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### Who is the Audience?

Among the *Aeneid*, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, and the *Bible*, each author or set of authors had a specific demographic they were catering toward when writing their books. This affects how modern-day readers interpret these texts. Their messages are affected by who they know will be reading their texts, specifically the authoritative powers that control them.

However, these authors balance these messages with themes that they want to get across, like what it means to be a Roman or how to maintain hope during trying times. By examining how these authors wrote and portrayed their stories, we can better understand what lessons are relevant in our lives and how our ancestors used them in theirs.

When writing the *Aeneid*, Virgil knew that it was a work that was going to be performed in front of Augustus Caesar, the emperor. This meant that he had to pander to Augustus and confirm the familial claim that he was a descendant of the gods, through their supposed ancestor Aeneas. When Virgil is describing Aeneas' trip to the underworld, Aeneas' father Anchises shows him their Roman descendants, "Here is Caesar, and all the line of Iulus" (Virgil 187). However, this flattery doesn't stop with confirming a godly parentage, Virgil goes on to give Augustus his own prophecy: "this is the man, this one, / Of whom so often you have heard the promise, / Caesar Augustus, son of the deified, / Who shall bring once again an Age of Gold" (Virgil 187). Augustus' very name is apparently foretold to Aeneas. In addition to this obvious form of flattery, Virgil takes it one step further two books later when describing Aeneas' godly shield, where the center of the shield shows "Augustus Caesar leading into battle / Italians" (Virgil 254). Aeneas is drawing a connection between Augustus and the gods for the Roman

people, showing how his authoritative power has been preordained. This gives the supporters of Augustus a sense that the violence of the past years will be quelled while sending a message to his opposers that Augustus plans to stay in power for the rest of his life.

However, Virgil used the stipulation of pleasing Augustus to his advantage, as he was able to speak directly to the emperor about what the values of Rome were. Anchises tells Aeneas what it takes to be a good ruler: “To pacify, to impose the rule of law, / To spare the conquered, battle down the proud” (Virgil 190). This is Virgil speaking directly to his audience, Augustus, where he gets the chance to tell the emperor how the Roman people should be governed. The values and safety of the Roman people had just been tested in a bloody war for power, and Virgil has the chance to speak to the new ruler of Rome on behalf of its citizens, where he uses this opportunity to plead that this new ruler governs with peace and proper justice. This significance can’t be overlooked, as Virgil knew that appealing to one’s emotions can have a huge impact. Right after he has Anchises speak these bold lines, Virgil describes Aeneas and the prophetess Sibyl reacting to these words so that “they gazed in awe” (190). Their reaction is an example for Augustus, who should be revelling in Virgil’s words as useful advice. Virgil knowing who his audience was affected the morals of the *Aeneid*, which sent a clear message to the new emperor; Rome can praise you in the present, but maintaining this power relies on how you lead.

The audience in Vitruvius’ *The Ten Books on Architecture* is relatively the same as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, as both authors were contemporaries of each other. Thus, they both knew that Augustus would be aware of whatever they wrote. Vitruvius speaks directly to Augustus about how specifically he timed his book’s release: “I hardly dared, in view of your serious employments, to publish my writings” (Vitruvius 3). He makes a point to reference Augustus

throughout the book, “Such, Caesar, are the authorities on whom I have depended” (Vitruvius 256) as if he is making sure that Augustus understands the points he is trying to make. These examples show the toll that the civil war had on Vitruvius, so his apprehension and praise of the new regime had to be carefully calculated. Too soon and Augustus could’ve been overthrown, too late and he could’ve been regarded as a traitor. So his comments throughout the text serve as a direct message of his support for Augustus and recognizing his roll in this new world.

Vitruvius’ goal isn’t the same as Virgil’s, as he is aiming to spread educational information regarding architecture. He uses historical references to Aristotle and Artemisia to prove his points of density and the impact of walls on society. For example, after describing the Rhodians recapturing their city from Artemisia, Vitruvius talks about a wall that the Rhodians used to cover up a mocking trophy, saying, “Since such very powerful kings have not disdained walls built of brick ... I think that one ought not to reject buildings made of brick-work” (Vitruvius 56). In this section of the book, Vitruvius is discussing what materials should be used to build Rome, and although he later goes on to reject the material of brick for the city, he shows that the material itself has its useful purposes outside of city walls. Similarly, with his example regarding Aristotle, Vitruvius is seeking to prove the usefulness of his career field. He makes statements regarding the job of an architect, saying “These, then, were men whose researches are an everlasting possession, not only for the improvement of character but also for general utility” (255). By highlighting the historical figure of Aristotle, Vitruvius draws a direct connection between Aristotle's work and his own work regarding architecture. Vitruvius uses historical examples to his advantage in order to further educate citizens on the importance of architecture, all while keeping in mind that he has to please Augustus in order to spread this information.

The Bible takes a radically different approach than Vitruvius and Virgil do, as it doesn't try and appease the emperor. Rather, the audience reading the Bible wouldn't be fans of the emperor or Roman republic, as emphasized by their condemnation of Jesus to death. In Romans, written by Paul the apostle, the book's audience is the common people, Jews and Gentiles alike. As his goal was to convert more people to Christianity, he used flattery tactics as seen in: "I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are ... able to instruct one another" (Romans 15:14). Since it was a relatively new religion, Paul has to convince these people to continue preaching this belief system. Similar to Virgil and Vitruvius, Paul catered his writing to match what his audience was interested in hearing, which he found was talking about salvation. Common people want to be reassured that their actions, however small, can still grant them salvation, so Paul describes that they only need to "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer" (Romans 12:12) and they will be saved. Paul knows his audience, and by giving them these instructions and then praising them, as chronologically they would be presented, he praises these actions of patience and enduring suffering. Paul balances a fine line between criticism and retribution to spread the word of Christianity, all while convincing these people to spread the word about this religion in order to obtain salvation.

If we look at the *Aeneid*'s political impact and compare it to the Bible's, we can see how drastic each of these works' messages are. In the *Aeneid*, the title character's blatant support of the emperor demonstrates to the Roman populace that they should support this new emperor, who is endorsed by the gods themselves. After listening to these heroic figures endorsing this new emperor, especially after years of war and strife surrounding the position, it might seem comforting that Augustus was always destined to be the ruler. That would mean that all the death

and drama would've been worth it and that now Rome is entering into an "Age of Gold" (Virgil 187). Opposingly, when viewing the Bible through this lens of political support, Rome is painted as the ultimate evil force. After all, they were the ones who put the son of God to death, not exactly a ringing endorsement. From the perspective of a citizen whose country was overtaken by Rome, hearing stories about people who overcame being victims of Rome's atrocities would be comforting and inspiring. It also shows that there is someone more powerful than even the emperor who is looking out for the little guy, which would give anyone hope. Keeping the audience of a particular work in mind gives more depth and understanding to certain aspects of the works, which allows for a more detailed understanding of why the authors chose to say what they did.

The audience for all three of these works lived within the same century, during particularly trying and gruesome times. Some, like the *Aeneid* and *The Ten Books on Architecture*, wove complex ideas around the central theme of praising the Roman republic and its emperor. Their authors had to find ways of proving their points in subtle ways. Other works, as seen in the Bible, brought up common criticisms felt during that time period regarding the authority figures and government practices. This critique allowed for members of Christianity to easily spread their message in relatable and cathartic ways. All of these works make political points regarding the current events that the authors were dealing with in their lives, and they showcase their support in both obvious and unique ways. The importance of keeping an audience in mind is crucial, without them we might truly think that Augustus was on Aeneas' shield!