# The Iliad

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The story of *The Iliad* occurs in about 1180 B.C., late in the Bronze Age. The action is located on the plain outside the great fortified city of Ilios (Troy), during the last year of the ten-year war between the allied Mycenaeans (the attackers) and the Trojans and their allies (the defenders).

In *The Iliad,* Homer's Greeks and Trojans speak the same language and appear to share other aspects of Hellenic culture, such as the same divinities. However, Ilios was located on the west coast of what is now Turkey—called Anatolia ("The East") by the Hellenes—across the Aegean Sea from Mycenaean Hellas. Therefore, in order to write a cohesive and comprehensible literary work about the Trojan War, Homer needed to Hellenize the Trojans or to transform the Hellenes into Anatolians. Since he lived relatively close to Troy, but in a Greek colony, Homer chose to Hellenize the Anatolian people of Ilios.

Throughout the ages, *The Iliad* was first considered to be historical, then legendary, and then mythical. However, when Heinrich Schliemann's excavations at Troy, in 1871, revealed the remains of many cities where Homer's Ilios could have stood, *The Iliad*'s historical basis became an intriguing question.

Unfortunately, the passage of more than three thousand years and the ravages of weather, war, and fire have destroyed the perishable remains of human life and culture. Moreover, victors, pirates, and new occupants have removed anything of value—from building materials to weapons and jewelry. Therefore, we can only evaluate archaeological remains, related scholarship, and literary references in order to learn about Mycenaean Greece, Anatolian Troy or Ilios, and Homer.

As early as about 2600 B.C., Indo-European-speaking tribes from the north invaded the area of northern Greece known as Macedonia. Between 1900 and 1600 B.C., the descendants of these peoples moved southward to inhabit the rest of Hellas. The golden age of their civilization occurred between 1450 B.C., when they conquered the island of Crete and adopted much of the technology and art of that advanced, non-Indo-European society, and about 1200 B.C., when their palace states began to be destroyed by civil wars and by sea raiders.

During this period, the Mediterranean and Aegean communities enjoyed a rich period of cultural exchange in that the Mycenaeans traded with the Hittites—whose empire in Anatolia and the Near East flourished from about 1800 until about 1200 B.C.—the people of Ugarit in Syria, and the Egyptians. (The Phoenicians became important after the Mycenaean Age.) Mycenaean religion, as well as art, literature, and technology, reveals the influence of other cultures. For example, the Mycenaeans adopted Athena and Hera from pre-Hellenic cultures; they combined their Zeus with the Minoan Zeus of Crete; and they adopted Apollo and Aphrodite from Anatolia and the Near East, respectively.

Our knowledge of the Bronze Age Mycenaean culture is based primarily on the ruins of a number of important sites in Greece. Fortunately, archaeologists have unearthed decorated objects, such as jewelry, pottery, and metal containers, and an assortment of war gear, such as shields, helmets, and weapons. In addition, archaeologists have found a large number of clay tablets that are inscribed with a language called Linear B, which they can read.

The Mycenaean civilization in full bloom far surpassed in complexity and wealth many of the Hellenic civilizations that followed it, including Homer's age. The Mycenaeans were an aggressive people who enjoyed fighting, hunting, and athletic contests. Except for the large peninsula known as the Peloponnese, their land was mountainous and their soil rocky and dry. Therefore, they took to the sea and became fearsome raiders of other communities.

In this way the Mycenaeans acquired extraordinary wealth. They lived and died with weapons by their sides. Fortunately for archaeologists, they buried their dead in tombs along with the war gear and wealth they had possessed in life. The Mycenaeans loved decorated objects. Whether of gold, bronze, or clay, their arts and crafts reflected their interest in war and in hunting ferocious wild animals.

The Mycenaean kings constructed palaces that were fortified strongholds. For example, the palace at Mycenae, built in 1350 B.C., had walls twenty-three feet thick. Each king's palace was the political, economic, and social center of his small kingdom. Connected with the palace were the numerous nobles, artisans, scribes, farmers, and common laborers needed to keep the complex organization operating. The king had to be a strong, able, and aggressive leader who could protect the people in his palace community and gain wealth for its aristocratic members by sacking other communities.

Archaeological remains reveal very little about the religious practices of these people and nothing of their myths except the names of some of their gods. We can assume that the family was important because the dead are buried in family groups. We can assume that in an age of piracy and well-fortified palaces, hospitality was necessary for the traveler to survive, and yet people had to be very cautious about welcoming strangers.

As early as about 6000 B.C., a New Stone Age, or Neolithic, fortified community existed in southern Anatolia. It grew to become one of the earliest cities, with a population of 5,000 to 10,000 people who worshipped the Great Goddess or Mother Goddess. Between about 5500 and 3000 B.C., the descendants of these people migrated into other areas of Anatolia, including Troy. Known for its strategic location with regard to overland trade between Europe and Asia and marine trade between the Mediterranean palace states and northeastern Europe, as well as for its bronze work, Troy became the most famous Early Bronze Age (3000–2000 B.C.), Anatolian, fortified city.

Troy controlled the Hellespont strait (now called the Dardanelles), a narrow waterway that functioned as the gateway from the Aegean Sea to the Euxine Sea (now called the Black Sea). The Euxine Sea provided access to the communities along three major rivers: the Danube from Germany, the Don from Russia, and the Dnieper from the Ukraine. The Mycenaean Greeks and other ancient peoples valued items such as pure copper, tin, and gold that they could obtain in trade with those who inhabited the coastal lands of the

Euxine Sea and the lands of northeastern Europe.

However, the prevalence of unfavorable wind and current patterns in the Hellespont strait usually forced ships en route to the Euxine Sea to wait for long periods of time in Troy's harbor (now known as Besik Bay) until favorable conditions permitted them to continue their journey. For hundreds of years, Troy took advantage of this situation by collecting mooring fees for the privilege of using its harbor plus large tolls for the privilege of passing through the Hellespont.

Consequently, given its strategic location at the mouth of this major trade route, Troy—whether or not it is Homer's Ilios—was an extraordinarily powerful and wealthy Bronze Age city. Archaeological excavation reveals that Bronze Age Troy was actually the sixth of nine cities that existed on the same site and that it was destroyed twice. However, as yet, no conclusive proof exists that Troy VI is Homer's Ilios or that the Trojan War that Homer describes in *The Iliad* actually occurred.

During the centuries between the collapse of Rome and the birth of the modern age, most historians and other scholars viewed the entire narrative content of *The Iliad* as pure myth. However, in 1870, Heinrich Schliemann, a wealthy German merchant, decided to become an amateur archaeologist. He took his beloved copy of *The Iliad* in hand and let it lead him through the Homeric world for the next fourteen years. To everyone's amazement but his own, in 1873, Schliemann unearthed the ruins of Troy on an acropolis (a large hill) that, in modern times, is called Hissarlik ("Place of Fortresses").

Convinced that Homer's Ilios had to be one of the bottom layers of this nine-layer ruin, Schliemann dug until he unearthed fabulous gold jewelry, silver knives, containers of gold, silver, and copper, and bronze weapons. Because he saw that the fortress that contained them had been destroyed by fire, he erroneously concluded that Troy II was Homer's Ilios, that the Trojan War had destroyed it, and that he had discovered the "Treasure of Priam." However, in 1995, new excavations revealed that Troy II was an impressive, late addition to Troy I, which burned c. 2480/20 B.C.—about 1300 years before the Trojan War and, therefore, too early to qualify as Homer's Ilios.

From 1932 to 1938, a team of scholars directed by archaeologist Carl Blegen (University of Cincinnati) discovered Troy VI (1700–1250/30 B.C.). This period is consistent with the period that Homer describes in *The Iliad,* and the remains of great towers and walls built with Bronze Age tools in about 1470 B.C. are consistent with the strongest Bronze Age city. However, Homer's description reveals Ilios to be a major trade center—a place where people from both western and eastern cultures would meet in order to transact business—whereas the Troy VI citadel occupies only five acres. Therefore, unless further excavation unearthed more extensive remains, Troy VI was clearly too small to be Homer's Ilios.

However, for the next fifty years—including World War II and the Cold War—Hissarlik was part of a military zone, and the partially excavated citadel remained undisturbed. Then, in 1988, the Turkish government invited German archaeologist Manfred Korfmann (University of Tubingen) to direct a new team of scholars in further archaeological excavation and analysis at Hissarlik. In 1996, the acropolis and its surrounding area officially became a national historic park.

Every summer since 1988, Korfmann and his team (specialists in the Bronze Age and earlier periods) have been working in conjunction with University of Cincinnati specialists in post-Bronze Age periods. Approximately one hundred scholars from Germany, the United States, Turkey, and ten other countries are involved—including anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, botanists, chemists, geographers, geologists, meteorologists, numismatists (currency specialists), philologists (literature and related language specialists), physicists, and zoologists. Computer specialists, filmmakers, photographers, restorers, scientific illustrators, and surveyors function as their support staff.

As the archaeologists have unearthed material remains, scholars have revised their ideas to conform with the latest discoveries. However, reputable reports may disagree about what has been excavated and its significance. Moreover, so much is still unknown that future discoveries may change what we currently "know" about the city that may be Homer's Ilios.

Current archaeological excavation has revealed that the great walls discovered by Blegen and his team enclosed only the citadel (fortress), rather than the city, of Troy VI. However, the citadel protected a lower residential city, at least nine times its size, that is located to the south of the acropolis. Whereas royalty and priests probably lived within the citadel, the Trojan people lived in the lower city.

Archaeologists have unearthed and mapped sixty-one significant structures from the period of Troy VI, including the remains of fifteen ancient fortifications (three of which are large forts located three miles south of the lower city). They have also discovered well-planned streets and many examples of Mycenaean pottery. Therefore, the size and complexity of this thirteenth century B.C., Bronze Age city reveals it to have been such a busy and prosperous community that it appears to be consistent with Homer's description of Ilios.

Recent archaeological excavations have also revealed a creative defense against the devastating war machine developed by the Hittites—a spoke-wheeled, lightweight chariot pulled by a team of swift horses. (Troy and the highlands of Anatolia were known for their horse-breeding.) Archers shot their enemies from these moving vehicles and then moved out of range before their enemies could retaliate.

In 1993, archaeologists discovered that, during the period of Troy VI, the lower city possessed an ingenious defense system against these chariots—an encircling trench, or moat, approximately twelve feet wide and twelve feet deep. Carved out of bedrock with hammers and chisels, the partially excavated moat now contains layers of debris, including a thick layer of Myceanean pottery shards at the bottom, as well as the remains of reeds and other aquatic plants.

However, in 1994, archaeologists unearthed part of a second huge trench, or moat, located one hundred yards beyond the first. Chariots could not cross these wide and deep expanses. Therefore, Troy's enemies—wearing armor and carrying weapons—would have been forced to climb down and then up the sloped sides of the trench, which would have made them vulnerable to attack.

Scholars believe that the Trojans also constructed a defensive wall or palisade behind the interior trench from which their archers defended the citadel and

the lower city by attacking raiders with arrows. However, archaeologists have yet to find evidence of such a wall.

Approximately three hundred feet behind the interior trench, archaeologists have unearthed the stone foundation of a Troy II (after 2900–c. 2480/2420 B.C.) wooden palisade that was about ten feet thick and that probably consisted of a line of stakes in front of a platform. However, Troy II is probably much too early for the palisade to have remained in use.

Current excavations have also revealed that, between about 1250 and 1230 B.C., the palaces within the walled citadel of Troy VI were destroyed by earthquake, internal social upheaval, enemy attack, fire, or some combination of these. If enemy attack was responsible for this upheaval, the motive probably was economic—to obtain free access to the Euxine Sea or to obtain Troy's fabulous wealth. The enemy could have been the Mycenaean Greeks because their survival depended on trade—both the export of their pottery and crafts and the import of grain and other food. Therefore, any disruption in their foreign trade would have caused both economic deprivation and significant political dissatisfaction at home, and Troy controlled the access to the Euxine Sea.

Troy VI's first destruction initiated a century (c. 1250–1150 B.C.) marked by a tumultuous upheaval throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The great cities in Anatolia and the Near East began to fall like a house of cards. The Hittite empire, which extended south from the Euxine Sea to the plains of Syria, and east from the shores of the Aegean and the Mediterranean Seas to the Euphrates River, collapsed between 1225 and 1200 B.C., when Hattusha, its great fortified capital, was suddenly demolished. Meanwhile, the cosmopolitan Canaanite port of Ugarit (in Syria), a Hittite vassal state, was also sacked and burned in about 1200 B.C.

The dependence of the Mycenaean Greeks on foreign markets—and the devastating loss of many of these markets caused by the chaos of this period—may have led them to unite, in about 1190 B.C. (assuming a ten-year war), in order to lay siege to Homer's Ilios. Ancient Egyptian and Roman sources date the second destruction of Troy VI—Homer's Trojan War—at one year before the destruction of the Phoenician city of Sidon (c. 1179 B.C.). Radiocarbon dating and analysis of pottery shards, in 1995, also reveal that Troy was attacked, defeated, and completely destroyed by a devastating fire in 1180 B.C.

Scholars must depend on circumstantial evidence in order to determine the culture of Troy VI's inhabitants, and finding artifacts that contain written language would be most helpful. Unfortunately, if their assumptions are correct, archaeologists will not unearth a Troy VI library because later inhabitants probably destroyed it in order to build a great Temple of Athena.

However, Troy VI was such a cosmopolitan city that its educated citizens must have spoken and written several languages, including the various languages of their partners in trade, such as Colchis on the Euxine Sea; Mycenaean Greece on the Aegean Sea; and Ugarit on the Mediterranean Sea. Because pottery shards from Troy VI reveal that it had an active trade with Mycenaean Greece, Troy VI citizens probably wrote the Linear B hieroglyphic script and spoke the language used by the Mycenaeans from about 1450 to 1200 B.C. In addition, some among them must have known the Akkadian language since bilingual poets were translating Akkadian literature into the Hurrian and Hittite languages from about 2000 to 1000 B.C. Moreover, Akkadian was the language of diplomacy throughout Anatolia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt from about 1500 to 500 B.C.

Although evidence of the use of these languages in Troy VI has not been unearthed, in 1995, archaeologists discovered the first piece of writing in Troy VI—a bronze seal that contains a Luwian text written, as was the custom, in Hittite hieroglyphics. The Luwians entered Anatolia at approximately the same time (c. 3000–2000 B.C.) as the Hittites and spoke a closely related Indo-European language. Undoubtedly, all Troy VI citizens spoke, and some among them probably wrote, a local language. However, scholars cannot conclude from one bronze seal that this language was Luwian.

Nevertheless, in early Greek script, Ilios is written "Wilios," and evidence exists to support the idea that Wilios was a Luwian city that the Hittites called Wilusa. Recently discovered Hittite texts suggest that, like Wilios, Wilusa was also located in northwestern Anatolia. At different times, the Luwians were rivals, allies, or vassals of the more powerful Hittites. A Hittite treaty (c. 1280 B.C.) between King Muwatalli II and King Alaksandu of Wilusa, his vassal, lists three gods as witnesses for Wilusa: Appaliunas; the "Storm God of the Army;" and Dingir Kaskal Kur ("God of the Underground River," who is also associated with other sources of water and with wells).

The names of the king (Alaksandu) and the divinity (Appaliunas) closely resemble the names and functions of Paris and Apollo, respectively, in *The Iliad*. Paris, who is King Priam's second son, is also known as Alexandrus ("Defender of Men"), the name he earned while living as a shepherd on Mount Ida.

Apollo is the principal god of Homer's Ilios, and throughout the tenth year of the war, he functions as a local deity who is swift to protect Troy's heroes and punish the Hellenes. Although the Mycenaean Greeks adopted Apollo and revered him as the epitome of the "Hellenic spirit," originally, he was neither a Hellenic nor a pre-Hellenic divinity, but rather a god who was first worshipped in Anatolia. For thirty years, most scholars have viewed Apollo's origin as central Anatolian, and some scholars had already identified Apollo with the Hittite god Appaliunas.

With regard to the god of water mentioned in the treaty, archaeologists have unearthed artificial caves buried beneath the ruins of the Hittite capital of Hattusha. Because they were built next to a holy lake, they appear to relate to the worship of Dingir Kaskal Kur in Hattusha. Moreover, in 1997, archaeologists excavating Troy VI unearthed the same type of artificial well-cave, with three benches, that presumably relates to the worship of Dingir Kaskal Kur in Wilusa.

