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Critical Lens Essay: Fate from Character

Heraclitus once said, “A man’s character is his fate”. This quote depicts that by the way that a person upholds themselves and the way they live their life will lead to the ultimate demise or eternal success. This quote gains validation through the works of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Pardoner’s Tale* and Burton Raffel’s interpretation *Beowulf*. In both stories the way the characters uphold themselves and how they live shows there after in the end. This quote has a strong hold even in today’s society throughout how someone’s character will truly determine a person’s final destination. In these two works both characters meet an end that is representative of how the characters live their life.

In the work of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Pardoner’s Tale*, the Rioters style of living forces them into a less than desirable fate. The Rioters sought to find and kill Death to live eternally. One literary symbol that shows this is the motif “Greed is the root of all evil”. In today’s society people are always out to get the most they can despite how it affects others. One base scenario that relates is how sports managers won’t keep their clients in their best interests in order to get the money they want. On the surface of all of these issues it’s an effect on character which is the ultimate decider of fate. In these said circumstances and stories providing evidence the results of these actions were as severe as death in the end.

Another form of evidence that is expressed through *The Pardoner’s Tale* is how the Rioters believed that they could cheat each other out of someone’s share of the found gold. The Rioters that were consumed by greed believed that they could all out smart each other. Although the characters believed this was a mighty cause it was a detriment to their character and led to their death. The negative choices of characters in this novel led to as stated a less than desirable fate due to decisions. This evidence just shows that the quote of “A man’s character is his fate” to be ultimately true.

Another example that shows this quote to be true is show through the Burton Raffel translation of *Beowulf*. The grandeur of living and how it was done towards Beowulf’s character led his fate to be a desirable one; ending in praise and glory. Beowulf was a hero to the Danes slaying all of their monstrosities that plagued their land. A literary symbol that shows this to be accurate is bravery. Beowulf stood as a character of bravery in how he fought monsters like Grendel for this beast was unlike no other and could not be defeated by man. This scenario is related much to the way that a soldier would go out to war in time of old for how they although out matched would fight for their kingdom’s glory. Both of these examples show that the content of one’s character can lead to a pleasing fate that all would wish to have.

In addition to all of these things the quote can gain to be more proven through Beowulf. Beowulf’s acts of honor led him to a fate that all his people would desire. Beowulf would go into many a battle just to help others, but this was not the significance of it. In all of this battles he fought in equality to his enemy. With Beowulf he fought with bare along fighting Grendel’s mother. Through this lens of history it gains validation much as a boxer will fight with proper technique and as equals to one another. Although there can only be one victor they make it so that there are no advantages therefore no regrets. All in all these examples show how through a historical lens “A man’s character is his fate.”

In conclusion, both of these works show the truth in the quote that “A man’s character is his fate”. In the works of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Pardoner’s Tale* and the Burton Raffel translation of *Beowulf* the person’s character is their eternal fate. The stories show how this can both have positive and negative results from character. This goes to prove that in the end “A man’s character is his fate.”