

English IV AP – The Iliad – *Hubris* - Books I and II

Concept: Hubris to the ancient Greeks meant excessive or *overweening* pride. It is *the pride that comes before the fall*. In ancient Attic law, hubris was an actual crime as it often led to violence toward others. A victim of one who committed hubris could receive damages in a court of law. The concept of hubris appears over and over in ancient Greek writings. Sophocles among others used it as a motivating factor in his tragedies.

Hubris is akin to the Asian concept of *saving face*. Like the ancient Greeks, keeping one's face (dignity) intact was of utmost social importance. An influential Chinese author, Lin Yutang, describes *face* as something that can be *granted* or *lost*... *to grant face (liu mianzi) is giving (someone) a chance to regain lost honor*. (1935: 199-200)

Background: In *Books I and II* of *The Iliad*, both Achilles and Agamemnon believe their honor has been damaged. Agamemnon believes he has been publicly *called out* by Achilles and blamed for Apollo sending plagues when he did not return Chryseis to her father Chryses. Achilles, on the other hand, believes he lost face when Agamemnon demanded his trophy, Briseis, as a replacement for Chryseis.

Assignment: **Part One:** Explore how one or both of these figures has committed the sin of Hubris. Be sure to use textual evidence (quotes) to support your analysis. In your analysis explore whether either one was justified in their actions. **Part Two:** Give examples of a modern world leader who has committed Hubris. Or, find an example of a country that has taken aggressive action in an attempt to save face.

Format:

1 1/2 to 2 pages

Size twelve font

Double-spaced

MLA

___ **20 pts.**