

## AENEID STUDY QUESTIONS

Write in your answers as you read Vergil's *Aeneid*

### Book 1

1. According to Vergil's introduction to the poem, what exactly is this story about?
2. Which deity hates the Trojans? Describe some of the problems her anger created for Aeneas and his companions after they fled Troy for Carthage.
3. In the conversation between Venus and Jupiter about the eventual fate of the Trojans, list some specific points discussed by Jupiter about subsequent Roman History.
4. Describe the historical ramifications of Aeneas' shipwreck at Carthage (Roman History c. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC?)

### Book 2

5. How does Aeneas' background story fit into the *Iliad* & the *Odyssey*? If you don't know these stories very well consult some summaries on the web: (<http://www.iliad.com.mx/Summary/Summary.html>) and (<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/odyssey/summary.html>)

6. Note the highlights of Aeneas' re-telling of the sack of Troy by the Greeks.

-How did the Greeks "crack the code" and get inside Troy's walls?

-What is the role of Ulysses (Odysseus)?

- Who is Laocoon & what happened to him?

-Who is Priam and what happened to him?

-Who is Anchises?

-Who is Ascanius?

-Who is Creusa?

-How did Aeneas escape Troy?

### **Book 3**

7. List and describe 3 events experienced by Aeneas in Book 3 that deliberately echo Odysseus' experiences in Homer's *Odyssey*.

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### **Book 4**

8. Why does Jupiter become involved? What message did Aeneas receive and how did he react?

9. Is Dido's resentment towards Aeneas justified? What eventually happens to Dido? What effect will this have on future relations between Rome and Carthage?

10. In Vergil's time the Roman general Marc Antony, one of Triumvirs along with Octavian/Caesar Augustus, while administering Rome's interests east of Italy, took up with Cleopatra the Queen of Egypt. Before him, Julius Caesar had an affair with the Egyptian queen. How does Book 4 resonate with that history? In other words, how does the Aeneas-Dido affair echo Roman Republican History? How does Aeneas act as the proto-Roman in this book? Consider and research briefly contemporary Roman attitudes towards these affairs.

## Book 5

11. Describe the 4 different games celebrated in honor of Anchises.

a)

b)

c)

d)

12. What do the Trojan women try to do? Why? How is the problem resolved? What does Aeneas decide to do? What is the fate of Palinurus?

## Book 6

13. What do you think is the purpose of the digression into the story of Daedalus at the beginning of the book?

14. Who is the Sibyl? What does she ask Aeneas to do? How does this reflect the Odyssey yet again?

15. Check out Michelangelo's picture of the Sibyl on the Sistine Chapel- we may visit the Vatican museum in Rome. (Google image-search "**Cumaean Sibyl Sistine Chapel**" will yield what you're looking for) Does Michelangelo's vision of the Sibyl look like what you pictured from reading the book? Discuss.

16. Big moment of Book VI is when Aeneas talks to his father in the Underworld. This is where he gets the “scoop” on future Roman History. Briefly identify some of the people & places mentioned by Anchises: (Google could help you in this little scavenger Hunt to get more familiar with Roman History...)

- **Alba Longa (pre-Roman history)**
- **Romulus (c.753 BC)**
- **King Numa (c.715 BC)**
- **King Tarquin the Proud (c.534 BC)**
- **Brutus (1<sup>st</sup> Consul of Roman Republic-c.509 BC)**
- **Cato the Elder (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC)**
- **the Gracchi brothers (130s BC)**
- **Scipio “Africanus” (conqueror of Carthage-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC)**
- **Julius Caesar (ob. 44 BC)**
- **Augustus Caesar (ob. AD 14)**

17. This is Anchises speaking to Aeneas in Book VI: "Others with more graceful art, I suppose, will beat out lifelike bronze, or form living features from marble, plead cases more effectively, mark with a pointer the motion of the heavens, and foretell the rising of the stars. But you, Roman, remember to rule over peoples with your government. This will be your art: to impose conditions of peace, to spare the conquered, and to crush the proud." TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK THIS MEANS ABOUT ANCIENT ROME:

***WHEN in the Course of human Events***, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation.

**WE** hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness -- That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shewn, that Mankind are more disposed to suffer, while Evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a Design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security.

**AFTER READING THIS DOCUMENT, TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK AMERICA'S OBLIGATION TO THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD IS....COMPARE IT TO VERGIL'S VISION OF ROME.**

## **Book 7**

18. Where do Aeneas and his men land in Italy? Who is ruling over the Latins? Who is his daughter? What is the oracle about her?

19. What do the Trojans resolve to do? Are they successful? What is Juno's attitude? What does she plot? Who is Allecto?

20. Who is Turnus? Why is he so concerned about the Trojans? How does he react? What are the consequences? Name some of the Latin allies. Describe Turnus. Who is Camilla?

