

# Gilgamesh



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The ancient Sumerians lived thousands of years ago in ancient Mesopotamia, in the land between two rivers. The ancient Sumerians were very smart. They invented a whole bunch of things to make their life more comfortable and more interesting - things like the wheel, the sailboat, and a written language called cuneiform.

# Gilgamesh



They were also great storytellers. The **Epic of Gilgamesh** is one of the oldest recorded stories in the world. These stories are about the king of Uruk, an ancient city-state. According to the stories, Gilgamesh was part god and part human and had many special powers! You could call him the first superhero!

# Gilgamesh

Here is one story from the **Epic of Gilgamesh, very loosely retold:**



Once upon a time, a long time ago, King Gilgamesh sat alone in his garden, thinking things over. He knew he was strong enough to pick up mountains. He knew he could dive down to the deepest point in the ocean and back again in one breath. He knew that any time he fought one of the monsters who lived in the forest near his kingdom, he would win.

Gilgamesh always won.

The truth was...he was bored. He had nothing to do that was any fun except scare his subjects with his tempers and his tantrums.

# Gilgamesh

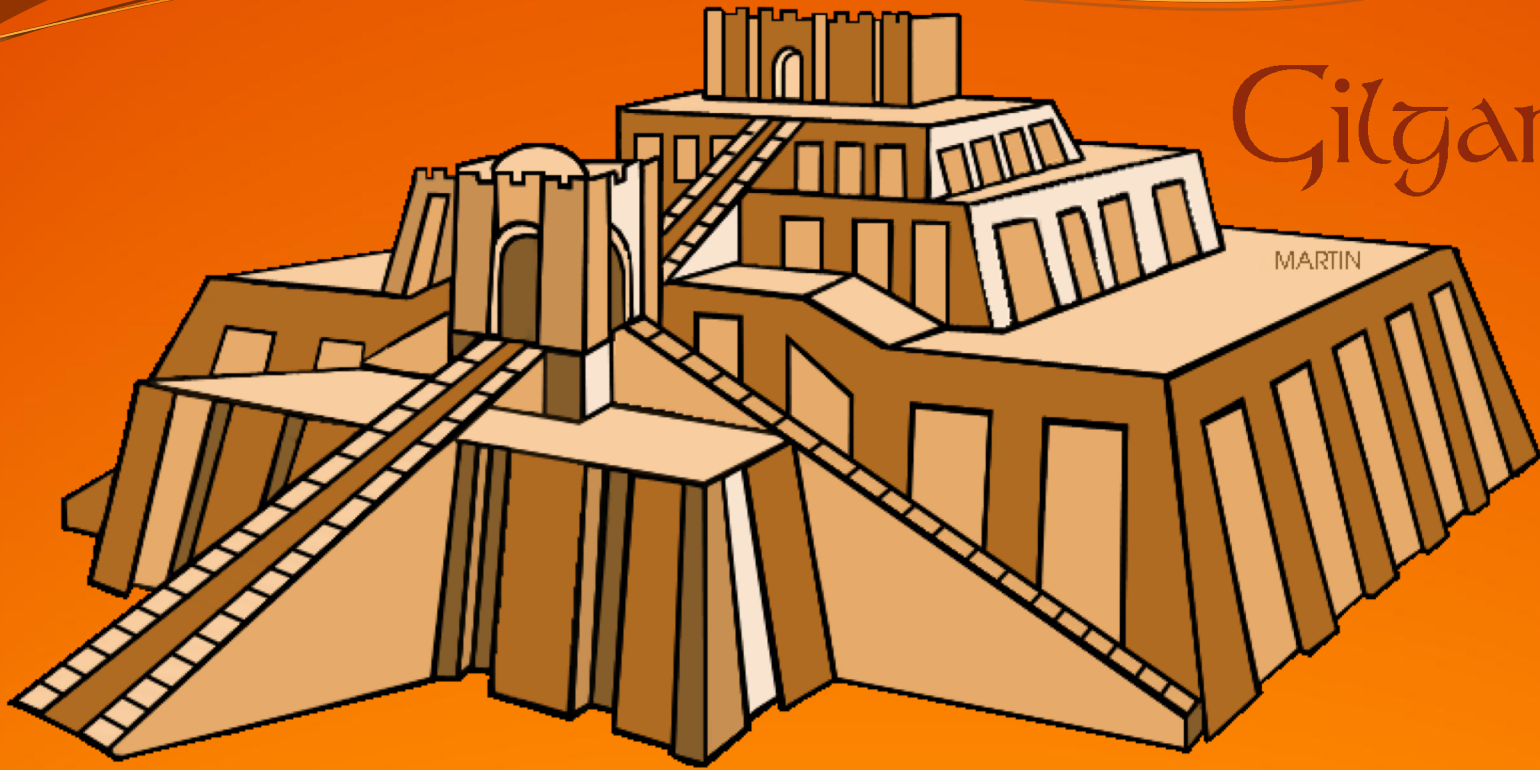
Recently, even the monsters in the forest had taken to hiding every time Gilgamesh went looking for a good fight.

