

ENGLISH IV AP SUMMER READING REQUIREMENTS

The summer assignment is designed so that AP students:

- read a literary work that forms a discussion foundation for the rest of the school year
- critically analyze and respond to a classic piece of literature
- are prepared to write as the semester begins

Required Texts: Homer – *The Iliad* (Fagels translation)
Edith Hamilton – *Mythology*
DCE Novels (3)

1. **Homer's *Iliad*:** Thoughtfully and carefully read the entire *Iliad*. Use the resources provided in this packet to help you in your reading. The translator's preface, introduction, maps, and glossary of names will also be helpful. Be certain to understand the literal level details of the entire work thoroughly (expect a comprehension test on them the first week of school). As you read, use **Post-it notes** to bookmark quotes from a broad swath of the 24 books of the *Iliad*, most particularly (but not limited to), books 1–3, 6, 9, and 15 –24, and then create a **handwritten** collection of these quotes on lined paper. The purpose of your quote gathering is to ensure your active engagement with the text and to collect quotes to use as supporting evidence in an in-class essay. Do not analyze the quotes; just mark them with a Post-it and hand-write them on lined paper. As you read *The Iliad*:

Take note of the messages or insights about the **human condition** that Homer conveys; look for his commentary—both direct and indirect—about:

love	free will
friendship	fear
family	sacrifice
honor	loss

For each of these concepts, mark and write out four (4) passages, for a total of 32.

Do not rely on Internet sources for your quote selection. Your collection should be a personal selection of quotes that strike you as meaningful.

2. **Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*:** This assignment will give you the background necessary to understand the context of *The Iliad*. Read and annotate the following selections **BEFORE** reading *The Iliad*. You will have a test on this material during the first week of school.

Chapters 13 & 14 (the Trojan War and the fall of Troy)

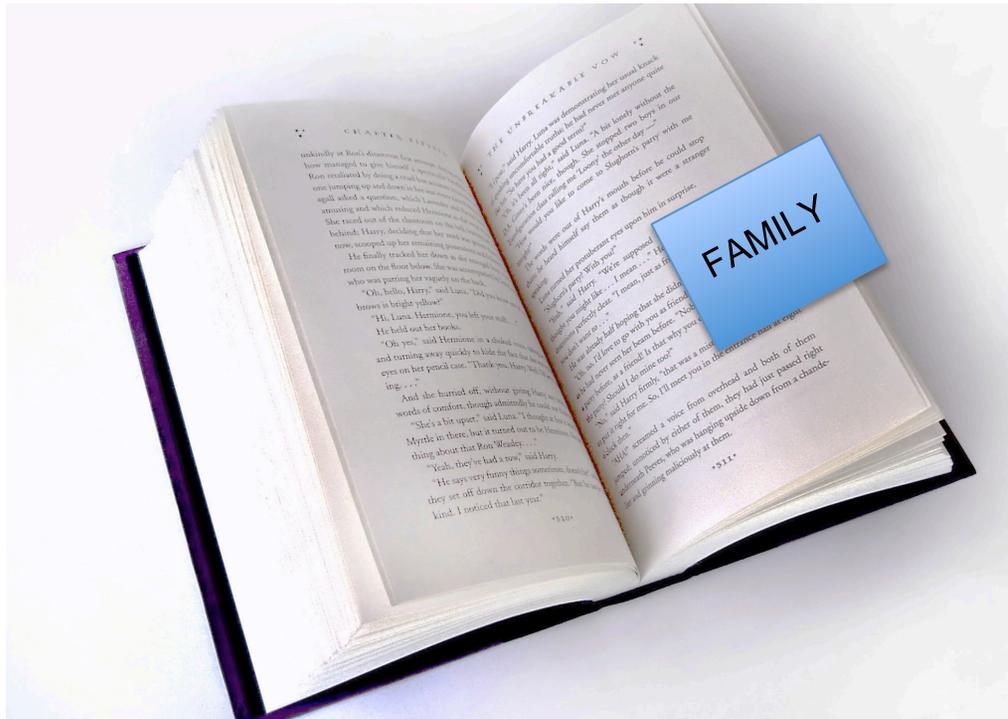
Chapters 15 & 16 (Odysseus' and Aeneas' adventures after the war)

3. **The Documented Critical Essay:** The DCE is a process project that will require you to read and closely analyze three separate novels and write a series of analytic essays. During the summer and before school starts:

- Read the novels of authors we have expressly approved for your DCE project.
- While reading, annotate your novels, noting significant quotations that reflect details of character, setting, and plot relevant to the themes that emerge. These notes and quotations will be used when you write your DCE essays.

Please note: All of these assignments are prerequisites for entrance into IV AP, and therefore must be completed before the first day of the fall semester.

As a further note, be aware that the ongoing reading demands on IV AP are significant. You will be reading more than 2,000 pages during the school year. Come prepared to work hard.



Use Post-it notes while you read. When you come to a passage that speaks to the human condition—specifically love, friendship, family, honor, free will, fear, sacrifice, and loss, mark that passage and label it. Do not write the quote on the Post-it. Keep Post-it notes in your book!

○ Write out all 32 quotes on lined paper. Clearly label them with the concept they address. Group them together with other quotes that address the same topic.

○ Might some of the quotes you select speak to more than one of these concepts? Yes! But you still need 32 distinct quotes.

○ As per instructions on page 1 of this handout, do not analyze the quote.

Please note that these are summaries of a different translation; therefore names may be spelled differently.

Outline of Homer's *Iliad*

Book 1

The *Iliad* begins with the poet calling on the Muse to sing of the wrath of Achilles and its consequences. Apollo's priest Chryses comes to the Achaian camp and asks to ransom back his daughter Chryseis, who has been captured. Agamemnon sends him rudely away, and Chryses prays to Apollo to punish the Greeks, which Apollo does by sending a plague upon them. Achilles calls an assembly to ask the seer Kalchas why Apollo is angry. First Kalchas secures Achilles' promise that he will protect him from reprisals, then he explains the situation. Agamemnon angrily denounces Kalchas. Agamemnon agrees to give up Chryseis, who is his concubine, but demands some other "prize" to replace her. Achilles answers that another prize will come later, when Troy is sacked. Agamemnon angrily threatens to take the captive woman of Achilles or of another of the Achaian chiefs, and Achilles responds to this slight by denouncing Agamemnon and threatening to go home to Phthia. Agamemnon repeats his threat to take Achilles' prize, and Achilles is about to draw his sword when Athene appears to him and stops him. Instead of attacking Agamemnon, Achilles berates him some more, and swears an oath to stay out of the battle so that the Achaians can see how important he is. Nestor tries to reconcile the two chiefs, but without much success. Achilles agrees to surrender his captive woman, Briseis, without a fight. When the messengers from Agamemnon arrive, Achilles hands her over. He then meets with his mother, Thetis the sea-nymph, and tells her the whole story of how he has been dishonoured. He asks her to convince Zeus to make the Trojans win for a while, so the Greeks will realize how much they need Achilles. Thetis leaves, and the Achaians set about returning Chryseis to her home and propitiating Apollo. Thetis meets with Zeus and explains the situation; he owes her a favor, so he agrees to give glory to the Trojans on Achilles' behalf. Hera, who favors the Greeks, expresses her displeasure over this plan, but Zeus asserts his authority and she is silenced. Hephaistos comforts his mother Hera, and soon all the gods are again at peace, and the day ends.

