



Homer:
The Iliad

THE NORTON
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The Iliad

Video:

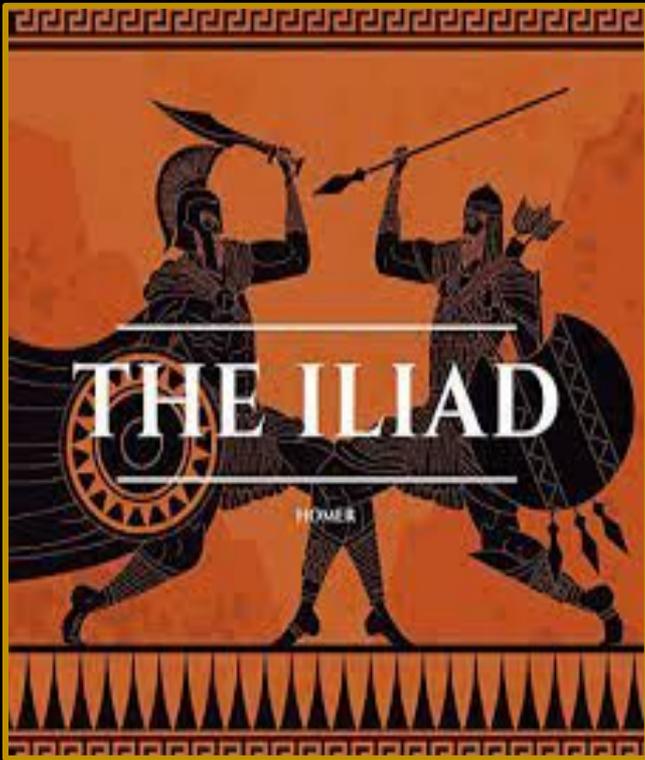


Did ancient Troy really exist?
(Einav Zamir Dembin | TED-Ed)

The Iliad

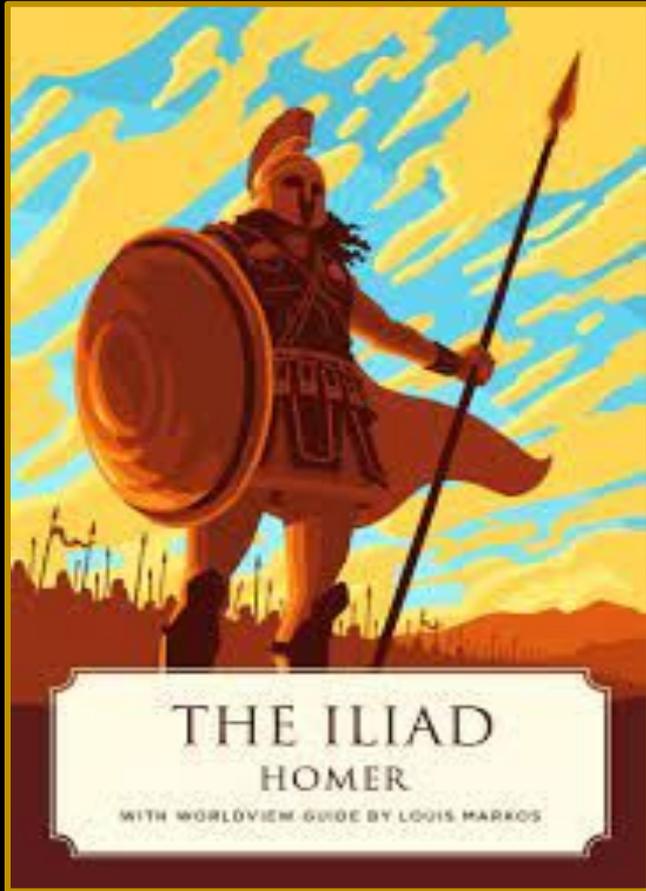
HOMER:

The Iliad & The Odyssey



- Form: Epic Poetry
- Country of Origin: Greece
- Key Themes: *Anger and Conflict, Heroism, Gods and Humans, Coming of Age, Loyalty, Death*

