

AN ILIAD by Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare

Glossary

directed by Kirsten Brandt

Jewel Theatre Company, May 18 – June 12, 2022

Susan Myer Sifton, dramaturge

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Note: This glossary defines terms as well as explains phrases spoken the play. BC, CE and BCE are used interchangeably, depending on which form is in the source material.

Characters

The Poet: From “Authors’ Note,” *An Iliad* by Peterson, Lisa and O’Hare, Denis. Published by Overlook Duckworth, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc. 2014.

We began to imagine a character called The Poet: an ancient teller of tales who might still exist in the universe, doomed to tell the story of the Trojan War until the day when human nature changes, when our addiction to rage comes to an end, when the telling of a war story becomes unnecessary. A day that has yet to come, of course.

We imagine that our Poet traveled across the wine-dark seas with Agamemnon and Achilles and the Greek armies. That he camped there on the coast of Ilium for nine years with the Greek soldiers, that he did lay eyes on Troy and fell in love with that culture. That he has roamed the world telling the story of Achilles and Hector and Hecuba and Hermes and all the hundreds of other characters that inhabit the *Iliad*. He has told this story for thousands of years, and in that time, he has witnessed (or thinks, or imagines, he has witnessed) every war from the Trojan War onwards. He’s found himself at each battle, in every trench, at every wall, in the mess halls, in the infirmaries, over the centuries. He has wandered the scorched battlefields and befriended—then lost—soldiers in all corners of the world’s history, witnessing and recording everything. He’s a compendium of war.

We imagine that on this particular night, our Poet finds himself transported to an empty stage, in front of a particular audience, and he chooses to tell the story in this way: as an inexorable collision between two great warriors—Achilles and Hector—and that on this particular night he becomes infected with rage himself, and nearly loses himself in a telescopic listing of all wars ever fought, and that on this night he tries to quit telling the story, but can’t. We think that he still believes in the old gods, and that the old gods won’t let him quit. They won’t let him out of his storytelling purgatory.

Peleus’ son, Achilles: There is no better way to know Achilles than from the imaginative, compassionate, and insightful perspective of Madeline Miller in her novel, *The Song of Achilles*. I’ve taken the description below directly from the “Characters from *The Song of Achilles*: Mortals” section of [her website](#):

Son of the king Peleus and the sea-nymph Thetis, he was the greatest warrior of his generation, as well as the most beautiful. The *Iliad* names him "swift-footed" and praises his singing voice. He was raised by the kindly centaur Chiron and took the exiled prince Patroclus as his constant companion. As a teenager, he was offered a famous choice: long life and obscurity, or short life and fame. He chose fame and sailed to Troy along with the other Greeks. However, in the ninth year of the war he quarreled with Agamemnon and refused to fight any longer, returning to battle only when his beloved Patroclus was killed by Hector. In a rage, he killed the great Trojan warrior and dragged his body around the walls of Troy in vengeance. He was eventually killed by the Trojan Prince Paris, assisted by the god Apollo [see p. 16 in definition of Apollo].



Achilles slaying Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons
Red figure amphora (wine jar) from Athens, ca 540-530BC, courtesy of the British Museum

Zeus, the god of sky and thunder in ancient Greece and king of the gods on Mount Olympus, was in love with Thetis. So was Poseidon, god of the sea and of all water, as well as earthquakes and horses. When Themis, goddess of Justice, revealed that Thetis was destined to bear a son who would be mightier than his father, the two gods decided she

should wed Peleus, a mortal and king of the Myrmidons of Thessaly. Thetis had no desire to wed a mortal, so she eluded Peleus by shapeshifting variously into flame, water, a lioness, and a serpent. The Boeotian dish pictured below, circa 500-475BC, shows Peleus in the foreground with Thetis behind him, surrounded by the various shapes she assumed.



Some stories have Thetis relenting in the face of Peleus' persistence, and other have the centaur, Chiron, who later helped raise Achilles, assisting Peleus in her capture.

Achaean: In this context, it is the name Homer used in *The Iliad* for Mycenaean-era Greeks in general. Mycenaean Greece spanned the period from approximately 1750 to 1050 BC

House of Death: In Greek mythology, the universe was made of three realms: Mount Olympus, home of the gods; Earth, home of the living; and the invisible realm of the underworld, commonly known as Hades after its patron god, where mortals go after death. At the time of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Greeks believed that when a person died, their psyche – essence or soul – separated from their body and was transported to the underworld. There the psyches were indiscriminately grouped together. It wasn't until later that Platonic philosophy offered the concept of post-mortem judgement, when good and bad people were divided and treated accordingly.

The underworld was thought to be located at the periphery of the earth, either at the outer limits of the ocean (the god, Oceanus, is its namesake) or under the earth. The underworld was dark and without sunlight, in contrast with the sunlit land of the living, or the glorious brightness of Mount Olympus.

Mycenae: Per [Wikipedia](#): “In the second millennium BC, Mycenae was one of the major centers of Greek civilization, a military stronghold which dominated much of southern Greece, Crete, the Cyclades, and parts of southwest Anatolia. The period of Greek history from about 1600 BC to about 1100 BC is called Mycenaean [see definition for Achaeans on p. 3 of this glossary] in reference to Mycenae. At its peak in 1350 BC, the citadel and lower town had a population of 30,000 and an area of 32 hectares [79 acres].”

Babylon: Babylon is the most famous city from ancient Mesopotamia whose ruins lie in modern-day Iraq, 59 miles southwest of Baghdad.

The ancient city owes its fame (or infamy) to the many references the Bible makes to it; all of which are unfavorable.

Outside of the sinful reputation given it by the Bible, the ancient city is known for its impressive walls and buildings, its reputation as a great seat of learning and culture, the formation of a code of law under the rule of Hammurabi which pre-dates the Mosaic Law, and for the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, man-made terraces of flora and fauna, watered by machinery, which were cited by ancient writers as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

In 539 BCE the empire fell to the Persians under Cyrus the Great at the Battle of Opis. Babylon's walls were impregnable and so the Persians cleverly devised a plan whereby they diverted the course of the Euphrates River so that it fell to a manageable depth.

While the residents of the city were distracted by one of their great religious feast days, the Persian army waded the river and marched under the walls of Babylon unnoticed. It was claimed that the city was taken without a fight. However, documents of the time indicate that repairs had to be made to the walls and some sections of the city; perhaps the action was not as effortless as the Persian account maintained. (Derived from [WorldHistory.org](#).)

The Poet tells us that Babylonians came in crowds to hear her. This may have been because of the parallels to the siege of Troy, the final battle of the Trojan War, which was won by the Greeks through the decisive action of the Trojan Horse, a calculated and crafty move, not unlike diverting the Euphrates.

Alexandria: Once home to the massive Pharos lighthouse, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Mediterranean seaport of Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great around 330 BCE, and like many other cities in his Empire, took its name from him. After his death in 323 BCE, Alexander's Empire was left in the hands of his generals, with Ptolemy I Soter taking Egypt and making Alexandria his capital in 320 BCE. Formerly a small fishing village on the Nile delta, Alexandria became the seat of the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt and developed into a great intellectual and cultural centre, perhaps the greatest city

in the ancient world. (Derived from WorldHistory.org.)

Gaul: *WorldHistory.org*'s [article on Gaul](#) briefly outlines its history, but I think The Poet's point has less to do with the city's history and is instead about the Gallic spirit, or "esprit gaulois". [Second.Wiki](#) provides the following definition, which is an amusing but somewhat awkward translation from the French:

The esprit gaulois is a car [sic] national stereotype of the French and describes a quality that the old Gauls supposedly already possessed, namely a mixture of quick-wittedness, wit and ridicule without taboos, but with the condition that one is coarse and suggestive, but not clumsy may be and not grossly hurtful. The esprit gaulois manifests itself practically exclusively verbally, hardly in the form of funny pranks or comical behavior.

The Renaissance author François Rabelais is regarded as a typical representative of esprit gaulois, but Asterix and Obelix can certainly also be considered typical embodiments.

The esprit gaulois should naturally be closed to members of other peoples, especially the Germans.

Homeric intensity: The article, "[Homer and Greek Myth](#)" by Gregory Nagy for *The Center for Hellenic Studies* discusses Homeric intensity as "a component of driving the narrative forward as a matter of performance. For the Homeric tradition in general, it can be said that the intensity of maintaining the epic narrative was correlated with the intensity of physically performing that narrative." He goes on to describe "speech-acts" in performance of Homer's epic poetry as "a special way of speaking in situations where you are actually doing something by way of speaking something".

Muses: The nine Muses of ancient Greek mythology are the goddesses who inspire all the arts, all knowledge, and all science. They were considered the source of the knowledge of the oral traditions of recitative poetry, lyric songs, and myths. The daughters of Zeus and Mnemosine (or Mnemosyne), the goddess of memory, they also were the romantic companions of Apollo's entourage of gods.

