In each of the pairs listed, one character shows mercy to the other or withholds it from the other. Choose one pair from group A and one pair from group B. In a short essay, discuss whether Vergil portrays the act of showing or withholding mercy as appropriate in each situation.

**Group A**

**Who is he?**

Pyrhus – “fire” (a.k.a. Neoptolemus – “new war”), Greek soldier, who killed Priam. He was the son of Achilles, who came to Troy after his father’s death. He was married to Hermione, the daughter of Helen and Menelaus.

**Does he show or withhold mercy from Priam?**

In Book II, when Pyrrhus, slaughters Polites before Priam’s eyes and face (cf. Aeneas’ first speech in I. 94-101, where those who died this way were beati), Priam rises to rebuke Pyrrhus (note nice hendiadys and litotes in 534). In his speech Priam invokes pietas (536) and refers back to the concept of defiling (539 and 502) with contemptuous alliteration. He tells Pyrrhus he is not the man his father was, referring to the end of the Iliad (as seen on the temple walls in I. 483-487) and the old man (senior 544) hurls his unwarlike spear (telum imbelle 544) in vain. Pyrrhus’ brutal response is to tell Priam to take the message to Achilles and die now. He drags the trembling (550 and 509) old man by the hair as he slips in his son’s blood and buries his sword in his side up to the hilt. Priam gets a nice eulogy with an emphasis on his past glory (554-557) amid the destruction. But the last line and a half are intended by Vergil (and Aeneas?) to be symbolic: the beheaded body lies on the shore without means of recognition. Why did Pyrrhus in the heat of battle behead the dead king and transport his body to the distant shore and how did Aeneas see the body in the dark of night? The theme that the king is dead, long live the king is seen here. The legitimate rulers of Troy have died and the royal power has in effect been transferred to Aeneas. Aeneas reaction is one of horror (559) and then he thinks of his father, the same age as the dead Priam (aequaevum 561), his family at home and especially his son, whom the reader knows is the future ruler in Italy.

**Group B**

**Who is he?**

The king of Troy. Priam is slain before Aeneas’s eyes during the Greeks’ sacking of Troy. Priam had many wives, one of which was Hecuba (or Hecebe). By his various wives and concubines Priam was the father of fifty sons and many daughters. Hector was Priam’s oldest son by Hecuba, and heir to the Trojan throne. Paris (a.k.a. Alexander), another son, was the cause of the Trojan War. Other children of Priam and Hecuba include the prophets Helenus and Cassandra; oldest daughter Ilione; Deiphobus; Troilus; Polites; Creusa, wife of Aeneas; Laodice, wife of Helicaon; Polyxena, who was slaughtered on the grave of Achilles; and Polydorus, his youngest son.

**Is mercy shown to or withheld from Priam?**

In Book II Priam is mentioned early, to set the stage (22 Priami dum regna manebant). After Pyrrhus kills him, Priam gets a nice eulogy with an emphasis on his past glory (554-557) amid the destruction. But the last line and a half are intended by Vergil (and Aeneas?) to be symbolic: the beheaded body lies on the shore without means of recognition. Why did Pyrrhus in the heat of battle behead the dead king and transport his body to the distant shore and how did Aeneas see the body in the dark of night? The theme that the king is dead, long live the king is seen here. The legitimate rulers of Troy have died and the royal power has in effect been transferred to Aeneas. Aeneas reaction is one of horror (559) and then he thinks of his father, the same age as the dead Priam (aequaevum 561), his family at home and especially his son, whom the reader knows is the future ruler in Italy.
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Does he show or withhold mercy from Sinon?

When Priam reassures him and guarantees his safety, he asks what the horse is all about. Sinon calls on witnesses (nature and the items from his supposed sacrifice to assert that it is allowed for him to reveal Greek secrets, if only the Trojans will be good to him. He says truthfully that the Greek side counted on the help of Athena; after saying how the Greeks stole the Palladium, he lies when he says that Athena was angry and that the horse was built to appease her. He continues to lie when he says that it is so big because if the Trojans take it inside it will protect Troy. The gullible Trojans believe this. Sinon is next seen in 267-269, when he is defended by the unfair fates, he releases the Greeks. His final appearance is in 329-330, where in celebration he throws fire around and is described in an enjambed insultans (taunting). The participle is from salio and refers to Pyrrhic dancing where a warrior taunts an opposing warrior prior to battle.

Who is he?

Sinon - The Greek youth who pretends to have been left behind at the end of the Trojan War. Sinon persuades the Trojans to take in the wooden horse as an offering to Minerva, then lets out the warriors trapped inside the horse’s belly.

Is mercy shown to or withheld from Sinon?

