes shoots last, and his arrow catches fire in midair. Aeneas interprets this as a sign from Jove, and gives Acestes the first prize, Anchises's decorated bowl. Eurytion is kind and doesn't mind his unexpected drop to second place.

This final contest shows the supremacy of signs, fate and gods' favor. Eurytion is the best shooter, but that doesn't matter compared to the heavenly sign. We can generalize and see this as further confirmation of Aeneas's fitness as forefather of Rome. Despite his flaws, he's the chosen one.

Ascanius and other Trojans parade in on their horses and perform a highly choreographed horse show that simulates a battle.

This kind of show will become a tradition in Rome. Virgil is here using the Aeneid to imagine the origins of Roman customs.

Juno watches these celebrations from the heavens, and sends down Iris to investigate. Iris finds the Trojan women apart from the games, exhausted with sailing and weeping about not yet having a home. Juno disguises herself as an old Trojan woman and comes to the Trojan women to stir up trouble. She complains about the seven years of traveling, wishes the Trojan ships would go up in flames, and exclaims that Cassandra, in a dream, told her that Acestes's land is the Trojans' destined home. Finally, she throws a torch at the Trojans' ships.

No happy festivity can last long when Juno's your enemy. The women's desperation brings to life the underlying pain and sadness of the Trojans' long wandering without a home. Though Aeneas can keep the men's morale high, the women can't be distracted by games.

One Trojan woman, Pyrgo, warns that the firestarter isn't who she says she is, and looks more like a god. After a moment of indecision, the women's longing for home overtakes them, and they start heaping the ships with flammable material.

Is Juno really to blame for the women's actions? Juno started the fire, but the women build up the fire even after they realize that it was started by a god. They choose to perform this action on their own.

A messenger rushes in to Ascanius with the news that the woman have begun burning the ships. Ascanius stops the celebrations and reaches the women first, bringing them to their senses. As Aeneas and others arrive, the embarrassed women leave the scene, shaking off Juno's influence. But the boats continue to burn.

This section indicates that Juno's enchantments had influenced them. Still, as always with the gods, Juno may have merely stimulated the women's natural inclinations.

Aeneas prays to Jove to either stop the fire or to kill him now with lightning. A huge rainstorm rolls in, and all but four of the ships are saved. Aeneas forgets his fate and can't decide if it would be better to keep going to Italy or to remain here, as he now sees his people wish to do. The wise old seer Nautes suggests a plan—the tired and weak should stay here in Acestes's lands, while the fit can continue.

As at the start of the Aeneid, we see Aeneas despairing. Aeneas's devotion to his people sometimes makes him lose track of his fate—another sign of his thoughtful leadership, though soon he'll remember that he must make his fate top priority.

Aeneas still isn't sure, until Anchises's ghost appears to him at night. Anchises tells Aeneas to follow Nautes's plan, and to bring only the best for the future difficulties in Italy. But before heading for Italy, Anchises says, Aeneas should go to visit him in the Underworld, with the aid of the Sibyl of Cumae. Anchises vanishes, and Aeneas calls after him, asking why he must go so quickly. The next day, the Trojans decide who will stay and who will go. For those who will stay, Aeneas marks out the boundaries of the new town, while Acestes describes the laws. They also mark out a temple for Venus and a priest to look after Anchises's grave.

Anchises's intervention demonstrate how much Aeneas depends on good advice from others. If he didn't have these others to keep reminding him, would he fail to fulfill his fate? This seems contradictory, but the poem allows that uncertainty to add tension to the storyline. Despite Aeneas's piety, it's hard even for him to have total faith in his fate. He doesn't seem to have accepted his fate yet, preferring to focus on the smaller picture.

The reduced group of Trojans sets sail. Venus goes to Neptune and describes Juno's recent plot, then asks Neptune to grant the Trojans safe passage to Italy. Neptune agrees, but requires the sacrifice of one man. Palinurus, the skilled navigator, leads the Trojan fleet. At night, the god of Sleep comes to Palinurus and forces him to doze off. Palinurus falls overboard and calls for help, but no one hears. Eventually, Aeneas takes over steering, and grieves for his friend, but blames him for putting too much trust in the quiet sea.

In this beautiful, tragic passage, Aeneas blames his navigator for dooming himself. The passage rings true psychologically—Aeneas would rather scold Palinurus for leaving him than accept the death. He fails to imagine it from Palinurus's point of view, and doesn't realize that the gods were responsible for the sacrifice. Aeneas comes off as both flawed and loving.

BOOK 6

Aeneas and the Trojans arrive at Cumae. While his men go hunting and exploring, Aeneas climbs to Apollo's temple and the Sibyl's cave. Long ago, Daedalus flew here (using the wings he constructed) and built this temple for Apollo. The doors to the temple depict the story of the Minotaur, who Daedalus helped to outwit. But Daedalus was too sad to depict the story of Icarus, his fallen son, on the doors.

The doors of the temple allow Virgil to use ecphrasis, which is a poetic technique when a description of a work of art allows the author to tell a story-within-a-story—in this case, exploring the myths of Daedalus. Ecphrasis also occurred back in Book 1 with the Trojan War stories on Dido's temple.

The Sybil urges Aeneas and Achates to sacrifice animals to Apollo. They do, and she calls out, her voice echoing through a hundred doors. She sees Apollo and enters a trance, possessed by the god. Aeneas asks to hear his fate, promising to build Apollo a temple and honor him as guardian of his future kingdom. As Helenus had counseled, Aeneas asks the Sibyl not to write the prophecy on easily-scattered leaves, but to say it aloud. The violently possessed Sibyl answers as the hundred doors fly open. The Trojans will reach and rule in Italy, but must first fight a terrible war.

This spooky, dramatic scene gives us the clearest articulation yet of Aeneas's fate. The Sibyl's violent possession intensely demonstrates the power of fate and the gods, and hints at the danger of defying them. Apparently, Dido's deathbed wishes will come true, and Aeneas will have to watch his companions die before fulfilling his fate.

Aeneas asks how he can descend to the Underworld to see Anchises again. The Sibyl answers that it's easy to go down to hell, but difficult to come back up. To visit the ghosts, he must find a nearby tree with a **golden bough**, which he must present as a gift to Proserpina, queen of the Underworld. Only those fated to go to the Underworld can remove the bough. But before all that, he should bury the body of his friend that has washed up on the shore.

The golden bough will be the first physical manifestation of Aeneas's fate, and it will give him a decisive yes or no answer about his suitability for this rare mission to the Underworld. It's fitting that this symbol comes from the natural world—this is beyond the realm of human creation.

Having located the body of their countryman Misenus on the shore, the Trojans build a tomb for him. Aeneas prays to find the tree with the **golden bough**, and Venus sends two doves to help him. He finds the tree near the entrance to the Underworld, and successfully removes the bough.

Unsurprisingly, Aeneas succeeds in taking the bough. But again, his success has depended in part on outside help. Fulfilling his destiny is a team effort. Though it's also worth noting that he piously followed the advice of the Sibyl to prepare the tomb for Misenus before searching out the golden bough.

The Trojans bury Misenus, then Aeneas performs sacrifices for good luck in the Underworld. The Sibyl leads Aeneas to the Underworld's entrance. Monsters and embodiments of Hunger, War, and Discord (among many others) stand before the entrance. Aeneas wants to fight them with his sword, but the Sibyl tells him that the sword will have no effect on their ghostly forms. Heading deeper into the Underworld, they reach Charon, who will ferry them across the river Styx.

In this passage Virgil transforms ideas like War and Hunger into godlike bodies—adding weight to the argument that the other gods in the Aeneid's might also be more like embodied human wishes than full, accountable characters.

