

Homer's
Iliad:
A Discussion Guide

David Bruce

Dedicated to Mom and Dad

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David Bruce

The book titles are taken from the translations by Robert Fagles and Ian Johnston. The Fagles titles appear first. Occasionally, both translators use the same title.

Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I have read, studied and taught Homer's *Iliad*, and I wish to pass on what I have learned to other people who are interested in studying Homer's *Iliad*. In particular, I think that the readers of this introduction to Homer's *Iliad* will be bright high school seniors and college first-year students, as well as intelligent adults who simply wish to study the *Iliad* despite not being literature majors.

This book uses a question-and-answer format. It poses, then answers, relevant questions about Homer, background information, and the *Iliad*. This book goes through the *Iliad* book by book. I recommend that you read the relevant section of the *Iliad*, then read my comments, then go back and re-read the relevant section of the *Iliad*. However, do what works for you.

Teachers may find this book useful as a discussion guide for the epic poem. Teachers can have students read books from the epic poem, then teachers can ask students selected questions from this study guide.

It helps to know something about Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Greek and Roman mythology, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but this background reading is not strictly necessary. You have to begin reading great literature somewhere, and Homer's *Iliad* is a good place to start. (Come on in! The water's great! And later you can go and read the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, *The Divine Comedy*, etc.)

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**Ian Johnston of Malaspina University-College,
Nanaimo, BC has an excellent translation available free
at**

http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/homer/iliad_title.htm

**I also recommend Elizabeth Vandiver's course on the
Iliad, which is available from the Teaching Company.**

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Introduction to Homer's *Iliad*, Pt. 1:

Background Material

Important Terms:

Iliad

Odyssey

Zeus

Hera

Athena

Thetis

Aphrodite

Artemis

Iphigeneia

Agamemnon

Menelaus

Achilles

Odysseus

Hector

Paris

Judgment of Paris

Aeneas

Aeneid

• Why is it necessary to know background information about the Trojan War when reading Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*?

Homer is an epic poet who tells traditional stories that his audience is already very familiar with. Because of that, Homer does not need to explain who his characters are or even the major events of the Trojan War, such as how it started or how it will end. Homer is able to jump into the middle of the story in the *Iliad* and start telling about an incident that occurred during the final year of the Trojan War.

Of course, Homer's contemporary audience is very different from his audience of today. Homer created and performed his epic poems hundreds of years before Jesus of Nazareth was born. Homer came from an oral tradition, and he seems to have composed his poems either before writing was invented or perhaps when writing was coming into use. Possibly, he saw the advantages of writing, and he used the new technology of writing to create two very long, very complex poems, both of which I would personally put in a list of the top 10 books ever created.

Anyone who reads Homer today (and in Homer's time, they would have probably heard Homer or heard a bard perform Homer's epic poems) will most likely not have been brought up hearing these traditional stories, the way that Homer's contemporary audience would have. Chances are, university students reading Homer in a Great Books course at a university would have read about Odysseus' adventure with the Cyclops, and that's about it.

That is why this introduction to Homer's *Iliad* will fill you in on the background necessary to understand and enjoy the *Iliad*.

• **What are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?**

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are epic poems that have been created by Homer. Here are two definitions of “epic poem”:

- a long narrative poem about the adventures of [a] hero or the gods, presenting an encyclopedic portrait of the culture in which it is composed.

Source:

<teacherweb.com/NC/OrangeHighSchool/MrMitchCox/HandyLiteraryandAnglo-SaxonTerms.doc>

- a long narrative poem telling of a hero’s deeds.

Source: <wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>

The *Iliad* tells the story of one incident that lasted a few days during the last year of the Trojan War: a quarrel between Achilles, the mightiest of the Greek (Achaean) warriors, and Agamemnon, leader of the Greek armies against Troy. Both Achilles and Agamemnon are kings of their own lands, but Agamemnon is the leader among the many kings fighting the Trojans and the Trojan allies. The quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon has devastating consequences.

• **What is the mythic background of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?**

The mythic background of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* consists of the Trojan War myth and myths about the Greek gods and goddesses.

• **For what other works did this mythic background provide narrative material?**

The Trojan War myth provided material for many other epic poems, both Greek and Roman, some of which have survived, and for many plays, including both tragedies and

comedies, by many Greek and Roman authors. The Trojan War myth is one of the most important myths in the world.

During Roman times, the Trojan War myth provided material for Virgil's great epic poem the *Aeneid*, which tells the story of Aeneas and how he survived the fall of Troy and came to Italy to found (establish) the Roman people. He and his Italian wife, Lavinia, became important ancestors of the Romans. Later, Dante used material from the Trojan War myth and its aftermath in his *Divine Comedy*. Material from the Trojan War myth has appeared in opera and in drama. Of course, James Joyce uses this material in his novel *Ulysses*.

• **What is the *Iliad* about?**

The *Iliad* tells the story of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. Following the quarrel, Achilles (the mightiest Greek warrior) withdraws from the fighting, which allows the Trojans to be triumphant in battle for a while. The *Iliad* tells about Achilles' anger and how he finally lets go of his anger.

• **What is the *Odyssey* about?**

The *Odyssey* is about a different Greek hero in the Trojan War: Odysseus, whose Roman name is Ulysses. Following the 10 years that the Trojan War lasted, Odysseus returns to his home island of Ithaca, where he is king. It takes him 10 years to return home because of his adventures and mishaps. Much of that time he spends in captivity. When he finally returns home, he discovers that suitors are courting his wife, Penelope, who has remained faithful to him and who wants nothing to do with the suitors, who are rude and arrogant and who feast on Odysseus' cattle and drink his wine as they party all day. In addition, Telemachus, Odysseus' son, has found it hard to grow up without a strong father-figure in his life. The *Odyssey* tells the story of how Odysseus returns home to Ithaca and reestablishes himself in his own palace.

- **What is the *Aeneid* about?**

The *Aeneid* is a Roman epic poem by Virgil that tells the story of Aeneas, a Trojan prince who survived the fall of Troy and led other survivors to Italy. His adventures parallel the adventures of Odysseus on his return to Ithaca. In fact, they visit many of the same places, including the island of the Cyclopes. One of Aeneas' most notable characteristics is his *pietas*, his respect for things for which respect is due, including the gods, his family, and his destiny. His destiny is to found the Roman people, which is different from founding Rome, which was founded long after his death. Aeneas journeyed to Carthage, where he had an affair with Dido, the Carthaginian queen. Because of his destiny, he left her and went to Italy. Dido committed suicide, and Aeneas fought a war to establish himself in Italy. After killing Turnus, the leader of the armies facing him, Aeneas married the Italian princess Lavinia, and they became important ancestors of the Roman people.

- **What is the basic story of the Trojan War?**

The basic story of the Trojan War can be told very quickly. Paris, prince of Troy, visits Menelaus, King of Sparta, and then Paris runs off with Menelaus' wife, Helen, who of course becomes known as Helen of Troy. This is a major insult to Menelaus and his family, so he and his elder brother, Agamemnon, lead an army against Troy to get Helen (and reparations) back. The war drags on for 10 years, and the greatest Greek warrior is Achilles, while the greatest Trojan warrior is Hector, Paris' eldest brother. Eventually, Hector is killed by Achilles, who is then killed by Paris, who is then killed by Philoctetes. Finally, Odysseus comes up with the idea of the Trojan Horse, which ends the Trojan War.

That is a brief retelling of the Trojan War, but many, many myths grew up around the war, making it a richly detailed myth.

• Does Homer allude to all of the details of the Trojan War?

Homer does not allude to all the details of the Trojan War. For example, one myth states that Achilles was invincible except for his heel. Supposedly, his mother, the goddess Thetis, knew that Achilles was fated to die in the Trojan War; therefore, to protect him, she dipped him into a pool of water that was supposed to make him invulnerable. To do that, she held him by his heel. Because she was holding him by his heel, the water did not touch it and so that part of Achilles' body remained vulnerable.

Homer never alludes to this myth; in fact, this myth plays no role whatsoever in Homer's epic poems. Achilles is not invulnerable. If he were, he could fight in battle naked, as long as he wore an iron boot over his vulnerable heel. In Homer, Achilles is vulnerable to weapons, and he knows it. At one point, he would like to join the fighting, but he cannot, because he has no armor. No one who reads the *Iliad* should think that Achilles is invulnerable except for his heel.

Myth changes and develops over time, and it is possible that Homer had no knowledge of this myth because it had not been created yet. Or it is possible that Homer knew of this myth but ignored it because he had his own points to make in his epic poem.

Another myth that may or may not be alluded to is the Judgment of Paris. It may be alluded to in a couple of places in the *Iliad*, but scholars disagree about this.

• Who is Achilles, and what is unusual about his mother, Thetis?

Achilles, of course, is the foremost warrior of the Greeks during the Trojan War. His mother, Thetis, is unusual in that she is a goddess. The Greeks' religion was different from modern religions in that they were polytheistic (believing in many gods) rather than monotheistic (believing in one god). In addition, the gods and human beings could mate with each other. Achilles is unusual in that he had an immortal goddess as his mother and a mortal man, Peleus, as his father. Achilles, of course, is unusual in many ways. Another way in which he is unusual is that he and Thetis have long talks together. Often, the gods either ignore their mortal offspring or choose not to reveal themselves to them. For example, Aeneas' goddess mother is Aphrodite (Roman name: Venus). Although Aphrodite does save Aeneas' life or help him on occasion, the two do not have long talks together the way that Achilles and Thetis do.

• Which prophecy about Achilles was given to his mother, Thetis?

The prophecy about Thetis' male offspring was that he would be a greater man than his father. This is something that would make most human fathers happy. (One exception would be Pap, in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Pap does not want Huck, his son, to learn to read and write or to get an education or to live better than Pap does.)

• Who is Zeus, and what does he decide to do as a result of this prophecy?

Zeus is a horny god who sleeps with many goddesses and many human beings. Normally, he would lust after Thetis, but once he hears the prophecy, he does not want to sleep with Thetis. For one thing, the gods are potent, and when they mate they have children. Zeus overthrew his own father,

and Zeus does not want Thetis to give birth to a greater man than he is because his son will overthrow him. Therefore, Zeus wants to get Thetis married off to someone else. In this case, a marriage to a human being for Thetis would suit Zeus just fine. A human son may be greater than his father, but is still not going to be as great as a god, and so Zeus will be safe if Thetis gives birth to a human son.

• **Who is Peleus?**

Peleus is the human man who marries Thetis and who fathers Achilles. At the time of the *Iliad*, Peleus is an old man and Thetis has not lived with him for a long time.

• **Why is Eris, Goddess of Discord, not invited to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis?**

Obviously, you do not want discord at a wedding, and therefore, Eris, Goddess of Discord, is not invited to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis. Even though Eris is not invited to the wedding feast, she shows up anyway.

• **Eris, Goddess of Discord, throws an apple on a table at the wedding feast. What is inscribed on the apple?**

Inscribed on the apple is the phrase “For the fairest,” written in Greek, of course. Because Greek is a language that indicates masculine and feminine in certain words, and since “fairest” has a feminine ending, the apple is really inscribed “for the fairest female.”

• **Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite each claim the apple. Who are they?**

Three goddesses claim the apple, meaning that each of the three goddesses thinks that she is the fairest, or most beautiful.

Hera

Hera is the wife of Zeus, and she is a jealous wife. Zeus has many affairs with both immortal goddesses and mortal women, and Hera is jealous because of these affairs. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

Athena

Athena is the goddess of wisdom. She becomes the patron goddess of Athens. Athena especially likes Odysseus, as we see especially in the *Odyssey*. Athena is a favorite of Zeus, her father. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

Aphrodite

Aphrodite is the goddess of sexual passion. She can make Zeus fall in love against his will. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

• Why doesn't Zeus want to judge the goddesses' beauty contest?

Zeus is not a fool. He knows that if he judges the goddesses' beauty contest, he will make two enemies. The two goddesses whom Zeus does not choose as the fairest will hate him and likely make trouble for him.

Please note that the Greek gods and goddesses are not omnibenevolent. Frequently, they are quarrelsome and petty.

By the way, Athens, Ohio, lawyer Thomas Hodson once judged a beauty contest featuring 25 cute child contestants. He was running in an election to choose the municipal court judge, and he thought that judging the contest would be a good way to win votes. Very quickly, he decided never to judge a children's beauty contest again. He figured out that he had won two votes — the votes of the parents of the child who won the contest. Unfortunately, he also figured out that

he had lost 48 votes — the votes of the parents of the children who lost.

• Who is Paris, and what is the Judgment of Paris?

Paris is a prince of Troy, and Zeus allows him to judge the three goddesses' beauty contest. Paris is not as intelligent as Zeus, or he would try to find a way out of judging the beauty contest.

• Each of the goddesses offers Paris a bribe if he will choose her. What are the bribes?

Hera

Hera offers Paris political power: several cities he can rule.

Athena

Athena offers Paris prowess in battle. Paris can become a mighty and feared warrior.

Aphrodite

Aphrodite offers Paris the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

• Which goddess does Paris choose?

As most of you know, Paris chose Aphrodite, who offered him the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

This is not what a Homeric warrior would normally choose. A person such as Achilles would choose to be an even greater warrior, if that is possible.

A person such as Agamemnon is likely to choose more cities to rule.

When Paris chooses the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife, we are not meant to think that he made a good decision. Paris is not a likable character.

• **Does the Judgment of Paris appear in the *Iliad*?**

Maybe. Maybe not. A couple of passages in the *Iliad* may contain a veiled reference to the Judgment of Paris.

• **Does myth develop over time?**

Myth does develop over time. Possibly, the myth of the Judgment of Paris was invented after Homer had created the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

• **As a result of Aphrodite's bribe, Paris abducts Helen. Why?**

Aphrodite promised Paris the most beautiful woman to be his wife. As it happens, that woman is Helen. Therefore, Paris abducts Helen, with Aphrodite's good wishes.

Did Helen go with Paris willingly? The answer to this question is ambiguous, and ancient authorities varied in how they answered this question.

• **To whom is Helen already married?**

Helen is already married to Menelaus, the King of Sparta. Paris visits Menelaus, and when he leaves, he carries off both a lot of Menelaus' treasure and Menelaus' wife, Helen. Obviously, this is not the way that one ought to treat one's host.

• **Who are Agamemnon and Menelaus?**

Agamemnon and Menelaus are the sons of Atreus. They are brothers, and Agamemnon, the King of Mycenae, is the older brother and the brother who rules a greater land, as seen by the number of ships the two kings bring to the Trojan War. Menelaus brings 60 ships (Fagles 2.678-679). Agamemnon brings 100 ships (Fagles 2.667-672).

- **Who is responsible for leading the expedition to recover Helen?**

Agamemnon is the older brother, so he is the leader of the Greek troops in the Trojan War.

- **Why do the winds blow against the Greek ships?**

When the Greek ships are gathered together and are ready to set sail against Troy, a wind blows in the wrong direction for them to sail. The goddess Artemis (Roman name: Diana) is angry at the Greeks because she knows that the result of the Trojan War will be lots of death, not just of warriors, but also of women and children. This is true of all wars, and it is a lesson that human beings forget after each war and relearn in the next war.

- **Why does Artemis demand a human sacrifice?**

Artemis knows that Agamemnon's warriors will cause much death of children, so she makes him sacrifice one of his daughters so that he will suffer what he will make other parents suffer.

- **Who does Agamemnon sacrifice?**

Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigeneia. This is a religious sacrifice of a human life to appease the goddess Artemis.

- **Did Homer know about this sacrifice?**

Very possibly, he did. In Book 1 of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon tells the prophet Calchas that he always brings bad news to Agamemnon. Calchas is the prophet who told Agamemnon that he had to sacrifice his daughter in order to get winds that would sail the ships to Troy.

• **What do Menelaus and Agamemnon do?**

After the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Menelaus set sail with all the Greek ships for Troy. They land, then they engage in warfare.

• **Who are Achilles and Hector?**

Achilles is the foremost Greek warrior, while Hector is the foremost Trojan warrior. Both warriors are deserving of great respect.

• **Does Homer assume that Achilles is invulnerable?**

Absolutely not. Achilles needs armor to go out on the battlefield and fight.

• **What happens to Hector and Achilles?**

Hector kills Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, in battle. Angry, Achilles kills Hector. Later, Paris (assisted by Apollo) kills Achilles.

• **What is the story of the Trojan Horse?**

Odysseus, a great strategist, thought up the idea of the Trojan Horse. Epeus built it.

The Greeks build a giant wooden horse, which is hollow and filled with Greek warriors, then they pretend to abandon the war and to sail away from Troy. Actually, Agamemnon and the other Greeks sail behind an island so that the Trojans cannot see the Greek ships. The Greeks also leave behind a lying Greek named Sinon, who tells the Trojans about a supposed prophecy that if the Trojans take the Horse inside their city, then Troy will never fall. The Trojans do that, and at night the Greeks come out of the Trojan Horse, make their way to the city gates and open them. Outside the city gates are the Greek troops led by Agamemnon, who have returned

to the Trojan plain. The Greek warriors rush inside the city and sack it.

Virgil's *Aeneid* has the fullest surviving ancient account of the Trojan Horse. Of course, he tells the story from the Trojan point of view. If Homer had written the story of the Trojan Horse, he would have told it from the Greek point of view. For the Greeks, the Trojan War ended in a great victory. For the Trojans, the Trojan War ended in a great disaster.

• Which outrages do the Greeks commit during the sack of Troy?

- King Priam is killed by Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, aka Pyrrhus, at the altar of Zeus. This is an outrage because anyone who is at the altar of a god is under the protection of that god. When Neoptolemus kills Priam, an old man (and old people are respected in Homeric culture), Neoptolemus disrespects the god Zeus.
- Hector's son is murdered. Hector's son is a very small child who is murdered by being hurled from the top of a high wall of Troy. Even during wartime, children ought not to be murdered, so this is another outrage.
- Cassandra is raped by Little Ajax even though she is under the goddess Athena's protection. Cassandra is raped in a temple devoted to Athena. This is showing major disrespect to Athena. Again, the Greeks are doing things that ought not to be done, even during wartime.
- The Greeks sacrificed Priam's young daughter Polyxena. The Trojan War begins and ends with a human sacrifice of the life of a young girl. This is yet another outrage.

• **How do the gods react to these outrages?**

The gods and goddesses make things difficult for the Greeks on their way home to Greece.

• **What happens to the Greeks after the fall of Troy?**

Nestor is a wise, pious, old man who did not commit any outrages. He makes it home quickly.

Athena is angry at all of the Greeks, so she does not help Odysseus on his journey home until 10 years have passed.

Little Ajax, who raped Cassandra, drowns on his way home.

Agamemnon returns home to a world of trouble. His wife, Clytemnestra, has taken a lover during his 10-year absence, and she murders Agamemnon.

Menelaus is reunited with Helen, but their ship is driven off course, and it takes them years to return home to Sparta.

• **What happens to Aeneas?**

Aeneas fights bravely, and he witnesses such things as the death of Priam, King of Troy; however, when he realizes that Troy is lost, he returns to his family to try to save them. He carries his father on his back, and he leads his young son by the hand, but although he saves them by leading them out of Troy, his wife, who is following behind him, is lost in the battle.

Aeneas becomes the leader of the Trojan survivors, and he leads them to Italy, where they become the founders of the Roman people.

• **Who were the Roman people?**

The Romans had one of the greatest empires of the world.

• In the Homeric epics, are human beings responsible for their actions?

Yes, human beings are responsible for their actions in the Homeric epics.

• Despite Aphrodite, is Paris responsible for his actions?

Of course, Aphrodite promised Paris the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife if Paris chose her as the fairest of the three goddesses who wanted the golden apple. However, Paris is responsible for his actions when he runs away with Helen, the lawful wife of Menelaus. Paris could have declined to run away with Helen.

• Is Agamemnon responsible for his actions?

Artemis required the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter before the winds would blow the Greek ships to Troy, but Agamemnon is still responsible for his actions. He could have declined to sacrifice his daughter, and he could have given up the war.

• What happens to humans who do impious acts?

Humans who do impious acts are punished for their impious acts.

• What is the Greek concept of fate?

The Greeks do believe in fate. We are fated to die at a certain time, although we do not know when we will die.

In addition, people may be fated to do certain things in their lives. For example, Oedipus is fated to kill his father and to marry his mother.

Similarly, certain events are fated to happen. For example, Troy is fated to be conquered in the Trojan War.

• Do the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* tell the entire story of the Trojan War?

No, they tell only a small part of the story. The *Iliad* tells the story of an event that occurred in a few weeks of the final year of the Trojan War. The story of the Trojan War is not fully told in either epic poem. Neither is the story of the Trojan Horse, although knowledge of it is essential for understanding the *Iliad*, and although the Trojan Horse is talked about briefly in the *Odyssey*.

• What happened the first time the writer of this discussion guide read the *Iliad*?

I read the *Iliad* for the first time the summer before I started college. It was my way of preparing myself to be educated. As I got near the end of the *Iliad*, I started wondering, “Where is the Trojan Horse?” When I got to the end of the *Iliad*, I was very surprised that Troy had not yet fallen.

• Did other epics exist?

Yes, other epics did exist, and we do have some Roman epics that were written much later than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, of course. The other ancient Greek epics from the time of Homer have not survived. Fortunately, we know from ancient commentators that we have the really good epic poems. The epics that have been lost were not as good as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

• What do the Homeric epics assume?

The Homeric epics assume that you know the mythic background, which is why I have written about it in this introduction to the *Iliad*.

• What is the society described in the Homeric epics like?

Classics scholar Elizabeth Vandiver points out that Homeric society is very different from our society; it is patriarchal,

slave-holding, monarchical, and polytheistic (*The Iliad of Homer* 13-14):

Patriarchal

This is a society in which the men have the power. Of course, the goddesses are a special case and are more powerful than human men. However, even in the world of gods and goddesses, the gods have more power. The King of the gods is Zeus, a male. Often, contemporary American society is thought of as patriarchal. I won't deny that, but the ancient Greek society was much more patriarchal than contemporary American society.

Slave-Holding

Slaves exist in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, women are spoils of war, and young, pretty women become sex-slaves to the warriors who have killed their husbands. In the *Odyssey*, slaves are servants in the palace and on the farm. Slavery is taken for granted in the Homeric epics.

Monarchical

Kings exist in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Agamemnon is a king, Menelaus is a king, Achilles is a king, Odysseus is a king, etc.

Polytheistic

As we have seen, the ancient Greeks and Romans believed in many gods. Moderns tend to believe or to disbelieve in one god.

Conclusion

Ancient Greek society is very much different from our modern American society. All you can do is to start reading. Don't worry. Soon, you will understand ancient Greek society much better.

Introduction to Homer's *Iliad*, Pt. 2:

Focus on the Gods

An Important Note

For more information about the role of the gods in the *Iliad*, read Elizabeth Vandiver's "The Paradox of Glory" in her *The Iliad of Homer*, pp. 101-111, to which I am greatly indebted.

Important Terms

Theos (THAY os): god (with a small 'g')

Athanatoi: immortals

Thnetoi: mortals

Double motivation: Many actions in the *Iliad* are motivated both by humans and by gods. For example, at one point in Book 11 of the *Iliad* Great Ajax is forced back by the Trojans. On the human level, he has been fighting very hard for a long time, and he is tired. No wonder the Trojan warriors force him back! But we also read that Great Ajax is forced back by Zeus. Often, we can explain actions purely on the human level, but Homer tells us that the gods are also involved in the actions.

Over-determination: Many actions in the *Iliad* occur because of the actions both of humans and of the gods. This double motivation is sometimes called by critics over-determination. Over-determination stresses the inevitability of certain actions — they *had* to occur. In literature, over-determination occurs when an action is explained by more than one cause when only one cause is enough to explain why the action occurred.

• **What do we mean by *theos*?**

The Greek word *theos* (THAY os) is usually translated as “god” with a small g. Yes, this is a good translation of the word, but we modern readers can be misled by it because of our familiarity with the word “God” with a big G.

Professors who know Greek sometimes toy with the idea of teaching a course on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, or a course on Greek mythology and literature in general, in which the words “god” or “gods” or “goddess” or “goddesses” are never used. For example, Elizabeth Vandiver, to whose Great Books course I am indebted for what I am writing in this section, would like to do this (104-105). Instead of translating the word *theos*, she would leave it untranslated, and she would let the students figure out what it means through the course of reading the works without *theos* being translated into the word “god.” The obvious problem with that is that she would not be able to use any translations of Greek literature that have ever been published. Instead, she would have to translate everything the students would read and keep *theos* as *theos*. Most professors won’t do that — translating the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* is a huge undertaking. However, if a professor would do that, the big advantage is that modern readers would not bring to the word *theos* the conceptions that we bring to the word “God.” (One possibility would be to get an etext translation of Homer and replace the word “god” with the word *theos*.)

• **Are the gods personified forces of nature?**

Originally, the gods seem to have been personified forces of nature. They are more than that in the Homeric epics, but they are still in part personified forces of nature.

One example is that Zeus is the god of the sky and lightning. Of course, in the *Iliad* Zeus is much more than merely the god of the sky and lightning. Maybe that is how belief in

Zeus arose, but Zeus became much more than that. One of Zeus' weapons is thunderbolts, which he throws.

Another example is that Poseidon is the god of the sea.

Another example is that Ares is war. (Here we have an embodiment of human culture rather than an embodiment of a force of nature.) In the *Iliad*, Zeus says that Ares is hated. He is hated because he is war.

Another example is that Aphrodite is sexual passion. She is the personification of sexual passion. We can say that she inflicts sexual passion on other people, but in addition, she *is* sexual passion. This is not just a way of speaking. Someone may say, "Aphrodite filled me with lust"; in other words, Aphrodite is a way of explaining human emotion. However, in the Homeric epics, Aphrodite is more than a way of explaining human emotion. In Book 3, Aphrodite forces Helen to go to bed with Paris. She threatens Helen, and she takes Helen to Paris' bedroom.

• **Are the gods anthropomorphic?**

These gods are anthropomorphic. They have human form, with some differences. The gods and goddesses are larger and better looking and stronger than human beings. However, they look like human beings, and they speak the language of human beings. They also eat, drink, and have sex like human beings. They also feel the human emotions of jealousy (Hera is jealous of Zeus' love affairs), passion (Zeus sleeps with many, many females, both mortal and immortal), anger (Ares becomes angry when he is wounded by Diomedes in battle), and grief (Zeus grieves because his son Sarpedon is fated to die).

• Are the gods omnibenevolent, omniscient, or omnipotent?

The Homeric gods are not omnibenevolent, omniscient, or omnipotent.

Not Omnibenevolent

Clearly, the gods are not omnibenevolent. They are not all-good; they are not even just. Some of the gods are rapists. Hera is very capable of exacting vengeance on innocent people. The gods are very dangerous, and they can do bad things to human beings. One example is the myth of Actaeon. He was out hunting with his dogs, and he saw the goddess Artemis bathing naked. He did not mean to see her naked, but she exacted vengeance anyway. She turned him into a stag, and he was run down and killed by his own dogs. He suffered horribly because his mind was still human although his body was that of a male deer.

Not Omniscient

In addition, the gods are not omniscient. We will see this in the *Odyssey*. Athena has been wanting to help Odysseus, but she does not want to anger Poseidon, who is opposed to Odysseus. Therefore, Athena waits until Poseidon's attention is turned elsewhere, and then she helps Odysseus. Another example is that when Hera seduces Zeus, he does not know that she is tricking him. Hera wants to seduce Zeus so that he will go to sleep, and the Achaeans will be triumphant in the battle. If Zeus were omniscient, he would have known that she was tricking him.

Of course, the gods do know a lot. For example, they know a human being's fate.

In addition, the gods hear prayers that are addressed to them.

Not Omnipotent

The gods are very powerful, but they are not omnipotent. The gods can change their shape. They can take the shape of a bird or of a particular human being. The gods can travel very quickly. The gods can fly through the air. Poseidon can cause earthquakes, and Zeus can cause lightning.

The gods cannot go back on their inviolable oaths. For example: When Alcmena was about to give birth to Heracles (Hercules), Zeus announced that on a certain day a boy would be born who was both a descendant of Perseus, an ancient hero, and who would rule over the city of Mycenae, which later Agamemnon ruled. Unfortunately, this news allowed Hera to interfere. Hera is the goddess of childbirth, and she was able to delay the birth of Heracles. She also was able to speed up the birth of Eurystheus, who was a descendant of Perseus. By doing this, Hera brought it about that Eurystheus, not Heracles, ruled Mycenae. Hera made sure that Eurystheus was born on that day, and not Heracles. After all, Zeus had sworn an inviolable oath that a descendant of Perseus born on that day would rule Mycenae, and the gods, including Zeus, cannot go back on their inviolable oaths.

• **Can the gods trespass on each other's spheres of influence?**

The gods do have spheres of influence, and they tend not to interfere with the sphere of influence of the other gods. Thus, Hades is the god of the Underworld, Poseidon is the god of the Sea, and Zeus is the god of the Sky. Possibly, they could trespass on each other's spheres of influence, but they choose not to. This may be a voluntary limit on their power.

Land supposedly is held in common by Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, but Zeus seems to regard land as being in his sphere of influence, thus the power struggle (with Zeus triumphant) between Zeus and Poseidon in Book 15 of the *Iliad*.

• **Can Zeus annul death?**

Zeus cannot simply annul death, as we see when Sarpedon dies. Zeus wants Sarpedon to live, and he is tempted to alter Sarpedon's fate and allow Sarpedon to live, but he does not do that. Apparently, Zeus cannot simply annul death for all human beings.

However, it may be the case that Zeus chooses not to annul the death of Sarpedon, that he chooses not to alter Sarpedon's fate. If he were to change the fate of his son, then other gods and goddesses would annul the fates of their mortal children. Apparently, this would have bad consequences, and perhaps Zeus decides not to change Sarpedon's fate although he could.

• **Are the gods transcendent?**

These gods are not transcendent. To be transcendent, the gods would have to be outside the universe. The Judeo-Christian God is transcendent; He created the universe. The ancient Greek gods and goddesses did not create the universe. Instead, the universe existed and then the gods such as Zeus came into existence.

• **Did the gods create human beings?**

Homer's gods may not even have created human beings. Homer does not address this issue. In some Greek myths, the gods did create human beings. In other ancient Greek myths, the gods did not create human beings. Zeus is the father of some gods, such as Ares and Athena, as well as of some mortals, such as Heracles (Hercules). However, when Zeus is called the Father of Gods and Men, it simply means that he is powerful; it does not refer to actual fatherhood.

• **Do the gods love human beings?**

Usually, the gods do not love human beings, although exceptions exist. Thetis really does love Achilles. Aphrodite seems to love Aeneas to an extent, although she drops him on the battlefield and runs away when she is wounded in Book 5. Her leaving him behind could have gotten him killed if it were not for Apollo.

Often, human beings seem to be playthings of the gods. Zeus rapes mortal women whom he desires but who are unwilling to sleep with him. The gods seem to look at the Trojan War as a long-running source of entertainment.

• **What are the gods not?**

The gods are not necessarily good, the gods are not omniscient, the gods are not omnipotent, the gods are not transcendent, and the gods are not necessarily loving. Occasionally, the gods can be good or loving, or both. Occasionally, the gods can be rapists or murderers, or both.

• **One characteristic of the gods is their anger (*menis*).**

We will see how strong the anger or *menis* of the gods is. In Book 1, Agamemnon disrespects the priest of Apollo, so Apollo sends the plague against the Achaeans. Agamemnon does not catch the plague and die, but many innocent Achaeans do. We do not know for sure whether Homer knew the myth of the Judgment of Paris, but if he did, then Athena and Hera are willing that Troy be sacked, Trojan warriors killed, Trojan women raped and made sex-slaves, and Trojan women and children made slaves simply because they lost a beauty contest. The *menis* of the gods results in many innocent human beings dying.

• **What are the Roman names of the Greek gods and goddesses?**

The Greek gods and goddesses have Roman equivalents. The Greek name is followed by the Roman name:

Aphrodite: Venus

Apollo: Apollo (yes, the same name)

Ares: Mars

Artemis: Diana

Athena: Minerva

Hera: Juno

Hades: Pluto

Hephaestus: Vulcan

Hermes: Mercury

Poseidon: Neptune

Zeus: Jupiter

By the way, the Greek warrior Odysseus has a Roman name: Ulysses.

Interestingly, in his translation of Homer's Greek epic poems, Alexander Pope uses the Roman names, not Greek names, of the gods and goddesses.

• **Note**

For a series of introductory lectures by Ian Johnston on Homer's *Iliad*, see

<http://records.viu.ca/~Johnstoi/homer/iliadessaystofc.htm>

Chapter 1: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 1 — The Rage of Achilles / The Quarrel by the Ships

Important Terms

In Medias Res: in the middle of the story

Menis: anger (used of a god and of Achilles)

Kleos: glory or fame

Timê: honor

Geras: prize of honor, often a spear-bridge

Proem: short introduction

Achaean: another name for the Greeks

Definition

Ethos: the character or values peculiar to a specific person, people, culture or movement

• How do we refer to lines in the *Iliad*?

We refer to books and lines in verse translations of the *Iliad*. For example, 1.1-8 means Book 1, verses 1-8. For example, 3.5 means Book 3, verse 5. This is important when quoting from *The Iliad*. It helps the reader to locate the passage quickly.

• What is a proem?

A proem is a short introduction. Homer begins the *Iliad* with a proem.

• What do we learn from the beginning of the *Iliad* (Fagles 1.1-8)?

These are the first few lines of Alexander Pope's translation of the *Iliad*:

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
 Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!
 That wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign
 The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain;
 Whose limbs unburied on the naked shore,
 Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore.
 Since great Achilles and Atrides strove,
 Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of
 Jove!

(Pope pdf 57)

These are the first eight lines of Robert Fagles' translation of the *Iliad*:

Rage — Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son
 Achilles,
 murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans
 countless losses,
 hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy
 souls,
 great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion,
 feasts for the dogs and birds,
 and the will of Zeus was moving toward its end.
 Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,
 Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.
 (Fagles 1.1-8)

These are the first few lines of Ian Johnston's translation of the *Iliad*:

Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles, son of Peleus,

that murderous anger which condemned Achaeans
to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls
deep into Hades, leaving their dead bodies
carrion food for dogs and birds,
all in fulfillment of the will of Zeus.

Start at the point where Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
that king of men, quarreled with noble Achilles.

(Johnston 1.1-8)

First, Homer announces the theme of his epic poem the *Iliad*: the rage of Achilles during the Trojan War. This is just one episode lasting a few days in a war that lasted 10 years. A related theme is the human condition: the fact that all human beings are mortal and will die. For much of the *Iliad*, Achilles will have a difficult time accepting the human condition.

Second, Homer announces that he has divine aid in telling this story: The Muse is helping him to tell the story.

Third, Homer announces that this is an exciting story: It is filled with fights and dead bodies. (Today, many of our summer blockbuster movies are also filled with fights and dead bodies.)

• **What does *in medias res* mean?**

The *Iliad* begins *in medias res*. The Roman poet Horace invented this term, which is literally translated as "in the

middle things,” or more idiomatically, “in the middle of things.” The phrase means that the storyteller starts in the middle. In an epic poem such as the *Iliad*, the epic poet Homer can do that because his audience already knows the story. Homer does not have to tell us (at least, he does not have to tell his contemporary audience) who Achilles, Zeus, or Agamemnon are, or why the Trojan War is being fought. Homer assumes that his audience already knows that. However, we will see that Homer cleverly fills his audience in on previous events of the Trojan War in Books 2-8 of the *Iliad*.

• How much information does Homer assume his audience already knows?

Homer was an ancient bard who recounted traditional stories — stories that everyone in his society grew up knowing. Therefore, Homer could begin his epic *in medias res* without stopping to explain who the major characters are, why the Trojan War is being fought, or even the major events of that war. Homer could even assume that his audience already knew how the war would end. Many modern students do not know that mythic background, and therefore I explained much of it in the introduction of this book.

• What is the time period of the *Iliad*? Does it tell the entire story of the Trojan War?

The *Iliad* tells very little of the story of the Trojan War. Instead, Homer focuses on one incident lasting a few days in the final year of the war: a quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon and its consequences. Homer is aware that his audience knew the rest of the story. Homer does not tell us that Achilles will die, but he is aware that his audience already knows that. Homer does not tell us about the trick of the Trojan Horse, but he is aware that his audience already knows that. Homer does not tell us that Troy will fall, but he

is aware that his audience already knows that. Homer uses his audience's knowledge to foreshadow certain events.

• Why does Chryses, the priest of Apollo, approach Agamemnon?

Chryses, the priest of Apollo, has a daughter who has been seized and made a slave as a result of the war between the Greeks and the Trojans. He wants to get his daughter back from Agamemnon in return for ransom.

• What happens when Chryses, the priest of Apollo, approaches Agamemnon?

Agamemnon refuses to let Chryses ransom his daughter and orders him away. Therefore, Chryses prays to Apollo, who brings plague to the Achaeans. The plague kills many Achaeans, and eventually Achilles calls a council of the Achaeans to decide what to do about the plague. This says something good about Achilles.

• What causes the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles?

The quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon is caused by Agamemnon being forced to return his spear-bride, Chryseis, to her father. To make up for his loss, Agamemnon demands Achilles' spear-bride, Briseis.

• What is a spear-bride?

A spear-bride is a spoil of war; the Greek term is *geras*. When a city is sacked, the women and children became slaves. (Often, all the surviving men who were warriors are put to death.) The women and children and cattle and other valuables are divided up among the conquering warriors. A king such as Agamemnon can show respect to a warrior such as Achilles by giving him one of the women from the

conquered city. A young, pretty woman would become a sex-slave, or spear-bride.

The main war of the Greeks is against Troy; however, the Greeks would sack other cities that were allied to Troy in order to get more valuables to divide up.

• Who is at fault in the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles?

Both men are at fault, but Agamemnon is much more at fault.

Agamemnon should have respected the priest of Apollo, Chryses, when he asked that his daughter be returned to him. Chryses offered a shining ransom, but Agamemnon rejected the ransom and said that he would keep the girl.

In doing this, Agamemnon rejects much that is valuable. He says that he values the spear-bride more than he values his own wife, Clytemnestra. Of course, he should value his wife more than he values a woman whom he won in war. In addition, he disrespects Chryses, who is an old man and who should be treated with respect because of his age. More importantly, he disrespects the god Apollo. By mistreating Apollo's priest, Agamemnon is showing a lack of respect for Apollo.

In addition, Agamemnon has the duty to look out after his men and fellow kings. Agamemnon is the main king before Troy. He organized the expedition against Troy, and he is the leader of the army against Troy. As such, he must be a leader of men and of kings. When the plague strikes the Achaeans, Agamemnon has the duty to do what he can to stop the plague. In this society, people believe that Apollo sends plagues, and the way to stop the plague is to make Apollo happy. Therefore, Agamemnon must give up his spear-bride.

However, Agamemnon has no right to dishonor Achilles by taking away his spear-bride. The war against Troy is undertaken to get Helen back, and Helen is the problem of the House of Atreus (Menelaus and Agamemnon, who are the descendants of Atreus). Helen is not the problem of Achilles. Agamemnon should seek to keep Achilles happy, not insult him by taking away his spear-bride. Many Achaeans end up dying because Achilles declines to fight after Agamemnon takes away his spear-bride. Achilles, by the way, has every right to decline to fight. By taking away Achilles' spear-bride, Agamemnon has taken away Achilles' honor and pay. If Achilles is not going to get paid, he has no reason to fight.

Achilles, however, is partly at fault because of the total lack of tact he shows in his argument with Agamemnon. He insults Agamemnon freely. Another king, such as Nestor or Odysseus, might have avoided the argument by showing more tact.

• Which insults do the characters Achilles and Agamemnon throw at each other in Book 1? What do the insults tell you about their characters?

Achilles states the first insult when he offers to protect Calchas against anyone who might threaten him:

“Take courage. State what your powers tell you.

By Apollo, whom Zeus loves, to whom you, Calchas,

pray in prophesy to the Danaans, I swear this,

while I live to look upon the light of day,

no Achaean will raise violent hands against you,

no, not even if you name Agamemnon,

who claims he's by far the best Achaean.”

(Johnston 1.90-96)

By saying “claims to be” (Fagles 1.107), Achilles makes clear that he thinks Agamemnon is not “the best of the Achaeans” (Fagles 1.108).

Achilles also makes the second insult. Agamemnon says that he is willing to give up his *geras* — provided that the Achaeans give him another prize to make up for the one he lost. Achilles says,

“Just how, Agamemnon,
great field marshal ... most grasping man alive,
how can the generous Argives give you prizes now?”
(Fagles 1.142-144)

Compare:

“Noble son of Atreus, most acquisitive of men,
how can brave Achaeans give you a prize now?”
(Johnston 1.131-132)

At this point, Agamemnon begins to insult Achilles:

“Not so quickly,
brave as you are, godlike Achilles — trying to cheat
me.”
(Fagles 1.153-154)

Compare:

“Achilles, you're a fine man, like a god.
But don't conceal what's in your heart.

You'll not trick me or win me with your words.
 You intend to keep your prizes for yourself,
 while the army takes my trophy from me.”

(Johnston 1.142-146)

Agamemnon threatens to take Achilles' spear-bride away — a huge insult. In addition, Agamemnon calls Achilles “the most violent man alive” (Fagles 1.172).

The insults continue. Achilles says,

“You insatiable creature, quite shameless.
 How can any Achaean obey you willingly,
 join a raiding party or keep fighting
 with full force against an enemy?”

(Johnston 1.163-166)

We also hear what is apparently an old grievance between Achilles and Agamemnon when Achilles says,

“When we Achaeans loot some well-built Trojan town,
 my prizes never match the ones you get.

The major share of war's fury rests on me.
 But when we hand around the battle spoils,
 you get much larger trophies. Worn out in war,
 I reach my ships with something fine but small.”

(Johnston 1.179-184)

Achilles is angry because he thinks that he does most of the fighting while Agamemnon reaps most of the benefits. He also calls Agamemnon “dog-face” (Fagles 1.188) and “shameless” (Fagles 1.174). Another insult is

“You don’t look left or right.”

(Fagles 1.189)

This insult seems right on target to me. Agamemnon doesn’t look before he leaps. He doesn’t consider the consequences of his actions.

Later, after thinking about killing Agamemnon but being restrained by Athena, who has been sent to him by Hera, Achilles says,

“Staggering drunk, with your dog’s eyes, your fawn’s heart!

Never once did you arm with the troops and go to battle

or risk an ambush packed with Achaea’s picked men
—

you lack the courage, you can see death coming.

Safer by far, you find, to foray all through camp,

commandeering the prize of any man who speaks against you.

King who devours his people!”

(Fagles 1.264-270)

Compare:

“You drunken sot, dog-eyed deer-timid coward,

you’re never strong enough within yourself

to arm for war alongside other comrades,
or venture with Achaea's bravest on a raid.

To you that smells too much like death.

No. You'd much prefer to stroll around

throughout the wide Achaean army,

to grab gifts from a man who speaks against you.

A king who gorges on his own people!"

(Johnston 1.245-253)

In addition, Achilles says,

"On this I swear,

the time will come when Achaea's sons

all miss Achilles, a time when, in distress,

you'll lack my help, a time when Hector,

that man killer, destroys many warriors.

Then grief will tear your hearts apart,

because you shamed Achaea's finest man."

(Johnston 1.263-269)

By referring to himself as "the best of the Achaeans" (Fagles 1.287) and "Achaea's finest man" (Johnston 1.269), Achilles makes clear that he does not regard Agamemnon as the best of the Achaeans.

More insults follow the wise speech of Nestor. Agamemnon says that Achilles wants to be number one and give orders to all, but that he will never yield to him.

Achilles responds by saying that if he followed Agamemnon's orders he would be called a "worthless, burnt-out coward" (Fagles 1.343).

Clearly, a power struggle is going on between the two men.

• Achilles was tempted to kill Agamemnon during their argument. Why didn't he?

The gods and goddesses sometime take direct action in the *Iliad*. Hera send Athena to tell Achilles not to kill Agamemnon. Interestingly, only Achilles sees Athena; the other Achaeans did not. Athena tells Achilles that Hera loves both him and Agamemnon, and she promises Achilles that one day he will receive many "glittering gifts" (Fagles 1.249).

• What mistakes does Agamemnon make in Book 1?

Mistake #1: Agamemnon does not allow the priest of Apollo to ransom his daughter.

Agamemnon makes two major mistakes in Book 1 of the *Iliad*. The war is being fought over Helen, whom Paris stole from Menelaus. Because Agamemnon is leading an army against Troy to get Helen back, he believes in the ethical principle that it is morally right to attempt to get back a woman who has been taken from you. Yet, he will not give back Chryseis to her father, Chryses, and he takes Briseis away from Achilles. This shows hypocrisy on Agamemnon's part.

Mistake #2: Agamemnon angers Achilles by taking away Achilles' spear-bride.

In Book 1, because of his anger Achilles refuses to fight, although it means that many Achaeans will die. Apparently, Achilles thinks the Achaeans are as guilty as Agamemnon. After all, none of them backed him up in his fight against

Agamemnon (except Nestor, who urged the two men not to fight).

In Book 9, Achilles wants an explicit apology from Agamemnon. In Book 16, when he sends Patroclus into battle, he apparently still wants the apology, although he does want to save the Achaeans' ships from being burnt.

Agamemnon should not anger his most powerful warrior. It is much better for the Achaeans if all the Achaean warriors work together.

Achilles, of course, makes a mistake as well. He is tactless when he speaks to Agamemnon. However, a good leader knows when to ignore an insult and when to respond to an insult.

• What does Nestor want Agamemnon and Achilles to do?

Nestor is a wise advisor who wants Agamemnon and Achilles to get along. He wants them to compromise and to keep fighting together.

Nestor wants Agamemnon NOT to take away Briseis, Achilles' spear-bride, from Achilles.

Nestor wants Achilles to recognize Agamemnon as the supreme leader of the Greek forces against Troy.

This is Nestor's advice to Agamemnon and to Achilles:

“Atrides, seize not on the beauteous slave;
That prize the Greeks by common suffrage gave:
Nor thou, Achilles, treat our prince with pride;
Let kings be just, and sovereign power preside.”
(Pope pdf 64)

Compare:

“Agamemnon, you’re an excellent man,
 but do not take Briseis from Achilles.
 Let that pass. Achaea’s sons gave her to him first.
 And you, Peleus’ son, don’t seek to fight the king,
 not as your enemy. The sceptre-bearing king,
 whose powerful authority comes from Zeus,
 never shares honours equally. Achilles,
 you may be stronger, since your mother was divine,
 but he’s more powerful, for he rules more men.
 But you, son of Atreus, check your anger.
 Set aside, I urge you, your rage against Achilles,
 who provides, in the middle of war’s evils,
 a powerful defence for all Achaeans.”

(Johnston 1.304-316)

• How does Achilles react to the quarrel? What does he ask Thetis to do? Why does he respond that way?

Achilles is very angry as a result of the quarrel. He wishes to recover his respect and dignity, which have suffered as a result of Agamemnon’s behavior. Agamemnon has taken away Achilles’ spear-bride, Briseis — that is, he sent two heralds to take away Briseis. (Note that Achilles does not take out his anger on the two heralds. He tells the two heralds specifically that he is not angry at them.) Agamemnon’s taking Briseis away from Achilles is a huge slap in the face to Achilles, who should be better treated by Agamemnon.

After all, Achilles is a king himself and is the Achaeans' greatest warrior.

Achilles asks his mother, Thetis, to talk to Zeus and to get Zeus to promise to let the Trojans be victorious for a while. If this happens, Achilles will be able to show the Achaeans that they can't get along without him and can't win the war without him. Zeus owes Thetis a favor because Thetis came to his aid when other gods — Hera, Poseidon, and Athena — were trying to overthrow him.

This is a mistake on Achilles' part. For one thing, the Trojans' being victorious means that many Achaeans will die. That means that some of Achilles' fellow warriors (and friends) will die. In fact, Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, will die.

Achilles does this because of his anger and because of his pride. However, this is a mistake on Achilles' part.

• In what way do the gods at the end of the book reflect the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles?

Agamemnon and Achilles have a quarrel that will end in disaster. However, the quarrel of Zeus and Hera has a happy ending because Hera gives in to Zeus' demands. The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles could have ended had Achilles given in to Agamemnon's demands or had Agamemnon acted more reasonably and more responsibly.

Hera is angry with Zeus because she knows that Thetis has been talking to him. Hera also knows that Zeus promised Thetis something because she felt the earth shake when Zeus nodded his head while promising something to Thetis. Hera supports the Achaeans in the Trojan War, and she suspects that Zeus has promised to let the Trojans win for a while.

Why does Hera suspect that? Hera, of course, knows about the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. (Hera sent

Athena down to Achilles to prevent him from killing Agamemnon.)

In the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, Nestor attempted to make peace between the two, but he did not succeed. Nestor wanted the two men to compromise. He wanted Agamemnon not to take away Briseis from Achilles, and he wanted Achilles not to fight against Agamemnon but to acknowledge him as leader. (This is excellent advice.)

In the quarrel between Zeus and Hera, Hephaestus brings about peace. He is crippled, and he hobbles around, joking. This makes everyone laugh and relieves tensions.

In this case, Hera bows down to Zeus's wishes just as Nestor wishes for Achilles to show more respect to Agamemnon. In addition, Zeus does not carry out his threat against Hera to throttle her.

The two situations are much alike (Agamemnon and Achilles, Zeus and Hera). In the case of Zeus and Hera, at least part of what Nestor has advised takes place. Hera gives in to Zeus' will. If Agamemnon and Achilles had taken Nestor's advice, the quarrel would have been patched up. Agamemnon would not have carried out his threat to take Briseis, and Achilles would have showed more respect to Agamemnon.

• If you wish to do research, explain the meaning of the Greek terms *kleos* (CLAY-os) and *timê* (TEE-MAY) and *geras*.

Kleos is reputation. *Timê* is gifts of honor.

Kleos is reputation. In particular, it is what people say about you after you are dead. We will see that Achilles is very interested in his *kleos*.

Kleos is important because it is the only kind of meaningful immortality that this society has. In this society, there is a kind of afterlife, but it is insubstantial. Souls go down to Hades, but there they have no meaningful kind of afterlife. In some accounts of the afterlife in Hades, souls don't know who they are until they have a drink of blood. At that time, they regain their memory and are able to converse with other souls. Without the drink of blood, they are like gibbering bats.

Timê is gifts of honor. After a city has been captured, what is inside the city is given out as gifts of honor. If a warrior has fought bravely, that warrior will get *timê*. An important kind of *timê* is a *geras* or spear-bride. *Timê* is the physical expression of honor; *timê* can take the form of booty, gifts, or a particular prize (*geras*).

In the *Iliad*, *kleos* and *timê* are related. The more *timê* a warrior has, the more *kleos* the warrior has. Achilles is upset when Agamemnon takes away his *geras* because Agamemnon is taking away his *timê* and therefore is taking away his *kleos*. As we will see later, at this time Achilles values *kleos* more than anything else in the world. Achilles — at this point — is willing to give up his life in order to have *kleos*.

According to classics scholar Elizabeth Vandiver,

Timê [...] is usually translated as “honor,” but it does not mean an internalized sense of honor — a personal sense of honor by which you validate yourself no matter what others think of you. Rather, *timê* refers to the externalized, tangible, physical representations of honor. *Timê* is what you are given by your peers; if you are a god, *timê* is what you are given through sacrifices people make to you. It is material, physical, tangible — and therefore removable. (*The Iliad of Homer* 44)

Kleos can be translated as “glory” or “fame” or, sometimes, “reputation.” What it literally means is what other people say about you, what is spoken aloud about you. (*The Iliad of Homer* 45)

• **The theme of the *Iliad* is the rage (or wrath) of Achilles. In fact, “rage” is the first word that appears in Fagles’ translation of the *Iliad*. The Greek word used is *menis*, which elsewhere in the *Iliad* is used only to refer to a god’s rage. In Book 1, two gods grow angry: Apollo and Zeus. What is their rage like?**

Phoebus Apollo grows angry because his priest, Chryses, is not shown respect. Chryses asks Agamemnon to release his (Chryses’) daughter, Chryseis, who has been captured by the Achaeans. In return for her release, Chryses offers Agamemnon gleaming treasure. Agamemnon ought to respect the priest — his troops want him to — but instead he threatens the priest and makes him leave. The priest then prays to Apollo, who becomes angry because Agamemnon, by not respecting Apollo’s priest, has not respected Apollo.

Apollo gets revenge in an interesting way. He sends the plague against the Achaeans. The plague kills many Achaeans, but it does not kill Agamemnon. If Apollo were a just god, he would kill Agamemnon — or punish him in some other way. Instead, the people who die are innocent Achaeans — the ones who wanted Agamemnon to respect Apollo’s priest and accept the shining ransom.

Zeus also becomes angry at his wife, Hera, on Mount Olympus, when she tries to find out what he has promised Thetis. He threatens her, which terrifies her and the other gods because they all know that he will do what he says and throttle her. In this glimpse of Zeus, we see that he has a bad marriage and that he rules through force and intimidation.

When Homer uses *menis* — a word used to describe the rage of a god — to describe the rage of Achilles, this is not meant to be a good thing. When gods get angry, innocent people can die, and when gods get angry, they have the power to wreak enormous slaughter and destruction.

• **How is the *menis* (rage or wrath) of Achilles like the *menis* (rage or wrath) of the gods?**

When the gods are angry, human beings get hurt. Their anger comes first. Often, it is innocent human beings who lose their lives.

The same is true of Achilles. He becomes angry, and many Achaeans at first (and Trojans later) lose their lives. Achilles is angry at Agamemnon, but Agamemnon will stay healthy (although wounded once) in the *Iliad*.

• **Write a character analysis of Achilles as he appears in Book 1.**

Achilles is a leader who cares about the fighting men.

When Apollo sends the plague against the Achaeans, it is Achilles who takes action. Achilles calls the council to discuss the plague and what to do about it.

Achilles lacks tact.

We see this in the way that Achilles insults Agamemnon. For one thing, Achilles insults Agamemnon before Agamemnon insults him. Achilles refers to Agamemnon as claiming to be the best of the Achaeans.

Achilles is the strongest fighting man the Achaeans can muster.

This is a simple fact.

Achilles is engaged in a power struggle with Agamemnon.

Achilles wants recognition as the strongest Achaean fighting man, but Agamemnon won't give it to him.

Achilles can be emotional.

Achilles thinks about drawing his sword and killing Agamemnon. Later, he cries because of his anger.

Achilles places his own pride before the lives of his fellow fighting men.

To get back at Agamemnon, Achilles wants Thetis to make Zeus promise to let the Trojans win for a while. This, of course, means that many Achaeans will die.

Achilles protects the weak.

When Calchas asks for protection, Achilles gives it to him.

• Write a character analysis of Agamemnon as he appears in Book 1.

Agamemnon is a bully.

We see this twice. We see this in the way he treats the old man, the priest of Apollo, who comes to him to ransom his daughter with treasure. We also see it when he threatens to take Briseis away from Achilles.

Agamemnon does not respect the old.

In this society, old people are supposed to be respected, but Agamemnon does not respect Chryses, the old man (the priest of Apollo), who comes to him to ransom his daughter with treasure. Instead, Agamemnon tells him to go away and not come back. He also threatens him with death if he does not leave immediately.

Agamemnon does not respect Apollo.

As the priest of Apollo, the old man ought to be shown respect, but Agamemnon does not show him respect. By disrespecting the priest, Agamemnon is disrespecting Apollo.

Agamemnon does not respect his wife or Chryseis.

Agamemnon says that Chryseis, the priest's daughter, will be taken back to Argos, where she will be forced to share his bed. This means that Agamemnon is a rapist. Agamemnon also says that he prefers Chryseis to his wife, Clytemnestra.

Agamemnon does not respect Achilles.

Achilles is the Achaeans' greatest warrior and as such should be shown respect. However, Agamemnon treats him poorly and does not respect him. Instead, Agamemnon insults Achilles.

Agamemnon does not follow the advice of his men.

His warriors want him to take the shining ransom that the priest of Apollo offers so that the priest's daughter may be returned to him, but Agamemnon rejects their advice.

Agamemnon does not follow the advice of Nestor.

Nestor is an old man and wise advisor. Agamemnon ought to follow his advice, but instead he ignores it.

Agamemnon may be a coward.

At first, he says that he himself may decide to take Briseis from Achilles (Fagles 1.217-221). Later, he says that he will show up with an army at his back to take Briseis from Achilles if Achilles will not give up Briseis to his two heralds (Fagles 1.378-382).

Agamemnon ignores the plague.

It is Achilles who calls the council to decide what to do about the plague. Agamemnon should have been enough of a leader to call the council.

Conclusion: The Main Point

Agamemnon is a poor leader.

• Write a character analysis of Nestor as he appears in Book 1.

Nestor is old, and he is a wise leader who gives good advice.

Nestor urges compromise between Agamemnon and Achilles.

Nestor realizes that Agamemnon is acting badly, and he urges Agamemnon not to take Briseis away from Achilles.

Nestor realizes that Achilles is acting without tact, and he urges him to show more respect to Agamemnon.

Nestor makes the persuasive point that King Priam and the Trojans would be very happy if they knew that Agamemnon and Achilles were quarreling.

• Write a character analysis of Zeus as he appears in Book 1.

Zeus is the King of gods and of men, although he favors gods over men.

Zeus owes Thetis a favor, which he pays back by promising her that the Trojans will be triumphant for a while.

Zeus cannot alter fate. That is, he cannot alter the endpoint of fate. Troy is fated to fall, and it will fall. However, Zeus is powerful enough that he can let the Trojans win for a while.

Zeus rules by might. He threatens his wife to make her obey him.

Zeus is powerful. What he says, goes.

• Write a character analysis of Thetis as she appears in Book 1.

E.T. Owen points out that whenever Thetis appears, she reminds us that her son Achilles is fated to live only a short time:

The shortness of his [Achilles'] life seems accentuated through being mourned by an immortal mother; her feeling toward him is dominated by this one dreadful realization, as a human mother's would be if she knew her child had but a few days to live. In fact, that is Thetis's artistic role in the poem — to bring with her when she comes the thought of Achilles' approaching death. (*The Story of the Iliad* 11)

The epithet for Thetis is interesting: “Thetis of the glistening feet.” Thetis is a sea-goddess, and her feet glisten when they are wet.

Thetis obviously loves her son Achilles. They have long, involved conversations.

When Achilles asks his mother to ask Zeus to let the Trojans win for a while, she obeys his wish.

• Write a character analysis of Hera as she appears in Book 1.

Hera is the archetypal jealous wife.

Hera has no problem going against the wishes of Zeus.

Hera is afraid of her husband. When he threatens her, she backs off.

- **Write a character analysis of Hephaestus as he appears in Book 1.**

Hephaestus is lame, and he is a blacksmith. In ancient Greece, any lame man with strong arms would probably become a blacksmith.

When Zeus and Hera quarrel, Hephaestus is able to smooth over the conflict by making jokes. One function of the episodes involving the gods is to provide comic relief. Homer tries to keep his audience interested by providing different kinds of scenes for their amusement, including battle scenes and comic scenes.

Hephaestus is a peacemaker. He does not want Zeus and Hera to be angry at each other, so he makes fun of his lameness and pours wine for the gods to drink.

- **What have we learned from Book 1 of the *Iliad*?**

Book 1 has been an important book. In it, we have seen the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. This quarrel sets in motion the events of the *Iliad*. In addition, we have seen the gods in action. They are often comic relief, but they do participate in the action of the epic poem.

Conclusion

The next few books of the *Iliad* will introduce important characters such as Odysseus, Menelaus, and Paris. They will also cleverly fill in the audience about previous events that have taken place in the Trojan War, and they will show how the withdrawal of Achilles from fighting in the war affects the combatants on both sides.

**Chapter 2: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 2 — The Great
Gathering of Armies / Agamemnon's Dream and the
Catalogue of Ships**

• **Why does Zeus send the lying dream to Agamemnon?**

Zeus sends the lying dream to Agamemnon to set in motion the fulfillment of his promise to Thetis. In Book 1, he promised Thetis that he would allow the Trojans to win for a while; however, Troy is still fated to fall, and both Zeus and Thetis know that.

• **Is the dream psychologically plausible?**

Agamemnon would love to be able to win the Trojan War without Achilles. Yeah, that will show him! The dream is psychologically plausible.

• **What does Zeus say to the murderous dream?**

This is what Zeus says to the murderous dream:

“Evil Dream, fly quickly to Achaea’s men,
by their swift ships. Go to Agamemnon’s hut,
Atreus’ son. Report my words precisely.

Bid him quickly arm long-haired Achaean troops,
for now they’ll capture Troy, city of wide streets.
Immortal gods who dwell on Mount Olympus
no longer disagree about all this.

Hera’s entreaties have persuaded them.

Trojans can expect more sorrows, more disasters.”

(Johnston 2.9-17)

Zeus wants the lying dream to go to Agamemnon and tell him that Troy is ready to fall.

• Does Homer regard human beings as the playthings of the gods?

Homer seems to regard human beings as the playthings of the gods. Humans try to do the best they can do, but the gods sometimes arbitrarily send them misfortunes.

• Did the ancient Greeks have the concept of free will?

The ancient Greeks don't seem to have had the concept of free will. However, we believe in free will — but free will can do only so much. For example, every athlete in the most recent Olympics used his or her free will to attempt to win a gold medal, but of course, not every athlete did win a gold medal. Homer would say, first, an athlete attempted to win, then the gods decided whether the athlete would win or lose. (I remember Mary Decker falling during a race in the Olympics. Homer would say that a god or goddess tripped her.) Another example: I can use my free will to attempt to become center for the Boston Celtics, but I will never become center of the Boston Celtics.

• Is Agamemnon fooled by the lying dream?

This is what Homer says about Agamemnon and Zeus:

A thousand schemes the monarch's mind employ;
 Elate in thought he sacks untaken Troy:
 Vain as he was, and to the future blind,
 Nor saw what Jove and secret fate design'd,
 What mighty toils to either host remain,
 What scenes of grief, and numbers of the slain!

(Pope pdf 74)

Compare:

This said, Dream went off, leaving the king
imagining things

which would not come to pass. He thought he'd take
Troy,

Priam's city, that very day. Fool! He had no clue
of what Zeus really meant, his plan to load on them,
Trojans and Danaans both, still more suffering,
more cries of sorrow, through war's brutality.

(Johnston 2.42-47)

Agamemnon is definitely fooled by the lying dream. This is a huge mistake on his part.

• **Is the dream realistically plausible?**

The dream is not realistically plausible. So far, the Achaeans have not been able to conquer Troy with Achilles and the Myrmidons. They are unlikely now to be able to conquer Troy without Achilles and the Myrmidons.

• **Why does Agamemnon decide to test his soldiers?**

Agamemnon is hoping to rally his soldiers.

Agamemnon thinks that most likely they will tell him: “No, we don't want to go home to Achaea! We want to stay here and fight!”

The test is interesting. Agamemnon says,

“But first, according to time-honoured custom,

I will test the men with a challenge, tell them all

to crowd the oarlocks, cut and run in their ships.
 But you take up your battle-stations at every point,
 command them, hold them back.”

(Fagles 2.86-90)

The test seems to have been common in ancient times; according to Agamemnon’s speech, it is a “time-honoured custom” (Fagles 2.86).

I remember this kind of test being used on my seventh- and eighth-grade basketball team, which sucked. We were so bad that we even bored the cheerleaders. Our coach tried to get his players fired up to play well by saying that we were so playing so badly that he wanted to go tell the other team that we had given up and were going home. (My game-high, season-high, and career-total points is three.) Of course, we said, No, we wanted to play. In the days before feminism penetrated the part of rural Ohio I lived in, our coaches would also try to motivate us at halftime by saying we played like a bunch of girls. Of course, that was in the days before the WNBA.

• What does Agamemnon’s testing of his soldiers tell us about his character?

Agamemnon tests his soldiers to see if they will willingly follow him into battle. His test fails.

Basically, Agamemnon is very angry at Achilles and so he is willing to believe the lying dream sent by Zeus. Agamemnon would love to defeat the Trojans without Achilles as a way to show Achilles up.

Agamemnon’s testing of the soldiers shows overconfidence on his part. He believes that the soldiers will resist the temptation to go home and instead be willing to stay at Troy and fight with him.

Agamemnon is an incompetent leader. In Book 1, he got Achilles angry at him. Now, in Book 2, he is responsible for his soldiers running for the ships, eager to go back home.

In this case, it is Odysseus who saves Agamemnon. Odysseus gets the kings and common men to return to the camp meeting where Nestor and Agamemnon can address them.

In Agamemnon's defense, we can say that this is a common test.

• From Agamemnon's speech to his soldiers, what do we learn about the numbers of the Trojans? What do we learn about the Trojans' allies? (Which army is greater in numbers: the Achaeans' army or the Trojans' army?)

In Agamemnon's speech we learn that the Trojans are badly out-numbered — but they have many allies (who speak various languages) to help them. Agamemnon says,

“For if we Achaeans and the Trojans wished,
in good faith, to draw up a treaty,
to tally up the numbers on both sides,
with Trojans counting each inhabitant of Troy,
and if we Achaeans set ourselves in groups of ten,
then chose, for every group, a Trojan man
to pour our wine, then of our groups of ten,
many would lack a man to act as steward.”

(Johnston 2.145-152)

According to Agamemnon, the Trojans are outnumbered by over 10 to 1.

• How do the common soldiers respond to Agamemnon’s test? Why do they respond that way?

How do the soldiers react to the test? They run for the ships, eager to get home:

From underneath their feet a dust cloud rose.
 They yelled orders to each other to grab the ships,
 drag them to the sacred sea, clear out channels
 for launching boats, knock out props from
 underneath,
 frantic to get home. Heaven echoed with the din.
 (Johnston 2.177-181)

The common soldiers have been away from Greece for at least nine years. They have left wives and children and parents behind. They would love to be home with their families.

• What does “Atrides” mean?

“Atrides” means “son of Atreus.” Atreus had two sons: Agamemnon and Menelaus. You will have to figure which son is meant by “Atrides” by using the context of the word. Often, the ancient Greeks referred to people as “son of so-and-so.” This was a way to show respect to their family, and it helps Homer to find a relevant word that fits into his rhyme scheme. This is not the way that we moderns refer to other people, but it is something to grow used to when studying Homer.

• What do we learn about the morale of the common soldiers?

The camp is disorganized and apparently demoralized. The common soldiers are tired of war and eager to go home.

• **Who do we see more often in the *Iliad*: the common soldiers or the kings?**

We seldom see common soldiers in the *Iliad*. Homer mostly writes about heroes — the kings. The war is hard on the common soldiers, who seem to be mostly fodder for heroic exploits. It is the common soldiers who die — very few heroes die in the *Iliad*. It's interesting to speculate on whether the *Iliad* is an anti-war poem. Certainly the common soldiers are tired of war.

• **Do the common soldiers know about the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles?**

We also learn that the common soldiers know about the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. Thersites says to Agamemnon,

“Look — now it's Achilles, a greater man he disgraces,

seizes and keeps his prize, tears her away himself.

But no gall in Achilles. Achilles lets it go.

If not, Atrides, that outrage would have been your last!”

(Fagles 2.278-281)

Compare:

“Now Agamemnon has even shamed Achilles,

a much finer warrior than himself,

stealing a prize, keeping it for his own use.

Then there's Achilles, no heart's anger there,

who lets it all just happen. If he didn't,

this bullying of yours, son of Atreus,
would be your last.”

(Johnston 2.281-287)

• **Why did the common soldiers believe Agamemnon when he said to sail for home?**

The common soldiers know about the quarrel and have been speculating on what it means to the war effort. No wonder they believed Agamemnon when he said to sail for home.

• **What evidence shows that Odysseus is a man of action?**

Odysseus is the person who stops the flight of the common soldiers. He picks up Agamemnon’s scepter, then he talks politely to the kings and persuades them to return to the council. He hits common soldiers and makes them return to the council.

• **How does Odysseus treat kings?**

When Odysseus talks to a king, he shows respect:

“Friend, it’s not suitable for you to panic,

as if you’re worthless. Take your seat instead.

Get other soldiers to remain in place.

You’ve no clear sense of Agamemnon’s plan.

Right now he’s testing all the army.

Soon enough he’ll punish Achaea’s sons.”

(Johnston 2.223-228)

If Agamemnon and Achilles knew how to talk to kings — both Achilles and Agamemnon are kings — they may not have quarreled in Book 1.

Odysseus does know how to talk to kings; he is a master of rhetoric (persuasive speech).

• **How does Odysseus treat common soldiers?**

But Odysseus treats the common soldiers very differently:

“You *fool* — sit still! Obey the commands of others,
your superiors — you, you deserter, rank coward,
you count for nothing, neither in war nor council.”

(Fagles 2.231-233)

This is exactly what the common soldiers need to hear to stop a rout and a mutiny.

Again, Odysseus shows his mastery of rhetoric.

• **Thersites is one of the few common soldiers described in the *Iliad*. Write a character analysis of Thersites.**

Thersites is a negative character. No one would want to be like Thersites.

First, his physical appearance is very ugly:

His figure such as might his soul proclaim;
One eye was blinking, and one leg was lame:
His mountain shoulders half his breast o’erspread,
Thin hairs bestrew’d his long misshapen head.

(Pope pdf 78)

Compare:

Here was the ugliest man who ever came to Troy.
Bandy-legged he was, with one foot clubbed,

both shoulders humped together, curving over
 his caved-in chest, and bobbing above them
 his skull warped to a point,
 sprouting clumps of scraggly, woolly hair,
 (Fagles 2.250-255)

Compare:

Of all the men who came to Troy, he was the ugliest,
 bow legged, one crippled foot, rounded shoulders
 curving in toward his chest. On top, his pointed head
 sprouted thin, scraggly tufts of hair.
 (Johnston 2.252-255)

Second, people despise him:

Achilles despised him most, Odysseus too —
 (Fagles 2.256)

Third, his personality is bad. Thersites says to Agamemnon:

“Now Agamemnon has even shamed Achilles,
 a much finer warrior than himself,
 stealing a prize, keeping it for his own use.
 Then there’s Achilles, no heart’s anger there,
 who lets it all just happen. If he didn’t,
 this bullying of yours, son of Atreus,
 would be your last.”
 (Johnston 2.281-287)

The common men also do not like him. They are happy when Odysseus hits him on the back with the scepter (Fagles 2.309-317).

Basically, Odysseus makes an example of Thersites to the other common men. Shut up, behave, and return to the camp and listen to Agamemnon, or be struck on the back like Odysseus strikes Thersites.

One thing we learn from Thersites' speech, however, is that the common men are aware that Agamemnon and Achilles have quarreled.

• How does Odysseus treat the common soldier Thersites?

The other kings, and especially Odysseus, are able to cover up Agamemnon's mistake. Odysseus turns the Achaeans' attention to Thersites, one of the few common soldiers whose name we learn.

Odysseus makes a mockery and an example of Thersites. In doing so, he defends the honor of Agamemnon:

“So I'll tell you how things are going to be.
 If I find you being so foolish any more,
 then let Odysseus' head no longer stay
 upon his shoulders, let him no longer
 be called the father of Telemachus,
 if I don't grab you, rip off all your clothes,
 cloak and tunic, down to your cock and balls,
 and beat you back to the fast ships in tears,
 whipping you in shame from our assembly.”

(Johnston 2.305-312)

This is what Odysseus does to Thersites:

And he cracked his scepter across his back and
shoulders.

The rascal doubled over, tears streaking his face
and a bloody welt bulged up between his blades,
under the stroke of the golden scepter's studs.

He squatted low, cringing, stunned with pain,
blinking like some idiot ...

rubbing his tears off dumbly with a fist.

Their morale was low but the men laughed now,
good hearty laughter breaking over Thersites' head

(Fagles 2.309-317)

There is some humor in the *Iliad* — it is mostly a rough
humor such as this.

• **What is the definition of “rhetoric”?**

Definitions of rhetoric on the Web:

- using language effectively to please or persuade
- study of the technique and rules for using language effectively (especially in public speaking)

wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

Rhetoric: “The art or study of using language effectively and
persuasively.” — *The American Heritage College
Dictionary*.

Understanding the definition of rhetoric is important because Odysseus is a master of rhetoric. He knows how to speak persuasively. He knows how to use language effectively. He knows how to use language to achieve his goals. He is able to craft what he says to make it persuasive to the people who hear it. Odysseus understands his audience and what will appeal to his audience and what will persuade his audience to act the way that Odysseus wants them to act..

• What evidence shows that Odysseus is a master of rhetoric (persuasive language)?

At the ships, he uses rhetoric to convince the kings and soldiers not to sail for Achaea. Odysseus calls men of rank, kings, “my *friend*” (Fagles 2.220), and he convinces them to return to the council, pointing out that Agamemnon was only testing them, and Agamemnon will be hard on people who fail the test. But Odysseus calls common soldiers “you *fool*” (Fagles 2.231), and he beats them with the scepter, all the while ordering them to return to the council. In doing this, he uses rhetoric wisely, addressing the captains one way and the common soldiers another way.

Once Odysseus gets the men back in the council, he addresses them again, and once again he shows his skill in rhetoric.

First, Odysseus says that the Achaeans are making Agamemnon look bad because they are not keeping their promise to stay at Troy until they have conquered the city of Troy.

Next, Odysseus saves the face of the men who ran away by acknowledging that the men have been long absent from home and so of course are eager to go back, but that having been at Troy so long they should hold out a little longer to see whether the prophet Calchas was able to foretell the future well.

Odysseus also reminds the soldiers of an omen that stated that Troy would fall in the 10th year. Odysseus reminds the Achaeans of the omen that Calchas saw at Aulis, when the Greeks were preparing to sail to Troy. The omen involved a snake and some birds. A snake swallowed the eight nestlings of a sparrow, then the snake swallowed the mother bird. The Achaeans interpreted the omen as saying that the Trojan War would be won in the 10th year. Currently, the war is in its 9th year — but possibly at the beginning of the 10th:

“This is the ninth year come round, the ninth
we’ve hung on here.”

(Fagles 2.345-346)

Odysseus concludes by rousing the soldiers to stay and fight and conquer Troy. We are told by Homer that Odysseus succeeded in rousing the soldiers — they all shout out in agreement with him and are eager to conquer Troy.

• Odysseus is the hero of the *Odyssey*. Write a character analysis of Odysseus based on what you have learned about him in Books 1 and 2 of the *Iliad*.

In Book 1, Agamemnon calls Odysseus one of the leading captains of the Achaeans. The others he mentions are Achilles, Great Ajax, and Idomeneus. All of these people can be entrusted with returning Chryseis to her father and holding a sacrifice to the god Apollo so that he will stop killing Achaeans with the plague. As it turns out, Odysseus in fact returns Chryseis to her father and succeeds in convincing Apollo not to kill Achaeans with the plague.

In Book 2, we learn that Odysseus is a man of action and a man of words. Odysseus can act well and he can speak well. He is also a leader. When Agamemnon makes the mistake of testing his men, only to have them run for the ships, eager to return to their homes, it is Odysseus who acts to stop their

flight. He picks up the scepter — a symbol of authority — and strides to the Achaean ships.

At the ships, he uses rhetoric to convince the soldiers not to sail for Achaea. Odysseus calls men of rank, kings, “my *friend*” (Fagles 2.220), and he convinces them to return to the council, pointing out that Agamemnon was only testing them, and Agamemnon will be hard on soldiers who failed the test. But Odysseus calls common soldiers “you *fool*” (Fagles 2.231), and he beats Thersites with the scepter, all the while ordering the common soldiers to return to the council. In doing this, he uses rhetoric wisely, addressing the captains one way and the common soldiers another way.

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Odysseus also reminds the soldiers of the omen that they saw and that Calchas interpreted — an omen that stated that Troy would fall in the 10th year.

Odysseus concludes by rousing the soldiers to stay and fight and conquer Troy. We are told by Homer that Odysseus succeeded in rousing the soldiers — they all shout out in agreement with him and are eager to conquer Troy.

In the Catalogue of Ships in the second half of Book 2 of the *Iliad*, we learn that Odysseus brought 12 ships to the Trojan War.

• Who would be a better leader of the Achaean army: Agamemnon or Odysseus?

Odysseus. Odysseus saves Agamemnon's *ss in Book 2. He is a much better leader than Agamemnon.

• Write a short character analysis of Nestor based on what you learn in Book 2. Is he a good speaker and a good advisor?

Nestor rallies the Achaeans in Book 2. He tells off the Achaeans:

“Alas! In our assembly you’re all infants,
silly children, with no sense of war’s events.
What will happen to our agreements,
the oaths we made?”

(Johnston 2.398-401)

The kings and soldiers had sworn an oath to fight in the war.

“So now let no man hurry to sail for home, not yet ...
not till he beds down with a faithful Trojan wife,
payment in full for the groans and shocks of war
we have all borne for Helen.”

(Fagles 420-423)

Compare:

“So let no man rush to get back home,
not before he’s had sex with some Trojan’s wife,

payment for Helen's miseries, her cries of pain."

(Johnston 2.421-423)

War is hell. When Troy falls, her women will be raped and made slaves. In fact, the omen that Calchas interpreted is about young — children — being killed, along with their mothers.

Nestor does in fact rally the men. He is a good speaker and a good advisor.

• **How does Agamemnon react to Nestor's speech?**

Agamemnon admits that the argument with Achilles is his fault. He says,

"Imagine — I and Achilles, wrangling over a girl,
battling man-to-man. And I, I was the first
to let my anger flare. Ah if the two of us
could ever think as one, Troy could delay
her day of death no longer, not one moment."

(Fagles 2.448-452)

Compare:

"So Achilles and I fought for that girl,
yelling at each other. The first offence was mine.

But if we two agreed, were of one mind,
then Troy's fate would be sealed without delay,
without a moment's pause."

(Johnston 2.449-453)

Agamemnon does admit that he made a mistake; however, he does not send Briseis back to Achilles, nor does he apologize. He is still eager to win the war without Achilles' help. He is still eager to trust the lying dream and to trust in the next battle.

• Do the events recounted in Books 1 and 2 show Agamemnon to be a good leader? Why or why not?

Agamemnon is a very bad leader.

In Book 1, he did not listen to his men when they wanted him to accept the shining ransom that the priest of Apollo brought to ransom his daughter.

In Book 1, he did not listen to Achilles when Achilles suggested a reasonable compromise — the Achaeans would replace Chryseis with wonderful gifts when Troy fell.

In Book 1, he made his greatest warrior, Achilles, angry by taking Briseis away from him.

In Book 1, he did not listen to the reasonable attempt of Nestor to stop Agamemnon and Achilles from quarreling.

In Book 2, he thinks that the lying dream sent by Zeus is true.

In Book 2, he tests his men only to have the test backfire.

Conclusion: Agamemnon is a very bad leader.

• What are the aesthetic purposes of the episode of the flight to the ships? (Why did Homer put this episode in his poem?)

These are the aesthetic purposes of the flight to the ships:

1. The eagerness of the common soldiers to return home to Greece shows just how demoralized the Achaeans are.

2. The flight to the ship shows how close the Achaeans came to losing the war — and makes more impressive their eventual victory.

3. The flight to the ship leads to the catalogs of the Achaeans and the Trojans.

• What are the aesthetic purposes of the catalog of ships and the catalog of Trojans and Trojan allies? (Why did Homer put this episode in his poem?)

The catalog of ships and the catalog of Trojans and Trojan allies give us a list of the characters of the *Iliad* — the Greeks in the Catalog of Ships and the Trojans and their allies in the Trojan catalog that follows. The poet wants to let us know who is involved in the war.

In addition, as Nestor points out, it allows Greek friend to fight alongside Greek friend.

• Were there really that many ships in the Trojan War?

Many ships are enumerated in the catalog of ships. Were there really that many ships in the Trojan War (assuming that a Trojan War was actually fought)?

No. The number of ships was exaggerated through the centuries (assuming that there was a Trojan War). Imagine the poet going to a wealthy household and telling the tale. One way in which the poet can curry favor with (that is, flatter) the wealthy person is by exaggerating the number of ships his ancestors sent to the Trojan War. Thus, instead of saying that the wealthy person's ancestors had sent **2** ships to the war, the poet might say that the wealthy person's ancestors had sent **3** ships to the war. Over centuries, 2 ships can be exaggerated to 20, 30, or 50 ships.

Here are some important dates, the last two of which are estimates:

1184 BCE: traditional date of the fall of Troy

1220 BCE: archeological evidence says that a city of Troy fell then

730 BCE: the *Iliad* is written down

• Book 2 contains a catalog (list) of the forces of the Greeks and the forces of the Trojans and their allies. Today, many readers find this catalog boring, but the ancient Greeks would have found it thrilling. Why do you think they would have found it thrilling?

To us, the catalog of ships can be boring, but to the ancient Greeks, it was not boring. To them, it was like being at a parade — only a parade described in words.

As you know, the *Iliad* was originally recited orally to its hearers. The poet would (perhaps) strum a stringed instrument, then speak a line, and so on until the poem or a segment of the poem was completed. A long poem such as the *Iliad* would take three days to recite in its entirety.

Imagine that you are an ancient Greek sitting in a great hall, listening to the poem. Today many of us do not know the people or the regions described in the catalog; however, the ancient Greeks knew them. The ancient Greeks heard stories of the Trojan War from childhood. Today we know the traditional stories of Adam and Eve, Noah and the Flood, Abraham's attempted carrying out of God's orders to sacrifice Isaac, etc.

To the names that appear in the Catalog of Ships are associated stories that the audience would know. The names of people and places would call forth associations from the ancient Greeks. They would hear a name and be reminded of a myth associated with that locale or they would hear a name and be reminded of a person's entire familial history. For example, when the ancient Greeks heard the name of

Telamonian Ajax (Great Ajax), they would know that here was one of the great ancient heroes — but a hero who would come to a bad end. Another example: the House of Atreus has a long and horrifying background.

We find the catalog of ships and the catalog of the Trojan forces boring partly because we don't know the people and places referred to; however, the ancient Greeks would have known many of the people and places referred to. For the Greeks, the people referred to would have been heroes, and the places referred to would have been exotic locales.

Imagine if US Americans such as the author of this discussion guide were to hear a catalog that listed such American heroes as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt and that listed such places as Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York City instead of such people as Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Little Ajax and such places as Mycenae, Ithaca, and Sparta. The catalog would be more interesting because we would know the people and places referred to. But for the catalog of ships and the catalog of the Trojan forces, we know few of the people and places referred to and their names are difficult to pronounce. (People from other countries can imagine a catalogue listing their own heroes and locales.)

Imagine a catalog of the forces of both sides in the American Revolutionary War. The catalog would include such names as George Washington, John Hancock, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Aaron Burr, and such cities and rivers as Boston and the Potomac River. A person who knew the history of the Revolutionary War would find such a catalog fascinating.

Or: Suppose there were a catalog of the people and places associated with the Civil War. If you were a Civil War buff, you might find such a catalog interesting, although people unfamiliar with the Civil War would find such a list of names

boring. You, with your knowledge of the Civil War, would find it intensely interesting. The ancient Greeks with their knowledge of the Trojan War would be like an American with his or her knowledge of the American Civil War.

The ancient Greeks would also find the catalogs interesting because these people were their ancestors. Of special interest would be a person's particular ancestor. So if an ancient Greek believed that he was descended from Menelaus of Sparta, he would be especially interested when Menelaus and his ships were mentioned. Today we find the genealogies in the Bible boring, but the ancient Jews found them fascinating because they were the genealogy of their people.

The catalog is also a word picture of opposing forces. In a modern movie, the director might show the audience the opposing forces before they fight. The camera would slowly go down one line of warriors, then down the line of opposing warriors. Homer does this using words, not film.

In addition, Homer keeps the catalog interesting by mentioning Achilles once in a while. When the audience hears that Achilles "would soon rise up in all his power" (Fagles 2.792), the audience would feel a thrill.

In addition, the Greek names were easily pronounced by the Greeks — that is an advantage that we Americans don't have.

In conclusion, although we may find the catalog boring, the ancient Greeks would have found it thrilling.

By the way, Art Linkletter once made a catalog of ships. As a publicity stunt, Art Linkletter was supposed to broadcast on the CBS Radio Network the arrival of the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet at the 1935 San Diego Exhibition. Unfortunately, as the time drew near for the arrival of the fleet, heavy fog began to roll into the San Diego harbor,

forcing the fleet to remain at anchor outside the harbor. Mr. Linkletter was faced with a problem. He had lots of time to fill on the radio, and he hated to lose such a good publicity stunt. So Mr. Linkletter simply pretended that the fleet was sailing into the harbor and described to his radio audience the destroyers and battleships that were actually nowhere to be seen.

• How many ships did these Achaeans bring to Troy: Agamemnon, Odysseus, Nestor, Menelaus, Achilles, Great Ajax, Little Ajax?

How many ships do the heroes have?

Agamemnon: 100 ships

Nestor: 90 ships

Diomedes: 80 ships

Menelaus: 60 ships

Achilles: 50 ships

Little Ajax: 40 ships

Odysseus: 12 ships

Great Ajax: 12 ships

Sources:

Telamonian Ajax (Great Ajax): 12 ships (Fagles 2.648)

Odysseus: 12 ships (Fagles 2.731)

Little Ajax: 40 ships (Fagles 2.624)

Achilles: 50 ships (Fagles 2.781)

Menelaus: 60 ships (Fagles 2.679)

Diomedes: 80 ships (Fagles 2.659)

Idomeneus: 80 ships (Fagles 2.747)

Nestor: 90 ships (Fagles 2.695)

Agamemnon: 100 ships (Fagles 2.667)

Homer sings about Agamemnon:

he was the greatest warlord, he led by far the greatest
army.

(Fagles 2.672)

Compare:

In their midst, Agamemnon put on a proud display,
dressed in gleaming armour, prominent among all
heroes.

He was the best of all, because he had most men.

(Johnston 2.657-659)

• What are the aesthetic purposes of the catalog of Trojans and their allies? (Why did Homer put this episode in his poem?)

Once again, the purpose is to give us a cast of characters.

In addition, we learn about the relative strength of each army.

• Which catalog is bigger: the catalog of the Achaeans or the catalog of the Trojans and their allies? Why?

One thing to notice in Book 2 is that the Trojans are quite a bit out-numbered. Quite simply, there are fewer Trojans and Trojan allies than there are Achaeans. (The catalog of the Trojans is much shorter than the catalog of the Achaeans.)

As you read the *Iliad*, you will note that many more Trojans die than Achaeans.

• How does Homer keep Achilles in our minds during Book 2?

Homer does not let us forget about Achilles. Although Achilles will not appear in the *Iliad* for several books, Homer often reminds us about him.

Achilles is referred to a number of times in the catalog of ships. First is when we find out that Achilles is the handsomest of all the Achaeans:

Nireus brought three well-balanced ships from
Syme.

The son of Aglaea and lord Charopus,
the handsomest of all Danaans who sailed to Troy,
after Achilles, who had no equal. But he was weak,
because he had few troops.

(Johnston 2.748-752)

The ancient Greeks often referred to people by naming their father. “Peleus’ fearless son” (Fagles 2.770) and “Pelides” both refer to Achilles.

There is some comparison and contrast in this passage. Achilles is neither a lightweight, nor does he have a tiny band.

Next, Achilles is referred to as the leader of 50 ships from Pelasgian Argos:

All the troops from Pelasgian Argos, Alos,
men living in Alope, Trachis, from Phthia,

and Hellas, where lovely women live, men called
 Myrmidons, Hellenes, Achaeans, these troops
 Achilles led in fifty ships. But their minds weren't
 set
 on the grim clash of war. They had no one to lead
 them.

Godlike Achilles, swift of foot, sat by his ships,
 still angry over fair-complexioned Briseis, seized
 from Lyrnessus after heavy fighting.

Achilles had laid waste Lyrnessus and Thebe's walls,
 overthrown the spearmen Mynes and Epistrophus,
 sons of lord Euenus, son of king Selepius[.]

Because of her, Achilles sat still grieving.
 But soon enough he'd rouse himself again.

(Johnston 2.757-770)

Homer's audience would thrill to that last line.

Achilles is also referred to when Homer asks the Muse to tell
 who was the best of them all, and who had the best horses:

Of the men, by far the best was Ajax, son of
 Telamon,
 but only while Achilles didn't join in battle.

For Achilles was the better man by far.

The horses carrying Peleus' son, man without equal,
 were much better, too. But he stayed behind,

by his curved seaworthy ships, still enraged
 at Agamemnon, Atreus' son, the people's shepherd.
 His soldiers amused themselves beside the breaking
 sea
 by throwing spears and discus or with archery.
 Their horses stood near their chariots, browsing on
 lotus
 and parsley from the marsh. Their masters' chariots,
 fully covered, remained stationed in the huts.
 Missing their warlike leader, these troops strolled
 here and there throughout the camp and did not fight.
 (Johnston 2.847-860)

Finally, in the catalog of the Trojans, are two more references to the might of Achilles:

Chromis and prophet Ennomus led the Mysians.
 But Ennomus' great skill in prophecy
 did not allow him to evade his deadly fate.
 Swift Achilles, descendant of Aeacus, killed him
 in the river where he slaughtered other Trojans.
 (Johnston 2.943-948)

And:

Nastes went to war carrying gold,
 like a girl. What a fool! His gold did not spare him
 a wretched death. He died in the river,

at the hand of swift Achilles, descended from
Aeacus.

Fiery Achilles carried off his gold.

(Johnston 2.958-962)

From this, we know that Achilles shall return.

Although Achilles is inactive for several books, sitting by his
ships and refraining from fighting in the war, he is never far
from our minds.

• **What have we learned in Book 2?**

In Book 2, we have seen these things:

Agamemnon's incompetence as a leader,

Odysseus' competence as a man of words and a man
of action,

Nestor's competence as an advisor,

a catalog of both sides of the war,

and each side's relative numbers and strength.

Conclusion

In Book 3, we will be introduced to some of the major
Trojans, and we will see Helen.

Chapter 3: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 3 — Helen Reviews the Champions / Paris, Menelaus, and Helen

Important Terms

Displacement: Occasionally in the *Iliad*, a scene will occur at a time when it ought not to logically occur. This is known as displacement. Consider the scene in which King Priam asks Helen to identify some of the Achaean heroes. By the 10th year of the Trojan War, King Priam would know who the leading Achaeans are, so this episode logically ought not to occur at this time. Logically, this episode ought to occur early in the war. This episode has been displaced by Homer. Aesthetically, of course, this episode makes sense. For the audience of the *Iliad*, it is still early in the *Iliad*. Homer needs to introduce some of the leading Achaeans to his audience.

***Xenia*:** *Xenia* refers to the guest-host relationship. This is an odd phrase, and we don't have exactly that concept in our culture. In ancient Greece, no inns, motels, or hotels existed. If you traveled, you would stay with a family. You would knock on the door of a house and ask for hospitality. The residents of the house, if they observed *xenia*, would let you stay with them. They would feed you, give you a place to sleep, and offer you water for bathing or washing. As the guest, you of course would not murder your guests or run away with your host's wife. Instead, you would entertain your hosts by giving them news and telling them of your travels. The Trojan War started because of a breach of *xenia*. Paris, Prince of Troy, stayed with Menelaus, King of Sparta, and ran away with his wife, Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. *Xenia* was taken seriously in the ancient world. Zeus was Zeus *Xenios*, Zeus the god of *Xenia*. He often punished people who did not respect the protocols of *xenia*.

Additional Important Terms

***Xenoi*:** plural of *Xenos*

Xenos: guest, host, stranger, friend, and foreigner

Xenophobia: fear of strangers

Zeus *Xenios*: Zeus, the god of *xenia*

• What does Homer do in Book 3? What are his purposes?

Homer gives his audience a sympathetic portrayal of the Trojans, and he reminds his audience of the cause of the Trojan War. Previously, he introduced us to many important Achaeans. Now he introduces us to many important Trojans.

• What does *xenia* mean?

Xenia is often defined as the guest-host relationship. English does not have a word like *xenia*, although “hospitality” is sometimes used as a translation of *xenia*. However, “hospitality” is too weak a word for what the ancient Greeks meant. The word *xenia* carries with it an obligation to the gods. Zeus is the god of *xenia*, and when people abuse their sacred duty of *xenia*, they are disrespecting Zeus.

• In which way is *xenia* a reciprocal relationship?

Xenia is a reciprocal relationship between guest and host in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Xenia is a reciprocal relationship between two *xenoi*. (*Xenoi* is the plural; *xenos* is the singular.)

• Which meanings does *xenos* have?

A very important new term is *xenia*, which can be loosely translated as the guest-host relationship. Travel was dangerous for the ancients, and a code developed for travelers and their hosts. No hotels, motels, or inns existed, and so a traveler would knock on the door of a house or palace and ask for hospitality. The host would feed the guest, allow him to bathe, and give him a place to sleep. Upper-

class hosts would also give the guest a gift, appropriately called a guest-gift. In return, the guest would provide news and entertainment for the host. Also, of course, the guest would not kill the host, rob the host, or run away with the host's wife.

Xenos can mean five different things, depending on the context: guest, host, stranger, friend, and foreigner.

You and your host would be *xenoi*.

In this case, you would be a guest, a stranger, and a foreigner. You would be a guest in this home. Because your host doesn't know you, you would be a stranger. Because you aren't from this town, you would be a foreigner.

Of course, your host would be a host.

In addition, you and your host would be friends. You would not be friends in the sense that you have known and liked each other for a long time. You would be friends because you have participated in the guest-host relationship.

By the way, *xenia* is a root word of *xenophobia*, or fear of strangers.

In addition, modern Greece has the tradition today of *xenophilia*, or of showing hospitality to tourists.

• Which safeguards protect against the violation of *xenia*?

There can be a lot of danger in a guest-host relationship. What would happen if either the guest or the host were a robber and a killer? Bad things.

Therefore, there needs to be some kind of safeguards in place. The host must not murder his guest. The guest must not murder his host.

Sinbad's Poverty Tour: Early in Sinbad the comedian's career, he knew that he needed to have more experience if he wanted to be a stand-up comedian. Therefore, he went out on what he called his Poverty Tour. He simply loaded up the trunk of his car with some tools and clothing, drove to a city, and looked for places where he could do his act. He would tell the owner of the club that he wouldn't charge him anything, but would simply pass the hat after his act. This was OK with the owners, as it saved them money. Of course, Sinbad didn't make much money that way, and he often slept in his car. To solve that problem, when he did his act for the last time at night, he would ask the audience if someone would let him sleep on their couch. Of course, Sinbad is a big guy and he can take care of himself. He would look over the prospective host, and if he looked OK, he would go home with him and sleep on the couch. If the prospective host looked dangerous, Sinbad would say that he was going to get his car, but he would drive off. Sinbad was a good guest, by the way. In his day job, he had done plumbing and carpentry work. He would unobtrusively look around his host's apartment, find something that needed fixed, and then he would say, "Hey, I've got my tools in my car. Let me fix that for you." Sinbad says that he always left the apartments he stayed in better shape than they were when he arrived.

The ancient Greeks did have a safeguard for *xenia*: Zeus *Xenios*, which means Zeus, the god of *xenia*. Anyone who does not follow the rules of *xenia* is not doing the will of Zeus. This offends Zeus, and eventually the offender will pay for his transgression.

• **An example of bad *xenia*.**

How evil were the people of Sodom? When a stranger arrived in their city, each citizen would give him a piece of gold that had been marked with the name of the giver. The stranger would be grateful, of course, to receive the gold, but

he would quickly find that he was unable to spend it. Each time he would attempt to buy food, the shop owners would refuse to sell it to him. In addition, the stranger found that he was unable to leave the city — the guards would not allow him to pass the gates. Therefore, the stranger — despite his pile of gold coins — would slowly starve to death. When the stranger had starved to death, the citizens would come by the pile of gold coins, pick up the coin with their name marked on it and wait to starve to death another stranger. (Source: Simon Certner, editor, *101 Jewish Stories for Schools, Clubs and Camps*, p. 136.)

• How did the Trojan War start? What did Paris and Helen do?

As you have probably realized by now, the Trojan War started because of a violation of *xenia*. Paris was traveling away from Troy, his home, and Menelaus became Paris' host at Sparta. Paris treated Menelaus badly by robbing him of some of his treasure, and by running away with Menelaus' wife, Helen. We don't know whether Helen ran away willingly with Paris, or he abducted her.

Of course, Menelaus and his older brother, Agamemnon, gathered together a number of Greek armies, and they all sailed to Troy to get Helen back.

Please note that Troy is in the wrong here. The Trojans are fighting to defend their city, yes, but they are also fighting so that Paris and Helen can have an adulterous love affair. That the Trojans are in the wrong is why Troy will eventually fall to the Greeks.

The Trojans did and do have the option of giving Helen back to Menelaus.

• How does Homer characterize the two armies — Achaean and Trojan — at the beginning of Book 3?

Which army is depicted as aggressors? Which army is depicted as defenders? Why is this depiction unusual?

The opening of Book 3 is unusual because of the characters of the two armies. The Trojan army is depicted as aggressors:

the Trojans came with cries and the din of war
(Fagles 3.2)

The Achaean army, however, is depicted as defenders:

[...] But Achaea's armies
came on strong in silence, breathing combat-fury,
hearts ablaze to defend each other to the death.
(Fagles 3.7-9)

Compare:

Achaean came on in silence, breathing ferocity,
determined to stand by each other in the fight.
(Johnston 3.7-8)

Actually, we would expect the opposite. We would expect the Achaeans to be portrayed as aggressors, not defenders, because they sailed across the Aegean Sea to attack Troy. We would expect the Trojans to be portrayed as defenders, not aggressors, because they are defending their city against the Achaean armies. However, in Book 3 Homer is reminding his audience of the cause of the Trojan War. The cause of the Trojan War is Paris, who acted wrongly by violating *xenia* — stealing treasure from his host and running away with his host's wife. Paris was the aggressor in that guest-host relationship, and so the Trojans are portrayed as aggressors here.

• **What do we learn about the character of Paris the first time we see him?**

Paris is beloved of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sexual passion. Paris is very good-looking, and so Helen apparently fell in love with him. In addition, Paris is superficially charming.

However, Paris has very few positive personal qualities. He is very willing to let Troy suffer through a war — and eventually fall — all because he wants to sleep with Helen.

I think of Paris as being like many women's first husband. After being married to someone who is handsome and superficial, they decide they want to be married to someone with substance, so they are very careful in choosing a second husband. Hector, as we will see, would make a good second husband — or a good first husband for a woman who wishes to stay in love with the man she marries. In addition, Helen is like many men's first wife — beautiful, but ethically challenged. Odysseus' wife, Penelope, as you will see if you read Homer's *Odyssey*, would make a good second wife — or a good first wife for a man who wishes to stay in love with the woman he marries. Hector's wife, Andromache, would also make a good second wife — or a good first wife for a man who wishes to stay in love with the woman he marries.

In addition, Paris is a bit of a coward. He does not wish to face Menelaus. When we first see Paris, he is wearing a leopard skin of all things, and he is bragging about his fighting prowess, but then he sees Menelaus, whom he has wronged. Seeing Menelaus, he acts like a person who has stepped on a snake, and he stops boasting and instead stays safely behind the Trojan lines:

But soon as magnificent Paris marked Atrides
shining among the champions, Paris' spirit shook.

Backing into his friendly ranks, he cringed from death

as one who trips on a snake in a hilltop hollow
 recoils, suddenly, trembling grips his knees
 and pallor takes his cheeks and back he shrinks.
 So he dissolved again in the proud Trojan lines,
 dreading Atrides — magnificent, brave Paris.

(Fagles 3.34-41)

As you can see, Homer is being sarcastic in that last line (Fagles 3.41).

Compare:

When godlike Alexander saw Menelaus there,
 among the fighters at the front, his heart sank.
 He moved back into the ranks, among his comrades,
 avoiding death. Just as a man stumbles on a snake
 in some mountainous ravine and gives way, jumping
 back,
 his limbs trembling, his cheeks pale, so godlike Paris,
 afraid of Atreus' son, slid back into proud Trojan
 ranks.

(Johnston 3.30-36)

“Alexander” is another name for Paris.

• Who is Hector?

Book 3 offers a sympathetic portrayal of many Trojans — not Paris, of course, but of many other Trojans. One of the

Trojans we can most relate to and be sympathetic toward is the great hero Hector, the leader of the Trojan forces. Just as Achilles is the great warrior for the Achaeans, Hector is the great warrior (as well as leader) of the Trojans.

Hector and Paris are brothers, but Hector is the crown prince of Troy, meaning that he is the oldest son of King Priam and will become King of Troy when King Priam dies, if all goes well for the Trojans in the Trojan War, which of course it will not.

Hector is a spokesman for the Trojans, as we see in Book 3. Later, in Book 6, we will see him as a father, son, and husband. Hector is a family man as well as a warrior.

Because Hector is the greatest warrior of the Trojans, when he dies, the war will soon be over. The Achaeans will win the war because the Trojans have lost their greatest champion.

• What kind of relationship do Hector and Paris, two brothers, have with each other? Which brother is more mature?

Hector is the more mature brother.

Hector is the Protector of the City, the leader of the Trojan troops and the Trojan allies. Paris is the problematic younger brother.

Hector wants Troy and his family to be safe. Paris is willing to risk the destruction of Troy (and of all the men, women, and children inside it) in order to be able to have an adulterous affair with Helen.

Both Hector and Paris are warriors, although Hector is the greater and more conscientious warrior.

Paris can fight well when he wants to, but often he doesn't want to. He is very willing to sleep with Helen while the

Trojans and their allies are out on the battlefield. Hector, however, would not dream of sleeping with his wife, Andromache, while Trojan warriors are on the battlefield.

Hector is very willing to fight in single combat, as we will see. However, Paris has to be urged to fight Menelaus in single combat.

Hector and Paris have a problematic relationship.

Hector would prefer that Paris be dead if that would stop the war.

• Why do Paris and Menelaus fight a duel? What is Paris' motivation for fighting it? What is Menelaus' motivation for fighting it?

In Book 3, Paris and Menelaus fight a duel. This makes sense. Since the quarrel is between these two men, why not have these two men fight in man-to-man combat? Whoever wins gets Helen. Such a duel will save much, much bloodshed on both the Achaean and the Trojan sides.

Paris, of course, ran away with Helen, Menelaus' lawfully wedded wife. Paris is fighting to keep on sleeping adulterously with Helen. Menelaus, on the other hand, is fighting to get his wife (and the treasure that Paris stole) back. If Menelaus wins the single combat, the Trojans will return Helen and the treasure that Paris stole from him in addition to reparations for the Achaean war effort.

Interestingly, Paris has to be convinced by Hector to fight Menelaus. At first, Paris is unwilling to meet Menelaus and fight him, although that is exactly what he should do. Hector has to shame Paris into doing the right thing and fighting Menelaus.

**• What is Hector’s opinion of his younger brother Paris?
How does he convince Paris to fight a duel with
Menelaus?**

Hector’s very first words in the *Iliad* are scornful of Paris;
Hector insults Paris openly:

“Paris, appalling Paris! Our prince of beauty —
mad for women, you lure them all to ruin!
Would to god you’d never been born, died unwed.
That’s all I’d ask. Better that way by far
than to have you strutting here, an outrage —
a mockery in the eyes of all our enemies. Why,
the long-haired Achaeans must be roaring with
laughter!”

(Fagles 3.41-49)

Compare:

“Despicable Paris, handsomest of men,
but woman-mad seducer. How I wish
you never had been born or died unmarried.
That’s what I’d prefer, so much better
than to live in shame, hated by others.
Now long-haired Achaeans are mocking us,
saying we’ve put forward as a champion
one who looks good, but lacks a strong brave mind.”

(Johnston 3.38-45)

Hector's insults are stinging. He says that he wishes that Paris had never been born; he feels that way because if Paris had never been born, the Achaeans and the Trojans would not be fighting a war. In Book 6, we will learn how much Hector loves his family. Hector wishes that Paris had never been born alive because then Hector's wife and son would be safe.

Hector, of course, is aware that Paris is the cause of the Trojan War. He says,

“Was this what you were like back on that day
 you gathered up your faithful comrades,
 sailed sea - worthy ships across the ocean,
 went out among a foreign people,
 then carried back from that far off land

a lovely woman linked by marriage
 to warrior spearmen, thus bringing on
 great suffering for your father and your city,
 all your people, joy to your enemies
 and to yourself disgrace?”

(Johnston 3.46-55)

It is obvious that Hector holds Paris in little regard. Hector has utter contempt for Paris:

“[...] You ...
 curse to your father, your city and all your people,
 a joy to our enemies, rank disgrace to yourself!

So, you can't stand up to the battling Menelaus?
 You'd soon feel his force, that man you robbed
 of his sumptuous, warm wife. No use to you then,
 the fine lyre and these, these gifts of Aphrodite,
 your long flowing locks and your striking looks,
 not when you roll and couple with the dust."

(Fagles 3.57-65)

Hector would love the war to be over, even if it means the death of his brother Paris. It seems obvious in the duel with Menelaus that Paris is outmatched, but it would be good for Troy whichever way the duel turns out. Even if Paris dies, Troy will escape war (but will return Helen and pay war retributions). Hector is happy that Paris agrees to fight Menelaus:

When Hector heard that challenge he rejoiced

(Fagles 3.93)

Compare:

So Paris spoke. Hearing those words, Hector felt great joy.

(Johnston 3.85)

We should note too that Hector is the leader in setting up the duel. He is the one who marches into no-man's-land and delivers Paris' challenge to Agamemnon. Marching into no-man's-land takes much courage, as the Achaeans try to kill Hector, who makes the Trojans stop fighting. This shows that Hector is the leader and the spokesman of the Trojan forces. Agamemnon stops his warriors from trying to kill Hector, and then he listens to Hector's words.

Both sides are happy that a duel will be fought:

The Achaean and Trojan forces both exulted,
hoping *this* would end the agonies of war.
(Fagles 3.135-136)

Compare:

Achaean and Trojans were elated, full of hope
that wretched war would end.
(Johnston 3.126-127)

• Why must Priam be brought to the battlefield to swear an oath? Why can't Paris swear an oath?

After the challenge is delivered by Hector on behalf of Paris and accepted by Menelaus, a messenger goes to Troy to bring back King Priam to swear an oath. Priam must be present to ratify the oath — he is the King of Troy. Also, the Achaeans do not trust Paris, for good reason. Hector is an honorable man, but the Achaeans want Priam to ratify the oath — he is the Trojan king.

Paris has already shown that he is not trustworthy. By running away with Helen, Paris violated *xenia*, the guest-host relationship. Anyone who does something like that is not trustworthy.

Because the messenger has to go to Troy to get King Priam, Homer's audience gets a glimpse inside the walls of Troy.

• How do the old men of Troy regard Paris and Helen?

The old men regard the Trojan War as a terrible thing, but looking at Helen and her beauty, they understand why it is being fought, even though they wish that it were not being fought.

We also find out that Priam treats Helen with great respect. Priam does not blame her for the war; instead, he blames the gods. Priam is not a character whom Homer's audience can find it easy to hate. Indeed, Priam and Hector are more sympathetic characters to us than Agamemnon and Achilles — even though Achilles is the “hero” of the epic poem.

Helen is an interesting character. She is a great beauty — the most beautiful woman in the world — but she is also the cause of great suffering for the Trojans. Because of Helen, many, many Trojans will die. The Trojan elders, as they see Helen, say to one another:

“There’s nothing shameful about the fact
that Trojans and well-armed Achaeans
have endured great suffering a long time
over such a woman, just like a goddess,
immortal, awe-inspiring. She’s beautiful.

But nonetheless let her go back with the ships.

Let her not stay here, a blight on us, our children.”

(Johnston 3.168-174)

• How is Helen’s beauty described?

We learn that the Trojans — specifically the old men — realize that Helen is beautiful. Her beauty is never described, but we know that she is beautiful because of the reaction the old men of Troy have when they see her — they understand why the Trojan War is being fought over her. It’s interesting that Homer never described Helen’s beauty — a detailed description could be a letdown for some people. For example, if Homer says Helen’s hair is straight, that could be a letdown for someone who prefers curly hair. If Homer

says that Helen's hair is light, that could be a letdown for someone who prefers dark hair.

Although Helen's beauty is described in detail, we learn that Helen is so beautiful that even old men understand why a war is being fought over her. This is probably the best way to describe Helen's beauty, as it allows the listener to use his or her imagination.

We see the same thing in some movies. In the movie *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, starring Sheila McCarthy, some paintings are described as beautiful, but we never see them. Instead, we see a glow. In the movie *Belle de Jour*, directed by Luis Bunuel, a box is shown to a prostitute. We don't see what is in the box. Instead, we see a glow and we hear a humming. What is in the box? Something of erotic significance to the male who owns it. A glowing box is also seen in *Pulp Fiction*.

Helen's beauty has been a theme of poets throughout the ages. Here are some famous lines about Helen of Troy (in the play, she is actually a demon, not the real Helen) from Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*:

FAUSTUS.

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,

And burnt the topless towers of Ilium —

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss. —

[Kisses her.]

Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies! —

Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.

Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,

And all is dross that is not Helena.

