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Introduction to The Iliad The Iliad, an epic poem attributed to the ancient Greek poet Homer, stands as a monumental work in the canon of Western literature. Composed in the 8th century BCE, it chronicles a brief period during the Trojan War, a conflict that has become legendary in Greek mythology. The significance of The Iliad extends beyond its narrative; it serves as an essential reflection on the values, beliefs, and cultural identity of ancient Greece.The Trojan War, a ten-year siege of the city of Troy by a coalition of Greek states, is steeped in myth and lore. The war's backdrop is rich with tales of heroism, betrayal, and divine intervention, making it a pivotal event in both history and mythology. The Iliad captures the essence of this war, exploring the intricate dynamics between mortals and the gods, and the very nature of human experience.Historical and Cultural Background The historical context of the Trojan War is often debated among scholars, as it intertwines with mythological narratives. Many believe that the war may have been inspired by actual conflicts in the Late Bronze Age, particularly the rise of Mycenaean Greece. Archaeological findings at the site of ancient Troy (Hisarlik in modern Turkey) have provided evidence of destruction layers that could correspond to a historical siege.Greek mythology plays a crucial role in understanding the narrative and characters of The Iliad. The stories of the gods, heroes, and legendary figures permeate the plot, reflecting the beliefs and values of ancient Greek society. Concepts such as honor (timê), fate (moira), and the consequences of hubris are central to the characters' motivations and actions.Main Characters and Their RolesThe Iliad features a rich tapestry of characters, each contributing to the epic's profound themes and conflicts. Among the most significant are:Achilles – The greatest warrior of the Greeks, whose wrath and pride lead to significant consequences for the Greek forces.Hector – The noble prince of Troy, known for his bravery and sense of duty, he represents the tragic hero caught between personal honor and familial duty.Agamemnon – The leader of the Greek forces, whose conflict with Achilles sets the stage for much of the epic's action.Priam – The aged king of Troy, who embodies the pain of loss and the desire for peace.Character motivations are deeply intertwined with their relationships. Achilles' pride and quest for glory often put him at odds with Agamemnon, while Hector's duty to protect Troy clashes with his love for his family. These dynamics create a complex web of interactions that drive the narrative forward.Structure and Themes of The IliadThe Iliad is structured in 24 books and employs a dactylic hexameter, a poetic form that enhances its oral tradition. The narrative unfolds in a non-linear fashion, often using flashbacks and dramatic speeches to convey emotions and motivations of its characters.Central themes within The Iliad include:Honor and Glory: The pursuit of personal honor is a driving force for many characters, particularly Achilles.Fate and Free Will: Characters grapple with their destinies, often feeling trapped by the whims of fate.Wrath: Achilles' anger is a central theme, leading to devastating consequences for himself and others.The Human Condition: The epic explores the struggles of life, death, and the quest for meaning amidst chaos.The Role of the Gods In The IliadDivine intervention is a hallmark of The Iliad, with numerous gods and goddesses actively participating in mortal affairs. Their influences often reflect the complexities of human emotions and conflicts. For example:Athena: The goddess of wisdom, who supports the Greeks and often intervenes in battles.Aphrodite: The goddess of love, who favors Paris and the Trojans, leading to significant tensions.Zeus: The king of the gods, who attempts to maintain a balance between the two sides, reflecting the themes of fate and justice.These deities not only influence the outcome of battles but also symbolize the values and fears of the society that worshipped them, highlighting the interplay between divine will and human action.Major Events and BattlesThe Iliad is filled with significant events and battles that showcase both the grandeur and tragedy of war. Notable moments include:The Quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon: This conflict leads to Achilles' withdrawal from battle and sets off a chain reaction of events.The Death of Patroclus: Patroclus dons Achilles' armor and fights bravely until he is killed by Hector, igniting Achilles' wrath.The Duel between Achilles and Hector: A climactic moment that illustrates themes of honor and revenge.The Fall of Troy: While it is not depicted in The Iliad, the groundwork for Troy's eventual downfall is laid through the events of the epic.Strategies and tactics are also highlighted, showcasing the ingenuity and bravery of the warriors on both sides. The interplay of strength, skill, and strategy contributes to the richness of the narrative.Legacy and Influence of The IliadThe Iliad has had a profound impact on literature, art, and culture throughout history. Its themes and characters have inspired countless adaptations and reinterpretations across various mediums. Some notable influences include:Literature: The Iliad has inspired writers from Virgil to modern authors, influencing the epic tradition and narrative structure.Art: Numerous artists, including painters and sculptors, have depicted scenes from The Iliad, capturing its dramatic essence.Film and Theater: Adaptations of The Iliad continue to resonate, with films like "Troy" and various stage adaptations bringing the epic to contemporary audiences.The epic's exploration of war, love, and humanity remains relevant, allowing it to resonate with each new generation.Conclusion: The Enduring Relevance of The IliadThe Iliad endures as a timeless exploration of human nature, war, and the pursuit of honor. Its themes of wrath, fate, and the complexities of human relationships continue to provoke thought and discussion in contemporary society. As we confront modern conflicts and ethical dilemmas, the lessons gleaned from The Iliad remain poignant, reminding us of the enduring struggles faced by humanity.In a world still grappling with the implications of war and the search for meaning, Homer's epic serves as a powerful reflection on the human condition, urging us to reflect on our own values and choices. Poetry Homer Translated by Samuel Butler An epic poem written by the Greek poet Homer, the Iliad recounts the events of the final weeks of the Trojan War and the siege of the city of Troy after Helen of Sparta is kidnapped by the Trojan prince Paris. Homer's Iliad is one of the oldest works known in Western literature and is typically dated back to some time in the 8th-century BCE, though its exact date of completion is speculative. The poem focuses on the quarrel between King Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaean (Greek) army, and the Greek hero Achilles, whose prowess in battle alters the course of the war. Agamemnon incurs the wrath of Achilles after claiming one of his concubines as his own, slighting the hero and resulting in Achilles's withdrawing himself and his army from the Achaean forces completely. This departure puts the Achaean forces at a significant disadvantage, and the remainder of the story explores the effects of pride in the quest for glory. Through its portrayal of significant events in the Trojan War, the Iliad explores themes of mortality, glory, and fate while relating one of the most widely read and celebrated stories in history. The Iliad was followed closely by Homer's Odyssey, which followed the hero Ulysses (also known as Odysseus,) on his journey home from the Trojan War, and inspired Virgil's Aeneid, which follows the hero Aeneas on his journey to Italy. (Epic Poem, Greek, c. 750 BCE, 15,693 lines)Introduction | Synopsis | Analysis | Resources"The Iliad" (Gr: "Iliás") is an epic poem by the ancient Greek poet Homer, which recounts some of the significant events of the final weeks of the Trojan War and the Greek siege of the city of Troy (which was also known as Ilion, Ilios or Ilium in ancient times). Written in the mid-8th Century BCE, "The Iliad" is usually considered to be the earliest work in the whole Western literary tradition, and one of the best known and loved stories of all time. The stirring scenes of bloody battle, the wrath of Achilles and the constant interventions of the gods, it explores themes of glory, wrath, homecoming and fate. Moreover, the Homeric epic has provided subjects and stories for many other later Greek, Roman, and Renaissance writings.FactInformationAuthorHomerDate writtenMid-8th Century BCESettingTrojan War, ancient GreeceMain CharactersAchilles, Agamemnon, Hector, Priam, Paris, Odysseus, Diomedes, Patroclus, MenelausKey