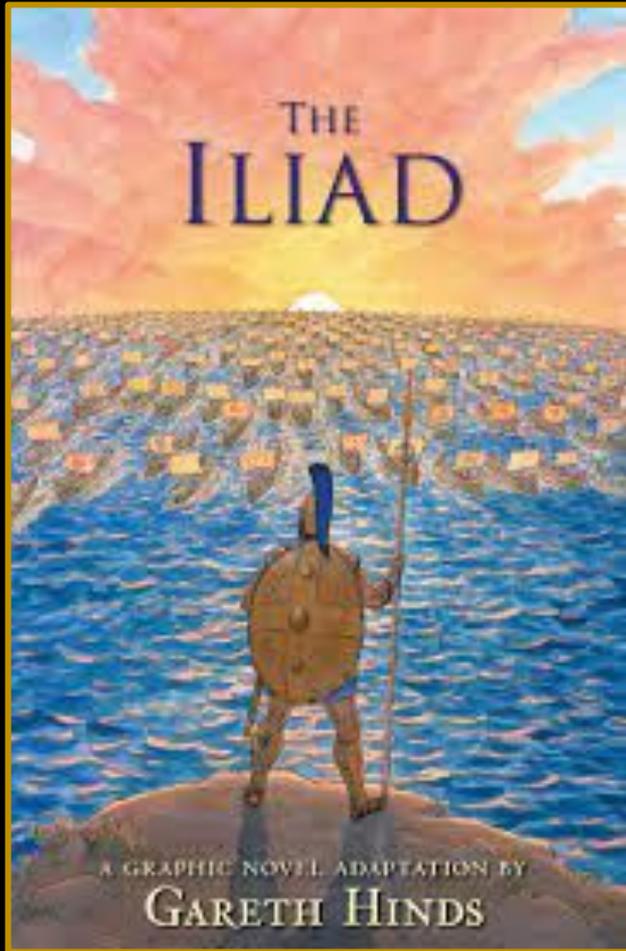
The Iliad



Summary:

- The main narrative of the *Iliad* takes place when the war is in its tenth year and ends before the capture of the city. ***Its central focus is not on the conflict between Greeks and Trojans, but on a conflict among Greek commanders.***
- The *Odyssey* deals explicitly with the relationship between the kind of people we know and those who are strange to us. *It is about a journey that spans most of the world as it tells the story of Odysseus's homecoming from Troy, tracing his reclamation of a household from which he has been absent for the past twenty years.*

The Iliad

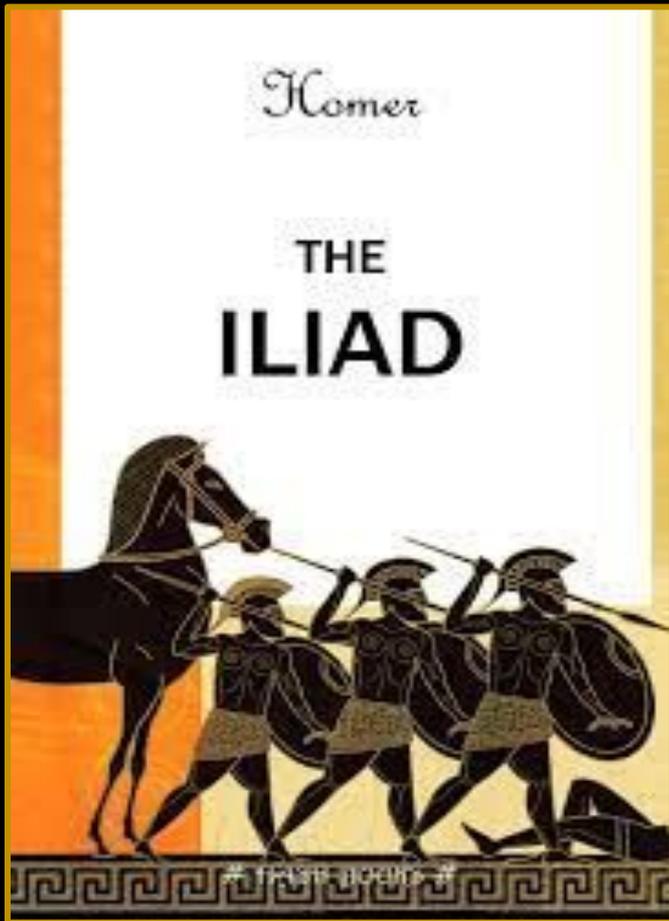


Key Passages:

- *Iliad*: “uncontrollable grief seized all; / close by the gates they met Priam as he brought Hector’s body; / at the front of his beloved wife and lady mother ripped their hair in grief / for him . . .”

