Homer’s *The Iliad* and Virgil’s *The* *Aeneid* both address the Trojan War, looking at it in different times and under different mythological perspectives. *The Iliad* follows both Greeks and Trojans engaged in battle, while *The Aeneid* follows one particular Trojan and his journey after the epidemic of the Trojan Horse. While the gods differ in their Greek and Roman identifications in the two epic poems, both depictions of the myths are meddlesome, to say the least. Both pieces depict many instances of interaction between mortals and gods, varying in intensity depending on the god and situation at hand. While many differences determine the course of the two pieces, this varied intensity of divine intervention in both poems reveals the human-like characteristics of the celestial beings while considering how gods can manipulate fate.

Interaction between mortals and gods in both poems is not uncommon- in fact, it serves as the driving force for many situations and actions. Many of the gods fall in love or have children with mortals, such as the case of Achilles in *The Illiad* and Aeneas in *The Aeneid*. Due to this, the gods often act on behalf of their “favorite” mortals or act against those they despise. This favoritism is illustrated in Book 16 of *The Illiad*, as Zeus laments over the impending death of his son Sarpedon, debating, “… my Sarpedon, the man I love the most…. Shall I pluck him up now, while he’s still alive… Or beat him down at Patroclus’ hand at last” (Homer, 427)? Although Hera discourages his intervention, the temptation reveals how kinship and affection may cloud even the gods’ judgement. While Zeus would not debate over saving any regular mortal, the thought of losing a beloved son causes impartiality to be forgotten. It is interesting to see how Hera is the one to bring Zeus away from intervention, as her Roman identity, Juno, does the exact opposite in *The Aeneid* of Virgil. In attempt to keep Aeneas from his fate of destroying her beloved city of Carthage, Juno reaches out to the god of the winds, requesting, “Hammer your winds to fury and ruin [the Trojans’] swamped ships, or scatter them piecemeal across the seas” (Virgil, 3). Her distaste for Aeneas justified arranging for his suffering and potential death. This quote demonstrates the wrath of Juno, focused around Aeneas, that brings her to throw many obstacles in his way. This also reveals a common thread in both epics: gods view mortals as their pawns, free to be manipulated at their bidding. Aeneas is a pious servant to the gods, accepting their requests, such as when Mercury appeared to him and a dream and told him he must leave Dido and continue his journey to Carthage (Virgil, 98). In contrast, gods can be found manipulating mortals in *The Iliad*, such as when Athena disguises as a Trojan to convince Pandarus to shoot at Melenaus in order to aid in the destruction of Troy (Homer, 148). While methods may vary, the gods use mortals to do their bidding, whether they are receptive or not.

The powers of the gods vary depending on what they are deemed the patron. For example, the Roman god of the seas, Neptune, can “…calm the restless swell” or enrage the waves at will (Virgil, 6). Apollo, Greek god of archery, sent nine days of arrows upon the ships of Agamemnon and Achilles (Homer, 78-79). While not all gods possess the same abilities, most seem to share human-like personalities, often driven by their own selfish desires or emotions. Gods in both *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid* find themselves squabbling over human affairs, allowing their own allegiances or ideas to cloud judgement of events. This is seen clearly in The Iliad, when Paris is near defeat and Aphrodite “…wrapped [Paris] in swirls of mist / and set him down in his bedroom” (Homer, 141). Still infatuated with the man, she let her personal feelings intervene with fate, saving him from death. Similarly, Juno in Virgil’s epic poem allows her rage to greatly interfere with the journey of Aeneas, posing the question of, “Can such resentment hold the minds of gods” (Virgil, 1)? This can be answered with a resounding yes in both epics. In Homer’s work, the gods seem slightly more willing to negotiate with mortals than those in *The Aeneid*, however. This is the case when Apollo choses to answer the desperate pleas of Chryses, or when Helen is unafraid to feud with Aphrodite (Homer 78-79, 141-142). In theory, gods could be the supreme beings of the universe, divine and impartial in their natures and actions. However, in the case of the works of Homer and Virgil, the gods are spiteful, emotionally-charged beings that have capabilities beyond those of mortals, and who have the ability to utilize mortals as their pawns.

The ideas of fate and divine intervention differs between the two epic poems. In *The Iliad*, it appears that gods are able to manipulate fate, but tend to avoid this in hopes of keeping order. This is seen as Zeus and Athena observe Hector nearing his end, where Zeus considers, “Either we pluck the man from his death and save his life / or strike him down at last” (Homer, 547). Although Athena confirms “… his doom [was] sealed long ago,” Zeus’ consideration reveals that the gods can change fate (Homer, 547). This piece reveals, godly intervention has a spectrum of intensity. While there are moments where saving characters from their fated dooms arise, there are also times when the gods merely urge for action rather than forcing one’s hand. This is seen in Book 1, as Achilles has the chance to kill Agamemnon, yet Athena appears, announcing, “I come to check your rage / if only you will yield” (Homer, 84). Rather than taking the sword from the swift-footed runner or pulling Agamemnon from the situation, she chooses to give Achilles the final decision. Divine intervention is not always direct manipulation, but all of it can greatly intervene with the fate of the characters. The Aeneid, on the other hand, poses that gods do not have the ability to change fate, but they can delay it or intervene. This intervention is best seen in the two storms Juno arranges to impede Aeneas on his journey: the first to throw his ships off course, the second to trap him and Dido in a cave so that they would make love and stay together, keeping him from Carthage (Virgil, 3, 83). While Juno realizes she cannot ultimately keep Aeneas from his destiny, she is willing to throw every possible obstacle in his way. However, Virgil also contributes to the idea that mortals hold power in determining their fates. Most notably, this scenario is displayed in Book IV, as Dido threw herself upon a sword, bringing “…a death that was not merited or fated” (Virgil, 102). This was something neither the gods nor the Fates intended to happen, demonstrating that humans may hold more power than initially believed. More control is given to mortals in *The Aeneid* than *The Iliad*, but both still demonstrate the great, dangerous capabilities of the gods they worship.

Documenting events surrounding the Trojan War from both Greek and Roman mythological perspectives, The Iliad and The Aeneid depict stories of great heroes, gods, and feuds that can lead to catastrophic consequences. While the two epic poems differ on their idea of how fate can be shaped, they both show close, influential relations between mortals and gods, as well as human-like characteristics of the gods that may bring them to abuse their powers, hence the catastrophic fallout often seen in these pieces.

*I have neither given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of any infraction of the Honor Code.*