



# The Great Books Foundations has developed questions and discussion guidelines for *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

## Questions

1. Why is Enkidu created? (Table I, Column ii)
2. What does Enkidu gain and lose through his encounter with the temple girl? (Table I, Columns iv, v)
3. Why does Enkidu wrestle with Gilgamesh at Ishtar's doorway? (Tablet II, Columns iv, v)
4. Why does Enkidu counsel Gilgamesh to kill rather than show mercy to Humbaba? (Table V, Columns iv, vi)
5. What does Gilgamesh's speech in response to Ishtar's offer of herself reveal about him? (Table VI, Columns i, ii)
6. In Enkidu's dream following the killing of the divine bull, what does the conversation between Anu, Enlil, and Shamash indicate about the gods' concept of justice? (Table VII, Column i)
7. Why does Enkidu die? (Tablet VII) Why does Gilgamesh claim that his own sorrow at the loss of Enkidu is shared by everything and everyone else? (Tablet VIII)
8. Why does Utnapishtim tell the story of the flood when Gilgamesh asks how he came to be immortal like the gods? (Tablet XI, Column i)
9. Who or what causes the flood and controls it? (Tablet XI, Columns i, ii, iii)
10. Why is Gilgamesh denied the gift of eternal life? (Tablet XI, Column vi)

## For Further Reflection

1. What is Gilgamesh's greatest achievement?
2. What does this story say about the connection between love and friendship?
3. In what ways, if any, does Gilgamesh mature in this story?
4. What role or roles in the story do the women characters play?
5. What does Gilgamesh learn from Utnapishtim?



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