

from the Epic of Gilgamesh

translated by N. K. Sandars

REVIEW SKILLS

Look for examples of the following literary device as you read the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

SIMILES

A figure of speech that uses a word such as *like* or *as* to compare two seemingly unlike things.

LITERARY FOCUS: EPIC HERO

An **epic hero** is an epic’s larger-than-life main character. The hero is a leader who stands for the values of his or her society. An epic hero often goes on a dangerous journey or quest to achieve a difficult goal. Along the way, the hero demonstrates great strength, knowledge, skill, and bravery. However, being human, an epic hero also has human weaknesses. Gilgamesh, the earliest known epic hero, has weakness in the form of pride.

Heroes Think of some larger-than-life heroes. What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses? Take, for example, Superman. He has extraordinary strength, speed, and vision. Superman also has a weakness: his susceptibility to Kryptonite, a mineral that strips him of his powers. In the chart below, list two other examples of heroes, along with their strengths and weaknesses.

Hero	Strengths	Weaknesses

READING SKILLS: VISUALIZING THE EPIC

When you **visualize** something, you picture it in your mind. Use the strategies below to help you visualize what is happening in the epic:

- Describe the events on the page in your own words.
- Draw a picture of the scene.
- Read aloud, and try to picture the events.

Use the Skill Read the epic, and concentrate on visualizing the events. As you do, circle descriptive words and phrases that help you picture what is happening.



Literary Skills
Understand the characteristics of the epic hero.

Reading Skills
Visualize key characters, events, and ideas.

Review Skills
Analyze similes.

from the **Epic of Gilgamesh**

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Gilgamesh, the king of the city-state of Uruk, is two-thirds god and one-third man. He is handsome, brave, and powerful. However, he continually oversteps his bounds as a ruler and treats his people harshly. Upset by his rule, Gilgamesh's subjects pray for relief. In response, the gods send a challenger for Gilgamesh: the wild man Enkidu. The two engage in an intense wrestling match, which Gilgamesh wins. Afterward, Gilgamesh and Enkidu become friends and go on a series of adventures that further anger the gods. As punishment, the gods send a fatal illness to Enkidu.

The Death of Enkidu

As Enkidu slept alone in his sickness, in bitterness of spirit he poured out his heart to his friend. "It was I who cut down the cedar, I who leveled the forest, I who slew Humbaba and now see what has become of me. Listen, my friend, this is the dream I dreamed last night. The heavens roared, and earth rumbled back an answer; between them stood I before an awful being, the **somber**-faced man-bird; he had directed on me his purpose. His was a vampire face, his foot was a lion's foot, his hand was an eagle's talon. He fell on me and his claws were in my hair, he held me fast and I smothered; then he transformed me so that my arms became wings covered with feathers. He turned his stare towards me, and he led me away to the palace of Irkalla,¹ the Queen of Darkness, to the house from which none who enters



The demon Humbaba (c. 1800–1600 B.C.E.). Babylonian clay mask from Sippar, southern Iraq. The British Museum, London.

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IDENTIFY

Pause at line 18. Underline words that describe the features of the man-bird in Enkidu's dream. What kind of image do these words create?

VOCABULARY

somber (säm'bər) *adj.*: dark; dismal.

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1. **Irkalla** (ir-kä'lə): also called Ereshkigal; goddess of the underworld.

CLARIFY

Re-read lines 23–31. What has happened to the kings?

ANALYZE

In lines 40–43, Enkidu uses two similes (comparisons using a word such as *like* or *as*). Circle the similes. What do they tell you about how Enkidu feels after waking from his dream? (*Review Skill*)

VOCABULARY

ominous (ām'ə-nəs) *adj.*: seeming to threaten evil or misfortune; sinister.

ever returns, down the road from which there is no coming back.

“There is the house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away forever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Anu and Enlil, stood
30 now like servants to fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the water skin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes,² priests of the incantation and of ecstasy; there were servers of the temple, and there was Etana, that king of Kish whom the eagle carried to heaven in the days of old. I saw also Samuqan, god of cattle, and there was Ereshkigal, the Queen of the Underworld; and Belit-Sheri squatted in front of her, she who is recorder of the gods and keeps the book of death. She held a tablet from which she read. She raised her head, she saw me and
40 spoke: ‘Who has brought this one here?’ Then I awoke like a man drained of blood who wanders alone in a waste of rushes; like one whom the bailiff³ has seized and his heart pounds with terror.”

Gilgamesh had peeled off his clothes, he listened to his words and wept quick tears, Gilgamesh listened and his tears flowed. He opened his mouth and spoke to Enkidu: “Who is there in strong-walled Uruk who has wisdom like this? Strange things have been spoken, why does your heart speak strangely? The dream was marvelous but the terror was great; we must
50 treasure the dream whatever the terror; for the dream has shown that misery comes at last to the healthy man, the end of life is sorrow.” And Gilgamesh lamented, “Now I will pray to the great gods, for my friend had an **ominous** dream.”

2. **acolytes** (ak'ə-līts') *n. pl.*: priests' assistants.

3. **bailiff** *n.*: sheriff's assistant whose duties include making arrests and serving people with court summonses and other legal documents.