The shores of the river are crowded with the ghosts of those who were not properly buried and therefore must wait a hundred years before crossing the river. Aeneas sees the ghost of Palinurus among those who are waiting. Aeneas says that Palinurus shouldn't have died, since a prophecy predicted that he'd reach Italy. In fact, Palinurus explains that after falling from the ship he did float to Italy, only to be killed by locals. He asks for a proper burial, or for Aeneas to help him cross the river. The Sibyl tells him not to cheat his fate by trying to get across the river before he is destined to, but comforts him by saying that he will be long remembered on Earth.

As we saw with the bleeding plants in Book 3, proper burials are key to a good death. Palinurus still hasn't accepted his fate.

Charon tells Aeneas he cannot take a living person across the river, but the Sibyl displays the **golden bough**, and Charon ceases his objections. After crossing, the Sibyl subdues the three-headed guard dog Cerberus with drugged cake. After passing Cerberus, Aeneas and Sibyl encounter a variety of dead people, who are being categorized (babies, suicides, those who died for love, etc) or, for particularly bad people, judged for punishment. Among the dead-for-love group wanders Dido. Aeneas tells her he left her unwillingly, begging her to stay, but she angrily ignores him, and runs to Sychaeus, who "meets her love with love."

Dido's reappearance allows her to display some of the dignity she lost during her time with Aeneas. Now, he's the beggar and she's the one with the power to ignore him. She's reunited with her true love, Sychaeus, showing that death and the Underworld need not be tragic.

The fascinated ghosts crowd around Aeneas—except for the fallen Greeks, who are frightened of him and avoid him. Aeneas speaks with the disfigured Deiphobus, son of Priam, who describes how his wife betrayed him to the Greeks. Aeneas and the Sibyl pass the section of the Underworld devoted to tormenting the guilty souls, noting diverse methods including whips and a liver-eating vulture.

Even in the land of death, the Greek-Trojan conflict lingers. Here the Greeks come off as cowards. It's comical that the shades are afraid of Aeneas, given that he can't possibly hurt them. The gruesome methods of torture resemble those in Dante's Inferno.

Aeneas leaves the **golden bough** at the gate to the happy part of the Underworld, the Elysian Fields. He and the Sibyl cross into the beautiful meadows, where the shades enjoy music, dancing, and athletic contests. They see Trojan ancestors and great poets. Aeneas asks one Trojan where he can find Anchises, and the Trojan points them to a ridge where they'll have a better view of the Elysian fields. When they find Anchises, he .joyously greets Aeneas. Aeneas explains that he came specifically to see Anchisees, and tries three times to hug Anchises, but each time the ghost fades away.

It's striking how much the festivities of Book 5 in which Aeneas and his men honored Anchises's death resemble Virgil's version of paradise. The emphasis on culture and the arts (the music, dancing, and poets) also approvingly link the scene to Augustus Caesar, as he was a great patron of the arts in Rome.

Aeneas then notices the souls crowded near a river. Anchises explains that those souls have passed a thousand years in the Underworld, and, finally cleaned of their mortal pasts, they are preparing to re-enter the world in new bodies. He points out Aeneas's descendents, who will be great kings in Italy, and eventually in Rome. Anchises describes Rome's seven hills, and how it will be blessed above all cities and will rule the world. He identifies Augustus Caesar, who will preside over a golden age and describes the greatness of other Roman heroes who will live during Augustus's rule. He then describes the great defining characteristic of Rome: "These will be your arts: to put your stamp on the works and ways of peace, to spare the defeated, break the proud in war." Aeneas asks about a particularly beautiful soul, but Anchises mourns that this soul, Marcellus, a promising nephew of Augustus, will only live a short time on Earth.

This is (debatably) the most important section of the entire Aeneid—the moment when Virgil, via Anchises, defines Roman greatness. If we interpret the poem as a glorification of Rome, this is definitely the thesis statement. The gist is that Romans are better than Greeks (the only similar nation that preceded them) because they know how to spare the conquered and vanquish the arrogant—to defeat those who threaten them, but, once they have defeated them, to spare them and make them a part of their peaceful empire. In addition, this is the moment when Aeneas learns the full measure of his destiny, allowing him to completely accept and pursue his fate.

The time comes for Aeneas to leave the Underworld. There are two exits to the underworld. One is the gate of horn for true shades, and the other is the gate of ivory for false dreams. Anchises escorts Aeneas and the Sibyl to leave through the gate of false dreams.

After such a triumphant description of Rome, it seems bizarre that Aeneas leaves through the gate of false dreams. This is one of the most mysterious and controversial moments of the Aeneid. Is it simply because Aeneas is actually alive, meaning he's not a true shade, that makes him have to leave through that gate? Or is Virgil making a commentary on the political lies of the Empire, the flaws of empire and colonization, and the prideful exaggerations of Roman identity? The question remains a matter of debate.

BOOK 7

The Trojans sail towards Italy. Caeita, Aeneas's old nurse, dies and the Trojans name the land where she's buried after her. Not long after, Aeneas sees a region with a forest filled with birds and the beautiful Tiber river flowing through it.

The Trojans get their first glimpse of Latium, the region where they'll found a new city (and where Rome will eventually rise, along the Tiber's banks).

Virgil explains the history of Latium, home of the Latins (and future location of Rome). King Latinus is seeking a suitable husband (and future heir) for his daughter Lavinia. Turnus, king of the Rutulians, seems most likely, but fate has delayed the marriage. Latinus sees a swarm of bees by a sacred laurel, signifying that strangers will arrive. A scary but harmless flame engulfs Lavinia, an omen that she will be long esteemed—but also that a war is on the horizon. Latinus goes to a grove sacred to Faunus, a nature god of the region, to pray about the omens. He sacrifices a hundred sheep. A voice tells him not to marry Lavinia to a Latin. A foreigner will arrive soon, who will lead to a powerful dynasty.

The harmless flame around Lavinia echoes the flame around Ascanius when Aeneas and his family were deciding whether to escape from Troy—another time when characters based their decisions about the future on signs rather than on what was easiest. Latinus's piety to the gods and to his daughter's future suggests he'll make a great father in law to Aeneas.

The Trojans land their ships and have lunch, eating food that they've placed on top of pieces of bread. Ascanius jokes that they're eating their tables—so the Harpy Caelano's prophesy of famine has been harmlessly fulfilled. Anchises had also told Aeneas in the Underworld to build his home on the spot where he eats his tables. Jove sends thunder, and the Trojans rejoice to have reached their destined home. They begin immediately to build a fortress and camp.

This amusing resolution to Caelano's dark-seeming prophesy is a rare piece of good luck for the Trojans. It also shows that fate might not be as straightforward or easily interpreted as they expect.

A delegation of Trojans (without Aeneas) journeys to Latinus's city. Latinus invites them to the palace, which is richly decorated with mythological images. He asks them how they arrived, and recalls that Trojan ancestry can be traced back to Latium. The Trojan Ilioneus praises Jove, describes Aeneas's greatness, asks if the Trojans can stay in peace, and offers gifts to Latinus, including some of Priam's robes.

This scene strengthens the Trojan-Latin bond, both from their historical connection (they're basically family) and from the gift of Priam's robes, which shows the legacy of Trojan leadership now passing to Latinus. An easy, fruitful peace seems inevitable.

Latinus realizes that Aeneas must be the foreigner destined to marry Lavinia. He tells the Trojans they may stay, but first he wants to meet Aeneas because signs indicated his daughter's fated marriage to Aeneas. He gives horses to the Trojans, and prepares a carriage led by half-god horses for Aeneas. But Juno, spying on the proceedings from above, is disgusted at the Trojans' good fortune and is determined not to let her enemies win.