– (*Iliad* 24. 708–711).

The Iliad

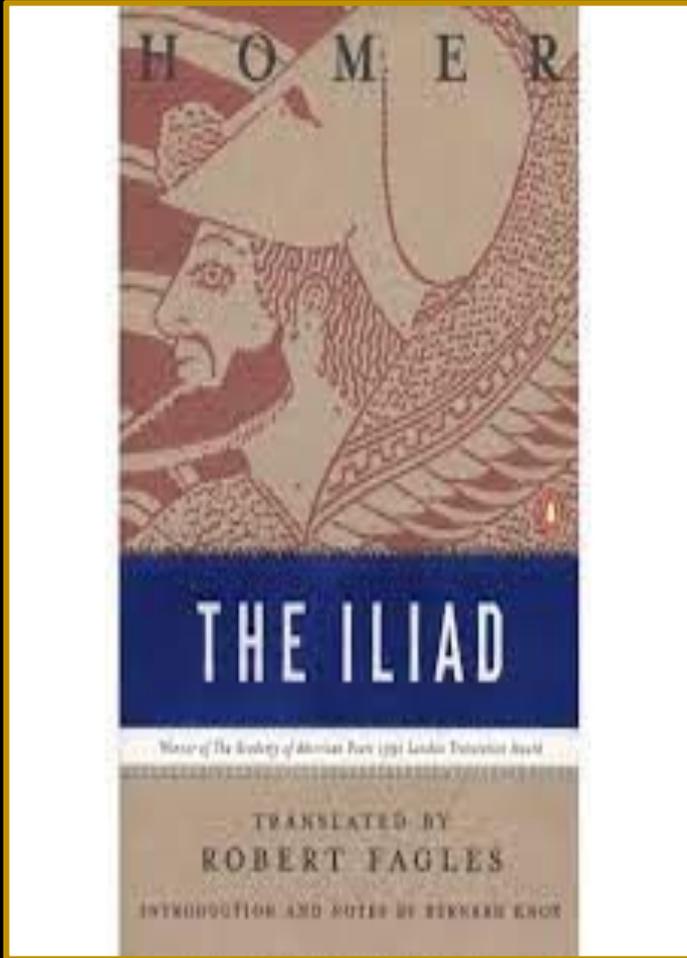


- However much Achilles might wish for the end of fighting, he does not control his rage; he kills Hector and then mutilates his body.
- Similarly uncontrolled passions and vices *include* Agamemnon's pride, Hector's vainglory, and Paris's lust. In each case, the lack of prudence and temperance *brings havoc and destruction* as a necessary consequence.

The Iliad

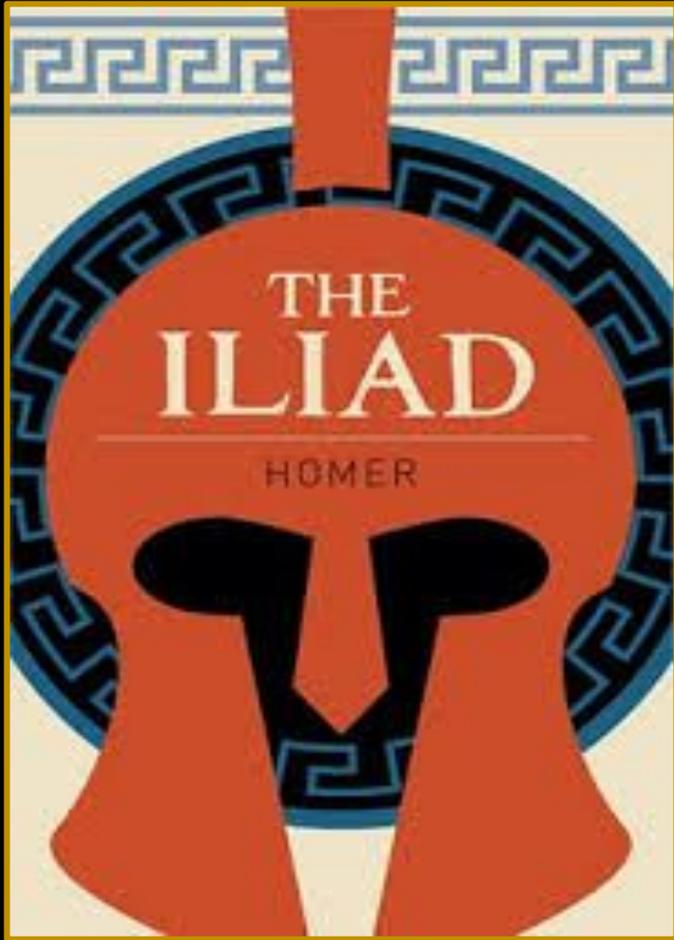
Key Passages:

- *Odyssey*: “Friends, listen! Zeus has cursed me more than all / the women of my family. Already / I lost my noble, lionhearted husband, / most talented and brave of all the Greeks, / whose fame is spread through Greece. And now the winds / have taken my dear son, and no one told me / that he was setting out. Shame on you all! / You knew that he was leaving on that ship! / Not one of you came here to wake me up! / If only I had known about his journey, / he would have stayed—no matter how he wanted / to leave—or else have left me dead right here” (*Odyssey* 4. 722–33).



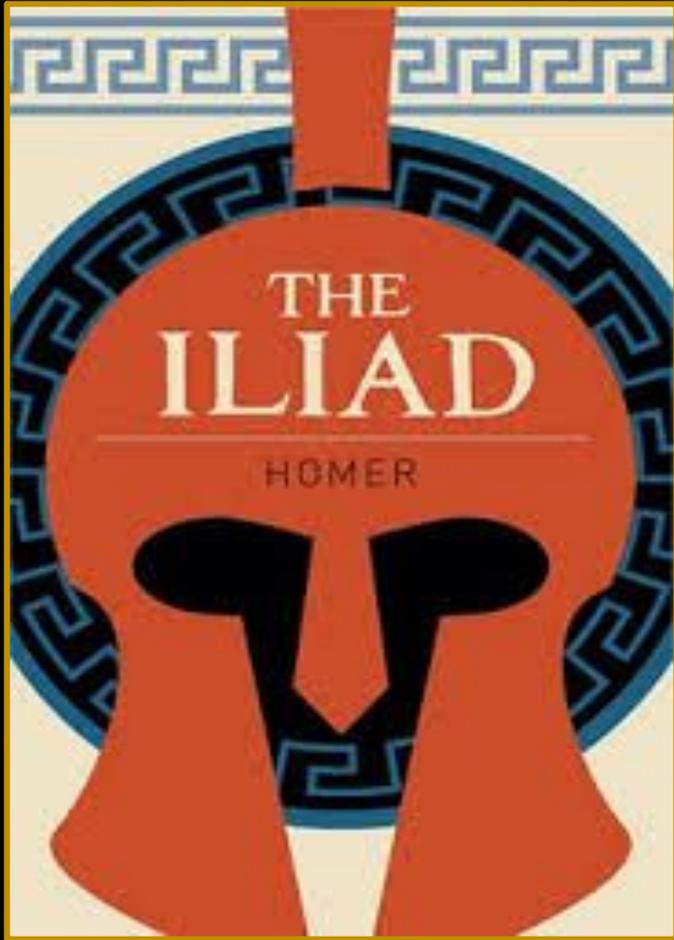
The Iliad - Book I

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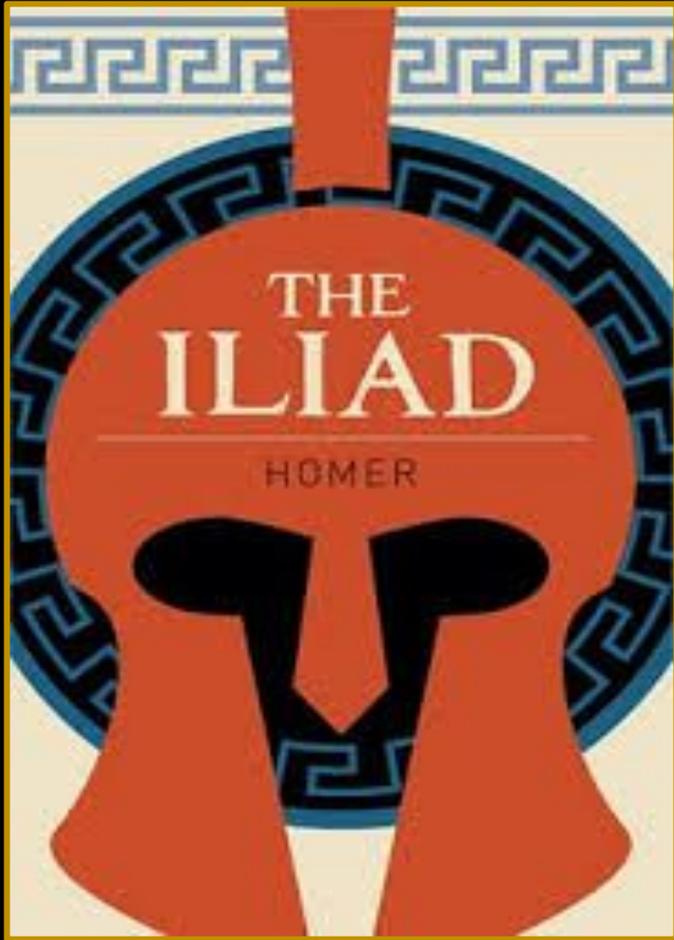
- Achilles angry with Agamemnon, stays out of the fighting.
- The Trojans make a series of successful attacks against the Greek forces.