The Muses were integral to the artistic development of ancient Greece. Poets attempted to summon the Muses, whom they believed would respond by giving them inspiration for their work. The ancient Greeks worshiped the Muses until Christianity became the dominant religion in Europe.

Artists of all disciplines still call upon the Muses, or simply "the Muse", as a source of inspiration today.



Apollo and the Muses by John Singer Sargent, 1921



The Nine Muses

Roman marble sarcophagus depicting the contest between the Muses and the Sirens
3rd quarter of 3rd century AD

In “[The Nine Muses of Greek Mythology and Their Powers](#),” her August 15, 2021 article for the *Greek Reporter*, Luisa Rosenstiehl writes, “The Muses began their lives as nymphs that manifested as whispers in the ears of those that invoked them. The ancient writer Hesiod called upon them across the world as the nine muses: Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Thalia, Terpsichore, and Urania”.

Each Muse governs her own sphere of art and knowledge. For more information and illustrations of each individual Muse, click the link above or go to “[Muse](#)” on WorldHistory.org.

Trojan War: The inspiration for Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Trojan War is described in [Columbia Encyclopedia](#):

Trojan War, in Greek mythology, war between the Greeks and the people of Troy.

The strife began after the Trojan prince Paris abducted Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta. When Menelaus demanded her return, the Trojans refused. Menelaus then persuaded his brother Agamemnon to lead an army against Troy.

At Aulis, troopships gathered, led by the greatest Greek heroes—Achilles, Patroclus, Diomedes, Odysseus, Nestor, and the two warriors named Ajax.

In order to win favorable winds for the journey, Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to Artemis. The winds came and the fleet set sail for Troy.

For nine years the Greeks ravaged Troy’s surrounding cities and countryside, but the city itself, well-fortified and commanded by Hector and other sons of the royal household, held out.

Finally, the Greeks built a large hollow wooden horse in which a small group of warriors were concealed. The other Greeks appeared to sail for home, leaving behind only the horse and Sinon, who deceitfully persuaded the Trojans, despite the warnings of Cassandra and Laocoön, to take the horse within the city walls. At night the Greeks returned; their companions crept out of the horse and opened the city gates, and Troy was destroyed.

The gods took great interest in the war. Poseidon, Hera, and Athena aided the Greeks, while Aphrodite and Ares favored the Trojans. Zeus and Apollo, although frequently involved in the action of the war, remained impartial.

The events of the final year of the war constitute the main part of the *Iliad* of Homer.

The Trojan War probably reflected a real war (c.1200 BC) between the invading Greeks and the people of Troas, possibly over control of trade through the Dardanelles.

Hector: From [Madeline Miller's website](#): "Oldest son of Priam and crown prince of Troy, Hector was known for his strength, nobility, and love of family. In Book 6 of the *Iliad*, Homer shows us a touching scene with his wife, Andromache, and young son, Astyanax".



Hector brought back to Troy, from a Roman sarcophagus, c. 180–200 AD

S. Farron's article, "[The Character of Hector in the *Iliad*](#)," for the journal *Acta Classica*, Vol. 21 (1978), published by the Classical Association of South Africa, is worth reading for Hector's backstory, but the portrait painted of him by the authors of *An Iliad* in Part Three singularly brings him to life. Also see my discussion on pp. 27-30 of this document.

dactylic hexameter: The meter of Greek heroic poetry, it consists of lines of six metrical units, which in simple terms, are either dactyls (a long plus two short) or spondees (two longs) in the first four places but must be dactyl and spondee in that order in the last two. Spondee *and* spondee is rarely found; spondee followed by dactyl is never found. According to Bernard Knox, in his introduction to [Robert Fagles' adaptation of Homer's *Iliad*](#), "the syllables are literally long and short; the meter is based on pronunciation time, not, as in our language, on stress".

Aphrodite: A description and illustration from the "[Gods and Immortals](#)" section of Madeline Miller's website pages for *The Song of Achilles*:

The goddess of love and beauty, mother of Aeneas, and champion of the Trojans. She particularly favored Paris, and in Book 3 of the *Iliad* she intervened to save him from Menelaus [King of Sparta and husband of Helen of Troy].



Alessandro Allori's *Venus y Cupido* (Aphrodite and her winged son Eros) c.1580-c.1607

Helen being more beautiful than somebody: This is a reference to The Judgement of Paris, one of the preliminaries of the Trojan War. The event that took place followed some trouble at the wedding banquet that Zeus threw for newlyweds Thetis and Peleus, who would later become the parents of Achilles. The atmosphere was no doubt pretty charged since Thetis was opposed to being married off to Peleus in the first place (see pp. 2-3 of this glossary). Eris, goddess of discord, whose name had been left off the guest list for obvious reasons, somehow managed to get past security and arrived with a golden apple from the Garden of the Hesperides, ready to stir things up. She threw the apple, which was inscribed with "To/for the fairest one," into the midst of the revelers. Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite immediately clamored to claim it. Zeus was shoved into the middle of the goddesses' fierce battle and pressed into choosing the recipient.

Zeus didn't need an oracle to tell him that it would be a no-win for him no matter what answer he gave, so he chose Paris to be the judge. Zeus defended his choice of Paris, citing the young man's reputation for fairness unswayed by outside influences. It seems that the young shepherd-prince had recently judged a contest between his family's prize bull and another bull, which, depending on who was telling the story, either belonged to the god Ares or was Ares himself in disguise. Supposedly, Paris was unaware of that and deemed Ares' bull the winner over his own, which he declared was based solely on the animal's superiority.

Paris agreed to judge the contest. It was decided that Hermes, with the aid of his winged sandals, would escort the three goddesses up to Mount Ida, where Paris spent his days

under the trees, tending his cattle. The three goddesses presented themselves in all their glory to the young prince. When Paris declared that he was unable to choose, they proceeded to bribe him. Hera promised Paris great wealth and the status of ruler over all



The Judgement of Paris by Peter Paul Rubens (1577 - 1640)

earthly realms; Athena promised to make Paris the greatest warrior and the most knowledgeable human of all time; and Aphrodite offered to make Helen, the most beautiful of all mortal woman, his wife. Paris chose Aphrodite's proposal.

In all fairness, Paris was pretty much a pawn in all this, due to a little wrinkle known to the Greeks as Fate. Apparently, Zeus pre-ordained the Trojan War and subsequently, Paris' major role in it, to bring an end to the Heroic Age.

The Attic red figure vase on the following page is from the Antikenmuseen in Berlin, Germany, and depicts the Judgement of Paris. Hermes, second from right, wearing his winged cap and a chlamys (traveler's cloak) and carrying a kerykeion (herald's wand), leads the three goddesses to Paris on the far right. Paris sits in the doorway holding a royal staff and lyre. Aphrodite, the central figure, is veiled. She holds her winged son Eros, the god of love, in her left hand and a myrtle wreath in her right. Athena, second from left, holds a spear and helm. Hera, at far left, is crowned, and bears a miniature lion and royal lotus-tipped staff.



Attic red figure vase, 5th century BC. Figures depicted are explained below

At Paris' birth, the seer Aesacus ordered the infant killed, having prophesied that he would bring about the downfall of Troy. Neither Hecuba, his mother, nor his father, Priam, could bring themselves to kill the infant, so Priam ordered his chief herdsman, Agelaus, to do it. Agelaus couldn't kill baby Paris either, so he abandoned him on Mount Ida to die of exposure. A mama bear took pity on him and nursed him with her own milk, so when Agelaus returned nine days later, he found him thriving. He ended up deceiving Priam by showing him a dog's tongue as evidence of the baby's demise and raised Paris as his own. Eventually Paris' royal birth was revealed by Cassandra [see pp. 51-52 of this glossary], and he was reunited with his family.



Infant Paris Abandoned on Mount Ida, ca. 1510, by Circle of Giorgione

Helen's been stolen, and the Greeks have to get her back: There are conflicting views of whether Helen left Sparta by choice or by force, but consistent across the legend's iterations is Menelaus' rage when he discovers his wife is gone. He responds by calling on the leaders of the ancient world to make good on their promises to retrieve Helen if she were to be taken from him. A fleet of a thousand ships gathered from their respective nations descends upon Troy to bring her back, thus initiating the Trojan War.

bronze: The ancient poet Hesiod, in his *Works and Days*, came up with a system of alternating generations of mortals – in English, it is customary to refer to “Ages” instead. The sequence starts with the Golden Age, followed by the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, the Age of Heroes, and finally the Iron Age. The Iron Age was the time when Hesiod himself lived, so it is considered “contemporary” ancient Greece – in his case, around 700 BC.

