

Please answer TWO of the following questions in English. (100%)

Question 1 (50%)

The following excerpt is taken from Homer's *Iliad*. Please read Achilles' reply to Odysseus's report of Agamemnon's offer in Book IX carefully and give a close reading of your understanding of it.

And Achilles, strong, swift, and godlike:

"Son of Laertes in the line of Zeus,
Odysseus the strategist—I can see
That I have no choice but to speak my mind
And tell you exactly how things are going to be.
Either that or sit through endless sessions
Of people whining at me. I hate like hell
The man who says one thing and thinks another.
So this is how I see it.
I cannot imagine Agamemnon,
Or any other Greek, persuading me,
Not after the thanks I got for fighting this war,
Going up against the enemy day after day.
It doesn't matter if you stay in camp or fight—
In the end, everybody comes out the same.
Coward and hero get the same reward:
You die whether you slack off or work.
And what do I have for all my suffering,
Constantly putting my life on the line?
Like a bird who feeds her chicks
Whatever she finds, and goes without herself,
That's what I've been like, lying awake
Through sleepless nights, in battle for days
Soaked in blood, fighting men for their wives.
I've raided twelve cities with our ships
And eleven on foot in the fertile Troad,
Looted them all, brought back heirlooms
By the ton, and handed it all over
To Atreus' son, who hung back in camp
Raking it in and distributing damn little.
What the others did get they at least got to keep.
They all have their prizes, everyone but me—
I'm the only Greek from whom he took something back.
He should be happy with the woman he has.
Why do the Greeks have to fight the Trojans?
Why did Agamemnon lead the army to Troy
If not for the sake of fair-haired Helen?
Do you have to be descended from Atreus
To love your mate? Every decent, sane man
Loves his woman and cares for her, as I did,
Loved her from my heart. It doesn't matter
That I won her with my spear. He took her,
Took her right out of my hands, cheated me,
And now he thinks he's going to win me back?
He can forget it. I know how things stand.
It's up to you, Odysseus, and the other kings
To find a way to keep the fire from the ships.
He's been pretty busy without me, hasn't he,
Building a wall, digging a moat around it,
Pounding in stakes for a palisade.
None of that stuff will hold Hector back.
When I used to fight for the Greeks,
Hector wouldn't come out farther from his wall
Than the oak tree by the Western Gate.
He waited for me there once, and barely escaped.
Now that I don't want to fight him anymore,
I will sacrifice to Zeus and all gods tomorrow,
Load my ships, and launch them on the sea.
Take a look if you want, if you give a damn,
And you'll see my fleet on the Hellespont
In the early light, my men rowing hard.
With good weather from the sea god,
I'll reach Phthia after a three-day sail.
I left a lot behind when I hauled myself here,
And I'll bring back more, gold and bronze,
Silken-waisted women, grey iron—
Everything except the prize of honor
The warlord Agamemnon gave me
And in his insulting arrogance took back.

So report back to him everything I say,
And report it publicly—get the Greeks angry,
In case the shameless bastard still thinks
He can steal us blind. He doesn't dare
Show his dogface here. Fine. I don't want
To have anything to do with him either.
He cheated me, wronged me. Never again.
He's had it. He can go to hell in peace,
The half-wit that Zeus has made him.
His gifts? His gifts mean nothing to me.
Not even if he offered me ten or twenty times
His present gross worth and added to it
All the trade Orchomenus does in a year,
All the wealth laid up in Egyptian Thebes,
The wealthiest city in all the world,
Where they drive two hundred teams of horses
Out through each of its hundred gates.
Not even if Agamemnon gave me gifts
As numberless as grains of sand or dust,
Would he persuade me or touch my heart—
Not until he's paid in full for all my grief.
His daughter? I would not marry
The daughter of Agamemnon son of Atreus
If she were as lovely as golden Aphrodite
Or could weave like owl-eyed Athena.
Let him choose some other Achaean
More to his lordly taste. If the gods
Preserve me and I get home safe
Peleus will find me a wife himself.
There are many Greek girls in Hellas and Phthia,
Daughters of chieftains who rule the cities.
I can have my pick of any of them.
I've always wanted to take a wife there,
A woman to have and to hold, someone with whom
I can enjoy all the goods old Peleus has won.
Nothing is worth my life, not all the riches
They say Troy held before the Greeks came,
Not all the wealth in Phoebus Apollo's
Marble shrine up in craggy Pytho.
Cattle and flocks are there for the taking;
You can always get tripods and chestnut horses.
But a man's life cannot be won back
Once his breath has passed beyond his clenched teeth.
My mother Thetis, a moving silver grace,
Tells me two fates sweep me on to my death.
If I stay here and fight, I'll never return home,
But my glory will be undying forever.
If I return home to my dear fatherland
My glory is lost but my life will be long,
And death that ends all will not catch me soon.
As for the rest of you, I would advise you too
To sail back home, since there's no chance now
Of storming Ilion's height. Zeus has stretched
His hand above her, making her people bold.
What's left for you now is to go back to the council
And announce my message. It's up to them
To come up with another plan to save the ships
And the army with them, since this one,
Based on appeasing my anger, won't work.
Phoenix can spend the night here. Tomorrow
He sails with me on our voyage home,
If he wants to, that is. I won't force him to come."