As with the Trojan horse incident in Book 2, or the first sighting of Italy in Book 3, the Trojans have another so-close-yet-so-far moment, making the tragedy of the coming war particularly painful. It would be so easy to have peace and fulfill fate immediately…but Juno pointlessly and cruelly continues to fight them.

Juno goes to the fury-goddess Allecto and instructs her to destroy Latium's peace and turn people against each other. Allecto throws one of her evil magical snakes at Amata, poisoning her against Aeneas and making her angry that Lavinia won't marry Turnus. Amata tries to convince Latinus to cancel the marriage to Aeneas, to no avail. She runs through the streets, whipping many of the other women of Latium into a frenzy. They rush from the city, taking Lavinia with them, and hide her in the mountains.

Juno repeats her tactics of the boat-burning in Book 5, choosing to enchant the women first, not the male leaders. Juno understands that a nation's peace depends on every citizen, not just those with the most power. Now Amata has set herself against fate, just as Dido did. In both cases, the effort to thwart fate seems to be accompanied by a kind of craziness. In Dido's case, it was a love-craze. In Amata's it seems to be a frenzy of anger.

Allecto next flies to Turnus's bedroom and disguises herself as an elderly priestess. She encourages Turnus to attack the Trojan ships and fight Latinus because of Lavinia. But Turnus dismisses her, saying she should focus on her temple and leave the fighting to the men. Allecto takes on her true, terrifying form, and throws a flame at him. Turnus becomes crazy with war-lust, like an overheated pot that bubbles over. He sends Latinus a message of war and gathers Rutulian men to be soldiers.

Our first impression of Turnus, like that of Dido, is that he's smart, balanced, and not an enemy at all. He resists Juno's desires much better than Amata or Dido. Allecto has to bring out her big guns to enchant him properly, suggesting that maybe all of what's to come isn't really his fault.

Allecto flies to the Trojan camp, and makes Ascanius's hunting dogs go mad. Following after the dogs, Ascanius sees and shoots a stag. Unfortunately, that particular stag was a beloved pet of two Latium locals, Tyrrheus the shepherd and his daughter Silvia. They are furious at what Ascanius has done. Allecto makes a deathly war call emanate from a shepherd's trumpet, and the Trojans rush out of their nearby camp. A battle begins between Trojans and shepherds. Tyrrheus's son is the first to die.

Again, Juno takes a minimalist approach to achieve her goal, enchanting the hunting dogs instead of Ascanius. The war that will take up the rest of the poem basically starts from an argument about a pet deer. But the war's small and petty beginnings don't matter once the frenzy of fighting takes over.

Allecto proudly shows her work to Juno, and offers to do more. Juno refuses the offer and sends Allecto away. The crazed mothers return from the mountains and ask Latinus to declare war. Latinus is reluctant to open the **gates of war**, which would serve as the declaration. Juno intervenes, opening the gates of war herself. The Latium men rush to arm themselves.

Juno's dismissal of Allecto shows that she hasn't created all this just for the fun of havoc—she has a purpose. Still not trusting the mess she's caused, she makes sure the war will stick by opening the gates.

BOOK 8

Turnus gathers his own men and sends a messenger to the city of King Diomedes, a Greek now living in Italy, to try to win him as an ally. Meanwhile, the spirit of the Tiber river appears to Aeneas in a dream, and tells him not to fear the war—he's finally reached his homeland and the destination of his **household gods**. The Tiber god tells Aeneas to travel up the river until he sees a white sow with piglets (the same that Helenus predicted in Book 3), which will be the sign of the place where Ascanius should build his city, Alba Longa. The Tiber god also says that near this spot live the Arcadian people, in a city called Pallanteum, and that Aeneas should go win the Arcadian king, Evander, to his side. The Tiber god also tells Aeneas to pray to Juno, to make her a little less angry.

It's a good sign for the Trojans that the land itself, in the form of the Tiber, has accepted Aeneas, further indicating his fate to rule this new homeland, despite the coming war. The Tiber's suggestion to pray to Juno seems like a great tactic Aeneas hasn't yet tried, considering Juno's pride and self-importance.

Aeneas thanks the Tiber god and sails with some of his men along the river. They see the white sow, and Aeneas sacrifices it as an offering to Juno. The men continue, reaching the place where someday Rome's towers will rise, a spot now occupied by Evander's humble home.

For the first time in the poem, Aeneas shows piety also towards Juno. His sacrifice of the fated white pig shows his understanding that Juno is involved in his fate.

The Arcardians are in the middle of a feast to honor Hercules and the gods. When they see the ships arriving, Pallas, Evander's son, goes to greet them so that the feast won't be interrupted. Aeneas explains he wants to ally with Evander in the coming war. Pallas is immediately impressed by Aeneas's nobility. Aeneas meets Evander and explains himself. Evander remembers meeting Priam and Anchises as a youth, and quickly agrees to help the Trojans and invites them to join the feast. Evander tells the story of Hercules and Cacus, which the feast commemorates. Cacus, a monster, stole eight of Hercules's cows and brought them to his cave. Hercules heard the cows mooing, and though Cacus blocked off the cave and breathed fire and smoke at him, Hercules managed to strangle him.

Evander's piety towards the tradition of honoring Hercules, as well as his knowledge of Priam and Anchises, makes him a perfect ally for Aeneas. As we saw at Dido's temple, the Trojans are famous throughout the Mediterranean. Here's another place where the same concerns touch the human heart. The story of Hercules and Cacus can also be seen as foreshadowing the war. Will Aeneas manage to pull off a Hercules-like feat, defeating those who stand against and taking what is rightfully his?

Evander gives Aeneas a tour of his city, and tells its history. During the peaceful, plentiful Golden Age, Saturn named this place Latium. But the Golden Age faded, and the land changed rulers many times, until Evander's fate brought him here. They look at the Capitoline Hill, future location of many important Roman temples. They also pass by the future Forum, now a field for grazing.

It would have been fun for Roman readers to picture their city in its countryside form eleven hundred years before. The tour of the pre-Rome area allows Virgil to extol Rome's greatness, suggesting a second Golden Age—the age of Augustus Caeasar.

Venus asks her husband Vulcan to build a set of armor for Aeneas, and kisses him as encouragement. Vulcan says he would even have built armor for Aeneas at Troy, if she'd asked. Vulcan gets his Cyclops workers to build a seven-layered **shield**.

Just like Juno, Venus is always trying to intervene in events. She's just trying to help, rather than harm, Aeneas. But if Aeneas is fated to win, why would he need her help?

In the morning, Evander and Aeneas meet to talk war. Evander says he would like to fight but is too old, but he advises Aeneas to go ally with the thousands of Tuscans who revolted against Mezentius's tyrannical rule. Those Tuscans already wanted to join the war against Mezentius, but a prophecy had told them to wait for a foreign commander. Evander also offers to send his troops and his beloved young son, Pallas, to fight for Aeneas and learn the ways of war.

Evander's trust in Aeneas, and his willingness to hand over his precious son, shows the depth of the bonds that war establishes between nations. War creates new families and eternal enemies.

Red light, accompanied by thunder, appears in the clear sky. Aeneas explains that it's a sign from Venus that war nears. Evander passionately prays that Pallas will return safely, hoping to die if his son is killed. Aeneas and the soldiers set out, with Pallas leading and looking particularly brave and handsome. The mothers of Pallanteum watch them go and cry.

Evander's love of his son parallels Aeneas's piety to his family. The loving and concerned mothers of Pallanteum who wish that war could be avoided but do not interfere in fated events contrast with the mothers of Lavinium, whom Allecto stirred into a crazy frenzy to start a war with the sole goal of thwarting fate.