I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
 Instead of Troy, shall Wertenberg be sack'd;
 And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
 And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
 Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
 And then return to Helen for a kiss.
 O, thou art fairer than the evening air
 Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
 Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
 When he appear'd to hapless Semele;
 More lovely than the monarch of the sky
 In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms;
 And none but thou shalt be my paramour!

The old men of Troy understand why the war is being fought — Helen is so beautiful that they can understand why Paris does not want to let her go. Still, the old men wish that she would return to her lawful husband, Menelaus. If that were to happen, it would save Troy a world of trouble.

• If you are a Greek (as was Homer's audience), King Priam is the enemy. Is it easy to dislike King Priam?

Priam, the King of Troy, is an old man whom it is difficult to dislike. Many of the Trojans are difficult to dislike, with the exception of Paris.

King Priam treats Helen of Troy well, although she is the reason the war is being fought.

Helen is having second thoughts about the war and Paris. She even calls herself a “whore” (Fagles 3.218). Homer sings:

the goddess [Iris] filled her heart with yearning warm
and deep

for her husband long ago, her city and her parents.

(Fagles 3.168-169)

Compare:

With these words the goddess [Iris] set in Helen’s
heart

sweet longing for her former husband, city, parents.

(Johnston 3.153-154)

Indeed, Helen even left a child at home: a daughter named Hermione.

When Helen goes to the Scaean Gates and sees Priam, he treats her kindly and speaks to her gently. Helen is a woman whom it would be easy for the Trojans to dislike, since the Trojan warriors are dying because of her and since the Trojans are denied the blessings of peace because of her, but Priam is kind to her and does not blame her for the war.

Priam says to Helen,

“Come here, dear child. Sit down in front of me,

so you can see your first husband, your friends,

your relatives. As far as I’m concerned,

you bear no blame. For I blame the gods.

They drove me to wage this wretched war

against Achaeans.”

(Johnston 3.176-181)

Instead of blaming Helen for the war, Priam blames the gods. This is not quite accurate because Paris is at fault for violating *xenia*, but human control and human endeavor do have limits. Much is out of our control. For example, Hector will fight mightily to defend Troy, but Troy is fated to fall and Hector is unable to prevent it from falling.

Priam could easily hate Helen for bringing war to Troy, but he does not. Priam is kind and compassionate.

• Why does King Priam ask Helen to identify some of the Achaean champions to him? Why is this odd? (Hint: The Trojan War has been going on for nine years.)

Priam and Helen are on a wall of Troy, looking out over the battlefield. As they are looking over the battlefield, they see Achaean warriors. Priam asks Helen to identify the Achaean champions.

Of course, this is odd because the Trojan War has been going on for nine years. After nine years, you would expect for Priam to be able to identify the main Achaean warriors. (They can be identified by their armor. For example, their shields bear different designs.)

Helen identifies three Achaean champions in particular: Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Great Ajax (as opposed to Little Ajax). Agamemnon, as we know, is the leader of the Achaeans. Odysseus is the hero of the *Odyssey*, and in the *Iliad* he is a great warrior and a master of rhetoric. Odysseus is both a man of action and a man of words. Great Ajax is a great defensive warrior, while Achilles is a great offensive warrior. Great Ajax is the great defender of the Achaean ships when the Trojans are trying to set them on fire.

• The early books (Books 2-7) of the *Iliad* sometimes include what we call the “displacement” of narrative

episodes. What example of displacement do you recall from Book 2?

As I mentioned, Priam should not be asking Helen to name the main Achaean warriors; by this time, he should be able to identify them by himself. However, although this may be the beginning of the 10th year of the Trojan War, this is also only the 3rd book of the *Iliad*, and Homer is still introducing his characters to his audience.

When Helen identifies the Achaean heroes to Priam, we have an excellent example of what is known as the “displacement” of narrative events. If this scene were to occur in the Trojan War, it would occur in the first year of the war, shortly after the Achaeans land on the Trojan shore rather than during the beginning of the 10th year of the war. This narrative episode has been displaced from year one to year ten.

Logically, the scene does not make sense because Priam should know who these Achaean warriors are. Aesthetically, it makes perfect sense because this is a good way for Homer to introduce some important characters to us and to tell us more about some characters whom we have already met.

We will see narrative displacement elsewhere in the *Iliad*. In fact, we have already seen it. In Book 2, we have the Catalog of Ships. If ever Agamemnon were to have a catalog of his ships, and a review of all the Achaean forces, it would be after the Achaeans had landed at Troy. In year 10, it doesn't make a lot of sense to have a catalog of ships. However, aesthetically, of course, it does make sense to have a kind of a roll call of the forces on both sides.

Of course, in Book 3 Paris and Menelaus fight one on one to see who will get Helen. The logical time for the duel to be fought is soon after the Achaeans have landed at Troy.

Homer's audience is unlikely to think about any logical unlikelihood.

• **What do Helen and Priam say about Agamemnon?**

Of Agamemnon, the leader of the expedition against Troy, Priam says,

“Tell me, who’s that large man,
over there, that impressive, strong Achaean?
Others may be taller by a head than him,
but I’ve never seen with my own eyes
such a striking man, so noble, so like a king.”
(Johnston 3.181-185)

Helen replies,

“that man is wide-ruling Agamemnon,
son of Atreus, a good king, fine fighter,
and once he was my brother-in-law,
if that life was ever real. I’m such a whore.”
(Johnston 3.193-196)

Both Priam and Helen praise Agamemnon; he is kingly.

• **What do Helen and Priam say about Odysseus?**

This is how Helen describes Odysseus, the man of action and the master of rhetoric:

“That’s Laertes’ son, the great tactician Odysseus.
He was bred in the land of Ithaca. Rocky ground
and he’s quick at every treachery under the sun —

the man of twists and turns.”

(Fagles 3.241-244)

Compare:

“That man is Laertes’ son, crafty Odysseus,

raised in rocky Ithaca. He’s well versed

in all sorts of tricks, deceptive strategies.”

(Johnston 3.219-221)

Helen describes Odysseus well. He really is a great strategist — and a great trickster. Odysseus is very much “the man of twists and turns” (Fagles 3.244). This is also the way Odysseus is described in the *Odyssey*.

Odysseus is a master of rhetoric — a master of persuasive speech. We saw that in Book 2, and we will see that later in the *Iliad*. In Book 9, Odysseus’ speech is well constructed and well designed to get a positive response from Achilles, even though it does not achieve the result that Odysseus wants. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus uses rhetoric extremely well.

• What do Helen and Priam say about Great Ajax?

There are two Ajaxes in the *Iliad*: Great Ajax and Little Ajax. Great Ajax is Telamonian Ajax, a great fighter whose father was Telamon. Priam asks,

“Who’s that other Achaean, so powerful, so well-built?

He towers over the Argives, his head, his massive shoulders!”

(Fagles 3.271-272)

Compare:

“Who is that other man? He’s over there,
that huge, burly Achaean, his head and shoulders
tower over the Achaeans.”

(Johnston 3.248-250)

Helen replies,

“Why, that’s the giant Ajax, bulwark of the
Achaeans.”

(Fagles 3.274)

Compare:

“That’s massive Ajax, Achaea’s bulwark.”

(Johnston 3.252)

Of course, Great Ajax is the second greatest Achaean warrior. Only Achilles is a better Achaean warrior.

• Helen’s brothers, Castor and Polydeuces (you may know him better by the Roman name Pollux), are missing. Where are they? What is your opinion of the passage in which Homer tells where they are?

Helen identifies several Achaean warriors, but two are missing. Her brothers, Castor and Polydeuces, are missing. These brothers have a myth of their own. After Castor was killed, Polydeuces wanted to be with his brother. Zeus allowed the two brothers to be alive on Mount Olympus, the home of the gods, one day, and dead in Hades, the ancient Greek abode of the dead, the next day. Day after day, one brother is alive one day and dead the next. When one brother is dead, the other is alive.

Helen wonders why her two brothers did not come to Troy — perhaps they are ashamed of her actions. However, actually, they are already dead:

So she wavered, but the earth already held them fast,
long dead in the life-giving earth of Lacedaemon,
the dear land of their fathers.

(Fagles 3.289-291)

Compare:

But the life-nourishing earth
already held her brothers in Lacedaemon,
in their own dear native land.

(Johnston 3.269-271)

Lacedaemon: la-se-DEE-mon

This is excellent poetry. The phrase “life-giving earth” (Fagles 3.290) has been highly praised by 19th-century critics, including Matthew Arnold. The phrase contains a vivid contrast. The earth is life-giving, of course, as plants comes from it and life is sustained on it, but it also holds the corpses of Helen’s two dead brothers.

Homer very deliberately chose that phrase: “life-giving earth” (Fagles 3.290). Classics scholar Elizabeth Vandiver points out that it (the phrase *phusizoos aia*) occurs very rarely in Homer (*The Iliad of Homer* 58). Homer knew what he was doing when he wrote about the life-giving earth being the abode of dead brothers.

• **Who wins the duel, and how? Which duelist has right on his side?**

Priam is present to ratify the oath — the Achaeans do not trust Paris. However, Priam returns to Troy before the duel begins. The terms of the oath are these; Agamemnon is speaking:

“If Alexander slays Menelaus,
 let him keep Helen, all her property.
 Let us return in our sea-worthy ships.
 But if fair-haired Menelaus kills Alexander,
 then let the Trojans hand back Helen,
 with all her property, and compensate
 Achaeans with something suitable,
 which future ages will remember.
 If Alexander’s killed and Priam
 and Priam’s children are unwilling
 to reimburse me, then I’ll remain here,
 fight on until I’m fully satisfied,
 until I end this war appropriately.”

(Johnston 3.315-325)

Before the duel begins, warriors on both sides call out a prayer to Zeus:

You could hear some Trojan or Achaean calling,
 “Zeus —

god of greatness, god of glory, all you immortals!

Whichever contenders trample on this treaty first,
 spill their brains on the ground as this wine spills —
 theirs, their children's too — their enemies rape their
 wives!”

(Fagles 3.352-356)

Compare:

“Most powerful, mighty Zeus, and you others,
 you immortal gods, may you make sure
 the men who first violate these oaths
 will have their brains spill out onto the ground,
 just like this wine, they and their children.
 May their wives be carried off by other men.”

(Johnston 3.334-339)

This is a prayer that will come true.

The Achaeans have right on their side. The Trojans are in the wrong. Menelaus has been wronged by Paris. Menelaus was the host, Paris was the guest, and Paris stole his host's wife. Menelaus says,

“Give me, great Jove! to punish lawless lust,
 And lay the Trojan gasping in the dust:
 Destroy the aggressor, aid my righteous cause,
 Avenge the breach of hospitable laws!
 Let this example future times reclaim,
 And guard from wrong fair friendship's holy name.”

(Pope pdf 104)

Compare:

“Lord Zeus, grant I may be revenged on this man,
 who first committed crimes against me,
 lord Alexander. Let him die at my hands,
 so generations of men yet to come
 will dread doing wrong to anyone
 who welcomes them into his home as friends.”

(Johnston 3.388-393)

In a duel, a lot is shaken from a helmet to determine which warrior will hurl his spear first. That warrior throws his spear, then the other warrior throws his spear, then they fight with whatever weapons are available — in this case, swords.

Paris is beloved by Aphrodite, goddess of love; but Menelaus is beloved by Ares, god of war. Menelaus is clearly superior to Paris as a fighter. When Paris hurls his spear, it does not go through Menelaus’ shield, but when Menelaus hurls his spear, it does go through Paris’ shield. Paris narrowly escapes being killed by Menelaus after Menelaus breaks his sword upon Paris’ helmet. In general, the Achaeans are victorious over the Trojans in the *Iliad*.

The Trojan War occurred in the late Bronze Age. The weapons are spears, swords, and bows and arrows. In addition, many soldiers throw rocks.

In the duel, the goddess Aphrodite saves Paris’ life by taking him back to Troy. After Menelaus has broken his sword, he simply grabs Paris by the helmet and drags him over to the Greek soldiers, where he will presumably be killed.

However, Aphrodite breaks the strap of Paris' helmet and carries him to safety.

This is how the duel ends:

[...] Aphrodite snatched Paris away,
 easy work for a god, wrapped him in swirls of mist
 and set him down in his bedroom filled with scent.

(Fagles 3.439-441)

Compare:

But Aphrodite had snatched Paris up, for a god
 an easy feat, concealed him in a heavy mist,
 and placed him in his own sweetly scented bedroom.

(Johnston 3.423-425)

The gods and goddesses do take part in the action of the *Iliad*; they are not always external manifestations of internal psychological states.

After Aphrodite has carried away Paris, Menelaus looks for him. Homer sings,

Not a single Trojan, none of their famous allies
 could point out Paris to battle-hungry Menelaus.
 Not that they would hide him out of friendship,
 even if someone saw him —
 all of them hated him like death, black death.

(Fagles 3.529-532)

Compare:

But no Trojan nor any of their famous allies
 could reveal Alexander to warlike Menelaus.
 If they'd seen him, they had no desire to hide him.
 For they all hated Paris, as they hated gloomy death.
 (Johnston 3.508-511)

Basically, they regard Paris as the source of the war — the long war that they are very tired of. Really, both armies are tired of the long war, and they want it to be over.

Note that we have more displacement in this duel. If Menelaus and Paris were to fight a duel together, the obvious time to do that would be when the Greek ships land at Troy. Instead of doing that, Homer displaces the duel to the beginning of the 10th year of the war.

• **Write a character analysis of Aphrodite.**

Aphrodite is a goddess who has favorites.

Paris is one of her favorites, and she takes care of him. When he faces Menelaus in a duel, she rescues him when it is apparent that he is about to lose the duel. In addition, she forces Helen to go to bed with him by threatening to abandon Helen and let her be friendless in Troy.

As a goddess, Aphrodite has supernatural powers.

- She can travel great distances very quickly.
- She is immortal (can never die).
- She is better looking than humans.
- She eats ambrosia and drinks nectar.
- She is sexual passion and can cause humans and gods to feel sexual passion.

Aphrodite is like a human in many ways.

- She is human in form, although she is more beautiful than humans.
- She speaks a human language.
- She eats and drinks, although she eats and drinks the food and drink of the gods.
- She has sex — she is the mother of the Trojan warrior Aeneas.
- She has human emotions, including anger.
- She has favorites, such as Paris.

• What do we learn about Paris and Helen when they are together in Troy?

Aphrodite takes Paris back to Troy, then she has Helen go to Paris, and Helen and Paris have sex together. We learn that Helen no longer loves Paris, if she ever did, although she does feel a physical attraction to him.

This shows that the war is being fought over something trivial. The Trojans are risking everything they have, including their lives, so that Paris and Helen can have an adulterous love affair. In addition, Paris is not worth it, and Helen no longer wants to be with Paris.

Note that Paris has an excuse for losing the duel. He tells Helen,

“Menelaus has won the day, thanks to Athena.”

(Fagles 3.514)

Compare:

“Yes, Menelaus has just defeated me,

but with Athena's help. Next time I'll beat him."

(Johnston 3.493-494)

Actually, the only god or goddess who intervened in the battle was Aphrodite, who helped Paris. Menelaus has had no help in the duel at all.

• **Write a character analysis of Helen of Troy.**

Helen has a great deal of self-hatred.

Helen refers to herself here as a "whore" (Fagles 3.218) and later as a "bitch" (Fagles 6.408).

Helen now hates her new husband, Paris.

When Paris returns to Troy from the battlefield after being bested in the duel with Menelaus, Helen tells Aphrodite that she doesn't want to see him, that she doesn't want to "share that coward's bed" (Fagles 3.476).

Helen now wishes that she were with her old husband, Menelaus.

When Paris returns to Troy from the battlefield after being bested in the duel with Menelaus, Helen tells him that she wishes that Menelaus had killed him. If Menelaus had killed Paris, Helen would be reunited with her old husband, Menelaus.

Helen has few friends and is afraid that she may lose the friends she has.

Helen does go to Paris and sleep with him after Aphrodite threatens her by saying that she may turn against her and not be her friend.

Many Trojans dislike Helen because she is the cause of the Trojan War. They don't see why their fathers and husbands and brothers have to die because Paris wants to have an

adulterous relationship with Helen. The Trojan men don't want their wives and children to become slaves if Troy should lose the war.

Helen is beautiful.

We see that Helen is beautiful by the reactions that the old men of Troy have when they look at her.

Helen is the cause of the Trojan War.

The Trojan War is being fought over Helen. Paris was a guest of Menelaus, but when Paris left, he took with him much of Menelaus' treasure and his wife, Helen.

Helen's character is ambiguous.

We never learn whether Helen ran away with Paris willingly or whether Paris kidnapped her.

• **Write a character analysis of Paris.**

Paris is afraid of Menelaus.

When he sees Menelaus, he acts as if he has stepped on a snake, and he moves away from him, afraid to fight him until his brother, Hector, shames him into it.

Paris is very willing to let his fellow Trojans do his fighting for him.

After Aphrodite spirits him away from the battlefield and his duel with Menelaus, Paris goes to bed with Helen. Other warriors are on the battlefield while Paris has sex with the woman whom the Trojan War is being fought over. Paris is good at getting women to go to bed with him, but the women eventually discover his lack of character. Helen has to be forced by Aphrodite to go to bed with Paris.

Paris is very interested in women.

The Trojan War is being fought because Paris wants to have an adulterous relationship with Helen — even though Helen says that she wishes that he were dead!

Paris is good looking, and he dresses in flashy clothing.

Paris does have facial beauty, and he dresses the part of a playboy — he wears a leopard skin into combat!

The Main Point

In Book 3, we learn that Paris is a person of poor character.

• Do Paris and Helen have a good marriage? Does Helen love Paris? How does Paris regard Helen?

Paris and Helen definitely do not have a good marriage. Helen does not love Paris anymore. They have a horrible marriage together. Helen doesn't want to see him when he is brought to Troy by Aphrodite, but Aphrodite forces her to see him by threatening her. At this point of the war, Helen regrets being with Paris. Helen does not want to go to Paris; she says that it would be “disgraceful to share that coward's bed once more” (Fagles 3.476). Aphrodite forces Helen to go to Paris by saying that if Helen does not go to Paris, she (Aphrodite) will abandon her.

Helen says to Aphrodite, who is in disguise as an old woman,

“[...] I'll never go back again. It would be wrong,
disgraceful to share that coward's bed once more.”

(Fagles 3.475-476)

Compare:

“I won't go to him in there,
that would be shameful, serving him in bed.”

(Johnston 3.458-459)

Aphrodite threatens Helen and says,

“Don’t provoke me, you obstinate girl.
 I might lose my temper, abandon you,
 and hate you just as much as I have loved you.
 I could make Trojans and Danaans hate you, too.
 Then you’d suffer death in misery.”
 (Johnston 3.463-467)

“Danaans” is another word for the Achaeans or Greeks.

We don’t know whether Helen willingly ran away with Paris or he kidnapped her, but we know that now Helen regrets her relationship with Paris. One of the first things Helen says to Paris when they meet in the bedroom is this: I wish Menelaus had killed you. Helen lashes out at Paris:

“So, home from the wars!
 Oh would to god you’d died there, brought down
 by that great soldier, my husband long ago.
 And how you used to boast, year in, year out,
 that you were the better fighting man than fighting
 Menelaus
 in power, arm and spear! So why not go back now,
 hurl your challenge at Menelaus dear to Ares,
 fight it out together, man-to-man again?”
 (Fagles 3.499-506)

Compare:

“You’ve come back from the fight. How I wish

you'd died there, killed by that strong warrior
 who was my husband once. You used to boast
 you were stronger than warlike Menelaus,
 more strength in your hands, more power in your
 spear.

So go now, challenge war-loving Menelaus
 to fight again in single combat.

I'd suggest you stay away. Don't fight it out
 man to man with red-haired Menelaus,
 without further thought. You might well die,
 come to a quick end on his spear."

(Johnston 3.480-490)

Still, Paris is a charmer, and he charms Helen into bed. Paris and Helen have sex together, while Menelaus is still on the battlefield looking for Paris. Paris and Helen now have a purely sexual relationship.

At the end of Book 3, the two are having sex together, while Menelaus is searching for Paris on the battlefield. Paris does not care for the citizens of Troy — he cares only for his own pleasure. Paris is superficial. One way to describe Paris is to say that he is a good-looking rebel who lives by his own rules. Of course, he is very attractive to many women. Paris plays the role of "bad boy."

In the early books of the *Iliad* that follow Book 1, Homer is giving his audience a lot of background information about the Trojan War. In Book 3, we see a reenactment of the cause of the Trojan War. Paris did not respect his host, but instead

slept with his host's wife. Here in Book 3, Paris has sex again with Helen.

• Do the Trojans have a good reason for fighting the war? What will the Trojans get if they win the war? What will the Trojans lose if they lose the war?

No, the Trojans do not have a good reason for fighting the war. They are fighting only so that Paris can sleep with Helen.

If the Trojans win the war, Paris will keep the treasure he stole from Menelaus, and he will keep the wife he stole from Menelaus. In order for him to do that, many Trojans and many Achaeans will have died in the war. Paris isn't worth the deaths of those men, and neither is Helen. Of course, while the war is being fought, many children are growing up in Achaea without fathers. In the *Odyssey*, some young men run wild because they did not have fathers around to help raise them and teach them the correct way to behave. And at least one young man on Ithaca is a bit of a mama's boy because his father was not around to raise him. In addition, many parents are growing old without their sons being around to take care of them.

If the Trojans lose the war, they lose everything. The men will lose their lives, and the women and children will become slaves. The young and pretty women will become sex-slaves. In addition, the ancient world will lose a center of civilization.

In fact, the Trojans lose the war. Hector, the character in the *Iliad* whom we perhaps can most relate to, dies. Hector's wife, Andromache, becomes a sex-slave. Hector's son, Astyanax, is murdered by being thrown from a high wall of Troy. Much, much better would the death of Paris in the duel of Menelaus, and the return of Helen to her lawfully wedded husband.

Yes, Hector is fighting for Troy in the war, but he is fighting for his family, for his parents, and for his city. Hector would be happy if Paris were to die in the war so that the war would end.

Hector is a patriot who is concerned about his city. Paris, on the other hand, thinks about little but himself. Troy is suffering because of him and his unjust actions, but Paris doesn't concern himself with that.

• In Book 3, are some of the Trojans depicted sympathetically?

Yes. Hector and King Priam are depicted very sympathetically. Paris, of course, is not. We can ask whether the *Iliad* is an anti-war poem. After all, Homer portrays the Trojans much more sympathetically than he portrays the Achaeans.

• How does Book 3 end?

Book 3 ends with Agamemnon claiming victory for Menelaus:

“Hear me now, you Trojans, Dardans, Trojan allies!

Clearly victory goes to Menelaus dear to Ares.

You must surrender Helen and all her treasure with her.

At once — and pay us reparations fair and fitting,
a price to inspire generations still to come!”

So Atrides demanded. His armies roared assent.

(Fagles 3.535-540)

Compare:

“Listen to me, Trojans, Dardanians, allies,

victory clearly falls to war-loving Menelaus.

So give back Argive Helen and her property,
compensate us with a suitable amount,
something future ages will all talk about.”

As he finished speaking, the other Achaeans cheered.

(Johnston 3.513-518)

Of course, the war does not end now. The Trojans can claim that the fight was to the death, and since Menelaus did not succeed in killing Paris, he did not win the fight; however, clearly Menelaus would have killed Paris or gotten Paris killed if Aphrodite had not saved Paris' life.

Conclusion

In Book 4, Homer will show his audience that Troy is in the wrong. Troy was the aggressor against the Achaeans.

Chapter 4: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 4 — The Truce Erupts in War / The Armies Clash

Important Term

Double Motivation: Many events in the *Iliad* are motivated in two different ways. First is realistic motivation; second is motivation by the gods. For example, Pandarus attempts to assassinate Menelaus in Book 4 of the *Iliad*. He has a realistic motivation for doing this. If he is successful in assassinating Menelaus, the war will be over and the Trojans will reward him. In addition, we are told that Athena (in disguise) tempts him to attempt to assassinate Menelaus, so we have double motivation.

• What is the main point of Book 4?

Homer's main purpose in creating Book 4 is to show his audience that Troy is in the wrong. We will see Pandarus reenact Paris' original sin. Paris did the wrong thing to Menelaus by running away with his wife, Helen, and with lots of his treasure. Paris violated *xenia*. Zeus is the god of *xenia*. In Book 4, Pandarus does wrong to Menelaus by trying to assassinate him. Pandarus violates the truce that Agamemnon and King Priam swore to Zeus.

Homer's audience would be interested in Book 4. They know that the Trojan War ended with the Trojan Horse, not with the duel between Menelaus and Paris. Homer's audience will be wondering what Homer has to say in Book 4.

What roles and purposes do the gods and goddesses have in the *Iliad*?

At the beginning of Book 4, the gods and goddesses are sitting in council, so this is a good opportunity to talk about the roles and purposes of the gods and goddesses in the *Iliad*.

1) *The gods and goddesses often play a direct action in the Iliad.*

For example, in Book 3, Aphrodite spirits Paris away from the duel that he had with Menelaus. In Book 1, Hera sends Athena to Achilles to tell him not to kill Agamemnon. Frequently, the gods and goddesses act in the *Iliad*.

However, sometimes the gods and the goddesses are described as if they were manifestations of the psychology of human beings. People who take this view believe that the Greeks did not know about psychology, so therefore they used gods and goddesses when they wished to talk about psychology.

For example, in Book 1, Achilles thinks about drawing his sword and slaying Agamemnon, but we read that Hera was aware of his thoughts and so she sent Athena down from Olympus to stop him. On Earth, no one was able to see Athena except for Achilles.

We moderns would say that Achilles thought about killing Agamemnon but that he thought better about it and changed his mind. The ancient Greeks, however, would say that the gods acted and convinced Achilles not to kill Agamemnon.

2) *One purpose of the episode of the gods and goddesses is to give a change in tone.*

One purpose of the episode of the gods is to give a change in tone. If the tone is always heroic, it would get monotonous. Frequently, the gods provide comic relief. In addition, the discord among the gods frequently mirrors the discord among the generals. Agamemnon and Achilles are in conflict; so are Zeus and his wife, Hera. Generals of the same army should get along together; so should husband and wife. Frequently, however, they don't. In Book 1, Agamemnon and Achilles have a quarrel. Also at the end of Book 1, Zeus and Hera are on the verge of having a quarrel, but

Hephaestus is able to avert the quarrel by behaving comically.

3) *The gods frequently let the audience know what will happen next.*

Also, the gods frequently let the audience know what will happen next. The episode of the gods here confirms that the ending of the Trojan War will **not** be altered. Zeus asks,

“So now we plan how the war will all work out:
do we rouse the pain and grisly fighting once again
or hand down pacts of peace between both armies?”

(Fagles 4.16-18)

Compare:

“But why don’t we discuss
how this warfare is going to finish up,
whether we should re-ignite harsh combat,
this horrific strife, or make both sides friends.”

(Johnston 4.16-19)

However, Zeus is mocking Hera, his wife, and Athena, his daughter, who hate the Trojans and want to see Troy destroyed. Peace will not be handed down. Instead, the gods will ensure that war breaks out again. Fate has decreed that Troy will be destroyed, and Troy will be destroyed. Therefore, any peace between the Achaeans and the Trojans will be only temporary.

4) *The gods and goddesses provide a contrast to the human beings.*

This will be important later in the *Iliad*. The gods and goddesses are immortal and can die; therefore, they can never do the heroic action of giving their life to save the life of a human being. Human beings are mortal and can die; therefore, they can do the heroic action of giving their life to save the life of another human being.

**• Which gods are on which sides in the Trojan War?
Which side is Zeus on?**

On Side of Trojans

Apollo

Ares

Artemis

Aphrodite

On Side of Achaeans

Athena

Hera

Poseidon

Zeus

Zeus likes the Trojans, but he is prepared to abide by the decrees of fate.

We discover that the gods favor various sides in the Trojan War. Zeus himself honors the Trojans:

“For of all towns inhabited by earth’s peoples,
under the sun, beneath the heavenly stars,
sacred Ilion, with Priam and his people,
expert spearmen, stands dearest in my heart.”

(Johnston 4.54-57)

“Ilion” is another name for Troy.

Not even Zeus will change Troy’s fate. Troy is fated to fall, and Zeus will allow Troy to fall.

• **What do we learn about the anger (*menis*) of the gods from Hera?**

We find just how little the gods respect human beings. Zeus is angry at Hera for wanting to raze Troy (dear to Zeus) and says that he hopes Hera won’t interfere when he (Zeus) wishes to raze one of the cities most dear to her. Hera replies,

“Excellent! The three cities that I love best of all
are Argos and Sparta, Mycenae with streets as broad
as Troy’s.

Raze them — whenever they stir the hatred in your
heart.

My cities ... I will never rise up in their defense,
not against you — I’d never grudge your pleasure.”

(Fagles 4.60-64)

“Raze” means “level to the ground.”

Compare:

“The three cities I love the best by far
are Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae,
city of wide streets. Destroy them utterly,
if you ever hate them in your heart.

I won’t deny you or get in your way.”

(Johnston 4.62-66)

But, of course, when a city is razed, the result is much human misery, as when Troy is finally conquered — but this means little to the gods. The gods care little for justice. Hera is willing to destroy three cities (and the human lives they contain) in order to destroy one city (and the human lives it contains) she hates. This means that if Homer knows about the Judgment of Paris (as I think that he did), Hera is willing to destroy four cities simply because she is insulted that she did not win a beauty contest. In Hera, we see *menis* (the anger of the gods). Achilles has that kind of anger.

• What is double motivation? (What are the two main things that motivate the actions that we read about in the *Iliad*?)

Double motivation is a term that is often used in Homeric studies. It refers in part to the impact that the gods have on human beings. In Book 4, Athena convinces Pandarus to attempt to assassinate Menelaus although it means violating the truce.

In ancient Greece, the gods and goddesses were thought of in part as doing the work that we assign to psychological impulses today. Aphrodite is the goddess of sexual passion. When a heterosexual man sees a beautiful naked woman, the man will be sexually aroused. The ancient Greeks would say that Aphrodite caused that sexual arousal.

We moderns might say that the sight of the beautiful naked woman was enough in itself to cause the sexual arousal in the man, but the ancient Greeks would say that there is an additional motivation in the fact of the goddess causing sexual arousal in the man.

This is double motivation. A realistic motivation exists for something to occur, but a god or the gods or fate also decrees that something will occur.

In double motivation, motivation exists on two levels: the god level and the human level.

We should keep in mind, of course, that in the *Iliad* the gods and goddesses are more than mere psychological impulses. They also take direct part in the action. For example, in Book 1, Athena is sent by Hera to go to Achilles and tell him not to kill Agamemnon. And in Book 3, Aphrodite saves Paris from being slaughtered by Menelaus.

• **Write a character analysis of Pandarus.**

Pandarus is the Trojan who breaks the truce, previously established in Book 3, by shooting an arrow at Menelaus even though the Achaeans and Trojans have decided not to fight each other but instead to let a single combat between Menelaus and Paris decide the end of the Trojan War. However, although Menelaus decisively beats Paris — who is rescued by Aphrodite — Pandarus decides to attempt to assassinate Menelaus.

Athena, who has taken the form of the Trojan spearman Laodocus, influences Pandarus to attempt to assassinate Menelaus. She makes what seems like good reasons for him to shoot at Menelaus. He will win renown among the Trojans, and Paris will reward him with many gifts. This is true, for if Menelaus dies, very likely the Achaeans will sail for home and the Trojans will have won the war.

Of course, by attempting to assassinate Menelaus, Pandarus is behaving badly. He is morally in the wrong, and everyone knows it. Homer has this episode in Book 4 because he is showing the audience that Troy is in the wrong. Paris was in the wrong when he stole away Helen, the wife of his host (Menelaus), and Pandarus is in the wrong when he attempts to assassinate Menelaus despite the truce.

Pandarus is religious, as he promises sacrifices to Apollo when he marches home; however, he dies (later in the *Iliad*) before that happens.

One more point: Some of the other Trojans hide Pandarus with their shields so that no one sees him before he attempts to murder Menelaus. Troy as a whole is guilty here.

• What would happen if Pandarus were successful when he shoots his arrow?

If Pandarus were to succeed in killing Menelaus, very likely the Trojan War would be over. With Menelaus dead, the Achaeans would most likely go back home, since the main reason for the war — to return Helen to Menelaus — would no longer be relevant. The Trojans would regard Pandarus as a hero, and he would get shining gifts from King Priam.

To be good literature, the story must have characters with plausible motivation. If we think of the gods as being representatives of psychology, we can see that the *Iliad*'s characters have plausible motivations. Athena fills Pandarus' heart with greed. This is how Athena tempts Pandarus to shoot at Menelaus:

“Fiery hearted son of Lycaon,
 why not do as I suggest? Prepare yourself
 to fire a swift arrow at Menelaus.
 You'd earn thanks and glory from all Trojans,
 most of all from prince Alexander.
 He'd be the very first to bring fine gifts,
 if he could see warlike Menelaus,
 son of Atreus, mounted on his bier,

his bitter funeral pyre, killed by your arrow.

So come, then, shoot an arrow at him,

at splendid Menelaus.”

(Johnston 4.109-119)

“Alexander” is another name for Paris.

If Pandarus succeeds in killing Menelaus, the war would be over. Menelaus is the husband of Helen, and it is his honor that needs to be avenged. With Menelaus dead, the Achaeans would go back home. Pandarus would be rewarded by the Trojans for bringing the war to a successful conclusion for the Trojans.

The episode of Pandarus is a good example of double motivation. Pandarus has his reasons for trying to kill Menelaus, but Athena also is determined that Pandarus will break the truce.

• Why does Athena motivate Pandarus to do what he does? What does this tell you about the anger (*menis*) of the gods?

Athena wants Troy to fall, she is on the side of the Greeks, so why does she tempt Pandarus to attempt to assassinate Menelaus?

Of course, Zeus has told her to do this. In addition, the answer is that Athena wants to keep the Trojan War going so that eventually Troy will fall. If the war ends now, Menelaus will get Helen back and much treasure, but Troy will remain standing. However, if Athena convinces Pandarus to break the truce, the war will continue, and eventually Troy will fall.

Athena is so angry that she wants lots of human beings to die. Why is she angry? If Homer knew about the judgment

of Paris when he created the *Iliad*, she is angry because she lost a beauty contest. To an immortal goddess, that is reason enough to want a city to fall and many human beings to die.

We should note that Athena makes sure that Menelaus is not seriously wounded although the wound draws blood:

But, Menelaus, the immortal sacred gods
 did not forget you. Athena, Zeus' daughter,
 goddess of war's spoils, was first to stand before you,
 to ward off the piercing arrow, she brushed it from
 your skin,
 just as a mother brushes a fly off her child
 while he lies sweetly sleeping.

(Johnston 4.151-156)

• **How does Homer describe Pandarus's bow?**

Homer — as a poet reciting a poem — has to make everything interesting. Therefore, whenever he describes something, he describes it with gusto and he makes the description as vivid as possible. Here, Homer sings:

Pandarus took up his bow of polished horn,
 made from a nimble wild goat he himself once shot
 under the chest, as it leapt down from a rock.
 He'd waited in an ambush and hit it in the front.
 The goat fell down onto the rocks, landing on its
 back.
 Horns on its head were sixteen palm widths long.
 A man skilled in shaping horn had worked on them,

to fit the horns together to create a bow.

He'd polished it all over, adding gold caps

snugly fitted on the tips.

(Johnston 4.124-133)

Homer is reciting a poem about warriors and therefore he spends some time describing their weapons and armor — valuable commodities, as we see when victorious warriors attempt to strip their victims of their armor. Remember, some warriors are fighting by throwing rocks.

One thing to point out here is that Pandarus' bow was mentioned in Book 2, in the Catalog of the Trojans:

Pandarus, with the bow that came from Apollo's own hands.

(Fagles 2.938)

Is there a contradiction between Book 2 and Book 4? No. Pandarus is a gifted archer, and Apollo is the god of archery. The ancient Greeks would say that Pandarus' gift for archery came from Apollo, and so it is OK to say that Pandarus' bow came from Apollo even though Pandarus had to hunt the goat from whose horns the bow is made. The ancient Greeks believed that the bowyer's skill also came from Apollo.

• **How does Homer describe Menelaus' wound?**

It's also important to note that Homer brings the entire world into the *Iliad*, even though he is describing only a few days in the tenth year of the Trojan War. Constantly, Homer tells us of things that happen outside of the Trojan War. We see that in how Homer describes how Pandarus got his bow, and in how Homer describes Menelaus' wound.

Homer sings,

Just as when some woman of Meonia or Caria
 stains white ivory with purple dye, making a cheek
 piece
 for a horse, and leaves it in her room, an object
 many riders covet for themselves, a king's treasure
 with double value, horse's ornament and rider's
 glory,
 that's how, Menelaus, your strong thighs, your shins
 and ankles
 were stained with your own blood below the wound.
 (Johnston 4.166-172)

Red blood flows down Menelaus' white thigh like red dye
 stains a piece of white ivory.

Homer frequently uses vivid metaphors and similes. They
 are one of the characteristics of his writing.

**• How does Agamemnon react to Menelaus' wounding?
 What does that tell you about Agamemnon?**

The wounding of his brother, Menelaus, certainly frightens
 Agamemnon, just as being wounded frightens Menelaus.
 Perhaps it even throws Agamemnon off balance. It does
 show that Agamemnon is concerned about his brother:

When Agamemnon saw dark blood flowing from the
 wound,
 that king of men shuddered.
 (Johnston 4.173-174)

One of Agamemnon's good points is that he does love his
 brother.

Menelaus receives the rather primitive medical care of his time from Machaon:

[...] When he saw the wound
 where the tearing arrow hit, he sucked out the blood
 and deftly applied the healing salves that Chiron,
 friend of Asclepius, gave his father long ago.

(Fagles 4.249-252)

Compare:

Around him all the noblest men had gathered in a circle.

Machaon, godlike man, strode into the middle,
 drew the arrow from the belt without delay,
 twisting back the sharp barbs as he pulled the arrow out.

He undid the finely decorated belt and armour,
 then, under that, the chain mail forged in bronze.

Next, he inspected the wound the keen arrow made,
 sucked out the blood, then skillfully applied his
 potions,

soothing medicines which Chiron gave his father.

(Johnston 4.248-256)

• In the Trojan War, which side is in the wrong? Which side caused the war? How is that guilt reflected in the assassination attempt by Pandarus?

Troy is doomed: The assassination attempt makes Agamemnon absolutely certain that right is on the side of the

Achaean, and that wrong is on the side of the Trojans. After all, Paris is in the wrong for stealing Helen, Menelaus won the duel with Paris, and the Trojans broke the truce. Agamemnon says,

“For now the Trojans
 have shot you, walking roughshod on their oaths,
 that treaty they swore to in good faith. But still,
 the oath, lambs’ blood, unmixed libations,
 handshakes, things in which we placed our trust,
 all these will not go in vain. For if Zeus,
 the Olympian, does not fulfill them now,
 later on he will. Trojans will pay much,
 with their heads, their wives, their children.
 I know in my mind and heart that day will come
 when holy Troy, Priam, and his people,
 fine spearmen, will be annihilated, [...]”
 (Johnston 4.183-194)

Agamemnon’s certainty that the Achaeans are in the right gives him a burst of confidence in himself and his army.

Idomeneus of Crete is also certain that the Achaeans must be victorious:

“On with the fighting, quickly!
 The Trojans broke our binding truce just now —
 death and grief to the men of Troy hereafter!
 They were the first to trample on our pact.”

(Fagles 4.307-310)

Compare:

“But you should rouse
 other long-haired Achaean men to action,
 so we may fight at once, without delay.
 Since Trojans have broken their sworn promises,
 death and sorrow will come to them at last,
 for they attacked us first, breaking their oaths.”

(Johnston 4.315-320)

One thing to point out here is that after Pandarus breaks the truth, everyone is certain that Troy is doomed: Agamemnon, Idomeneus, and the other Achaeans.

Troy is guilty of dishonor. Just as Paris is guilty of doing a dishonorable act by running away with Menelaus' wife, Helen, so Pandarus is guilty of doing a dishonorable act in breaking the truce with an assassination attempt.

Troy is doomed, and the gods will not change this. All Zeus has promised Thetis is that the Trojans will win for a while.

Soon, Pandarus will die for his dishonorable action. Later, Paris will die and Troy will be destroyed for Paris' dishonorable action. Both Pandarus and Paris are responsible for their actions.

Pandarus' sin mirrors the original sin of Paris in stealing away Helen. We see why Troy is doomed — Troy is guilty.

• What is Agamemnon's purpose in reviewing his troops?

Often, Agamemnon is heavy-handed and insulting. The other generals are kings and they can withdraw from the fighting if they wish, just as Achilles has done. Still, Agamemnon seems to motivate the generals.

One of the things Agamemnon does right is to review the troops, although he makes a few mistakes when he does so. His purpose is good. Agamemnon wishes to encourage the troops to fight well, so he praises those who are ready to fight and criticizes those who he feels are unready to fight.

Agamemnon does have a burst of confidence in his just cause. To spur on the charioteers, he says,

“Argives, don't lose your warlike spirit.

Father Zeus will never help those liars.

By attacking us, these Trojans were the first
to violate their oaths. Vultures will gnaw away
their tender flesh, while we lead off their wives
and their dear delicate children to our ships,
when we've destroyed their city.”

(Johnston 4.273-279)

• Who does Agamemnon praise? Who does Agamemnon criticize (unjustly)?

Sometimes Agamemnon does things right; he has praise for Idomeneus, the two Ajaxes, and Nestor.

Sometimes Agamemnon does things wrong; he unjustly criticizes Odysseus and Diomedes.

• **How does Agamemnon treat Idomeneus?**

Agamemnon praises Idomeneus:

“Divine Idomeneus! what thanks we owe
 To worth like thine! what praise shall we bestow?
 To thee the foremost honours are decreed,
 First in the fight and every graceful deed.
 For this, in banquets, when the generous bowls
 Restore our blood, and raise the warriors’ souls,
 Though all the rest with stated rules we bound,
 Unmix’d, unmeasured, are thy goblets crown’d.
 Be still thyself, in arms a mighty name;
 Maintain thy honours, and enlarge thy fame.”
 (Pope pdf 113)

Compare:

“Idomeneus, above all Danaans,
 with their swift horses, I value you in war,
 in all other things, and at banquets,
 when Achaea’ s finest prepare gleaming wine,
 the kind reserved for kings, in mixing bowls.
 Other long-haired Achaeans drink their portion,
 the amount allotted to them, but your cup
 always stands full of wine, as does mine,
 so you can drink any time your heart desires.

Set off to battle, then, show you're a man,
the fine man you claimed to be before."

(Johnston 5.301-310)

Idomeneus deserves the praise; he tells Agamemnon of his desire to go into battle.

• **How does Agamemnon treat the two Ajaxes?**

Agamemnon praises the two Ajaxes:

"You two Ajaxes,
leaders of the Argives armed in bronze,
for you I have no orders. It's not right
for me to urge you forward, for both of you
are rousing men to fight with all their force.
By father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo,
I wish such spirit would fill each man's chest.
Then king Priam's city would soon fall,
we'd capture it, destroy it utterly."

(Johnston 4.334-342)

• **How does Agamemnon treat Nestor? What do we learn about Nestor as a general?**

Old Nestor shows himself an able general. When marshalling the troops in his command, he puts the cowards in the middle of the line, where they will be forced to fight:

But the known cowards he drove amidst the center:
a man might cringe but he'd be forced to fight.

(Fagles 4.343-344)

Compare:

Nestor set horses, chariots, and charioteers in front.
 In the rear, he placed his many brave foot soldiers,
 a battle wall. In the middle he placed his poorer
 troops,
 to force them to keep fighting on against their will.
 (Johnston 4.348-351)

Agamemnon praises Nestor highly.

• How does Agamemnon treat Odysseus? What does Odysseus' reaction tell you about Odysseus?

Agamemnon praises generals who are ready for battle, but insults generals who are not ready to fight or who seem to him not to be eager to fight. He even insults Odysseus. His insulting of Odysseus is remarkable, because Odysseus kept the Achaeans from sailing home in Book 2. In fact, Odysseus is not at fault, because he and the Ithacans have not yet heard the call to action. (Neither has Menestheus, leader of the soldiers from Athens, who is nearby.) This is how Agamemnon insults Odysseus:

“Son of Peteos, god-given king, and you,
 Odysseus, skilled in sly deception,
 crafty minded, why are you holding back,
 standing apart? Are you waiting for the rest?
 By rights you two should be with those in front,
 sharing the heat of battle. At banquets,
 when we Achaeans feast our senior men,

you hear me call your name out first.
 Then you like to have roast meat and cups of wine,
 honey sweet, to your heart's content.
 But now you'd be quite happy looking on
 if ten Achaean groups were fighting here
 with ruthless bronze before your very eyes."
 (Johnston 4.396-408)

Odysseus, however, has too much pride to put up with this:

"Son of Atreus, how can you say such things?
 How can you claim I'm hanging back from battle
 each time we Achaeans rouse ourselves for war
 against horse-taming Trojans? If you want,
 if it's of interest to you, then you'll see
 Telemachus' dear father battling
 horse-taming Trojans at the very front.
 What you've been saying is clearly nonsense."
 (Johnston 4.410-417)

Agamemnon knows when to back down — this time:

"Odysseus, you resourceful man,
 divinely born son of Laertes,
 I'm not finding serious fault with you.
 I'm issuing no orders to you.
 I know that spirit in your loyal chest

is well disposed. We both are of one mind.
 If I've said something bad we'll make it good.
 May the gods bring all of this to nothing."
 (Johnston 4.420-427)

Agamemnon should have known when to back down when he argued with Achilles.

We should note that recently, in Book 2, Odysseus saved Agamemnon's rear end by keeping the army from sailing back home to Achaea. Agamemnon should be treating Odysseus with more respect here.

• **How does Agamemnon treat Diomedes and Sthenelus? What does Diomedes' reaction tell you about Diomedes?**

Agamemnon insults Diomedes, but the young Diomedes takes it, although his kinsman Sthenelus (Capaneus' son) does not. Diomedes says,

"I don't blame Agamemnon, our commander in chief,
 for goading his combat-ready Argives into battle.
 The glory goes to him if the Argive fighters
 lay the Trojans low and take their sacred city,
 but immense grief is his if comrades die in droves.
 Up now, rouse our fighting-fury!"
 (Fagles 4.479-484)

Compare:

"My friend. Stay quiet. Follow my advice.
 For I'm not hurt that Agamemnon,

the army's shepherd, urges armed Achaeans
 on to battle. For he will get the glory,
 if Achaeans annihilate the Trojans
 and capture sacred Ilion. And he'll get
 great sorrow, if Achaeans are wiped out.
 But come, let's get our two minds working
 to rouse our spirits for this coming fight."

(Johnston 4.481-490)

Diomedes respects the authority of the king. One of Diomedes' major characteristics is restraint. In addition, Diomedes is a young warrior who ought to respect the older Agamemnon.

• **How good of a leader is Agamemnon?**

In Agamemnon's review of his troops, sometimes he does the right thing, but sometimes he does the wrong thing. His praise of Idomeneus, the two Ajaxes, and Nestor is just, but his insults to Odysseus and to Diomedes are gratuitous.

Agamemnon does some things right, and some things wrong. He treats some kings correctly, and other kings incorrectly.

One of the things he does right is to review the troops, although he makes a few mistakes when he does so. His purpose is good. He wishes to encourage the troops to fight well, so he praises those who are ready to fight and criticizes those who he feels are unready to fight.

Agamemnon praises many people who are deserving of praise. Idomeneus of Crete is one such person. Others are the two Ajaxes and Nestor. All of these men are ready to fight. Here Agamemnon does the right thing. He praises men who

are worthy of praise. In this book we find out one reason why Nestor is regarded as wise. Some of his men are known cowards, so he puts them in the center, where they must fight. If they were on the right or the left or in the rear, they would find it easier to run away.

Agamemnon does make a mistake when he criticizes Odysseus and Menestheus, who have not yet heard the call to action. Agamemnon says that they are first to arrive at feasts, but now they are not willing to go to the battlefield. In other words, they are willing to accept the pay, but not to do the work. Odysseus has proper pride, and he criticizes Agamemnon in turn, saying that he (Odysseus) is always ready to fight. Agamemnon backs down, as he ought to.

Agamemnon next criticizes Diomedes and Sthenelus. Sthenelus becomes angry, but Diomedes remains calm, saying that he recognizes that Agamemnon is doing what he ought to be doing — that is, pumping up the troops. Diomedes acts the way he should act. He is the youngest of the Greek warriors, and therefore he shows deference to Agamemnon.

• What can we learn from the death of Simoisius at the end of Book 4?

Following Agamemnon's review of the troops, the Achaeans and the Trojans clash in battle. Warriors die.

What is Homer's attitude toward death? To find out, we can investigate the deaths of some of the lesser heroes in the *Iliad*. Many warriors die quickly, but frequently Homer mentions various facts about the lesser heroes — so and so was young, was engaged, but now he will never be married and now he will not be able to take care of his parents in their old age. The lesser warriors are not as important as the great heroes, but there is pathos in their deaths.

An Important Passage

For an example, check out Fagles 4.547-564 and Johnston 4.549-566, which describe the death of Simoisius (pronounced si-mo-EE-si-us — the river Simois is pronounced SIM-oh-is), only the third person to be killed in the *Iliad*:

And Telamonian Ajax struck Anthemion's son,
 the hardy stripling Simoisius, still unwed ...
 His mother had borne him along the Simois' banks
 when she trailed her parents down the slopes of Ida
 to tend their flocks, and so they called him Simoisius.
 But never would he repay his loving parents now
 for the gift of rearing — his life cut short so soon,
 brought down by the spear of lionhearted Ajax.
 At the first charge he slashed his right nipple,
 clean through the shoulder went the brazen point
 and down in the dust he fell like a lithe black poplar
 shot up tall and strong in the spreading marshy flats,
 the trunk trimmed but its head a shock of branches.
 A chariot-maker fells it with shining iron ax
 as timber to bend for handsome chariot wheels
 and there it lies, seasoning by the river ...
 So lay Anthemion's son Simoisius, cut down
 by the giant royal Ajax.
 (Fagles 4.547-564)

Compare:

Then Ajax, son of Telamon, hit Simoeisius,
Anthemion's son, a fine young warrior.
He was born on the banks of the river Simoeis,
while his mother was coming down mount Ida,
accompanying her parents to watch their flocks.
That's why the people called him Simoeisius.
But he did not repay his fond parents for raising him.
His life was cut short on Great Ajax's deadly spear.
As he was moving forward with the men in front,
Ajax struck him in the chest, by the right nipple.
The bronze spear went clean through his shoulder.
He collapsed in the dust, like a poplar tree,
one growing in a large well-watered meadow,
from whose smooth trunk the branches grow up to
the top,
until a chariot builder's bright axe topples it,
bends the wood, to make wheel rims for a splendid
chariot,
letting the wood season by the riverbank.
That's how godlike Ajax chopped down Simoeisius,
son of Anthemion.

(Johnston 4.549-566)

Analysis of the Passage

Seth Schein makes a number of points about this passage in his *The Mortal Hero* (73-76):

- The passage is framed by the two statements that Ajax did the killing.
- Simoisius is twice called a son, while Ajax is identified only once as a son (to tell us which Ajax it is who does the killing).
- The name of Simoisius' father suggests the Greek word *anthos*, or flower, connecting Simoisius with natural growth. (Simoisius dies in the flower of his youth.)
- This connection is further reinforced when Simoisius' death is compared to the cutting down of a young tree by a chariot-maker. This is ironic — chariots are used in war and in killing people.
- The poplar lies seasoning — or hardening — and Simoisius' body will undergo rigor mortis.

Simoisius' Birth

In this short passage, Homer also fits in some details about Simoisius' birth. His mother was helping her parents to tend sheep, and she gave birth by the river. All of this is interrupted by the war. (There is no more herding sheep on Mount Ida — war is going on now.)

Conclusion: Homer is an Anti-war Poet

Simoisius was a young man, very healthy, and still unwed. He will never know the pleasures of wedded life and never have a child. His life is cut short, unfinished and unfulfilled. In addition, he will not be around to take care of his aged parents in a world without Social Security.

As always, I suspect that Homer is an anti-war poet. He is aware of the negative impact of the war on noncombatants.

• How does Homer keep Achilles in our minds while Achilles is absent?

As always, Achilles is in the background of our minds. Apollo mentions Achilles while urging on the Trojans:

“[...] Stab them, slash their flesh!

Achilles the son of lovely sleek-haired Thetis —
the man’s not even fighting, no, he wallows
in all his heartsick fury by the ships!”

(Fagles 4.591-594)

Compare:

“Charge ahead, you horse-taming Trojans.

Don’t make Argives happy. Their skin’s not made
of stone or iron. Once you strike at them
it can’t stop flesh-ripping bronze. And Achilles,
son of lovely Thetis, isn’t in this fight.

He’s sitting by his ships, nursing his anger.”

(Johnston 4.588-593)

Homer makes sure that Achilles is never far from our minds.

Conclusion

In Book 5, Diomedes will fight the gods — with the permission of Athena. Diomedes forms a contrast with Achilles. Diomedes knows his human limits; Achilles does not.

Chapter 5: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 5: Diomedes Fights the Gods / Diomedes Goes to Battle

Important Terms

In Book 5, Diomedes has an *aristeia* and demonstrates *sophrosyne*.

Aristeia (a-ris-STAY-a): a warrior's period of excellence in battle

Sophrosyne: lack of presumption, restraint, recognition of human limits

Sophrosyne: Soundness of mind, moderation, prudence, self-control.

The Greeks had a word for it, at least classical Greeks like Plato did. Translating the idea into English, however, has always posed a difficulty, since we don't have one word that summarizes his ideal of excellence of character and soundness of mind combined in one well-balanced individual. He defined it as "the agreement of the passions that Reason should rule". It's usually translated as temperance, moderation, prudence, self-control, or self-restraint. The idea of this harmonious balance is the basis of two famous Greek sayings: "nothing in excess" and "know thyself" — it's the exact opposite of arrogant self-assertion or hubris. The word has only appeared in English within the past sixty years (W H Auden used it in 1944) but it has resonated with some moderns because the idea is quite close to that of wholeness. Note the word has four syllables, not three. It derives from Greek *sophron*, of sound mind, prudent.

Source:

<http://www.worldwidewords.org/weirdwords/ww-sop1.htm>

• We know that Zeus has promised Thetis that the Trojans will have temporary ascendancy over the Achaeans; however, which things favor the Achaeans at this point?

Although Zeus has promised Thetis that the Trojans will win a victory that will force Agamemnon to apologize to Achilles, much favors the Achaeans at this point:

1) Zeus sent the lying dream to Agamemnon — the Achaeans don't know that it is a lying dream.

The Achaeans would be fired up because they think they will win.

2) Right is on the side of the Achaeans.

First Paris committed an injury against the Achaeans, and then Pandarus did. Both Paris and Pandarus are in the wrong, and both are Trojans.

3) Menelaus clearly defeated Paris in single combat.

Both sides had made binding oaths to the gods that they would observe the results of the single combat. The Trojans broke their oath.

4) Chances are, the Achaeans usually won the battles fought during the Trojan War.

The Achaeans outnumber the Trojans, although the Trojans do have allies. (Many more Trojans than Achaeans die in the *Iliad*.)

Clearly, the time seems ripe for an Achaean victory.

• **If you feel like doing research, identify what an *aristeia* (a-ris-STAY-a) is.**

An *aristeia* is a warrior's day of glory in battle, a day in which the hero is nearly unstoppable and fights so well that bards such as Homer keep his memory alive after the warrior dies by singing about the warrior's *aristeia* in epic poems such as the *Iliad*.

In the *Iliad*, we will see many *aristeias*, including this first *aristeia* by Diomedes. However, Agamemnon will also have an *aristeia*, and Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, will also have an *aristeia*. On the Trojan side, Hector will have an *aristeia*.

The most impressive *aristeia* of all, of course, will be that of Achilles, whose *aristeia* will continue over a few books of the *Iliad*.

The word *aristeia* means excellence in battle. Usually, according to Seth Schein's *Mortal Hero*, pp. 80-81) an *aristeia* has five sections (these can be changed to make the poet's points; not all characteristics are present in every *aristeia*):

- 1) *The hero arms himself.* Very often in the arming process, the armor shines like fire. Whenever that happens, you know that the hero arming himself will fight very well.
- 2) *The hero turns the tide of battle by killing an enemy.*
- 3) *The hero wreaks havoc in the ranks of the enemy.*
- 4) *The hero is wounded, but recovers, and re-enters the battle, killing an important enemy.*

5) A battle is fought over the corpse of the important enemy, which is eventually taken from the hero (often with divine assistance).

• **How does Athena reveal that Diomedes will have an *aristeia*?**

At the beginning of Book 5, Athena announces Diomedes' *aristeia*:

Then Pallas Athena gave Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
 strength and courage, so among all Argives,
 he'd stand out and win heroic glory.
 She made his helmet blaze with tireless flames,
 his shield as well, like a late star in summer
 which shines especially bright, newly risen from its
 bath
 in Ocean's streams. Around his head and shoulders
 the goddess put a fiery glow, then drove him forward,
 right into the middle of the strife, the killing zone,
 where most warriors fight.
 (Johnston 5.1-10)

Notice the fire imagery in that description. It means that Diomedes will fight very well indeed.

Tydides means the son of Tydeus: Diomedes.

• **In his descriptions of battles, does Homer focus on individual warriors or on armies?**

Homer tells the stories of battles by focusing on individual exploits and individual warriors. A battle is a succession of

individual exploits by individual warriors. Homer doesn't really show us armies in action, just individual warriors performing notable exploits. Always, the stronger warrior defeats the weaker warrior.

Sir Walter Scott was good at describing the actions of armies; Homer describes the actions of individual warriors.

• Which special gift does Athena give to Diomedes? Which instructions does she give him?

Athena also gives Diomedes a special gift: the ability to see a god as a god, even when the god is in disguise. She tells him,

“Look, I’ve lifted the mist from off your eyes
 that’s blurred them up to now —
 so you can tell a god from man on sight.
 So now if a god comes up to test your mettle,
 you must not fight the immortal powers head-on,
 all but one of the deathless gods, that is —
 if Aphrodite daughter of Zeus slips into battle,
 she’s the one to stab with your sharp bronze spear!”
 (Fagles 5.140-147)

Compare:

“Take courage, Diomedes, in this fight with Trojans.
 I’ve put your father’s strength into your chest,
 that shield-bearing horseman’s fearless power.
 And I’ve removed the filter from your eyes
 which covered them before, so now,

you'll easily distinguish gods from men.
 If a god comes here and stands against you,
 don't offer to fight any deathless one,
 except for Aphrodite, Zeus' daughter.
 If she fights, cut her with your sharp bronze.”

(Johnston 5.142-151)

When a god or goddess gives a warrior gifts such as this, the gifts will be an aid in battle.

Athena tells Diomedes that he is allowed to wound only Aphrodite. He must not fight the other gods.

• How does Homer keep the battle from being monotonous?

Homer does a number of things to keep the battle from being monotonous:

1) The episodes with the gods are frequently meant to be humorous, including the episodes where the gods — Aphrodite and Ares — are wounded.

For example, when Aphrodite is wounded, she runs crying to her mother. And Ares is a hypocrite who kills mortal human beings and then complains about being wounded by a human being. (Being immortal, Ares cannot be killed so he has a big advantage in battle.)

2) The battle goes first for the Achaeans, then the Trojans, then the Achaeans again.

When the Trojans are winning, Hector is very active. We can tell which side will have the advantage by the actions of the gods:

- 1) Athena fires up Diomedes, and the Achaeans are winning.
- 2) Ares enters the battle and fires up Hector, and the Trojans begin to win.
- 3) Hera and Athena enter the war, and Athena fires up Diomedes again, and the Achaeans begin to win again.

To make a battle interesting, its outcome should be uncertain and so it is right that the momentum of the battle should change back and forth. Such a change in momentum is realistic.

Think of the most exciting sports game you have ever seen. It would be the one where the lead changes hands constantly, not a blowout.

3) *Homer uses variety in his epic poem.*

Homer uses dialogue, then narrative, then a humorous episode with the gods, then dialogue again.

• **Which action does Pandarus perform in Book 5?**

Let me say that a number of people get killed in the *Iliad* — minor characters almost all of them (the exceptions are Sarpedon, Patroclus, and Hector).

It's like an old TV episode of *Combat*, where guest stars are brought on each week for the purpose of being killed — you can't kill a star!

First, however, Pandarus repeats the act he performed in Book 4 — the wounding of an unwary man. In Book 4, he wounded Menelaus. Here in Book 5 he wounds Diomedes:

Lycaon's fine son saw Diomedes moving fast
along the plain, pushing Trojan ranks in front of him,

in complete disorder. He quickly bent his bow,
 taking aim at Diomedes. He fired an arrow
 and hit him on his sculpted body armour,

in the right shoulder. The sharp arrow went in there,
 kept going, and splattered blood down on the curving
 metal.

(Johnston 5.107-113)

He shoots his arrow and hits Diomedes, then boasts,

“Come on, you brave horse-lashing Trojans.

For the finest of Achaeans has been hurt.

I don’t think he’ll long survive my arrow’s force,

if Apollo, son of Zeus, really was the one

who put it in my heart to leave Lycia.”

(Johnston 5.115-119)

• Pandarus is an archer; Diomedes is not. How does Pandarus come close enough to Diomedes that Diomedes can kill him?

Although he is wounded, Diomedes prays to Athena to bring Pandarus close to him so he can kill Pandarus.

Of course, Diomedes is not killed. Eventually, Diomedes will kill Pandarus. First, though, Homer has to get Pandarus closer to Diomedes. After all, Pandarus is an archer, while Diomedes fights in hand-to-hand combat. How can Homer get Pandarus close enough to Diomedes for Diomedes to kill him?

Homer does it through Aeneas. Aeneas wants Pandarus to shoot Diomedes with an arrow, but Pandarus is too disappointed with his shooting:

“Too late, O friend! my rashness I deplore;
 These shafts, once fatal, carry death no more.
 Tydeus’ and Atreus’ sons their points have found,
 And undissembled gore pursued the wound.
 In vain they bleed: this unavailing bow
 Serves, not to slaughter, but provoke the foe.”
 (Pope pdf 126)

Compare:

“For already I’ve hit two of their best men,
 Tydeus’ son and the son of Atreus.
 I’ve drawn blood from both of them, it’s true,
 but that just made them much more dangerous.”
 (Johnston 5.242-245)

Therefore, Aeneas drives his team and chariot at Diomedes while Pandarus fights Diomedes with a spear. Diomedes is victorious, killing Pandarus and nearly killing Aeneas, too.

In his *The Story of the Iliad*, E.T. Owen points out that Homer gets “his characters to do his necessary work for him” (51). Pandarus must be killed, but the way he gets killed is because of his character. His death is plausible, not forced. If Pandarus were to continue shooting arrows, Diomedes would not get close enough to him to kill him. However, because Pandarus is understandably disappointed that his arrows haven’t killed Menelaus or Diomedes, but only

wounded them, he decides to do some close-in fighting, which allows Diomedes to get close enough to him to kill him.

• **Why is it morally satisfying that Pandarus dies in Book 5?**

Pandarus attempted to assassinate Menelaus in Book 4 despite the truce between the Trojans and the Achaeans; therefore, it is morally satisfying that Pandarus die now.

Pandarus is guilty, so Pandarus must die. Troy is guilty, so Troy must fall.

Diomedes make a boast, and then he kills Pandarus:

He spoke, and rising hurl'd his forceful dart,
Which, driven by Pallas, pierced a vital part;
Full in his face it enter'd, and betwixt
The nose and eye-ball the proud Lycian fix'd;
Crash'd all his jaws, and cleft the tongue within,
Till the bright point look'd out beneath the chin.
Headlong he falls, his helmet knocks the ground:
Earth groans beneath him, and his arms resound;
The starting coursers tremble with affright;
The soul indignant seeks the realms of night.
(Pope pdf 128)

• **Does Diomedes follow Athena's instructions?**

Athena has told Diomedes that he is allowed to wound Aphrodite, whom Diomedes recognizes as a "coward goddess" (Fagles 5.371). It is true that Aphrodite is a coward

goddess, as we see in what happens when Aphrodite tries to rescue her son Aeneas.

When Aeneas is wounded, it is his mother Aphrodite who comes to his rescue — he is not fated to die at Troy. However, Diomedes, following Athena’s instructions, wounds Aphrodite. Aphrodite drops her son Aeneas, who is then rescued by Apollo.

Note that Diomedes grievously wounds Aeneas (Fagles 5.336-346); however, Apollo takes Aeneas from the battlefield and two goddesses — Leto and Artemis — heal him (Fagles 5.512-517).

• Write a character analysis of Aphrodite based on what you learn in Book 5. How does Aphrodite react when she is wounded? Is this a tragic scene?

Almost always, the gods in the *Iliad* are comedic. Some exceptions are when what they do affects Achilles. Quite simply, the wounding of a god does not have the force of the wounding of a human being because the gods are immortal. It is human beings who die. The gods run or fly away and are healed on Mount Olympus.

Tragedy affects only mortal beings. The wounds of gods and goddesses heal quickly.

Aphrodite asks Ares for help:

“Dear brother, save me. Give me your horses,
 so I may go back up to mount Olympus,
 the immortals’ home. My wound pains me a lot.
 A mortal man inflicted this wound on me,
 Tydeus’ son, who’d now fight Father Zeus himself.”
 (Johnston 5.424-428)

Frequently, the gods are crybabies. When Aphrodite is wounded, she cries to her mother:

[...] “The son of Tydeus stabbed me,
 Diomedes, that overweening, insolent — all because
 I was bearing off my son from the fighting. Aeneas —
 —
 dearest to me of all the men alive. Look down!
 It’s no longer ghastly war for Troy and Achaea —
 now, I tell you, the Argives fight the gods!”

(Fagles 5.425-430)

Dione comforts Aphrodite by telling her about other gods who have been wounded by mortals.

However, when Aphrodite is wounded, Athena mocks her:

“Father Zeus, you won’t get angry with me
 for what I say, will you? Aphrodite,
 trying to coax some new Achaean woman
 into running off with one of those Trojans
 she loves so much, must have been caressing
 some well-dressed Achaean lady and scratched
 her delicate hand on a golden brooch.”

(Johnston 5.500-506)

Zeus smiles at Athena’s words.

• **If *you* were in danger of being killed, how would *your* mother act? How does that compare to how Aphrodite acts when Aeneas, her son, is in danger?**

If you were in danger, your mother is very likely to sacrifice her life in order to save your life.

When Ohio University student Nathaniel Sturgil was a child, an alarm clock caused a major panic in his family. The alarm was set very loud to allow the family to wake up to music, but one morning a radio drama was playing on the station. The radio drama was about a house fire, and the crackling of the flames could be heard very clearly. His mother ran screaming through the house, waking up her children and making them go outside until she realized her mistake

Aphrodite doesn't do that. When she is wounded, she drops her son and runs away. Of course, Aphrodite cannot be killed because she is immortal. In addition, her wound is minor and easily cured. Human mothers (and many animal mothers, probably) love their children more than Aphrodite loves her mortal son).

Animals can show more heroism than Aphrodite: In 1992, Cassandra and John Craven took Jane, their two-year-old daughter, and Socks, their pet cat, along on a vacation to the Adirondack Mountains. While Jane was in a clearing, a black bear suddenly came and grabbed her in its jaws. Socks the cat came to the rescue, jumping onto the bear's head and scratching at its eyes. The black bear released Jane and started clawing at Socks, who jumped off the bear's head and fled with the black bear in hot pursuit. Jane was fine, although the bear's teeth had torn her clothing. Two hours later, Socks the cat showed up, safe and sound and winner of the match — Cat: 1, Bear: 0. (Source: Christopher Farran, *Animals to the Rescue!*, pp. 76-77.)

Aphrodite, the goddess of love, loves her son, Aeneas, to some extent. She rescues him when he is threatened by Diomedes, but when Diomedes injures her, she drops Aeneas and runs away. This is remarkable, because Aphrodite is not risking her life if she stays — as an immortal goddess, Aphrodite cannot die. She has a very minor wound that is quickly healed, but nevertheless, Aphrodite drops Aeneas, her mortal son, leaving him in danger of being killed. Fortunately, Apollo protects Aeneas and prevents Diomedes from killing him.

Aphrodite is also a crybaby. Diomedes wounds her hand, and Aphrodite cries, although she knows that she is immortal and cannot die. (The gods and goddesses can feel pain.)

Diomedes does better than Aphrodite (and Ares). Diomedes was wounded, but he kept on fighting. The wounded gods leave the battle.

By the way, Aeneas will be the hero of Virgil's Roman epic poem *Aeneid*.

• Diomedes' character is noted for his *sophrosyne* — his lack of presumption, his restraint, his recognition of human limits.

In Book 4 we saw Diomedes' *sophrosyne* in the way he reacted to Agamemnon's criticism of him. Diomedes is noted for his obedience. He is able to get along with his superiors. We see this in Book 4 when Agamemnon is reviewing the troops and criticizes Diomedes for not being prepared to fight. Sthenelus is with Diomedes, and he responds to Agamemnon's attack, but Diomedes says that he does not mind Agamemnon's criticizing him, because a leader is supposed to rally his troops. If criticizing the troops will make them fight harder, then that is what the leader ought to do.

Diomedes said,

“I don’t blame Agamemnon, our commander in chief,

for goading his combat-ready Argives into battle.

The glory goes to him if the Argive fighters

lay the Trojans low and take their sacred city,

but immense grief is his if comrades die in droves.

Up now, rouse our fighting-fury!”

(Fagles 4.478-484)

One reason Diomedes is so deferential to Agamemnon is because he is the youngest commander among the Achaean kings. Agamemnon is older, and therefore Diomedes defers to him.

Diomedes respects the authority of the king, and he respects the authority of the gods. Even during his *aristeia*, Diomedes recognizes that he is human and not a god. Athena tells Diomedes to keep away from all the gods except for Aphrodite, and Diomedes obeys — he wounds only Aphrodite. Later, after receiving Athena’s permission, he wounds Ares.

Diomedes appears superhuman as he tries to kill Aeneas (who was acting as Pandarus’ charioteer) while Apollo protects him, but when Apollo tells Diomedes to back off, he obeys. Diomedes does risk going too far when he charges Apollo three times in his battle frenzy in an attempt to kill Aeneas. However, Diomedes comes to his senses and withdraws after Apollo gives him this warning:

“O son of Tydeus, cease! be wise and see

How vast the difference of the gods and thee;

Distance immense! between the powers that shine

Above, eternal, deathless, and divine,
 And mortal man! a wretch of humble birth,
 A short-lived reptile in the dust of earth.”
 (Pope pdf 132)

Compare:

“Take care, son of Tydeus. Go back.
 Don’t think you’re equal to the gods.
 The race of men who walk upon the ground
 can never match the race of deathless gods.”
 (Johnston 5.522-525)

Athena rallies Diomedes when she sees that he is not fighting Ares. This is a macho society. Men and the gods — and goddesses — rally fighters by insulting them. In this case, Athena rallies Diomedes by saying that he is not half the man his father was.

When Diomedes sees Ares fighting in the battle, he withdraws, and when Athena bawls him out for withdrawing from the battle, Diomedes replies mildly that he was only obeying her orders. She then gives him permission to fight and wound Ares. Only with Athena’s permission does Diomedes wound Ares. (By the way, Diomedes is also wounded — Pandarus previously hit him with an arrow.) When Athena gives him permission to fight Ares, Diomedes wounds him in the bowels where his belt cinches tight. Of course, Ares is not killed, since he is an immortal god, but he does withdraw from the fighting.

• **Write a short character analysis of Diomedes.**

Diomedes is noted for his obedience.

Diomedes is able to get along with his superiors. We see this in Book 4 when Agamemnon is reviewing the troops and criticizes Diomedes for not being prepared to fight. Sthenelus is with Diomedes, and he responds to Agamemnon's attack, but Diomedes says that he does not mind Agamemnon's criticizing him because a leader is supposed to rally his troops. If criticizing the troops will make them fight harder, then that is what the leader ought to do.

Diomedes is so deferential to Agamemnon in part because he is the youngest commander among the Achaean kings.

Agamemnon is older, and therefore Diomedes defers to him.

Diomedes also defers to the wishes of Athena and Apollo.

Athena gives him the gift of being able to tell who is or is not a god, and she also tells him to fight no one but Aphrodite. Diomedes obeys her wishes. He fights Aphrodite, wounding her on the hand and causing her to drop Aeneas, her son. Diomedes then is eager to get to Aeneas and kill him, but Aeneas is protected by Apollo. After Apollo warns Diomedes not to continue fighting the gods, Diomedes stops fighting the gods but continues to kill Trojans.

Shortly afterward, Athena criticizes Diomedes for not fighting Ares, but Diomedes points out that he is merely following her orders — fight no god but Aphrodite. Diomedes wounds Ares only after getting permission from Athens to do so.

In Diomedes, we have a contrast to Achilles.

Diomedes is obedient and listens to orders from his superiors, whereas Achilles does not always obey the commands of Agamemnon.

Diomedes does better in battle than Aphrodite and Ares.

Diomedes was wounded by Pandarus, but he kept on fighting. The wounded gods leave the battle.

• **How does Ares react when he is wounded?**

Even Ares, the god of war, is a crybaby. After Diomedes wounds him, Ares complains to Zeus:

his spirit racked with pain, Ares displayed the blood,
 the fresh immortal blood that gushed from his
 wound,
 and burst out in a flight of self-pity: “Father Zeus,
 aren’t you incensed to see such violent brutal work?
 We everlasting gods... Ah what chilling blows
 we suffer — thanks to our own conflicting wills —
 whenever we show these mortal men some
 kindness.”

(Fagles 5.1004-1010)

Compare:

“Father Zeus,
 aren’t you incensed at this barbarity?
 We gods are always suffering dreadfully
 at each other’s hands, when we bring men help.”

(Johnston 5.996-999)

Great! Ares can kill human beings, but he feels bad when a mortal man wounds him. The reference to “kindness” (Fagles 5.1010) in Ares’ speech is ironic. Ares is the most

hated of the gods because he is the god of war. Ares brings misery, not kindness, to humanity.

Ares' being wounded is not a tragic scene. He cannot die, so no tragedy is involved.

• Write a character analysis of Ares based on what you learn in Book 5. What is he noted for?

Ares is the god of war, and he is hated both by gods and by humans.

As the god of war, he brings destructions to humans, and so they hate him. And Zeus says that he hates Ares — his own son — more than any other Olympian god. (However, Zeus also says that he can't stand to see Ares suffer after Ares is wounded, so he orders that Ares be healed.)

Ares seems to be a crybaby and a coward.

Ares is immortal, and he fights against mortals in battle and kills many of them, but he objects when Diomedes, under orders from Athena, wounds him. Interestingly, Ares speaks of the kindnesses he has shown to men, but actually he has been killing them.

Ares doesn't seem to be very intelligent.

Early in Book 5, Ares is fighting on the side of the Trojans, but Athena, who favors the Greeks, convinces Ares to stop fighting. This allows Diomedes to fight well without being opposed by Ares.

Often in the *Iliad*, the gods are not characters who are worthy of being venerated. Often, they seem cowardly and of poor character.

• What does it take to have a tragedy? What does it take to be a hero? Are the gods (and goddesses) tragic figures? Can the gods (and goddesses) be heroes?

In order to have a tragedy, someone must lose something important, such as his or her life. The gods and goddesses are immortal, so they are incapable of tragedy. A human being who loses his or her life stays dead forever, according to the beliefs of the ancient Greeks.

Human beings can be heroes, but the gods and goddesses cannot.

Only heroes can risk their lives in war or to help another person. When Ares fights in war, so what? He is immortal — he can't be killed. Ares isn't risking anything when he fights in battle.

Even when the gods are wounded, they are quickly healed:

Paeëon cured him by spreading pain-killing herbs,
 for Ares wasn't born to die. Just as fig juice
 added quickly to white milk clots it at once,
 as it's stirred, that's how fast headstrong Ares healed.
 Hebe washed him and clothed him in fine garments.
 He sat beside Zeus, son of Cronos, enjoying his
 splendour.

(Johnston 5.1031-1036)

The wounds of the gods quickly heal, and they sit at their ease — it is human beings who die and stay dead.

• **What is Zeus' opinion of Ares, who is his son and the god of war?**

Zeus is king of the gods, and it is interesting to hear what he thinks of — and says to — Ares the god of war near the end of Book 5. Zeus realizes the evils of war:

“You — I hate you the most of all the Olympian gods.

Always dear to your heart,

strife, yes, and battles, the bloody grind of war.

You have your mother's uncontrollable rage — incorrigible,

that Hera — say what I will, I can hardly keep her down.”

(Fagles 5.1030-1034)

Zeus' words that Ares is the Olympian god he most hates helps convince me that the *Iliad* is an anti-war poem.

• **What does it mean to say that the gods are a metaphorical explanation of a human character's own impulses? Give an example.**

Some critics look at the gods and goddesses as providing psychologizing explanations for human emotions. Occasionally, this seems to be true. In Book 1, Achilles thinks about drawing his sword and killing Agamemnon, but the goddess Athena, who has been sent by Hera, stops him. We can look at that as being Achilles thinking before he acts and deciding that killing Agamemnon is not a good thing to do.

• **Should we regard the gods as being actual reality within the pages of the *Iliad*?**

However, the gods take part in the action of the *Iliad*. Ares fights on the battlefield. Aphrodite rescues Paris when it looks as if Menelaus will kill him in the duel. Apollo rescues Aeneas when Aphrodite fails to do that. Often, we cannot look at the gods and goddesses as providing psychologizing explanations for human emotions. Clearly, they are active participants in the *Iliad*.

When Aphrodite rescues Paris when Menelaus defeats him in their duel, she is an active participant in the action. The narrator, Homer himself, tells us that she takes action at that time.

Diomedes wounds both Ares and Aphrodite when they are on the battlefield.

When reading the *Iliad*, we must assume that the gods and goddesses are actual entities who participant in the action. They are real beings as opposed to being ways of explaining human emotions.

• **Compare and contrast Diomedes and Achilles.**

Diomedes is a human being who knows his (human) place — he does not try to be a god. This forms a contrast with Achilles, who will try to break out of his human limits — by, for example, fighting a river. Diomedes knows his human limits, but Achilles, as we will see later, does not.

In Diomedes, we have a contrast to Achilles. Diomedes is obedient and listens to orders from his superiors, whereas Achilles does not always obey the commands of Agamemnon. Diomedes knows his (human) place, while Achilles does not.

Achilles is kept in our minds during the early books of the *Iliad*, even when he is not playing an active role in events — his very absence is important. Hera shows us the significance of Achilles' absence when she rallies the Trojans:

“Shame on you, you Argive warriors.
 You're a disgrace, good only for display.
 When lord Achilles used to go to battle,
 the Trojans didn't dare to venture out
 beyond the Dardanian gates. They feared
 his mighty spear. But now they're fighting
 well outside the city, by our hollow ships.”
 (Johnston 5.899-905)

• **Sarpedon will be an important character later. What do we learn about him in Book 5?**

In Book 5, Homer is building Sarpedon up as a significant hero so that his death will be important when it occurs later.

Sarpedon is a Trojan ally.

We first see Sarpedon in Book 5 encouraging Hector to fight:

“Hector, where's that courage you used to have?
 You kept claiming you could guard the city
 on your own, without your people or your allies,
 using your own family and relatives.
 Looking round now, I can't see them here,
 any of them. They've all taken refuge,
 like dogs around a lion. Those of us

who've come as allies, we do all the fighting.”

(Johnston 5.559-566)

Hector is stung by Sarpedon's criticism and begins to fight.

In Book 5 Sarpedon later fights Tlepolemus and wins. Both men throw spears at each other, and both men are hit, but only Sarpedon lives. Sarpedon says to Hector,

“Son of Priam, don't let me lie here,
a trophy for Danaans. Rescue me.
Let me remain forever in your city,
since it seems I'll not be going home
to cheer up my dear wife and infant son.”

(Johnston 5.790-794)

Hector is so anxious to fight that he doesn't help Sarpedon, but Sarpedon's comrades save him — still, he will die in a later book.

• **Does Homer recognize the evils of war?**

In my opinion, Homer recognizes the evils of war:

- War is a place to win honor, according to Homer, but it is also a place of death.
- Frequently, Homer realistically describes brains being dashed out, blood spurting, etc.
- In addition, Homer realizes that many aged parents back in Greece will live their old age without the comfort of their sons and he realizes that many wives will become widows as a result of the war.

- In addition, Homer realizes that eventually a great city will fall and the ancient world will lose a center of civilization.

• **Is Homer realistic in describing wounds and death?**

Homer is very realistic in his descriptions of the wounds and death inflicted during war.

Although war is a place where glory can be won, Homer recognizes the horrors of war.

Here we see the wounds and death inflicted during war. Homer is very realistic in these descriptions. For example:

First, Agamemnon,

king of men, threw huge Odios, chief of the Halizoni,
from his chariot. His spear first struck him in the
back,

between the shoulder blades, as he turned to flee.

His next of kin thus divided up his assets.

It drove clean through his chest. Odios pitched
forward

with a thud, his armour rattling round him as he fell.

(Johnston 5.42-47)

And:

Meriones caught him [Phereclus] quickly, running
him down hard

and speared him low in the right buttock — the point

pounding under his pelvis, jabbed and pierced the
bladder —

he dropped to his knees, screaming, death swirling around him.

(Fagles 5.72-75)

• **How does the Trojan War affect non-combatants who are not present?**

Homer also realizes the effect of death on relatives — whether Greek or Trojan. For example, Diomedes kills the “two sons of Phaenops” (Fagles 5.169):

The son of Tydeus killed the two of them on the spot, he ripped the dear life out of both and left their father tears and wrenching grief. Now he’d never welcome his two sons home from war, alive in the flesh, and distant kin would carve apart their birthright.

(Fagles 5.173-177)

Compare:

Then Diomedes went after Xanthus and Thoön, two sons of Phaenops, both of whom he loved. Worn down by sad old age, he’d have no other child, no person to inherit all his property.

Diomedes killed them, took the life they loved, leaving bitter grief and anguish for their father, who wouldn’t welcome them back home from war alive.

His next of kin thus divided up his assets.

(Johnston 5.174-181)

Although war is a place where glory can be won, Homer recognizes the horrors of war.

Conclusion

Book 6 allows us to go inside Troy and see the family lives of Paris and Helen and of Hector and Andromache.

Chapter 6: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 6 — Hector Returns to Troy / Hector and Andromache

Introduction

Book 6 is very important. It contains the tenderest moment in the *Iliad*. Hector goes back to Troy to get Paris. While there, he sees his wife, Andromache, and their son, Astyanax.

• What can we learn from Diomedes' killing of Axylus, Teuthras' son?

Homer recognizes that in war good people are killed. At the beginning of Book 6, Diomedes kills a good man: Axylus, Teuthras' son:

a man of means and a friend to all mankind,
at his roadside house he'd warm all comers in.

(Fagles 6.16-17)

Clearly Axylus, Teuthras' son, respected the protocol of *xenia*.

This is the kind of writing that makes me think that Homer is an anti-war poet.

Compare this poem by Thomas Hardy:

The Man He Killed

By Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin! [half-pint cup]

But ranged as infantry,
 And staring face to face,
 I shot at him as he at me,
 And killed him in his place.
 I shot him dead because —
 Because he was my foe,
 Just so: my foe of course he was;
 That's clear enough; although
 He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
 Off-hand-like — just as I —
 Was out of work — had sold his traps —
 No other reason why.
 Yes; quaint and curious war is!
 You shoot a fellow down
 You'd treat, if met where any bar is,
 Or help to half-a-crown.

• **What form does supplication take in the ancient world?**

Being a suppliant — begging for one's life or begging for help — takes on a standard form in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

- The suppliant takes one arm and puts it around the knees of the person he is supplicating. This keeps the warrior from moving.
- The suppliant uses his other hand to reach up and grab the warrior's chin or beard or weapon.

- The suppliant begs for mercy.

Why does supplication take this form? Elizabeth Vandiver explains (*The Iliad of Homer* 152-153, the three points are paraphrased below):

- *The suppliant is showing that he does not have a weapon.* One hand is around the warrior's knees; the other hand is grabbing the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. The suppliant is not holding a weapon in either hand.
- *The suppliant is making the warrior pay attention to the suppliant.* One hand is around the warrior's knees, so the warrior can't move. The other hand is grabbing the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. The warrior is forced to pay attention to the suppliant.
- *The suppliant is showing that he is completely vulnerable and at the mercy of the person he is supplicating.* In addition to being unarmed, the suppliant's throat is exposed because he is looking up at the warrior.

In the act of supplication, the suppliant is completely vulnerable and submissive to the warrior.

Killing a suppliant is much different from killing a warrior who is fighting in battle. Often, the warrior will allow the suppliant to live. The warrior can sell the suppliant as a slave or allow the suppliant's family to ransom him.

• **What can we learn from the killing of Adrestus?**

The main thing we learn is that Agamemnon is not merciful.

We read about Menelaus capturing a Trojan alive: Adrestus. It is up to Menelaus whether he kills Adrestus or takes him alive and ransoms him. Adrestus takes the suppliant's position and begs for his life:

Adrestus hugged his knees and begged him,
pleading,

“Take me alive, Atrides, take a ransom worth my
life!

Treasures are piled up in my rich father’s house,
bronze and gold and plenty of well-wrought iron —
father would give you anything, gladly, priceless
ransom

if only he learns I’m still alive in Argive ships!”

(Fagles 6.54-58)

Menelaus is prepared to grant Adrestus his life, but Agamemnon is without mercy and argues that Menelaus ought not to show mercy to Adrestus.

Because of Agamemnon’s words, Menelaus rejects the suppliant, and Agamemnon kills Adrestus.

• What is Agamemnon’s attitude toward the Trojans, including Trojan children?

When Menelaus is prepared to grant Adrestus his life, Agamemnon says to him,

[...] “So soft, dear brother, why?

Why such concern for enemies? I suppose you got
such tender loving care at home from the Trojans.

Ah would to god not one of them could escape
his sudden plunging death beneath our hands!

No baby boy still in his mother’s belly,
not even he escape — all Ilium blotted out,

no tears for their lives, no markers for their graves!”

(Fagles 6.63-70)

Agamemnon would kill all Trojans, including the unborn (see Fagles 6.63-70). He has no mercy for his enemies and would like all Trojans to die.

This scene is also important for several reasons:

- It shows how much hatred Agamemnon has for the Trojans.
- This scene will form a contrast to a later scene in Book 6, in which we witness the friendship between the Achaean Diomedes and the Trojan ally Glaucus.
- In addition, later we will see Achilles so perverted by hate that he will act like Agamemnon.
- Furthermore, this scene gives us a glimpse of what the fall of Troy will be like when Agamemnon finally conquers it: Many women and children will perish in the fall of Troy. Later in Book 6, we see Hector with his son, Astyanax. Astyanax is one of the Trojan children whom Agamemnon wants to see die.

• What is the reference that Homer makes to writing in Book 6?

This passage is important because it shows the existence of writing:

“but the king [Proetus] seethed when he heard a tale like that.

He balked at killing the man — he’d some respect at least —

but he quickly sent him off to Lycia, gave him tokens,

murderous signs, scratched in a folded tablet,
and many of them too, enough to kill a man.

He told him [Bellerophon] to show them to Antea's
father:

that would mean his death.”

(Fagles 6.196-202)

Homer composed the *Iliad* orally (and perhaps had the *Iliad* written down); however, he may also have written down the *Iliad*. We simply don't know, although Bernard Knox argues in the Introduction of Robert Fagles' translation of the *Iliad* (20-22) that Homer was aware of the existence of writing. For example, Book 9 shows signs of having been revised. In Book 9, three emissaries are sent to talk to Achilles, but at times in Book 9 there are references to only two emissaries. The errors that appear in Book 9 could easily have been corrected; the fact that they were not corrected is evidence that a manuscript existed and that copyists did not want to deviate from the manuscript.

• **Interpret these important lines by Glaucus (Cf. Johnston 6.181-185):**

**“Like the generations of leaves, the lives of mortal
men.**

**Now the wind scatters the old leaves across the
earth,**

now the living timber bursts with the new buds

and spring comes round again. And so with men:

**as one generation comes to life, another dies
away.”**

(Fagles 6.171-175)

When Glaucus meets Diomedes on the battlefield, the two warriors tell each other who their ancestors are, but before telling Diomedes about his ancestors, Glaucus says the words quoted above (Fagles 6.171-175).

This is a melancholy, but realistic, philosophy. One generation dies, but another generation is born to replace it. Human beings are like leaves: We are born, we live for a short time, and then we die. The only thing that we can do about this is to choose how to live our lives. A hero will choose to live for glory. (But here we see something important: A hero can also choose to live for friendship — or at least to recognize the existence of friendship.)

• **Why do Diomedes and Glaucus introduce themselves?**

Diomedes and Glaucus meet on the battlefield, and Diomedes has never seen Glaucus before and so does not recognize him. (In the tenth year of the Trojan War, this is unlikely, so here we have another example of displacement.) Therefore, Diomedes asks him who he is. As we have seen before, Diomedes does not overstep the bounds of human beings. Diomedes says,

“I’m not the man to fight the gods of heaven.”

(Fagles 6.149)

Compare:

“If you’re one of the immortal gods
come down from heaven, I won’t fight you.”

(Johnston 6.157-158)

Of course, in Book 5, Diomedes did just that — but he had Athena’s permission.

Today, most of us identify ourselves by how we make money, although in California (so I am told) people identify

themselves by what gives them joy. (In Ohio, I identify myself by saying that I'm a teacher — but in California, someone may identify him- or herself by saying that he or she is a surfer.) The ancient Greeks, however, identified themselves by their ancestors.

This identification is important because of *kleos*. Homeric warriors want to be remembered after their death. Homeric warriors want their name to live on after they die. To have your name live on, other people have to know your name. If you are lucky, you will be remembered as a great warrior who slaughtered many other warriors. If you are unlucky, you may be remembered as the victim of a greater warrior than you are.

Also, of course, identifying yourself and knowing the identities of opposing warriors is important because you and they do not want to kill a hereditary guest-friend.

• What do we learn about the importance of *xenia* (the guest-host relationship) from the meeting between Diomedes and Glaucus?

Glaucus and Diomedes introduce themselves, and they discover that they are hereditary guest-friends. Diomedes' ancestor Oeneus hosted one of Glaucus' ancestors, who was named Bellerophon. Because their ancestors were friends, Glaucus and Diomedes are hereditary friends.

One thing to notice here is the importance of the guest-host relationship, which Paris violated. The guest-host relationship is so important that one's descendants will observe it. Travel in ancient Greece was very dangerous. The only form of society was that of small kingdoms. If you were a king, you could be a guest — or an enemy — of another king. In being a guest, you were under the protection of that king. In becoming a guest of that king, you were also pledging yourself to be the host of that king if he should ever

come into your territory. As we see with Glaucus and Diomedes, this friendship also extended to your descendants.

Diomedes' reaction to Glaucus' story of his ancestry is impressive:

[...] Diomedes, skilled at war cries, rejoiced.

He jabbed his spear into the life-giving earth,

and then spoke to that shepherd of his people as a friend:

“In that case, you're an old friend of my father.

For Oeneus once entertained Bellerophon,

that worthy man, in his home for twenty days. [...]"

(Johnston 6.272-277)

After Glaucus and Diomedes discover that they are hereditary guest-friends, they choose not to fight each other and attempt to kill each other. Because their grandfathers were friends, they are friends and therefore they don't fight each other. Instead, they decide that there are plenty of other warriors for them to kill.

• How can the relationship of Diomedes and Glaucus be compared to the hatred of Agamemnon and to the relationship between Paris and Menelaus?

Frequently, war is evil, as we all know. However, good things can occur even in the midst of war. We have seen Agamemnon's bloodthirstiness. He wishes even to kill the unborn children of his enemies. However, Diomedes and Glaucus show that there can be friendship between enemies in war.

This show of friendship is a powerful contrast to Agamemnon's hatred of the enemy. The story of the guest-host relationship is also a powerful contrast to the relationship between Paris and Menelaus.

• What trade do Glaucus and Diomedes make? What is the trade that Troy is making so that Paris and Helen can have an adulterous relationship?

Because of their friendship, they trade armor. Diomedes says,

“But let's trade armor. The men must know our claim:

we are sworn friends from our fathers' days till now!”

(Fagles 6.276-277)

Compare:

“[...] So let's trade armour.

Then those men here will all recognize

that we acknowledge our father's bonds as friends.”

(Johnston 6.293-295)

There is also some humor in this episode. Glaucus is wearing valuable gold armor (worth 100 oxen), while Diomedes is wearing less valuable bronze armor (worth only nine oxen), but the two warriors, at Diomedes' suggestion, exchange armor to show that they are friends:

But the son of Cronus, Zeus, stole Glaucus' wits away.

He traded his gold armor for bronze with Diomedes, the worth of a hundred oxen just for nine.

(Fagles 6.280-282)

Compare:

Then Zeus, son of Cronos, stole Glaucus' wits,
for he gave Tydeus' son his golden armour,
worth one hundred oxen, exchanging that
for armour made of bronze, worth only nine.

(Johnston 6.298-301)

Homer points out that Glaucus traded away gold armor that was worth 100 oxen for bronze armor that was worth only nine oxen.

This story shows a Trojan ally trading something very valuable for something not nearly so valuable. Troy is trading all the blessings of peace, and even the lives of its women and children, for Helen — and Helen isn't worth it. By the way, Paris isn't worth it, either. Quite simply, an adulterous relationship is not worth the destruction of a center of civilization.

If I were Menelaus, and Paris stole Helen from me, I'd be on the shore yelling at Paris on his ship (assuming that Helen went willingly with Paris), "You can have her — I don't want her. You two deserve each other."

The Trojans are risking everything they have so that Paris and Helen can have an adulterous relationship. Hector will die, Troy will fall, Trojan warriors will die, Trojan old men will die, and Trojan women and children will either die or become slaves. The Trojans have traded peace for war simply because Paris ran off with Helen. When Diomedes and Glaucus exchange armor, we see pictured the Trojans and their allies trading something valuable (peace or gold

armor) for something not as valuable (Paris and Helen's adulterous relationship or bronze armor).

• Which gods do the Trojans and the Achaeans worship? Which language do the Trojans and the Achaeans speak? (Do they speak the same language?)

In Book 6, we see Hector return to Troy, where he interacts with his mother, one of his brothers (Paris), Helen, and his wife and son. This gives us a peek inside the walls of Troy.

Troy, of course, is a center of civilization. Women and children live there.

One thing that we notice in the *Iliad* is that the Trojans and the Achaeans speak the same language and worship the same gods. Some of the Trojan allies speak a different language, but the Trojans and the Achaeans are able to talk to each other without a translator.

When Hector returns to Troy, one of his purposes is to ask his mother to pray to the goddess Athena. Of course, Athena is the patron goddess of the Achaean warrior Odysseus. The Trojans and the Achaeans worship exactly the same gods and goddesses, and of course, some gods are on the side of the Trojans and some gods are on the side of the Achaeans.

Of course, Homer presents the Trojans very sympathetically. Priam is a person whom it is difficult to hate, and most readers relate to Hector much more than they relate to Achilles.

The differences between the Trojans and the Achaeans are minor. Priam seems to have more than one wife (or perhaps he has concubines); he has had too many children (50 sons and a number of daughters; some ancient sources say 50 daughters) for Hecuba to bear alone.

• Why does Hector return to Troy (three reasons)?

Hector returns to Troy for these three reasons:

- 1) To ask his mother to pray to Athena and to offer her gifts.
- 2) To get Paris to return to the battlefield.
- 3) To see his family.

The Achaeans have been victorious in battle, due largely to Diomedes' *aristeia*, and so Hector returns to Troy to ask his mother to pray to the gods and to get Paris to return to the battle.

• Does Hector's return to Troy at this time make sense realistically? Does his return to Troy make sense aesthetically?

Hector returns to Troy to tell his mother to offer a sacrifice and gifts to Athena. This would not be wise in a real war. After all, the Trojans seem to be on the verge of being routed:

and the next moment crowds of Trojans once again
would have clambered back inside their city walls,
terror-struck by the Argives primed for battle.

(Fagles 6.85-87)

To be honest, it doesn't make realistic sense to have the Trojans' greatest warrior and leader to return to Troy while the Achaeans are being victorious on the battlefield, but Homer has another, aesthetic reason for having Hector return to Troy. Homer wants his audience to see Hector relating to his wife and child. This is a wonderful way to humanize the Trojans, and it makes excellent aesthetic sense.

However, Hector rallies the Trojans with words before he leaves for Troy:

“You proud Trojans, wide-renowned allies,
 friends, be men, summon up your fighting strength,
 while I go to Troy in person, to instruct
 the old men of the council and our wives
 to pray to the gods and promise sacrifice.”

(Johnston 6.138-142)

One thing that we know is that Troy is doomed. We have seen that in such events as Pandarus’ attempted assassination of Menelaus. We know that Troy will fall, and we know that Hector will die, that Hector’s son will be killed, and that Hector’s wife will become a sex-slave. Homer wants his audience to be familiar with these people and victims of war and to know the people that these bad things will happen to.

• What is the effect of the war on non-combatants, including the women of Troy? What do you imagine is the effect of the war on the women and parents back home in Achaea?

The women of Troy have been watching the battle from the walls of Troy, and they know that Diomedes has been fighting well and killing many, many Trojans. The Trojan women are worried about their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons who are on the battlefield. They have no way of knowing whether their male relatives are alive or dead.

When Hector enters the gates of Troy, women immediately surround him and ask about their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons. The women know that a great battle is being fought and that many men — fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons — have died, and so they ask Hector about the safety of their loved ones. All Hector can tell them is this:

“Pray to the gods”

(Fagles 6.286)

Compare:

The Trojans' wives and daughters ran up round him,
asking after children, brothers, relatives, and
husbands.

Addressing each of them in turn, he ordered them
to pray to all the gods.

(Johnston 6.303-306)

No doubt, the women in Achaea also pray to the gods and also wonder whether their male relatives are alive or dead.

• What happens when Theano, the Trojan priestess, prays to Athena?

Athena does not listen to the Trojan prayers. This is significant. Elaborate preparations are made for prayer. A beautiful robe is offered to Athena. Troy's priestess prays,

“Blessed Athena, sacred goddess,
defender of our city, break the spear
of Diomedes. Let him fall face down
before the Scaean Gates. If so, right now
we'll sacrifice twelve heifers in your temple,
beasts untouched by any goad, if you'll pity
our city, Trojans' wives and children.”

(Johnston 6.381-387)

In return, the Trojans want Athena to restrain Diomedes, who has been a fighting machine for the Achaeans. In the passage about the sacrifice, we notice the emphasis on youth

(heifers — they are cows that have never calved — and “yearlings” (Fagles 6.364)), and we remember that children will die when Troy falls.

Theano, Athena’s priestess, makes the prayer. After the elaborate preparations for the offering to Athena, Athena’s answer is short and simple:

But Athena refused to hear Theano’s prayers.

(Fagles 6.366)

This short sentence is heartbreaking.

• What have Paris and Helen been doing while the Trojans have been dying for them on the battlefield?

Paris, of course, is taking it easy in his house. He has just had sex with Helen, and is now relaxing.

One thing we notice is that Paris lives in “sumptuous halls” (Fagles 6.368).

Hector has little respect for Paris. He tells his mother that he’ll go hunt for Paris, then adds,

“If only the earth would open under him,
swallow him up! Olympian Zeus raised him
as trouble for the Trojans, for brave Priam,
for his children. If I could see Paris die,
heading down to Hades, then I could say
my heart’s sorrows were over and forgotten.”

(Johnston 6.356-361)

Hector taunts and insults Paris to his face:

“Paris, you’re a worthless man.

It's quite wrong of you to nurse that anger
 in your heart, while men are being destroyed,
 fighting round the city, its steep walls.
 It's because of you the sounds of warfare
 catch fire round our city. You would fight
 any man you saw avoiding battle,
 fleeing war's brutality. So up with you,
 with fire consuming everything.
 or soon our city will go up in smoke,"
 Johnston 6.403-412)

Hector is sarcastic when he says "this anger you keep smoldering in your heart!" (Fagles 6.385). After all, Paris is relaxing. This forms a contrast to Hector, who refuses three entreaties — by Hecuba, Helen, and Andromache — to relax.

• Can we trust what Paris says? He says to Hector, "I only wanted to plunge myself in grief. / But just now my wife was bringing me round, / her winning words urging me back to battle" (Fagles 6.398-400).

Paris, who has been

polishing, fondling his splendid battle-gear,
 (Fagles 6.378)

excuses himself. (Notice that Paris wants to look good — even in battle.) He says,

"[...] It's not so much from anger or outrage
 at our people that I keep to my rooms so long.

I only wanted to plunge myself in grief.”

(Fagles 6.396-398)

He was plunging himself, all right — but in Helen, not in grief.

Paris adds,

“But just now my wife was bringing me round,
her winning words urging me back to battle.”

(Fagles 6.399-400)

Compare:

“Just now my wife urged me,
using gentle words, to rouse myself to fight.”

(Johnston 6.417-418)

Also, Helen’s words are hardly “winning” (Fagles 6.400) or “gentle” (Johnston 6.418) — she wishes that Paris were dead.

• Do Paris and Helen love each other? Do they have a good marriage? How do you know?

Like Hector, Helen has little respect for Paris, her husband. She taunts and insults him:

“I wish I had been the wife of a better man, someone
alive to outrage, the withering scorn of men.

This one has no steadiness in his spirit,
not now, he never will ...”

(Fagles 6.415-418)

Compare:

“I wish I’d been wife to a better man,
 someone sensitive to others’ insults,
 with feeling for his many shameful acts.
 This husband of mine has no sense now,
 and he won’t acquire any in the future.”

(Johnston 6.433-437)

Helen also has little respect for herself. She calls herself a “bitch” (Fagles 6.408) and a “whore” (Fagles 6.422). Possibly, she feels bad that the war is being fought for her. Or she may be trying to manipulate people into feeling sorry for her. As always, Helen’s character is ambiguous.

All Paris seems to care about is having sex with Helen.

• Do Hector and Andromache love each other? Do they have a good marriage? Do they have a good family life? How do you know?

Obviously, they have a good marriage, as we discover when Hector returns to Troy to ask his mother to pray to Athena to help the Trojans in the battle, to get Paris to return to battle, and to see his family.

We know that Hector loves his family because he takes time to see them. Earlier, both his mother and Helen asked him to rest from the battle, but each time he says that he must return to the battle. (Hector says the same thing when his wife wants him to stay behind the walls of Troy.) That he takes time to see his family shows how much he loves them — Hector is a man of duty, and he will fight because he must, although he would rather have peace.

In turn, Andromache loves Hector. We see that when she runs up to meet him, after he has been disappointed in not seeing her at their house. We know also that she loves him

when she tempts him to defend a wall of Troy — she knows that he will be safer if he stays behind the city's walls.

In addition to loving Andromache, Hector loves his son. At first, his son cries when he sees Hector wearing his helmet, but after Hector takes off his helmet, the son is quiet. The son knows his father, but he is afraid of the implements of war. This is as it should be — the son will die at the end of the Trojan War when the helmeted Achaeans throw him from the walls of Troy.

We also know that Hector loves Andromache because he fears what will happen to her after the war ends. Hector is afraid that Troy will fall, and that Andromache will become a slave woman to one of the Achaean kings. As we know, this in fact will happen. Hector says that he hopes to die before he can hear his wife's cries as she is taken off to become the slave of an enemy king. Of course, this is exactly what happens.

In the scene in which Hector visits his family, we see a contrast between Hector and Paris and in how their wives regard them. Helen has contempt for Paris, but Andromache loves Hector.

Hector wants to see his wife and baby son because he knows that he may die in battle:

“I'm going home, to visit my dear wife
and infant son, for I've no idea
if I'll be coming back to them again,
or if the gods will kill me at Achaean hands.”

(Johnston 6.451-454)

We get to see Hector not just as a Trojan leader and a Trojan warrior, but also as a man who loves his wife and his child.

We get to see exactly what Troy is giving up by allowing Paris to keep Helen. Because Paris and Helen want to have an adulterous relationship (or at least because Paris wants to sleep with Helen), Hector will die, Hector's wife will become a sex-slave, and Hector's son will be thrown from the high walls of Troy.

Hector is the most sympathetic character in the *Iliad*. He is the character whom male readers of the *Iliad* at least can most identify with.

• What happens after Hector goes to his home and learns that his wife is not there?

Hector first goes to his home to see his wife and his child. They are not there, disappointing him, but he knows his duty, and he heads to the gate of Troy so that he can rejoin the fighting. There his wife sees him and comes running to him. Like other Trojan women, she has been worried about the fighting and has gone to the Trojan walls to watch the battle. She has been hoping to catch sight of Hector so that she knows he is still alive. Diomedes has been a war machine for the Achaeans, and Andromache is worried that he may have killed Hector. A servant tells Hector,

“Hector, you asked me to tell you the truth.

She didn't go to one of your sisters,

or one of your brothers' well-dressed wives,

nor did she go to Athena's temple,

where other fine-haired Trojan women

are praying to that fearful goddess.

No. She went to Ilion's great tower,

for she'd heard the Trojans were hard pressed,

the power of Achaeans was so great.
 So she's hurrying off up to the walls,
 like someone in a fit. A nurse went, too,
 carrying the child.”

(Johnston 6.468-479)

The first thing we learn about Andromache is that she loves her husband, Hector. The first time we see Andromache, she is running to meet her husband:

There his warm, generous wife came running up to
 meet him,

(Fagles 6.466)

Andromache loves Hector. We see that when she runs up to meet him, after he has been disappointed in not seeing her at their house. We know also that she loves him when she tempts him to defend a wall of Troy — she knows that he will be safer if he stays behind the city's walls.

Andromache is very worried about her husband, Hector. Homer says that Hector is

[...] the lone defense of Troy.

(Fagles 6.478)

• What is Andromache's opinion of how Achilles treated her father?

We find out that Andromache is alone in the world because of Achilles. Even when Achilles spends much time sulking by his ships on the beach, his presence hangs over the books of the *Iliad*. Andromache says,

“Father ... the brilliant Achilles laid him low

when he stormed Cilicia's city filled with people,
 Thebe with her towering gates. He killed Eetion,
 not that he stripped his gear — he'd some respect at
 least —
 for he burned his corpse in all his blazoned bronze,
 then heaped a grave-mound high above the ashes
 and nymphs of the mountain planted elms around it,
 daughters of Zeus whose shield is storm and
 thunder.”

(Fagles 6.492-499)

Compare:

“[...] For lord Achilles killed
 my father, when he wiped out Thebe,
 city with high gates, slaying Eëtion.
 But he didn't strip his corpse, his heart
 felt too much shame for that. So he burned him
 in his finely decorated armour
 and raised a burial mound above the ashes.”

(Johnston 6.508-514)

Andromache is impressed that Achilles did not strip her father, Eetion, of his armor. This was an unexpected courtesy and mark of respect. After all, stripping of armor is expected in ancient Greek warfare. Armor was valuable, and the Greeks wanted booty. Once you had killed a warrior, stripping his armor made the victory complete.

Compare the boots in the movie *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*. The undertaker steals John Wayne's character's boots in that movie, but Jimmy Stewart's character makes him put the boots back on the corpse.

In addition, Achilles gives the body of Andromache's father a proper burial instead of ransoming the body or allowing the dogs and birds to eat it. This shows great respect to the corpse and allows the soul of the dead person to go to Hades.

This episode shows something good about Achilles. He is capable of being good and generous, just as the episode between Diomedes and Glaucus shows that they are capable of good — friendship — even in the midst of war. In Achilles, there is much good. Normally, one of his major characteristics is friendship. However, in much of the *Iliad*, he is perverted by hatred — which is sometimes the result of his devotion to honor and glory.

• What did Achilles do to Andromache's mother? Is that good or bad?

In addition, Achilles also was good to Andromache's mother, ransoming her:

“[...] As for my mother,
 who ruled wooded Thebe-under-Placus,
 he brought her here with all his other spoils.
 Then he released her for a massive ransom.”

(Johnston 6.521-524)

Achilles can be kind to suppliants and save their lives (and not sell them into slavery). But Agamemnon, as we have seen in this book, is not kind to suppliants.

• **What did Achilles do to Andromache's seven brothers?**

Of course, Achilles is a lethal warrior. He killed Andromache's father and her seven brothers all on the same day:

“Father ... the brilliant Achilles laid him low”

(Fagles 6.492)

and

“And the seven brothers I had within our halls ...

The great godlike runner Achilles butchered them all,”

(Fagles 6.500-501)

Quite simply, warriors try to kill enemy warriors. Warriors prefer not to die for their country; they prefer to make enemy warriors die for the enemy warriors' country.

• **What worries Hector most about the fall of Troy, if it should in fact fall?**

Hector says that what will bother him most if Troy falls is what will happen to Andromache, his wife:

“it is less the pain of the Trojans still to come
that weighs me down, not even of Hecuba herself
or King Priam, or the thought that my own brothers
in all their numbers, all their gallant courage,
may tumble in the dust, crushed by enemies —
that is nothing, nothing beside your agony
when some brazen Argive hales you off in tears
wrenching away your day of light and freedom!

