ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

In the first five tablets of the Epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh's friendship with Enkidu is first contrived by the gods, and represents the transformation of the wild world by the influence of civilization. But as their friendship expands beyond Uruk, they destroy a powerful natural force, the monster Humbaba, and cause physical changes to the world that upset the natural order.

Using examples from the Epic, other texts, or one current news story explain how the story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu could be read as the initial example or first warning of the ways in which human ambition and activity can overpower the Earth's natural systems.¹

Possible "modern" news examples could include:

- Deepwater Horizon oil spill, 2010
- Hurricane Katrina (aftermath), 2005
- Exxon Valdez oil spill, 1989
- Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident, 1986
- Sandoz Chemical Spill into the Rhine, 1986
- Bhopal, India fertilizer plant explosion, 1984
- Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident, 1979
- The Dust Bowl of the United States & Canada, 1934-39

¹ You do NOT have to agree personally with this theory, but you should be able to argue it.
Gilgamesh
Essential Question

The ability to relate modern history to the past is an essential skill in historical studies, in politics, in science. It is called Inference From Prior Events. The last ten days, you've read the first five tablets of the Epic of Gilgamesh and deeply enough to recognize certain themes in it: rivalry, friendship, civic responsibility, lawful behavior and unlawful harassment, abuse of official powers, and teamwork overcoming a fearsome enemy.

On standardized tests like the SSAT and the SAT, you are asked to make connections in written essays between historical texts, current events and personal experience. This are called Text-to-text Connection and Text-to-World Connection and Text-to-Self Connection. Of these three, Text-to-text Connection is considered most valuable, and Text-to-World connection is second. In this essay, concentrate 80-90% of your effort on the first kind of connection and 20-10% of your effort on the second. Your personal experience has no place in the essay at all.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

In the first five tablets of the Epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh's friendship with Enkidu is first contrived by the gods, and represents the transformation of the wild world by the influence of civilization. But as their friendship expands beyond Uruk, they destroy a powerful natural force, the monster Humbaba, and cause physical changes to the world that upset the natural order.

Using examples from the Epic, other texts, or one current news story explain how the story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu could be read as a warning of the ways in which human ambition and activity can overpower the Earth's natural systems.

This paper, between 3-5 pages in length, is due at the history examination.

That date is

I will read drafts of this paper and sample paragraphs from it on any day before that.
Gilgamesh: a history of the text
Developed and organized from the *Wikipedia* entry

The Epic of Gilgamesh is an epic poem from Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq) and is among the earliest known works of literary writing. Scholars believe that it originated as a series of Sumerian legends and poems about the mythological hero-king Gilgamesh, which were gathered into a longer Akkadian epic much later. The earliest versions date from about 2700BC, but the most complete version existing today is preserved on 12 clay tablets from the library collection of 7th-century BC Assyrian king Ashurbanipal. It was originally titled *He who Saw the Deep* (*Sha naqba imuru*) or *Surpassing All Other Kings*, from the two most common first lines of the epic. Gilgamesh was probably a real ruler in the late Early Dynastic II period (ca. 27th century BC).

The earliest Sumerian versions of the epic date from as early as the Third Dynasty of Ur (2150-2000 BC). The earliest Akkadian versions are dated to the early second millennium. The "standard" Akkadian version, consisting of 12 tablets, was edited by the scribe Sin-liqe-unninni sometime between 1300 and 1000 BC and was found in the library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh, where British archaeologists found it in AD1846.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is widely known today. The first modern translation of the epic was published in the early AD1870s by George Smith. More recent translations into English include one undertaken with the assistance of the American novelist John Gardner, and John Maier, published in 1984. In 2001, Benjamin Foster produced a reading in the Norton Critical Edition Series that fills in many of the blanks of the standard edition with previous material.2

The Story

The story revolves around a relationship between Gilgamesh, who has become distracted and disheartened by his rule, and his close companion, Enkidu. Enkidu is a wild man created by the gods as Gilgamesh's equal to distract him from oppressing the citizens of Uruk. Their riotous fight almost destroys the city before they can make peace. Thereafter they are always together.

Together they undertake dangerous quests that incur the displeasure of the gods. Firstly, they journey to the Cedar Mountain to defeat Humbaba, its monstrous guardian. Later they kill the Bull of Heaven that the goddess Ishtar has sent to punish Gilgamesh for spurning her advances. However, in the battle Enkidu is killed, and Gilgamesh mourns for his lost friend, refusing to bury him until a worm drops out of Enkidu's nose.