This day on which Enkidu dreamed came to an end and he lay stricken with sickness. One whole day he lay on his bed and his suffering increased. He said to Gilgamesh, the friend on whose account he had left the wilderness, “Once I ran for you, for the water of life, and I now have nothing.” A second day he lay on his bed and Gilgamesh watched over him but the sickness
 60 increased. A third day he lay on his bed, he called out to Gilgamesh, rousing him up. Now he was weak and his eyes were blind with weeping. Ten days he lay and his suffering increased, eleven and twelve days he lay on his bed of pain. Then he called to Gilgamesh, “My friend, the great goddess cursed me and I must die in shame. I shall not die like a man fallen in battle; I feared to fall, but happy is the man who falls in the battle, for I must die in shame.” And Gilgamesh wept over Enkidu. . . .

*Gilgamesh laments Enkidu's death for seven days and nights. Finally he has the people of Uruk fashion a magnificent statue of
 70 Enkidu as a memorial. Then the grieving Gilgamesh leaves Uruk.*

The Search for Everlasting Life

Bitterly Gilgamesh wept for his friend Enkidu; he wandered over the wilderness as a hunter, he roamed over the plains; in his bitterness he cried, “How can I rest, how can I be at peace? Despair is in my heart. What my brother is now, that shall I be when I am dead. Because I am afraid of death I will go as best I can to find Utnapishtim whom they call the Faraway, for he has entered the assembly of the gods.” So Gilgamesh traveled over the wilderness, he wandered over the grasslands, a long journey,
 80 in search of Utnapishtim, whom the gods took after the **deluge**; and they set him to live in the land of Dilmun,⁴ in the garden of the sun; and to him alone of men they gave everlasting life.

At night when he came to the mountain passes Gilgamesh prayed: “In these mountain passes long ago I saw lions, I was

4. **Dilmun:** land beyond the seas (the Persian Gulf); paradise of the Sumerians.

CLARIFY

Pause at line 67. According to Enkidu, what is the cause of his eventual death? How does he feel about his death?

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 78. A common device in epics is the **epithet**, or special name or title given to someone. Underline the epithet given to Utnapishtim.

INTERPRET

Re-read lines 76–82. Why does Gilgamesh want to find Utnapishtim?

VOCABULARY

deluge (del'yooj') *n.*: great flood.

Notes

Pause at line 104. Why do you think the mate of the Man-Scorpion says of Gilgamesh, “Two thirds is god but one third is man”?

ANALYZE

afraid and I lifted my eyes to the moon; I prayed and my prayers went up to the gods, so now, O moon god Sin,⁵ protect me.”

When he had prayed he lay down to sleep, until he was woken from out of a dream. He saw the lions round him glorying in life; then he took his axe in his hand, he drew his sword from his belt, and he fell upon them like an arrow from the string, and struck and destroyed and scattered them.

So at length Gilgamesh came to Mashu,⁶ the great mountains about which he had heard many things, which guard the rising and the setting sun. Its twin peaks are as high as the wall of heaven and its paps reach down to the underworld. At its gate the Scorpions stand guard, half man and half dragon; their glory is terrifying, their stare strikes death into men, their shimmering halo sweeps the mountains that guard the rising sun. When Gilgamesh saw them he shielded his eyes for the length of a moment only; then he took courage and approached. When they saw him so undismayed the Man-Scorpion called to his mate, “This one who comes to us now is flesh of the gods.” The mate of the Man-Scorpion answered, “Two thirds is god but one third is man.”

Then he called to the man Gilgamesh, he called to the child of the gods: “Why have you come so great a journey; for what have you traveled so far, crossing the dangerous waters; tell me the reason for your coming?” Gilgamesh answered, “For Enkidu; I loved him dearly, together we endured all kinds of hardships; on his account I have come, for the common lot of man has taken him. I have wept for him day and night, I would not give up his body for burial, I thought my friend would come back because of my weeping. Since he went, my life is nothing; that is why I have traveled here in search of Utnapishtim my father; for men say he has entered the assembly of the gods, and has found everlasting life. I have a desire to question him concerning the living and the dead.” The Man-Scorpion opened his mouth and

5. **Sin:** father of Shamash, the sun god, and Ishtar, the goddess of love; son of Enlil, the chief god.

6. **Mashu:** in the Lebanon ranges.

120 said, speaking to Gilgamesh, “No man born of woman has done what you have asked, no mortal man has gone into the mountain; the length of it is twelve leagues⁷ of darkness; in it there is no light, but the heart is oppressed with darkness. From the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun there is no light.” Gilgamesh said, “Although I should go in sorrow and in pain, with sighing and with weeping, still I must go. Open the gate of the mountain.” And the Man-Scorpion said, “Go, Gilgamesh, I permit you to pass through the mountain of Mashu and through the high ranges; may your feet carry you safely home. The gate of the mountain is open.”