ThemesGlory, wrath, heroism, honor, fate, war, peaceThe story covered in "The Iliad" begins nearly ten years into the siege of Troy by the Greek forces, led by Agamemnon, King of Mycenae. The Greeks are quarrelling about whether or not to return Chryseis, a Trojan captive of King Agamemnon, to her father, Chryses, a priest of Apollo. Agamemnon wins the argument and refuses to give her up and threatens to ransom the girl to her father. In turn, Chryses pleads Apollo to help him, so the offended god plagues the Greek camp with a pestilence.At the warrior-hero Achilles orders, the Greek soldiers force Agamemnon to return Chryseis in order to appease Apollo and end the pestilence. But, when Agamemnon eventually reluctantly agrees to give her back, he takes in her stead Briseis, Achilles's own war-prize concubine. Feeling dishonoured, Achilles wrathfully withdraws both himself and his Myrmidon warriors from the Trojan War.Testing the loyalty of the remaining Greeks, Agamemnon pretends to order them to abandon the war, but Odysseus encourages the Greeks to pursue the fight. During a brief truce in the hostilities between the Trojan and Greek troops, Paris and Menelaus meet in single combat over Helen, while she and old King Priam of Troy watch from the city walls. Despite the goddess Aphrodite's intervention on behalf of the over-matched Paris, Menelaus wins. After the fight is over, the goddess Athena who favors the Greeks provokes the Trojans to break the truce, and another battle begins.Heroes of Iliad by TischbeinDuring the new fight, the Greek hero Diomedes, strengthened by Athena, obliterates the Trojans before him. However, in his blind arrogance and blood-lust, he strikes and injures Aphrodite. Meanwhile, in the Trojan castle, despite the misgivings of his wife, Andromache, the Trojan hero, Hector, son of King Priam, challenges the Greek warrior-hero Ajax to single combat, and is almost overcome in battle. Throughout everything, in the background, the various gods and goddesses (particularly Hera, Athena, Apollo and Poseidon) continue to argue among themselves and to manipulate and intervene in the war, despite Zeus' specific orders to not do so.Achilles steadfastly refuses to give in to either pleas for help from Agamemnon, Odysseus, Ajax, Phoenix and Nestor, declining the offered honours and riches; even Agamemnon's belated offer to return Briseis to him. In the meantime, Diomedes and Odysseus sneak into the Trojan camp and wreak havoc. But, with Achilles and his warriors out of battle, the tide appears to begin to turn in favour of the Trojans. Agamemnon is injured in the battle and, despite Ajax's efforts, Hector successfully breaches the fortified Greek camp, wounding Odysseus and Diomedes in the process, and threatens to set the Greek ships on fire.Trying to rectify the situation, Patroclus convinced his friend and lover, Achilles, to dress in Achilles' own armour and lead the Myrmidons against the Trojans. The fight between the two times Patroclus launches against the Trojans, he is successful, killing Sarpedon (son of Zeus who participated in the war). Intoxicated by his success, Patroclus forgets Achilles' warning to be careful, and pursues the fleeing Trojans to the walls of Troy. He would have taken the city were it not for the actions of Apollo. The god of music and the sun, is the first one to strike Patroclus. After that first blow and in the heat of the battle, Hector also finds the disguised Patroclus and, thinking him to be Achilles, fights and (with Apollo's help) kills him. Menelaus and the Greeks manage to recover Patroclus's corpse before Hector can inflict more damage.Distraught at the death of his companion, Achilles then reconciles with Agamemnon and rejoins the battle, destroying all the Trojans before him in his fury. As the ten year war reaches its climax, even the gods join in the battle and the earth shakes with the clamour of the combat.Dressed in new armour fashioned specially for him by Hephaestus, Achilles takes revenge for his friend Patroclus by slaying Hector in single combat, but then defiles and desecrates the Trojan prince's corpse for several days. Now, at last, Patroclus' funeral can be celebrated in what Achilles sees as a fitting manner. Hector's father, King Priam, emboldened by his grief and aided by Hermes, recovers Hector's corpse from Achilles, and "The Iliad" ends with Hector's funeral during a twelve day truce granted by Achilles.Although attributed to Homer, "The Iliad" is clearly dependent on an older oral tradition and may well have been the collective inheritance of many singer-poets over a long period of time (the historical Fall of Troy is usually dated to around the start of the 12th Century BCE). Homer was probably one of the first generation of authors who were also literate, as the Greek alphabet was introduced in the early 8th Century BCE. We know this because the language used in epic poems is an archaic version of Ionic Greek, with admixtures from certain other dialects such as Aeolic Greek. However, it is by no means certain that Homer himself (if in fact such a man ever really existed) actually wrote down the verses."The Iliad" was part of a group of ancient poems known as the "Epic Cycle", most of which are now lost to us. These poems dealt with the history of the Trojan War and the events surrounding it. Whether or not they were written down, we do know that Homer's poems (along with others in the "Epic Cycle") were recited in later days at festivals and ceremonial occasions by professional singers called "rhapsodes". Interestingly enough, these singers used rhythm staffs in order to create a beat out of the rhythm of the words used in the poems. "The Iliad" itself does not cover the early events of the Trojan War, which had occurred ten years before the events described in the poem. The early occurrences of the Trojan war included an attempt to rescue Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, after her abduction by the Trojan prince, Paris. Likewise, the death of Achilles and the eventual fall of Troy are not covered in the poem, and these matters are the subjects of other (non-Homeric) "Epic Cycle" poems, which survive only in fragments. "The Odyssey", a separate work also by Homer, narrates Odysseus' decade-long journey home to Ithaca after the end of the Trojan War.The poem consists of twenty-four scrolls, containing 15,693 lines of dactylic hexameter verse. The entire poem has a formal rhythm that is consistent throughout (making it easier to memorize) and yet varied slightly from line to line (preventing it from being monotonous). Many phrases, sometimes whole passages, are repeated verbatim over and over again throughout "The Iliad", partly to fulfil the demands of the metre and partly as part of the formulaic oral tradition. In the same way, many of the descriptive phrases that are linked with a certain character (such as "swift-footed Achilles", "Diomedes of the great war cry", "Hector of the shining helm", and "Agamemnon the lord of men") match the number of syllables in a hero's name. This is why they are repeated regularly to the extent that they almost seem to become part of the characters' names themselves.The immortal gods and goddesses are portrayed as characters in "The Iliad", displaying individuality and will in their actions. But they are also stock religious figures, sometimes allegorical, sometimes psychological, and their relation to humans is extremely complex. They are often used as a way of explaining how or why an event took place, but they are also sometimes used as comic relief from the war, mimicking, parodying and mocking mortals. Indeed, it is often the gods, not the mortals, who seem casual, petty and small-minded.The main theme of the poem is that of war and peace, and the whole poem is essentially a description of war and fighting. There is a sense of horror and futility built into Homer's epic, and yet, there is a sense of heroism and glory that adds a glamour to the fighting: Homer appears both to abhor war and to glorify it. Frequent similes tell of the peacetime efforts back home in Greece, and serve as contrasts to the war, reminding us of the human values that are destroyed by fighting, as well as what is worth fighting for.The concept of heroism, and the honour that results from it, is also one of the major themes running through the poem. Achilles in particular represents the heroic code, and his struggle revolves around his belief in an honour system, as opposed to Agamemnon's reliance on royal privilege. But, as fighter after heroic fighter enters the war in search of honour and is slain before our eyes, the question always remains as to whether their struggle, heroic or not, is really worth the sacrifice."Menin" or "menis" ("anger" or "wrath") is the word that opens "The Iliad", and one of the major themes of the poem is Achilles coming to terms with his anger and taking responsibility for his actions and emotions. Indice The Trojan War, one of the most renowned conflicts in Greek mythology, has captured the imaginations of poets throughout history. This epic war, waged between the Greeks and the Trojans, has inspired countless epic poems that delve into the heroism, tragedy, and strife that defined this ancient battleground. From Homer's Iliad to Virgil's Aeneid, these gripping narratives offer a poetic glimpse into the Trojan War's rich tapestry. 