**Honors Humanities**

**Characteristics of the Epic Hero**

1. The hero is usually a **demi-god**, or has a god in his family.

2. The hero has some kind of **super-natural power** or has the strong support of a god.

3. The hero is usually on a **quest**. He has a task or a challenge (or more than one) that an ordinary mortal could not carry out.

4. The hero is always seeking **fame, glory** and most important, **honor**. These are more important than life itself.

5. The hero is **braver, stronger, bolder** and some times more **clever** than most men. He is close to the gods.

6. The hero usually has a **weakness**, usually too much pride or a terrible temper. This can lead to problems for him, and usually to his downfall.

**Read the excerpt from prologue to the Epic of Gilgamesh below. Identify each of the characteristics of an epic hero in the text.**

Read how Gilgamesh fared many hardships

Surpassing all kings, great in respect, a lord in his form

He is the hero, He is of Uruk, He, the butting bull

He leads the Way, He, the Foremost, He also marches at the rear, a helper to his brothers

He is the Great Net, protector of his men. He is the furious flood-wave,

Who destroys even stone walls. The offspring of Lugulbanda, Gilgamesh is perfect in strength

The son of the revered Cow, of the woman Rimat-Ninsun. Gilgamesh inspires perfect awe. He opened the mountain passes, he dug the well on the mountain's flank.

He crossed to the far shore, traversed the vast sea to the rising Sun. He explored the rim, sought life without death. …

Who is there to compare with him in kingship?

Who like Gilgamesh can say: 'I am king indeed?'

His name was called Gilgamesh

From the very day of his birth, He was two-thirds god, one third man,

The Great Goddess Aruru designed him, planned his body, prepared his form

A perfect body the gods gave For the creation of Gilgamesh

Shamash the Sun gave beauty, Adad the Storm gave courage, And so he surpassed all others.

He was two-thirds god, one third man, The form of his body no one can match

Eleven cubits high he is, nine spans his chest As he turns to see the lands all around him.

But he comes to the city of Uruk.

Long was his journey, weary, worn down by his labours

He inscribed upon a stone when he returned This story.