

THE AENEID

Structure

Themes

Characters

Literary Devices

The Aeneid

STRUCTURE

MAKING THE STORY (7)

- ◎ The original legend in prose:
 - Aeneas journeys from Troy to Italy
 - Allies with Latinus
 - Opposed by Turnus whom he kills
- ◎ No mention of Carthage or Dido
(or Evander and Pallas [XIII, X-XII])

STRUCTURE

- ◉ Elements of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* come together.
- ◉ A single hero.
- ◉ One overarching theme - establishing the Roman race.
- ◉ Inevitability of Fate - the mystery of how and the sadness of effects.
- ◉ Two distinct parts - wanderings vs. wars
- ◉ Two locations - Carthage and Latium
- ◉ Some books are able to be read independently and still be understood.

Unity

Division

UNITY

- ◉ The founding of Rome
- ◉ The person of the hero
- ◉ The philosophy of the poet
- ◉ Rome's greatness vs. the pathos of human suffering.
- ◉ Homeric values vs. Roman values.
- ◉ The world of men vs. the world of gods

Camps - Themes

Williams - Tensions

STRUCTURE

- ⊙ Alternation between intensity and torpidity.
 - Even vs. Odd
- ⊙ Division into two halves.
 - I-VI (Odyssean) Wanderings
 - VII-XII (Iliadic) Wars
- ⊙ Division into thirds.
 - Tragedy of Dido
 - The Roman centre
 - Tragedy of Turnus

The Aeneid

THEMES

THEMES

- ◉ The founding of the Roman race
- ◉ The relationship between humans and fate and the gods
- ◉ The struggle between *furor* and *pietas*

THE FOUNDING OF THE ROMAN RACE

- ◎ Aeneas' mission is to found a line which will go through the ages to Augustus.
- ◎ Originates with the prophecy in (I).
 - Is this meant for Aeneas or the reader?
- ◎ Creusa's prophecy to Aeneas (II).
- ◎ Mercury's reminder (IV)
- ◎ The Underworld and Anchises (VI)

HOW ARE THE LEGENDS RECONCILED?

- Multiple legends including founding by Trojans and the Romulean story.
- Virgil combines these through:
 - Aeneas landed in Italy, married Lavinia.
 - His family founds Lavinium and the Roman nation.
 - Iulus founds Alba Longa - Romulus and Remus born here.
 - From Aeneas are descended the Julian family.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND FATE AND GODS

- A person's life depends on his fate.
 - Even the gods cannot change it.
- Dido (and Turnus) have tragic fates although they are not wrongdoers.
- Aeneas' *pietas* makes him a great leader and is fated to succeed.
 - Dido is governed by *furor* and leads to fated to downfall.
- Virgil asserts that both chance and personality control fate.

EXAMPLES OF FATE

- ◉ The concept of Fate or destiny dominates the Aeneid.
 - ◉ Aeneas is mindful of his destiny.
 - ◉ Destiny is unchangeable
 - ◉ What is fated to Aeneas and his descendants?
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- ◉ Is there a problem of unchangeable destiny vs. individual free will, choice or moral responsibility?

FUNCTION OF THE GODS

- ◉ Olympians rarely interact directly with humans in the Aeneid.
 - They use intermediaries - Cupid, Iris, Mercury.
- ◉ Compared with Homer, Virgil's gods are distant and set apart from the human race.
- ◉ They motivate through omens and portents (public), visions and dreams (private).
- ◉ This was how Romans saw the gods interacting.

FUNCTION OF THE GODS

- ◉ Jupiter is the guardian of Fate
- ◉ Juno is counter-Fate
- ◉ Venus is the protector of Aeneas and intervenes to support Fate

- ◉ Humans are simply the pawns in the gods' game and rivalry.
- ◉ The gods are willing to sacrifice humans even if they have no malice toward them.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN *FUROR* AND *PIETAS*

- Forces of disorder and chaos surrounded Virgil.
 - Represented by Juno, Dido (and Turnus)
- Irrational forces (*furor*) lead to death and destruction.
- Fate is on the side of order (*pietas*).
- Order will always triumph over disorder.

EXAMPLES OF *PIETAS*

- ◉ Beginning of (I)
- ◉ Reverence for the gods and father in (II)
- ◉ In his dealings with Dido (IV)
- ◉ Dido in (I) - welcoming of Trojans and to gods.

WHEN DO WE SEE *FUROR*?

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CHARACTERS

DIDO - 'VALIANT WOMAN'

- ◉ Her real name is *Elissa*, Dido is her title.
- ◉ Her flaws and the plots of Juno and Venus result in her death.
- ◉ Deliberate contrast between emotional Dido (Carthage) and stoic Aeneas (Rome).
- ◉ Her swinging emotions highlight her un-Roman character.

DIDO - *FUROR*

- ◉ She also makes reference to her ‘descendants’ .
 - IV - 116 - The future avenger is Hannibal, the Carthaginian general of the 2nd Punic War.
- ◉ She is shown as oblivious to Aeneas’ qualities which define him as a Roman hero.
- ◉ She is shown as opulent, colourful, and full of splendour.
 - Cf. Cleopatra
- ◉ We generally would consider Dido as governed by *furor*. She does have moments of *pietas*...

DIDO - *PIETAS*

- ◉ Helping the Trojans upon their arrival.
- ◉ Asking for the gods' aid
 - To settle the matter of her loyalty to her husband (IV)
- ◉ She is initially a strong character full of *dignitas* and *pietas*.
- ◉ It is under the influence of Juno and Venus (and Cupid in the form of Ascanius) that she loses her *pietas*.
- ◉ At the end of her life, during her final speech, she is dignified once again.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Reading:

AENEAS - THE NEW HERO

The Aeneid

LITERARY DEVICES