The Roman poet Ovid would merge the Age of Heroes with the Bronze Age, reducing the number of ages to four. (AncientWorldMagazine.com)

Hesiod's Third Age was of bronze. Zeus created men from ash trees – a hard wood used in spears – and made the men of the Bronze Age terrible and strong and warlike. Their armor and houses were made of bronze; and they did not eat bread, living mainly on meat. It was this generation of men that was destroyed by the flood in the days of Prometheus' son Deucalion and Pyrrha. When the bronze men died, they went to the Underworld. Copper (chalkos) and a component of bronze is the metal of Ishtar in Babylon. In Greek and older myths, bronze was connected to weapons, war, and warfare, and their armor and houses were made of bronze. (ThoughtCo.com)

The List of Ships...the numbers of men on those ships: Helen of Troy is said to have had a face that “launched a thousand ships” of armed men that the Greeks gathered to retrieve her from Troy. The figure of a thousand ships came from the “Catalogue of Ships” that Homer listed in book II of the *Iliad*. According to GreekLegendsandMyths.com:

The Greek writer would write down 29 ethnic groups, 190 places and 46 named captains, and an actual figure of 1186 ships. There is debate as to how many actual men this totals; if each ship comprised the 120 men talked of in the Boeotian force, then a total of 142,320 men would have been amassed, but the ships of Meliboeans under Philoctetes comprised just 50 men, so a lower estimate might be as low as 100,000 men.

Similar lists are to be found in other ancient sources, although names and number differ from Homer's figures; in the *Bibliotheca* (Pseudo-Apollodorus) totals of 1013 ships, 43 captains and 30 groups of people, and in *Fabulae* (Hyginus) a figure of 1154 ships is ascertained.

The article goes on to list the full armada of the catalogue of ships, so click on the link above if you are interested. The Poet makes a great start, but when realizing the audience is unfamiliar with the ancient cities, segues to more relevant locales.

nine years: Those who believe that the stories of the Trojan War are derived from a specific historical conflict usually date it to the 12th or 11th century BC, often preferring the dates given by Eratosthenes, 1194–1184 BC, which roughly correspond to archaeological evidence of a catastrophic burning of Troy VII, and the Late Bronze Age collapse. ([Wikipedia.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_years_of_the_Trojan_War))

Diocletian: Diocletian was Roman emperor from 284 to 305 CE, invading, conquering and governing parts of Greece during that time. Therefore, The Poet is not referring specifically to what a resident of Troy or of Athens would have experienced in the nine years of the Trojan War, but what soldiers have experienced returning home after fighting in other lengthy wars.

Spartan: As with Diocletian above, Spartan rule didn't occur at the time of the Trojan War, so The Poet is referring to other times in history.

Around 650 BC, Sparta rose to become the dominant military land-power in ancient Greece.

This [Wikipedia article](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sparta) about Sparta states: "Given its military pre-eminence, Sparta was recognized as the leading force of the unified Greek military during the Greco-Persian Wars, in rivalry with the rising naval power of Athens. Sparta was the principal enemy of Athens during the Peloponnesian War (between 431 and 404 BC), from which it emerged victorious after the Battle of Aegospotami. The decisive Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC ended the Spartan hegemony, although the city-state maintained its political independence until the Roman conquest of Greece in 146 BC".

Athena: found throughout this glossary because of her major role in the Trojan War, [Madeline Miller](https://www.madeline-miller.com/) describes Athena as "The powerful goddess of wisdom, weaving and war arts. She was a fierce supporter of her beloved Greeks against the Trojans, and a particular guardian of the wily Odysseus. She appears often in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*".

The relief sculpture on the following page is said to depict Athena mourning the death of Achilles.



Pensive Athena, relief sculpture from the Acropolis, Athens, c. 460 BCE

Hermes: He of the “fabulous sandals” (per The Poet), Hermes is mentioned throughout this glossary.

He is known as the herald of the gods, acting as their emissary and messenger. Some legends have him as son of Zeus and Maia, the Pleiad.

Hermes, once portrayed as an older, bearded man, he was represented later as a springy youth, more befitting his Puck-like reputation as a swift and athletic mischief-maker as described by Homer in his *Hymn to Hermes*.

With his winged sandals, Hermes can move easily and swiftly between Mount Olympus and Earth. Alone among the Greek deities, he can cross the boundaries to the world of the dead and serves as a psychopomp or “soul guide,” accompanying souls to their afterlife.

Madeline Miller doesn’t describe him on her website, but [this article from GreekMythology.com](#) does.



Detail of a marble statue of Hermes showing one of Hermes' winged sandals
19th century CE plaster cast from the 1st century BCE bronze original

Agamemnon: Also found throughout this document, Agamemnon is described by [Madeline Miller](#) on her website: “Brother of Menelaus, he ruled Mycenae, the largest kingdom in Greece, and served as the over-general of the Greek expedition to Troy. During the war he quarreled often with Achilles, who refused to acknowledge Agamemnon’s right to command him. Upon his return home after Troy’s fall, he was murdered by his wife,

Clytemnestra. Aeschylus depicts this incident and its aftermath in his famous tragic cycle *The Oresteia*".



The above painting by the American artist William Page (c. 1811-1885) shows the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles over Briseis. Agamemnon is sitting above the crowd on a platform and Achilles is the shirtless man with the white cloth around his waist.

Apollo: Also cited through this document, [Madeline Miller](#) describes Apollo as “The god of light and music, and a champion of the Trojans. He was responsible for sending the plague down upon the Greek army in Book 1 of the *Iliad* and was instrumental in the deaths of both Achilles and Patroclus”.

Apollo had dual powers to either heal people or bring illness and disease. As a God of Music, he could heal illness both through his music, represented in art with a lyre, and through his arrows. His arrows could also bring about plagues and disease, as they did to the Greek army when Agamemnon refused to give Chryseis back to her father, Chryses, a high priest and a favorite of Apollo. Apollo’s healing arrows treated Hector’s injuries during the Trojan War. Later, after the Achilles killed Hector, Apollo guided the retaliatory arrow that struck Achilles in the heel and killed him.

The statue of Apollo on the following page is known as the *Belvedere Apollo*. It shows Apollo after he let go an arrow from the wooden bow that used to be in his left hand. The date of the work is believed to be mid-2nd century AD and is determined to be a copy of an original bronze statue from 330-320 BC by Leochares, one of the artists who worked on the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.

The German art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) has lauded the statue as the highest expression of Greek art: "of all the works of antiquity that have escaped destruction, the statue of Apollo represents the highest ideal of art".



Apollo Belvedere, restored Roman copy of the Greek original attributed to Leochares, 4th century BC, in the Vatican Museum, Rome

grand assembly: The keystone of Athenian Democracy, the assembly, or ekklesia, was “the regular gathering of male Athenian citizens (women also enjoyed the status of “citizen,” but without political rights) to listen to, discuss, and vote on decrees that affected every aspect of Athenian life, both public and private, from financial matters to religious ones, from public festivals to war, from treaties with foreign powers to regulations governing ferry boats”, as described by Christopher W. Blackwell in his article “[The Assembly](#),” which was published in the March 26, 2003 edition of *Dēmos*, a Stoa Publication dedicated to Classical Athenian Democracy.

The “grand assembly” described by The Poet appears to follow the guidelines set forth for the Athenian assembly, which are described in the article. The protocols that the assembly would have observed in accordance with the ekklesia model were established so that each citizen had an equal voice, regardless of their station or status. Deference was given to those over 50 as well as those better qualified to speak on certain subjects.

The “grand assembly” that was summoned by the Greeks feels much like a “Called-together Assembly,” or an Assembly called at short notice. The use of the scepter, wielded by Agamemnon to initiate the proceedings but available to whomever wished to speak, resembles the “suppliant-branch” used by anyone who was compelled to address his fellow citizens about any public or private matter that concerned him. Despite its pedigree, the scepter of Agamemnon functioned in the same way, as described in the definition below.

scepter: Ionna Patera, a fellow at the Center for Hellenic Studies at Harvard, wrote [an article about the scepter of Agamemnon](#) for the department’s journal, *Research Bulletin*. In it she describes it as “the marker of authority of kings and of speakers in the assemblies,” first mentioned in the *Iliad*.

She outlines its genealogy and transmission over generations by quoting Agamemnon’s words to the assembly of armies from Book II of [Augustus Taber Murray’s adaptation of The Iliad \(1924\)](#):

Then among them lord Agamemnon stood up, holding in his hands the scepter [*skêptron*] which Hephaestus had toiled over making. Hephaestus gave it to lord Zeus, son of Cronos, and Zeus gave it to the messenger Argeiphontes; and Hermes, the lord, gave it to Pelops, driver of horses, and Pelops in turn gave it to Atreus, shepherd of men; and Atreus at his death left it to Thyestes, rich in flocks, and Thyestes again left it to Agamemnon to carry, to be lord of many isles and of all.