Then far off in the land of Argos you must live,
 laboring at a loom, at another woman's beck and
 call,"

(Fagles 6.535-543)

And:

"And a man may say, who sees you streaming tears,
 'There is the wife of Hector, the bravest fighter
 they could field, those stallion-breaking Trojans,
 long ago when the men fought for Troy.' So he will
 say

and the fresh grief will swell your heart once more,
 widowed, robbed of the one man strong enough
 to fight off your day of slavery. No, no,
 let the earth come piling over my dead body
 before I hear your cries, I hear you dragged away!"

(Fagles 6.547-555)

Compare:

"[...] My pain focuses on you,
 when one of those bronze-clad Achaeans
 leads you off in tears, ends your days of freedom."

(Johnston 6.556-558)

We know that Hector loves Andromache because he fears what will happen to her after the war ends. Hector is afraid that Troy will fall, and that Andromache will become a slave woman to one of the Achaean kings. As we know, this in fact

will happen. Hector says that he hopes to die before he can hear his wife's cries as she is taken off to become the slave of an enemy king. Of course, this is exactly what happens.

Hector reminds me of the old Norse gods. Hector says that he realizes that Troy must fall, yet he does everything possible to stave off the final day of destruction. Similarly, the Norse gods know that the universe will eventually end, but they do everything possible to stave off the final day of destruction.

• Do Hector and Astyanax love each other? How do you know?

The nurse is behind Andromache and is carrying Hector's young son. What Hector does now is very rare in the *Iliad*: He smiles:

The great man of war breaking into a broad smile,
his gaze fixed on his son.

(Fagles 6.479-480)

Smiles are rare in the *Iliad*. Andromache also smiles in this book — through her tears. Another smile occurs in Book 23, when Achilles — of all people — smiles. Odysseus also smiles in Book 10 (Fagles 10.466).

Hector prays to Zeus that Astyanax will be a better warrior than he (Hector) is now.

• Why is Astyanax afraid of Hector's helmet? Should he be?

Hector and his son have a wonderful scene. In addition to loving Andromache, Hector loves his son. At first, his son cries when he sees Hector wearing his helmet, but after Hector takes off his helmet, the son is quiet. The son knows his father and loves his father, but he is afraid of the

implements of war. This is as it should be — the son will die at the end of the Trojan War when the helmeted Achaeans throw him from the walls of Troy.

This is a charming scene:

With these words,

glorious Hector stretched his hands out for his son.

The boy immediately shrank back against the breast of the finely girdled nurse, crying out in terror

to see his own dear father, scared at the sight of bronze,

the horse-hair plume nodding fearfully from his helmet top.

The child's loving father laughed, his noble mother, too.

Glorious Hector pulled the glittering helmet off, and set it on the ground. Then he kissed his dear son and held him in his arms.

(Johnston 6.573-582)

Hector's helmet would frighten a young child. Hector is often called "Hector of the glancing helmet" — this scene is why he is called that. Homer wants us to remember this scene in which Hector sees his young son, who is frightened by his helmet. Often, the epithets are important and carefully chosen by Homer. Later, we will see why Achilles is so often called "swift-footed Achilles," even when he is sitting down.

• **Does Hector know the future?**

Hector is a hero, but he is a human, and he does not know the future, although sometimes he speaks as if he does know the future.

Hector says that he knows that Troy will eventually fall. Here his speech is word for word what Agamemnon said in Book 4 after Menelaus was wounded. However, later Hector shows that he hopes that Troy will survive and his son will grow up to be a better man than him. Hector is human and does not know the future.

Hector is afraid that Troy will fall, but he does not know that it will fall. Immediately after saying that he knows that Troy will fall, he prays that his son will grow to be a better man than his father. This is something that a loving father would say:

“Zeus, all you other gods,
grant that this child, my son, may become,
like me, pre-eminent among the Trojans,
as strong and brave as me. Grant that he may rule
Troy with strength. May people someday say,
as he returns from war, ‘This man is far better
than his father.’ May he carry back
bloody spoils from his slaughtered enemy,
making his mother’s heart rejoice.”

(Johnston 6.583)591)

This is a prayer that the audience knows will not be answered.

Hector is a good father. It takes a human parent to pray that his son will be better than he was. (Compare Zeus and Thetis. Thetis was supposed to give birth to a son who would be greater than his father, and therefore Zeus did not want to have sex with Thetis.) In Hector's speech, we also see the heroic ethic. One way to make your life meaningful is to gain glory and honor in war.

• What will happen to Andromache and to Astyanax after the war is over?

When Hector dies, Troy will fall. After Troy falls, Andromache will become a slave, and Hector's son will be thrown from the top of Troy's walls and dashed to death.

As E.T. Owen points out in *The Story of the Iliad* (71), this scene shows us what Agamemnon's speech (Fagles 6.63-70) really means. Troy will fall, yes, but it means the death of Hector's son and the enslavement of Hector's wife. Owen writes, "Troy is no longer just the treacherous enemy; it is Hector and Andromache and their little son" (71).

Even though Troy, because of Paris' action, is guilty, her fall will result in much misery. Agamemnon has said that he wants all male Trojans, even unborn male Trojans, to die. Hector's son will be thrown from the high towers of Troy.

Homer's audience knows all of this. Homer's audience knows that Hector will die, that Troy will fall, that Andromache will become a slave, and that Astyanax will be murdered by the Achaeans. When Homer recited this scene to his audience, his audience had foreknowledge of what would happen. Hector has no foreknowledge of these things, but Homer's audience does.

• Is Hector a hero? Hector is tempted three times to stay in Troy where it is safe. How does he respond to these temptations?

Hector refuses to rest at Troy. Hector is very conscious of his duty on the battlefield. He refuses wine from his mother, Hecuba, and he refuses the entreaty of other women at Troy — Helen and his wife, Andromache — to rest. When Hecuba asks him to offer a cup of wine to Zeus and then to drink wine himself, he replies,

“My dear mother, don’t bring me some sweet wine,
for you’ll weaken me. I’ll lose my battle strength.
And I’m ashamed to offer up to Zeus
libations of bright wine with unwashed hands.”

(Johnston 6.331-334)

Helen may hate Paris, but she shows respect to Hector and urges him to rest. Hector is courageous and shows steadiness of spirit. He would make a good second husband. Hector will not rest.

Andromache asks Hector not to return to the fighting in an extremely emotionally appealing speech in which she reminds him that Achilles killed her parents and her brothers and Hector is all she has left. She says,

“You, Hector — you are my father now, my noble
mother,
a brother too, and you are my husband, young and
warm and strong!”

(Fagles 6.509-510)

Compare:

“[...] So, Hector, you are now
my father, noble mother, brother,
and my protecting husband.”

(Johnston 6.526-528)

Both Hector and Andromache are aware that Troy may eventually fall. Both Hector's mother and Hector's wife want Hector to rest a while and stand inside the safe walls of Troy. Hector says to Andromache,

“But I would die of shame to face the men of Troy
and the Trojan women trailing their long robes
if I would shrink from battle now, a coward.
Nor does the spirit urge me on that way.
I've learned it all too well. To stand up bravely,
always to fight in the front ranks of Trojan soldiers,
winning my father great glory, glory for myself.
For in my heart and soul I also know this well:
the day will come when sacred Troy must die,
Priam must die and all his people with him,
Priam who hurls the strong ash spear ...”

(Fagles 6.523-533)

Compare:

“[...] But I'd be disgraced,
dreadfully shamed among Trojan men
and Trojan women in their trailing gowns,

if I should, like a coward, slink away from war.”

(Johnston 6.540-543)

In Hector’s speech, we find the heroic ethic. Death is not optional, and so all we can choose is how we will live this life. We can live it as a coward or as a hero. Hector chooses to live his life as a hero.

Hector makes a speech about fate, which heroes believe in:

“No man will throw me down to Hades
before my destined time. I tell you this,
no one escapes his fate, not the coward,
nor the brave man, from the moment of his birth.”

(Johnston 6.597-600)

Hector is aware that death is not optional. All we can do is to choose how we will lead our lives. For a warrior, the choice is to lead life as a hero or as a coward. Hector chooses to lead his life as a hero. (This is very Existential.)

Still, as this tender scene ends, Andromache is smiling through her tears.

• **What do the Trojans do when Hector returns to battle?**

When Hector returns to the battle, people sing dirges for the dead in his house, because his people don’t believe that he will ever come back alive:

His beloved wife went home, often looking back,
as she went, crying bitterly. She quickly reached
the spacious home of Hector, killer of men.

Inside she met her many servants and bid them all
lament.

So they mourned for Hector in his own house,
 though he was still alive, they thought he'd not come
 back,
 he'd not escape the battle fury of Achaean hands.
 (Johnston 6.607-613)

Of course, we know that Hector will soon die.

• **Does Hector believe that Paris can be a good warrior?**

Hector does believe that Paris can be a good warrior:

“Brother, no one could justly criticize
 your work in battle, for you fight bravely.
 But you deliberately hold back
 and do not wish to fight. It pains my heart,
 when I hear shameful things about you
 from Trojans, who suffer much distress
 because of you.
 (Johnston 6.634-640)

Paris has abilities. He can fight well. Unfortunately, Paris has a character flaw. He can fight well, but he is very willing to sit back and relax and let other people do his fighting for him.

Hector and Paris rejoin the battle.

• **How does Hector's character compare to Agamemnon's?**

Leadership

Both Hector and Agamemnon are leaders, but Hector is a better leader.

Hector is the leader of the Trojans, while Agamemnon is the leader of the Achaeans. It is Hector who cares more about his people.

Earlier, Agamemnon did not listen to his warriors. They wanted him to respect the priest and accept the shining treasure in Book 1, but Agamemnon preferred to keep the priest's daughter as his sex-slave. This shows disrespect to the gods, to his men, and to his wife. It also led to many of his men dying of the plague.

Hector respects the gods. He returns to Troy in part to ask his mother to pray to Athena.

Hector respects his men. He knows that they are dying, so he returns to Troy in part to get Paris so that he can help the Trojans and their allies fight against the Achaeans.

Hector loves his wife and son. One reason that he returns to Troy is so that he can see them.

Family Life

Agamemnon did not want to give up Chryseis, his sex-slave, in Book 1. He said that he preferred her to Clytemnestra, his lawfully wedded wife.

Clearly, Hector loves his wife and his son.

Conclusion

In Book 6, Homer shows us what the Trojans are risking by allowing Paris to keep Helen: the blessings of peace and

family. Homer also shows us Hector as a family man with a loving wife and son.

It would be an interesting exercise to compare the marriage of Paris and Helen with the marriage of Hector and Andromache. In the next book, we will see how Hector duels, and compare that to Paris' duel with Menelaus.

Chapter 7: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 7 — Ajax Duels With Hector / Hector and Ajax

- **Homer did not divide his epic poem into books and give each book titles. Instead, he composed it as a long continuous epic poem to be recited over three days. Where did the book titles come from?**

Before the invention of printing, the epic poems were written on papyrus (pa PEYE rus) scrolls. Apparently, it took 24 papyrus scrolls to write out these poems. Apparently, that is why these epic poems have 24 books. All of us can be very happy that we can buy and read these epic poems in paperback or hardback (codex) or ebook form. That makes reading these poems much easier than trying to read them on papyrus scrolls.

Other actions have been useful to scholars:

1. Regularize the Texts

From the 5th to the 2nd century B.C.E., the librarians at Alexandria worked to regularize the texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. That means that they compared different versions of these two epic poems — a line might be slightly different in two written texts of one of these epic poems — and they decided which version of the line was the better and the more accurate of the two.

2. Divide the Epic Poems into Books

In addition, they divided the epic poems into standardized books. Long after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were first written down, the librarians at the Library of Alexandria realized that dividing the epic poems into shorter sections would be useful. Therefore, in the 3rd or the 2nd century B.C.E., the librarians did just that: divide these two long epic

poems up into shorter sections that we now call books.

3. *Add Numbers for the Lines*

Doing this is a great advantage to scholars. Another great innovation was the addition of numbers for the lines. Now we can refer to Book 6, line 310, of the *Iliad* if we want to, and other people can look up the line in their edition of the epic poem and know what we are referring to. That is much better than saying “a line in the middle of the 6th papyrus scroll of the *Iliad*.” (Of course, line numbers will vary according to the translation you are using.)

Of course, Homer and the other original performers of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had no such divisions and no such way to refer to lines. Homer would never have said “Book 6” before reciting what we now consider Book 6. In Books 3 through 7 is a great battle (and a duel), and Homer would have recited it as a great battle (and duel) without divisions.

Because the division of the epic books into books and the addition of line numbers is so useful, we regard them as standard today.

• **How might Homer object to the title given by Robert Fagles (“Ajax Duels With Hector”) to Book 7 of the *Iliad*?**

Remember: Homer did not write the book titles we have in the *Iliad*. They were added later. Unfortunately, in this case, the title takes away the suspense of who will duel with Hector. (However, we could wonder whether it is Great Ajax or Little Ajax whom Hector will fight.)

• **What are the aesthetic purposes of having Hector duel with Great Ajax?**

These are the aesthetic purposes of having Hector duel with Great Ajax:

1. Now that we have seen Hector within the walls of Troy and have seen his family life, it is time for him to return to the battlefield and do a notable deed. That deed is battling man to man with Great Ajax in a duel.
2. The duel shows again that Troy is doomed. We see that because Great Ajax fights better than Hector does, although Great Ajax does not fight so well that he kills Hector.
3. The duel is exciting. One thing to point out is that Homer's audience liked stories of battles. Therefore, Homer gave them a lot of stories about battles.

• **How and why do Athena and Apollo cause the duel to happen?**

Hector and Paris are rested, so it is plausible that each immediately kills an enemy warrior when they return from Troy, and they do just that. This inspires the Trojan ally Glaucus to also kill an Achaean.

Hector would seem to have an advantage in the duel with Great Ajax because he is rested. However, Great Ajax is stronger than Hector, as we will see.

Often, Homer uses the gods to announce what will happen in his poem. Here, Athena is angry that Hector and Paris are killing her beloved Achaeans, and she swoops down to help the Achaeans, but Apollo, friend of the Trojans, stops her. Apollo convinces Athena to give the battle a rest and not to

fight. For a short time, there will be no fighting, and then the fighting will resume as usual.

The two decide to halt the battle by having Hector challenge the best of the Achaeans to single combat. He throws out his challenge and asks the bravest and the best of the Achaeans to fight him.

Both sides have been fighting hard; the duel will allow both sides to rest.

Often in Homer we know exactly what will happen because the gods tell us exactly what will happen. Here, though, there is suspense. We know only that Hector will fight a single combat and we know that he will not be killed.

Athena flashes the word to Helenus, who then tells Hector:

“Hector, son of Priam, wise as Zeus,
 why not be persuaded by what I suggest,
 since I’m your brother? Let other Trojans
 and Achaeans sit. You should challenge
 the best of the Achaeans to fight you,
 a personal single combat, a grim fight.
 I’ve heard the voices of eternal gods,
 now is not your fated time to die.”

(Johnston 7.54-61)

Having the details of the duel in doubt makes it more exciting.

I personally find it interesting that Homer compares the gods Athena and Apollo to vultures:

The Athenian maid, and glorious god of day,

With silent joy the settling hosts survey:
 In form of vultures, on the beech's height
 They sit conceal'd, and wait the future fight.
 (Pope pdf 160)

Compare:

Athena, with Apollo of the silver bow,
 perched in the lofty oak tree sacred to Zeus,
 who bears the aegis, looking like two vultures,
 set to enjoy the unfolding human action.
 (Johnston 7.67-70)

I think that this description of Athena and Apollo as carrion birds is part of Homer's anti-war message. After all, Athena and Apollo are causing human beings to fight, often to the death, while the gods are immortal and will not be harmed by the fighting. These gods truly are like vultures.

• What is the respect that is due to the dead? (If someone dies in the duel, what will happen to his body?)

One thing that stands out is that Hector is brave. He challenges any one of the Achaeans to fight him, no matter how strong they are.

Another thing that stands out is the respect due to the dead. In single combat, two men fight to the death. Hector proposes that the victor strip the dead opponent of his armor, but that then the victor will allow his opponent's army to take the corpse for decent funeral rites. Hector says,

“If your man kills me with his sharpened bronze,
 let him strip my armour and take it away,

off to your hollow ships, but give my body
back to my house, so Trojans and their wives
may give me ritual burning once I'm dead.
If I kill your champion, if Apollo
grants me that triumph, I'll strip his armour,
take it to sacred Ilium and hang it
in the temple of Apollo, the far shooter.
I'll give up the body to be taken back
to well-decked ships, so long-haired Achaeans
can bury him and build his funeral mound
on the banks of the broad Hellespont.”

(Johnston 7.87-99)

The references to burial rites are important in Homer — that will become apparent as you read the poem. If a corpse is not buried, the corpse's spirit cannot enter Hades. The ancient Greeks regarded this as terrible.

As we know, armor was important — and valuable — in this society. Warriors would do their best to strip the armor off the bodies of dead warriors.

• What happens when Hector makes his challenge to fight in single combat any of the Achaeans?

This combat is suspenseful. In this case, the listeners of the *Iliad* do not know — because the gods don't tell us — whom Hector will fight, and we don't know the outcome of the single combat — except that Hector will not be harmed.

The duel starts when Hector challenges any of the Achaeans to a one-on-one fight. We learn of Hector's strength and

reputation when none of the Achaeans immediately responds to Hector's challenge.

When Hector makes his challenge, the Achaeans hang back — no one volunteers to fight him. Homer sings,

A hushed silence went through all the Achaean ranks,

ashamed to refuse, afraid to take his challenge ...

(Fagles 7.106-107)

Compare:

Hector finished. The Achaeans all grew silent,

ashamed to duck the challenge, afraid to answer it.

(Johnston 7.106-107)

This shows us the great respect that Hector's fighting prowess is accorded by the Achaeans. No one immediately challenges Hector.

Menelaus prepares to fight Hector because no one else will, but Agamemnon knows that Hector is stronger and will kill Menelaus, so he convinces Menelaus to let someone else fight.

This shows something good about Menelaus — he is willing to fight his own fights. It also shows something good about Hector — he is a strong warrior, and even the Achaeans recognize that he would kill Menelaus in one-on-one fighting. In fact, even Menelaus recognizes it. (Note the difference between Menelaus and Paris — Menelaus need not be pushed into accepting a challenge to duel.)

• **Why doesn't Agamemnon want Menelaus to fight Hector?**

Menelaus — who has been wounded — stands up, as he should. This gives Homer the opportunity to show how Menelaus is loved by his brother, Agamemnon. Agamemnon convinces Menelaus to not fight Hector, saying that there is no dishonor in not fighting someone whom even *Achilles* is afraid to fight:

“Lord Menelaus, have you lost your mind?
 There's no need for you to act so foolishly.
 Be patient, even though you're disappointed.
 Don't volunteer from mere love of battle
 to fight someone better than yourself,
 for Hector, son of Priam, is a man
 whom other men avoid. Even Achilles,
 a far better man than you, was hesitant
 to meet Hector in fights where men win fame.
 So go now, sit down with your companions.
 Achaeans will send out another man
 as champion against Hector.”

(Johnston 7.126-137)

Of course, we remember that Agamemnon had no objection when Menelaus fought Paris in one-on-one combat. Hector, however, is a much better warrior than Paris, and Agamemnon does not want Menelaus to be killed by Hector.

We see how much Hector is respected by the Achaeans. At first, no one stands up to fight him. Finally, Menelaus, the

man whose wife and treasure the Achaeans are trying to recover, stands up.

• Why does Agamemnon say that even Achilles is afraid to fight Hector? Is Agamemnon correct when he says that?

Is Agamemnon correct when he says that even Achilles is afraid to fight Hector? No. Agamemnon is making sure that his brother Menelaus will not lose face by sitting down — if *Achilles* is afraid to fight Hector, then Menelaus will lose no honor in not fighting Hector. We know in Book 22 that Achilles will fight Hector. This scene does show that Agamemnon loves his brother. Another reason why Menelaus should not be fighting Hector is that Menelaus was recently wounded. Following Menelaus' duel with Paris, Pandarus attempted to assassinate Menelaus and wounded him with an arrow despite the truce between the Achaeans and the Trojans.

In the *Iliad*, the stronger warrior always wins. There are no upsets, no underdogs winning. Hector would definitely defeat Menelaus. (This reminds me of Ohio University playing Ohio State in football — Ohio State always wins.)

Note also that Menelaus is not insulted when Agamemnon says that Achilles is “far and away a stronger man than you” (Fagles 7.132) — Menelaus knows that this is true. It is a fact that cannot be challenged.

• How does Nestor shame other Achaeans into offering to fight Hector?

Nestor then makes a speech and shames some of the other Achaeans into offering to fight Hector. The Achaeans remain quiet — afraid — until Nestor the old counselor shames several of them into volunteering to fight Hector.

Nestor is a good rhetorician. He mentions Peleus, Achilles' father. While the troops were being gathered together to go to the Trojan War, Nestor stopped by Peleus' palace to pick up Achilles. Nestor told Peleus about the lineage of all the Achaeans going off to war, and Peleus was happy. But Peleus would not be happy that none of the Achaeans is brave enough to fight Hector.

By mentioning Peleus, Nestor subtly reminds the Achaeans of Achilles, who would not be afraid to fight Hector, despite what Agamemnon said earlier.

What Nestor does now is to tell an old story that he did not have time to tell in Book 4 (Fagles 4.319): the story of killing Ereuthalion. Ereuthalion had made a challenge, all had refused the challenge, then Nestor accepted the challenge and killed Ereuthalion and won honor.

Nestor really does shame the Achaeans. He tells them,

“You, the bravest of the Achaeans — and not one
with the spine to battle Hector face-to-face!”

(Fagles 7.185-186)

Compare:

“But now you warriors here,
although the finest of Achaean men,
aren't keen at all to face up to Hector.”

(Johnston 7.192-194)

Finally, nine Achaeans volunteer to fight Hector, including Agamemnon, Diomedes, Odysseus, Little Ajax, and Great Ajax. Nine Achaeans stand up, and Great Ajax is chosen by lot to fight Hector.

We don't find out until lots are thrown that Great Ajax (as opposed to Little Ajax, who has also volunteered to fight Hector) will fight Hector. As I mentioned before, the book title "Ajax Duels with Hector" was not yet created when the oral poet told this story; instead, it was written by Robert Fagles. Therefore, unfortunately, we feel little suspense where the ancient listeners would have felt suspense.

• Which speeches do Hector and Ajax make before fighting?

As always, Homer keeps Achilles before our minds. Great Ajax says,

“Hector, now you'll come to recognize,
one against one, just what the finest men
are like among Danaans, not counting
Achilles, breaker of men, with his lion's heart.
He now lies by his curved sea-worthy ships,
angry at Agamemnon, his people's shepherd.
But there are lots of us who'll stand against you.
So come on then. Let's start this fight.”

(Johnston 7.268-275)

Trash talking is nothing new.

At first, Ajax insults Hector — as was the custom between two warriors back then. But Hector replies with dignity:

“Noble Ajax, son of Telamon,
leader of your people. Don't play with me,
as if I were a witless child or woman

who knows nothing of what war requires.

For I understand well how to fight,
 how to kill men. I know how to shift
 my tanned leather shield to right or left,
 to me a crucial skill in fighting battles.

I know how to charge into the frenzy
 of fast chariots, and I know how to dance
 to Ares' tune in the grim killing zone.

I don't want to hit you with a sneaky shot,
 not a man like you, but in open combat,
 if I can manage it."

(Johnston 7.277-290)

Hector points out with dignity that he is an experienced warrior.

**• Who is the stronger warrior: Hector or Great Ajax?
 Who would have won the duel if night had not fallen?**

The two heroes fight, quitting only because night is falling. Great Ajax wins the duel, although he does not kill Hector. The rock he throws hurts Hector, and clearly Great Ajax would have killed Hector had darkness not intervened. We see that Great Ajax wins because Agamemnon treats him with honor; in addition, Hector possibly gives a better gift than he receives. Also, it is Hector, at Great Ajax' request, who asks for the duel to stop.

In the duel, Great Ajax clearly is the winner. If night were not coming on, Great Ajax would have killed him. Here we have a foreshadowing of the defeat of Troy.

The duel between Hector and Great Ajax is a microcosm of the Trojan War. One of the things we learn is that Hector is honorable, but that Great Ajax is stronger.

• **Which is the stronger army: Achaean or Trojan?**

The Achaean army is stronger than the Trojan army. The Achaean army outnumbers the Trojan army and its allies. Hector is the mightiest Trojan warrior, but at least two Achaean warriors can defeat him — Great Ajax and, of course, Achilles.

• **Even in the midst of war, can there be such a thing as dignity and respect given to the enemy?**

Following the duel, in a scene that recalls the friendship scene between Glaucus and Diomedes, the two heroes exchange gifts. Hector gives Great Ajax “his silver-studded sword” (Fagles 7.349) and Ajax gives Hector “his war-belt, glistening purple” (Fagles 7.351). Great Ajax and Hector respect each other. This is what Hector says,

“But let us, on this memorable day,
Exchange some gift: that Greece and Troy may say,
‘Not hate, but glory, made these chiefs contend;
And each brave foe was in his soul a friend.’”
(Pope pdf 165-166)

Compare:

“But come, let’s exchange noteworthy presents
with each other, so Trojans and Achaeans
may say, ‘These men fought in life-destroying war
but were reconciled and parted friends.’”

(Johnston 7.351-354)

Once again, even in the midst of war, there can be such a thing as dignity and respect given to the enemy. As in the scene with Glaucus and Diomedes, there can be mutual respect in war between enemies. Hector has given Great Ajax his silver-studded sword, and Great Ajax has given Hector his war-belt. The two will still end up fighting each other in battle, but for today they show respect to each other.

This reminds me of many sports, such as rugby. Two teams beat each other's brains out on the field, then they become friends again and party together.

In Book 7, the two warriors gain and show respect for each other, but they can still end up trying to kill each other on the battlefield.

• **How is Great Ajax rewarded for fighting Hector?**

Great Ajax is a stronger and better warrior than Hector.

After the duel, Great Ajax is honored:

[...] far across the field the Achaean men-at-men escorted Ajax, thrilled with victory, back to Agamemnon.

(Fagles 7.357-358)

Compare:

Well-armed Achaeans, for their part, led Ajax, elated by his victory, to lord Agamemnon.

(Johnston 7.364-365)

At the Achaean feast that follows the duel, Agamemnon rewards Great Ajax with meat:

[...] the lord of far-flung kingdoms, hero
 Agamemnon,
 honored giant Telamonian Ajax first and last
 with the long savory cuts that line the backbone.
 (Fagles 7.367-369)

Meat is an important gift to the ancient Greeks. Although a lot of feasting occurs in the *Iliad*, the feasting is done by kings. The diet of the ancient Greeks was poor, and chances are, meat was rare for the common people unless the common person was a swineherd or a goatherd or an oxherd.

• What do we learn from the meeting that the Trojans hold after the duel?

At the meeting, we learn once more how tired the Trojans are of the war, and the sense of guilt they feel as a result of Paris' actions — and of Pandarus'. Antenor, a Trojan, suggests:

“Hear me, Trojans, Dardans, all our loyal allies,
 I must speak out what the heart inside me urges.
 On with it — give Argive Helen and all her treasures
 back to Atreus' sons to take away at last.
 We broke our sworn truce. We fight as outlaws.”
 (Fagles 7.400-404)

Compare:

“Come now, let's give back Argive Helen
 and her possessions to the sons of Atreus
 for them to keep. We've broken the truce

and are fighting once again, so I don't see
 how things will work out very well for us,
 unless we carry out what I propose.”

(Johnston 7.407-412)

At this point, Paris refuses to give up Helen, although he is willing to compromise and give up the treasures he stole when he took her — and add treasures of his own. Paris says,

“Now *I* say this to our stallion-breaking Trojans,
 I say *No*, straight out — I won't give up the woman!”

(Fagles 7.415-416)

Compare:

“Now I'll speak to horse-taming Trojans.
 I flatly refuse. I won't give up my wife.
 But I will surrender all the goods
 I carried back from Argos to our home.
 I'm willing to give up all of it,
 even to add to it things of my own.”

(Johnston 7.421-426)

King Priam accepts the compromise, thus sharing in Paris' guilt.

• **The Trojans send Idaeus to the Achaeans. Is the speech Idaeus makes a good speech from the point of view of the Trojans? Does it show the Trojans to be united with good morale — or the opposite?**

Note that even the Trojan herald Idaeus, who makes the offer to the Achaeans, wishes that Paris were dead:

“[...] That man began our strife.
 All the property which Paris brought here
 in his hollow ships to Troy, how I wish
 he’d died before that day!, he’ll hand over
 and add more goods from his own home.
 But he says he’ll not return that noble lady,
 wife of Menelaus, though the Trojans wish
 he’d do that.”

(Johnston 7.455-462)

This is not a good speech from a strategic viewpoint. The Trojan herald should present the Trojans as being unified, instead of being tired of the war and of Paris.

The Trojan herald uses poor rhetoric in his speech. Odysseus, a master of rhetoric, would never make such a poor speech.

No wonder the Achaeans reject the compromise!

“No one touch the treasures of Paris, Helen either!
 It’s obvious — any fool can see it. Now, at last,
 the neck of Troy’s in the noose — her doom is
 sealed.”

(Fagles 7.463-465)

Compare:

“Let no man now accept Alexander’s stuff,
 nor Helen. For it’s quite clear, even to a fool,
 the Trojans are bound up to a fatal doom.”

(Johnston 7.470-472)

Note: “Alexander is another name for Paris.

• **Why must the dead be buried?**

Both sides decide to call a truce so that they can honor their dead. The battlefield is now littered with corpses. As always, the treatment of the dead is an important theme in the *Iliad*.

The dead are supposed to be honored, not desecrated. Here we learn something good about Agamemnon, who says,

“[...] But I don’t object
to burning corpses, for when men die,
one should not deny the bodies of the dead
a swift propitiation in the flames.”

(Johnston 7.478-481)

The next day, the soldiers collect their dead from the battlefield. Homer sings,

And hard as it was to recognize each man, each body,
with clear water they washed the clotted blood away
and lifted them onto wagons, weeping warm tears.

(Fagles 7.491-493)

The dead must be buried for a number of reasons:

1. If the dead are not buried, their souls cannot enter the Underworld.
2. Dead bodies lying about can help cause plague. The ancient Greeks would have recognized this through observation.
3. Of course, corpses soon stink.

The first reason is probably the most important. The ancient Greeks believed that unless the warrior's body was buried, its soul could not enter the Underworld. This was horrible for the soul, and it was horrible for the family of the dead warrior.

An insult that warriors sometimes hurl at each other in the *Iliad* is that after killing the other warrior, they will let the dogs and birds eat the corpse, thus keeping the warrior's soul from entering the Underworld.

• Which fortifications do the Achaeans build?

The other thing we see in this book is the building of the defenses of the Achaeans. They build both a trench and a wall to protect their ships. There is also a gate in the wall. This Achaean defense will be important in the later books, so Homer emphasizes these fortifications here.

Of course, the Achaeans would have built the wall and trench in the first year of the Trojan War. This is more displacement.

• Why is Poseidon jealous of the wall that the Achaeans have built? What will happen to the wall in the future?

Poseidon is jealous of the wall that the Achaeans have thrown up; for one thing, the Achaeans made no sacrifices to the gods before building the wall. However, Zeus tells Poseidon that after the war is over, Poseidon can simply batter the wall until it disappears. The Trojan War is a great event, yet someday all signs of it will be obliterated.

We know that someday the wall will be obliterated. However, right now the shore is busy with ships bringing supplies to the Achaeans. Later, wind and water will wear down the wall until nothing remains.

By the way, Poseidon and Apollo built the walls of Troy. They had revolted against Zeus, and as punishment they were sentenced to work for a year for Laomedon, Priam's father. After the year was over and the wall was built, Laomedon refused to pay the reward he had promised them.

Homer frequently refers to events that happened in the past and that will happen in the future. This enlarges the scope of his poem. In addition, through his similes, Homer shows us the world when it is not at war.

• **What have we learned since Book 1 of the *Iliad*?**

Book 1 sets out the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles. The other books, Books 2-7, according to E.T. Owen, the author of *The Story of the Iliad*, have been exposition. We have, Owen writes (81-82), been told many things:

- We know why the Achaeans are at Troy.
- We know how long the Achaeans have been at Troy.
- We have seen the armies on both the Achaean and the Trojan side, and we have seen that the Achaean army is stronger than the Trojan army
- We have become familiar with such prominent Achaean heroes as Agamemnon, Menelaus, Nestor, Odysseus, Great Ajax, and Achilles.
- We have become familiar with such prominent Trojan heroes and personalities as Andromache, Priam, Paris, and Helen.
- We have become familiar with the gods and goddesses and we know which sides the gods and goddesses support.

The stage is being prepared for the continued wrath and the later return of Achilles:

- We know that Troy is doomed to fall.
- We know that Zeus has promised Thetis that the Trojans would be triumphant for a while.
- We have seen Achilles argue with Agamemnon, and we know that Achilles shall return to battle one day.

• **Has Achilles been forgotten in Books 2-7 of the *Iliad*?**

Owen writes, “In one context or another, [Achilles’] name has kept appearing, so that we get the impression of a long absence from the field” (*The Story of the Iliad* 82).

• **What is your opinion of the ending of Book 7? What does the thunder of Zeus foreshadow? By the way, what is foreshadowing?**

Foreshadowing occurs when an author subtly suggests or hints at something that will occur later in the literary work.

Of course, plays also contain foreshadowing. According to the playwright Anton Chekhov, “If there is a gun hanging on the wall in the first act, it must fire in the last.”

The thunder of Zeus foreshadows the coming battle:

[...] but all night long the Master Strategist Zeus plotted fresh disaster for both opposing armies — his thunder striking terror — and blanching panic swept across the ranks.

(Fagles 7.551-554)

Compare:

Long-haired Achaeans feasted all night long,
as did Trojans and their allies in the city,
while throughout the night, Counselor Zeus,
thundering ominously, plotted bad things for them.
Pale fear gripped men. They kept pouring wine from
goblets
onto the ground. No one dared to drink before he
made
an offering to Zeus, almighty son of Cronos.
Then they went to bed, to receive the gift of sleep.
(Johnston 7.553-560)

This thunder foreshadows the battle coming in Book 8.

Conclusion

Books 2-7 have been exposition; Homer has filled his audience in on the background of the story. Now we return to the main story. In Book 1, Achilles and Agamemnon argued and Achilles withdrew from the fighting. In Book 8, we begin to see the consequences of Achilles' withdrawal from the fighting.

Chapter 8: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 8 — The Tide of Battle Turns / The Trojans Have Success

• In Books 2-7, we have had exposition of background material. Now we return to the story that we left off in Book 1. What happens in the assembly of the gods at the beginning of Book 8?

In Books 2-7, we have had exposition. Now, through Zeus, Homer tells us that he is going to pick up the story we left in Book 1. The assembly of the gods tells us that Homer is returning to the story of Achilles. The expository books are over.

At the assembly of the gods, Zeus takes control.

At the beginning of Book 8, Zeus tells the other gods and goddesses not to interfere in the Trojan War. In doing so, he threatens them with a harsh punishment if they disobey his will. Zeus says that he is the strongest god — he says that he is stronger than the other gods and goddesses put together — and if they disobey him, he will either punish them with lightning or throw them into the Underworld.

Zeus tells the other gods in strong terms that he wants no interference from them in the battle this day. They are by no means allowed to fight in the battle. At most, they can advise the Achaeans but nothing else. He seriously threatens any god or goddess who fights in the battle:

“If I see any of you breaking ranks of gods,
 keen to assist the Trojans or Danaans,
 that god I’ll beat up ignominiously
 and send back to Olympus. Or I’ll seize him
 and pitch him into black Tartarus, way down,
 into the deepest pit below the earth,

where the gates are iron, the threshold bronze,
 as far below Hades as heaven lies
 above the earth. Then he'll acknowledge
 just how strong I am, the strongest of all gods.”

(Johnston 8.11-20)

Obviously, Zeus rules by force. In other words, Zeus rules through power and might, not because he is a more intelligent or better leader than the other gods and goddesses.

Zeus also taunts the other gods and goddesses. After he sends Iris to prevent Athena and Hera from helping the Achaeans in the Trojan War, they return to Olympus, where Zeus taunts them by saying he trusts that they are not over-tired from helping the Achaeans.

In addition, Zeus freely interferes with human beings and with the Trojan War when he feels like it. When he wants to, he can use his lightning and thunder to panic even a brave man such as Odysseus. Of course, Zeus' interference gets a lot of human beings killed, but this does not worry him, at least when one of his own mortal sons is not among the warriors being killed.

As Homer so frequently does, he uses the gods to tell us what will happen in part of the story. With the other gods not fighting on the side of the Achaeans, Zeus is free to turn the tide of the battle to the side of the Trojans. This gives the Trojan victory a sense of inevitability, since Zeus has willed it.

• Write a character analysis of Zeus as he appears in Book 8. When is Zeus majestic, and when is he petty?

When I look at Zeus in the *Iliad*, I often see the worst qualities of Agamemnon and Achilles. Like Agamemnon,

Zeus is often a poor leader, ruling through might and force. Like Achilles, Zeus is often insulting in his speech.

Sometimes Zeus is awe-inspiring, as when he holds the scales to weigh the fates of two warriors or two armies; however, in Book 8, he is mostly petty.

Still, Zeus seems capable of love, especially when the loved one obeys his wishes. At the beginning of Book 8, after he has warned Athena and Hera not to interfere in the Trojan War, Athena says that she will obey him, and Zeus tells her, “I mean you all the good will in the world” (Fagles 8.46).

• **Zeus will allow the Trojans to win for a while. Is Troy still doomed, nonetheless?**

At this point, Zeus’ promise to Thetis is beginning to be fulfilled. It won’t be fulfilled yet, but soon it will be.

Even though Zeus will turn the tide of the battle for a while, we still know that Troy is doomed — and Zeus knows it, too. Zeus tells Athena after she has said that she will obey and not fight, although she will give advice to the Achaeans, whose side she favors:

“Courage, Athena, third-born of the gods, dear child.

Nothing I said was meant in earnest — trust me,

I mean you all the good will in the world.”

(Fagles 8.44-46)

Compare:

“My dear child born of Triton, have no fears.

I wasn’t speaking all that seriously.

I want to treat you in a friendly way.”

(Johnston 8.45-48)

Zeus is serious that he does not want to be interfered with; however, Athena is Zeus' favorite, and in saying that "nothing I said was meant in earnest" (Fagles 8.45), Zeus means that he will punish neither Athena nor Hera as much as he said he would. Zeus also means that Troy will still fall, even though he will allow the Trojans to win for a little while.

Zeus goes to Mount Ida, which is outside Troy. There he will keep watch on the Trojan War and make sure that the other gods and goddesses don't interfere. This will be important in Book 14, when Hera seduces him so that he will go to sleep, thus allowing other gods to help the Achaeans.

• **How does Zeus turn the tide of battle?**

Once again, Homer uses the gods to tell us what will happen. This time, Father Zeus uses his golden scales at noon. The golden scales tell which army is fated to win on this day and which army is fated to be defeated on this day.

On one side of the scales is death for the Achaeans; on the other side of the scales is death for the Trojans. Down goes the side of the Achaeans, and so on this day many Achaeans will die:

Gripping the scales,
 he raised them by the centre. One scale sank down,
 the one which held the Achaeans' fate that day,
 it moved down to the all-sustaining earth,
 while the Trojans' fate rose up toward wide heaven.

(Johnston 8.79-83)

Zeus then interferes in the battle to turn the tide in favor of the Achaeans. He does this easily — by hurling thunderbolts to panic the Achaeans. Homer sings,

And Zeus let loose a huge crash of thunder from Ida,
hurling his bolts in a flash against Achaea's armies.

The men looked on in horror. White terror seized
them all.

(Fagles 8.88-90)

Compare:

From mount Ida, Zeus sent out a loud thunder clap
and hurled a lightning bolt down on Achaean troops.

Men looked and were astounded. Pale fear gripped
them all.

(Johnston 8.84-86)

Zeus is the god of lightning. If a lightning bolt strikes near a Greek, the Greek will think that Zeus is against him. To have the king of gods and men against you is frightening.

When an army is in panic, it is difficult to control. It can easily be routed, and this is what happens to the Achaeans.

As we will see, nearly all of the Achaeans — even the bravest — are affected by the panic. The two Ajaxes, Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Idomeneus do not dare to stand their ground.

• **How does Odysseus behave in the battle?**

We see the battle in scenes. Nestor is in trouble, and Diomedes comes to his rescue. Nestor is in a chariot, but one of his horses has been killed, so Nestor is in danger of immediately perishing as Hector bears down on him.

Interestingly, we see the hero Odysseus in flight — something we don't expect to see because he is courageous.

However, the panic has affected most of the Achaeans.
(Diomedes is an exception.)

Diomedes asks Odysseus for help in saving Nestor from Hector:

[...] “Where are you running,
the royal son of Laertes, cool tactician?
Turning your back in battle like some coward!
Cutting and running so — take care that no one
spears you in the back! Hold firm with me —
we’ll fight this wild maniac off the old man here!”
(Fagles 8.108-113)

Compare:

“Noble Odysseus, Laertes’ son,
you resourceful man, why move away,
turning your back on all these flying weapons,
like a coward? Watch someone doesn’t spear you
right in the back as you run off. Come on,
let’s save old man Nestor from wild Hector.”
(Johnston 8.106-111)

But Diomedes gets no help from Odysseus:

But long-enduring Odysseus never heard him —
down he dashed to the hollow Argive ships.
(Fagles 8.114-115)

Compare:

Diomedes' words missed godlike, firm Odysseus,
 who moved off to the Achaeans' hollow ships.

(Johnston 8.112-113)

• **How does Diomedes behave in the battle?**

Fortunately, even without the aid of Odysseus, Diomedes is a hero all by himself. He goes to Nestor, then invites him to join in the fight. Nestor takes the reins of the chariot, while Diomedes is in place to do the fighting. (The chariots are designed to hold two men: one to do the fighting, the other to do the steering.)

In lines 131-148 of Book 8 (translation by Robert Fagles), we see an indication of just how thick the fighting is. Diomedes hurls a spear at Hector, misses him, but instead picks off Hector's driver. In this book, we will see that happening more than once — the Achaean archer Teucer will also aim at one person, miss him — but kill another of the enemy.

• **How does Nestor behave in the battle?**

Diomedes rescues Nestor, and the two men work together, with Nestor acting as charioteer as Diomedes does the fighting.

Zeus again intervenes on the side of the Trojans. The Trojans would have been penned inside Troy like sheep, but Zeus again hurls thunderbolts to panic the Achaeans. Nestor is among those panicked. Zeus hurls a thunderbolt at the feet of Diomedes' team, causing Nestor to drop the reins and Nestor immediately becomes convinced that the gods are against the side of the Achaeans.

This leads to a dispute between Diomedes and Nestor. Diomedes the hero wants to stay and fight, but Nestor is

ready to flee. Nestor has the reins, and so he takes off with Diomedes, whether Diomedes will or not.

• **Diomedes does not want to flee from the battle. Why not?**

Nestor is aware that Zeus is currently against the Achaeans:

“O chief! too daring in thy friend’s defence
 Retire advised, and urge the chariot hence.
 This day, averse, the sovereign of the skies
 Assists great Hector, and our palm denies.
 Some other sun may see the happier hour,
 When Greece shall conquer by his heavenly power.
 ’Tis not in man his fix’d decree to move:
 The great will glory to submit to Jove.”

(Pope pdf 174)

In Diomedes’ reply we see the machoism of the ancient Greeks. War is a place for men to gain honor and to gain immortality in song — as in the songs that Homer sings. No ancient Greek wants to be thought a coward. We see that in what Diomedes says to Nestor when Nestor wants to flee:

“Everything you say, old man, is true enough.
 But this brings fearful pain into my heart and chest.
 For Hector then will speak out in Troy.
 He’ll say, ‘The son of Tydeus, in fear of me,
 scurried off, back to his ships.’ That’s what he’ll
 boast.
 Then let the wide earth open up for me.”

(Johnston 8.168-173)

Diomedes is worried about his *kleos* should he flee from Hector.

Nestor desperately wants to leave the battlefield and argues against Diomedes:

“Son of fiery-hearted Tydeus, why talk like that?
Even if he slanders you and calls you coward,
he’ll not convince the Trojans or Dardanians,
or Trojan wives, married partners of brave men
you’ve thrown into the dirt, still in their prime.”

(Johnston 8.175-179)

Hector does exactly what Diomedes fears. He insults Diomedes:

“Son of Tydeus,
fast-riding Danaans at their banquets
have awarded you a place of honour,
with lots of meat, a wine cup always full.
Now, they’re ashamed of you. You’ve turned out
no better than a woman. Run off then,
you coward girl. I’ll not back away,
let you climb our walls, or take our women.
Before that happens, I’ll send you to your death.”

(Johnston 8.183-191)

Here the insults are sexist, of course. In ancient Greek warfare, strength is important (in the hurling of weapons, for example) and women are in general less strong than men and would have little opportunity to develop what strength and talent they had.

• **How does Homer convey the excitement of the battle?**

Homer Describes Battles Vividly

As always, Homer describes battles vividly; after all, that is something that his listening audience is interested in. Homer sings,

Screams of men and cries of triumph breaking in
one breath,

fighters killing, fighters killed, and the ground
streamed blood.

(Fagles 8.76-77)

This is an example of good poetry. Good poetry can be written on many topics, including war and death.

The Fighting is Thick

The fighting is so thick that sometimes a warrior will aim at one enemy, miss, but kill another of the enemy.

Excitement of Hector's Speeches

One of the major ways in which Homer emotionally conveys the excitement of the Trojan victory is through the excitement in Hector's speeches — two speeches during the battle and one speech after darkness has stopped the battle for the day. In his speeches Hector is exultant.

The Ebb and Flow of Battle

Once again, the battle scenes are more exciting where there is an ebb and flow. One side winning all the time would get monotonous. In this battle, the Achaean archer Teucer will fight very well, although the Trojans will win.

• **Describe Hector’s first speech, which he makes to his men (Fagles 8.197-208 / Johnston 8.204-211).**

One of the major ways in which Homer emotionally conveys the excitement of the Trojan victory is through the excitement in Hector’s speeches — two speeches during the battle and one speech after darkness has stopped the battle for the day. In his speeches Hector is exultant.

Hector makes two speeches during battle — one to his men, and one to his horses. Hector is so exultant because victory has swung to the Trojans’ side that he says that he hopes to set fire to the Achaean ships soon:

“They’ll never hold me back in my onslaught now,
with a bound my team will leap that trench they dug.
But soon as I reach their hollow ships, torches —
don’t forget now, one of you bring me lethal fire!
I’ll burn their ships, I’ll slaughter all their men,
Argive heroes panicked in smoke along their hulls!”
(Fagles 8.203-208)

Compare:

“What fools they were to build this feeble wall,
a puny hazard, it will not check me,
my warlike spirit. As for the trench they dug,

my horses will jump over that with ease.

When I reach their hollow ships, don't forget the fire,
which wipes out everything, so I may burn their fleet,
slaughter them, those Argives by their ships,
as they suffocate, choking on the smoke.”

(Johnston 8.204-211)

In his first speech, Hector expresses the hope that he can soon burn the Achaeans' ships.

• **Describe Hector's second speech, which he makes to his horses (Fagles 8.210-223 / Johnston 8.213-228).**

We also see the exultation of Hector in what he tells his horses:

“Golden and Whitefoot, Blaze and Silver Flash!
Now repay me for all the loving care Andromache,
generous Eetion's daughter, showered on you
aplenty.
First of the teams she gave you honey-hearted wheat,
she even mixed it with wine for you to drink
when the spirit moved her — before she'd serve *me*,
though I'm proud to say I am her loving husband.
After them, fast, full gallop! So we can seize
the shield of Nestor — its fame hits the skies,
solid gold, the handgrips and the shield itself —
and strip from the stallion-breaking Diomedes' back

the burnished armor Hephaestus forged with all his skill.

If only we lay our hands on these, I'm filled with hope

they'll take to their racing ships this very night!"

(Fagles 8.210-223)

In speaking to his horses, Hector says that he hopes that the Achaeans will set sail for Greece this very night if only he can kill or capture Nestor and Diomedes.

• Hector would love for either the Achaeans to sail home or for him to burn the Achaeans' ships. Why?

Either way — whether Hector burns the Achaeans' ships, or the Achaeans set sail for home — Hector's wife and son will be safe. Of course, that is what Hector wants.

• Is Agamemnon a good leader in this battle?

Previously, Zeus told the gods that he did not want to see them fighting in the battle.

However, already Hera is tempted to interfere in behalf of the Achaeans and she asks Poseidon to help her. Poseidon refuses because of fear of Zeus. Therefore, Hera is forced merely to give advice to the Achaeans. She impels Agamemnon to rouse his men.

Things are going badly for the Achaeans, many of whom are packed between the Trojans and the defensive wall.

Agamemnon does little enough, merely making a speech to his men in which he insults them and then praying to Zeus. He tells his men,

“You Argives! What a shameful bunch of men!

Splendid to look at, but a sour disgrace!

(Johnston 8.266-267)

Agamemnon prays to Zeus, after mentioning the sacrifices the Achaean armies have made to Zeus:

“But Zeus, grant me now at least this prayer,

let us get out of here alive, in safety.

Don’t let Trojans kill Achaeans off like this.”

(Johnston 8.283-285)

• Describe and interpret the sign that Zeus sends to Agamemnon.

At this, Zeus takes pity on the Achaeans. An eagle releases a fawn to the Achaeans, a sign that Zeus will agree to Agamemnon’s appeal and not let the Achaeans be destroyed, although they will be in the clutches of the enemy for a while. The fawn was in danger for a while, but then escapes danger. The Achaeans will be in danger for a while, then escape danger.

• Write a character analysis of Teucer based on what you learn in Book 8. How do Teucer and Great Ajax work together (cooperate)?

Diomedes, a hero, kills a Trojan captain, but then Teucer the archer, a minor character, becomes a hero. Using his bow and arrows and protected by the shield of his half-brother, Great Ajax, he kills several Trojans. This shows the importance of cooperation during war:

As Ajax cautiously pulled his shield aside,

Teucer would peer out quickly, shoot off an arrow,

hit someone in the crowd, dropping that soldier

right where he stood, ending his life, then he'd duck
back,

crouching down by Ajax, like a child beside its
mother.

Ajax would then conceal him with his shining shield.

(Johnston 8.314-319)

Note that Great Ajax, the great defensive warrior, provides
defense for Teucer.

Here we learn about the rewards of being a good warrior in
ancient Greece. Agamemnon notices the heroics of Teucer
and promises to give him a reward:

“For I’ll tell you something, and this will happen,
if Athena and aegis-bearing Zeus permit me
to devastate that well-built city Ilium,
you’ll be the first to take the prize of honour,
after me, of course, a tripod, two horses,
their chariot as well, or some woman
to climb up into your bed with you.”

(Johnston 8.334-340)

Homer is never afraid to mention sex.

Teucer gives what Homer calls a “faultless answer” (Fagles
8.333):

“Great field marshal, why bother to spur me on?
I go all-out as it is.”

(Fagles 8.334-335)

Compare:

“Mighty son of Atreus, why urge me on?

I’m eager to continue shooting.

(Johnston 8.342-343)

Teucer is a minor character, and so he is made the hero of a minor battle. Bigger battles are to come.

Eventually, Hector wounds Teucer with a rock and the battle swings to the favor of the Trojans.

• What happens when Hera and Athena attempt to intervene in the battle?

Hera and Athena attempt to interfere, but Zeus sends Iris to stop them.

This episode is very short. Hera and Athena decide to fight on the side of the Trojans against Zeus’ orders, but Zeus sees them leaving Mount Olympus and immediately sends Iris to order them to return to Olympus.

This scene seems so insignificant that we may wonder why it is included. In fact, it is foreshadowing. This scene tells us that scheming Hera will continue to interfere in Zeus’ plans and continue to thwart his will. We will see this in the remainder of the poem.

Very often, the gods and goddesses provide comic relief and thus vary the tone of a section of the *Iliad*.

I find it very funny that Iris, the messenger of the gods, uses this opportunity to insult Hera to her face. She passes on Zeus’ message, then adds this insult:

“you insolent brazen bitch — you really dare

to shake that monstrous spear in Father’s face?”

(Fagles 8.486-487)

Hera and Athena back down immediately because Zeus really does rule by force.

• **Often, Zeus tells us what will happen; for example, he does that in Fagles 8.542-551 / Johnston 8.554-560. Does that harm the epic poem?**

Zeus lets us know what is to come in the future:

“This powerful Hector will never quit fighting,
not till swift Achilles rises beside the ships
that day they battle against the high sterns,
pinned in the fatal straits
and grappling for the body of Patroclus.
So runs the doom of Zeus.”

(Fagles 8.546-551)

Compare:

“For warlike Hector won’t stop fighting,
until beside the ships he stirs to action
swift Achilles, son of Peleus, on that day
they fight with bloody desperation
by the ships’ sterns — they’ll be battling over
the body of Patroclus. That’s been decreed.
I don’t care at all if this annoys you.”

(Johnston 8.554-560)

Zeus tells us just enough to whet our appetites. By doing so, he increases — not decreases — our interest in the story. This poetic device also gives a sense of inevitability to these events that are foretold.

What is doomed to happen is destined to happen — it *must* happen.

• **Describe Hector’s third speech, which he makes to his men: Fagles 8.576-629 / Johnston 8.584-638.**

We hear a long speech by Hector in the Trojan camp after night has fallen and the battle has ended for the day. In this speech, Hector is exultant:

“Just now I stated we’d go back to Troy today,
once we’d destroyed the ships and slaughtered
all Achaeans. But darkness intervened.

That’s the only thing that spared the Argives
and saved their ships beached on the shore.”

(Johnston 8.586-590)

After the day’s victory, Hector’s hopes have risen. Previously, he told his horses that he hoped that the Achaeans would sail away that night. Now, he has watchfires built so that they can’t sail away:

“Gather lots of wood,
so all night long, until first light of dawn,
we can burn many fires, lighting up the sky.
Some time in the night, long-haired Achaeans
may make their move to get away by sea.
Let each grown woman get ready a large fire

in her home. Let all keep a sharp lookout,
to stop a group from entering our city
while the army is elsewhere.”

(Johnston 8.596-604)

One of the most important points of this scene is that the Trojans are camped on the plains outside Troy. Always before, they have returned inside the walls of Troy. Now, after their victory, they have claimed land from the Achaeans, and the Achaeans are behind the wall by their ships.

That is why Hector must give orders that are new to him: He orders the Trojans to build great fires so that they can prevent the Achaeans from sailing away in their ships, and he orders the people of Troy to be on the lookout against a surprise attack.

Hector really is exultant. He says,

“[...] My hopes are rising now —

I pray to Zeus and the great array of deathless gods
that we will whip the Achaeans howling out of Troy
and drive them off to death, those dogs of war
the deadly fates drove here in their black ships!”

(Fagles 8.611-615)

Compare:

“[...] I hope and pray to Zeus,
to the other gods I'll drive away
these death-infected dogs, conducted here

in their black ships by mortal fates.”

(Johnston 8.618-621)

At this time, all the Trojans are exultant:

And so their spirits soared

as they took positions down the passageways of battle

All night long, and the watchfires blazed among them.

(Fagles 8.638-640)

Compare:

So all night long men sat there in the battle lanes,

with high expectations, burning many fires.

(Johnston 8.649-650)

• What is the mood of the Trojans after the battle? What is the mood of the Achaeans after the battle?

The Trojans have won. They are exultant.

The Achaeans have lost. They are downcast.

• How do you think the Achaeans would feel looking at the watchfires of the Trojans: Fagles 8.650-654 / Johnston 8.651-659?

We can imagine how the Achaeans feel, seeing the many large watchfires of the Trojans. This is an impressive scene — the Achaeans are huddled by their ships, while the Trojans camp on the plain with their many watchfires:

A thousand fires were burning there on the plain

and beside each fire sat fifty fighting men

poised in the leaping blaze, and champing oats
 and glistening barley, stationed by their chariots,
 stallions waited for Dawn to mount her glowing
 throne.

(Fagles 8.650-654)

Compare:

Just as those times when the stars shine bright in
 heaven,
 clustered around the glowing moon, with no wind at
 all,
 and every peak and jutting headland, every forest
 glade
 is clearly visible, when every star shines out,
 and the shepherd's heart rejoices, that's the way
 the many Trojan fires looked, as they burned there
 in front of Ilion, between the river Xanthus
 and the ships, a thousand fires burning on the plain.
 By each sat fifty men in the glow of firelight.
 Horses munched on wheat and barley, standing there
 by their chariots, awaiting the regal splendour of the
 dawn.

(Johnston 8.651-661)

Homer stresses this scene because it is so unusual. Usually, the Trojans would not camp on the plains. They would go back to Troy and sleep behind their walls.

This tells us the size of the Trojan army and their allies. It consists of 50,000 warriors —1,000 fires times 50 warriors. Since, according to Agamemnon, the Achaeans outnumber the Trojans by more than 10 to 1, the Achaeans must have over 500,000 warriors. However, I don't think that we are meant to take this literally.

Of course, this is a visual scene. Homer is sometimes thought to have been blind, in part because of a blind bard named Demodocus who appears as a character in the *Odyssey*, but if he were blind, he seems to have been able to see for at least a while. Much of his imagery is very visual.

In Book 8, we have preparation for Book 9, in which Agamemnon sends an embassy to Achilles. The Trojans have won an important victory — important enough for Hector and Agamemnon to think that the Trojans may win the war.

Conclusion

The purpose of Book 8 is to set up Book 9. In Book 9, the Achaeans are so discouraged by their loss that Agamemnon sends an embassy to Achilles offering him gifts if he will return and fight.

Book 9 is very important in understanding Achilles' character.

Chapter 9: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 9 — The Embassy to Achilles / Peace Offerings to Achilles

Important Terms

klea andron: the glories of men

kleos aphthiton: undying *kleos* or imperishable glory

in loco parentis: in place of parents

• What has happened in Book 8?

In Book 8, the tide of battle changed. The Trojans won a great victory, and they are camped on the plains before Troy. Normally, the Achaeans would have been successful in battle, and the Trojans would have returned within the walls of Troy after the battle and stayed there at night.

Agamemnon, of course, is dismayed and is ready to return home to Greece, and he now regrets the argument he had with Achilles. Of course, normally Achilles would have been fighting for the Achaeans. With Achilles not fighting in the battle, the Trojans have been victorious.

Now Agamemnon is willing to send an embassy to Achilles to make peace with him so that he will again fight for the Achaeans.

• What is the morale of the Achaeans and Agamemnon at the beginning of Book 9? Why do the Achaeans decide to hold a council?

At the beginning of Book 9, many of the Achaeans are in despair. The Achaeans have been swept by panic and forced back to their ships. Homer sings,

Thus joyful Troy maintain'd the watch of night;

While fear, pale comrade of inglorious flight,

And heaven-bred horror, on the Grecian part,
Sat on each face, and sadden'd every heart.

(Pope pdf 186)

Compare:

Just like those times two winds blow in from Thrace,
North Wind and West Wind suddenly spring up
and lash the fish-filled seas, black waves at once rise
up,

then fling seaweed in piles along the shoreline,

so spirits in Achaean chests were now cast down.

(Johnston 9.4-8)

Because the Achaeans are discouraged at having lost the battle this day, Agamemnon decides to hold a council to figure out what they should do.

• **What does Agamemnon suggest the Achaeans do?**

At the meeting of leaders called by Agamemnon, Homer sings,

They grouped on the meeting grounds, morale
broken.

(Fagles 9.14)

Agamemnon is so discouraged that he even suggests packing up and leaving, going home. In Book 2, we saw that Agamemnon had suggested this as a way to get his soldiers roused up and ready to fight. Apparently, he thought that they would resist the orders to sail for home and would instead insist on staying at Troy and fighting. Agamemnon

was shocked in Book 2 when his men broke and ran for the ships, ready to sail home immediately.

Now, because Agamemnon is so discouraged after the Trojans' victory, he seriously suggests giving up the war and sailing for home.

Agamemnon addresses the Achaean leaders. Previously, he tested his men by saying let's give up, let's go home. Then, it was only a test, but now he means it:

“My friends, leaders, Argive counselors,
 Zeus, son of Cronos, has snared me badly
 in grievous folly. Deceptive god,
 he promised me, he nodded his assent,
 that I'd lay waste to well-built Ilion,
 before I went back home. Now he tricks me.
 (Johnston 9.18-23)

• How does Diomedes respond to Agamemnon?

This time the men stay seated — they probably remember when Odysseus had to restrain them from setting sail for Troy in Book 2.

Agamemnon is truly desperate here, but should he be? Certainly the Trojans have won a great victory, but is the victory great enough for the Achaeans to go and turn home? The answer is no, as we find out from the responses of the Achaean leaders. What do they do? Homer sings,

Silence held them all, struck dumb by his orders.
 (Fagles 9.33)

Apparently, they are surprised at Agamemnon. He is overreacting here, just as he has overreacted elsewhere. In Book 1, he overreacted to giving up his prize: a woman named Chryseis. He overreacted to the wounding of his brother, Menelaus (although that did show that he loved his brother).

Diomedes, one of the youngest but greatest Greek warriors, tells Agamemnon that he can leave if he wishes, but that the other Achaean warriors will stay. Nestor takes advantage of the situation by persuading Agamemnon to attempt to patch up his quarrel with Achilles.

Diomedes first responds here — with contempt:

“Atrides — I will be the first to oppose you in your folly,

here in assembly, King, where it’s the custom.

Spare me your anger.”

(Fagles 9.36-38)

Compare:

“Son of Atreus, I’ll be the first to challenge

your foolishness, as is my right, my lord,

in our assembly. So don’t be angry.”

(Johnston 9.37-39)

One thing to notice here is that apparently it’s the custom of kings to speak freely in council. This is one place where free speech is allowed:

“the Father gave you honor beyond all other men alive

but he never gave you courage, the greatest power of all.

Desperate man! So certain, are you, the sons of Achaea

Are cowards, poor soldiers, just because you say so?

Desert — if your spirit drives you to sail home,

then sail away, my King! [...]"

(Fagles 9.44-49)

Compare:

"[...] If your heart wishes to go home,

then go. The road lies there in front of you."

(Johnston 9.50-51)

Previously, Agamemnon told Achilles to desert if he wants to; now Diomedes is telling Agamemnon to desert if he wants to. Diomedes says,

"But the rest of the long-haired Achaeans

will stay here, until we demolish Troy.

If they flee back to their dear native land

in their ships, too, then Sthenelus and I,

will fight on to our goal, to take Ilion.

For the gods were with us when we came."

(Johnston 9.54-59)

• How does Nestor respond to Diomedes, and what does he suggest Agamemnon and the other Achaeans do before they hold a council?

In Book 9, we learn that Diomedes has a youthful fault, Nestor is wise, and Odysseus is full of confidence.

We learn that Diomedes has a youthful fault by seeing how he responds when Agamemnon is discouraged and advocates that the Achaeans return to Greece. Diomedes, like the other Achaeans, realizes that the Achaean army has suffered a serious setback, but not a setback so serious as to give up the war and return home. Agamemnon is overacting here, and Diomedes knows that Agamemnon is overacting. Diomedes tells Agamemnon that if Agamemnon wishes to return home, fine, go, but he will stay and fight. Diomedes here shows a fault of youth. He is tactless and does not show respect to a person with more years and more authority than himself. Achilles also is young.

In Book 8, we saw Nestor panicked and driving away from battle in a chariot with Diomedes. But Nestor is an intelligent counselor and he sees an opportunity to heal the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. Diomedes has spoken with contempt to Agamemnon, but Nestor realizes the importance of saving face. Nestor speaks with respect to both Diomedes and Agamemnon, and he gives good advice:

“Few can match your power in battle, Diomedes,
and in counsel you excel all men your age.
So no one could make light of your proposals,
not the whole army — who could contradict you?
But you don’t press on and reach a useful end.
How young you are ...”

(Fagles 9.61-66)

Compare:

“Son of Tydeus, you’re excellent in battle
and the best Achaean of your age in council.
No Achaean will fault what you’ve just said
or oppose it. But your speech is incomplete.
You are still young, you might well be my son,
my youngest born. Still, you spoke sensibly,
in what you said to the Achaean king.
For you spoke justly and kept to the point.”

(Johnston 9.63-70)

Nestor is a master of rhetoric, although he can be a little long-winded sometimes. Here he gives Diomedes some praise, but he also reminds him that he is young. This is a culture in which the older men are respected, and Nestor is subtly letting Diomedes know that he ought to be more respectful to Agamemnon, who is older than Diomedes. And yes, warriors can speak openly in council, but one can speak openly and still show respect where respect is due. Nestor himself does this when he speaks to Agamemnon.

Nestor may seem a little hard on Diomedes here, but he is simply implying that older men are wiser (and often more tactful). Nestor, of course, is older and wiser than Diomedes, and he lets Diomedes know that.

Nestor then advises “mighty Agamemnon” (Fagles 9.73) to first give the evening meal, then to hold a council and decide what to do. This is good advice. After a little rest and some good food, things look better to us and we are less

discouraged and so we can more rationally decide what to do than when we are weary and hungry. It is also good to seek advice before jumping to a conclusion. Agamemnon jumped to a conclusion at the start of his speech when he said, Let's return home because we will not win the war.

• **After everyone has eaten, what does Nestor persuade Agamemnon to do?**

Nestor shows his intelligence and his great experience. He is a master conciliator. He addresses Agamemnon with respect:

“Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,
king of men, I'll begin and end my speech
with you, for you are lord of many men.
Zeus gave you sceptre and laws to rule them.”

(Johnston 9.114-117)

Nestor does tell Agamemnon that he should listen to good advice:

“[...] listen,
and carry out the next man's counsel too,
whenever his spirit leads him to speak
for the public good. Credit will go to you
for whatever he proposes.”

(Fagles 9.117-121)

Compare:

“Thus, you, above all, should speak and listen,
then act upon what other men may say,
if their spirit prompts them to speak well.

You'll get the credit for what they begin."

(Johnston 9.119-122)

Like a good rhetorician, Nestor points out that Agamemnon can benefit by paying attention to good advice. In persuasive writing (or speaking), it is often an excellent idea to point out to the reader (or listener) the benefits of accepting your recommendation(s).

Nestor then pushes his plan, which is a good one: reconcile Agamemnon and Achilles. Achilles is a great warrior who can turn the tide of battle:

"So I'll say what seems to me the best advice.

No one else has set out a better scheme

than the one which I've been mulling over

a long time now, ever since you, my lord,

made Achilles angry by taking back

that young girl Briseis from his hut,

against my judgment. Repeatedly,

I urged you not to do it. But then you,

surrendering to your arrogant spirit,

shamed our strongest man, honoured by the gods.

You still have that prize you took. So now let's think

how we may make amends, win him back with gifts

and gracious speeches, and be friends once more."

(Johnston 9.123-135)

Nestor says two things must be given to Achilles: "gifts of friendship and warm, winning words" (Fagles 9.135).

Agamemnon agrees with Nestor, who is wise, and Agamemnon admits that he was in the wrong with his argument with Achilles. He also decides to offer Achilles magnificent gifts.

• What is the recompense that Agamemnon promises to give to Achilles if he will fight again?

Here Agamemnon admits his guilt and is very generous in seeking amends with Achilles. He offers Achilles many gifts to return to battle (Fagles 9.147-187):

Right now:

- 7 tripods never touched by fire
- 10 bars of gold
- 20 burnished cauldrons
- 12 massive stallions (racers which have won prizes)
- 7 beautiful and skilled women
- Briseus' daughter, whom Agamemnon swears that he has not slept with

Once Troy has been taken:

- all the plunder that Achilles' ships can hold — gold and bronze, and 20 Trojan women, second only to Helen in their beauty

Once home in Achaea:

- marriage to any of Agamemnon's three daughters whom Achilles chooses — no bride-price, and a dowry
- 7 citadels (fortresses, strongholds), filled with people

This is a huge amount of treasure and other good things.

The gifts fall into three main categories:

- Recognition that Achilles is a mighty warrior, as shown by race horses, bronze, gold, etc.
- A wonderful marriage with one of the daughters of Agamemnon
- Political power, as shown by kingship over 7 citadels filled with people

Of course, these are the three kinds of bribes offered to Paris by the three goddesses in the Judgment of Paris. Possibly, this is evidence that Homer knew the myth of the Judgment of Paris. On the other hand, as Elizabeth Vandiver points out, people can also argue that these are simply the things that a warrior in this culture would value, and they can argue that Homer did not know the myth of the Judgment of Paris (*The Iliad of Homer* 72-73). It is impossible, I think, to decide one way or the other.

• There is one thing that Nestor recommended that Agamemnon give to Achilles that Agamemnon does not offer. What is it?

Agamemnon does not offer warm, winning words.

Agamemnon says,

“All this —

I would extend to him if he will end his anger.

Let him submit to me! Only the god of death

is so relentless. Death submits to no one —

so mortals hate him most of all the gods.

Let him bow down to me! I am the greater king,

I am the elder-born, I claim — the greater man.”

(Fagles 9.187-193)

Agamemnon will give Achilles only part of what Nestor has recommended. He will give the “gifts of friendship,” but not the “warm, winning words.” He wants Achilles to submit to him, which Achilles will not do.

• Are the three men sent as an embassy to Achilles wisely chosen? Why or why not?

Nestor chooses three men to serve as Agamemnon’s embassy to Achilles. Nestor is old and wise, and he chooses wisely.

Odysseus

Nestor chooses Odysseus, who is a skilled rhetorician as well as a skilled warrior.

Because Odysseus is a skilled rhetorician, he will be able to speak persuasively to Achilles. Odysseus knows how to use language to please and to persuade.

Phoenix

Nestor chooses Phoenix, who is an old man who serves as a father figure to Achilles.

This culture respects fathers, and it respects old men. Phoenix will be able to speak to Achilles on an emotional level.

Great Ajax

Nestor chooses Great Ajax, whose prowess as a warrior is second only to Achilles.

Great Ajax can speak to Achilles warrior to warrior.

The Embassy as a Whole

Nestor truly has chosen well. He has chosen Odysseus, who can speak persuasively; Phoenix, who can speak as a father-figure; and Great Ajax, who can speak as a warrior to another warrior.

• **Who does Nestor want to be in charge of the embassy?
Why does Nestor look most sharply at Odysseus?**

Nestor praises Agamemnon for wanting to be reconciled to Achilles, and then Nestor picks the embassy of three people to speak to Achilles:

“Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon,

king of men, the gifts you’re offering
to lord Achilles can’t be criticized.
But come, let’s send out hand-picked men
to go with all speed to Achilles’ hut,
Peleus’ son. And may those whom I select
agree to do it. First, let Phoenix,
whom Zeus loves, be leader, then great Ajax,
and lord Odysseus. Let herald Odios
accompany them, along with Eurybates.
Bring some water for our hands. Let’s observe
a holy silence, so we may pray to Zeus,
son of Cronos, to take pity on us.”

(Johnston 9.200-212)

Nestor says specifically that Phoenix will lead the embassy. Phoenix is the oldest man in the embassy and so he will lead

the embassy; however, note what happens when the embassy leaves to visit Achilles:

Nestor the old driver gave them marching orders —
a sharp glance at each, Odysseus most of all:

“Try hard now, bring him round — invincible Achilles!”

(Fagles 9.214-216)

Nestor looks most sharply at Odysseus because Odysseus is a master of persuasive speech. Nestor is sending Odysseus a signal, letting him know that Nestor is relying most strongly on Odysseus to persuade Achilles to return to the fighting.

• **What is Achilles doing when the embassy arrives at his camp?**

The embassy goes to Achilles’ camp. The Achaeans’ ships are lined up on shore, and the camps are by the ships. This is a good idea, of course, because the ships can serve as storage.

The scene in which the delegation finds Achilles is interesting. Achilles is playing a lyre and singing, while his best friend, Patroclus, is silent:

They came to the ships and huts of the Myrmidons.

There they found Achilles. He was easing his spirit
with a tuneful finely decorated lyre.

It had a silver cross-piece. He’d seized it as a prize
when he’d destroyed the city of Eëtion.

With the lyre he was bringing pleasure to his heart,
singing about the celebrated deeds of men.

Patroclus, his sole companion, sat there facing him,
waiting in silence until Achilles finished singing.

(Johnston 9.226-234)

We can ask if this is a good sign for the delegation. At first thought, it may seem good that Achilles is in a good mood. However, we can ask why Achilles is in a good mood. It seems to me that he is in a good mood because the Achaeans are being defeated and are therefore missing his talents as a warrior. Patroclus, as we will see later, is very much on the side of the Achaeans and may be silent because he is worried about the Achaeans.

It is interesting to note that Achilles is singing of heroes. Achilles is doing what Homer does: singing the deeds of famous men. Through the bards, heroes were able to achieve immortality. In the *Iliad*, this is the only portrait of someone acting like a bard that we will see. In the *Odyssey*, we will see a blind bard performing songs.

It's also interesting to note that, among the mortals, only Achilles (singer) and Helen (weaver) are artists. Hephaestus, the armorer, is an artist among the gods.

When the embassy arrives, Achilles is doing what Homer does: singing *klea andron* (the "glories of men"). (*Klea* is the plural of *kleos*, *andron* of man.) In other words, Achilles is singing an epic poem. Just as Homer sings of Achilles in the epic poem *Iliad*, so Achilles is singing the story of another hero in a different epic poem.

• What kind of a host is Achilles? The members of the embassy have just eaten. Why do they eat again with Achilles?

Achilles may be angry at Agamemnon, but the three members of the embassy who have just arrived are his

friends. He shows them proper *xenia*, or hospitality. He gives them food, and wine, and only after they have eaten does he ask them why they have come. Achilles is a good host here.

Achilles welcomes the delegation:

“Welcome! Look, dear friends have come our way
—

I must be sorely needed now — my dearest friends
in all the Achaean armies, even in my anger.”

(Fagles 9.237-239)

Compare:

“Welcome,

My dear friends have come. I must be needed.

Among Achaeans you’re the men I love the most,
even in my anger.”

(Johnston 9.240-243)

Achilles is happy to see the delegation because it means that he is needed.

The embassy members eat with Achilles even though they have just eaten with Agamemnon. This is wise. Sharing bread with other people can create a bond. Also, they don’t want to do anything to upset Achilles.

**• Who speaks first to Achilles? Why does he speak first?
Whom did Great Ajax want to speak first?**

We remember what happened when the embassy left to visit Achilles:

Nestor the old driver gave them marching orders —

a sharp glance at each, Odysseus most of all:

“Try hard now, bring him round — invincible Achilles!”

(Fagles 9.214-216)

Nestor looks most sharply at Odysseus because Odysseus is a master of persuasive speech. Because of this, and because of his confidence in his rhetorical abilities, Odysseus wants to be the first member of the embassy to speak to Achilles.

Now come a series of important speeches, beginning with Odysseus'. We learn something of Odysseus' character here. Homer sings,

Then each man helped himself,
 eating the food prepared and set before him.
 They all ate and drank to their full heart's content.
 Then Ajax gave a nod to Phoenix. Seeing that,
 lord Odysseus filled up his cup with wine
 and proposed a toast:

(Johnston 9.268-273)

Great Ajax wanted Phoenix to speak first; after all, Phoenix is the oldest man present, and it is a sign of respect to allow the oldest man to speak first.

However, Odysseus is so convinced of his skill in speaking and in strategy that he wants to be the one to make the first overture to Achilles. Therefore, even though he knows that Great Ajax wants Phoenix to speak first, Odysseus decides to speak first.

• **What points does Odysseus make in his speech to Achilles?**

Odysseus begins his speech skillfully, beginning with a compliment and bringing in Agamemnon's name subtly:

“Good health, Achilles.

We have not had to go without our share
of feasts, either in Agamemnon's hut,
Atreus' son, or here, for you've prepared
a richly satisfying meal.”

(Johnston 9.273-277)

Odysseus states the reason why the delegation is there:

“But now

our business is not pleasant banqueting.
For we are staring at a great disaster.
And, my lord, we are afraid, in a quandary,
whether we can save our well-decked ships,
or whether they will be destroyed, unless
you put on your warlike power once again.”

(Johnston 9.277-283)

Odysseus then speaks prophetically:

“So rouse yourself, late though it may be,
if you've a mind to save Achaeans
from their suffering at this Trojan onslaught.
If not, you'll suffer future agonies.

You won't find any cure for such despair."

(Johnston 9.304-308)

This is true. Achilles does fail the Achaeans, and he will live to regret it.

Odysseus also mentions Achilles' father, saying that Achilles' father would want him to help the Achaeans:

"My friend, that day your father, Peleus,
sent you off, away from Phthia,
to join Agamemnon, didn't he say this,
'My son, Athena and Hera will give you
power, if they so wish, but you must check
that overbearing spirit in your chest.
It's better to show good will, to give up
malicious quarreling. Then Achaeans,
young and old, will respect you all the more'?
That's what your old father said, advice
which you've forgotten."

(Johnston 9.311-321)

If Achilles rejects Odysseus' appeal, it is as if Achilles is rejecting his father's advice.

Next, Odysseus lists the prizes that Agamemnon will give to Achilles to come back and fight — very impressive treasure indeed, as we have seen. Agamemnon does not make an explicit apology to Achilles, but the list of gifts constitute an implicit apology. Obviously, Agamemnon wants Achilles

back fighting for him. Odysseus speaks of the offer in almost the exact words that Agamemnon used earlier in Book 9.

Of course, Odysseus does more than simply repeat the offer of Agamemnon's gifts. He continues and asks Achilles to take pity on his fellow Achaean warriors: Come back and help your friends even if you are still angry at Agamemnon.

Finally, Odysseus ends with his most impressive point. We need to keep in mind places of emphasis. In writing, very often we will begin with our main point. We do that in journalism, because who knows if the reader will read the end of the article? We do that in technical writing — people in business are busy and who knows if the reader will read the end of the letter or memo? In speech, however, very often you want to end with your main point. You give a number of good points, then close with the clincher. Here the clincher is glory — Odysseus knows the Achilles of Book 1 well:

“He will give all this, if you will abate
 your anger. But if your heart still resents
 Atreus's son and his gifts, then take pity
 on all Achaeans, our exhausted soldiers.
 They will pay you honours like a god.
 Among them you'll earn enormous glory,
 for now you might kill Hector, who may well
 approach you, he's so obsessed with slaughter,
 he thinks there's not a warrior his equal
 among Danaans brought here in our ships.”

(Johnston 9.373-382)

Odysseus has spoken well and has emphasized glory and honor, as he should when speaking to Achilles — at least the Achilles of Book 1. Achilles can win glory and honor by fighting for the Achaeans and by killing Hector. However, what is missing from Odysseus' speech is any apology from Agamemnon. Of course, the lack of an apology from Agamemnon is not anything that Odysseus is responsible for.

Note also that Odysseus left out of his speech this demand of Agamemnon's:

“Let him bow down to me! I am the greater king,
I am the elder-born, I claim — the greater man.”

(Fagles 9.192-193)

True, Agamemnon has offered many gifts, but gifts put the receiver in the debt of the giver. Think of favors. If you do a favor for someone, you expect a favor back. Odysseus has emphasized the gifts as well as the glory, but we will see that Achilles is not interested in the gifts.

What is missing from Odysseus' speech is something that Odysseus is not responsible for: an explicit apology from Agamemnon.

• Achilles rejects Odysseus' attempt to persuade him to return to the fighting. What is Achilles' opinion about the heroic ethic?

Achilles rejects Odysseus' attempt to persuade him to return to the fighting. Odysseus has spoken well, but Achilles has changed, and he is a different man from the man whom he was in Book 1.

Odysseus focused his persuasive appeal to Achilles on such things as *kleos* and *timê*. However, these are things that Achilles is no longer interested in. *Kleos* is reputation —

especially one's reputation after one dies. It is a kind of immortality. The warrior's body may die, as all of us will die, but the warrior's *kleos* or reputation or fame can live on in epic poetry after he dies. Achilles has been interested in *kleos*; it is why he is fighting in the Trojan War.

Timê is a kind of physical representation of *kleos*. If a warrior fights well in battle, that warrior's leader will reward the warrior with *timê*. *Timê* is booty — that is, the spoils of war. *Timê* can be cattle, slaves, and pretty young women who will sleep with the warrior — in other words, sex-slaves. The more *timê* a warrior has, the more *kleos* the warrior will have.

The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles was over *timê*. Briseis was Achilles' sex-slave, awarded to him by the Achaean warriors — and especially by Agamemnon — as a physical reward for his skill in fighting. By taking away Achilles' *timê*, Agamemnon is taking away Achilles' *kleos*.

Now, of course, Agamemnon offers Achilles even more *timê* to make up for the *timê* that was taken away from him in Book 1. Odysseus places value on *timê* and *kleos*, and that is what he has stressed in his speech to Achilles. Odysseus has made two major points when speaking to Achilles: 1) Agamemnon is offering you lots and lots of *timê* to come back and fight, and 2) if you can come back and fight, you can kill Hector and win *kleos*.

Achilles rejects Odysseus' attempt to persuade him to come back and fight because, he says, he no longer wants *kleos* and *timê*. By saying this, Achilles is doing something absolutely shocking. He is rejecting the Heroic Ethic — he is rejecting the reasons why Homeric warriors fight.

Achilles' speech arises out of his character. He first says,:

“I hate that man like the very Gates of Death

who says one thing but hides another in his heart.

I will say it outright. That seems best to me.”

(Fagles 9.378-380)

Compare:

“I hate like the gates of Hell any man
who says one thing while thinking something else
which stays hidden in his mind.”

(Johnston 9.389-391)

Indeed, Achilles is outspoken. He says what he thinks, whether it is polite or not. There is an accusation here against Agamemnon, that he is saying one thing, while really thinking something different. Previously, Agamemnon has done this; for example, when he tested his troops about sailing back to Troy. In addition, Agamemnon has promised that great warriors would be rewarded well — and in Achilles’ case, that has not happened.

But now, Achilles’ accusation is not true — Agamemnon desperately wants Achilles back. However, Achilles wants an apology, and Agamemnon has not offered an apology.

Interestingly, Odysseus is a person who says one thing and means another; Odysseus is a trickster. Odysseus will come up with the idea of the Trojan Horse. As we will see in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is a master liar.

Achilles does say exactly what is on his mind:

“Will Agamemnon win me over? Not for all the
world,

I swear it — nor will the rest of the Achaeans.”

(Fagles 9.381-382)

Achilles recognizes that warriors, like all men, come to the same end: death. In the long run, whether we are heroes or cowards, we are all dead. Death is not optional — even for a hero:

“No, what lasting thanks in the long run
 for warring with our enemies, on and on, no end?
 One and the same lot for the man who hangs back
 and the man who battles hard. The same honor [*timē*]
 waits
 for the coward and the brave. They both go down to
 Death,
 the fighter who shirks, the one who works to
 exhaustion.
 And what’s laid up for me, what pittance? Nothing
 —
 and after suffering hardships, year in, year out,
 staking my life on the mortal risks of war.”
 (Fagles 9.383-391)

Compare:

“I don’t believe that Agamemnon,
 Atreus’ son, or any other Argive
 will persuade me, for no thanks are given
 to the man who always fights without rest
 against the enemy. Whether one fights
 or stays behind, the shares are still the same.
 Coward and brave man both get equal honour.

Death treats idle and active men alike.”

(Johnston 9.393-400)

One of Achilles’ main points in his speech is that he has not been receiving honor from Agamemnon in the war. There is a contract that exists between the warriors and the lord of men: If you fight well, you will be rewarded. Achilles fought well and was rewarded with Briseis. However, Agamemnon did not live up to his part of the contract: He took Briseis from Achilles. This means that someone can work hard and fight bravely, yet be treated the same as a coward.

Now, Achilles says that he does not care about *timê*. Achilles has done what he is supposed to do — fight well and bravely. But what did Agamemnon do? Agamemnon took Achilles’ *timê* from him. If *timê* can be taken so easily, even though it has been well and truly earned, why risk your life for *timê*?

Imagine that you have a job and the boss gives you a paycheck that you have earned, but then the boss takes that paycheck away from you. Would you continue to work for that boss? No. And suppose that the boss offered you a raise and a promotion to come back and work for him. Would you go back and work for him? Perhaps not. You might think that since this boss is untrustworthy that he will again take the paycheck that you have earned.

Achilles’ situation is somewhat similar, but it is more serious. In Achilles’ work, he can end up dead.

Since all must die, what counts for the Homeric warrior is glory and honor that are won while one is alive. This is something that Agamemnon has wrongfully taken from Achilles. Achilles does the work, but Agamemnon takes the reward:

“Many a sleepless night I’ve bivouacked in harness,

day after bloody day I've hacked my passage
 through,
 fighting other soldiers to win their wives as prizes.
 Twelve cities of men I've stormed and sacked from
 shipboard,
 eleven I claim by land, on the fertile earth of Troy.
 And from all I dragged off piles of splendid plunder,

 hauled it away and always gave the lot to
 Agamemnon,
 the son of Atreus — always skulking behind the
 lines,
 safe in his fast ships — and he would take it all,
 he'd parcel out some scraps but keep the lion's share.
 Some he'd hand out to the lords and kings — prizes
 of honor —
 and they, they hold them still. From me alone,
 Achilles
 of all Achaeans, he seizes, he keeps the wife I love
 ...
 Well *let* him bed her now —
 enjoy her to the hilt!"

(Fagles 9.396-409)

Since Achilles will not take Briseis back, even with
 Agamemnon's word that he has not slept with her, it is
 apparent that his hatred of Agamemnon means more to him
 than Briseis does. Note also that Homer does not shy away

from sex. A vagina can be regarded as a kind of sheath. A sword or dagger fits in a sheath (a protective covering). “Enjoy her to the hilt” (Fagles 9.409) is a sex metaphor.

Achilles is too angry to go back to Agamemnon. He insults Agamemnon and the work of the armies without him:

“But, Odysseus, let him rely on you
and other kings as well to save his ships
from fiery destruction. He has done much
without me already. He’s built a wall,
constructed a large wide ditch around it,
and fixed stakes inside. But for all these things,
he’s not been able to check the power
of man-killing Hector. When I fought
beside Achaeans, Hector wasn’t eager
to push the battle far from his own walls.
He came out only to the Scaean Gates
and to the oak tree. Once he met me there
alone. He barely got away from my attack.”

(Johnston 9.432-444)

At this point, Achilles threatens to sail alone, back to his homeland. However, he never sails home.

Agamemnon also completely rejects the gifts offered by Agamemnon, including marriage with one of Agamemnon’s daughters.

Note that Achilles is rejecting the things that motivate ordinary men. He rejects marriage with one of

Agamemnon's daughters. He rejects lordship over many cities. He rejects vast wealth. Someone such as Paris would jump at these things. In fact, the ordinary Homeric warrior would jump at these things.

What Achilles wants instead is for Agamemnon to be completely humiliated. Will he come back and fight for Agamemnon? Achilles says,

“[...] not even if he gave me gifts as numerous as grains of sand

by the sea or particles of dust,

not for all that would Agamemnon win

my heart, not until he satisfies me

in full for all my heartfelt bitter pain.”

(Johnston 9.481-485)

• Does Achilles love life?

The next part of Achilles' speech is very interesting. In the Heroic Code, a hero is given honor in return for the promise of fighting when fighting is needed. In Book 1 Agamemnon broke the Heroic Code. Achilles has done well his part of the bargain — the Achaeans acknowledge that he is the best fighter of the war. However, Agamemnon took away Achilles' honor — his prize, Briseis. Therefore, Achilles did what any of us would do. We aren't going to work for free, so if an employer won't pay us, we will quit working for him. Here we learn that Achilles loves life:

“Time and again my fiery spirit drove me to win a wife,

a fine partner to please my heart, to enjoy with her

the treasures my old father Peleus piled high.

I say no wealth is worth my life! Not all they claim
 was stored in the depths of Troy, that city built on
 riches,
 in the old days of peace before the sons of Achaea
 came —
 not all the gold held fast in the Archer's rocky vaults,
 in Phoebus Apollo's house on Pytho's sheer cliffs!
 Cattle and fat sheep can all be had for the raiding,
 tripods all for the trading, and tawny-headed
 stallions.
 But a man's life breath cannot come back again —
 no raiders in force, no trading brings it back,
 once it slips through a man's clenched teeth."
 (Fagles 9.485-497)

Compare:

"My heart has often felt a strong desire
 to take a woman there as my own wife,
 someone suitable for marriage, to enjoy
 the riches which old Peleus has acquired.
 Life is worth more to me than all the wealth
 they say was stored in well-built Ilium
 some time ago, when they were still at peace,
 before the sons of Achaea came,
 more than all the treasures of the archer,

Phoebus Apollo, stacked on the stone floor
 in rocky Pytho. Men can steal cattle,
 fat sheep, get tripods, herds of sorrel horses.
 But no man gets his life back, not by theft
 or plunder, once it has flown out from him,
 passed beyond the barrier of his teeth.”

(Johnston 9.501-515)

Achilles loves life, and he realizes that life is worth more than material things. (Without life, you can't enjoy your possessions.) However, Achilles has loved glory and honor more than life.

• What are Achilles' two fates? What is unusual about his two fates?

Now comes an important part of the poem. Achilles is very concerned with death. We learn that he has two possible fates — he can choose whichever he wants. He knows this because his mother, the goddess Thetis, has told him. Achilles can choose a short life with great glory, or he can choose a long life with no glory:

“Mother tells me,
 the immortal goddess Thetis with her glistening feet,
 that two fates bear me on to the day of death.
 If I hold out here and I lay siege to Troy,
 my voyage home is gone, but my glory never dies.
 my journey back to the fatherland I love,
 my pride, my glory dies ...

true, but the life that's left me will be long,
the stroke of death will not come on me quickly."

(Fagles 9.497-505)

Compare:

"My goddess mother, silver-footed Thetis,
has said two fates may bring about my death.
If I remain here, continuing the fight
against the Trojans' city, that means
I won't be going home, but my glory
will never die. But if I go back home,
my fame will die, though my life will last
a long time, death will not end it quickly."

(Johnston 9.516-523)

Thetis has described to Achilles his two alternative fates: early death in battle and everlasting glory (*kleos*) or a long and obscure life and no fame, no *kleos*, no glory.

Obviously, this is an extraordinary speech. Achilles is a mortal who knows his fate. This is unusual. In a general way, all of us know that we will die someday. In a general way, all of us know that if we take care of our bodies, avoid fighting in wars, wear safety belts, don't smoke, and are lucky, we will have — probably — a long life. In a general way, we know that if we fight in the front lines in battle, we may die.

We know our probable fate in a general way. However, Achilles specifically knows his fate.

A few other people in ancient Greek literature know their fate. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus learns that he

is fated to kill his father and to marry his mother — an awful fate.

In addition, it is remarkable that Achilles has two fates, and it is remarkable that he can choose between them. We know our fate in a general way, but Achilles really does know what will happen to him if he stays and fights in the Trojan War — he will die but win everlasting *kleos* — and he really does know what will happen to him if he returns home to Achaea — he will have a long life but no *kleos*.

This shows just how special and unusual Achilles is. Each of us knows that we will die someday. However, we don't know when that will be. In addition, of each of us it can be said that we have one fate. When we die, other people can say that we were fated to die at that time.

Important: Achilles is special and unusual because he has two fates, and he knows that he has two fates. In addition, Achilles is able to choose between his two fates. He can fight in the Trojan War and have a short life with glory and honor that will never die, or he can go home to Achaea and have a long life but be forgotten when he dies.

Achilles has always wanted glory, but Agamemnon took that away from him in Book 1, and Achilles is still angry at him — so angry that he is considering leaving the siege of Troy and giving up all chance of glory entirely. We know just how much Achilles values glory in that he does not leave Troy. He stays, lives a short life, and is immortalized in the *Iliad*. However, Achilles still loves life. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus sees the spirit of Achilles in Hades, and Achilles tells him that it is better to be the live slave of a poor farmer than to be a dead hero in Hades. The Greek conception of the afterworld was very bleak.

It's no wonder that Achilles is not interested in material possessions. If he accepts the gifts of Agamemnon, then

Achilles will fight, and if he fights, he knows he will die. If he dies, he can't enjoy the material possessions. (However, he will have the *kleos* represented by the prizes of honor.)

It's no wonder that Achilles is so angry at Agamemnon. Achilles has made a bargain to give up his life for glory and honor, and although Achilles has kept his part of the bargain, Agamemnon has not. Even though Achilles has fought well and been awarded a prize of honor, Agamemnon took that prize of honor away from him.

• **At this point, what does Achilles say that he will do?**

At this point, after rejecting the Heroic Ethic in speech to the embassy after Odysseus has spoken, Achilles says that he will leave for Achaea in the morning. He is not going to fight for Agamemnon. At this point, Achilles prefers to live a long life in Achaea and to die without *kleos*.

Achilles also tells the embassy to tell Agamemnon what he has decided to do.

• **What is the embassy's reaction to Achilles' speech?**

Achilles message stuns the ambassadors:

He stopped.

A stunned silence seized them all, struck dumb —

Achilles' ringing denials stunned them so.

(Fagles 9.522-524)

• **Why does Phoenix tell about how he came to live with Achilles' family in his speech to Achilles?**

Odysseus is a master of rhetoric, but his attempt to persuade Achilles to return and fight for the Achaeans has failed miserably. Far from fighting again for the Achaeans, Achilles has said that he will set sail for Achaea in the

morning. Odysseus has stressed *kleos* and *timê* in his speech, but Achilles says that he is no longer interested in them.

The next person to speak to Achilles and attempt to persuade him to return and fight for the Achaeans is Phoenix, Achilles' father-figure.

Phoenix has known Achilles since Achilles was very young, perhaps a toddler. Phoenix also makes a very good persuasive speech. He stresses two major things:

- 1) Achilles' affection for his father and fellow warriors, and
- 2) what has happened to heroes in the past.

In this society, these are very persuasive things.

Phoenix begins by saying,

“Old horseman Peleus
sent me with you, on that day he shipped you
from Phthia to join Agamemnon.
You were young, knowing nothing about war,
which levels men, or about public debates,
where men acquire distinction. Thus Peleus
sent me to teach you all these things,
so you could speak and carry out great actions.”

(Johnston 9.548-555)

This shows us that Phoenix and Achilles have a long relationship, but it also may show us why Agamemnon resists giving Achilles the honor he deserves. When the Trojan War started, Achilles was just a kid.

Phoenix tells two stories, both of which deal with suppliants. In Book 9, the members of the embassy can be considered suppliants, while in Book 1 Chryses was a suppliant. Achilles is acting like Agamemnon — both denied suppliants. It's much more merciful to respect suppliants.

Phoenix tells the story of how he came to be Achilles' foster-father. In this first story, Phoenix is a suppliant to Achilles' father, Peleus, who receives him with friendship. The story is somewhat long. Phoenix's father is having an affair, and Phoenix's mother convinces him to bed his father's lover so that the concubine will not want the father anymore. The result is that the father is angry at Phoenix, and Phoenix considers killing him — but does not. Instead, Phoenix leaves and goes to Peleus, who welcomes him.

Phoenix believes that Achilles should act like his father, Peleus, and respect the suppliant. By not doing so, Achilles is condemned by contemporary men.

Of course, Phoenix wants Achilles to draw a parallel here between Phoenix' story about his quarrel with his father over a woman, and the quarrel over a woman — Briseis — that Achilles and Agamemnon had.

Phoenix quarreled with his father over a woman, and the effects were devastating. Phoenix rejected his family ties and instead went to live with Achilles' father. It would have been much better if Phoenix and his father had not quarreled and if Phoenix had stayed in his father's house. In this society, sons are supposed to take care of their parents, and of course Phoenix was not around to take care of his parents.

Similarly, if Agamemnon and Achilles quarrel over a woman and don't make things right, the effects will be devastating for them.

When Phoenix stayed with Peleus, Achilles' father, Phoenix took care of Achilles when Achilles was very young.

Phoenix fed Achilles bits of meat and gave him sips of wine (mixed with water, no doubt):

“And I made you what you are — strong as the gods,
Achilles —

I loved you from the heart. You’d never go with
another

To banquet on the town or feast in your own halls.

Never, until I’d sat you down on my knees

And cut you the first bits of meat, remember?

You’d eat your fill, I’d hold the cup to your lips

And all too often you soaked the shirt on my chest,

Spitting up some wine, a baby’s way [...]

(Fagles 9.588-594)

Compare:

“You would refuse to attend a banquet

with anyone or eat in your own home,

unless I set you on my knees, fed you,

cut the meat, and held the wine cup for you.

Many times you soaked the shirt on my chest,

slobbering your wine, a helpless baby.”

(Johnston 9.609-614)

In addition, Phoenix reminds Achilles that he (Phoenix) has no children, so Achilles is the closest to a son that he will ever have.

• **What does Phoenix tell Achilles about Prayers and Ruin?**

Phoenix describes what happens when a person oversteps the mark and does not make amends by using Prayers:

“If someone spurns them [Prayers], rudely rejecting them,

they go to Zeus, son of Cronos, begging

for Folly to pursue that man, who then

harms himself and suffers punishment.”

(Johnston 9.637-640)

Here is some information about Prayers:

LITAE (Litai), a personification of the prayers offered up in repentance. They are described as the daughters of Zeus, and as following closely behind crime, and endeavouring to make amends for what has been done; but whoever disdains to receive them, has himself to atone for the crime that has been committed. (Hom. Il. ix. 502, &c.; Eustath. ad Hom. p. 768; Hesych. s. v. Aigai, calls them Aetae, which however is probably only a mistake in the name.)

Source: *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*.

<http://www.theoi.com/Daimon/Litai.html>

Will Achilles be struck down by Ate (Ruin)? Phoenix begs him to relent before it's too late.

Ruin is Ate, which is madness and blinding ruin. When Ruin follows you, you are unable to tell right from wrong, and you are unable to tell what will benefit you from what will harm

you. Phoenix' point is that Achilles is making the wrong choice — one that will harm him.

Here is some information about Ate (Ruin):

ATE (Atê), according to Hesiod (Theog. 230), a daughter of Eris, and according to Homer (Il. xix. 91) of Zeus, was an ancient Greek divinity, who led both gods and men to rash and inconsiderate actions and to suffering. She once even induced Zeus, at the birth of Heracles, to take an oath by which Hera was afterwards enabled to give to Eurystheus the power which had been destined for Heracles. When Zeus discovered his rashness, he hurled Ate from Olympus and banished her for ever from the abodes of the gods. (Hom. Il. xix. 126, &c.) In the tragic writers Ate appears in a different light: she avenges evil deeds and inflicts just punishments upon the offenders and their posterity (Aeschyl. Choeph. 381), so that her character here is almost the same as that of Nemesis and Erinnys. She appears most prominent in the dramas of Aeschylus, and least in those of Euripides, with whom the idea of Dike (justice) is more fully developed. (Blünmer, Ueber Idee die des Schicksals, &c. p.64,&c.)

Source: *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*.

<http://www.theoi.com/Daimon/Ate.html>

• Why does Phoenix tell a story about Meleager in his speech to Achilles?

Phoenix also talks to Achilles about the precedent of an ancient hero named Meleager.

According to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1953), Meleager

was the great hero of the Calydonian boar-hunt, the story of which is first found in Homer, told by Phoenix ([Book] 2) during the Embassy to Achilles. Oeneus forgot to sacrifice to Artemis, and she, in anger, sent a great wild boar to ravage the country. Meleager gathered huntsmen and hounds from many cities and killed the boar. The goddess then stirred up strife between Aetolians and Curetes over the head and hide of the boar, and a violent battle ensues (*Il.* 9. 529 ff.). From this point on, Homer seems to develop the traditional story in order to create a *paradeigma* (example) paralleling Achilles' situation, the better for Phoenix to persuade him back to battle. While Meleager fought, all went well for the Aetolians, but when he withdrew from battle (out of anger with his mother, who had cursed him for the 'slaying of a brother') the Curetes attacked their city more and more violently. Meleager was offered gifts and was entreated to return to battle by priests, his father, mother, and sisters; but he refused. Only when his wife Cleopatra entreated him did he go and fight, but then too late to receive the offered gifts. Elsewhere (2. 642) the fact of his death is mentioned, but not the manner of it.

Like Odysseus, Phoenix is interested in *timê*. Meleager's anger kept him from fighting until it was too late for him to get the gifts offered to him. Phoenix is advising Achilles to accept now because the gifts may be withdrawn later.

However, Phoenix's main point is that Achilles should be like Meleager, who respected his wife, who was a suppliant. By not doing so, Achilles is condemned by traditional mythology.

In Phoenix's stories, disaster is averted by giving aid to suppliants. In the story of Meleager, Phoenix emphasizes

that Meleager lost his treasure trove of gifts by waiting so long to fight. We already know that Achilles is not interested in material possessions because he knows that if he fights, he will die.

We should note that epic poetry is being used as an educational tool here. How should Achilles decide how to act? He should look at ancient epic poetry for precedents. He should think about the story of Meleager so that he can avoid Meleager's mistakes.

The ancient Greeks did use epic poetry as an educational tool. They did study the *Iliad*. The ancient Greeks did look at what Achilles and Agamemnon did, and the ancient Greeks did attempt to avoid making the mistakes of these heroes.

• **How effective is Phoenix' speech made to Achilles?**

Achilles rejects Phoenix' plea just like he rejected Odysseus' plea. However, Phoenix' speech does affect Achilles to a limited extent. Achilles decides not to set sail for Achaea in the morning; instead, he invites Phoenix to stay the night with him, and he says,

“Then, tomorrow at first light, we will decide
whether we sail home or hold out here.”

(Fagles 9.755-756)

• **What does Great Ajax say in his speech?**

Great Ajax may be angry at Odysseus for speaking first to Achilles. That may be why he addresses Odysseus in his speech and not Phoenix.

Great Ajax says,

“Noble son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus,

let's be off. I don't think we'll bring this talk
to a successful end, not on this trip.

We must report this news, though it's not good,
to the Danaans waiting to receive it.

For Achilles has turned his great spirit
into something savage in his chest.

He's cruel and doesn't care for friendship
of his comrades, how we honoured him
above all others there beside the ships.

He has no pity. Any man accepts reparations
for a murdered son or brother.

The man who killed them pays a large amount
to stay there in his own community.

The other man's angry heart and spirit
are checked, once he takes the compensation.

But with you, gods have put inside your chest
unchanging evil passions, and all this
over a single girl. Now we are offering
seven of the best we have and much more.

You should turn your passion into kindness,
the hospitality of your own house.

For we are guests here under your own roof,
chosen from the Argive host. We believe

that we, of all Achaeans, are the ones
 most dear to you, your closest friends,
 far more so than all the others.”

(Johnston 9.787-813)

Ajax emphasizes the gifts (by mentioning the blood-price paid when a man is killed), but we know that Achilles is not interested in the gifts. In this speech, Ajax condemns Achilles. Previously, Achilles has fought for a principle, but now, Ajax says, he is angry over a girl.

• **How effective is Great Ajax’s speech?**

Great Ajax’ speech is the shortest of all, but it seems to be the most effective of all. Achilles relents even more and says that he will not set sail for Achaea in the morning. However, he will not fight for Agamemnon either. Instead, he will stay at his own camp until the Trojans set fire to the ships. When the fires reach his ships, he will come out and fight — not for Agamemnon, but for himself and to save his ships.

“I will not think of arming for bloody war again,
 not till the son of wise King Priam, dazzling Hector
 batters all the way to the Myrmidon ships and
 shelters,
 slaughtering Argives, gutting the hulls with fire.”

(Fagles 9.795-798)

Compare:

“[...] But you’d better go, take back
 this message, I shall not concern myself
 with bloody war until lord Hector,

murderous son of Priam, comes against
 the huts and sea ships of the Myrmidons,
 killing Achaean soldiers as he goes,
 until he starts to burn our ships with fire.”

(Johnston 9.820-826)

The members of the embassy have to report Achilles’ answer to Agamemnon. Of course, this is not the answer that Agamemnon and the other Achaeans want to hear.

• **Are Achilles and Patroclus gay?**

No, though they are friends. Both are heterosexual; both sleep with women:

Achilles slept in a corner of the well-built hut.
 Beside him lay a woman he’d seized from Lesbos,
 fair Diomedes, one of Phorbas’ daughters.
 Patroclus slept opposite Achilles. Beside him
 lay lovely Iphis, whom Achilles gave him
 after capturing steep Scyros, Enyeus’ city.

(Johnston 9.838-843)

• **At the end of Book 9, what does Odysseus report to Agamemnon and the other Achaeans, and how do they take it?**

The book ends with Odysseus’ giving a report to Agamemnon, followed by the Achaeans agreeing to fight in the morning. Odysseus puts the worst possible light on Achilles’ response, saying that Achilles is threatening to set sail in the morning. Odysseus may want the Achaeans to be

prepared for the worst. In addition, he may want them to feel relieved if the worst does not happen.

As Book 9 closes, the Greeks' situation remains desperate. Book 9 appears at a crucial point in the *Iliad*.

• **Is Agamemnon a good fighter?**

We have heard from Achilles that Agamemnon hangs back in battle and does not fight. Is that true? Perhaps it is, although Agamemnon will have an *aristeia* in Book 11. When the unsuccessful embassy comes back to report to Agamemnon, Diomedes says,

“When fair rosy-fingered Dawn appears,
 you [Agamemnon] should range your army, men and horses,
 before the ships, then rouse their spirits,
 with you fighting at the front in person.”

(Johnston 9.889-892)

Perhaps Achilles is right, and Agamemnon has been hanging back from the fighting.

• **Does Achilles blunder in Book 9 by not being reconciled to Agamemnon?**

Agamemnon blundered in Book 1; has Achilles blundered in Book 9?

Interestingly, we can speculate on whether Achilles is in the wrong here. Agamemnon wants him back, and he is offering abundant material rewards to Achilles to come back. However, Achilles does not want material rewards at this point.

Achilles is headstrong. We can imagine what would have happened if Agamemnon had taken the slave-girl of Odysseus. Odysseus would have been more diplomatic, and the story would not be tragic. Odysseus would have gladly accepted the treasures Agamemnon is now offering.

Achilles may be regarded as being in the wrong here, and he will pay for it. Agamemnon has offered a fair material reconciliation. He has offered many gifts — gifts that show that Agamemnon was wrong to take Briseis from Achilles. Achilles is denying suppliants (the Achaean warriors), when he should respect the suppliants. Still, we can recognize Achilles' motivation in refusing Agamemnon's offer of reconciliation. We also know that Agamemnon did not offer an explicit apology. Agamemnon took away what Achilles valued most: glory and honor. If these things are not available to Achilles, then he refuses to be reconciled to Agamemnon. The only thing that will satisfy Achilles now is for Agamemnon to be completely humiliated — as Achilles has been.

In addition, Achilles is questioning the meaning of life and how he ought to live his life. Agamemnon took away the foundation (honor and glory) of Achilles' life, and Achilles is searching for a new foundation. In my opinion, Achilles was serious when he threatened to sail home. He loves life, and if *timê* and *kleos* can be taken away so easily, why not live a long life at home?

This, however, is something for you to work out on your own. Each of you must form an interpretation of the *Iliad*.

Should Achilles have accepted Agamemnon's offer? Chances are, he should. If Achilles had accepted Agamemnon's offer, fewer Achaeans, including Achilles' friend Patroclus, would have died.

We can ask what is motivating Achilles in this speech and in this book. His entire world has been upset by Agamemnon's action in Book 1. For a long time, his choice was clear to him. He would live a short life, but gain everlasting glory. However, Agamemnon showed him that it is easy to take glory away. Achilles did everything right in battle — no one questions that he is the foremost Achaean warrior — but Agamemnon took Briseis away from him.

Achilles is undergoing a dark night of the soul. He is wondering what life means. He is wondering what makes life worthwhile. The choice he had made to have a short life and undying glory has been upset, and he is questioning the entire basis of the Homeric Heroic Ethic. Since he is no longer motivated by the quest for undying glory, he needs to replace that with something else. At the moment, all he has to replace it with is anger at Agamemnon.

Even if Achilles were to set sail for home and be guaranteed a long life, he would still need something to make his life meaningful. Each of us needs to be ultimately concerned about something.

• Write a character analysis of Nestor based on what you learn in Book 9.

Nestor does the right things in Book 9. He tells Diomedes straight out that Diomedes is still a young pup — Nestor can say such things because he is older and has more authority than Diomedes. In addition, Nestor handles Agamemnon with considerably more tact than Diomedes does. Nestor does point out that Agamemnon previously made a mistake, but he also points out that there is no shame in rectifying a mistake. Nestor also gives much good advice here. He wants Agamemnon to win Achilles over with gifts and warm, winning words. Agamemnon certainly comes through with the gifts, but he neglects the warm, winning words, and so the attempt to win Achilles back fails.

