

Foreword to the Teacher's Edition

The Teacher's Edition of *The Tale of Aeneas* includes everything from the students' edition, but supplies additional resources for teachers. Translations for each passage are included, as well as several discussion questions, which cover both grammar and story content; in each chapter, grammar questions precede reading questions. Each question will be labeled with either a "G" or an "R" in order to denote whether the question is about grammar or reading. Questions regarding the story generally encourage reading passages from the *Aeneid* in English. It is, therefore, strongly encouraged that teachers using this reader plan to have their students purchase a translation of the poem or to provide copies for the students. Especially as students approach the end of the reader, direct quotes from the *Aeneid* will be inserted to an increasing degree. For this reason, teachers may want to familiarize themselves with basic poetic devices (chiasmus, synchysis, etc.) so that they can point these devices out to their students. In the following bibliography, teachers can find resources for finding these devices. Also in the bibliography are useful articles and books about the *Aeneid*, its themes, and its reception. Teachers may want to use these articles especially towards the end of the reader to give students a feel for what an AP level course would be. By reading the *Aeneid* in translation in conjunction with the reader, students will be thoroughly prepared to read the poem in Latin upon completion of their elementary Latin instruction.

Introduction

The Reader, The *Aeneid*

The Reader

The Tale of Aeneas is designed to introduce elementary Latin students using the Oxford Latin Course to the preeminent Latin epic, Vergil's *Aeneid*. Each story within the reader follows the journey of Aeneas and the Trojans as they wander around the Mediterranean in search of a new homeland, eventually ending up in Italy, where they must fight for a place of their own. The reader leads students through stories, which gradually increase in length, highlighting the grammar and vocabulary of the corresponding chapter in the Oxford Course. The end goal of the reader, thus, is to serve not only as a means of additional translation practice for students, but also as an exciting entry point into the world of Latin literature.

The *Aeneid*

The *Aeneid* tells the story of the Trojan Aeneas and his escape from Troy as the city is being overtaken by the Greeks at the end of the decade-long Trojan War. The Trojans travel all across the Mediterranean making stops in Thrace, Crete, Greece, Sicily, and Carthage before reaching their final destination in Italy. Once there, the interference of Juno incites a battle between the Trojans and the Rutulians, led by Turnus, for which the prize is the hand of Lavinia, daughter of Latinus, king of Latium. The poem culminates with the final battle between the two men, a scene that has substantial impact on Latin literature after the *Aeneid*.

The poem follows the traditional format established for epic poetry in that it is written in dactylic hexameter, the meter used in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Ennius' *Annales*, and other preceding epics. Many critics argue that Homer's epics especially influenced Vergil as an epic poet; they relate Books I-VI of the *Aeneid* (Aeneas' wanderings) to the *Odyssey* and Books VII-XII (the war in Italy) to the *Iliad*. Some critics alternatively view the poem as structured in thirds, with Books I-IV as a tragedy centered on Dido, Books V-VIII as an homage to Roman nationalism, and Books IX-XII as a tragedy centered on Turnus.

There are three major themes at play through the course of the *Aeneid*. The first is that of *pietas*, or "piety." However, in addition to the sense in which we see piety today, namely, a strong devotion to a guiding, often religious, principle, for Romans, the term also includes devotion to one's family and the state. So, not only do we find Aeneas constantly struggling with his commitment to the gods and the fulfillment of their commands, but also consistently dedicating himself to carrying out the wishes of his father, Anchises, for the sake of his son, Ascanius/Iulus, and future generations. The familial aspect of *pietas* is one that shows up often throughout the course of the *Aeneid* in characters besides Aeneas. For example, Vergil creates a stark contrast in familial relationships in the second half of the poem in the father-

son pairs of Evander and his son, Pallas, and Mezentius and his son, Lausus. As readers will come to find, the relationship between Evander and Pallas shows both men regarding each other with a great deal of devotion, while that of Mezentius and Lausus finds the father almost disregarding his son completely until the son's death in defense of his father. With regard to the state, Vergil sets up theme of *pietas* from the outset of the poem, saying in line I.33, in reference to the struggles of Aeneas he is about to relate: "It was of such great work to found the Roman race." In the poem itself, we often see Aeneas acting for the sake of the future prosperity not only of his family, but also of his entire race. Vergil also highlights the good fortune that will befall the Romans under the reign of Augustus, asserting that it is under him that Rome will be restored to the Golden Age, the period in which Saturn ruled and men lacked for nothing. This theme culminates in Jupiter's promise to Juno in Book XII that the Romans will surpass all other races in *pietas*. Throughout the poem *pietas* is juxtaposed with *furor* ("passion," "wrath," or "madness") a symptom found in the two major characters that would prevent Aeneas from his destiny, Dido and Turnus, which is also a defining characteristic of Juno.