Further evidence indicates that the culture of Late Bronze Age Troy was probably Luwian-Hittite. First, the defensive trench and the gates to Troy VI resemble Hittite, rather than Mycenaean, architecture. In addition, most of the Troy VI pottery that has been unearthed is Gray Minyan Ware, rather than Mycenaean. Also, in 1995, archaeologists unearthed a small bronze figure of a warrior-god that resembles figures that have been found at Hittite and other near-eastern sites.

Moreover, 1996 research into the significance of the many *stelae* (inscribed or carved stone pillars or slabs used for commemorative purposes) that have been found at the gates of Troy VI reveals that they relate to the worship of Troy's principal god, who was probably Appaliunas. Similar Late Bronze Age stelae have been found to the east, in Luwian and Hittite Anatolia, but not in the regions that border on the Aegean and Mediterranean seas.

The extensive excavations and analyses that are scheduled for the remainder of the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries may finally turn myth and legend into fact. However historians and Homeric scholars want archaeologists to discover more than Homer's Ilios. In order to determine whether Homer's account of the Trojan War is historically accurate, archaeologists must find some remains of the Hellenic camp that would have existed near the shore of Troy's harbor during the period of Troy VI.

## HOMER AND TRADITION

Although ancient literature that was written on perishable materials has disappeared, in time the continued discovery and translation of clay tablets may reveal that the destruction of so many great cities between about 1250 and 1150 B.C. inspired the creation of ancient epics in Anatolia, Syria, and other parts of the near east that are, as yet, unknown. Fortunately, the war that destroyed Ilios inspired an active oral tradition in the Greek colonies located in or near Anatolia, so that we have *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* from the eighth century B.C. as well as six later epics about the Trojan War that exist only in the form of ancient summaries.

One of the most important books in Western literature, *The Iliad* is also one of the two earliest examples of Hellenic literature, the other being its companion epic poem, *The Odyssey*. Most scholars attribute both works to Homer. However, we have no proof that Homer ever existed, and it appears that the ancient Greeks knew no more about him than we do. Today, many Homeric scholars think that Homer lived and worked in about 760 B.C. and later. It is possible that he composed *The Iliad* as a young man and that he was much older when he composed *The Odyssey*.

The linguistic aspects of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* place the epics no later than the eighth century B.C. and connect them with the language of Ionia, the central part of the east Aegean coast that includes the large islands of Samos and Chios. These conclusions are consistent with the fact that, in about 700 B.C., Arctinus of Miletus wrote *The Aethiopis* to be the sequel to *The Iliad*, thus placing *The Iliad* in the eighth century B.C. or earlier. They also support the traditional idea, dating from the period between about 650 and 525 B.C., that Homer was a blind Ionian poet from the island of Chios or the city of Smyrna (now called Izmir, in Turkey).

In Homer's time, the Greeks possessed an elaborate oral tradition that had developed during the dark age that followed the collapse of the great Mycenaean civilization. Successive generations of professionally trained poets, called *rhapsodes*, learned, taught, and performed a wealth of literary material orally. A rhapsode chanted his tales to the accompaniment of his lyre (a small, harplike instrument). If he was fortunate, he became attached to a particular king's household staff; otherwise, he traveled from house to house, earning his food and lodging with his tales. The best rhapsodes were highly respected, for they provided one of the major forms of entertainment in their day. They combined radio, television, movies, albums, history books, and novels all in one human being.

Rhapsodes served a far more important purpose as well. In times of political instability and war, they kept alive the heroic past of Greece. By recounting the great deeds of mortal men, they provided their listeners with heroic models of behavior. In a culture that had no code of ethics or body of laws, their tales presented standards and goals for living one's daily life. Courage, strength, skill, intelligence, loyalty, respect for all forms of life, moral responsibility, and hospitality were prime values; glory and honor were principal goals.

At this time, it was still the custom for a poet to create narratives without attaching his name to them. As the opening lines of *The Iliad* reveal, Homer viewed himself as the anonymous voice of the Muse of Epic Poetry, a daughter of Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. Homer was the last and greatest of these anonymous poets, eclipsing all who preceded him and casting his shadow upon all who followed him in the ancient world, including the next great epic poet, Virgil. Toward the turn of the eighth century B.C., the concept of anonymity was replaced by the concept of authorship, and the seventh-century epic poets, such as Hesiod, speak in their own voice.

We do not know whether Homer put *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* into writing, or whether he dictated them to someone else, or whether other poets memorized and performed *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* as Homer had created them until they were eventually written down. Many contemporary Homeric scholars think that one poet wrote both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. All of the existing ancient copies of *The Iliad* agree in terms of dialect and plot details, thus reflecting the existence of one original version. *The Iliad*, which is longer and more complex in its structure, is organized as if it were going to be recited rather than read. However, a literate tradition can coexist with an oral tradition.

In 1595 B.C., the Hittites had destroyed Hammurabi's city of Babylon and with it his empire. However, they had adopted Babylonian Akkadian script and Babylonian/Sumerian literature and had introduced them to the coastal lands of Anatolia and the offshore islands in the Aegean and Mediterranean. Later, many of these areas had become Greek colonies. Meanwhile, by the thirteenth century B.C., Ugarit had a cuneiform alphabet, and by the twelfth century B.C., Phoenicia had one as well. Phoenician merchants, with their prized bowls of bronze and silver, also transported goods from other eastern cultures to western communities, and wherever such trade occurred, written language developed.

Therefore, by the mid-eighth century B.C., when Homer was creating *The Iliad*, communities from the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia on the east to Italy on the west had become literate. In Smyrna—and, therefore, possibly on the island of Chios, as well—people still spoke, understood, and wrote the Luwian language, and Akkadian cuneiform scripts (Babylonian/Hittite/Luwian) often coexisted with three related, alphabetic Semitic scripts—the Aramaic

(Syria/Palestine), the Phoenician, and the Greek.

Moreover, folded wooden or leather writing tablets, like the one Glaucus mentions when relating the tale of Bellerophon (*The Iliad,* Book VI) were used in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. In fact, a fourteenth century B.C. wooden writing tablet has been unearthed in Turkey. However, because leather and wood are perishable materials, with the exception of the Bible (which, being a sacred text, was treated with special care), the literature written on these materials has almost completely disappeared.

Homer is first mentioned in writing that scholars date at 660 B.C. By this time, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were well known throughout Hellas and the Hellenic Aegean. The writer of one of *The Homeric Hymns* refers to himself as a blind poet, and when the ancient Greeks attributed these poems to Homer, they decided that he must therefore have been blind. Late in the sixth century B.C., Chios had a guild called the *Homeridai* ("the descendants of Homer") that trained rhapsodes. By this time, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were considered an important part of a Hellene's education.

Until late in the fourth century B.C., students usually memorized *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by listening to others recite them. It is possible that an authoritative edition of *The Odyssey* existed in Athens in the sixth century B.C.; however, few copies of *The Iliad* have been found that were written prior to the mid-fifth century B.C.

In the fourth century B.C., books became more plentiful in Athens, and a larger segment of the Athenian public could read. Thus, it is not surprising that numerous fragments of both epics have survived from this period. In addition to being written on papyrus, which was scarce and expensive, the early copies were also written on rolls of leather or on wooden tablets. By this time, Athenian authors often quoted Homer in their writings.

Many contemporary Homeric scholars think that Homer created *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with the knowledge of other epics in mind. Homer's choice of subjects, the related knowledge that he obviously expected his audience to possess, and the existence of six other ancient Hellenic epics on the Trojan War all reveal that Homer and the other rhapsodes of ancient Hellas knew a larger body of myth on the subject of the Trojan War.

In *The Iliad,* for example, Homer chose one event from the last year of the ten-year Trojan War and developed it in depth. He assumed that his listeners would know the complete story of the war with Ilios, the stories of all the families of the major heroes in that war, and the stories of the Olympian gods that determine their ways of relating to one another.

In keeping with the oral tradition, Homer created *The Iliad* by taking traditional building blocks of material from the poets who preceded him and reshaping them to form the foundations of his artistic creation. These blocks included various myths about the gods and about the heroes of old (the fathers of the heroes of the Trojan War); myths about the war with Ilios and its various participants, from long before the start of the war until the last of the heroes had returned home; folk tales; set passages describing scenes of sacrifice, fighting, and funerals; and particular descriptive phrases, called *epithets,* that described people and nature. From these blocks of material, Homer created two dramatic tales that were new in the important sense that each had a focus that was uniquely his own. Although Homer was trained to work within a particular framework, like all rhapsodes, he was also free to manipulate much of the material so as to reflect his own artistic vision and to please a particular audience.

Homer believed that the Muse of Epic Poetry gave him the power to remember the heroes' exact words and to describe their actions as if he had personally observed them. Often Homer would repeat descriptions and speeches, sometimes exactly and other times with slight variations. Repetition not only made the storytelling process easier, but it reminded listeners about what the poet had been telling them, for these were always very complicated tales. Approximately one-third of the lines in *The Iliad* are repeated, often more than once.

Homer designed his tale in the form of a tree. The principal plot forms the trunk of the tree, and many other stories branch off from the trunk. Some of the auxiliary stories are included in order to instruct particular characters in the major plot; others are inserted artistically as comic relief or as parallel subordinate plots that reinforce the theme of the principal plot. Given the extensive connections among stories, Homer invariably begins his tale in the middle and moves in many directions simultaneously.

*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* became incorporated into a group of six other Trojan War epics that had been written by various poets in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., and this group of eight epics became known as the Epic Cycle. The later poets were so impressed by *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* that they made no effort to deal with the subject of either epic. Instead, each poet chose to supplement both epics by telling a part of the Trojan War narrative that Homer had chosen to omit.

By the sixth century A.D., all of these supplementary epics had disappeared. However, a writer by the name of Proclus had summarized them, and summaries of his work have survived to this day, along with 120 more or less scattered lines from the original epics. By studying this material, it is possible to discover details about the Trojan War that Homer does not include in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey,* and it is also possible to see what Homer undoubtedly contributed to the traditional version of that narrative. For example, it is interesting to note that Patroclus's death and funeral in *The Iliad* are very similar to Achilles' death and funeral in *The Aethiopis.* Whether Arctinus copied Homer or both poets followed the earlier oral tradition is open to conjecture.

Consistent with Homer's treatment of Patroclus in *The Iliad* is his creative addition of a second shield for Achilles. In both *The Aethiopis* and *The Little Iliad,* Odysseus and Ajax (Telamon's son) compete for Achilles' shield. Consequently, it appears that, traditionally, Achilles only needed and possessed one shield.

Homer straddled two cultures—Hellenic and Anatolian. First, he lived in a Greek colony that was either on the coast of Anatolia (ancient Smyrna; modern Izmir) or on an offshore island (Chios). Therefore, he was much closer to Troy than to Hellas, and it is natural that he would have been very familiar with Anatolian literary materials and historical events.

The educated Hellenic Anatolians of Homer's time and place were a cosmopolitan people. Their location

enabled them to be in touch with merchants who transacted business with the peoples of many diverse cultures who lived along the shores of the Mediterranean and the Euxine Seas. Therefore, many Hellenic Anatolians spoke and wrote more than one language, including Luwian, and they enjoyed an unusually rich literary heritage.

Being a Hellene, Homer had inherited a large body of Hellenic myth and legend. Living in Anatolia, he had inherited two additional literary traditions: the rich culture that the Hittites had preserved from Ancient Sumer and Mesopotamia and the rich culture that was indigenous to Anatolia.

Being a rhapsode, Homer performed other epics than his own. Particular details in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* reveal that he was familiar with the older epic literature from the Middle East, such as *Gilgamesh* from Sumer/Babylonia and *The Enuma elish* from Babylonia. (Both of these are included in *World Mythology*.) For example, Achilles and Gilgamesh can be shown to follow the same heroic pattern. Moreover, Homer apparently found the close friendship between the two heroes in *Gilgamesh* to be such an appealing idea that he increased Patroclus's importance in *The Iliad* in order to create a relationship between him and Achilles that parallels the relationship between Enkidu and Gilgamesh. Patroclus does not appear to have the same relationship to Achilles in the plot of *The Cypria*, which chronologically precedes the plot of *The Iliad* in the Epic Cycle.

Moreover, being a rhapsode, Homer's knowledge of other myths and legends—including those of Anatolia—enabled him to choose from a treasure chest of literary riches. Many Hellenic and Anatolian myths and legends may already have enriched each other by the time Homer became familiar with them; others Homer himself probably combined. For example, when Glaucus tells the tale of Bellerophon, a warrior who is a Lycian and a Trojan ally, he is relating heroic exploits that occurred in Lycia (located on the southern coast of Anatolia). However, at least in Homer's version, Bellerophon is a Hellene who is sent to Lycia, where he remains, because of someone else's connection with that Anatolian kingdom.

Like Homer's version of the Bellerophon tale, his other renditions of myth and legend are the earliest we have. Therefore, we can only evaluate them in connection with later Hellenic versions and similar material from other cultures. In the process, we can see how Homer may have taken details from a competing myth or legend and adapted them to enrich his own version of *The Iliad*. For example, Proclus's summary of *The Cypria* (written c. 660 B.C. by either Staninus of Cyprus or Hegesinus of Salamis) reveals that the Hellenes leave Aulis for Ilios but arrive, by mistake, at Teuthrania, in Mysia (located east of the large island of Lesbos, on the northwestern coast of Anatolia and therefore southeast of Ilios). Believing Teuthrania to be Ilios, they sack this Mysian city.

Meanwhile, the Mysian hero, Telephus—described in later versions as the king of Teuthrania—defends the city against the Hellenes. Depending on the version of this myth—and revealing ancient cultural exchange—Telephus is either born in Mysia, arrives there from Hellas as an infant, or appears there as an adult, where he discovers his mother.

Then, in a situation that resembles that of Philoctetes (See "The Death of Paris," in the Epilogue to *The Iliad*, in *World Mythology*), Achilles wounds Telephus, and the Hellenes return to Hellas. Meanwhile, an oracle reveals to Telephus that Achilles alone can cure him of this wound and that he is destined to guide the Hellenes to Ilios. Therefore, Telephus finds Achilles in Hellas and, in return for Achilles' cure, agrees to lead the Hellenes to Ilios. As a result, the Hellenes gather at Aulis once again, and this time their voyage to Ilios is successful.

Proclus's summary of *The Little Iliad*, written c. 660 B.C. by Lesches of Mitylene (located on Lesbos), tells of the arrival of Philoctetes from the island of Lemnos, the healing of his wound, and his single combat with Paris in which he kills Paris with Heracles' bow. Lesches also continues the tale of Telephus, when, shortly before the construction of the wooden horse, Achilles' son arrives to help the Hellenes, Telephus's son arrives to help the Trojans, and, in the course of battle, the son of Achilles kills the son of Telephus.

Finally, it is also possible that Homer could have based parts of *The Iliad* on Luwian oral and written sources. Hittite tablets record several wars with Wilusa, and a passage from a sixteenth century B.C. Luwian cult song closely resembles a description in *The Iliad*.

## APPEAL AND VALUE

The survival and fame of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* confirm that Homer was the supreme poet of ancient Greece. Because these epics are unusually long, they made great demands both on the rhapsode and on his audience. Performing *The Iliad* must have taken between six and ten three-hour sessions and, therefore, was a form of entertainment that would continue for a three- to four-day period. According to the great philosopher Plato (427–347 B.C.), Homer was the teacher of every Hellene. In fact, Homer profoundly influenced Hellenic civilization for a thousand years, for the people of ancient Greece knew and valued his words as people continue to know and value the Bible. Moreover, students of every generation have studied *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, for something in Homer appeals to every human being.

Without the existence of writing, it is amazing that information about any event could survive the gap of more than four hundred years between the Trojan War and the first written version of *The Iliad*. Yet archaeologists have confirmed a surprising number of Homer's details, such as the existence of most of the communities he mentions and his descriptions of war gear. Homer memorized lists of communities that no longer existed in his own day. He also retained the use of chariots as a means of transportation across battlefields, even though chariots no longer existed in Greece when he created *The Iliad*, and he did not know their real purpose. Homer's distance in time from the events he described resulted in some inaccuracies. For example, the Mycenaeans buried their dead; they did not cremate them. Homer also describes palaces that appear to have no historical basis at all.

