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# Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh

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## INTRODUCTION: THE ENDURING WISDOM OF THE WORLD'S OLDEST STORY

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For more than four thousand years, the story of a king who sought immortality has captivated readers and scholars alike. The *Epic of Gilgamesh*, inscribed on clay tablets in cuneiform script, is not only the oldest surviving work of great literature but also a profound exploration of what it means to be human. Across its

twelve tablets, the tale follows Gilgamesh, the tyrannical king of Uruk, and his transformative friendship with the wild man Enkidu. Their adventures, grief, and ultimate search for eternal life give us some of the most powerful and thought-provoking lines ever written. In this article, we will explore the most significant **Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh**, unpacking their meanings and understanding why they continue to resonate in the modern world.

Whether you are a

student of ancient history, a lover of mythology, or simply someone searching for timeless truths, these quotes offer a window into the soul of ancient Mesopotamia. They speak of love, loss, mortality, and the joy of simply being alive. By examining these lines closely, we can see how the epic's central themes remain relevant today, long after the clay tablets were buried and rediscovered.

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**THE POWER OF  
FRIENDSHIP:  
QUOTES THAT  
DEFINE THE BOND  
BETWEEN  
GILGAMESH AND  
ENKIDU**

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The heart of the epic lies in the relationship between Gilgamesh, the two-thirds divine

king, and Enkidu, the man created by the gods to be his equal. Before Enkidu arrives, Gilgamesh is arrogant and oppresses his people. The friendship that develops between them changes both characters profoundly. Several **Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh** capture this transformative bond.

“A friend  
who  
understa  
nds your  
tears is  
much

more  
valuable  
than a  
friend  
who only  
knows  
your  
smile.”

This line, though a modern paraphrase often associated with the epic, captures the essence of what Gilgamesh and Enkidu meant to each other. Enkidu was the only being who could truly challenge Gilgamesh, and later, the only one who could share his deepest grief. When

Enkidu falls ill and dies, Gilgamesh’s lament is one of the most emotionally raw passages in ancient literature. The original text shows Gilgamesh crying out, “Hear me, O elders of Uruk! I weep for Enkidu, my friend. Like a hunter’s widow, I mourn.” This is not a king speaking to his subjects; it is a man undone by loss, proving that friendship can break down even the highest walls of pride.

“They  
kissed  
each  
other and

# made friends.”

This simple, direct line occurs after Gilgamesh and Enkidu have wrestled fiercely in the streets of Uruk. The fight, which was meant to humble the king, ends not in animosity but in mutual respect. The formal declaration of friendship marks the beginning of their journey together. The epic uses the act of kissing as a cultural sign of peace and brotherhood, effectively turning a violent contest into the foundation of a deep soul-bond. This moment is crucial because it shows that true friendship often emerges from struggle and conflict, a lesson that remains as true

today as it was in ancient Sumer.

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## **FACING MORTALITY: THE MOST PROFOUND QUOTES ON LIFE AND DEATH**

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After Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh is overwhelmed by the fear of his own mortality. He sets out on a quest to find Utnapishtim, the lone survivor of the great flood, to learn the secret of eternal life. During this journey, the epic offers its most enduring wisdom about the nature of death and the value of life. Many of the most famous **Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh** arise from this existential crisis.

“The life of them,  
that you and kept  
seek you life for  
will never themselves  
find. es.”

When the  
gods  
created  
mankind,  
they set  
aside  
death for

This line is spoken by Siduri, the tavern keeper, when Gilgamesh arrives at the edge of the world. It is a blunt, compassionate, and utterly realistic statement. Siduri does not offer false hope; she tells the king the truth that divine law is fixed: humans are mortal. This is one of the central philosophical pillars of the epic. The quote teaches that the search for physical immortality is futile.

Instead, Siduri advises Gilgamesh to embrace the simple pleasures of life: to eat, drink, dance, and take joy in his family. This advice is echoed in countless wisdom traditions across the globe, from the Book of Ecclesiastes to Buddhist teachings, underscoring the universality of the message.

“Should a  
man live  
forever?  
No. We  
are all  
destined

to die.  
But we  
can die  
well.”

While this specific phrasing is a modern adaptation, it captures the spirit of the original text. Gilgamesh eventually learns that true immortality is not about living endlessly but about leaving a legacy. As he returns to Uruk, he gazes at the city walls he built. He realizes that the clay bricks and the well-ordered city are his true monument. The epic closes with Gilgamesh understanding that the meaning of life is found in what we create, whom we love, and

how we serve our community. This shift from desperation to acceptance is the emotional and intellectual climax of the story.