Aeneas's group finds the Tuscans and camps with them. As they camp, Venus comes down from the heavens to give Aeneas his new armor. Aeneas marvels at the beautiful helmet, sword, and spear, and finally the ornate **shield**. On the shield, Vulcan has depicted the future of Rome, including important Roman myths and history such as Romulus and Remus suckling from a she-wolf and Augustus Caesar leading the Roman fleet to victory at the Battle of Actium, along with the celebrations in Rome afterward. Aeneas doesn't know what the images mean, but he appreciates them, and "lift[s] onto his shoulders now the fame and fates of all his children's children."

Other than the trip to the Underworld, this moment represents the place in the Aeneid where Virgil gives the most specifics about Rome's future. He touches on many stories central to Roman culture and even mentions politicians and orators of his time period. The shield gives physical form to Aeneas's fate to create the people who will found Rome, and simultaneously suggests both that all of Rome's future will help guard him in battle, and that Rome's future depends entirely on this one man.

BOOK 9

Iris, sent by Juno, instructs Turnus to attack the Trojans' camp, since Aeneas has left it to find Evander. Turnus thanks the gods for the help and prepares his troops. The Trojans see Turnus's army approaching and prepare to guard the fortress that they've built in their camp. Turnus's men think that the Trojans are cowards to stay in their fortress instead of coming out to meet them on the plain. Turnus rages like a famished wolf who's unable to reach the lambs he wants to eat.

Virgil will make use of many animal metaphors to highlight the impulses and savagery that drive war. Turnus as a hungry wolf suggests that Turnus doesn't just want to kill the Trojans, he must in order to survive—and this is true, because if Aeneas's fate stands, Turnus is doomed.

After attempting and failing to break into the fortress, Turnus's troops begin to burn the Trojan ships. The action pauses for some backstory about the Roman ships. Cybele, a goddess, gave her sacred trees to the Trojans to build their ships, and asked Jove to shield the ships from storms and destruction. Jove agreed, and planned to turn the ships into water nymphs after they served their purpose. Returning to the present time, as Turnus attempts to burn the ships, they transform into nymphs and swim away.

This is the second time that people have attempted to burn the ships. In Book 5, Jove saved four ships with a rainstorm. Now the transformation into nymphs shows that Aeneas has truly reached a place where he won't have to do any more sea-wandering, since the ships were fated to turn into nymphs once they had served their purpose.

Though Turnus's men are upset by the divine intervention, Turnus declares that the lack of ships will actually hurt the Trojans. He doesn't fear fate or the gods, he says, and anyway, the Trojans have messed up his fate to marry Lavinia. He galvanizes his men with a stirring speech and makes plans to scale the walls of the Trojans' camp.

Turnus misinterprets fate on purpose, substituting what he wants with his destiny. His bold declaration that he doesn't fear fate or the gods shows bravery but also a profound lack of piety.

As the Trojans guard the walls of their fortress, Nisus, a Trojan, tells his young friend Euryalus about his eagerness to do some brave act. Nisus wants to sneak out through the Rutulian camp surrounding the fortress to find Aeneas and get help for the upcoming battle. Euryalus thinks it's a great idea and wants to come too. Nisus warns that the attempt might prove fatal, and says young Euryalus's life is more important. Euryalus refuses to budge.

Nisus and Euryalus, who we last saw teaming up to win the running race in Book 5, again demonstrate the special bond of their friendship. Though they're just two of many Trojans, their great devotion to the Trojan cause makes them famous.

The Trojan leaders are in the middle of a nighttime meeting trying to decide who should go as a messenger to Aeneas when Nisus and Euryalus come to volunteer. Aletes and Ascanius praise and encourage them, and Ascanius promises them gifts. Euryalus asks only that they comfort his mother, because he can't bear to upset her. Ascanius cries, remembering his own mother Creusa, and promises he will. Ascanius gives the pair messages for Aeneas, but Virgil foreshadows that the messages will only scatter on the wind.

With Aeneas absent, this scene is the first time Ascanius's leadership is on view. Ascanius has clearly learned from his father's methods—like Aeneas in Book 5, Ascanius praises bravery and promises gifts. But Virgil's foreshadowing shows that even the best and brightest can be cut down by fate, which is impartial to human goodness.

Nisus and Euryalus, under cover of night, creep through the enemy camp, where the Rutulians are drunk and sleeping. Nisus then suggests that they shouldn't waste this chance to kill some of the enemy leaders in their sleep. They quietly kill many men before Nisus finally decides they should stop and continue on through the camp. Euryalus straps on some enemy armor and a helmet as trophies.

Nisus and Euryalus could have just gone through with the messages, but with their bravery and desire for glory, they decide to take advantage of their unguarded enemies, and Euryalus takes trophies of enemy armor to prove his triumph.

Meanwhile, Volscens, a Rutulian captain, marches back to Turnus's camp with three hundred men. He sees Euryalus's helmet through the dark, and calls out, asking who's there. Nisus and Euryalus run into the forest, but Volscens's men chase after. Nisus finds the way through the forest to Latinus's land, but realizes he's lost Euryalus somewhere in the wood. He re-enters the forest, searching, and finds Euryalus, whom enemies have surrounded.

Euryalus's trophy-taking, an error of pride, is his downfall (and foreshadows Turnus's fateful choice to do some trophy-taking of his own in Book 10). Nisus, though, doesn't blame Euryalus for this error and puts himself in danger to go back for his friend.

Nisus struggles with a decision: should he save his own life, leaving his friend to die? Or should he attempt a rescue? He prays, then throws his spear, killing a Rutulian. The startled group looks around, and he kills another. Volscens furiously prepares to kill Euryalus. Nisus jumps from his hiding place, saying that he's responsible for the Rutulians' deaths, but it's too late—Volscens stabs Euryalus.

Ultimately, this act of friendship will bring Nisus more (posthumous) glory than if he'd saved himself and lived out a long life. In a way, this action is also about piety—a selfless devotion, in this case, to a slightly foolish friend. Euryalus's mistakes don't matter in the face of the bravery he's inspired.

Nisus chargers forward and kills Volscens even as Volscens kills him. Nisus falls and dies next to his friend. The Rutulians bring back the bodies and mourn their many dead.

Nisus actions show the importance of vengeance in this society. Like a proper burial, vengeance is one way to do right by the dead.

In the morning, Turnus's side displays the heads of Nisus and Euryalus, stuck on pikes, to the Trojans. Rumors reach Euryalus's mother, who runs to the front lines and says that the robe she made for Euryalus will serve as his shroud, and she didn't even have a chance to say goodbye. She begs the Rutulians to kill her too. Her tragedy lowers the Trojans' morale as each soldier remembers his family. Ascanius and others carry her home.

It is typical of Virgil to complicate the story of the glorious dead by showing its aftermath. As much as Nisus and Euryalus won honor for their bravery and piety, the mother shows the human tragedy that underlies it. For her, her son's life would have been better than his fame in death.

Turnus's troops attempt to scale the fortress walls. The Trojans hold them off, but Turnus throws a flaming torch that sets afire and collapses a Trojan tower, killing many, and throwing two Trojans out onto the Rutulians. One, Helenor, resembles a wild boar as he throws himself onto Turnus's men and dies. The other, Lycus, tries to climb the wall to get back to the Trojan fortress. Turnus taunts him and pulls him from the wall, killing him. The battle sounds like a mother sheep crying after a wolf has taken her lamb. Many men die.

Virgil emphasizes the viciousness and inhumanity of war. He once again uses the metaphor of a wolf to describe battle, but shifts it to echo Euryalus's mother's sadness. Instead of focusing on the wolf (Turnus) or the lamb (the Trojans), Virgil concentrates on the mourning mother sheep. This suggests that the saddest thing about war isn't the soldiers' doom, but the families the dead leave behind.

