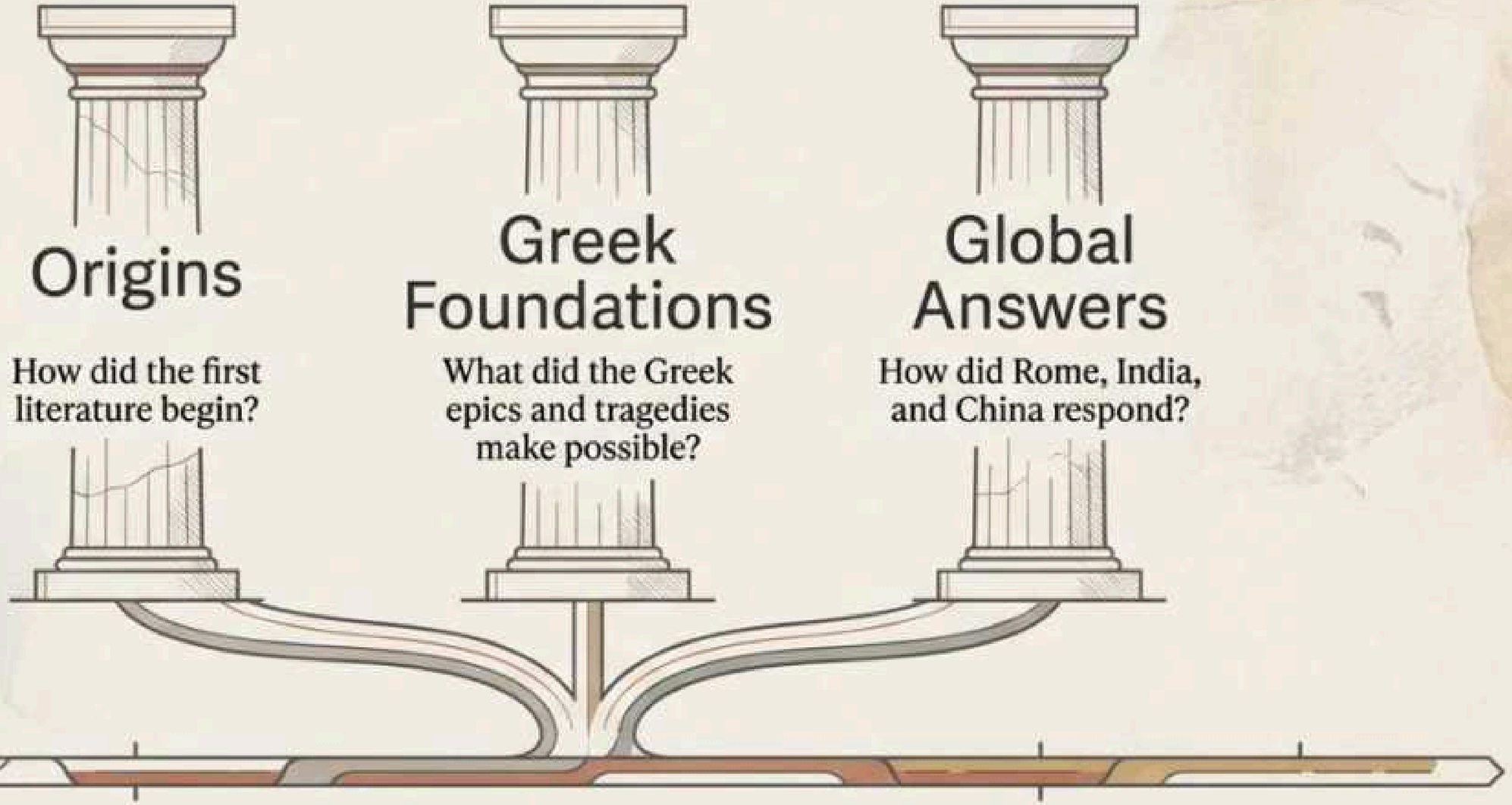
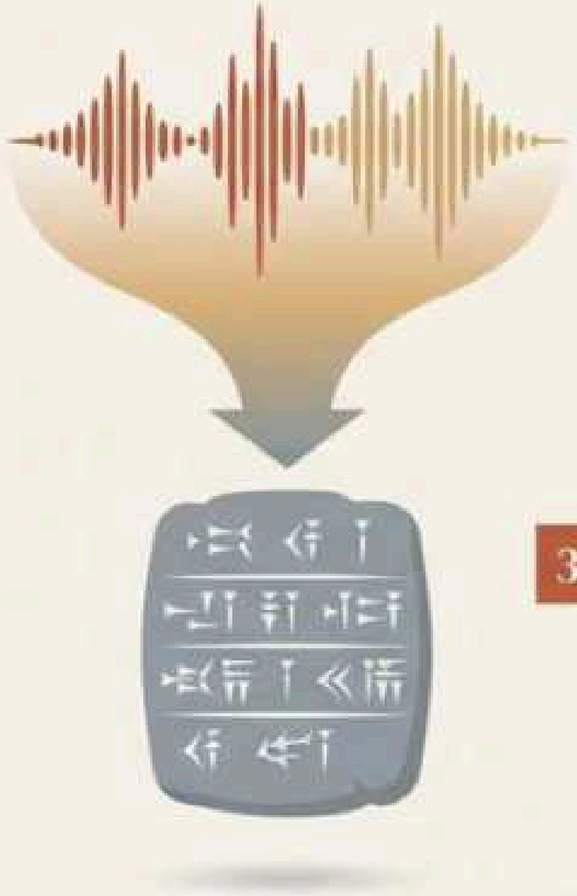
1.1