130 *Gilgamesh successfully makes his way through the twelve leagues of darkness. When he comes out on the other side of Mashu, he is greeted with an astounding sight.*

There was the garden of the gods; all round him stood bushes bearing gems. Seeing it he went down at once, for there was fruit of carnelian with the vine hanging from it, beautiful to look at; lapis lazuli⁸ leaves hung thick with fruit, sweet to see. For thorns and thistles there were hematite and rare stones, agate, and pearls from out of the edge of the sea. While Gilgamesh walked in the garden by the edge of the sea Shamash saw him, and he saw that he was dressed in the skins of animals and ate their
140 flesh. He was distressed, and he spoke and said, "No mortal man has gone this way before, nor will, as long as the winds drive over the sea." And to Gilgamesh he said, "You will never find the life for which you are searching." Gilgamesh said to glorious Shamash, "Now that I have toiled and strayed so far over the wilderness, am I to sleep, and let the earth cover my head forever? Let my eyes see the sun until they are dazzled with looking. Although I am no better than a dead man, still let me see the light of the sun."

VISUALIZE

7. **leagues** *n.*: units used for measuring length; one league equals three miles or 4.8 kilometers.

Notes

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 179. Circle Gilgamesh's response to the questions that express doubt about his identity. As you continue reading, watch for another character who repeats the same questions.

150 Beside the sea she lives, the woman of the vine, the maker
of wine; Siduri sits in the garden at the edge of the sea, with the
golden bowl and the golden vats that the gods gave her. She is
covered with a veil; and where she sits she sees Gilgamesh com-
ing towards her, wearing skins, the flesh of the gods in his body,
but despair in his heart, and his face like the face of one who has
made a long journey. She looked, and as she scanned the dis-
tance she said in her own heart, "Surely this is some felon; where
is he going now?" And she barred her gate against him with the
cross-bar and shot home the bolt. But Gilgamesh, hearing the
sound of the bolt, threw up his head and lodged his foot in the
160 gate; he called to her, "Young woman, maker of wine, why do
you bolt your door; what did you see that made you bar your
gate? I will break in your door and burst in your gate, for I am
Gilgamesh who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, I killed
the watchman of the cedar forest, I overthrew Humbaba who
lived in the forest, and I killed the lions in the passes of the
mountain."

170 Then Siduri said to him, "If you are that Gilgamesh who
seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, who killed the watchman
of the cedar forest, who overthrew Humbaba that lived in the
forest, and killed the lions in the passes of the mountain, why
are your cheeks so starved and why is your face so drawn? Why
is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who
has made a long journey? Yes, why is your face burned from
heat and cold, and why do you come here wandering over the
pastures in search of the wind?"

180 Gilgamesh answered her, "And why should not my cheeks
be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my
face is the face of one who has made a long journey, it was
burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over
the pastures in search of the wind? My friend, my younger
brother, he who hunted the wild ass of the wilderness and the
panther of the plains, my friend, my younger brother who seized
and killed the Bull of Heaven and overthrew Humbaba in the

Notes

INTERPRET

Pause at line 231. Why do you think Utnapishtim questions Gilgamesh's identity?

the sun's transit, eastward of the mountain. To him alone of men the gods had given everlasting life.

220 Now Utnapishtim, where he lay at ease, looked into the distance and he said in his heart, musing to himself, "Why does the boat sail here without tackle and mast; why are the sacred stones destroyed, and why does the master not sail the boat? That man who comes is none of mine; where I look I see a man whose body is covered with skins of beasts. Who is this who walks up the shore behind Urshanabi, for surely he is no man of mine?" So Utnapishtim looked at him and said, "What is your name, you who come here wearing the skins of beasts, with your cheeks starved and your face drawn? Where are you hurrying to now? For what reason have you made this great journey, crossing the seas whose passage is difficult? Tell me the reason for your coming."

He replied, "Gilgamesh is my name. I am from Uruk, from the house of Anu." Then Utnapishtim said to him, "If you are Gilgamesh, why are your cheeks so starved and your face drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face burned with heat and cold; and why do you come here, wandering over the wilderness in search of the wind?"

Gilgamesh explains his quest and asks Utnapishtim for the secret of eternal life. The old man's reply is not what Gilgamesh expects.

240 Utnapishtim said, "There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand forever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep forever, does the flood time of rivers endure? It is only the nymph of the dragonfly who sheds her larva and sees the sun in his glory. From the days of old there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, they are like a painted death. What is there between the master and the servant when both have fulfilled their doom? When the Anunnaki,⁹ the judges, come together,

9. **Anunnaki** (ä·nōō·nä'kē): underworld gods who serve Ereshkigal by judging the dead.

and Mammetun the mother of destinies, together they decree
 250 the fates of men. Life and death they allot but the day of death
 they do not disclose.”

Then Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim the Faraway, “I look
 at you now, Utnapishtim, and your appearance is no different
 from mine; there is nothing strange in your features. I thought
 I should find you like a hero prepared for battle, but you lie here
 taking your ease on your back. Tell me truly, how was it that you
 came to enter the company of the gods and to possess everlast-
 ing life?” Utnapishtim said to Gilgamesh, “I will reveal to you a
 mystery, I will tell you a secret of the gods.”