Nestor also recognizes that Odysseus is a wonderful speaker. When Nestor chooses the delegation to go to Achilles, he picks Phoenix, Great Ajax, and Odysseus. He says that Phoenix should lead the delegation, but he also looks most sharply at Odysseus. Odysseus, however, is full of confidence. Instead of Phoenix leading the delegation, it is Odysseus who leads it. In addition, when Great Ajax signals Phoenix to begin speaking, Odysseus catches the signal, and he speaks first. This shows that Odysseus has great confidence in his speaking abilities, but unfortunately, Achilles rejects his pleas, although Odysseus made a speech that would have been persuasive to most Homeric heroes.

Conclusion

Book 9 has been very important. Achilles has rejected the Heroic Ethic and has declined to fight for Agamemnon. Achilles has rejected everything that Homeric warriors believe in.

Chapter 10: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 10 — Marauding Through the Night / A Night Raid

- The *Iliad* was probably performed at religious festivals over a period of three days. Chances are, the first day's performance would end at the end of Book 9. Is that a good place to end the first day of performance?

Some critics believe that that the *Iliad* was probably performed at religious festivals over a period of three days. Chances are, the first day's performance would end at the end of Book 9. That would be a good place to end the first day of performance for a number of reasons:

- The *Iliad* was recited orally. To recite the entire epic poem in the original Greek probably took about 23 or 24 hours, depending on how fast the epic poem was recited, and depending on how much musical accompaniment there was. Possibly, the bard recited a line, then strummed a lyre. We don't know. The bard would definitely need a break at the end of Book 9. Book 9 is roughly a third of the way through the *Iliad*.
- Book 9 reminds the audience of the cause of the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles. Agamemnon took Achilles' *timê* away from him: the spear-bride Briseis. In Book 9, Agamemnon tries to convince Achilles with gifts to come and fight, but Achilles declines to do so.
- Book 9 brings up important themes of the poem. The main theme is the anger of Achilles. In his anger, Achilles rejects the Heroic Ethic. He is no longer willing to fight for *kleos* and *timê*.
- Book 9 reminds us of the desperate situation of the Achaeans. Because Achilles is not fighting for the Achaeans, the Trojans are triumphant, and they are

camping on the plain before Troy instead of withdrawing behind their city walls.

- The end of the first day of performance is precisely a place where these themes and facts need to be stated again.
- Book 9 is also a narrative high point. Achilles rejects Agamemnon's offer of peace. The audience will definitely wonder what will happen next.

• Many critics don't think that Book 10 is an important book. What reasons can be advanced that it provides a symmetry to the *Iliad*?

Many critics think that Book 10 is not an important book. Many courses about the *Iliad* would ignore this book. We have read many important books in the *Iliad*. Book 1 showed the cause of the wrath of Achilles. Book 6 shows us the tender scene between Hector and Andromache and so tells us his character. Book 9 shows the wrath of the Achilles — the break between Achilles and the rest of the Achaeans is now complete. Here, in Book 10, we have the nature of an interlude. (E.T. Owen devotes only four pages to Book 10 in his *The Story of the Iliad*; usually, he devotes 10 pages to a book of the *Iliad*.)

Homer is a major poet, and so perhaps we should look closer at Book 10. After all, we don't expect Homer to simply use filler in his great work of art.

The *Iliad* has a symmetry; it is planned well. In the *Iliad* are two major turning points, which divide the poem into three sections. We have read the first section already; the turning point is Achilles' refusal of Agamemnon's offer to him to come and fight in Book 9.

The next turning point will be when Patroclus, Achilles' best friend, is killed and Achilles decides to fight to revenge the

death of his best friend. After both turning points is an interlude. After the death of Achilles' friend, we hear of the Shield of Achilles and of Achilles' armor. After Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's offer, we read of this night sortie by Diomedes and Odysseus.

• In which ways does Book 10 form a contrast with Book 9?

In Book 10, we see a contrast to Book 9. In Book 9, we see the division between Agamemnon and Achilles; in Book 10, we see cooperation between Diomedes and Odysseus. In these two books, Homer is working out the theme of united we stand, divided we fall. Because Agamemnon and Achilles can't cooperate, the Achaean army will suffer many losses. Because Diomedes and Odysseus can cooperate, they successfully mount a night sortie against the Trojans.

• Which aesthetic reasons can be advanced for the necessity of a night raid at this point in the *Iliad*?

Coming up is a great battle in which the Trojan forces will reach the Achaean ships and set fire to one of them. That will be a much more significant defeat than the defeat the Achaeans suffered in Book 8. Homer does not want the earlier defeat to overshadow the later defeat. One way that he can do that is to insert a night sortie between the two battles. By letting the Achaeans have a victorious night sortie, Homer can wipe out some of the sting of the earlier defeat. In addition, the success of the night sortie will contrast mightily with the major defeat that will follow.

Homer has other reasons for inserting a night sortie here:

- This is an enjoyable adventure.
- Battle scene after battle scene can grow boring. Inserting a night scene here gives the audience a change of pace.

- Homer's Greek audience will enjoy a Greek victory. Homer's Greek audience is less likely to enjoy battles in which the Trojans are triumphant.
- Book 10 brings up the important theme of cooperation.

• In which ways do Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Nestor exhibit teamwork?

We find out some good things about Agamemnon and his brother, Menelaus. Agamemnon is acting like a general now. And for good reason: The fires of the Trojans are terrifying to the Achaeans. This is a reversal of what has been the norm. Formerly, the Trojans would have been terrified inside their walls as they looked out on the plain at the many fires of the Achaeans. But now, Homer shows Agamemnon looking at the many fires of the Trojans:

Now as he scanned across the Trojan plain
 Agamemnon marveled in horror at those fires,
 a thousand fires blazing against the walls of Troy,
 and the shrill of pipes and flutes and low roar of men.
 (Fagles 10.13-16)

Compare:

Every time he looked out on the Trojan plain,
 he was overcome at the sight of countless fires
 burning in front of Ilion, at the sound of flutes,
 pipes, the loud noise all those soldiers made.
 (Johnston 10.13-16)

Menelaus shows good judgment. He goes to Agamemnon without being asked, and he is thinking about a plan. Menelaus says to Agamemnon,

“Brother, you’re arming yourself. Why?
 Are you going to encourage some companion
 to scout the Trojans out? I really doubt
 that anyone will do that for you,
 set off to spy against a hostile force
 under the cover of immortal night.
 Such work would require a courageous heart.”

(Johnston 10.40-46)

In Book 10, we see Agamemnon and Menelaus working well together and cooperating.

Agamemnon shows good judgment in going to Nestor for advice. Also, he shows good judgment in asking Menelaus — who has come to him without being asked — to show respect to the soldiers. Formerly, Agamemnon did not show respect to Achilles. Now he makes sure to show respect to his soldiers. Agamemnon says,

“But shout wherever you go, tell them to stay awake.
 And call each man by his name and father’s line,
 show them all respect.”

(Fagles 10.77-79)

Like a good general should be, Agamemnon is worried about the sentries. Are they awake?

“[...] If you want some action,

since sleep hasn't come to you here either,
 go with me. We'll walk down to the sentries,
 and check if they're exhausted and asleep,
 worn out, forgetting to maintain a watch."

(Johnston 10.115-119)

Agamemnon gives credit where credit is due. When Nestor complains about Menelaus' sleeping, Agamemnon replies that normally he would join in the complaining, but that this time Menelaus sought him out:

"Old man, at other times I'd urge you on
 to criticize him, for often he holds back,
 reluctant to carry out the heavy tasks,
 not because he's lazy or soft in the head,
 but because he's looking for my signal,
 waiting for me to make a move. But this time,
 he was up and moving well ahead of me.
 He came to see me. I sent him off
 to summon those very men you mention."

(Johnston 10.144-152)

Like a good leader, Agamemnon gives credit where credit is due.

• How do Odysseus and Diomedes react when woken up by Nestor?

Nestor then wakes Odysseus and Diomedes, the heroes of Book 10. Odysseus says,

“What new distress, what sudden cause of fright,
Thus leads you wandering in the silent night?”
(Pope pdf 206)

Compare:

“Why, why prowling along the ships and camp,
you alone in the bracing godsent night —
what’s the crisis now? What trouble’s come?”
(Fagles 10.163-165)

Odysseus is always ready for trouble when it comes to him.

When Diomedes is woken up by Nestor, he says,

“Old man,
you’re a hard one. You never stop working.
What about Achaea’s other sons,
the younger ones? Can’t each of them go round

waking up the kings? You old man,
we can’t do anything to check you.”
(Johnston 10.197-202)

It seems that Diomedes is usually in a good mood and is usually respectful of his elders.

The Achaeans hold their council at a place free of corpses:

Crossing out the deep trench they grouped
on open ground, where they chanced to find a sector
free and clear of corpses [...]

(Fagles 10.234-236)

So far, we have seen much cooperation. Agamemnon and Menelaus are working together — Menelaus is not hanging back and letting Agamemnon do all the leading. Agamemnon shows that he is willing to show respect to his warriors, and he shows himself willing to take advice from Nestor. Diomedes and Odysseus also show themselves willing to attend the council and to go on a night raid.

• **Why do the Achaeans decide on a night scouting expedition?**

The Achaeans decide on a night scouting expedition. They will send out a man to spy on the Trojans and perhaps even kill a Trojan or two. The main thing, though, Nestor says, is to spy on the Trojans and determine their plans:

“What plans are they mapping, what maneuvers next?

Are they bent on holding tight by the ships, exposed?

—

or heading back to Troy, now that they’ve trounced our armies?”

(Fagles 10.246-248)

• **Why does Diomedes want a companion to go with him?**

Diomedes volunteers, but suggests that someone go with him. This is important. Two men working together can accomplish much:

“If another comrade would escort me, though,
there’d be more comfort in it, confidence too.

When two work side-by-side, one or the other

spots the opening first if a kill's at hand.
 When one looks out for himself, alert but alone,
 his reach is shorter — his sly moves miss the mark.”
 (Fagles 10.261-266)

Compare:

“Nestor, my heart and my proud spirit prompt me
 to infiltrate the hostile Trojans' camp,
 which stands close by. But another man
 should come with me. Things would go much better.
 We'd have more confidence. When two set out,
 one may see something good before the other.
 A man alone might notice it, but his mind
 is less perceptive, less resourceful, than two.”
 (Johnston 10.261-268)

• Why does Agamemnon not want Diomedes to choose a man simply because he is “more kingly” (Fagles 10.280 / Johnston 10.277-286) than another man?

We have learned in the past that Agamemnon fears for his brother's safety. We see this again in Book 10, when Agamemnon allows Diomedes to choose a warrior to accompany him on the night raid. Agamemnon is afraid that Diomedes will choose Menelaus, so he says,

“Diomedes, soldier after my own heart,
 pick your comrade now, whomever you want,
 the best of the volunteers — how many long to go!

But no false respect. Don't pass over the better man
 and pick the worse. Don't bow to a soldier's rank,
 an eye to his birth — even if he's more kingly.”
 He suddenly feared for red-haired Menelaus
 (Fagles 10.275-281)

Compare:

“Diomedes, son of Tydeus,
 you delight my heart. But you must choose
 the other man. Take the one you want,
 the best of those in view. Many are keen.

Don't reject the better man, following
 a sense of duty in your mind, taking
 someone less worthy as your comrade,
 thinking only of his birth. Don't do that,
 even if the second is the greater king.”
 Agamemnon spoke, afraid for fair-haired Menelaus.
 (Johnston 10.277-286)

• **Why does Diomedes choose Odysseus to go with him?**

Diomedes chooses Odysseus to go with him. Quite simply,
 Diomedes has a lot of respect for Odysseus:

“If you bid me choose a companion for myself,
 how could I reject godlike Odysseus,
 with his heart and daring spirit always eager

for every challenge? Pallas Athena loves him.
 With Odysseus at my side, we'd both return,
 even from blazing fire. For he knows,
 better than other men, how to use his mind."

(Johnston 10.288-294)

In Book 10, we find out what happens when people work together. Diomedes and Odysseus make a good team. Working together, they are able to kill several Trojan allies. This forms an important contrast to the discord between Achilles and Agamemnon that we have seen so far.

Unfortunately, Agamemnon and Achilles don't work together, and so the Achaean army suffers many casualties. People who work together can defeat people who don't work together.

• How does Odysseus respond to Diomedes' praise of him?

Book 10 is in part a commentary on Achilles. An interesting point to note is that Odysseus is much less concerned with glory than Achilles is. When Odysseus is chosen by Diomedes to go on the night raid, Diomedes showers him with praise, but Odysseus replies,

"It fits thee not, before these chiefs of fame,
 (Replied the sage,) to praise me, or to blame:
 Praise from a friend, or censure from a foe,
 Are lost on hearers that our merits know.
 But let us haste — Night rolls the hours away,
 The reddening orient shows the coming day,

The stars shine fainter on the ethereal plains,
 And of night's empire but a third remains.”

(Pope pdf 208)

There needs to be a balance. Don't over-praise, but don't over-blame. As long as there is a balance, people will work together. This balance has been lacking in the relationship between Achilles and Agamemnon. In addition, we should note that this passage shows that Diomedes respects his elders. By picking Odysseus instead of Menelaus, Diomedes may be showing respect for Agamemnon's wishes (or he may simply have preferred to work with Odysseus instead of Menelaus).

• **How do Diomedes and Odysseus prepare for their night scouting mission?**

Odysseus and Diomedes did not bring all their weapons and armor to the council because they were not expecting to fight, so they borrow weapons and armor from other Achaean warriors. (Part of the night is gone, and they don't want to waste time returning to their camps to get armor and weapons.)

Note that Odysseus gets a bow and a quiver full of arrows. In the *Odyssey*, he says that he was the second-best archer among the Achaeans in the Trojan War, but this is the only time he has a bow and arrows. This passage is from the *Odyssey*:

“I well understand
 how to use a polished bow with skill.
 I was the first to shoot an arrow off
 and, in a multitude of enemies,
 to kill a man, even as companions

standing close by me were still taking aim.
 In that Trojan land, when Achaeans shot,
 the only one who beat me with the bow
 was Philoctetes.”

(Johnston, *Odyssey* 8.275-283)

Diomedes and Odysseus also pray to Athena, who will help them during the night raid. She sends a bird-sign that is positive for the Achaeans. A bird veers to the right. Even a goddess is cooperating with the Achaeans during the night raid.

Odysseus and Diomedes work together during the night raid very well indeed, as we see in both the episodes with Dolon and King Rhesus.

• **What is the battlefield like?**

We learn something about the fighting: corpses are strewn almost everywhere. When Diomedes and Odysseus leave for their night raid, Homer sings,

Their prayers to the daughter of great Zeus complete,
 they continued on their way, like two lions,
 in the darkness of night, through the slaughter,
 through corpses, armour, through black pools of
 blood.

(Johnston 10.353-356)

A funeral to bury the corpses lying on the battlefield is not held everyday.

• **What does Hector promise to a Trojan or Trojan ally who will spy on the Achaeans?**

Odysseus and Diomedes get ready for battle while Hector recruits a Trojan to spy on the Achaeans. The prize Hector offers is very impressive indeed:

“Who will undertake a mission and bring it off
for a princely prize? A prize to match the exploit!
I’ll give him a chariot, two horses with strong necks,
the best of the breeds beside Achaea’s fast ships.”

(Fagles 10.355-358)

Compare:

“I’ll give a chariot and two strong-necked horses,
the finest ones there are by those fast ships
of the Achaeans, [...]”

(Johnston 10.364-366)

Homer always finds a way to keep Achilles before our minds. It is Achilles who has the best horses of the Achaeans.

• **In which ways do Odysseus and Diomedes exhibit teamwork when they capture Dolon?**

Diomedes and Odysseus fight together when they capture — and later kill — Dolon. Odysseus comes up with a good plan for capturing Dolon:

“Diomedes, someone’s coming from the camp.
I don’t know if he’s going to scout our ships
or strip some dead man’s corpse. Let’s let him

at first get past us on the plain, just a bit.
 Then we can go after him and catch him fast.
 If his feet outrun ours, we'll keep following him,
 and chase him from his camp towards our ships.
 Keep brandishing your spear behind him,
 so he doesn't make it to the city."

(Johnston 10.407-415)

Note the strategy of Odysseus' plan. He and Diomedes will let Dolon run past them before they reveal themselves to him. That way, they will have him trapped between themselves and the Achaean ships.

It is entirely in character for quick-witted Odysseus to come up with this plan. After all, he is the one who will invent the Trojan Horse.

Odysseus' plan works. The two capture Dolon, who promptly spills his guts and tells them what they need to know to attack some new Trojan allies. Dolon is terrified when he is captured:

[...] "Take me alive!
 I'll ransom myself! Treasures cram our house,
 bronze and gold and plenty of well-wrought iron —
 father would give you anything, gladly, priceless
 ransom —
 if only he learns I'm still alive in Argive ships!"

(Fagles 10.442-446)

Compare:

“Take me alive, and I’ll ransom myself.
 At home there is bronze, gold, well-wrought iron.
 My father will give lots of it to you,
 an immense ransom, if he once finds out
 I’m at Achaean ships and still alive.”

(Johnston 10.449-503)

• **How does Dolon die?**

Dolon is a coward. When he is captured by Diomedes and Odysseus, he blames Hector for “duping” him (Fagles 10.457).

As always, Homer keeps Achilles in our minds. When Dolon tells Odysseus the prize he had hoped to win, Odysseus reacts in this way:

“Your heart has been ambitious for big gifts.
 Those horses of warrior Achilles,
 descendant of Aeacus, are hard to manage
 or control for any mortal person,
 except Achilles, son of an immortal mother.”

(Johnston 10.478-482)

Because Dolon is such a coward, he tells Diomedes and Odysseus what they need to know in order to kill many Trojans and Trojan allies. In trying to save his own life, he gets many other people killed. And after spilling his guts, Dolon is beheaded:

[...] just as Dolon reached up for his chin
 to cling with a frantic hand and beg for life,

Diomedes struck him square across the neck —
 a flashing hack of the sword — both tendons snapped
 and the shrieking head went tumbling into the dust.
 (Fagles 10.523-527)

Compare:

As Diomedes finished, Dolon was intending
 to cup his chin with his strong hand in supplication.
 But with his sword Diomedes jumped at him,
 slashed him across the middle of his neck, slicing
 through both tendons. Dolon's head rolled in the
 dust,
 as he was speaking.
 (Johnston 10.544-549)

In this case, a suppliant is refused, but in this case, the refusal may be justified. Dolon is a coward and a traitor. In an attempt to save his own life, he gets many of his allies killed.

• **Write a character analysis of Dolon.**

Dolon is the Trojan who is killed by Odysseus and Diomedes. He is the only son of a Trojan herald, and he has four sisters. He is not good-looking, but he is rich (rich in bronze and in gold) and he is a very fast runner. He is greedy, and he may seem to have some courage because he volunteered for the mission of scouting the Achaean defenses. However, courage is not the right word — a better word is foolhardy.

We know that Dolon is greedy because of the reward that he asks from Hector for spying on the Achaeans. He wants

Achilles' team of horses. This is such an outrageous reward that Odysseus smiles when he hears of it.

One problem that Dolon has is that he chooses to work alone. Odysseus and Diomedes have the advantage of him because they are able to work as a team.

Dolon lacks some basic skills. He does not notice Odysseus and Diomedes, but they see him coming and hide until he is past them and in between them and the other Achaeans.

When Dolon is captured, he gives in too easily. After all, he is armed. He has a reflex bow on his back. With his arrows (and with an armed companion), he might have been able to escape.

A basic characteristic of Dolon is cowardliness. He fears for his life, so he blames his problems on Hector — he says Hector duped him by offering him Achilles' team if he would spy on the Achaeans.

Dolon comes from a rich family, and therefore he begs to be ransomed. However, Odysseus and Diomedes are not interested in ransoming him.

The worst thing that Dolon does that displays his cowardliness is to tell Odysseus and Diomedes everything they want to know. He even volunteers information about King Rhesus that gets the king and 12 of his men killed. Dolon does this in an unsuccessful attempt to save his cowardly life.

We find out when Dolon arms himself what he is wearing. He has the cape of a wolf about him and he wears a cap that is made of weasel skin. The cap seems appropriate — Dolon is a weasel.

• In which ways do Odysseus and Diomedes exhibit teamwork when they kill King Rhesus and his men?

Diomedes and Odysseus fight together when they attack King Rhesus and his men. They divide the work: Diomedes kills the soldiers and Odysseus drags them away, thus making sure that the ground is clear of corpses so that they will not spook King Rhesus' horses when they drive them away:

Each man he'd [Diomedes would] stand above
and chop with the sword, the cool tactician Odysseus
grappled from behind, grabbing the fighter's heels,
dragging him out of the way with one thought in
mind:

that team with their flowing manes must get through
fast,

not quake at heart and balk, trampling over the dead,
those purebred horses still not used to corpses.

(Fagles 10.564-570)

Compare:

Whenever Diomedes
stood over some man he'd just killed with his sword,
crafty Odysseus, from behind, would grab his feet
and drag the body clear. For his mind was planning
how he might steal the fine-maned horses easily,
if he didn't frighten them by forcing them to step
on dead men's bodies, for they were not used to that.

(Johnston 10.585-591)

Because King Rhesus has recently come to Troy, his horses are not yet used to corpses.

Athena contributes to the slaughter. She breathes fury into Diomedes so that he can kill many Trojan allies. This is an example of double motivation.

• In which ways are Odysseus and Diomedes a good team even when they make it back to the Achaean camp?

Odysseus and Diomedes take off with the horses after killing 13 men, including King Rhesus, and make it safely back to the Achaean camp, where they can finally relax. The teamwork continues, as Odysseus makes sure that Diomedes gets the credit that is due him. When the two warriors come into camp, Nestor asks Odysseus (who is the older man) where these fine chariot horses came from, and Odysseus makes clear that Diomedes has played an important role in their capture:

“Of Thracian lineage are the steeds ye view,
Whose hostile king the brave Tydides slew;
Sleeping he died, with all his guards around,
And twelve beside lay gasping on the ground.
These other spoils from conquer’d Dolon came,
A wretch, whose swiftness was his only fame;
By Hector sent our forces to explore,
He now lies headless on the sandy shore.”

(Pope pdf 216)

Compare:

“O Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory
 of Achaeans, if a god wanted to,
 he’d easily give even better horses,
 for gods are much more powerful than us.
 But these horses which you ask about,
 old man, are from Thrace, new arrivals.
 Brave Diomedes killed their master,
 along with all twelve of his companions,
 their finest men. There was a thirteenth killed,
 a spy we captured near the ships, sent there
 by Hector and the other haughty Trojans,
 to scout around our camp.”

(Johnston 10.663-674)

The two divide the spoils fairly. Odysseus gets the gear of Dolon because he promised it to Athena. Diomedes gets the horses of Rhesus because he did the killing. In addition, Odysseus may not have much use for horses. He doesn’t fight in a chariot, which may explain why he forgot the whip and had to use a bow on King Rhesus’ horses. Also, Odysseus’ home island of Ithaca is hilly and not suitable for horses, as we find out from what Telemachus says to Menelaus in Book 4 of the *Odyssey* when Menelaus wishes to give him a chariot and three horses.

Note that Odysseus gives credit where credit is due. Diomedes is younger than Odysseus, but Diomedes has done good work in the night sortie.

Finally, the two warriors can get clean and relax:

Then the two men waded
 into the sea, washed off their legs and necks and
 thighs,
 removing all the sweat. Once the surf had taken
 layers of sweat from off their skin and their hearts
 had been refreshed, they stepped in shining tubs and
 bathed.
 They washed, rubbing lots of smooth oil on
 themselves,
 then sat down to eat. From the brimming wine bowl
 they drew off sweet wine and poured libations to
 Athena.

(Johnston 10.683-690)

Diomedes and Odysseus have worked hard; now it is time for them to relax.

When Book 11 begins, we will see that the Achaean army is in a much better mood as a result of this night sortie.

• Many critics don't think that Book 10 is an important book. However, we may disagree. What are the functions of Book 10?

In conclusion, I want to point out that this book has many functions:

1. The cooperation of the Achaeans, especially the cooperation of Diomedes and Odysseus, serves as a contrast to the lack of cooperation between Achilles and Agamemnon. Homer is aware that united we stand, divided we fall. Dolon works alone, so he is

overpowered by Diomedes and Odysseus, who work together. (Once again, the Trojans are outnumbered.)

2. Homer's audience is Greek, and they would enjoy a Greek victory after the Greek defeat in the previous battle and before the greater defeat to be suffered in the following battle.

3. The book is an interesting adventure all by itself.

4. The book serves to raise the Achaeans' spirits, thus making their next defeat all the worse.

5. Homer does not want the next day's battle, which will be a major defeat for the Achaeans, to be overpowered by the previous day's defeat. Therefore, he inserts a successful Achaean night raid here.

6. Book 10 gives a symmetry to the *Iliad*. After important turning points, there is an interlude to allow the audience to catch its breath.

7. We also see or are reminded that Diomedes and Odysseus have qualities that are lacking in Achilles. Diomedes is almost always respectful to his elders, and Odysseus (as we find out in the *Odyssey*) is able to hide his feelings when he wishes.

Conclusion

The main theme of Book 10 is cooperation, something that Agamemnon and Achilles lack right now.

Chapter 11: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 11 — Agamemnon's Day of Glory / The Achaeans Face Disaster

Important Terms

Aristeia: a warrior's day of excellence in battle (pronounced a ris STAY a)

Double motivation: Many actions in the *Iliad* are motivated both by humans and by gods. For example, at one point in Book 11 of the *Iliad* Great Ajax is forced back by the Trojans. On the human level, he has been fighting very hard for a long time, and he is tired. No wonder the Trojan warriors force him back! But we also read that Great Ajax is forced back by Zeus. Often, we can explain actions purely on the human level, but Homer tells us that the gods are also involved in the actions.

Over-determination: Many actions in the *Iliad* occur because of the actions both of humans and of the gods. This double motivation is sometimes called by critics over-determination. Over-determination stresses the inevitability of certain actions — they *had* to occur. In literature, over-determination occurs when an action is explained by more than one cause when only one cause is enough to explain why the action occurred.

• What do we mean by “double motivation”?

Very often, the human motivation is enough to explain an action, but Homer will also have the gods and goddesses motivate an action. Therefore, an action will have a double motivation: the human motivation and the divine motivation.

For example, in Book 11, Great Ajax has been fighting hard and he drops back from the fighting briefly when the Trojans attack his position with great force. This is enough motivation to explain what had happened. Great Ajax has been fighting very hard for a long time, and because the

Trojans attack his position so fiercely, he is forced back by the Trojans.

However, Homer gives us an additional motivation. Zeus dashes his spirits and forces Great Ajax to retreat:

But Father Zeus on the heights forced Ajax to retreat.

(Fagles 11.638)

Compare:

Then Father Zeus, enthroned on high, put fear in Ajax.

He stood bewildered, shifted his seven-layered shield

onto his back, turned, looked round at throngs of Trojans,

like some wild beast, then backed off step by step, retreating,

but often turning back.

(Johnston 11.615-619)

Double motivation of this kind adds to a sense of inevitability. Great Ajax has no choice. He must retreat at this time.

• On what two levels can the battle that we are going to read about be analyzed?

Double motivation occurs when a realistic motivation exists for something to occur, but a god or the gods or fate also decrees that something will occur. We moderns might say that Troy fell because of the superior numbers of warriors fighting against it, but the ancient Greeks would say that in addition fate decreed that Troy would fall.

In double motivation, motivation exists on two levels: the god level and the human level.

I am mentioning this here because the battle that will now occur has many examples of double motivation. An adequate realistic motivation for the events of the battle will be present, but we will also read about the gods and goddesses playing a role in the battle, perhaps by giving advice or exhorting the troops, and we will read occasionally that fate plays a role in the battle.

As we read the books devoted to the battle, we ought to keep an eye out for the two levels of motivation: the god level and the human level.

As part of Homer's audience, we have a privileged point of view. Homer lets us know what the gods and goddesses are doing. The human characters in the *Iliad* usually don't have that point of view. Unless a god reveals himself by turning into a bird and flying away, the humans don't know what the gods are doing. We do know because Homer tells us.

Our opinion about the gods and goddesses is likely to be different from the opinions of the human characters in the *Iliad*. Those human characters find the gods to be awesome and awe-inspiring. We, on the other hand, are less likely to do that. We have a different religion from that of the ancient Greeks, and we see the ancient Greek gods acting in silly ways. Often, the gods and goddesses are comic relief. The human characters in the *Iliad*, of course, take them very seriously.

Note that the battle is described very realistically. The battle is very much like a real battle. We don't need the gods to explain what happens in the battle, although Homer does make us aware of the double motivation that occurs during the battle.

• **What do we mean by “over-determination”?**

“Over-determination” is a term used by critics to indicate that an action can be explained by more one cause. Many of the events that occur in the *Iliad* can be explained on the human level and on the divine level. Double motivation is over-determination.

• **What is the morale of the Achaeans after the night raid of Diomedes and Odysseus?**

The Achaeans are up for battle, ready to fight. In the passage below, Eris (Strife) is standing on Odysseus’ ship:

Standing there, the goddess [Strife] screamed out a piercing call,

a dreadful sound. In the heart of each Achaean,
she put strength for war, for unremitting combat.

To men war then became sweeter than sailing back,
going home in their hollow ships to their dear native land.

(Johnston 11.11-15)

• **What kind of a warrior is Agamemnon?**

Now begins the battle that ends in a great Achaean defeat. This battle will go on for several books, from Book 11 until the middle of Book 18.

The day before, the Achaeans suffered a defeat bad enough that Agamemnon was willing to give gifts to Achilles in an attempt to convince him to fight again for the Achaeans. This was followed by a successful night sortie by the Achaeans that took away a lot of the sting of that defeat so that it would not overshadow the much bigger defeat that will be suffered by the Achaeans in this battle.

Homer takes away more of the sting of the previous day's defeat by having this battle start well for the Achaeans. Agamemnon has an *aristeia* and fights well at the beginning of the battle. We can tell that Agamemnon will have an *aristeia* from Robert Fagles' title (which Homer did not write) for Book 11. An *aristeia* is a warrior's day of glory in battle, and Robert Fagles' title for Book 11 is "Agamemnon's Day of Glory." Ian Johnston's title for Book 11 is "The Achaeans Face Disaster."

However, Agamemnon's *aristeia* will be brief, and because Achilles is not fighting for the Achaeans, many great Achaean heroes, including Agamemnon, will become wounded and will have to withdraw from the battle. The Achaeans are vulnerable because Achilles has withdrawn from the fighting.

Book 11 stresses the Greeks' vulnerability without Achilles. Book 11, in which we as the audience know that Zeus has promised one day's valor to Hector, opens with the Greeks fighting very, very well.

Agamemnon is very successful in battle. Homer spends some lines simply describing Agamemnon preparing for battle. This is something that he will also do later for Achilles — in much more detail. When Homer spends time describing a warrior preparing for battle, we know that he is describing a great warrior who will have an *aristeia*.

• If you feel like doing research, explain what an *aristeia* (a ris STAY a) is.

Agamemnon has his *aristeia* here, but it is a short *aristeia*. The *aristeia* of Achilles will last for three books. Hector also has an *aristeia*.

In the *Iliad* several warriors have their day of glory, or *aristeia*, in battle. Because of their *aristeia*, these warriors win *kleos aphthiton*, or imperishable glory. By putting them

in his *Iliad*, Homer has made sure that these warriors are remembered millennia after their deaths.

An *aristeia* shows a warrior fighting very, very well and shows us his *kleos*. Seth Schein, in his *Mortal Hero*, pp. 80-81, identifies five parts of an *aristeia*. An *aristeia* has a number of parts, not all of which are present in every *aristeia*:

1: The Warrior Arms Himself

Often Homer tells us that the armor is gleaming. Often, Homer uses fire imagery.

2: The Warrior Turns the Tide of Battle

The warrior fights very, very well, and because he is fighting so well, the momentum of the battle is on the warrior's side. His army is winning.

3: The Warrior is Wounded, Then Healed

Eventually, the warrior is wounded, but because he prays to a god, he is able to be healed and return to the battle and fight again.

4: The Warrior Returns to Combat and Kills an Important Enemy

After returning to the battle, the warrior kills an important enemy.

5: A Fierce Battle Ensues Over the Important Enemy's Body

Both sides fight over the important enemy's body. Often, the important enemy's body is taken away from the warrior, and the warrior's *aristeia* ends.

Of course, not every element is present in every *aristeia*. Agamemnon's *aristeia* lacks some of these elements. After

he is wounded and the blood dries, he leaves the battle and does not return.

• **Is Homer’s description of the battle realistic? For example, look at how Homer describes Agamemnon’s killing of the charioteer Oileus (Fagles 11.106-117 / Johnston 11.98-106) and Hippolochus (Fagles 11.166-170 / Johnston 11.160-166).**

When Homer describes single combat, he uses very realistic terms. Agamemnon gets first blood in the battle — and “blood” is a very appropriate term here. He kills Bienor, then the charioteer Oileus:

And right in the midst sprang Agamemnon first
and killed a fighter, Bienor, veteran captain,
then his aide Oileus lashing on their team.
Down from the car he’d leapt, squaring off,
charging in full fury, full face, straight
into Agamemnon’s spearhead ramming sharp —
the rim of the bronze helmet could not hold it,
clean through heavy metal and bone the point burst
and the brains splattered all inside the casque
[helmet].

(Fagles 11.106-114)

An epic simile that Homer uses to describe Agamemnon in battle is very good:

The Trojans see the youths untimely die,
But helpless tremble for themselves, and fly.
So when a lion ranging o’er the lawns.

Finds, on some grassy lair, the couching fawns,
 Their bones he cracks, their reeking vitals draws,
 And grinds the quivering flesh with bloody jaws;
 The frightened hind beholds, and dares not stay,
 But swift through rustling thickets bursts her way;
 All drown'd in sweat, the panting mother flies,
 And the big tears roll trickling from her eyes.
 (Pope pdf 220)

Here's one more example of Homer's realism in describing battle:

And he [Agamemnon] pitched Pisander off the
 chariot onto earth
 and plunged a spear in his chest — the man crashed
 on his back
 as Hippolochus leapt away, but *him* he killed on the
 ground,
 slashing off his arms with a sword, lopping off his
 head
 And he sent him rolling through carnage like a log.
 (Fagles 11.166-170).

• What are the reasons for Agamemnon's great success in battle? Why does Homer show us Agamemnon's *aristeia*?

Agamemnon has such great success now for a few reasons:

- We have seen Agamemnon as a leader whose abilities are sometimes lacking. We also have seen

him as a man who loves and cares about his brother, Menelaus. Now, we see Agamemnon as a warrior.

- Homer wants us to know that Agamemnon's being wounded hurts the Achaean armies. To show how much it will hurt the Achaeans, Homer shows us that Agamemnon can be a fighting machine.
- Agamemnon is the leader of the Achaeans. When he is wounded and forced to withdraw from the battle, Homer is showing us how badly the Achaeans are being defeated.

But before Agamemnon is wounded, he wreaks great havoc on the Trojans. Being Agamemnon, he refuses two suppliants and kills them instead. Pisander and Hippolochus both beg to be taken alive, but Agamemnon kills them because they are the sons of Antimachus, whom Agamemnon accuses of trying to have Menelaus murdered.

• Zeus tells us what to expect in the battle in the message he has Iris take to Hector (Fagles 11.219-227 / Johnston 11.212-222). What will happen in the battle?

Zeus tells us what to expect in the battle:

“So long as he [Hector] sees lord marshall
Agamemnon storming

among the champions, mowing columns down in
blood,

Hector must hold back, command the rest of his men
to fight the enemy, stand their headlong charge.

But soon as a spear or bowshot wounds the king
and Atrides mounts his chariot once again,

then I will hand Hector the power to kill and kill

till he cuts his way to the benched ships and the sun
sinks

and the blessed darkness sweeps across the earth.”

(Fagles 11.219-227)

Compare:

“Go, swift Iris, and tell Hector this,
as long as he sees Agamemnon,
that shepherd of his people, rampaging
at the front, mowing down rows of men,
he must restrain himself, tell other troops
to fight the enemy in the killing zone.
But when Agamemnon, hit by a spear
or wounded with an arrow, mounts his chariot,
then I’ll give Hector power to kill and kill,
until he reaches the well-decked ships,
at sunset, when sacred darkness comes.”

(Johnston 11.212-222)

This is what Zeus says that Iris, messenger of the gods, must communicate to Hector.

Hector will have one day of glory. Hector must wait until Agamemnon is wounded and withdraws from battle, and then he can fight mightily. However, when the sun sets, Hector’s day of glory will be over.

Zeus has promised Thetis, Achilles’ mother, that the Trojans will be triumphant for a while. Zeus will keep his promise as

soon as Agamemnon withdraws from the battle. Hector will be able to fight his way to the Achaeans' ships.

In the beginning of Book 11, Zeus sends Iris, the messenger goddess, to tell Hector to hold back from the fighting until he sees Agamemnon wounded. Once Agamemnon has been wounded and has withdrawn from the fighting, Zeus promises victory to Hector until the sun sets. Zeus promises Hector "power to kill and kill" (Fagles 11.225), as he puts it, until Hector reaches the ships of the Greeks and the sun sets.

• **What is the longest day in the *Iliad*?**

This battle is the longest day in the *Iliad*. It lasts from Book 11 through Book 18, line 279, in Robert Fagles' translation (line 240 in the original Greek). This day lasts roughly one third of the *Iliad*. It ends only with the setting of the sun in Book 18.

For much of that time, Books 12 through 15, Hector will have his *aristeia*.

Agamemnon now has an *aristeia*, and Homer even asks for the aid of the Muses to help him sing it.

"Sing to me now, you Muses who hold the halls of Olympus,

who was the first to go up against King Agamemnon,

who of the Trojans or famous Trojan allies?"

(Fagles 11.253-255)

Compare:

Tell me now, you Muses inhabiting Olympus,

who was the first to come against Agamemnon,

one of the Trojans or one of their famous allies?

(Johnston 11.249-251)

• **How is Agamemnon wounded, and what happens after Agamemnon is wounded?**

Agamemnon is wounded by a spear wielded by Coon. He is able to continue to fight as long as the blood flows, but when the blood dries, he is overcome with pain and has to withdraw from the battle.

Hector is vigilant, and when he sees that Agamemnon withdraws from the battle, then Hector begins to fight. Immediately, the Trojans begin to be triumphant, and they wound a number of other important Achaean heroes.

Hector does exactly what we would expect him to do, realistically. He has seen an important Achaean warrior get wounded and withdraw from the battle, and so he seizes the opportunity and rallies his troops to fight well. Of course, we are aware that Hector has received a message that came from Zeus by way of Iris, messenger of the gods. Here we have double motivation, as we will so often throughout this battle.

• **How is Diomedes wounded?**

The Achaeans rally briefly (due to teamwork by Diomedes and Odysseus). However, Paris shoots an arrow and wounds Diomedes' foot.

Here we find out how archers are regarded in this society: not well. Archers kill at a distance, and the warriors who kill up close and personal get greater respect.

Paris is an archer, but for the most part, archers aren't respected in ancient Greece. There is greater glory in killing an enemy up close, face to face. Diomedes says to Paris,

“Come, try me in combat, weapons hand-to-hand —

bow and spattering shafts will never help you then.
 You scratch my foot and you're vaunting all the same
 —
 but who cares? A woman or idiot-boy could wound
 me so.”

(Fagles 11.455-458)

Compare:

“You useless archer, brave only with your bow,
 seducer, if you stepped out to face me
 with real weapons, that bow and clutch of arrows
 would be no use to you. So now you've grazed me
 on my foot, and you boast like this. It's nothing,
 like some blow from a woman or a witless child.
 A weapon from a coward has no bite at all.
 But from me, it's different, even a slight hit.
 My spear is sharp. The man it hits, it kills.
 His wife tears at her cheeks, his children then
 are orphans. Earth is blood-soaked where he rots,
 with vultures instead of women round him.”

(Johnston 11.440-451)

Still, Diomedes is wounded badly enough that he has to stop fighting.

• **How is Odysseus wounded?**

After Diomedes withdraws from battle, Odysseus is left alone and surrounded by Trojans. Odysseus is wounded and forced to cry out three times for help. Athena makes sure that Odysseus is not wounded mortally, but he is wounded badly enough that he must stop fighting. Socus wounds Odysseus:

“O great Ulysses! much-enduring man!
 Not deeper skill’d in every martial sleight,
 Than worn to toils, and active in the fight!
 This day two brothers shall thy conquest grace,
 And end at once the great Hippasian race,
 Or thou beneath this lance must press the field.”
 He said, and forceful pierced his spacious shield:
 Through the strong brass the ringing javelin thrown,
 Plough’d half his side, and bared it to the bone.
 By Pallas’ care, the spear, though deep infix’d,
 Stopp’d short of life, nor with his entrails mix’d.
 (Pope pdf 228)

Note: Alexander Pope refers to Odysseus by his Roman name: Ulysses.

• **Who rescues Odysseus?**

When Odysseus cries out three times for help, Menelaus hears him and lets Great Ajax know that Odysseus needs help:

Now troops on troops the fainting chief invade,
 Forced he recedes, and loudly calls for aid.

Thrice to its pitch his lofty voice he rears;
 The well-known voice thrice Menelaus hears:
 Alarm'd, to Ajax Telamon he cried,
 Who shares his labours, and defends his side:
 "O friend! Ulysses' shouts invade my ear;
 Distressed he seems, and no assistance near;
 Strong as he is, yet one opposed to all,
 Oppress'd by multitudes, the best may fall.
 Greece robb'd of him must bid her host despair,
 And feel a loss not ages can repair."

(Pope pdf 229)

Great Ajax comes to Odysseus' rescue, then continues to fight well.

• **Why does Great Ajax retreat?**

Soon Zeus forces Great Ajax slowly to retreat:

But Father Zeus on the heights forced Ajax to retreat.

(Fagles 11.638)

Compare:

Then Father Zeus, enthroned on high, put fear in Ajax.

He stood bewildered, shifted his seven-layered shield

onto his back, turned, looked round at throngs of Trojans,

like some wild beast, then backed off step by step,
retreating,

but often turning back.

(Johnston 11.615-619)

This simile comparing great Ajax to a stubborn ass may be why Ajax had in later antiquity the reputation of being stupid:

Just as when some donkey taken past a cornfield,
a stubborn beast on whose sides many sticks are
broken,

bolts from boys tending it and goes to munch deep
corn,

while boys beat it with sticks, although their strength
is small,

at last they drive it out, once it's had its fill,

that's how proud Trojans and allies from many lands

then pushed back great Ajax, son of Telamon,

their spears always prodding at the centre of his
shield.

From time to time, remembering his warlike spirit,

Ajax would turn again, holding off the ranks

of horse-taming Trojans. Then he'd turn back to
retreat.

(Johnston 11.631-641)

• **How well does Paris fight in the battle?**

Paris wounds Machaon the healer, and Nestor drives him from the battlefield. Machaon is a minor character in the *Iliad* but his wounding is important to the story. Finally, Eurypylus is wounded by Paris. Although Eurypylus is a minor character, his wounding is important to the story. This battle is exciting. It started well for the Achaeans, but the momentum has swung back to the favor of the Trojans. Many Achaean heroes, including Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus have been wounded and forced to withdraw from battle. Things do not look good for the Achaeans.

One interesting thing to note is the role that Paris plays in the wounding of the Achaean leaders. Previously, Hector has said that Paris can fight well when he chooses. In this book, Paris shows that Hector is right. Paris has wounded Diomedes, Machaon, and Eurypylus.

• **How do the Achaeans regard their healer?**

It is interesting to note that the Achaeans consider their healer important. Idomeneus says to Nestor,

“A man who can cut out shafts and dress our wounds
—

a good healer is worth a troop of other men.”

(Fagles 11.606-607)

This is still true today. When I was in the military, the U.S. Marines got their medical personnel from the U.S. Navy, and they took very good care of them. Medical personnel save lives.

Nestor uses his chariot to drive Machaon to safety.

• **What is Achilles doing during the battle? What does he ask Patroclus to do?**

During the battle, Achilles is watching with interest. He is standing on the stern of one of his ships and watching the battle. Achilles says,

“Son of Menoetius, soldier after my own heart,
now I think they will grovel at my knees,
our Achaean comrades begging for their lives.

The need has reached them — a need too much to bear.”

(Fagles 11.718-721)

Achilles sees Nestor drive by with a wounded man, but Achilles does not see who is wounded. Curious, yet too proud to go and see for himself, he asks his friend Patroclus to go and find out who is wounded. This will eventually lead to one of the most important actions in the *Iliad* — Nestor convinces Patroclus to fight while wearing Achilles’ armor.

We should note that Patroclus’ words in Book 11 —

“Why do you call, Achilles? Do you need me?”

(Fagles 11.716)

— are the first he has spoken in the *Iliad*. Patroclus has been a minor character in the *Iliad* so far, but now he begins to play a major role.

• **How does Nestor greet Patroclus?**

Nestor and Machaon are in Nestor’s tent, resting and drinking, when Patroclus appears:

The two men drank

and quenched their parching thirst. They started talking,

enjoying each other's pleasant conversation.

Then Patroclus stood in the doorway, like some god.

(Johnston 11.723-726)

Nestor, as always, is wise. He sees an opportunity. No one can talk to Achilles because Achilles is too proud. However, Patroclus, Achilles' friend, is here, and one can talk to Patroclus. Even better, one may be able to reach Achilles through Patroclus.

We see how glad Nestor is to see Patroclus:

Old Nestor saw him at once and started up
from his polished chair, warmly grasped his hand
and led Patroclus in, pressing him to sit.

(Fagles 11.763-765)

Compare:

Seeing him, old Nestor leapt up from his shining chair,

took him in hand and invited him to sit.

(Johnston 11.727-728)

We also see how eager Patroclus is to get away from Nestor:

“Old man, divinely bred, I can't sit down.

You'll not talk me into it. The man who sent me
is honourable but quick to take offence.

I'm here to learn the name of that wounded man

you drove away with. But I see him for myself.
 I know Machaon, his people's shepherd.
 Now I'll go back and tell this to Achilles.
 You know well enough, divinely bred old man,
 what he's like, not someone to take lightly.
 He'd be quick to blame an innocent man."
 (Johnston 11.730-739)

Nestor is not one to let an opportunity go by. He intends to talk to Patroclus, and who cares if Patroclus doesn't want to listen? He knows that Patroclus is interested in the fortunes of the Achaeans (Patroclus is often called "gentle" Patroclus — caring is one of his attributes) and immediately begins to talk about those fortunes, at the same time casting blame on Achilles:

"Why is Achilles showing pity now
 for Achaea's sons, those men hurt with spears
 and arrows? He knows nothing of our trouble,
 the great suffering which afflicts the army.
 For our best men lie injured at the ships,
 crippled by arrows, spears, and swords.
 Strong Diomedes, son of Tydeus, is hurt,
 as is Odysseus, famous for his spear,
 Agamemnon and Eurypylus as well,
 with an arrow in his thigh. This man here,
 hurt with an arrow from some bowstring,

I've just brought in from battle. Achilles is brave,
but shows no pity, feels nothing for Danaans.

Is he waiting until our fast ships by the sea
are set on fire with all-consuming flames,
and Achaeans, powerless to stop it,
are slaughtered one by one?"

(Johnston 11.741-757)

Nestor points out that he himself is old and feeble:

"My limbs are gnarled now, the old power's gone."

(Fagles 11.792)

However, Nestor is exaggerating for Patroclus. Nestor is trying to convince Patroclus to attempt to persuade Achilles to go back into battle — or to go into battle himself. Not long before, we read about Nestor lifting a heavy cup full of wine

A massy weight, yet heaved with ease by him,

(Pope pdf 233)

Compare:

An average man would strain to lift it off the table
when it was full, but Nestor, old as he was,
could hoist it up with ease.

(Fagles 11.751-753)

• What is the point of the stories about his youth that Nestor tells Patroclus?

With Patroclus as his audience, Nestor launches into a couple of stories. Nestor is an old man, who has the old

man's fault of talking way too much about things that happened way too long ago. However, Nestor's stories have a point and they fit in with Nestor's strategy. Nestor wants Achilles to fight again, but barring that, he wants Patroclus to put on Achilles' armor and go and fight in Achilles' place. Patroclus would be a fresh fighter, and the Trojans would think that he is Achilles, whom they are afraid of. In addition, Patroclus can lead Achilles' troops into battle. Therefore, Nestor's stories are about the glory — the *kleos* — that a young person — such as Patroclus — can win in war.

Nestor describes fighting the Epeans. Nestor killed Itymoneus, and he carried away much plunder:

“His country people ran away, and so we seized
 a huge amount of plunder from that plain,
 fifty herds of cattle, as many flocks of sheep,
 fifty droves of pigs, fifty herds of wandering goats,
 one hundred fifty horses, all chestnut mares,
 many with foals still standing under them.
 At night we drove these to the citadel
 of Neleus' city Pylos.”

(Johnston 11.767-774)

Plunder is one benefit of war. However, the pride of a father is also a benefit for a successful young warrior:

“And father beamed, seeing how much I'd won,
 a young soldier out on his first campaign.”

(Fagles 11.811-812)

Compare:

“[...] Neleus rejoiced,
glad at heart, because I’d shared in so much loot,
though I was just a young man going to war.”

(Johnston 11.774-776)

All of this is meant to tempt Patroclus to go into battle.

Nestor begins another story. In this story he describes fighting the Epeans again (three days later) and raising the siege of a fortress. Nestor was then so young that his father did not want him to fight and even hid his horses, but Nestor fought anyway, reaching “the ranks on foot” (Fagles 11.856). In the battle, Nestor captured 50 chariots, killing the two enemies in each chariot. (In other words, Nestor killed 100 men!) He also was the first to kill one of the enemy soldiers. For his efforts, he receives much glory:

There to high Jove were public thanks assign’d,
As first of gods; to Nestor, of mankind.

(Pope pdf 235)

Compare:

“[...] all gave glory to Zeus among the gods
and among all men to Nestor.”

(Fagles 11.906-907)

Nestor points out that Achilles can lose his glory by holding back and not fighting:

“[...] But what of Achilles?

His courage will profit no one but himself.

I think he might bitterly regret all this,
once our army is destroyed.”

(Johnston 11.878-881)

In my opinion, this defeat of the Achaeans is Achilles' fault: He places personal glory above the lives of his fellow Achaeans.

• **What is Nestor trying to persuade Patroclus to do?**

All of these words by Nestor have a purpose. Nestor wants Patroclus to convince Achilles to return to fighting. Nestor points out the words of Patroclus' father to Patroclus:

“Your ancient fathers generous precepts gave;
Peleus said only this: — ‘My son! be brave.’
Menoetius thus: ‘Though great Achilles shine
In strength superior, and of race divine,
Yet cooler thoughts thy elder years attend;
Let thy just counsels aid, and rule thy friend.’
Thus spoke your father at Thessalia’s court:
Words now forgot, though now of vast import.”
(Pope pdf 235)

Compare:

“[...] Menoetius, son of Actor,
told you: ‘My son, Achilles is by birth
a finer man than you. But you are older.
In strength he is by far your better,

but it's up to you to give shrewd advice,
prudent counsel, and direction to him.

He'll comply, for that works to his benefit.'

That's what the old man said. But you forget."

(Johnston 11.906-913)

If Patroclus cannot persuade Achilles to return and fight, however, Patroclus can put on Achilles' armor and lead the Myrmidons into battle:

"But if his heart knows of some prophecy
that he's avoiding, something from Zeus
his mother's mentioned to him, then at least
let him send you to war, in command
of other Myrmidons, it may be
you'll prove a saving light to the Danaans.
Let him also give you his fine armour
to carry into battle, so Trojans may confuse
the two of you and thus refrain from fighting.
Achaea's warrior sons are tired out.
They might gain a breathing space, something rare
in warfare. Your troops are fresh. They might drive
Trojans worn out with fighting to the city,
far from our ships and huts."

(Johnston 11.918-931)

Note that the lines above hint that Achilles may be afraid of dying at Troy.

• Write a character analysis of Nestor as he appears in Book 11.

Nestor is wily.

When Patroclus appears at his tent, Nestor is not going to let him get away without talking to him first.

Nestor is a good orator and rhetorician.

The stories that Nestor tells Patroclus have a persuasive point: Patroclus can win glory in battle.

Nestor is wise.

Nestor is thinking ahead. If Achilles will not fight, Nestor wants Patroclus to fight while wearing Achilles' distinctive armor. That way, the Trojan army will think that Patroclus is Achilles.

• Write a character analysis of Patroclus as he appears in Book 11.

In Book 11, Patroclus has interaction with three characters: Achilles, Nestor, and Eurypylus.

In his interaction with Achilles, we see that Patroclus is clearly subservient to Achilles. Achilles is the boss, and Patroclus does his bidding. When Nestor drives past with a wounded warrior whom Achilles cannot identify for certain, Achilles asks Patroclus to find out for sure who the warrior is. Patroclus does Achilles' bidding without hesitation. Achilles and Patroclus are very close friends, and Patroclus does not mind responding positively to Achilles' requests.

In his interaction with Nestor, we find that Patroclus is polite and can be imposed on. Patroclus goes to Nestor's tent, sees that Machaon is the wounded warrior, and fearing Nestor's

garrulousness, tries to leave quickly. However, Nestor sees an opportunity to convince Patroclus to don Achilles' armor and lead the Myrmidons into battle, so he will not let Patroclus leave. Instead, Nestor forces Patroclus to listen as he tells tales of glory in combat and makes his suggestion that Patroclus go into battle.

Finally, Patroclus interacts with Eurypylus. Here, we see Patroclus at his best. He sees that Eurypylus is wounded, and he helps him. He cuts out the arrow from Eurypylus' wound, and he cleans the wound. He also takes the opportunity to get more information about how the battle is going for the Achaeans.

In short, Patroclus is a kind and caring person. He obeys the wishes of others, and he does nothing that is unkind or cruel. We find out elsewhere that he is Achilles' best friend, and that he cares about the Achaeans' fate in battle. Patroclus is known as "gentle" Patroclus for good reason.

• **Why doesn't Patroclus return right away to Achilles?**

Nestor makes a big impact on Patroclus — the fighting spirit leaps inside him. However, as Patroclus dashes back to Achilles, he runs into the wounded warrior Eurypylus. Eurypylus confirms the report of the battle that Patroclus has heard from Nestor:

“No hope, Patroclus, Prince. No bulwark left.
They'll all be hurled back to the black ships.
All of them, all our best in the old campaigns
are laid up in the hulls, they're hit by arrows,
pierced by spears, brought down by Trojan hands
while the Trojans' power keeps on rising, rising!
Save me at least.”

(Fagles 11.983-989)

Compare:

“Lord Patroclus, there’s no longer anything
can save Achaeans, who’ll fall back to their black
ships.

All those who were our finest fighters
are lying by the ships, hurt or wounded
at Trojan hands, whose strength keeps growing.

But take me safely back to my black ship,
cut the arrow from my thigh, and with warm water
wash away the black blood there, then rub on
fine soothing medication, whose use, they say,
Achilles taught you, an art he learned
from Chiron, most righteous of the Centaurs.”

(Johnston 11.953-963)

At this point, Eurypylus asks Patroclus for help, and Patroclus obliges. The time has not yet come for Patroclus to appeal to Achilles. That will happen soon, but first Homer wants the plight of the Achaeans to grow even worse.

• What is the situation of the Achaeans at the end of Book 11?

Agamemnon, Diomedes, Odysseus, Machaon, and Eurypylus have all been wounded. Previously, Menelaus was wounded, but he is now recovered and can fight.

Great Ajax can still fight, and he will be a great defensive warrior for the Achaeans, almost singlehandedly keeping the Trojans away from the Achaean ships.

However, things are bad for the Achaeans. Hector and the Trojans are fighting well, and they would love to drive the Achaeans back to their ships, then set the Achaean ships on fire and slaughter all the Achaean warriors. If the Achaean ships are burned, the Achaeans will not have a means of escape, and they will be slaughtered.

Conclusion

In Book 12 the Trojans continue to fight very well.

Chapter 12: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 12 — The Trojans Storm the Ramparts / The Fight at the Barricade

Important Terms

The Human Condition: we are mortal; we will die someday

Kleos Aphthiton: undying glory, reputation, and fame

Psyche: the spirit, soul (pronounced SOO-KAY)

Aristeia: a warrior's day of excellence in battle (pronounced a ris STAY a)

• Are Books 12 and 13 of the *Iliad* significant?

Often, if you want to find a significant part of a book, you can find it by opening the book in the middle. If we do that to the *Iliad*, we find Books 12 and 13, in which the Trojans almost succeed in destroying the Achaeans. This, of course, is the most important battle in the *Iliad* and plays a major role in the wrath of Achilles. In addition, the speech of Sarpedon appears almost exactly in the middle of the *Iliad*. Sarpedon's speech sets forth the Heroic Ethic — an ethic that Achilles is now rejecting.

• What happens in Book 12?

We can sum up Book 12 very quickly: The Trojans fight very well, Sarpedon breaks down part of the Achaeans' wall, and Hector breaks through the gate in the Achaean wall. Homer, however, devotes a lot of space — Books 11-18 — to this battle, which is the most important battle in the *Iliad*. This is Hector's day of glory, and he fights very well.

• What is the situation of the Achaeans at the beginning of Book 12?

At the beginning of Book 12, many Achaeans, including Agamemnon, Diomedes, Odysseus, Machaon, and Eurypylus, are wounded and unable to fight. This means that

fewer great Achaean warriors are available to try to stop Hector.

• **What are the Achaeans' defensive trench and wall like?**

In the beginning of Book 12, we read about the Achaeans' defensive trench and wall. The wall is made of logs and rocks, and in front of the wall, facing the Trojans is a trench. To reach the Achaean ships, the Trojans would have to go down into the trench and then over the wall. However, we learn later that there is at least one gate in the fence. Achaean chariots can be driven through the gate.

The Trojans fight magnificently in Book 12. They are trying to reach the wall, cross it, and set fire to the Achaean ships. If they can do this, they will have won the Trojan War.

As the Trojans face the fortifications, they would see first a trench. Behind the trench is a fence. In the fence is a gate through which the Achaeans can come and go. On the far, steep wall of the trench sharp stakes are planted, pointing toward the Trojans. The trench is broad, as the chariot horses cannot jump it, thus making it wise for the Trojans to dismount from their chariots and attack the wall on foot.

• **How long will the wall last? What is its future fate?**

We learn very quickly that the wall will fall. Homer sings,

The Danaan ditch

and the high broad wall weren't going to hold out long.

(Johnston 12.3-4)

And:

But they'd built it without sanction

from immortal gods, they'd made no splendid offering,

no sacrifices to the gods, asking them to keep their swift ships safe, so the wall soon fell apart.

(Johnston 12.7-10)

The Achaean warriors put a lot of time and effort into building the wall, but the gods will tear it down. What human beings build with effort, the gods tear down. The wall will fall, and the gods will later destroy traces of its existence. The gods are angry at the Achaeans because they did not make sacrifices when building the wall.

Homer sings,

When Achaeans sailed back to their dear native land,
then Poseidon and Apollo planned to erase that wall,
by stirring up the raging power of all rivers

flowing from Mount Ida to the sea—Rhesus,

Heptaporus, Caresus, Rhodius, Granicus,

Aesepus, the sacred Scamander and Simoeis,

where many ox-hide shields and helmets had fallen

in the dust, along with a race of people half-divine.

Phoebus Apollo merged the mouths of all these rivers,

then for nine days drove the flood against the rampart.

Zeus brought constant rain to wash the wall away

into the sea more quickly. And Poseidon, too,

the Earthshaker himself, holding his trident,
 led the work, his waves eroding all foundations,
 wood and stone Achaeans had worked so hard to set
 there.

He smoothed the shores of the fast-flowing
 Hellespont,

covering huge beaches once again with sand. The
 wall gone,

he changed the rivers, so they flowed on as before,
 their lovely waters in their customary channels.

All this Apollo and Poseidon would do later on.

(Johnston 12.17-36)

Homer frequently contrasts the aspirations of human beings to eternity. What human beings strive so mightily to do on Earth does not last long. The wall that the Achaeans built will not last long. Even Troy does not last. However, we do have to note that the *Iliad* has lasted. War does not last, but poetry does.

Many of human beings' works are fragile and short-lived. The Trojan War is a great event, yet someday all physical signs of it will be obliterated.

During the war, the shore is busy with ships bringing supplies to the Achaeans. Later, wind and water will wear down the wall until nothing remains.

Homer frequently refers to events that happened in the past and that will happen in the future. This enlarges the scope of his poem. In addition, through his similes, Homer shows us the world when it is not at war.

• **What is the advice of the seer Polydamas?**

At Hector's urging, the Trojans attack the Greeks' defensive trench and wall, which the Greeks had built as a defense for their camp. The Greeks' defenses consist of a wall with a trench. They built it purely to defend themselves against this eventuality — if the Trojans should ever reach their camp.

The seer Polydamas points out the dangers of attacking the wall in chariots. He says,

“Hector, you other leaders, you allies,
it's foolish to think of driving our swift horses
through this trench. It's difficult to get across,
with those sharpened stakes projecting from it,
right by the Achaean wall. There's no way
any charioteer could get down and fight.
There's not much room. I think we'd get badly hurt.”
(Johnston 12.62-68)

The seer Polydamas gives very good advice to Hector. Polydamas says,

“But come,
let's all agree to what I now propose,
attendants should hold the horses at the ditch.
We'll arm ourselves with heavy weapons,
then all follow Hector bunched up tightly.
Achaean will not push us back, if it's true
they're already headed for destruction.”

(Johnston 12.77-83)

• **Is Asius successful in attacking the Achaeans' defensive wall?**

Polydamas gives good advice. We find that out by the deeds of Asius, who ignores Polydamas' advice and instead attacks the Achaeans in his chariot. Homer sings,

But Asius captain of armies, Hyrtacus' son refused
to leave his horses there with a driver reining back —
and on he drove at the fast trim ships, chariot and all,
the fool. [...]

(Fagles 12.132-135)

Asius is not successful; two Achaean fighters beat him back from the Achaean gates: Polypoetes and Leonteus.

Asius is disappointed in his attack. He cries out to Zeus:

“Father Zeus, how you love to lie!
I didn't think these warrior Achaeans
could withstand the force of our all-powerful hands.
But they're like yellow-banded wasps or bees
who've made their home by some rough road
and won't leave their hollow house, but stay there,
guarding their offspring from the hunting men.
That's how these men refuse to yield the gate,
though there's only two of them, until they kill us
or are killed themselves.”

(Johnston 12.170-179)

• **What is the point of the omen from Zeus? How does Polydamas interpret the omen?**

In the midst of the fighting there comes an omen — a bird-sign. The Greeks often felt that the flight of birds were signs from the gods, warning people about what they should do or what they should not do. The omen is described here:

For as they'd assembled, eager to cross the trench,
 a bird had gone above them, a high-flying eagle,
 moving past the left flank of the troops, gripping
 in its talons a huge blood-red snake, still alive,
 still struggling. It hadn't lost its will to fight.
 Doubling up, it struck the bird that clutched it
 beside the neck. The eagle, stung with pain,
 let the snake fall down onto the ground, dropping it
 right in the middle of the crowd. Then with a cry,
 it flew off downwind. Seeing that writhing snake,
 lying there in their midst, Trojans shuddered. It was
 a sign,
 a powerful omen, from aegis-bearing Zeus.

(Johnston 12.208-209)

Polydamas interprets the omen. We have just seen that Polydamas was correct about the right way to attack the Achaean wall, and so we won't be surprised that Polydamas' interpretation (and later, advice) will be correct here. Polydamas says,

“Let’s not advance
 to fight Danaans by their ships. In my view,
 this is how all this will end. If that omen
 was sent to Trojans keen to cross the ditch,
 a high-flying eagle on our army’s left
 holding in its talons a blood-red snake,
 still living, which it let drop before it reached
 its nest, thus failing in its purpose,
 to bring that snake back for its offspring,
 then, like that bird, if we, with our great strength,
 breach the gates and the Achaean wall,
 and if Achaeans then retreat, we’ll come back
 from the ships by this same route in disarray,
 leaving behind many Trojans slaughtered
 by Achaean bronze, as they defend their ships.”

(Johnston 12.228-242)

This is the interpretation of the omen. The eagle represents Hector, and the snake represents the Achaeans. Hector will almost destroy the Achaeans, but not quite. Although the Achaeans will be bloodied, they will not lose their fight, but instead will strike back at Hector.

Of course, the Achaeans will see the exact same sign: the eagle letting loose of the bloody snake. However, for the Achaeans, this will be a hopeful omen. Why? Because for them, the eagle flies on their right — this makes it a hopeful

omen. From the vantage of the Trojans, however, the eagle flies on their left — this makes it an evil omen.

Bird-signs are positive when they are on the right or to the right. Bird-signs are negative when they are on the left or to the left.

• Why does Hector reject Zeus’ omen? Hector does not put his faith in the flight of birds. In what does he put his faith?

Hector rejects Polydamas’ advice, even though it is good advice:

“You tell *me* to forget the plans of storming Zeus,
all he promised me when he nodded in assent?

You tell *me* to put my trust in birds,
flying off on their long wild wings! Never.

I would never give them a glance, a second thought,
whether they fly on their right toward the dawn and
sunrise

or fly on the left toward the haze and coming dark!”

(Fagles 12.272-278)

In this scene, we have an echo of the discord between Calchas and Agamemnon. Polydamas is like Calchas, speaking plainly to the king. Hector is like Agamemnon, rejecting advice that doesn’t suit him. Just as Agamemnon disliked the advice of Calchas in Book 1, so Hector dislikes the advice of Polydamas here.

Hector is ready to charge forward now, although the voice of prudence as represented by Polydamas tells him to hang back. Hector makes his choice here, and his choice is for

glory rather than prudence. Of course, Hector is also fighting for his wife and son, not just for glory. Hector says,

“No, no, put our trust in the will of mighty Zeus,
king of the deathless gods and men who die.

Bird-signs!

Fight for your country — that is the best, the only
omen!”

(Fagles 12.279-281)

Hector will put his faith in Zeus, not in the flight of birds. However, we have already seen Asius — another person who put his faith in Zeus and was bitterly disappointed. Furthermore, Agamemnon put his faith in Zeus when Zeus sent a lying dream to him.

• **What exactly has Zeus promised to Hector?**

In addition, what exactly has Zeus promised to Hector? In Book 11, the messenger Iris gave Hector this message from Zeus:

“then Zeus will hand you the power to kill and kill
till you cut your way to the benched ships and the sun
sinks
and the blessed darkness sweeps across the earth.”

(Fagles 11.241-243)

Zeus has not promised Hector complete victory, only that he will bloody the Achaeans the way the eagle has bloodied the snake.

Let us remember Hector’s reason for fighting. He is fighting for family and for country, not for Paris. Hector is desperate to win the war so that his wife and child will be safe.

• **What is the significance of the epic simile in which Hector is compared to a boar (Fagles 12.49-60 / Johnston 12.42-51)?**

Here is a significant epic simile about Hector, in which he is compared to a boar:

On he fought like a whirlwind, staunch as always —
 think of the hounds and huntsman circling round
 some lion or boar when the quarry wheels at bay,
 rippling in strength as the men mass like a bastion
 standing up to his charge and hurl their pelting spears
 and the boar's brave spirit never flinches, never bolts
 and his own raw courage kills him — time and again
 he wheels around, testing the huntsmen's ranks
 and where he lunges out the ranks of men give way.
 So Hector lunged into battle, rallying cohorts now,
 spurring them on to cross the gaping trench —
 but his own rearing stallions lacked the nerve.
 (Fagles 12.49-60)

Compare:

Just as some wild boar
 or lion faced with dogs and huntsmen keeps turning,
 confident of his strength, and men form in a line,
 preparing to go against the beast, hurling spears
 in volleys from their hands, still it doesn't tremble,

show any fear in its brave heart, but its courage
 kills the beast, repeatedly it whirls itself around,
 threatening the ranks of men, that's how Hector then
 moved through the troops, urging men to attack the
 ditch

and charge across it.

(Johnston 12.42-51)

Hector is like the boar, brave but doomed. Hector could save himself by not fighting, but he is too brave not to fight. Thus, Hector's "raw courage kills him" (Fagles 12.55). E.T. Owen points out in his *The Story of the Iliad* that the command that Hector believes in most now is, "Forward!" (123).

• Examine the famous speech that Sarpedon makes to Glaucus (Fagles 12.359-381 / Johnston 12.332-355). What is Sarpedon saying in the speech?

Sarpedon speaks to Glaucus in a famous speech:

“Not without fame, the men who rule in Lycia,
 these kings of ours who eat fat cuts of lamb
 and drink sweet wine, the finest stock we have.
 But they owe it all to their own fighting strength —
 our great men of war, they lead our way in battle!’
 Ah my friend, if you and I could escape this fray
 and live forever, never a trace of age, immortal,
 I would never fight on the front lines again
 or command you to the field where men win fame.
 But now, as it is, the fates of death await us,

thousands poised to strike, and not a man alive
 can flee them or escape — so in we go for attack!
 Give our enemy glory or win it for ourselves!”
 (Fagles 12.369-381)

Compare:

“Glaucus,
 why are we two awarded special honours,
 with pride of place, the finest cuts of meat,
 our wine cups always full in Lycia,
 where all our people look on us as gods?
 Why do we possess so much fine property,
 by the river Xanthus, beside its banks,
 rich vineyards and wheat-bearing ploughland?
 It’s so we’ll stand in the Lycian front ranks
 and meet head on the blazing fires of battle,
 so then some well-armed Lycian will say,
 ‘They’re not unworthy, those men who rule Lycia,
 those kings of ours. It’s true they eat plump sheep
 and drink the best sweet wines, but they are strong,
 fine men, who fight in the Lycians’ front ranks.’
 Ah my friend, if we could escape this war,
 and live forever, without growing old,
 if we were ageless, then I’d not fight on

in the foremost ranks, nor would I send you
 to those wars where men win glory. But now,
 a thousand shapes of fatal death confront us,
 which no mortal man can flee from or avoid.
 So let's go forward, to give the glory
 to another man or win it for ourselves.”

(Johnston 12.332-355)

According to E.T. Owen,

This is the true commentary on Hector's speech. This is the spirit and outlook that actuates him. It is the same as he expressed in his answer to Andromache's appeal in Bk. VI — since Troy and all its people will perish, therefore he will fight. Out of hopelessness he will not make hope, but glory. The nobleness of life is to do thus. Since death in countless forms threatens us anyway, let us forward. (124)

Heroes received special benefits in ancient Greece. They got good land and ate well. In return, they were expected to be great warriors and to lead troops into battle.

The ancient Greeks were well aware that death is not optional. All men (and women) must die, and we live our lives in the face of that fact. Because of the omnipresence of death — especially in war — all we can do is to decide how to live our lives. One way to live life is to play it safe. However, all this can do is to buy you more time. Eventually, you will die even if you play it safe. Another way to live life is to go for glory. This means risk, and if you take risks you may lose. But if you risk enough, glory will be gained — if not by you, then by someone else. Sarpedon goes out and fights hard. If he succeeds in tearing down the walls of the

Achaean, he will gain glory. But if an Achaean kills him, then the Achaean will gain glory. There are no half-hearted measures for Sarpedon. In the battle, his friend Glaucus is wounded, but Sarpedon accomplishes a great deed.

By the way, another cruel fact of life is that all food was recently alive.

• Who makes the breach in the wall? How does Hector respond?

Sarpedon makes a breach in the wall:

Swift to the battlement the victor flies,

Tugs with full force, and every nerve applies:

It shakes; the ponderous stones disjointed yield;

The rolling ruins smoke along the field.

A mighty breach appears; the walls lie bare;

And, like a deluge, rushes in the war.

(Pope pdf 247)

Compare:

With his strong hands, Sarpedon grabbed the parapet and pulled.

The whole construction fell apart, breaching the wall, creating a passage through for many men.

(Johnston 12.338-440)

Sarpedon has just made an important speech in which he spoke about the way the Homeric warriors strived to live life. Homeric warriors realize that death is not optional, and they believe that the best way to live life is to try to win as much *kleos* as possible. Sarpedon is not a hypocrite. He

immediately performs an action that wins him much *kleos* — so much *kleos* in fact that people learn about his exploit millennia after he died. Sarpedon tears a breach in the wall the Achaeans had built.

In addition, Hector picks up an enormous boulder and sends it crashing through the gates of the Achaeans. Book 12 ends with the Trojans swarming over the wall and through the gates. The situation is desperate for the Achaeans. Hector tells his warriors,

“Drive forward, you horse-taming Trojans.
Breach that Argive wall. Then burn the ships
with a huge fire.”

(Johnston 12.486-488)

• **How strong were the Homeric heroes?**

The Homeric heroes were much stronger than the men of Homer’s day — or of today. Homer tells us about the boulder that Hector uses to smash the gate:

Hector picked up a rock lying before the gates,
thick at its base but tapering sharply on the top.
Two of the best working men now living
could not lever that stone out of the ground easily
into their cart, but Hector carried it with ease alone.

(Johnston 12.491-495)

Many peoples, of course, have believed in a Golden Age. We have the myth of the Garden of Eden, but the Taoists also believed in a Golden Age. One possibility for the belief that men were larger and stronger back then is the vast ruins of

many places. Mycenae — Agamemnon's citadel — had huge stone walls.

• **What is the Achaeans' situation at the end of Book 12?**

Things are going badly for the Achaeans. The wall has a huge hole, and Hector has smashed the gate. At any moment it seems that the Trojans will pour through the huge hole and gate and set the Achaean ships on fire. At any moment it seems that the Trojans will win the war.

Remember that Achilles is not fighting, nor are many other great warriors. In addition, Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus and some other Achaean warriors are wounded and unable to fight.

Things really are going badly for the Achaeans.

• **What are some central themes of the *Iliad*?**

Homer addresses many themes in the *Iliad*. He addresses the Heroic Ethic. This is something that Achilles rejects when he is no longer willing to fight for *kleos* and *timê*. By refusing to do this, Achilles is rejecting what his culture believed in. Book 12 is immensely important in understanding the Heroic Ethic; the Trojan ally Sarpedon very clearly explicates the Heroic Ethic in an important speech.

We can say that a central theme of the *Iliad* is the human condition and mortality. The *Iliad* is very much concerned with death, and many, many warriors die in it. The human condition is simply that we are mortal and we will die. For human beings, death is not optional. Characters in the *Iliad* have to face death — sometimes their own death, and sometimes the death of a loved one. In the *Iliad* Achilles' beloved friend Patroclus dies, and for a long time, Achilles is unable to come to terms with that death. After the death of his friend, Achilles is unable to eat, sleep, or find pleasure in life. All he wants to do is to avenge the death of his friend.

Eventually, Achilles accepts the human condition. He realizes that everyone, including his friend and himself, must die. We have to accept that, and in accepting that, we have to eat, sleep, and find joy in life.

• **What is *kleos*?**

We have talked about *kleos* before, but *kleos* is fame or glory or reputation — especially it is what people say about you after you are dead.

• **What kind of an afterlife did Homeric warriors believe in?**

The ancient Greeks did believe in an Underworld where our souls go, but it is an Underworld much different from that of Christian mythology. (Remember that mythology can be true, although it may not be a literal truth.) Christians believe that good souls go to Heaven, and bad souls go to Hell. The ancient Greeks believed that almost everyone, with the exception of a lucky few such as Hercules who became gods when they died, went to Hades, a gloomy and unhappy place.

The ancient Greeks did believe in a kind of soul: the Psyche (pronounced SOO-KAY). When we die, the breath of life leaves our body, according to the ancient Greeks, and goes to Hades. In the *Odyssey*, Homer paints a bleak picture of the Underworld.

• **Why is *kleos apthiton* (imperishable glory) is the only kind of meaningful or significant immortality available to a Homeric warrior?**

Kleos apthiton (AFT Thee Ton) is the only kind of meaningful or significant immortality available to a Homeric warrior.

In Book 9, Achilles tells Odysseus, Phoenix, and Great Ajax about his two fates. If he returns home to Achaea, his life

will be long but he will die with no *kleos*. If he stays at Troy, he will die young but his *kleos* will be *aphthiton* — that is, everlasting.

Kleos is a kind of meaningful immortality. The body of the Homeric warrior may die, but his *kleos* will be everlasting — his name will be remembered and he will be talked about.

The only alternative is to be forgotten.

Immortality such as that of the souls in the Underworld is not meaningful. In that Underworld, the souls have no meaningful life. In the Underworld, according to Odysseus' visit to the Underworld in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, the souls do not even know who they are until they have drunk blood. It is as if they have Alzheimer's disease.

• What is the paradox of *kleos*? How does a Homeric warrior win *kleos*?

There is a problem with the *kleos aphthiton* that the Homeric warrior seeks. The way that you get it is to kill and/or to be killed — or both. Many of the warriors who achieve immortality by having their exploits sung by Homer in the *Iliad* both killed other warriors and were killed themselves.

Achilles can get *kleos aphthiton*, but only at the price of killing many, many Trojans and at the price of dying young.

Elizabeth Vandiver points out in *The Iliad of Homer* that the paradox of *kleos aphthiton* is that to get it you have to kill and/or be killed (90). In the case of Achilles, the only way for him to get *kleos aphthiton* is to die young. For Achilles to achieve the only kind of immortality available to a Homeric warrior, Achilles must die young.

Timê is related to *kleos* in that if you get lots of *timê*, you will also get lots of *kleos*; however, *kleos* is what the Homeric warrior is truly fighting for. We will see later that

when Achilles wins *kleos aphthiton* he cares nothing for *timê*. Indeed, at that point he may not even care for *kleos aphthiton*.

To gain both *timê* and *kleos*, the Homeric warrior must fight very well in battle.

In the *Iliad*, we see a number of warriors win *kleos aphthiton*. They do that by having an *aristeia*, a time when they are unstoppable in battle. By doing that, they perform so well in battle that Homer sings of their exploits. This is exactly what these Homeric warriors want. Many of them achieve that; Diomedes, Agamemnon, Hector, Patroclus, and especially Achilles have *aristeias* in the *Iliad*.

Death occurs constantly in the *Iliad*. By killing and by being killed, the Homeric warriors achieve *kleos*.

• How does Sarpedon’s speech explicate what the Homeric heroes are fighting for?

Sarpedon’s speech explains very well and very clearly what the Homeric heroes are fighting for. Sarpedon, a son of Zeus, speaks with his friend Glaucus, who exchanged armor with Diomedes in Book 6.

Sarpedon says to Glaucus:

“Ah my friend, if you and I could escape this fray
and live forever, never a trace of age, immortal,
I would never fight on the front lines again
or command you to the field where men win fame
[*kleos*].
But now, as it is, the fates of death await us,
thousands poised to strike, and not a man alive

can flee them or escape — so in we go for attack!

Give our enemy glory or win it for ourselves!”

(Fagles 12.374-381)

Compare:

“Glaucus,

why are we two awarded special honours,

with pride of place, the finest cuts of meat,

our wine cups always full in Lycia,

where all our people look on us as gods?

Why do we possess so much fine property,

by the river Xanthus, beside its banks,

rich vineyards and wheat-bearing ploughland?

It's so we'll stand in the Lycian front ranks

and meet head on the blazing fires of battle,

so then some well-armed Lycian will say,

‘They’re not unworthy, those men who rule Lycia,

those kings of ours. It's true they eat plump sheep

and drink the best sweet wines, but they are strong,

fine men, who fight in the Lycians’ front ranks.’

Ah my friend, if we could escape this war,

and live forever, without growing old,

if we were ageless, then I'd not fight on

in the foremost ranks, nor would I send you

to those wars where men win glory. But now,
 a thousand shapes of fatal death confront us,
 which no mortal man can flee from or avoid.
 So let's go forward, to give the glory
 to another man or win it for ourselves.”

(Johnston 12.332-355)

Sarpedon states the Heroic Ethic clearly. Death is not optional, and therefore what we ought to do is to fight bravely and win *kleos*. By killing or being killed, we can either win *kleos* for ourselves or give *kleos* to others.

Achilles, of course, rejected the Heroic Ethic in Book 9. He said that he loves life and therefore he no longer values *kleos* and *timê*. This is entirely different from what the other Homeric warriors believe.

As Elizabeth Vandiver points out, Achilles can be seen as embodying the paradox of *kleos* (*The Iliad of Homer* 91).

Of course, Achilles is very unusual; he is different from other Homeric warriors.

• What kind of relationship does Achilles have with his mother?

Achilles has a real relationship with Thetis, his goddess-mother. Of course, he is not the only warrior with a god or a goddess for a parent. Sarpedon's father is Zeus. Aeneas' mother is Aphrodite. However, Achilles has long conversations with his mother. We saw this in Book 1, when Achilles asked his mother to allow the Trojans to win for a while. The other characters with a divine parent do not have close relationships and long conversations with their divine parent.

Clearly, Thetis loves Achilles. Thetis mourns that Achilles is mortal, that he will die soon. One of her purposes in the poem is to remind the audience that Achilles will soon die.

• **What are Achilles' two fates?**

Because Thetis and Achilles are so close, Thetis has told Achilles about his two fates.

One fate, of course, is to die young at Troy and in doing so to achieve *kleos apthiton*.

The other fate is to return home to Achaea, have a long life, but win no *kleos*.

As Elizabeth Vandiver points out in *The Iliad of Homer*, Achilles' two fates seem to like those of other warriors, but there is a difference (92). Any warrior who stays and fights at Troy knows that there is a chance that he will die there and perhaps win *kleos*. Any warrior who returns to Achaea knows that there is a good chance that he will have a long life but win no *kleos*. The difference is that Achilles knows his two fates. If he stays at Troy, he knows that he will die young and achieve *kleos apthiton*. If he returns to Achaea, he knows that he will have a long life but win no *kleos*. Because of the special knowledge given to him by his goddess mother, he knows these things.

• **Compare and contrast Achilles' and Hector's knowledge of the future.**

As we have seen, Achilles has a divine mother, he knows his two fates, and he knows what his choice of fates is.

Hector, on the other hand, is a mortal with two mortal parents. Hector knows that Troy may fall, but he hopes that Troy will not fall.

In Book 6, Hector spoke as if he knew that Troy would fall, but actually it is only a possibility to him. After he speaks

about knowing that Troy will fall, he then prays that his son will grow up and be a better man than he (Hector) is.

• **Why does Achilles reject *kleos* at this time?**

Achilles, in rejecting *kleos* and *timê*, rejects everything that his society believes in. He is rejecting the Heroic Ethic, and he is rejecting everything that he has built his life on up to this point.

Homer in his *Iliad* is examining the Heroic Ethic and asking if it is worthwhile.

Achilles has long known that if he fights at Troy, he will die but win *kleos*. He has been willing to die for *kleos*, but Agamemnon has shown him that *kleos* can be taken away arbitrarily. In Book 1, Agamemnon took away Achilles' *time*: Briseis. If Agamemnon can take away Achilles' *timê* — and therefore his *kleos* — arbitrarily, then Achilles says that *kleos* is not worth dying for.

Of course, Achilles has not yet made his decision. He is at his camp, undecided. He has not chosen his fate yet.

An Important Note

For more information about the theme of *kleos* in the *Iliad*, read Elizabeth Vandiver's "The Paradox of Glory" in her *The Iliad of Homer*, pp. 86-95, to which I am greatly indebted.

Conclusion

In Book 13, Zeus will stop paying attention to what is happening on the battlefield. This allows the Achaeans to rally.

Chapter 13: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 13 — Battling for the Ships / The Trojans Attack the Ships

• When Zeus looks away from the battlefield, what does the alert reader expect will happen?

We have already seen that the gods and goddesses are very willing to interfere in the action of the Trojan War. Hera and Athena, despite orders from Zeus earlier not to interfere, attempted to go to battlefield to interfere in Book 8. Zeus saw them and sent Iris to tell them not to interfere. When Zeus looks away from the battlefield, we know that the gods and goddesses are likely to disobey orders and to interfere in the Trojan War.

Things are going as Zeus wants them to go. The Trojans have made a breach in the Achaean wall, and they are pouring through the breach. At the end of Book 12, Homer sings,

Then pouring after, through the gaping space,
A tide of Trojans flows, and fills the place;
The Greeks behold, they tremble, and they fly;
The shore is heap'd with death, and tumult rends the sky.

(Pope pdf 248)

Because things are going as he has planned, Zeus ceases to look at the battlefield.

Homer sings,

Thus Zeus brought Hector and the Trojans to the ships.

Then he left the soldiers there to carry on their strife,

their wretched endless war. He turned his shining
 gaze
 away from them, looking far off into the distance,
 at the land of Thracian horsemen, Mysians,
 men who fight hand to hand, proud Hippemolgi,
 who drink mare's milk, to the most righteous men of
 all,
 the Abii. Zeus no longer turned his radiant eyes
 toward Troy, for in his heart he did not believe
 a single one of the immortal gods would move
 to give assistance to the Trojans or Danaans.

(Johnston 13.1-11)

Zeus, of course, is wrong when he thinks no god would interfere with his plans. They frequently interfere, and they will interfere now.

We now have an interruption in the story. We may expect that Patroclus would quickly go to Achilles and report what he has found out, but instead we have more battle scenes for two-and-a-half books and we have a comic scene involving the gods and goddesses in Book 14. The comic scene is needed, of course, to vary what we read in the *Iliad*. Battle scene after battle scene can grow monotonous, so Homer does the right thing by having a comic scene in Book 14.

• What do we learn about Poseidon as he drives his chariot in Book 13?

Indeed, Poseidon immediately drives his chariot to Troy to encourage the Achaeans. There is a contrast between the gods and the heroes. When Achilles or Hector drives his

chariot, it becomes splattered with blood and gore, but Poseidon can drive his chariot over the ocean without its wheels becoming wet:

Going inside, he harnessed to his chariot
 swift bronze-hooved horses with flowing golden
 manes.
 Dressed in gold, he took his well-made golden whip,
 climbed in the chariot, then set off across the waves.
 From the depths, sea creatures played around him
 everywhere,
 acknowledging their king. The joyful ocean parted.
 He sped on quickly, keeping the bronze axle dry.
 The prancing horses carried him to the Achaean
 ships.

(Johnston 13.26-33)

I like the detail that dolphins swim near Poseidon's chariot. I remember being in a boat around Mount Athos in Greece. Dolphins playfully swam in front of the boat.

• The tide of battle turns in Book 13. How can we explain this on the human level?

We remember that we can explain many actions in the battle and many other scenes of the *Iliad* on a human level and a god level. With double motivation, humans are realistically motivated to do something, but also the gods and goddesses motivate the actions of humans.

In Book 13, the tide of battle turns. The Trojans have been fighting magnificently, but now the Achaeans rally and they fight magnificently. We read that the Achaean prophet

Calchas rallies the Achaeans with a speech. Often, a speech can motivate warriors to fight well, and that happens here.

In addition, of course, the Achaeans need to rally here. The Trojans have smashed through the gate and seem to be about to burn the Achaean ships. If that happens, the Trojans will have won the war and the Achaeans will be trapped between the triumphant Trojan warriors and the sea. Either the Achaean warriors rally now, or they will be slaughtered. That is sufficient motivation for the Achaean warriors to fight magnificently.

• The tide of battle turns in Book 13. How can we explain this on the god level?

On the god level, Poseidon is helping the Achaeans. Poseidon has taken the form of Calchas, so it isn't really Calchas who is motivating the Achaeans to fight well; it is the god Poseidon. He does not actually fight for the Achaeans, but he gives a rousing speech that motivates the Achaeans to fight well. Earlier, Hera had wanted Poseidon to help the Achaeans, but Zeus was still watching the battle. Now that Zeus is no longer watching the battle, Poseidon acts.

Poseidon still refrains from fighting for the Achaeans, as Zeus has expressly forbidden that, but he gives a rousing speech after taking the form of Calchas. Zeus rules by force, and Poseidon is afraid to cross him too much. We remember that in Book 8 Athena said that she will obey Zeus' orders and not fight, although she will give advice to the Achaeans, whose side she favors.

• **What are some aesthetic reasons for having the tide of battle turn in Book 13?**

1) *Homer's audience liked violence.*

Having the tide of battle gives the audience more violence. This is what Homer's audience apparently liked. As is the case in today's Hollywood movies — especially the summer blockbuster films — violence is a crowd-pleaser.

2) *Many battle scenes make the Iliad monumental.*

We should remember that Homer meant to write a long poem — after all, the *Iliad* is quite long — and he made it long by making it monumental, with many battle scenes and many rallies.

3) *By having an Achaean rally, Homer gives the battle two climaxes.*

An artistic purpose is served by the Achaean rally. As E.T. Owen points out in his excellent *Story of the Iliad* (130), by having an Achaean rally here, we get in effect two battle climaxes. One climax occurred when Sarpedon broke down part of the wall and Hector broke down the Achaean gates. The next will occur when Hector calls for fire when he finally reaches the Achaean ships. If Hector had reached the Achaean ships immediately after bursting through the gates, we would have just one exciting climax in the battle.

4) *The battle is more interesting if it is not one-sided.*

In addition, to keep a battle interesting, the battle should not be one-sided. It's more exciting when one side has the advantage, then the other side does. Hollywood movies sometimes ignore this by making their heroes invincible. In some action movies, the bad guys don't have a chance. A movie is more exciting if the bad guys have a chance at winning; for example, the first *Die Hard* movie and the first

Terminator movie have notable villains. Here, Calchas is rallying the Achaeans, but Hector is rallying the Trojans. Both sides have a chance of winning the battle.

The same is true of a sports event. When the score is lopsided, you may be happy if your team is winning; however, the game would be much more exciting if first one team has the lead, then the other, and so on. Close games are always more exciting than blowouts.

5) Homer often delays action artistically. Here he delays the setting on fire of one of the Achaean ships so that he can insert other scenes, such as the comic scene with Zeus and Hera.

Now, after the main action of Hector's crashing through the Achaean gates, we will learn about the fierceness of the battle and will have a comic scene with Zeus and Hera before we have the important action of Hector setting fire to one of the Achaean ships.

6) The Achaean rally lengthens the battle — the more warriors who are killed, the more serious are the consequences of Achilles' wrath.

Finally, the more warriors who are killed, the more important the battle becomes, and the more serious are the consequences resulting from Achilles' wrath.

• Discuss the theme of *kleos* as it appears in the scene with the Achaean captains Idomeneus and Meriones.

The theme of honor appears in the episode featuring the Achaean captains Idomeneus and Meriones. Idomeneus is the main leader from Crete, and Meriones is second in command.

Idomeneus has been helping a wounded friend, but now returns to his quarters to strap on his armor. Meriones needs

a new spear and so returns to his camp to get one. Idomeneus meets Meriones. As Idomeneus goes to get his armor, Poseidon talks to him in the voice of Thoas:

“Idomeneus, captains of Cretans under arms —
 where have the threats all gone
 that sons of Achaea leveled at these Trojans?”
 (Fagles 13.260-262)

Compare:

“Idomeneus,
 Cretan counselor, what’s happened to those threats
 Achaea’s sons once made against the Trojans?”
 (Johnston 13.254-256)

One thing that ancient warriors did was talk a lot. They boasted to each other about their prowess in war and about what they would do in battle. This means that when battles did occur, they had to try to live up to their boasts. We still see this today in trash talking in sports. Once you talk the talk, you have to be able to walk the walk.

Unfortunately, trash talking sometimes mars the Olympics, which should be about good sportsmanship.

At this point, there is apparently some understandable anger at Achilles. Poseidon, who has now taken the form of Thoas and is speaking to Idomeneus, apparently makes a reference to Achilles:

“may that man, that coward never get home from
 Troy —
 let him linger here, ripping sport for the dogs,

whoever shirks the fight while this day lasts.”

(Fagles 13.275-277)

Compare:

“may the man who will not fight today,

and willingly, never return from Troy.

May he become a toy for dogs to play with.

(Johnston 13.270-272)

Idomeneus can talk the talk. He meets Meriones and says,

“I have no mind to sit it out in the shelters —

what I love is battle!”

(Fagles 13.298-299)

Meriones can also talk the talk, as he points out to Idomeneus that he has returned only to get a new spear and that he can fight well:

“Whenever battles start, I stand and fight

with men in front, in those encounters

where men win glory. Other Achaeans

might not know my fighting quality, but you,

I think you’ve seen it for yourself.”

(Johnston 13.315-319)

Idomeneus invites Meriones to get a spear from his tent:

“If it’s spears you want, you’ll find not one but
twenty,

all propped on my shelter’s shining inner wall:

Trojan weapons, stripped from the men I kill.

It's not *my* way, I'd say, to fight at a distance,
out of enemy range.

So I take my plunder — spears, bossed shields,
helmets and breastplates, gleaming, polished bright.”

(Fagles 13.307-313)

This passage is interesting because it tells us where the glory in war is found. Archers — such as Paris — are not held in as high repute as those who fight up close. In addition, fighting up close has the advantage of occasionally allowing you to strip the armor off a dead enemy.

Meriones is quick to point out that he also has enemy weapons in his shelter:

“And so do I, by god!” the cool Meriones blazed up
in his own defense — “They crowd my ship and
shelter,

hoards of Trojan plunder [...]”

(Fagles 13.314-316)

Meriones then takes one of Idomeneus' Trojan spears and off they go to walk the walk.

Before the two join battle, Idomeneus compliments Meriones: If he is ever wounded, it will be in the front, not the back:

“For if, in the middle of the fighting,
some flying weapon hit you, or you were stabbed,
that weapon wouldn't strike your neck or body

in the back. No, you'd be hit in front,
 in chest or stomach, as you charged ahead,
 getting your joy from fighting at the front.”

(Johnston 13.338-343)

Zorba the Greek, in the famous movie, is proud because all his scars are in the front, not in the back. He is not a coward.

• **How well do Idomeneus and Meriones fight in battle?**

Idomeneus and Meriones have to decide where to join the battle. Since the two Ajaxes are already defending the center, where the Achaean gates are located, they join in defending the left flank. Their appearance — and their fine armor — lead the Trojans to attack them:

When Trojans saw mighty Idomeneus,
 like some flame, and his attendant Meriones
 in his richly shining armour, they called out
 to each other in the crowd, then made a massive
 charge.

(Johnston 13.391-394)

Wearing fine armor in battle is a sign of a good warrior. Obviously, the enemy would want your fine armor, so if you wore it, you knew that you had to be able to defend yourself. A bad warrior would be wise to wear less valuable — but still protective — armor into battle.

Homer makes an interesting comment at this point:

Only a veteran steeled at heart could watch that
 struggle

and still thrill with joy and never feel the terror.

(Fagles 13.398-399)

Compare:

It would take a hard man to find joy in the sight
of all that suffering and show no trace of sorrow.

(Johnston 13.406-407)

On a World War II battlefield covered with dead and wounded soldiers, General George Patton looked around, then said, “War, I love it!”

Of course, now we see a number of battle scenes. To me, the battle grows more fierce as it continues and no mercy occurs. Othryoneus, who is betrothed to “Priam’s loveliest daughter, Cassandra” (Fagles 13.424) and who has promised to help Priam rout the Achaeans, is killed by Idomeneus.

The boast by Idomeneus after he kills Othryoneus is really cruel:

[...] “Bravo,

Othryoneus, bravo to you beyond all men alive!

If you can really keep your promise to Priam now,
who promised his daughter — a true blood-wedding
day!

Look, we’ll make you a promise — we’ll keep it too.

We’ll hand you Agamemnon’s loveliest daughter,

lead her from Argos, marry her off to you

if you’ll just help us raze the walls of Troy.”

(Fagles 13.435-442)

Compare:

“Othryoneus,
 of all mortal men I’d consider you
 the happiest, if you’d accomplished
 all those things you promised Dardan Priam,
 so he’d give you his daughter. But come,
 we’ll make you the same proposition,
 and we’ll deliver. We’ll give you the loveliest
 of Agamemnon’s daughters, bring her here
 from Argos, so you can wed her, if you,
 for your part, will join us to destroy
 the well-built city Ilion. So let’s go.
 We can arrange the marriage contract
 by our seaworthy ships. We’ll be generous
 about your marriage price.”

(Johnston 13.442-455)

Idomeneus and Meriones do notable feats in battle. Idomeneus kills Asius, while Meriones kills Adamas, who is Asius’ son, by spearing him “between the genitals and the naval — hideous wound, / the worst the god of battles gives to wretched men” (Fagles 13.657-658).

• **What happens to Asius?**

Asius and his driver are killed. Idomeneus kills Asius, while Antilochus kills Asius’ driver. Asius has been using his chariot in fighting before the Achaeans’ wall. Antilochus ends up driving away and keeping Asius’ horses as spoils of war. Antilochus is a son of Nestor.

• **How does Poseidon encourage the Achaeans to fight?**

Constantly, there is an appeal to honor. Poseidon encourages the Achaeans to fight by stressing the dishonor of the Trojans attacking the ships. Poseidon says,

“Shame —

you Argives, raw recruits — and I, I trusted in you,
certain that if you fight you’ll save our ships!

But if *you* hang back from the grueling battle now,
your day has dawned to be crushed by Trojans. What
disgrace —

a marvel right before my eyes! A terrible thing ...
and I never dreamed the war would come to this:”

(Fagles 13.112-118)

And:

“[...] How can you hold back
your combat-fury any longer? Not with honor —
you, the finest men in all our ranks [...]”

(Fagles 13.135-137)

Often, the heroes and gods are macho. Often, they accuse other warriors of holding back or of being cowards when such insults are not deserved. For example, I don’t think that Hector is a coward, even when he is accused by the Lycians of doing less than his share. It seems obvious to me that Hector is the greatest warrior on the Trojan side — as shown, for example, when he earlier challenged any of the Achaeans to a duel.

A sports analogy is relevant here again. Sometimes, a coach will accuse his male players of playing like “girls” simply in order to motivate them to play better. (Of course, because of Title 9, American girls and women often play quite well — for example, in the WNBA.)

• **Does the battle grow more savage as it continues? (For example, look at Fagles 13.240-245 / Johnston 13.233-241 and Fagles 13.708-711 / Johnston 13.722-725 and Fagles 13.749-755 / Johnston 13.768-772.)**

We would expect the battle to grow more savage as it continues, because this battle is so important. If the Trojans reach the Achaeans’ ships and set them on fire, the Achaeans are doomed. That is why the fighting is so fierce. We read about Little Ajax cutting off the head from the corpse of Imbrius and hurling it at the Trojans, where it stops at the feet of Hector.

The battle — and war — get more violent. One thing that we notice is corpse mutilation now. Little Ajax mutilates a corpse:

As two lions snatch a goat from sharp-toothed hounds,

then take it in their jaws off through thick underbrush,

holding it well off the ground, that’s how both Ajaxes

held Imbrius up. They stripped off his armour.

In his anger at the killing of Amphimachus,

Oïlean Ajax hacked through the tender neck,

then, with a swing of his body, threw away the head,

like some ball, into the crowd. It fell into the dust,

right at Hector's feet.

(Johnston 13.233-241)

This kind of violence is probably natural in a war or long battle. Here the Achaeans are fighting for their lives, and no doubt they hate the Trojans more than ever. As wars continue, enemies hate each other more and are more willing to dishonor them. After all, as the battle (and war) continues, more and more friends are being killed.

By the way, the very first soccer ball was probably a human head that was severed from the body of an enemy soldier.

In movies and TV shows, scenes become more violent to hold the audience's interest. A study was once done of the *Miami Vice* TV series. Early in the series deaths occurred, but they weren't unusually gruesome. However, as the series progressed, the deaths became more violent and more gruesome. Of course, the escalating violence in TV shows may be due to the writers' trying to outdo each other.

In the Peloponnesian War, we see an example of war turning hearts hard. At one point, the Athenians are angry at an island people. They send ships to kill the men, and to sell the women and children in slavery. However, the next day the Athenians have a change of heart and send more ships after the first ships to overtake the sailors and tell them NOT to kill the all the men and NOT to sell the women and children into slavery. This is successfully done. However, later in the war the Athenians again get mad at an island people — the Melians —and this time the men are killed and the women and children are sold into slavery.

Here we see a number of violent scenes:

lunging as Menelaus hacked Pisander between the eyes,

the bridge of the nose, and bone cracked, blood
sprayed

and both eyes dropped at his feet to mix in the dust

—

he curled and crashed.

(Fagles 13.708-711)

Compare:

But as Peisander charged, Menelaus hit him,

right on the forehead, just above his nose.

The bones cracked. Both his bloody eyes fell out

into the dirt beside his feet. Peisander doubled up

and then collapsed.

(Johnston 13.722-725)

And:

But Meriones caught him in full retreat, he let fly

With a bronze-tipped arrow, hitting his right buttock

Up under the pelvic bone so the lance pierced the
bladder.

He sank on the spot, hunched in his dear
companion's arms

Gasping out his life as he writhed along the ground

Like an earthworm stretched out in death, blood
pooling,

Soaking the earth blood red.

(Fagles 13.749-755)

Compare:

The bronze-tipped arrow hit his right buttock,
pushing

underneath the bone, going right into the bladder.

He sat down there, in the arms of his dear comrades,
choking his life away, convulsing on the ground,

like some worm.

(Johnston 13.668-772)

• **How good is the advice that Polydamas gives Hector?**

The deaths of Asius and his son remind us of the Trojan Polydamas, who had advised the Trojans to dismount from their chariots to storm the Achaean wall. Homer returns to Hector and we find Polydamas giving Hector more good advice: to gather the Trojan captains and decide which strategy to follow. Should they continue to fight, or not? Polydamas is aware that Achilles is waiting in reserve: Won't Achilles soon decide to fight?

“You should fall back, then summon here to you
all our finest men. Then we can weigh our options,
whether we should assault the well-decked ships,
in the hope god wants to give us victory,
or whether, for safety's sake, we leave the ships.

I'm afraid Achaeans may avenge the hurt
we gave them yesterday, since by their ships
there sits a man with appetite for war,

I think he may change his decision not to fight.”

(Johnston 13.871-879)

Hector agrees that this is good advice — the Achaeans are holding them in check, and this is a time to accept good advice.

The Trojans retreat to take counsel. The Trojan troops back away from the smashed gate, and start to counsel with one another about how best to proceed at this point.

Therefore, Hector gathers a few Trojan captains together, including Paris. Hector is angry at the Trojans' being held in check and tells Paris:

“Now all towering Troy is ruined top to bottom!

Now one thing's certain — your own headlong death!”

(Fagles 13.893-894)

Because of the Achaean rally, things are going badly for the Trojans. Many Trojans are dead or wounded.

Among the Trojan wounded: Deiphobus and Helenus

Among the Trojan dead: Asius, Adamas (Asius' son), Othryoneus

• **What kind of a warrior is Paris?**

Paris can be lazy and let other people do his fighting, as we saw when he bedded Helen in Troy when he should have been dueling Menelaus. However, he can fight well when he wants. We see that Paris is fighting well and encouraging his men to fight well. He wounded Diomedes and forced him to quit fighting earlier in the battle. Apparently, Paris has gifts, but he is often very willing to let other people do his work and fighting for him.

However, Paris inspires Hector and so Hector decides to fight again, thus ignoring Polydamas' advice. This is how Paris inspires Hector:

“But now, lead on where your spirit tells you,
we'll follow you quite willingly. I don't think
we'll show a lack of courage while our strength holds
out.

Once that goes, no matter how keen a man may be,
he can no longer continue in the war.”

(Johnston 13.920-924)

Hector continues to fight, trying to work his way past the gate into the ranks of the Greeks. Paris fights beside him. Hector is like a boar, fighting courageously but doomed nevertheless.

• What is the situation at the end of Book 13? Which side has the momentum in the battle?

At the end of Book 13, Hector immediately leads a charge against the two Ajaxes. Great Ajax tells Hector,

“I say the time has come when you'll run back,
praying to Father Zeus and other gods,
to make your horses with their lovely manes
fly as fast as hawks, when they speed through dust
to get you to your city on the plain.”

(Johnston 13.957-961)

Immediately following Ajax' words, a bird-sign confirms good things for the Achaeans. However, Hector replies to Great Ajax,

“From whence this menace, this insulting strain?
 Enormous boaster! doom’d to vaunt in vain.
 So may the gods on Hector life bestow,
 (Not that short life which mortals lead below,
 But such as those of Jove’s high lineage born,
 The blue-eyed maid, or he that gilds the morn,)
 As this decisive day shall end the fame
 Of Greece, and Argos be no more a name.
 And thou, imperious! if thy madness wait
 The lance of Hector, thou shalt meet thy fate:
 That giant-corse, extended on the shore,
 Shall largely feast the fowls with fat and gore.”
 (Pope pdf 269)

And then the two armies clash again.

The Achaeans still have the momentum, although in the next book Nestor is shocked at how much damage the Trojans have done to the Achaean fortifications.

Conclusion

At the end of Book 13, Hector is charging toward Great Ajax and Little Ajax. However, they will not meet right away; instead, we have a break in this action. Later, Hector and Great Ajax will meet.

The main point of Book 13 has been that the Achaeans have rallied and have kept the Trojans away from the Achaean ships. However, the battle is still raging.

In Book 14, Hera will sleep with Zeus so that the Achaeans can rally even more and keep the troops from reaching the ships.

Chapter 14: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 14 — Hera Outflanks Zeus / Zeus Deceived

• What does Nestor do at the beginning of Book 14? What is the situation of the Achaeans at the beginning of Book 14?

The Achaeans had the momentum in Book 13 with their rally, and they continue to have the momentum in Book 14, as their rally continues. The Achaeans are fighting very well; the Trojans are fighting less well. Of course, this is realistic. We would expect the Achaeans to have a rally now because their lives depend on it.

We have not heard from Nestor for a long time, but now we do. Nestor has been resting, but now he hears the cries of war, which are growing louder. He goes outside only to find this:

Friends routed, enemies harrying friends in panic,
the Trojans riding high — the Argive wall in ruins.
Nestor stood there, stunned.

(Fagles 14.16-18)

We can ask at what point in the battle this is. Really, we seem to have gone back in time. Nestor seems to come out of his tent at the time that Hector and the Trojans break down the gate right before the Achaeans rally. Homer, however, does not indicate this. Rather, he narrates everything here as if it were happening in chronological order with no flashbacks. Doing that suits his narrative purposes. Homer wants to narrate the battle as one continuous chronological sequence. It is as if the Achaeans have rallied, but now Hector and the Trojans have rallied so that the Achaean warriors are in trouble again.

However, another explanation is that Nestor has been unaware that things were going badly for the Achaeans, and he is unaware that the Achaeans rallied. After all, when Nestor went to his camp the Achaean rampart was up and the gate had not been broken through. Clearly, the Trojans have done great damage to the Achaean fortifications.

Nestor, of course, is a wise old counselor, and it is he — not Hector — who follows the Trojan Polydamas' advice. Polydamas had advised Hector to meet with his fellow chiefs to decide what to do, but immediately after Hector ran into a few fellow chiefs, he talked to Paris, and then he started attacking the Achaeans again. Nestor sees the Achaeans in trouble, and immediately goes to see Agamemnon and the other injured Achaean kings, including Diomedes and Odysseus.

Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus can't fight because of their wounds, although they aren't so badly wounded that they are going to die. Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus are talking to each other; they aren't even in bed. (One non-realistic aspect of the *Iliad* is that in the age before medical science, many warriors must have died of infection.)

• What does Agamemnon recommend at the beginning of Book 14?

Agamemnon is discouraged, and he does not realize that the Achaeans have rallied in Book 13. In battle, this can occur. Warriors don't know everything that is happening in battle. They can be misinformed.

Agamemnon is also wondering if the Achaeans warriors are angry at him, just like Achilles is angry at him (Fagles 14.60-63). Maybe that is why they are not fighting well.

Nestor tells Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus that the wall has been breached, that Hector has smashed the gate.

Agamemnon is often ready to quit. Once again, he is discouraged, and he advises sailing for home. (In Book 2, he had tested his troops by telling them to sail for home; now he is seriously advocating setting sail for home.) Agamemnon says,

“But come now, let’s agree
to what I propose. Let’s drag down those ships
drawn up in line closest to the surf
and pull them all into the sacred sea,
moor them there with stones in deeper water,
until the coming of immortal night,
which may prevent the Trojans’ fighting.
Then we can shift the other ships. To flee
from ruin, even at night, brings no shame.
It’s better to escape one’s own destruction,
to run off, than let it overtake you.”

(Johnston 14.88-98)

Again, Agamemnon despairs and thinks that the Achaeans will not win the war. He is thinking of abandoning the war that very night and sailing back to Achaea.

• How does Odysseus respond to Agamemnon? What does this tell you about Agamemnon and Odysseus?

Once again, the other kings are more level headed and less discouraged than Agamemnon. They realize that they have not lost the war even though the battle seems to be in the Trojans’ favor right now. They also realize that following

Agamemnon's idea to pull the ships into the sea would lead to disaster for the Achaeans.

Odysseus has scorn for Agamemnon:

“[...] Quiet!

What if one of the men gets wind of your brave plan?

No one should ever let such nonsense pass his lips,

no one with any skill in fit and proper speech —

and least of all yourself, a sceptered king.

Full battalions hang on your words, Agamemnon —

look at the countless loyal fighters you command!

Now where's your sense? You fill me with contempt

—

what are you saying! With the forces poised to clash

you tell us to haul our oar-swept vessels out to sea?”

(Fagles 14.110-119)

Odysseus is very intelligent. He realizes what would happen if the men saw them putting the ships out to sea. Immediately they would quit fighting and run.