The works in this collection represent the oldest texts readers still open today. For the next three thousand years, later writers would build upon, borrow from, and answer them.

Gemini Notebook

1.2



Spoken Word

Stories and songs remembered, performed, and passed by voice.

3200 BCE

Writing arrives in Mesopotamia for accounts and records.

The transition to Poems and Prayers.



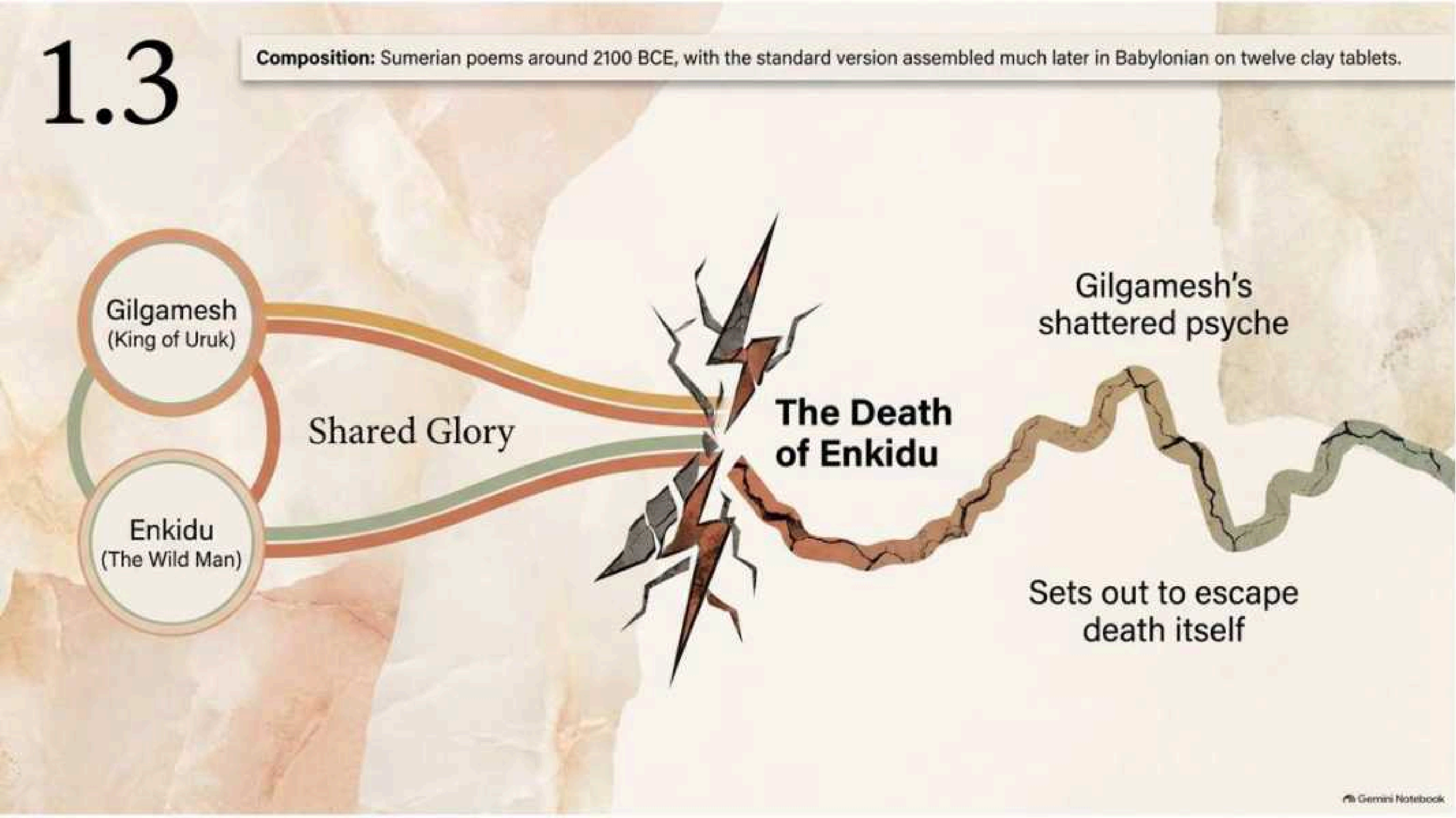
Enheduanna

Identity	Priestess and poet, City of Ur
Era	c. 2300 BCE
Significance	The earliest named author known to history, composing hymns to the goddess Inanna.