Patera continues:

According to old Nestor [*Iliad*, IX, 96-9], the scepter marks the privileges of royalty along with judicial pronouncements. It also accompanies the warriors’ speeches and oaths.

... Possessing or holding the scepter comes to be invested with a power guaranteed by Zeus. The king’s power, however, is not limitless. The council and the assembly

control him. Thus, Agamemnon is the holder of the scepter, but not its exclusive owner. He passes it around the community, signifying the sharing of an acknowledged power.

Nestor was a king of Pylos in Peloponnesus, who, despite his advanced age, led his troops in the Trojan War. His wisdom and eloquence were legendary.



In the Roman mosaic above from Pompeii, c. first century AD, Agamemnon, seated at left, holds the scepter of authority and sits on a throne, his lower body wrapped in a robe. Achilles pulls his sword from its scabbard. Achilles is in “heroic nudity,” an ancient artistic convention whereby heroes are shown without clothes. Athena seizes Achilles from behind by the hair, an incident described by The Poet in the play. (ItalianArtSociety.com)

Argives: Various, it is a resident of Argos and ancient Greek city. Homer uses it as an epithet for a Greek person, from the Greek Argeios, or “relating to Argos”. The term is also generally used for the ancient Greeks who assaulted the city of Troy during the Trojan War, and widely applied by the Homeric bards.

Heracles: According to [Madeline Miller](#), “Son of Zeus and the most famous of Greek heroes. Known for his tremendous strength, Heracles was forced to perform twelve labors as penance to the goddess Hera, who hated him for being the product of one of Zeus' affairs. He died long before the Trojan War began”. Also see pp. 31, 34, 38, and 44 of this glossary.

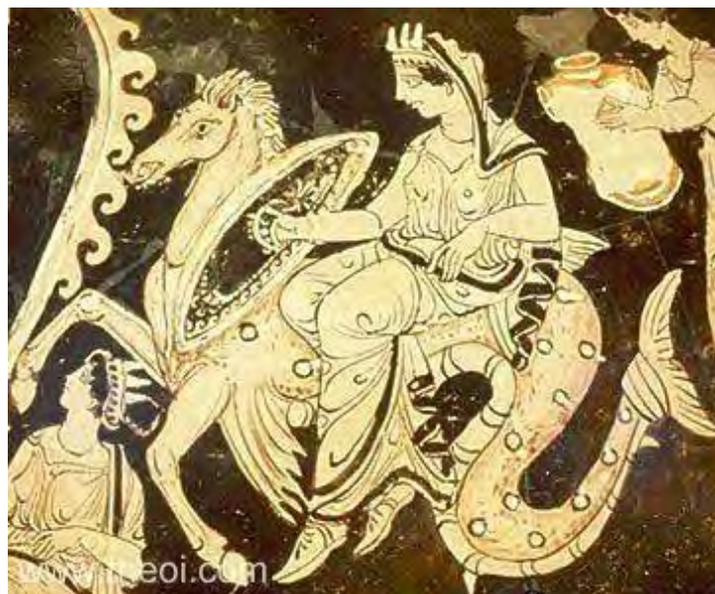
Sinbad: Also known as Sinbad the Sailor, he appears in the [Thousand and One Nights](#), a collection of mostly Middle Eastern and Indian stories recorded between the 800s and the 1400s. Westerners were introduced to its tales of Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sindbad the Sailor in European adaptations starting in the 18th century.

A merchant from the city of Baghdad in the Near East, Sinbad made seven voyages to lands and islands around the Indian Ocean. He had great adventures, survived numerous dangers, and acquired many riches during his travels. ([MythEncyclopedia.com](#))

Many believe that Sinbad’s tale was adapted from much earlier Greek folklore by Syntipas (the Greek form of Sinbad), an Indian philosopher of 100 BC, as part of his collection of tales known as *The Story of the Seven Wise Masters*. ([Diatribes](#))

In her March 9, 2019 article, “[Was Sinbad the Sailor Real?](#)” for ThoughtCo.com, Kallie Szczepanski writes about the “striking parallels between many of Sinbad's adventures and those of Odysseus in Homer's great classic, *The Odyssey*, and other stories from classical Greek literature.

Thetis: From [Madeline Miller](#), Thetis was “A sea-nymph and shape-changer, mother of Achilles. The fates had prophesied that her son would be greater than his father. This frightened the god Zeus (who had previously desired her) and so he made sure to marry her to a mortal, in order to limit the power of her son [see p. 2]. In post-Homeric versions of the story, she tries a number of ways to make Achilles immortal, including dipping him by his ankle in the river Styx and holding him in a fire to burn away his mortality”.



The image on the previous page is a detail from a painted Greek pelike, or ceramic vase, ca 425 - 401 BC, depicting Thetis riding on the back of Hippocamp, the fish-tailed horse. She is bringing Achilles the armor that Hephaestus has forged for him, including the "the most magnificent shield" (as described by The Poet), which she carries in her right hand.

Thetis is also mentioned throughout this document.

sea nymph: From Theoi.com:

The Nereides (Nereids) were fifty sea-nymph daughters of Nereus the old man of the sea. They were goddesses of the sea's rich bounty and protectors of sailors and fishermen, coming to the aid of those in distress. Individually they represented various facets of the sea from the salty brine, to the sea foam, sand, rocks, waves and currents, as well as the various skills possessed by seamen.

The Nereides dwelt with their elderly father in a silvery grotto at the bottom of the Aegean Sea. The Nereid Thetis was their unofficial leader and Amphitrite was Poseidon's queen.

The Nereides were depicted in ancient art as beautiful, young maidens, sometimes running with small dolphins or fish in their hands, or else riding on the backs of dolphins, hippokampoi (hippocamps) and other sea creatures.

The name Nereides means "Daughters of Nereus" but also "the Wet Ones" from *nêros* the Greek word for "wet".

centaur: The centaur who helped raise Achilles was Chiron, whom [Madeline Miller](#) describes as "The only 'good' centaur [the others were considered savages], known as a teacher of heroes (Jason, Aesculapius and Achilles), as well as the inventor of medicine and surgery. Click [here](#) to see Chiron featured as a 'Myth of the Week'."



The illustration on the previous page, styled after the red figure paintings on ancient Greek amphoras, kylixes, and other domestic containers, is from [Golden Porch: A Book of Greek Fairy Tales](#) by Winifred Margaret Lambart, published in 1914 by Longmans, Green and Co., New York. It shows the infant Achilles being brought to Chiron by his father, Peleus. The link takes you to the page in the book that describes the event taking place.

Briseis: Described by [Madeline Miller](#), “Taken captive by the Greeks in their raids on the Trojan countryside, Briseis was given as a war-prize to Achilles. When Achilles defied him, Agamemnon confiscated her as a punishment. She was returned after Patroclus’ death, and in Book 19 of the *Iliad*, she and the other women of the camp mourn over his body.”

The image below shows Briseis with Phoenix, once tutor of the young Achilles. He, Ajax, and Odysseus were sent to Achilles to negotiate Briseis’ return after his refusal to fight when Agamemnon took her from him. The painting is a detail from a kylix, the most common wine-drinking cup from ancient Greece, c. 490 BC.

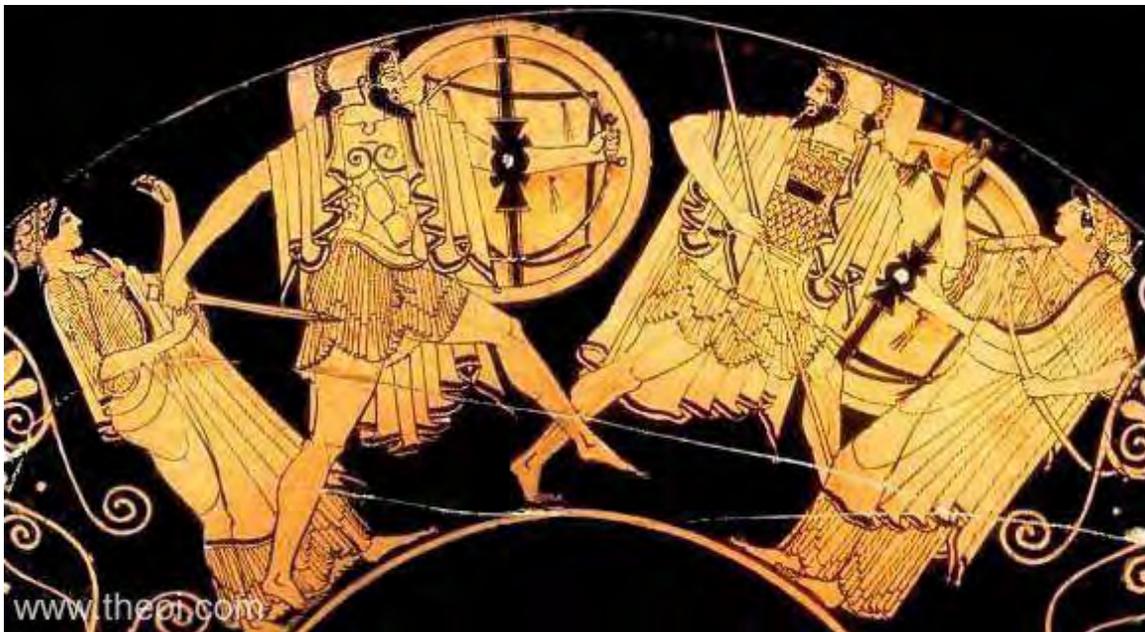


As the Russian invasion in Ukraine wages, Human Rights Watch is gathering [evidence of atrocities](#) suffered by Ukrainians at the hands of the Russian forces, including civilian execution and rape. Throughout time, women have been war's plunder, and Briseis was no exception. She was the bounty of war, just as the Ukrainian women are now, and as women have been since war began, stripped of their humanity, kidnapped, raped, pressed into slavery, and/or killed. Many accounts romanticize her relationship with Achilles, but I feel that his withdrawal from combat had more to do with his pride and Agamemnon's public humiliation of him than his love for her.

The Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE – 17 CE) gave Briseis a voice in his collection, *Heroides*, “two sets of mythological letters written in elegiac couplets” by legendary women – the titular heroines – to the absent men they loved (Fulkerson, Laurel. “[The Heroides: Female Elegy?](#)” *A Companion to Ovid*). Her words were eloquent, strong, intelligent, fiery, and accusatory but also loving, plaintive and full of pain. The first set of five, which includes fictional epistles, or letters, from some of the women of the Trojan War, also contains a letter to Achilles from Briseis. To read it, click on the link for Ovid's *Heroides* above and scroll down to “III. BRISEIS TO ACHILLES”, the third epistle.

Menelaus: From [Madeline Miller](#), “Brother of Agamemnon and, after his marriage to Helen, the king of Sparta. When she was kidnapped by Paris, he invoked the oath sworn by all of her suitors, and with his brother led an army to retrieve her. In Book 3 of the *Iliad*, he duelled with Paris for possession of Helen, and was winning before the goddess Aphrodite intervened on Paris' behalf. After the war, he and Helen returned to Sparta”.

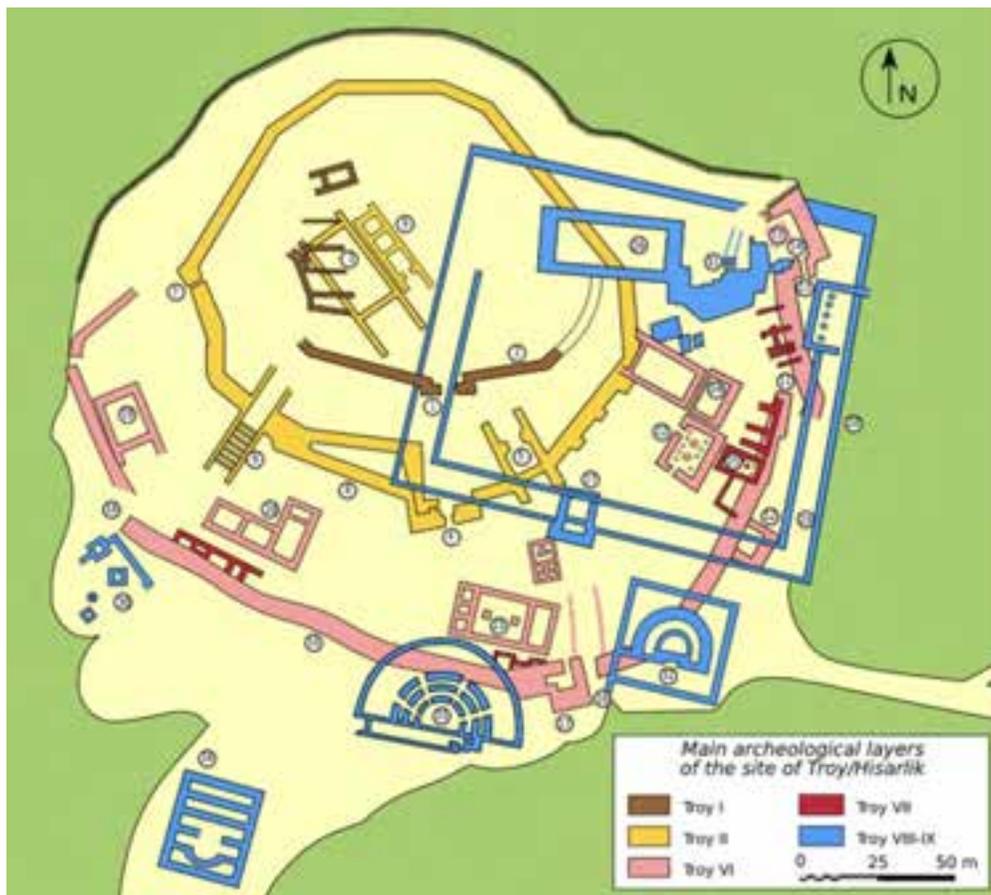
The duel of Menelaus and Paris is pictured below from a kylix painting (see definition on p. 23 of this glossary) by Douris, ca 485 - 480 BC. Menelaus is second from left, with Helen far left. Paris is being protected by Aphrodite on his right, equipped with a bow.



Scaean Gates: Troy was a walled city, and the heavily guarded Scaean Gate was its portal. It was the passageway for the Trojan Horse in the siege of Troy during the Bronze Age.



The ruins of the ancient city of Troy in the Canakkale Province of Turkey



Plan of the archeological site of Hisarlik, aka Ilion or Illium, the ancient Troy, in northwest Turkey

Time has long since crumbled the Scaean Gate; Troy was “constantly changing, and the settlement was destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly: After one city was destroyed, a new city would be built on top of it, creating a human-made mound called a ‘tell’.” ([“Ancient Troy: The city and the legend”](#) by Owen Jarus, published February 07, 2022, in *LiveScience.com*)

Those layers, or phases, are shown on the map on the preceding page. The first layer, Troy I, is the Troy of Homer’s *Iliad*, and colored brown. The legend reprinted below identifies the Scaean Gate as #1.

Legend:

1: Gate	18: VI. U Gate
2: City Wall	19: VI. A House
3: Megarons	20: VI. M Palace-Storage House
4: FN Gate	21: Pillar House
5: FO Gate	22: VI. F House with columns
6: FM Gate and Ramp	23: VI. C House
7: FJ Gate	24: VI. E House
8: City Wall	25: VII. Storage
9: Megarons	26: Temple of Athena
10: City Wall	27: Entrance to the Temple (Propylaeum)
11: VI. S Gate	28: Outer Court Wall
12: VI. H Tower	29: Inner Court Wall
13: VI. R Gate	30: Holy Place
14: VI. G Tower	31: Water Work
15: Well-Cistern	32: Parliament (Bouleuterion)
16: VI. T Dardanos Gate	33: Odeon
17: VI. I Tower	34: Roman Bath

a great plaza with a fountain Also known as an agora, the cities of ancient Greece had a public open space that was used for assemblies and markets.

Priam and his sons: [Madeline Miller](#) describes Priam, “Elderly king of Troy, renowned for his piety and his many children. In Book 24 of the *Iliad*, he bravely made his way into Achilles’ tent to beg for his son Hector’s body. During the sack of Troy, he was killed by Achilles’ son, Pyrrhus”. His name is also found throughout this document.

The Trojan War took place during Priam’s reign, bringing utter ruin to his country, his family, and himself.

Priam was a beloved king, known for his prowess and wisdom and described in the *Iliad* as majestic and noble. He also was quite prolific, having fathered 50 sons and 12 daughters. Robert Fagles’ translation of Homer’s *Iliad* confirms his progeny in several places. Book Six describes Priam’s palace, where “deep within its walls were fifty sleeping chambers, masoned in smooth, lustrous ashlar, linked in a line where the sons of Priam slept beside their wedded wives and facing these, opening out across the inner courtyard, lay the twelve sleeping chambers of Priam’s daughters”. In the “Pronouncing Glossary” of

Fagles' *Iliad*, 18 sons and four "bastard" sons are listed, all casualties of the war.