Odysseus says,

“Achaean troops will never hold the line, I tell you,

not while the long ships are being hauled to sea.

They'll look left and right — where can they run? —

and fling their lust for battle to the winds. Then,

commander of armies, your plan will kill us all!”

(Fagles 14.123-127)

Compare:

“For once we drag our ships into the sea,
Achaean then will never go on fighting,
the whole time they’ll be looking over here
and pulling out from battle. Then your plan,
you leader of the army, will destroy it.”

(Johnston 14.123-127)

Odysseus is an older king, and he knows when to speak up and when to be quiet. In Book 1, when Agamemnon was making a fool of himself by threatening to take away some other warrior’s *timê*, Odysseus stayed quiet. Now, he speaks up and severely criticizes Agamemnon.

• **How good is Diomedes’ advice in Book 14?**

It is Diomedes who comes up with a good plan. Although these kings are wounded, they can go to the battle and encourage their men. The wounded need not fight, but they can put heart into the other unwounded warriors. Diomedes, who says he is “the youngest-born in all our ranks” (Fagles 14.138) advises,

“[...] We must go back there,
to the battle, though we’re wounded. Once there,
we’ll stand back from combat, beyond the range
of flying weapons, in case someone is hit

and gets more wounds. But we’ll urge on the others,
even those who, wallowing in their feelings,

have stood aside, without fighting up to now.”

(Johnston 14.155-161)

This is much better than Agamemnon’s plan. Agamemnon wanted to drag the ships to the sea. This would have made the Achaean warriors think that Agamemnon was going to desert them, and they would have quit fighting and would have run for the ships, with the result being that the Achaeans would be slaughtered by the Trojans.

Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus follow Diomedes’ plan. They don’t fight, but they do show themselves to the Achaean warriors. The Achaean warriors know that Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus are not deserting them because they can see these kings.

• What opinion do you think the Achaeans have of Achilles now?

We learn how the Achaeans regard Achilles by the words of Poseidon, who has taken the form of a human warrior:

“Son of Atreus, in Achilles’ chest
his destructive heart is really happy now,
to see Achaeans slaughtered and in flight.
He’s not in his right mind, not in the least.
Well, he may be killed anyway, some god
may strike him. [...]”

(Johnston 14.168-173)

As the battle progresses and the Achaeans get the worst of it, they become angrier and angrier at Achilles. They most likely think that Achilles is happy that the Achaeans are being slaughtered.

• **The seduction of Zeus by Hera reminds Homer's audience of what other seduction that is important in the Trojan War myth?**

In Book 14, Hera seduces Zeus so that he will go to sleep and pay absolutely no attention to the battle. The other important seduction we know of in reference to the Trojan War is the seduction of Helen by Paris, although it also recalls other instances of males distracted by sex:

- 1) Book 1: Achilles and Agamemnon quarrel over a spear-bride whom Achilles sleeps with and whom Agamemnon would like to sleep with. In part, the quarrel is over sexual jealousy.
- 2) Book 3: Paris sleeps with Helen instead of fighting in the battle and duel.
- 3) The cause of the Trojan War: Paris seduces Helen.

Certainly, Paris overvalues sex with Helen. Their adulterous love affair is not worth the destruction of Troy and its people. Paris wants sex with Helen so much that he ignores what he ought to do, which of course is to return Helen to her lawful husband and to stop the war.

• **What are the aesthetic functions of the scene of Hera seducing Zeus?**

1) One artistic purpose is to vary the tone and bring comic relief into the epic poem.

Battle scene after battle scene can get monotonous. Homer is in the midst of several books describing a long battle, and death after death after death could get boring. It's more entertaining now and again to talk about something else. Action/adventure movies often have comic relief, and so does the *Iliad*.

The interludes with the gods are frequently humorous and light in tone instead of serious as in the battle scenes. This scene involving Hera and Zeus is comic. Hera is dissatisfied with the way that the battle is going for her beloved Achaeans, who have rallied but who are still in danger; therefore, she wants to figure out a way to help the Achaeans. Zeus has already said that the Trojans will win for a while, so what can Hera do? She decides to seduce him so that afterwards he will go to sleep. That will allow the Achaeans to be triumphant for a while — until Zeus awakens.

The episode between Zeus and Hera is kind of a comic Trojan War. This is a comic war, rather than a serious war.

2) More importantly, the comic episode sets up a contrast between human beings and the gods.

The Trojan War is deadly serious for human beings, and a source of entertainment for the gods.

The Trojan War is deadly serious for the human beings involved in it. Human beings are mortal, and they die. Many warriors will die in the Trojan War, and the ancient Greeks believed in a very dismal afterlife, so we can't say that the warriors will go to heaven when they die. After the Trojan War, a center of civilization will have fallen, and women and children will become slaves. In addition, Hector's son will be killed.

For the gods, however, the Trojan War is like a long-running mini-series on television. Zeus watches the Trojan War from a mountaintop just as if he were watching TV.

The gods cannot die, and so they cannot risk much. Yes, Aphrodite fights in the war, but she is immortal and so when she is wounded, the wound cannot kill her. In fact, the wound is healed quickly, and Aphrodite goes back to living her life with enjoyment again.

Because the gods are immortal, they cannot risk much. Because humans are mortal, they do risk their lives while fighting in battle. Humans' mortality makes heroism possible. Only mortal creatures can risk their lives to help other people. Immortal gods cannot do that.

3) Finally, Homer is preparing us for a short rally by the Achaeans, in which even Hector is wounded.

Once again, we have a shift in momentum.

• Given the characters of Hera and Zeus, is the seduction scene plausible?

Of course, these are Olympian gods, and we don't believe in the Olympian gods today. However, they are characters in this epic poem, and we can ask if the seduction scene is consistent with their characters. It is.

Hera's Character

Certainly, it is consistent with Hera's character. She is on the side of the Achaeans, and she frequently tries to go against Zeus' will. Tricking Zeus is very much consistent with her character. Hera is an often disagreeable and jealous wife.

Zeus' Character

The seduction scene is also consistent with Zeus' character. Zeus looks away from the battle because he doesn't have the interest in it that other gods and goddesses do. He is much less interested in the Trojan War than the other gods — he is involved only because of a promise he made to Thetis. It is natural that his attention should slip away from the battlefield for a moment. It is also very consistent with Zeus' character that he is interested in sex. Zeus has a long history of infidelities with many goddesses and many mortal women. Zeus is very interested in female beauty and the contours of the female form.

• **In what way is the seduction scene a parody of an *aristeia*?**

Hera is preparing herself for another kind of combat than what we see on the battlefield. Homer often describes a great warrior arming himself for battle, sometimes in descriptions that go on for a page or more. The same thing happens here. Hera prepares herself for a romantic encounter with Zeus, and Homer takes a page to describe her dressing herself. The seduction scene is Hera's *aristeia*.

• **How does Hera put her plan into action?**

In addition to tricking Zeus, Hera also tricks Aphrodite, who is on the side of the Trojans. (Aphrodite is the particular friend of Paris.) Hera tells Aphrodite that she wants to help heal the rift between Ocean and Mother Tethys (TE this), who have not been sleeping together. Aphrodite then gives Hera a breastband, which helps men to be allured by women.

Hera also enlists the help of Sleep, who refuses to help her for a time because he had gotten into trouble with Zeus earlier when he helped Hera by putting Zeus to sleep so that Hera could make Heracles sail off course. Hera, of course, hated Heracles because he was the son of Zeus, her husband, by a mortal woman. Hera hated all of Zeus's affairs.

Eventually, Hera promises that he can be married to one of the younger Graces. It's humorous to think that Sleep tosses and turns during the day:

“Swear you will give me one of the younger Graces,

Pasithea, she's the one —

all my days I've tossed and turned for *her!*”

(Fagles 14.330-332)

Finally, Hera puts her plan in action, and it works. At first, Hera tries to get Zeus away from Mount Ida, where he can see the battle, by saying that the other gods and goddesses will see them making love:

He spoke; the goddess with the charming eyes
 Glows with celestial red, and thus replies:
 “Is this a scene for love? On Ida’s height,
 Exposed to mortal and immortal sight!
 Our joys profaned by each familiar eye;
 The sport of heaven, and fable of the sky:
 How shall I e’er review the blest abodes,
 Or mix among the senate of the gods?
 Shall I not think, that, with disorder’d charms,
 All heaven beholds me recent from thy arms?
 With skill divine has Vulcan form’d thy bower,
 Sacred to love and to the genial hour;
 If such thy will, to that recess retire,
 In secret there indulge thy soft desire.”

(Pope pdf 279)

Zeus and Hera do not go to his bedroom; instead, Zeus covers them with a cloud so no one can see them. That is why Zeus is described three times as “Zeus who gathers the breasting clouds” (Fagles 14.354, 14.376, 14.408) in the seduction scene.

• How does the seduction scene make Zeus look? Dignified or undignified?

The seduction of Zeus by Hera is undignified. Frequently, the gods and goddesses act in undignified ways. Here, both Zeus and Hera are undignified. We have already seen Aphrodite act in an undignified way. She wanted to save the life of Aeneas, her son, but when she was wounded — not seriously — she dropped her son and fled. Goddesses, of course, are immortal and cannot die, so she was risking little by rescuing Aeneas — some pain, and nothing more.

• What do you think of what Zeus says to Hera before sleeping with her?

Zeus, looking at Hera, says that he really, really wants to go to bed with her right now. Zeus has a humorous way of telling Hera that he desires her. What Zeus says to Hera would not work for mortal men, I think. In his seduction of Hera, Zeus recounts this list of seven goddesses and mortal women he's slept with (and he mentions the children they have borne him):

- 1) Ixion's wife
- 2) Acrisius' daughter Danaë (DA nay ee)
- 3) Europa, far-famed Phoenix' daughter
- 4) Semele
- 5) Alcmena queen of Thebes (and mother of Heracles, whom Hera hates, as Homer reminds us when Sleep reminds Hera of the trouble he got into with Zeus earlier when he helped Hera by putting Zeus to sleep so that Hera could make Heracles sail off course)
- 6) Demeter

7) Leto

And Zeus says that Hera is more desirable than any of them:

“Now —
 come, let’s go to bed, let’s lose ourselves in love!
 Never has such a lust for goddess or mortal woman
 flooded my pounding heart and overwhelmed me so.
 Not even then, when I made love to Ixion’s wife”
 (Fagles 14.377-381)

Compare:

“Hera,
 you can go there later. But why don’t we
 lie down and make joyful love together?
 I’ve never felt such sexual desire before
 for any goddess, for any mortal woman.”
 Johnston 14.372-376)

By the way, on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, Jay asked a man how many women he had slept with. He looked at his girlfriend or wife, then said hesitantly, “One.” He was obviously lying, but his girlfriend or wife told him, “Good answer.”

Zeus’s catalog of women he has slept is often called the “Leporello catalog.” It is named after a famous aria in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*:

In Act I, Scene II of the Italian opera *Don Giovanni* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Donna Elvira confronts Don Giovanni, who had betrayed her.

Leporello tells her that she should forget him, and then produces a book of the Don's feminine conquests:

640 in Italy,
 231 in Germany,
 100 in France,
 91 in Turkey, and
 1003 in Spain.

Source: <http://www.aria-database.com/cgibin/aria-search.pl?opera=Don+Giovanni&a>

By the way, Don Giovanni is better known as Don Juan.

Someone — even Zeus — trying to flatter a woman by telling her how many women he has slept with is undignified. It is also stupid, particularly in this case. Hera is a jealous wife. She hates the affairs that her husband has had with other goddesses and with mortal women. She often persecutes the women whom Zeus has slept with. If Hera were not already trying to seduce Zeus, Zeus' mentioning of his affairs would probably make Hera not want to sleep with him.

• **What does Poseidon do once Zeus falls asleep?**

Hera's plan works, and Zeus falls asleep. Sleep tells Poseidon that Zeus is asleep and unwary, and Poseidon immediately begins to help the Achaeans. Before, he has been giving advice, but now he can help more actively.

Poseidon is angry at Achilles and speaks about him:

“You Argives,
 are we really going to give the victory

to Hector, son of Priam, allow him
 to take our ships and get the glory?
 That's what he says. He even boasts about it,
 since Achilles stays beside his hollow ships,
 anger in his heart. But we won't miss him much
 if the rest of us get fighting strength
 and help each other. [...]"

(Johnston 14.431-439)

Poseidon does come up with a good idea. The Greek warriors should exchange armor so that the best warriors have the best armor:

"Let any rugged fighter who shoulders a small
 buckler
 pass it on to a weaker man — put on the bigger
 shield."

(Fagles 14. 447-448)

Compare:

"[...] Let's arm ourselves with shields,
 the best and biggest in our whole army,
 cover our heads with gleaming helmets,
 take in our hands the longest spears, and go.
 I'll lead us. I don't think Hector, Priam's son,
 will hold, no matter how much he wants to fight."

(Johnston 14.440-445)

The Achaean leaders quickly accept Poseidon's advice:

The kings themselves, though wounded, organized the men—

Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus.

Moving among the warriors, they supervised the exchange of weapons. The best men put on the best equipment, the worst men got the worst.

(Johnston 14.447-451)

• What is the purpose of the armor exchange arranged by the Achaean leaders?

The Achaean leaders arrange an exchange of armor to ensure that the best men have the best armor. This makes sense. You want to make sure that your best fighters remain alive to fight. This is realistic. To keep the Trojans away from the ships, you want your best warriors to have the best weapons.

In addition, Diomedes, Odysseus, and Agamemnon show themselves to the troops and rally them. Wounded, they can't fight, but they can show the Achaean warriors that they aren't deserting them.

• What is an epic simile? What is unusual about the epic simile at Fagles 14.467-474?

Homer is known for his epic similes. *A Handbook to Literature*, edited by C. Hugh Holman, defines epic simile in this way:

An elaborated comparison. The epic simile differs from an ordinary simile in being more involved and more ornate, in a conscious imitation of the Homeric manner. (172)

For example, My love is like a red, red rose. This is an ordinary simile. However, epic simile is much more extended.

We read a famous three-ply epic simile at Fagles 14.467-474. It is used to describe the noise made by the clashing of the Trojans, led by Hector, and of the Achaeans, led by Poseidon:

Not so loud the breakers bellowing against the shore,
driven in from open sea by the North Wind's brutal
blast,

not so loud the roar of fire whipped to a crackling
blaze

rampaging into a mountain gorge, raging up through
timber,

not so loud the gale that howls in the leafy crowns of
oaks

when it hits its pitch of fury tearing branches down
—

Nothing so loud as the cries of Trojans, cries of
Achaeans,

terrible war cries, armies storming against each
other.

(Fagles 14.467-474)

This is the only negative simile in the *Iliad*.

• What is the situation of the Trojans at the end of Book 14?

At the end of Book 13, Hector charged Great Ajax. Here the two warriors finally meet. Great Ajax wounds and dazes

Hector by hitting him with a boulder. This is something that helps the Achaeans to continue their rally.

Hector is wounded by Great Ajax, who throws a large rock at him:

Ajax picked up one of these [rocks] and struck
Hector's chest,

just above the shield rim, close to Hector's neck.

The impact spun Hector like a top, reeling
round and round.

(Johnston 14.482-485)

The Achaeans rush in trying to kill Hector, but the Trojan troops protect him. They carry him to the Xanthus River, throw water on him, and Hector becomes more alert momentarily and vomits, then falls unconscious. Now things look very bad for the Trojans. The Achaean troops continue to rally.

• Are Homer's descriptions of the war growing more violent?

During the Achaeans' rally, the battle scenes grow more disgusting. It seems to me that as Homer continues to describe the war, his descriptions grow more and more horrifying.

Ajax beheads a Trojan, Antenor's son Archelochus, then cruelly boasts:

“Consider this, Polydamas,

and tell me the truth, is not this man here

worth killing to avenge Prothoënor?

He doesn't seem to be unworthy,

or from inferior parents. He looks like
 a brother of horse-taming Antenor,
 perhaps his son, he looks a lot like him.”

Ajax shouted this, knowing very well the man he'd
 killed.

Trojans['] hearts were seized with grief.

(Johnston 14.546-554)

Homer sings,

[...] Ilioneus' mother gave him just one son ...
 the one Peneleos lanced beneath the brows,
 down to the eyes' root and scooped an eyeball out —
 (Fagles 14.575-577)

Compare:

Ilioneus was the only child his mother bore
 to Phorbas. But then he was hit by Peneleus,
 below his eyebrows, just underneath his eye.
 The spear knocked out the eyeball, went in his eye,
 drove through his neck, and sliced the tendons at the
 nape.

(Johnston 14.574-578)

Peneleos then cuts off the corpse's head and displays it on a
 spear:

hoisting the head high like a poppy-head on the shaft
 he flourished it in the eyes of all the Trojans now,

yelling out his boast: “Go tell them from me,
 you Trojans, tell the loving father and mother
 of lofty Ilioneus to start the dirges in the halls!
 The wife of Promachus, Alegenor’s son, will never
 thrill
 to her dear husband striding home from the wars
 that day the sons of Achaea sail from Troy!”
 (Fagles 14.584-591)

Compare:

Peneleus drew his sharp sword and struck his neck,
 chopping head and helmet, so they hit the ground,
 the spear still sticking from the socket of his eye.
 Holding it up high, like a flowering poppy,
 Peneleus shouted a loud boast at the Trojans:
 “Trojans, you can now tell the dear father
 and mother of fine Ilioneus to lament
 all through their house. When we Achaean lads
 sail in our ships from Troy, then the wife
 of this Promachus, son of Alegenor,
 will not be celebrating the return
 of her beloved husband.”
 (Johnston 14.580-591)

• **What disgusting thing do we read about Little Ajax at the end of Book 14?**

We also learn something disgusting about Little Ajax:

But Oileus' son, quick Ajax killed the most —
no one alive could run men down in flight like him
once Zeus whipped enemy ranks in blinding, panic
rout.

(Fagles 14.608-610)

Compare:

But Ajax, swift son of Oileus, killed the most.
For none could match his speed on foot, as he ran,
chasing men in flight when Zeus forced them to flee.

(Johnston 14.608-610)

No doubt being able to run down and kill a fleeing enemy is a useful skill in war, but it is disgusting nonetheless.

Conclusion

In Book 15, the Trojans will rally and will reach the Achaean ships.

Chapter 15: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 15 — The Achaean Armies at Bay / The Battle at the Ships

Introduction

In Book 15, the main event is that Zeus wakes up and makes sure that the Trojans are triumphant. At the end of Book 15, the Trojans reach the Achaean ships, and Hector screams for the Trojans to bring fire.

• When Zeus wakes up, how does he react?

The episode involving Hera and Zeus is comic, and when Zeus wakes up and sees the destruction his wife has done, Homer has the opportunity to get some humor out of Hera's character.

Of course, when Zeus wakes up and sees the Achaeans triumphing over the Trojans, and Hector wounded and out of the battle, he knows immediately that Hera has tricked him — and he is furious! He also knows that this is exactly the kind of thing that he should have expected Hera to do. He tells Hera,

“You're impossible to deal with, Hera,
devising such deceitful tricks to get
lord Hector from the fight and make the army
run away. [...]"

(Johnston 15.15-18)

Zeus knows that Hera is at fault because she often does things like this. For example, she often interfered with Zeus' son Heracles (the Romans used the name Hercules) and she has often interfered in the Trojan War. Zeus has often punished her severely for things like this. He once hung her up with anvils tied to her feet after she drove Heracles off

course. The other gods didn't like it, but Zeus didn't care. Zeus was too powerful for the other gods to stop him.

• **When Zeus wakes up, how does Hera react?**

Because Zeus is angry with Hera and threatens her, Hera lies to save her skin:

“Let earth and wide heaven above be witnesses,
with the flowing waters of the river Styx,
on which the most binding, most fearful oaths
are made by blessed gods, let your sacred head,
our marriage bed as well, stand witnesses,
things on which I'd never swear untruthfully,
the harm that Earthshaker Poseidon did
to Hector and the Trojans, to help the Argives,
in all that I had no part. His own heart
pushed and drove him on. He saw Achaeans
being beaten by their ships and pitied them.
I'd not advise him to go against you,
lord of the dark cloud, but to follow you,
wherever you might lead.”

(Johnston 15.45-57)

Hera says that Poseidon, the god of the oceans and of earthquakes, must be helping the Achaeans of his own accord — she had nothing to do with it. This is, of course, a lie. She seduced Zeus in order that Poseidon could help the Achaeans.

Zeus has too much experience with Hera to be taken in by Hera's obvious lying, but his main concern is immediate obedience, so he lets Hera off easy and merely sends her back to Olympus with a message that Iris and Apollo should come to him. Iris will tell Poseidon to stop interfering in the battle, while Apollo will help Hector.

However, Zeus smiles (Fagles 15:60)— one of the rare smiles in the *Iliad* — because Hera is bending herself to his will. Back on Mount Olympus, Hera also smiles, but only with her eyes — her brow is furrowed.

Hera returns to Olympus, but she is still quarrelsome — and even tries to get Ares, a god who is on the side of the Trojans, in trouble. Zeus has told her that the gods must stay out of the fighting, but Hera tempts Ares to get involved in the battle by telling him that his son Ascalaphus is dead:

Stern Mars, with anguish for his slaughter'd son,
Smote his rebelling breast, and fierce begun:
“Thus then, immortals! thus shall Mars obey;
Forgive me, gods, and yield my vengeance way:
Descending first to yon forbidden plain,
The god of battles dares avenge the slain;
Dares, though the thunder bursting o'er my head
Should hurl me blazing on those heaps of dead.”

(Pope pdf 287)

Only intervention by Pallas Athena saves Ares from tempting the wrath of Zeus:

But Pallas, springing through the bright abode,
Starts from her azure throne to calm the god.

Struck for the immortal race with timely fear,
 From frantic Mars she snatch'd the shield and spear;
 Then the huge helmet lifting from his head,
 Thus to the impetuous homicide she said:
 "By what wild passion, furious! art thou toss'd?
 Striv'st thou with Jove? thou art already lost.
 Shall not the Thunderer's dread command restrain,
 And was imperial Juno heard in vain?
 Back to the skies wouldst thou with shame be driven,
 And in thy guilt involve the host of heaven?"

(Pope pdf 287)

• Homer often uses the gods to tell us what is going to happen. What does Zeus say is going to happen? Does Homer's use of the gods in this way have any advantages?

Homer uses the gods to tell us what will happen. This can take away from any suspense the plot could have — but then Homer's audience knew the main outline of the story anyway. Homer's use of the gods does have the advantage of alerting us to the significance of the events as they happen. We know that Hector will reach the ships, and we know that this event will be followed by Patroclus' arming and fighting and being killed, which in turn will lead to Achilles' rejoining the battle. Zeus says,

"And let Apollo drive Prince Hector back to battle,
 breathe power back in his lungs, make him forget

the pains that rack his heart. Let him whip the
Achaean

in headlong panic rout and roll them back once more,
tumbling back to the oar-swept ships of Peleus' son
Achilles.

And he, he will launch his comrade Patroclus into
action

and glorious Hector will cut him down with a spear
in front of Troy, once Patroclus has slaughtered
whole battalions of strong young fighting men
and among them all, my shining son Sarpedon.

But then — enraged for Patroclus —

brilliant Achilles will bring Prince Hector down.

And then, from that day on, I'll turn the tide of war:
back the fighting goes, no stopping it, ever, all the
way

till Achaean armies seize the beetling heights of Troy
through Athena's grand design."

(Fagles 15.75-90)

According to E.T. Owen, author of *The Story of the Iliad*,
Homer's use of the gods to tell us what is going to happen
has a plain artistic advantage:

[...] one can see the significance of an event in a
series much more clearly when one knows to what
they are tending; one's interest is oriented. (140)

In addition, Homer's use of the gods to tell us what will happen gives these events a sense of inevitability, a sense that nothing else could happen.

• Do the actions of the gods enhance the audience's sense of inevitability?

The actions of the gods enhance the audience's sense of inevitability. Very often, the gods let us know in advance exactly what will happen. That does make us, the audience, think that an event is inevitable. Because Zeus has told us, we know — it is inevitable — that Achilles will go into battle and kill Hector. We know that nothing else can happen.

• The discord among the gods Poseidon and Zeus mirrors what other discords you know about?

The discord among the gods mirrors the discord of the Trojan War, which is, of course, being fought because of a discord between Paris and Menelaus. The gods fight among each other just as the human warriors fight among each other. As long as gods or men obey a single leader — Zeus or Agamemnon — there is concord. However, both gods and men want honor, and this leads to discord. Achilles has not received his due honor from Agamemnon, and so Achilles refuses to fight. Poseidon, meanwhile, protests that he is not receiving the honor that is due to him. Poseidon protests:

“It's unjust!

He may be best, but he speaks too proudly,
if he restrains me by force against my will,
for I'm as worthy of respect as he is.

We are three brothers, sons of Cronos,
born from Rhea, Zeus, myself, and Hades,
third brother, ruler of the dead. The whole world

was divided in three parts, and each of us
received one share. [...]"

(Johnston 15.219-227)

In addition, Poseidon and Zeus are brothers, just like Hector and Paris are brothers.

Poseidon, recognizing Zeus' might, obeys him. Agamemnon does not have the same power as Zeus, and Achilles does not obey him. With the gods, as so often with human beings, might makes right. Iris gives Poseidon Zeus' message — and his threat:

“But if you will not obey his orders, if you spurn them,

he threatens to come here in person, fight you down,
power against power.”

(Fagles 15.212-214)

The power struggle between Zeus and Poseidon in Book 15 recalls the power struggle between Achilles and Agamemnon. As you remember, Zeus had promised Thetis that he would let the Trojans have ascendancy over the Greeks for a certain time, until Achilles is missed enough by the Greeks that they honor him again. Poseidon, on the other hand, is very much on the side of the Greeks at this point, and he wants the Greeks to have ascendancy over the Trojans.

• **In what ways do the Trojans begin to fight better?**

Now that Zeus is awake and paying attention to the battle, the Trojans rally.

Apollo also obeys Zeus, who orders him to help Hector rejoin the battle. Apollo tells Hector,

“Take courage now. Cronos’ son has sent you
 a powerful defender from mount Ida,
 to stand beside you as your protector,
 Phoebus Apollo with his golden sword,
 who’s helped you before, you and your city.
 But come now, tell your many charioteers
 to charge the hollow ships with their swift horses.
 I’ll go ahead and smooth the horses’ path.
 I’ll turn back these Achaean warriors.”
 (Johnston 15.306-314)

Hector returns to battle, and again the Trojans are triumphant. Earlier, Hector threw a boulder and knocked a hole through the gate and Sarpedon tore down a section of the Achaeans’ wall. Now the Trojans expand the openings (Apollo will help them knock down the ramparts and fill in the trench) and pour through them. Now that the Trojans are through the gate, they are ready to try to burn the Achaean ships.

• Which tactics does the Achaean Thoas advise? Is Thoas correct?

The Achaean Thoas gives some sound tactics: He wants the best fighters to stay in front, and the weaker fighters to be the backup:

“[...] But come, let’s all follow
 what I propose. Let’s tell most of the men
 to move back to the ships. Those among us
 who claim to be the best men in the army

will make a stand. If we can reach him first
 and hold him off with our extended spears,
 for all his fury I think his heart will fear
 to mingle with this Danaan company.”

(Johnston 15.350-357)

The tactics are sound, but Thoas is wrong that Hector will quake. Instead, Hector becomes a fighting machine. He launches the attack, the Achaeans hold the line for a while, but eventually the Trojans break through to the Achaean ships.

• **What does Hector do when he returns to the battle?**

Hector is a warrior on fire — a war machine — encouraging his troops:

“Now storm the ships! Drop those bloody spoils!
 Any straggler I catch, hanging back from the fleet,
 right here on the spot I’ll put that man to death.
 No kin, no woman commit his corpse to the flames
 —
 the dogs will tear his flesh before our walls!”

(Fagles 15.409-413)

Compare:

“Charge the ships. Leave the blood-stained spoils
 alone.

Whoever I see not moving to the ships
 on the other side, I’ll make sure he dies,
 right there. His relatives, men and women,

won't be burying him, once he's dead,
 with the proper rites of fire. Instead,
 the dogs will rip him up before our city.”

(Johnston 15.409-415)

Hector knows what is important now. If the Trojans set fire to the Achaean ships, the Trojans will have won the war. The Trojan women and children will be safe, and so storming the ships is more important than stopping to strip the bloody armor off a defeated foe.

• **What is your opinion of the sand castle simile at Fagles 15.425-429 / Johnston 15.426-429?**

Now we come to a Homeric simile that shows something important about human beings who lived 3,000 years ago. Apollo is helping the Trojans by knocking the Achaean rampart down and building a place where the Trojans can cross the Achaean trench. Homer sings,

Apollo heading them, gripping the awesome storm-
 shield

and he tore that Argive rampart down with the same
 ease

some boy at the seashore knocks sand castles down
 —

he no sooner builds his playthings up, child's play,
 than he wrecks them all with hands and kicking feet,
 just for the sport of it.

(Fagles 15.424-429)

Compare:

The Achaean wall

he easily demolished, as a child will scatter sand,
 in a childish game beside the sea he builds a sand
 wall,
 then with his hands and feet flattens it for fun.

(Johnston 15.426-429)

Human beings have made some progress in the millennia since Homer — progress in science and technology — but human nature and children have not changed. Homer's *Iliad* is still a great masterpiece, and children still build, then knock down sand castles.

**• Why does it take so long for us to hear from Patroclus?
 What has happened since we last saw Patroclus?**

Finally, we return to Patroclus, whom we have not heard about since Book 11. Patroclus has been helping the wounded Eurypylus, but now he hears shouts from the battle:

As long as Trojans and Achaeans
 were fighting by the wall away from the swift ships,
 Patroclus stayed sitting in Eurypylus' hut,
 cheering him up with pleasant conversation,
 relieving his black pain by spreading ointments
 on his painful wound. But when he realized
 Trojans were capturing the wall, while the Danaans
 were crying out and in retreat, Patroclus groaned.
 Striking his thighs with the flat of his hands, he spoke
 in evident distress:

“Eurypylus, I can’t stay
 with you any longer here, though you need help.
 For a fierce battle has begun. Your companion
 must look after you. I’ll run to Achilles
 to urge him on to fight. Who know? With god’s help,
 I may rouse his spirit with my words.
 A friend’s persuasion perhaps can do some good.”
 (Johnston 15.460-475)

It’s been a long time since we have heard about Patroclus, but the actions of that time — although they have taken a long time to tell — have not taken much real time. This is what has happened since we have heard about Patroclus:

- Sarpedon knocks down part of the wall, and Hector breaks through the gate by hurling a boulder through it.
- Facing slaughter, the desperate Achaeans rally and hold back the Trojans.
- Nestor and the wounded kings — Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes — encourage their troops by showing themselves and letting the troops know that they are not going to desert them.
- Great Ajax wounds Hector, and the Achaean rally continues, beating back the Trojans.
- Hector revives and leads another attack, and the Trojans retake the wall and force the Achaeans back to the ships.

We have not heard about Patroclus until now because now is the time for Patroclus to make his appeal to Achilles: when an Achaean ship has been set on fire.

• How do Great Ajax and Hector motivate their respective armies?

We next have further description of the battle, which the Trojans are winning. The Trojans have reached the ships, when Teucer draws his bow and his bowstring — a new one — breaks. The Achaeans take this as a sign that Zeus is against them, while the Trojans take this as a sign that Zeus is on their side.

In the fighting that follows, both Great Ajax and Hector are magnificent. Both cheer on their armies in their own way. Their speeches are some of the best things in this book. Ajax says to Teucer after the string of Teucer’s bow snaps,

“My friend, leave your arrows and your bow,
 set them down, since some god has broken them
 to spite Danaans. Take hold of a long spear,
 set a shield against your shoulder, fight the Trojans.
 Encourage other troops to do the same.
 They won’t take our well-decked ships without a
 fight,
 even though they’re overpowering us,
 so let’s concentrate our minds on battle.”

(Johnston 15.554-561)

Note Great Ajax’s reference to the “joy of war” (Fagles 15.557). Certainly war can command all your attention.

People who have been in wars sometimes say that they feel intensely alive. Certainly General George Patton loved war.

After seeing Teucer's bow snap, Hector reminds his warriors that they are fighting for family:

“Trojans, Lycians, Dardan spearmen,
be men, my friends. Recall your warlike power
among these hollow ships. For I've witnessed
with my own eyes how Zeus has nullified
an arrow shot at us by their best man.
It's easy to see how Zeus assists men,
those to whom he grants great victories,
or how he drains men's strength, refusing
to protect them, as he now saps the power
among the Argives and works to help us,
while we fight by the ships. So stay together.
Should one of you meet his fate and die,
stabbed by a spear or cut down with a sword,
let the man die. To be killed defending
one's own native land is no ignoble act.
The man's wife is safe, his children live,
his house and land remain, if the Achaeans leave,
returning to their country in their ships.”
(Johnston 15.570-587)

What is at stake for the Trojans is the safety of their wives and children — as Hector well knows because of his own wife and son. They are the reason Hector is fighting.

The Achaeans are fighting to save their lives. If the Trojans succeed in setting on fire the Achaean ships, the Achaeans will die.

Great Ajax fires up the Achaeans:

“For shame, Argives. Now the issue’s clear,
 either we’ll be killed or we’ll be saved,
 if we can push the danger from our ships.
 Are you expecting, if the ships are taken
 by Hector of the shining helmet,
 you’ll all get to your native land on foot?
 Don’t you hear frenzied Hector urging on
 his men. He’s frantic now to burn the ships.
 He’s inviting them to fight, not to a dance.
 For us there’s no better choice or tactic
 than to bring our arms and warrior strength
 against them in fighting hand to hand.
 It’s better to settle this once and for all,
 whether we live or die, than be hemmed in,
 fighting a long grim battle, as we are now,
 among our ships against inferior men.”

(Johnston 15.590-605)

If the Achaeans lose their ships, how will they get home —
by walking on water?

Hector exhorts Melanippus:

“Follow me now. No more standing back, no fighting
these Argives at a distance — kill them hand-to-
hand.

Now — before they topple towering Ilium down,
all our people slaughtered!

(Fagles 15.645-648)

Ajax again exhorts the Achaeans:

“Be men, my friends! Discipline fill your hearts!

Dread what comrades say of you here in bloody
combat!

When men dread that, more men come through alive
—

when soldiers break and run, good-bye glory,
good-bye all defenses!”

(Fagles 15.651-655)

In saying this, Ajax is making a not-complimentary
reference to Achilles. If Achilles were more concerned about
what people say of him, fewer Achaeans would be dying.

• **Note that Antilochus is identified as being swift. This is foreshadowing.**

We do have a reference to Antilochus’ swiftness. Menelaus
tells him,

“None of the younger troops, Antilochus, none

is faster of foot than you or tougher in combat —
 why not leap right in and lay some Trojan out?”

(Fagles 15.660-662)

Antilochus’ swiftness will be important in Book 17, so it is foreshadowed here. And yes, Antilochus does “lay some Trojan out” (Fagles 15.660-662).

• **What is Hector doing at the end of Book 15?**

Both Great Ajax and Hector are excellent warriors. Great Ajax leaps from stern to stern of the Achaean ships, bellowing to his Achaeans to fight, and spearing Trojans with his pike.

Hector reaches an Achaean ship, grabs its stern, and shouts for fire.

Homer sings,

And Hector held fast,
 he never let go of the high stern, he hugged its horn,
 arms locked in a death-grip, crying out to Trojans,
 “Bring fire! Up with the war cries, all together!
 Now Zeus hands *us* a day worth all the rest,
 today we seize these ships — ”

(Fagles 15.829-834)

Compare:

“Bring fire. Raise a general shout.
 Now Zeus has given us a day that makes up
 for everything, to seize the ships that came here,

contravening the gods' will, creating many troubles for us, because our elders in their cowardice restrained me, held back my troops, when I was keen to fight it out at the ships' sterns. But if all-seeing Zeus dulled our minds then, now he commands us, now he drives us forward."

(Johnston 15.829-838)

Hector actually seizes hold of the stern of a ship and calls for fire to burn the ships. As Hector is calling for fire, as the battle continues to rage around the ships, Great Ajax leaps from deck of ship to deck of ship, all while fighting Trojans and urging his fellow Greeks to rally and protect the ships. Great Ajax is holding off the Trojans almost single handedly. Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus must be fighting again because of the desperateness of the situation, but they are wounded and not at full strength — at most, all they can do is stand and jab out with a spear. Achilles of course is still off in his camp doing nothing. This leaves Great Ajax as the main Achaean warrior to hold off the Trojans and keep them away from the ships.

This is a great moment for Hector — what he has been waiting for, for years. During much of the war, the Trojans have stayed inside the walls of Troy; often when the Trojan warriors have ventured outside they have been defeated by the Achaeans.

In addition, this is the second great climax of the battle. The first occurred when the Trojans broke through the Achaean wall and gate in Book 12.

• **What is Nestor doing at the end of Book 15?**

Nestor knows that the situation is desperate, and he encourages the Achaeans:

“Friends, be men. Let sense of shame from all men
fill your hearts. Remember, each of you,
your children, wives, possessions, and your parents,
whether alive or dead. They’re not here,
but, on their behalf, I beg you to stand firm.
Don’t let yourselves turn round and run away.”

(Johnston 15.769-774)

As always, Nestor is wise, and he knows the right thing to say.

• **What is Great Ajax doing at the end of Book 15?**

Homer sings about Ajax:

And any Trojan crashing against the beaked ships,
torch ablaze in hand, straining to please Hector
who urged him on ... Ajax ready and waiting there
would stab each man with his long, rugged pike —
twelve he impaled point-blank, struggling up the
walls.

(Fagles 15.862-866)

Compare:

Saying this, Ajax kept on jabbing ferociously

with his sharp pike. Any Trojan who charged the ships

with blazing fire, seeking to please Hector,

found Ajax waiting to slice him with his pike.

(Johnston 15.859-862)

Here we can compare Achilles' behavior to Great Ajax's. Great Ajax is a magnificent fighter, and he is doing what Achilles should be doing.

Great Ajax is a hero, but he is not as great a hero as Achilles. Great Ajax is a great defensive fighter as we see very well in Book 15, whereas Achilles, as we will see after Patroclus dies, is a great offensive fighter.

At the end of Book 15, Great Ajax is practically holding off the Trojan army by himself. He is on the decks of the ships, going from one ship to another, using his pike to kill Trojans who are trying to set the ships on fire. This is his finest hour. While Achilles is still sulking in his camp, Great Ajax is acting like a hero.

We also see Great Ajax motivating the Achaean troops to fight through the use of words. Ajax' argument is very simple. If the ships go up in flames, then the Achaeans will die. There is nowhere to go to be safe if the ships burn up. Unlike the Trojans, the Achaeans can't go behind the walls of a great city and be safe. If the ships survive, then the Achaeans can sail away at night and go home to Greece.

However, Great Ajax is only partially correct in one thing he says. He says that the Achaeans don't have an army in reserve to help them. Of course, an army is in reserve. Achilles' men are not fighting. However, Ajax is partially correct in that Achilles has said that he won't fight until the

flames reach his own ships. (Of course, it looks as though that will happen at any time now.)

Later in history, Great Ajax got a bum rap. He was thought of as being stupid, but in the *Iliad* he appears to be a very intelligent man as well as a very good fighter. The bum rap may have come into play because of a simile in which Homer compares Ajax to a donkey being slowly driven back by boys with sticks (Fagles 11.653-662). In addition, before the end of the Trojan War, after Achilles has died, Ajax goes insane and commits suicide.

• **Is the description of the battle in Books 11-15 realistic?**

Homer is realistic in his description of the battle. We have the momentum swinging back and forth. The Achaeans rally when we would expect them to rally — when it is necessary to save their lives. We also have heroism here. Great Ajax is worthy of much respect because he is fighting magnificently. In reading about this battle, we need no references to the gods and goddesses, although Homer mentions them. We can explain and understand everything that happens without any mention of the gods and goddesses.

An example of Homer's realism is that a warrior dies because of an accident. Periphetes, an Achaean, trips and lets his shield down. Hector notices this, and he stabs Periphetes in the chest, killing him. See Fagles 15.742-757.

In addition, the fighting is so thick that one warrior will throw a spear at a warrior, miss him, and kill another warrior. This is realistic.

Also, warriors grow more savage and cruel as the fighting continues. This is realistic because they are in danger of being killed and they have seen their friends killed.

• **How would you summarize the battle of Books 11-15?**

This is what happens in the battle in Books 11-15:

- Hector and the other Trojans wound Agamemnon, Odysseus, Diomedes, and some other Achaeans, forcing them to withdraw from the fighting. Great Ajax is forced to retreat.
- Sarpedon knocks down part of the wall, and Hector breaks through the gate by hurling a boulder through it.
- Facing slaughter, the desperate Achaeans rally and hold back the Trojans.
- Nestor and the wounded kings — Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes — encourage their troops by showing themselves and letting the troops know that they are not going to desert them.
- The Achaeans make sure that the best warriors have the best armor.
- Great Ajax wounds Hector, and the Achaean rally continues, beating back the Trojans.
- Hector revives and leads another attack, and the Trojans retake the wall and force the Achaeans back to the ships.

• **How would you summarize the battle of Books 11-15 at the human level and at the god level?**

Of course, Homer does use double motivation when he describes the battle in Books 11-15. He does use the gods to help explain the events of these books.

- *Human Level:* Hector and the other Trojans wound Agamemnon, Odysseus, Diomedes, and some other

Achaean, forcing them to withdraw from the fighting. Great Ajax is forced to retreat.

- *God Level:* In Book 11, Zeus promises victory to Hector until the sun sets. He also tells Hector to wait until Agamemnon is wounded, and then fight. Therefore, when Agamemnon is wounded, Hector and the Trojans seize their opportunity and attack fiercely, wounding Diomedes and Odysseus and other important Achaean leaders. Zeus forces Great Ajax to retreat (Fagles 15.638). Odysseus is wounded, but his patron goddess, Athena, makes sure that the weapon used does not kill him.

- *Human Level:* Sarpedon knocks down part of the wall, and Hector breaks through the gate by hurling a boulder through it.

- *God Level:* Zeus drives his son Sarpedon against the Achaeans (Fagles 12.339-341). Sarpedon knocks down part of the wall. Hector, having been told that this is his day of glory, breaks through the wall by hurling a boulder through it.

- *Human Level:* Facing slaughter, the desperate Achaeans rally and hold back the Trojans.

- *God Level:* Poseidon, disguised as the human Calchas, helps rally the Achaeans in Books 13-14. Poseidon rallies the Achaeans with words, and he gives them sound tactics.

- *Human Level:* The Achaeans make sure that the best warriors have the best armor.

- *God Level:* Poseidon suggests the armor exchange in Book 14.

- *Human Level:* Nestor and the wounded kings — Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes — encourage their troops by showing themselves and letting the troops know

that they are not going to desert them. Great Ajax wounds Hector, and the Achaean rally continues, beating back the Trojans.

- *God Level*: The Achaean rally is helped by the trick of Hera, who sleeps with Zeus so that he will fall asleep and not ensure that the Trojans are victorious.
- *Human Level*: Hector revives and leads another attack, and the Trojans retake the wall and force the Achaeans back to the ships.
- *God Level*: Zeus wakes up, and he ensures that the Trojans are triumphant. He sends Iris the messenger-goddess to tell Poseidon to leave the battlefield and stop helping the Achaeans. Hector revives because Zeus sends Apollo to help Hector. Apollo also leads the Trojans into battle, and he makes the Achaeans afraid (Fagles 15.376-381). Apollo knocks the rest of the wall down (Fagles 15.424-429).

The human characters in the *Iliad*, of course, usually see only the human level, unless of course a god or goddess turns him- or herself into a bird and flies away. Homer's audience, however, is given a god's-eye view of things.

• **What do you expect to happen next?**

We are able to see the turning point of the *Iliad*. Soon Patroclus will go into battle. All that we have been reading is leading up to that moment. Zeus has already told us what will happen. Zeus said early in Book 15,

“And let Apollo drive Prince Hector back to battle,
 breathe power back in his lungs, make him forget
 the pains that rack his heart. Let him whip the
 Achaeans
 in headlong panic rout and roll them back once more,

tumbling back to the oar-swept ships of Peleus' son Achilles.

And he, he will launch his comrade Patroclus into action

and glorious Hector will cut him down with a spear in front of Troy, once Patroclus has slaughtered whole battalions of strong young fighting men and among them all, my shining son Sarpedon.

But then — enraged for Patroclus —

brilliant Achilles will bring Prince Hector down.

And then, from that day on, I'll turn the tide of war: back the fighting goes, no stopping it, ever, all the way

till Achaean armies seize the beetling heights of Troy through Athena's grand design."

(Fagles 15.75-90)

We know that Patroclus will go into battle, he will be killed after he kills Sarpedon, and then Achilles will reenter the battle and kill Hector. Because Zeus has said these things, we know what will happen. All of this will happen — it is fated to happen and nothing else can happen. All of these things are inevitable.

Conclusion

In Book 16, Patroclus goes into battle and dies, just as Zeus has said he would.

Chapter 16: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 16 — Patroclus Fights and Dies

Important Term

Moirai: Fate

• What is the crucial turning point in the *Iliad*?

The crucial turning point of the *Iliad* occurs when Patroclus fights and dies. This will motivate Achilles to return to the battle. In Book 16, Patroclus dies, and in Book 17, a long battle breaks out over his body.

The *Iliad* is a poem about war, but love also appears in it. There is the love (or “love”) that Paris has for Helen, a love that is the cause of the Trojan War and which is no longer requited. In addition, there is the love that Hector and Andromache have for each other. This is a true love. In the *Odyssey*, we learn that Odysseus and his wife, Penelope, love each other, but this plays no part in the *Iliad*. Zeus apparently is able to love his son, the mortal Sarpedon. Also, there is the love that Achilles has for his best friend, Patroclus, and for other things.

Achilles loves many things. Certainly he loves glory; he stays at the Trojan War despite knowing that he will have a long life only if he leaves the war and returns home. He also loves life, as we discover in Book 9, when Achilles rejects Agamemnon's offer of reconciliation. Achilles loves Briseis — she is more to him than merely the sign of the honor that he has received from the other Achaean warriors. And, as we will see in this and the following books of the *Iliad*, Achilles loves Patroclus. This is not to say that Achilles and Patroclus are gay. We have already seen them in bed with women. Nevertheless, there is a deep friendship between them that we can call love.

• What role has Patroclus played in the *Iliad* so far? (In which books have we seen Patroclus, and what has he done?)

Patroclus, of course, is Achilles' best friend. We have seen Patroclus a few times briefly in the *Iliad*:

- In Book 1, Patroclus was with Achilles when the heralds came to take Briseis away from Achilles following the quarrel with Agamemnon. It was Patroclus who delivered Briseis to Agamemnon's heralds.

- In Book 9, Patroclus was with Achilles when Odysseus, Phoenix, and Great Ajax came from Agamemnon to offer gifts to Achilles if he would come back and fight. Patroclus listens as Achilles sings an epic poem.

- In Book 11, Achilles sees that someone is wounded, but he doesn't see the wounded man's face, so he sends Patroclus to find out the name of the wounded man. In Book 11, Nestor talks to Patroclus and suggests that if Achilles won't fight, then Patroclus should go out in battle wearing Achilles' armor so that the Trojans will think that Achilles has returned to fight.

- At the end of Book 11, Patroclus is returning to Achilles' camp to tell Achilles who the wounded man is, but he runs across a wounded warrior named Eurypylus and stays to help him.

• Describe Patroclus' character. Which adjectives can be used to describe him?

Patroclus is gentle and kind. We see that at the end of Book 11. Patroclus is returning to Achilles' camp to tell Achilles who the wounded man is, but he runs across a wounded

warrior named Eurypylus and stays to help him. This shows how gentle and kind Patroclus is.

Achilles has an interesting description of Patroclus when Patroclus finally returns to their camp. Achilles asks him,

“Why in tears, Patroclus?

Like a girl, a baby running after her mother,
begging to be picked up, and she tugs her skirts,
holding her back as she tries to hurry off — all tears,
fawning up at her, till she takes her in her arms ...

That’s how you look, Patroclus, streaming live
tears.”

(Fagles 16.7-12)

Compare:

“Why are you crying, Patroclus, like some girl,
an infant walking beside her mother,
asking to be picked up. She pulls the robe
and stops her mother strolling on ahead,
looking up at her in tears, until the mother
lifts her up. You’re crying just like that girl,
Patroclus. [...]”

(Johnston 16.7-13)

Achilles’ tone is light teasing — a tone of friendship. This is the sound of one friend talking to another. Patroclus does not sound like a warrior in this description, but his gentleness and kindness come through clearly in this description. E.T.

Owen writes in his *The Story of the Iliad*, “It is the tone of familiar friendship” (146).

We should note what a master poet Homer is. Patroclus had an errand in Book 11, and now he appears in Book 16. That is four or five hours of performance time, and Homer is ready to start singing about Patroclus again. Homer is always in control of his material.

Homer shows us that Patroclus is worthy to be a friend with Achilles. He is worthy to go into battle as the surrogate of Achilles, and that is exactly what Patroclus does — he goes into battle wearing Achilles’ armor so that the Trojans think that Achilles has reentered the battle and is ready to fight.

• **Which news does Patroclus bring back to Achilles?**

At the beginning of Book 16, Patroclus tells Achilles that the battle is going badly for the Achaeans, and he reports that Diomedes, Odysseus, and Agamemnon are all wounded. Furthermore, Patroclus reproaches Achilles:

“Let Greece at length with pity touch thy breast,
 Thyself a Greek; and, once, of Greeks the best!
 Lo! every chief that might her fate prevent,
 Lies pierced with wounds, and bleeding in his tent:
 Eurypylus, Tydides, Atreus’ son,
 And wise Ulysses, at the navy groan,
 More for their country’s wounds than for their own.”
 (Pope pdf 303)

Patroclus then reproaches Achilles:

“[...] But it’s impossible

to deal with you, Achilles. I hope anger
 like this rage you're nursing never seizes me.
 It's disastrous! How will you be of use
 to anyone in later generations,
 if you won't keep shameful ruin from the Argives?
 You're pitiless. [...]"

(Johnston 16.37-43)

Patroclus wants Achilles to go into battle, but if he is unwilling, then Patroclus wants to go into battle wearing Achilles' armor so that the Trojans will think that he is Achilles. If the Trojans think that Patroclus is Achilles, then they are likely to be more cautious and not attack the Achaeans so fiercely.

Of course, this means that the warriors have distinctive armor. They are not all wearing the same uniform. Other warriors can identify a particular warrior by looking at his shield and the rest of his armor and weapons.

Patroclus also refers to one of the fates that Thetis revealed to Achilles: If Achilles stays at Troy, he will die there.

• **Is Achilles still angry at Agamemnon?**

Has Achilles changed his mind and is he regretting having refused Agamemnon's offer of reconciliation? It's possible. In Book 9, when the embassy from Agamemnon came to him, he was enjoying himself in his tent, ignoring the results of that day's battle. During the most recent battle, however, he was eagerly watching from the stern of his ship (in Book 11). Chances are, Achilles is eager to be in battle. However, he does still feel the pain of Agamemnon's insult to him. He also denies to Patroclus that he is staying out of the battle

because of Thetis' prophecy that he will die in battle if he stays at Troy — Achilles is not a coward:

“My dear divinely born Patroclus,
 what are you saying? I'm not concerned
 with any prophecy I know about,
 nor has my noble mother said a thing
 from Zeus. But dreadful pain came in my heart
 and spirit when that man wished to cheat
 someone his equal and steal away that prize,
 and just because he's got more power.
 That really hurt, given that I've suffered
 in this war so many pains here in my chest.
 Achaea's sons chose that girl as my prize.
 I won her with my spear, once I'd destroyed
 her strong-walled city. Lord Agamemnon
 took her back, out of my hands, as if I were
 some stranger without honour. [...]"

(Johnston 16.62-76)

Achilles still says that he will refrain from fighting until the fires reach his own ships. This is what he said at the end of Book 9, when he declined to come back and fight for Agamemnon. Achilles' intention seems to be to show Agamemnon that he, Achilles, is fighting for himself and for himself only. Without Achilles, the Achaeans are unable to keep the Trojans from setting fire to the ships, but Achilles, who is fighting for himself, is able to stop the Trojans. That

moment seems to be about to occur at any moment now. Hector is screaming for more fire so he can burn the Achaean ships.

However, Achilles does not seem to be as angry at Agamemnon as he has been:

“Enough.

Let bygones be bygones. Done is done.

How on earth can a man rage on forever?”

(Fagles 16.68-70)

Still, Achilles is unwilling to go into battle at this point:

“Still, by god, I said I would not relax my anger,
not till the cries and carnage reached my own ships.”

(Fagles 16.71-72)

Achilles has boxed himself in. He has rejected Agamemnon’s offer of reconciliation and has said that he would not fight until the battle came to his own ships, and so he won’t. Perhaps Achilles’ motivation for staying out of the battle is simply not wanting to go back on his sworn word that he would not fight until the battle reached his own ships.

Achilles may think that after this day’s battle, Agamemnon will apologize — for real this time, not just offer him a bribe to fight again — to him, and then Achilles can go into battle with honor.

• Why does Achilles allow Patroclus to wear his armor and fight in the battle when Achilles himself is unwilling to fight?

Achilles does make mistakes. In Book 1, he does not show respect to Agamemnon. Achilles’ lack of tact definitely

helps lead to the quarrel between him and Agamemnon. In Book 9, Achilles may or may not make a mistake. He declines Agamemnon's generous offer of gifts; however, Agamemnon did not offer him "warm, winning words" (Fagles 9.135) of friendship. For that reason, I lean toward thinking that Achilles was right to refuse Agamemnon's offer of gifts.

Here in Book 16, Achilles definitely makes a mistake. If Achilles wanted to, he could arm and save the Achaeans. Previously, he said that he would not fight until the fire reached his own ships. Certainly, that is just about to happen. If Patroclus had not put on Achilles' armor and led the Myrmidons into battle, the Achaeans' ships would have been set on fire, and the fire eventually would have reached Achilles' ships. If Achilles were to arm now and were to go into battle once the first ship had been set on fire, he would not have done much differently from what he said he was going to do.

So why does Achilles allow Patroclus to wear his (Achilles') armor and to go into battle? I think that there are a few reasons:

Reason #1: There is Something Fundamentally Decent in Achilles — He Does Not Want the Achaeans to Have Their Ships Burned

Achilles has not been reconciled with Agamemnon — and he is still angry at him — yet he does want to help the Achaeans. That is why he grants Patroclus' request. He allows Patroclus to don his — Achilles' — armor and ride out in battle. He does this even though it can ruin his plan of revenge. Achilles' plan of revenge was to wait for the Trojans to reach his own ships, then to fight them off — for himself, not for Agamemnon. If Patroclus is too successful, the Achaeans will not need Achilles.

Reason #2: Patroclus Asked Him to — Achilles Wants to Do a Favor for a Friend

Why does Achilles allow Patroclus to wear his armor into battle? I think one important reason is that Patroclus asked him to. Achilles is doing a favor for a friend.

Reason #3: Achilles Values Glory, and He Wants Patroclus to Win Glory and Honor in Battle

Patroclus wants to win glory and honor in battle. When Nestor talked to Patroclus and wanted him to go into battle wearing Achilles' armor, he persuaded him by telling tales of how he (Nestor when he was young) won glory and honor as a young man in battle. Achilles wants his friend to win glory and honor in battle.

Reason #4: Achilles Still is Aware that He has Two Fates — and He Still Loves Life

Achilles still is aware that he has two fates. Much of his anger at Agamemnon may have disappeared, but Achilles has still rejected the pursuit of *kleos* and of *timê* (that is, Achilles has rejected success — at least, the success of a warrior). The prospect of a long life still has a healthy attraction for him.

• Which instructions does Achilles give to Patroclus?

Of course, Achilles does not want Patroclus to do more than keep the Trojans from setting fire to the Achaeans' ships and killing the Achaeans. He tells Patroclus three times not to take the war to Troy. (Patroclus ignores the order.) Apparently, Achilles' plan is for Patroclus to save the Achaeans, then for Achilles and Agamemnon to be reconciled (with Agamemnon giving him gifts and warm words), then for Achilles to win great glory and honor by defeating the Trojans.

Importantly, Achilles warns Patroclus *three times* not to carry the fight to Troy.

Achilles wants Patroclus to save the Achaean ships, but not to risk his life any more than that. Achilles says,

“[...] Even so, Patroclus,
 you must stave off disaster from the fleet.
 Go after them in force, they may fire those ships
 and rob us of the journey home we crave.
 Now, pay attention to what I tell you,
 about the goal I have in mind for you,
 so you’ll win me great honour and rewards,
 so all Danaans will send back to me
 that lovely girl and give fine gifts as well.
 Once you push the Trojans from the ships, come
 back.
 If Zeus, Hera’s mate, who loves his thunder,
 gives you the glory, don’t keep on battling
 those war-loving Trojans with me absent. [...]”

(Johnston 16.100-112)

Compare:

“Once you have whipped the enemy from the fleet
 you must come back, Patroclus.”

(Fagles 16.101-102)

Later:

“You must not, lost in the flush and fire of triumph,
slaughtering Trojans outright, drive your troops to
Troy — ”

(Fagles 16.107-08)

Still later:

“No, you must turn back —

soon as you bring the light of victory to the ships.

Let the rest of them cut themselves to pieces on the
plain!”

(Fagles 16.112-114)

Even though Achilles does not want the ships to be set on fire, he was angry at Agamemnon (and still does not like the way that Agamemnon treated him) and wants the Achaeans to lose without him, although he does not want the Achaeans to be totally annihilated. He is still concerned with his glory and wants at last to come out of his retirement and defeat the Trojans. He also does not want Patroclus to be hurt.

• While Achilles and Patroclus are talking, what is happening with Great Ajax and to the Achaean ships?

We see a contrast of Great Ajax and Achilles. While Achilles is refusing to fight, Ajax is fighting his heart out. He has been fighting a long time and is now being driven back. Homer sings about Great Ajax,

His left shoulder was worn out from always holding
up

his shining shield. But for all the onslaught with their
spears,

the Trojans couldn't budge him. Still, he was in trouble,

breathing heavily, sweat pouring down in rivulets
from every limb. He'd had no time for any rest.

In every way, his desperate plight was getting worse.

(Johnston 15.132-137)

Great Ajax, who is exhausted from fighting, is being driven back by the Trojans. It seems that the moment of Trojan victory has come.

Finally, the Trojans set fire to an Achaean ship. This event is so significant that Homer asks for help from the Muses in singing it:

Say, Muses, throned above the starry frame,
How first the navy blazed with Trojan flame?

(Pope pdf 305)

Compare:

[...] Sing to me now,
you Muses, you who first hold Olympus' vaulting
halls,

how fire was first pitched on Achaea's ships!

(Fagles 16.134-136)

Great Ajax, of course, has been fighting defensively very, very well. Hector, however, is finally able to stop Great Ajax by cutting off the head of his weapon, a pike. This forces Great Ajax back, and the Trojans are finally able to set fire to an Achaean ship:

Stern Hector waved his sword, and standing near,

Where furious Ajax plied his ashen spear,
 Full on the lance a stroke so justly sped,
 That the broad falchion lopp'd its brazen head;
 His pointless spear the warrior shakes in vain;
 The brazen head falls sounding on the plain.
 Great Ajax saw, and own'd the hand divine;
 Confessing Jove, and trembling at the sign,
 Warn'd he retreats. Then swift from all sides pour
 The hissing brands; thick streams the fiery shower;
 O'er the high stern the curling volumes rise,
 And sheets of rolling smoke involve the skies.

(Pope pdf 305-306)

All of us have seen the first *Terminator* movie when Arnold Schwarzenegger's character goes berserk in the police station. The police keep trying to kill the Terminator, which doesn't work. I have often wondered why the policemen don't simply shoot the Terminator's weapon, thus decreasing his killing power.

• **What does Achilles do when he sees the fire?**

At this moment, Achilles could go into battle himself, but he allows Patroclus to go into battle. Instead of going into the battle himself, Achilles urges Patroclus to finish putting on his (Achilles') armor and to hasten into the fight in his stead; Achilles also urges their own soldiers, the Myrmidons, to fight bravely.

Patroclus puts on Achilles' armor, but like other strong men, he is not strong enough to wield Achilles' spear. Patroclus

also drives Achilles' horses into battle. Three horses — one mortal and two immortal — pull Achilles' chariot. Zeus gave the two immortal horses to Achilles' father.

Achilles sees the fire and shouts at Patroclus,

“To arms — Patroclus, prince and master horseman!

I can see the blaze go roaring up the ships.

They *must* not destroy them. No escape-route then.

Quick, strap on my gear — I'll rouse the troops.”

(Fagles 16.152-155)

Compare:

“Up now,

divinely born Patroclus, master horseman.

In the ships I see destructive flames going up.

Trojans must not seize our ships and leave us

with no way to escape. Put armour on,

and quickly. I'll collect the soldiers.”

(Johnston 16.154-159)

Patroclus arms himself in Achilles' armor. He takes everything but Achilles' spear, which no man but Achilles is skilled and strong enough to use. This is a significant moment, and Homer pauses for the arming to allow us to grasp the significance of the moment. Because we see a hero arming himself, we know that he will fight well in the battle. Patroclus will have an *aristeia*.

Following this, Achilles addresses his troops, who will fight with Patroclus and who have been chafing at their inactivity.

Achilles, by the way, is well aware that his troops are angry at him. They have been saying about him, Achilles reports,

“[...] ‘Brutal son of Peleus —
 your mother nursed you on gall! Merciless, iron man
 —
 confining your own men to the ships against their
 will!’”

(Fagles 16.239-241)

Still, Achilles fires the Myrmidon troops up for battle:

“Well, here’s a tremendous work of battle, look,
 blazing before your eyes
 and just the sort you longed for all those days.
 So each man tense with courage — fight the Trojans
 down!”

(Fagles 16.245-248)

Compare:

“Now a great work of war awaits you,
 the sort of enterprise you used to love.
 So make sure each man’s heart is resolute,
 as you go to battle with these Trojans.”

(Johnston 16.249-252)

Achilles does love Patroclus and so he prays for his safety. Achilles gets out his cup, which he uses to pour wine out as an offering to Zeus. He prays for two things:

1) Patroclus to drive the Trojans away from the
 Achaean ships, and

2) Patroclus to return safely.

Zeus grants only the first prayer. Patroclus will drive the Trojans away from the Achaean ships, but he will not return safely.

• **How successful is Patroclus in battle?**

Patroclus is immediately successful in battle. This is his *aristeia*, his day of glory in battle.

Patroclus goes into battle wearing Achilles' armor, and at first the Trojans think that he is Achilles, which gives Patroclus an edge in battle. In addition, Patroclus is good enough a warrior to kill several Trojans.

Patroclus is so successful in battle that he ignores Achilles' warning to stop fighting once he has saved the Achaean ships from being set on fire by the Trojans. He continues to fight all the way to the gates of Troy. He also kills a minor Trojan hero: Sarpedon, who stated the Heroic Ethic in Book 12.

• **What is fate (*moira*)?**

Patroclus kills Sarpedon, the son of Zeus. Zeus loves his son, but Sarpedon is fated to die, and so Zeus is forced to allow him to die.

Moira is usually translated as fate. *Moira* means "share" or "portion" or "lot."

Moira in the *Iliad* means "share of life" or "portion of life." According to the Bible, the usual *moira* of human beings is three score and ten years, or 70 years. Of course, not everyone lives this long, and some people live longer.

In the *Iliad*, warriors' *moira* varies. Many warriors, of course, die on the battlefield, but other Achaean warriors will survive war and return home again. Warriors tend not to know in advance what their *moira* will be. They know that it

is possible that they will die on the battlefield, but they also know that it is possible that they will survive the war.

One way to look at *moira* is to say that it is what is bound to happen. Or better, with hindsight, we can say that it is what was bound to happen. When you are on your deathbed, you will know that it is your day to die, and you will then know that you were fated to die on this day.

The gods and goddesses have unusual abilities, of course. They know the fates of human beings in advance. Thetis knows that Achilles, her son, has two fates. Zeus knows that Sarpedon is fated to die in this battle. Zeus also knows that Patroclus will kill Sarpedon, Hector (with help) will kill Patroclus, and Achilles will kill Hector.

• How does Sarpedon die?

Patroclus kills Sarpedon.

In the *Iliad*, lots of killings occur, but very few major heroes are killed. Indeed, the only major figures to be killed are Patroclus and Hector. Even Sarpedon is only a minor hero. Homer has been faced with a problem, which he has solved: How do I come up with victims suitable for my heroes to kill, yet not kill off the major heroes? After all, the plot of the Trojan War was already known. Homer can't kill off Odysseus — Odysseus will live to return to his home island of Ithaca. Homer can't kill off Aeneas — Aeneas will survive the fall of Troy and travel west. We read about Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*, and we read about Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Homer has built up Sarpedon to be a worthy hero for Patroclus to kill. Sarpedon made the speech about the Heroic Ethic in Book 12, and he did a notable deed in battle when he tore down part of the Achaean Wall in Book 12.

Sarpedon sees the havoc that Patroclus is wreaking against the Trojans and their allies, and therefore Sarpedon decides to fight Patroclus:

When now Sarpedon his brave friends beheld
 Grovelling in dust, and gasping on the field,
 With this reproach his flying host he warms:
 “Oh stain to honour! oh disgrace to arms!
 Forsake, inglorious, the contended plain;
 This hand unaided shall the war sustain:
 The task be mine this hero’s strength to try,
 Who mows whole troops, and makes an army fly.”
 (Pope pdf 313)

Sarpedon decides to fight Patroclus, and of course Patroclus kills him.

• **Can the gods change a human’s fate?**

Although Patroclus kills Sarpedon, Zeus thinks about keeping Sarpedon — his son — alive. Zeus voices some lines that are important for understand fate.

We know Sarpedon, and we don’t want him to die. Zeus is Sarpedon’s father, and Zeus voices a feeling that all of us have: We grieve when our loved ones die:

“Alas, Sarpedon, dearest of all men,
 is fated now to die, killed by Patroclus,
 son of Menoetius. My heart’s divided,
 as I think this over. Should I snatch him up,
 while still alive and place him somewhere else,

in his rich land of Lycia, far distant
 from this wretched fighting, or have him killed,
 at the hands of Menoetius' son.”

(Johnston 16.508-515)

Patroclus is the son of Menoetius.

Zeus knows that Sarpedon is fated to die on this date; however, Zeus seems to be tempted to change Sarpedon's fate and to allow Sarpedon to live. Usually, it seems that gods and goddesses cannot change fate. Thetis can tell Achilles his two fates, but she does not seem to be able to change those fates. It seems that she would if she could because she loves Achilles, her son.

However, Zeus seems to be able to change Sarpedon's fate and allow him to live. Perhaps Zeus is simply more powerful than Thetis. Certainly, he is *the* major god, and she is a minor goddess.

Hera objects to Zeus saving Sarpedon, and she convinces Zeus not to alter Sarpedon's fate. Hera tells Zeus that if he saves Sarpedon against his fate, then the other (major) gods will do the same thing with their human children who are fated to die. She tells Zeus,

“if you send Sarpedon home, living still, beware!
 Then surely some other god will want to sweep
 His own son clear of the heavy fighting too.
 Look down. Many who battle round King Priam's
 Mighty walls are sons of the deathless gods —
 You will inspire lethal anger in them all.”

(Fagles 16.529-534)

Compare:

“If you send Sarpedon home alive,
 take care some other god does not desire
 to send his dear son from the killing zone.
 Around Priam’s great city, many men,
 sons of the immortals, are now fighting.
 You’ll enrage those gods and make them bitter.”
 (Johnston 16.523-528)

Hera wants Zeus to allow Sarpedon to be killed, and then to have his body taken home for a proper and respectful burial. Zeus does this.

Apparently, at least the major gods have the power to choose to change fate, but they agree not to. Apparently, changing fate would have bad consequences and would upset the natural order.

We should realize that these ancient Greek gods and goddesses are not like the Judeo-Christian God who is thought to be transcendent — to be outside the universe. These ancient Greek gods and goddesses are a part of the universe.

• **What happens to Sarpedon’s body?**

Patroclus kills Sarpedon, and a fight breaks out over his body. The Achaeans want to strip Sarpedon’s armor, and the Trojans wish to recover his body and his armor — that was Sarpedon’s dying wish to his friend Glaucus:

Then to the leader of the Lycian band
 The dying chief address’d his last command;

“Glaucus, be bold; thy task be first to dare
 The glorious dangers of destructive war,
 To lead my troops, to combat at their head,
 Incite the living, and supply the dead.
 Tell them, I charged them with my latest breath
 Not unrevenged to bear Sarpedon’s death.
 What grief, what shame, must Glaucus undergo,
 If these spoil’d arms adorn a Grecian foe!
 Then as a friend, and as a warrior fight;
 Defend my body, conquer in my right:
 That, taught by great examples, all may try
 Like thee to vanquish, or like me to die.”

(Pope pdf 315)

Eventually, Zeus causes the Trojans to fall into a panic and run to the gates of Troy — and Zeus sends Apollo to take care of Sarpedon:

“Up now,
 dear Phoebus, and move Sarpedon out of range.
 When you’ve cleaned the dark blood off his body,
 take him somewhere far away and wash him
 in a flowing river. Next, anoint him
 with ambrosia, and put immortal clothes
 around him. Then you must hand him over
 to those swift messengers Sleep and Death,

twin brothers, to carry off with them.

They'll quickly place him in his own rich land,
wide Lycia, where his brothers and his kinsmen
will bury him with mound and headstone,
as is appropriate for those who've died.”

(Johnston 16.776-788)

• **Which other death does Sarpedon's death prefigure?**

Homer uses comparison and contrast in his epic poem. The death and burial of Sarpedon is to be compared and contrasted with the death of Hector later. We resent the death of both heroes, and we are comforted by the tender treatment of the corpse of Sarpedon — tender treatment that the corpse of Hector will not receive.

• **When an important warrior such as Sarpedon dies, what are some things that can happen?**

Theme No. 1: Stripping of Armor

In some of the slayings of important warriors — the death of Sarpedon and the death of Patroclus — the enemy strip the dead warrior's armor from his body immediately after he is killed. The Achaeans succeed in stripping Sarpedon's armor off his corpse.

Theme No. 2: Fierce Fight for Corpse

Often, following the death of an important warrior is a fierce fight between the Greeks and the Trojans for possession of the corpse. The enemy wants the corpse so that they trade it for ransom or so that they can dishonor the corpse. The friends of the warrior want the corpse so that they can give it a proper burial.

Theme No. 3: Gods Protect the Body

In addition, the gods often protect the body. In the case of Sarpedon, Zeus has the twin gods Sleep and Death pick up Sarpedon's body carry it back to his home land of Lycia. There Sarpedon gets an honorable and decent burial.

All of these themes happen in the case of the death of Sarpedon, and they often happen with the death of other important warriors. However, sometimes a theme is missing. For example, warriors don't fight over the body of Hector.

• What kind of relationship do Achilles and Patroclus have, and what do you think will be Achilles' reaction to Patroclus' death?

Achilles and Patroclus are best friends.

Patroclus is a little older than Achilles, but Achilles has the power in the relationship, in part because of his birth.

We know that Achilles will take Patroclus' death hard.

They have a very close relationship, and Achilles will be very angry when Patroclus dies.

• How does Patroclus die, and what is your reaction to the way he is killed?

Glaucus realizes that Patroclus — not Achilles — killed Sarpedon. After Sarpedon dies, Glaucus says to Hector,

“There lies Sarpedon, lord of Lycia's shieldsmen,
who defended his realm with just decrees and power
—

Ares has cut him down with Patroclus' spear.”

(Fagles 16.635-637)

At first, the Trojans were fooled by Achilles' armor into thinking that Patroclus is Achilles, but in the close-up fighting, they have learned that the warrior is Patroclus. (The spear is a give-away — Patroclus is not strong enough to use Achilles' spear.)

Now that the Trojans realize that Patroclus — not Achilles — is fighting, they are more willing to meet Patroclus in battle. Of course, we remember that Patroclus has taken the fighting to the walls of Troy. This is a good place for the Trojans to rally, just as the Achaeans rallied when Hector knocked down the Achaean gate.

In the battle, Patroclus has much the same fault as Hector: Patroclus wants to charge forward. Just as Hector's courage is driving him to his death, so is Patroclus', as shown in this epic simile:

And he [Patroclus] leapt himself at the fighting
driver's corpse

with the rushing lunge of a lion struck in the chest
as he lays waste pens of cattle —

his own lordly courage about to be his death.

(Fagles 16.874-877)

Patroclus even tries three times to scale the walls of Troy, but he is unsuccessful. He stops trying to scale the walls of Troy when Apollo warns him off the attempt:

Now Troy had stoop'd beneath his matchless power,

But flaming Phoebus kept the sacred tower

Thrice at the battlements Patroclus strook;

His blazing Ægis thrice Apollo shook;

He tried the fourth; when, bursting from the cloud,
A more than mortal voice was heard aloud.

“Patroclus! cease; this heaven-defended wall
Defies thy lance; not fated yet to fall;
Thy friend, thy greater far, it shall withstand,
Troy shall not stoop even to Achilles’ hand.”

So spoke the god who darts celestial fires;
The Greek obeys him, and with awe retires.

(Pope pdf 320)

Finally, Patroclus is killed; however, he is not killed by just one warrior. Hector kills Patroclus, but he has the help of Apollo and a young Trojan warrior named Euphorbus. First Apollo comes up behind Patroclus and hits him and partially disarms him — Apollo knocks off Patroclus’ helmet, breastplate, and shield (cf. Fagles 16.916-934):

For lo! the god in dusky clouds enshrined,
Approaching dealt a staggering blow behind.
The weighty shock his neck and shoulders feel;
His eyes flash sparkles, his stunn’d senses reel
In giddy darkness; far to distance flung,
His bounding helmet on the champaign rung.
Achilles’ plume is stain’d with dust and gore;
That plume which never stoop’d to earth before;
Long used, untouch’d, in fighting fields to shine,
And shade the temples of the mad divine.

Jove dooms it now on Hector's helm to nod;
 Not long — for fate pursues him, and the god.
 His spear in shivers falls; his ample shield
 Drops from his arm: his baldric strows the field:
 The corslet his astonish'd breast forsakes:
 Loose is each joint; each nerve with horror shakes;
 Stupid he stares, and all-assistless stands:
 Such is the force of more than mortal hands!

(Pope pdf 322)

Euphorbus then spears Patroclus in the back, and Hector finishes off Patroclus with another spear.

Important warriors get to make a dying speech, and Patroclus points out to Hector that Hector did not manage to kill him by himself. Instead, it took a god and two Trojan warriors to kill him. Hector simply gave Patroclus the finishing blow.

We feel sympathy for the way that Patroclus dies. It was not a fair fight, since no mortal can withstand a god. We are supposed to be outraged by the way that Patroclus died. However, our anger cannot match Achilles' anger. Achilles was a friend to Patroclus, and Achilles also sent Patroclus into battle — to his death. Achilles will feel anger at Hector and the Trojans because of Patroclus' death — but he will also feel guilt.

We are angry at the way Patroclus died, and we are eager to see his death revenged at the hands of Achilles. According to E.T. Owen, writing in *The Story of the Iliad*:

Everyone must feel at this point only fierce desire to see him revenged. (163)

• **After Patroclus is mortally wounded but before he died, Patroclus makes a prophecy to Hector. What is that prophecy, and how does Hector respond?**

With his dying words, Patroclus makes a prophecy to Hector — Achilles will avenge him:

“Boast on, Hector, for the moment.

Zeus, son of Cronos, and Apollo

have given you victory. They overcame me

easily, for they personally removed

the armour from my shoulders. If twenty men

came to confront me, just like you,

all would have died, slaughtered by my spear.

But deadly fate and Leto’s son have slain me,

and Euphorbus. So you’re the third in line

at my death. But I’ll tell you something else,

bear this in mind, you’ll not live long yourself.

Your death is already standing close at hand,

a fatal power. For you’ll be destroyed

at brave Achilles’ hands, descendant of Aeacus.”

(Johnston 16.980-993)

In ancient Greek literature, a dying man has the gift of prophecy, the gift of being able to tell the future. At the end of Plato’s *Apology*, the philosopher Socrates has been condemned to death, and he tells the judge and jurors that since he is a condemned man, he has the gift of prophecy,

and he prophesies that his death will give Athens a bad reputation.

Therefore, Hector should respect Patroclus' dying words. Patroclus truly does have the gift of prophecy. However, Hector does not do that. Hector responds to Patroclus (after Patroclus dies):

“Why, Patroclus,
 why prophesy my doom, my sudden death? Who
 knows? —
 Achilles the son of sleek-haired Thetis may outrace
 me —
 struck by *my* spear first — and gasp away his life!”
 (Fagles 16.1006-1009)

Note the word “outraces.” It refers to an important event that occurs later.

Hector is an ordinary mortal, although he is a great warrior. He does not have special knowledge of the future. Therefore, he does not treat Patroclus' dying prophecy with the respect that it deserves. Instead, Hector is still hoping to win the Trojan War. So Hector believes that yes, Patroclus' prophecy may come true, but that perhaps it will not come true.

We know, of course, that Hector will die. Zeus has told us that. We also know it because we know the story of the Trojan War. Hector, however, does not know that.

Hector is human; Hector does not know his future fate.

Conclusion

In Book 17, the Achaeans and the Trojans battle to gain possession of the corpse of Patroclus.

**Chapter 17: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 17 — Menelaus'
Finest Hour / The Fight Over Patroclus**

• Why does Homer delay the delivery of the news of Patroclus' death to Achilles? What are the aesthetic purposes of Book 17?

What do we look forward to after Book 16, in which Patroclus is killed? What we look forward to, of course, is Achilles' hearing of Patroclus' death. However, Homer delays the announcement of Patroclus' death to Achilles for an entire book.

Why does Homer delay the announcement of Patroclus' death? What are the aesthetic purposes of Book 17?

- 1) The death of Patroclus is an important event, and to show that it is important, Homer shows the Achaeans and the Trojans fighting for Patroclus' body.
- 2) Homer believes in delaying important events. He believes that you can increase the audience's anticipation by delaying what they want to hear.
- 3) Some necessary preparation is being made here. In Book 18, Achilles will acquire new armor, including a magnificent shield, all of which will be made by the god of fire, Hephaestus. In order for that to happen, Patroclus' armor must be lost — taken by Hector.
- 4) The Trojans cannot capture the body of Patroclus. If the Trojans acquire Patroclus' body, Achilles will be forced to trade the body of Hector, after Achilles has killed him, for the body of Patroclus. Homer's aesthetic purposes require that Achilles keep the body of Hector.

5) In Book 17, Homer is preparing for Book 18, when Achilles rescues Patroclus' body himself. In Book 17, Homer shows that the battle for Patroclus' body is very hard fought. That is why Homer spends so many lines on that battle here. Only Achilles must save the body of Patroclus. If anyone else were to do that, the action would be aesthetically unsatisfying.

6) Everything that Patroclus has accomplished must be undone. Patroclus has driven back the Trojans to their city. In doing that, he has captured the plain in front of Troy. All of that territory must be lost so that Achilles can reconquer it. Achilles will be the one who finally saves the Achaeans and their ships. Only Achilles must do that. If anyone else were to do that, the action would be aesthetically unsatisfying.

In Book 17, Homer does what he usually does: amplify the action. Every time Homer describes a detail, he describes it as if it is the most important detail in the world. Homer never does things in halves — he pours forth his heart into whatever he is describing.

Homer has a very good way of describing battles. He describes scene after scene. Always we are observing individuals — fighting, encouraging their comrades, insulting the enemy. The multiplicity of scenes makes up a battle. Homer wants us to feel the battle, not just listen to it.

• **Which death we have seen earlier mirrors Patroclus' death?**

Patroclus' death mirrors the death of Sarpedon in Book 16. We see the same elements:

1) After Sarpedon died, a long struggle ensued to gain possession of his body. The same thing happens following the death of Patroclus. The struggle for the body and armor of Patroclus lasts longer because

Patroclus is a more important character than Sarpedon.

2) Sarpedon and Patroclus both make speeches after being mortally wounded. Sarpedon speaks to his friend Glaucus, and Patroclus speaks to Hector, who gave him his death blow.

Why does Homer do these things? Homer wants us to compare and contrast the deaths and the treatment of the corpses of Sarpedon and Patroclus — and later of Hector.

• Many of the major characters in the *Iliad* are out of action. Which characters does Homer have available to use in describing the fight over Patroclus' body?

In what way is Homer restricted in describing the battle for Patroclus' body? One restriction is in personnel. We have no mention of Agamemnon, Diomedes, or Odysseus in this book. Why? Because they are wounded and are back at the ships. Previously, they did come out to join the Achaean lines, but only to encourage their comrades as they defended the Achaean ships.

This leaves only Menelaus and Great Ajax as major Achaean heroes — Achilles, of course, is back at the ships. It is Menelaus and Great Ajax who bear the brunt of the fighting over Patroclus' body. In addition, the minor figure Antilochus plays an important role.

• How does Euphorbus die?

As Book 17 begins, Hector is trying to capture Achilles' horses, so Menelaus starts the defense of Patroclus' body. The first person whom he kills is Euphorbus, who had a hand in the killing of Patroclus. (Apollo hit Patroclus and disarmed him, Euphorbus injured Patroclus, and then Hector gave Patroclus his death blow.) Thus, it is fitting that Euphorbus die now.

From Book 16, we know a little bit about Euphorbus:

From close behind Euphorbus, son of Panthous,
 a Dardan warrior, hit him in the back,
 with a sharp spear between the shoulder blades.
 Euphorbus surpassed all men the same age as him
 in spear throwing, horsemanship, and speed on foot.
 He'd already knocked twenty men out of their
 chariots,
 and that was the first time he'd come with his own
 chariot
 to learn something of war. Euphorbus was the first
 to strike you, horseman Patroclus, but he failed
 to kill you. Pulling the spear out of Patroclus' flesh,
 Euphorbus ran back again to blend in with the throng.
 He didn't stand his ground, even though Patroclus
 had no weapons for a fight.

(Johnston 16.935-947)

Euphorbus is young, new at war, but he has been very successful in his first battle. He is now cocky, and willing to insult the seasoned warrior Menelaus by telling him to leave the corpse of Patroclus:

“Divinely raised Menelaus, son of Atreus,
 leader of men, go back. Leave this corpse.
 Abandon these battle trophies. No Trojan
 and no famous ally hit Patroclus

before I struck him with my spear
 in that murderous fight. So let the Trojans
 give me the honour and the fame. If not,
 I'll steal your sweet life with one spear throw.”

(Johnston 17.15-22)

Menelaus, however, realizes that Euphorbus is no match for him, and so he warns Euphorbus not to fight him. In addition, however, Menelaus tells Euphorbus that he — Menelaus — has killed Euphorbus’ brother Hyperenor — see Fagles 14.603:

The Trojan thus: the Spartan monarch burn’d
 “Yet ’twas but late, beneath my conquering steel
 This boaster’s brother, Hyperenor, fell;
 Against our arm which rashly he defied,
 Vain was his vigour, and as vain his pride.
 These eyes beheld him on the dust expire,
 No more to cheer his spouse, or glad his sire.
 Presumptuous youth! like his shall be thy doom,
 Go, wait thy brother to the Stygian gloom;
 Or, while thou may’st, avoid the threaten’d fate;
 Fools stay to feel it, and are wise too late.”

(Pope pdf 325)

Compare:

“Go back to your own rank and file, I tell you!

Don't stand up against me — or you will meet your death.

Even a fool learns something once it hits him.”

(Fagles 17.34-36)

This infuriates Euphorbus, he attacks Menelaus, and Menelaus kills him. In Homer's description of Euphorbus' death, we get a glimpse of his youth — and his youthful attention to his hair:

The spear point drove straight through Euphorbus' soft neck.

He fell with a thud, his armour clanging round him.

His hair, as lovely as the fine curls on the Graces, with braids in gold and silver clips, were soaked in blood.

(Johnston 17.64-67)

Many of us older guys don't pay as much attention to our hair as the younger guys do. I don't know why. (Maybe it's because so many older guys, including me, are bald.)

• What is your opinion of the simile that Homer uses to describe Euphorbus' corpse: Fagles 17.59-68?

Homer uses a simile that expresses regret at the loss of young Euphorbus:

Just as a man tends a flourishing olive shoot,
in some lonely place with a rich source of water,
a lovely vigorous sapling stirred with the motion
of every breeze, so it bursts out in white blossoms,
but then a sudden stormy wind arising rips it

from its trench and lays it out prone on the earth,
 that's how Menelaus, son of Atreus, cut down
 Panthous' son, Euphorbus of the fine ash spear.
 He then began to strip the armour off.

(Johnston 17.68-76)

• **How does Hector acquire Achilles' armor?**

Hector arrives on the scene, and Menelaus is forced to retreat, knowing that now the Trojans will attack. Hector takes Patroclus' armor and starts to send it back to Troy. Menelaus then gets Great Ajax to help, and it is the Trojans' turn to retreat.

At this time, Glaucus becomes furious at Hector. Glaucus is afraid that Sarpedon's body has been taken to the Achaean camp (but we know that Zeus has told Apollo to take Sarpedon's body to Lycia), and Glaucus wants the Trojans to take Patroclus' body. (That way, a trade of bodies can be arranged later.) Glaucus tells Hector,

“How can you rescue a lesser warrior
 from the thick of battle, ungrateful man,
 when Sarpedon, once your companion,
 your guest, you abandon to the Argives,
 to become their battle spoils, their trophy.
 He often served you well, both your city
 and you personally, while he was alive.”

(Johnston 17.191-197)

Hector strips Achilles' armor from Patroclus' corpse.

• **What are the reasons why Hector strips Achilles' armor from Patroclus' corpse?**

Hector strips Achilles' armor from Patroclus' corpse for a number of reasons:

- 1) This is a demonstration of superiority over the dead warrior: I am a better warrior than you, and I can strip your armor from you after killing you.
- 2) The armor is valuable. It is worth many oxen.
- 3) Stripping the armor from a dead warrior results in more *kleos* and *timê*.
- 4) Achilles' armor is magnificent.

• **What does Hector do with Achilles' armor?**

When Glaucus taunts him, Hector puts on Achilles' armor before fighting again.

Not only does Hector decide to fight Menelaus and Great Ajax, but first he puts on Achilles' armor (it has not yet arrived in Troy). Why? To flaunt in the face of Menelaus and Great Ajax that he has killed Patroclus. However, when Hector puts on Achilles' armor, Zeus reminds us of what will happen to Hector.

• **Why does Zeus pity Hector?**

Zeus, in Book 17, looking down over the field of battle, sees Hector putting on Achilles' armor and says,

“You poor wretch,
 you're not considering your own death at all,
 it's getting closer. So you're putting on
 the immortal armour of the finest man,

who makes other men afraid. You've just killed
 his comrade, a kind, courageous man,
 and then vainly stripped the armour off
 his head and shoulders. But for the moment,
 I'll give you great power, to compensate you,
 since you'll not be coming back from battle,
 or handing over to Andromache
 the glorious armour of the son of Peleus."

(Johnston 17.259-270)

Hector's death is sealed because of his killing of Patroclus, but the taking of the armor emphasizes that Hector has killed Patroclus. Zeus feels pity for Hector because he knows that Hector will soon be killed by Achilles, so Zeus resolves to allow Hector to win great *kleos* for the rest of the day, until the sun sets.

• **Does Achilles know that Patroclus is dead?**

We are reminded that Achilles does not yet know of Patroclus' death:

Achilles in his ships at distance lay,
 Nor knew the fatal fortune of the day;
 He, yet unconscious of Patroclus' fall,
 In dust extended under Ilion's wall,
 Expects him glorious from the conquered plain,
 And for his wish'd return prepares in vain;
 Though well he knew, to make proud Ilion bend

Was more than heaven had destined to his friend.
 Perhaps to him: this Thetis had reveal'd;
 The rest, in pity to her son, conceal'd.
 (Pope pdf 334)

• How do Achilles' immortal horses react to Patroclus' death?

The next important incident involves Achilles' horses, which are standing still, mourning Patroclus' death. (Patroclus was their usual driver.)

This is an extraordinary scene, and the horses are extraordinary horses. The horses mourn Patroclus, and Zeus talks about the horses.

What is extraordinary about the horses is that they are immortal. These are two horses that will never die. Achilles' immortal horses are like the horses depicted on some Greek grave monuments. These horses have their heads drooping down, and the horses weep tears:

Meantime, at distance from the scene of blood,
 The pensive steeds of great Achilles stood:
 Their godlike master slain before their eyes,
 They wept, and shared in human miseries.
 In vain Automedon now shakes the rein,
 Now plies the lash, and soothes and threats in vain;
 Nor to the fight nor Hellespont they go,
 Restive they stood, and obstinate in woe:
 Still as a tombstone, never to be moved,

On some good man or woman unreproved
 Lays its eternal weight; or fix'd, as stands
 A marble courser by the sculptor's hands,
 Placed on the hero's grave. Along their face
 The big round drops coursed down with silent pace,
 Conglobing on the dust. Their manes, that late
 Circled their arched necks, and waved in state,
 Trail'd on the dust beneath the yoke were spread,
 And prone to earth was hung their languid head:
 (Pope pdf 334-335)

• What is Zeus's opinion of the human condition: Eagles 17.509-516 / Johnston 17.548-554? (The human condition is that we are mortal and we will eventually die and we know that we will die.)

Zeus' words to Achilles' immortal horses express what Zeus thinks about the human condition. The human condition is that we are mortal, and for us death is not optional. We know that we will die.

Zeus pities the horses, and he pities Hector. Zeus says,

"Poor creatures, why did we give you to King Peleus,
 a mortal doomed to death ...
 you immortal beasts who never age or die?
 So you could suffer the pains of wretched men?
 There is nothing alive more agonized than man
 of all that breathe and crawl across the earth."

(Fagles 17.511-516)

Compare:

“Poor horses!

Why did we give you to king Peleus,
a mortal man, for you’re immortal, ageless?

Was it so you’d experience sorrow
among unhappy men? For the truth is this,
of all the things which breathe or move on earth,
nothing is more miserable than man.”

(Johnston 17.548-554)

Note: “Poor creatures” is similar to what Zeus called Hector recently: “Poor soldier” (Fagles 17.230).

Zeus’ comment on human mortality shows that he sees no advantage in the human condition. To be a human being and know that you are mortal is to be wretched — to be miserable.

• **Why does Zeus say, “There is nothing alive more agonized than man /of all that breathe and crawl across the earth” (Fagles 17.515-516)? (Cf. Johnston 17.553-554.)**

We can ask: What is going on here?

The Homeric world-scheme has three different kinds of living, sentient entities: immortal gods, mortal humans, and animals, which are usually mortal.

Gods are immortal and ageless forever. Gods are born, then they age until they reach a certain point, and then they stop aging. Zeus and Poseidon are mature men. Apollo and

Hermes are young men. They will be that way forever. Gods will never die, and they are aware that human beings will die. Death is not optional for human beings.

Gods are immortal and ageless forever. Gods know about death. Certainly they know the reality of death for humans and for animals, but gods themselves are immune to death. Gods do not die.

Animals, of course, are mortal. Chances are, animals are not aware that they are mortal. Animals can be aware of danger, and animals feel pain, but I doubt that they know that they are mortal and I doubt that they think about it. Animals are usually considered of less value than human beings.

Humans are the only living creatures who are both mortal and know that they are mortal. All of us know that one day we will die.

Zeus believes that we are more wretched than animals because of our knowledge of mortality. Because animals do not know that they will die, they are better off than human beings are. We human beings are more wretched because we know that we will die one day, and we know that all of our loved ones will also die one day.

These immortal horses are very strange creatures. They are animals, but they are also immortal. This combination is not something that we see in ordinary life.

• Do we have to agree with Zeus's opinion of the human condition?

Homer shows us what it means to be human:

- 1) To be human is to be mortal.
- 2) To be human is to know that we will die.

Zeus thinks that this combination of qualities makes us humans more wretched than Achilles' immortal horses. According to Zeus, to be a human being is to be wretched.

We do not have to agree with Zeus. Because we are mortal, we can make the choice to give up our lives for other people. This is something that police officers and firefighters and other heroes do daily. To be human is to have the opportunity to be a hero.

Of course, Patroclus has been a hero. Achilles has been wavering about whether he should go back home or stay to fight. Because of his indecision, he let Patroclus wear his armor and fight in his place instead of fighting himself — and of course, once the ship had been set on fire, Achilles could have begun to fight again. Patroclus fought bravely and fought well, and he saved the Greek ships from being set on fire. However, he was killed. In other words, Patroclus gave up his life to save the lives of his friends.

Gods are immortal. They cannot give up their lives to help another being. Gods are incapable of that kind of heroism.

Zeus pities Achilles' immortal horses — and he tells us (and the horses) what will happen:

“But I will fill your legs and hearts with strength
 so you can save Automedon, bear him from the
 fighting
 back to the fleet. For still I will give the Trojans glory
 —
 killing all the way to the benched ships till the sun
 sinks
 and the blessed darkness sweeps across the earth.”

(Fagles 15.521-525)

Hector is having his day of glory; it is not yet over. The horses drive away with Automedon, who has trouble controlling them.

Because human beings are mortal, the decisions that we make are important. We have only a limited amount of time to live, and what we choose to do with that time is important. If we waste 10 years watching TV, we will never get that 10 years back.

A god can watch TV for 1,000 years and still have eternity to do something important.

As a young man, choreographer George Balanchine nearly died and so he believed in living his life day by day and not holding anything back. He would tell his dancers, “Why are you stingy with yourselves? Why are you holding back? What are you saving for — for another time? There are no other times. There is only now. Right now.” Throughout his career, including before he became world renowned, he worked with what he had, not complaining about wanting a bigger budget or better dancers. One of the pieces of advice Mr. Balanchine gave over and over was this: “Do it now.”

Of course, the most important decision that a human being makes is to choose whether to be a good person or a bad person.

• Why is the fight over Patroclus’ body so important? Why is burial so important to the ancient Greeks?

The fight over Patroclus’ body is important for the Lycians, the Trojans, and the Achaeans.

Glaucus, a Lycian, wants the Trojans to capture Patroclus’ body because it can be used to ransom the corpse of Sarpedon. (The reader knows that Zeus ordered that Sarpedon’s body be sent back to Lycia and given an honorable burial, but Glaucus does not know that. He thinks

that the Achaeans have Sarpedon's corpse.) Sometimes, the body of an important enemy can be used to ransom the body of an important warrior on your side. Sometimes, a corpse can be ransomed for valuables.

Hector would like to have the corpse of Patroclus. Glaucus has shamed him into going after the body by saying that unless Hector and the Trojans fight to gain the corpses of important allies, the allies will not care to fight for the Trojans anymore.

The Achaeans want Patroclus' body so that they can give it back to Achilles. They know that Achilles will mourn the death of his friend — and will fight once more so that he can avenge his friend's death. They also know that Achilles will want to give his friend's body a proper burial.

Burial is a main reason to recover the corpse. If the enemy wants to, the enemy can disrespect the corpse of an important enemy. We read references about dogs and birds eating corpses; this ties into the importance of burial.

According to the ancient Greeks, burial is important because without a proper burial, you cannot cross the River Styx into Hades. And if you are dead, Hades is the proper place for you and is where your soul desperately wants to go. If, on the other hand, you don't have a proper burial, then you have to wait 100 years to get into Hades. Sometimes, the enemy threatens to allow a corpse to be eaten by dogs and birds. This condemns the soul to a kind of purgatory for 100 years. This wait is horrible for a soul.

Note: The figure of 100 years comes from Virgil's *Aeneid*, which of course was written hundreds of years after the *Iliad* was created. We find out that unburied people have to wait 100 years before they can be ferried across the River Styx by Charon and enter the Underworld. Apparently, after 100

years their bones will be buried by natural forces. Here is this important passage, which is spoken by Palinurus:

“And no spirits may be conveyed
 across the horrendous banks and hoarse, roaring
 flood
 until their bones are buried, and they rest in peace ...
 A hundred years they wander, hovering around these
 shores
 till at last they may return and see once more the
 pools
 they long to cross.”

(Fagles, *Aeneid* 6.371-376)

• **How are things set in motion for Achilles to hear of the death of Patroclus?**

Great Ajax has been looking for a messenger to Achilles, but he has not been able to find a good one in part because of the fog that Zeus has sent. Great Ajax says,

“[...] I wish
 some comrade would report back quickly
 to Peleus’ son, for I don’t think he’s learned
 the dreadful news of his dear comrade’s death.
 But I can’t see any Argive who could do that.
 Men and horses are all shrouded in this mist.
 Father Zeus, rescue these Achaean sons
 from this fog, make the sky clear, let us see
 with our own eyes. Since it gives you pleasure,

kill us, but do [it] in the light of day.”

(Johnston 17.780-789)

The ancient Greeks definitely believed in momentum. First the battle favors one side, then it favors the other.

Zeus hears Ajax and lifts the cloud, and Ajax sends Menelaus to look for Antilochus — the messenger to be sent to Achilles. Menelaus is loathe to leave the body of Patroclus and reminds his comrades of what a fine person Patroclus was:

“You two Ajaxes,
 Argive leaders, and you, Meriones,
 let each man bear in mind the kindnesses
 of poor Patroclus, who, when he was alive,
 knew how to treat every man with care.
 Now fatal death has overtaken him.”

(Johnston 17.814-819)

Homer frequently reminds us of how good a man Patroclus was because he wants us to pity the death of Patroclus. Now someone is being sought to carry the news to Achilles that Patroclus is dead — a result of Achilles allowing him to enter the battle while wearing Achilles’ armor. This is not the kind of news that one wants to carry to a friend.

Earlier, in Book 15, we learned from Menelaus that Antilochus is fast:

“None of the younger troops, Antilochus, none
 is faster of foot than you or tougher in combat —
 why not leap right in and lay some Trojan out?”

(Fagles 15.660-662)

Antilochus' speed makes him a good choice to carry the news to Achilles.

Menelaus finds Antilochus, and Antilochus runs off to deliver the message to Achilles. However, will Achilles be able to help? After all, he has no armor — Hector is wearing it. Meanwhile Menelaus returns to the body of Patroclus, where he tells Great Ajax,

“I’ve sent Antilochus to our fast ships,
to swift Achilles. Still, I don’t expect
he’ll come out now, no matter how enraged
he is with godlike Hector. He can’t fight
at all against the Trojans without armour.
But now we should consider for ourselves
the best thing we should do, so we’ll be able
to haul off the corpse and leave this Trojan tumult,
escaping our own death and our destruction.”

(Johnston 17.863-871)

This shows that the myth of Thetis trying to make the baby Achilles immortal by holding one of his heels and dipping him into a magic pool is not used by Homer. Achilles needs armor if he is to fight.

• What is the situation of the Achaeans at the end of Book 17?

Telamonian Ajax orders Menelaus and Meriones to pick up Patroclus' body and start carrying it to the Achaean ships. This is an appropriate order because Great Ajax is a better

fighting man than Menelaus. The two Ajaxes will fight off the Trojans while Menelaus and Meriones carry Patroclus' body.

The Achaeans are now being routed by the Trojans, as we see at the end of this book:

But Trojans kept up their pursuit,
 especially two of them, Aeneas, Anchises' son,
 and glorious Hector. Just as a flock of daws or
 starlings
 flies off in screaming fear, once they see a falcon
 as it comes after them, bringing death to all small
 birds,
 that's how the young Achaean soldiers then ran off,
 away from Hector and Aeneas, screaming in panic,
 forgetting all their fierce desire for battle.
 As Danaans fled, plenty of fine weapons fell
 around the ditch. But there was no let up in the war.
 (Johnston 17.913-922)

Most of what Patroclus did has been reversed. The Trojans are winning now.

• **An Important Note**

For more information about the gods in the *Iliad*, read Elizabeth Vandiver's "The Role of the Gods" in her *The Iliad of Homer*, pp. 101-111, to which I am obviously greatly indebted in this discussion guide.

• How do the gods reiterate some of the most important underlying narrative themes of the *Iliad*?

One of the functions of the gods is to reiterate some of the most important underlying narrative themes of the *Iliad*.

The humans have difficulties, and often the gods have the same difficulties. For example, Agamemnon and Achilles have a power struggle that begins in Book 1. In addition, Zeus and Poseidon have a power struggle in Book 15. Agamemnon and Achilles have a quarrel in Book 1; Zeus and Hera have a quarrel in Book 1.

However, one of the most important things that the gods do is to provide a contrast to human beings. Humans are, of course, mortal, while the gods and goddesses are immortal. This is an important contrast. The *Iliad* closely examines the human condition, and the gods help put a focus on the human condition by themselves being immortal.

One important function of the gods is to form a contrast to the human beings. The gods are immortal; the human beings are mortal. Human beings are capable of heroism; because they are mortal, they have the possibility of risking their lives to save other people. The gods are not capable of heroism; because they are immortal, they do NOT have the possibility of risking their lives to save other people.

We have just seen Patroclus give up his life in order to save his fellow Achaean warriors. This is an act of heroism that the gods are not capable of doing. Even if the gods wanted to give their lives in order to help mortals, they cannot because the gods are immortal and cannot die.

• Are the gods sometimes awe-inspiring? Are the gods sometimes petty?

Sometimes, the gods are awe-inspiring. I think that when Zeus holds a scale in his hand to weigh the fates of two

opposing warriors or two opposing armies, then he is awe inspiring.

More often, the gods seem to be petty and even humorous. We can think of Zeus being tricked by Hera, who seduces him so that he will go to sleep and not pay attention to the battle on the Trojan plain. Zeus and Hera bicker continually, and Zeus often threatens to physically punish Hera. We can think of Hera as a jealous wife and as a battered wife.

The human beings in the *Iliad* can be petty, as Agamemnon is when he takes Briseis away from Achilles in Book 1. However, time after time we see the Homeric warriors engage in acts of bravery.

• **Are the gods good parents?**

The gods are capable of loving their children. Clearly, Thetis loves Achilles, her son, and does not want him to die an early death. Clearly, Zeus does not want Sarpedon, his son, to die.

At other times, however, the gods and goddesses don't care for their children as much as a mortal parent would.

When Zeus hears that Thetis will give birth to a son that is greater than his father, he doesn't want anything to do with her. Mortal fathers such as Hector want their sons to be greater men than they (the fathers) are.

Aphrodite does not behave heroically for long when she tries to rescue Aeneas, her son. Diomedes inflicts a minor wound on her wrist, and she drops her son and flees, although she is immortal and her injury will soon heal. She doesn't pay attention to the most important thing: saving the life of her son.

Hera threw her infant son, Hephaestus, from Mount Olympus because he was born crippled:

“Thetis (replied the god) our powers may claim,

An ever-dear, an ever-honour'd name!
 When my proud mother hurl'd me from the sky,
 (My awkward form, it seems, displeas'd her eye,)"
 (Pope pdf 352)

Certainly, Hector and Andromache are much better parents than the gods are.

• What are the gods like according to the view of the human characters in the *Iliad*?

The human characters of the *Iliad* see the gods as being awe-inspiring. The human beings pray to the gods and give sacrifices to the gods. Odysseus prays to Athena in Book 10 when he and Diomedes go out on a night raid. The human characters see the gods as being dangerous beings whom one needs to be very careful not to offend. In the Judgment of Paris, Paris offended two goddesses when he did not choose them as being the most beautiful female. A beauty contest may seem petty to us, but a war arises because of this beauty contest.

• What are the gods like according to the view of the audience of the *Iliad*?

Homer's audience, however, has a different view of the gods and goddesses. We get to see the gods behind the scenes — on Mount Olympus, for instance. From our point of view, the gods are shallow, petty, and comic relief. They often do silly things.

Ares is an immortal god fighting on a battlefield of mortals, and he complains to Zeus after Diomedes wounds him.

The gods fight with one another, often over petty things. In Book 21, the gods will fight a battle, and it will be comic, in great contrast to the serious fighting going in the Trojan War.

A good example of the pettiness of the gods is Hera's seduction of Zeus in Book 14.

• Why are the gods portrayed this way in the *Iliad*? What can human beings do that the gods cannot?

The obvious question is this: Why does the *Iliad* present this double view of the gods? What does the epic gain from the apparent pettiness of its divinities? In the *Odyssey*, Homer does not portray the gods as being this silly or petty.

Homer wants his audience to contrast human beings and the gods. Humans are mortal; the gods are immortal. Humans can be seriously wounded, and they can die. The gods cannot be seriously wounded, and they cannot die.

Most important of all, human beings are capable of sacrificing their lives for other people. They are capable of altruism, and they are capable of nobility. A human being can be a hero.

Altruism is unselfishness and concern for other people. Being noble means having a high moral character. Heroism is courage combined with selflessness.

A god cannot sacrifice his or her life for another god or for a human being. Gods are incapable of being killed. The gods are incapable of doing the good deeds that human beings are capable of. A soldier can throw him- or herself on a grenade in order to save his or her fellow warriors. Aphrodite would never do that, even though she is immortal and would not die. Human beings do that although they know that they will die.

Of course, human beings can be cowards, but they have the opportunity to choose. A human being can choose to be a coward or to be a hero.

If a god cannot die, can a god exhibit courage? Courage is being afraid that you will be seriously hurt or die, yet doing what has to be done to save another human being.

• Do you know of any instances in which a human hero risked his or her life to save someone else's life? Can a god show that kind of courage?

This is quoted from my book *The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 4*:

In Oak Park, California, on December 22, 1994, a fire broke out at a residence. The Sacramento Fire Department received an alarm at about 1:30 a.m. and hurried to the scene. When the fire fighters arrived at the burning house, they immediately heard, "There's a baby inside! You've got to help!" The baby was named Daishna, and she was only 23 months old. Captain Tim Adams went to the window of the room where the baby was supposed to be, and he looked inside. Immediately, he thought, "There's no way there's anybody alive in there!" He was wrong — he heard the baby scream. Captain Adams crawled inside the room without his SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus) because he had no time to get it. He got on the floor and crawled forward through the smoke toward the screams. Eventually, he reached out a hand through the smoke and his fingers went in the baby's mouth. He grabbed Daishna and headed back to the window and jumped out before the room was totally engulfed in flames. Daishna received treatment at the UC Davis Medical Center, and after two days she was released. For saving Daishna's life, Captain Adams received the Gold Medal of Valor. His father, Ernest Adams, had won the same medal in 1963 for saving the lives of three children inside a

burning apartment building. (Source: Sandra Markle, *Rescues!*, pp. 49-55.)

Captain Adams could have died in that fire, yet he chose to go into that smoke- and fire-filled room without a self-contained breathing apparatus because a baby was screaming and was in danger of dying. Captain Adams is a hero because he risked his life to save that baby.

Now suppose that Zeus comes along and hears that baby screaming. Being in a good mood, Zeus rescues the baby. Did Zeus act as heroically as Captain Adams did? After all, the result is the same: The baby is saved. No, Zeus did not act as heroically as Captain Adams. Captain Adams risked his life; all Zeus gave up was a small amount of time.

In the *Iliad*, human beings can be heroes and give up their lives for their fellow man, as Patroclus did when he beat the Trojans back from the Achaean ships. The gods are not capable of such heroism.

The major theme of the *Iliad* is the human condition and what it means to be human. The contrast of mortal human beings with the immortal gods shows what it means to be human.

Here is another example of heroism that is quoted from my book *The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 4*:

In the winter of 1995, the weather was so cold that over four inches of ice formed on a small lake in Indiana, making it safe to walk on. However, a few warm days in February melted some of the ice, making it dangerous to walk on. Unfortunately, 12-year-old Josh Mitchell didn't realize that, and he decided to take a short cut to a friend's house by walking across the semi-frozen lake. He fell through the ice, and a dog named Levi, the pet of Denise and George Hammond, saw him and started whining.

George heard the whining, investigated, and saw Josh floundering in the icy water. He ordered, “Levi, fetch!” Levi ran out onto the lake, jumped into the water, and allowed Josh to hold on to him. Meanwhile, George and Denise brought Levi’s 20-foot leash out to the lake and tried to throw it to Josh, but the leash was too short. Because she didn’t know how long Levi could keep Josh afloat, Denise went out on to the ice, knowing that although she weighed less than her husband, she would probably fall through the ice. In fact, she did fall through the ice four feet away from Josh. She kept breaking the ice until she could reach Josh, then she kept him afloat. George called Levi, and Levi came out of the water. Two neighbors brought an extension ladder out to the lake and pushed it to where Denise and Josh were. Denise pushed Josh up on the ladder and then climbed up on the ladder herself. The ladder distributed their weight across a large area of the ice so that they didn’t fall through, and they reached the shore. Denise fainted when she reached the shore, but paramedics took care of her and Josh and took them to the hospital, where they quickly recovered from their ordeal. Of course, Josh and his parents were grateful to Levi and the Hammonds, and they sent them gifts: bones for Levi, a big bouquet of flowers for Denise, and a gift certificate to be used at a pet store. (Source: Jeanne Betancourt, *Ten True Animal Rescues*, pp. 38-46.)

The book *The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds: Volume 4* is a free download. Search for it on the Web.