1. The Iliad by Homer The Iliad is perhaps the most famous epic poem about the Trojan War. Attributed to the legendary poet Homer, this monumental work spans over 15,000 lines and portrays the events of the war's final weeks. Primarily focusing on the wrath of Achilles, his feud with Agamemnon, and the tragic demise of Hector, The Iliad showcases the immense valor, divine intervention, and human suffering that characterized the war. Homer's vivid descriptions and masterful storytelling continue to captivate readers to this day. While The Odyssey is not solely centered around the Trojan War, it serves as a captivating sequel to The Iliad. Also penned by Homer, this epic poem narrates the arduous ten-year journey of Odysseus as he attempts to return home to Ithaca after the war. Along the way, he encounters mythical creatures, navigates treacherous waters, and faces numerous challenges. The poem's inclusion of the Trojan War's aftermath provides a unique perspective on the war's impact on both heroes and ordinary mortals. Written by the Roman poet Virgil, The Aeneid serves as a sequel to both The Iliad and The Odyssey. This epic poem follows the journey of Aeneas, a Trojan hero, as he flees from the fallen city of Troy and eventually founds Rome. While The Aeneid explores a broader scope beyond the Trojan War, it offers a compelling exploration of the war's aftermath, the hero's quest, and the destiny of a new empire. Virgil's work masterfully weaves together themes of love, duty, and destiny, leaving a lasting impact on Western literature. Exploring the Trojan War through Poetry These epic poems not only recount the events of the Trojan War but also provide a deeper understanding of the characters, cultures, and values of both the Trojans and the Greeks. Through vivid imagery, figurative language, and powerful storytelling, poets have transported readers back to this ancient conflict, allowing them to witness the heroism of Achilles, the cunning of Odysseus, and the tragic fate of Hector. Whether you immerse yourself in the grandeur of Homer's Iliad, follow Odysseus' perilous journey in The Odyssey, or explore the aftermath of the war in Virgil's Aeneid, these epic poems ensure that the tales of the Trojan War and its legendary heroes will continue to enthrall readers for generations to come. Enjoy sharper detail, more accurate color, lifelike lighting, believable backgrounds, and more with our new model update. Your generated images will be more polished than ever.See What's NewExplore how consumers want to see climate stories told today, and what that means for your visuals.Download Our Latest VisualGPS ReportData-backed trends. Generative AI demos. Answers to your usage rights questions. Our original video podcast covers it all—now on demand.Watch NowEnjoy sharper detail, more accurate color, lifelike lighting, believable backgrounds, and more with our new model update. 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Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Published: Aug 14, 2021written by Michael Arnold, BA Art History, MA Ancient Mediterranean ArchaeologyThe Abduction of Helen by Jacopo Robusti Tintoretto, Venetian, 1578 - 1579, Oil on canvas, via Museo del Prado with The Body of Patroclus Borne from the Battlefield by Diana Scultori, 16th c., via The Harvard Art Museums According to legend, Alexander the Great kept two things under his pillow: a dagger and a copy of Homer's Iliad. The warrior prince Achilles had been his idol since boyhood. When the Macedonian conqueror crossed the Dardanelles into Asia, he built an altar to pay tribute to him. Even at the time of Alexander's Persian campaign, little was known about the historic Trojan War that had taken place over 800 years prior. Its fame survived solely through the epic of Homer. Today, some historians believe that the city of Troy in The Iliad could be what archaeologists call Troy VI and VII—the context layer of that ancient city destroyed during the upheaval of the Late Bronze Age Collapse. It was at this time that entire empires, like the Hittites in Anatolia and the Mycenaeans in Greece, collapsed due to hostile incursions by the so-called Sea Peoples. Despite this, we may never know for certain the reality of exactly how or why Troy VII fell, historically speaking. Homer's evocation of the mythic Trojan War, however, remains as important today as it was to Alexander 2,300 years ago. The Central Conflict of The Iliad: What Was the Reason for the Trojan War? Paris and Helen by Jacques-Louis David, 1789, Oil on canvas, via Musée du Louvre Homer's epic centers on a conflict that arose after Paris, a Trojan prince, stole Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, and wife of the Greek King Menelaus, from Sparta. To recapture Helen and destroy the city. Hence, the idiom "the face that launched the thousand ships" was born. It proved to be no simple task, however, to besiege the high walls of the old Trojan King Priam or to subdue his fierce warrior son, Hector. The struggles of the Greeks are only exacerbated by troubles within their own ranks, particularly those generated by Achilles — a Greek prince of Pheia, who is unmatched on the battlefield. Because of a disagreement with Agamemnon, Achilles refuses to participate in the early battles of The Iliad. But it isn't until a second front of his, a certain Patroclus, is killed in battle that Achilles resolves to enter the conflict. Trouble in The Greek Camp: Achilles & Agamemnon Quarrel Amphora with Ajax Carrying the Dead Achilles, Archaic Period of Greece (530 – 520 BCE), Terracotta, via The Walters Art Museum Book I of The Iliad opens with an altercation between Agamemnon, king of kings at the helm of the Greek alliance, and Achilles. The cause of this fight was Agamemnon's usurpation of Briseis, a beautiful maiden whom Achilles had won from the spoils of victory in battle. Agamemnon forces Achilles to forfeit her, and, as a result, Achilles refuses to continue fighting for him. While crying at the loss of Briseis, Achilles is approached by his mother Thetis, a sea nymph. She takes pity on her son, who as she knows is doomed to die in the Trojan War, and resolves to address his plight with Zeus. So Thetis flies to Mount Olympus and begs the king of the gods to punish Agamemnon for his cruelty. Zeus agrees, against the will of his wife, Hera, who detests Troy and favors the Greek cities of Sparta and Argos. He consents to fix the events of the Trojan War against Agamemnon and the Achaeans until honor is restored to Achilles. The Duel for Helen of Troy: Menelaus V. Paris The Abduction of Helen by Jacopo Robusti Tintoretto, Venetian, 1578 – 1579, Oil on canvas, via Museo del Prado The Greek host described by Homer was enormous, far outnumbering the Trojans. But the Trojans had the advantage of being able to call on their many neighboring allies, such as the Phrygians and Lydians, and the walls of Priam had never before been breached. To avoid a bloodbath, Paris, (also called Alexandros in The Iliad) challenges Menelaus to a duel. The rules of the duel between Menelaus and Paris were winner takes all: if Paris were to kill Menelaus, Helen would remain at Troy and the Greek host would have to disband and return to Argos. But Menelaus is a much greater man and warrior than the young Trojan prince. He'd nearly defeated him in their duel when Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, swooped in and saved the life of Paris. She carried him away in a fog and laid him to rest in his bed-chamber by Helen's side. Menelaus went into a rage. He declared victory and demanded that Helen be handed over. But before the Trojans could acquiesce to his will, there would be an attempt on the Spartan king's life. This would set off the first major battle of the Trojan War. The First Battle of the Trojan War The Mask of Agamemnon, Gold, Mycenae, Greece, 16th c. BC, via The National Archaeological Museum of Athens Athena and Hera, the daughter and wife of Zeus, both of whom were firmly allied with the Greeks, had been observing the happenings at Troy from the sky. They wanted to see The Iliad resolved to interfere in the unfolding events before the Trojans could turn Helen over and allow the conflict to dissolve. So Athena descended onto the battlefield in the form of a Trojan soldier and approached an archer among their ranks called