When Priam kneels before Achilles in Book Twenty-Four of the *Iliad* to beg for Hector's body, a tender scene described by The Poet, he tells him:

Fifty sons I had when the sons of Achaea came,
nineteen born to me from a single mother's womb [Hecuba]
and the rest by other women in the palace. Many,
most of them violent Ares cut the knees from under.
But one [Hector], one was left me, to guard my walls, my people

The death of his "best son," Hector, plunged Priam into bitterness. He railed against the crowds of citizens who "were mobbing his colonnades," to mourn Hector, and "sent them packing", berating them: "Get out—you good-for-nothings, public disgraces! Haven't you got enough to wail about at home without coming here to add to all my griefs?" Then he turned on his grief-struck sons, "Helenus, Paris, noble Agathon, Pammon, Antiphonus, Polites loud with the war cry, Deiphobus and Hippothous, even lordly Dius" (*Iliad*, Robert Fagle, p. 705).



Neoptolemus kills King Priam during the sack of Troy. Attic black-figure amphora. Attributed to an artist of the Leagros Group; ca. 520-500 BCE.

Soon after Hector's funeral, for which Achilles, his heart softened by Priam's grief, declared a temporary truce, Achilles was killed by Paris, whose arrow was guided by Apollo. To avenge his father's death, Neoptolemus, also known as Pyrrhus for his red hair, killed Priam. as shown in the vase painting on the previous page.

Shining Hector. Man-killing Hector. Hektoros hippodamoio. Hector breaker of horses - it's always so hard to describe Hector - His little brother calls him a "sharp ax"- a sharp edge, always cleaving forward

Hector believes in- he believes in institutions, he believes in- in country, he believes in his family, he believes in the army. Isn't it funny how hard it is to describe a good man?

He's a brave man, but deep down, he'd rather be taming horses.

You know, the thing about Hector is: He's proud. He won't let anyone else lead the charge for Troy. They've got allies, come in from all over, but Hector won't let them lead their own tribes. He wants to be in charge. Complicated. Full of hubris, but also decent.

Hector's a good husband, and a good father. He's a lot like ...

From [Madeline Miller](#): "Oldest son of Priam and crown prince of Troy, Hector was known for his strength, nobility, and love of family. In Book 6 of the *Iliad*, Homer shows us a touching scene with his wife, Andromache, and young son, Astyanax".



Detail of the Apulian red-figure column-krater attributed to the painter of York, 380-360 BC. It shows the scene described by Madeline Miller above



Achilles battling Hector. Detail of a black figure amphora. Greek. Artist and date unknown

The Poet says much more, as quoted in the lines above that are in bold, and in relaying Hector's story. The scene Miller mentions in Book Six is indeed touching.



Scene from Book XXIV of the *Iliad*: Hector's corpse brought back to Troy (detail). Roman artwork (ca. 180–200 CE), relief from a sarcophagus, marble

Hector is an ideal man among ideal men, truly heroic and truly a hero: the best son, husband, brother, fellow soldier, and leader. He's devout, patriotic, loyal, honorable, brave, and fully committed to his ideals. The gods smile on him, especially Apollo. Nevertheless, he is human, and he has a dark side, described by The Poet. After Hector kills Patroclus, rage courses through his body. He yells at Patroclus' corpse that together with Death, he will murder all Greeks. He then wrenches his spear from Patroclus' chest and tears the rest of Achilles' armor off him, "savagely, awkwardly, crying out like an animal". "Hector is ... a good guy, an honorable man," The Poet says, "But at that moment- well ... Yes. That's how it happens. We think of ourselves: not me, I'm not like that, I'm a peaceful – but it happens anyway, some trick in our blood and – rage".

The Poet doesn't finish her sentence, "He's a lot like ...", which I see as an invitation for the audience to think about heroes, heroics and the qualities of heroism.

What was Homer's purpose in showing us Hector in all his complexity and all his humanity? Like those we call heroes, he evokes admiration. We are awed by his godlike power and exploits, but also moved by his tenderness. We see ourselves in him, in his glory and in his moments of fear and cowardice. He is us. The same can be said for Achilles – we see ourselves in his bravado, his wounded pride, his anguish at the loss of Patroclus, his deference towards his parents, his empathy for Priam. We have our everyday heroes in life, but these heroes are bigger than life.

Patrice Rankine, in "[Epic Performance through Invenção de Orfeu and 'An Iliad: Two Instantiations of Epic as Embodiment in the Americas](#)," writes of bringing the heroes of the past into the present: "Contemporary performance makes of these roles not the absent gods and heroes of the past but transforms those heroes and gods into you and me". They are, as we are, self-contradictory. In his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Homer shows the paradoxes of human nature, along with a multitude of morally disturbing issues. *An Iliad* makes the issues immediate, raw, and personal: in-yer-face theatre with a mission.

Patrice Rankine also acknowledges the enormity of the effort of the actor who plays The Poet: "... the true emotional toll of acting, of performing various roles—of soldier, of athlete, of husband or wife—not only onstage, but also in life. The actor only amplifies everyday lived experience by portraying in heightened fashion what we all go through in real life ... *An Iliad* is precisely interested in the question of acting's impact on the moral self." She goes on to quote theatre reviewer Chris Jones of the *Chicago Tribune*, whose words about Timothy Edward Kane as The Poet in Chicago's Court Theatre's 2011 production of *An Iliad* could easily be said of Patty Gallagher, who plays The Poet for Jewel: "[Kane]is spilling out the contents of his mind and heart, in service of some higher duty. Acting work at this level is often marked by a palpable unselfishness, a willingness to subjugate self to character and material, and that's exactly how it feels here. It is a masterpiece of acting".

I can vouch for Patty's selflessness and willingness to subjugate self to character and material, not only as witness to her many, diverse roles with Shakespeare Santa Cruz and Santa Cruz Shakespeare, but as her director when she played Maria Callas in Terrence McNally's *Master Class* at Jewel Theatre in 2016. It was indeed a "masterpiece of acting". As

The Poet, she embodies many characters; as Callas, she embodied Callas' longtime lover, Aristotle Onassis. She had to feel wrenching humiliation, uncertainty, even rage. You could see that her telling of Callas' story came, as Rankine writes, "at enormous cost to the teller". She embodied the qualities of heroism then, and she has again with *An Iliad*.

To transform ten years of vicious combat, brutal power plays, anguish, love, and loss into flesh and blood, an actor must have the strength and stamina of a world-class athlete. Patty, an accomplished physical actor with an extensive background in acrobatics, Balinese dancing, and clown work, is more than up to the task. By the time the last ticketholder exits the final performance of *An Iliad*, it will be as if she has completed the twelfth labor of Hercules.

Paris: Per Madeline Miller: "Son of Priam who became the judge of the famous 'beauty contest' between Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, with the golden apple as a prize. Each goddess tried to bribe him, Hera with power, Athena with wisdom, and Aphrodite with the most beautiful woman in the world. He awarded the prize to Aphrodite, and she in turn helped him spirit Helen away from her husband Menelaus, thus starting the Trojan war. Paris was known for his skill with a bow and, with Apollo's help, killed the mighty Achilles".



Paris In The Phrygian Cap by Antoni Brodowski (1784-1832)

The cap was worn in antiquity by inhabitants of Phrygia, a region of central Anatolia

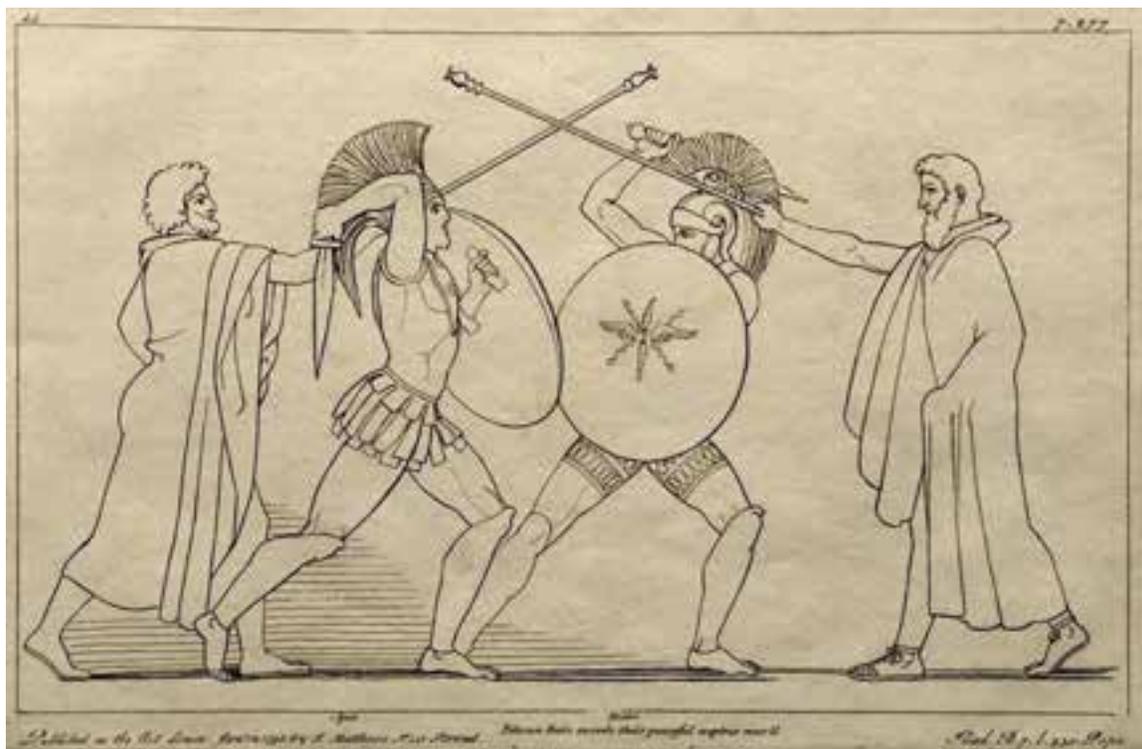
More about Paris can be found in the glossary entry, “Helen being more beautiful than somebody”, which is about The Judgement of Paris, on pp. 9-11 of this glossary. It describes the circumstances of his birth and his part in the Trojan War. He is also mentioned in many other places throughout this document.

