

Passage Three: From Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

As the prefatory comment explained, in this selection from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* Ulysses is responding to Achilles' lament that his past heroism has been forgotten. Ulysses begins his monologue with a figurative depiction of Time. Time is first presented as a miser who hoards monies that could alleviate the plight of the poor for "oblivion" (line 2), the suggestion being that Time is a greedy and self-centered being who cares not for others. This pejorative depiction is further reinforced by the metaphor comparing Time to a "great-sized monster of ingratitude" (line 3), who rapidly devours the reputations earned by good deeds "As fast as they are made" (line 5). Only perseverance, says Ulysses, "Keeps honor bright" (line 7). What Ulysses means is that Achilles' past heroism is over and done with, and that reputation must be maintained by continually heroic action. His observation that "To have done is to hang / Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail / In monumental mockery" (lines 7-9) offers, in its description of a corroding suit of armor, a particularly persuasive symbol for a warrior like Achilles.

In line 9 Ulysses gently begins to advise Achilles, urging him to "Take the instant way," the most direct path to renewed glory. This path, however, is a crowded one, "For emulation hath a thousand sons" (line 12), all striving to wear the laurel. Any hesitance along the "direct forthright" (line 14), admonishes Ulysses, and "Like to an entered tide they all rush by / And leave you hindmost" (lines 15-16). This simile of the tide, a favorite comparison of the Bard, is followed by another, more telling simile, one that compares the reluctant hero to a "gallant horse fallen in the first rank" (line 17) which is trampled over by those that come behind. When Ulysses observes "Then what they do in present / Though less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours" (lines 19-20), he is affirming that fame is fleeting, and suggesting to Achilles that the best way to stay in the public eye is to continue to do glorious things.

The final ten lines begin with yet another simile, in which Time is compared to a "fashionable host" (line 21) who barely acknowledges the parting guest but warmly embraces the arriving customer. As Ulysses sagely remarks, "Welcome ever smiles, / And farewell goes out sighing" (lines 24-25). Ulysses concludes his monologue by once more admonishing Achilles not to seek praise for his past acts of valor, "For beauty, wit, / High birth, vigor of bone, desert in service, / Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all / To envious and calumniating time" (lines 27-30). This mantra, found often in Shakespeare's sonnets, deftly unites the monologue from start to end. Unlike the protagonist in the dramatic exemplum of *Everyman*, who discovers that his "Good Deeds" will faithfully accompany him to the end, Ulysses seems to be implying that heroism past is heroism forgotten, and that to remain a hero one must continue to act as one.

23. The overall theme of the passage states that **(C) glory is fleeting**.

Ulysses in his monologue suggests that time has “a wallet at his back / Wherein he puts alms for oblivion” (lines 1-2). He goes on to suggest that these alms are “good deeds past, which are devoured / As fast as they are made, forgot as soon / As done” (lines 4-6), consumed by time, “A great-sized monster of ingratiitudes” (line 3). Later, in lines 21-24, Time is compared to a “fashionable host / That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand, / And with his arms outstretched, as he would fly, / Grasps in the comer.” Here Time is seen as barely acknowledging the departing guest but warmly inviting the new boarder. These and other comparisons in the text suggest that renown, like other worldly values, is subject to the ravages of “envious and calumniating time” (line 30).

24. Throughout the passage Ulysses is seen **(C) counseling Achilles**.

This is derived both from the content and the tone. In his comments to Achilles, Ulysses warns him how time devours the renown of exploits past, how “emulation hath a thousand sons / That one by one pursue” and who, if afforded the opportunity, “Like to an entered tide they all rush by / And leave you hindmost” (lines 12-16). Through these examples and the similes of the host and the fallen horse, Ulysses tries to show Achilles how “To have done is to hang / Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail / In monumental mockery” (lines 7-9). He also warns him to “let not virtue seek / Remuneration for the thing it was” (lines 25-26). Since to “counsel” means to “give gentle, friendly advice,” (C) is the most appropriate selection.

