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Section C

Humanism - The Iliad

Throughout history, humanism has been an essential aspect of numerous civilizations. The Greek and Trojan civilizations were no exception. With increased technology, division of labor, and a stable government, both cultures were able to devote their resources to humanistic notions. One of the best records of the Greek and Trojan civilizations practicing humanistic concepts was the Iliad, written by Homer. In this heroic tale, especially in book six, the characters display several aspects of humanism such as emotion, ethics, and faith.

A number of characters, including both protagonists and antagonists, expressed feelings of emotion in book six of the Iliad. Emotion, which affects a character's actions and values, is unmistakably a feature of humanism because emotions control almost every human reaction. In Homer's book, one instance of a group of characters' emotions is the relationship between Hektor, the Trojan leader, and Andromache, his wife, in a scene where Hektor confronts his wife before heading back to war. Andromache, crying, runs up to meet her husband, grabs his hand, and then pleads that he command the Trojan Army from within the city walls to avoid death on the battlefield. Hektor, looking at his son at first, explains that doing so would bring him no honor. It is clear that this lone scene between the Trojan leader and his wife

demonstrates the emotions of both characters: Andromache's fear of being a widow and her love toward her husband, and Hektor's love for his son and lust for battle. Another section that displays humanism through emotion is the confrontation between Hektor and his brother, Paris, when the former discovers that his brother is polishing armor instead of fighting for the Trojans. Hektor's tone, which is both logical and demanding, indicates that he is upset and ashamed at his brother, and that Paris will think he has been a coward. A final example of emotionalism is the countless slayings between the Greeks and the Trojans. Every time that a soldier participates in open battle, each feels a sense of duty for their civilization or a sense of hatred for their enemy. The actions and feelings of the characters in book six of the Iliad suggest that they had humanistic attributes.

Human emotion is not a lone case in respect to feelings of love, hate, duty and loneliness. In addition to emotions of love, hate, duty, and loneliness, Homer writes about characters who demonstrate ethical concerns of a civilization. Human ethics is first exemplified after Menelaos, Agamemnon's brother and Helen's first husband, captures Adrestos, a Trojan soldier. The brothers argue about the future of Adrestos, and decide that a Trojan's life is not worth a large sum of money. In this event, the kinsmen morally decide what is right and what is wrong based on love for the citizens of Greece and hate for their enemies. Another event that exemplifies an ethical decision in book six of the Iliad is the meeting between Diomedes of Greece and Glaukos of Troy, where the rivals discover that they are of common lineage, and

decide not to be hostile toward each other. Glaukos and Diomedes make an ethical decision to decide what is right. A third and final example of an ethical decision in Homer's famous book is the contrast between Paris, Hektor's brother, and Hektor. Paris stays within the protected walls of a city-state while Hektor fights for his country. Both of these brothers have to make a moral decision based on their own values. The ethical decisions that characters made indicates that both Greek and Trojan civilizations had attributes of humanity.

In keeping with the feelings of humanity, Homer also infuses faith of the gods and faith in oneself in the Iliad. The author presents one of these issues, the faith of a god, when Hektor rallies the citizens of Troy to sacrifice to Athene, who will in turn hold back Diomedes and the Greek troops. The goal of the sacrifice is to give Troy the edge in battle, which would then bring the Trojans closer to bettering themselves: a key aspect of humanity. Another manner in which faith is translated to humanism is the lust to be similar to the gods. To be like the gods was to be revered among your people. One example of such a man was Paris, someone whom Homer referred to as "the godlike Alexandros." Paris was humanistic because one common goal of humanism was to be the best that one could be. A final example of the relation between faith and humanism lies in the faith of oneself. When Paris realizes that it is right for him to stand up for his civilization and fight in the war, he gains self-courage and decides to improve his country as a whole. Such decisions about faith that the characters of the Iliad make have clearly defined humanistic implications.

Ideas such as emotions, ethics, and faith, which are all fundamental aspects of humanism, are without a doubt shown by the characters of book six in the Iliad. In Homer's text, it is evident that Greek and Trojan civilizations practiced humanistic concepts based on the actions, feelings, decisions, and beliefs of the characters. Such humanism is essential to all civilizations because it governs human action. Greek and Trojan civilizations are not the only civilizations where humanism is displayed by the people. Numerous civilizations, including some from before written record, have viewed humanism as an essential aspect of life.