- They are led by the greatest of the Trojan heroes, Hector, son of Priam and brother of Paris, who leaves behind his wife and infant son to challenge the invading army and defend his home.

*The Iliad - Book I
Continued*



- When Hector brings the Trojan soldiers right up to the Greek ships, ready to set them on fire, Agamemnon acknowledges that he made a mistake to alienate Achilles, and sends messengers (including Odysseus) to try to persuade the hero to return to the war.
- But Achilles holds out, and the fighting continues.

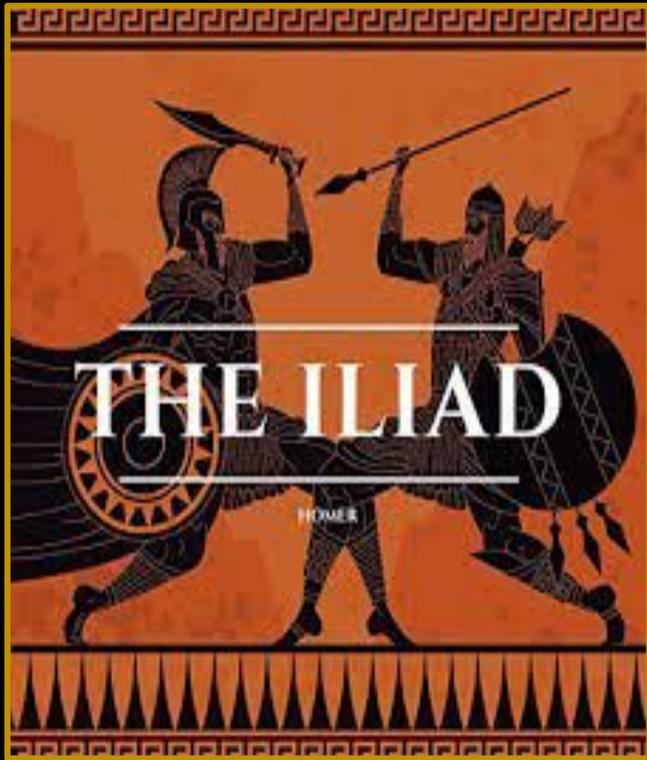
The Iliad - Book I
Continued



- Many die on both sides.
- Finally, Achilles' friend, Patroclus, volunteers to fight in his place, borrowing Achilles' own armor.
- He is killed by Hector.
- Hector strips Achilles' divine armor from Patroclus' corpse.
- A fight for the body ensues and the Greeks take Patroclus's body but have to retreat with the Trojans at their heels.