## **Book 8**

21. Who is Evander? Importance to Aeneas? What is the purpose of the story of Hercules and Cacus?

22. How did Latium get its name? What important place does Evander show to Aeneas?

23. Describe in detail the marvelous shield of Aeneas built by Vulcan at the request of Venus. How does it reflect Roman history? Do brief research into your identifications of the following events from the shield...

**-Romulus & Remus (She-wolf c.753 BC)**

**-Rape of the Sabine Women (8<sup>th</sup> century BC)**

**-Defeat of Tarquin the Proud (c.510 BC)**

**-Defeat of Lars Porsenna (c.500s BC)**

**-Defense of the Capitol against the Gauls (c.390 BC)**

**-Cicero's punishment of Cataline (63 BC)**

**-Battle of Actium (31 BC) \*\*\*Most important event on the shield...Why?**

## **Book 9**

24. What action is taken by Nisus & Euryalus? Why? What is their ultimate fate?

25. What was the effect of the 1<sup>st</sup> assault on the Trojan camp?

## Book 10

26. What takes place on Mt. Olympus? What are the arguments of Venus and Juno? What is Jupiter's position?

27. Summarize the second assault on the Trojan position. How does Aeneas learn of the trapped Trojans? What effect does Aeneas have on the fighting?

28. What is the outcome of the duel between Turnus and Pallas? How does Juno trick and save Turnus? What is the effect on the battle after the departure of Turnus? What is the fate of Mezentias?

29. An important strain running thru Vergil (and indeed thru Roman History) is that of Stoic philosophy. Don't give me a history of that philosophy here, but do a little research and tell me basically what **stoicism** is about:

React to this beautiful quote from Book X (Jupiter speaking to Hercules) and tell me how it is Stoic.

*Then the father spoke these words to his son: "For each man stands his own day- short and irretrievable is the time of life for all; but to extend one's fame by deeds- this is the work of virtue..."*

## Book 11

30. What occurs between the Trojans and the Latins to stop the fighting? How do the envoys from Diomedes respond to the requests for aid made by Latinus?

31. As a consequence, what does Latinus recommend? What are the responses of Drances and Turnus?

32. What events force war to break out again? What is the strategem of Turnus to win the battle?

33. What deity shows special favor to Camilla? Why? Describe Camilla's exploits. Her fate? Effect on the Latins?

## **Book 12**

1. What is the advice of Latinus? Effect on Turnus?

2. What effect does Juno's intervention have on the truce?

3. What misfortune befalls Aeneas? How is he restored?

4. Describe the ensuing battle. What does Jupiter promise Juno on behalf of the Ausonians? How does he get Juno to agree to stop her hatred of the Trojans and allow them to settle in Italy?

The close of the poem has been the subject of intense debate by scholars for centuries. Some speculate that Vergil was not finished with the work and was going to change the ending- this is utter nonsense. Vergil ended the epic exactly the way he wanted to- it was an **artistic choice**...the question is why?

Why do you think Aeneas kills Turnus at the end?

Do you think that the killing has a larger context for Roman history/government for Vergil?

Is there such a thing as justified killing?

Can you think of any instances where American forces have paid the ultimate price & it was worth the cost?

Take one of the prompts below and write an essay of at least 500 words. (The 500 words satisfies a departmental requirement- I am much more interested in what you think rather than counting words, so please write in a way that you give me your open and honest reactions to the work- don't just churn out some pointless drivel. That is not the point of this summative experience.)

## FINAL ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Aeneas has long been analyzed as the so-called "Vergilian" hero, a new kind of hero quite different from the heroes of Homer's *Iliad* & *Odyssey*. Are there any episodes where his limitations are revealed? Where does he seem to demonstrate flaws? What sort of a guy is this to be a founding hero?
2. Aeneas is destined to sail to Italy and build a great new empire that will one day become Rome. There are numerous references throughout the *Aeneid* to the inevitability of fate. When are the episodes where fate might have been thwarted? Could Aeneas have abandoned or failed to fulfill his destiny? What are the limits of free will when the endpoint is already set?
3. To what extent is the *Aeneid* a political poem? Is it propaganda? Many critics have dismissed it as such. To paraphrase Mark Twain's words, a "classic" is a book that people often mention but they have never actually read. Now that you have read the *Aeneid*, do you see Vergil as a great writer or as a propagandist? (Remember that the ancients considered imitation of models as flattery, not plagiarism.)
4. Is the plot of the *Aeneid* driven more by the gods or by human characters? How does Vergil portray the gods and is this in harmony, or disharmony with his concept of "Fate"? Is Vergil trying to make a point about religion in the *Aeneid*? If so, what do you think that point is?