However, Homer is not read primarily for his history. The universal appeal of Homer resides in his heroes. What survives of the other epics in the Epic Cycle reveals that Homer was a literary giant among poets. Unlike

those who came after him, Homer was a born psychologist and was far more interested in creating heroes who thought and acted like real people in time of crisis than in repeating the multitude of factual details that traditionally described the events in the Trojan War.

Because of the individual he was and the fact that he lived in a community that was, in many ways, as close to Anatolian culture as to Hellenic culture, Homer reveals his sympathy for both the Greeks and the Trojans in the great war that provides the setting for his story. Because of his gift with characterization, we, too, sympathize with Achilles and Patroclus, who find themselves caught in circumstances beyond their control. Moreover, the plight of Hector, his parents (King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Ilios), his wife (Andromache), and their young son (Astyanax) gives them a lasting place in our hearts.

Homer's heroes in *The Iliad* are remarkable in that, unlike the earlier heroes of Hellenic myth and the traditional heroes of world myth, they do not achieve fame or immortality by killing evil human beings or monsters. Instead, they are simply good men who, due to circumstances beyond their control, find themselves called upon to fight and kill other good men in battle. Homer's heroes—Greeks and Trojans alike—fight with courage, strength, and skill, and they win honor, glory, and lasting fame. However, the price of victory is as great as the cost of defeat—overwhelming suffering and death.

Many details relating to the war in *The Iliad* no longer interest contemporary readers. However, Homer's characters remain vitally alive. As we watch them react to the problems in their lives, we realize that people have remained basically the same throughout the history of humanity. Like those who lived at the turn of the twelfth century B.C., on whom the characters in the Trojan War are based, and like Homer and his eighth century B.C. contemporaries, we have the same needs, the same types of conflicts, and the same ultimate fate, which is death. Therefore, Homer's characters become so real to us that we identify with them, and, in the process, we gain insight into our own emotions and goals. This examination of our own attitudes and values may help us exert more control over the course of our own lives.

Human emotions and behavior obviously fascinated Homer, for the opening lines of *The Iliad* state that his focus will be the anger of Achilles and the devastation it caused all of the Greeks who were fighting in the war against Ilios. In keeping with his perspective, Homer's style is dramatic rather than narrative. He does not tell us what his characters are like; instead, he reveals their personalities by actively involving us in their moments of crisis. Homer enables us to listen to their private thoughts and public statements and to watch them interact with other characters. Often, two characters who are quite different in attitude and behavior react against one another.

This approach lets us see each major character from a variety of perspectives. Each hero becomes a vital, complex person who possesses a range of emotions and whose behavior varies as his emotions change. Because the issues he faces are complex and important, the decisions he must make are never obvious or easy. Given a particular hero's values and attitudes and the very human limitations of his personality, it is as difficult to categorize him as good or evil as it would be in real life. Homer almost always leaves the interpretation of his heroes' personalities and the evaluation of their behavior to the other characters and to us.

Homer's characters stand apart from the story of the Trojan War as a sculpture stands apart from its background. Homer gives us no idea of the timing of his story beyond its duration of a few days; neither the year nor the season interests him. He tells us that the Hellenic ships are swift, black, and "hollow," that men row them and that they have sails, but we still cannot picture them in our minds. We have even less of a feel for the appearance of Ilios and the wall that protects it. Homer is interested primarily in human beings, and anything else is included in the story only to the extent that it enhances his portrayal of the individual.

Homer's extended comparisons, known as *Homeric similes,* function in this way. In these comparisons Homer relates the appearance, emotions, or actions of one of his characters to something or someone in the natural world—a particular wild animal or bird, a forest fire, flood, or storm, or a farmer or artisan working. The scenes Homer describes in his similes provide additional emotional depth by showing, for example, how much fear, anger, grief, or happiness a particular character is feeling at that moment. In this way the Homeric simile increases the significance of human emotions and actions.

## THE HOMERIC HERO

The principal characters in *The Iliad* are heroic aristocrats. Homer examines their attitudes and their behavior in crucial wartime situations. These aristocrats are no strangers to the demands of war. On the contrary, their families reared them to assume a major role in the warrior culture that dominated their age. In fact, many nobles were much happier fighting on the battlefield with their friends than living at home in peaceful isolation.

The Greek nobility in the Mycenaean age valued strength and skill, courage and determination, for these attributes enabled the person who possessed them to achieve glory and honor, both in his lifetime and after he died. The Mycenaean hero never forgot that death was his ultimate fate. Faced with a grim view of life after death, he chose to concentrate on the aspects of his existence he could control, notably the quality of his life and the manner in which he died.

The striving for excellence in particular areas of human behavior, called *aretē* by the ancient Greeks, is an integral part of the Homeric hero's life. Strength, skill, and determination are necessary and admirable attributes both on the athletic field and on the battlefield. Courage and moral responsibility are obviously components in the *aretē* of the warrior. *Aretē* in the form of intelligence, insight, or ingenuity is more common in the older hero. Years of experience in the warrior culture have made the older generation of heroes more expert in this area, and one of their major roles is to counsel the younger men.

The Homeric hero strives to be the best among his peers. His goal is to achieve the greatest glory in order to earn the highest honor from his peers, his commander, and his warrior society. He has the opportunity to exhibit the greatest *aretē*—and thus win the greatest glory—on the battlefield, for armed conflict presents the ultimate challenge to his abilities. How well the Homeric hero fights, how heroic his adversary is, and how well he faces

death all combine to determine how well he will be remembered and honored, not only by his companions but by society and posterity. Given that suffering and death are an inevitable part of the human condition, honor, glory, and lasting fame compensate the Homeric hero for his mortality.

The Homeric hero judges his own *aretē* by what his warrior society thinks of him. Public approval is crucial to the Homeric hero's self-esteem. His commander confers a more tangible honor by rewarding him with wealth and prizes that represent in material terms the amount of honor he has earned. Such wealth includes gold and bronze, valuable objects and animals, land and the power to rule those who inhabit it, and female slaves captured when their cities were raided. The highest and most honored prize is called the prize of honor, and in *The Iliad* this prize is the most attractive, intelligent, and skilled female captive.

Moreover, once the Homeric hero achieves his goals of glory and honor, the poets will sing about his great accomplishments, conferring wide and lasting fame upon him. Such fame is the ultimate honor, for it is the only form of immortality that any mortal can acquire. Lasting fame places the Homeric hero lower than the gods but higher than ordinary men.

The greatest insult one can confer upon the Homeric hero is to withhold the honor he has earned. The hero then feels robbed of his proper status in society, and he feels the intolerable shame of public disgrace. The Homeric hero feels dishonored if he does not receive enough wealth or appropriately impressive prizes for his contributions in battle, or if he is judged the loser in a competition that he thinks he deserved to win.

Ultimately every Greek warrior must choose between dying as a hero and dying an obscure or disgraceful death. Despite his values, the choice of how to die is never easy, for the warrior loves life and believes that death will be an eternally dull existence. Moreover, his decision inevitably involves the welfare of his society, whether in the form of his companions on the battlefield or the people of the city he is defending. Sometimes he must choose between his loyalty and responsibility to the individuals he loves most and the loyalty and responsibility he owes to the larger community. The Homeric hero's decision to accept death in order to give significance and value to his life gives him a dignity, a nobility, and a grandeur that do not tarnish with the passage of time. When he is most vulnerable, most aware of his situation, and most alone, he is most noble.

The principal focus of *The Iliad* is on the consequences of a quarrel between Agamemnon, the commander of all the Greek forces, and Achilles, his greatest warrior. In a very human but very juvenile, arrogant, and callous act, Agamemnon publicly humiliates Achilles by taking away his prize of honor. Achilles retaliates by withdrawing from battle. His decision cripples the Greek forces and results in needless suffering and death among the Greeks, eventually including the death of his best friend, Patroclus. *The Iliad* demonstrates how the actions of these two great Greek heroes cause great harm to their community (the army) when each thinks only of himself. Homer's own attitudes toward war and its heroes are reflected in the values of Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector.

The issues in *The Iliad* are not simple ones by any means. The removal of Achilles' prize of honor is a blow to his reputation as well as to his pride. Moreover, Achilles knows that if he chooses to fight in the Trojan War, he will die an early death but will be remembered as a great hero; whereas if he refrains from fighting, he will lead a long but insignificant life and will not be remembered at all. He understandably vacillates between choosing life and choosing death.

Achilles personifies what is best and worst in human nature. As he moves from one crisis to another, he is at his best when he stands apart from his warrior society and questions the values by which he and they live. He is also at his best when he offers compassion and consolation that reveal his profound understanding of the human condition. However, at his worst, Achilles behaves like a selfish child and acts like a brutal beast. With striking psychological realism, Homer portrays the two sides of Achilles' nature as they exist in the human personality, like the two sides of one coin.

Achilles is considered to be the first tragic hero in literature, and his tragedy has many possible causes. He may be a tragic figure because he must sacrifice his life in order to achieve the lasting fame that confers immortality. He may be tragic because, given his values, he is not ultimately free to choose either life or death. His tragedy may also lie in the fact that his reason for reentering the war has nothing to do with his argument with Agamemnon, the principles for which he stood, or the Greek cause. Finally, it may be tragic that his view of his fellow warriors condemns him to be honored by those whose values he does not respect. Because Homer presents all these factors, he permits us to evaluate Achilles' situation for ourselves.

Homer changed the traditional Trojan War myth wherever necessary in order to create a psychologically cohesive narrative. For example, in *The Aethiopis,* Zeus permits Thetis to rescue Achilles from the funeral pyre and take him to White Island in the Euxine Sea, where he lives forever. The ability of a god to grant immortality to a favored mortal occasionally occurs in the earlier, traditional body of Greek myth, and, given Achilles' heroic stature, it is likely that he would have received this highest accolade. However, by permitting Achilles to die, Homer makes *The Iliad* more stimulating intellectually. It is interesting to consider how Homer's audience would have responded to *The Iliad,* since they would have known the story of Achilles' later rescue.

Homer's treatment of the Greek and Trojan heroes is unbiased. Although the Trojans are the enemy, in Homer's epic they are not villains. They are as human and heroic as the Greeks. The greatest of the Trojan warriors is Hector, whose sense of responsibility to his people stands in sharp contrast to his brother Paris's selfishness, and to Achilles' selfishness as well. Like Achilles, Hector knows that he will die fighting in the Trojan War. He too vacillates between choosing life and choosing death, even though an honorable death will bring the immortality of everlasting fame. His death at the hands of Achilles shows only that Achilles is the greater warrior. Hector's humane values and his ultimate courage reveal that he is the greater human being.

Yet, like Achilles, Hector is not perfect. At the base of his single-minded devotion to his people is the fact that above all else, above even his wife and child, he values his reputation. Therefore, in this respect, the motivating force behind Hector's behavior is similar

to that behind Achilles' behavior. Hector's fear of disgrace, with its accompanying shame, causes needless death among the Trojans, including his own.

The ancient Greeks were fond of two precepts: "Know thyself" and "Nothing in excess." However, the Homeric hero, in striving for excellence, or *aretē*, was such an accomplished individual that it was easy for him to forget his human limitations and to think that he was even greater than he actually was. The ancient Greeks called such excessive pride and arrogance *hubris*. *Hubris* would lead the hero to think that he was greater than the heroes who were his peers and that he had the limitless power that he attributed to his gods.

As a result of this attitude, the hero inevitably would say or do something excessive, without thinking of the consequences. The ancient Greeks called such action *atē*, which means blind, rash behavior. *Atē* would inevitably lead to retribution, or *nemesis*. Sometimes the gods would punish the hero directly; sometimes other human beings would punish him. Either way, the Homeric hero brought his fate, which was often death, upon himself. The reader can follow the pattern of *aretē*, *hubris*, *atē* and *nemesis* in the behavior of Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector.

## WOMEN IN THE ILIAD

*The Iliad* is dominated by men, since it is set during the Trojan War. However, the Homeric heroes clearly place a very high value upon women. The aristrocratic woman in Mycenaean society also possesses *aretē*, consisting of beauty, intelligence, loyalty, and excellence in handicraft work (usually weaving). Although the queen's place is in the home instead of on the battlefield, as mistress of the royal household she wields great power during her husband's frequent absences.

The Homeric hero's most honored prize is the female captive who possesses the greatest *aretē*. The heroes reveal, by both their actions and their words, that they cherish these women both as individuals and as symbols of honor. It is worth noting that the abduction of Helen caused the Trojan War, and that the anger of Achilles over the seizure of Briseis, the female captive who was his prize of honor, is the focus of *The Iliad*.

However, Homer also depicts this situation from the female point of view. Through Andromache, Homer eloquently expresses the plight of all aristocratic Mycenaean women who become war's victims. The woman who is so valued as to become a prize of honor is actually enslaved by the victorious nobleman who wins her. She is carried off to a new land, where she is relegated to a life of servitude and deprivation.

Female divinities play a major role in *The Iliad*. Athena, the goddess of defensive war, is the favorite child of Zeus, the ruler of all the Greek gods, because she is so intelligent and clever. She is also the favorite divinity of the Homeric hero, whom she inspires and guides. Since the ancient Greeks gave their gods the qualities they themselves possessed, the fact that Athena is a superlative being is another indication that they esteemed women highly.

## THE ROLE OF THE GREEK GODS

Because *The Iliad* is the earliest written work from ancient Greece, it is the earliest presentation of the Greek gods. The Homeric gods are ageless and immortal, can possess great knowledge of the future, and are influenced by the pleas of one another and the prayers of mortals. They have not given any moral code to mortals, nor do they live by such a code themselves. In practice, they are simply a divine aristocratic family whose members possess the same variety of feelings and attitudes as mortals. Their behavior is often angry, jealous, deceitful, and, in some instances, amusingly juvenile. It is clear that the ancient Greeks did not require perfection, either in themselves or in their divinities.

The Homeric gods are not all-powerful. Unlike divine power in the earlier, traditional body of Greek myth, fate and death are even beyond the control of Zeus, who may talk as though he could control when a mortal dies, but never tries to do so. While mortals live, however, the gods may participate in their lives by giving advice (both good and bad), by supplying thoughts and ideas, strength and skill, courage and determination, and by causing weapons to hit or miss their mark. They may appear as their divine selves, or they may disguise themselves as any human being they choose, depending upon the purpose they have in mind.

The Homeric hero feels the presence or absence of his gods. He often attributes all of his success on the battlefield to them or blames them for his failures and bad luck. However, he always accepts the fact that the gods cannot prevent his death when it is his time (his fate) to die.

The relationship between the Homeric hero and his gods is complex. The Homeric gods clearly have their favorites among mortals and make an effort to help them. However, a mortal must earn divine esteem and goodwill by the way he treats both the gods and other mortals. The gods are particularly partial to heroes because they appreciate and enjoy heroic deeds. Their help enhances the heroic stature of those warriors who receive it.

Homer attributes to the gods powers that today we ascribe to science, human nature, human skill, luck, and fate. The Homeric gods do surprisingly few things that we can explain in no other way. Certainly only a god could whisk Paris off the battlefield and into his palace bedroom. Only a god could lure Hector into a direct confrontation with Achilles and then instantly disappear. However, a god need not be present to cause the strap of Paris's helmet to break, or to tell Achilles that it is better to hurl sharp words at Agamemnon than to stab him with his sword.

The Homeric gods do not change a mortal's personality or fate. Even though the gods may give advice or help, a mortal's actions in response to any given situation are determined by his or her own personality and ability. Consequently, a mortal's fate is created by the interaction between personality and situation. Because the Homeric gods are not all-powerful, mortals can be dignified, morally responsible, and important. The world of ancient Greece contains no puppets.

## PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

### THE GREEKS

AGAMEMNON: son of Atreus; older brother of Menelaus; king of Mycenae; commander of all the Greek forces; husband of Clytemnestra; father of Iphigenia, Electra, and Orestes
CLYTEMNESTRA: daughter of King Tyndareus and Queen Leda of Sparta; wife of Agamemnon; queen of Mycenae; mother of Iphigenia, Electra, and Orestes
MENELAUS: son of Atreus; younger brother of Agamemnon; king of Sparta; husband of Helen
HELEN: daughter of Zeus and the goddess Nemesis; reared by King Tyndareus and Queen Leda of Sparta; wife of Menelaus and queen of Sparta until abducted by Paris and taken to Troy
NESTOR: king of Pylos; old, wise Greek leader
ACHILLES: son of the hero Peleus and the sea-goddess Thetis; leader of the Myrmidons; greatest Greek warrior
PATROCLUS: best friend of Achilles
PHOENIX: Achilles' tutor
AJAX: son of the hero Telamon; second greatest Greek warrior
ODYSSEUS: son of the hero Laertes; king of Ithaca; master of strategies
CALCHAS: chief prophet of the Greeks

### THE TROJANS

PRIAM: king of Troy; husband of Hecuba; father of Hector, Paris, Deiphobus, and Cassandra
HECUBA: wife of Priam; queen of Troy; mother of Hector, Paris, Deiphobus, and Cassandra
HECTOR: son of Priam and Hecuba; husband of Andromache; father of Astyanax; brother of Paris; commander of the Trojan forces; greatest Trojan warrior
ANDROMACHE: wife of Hector; mother of Astyanax
ASTYANAX: son of Hector and Andromache
POLYDAMAS: Hector's good friend and wise counselor
PARIS: son of Priam and Hecuba; brother of Hector; abductor of Helen
DEIPHOBUS: son of Priam and Hecuba; brother of Hector and Paris
CASSANDRA: daughter of Priam and Hecuba; sister of Hector and Paris
AENEAS: son of Aphrodite and Anchises
PANDARUS: a respected Trojan spearman
BRISEIS: Achilles' prize of honor
CHRYSEIS: daughter of Chryses, a priest of Apollo; Agamemnon's prize of honor

For a list of the gods, see page 83.

# PROLOGUE TO THE ILIAD

## THE BIRTH OF PARIS

Hecuba, the wife of King Priam of Troy, was about to give birth when she had a dreadful nightmare. She dreamed that instead of a baby, she gave birth to a flaming torch crawling with snakes. When she told her dream to the prophets, they told her that the baby must be killed, for if he lived he would cause the destruction of Troy.

As soon as he was born, Priam and Hecuba obediently gave the baby, whom they had named Paris, to two of their trusted servants and ordered them to kill him. The servants did not have the heart to kill Paris, so they left him exposed upon a mountainside, expecting that he would die of starvation or would be mauled by wild animals. Instead, Paris was found and raised by a shepherd couple. He grew to manhood as their son.

Many years later, this shepherd boy's favorite bull was chosen by King Priam's servants to be a prize in funeral games commemorating Paris's death. The young man went to the games and won all of the contests. Priam's daughter Cassandra, to whom Apollo had given the gift of prophecy, announced that this young man was, in fact, the son they thought had died. Then his parents welcomed Paris home.

## THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

While Paris was still living with the shepherd family, an event occurred that led to the eventual destruction of Troy. Zeus, Lord of Olympus, held a royal wedding celebration to honor the sea goddess Thetis and the great mortal hero Peleus. He invited all the gods except Eris, Goddess of Discord, for a wedding is no place for arguments. Highly insulted, Eris came anyway. When she was not permitted to enter, she threw a golden apple into the hall and announced that it was a gift for the most beautiful goddess.

Every goddess wanted the honor of receiving the apple, but finally all of them gave up except for Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. They asked Zeus to decide which of them was most beautiful, but he refused to choose among his wife and two of his daughters. So he ordered Hermes, the Wayfinder, to take the golden apple and the three goddesses to Mount Ida and to have Paris, who was herding sheep there, judge among them. Each goddess thought Paris would choose her if she promised him a special gift.

Hera said, "If you give the apple to me, Paris, I will give you extraordinary wealth and will make you ruler over all mortals."

Athena said, "If you give the apple to me, Paris, I will make you the bravest and wisest of mortal men, victorious in war, and skillful in every craft."

Finally, Aphrodite said, "If you give the apple to me, Paris, I will give you Helen, the daughter of King Tyndareus and the most beautiful woman in the world, as your wife." (It did not matter to Aphrodite that Helen was already married to King Menelaus of Sparta.)

Paris liked Aphrodite's gift best of all, so he awarded the apple to her, and from that time on Hera and Athena hated all Trojans. Paris then sailed to Sparta, where he was the guest of Menelaus and Helen for nine days. When Menelaus left on a trip, Paris convinced Helen to return to Troy with him. She left her nine-year-old daughter at home, took all of her possessions, and sailed away on Paris's ship that night.

## THE MARRIAGE OF HELEN

Helen's marriage to Menelaus had involved an unusual circumstance, which also contributed to the eventual destruction of Troy. Because of Helen's beauty, many of the greatest kings in Greece approached her father, King Tyndareus, for her hand. He was afraid to choose one of them for fear that the others would be furious

enough to attack the chosen suitor and destroy the marriage. Odysseus, Ajax, Menelaus, and Patroclus were among the suitors.

Odysseus looked at his competitors and decided that Helen would never choose him, for he was not handsome. He approached her father and offered to help the king solve the problem of the suitors if, in return, King Tyndareus would help Odysseus win Penelope, who was the king's niece, for his wife. Odysseus suggested that before announcing his choice, the king should make all the suitors swear that they would punish anyone who tried to break up the marriage. Once the suitors had taken the oath, King Tyndareus chose Menelaus to be the husband of Helen and Odysseus to be the husband of Penelope.

## PREPARATION FOR WAR: ODYSSEUS AND ACHILLES

When Menelaus returned to Sparta and heard that Paris had carried Helen away, he went to wide-ruling Agamemnon, his powerful brother, and asked him to raise an army to bring her back. He then sent heralds to many of the Greek kings, including Helen's former suitors, to remind them of the oath they had sworn. Many kings were delighted to have an occasion for heroism and adventure; Odysseus felt otherwise.

An oracle had warned Odysseus that if he went to Troy, he would return home, alone, twenty years later. So when Agamemnon and Menelaus came for him, he pretended to be insane by harnessing a horse and an ox, instead of two oxen, to his plow. Knowing that Odysseus was a man of many schemes, the two brothers tested him by taking his infant son, Telemachus, out of his cradle and putting the baby down in front of the plow. To avoid killing his son, Odysseus had to stop pretending to be insane. He made arrangements for organizing the soldiers who would go with him to Troy, and then he left with Agamemnon and Menelaus to find Achilles.

Achilles' mother, the sea goddess Thetis, could not accept the fact that Achilles was doomed to die since his father, Peleus, was mortal. (In order to be immortal, one must have both an immortal mother and an immortal father.) When Achilles was an infant, she tried to burn away his mortality by secretly placing him in a fire at night. However, Peleus suddenly awakened in the middle of the night, found his wife holding the baby in the flames, and commanded her to stop. Thetis was so infuriated that she abandoned her husband and returned to her home in the sea to live, leaving Achilles to be reared by his father.[1]

Thetis knew that Achilles would die if he fought in the Trojan War, so she hid him in the palace of a king who was a friend of hers. The king dressed fifteen-year-old Achilles as a girl, gave him a female name, and housed him with his daughters.

1 A Roman poet writing more than a thousand years after the Trojan War adds more detail to this story. He says that Thetis then took the infant Achilles down to the River Styx in the Underworld. There she held onto him by the heel of one foot and submerged the rest of him in the water. The river water protected from injury every part of his body it touched, so Achilles could be wounded only in the back of one heel—the Achilles tendon. Homer, however, does not indicate that he knew this story.



Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Odysseus heard that Achilles was in the palace, but the king would not admit it. He did agree to let them search the palace, but they could not find Achilles anywhere. Odysseus, a man of many schemes, then pretended to be a peddler. He returned to the palace with a tray of beautiful scarves and jewelry, plus a spear and a shield. When the daughters of the king and their handmaidens came into the forecourt of the palace to examine these beautiful articles, he had the servants sound an alarm and shout that the palace was under attack. Achilles immediately tore off his woman's clothing, grabbed the spear and the shield, and went looking for the attackers. Instead he found Odysseus, who told him of Helen's abduction. Achilles then promised the Greek kings that he would bring his soldiers to Troy.

## DEPARTURE FOR TROY

The Greek kings, with all of their soldiers, gathered at Aulis and prepared to sail across the Aegean Sea to Troy. Time passed and the fleet remained beached, for the winds would not blow in the right direction. Finally, the prophet Calchas announced that favorable winds would blow only when Agamemnon appeased Artemis, the Goddess of the Hunt, by sacrificing his most beautiful daughter. Agamemnon had killed a deer that was sacred to Artemis and then bragged that he had killed a deer the Archer Goddess could not have hit. Therefore, he would have to soothe her rage.

Agamemnon sent Odysseus to his wife, Clytemnestra, with the false message that their daughter Iphigenia should come to Aulis in order to become the bride of Achilles. When Iphigenia arrived, her father let Calchas place her upon an altar. As the prophet was about to kill her, Artemis secretly substituted a deer and carried Iphigenia off to become one of her priestesses. The winds shifted, and the Greeks set sail for Troy. But Clytemnestra never forgave her husband.

# THE ILIAD

## Chapter 1

*Agamemnon insults the priest of Apollo, causing Apollo to punish the Greeks. In order to correct the situation, Agamemnon must give up his prize of honor. Achilles and Agamemnon argue, and as a result, Agamemnon takes Achilles' prize of honor. Achilles, in turn, retaliates by withdrawing from battle.*

Sing, goddess, of the time when wide-ruling Agamemnon and godlike Achilles parted in anger. The wrath of Achilles brought numerous troubles upon the long-haired Greeks and sent down to Hades the shades of many brave warriors, while dogs and birds feasted upon their dead flesh.

Who set Agamemnon and Achilles against each other? Apollo, God of the Silver Bow, caused the argument when Agamemnon dishonored Apollo's priest. Agamemnon had been awarded the priest's daughter, Chryseis, as a prize of honor, but soon the priest arrived with a rich ransom. He spoke to Agamemnon, his brother Menelaus, and all the other Greeks. "May the Olympian gods permit you to destroy Troy, Priam's great city, and return safely to your homes if you will accept my ransom and free my daughter. Do this out of reverence for the son of Zeus, far-shooting Apollo."

All of the Greeks agreed to honor the priest of Apollo, except for Agamemnon, whose heart beat with resentment. The wide-ruling king warned the priest, "Do not let me find you by our hollow ships, old man, or even Apollo will not be able to protect you! I refuse to free your daughter. Instead, Chryseis will grow old in my house in Argos, far from you and her country. There she will weave on the loom and serve me. Go peacefully now, without arousing my anger."

Agamemnon's words put fear into the priest's heart. Silently he walked some distance along the shore of the salt sea. Then he prayed to Apollo, "Hear me, God of the Silver Bow! If I have ever pleased you, let your arrows repay the Greeks for my sorrow."

So he prayed, and Apollo heard him. Down from the peaks of Mount Olympus, the Far-Shooter came like night, with anger in his heart and his bow and arrows upon his shoulders. Each invisible arrow carried a deadly disease. First he shot the mules and dogs, and then he killed so many Greek warriors for nine days that funeral pyres were burning continuously everywhere.

On the tenth day the goddess Hera felt sorry for the Greeks and put into Achilles' heart the idea of calling the Greek leaders together in council. When everyone had assembled, godlike Achilles took the speaker's staff into his hands and said, "Agamemnon, son of Atreus, we are now being destroyed by plague as well as by war. Let us ask some priest or prophet to tell us why Apollo is so angry with us. Perhaps if we appease him with a sacrifice of lambs and goats he will end the plague."

When Achilles had finished speaking, the prophet Calchas, to whom Apollo had given knowledge of the past and the future, rose and took the speaker's staff. "Achilles, dear to Zeus," he began, "I will speak out if you will promise to defend me against the anger of the one who rules over all the Greeks."



To this Achilles replied, "Be brave, Calchas, and reveal what you know. I swear by Apollo, the dear son of Zeus whose gift you possess, that as long as I live and see, no man will harm you—not even if you fear Agamemnon himself, who states that he is by far the greatest of the Greeks."

Then Calchas revealed, "The Far-Shooter is punishing us because Agamemnon has dishonored his priest by not accepting his ransom and returning his daughter. Now Apollo will not remove the plague until we have returned Chryseis freely, without accepting any gifts in return."

Agamemnon rose angrily. With rage in his heart and fire in his eyes, he grabbed the speaker's staff and exclaimed, "You prophet of evil! You never reveal any good thing! Why must you blame me for Apollo's anger just because I want to keep Chryseis in my own house? I prefer her to my wife, Clytemnestra, and Chryseis is certainly Clytemnestra's equal in beauty, intelligence, and skill with handiwork.

"Yet even though I love her," Agamemnon continued, "if it is necessary, I will return Chryseis to her father. I prefer to see the Greeks safe rather than dead. Just give me another prize so that I am not the only noble Greek without this symbol of my rank and honor, for it is not appropriate for a person of my stature to have his prize of honor taken from him."

Achilles then took up the staff and answered him. "Great son of Atreus, most greedy of all men, how can the great-hearted Greeks give you a prize of honor? We have already distributed everything of value from the cities we have raided, and it is improper to take back what we have given. However, if you give up Chryseis, we will give you prizes worth three or four times her value when Zeus lets us sack well-defended Troy."

Agamemnon replied, "Brave you are, Achilles, but do not try to deceive me. Do you think that you can keep your own prize of honor while making me return mine? No! If the great-hearted Greeks give me another prize that pleases me, I will accept it. Otherwise, I will seize a prize of honor from you, or from Ajax, or from Odysseus, by force. However, I will deal with this later. Now let us return fair Chryseis and make suitable sacrifices to Apollo, the Archer God."

Then Achilles, his eyes glaring, exclaimed, "Oh, you shameless, cunning man! How is any Greek willing to obey you? I did not come here because the Trojans had injured me. They have never bothered my pigs or horses or my fields of grain, for great distance separates the rich soil of Phthia from Troy—shadowy mountains and the salt sea. Rather it was for you, shameless one, dog-face, for you and for your brother Menelaus that we came to wreak vengeance on the Trojans.

"Yet now," Achilles continued, "you threaten to take away my prize of honor, which I earned and which the Greeks gave to me. Whenever I sack a town, my prize is never as great as yours, even though I am the greatest Greek fighter. Even so, my small prize is my own. So now I will return to my homeland. I refuse to stay here, dishonored, in order to win greater wealth for you!"

To these words wide-ruling Agamemnon replied, "Run away if you wish! I will not ask you to stay. I have many others who honor me, even Zeus, Lord of Olympus. Of all the kings Zeus favors, I hate you most of all, for you are too fond of arguing and fighting. You are strong only because a god has given you that gift. So take your men and your black ships, and go home.

"I do not care about you or your anger," Agamemnon continued, "but know this. Because Apollo has taken my Chryseis from me, I will come to your hut and take your prize of honor, fair Briseis, from you. Then you will understand how much more powerful I am than you are, and in days to come, no other king will think that he can argue with me and treat me as his equal."

As Agamemnon said these words, Achilles debated within himself whether he should draw his sword and kill this arrogant son of Atreus, or whether it would be better to control his anger. While his hand was on his sword hilt, Hera sent Athena down to him, for Hera loved both Agamemnon and Achilles. Athena stood behind Achilles and pulled his golden hair, making herself visible to him alone.

Startled, Achilles turned and recognized the bright-eyed goddess. "Why are you here, daughter of Zeus?" he asked. "Have you come to watch how this insolent king will lose his life?"

To these words Athena replied, "Hera has sent me here to ask you to control your anger, for she loves both you and Agamemnon. If you will use words against Agamemnon instead of your sword, in days to come you will receive three times as many gifts."

"No matter how angry he is," Achilles replied, "a man must obey the two of you, for the gods will listen to those who obey them." So the son of Peleus leashed his fury, took up the speaker's staff, and attacked Agamemnon with strong words instead.

"You drunkard!" Achilles exclaimed. "You with the face of a dog but the heart of a deer! You have never been brave enough to arm yourself for battle with your countrymen or to take part in an ambush with the other Greek kings. You are as afraid of that as you are of dying! Instead, you much prefer to seize for yourself the prize of any Greek who disagrees with you. You must rule over mice, not men; otherwise you would not think that you could treat other people in this way."

Achilles then announced, "By the staff I am holding in my hands, I swear before you a mighty oath. When hundreds of Greeks fall to their deaths before man-slaying Hector and you cannot defend them, all the Greeks will long for Achilles' help. Then you will sorrow in your heart, knowing that by refusing to honor the best of the Greeks, you have caused their destruction."