Book 2

Zeus sends Agamemnon a deceitful dream indicating that this is a good time for the Achaians to attack. Next morning, Agamemnon summons the chiefs to an assembly and tells them about the dream. Nestor approves, and the chiefs call an assembly of the whole army. Agamemnon takes the sceptre and addresses the multitude, telling them that the time has come to give up the struggle (now in its ninth year) and go home. The Achaians are delighted by this and rush for the ships, but Hera sends Athene to intervene. On Athene's orders, Odysseus goes around stopping the flight. To noble men he recalls their duty as leaders, and to common soldiers he asserts the authority of the kings, backed by a blow from the staff. When the army is reassembled, a funny-looking commoner named Thersites rises to address the crowd. He rails against Agamemnon, calling him greedy and implying that he is in the wrong in the quarrel with Achilles. Odysseus rises and shouts Thersites down, chiefly on the grounds that a common soldier such as he ought not to defy his betters. The crowd delights in seeing Odysseus humiliate Thersites. Odysseus now addresses Agamemnon, noting that the omens for Greek victory have been good and urging him to stay until Troy is taken. Nestor expresses a similar opinion, advising Agamemnon to allow any who wish to leave to go, so that only those eager for the fight will remain. Agamemnon agrees, and sends the Achaians off to eat and then to prepare themselves for war. The chiefs sacrifice an ox and pray to Zeus for success in the fighting, then they feast together. All the Argives assemble for battle, and the poet again asks the aid of the Muses, this time for the task of listing all the contingents. This list of the leaders (the "Catalogue of Ships") falls into two parts. First, the Greek leaders are enumerated. There follows an interlude in which Iris (disguised as Priam) induces the Trojans to muster their forces, and then the list of Trojan and allied leaders continues to the end of the book.

Book 3

The two armies come together. Paris sees Menelaos and shrinks back into the ranks in fear, earning a bitter reproach from Hektor. Chastised, Paris proposes a single combat between himself and Menelaos. Hektor is pleased and conveys this proposal to the Greeks, whereupon Menelaos quickly accepts the challenge. While the two sides prepare to seal the bargain with sacrifices, the scene shifts to Helen, whom we find in her chamber weaving a tapestry depicting the Trojan War. Iris summons Helen to the wall, and as Helen goes by the Trojan elders marvel at her beauty. Together Helen and Priam look out over the armies, and Helen identifies various heroes among the Achaian ranks: first Agamemnon, then Odysseus, then Telamonian Aias. One of the Trojan elders, Antenor, recalls being impressed by the oratorical skill of Odysseus on a previous occasion. Priam and Antenor go out onto the battlefield to preside over the oaths under which Menelaos and Paris are to fight in single combat. The single combat is intended to end the war, and the winner is to have Helen. Paris draws the lot granting him first cast, but his spear does not pierce Menelaos' shield. Menelaos throws, but merely grazes Paris. Although Menelaos closes in to kill Paris with his sword, Aphrodite wraps Paris in a cloud and spirits him off the battlefield. Aphrodite goes to Helen and summons her to join Paris in the bedroom. At first Helen protests, but she cannot defy the goddess. Similarly, when confronting Paris in person she begins by reviling him and suggesting that he is a coward, but ends up in bed with him.

Book 4

The gods sit in council, and Zeus wonders if there is still a way to get Helen back to Menelaos without utterly destroying the city of Troy. Hera expresses her displeasure at this idea and Zeus backs off, although not without some blustering about his position of supremacy. In response Hera asserts her own ancestry and suggests a compromise: the war will go on, but the Trojans will be the first to break the truce. Athene flies to earth and convinces a Trojan, Pandaros, to shatter the truce by firing an arrow at Menelaos. The arrow only grazes him, but it is enough to break the truce. Machaon, the doctor, treats the wound. The battle is joined again, and Agamemnon goes through the ranks, urging on the good fighters with praise and the slackers with reproaches. He encounters the Kretan Idomeneus, and the two exchange words of encouragement, then Agamemnon moves on, pausing to deliver pep talks to the two Aiantes and to Nestor and his men. Coming upon Odysseus and his men, who seem to be hanging back, Agamemnon speaks harshly to them. But Odysseus responds that he intends to fight hard, and Agamemnon almost apologizes. Next Agamemnon meets Diomedes standing among the chariots, and again he speaks harshly, this time comparing Diomedes unfavorably to his father Tydeus. Diomedes does not respond, being unwilling to challenge Agamemnon's authority, and he even rebukes his friend Sthenelos for trying to defend him. The Trojans attack, shouting fearfully, and the battle is joined. Several warriors on each side are killed.

Book 5

The *aristeia* (period of pre-eminence) of Diomedes begins, with Athene at his side helping him. Several warriors die on each side, as Diomedes rages among them like a flooded river. Pandaros wounds Diomedes with an arrow, and Diomedes prays to Athene for help in killing him. She appears and reassures Diomedes, while also warning him not to attack any of the gods, except Aphrodite. Diomedes rages on, and many Trojans fall before his spear. Aineias meets Pandaros and asks why he is not shooting arrows at Diomedes; Pandaros replies that he is disgusted by his two grazing shots (at Menelaos and Diomedes) and wishes he had come to battle with a chariot and a spear. Aineias invites him to ride with him, and they set out after Diomedes. Sthenelos advises Diomedes to flee, but Diomedes refuses. Awaiting the onslaught, he remarks that Sthenelos should try if possible to capture Aineias' horses, which are from a famous line. Diomedes kills Pandaros, and when Aineias tries to protect the body he himself is

gravely wounded. Diomedes moves in to finish him off, but Aphrodite comes to whisk Aineias away, while Sthenelos captures the team. Diomedes remembers Athene's instructions and attacks Aphrodite, wounding her and sending her back to Olympos. On Olympos, Aphrodite's mother Dione comforts her with stories of other gods who have had to endure pain and defeat. Aphrodite is thus forced to abandon Aineias, but Apollo takes her place and is able to protect Aineias from Diomedes, chiefly by removing the real Aineias and leaving behind a mere facsimile on the battlefield. Not knowing this, Sarpedon chides Hektor for allowing Aineias to lie unprotected, and Hektor redoubles his efforts, just as the real Aineias returns, alive and well. The battle rages on, until Diomedes sees Hektor rushing upon the Greeks with Ares at his side, and the Achaians retreat a bit. The Achaian Tlepolemos meets Sarpedon and boasts of his ancestry, for he is the son of Herakles; not bothering to counter with his own, more glorious father (Zeus) Sarpedon kills Tlepolemos, though he is wounded in the process. He begs Hektor to save him, but Hektor is in a hurry to get on with the battle and ignores him. Sarpedon is saved by someone else, while the Achaians continue to retreat before Hektor and Ares. Athene and Hera arm themselves and drive their chariot to Zeus. In response to their complaints, Zeus gives permission for Athene to oppose Ares. Athene visits Diomedes and chides him for slacking off. He replies that she herself instructed him not to attack any god but Aphrodite; how can he fight with Ares? Athene says that now he may attack Ares, and she herself drives his chariot up to the war-god, and Diomedes is able to wound Ares with his spear. Ares goes to Zeus and complains that Athene is out of control, but Zeus is unreceptive. Thus all the gods retire from the battlefield.