Conclusion to Book 17

Book 17 prepares for the return of Achilles — something we have been waiting for since Book 1. Achilles will have a

hand in the rescue of Patroclus' body, then he will avenge Patroclus' death.

Chapter 18: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 18 — The Shield of Achilles / The Arms of Achilles

• What is the crucial turning point in the *Iliad*?

The crucial turning point in the *Iliad* is the death of Patroclus because that event motivates Achilles to return to battle.

After hearing of the death of Patroclus, Achilles' anger turns from Agamemnon and is focused on Hector. Achilles is still angry, but his anger has turned toward Hector and he now wants to kill Hector.

When Achilles returns to battle, he has no interest in *timê*. Agamemnon gives him the gifts he promised, but Achilles cares nothing for the gifts. Because Patroclus is dead, Achilles is motivated only by his desire to kill Hector.

• What effect does Patroclus' death have on Achilles?

Achilles reacts to news of the death of Patroclus by being overwhelmed with grief, and then by being overwhelmed with a desire to kill Hector.

What happens when Antilochus finds Achilles? Achilles is in his camp, worrying about Patroclus. He hears the Trojan army near the Achaean ships again, and he is afraid that Patroclus must be dead. Antilochus finds him and in three short lines tells Achilles what has happened to Patroclus:

“Patroclus has fallen. They're fighting over his corpse.

He's stripped, naked — Hector with that flashing helmet,

Hector has your arms!”

(Fagles 18.21-23)

Usually, Homer takes his time in reporting facts. Here, in three short lines, the news is related to Achilles. Why? For one thing, when you want to emphasize something, you can put it in short sentences, surrounded by longer sentences. For another, the short sentences are almost like being struck with a fist. In his *The Story of the Iliad*, E.T. Owen writes,

These brief, sharp sentences reproduce for *us* the effect of the news on Achilles. Put thus, we, though we already know the facts, get the effect of a sudden, stunning blow. (174)

The effect on Achilles is immediate. He grieves the way the ancient Greeks grieved. He falls to the ground, grabs dirt with both hands and pours it over his head. He also tears his hair with both hands:

Compare:

Overpowered in all his power, sprawled in the dust,
Achilles lay there, fallen ...
tearing his hair, defiling it with his own hands.

(Fagles 18.28-30)

• When Achilles falls to the ground after hearing of the news of Patroclus' death, which contrasts of opposites do we see?

In this scene, there is a contrast of opposites. Achilles' face is handsome, yet he makes it ugly by pouring dust on it. Achilles is the most powerful warrior in the Trojan War, yet he lies grieving on the ground. Achilles' grief is extreme, as we knew it would be. (Achilles' wrath was extreme; so is his grief.) The death of Patroclus will turn Achilles into a killing machine as he goes forth to avenge his friend's death.

From now on, Achilles is portrayed as though he were dead. We will see this over and over. Of course, Achilles is going to die. He has made his decision and chosen the fate that leads to an early death. It is as if when Patroclus died, Achilles died with him.

For example, when Achilles collapses out of grief for the dead Patroclus, Homer describes Achilles as if he were a dead hero. When Achilles lies stretched out on the ground, Homer uses a verb that he uses elsewhere only to refer to dead heroes stretched out on the ground. Elizabeth Vandiver points out that when Homer uses this Greek verb to describe Achilles, that is the only time in the *Iliad* that Homer uses that verb to describe a person who is still alive (*The Iliad of Homer* 149-150).

• **How do the women in the Achilles' camp react to the death of Patroclus?**

The women in Achilles' camp join in the mourning:

The women slaves acquired as battle trophies
by Achilles and Patroclus, hearts overwhelmed
with anguish, began to scream aloud. They rushed
outside
and beat their breasts around warlike Achilles.

(Johnston 18.34-37)

The women are following an ancient Greek custom of beating their breasts when they mourn.

• **How does Thetis react to the death of Patroclus?**

At this point, Achilles gives a great mourning cry that is heard by his mother, Thetis. Thetis mourns and her fellow Nereids (sea-nymphs) join the mourning. There is mirroring here. Achilles mourns, and Thetis mourns. The women in

Achilles' camp mourn, and the nymphs in the sea mourn by beating their breasts. This is an important event, and the emotions that occur in the realm of humans are echoed in the realm of gods and goddesses.

Thetis says to her sister sea-nymphs:

“Sister Nereids, listen,
so all of you, hearing what I say,
will understand my heart's enormous sorrow.
Alas, for my unhappy misery,
that to my grief I bore the best of men.
For when I gave birth to a fine strong boy
to be an excellent heroic warrior,
when he'd grown as tall as some young sapling,
for I'd raised him like a lovely orchard tree,
I sent him out in the beaked ships to Ilion,
to war against the Trojans. But now,
I'll never welcome him back home again,
returning to the house of Peleus.
While he's alive and sees the sunlight,
he lives in sorrow. When I go to him,
I can provide no help. But I shall go
to look on my dear child, to hear what grief
has overtaken him while he remains
detached from all the fighting.”

(Johnston 18.60-78)

Actually, Thetis and the sea-nymphs are mourning for both Achilles and Patroclus. Patroclus is dead. Achilles will revenge Patroclus by killing Hector. Soon after Hector's death, Achilles will die.

• **Thetis mourns Achilles as if he were already dead.**

When Thetis comes out of the sea to mourn with Achilles, it is as if she is mourning an already dead Achilles.

Achilles lies stretched out on the ground, and Thetis comes and holds his head in her arms.

Thetis' actions and words are indicative of a woman mourning a dead male, in this case the still-living Achilles. This is an image from ancient Greek art. The ancient Greeks would carve a *bas* (pronounced ba) *relief* that showed a woman holding the head of a man who is lying down. That work of art shows a woman mourning a fallen warrior. The fallen warrior is the man whose head she is cradling in her arms.

Thetis is grieving for Patroclus, I think, but mainly she is grieving for Achilles, her son. Thetis says that she is "mother of grief and greatness" (Fagles 18.62), translated from *dusaristotokeia*, a Greek word that is pronounced "do-sa-rees-to-keye-a," which Elizabeth Vandiver translates as "unhappy in the best of childbearing" (*The Iliad of Homer* 150). Thetis is unhappy because Achilles, her beloved son, will soon die.

• **Achilles chooses between his two fates. Which fate does Achilles choose?**

Achilles makes his choice between his two possible fates. He can stay in Troy, fight and die, and win unending *kleos*, or he can go home, live a long life, and die without *kleos*. Of

course, we know what he chooses. We are reading about Achilles millennia after he died, so he obviously chose to stay and fight and die at Troy. Of course, I doubt that he is concerned with *kleos* now. If he were concerned with *kleos*, he would want the gifts that Agamemnon has offered to him and will give to him. However, all Achilles cares about is avenging the death of his beloved friend.

Has Thetis' entreaty to Zeus come true? With the appearance of Thetis, we are reminded of her entreaty to Zeus. She begged Zeus in Book 1,

“Zeus, Father Zeus! If I ever served you well
among the deathless gods with a word or action,
bring this prayer to pass: honor my son Achilles! —
doomed to the shortest life of any man on earth.
And now the lord of men Agamemnon has disgraced
him,
seizes and keeps his prize, tears her away himself.
But you —
exalt him, Olympian Zeus: your urgings rule the
world!
Come, grant the Trojans victory after victory
till the Achaean armies pay my dear son back,
building higher the honor he deserves!”
(Fagles 1.600-609)

Compare:

“Father Zeus, if, among the deathless gods,
I've ever served you well in word or deed,

then grant my prayer will be fulfilled.
 Bring honour to my son, who, of all men
 will be fate's quickest victim. For just now,
 Agamemnon, king of men, has shamed him.
 He seized his prize, robbing him in person,
 and kept it for himself. But honour him,
 Zeus, all-wise Olympian. Give the Trojans
 the upper hand, until Achaeans respect my son,
 until they multiply his honours.”

(Johnston 1.560-570)

Part of the *Iliad* is a tragedy. Achilles has asked for something, and he has received it. Achilles wanted the Trojans to win victory after victory, until at last nothing could save the Achaeans except Achilles himself. Achilles has received what he prayed for. The Trojans have won victory after victory, and not even Patroclus could stop them. The Achaeans tried everything to stop the Trojans, including sending Patroclus out to fight them while wearing Achilles' armor. Now, only Achilles can save the Achaeans.

• One theme of the *Iliad* is the rage of Achilles. Who is now the target of Achilles' rage?

Achilles' wrath has not ceased. He was angry at Agamemnon; now he is angry at Hector. We will still read about the wrath of Achilles.

Achilles tells Thetis,

“Patroclus dead, Achilles hates to live.

Let me revenge it on proud Hector's heart,

Let his last spirit smoke upon my dart;
 On these conditions will I breathe: till then,
 I blush to walk among the race of men.”
 (Pope pdf 345)

Compare:

“My spirit rebels — I’ve lost the will to live,
 to take my stand in the world of men — unless,
 before all else, Hector’s battered down by my spear
 and gasps away his life, the blood-price for Patroclus,
 Menoetius’ gallant son he’s killed and stripped!”
 (Fagles 18.105-109)

Compare:

“My own heart has no desire to live on,
 to continue living among men,
 unless Hector is hit by my spear first,
 losing his life and paying me compensation
 for killing Menoetius’ son, Patroclus.”
 (Johnston 18.112-116)

Thetis replies,

“You’re doomed to a short life, my son, from all you
 say!
 For hard on the heels of Hector’s death your death
 must come at once — ”

(Fagles 18.111-113)

Whenever we hear about Thetis, we are reminded that Achilles is doomed to a short life. That is one of her main functions in this epic poem. Thetis knows that Achilles, her son, will have a short life — that thought is always with her. She knows that Achilles will die shortly after Hector dies. She also knows that there is absolutely nothing that can stop Achilles from seeking revenge for Patroclus' death. That revenge will come with the death of Hector.

Achilles hears Thetis, but now he cares only about avenging the death of Patroclus, even if it means that he himself will die:

“Then let me die, since I could not prevent
the death of my companion. He's fallen
far from his homeland. He needed me there
to protect him from destruction.”

(Johnston 18.122-125)

Achilles adds,

“[...] Enough.
Let bygones be bygones. Done is done.
Despite my anguish I will beat it down,
the fury mounting inside me, down by force.
But now I'll go and meet that murderer head-on,
that Hector who destroyed the dearest life I know.
For my own death, I'll meet it freely — whenever
Zeus

and the other deathless gods would like to bring it on!”

(Fagles 18.131-138)

Achilles is feeling guilt now. He feels guilt at Patroclus’ death because he lent Patroclus his armor and allowed him to join the battle. Because of that guilt, he will show no mercy to Hector. Achilles is willing to give up his own life to avenge Patroclus’ death.

Note that Achilles calls Hector a “murderer” (Fagles 18.125). Of course, Hector is not a murderer. Killing an enemy in battle is not murder.

• **The battle is still raging. How does Achilles — who has no armor — recover the corpse of Patroclus?**

What is happening around Patroclus’ corpse? Thetis realizes that Achilles needs armor and offers to get him heavenly armor. When Thetis leaves, our minds are drawn back to Patroclus’ body, which the Achaeans and Hector and the Trojans are still fighting for. Homer sings,

As for Patroclus, there seemed no hope that
Achaeans

could drag the corpse of Achilles’ comrade out of
range.

(Fagles 18.176-177)

Achilles returns to battle after he has received his new armor, but he becomes active even before he has received his new armor. Of course, without armor Achilles cannot go out and fight, but he still finds a way to make his presence known.

The battle is raging, and both sides are trying to get the corpse of Patroclus. The Achaeans want the corpse so that they can give it to Achilles, who will give it a good burial.

The Trojans want the corpse so that they can hold it for ransom. Both Menelaus and Great Ajax are defending the corpse for the Achaeans.

Iris — the messenger-goddess — arrives with a message for Achilles. Hera wants Achilles simply to show himself to the Trojans. The mere sight of Achilles will be enough to strike fear into the hearts of the Achaeans, and that will be enough for the Achaeans to take the corpse of Patroclus and give it to Achilles.

Of course, Achilles has no armor, as he tells Iris. His mother, Thetis, has gone to ask Hephaestus to make armor for him, but she won't be back for a while. In addition, Achilles is so big and strong that he can't just borrow armor from anyone else. Great Ajax has a shield that would suit Achilles' needs, but Great Ajax is using it as he fights to get and keep possession of Patroclus' corpse so that he can bring it back to Achilles.

Iris points out that Achilles need not fight. He can stand by the trench that the Achaeans had dug, and he can simply show himself to the Trojans without fighting:

“Thy want of arms (said Iris) well we know;
 But though unarm'd, yet clad in terrors, go!
 Let but Achilles o'er yon trench appear,
 Proud Troy shall tremble, and consent to fear;
 Greece from one glance of that tremendous eye
 Shall take new courage, and disdain to fly.”

(Pope pdf 347)

Achilles does this.

Obviously, Achilles is not invulnerable except for his heel. We all know the myth of Thetis wishing to make the infant Achilles invulnerable by holding him by a heel and dipping him into the water of the River Styx, thus making him invulnerable except for the heel that was not wet by the river. Either Homer ignores that myth, or that myth was created after Homer wrote. We don't know which. If Achilles is going to fight in battle, he needs a good set of armor — not just a bronze shoe that will protect his vulnerable heel.

Now comes an important point in the *Iliad*: Achilles rises up:

as Achilles, Zeus' favorite fighter, rose up now

(Fagles 18.235)

This would be thrilling to Homer's audience; it is what they have been waiting for.

• How does Athena help Achilles recover the corpse of Patroclus?

We have more double motivation as Achilles recovers the body of Patroclus. As we know, Achilles shows himself to the Trojans. In addition, he shouts. This is enough to frighten the Trojans so that they pause and give the Achaeans a chance to carry off the body of Patroclus.

However, Athena also plays a part in the recovery of the corpse of Patroclus. Athens enhances Achilles. Athena crowns Achilles with flame and wraps a cloud around him. This would seem to be an image of a volcano — it is definitely fire imagery. When Achilles appears to the Trojans, he is standing by the Greek ditch, he has flame encircling his head, and he shouts aloud.

This is a very visual scene. We can think in terms of a fiery-red sunset. Achilles is standing in the west as the sun sets. The sunset behind his head makes him appear to be on fire:

Her Ægis Pallas o'er his shoulder throws;
 Around his brows a golden cloud she spread;
 A stream of glory flamed above his head.
 As when from some beleaguer'd town arise
 The smokes, high curling to the shaded skies;
 (Seen from some island, o'er the main afar,
 When men distress'd hang out the sign of war;)

Soon as the sun in ocean hides his rays,
 Thick on the hills the flaming beacons blaze;
 With long-projected beams the seas are bright,
 And heaven's high arch reflects the ruddy light:
 So from Achilles' head the splendours rise,
 Reflecting blaze on blaze against the skies.

(Pope pdf 347-348)

As is fitting, it is Achilles who recovers Patroclus' body. Achilles gives his war-cry three times — that and the sight of Achilles, who is described as having flame encircling his head — is enough to make the Trojans flee:

And Trojans hearing the brazen voice of Aeacides,
 all their sprits quaked — even sleek-maned horses,
 sensing death in the wind, slewed their chariots
 round

and charioteers were struck dumb when they saw that
 fire,

relentless, terrible, burst from proud-hearted
Achilles' head,

blazing as fiery-eyed Athena fueled the flames.
Three times

the brilliant Achilles gave his great war cry over the
trench,

three times the Trojans and famous allies whirled in
panic —

and twelve of their finest fighters died then and there,
crushed by chariots, impaled on their own spears.

(Fagles 18.257-266)

When Achilles and Athena shout, the Trojans and their
horses panic and scatter. Twelve Trojan fighters die in the
panic, “crushed by chariots, impaled on their own spears”
(Fagles 18.266), and the Achaeans recover Patroclus’
corpse:

Patroclus’ body is mourned by Achilles and the other
Achaeans:

His dear companions gathered mourning round him,
Achilles with them, shedding hot tears when he saw
his loyal companion lying on a death bed,
mutilated by sharp bronze. He’d sent him out to war
with chariot and horses, but never welcomed him
at his return.

(Johnston 18.289-294)

• **What is an allusion?**

Fire in the *Iliad* is a destructive force. As we will see, Achilles will be a destructive force in the next few books of the *Iliad*.

The flame from Achilles' head is a famous image. It is alluded to in many works of art.

This is a definition of "allusion":

A brief reference to a person, place, thing, event, or idea in history or literature. Allusions conjure up biblical authority, scenes from Shakespeare's plays, historic figures, wars, great love stories, and anything else that might enrich an author's work. Allusions imply reading and cultural experiences shared by the writer and reader, functioning as a kind of shorthand whereby the recalling of something outside the work supplies an emotional or intellectual context, such as a poem about current racial struggles calling up the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

• **How does the longest day in the *Iliad* end?**

The sun now sets behind Achilles. Achilles is standing, silhouetted against the sky, and in the background is the sunset that makes it look as if Achilles' head is surrounded by flames. This image can be explained both naturally and with the aid of the gods. The sunset makes it look like Achilles' head is surrounded with flames, and Athena surrounds Achilles' head with non-burning flames. This is a wonderful visual image, and I doubt that the person who created it was blind from birth.

The *Iliad*'s longest day ends now, with the sun setting behind Achilles.

• **What does the end of this day mean for Hector?**

With the setting of the sun, the day is done:

Then ox-eyed queen Hera
made the unwearied sun, against his will, go down

into the stream of Ocean. So the sun set.
Godlike Achaeans now could pause for some relief
from the destructive killing of impartial war.

(Johnston 18.294-298)

Homer calls special attention to the setting of the sun. It is a significant event.

In Book 11, Zeus stated,

“[...] I will hand Hector the power to kill and kill
till he cuts his way to the benched ships and the sun
sinks
and the blessed darkness sweeps across the earth.”
(Fagles 11.225-227)

Compare: In Book 17, Zeus stated,

“[...] For still I will give the Trojans glory —
killing all the way to the benched ships till the sun
sinks
and the blessed darkness sweeps across the earth.”
(Fagles 17.523-525)

With the setting of the sun, Hector’s day of glory is over. Zeus has allowed Hector to do many glorious things: the Trojans have won victory after victory, have camped on the

plains, have crossed the Achaean wall, have set fire to an Achaean ship, have killed Patroclus. However, now Achilles is back, and Achilles will win victory on the battlefield.

• **What does Polydamas advise Hector to do?**

What does Hector do that night? With the setting of the sun, we think of Hector, and therefore the *Iliad* turns to Hector. In the Trojan camp, the Trojans are planning their strategy. In Book 13, Polydamas has already been shown to be a clear-headed counselor. Here he advises that the Trojans retreat back behind the walls of Troy because Achilles has returned to the ranks of the Achaean army. He says about Achilles,

“But now I really have
 a dreadful fear of Peleus’ swift-footed son.
 He has a reckless heart, he’s not a man
 to rest content in the middle of the plain,
 where Trojans and Achaeans have a share
 of Ares’ battle fury. No, he’ll fight on
 for our city and our women. So let’s go back,
 return into the city. Trust me when I say
 that’s how things will go. For now, sacred night
 has stopped the swift-footed son of Peleus.
 But if tomorrow he moves into action
 fully armed and encounters us still here,
 we’ll recognize him well enough. Anyone
 who gets away and makes it back to Ilion
 will be a happy man. For dogs and vultures

will eat many Trojans.”

(Johnston 18.321-336)

• **What does Hector decide to do?**

Hector rejects Polydamas’ advice — which the alert reader knows is good advice (because Polydamas has given good advice before when the Trojans attacked the Achaean walls).

We also know that it is good advice because Homer specifically tells us that it is good advice.

In addition, of course, we know what is going to happen because Zeus has told us: Achilles will fight, and he will kill Hector.

Hector speaks proud words:

“If it really *was* Achilles who rested beside the ships,
all the worse for him — if he wants his fill of war.
I for one, I’ll never run from his grim assault,
I’ll stand up to the man — see if he bears off glory
or I bear it off myself! The god of war is impartial:
he hands out death to the man who hands out death.”
(Fagles 18.355-360)

Compare:

“If indeed it’s true that lord Achilles
is returning to that battle by the ships,
if he wants that, so much the worse for him.
I won’t run from him in painful battle,
but stand against him, fighting face to face,

whether great victory goes to him or me.

In war the odds are equal, and the man
who seeks to kill may well be killed himself.”

(Johnston 18.380-387)

These are proud words, and Hector will fail to live up to them entirely. But here he repeats the Heroic Ethic. Death is not optional. The man who kills will eventually die. The Trojans back Hector, not Polydamas.

• **What do the Achaeans do after recovering the corpse of Patroclus?**

What do the Achaeans do that night? Once again, Homer has a smooth transition — this time back to the Achaean camp. The Trojans agree with Hector, and as they eat, they hear the grieving of the Achaeans over Patroclus’ body. Homer then takes us back to the Achaean camp where there is mourning for Patroclus:

And now their [the Trojans’] entire army settled
down to supper

but all night long the Argives raised Patroclus’ dirge.

And Achilles led them now in a throbbing chant of
sorrow,

laying his man-killing hands on his great friend’s
chest,

convulsed with bursts of grief. Like a bearded lion

whose pride of cubs a deer-hunter has snatched
away,

out of some thick woods, and back he comes, too
late,

and his heart breaks but he courses after the hunter,
 hot on his tracks down glen on twisting glen —
 where can he find him? — gripped by piercing rage
 ...

so Achilles groaned, deeply, crying out to his
 Myrmidons,

“Oh my captains! How empty the promise I let fall
 that day I reassured Menoetius in his house —
 I promised the king I’d bring him back his son,
 home to Opois, covered in glory, Troy sacked,
 hauling his rightful share of plunder home, home.”

(Fagles 18.365-380)

One thing to notice in this section is the reverence that is paid
 Patroclus’ body. The blood is washed from it, the body is
 anointed with olive oil, the wounds are closed with an
 ointment, and the body is laid on the bier:

[...] the sad attendants round

Cleanse the pale corse, and wash each honour’d
 wound.

A massy caldron of stupendous frame

They brought, and placed it o’er the rising flame:

Then heap’d the lighted wood; the flame divides

Beneath the vase, and climbs around the sides:

In its wide womb they pour the rushing stream;

The boiling water bubbles to the brim.

The body then they bathe with pious toil,
 Embalm the wounds, anoint the limbs with oil,
 High on a bed of state extended aid,
 And decent cover'd with a linen shade;
 Last o'er the dead the milk-white veil they threw;
 That done, their sorrows and their sighs renew.
 (Pope pdf 351)

This is the way that bodies should be treated — the same way that Sarpedon's body was treated earlier in Book 17. This is not the way that Achilles will treat the corpse of Hector later.

• What does Thetis ask Hephaestus to do? Why does Hephaestus do as Thetis asks?

Now we turn from the angry battlefield to the peaceful home of the fire god Hephaestus and his wife, Charis, one of the Graces. This is an important contrast. Thetis is here to ask Hephaestus to make new armor for her son, Achilles. Hector has stripped Achilles' armor from the body of Patroclus, and Hector is now wearing it. Achilles needs new armor, and Thetis is asking Hephaestus to make new armor for Achilles.

By the way, this is a definition of the Graces:

In Greek mythology, a Charis is one of several Charites (Greek: "Graces"), goddesses of charm, beauty, nature, human creativity and fertility. They ordinarily numbered three, from youngest to oldest: Aglaea ("Beauty"), Euphrosyne ("Mirth"), and Thalia ("Good Cheer").

Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graces

Hephaestus is a most competent blacksmith:

[...] Handmaids ran to attend their master,
 all cast in gold but a match for living, breathing girls.
 (Fagles 18.488-489)

Hephaestus and his wife, Charis, treat Thetis well — Thetis helped save Hephaestus' life when he was thrown out of Olympus. Hephaestus was born with bandy legs — handicapped — and Hera had thrown him out because he was imperfect.

Note that Hephaestus is a blacksmith — a very good occupation for someone who has strong arms and crippled legs. Hephaestus is a very good blacksmith. In the *Odyssey*, Hephaestus is said to be married to Aphrodite, who committed adultery with Ares. Hephaestus learned about the affair and wanted to punish the couple, so he made a very fine net, which he flung over the couple as they were having sex. Then Hephaestus called in the other gods to laugh at the adulterous couple.

We also find out that Thetis was married to a mortal against her will (Fagles 18.503-507):

“I, only I, of all the watery race
 By force subjected to a man's embrace,
 Who, sinking now with age and sorrow, pays
 The mighty fine imposed on length of days.”
 (Pope pdf 353)

The myth is that whoever bore a son by Thetis would sire a son who would be greater than his father. Because of this, Zeus — who was always randy — wanted to marry her to a

mortal (and did not sleep with her himself). Zeus did not want any competition for his throne.

Hephaestus readily agrees to make new armor, including a shield, for Achilles.

• Describe the shield that Hephaestus makes for Achilles. What is the purpose of the scenes that Hephaestus, the god of fire, inscribes on Achilles' shield?

The making of the shield is significant. Achilles' shield depicts the wide world as a whole: it is surrounded by Ocean on its edge, and Ocean surrounds the world. On the shield are scenes of life from around the world. In this way, Homer broadens the scope of his poem. The *Iliad* is concerned basically with a few days in the siege of the Trojan War, but with the making of Achilles' shield, Homer reminds us that there is a big world out there that is not affected by this war.

The following passage is quoted word for word from Michael Silk, *Homer: The Iliad*:

On it [the shield] are five segments (481), evidently circles, each with a different scene.

[No. 1:] At the centre are the earth, the sky and the sea (483ff.).

[No. 2:] Outside the central circle are two cities, one at peace, busy with a marriage and a law-suit, the other at war, suffering siege, and preparing an ambush against its attackers, while the old men, the women and the children are left inside the city wall (490ff.).

[No. 3:] The third circle contains the seasons of the rural year (541ff.),

[No. 4:] the fourth a dance (590ff.),

[No. 5:] and the fifth, ‘around the outermost rim’, Ocean (670ff.).

The whole is a microcosm that begins with the elements and is enclosed by Ocean, which in Greek myth is a river that encloses the world. The natural elements, therefore, occupy the beginning and the end, and within them is human life, lived according to the seasons and social custom, and represented as a unified whole. Within that whole, alongside civil disputes and social celebrations, war has a proper place — war in two guises: the ambush and the siege, technique and might, the kind of war the *Iliad* ignores and the kind of war the *Iliad* is about. (78)

Homer describes the big picture to us. He is focusing on a few days during the Trojan War, yet we learn much about the world as a whole. In the epic similes, we learn much about the world outside the Trojan War. The same thing is true in the decorations of the Shield of Achilles.

Note that Hephaestus is an artist. The shield is a work of art.

Achilles is special. In some ways, he is more than human. We can see that in his armor. On his shield is a depiction of the cosmos as a whole and of humanity in particular. We have seen war in the *Iliad*. The shield depicts war, but it also depicts peace and the blessings of peace: law and justice, dance, herding animals such as sheep and cattle for food (and wool for clothing). The shield shows us human culture. When Achilles goes into battle, he bears a representation of the entire Universe on his shield. The only thing missing is Hades, abode of the dead.

Achilles will reject the human condition for a long time. He cannot come to terms with the fact that Patroclus is dead. We mortals are supposed to grieve when someone dies, then we are supposed to continue with our lives. There is a time for

grieving, but there is a time to begin living life again. Achilles will grieve too long for Patroclus, and it will be a long time before he is able to live life again.

• **How does Book 18 end?**

At the end of Book 18, Hephaestus finishes making the new armor, and Thetis carries the new armor to Achilles:

When the famous lame god had made all the armour,
he took it and set it there before Achilles' mother.

Then, like a hawk, she sped down from Olympus,
carrying the gleaming armour of Hephaestus.

(Johnston 18.745-748)

• **Write a character analysis of Hephaestus.**

Hephaestus is a crippled god, the son of Zeus and Hera. When Hera saw that he was crippled, she threw him from Mount Olympus, and he fell to earth. Two goddesses took care of him: Thetis (Achilles' mother) and Eurynome. For this reason, Thetis is a welcome visitor in his house.

Hephaestus' legs are crippled, but he has strong arms and shoulders. Therefore, he became a blacksmith. He works with metal, and he will create metal armor for Achilles.

Hephaestus is enormously talented, and some of his creations are like science fiction. For example, when Thetis arrives, he is creating cauldrons. In fact, he is adding wheels to them so that when he commands a cauldron by nodding, it will roll to where he wants it to go. In addition, when he makes Achilles' armor, he is assisted by girls made of gold — “a match for living, breathing girls” (Fagles 18.489). These girls sound like sophisticated robots to me.

Hephaestus is also an artist. We don't see many of them in the *Iliad*. Helen is an artist who weaves tapestry. Achilles is an artist who sings songs of heroism (epic songs). Hephaestus is an artist who creates armor and whose shield is a work of art.

The shield has five layers of metal, making it both heavy and valuable. Achilles is able to carry it because he is so strong, but many warriors have shields made of rawhide, or rawhide covered with one layer of metal.

Artistically, the shield is a masterpiece. It has circles, and in the circles Hephaestus often sets scenes, such as a city at peace and a city at war, and a trial, and the constellations, and the River Oceanus. Basically, the shield represents the entire world as the ancient Greeks knew it with the exception of Hades.

Conclusion

In Book 19, Achilles and Agamemnon are reconciled.

Chapter 19: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 19 — The Champion Arms for Battle / Achilles and Agamemnon

• We are eager for Achilles and Hector to fight. Why does Homer delay their meeting?

As usual, Homer delays the action. Immediately, we want to get on with the story. We know that Achilles and Agamemnon will be reconciled and that Achilles will kill Hector, but Homer delays the action as usual. There is so much that he wants to get into the poem that he doesn't mind delaying action — Hector won't be killed until Book 22.

Homer believed that delaying action was good: If the audience is really interested in what will happen next, you can increase that interest by delaying the action. As we will see, Homer will definitely tease his audience by seeming to be about to tell of the meeting of Achilles and Hector, then delaying it.

Another point to make here, however, is one made by E.T. Owen, author of *The Story of the Iliad*. Homer's audience did not know, as we know, that Hector won't be killed until Book 22 (Owen 190-191). Homer's audience would have been entertained by Homer's pretending to draw near to the action that everyone is looking forward to, then delaying it. Homer's audience did not have the book titles that we have that reveal important events — for example, "Book 22: The Death of Hector." This book title comes from the translation by Robert Fagles and the translation by Ian Johnston. (One advantage of such book titles, of course, is that it is easy to tell in which book Hector dies.)

• What happens when Thetis gives the armor to Achilles?

Thetis is aware of the human condition. She knows that Achilles is grieving mightily for Patroclus. She advises that he leave the body and concentrate on other things. One other

thing, however, is the armor. Achilles will put on the armor so he can kill Hector. Thetis tells Achilles,

“My child, leave your friend to lie there dead —
we must, though it breaks our hearts ...
The will of the gods has crushed him once for all.”

(Fagles 19.9-11)

As Book 19 begins, Thetis gives her son Achilles the armor fashioned by Hephaestus:

Fear gripped all the Myrmidons. Not one of them
dared look directly at those weapons. They shrank
away.

But when Achilles saw them, his anger grew.

His eyes glared underneath his eyelids, like a fire,
a terrifying light. But as his hands went over
the god’s priceless gifts, he felt great joy. He gazed
at them,

filling his heart with pleasure at the rich designs.

(Johnston 19.16-22)

The armor, as we know, is impressive, as shown by the Myrmidons’ reaction to it.

Homer also sings that Thetis asks Achilles to formally renounce his anger toward Agamemnon.

• **Why doesn’t Patroclus’ corpse rot?**

Will Patroclus’ body rot while Achilles fights Hector? No. At this point, something miraculous occurs — nothing unusual in the *Iliad*. Achilles is worried that Patroclus’ body

might decay, but Thetis reassures him that she will take care of the body so that nothing happens to it:

With that she breathed in her son tremendous
courage

then instilled in Patroclus' nostrils fresh ambrosia,
blood-red nectar too, to make his flesh stand firm.

(Fagles 19.43-45)

Nectar is the drink of the gods, and ambrosia is the food of the gods.

Note that the death of Sarpedon prepares us for the care that is taken of Patroclus' body. Sarpedon's body is taken care of by the gods, as is the body of Patroclus, and as will be the body of Hector.

• **Many wounded kings limp into the council called by Achilles. How did these kings get wounded?**

Now we are ready for the reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon. This book begins as the first book began, with Achilles calling for a council, which he does by striding through the Achaean camps "crying his piercing cry" (Fagles 19.47).

The wounded kings are described limping in to the council, and we see the people whom Achilles will address. These are men who would probably have not been wounded if not for the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon:

Two associates of the war god Ares came in limping,
the brave offspring of Tydeus and lord Odysseus,
leaning on their spears, their wounds still pained
them.

They came and sat down at the front of the assembly.

Last to arrive was Agamemnon, king of men,
still suffering from the wound Coön had given him,
Antenor's son, who in deadly conflict stabbed him
with his bronze-tipped spear.

(Johnston 19.58-65)

The “brave offspring of Tydeus” (Johnston 19.59) is Diomedes.

In a way, Achilles is responsible for the wounds of all these warriors. If he had been reconciled to Agamemnon in Book 9, they would not now be standing wounded before him.

• Why does Achilles want to make peace with Agamemnon?

Achilles wants to make peace with Agamemnon so that he can go into battle with the other Achaeans. Achilles does not care about the gifts that Agamemnon offered him in Book 9. The only thing that Achilles cares about is going into battle so that he can kill Hector.

The quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon has been destructive. Many Achaeans have lost their lives in battle, including Patroclus. Achilles is ready to make peace; he acknowledges that the quarrel was bad for both Agamemnon and him:

“Agamemnon — was it better for both of us, after all,
for you and me to rage at each other, raked by
anguish,
consumed by heartsick strife, all for a young girl?

If only Artemis had cut her down at the ships —
 with one quick shaft —
 that day I destroyed Lyrnessus, chose her as my
 prize.
 How many fewer friends had gnawed the dust of the
 wide world,
 brought down by enemy hands while I raged on and
 on.”

(Fagles 19.63-70)

Compare:

“Son of Atreus, has it been good for us,
 for you and me, to continue squabbling
 in a heart-rending quarrel full of grief
 for both of us, over some girl? I wish
 she’d been killed by Artemis’ arrow
 right beside my ships, the day I got her
 as my prize, after we destroyed Lyrnessus.
 Fewer Achaeans would have sunk their teeth
 into this wide earth at enemy hands,
 if I’d not been so angry.”

(Johnston 19.67-76)

Note the reference to Briseis, whom Achilles calls “some girl” (Johnston 19.70). Achilles has said that he loved her, but he does not love her as much as he loves Patroclus. He is very willing to sacrifice her if only he could get Patroclus

back. Achilles wishes that Briseis had died in the battle in which he took her city.

Achilles says that the quarrel between Agamemnon and him will be remembered. He is certainly correct:

“[...] For years to come, I think,
they will remember the feud that flared between us
both.”

(Fagles 19.72-73)

Achilles is in a hurry for him and his fellow Achaeans to go into battle. He wants to be reconciled with Agamemnon, then start killing Trojans immediately:

“[...] Still, though it hurts,
we should let all this pass, repressing hearts
within our chests, we must do that. So now,
I end my anger. It’s not appropriate
for me to remain enraged for ever.
But come, quickly urge long-haired Achaeans
on to battle, so I may go out once again
to face the Trojans and see if they still wish
to spend the night beside our ships. I think
many of them will be glad to get some rest,
the ones who escape this deadly war
and who evade my spear.”

(Johnston 19.79-90)

Of course, Achilles has not renounced his anger. He has merely directed his anger away from Agamemnon and toward Hector and the other Trojans.

• **Analyze the speech that Agamemnon makes to Achilles. What is the point of his story about how Ruin came to dwell among human beings?**

At this point, Agamemnon makes a long speech to Achilles. He must be very careful here not to upset Achilles, who as we all know has a temper. For that reason, Agamemnon barely mentions the embassy to Achilles that Odysseus, Great Ajax, and Phoenix had made to him only 24 hours ago. Agamemnon is conciliatory — but he blames the gods for making him mad enough to argue with Achilles:

“[...] I am not to blame!

Zeus and Fate and the Fury stalking through the night,

they are the ones who drove that savage madness in my heart,

that day in assembly, when I seized Achilles' prize

—

on my own authority, true, but what could *I* do?

A god impels all things to their fulfillment:”

(Fagles 19.100-105)

Compare:

“You Achaeans have often criticized

and spoken ill of me. But I'm not to blame.

It's Zeus' fault and Fate, those Furies, too,

who walk in darkness. In our assembly,

they cast a savage blindness on my heart,
 that day when on my own I took away
 Achilles' prize. But what was I to do?
 It is a god who brought all this about.
 Zeus' eldest daughter, Ate, blinds all men
 with her destructive power. Her feet are soft,
 she walks, not on the ground, but on men's heads,
 and she brings folly onto humankind,
 seducing them at random."

(Johnston 19.105-117)

Agamemnon even tells a long story of how Ruin came to dwell among human beings (the story of Heracles' — that is, Hercules' — birth).

Agamemnon's story shows that even Zeus can be blinded by Ruin:

- In this story, Zeus says that on a certain day one of his mortal descendants will be born and will rule over the people around him.
- Hera hears this, and makes Zeus swear an oath that this is so.
- Then Hera, the goddess of childbirth, stops Heracles' birth, and instead starts the labor of a mother who is only seven months pregnant.
- Eurystheus is born, and Heracles, who is born later, is made to labor for him. These are the famous 12 labors of Heracles. They include battling the Hydra. It had numerous heads, and when one head was cut

off, two grew in its place. Another labor was to clean the stables of Augeus, which Heracles did by diverting two rivers from their courses and through the stables.

In part, Agamemnon is avoiding responsibility for his actions by blaming a god named Ruin.

• Who is Heracles? What are the Twelve Labors of Heracles?

A Panhellenic Hero

Hercules is a Panhellenic hero — he is a hero throughout Greece. (“Pan” means everywhere. “Hellenic” refers to Greece.)

Heracles is THE ancient hero. He appears in myth after myth. I imagine that Homer must have thought about writing an epic hero about Heracles, but the Trojan War captured his imagination and so he created two epic poems about that war and its aftermath instead. It’s too bad that Homer did not live longer. Maybe he would have created an epic poem about Heracles, too.

Heracles, under the name of Hercules, is probably the ancient hero whom most people would name if they were asked to name an ancient hero. He pops up in many movies, including the Disney animated movie. A few years ago, there was also a TV series about Hercules.

Heracles is often referred to as a Panhellenic hero, meaning that he and his exploits are not associated with one particular city. We associate Theseus with Athens, Agamemnon with Mycenae, Menelaus with Sparta, and so on. Heracles is not associated with one particular Greek city, and he was worshipped throughout Greece. Heracles appears often in ancient Greek literature.

Heracles has a divine father, Zeus, and a mortal mother, Alcmena. Hera, the wife of Zeus, hates the women with whom Zeus has affairs, and she hates the children who are born from those affairs. In the case of Heracles, she hates him even before he is born.

When Alcmena was about to give birth to Heracles, Zeus announced that on a certain day a boy would be born who was both a descendant of Perseus, an ancient hero, and who would rule over the city of Mycenae, which later Agamemnon ruled.

Unfortunately, this news allowed Hera to interfere. Hera is the goddess of childbirth, and she was able to delay the birth of Heracles. She also was able to speed up the birth of Eurystheus, who was a descendant of Perseus. By doing this, Hera brought it about that Eurystheus, not Heracles, ruled Mycenae. Hera made sure that Eurystheus was born on that day, and not Heracles. After all, Zeus had sworn an inviolable oath that a descendant of Perseus born on that day would rule Mycenae, and the gods, including Zeus, cannot go back on their inviolable oaths.

Although Heracles was not born to become the ruler of Mycenae, he did show remarkable powers even as a baby. Hera still hated him — she was very good at hating people — and she sent two snakes to strangle Heracles while he was still in a crib. Fortunately, Heracles was so strong that he strangled the snakes.

Heracles was also remarkable for his appetite for food and drink. Sometimes, he appears as a buffoonish character in ancient plays. In these plays, he is shown as someone who eats and drinks way too much.

Unfortunately, Heracles was also known for his anger. Sometimes, he kills people when he is angry. Sometimes, he

is mad with rage, and as you might guess, Hera sends him this madness.

Once, Heracles even killed the children he had with Megara, his first wife, and according to some ancient sources, he even killed Megara, too. (The Disney animated movie is for kids, and it leaves out all this negative stuff. In the Disney movie, Hera loves Heracles, and Heracles does not suffer from fits of madness.)

Of course, Heracles is famous for his 12 labors. After he killed his children, which is a horrible misdeed in any culture, in a fit of madness, he went to the Delphic Oracle (a truth-telling prophetess at Delphi) in order to find out what he has to do to be cleansed of this terrible sin. The Delphic Oracle told him that he must serve for 12 years his cousin Eurystheus, who is ruling Mycenae. If Hera had not interfered, Heracles would be ruling Mycenae.

Eurystheus gave Heracles 12 labors to perform. The Delphic Oracle told Heracles that if he successfully performs the 12 labors he will be granted immortality.

Labor #1: Killing the Nemean Lion

Heracles' first labor was killing the Nemean lion. Heracles set out for Nemea and the lion. In Nemea, he met a shepherd named Molorchos whose son the lion had killed, and Heracles told him to wait thirty days. If Heracles returned with the carcass of the lion, then Molorchos would make a sacrifice to Zeus, but if Heracles had not returned with the lion's carcass in thirty days, that meant that Heracles was dead and Molorchos should make a sacrifice to Heracles — the Greeks sometimes made sacrifices to heroes as well as to gods. Heracles found the lion and tried to kill it by shooting arrows at it, but he discovered that weapons could not penetrate the lion's fur. Heracles forced the lion into its cave, which had two entrances. Heracles trapped the lion by

blocking one entrance and then going into the cave through the other entrance. Because ordinary weapons could not penetrate the lion's skin, Heracles killed the lion by strangling it. To skin the lion, Heracles used one of the lion's claws. For the rest of his life, Heracles wore the skin of the lion. On the thirtieth day, he found Molorchos ready to make a sacrifice to Heracles, whom he thought had died, but Molorchos happily made the sacrifice to Zeus instead.

Labor #2: Killing the Lernaean Hydra

Heracles' second labor was killing the Lernaean Hydra. In accomplishing this labor, Heracles had the help of a nephew named Iolaus. The Hydra of Lerna had nine heads, the middle of which was immortal. Heracles and Iolaus traveled to Lerna and found the Hydra's lair. Heracles forced the Hydra to leave its lair by shooting flaming arrows into the lair. Heracles fought the Hydra, but he discovered that each time a mortal head was cut off, two more heads grew in its place. Hera gave Heracles even more trouble by sending an enormous crab to fight him, but Heracles crushed the crab. Heracles then got help from Iolaus. Each time Heracles cut off one of the Hydra's mortal heads, Iolaus cauterized it with a torch, thus preventing more heads from growing. Heracles then cut off the immortal head and placed it under a boulder. The blood of the Hydra was poisonous, and before leaving, Heracles dipped the heads of his arrows into the Hydra's blood.

Labor #3: Capturing the Fire-Breathing Ceryneian Hind

Heracles' third labor was capturing the fire-breathing Ceryneian Hind — the golden deer — of Artemis that lived in Ceryneia. Eurystheus ordered Heracles to bring back this deer, whose horns were made of gold. Because the deer belonged to the goddess Artemis, Heracles did not want to kill it, so he chased it for a year — the deer was so swift that it could outrun arrows. Finally, Heracles captured the deer

while it was asleep. Artemis confronted Heracles as he was taking the deer to Eurystheus, but Heracles promised to release the deer as soon as he had shown the deer to Eurystheus. Eurystheus, however, wanted the deer to be a part of his zoo — Eurystheus was hoping that Artemis would become angry at Heracles and kill him. Heracles said that Eurystheus could put the deer in his zoo, and then he released the deer, which immediately fled back to Artemis. Eurystheus complained, but Heracles said that Eurystheus should have caught the deer before it fled.

Labor #4: Capturing the Erymanthian Boar

Heracles' fourth labor was capturing the Erymanthian boar. Boars are dangerous, and this especially dangerous boar lived on Mount Erymanthus. While traveling to Mount Erymanthus, Heracles became the guest of a Centaur named Pholus. The Centaur ate his meat raw, and Heracles ate his meat roasted. The Centaurs had a jar of wine, and Pholus and Heracles drank from it. The other Centaurs smelled the wine, and they also drank, but they did not mix the wine with water and so became drunk and unruly. Heracles fought the Centaurs and chased them, and he discovered Prometheus, who had given the knowledge of how to control fire to mortals. Zeus had punished him by chaining him to a rock on a mountain and by sending an eagle each day to eat his liver, which grew back each night so it could be eaten again the following day. Heracles shot the eagle and released Prometheus, and then he consulted the wise Centaur Chiron, seeking advice about how to capture the Erymanthian boar. Chiron advised Heracles to drive the Erymanthian boar into deep snow and then capture it. After following Chiron's advice, Heracles took the Erymanthian boar to Eurystheus, who ordered it to be thrown into the sea. The Erymanthian boar swam to Italy, where it died. Its tusks were put on display in the temple of Apollo at Cumae.

Labor #5: Cleaning the Augean Stables

Heracles' fifth labor was cleaning the Augean Stables. Augeas was an ancient Greek King, and he had a large number of cattle. Unfortunately, he was not good at keeping the cattle's stables clean. In fact, for all the many years that he had had his cattle and stables, he had never cleaned the stables even once. Of course, cattle aren't housetrained, and the stables were filled with manure. Heracles was given the task of cleaning the stables in a single day. Fortunately, Heracles was a problem-solver. He diverted the course of two rivers so that they flowed through the stables, and the rivers cleaned the stables for him. After the stables were cleaned, Heracles diverted the course of the rivers so that they flowed in their regular channels.

Labor #6: Killing and Chasing Away the Stymphalian Birds

Eurypylus' shield showed Heracles' sixth labor, which was to kill and chase away the Stymphalian birds. To escape wolves, they had migrated to a marsh in Arcadia. These birds killed human beings. Heracles could not go into the marsh because the soggy land would not support his weight, so Athena gave him some castanets. Heracles clicked the castanets, making noises that frightened the birds. He shot many of the birds, and the others flew away, never to return. Arcadia became much safer for mortals.

Labor #7: Capturing the Fire-Breathing Cretan Bull

Heracles' seventh labor was to capture the fire-breathing Cretan bull. This bull had been plaguing Crete, and King Minos wanted to be rid of it. Heracles choked the bull into submission and took it to Eurystheus, who released it. It wandered to Marathon and resumed its evil ways. Eurystheus lost an opportunity to help mortals when he released the dangerous bull instead of killing it. He should have sacrificed it to the gods.

Labor #8: Capturing the Man-Eating Mares of Diomedes of Thrace

Heracles' eighth labor was to capture the man-eating mares of Diomedes of Thrace. Heracles took a few companions with him during this labor. He captured the horses, but they ate human flesh. While Heracles was fighting Diomedes, Heracles' companion Abderus watched the mares; unfortunately, they attacked and ate him. To avenge the death of Abderus, Heracles fed Diomedes to the mares. Heracles took the mares to Eurystheus, who ordered them to be taken to Mount Olympus and sacrificed to Zeus. Zeus did not want such a sacrifice, so he sent wild animals that killed the mares.

Labor #9: Getting the War-Belt of Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazons

Heracles' ninth labor was to get the war-belt of Hippolyta, the queen of the Amazons. The Amazons were war-like women who learned the skills of war such as archery from birth. Heracles sailed with other warriors to the Amazons, and Hippolyta met him. Heracles was in a hurry to get her war-belt, and he attempted to drag her by her hair from her horse. She respected Heracles' strength and daring, and she willingly gave him her war-belt. However, Hera caused trouble. She told the Amazons that Heracles was planning to kidnap Hippolyta, and the Amazons attacked Heracles, who sailed away with Hippolyta's war-belt. Penthesilea, Hippolyta's sister, later killed her with a spear in a hunting accident.

An Additional Adventure: Conquering Troy

Heracles visited Troy after he got the war-belt of Hippolyta. The gods Poseidon and Apollo had displeased Zeus, so he forced them to disguise themselves as mortals and work for Laomedon, King of Troy, for one year. Laomedon promised

the two gods payment if they would build the walls of Troy; however, after the two gods had worked for a year and built the walls, Laomedon refused to give them the agreed-upon fee and even threatened to sell them into slavery. Poseidon and Apollo did not want to reveal themselves as gods because it would be humiliating if it became known that they had worked for a mortal, so they left. But Apollo sent a plague and Poseidon sent a sea-monster to Troy. Laomedon consulted seers, who told him that the plague would stop and the sea-monster would leave if he sacrificed Hesione, his daughter, to the sea-monster, so Laomedon chained Hesione by the sea. At this time, Heracles arrived and said that he would rescue Hesione if Laomedon would give him the valuable mares that Zeus had given to Laomedon when Zeus kidnapped Laomedon's son Ganymede and took him to Olympus to be his cupbearer. Heracles fought off the sea-monster with arrows and rescued Hesione, but Laomedon refused to give Heracles the mares that he had promised as payment. Heracles sailed away, but he promised to return later with more ships and conquer Troy. After he completed his twelve labors, he did return to Troy and conquer the city. He and his warriors killed all of Laomedon's sons except for Podarces, who saved his life by giving Heracles a golden veil that Hesione, Podarces' sister, had embroidered. Afterwards, Podarces used a new name that in his language is related to the word for "ransomed": Priam.

Labor #10: Stealing the Cattle of a Monster Named Geryon

Heracles' tenth labor was to steal the cattle of a monster named Geryon, who was three men joined together at the waist. Because of this, Geryon was called "triple-bodied Geryon." To get to Geryon's island, Heracles had to cross a desert. Heracles became so hot that he shot an arrow at Helios the Sun-god. Helios respected Heracles' daring, and he lent him a golden cup. Helios used the cup each night to sail from west to east on the ocean, and Heracles used it now

to sail to the land of Geryon. Heracles was attacked there by a two-headed dog named Orthrus; the three-headed dog of Hades, Cerberus, was his brother. Heracles killed Orthrus with his club, and when Geryon's cowherd, Eurytion, attacked Heracles, Heracles also killed him with the club. Geryon then attacked Heracles, who shot and killed him with an arrow whose head had been dipped into the poisonous blood of the Hydra. Heracles put the cattle of Geryon into the golden cup of Helios, sailed back to the desert, and returned the golden cup to Helios. Heracles then took the cattle to Eurystheus.

Labor #11: The Apples of the Hesperides

The Hesperides live on an island in the far West. "Hesperides" means Daughters of the West. They are three goddesses who are daughters of the Night. The Hesperides have a tree on which golden apples grow. Heracles' task was to get those apples. To do that, he had to find a way to get past the dragon that guards that tree. Fortunately, Heracles found a way to get someone else to do that for him. Atlas is the brother of Prometheus, and he is condemned to hold up the sky. Heracles made a deal with him. Heracles will hold up the sky for him while Atlas gets the golden apples. This deal will give Atlas a break, and it will get Heracles the apples. Unfortunately, after Atlas got the golden apples he decided to renege on his deal. He didn't want to take the sky back on his own shoulders. However, again Heracles was a problem-solver. He asked Atlas to hold up the sky for a moment while Heracles adjusted his robe to provide padding on which to hold up the sky. Atlas held up the sky, and Heracles left with the golden apples.

Labor #12: Cerberus the Three-Headed Dog

Cerberus is the three-headed dog of the Underworld, and Eurystheus ordered Heracles to fetch Cerberus from the Underworld and bring it to the Land of the Living. Heracles

did this, strangling the three-headed dog until it submitted to him. (Also, Heracles rescued Theseus, who had been held captive in the Underworld.) After Heracles demonstrated that he had Cerberus, he apparently released it, and it found its way back to the Underworld. Cerberus is in the Underworld when Dante visits it in his *Inferno*.

Heracles' Marriage to Deianira

Heracles married again, this time to Deianira (DAY-a-ner-a). In order to marry, he wrestled with a river-god who has the head of a bull. To get Deianira back home, he had to cross another river, and this time a Centaur named Nessos tried to rape her. (A Centaur has the body of a horse, but instead of a horse's head, the torso and head and arms of a human man take its place.)

Heracles shot Nessos with one of the arrows that had been dipped in the poisonous blood of the Hydra.

While dying, Nessos told Deianira to save some of his blood. If Heracles ever appeared to fall out of love with her, Nessos said, she could restore his love for her by giving Heracles a robe soaked in Nessos' blood. Later, Heracles did appear to be falling out of love with Deianira, so she gave him a robe soaked with Nessos' blood.

Heracles put on the robe, and the blood of Nessos began to eat away at his flesh, causing him agony. In order to stop the agony, Heracles had a funeral pyre built. He climbed on the funeral pyre and set it on fire. The fire ate away his mortal part, leaving the part that is immortal. Left behind is the immortal part, which is a god and is on Mount Olympus with the other gods. However, Odysseus sees the mortal part in the Land of the Dead, and it is that part with whom Odysseus speaks:

“And then I noticed mighty Hercules,

or at least his image, for he himself
was with immortal gods, enjoying their feasts.

(Johnston, *Odyssey* 11.775-777)

On Mount Olympus, Heracles has another wedding — he marries Hebe, the goddess of youth.

• **Why does Homer bring up Heracles in the *Iliad*?**

We can ask why Homer brings up Heracles in the *Iliad*. In my opinion, it is to emphasize the finality of death. Heracles was a great hero, yet even he died. In the *Iliad*, there is no indication that Heracles became a god, although there is in the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, Heracles eventually died like other men.

In the *Iliad*, Homer contrasts the lives of mortal men and the lives of immortal gods. Men suffer, and then they die. Gods live an easy life, and they never die.

• **Agamemnon says that Achilles will receive the gifts that were promised to him earlier (in Book 9). What is Achilles' attitude toward the return of the gifts?**

Agamemnon says that Achilles will receive all the gifts that were promised to him by yesterday's embassy:

“I could not forget Ate, who blinded me
when all this started. But since I was blind,
since Zeus robbed me of my wits, I will agree
to make amends, to give priceless gifts.
But prepare yourself for battle, rouse up
all your other men. As for me, I'm ready
to give every gift which lord Odysseus

promised you in your hut yesterday.

Of, if you prefer, don't turn right now to war.

Though you're keen to go, let my servants fetch those presents from my ship and bring them here, so you can see if you approve of them."

(Johnston 19.170-180)

Achilles, however, is impatient to start a battle with the Trojans:

"produce the gifts if you like, as you see fit, or keep them back, it's up to you. But now — quickly, call up the wild joy of war at once!

It's wrong to malingering here with talk, wasting time —"

(Fagles 19.177-180)

Compare:

"Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men, if you wish to give me presents, as is appropriate, or to withhold them, that's up to you. Now we must think of war, and with all speed. We should not be wasting time in conversation or with such delays."

(Johnston 19.183-188)

We are in agreement with Achilles here — we want to get on with the fight between Achilles and Hector that we know is coming.

Note that Achilles is no longer motivated by *kleos* and *timê*. Agamemnon is offering a large amount of *timê*, which would give Achilles a large amount of *kleos* — and Achilles doesn't care. The only thing Achilles wants to do is to avenge the death of Patroclus by killing Hector.

• Compare and contrast the attitudes of Achilles and Odysseus toward eating and drinking.

Achilles is no longer interested in *kleos* and *timê*, and he is not interested in eating and drinking. All that Achilles is focused on is battle and vengeance. Achilles has no interest in the ordinary human activities that all of us do such as eating and drinking.

Achilles is so focused on exacting vengeance against Hector and the other Trojans that he says that he will not eat or drink — not with Patroclus laid out for burial.

Odysseus tries to persuade Achilles to eat something before he goes into battle — or to at least let the Achaean troops eat something. Odysseus takes a very practical view — you can't fight on an empty stomach. He realizes that human warriors must eat in order to keep up their strength during a long day of battle. Odysseus tries to persuade Achilles to eat. Odysseus brings up a practical objection at once. It is important for the troops to eat, for otherwise they won't be able to fight well. Quite simply, mortals must eat and drink.

• Why does Odysseus want Agamemnon to produce the gifts that Agamemnon promised to give to Achilles if Achilles were to fight again?

In addition to letting the Achaean soldiers eat and drink, Odysseus wants the reconciliation between Achilles and

Agamemnon to go well and therefore he insists that the usual customs be observed. Agamemnon must display the gifts he will give to Achilles, he must swear that he has not slept with Briseis, and he must give Achilles a feast (which Achilles will not eat). In part, Odysseus is protecting the rights of the kings. However, he is right to insist — as did Achilles' mother, Thetis — that the reconciliation must be made. To be a true reconciliation, all the proper rites must be performed.

Odysseus is a master of diplomacy. He takes pains to save Agamemnon's face. As Odysseus points out to Agamemnon,

“It is no disgrace for a king to appease a man
when the king himself was the first to give offense.”

(Fagles 19.218-219)

In addition, Odysseus tells Achilles what Achilles has long wanted to hear. He calls him

“Achilles, son of Peleus, greatest of the Achaeans,”

(Fagles 19.257)

Again, Achilles is, like us, eager to get to the action. In this scene, we are on the side of Achilles and we see the scene through his eyes. He says,

“You talk of food?

I have no taste of food — what I really crave

is slaughter and blood and the choking groans of
men!”

(Fagles 19.253-255)

Again Odysseus insists that the warriors must be fed and the customs observed. Very importantly, Briseis must be

returned to Achilles. Agamemnon's taking of Briseus away from Achilles caused the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon just as Paris' taking of Helen away from Menelaus caused the quarrel between Menelaus and Paris.

• Compare and contrast the attitudes of Achilles and Odysseus toward the human condition. (The human condition is that we are mortal and we will die and we know that we will die.)

Odysseus is a very practical man. He shows his acceptance of the human condition:

“No. We must steel our hearts. Bury our dead,
with tears for the day they die, not one day more.
And all those left alive, after the hateful carnage,
remember food and drink [...].”

(Fagles 19.271-274)

Compare:

“[...] the dead
we must bury, then mourn a single day,
hardening our hearts. But those who do survive
grim battle must remember food and drink,”

(Johnston 19.282-285)

Odysseus will continue to accept the human condition in the *Odyssey*. In fact, he even rejects an offer by a goddess to make him immortal and nonaging. Achilles, of course, will reject the human condition. It will take Achilles a very long time before he stops grieving and returns to the ordinary human activities of eating, drinking, sleeping, and having sex.

Odysseus is correct in that we must mourn for the dead and then get on with our lives. Mourning for the death of a loved one is normal, but we still need to eat and live. This is why funerals are followed by a meal.

• Write a character analysis of Odysseus as he appears in Book 19.

We learn that Odysseus is practical, a man of common sense, and a man with a good head on his shoulders. This is consistent with his character as revealed in the rest of the *Iliad*.

When Achilles wishes to begin fighting to avenge Patroclus immediately, Odysseus tells him to let the Achaeans eat first. Fighting and killing people is hard work, and the men need nourishment. Apparently, when there is fighting, the warriors eat twice a day: morning and evening. Achilles will be able to fight without eating or drinking until he has killed Hector, but he has divine help. The gods have put ambrosia and nectar — the food and drink of the gods — in his chest.

Achilles cares nothing about the gifts that Agamemnon has offered him. All he cares about is avenging the death of Patroclus by killing Hector. However, Odysseus cares about the gifts. He wants the right thing to be done, and he wants a formal reconciliation between Agamemnon and Achilles. Here Odysseus is correct. A formal reconciliation is needed, if not for Achilles, at least for the Achaeans. The Achaeans need to know that Agamemnon and Achilles have reconciled. In addition, Agamemnon was in the wrong, and he needs to be punished. He can be punished if he pays the price he swore to pay if Achilles were to start fighting again for the Achaeans. Odysseus, however, is a master of tact and a master of rhetoric. To save Agamemnon's face, Odysseus tells him,

“It is no disgrace for a king to appease a man

when the king himself was first to give offense.”

(Fagles 19.218-219)

This tells us who was right and who was wrong in Book 1. Yes, Achilles showed a lack of tact, but warriors are allowed to speak frankly during conferences. Agamemnon was clearly in the wrong in Book 1 — both Nestor and Odysseus clearly say so in the *Iliad*.

• **Why does Briseis mourn for Patroclus?**

In this section of the *Iliad*, we see a number of mourning women. Thetis has mourned the death of Patroclus and also the approaching death of Achilles, her son. Here Briseis speaks for the only time in the *Iliad* and mourns the death of Patroclus.

When Briseis mourns for Patroclus, we are reminded of what a good person he was. Briseis sees Patroclus as a friend. Briseis loves Patroclus, but how much more must Achilles love him! Briseis mourns Patroclus, but how much more must Achilles mourn him! Briseis says,

[...] “Patroclus,
 you who brought the utmost joy to my sad heart,
 I left you here alive, when I went off,
 taken from these huts. But now, at my return,
 I find you dead, you, the people’s leader.
 Again for me, as always, evil follows evil.”

(Johnston 19.348-353)

Patroclus was good to Briseis. When she was captured and Achilles took her as his prize, Patroclus comforted her and promised to make Achilles marry her:

“But when swift Achilles killed my husband,
 you wouldn’t let me weep. You told me then
 you’d make me lord Achilles’ wedded wife,
 he’d take me in his ships to Phthia,
 for a marriage feast among the Myrmidons.
 You were always gentle. That’s the reason
 I’ll never stop this grieving for your death.”

(Johnston 19.359-365)

The role of women in ancient Greece is not a role of equality. Women in the *Iliad* are possessions and prizes. They can be won in sieges or in athletic games. The best a woman can hope for is marriage — thus Briseis would like to be Achilles’ wife even though he killed her husband (her three brothers also died in the siege). Being a wife is better than being a slave.

• **Achilles refuses to eat or drink. How does Athena take care of Achilles?**

From Briseis mourning for Patroclus, we see Achilles mourning for Patroclus:

“[...] I’m sick with longing for you!

There is no more shattering blow that I could suffer.

Not even if I should learn of my own father’s death

...

or the death of my dear son ...

Till now I’d hoped, hoped with all my heart

that I alone would die

far from the stallion-land of Argos, here in Troy,”
 (Fagles 19.381-392)

Compare:

“[...] Now you lie disfigured,
 my heart refuses meat and drink, though both
 are in this hut, because I miss you so.
 I could suffer nothing worse than this,
 not even if I learned my father’s died,
 he must be shedding gentle tears in Phthia,
 missing a son like me, while I stay here
 among strange people, fighting Trojans
 over Helen, whom I detest, or if I heard
 my dear son had died, who’s being raised for me
 on Scyros, if, in fact, he’s still alive,
 godlike Neoptolemus. Up to now,
 the heart here in my chest hoped that I alone
 would perish here in Troy, so far from Argos,
 where horses breed.”

(Johnston 19.389-403)

Achilles is mourning so much for Patroclus that he refuses to eat and drink, but at the request of Zeus, Athena puts in his body nectar and ambrosia — the drink and the food of the gods. Achilles is the only living human being in the *Iliad* who gets nourishment from nectar and ambrosia.

At this point, Achilles is rejecting the human condition. The human condition is that we die, yet Achilles is unable to come to terms with the fact of Patroclus' death. Normally, a human will grieve over the death of a friend, then he or she will move on with his or her life. Achilles has a very difficult time doing this.

• What happens when Achilles puts on his armor? What does the fire imagery indicate will happen?

Now Achilles dons Hephaestus' armor. This scene mirrors the scene in which Patroclus donned Achilles' armor. Then Patroclus was preparing for death, although he didn't know it. Now Achilles is preparing for death, and he definitely knows it. Achilles is laying down his life for his friend. Achilles knows that shortly after he gets revenge by killing Hector, that he himself will die.

Achilles is fierce as he dons the gifts of Hephaestus:

A sound of grinding came from the fighter's teeth,
his eyes blazed forth in searing points of fire,
unbearable grief came surging through his heart
and now, bursting with rage against the men of Troy,
he donned Hephaestus' gifts — magnificent armor
the god of fire forged with all his labor.

(Fagles 19.431-436)

Compare:

[...] A noise like thunder rose,
drummed by the soldier's marching feet. Amid them
all,
noble Achilles armed himself for battle,

his teeth clenched, eyes blazing with a fiery light,
his heart filled with a sorrow not to be endured.

As he pulled on the divine gifts which Hephaestus
had made for him, he raged against the Trojans.

(Johnston 19.440-446)

Fire imagery in an arming scene means that the hero will have an *aristeia*.

• What does the horse Roan Beauty prophesy? How does Achilles react to that prophecy? (Prophecy = verb; prophecy = noun.)

Achilles' immortal horse Roan Beauty, who is given human speech by Hera, speaks aloud to Achilles and prophesies Achilles' death:

“Yes, we will save your life — this time too —
master, mighty Achilles! But the day of death
already hovers near, and we are not to blame
but a great god is and the strong force of fate.”

(Fagles 19.483-485)

Compare:

“Mighty Achilles,
on this occasion we will bring you safely back.
But the day you'll die is fast approaching.
We won't be the cause, but some mighty god
and a strong fate.”

(Johnston 19.490-494)

Roan Beauty also says that it was Patroclus' fate to die in the battle; the horses did nothing wrong. Roan Beauty adds,

“Still *you* are doomed to die by force, Achilles,
cut down by a deathless god and mortal man!”

(Fagles 19.493-494)

Achilles replies,

“Why, Roan Beauty — why prophesy my doom?
Don't waste your breath. I know, well I know —
I am destined to die, far from my dear father,
far from mother. But all the same I will never stop
till I drive the Trojans to their bloody fill of war!”

(Fagles 19.487-501)

Compare:

“Xanthus,
why do you prophesy my death? There is no need.
I know well enough I'm fated to die here,
far from my loving parents. No matter.
I will not stop till I have driven the Trojans
to the limit of what they can endure in war.”

(Johnston 19.505-510)

Both Achilles and Roan Beauty (Xanthus) are out of the ordinary. Achilles has two fates and knows that he two fates, and Roan Beauty is an immortal animal. Both Achilles and Roan Beauty deviate from the normal order of things.

The conversation of Achilles and Roan Beauty about Achilles' approaching death — and later, Achilles' fight with the river — shows just how different Achilles is right now from normal humanity. Also, of course, Achilles is the only living mortal nourished by the food and drink of the gods.

Now Achilles returns to battle carrying the remarkable shield made by Hephaestus.

• Talking horses may strike readers today as funny. Reading this scene requires a willing suspension of disbelief, of course, but this is something we all do frequently. In watching a movie, you may have to believe that aliens are destroying the White House, for example, in *Independence Day*. What are you asked to believe in (to suspend your disbelief in) the following movies?

- *The Terminator*
- *Groundhog Day*
- *Watermelon Man*
- *Freaky Friday*
- *Jack*
- *Big*

• *The Terminator*

A cyborg from the future comes to the present day to kill John Connor, who will later lead the human resistance against the cyborgs.

• *Groundhog Day*

An egoistic man is condemned to live the same day over and over.

- *Watermelon Man*

A white man becomes black overnight.

- *Freaky Friday*

A mother and her teenage daughter exchange bodies.

- *Jack*

A young boy suddenly has the body of an adult man.

- *Big*

A 12-year-old boy makes a wish to be big, and ages into a 30-year-old man overnight.

- **An Important Note**

For more information about how Achilles is portrayed in this section of the *Iliad* as both less and more than human, read Elizabeth Vandiver's "Achilles Returns to Battle" in her *The Iliad of Homer*, pp. 149-156, to which I am obviously greatly indebted. As you read the rest of the *Iliad*, look out for these main points.

- **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles is portrayed both as less than a living human and as more than a living human being (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 149).**

As you read through the rest of the *Iliad*, note that Achilles is portrayed as being both more than human and less than human. His anger is more than human — it is excessive. Achilles is portrayed like a force of nature — like a fire sweeping over his victims. We see this more than human status in the fact that he has nectar and ambrosia in his body. Achilles is also portrayed as if he were already dead.

• **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles is portrayed as if he were already dead (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 149-151).**

Achilles is also portrayed as less than a living human being. He is frequently portrayed, as we have seen earlier and will see later, as if he were already dead.

We remember that when Thetis mourns the death of Patroclus, it is as if she were mourning the death of Achilles. When Thetis holds Achilles' head as he lies in the dust grieving for Patroclus, the imagery is that of a woman mourning a fallen warrior.

At other places in the *Iliad*, Achilles is portrayed as if he were already dead.

In Book 24, when Priam goes to the camp of Achilles to ransom the body of Hector, Priam is led by the god Hermes and crosses a river. In ancient Greek mythology, Hermes leads the souls of the dead to the Underworld. To reach the Land of the Dead, the souls must cross a river. The imagery in Book 24 is of Priam paying a visit to the Land of the Dead. It is as if Achilles is already dead. Of course, we the audience and Achilles himself knows that Achilles will soon die.

• **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles is portrayed as though he were almost a god (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 151).**

Achilles is portrayed as being more than human, as being either a god or a force of nature. Only the gods eat ambrosia and drink nectar, yet that is the food and drink that is nourishing Achilles' body. Zeus ordered Athena to put nectar and ambrosia in Achilles' chest (Fagles 19.412-413). In the *Iliad*, Achilles is the only living human being to be nourished by the food and drink of the gods.

• **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles is portrayed as though he were almost a force of nature (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 151).**

Once Achilles returns to battle, he is described over and over again with fire imagery. Of course, this indicates that Achilles is having his *aristeia*, but the repetition of fire imagery makes it seem as if he were fire, which is a force of nature.

Remember Book 18, in which Athena crowns Achilles with flame as he shows himself to the Trojans and shouts, thus allowing the corpse of Patroclus to be recovered. And over and over fire is mentioned in connection with Achilles. When he fights, he is like a fire. His eyes glitter like fire. His armor shines like fire. Etc. It seems as if Achilles himself were fire.

• **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles is portrayed as though he were a force of death (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 151-153).**

In addition to Achilles seeming to be fire, he also seems to be a force of death. In the *Iliad*, we have seen lots of death. We have seen lots of warriors kill other warriors. But when Achilles returns to battle, he is the only warrior who does any killing. From the time that Achilles goes into battle until the time that he kills Hector, no one else does any killing.

In addition, Achilles promises to sacrifice human beings for Patroclus. In fact, he does this. At the funeral of Patroclus, Achilles kills 12 Trojan youths. Human sacrifice, of course, is a horrible thing.

Achilles kills without mercy. Not only does he kill youths in a human sacrifice, but also he does not respect suppliants, killing them now although in the past he would have allowed them to live so that he can ransom them. Now Achilles is pitiless. Achilles kills inappropriately.

• **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, the only thing that can stop or slow down Achilles is a river-god or a god (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 153-154).**

Achilles even fights a river-god, which is something that no ordinary mortal would ever do. Achilles seems to embody fire in this section of the *Iliad*, so it is natural for him to be opposed by a river-god. Achilles kills all human beings who oppose him. Achilles kills all Trojans he comes across except for those whom he captures so that he can kill them later. Achilles is almost a god in this section of the *Iliad*, and only a river-god can successfully oppose him. Hephaestus, the god of fire, has to rescue Achilles from the river-god. Later, Apollo will slow Achilles down and allow Trojans to escape him; Apollo does this by disguising himself as a mortal and tricking Achilles into chasing him.

• **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles is not portrayed as a normal human being (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 154-155).**

Achilles has two natures because of his parents. His mother, Thetis, is a goddess, so part of Achilles' nature is divine. His father, Peleus, is mortal, so part of Achilles' nature is mortal. We see Achilles' two sides in opposition in this part of the *Iliad*.

In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles is not a normal human being. Achilles is portrayed as if he were a god or a force of nature, and he is portrayed as if were already dead. Achilles is not a normal human being in this part of the *Iliad*. An ordinary human being would grieve for a while for Patroclus, then would live his life. Achilles will find it very, very difficult to do that.

In addition, when Achilles goes into battle, he carries a representation of the Universe — the shield that Hephaestus made for him.

Zeus was stronger than his father, and he overthrew his father and became king of gods and men. If Zeus had been Achilles' father, Achilles would have been greater than him, as we know from a prophecy. If Zeus had been Achilles' father, Achilles would be or would become the king of gods and men.

In this part of the *Iliad*, Achilles completely rejects the human condition.

• **A main point: In this section of the *Iliad*, Achilles rejects the human condition (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 155).**

The main thing about Achilles in this part of the *Iliad* is that he rejects the human condition — the fact that we and our loved ones are mortal and we die. Achilles puts off holding a funeral for Patroclus. It actually takes Patroclus' ghost to appear before Achilles in a dream and beg to be buried before Achilles holds the funeral for Patroclus. It takes the gods to protect the body of Patroclus and keep it from decaying. Thetis puts nectar and ambrosia in Patroclus' nostrils to keep the body from decaying.

In addition, because Patroclus has not had a funeral yet, his *psyche* cannot enter the Underworld. This is horrible for a *psyche*.

Because of his grief at the death of Patroclus, Achilles has put his life on hold. Achilles does not eat or drink or sleep or wash or have sex with Briseis. Thetis wants Achilles to stop putting life on hold and to do all of these things. Achilles finds it very, very difficult to do any of these things right now. Achilles continues to put his life on hold.

Conclusion

Achilles needs to reintegrate himself into humanity. Achilles needs to accept the human condition. Achilles needs to accept the fact that being human means that we will die.

Achilles is not willing to do that now. Before he can even consider doing those things, he will first kill Hector.

Chapter 20: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 20 — Olympian Gods in Arms / Achilles Returns to Battle

• Why does Homer delay the death of Hector?

The audience would expect Achilles to quickly meet Hector. However, Homer is saving that for later. He has two good reasons for delaying this action:

- 1) The death of Hector is an important event, and it should come when the Trojans have been routed. Homer wants the death of Hector to be the climax of the day, and so there must be a long battle before Hector dies.
- 2) In addition, Homer wants to show Achilles' fury in battle by having him kill several Trojans.

As readers, we know when Achilles will kill Hector — we can read the titles of the books. But, of course, Homer's original audience did not read the *Iliad*. Homer himself did not have book titles — they were added later.

Therefore, Homer announces to his audience that there will be a delay: He has Zeus call a council of the gods.

• What does Zeus say during the council of the gods?

Zeus announces that he will allow the gods to fight as they wish — on whatever side they wish. He has a reason for allowing this: Achilles is such a fierce warrior that unless some of the gods oppose him, he will conquer Troy before its time. Zeus says,

“For if we leave Achilles there alone
to fight the Trojans, they'll not hold out
against the swift-footed son of Peleus,
not even briefly. In earlier days,

if they saw him, their fear would make them shake,
 and now his heart's so terribly enraged
 for his companion, I fear he may go
 beyond what fate ordains and storm the walls."

(Johnston 20.31-38)

This shows the greatness of Achilles as a warrior. He is such a great warrior that unless some gods oppose him he can raze the walls of Troy before fate has appointed that they come down.

In this book, we will see several gods and goddesses helping the Trojans. Even Poseidon, who is on the side of the Achaeans, helps save the life of the Trojan Aeneas.

• Which gods are on the side of the Achaeans? Which gods are on the side of the Trojans?

At this point the gods go off to war. As a reminder, these are the gods and which side they support (the first divine person mentioned in each group of two is on the side of the Trojans; the second divine person mentioned in each group of two is on the side of the Achaeans):

Aphrodite (she gave Helen to Paris) is present, but she is not opposed

Ares versus Athena

Apollo versus Poseidon

Artemis versus Hera

Leto (mother of Artemis & Apollo) versus Hermes

the River Xanthus (the chief river in Troy, called by mortals the Scamander River, and called by gods the Xanthus) versus Hephaestus, son of Hera

By the way, in the battle of the gods and goddesses, which occurs in Book 21, Athena defeats Ares and Aphrodite, and Hera defeats Artemis. Hermes declines to fight Leto, and Apollo declines to fight Poseidon. As you would expect, the gods who are on the side of the Achaeans are triumphant. Interestingly, the gods who decline to fight are the most dignified.

The presence of the gods shows that this is an important battle. After all, this is the day on which Achilles will kill Hector.

This image of the gods is awe-inspiring. Often, the gods and the goddesses are in the *Iliad* for comic relief, but not this time.

• **What happens when Poseidon causes an earthquake?**

We see an awe-inspiring image here. Poseidon, god of earthquakes, causes an earthquake so strong that Hades, god of the Underworld, is afraid that it will cause the earth to open up and allow everyone to see into the Land of the Dead:

Under the earth,
the king of the dead, Aidoneus, was terrified.
He leapt up from his throne afraid and shouting,
frightened that Earthshaker Poseidon would split up
the earth above him and reveal to gods and men
the dark and dreadful habitations of the dead,
which even gods detest, [...]

(Johnston 20.71-77)

Aidoneus is another name for Hades, god of the Land of the Dead.

• **Which parallels exist between Achilles and Diomedes?**

Aeneas and Achilles meet in battle; however, we know that Aeneas will not be killed by Achilles; Aeneas will go to Italy after Troy falls and will become an ancestor of the Romans. It's interesting to speculate why we even have this battle here.

One reason is that Homer uses parallelism in the *Iliad*. Here we have the *aristeia* of Achilles. (*Aristeia* means a time when a Greek hero is almost unstoppable.) Earlier in the *Iliad*, Diomedes was unstoppable; now Achilles is. The later parallel events in the *Iliad* are more important than the earlier ones.

Here are some other parallels between Diomedes and Achilles:

- Pallas Athena makes each of them blaze with fire.
- Each Greek hero fights Aeneas.
- In each fight with Aeneas, Aeneas is spirited away by a god. When Aeneas and Diomedes fight, Apollo rescues Aeneas. When Aeneas and Achilles fight, Poseidon rescues Aeneas.
- The gods are present in both instances. Diomedes wounds both Ares and Aphrodite, while the gods are lined up against each other when Achilles returns to the war. (There will be comedy involving the gods in the next book.) Of course, Achilles will fight a river-god in the next book.

• **What are two major contrasts between Achilles and Diomedes?**

There are two major contrasts between Diomedes and Achilles:

1) In Book 6, Diomedes met Glaucus, a friend, with whom he exchanged armor. When Achilles meets Hector, there will be no friendship. However, finally Achilles will regain his humanity when he meets with Priam. We are meant to be reminded of the meeting between Diomedes and Glaucus at this point, so we will think of it when Achilles meets Hector.

2) Diomedes is renowned for knowing his human limits. Achilles in this section of the *Iliad* does not recognize his human limits. Homer portrays Achilles as if he were more and less than human.

• **How is Achilles described when he and Aeneas meet?**

As I keep going through the *Iliad*, I begin to think that Achilles is not always a good character to the ancient Greeks. Achilles gets many Achaeans killed because of his anger at Agamemnon. I also think the ancient Greeks would dislike the way Achilles treats the dead body of Hector. Of course there is a positive ending to the *Iliad* — Achilles accepts the human condition.

On this day, Achilles is mad with bloodlust. He searches for Hector:

Hector he sought; in search of Hector turn'd
 His eyes around, for Hector only burn'd;
 And burst like lightning through the ranks, and
 vow'd
 To glut the god of battles with his blood.
 (Pope pdf 370)

According to Homer, Achilles is like a wounded lion — a wounded lion is the most dangerous of all animals:

[...] The son of Peleus, from the other side,
 charged up against him like a murderous lion
 which a whole community is keen to slaughter.
 At first, the beast moves on and leaves the group
 alone,
 but when some quick young hunter hits it with a
 spear,
 the lion gathers itself, opens its jaws wide,
 foaming at the mouth, as its brave heart roars inside.
 Its tail twitches to and fro against its ribs and flanks.

Then it drives itself to fight, charging straight ahead
 with furiously glaring eyes to kill someone
 or die there in the first attack. That's how Achilles,
 driven by his furious proud heart, came on then
 against the brave Aeneas.

(Johnston 20.197-209)

Achilles is like the wounded lion. Achilles, angry at Agamemnon, stayed away from the battle, but he was wounded figuratively when Patroclus was killed.

• What happens in the fight between Achilles and Aeneas?

In the fight between Achilles and Aeneas, we have the customary exchange of insults. In addition, Aeneas spends a lot of time telling Achilles his ancestry. This may seem boring to us, but ancient peoples found this interesting — in the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* we find the same

interest in genealogy. In addition, most of us are familiar with the long lists of begats in the Bible.

What happens when Achilles and Aeneas meet in battle? Very little. The two exchange insults, Aeneas recites his ancestry, then the two fight.

• Why does Poseidon rescue Aeneas? What will happen to Aeneas after the Trojan War has ended?

Poseidon rescues Aeneas because Aeneas is fated to survive the fall of Troy and Poseidon is afraid that Achilles will alter the course of fate by killing Aeneas. Poseidon says to Hera,

“So come, let us rescue him from death ourselves,
for fear the son of Cronus might just tower in rage
if Achilles kills this man. He is destined to survive.”

(Fagles 20.347-349)

And:

“[...] Aeneas will rule the men of Troy in power —
his sons’ sons and the sons born in future years.”

(Fagles 20.355-356)

Aeneas is the hero of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which is to the Romans what Homer’s works were to the ancient Greeks. Virgil died in 19 B.C.E., and his *Aeneid* was published after his death, against his wishes. Because we think that Homer’s *Iliad* was written down in approximately 730 B.C.E., there is a span of over 700 years between the two great epic poems. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Aeneas becomes an important ancestor of the Roman people.

Note that Achilles’ desire for revenge is so strong that often the gods are afraid that he will alter fate — something even

the gods don't do. The gods are afraid that Achilles will conquer Troy before its time, and they are afraid that Achilles will alter the course of history by killing a Trojan warrior who is fated to survive the fall of Troy. All of this shows that Achilles does not accept the human condition. Part of the human condition is to be subject to the forces of fate.

Poseidon rescues Aeneas by throwing him through the air to a less dangerous part of the battlefield (Fagles 20.372-376). Poseidon then says to him,

“What power, O prince! with force inferior far,
 Urged thee to meet Achilles' arm in war?
 Henceforth beware, nor antedate thy doom,
 Defrauding fate of all thy fame to come.
 But when the day decreed (for come it must)
 Shall lay this dreadful hero in the dust,
 Let then the furies of that arm be known,
 Secure no Grecian force transcends thy own.”

(Pope pdf 375)

• How do Achilles and Hector motivate their respective sides to compete?

Achilles urges the Achaeans to fight well. Achilles is a mighty warrior and swears to go through the enemy ranks:

“Don't just stand there any more,
 you fine Achaeans, don't stay away from Trojans.
 Let each of you go up against your man
 in full warrior fury. It's hard for me,

though I'm a powerful man, to attack
 so many men and battle with them all.
 Even deathless gods like Ares and Athena
 could not fight them in the jaws of war
 in such a conflict and keep on going.
 But what I can do with my hands and feet,
 and my own power, I'll do. I'll not hold back,
 but go straight at their lines. I don't think
 a Trojan who gets within my spear range
 will have reason to feel happy."

(Johnston 20.422-434)

Of course, Achilles does route the Trojans single-handedly although he says here that it is hard for him to fight the Trojans alone.

Hector also urges the Trojans to fight well:

"No fear of Pelides now, my gallant Trojans!
 I too could battle the deathless gods with words —
 it's hard with a spear, the gods are so much stronger.
 Not even Achilles can bring off all his boasts:
 some he'll accomplish, some cut short, half-done.
 I'm off to engage the man, though his fists are fire,
 though his fists are fire and his fury burnished iron!"

(Fagles 20.418-424)

Note: “Pelides” means “son of Peleus”; that is, Achilles. “Burnished” means “polished.”

Compare:

“You proud-hearted Trojans,
 don’t be afraid of that son of Peleus.
 I, too, can battle anyone with words,
 even the immortals. But with a spear,
 that’s more difficult, they’re so much stronger.
 Achilles won’t accomplish everything
 he says he will. Some of it he’ll manage,
 some he’ll leave undone. I’ll go against him,
 though his blazing hands are like a fire,
 his strength like glittering iron.”

(Johnston 20.437-446)

It certainly sounds as if Achilles and Hector are going to fight now, but the big battle between Achilles and Hector will not yet take place. The two meet in this book, but Apollo saves Hector. (Here Homer is teasing his audience.)

• What happens when Achilles and Hector meet in battle?

Very little action happens; the meeting is described briefly. The two exchange words, including these honest words by Hector:

“Son of Peleus,
 don’t try to frighten me with words, as if

I were some child. I, too, know well enough
 how to shout out taunting words and insults.
 I know you're brave, stronger than me by far.
 But these things are in the lap of the gods.
 Though I'm the weaker man, I'll take your life,
 with one throw of my spear, for in the past
 it's proved it's sharp enough."

(Johnston 20.516-524)

Hector is very human, and occasionally he tries to do more than he is capable of. He knows that Achilles is stronger than he is, but he still thinks he has a chance to kill him.

Eventually, a far weaker man will kill Achilles — Paris (with the help of Apollo) will shoot an arrow in Achilles' heel.

Apollo rescues Hector:

Hector raised his spear and threw it. But Athena,
 with the slightest puff of breath, blew it aside,
 away from glorious Achilles, turning it back
 to godlike Hector. It landed there beside his feet.
 Then, with a terrifying shout, Achilles charged,
 lusting to kill. But Apollo snatched up Hector,
 something a god can do with ease, then hid
 him in thick cloud.

(Johnston 20.525-532)

• **When Achilles kills people, where does he wound them?**

Achilles is unstoppable in battle.

Achilles is like a wounded lion. He kills these warriors by inflicting these wounds:

Iphition (Fagles 20.436-442): inflicts head wound

Demoleon (Fagles 20.449-451): inflicts head wound

Hippodamas (Fagles 20.455-458): inflicts back wound

Polydorus (Fagles 20.463-470): inflicts back wound

Dryops (Fagles 20.516): inflicts neck wound

Demuchus (Fagles 20.517-519): spears his knee, and then kills him with a sword

Laogonus and Dardanus (Fagles 20.520-522): one he spears; one he kills with a sword

Tros (a suppliant) (Fagles 20.523-530): inflicts liver wound

Echeclus (Fagles 20.536-537): inflicts head wound

Deucalion (Fagles 20.540-545): cuts head off

Rhigmus (Fagles 20.548-549): inflicts belly wound

Areithous (Fagles 20.550-551): inflicts back wound

We notice that many of the wounds are in the head and in the back.

The head wounds seem significant to me — they show Achilles' great skill in battle. If you want to be sure to wound a man, you should aim at the middle of his chest. That way, if your shot is not completely on target, you have a good chance of wounding a shoulder or some other part of his

body. On the other hand, when you aim at the head, you had better be on target because if you miss, you probably won't wound the man at all. You have to have a lot of skill to consistently give a head wound.

The wounds to the back are also significant. Achilles is killing people who are running away from him.

• What happens when Achilles meets a suppliant named Tros?

On this day, in this battle, after the death of Patroclus, Achilles shows no mercy. Indeed, he even kills a suppliant named Tros:

Then Tros, Alastor's son, crawled to Achilles' knees
and clutched them, hoping he'd spare him,
let Tros off alive, no cutting him down in blood,
he'd pity Tros, a man of his own age — the young
fool,
he'd no idea, thinking *Achilles* could be swayed!
Here was a man not sweet at heart, not kind, no,
he was raging, wild — as Tros grasped his knees,
desperate, begging, Achilles slit open his liver,
the liver spurted loose, gushing with dark blood,
drenched his lap and the night swirled down his eyes
as his life breath slipped away.

(Fagles 20.523-533)

Compare:

Then Tros, Alastor's son, fell at Achilles' knees,

clutching them, begging him to spare his life,
 to capture him alive, instead of killing him,
 moved by pity for a man the same age as himself.
 What a fool! He did not know there was no way
 to change Achilles' mind, he was not a tender man
 with a soft heart, but full of fighting rage. With his
 hands
 Tros tried to clutch Achilles' knees, desperate
 to plead for mercy, but Achilles' sword struck him
 in his liver, which slid out from the wound.
 Black blood, pouring from the gash, filled up his lap.

Then darkness veiled his eyes, and his spirit left him.
 (Johnston 20.555-566)

• **Who does Achilles remind you of when he fights?**

Achilles is acting like Agamemnon and Little Ajax, of all people.

Agamemnon wants all the Trojans to die. Agamemnon doesn't pay any heed to suppliants. Agamemnon is without mercy. Achilles is another Agamemnon on this day of battle. Sometimes Achilles is also acting like Little Ajax — as when he kills men who are running away from him. Achilles is acting like two warriors we don't especially admire.

One thing we notice in this book (and in the next) is that Achilles does not show mercy. He kills a suppliant, a man who wishes to be kept alive and ransomed. Agamemnon

wishes for all the Trojans to die, even unborn boys. Achilles is like that in the way he kills all the enemy, indiscriminately.

Little Ajax is very good at running down the enemy as they flee, and Achilles does the same thing.

• **What kind of a warrior is Achilles?**

Another thing to notice here is that Achilles doesn't stop to strip away his victims' armor — Achilles is much too eager to kill Trojans to stop for material gain.

We may also be reminded of Phoenix' words in Book 9, when he was describing what happens when a person oversteps the mark and does not make amends by using Prayers:

“[...] But if one denies them,
turns them away, stiff-necked and harsh — off they
go
to the son of Cronus, Zeus, and pray that Ruin
will strike the man down crazed and blinded
until he's paid the price.”

(Fagles 9.620-624)

Will Achilles be struck down by Ruin? The *Iliad* is in part a tragedy. Achilles is a basically good person, but because of a flaw of too much pride and excessive anger he allows his friend Patroclus to be killed and as a result Achilles loses much of his humanity. Previously, Achilles has shown kindness to people. He allowed Eetion to undergo the rites of death wearing armor. He even allowed Patroclus to wear his (Achilles') own armor to stop the Trojans from setting the Achaean ships afire. Now he is like a wounded lion, killing everyone he can. Therefore, these are good questions:

Will Achilles be struck down by Ruin? Will Achilles ever regain his humanity?

Is the *Iliad* an anti-war poem? Possibly. When describing warriors, Homer constantly refers to animals — especially lions. War can make warriors into beasts. The realistic details of death can also be construed as being anti-war. In addition, war has a bad effect on Achilles.

• **Near the end of Book 20, which two similes does Homer use to describe Achilles: Fagles 20.553-559 / Johnston 20.588-593 and Fagles 20.559-562 / Johnston 20.593-508?**

Near the end of Book 20, Achilles is vividly compared in two Homeric similes to a raging fire and to oxen:

[...] Achilles now

like inhuman fire raging on through the mountain gorges

splinter-dry, setting ablaze big stands of timber,

the wind swirling the huge fireball left and right —

chaos of fire — Achilles storming on with brandished spear

like a frenzied god of battle trampling all he killed

and the earth ran black with blood.

(Fagles 20.553-559)

Compare:

Just as a terrifying fire rages through deep woods
on a parched mountain, burning dense stands of trees,
as the driving wind blows flames to every spot
that is how Achilles, like a god, raged with his spear,

attacking and killing men all through the fight.

The dark earth ran with blood.

(Johnston 20.588-593)

And:

[...] Thundering on,

on like oxen broad in the brow some field hand yokes
to crush white barley heaped on a well-laid threshing
floor

and the grain is husked out fast by the bellowing
oxen's hoofs —

(Fagles 20.559-562)

Compare:

[...] Just as a man yokes oxen,

big bulls, wide in the shoulder, to grind barley

on a well-built threshing floor, and lowing oxen

quickly flatten all the grain, that is how brave
Achilles

drove his sure-footed horses to trample on the dead

and on their shields as well.

(Johnston 20.593-508)

• At the end of Book 20, what image do we have of Achilles?

At the end of Book 20 is a memorable image of Achilles. He is riding in his war chariot, and here it is used as a weapon. He rides over enemy warriors, and blood splashes up. Achilles and his chariot are covered in blood. Achilles also

is compared to something not human: fire. He is compared to a fire raging through a mountain gorge, engulfing dry timber. A raging forest fire must have been a frightening sight to the ancient Greeks. Homer uses that image frequently in the *Iliad*. As Achilles fights, he is frequently compared to fire.

Book 20 ends with an unforgettable image of Achilles covered in blood:

so as the great Achilles rampaged on, his sharp-
hoofed stallions
trampled shields and corpses, axle under his chariot
splashed
with blood, blood on the handrails sweeping round
the car,
sprays of blood shooting up from the stallions' hoofs
and churning, whirling rims — and the son of Peleus
charioteering on to seize his glory, bloody filth
splattering both strong arms, Achilles' invincible
arms.

(Fagles 20.563-569)

Compare:

The chariot axle underneath
got sprayed with blood. Blood soaked the chariot
rails,
thrown up in gouts from horses' hooves and wheel
rims.
But Peleus' son pushed on to win more glory,

blood spattered over his all-conquering hands.

(Johnston 20.598-602)

Note that the chariot is now being used as a weapon of war instead of as merely a vehicle for transportation.

Conclusion

At this point, the audience would expect Achilles to meet Hector. However, Homer will continue to delay their meeting.

Chapter 21: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 21 — Achilles Fights the River

• How well is Achilles fighting at the beginning of Book 21?

At the beginning of Book 21, Achilles is fighting magnificently. He is routing the entire Trojan army by himself. Achilles drives half of the Trojans into the river, while the other half flee back to Troy.

This river has two names: the gods call it Xanthus, and the mortals call it Scamander.

With the Trojans in the river, Achilles — bloodthirsty — jumps in after them with a sword, leaving his spear on the riverbank:

Then divinely born Achilles left his spear
beside a tamarisk bush and jumped into the stream,
like an inhuman thing, armed only with his sword,
his heart intent on killing. Turning in all directions,
he kept on striking. The men his sword slaughtered
cried out in terror. The water turned blood red.

(Johnston 21.20-25)

• Why does Achilles capture alive 12 Trojan youths?

In Book 18, Achilles promised to sacrifice 12 Trojan youths at the funeral of Patroclus when he said over the dead body of Patroclus:

“Here in front of your flaming pyre I’ll cut the throats
of a dozen sons of Troy in all their shining glory,
venting my rage on them for your destruction!”

(Fagles 18.392-394)

Of course, we consider human sacrifice a horrible thing today, and it was a horrible thing at the time that Homer created the *Iliad*. We are not supposed to support Achilles when he sacrifices 12 Trojan youths at the funeral of Patroclus.

Even after killing several Trojans, and capturing 12 young Trojans to be killed at Patroclus' funeral, Achilles wants to kill more Trojans. All of this shows Achilles in his rage — Achilles unstoppable in his fury. Achilles definitely proves that he is a mighty warrior.

• What happened the previous time that Achilles met Lycaon?

Achilles kills Lycaon, a suppliant. Achilles kills a young man. At this time, Achilles is not showing mercy to any Trojan. He kills when it would be better to show mercy.

Previously, Lycaon and Achilles had met in battle. Rather than killing Lycaon, Achilles took him alive and then sold him into slavery. Then Eetion ransomed and released him.

Selling prisoners of war into slavery frequently happens in the Trojan War. This (and ransoming prisoners) is a way of gaining wealth during the Trojan War. However, now Achilles shows no mercy. Lycaon's father is Priam, King of Troy and father of Hector, who killed Patroclus. Achilles shows no mercy to any Trojan and especially not to any son of Priam.

The episode in which Achilles kills a suppliant is significant. Lycaon is a Trojan whom Achilles has captured before on a midnight raid. Achilles, of course, did not kill him, but he did sell him into slavery. However, Eetion released Lycaon (Fagles 21.49-50), who went back home to his family, stayed

there 11 days, then on the 12th day returned to battle where he is now at the mercy of Achilles.

We should note several things in this episode. One is the reference to Eetion, who has the same name as the father of Andromache, which reminds us of Achilles' former courtesy to him — giving him his burial rites with his armor. In addition, of course, the Eetion who ransomed and freed Lycaon was merciful, which Achilles is not. We are meant to note this contrast. Eetion, and Achilles earlier, were merciful. Now Achilles is merciless.

Homer sings,

That time, Achilles took him in his ship and sold him

in well-built Lemnos, where the son of Jason

had paid the purchase price. From there, Eëtion,

a friend and guest from Imbros, had ransomed
Lycaon,

paying a huge sum, then sent him on to Arisbe.

He'd escaped from there in secret and gone home,

back to his father's house. Once he returned from
Lemnos,

for eleven days his heart enjoyed his friends.

On the twelfth, some god threw him back again

into Achilles' hands, who was about to ship him,

against Lycaon's wishes, down to dwell with Hades.

(Johnston 21.46-56)

Another thing to note is the timing. During the time when Achilles has not been fighting, Lycaon has been safe with his family. On the very day that Lycaon returns to Troy, Achilles has begun to fight again and comes upon him.

Achilles recognizes Lycaon, and he remembers that he previously had sold Lycaon as a slave. Then Achilles says,

“But come, let him taste my spear point. I’ll see,
and in my heart confirm, if he’ll return,
as he’s just done, or if life-giving earth,
which keeps even strong men down, will hold him.”

(Johnston 21.70-73)

Lycaon knows Achilles’ might, and he decides to beg for his life. He rushes under Achilles’ spear, grabs Achilles’ knees, and begins to beg:

“Achilles!
I grasp your knees — respect me, show me mercy!
I am your suppliant, Prince, you must respect me!”

(Fagles 21.84-86)

And:

“Ah, to a short life you bore me, mother — mother,
she was Laothoë, aged Altes’ daughter ...
Altes who rules the Leleges always keen for war,
who holds the Pedasus heights along the Satniois —
and Priam wed his daughter, with many other wives,
and she produced two sons, and you, you’ll butcher both!

One you killed in the ranks of frontline fighters,
 noble Polydorus, ran him down with your lance
 and a gruesome death awaits me here and now —
 no hope of escape for me, from *your* clutches,
 not when destiny drives me up against you.

Listen, this too — take it to heart, I beg you —
 don't kill me! I'm not from the same womb as
 Hector,

Hector who killed your friend, your strong, *gentle*
 friend!"

(Fagles 21.96-109)

Compare:

“Father Zeus must hate me, to give me to you
 for a second time. My mother, Laothoë,
 daughter of old Altes, gave birth to me
 to live a shortened life. Altes rules over
 war-loving Leleges, in steep Pedasus,
 by the river Satnioeis. His daughter
 married Priam, who has many other wives.
 She had two sons. Now you'll have slaughtered both.
 You killed fine Polydorus with those men
 fighting at the front, when your sharp spear
 sent him to die. Now death comes for me, as well.
 I don't expect to escape your hands this time,

since some god has guided me right to them.
 But I'll say one more thing, take it to heart,
 don't kill me. I'm not from the same womb
 as Hector, the man who killed your comrade,
 that kind and powerful warrior.”

(Johnston 21.98-114)

We must here feel pity for Lycaon, who begs for his life. If Lycaon dies, his mother will have no son left, so no one will be alive to look out for her — Achilles has already killed her only other son.

Increasing the pathos is the fact Lycaon points out that he is only a half-brother to Hector; they share the same father, but not the same mother.

Note that Lycaon and Polydorus, whom Lycaon mentions that Achilles has killed (Fagles 20.463), are sons of Priam and thus at least half-brothers of Hector. Achilles is furious at Hector because he killed Patroclus, his best friend. Hector has a right to be even more furious at Achilles because Achilles has been killing Hector's blood relatives.

Note that the Trojans practice polygamy. Priam has many wives and/or concubines. One possible theme of the *Iliad* is how men act when there is a scarcity of women. They can become more aggressive and more competitive; thus the power struggle between Achilles and Agamemnon over Briseis. The scarcity of women (if it existed) can occur when powerful men — kings and warriors — take many women. A scarcity of women in the ancient world helps explain the many suitors who want to marry Penelope, Odysseus' wife, in the *Odyssey*.

• **What form does supplication take in the ancient world?**

Being a suppliant — begging for one's life or begging for help — takes on a standard form in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

- The suppliant takes one arm and put it around the knees of the person he is supplicating. This keeps the warrior from moving.
- The suppliant uses his other hand to reach up and grab the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. Lycaon grabs Achilles' spear.
- The suppliant begs for mercy.

Why does supplication take this form? Elizabeth Vandiver explains (*The Iliad of Homer* 152-153, the three points are paraphrased below):

- The suppliant is showing that he does not have a weapon. One hand is around the warrior's knees; the other hand is grabbing the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. The suppliant is not holding a weapon in either hand.
- The suppliant is making the warrior pay attention to the suppliant. One hand is around the warrior's knees, so the warrior can't move. The other hand is grabbing the warrior's chin or beard or weapon. The warrior is forced to pay attention to the suppliant.
- The act of supplication shows that the suppliant is completely vulnerable. In addition to being unarmed, the suppliant's throat is exposed because he is looking up at the warrior.

In the act of supplication, the suppliant is completely vulnerable and submissive to the warrior.

• **What do we learn about Achilles when he kills Lycaon?**

In response to the begging of Lycaon, Achilles says that now he will take no ransom for anyone, although when Patroclus was alive, yes, he would sometimes take prisoners alive and ransom them. Achilles has changed since Patroclus has died, as he makes very clear in his speech to Lycaon:

[...] “Fool,
 don’t talk to me of ransom. No more speeches.
 Before Patroclus met his day of destiny, true,
 it warmed my heart a bit to spare some Trojans:
 droves I took alive and auctioned off as slaves.
 But now not a single Trojan flees his death,
 not one the gods hand over to me before your gates,
 none of all the Trojans, sons of Priam least of all!
 Come, friend, you too must die. Why moan about it
 so?
 Even Patroclus died, a far, far better man than you.
 And look, you see how handsome and powerful I
 am?
 The son of a great man, the mother who gave me life
 a deathless goddess. But even for me, I tell you,
 death and the strong force of fate are waiting.
 There will come a dawn or sunset or high noon
 when a man will take my life in battle too —
 flinging a spear perhaps

or whipping a deadly arrow off his bow.”

(Fagles 21.111-128)

Compare:

“You fool,
 don’t offer me a ransom or some plea.
 Before Patroclus met his deadly fate,
 sparing Trojans pleased my heart much more.
 I took many overseas and sold them.
 But now not one of them escapes his death,
 no one whom god delivers to my hands,
 here in front of Ilion, not one,
 not a single Trojan, especially none
 of Priam’s children. So now, my friend,
 you too must die. Why be sad about it?
 Patroclus died, a better man than you.
 And look at me. You see how fine I am,
 how tall, how handsome? My father’s a fine man,
 the mother who gave birth to me a goddess.
 Yet over me, as well, hangs fate, my death.
 There’ll come a dawn, or noon, or evening,
 when some man will take my life in battle,
 he’ll strike me with his spear or with an arrow
 shot from his bowstring.”

(Johnston 21.116-135)

Lycaon realizes that Achilles will not give him mercy. He lets go of Achilles' knees and spear, and Achilles kills him by stabbing him in the throat. Now Achilles is like Agamemnon, who also wants Trojan suppliants to die.

• How has Achilles changed since Patroclus was killed in battle?

Achilles is aware of how much he has changed since Patroclus' death. Before Patroclus died, Achilles was much more merciful. Often he ransomed Trojans or sold them into slavery instead of killing them. We get a glimpse of the past Achilles when he refers to his past kindnesses here. Now, however, he much prefers to kill the Trojans. That is the present Achilles. So here we get a glimpse of Achilles as he was, in comparison to what he is now. The comparison is not a good one.

The human condition is that death is not optional, even for heroes who have a goddess for a mother. Everyone dies — no exception. Patroclus died, Lycaon dies, Achilles will die. Achilles shows an understanding of the human condition. In this, we have a glimpse of the future Achilles, who will combine understanding with compassion. Here, Achilles is able to call Lycaon “friend,” showing that he feels solidarity with Lycaon in his mortality, but Achilles is unable to feel compassion now. Achilles still rejects the human condition; although he can easily accept his own death, he cannot accept the death of Patroclus.

Of course, Achilles knows that he will die. He even mentions dying by an arrow whipping off a bow. We know that Paris — aided by Apollo — will kill Achilles with an arrow.

• Is Homer an anti-war poet?

We note that war brutalizes warriors.

Lycaon is someone we feel pity for. If Achilles cannot feel pity for Lycaon, how much less will he be able to feel pity for Hector when he meets him?

• **How well does Achilles fight at the river?**

Achilles not only kills Lycaon, but he slings his corpse into the river. This shows a lack of respect for the corpse — a respect that Achilles used to show, as when he left the armor on Eetion’s corpse and gave the corpse a decent funeral. Achilles is also disrespecting the river-god. Achilles says,

“Lie there, among the fish.
They’ll lick blood from your wound with no respect.
Your mother won’t set you on your funeral bed,
lamenting over you. No, Scamander,
the swirling river, will carry you away
to the broad lap of the sea. Many fish
will swim up to the darkly rippled surface
to eat white fat from Lycaon.”

(Johnston 21.144-151)

Achilles has no interest in the burials of Trojan corpses. Instead, he flings their corpses into the river for the fish to eat. We see this over and over in this book.

At this time, Achilles shows no mercy whatsoever. His only thought is to kill Trojans and to get 12 Trojan youths so that he can later sacrifice them. A better Achilles would show mercy to and respect suppliants.

In Book 1, Agamemnon refused a suppliant. Here, Achilles does. Previously, Agamemnon has said that he wants every Trojan male to die; now Achilles does.

Achilles continues with his bloodthirst:

“[...] Die, Trojans, die —
 till I butcher all the way to sacred Troy —
 run headlong on, I’ll hack you from behind!
 Nothing can save you now —
 not even your silver-whirling, mighty-tiding river —
 not for all the bulls you’ve slaughtered to it for years,
 the rearing stallions drowned alive in its eddies
 ... die! —
 even so — writhing in death till all you Trojans pay
 for Patroclus’ blood and the carnage of Achaeans
 killed by the racing ships when I was out of action!”
 (Fagles 21.146-155)

Compare:

“[...] So die,
 all you fleeing Trojans, until we reach
 that sacred city Ilion, with me there,
 right behind you, fighting and killing you.
 Your flowing river with its silver eddies
 won’t help, for all those bulls you’ve sacrificed
 all these years, for all the sure-footed horses
 you’ve thrown alive into its swirling pools.
 No matter, you’ll suffer an evil fate,

till every one of you has paid in full
 for Patroclus' death, for Achaea's dead,
 the men you slaughtered by our swift ships,
 when I was not among them there."

(Johnston 21.151-163)

One thing to note is that Achilles kills those who flee from him — in this, Achilles is like Little Ajax. Achilles wounds warriors in the back.

These passages (especially the passage concerning Lycaon) show a weakness of Achilles — he is not merciful here, the way he used to be. This is the way he has been changed by Patroclus' death. Achilles used to be a better man; now he is a worse man. Achilles is at war with his inner nature, which is merciful.

• **What happens when Achilles meets Asteropaeus?**

Achilles continues to kill Trojans, including Asteropaeus. Achilles charges Asteropaeus, the son of a river. This takes place near the river Xanthus (Scamander), who is still upset:

the river seething for all the youths Achilles
 slaughtered

chopped to bits in its tide without a twinge of pity.

(Fagles 21.167-168)

Here we learn that Achilles can be wounded, as Asteropaeus wounds his arm:

But the other grazed Achilles' strong right arm
 and dark blood gushed as the spear shot past his back,

(Fagles 21.189-190)

Achilles then kills Asteropaeus, and he stops to strip the warrior's armor.

One thing to notice about Achilles is that he almost never stops to strip off his victims' armor. (Achilles is not concerned with material things. He has been concerned with glory, honor, and love, and he has enjoyed fine things, but he is not obsessed with material wealth — witness how he responded to Agamemnon's embassy to him.) Achilles' not stopping to strip the armor from the Trojans he kills is not done out of respect for the victims, but only because Achilles is too busy searching for more Trojans to kill. Achilles does strip Asteropaeus' armor — one of the rare times he does this. He may do that because he is angry at being wounded, and so he wants to disrespect Asteropaeus' corpse.

Note that part of a hero's *aristeia* is getting wounded, and Achilles is wounded here.

• **Why do Achilles and the river-god fight?**

In his killing of the Trojans, Achilles occasionally insults the river. When he throws Asteropaeus' corpse in the river, he says,

“Here is a great river flowing past you, look —
what help can he give you! None!”

(Fagles 21.217-218)

After killing Asteropaeus, Achilles claims descent from Zeus, who fathered Achilles' grandfather Aeacus, who fathered Peleus, who fathered Achilles.

Achilles has thrown the corpses of many Trojans into the river, including the corpse of Lycaon. Achilles has killed many, many Trojans. (Mortals call the river Scamander; the gods call it Xanthus.)

According to the polytheistic ancient Greeks, nature has many gods. A river is a god. A stream is a god. A lake is a god. The same applies to trees. Here the river-god is angry at Achilles because Achilles has choked the river by throwing so many corpses into it. The river tells Achilles,

“Achilles,
 you may be the most powerful of men,
 but you’re inflicting too much damage here.
 Yes, the gods are always there to help you.
 And if Cronos’ son is now enabling you
 to kill all Trojans, at least drive them off
 far from my stream. Carry out your work,
 this butchery, out there on the plain.
 Now corpses fill my channels, I can’t let
 my waters flow through anywhere to reach
 the glimmering sea. I’m choking on the dead,
 while you keep up these harsh atrocities.
 Come, you leader of your people, let me be.
 I find your actions here astounding.”