Then sweet-speaking Nestor, the aged and wise king of Pylos, rose, took up the speaker's staff, and spoke. "Shame upon both of you!" he cried. "It is sad to see the Greeks divided like this. Surely Priam and his sons are delighted to have such strife between the two Greeks who are greatest in counsel and in fighting. Listen to me, for I am older than both of you, and long ago even better men than you paid attention to my words."

Nestor then advised, "You, Achilles, should not think that you can fight against a king. Although you are the mighty son of a goddess, Agamemnon is greater than you are, for he is king over more people. As for you, Agamemnon, powerful as you are, do not take Briseis, for the Greeks gave her to Achilles as his prize of honor. Control your anger, for Achilles is the Greeks' great defense in this war."



Then Agamemnon replied, "You are right, old sir, but this man thinks that he is the chief commander whom everyone should obey. The immortal gods made him a spearman, but did they also give him his insulting tongue?"

Achilles interrupted him. "Yes, for people would call me a coward and a mouse if I gave in to your demands. Order others if you will, but not me, for I will obey you no longer. I will not fight you for Briseis because you gave her to me. However, if you attempt to seize anything else that is mine, my spear will invite your dark blood!"

With these words, the two leaders rose and disbanded the assembly. Agamemnon sent Chryseis homeward, with Odysseus as captain. Then he commanded the Greeks to purify themselves in the salt sea and to sacrifice bulls and goats to Apollo.

Achilles returned to his huts, where he gave up Briseis to Agamemnon's two heralds. As they were about to leave, he announced, "Let the two of you be my witnesses before the immortal gods and mortal men and before that foolish king if the day comes that the Greeks need me to save them from destruction. For the wide-ruling son of Atreus does not have the sense to look ahead and see the consequences of his actions."

## Chapter 2

***Achilles' mother agrees to persuade Zeus to restore Achilles' honor by showing the Greeks that, unless he rejoins the war, the Trojans will defeat them. Zeus sends Agamemnon a false dream that tells the king to attack Troy now, for the attack will be successful. When the Greeks and Trojans meet on the battlefield, Menelaus and Paris fight one another but neither warrior is clearly victorious.***

Then godlike Achilles sat down alone beside the shore of the loud-sounding sea and cried. Stretching out his hands, he prayed to his mother, silver-footed Thetis. "Seeing that my life will be so brief," he began, "surely Zeus, the Loud-Thunderer, should permit me to be honored. Yet wide-ruling Agamemnon has dishonored me by seizing Briseis, my prize of honor."

Thetis heard Achilles' prayer deep in the salty sea. Quickly she emerged like a mist, comforting her son as she listened to his tale of sorrow.

When he had finished, Achilles said, "As I was growing up in my father's house, I often heard you brag about how, of all the immortal gods, you alone saved Zeus of the storm-clouds when the other gods united against him and bound him up so intricately. You brought Briareus, one of the Hundred-Handed Giants, to rescue him, and in this way you earned his eternal affection and gratitude.

"So please help me now," Achilles pleaded. "Go to Zeus, Lord of Counsel, and ask him to help the Trojans for my sake, letting the Greeks die by their ships. Only through disaster will Agamemnon, that arrogant son of Atreus, discover how blind he was when he refused to honor the best of the Greeks."

Tearfully, Thetis replied, "Knowing how short your life will be, I wish that you could have been spared this grief. Instead, you bear sorrows that are too great for any one man. Do not attempt to leash your anger. Avoid all battle, and stay

instead by your swift black ships. Meanwhile, I will go up to snow-covered Olympus and plan to convince Zeus to support us."

Achilles obeyed his mother's instructions. He no longer attended the council sessions where men win glory, and he remained idly by his ships, far from the battlefield. Yet he sorely missed the war cry and the fighting.

As she had promised, Thetis approached Zeus as he sat alone upon the highest peak of many-ridged Olympus. "Father Zeus," she prayed, "if ever I have helped you by word or deed, hear my plea. Bring honor to my son who is fated to die so young, for Agamemnon has dishonored him by taking his prize of honor. Please help the Trojans until the Greeks restore my son's honor and compensate him for their insult. Bow your head in agreement, or else deny my prayer and show me how little you honor me."

Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, replied, "You are making my life with Hera more difficult by asking this of me. She already complains that I have given the Trojans too much help in battle. Yet I will do as you wish."

While gods and mortals slept, Zeus considered how he could best bring honor to Achilles and kill many of the Greeks beside their black ships. He decided to send wide-ruling Agamemnon a misleading dream. Calling Dream to his side, he commanded, "Go, harmful Dream, and tell Agamemnon to rouse the long-haired Greeks to battle since now they can conquer the well-defended city of the Trojans. Hera has convinced all the gods to side with the Greeks."

So Zeus spoke, and Dream went to Agamemnon, appearing in the form of Nestor, king of sandy Pylos, whom of all the elder Greeks Agamemnon most honored. "Why are you asleep, Agamemnon?" Dream asked. "A leader in your position, in charge of the entire Greek army, should have too much on his mind to sleep the night away. Now listen carefully, for I bring you a message from Zeus, Lord of Olympus, who cares for you.

"Quickly rouse all the bronze-coated Greeks to arms because now is the time to take Priam's great city. Hera has won the support of all the deathless gods, and by the will of Zeus, Troy is doomed. Do not forget these words once you awaken." So Dream spoke to Agamemnon and departed.

Once wide awake, Agamemnon foolishly believed his dream to reflect reality. He put on his tunic, cloak, and sandals and hung his sword around his shoulders. He took his father's sceptre, fashioned by Hephaestus, in his hand and had his heralds call the Greeks to assembly.

When Agamemnon had explained to the council of elders the nature of his dream, wise Nestor spoke, "Friends, kings, and leaders of the Greeks," he began, "if any other Greek had had such a dream, we might think it false and therefore ignore it. However, since Agamemnon, who states that he is by far the greatest of the Greeks, has heard these words, let us prepare to attack."

Meanwhile, Zeus sent Iris, his wind-footed messenger, to the place where the Trojan forces had assembled. There she appeared in the form of the Trojan's principal watchman. "Old sir," Iris said to Priam, "I have been a part of many battles, but I have never seen such a large and impressive army marching across the plain to attack us. In numbers they are as great as the leaves in the woods or the sands along the salt sea!"



Then Iris turned to Hector of the shining helm. "Hector, godlike son of Priam, I place you in command of all the Trojans and our allies. Because those who have come to our aid speak many different languages, let each chieftain inform and lead his own countrymen out to battle." So Iris spoke, and Hector knew her true voice and obeyed her advice.

The horse-taming Trojans marched upon the field as noisily as cranes fly up into the sky toward the ocean when they flee from the heavy rains of winter. The bronze-coated Greeks silently approached them, each man with courage in his heart and eager for battle.

Just as the south wind spreads a mist over mountain peaks—a mist that the shepherd despises but the robber loves, for it hides the land and a man can see no farther than he can throw a stone—so the feet of these hundreds upon hundreds of marching men created a heavy cloud of dust over the armies as they moved quickly across the plain.

As the Greeks approached the Trojans, Paris became the Trojan champion. Carrying a bronze-tipped spear in each hand and upon his shoulders a panther skin, his curved bow, and his sword, he challenged the Greeks. "Come forth, any of you who think you are the best of the Greeks!" he announced. "I challenge you to fight me face to face to the death!"

Menelaus was pleased in his heart to see Paris emerge from the Trojan throng. Just as a hungry lion is delighted to come upon the carcass of a great horned stag or a wild goat, and he eats the tasty flesh even though he senses that young hunters with their pack of dogs are swiftly coming upon him, so Menelaus was delighted to see Paris, for the war-loving king of Sparta was anxious to take vengeance upon the Trojan prince who had taken fair Helen from her home and had carried her across the sea to Troy.

But when Paris saw Menelaus leap from his chariot in order to accept his challenge, Paris suddenly became terrified. As a man turns pale, trembles, and reels backward when he spies a snake on his mountain path, so did Paris shrink fearfully away from war-loving Menelaus and hide among the Trojan ranks.

When Hector observed this behavior, he criticized his brother with strong words. "Evil Paris! You are so handsome that women cannot resist you. It would have been far better for the Trojan people had you never been born or had you died unwed. As it is, your behavior is shameful. Your countrymen scorn you, and Greeks must be laughing indeed to see that the Trojan champion, for all his beauty, lacks courage and strength in his heart."

Hector then asked, "Are you the same man who crossed the salt sea to a strange land and returned with a beautiful woman, bringing sorrow upon your father, your city, and your countrymen and shame upon yourself? Do you really intend to evade Menelaus? You should learn what kind of man he is whose wife you took. You will find no help in your lyre or in the gifts Aphrodite has bestowed upon you, for Menelaus is a respected warrior who would send you, defeated, into the dust. The Trojan people must share your cowardice, or they would have stoned you to death long before this, for all the evils you have brought upon them."

To these words, Paris replied, "Hector, you are right to criticize me, but do not blame me for golden Aphrodite's gifts. Instead, command all the Greeks and

Trojans to stand aside while I fight Menelaus hand to hand for fair Helen and all her treasure. Then our people and their allies can return to their homes, and the Greeks can return to their lands in peace."

All the Greeks and Trojans were overjoyed to hear Hector's announcement, for the war rightfully was a conflict between Paris and Menelaus, and few were enthusiastic about continuing the fighting into this tenth year. The leaders of both forces united in prayer to Zeus and the other immortal gods, swearing to the terms of the agreement.

Wide-ruling Agamemnon raised his arms and prayed, "Father Zeus, observe our oaths. If Paris kills Menelaus, fair Helen and all her possessions will be his, and we will return to Greece empty-handed. But if fair-haired Menelaus kills Paris, then the Trojans must return Helen and her treasure along with suitable compensation for inciting us to war. Otherwise, I will remain on Trojan soil and continue to fight until I win what is rightfully mine."

When Paris and Menelaus had armed themselves, they entered the clearing between the seated Trojan and Greek forces, approaching each other with glaring looks and ready spears. Paris was the first to throw his far-shadowing spear, which bent its bronze point upon meeting Menelaus's round shield.

As Menelaus raised his spear, he prayed, "Zeus, Lord of Olympus, permit me to punish Paris for stealing my wife so that any guest hereafter will fear to commit an offense against his friendly host." His spear penetrated Paris's armor, but it did not draw blood, and when he smashed his sword upon Paris's helmet, the sword fell to the ground, broken into four pieces.

So war-loving Menelaus jumped upon Paris, grabbed the thick horse-hair crest of his helmet, pulled him around, and began to drag his body backward toward the seated Greeks. Paris would have strangled to death, bringing Menelaus endless glory, if Aphrodite had not observed Paris's plight and cut his helmet strap, permitting him to break loose from Menelaus's grasp. When Menelaus leaped after Paris with his bronze spear he could not find him, for Aphrodite had lifted him up, hidden him in a dense mist, and returned him to his bedroom in Priam's great city.

Agamemnon shouted, "Hear me, all you Trojans and your allies. Obviously Menelaus has won the duel, so return Helen and her treasure to her rightful husband, and compensate the Greeks for Paris's offense." So he spoke, and all the Greeks shouted in agreement.

However, Hera and Athena were still angry with Paris for choosing Aphrodite's beauty over their own. This meant that Zeus could keep his word to Thetis without offending them, and the immortals agreed that Athena should cause the battle to resume.

Athena chose the Trojan Pandarus and appeared to him in the form of a respected Trojan spearman. "Why don't you shoot Menelaus with one of your arrows?" she suggested. "Then you will win fame and honor in the eyes of all the Trojans, especially Paris. He surely will reward you most handsomely for killing Atreus's war-loving son!"

So bright-eyed Athena persuaded the foolish Pandarus to draw his bow upon the unsuspecting Menelaus. However, because Athena at heart was a friend to the king of Sparta, she directed Pandarus's arrow through Menelaus's belt, where it wounded but did not kill him.

Agamemnon was so outraged at the injury to his brother that no one could accuse him of reluctance or cowardice as the Trojans resumed the battle. Leaving his chariot, he went by foot through the ranks of the bronze-coated Greeks, eagerly cheering them on to battle and the winning of glory. "Father Zeus will not help those who do not keep their word," he cried, "so be of good strength and courage. Vultures will feed on Trojan flesh, and many Trojan wives and children will sail home with us once we have taken Priam's well-defended city."

Just as the waves of the salt sea pound the shore, one after the other, driven forward by the west wind, so did the Greeks return to the battle, group after group, in endless succession; and each chieftain commanded his respectful, silent men, gleaming in their armor.

The Trojans, on the other hand, were as noisy as herds of sheep impatiently waiting to be milked, for they included peoples from many lands who did not share a common language. Bronze clashed upon bronze until untold numbers of Greeks and Trojans remained upon the plain, intermingled, with their faces buried in the dust.

## Chapter 3

***Hector returns to Troy. He urges Paris to join the Trojan warriors and then he bids farewell to his wife and son.***

Hector of the shining helm decided to leave the plain of battle and enter Priam's great city in order to ask the women of Troy to pray to the deathless gods for help. The bronze-coated Greeks were clashing against the horse-taming Trojans with a mighty uproar, and Hector was no longer confident of a Trojan victory. Louder than the waves of the sea as they crash upon the shore when they are driven from the ocean's depths by the harsh blowing of the north wind; louder than the roaring of a fire that rages among the trees of a forested mountainside; louder than the howling wind among the highest branches of the oak trees were the Greeks and Trojans as Hector left them.

When his mother spied him, she cried, "My dearest child, why have you left the dreadful battle to return home? Do you wish to offer prayers to Zeus, Lord of Olympus? Stay while I bring you honey-sweet wine for the prayer, and then relax and have some wine yourself." So Queen Hecuba spoke to her godlike son.

Man-slaying Hector replied, "Mother, do not bring me any honey-sweet wine unless you want to weaken me and make me forget my strength and my courage. I am so covered with the dirt and blood of battle that it is wiser for you and the other women to pray to Athena than for me to petition Zeus of the storm clouds. I am here to call Paris to battle if he will listen to me."

Hector found his brother at home in his bedroom aimlessly handling his shield and his bow while Helen sat among her servants and their handiwork. Again he addressed Paris with contempt. "Strange man! Your countrymen are dying in battle upon the wall and within the city, and here you sit! And yet you

are the person responsible for the raising of the war cry around Troy. You yourself would be very angry with any coward you caught shrinking away from this hateful war. So arise and help defend your city before it is burned to the ground!"

"You are right, as usual, Hector," replied Paris. "Even Helen has been urging me to join the fighting. So either stay with us while I put on my armor or else go on your way. I will follow, and I will probably overtake you before you leave the city."

When Hector did not reply, Helen softly spoke to him. "I wish that on the day I was born, a great storm wind had carried me away to some lonely mountainside or to the shore of the loud-sounding sea, where the waves would have washed me away, for then this hateful war never would have occurred. Or, considering that the deathless gods determined these events, I wish that they had married me to a better man than Paris, one who could feel the anger and hatred of his family and his people. Paris will never change, so I fear that he will reap the bitter fruit of the seeds he has sown. But come and sit down, dear Hector, since Paris's foolishness and my shame have laid the heaviest burden upon your shoulders."

Hector replied, "Do not ask me to stay, Helen, even though you love me. I am most anxious to rejoin the Trojan forces, whom I know miss my help while I am within the city walls. Try to make Paris hurry so that he will be able to overtake me. Meanwhile, I will go home to see my dearest wife and baby, perhaps for the last time."

With these words, Hector went searching for his wife and child. They met near the Scaean Gates, the entrance to Priam's great city, for Andromache had been standing upon the wall of Troy, weeping as she searched the battlefield for him. Hector smiled silently as he gazed upon his infant son, but Andromache tearfully approached her husband, took his hand in hers, and pleaded with him.

"Oh, Hector," she cried, "your courage and your skill in battle will destroy you! You lack any pity for your baby son, who will become an orphan, or for the woman who will soon be your widow, for the bronze-coated Greeks will soon kill you.

"It would be better for me to die than to lose you," she continued, "for swift-footed Achilles has made me an orphan. He killed my kingly father in his armor and murdered my seven brothers as they were tending their sheep, and then Artemis killed my mother. So, dear Hector, you are my father, my mother, and my brother, as well as my husband. Have pity upon me, and remain here upon the wall of Troy."