The second overarching theme is that of fate. Aeneas constantly struggles to bend his actions to what the fates have demanded of him. Similarly, we find that the fates play a role in the lives of characters that cross paths with Aeneas, whether for good or ill. For example, coming into contact with the hero of the poem saves Achaemenides, a Greek member of Odysseus' crew who had been left behind on Sicily, but leads to the death of Aeneas' first wife, Creusa. In addition to the immediate fates of characters in the book, the poet often alludes to the fates role of future events, especially in foreshadowing the Punic Wars (Rome's wars against Carthage) and the future of Rome as a whole via the display of future generations in the Underworld in Book VI and the scenes depicted on Aeneas' shield in Book VIII.

Lastly, there exists a central conflict between the Greek and Roman worlds. While Vergil, in constructing his poem both structurally and stylistically, follows Homeric, i.e. Greek, examples, he must also create a Roman landscape. This interplay works throughout the poem as Vergil tries to find ways to set himself apart from and even above his predecessor. This struggle often relates back to the idea of *pietas* discussed earlier. Whereas the heroes of Homer's epics, Achilles and Odysseus, represent wrath and cunning individually as well as an overall selfish motivation, Aeneas cannot embody either of these qualities wholly, nor can he think only of himself as he strives to found a new homeland for his people. The interesting dilemma comes when Aeneas is driven further into these Greek models, most prominently in his being overtaken by wrath and slaying Turnus, a scene which leaves the reader wondering just how successfully the Roman model is able to overcome the Greek.

In addition to these thematic elements, a fundamental rift in the interpretation of the poem has formed between readers who believe Vergil wrote

The *Aeneid*, Vergil

the poem full of hope for the future of the Roman Empire and those who believe he wrote it full of apprehension about the rule of Augustus and his successors. These two readings have come to be known as the “optimistic” or “European” reading and “pessimistic” or “Harvard” reading. Scholars who read the *Aeneid* optimistically argue that the poem highlights the ideal morals of Rome, the ideology of Augustus, and the idea of destiny. Additionally, to these readers, Aeneas’ triumph represents Roman victories over not only foreign but also domestic enemies, namely Dido/the Carthaginians and Turnus/Mark Antony. Alternatively, critics who read the poem pessimistically argue that Vergil, especially in the second half of the poem, find the tone of the poem to be mournful and critical of the Augustan regime and what it means for the future of Rome. The crux of the pessimists’ argument hinges on Aeneas’ slaying of Turnus in the final scene; to these readers, this action, in which Aeneas fails to carry out the wishes of his father to spare the conquered, represents Vergil’s view of the future of the Roman Empire, one in which there is no sympathy for the defeated. They also find in this the passage of *furor* from Juno, a primary antagonist of the poem, to Aeneas. Some more recent critics have attempted to show that both readings can exist simultaneously, arguing that Vergil represents both the hopes of the Romans and their fears that their hopes may be in vain.

Vergil

Vergil was born Publius Vergilius Maro on October 15th, 70 BC in Mantua, a town of northern Italy. Born to a lower-class family (though there is some evidence that his father was actually of equestrian, or middle-class, rank), Vergil was raised on his father’s farm. Eventually, having come into contact with influential men while being educated in Cremona, Mediolanum (Milan), and Rome, he began to write poetry. The most important development of his decision to write poetry was his inclusion in the literary circle of Maecenas, a close friend of Octavian, the future Emperor Augustus.

The poet’s first work is a collection of 10 poems in dactylic hexameter, collectively called the *Eclogues*, “selections,” or *Bucolica*, “country things.” The poems of the collection focus on pastoral ideals, heavily influenced by the Greek pastoral poet, Theocritus. Written over a period of five to six years, the work was published in 38 or 37 BC. The most famous of the poems is Eclogue IV, which comes to be known as the “Messianic” Eclogue. Many Christian scholars in the early centuries AD found in this eclogue a prophecy of the birth of Christ and thus labeled Vergil a prophet and a rewarded pagan, specifically in Dante’s *Inferno* where Vergil acts as Dante’s guide through the Circles of Hell. It was after the publication of the *Eclogues* that Vergil was invited into the circle of Maecenas.