(Johnston 21.254-267)

Achilles agrees not to throw corpses into the river, but he says that he won’t stop killing Trojans:

“So be it, Scamander sprung of Zeus — as you command.

But I, I won’t stop killing these overweening Trojans,

not till I've packed them in their walls and tested
Hector,
strength against strength — he kills me or I kill him!"

(Fagles 21.252-255)

The river complains to Phoebus Apollo that Apollo is not doing enough to help the Trojans and is allowing the Trojans to die. Hearing that, Achilles attacks the river, jumping into it to fight the river-god.

• **How is Achilles rescued from the river?**

Achilles fights the river, and the river nearly overcomes him. It takes a god to slow down Achilles' death spree and nearly overcome him. However, Achilles is rescued by other gods and continues to hunt down Trojans.

It seems as if the river will overcome Achilles, but he prays to Zeus (Fagles 21.308-320):

“Is there no god Achilles to befriend,
No power to avert his miserable end?
Prevent, O Jove! this ignominious date,
And make my future life the sport of fate.
Of all heaven's oracles believed in vain,
But most of Thetis must her son complain;
By Phoebus' darts she prophesied my fall,
In glorious arms before the Trojan wall.
Oh! had I died in fields of battle warm,
Stretch'd like a hero, by a hero's arm!

Might Hector's spear this dauntless bosom rend,
 And my swift soul o'ertake my slaughter'd friend.
 Ah no! Achilles meets a shameful fate,
 Oh how unworthy of the brave and great!
 Like some vile swain, whom on a rainy day,
 Crossing a ford, the torrent sweeps away,
 An unregarded carcase to the sea."

(Pope pdf 386)

Achilles may not recognize his human limits, but he is human, nevertheless. Reality intrudes — Achilles would like to defeat the river-god, but Achilles is a mortal and he cannot defeat the immortal river-god.

Achilles gets divine help. Both Poseidon and Athena comfort him, and they apparently help him out of the river (or they give him courage to get out of the river by himself). Athena gives Achilles courage. Then they leave. The courage that Achilles receives from Pallas Athena helps him fight the river on the plain — the river has overflowed its banks:

Not a whole river stops the hero's course,
 While Pallas fills him with immortal force.
 With equal rage, indignant Xanthus roars,
 And lifts his billows, and o'erwhelms his shores.

(Pope pdf 387)

Achilles, however, continues to attack the river. This time, Achilles and the river are evenly matched. However, the river Xanthus asks another river, the Simois, for help.

This time, Hera sends Hephaestus to save Achilles. Hephaestus, the god of fire, burns the river into submission. Hera sends winds, and Hephaestus both burns the plain and burns the river.

The river is forced to give up:

At length the river rear'd his languid head,
 And thus, short-panting, to the god he said:
 "Oh Vulcan! oh! what power resists thy might?
 I faint, I sink, unequal to the fight —
 I yield — Let Ilion fall; if fate decree —
 Ah — bend no more thy fiery arms on me!"
 He ceased; wide conflagration blazing round;
 (Pope pdf 388)

Vulcan is the Latin name for Hephaestus.

• Why does Homer relate the incident in which Achilles fights the river? What do we learn about Achilles in this fight?

The fight between Achilles and the river is a strange thing. Why does Homer allow it?

1) Obviously, we have Achilles fighting nature.

A river is a part of nature, and even though the river does take the form of a man when it talks to Achilles, it still is a river during their fight, using its waters to rise up against Achilles. Certainly, man versus nature is a worthy battle, with nature usually winning. Floods, hurricanes, volcanoes, monsoons, etc., kill human beings. This is an important fight.

2) In addition, Achilles is fighting his human nature.

Normally, Achilles is very much a human being with a good character. He is a great warrior, yes, but he is also capable of enjoying the fine things of life — witness his singing epic songs before his reception of Agamemnon's embassy to him — and of loving other human beings (Briseis, his father, and especially Patroclus). In addition, Achilles is frequently generous. Before Patroclus was killed, Achilles often would ransom Trojan soldiers instead of killing them. Achilles also impressed Andromache by allowing Eetion, her father, to keep his armor during his burial rites. The fight with the river symbolizes Achilles' fight with his own human nature.

3) The fight with the river shows that Achilles does not recognize his human limitations.

Achilles is willing to fight a god — even without permission from a goddess. Diomedes fought the gods, but he had permission to do so from a goddess.

4) This incident also shows Achilles' pride; he puts himself above a river, which to the ancient Greeks was a god.

However, notice who wins the fight between Achilles and the river: The river wins. Achilles is forced to call out for help, and first Poseidon and Athena, then Hephaestus, the god of fire, rescue him. Similarly, eventually Achilles' good nature will win out.

5) In addition, the fight with the river shows Achilles' limitations.

Achilles is forced to call out for help because the river is more powerful than he and he is afraid of drowning:

so the relentless tide kept overtaking Achilles,
yes, for all his speed — gods are stronger than men.

(Fagles 21.296-297)

6) *Achilles is still mortal, although he is a very strong and handsome mortal.*

Despite Achilles' gifts, he cannot defeat the river on his own. Achilles may not accept the human condition, but he is still subject to it. A mortal can wound Achilles, and a god can overcome him if he is not helped by other gods.

• When the Greek deities fight among themselves, who wins and loses?

Frequently, the gods provide comic release to the audience of the poem. We have seen a seriously heart-wrenching scene with Achilles and Lycaon. Therefore, comic relief is appropriate at this time. The audience needs to feel relief from the seriously heart-wrenching scene with Lycaon so that it can feel more intensely the even more seriously heart-wrenching scene in Book 22 when Achilles kills Hector.

There is something funny in the idea of immortal gods fighting each other. After all, the gods are immortal, so they can't be killed. For human beings, war is a serious matter: Human beings die.

In this battle, the gods and goddesses who support the Achaeans fight the gods and goddesses who support the Trojans. As a reminder, these are the gods and which side they support (the first divine person mentioned in each group is on the side of the Trojans; the second divine person mentioned in each group is on the side of the Achaeans):

Aphrodite (she gave Helen to Paris) is present, but she is not opposed

Ares versus Athena

Apollo versus Poseidon

Artemis versus Hera

Leto (mother of Artemis & Apollo) versus Hermes
 the River Xanthus (the chief river in Troy, called by
 mortals the Scamander River, and called by gods the
 Xanthus) versus Hephaestus, son of Hera

Winners and Losers

Hephaestus, god of fire, defeats the river.

Athena defeats Ares, then beats the breasts of Aphrodite,
 who was helping Ares.

- Athena defeats Ares, throwing a heavy boundary-
 stone at him.
- Athena defeats Aphrodite, who has been helping
 Ares leave the field of battle.

Apollo declines to fight Poseidon over mortals:

“Earthshaker, you’d never call me prudent,
 if I fought with you over human beings,
 those pitiful creatures are like the leaves,
 now full of blazing life, eating nourishment
 the earth provides, then fading into death.
 No, let’s quickly end our quarrel, leaving
 these mortal men to fight amongst themselves.”

(Johnston 21.556-562)

Apollo’s speech shows a little of the human condition.
 Apollo says that we live for a little while and then we die.
 Apollo regards human beings the way that we regard fruit
 flies, which live for only a few weeks and then die.

In addition, Hermes won’t fight Leto, the mother of Artemis.

One thing to notice here is that the gods who won't fight (including Zeus) have more dignity than those who do.

Hera then defeats Artemis. The battle between Hera and Artemis is funny, and is meant to be funny. Hera strips Artemis of her bow and arrows, then uses them to box her ears. Artemis immediately runs home to Daddy, father Zeus:

By now the Huntress had reached Olympus heights
and made her way to the bronze-floored house of
Zeus.

And down she sat on her Father's lap, a young girl,
sobbing, her deathless robe quivering round her
body.

(Fagles 21.577-580)

• **What are the main points we learn from the fight of the gods/goddesses?**

1) *The gods who favor the Achaeans defeat — or don't need to fight — the gods who favor the Trojans.*

Of course, this is more foreshadowing of the fall of Troy.

2) *We learn that peace is good.*

When Poseidon offers to fight Phoebus Apollo, Apollo declines on the ground that he should not fight his father's brother. Hermes declines to fight Leto. The gods who decline to fight have more dignity than the gods who fight. Often, Homer seems to be an anti-war poet, and this is one more piece of evidence for this idea.

3) *The main thing we have in this scene is a parody of war.*

The way the gods and goddesses fight is silly. For example, Hera boxes Artemis' ears and Athena boxes Aphrodite's

breasts. But of course, a war between the immortal gods is rather silly. The gods are immortal and cannot die; therefore, a war between them cannot be as serious as it is for humans.

4) A battle among gods and goddesses is comic; however, a battle among human beings is serious.

War between humans is, of course, serious. It is mortal humans who risk their lives; immortal gods can't do that. We can argue that mortality makes such things as courage and heroism possible. A god fighting humans is not heroic; Ares slaughtering human beings is not heroic. Why not? A god risks nothing when he fights humans. Even if the god is wounded, the wound will be quickly healed. On the other hand, a human being who risks his or her life to help other people is truly heroic. The Trojan War is serious because human warriors are risking their lives.

• At the end of Book 21, Achilles could possibly conquer Troy against the will of fate. Why doesn't that happen?

Near the end of Book 21, Achilles is chasing the Trojans to their city gates. As we know, the gods are worried that Achilles is so mighty that he will conquer Troy at this time, against fate.

Priam, watching from the city high tower, is also worried about the might of Achilles. He orders that the gates of Troy be opened so that the surviving Trojan warriors can enter the city and find safety:

“Hold the doors wide open with your hands,

until the fleeing troops come to the city.

For Achilles is coming closer, driving

them in panic. I think disaster looms.

When the men have gathered here inside the wall,

able to get relief, then close the gates,
 these tight-fitting doors, once more. I'm afraid
 this murderer may jump inside our walls."

(Johnston 21.638-646)

Achilles must be stopped from entering Troy and capturing it — it is not yet time for Troy to fall.

In addition, Agenor — helped by Apollo — stops Achilles.

• Write a short character analysis of Agenor. How does Agenor's facing Achilles foreshadow Hector's facing Achilles in Book 22?

Agenor, helped by Phoebus Apollo, stops Achilles. Here we see foreshadowing:

- Agenor faces Achilles, just like Hector will face Achilles in Book 22.
- Agenor has a soliloquy, just like Hector will have a soliloquy in Book 22.
- Both Agenor and Hector think about saving their own lives and about what honor demands.
- Agenor thinks about withdrawing behind the walls of Troy, just as Hector will.
- Agenor thinks about how to save his fellow Trojans, just like Hector will.
- Both Agenor and Hector have to decide whether to fight Achilles or run away from him.
- Like all human beings, Agenor and Hector have to decide whether to be heroes or cowards.

Agenor thinks about running away from Achilles, but he finally decides to face Achilles:

“Wait ... what if I face him out before the walls?
 Surely his body can be pierced by bronze, even his
 —
 he *has* only one life, and people say he’s mortal:
 it’s only the son of Cronus handing him the glory.”
 (Fagles 21.653-656)

Compare:

“What if I go out to stand against him
 before the city? My sharp bronze, I think,
 can slice up his flesh, too. He’s got one life,
 no more. And men say that he’s a mortal,
 although Zeus, son of Cronos, gives him glory.”
 (Johnston 21.683-687)

Agenor engages Achilles in battle, but Apollo keeps Agenor from being killed by Achilles. Agenor fights well against a warrior who is vastly superior to him; Agenor does not run away from Achilles. This is incredibly brave of Agenor. Compared to Achilles, Agenor is a nobody. Who has heard of Achilles? Everybody. Who has heard of Agenor? His mother. Agenor is a nobody going up against the mightiest warrior of the Trojan War. He feels that he may get lucky and kill Achilles, but he has to know that the most probable outcome of the duel is that Achilles will kill him.

When Agenor challenges Achilles, Agenor does not know that Apollo will save his (Agenor’s) life.

Agenor's spear hits Achilles on the greave (armor that protects the leg from the knee to the ankle), but the greave holds and Achilles is not wounded. Agenor's throw does not come close to hitting a mortal spot on Achilles' body. Achilles, of course, is a warrior whose skill is so great that he often goes for a head wound.

Apollo hides Agenor and allows him to steal away:

[...] Apollo shrouds

The god-like Trojan in a veil of clouds.

Safe from pursuit, and shut from mortal view,

Dismiss'd with fame, the favoured youth withdrew.

(Pope pdf 394)

Agenor is a hero. He risks his life to save the lives of his fellow soldiers and to keep Troy from falling. If not for Agenor (and Apollo), Troy would have fallen. In addition, Agenor risks his life to help his fellow citizens. The gods are immortal and cannot risk their lives to save others.

Human beings can decide whether to be heroes or cowards. Agenor, a very minor warrior, becomes a hero by standing up to Achilles, a very great warrior. Agenor's action is very human. Unfortunately, Hector, in a somewhat similar situation, will act differently from the way that Agenor acts, although what Hector will do is also very human.

• **How are Agenor and other Trojan warriors saved?**

Apollo takes the shape of Agenor, then he leads Achilles away from Troy:

Meanwhile the god, to cover their escape,

Assumes Agenor's habit, voice and shape,

Flies from the furious chief in this disguise;
The furious chief still follows where he flies.

(Pope pdf 394)

This allows the fleeing Trojans to reach Troy in safety:

Meanwhile, the other Trojans
fleeing in confusion, came crowding in the city,
thronging of them, cramming the gates, happy to be
there.

They didn't dare to wait outside the wall, to check
who had made it back and who had perished in the
fight.

They streamed into the city in an eager rush,
all whose legs and knees had brought them safely
back.

(Johnston 21.728-734)

By standing up to Achilles, Agenor saved many lives.
Apollo also helped save Trojan lives by taking the shape of
Agenor and keeping Achilles engaged in chasing him instead
of killing Trojans.

Conclusion

In Book 22, Achilles kills Hector.

Of course, this is what Homer's audience has been waiting
for.

Chapter 22: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 22 — The Death of Hector

• What major things are highlighted in Book 22?

The major things that are highlighted in Book 22 are Hector's humanity and Achilles' inhumanity. Another way of expressing this is that the major things that are highlighted in Book 22 are Hector's acceptance of the human condition and Achilles' lack of acceptance of the human condition.

• Where are the Trojans — except for Hector — at the beginning of Book 22?

At the end of Book 21, the routed Trojans fled back to Troy. Now all of them — except Hector — are inside the Trojan walls:

At this point, the Trojans, having fled like deer,
spread out through the city, resting by its well-made walls,
drying their sweat and taking drink to slake their thirst.

Meanwhile, Achaeans were moving to the walls,
their shields held up against their shoulders.

(Johnston 22.1-5)

Where is Hector?

But there stood Hector,
shackled fast by his deadly fate, holding his ground,
exposed in front of Troy and the Scaean Gates.

(Fagles 22.5-7)

• **What does Achilles do when he finds out that Apollo has tricked him?**

Apollo has tricked Achilles by pretending to be the Trojan warrior Agenor. By doing that, he has encouraged Achilles to chase after him and try to kill him; this allows the Trojan warriors to reach Troy safely. When Apollo reveals himself to Achilles, Achilles immediately turns and races toward Troy. We see a little of Achilles' wrath in what Achilles — proud — tells Apollo, an immortal god:

“You’ve robbed me of great glory, saving them
with ease, since you don’t have to be afraid
of future retribution. I’d make you pay,
if only I were powerful enough.”

(Johnston 22.24-27)

• **How does Priam urge Hector to come within the walls of Troy?**

Achilles races toward Troy, and Priam, King of Troy, is the first to see him. Priam knows that his son Hector is outside the Trojan walls. Priam begs Hector to come inside the Trojan walls, so that he will be safe. Priam realizes that Achilles is stronger than Hector, and Priam knows that in a duel between the two warriors, Achilles will kill Hector. Priam also hates Achilles, who has killed many of his sons:

“Hector, my dear son, don’t stand out there alone,
facing that man with no one else to help you,
or you will quickly meet your death, slaughtered
by Peleus’ son, who’s much more powerful.
Don’t be obstinate. If only the gods

would love Achilles just as much as I do,
 then dogs and vultures would soon gnaw at him
 as he lay there. [...]"

(Johnston 22.47-54)

Priam knows firsthand how much damage Achilles can do. He has searched the streets of Troy, but he cannot find his sons Lycaon and Polydorus. Of course, he cannot find them because Achilles killed them in the last two books:

"How many valiant sons I late enjoy'd,
 Valiant in vain! by thy cursed arm destroy'd:
 Or, worse than slaughtered, sold in distant isles
 To shameful bondage, and unworthy toils.
 Two, while I speak, my eyes in vain explore,
 Two from one mother sprung, my Polydore,
 And loved Lycaon; now perhaps no more!"

(Pope pdf 396)

Priam loves his sons Lycaon and Polydorus, but he knows that the rest of Troy will mourn them only for a moment (Fagles 22.63). They are not the hope of Troy — Hector is.

Priam knows that Hector is the hope of Troy. He knows what will happen if Hector dies. He knows that Troy will fall, that he — Priam — will die, that the Trojan women will be made slaves, and the Trojan children will be either killed or made slaves:

"Have pity on me, too.
 Though full of misery, I still can feel.

Father Zeus will kill me with a cruel fate
 on the threshold of old age, once I've seen
 so many dreadful things, my sons slaughtered,
 my daughters hauled away, their houses ransacked,
 their little children tossed down on the ground
 in this murderous war, my daughters - in - law
 led off captive in hard Achaean hands."

(Johnston 22.75-83)

Everything that Priam says here will come true.

Priam also foresees his own death, which will be pathetic. His own dogs will lap his blood. Although a young man may win glory in being killed on the battlefield, the same is not true for old men:

"When an old man's killed
 and the dogs go at the gray head and the gray beard
 and mutilate the genitals — that is the cruelest sight
 in all our wretched lives."

(Fagles 22.87-90)

Compare:

"But when the dogs disfigure shamefully
 an old man, chewing his gray head, his beard,
 his sexual organs, that's the saddest thing
 we wretched mortals see."

(Johnston 22.93-96)

The genitals are the source of life. Priam mentions his genitals here because from them came Hector's life. Hector is a very human character — the character in the *Iliad* whom we can most relate to.

Priam sees Hector both as his son and as the main defender of Troy. Without Hector, Troy cannot stand. Troy will fall, Priam will be killed, Trojan women will be sold into slavery, Trojan children will be killed, and the treasures of Troy will be looted.

• How does Hecuba urge Hector to come within the walls of Troy?

Hecuba is a mother, and she sees Hector as her son — the same son she used to breastfeed. She loosens her robe, grabs one breast, according to Fagles' translation at 22.95 (or both breasts, according to Johnston's translation) and displays it to Hector, then speaks to him:

Beside Priam,

Hector's mother wept. Then she undid her robe,
and with her hands pushed out her breasts, shedding
tears.

She called out to him with these winged words:

“Hector, my child, respect and pity me.

If I ever gave these breasts to soothe you,
remember that, dear child. Protect yourself
against your enemy inside these walls.

Don't stand out there to face him. Stubborn man,
if he kills you, I'll never lay you out
on your death bed or mourn for you, my child,

my dearest offspring, nor will your fair wife.
 Far away from us, beside Achaean ships,
 their swift dogs will eat you.”

(Johnston 22.98-110)

Hecuba’s breast, of course, fed Hector when he was a baby. She mentions her breast just as Priam mentioned his genitals. Of course, this emphasizes Hector’s humanity.

Hecuba also mentions Andromache, who will become a widow when Hector dies.

Hecuba is aware that Achilles will not allow Hector’s body to be ransomed. Neither she nor Andromache will be able to mourn Hector with a decent funeral.

• What is the effect on you of Hector’s parents urging him to come into Troy instead of staying outside Troy and fighting Achilles?

We feel much sympathy for the very human Hector here. The pleadings of his parents arouse our sympathy. In addition, Hecuba’s reference to Hector’s wife, Andromache, reminds us of Book 6 and the meeting between Hector and Andromache and Astyanax. That meeting took place right here at the Scaean Gates, and we remember how much Hector and Andromache loved each other and their son.

• What do we learn about Hector from his soliloquy outside the walls of Troy (Fagles 22.118-156 / Johnston 22.122-164)? Why doesn’t Hector go within the walls of Troy, where it is safe?

Hector considers retreating to within the walls of Troy as Achilles runs toward him, but he does not retreat. Hector, being human, has made an error of judgment here. The best thing to do is to retreat, recover inside the walls of Troy, and

fight another day. Hector thinks about his options and what he ought to do.

Hector does not retreat because he is ashamed to do that. In Book 6, Hector rejoined the battle after seeing his wife and son. Three women — his mother, Helen, and his wife — encouraged him to stay within the walls of Troy, but Hector told his wife that he would be ashamed not to rejoin the fighting. Here Hector is ashamed because he ignored good advice and kept on fighting, and now Achilles has greatly defeated the Trojan army. Hector knows that if he retreats inside the walls of Troy, he will have to face the criticism of his fellow Trojans. Because Hector had the courage of a boar and kept on fighting, many Trojan warriors have died. Many women have become widows, and many parents have lost one or more sons, and many sisters have lost brothers. Hector himself has lost brothers who would now be alive if he had retreated earlier. Therefore, Hector decides that he must stay and fight Achilles. One way to bring victory out of defeat would be for Hector to face and kill Achilles.

Hector thinks about many things as he awaits Achilles. He knows that he would like to live. He is reluctant to face Achilles. He wishes that he had a way out of facing Achilles. We may think about Jesus shortly before he was crucified; he went through the same process. However, Hector eventually realizes that he has no way out:

“What do I do?

If I go through the gates, inside that wall,
 Polydamas will be the first to blame me,
 for he told me last night to lead the Trojans
 back into the city, when many died,
 once godlike Achilles joined the fight.

But I didn't listen. If I'd done so,
 things would have been much better. As it is,
 my own foolishness has wiped out our army.
 Trojan men will make me feel ashamed,
 so will Trojan women in their trailing gowns.”

(Johnston 22.122-132)

Hector is right about Polydamas. The previous times that we have seen Polydamas he has given good advice to Hector, which Hector did not take. Furthermore, Polydamas has not been slow to criticize Hector. In addition, Hector's army has been routed — Achilles has killed many men, including two sons of Priam. Because of Hector's decision to keep on fighting instead of withdrawing his arm back behind the walls of Troy, many fathers, brothers, and sons have been killed by Achilles.

Hector even considers giving in to Achilles and the Achaeans:

“[...] But what would happen,
 if I set my bossed shield and heavy helmet
 to one side, leaning my spear against the wall,
 and went out to meet noble Achilles,
 just as I am, promising that Helen,
 along with all the goods shipped here to Troy
 by Alexander in his hollow ships,
 the origin of our hostilities,
 would be given to the sons of Atreus,

to take away with them, in addition,
to give the Achaeans an equal share
of all this city holds. [...]"

(Johnston 22.139-150)

This reminds us that Troy is in the wrong, and Hector knows it. The cause that Hector is fighting for is not good. He doesn't respect Paris, and he knows that Troy is the wrong. Hector is not fighting for Paris, not fighting for Helen — he is fighting for Troy because it is his city. In addition, he is fighting for his family: Priam and Hecuba, and especially Andromache and Astyanax.

Hector thinks about meeting Achilles and returning Helen to the Achaeans, but he knows that it won't work. Achilles will not make peace with the Trojans because of the death of Patroclus:

“Why debate, my friend? Why thrash things out?
I must not go and implore him. He'll show no mercy,
no respect for me, my rights — he'll cut me down
straight off — stripped of defenses like a woman
once I have loosed the armor off my body.”

(Fagles 22.146-150)

Compare:

“But why's my dear heart having this debate?
If I went out to meet him in that way,
he'd show me no respect. He wouldn't pity me.
Once I'd set aside my armour, he'd kill me

on the spot, unarmed, like some woman.”

(Johnston 22.155-159)

We know that Hector is right when he thinks that Achilles will not make peace with the Trojans because Achilles is no longer kind to Trojan suppliants, as the deaths of Tros and Lycaon have shown.

• Why doesn't Hector explicitly think about Andromache in his soliloquy?

We have not heard Hector speak of Andromache, although his mother has mentioned her. We can imagine that Hector does not want to think of her, knowing how likely he is to die when he meets Achilles and knowing what will happen to Andromache as a result of his death. E.T. Owen writes in *The Story of the Iliad*,

Hector is resolutely *not* thinking of Andromache, and, as he makes up his mind to stand his ground, he dismisses his irresolution with a half-jest at himself — “This is no lovers’ meeting this time; there won’t be any opportunity for the pleasant chat I have been picturing.” (222)

Hector seems to make a subtle reference to his wife, however, at the end of his soliloquy:

“No way to parley with that man — not now —
not from behind some oak or rock to whisper,
like a boy and a young girl, lovers’ secrets
a boy and a girl might whisper to each other ...
Better to clash in battle, now, at once —
see which fighter Zeus awards the glory!”

Fagles 22.151-156)

Compare:

“There’s no way I can bargain with him now,
like a boy and girl chatting by some rock
or oak tree, as they flirt with one another.
No, it’s better to clash in battle right away.
We’ll see which one wins victory from Zeus.”

(Johnston 22.160-164)

With this reference, we are reminded of the last time that Andromache and Hector met — the time when their baby was frightened by Hector’s helmet.

Hector, of course, realizes that Achilles is the stronger warrior and is likely to kill him, but Hector still hopes to be triumphant in the man-to-man combat.

• **Compare and contrast Agenor and Hector.**

Homer uses parallelism in the *Iliad*. Often, one event or character is meant to be compared to another event or character, as is the case with Agenor and Hector:

Similarities

- Both Hector and Agenor are Trojan warriors.
- Both meet Achilles. Both are far weaker than Achilles.

Differences

- A contrast is that Agenor is helped by a god when he faces Achilles, while Hector is tricked by a goddess when he faces Achilles.

- Another contrast is that Agenor does not run away from Achilles, but Hector will run away from Achilles. Agenor may seem to run away from Achilles, but that is actually Apollo, who has taken the form of Agenor in order to keep Achilles occupied so that the Trojan warriors can escape to Troy.

• **What is the effect on you of Hector's running away?**

Hector's running away from Achilles is shocking. Agenor, a much lesser warrior than Hector, did not run away from Achilles, a fact that makes Hector's running away from the great warrior that much more shocking.

Hector is a very human hero, and I think that that his running away from Achilles emphasizes that. Hector wants to face Achilles because he knows that he (Hector) is responsible for the Trojan army's defeat by Achilles. If only he (Hector) had listened to the advice of Polydamas, the Trojans would be safe behind the walls of Troy, and they would live to fight another day. Because Hector decided to fight, the Trojans suffered a major defeat. At this point, Hector would love to bring victory out of defeat by facing Achilles and defeating him. And even if Hector loses and dies, he won't have to face Polydamas inside Troy.

Even though Hector has made up his mind to face Achilles in single combat, he finds that he is unable to do that. Instead, he turns and runs away from Achilles, circling Troy three times before finally facing Achilles and dying. Running from Achilles is a very human thing to do. Hector has made up his mind to do something heroic, but then he finds that he is unable to do it.

Hector flees from Achilles and runs three times around the walls of Troy. Why does he run? Does this mean that Hector is a coward?

I hate to think that Hector is a coward. He is standing outside the gates of Troy on his own volition, and this takes courage. (All of the other Trojans are inside the walls of Troy.) However, as he waits for Achilles, who is racing toward him, the pressure grows and he loses his nerve. This emphasizes Hector's humanity. However, a coward does run away from a stronger warrior, and that is exactly what Hector does. As a human being, Hector makes mistakes. He sometimes tries to be better than he really is — he outreaches himself. Running away from great danger is a very human thing to do.

Of course, we remember that Agenor, a minor warrior, did stand up to Achilles. In fact, many warriors have stood up to Achilles only to be killed. Not all of these warriors were mortally wounded in the back. Still, Hector's running away from Achilles increases our sympathy for him.

• **How does Achilles look as he races toward Hector?**

As Achilles races toward Hector, Homer says that Achilles looks like Ares, the god of war. He also says that Achilles' armor is like a burning fire:

[...] Achilles was closing in on him now
 like the god of war, the fighter's helmet flashing,
 over his right shoulder shaking the Pelian ash spear,
 that terror, and the bronze around his body flared
 like a raging fire or the rising, blazing sun.

(Fagles 22.157-161)

Compare:

But Achilles was coming closer, like Enyalios,
 the warrior god of battle with the shining helmet.

On his right shoulder he waved his dreadful spear
made of Pelian ash. The bronze around him glittered
like a blazing fire or rising sun.

(Johnston 22.166-170)

Of course, Ares, the god of war, is hated. In addition, we see again that Achilles is described as more than human — as either a god or a force of nature.

• How does Homer compare Achilles and Hector in his simile at Fagles 22.162-173 / Johnston 170-180?

Homer compares Achilles to a hawk and Hector to a dove in a simile:

Hector looked up, saw him, started to tremble,
nerve gone, he could hold his ground no longer,
he left the gates behind and away he fled in fear —
and Achilles went for him, fast, sure of his speed
as the wild mountain hawk, the quickest thing on wings,
launching smoothly, swooping down on a cringing dove
and the dove flits out from under, the hawk screaming
over the quarry, plunging over and over, his fury
driving him down to beak and tear his kill —
so Achilles flew at him, breakneck on in fury
with Hector fleeing along the walls of Troy,
fast as his legs would go.

(Fagles 22.162-173)

Compare:

At that moment,
 as he watched, Hector began to shake in fear.
 His courage gone, he could no longer stand there.
 Terrified, he started running, leaving the gate.
 Peleus' son went after him, sure of his speed on foot.
 Just as a mountain falcon, the fastest creature
 of all the ones which fly, swoops down easily
 on a trembling pigeon as it darts off in fear,
 the hawk speeding after it with piercing cries,
 heart driving it to seize the prey, in just that way
 Achilles in his fury raced ahead.

(Johnston 22.170-180)

Achilles has often been called “swift-footed Achilles” through the *Iliad*, and now we see why he has been called that. (Achilles is swift to rush to judgment as well as swift of foot.) He is able to outrun Hector and prevent him from getting any aid from the Trojan soldiers on the walls of Troy. The race is fast, because both men are racing for the life of Hector. Whoever wins gets Hector's life.

Hector has often been called Hector of the flashing helmet. Why? To remind us of the scene with Andromache and Astyanax.

• Achilles and Hector run past the Trojan washing ground. Why would Homer include this seemingly insignificant detail in this very important scene?

Homer describes the pursuit of Hector by Achilles as taking them by a spring — the place where, in days of peace, the Trojan women used to wash clothes. As Achilles and Hector keep circling the city, they keep running past the Trojan washing grounds. Why does Homer include this seemingly insignificant detail in this very important scene?

Homer is showing us what the Trojans have given up so that Paris and Helen can have an adulterous love affair. The Trojans have given up the blessings of peace. In the days before the Trojan War, the Trojan women could go to the spring and wash clothes. Now they can't do that because they would be captured and made slaves by the Achaean warriors. Of course, the Trojans will end up losing everything. Troy will be conquered, the Trojan men will be killed, the Trojan women will be made slaves, and the Trojan children will either die or be made slaves. We can look at the Trojan washing springs as a symbol of peace and of what the Trojans have lost because of Paris and Helen. Because of Paris and Helen, Hector will die, Andromache will become a sex-slave, and Astyanax will be murdered.

We read:

On and on they raced,
 passing the lookout point, passing the wild fig tree
 tossed by the wind, always out from under the
 ramparts
 down the wagon trail they careered until they reached
 the clear running springs where whirling Scamander

rises up from its double wellsprings bubbling strong
 —

and one runs hot and the steam goes up around it,

drifting thick as if fire burned at its core

but the other even in summer gushes cold

as hail or freezing snow or water chilled to ice ...

And here, close to the springs, lie washing-pools

scooped out in the hollow rocks and broad and smooth

where the wives of Troy and all their lovely daughters

would wash their glistening robes in the old days.

the days of peace before the sons of Achaea came ...

(Fagles 22.173-187)

Compare:

They ran on past the lookout and the wind-swept fig tree,

some distance from the wall, along the wagon track.

They reached the two fair-flowing well springs

which feed swirling Scamander's stream. From one of them

hot water flows, and out of it steam rises up,

as if there were a fire burning. From the other,

cold water comes, as cold as hail or freezing snow

or melting ice, even in summer. By these springs

stood wide tubs for washing, made of beautiful stone,
 where, in peace time, before Achaea's sons arrived,
 Trojan wives and lovely daughters used to wash
 their brightly coloured clothing.

(Johnston 22.182-193)

Elizabeth Vandiver points out,

Think of what is symbolized, what is summed up in the little vignette of the place where Trojan wives used to come out in the days of peace and wash the laundry. It is as plain, as banal, if you like, as domestic a detail as you can get, washing the clothes; and yet here it stands for so much. It stands for a time when the women could come out of the city. It stands for a time when marriages could continue and children could grow up, before Paris and Helen wrecked everything through their violation of marriage. It stands for what Hektor and all the other Trojans have irrevocably lost [...] (*The Iliad of Homer* 165-166)

• What are some other things to notice in how Homer describes Hector running away from Achilles?

One of the important reasons why Homer describes Hector as running away from Achilles is to increase our sympathy for him. We feel sympathy for this weakness in Hector. Hector, of course, is fully human.

Homer describes Hector running away from Achilles well. The two warriors are running a footrace — a footrace for the life of Hector.

In addition, as Hector runs from Achilles in Book 22, Homer describes the race as if it were happening in a dream or nightmare:

As men in slumbers seem with speedy pace,
 One to pursue, and one to lead the chase,
 Their sinking limbs the fancied course forsake,
 Nor this can fly, nor that can overtake:
 No less the labouring heroes pant and strain:
 While that but flies, and this pursues in vain.
 (Pope pdf 400)

Compare:

Like a dream in which a man cannot catch someone
 who's running off and the other can't escape,
 just as the first man can't catch up, that's how
 Achilles, for all his speed, could not reach Hector,
 while Hector was unable to evade Achilles.
 (Johnston 22.247-251)

• Why doesn't Zeus, who pities Hector, save Hector's life?

Sometimes the gods seem to represent fate. (Sometimes the gods seem subordinate to fate.) Fate and the gods are merciless. Zeus thinks about saving Hector's life because Hector has made many sacrifices to him; however, Athena stops him. This scene is paralleled by the scene in which Hera stops Zeus from saving the life of Sarpedon. In fact, Athena uses the exact same words that Hera used:

“what are you saying? A man, a mere mortal,
his doom sealed long ago? You’d set him free
from all the pains of death?”

(Fagles 22.213-215)

Compare:

[...] “what are you saying?

A man, a mere mortal, his doom sealed long ago?

You’d set him free from all the pains of death?”

(Fagles 16. 523-525)

Zeus in Book 22 tells Athena that he was just kidding. In many ways, human beings are the playthings of the gods. Zeus sends Athena to trick Hector to his death.

• In the Homeric similes, how does Homer describe Achilles? How does he describe Hector?

Homer uses another simile comparing Achilles to a hound and Hector to a fawn in the race between him and Hector:

And swift Achilles kept on coursing Hector, nonstop
as a hound in the mountains starts a fawn from its
lair,

hunting him down the gorges, down the narrow glens
and the fawn goes to ground, hiding deep in brush

but the hound comes racing fast, nosing him out
until he lands his kill. So Hector could never throw
Achilles off his trail, the swift racer Achilles —

(Fagles 22.224-230)

In the Homeric similes used to describe Achilles and Hector, Achilles is usually seen as an aggressive predator or dangerous force of nature (lion, hawk, forest fire), while Hector is usually seen as an animal that is hunted (boar, dove).

• **What strategy does Achilles use in the race for Hector's life?**

Achilles uses good strategy in the race. It is always Achilles who is nearest the Trojan walls, thus he forces Hector to run a wider circle. Hector desperately tries to get to the Trojan walls, because the soldiers on the walls could protect him by throwing spears and shooting arrows at Achilles. However, Achilles always cuts him off:

As through the forest, o'er the vale and lawn,
 The well-breath'd beagle drives the flying fawn,
 In vain he tries the covert of the brakes,
 Or deep beneath the trembling thicket shakes;
 Sure of the vapour in the tainted dews,
 The certain hound his various maze pursues.
 Thus step by step, where'er the Trojan wheel'd,
 There swift Achilles compass'd round the field.
 Oft as to reach the Dardan gates he bends,
 And hopes the assistance of his pitying friends,
 (Whose showering arrows, as he coursed below,
 From the high turrets might oppress the foe,)
 So oft Achilles turns him to the plain:
 He eyes the city, but he eyes in vain.

(Pope pdf 400)

In addition, Achilles keeps the Achaeans from killing Hector, because he wants the satisfaction of killing him:

And brilliant Achilles shook his head at the armies,
never letting them hurl their sharp spears at Hector
—

someone might snatch the glory, Achilles come in
second.

(Fagles 22.245-247)

• What is the effect on you of Athena’s tricking Hector into fighting Achilles?

Once again, Homer wants to increase sympathy for Hector. Achilles is certainly enough of a warrior to kill Hector without help, but we feel even more sympathy for Hector because Athena tricks him.

Hector finally stops running; Hector finally realizes that he is not going to escape from Achilles. Therefore, Hector finally decides to fight Achilles.

Athena, who as a goddess has special powers, takes the form and voice of Deiphobus, one of Hector’s brothers, and she encourages Hector to fight Achilles — two against one. (Deiphobus will be his second.) Hector is indescribably happy to see what he thinks is Deiphobus:

“Deiphobus, in the past you’ve always been
the brother I loved the most by far
of children born to Hecuba and Priam.
I think I now respect you even more,
since you’ve dared to come outside the wall,

to help me, when you saw me in distress,
while others all remained inside.”

(Johnston 22.289-295)

That Athena tricks Hector and later helps Achilles in the fight increases our sympathy for Hector.

• What do we learn when Zeus weighs the fates of the two warriors in his scales?

Apollo gives Hector some help until Zeus weighs the fates of Achilles and Hector in his scales. Hector’s fate goes down, which means that he will die.

When Zeus weighs the lives of the two soldiers in his scales, we are meant to see Zeus as being dignified rather than as comic relief:

Jove lifts the golden balances, that show
The fates of mortal men, and things below:
Here each contending hero’s lot he tries,
And weighs, with equal hand, their destinies.
Low sinks the scale surcharged with Hector’s fate;
Heavy with death it sinks, and hell receives the weight.

(Pope pdf 400)

After the weighing of the fates in the scales, Apollo leaves Hector, but Athena assists Achilles.

Although the gods often provide comic relief, this is a scene in which Zeus is meant to be majestic. Of course, Zeus does not determine the warriors’ fates, which are already set. This is simply a way to show what the warriors’ fates are. Who is

fated to live in the single combat? Who is fated to die in the single combat?

We continue to see double motivation in this scene. Apollo stops helping Hector, and Athena helps Achilles. In the fight, Athena helps Achilles. The reason for this may be to recover any sympathy that has been lost for Hector by his flight. For myself, I pity Hector all the more because of his flight. If any other readers (or listeners) have lost sympathy, however, the episode with Athena should regain for Hector whatever sympathy he has lost.

• What agreement does Hector want to make with Achilles before they fight? Is Hector's request appropriate?

Hector talks with Achilles before they fight, and Hector wants Achilles to agree to the same terms that Hector and Great Ajax agreed to before they dueled in Book 7. Those conditions are that whoever wins the fight to the death will strip the armor from the conquered warrior but will allow the friends of the conquered warrior to take his corpse so that they can give it proper burial and allow the conquered warrior's soul to enter the Underworld:

“I'll no longer try to run away from you,
 son of Peleus, as I did before, going
 three times in flight around Priam's great city.
 I lacked the courage then to fight with you,
 as you attacked. But my heart prompts me now
 to stand against you face to face once more,
 whether I kill you, or you kill me.
 So come here. Let's call on gods to witness,

for they're the best ones to observe our pact,
 to supervise what we two agree on.
 If Zeus grants me the strength to take your life,
 I'll not abuse your corpse in any way.
 I'll strip your celebrated armour off,
 Achilles, then give the body back again
 to the Achaeans. And you'll do the same."
 (Johnston 22.309-323)

Hector's request is appropriate. In Book 7, Great Ajax had no problem agreeing to these conditions.

• How does Achilles respond to Hector's very appropriate request?

Achilles absolutely refuses to abide by Hector's request. Instead, Achilles promises to let the dogs devour Hector's body:

A swift dark glance
 and the headstrong runner answered, "Hector, stop!
 You unforgivable, you ... don't talk to me of pacts.
 There are no binding oaths between men and lions —
 wolves and lambs can enjoy no meeting of the minds
 —
 they are all bent on hating each other to the death.
 So with you and me. No love between us. No truce
 till one or the other falls and gluts with blood
 Ares who hacks at men behind his rawhide shield.

Come, call up whatever courage you can muster.
 Life or death — now prove yourself a spearman,
 a daring man of war! No more escape for you —
 Athena will kill you with my spear in just a moment.
 Now you'll pay at a stroke for all my comrades'
 grief,
 all you killed in the fury of your spear!"

(Fagles 22.307-321)

We are not on Achilles' side here, and we are not meant to be. Achilles is a ravaging wolf here, not a man. Achilles has no sympathy whatsoever for Hector; in fact, he almost regards him as being of a different species — thus the references to men and lions, wolves and lambs.

Hector's request has been appropriate, but Achilles completely rejects it.

• How does Hector die?

Hector throws his spear first and misses. Then Achilles throws his spear and misses. Athena immediately returns Achilles' spear to him, but when Hector asks his brother Deiphobus for another spear, he doesn't see Deiphobus — and Hector immediately realizes that he has been tricked. Hector says,

"This is it, then.

The gods are summoning me to my death.

I thought warrior Deiphobus was close by.

But he's inside the walls, and Athena

has deceived me. Now evil death is here,

right beside me, not somewhere far away.
 There's no escape. For a long time now,
 this must have been what Zeus desired,
 and Zeus' son, the god who shoots from far,
 and all those who willingly gave me help
 in earlier days. So now I meet my fate.
 Even so, let me not die ingloriously
 without a fight, but in some great action
 which those men yet to come will hear about."

(Johnston 22.373-386)

At this point, Hector knows that he will die. He rushes at Achilles with his sword — wearing Achilles' armor that he has taken from Patroclus — and Achilles, who knows the weak point of his own armor that Hector is wearing, spears him in the neck, giving him a mortal wound, but one that does not harm the windpipe and so Hector can still — with difficulty — speak. (Athena had returned Achilles' spear to him.)

**• What does Hector say in his first speech as he is dying?
 (Note that Hector has two speeches. This question refers to the first of Hector's dying speeches.)**

The scene that follows leaves us with no sympathy for Achilles. He is simply wrong here as he boasts to Hector — who can still speak — and he is wrong in what he does to Hector's body after Hector dies.

Achilles says,

“Hector,

I suppose you thought you could safely strip
 Patroclus, without giving me a thought,
 since I was far away. That was foolish!
 By our hollow ships he'd left me behind,
 a much greater man, to take out my revenge.
 I've drained strength from your limbs, now dogs and
 birds
 will tear you into miserable pieces,
 while Achaeans are burying Patroclus."
 (Johnston 22.415-423)

Hector, who is still able to speak, answers Achilles:

His strength fading, Hector of the shining helmet
 answered Achilles:

“By your life, I beg you,
 by your knees, your parents, don't let dogs eat me
 by Achaean ships. No, you should accept
 all the bronze and gold you want,
 gifts my father and my lady mother give you,
 if you'll send my body home again,
 so Trojans and Trojans' wives can bury me,
 with all the necessary funeral rites.”
 (Johnston 22.424-432)

• Is Achilles' response to Hector's dying request appropriate?

Achilles has mortally wounded Hector. Hector knows that he will die, and he begs Achilles not to let the dogs devour his body. Hector begs that Achilles allow his corpse to be ransomed so that it can be properly buried, but Achilles absolutely refuses to do that. Achilles replies to Hector,

“Beg no more, you fawning dog — begging me by my parents!

Would to god my rage, my fury would drive me now
to hack your flesh away and eat you raw —
such agonies you have caused me! Ransom?

No man alive could keep the dog-packs off you,
not if they haul in ten times, twenty times that ransom
and pile it here before me and promise fortunes more
—

no, not even if Dardan Priam should offer to weigh
out

your bulk in gold! Not even then will your noble
mother

lay you out on your deathbed, mourn the son she bore
...

The dogs and birds will rend you — blood and
bone!”

(Fagles 22.407-417)

Compare:

“Don't whine to me, you dog, about my knees

or parents. I wish I had the heart and strength
to carve you up and eat you raw myself
for what you've done to me. So there's no one
who'll keep the dogs from going at your head,
not even if they bring here and weigh out
a ransom ten or twenty times as much,
with promises of more, or if Priam,
son of Dardanus, says he'll pay your weight
in gold. Not even then will your mother
set you on a funeral bed and there lament
the son she bore. Instead, the dogs and birds
will eat you up completely."

(Johnston 22.434-446)

Achilles is brutal in his reply. Achilles even says that he wishes that he were capable of engaging in cannibalism; if he were, he would eat Hector's corpse. Instead, he will let the dogs and birds eat it.

In addition, Achilles talks about "such agonies you have caused me!" (Fagles 22.410).

What agonies exactly has Hector caused Achilles? Hector has killed Patroclus. However, all of us should realize that this is normal in warfare. If you send your best friend into battle, you need to realize that he may be killed. In the movie *Patton*, actor George C. Scott, who plays the title character, makes a speech in which he says that warriors ought not to die for their country — they ought to make enemy warriors die for the enemy warriors' country.

What is the essence of war? Here is one answer:

When MacLean Stevenson, who played Colonel Blake, left the television sitcom *M*A*S*H*, his character's plane was shot down over the Sea of Japan — there were no survivors. This was a bit of realism no TV sitcom had previously engaged in, and the episode's writers, Jim Fritzell and Everett Greenbaum, were both praised and damned by letter writers. To people who wrote him letters criticizing the decision to kill the character, Mr. Greenbaum wrote back, "The essence of war is the quick and final departure of a loved one."

What has Achilles done to Hector? Achilles has killed great numbers of the Trojan warriors. Achilles has killed many of Hector's brothers. Who has suffered more in this case? Hector, who has lost many brothers to Achilles? Or Achilles, who has lost his best friend to Hector? It seems that Hector is the warrior who has suffered more and who has lost more.

Elizabeth Vandiver points out,

If anyone should be able to say to the other in this scene, "I cannot forgive you; I wish that I could eat you raw and throw what is left of you to the dogs for what you have done to me," it would make more sense for the man who has seen many of his younger brothers killed by one individual to say that than for Achilles, who has lost one friend to Hektor, to say that. (*The Iliad of Homer* 167)

Achilles, however, has the anger of a god. Hector has done what warriors in battle do. Achilles cannot see this, and Achilles wants to do the worst he can to Hector and Hector's body.

Once again, we note that Achilles is not at all materialistic. He is motivated by things other than money. Even when

Briseis — according to the ancient Greeks, she is a material object — is taken from him, Achilles is worried more about glory and honor than material possessions.

• **What does Hector say in his second speech?**

In Homer, the minor warriors are killed without having a death speech. However, the great warriors who die are given a speech as they lie dying. Because Hector is so important, he gets to make two speeches:

Then, as he died,
 Hector of the shining helmet said to Achilles:
 “I know you well. I recognize in you
 what I expected, that you’d not be convinced.
 For your heart and mind are indeed of iron.
 But think of this, I may bring down on you
 the anger of the gods that very day
 when Paris and Phoebus Apollo,
 in spite of all your courage, slaughter you
 at the Scaean Gate.”

(Johnston 22.446-455)

Hector’s curse will come to pass. Eventually, Achilles will be killed by Paris and Apollo. As a dying man, Hector has the gift of prophecy.

• **What is your reaction to the death of Hector? Is his death to be applauded? Is his death to be deplored?**

I am very much on Hector’s side. He is the most accessible of the heroes; he is the most human of heroes. I deplore his death.

The way that Hector dies seems designed to make us sympathetic to his death. Athena helps Achilles in the duel, although I doubt very much that Achilles needs help to kill Hector — Achilles is clearly the stronger warrior. Hector thinks that his brother Deiphobus is with him, but the brother is actually Athena and she abandons him when he most needs help.

I doubt that any reader of the *Iliad* can be happy about the death of Hector. In many ways, he is the most sympathetic character in the *Iliad*. All of us remember when he returned to Troy to visit his wife and child. That was a very touching family scene, and we know that when Troy falls, his son will be killed and his wife will become a slave. No one can be happy about that.

• **Why did Hector run away from Achilles?**

Hector displays the human failing of cowardice.

Hector wants to be brave and fight Achilles, but he finds that he cannot, so he runs away from Achilles. Hector tries to do more than he is capable of doing.

Hector wants to live.

Hector knows that Achilles is stronger than he is and will most likely kill him. Hector does not want to die.

• **Does Hector die “in some great clash of arms that even men to come / will hear of down the years!” (Fagles 22.359-362)? (Cf. Johnston 22.384-386.)**

Right at the end of his life, when Hector knows that he is going to die, he attempts to win *kleos*. In his society, that is the only way to gain some kind of meaningful immortality. Hector says,

“Well let me die —

but not without struggle, not without glory, no,
 in some great clash of arms that even men to come
 will hear of down the years!”

(Fagles 22.359-362)

Compare:

“Even so, let me not die ingloriously
 without a fight, but in some great action
 which those men yet to come will hear about.”

(Johnston 22.384-386)

In a way, yes, Hector dies “in some great clash of arms that even men to come / will hear of down the years!” (Fagles 22.361-362). We are reading the *Iliad*, so we certainly know how Hector dies. Therefore, we “men to come” (Fagles 22.361) know how Hector dies.

In a way, no, Hector does not die “in some great clash of arms that even men to come / will hear of down the years!” (22.361-362).

I would not call Hector’s death “some great clash of arms” (Fagles 22.362). Hector draws his sword and rushes toward Achilles, and then Achilles throws his spear at Hector’s throat and mortally wounds him. Other duels have been much more exciting.

• **How do the Achaean warriors treat Hector’s corpse?**

The Achaean warriors stab Hector’s corpse.

• **How has Achilles changed from the way he was earlier in the Trojan War?**

Achilles is now much different from what he was before his rage. Before, he treated King Eetion well. In Book 6, Andromache said,

“Father ... the brilliant Achilles laid him low
 when he stormed Cilicia’s city filled with people,
 Thebe with her towering gates. He killed Eetion,
 not that he stripped his gear — he’d some respect at
 least —
 for he burned his corpse in all his blazoned bronze,
 then heaped a grave-mound high above the ashes
 and nymphs of the mountain planted elms around it,
 daughters of Zeus whose shield is storm and
 thunder.”

(Fagles 6.492-499)

Contrast that with this description of Achilles now:

and now he was bent on outrage, on shaming noble
 Hector.
 Piercing the tendons, ankle to heel through both feet,
 he knotted straps of rawhide through them both,
 lashed them to his chariot, left the head to drag
 and mounting the car, hoisting the famous arms
 aboard,
 he whipped his team to a run and breakneck on they
 flew,

holding nothing back. And a thick cloud of dust rose
up

from the man they dragged, his dark hair swirling
round

that head so handsome once, all tumbled low in the
dust —

since Zeus had given him over to his enemies now
to be defiled in the land of his own fathers.

(Fagles 22.466-475)

• What is your reaction to the way Achilles treats Hector's corpse?

Hector dies, and Achilles is glad. Then begins the horrible mutilation of Hector's body. The Achaeans stab Hector's corpse. Then Achilles takes Hector's ankles, pierces them, draws a rope through them, and drags Hector's body behind his chariot. This is a famous scene from the *Iliad*.

• What will happen to Hector's *psyche* (soul, spirit) if his body is not buried?

Achilles mutilates Hector's body by piercing Hector's ankles, putting a rope through the holes, and fastening Hector's corpse to his chariot, drags the body back to his camp. However, what Achilles is doing is even worse than that.

According to ancient Greek mythology, unless Hector's body receives a decent burial, his *psyche* will not be able to enter the Underworld. Being in the Underworld is not pleasant, but being a *psyche* who is not able to get into the Underworld is even worse.

Compare John Wayne's character in *The Searchers*. John Wayne, who plays a racist who hates Indians, shoots the eyes

out of an Indian corpse. That way, according to Indian mythology, the corpse will not be able to find its way to the Happy Hunting Ground.

So by refusing to return Hector's body for burial, Achilles is condemning Hector's *psyche* to not being able to enter the Underworld.

By the way, because of Achilles' fixation on revenge, he is doing the same thing to Patroclus' *psyche* that he is doing to Hector's *psyche*. Patroclus has not received a decent burial, and therefore Patroclus' *psyche* cannot enter the Underworld. In fact, Patroclus' ghost appears to Achilles in Book 23 of the *Iliad* and begs for a funeral so that his *psyche* can go to Hades. (The best way to respect a corpse is to bury — or burn — it quickly.)

Elizabeth Vandiver points out,

The parallel with what Achilles is inadvertently doing to Patroclus is obvious. Achilles is refusing to bury Patroclus, because he cannot bear to let him go; and yet he is — whether he sees it this way or not — inflicting exactly the same horror on Patroclus as he inflicts deliberately on Hector. (*The Iliad of Homer* 168)

• What are the responses to Hector's death by Achilles and the Achaeans?

Hector dies, and Achilles and the Achaeans are glad. They horribly mutilate Hector's body. As I have said, the Achaeans take turns stabbing Hector's corpse, and then Achilles takes Hector's ankles, pierces them, draws a rope through them, and drags Hector's body behind his chariot.

• **Does Achilles drag Hector’s body three times around the city of Troy?**

No, in the *Iliad* Achilles does not drag Hector’s body three times around the city of Troy. While he was alive, Hector ran three times around the city of Troy, but Achilles simply drags Hector’s body back to his camp.

However, in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, written some 700 years after the *Iliad* was written down, Hector’s body is dragged three times around the city of Troy:

And there was Hector, dragged around Troy walls

Three times

(Fitzgerald, *Aeneid* 1.658-659)

The Latin can be found at *Aeneid* 1.483.

• **What is the response to Hector’s death by Priam?**

As Achilles and the Achaeans mistreat Hector’s body, Priam and Hecuba watch from the walls, and later Andromache arrives and faints at the sight. They know that Achilles’ possession of the body prevents Hector’s *psyche* from entering the Underworld.

For Hector’s family, it is horrible that Hector has been killed, but what is even worse is that his *psyche* cannot enter the Underworld. The only way for Hector’s *psyche* to enter the Underworld is for his family to get his corpse back so that they can give it a decent burial.

This, of course, drives Priam wild with grief. He immediately wants to leave the protection of the walls of Troy to go to Achilles and ransom Hector’s corpse, but friends restrain him — they know that Achilles will kill him:

“My dear friends,

leave me alone. I know you care for me,
but let me leave the city by myself,
go to the Achaean ships, then beg him,
that ruthless man, that violent monster.
He may feel shame in front of comrades.
He may pity my old age. For he, too,
has a father, one just like me, Peleus,
who sired and raised him to butcher Trojans.
On me especially he's loaded sorrow,
more than on any other man. He's killed
so many of my sons, all in their prime.
But, despite that sorrow, I don't grieve
for all of them as much as I do for one,
for Hector. The sharp pain I feel for him
will bring me down to the house of Hades.
If only he had died here in my arms,
we could have had our fill of weeping,
of lamentation, me and his mother,
who gave birth to him, to her own sorrow."

(Johnston 22.516-535)

There is a difference between Achilles and Priam. Achilles is so filled with wrath that he cannot think of any mercy at all for Hector — Achilles also regards Hector as being of another species. However, Priam, although he hates Achilles

for causing him so much misery, recognizes that Achilles is still a human being and has a father whom he can pity.

• **What is the response to Hector's death by Hecuba?**

After we hear the sorrow of Priam, we hear the sorrow of Hecuba.

Hecuba says,

“My child, how can I live with this misery,
 such wretched sorrow, now that you are dead?
 You were my pride and joy, night and day,
 and in the city, a blessing to us all,
 to Trojan men and women in the state,
 who received you like a god. To them
 you were great glory when you were alive.
 Now death and fate have overtaken you.”

(Johnston 22.538-545)

• **What is the response to Hector's death by Andromache?**

One person we have not heard from is Andromache, who has not yet heard that Hector is dead. We know about Andromache from Book 6. She loves Hector, and they have a good marriage. She is still concerned about her husband's comfort:

And she called her well-kempt women through the
 house
 to set a large three-legged cauldron over the fire
 so Hector could have his steaming hot bath

when he came home from battle — poor woman,
 she never dreamed how far he was from bathing,
 struck down at Achilles' hands by blazing-eyed
 Athena.

(Fagles 22.519-524)

Compare:

But so far Hector's wife
 knew nothing of all this, for no messenger
 had come to tell her clearly that her husband
 had remained outside the gates. She was in a room
 inside their lofty home, weaving purple fabric
 for a double cloak, embroidering flowers on it.
 She'd told her well-groomed servants in the house
 to place a large tripod on the fire, so Hector
 could have a hot bath when he came home from
 battle.

(Johnston 22.546-554)

Andromache is in her home, preparing for her husband's return from battle. She wants him to be comfortable, so he is having a hot bath prepared for him.

Andromache hears the laments of the Trojans and knows that something bad has happened on the battlefield. She goes to the walls of Troy, looks out, and sees that her husband is dead and his corpse is being dragged behind Achilles' chariot.

Andromache faints. Homer sings,

The world went black as night
 before her eyes, she fainted, falling backward,
 gasping away her life breath ...
 She flung to the winds her glittering headdress,
 the cap and the coronet, braided band and veil
 (Fagles 22.547-551)

Compare:

black night eclipsed her eyes. She fell back in a faint,
 gasping her life away. From her head she threw off
 her shining headdress, frontlet, cap, woven
 headband,
 (Johnston 22.582-584)

Note: “Veil” is pronounced with a long A sound.

• What is significant about Andromache’s headdress and veil?

This is significant. Homer uses a special word — *kredemna* — for Andromache’s headdress; the word *kredemna* is pronounced cri-DEM-na. Elizabeth Vandiver points out that *kredemna* has two meanings. It can refer to a woman’s headdress and veil, and it can refer to the ramparts and battlements of a city (*The Iliad of Homer* 169).

This image of Andromache falling and tearing off her is foreshadowing of two upcoming events:

1) Image of the Fall of Troy

What happens when the *kredemna* of a city are thrown down? It means that the city has been defeated, that the city’s enemies have conquered it. Therefore, when Homer’s

audience hear Homer sing that Andromache “flung to the winds her glittering headdress [cri-DEM-na],” they have the image of the fall of the city, the city of course being Troy. Hector, the great defender of Troy, is dead, and Troy’s fall is now inevitable.

2) *Image of Andromache Becoming a Slave*

More is going on in this passage. Andromache has a headdress and a veil because she is a married woman. (Hera, the goddess of marriage, is often shown with a veil.) What will happen to Andromache when the city of Troy falls? The same thing that happened to Briseis and Chryseis. She will be taken into slavery, and because she is a young, desirable woman, she will be a slave who is forced to sleep with her master. When Andromache tears her headdress and veil off when she faints, we see a foreshadowing of her future fate. What does it mean when an enemy warrior tears off a married woman’s headdress and veil? It means that her husband is dead and that she has become a slave. The tearing off of a married woman’s headdress and veil is a way to represent that the woman’s marriage is being violated.

Elizabeth Vandiver points out,

The headdress and veil are the emblem of a married woman. The goddess Hera, for instance, who is the goddess of marriage, is always shown with a veil; very frequently with her hand holding her veil to draw attention to it. When a city is conquered, the women are taken into slavery; and as we have seen with Briseis and Chryseis earlier in the *Iliad*, slavery for a woman in this society means sexual slavery, means providing sexual services to her new master. One way of visually representing the violation of a woman, the violation of a woman’s marriage, the taking of her into slavery, is to represent her with her

veil being violently torn away from her. (*The Iliad of Homer* 169)

We should note that when Hecuba sees Achilles kill Hector, she flings her veil to the ground:

And now his [Hector's] mother began to tear her hair
...

she flung her shining veil to the ground and raised
a high, shattering scream, looking down at her son.
(Fagles 22.478-480)

Compare:

When she saw her son, his mother pulled her hair,
threw off her shining veil, and began to shriek.
(Johnston 22.506-507)

Like Andromache, Hecuba will become a slave.

• Now that Hector is dead, what will happen to Andromache and to Astyanax?

Hector himself foretold in Book 6 what would happen to Andromache if he fell and the city of Troy fell. She would be dragged off, the slave of an Achaean warrior.

When Andromache recovers, her thought is of her fatherless son, Astyanax:

“Now you go to Hades’ house deep underground,
abandoning me to bitter sorrow,
widowed in our home. Our son’s an infant,
born to wretched parents, you and me.
No good will come to him from you, Hector,

now that you're dead, nor will he help you. Even if he gets through this dreadful war with the Achaeans, his life will always be a constant pain and sorrow. For other men will take away his lands. The day a child becomes an orphan all his friends are gone.”
(Johnston 22.600-610)

It will go worse for Astyanax than Andromache thinks. She thinks that her son may escape being killed although he will have a hard life. Actually, the Achaeans will kill her son by throwing him off the walls of Troy.

Andromache is also aware that Achilles will desecrate Hector's body. Her house is filled with cloth that could be used in funeral rites; however, Achilles — she believes — will never allow that; therefore, she says that she will burn them (Fagles 22.602).

If Hector's body cannot be cremated, the next best thing is to burn something valuable in place of his body.

• **An Important Note**

For more information about the differences between Achilles and Hector in the *Iliad*, read Elizabeth Vandiver's "Achilles and Hektor" in her *The Iliad of Homer*, pp. 160-165, to which I am obviously greatly indebted.

• **A main point: It is fair to say that Achilles and Hector are polar opposites (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 160).**

It is fair to say that in many ways, Achilles and Hector are polar opposites.

- **A main point: Hector is a more accessible and sympathetic character than Achilles (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 160).**

Hector is more accessible and sympathetic than Achilles is. We can relate more to Hector than we can relate to Achilles. Hector is much more like we are than Achilles is. In the *Iliad*, Achilles is often portrayed as being more than a living human being and as being less than a living human being.

Achilles is often portrayed as being like a god or as a force of nature, or he is portrayed as if he were already dead.

Hector, on the other hand, is completely human, even in his faults. Hector is a social human being. He has a father and a mother who love him and whom he loves, he has a brother who is a source of pain to him, and he has a loving family. Hector is a leader of his city and is the head of his family. He has many good qualities. He works and fights hard, and he declines to rest in the city of Troy while the other warriors do the fighting. One human error he makes is pushing too hard to win the war: He sometimes fights when he should retreat. Even when Hector runs away from Achilles, he is acting in a very human way.

- **A main point: Achilles is a more isolated character than Hector (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 160).**

Achilles is more isolated than Hector is in the *Iliad*. Achilles is far from home, and he is far from his aged father. He also further isolates himself by withdrawing from battle. In addition, his best friend, Patroclus, is killed in battle. Achilles spends much of the *Iliad* at his camp, angry. When he does return to battle, he routs the Trojans singlehandedly. Achilles does have his mother nearby, but his mother, Thetis, is an immortal goddess. Achilles does not have a normal family with both a mortal father and a mortal mother, as Hector does. This kind of isolation is not admirable. The

ancient Greeks believed in community, in Humankind as social animals. Elizabeth Vandiver points out,

In the context of Homeric culture, and in ancient Greek civilization, there would be nothing admirable at all about someone isolated the way Achilles is isolated. This would seem strange, bizarre, and in a very real sense inhuman. Human beings are defined in Homeric society by their position in a community — by whose father they are, whose son they are, where they fit in a community, what role they play in a community. A human being without community is, in a very real sense, not a human being at all, in Homeric epic and in Greek civilization in general. So Achilles' isolation is not to be seen as somehow indicating his status as a truly great hero. Quite the opposite; it makes him odd, it makes him anomalous, it makes him [...] less than human. (*The Iliad of Homer* 160-161)

To be isolated the way that Achilles is isolated is not good. We Americans may believe in isolation and solitude, as demonstrated by Henry David Thoreau on Walden Pond, or by John Wayne in many Western movies. The ancient Greeks did not think that way. According to the ancient Greeks, humans need to be a part of a community. Achilles' isolation is odd.

Hector, of course, is not isolated. Hector's city is Troy, and usually, after fighting in a battle, he would return home and get a hot bath. Hector's wife, son, father, mother, and living brothers are all present.

• A main point: The parents of Achilles and Hector are very different (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 161-162).

Achilles' parents are not both human. His aged father, Peleus, is mortal, and Achilles doesn't even know whether

his father is alive or dead because he, Achilles, has been away from home so long. Achilles does have a relationship with his goddess mother, Thetis — they have long conversations together when he calls her to come to him. Still, Achilles is mortal and Thetis is immortal, so there is a separation between them. Thetis mourns when Achilles chooses his fate — to die young at Troy — but because she is immortal she has had approximately 3,000 years to get over his death. Thetis is a goddess, so she is both immortal and ageless.

Both of Hector's parents are mortal humans. Both of Hector's parents are completely human. We see this in the scene where Hector is waiting for Achilles outside the walls of Troy. Priam speaks about dogs desecrating his genitals when he, Priam, is dead after the fall of Troy. Hecuba shows Hector her aged breast and reminds him that he nursed from her breast. Both of Hector's parents mourn him when Achilles kills him.

• A main point: The relationships of Achilles and Hector to their wife and son are very different (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 162).

Achilles is probably not married, but he does have a son, Neoptolemus, who later fights at Troy. It is Achilles' son who kills Priam during the fall of Troy. However, Achilles is separated from his son, who is not present at this time. And, of course, Patroclus, Achilles' best friend, is dead at this time.

Hector's wife and child are present. We see them together in Book 6. Andromache is clearly a loving wife. She wants Hector to rest in Troy before going into battle again, but her husband, who is conscious of his duty, declines to rest while the other Trojan warriors do the fighting. Andromache also has a hot bath ready for her husband when he is expected to return home from fighting. We know that Hector's son loves

his father. The son is scared of the helmet that Hector is wearing in Book 6, but when Hector takes off the helmet, the son knows and is not afraid of his father.

Hector's family is present, while Achilles' family is absent. Achilles is isolated; Hector is not.

• **A main point: Achilles and Hector differ in their knowledge of the future and their attitude toward death (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 162-163).**

Achilles has knowledge of the future. Achilles has two fates, and he knows that he has two fates. Why? Because his mother is an immortal goddess, and the gods and goddesses know the fates of human beings. When Achilles goes into battle again, he knows that he will die. When his horse, Roan Beauty, tells Achilles in Book 19 that now his life will not be long, Achilles replies that he already knows that.

Hector is a regular human being. He does not know his fate. At times, he speaks as if he knows that Troy will fall, but he does not know that. He simply realizes that it is a very strong possibility. In Book 6, Hector still hopes to win the war and to keep his wife and son safe. Hector can say in one moment that he knows that Troy will fall, and in the next moment pray to Zeus to make his (Hector's) son a better man than his father. In addition, Hector disregards prophecies. The dying Patroclus prophesies that Achilles will kill Hector, but Hector still hopes to be able to kill Achilles in battle, even though he realizes that Achilles is a far stronger warrior than he is. Hector is like we are. We don't know our fate, and we hope to have a long and happy life.

• **A main point: Achilles and Hector differ in their motivations for fighting (Vandiver, *The Iliad of Homer* 163-164).**

At first, Achilles is fighting for *timê* and especially *kleos*. Later, after his quarrel with Agamemnon, these things no

longer motivate him. When Patroclus dies, Achilles' anger is turned toward the Trojans and especially Hector. Achilles fights so that he can avenge the death of his best friend, Patroclus. Oddly, Achilles and Paris are similar in that they overvalue a person. Paris overvalues Helen, and he is willing for his city to go to war so that he can sleep with Helen. Achilles overvalues Patroclus, and he is willing to do horrible things to the corpse of Hector in order to get revenge for the death of Patroclus. In contrast to Hector, Achilles puts his desires first. When he is angry at Agamemnon, he does not fight. When he is angry at Hector, he kills Hector and then he treats Hector's corpse horribly.

Hector does not want to fight. In Book 3, Hector is happy that his brother Paris is going to fight Menelaus in single combat. Hector is happy because it looks as if the war will be over. Whichever fighter defeats the other will decide the outcome of the war. Hector, however, is responsible for protecting Troy. He is the crown prince of Troy, and he knows that it is his duty to fight and protect his city. Hector fights so that his parents and especially his wife and child will be safe. Hector would love for the war to be over quickly, or better yet, to have never started. But despite what he wants, he fights for his city because it is his obligation to fight for his city.

• How do Achilles and Hector differ in their acceptance of or rejection of the human condition?

Hector accepts the human condition. Hector knows what it means to be human. We live our lives as best we can, and we die. The same is true for all other mortal human beings. Some of Hector's brothers have died in battle, so Hector knows that death comes to those who are close to us. And, although Hector does not know when he will die, he knows that eventually he will die.

Achilles rejects the human condition. Patroclus has gone into battle, and Patroclus has died. However, Achilles cannot come to terms with that. Achilles sent his best friend into battle wearing his armor, and even though he told Patroclus not to continue fighting after beating the Trojans away from the Achaean ships, he should have realized that there was a chance that Patroclus would fall in battle. (Many people who join the Army are in a similar position. They don't think that they might be killed.) Warriors die in battle, and Achilles has seen this each time he has fought in battle, and yet Achilles cannot come to terms with the death of Patroclus. Elizabeth Vandiver points out,

This is not an extraordinary circumstance; warriors die in battle. And yet Achilles refuses to accept it. Achilles reacts as though this is something that has never happened before. (*The Iliad of Homer* 164)

Achilles refuses to accept the mortality of his best friend, Patroclus. Achilles refuses to accept the human condition.

Conclusion

Achilles has killed Hector, but we will see that doing that gives Achilles no satisfaction at all. Achilles still has not accepted the human condition. Achilles continues to mistreat the corpse of Hector.

Achilles has not yet been reintegrated into humanity. He needs to be fully human rather than more than human or less than human. That will occur in the final two books of the *Iliad*.

Chapter 23: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 23 — The Funeral Games of Patroclus / The Funeral Games for Patroclus

Introduction

In this book, we see two main things: the funeral of Patroclus, and the games that follow the funeral of Patroclus.

We should definitely notice Achilles' character in Book 23. Indeed, there is a definite contrast between Agamemnon's character in Book 1 and Achilles' character in Book 23. It looks very much as if the Achilles of Book 23 should be the leader of the Achaeans instead of Agamemnon. In Book 1, Agamemnon shows what a poor leader he is. In Book 23, Achilles shows that he would be a good leader. In addition, Achilles has changed. Now, he has tact; in Book 1, he did not have tact.

• What do Achilles and the Achaeans do at the beginning of Book 23?

In Book 23, Achilles still has not come to terms with the death of Patroclus. He is still grieving excessively. He is still not eating, not drinking, and not having sex; in addition, he is still dragging the corpse of Hector around behind his chariot.

As soon as Hector is dead and the Achaeans have desecrated his body, the Achaeans return to the ships, but Achilles does not send away his Myrmidons. Instead, he begins preparations for the burial of Patroclus. In doing so, Achilles shows that he knows "the solemn honors owed the dead" (Fagles 23.10). Of course, at this time he will not allow these honors to be given to Hector.

The burial customs of the Achaeans are interesting. In their chariots, the Myrmidons drive around Patroclus' body three times:

“All in battle-order drive them [chariots] past
Patroclus —

a cortege will mourn the man with teams and
chariots.

These are the solemn honors owed the dead.”

(Fagles 23.8-10)

Note: A “cortege” is a funeral procession.

Achilles knows “the solemn honors owed the dead,” but he has not yet learned that these solemn honors are also owed to Hector.

Achilles says this over the body of Patroclus:

“Farewell, Patroclus, even there in the House of
Death!

Look — all that I promised once I am performing
now:

I’ve dragged Hector here for the dogs to rip him raw
—

and here in front of your flaming pyre I’ll cut the
throats

of a dozen sons of Troy in all their shining glory,
venting my rage on them for your destruction!”

(Fagles 23.22-27)

Achilles then offers a sacrifice to the gods. Many oxen are killed, the Myrmidons feast on their flesh, and then blood is poured out around the corpse.

Next the Achaean leaders take Achilles to Agamemnon’s tent. The Achaean leaders want Achilles “to wash the clotted

bloodstains from his body” (Fagles 23.48), but Achilles declines to do that:

“No drop shall touch me, by almighty Jove!
 The first and greatest of the gods above!
 Till on the pyre I place thee; till I rear
 The grassy mound, and clip thy sacred hair.
 Some ease at least those pious rites may give,
 And soothe my sorrows, while I bear to live.”

(Pope pdf 410)

Achilles also will not eat, giving as his reason that it would be improper for him to eat while Patroclus is still unburied. Achilles does, however, want Agamemnon to have men bring in wood for Patroclus’ funeral pyre the following morning.

• Compare and contrast the ways that the corpses of Hector and of Patroclus are treated by the Achaeans.

One thing to notice here is the difference between the ways Patroclus’ body and Hector’s body are treated. Obviously, Patroclus’ body is being treated well, while Hector’s body is being treated badly. A funeral is being planned for the corpse of Patroclus; no funeral is being planned for the corpse of Hector.

• Why does the *psyche* of Patroclus appear to Achilles in a dream?

This is significant: Achilles falls asleep and Patroclus appears to him in a dream. The *psyche* or ghost of Patroclus appears to Achilles in a dream for the express purpose of begging him to hold a funeral quickly so that he — the *psyche* of Patroclus — can enter the Underworld quickly.

Patroclus tells Achilles:

“Bury me, quickly — let me pass the Gates of Hades.
 They hold me off at a distance, all the souls,
 the shades of the burnt-out, breathless dead,
 never to let me cross the river, mingle with them ...
 They leave me to wander up and down, abandoned,
 lost
 at the House of Death with the all-embracing gates.
 Oh give me your hand — I beg you with my tears!”
 (Fagles 23.83-89)

Compare:

“You’re asleep, Achilles.
 You’ve forgotten me. While I was alive,
 you never did neglect me. But now I’m dead.
 So bury me as quickly as you can.
 Then I can pass through the gates of Hades.
 The spirits, ghosts of the dead, keep me away.
 They don’t let me join them past the river.
 So I wander aimlessly round Hades’ home
 by its wide gates. [...]”
 (Johnston 23.80-88)

Achilles tries to embrace the phantom, but he cannot.

Here we see that *psyches* greatly desire to enter the Underworld, gloomy as the Underworld is. Obviously, the

Underworld is the proper place for a *psyche* or ghost. And unless a funeral is held, your *psyche* cannot enter the Underworld. The Underworld may not be a pleasant place, but for a *psyche* it is worse to be left on the banks of the River Styx and not be allowed to cross the river and enter the Underworld.

Of course, neither Hector nor Patroclus is buried at this time, and therefore, their souls have not yet entered Hades.

Achilles is deliberately doing something horrible to Hector's *psyche* by not allowing his corpse to have a funeral. Achilles' anger at Hector is so deep that killing Hector's body is not enough. Achilles punishes Hector's *psyche*, too.

We also see how much Achilles and Patroclus love each other. Patroclus asks that his and Achilles' bones be placed in the same urn.

We will see a magnificent funeral for Patroclus, followed by magnificent funeral games that consist of athletic events such as archery and footraces. These games are held in honor of Patroclus.

• When Achilles wants most soldiers to leave but the leading captains to remain, how does Achilles show respect to Agamemnon (Fagles 23.179-184 / Johnston 23.187-193)?

When daybreak comes, the soldiers gather wood for the pyre
 at the site Achilles chose to build an immense mound
 for Patroclus and himself.

(Fagles 23.146-147)

Achilles, we remember, is going to die soon. He knows that. He is planning ahead.

As part of the mourning process, the Achaeans cut their hair and cast it on the corpse, to be burned also. Achilles also does this.

Achilles shows respect to Agamemnon — this is one instance in which he displays his newfound tact. He wishes most soldiers to leave, but for the generals to stay. Instead of giving orders himself, however, Achilles asks Agamemnon to do so:

“Son of Atreus,
 Achaean troops will listen to your words
 more than to anyone. Men can grieve too much.
 So dismiss them from the pyre for now.
 Tell them to prepare a meal. Those of us
 with special cause to mourn will take care of this.
 But let the leaders remain here with us.”

(Johnston 23.187-193)

• Describe the sacrifice of the 12 Trojan youths by Achilles. What else is sacrificed?

We know why Achilles captured twelve Trojans in Book 21 instead of slaughtering them. He wants to kill them as a human sacrifice at Patroclus’ pyre.

As part of the funeral rites, Achilles sacrifices sheep and cattle, sets honey and oil beside Patroclus’ corpse, kills four stallions and two dogs — and kills the twelve Trojans he had captured live previously:

And the dead lord Patroclus
 had fed nine dogs at table — he slit the throats of two,

threw them onto the pyre and then a dozen brave sons
of the proud Trojans he hacked to pieces with his
bronze ...

Achilles' mighty heart was erupting now with
slaughter —

(Fagles 23.198-203)

Patroclus fed nine dogs, yet Achilles kills only two. Achilles does not stint anything for Patroclus, so it must be significant that he kills only two dogs. Possibly he wants to be sure that there are enough dogs to eat Hector's corpse. Achilles says,

“Rest in peace,
Patroclus, though you're in Hades' house.
For I'm now completing everything
I promised you before. Flames will burn
twelve noble sons of great-hearted Trojans,
all cremated with you. But as for Hector,
Priam's son, I'll not feed him to the fire,
but to the dogs.”

(Johnston 23.215-222)

Even a magnificent funeral and a human sacrifice such as this one will not ease Achilles' pain. He will still find it hard to come to terms with the death of his best friend.

• **How do the gods take care of Hector's body?**

Obviously, corpses rot. That is one reason why the Achaeans and the Trojans occasionally make truces — so that funerals could be held for the dead. In addition, of course, Achilles wants the dogs and birds to feast on Hector's body.

Fortunately, Aphrodite takes care of Hector's corpse so that it is not eaten by the dogs — she beats away the wild dogs and anoints Hector's corpse with oil. And Apollo helps by not allowing the sun to shine on Hector's corpse. So although Achilles threatens to let dogs eat Hector's corpse, Aphrodite and Apollo take care of it:

So spake he, threatening: but the gods made vain
 His threat, and guard inviolate the slain:
 Celestial Venus hover'd o'er his head,
 And roseate unguents, heavenly fragrance! shed:
 She watch'd him all the night and all the day,
 And drove the bloodhounds from their destined prey.
 Nor sacred Phoebus less employ'd his care;
 He pour'd around a veil of gather'd air,
 And kept the nerves undried, the flesh entire,
 Against the solar beam and Sirian fire.

(Pope pdf 414)

• **How do the gods help during the funeral of Patroclus?**

Patroclus' pyre is lit, but it doesn't burn well. Therefore, Achilles prays to the two winds — the West wind and the North wind — to blow on the fire so it will burn. The winds answer Achilles' prayer.

• **How much does Achilles mourn his friend in the simile at Fagles 23.254-258 / Johnston 23.265-269?**

Homer creates a telling simile here:

As a father weeps when he burns his son's bones,

Dead on his wedding day,
 And his death has plunged his parents in despair ...
 So Achilles wept as he burned his dear friend's
 bones,
 Dragging himself around the pyre, choked with sobs.
 (Fagles 23.254-258)

Compare:

Just as a father mourns his son, when he burns his
 bones,
 his newly married son, whose death brings parents
 dreadful sorrow, that's how Achilles kept crying
 then,
 as he burned his companion's bones, dragging
 himself
 around the pyre, lamenting endlessly.
 (Johnston 23.265-269)

Achilles mourns as much as any man can mourn. He mourns as if he is a father at the funeral of his son, a son who died on his wedding day. This is an excellent contrast. A wedding day is a day of happiness, but on that day the groom died. This intensified the sorrow of the father.

• Achilles finds it difficult to sleep, and he refuses to eat. How do the gods take care of his physical needs?

Finally Achilles sleeps briefly, but Agamemnon's men arouse him. Achilles plans ahead as he continues to take care of Patroclus' bones. He says that Patroclus' mound should not be built high; instead, after Achilles is dead and his bones

are mingled with Patroclus' bones the mound can be built higher.

Even after the funeral Achilles continues to fast, to refrain from bathing, and to drag Hector's corpse behind his chariot.

Achilles is kept alive because of the gods. Athena has put nectar and ambrosia into Achilles' chest. The food and drink of the gods keep Achilles alive. The gods used ambrosia to keep the corpses of Patroclus and Hector from decaying, and now the gods use ambrosia to keep Achilles from dying at this time. Achilles has been portrayed as something more than human and as an already dead human being. Here are parallels between Achilles and the gods, and between Achilles and two corpses. The gods give special treatment to Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector. Achilles is the only living human being in the *Iliad* to be given nectar and ambrosia.

• Describe the chariot race. What are the prizes, and who wins?

Now it is time for the funeral games. Achilles brings out the prizes for the games — the prizes include women, cattle and oxen, tripods, metal, and weapons and armor.

The first game is the chariot race. There are five prizes, and there are five contestants, so that everyone will gain a prize:

1st: a woman skilled in crafts and a tripod

2nd: an unbroken mare

3rd: a 4-measure cauldron

4th: 2 gold bars

5th: a good 2-handled jar

The five contestants (and how they finish) are:

1st: Diomedes

2nd: Antilochus

3rd: Menelaus

4th: Meriones

5th: Eumelus

Before the chariot race, Nestor, Antilochus' father, gives him some advice. The person who wins the race is not always the swiftest (Antilochus already knows that his team is the slowest); instead, sometimes skill in driving can lead to a victory:

“It’s skill, not brawn, that makes the finest woodsman.

By skill, too, the captain holds his ship on course,
 scudding the wine-dark sea though rocked by gales,
 By skill alone, charioteer outraces charioteer.”

(Fagles 23.359-362)

By the way, “to scud” means “to run or skim along swiftly and easily” — the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (1249).

Nestor’s advice is good. Nestor advises his son to make a tight turn, not a wide turn, at the halfway mark where the chariots turn around and come racing back to the starting point.

In the race, the gods cheat — just as the angels cheated in the movie *Angels in the Outfield*. Apollo knocks the whip from Diomedes’ hand, but Athena brings the whip back to Diomedes and then smashes Eumelus’ yoke, forcing him to come in last.

In the race, the young Antilochus is impetuous — and not fair. There are places where one can pass safely, but Antilochus engages in a contest of nerves with Menelaus. He begins to pass Menelaus just as they approach a narrow place, and Menelaus is frightened and holds back. Menelaus complains,

“Antilochus, you’re driving like an idiot!

Pull your horses back! The road’s too narrow.

It gets wider soon, you can pass me there!

Watch you don’t hit me. You’ll make us crash!”

(Johnston 23.519-522)

Antilochus has done something wrong here. He should have waited to pass at a wider spot on the race course.

• What do we learn about Achilles’ abilities as a leader during the chariot race?

At this point the chariots are entering the home stretch and the Achaeans are watching eagerly to see who is in the lead. A quarrel breaks out between Little Ajax and Idomeneus about who is in first place, but Achilles — as he will do so often in the funeral games — calms the quarreling men:

“No more of this,

Idomeneus and Ajax, no more angry words,

no more insults, that’s not appropriate.

You’d both feel indignation if another man

behaved this way. So sit down with the group

and watch for horses. It won’t be long

before their eagerness to win brings them here.

Then you can both see the Argive horses,
 who's in the lead and who's behind."

(Johnston 23.601-609)

• What do we learn about Achilles' abilities as a leader in his interaction with Eumelus and Antilochus following the chariot race?

Eumelus, whose yoke broke, came in last, and Achilles is sympathetic and wishes to award him a higher prize. Achilles doesn't give him the first prize — that will go to Diomedes — but he wishes to award him the second prize:

"Behold! the man whose matchless art surpass'd

The sons of Greece! the ablest, yet the last!

Fortune denies, but justice bids us pay

(Since great Tydides bears the first away)

To him the second honours of the day."

(Pope pdf 421)

Immediately, Antilochus protests — he came in second and he says that he should be awarded the second prize — the mare:

"Achilles, I'll be angry with you,

if you carry out what you've proposed.

For you want to rob me of my prize,

claiming that his chariot and swift horses

ran into trouble, as he did himself,

though he's an excellent charioteer.

But he should have prayed to the immortals.

Then in the race he would not have finished last.
 If you're feeling sorry for Eumelus,
 if he's someone your heart is fond of,
 in your hut there's lots of gold. You've got bronze,
 sheep, women slaves, and sure-footed horses.

Why not take some of that and then give him
 an even greater prize sometime later on?
 Or do it now. Achaeans will applaud you.
 But I won't give up the mare. If someone
 wants her, let him try doing battle with me,
 hand to hand."

(Johnston 23.662-679)

Homer's audience should recognize this situation. It is much like the situation we had in Book 1. Antilochus is being stripped of a prize, just as Achilles was stripped of Briseis. However, Achilles handles this situation much better than Agamemnon did. Agamemnon stripped Achilles of his prize instead of accepting Achilles' suggestion to take another prize later, after Troy has fallen, but Achilles accepts Antilochus' suggestion and awards Eumelus another prize from his stores.

Interestingly, Achilles smiles at Antilochus' outburst. The way that Achilles handles the situation is remarkably right:

He flared up and the swift runner Achilles smiled,
 delighting in Antilochus — he liked the man
 immensely.

He answered him warmly, winged words:
 “Antilochus,

you want me to fetch an extra gift from my tents,
 a consolation prize for Eumelus? I’m glad to do it.

I’ll give him the breastplate I took from Asteropaeus.

It’s solid bronze with a glittering overlay of tin,
 rings on rings. A gift he’ll value highly.”

(Fagles 23.619-626)

The smile by Achilles is remarkable. Few smiles appear in the *Iliad*. Some other mortals who smile are Hector, who breaks into a “broad smile” (Fagles 6.479), Andromache, who smiles “through her tears” (Fagles 6.577) and Odysseus, who smiles when Dolon tells him that the prize for spying on the Achaeans is Achilles’ horses (Fagles 10.466). Smiling is a very human thing to do. Both Hector and Andromache laugh in Book 6. Zeus smiles at Athena’s words in Book 5 (Fagles 5.491). (Zeus smiles at Athena’s mocking of the wounded Aphrodite.) In addition, Zeus smiles after being tricked by Hera (Fagles 15.60). (Zeus smiles when Hera protests that it wasn’t her fault.)

Achilles is right; Eumelus does value the breastplate highly. Achilles is very generous here.

By the way, Antilochus was, I think, wrong to protest. He is a young warrior, and he should have stayed quiet.

• **How is the conflict between Antilochus and Menelaus resolved following the chariot race?**

Now a new problem arises. Menelaus feels cheated. As you remember, Antilochus cut before Menelaus just before they reached a narrow spot in the race course, although Antilochus had a slower team. The race apparently has rules

designed to keep the participants from being wounded or even killed. Menelaus tells Antilochus,

“Come over here, Antilochus, royal prince —
 this is the old custom. Come, stand in front
 of your team and chariot, grasp the coiling whip
 that lashed them home, lay your hand on their manes
 and swear by the mighty god who grips and shakes
 the earth
 you never blocked my chariot — not by deliberate
 foul.”

(Fagles 23.645-650)

Antilochus backs down; he realizes that he has done the wrong thing. He says,

“Bear with me now. I’ll give you this mare I won —
 of my own accord. And any finer trophy you’d ask
 from my own stores, I’d volunteer at once,
 gladly, Atrides, my royal king — *anything*
 but fall from your favor all my days to come
 and swear a false oath in the eyes of every god.”

(Fagles 23.656-661)

Menelaus is generous in his response to Antilochus — apparently he is influenced by the generosity of Achilles. Menelaus gives the mare back to Antilochus and is satisfied with the apology.

One thing to notice in this race is that the best team does not always win. Eumelus had the best team of horses, so he should have won, but instead he came in last.

• What do we learn about Achilles' abilities as a leader in his interaction with Nestor following the chariot race?

We see more good things about Achilles. Because he has given an extra prize to Eumelus, that leaves the fifth prize — the two-handled jar — unclaimed. Therefore, Achilles gives it to Nestor. This helps relieve the unpleasant situation between Menelaus and Nestor's son, Antilochus, and it also shows respect to the old warrior. Achilles tells Nestor,

“Take this now, old man.

Let it be your treasure, in memory

of Patroclus' burial. For you'll see him

no more among the Argives. This prize

I'm giving you without a contest.

For you won't be competing as a boxer,

or in wrestling, or the spear throw.

Nor will you be running in the foot race.

For old age now has you in its cruel grip.”

(Johnston 23.759-767)

Nestor is very pleased with the gift, and begins one of his stories about the man he used to be. Nestor also praises Achilles — and keeps his reminiscence short:

“But come, you must continue with these games

to honour your companion. As for this gift,

I accept it gladly. It delights my heart

that you think of me always as your friend.
 You don't forget the honours due to me
 among Achaeans. May the gods grant you,
 as a reward for that your heart's desires."

(Johnston 23.799-805)

Most people find old men's reminiscences boring, so it is remarkable to hear Achilles' reaction to the story:

He savored every word of Nestor's story.

(Fagles 23.727)

Note: Many old men are in their anecdotage.

• Describe the boxing match between Epeus and Euryalus.

The next event is the boxing-match. Two contestants compete, and two prizes are offered. First prize is a heavy-duty mule, while second prize is a cup with double handles. The two contestants are Epeus and Euryalus. One thing we learn from this event is that trash talking in boxing is nothing new. Epeus says,

"But I'll say this, and what I say will happen,
 I'll break apart the skin and crush the bones
 of the man who fights me. Those close to him
 had better stay here in a single group
 to help him off, once my fists have thrashed him."

(Johnston 23.830-834)

Epeus is able to walk the walk as well as to talk the talk — he wins with a knockout.

• **Describe the wrestling match between Odysseus and Great Ajax.**

The next event is a wrestling match. The contestants here are Odysseus and Great Ajax, both great Greek heroes. They are evenly matched, and Achilles is forced to step in before things get out of hand:

“No more struggling — don’t kill yourselves in sport!

Victory goes to both. Share the prizes. Off you go, so the rest of the men can have a crack at contests.”

(Fagles 23.818-820)

Once again, Achilles has shown good judgment at stopping the men before they hurt each other.

Although Achilles says, “Victory goes to both” (Fagles 23.819), I think that Odysseus has the edge. Great Ajax tried to hoist Odysseus into the air, but Odysseus was able to kick him behind the knee (Fagles 23.808-809). When Odysseus tried to hoist Great Ajax into the air, he could not do so, but he hooked a leg around Great Ajax and they sprawled on the ground (Fagles 23.814). In the wrestling match, Odysseus takes the offensive:

While the long strife even tired the lookers on,

Thus to Ulysses spoke great Telamon:

“Or let me lift thee, chief, or lift thou me:

Prove we our force, and Jove the rest decree.”

He said; and, straining, heaved him off the ground

With matchless strength; that time Ulysses found

The strength to evade, and where the nerves combine

His ankle struck: the giant fell supine;
 Ulysses, following, on his bosom lies;
 Shouts of applause run rattling through the skies.
 Ajax to lift Ulysses next essays;
 He barely stirr'd him, but he could not raise:
 His knee lock'd fast, the foe's attempt denied;
 And grappling close, they tumbled side by side.
 Defiled with honourable dust they roll,
 Still breathing strife, and unsubdued of soul:
 Again they rage, again to combat rise;
 When great Achilles thus divides the prize:
 "Your noble vigour, O my friends, restrain;
 Nor weary out your generous strength in vain.
 Ye both have won: let others who excel,
 Now prove that prowess you have proved so well."
 (Pope pdf 426)

• What do we learn about Odysseus following the wrestling match?

Notice, too, a little humor by Homer. Achilles has told Odysseus and Great Ajax to let the others have a chance at winning prizes, yet Odysseus enters the very next contest so he can win more prizes. It's like a hostess elbowing me in the ribs and saying, "Save some shrimp for the other guests." Instead of obeying, I simply move to a different table and keep eating shrimp.

• **Describe the footrace, which Odysseus wins.**

The next event is the footrace. Here we have a reminder of a time when Achilles was not so generous. A silver bowl is the prize here — the bowl was the ransom that was paid for Lycaon the first time Achilles met him. This is the same Lycaon whom Achilles has recently killed — although Lycaon was a suppliant.

In describing the footrace, Homer uses an unusual simile. Usually, his similes concern wild animals, but here he uses a simile of life at home. This is appropriate because the funeral games are civilized, in contrast to war:

The son of Oïleus quickly raced in front,
with godlike Odysseus really close behind,
as close as the weaving bar comes to the breast
of a well-dressed woman when she deftly pulls it
in her hands to pass the weaving spool through
thread,
keeping the rod against her chest, that's how close
Odysseus ran behind, his feet hitting Ajax's
footprints
before the dust could settle there.

(Johnston 23.935-942)

Homer makes the scope of his poem very wide. He includes this simile of domestic life, which is appropriate here because this book is gentler than most of the other books of the *Iliad*.

In the race, Homer engages in a little humor. Ajax slips on some manure and gets it all over him, including in his mouth and nostrils.

• **Why does Antilochus come in last in the footrace?**

Antilochus comes in last in the footrace — perhaps a wise move, since Menelaus has been recently angry at him. (I once played a friendly volleyball game and spiked the volleyball against my philosophy thesis advisor. He didn't look very happy about it, so I let him spike the ball against me as soon as I could. Mama Bruce didn't raise her little boy Davy up to be no fool.) In other words, Antilochus may have thrown the race; after all, although Odysseus is vigorous, he has a few years on him. In addition, we remember that this is “swift Antilochus,” who carried the news of Patroclus' death to Achilles and who is described as

Antilochus, fastest of all the young men in the ranks.

(Fagles 23.841)

Mainly, the older kings compete in the games. Antilochus is an exception because Nestor, his father, is too old to compete in the games.

• **What do we learn about Achilles' abilities as a leader in his interaction with Antilochus following the footrace?**

Antilochus also compliments Achilles:

“I'll tell you something you've always known, my friends —

down to this very day the gods prefer old-timers.

Look at Ajax now, with only a few years on me.

But Odysseus — why, *he's* out of the dark ages,

one of the old relics —

but in green old age, they say. No mean fate
to beat him out in a race, for all but our Achilles.”

(Fagles 23.874-880)

Achilles is flattered, and rewards Antilochus — thereby making up for the earlier unpleasantness Antilochus had with Menelaus:

“Antilochus, how can I let your praise go
unrewarded?

Here’s more gold — a half-bar more in the bargain.”

(Fagles 23.883-884)

I wonder if Achilles thinks or knows that Antilochus could have finished higher in the race than he did. We remember that Achilles gave a good prize to Eumelus, who finished last in the chariot race. Achilles gives honor when honor is due.

• Describe the duel contest between Diomedes and Great Ajax.

The next event is very strange. Two warriors must fight each other, and the first to draw blood against the other wins. This time it’s Great Ajax and Diomedes, once again two great Greek heroes. Achilles awards the first-place prize to Diomedes, who does seem to have performed better.

• Why do you suppose that Great Ajax always seems to come in second during the funeral games?

Note that Diomedes is an offensive warrior, while Great Ajax is a defensive warrior. Diomedes is known for his *aristeia* in which he wounded Aphrodite and Ares earlier. Great Ajax is known for his defense of the ships. Here offense conquers defense. Similarly, the Trojans, who are on the defensive, will be conquered by the Achaeans, who are on the offensive.

One thing to notice in this book is that Great Ajax always seems to come in second in the games, as he does in “real” life:

- Great Ajax is second to Achilles in “real” life. Achilles is the greatest Achaean warrior, while Great Ajax is the second greatest Achaean warrior.
- When Achilles is killed and his armor is distributed, Great Ajax again comes in second — this time to Odysseus. When the Achaeans vote on whom to give Achilles’ armor, they vote to give it to Odysseus.
- Even when Great Ajax is heroically almost single-handedly fighting the Trojans at the ships, he still comes in second — he is forced back, one ship is set on fire, and it is up to Patroclus to save the Achaeans.

In the funeral games, Odysseus is a little better than Great Ajax in wrestling, and Diomedes is a little better than Great Ajax in dueling. Great Ajax also comes in second in the next event: throwing the shotput.

Great Ajax participates in more athletic events than anyone.

• **Describe the shotput contest.**

The next event is the shotput — the hurling of a piece of pig iron. Polypoetes wins.

There is some humor here:

They stood in a row. Big Epeus hefted the iron,
swung and heaved it — and comrades burst out
laughing.

(Fagles 23.931-932)

Apparently, Epeus’ throw is very poor.

Again, Great Ajax finishes second in a contest:

Stern Polypoetes stepp'd before the throng,
 And great Leonteus, more than mortal strong;
 Whose force with rival forces to oppose,
 Uprose great Ajax; up Epeus rose.
 Each stood in order: first Epeus threw;
 High o'er the wondering crowds the whirling circle
 flew.
 Leonteus next a little space surpass'd;
 And third, the strength of godlike Ajax cast.
 O'er both their marks it flew; till fiercely flung
 From Polypoetes' arm the discus sung:
 Far as a swain his whirling sheephook throws,
 That distant falls among the grazing cows,
 So past them all the rapid circle flies:
 His friends, while loud applauses shake the skies,
 With force conjoin'd heave off the weighty prize.
 (Pope pdf 429)

• Describe the archery contest between Teucer and Meriones.

The next contest is archery. This contest is exciting. A dove is tied with a string to a pole. Teucer hits the string and severs it, then Meriones shoots the dove as it flies away.

• What do we learn about Achilles' abilities as a leader in how he handles the spear-throwing contest?

Finally, there is the spear-throwing contest — and Agamemnon and Meriones rise to compete. Again Achilles shows his intelligence. The contest is never held; instead, Achilles tells everyone that there is no need to hold the contest — everybody already knows how good Agamemnon is. Since he is sure to win, let's just give him first prize:

“Atrides — well we know how far you excel us all:
no one can match your strength at throwing spears,
you are the best by far!

Take first prize and return to your hollow ships
while we award this spear to the fighter Meriones,
if that would please your heart. That's what I
propose.”

(Fagles 23.886-991)

Of course, in the previous contests, we have already learned that the best person doesn't always win. Eumelus was the best charioteer, but he came in last. Achilles here avoids a potentially embarrassing situation. If Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaeans, comes in second, he will lose face. Therefore, Achilles is wise to simply award first prize to Agamemnon. Agamemnon's pride is touchy, and Achilles makes sure that his pride is not wounded.

Agamemnon apparently responds with generosity — apparently influenced by the generosity of Achilles. Agamemnon gives his prize away to his herald Talthylbius:

Achilles gave the bronze-shod spear to Meriones.

And the winning hero Atrides gave his own prize

to his herald Talthybius — the king's burnished trophy.

(Fagles 23.993-995)

It is possible that Agamemnon is simply handing the spear to his herald Talthybius to carry back to Agamemnon's camp, but it is certainly consistent with the tone of Book 23 for Agamemnon to give away the spear. After all, Menelaus allowed Antilochus to keep the mare that should have gone to Menelaus.

Meriones also generously does not object to Achilles' awarding first prize to Agamemnon. Meriones is a little older and wiser than Antilochus, who objected when Achilles wanted to award the second-prize mare to Eumelus in the chariot race.

Book 23 has a lot of generosity.

• How does Achilles treat Agamemnon in Book 23 as compared to the way he treated him in Book 1?

Achilles treats Agamemnon very differently in Book 23 from the way he treated him in Book 1. In Book 1, Achilles treats Agamemnon with disdain, insulting him by saying that Agamemnon takes riches for himself without fighting hard and without showing proper respect toward Achilles. In Book 23, Achilles treats Agamemnon with respect.

We see this in two particular places. One is in the spear-throwing contest; the other is before the funeral games start, when Achilles asks Agamemnon to dismiss the ordinary warriors from the funeral pyre but have the "leading captains" (Fagles 23.184) remain. Achilles tells Agamemnon that he is "the first the armies will obey" (Fagles 23.179). Here, Achilles recognizes Agamemnon as the main king of the Achaean forces at Troy. He shows

Agamemnon proper respect, respect that is due him as the main leader of the Achaean forces.

In addition, we see Achilles showing Agamemnon respect in the spear-throwing contest. Two men rise up to compete in the spear-throwing contest. One is Agamemnon; the other is Idomeneus' aide, Meriones. Achilles doesn't even hold the contest. Instead, he tells Agamemnon that Agamemnon is the superior spear thrower and of course Agamemnon will win, so there is no need to hold the contest. Therefore, Achilles simply gives Agamemnon the first prize. Meriones doesn't object, since he is so much lower in rank than Agamemnon.

But of course we know that the best or most talented person doesn't always win. In the chariot races, Eumelus had the best team of horses, but he came in last because Athena smashed his yoke. By simply awarding the first place to Agamemnon, Achilles is taking no chances that Agamemnon will lose the contest and thereby lose face in front of the Achaeans. This is very intelligent on Achilles' part.

• What are the main things to learn in Book 23?

1. Throughout Book 23, we see that Achilles would now make a better leader than Agamemnon.
2. We also see that Achilles has changed since Book 1. In Book 1, Achilles did not hesitate to insult Agamemnon. Here, however, Achilles makes sure to treat Agamemnon with respect.
3. We also see that generosity breeds generosity. Achilles is generous throughout the funeral games, and both Menelaus and Agamemnon show generosity in their disposal of their prizes.

4. Achilles is going through a healing process here. It takes time for him to learn that he should treat Hector's corpse with dignity and respect.
5. Note also that here we say goodbye to the Achaean leaders. This is the last time we see Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, Diomedes, the two Ajaxes, etc.
6. One purpose of funerals and of these funeral games is to help the living come to terms with the deaths of loved ones. Following a funeral, one thing that modern families do is eat. This is a way of accepting the human condition. A loved one dies, we grieve, we hold a funeral, and then we return to living our lives. The funeral and the funeral games help Achilles, but he still has a long way to go before he comes to terms with the death of Patroclus and accepts the human condition. We will see him do that in Book 24.

Chapter 24: Homer's *Iliad*, Book 24 — Achilles and Priam

Introduction

In Book 24, we find the conclusion to the *Iliad*, and it is a fitting conclusion. The wrath of Achilles will end.

In this final book, we say goodbye to the gods and to Achilles and the Trojans.

• In what way does the structure of the end of the *Iliad* parallel the structure of the beginning of the *Iliad*?

The structure of the *Iliad* includes similarities in lengths of time in Book 1 and Book 24.

For nine days Apollo shoots arrows of plague at the Achaeans (Fagles 1.61), and in Book 24 Zeus tells Thetis

“For nine whole days the immortals have been feuding

over Hector’s corpse and Achilles scourge of cities.”

(Fagles 24.131-132)

The gods have been feuding over what to do about Hector’s body. They want it buried.

Twelve days pass in between the time Achilles requests Thetis to go to Zeus and request that the Trojans win for a while and the time that she can actually do that (Fagles 1.587). When Achilles asks how long the Trojans “need to bury Prince Hector” (Fagles 24.772), Priam answers,

“Well, nine days we should mourn him in our halls,
on the tenth we’d bury Hector, hold the public feast,
on the eleventh we’d build the barrow high above his
body —

on the twelfth we'd fight again ... if fight we must."

(Fagles 24.782-785)

One + Nine + One + Twelve

Book 1:

One: Chryses supplicates Agamemnon, but is rejected.

Nine: Apollo shoots plague arrows at the Achaeans.

One: Achilles calls a council, at which he and Agamemnon quarrel.

Twelve: After 12 days, Thetis speaks to Zeus, requesting that Zeus allow the Trojans to win for a while (as Achilles desires).

Book 24

One: The funeral games end.

Nine: The gods feud over what to do about Hector's corpse.

One: Priam goes to Achilles.

Twelve: The Trojans mourn Hector for nine days, bury Hector on the 10th day, build his barrow on the 11st day, and fight again on the 12th day.

We also find out that it is 12 days from the time Hector was killed to the time that Priam ransoms his body. Hermes (in disguise) tells Priam (who is going to Achilles' camp to ransom Hector's body) about Hector's body:

"This is the twelfth day he's lain there, too.

but his body has not decayed, not in the least,"

(Fagles 24.487-488)

It takes 12 days for Chryseis to be returned to her father and for Odysseus to return to the Achaean camps after delivering Chryseis to her father:

One: Chryses supplicates Agamemnon, but is rejected.

Nine: Apollo shoots plague arrows at the Achaeans.

One: Achilles calls a council, at which he and Agamemnon quarrel.

One: Odysseus returns Chryseis to her father, and then returns to the Achaean camps. (They reach Chryses quickly and sacrifice, stay overnight, and then return to the Achaean camps.)

Or we can say that the number 11 is important:

In Book 1, it takes 11 days for Chryseis to be returned to her father. On the 12th day, Odysseus and his companion return to the Achaeans' camp.

In Book 24, Achilles arranges a truce of 11 days so that the Trojans can mourn and bury Hector. On the 12th day, the two armies fight again.

• How does Achilles act at the beginning of Book 24? Has killing Hector helped Achilles?

Achilles discovers that killing Hector does not help him. Achilles still mourns greatly for Patroclus. Achilles still finds it difficult to eat, drink, and sleep, and he does not have sex. Yes, Achilles has gotten revenge by killing Hector, but Achilles still suffers immense grief because of the death of his best friend, Patroclus.

Of course, we know what Achilles wants. Achilles wants his best friend to be alive again. But nothing will make that happen, not even killing Hector and abusing his corpse.

Achilles needs to accept the human condition. Achilles needs to live the rest of his life, short as it will be, not spend it in excessive mourning.

In Book 23, Achilles became more human with the funeral games for Patroclus, but he still needs to make progress. We will see him make that progress in Book 24.

Of course, the theme of the *Iliad* is the anger of Achilles, and Achilles is still angry. The focus of his anger has changed during the course of the *Iliad*, and he will not give up his anger until the final pages of the *Iliad*.

• How does Achilles treat Hector's corpse, and what do the gods think about it?

We can see that Achilles is still angry by how he treats Hector's corpse. Achilles cannot sleep, because he is tormented by thoughts of his best friend, Patroclus. At times such as that, he abuses Hector's corpse:

As he kept remembering,
 he cried heavy tears, sometimes lying on his side,
 sometimes on his back or on his face. Then he'd get
 up,
 to wander in distress, back and forth along the shore.
 He'd see Dawn's approach across the sea and
 beaches,
 then he'd harness his fast horses to their chariot,
 tie on Hector and drag him behind, driving
 three times around the tomb of Menoetius' dead son.
 Then in his hut he'd rest again, leaving Hector
 stretched out, face down in the dust.

(Johnston 24.9-18)

Hector's body will lie unburied for several days after his death. However, the gods are taking care of Hector's corpse — Apollo is keeping corruption from it by not allowing the sun to shine on it, and Aphrodite keeps wild dogs away from the body.

What Achilles is doing is excessive, and most of the gods are against it:

And so he kept on raging, shaming noble Hector,
but the gods in bliss looked down and pitied Priam's son.

(Fagles 24.26-27)

Finally, the gods intervene. Achilles cannot get past his grief, and the gods decide to take action. For one thing, they are outraged by the way that Achilles is treating Hector's corpse.

Apollo is the god who first advocates that the gods take action. Apollo wants the gods to ensure that Achilles gives Hector's body back to his family so that his family can give the body a proper burial.

Apollo has good reasons for advocating that Hector's body be returned to his family for a proper burial. Hector was a pious man. He gave the gods sacrifices. He was an honorable man. He deserves a honorable burial.

In addition, Apollo says that Achilles' grief is excessive. He is grieving more than a mortal man should.

Apollo says,

“Achilles has lost all pity! No shame in the man,
shame that does great harm or drives men on to good.

No doubt some mortal has suffered a greater loss than this,
 a brother born in the same womb, or even a son ...
 he grieves, he weeps, but then his tears are through.
 The Fates have given mortals hearts that can endure.
 But this Achilles — first he slaughters Hector,
 he rips away the noble prince's life
 then lashes him to his chariot, drags him round
 his beloved comrade's tomb. But why, I ask you?
 What good will it do him? What honor will he gain?
 Let that man beware, or great and glorious as he is,
 we mighty gods will wheel on him in anger — look,
 he outrages the senseless clay in all his fury!”
 (Fagles 24.52-65)

Compare:

“[...] Achilles
 destroys compassion. And in his heart
 there's no sense of shame, which can help a man
 or harm him. No doubt, a man can suffer loss
 of someone even closer than a friend,
 a brother born from the same mother
 or even a son. He pays his tribute
 with his tears and his laments, then stops.

For Fates have put in men resilient hearts.”