Finally Andromache advised her husband, "Position the Trojans by the wild fig tree, for there the wall is most easily accessible. Three times already the greatest warriors among the Greeks have tried to enter there."

Hector responded, "Dearest wife, I too have thought of this, but our people would look upon me with shame if I were to shrink like a coward from battle. My own heart cannot tolerate such behavior. I was taught to be courageous always and to lead the Trojans into battle to win great glory for my father and myself.

"My heart and my soul tell me that the day will come when the Greeks will destroy our fair city and its people. Yet I do not grieve for anyone in my family as much as I do for you when some Greek steals your freedom and leads you across the salt sea against your will.

"There," Hector added, "as a slave in some Greek household, you will work at the loom as some mistress directs you, and you will carry water from the spring as part of your sad burden. And when he notices your tears, some stranger will say, 'Look. There goes the wife of man-slaying Hector, who was the greatest in war of all the Trojans in the days when man fought against man at Troy.' May I be dead and may the earth cover my body before the Greeks enslave you."

With these words, Hector stretched out his arms to his little son, but Astyanax, terrified by his father's shining bronze helmet with its wildly waving horsehair crest, tearfully withdrew from his embrace. Then Hector and Andromache laughed together, and Hector removed the helmet from his head and placed it upon the ground.

Taking his infant son in his arms, Hector kissed Astyanax and prayed. "Zeus and all you other immortal gods," he began, "permit my son to live and grow to be as I am: courageous and strong, and foremost among the Trojan people; and grant that he will become a great king of Troy. Then one day may someone say of him as returns from war, 'He is better far than his father!' and his mother will be glad in her heart."

Hector then placed Astyanax in his mother's arms, and she held him, smiling through her tears. This sight brought pity to Hector's heart, and he caressed Andromache as he said, "Dearest, please try not to be too unhappy. I will not die before my fate sends me down to Hades, and I share the same fate as every other mortal; neither the courageous nor the cowardly can escape it.

"So return home," her husband concluded, "and keep busy with your daily chores. War is the responsibility of the men of Troy and, therefore, mostly mine." Hector put his crested helmet upon his head and returned to his men.

Andromache walked home, frequently looking back tearfully. When she arrived, all the women of the household cried for Hector, even though he still lived, for in their hearts they knew that he would never return alive from this battle with the Greeks.

Paris did not dally long at home. Just as a well-fed horse breaks his rein and goes galloping across the field, anticipating a swim in the fast current of the river, and rejoices in his strength and splendor as he carries his head high and feels his mane waving upon his neck, so Paris in his sparkling armor moved through the streets of the city on his swift feet, laughing with the pure joy of being alive.

He met his brother as Hector was leaving the place where he had talked with Andromache. "Hector," Paris apologized, "I am sure that I delayed you and did not come as soon as you wished."

To these words Hector replied, "No one who is observant can criticize your skill in battle, Paris, for you are courageous and strong. But you are also irresponsible, and it makes me sad to hear the Trojans say truly that you are the cause of their troubles. However, let us go on our way. We will deal with this later if Zeus permits us to drive the Greeks from our land."

## Chapter 4

*Agamemnon's advisors counsel him to apologize to Achilles. He offers Achilles many gifts if he will rejoin the Greeks and keep Hector from burning their ships, but the warrior refuses.*

The Trojans were fighting with skill, spirit, and success. With the allies they had summoned from many lands, they frustrated every attempt of the bronze-coated Greeks to subdue them.

Without Achilles to lead his countrymen, the Myrmidons, and without the gods to help them, the Greeks were not equal to Hector and the Trojan army. Just as farmers and their dogs force a lion out of the cattle pen so the wild beast cannot capture the fattest of the herd, and they remain on watch throughout the entire night and when the lion returns, skillful hands send arrows and dreadful flaming torches to frighten it away, until with the coming of rosy-fingered Dawn the lion finally retreats in anger, so the Trojans sent the Greeks back across the plain toward their hollow ships.

There Agamemnon, with sadness in his heart, commanded his heralds to call the Greek leaders to assembly. When everyone had arrived, the wide-ruling king rose and addressed them. As a waterfall pours down the face of a cliff into the dark stream below, so Agamemnon stood weeping before the gathering.

"My friends, leaders, and chieftains of the Greeks," he began. "Cruel Zeus, Lord of Olympus, has blinded me. Long ago he promised me, and he bowed his head to it, that I would not return home until I had destroyed well-defended Troy. Obviously he was deceiving me. So let each of us gather our countrymen into our hollow ships and return to our homeland, for we cannot hope to capture Troy. We need not feel ashamed to run from ruin, even in darkness, for it is better to escape and live than to be captured or killed."

Those assembled before him sat in complete silence. Finally, Odysseus rose. "Son of Atreus, do you mean these words you have just spoken? If so, it would be far better if you commanded some ordinary army. Do you really wish to leave Troy now, after we have fought here for nine years to destroy it? Remain quiet so that no other king will think to follow your poor example. You must have lost your senses to speak to us in this way in the midst of battle. Your advice would be the dearest wish of the Trojans."

Agamemnon replied, "Your words have touched my heart. I would not have the bronze-coated Greeks withdraw against their will. I welcome other opinions on this matter."

Nestor, the wise king of Pylos, rose. "Great son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, I will begin and end with you, for Zeus has enabled you to rule all the men gathered here. It seems best to remind you of the day long ago when, against my advice and the consent of all gathered here, you took from godlike Achilles' hut his prize of honor, fair Briseis. By giving your pride free reign, you dishonored a mighty warrior whom the deathless gods honor. Consider how best to apologize, with what word to entreat him, and with what gifts to persuade him to rejoin us."

Agamemnon replied, "Old sir, you are right to remember my foolishness. I do not deny that I was blinded by my strong feelings. As a result, Zeus honors Achilles, whom he loves in his heart, and is destroying us. To atone for my insult, I will give the son of Peleus an overwhelming number of impressive gifts.

"I will give swift-footed Achilles seven new tripods, untouched by fire; the weight of ten talents in gold; twenty shining cauldrons; and twelve strong, swift, prize-winning horses. I will also give him seven beautiful women who are skilled at handicraft, among them Briseis, whom I have never touched."

Agamemnon added, "Later, if the gods permit us to seize well-defended Troy, let Achilles pile gold and bronze into his hollow ships and choose for himself the twenty most beautiful Trojan women next to Helen. And if we return to the rich land of Argos, I will honor Achilles as I honor my son Orestes. Let him choose any one of my three daughters to be his wife, and he need offer none of the usual courting gifts. Finally, I will give him seven large cities near the salt sea on the border of sandy Pylos, cities that are rich in sheep and cattle, whose people will honor him as if he were a god.

"All this I will do for Achilles if he will put aside his anger. Only Hades, lord of the dead, is unrelenting, and he is, therefore, the god whom mortals hate most. The son of Peleus should agree to my proposal because I am older than he is, and I am a greater king."

So spoke Agamemnon, and everyone was pleased with his words. Nestor then said, "Great son of Atreus, no one could find fault with the gifts you are offering Achilles. So let us choose who will approach Achilles in your name. First let Phoenix, Achilles' tutor, lead the way, followed by Ajax and Odysseus."

The three men walked along the shore of the loud-sounding sea with prayers in their hearts that Poseidon, the Earthshaker, might help them persuade Achilles to their cause. When they arrived, Achilles greeted them warmly. "Welcome!" he cried. "Even in anger, you are my dearest friends! The bronze-coated Greeks must desperately need my help that they have finally sent you to me."

After Achilles had fed them, Odysseus discussed why they had come. He explained the successess of the Trojans under Hector's leadership, and he repeated the list of gifts that Agamemnon was offering Achilles if he would forget his anger and return to the war.

When he had finished recounting the gifts, Odysseus said, "But if you hate the son of Atreus and his gifts too much, then at least have pity for the rest of us! We will honor you as a god, for you will win great glory. Now you may easily kill Hector, for he thinks there is no one who can match him among the Greeks."

Achilles replied, "Odysseus, man of many wiles, I will say exactly what I think so that you will not think you can argue with me. I hate a man who thinks one thing but speaks another.

"Neither Agamemnon nor any other bronze-coated Greek will persuade me to rejoin the battle, for it seems that no one appreciates the warrior who fights without rest. He who remains at home receives the same gifts as he who fights his best; the coward is honored equally with the brave man; and death is the fate of both the man who is idle and the man who works hard. I have spent many a bloody day in battle and many a sleepless night in watch. I destroyed twelve Trojan cities from my ships and eleven more by land. I took much treasure from these cities and gave all of it to Agamemnon. He remained behind, beside his hollow ships, and from

the treasures I gave him, he distributed a few and kept the rest. Some he gave to kings and chieftains, and they have been allowed to keep them. Only from me did he take a prize of honor."

Achilles went on to say, "Agamemnon has led all of us here to bring Menelaus's wife, fair Helen, back to Sparta. Are the two sons of Atreus the only mortal men who love their wives? Surely I love mine with all my heart, even if she is a captive I won with my spear.

"I know Agamemnon too well. He does not keep his word. He will not deceive me again, nor will he persuade me to come to his aid. Even his gifts are hateful to me; I would not accept them if they were as many as the sands of the salt sea and the dust of the earth, and I would not marry his daughter if she were as beautiful as Aphrodite and as skilled in handiwork as Athena.

"What are gifts compared to life!" Achilles concluded. "My goddess mother has told me that if I stay here and fight at Troy, I will never live to return home, although I will have gained eternal fame. On the other hand, if I return to my homeland, I will lose all fame but live a long life. I am choosing life, and I advise you to do the same. You will not conquer the great city of Priam, for the horse-taming Trojans are a courageous people, and Zeus is watching over them. So let the arrogant son of Atreus plan the best way to keep man-slaying Hector from burning the Greek ships. The wall and the ditch will not be sufficient to stop him, so courageous and confident is he now that I am not fighting. Return to Agamemnon with this message, but let Phoenix sleep here tonight so that he can sail home with me tomorrow if he chooses."

For a few minutes after Achilles had spoken, everyone remained silent, overwhelmed by what he had said and the strength of his feeling. Then Phoenix spoke through his tears. "If you are indeed determined to return home and will not help protect the Greek ships from Hector's fire, then I must return with you.

"I have loved you and reared you as I would my own son, Achilles. I ask you now to rule your pride, and let pity enter your heart. Even the deathless gods bend, and they are far greater than you are. If Agamemnon were not offering you gifts, I would not ask you to put aside your anger and help the Greeks in their need. But he is amply rewarding you, and he has sent the best warriors, your dearest friends, to plead with you. Do not look arrogantly upon their words or upon their visit here.

"Until now," Phoenix concluded, "no one could blame you for your anger, but the time has come for you to relent. It will be much harder to save the hollow ships once they are burning. So agree to help the Greeks while they are offering you gifts, and they will honor you as a god. If you enter the battle later, you will have given up the gifts, and you will have lost much honor even if you save the ships."

Achilles replied, "Phoenix, old sir, Father, I do not need the long-haired Greeks to honor me. Zeus, Lord of Olympus, has honored me, and his honor will be mine as long as I live. Do not annoy me by taking Agamemnon's part against me, or I will hate you as I hate him. Let the others return to the son of Atreus with my message. Meanwhile, spend the night with me, and in the morning we will discuss whether we should remain here or return home."



Ajax then said to Odysseus, "Let us be on our way, for we should quickly deliver Achilles' message, even if it is not a good one. The son of Peleus has no pity for his friends who have honored him above everyone else. A man accepts payment from the one who kills his brother or his son, and for a great price, the one who killed can continue to live in his own country.

"But you, Achilles, will not bend because of one woman, when we have offered you seven of the best women and many other gifts besides. Respect yourself and us, for we would like to be your dearest friends."

Achilles answered, "I would agree with you, Ajax, except that I am furious to think of how the arrogant son of Atreus has dishonored me among the Greeks as though I were some worthless stranger. So return with my message. I will not join the fighting until Hector brings fire to my own ships, and there I will stop him."

Ajax and Odysseus returned to Agamemnon. When Odysseus repeated Achilles' message, the hearts of the Greek leaders and chieftains were sad. They realized that the son of Peleus would fight only if and when his heart moved him to do so. Until then, the bronze-coated Greeks would have to rely upon their own courage and strength.

## Chapter 5

***Patroclus convinces Achilles to let him lead the Myrmidons into battle. Wearing Achilles' armor, Patroclus pushes the Trojans away from the Greek ships and back toward Troy. Finally, Hector kills him.***

When Dawn, the rosy-fingered, shone forth upon gods and mortals, the war resumed. Just as reapers push into one another as they move through a rich farmer's field of wheat or barley, and many handfuls of grain quickly fall about them, so the bronze-coated Greeks and the horse-taming Trojans leaped upon each other and cut one another down, with no thought of retreat. Neither side gave in to the other, and they tore on like wolves.

Achilles stood at the stern of his black ship, watching the return of injured Greeks. Calling his closest friend to him, Achilles said, "Good Patroclus, dearest to my heart, I think the Greeks soon will be praying at my knees for me to help them, for they appear to be in great trouble. Go ask Nestor whom he has brought wounded from the field; I fear it is our doctor, and that, indeed, would be a cause of fear and grief."

When Patroclus questioned Nestor, the king of Pylos asked him, "Does Achilles suddenly pity the Greeks? Does he care that many of our greatest warriors are lying by their hollow ships sorely wounded by arrows or spears?"

Nestor then told Patroclus, "I remember that when Odysseus and I came to Phthia to ask Achilles to join wide-ruling Agamemnon and the other Greek leaders, your father told you to be your dear friend's adviser. Although Achilles is stronger than you are, you are older and, therefore, wiser than he is. Counsel him now. Perhaps he will take your words into his heart.

"And if, perhaps, some prophecy of his mother is restraining Achilles from fighting, let him place his armor upon you and permit you to lead the Myrmidons

into battle. With godlike Achilles' armor upon you, the Trojans may think that you are indeed he, and they may retreat in fear."

Then Nestor concluded, "The Greeks need a chance to rest, for they are weary with fighting. Your countrymen are so well-rested that it will be easy for you to push the tired Trojans back from our huts and our ships across the plain toward Troy." So Nestor of sandy Pylos, in his wisdom, put fire into the heart of good Patroclus.

The Trojans, who had been fighting by the wall the Greeks had constructed to protect their huts and their ships, suddenly pushed forward. Just as a great wave upon the salt sea is forced by the fury of the strong wind into a mighty swell and rushes down upon the decks of a ship and engulfs it, so the Trojans, with a loud war cry, drove their chariots over the defensive wall to the sterns of the Greek ships. They fought the Greeks there face to face.

As a starving mountain lion courageously enters a well-built sheepfold to seize its prey, and although it sees that the shepherds are prepared to defend the sheep with their swift spears and their dogs, it is determined to capture a sheep or else die in the attempt, so did man-slaying Hector of the great war cry put courage into the hearts of the Trojans and lead them to set fire to the hollow ships of the Greeks.

By the time Patroclus reached Achilles, he was in tears. The son of Peleus pitied him and asked, "Patroclus, dearest of friends, why are you weeping like a little girl who runs by her mother's side and slows her down by pulling at her robe and tearfully crying up at her until her mother picks her up? Have you heard that your father or mine has died? Or are you grieving for the bronze-coated Greeks who are being killed beside their black ships because of their arrogance?"

Then did great-hearted Patroclus foolishly relate to Achilles the plight of the Greeks and his wish to lead the Myrmidons into battle in Achilles' place, for he did not realize that he was, in fact, pleading for his own death.

Patroclus's words weighed upon Achilles' heart, and he replied, "Dear Patroclus, it is not my mother's prophecy that keeps me from battle. I simply could not let a man who is my equal seize my prize of honor just because he is more powerful than I am. I did not intend to be angry forever, but I did say that I would not rejoin the Greeks until Hector threatened my own ships.

"However," Achilles relented, "put my shining armor upon your shoulders, if that is your wish, and lead the war-loving Myrmidons into battle yourself. Drive the Trojans from the hollow ships, for if they burn the ships, the Greeks will have no way to return home. Win enough glory that the Greeks will return Briseis to me along with many impressive gifts, but not so much glory that your success will lessen my own value and my own honor. Although you love the war cry, once you have cleared the Trojans from the ships and have sent them in retreat across the plain toward Troy, return to me."