Book 6

The battle goes on without the gods, and the Greeks begin to gain the upper hand. Helenos sends Hektor back into the city, so he can tell the women of Troy to try to propitiate Athene. Glaukos and Diomedes meet on the battlefield, and Diomedes (not wanting to attack a god) asks Glaukos who he is. Glaukos replies with a famous simile; why ask his lineage, when men are as impermanent as the leaves? Nonetheless he gives it at length, including in it the story of how his ancestor Bellerophon overcame a variety of dangers to become king of Lykia. Diomedes realizes that there is a tradition of hospitality (xenia) between his family and Glaukos'; instead of fighting, they exchange armor and part on good terms. But Diomedes gets the better of Glaukos, since he receives gold armor in exchange for bronze. Hektor arrives at Troy and encounters his mother, Hekabe. She offers him wine and the chance to pour a libation, but he turns it down, saying he is not clean enough for religious rituals. He gives her instructions about what to do for Athene, and she obeys, but Athene is unmoved. Next Hektor goes to Paris' house, where he chastises his brother for not being on the battlefield. Helen tries to get Hektor to sit down next to her, but he refuses. Hektor goes to his own house to find his wife Andromache, but learns that she is up on the wall with his baby son Astyanax. There he meets them. Weeping, Andromache reminds him of her life story. Achilles killed her whole family, and Hektor is all she has. She advises him not to go back out onto the battlefield. Hektor replies that he must go or be thought a coward. He imagines Andromache as a captive woman, and is sorrowed by the thought. He seems certain that he will die soon, but he can see no real alternative except to fight on. Next he tries to hold his son, but the baby is frightened by his war gear. Hektor removes his helmet and places it on the ground, and the baby comes into his arms. Hektor prays that one day his son may be a warrior even more glorious than his father. In his parting words to Andromache, Hektor takes pity on her and suggests that perhaps he may survive the battle after all. Hektor and Paris return to the battlefield.

Book 7

The battle resumes. Athene and Apollo confer, and they decide to slow the killing by setting up another contest of individuals. Inspired by them, Helenos tells Hektor to issue his challenge for a single Greek opponent. At first no one of the Achaians will answer the challenge. Menelaos volunteers, but Agamemnon will not allow it. Nestor chides the Argives, sounding the theme that they cannot compare to

the sort of warriors whom Nestor knew in his youth. The speech works, and nine Greeks volunteer; they cast lots, and Telamonian Aias wins. Hektor and Aias exchange menacing words, then both throw their spears, but neither cast is effective. They continue to fight, and Aias appears to be winning, but night falls and the contest is stopped. Hektor and Aias exchange gifts, and part with mutual admiration. The Greeks feast, and then Nestor proposes building a ditch and a rampart to protect the ships. Meanwhile in the Trojan assembly Antenor's proposal to give Helen back and end the war is quashed by Paris. Next day, on Priam's orders, the Trojans propose a truce for collecting the dead, and the Greeks agree. Meanwhile the gods meet in council, and Poseidon expresses frustration at the prospect that the wall built by the Greeks will be more famous than the one he himself built around Troy. Zeus replies that the Greeks' wall will be destroyed soon after the city is taken.

Book 8

The gods meet in council, and Zeus orders them all to stay out of the battle. He then retires to Mt. Ida to watch the war unfold. The Trojans pour out of the city gates, and Zeus' scales show that they are fated to win the day. Paris wounds Nestor with an arrow, and Diomedes is forced to take the old man onto his chariot. Diomedes comes close to Hektor in the battle, but he is unwilling to attack the son of Priam, since both sides are aware that fate is on the Trojan side this day. Hektor urges the Trojans on, longing to kill Nestor and Diomedes. Hera is enraged and tries to convince Poseidon to intervene, but he is mindful of the injunction of Zeus. Hera acts alone, however, inspiring Agamemnon to cry out words of encouragement to the Argives, and to make a prayer to Zeus for the preservation of the Greeks. Zeus responds affirmatively with a bird-sign, and the Greeks regain their valor. Teukros has a brief *aristeia*, striking down many Trojans with arrows from his bow. Again and again he tries to hit Hektor and misses, until finally Hektor charges him and wounds him gravely with a stone. The tide again turns in favor of the Trojans. Hera and Athene arm themselves and drive their chariot towards the battlefield, but Zeus sees them and sends Iris to intercept them. Zeus' threat to hit their chariot with a thunderbolt is too much for the two goddesses, and they retire back again to Olympos. Zeus returns to Olympos to tell Hera and Athene not to sulk, since they are no match for his power. Hera is still angry, but she meekly acquiesces. Zeus foretells the fighting close by the ships over the body of Patroklos (Book 17). Night falls, and the Greeks are glad. The Trojan forces hold an assembly, and Hektor proposes making camp there on the plain, so that in the morning the Trojans may force their way up to the ships. This plan is adopted, and the book ends with a picture of the Trojan campfires burning in the plain.

Book 9

Agamemnon calls a meeting of the Greek leaders and proposes abandoning the struggle. Diomedes asserts his resolve to remain, and Nestor counsels patience. After feasting, the chiefs assemble again, and Nestor advises Agamemnon to make overtures to Achilles. Agamemnon agrees, admitting that he was not in his right mind when he dishonoured Achilles. He gives a long list of gifts and honors which Achilles will receive if he returns to the battle; this list includes Briseis, whom Agamemnon swears he has not touched. Agamemnon closes with four less tactful lines, comparing the pitilessness of Achilles to that of Hades, the god of death, and opining that Achilles ought to yield to higher authority. The assembly selects three ambassadors (Odysseus, Phoinix, and Aias) and sends them to Achilles. They find him playing the lyre and singing epic verses by the shore. They feast, and then Odysseus makes the first of the speeches imploring Achilles to return. First he apprises Achilles of the strategic situation, using the rhetorical device of hyperbole to magnify the danger in which the Achaians find themselves. Second, he touches Achilles' heart by speaking in the voice of his father Peleus, sending him off to Troy and warning him to avoid quarrels. Third, he repeats Agamemnon's list of gifts and honors, artfully substituting the glorious prospect of killing Hektor for the original last four lines. Achilles responds with an impassioned speech, rejecting Odysseus' arguments roughly in reverse order. What good will honor do if he is dead? Why has Agamemnon waited so long to share the plunder equitably? If Menelaos and the rest have gone to war

for the sake of Helen, why should not Achilles do the same against Agamemnon for the sake of Briseis? Achilles again threatens to return home to Phthia, claiming that he prefers what awaits him there to all the gifts promised by Agamemnon. As if convincing himself of the rightness of this course, he recalls Thetis' prophecy about his two futures: a quick but glorious death at Troy, or a return home and a long life of domestic tranquility. Next Phoinix, an old friend of Achilles' family, takes his turn at persuasion. He recalls his own personal history, how he came to live in the palace of Peleus, and saw Achilles grow up. He warns Achilles about the dangers of Ruin (Ate). To illustrate the principle that all stubbornness is eventually overcome, he tells the story of Meleagros, slayer of the Kalydonian boar. During the war between the Aitolians and the Kouretes, Meleagros stayed away until the city of Kalydon was nearly taken, then entered the battle and saved the day. In his response, Achilles admits that Phoinix has moved him, but still he refuses to comply. Last of all, Aias takes his turn. In his blunt way, he suggests that Achilles has moved well outside the realm of societal norms (*nomos*); in society, even a murderer can be forgiven. Unmoved, Achilles swears not to return to the battle until the Trojans have set the Achaian ships ablaze. The embassy returns and reports Achilles' decision; Diomedes says they must fight on without him, and the others agree.