Pandaros. She convinced him to shoot an arrow at Menelaus and strike him dead to recover the honor of Troy. Pandaros fell for the goddess's trick. He took aim and fired, but before his arrow could sink into Menelaus, Athena swatted it away. Menelaus and Agamemnon then declared that the Trojans had broken their oath. Accordingly, the Achaeans prepared for battle — that is, all the Achaeans except Achilles and his Myrmidons. The Olympian gods took sides and marshaled with their respective favorites. Athena joined the ranks of the Achaeans while Hera wished them well from the heavens. Digital illustration of Troy VII, by Christoph Haußner, via The British Museum Blog Zeus, honoring his oath to Thetis, favored the Trojans. Ares, god of war, also joined their ranks; he kept close to the mighty Prince Hector throughout the battle. Apollo and lovely Aphrodite also cheered for the Trojan warriors, intervening in events intermittently. It's in this first battle that we're introduced to the preeminent Greek heroes of the Trojan War: there was Telemonian Ajax, also called Ajax, a giant, mighty warrior; Odysseus Laertes the king of Ithaca and later the protagonist of The Odyssey; and the fierce soldier called Diomedes, who receives the blessing of Athena and goes on to vanquish many Trojans. On the Trojan side was Aeneas, protagonist of the epic, The Aeneid, and mythical founder of the Roman race. Prince Hector is the powerhouse of the Trojan army until his untimely demise at the hands of Achilles. The Trojan Army Defends Troy: Hector V. Ajax What Was the Petro Fontana, 1817, via The Metropolitan Museum of Art Keeping his promise to Thetis, Zeus ensured that the early battles of the war resulted in good outcomes for the Trojans. The laundry list of other gods who allied with Troy also helped in this cause. Ares remained glued to Hector. At one point, Aphrodite intervened to rescue her son, Aeneas, but was stabbed by Diomedes; she ran off to Olympus never to return to the battlefield. Apollo also intervened on behalf of the Trojans. But, irrespective of this, "many Trojans and many Achaeans fell on that day and lay prone in the dust side by side," writes Homer. Apollo and Athena, sick to see that so many of their favorites had fallen in battle, conspired with one another to reach a ceasefire. So at the opening of Book VII, they embolden Hector to face off with Ajax in the deciding duel of the first battle. Hector and Ajax were well-matched, and just so their dual intensified, night fell and the two men called a truce and departed. The Achaeans and Trojans agreed to a one-day ceasefire to collect their dead. Priam and his 50 sons strategized behind their high walls, and the Greeks built a moat and fortification around their ships and encampment. Zeus Threatens the Olympians; The Achaeans Suffer at the Hands of Hector Statue of Jupiter (Zeus), Roman, 100 – 1 BC, via The Paul J. Getty Museum At the opening of Book VIII, the Greeks are in a dire situation. Hector had been relentless in battle, and the Trojans had successfully invaded the Achaeans' encampment. Agamemnon first prays to Zeus to spare the lives of the Achaeans. Next, he resolves to plead with Achilles to enter the war and save his countrymen — the last hope for the Greeks. Agamemnon Pleads With Achilles Roman panel relief of Achilles and Briseis, 30 BC – 80 AD, via The British Museum Agamemnon sends envoys to Achilles with his terms of apology. He promises to return Briseis to him and to ensure that he is enriched from the spoils of Troy. But Achilles declines the king's proposal, and the Achaeans continue to suffer at the hands of Hector. It isn't until Book XIV that the tides begin to turn. It's at this time that Hera plays a trick on Zeus. She channels the charms of Aphrodite to distract Zeus from the events of the Trojan War. Then she seduces him, and, afterward, Zeus falls asleep. While Zeus slumbers, all the other gods, including Hera, begin to intervene in the battle again. But Hector, who is imbued with the courage of Apollo, is relentless. He and his men break into the Achaeans' camp. Hector Kills Patroclus The Body of Patroclus Borne from the Battlefield by Diana Scultori, 16th c., via The Harvard Art Museums Hector and the Trojans had set the Greek encampment ablaze. Out of the wild conflagration came Patroclus charging toward the Trojans and cutting them down left and right. When he reached Sarpedon, a son of Zeus and king of Lycia, the pair faced off. Patroclus killed him, and, as a result, sent Hector into a rage. Hector vowed to avenge Sarpedon, but, before he could, Patroclus and the spirited Greeks drove the Trojans and the Trojans back. The Achaeans were so fierce that they would have taken Troy that day if it weren't for Apollo's intervention. The patron god of Troy was standing on top of the city walls and commanded Patroclus and the Greeks to retreat. Then the god started playing tricks on him to confuse and exhaust him. Hector seized the opportunity to strike at Patroclus. He stabbed the young Greek in the belly with his spear. Achilles' New Armor & The Death of Hector as depicted on a Roman Sarcophagus, 180 – 200 AD, via Wikimedia Commons In Book XVIII, Thetis visits Achilles and offers to have new armor custom made for him. His old armor had been stripped off the corpse of Patroclus and paraded into Troy by Prince Hector. Needless to say, Achilles was devastated about the death of his dear companion and he later honored him with an elaborate funeral. Thetis took it upon herself to commission Hephaestus, the god of metalworking, to craft a shield imbued with divine power for her son. Achilles then takes to the battlefield with his new armor. He meets Hector outside the walls of Troy, where the gods had been making a last minute deliberation on the Trojan prince's fate. Achilles kills Hector, Peter Paul Rubens, 1630-1635, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam The scales of fate were in favor of Achilles, and Apollo and Zeus begrudgingly abandoned their favorite. Achilles overpowered Hector in combat, and then chased him around the city three times. Finally, he cast his spear through Hector's neck and removed his dead body back to the Achaean encampment. That night, Achilles hosted the funeral of Patroclus — a hero's sendoff complete with festival games and the human sacrifice of 12 Trojan princes. He defiled the corpse of Hector, but later returned it to the Trojans. The Trojan War and the Fall of Troy Map of the ancient Aegean World, via British Museum Blog It may be shocking to read this, but there is no mention of a Trojan Horse in The Iliad. Additionally, Troy hasn't been sacked by the close of Homer's epic, and there's no clear indication as to which side will be victorious. We learn of the city's cruel fate from The Aeneid, in which a ten year war leads to the fall of Troy and is described by the Roman poet Virgil. Epic poem attributed to Homer For other uses, see Iliad (disambiguation). Iliadby HomerInscription of lines 468–473, Book I. Dated 400–500 AD, from Egypt, on display at the British MuseumOriginal titleἸλιάς IliásTranslatorGeorge Chapman and others; see English translations of HomerWritten: 8th century BCCountryAncient GreeceLanguageHomeric GreekSubject(s)Trojan WarGenre(s)Epic poetryPublished in English1598; 427 years ago (1598)Lines15,693Followed byThe OdysseyMetreDactylic hexameterFull text IliadWikisourceIliad at Greek Wikisource Trojan WarAchilles tending the wounded Patroclus(Attic red-figure kylix, c. 500 BC) Literary sources Iliad Epic Cycle Aeneid, Book 2 Iphigenia in Aulis Philoctetes Ajax The Trojan Women Posthomerica See also: Trojan War in literature and the arts Episodes Judgement of Paris Seduction of Helen The Returns Wanderings of Odysseus Aeneas and the Founding of Rome Greeks and allies Agamemnon Achilles Helen Menelaus Nestor Odysseus Ajax Diomedes Patroclus Thersites Achaeans Myrmidons See also: Achaean Leaders, Catalogue of Ships Trojans and allies Priam Hecuba Hector Paris Cassandra Andromache Aeneas Memnon Troilus Penthesilea and the Amazons Sarpedon See also: Trojan Battle Order, Trojan Leaders Participant godsCaused the war: Eris On the Greek side: Athena Hephaestus Hera Hermes Thetis Poseidon On the Trojan side: Aphrodite Apollo Ares Artemis Leto Scamander Zeus History Mycenae Hisarlik Homeric Question Late Bronze Age Troy Manapa-Tarhunta letter Milawata letter Tawagalawa letter Trojan language Wilusa See also: Historicity of the Iliad Related topics Bronze Age Collapse Euhemerism Homeric Question Mycenae Mycenaean warfare vte The Iliad (/ˈɪliəd/; [1] Ancient Greek: Ἰλιάς, romanized: Iliás, [i:.li.ás]; lit. '[a poem] about Ilion (Troy)') is one of two major Ancient Greek epic poems attributed to Homer. It is one of the oldest extant works of literature still widely read by modern audiences. As with the Odyssey, the poem is divided into 24 books and was written in dactylic hexameter. It contains 15,693 lines in its most widely accepted (critical)[verification needed]. The Iliad is often regarded as the first substantial piece of European literature and is a central part of the Epic Cycle.