(Continued on next page)

Question 2 (50%)

The following excerpt is taken from Sophocles' *Antigone*. Please read the dialogue between Creon and Antigone carefully and give a close reading of your understanding of it.

CREON [*Wheeling on* ANTIGONE.] You, with your eyes fixed on the ground—speak up. Do you deny you did this, yes or no?

ANTIGONE I did it. I don't deny a thing.

CREON [*To the SENTRY.*] You, get out, wherever you please—you're clear of a very heavy charge.

[*He leaves; CREON turns back to ANTIGONE.*]

You, tell me briefly, no long speeches—were you aware a decree had forbidden this?

ANTIGONE Well aware. How could I avoid it? It was public.

CREON And still you had the gall to break this law?

ANTIGONE Of course I did. It wasn't Zeus, not in the least, who made this proclamation—not to me. Nor did that Justice, dwelling with the gods beneath the earth, ordain such laws for men. Nor did I think your edict had such force that you, a mere mortal, could override the gods, the great unwritten, unshakable traditions. They are alive, not just today or yesterday: they live forever, from the first of time, and no one knows when they first saw the light.

These laws—I was not about to break them, not out of fear of some man's wounded pride, and face the retribution of the gods. Die I must, I've known it all my life—how could I keep from knowing?—even without your death-sentence ringing in my ears. And if I am to die before my time I consider that a gain. Who on earth alive in the midst of so much grief as I, could fail to find his death a rich reward? So for me, at least, to meet this doom of yours is precious little pain. But if I had allowed my own mother's son to rot, an unburied corpse—that would have been an agony! This is nothing. And if my present actions strike you as foolish, let's just say I've been accused of folly by a fool.

LEADER Like father like daughter, passionate, wild . . . she hasn't learned to bend before adversity.

CREON No? Believe me, the stiffest stubborn wills fall the hardest; the toughest iron, tempered strong in the white-hot fire, you'll see it crack and shatter first of all. And I've known spirited horses you can break with a light bit—proud, rebellious horses. There's no room for pride, not in a slave, not with the lord and master standing by.

This girl was an old hand at insolence when she overrode the edicts we made public. But once she'd done it—the insolence, twice over—to glory in it, laughing, mocking us to our face with what she'd done. I am not the man, not now: she is the man if this victory goes to her and she goes free.

Never! Sister's child or closer in blood than all my family clustered at my altar worshipping Guardian Zeus—she'll never escape: she and her blood sister, the most barbaric death. Yes, I accuse her sister of an equal part in scheming this, this burial.

[*To his attendants.*]

Bring her here! I just saw her inside, hysterical, gone to pieces. It never fails: the mind convicts itself in advance, when scoundrels are up to no good, plotting in the dark. Oh but I hate it more when a traitor, caught red-handed, tries to glorify his crimes.

ANTIGONE Creon, what more do you want than my arrest and execution?

CREON Nothing. Then I have it all.

ANTIGONE Then why delay? Your moralizing repels me, every word you say—pray god it always will. So naturally all I say repels you too.

Enough. Give me glory! What greater glory could I win than to give my own brother decent burial? These citizens here would all agree.

[*To the CHORUS.*]

they would praise me too if their lips weren't locked in fear.

[*Pointing to CREON.*]

Lucky tyrants—the perquisites of power! Ruthless power to do and say whatever pleases them.

CREON You alone, of all the people in Thebes, see things that way.

ANTIGONE They see it just that way but defer to you and keep their tongues in leash.

CREON And you, aren't you ashamed to differ so from them? So disloyal!

ANTIGONE Not ashamed for a moment, not to honor my brother, my own flesh and blood.

CREON Wasn't Eteocles a brother too—cut down, facing him?

ANTIGONE Brother, yes, by the same mother, the same father.

CREON Then how can you render his enemy such honors, such impieties in his eyes?

ANTIGONE He'll never testify to that. Eteocles dead and buried.

CREON He will— if you honor the traitor just as much as him.

ANTIGONE But it was his brother, not some slave that died— CREON Ravaging our country!— but Eteocles died fighting in our behalf.

ANTIGONE No matter—Death longs for the same rites for all.

CREON Never the same for the patriot and the traitor.

ANTIGONE Who, Creon, who on earth can say the ones below don't find this pure and uncorrupt?

CREON Never. Once an enemy, never a friend, not even after death.

ANTIGONE I was born to join in love, not hate—that is my nature.

CREON Go down below and love, if love you must—love the dead! while I'm alive, no woman is going to lord it over me.