25. In attempting to spur Achilles to action, Ulysses makes the MOST significant use of **(E) a series of appropriate comparisons**.

Though there are numerous comparisons drawn by Ulysses, the two most appropriate are the “rusty mail” (line 8) and the “gallant horse” (line 17) since they allude to the military and the battle. Both the image of a suit of mail rusting away “in monumental mockery” in some castle’s armory, and that of the gallant horse wounded in the first rank and trampled over by the cavalry that comes behind, are images that the war-hardened Achilles can readily comprehend.

26. Throughout the passage Ulysses addresses Achilles in a tone that is predominantly **(C) didactic**.

This is fairly consistent with the explanation to question #24 since throughout the monologue Ulysses attempts to show Achilles how past glory fades quickly and how heroic reputation must be maintained. The series of insightful comparisons—as well as more forthright lines such as “Perseverance, dear my lord, / Keeps honor bright” (lines 6-7) and “Then what they do in present, / Though less than yours in past, must o’ertop yours” (lines 19-20)—are designed to persuade Achilles to embrace a course of action. Thus, (C) is the most appropriate answer.

27. Ulysses cites all of the following as exemplifying things whose value has past EXCEPT **(C) “entered tide” (line 15)**.

The “alms” mentioned in choice (A) are earmarked “for oblivion,” while both the “rusty mail” (B) and “gallant horse” (D) suggest things that are corroded or surpassed. Similarly, the “parting

guest” (E) is quickly forgotten and soon replaced by the “comer” (line 24). The phrase “entered tide” (C) is the exception because it refers to individuals who will pass one by on the path of renown if one gives them the opportunity to do so.

28. Lines 9-16 contain examples of all of the following EXCEPT **(D) allusion**.

The phrase “instant way” (line 9) is a metonymy for the quickest path to glory, while the fact that honor “travels” (line 10) exemplifies personification. Simile is apparent in “Like to an entered tide” (line 15), and hyperbole is present in “emulation hath a thousand sons” (line 12). Only choice (D), allusion, is missing.

29. The similes in lines 8, 15, 17 and 21 all illustrate how rapidly **(A) past deeds can be forgotten**.

As this has been sufficiently illustrated in both the general explication and the answers to questions #23, #24, #25 & #27, we will not expatiate here. Let it suffice that the similes regarding the rusted armor, the roiling tide, the fallen steed, and the ungrateful host all reinforce the same theme: that past glory carries no weight in the present.

30. In attempting to prod Achilles to action, Ulysses uses a conceit involving a **(C) road**.

Lines 9-16, which compare the road to glory to a narrow path on which rivals continually endeavor to push past you and gain for themselves the place of prominence, set up the similes of the “entered tide” (line 15) and the “gallant horse” (line 17). Ulysses’ conceit intends to show Achilles how brooding over lost renown may allow others to supplant him as hero. The whole purpose of the conceit is to spur him to heroic action by reminding him that all worldly things—“beauty, wit, / High birth, vigor of bone, desert in service, / Love, friendship, charity” (lines 27-29)—erode with time.

31. In the course of his address, Ulysses personifies all of the following EXCEPT **(B) “mail” (line 8)**.

“Time” is depicted as carrying a wallet (line 1) and being a host (line 21), “emulation” as father to a thousand sons (line 12), “Welcome” as being someone who smiles (line 24), and “virtue” as seeking payment (lines 25-26). This confirms choices (A), (C), (D) and (E) as exemplifying personification. Choice (B), “mail,” does not.

32. Which of the following would be an inaccurate observation about the passage? **(A) It is a soliloquy**.

The wallet and the simile comparing Time to a “fashionable host” confirm (B), while the presence of Ulysses and Achilles, as well as the latter’s inaction, attest to the validity of (C). The many similes, metaphors, hyperboles, and the like confirm (D), while the unrhymed iambic pentameter that defines blank verse validates (E). However, the fact that Ulysses is addressing another character, and not thinking aloud, makes it a monologue, not a soliloquy.