Ascanius makes his first kill, using a bow and arrow, his boyhood hobby. His victim is Numanus, a Rutulian soldier who was mocking the Trojans, saying that they, like women, enjoy dressing up in fancy clothes. Ascanius asks Jove to bless his shot, and thunder comes from the blue sky. Ascanius's arrow hits Numanus in the head.

Ascanius, by killing Silvia's pet stag in Book 7, started the war with a bow and arrow. His first kill reflects that, and aligns him with Camilla, the great archer of Book 11. Numanus calling the Trojans feminine recalls Iarbas's similar insults in Book 4.

Apollo, also famous for his archery, applauds Ascanius's actions from the heavens, exclaiming that he's fated to found a line of great leaders who will bring peace. Apollo comes to earth disguised as the elderly Trojan Butes, and instructs Ascanius to stop fighting. When he leaves, the other Trojans realize he was a god, and remove Ascanius from the battle.

As has often happened with Aeneas, despite Ascanius's sunny fate, he's in danger of getting himself killed, so the gods have to intervene to set him on track. Despite his moment of glory, Ascanius is actually young and inexperienced.

The Trojans Pandarus and Bitias, who were guarding a gate to the fortress, open it and dare the Latins to enter. They manage to kill some of the onrushing Latins, but then Turnus enters and kills many Trojans, including Bitias. Mars strengthens the Latins. Pandarus closes the gate, but in doing so accidentally closes Turnus within the Trojan walls. Pandarus throws his spear at Turnus, but Juno diverts it. Turnus brutally kills Pandarus and many other Trojans, strengthened by Juno.

As at the Trojan war, some gods (here, Mars) take sides against the Trojans, despite Aeneas's piety and superior fate. This adds tension to the war, and suggests that the Latins are also worthy and pious fighters. Turnus's killing rampage shows that he'll make a formidable match for Aeneas.

Mnesthus, a Trojan, encourages his friends, telling them to remember Aeneas and Troy. The Trojans manage to stop Turnus's progress. Jove sends Iris down to tell Turnus to leave, because Juno can't disobey Jove by continuing to help him. Unable to fight any longer, he escapes by jumping into the Tiber.

The Trojans turn to their two sources of strength, Troy and Aeneas, their home and their leader, to rally their forces. Turnus's quick escape shows how much he depends on Juno's help.

BOOK 10

Jove calls a council of the gods on Mount Olympus. He reminds the gods that he commanded that Italy and Troy should not fight, and asked why they've ignored his orders and what has caused the war. Venus responds first, describing the Trojans' great suffering, Turnus's pride, Allecto's troublemaking, and more. She begs Jove at least to save Ascanius, saying he can do whatever he wants with Aeneas. She proposes that the Trojans return home to rebuild Troy.

Venus's willingness to throw Aeneas under the bus seems bizarre, but it might actually show her faith in fate. She knows he'll have to survive to found the city, so she can pretend not to care about him to strike a better bargain.

Juno angrily responds that Aeneas chose to make Turnus his enemy, and that he brought war to a peaceful land. She says that Jove could have helped Aeneas more if he'd wanted, though she acknowledges that he twice saved the Trojan ships. She finishes by saying that Jove's anti-war complaints come too late.

While Venus is a canny bargainer, Juno is simply a liar. The council humorously reflects political meetings in the Rome of Virgil's day, when different rhetoricians would attempt to convince the public by whatever means necessary.

Jove rules that the war should proceed, since there's no other solution. The war's results will be left to fate.

Fate is more powerful than the gods—or at least more powerful than all the gods other than Jove—but of course Jove's being unrealistic if he thinks Juno and Venus won't meddle further.

Back on earth, as the battle rages on, Aeneas continues to search for allies. He finds Tuscans (also called Etruscans), whose king, Tarchon, along with many Tuscan warriors, sail back to Latium. As Aeneas steers his ship in the night, the nymphs that his other ships transformed into in Book 9 swim up to him. The nymph Cymodocea describes the battle situation back in Latium, encourages Aeneas to fight well, and speeds up the boats.

Just after Jove's declaration that the war should be left to fate, Aeneas gets some divine help from his former ships. Perhaps Jove has factored divine intervention in as part of fate—the gods can help in the specifics, but can't change the larger outcome.

Aeneas and the Tuscan troops arrive at the battle in the morning, and Aeneas's Vulcan-made **shield** shines impressively. Turnus rallies his men to fight on the beach with the famous line: "Fortune speeds the bold!" The fighting begins and Aeneas successfully kills many men, though Achates, his trusty friend, is injured.

Despite Turnus's words, it's not clear that fortune (i.e. fate) favors the bold. Fortune is impartial, and would seem random if it weren't all pre-ordained. This is another subtle suggestion that Turnus might not deserve his doom. His courage makes him a hero in his own right.

Pallas, the young son of Aeneas's ally Evander, sees some of his men, the Arcadians, fleeing in fear on their horses, and gives them a heartening speech. Pallas rushes into battle and his men follow. Pallas fights with Lausus, a boy his age, the son of Turnus's important ally Mezentius. Fate has determined that neither will return to their homes.

Pallas is brave and thoughtful to his men, but, as with Turnus, those good traits can't change his fate. The foreshadowing puts us readers in the position of the gods. We know and mourn what will happen to Pallas before he does.

Turnus's sister Juturna tells him to go help Lausus. Turnus tells the soldiers crowded around to back off so he can kill Pallas, and says he wishes Pallas's father were there to see. Pallas bravely responds that his father will be able to handle any outcome.

Turnus acts like a real villain here. His savagery and total lack of piety for the father-son bond echoes Pyrrhus, the Greek who killed the Trojan king Priam's son before Priam.

Pallas prays to Hercules, who watches from the heavens and groans that he can't help. Jove comforts Hercules, saying that the fates are unchangeable, but human bravery brings lasting glory. Pallas throws his spear but barely nicks Turnus. Turnus tauntingly says that he might be able to do better than that, then throws his spear and hits Pallas right in the chest. As Pallas dies, Turnus says that he'll get a proper tomb. Turnus takes Pallas's belt as a prize. Virgil foreshadows that in the future Turnus will wish he'd never touched Pallas.

Jove's words recall Nisus and Euryalus's deaths as well. As we've seen, much of the second half of the Aeneid focuses on giving the brave their deserved praise. Turnus continues in villain-mode, taunting Pallas until he makes the kill. But then his promise to bury Pallas properly shows that he respects the Trojans and the rules of war.

When Aeneas hears of Pallas's death, he goes into a killing frenzy. He takes several Latins alive to use as human sacrifices at Pallas's funeral, then continues to slaughter his enemies. Aeneas even kills men who beg for mercy, insults the corpse of one of his victims, and makes fun of another after he's already killed him. Ascanius and other Trojans finally appear at the battle.

As Turnus becomes more respectful, Aeneas becomes something of a monster, again echoing Pyrrhus, and foreshadowing the poem's end. His lack of pity goes against the Roman traits that Anchises defined of mercy and peacefulness.

Back on Mount Olympus, Jove tells Juno that Venus has been helping the Trojans. Juno asks to remove Turnus from the battle, where the Latins are badly losing, so he can at least see his father, Daunus, before his death. Jove agrees, but warns Juno that she will not be able to use this as an excuse to change the whole war. Juno sends a phantom Aeneas down from the heavens. Turnus throws his spear at the fake Aeneas, then chases the phantom onto a boat, which Juno quickly sets sail away from the battle.

