

## (ii) Aeneas's sense of duty – 2016

**Aeneas's most admirable characteristic is his strong sense of duty.**

**(a) Discuss this statement, supporting your answer by reference to Virgil's *Aeneid*.**

Aeneas' sense of duty is probably his most defining characteristic. It is difficult not to admire his devotion to the Gods, his family, his people and to his fate. While there are many occasions in which the hero could abandon his quest to Italy, he doesn't hesitate to continue such a difficult journey despite an adequate life of elsewhere.

From his introduction in Book I, it's clear that Aeneas has already suffered a lot. His ships are separated in a storm, and they wash up on the shores of Carthage. Upon landing in Africa, despite feeling wretched, Aeneas takes care of his men by killing stags and keeping up morale. He remains a strong support for his people throughout the rest of the epic. In Book II during the fall of Troy, Aeneas is willing to die and protect the people of Troy than escape to safety. In Book V, he hosts funeral games for his father and gives the journey weary Trojans a break to enjoy themselves and receives some prizes for their efforts. In Book IX, the Trojans prepared when the Latins attack their camp as Aeneas advised them to retreat into the camp before leaving to find allies for the coming battles. He knows his duty as leader of the Trojans and in turn they follow his orders without hesitation because of his dedication as a leader. It's hard not to be in awe of him due to the weight of this responsibility.

Aeneas' commitment to his family is also highly commendable. During the fall of Troy, Aeneas rushes home to his wife, son, and father. When his father, Anchises, refuses to leave Troy, Aeneas is resigned to stay. He will not abandon his father. However, he's torn as he wants to protect his son Ascanius and wife Creusa. When Anchises is convinced to leave, Aeneas carries him the whole way to safety. When he realises that Creusa is missing, he returns to the burning city to look for her. In Book IV when Aeneas wants to stay with Dido on Carthage, Mercury reminds Aeneas that it is not just his future he is walking away from but also that of his son. He must go to Italy for the sake of Ascanius. This ultimately convinces Aeneas to leave his potential happy life with Dido. Aeneas continues to showcase his devotion by hosting funeral games for his

father, following his advice to journey to the Underworld and fighting honourably for the hand of his future wife Lavinia.

Aeneas is also undoubtedly devoted to the Gods. If he is ordered to do something by them, he will follow it word for word. While his other loyalties also drive him towards Italy, his trust and obedience to the Gods guides him there. There are many occasions in which he demonstrates his loyalty. When Mercury sends an order from Jupiter to leave Carthage and Dido, he immediately does so. When the Gods advise him through Helenus to sacrifice a sow and thirty piglets on the site he sees them in Italy, he does so. When the river god Tiber tells him to find Greek allies down the river, Aeneas travels to King Evander. He allows for a period of peace while both sides bury their dead in Book XI. Before his final battle with Turnus in Book XII, he makes a sacrifice to the Gods and promises to deal fairly with the Latins whatever the outcome. His unwavering devotion to them is honourable and he is rewarded for it.

Aeneas remains throughout the epic, dedicated to the destiny of Rome. When he is reassured in Book VI by his father that Rome is fated to be a city of great importance, Aeneas stays for the remainder of the epic, faithful to the city. While he does not start the war against Latium, he is willing to fight it to win his city. The shield gifted to him by Venus that he holds reminds him of the greatness of Rome and what he is fighting for. He even suggests a one-on-one battle between himself and Turnus as to not kill any more of his future people, the Latins.

Overall, Aeneas is very dutiful, does the right things, obeys the oracles, accepts destiny, and never offends the Gods. He doesn't stray way from his core virtues, is predictable and disciplined throughout. His main aim remains throughout the epic to reach Italy and set up a new kingdom for the Trojans. His loyalty to the gods, family and people encourages everything he does.

**(b) Do you think Aeneas's strong sense of duty makes him a more interesting character or a less interesting character? Explain your answer.**

I don't believe that Aeneas' duty makes him a more compelling character. He is almost too dutiful. He remains throughout the epic to be very rigid and unfeeling character. He's so obedient to the Gods and his people that he sometimes acts as if he is being controlled rather than making his own decisions. A perfect example of this is when he abandons Dido on Carthage. He doesn't seem conflicted or emotional at all. It makes him seem boring.

Turnus however is a much more interesting character. He is not driven by duty but rather his own emotions and love for Lavinia. Turnus seems to have free will which makes for more exciting scenes. His attack and later escape from the Trojan camp in Book IX is a dramatic scene where Turnus acts on rage and determination. Aeneas however would never act so spontaneously. All of his actions have some meaningful destiny-based influence which gets predictable after a while.