

## Literature Year 2

### Lesson 5



You should have already read about Aeneas' adventures after the fall of Troy in *The Tale of Troy* on pp.109 and 114-6. What part of the story does the picture above show?<sup>1</sup> But where did the story that Rome descended from Troy come from in the first place? Did Virgil make it up?

Virgil worked the existing traditions about Aeneas into his story. Homer himself in Book XX of the *Iliad*, tells his us about Aeneas' lineage (p.25)<sup>2</sup> and his reputation for bravery (p.67). Another source of information was the Roman historian Livy, a contemporary of Virgil, who may have had access to sources of information no longer existing today.

There is a wide variety of ancient accounts of what Aeneas did after the war. Greek art from the sixth century B.C. portrays Aeneas carrying his father, Anchises, out from the burning ruins of Troy (p.109). We know from archaeological finds that the tale of Aeneas was often depicted in art in Italy itself as early as the sixth century B.C. The settlement of Aeneas and the Trojans in Italy and their connection with the foundation of Rome first occurs in written form at the end of the third century B.C. Poets including including Marcus Terentius Varro, (116-27 BC) had written about Dido of Carthage and Aeneas. Varro was a contemporary of Virgil's and like Virgil was a protégé of Augustus but it was Virgil who first put all the pieces of the story together.

Virgil was a very careful writer. He took eleven years over the Aeneid and even then he did not consider it ready. He was still revising and editing when, on returning from a trip to Greece he fell ill and died. Before he died he ordered that the manuscript of the Aeneid should be burned on his death as it was not yet fit for the public. However, Augustus prevented this from happening and the poem was published against Virgil's wishes.

The Aeneid marked Virgil out as the greatest poet in Latin. His fame continued throughout the Middle Ages, although, of course, until the invention of printing the Aeneid was not accessible easily. He inspired renaissance poets such as Dante. Milton also took inspiration from the Aeneid.

According to Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth,<sup>3</sup> the first named king of Britain was called Brutus. He traced his descent from ancient Troy and claimed Aeneas as his great grandfather. Exiled from Italy where he had been born, he wandered by sea into Greece and Gaul (modern France) gathering followers as he went. He came ashore in Totnes in Devon where he and his followers did

---

1 Answer on the last page.

2 Page numbers in brackets refer to *The Tale of Troy*.

3 Writers of the first histories of Britain. See Cooper, B., *After the Flood* (Chichester, 1995).

battle with a race of “giants” or “great warriors.” He conquered the giants, joining forces with Corineus, the ruler of Cornwall, whom he met when he landed. If, as the sources suggest, he reigned from 1104-1081 B.C., Stonehenge may have been standing for hundreds of years when he arrived. Perhaps the “great warriors” he met with were descendants of the builders.

To get the overall picture and background for your set lines which are extracted from book 11 of the Aeneid, read the notes here: <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/aeneid/section11/>. Pay particular attention to the section dealing with Camilla for she is the character around which your selected lines revolve.

Answer: It shows Aeneas carrying his father Anchises.