Book 10

Both worried about the Greek setbacks, Agamemnon and Menelaos meet at night and agree to work on sending spies to the Trojan camp. Agamemnon goes to Nestor's shelter, while Menelaos collects the other chiefs. Nestor addresses the collected leadership, and asks for volunteers to infiltrate the Trojan camp. Diomedes volunteers and chooses Odysseus to go with him. Odysseus' armor includes a helmet of boar-tusks (Mycenaean). After prayers to Athene, Odysseus and Diomedes set out. Meanwhile, Hektor has done the same thing on the Trojan side, choosing Dolon as his spy. Odysseus and Diomedes see Dolon coming, so they ambush him and chase him down. Odysseus interrogates Dolon, who answers all the questions without demur. Dolon describes the Trojan order of encampment, including the splendid chariot of the Thracian King Rhesos. Ooton pleads for his life, but Diomedes kills him anyway. Diomedes and Odysseus find the Thracians asleep, so they slaughter twelve of them and escape with the chariot and team of Rhesos, back to the Greek camp. On the way they pause to pick up the arms stripped from Dolon's corpse for a dedication to Athene.

Book 11

Zeus sends Hate (Eris) to rouse the Greeks to battle. Agamemnon's armor is described in detail, for he will play a key role in the battle today. Zeus' evil intent towards the Greeks is figured as clouds dripping blood. All morning the battle rages, until finally at noon the Greeks begin to gain the upper hand. Agamemnon kills many Trojans, refusing to take prisoners; he is compared to a lion hunting a deer, and to a raging fire. Zeus sends Iris to tell Hektor to stay out of it until he sees Agamemnon wounded and retiring in his chariot. Iphidamas almost succeeds in wounding Agamemnon, but dies in the attempt. Iphidamas' older brother Koon then wounds Agamemnon in the struggle over the corpse, only to be killed himself by the wounded champion. Agamemnon retreats in his chariot, and Hektor begins killing the Greeks. Diomedes and Odysseus respond by killing some Trojans. Alexandros shoots an arrow at Diomedes and wounds him in the foot; Diomedes ridicules his shouts of triumph, but is forced to leave the battle anyway. Without Diomedes, Odysseus is surrounded, and Sokos manages to wound him (but at the cost of his own life). Menelaos and Aias go to the rescue, with Menelaos leading Odysseus off while Aias holds the enemy at bay, killing many of them. Meanwhile, Paris shoots an arrow and wounds Machaon, physician to the Greeks. Nestor rescues Machaon. Hektor attacks the Greeks (but not Aias) and meanwhile Aias is being driven back. At the ships, Achilles sees Nestor carrying Machaon off of the battlefield and sends Patroklos to find out what happened. Patroklos arrives at Nestor's shelter and sees Machaon; he tries to return to Achilles right away, but Nestor delivers a speech which chides Achilles for staying out of the

battle and includes a long digression about a war from Nestor's own glory days. He closes by urging Patroklos to don Achilles' armour and lead the Myrmidons into battle himself, a foreshadowing of the events of Bk. 16. Leaving Nestor, Patroklos meets Eurypylos, who assures him that the Greeks are near defeat. Although anxious to return to Achilles, Patroklos pauses to treat Eurypylos' wound.

Book 12

The Trojans and Achaians fight around the ditch and wall which protect the Greek camp. The wall was destined to be destroyed by floods, but not until after the fall of Troy. Since the ditch is impassable to horses, the Trojans decide to dismount and attack it on foot. After seeing an omen (an eagle dropping a snake) Poulydamas advises Hektor not to press on towards the ships, but Hektor rejects this counsel. Battle rages on around the wall, and Zeus inspires his son Sarpedon to lead the charge against one of the gates. Sarpedon makes his famous speech (12. 310-328) to Glaukos affirming the principles of the heroic code. Led by Sarpedon, the Lykians attack the gates, but Telamonian Aias comes over to help defend it and the Lykians cannot break through. Finally Hektor smashes in one of the gates with a stone, and the Trojans pour through the gap.

Book 13

While Zeus' attention is elsewhere, Poseidon arms and prepares to aid the Greeks. He inspires the two Aiantes to new heights, and urges on the other Greeks as well. Battle rages around the Greek ships. The battle narrative pauses for a conversation between Idomeneus (the Kretan) and Meriones, who is getting a new spear. Idomeneus and Meriones then enter the battle and fight well, but Poseidon is reluctant (for fear of Zeus) to take an active part. Instead he intervenes in small ways, such as by causing an opponent of Idomeneus to hold still for the spear-cast, or protecting the body of a fallen Greek. Essentially an *aristeia* of Idomeneus, the book seems to be moving towards a single contest between Idomeneus and Aineias, but this never comes. Instead there is vivid description of a variety of individual clashes, until finally Hektor decides to heed the advice of Poulydamas. Hektor rallies the Trojans and, after a final exchange of threats and insults with Telamonian Aias, prepares to withdraw.

Book 14

During the lull in the fighting, Nestor meets with the wounded leaders (Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes). Discouraged by the breaching of the wall, Agamemnon proposes to prepare the ships for flight. Odysseus reproaches him, pointing out that the Achaians will be slaughtered as they drag their ships to the sea. Diomedes then proposes that they all re-enter the fray, wounded as they are, and this proposal is adopted. Poseidon encourages Agamemnon and inspires all the Greeks with a mighty war-cry. Meanwhile Hera convinces Aphrodite to help her become more desirable, and persuades Sleep to assist her in putting Zeus out of the action. Hera then seduces Zeus on Mt. Ida, and after they make love he falls asleep. This frees Poseidon to lead the Greeks back into battle. Aias manages to wound Hektor with a rock, but the Trojans are able to rescue him. Thus encouraged, the Greeks are generally successful in the fighting.