If he could fly, he would have flown over the forest and spotted their hiding places. But he could not fly. After all, wasn't he a god? Well, two-thirds of a god? What good were special powers if there was nothing fun to do with them?

His sighs grew heavier and heavier.



# Gilgamesh



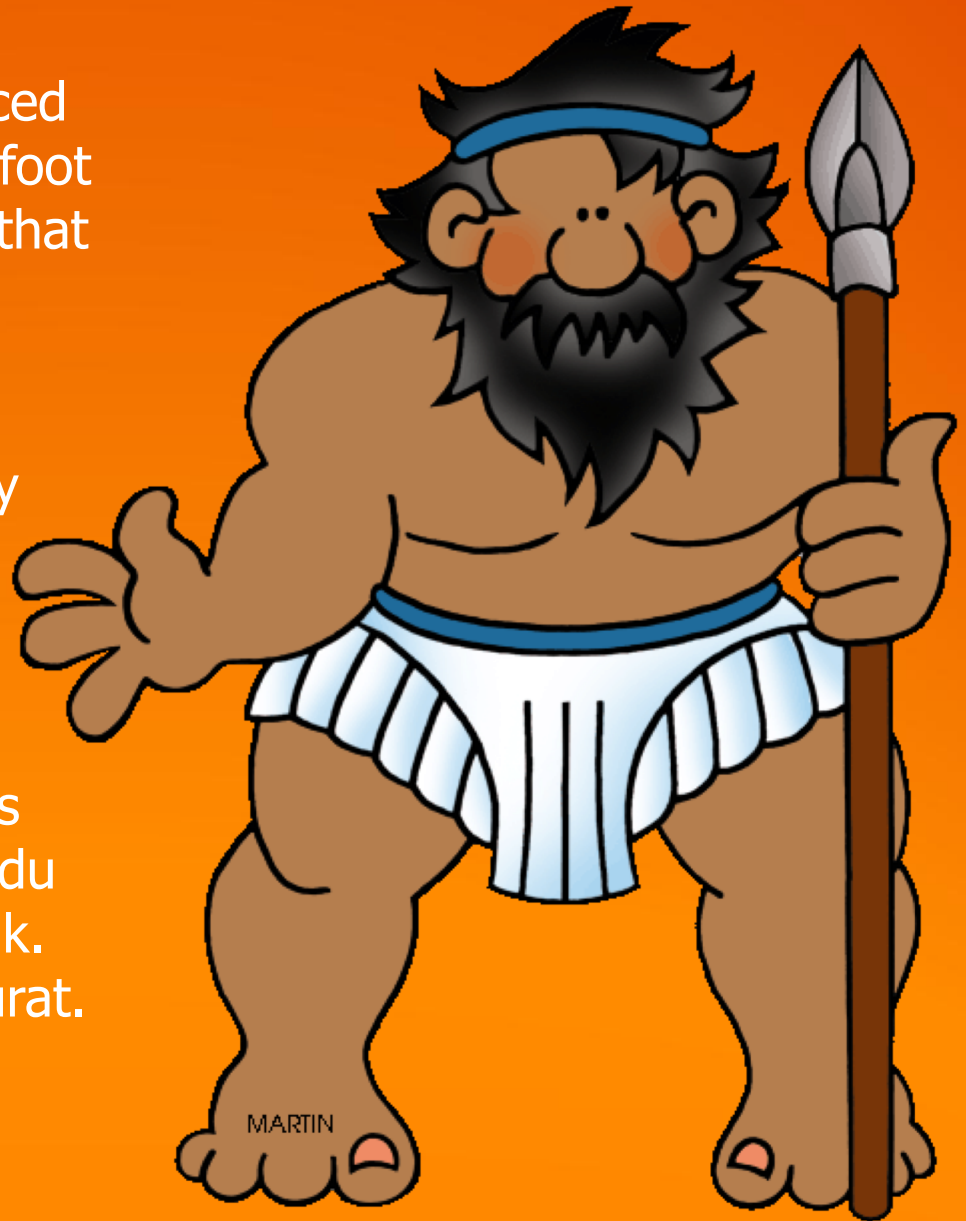
Gilgamesh dragged himself to his feet, and wandered towards the ziggurat to join his people in prayer. Every day, the people gathered at the ziggurat. The ziggurat was a temple - a really big temple - with stairs that seemed to climb to the sky. His people eyed him nervously. Gilgamesh did not notice. He knew he should be praying for his people's safety and for food enough for everyone. But this day, Gilgamesh prayed for something to do, something fun!

The gods looked down and noticed Gilgamesh sighing loudly at the foot of the ziggurat. The gods knew that all Gilgamesh needed was a challenge.

The gods quickly created a really wild man - a man stronger and faster than Gilgamesh. They named him Enkidu.