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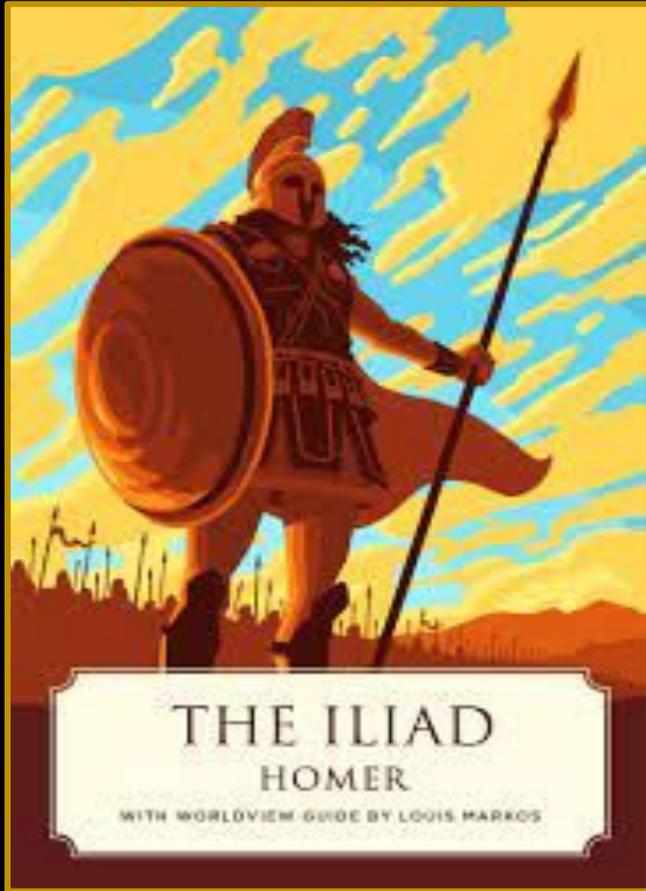
The Iliad - Book XVIII



- Achilles finally accepts gifts of restitution from Agamemnon, as he refused to do earlier.
- His return to the fighting brings terror to the Trojans and turns the battle into a rout; he kills every Trojan that crosses his path.
- As he pursues Agenor, Apollo tricks him by rescuing his intended victim (*he spirits him away in a mist*) and assumes Agenor's shape to lead Achilles away from the walls of Troy.
- The Trojans take refuge in the city, all except Hector.

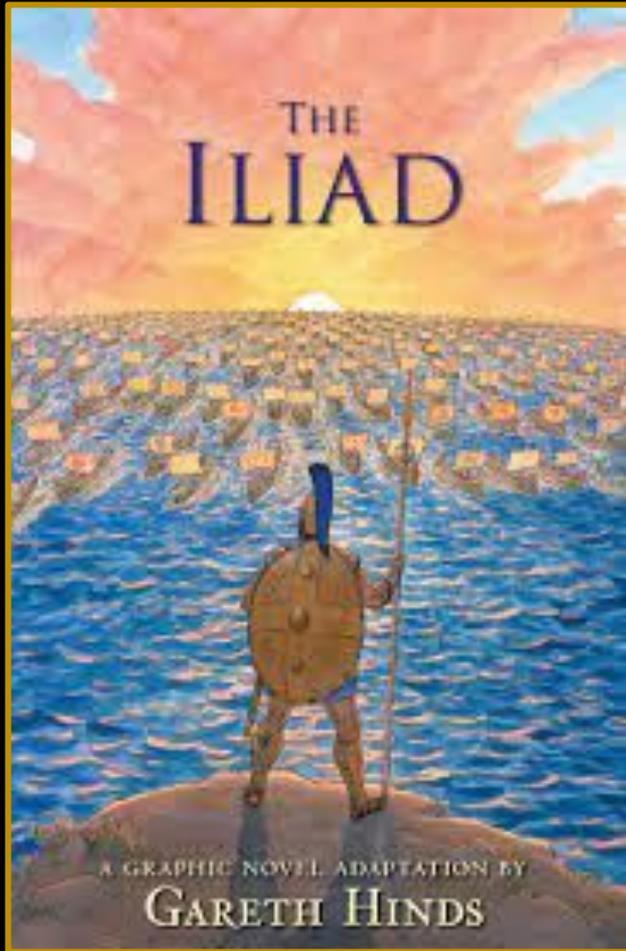
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The Iliad - Book XXII



- Achilles buries Patroclus, and the Greeks celebrate the dead hero's fame with athletic games, for which Achilles gives the prizes.

The Iliad - Book XXIV



Ref. pp.194 (NAWOL)

- Hector's funeral

The Iliad

I. As is evident from the initial lines, Achilles' rage is the governing passion of *The Iliad*, but it is also representative of all of the passions without the guidance of prudence that are presented throughout the work.

