**Comparison: Tragic Flaw/ Theme**

**Objective:** Recognizing the common tragic flaw and theme in similar stories.

**Activity I**

Read the following excerpts from *Mythology* and the *Holy Bible*, both about the first woman created.

**Excerpt One: *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton**

“Another story about Pandora is that the source of all misfortune was not her wicked nature, but only her curiosity. The gods presented her with a box into which each had put something harmful, and forbade her ever to open it. Then they sent her to Epimetheus, who took her gladly although Prometheus had warned him never to accept anything from Zeus. He took her, and afterward when that dangerous thing, a woman, was his, he understood how good his brother’s advice had been. For Pandora, like all women, was possessed of a lively curiosity. She *had* to know what was in the box. One day she lifted the lid—and out flew plagues innumerable, sorrow and mischief for mankind. In terror Pandora clapped the lid down, but too late.” (Pg. 74)

**Excerpt Two: *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Book of Genesis**

“And the woman [Eve] said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Genesis 3:2-6)

**Comparison Chart**

Based on these excerpts, complete the following comparison chart. Be sure to use complete sentences!!!

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Excerpt One** | **Excerpt Two** |
| What tragic flaw does the woman possess? |  |  |
| Is the story religious? |  |  |
| Why was this story written? |  |  |
| How is the woman viewed? |  |  |
| What is the theme of the story? |  |  |
| Why is a woman blamed for the great hardships released? |  |  |

**Activity II**

The story of the flood is also found in several ancient narratives of world literature.

Tablets containing portions of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, a poem of antiquity, was discovered at sites throughout the Middle East in 1872. *Gilgamesh* developed over a period of nearly a thousand years, and vanished when the civilizations of the Greeks, Hebrews, and Romans had only just developed beyond their infancy. Until the story was rediscovered and published, everyone believed that the Biblical story of Noah and the great flood was original and unique.

Read the next three excerpts, all relating to the story of the great flood, and answer the following questions in complete sentences.

**Excerpt One: *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton**

“All over the earth men grew so wicked that finally Zeus determined to destroy them. He decided *To mingle storm and tempest over boundless earth* *And make an utter end of mortal man.* He sent the flood. He called upon his brother, the God of the Sea, to help him, and together, with torrents of rain from heaven and rivers loosed upon the earth, the two drowned the land… After it had rained through, nine days and nine nights, there came drifting to that spot what looked to be a great wooden chest… The wisest person in all the universe, Prometheus had well been able to protect his own family. He knew the flood would come, and he had bidden his son to build the chest, store it with provisions, and embark in it with his wife.” (Pgs. 76-77)

**Excerpt Two: *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Book of Genesis**

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. . .And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them,; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood. . . And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons wives with thee.” (Genesis 3:5-18)

**Excerpt Three: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 2500-1500 B.C.E.**

“In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamour. Enlil heard the clamour and he said to the gods in council, ‘The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babble.’ So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind. Enlil did this, but Ea because of his oath warned me [Utnapishtim] in a dream. He whispered their words, ‘…tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life, despite worldly goods and save your soul alive. Tear down your house, I say, and build a boat.’…For six days and six nights the winds blew, torrent and tempest and flood overwhelmed the world, tempest and flood raged together like warring hosts. When the seventh day dawned the storm from the south subsided, the sea grew calm, the flood was stilled; I looked at the face of the word and there was silence, all mankind was turned to clay.” (Part 5)

1. What parallels can you find in these excerpts?

2. What is the reason for the creation of these stories?

3. Why do you suppose a natural disaster is used to punish mankind for wickedness?

4. How are these texts different?

5. What is the common theme found in these stories?