In answer to his prayer, the gods sent Enkidu down to earth. Enkidu went roaring into the city of Uruk. He headed straight for the ziggurat.

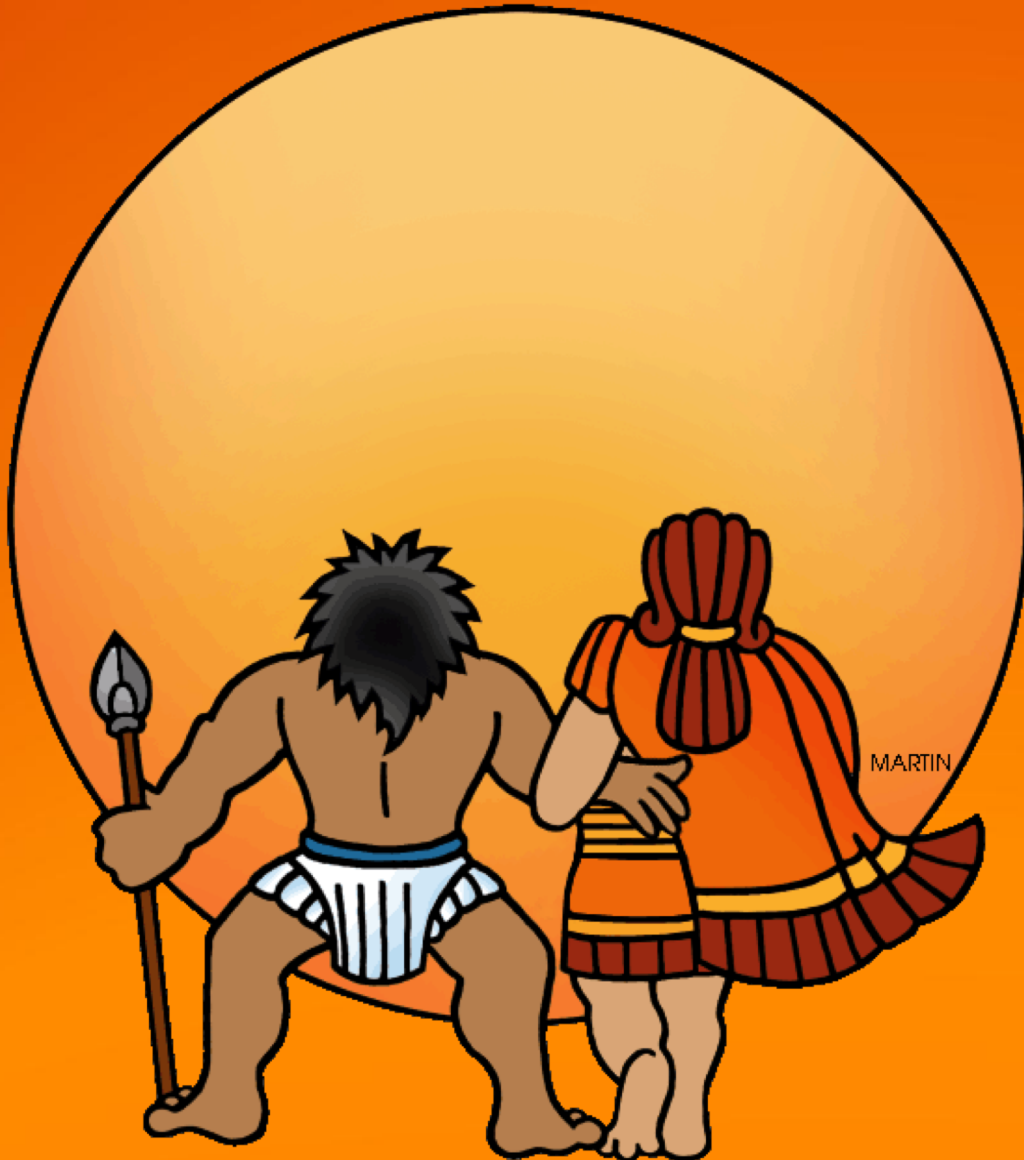
The townspeople fled in terror.



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Gilgamesh perked up immediately. The two men/gods roared and wrestled and bit and scratched, but neither could beat the other.

They started laughing and soon became the best of friends. Since there was nothing much to do around town, arm in arm, the two god/men left Uruk in search of adventure elsewhere.





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When the citizens of Uruk and the monsters in the forest heard their king had left town, they threw a huge festival to thank their beloved gloomy god, Marduk, for sending their king a friend.

They prayed every day to all powerful Marduk that their king would enjoy adventures all over the world with his new friend! Forever.



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Want to learn more about Gilgamesh and Mesopotamia?

Here's a story about [Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest](#).

Meet another hero from ancient Mesopotamia - the great King [Hammurabi](#).

Ancient Mesopotamia for Kids (<http://mesopotamia.mrdonn.org/index.html>)

