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Peleus' Kids

by Mikey Lawson

(English 1159)

“First they’re sour, then they’re sweet” is a phrase we hear from the candy, Sour Patch Kids. This candy has a sour coating on the outside but is sweet once the sour is gone. Although there are so many candies like this, I’ve decided to create my own brand based on the Greek hero, Achilles. Throughout Homer’s *The Iliad*, we see Achilles - the bravest, the meanest, and the greatest warrior of the army of Agamemnon in the Trojan War. Towards the end of *The Iliad*, as the audience, we start to see Achilles’ true personality of sour and sweet. The candy will take the shape of swords, spears, armor, and shields to represent the things used for fighting during the Trojan War. Sour candies tend to have one flavor per piece of candy, but Peleus’ Kids will have multiple flavors per piece of candy. Example being: the sword consisting of the handle being apple, then the blade being watermelon. The reasoning behind the name of the brand, "Peleus' Kids," is the personality that is found in the son of Peleus, Achilles. His sour and sweet personality plays on the Sour Patch Kids' slogan which influenced the name. In Homer's *The Iliad*, Achilles can be seen as sour while he's killing multiple people and sweet when he gives the body back of a son he killed to a father. The sour coating of the candy will be representative of Achilles’ anger toward the city of Troy and Hector, and the sweetness of the candy will be his sympathy for Priam.

Before Achilles joins the fight, he is very stubborn and refuses to participate. He makes it very clear that he will be taking no part in the fighting, that is until his beloved cousin, Patroclus, who some say even had a romantic relationship with him, dies by the hands of a man named Hector who leads the army of Troy. During the battle, Patroclus is met face to face with Hector and soon enough, Hector wins the fight ultimately killing Patroclus. Achilles receives the news of his beloved cousin and turns into a blinding rage which I refer to as his sour side. When I say sour, I am referring to Achilles’ anger toward the city of Troy and Hector. To show his rage, Achilles joins the fight against Troy and slays everybody in his path. One scene takes place next to a river where Achilles slays his enemies then throws everyone he kills into the river. After many bodies have been thrown into the river, the river speaks to Achilles saying,

“Stop, Achilles! Greater than any man on earth/ greater in outrage too/ for the gods themselves are always at your side!/ But if Zeus allows you to kill off all the Trojans/ drive them out of my depths at least, I ask you/ out on the plain and do your butchery there./ all my lovely rapid are crammed with corpses now/ no channel in sight to sweep my currents out to sacred sea/ I’m choked with corpses and still you slaughter more/ you blot out more! Leave me alone, have done/ captain of armies, I am filled with horror!” (21.240-250)

As made obvious by the graphic imagery and death surrounding Achilles, the scene proves to be one of the most gruesome parts throughout *The Iliad*. Homer explains that Achilles is killing lots of people and throws them into the river. So many people are being thrown into the river that it starts to clog and turn its water red. Achilles’ dreadful and harmful actions are all done to avenge his dead cousin, Patroclus.

The sourness of Achilles continues to be exemplified through his fight with Hector. Again, Hector is the character that killed Patroclus and Achilles will stop at nothing to kill him. Achilles

fights Hector right outside the walls of Troy, with the help of Athena, in front of all of Hector's loved ones. The fight begins with both men throwing their spears and missing, then follows by the men exchanging sword thrusts, resulting in Hector losing. The two men knew at the beginning of the fight that the greatest consequence of losing would be the loss of their own lives. Hector struggling for breath, asks Achilles, "I beg you, beg you by your life, your parents/... but give my body to friends to carry home again..." (22.399-406). Though Achilles, with all his vengefulness, made it blatantly clear that would not happen. After Hector is dead, Achilles

...triumphed/ and now he was bent on outrage, on shaming noble hector. / Piercing the tendons, ankle to heel behind both feet/ he knotted straps of rawhide through them both/ lashed them to his chariot, left the head to drag/ and mounting the car, hoisting the famous arms aboard/ he whipped his team to a run and breakneck on they flew/ holding nothing back. And a thick cloud of dust rose up/ from the man they dragged, his dark hair swirling round. (22.466-473)

Achilles' disrespect and sourness is shown by him mutilating his enemy's body. Greek traditions for the dead usually involve a proper funeral in order for their spirit to pass into the underworld, but Achilles being so vengeful, is taking those burial privileges away from Hector and Hector's family. Instead of handing the body over, it is explained in the passage that he ties Hector's body to the back of the chariot and lets his body drag behind, while he rides back into the Greek camp.

Achilles, though clearly exemplifying sourness throughout *The Iliad*, melts away his outer layer and begins to show sweetness when Hector's father, Priam, sneaks into Achilles' tent with the help of Hermes. In the middle of the night, Priam has a deeply emotional conversation with the man who killed his son. The encounter starts with Priam walking in, kneeling down, and kissing the top of Achilles' hands, which no man has ever done before. The words and actions by Priam touched a soft spot in Achilles as they both began to cry and mourn for their loved ones. As they were both done crying, the opinions each man had of each other begins to change. Changing emotions are exemplified when Homer writes, "Then, when brilliant Achilles has had his fill of tears/ and the longing for it had left his mind and body/ he rose from his seat, raised the old man by the hand/ and filled with pity now for his gray head and gray beard/ he spoke out winging words, flying straight to the heart" (24.600-604). Achilles begins to realize the harm he has caused and him grieving over Patroclus helps him understand the extreme sadness Priam is experiencing. Achilles goes on to say to Priam, "Poor man, how much you've borne-pain to break the spirit/ what daring brought you down to the ships, all alone/ to face the glance of the man who killed your sons/ so many fine brave boys? You have a heart of iron" (24.605-608). After this, Achilles sees the pain he has caused Priam so he decides to grant his request and give him his son Hector back. Achilles even goes out of his way to wrap Hector up and put him in the back of Priam's chariot. He then grants Priam and all of Troy a truce, not to attack the city. During this time of peace Achilles has granted, Troy will give Hector a proper burial. This shows remorse and the sweet side of Achilles.

A candy that is sour when one first experiences it but then transforms to a sweet flavor connects directly to the Greek hero Achilles in *The Iliad*. The shapes of swords, spears, armor, and shields will represent the hostility and equipment used by each side during the fighting. Homer's message to the audience is based around the powerfulness and pride shown through the characters in *The Iliad*. Though Achilles, for example, believed he would have no remorse for the people he murders and puts into the river, it is clear that his emotions made it impossible to have such an intense disconnect from people. The emotional weakness shown through this example is telling of Homer's message of mortality with the scene of Achilles showing remorse for Priam. Though a seemingly emotionally disconnected person can perform such murders, it is not likely that one would be able to remain without emotions forever. Homer's message to the audience becomes clear as not

even the most ruthless characters in his book lack sympathy for others all the time.

Works Cited

Homer, *The Iliad*. Translated by Robert Fagles. Penguin, 1990.