

# GILGAMESH

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (/ˈɡɪlɡəmɛʃ/)<sup>[2]</sup> is an [epic poem](#) from ancient [Mesopotamia](#), regarded as the earliest surviving notable literature and the second oldest religious text, after the [Pyramid Texts](#). The literary history of [Gilgamesh](#) begins with five [Sumerian](#) poems about Bilgamesh (Sumerian for "Gilgamesh"), king of [Uruk](#), dating from the [Third Dynasty of Ur](#) (c. 2100 BC).<sup>[1]</sup> These independent stories were later used as source material for a combined epic in [Akkadian](#). The first surviving version of this combined epic, known as the "Old Babylonian" version, dates back to the 18th century BC and is titled after its [incipit](#), *Shūtur eli sharrī* ("Surpassing All Other Kings"). Only a few [tablets](#) of it have survived. The later Standard Babylonian version compiled by [Sin-lēqi-unninni](#) dates from the 13th to the 10th centuries BC and bears the incipit *Sha naqba īmuru*<sup>[note 1]</sup> ("He who Saw the Abyss", in unmetaphoric terms: "He who Sees the Unknown"). Approximately two-thirds of this longer, twelve-tablet version have been recovered. Some of the best copies were discovered in the [library ruins](#) of the 7th-century BC [Assyrian king Ashurbanipal](#).

The first half of the story discusses Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, and [Enkidu](#), a wild man created by the gods to stop Gilgamesh from oppressing the people of Uruk. He travels to Uruk, where he challenges Gilgamesh to a test of strength. Gilgamesh wins the contest; nonetheless, the two become friends. Together, they make a six-day journey to the legendary [Cedar Forest](#), where they plan to slay the Guardian, [Humbaba the Terrible](#), and cut down the sacred Cedar.<sup>[4]</sup> The goddess [Ishtar](#) sends the [Bull of Heaven](#) to punish Gilgamesh for spurning her advances. Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the Bull of Heaven after which the gods decide to sentence Enkidu to death and kill him.

In the second half of the epic, distress over Enkidu's death causes Gilgamesh to undertake a long and perilous journey to discover the secret of eternal life. He eventually learns that "Life, which you look for, you will never find. For when the gods created man, they let death be his share, and life withheld in their own hands".<sup>[5][6]</sup> Nevertheless, because of his great building projects, his account of [Siduri's](#) advice, and what the immortal man [Utnapishtim](#) told him about [the Great Flood](#), Gilgamesh's fame survived well after his death, with expanding interest in his story. It has been translated into many languages and is featured [in several works of popular fiction](#).

The epic is regarded as a foundational work in religion and the tradition of heroic sagas, with Gilgamesh forming the prototype for later heroes like Heracles (Hercules), and the epic itself serving as an influence for Homeric epics.<sup>[7]</sup>



Ancient Assyrian statue currently in the [Louvre](#), possibly representing Gilgamesh

# The Deluge Tablet (British Museum- London)

## *Epic of Gilgamesh*



The [Deluge](#) tablet of the *Gilgamesh* epic in [Akkadian](#)

<b>Written</b>	c. 2100–1200 BC <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	<a href="#">Mesopotamia</a>
<b>Language</b>	<a href="#">Akkadian</a>
<b>Media type</b>	<a href="#">Clay tablet</a>

Some 15,000 fragments of [Assyrian cuneiform](#) tablets were discovered in the [Library of Ashurbanipal](#) in [Nineveh](#) by [Austen Henry Layard](#), his assistant [Hormuzd Rassam](#), and [W. K. Loftus](#) in the early 1850s.<sup>[16]</sup> Late in the following decade, the [British Museum](#) hired [George Smith](#) to study these; in 1872, Smith read translated fragments before the [Society of Biblical Archaeology](#),<sup>[17]</sup> and in 1875 and 1876 he published fuller translations,<sup>[18]</sup> the latter of which was published as *The Chaldaean Account of Genesis*.<sup>[16]</sup> The central character of Gilgamesh was initially reintroduced to the world as "Izdubar", before the cuneiform [logographs](#) in his name could be pronounced accurately.<sup>[16][19]</sup> In 1891, [Paul Haupt](#) collected the cuneiform text, and nine years later, [Peter Jensen](#) provided a comprehensive edition; [R. Campbell Thompson](#) updated both of their work in 1930. Over the next two decades, [Samuel Noah Kramer](#) reassembled the Sumerian poems.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Gilgamesh science fiction comics