Gemini Notebook

1.3

Composition: Sumerian poems around 2100 BCE, with the standard version assembled much later in Babylonian on twelve clay tablets.



Gemini Notebook

1.4

The Archaeological Archive

Meets Utnapishtim (survivor of a great flood resembling Noah in Genesis)

Fails to win immortality



He embraces human legacy, human hands can build.

Returns to Uruk

The Rediscovery

Lost:
For two thousand years

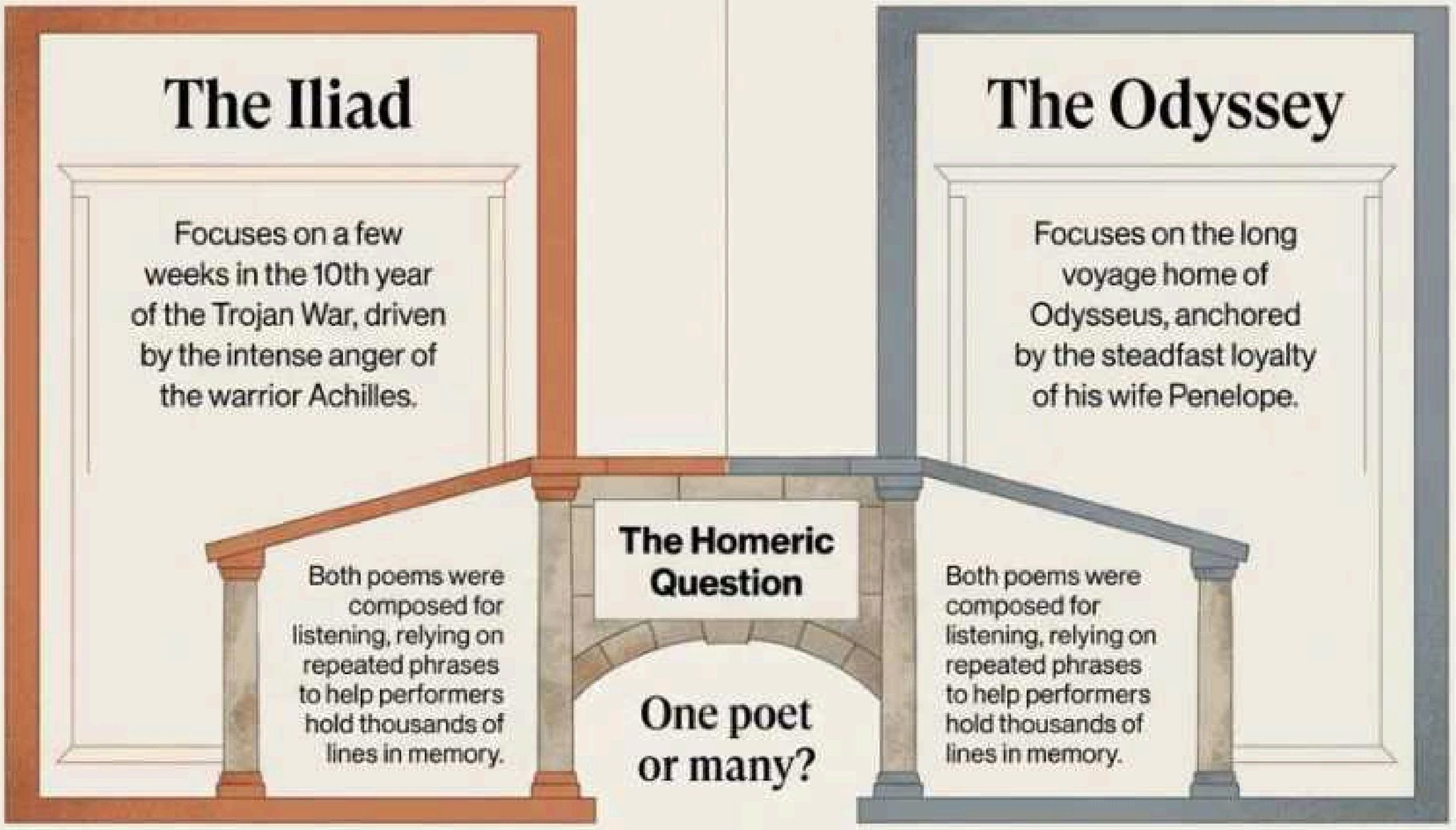
Found:
Among the tablets at Nineveh (19th century)