Juno's action is motivated by concern for Turnus, not just rage against the Trojans. She's slowly realizing (as Jove forces her too) that she won't be able to change fate, so instead of strengthening Turnus, she removes him from the battle so that he can fulfill the pious father-son bond. But her good intentions effectively make Turnus look like a coward.

Aeneas searches unsuccessfully for Turnus. Meanwhile, Turnus realizes he's floated away, and makes a desperate speech to the gods, unsure why he has to suffer so much, why he's doing what he's doing, and even who he is. He says that he wants to commit suicide, or to jump in the water and swim back to the battle, but Juno stops him.

Turnus's speech of desperation is a slightly crazier version of Aeneas's similar anguish and near-suicidal pessimism in Books 1 and 5. The speech shows that he's not a coward, just struggling to accept his fate and the manipulations of the gods.

In Turnus's absence, Mezentius takes over leadership of the Rutulians. Mezentius is described as resembling a cliff unaffected by crashing waves, a wild boar so ferocious that hunters are afraid to come near. Making a kill, he resembles a hungry lion feasting on his prey's blood. One of his victims, Orodes, warns in his dying words that Mezentius doesn't have long to live, but Mezentius scoffs, saying Jove protects him.

The wild, quickly-changing descriptions of Mezentius show both the excitement of war and the quick-changing character of Mezentius. Mezentius's transformations, from cliff to boar to lion, recall Turnus's transformation from murderous to calm, and Aeneas's transformation in the other direction.

Mezentius moves across the battlefield like the giant Orion, so tall that his head is in the clouds. When Aeneas catches up with Mezentius, Mezentius throws his spear at Aeneas. Aeneas deflects it with his **shield**, though it unfortunately kills one of Aeneas's allies. Then Aeneas throws a spear, which travels through Mezentius's shield and pierces him the groin, though it doesn't kill him.

The description of Mezentius as Orion establishes Mezentius as almost superhuman, which makes it even more impressive when Aeneas defeats him. Notice also how Aeneas shield, with its images of Rome, is so much stronger than Mezentius's shield.

Lausus cries out for his injured father, and Virgil praises Lausus's bravery as deserving lasting recognition. Lausus jumps in to protect Mezentius. Aeneas tells Lausus he's being foolish. Lausus refuses to move, and Aeneas kills him, stabbing him. When Aeneas sees the corpse, however, he grieves, thinking of his own son Ascanius, and promises to treat the body respectfully and return it to his parents.

Lausus's bravery brings him to an act of piety not even Ascanius has matched—he sacrifices himself for his father. He's on par with Nisus for his selflessness, or even Aeneas, who braved death to visit his father in the Underworld. Only the sight of dead Lausus snaps Aeneas out of his killing frenzy.

Mezentius cleans his wounds at the Tiber. When he sees the Tuscans carrying his dead son Lausus, he makes a tragic speech, acknowledging that his son's sacrifice saved him. Mezentius gets on his horse, ready to kill Aeneas or die trying. He finds Aeneas and denounces him for taking his son, and fails again and again to spear Aeneas. Finally, Aeneas throws his spear at Mezentius, killing him in one try. In his last words, Mezentius acknowledges that even his own people hate him, and asks for a proper burial with Lausus.

In a typically Virgilian move, Virgil makes us sympathize with the enemy. We know from Evander that Mezentius is an evil tyrant, and we've seen his viciousness on the battlefield. But here Mezentius shows that even he is full of love for his son and will piously sacrifice himself for him, while also acknowledging his own past cruelty.

BOOK 11

The next morning dawns. Aeneas sets up a display of Mezentius's armor as an offering to Mars. Despite his sadness about Pallas's death, he speaks positively to his men, telling them they have fought well, and now they can bury their dead. Afterward, Aeneas cries over Pallas's body, devastated to have broken his promise to Evander to bring his son back safely. He sends a thousand men to bear Pallas's body back to Evander.

Returned to his sensitive, pious self, Aeneas thinks of his men before allowing himself to mourn Pallas. Of the many tragedies of the war, this is the one that hits Aeneas most deeply. His behavior now offers important clues for understanding the Aeneid's surprising ending.

Returning to the camp, Aeneas finds a delegation of Latins carrying olive branches, asking for a temporary truce during which they can bury their dead. Aeneas criticizes them for fighting, explaining that he was fated to come here to make his home, and that they should have been friends. Aeneas says that Turnus should have stayed to fight him, because one of their deaths would have ended the war. Finally, Aeneas agrees to the truce. Drances, a Latin, praises Aeneas's war skills and declares that he (and King Latinus too) would rather be Aeneas's ally than Turnus's. They agree on twelve days of truce.

Like a practiced politician, Aeneas won't agree with the other side's sensible decision without airing some grievances. Sadly, Aeneas's explanations come late in the game, but it seems that both sides might be able to use reason and piety to fate to come to a real peace. The Latins realize they're fighting on the wrong side of destiny.

Pallas's funeral procession reaches Evander. Evander flings himself onto the corpse, sobbing, and gives a tragic speech. He wishes he had died instead of Pallas, but doesn't blame the Trojans, and declares that Pallas will receive a Trojan-style burial. A description of the various funerals follows, showing that both the Latins and the Trojans equally mourn their fallen.

Evander's willingness to forgive the Trojans indirectly shows how great Aeneas must be. Evander didn't even have to be involved in the war at all, but his devotion to Aeneas indicates Aeneas's powers of persuasion and charisma. In showing how both the Latins and the Trojans grieve for their dead, Virgil once again shows how there is no "bad" side in this war, there are simply those who are following fate and those who are opposing it.

The Latins, urged on by Drances, want to separate themselves from Turnus, who caused all the suffering. In Book 8, a Latin delegation traveled to ask King Diomedes, a Greek now living in Italy, to ally with them against Aeneas. Now that delegation of Latins returns with news that Diomedes doesn't want to ally, because he's fought the Trojans enough and doesn't want more of the misery of war. Hearing this in a council meeting, Latinus declares that the war was against fate anyway. He chooses a piece of land near the Tiber to give the Trojans, so they can be friends. If the Trojans don't want that, the Latins will build the Trojans twenty ships to continue on their way. Latinus calls for a hundred men to bring peace gifts to the Trojans.

Peace nears. By only enchanting Amata and Turnus, Juno left most of the Latins with their powers of reason intact. Latinus's desire to stop fighting Aeneas bodes well, given that Aeneas is fated to be his son-in-law. That the Greek Diomedes don't want to keep fighting the Trojans shows that even the deepest hatreds can fade. And for all the poem seems to talk about the glory of war, in actuality the characters find it tiring and depressing.

Drances, the elderly Latin, isn't satisfied. He still hates Turnus, and with an angry, convincing speech, he tells Latinus to promise Lavinia to Aeneas. Then he speaks directly to Turnus, telling him either to surrender or to go meet Aeneas in single combat.

Drances brings a happy ending even closer—so it'll be that much more painful when it fails again.

Turnus responds that Drances is a good talker but doesn't back up his words with fighting. Turnus is particularly offended by the suggestion that he's been beaten. He mentions his many kills, then tells Latinus that he'll renew the battle with allies like Camilla, a ferocious warrior and queen of the Volscians. He declares that he'll fight Aeneas, even though Aeneas wears Vulcan-made armor just as Achilles did in the Trojan war.

Turnus is clearly in a different mindset from the rest of the Latins. Not only does he want to fight Aeneas, he wants to continue the whole battle, despite the exhaustion of his troops. And he wants to continue even though he realizes he's got the disadvantage.

A messenger arrives with news that Aeneas's army is on the move. The townspeople are in chaos, and Turnus uses the moment to underscore the need to keep fighting. Turnus orders his captains to gather the allied troops, and Latinus ends the council, sorry that the war must continue. The Latins fortify the city, and Amata, Lavinia and other women pray at the shrine of Minerva for victory.

