

## Aeneid Book III Analysis 9: Aeneas: *Pietas*



*Pius* is a difficult word to translate but, as we have already noticed, it is very important in the Aeneid. Aeneas himself is often described as *pius Aeneas* throughout the Aeneid. It does not have the rather negative force that it does in English to constantly describe your main character as “good/ virtuous/ pious/ dutiful /religious”. Rather it emphasises what to Romans was a most important virtue: *pietas*. Above you can see a Roman coin depicting Aeneas leaving the burning city of Troy. On his back he carries his old father Anchises and in his hand he bears the Trojan household gods or *lares*. The Romans would see this behaviour as the embodiment of *pietas*.

It is Anchises himself who utters the word *pios* in the IGCSE set lines. *Di, prohibete minas; di, talem avertite casum et placidi servate pios*, he prays as the Trojans prepare to leave the Clashing Islands after the prophecy of Celaeno. The word *pios* is the masculine plural form, Anchises is describing the whole Trojan party. “Gods, avert these threats, gods, prevent these acts, and, in peace, protect the virtuous – the *pui*s. In this speech Anchises uses the term *pios* (masculine plural) and applies it to Aeneas and all his companions.

What did Romans understand by *pietas*? Cicero defined *pietas* in this way: *pietatem, quae erga patriam aut parentes aut alios sanguine coniunctos officium conservare moneat*. “piety, which admonishes us to do our duty to our country or our parents or other blood relations.” Duty to parents was considered especially important and this is what particularly singled out Aeneas. In the picture which heads today's lesson you see a statue of him carrying his lame father, Anchises, out of the burning ruins of Troy, a supreme act of *pietas*. Notice that duty to country *Patria* comes even before duty to parents in Cicero's list. Aeneas and his Trojan party, toiling to carry out the command of the gods to found a new city and carrying with them the *Lares* or household gods of Troy, were fulfilling their duty to *patria*.

As with all man made religions, the Roman system was one of salvation based on human effort. The truly virtuous, provided all the correct rites have been observed, arrive after death in the Elysian Fields where according to Virgil, reincarnation is possible. The rest remain in Hades.

The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden leads to sin and therefore death and punishment passing on the entire human race. As a consequence we are all naturally rebels against God. No matter how hard we try we can never be wholly good all the time. God in his mercy and kindness sent his own Son to die for rebellious sinners, taking the punishment they deserve. By repenting of our sin and trusting in Jesus Christ we can have everlasting life.



the island, Anchises prayed to the gods for protection and “declared the due sacrifice.” [1] All this shows *pietas* in the religious sense. When Achaemenides the Greek appears, the Trojans show *pietas* even beyond what is strictly considered a Roman duty. [1] Taking pity on and rescuing an enemy does not feature in the *pietas* of Cicero, for instance, whose description of duty begins with country (*patria*) and ends with near relations. [1] Here the Trojans behave with a *pietas* that seems to foreshadow Christian morality which requires “loving your enemy” as they receive Achaemenides.[1]

You may have had different answers but must make 10 points/examples/quotes.

d. Virgil makes his writing more vivid in line 261 by employing **Zeugma**. [1] The phrase **exposcere pacem** relates to the weapons and also to the vows and prayers. It has a (slightly) different meaning in each case. You can seek peace (i.e. relief from annoyance) with weapons.<sup>1</sup> This is what Aeneas and his followers had been doing when they attacked the Harpies. This is different to begging for peace (i.e. for cessation of hostilities) from the enemy. The weapons might be suitable for dreadful birds but prayers are more suited to goddesses and the contrast is **vivid**. [1]

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1 See lesson 3 lines 236-346.