The Sensation:
In 1872, George Smith announces the translation of the flood tablet, stunning the modern world

Gemini Notebook

1.5

Epics attributed to Homer, written down around the 8th century BCE.



Gemini Notebook

1.6

Scholar Milman Parry's 1930s field research recording singers in Yugoslavia finally explained Homer's compositional methods.



These poems were made to be heard, and they came to to be seen as the foundation of European literature.

Gemini Notebook

1.7



5th Century BCE, Athens. Staged before thousands of citizens at the Festival of the god Dionysus.

Aeschylus

Oresteia (458 BCE)

Theme: Murder and the rise of justice in a city.

Sophocles

Oedipus the King

Theme: The inescapable grip of fate and self-discovery.

Euripides

Medea (431 BCE)

Theme: A brutal examination of betrayal and revenge.

Gemini Notebook

1.8

Oedipus the King (c. 429 BCE)
The king of Thebes sets out to find the killer of the previous king.



Flaw or Mistake
The catalyst for the fall.



Reversal
The collapse of fortune.



Recognition
The agonizing moment of truth.

"He is the killer" AND "He married his mother."

Emotional Output: Pity and Fear

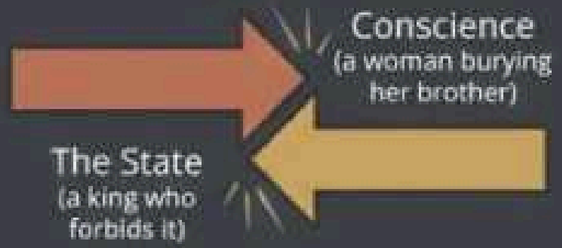
Gemini Notebook

1.9

Laughter and tears were both political arts.

Tragedy (Tears)

Sophocles' *Antigone*
(c. 441 BCE)



Comedy (Laughter)