[2] Set towards the end of the Trojan War, a ten-year siege of the city of Troy by a coalition of Mycenaean Greek states, the poem depicts significant events in the war's final weeks. In particular, it traces the anger (μῆνις) of Achilles, a celebrated warrior, from a refusal to return to battle, to Hector.[3][4] The narrative moves between wide battleground scenes and personal interactions. The Iliad and the Odyssey were likely composed in Homeric Greek, a literary mixture of Ionic Greek and other dialects, around the late 8th or early 7th century BC.[according to whom?], Homer's authorship was infrequently questioned in antiquity,[5] although the poem's composition has been extensively debated in contemporary scholarship, involving debates such as whether the Iliad and the Odyssey were composed independently, and whether the survival via an oral or also written tradition.[6] The poem was performed by professional reciters of Homer known as rhapsodes at Greek festivals such as the Panathenaia.[7][8] Critical themes in the poem include kleos (glory), pride, fate, and wrath.[9] Despite being predominantly known for its tragic and serious themes, the poem also contains instances of comedy and laughter.[10] The poem is frequently described as a "heroic" epic, centred around issues such as war, violence, and the heroic code. It contains detailed descriptions of ancient warfare, including battle tactics and equipment. However, it also explores the social and domestic side of ancient culture in scenes behind the walls of Troy and in the Greek camp. Additionally, the Olympian gods play a major role in the poem, aiding their favoured warriors on the battlefield and intervening in personal disputes.[11] Their anthropomorphic characterisation in the poem humanised them for Ancient Greek audiences, giving a concrete sense of their cultural and religious tradition. In terms of formal style, the poem's formulaic use of similes, and epithets are often explored by scholars.[12] Source:[3] First verses of the Iliad The story begins with an invocation to the Muse. The events take place towards the end of the Trojan War, fought between the Trojans and the besieging Achaeans. The Achaean forces consist of armies from many different Greek kingdoms, led by their respective kings or princes. Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, acts as commander for these united armies. Chryses, a priest of Apollo, offers Agamemnon and the Achaeans wealth for the return of his daughter Chryseis, held captive by Agamemnon. Although most of the Achaeans are in favour of the offer, Agamemnon refuses. Chryses prays for Apollo's help, and Apollo sends a plague to afflict the Achaean army. After nine days of plague, Achilles, the leader of the Myrmidon forces and aristos achaion ("best of the Greeks"), calls an assembly to deal with the problem. Under pressure, Agamemnon agrees to return Chryseis to her father but decides to take Achilles's slave, Briseis, as compensation. Viewing Agamemnon's decision as a huge dishonour in front of the assembled Achaean forces, Achilles furiously declares that he and his men will no longer fight for Agamemnon. Odysseus returns Chryseis to her father, causing Apollo to end the plague. In the meantime, Agamemnon's messengers take Briseis away. Achilles becomes very upset and prays to his mother, Thetis, a minor goddess and sea nymph.[13] Achilles asks his mother to supplicate Zeus, wanting the Achaeans to be beaten back by the Trojans until their ships are at risk of being burnt. Only then will Agamemnon realise how much the Achaeans need Achilles and restore his honour. Thetis does so, and Zeus agrees. Zeus then sends a dream to Agamemnon, urging him to attack Troy. Agamemnon heeds the dream but first decides to test the Achaean army's morale by telling them to go home. However nine years into the war, the soldiers' morale has worn thin. The plan backfires, and only the intervention of Odysseus, inspired by Athena, stops a rout. Odysseus confronts and beats Thersites, a common soldier who voices discontent about fighting Agamemnon's war. The Achaeans deploy in companies upon the Trojan plain. When news of the Achaean deployment reaches King Priam, the Trojans respond in a sortie upon the plain. The armies approach each other, but before they meet, Paris offers to end the war by fighting a duel with Menelaus, urged by his brother and head of the Trojan army, Hector. While Helen recounts to Priam the Achaean commanders from the walls of Troy, both sides swear a truce and promise to abide by the outcome of the duel. Paris is beaten, but Aphrodite rescues him and leads him to bed with Helen before Menelaus can kill him. The gods deliberate whether the war should end here, but Hera convinces Zeus to wait for the utter destruction of Troy. Athena prompts the Trojan archer Pandarus to shoot Menelaus. Menelaus is wounded, and the truce is broken. Fighting breaks out, and many Achaeans and Trojans are killed. Source:[3] In the fighting, Diomedes kills many Trojans, including Pandarus, and defeats Aeneas, whom again Aphrodite rescues, but Diomedes attacks her and wounds the goddess's wrist. Apollo faces Diomedes and warns him against warring with gods. Diomedes does not heed the warning, and attacks and wounds Ares and Aphrodite. Many heroes and commanders join in, including Hector, and the gods supporting each side try to influence the battle. Emboldened by Athena, Diomedes wounds Ares and puts him out of action. Hector rallies the Trojans and stops a rout; the Trojan Glaucus finds common ground after a duel and exchange unequal gifts, sparked by Glaucus' story of Bellerophon. Hector enters the city, urging his mother Hecuba to perform prayers and sacrifices, inciting Paris to battle, and bidding his wife Andromache and son Astyanax farewell on the city walls. He then rejoins the battle. Hector duels with Ajax, but nightfall interrupts the fight and both sides retire. The Trojans quarrel about returning Helen to end the war. The Achaeans agree to a day's truce to bury the dead. The Achaeans also build a wall and trench to protect their camp and ships. Source:[3][4] Iliad, Book VIII, lines 245–253, Greek manuscript, late 5th, early 6th centuries AD The next morning, Zeus prohibits the gods from interfering, and fighting begins anew. The Trojans prevail and force the Achaeans back to their wall. Hera and Athena are forbidden to help. Night falls before the Trojans can assault the Achaean wall. They camp in the field to attack at first light, and their watchfires light the plain like stars. Meanwhile, the Achaeans are desperate. Agamemnon admits his error and sends an embassy composed of Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoenix to offer Briseis and extensive gifts to Achilles, if he will return to the fighting. Achilles and his companion Patroclus receive the embassy well. Achilles refuses Agamemnon's offer, considering the slight to his honour too great. He declares that he will only return to battle if the Trojans reach his ships and threaten them with fire. The embassy returns unsuccessful. Later that night, Odysseus and Diomedes venture out to the Trojan lines, kill the Trojan Dolon, and wreak havoc in the camps of some Thracian allies of Troy. In the morning, the fighting is fierce and Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus are all wounded. Achilles sends Patroclus from his camp to inquire about the Achaean casualties, and while there, Patroclus is moved to pity by a speech by Nestor. Nestor asks Patroclus to beg Achilles to return to the fighting, or at least to enter the battle wearing Achilles's armor. The Trojans attack the Achaean wall on foot. Hector leads the terrible fighting, despite an omen that their charge will fail. The Achaeans are overwhelmed and routed, the wall's gate is broken, and Hector charges in. The Achaeans fall back to their ships. Poseidon pities the Achaeans and decides to disobey Zeus and help them. He rallies the Achaeans' spirits, and they begin to push the Trojans back. Poseidon's nephew Antimachus is killed in the battle; Poseidon imbues Idomeneus with godly power. Many fall on both sides. The Trojan seer Polydamas urges Hector to fall back and warns him about Achilles; he is ignored. Hera seduces Zeus and lures him to sleep, allowing Poseidon to help the Greeks. The Trojans are driven back onto the plain. Source:[4] Thetis and Haephestus's forge waiting to receive Achilles's new weapons, fresco from Pompeii, 1st century Patroclus cannot stand to watch any longer and goes to Achilles, weeping. He admonishes him for his stubbornness and then asks him to allow him to fight in his place, wearing