



AP[®] Latin: Vergil 2002 Sample Student Responses

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Various characters in the Aeneid are frequently subjected to the powerful influence of the gods which often changes their fate for the worse and forces them to undergo ~~unmerited~~ unmerited hardship. Furthermore such divine intervention is a result of the gods' arbitrary whims or the petty conflicts between them, so it seems entirely unfair that mortals should be forced to pay the price for such things.

This theme is reflected by the course of events that unfolds for Palinurus, the ^{chief} helmsman of Aeneas' fleet. As Aeneas' men leave Sicily after celebrating Anchises' funeral games, they embark for the fated lands of Italy. Venus, as usual protective of her son, pleads with Neptune to grant the Trojans a safe voyage, but he insists that in return for keeping the fleet intact, one of the men must die as a sacrifice, and that man is Palinurus. It is not entirely clear why Neptune ~~requires~~ requires this death ^{in order} to be appeased; indeed it seems like a selfish and arbitrary wish. Later, when Aeneas journeys to the underworld to visit Anchises, he ~~sees~~ beholds the wretched Palinurus wandering ~~on~~ on the far bank of the River Styx with the other "lost souls" who have not been properly buried. Again, an innocent mortal is forced to suffer because divine law decrees that ~~the~~ the unburies are not allowed into ~~the~~ Hades.

Another mortal who is ruthlessly manipulated by the gods (especially by Juno and her furies) is ~~the~~ Amata, King Latinus' wife. Initially, Juno sends down the fury Allecto to "inflame" Amata's

V5

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Ap. 2

heart against Aeneas (whom Juno will go to ~~the~~ the most extreme measures to impede or hurt in any way she can). Thus the poor woman is essentially used by Juno as a tool to oppose Aeneas. In the end, when the battle turns in favor of the Trojans and Amata glimpses the burning city of the Latins, the queen's ~~is once again~~ heart is once again ~~and~~ possessed by Fury. She is ~~so~~ so overcome with despair and irrational emotion that she changes herself. This is Juno's way of "disposing" of Amata when defeat is near and she is no longer useful. Again, a human life has been taken over and ended by divine forces that seek to satisfy only their own selfish needs.

In the story of Palinurus and the boat races of Book V, Vergil demonstrates the frustration of divine rule taking precedence ~~of~~ over the human world. In both cases, the human victims of the will of the gods ~~and~~ did not suffer because of a lack of ability or virtue; they merely were not favored by the gods. Palinurus, the helmsman of Aeneas' ship, was chosen arbitrarily to die a cruel death after swimming endlessly only to be killed by savage Italians.

His death was a sacrifice necessary to Juno in order to allow the Trojans to finally reach Italy. Palinurus had been a capable helmsman and a good man, but obviously those characteristics had no effect on the decision to kill him.

Another capable seaman was victimized in Book V. Rather than allowing the best captain to win a boat race, the gods instead allowed an untalented captain who prayed to the gods win. This shows the greedy favoritism of the gods, and shows that small acts of piety win over human ability. By showing that ~~discrepancy~~ discrepancy, Vergil encourages his reader to question the fairness of the divine gods' sovereignty over the world of humans.



As humans we always complain about things not being fair. In the Aeneid there are events that do not seem fair to us. One such example is the boat race in Book V. Not all of the ships were given a fair shot. Some of the ships lost men while others hit some rocks. This prevented them from competing on equal footing with the other ships. The boxing competition was also not perfect in its setup. Another example is the death of Palinurus. Palinurus was taken before his time and not for anything serious. His burial was also not entirely ~~is~~ right. So people aren't always treated fairly in the Aeneid.