The latter part of the epic focuses on Gilgamesh's reaction to Enkidu's death, in the form of a quest for immortality. Gilgamesh attempts to learn the secret of eternal life by undertaking a long and perilous journey to meet the immortal flood hero, Utanapishtim. Ultimately the words addressed to Gilgamesh in the pursuit of his quest foreshadow the end result: "You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping." Gilgamesh, however, was widely celebrated by posterity for his building achievements, and for bringing back long-lost cultic knowledge to Uruk as a result of his meeting with Utanapishtim.

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2 (*Mr. Watt's note: We are reading from the Benjamin Foster translation, since he was one of my teachers at Wesleyan University)*.
Questions about the history of the Gilgamesh Epic

Directions: answer each of the following questions on a separate piece of paper in one complete sentence. Twenty of the questions will be on the final exam in some form.

1. What was the ancient title of the Epic of Gilgamesh, in the version you are reading?
2. What culture produced the earliest material for the epic of Gilgamesh?
3. How many clay tablets make up the standard edition of Gilgamesh today?
4. When was the standard edition of the text of Gilgamesh produced?
5. Who was the scribe who created the standard edition of Gilgamesh?
6. What library was the standard edition produced for?
7. When were the tablets rediscovered?
8. Who first translated the Epic of Gilgamesh into English, and when?
9. What are two advantages of the Benjamin Foster edition of the Epic of Gilgamesh?
10. What was American novelist John Gardner's aid to Gilgamesh translation efforts?
11. What is the main theme of part one of the Epic of Gilgamesh?
12. What is the main theme of part two of the Epic of Gilgamesh?
13. What is the main theme of part three of the Epic of Gilgamesh?
14. What two monsters do Gilgamesh and Enkidu defeat in part one?
15. Who is the goddess that Gilgamesh offends?
16. What happens to Enkidu that convinces Gilgamesh to bury his friend?
17. Who is Utanapishtim?
18. What is Utanapishtim's power?
19. What other mythological figure is cognate with Utanapishtim?
20. What does cognate mean in the context of two mythological characters?
21. What is the danger of Gilgamesh's quest?
22. What have the Sumerian gods reserved to themselves?
23. How did Gilgamesh achieve immortality of a sort in his own time, and in ours?
Gilgamesh
Research a Modern Environmental Disaster

Think of the following as a recipe or a checklist for success in finding and understanding an environmental disaster that you can use in your final paper on the Epic of Gilgamesh. You do not have a lot of time, so work through the following steps.

1. Read the Wikipedia article about the specific disaster you choose. Make a bookmark to the URL. Read it two or three times to be sure you understand.
2. Gather core facts about the disaster: where, when, why, who, what, how.
3. Write a summary sentence about the essentials of the story. Expand that to a paragraph as you learn more.
4. Read three other stories about your disaster.
5. Identify four or five possible parallels between the story of Gilgamesh and your news story. Some possible examples include:
   1. Government corruption (Gilgamesh not obeying his own laws)
   2. Environmental damage (Humbaba killed, forest cut)
   3. Mistreatment of natives (Uruk's fears about Gilgamesh)
   4. Damages paid to wrong 'victim' (Enkidu's door for Enlil's temple)
   5. Personal irresponsibility (Gilgamesh abandoning Uruk)
   6. Intention to corrupt (Gilgamesh sending Shamhat to Enkidu)
   7. Clear warnings of the danger (Enkidu's warnings to Gilgamesh)
   8. Other
6. Use Google Image Search to find 10-30 photographs, diagrams or maps to help you understand your chosen disaster more effectively.
7. Use the iTunes store to search for relevant podcasts or iTunesU classes.
8. Use the YouTube.com video catalog to search for video coverage of your event.
9. Keep a file in MS Word or on your desktop of information, photographs, and URLs. Review this material regularly as you plan your paper.
10. Identify specific places in the text of Gilgamesh which may relate to your environmental disaster, by both page and line number.