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**WISDOM FROM  
THE FLOOD:  
UTNAPISHTIM'S  
WORDS ON THE  
NATURE OF MAN**

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The story of Utnapishtim, the Mesopotamian Noah, is recounted within the epic. When Gilgamesh finally finds him, Utnapishtim shares a story of divine wrath and human survival. The wisdom he imparts is harsh but necessary. One of the most memorable **Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh** comes from this part of the narrative.

“The  
flood is  
coming:  
build a  
boat. Let  
no one  
know of  
your  
plan.”

This direct instruction from the god Ea to Utnapishtim carries a deeper meaning. It suggests that survival often requires secrecy and wisdom, as well as quiet obedience to divine warnings. In the context of the epic, it

reminds  
Gilgamesh—and the  
reader—that some  
knowledge is too  
dangerous for the  
masses, and that those  
who are favored by the  
gods must act with  
both courage and  
discretion.

Utnapishtim's tale  
serves as a caution  
that nature can be  
merciless, but that  
humanity can endure  
through foresight and  
craftsmanship.

“The  
gods  
smelled  
the sweet  
savor of

the  
sacrifice  
and  
gathered  
like flies.”

This visceral, almost  
comical image appears  
after Utnapishtim  
offers a sacrifice upon  
leaving the ark. It  
humanizes the gods,  
showing them as  
creatures driven by  
appetite and emotion.  
The line is a stark  
reminder that the  
divine beings of the  
epic are not all-  
powerful or perfectly  
wise—they are jealous,  
petty, and easily  
swayed. This nuance  
gives the epic a  
sophisticated  
theological



perspective, questioning the fairness of the gods while still acknowledging their ultimate power. For the modern reader, it is a humbling thought: if even the gods are flawed, then human striving for perfection is both noble and impossible.

### **THE RETURN TO URUK: FINDING MEANING IN THE ORDINARY**

In the final tablet of the epic, Gilgamesh returns home, changed. He no longer seeks to conquer death. Instead, he finds peace in the tangible world. The final lines of the epic direct the reader to look upon the city walls of Uruk. One of the closing **Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh** urges:

“Go up,  
Urshanab  
i, onto  
the wall  
of Uruk  
and walk  
around.  
Examine  
its  
foundatio  
n, inspect  
its

brickwork

. Are not

its bricks

made of

fired

clay? Did

not the

seven

sages lay

its

founda-

ns?"

This is the final image of the epic. Gilgamesh invites his

boatman—and by extension, the reader—to appreciate the work of human hands. The wall is solid, enduring, and real. Unlike the elusive plant of eternal youth that Gilgamesh lost to a snake, these bricks will stand for generations. The quote is a powerful argument for finding purpose in lasting contributions rather than in infinite personal survival. It is a call to be proud of what we build, teach, and leave behind.

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#### MODERN

#### RELEVANCE: WHY THESE QUOTES

#### SPEAK TO US TODAY

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The continued fascination with **Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh** lies in their raw honesty. In an age of

digital noise and fleeting fame, the ancient words remind us of eternal truths. We still struggle with grief, with the fear of death, and with the desire to leave our mark. Gilgamesh's journey from arrogant king to wise ruler mirrors our own potential for growth. The lines about friendship, especially the unfiltered mourning of Enkidu, show that even four millennia ago, people understood the depth of love and the pain of loss.

Moreover, the epic offers a view of masculinity that is refreshingly complex. Gilgamesh learns that true strength is not in domination but in vulnerability and compassion. When he weeps for his friend, he is not diminished but

elevated. This message is profoundly relevant in contemporary discussions about emotional health and authentic relationships.

### **CONCLUSION: A TIMELESS LEGACY ETCHED IN CLAY**

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is far more than a historical artifact. It is a mirror held up to the human condition, reflecting our deepest fears and our highest aspirations. Whether we are moved by the lament for a lost friend, the bitter truth of mortality, or the quiet pride in a city well built, these **Quotes From The Epic Of Gilgamesh** continue to inspire, challenge, and comfort. They remind us that while the gods may keep eternal life for themselves, the

capacity for love, words, we connect with  
creativity, and wisdom a voice from the dawn  
is the truest form of of civilization—and we  
immortality available realize that some  
to us. In reading these stories never grow old.