Paris could have ended the war years earlier had he taken up Hector’s proposal to fight Menelaus in single combat – although, like The Poet explains, on one occasion he did try, but Aphrodite pulled him out of the combat and returned him to Helen’s bed.

Great Ajax: there were two Ajaxes in the Trojan War, Ajax the Great and Ajax the Lesser. The former was called great to distinguish him from the latter, though there was nothing lesser about Ajax the Lesser. He was a prince, the son of Oileus, who was the king of Locris, a region of ancient Greece. He was also known as Locrian Ajax as he led the Locrian contingent during the Trojan War.

Great Ajax was also called Telamonian, as he was the son of Telamon and Periboea, king and queen of Salamis, the largest Greek island in the Saronic Gulf. Ajax the Greater had a heroic pedigree: Telamon was regarded as a hero for having fought alongside Heracles and taking part in the quest for the Golden Fleece and the hunt for the Calydon Boar.

Ajax the Greater was second only to Achilles among the Argive leaders and was known for his colossal frame and broad shoulders. As the Trojan War dragged on, he sought to end it by meeting Hector in single combat. The battle started at dawn, and raged until dusk, but neither could kill the other. Finally, Zeus sent his heralds to call it off due to nightfall. The



Ajax and Hector, John Flaxman's Iliad, 1793

combatants exchanged gifts: Hector gave Ajax his sword and Ajax gave Hector his belt. Later, Achilles would drag Hector through the dirt behind his chariot by this same belt.

Great Ajax came to a tragic end. After Achilles' death, it was decreed that his armor be awarded to the Greek deemed most heroic. This troubled Ajax, who felt that the armor should have been granted automatically to him as the next greatest of the Achaean heroes. When Agamemnon and Menelaus awarded it to Odysseus – more for his eloquence than his deeds, which were far less than Ajax's – Ajax took the judges' decision as a great insult. He went mad and tried to kill Odysseus, Agamemnon, Menelaus, and other Greeks. Athena, a protector of Odysseus and Diomedes (see the glossary entry that follows this one), stepped in. She deluded Ajax by altering his sight and clouding his mind so that he would think that the cattle and sheep kept near the Achaean camp, the spoil of the Greek army, were the men he wished to kill. Ajax slaughtered them as well as the herdsmen.

Eventually Ajax came to his senses and saw what he had done. Wracked with shame, he killed himself by falling upon his sword, the same sword given to him by Hector.

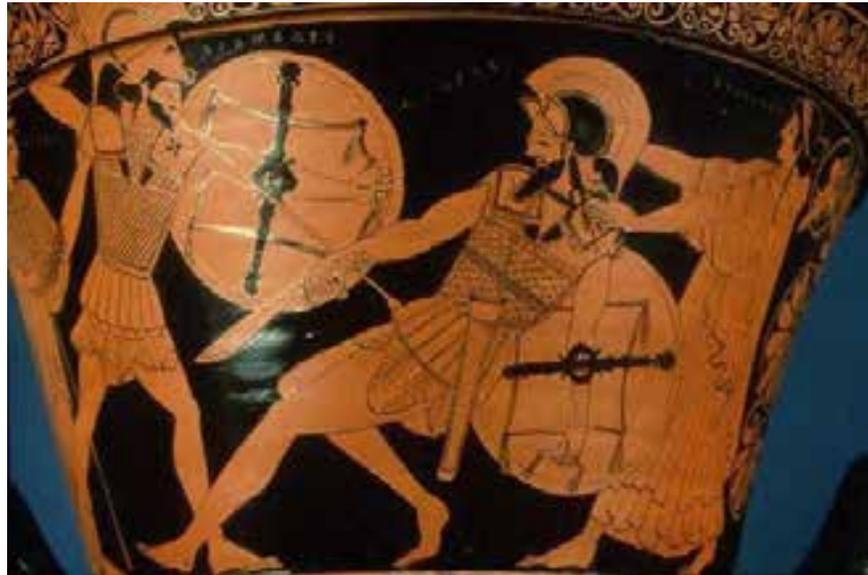
Sophocles wrote a play about him, entitled, simply, *Ajax*. An article in the *Greek Reporter*, entitled "[Ajax: Exploring the Anguish of War in Ancient Greece](#)" discusses the psychological disorders that can be brought on by war, as well as the Greek concept of madness. Find out more about Ajax in this [article](#) from *Greek Mythology Link*, a website created by Carlos Parada, author of *Genealogical Guide to Greek Mythology*.

Diomedes: Like Ajax, Diomedes was the descendant of a legendary Greek hero. He was the son of Tydeus, the Aetolian hero who was one of the Seven Against Thebes. The war of the Seven against Thebes occurred in the generation prior to that of the Trojan War. It is also the title of Aeschylus' third play in a Theban trilogy dealing with the devastating effects of the curse of Oedipus. Aetolia is a mountainous region of Greece on the north coast of the Gulf of Corinth.

Diomedes was one of the most respected leaders in the Trojan War, commanding 80 Argive ships. According to [Brittanica.com](#), "Among his famous exploits include the wounding of Aphrodite, the slaughter of Rhesus and his Thracians, and seizure of the Trojan Palladium, the sacred image of the goddess Pallas Athena that protected Troy. After the war Diomedes returned home to find that his wife had been unfaithful (Aphrodite's punishment) and that his claim to the throne of Argos was disputed. Fleeing for his life, he sailed to Italy and founded Argyripa (later Arpi) in Apulia, eventually making peace with the Trojans. He was worshipped as a hero in Argos and Metapontum. According to Roman sources, his companions were turned into birds by Aphrodite, and hostile to all but Greeks, they lived on the Isles of Diomedes off Apulia".

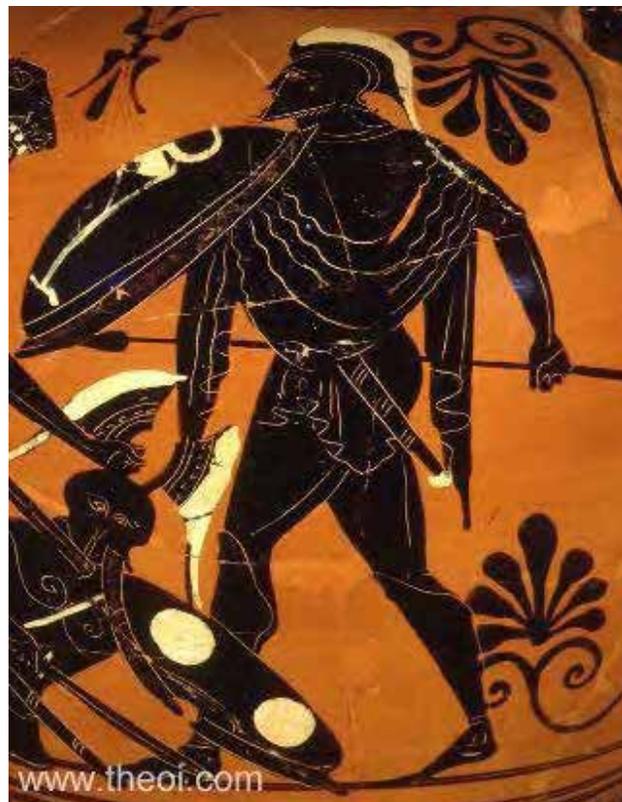
The painting on the following page depicts a fierce battle from Book 5 of the *Iliad* between Diomedes and Aeneas, the noble Trojan hero immortalized in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Diomedes, wounded by Pandarus, prays to Athena for revenge. Armed with the superhuman strength she gives him, as well as an enhanced power of sight that allows him to distinguish gods from mortals on the battlefield, he severely wounds Aeneas with his spear. Aeneas's

mother, Aphrodite, comes to his aid and is herself wounded by Diomedes, who cuts her wrist and sends her back to Mount Olympus.