Turnus manages to get the fighting started again without intervention from Juno. As when he didn't want to open the gates of war in Book 7, Latinus comes off as weak-willed and indecisive—the perfect target for Turnus's manipulation.

Turnus eagerly arms himself, resembling a freed horse enjoying himself in the countryside. Camilla arrives, saying that she'll go meet the Trojans at the front while Turnus guards the city. Turnus explains his plan to ambush the Trojans as they walk through a constricted pathway in a gorge.

Unlike most Latins, Turnus and Camilla are excited about fighting—and Camilla doesn't even have Juno's spells urging her on. Like Dido, Camilla is a strong female leader. But also like Dido, she allows passion rather than piety to rule her, though in this case it is a passion for war.

In the heavens, Diana, the goddess of the hunt, talks to another goddess named Opis. Diana describes her love for Camilla, and recounts Camilla's life story. Camilla's father Metabus, a tyrannical king, had to flee when his people revolted. He took baby Camilla with him, but when he had to cross a dangerous river, he didn't know how he would carry her. So he tied her to a spear and, with a prayer to Diana, threw her across. Camilla landed safely on the other side, where Metabus joined her. He lovingly raised her in the wilderness and she became an incredible hunter.

Metabus, like Mezentius, was a dictatorial king who loved his child. It seems he was also something of an ancient feminist. Camilla is one of the Aeneid's most fascinating characters. A true wild woman, she is not only better than the men at fighting, but somehow even more terrifying to them because of her uniqueness as a woman warrior.

Since the omens suggest a bad fate for Camilla in this battle, Diana sends Opis down with a bow, to kill the man who will kill Camilla. The battle begins and various men die. In the middle of the scene of carnage, Camilla appears, with one breast bare, a brilliant and untiring fighter, and accompanied by other virgin warriors. Camilla kills multiple men with single arrows, and even slays Butes, the biggest Trojan. She mocks the Tuscans for being afraid of a woman. Tarchon, the Tuscan king, tries and fails to kill her.

Camilla is also a virgin, suggesting a single-minded, almost priestly devotion to her bow and arrow. At the same time, she has fun on the battlefield, joking about her femininity as she slaughters men. Virgil didn't completely invent her—she's preceded by the Greek legends of the Amazons, female warriors who also fought at Troy.

Chloreus, a Trojan soldier, begins his attack on Camilla. He is dressed in particularly gorgeous, highly colored armor. Camilla pursues him, wanting his armor for herself, "afire with a woman's lust for loot and plunder," and lets her guard down. Arruns, a Trojan ally, prepares to kill Camilla. He prays to Apollo that if he can kill her he'll stop fighting and return home. Apollo grants half the prayer, and Arruns spears Camilla.

Camilla's personal passion makes her impious and ends up being her downfall. This was Dido's fatal flaw too—her passion for Aeneas made her try to go against his fate. Aeneas also forgot his piety when he focused too much on his personal desire for Dido.

As Camilla dies, she tells her friend Acca that Turnus must come to take her place. Opis follows through on Diana's wishes, locates the fleeing Arruns, and kills him with one shot from her bow.

Camilla sets up the fated showdown between Turnus and Aeneas. Opis's powerful archery fittingly avenges Camilla's death, as the bow was Camilla's preferred weapon.

The Latin army falls apart after Camilla's death. The Trojan side enters the city of Lavinium and kills people right in the gateway. Turnus, who was still in the gorge waiting for the ambush, hears about the unfortunate turn from Acca and returns to the city. Just after Turnus leaves, Aeneas and his men march through the gorge. He sees Turnus from afar, but night is falling, so their reckoning will have to wait until tomorrow.

After Camilla's death, the Latin side suffers from the lack of leadership and fresh soldiers that Latinus feared. Turnus makes the right choice to go help his faltering men, a sign of piety in the face of the opportunity to stay just a little longer and have his one-on-one showdown with Aeneas.

BOOK 12

In a rage at the turn of events against the Latins, Turnus announces to Latinus his intention to fight Aeneas and win Lavinia's hand. Latinus begs Turnus to reconsider, but Turnus is resolute. He says he's strong enough, and Venus won't be able to protect Aeneas when they fight man-to-man. Amata cries that if Turnus dies, she'll die too, rather than see her daughter with Aeneas. Turnus tells Amata, whom he calls "mother," not to bother him further with her fears. Tomorrow he'll fight Aeneas. He puts on his armor, including his special sword, inherited from his father, which was made by Vulcan and dipped in the river Styx.

It seems that Turnus's sword may be able to get past Aeneas's shield, since both were made by Vulcan, but given the attitude of Latinus's family no one believes that Turnus can actually win. Nonetheless, he bravely plans to fight Aeneas (and fate). The love that the Latin royal family feels for Turnus, and the way they already treat him as a son, ensures that no matter who wins this battle, it will be a tragedy.

On the Trojan side, Aeneas accepts Turnus's challenge, and comforts his friends and Ascanius by talking about fate. Morning comes and both armies march to the battlefield, not to fight but to accompany their leaders for the duel. Juno, watching from a nearby mountain, speaks to Turnus's sister Juturna, a nymph of lakes. Juno explains that she's been helping Turnus, and tells Juturna to go try to stop Turnus's fate, because Juno can't bear to watch the fight. Or, Juno says, Juturna could stir up the war again.

Aeneas's friends are much less concerned about him battling Turnus, since fate is on his side. Juno reaches a turning point in her harassment—knowing she's on the losing side, she can't bear to be directly involved. This demonstrates both her pride and her love for Turnus.

Latinus, Turnus, and Aeneas enter in separate chariots. Aeneas prays and asks Juno to be more kind. He says the Trojans will leave peacefully if he falls, but he hopes that instead of enslavement or humiliation of one side, the Trojans and Latins will "undefeated, under equal laws, march together towards an eternal pact of peace." Latinus agrees and they sacrifice animals.

Like Anchises said of the Romans, back in the Underworld in Book 6, Aeneas knows when to fight, but, more rare, he knows when to promote peace. Most leaders would enslave their defeated enemies, but Aeneas wants to join together as one nation.

The Rutulians are nervous to see how uneven the duel will be, with Turnus looking scared and weak compared to Aeneas. Juturna sees her chance, and, disguising herself as the soldier Camers, she tells the Rutulians they should fight or they'll be enslaved. The other allies on Turnus's side also get riled up, and then Juturna makes a sign—an eagle, the bird of Jove, snatches a swan from the stream, but has to drop the swan when other birds attack it. The Latins, encouraged by the seer Tolumnius, think this means that they, like the smaller birds, can win.

Juturna tries both to cheat fate (and save Turnus) and fake fate (with a sign). The scene again shows that humans interpret signs in the way that fits with their worldview. Virgil here shows us Turnus from the Latin point of view, making it impossible for us to fully cheer for Aeneas without feeling a pang for poor Turnus.

A Latin named Tolumnius throws a spear which kills A Trojan, restarting the war. With his peace efforts destroyed, Latinus runs back to his city. Aeneas attempts to regain control of the situation, but an arrow hits him. The name of the shooter is unknown, since no one ever wanted to boast of having hit Aeneas. Seeing this, Turnus regains hope and kills many men. Achates and Ascanius, along with Mnestheus, another Trojan, bring Aeneas back to the camp. Aeneas wants them to cut him open to take out the arrowhead so he can go fight again.

Virgil, as the creator of the Aeneid, of course could have made it that the name of the person who shot the arrow that killed Aeneas was known. But he makes Aeneas seem even greater by imagining how even his enemies would have respected him and wouldn't have found any glory in gloating about causing him injury.