Sinon - (note formation of name: from si non perhaps, but more likely from sinus, ūs – fold or coil as in a snake – cf. Knox’s article). Note how he presents himself as a captive to accomplish his goal of destroying Troy or dying. Note how Trojans crowd around to jeer and Aeneas’ direct address to Dido about knowing all the Greeks from the actions of one (65-66). Sinon plays for mercy by saying that he has no place left in the world to go (67-72). Note how the Trojans crowding around are seen through Sinon’s eyes as an agmina (68). His speech wins them over (73-76) in language that will be reprised with Achaemenides in Book III. Note complexity of the start of each of his speeches, especially 77-80. He includes truth (the death of Palamedes) with fiction (that he vowed revenge on Odysseus/Ulysses). In 97-99 note historic infinitives to speed story, then the abrupt aposiopesis in 100 that stops at the critical moment, and the teasing taunt that the sons of Atreus and Ulysses would want him killed. In 105-107 note the fire and the Greek art, and hear the alliteration in 107 that echoes Sinon’s rapid heart beat. He then lies that the Greeks wanted to flee, but could not, that there was an oracle that demanded a Greek life, that eventually he was chosen as the victim with Calchas’ connivance, and that he escaped the night before his death. Note that the oracle is enjambed and is thus not a true oracle. At the end of this speech he pleads for mercy.

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AENEAS & TURNUS

Who is he?

The protagonist of the Aeneid. Aeneas is a survivor of the siege of Troy, a city on the coast of Asia Minor. His defining characteristic is piety, a respect for the will of the gods. He is a fearsome warrior and a leader able to motivate his men in the face of adversity, but also a man capable of great compassion and sorrow. His destiny is to found the Roman race in Italy and he subordinates all other concerns to this mission. The Aeneid is about his journey from Troy to Italy, which enables him to fulfill his fate.

Who is he?

Turnus - The ruler of the Rutulians in Italy. Turnus is Aeneas’s major antagonist among mortals. He is Lavinia’s leading suitor until Aeneas arrives. This rivalry incites him to wage war against the Trojans, despite Latinus’s willingness to allow the Trojans to settle in Latium and Turnus’s understanding that he cannot successfully defy fate. He is brash and fearless, a capable soldier who values his honor over his life.

Does he show or withhold mercy from Turnus?

Seeing Turnus waver, Aeneas casts his mighty spear and strikes Turnus’s leg, and Turnus tumbles to the ground. As Aeneas advances, Turnus pleads for mercy for the sake of his father. Aeneas is moved—but just as he decides to let Turnus live, he sees the belt of Pallas tied around Turnus’s shoulder. As Aeneas remembers the slain youth, his rage returns in a surge. In the name of Pallas, Aeneas drives his sword into Turnus, killing him.

Is mercy shown to or withheld from Turnus?

As the battle shifts towards Latinus’ city and Amata commits suicide when Turnus does not appear at once; Turnus is fighting on the edges of the main battle when he hears the lamentations (614-621). The disguised Juturna tells him that others can defend the ir homes while he inflicts damage on the Trojans (623-630). Turnus tells her that he recognized her presence very early and wants to know who sent her to see his cruel death (632-636); he feels shame that his comrades fall without him and the city is under attack and he cannot refute the accusations of Drances (637-644). At this point he essentially commits to dying and accepts his fate (645-649). After he gets the report from the wounded Saces and turns in anger towards the city (650-671), he tells her to stop delaying him (676); since he intends to fight Aeneas and die, she will not see him disgraced and she should allow him to rage his final madness (677-680), with an unusual emphasis on furor with furere ante furorem (680); he rushes forward without her (681-683). In his fight with Aeneas the sword he is using shatters on Aeneas’ divinely-made armor (728-742); eventually Juturna, still in disguise, gives him his real sword against the threats of Aeneas (784-785).

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**Does he show or withhold mercy from Magus?**

Aeneas kills Magus even when the latter supplicates him (10.523 ff.) for clemency. In this act, Aeneas forgets the principle his father Anchises enjoined upon him as the Roman way of war: ‘parcere subiectis et debellare superbos’ (‘to spare the subdued and war down the proud’- 6.853). Magus, in being ‘supplex’ (10.523), was indeed ‘subiectus’, yet Aeneas failed to spare him.

**Who is he?**

Magus, an Italian fighting for Turnus, is a man who is described as sly, cowardly and wealthy, and he tries to bribe Aeneas with promises of gold and silver bars in his lofty mansion, which infuriates the honest hero.

**Is mercy shown to or withheld from Magus?**

Magus falls at his knees and begs him for mercy, Aeneas refuses and stabs him in the throat. Book 10: 510-605 Aeneas rages over the battle field, slaying many to avenge the fallen Pallas.

510- 517 Aeneas hears of Pallas’ death and immediately seeks Turnus; the hospitality of Evander and the pledges he made for Pallas’ safety are foremost in his mind. 517-520 Aeneas captures four sons of Sulmo and four of Ufens to sacrifice at Pallas’ funeral.

521-530 He next hurls a spear at Magus, which misses. Embracing his knees, MAGUS pleads: “By you father and son, spare my life for my son and my father; I have wealth to pay a ransom for my life, and my life makes no difference in Troy’s victory.”

531-536 Slaying him, AENEAS retorts: “Save the money for your sons. Turnus stopped the business of buying life in war when he killed Pallas.”