260 The Story of the Flood

“You know the city Shurrupak,¹⁰ it stands on the banks of
 Euphrates? That city grew old and the gods that were in it were
 old. There was Anu, lord of the firmament, their father, and
 warrior Enlil their counselor, Ninurta the helper, and Ennugi
 watcher over canals; and with them also was Ea. In those days
 the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like
 a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamor. Enlil
 heard the clamor and he said to the gods in council, ‘The uproar
 of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by rea-
 270 son of the babel.’ So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind.
 Enlil did this, but Ea because of his oath warned me in a dream.
 He whispered their words to my house of reeds, ‘Reed-house,
 reed-house! Wall, O wall, hearken reed-house, wall reflect; O
 man of Shurrupak, son of Ubara-Tutu; tear down your house
 and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despise
 worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house,
 I say, and build a boat. These are the measurements of the bark
 as you shall build her: let her beam equal her length, let her deck
 be roofed like the vault that covers the abyss; then take up into
 280 the boat the seed of all living creatures.”

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 252–258, and circle the simile Gilgamesh uses to describe Utnapishtim. Is Gilgamesh surprised by Utnapishtim’s appearance? Why or why not?
(Review Skill)

CLARIFY

In lines 261–270, Utnapishtim begins to give an account of the flood. Who recommends the flood and why? Who warns Utnapishtim?

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 280. Describe the task that Ea gives to Utnapishtim.

10. **Shurrupak** (sh-ə-roop’ak): ancient city of Sumer.

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 281–289. Why do you think Ea tells Utnapishtim to lie to the people?

PARAPHRASE

Put into your own words what Utnapishtim means by saying, in line 313, “The time was fulfilled.”

“When I had understood I said to my lord, ‘Behold, what you have commanded I will honor and perform, but how shall I answer the people, the city, the elders?’ Then Ea opened his mouth and said to me, his servant, ‘Tell them this: I have learned that Enlil is wrathful against me, I dare no longer walk in his land nor live in his city; I will go down to the Gulf to dwell with Ea my lord. But on you he will rain down abundance, rare fish and shy wildfowl, a rich harvest-tide. In the evening the rider of the storm will bring you wheat in torrents.’

290 “In the first light of dawn all my household gathered round me, the children brought pitch and the men whatever was necessary. On the fifth day I laid the keel and the ribs, then I made fast the planking. The ground-space was one acre, each side of the deck measured one hundred and twenty cubits, making a square. I built six decks below, seven in all, I divided them into nine sections with bulkheads between. I drove in wedges where needed, I saw to the punt-poles, and laid in supplies. The carriers brought oil in baskets, I poured pitch into the furnace and asphalt and oil; more oil was consumed in caulking, and more again the master of the boat took into his stores. I slaughtered

300 bullocks for the people and every day I killed sheep. I gave the shipwrights wine to drink as though it were river water, raw wine and red wine and oil and white wine. There was feasting then as there is at the time of the New Year’s festival; I myself anointed my head. On the seventh day the boat was complete.

“Then was the launching full of difficulty; there was shifting of ballast above and below till two thirds was submerged. I loaded into her all that I had of gold and of living things, my family, my kin, the beast of the field both wild and tame, and all

310 the craftsmen. I sent them on board, for the time that Shamash had ordained was already fulfilled when he said, ‘In the evening, when the rider of the storm sends down the destroying rain, enter the boat and batten her down.’ The time was fulfilled, the evening came, the rider of the storm sent down the rain.

I looked out at the weather and it was terrible, so I too boarded the boat and battened her down. All was now complete, the battening and the caulking; so I handed the tiller to Puzur-Amurri the steersman, with the navigation and the care of the whole boat.

320 “With the first light of dawn a black cloud came from the horizon; it thundered within where Adad, lord of the storm was riding. In front over hill and plain Shullat and Hanish, heralds of the storm, led on. Then the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal¹¹ pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninurta the warlord threw down the dikes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their livid flame. A stupor of despair went up to heaven when the god of the storm turned daylight to darkness, when he smashed the land like a cup. One whole day the tempest raged, gathering fury
330 as it went, it poured over the people like the tides of battle; a man could not see his brother nor the people be seen from heaven. Even the gods were terrified at the flood, they fled to the highest heaven, the firmament of Anu; they crouched against the walls, cowering like curs. Then Ishtar the sweet-voiced Queen of Heaven cried out like a woman in travail: ‘Alas the days of old are turned to dust because I commanded evil; why did I command this evil in the council of all the gods? I commanded wars to destroy the people, but are they not my people, for I brought them forth? Now like the spawn of fish they float in the ocean.’
340 The great gods of heaven and of hell wept, they covered their mouths.

“For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world, tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the world and there was silence, all mankind was turned to clay. The surface of the sea

Notes

VISUALIZE

Pause at line 332. To describe the storm, Utnapishtim uses two similes. Circle the simile in lines 327–329 and the one in lines 329–330. Then, explain how they help you picture the scene. (*Review Skill*)

11. Nergal: god of plagues of the underworld.

Notes

INFER

Pause at line 379. Why do you think Enlil is angry?