Book 15

The Trojans are driven back across the ditch to where their chariots are parked. Zeus awakens and reproaches Hera, who blames Poseidon for the Greek success. Zeus remembers his promise to Thetis and again plans to help the Trojans. Hera returns to Olympus. When Ares hears that his son Askalaphos has been killed, he is enraged and prepares to enter the battle on the Trojan side; Athene dissuades him by reminding him of Zeus' instructions. Hera sends Iris and Apollo to meet with Zeus. Zeus in turn sends Iris

to tell Poseidon to leave the battlefield, and Poseidon reluctantly obeys. Next Zeus directs Apollo to discourage the Achaians and to rejuvenate the wounded Hektor, which Apollo quickly does. With the help of Apollo, the Trojans now regain the upper hand, and again cross the ditch to attack the ships. Still nursing Eurypylos, Patroklos observes the Achaian discomfiture and runs to tell Achilles. Meanwhile, in balancing speeches, Hektor and Aias urge on their comrades. Finally Hektor is able to grab the prow of one of the ships, and the book ends with the Trojans threatening to burn the vessels.

Book 16

A weeping Patroklos tells Achilles of the Greeks' plight. He asks Achilles to allow him to wear Achilles' armor and to lead the Myrmidons into battle. Achilles reiterates his own reasons for staying out of the contest; although his anger has abated, he can not fight until the battle reaches his own ships. But he consents to the plan of Patroklos, warning him not to advance into the plain, but only to drive the Trojans away from the ships. Meanwhile, Hektor forces Aias to retreat from the defence of his ship, and the burning of the Greek hulls begins. Achilles sees this and hurries to muster the Myrmidons, while Patroklos arms himself. Achilles pours a libation and prays to Zeus for Patroklos' success. Led by Patroklos, the Myrmidons attack, drive the Trojans back from the ships, and put out the fire. Patroklos himself kills many Trojans between the ships and the ditch, while others flee back towards Troy. Sarpedon comes up to face Patroklos in single combat, and Zeus wonders whether he should rescue his son; but Hera advises him to let destiny take its course, and Zeus agrees. Patroklos kills Sarpedon, who with his dying breath calls upon Glaukos to protect his corpse. Glaukos prays to Apollo, and Apollo responds by healing his wounds, enabling Glaukos to collect a band of Trojans for the fight over Sarpedon's body. Battle rages around the carcass of Sarpedon, but in the end Zeus decides to postpone Patroklos' death, and the Greeks are able to strip the body while the Trojans and Lykians flee. Zeus sends Apollo to remove the denuded corpse from the battlefield. Meanwhile Patroklos forgets the warning given him by Achilles, and pursues the Trojans across the plain up to the city walls. Apollo urges Hektor to attack Patroklos, but Patroklos continues his rampage, killing ten more men before Apollo himself finally knocks him down and takes away his armor. The dazed and defenceless Patroklos is wounded by a Trojan, Euphorbos, and Hektor comes in to finish him off. As he dies, Patroklos predicts the death of Hektor at the hands of Achilles.

Book 17

Menelaos fight Euphorbos over Patroklos' body and kills him, but is then forced to withdraw before Hektor and the Trojans. Hektor strips the armor from Patroklos' corpse, but Aias and Menelaos together are able to take a stand over the body. This causes a crisis of confidence among the Trojans, and Glaukos denounces Hektor. Hektor withdraws and dons the armor of Achilles, then summons the Trojans for another try at Patroklos' body. Battle rages on at length over the corpse. In a short interlude, we see the immortal horses of Achilles grieving over the death of Patroklos, until Zeus breathes new life into them and they carry the charioteer Automedon back into the fray. The focus shifts briefly away from the struggle for Patroklos' body as Hektor and Aineias try, without success, to capture the divine horses. Athene intervenes to inspire Menelaos, but Apollo encourages Hektor, and with Zeus' help the Trojans begin to gain the upper hand. At the insistence of Aias, Menelaos sends Antilochos to get word to Achilles that Patroklos' corpse is in danger of being dragged away by the Trojans. But the issue is decided when Menelaos and Meriones are able to carry the body back to the ships, while the two Aiantes hold the Trojans at bay.

Book 18

Antilochos reports the death of Patroklos to Achilles, whose cry of woe reaches the ears of Thetis. She leads all the nymphs in a song of mourning (threnody), then goes to see Achilles. He explains that Patroklos is dead, and mother and son grieve together, both knowing that this means Achilles must reenter the battle and eventually die young at Troy. Without admitting fault, Achilles regrets that there is such a thing as anger among men. Thetis agrees that he must fight now, but tells him to wait while she fetches new armor from Hephaistos. Meanwhile on the battlefield Hektor again threatens to win Patroklos' body. On Iris' instructions, Achilles steps out beside the ditch and shouts his war cry. This, together with Athene's own shout and a terrifying flame she creates above Achilles' head, is enough to frighten off the Trojans and to get Patroklos' body back to Achilles' shelter. The Trojans withdraw and assemble; Poulydamas suggests that they retreat within the walls and defend the city rather than face Achilles on the plain. But Hektor rejects this good advice and declares himself ready to take on Achilles. In ceremony over Patroklos' body, Achilles swears not to bury him until Hektor's head and body lie beside their shelter. He also promises to decorate Patroklos' funeral pyre with the heads of twelve Trojans (human sacrifice). Hera acknowledges to Zeus that she is happy about Achilles' return. Now Thetis arrives at Hephaistos' workshop, and he recalls that he owes her a favor. She tells him Achilles' whole story, and requests that he forge new armor for her son. He begins with the shield, on which are depicted various scenes: (1) the universe, with heavens, earth, and sea; (2) a marriage festival; (3) a judicial scene, a murder trial before a court of elders; (4) a city under siege, and battle around the walls; (5) agricultural scenes, including farmers ploughing, laborers reaping, a vineyard at harvest time, a herd of cattle under attack by lions, and a meadow; (6) a dancing floor (*orchestra*), with the dance under way. All around the rim of the shield, as if around the world itself, is the circle of Ocean. Hephaistos also crafts the rest of Achilles' armor, and Thetis takes it to him.

Book 19

Achilles receives the armor and is filled with lust for battle. Assured by Thetis that she will prevent Patroklos' corpse from decaying, he calls the Achaians to assembly. Without admitting fault, he wishes aloud that he and Agamemnon had never quarreled, and even that Briseis had died before ever becoming the object of the strife. Achilles declares his anger to be at an end. Agamemnon replies at awkward length, likewise denying any personal responsibility, but blaming instead Zeus and Destiny and Delusion (Ate). As an example of the power of Ate, he tells the story of how Hera tricked Zeus into making his son Herakles labor for Eurystheus. Agamemnon closes by reminding Achilles that his previous offer of gifts still stands. Achilles briefly replies that he does not care about the gifts; he is eager only for battle. Odysseus intervenes, insisting that the men must eat before fighting, and that Briseis and the gifts must be presented publicly and with full ceremony. Agamemnon agrees, but Achilles wants none of it. He says he will not eat or drink until he has avenged Patroklos. After Odysseus insists, Briseis and the gifts are brought out, and Agamemnon swears an oath that he has not touched her. Briseis laments over the body of Patroklos. The other Achaians feast, but since Achilles continues to refuse food and drink Zeus sends Athene to fill him up with nectar and ambrosia. Achilles then arms himself, and exhorts his horses to bring him safely out of the battle when it is over. The lead horse, Xanthos ("Tawny"), agrees to do this, but also reminds Achilles that his appointed day of death is near.

