

# Activity ideas: Literature

## FOR THE GILGAMESH EPIC

### Guess the Ending

(Subject Area: *Language Arts*)

Read aloud a version of the Gilgamesh epic to the class (\*see below). Stop before the ending and have students write their own climax to the epic. Compare student versions with the actual ending. Which do they like best?

### Have a Discussion

(Subject Areas: *Social Studies, Language Arts, Cooperative Learning*)

Literature expresses values and qualities a culture considers important. Ask students what personal qualities they think the ancient story of Gilgamesh emphasizes. Do students feel these are still important qualities? Why or why not?

### Create a Game

(Subject Areas: *Fine Arts, Language Arts*)

Small groups of students could create a Gilgamesh board game. The pieces moving around the board could represent characters in the story, or Mesopotamian artifacts, such as a cylinder seal, or a clay tablet. The board could represent difficulties and triumphs Gilgamesh and his friends face—for example, “slay Humbaba, go ahead five spaces; the goddess Ishtar is angry, go back three.”

Once complete, the game each group creates could be traded with another group and played.

### Create a Hero

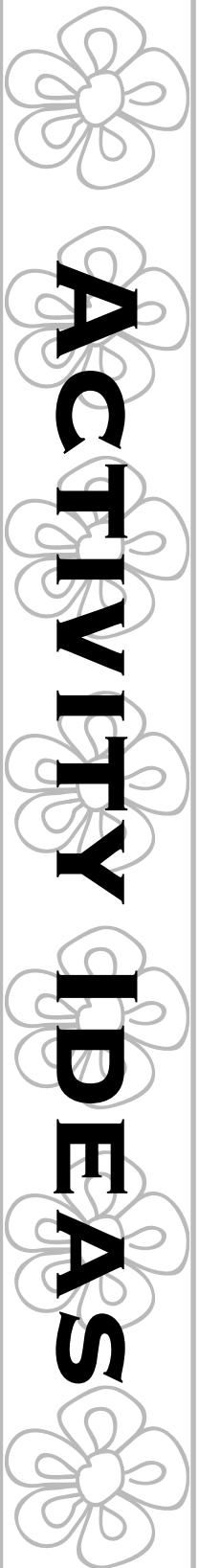
(Subject Area: *Language Arts*)

Gilgamesh has been called the world’s first superhero, who succeeds because of his great courage, intelligence, and strength, as well as help from the gods and immortals. Stories like his set the pattern for countless epics through the ages, including the heroic stories of today, like the Star Wars films.

Who are the students’ heroes? Ask them to write an essay about someone they think is heroic, what he or she has accomplished, and why that person’s life or actions are worthy of admiration. Or, students could write an epic recounting the deeds of a hero—either a real person or an imaginary one. They could accompany the story with a drawing of the hero, perhaps in action.

### \*Suggested Books for the classroom:

- Bryson, Bernarda. *Gilgamesh: Man’s First Story*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966. (grades 5-8)  
 Kovacs, Maureen Gallery. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989. (high school)  
 Zemen, Ludmilla. *Gilgamesh The King*. Montreal: Tundra Books, 1992. (grades K-4)  
 Zemen, Ludmilla. *The Revenge of Ishtar*. Montreal: Tundra Books, 1993. (grades K-4)  
 Zemen, Ludmilla. *The Last Quest of Gilgamesh*. Montreal: Tundra Books, 1995. (grades K-4)



*Literature*