Remember that Gilgamesh and Enkidu are not just an ancient buddy-movie; they are also symbolic, in this paper, of humanity's relationship with our environment. This means that it is acceptable to explain their stories as archetypes of human experience. Enkidu evolves from beastliness to humanity; Gilgamesh progresses from cruel tyranny to diligent leadership; they both use their friendship to destroy Humbaba (here representing nature) for glory and profit.
**Gilgamesh**  
**Tablet I Assessment**

**Directions:** Write one and only one sentence to answer each of the questions below. Twenty of these questions will be on the final examination this spring.

1. What is the difference between "secret" and "hidden"?
2. Of whom is it said, "full understanding of it all he gained,"?
3. Why is it significant that Gilgamesh "brought back tidings from before the flood"?
4. What is Eanna?
5. Where did the lapis for the lapis tablet in line 28 come from?
6. What does the presence of lapis in Uruk indicate?
7. In line 27, what are the hidden contents of the foundation box?
8. What does it mean, that Gilgamesh both marches at the rear and rides in the vanguard?
9. What other mythical character is based on Utanapishtim the Distant One?
10. What are three pieces of evidence that Gilgamesh is a successful king?
11. Why is Gilgamesh's hair significant to understanding his role as king?
12. Why does Gilgamesh rampage fiercely day and night?
13. What is Gilgamesh's great failure as a king?
14. Why do goddesses keep hearing the plaints of Uruk's young women?
15. Why do the gods summon the Lady of Birth at about line 90?
16. How does Aruru form Enkidu?
17. What animals does Enkidu resemble?
18. What terror does the hunter describe to his father at line 123ff?
19. What is the father's advice to his son?
20. Is the trapping-man's speech to Gilgamesh the same as the one to his father?
21. Does Gilgamesh's plan differ from the hunter's father's plan in any way?
22. What does Shamhat's embrace give Enkidu?
23. What does Shamhat's embrace take from Enkidu?
24. How does Shamhat tempt Enkidu to return with her to Uruk?
25. In line 221, how does Enkidu intend to challenge Gilgamesh?
26. What are the four pleasures of life in Uruk?
27. Which four Sumerian gods watch over Gilgamesh, according to Shamhat?
28. When does Gilgamesh dream of Enkidu?
29. What is Ninsun's interpretation of Gilgamesh's first dream?
30. What is the nature of the axe in Gilgamesh's second dream?
31. Who else hears of Gilgamesh's dreams?
Gilgamesh
Tablet II Assessment

Directions: Write one and only one sentence to answer each of the questions below. Twenty of these questions will be on the final examination this spring.

1. What does Enkidu do for six days and seven nights?
2. Why will Enkidu love Gilgamesh like himself?
3. How is Shamhat like a guardian deity?
4. Where does Enkidu learn to be a human being?
5. What do the shepherds think of Enkidu?
6. What two foods does Enkidu not recognize?
7. How does Enkidu learn to be human?
8. What four things make someone civilized, according to the poem?
9. How does Enkidu show himself to be a warrior?
10. What does Enkidu do that shows he is law-abiding, even though he's wild?
11. What awakens Enkidu to his real mission, the subdual of Gilgamesh's lawlessness?
12. How is a typical Sumerian wedding feast described?
13. What is the law regarding the bride in Uruk?
14. How has Gilgamesh further changed the law to his own advantage?
15. How is Enkidu greeted when he first arrives in Uruk?
16. What two ways is Enkidu different than Gilgamesh?
17. What time of year is it when Enkidu arrives?
18. What does Enkidu do to Gilgamesh at the feast?
19. Where do Enkidu and Gilgamesh fight?
20. How do Enkidu and Gilgamesh fight?
21. Who is victorious in the battle?
22. How does Enkidu acknowledge the victory?
23. Whose speech is largely missing from the formal agreement of friendship between the two men?
24. How does Gilgamesh propose to fix his friend's sadness?
25. Why does Enkidu consider the proposal a hopeless quest?
26. How large a tree does Gilgamesh want?
27. What five powers is Humbaba said to have?
28. What further challenges does the cedar forest hold for those who enter?
29. How does Gilgamesh challenge Enkidu to agree to the quest?
30. How do the craftsmen deal with the work order?
31. How does Gilgamesh inform the people of his intention?
32. What part of the population sides with Gilgamesh?
33. How does Enkidu subvert his friend's quest?
34. What is the "flightiness" that the elders of Uruk speak of?

The Fertile Crescent is the region of the Middle East that is particularly good for agriculture. The remains of the cedar forest today are in the area southwest of Ebla and east of Tyre, but it may have been much larger in Sumerian times.
35. Has the gods' plan to restrain Gilgamesh really worked?
36. How does Gilgamesh mock the advice of the elders of Uruk?

