

Student 1

Low Excellence

Rhetorical Question

*quem non incusavi amens hominumque deorumque /aut quid in eversa vidi crudelius urbe? Whom did I not accuse, both men and gods in my madness? Or did I see anything more cruel in the overthrow of the city? (Aeneid 2.745-746*

A rhetorical question is a question that is asked in order to make a point rather than to elicit a response. Here Virgil uses this rhetorical question to depict Aeneas' distress upon finding out that Creusa has been left behind in the flight from Troy (1). The phrase 'quem non accusavi amens hominumque deorumque?' (Whom did I not accuse, both men and gods in my madness?) (2) suggests that Aeneas' suffering is so great that it goes beyond the point of reason and into the realm of madness, without rational accusation (3). In this way Virgil has shown us how overwhelming and confusing grief can be (4). Virgil has also used this rhetorical question to depict the cruelty of fate, as Aeneas accusing the gods shows the way in which his life is utterly controlled by the divine. (5) The gods determined that Troy would fall.