350 stretched as flat as a rooftop; I opened a hatch and the light fell on my face. Then I bowed low, I sat down and I wept, the tears streamed down my face, for on every side was the waste of water. I looked for land in vain, but fourteen leagues distant there appeared a mountain, and there the boat grounded; on the mountain of Nisir¹² the boat held fast, she held fast and did not budge. One day she held, and a second day on the mountain of Nisir she held fast and did not budge. A third day, and a fourth day she held fast on the mountain and did not budge; a fifth day and a sixth day she held fast on the mountain. When the seventh day dawned I loosed a dove and let her go. She flew away, but finding no resting-place she returned. Then I loosed a swallow, 360 and she flew away but finding no resting-place she returned. I loosed a raven, she saw that the waters had retreated, she ate, she flew around, she cawed, and she did not come back. Then I threw everything open to the four winds, I made a sacrifice and poured out a libation¹³ on the mountain top. Seven and again seven cauldrons I set up on their stands, I heaped up wood and cane and cedar and myrtle. When the gods smelled the sweet savor, they gathered like flies over the sacrifice. Then, at last, Ishtar also came, she lifted her necklace with the jewels of heaven that once Anu had made to please her. 'O you gods here 370 present, by the lapis lazuli round my neck I shall remember these days as I remember the jewels of my throat; these last days I shall not forget. Let all the gods gather round the sacrifice, except Enlil. He shall not approach this offering, for without reflection he brought the flood; he consigned my people to destruction.'

"When Enlil had come, when he saw the boat, he was wroth¹⁴ and swelled with anger at the gods, the host of heaven, 'Has any of these mortals escaped? Not one was to have survived the destruction.' Then the god of the wells and canals Ninurta

12. **Nisir**: sometimes identified with Ararat.

13. **libation** *n.*: ritual offering in which wine or oil is poured out on the ground as a sacrifice to a god.

14. **wroth** (*rôth*) *adj.*: (British) angry.

380 opened his mouth and said to the warrior Enlil, ‘Who is there of the gods that can devise without Ea? It is Ea alone who knows all things.’ Then Ea opened his mouth and spoke to warrior Enlil, ‘Wisest of gods, hero Enlil, how could you so senselessly bring down the flood?

*Lay upon the sinner his sins,
Lay upon the transgressor his **transgression**,
Punish him a little when he breaks loose,
Do not drive him too hard or he perishes;
Would that a lion had ravaged mankind
Rather than the flood,
Would that a wolf had ravaged mankind
Rather than the flood,
Would that famine had wasted the world
Rather than the flood,
Would that **pestilence** had wasted mankind
Rather than the flood.*

390

It was not I that revealed the secret of the gods; the wise man learned it in a dream. Now take your counsel what shall be done with him.’

400

“Then Enlil went up into the boat, he took me by the hand and my wife and made us enter the boat and kneel down on either side, he standing between us. He touched our foreheads to bless us saying, ‘In time past Utnapishtim was a mortal man; henceforth he and his wife shall live in the distance at the mouth of the rivers.’ Thus it was that the gods took me and placed me here to live in the distance, at the mouth of the rivers.”

The Return

410

Utnapishtim said, “As for you, Gilgamesh, who will assemble the gods for your sake, so that you may find that life for which you are searching? But if you wish, come and put it to the test: only prevail against sleep for six days and seven nights.” But while Gilgamesh sat there resting on his haunches, a mist of sleep

IDENTIFY

What is the main idea in lines 385–396?

VOCABULARY

transgression (trans-gresh’ən) *n.*: act that goes beyond limits set by laws.

pestilence (pes’tə-ləns) *n.*: deadly disease.

CLARIFY

Re-read lines 408–411. What is the test Utnapishtim gives Gilgamesh?

ANALYZE

Pause at line 422. Why does Utnapishtim instruct his wife to bake the loaves of bread?

CLARIFY

Re-read lines 439–442. What happens to Urshanabi as a result of bringing Gilgamesh to Utnapishtim?

like soft wool teased from the fleece drifted over him, and Utnapishtim said to his wife, “Look at him now, the strong man who would have everlasting life, even now the mists of sleep are drifting over him.” His wife replied, “Touch the man to wake him, so that he may return to his own land in peace, going back through the gate by which he came.” Utnapishtim said to his wife, “All men are deceivers, even you he will attempt to deceive; therefore bake loaves of bread, each day one loaf, and put it
420 beside his head; and make a mark on the wall to number the days he has slept.”

So she baked loaves of bread, each day one loaf, and put it beside his head, and she marked on the wall the days that he slept; and there came a day when the first loaf was hard, the second loaf was like leather, the third was soggy, the crust of the fourth had mold, the fifth was mildewed, the sixth was fresh, and the seventh was still on the embers. Then Utnapishtim touched him and he woke. Gilgamesh said to Utnapishtim the
430 Faraway, “I hardly slept when you touched and roused me.” But Utnapishtim said, “Count these loaves and learn how many days you slept, for your first is hard, your second like leather, your third is soggy, the crust of your fourth has mold, your fifth is mildewed, your sixth is fresh and your seventh was still over the glowing embers when I touched and woke you.” Gilgamesh said, “What shall I do, O Utnapishtim, where shall I go? Already the thief in the night has hold of my limbs, death inhabits my room; wherever my foot rests, there I find death.”