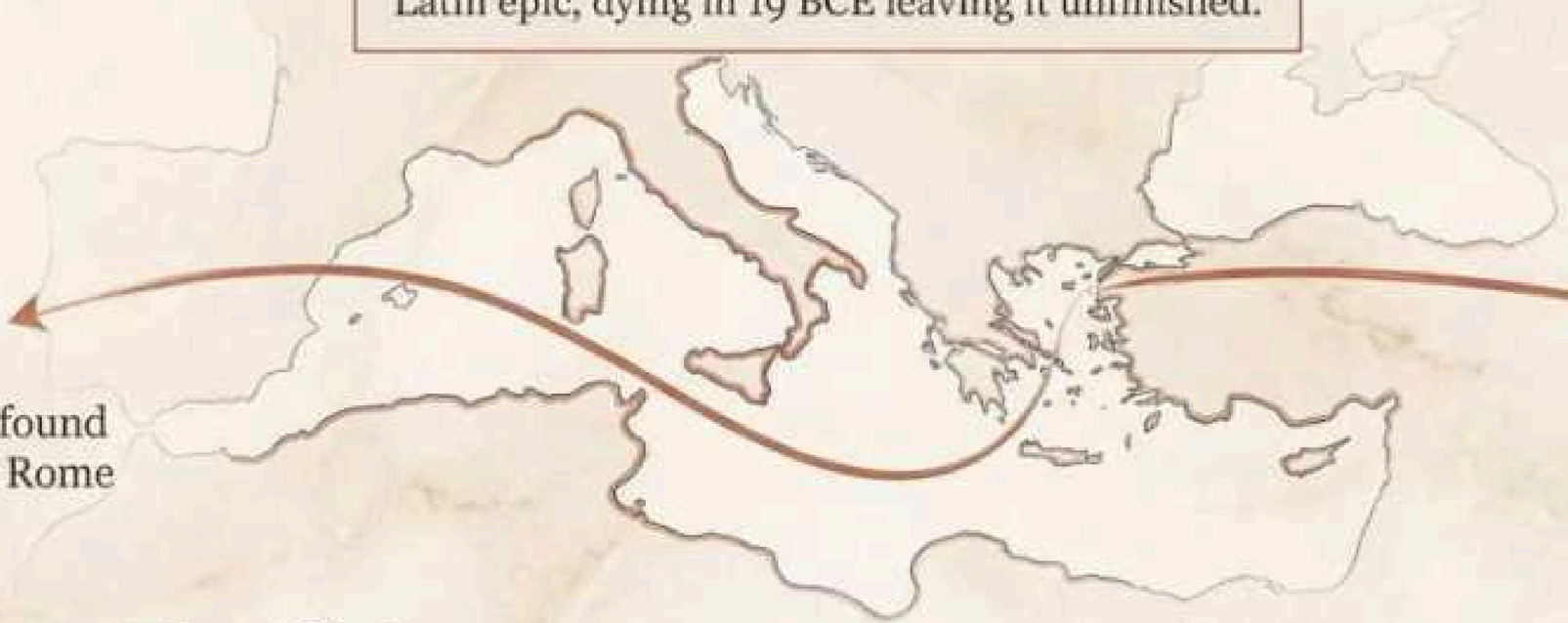
Aristophanes'
Lysistrata

Women successfully ending a war by enacting a marital strike and refusing to sleep with their husbands.

Gemini Notebook

1.10

Virgil spent his final decade writing this 12-book Latin epic, dying in 19 BCE leaving it unfinished.



