



# Epic of Gilgamesh

The Epic of Gilgamesh is a story about a [Sumerian](#) king (Gilgamesh) who seems to have lived around [2500 BC](#), in [Mesopotamia](#). Story-tellers probably began telling this story not long after he died, and someone probably wrote down the story about [1700 BC](#), in the time of the [Babylonian Empire](#), but the oldest written copy of it that we still have dates to the [Assyrian period](#) (around [900 BC](#)). Archaeologists found the tablet in the ruins of the palace of one of the Assyrian kings.

The Epic begins with Gilgamesh ruling the city of Uruk, but he is not doing a good job. Everyone is mad at him because he has too much fun and is disrespectful to the elders in the city.

Then a messenger tells Gilgamesh about a wild man who is living out in the hills near the city. This wild man's name is Enkidu. He wears **furs**, and he drinks only water from the river. But he is very strong. Gilgamesh thinks this is interesting, so he sets a trap for Enkidu to get him to come to the city and be his friend. Gilgamesh sends a beautiful woman to Enkidu, and when he sees her he kisses her and the kiss works like magic to tame him: he follows her back to the city and becomes civilized.

Now that Gilgamesh has a friend, Enkidu, he is not so bored anymore and he stops being mean to everyone and bothering the girls. Instead, Gilgamesh and Enkidu plan a big heroic trip to the West to get wood for building (because **very little wood** grew in Mesopotamia). They travel there and fight the great monster Humbaba.

When the two heroes get home, though, they begin to have problems. Gilgamesh is so cool now that the goddess **Ishtar** falls in love with him, but when she asks him to be her boyfriend, Gilgamesh says no (and he is **pretty rude** about it too). Ishtar is angry and she makes Enkidu die of a fever. Gilgamesh is very sad and upset that his friend died. And he is afraid that he will someday die too.

Finally Gilgamesh travels to the Land of the Dead to see if he himself can somehow live forever. While he is there, he meets a man named Utnapishtim, who tells Gilgamesh a story about a great flood. Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh that the gods sent this flood because people made too much noise on earth and hurt the gods' ears. He himself survived the flood in a boat. (

Gilgamesh finds out that he can live forever if he can stay awake for a week watching this plant. But he falls asleep in the end. He goes back to his city, still sad but realizing that everyone has to die sometime, and he goes back to being a good king.