Book 20

Zeus assembles the gods and gives them permission to intervene in the battle at will, especially to help protect the Trojans against Achilles. To the Greek side go Hera, Athene, Poseidon, Hermes, and Hephaistos; to the Trojans Ares, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite, Leto, and the river-god Skamandros. Apollo convinces Aineias that he can take on Achilles. The gods on the Achaian side consider whether to help Achilles, and decide to let him fight on his own for a while. They withdraw to an observation point.

Achilleus then challenges Aineias, reminding him that once on an earlier occasion Aineias fled before his spear. Aineias responds with a lengthy recitation of his genealogy, and closes by daring Achilleus to match his deeds to his words. They fight, and Achilleus is on the point of killing Aineias when Poseidon notices, and remarks that Aineias is destined to carry on the Trojan stock after the fall of the city. Although a partisan of the Greeks, Poseidon removes Aineias from the battle, leaving Achilleus to marvel at how much Aineias is loved by the gods. Achilleus and Hektor each urge on their men; for a moment, it seems as if these two are about to fight, but Apollo tells Hektor it is not yet time. Achilleus goes on a rampage and kills many Trojans, including Hektor's brother Polydoros. This brings Hektor out to face Achilleus, but before Achilleus can kill him Apollo hides Hektor in a cloud and removes him. Achilleus' killing spree continues.

Book 21

The aristeia of Achilleus goes on. He captures twelve Trojans and sends them back to the Greek camp to be used as human sacrifices in Patroklos' honor. Next Achilleus catches Lykaon, whom previously he had ransomed as a P.O.W.; Lykaon is unarmed, and he formally supplicates Achilleus, begging him to spare his life. Achilleus ignores the plea, killing Lykaon and boasting over his body, which he dumps in the river Skamandros. This angers the river-god, who inspires Asteropaios to challenge Achilleus. Asteropaios is himself the son of a river-god, so when Achilleus kills him Skamandros is more upset than ever. Achilleus continues to fill the river with corpses, until finally the river-god complains that he is choking on the dead bodies. Achilleus seems to agree to stop it, but a moment later we see him locked in combat with the river itself. Losing the struggle, Achilleus appeals to the gods. Poseidon reassures him, and Hera assigns Hephaistos to fight the river with fire. Soon Skamandros is subdued, and the gods turn to fighting each other. Ares challenges Athene, but she knocks him down with a stone. As Aphrodite is leading Ares away, Athene strikes her down as well. Poseidon then challenges Apollo, arguing that Apollo ought to oppose the Trojans because long ago Poseidon and Apollo were swindled in a deal with Priam's ancestor Laomedon. Apollo refuses to fight Poseidon, which earns him a severe rebuke from Artemis. In return, Hera boxes Artemis' ears and sends her weeping off the field. Meanwhile Priam sees that the Trojans are losing, and orders the city gates opened. Apollo distracts Achilleus, allowing the Trojan forces to take refuge behind the walls.

Book 22

Hektor remains alone outside the walls as Achilleus realizes that he has been tricked. Priam and Hekabe plead with their son, urging him to come inside the walls and not to face Achilleus alone. Hektor ignores their pleas, while in his own mind he ponders his fate, wishfully imagining that it might be possible to make terms with Achilleus, but in the end resolved to stand up to him. When Achilleus draws near, Hektor is seized by fear and runs away, with Achilleus close behind. Zeus considers rescuing Hektor, but Athene convinces him to allow her to help Achilleus instead. Zeus weighs the destinies of both men in the scales, and Hektor's is heavier; his death is therefore at hand. Athene disguises herself as Hektor's brother Deiphobos, and so persuades Hektor to stop running away so that the two of them may face Hektor together. Hektor stops and addresses Achilleus, proposing that before fighting they should agree that the winner will treat the loser's body correctly. Achilleus refuses this deal and attacks. His first cast misses, but Athene retrieves the spear for him. Hektor's spear bounces off the shield of Achilleus, and after calling in vain on Deiphobos to provide another Hektor realizes how Athene has misled him. Now Achilleus kills Hektor, boasts aloud of his intention to maltreat Hektor's body, and says that he will never ransom it back to Priam for proper funereal rites. The Achaians crowd around and stab the corpse, then Achilleus drags it back to the camp behind his chariot. The focus shifts to the city, where we get the mournful reactions of Priam, Hekabe, and Andromache. Andromache's worst fears, imagined in Book 6, have now come to pass; her lament is mostly about what a hard life now lies ahead for her fatherless son, Astyanax.

Book 23

The Greeks hold more ceremonies for Patroklos. Achilles may now eat, but he refuses to bathe or cut his hair until Patroklos is properly buried. That night, Patroklos' ghost visits Achilles in a dream. The ghost requests a quick burial, and also that his ashes may eventually share an urn with those of Achilles. Achilles agrees, but as he attempts to hug Patroklos the ghost slips away. The Achaians collect timber and place Patroklos upon the pyre, and Achilles dedicates a lock of his hair. He places grave offerings on the pyre, and sacrifices victims as well, including the twelve Trojans. With the help of the winds, the bonfire is lit and a huge flame consumes Patroklos' body, while Achilles mourns alongside. The Argives collect the bones of Patroklos and bury them under a mound. Achilles now convokes the funeral games, and brings out prizes for the winners. The first contest is a chariot race, in which Achilles (although he has the best horses) will not compete. The charioteers are Antilochos, Eumelos, Menelaos, Meriones, and Diomedes. Nestor gives his son Antilochos detailed advice about how to win the race. At first Eumelos is winning and Diomedes is second, but Athene makes Eumelos crash. Meanwhile Antilochos uses his skill to get past Menelaos, who has faster horses. Diomedes wins easily, with Antilochos second, Menelaos third, Meriones fourth, and Eumelos last. A series of squabbles ensues, but eventually everyone is satisfied with his prize. An extra prize is given to Nestor, who long-windedly recalls his own days of athletic prowess. In the next contest, boxing, Epeios defeats Euryalos and wins. In the wrestling, Odysseus and Telamonian Aias grapple to a draw. In the foot-race, Odysseus wins after the other Aias slips on a cow patty. In the contest at arms, Diomedes is declared the winner over Telamonian Aias, who comes out unhurt. Polypoites wins the shot-put, and Meriones proves himself the best among the archers.

