

The story of Gilgamesh is one that precedes most. Holding the title for the oldest story ever told. There are many different translations and interpretations and yet it is captivating even today. It speaks to the contemporary idea of the man. It is a mystical story with much adventure and a mission to gain the unattainable, immortality. With all that transpires in the story the question has yet to be answered. Is man deserving of immortality? I will use Gilgamesh as a representation of man because he supposed to be the best of us. He's considered part man and part divine. To answer this question, I'll be diving into the nature of this man and its many results.

Gilgamesh was the son of a great ruler in his father and came through the womb of a goddess. He was mighty in strength and not lacking in wisdom. He was also very ambitious and somewhat egotistical. One of the reader's first introductions to this character is through the eyes of his subordinates. He is highly praised for his attributes but it's clear that he's been using them for the benefit of his own conquest and not for that of his people. They give him great praise but are also terrified of him. The people of his kingdom pray that the God's would send someone to humble Gilgamesh. His ego is seen in his mandate; that all who marry must share their wife with him before the consummation. This action shows a lack of respect. He has become drunk with power and there's no one that can stop him, until Enkidu arrives. Enkidu is said to be the splitting image of Gilgamesh. His automatic expectance of Enkidu and his invitation to brother hood only further proves my previous conclusion. Gilgamesh has a large ego and narcissistic tendencies. He appreciates power but will trample over beings he deems unworthy of his reverence. These consist of anyone that is unable to rival him in strength. As the story continues. Gilgamesh in his

lofty ambitions decides that in order to keep the people of his kingdom safe he must go off and destroy a great monster. I believe that this is just a guise to serve his own self exalting interest. He claims the monster is a threat to his people, but it resides far from his domain. He also describes the creature as a great monster of evil when in reality it was created with the purpose of protecting the great forest and it is serving that purpose. He is warned many times by his dear friend Enkidu but persists not taking into consideration anyone but himself. This self-absorption is seen constantly throughout the epic. Gilgamesh's next major encounter is with that of the goddess of lust and sexual pleasure. When dealing with this goddess his prudence is shown as well as his recklessness. He is able to see through the fickle infatuations of the goddess but is a little reckless in dealing with her advances. She is the daughter of the God that rules all and yet Gilgamesh speaks to her as if she's just another prostitute making her way through an inner city. I admire his ability to tell it like it is regardless of who he's talking to but it also shows a lack of consideration for his people. He may have the strength to resist the retaliation of this Goddess, but his people don't have that luxury. Later in the story it is decided by the God's that someone must pay for the recent acts against the God's. Enkidu is chosen to take the brunt of Gilgamesh's actions in death. When Enkidu tells Gilgamesh about what is to come, he's a little insensitive to his brother's plight. This just reiterates his self-absorption. He blows the idea off and doesn't do much to offer his brother consultation other than to say, "it's all in your head don't worry about it". After the passing of his beloved brother, I had expected some kind of revelation. But a revelation can only be accepted by the person willing to admit they were wrong. This does not seem possible for Gilgamesh. After all that he had done he never took responsibility for any of it. He waded in the darkness, unable to see the connectivity between his current state and the actions that preceded it. The stubbornness of this character is actually what surprised me the

most. After losing the closest person to him he still could not see his own faults. Thus, without ever seeing his actions for what they really were, he is unable to correct them. The death of his brother Enkidu throughs him into despair. Within the mist of his heartache, he becomes possessed by the idea of becoming immortal. This was baffling because he promised that as long as he lived, he would be in mourning for his brother. From this I drew another conclusion. That a man that is not able to forget what was in exchange for what could be would only be tormented by immortality. As he lives through many lifetimes those closes to him would die and he would have to face the grief for an eternity. I believe that this would breed a bitterness and indifference to life that would be very destructive. Gilgamesh was already a man stuck in his ways and self-absorbed. If bitterness and loathing were added to the mix, He wouldn't be much good for the world around him. This brings me to the answer to my original question. Is man deserving of immortality? The answer is no. Even with the physical stature of Gilgamesh he was not able to denounce his impulsive nature. His strength proved to be his downfall in that it created a god complex within him which justified his acting in tyranny. Throughout the story there was little character development. Gilgamesh like many with great power was tainted by arrogance. Say Gilgamesh had changed his ways after the death of his brother. Say he took responsibility for his actions and came to the conclusion that service to others and love to all impartial of their stature was how he should live; would he have been deserving of immortality. I think not. It would still be more of a curse than a gift because for all his love and ambivalence, those he watched over from young, protected when they were in danger, shared feasts and laughs with would ultimately go to a place that he could not. He would have the weight of many lifetimes resting on his mind. His immortality would do nothing to shield him from the pain of loss.