(Johnston 24.50-58)

The human condition is that we are mortal, and we will die, and we know that we will die. This is true of all human beings, including the ones that we are closest to and love the most. Grief for a loved one is natural, and we should grieve. But then we need to return to life. We need to eat, drink, wash, and have sex again. Achilles has not done that. Achilles is so stuck in his grief that he spends his time outraging the corpse of Hector. The normal way of mourning is to grieve, then to return to living our life. Achilles, however, has not been able to do this.

A famous Buddhist story is about a woman named Kisa Gautami, whose child had died. She begged the Buddha to bring her child back to life, and he told her, “I can help you. Bring me a mustard seed, but it must be given you from a person whose family has never known death.” The woman searched for such a person, but was unable to find one. She returned to the Buddha and said, “I know now that I am not alone in my grief. Death is common to all people.” She was able to grieve for her child, then return to living her life, which is something that all of us must do. (Source: Patricia D. Netzley, *Buddhism*, p. 44.)

• Why is Apollo an appropriate god to speak against the way Achilles is treating Hector’s corpse?

Apollo is an appropriate god to say these things to the gods. Apollo is concerned about the corpse of Hector. Yes, Hector was an honorable man who made sacrifices to the gods, but why else is Apollo the appropriate god to be concerned about Hector’s corpse here?

Apollo is like the other gods, in that certain realms are his concern. Hera is the goddess of marriage. Zeus is the god of *xenia*, aka the guest-host relationship. Apollo is the god of

medicine, healing, and the plague. Apollo is the god who is especially concerned with the way that dead bodies are treated. If dead bodies are not cremated and buried, if dead bodies are left to fester on the ground, then the result is plague. This is something that the ancient Greeks would have noticed. A place with a lot of dead bodies left on the ground will have plague. Elizabeth Vandiver points out,

[...] Apollo is the god of medicine and healing, but he is also the god of plague; those are two sides of the same coin. As so often in Greek theology, the same gods controls these two opposites — medicine or healing; plague. And of course, one of the main reasons why, in any human culture that has ever existed, rituals and ceremonies for disposing of the dead have developed is because if you leave unburied dead bodies lying around in your city, what happens? You develop plague. Apollo, as the god of plague and of medicine, is a god who is particularly concerned with the proper disposal of dead bodies. (*The Iliad of Homer* 177)

Because Apollo is the god who is especially concerned with the cremation and burial of dead bodies, the way that Achilles is treating Hector's body is an insult to Apollo. Achilles should allow Hector's body to receive a proper funeral. That would be pleasing especially to Apollo. In addition, because Hector was a pious man who made sacrifices to the gods, they are also in favor of Hector's body being buried. This includes the gods who are on Troy's side; after all, now that Hector is dead, he can no longer fight the Achaeans.

Apollo is correct when he says that what Achilles is doing is outrageous. Hector's body does need to be given a proper burial.

Apollo says that the gods must take action.

• Why do the gods decide to intervene and get Achilles to give up Hector's corpse?

The gods agree with Apollo. Hector has been a good man. Some of the gods, but not Hera, Poseidon, and Athena (all of whom support the Achaeans), debate stealing Hector's body so that it can have a proper funeral. However, they are unable to do this because Thetis is staying near Achilles and it is impossible to steal Hector's body without Thetis noticing. Finally, Zeus makes the decree that Achilles must give Hector's body to Priam. Zeus says,

“[...] But we'll not let this corpse,
brave Hector's body, be taken secretly.
Achilles would for certain learn of it,
since his mother sees him all the time,
both day and night. But one of the gods
should tell Thetis to come here before me,
so I can put a useful plan to her,
how Achilles can get gifts from Priam
and then give Hector back to him.”

(Johnston 24.88-96)

• If the gods tell Achilles to give back Hector's body, and Achilles obeys, does that mean that Achilles has been deprived of free will and so should not receive credit for performing a morally right action?

The answer is no. In Homer, the gods are frequently externalizations of interior psychological states. That is, something that a person does of his own free will is represented externally by a god telling the person what to do.

We moderns should not be worried that Zeus tells Achilles to give back Hector's body. That is like our conscience telling us that something we are doing is wrong and that we should do the morally right thing. The gods tell Achilles what to do, but it is Achilles' free choice whether or not to obey the gods.

In Homer, human beings are always responsible for their actions, even when a god or goddess tells that person to do something. Artemis tells Agamemnon through a seer to sacrifice his daughter. Agamemnon does so, and Agamemnon is responsible for what he does. Aphrodite tells Paris to take Helen. Paris does so, and Paris is responsible for what he does. Here the gods tell Achilles to do the right thing and give Hector's body to Priam. Achilles does so, and Achilles is responsible for what he does.

Actually, the ancient Greeks and Romans were not concerned with free will, at least not the way that we moderns are. Free will became an issue with the invention of modern science. If such things as planets and other physical bodies obey the law of gravity and other natural laws, then they are determined; that is, they must act in a certain way and cannot do otherwise. Modern philosophers such as Descartes (who believed in free will) then began to wonder whether human beings are determined in the same way that planets and other physical bodies are. After all, we have a brain that we can see. Some people believe that we have a soul, but if it exists, it is a nonmaterial thing whose existence cannot be proven. Perhaps what human beings do is a result of our nature and nurture, and what seem like freely made choices are actually determined by our heredity and environment. Or perhaps we really do have free will.

• What is the decree that Zeus tells Thetis to deliver to Achilles? Does Achilles agree to obey the decree?

Zeus agrees with Apollo and takes action. He sends Thetis to speak to Achilles, and Iris (the messenger-goddess) to urge Priam to visit Achilles and ransom Hector's body.

Thetis tells Achilles that he must return Hector's body to Priam. Achilles accepts this without question. If that is what the gods want, he is willing to do it. Apparently, Achilles has realized that outraging Hector's body has done him no good at all.

When Thetis tells Achilles that Zeus has said that he should ransom Hector's body, Achilles has no difficulty in agreeing:

The swift runner replied in haste, "So be it.

The man who brings the ransom can take away the body,

if Olympian Zeus himself insists in all earnest."

(Fagles 24.168-170)

Achilles needs to go beyond returning Hector's body to Priam. Achilles still needs to accept the human condition and to return to living life again. Achilles still is excessively grieving over the death of Patroclus.

During the funeral games for Patroclus, we saw Achilles returning to his normal, generous self, but he is not completely himself again — his grief over Patroclus' death is too great. By the end of the *Iliad*, however, he will be himself again — and he will have learned from his experience.

• What is the message that Zeus tells Iris to deliver to Priam? How does Priam react to the message?

It is a brave but fearful action for Priam to go to Achilles; after all, Achilles has killed Hector and many more of Priam's sons. However, Zeus knows Achilles' character as it now is, and Zeus tells the messenger goddess Iris to reassure Priam:

“He mustn't think of death or be afraid.
 A fitting escort will accompany him,
 Hermes, killer of Argus, as a guide,
 until he brings him to Achilles.
 Once he's led him to Achilles' hut,
 that man will not kill him, he'll restrain
 all other men. For he's not stupid,
 blind, or disrespectful of the gods.
 He'll spare a suppliant and treat him kindly.”

(Johnston 24.190-198)

Previously, Achilles has been a madman and a reckless fool who has done such things as fight a river-god. Previously, Achilles has not spared suppliants who have begged him for mercy. Now Achilles is different.

Achilles has been merciful in the past — remember King Eetion? However, he has also been murderous, so we can imagine that Priam is nervous despite the words of Zeus.

Reaching Priam's house, she [Iris] found him weeping there

and mourning. His sons were sitting with their father

inside the courtyard, wetting garments with their tears.

The old man sat with them, cloak tightly wrapped around him.

Both his head and neck were covered with the dung he'd groveled in and grabbed up by the handful.

(Johnston 24.200-205)

As part of his mourning, Priam has smeared dung on his head and neck (Fagles 24.197-198).

Iris gives Priam this message:

“Fear not, O father! no ill news I bear;
 From Jove I come, Jove makes thee still his care;
 For Hector’s sake these walls he bids thee leave,
 And bear what stern Achilles may receive;
 Alone, for so he wills; no Trojan near,
 Except, to place the dead with decent care,
 Some aged herald, who with gentle hand
 May the slow mules and funeral car command.
 Nor shalt thou death, nor shall thou danger dread:
 Safe through the foe by his protection led:
 Thee Hermes to Pelides shall convey,
 Guard of thy life, and partner of thy way.
 Fierce as he is, Achilles’ self shall spare
 Thy age, nor touch one venerable hair;

Some thought there must be in a soul so brave,
Some sense of duty, some desire to save.”

(Pope pdf 435-436)

• **How does Hecuba react to Priam’s decision to go to Achilles and ask him to trade Hector’s corpse for treasure?**

Priam listens to Iris and determines to go to Achilles with a ransom. Priam’s wife, Hecuba, is completely against Priam going to Achilles; she is afraid of what Achilles will do to him:

“If he gets you in his clutches, sets his eyes on you
—
that savage, treacherous man — he’ll show no mercy,
no respect for your rights!”

(Fagles 24.244-246)

What Priam is doing is dangerous, as Hecuba emphasizes. What Hecuba would like to do to Achilles now is eat his liver (Fagles 24.253) or heart (Johnston 24.265):

“How I wish I could rip out that man’s heart,
then eat it. That would be some satisfaction
for my son, who wasn’t playing the coward
when he killed him. No, he was standing there,
defending deep-breasted Trojan women
and Trojan men, not thinking of his safety
or running off in flight.”

(Johnston 24.265-271)

Hecuba chooses not to remember that Hector fled from Achilles and ran three times around the walls of Troy; after all, she is a mother.

• **In what state of mind is Priam while he prepares to visit Achilles?**

Priam's mind is made up. He chooses to go, even if Achilles kills him. Therefore, he picks out a ransom from the treasure trove of Troy to take to Achilles:

Then he threw open fine lids on the storage chests.

From there he took twelve lovely robes, twelve single cloaks,

as many blankets, white coverlets, and tunics.

He brought gold, weighing out a total of ten talents, then two gleaming tripods, four cauldrons, and a cup, a beautiful one given to him by men of Thrace, when he'd gone there as an envoy, a fine treasure.

Even this cup the old man didn't leave at home, he was so eager to pay ransom for his son.

(Johnston 24.286-294)

Priam is afraid, despite the words of Zeus, which were conveyed by Iris. Therefore, it is natural that he should give way to anger, cursing the many people around him, including his sons, who are *not* Hector:

Then Priam chased the Trojans from his courtyard, shaming them with angry words:

“Go away,

you wretches! You ought to be ashamed.
 Have you nothing to cry about back home,
 so you come here tormenting me like this? [...]"

(Johnston 24.295-299)

In addition, Priam criticizes his living sons:

the old man shouted at all nine, rough commands:
 "Get to your work! My vicious sons — my
 humiliations!

If only you'd all been killed at the fast ships
 instead of my dear Hector ..."

(Fagles 24.298-301)

Compare:

"The sons still left here are disgraceful,
 liars, prancing masters of the dance floor,
 who steal lambs and goats from their own people."

(Johnston 24.324-326)

Priam also gives his living sons orders:

"Why don't you get my wagon ready — now, at
 once?

Pack all these things aboard! We must be on our
 way!"

(Fagles 24.311-312)

Priam's speech shows that he is afraid despite the promise that was made to him by Zeus that he would be safe when he

visits the camp of Achilles. In addition, the speech shows how much Priam is grieving for his son Hector.

Note that Priam values the son who is not with him more than the sons who are. (Cf. the Prodigal Son.)

Hecuba is so worried that she insists on pouring a wine libation for Zeus. Hecuba also wants Priam to pray to Zeus to keep him safe. Priam does so, and Zeus sends him a favorable omen: the eagle, which is Zeus' sacred bird:

Jove heard his prayer, and from the throne on high,

Despatch'd his bird, celestial augury!

The swift-wing'd chaser of the feather'd game,

And known to gods by Percnos' lofty name.

Wide as appears some palace-gate display'd.

So broad, his pinions stretch'd their ample shade,

As stooping dexter with resounding wings

The imperial bird descends in airy rings.

A dawn of joy in every face appears:

The mourning matron [Hecuba] dries her timorous tears:

Swift on his car the impatient monarch [Priam] sprung;

(Pope pdf 439)

• Which god does Zeus send to serve as a guide for Priam?

At night, Priam sets off to visit Achilles' camp. He is worried, for things will go ill for him if he is caught by the Achaeans. Agamemnon is unlikely to be merciful to him.

Fortunately, Zeus sends Hermes to Priam to guide him to Achilles' camp. This is a device by Homer, but a good one. Without a god's help, it is difficult to see how Priam could make it to Achilles' camp safely and unseen. Achilles' ships are off to one side, so Priam knows where Achilles is, but a god's help is useful in getting to the camp safely and unseen.

When Hermes appears before Priam, he appears in disguise, as a young man.

The way in which Hermes appears to Priam shows the old man's (and the Trojan herald's) fear. The herald sees Hermes and says,

“Be careful, son of Dardanus. At this point,
we need to think with prudence. I see a man,
and it seems we may be cut to pieces soon.
Come, let's go in your chariot, or at least
clasp him by the knees and beg for mercy.
He may feel pity for us.”

(Johnston 24.437-442)

Hermes comes directly to Priam and speaks kind words:

“But I would never hurt you — and what's more,
I'd beat off any man who'd do you harm:
you remind me of my dear father, to the life.”

(Fagles 24.437-439)

Still, Priam is alarmed when Hermes recognizes him and Priam asks Hermes (who he does not know is a god) for his background. Hermes lies that he is Achilles' aide, then he truly says that he will take Priam to Achilles.

Hermes also tells Priam good news about the state of Hector's body — although it has been 12 days since Hector was killed, his body has not yet begun to decay.

• **How is Achilles portrayed as already being dead in the scene in which Hermes serves as a guide for Priam?**

Hermes is an appropriate guide for Zeus to send to Priam in part because Hermes is a guide. In addition, the use of Hermes as Priam's guide helps to show that Achilles will die soon. As before in the *Iliad*, Homer is portraying Achilles as if he were already dead.

Hermes guides the souls of the dead to the Underworld, and the souls must cross a river to reach the Underworld. Hermes guides Priam to Achilles' camp, and to reach the camp they must cross a river and pass the gates of the Land of the Dead.

When Priam visits Achilles' camp, it is as if he is visiting the Underworld.

In addition, we see here foreshadowing of the Fall of Troy. Achilles will die before Troy falls, and Priam will die during the Fall of Troy. When Priam dies, Hermes will lead his ghost to the Land of the Land. They will cross a river, and when they arrive in the Land of the Dead, the ghost of Achilles will already be there.

• **What does Priam do and say when he meets Achilles?**

Now comes one of the great scenes in the *Iliad*. Achilles has just eaten, and Priam comes to him and kisses his hands — the same hands that killed Hector. This is unimaginable. Priam is kissing the hands of the man who killed his son.

This is also something Achilles had prayed for — for Agamemnon to come humbled to him. Achilles' prayer has been answered, but in a different way from what he expected.

Priam kisses the hands of Achilles, the warrior who killed Hector and many other sons of Priam. Priam tells Achilles that he has had 50 sons. Hecuba had given birth to 19 sons, and Priam's concubines had given birth to the other sons. Achilles had killed most of these sons, but Hector was still left. But then Achilles killed Hector. Priam does not mention Paris, who is not worthy to be mentioned in the same sentence as Hector.

Priam says to Achilles,

“Remember your own father, great godlike Achilles

—

as old as *I* am, past the threshold of deadly old age!

No doubt the countrymen round him plague him now,

with no one there to defend him, beat away disaster.

No one — but at least he hears you're still alive

and his old heart rejoices, hopes rising, day by day,

to see his beloved son come sailing home to Troy.

But I — dear god, my life so cursed by fate ...

I fathered hero sons in the wide realm of Troy

and now not a single one is left, I tell you.”

(Fagles 24.570-579)

Compare:

“Godlike Achilles,

remember your own father, who's as old as me,

on the painful threshold of old age.

It may well be that those who live around him
 are harassing him, and no one's there
 to save him from ruin and destruction.
 But when he hears you're still alive,
 his heart feels joy, for every day he hopes
 he'll see his dear son come back home from Troy.
 But I'm completely doomed to misery,
 for I fathered the best sons in spacious Troy,
 yet I say now not one of them remains."

(Johnston 24.596-607)

Of course, Priam does have living sons, but right now he is grieving so much for Hector that they don't count. He adds,

"But one, one was left me, to guard my walls, my
 people —
 the one you killed the other day, defending his
 fatherland,
 my Hector! It's all for him I've come to the ships
 now,
 to win him back from you — I bring a priceless
 ransom.
 Revere the gods, Achilles! Pity me in my own right,
 remember your own father! I deserve more pity ...
 I have endured what no man on earth has ever done
 before —
 I put to my lips the hands of the man who killed my
 son."

(Fagles 24.584-591)

Compare:

“But I had one left, guardian of our city,
protector of its people. You’ve just killed him,
as he was fighting for his native country.

I mean Hector. For his sake I’ve come here,
to Achaea’s ships, to win him back from you.

And I’ve brought a ransom beyond counting.

So Achilles, show deference to the gods
and pity for myself, remembering

your own father. Of the two old men,

I’m more pitiful, because I have endured

what no living mortal on this earth has borne,

I’ve lifted to my lips and kissed

the hands of the man who killed my son.”

(Johnston 24.612-624)

Human beings have much in common with each other, even if they are enemies. Priam stresses what he and Achilles have in common with each other. Previously, when Achilles spoke to Hector before their duel, Achilles stressed the differences between them. Achilles made it sound as if he and Hector were of different species: wolves versus lambs, men versus lions.

However, Priam stresses what he and Achilles have in common: family. Both Achilles and Priam have family relations. Achilles has an old father, and Priam is an old

father. Achilles' father is concerned about him, and Priam is concerned about his son's body.

• **How does Achilles respond to Priam?**

Achilles reacts well to Priam's extremely moving speech.

Achilles takes Priam by the hand and raises him up. Previously, Priam has been in the suppliant's position: kneeling on his own knees and clasping Achilles' knees. When Achilles raises Priam up (or moves him back), this is the manner in which, by custom, one accepts the suppliant's suit — this simple gesture means yes, I will allow you to ransom Hector. Compare this to Agamemnon's rejection of the suppliant in Book 1. Previously, after Patroclus had been killed, Achilles had rejected suppliants. Now, he respects Priam as a suppliant. He lets Priam know that he will return Hector's body to him.

Achilles' motivation is not money here. He has not seen the ransom, although Priam has said that it is priceless. Rather, he allows Priam to ransom Hector because of a sense of their common humanity. Both men are human, and both men are capable of feeling great grief.

• **Why do Priam and Achilles cry together?**

Achilles and Priam cry together. Priam is crying for Hector. Achilles is crying sometimes for his father, Peleus, an aged parent whom he knows he will never see again because he, Achilles, will die soon at Troy, and sometimes Achilles is crying for Patroclus.

Achilles grieves for his aged father:

Those words stirred within Achilles a deep desire
to grieve for his own father. Taking the old man's
hand

he gently moved him back. And overpowered by
memory

both men gave way to grief. Priam wept freely
for man-killing Hector, throbbing, crouching
before Achilles' feet as Achilles wept himself,
now for his father, now for Patroclus once again,
and their sobbing rose and fell throughout the house.
(Fagles 24.592-599)

Compare:

Priam finished. His words roused in Achilles
a desire to weep for his own father. Taking Priam's
hand,
he gently moved him back. So the two men there
both remembered warriors who'd been slaughtered.
Priam, lying at Achilles' feet, wept aloud

for man-killing Hector, and Achilles also wept
for his own father and once more for Patroclus.
The sound of their lamenting filled the house.
(Johnston 24.625-632)

Achilles is changing: going back to normal, but also learning something new. According to Bernard Knox in the Introduction to Fagles' translation of the *Iliad*, "[...] Achilles begins to break out at last from the prison of self-absorbed, godlike passion [...]" (59).

One thing to point out here is the great courage shown by Priam. It took courage to go to Achilles' camp. As we know, Achilles is a great admirer of courage.

• **Discuss what Achilles says about the two jars of Zeus (Fagles 24.617-622 / Johnston 24.650-658).**

In Book 24, Achilles tells King Priam that Zeus has two jars from which he dispenses gifts to human beings. One jar is filled with bad things; the other jar is filled with good things. To some people, Zeus gives only bad gifts; to other people Zeus gives both good and bad gifts. To no one does Zeus give only good gifts.

The meaning of this story is very clear. Everyone will experience bad things in his or her life. Some unfortunate people experience only bad things in their lives, while fortunate people will experience much good but also some bad in their lives.

This may seem pessimistic to some people, but it also is true. All of us are mortal, and to mortal creatures death is not optional. This means that all of us will die, and death is usually seen as a bad thing. When death is seen as a good thing, it is because (usually) life is seen as a bad thing — a person's life is so unfortunate that that person longs to die.

The story about the two jars of Zeus is true for both Achilles and Priam. They are great human beings with great gifts, but they have suffered. King Priam's city is at war and will fall and Achilles has killed many of King Priam's sons, most notably Hector. Achilles is, of course, the greatest Achaean warrior, but his best friend, Patroclus, has died. Both of these men — who are enemies to each other and who are the greatest men of their age — have suffered.

Achilles gives Priam good advice — good advice that Achilles has had to learn to accept. Achilles tells Priam about the human condition: We are born, some of our loved ones

die, we suffer and grieve, and then we move on with our lives. This is exactly what others have been telling Achilles. They have wanted him to eat, but Achilles has refused to do that. Now we have Achilles serving a meal to Priam and telling him that he must eat. Achilles will give Priam time to mourn and hold a funeral for Hector, and then they will get on with their lives again. Achilles will go to war again because Achilles is a warrior.

In this famous passage, Achilles talks about what human life is like:

“So the immortals spun our lives that we, we wretched men

live on to bear such torments — the gods live free of sorrows.

There are two great jars that stand on the floor of Zeus’s halls

and hold his gifts, our miseries one, the other blessings.

When Zeus who loves the lightning mixes gifts for a man,

now he meets with misfortune, now good times in turn.

When Zeus dispenses gifts from the jar of sorrows only,

he makes a man an outcast — brutal, ravenous hunger

drives him down the face of the shining earth,

stalking far and wide, cursed by gods and men.”

(Fagles 24.615-622)

Compare:

“On Zeus’ floor stand two jars which hold his gifts,
 one has disastrous things, the other blessings.
 When thunder-loving Zeus hands out a mixture,
 that man will, at some point, meet with evil,
 then, some other time, with good. When Zeus’ gift
 comes only from the jar containing evil,
 he makes the man despised. A wicked frenzy
 drives him all over sacred earth, he wanders
 without honour from the gods or mortal men.”

(Johnston 24.650-658)

Al Gore, who officially lost the year 2000 United States Presidential election to George W. Bush, whose eight years as President can best be described — in the opinion of the author of this discussion guide — as a disaster for the country, knows about the human condition:

In the years immediately following — after growing a beard and gaining weight — [Al] Gore drew on deadpan humour to help process the experience, and to put audiences at their ease. “You win some, you lose some, and then there’s that little-known third category,” he would say. Or: “I don’t want you to think I lie awake at night, counting and recounting sheep.” But these days the gags have subsided. “To place the disappointment, which I felt keenly, into some perspective, there are millions upon millions of people who have suffered infinitely larger losses than I suffered,” he says now. “They move on with their lives, and if they can, I certainly can. If we walked

through the lobby of this hotel and down the sidewalk outside, we'd run into a lot of people who, without us knowing it, are carrying enormous burdens of loss and disappointment. It's part of the human condition."

Source: Oliver Burkeman, "Civil disobedience has a role to play." *The Guardian*. 7 November 2009 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/07/al-gore-interview-climate-change>>.

Do you agree with the world-view Achilles presents when he talks about the two jars of Zeus (Fagles 24.617-622 / Johnston 24.650-658)?

To me, this is a realistic philosophy. For human beings, grief is in store. No one is able to escape grief and death. The best that human beings can hope for is a mixture of good and bad things. Some human beings don't even get that. They just get the bad things. Who is able to escape grief and death? The gods are able to escape death, but even they sometimes feel grief. Thetis grieves that Achilles will soon die. Zeus grieved because his son Sarpedon died. Achilles says that "the gods live free of sorrows" (Fagles 24.617), but that is not quite true.

A Chinese sage was asked to write a poem that would bless a nobleman's house. The sage wrote, "Grandfather Die, Father Die, Son Die." The nobleman was outraged, but the sage explained that the poem offered good wishes. It is best when the grandfather grows old and dies, then the father grows old and dies, and finally the son grows old and dies. It is a tragedy when the son dies before the father. Remember: For humans, death is not optional.

At Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, four Korean students were killed in a car accident. Ohio University officials arranged a memorial service for the students, which the

students' parents attended. One of the fathers of the students thanked the mourners attending the service, then said, "This is not the way it is supposed to be. When a parent dies, you bury them in the ground, but when a child dies, you bury them in your heart." (Source: Ohio University Emeriti Association, compilers, *Ohio University Recollections for the Bicentennial Anniversary: 1804-2004*, p. 72.)

Achilles has learned to accept the human condition, to realize and to accept that all of us will die, including the people we love most.

In addition (as Knox points out on p. 60 in his Introduction to Fagles' translation), Achilles achieves the ability to see himself as others (Priam) see him when he says,

"only a single son he [Peleus] fathered, doomed at birth,

cut off in the spring of life —

and I, I give the man no care as he grows old

since here I sit in Troy, far from my fatherland,

a grief to you, a grief to all your children."

(Fagles 24.630-634)

Compare:

"Consider Peleus. The gods gave him gifts,

splendid presents, right from birth. In wealth,

in his possessions, he surpassed all men.

And he was king over the Myrmidons.

Though he was mortal, the gods gave him

a goddess for a wife. But even to him

the gods gave evil, too, for in his palace
 there sprang up no line of princely children.
 He had one son, doomed to an early death.
 I'll not look after him as he grows old,
 since I'm a long way from my native land,
 sitting here in Troy, bringing pain to you
 and to your children."

(Johnston 24.659-671)

• How do we know that tension underlies the relationship between Achilles and Priam?

Despite the compassion Achilles feels for Priam, they are still enemies and Achilles' anger is just under the surface. He warns Priam not to make him angry. Achilles, of course, knows that Priam is the father of Hector, who killed Patroclus. Priam, of course, is aware that Achilles killed Hector. Although they recognize each other's grief, they are still on opposite sides in the Trojan War and there is tension in their relationship. It is still possible that Achilles could kill Priam, if Priam were to make him angry.

Priam does come close to making Achilles angry. Priam is in a hurry to take Hector's body and leave, but Achilles can't let him do that. Hector's body has not been taken care of. Achilles knows that if Priam were to see Hector's body in its uncared-for state, Priam would become angry, and that would make Achilles angry. Achilles could then very possibly kill Priam. Achilles' not giving Hector's body back to Priam until it has been cleaned up shows self-awareness on Achilles' part. He is more mature than he was in Book 1.

Achilles shows kindness to Priam — he is a good host. However, Priam is in a hurry to be on his way with Hector's body. He says,

“Don't make me sit down on a chair, my lord,
 while Hector lies uncared for in your huts.
 But quickly give him back, so my own eyes
 can see him. And take the enormous ransom
 we've brought here for you. May it give you joy.
 And may you get back to your native land,
 since you've now let me live to see the sunlight.”

(Johnston 24.686-692)

This speech angers Achilles. Why? Because giving up Hector's body takes a great effort of the will. Patroclus is dead, and Achilles is still grieving. Achilles has determined to do the right thing, yet as we all know, doing the right thing often takes an effort. Achilles tells Priam,

“So don't anger me now. Don't stir my raging heart
 still more.

Or under my own roof I may not spare your life, old
 man —

suppliant that you are — may break the laws of
 Zeus!”

(Fagles 24.667-669)

Zeus is the god of *xenia* (the guest-host relationship). Achilles' breaking the laws of Zeus means that he would kill Priam.

Here is Priam's reaction:

The old man was terrified. He obeyed the order.

(Fagles 24.670)

• What does Achilles order to be done to Hector's corpse? Is this a good thing?

Achilles does not want Priam to become angry:

Then Achilles called the serving-women out:

“Bathe and anoint the body —

bear it aside first. Priam must not see his son.”

He feared that, overwhelmed by the sight of Hector, wild with grief, Priam might let his anger flare and Achilles might fly into fresh rage himself, cut the old man down and break the laws of Zeus.

(Fagles 24.681-687)

Compare:

Then from the polished wagon they brought in that priceless ransom for Hector's head, leaving there two cloaks and a thickly woven tunic, so Achilles could wrap up the corpse before he gave it back for Priam to take home. Achilles then called out, ordering his servant women to wash the body, and then anoint it, after moving it away, so Priam wouldn't see his son, then, heart-stricken, be unable to contain his anger at the sight.

Achilles' own spirit might then get so aroused
 he could kill Priam, disobeying Zeus' orders.

Servants washed the corpse, anointed it with oil,
 then put a lovely cloak and tunic round it.

Achilles himself lifted it and placed it on a bier.

(Johnston 24.716-729)

Achilles goes out to prepare Hector's body for Priam. As always, Achilles is generous. He and his two aides take most of the ransom:

but they left behind two capes and a finely-woven
 shirt

to shroud the body well when Priam bore him home.

(Fagles 24.679-680)

Achilles is showing a lot of self-knowledge here by making sure that Hector's body is well cared for so that Priam does not become angry. Also, Hector's body is washed and anointed with olive oil (Fagles 24.689). This is good thinking on Achilles' part. If Priam were to see Hector's body unwashed, it could make him angry and thus make Achilles angry. And if Achilles gets angry, he just might kill Priam. In treating Hector's corpse kindly, Achilles is able to look at the corpse as Priam does. No longer is there a suggestion that Hector is of a different species than Achilles.

Even though Achilles is giving back Hector's body, he still feels of two minds about it. He even talks to Patroclus:

“O Patroclus,

don't be angry with me, if you learn,

even in Hades' house, that I gave back

godlike Hector to his dear father.
 He's brought to me a fitting ransom.
 I'll be giving you your full share of it,
 as is appropriate."

(Johnston 24.732-738)

• **Is Achilles a good host to Priam?**

As always, Achilles is a generous host. Achilles properly observes the protocols of *xenia*. He tells Priam that they must eat. This, of course, is something that others have been telling Achilles, but he has found it difficult to eat because of his excessive grief for Patroclus. He speaks to Priam,

"Your son is now set free, old man, as you requested.
 Hector lies in state. With the first light of day
 you will see for yourself as you convey him home.
 Now, at last, let us turn our thoughts to supper."

(Fagles 24.704-707)

Compare:

"Old man, your son has been given back,
 as you requested. He's lying on a bier.
 You'll see him for yourself at day break,
 when you take him. We should think of eating."

(Johnston 24.742-745)

• **What is the point of the story about Niobe that Achilles tells Priam?**

In the ancient Greek civilizations, stories were ways to convey truths. Achilles tells a story here — a story about accepting the human condition.

Achilles tells the story of Niobe, who managed to eat even after all twelve of her children had been killed in a single day. Niobe had angered Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis, by saying that she herself was worthy of more worship than Leto because Niobe had 12 children, while Leto had only two. Leto's two children, Apollo and Artemis, killed all of Niobe's children. (Of course, this is an example of the *menis* or wrath of the gods.) For several days, Niobe did not eat, but after all of her children were buried, then she ate.

Achilles says that even Niobe ate, and so, Priam, you too must eat:

“So come — we too, old king, must think of food.

Later you can mourn your beloved son once more,
when you bear him to Troy, and you'll weep many
tears.”

(Fagles 24.728-730)

Achilles serves a meal to Priam and eats with him. Achilles does what other people have been advising him to do: eat.

• **Why does Achilles accept the human condition?**

Through his encounter with Priam, Achilles is able to accept the human condition. He accepts the death of Patroclus, and he goes back to living his life again — what remains of it.

Earlier, Apollo said,

“No doubt some mortal has suffered a greater loss than this,

a brother born in the same womb, or even a son ...

he grieves, he weeps, but then his tears are through.”

(Fagles 24.54-56)

Achilles is able to empathize with Priam, and because of that empathy, he is able to work through his own grief. Achilles is able to see that others feel the grief that he feels.

Achilles sees the same kind of grief in Priam as he has in himself. In addition, Priam reminds him of his own father, Peleus, so there is once again empathy. Also, Achilles works through his grief by helping other people. He feels Priam’s grief and in comforting Priam, comforts himself. Achilles also knows that his own father will soon feel the kind of grief that Priam feels.

• What else, besides the return of Hector’s corpse, does Achilles grant to Priam?

Achilles himself slaughters a sheep and serves a meal to Priam. After they eat, Achilles promises to arrange a truce of eleven days so that the Trojans can give Hector a proper burial.

Achilles is magnificent. He has done everything that he has been asked to do, but he goes further than the gods have asked him to and volunteers to help Priam more:

“But come, tell me, and speak truthfully,

how many days do you require to bury

godlike Hector, so I can stop that long

and keep the troops in check?”

(Johnston 24.809-812)

This shows an enormous courtesy on Achilles' part. Priam answers and tells him the truth:

“If then thy will permit (the monarch said)
 To finish all due honours to the dead,
 This of thy grace accord: to thee are known
 The fears of Ilium, closed within her town;
 And at what distance from our walls aspire
 The hills of Ide, and forests for the fire.
 Nine days to vent our sorrows I request,
 The tenth shall see the funeral and the feast;
 The next, to raise his monument be given;
 The twelfth we war, if war be doom'd by heaven!
 (Pope pdf 448)

Compare:

Old godlike Priam
 then said in answer to Achilles:
 “If you're willing
 for me to give lord Hector a full burial,
 then, Achilles, as a personal favour,
 there is something you could do for me.
 You know how we're restricted to our city.
 It's a long way to the mountains to get wood.

Besides, the Trojans are especially fearful.
 We'll mourn Hector for nine days in our home.
 On the tenth day we'll have his funeral.
 Then there'll be a banquet for the people.
 On the eleventh, we'll make his burial mound.
 The twelfth day, if we must, we'll go to war."
 (Johnston 24.812-824)

The fighting is required. Troy is fated to fall, and Achilles is still a warrior, not a diplomat. A diplomat might have been able to end the Trojan War with the return of Helen, her treasure, and tribute. In addition, Achilles has no time left. He knows he is fated to die soon. However, Achilles will do what the king asks. Achilles' last words and actions are these:

"All will be done, old Priam, as you command.
 I will hold our attack as long as you require."
 With that he clasped the old king by the wrist,
 by the right hand, to free his mind from fear.
 Then Priam and herald, minds set on the journey home,
 bedded down for the night within the porch's shelter.
 And deep in his sturdy well-built lodge Achilles slept
 with Briseis in all her beauty by his side.
 (Fagles 24.787-794)

Achilles also has a bed made for Priam. Achilles did this for Phoenix, his father-figure, in Book 9.

After dinner, they sleep. The breaking of bread is important. Sharing food with someone is an act of friendship.

Achilles is a good strategist. He asks Priam to sleep outside. The Achaeans sometimes visit Achilles in his tent, and if they saw Priam there, then there would be real trouble.

By offering Priam a bed to sleep in, Achilles is giving good *xenia* to Priam.

• **What is Achilles doing when Priam leaves the camp?**

Achilles sleeps beside Briseis. This is the last time we see Achilles in the *Iliad*, and in some ways we have come back to the beginning of the *Iliad*. Achilles and Briseis are together again. However, Achilles has learned much in the *Iliad*. He has learned to accept the human condition. Now Achilles is ready to die, although his death is not shown in the *Iliad*.

Achilles is at rest again, more than he has been for a long time. There is peace here. He is sleeping beside Briseis, and he has done the right thing by restoring Hector's body to Priam.

• **How does Cassandra announce the return of Hector's corpse?**

After Hermes appears to Priam in a dream and advises him to leave Achilles' camp, Priam and his herald take Hector's body and leave in the night. This is a good thing because there would likely be trouble if the Achaeans saw them. Priam goes back to Troy, and Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen lament over Hector's body.

Cassandra, Hector's sister, sees the body being returned to Troy and cries out,

“Come, look down, you men of Troy, you Trojan women!

Behold Hector now — if you ever once rejoiced
 to see him striding home, home alive from battle!
 He was the greatest joy of Troy and all our people!”
 (Fagles 24.827-830)

Compare:

“See, men and women of Troy, come and see,
 look on Hector, if, while he was still alive,
 you would rejoice when he came back from war,
 for he was a great joy to all our city
 and its people.”
 (Johnston 24.866-870)

• **How does Andromache lament over Hector’s corpse?**

Andromache and Hecuba throw themselves on Hector’s
 body. Andromache mourns:

“My husband, you’ve lost your life so young,
 leaving me a widow in our home,
 with our son still an infant, the child
 born to you and me in our wretchedness.
 I don’t think he’ll grow up to adulthood.
 Before that, our city will all be destroyed.
 For you, who kept watch over for us, are dead.
 You used to protect our city, keeping
 its noble wives and little children safe.

Now, soon enough, they'll all be carried off
in hollow ships. I'll be there among them."

(Johnston 24.891-901)

Andromache is correct. Their son will be thrown to the ground from the high walls of Troy and will die. The other choice for her son would be to become a slave, but that will not happen. Because Hector is dead, Troy will fall, Andromache will become a slave, and their child will be murdered.

• **How does Hecuba lament over Hector's corpse?**

Next to lament Hector is his mother, Hecuba:

"Hector, dearest by far of all my children,
loved by the gods, as well, when you were living.
Now, at your death, they still take care of you.
When swift Achilles took my other sons,
he'd ship them off across the boundless seas,
to Samos, or Imbros, or foggy Lemnos.
When his long-edged bronze took away your life,
he dragged you many times around the mound
for his comrade Patroclus, whom you killed.
Yet even so, he could not revive him.
Now you lie here in our house, fresh as dew,
like someone whom Apollo of the silver bow
has just come to and killed with gentle arrows."

(Johnston 24.922-934)

• How does Helen lament over Hector's corpse?

The last person whose words we hear as she mourns for Hector is Helen, over whom the Trojan War has been fought. We learn about Hector's gentlemanliness now:

“Hector, of all my husband's brothers,
you're by far the dearest to my heart.
My husband's godlike Alexander,
who brought me here to Troy. I wish I'd died
before that happened! This is the twentieth year
since I went away and left my native land,
but I've never heard a nasty word from you
or an abusive speech. In fact, if anyone
ever spoke rudely to me in the house,
one of your brothers or sisters, some brother's
well-dressed wife, or your mother, for your father
always was so kind, as if he were my own,
you'd speak out, persuading them to stop,
using your gentleness, your soothing words.
Now I weep for you and for my wretched self,
so sick at heart, for there's no one else
in spacious Troy who's kind to me and friendly.
They all look at me and shudder with disgust.”
(Johnston 24.938-955)

Helen has been away from her husband, Menelaus, for 20 years. The war had been fought for ten years, so apparently it took ten years for the Achaeans to gather their armies together and sail to Troy.

Ending with Helen is appropriate because Helen is the cause of the Trojan War. She was present at both the beginning and the end, so we have come full circle.

The mourning for Hector is natural. It helps bring the *Iliad* to a close. We see that Hector was loved. That Helen, a foreigner, attests to his kindness is significant.

• **How does Book 24 end?**

Now the Trojans do just as Priam has said they would. They haul in wood without fear of an Achaean attack. Priam has learned to trust Achilles:

“Now, you men of Troy, haul timber into the city!

Have no fear of an Argive ambush packed with danger —

Achilles vowed, when he sent me home from the black ships,

not to do us harm till the twelfth dawn arrives!”

(Fagles 24.915-918)

Compare:

“You Trojans,

you must fetch some wood here to the city.

Don’t let your hearts fear any ambush,

some crafty Achaean trick. For Achilles,

when he sent me back from the hollow ships,

gave me his word they'd not harm us
until the twelfth day dawns."

(Johnston 24.957-963)

Hector is mourned, and we see no more of Achilles. However, Achilles keeps his word; the Trojans gather wood and mourn Hector in peace. The *Iliad* ends in this way:

And so the Trojans buried Hector breaker of horses.

(Fagles 24.944)

Compare:

And thus they buried Hector, tamer of horses.

(Johnston 24.984)

• **Why is Book 24 a satisfying conclusion to the *Iliad*?**

The *Iliad* has examined the human condition. It is fitting that it ends with Achilles accepting the human condition. It is fitting for it to end in this way: a funeral for Hector, the mortal hero that all of us can most identify with.

This is a good — but not a happy — ending. We have the burial of Hector, just as we have had the burials of Sarpedon and Patroclus.

The *Iliad* does not have a happy ending. Hector is dead. Patroclus is dead. Achilles was overwhelmed by his emotions, and Achilles feels in part responsible for Patroclus' death. One theme of the *Iliad* has been the wrath of Achilles. In Book 1 the wrath started. At first Achilles was angry at Agamemnon, and then he was angry at Hector. Now, in Book 24, the wrath of Achilles has come to an end. Achilles has been through some overwhelming emotions, but in the end he has regained his natural courtesy and generosity, which he shows even to defeated enemies.

• **What, if anything, has Achilles learned during the course of the *Iliad*?**

Achilles has learned many things during the course of the *Iliad*:

1. Achilles now can empathize with the enemy, and he sees himself as others see him.
2. Achilles' ultimate concern (to use theologian Paul Tillich's term) has changed during the course of the *Iliad*. (See Appendix F: Paul Tillich (1886-1965): Faith as Ultimate Concern.) Before Book 1, his ultimate concern was the pursuit of glory and honor. After Agamemnon's insult, his ultimate concern was hatred of Agamemnon. After Patroclus' death, his ultimate concern was hatred of Hector and the Trojans. At the end of Book 24, what is Achilles' ultimate concern? Not honor and glory. Not hatred of Agamemnon. Not hatred of Hector and the Trojans. Not material possessions. His ultimate concern appears to be friendship and the acceptance of the human condition.
3. Achilles considers even the enemy to be worthy of respect and dignity, even though he is still warring against them. He is able to show kindness even when it is not necessary, as shown by his giving the Trojans plenty of time to give Hector burial rites. Friendship has always been important to Achilles, but now it appears to be his ultimate concern.
4. Achilles now recognizes the human condition: Forces beyond our control buffet us while we are alive, and eventually we die. He also comes to pity Priam and to realize that the enemy is also subject to the same forces of fate that the Greeks are subject to. Achilles has learned from his tragic experience. At

the end of the *Iliad*, Achilles is a much more mature individual. The *Iliad* could not happen all over again. Even though Achilles is still a war machine and would avenge the death of his best friend, he is too mature to act the way he acted in Book 1.

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Appendix B: Paper Topics

Paper No. 1 — Books 1-10

- Compare and contrast the characters of Hector and Paris.
- Compare and contrast the marriages of Zeus and Hera, Paris and Helen, and Hector and Andromache.
- Analyze the character of Achilles thus far in the *Iliad*.
- Analyze the character of Odysseus thus far in the *Iliad*.
- Analyze the character of Agamemnon thus far in the *Iliad*.
- How does Homer give his audience crucial background information in Books 2 through 7?

Paper No. 2 — Entire Epic Poem

- Explain how Achilles comes to accept the human condition.
- Explain what, if anything, Achilles has learned in the *Iliad*.
- Argue either that the *Iliad* is an anti-war poem or that it glorifies war.
- Compare and contrast the characters of Hector and Achilles.
- Compare and contrast the characters of Agamemnon and Achilles.
- Explain the role that the gods play in the *Iliad*.

Appendix C: Paper Hints — *Iliad* Paper #1 (Books 1-10)

Assignment: Write a typed paper (5-10 full pages) on one of the following topics:

• **Compare and contrast the characters of Hector and Paris.**

What are the differences in the way that Hector and Paris fight?

Paris is an archer, and archers are not as well respected as warriors who fight up close with spears and swords.

Hector fights with spears and swords.

What are their reasons for fighting in the Trojan War?

Paris is fighting to have an adulterous love affair with Helen.

Hector is fighting to protect his wife and child, his parents, and his city and its citizens.

Hector would not mind if Paris died because the war would come to an end.

What are their abilities as warriors?

Both can fight well.

Hector is a leader; he fights well all the time. He challenges any of the Achaeans to a duel. He sets up the duel between Menelaus and Paris.

Paris is inclined to slack off and sleep with Helen while other people do his fighting for him.

What do their family relationships (to parents, wives, and children, if any) tell us about them?

Paris and Helen have only a physical relationship.

Hector and Andromache love each other and their son.

What other similarities and contrasts do Hector and Paris have that you may want to write about?

Hector is respected, while Paris is not.

Compare their duels.

One of Many Possible Organizations:

Introduction

Reasons for Fighting in the War

Hector

Paris

Marriages

Hector

Paris

Leadership or Lack of Leadership

Hector

Paris

Fighting Ability

Hector

Paris

Performance in Duels

Hector

Paris

Conclusion

- Use a forecasting statement in your introduction.

A forecasting statement tells the reader what he or she will read in a paper. Forecasting statements often appear in the introductions of papers. This example is from a paper about Hector and Paris:

Ex: Hector and Paris differ in their marriages, motivation for fighting, reputation as warriors, leadership ability, and personal integrity or lack of it.

This forecasting statement tells the reader that the writer will first write about how Hector and Paris differ in their marriages, then about how they differ in their motivation for fighting, then about how they differ in their reputation as warriors, then about how they differ in their leadership ability, and finally about how they differ in their personal integrity or lack of it.

A forecasting statement may follow a thesis statement. This example is from a paper about Hector and Paris.

Ex: Hector and Paris are polar opposites. They differ in their marriages, motivation for fighting, reputation as warriors, leadership ability, and personal integrity or lack of it.

• Compare and contrast the marriages of Zeus and Hera, Paris and Helen, and Hector and Andromache.

Who has a bad marriage?

Zeus and Hera have a bad marriage.

Paris and Helen have a bad marriage.

Who has a good marriage?

Hector and Andromache have a good marriage, as we see in Book 9.

What makes the marriages good or bad?

Love and perhaps a child. Being able to smile and laugh together.

Lack of what makes a bad marriage.

Hera is jealous of Zeus' many affairs. Having affairs is hard on a marriage.

Ruling by might is hard on a marriage.

What evidence exists that a certain marriage is good or bad?

In Book 3, we see that Helen hates Paris. We also see that in Book 9. Helen says some very nasty things about Paris.

Zeus frequently threatens Hera. Domestic violence is in that marriage.

In Book 14, Hera will trick Zeus. In earlier books, she has gone against his wishes.

In Book 6, we see that Hector and Andromache love each other and their son.

One of Many Possible Organizations:

Introduction

Zeus and Hera

Paris and Helen

Hector and Andromache

Conclusion

Be aware that in Book 14 Hera tricks Zeus.

You may want to write about children or the lack of children in the marriages.

Zeus and Hera have two children: Ares and Hephaestus.

Paris and Helen have no children.

Hector and Andromache have a son: Astyanax.

Bernard Knox has written notes on the translation by Robert Fagles. They appear before the glossary. If you are going to write about the children, see the note about Hephaestus on 1.712 (Book 1, line 712).

• **Analyze the character of Achilles thus far in the *Iliad*.**

What are the reasons for the quarrel with Agamemnon?

By taking away Briseis, Agamemnon is taking away Achilles' *timê* and thus his *kleos*.

Why isn't Achilles reconciled with Agamemnon in Book 9?

He is still too angry, and he is now rejecting *kleos* and *timê*.

What are Achilles' motivations for fighting?

They change. He has been fighting for *timê* and *kleos*. In Book 9, however, he rejects the Heroic Ethic.

Let us remember that Achilles has two fates, and he loves life.

• **Analyze the character of Odysseus thus far in the *Iliad*.**

What do we learn about Odysseus in Book 2?

Book 2: Returns Chryseis to Chryses

Book 2: Rescues Agamemnon's rear end

What do we learn about Odysseus in Book 9?

Book 9: Leader of the embassy to Achilles

Book 9: Speaks first, well, and persuasively

Book 9: Is ineffective in his speech

What do we learn about Odysseus in Book 10?

Book 10: He and Diomedes cooperate well during night expedition

What do we learn about Odysseus in the other books we have read thus far?

Book 1: Stayed quiet during quarrel

Book 3: Helen identifies Odysseus to Priam; Hector and Odysseus measure off the area for the duel between Paris and Menelaus (Fagles 3.370-371)

Book 4: Agamemnon insults Odysseus without just cause; Odysseus stands up for himself

Books 5 and 6: Not significant as far as Odysseus is concerned

Book 7: Odysseus volunteers to fight Hector (hangs back at first)

Book 8: Odysseus flees in battle

• Analyze the character of Agamemnon thus far in the *Iliad*.

Is he a good leader? Why or why not?

No. We see that in Book 1 when he will not return Chryseis to her father, and when he infuriates Achilles. Also, it is Achilles who calls the council because he is worried about dying Achaeans. (They are dying because of a plague that Apollo sent to them.)

No. We see that in Book 2 when he tests his troops.

In Book 3, when he tries to rally his troops by talking to the leaders, sometimes he does the right thing, and sometimes he does the wrong thing.

What are his strengths?

He loves his brother (Menelaus). We see that when Menelaus is wounded by Paris in Book 3, when Ajax duels with Hector in Book 7, and when Diomedes needs to choose a companion in Book 10.

He did rally the Achaeans to go against Troy. He is the leader.

He will have an *aristeia* in Book 11.

• How does Homer give his audience crucial background information in Books 2 through 7?

Define *displacement*.

Explain the displacement of the catalog of the ships in Book 2.

Explain the displacement of the naming of the Achaean heroes in Book 3.

Explain the displacement of the duel between Menelaus and Paris in Book 3.

How do we learn about the relative strengths of the two opposing armies?

How are we introduced to the major characters on each side?

Book 1 sets out the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles. The other books, Books 2-7, according to E.T. Owen, the author of *The Story of the Iliad*, have been exposition. We have, Owen writes (81-82), been told many things:

- We know why the Achaeans are at Troy.
- We know how long the Achaeans have been at Troy.

- We have seen the armies on both the Achaean and the Trojan side, and we have seen that the Achaean army is stronger than the Trojan army
- We have become familiar with such prominent Achaean heroes as Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, Great Ajax, and Achilles.
- We have become familiar with such prominent Trojan heroes and personalities as Andromache, Priam, Paris, and Helen.
- We have been become familiar with the gods and goddesses and we know which sides the gods and goddesses support.

The stage is being prepared for the continued wrath and the later return of Achilles:

- We know that Troy is doomed to fall.
- We know that Zeus promised Thetis that the Trojans would be triumphant for a while.
- We have seen Achilles argue with Agamemnon, and we know that Achilles shall return to battle one day.

Appendix D: Paper Hints — *Iliad* Paper #2 (Entire Epic Poem)

Assignment: Write a typed paper (5-10 full pages) on one of the following topics:

• **Explain how Achilles comes to accept the human condition.**

One theme of the *Iliad* is the human condition — we are mortal, we will suffer in this life, and all of us will someday die. In Book 24, Achilles finally comes to accept the human condition. Explain how that happens during his interaction in King Priam. (Be sure to engage in analysis, not mere plot summary.)

Briefly, the human condition is this: We live, we suffer, we die, and we know that we will die.

In writing about this question, you will need to define the human condition (the fact that we are mortal, we will suffer in this life, and all of us will someday die). In addition, you will need to write about Achilles' rejection of the human condition (perhaps fairly briefly) as well as his final acceptance of the human condition (in detail).

In my opinion, Achilles has no trouble at all accepting his own death, although he does love life. Early in the *Iliad*, Achilles is willing to die for *kleos*; late in the *Iliad*, Achilles is willing to die to avenge the death of Patroclus. It is Patroclus' death that Achilles has a hard time accepting. However, Achilles' choice between two fates does throw into stark contrast life and death. Also throwing into stark contrast life and death are the gods, who never die and who live blessed lives.

What does it mean to say that Achilles refuses to accept the death of Patroclus? After all, the corpse is in the possession of Achilles, so he knows that Patroclus is dead. Refusing to

accept the death of Patroclus means that Achilles refuses for a long time to return to normal, to live his life — to sleep, eat, drink, bathe, and have sex. Human beings grieve over the death of a loved one for a time, and then they accept the death of a loved one and start living life again. Achilles grieves on and on, and it takes the visit of Priam to get him to accept the death of Patroclus.

The visit of Priam causes Achilles to feel empathy for Priam. Priam mourns for Hector the same way that Achilles mourns for Patroclus. Priam mourns for his son, Hector, the same way that Achilles' father will soon mourn for Achilles. This empathy causes Achilles to accept the human condition, to accept the fact that Patroclus has died. Because of Priam's visit, Achilles is able to sleep, eat, drink, bathe, and have sex, and do all the other things that normal human beings do. This is as it should be. When someone we love dies, we should mourn for a while, then live our lives again.

Achilles knows a lot about death — each day he spends on the battlefield, he sees warriors die. Yet, he is never tested by death until Patroclus dies. Achilles accepted the deaths of other warriors during the first nine years of the Trojan War, yet he cannot accept the death of Patroclus until Book 24.

A few questions to ponder — listed in no particular order — and maybe write about:

- When Achilles rejects the human condition, how does he act?
- In Book 24, what is the significance of Achilles' tale of the two jars from which Zeus dispenses gifts?
- In Book 24, what is the significance of Achilles' tale concerning Niobe that he tells King Priam?
- In Book 24, what is the significance of Achilles and King Priam sharing a meal together?

- In Book 24, what is the significance of the last time we see Achilles — when he is sleeping beside Briseis?
- Should you mention the gods, who are in contrast to us by virtue of nearly always being always happy and never dying?
- Does the human condition have any advantages? For example, does it make possible altruistic and heroic actions such as giving your life to save the life of another person?

• **Explain what, if anything, Achilles has learned in the *Iliad*.**

For example: How has his character changed in the *Iliad*? How is the Achilles of Book 9 different from the Achilles of Book 1? How is the Achilles of Books 23 and 24 different from the Achilles of Book 1 and the Achilles of Book 9?

One of the things that Achilles learns in the course of the *Iliad* is to accept the human condition, so you should write about that, too. If you want to, you can write a full paper on that topic alone; however, if you wish, you can write about the other things that Achilles learns in the course of the *Iliad*.

At the beginning of Book 1, Achilles shows that he cares about the Achaeans because he calls a council to find out the cause of the plague. In Book 6, we find out that he showed respect to the corpse of Andromache's father. For most of the middle of the *Iliad*, he allows many Achaeans to die and he does not show mercy to Trojans or their allies. At the end of the *Iliad*, Achilles again cares about the Achaean soldiers and he shows mercy to Priam. Has Achilles merely gone full circle or has he learned something in the process?

At the very beginning of the *Iliad*, Achilles is not angry. In the middle of the *Iliad*, Achilles is angry. At the end of the

Iliad, Achilles is not angry. Has Achilles merely gone full circle or has he learned something in the process?

A few questions to ponder — listed in no particular order — and maybe write about:

- How has Achilles' character changed in the *Iliad*?
- How is the Achilles of Book 9 different from the Achilles of Book 1?
- How is the Achilles of Books 23 and 24 different from the Achilles of Book 1 and the Achilles of Book 9?
- Is there a difference in the way Achilles treats Agamemnon in Books 23 and 24 from the way that he treated Agamemnon earlier?
- Does Achilles show any self-awareness of his quickness to anger in Book 24?
- In Book 24, is Achilles able to see himself the way that other people (e.g., Priam) see him?
- Would the Achilles of Book 1 make a good leader? Would the Achilles of Book 23 make a good leader?
- Is Achilles selfish in Book 1? Is Achilles selfish in Book 24?
- Does Achilles learn empathy in the *Iliad*?
- Has Achilles changed in how he views *kleos* and *timē*? At the end of the *Iliad*, does he still fight for these things, or does he reject them?

• **Argue either that the *Iliad* is an anti-war poem or it glorifies war.**

For example: What is the effect of the Trojan War on Humankind? What is the war like for the noncombatants — King Priam, Andromache, Astyanax, and the common people (including the wives and sisters of the combatants)? Are the Trojans (including the warriors) a people the Greek audience of the *Iliad* can easily hate? Is *kleos* worth dying for? Does *anyone* benefit from the Trojan War?

In writing a paper on this topic, you may want to use some information that is not directly presented in the *Iliad*. After all, Homer realized that his audience knew this information — it's assumed as part of the background of the *Iliad* — so it's fair to use it. For example, what happens during and after the fall of Troy?

Be aware that the name of Hector's son — Astyanax — is often misspelled by students who write a paper on this topic. Be aware that the Fagles translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have glossaries (with pronunciations) in the back. If you ever wonder how to spell or pronounce a name, look it up in the glossary.

A few questions to ponder — listed in no particular order — and maybe write about:

- What is the effect of the Trojan War on the warriors?
- What is the effect of the Trojan War on the Trojan non-combatants: the old men, women, and children inside Troy, King Priam, Andromache, and Astyanax?
- What is the effect of the Trojan War on the Achaean non-combatants (parents, wives, and children back home — e.g. Agamemnon's wife)?

- Should Achilles' rejection of *kleos* in Book 9 be seen as an anti-war statement?
- What is the effect of the Trojan War on Ithaca, as shown by the *Odyssey*?
- What is the effect of the fall of Troy on the ancient world as a whole (the ancient world loses a center of civilization)?
- The war is being fought over Helen. Is she worth it?
- What comment does the meeting of Glaucus and Diomedes in Book 6 make on the war?
- As the war continues, do the soldiers become more brutal?
- What outrages were committed by the Achaeans during the fall of Troy and after Troy fell?
- When Troy falls, the ancient world loses an important center of civilization. Are there many centers of civilization at this time?
- Are the Trojans (including the warriors) a people the Greek audience of the *Iliad* can easily hate?
- Does *anyone* benefit from the Trojan War?
- Are the Homeric similes comparing warriors to beasts or to violent acts of nature such as forest fires significant?
- Many heroes die in the Trojan War. What happens to the heroes who survive?
- Is the gruesomeness of the deaths of warriors a reason to think that Homer is an anti-war poet?

• **Compare and contrast the characters of Achilles and Hector.**

For example: How are they similar? How are they different? What are their reasons for fighting in the Trojan War? What do their relationships with other people tell us about them? Do they accept or reject the human condition? (Be sure to include a thesis statement, a forecasting statement, and transitions.) Note: A forecasting statement mentions the major topics of your paper in the order in which you write about them.

- How are they similar?
- How are they different?
- What are their reasons for fighting in the Trojan War?
- What do their relationships with other people tell us about them?
- Do they accept or reject the human condition?
- How do their family lives differ?
- Note that in comparison and contrast papers, an alternating pattern of organization works well. For example, let's say that you are going to compare and contrast Achilles and Hector. In your essay, you would discuss each according to similarities (their abilities as warriors and their abilities as leaders) and differences (their reasons for fighting in the Trojan War, their relationships with other people, whether they accept or reject the human condition). Your outline would look something like this:

Introduction

Thesis Statement

Forecasting Statement

Similarities

Abilities as Warriors

...

...

Difference #1: Their Reasons for Fighting in the Trojan War

Hector

Achilles

Difference #2: Their Relationships With Other People

Hector

Achilles

Difference #3: ...

Hector

Achilles

Difference #4: ...

Hector

Achilles

Difference #5: Acceptance or Rejection of the Human Condition

Hector

Achilles

Conclusion

Of course, you should write about more similarities and differences than are listed here.

- Note that your description of their similarities will probably be briefer than your description of their differences.
- Note that you want to end with an important topic. The human condition is an important theme in the *Iliad*, so it is a good idea to end the section of differences with whether Achilles and Hector accept or reject the human condition. (Of course, Achilles accepts the human condition at the end of the *Iliad*, but during his *aristeia* he rejects it.)
- Note that you will need good transitions between sections of your paper. You will need a good transition to get from the similarities to the differences, and you will need good transitions to get from one difference to the next difference.
- Avoid obvious and boring sentences in your introduction. For example:

Hector and Achilles have few similarities and many differences.

Hector and Achilles are the main characters of the *Iliad*.

A better version of the sentence would mention a few similarities and many differences. This sentence could be a forecasting statement:

Hector and Achilles are similar in that they ... and ..., but their many major differences include ..., ..., and

- Use a forecasting statement in your introduction.

A forecasting statement tells the reader what he or she will read in a paper. Forecasting statements often appear in the introductions of papers. This example is from a paper about Hector and Paris:

Ex: Hector and Paris differ in their marriages, motivation for fighting, reputation as warriors, leadership ability, and personal integrity or lack of it.

This forecasting statement tells the reader that the writer will first write about how Hector and Paris differ in their marriages, then about how they differ in their motivation for fighting, then about how they differ in their reputation as warriors, then about how they differ in their leadership ability, and finally about how they differ in their personal integrity or lack of it.

A forecasting statement may follow a thesis statement. This example is from a paper about Hector and Paris:

Ex: Hector and Paris are polar opposites. They differ in their marriages, motivation for fighting, reputation as warriors, leadership ability, and personal integrity or lack of it.

- Introductions are often a danger spot for many writers. Often, writers start at the beginning of their papers and work their way through to the end. Unfortunately, at the beginning of the writing period, the writer's writing muscles have not warmed up yet, and they write boring, obvious sentences. Later, instead of writing a vivid, interesting introduction, they simply proofread the boring, obvious sentences they have already written. Moral: After writing a complete draft, wait a while, then evaluate your introduction. If you need to write a more vivid, interesting introduction, do so.
- Sometimes, the first few sentences of an introduction are obvious and boring, but the following sentences make a good beginning.
- Use topic sentences at or near the beginnings of your paragraphs. For example:

Close relationships are very important to Achilles and Hector, and they both have very strong bonds with the people close to them.

Each warrior has different reasons for being involved in the war.

- Use transitions to get from one section of your paper to another. The transition will go at the beginning of the first paragraph of the new section, not at the end of the last paragraph of the old section. For example:

Although Achilles and Hector have different reasons for fighting in the Trojan War, they both are mighty warriors.

Brainstorming Exercise

List some similarities of Achilles and Hector:

- Both are good warriors
- Both are Trojans

Etc.

List some differences of Achilles and Hector:

- Their reasons for fighting in the Trojan War
- Their relationships with other people
- Acceptance or rejection of the human condition

Etc.

- **Compare and contrast the characters of Agamemnon and Achilles.**

Who is the better fighter?

Who is the better leader?

Who changes in the *Iliad*?

• **Explain the role that the gods play in the *Iliad*.**

Are the gods capable of heroism?

Appendix E: Short Reaction Memos

The questions in this discussion guide to Homer's *Iliad* can be used in discussions; however, they can also be used for short reaction memos. For example, I do this at Ohio University. See below for the assignment and sample short reaction memos.

How Do I Complete the Reaction Memo Assignments?

During the quarter, you will have to write a series of short memos in which you write about the readings you have been assigned.

Each memo should be at least 250 words, not counting long quotations from the work of literature. Include a word count for each memo, although that is not normally part of the memo format.

Following the memo heading (To, From, Re, Date, Words), write the question you are answering and the part of the book that the question applies to.

You may answer one question or more than one question. I will supply you with a list of questions that you may answer.

Note that a Works Cited list is needed if you use quotations.

For examples from my Great Books courses at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, see below.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *Odyssey*, Book 12 Reaction Memo

Date: Put Today's Date Here

Words: 323

Odyssey, Book 12: Is Odysseus a bad leader?

This is an important question in the *Odyssey*. After all, Odysseus leads 12 ships and many men to Troy, but the ships are all destroyed and all of his men die and he returns home to Ithaca alone. Who is responsible for the deaths of Odysseus' men? Is Odysseus responsible for their deaths, or do the men bear some responsibility for their own deaths? Many readers prefer Odysseus, the great individualist, to Aeneas, the man who founds the Roman people, but then they realize that all of Odysseus' men died, while Aeneas succeeded in bringing many Trojans to Italy. When readers think of that, they begin to have a greater respect for Aeneas.

From the beginning of the *Odyssey*, this has been an issue. The bard says that the men perished because of the "recklessness of their own ways" (1.8). However, we notice that Odysseus is asleep at odd times. In Book 10, Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag in which the contrary winds have been tied up. This allows Odysseus to sail to Ithaca safely. However, they reach the island and see smoke rising from the fires, Odysseus goes to sleep and his men open the bag, letting the contrary winds escape, and the ship is blown back to King Aeolus' island. Similarly, in Book 12, on the island of the Sun-god, Odysseus is asleep when his men sacrifice the Sun-god's cattle.

It does seem that Odysseus does not bear the blame for his men's death. In many cases, they do perish through their own

stupidity. In other cases, of course, they die during war or during adventures, but in those times, Odysseus was with them, and he could have died, too.

One other thing to think about is that Odysseus is telling his own story. Could he be lying? After all, some of the adventures he relates are pretty incredible. (Probably not. The gods vouch for some of what he says.)

Works Cited

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 1996. Print.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *Inferno*, Canto 1 Reaction Memo

Date: Put Today's Date Here

Words: 263

Inferno, Canto 1

- What do you need to be a member of the Afterlife in Dante's *Inferno*?

To be a member of the afterlife in Hell, you must meet a number of criteria:

- 1) You must be dead.
- 2) You must be an unrepentant sinner.
- 3) You must be a dead, unrepentant sinner by 1300.

Of course, only dead people — with a few exceptions such as Dante the Pilgrim — can be found in the *Inferno*.

Only unrepentant sinners can be found in the *Inferno*. Everyone has sinned, but sinners who repented their sins are found in Purgatory or Paradise, not in the *Inferno*.

Dante set his *Divine Comedy* in 1300, so the characters who appear in it are dead in 1300.

Inferno, Canto 1

- What does it mean to repent?

A sinner who repents regrets having committed the sin. The repentant sinner vows not to commit the sin again, and he or she does his or her best not to commit the sin again.

Inferno, Canto 1

- What is the geography of Hell? In *The Divine Comedy*, where is Hell located?

Hell is located straight down. We will find out later that when Lucifer was thrown out of Paradise, he fell to the Earth, ending up at the center of the Earth. The center of the Earth is the lowest part of Hell. Lucifer created the Mountain of Purgatory when he hit the Earth.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *Candide*, Ch. 26-30

Date: Today's Date

Words: 368

Ch. 30: Write a brief character analysis of the old man and his family.

When Candide and his friends meet the old man, the old man is “sitting in front of his door beneath an arbor of orange trees, enjoying the fresh air” (119). The old man basically ignores politics that he cannot influence. Some people have recently been killed in Constantinople, and the old man does not even know their names. However, the old man does enjoy some material things, including good food, and he enjoys hospitality.

The old man invites Candide and his friends to enjoy some refreshments inside his house. They are served with “several kinds of fruit-flavored drinks” and “boiled cream with pieces of candied citron in it, oranges, lemons, limes, pineapples, pistachio nuts, and mocha coffee” (119). The old man and his family have an abundance of food, but although Candide wonders if the old man has an enormous farm, the old man tells him, “I have only twenty acres of land, which my children and I cultivate. Our work keeps us free of three great evils: boredom, vice, and poverty” (119).

From this brief encounter, we learn several things:

- The old man and his family are content — even happy.
- The old man and his family ignore the wars and murders and crimes that happen elsewhere.

- The old man and his family have enough. They work hard on their little farm, and they have plenty of food and good things to eat.
- The old man and his family have only 20 acres, but 20 acres are enough.

Candide and his friends decide to emulate the old man and his family. Each of them begins to work hard on their little farm. Cunegonde learns to make pastry, Paquette begins to embroider, and the old woman does the laundry and repairs the linen. Brother Giroflée becomes a carpenter, and Candide and the others grow “abundant crops” (120). At the end of the short novel, the group of friends seem to have come the closest they can to happiness in a world filled with evil, but it does take an effort on their part. As Candide says in the short novel’s last words, “... we must cultivate our garden” (120).

Works Cited

Voltaire. *Candide*. Trans. Lowell Bair. New York: Bantam Books, 1981. Print.

To: David Bruce

From: Jane Student

Re: *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Ch. 1-4
Reaction Memo

Date: Put Today's Date Here

Words: 286

CH. 3: "KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND"

- What hints do we have of the relationship between Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot?

Some hanky-panky is going on between Sir Launcelot and King Arthur's wife, Queen Guenever. Some six or eight prisoners address her, and they tell her that they have been captured by Sir Kay the Seneschal. Immediately, surprise and astonishment are felt by everybody present. The queen looks disappointed because she had hoped that the prisoners were captured by Sir Launcelot.

As it turns out, they were. Sir Launcelot first rescued Sir Kay from some attackers, then he took Sir Kay's armor and horse and captured more knights. All of these prisoners were actually captured by Sir Launcelot, not by Sir Kay at all.

Two passages let us know that something is going on between Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever:

1. The first is subtle; she looks disappointed when Sir Kay says that he captured the knights: "Surprise and astonishment flashed from face to face all over the house; the queen's gratified smile faded out at the name of Sir Kay, and she looked disappointed ..." (503).
2. The other is much more overt and occurs after Guenever learns that the knight who really captured the prisoners was Sir Launcelot: "Well, it was touching to see the queen blush

and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot in Arkansas, to a dead certainty” (503).

Works Cited

Twain, Mark. *Four Complete Novels*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1982. Print.

Appendix F: Paul Tillich (1886-1965): Faith as Ultimate Concern

Paul Tillich's concept of faith as ultimate concern is fascinating. According to Tillich, "Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned: the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern."

All of us have many concerns. Certainly we are concerned with such things as acquiring food, shelter, and clothing. However, we have a concern that is more important to us than any of the other concerns. An ultimate concern demands complete surrender and promises complete fulfillment.

An ultimate concern can have either true or false ultimacy. If our ultimate concern is not worthy of being our ultimate concern, if it is not genuinely ultimate, then it has false ultimacy and it is idolatrous, according to Tillich. There are many examples of idolatrous ultimate concerns in the world.

An example of a person whose ultimate concern was idolatrous can be found in baseball great Ty Cobb, who was the first player to be voted into baseball's Hall of Fame. Cobb was a racist who, according to a review by Allen Barra in *Newsday* of Al Stump's book *Cobb: A Biography*, "once beat a black groundskeeper because the man tried to shake his hand." Cobb died rich, but alone.

According to Barra, "At [Cobb's] funeral, none of his three children, two ex-wives or hundreds of former teammates showed up.

"*Cobb* is a monument to a man who achieved unqualified success in the furious and unrelenting pursuit of goals that proved, finally, to be utterly trivial."

Other idolatrous ultimate concerns include a total commitment to nationalism. When Nazi Germany was defeated, propaganda minister Paul Joseph Goebbels killed

himself — and his children. Killing himself may be understandable, since Goebbels would certainly have been found guilty of war crimes and almost certainly would have been condemned to death. However, Goebbels and his wife did not need to kill their children. They apparently killed their children because they did not want them raised in a country that was not Nazi Germany.

It is possible to change one's ultimate concern. Ebenezer Scrooge is the main protagonist of Charles Dickens' short novel *A Christmas Carol*. Early in the short novel, Scrooge's ultimate concern is money. A miser, Scrooge likes money for its own sake, not for anything money can buy. Scrooge does not even use his money to make his life comfortable. He prefers to bask in the warmth of his bank book rather than in the warmth of a roaring fire. (Scrooge's fires are small, as fuel costs money.)

However, in *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge changes his ultimate concern to one that is truly ultimate. He learns to use his money to relieve human suffering — something much more worthy than simply hanging on to one's money for the sake of having money.

It is possible to find people in real life with ultimate concerns that are truly ultimate. Lives that are devoted to God can show this through a devotion to service and to inquiry.

A life of service is devoted to helping other people. An example of a person devoting himself to a life of service is D. Cordell Brown, a Protestant minister who has cerebral palsy. After becoming a minister, he began to look for a way to serve other people, and he decided that services for handicapped adults were much needed. Therefore, he took his farm in Warsaw, Ohio, and turned it into Camp Echoing Hills, a camp for the handicapped. Next, he started a handicapped adult residence at Echoing Hills, and since then has started many other handicapped adult residences in

Ohio, including Echoing Meadows in Athens, Ohio (home of Ohio University). Brown has helped and is helping many thousands of adults and children in wheelchairs during his lifetime.

A life of inquiry is devoted to the acquisition of knowledge. In Athens, Ohio, there are numerous examples of lives of inquiry; all you have to do is to look at the professors (and many of the students). One example is Dr. Donald Borchert, retired chair of the Ohio University Philosophy Department. He has several degrees, and has written several books. Dr. Borchert specializes in Ethics and Philosophy of Religion. In addition to devoting his life to inquiry, Dr. Borchert has devoted his life to service, as is shown by the philosophy courses he teaches.

According to Tillich, “Faith as ultimate concern is an act of the total personality. It happens in the center of the personal life and includes all its elements. Faith is the most centered act of the human mind.” In addition, he writes, “Faith is a total and centered act of the personal self, the act of unconditional, infinite and ultimate concern.”

Tillich also believes that your ultimate concern provides a core of meaning — a unity and focus — to your personality. Without an ultimate concern, you would drift aimlessly through life. Lives with an ultimate concern that has true ultimacy have a resonance that is lacking in other lives.

Your ultimate concern gives meaning to your life and takes all of your effort. When you have an ultimate concern, you have a reason to get up in the morning. People who are devoting their lives to service and to inquiry always have something to do. There are always people who need help and always more books to read.

If you should not have an ultimate concern, your life would have no core of meaning. For an example of someone

without an ultimate concern, we can look at the fictional character Mersault in the beginning of Albert Camus' novel *The Stranger*. Mersault lives for the moment only and doesn't care strongly about anything; he wanders aimlessly through life without thinking much about anything.

We should be aware that a person may pay lip service to one ultimate concern, but in reality have another ultimate concern. Thus, someone may say that serving God is their ultimate concern, but an objective observer looking at this person's life may say that money is actually this person's ultimate concern.

Here is a question for you to think about: What is *your* ultimate concern?

Note: The quotations by Paul Tillich that appear in this essay are from his *Dynamics of Faith* (Volume 10 of the World Perspective Series, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen. Copyright 1957 by Paul Tillich).

Appendix G: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer’s Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare’s Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

Appendix H: Some Books by David Bruce

Discussion Guides Series

Dante's Inferno: A Discussion Guide

Dante's Paradise: A Discussion Guide

Dante's Purgatory: A Discussion Guide

Forrest Carter's The Education of Little Tree: A Discussion Guide

Homer's Iliad: A Discussion Guide

Homer's Odyssey: A Discussion Guide

Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: A Discussion Guide

Jerry Spinelli's Maniac Magee: A Discussion Guide

Jerry Spinelli's Stargirl: A Discussion Guide

Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal": A Discussion Guide

Lloyd Alexander's The Black Cauldron: A Discussion Guide

Lloyd Alexander's The Book of Three: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's The Adventures of Tom Sawyer: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court: A Discussion Guide

Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper: A Discussion Guide

Nancy Garden's Annie on My Mind: A Discussion Guide

Nicholas Sparks' A Walk to Remember: A Discussion Guide

Virgil's Aeneid: A Discussion Guide

Virgil's "The Fall of Troy": A Discussion Guide

Voltaire's Candide: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Discussion Guide

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Discussion Guide

William Sleator's Oddballs: A Discussion Guide

(*Oddballs* is an excellent source for teaching how to write autobiographical essays/personal narratives.)

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The New Inn: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings

Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose

The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling

From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica

George Peele: Five Plays Retold in Modern English

George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling

George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling

George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling

George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling

George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling

George-A-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield: A Retelling

The History of King Leir: A Retelling

Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose

Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose

Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica

The Jests of George Peele: A Retelling

John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English

John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling

John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling

John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling

John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling

John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling

- John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*
- John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*
- King Edward III: A Retelling*
- The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*
- Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*
- The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*
- Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*
- The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*
- Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose*

- William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose

Children's Biography

Nadia Comaneci: Perfect Ten

Personal Finance

How to Manage Your Money: A Guide for the Non-Rich

Anecdote Collections

250 Anecdotes About Opera

250 Anecdotes About Religion

250 Anecdotes About Religion: Volume 2

250 Music Anecdotes

Be a Work of Art: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Boredom is Anti-Life: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

The Coolest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in the Arts: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

Create, Then Take a Break: 250 Anecdotes

Don't Fear the Reaper: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

- The Funniest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Dance: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Families: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Families, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Families, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Families, Volume 4: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Families, Volume 5: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Music: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Music, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Music, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Neighborhoods: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Relationships: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Sports, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Television and Radio: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People in Theater: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Funniest People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 1: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes*
- Maximum Cool: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Most Interesting People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes*
- The Most Interesting People in Politics and History: 250 Anecdotes*

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Religion: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes

The Most Interesting People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

Reality is Fabulous: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Resist Psychic Death: 250 Anecdotes

Seize the Day: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

**Appendix I: Book 1 of Homer's *Iliad*: A Retelling in
Prose (by David Bruce)**

**BOOK 1: The Rage of Achilles and the Quarrel by the
Ships**

Rage.

Goddess, use me to tell the story of the rage of Achilles, a Greek warrior who had the rage of a god. The rage of the son of Peleus made corpses of many men and sent their souls to the Land of the Dead. Dogs and birds feasted on warriors' flesh, all because of Achilles and the will of Zeus, king of gods and men.

Start telling the story, Muse, from the time when Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Greeks, and Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces against Troy, first quarreled by the Greek ships.

The actions of a god led them to quarrel. Apollo, Zeus' son, raged against Agamemnon and spread the plague throughout the Greek warriors. Many brave warriors died because Agamemnon had disrespected a priest of Apollo, the god of the plague.

Chryses, the priest of Apollo, loved his daughter, whom the Greeks had captured when they conquered the city of Thebe, which was allied with Troy. To get his daughter back, he gathered shining treasure with which to ransom her. He took his shining treasure to the Greek ships while carrying a golden staff on which Apollo's wreaths were tied, clearly identifying Chryses as a priest of Apollo.

He did everything as he ought to have done. He begged the Greek warriors, and especially Agamemnon and his brother, Menelaus, to accept the shining treasure and give him back his daughter, Chryseis.

He said, respectfully, “Agamemnon, Menelaus, and all you Greek warriors! May Zeus and all the other gods of Mount Olympus allow you to conquer the city of Troy and sail safely home again! But set my beloved daughter free. I love her so much. Take this shining treasure as fair ransom for my daughter! I am the priest of Apollo — respect the archer god who is also the god of the plague.”

The ranks of the Greek warriors approved of the ransom; they shouted, “Respect the priest of Apollo! Respect the suppliant! Respect the old man! Accept the ransom!”

But Agamemnon would not.

He told the old father and priest, “Don’t let me see you among the Greek ships. Leave immediately and don’t come back. Even if you are a priest of Apollo, I will kill you. I won’t give your daughter back to you. She will die of old age back in the city of Mycenae. She will die far from the land where she was born and raised. She will work as a slave weaving cloth, and I will force her to sleep with me. Leave immediately, or die!”

The old priest of Apollo was afraid and left. He turned and quietly went down to the shore. When he was a safe distance from Agamemnon, he prayed to Apollo, god of archery and of plague: “Hear me, Apollo. You are the god of the silver bow, and you walk in my city: Chryse. If I have ever built shrines for you, if I have ever sacrificed cattle to you and burned fat and bones on your altar, hear my prayer and answer it: Kill many Greek warriors. I have shed tears — now you shoot arrows!”

The prayer traveled in the air, and the archer god heard it on Mount Olympus. Gods have that power. Angry at how his priest had been treated, Apollo stormed from Olympus, traveling quickly to the Greek ships. His quiver was full of arrows. When he reached the Greek ships, he dropped to one

knee and started shooting arrows. With each shot of an arrow, something or someone died.

First, Apollo shot at and killed mules and dogs, but then he started aiming at warriors, and they died of the plague. The Greeks burned the corpses of the dead warriors, and the corpse-fires stayed lit all day and all night.

Apollo was angry at Agamemnon, but other Greek warriors were the ones who died. Such is the anger of the gods.

For nine days, the plague killed many, many Greek warriors. On the tenth day, Achilles — the greatest warrior among the Greeks and the greatest warrior among all who fought at Troy — did what Agamemnon should have done and called a council to see how to stop the plague.

When everyone, including Agamemnon and Menelaus and the other kings of Greece who had come to wage war against Troy, had gathered, Achilles said, “Agamemnon, things are going badly. Unless we can figure out how to stop this plague, we might as well sail back home to Greece — or we will also die of the plague before we can set sail. The war and the plague are killing so many Greeks.

“But a prophet may know why the plague has come and what we can do to stop it. A prophet may know why Apollo has sent a plague to kill us. Perhaps we have not honored a vow we made to the god, or perhaps we need to make a sacrifice to him. Perhaps if we sacrifice lambs and goats to Apollo, the archer god may have mercy on us and take this plague away from us.”

Achilles spoke sensible words.

Calchas, the Greeks’ chief prophet, was a seer who can look at the flight of birds and interpret the will of the gods. A wise man, he knew the past, the present, and the future. He had let the Greeks know what they had to do in order to sail safely

to Troy to make war. Apollo is also the god of prophecy, and Apollo had blessed Calchas with special sight.

Calchas wanted what was best for the Greek warriors. He said, “Achilles, the great god Zeus knows and respects you. You want me to say why this plague has come against us? You want me to explain why Apollo is angry at us? I can and will explain these things, but first swear to protect me.

“If I explain why Apollo is angry at us, I will make angry a powerful man among us. This powerful man gives orders that must be obeyed. This man is a powerful king. When a powerful man is angry at a man who is not powerful, the powerful man will win. Even if the powerful man is able to choke down his rage today, he will get his revenge later. Achilles, will you protect me against this powerful man?”

Achilles replied, “Yes. Have courage. Tell us why Apollo is angry at us. I swear by Apollo that I will protect you against anyone who becomes angry at you. No one will harm you. I swear that I will not allow even Agamemnon — who claims to be the best of all the Greeks — to harm you.”

Reassured by Achilles’ words, Calchas said, “Apollo is not angry at us because of a lack of sacrifice or a vow that we failed to fulfill. Instead, the god is angry because of the actions of Agamemnon. The priest of Apollo acted correctly when he tried to ransom his daughter, but Agamemnon disrespected the old priest. Agamemnon should have respected the old priest and the god — Apollo — he serves. Now, because of Agamemnon’s disrespect to him, Apollo shoots his arrows at us and kills us with plague. The deaths will not stop until we give the old priest his daughter — without taking shining treasure as ransom. She must be given back to her father with no price paid for her freedom. Both she and a hundred bulls need to be sent to the city of Chryse; the bulls must be sacrificed to Apollo. Only then will Apollo be appeased and stop the killing.”

Powerful Agamemnon, as Calchas had foreseen, was furious. He turned to Calchas and said, “You are a seer of misery. All you forecast is bad. With you, nothing is ever good news. Every prophecy is about disaster. This prophecy is more of the same. Why is Apollo angry at us? You say that it is because of me, because I refused to accept shining ransom for the priest’s daughter.

“It is true that I much prefer having the girl to having the treasure. I want her to be a slave in my house in the city of Mycenae. I value her more than I value Clytemnestra, my own lawfully wedded wife. The girl’s beauty, upbringing, mind, and skill in crafts are equal to Clytemnestra’s.

“Still, I am willing to return the girl to her father. That will be the best for all of us. Better that than to have Greek warriors continue to die of the plague.

“She is the girl I won. Whenever we conquer a city, we gather the treasure, the cattle, and the women and children of the city, and we award them to the warriors who conquered the city. Each main warrior receives a prize of honor in recognition of that warrior’s strength in battle and leadership.

“But now my prize of honor is taken from me! I need a prize of honor to take her place. So give me another prize of honor, or I alone of all the Greek warriors will be without a prize. That would disgrace me. All of you know that my prize of honor is being taken away from me.”

Achilles replied to Agamemnon, “You are a great general, Agamemnon, but how can we give you a prize of honor now? If you were to cause that to happen, you would be the greediest man alive.

“We have no treasure, no cattle, no women, and no children to give as prizes of honor. All of those things have been awarded to warriors who deserve them. We have no prizes

of honor that we can now award. Nothing is left to be awarded. For you to call back prizes of honor would be a deadly insult to your warriors.

“So give the girl back to her father, the old priest. We will pay you back for what you have lost. When we conquer Troy, we will give you three or four times what you lose today. Your loss of a prize of honor will be only temporary.”

Such words were wise, but Agamemnon’s response was not.

Agamemnon said to Achilles, “You are a brave man, and you are like a god, but I will not allow you to cheat me. You want to keep your own prize of honor while I go without one. Am I someone to be empty-handed? Am I someone to be without a prize of honor? No.

“If the Greek warriors will willingly give me a prize of honor, well and good. But if they won’t, I will take one without their and your consent.

“Maybe I will take your prize of honor. You are the greatest Greek warrior.

“Maybe I will take Great Ajax’ prize of honor. He is the second greatest Greek warrior.

“Maybe I will take Odysseus’ prize of honor. He is a master of rhetoric and a man of action.

“I am greater than any of you, and I will NOT go without a prize of honor. Anyone whose prize of honor I take can choke with rage, but I will still take his prize of honor.

“But enough for now. We can talk about this later. Right now, we have business to take care of. Let’s haul a ship from shore into the water, get oarsmen ready, and load the ship with cattle and with beautiful Chryseis, who was my prize of honor. A person of authority — Great Ajax, Idomeneus from Crete, Odysseus, or even you, Achilles — as violent as you

are — can sail the ship to Chryses, give Chryseis to her father, perform the sacrifice, and appease Apollo.”

But Achilles was angry — Agamemnon had threatened to take his prize of honor.

Achilles — a man without tact — said to Agamemnon, “You are both shameless and greedy. Why should a Greek warrior obey your orders? Why should a Greek warrior do your errands? Why should a Greek warrior fight for you? I should not and will not.

“We are here to fight the Trojans, but the Trojans have never done anything to *me*. The Trojans did not steal *my* cattle. The Trojans did not steal *my* horses. The Trojans did not harm the crops in *my* fields.

“You and Menelaus — the sons of Atreus — have a quarrel with the Trojans. We other Greek warriors are fighting *your* fight — you dog. Paris took Helen away from Menelaus, and we are fighting to get back the honor of the House of Atreus.

“But do you care that we are dying and fighting for you? This is not the way to show it. You lack intelligence. You lack prudence. You don’t think ahead. You don’t consider the consequences of your actions.

“You are planning an act of outrage. You are threatening to take from me my prize of honor. I fought hard, and I was awarded a prize of honor because I fought hard.

“A good leader should reward his men. I fight hard — harder than you — but your prizes are greater than mine. Whenever we sack a city allied to Troy, I fight harder than anyone and I wreak the most damage, but you get loaded down with prizes of honor and I get something small, exhausted as I am from fighting.

“I won’t take it anymore! I will sail back home to my own country: Phthia. It is better to sail home than to stay here and be insulted by you despite all that I have done to make you richer.”

Agamemnon was also angry. He said to Achilles, “If you want to go home, then go home. Be a deserter. I will not beg you to stay and fight. Other warriors are here to fight, and Zeus, the god of kings and men, will know that I am in the right. I hate you the most of all the Greek warriors battling before Troy.

“You love battles, and you love war. You are a great warrior, but so what? Did you earn it? No. It’s simply a god’s gift to you. So go back home to Phthia and take your Myrmidons — your soldiers — with you. I don’t value you or respect your anger.

“But I will say this. I have lost my prize of honor — Apollo has taken her from me. To make up for my loss, I am going to take your prize of honor from you. Face-to-face with you at your tents, I will take your prize of honor — Briseis — from you. That way, you will know that I am more powerful than you are. And so will all Greek warriors who seek to challenge me.”

Achilles was furious. Hanging at his side was a long sword in a scabbard. He put his hand on its grip and started to draw it from its scabbard.

But the gods were watching from Mount Olympus. Hera, the wife of Zeus, did not want Achilles to kill Agamemnon. Neither did Athena, the daughter of Zeus, but not by Hera. Hera and Athena wanted Troy to fall, and if Achilles were to kill Agamemnon, the war of Troy would end and the Greeks would sail back home. The Trojans would be triumphant.

Hera, who was watching the quarrel from Mount Olympus, sent Athena to appear before Achilles and order him not to

kill Agamemnon. Athena sped down from Olympus and grabbed Achilles' hair. No mortal but Achilles saw or heard her. Gods have that power.

Achilles knew the fiery-eyed goddess Athena at once and said to her, "Why have you come to me now? Do you want to witness Agamemnon insulting me? I tell you now — he is going to pay for his insult to me!"

Athena replied, "I have come from Olympus to stop you from killing Agamemnon. Hera sent me. She cares for both you and Agamemnon — you are warriors who fight the Trojans. Don't draw your sword. Don't kill Agamemnon. Do tell him that he will suffer and pay for what he has done. I am a goddess, and I know the future. Soon, brilliant gifts will be brought to you — worth three times what you have lost today. The gifts will be the payment for Agamemnon's insult to you. Do not kill Agamemnon. Obey both Hera and me."

Achilles respected the two goddesses. He said to Athena, "I will obey. I must. When you two goddesses give commands, a mortal man must obey them no matter how angry he is. It is the best thing to do. Gods hear the prayers of a mortal man who obeys their commands."

Achilles pushed his sword back in its scabbard. Athena flew back to Mount Olympus. Gods have that power.

But Achilles spoke again to Agamemnon, "You drink until you stagger, you have the eyes of a dog, you have the heart of a fawn, you lack courage in battle. When it is time for the best Greek warriors to ambush the Trojans, you are not present because you know how dangerous it is. Rather than fight and earn a prize of honor at the risk of losing your life, you find it safer to stay in your well-guarded camp and take the prize of honor of a warrior who fought well and who earned it but who dares to criticize you. You feed on your own people, as worthless as they are. If they were not

worthless, they would not let your outrage of today stand and would not allow you to commit any new outrages.

“I swear an oath upon the scepter I hold. It is wooden, and never again will leaves sprout from it. In councils, whoever holds the scepter can speak. I swear that someday you will regret what you have done today. I swear that soon you and your warriors will want me to fight again for you. For without me fighting on your side, Hector — the greatest warrior of the Trojans — will kill and kill again. Then you will regret what you have done today. Then you will regret having disgraced me — the greatest warrior of the Greeks!”

Achilles threw the scepter on the ground. Agamemnon glared at him.

Nestor, the King of Pylos, was an old man and the wisest of the Greeks. He knew how to use rhetoric; he could speak persuasively. He said, “No more quarreling. If you continue to quarrel, great misery for the Greeks will be the result. Think of how the Trojans would rejoice if they heard you two quarreling. Priam — the King of Troy — and his sons would rejoice, as would all the Trojans. You two are the best of the Greeks: the best in our councils, and the best on the fields of battle.

“Stop quarrelling. Please. Listen to me. I am older than you, and I have more experience than you. I have known better men than you, and they were my colleagues and respected me. They were excellent men: Pirithous, Dryas, Caeneus, Exadius, Polyphemus, and Theseus.

“These men were strong, and they fought the half-man, half-horse Centaurs, who were wild and lived in the mountains. These strong men hacked down the Centaurs. I was a young man then, far away from my home in Pylos. They had sought me and enlisted me in their team. I fought, and fought well. These strong men were fighters whom no man of today could

beat, but they listened to my words when I spoke up in councils.

“Now you should also listen to me. Sometimes, compromise is the best course of action. Agamemnon, don’t take Bryseis, Achilles’ prize of honor. We warriors awarded her to Achilles, so let Achilles keep her. She belongs to him.

“Achilles, don’t quarrel with Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces. He is the main Greek king before Troy, and he is the most powerful. Zeus, the King of gods and men, has given Agamemnon much glory. Achilles, you have a goddess for a mother, and you are the most physically strong of all the Greeks, but Agamemnon is more powerful than you are because he brought more warriors to Troy than you did and because he is the leader of the Greek forces against Troy.

“Agamemnon, stop being angry at Achilles. Listen to me — I am an old man. Achilles is the greatest Greek warrior. Don’t disrespect a man who fights well for you!”

Nestor spoke wise words, but Agamemnon’s words in reply were only partially wise.

Agamemnon said, “Everything that you say is wise, Nestor, but Achilles wants more respect than he deserves. He wishes to be the leader here. He wishes to give everyone orders and have his orders obeyed. But I will never allow that to happen. The gods have made him a great spearsman, but that does not entitle him to abuse me, although he may think that.”

Achilles’ words were not wise: “Yes, I do think that. If I submitted to your orders, I would be worthless and cowardly. Give other people orders, not me! I will never again yield to your orders.

“But I will not fight for Briseis. I will not fight you. The Greek warriors gave me Briseis, but now you, Agamemnon,

are taking back my prize of honor. So be it. But everything else at my ship is mine. If you try to take any of it, Agamemnon, you will die. If you doubt me, just try to take something of mine. My spear will be in your body, and your blood will gush out!”

The quarrel of words ended, but the bad feelings continued. The council broke up, and Achilles returned to his camp and his best friend, Patroclus.

Meanwhile, Agamemnon prepared to send a ship to Chryses so the god Apollo would be appeased. He ordered men to drag a ship into the sea. He picked out twenty oarsmen to be the crew of the ship. He ordered one hundred bulls to be put on board the ship. He led Chryseis to the ship. Odysseus, ever competent, captained the ship. It sailed to the city of Chryse.

Agamemnon’s men washed themselves in the sea to clean and purify themselves after being around the plague so long, and they sacrificed to the gods.

Agamemnon could have decided not to follow through on his threat to take Briseis away from Achilles. Agamemnon could have taken the advice of Nestor. Agamemnon could have restrained his anger.

But he did not.

Agamemnon called his two heralds, Talthibius and Eurybates, to him and said, “You two go to the camp of Achilles and get his prize of honor, Briseis, and bring her to me. If Achilles will not give her up, I will go to the camp of Achilles myself — with an army of warriors — and take her.”

Reluctantly, the two heralds obeyed. They reached the camp of Achilles and found him. He was grim, but he was not

murderous. He looked at the two heralds, and they were afraid and said nothing, but just stood in his camp.

But Achilles was courteous to them, saying, "Welcome! I am angry at Agamemnon, not at you, so come closer. You have not treated me badly, as Agamemnon has.

"Agamemnon sent you to get Bryseis, and you shall have her. Patroclus, my friend, bring out Bryseis, and give her to these two heralds.

"But, heralds, listen to my words. Agamemnon shall need me one day to keep death away from his men. Agamemnon is a man who forgets what I have done in the past and what I can do in the future. He does not know what he needs to do to keep his warriors safe."

Patroclus obeyed his friend's request. He brought out Briseis and handed her over to the two heralds, who led her to Agamemnon. She followed them, reluctantly. She wanted to stay with Achilles.

Achilles left his friends and went to the beach. Raising his arms, he prayed to his mother: the sea-goddess Thetis.

He prayed, "Mother, you gave me life. My life will be short, and so Zeus should give me honor as recompense, but he does not. I lack honor. Agamemnon has taken my prize of honor away from me!"

He wept.

Thetis, sitting by her father, the Old Man of the Sea, heard her son's prayer. She swam to him and rose up out of the surf and sat by him on the shore. She stroked him gently and said, "Achilles, you are my child. Tell me why you are crying. Tell me what is wrong. Share your pain with me."

Achilles said to his mother, "You already know what is wrong. We Greeks attacked Thebe, the city of King Eetion.

We conquered the city, and we carried away its treasure, cattle, women, and children.

“Agamemnon was awarded Chryseis, a beauty. But her father, a priest of Apollo, tried to ransom her with shining treasure. He carried the staff and wreaths that identified him as a priest of Apollo and approached Agamemnon and the Greek warriors. The Greek warriors wanted Agamemnon to respect the old priest and accept the shining ransom, but Agamemnon disrespected the old priest and ordered him to leave.

“The old priest prayed to Apollo, who — angered by the bad treatment given to his priest — answered his prayer by shooting arrows at the Greek warriors, killing them with plague. Our aged seer, Calchas, revealed the cause of the plague: the anger of Apollo.

“I wanted the anger of Apollo to be appeased. I was the first one to advocate appeasing his anger. But this made Agamemnon angry. Agamemnon made a threat to me, and he carried out his threat. His prize of honor, Chryseis, was returned to her father with sacrifices for Apollo. My prize of honor, Briseis, was taken from me and given to Agamemnon.

“Mother, help me to regain my honor! Go to Mount Olympus and plead with Zeus. Convince him to help me regain my honor.

“Zeus has never been conquered, although on occasion he has had to put down rebellions. On one occasion, he needed your help. Three gods — Hera, his wife; Poseidon, his brother who is the god of the sea; and Athena, his daughter — had succeeded in chaining him. But you were loyal to Zeus. You, alone of all the many gods, rushed to Zeus and broke the chains that bound him. In addition, you ordered the giant with a hundred hands to go to Zeus and protect him.

The gods call the giant Briareus, and the mortals call him Aegaeon. Hera, Poseidon, and Athena saw the giant with the hundred hands. Terrified, they stopped their rebellion against Zeus.

“Remind Zeus of what you did for him. Sit by Zeus. Clasp his knees. Supplicate him. Convince him to allow the Trojans to be victorious for a while — to push the Greek warriors back to their ships and to kill and kill again. That way, the Greek warriors will understand — and Agamemnon will understand — how much they need me and how much they ought to respect me!”

Thetis wept, and she said, “Achilles, my son. You will die soon, and I do and shall grieve for you. You are doomed to have a short life. And now, you have both a short and an unhappy life. I want you to be happy in the life that remains to you. I will do as you ask, I will go to Mount Olympus, supplicate Zeus, and try to persuade him to allow the Trojans to kill and kill again.

“Achilles, stay here in your camp. Don’t fight in the battles against the Trojans.

“Zeus is not now on Mount Olympus. Yesterday, he went to Ethiopia to take part in a feast. All of the other Olympian gods went with him. But he shall return to Mount Olympus in twelve days, and I shall see him then. I think I can persuade him to do as you wish.”

Thetis left Achilles, who mourned in his camp for Briseis and for his lost honor.

Odysseus and the ship he captained reached the city of Chryse. The sail sailed into the harbor, docked, and unloaded the sacrificial animals for Apollo. Chryseis stepped on shore. Odysseus led Chryseis to her father, who was at the altar of Apollo. The old priest of Apollo hugged his daughter, and Odysseus said to him, “Chryses, Agamemnon sent me here.

He wants you to have your daughter, and he wishes to sacrifice to Apollo, who has killed so many Greek warriors with plague. By doing these things, Agamemnon hopes to appease Apollo's wrath."

Odysseus left Chryses, and Chryses rejoiced with his daughter. Odysseus and his men prepared the cattle for sacrifice. They brought the cattle and barley to the altar. They rinsed their hands. Chryses raised his hands to the sky and prayed, "Apollo, earlier you heard and answered my prayer. You brought plague to the Greek warriors and killed many of them. Now I pray to you again. Stop the plague. Stop killing the Greek warriors."

Odysseus' men scattered grains of barley. They cut the throats of the cattle and killed them. Then they skinned the cattle and carved away the meat from the thighbones. They wrapped the thighbones in fat — two layers — and put some strips of meat on top. Chryses burned these offerings to the god Apollo, and poured out some wine for the god.

They then roasted the meat on spits, and each man ate. Next they poured out wine for each man, who spilled a few drops for the god and then drank.

All day, they sang songs that pleased Apollo who brings plague and who drives away plague. Apollo was happy.

Odysseus and the men slept on the island that night. At dawn, they sailed away back to the Greek camps. Apollo sent them favorable winds. The sails filled out, and the ship sped as the water foamed up at its bow. Once they had returned to the Greek camps, they hauled the ship high up on the beach and then each man returned to his camp.

Achilles stayed away from the other Greeks. He no longer attended councils. He no longer fought in battles. Still angry, he stayed in his own camp. But although he was angry, he yearned to fight again.

Twelve days passed since Achilles had spoken with Thetis, and now Zeus and the other gods returned to Mount Olympus. Thetis rose up out of the ocean and flew to Mount Olympus. She found Zeus sitting alone, away from the gods, at the top of the mountain. He was looking down at the world.

Thetis supplicated him. She knelt at his feet, grasped his knees with her left hand, and held him under his chin with her right hand. Zeus had to pay attention to her.

She said to him, “Zeus, if I have ever been of service to you and have ever helped you when you needed help, answer my prayer now. Honor my son — Achilles. He is mortal, and his life will be short. And now Agamemnon has disgraced Achilles by taking away his prize of honor that he fought so hard to earn. But you, Zeus, can bring my son honor. You are the king of gods and men, and you have the power to bring honor to my son by allowing the Trojans to kill and kill again until Agamemnon realizes just whom he has dishonored and gives him the honor he deserves!”

Zeus did not immediately respond. He thought. Yes, he owed Thetis, and yes, if he agreed to honor Thetis’ request, his wife, Hera, who favored the Greeks, would try to make trouble for him and would probably succeed to some extent. He thought for a long time.

Thetis said to him, “Grant my prayer now, Father Zeus, and nod in assent. Swear an oath that is impossible for you to take back.

“Or, if you prefer, deny my prayer and let me know that you don’t value me at all — that you dishonor me more than any other goddess.”

Zeus replied, “If I agree to answer your prayer, it will be a disaster for me. Hera will be impossible. She and I will fight with each other. She will make me angry, and she will insult

me. I have much experience with this. Even now, Hera accuses me of siding with the Trojans, of always taking their side. Leave now, before Hera sees you and guesses what you are asking me to do. But yes, I will answer your prayer. I will nod my head and make an inviolable vow to do what you are asking me to do. This is a vow that I *must* fulfill.”

He nodded his head, and earthquakes shook Mount Olympus.

Thetis left Zeus and returned to the sea. Zeus returned to his halls on Mount Olympus, and the other gods stood up to show respect to him.

Hera, however, had seen Thetis supplicate Zeus. She had seen him bow his head. She knew of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, and she could guess to what Zeus had agreed.

Hera taunted Zeus, “So, my treacherous husband, with which god have you been plotting now? Whenever my back is turned, you make grand plans and never let me know about them.”

Zeus replied, “Hera, don’t bother me. You do not need to know everything I do. If you ever have a need to know my plans, I will tell them to you. But if I choose to make plans with another god and you do not need to know what we are planning, don’t expect me to tell you about our plans. So do not question me now.”

Hera widened her eyes and said, “Are you accusing me of probing and prying? I have not and am not doing any such thing! You can make whatever plans you wish, but right now I am worried that Thetis, the daughter of the Old Man of the Sea, has convinced you to honor her mortal son, Achilles. I am afraid that she has convinced you to allow the Trojans to kill and kill again and drive the Greek warriors back against their ships.”

Zeus replied, “And what if I have decided to allow the Trojans to be triumphant for a while? What can you do about it? Nothing. So sit down and be quiet. Even if all the gods on Olympus were to try to rescue you, I am powerful enough that I could still choke you with my strong hands.”

Hera was terrified. Zeus was physically and mentally capable of doing exactly what he said he could do. Hera did not speak.

The other Olympian gods were also terrified. Zeus was that powerful and that strong.

Hephaestus, the blacksmith god with the strong shoulders and the lame legs, wanted to lighten the mood. He said, “Zeus and Hera, don’t quarrel. Why fight over the doings of mortal men? Are they worth it? When you two quarrel, we gods are unable to enjoy the good life here on Mount Olympus.

“Mother, give in to the will of Zeus, my father. You two are my parents, and I want you to get along. Zeus is strong and powerful, and he can blast us gods with his lightning bolts. Better for you, Mother, to make Father happy. That way, he will be kind to us gods.”

Hephaestus held out a two-handed cup filled with nectar to his mother, Hera, so she could drink.

He said to her, “Give in to the will of Zeus. I do not want to see him beat you, as he is very capable of doing. I would not be able to help you. Once, I ran to help you, and he grabbed my foot and threw me from Mount Olympus. I fell for twenty-four hours. Finally, I fell on the island called Lemnos. I am immortal, but I was injured. The mortals on Lemnos took care of me and made me healthy again.”

Hera smiled and took the two-handed cup.

Hephaestus then poured out nectar to all of the other gods, exaggerating his limp and making jokes. The gods laughed and were happy again. They feasted on ambrosia and nectar and listened to Apollo's lyre and the Muses' singing until the sun went down.

The gods went to their own homes to sleep. Hephaestus had built their homes for them. Zeus slept, and Hera lay beside him.

Hera thought, The cause of the Trojan War happened long ago. Thetis is a sea-goddess with whom Zeus, my husband, would normally want to sleep. He has many affairs with goddesses and with mortal women, and this drives me crazy. I am a jealous wife.

But Thetis is a special case because of a prophecy. The prophecy about Thetis' male offspring is that he will be a greater man than his father. This is something that would make most human fathers happy, but it would not make Zeus happy. Zeus was greater than his own father, and he overthrew his own father and became the king of gods and men. Zeus did not want to sleep with Thetis because if he did that, Thetis would give birth to a male who would be more powerful than he is and who would overthrow him.

Therefore, Zeus, my husband, wanted to get Thetis married off to someone else. A marriage to a human being for Thetis suited Zeus just fine. A human son may be greater than his father, but a mortal is still not going to be as great as a god, and so Zeus knew that he would be safe if Thetis gave birth to a human son.

Zeus got Thetis to marry the mortal man named Peleus. After Peleus married Thetis, he fathered Achilles. The marriage did not last. Peleus is now an old man, and Thetis has not lived with him for a long time.

When Peleus married Thetis, they invited many gods and many mortals to the wedding. One goddess whom they did not invite was Eris, Goddess of Discord. But even though Eris was not invited to the wedding feast, she showed up anyway.

Eris, Goddess of Discord, threw an apple on a table at the wedding feast. Inscribed on the apple was the phrase 'For the most beautiful female.'

Obviously, this apple was meant for me, and I claimed it. But Athena, who is my husband's daughter, and Aphrodite, who is the goddess of sexual passion, also claimed the apple — bitches! Each of them thinks that she is more beautiful than me.

Someone had to judge the beauty pageant of the goddesses and decide who is the most beautiful. This should have been an easy task, since I am the most beautiful by far!

Zeus would seem to be the perfect choice to judge the beauty pageant, but he was smart enough not to.

He knew that I would make his life miserable — as a simple matter of justice — if he did not choose me as the most beautiful.

He knew that he would make Athena — his favorite child — unhappy if he did not choose her as the most beautiful.

He knew that Aphrodite could make his life miserable by making him think with his penis rather than his brain — something he does a lot of anyway — if he did not choose her as the most beautiful.

Zeus is not a fool. He knew that if he judged the beauty contest, he would make two enemies. The two goddesses whom Zeus did not choose as the most beautiful would hate

him and likely make trouble for him. I have to give my husband some credit here.

So Zeus found a mortal sap to judge the beauty contest. Paris is a prince of Troy, and Zeus allowed him to judge the divine beauty contest. Paris was not as intelligent as Zeus, or he would have tried to find a way out of judging the beauty contest. Plus, he chose the wrong goddess as the winner.

Each of us goddesses offered Paris a bribe if he would choose her.

I offered Paris political power: several cities he can rule. I did this because I knew that Athena and Aphrodite would offer Paris bribes — cheaters!

Athena offered Paris prowess in battle. Paris would become a mighty and feared warrior.

Aphrodite offered Paris the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

Paris chose Aphrodite as the winner of the beauty contest.

Why? Her bribe was the poorest!

A person such as Achilles would choose to be an even greater warrior, if that is possible.

A person such as Agamemnon would likely choose more cities to rule.

To chose the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife is to choose the worst of the three choices!

The most beautiful woman is Helen, who is legally married to Menelaus, the king of Sparta. Paris visited Menelaus, and he ran away with lots of Menelaus' treasure and with his wife. Paris treated his host abominably.

Did Helen run away with Paris willingly? I don't know. Helen is tricky and hard to figure out.

Running away with Helen was and is a terrible insult to Menelaus and to Menelaus' entire family. Menelaus and Agamemnon are the sons of Atreus. Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, is the older brother and the brother who rules a greater land, as seen by the number of ships the two kings brought to the Trojan War. Menelaus brought sixty ships, while Agamemnon brought one hundred ships.

Because Agamemnon is the older brother, he is the leader of the Greek troops in the Trojan War.

Agamemnon and Menelaus gathered many Greek ships and warriors to sail to Troy and make war against the Trojans.

When the Greek ships were gathered together and were ready to set sail against Troy, a wind blew in the wrong direction for them to sail. The goddess Artemis was angry at the Greeks because she knew that the result of the Trojan War would be lots of deaths, not just of warriors, but also of women and children. This is true of all wars, and it is a lesson that human beings forget after each war and relearn in the next war.

Artemis knew that Agamemnon's warriors will cause much death of children, so she made him sacrifice one of his own daughters so that he will suffer what he will make other parents suffer.

Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigeneia. This was a religious sacrifice of a human life to appease the goddess Artemis.

On the day that he quarreled with Achilles, Agamemnon told the prophet Calchas that he always brings bad news to Agamemnon. This is true. Calchas is the prophet who told

Agamemnon that he had to sacrifice his daughter in order to get favorable winds that would sail the ships to Troy.

After the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Menelaus set sail with all the Greek ships for Troy. They landed, and then the Trojan War started.

Aphrodite supports the Trojans during the war, while Hera and Athena support the Greeks.

Hera and Athena are happy for many Trojans to die during the Trojan War — all because of a beauty contest.

Such is the anger of the gods.