Achilles's armor so that he will be mistaken for him. Achilles relents and lends Patroclus his armour but sends him off with a stern warning to come back once he has pushed the Trojans back from the ships. Achilles says that after all has been made right, he and Patroclus will take Troy together. Patroclus leads the Myrmidons into battle and arrives as the Trojans set fire to the first ships. The Trojans are routed by the sudden onslaught, and Patroclus begins his assault by killing Zeus's son Sarpedon, a leading ally of the Trojans. Patroclus, ignoring Achilles's command, pursues and reaches the gates of Troy, where Apollo himself stops him. Patroclus kills Hector's charioteer Cebriones, a bastard son of Priam, and is disoriented by Apollo. Hector casts the killing blow. Patroclus, before he dies, prophesies that Hector too will soon be dead. Source:[3][4] Iliad, Book VIII, lines 245–253, Greek manuscript, late 5th, early 6th centuries AD The next morning, Zeus overwhelming that his mother, Thetis, hears him from the bottom of the ocean. Thetis grieves too, knowing that Achilles is fated to die if he kills Hector. Although he knows it will seal his own fate, Achilles vows to kill Hector in order to avenge Patroclus. Achilles is urged to help retrieve Patroclus's body but has no armor to wear. Bathed in a brilliant radiance by Athena, Achilles stands next to the Achaean wall and roars in rage. The Trojans are terrified by his appearance, and the Achaeans manage to bear Patroclus's body away. Polydamas urges Hector to withdraw into the city; again, Hector refuses, and the Trojans camp in the plain at nightfall. Achilles mourns Patroclus. Meanwhile, at Thetis's request, Hephaestus fashions a new set of armor for Achilles, including a magnificently wrought shield.[14] Source:[4] A detail of fresco from the François Tomb of Vulci, showing the sacrifice of Trojan slaves. From left to right: Agamemnon, Ajax the Great, a slave, Ajax the Lesser. 350-330 BC In the morning, Thetis brings Achilles his new set of armor, only to find him still weeping over his friend, his body preserved by her from decay. Achilles is filled with grief and vows to take revenge on Hector; his mother warns him that his own death will follow Hector's closely, to which Achilles replies that he is ready to die. Athena breathes nectar and ambrosia into Patroclus's body to prevent it from decaying. The armies of the Greeks and Trojans assemble for battle. Achilles, still furious about Briseis, refuses. He reconciles with Agamemnon and furiously enters the battle. He slaughters many Trojans, and almost kills Aeneas, who is rescued by Poseidon. Achilles fights Hector, but Apollo hides Hector in a mist, unable to catch him. Achilles comes to the river Scamander and slays many Trojans. The river, angered by the killing, confronts Achilles but is beaten back by Hephaestus's firestorm. The gods fight amongst themselves. The great gates of the city are opened to receive the fleeing Trojans, and Apollo leads Achilles away from the city by pretending to be a Trojan. When Apollo reveals himself to Achilles, the Trojans have retreated into the city, all except for Hector, who, out of shame, refuses to leave. Despite the pleas of his parents, Priam and Hecuba, Hector resolves to face Achilles. When Achilles approaches, however, Hector's will fails him. He flees and is chased by Achilles around the city. Finally, Athena tricks him into stopping, and he turns to face his opponent. After a brief duel, Achilles stabs Hector through the neck. Before dying, Hector reminds Achilles that he, too, is fated to die in the war. Achilles takes Hector's body and dishonours it by dragging it behind his chariot. Source:[4] Patroclus asks Achilles to avenge his death by killing Hector. Achilles gives into his hatred and slays Hector in combat, and then chained his dead body to his chariot and dragging it around the walls of Troy. Hecuba and Priam lament, with the latter attempting to face Achilles himself. Andromache hears the news and comes to the walls, fainting on seeing the scene below. The Trojans grieve. The ghost of Patroclus comes to Achilles in a dream, urging him to carry out the burial rites so that his spirit can move on to the Underworld. Patroclus asks Achilles to arrange for them both to be buried in the same tomb. Patroclus's body is cremated. The Achaeans hold a day of funeral games, and Achilles gives out the prizes. Achilles, still overcome by grief, sleeps fitfully. He remembers Patroclus with tears and hardly sleeps at all. The next day, Achilles drags Hector's body behind his chariot. Dismayed by Achilles's continued abuse of Hector's body, Zeus decides that it must be returned to Priam. Led by Hermes, Priam takes a wagon filled with gifts across the plain and stops at Achilles's tent. Weeping, Priam kisses Achilles's hands and begs for his son's body. Achilles is moved to tears, and the two lament their losses in the war. Achilles agrees to give Hector's body back to Priam and grants the Trojans twelve days to properly mourn and bury him. Achilles apologizes to Patroclus, fearing he has dishonored him by returning Hector's body. After a meal, Priam carries Hector's body back into Troy. Hector is buried, and the city mourns. Main article: Deception of Zeus Hypnos and Thanatos carrying the body of Sarpedon from the battlefield of Troy; detail from an Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440 BC Ancient Greek religion had no strict organisation, rather arising out of the diverse beliefs of the Greek people.[15] Adkins and Pollard state that "The early Greeks personalized every aspect of their world, natural and cultural, and their experiences in it. The earth, the sea, the mountains, the rivers, custom-law (themis), and one's share in society were all seen in personal as well as naturalistic terms".[16] They perceived the world and its gods in much the same way. Often, they found these events to be mysterious and inexplicable.[17] In the Iliad, the Olympian gods, goddesses, and minor deities fight among themselves and participate in human warfare, often by interfering with mortals to counter other gods. Unlike in modern thought were not above of in terms familiar to the works of Homer.[17] The historian Herodotus says that Homer and Hesiod, his contemporary, were the first writers to name and describe the gods' appearance and character.[18] Some scholars discuss the intervention of the gods in the mortal world, spurred by quarrels they had with each other. Homer interprets the Iliadic world by using the passion and emotion of the gods to be determining factors of what happens on the human level.[19] Book 24 offers a retrospective structure of the cause of the war, attributing it to the anger of Hera and Athena. And though this was pleasing to all the rest, it was not to Hera or Poseidon or the flashing-eyed maiden, but they persisted just as when sacred Ilios at first became hateful in their eyes and Priam and his people, because of the folly of Alexander, who had insulted those goddesses when they came to his farmstead and honoured him who furthered his grievous lustfulness. — Homer 24.25–30[4] Athena and Hera support the Greeks, while Aphrodite, who set Helen and Paris together, supports the Trojans, as does Apollo. Zeus remains neutral in the conflict. The concept of divine intervention reflects a broader theme in which human choices and divine will are intertwined, often leading to tragic consequences. The gods' involvement emphasizes the idea that human beings are not fully in control of their destinies. Wolfgang Kullmann further goes on to say, "Hera's and Athena's disappointment over the victory of Aphrodite in the Judgement of Paris determines the whole conduct of both goddesses during the war of Troy and causes their hatred of Paris, the son of Priam who gave the decisive judgement".[20] Hera and Athena continue to support the Achaean forces throughout the poem as a result of this, while Aphrodite aids Paris and the Trojans. The emotions between the goddesses often translate to actions they take in the mortal world. For example, in Book 3 of the Iliad, Paris is about to be defeated by Menelaus, who had challenged him to single combat, however, Aphrodite intervenes to save Paris: "Now he'd have hauled him off and won undying glory but Aphrodite, Zeus's daughter, was quick to the mark, snapped the rawhide strap."[20] This connection of emotions to actions is just one example of many that occur throughout the poem: there is constant intervention by all of the gods, especially to give motivational speeches to their respective protégés, often appearing in the shape of a human being they are familiar with.[19] Mary Lefkowitz discusses the relevance of divine action in the Iliad, attempting to answer the question of whether divine intervention is a discrete occurrence (for its own sake) or if such godly behaviors are mere human character metaphors.