Sails to Italy to found the bloodline of Rome

Aeneas escapes the burning city of Troy

The State

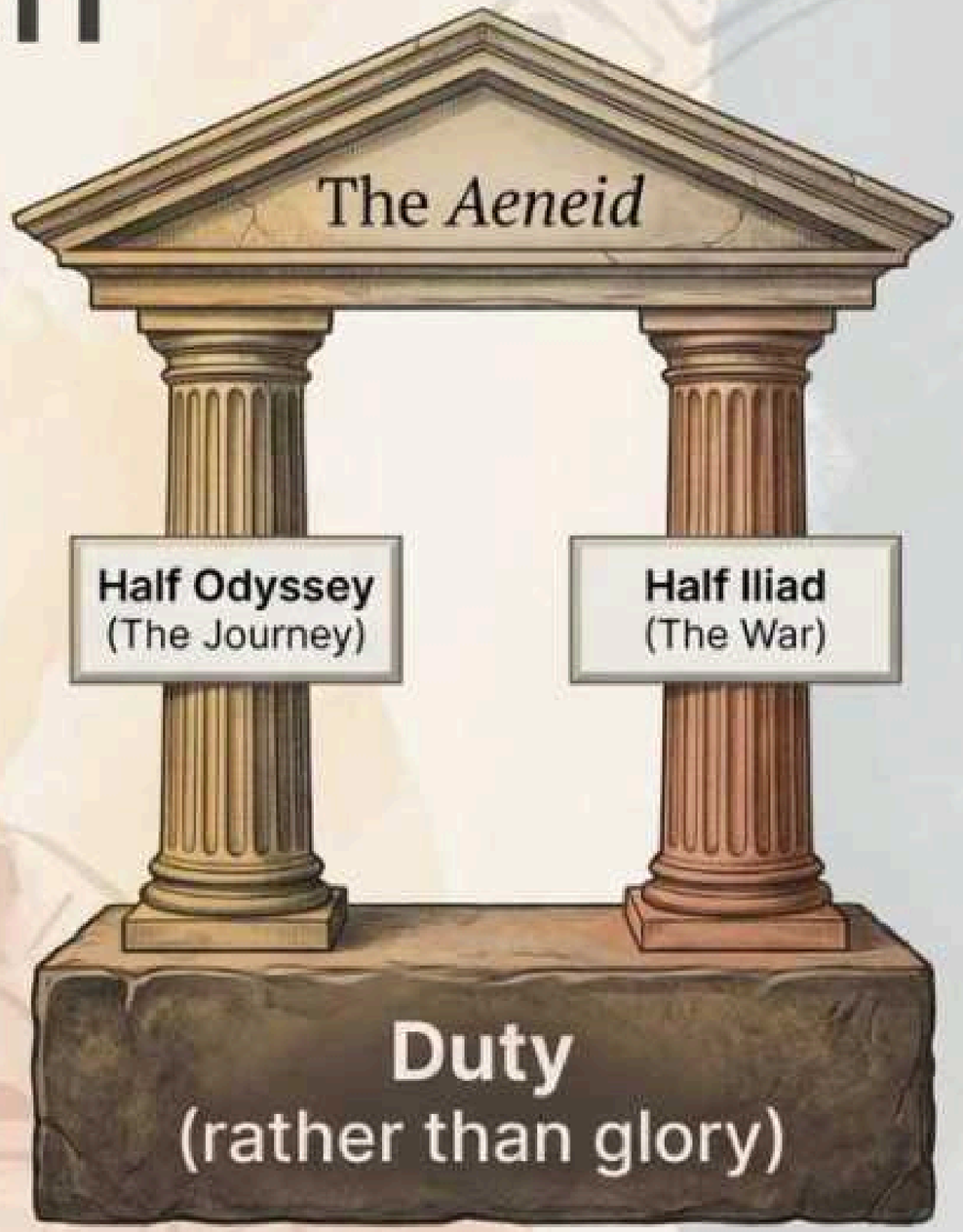
Emperor Augustus's endorsement of the poem as an engine for Empire Building & Glory.

The Poet

Virgil's embedded, quiet theme counting the Human Cost of Empire.

Gemini Notebook

1.11



Ovid

Metamorphoses
(completed c. 8 CE)

Augustus exiled Ovid that same year.

Tales of people transforming into trees,

birds,

and stars.

A storehouse of myths feeding later writers like Shakespeare.

Gemini Notebook

1.12

The Mahabharata

One of the longest poems ever composed. Details an immense, sweeping war between two branches of a royal family.

The Bhagavad Gita

A battlefield dialogue capturing the tension between the warrior Arjuna's paralyzing doubt and the god Krishna's definitive answer regarding duty.

The Ramayana

Attributed to the poet Valmiki, this text tracks the narrative of Rama, his wife Sita, and her epic rescue.

1.13

Great literature flourished far beyond Greece and Rome.

Origin Node

5th Century CE

Sanskrit drama reaches its zenith with Kalidasa. His masterpiece, Shakuntala, revolves around a love story, a curse, a lost ring, and a reunion.

A centuries-spanning bridge from Ancient India to Enlightenment Europe.

Impact Node

1789

William Jones publishes the English translation.

The play astonishes European readers.

Earns high praise from the German writer Goethe.

Gemini Notebook

1.14

The Book of Songs (Shijing). China's earliest poetry, a collection of 305 poems spanning the 10th to 7th centuries BCE.



Later tradition links him to the text, **emphasizing** his belief that **poetry teaches feeling and judgment.**

For more than two thousand years, Chinese students memorized these texts as foundational bedrock.

Gemini Notebook

1.15

Narrative | Law | Prophecy | Poetry (including the Psalms)

Deep Dive Callout

The Book of Job: *A profound dramatic poem where a good man loses everything and dares to demand an explanation from God.*

Lens 1	**A sacred, divine text to millions.**
Lens 2	**A vast literary resource continuously utilized by later monumental writers, ranging from Milton to Melville.**

Gemini Notebook

1.16

Task 1: Translation Analysis

Compare two translations of the Odyssey's opening lines. Notice how each translator chooses words for the same lines. What changes? What stays the same?

	Duty	Love	Fate	Power
Gilgamesh				
Antigone				
Aeneid				
Gita				