When Patroclus, wearing the armor of Achilles, was ready to depart with the Myrmidons, Achilles prayed to Zeus. "Lord of Olympus, in the past you have heard my prayers. You have honored me, and you have brought destruction upon the Greeks. Now hear my prayer again. I am sending my dearest friend into war with my Myrmidons. Grant him success and glory, but when he has driven the Trojans from the hollow ships, let him return uninjured to me."



So Achilles, son of Peleus, prayed, and Zeus, Lord of Counsel, heard him. He permitted Patroclus to drive the Trojans from the swift black ships, but he did not permit him a safe return from battle.

With Patroclus in the lead, the war-loving Myrmidons marched into battle. Patroclus cried, "Myrmidons, friends of Achilles, courageously win honor for the son of Peleus, so that wide-ruling Agamemnon will realize how blind he was when he dishonored the best of the Greeks."

So Patroclus put strength and courage into the hearts of the Myrmidons as they joyfully prepared to attack the Trojans. Like wasps along the wayside that swarm angrily from their nests when young boys foolishly torment them for the fun of it, so the Myrmidons swarmed upon the Trojans with a great war cry.

When the Trojans saw Patroclus in Achilles' shining armor, fear entered each man's heart, for they thought that godlike Achilles himself would soon be upon them. They gave way before the Myrmidons and considered how best to escape total destruction.

Just as a winter rainstorm at its peak causes swift, swollen rivers to wash away whatever lines their banks, so Patroclus raged across the plain, causing many Trojans to fall beneath his sharp spear. If he had remembered to return to the ships, as Achilles had counseled him, he would have avoided his fate. However, blind in his heart, he forgot the words of his dearest friend and foolishly pressed on across the plain toward Troy.

Then the bronze-coated Greeks would indeed have captured high-gated Troy under the leadership of Patroclus, but Apollo came down from Mount Olympus to stand upon the well-built wall and help his favorites. Three times Patroclus climbed upon a corner of the high wall, and three times the Lord of the Silver Bow raised his immortal hands, pushed against Patroclus's shining shield, and threw him back.

When Patroclus, undaunted, made a fourth attempt to climb the wall, Apollo stopped him with a terrifying cry. Then he said, "Give up, Patroclus! It is not your fate to sack the great city of Priam with your spear; nor will swift-footed Achilles destroy this city, and he is a far better man than you are." Patroclus obeyed Apollo's command, having no intention of angering the Far-Shooter.

Meanwhile, Hector of the flashing helm was standing at the Scaean Gates and wondering whether it would be better to continue the fighting or to summon the Trojans inside the well-defended walls. Apollo assumed the form of Hector's uncle and said, "Godlike Hector, why are you not fighting? It is not honorable to stand about idly while others are winning glory for themselves and their fathers. If I were strong enough, I would punish you for your cowardice. Now drive your horses toward Patroclus and kill him; then Apollo, the Far-Shooter, will give you glory." So spoke Apollo, and Hector returned to the battle.

As long as the sun was high in the sky, the spears and arrows of Greeks and Trojans took an even toll. But when the sun revealed that the time had come to unyoke the oxen and stable them for the evening, then the bronze-coated Greeks took the lead.

Three times Patroclus, shouting the great war cry, killed nine men. As he raged on for the fourth time, far-shooting Apollo enveloped himself in a thick

mist and came up behind Patroclus. Unseen, the Lord of the Silver Bow took his immortal hand and struck the warrior on the back with such a mighty force that his eyes whirled in his head. Then he knocked Patroclus's helmet to the ground, where it clattered as it rolled beneath the feet of the horses, and its horsehair crest became covered with blood and dust.

Still Apollo was not finished with Patroclus: The warrior's bronze-tipped, far-shadowing spear broke apart in his hands, his shield fell to the ground, and his armor loosened. Then his mind became blind, and as he was standing senseless, a Trojan came up behind him and speared him in the back. However, even this wound did not kill Patroclus.

Man-slaying Hector then approached and drove his spear clear through Patroclus's stomach. Just as a mountain lion overpowers a mighty boar when the two fight upon a mountaintop for the right to drink from a little spring, so did Hector, godlike son of Priam, end good Patroclus's life.

Standing over the fallen body of his enemy, Hector said, "Patroclus, you thought that you would sack Troy! You wanted to make slaves of our women and return with them to your homeland. You were a fool! Instead, vultures will feed upon your flesh. Even your dear friend, Achilles, with all his courage, strength, and skill, could not help you. He must have commanded you to kill me. He muddled your good sense!"

The dying Patroclus replied, "You can boast about my death only because Zeus and Apollo first subdued me. Otherwise, if twenty Hectors had attacked me, I would have killed them all with my spear. You were not first but third in my slaying.

"And remember this well," Patroclus concluded. "You yourself do not have long to live, for it is your fate to be killed by Achilles. Even now, your death is very close at hand." With these words Patroclus's shade left his body and went down to the kingdom of Hades.

Hector replied to the dead Patroclus, "Why do you prophesy my death? Maybe I will kill the son of Peleus!" He then removed Achilles' shining armor from Patroclus and took it for himself. He would have dragged off Patroclus's body as food for the dogs of Troy, but Ajax took his shield, which was like a wall, and defended the corpse.

The bronze-coated Greeks then fought the horse-taming Trojans for the body of Achilles' friend. All day long the battle raged. Just as a man gives the hide of a great bull, soaked in fat, to his people to stretch, and they arrange themselves in a circle, where they stand and pull it until the moisture evaporates, the fat penetrates the skin, and the hide is completely stretched out, so the Greeks on one side and the Trojans on the other pulled the body of Patroclus first this way and then that until, at long last, the Greeks were able to carry his corpse back to the hollow ships.



## Chapter 6

***As soon as Achilles hears that Hector has killed Patroclus, he is determined to kill Hector. He and Agamemnon formally settle their quarrel, and Achilles shows his skill on the battlefield. Hector flees from him, and Achilles chases Hector around the walls of Troy.***

Meanwhile, back at his hut, Achilles was filled with foreboding. "Why are the Greeks being driven back again?" he asked himself. "My mother once told me that I would live to see the best of the Myrmidons felled by Trojan hands. Great-hearted Patroclus! My dearest friend! How foolish of him to ignore my words and fight against man-slaying Hector."

While he was thinking such thoughts, the son of Nestor arrived in tears and announced, "I am so sorry to bring you very sad news, Achilles. Hector has killed Patroclus and has taken his armor. Now our warriors are fighting the Trojans for his very body!"

These words enveloped Achilles in a black cloud of grief. With both hands he covered his head and clothing with black soil. Then he lay himself in the dirt and tore his hair.

As he moaned in grief, silver-footed Thetis appeared before him. "My child, why are you crying?" she asked. "Zeus, Lord of Counsel, has indeed granted your wish, and the bronze-coated Greeks are sorely in need of you."

Achilles replied, "Mother, even if the deathless gods have heard my prayer, what joy can I have when Patroclus, dearest of all to me, is dead? I no longer care to live unless I slay the godlike son of Priam who killed my friend!"

"You are then fated to die soon," Thetis replied, weeping, "for your own death will rapidly follow the death of Hector."

"Let me die, then," responded Achilles, "since I was not able to stand with Patroclus against Hector. I now realize at what great price I sat uselessly by my ships, enjoying anger far sweeter than honey against wide-ruling Agamemnon. Hector has killed good Patroclus and many other friends. May such anger, which upsets even the wisest, no longer afflict the deathless gods and mortal men!"

Achilles then announced, "I will go forth to slay Hector, who killed the man I loved. I will accept my fate whenever Zeus and the other immortals bring it upon me. Until then, may I win great fame and glory, and may every Trojan realize that the greatest of the Greeks no longer remains apart from battle. If you love me, Mother, do not attempt to prevent my return to battle."

"I will not try to dissuade you, my child," Thetis replied. "I ask only that you wait until Dawn has brought early light. Then I will return to you, bringing you new armor forged by Hephaestus himself. You will enter battle wearing shining armor that will bring glory to the immortal craftsman who fashioned it and to you."

When the Greeks finally had carried Patroclus's body back to the hollow ships, wise Polydamas advised Hector. "Godlike son of Priam, listen to my thoughtful counsel. I think that we should return to Troy. It was safe for us to remain by the Greek ships, far from our well-defended city, as long as Achilles was angry with wide-ruling Agamemnon. Now, however, I fear the wrath of the

swift-footed son of Peleus. He will fight relentlessly to destroy our city and to capture our wives. If we remain here, many of us will become food for dogs and vultures, and we will weaken the defense of Troy. We can fight Achilles far better if we take a stand upon our walls."

To this advice, Hector of the flashing helm angrily replied, "Polydamas, your words do not please my heart. Are you not tired of being confined within walls? I will not permit any Trojan to listen to you! We will fight the bronze-coated Greeks at their hollow ships. If Achilles enters the battle, I will fight him face to face, and one of us will win great glory."

So Hector commanded the horse-taming Trojans. His countrymen foolishly supported him, for bright-eyed Athena robbed them of their good judgment. They praised man-slaying Hector for his poor counsel and refused to listen to wise Polydamas.

When rosy-fingered Dawn brought light to gods and mortals, Thetis appeared before Achilles as she had promised, with Hephaestus's shining armor. Following her advice, the son of Peleus then called the Greeks to assembly in order to end his argument with Agamemnon.

Once they had gathered together, Achilles rose and said, "Agamemnon, did we gain anything by fighting in this way over a woman? Would that Artemis the archer had slain her when I captured her! My mighty anger has caused the deaths of my dearest friend and many other Greeks and has brought great glory to Hector and the Trojans. Now it is time for us to put aside the past and unite once again against our enemy. Few will escape the fury of my spear!"

Agamemnon replied, "Often the long-haired Greeks have criticized me, even though I was not at fault. The evil goddess Ate blinded me and Zeus stole my judgment on the day that I seized your prize of honor. Therefore, I am willing to compensate you for the injury I have caused you. I offer you, once again, all of the gifts that Odysseus promised you in my name when he came to your hut."

Achilles answered, "Great son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, whether you give the gifts, as is proper, or whether you withhold them is your decision. But let us put an end to this talk. Instead, we should quickly prepare for battle, for that is an unfinished task. Let everyone watch as I destroy the Trojans with my far-shadowing bronze spear!"

Soon the plain shone with shining bronze as the Greeks met the Trojans in battle. Achilles' desire for revenge combined with his courage, strength, and skill to ravage the Trojan army. Swift-footed Achilles pushed ever onward to win glory. As a wildly raging fire sweeps through the parched forests on a mountainside, and the wind scatters flames everywhere, so the godlike son of Peleus raged among the Trojans, causing the black earth to swim with Trojan blood.

Now that Patroclus was dead, Achilles could feel no pity. When one of the Trojan warriors begged for his life, Achilles explained, "Until Patroclus died, I enjoyed sparing Trojan lives. Many I captured alive and sold across the sea. But now no Trojan who comes into my hands will avoid death. Great-hearted Patroclus died, and he was a far better man than any of you. Even I, goddess- and hero-born, and as skillful as I am, will die in this war, either by some Trojan spear or by an arrow from a well-aimed bow."



Hector was standing near the Scaean Gates of Troy with his father when they saw Achilles approaching. "My dearest child," Priam pleaded, "do not go forth to meet Achilles alone lest he kill you, for he is a far better warrior than you are. Cruel man! I wish the immortals valued him as I do! I would let the dogs and vultures ravenously feed upon him as I left him, unburied, upon the dirt. Do not bring great glory to the swift-footed son of Peleus by offering him your life!"

As Hector of the shining helm watched Achilles come toward him, he thought to himself, "If I retreat within the walls of Troy now, Polydamas will remind me that I have caused our troubles. After I killed Patroclus, I ordered the Trojans to remain near the Greek ships. Thinking that we had nothing to fear, I was quick to criticize Polydamas's wise counsel. How blind I was to think that we could defeat the bronze-coated Greeks once godlike Achilles returned to the battlefield!

"Now Achilles has sent the shades of many fine Trojan warriors down to the kingdom of Hades, and I feel ashamed in front of the armored men and long-robed women of Troy. I fear they will say I brought destruction upon my people because I was too confident in my ability to fight Achilles. It would be far better to face Achilles man to man and either kill him or die with honor.

"On the other hand," Hector thought, "what if I lay down my shield and crested helmet, rest my far-shadowing spear against the wall, and go forth unarmed to meet Achilles, promising to return Helen and all the treasure that Paris took from Sparta? We could give the sons of Atreus half the treasure of Troy as well.

"But how can I even consider this? If I approach Achilles in a submissive way, he will neither respect me nor pity me but will kill me as I stand unarmed before him. No, the first approach is the better one: to fight it out and learn which of us will gain glory."

As Hector stood thinking, Achilles approached him. The godlike son of Peleus was a terrifying sight as his father's ash spear rode upon his right shoulder and his bronze armor blazed like the fiery sun. Fear grabbed Hector's heart, and he fled. Swift-footed Achilles immediately pursued him. As a falcon in the mountains, the swiftest of birds, swoops easily after a trembling dove and pursues it with shrill cries, so Achilles chased Hector.

Around the walls of Troy they ran, past where the Trojan people sat upon the wall, past the observation post, past the wild fig tree, along the wagon track, and by the two springs that feed the Scamander River, the one steaming hot and the other icy cold. As swiftly as Hector ran, a faster man ran after him, for they were not running a race to win a beast of sacrifice or a bull's hide as a prize. They were running to see who would win Hector's life!

Three times around the walls of Troy they ran, as all the deathless gods watched from Mount Olympus. Just as a hunting dog stirs a fawn from its den and chases it through woods and meadow, and though the fawn escapes for a while by hiding in thick underbrush, yet the dog tracks its scent and follows it until he finds it, so swift-footed Achilles pursued man-slaying Hector.

Whenever Hector tried to come close enough to the Scaean Gates for the Trojans upon the wall to shoot at Achilles, the son of Peleus would take an inside

track and drive Hector back toward the plain. Apollo helped Hector for the last time by increasing his strength and hastening his feet so that swift-footed Achilles could not overtake him.

Meanwhile, Achilles signaled the Greeks that they should not try to kill Hector. The godlike son of Peleus wanted to win that glory for himself.

## Chapter 7

*Athena tricks Hector into fighting Achilles face to face. It is Hector's time to die, and Achilles kills him. Hector reminds Achilles that his own death will soon follow.*

As the race around the well-built walls of Troy continued, the Lord of Olympus commented, "I pity Hector, whom I love, but Achilles is a good man too. Should we save Hector from death, or good as he is should we let Achilles kill him?"

Bright-eyed Athena replied, "Oh, Father, lord of the bright lightning and of the dark cloud, how can you suggest that we have a choice? Do you intend to change a mortal's fate that was set long ago? Save him if you wish, but know that all of us do not agree with you."

As Hector and Achilles were approaching the hot and cold springs for the fourth time, Zeus raised his golden scales and set the two fates of death upon them: on the one hand, that of swift-footed Achilles; on the other, that of man-slaying Hector. When he held the scales in the middle to see how they would balance, the scale bearing Hector's fate sank. Now Apollo would have to leave him, for a god may not help a mortal on the day he or she is fated to die.

Athena went down to Achilles and said, "Great Achilles, dear to Zeus, now we will kill Hector. He can no longer escape from us, no matter what Apollo may try to do to save him. Rest here while I persuade the son of Priam to fight you face to face."

When the goddess left Achilles, she appeared before Hector in the form and voice of his dearest brother, Deiphobus. "Dear brother," she cried, "let us stand here together and deal with Achilles as he deserves!"

Hector of the shining helm replied, "Deiphobus, you have always been the dearest of my brothers to me, but now I honor you in my heart even more because you have left the safety of the walls for my sake, while everyone else has remained within."

The bright-eyed goddess then said, "It is true that our father and mother and many friends pleaded with me to remain there, so terribly afraid are they of Achilles, but my heart was with you. So let us now attack the son of Peleus with all of our strength and skill, and learn if, in fact, he will kill both of us or whether your spear will put an end to him." In this deceptive fashion Athena tricked god-like Hector into confronting his fate.

Hector approached the son of Peleus and said, "I will no longer run from you, Achilles, but will fight you man to man until one of us has taken the life of the other. But first, let us call the deathless gods to witness this pledge: I will treat you fairly if Zeus, Lord of Olympus, gives me the strength to slay you. Once I have removed your splendid armor, I will return your dead body to your countrymen, and I want you to promise to do the same."