[21] The intellectual interest of 5th- and 4th-century BC authors, such as Thucydides and Plato, was limited to their utility as "a way of talking about human life rather than a description of a truth", because, if the gods remain religious figures rather than human metaphors, their "existence" - without the foundation of either dogma or a bible of faiths – then allowed Greek culture the intellectual breadth and freedom to conjure gods fitting any religious function they required as a people.[21][22] Psychologist Julian Jaynes[23] uses the Iliad as a major piece of evidence for his theory of the Bicameral Mind, which posits that until about the time described in the Iliad, humans had a far different mentality from present-day humans. He says that humans during that time were lacking what is today called consciousness. He suggests that humans heard and obeyed commands from what they identified as gods, until the change in human mentality that incorporated the motivating force into the conscious self. He points out that almost every action in the Iliad is directed, caused, or influenced by a god, and that earlier translations show an astonishing lack of words suggesting thought, planning, or introspection. Those that do appear, he argues, are reinterpretations made by translators imposing a modern mentality on the characters,[23] a view rejected by which a conclusion determines the validity of evidence. Fate (κήρ, kēr, 'fated death') propels most of the events of the Iliad. Gods and men alike begin to accept that their fate, unchangeable and set, is fixed. Fate implies the primeval, tripartite division of the world that Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades made in dividing their dominion after they deposed their father, Cronus, for its distribution. Zeus took the air and sky, Poseidon the waters, and Hades the underworld, the land of the dead—yet they share dominion of the earth.[24] Fate does not determine every action, incident, and circumstance, but it does determine the outcome of life—before killing him, Hector calls Patroclus a fool for cowardly consolation and for failing to foresee his own fated death at the hands of Patroclus's friend. Patroclus retorts: [...] No, deadly destiny, with the son of Leto, has killed me, and of men it was Euphorbos; you are only my third slayer. And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you. You yourself are not one who shall live long, but now already there stands beside you death and powerful destiny, to go down under the hands of Aiakos' great son, Achilleus. — Homer 16.849–854 (Lattimore 1951). Here, Patroclus alludes to his fated death by Hector's hand and Hector's fated death by Achilles's hand. Each accepts the outcome of his life, yet chooses to persist regardless. However, fate is not always decreed through divine intervention. The first instance of this doubt occurs in Book 16. Seeing Patroclus about to kill Sarpedon, his mortal son, Zeus says: Ah me, that it is destined that the dearest of men, Sarpedon, must go down under the hands of Menoitios' son Patroclus. In debating these, the heart in his breast is pondered in two ways, whether I should snatch him out of the sorrowful battle and set him down still alive in the rich country of Lykia, or beat him under at the hands of the son of Menoitios. — Homer, The Iliad 16.433–434 (Lattimore 1951). About his dilemma, Hera asks Zeus: Majesty, son of Kronos, what sort of thing have you spoken? Do you wish to bring back a man who is mortal, one long since doomed by his destiny, from ill-sounding death and release him? Do it, then; but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you. — Homer, The Iliad 16.440–443 (Lattimore 1951). In deciding between losing a son or abiding fate, Zeus, King of the Gods, elects to abide it. This motif recurs when he considers sparing Hector, whom he loves and respects. This time, it is Athena who challenges him: Father of the shining bolt, dark misted, what is this you said? Do you wish to bring back a man who is mortal, one long since doomed by his destiny, from ill-sounding death and release him? Do it, then; but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you. — Homer, The Iliad 22.178–181 (Lattimore 1951). Again, Zeus appears capable of altering fate, but does not, deciding instead to abide by set outcomes. Similarly, fate decrees the overmatched Trojan to fight Achilles. Poseidon cautiously speaks: But come, let us ourselves get him away from death, for fear the son of Kronos may be angered if now Achilleus kills this man. It is destined that he shall be the survivor, that the generation of Dardanos shall not die... — Homer, The Iliad 20.300–04 (Lattimore 1951). Divinely aided, Aeneas escapes the wrath of Achilles and survives the Trojan War. Whether or not the gods can alter fate, they do abide by it, despite it is countering their human allegiances. The mysterious origin of Fate remains a power beyond both mortals and immortals. Kleos (κλέος, "glory, fame") is the concept of glory earned in heroic battle.[26] It is a fluctuating quality that can be given or taken away, increased or decreased. In particular, Achilles is deeply concerned about his legacy. When Agamemnon's envoys – Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax – begging his reinstatement to battle about having to choose between two fates (διχθαδίας κῆρας, 9.411).[28] The passage reads: μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα (410) διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλος δέ. εἰ μέν κ᾽ αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι, ὤλετο μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται: εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ᾽ ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν, ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν (415) ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ᾽ ὦκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη.[29] For my mother Thetis the goddess of silver feet tells me I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either, if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans, my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting; but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers, the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life left for me, and my end in death will not come to me quickly.[30] —Translated by Richmond Lattimore In forgoing his return home (nostos), he would be rewarded with everlasting glory (κλέος ἄφθιτον, kléos áphthiton, "fame imperishable").[28] In the poem, aphthiton (ἄφθιτον, "imperishable") occurs five other times,[31] each occurrence denotes an object: Agamemnon's sceptre, the wheel of Hebe's chariot, the house of Poseidon, the throne of Zeus, and the house of Hephaestus. Translator Lattimore renders kleos aphthiton as "forever immortal" and as "forever imperishable" – connoting Achilles's mortality by underscoring his greater reward in returning to battle Troy. Kleos is often given visible representation by the prizes won in battle. When Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles, he takes away a portion of the kleos he had earned. Achilles' shield, crafted by his mother Thetis, bears an image of stars in the center, peering images of a single man, no matter how heroic, in the perspective of the entire cosmos. Nostos (νόστος, "homecoming") occurs seven times in the poem,[32] making it a minor theme in The Iliad itself. Yet the concept of homecoming is much explored in other Ancient Greek literature, especially in the postwar homeward fortunes experienced by the Atreidae (Agamemnon and Menelaus) and Odysseus (see The Odyssey). Pride drives the plot of The Iliad. The Achaeans gather on the plain of Troy to wrest Helen from the Trojans. Though the majority of the Trojans would gladly return Helen to the Achaeans, they defer to the pride of their prince, Alexandros, also known as Paris. Within this theme, Homer's work explores the tension between fate and free will in the actions of men. The characters make choices that lead to their downfall, yet those choices are often influenced by the gods. When Agamemnon takes away Briseis from Achilles, Achilles refuses to fight and prays to his mother that the Achaeans suffer on the battlefield until Agamemnon realizes the harm he has done to him by taking his prize. He overcomes his pride again when he keeps his anger in check and returns Hector to Priam at the epic's close. From epic start to epic finish, pride drives the plot.[a] The Iliad portrays the theme of heroism in a variety of different ways through different characters, mainly Achilles, Hector, Patroclus, etc. Though the traditional concept of heroism is often tied directly to the protagonist, who is meant to be written in a heroic light, the Iliad plays with this idea of heroism and does not make it explicitly clear.

