

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

**Question 1 (50%)**

The following excerpt is taken from the *Iliad* of Homer. In Book XXIV, Achilles at last breaks out of the prison of his rage as he comes to feel sympathy and admiration for another man—old Priam, Hector's father, who has come alone, by night, to the tent of Troy's mortal enemy, to ransom the corpse of his son. Please read the passage carefully and give a close reading of it.

The majestic king of Troy slipped past the rest and kneeling down beside Achilles, clasped his knees and kissed his hands, those terrible, man-killing hands that had slaughtered Priam's many sons in battle. Awesome—as when the grip of madness seizes one who murders a man in his own fatherland and flees abroad to foreign shores, to a wealthy, noble host, and a sense of marvel runs through all who see him—so Achilles marveled, beholding majestic Priam. His men marveled too, trading startled glances. But Priam prayed his heart out to Achilles: "Remember your own father, great godlike Achilles—as old as I am, past the threshold of deadly old age! No doubt the countrymen round about him plague him now, with no one there to defend him, beat away disaster. No one—but at least he hears you're still alive and his old heart rejoices, hopes rising, day by day, to see his beloved son come sailing home from Troy. But I—dear god, my life so cursed by fate . . . I fathered hero sons in the wide realm of Troy and now not a single one is left, I tell you. Fifty sons I had when the sons of Achaea came, nineteen born to me from a single mother's womb and the rest by other women in the palace. Many, most of them violent Ares cut the knees from under. But one, one was left me, to guard my walls, my people—the one you killed the other day, defending his fatherland, my Hector! It's all for him I've come to the ships now, to win him back from you—I bring a priceless ransom. Revere the gods, Achilles! Pity me in my own right, remember your own father! I deserve more pity . . . I have endured what no one on earth has ever done before—I put to my lips the hands of the man who killed my son."

Those words stirred within Achilles a deep desire to grieve for his own father. Taking the old man's hand he gently moved him back. And overpowered by memory both men gave way to grief. Priam wept freely for man-killing Hector, throbbing, crouching before Achilles' feet as Achilles wept himself, now for his father, now for Patroclus once again, and their sobbing rose and fell throughout the house. Then, when brilliant Achilles had had his fill of tears and the longing for it had left his mind and body, he rose from his seat, raised the old man by the hand and filled with pity now for his gray head and gray beard, he spoke out winging words, flying straight to the heart:

"Poor man, how much you've borne—pain to break the spirit! What daring brought you down to the ships, all alone, to face the glance of the man who killed your sons, so many fine brave boys? You have a heart of iron. Come, please, sit down on this chair here . . . Let us put our griefs to rest in our own hearts, rake them up no more, raw as we are with mourning. What good's to be won from tears that chill the spirit? So the immortals spun our lives that we, we wretched men live on to bear such torments—the gods live free of sorrows. There are two great jars that stand on the floor of Zeus' halls and hold his gifts, our miseries one, the other blessings. When Zeus who loves the lightning mixes gifts for a man, now he meets with misfortune, now good times in turn. When Zeus dispenses gifts from the jar of sorrows only, he makes a man an outcast—brutal, ravenous hunger drives him down the face of the shining earth, stalking far and wide, cursed by gods and men. So with my father, Peleus. What glittering gifts the gods rained down from the day that he was born! He excelled all men in wealth and pride of place, he lorded the Myrmidons, and mortal that he was, they gave the man an immortal goddess for a wife. Yes, but even on him the Father piled hardships, no powerful race of princes born in his royal halls, only a single son he fathered, doomed at birth, cut off in the spring of life—and I, I give the man no care as he grows old since here I sit in Troy, far from my fatherland, a grief to you, a grief to all your children . . . And you too, old man, we hear you prospered once: as far as Lesbos, Macar's kingdom, bounds to seaward, Phrygia east and upland, the Hellespont vast and north—that entire realm, they say, you lorded over once, you excelled all men, old king, in sons and wealth. But then the gods of heaven brought this agony on you—ceaseless battles round your walls, your armies slaughtered. You must bear up now. Enough of endless tears, the pain that breaks the spirit. Grief for your son will do no good at all. You will never bring him back to life—sooner you must suffer something worse."

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## Question 2 (50%)

The following excerpt is taken from the book of *Job* in the Hebrew Bible. In chapter 3, Job expresses his inner torment through the great death-wish poem. Please read the poem carefully and give a critical analysis of it.

Afterward, Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. And Job spoke up and he said:

Annul the day that I was born  
and the night that said, "A man is conceived."

That day, let it be darkness.

Let God above not seek it out,  
nor brightness shine upon it.

Let darkness, death's shadow, foul it,  
let a cloud-mass rest upon it,  
let day-gloom dismay it.

That night, let murk overtake it.

Let it not join in the days of the year,  
let it not enter the number of months.

Oh, let that night be barren,  
let it have no song of joy.

Let the day-cursers hex it,  
those ready to rouse Leviathan.

Let its twilight stars go dark.

Let it hope for day in vain,  
and let it not see the eyelids of dawn.

For it did not shut the belly's doors  
to hide wretchedness from my eyes.

Why did I not die from the womb,  
from the belly come out, breathe my last?

Why did knees welcome me,  
and why breasts, that I should suck?

For now I would lie and be still,  
would sleep and know repose  
with kings and the councilors of earth,  
who build ruins for themselves,

or with princes, possessors of gold,  
who fill their houses with silver.

Or like a buried stillborn I'd be,  
like babes who never saw light.

There the wicked cease their troubling,  
and there the weary repose.  
All together the prisoners are tranquil,  
they hear not the taskmaster's voice.  
The small and the great are there,  
and the slave is free of his master.  
Why give light to the wretched  
and life to the deeply embittered,  
who wait for death in vain,  
dig for it more than for treasure,  
who rejoice at the tomb,  
are glad when they find the grave?  
—To a man whose way is hidden,  
and God has hedged him about.  
For before my bread my moaning comes,  
and my roar pours out like water.  
For I feared a thing—it befell me,  
what I dreaded came upon me.  
I was not quiet, I was not still,  
I had no repose, and trouble came.

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