Gilgamesh
Tablet III Assessment

Directions: Write one and only one sentence to answer each of the questions below. Twenty of these questions will be on the final examination this spring.

1. What advice do the elders of Uruk give to Gilgamesh?
2. What bargain do the elders of Uruk make with Enkidu?
3. Who do Gilgamesh and Enkidu go to see before they leave on their quest?
4. How long does Gilgamesh expect his journey to take?
5. To whom does Ninsun pray?
6. What is the substance of Ninsun's prayer?
7. What realm does Ningishzida rule in Sumerian mythology?
8. How does Ninsun reward Enkidu for watching over Gilgamesh?
9. Is Gilgamesh beginning to change from a lawless king to a lawful one?
10. What last-minute duties occupy Gilgamesh's attention before he goes?
11. How do the elders of Uruk again bargain with Enkidu?
12. What final blessing do the elders of Uruk offer Gilgamesh?
13. What practical advice do the elders of Uruk offer Gilgamesh to improve trade and communications while he is away?
14. Does Enkidu finally drop his objections to seeking out Humbaba?
Gilgamesh
Tablet IV Assessment

Directions: Write one and only one sentence to answer each of the questions below. Twenty of these questions will be on the final examination this spring.

1. How is the journey of Enkidu and Gilgamesh of unusual swiftness?
2. Does Gilgamesh follow the requests of the elders of Uruk from Tablet III?
3. What shelter does Enkidu provide for Gilgamesh each night?
4. What evidence does Gilgamesh have that he has had a true dream?
5. How does Enkidu interpret the dream?
6. How long does the journey to the forest of Humbaba take?
7. Who is the strange and handsome man in Gilgamesh's dream?
8. Is Gilgamesh ready to face Humbaba yet?
9. How is Gilgamesh out of Uruk different from Gilgamesh in Uruk?
10. Who is Anzu in Gilgamesh's fourth dream?
11. Who is the Wild Bull in Gilgamesh's sixth dream?
12. Is being "like a wild bull" now a compliment, though it was mildly insulting in Uruk?
13. Who is growing braver as Gilgamesh grows more fearful and dream-wrecked?
14. Where does Tablet IV end?

From right to left, Sumerian gods: Shamash of the sun; Enlil of water; Anzu the demon bird; Ningishzida of the dead (or Ea of the depths); Ilimina of agriculture; Lugalbanda the hunter

A Humbaba Face, used as decoration to drive demons from Sumerian temples.
Gilgamesh
Tablet V Assessment

Directions: Write one and only one sentence to answer each of the questions below. Ten of these questions will be on the final examination this spring.

1. How is the cedar mountain described?
2. Does Humbaba already know Enkidu?
3. What happens to city-slicker Gilgamesh at the sight of Humbaba?
4. What metaphor does Enkidu use to stiffen Gilgamesh's resolve?
5. How does Shamash assist Enkidu and Gilgamesh?
6. How does the fight with Humbaba change the land itself?
7. What bribe does Humbaba offer to Gilgamesh in exchange for life?
8. How does the wild man, Enkidu, defy the gods?
9. What does Humbaba say to Enkidu in response?
10. Why do Enkidu and Gilgamesh first ignore the glories of Humbaba?
11. What are the glories of Humbaba? (see p. 19, footnote)
12. What are the two parts of Humbaba's curse?
13. Who actually kills Humbaba?
14. How does the forest respond to the death of its guardian monster?
15. How does the mountain respond to the death of its guardian monster?
16. What happens to Humbaba's glories in the end?
17. What does Gilgamesh gain by slaying Humbaba?
18. How does Enkidu try to appease the gods after Humbaba's death?

In Lebanon, one of the last remnants of the cedar forest contains about 200 trees. It used to fill this valley to the edges of Mount Lebanon, in the background.
Gilgamesh
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- The Eridu Genesis Flood, an alternate Flood story:
  - [http://www.livius.org/ei-er/eridu/eridu_genesis.html#The_Flood](http://www.livius.org/ei-er/eridu/eridu_genesis.html#The_Flood)

Podcasts:
- Check out Rick Albright in iTunesU, GILGAMESH: Introduction and GILGAMESH: Part 2

Photos:
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