who the true hero of the story is. The story of the Iliad follows the great Greek warrior Achilles, as well as his rage and the destruction it causes. Parallel to this, the story also follows the Trojan warrior Hector and his efforts to fight to protect his family and his people. It is generally assumed that, because he is the protagonist, Achilles is the hero of this story. Examining his actions throughout the Iliad and comparing them to those of other characters, however, some may come to the conclusion that Achilles is not really the hero, and perhaps even an antihero. It can also be argued that Hector is the true hero of the Iliad due to his inherently heroic qualities, such as his loyalty to his family and the strength and determination to defend his people, and the focus at the end of the story on burying Hector with honor. The true hero of the Iliad is never shown explicitly and is purposefully left up to interpretation by the author, Homer, who aimed to show the complexity and flaws of both characters, regardless of who is considered the "true" hero.

Akin to kleos is timê (τιμή, "respect, honor"), the concept denoting the respectability an honorable man accrues with accomplishment (cultural, political, martial), per his station in life. In Book I, the Achaean troubles begin with King Agamemnon's dishonorable, unkingly behavior – first, by threatening the priest Chryses (1.11), then, by aggravating them in disrespecting Achilles, by confiscating Briseis from him (1.171). The warrior's consequent rancor against the dishonorable king ruins the Achaean military cause. Hybris (Ὕβρις) plays a part similar to timê. The word typically refers to actions that transgressed the normal human bounds and taunted the gods. Uncontrolled anger destroys orderly social relationships and upsets the balance of correct actions necessary to keep the gods away from human beings. Despite the epic's focus on Achilles's rage, hybris also plays a prominent role, serving as both kindling and fuel for many destructive events.[34] Agamemnon refuses to ransom Chryseis out of hybris and harms Achilles' pride when he demands her. Hubris forces Paris to fight against Menelaus. Agamemnon spurs the Achaeans to fight by calling into question Odysseus, Diomedes, and Nestor's pride, asking why they are cowering and waiting for help when they should be the ones leading the charge. While the events of the Iliad focus on Achilles' rage and the destruction it brings on, hybris fuels and stokes them both.[34] The Wrath of Achilles (1819), by Michel Martin Drolling The poem's initial word, μῆνιν (mênin; acc. μῆνις, mênis, "wrath", "rage", "fury"), establishes the Iliad's principal theme: the "Wrath of Achilles".[35] His personal rage and wounded soldier's pride propel the story: the Achaeans' faltering in battle, the slayings of Patroclus and Hector, and the fall of Troy. In Book I, the Wrath of Achilles first emerges in the Achilles-convoked meeting between the Greek kings and the seer Calchas. King Agamemnon dishonours Chryses, the Trojan priest of Apollo, by refusing with a threat the restitution of his daughter, Chryseis – despite the proffered ransom of "gifts beyond count".[36] The insulted priest prays to Apollo for help, and a nine-day rain of divine plague arrows falls upon the Achaeans. Moreover, in that meeting, Achilles accuses Agamemnon of being "greediest for gain of all men".[37] To that, Agamemnon replies: But here is my threat to you. Even as Phoibos Apollo is taking away my Chryseis. I shall convey her back in my own ship, with my own followers; but I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis, your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me. —Homer, Iliad 1.181–187 (Lattimore 1951). After that, only Athena stays Achilles' wrath. He vows to never again obey orders from Agamemnon. Furious, Achilles cries to his mother, Thetis, who persuades Zeus's divine intervention – favouring the Trojans – until Achilles's rights are restored. Meanwhile, Hector leads the Trojans to almost pushing the Achaeans back to the sea (Book XII). Later, Agamemnon contemplates defeat and retreat to Greece (Book XIV). Again, the Wrath of Achilles turns the war's tide in seeking vengeance when Hector kills Patroclus. Aggrieved, Achilles tears his hair and dirties his face. Thetis comforts her mourning son, who tells her: So it was here that the lord of men Agamemnon angered me. Still, we will let all this be a thing of the past, and for all our sorrow beat down by force the anger deeply within us. Now I shall go, to overtake that killer of a dear life, Hektor; then I will accept my own death, at whatever time Zeus wishes to bring it about, and the other immortals. —Homer, Iliad 18.111–116 (Lattimore 1951). Accepting the prospect of death as fair price for avenging Patroclus, he returns to battle, dooming Hector and Troy, thrice chasing him around the Trojan walls before slaying him and then dragging the corpse behind his chariot, back to camp. Achilles Slays Hector, by Peter Paul Rubens (1630–1635) Much of the Iliad focuses on death-dealing. To gain status, heroes must be good at killing. Though not as prevalent, there are instances where the author showcases the peaceful aspects of war. The first instance of this is in book 3 when Menelaus and Paris agree to fight each other to end the war. This conversation between Menelaus and Paris highlights the overwhelming desire for peace on both sides. Also in book 3, we see peace when the elders talk to Priam saying that though Helen is a beautiful woman, war is still too high a price to pay for one person. These events display the humanity of the war. In book 6, when Hector goes back into the city to visit his family, this event is another powerful show of peace because we get to see that Hector is more than a great warrior. He is a loving father and devoted husband. The love that is shared between him and his family contrasts with the gory battle scenes, noting the importance of peace. The final moments of peace are in books 23 and 24. The first of these is the funeral games that are held for Patroclus. The games show the happiness, grief, and joy that can happen during the war. In book 24, peace is highlighted again when Achilles and Priam share food and grief for their recent losses. In this encounter, the two empathize with one another and agree to a truce of twelve days for the burial of Hector. This conversation allows for ... [truncated]

[...] The text continues at length through scholarly discussion of the Iliad's authorship, transmission, translation history, adaptations, and reception.

^ a b c d e Homer, Iliad, Volume I, Books 1–12, translated by A. T. Murray, revised by William F. Wyatt, Loeb Classical Library 170, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1924. ^ a b c d e Homer, Iliad, Volume II, Books 13–24, translated by A. T. Murray, revised by William F. Wyatt, Loeb Classical Library 171, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1925. ^ Ready & Tsagalis 2018. ^ Hammond 1987, pp. i–xxiv. ^ Bell, Robert H.; "Homer's humor : laughter in the 'Iliad'". The Humor Code, Index I, (2007), 596. ^ a b Kearns, E. (2004), "The Gods in the Homeric epics", in R. Fowler (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Homer, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Companions to Literature), pp. 59–73. ^ Fowler 2004b, pp. 115–168. ^ Homer. The Iliad. Translated by Wilson, Emily. W. W. Norton & Company. p. 115.[full citation needed] ^ Auden, W. H., and Alan Jacobs, The Shield of Achilles, 2024. ^ Lawson, John Cuthbert (1910). 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