Iapyx, a healer and favorite of Apollo, tries to pull out the arrowhead, without success, since Apollo refuses to intervene. Venus flies to Crete to pick some dittany, a healing herb, and then invisibly mixes it into Iapyx's treatment. The arrow now comes out easily, and Aeneas feels well enough to fight. Iapyx realizes that his human skills couldn't have cured Aeneas—it's a god's work.

Apollo doesn't help to cure Aeneas, but Venus does. This highlights the way that the gods play favorites. Surprisingly, despite Aeneas's status as a great hero and forefather of Augustus, not all the gods rally behind him.

Aeneas's return to the battle demoralizes the Latins and the Trojans kill many enemies. Juturna sees Aeneas stalking Turnus. She pushes Metiscus, Turnus's chariot-driver, out of his seat, taking the reigns and using her nymph-powers to disguise herself as him. She steers the chariot far from Aeneas.

Juturna's dedication to her brother makes him a more sympathetic character. Despite Turnus's anger (which might be more Juno's fault than his), he's brave and important to his people. Like when Juno tricked him into getting on a boat, here his sister, attempting to protect him, makes him seem more cowardly.

Messapus, Turnus's ally and a son of Neptune, knocks off Aeneas's helmet with a spear. Aeneas, frustrated by this and by Turnus's flight, gives up just trying to find Turnus for the duel, and throws himself fully into the battle. He kills so many people so ferociously that Virgil wonders what god can even help him sing about all the slaughter. Virgil wonders if Jove liked seeing all this: "Did it please you so, great Jove, to see the world at war, the peoples clash that would later live in everlasting peace?"

The battle is so horrible it defies not only Virgil's powers to describe it, but also the powers of the muses. His ironic question to Jove dramatically details the ruinous pointlessness of this war, and makes a larger point too. How can we continue to believe in gods in the face of such a disaster? Even piety is thrown into doubt. At the same time, it also highlights the Roman's great ability to create peace, as opposed to war.

Venus suggests to Aeneas that he attack Lavinium. Aeneas agrees. As the Trojans rush into Lavinium, Aeneas yells to the gods that the Latins have broken two pacts and so he's been forced back into war.

Though Aeneas is responsible for much of the carnage, he also hates the war. He defends his actions by blaming the Latins, and he's right—to achieve his fate, he doesn't have another option.

Amata, the queen, sees the attacking Trojans and thinks that this means that Turnus has died. Believing this terrible outcome is all her fault, she makes a noose from her dress and hangs herself. Lavinia and the other women mourn, and Latinus puts dirt on his head in sorrow.

Amata commits suicide because she believes her stance against Aeneas started the war that is now going so badly. But she only took that stands after Juno sent Allecto to enchant her. Amata's death ensures that even a Trojan victory will not restore total happiness to Latium.

Turnus, out on the battlefield, hears the cries from the city and wants to go investigate. But Juturna, still disguised as his chariot-driver, tells him that others can defend the city while he continues to kill Trojans. Turnus tells Juturna that he's seen through her disguise, and, like his many dead friends, he'd rather die a worthy man like his ancestors than flee like a coward. Just then, Saces, a messenger, tells him that Lavinium is in bad shape and Amata has killed herself. Turnus, full of shame and anger, is determined to duel Aeneas. He rushes to the city.

Turnus's desire to prove himself a worthy descendent of his great ancestors shows that he too is pious and brave. But it's rare to see any character going against what their guardian god wants. Juno and Juturna have come together to save him—and he rejects their help. He accepts before they do that he can't keep avoiding fate. He knows he's heading for his death.

Aeneas halts the assault on the city when he hears that Turnus is coming. The armies gather around to watch the duel. The two men start with spears, then fight with swords. They fight like bulls, aiming to kill. Jove places their fates on his scales—tentatively balanced for now. Turnus powerfully strikes Aeneas, but his sword breaks. It wasn't his father's Vulcan-made, Styx-treated blade after all, but the one belonging to his charioteer. Turnus runs to try to find his sword.

Aeneas has a rather unfair advantage, since a mortal-made sword will never be able to get through his Vulcan-made shield. Though earlier we learn that Turnus seems weaker than Aeneas, when it comes to their duel, they're evenly matched—just this difference of equipment causes Turnus's problem.

Aeneas chases Turnus, like a hunting dog chasing a deer. Aeneas pauses to try to pull his spear out of an olive tree stump, not knowing that the olive tree (which the Trojans had cut down) had been sacred to Faunus, a nature god worshipped by the Latins. Turnus prays to Faunus to keep the spear stuck, and Aeneas can't wrench it free. Meanwhile, Juturna gives Turnus back his spear—but Venus, finding Juturna's helpfulness unfair, releases Aeneas's spear.

Back in Book 4, Virgil compared Dido to a wounded deer. Now he uses it again. Though the circumstances are different, the implication is the same, as the hunter is built to kill, while the deer can only run. Turnus, like Dido, has no hope of actually defeating the "hunter" Aeneas. Meanwhile, the intervening gods negate each other.

Jove asks Juno when this will all end, and what hope she still has. They both know that Aeneas is fated to win. So why bother to get Turnus back his sword? He tells her that she's given the Trojans enough grief. Finally, Juno agrees to yield. But she asks that the Latins keep their old name and customs, instead of becoming Trojans. Jove agrees, saying that the Latin-Trojan race will bring untold glory to Juno.

As if in response to Virgil's rhetorical question earlier in Book 12 about whether Jove likes seeing all this slaughter, Jove asks Juno when she'll stop all this, since, at bottom, this is all her fault. And, in the moment we've been waiting for, she gives in to fate and agrees to give up.

Jove sends down a Fury, a goddess of vengeance, to make Juturna cease helping Turnus. The Fury comes down to Turnus disguised as a bird, and Juturna understands what it means. She wishes she weren't immortal, because she wants to stay with Turnus in the underworld.

Juturna's wish to stay with Turnus recalls the many others who have wished to die along with those they love—aligning Turnus with other beloved characters who died in the Aenied, like Pallas and Anchises.

Aeneas asks Turnus why he's dawdling. Turnus says he fears Jove, not Aeneas. Turnus picks up a boulder that would be hard for a dozen men to carry, and tries to throw it at Aeneas. But he can't throw it hard enough because the Fury weakens him and slows his instincts.

This might be the most tragic moment of piety in the entire poem. Turnus is right, in general, to fear the gods more than humans—but in just this one case, Aeneas will decide Turnus's end, not Jove.

Aeneas then strikes Turnus with his spear. On his knees, Turnus reaches up to Aeneas. He asks Aeneas to pity Daunus, his father, and spare him so he can return to his people. He admits defeat and concedes Lavinia. He tells Aeneas, "Go no further down the road of hatred."

Here's the perfect chance for Aeneas to follow Anchises's advice, to spare the vanquished. Turnus is defeated and humiliated—it seems like enough.

Aeneas considers Turnus's pleas, but then he sees Pallas's belt that Turnus had removed and wears as a trophy. Aeneas's feelings of mercy change to fury, and he proclaims that Pallas is the one killing Turnus. He plunges his sword into Turnus's heart, and Turnus's soul flies to the Underworld.

The ending showcases Aeneas's total pious devotion to his friend—a bond so deep that vengeance is more important than mercy. But in avenging Pallas, he fails at the Romans' unique skill, to know how to make peace, not just war. The sudden ending, with no falling action whatsoever, leaves no chance to untangle the complex morals of Aeneas's final action. Though Aeneas has finally fulfilled his fate, the Aeneid ends in anger, not joy, a fact that has caused much discussion and debate among critics.

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