Book 24

For twelve days Achilles tries to abuse Hektor's body, but Apollo keeps it in pristine condition. The gods debate over what to do about this situation, and Zeus decides that Achilles must be convinced to ransom the body. Zeus summons Thetis to Olympos, and orders her to speak to Achilles about ransoming Hektor and to convey to him the displeasure of the gods. This Thetis does, and Achilles readily agrees. Zeus then sends Iris to tell Priam that he must go to Achilles in person and ask for his son's body. Over the protestations of Hekabe, Priam prepares to enter the Greek camp. Hekabe tells Priam to pour a libation and pray to Zeus before starting out. Priam obeys, and Zeus signals acceptance of the prayer with a bird-sign. On Zeus' orders, Hermes poses as one of Achilles' men, and guides Priam through the Greek camp to Achilles' shelter. On their arrival, Hermes reveals himself and departs, after reassuring Priam that Hektor's body is still unblemished. Priam enters and supplicates Achilles, strongly reminding him of his own beloved father Peleus. Together Achilles and Priam weep, each for his own. Then Achilles replies to Priam's speech, voicing admiration for his courage in coming, and painting a famous picture of the inconstancy of mortal happiness (the two urns of Zeus). Achilles orders his servants to clean and wrap the body for moving, but to keep it out of Priam's sight. He apologizes to Patroklos for breaking his promise and allowing Hektor to be buried. Achilles then tells Priam the story of Niobe, whose twelve children all died as a result of her hubris, to illustrate the principle that even amidst great sadness people must eat. They feast, and Achilles agrees to restrain the Achaians for twelve days while the Trojans have Hektor's funeral. Priam goes to sleep outside of Achilles' shelter, until Hermes awakens him in the middle of the night and guides him back to the city. The three women closest to Hektor now take turns leading the lament. First is Andromache, who repeats her earlier theme of the hard future ahead for herself and Astyanax, then closes with a wish that the last moments she had with Hektor had been more intimate. Second is Hekabe, who asserts that Hektor was her favorite son. Third is Helen, who praises Hektor for having befriended her when others were harsh. The Trojans gather wood for the pyre for nine days. On the tenth they immolate Hektor, and on the eleventh they bury him.

The Iliad

Form and Structure

Just as the oral tradition supplied Homer with a vast body of legend, it also provided him with the form and structure in which to express the legend. Although Homer was free to choose and shape the elements of the story according to his own vision, his language, meter, and style were formulaic. Over time, bards had developed a common fund of expressions, phrases, and descriptions that fit the rhythms of the epic verse line. These conventions became the building blocks of the epic genre.

The Invocation *In Medias Res*

Homer begins the *Iliad* powerfully by stating the epic's theme and invoking one of the Muses. The Muses are nine goddesses in Greek mythology who were believed to preside over all forms of art and science. The poet calls on the Muse to inspire him with the material he needs to tell his story. This type of opening is one of the defining features of a Homeric epic. Homer observes another epic convention by beginning the story *in medias res*, which is Latin for "in the middle of things." Reading a Greek epic from the beginning is like tuning in to a story already in progress, in that many of the story's events have already taken place. Information about those events is revealed later in the poem through flashbacks and other narrative devices. Homer could begin his poems *in medias res* because the general outline of the plot and the main characters were already familiar to his audience. The *Iliad*, like other epics, is a small fragment of a large body of legendary material that formed the cultural and historical heritage of its society.

Homeric Epithets

The particular demands of composing and listening to oral poetry gave rise to the use of stock descriptive words or phrases, such as "brilliant Achilles" or "Hector breaker of horses." These epithets, often compound adjectives like "blazing-eyed Athena," allowed the poet to describe an object or a character quickly and economically, in terms his audience would recognize. Homeric epithets and other formulaic language may have helped the poet shape his story and compose while reciting, and the repetition of familiar expressions also would have helped the audience follow the narrative.

Meter

Meter is another essential ingredient to the Homeric epic formula. The Greek epic line is made up of six units, or feet, which have the form of dactyl (a long syllable followed by two short) or spondees (two long syllables). In English translation, a dactyl is an accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables: "an' ger of." A spondee is two accented syllables: "strong-greaved." These units can be combined in a variety of ways, but each line ends in a dactyl followed by a spondee.

Epic Conventions

An **epic** is a long, narrative poem in which characters of high birth or national status are engaged in a quest, a series of adventures important to the history of a nation or race. The hero is a central, imposing figure of national or international importance and of great historical or legendary significance. Usually, the epic has a vast setting covering several nations. The action consists of valorous deeds requiring superhuman courage and which involve the intervention of supernatural forces. Conventions employed by most epic poets include: beginning *in media res*; stating theme in the invocation of the muse; presenting catalogs of warriors, ships, and armies; having the main characters utter long, formal speeches; and using epic similes, elaborate comparisons between two unlike things.

The **epic hero possesses** certain qualities - bravery, superhuman strength, success in battle, and a driving desire to immortalize himself through valorous deeds. All heroes desire eternal glory and fame. Although they achieve that fame by performing heroic deeds for society, they are concerned exclusively with how their individual behavior will immortalize them for future generations. He who shows courage in the face of death is sure to be immortalized as a hero. With few exceptions, the epic hero is of high birth or of semi-divine origin, as Achilles is the son of a mortal and the goddess Thetis. Achilles' mortality is an overwhelming fact of life for him because he knows he is fated to die. Therefore, he strives to achieve a reputation that will survive his death. One of the most important and recurring epic conflicts is the conflict between hero and king.

THE TRAGIC HERO

The concept of the tragic hero (as it applies to characters in literature) has the following characteristics:

- ❖ The character's position in the community shows a sense of nobility, authority, influence, or power
- ❖ The character has an "error, frailty, mistaken judgment, or misstep through which the fortunes of the hero of a tragedy are reversed." This is also called *hamartia*, from the Greek. The hero is not perfect and may make this error as a result of ambition, ignorance, or *hubris*. *Hubris*, or "overweening pride or insolence that results in the misfortune of the protagonist of a tragedy... leads the protagonist to break a moral law, attempt vainly to transcend normal limitations, or ignore a divine warning with calamitous results."
- ❖ The punishment is harsh and aroused pity and empathy in the audience.
- ❖ The character gains self-knowledge; he or she realizes an important new insight as a result of the experience and punishment and achieves some reconciliation with the universe.
- ❖ The character experiences a catharsis (a purging of emotion) with awe and compassion as a result.

Imagery of Achilles' Shield

Homer's description of Achilles' shield is as fabulous a piece of art as the shield itself. Using a pattern of images - concrete representations of sensory experiences and abstractions - Homer brings the scenes on the shield to life. He endows the people in the scenes with motion, sound, thought, speech, and action. Contrasting scenes of peace and war, country and city, sowing and harvesting, and dancing and working reflect the intense joy and utter pathos of life as Homer's audience knew it. Ultimately, the images on the shield form a coherent description of human reality.

Homer's extensive description of the shield is often referred to as an **ekphrasis**, an extended description of a work of art, real or imaginary. In a work of literature, an **ekphrasis**, often adds to the main story indirectly, focusing our attention on a symbolic meaning or making us reflect on the main story. Homer's **ekphrasis** of Achilles' shield leads us through the world of the *Iliad*, cinematically. Since the images on the shield are thematically connected to events elsewhere in the *Iliad*, Homer's detail of the shield is an indirect comment on the main story.

Remarkably, the shield contains the entire cosmos, or ordered universe. The outer circle is the River Ocean, the boundary of the world. Within the boundary are planets and constellations that form an essential part of the daily life of people who till the soil and live by the seasons. Agriculture, harvest festivals, and marriage rites find their place on the shield. Two cities, one at war and one enjoying peace, represent all the major aspects of life in the *Iliad* - the heroic and tragic reality of war, and the relieving calm of peacetime. Achilles' shield is a microcosm of the *Iliad* and of Homer's world.