Then Utnapishtim spoke to Urshanabi the ferryman:
440 “Woe to you Urshanabi, now and forevermore you have become hateful to this harborage; it is not for you, nor for you are the crossings of this sea. Go now, banished from the shore. But this man before whom you walked, bringing him here, whose body is covered with foulness and the grace of whose limbs has been spoiled by wild skins, take him to the washing-place. There he shall wash his long hair clean as snow in the water, he shall throw off his skins and let the sea carry them away, and the

beauty of his body shall be shown, the fillet¹⁵ on his forehead shall be renewed, and he shall be given clothes to cover his nakedness. Till he reaches his own city and his journey is accomplished, these clothes will show no sign of age, they will wear like a new garment.” So Urshanabi took Gilgamesh and led him to the washing-place, he washed his long hair as clean as snow in the water, he threw off his skins, which the sea carried away, and showed the beauty of his body. He renewed the fillet on his forehead, and to cover his nakedness gave him clothes which would show no sign of age, but would wear like a new garment till he reached his own city, and his journey was accomplished.

Then Gilgamesh and Urshanabi launched the boat onto the water and boarded it, and they made ready to sail away; but the wife of Utnapishtim the Faraway said to him, “Gilgamesh came here wearied out, he is worn out; what will you give him to carry him back to his own country?” So Utnapishtim spoke, and Gilgamesh took a pole and brought the boat in to the bank. “Gilgamesh, you came here a man wearied out, you have worn yourself out; what shall I give you to carry you back to your own country? Gilgamesh, I shall reveal a secret thing, it is a mystery of the gods that I am telling you. There is a plant that grows under the water, it has a prickle like a thorn, like a rose; it will wound your hands, but if you succeed in taking it, then your hands will hold that which restores his lost youth to a man.”

When Gilgamesh heard this he opened the sluices so that a sweet-water current might carry him out to the deepest channel; he tied heavy stones to his feet and they dragged him down to the water-bed. There he saw the plant growing; although it pricked him he took it in his hands; then he cut the heavy stones from his feet, and the sea carried him and threw him onto the shore. Gilgamesh said to Urshanabi the ferryman, “Come here, and see this marvelous plant. By its virtue a man may win back all his former strength. I will take it to Uruk of the strong walls;

IDENTIFY

What is remarkable about the clothes that Utnapishtim gives to Gilgamesh (lines 450–452)?

IDENTIFY

Re-read lines 468–472. What does Utnapishtim reveal to Gilgamesh?

15. **fillet** (fil' it) *n.*: narrow headband.

GENERATE QUESTIONS

Pause at line 499. Do you agree with Gilgamesh that he has gained nothing? Compose at least two questions you might want to ask him about his journey.

ANALYZE

Underline the descriptions of Gilgamesh in the last paragraph, and try to visualize him. Given the events of the epic, do you agree with the description? Explain.

there I will give it to the old men to eat. Its name shall be 'The Old Men Are Young Again'; and at last I shall eat it myself and have back all my lost youth." So Gilgamesh returned by the gate through which he had come, Gilgamesh and Urshanabi went together. They traveled their twenty leagues and then they broke their fast; after thirty leagues they stopped for the night.

490 Gilgamesh saw a well of cool water and he went down and bathed; but deep in the pool there was lying a serpent, and the serpent sensed the sweetness of the flower. It rose out of the water and snatched it away, and immediately it sloughed its skin and returned to the well. Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept, the tears ran down his face, and he took the hand of Urshanabi; "O Urshanabi, was it for this that I toiled with my hands, is it for this I have wrung out my heart's blood? For myself I have gained nothing; not I, but the beast of the earth has joy of it now. Already the stream has carried it twenty leagues back to the channels where I found it. I found a sign and now I have lost it. Let us leave the boat on the bank and go."

500 After twenty leagues they broke their fast, after thirty leagues they stopped for the night; in three days they had walked as much as a journey of a month and fifteen days. When the journey was accomplished they arrived at Uruk, the strong-walled city. Gilgamesh spoke to him, to Urshanabi the ferryman, "Urshanabi, climb up onto the wall of Uruk, inspect its foundation terrace, and examine well the brick work; see if it is not of burnt bricks; and did not the seven wise men lay these foundations? One third of the whole is city, one third is garden, and one third is field, with the precinct of the goddess Ishtar. These parts and the
510 precinct are all Uruk."

This too was the work of Gilgamesh, the king, who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went a long journey, was weary, worn out with labor, and returning engraved on a stone the whole story.

from the Epic of Gilgamesh

Reading Skills: Visualizing the Epic Review the descriptive words and phrases you circled that helped you picture events in Gilgamesh’s quest for eternal life. Choose three examples, and write them in the first column of the chart below. In the second column, explain what each example helped you picture. Finally, in the third column, tell what each event reveals about Gilgamesh’s character as an epic hero.

These words and phrases . . .	helped me picture this event . . .	which reveals this about the epic hero
1.		
2.		
3.		

Vocabulary Development

from the Epic of Gilgamesh

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

DIRECTIONS: Write a vocabulary word from the Word Box in each blank to complete the paragraph below. Use each word only once.