Achilles's anger not only keeps him from the conflict with the Trojans at the beginning of *The Iliad* but is also that passion that leads to his slaughter of Hector after Patroclus's death. In brief moments of rational clarity, Achilles understands that he ought to control his rage and that his lack of ability to do so places certain blame upon his own head, as when he laments Patroclus.

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II. The extended Homeric similes not only complement the vivid nature of the descriptions throughout *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, but they also anchor the depiction of what are otherwise often fantastic events firmly within the sphere of human experience and imagination.

- In one of Homer's most gripping similes, Hector awaits the coming of Achilles, "As a snake by its hole in the mountains waits for a man, / having eaten evil poisons, and a deadly anger comes upon it, / and it shoots a stinging glance, coiled by its hole." (*Iliad*, 22. 93–95).
- Not only expressing the deadly intent, hatred, and tense expectation with which Hector waits, this simile also helps convey the depth of passion that such a superlative hero would have felt. Rather than simply record a description of the different, extraordinary aspects of Hector at this moment, the Homeric simile creates an entire likeness that more succinctly and powerfully expresses the tension.

The Iliad

- In a similar manner, Odysseus, finally home, strings his great bow “carefully, inch by inch—as easily / as an experienced musician stretches / a sheep-gut string around a lyre’s peg” (21. 407–9).
- In contrast to the reader’s understanding of the symbolic importance and precariousness of Odysseus’s stringing of the bow, the simile compares the action to the commonplace and casual action of a musician, a comparison that at once conveys Odysseus’s ease as well as the heightening of tension through situational understatement.

The Iliad

III. The dissension in the Greek army between Achilles and Agamemnon is mirrored by dissension among the Trojans and the gods.

- While the difficulties between Achilles and Agamemnon are most central to the plot because of the serious consequences of Achilles's anger, it is nevertheless important to understand that the Trojans have similar difficulties.
- Despite the fact that Troy is being besieged on account of Paris stealing Helen, the reader finds that Paris is not particularly devoted to the military defense of the city. Hector rebukes him for dawdling with Helen. Yet not only does Paris not become ashamed, but the very wife he stole rebukes him and praises Hector instead.

The Iliad

- The potential conflict of interest between all of the Greeks having to fight for Menelaus's wife is parallel to the problematic necessity of all of Troy having to defend Paris's theft.
- Differences between the gods concerning their favorite humans are similarly divisive, as the reader finds in the violent arguments between Hera and Zeus.
- Notably, the entire his-tory of the Trojan War begins with Eris, the goddess of discord, and her legacy is a fundamental problem for all involved in *The Iliad*.

The Iliad

IV. A common feature of classical epics is that they begin *in medias res* (in the middle of things), and this not only creates a sophisticated narrative structure with the recounting of past events, but it also heightens the importance of time.

- When *The Iliad* begins, the Greeks have already been fighting at Troy for nine years, and the initial source of conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles is over plunder from battles that have already transpired. An essential question for the reader to ask, then, is why does the narrative begin where it does?

The Iliad

- *The Odyssey* begins in a parallel manner—Odysseus has been traveling home for nine years, since the sacking of Troy.
- Part of the importance of **both epics** beginning *in medias res* is that *it reflects an understanding of man as a temporal, rational creature whose intellect can order and learn from past events and can look forward to future ones.*
- Knowledge of placement in time, or in an understandable progression of events, is an important form of self-knowledge in these works.

The Iliad

- Class Discussion Question/s : *The Iliad /The Odyssey
- ***What role does war play in *The Iliad*? Is it presented as a good thing or a bad thing? What understanding of war do the different characters have? What are the worthwhile causes for fighting a war?**
- Compare/Contrast Odysseus's virtues and vices to those of Achilles. Which character is more heroic, admirable and inspiring? Why? Why Not? Use specifics from the text to support your answers.

The Iliad

Response Question/s : The Iliad (*Select one of the two questions to respond to*) Responses are due by 11:59pm on Wednesdays to the appropriate dropbox.

1. Is Achilles's anger a virtue or a vice, as presented in *The Iliad*? How is it made manifest in characters other than Achilles?

2. Consider the presentation of the gods in *The Iliad*. What is the gods' role? Do they control humans? Do humans have free will? Are the gods simply fickle, or do they support some essential order? What does this presentation of the gods reveal about the ancient Greek understanding of the divine?

The Iliad

Conclusion: Questions/Comments?