Religion / The Gods

The way the Greeks conceived of their gods reveals how they saw the world around them and their role as human beings in the world. As personifications of war, plague, or earthquake, the gods were formidable; but in their anthropomorphic (having human qualities) form they were approachable and even comic. The Greeks perceived their relationship to the gods as one of mutually advantageous exchange. They often held religious festivals in honor of the gods. The most famous example is the Olympic Games, first held in 776 B.C. in honor of Zeus.

The Greek gods were organized in a patriarchal hierarchy with Zeus, “father of the gods and men,” at the top. Zeus maintained the precarious balance of forces that makes the world, as the Greeks saw it, possible. Without balance, chaos (which in Greek means "gaping void") would have taken over- the Greeks had above all a horror of chaos. They perceived the universe as an orderly arrangement (cosmos) in which potentially warring forces were kept in harmony.

All the aspects of nature and human life were represented in the divine hierarchy. Zeus had the sky as his domain; his brother, Poseidon ruled the sea, and another brother, Hades, the realm under the earth. Zeus' sister Hera, who was also his wife, was a patroness of marriage. Zeus' daughter Athena embodied intelligence, skill, and military victory. His other children Artemis and Apollo were archer gods. Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty and love, was the wife of Hephaestus (the blacksmith god) and a lover of Ares, the god of war, who was also a child of Zeus. Dionysus, the son of Zeus and a mortal woman, was the god of wine and ecstasy. In one way or another, the Greeks envisioned all the gods as being related to Zeus, and all the legendary heroes claimed to be Zeus' descendants.

The gods intervened in the lives of mortals; in legendary times, they mated with mortals and generally spent time among human beings. They never functioned as mere puppeteers, and they never imposed on a mortal a fate not in keeping with his or her own character. For the Greeks, destiny was simply a recognition of the way things are. The gods did not make reality; they embodied it and were not to blame for human suffering. They gave true signs, but it was the nature of mortals to misinterpret those signs.

Cultural Context- *Iliad*

According to tradition, the *Iliad* was composed in 750 B.C., but its story takes place five hundred years earlier, in the tenth year of the Trojan War. Troy was a major city and trading hub. Greece was not, either in the thirteenth or the eighth century B.C., a single nation; the Achaean expeditionary force was a loose group of independent tribal kings who commanded their own fighting men. Kings did not owe other kings unconditional allegiance. If they did not support another king's policies, they were free to do what Achilles does in the *Iliad* - take their ships and their men and leave.

As a product of a long and rich oral tradition, the *Iliad* was a source of culture for the ancient Greeks. They revered the poem as an expression of central truths about human beings and their place in the scheme of the universe. The story in the *Iliad*, which grew from the story of Paris' abduction of Helen and the resulting war of Troy, was firmly planted in Greek culture. Similarly, the values of warfare depicted in the poem - the nobility and glory of the slayers and the humanity and pathos of the slain- were also grounded in the Greek consciousness.

A fundamental element of the Greek code of ethics was *timê*, or honor. It was understood that warriors fought for time and to ensure a reputation that would outlive them. *Timê* was expressed tangibly by the prizes distributed to a warrior according to his rank and valor. A warrior's share of booty was thus a visible symbol of his merit, which is why Achilles and Agamemnon feel so shamed when they must forfeit their prizes in the *Iliad*. Ultimately, a hero's *timê* depended on how the world saw him, not on how he saw himself.

The concept of *arete*, or excellence, was one of the Homeric Age's most important contributions to Western culture; in fact, in many ways the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are actually paens to *arete*. In Homer, even nonhuman things such as noble horses and powerful gods may possess *arete*; an ordinary person does not possess *arete*; and an aristos, or noble, who becomes a slave, loses half his *arete*. The nobility is the prime mover in forming a nation's culture, and that the aristoi, or "the best/" are responsible for the creation of a definite idea of human perfection, an ideal toward which they are constantly educated. *Arete* became the "quintessence of early aristocratic education," and thereafter the dominant concept in all Greek education and culture; it has remained with us as an educational ideal ever since. It was not possible to separate leadership from *arete*, the Greeks believed, because unusual or exceptional prowess was a natural manifestation of leadership. Since each man was ranked in accordance with his ability, *arete* became an ideal of self-fulfillment or self-realization in terms of human excellence.

A noble's *arete*, in Homer, is specifically indicated by his skill and prowess as a soldier in war, and as an athlete in peace. War provides the occasion for the display of *arete* and the winning of *kleos*, or glory. This is one of the most important understandings of why many Greeks went to Troy (most specifically Achilles). The aristoi compete among themselves "always to be the best and to be superior to others." In his personal conduct, the Homeric hero possesses *aidos*, or a sense of duty. An affront to this sense of duty is known as *nemesis*, and is aroused in the hearts of others when *aidos* is slighted. Finally, the meaning of *arete* was enlarged to signify the union of nobility of action and nobility of mind, and an accompanying imperative of honor. Thus, Phoenix, the counselor and tutor of great Achilles, in Book IV of the *Iliad*, reminds the great warrior of the aristocratic ideal of *arete*, which he was charged to impart to him, to make him a speaker of words and a doer of deeds. Ultimately, *arete* means intellectual as well as physical excellence, the realization of a man's total potential.

Ancient Codes of Ethics

In the *Iliad*, funeral rites are elaborate. They provide a way of celebrating the life and acknowledging the worth of a dead person. They also help the living come to terms with grief and loss so that they can separate themselves from the dead and go on living. First the corpse must be prepared for burial. Then those close to the deceased must give voice to their mourning in ritual laments that follow a comfortingly familiar pattern, but that also allow for personal detail. Following the ritual laments, the corpse is burned on a funeral pyre, and the ashes are later buried.

Another sacred code of behavior had to do with hospitality, *xenia*. It was customary to offer a stranger food, drink, and shelter before asking his or her name or business. Neither the host nor the guest was to violate the bond of hospitality; wronging a host or a guest was a crime punishable by Zeus in his role as Zeus Xenios. Ties of *xenia* could bind persons unrelated by blood, and their descendents, in a strong alliance.

Priam's tears of loss over Hector's death move Achilles to realize that his own father would have been similarly devastated at the thought of Achilles dead on the battlefield. That realization breaks down the strict heroic code Achilles lives by, and the two men shed tears of sadness in recognition of their common human condition.

The Fates

According to the ancient Greeks, the gods supervised fate but did not determine it. Mortals in the *Iliad* believe in divine causality, the idea that gods cause human successes or failures. However, the gods' interference is in keeping with the personality of the character. In other words, the gods do not make anyone do anything that that person is not willing to do deep down in his or her being. However, the gods do not determine fate. Instead, a triad of goddesses, the Three Fates, controlled the fate of mankind: Atropos the harvester, Clothos the spinner, Lachesis the weaver. Atropos cut the thread of life. She was known as the inflexible or inevitable and cut this thread with "abhorred shears." She worked along with Clothos, who spun the thread, and Lachesis, who measured the length. They were the daughters of Zeus and Themis, the goddess of order. Clothos spins the thread of human life. The length of the thread will determine how long a certain person's life will be. She is also known as the daughter of Night to indicate the darkness and obscurity of human destiny. Lachesis measures the length of the thread of human life spun by Clothos and determines its destiny. Some have suggested that their powers are part of the order of the universe that man cannot disturb.