Word Box

somber
ominous
deluge
transgression
pestilence

The people looked fearfully at the (1) _____ black clouds that filled the sky. As the storm raged and the water poured from the heavens, even the gods were afraid of the terrible (2) _____. On the seventh day, the storm ended. When Ea saw the destruction, his mood was gloomy and (3) _____. He said that the gods should have sent a famine or (4) _____ instead of the flood. In his opinion, the punishment was too severe for humanity's (5) _____.

ANALOGIES: RECOGNIZING SYNONYM AND ANTONYM PAIRS

In an **analogy**, the words in one pair relate to each other in the same way as the words in a second pair. Often, the words in each pair are **synonyms** (words having similar meanings) or **antonyms** (words having opposite meanings). In the analogy below, for example, the words in each pair are synonyms.

EASY : SIMPLE :: sick : ill

DIRECTIONS: Study each incomplete analogy below to determine whether the word pairs are antonyms or synonyms. Then, fill each blank with the appropriate word from the Word Box above.

1. OBLIGATION : DUTY :: _____ : crime
2. NOISY : QUIET :: cheerful : _____
3. WEALTH : POVERTY :: _____ : drought
4. MISTAKE : ERROR :: _____ : plague
5. TIMID : SHY :: _____ : threatening

SKILLS
FOCUS

Vocabulary Skills

Use vocabulary in context.

Analyze analogies.

Page 10

CLARIFY

The Ten Commandments are a code of moral conduct and form the basis for Mosaic law.

WORD STUDY

Prosperity means “success,” probably economic and political success in this case.

IDENTIFY

Students should underline “Judaism” and “Jew” in line 235.

Page 11

PARAPHRASE

Possible paraphrase: The Diaspora happened when the Hebrews who had been taken as slaves to Babylon were freed. Many returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, but others stayed in Babylon. The Hebrews were “scattered,” no longer living together as one nation.

INFER

For Hebrews, belief in the covenant sets them apart as special people under Yahweh’s guidance and protection.

from the Epic of Gilgamesh, page 12

■ Possible Answers to Before You Read

Heroes (page 12)

Answers will vary.

Page 13

IDENTIFY

Students should underline some of the following words: “vampire face,” “lion’s foot,” “eagle’s talon,” “claws” (lines 14–16). Possible image created by these words: a threatening monster.

Page 14

CLARIFY

In death the former kings are servants to the gods in the house of dust.

ANALYZE

Students should circle “like a man drained of blood who wanders alone” and “like one whom the bailiff has seized” (lines 40–43). Possible response: The similes show that Enkidu feels weak, lonely, and afraid.

Page 15

CLARIFY

Enkidu dies because the great goddess has cursed

him. He feels shame because he will die of illness instead of bravely in battle.

IDENTIFY

Students should underline “the Faraway” in line 77.

INTERPRET

Gilgamesh wants to learn the secret of everlasting life.

Page 16

ANALYZE

Possible response: The mate of the Man-Scorpion knows that Gilgamesh’s mortal part dooms him to death like all mortals.

Page 17

VISUALIZE

Students should underline some of the following phrases: “bushes bearing gems,” “fruit of carnelian,” “vine hanging,” “lapis lazuli leaves hung thick with fruit,” “hematite and rare stones,” “agate, and pearls from out of the edge of the sea” (lines 132–137).

INTERPRET

Possible response: Gilgamesh refers to his death, after which he will be buried and never see the sun again.

Page 18

IDENTIFY

Students should circle “And why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey, it was burned with heat and cold” (lines 176–179).

Page 19

IDENTIFY

No, Siduri knows that the gods decided to keep eternal life for themselves and to let mortals die. She advises Gilgamesh to eat good food, to dance and be happy each day, to enjoy clean clothing and baths, to cherish children, and to love his wife.

Page 20

INTERPRET

Utnapishtim wants to know what kind of man could make such a difficult journey; he does not recognize Gilgamesh, who is wearing animal skins and who has a drawn face and starved cheeks.

Page 21

IDENTIFY

Students should circle “like a hero prepared for battle” in line 255. Yes, Gilgamesh is surprised. He was expecting to see a great hero, a warrior, but instead Utnapishtim has an ordinary appearance and is lying down resting.

CLARIFY

The god Enlil recommends the flood because the people's noise is keeping the gods from sleeping. The god Ea warns Utnapishtim.

IDENTIFY

Ea tells Utnapishtim to tear down his house, build a boat from the wood, and take animals into the boat.

Page 22**IDENTIFY**

Ea tells Utnapishtim to lie so that other people won't be suspicious when Utnapishtim builds a boat and leaves the city.

PARAPHRASE

Possible paraphrase: Utnapishtim has completed the tasks, and the time Ea foretold has arrived.

Page 23**VISUALIZE**

Students should circle "he smashed the land like a cup" and "the tempest . . . poured over the people like the tides of battle" (lines 328–330). Possible response: The similes help me picture the violence and enormity of the storm.

Page 24**INFER**

Enlil intended to kill all mortals, but Utnapishtim and his wife survived to have more children.