Achilles angrily replied, "Do not talk to me of promises, Hector. Just as lions and men do not make pledges to one another, nor do wolves and lambs agree but rather continually plot evil against each other, so it is impossible for you and me to treat one another as friends and promise anything at all.

"Instead," Achilles continued, "summon all your courage, strength, and skill as a spearman, for you are about to die. You can no longer escape your fate, for by my spear Athena, bright-eyed daughter of Zeus, will take your life. Now you will finally pay for all the sorrow you brought me by slaying good Patroclus with your bronze-tipped spear."

With these words Achilles raised his own far-shadowing spear and hurled it at Hector. The son of Priam accurately judged its path, and moved so that the spear flew over his head and lodged in the earth behind him. Unseen by Hector, Athena removed the spear and returned it to Achilles.

As he prepared to hurl his swift spear, Hector announced, "You missed me, Achilles! You have also missed knowing my fate, sure as you were of it. You tried to frighten me into losing my courage and my strength and fleeing, but I will not give you the chance to drive your spear into my back. You will have to plunge it straight through my chest. Now, avoid my spear if you can!"

Hector's spear hit Achilles' shield as planned, but then it bounced off and fell to the ground out of Hector's reach. He called upon his brother for another spear, but Deiphobus was nowhere in sight.

Then in his heart Hector understood the truth. He thought, "The deathless gods have indeed brought me to my death! I thought that Deiphobus was by my side, but he is within the walls of Troy. Athena has deceived me! The Lord of Olympus and his far-shooting son must long have intended this, even though they have usually been quick to help me.

"My death now awaits me," Hector concluded. "I see no way to avoid it. At least I will die with honor, so that men in times to come will hear of my valor."

He drew his great sword from his side and rushed upon Achilles. As a mighty eagle soaring high into the sky spies a little lamb or rabbit far below and, swiftly changing its course, swoops down through the dark clouds to the meadow to seize its trembling prey, so Hector of the shining helm attacked the son of Peleus.

Achilles met Hector's attack with rage in his heart. In his right hand, his spear shone like the brightest evening star. He paused briefly while he studied his old bronze armor in order to find the best place to strike. He had given that shining armor to great-hearted Patroclus, but now it was protecting man-slaying Hector. Hector's only visible flesh was at his throat, where he would die most quickly. There Achilles plunged his bronze tipped spear.

As his foe lay dying in the dust, the son of Peleus cried joyfully, "Hector, slayer of men, while you were busy killing Patroclus, you were foolish to give so little thought to how I would repay you for your evil deed. Good Patroclus will receive a proper burial, but your body will be ravaged by dogs and birds!"

Hector replied with the last of his strength, "I plead with you, do not take me to your hollow ships to be consumed by dogs. Instead, accept the gifts of bronze

and gold that my father and mother will give you for my body so that the Trojan people can bury me with honor."

Achilles furiously responded, "Do not implore me, you dog! So great is my anger at what you have done to me that if I could, I myself would tear apart your flesh and eat it raw. Therefore, no one can keep the dogs away from your head, not for ten or twenty times the proper ransom, not even if Priam were to pay me your weight in gold. Your mother will not be able to mourn before your body, for you will be completely devoured by dogs and birds far from Priam's great city."

The dying Hector then said, "I knew that I could not hope to persuade you. Your heart is truly made of iron! Be careful, though, for I may bring the wrath of the deathless gods upon you on the day when, in spite of your courage, your strength, and your skill, my brother Paris and far-shooting Apollo will kill you at the Scaean Gates."

With these words, death came upon him. Godlike Hector's shade left his lifeless body and went down to the kingdom of Hades.

Achilles spoke to the dead Hector. "Lie dead, Hector! As for me, I will accept my death whenever Zeus, Lord of Olympus, and the other deathless gods bring that fate upon me." Then the son of Peleus withdrew his bronze spear from Hector's neck and put it aside. He removed from Hector's body the bloody armor that had been his own.

The bronze-coated Greeks then approached the lifeless Trojan. As they stood admiring their greatest foe, they took their bronze spears and, one by one, each warrior drove his spear into godlike Hector's corpse.

Achilles announced, "Come, let us return to our hollow ships singing our song of victory, and let us take with us this warrior who has brought so much evil upon us. We have won great glory, for we have killed Hector of the shining helm, whom the horse-taming Trojans worshipped as though he were a god."

The son of Peleus then punctured the tendons of Hector's feet between the ankle and the heel, inserted a narrow strip of oxhide through each slit, and tied Hector's body to his chariot, leaving the hero's head to trail behind in the dust. After that, he put the shining armor into his chariot, climbed into it, and drove his horses forward at top speed, dragging Hector's body behind him.

## Chapter 8

*The Trojans mourn Hector's death and are angered that Achilles will not return his corpse. Finally the gods order Achilles to accept Priam's ransom and surrender Hector's body. After Priam returns to Troy, the Trojans conduct a royal funeral.*

Hector's father and mother agonized over the death of their dearest son and his foul treatment at the hands of Achilles. Priam cried, "My friends, although you love me, let me leave the city by myself and go across the plain to the Greeks' hollow ships. There I will plead with this evil man for the body of our son. Perhaps he will be ashamed before his companions and will pity me in my old age, for he himself has a father like me."



Andromache, who heard the cries and wailing from the wall while she was at home weaving, reached the wall in time to see Achilles' horses swiftly dragging Hector's body off toward the Greeks' hollow ships. Darkness like night came over her eyes and she collapsed, tearing from her head the veil that golden Aphrodite had given her on the day she had married Hector.

When Andromache regained consciousness she cried, "Oh, Hector, you have left me in deep grief, myself a widow and our infant son helpless without you. Even if he survives this war, he is now doomed to a hard, sad life, for other men will seize his lands.

"Once a child becomes an orphan," she continued, "his friends leave him. With a bowed head and tears on his cheeks, he approaches his father's friends, tugging at their coats. The one who pities him will offer him a cup for a moment, enough to wet his lips but not enough to fill his mouth. And a child whose parents still live strikes him and pushes him away from the table, saying: 'Go away! No father of yours is eating with us!' So the needy child tearfully returns to his widowed mother. Poor Astyanax, who has known only the best of love and care!" So Andromache spoke, weeping, and all the Trojans wept with her.

That night, Achilles mourned for Patroclus until he finally fell asleep by the shore of the loud-sounding sea. Then the shade of his dearest friend appeared before him, looking and sounding exactly as he had when he was alive.

"You have forgotten me," Patroclus admonished Achilles. "Bury me quickly so that I may enter the kingdom of Hades! Until you do this, the shades will not let me cross the River Styx and join them. You, too, are fated to die beneath the well-defended walls of Priam's city. When that time comes, let our bones lie together in the golden urn with the double handles that your mother gave you."

Achilles replied, "I will do just as you wish, dearest friend, but come closer that we may clasp our arms about each other and grieve over our separation."

The son of Peleus reached toward Patroclus with his hands, but he could not touch him. Like a mist, the shade of his friend disappeared into the earth. Achilles proceeded to hold the funeral ceremonies and games in honor of Patroclus as he had promised.

Many days after the funeral, Achilles still kept the body of Hector, unburied, by his hollow ships. Whenever he felt the desire, he would attach Hector's body to his chariot, drag it around and around Patroclus's tomb, and then leave it lying face down in the dust. Since Apollo loved Hector even in death, he preserved Hector's corpse from decay and destruction.

The God of the Silver Bow finally prevailed upon his father, Zeus, to convince Hera and Athena that Achilles should not be permitted to have his way with Hector's body. This was not an easy task, for even Hector's death had not softened the hatred that Hera and Athena felt for the Trojans. The insult of Paris's choice of Aphrodite's beauty and gift over their own had not faded with time. Nevertheless, they finally permitted Thetis to counsel her son.

When Thetis entered Achilles' hut, he was sitting with his head upon his arms, still mourning for Patroclus. She sat down beside him, stroked his head, and said, "My child, how long will you continue this sorrow? Since your life will be so short, I would like to see you enjoy it. I have come as a messenger from Zeus, Lord

of Olympus. All the deathless gods are angry because you have not returned Hector's body for proper burial. Accept the ransom for the dead and give him up."

While Thetis was persuading Achilles to return Hector's body, the Lord of Olympus sent wind-footed Iris down to advise King Priam to go alone to Achilles' hut with ample ransom. In order to calm his fears, Hermes, the Wayfinder, would be his guide.

Great-hearted Priam collected a wondrous array of gifts. As the eternally young god and the old king made their way together across the plain of Troy toward the hollow ships of the Greeks, Hermes reassured Priam that the immortals had protected Hector's body from both the ravages of time and Achilles' harsh treatment. Once they reached Achilles' hut, Hermes took leave of Priam and returned to Mount Olympus.

The old king entered the hut, took Achilles by the knees, and said, "Remember your father, godlike Achilles, who, like me, will soon become an old man. While you are alive, his heart is joyful. As for me, although I fathered fifty sons, you and war-loving Ares have killed the best of them. And for none do I mourn as I do for my son Hector, who guarded Troy and its people. I have come to you with numerous gifts as ransom for his body. Pity me, for I am forced to beg the man who killed my valiant sons."

Achilles wept in sympathy with Priam in his sorrow. Then the swift-footed son of Peleus asked, "How did you have the courage to come alone to the hollow ships and look into my eyes when I have killed so many of your brave sons? Surely your heart is made of iron!"

Achilles continued, "The deathless gods spin the threads of mortals' lives to bring them grief, while the gods themselves live free of pain. Zeus, Lord of the Thunderbolt, sits between two urns, one filled with blessings and the other containing evils. The one to whom Zeus gives only evil gifts is despised both by mortals and by the gods. That man wanders upon the earth searching for honor but finding none. However, the one to whom Zeus gives gifts from both urns at some times finds good and at other times evil in his life.

"So it is with you. In the past the deathless gods gave you great gifts: the blessings of land, wealth, and many fine sons. Now, with this hateful war, the gods have brought evil upon you. The bronze-coated Greeks have killed many of the sons you loved. However, you must endure the pain. A heart overflowing with sorrow will not help you, for grief will not return the dead to life. So come now and sit down. Together we will put an end to our tears."

Priam replied, "Do not ask me to sit down while my son Hector lies unburied and away from Troy. Instead, bring him to me immediately so that I can look upon him, and accept the great ransom I have brought you."

Achilles angrily replied, "Do not incite me to fury, old sir, or I may harm you even while you are a guest inside my hut and, in doing so, anger Zeus. I intend to give your son back to you, for Zeus, Lord of Counsel, sent my mother to advise me. I know in my heart that some god must have led you to my hut. No mortal, no matter how young and strong, would have had the courage to come into the camp of the bronze-coated Greeks, nor could he have done so without arousing the guards."



Then Priam became frightened and silent. Achilles, however, leaped forth like a lion, accepted the ransom, and prepared to return the body of Hector to his father. He also agreed to halt the war for eleven days so that the Trojans could prepare and hold a proper funeral for Hector. He shook the old king's hand to confirm his promise.

With Hermes to guide him once again, Priam returned to Troy with Hector's body. Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen led the women in wailing over the death of Hector, recounting his loss to them as husband, son, and dear friend.

The gathering of wood for the funeral pyre took nine days. On the tenth day, as rosy-fingered Dawn shone forth, the people of Troy assembled at the pyre. They laid godlike Hector's corpse upon it and set fire to his body. When Dawn next gave light to gods and mortals, they quenched the flames, gathered Hector's bones, and put them into a golden urn. They wrapped the urn in purple robes and placed it in a hollow grave. After they had covered the grave with large stones, they built a mound and set a watch upon it to protect it from the Greeks. The funeral concluded with a great feast in the palace of King Priam.

In this way the horse-taming Trojans held the funeral of godlike Hector of the shining helm.

# EPILOGUE TO THE ILIAD

## THE DEATH OF ACHILLES

With the help of Apollo, Paris killed Achilles at the Scaean Gates by shooting an arrow into his heel. A great battle for Achilles' corpse followed. While Odysseus fought off the Trojans, Ajax was able to pick up Achilles' body and, through a shower of Trojan arrows, carry it back to the Greek ships. The Greeks burned the body of Achilles and placed his bones with those of Patroclus as they both had wished. However, Thetis actually rescued Achilles from the funeral pyre and took him to White Island in the Euxine Sea, where he is immortal.

After the funeral games, the Greeks decided to award Achilles' armor to the warrior who had contributed the most to the Greek effort. Odysseus, the best strategist, and Ajax, the best fighter, competed for this prize. Odysseus, with the help of Athena, won the votes of the Greek leaders. Ajax was so humiliated by his defeat that he went insane. Thinking that the Greeks' cattle were the warriors who had voted against him, he killed them. When he realized what he had done, he was so ashamed that he killed himself.

## THE DEATH OF PARIS

When the Greeks sailed for Troy, Philoctetes accompanied them carrying the bow that Heracles had given him before he died. At one of their island stops, Philoctetes was bitten by a snake. The wound smelled so terrible that the Greeks left him behind on the island. Ten years later, the prophet Calchas (or the Trojan seer Helenus), whom Odysseus captured, told the Greeks that they needed Heracles' bow in order to defeat the Trojans. So Odysseus and Diomedes returned to the island and brought Philoctetes and the bow to Troy. There his wound was healed and he shot Paris in single combat.

## THE DEFEAT OF TROY

After the death of Paris, his brother Deiphobus married Helen. Odysseus brought Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, to Troy and gave him his father's armor. Athena taught Epeius to build a great wooden horse, whose body would accommodate the greatest of the Greek warriors. Meanwhile, Odysseus, in the disguise of a beggar, entered Troy. Helen recognized him and plotted with him to capture Troy. However, she later changed her mind and tried to expose the men who were hiding inside the horse.

The Greeks left the horse outside the walls of Troy and hid on a nearby island. The Trojans were suspicious of the horse, but when two serpents attacked the priest of Apollo, who had warned against accepting a Greek gift, they took it inside. Then, certain that the war had finally ended, they celebrated their great victory.

Later that night, while the Trojans slept soundly, the Greeks who were hiding inside the horse, including Odysseus, Menelaus, and Neoptolemus, disembarked and opened the Trojan gates to the Greek armies, who had secretly returned. The Greeks then looted and burned the great city.

Menelaus killed Deiphobus and recovered Helen. The women in Hector's family became enslaved, as he had known would be their fate if Troy lost the war. The greatest Greek warriors were entitled to special prizes of honor, which, now, were the greatest of the Trojan women. Agamemnon claimed Hector's sister Cassandra, who had received but spurned Apollo's love. Odysseus claimed Hecuba. Neoptolemus, who had killed Priam, chose Andromache. Hector's son Astyanax was grabbed from his nurse by either Neoptolemus or Odysseus and thrown to his death, either from a tower or from the Trojan wall.

### QUESTIONS FOR
### Response, Discussion, and Analysis

1. *The Iliad* focuses on the behavior of warriors in time of crisis and examines what each person owes to him- or herself and to the community. What does each of the following characters owe to himself and to others: (a) Agamemnon? (b) Achilles? (c) Patroclus? (d) Hector? (e) Paris?

2. Achilles is acknowledged to be the greatest Greek warrior. Yet Homer focuses on Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon and its effect upon the Greeks rather than on his heroic exploits. Why?

3. In *The Iliad*, why is a person's reputation worth more than wealth and power? Is this still true today? Explain.

4. Why does Homer choose an argument over a woman as the cause of a tragic quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles? Does it matter what actually causes the quarrel? Explain.

5. When we evaluate a human being, we consider what kind of person he or she is as well as the deeds he or she accomplishes. What kind of person is Agamemnon? What tests of character confront him? To what extent does he pass those tests? What temptations does he find irresistible? Why? How does his behavior affect his heroic image?

6. Describe Agamemnon as Achilles sees him. Is Achilles' evaluation correct? Consider the following:
   a. What makes Agamemnon apologize to Achilles?
   b. Why does he give Achilles so many gifts?
   c. Why does he send others to kill Achilles instead of going himself?

7. Based on *The Iliad*, what kind of person is Achilles? What tests of character confront him? To what extent does he pass them? Which temptations does he resist, and which does he find irresistible? Why? How does his behavior affect his heroic image?