Following his foray into pastoral poetry, Vergil moved into the genre of didactic poetry, that which is designed to teach, and published his *Georgics* in

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Vergil, Rome and Augustus

30 BC. The poem, like the *Eclogues*, was written in dactylic hexameter and focused on country living, teaching the reader how to raise crops, graft trees, tend to livestock, etc. The poem is divided into four books, each generally revolving around one aspect of agriculture. Throughout the poem, Vergil weaves in various myths in explaining the origins of things or the manner in which certain processes must be carried out. Arguably the most famous passage comes in Book IV when Vergil tells the story of Aristaeus' attempt to revive his bees, which contains the tale of Orpheus' journey to the Underworld. It is in the opening of Book III where we find the poet declaring that his next work will be one of national praise, in honor of his friends Maecenas and Augustus.

The poet's next and final work, composed from 30-19 BC, was the *Aeneid*. The poem was published unfinished, following the death of the poet that same year; it was, however, edited by the poets' friends, Varius and Tucca. Wishing to change as little as possible about the poem, the editors left many half-lines in the state they were at the time of Vergil's death, leading to much debate regarding the poet's intent of these lines and the question of whether the lines were crafted as half-lines on purpose. Despite legend that Vergil had ordered the incomplete poem to be burned upon his death, Augustus ordered the poem's publication and the *Aeneid* became an immediate success; it was later considered by many to be the peak of Latin literature. It remained a standard school text for centuries from its publication onward. Additionally, elements of the poem, ranging from mere quotes to themes to structure, can be found in other works from the time immediately after publication, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, all the way through the ages in works such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and even in the works of Shakespeare. There even existed a tradition in the Middle Ages known as the "Sortes Vergilianae," in which someone would open a copy of the *Aeneid* and interpret a random line as foretelling the outcome of the current situation.

Following Vergil's death in 19 BC, the poet was supposedly buried in the area just outside of Naples. Over the centuries, the tomb, whether it actually belonged to Vergil or not, became a common site for pilgrimages, especially those following the tradition of Vergil as a Christian prophet. Many pilgrims claimed to have witnessed various miraculous events while near the tomb as well.

Rome and Augustus

The Roman state went through much turmoil and uncertainty over the course of Vergil's life. With the war between Julius Caesar and Pompey in the early 40s BC, the assassination of Caesar in 44, the subsequent war against the conspirators, and culminating in the conflict between Octavian and Marc Antony, the Roman people were desperate for a sense of stability, which is

Rome and Augustus, a Grammatical Note

exactly what Augustus, the renamed Octavian, gave to them. The nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, Augustus, after defeating Marc Antony and setting himself up as sole ruler of Rome through a bevy of titles bestowed upon him by the Senate, set about returning Rome to its former glory in a time before wars tore the city apart. The most important aspect of Augustus' rule was his creation of new moral legislation. However, to maintain his power and his influence over the Roman people and, more importantly, the Senate, Augustus needed to legitimize his rule on a regular basis. His friendship and patronage of Vergil gave him just such an opportunity.

Through the *Aeneid*, Augustus was able to reinforce his right to rule in a number of ways. First, in Vergil's naming of Aeneas' son as Iulus, Augustus was able to claim, as his adopted father had, descent from Venus herself, as the Julian clan traced their origins to Iulus. Second, Vergil's main theme of *pietas* highlights the main goals of Augustus as a ruler, the creation of a statewide sense of personal devotion to gods, family, and Rome. Thirdly and most obviously, Augustus is referenced throughout the poem in many of the prophetic scenes, including the revelation of future generations in Book VI, and finds himself blatantly in the center of Aeneas' shield in his victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium. Despite all these elements, many readers still question whether Vergil was pro-Augustan, anti-Augustan, or somewhere in between, as there are many pieces of the poem which seem to distance the poet from his patron, most notably the final scene, in which Aeneas, who is supposed to be the embodiment of *Romanitas*, finds himself overwhelmed by rage and mercilessly slaying his opponent, offering surrender.

A Grammatical Note

A brief note on Greek names, which appear throughout the text:

Many Greek male names occur in Latin as 1st or 3rd declension nouns and keep a traditional Greek accusative. For example, Aeneas' name declines thus:

Nominative – **Aenēās**

Genitive – **Aenēae**

Dative – **Aenēae**

Accusative – **Aenēān** (where we would expect an ending, **-am**)

Ablative – **Aenēā**

Vocative – **Aenēā**

The same occurs for Anchises (acc. – **Anchisēn**) and other characters whose names originate in Greek. These names will be noted in the “Notes and Vocabulary” section alongside each story for the students' aid.

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