Page 25**IDENTIFY**

Possible response: Blame the person who deserves the blame, but do not punish him too harshly. The flood was a bad idea; it would have been better if anything else had destroyed humanity.

CLARIFY

Utnapishtim challenges Gilgamesh to stay awake for six days and seven nights.

Page 26**ANALYZE**

Possible response: Utnapishtim tells his wife to bake the loaves in order to have proof of how many days Gilgamesh has slept. He believes Gilgamesh will lie if given the chance.

CLARIFY

Utnapishtim tells Urshanabi that he can no longer cross the sea.

Page 27**IDENTIFY**

The clothes will not show age or wear until Gilgamesh reaches Uruk.

IDENTIFY

Utnapishtim reveals that a magic plant that can restore youth grows underwater.

Page 28**GENERATE QUESTIONS**

Possible response: Gilgamesh has had an adventure and seen more than normal humans see. Possible questions: Isn't it better to have some adventures than none? Don't you think the quest for eternal youth is an impossible dream?

ANALYZE

Students should underline some of the following: "the king, who knew the countries of the world," "was wise," "saw mysteries and knew secret things," "brought us a tale of the days before the flood," "went on a long journey, was weary, worn out with labor" (lines 511–515). Possible response: The description fits the epic because, even though Gilgamesh did not find eternal life, he did some amazing things.

■ Possible Answers to Skills Practice**Chart (page 29)**

- Column 1:** "He saw the lions . . . and he fell upon them like an arrow from the string, and struck and destroyed and scattered them" (lines 88–91).
Column 2: The words "like an arrow from the string" helped me see how quickly Gilgamesh reacts. The words "struck and destroyed and scattered" show his forcefulness.
Column 3: Gilgamesh is brave and skillful.
- Column 1:** "When Gilgamesh saw them [the Scorpions] he shielded his eyes for the length of a moment only; then he took courage and approached" (lines 98–100).
Column 2: The words "he shielded his eyes" helped me visualize the fear Gilgamesh feels when he sees the Scorpions. "For the length of a moment only" shows that his fear is temporary.
Column 3: Gilgamesh has weaknesses as do ordinary people, but he overcomes his weakness and shows courage.
- Column 1:** "But Gilgamesh, hearing the sound of the bolt, threw up his head and lodged his foot in the gate" (lines 158–160).
Column 2: The phrase "threw up his head and lodged his foot in the gate" helped me visualize Gilgamesh's determination to achieve his goal.
Column 3: Gilgamesh is determined in his quest for knowledge.

■ Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary in Context (Page 30)

1. ominous
2. deluge
3. somber
4. pestilence
5. transgression

Analogies: Recognizing Synonym and Antonym Pairs

1. transgression
2. somber
3. deluge
4. pestilence
5. ominous

New Kingdom Love Lyrics, page 31

■ Possible Answers to Before You Read

Seeing Through Others' Eyes (page 31)

Answers will vary.

Page 32

The Voice of the Wild Goose

INTERPRET

Possible answer: She feels trapped and threatened by an overpowering love.

IDENTIFY CAUSE & EFFECT

Possible answer: She is too swept up by her love to do her work at all.

Most Beautiful Youth Who Ever Happened

COMPARE & CONTRAST

She feels “dead” when her beloved is far from her, and she feels joy when her beloved is well. Possible response: The speaker’s feelings tell me that the poem’s theme is about how love can bring both sadness and joy.

■ Possible Answers to Skills Practice

Chart (page 33)

The Voice of the Wild Goose

Detail 1: The speaker feels like a trapped wild bird.

Detail 2: The speaker knows she is supposed to get her work done.

Detail 3: The speaker neglects her work to think about and be with her beloved.

Theme: The details in the poem suggest that love can sometimes be overpowering and distracting.

Most Beautiful Youth Who Ever Happened

Detail 1: The speaker wants to share a home with her beloved.

Detail 2: The speaker feels as if she were dead when they are apart.

Detail 3: The speaker finds joy in her beloved’s well-being.

Theme: The details in the poem suggest that love brings both sadness and joy—sadness caused by separation, and joy caused by the beloved’s well-being.

The Book of Ruth, page 34

■ Possible Answers to Before You Read

The Main Events (page 34)

Answers will vary.

Page 35

IDENTIFY

Elimelech traveled to Moab with his wife Naomi and his sons Mahlon and Chilion. Elimelech died in Moab, and then his sons married Moabite women. About ten years later, both Mahlon and Chilion died.

Page 36

INFER

Possible response: Naomi insists that her daughters-in-law leave her because she wants them to be able to find new husbands. Her advice to them shows how important it was for women to be married in biblical times.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Both women love their mother-in-law and do not want to part from her. Ruth, however, refuses to leave Naomi, while Orpah returns to her Moabite family.

EVALUATE

Possible response: Yes. Ruth gives up her homeland, her family, and her religion to follow Naomi.

Page 37

CONNECT

Students should underline “Bethlehem” and “the beginning of barley harvest” in line 62.

SUMMARIZE

Possible summary: To get food, Ruth goes to the harvest fields to pick up grain dropped by the workers. There the owner of the field, Boaz, who was a kinsman of Elimelech, sees Ruth and asks his servant about her.