Diomedes (left) attacking Aeneas, who is assisted by his mother, Aphrodite, far right. From a red figure painting on an amphora, Athens. Undated, but likely mid- to early 500s BC.

Ares: Ares, the oldest child of Zeus and his consort, Hera, is the Greek god of war. He



Ares. Athenian black-figure amphora. C6th BC

represented the brutality, violence, and slaughter of war, and as a result, was not popular with mortals or among gods. Aphrodite was an exception. Although she wouldn't marry him, she had many of his children. As opposed to his Roman counterpart, the popular god Mars, he was not worshiped extensively.

Ares is usually depicted driving a four-horse chariot while accompanied by dogs or vultures. He wears a helmet and a shield and carries either a sword or a spear. Artists will sometimes show his sons Deimos and Phobos beside him.

In Book 5 of the *Iliad*, Zeus compels Ares to fight on the Trojan side, which he does, side-by-side with Hector.

You can read more about Ares in this article in Theoi.com.

Zeus: Madeline Miller describes Zeus: "King of the gods, and father of many famous heroes, including Heracles and Perseus". He can also be found throughout this glossary.

Zeus was the god of the sky, weather, law and order, destiny and fate, and kingship. As shown in the amphora painting below from the fifth century BC, he was depicted as a regal, mature man with a sturdy figure and dark beard. Zeus was usually pictured, as shown, with



Zeus with eagle and scepter, Athenian red-figure amphora C5th BC

a royal scepter and an eagle, but also with a lightning bolt, not depicted in this painting.

Theoi.com has more information about Zeus if you are interested.

Hecuba: Hecuba was Priam's primary wife and mother of nineteen of his children, including Hector, Paris, Cassandra, Helenus, Troilus, Creusa, and Polyxena. She is a background figure in the *Iliad*: the spouse who remains behind, her destiny to survive the sack of Troy, left to mourn the loss of her husband and most of her children and grandchildren. Her later life, rich in tragedy, has informed several Greek plays, including Euripides' *The Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, plays about genocide, infanticide, and the rape, murder, and enslavement of women in war. *The Trojan Women*, which debuted in 415 BC, takes place immediately after the fall of Troy and runs parallel to the events in *Hecuba*. It follows the fates of Hecuba and the women of the royal family, as well as the other women of Troy after their city has been sacked, their husbands killed, and their surviving family members about to be appropriated as slaves.

Both plays focus on the royal women whose fates are being decided by the victorious Greeks: Hecuba; her daughter Cassandra, the prophetess; Andromache, her daughter-in-law, widow of her son Hector and mother of her grandson Astyanax, Hector's only son; and Helen of Sparta, former wife of Menelaus, now forced to beg him to spare her life. Captive Trojan women make up the chorus.

The Trojan women who are not royal are dispersed as slaves to Greek princes who were leaders of contingents within the Greek army. Odysseus is a key player in the cruel calculation of who will go where. For himself, he chooses Hecuba, who laments her lot "to be slave to a vile and treacherous man".

It had earlier been decided that young Polyxena would go to Achilles after the war, but because he is dead, she will be sacrificed at his tomb. As Odysseus comes to lead her away, Hecuba pleads for her daughter's life. She reminds him that he once owed his life to her, when many years before, he was caught as a spy in the palace and placed into slavery while he awaited punishment. He pleaded with Hecuba for mercy. She could have thrown him in jail or had him killed, but instead she let him go. Nevertheless, he cared not to show her mercy in return and her pleas are in vain. There is some consolation in that Polyxena willingly goes to her sacrifice, preferring death to slavery.

Andromache, Hector's widow, goes to Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, the man who killed her husband and dragged his corpse through the dirt for days.

Agamemnon claims Cassandra. She will be his sex slave. Helen is returned to Menelaus.

Hecuba suffers another great loss when Cassandra is murdered with Agamemnon upon their return to Mycenae, described on pp. 52-53 of this glossary. But her greatest agony, and the cruelest loss of the play, is when Astyanax, her baby grandson, is murdered. Odysseus comes up with the idea of throwing him from the battlements of the city, warning that he won't allow a burial if the women don't cooperate. Andromache's ship has already

departed the harbor, so she is unable to bury him according to proper Trojan rituals as she had hoped. The little body of Astyanax is instead brought to Hecuba on Hector's great bronze shield, and it is up to her to prepare him for burial.

The play closes as flames rise from the ruins of Troy. Hecuba tries one more time to throw herself to her death on the fire, but the Greek soldiers hold her back. She and the remaining Trojan women are taken off to the rest of the ships bound for Greece.

Hecuba, written in 424 BC following *The Trojan Women*, begins with Hecuba learning of the murder of her last remaining and youngest son, Polydorus, as she is preparing Astyanax for his burial. Polydorus had been sent to the Thracian Chersonese, an ancient region of Turkey, where the Greek fleet is now detained. He carried part of the treasure of Priam to Polymestor, the king of the region, who promised to protect Polydorus and the riches. When Troy fell to the Greeks, Polymestor had the boy murdered so he could keep the fortune for himself. He had Polydorus' body thrown into the Aegean Sea. The body has now washed up and is brought to Hecuba. She approaches Agamemnon to enact revenge for her. He is sympathetic but reluctant, so Hecuba makes her own plan for vengeance. She lures Polymestor and his sons to her tent, where her women put out Polymestor's eyes and kill his sons. Agamemnon exiles the now-blind king on a deserted island. He then prophesies that Hecuba will transform into a bitch, and the name Cynossema, which means dog's tomb, will adorn her tomb, the site of which will be the coast of the Thracian Chersonese.

As time passed, the story evolved. Hecuba became the name of a legendary dog with fiery eyes who jumps into the Aegean Sea and disappears.

Helen: Mentioned throughout this glossary and the play, we can now give Helen her own section. [Madeline Miller](#) writes: "The legendary most beautiful woman in the world, Helen was a princess of Sparta, daughter of the queen Leda and the god Zeus (in the form of a swan). Many men sought her hand in marriage, each swearing an oath to uphold her union with whoever prevailed. She was given to Menelaus, but later ran away with the Trojan prince Paris, setting in motion the Trojan War. After the war, she returned home with Menelaus to Sparta".

Helen has plenty of detractors, centering around both her complicity in and indifference to the destruction and loss of life that raged for a decade. However, she can be seen as yet another plundered object of war, another trafficked woman of that time. Ruby Blondell elaborates on Helen's duality in her journal article, ["Bitch that I Am": Self-Blame and Self-Assertion in the Iliad](#): Her aim is to uncover Helen's "subjectivity and agency while acknowledging the complexity and appeal of her character". She sees Helen as "an agent as well as a victim, a viewer as well as viewed, active as well as passive, a generator of signs as well as a sign herself. As such she is an iconic figure of the Greek bride, embodying the problematic tension that lies at the heart of the traffic in women. In the *Iliad*, however – the most canonical version of her story – Helen's subjectivity and agency are minimized both by the narrative and by characters within it. This emphasis is echoed in the critical tradition, where she appears less as an agent than as a victim of a variety of objectifying forces, whether human or divine. Not coincidentally, the Iliadic Helen is also widely

perceived as an extraordinarily charming and sympathetic figure”.

Blondell looks at the language of the play: how Helen is described as “taken” and how each side in the war uses her capture to justify their position. She cites Helen’s self-reproachment as a “chilling, evil-devising bitch in the *Iliad*” and “bitch that I am” in *An Iliad*, calling it, among other things, a device “deployed by powerful, dangerous women in tragedy to deceive and manipulate men”. On the other hand, she writes: “Such self-deprecation is particularly appealing to men when voiced in remorse for transgression of the gender roles that undergird the patriarchal power structure”. Helen’s self-blame is also “neutralizing her transgression and ensuring her protection”. However, Blondell also points out Helen’s admission of her agency, using the verbs “leaving” and “following” and saying that she “went” to Troy, as opposed to Paris’ assertion that he has “seized” her or “taken” her.

Still, she would have not been in that position in the first place, had Aphrodite not used her as a bargaining chip in a beauty contest. However, Blondell writes, “In ordinary moral



Detail from an Attic red-figure krater c 450 BCE showing Menelaus’ futile attempt to kill Helen after she is returned to Sparta.

parlance, acrotic acts – acts performed against one’s better judgment – are still acts, for which one is held accountable even if the force that drives us is divine in origin and overwhelming in its power”. Quite the Catch-22.

Blondell also reminds us, “There is no sign that [Helen] has the power to end the war by leaving Troy, even if she wanted to (something for which there is also no explicit evidence despite her nostalgia for Greece)”. Overriding all is Blondell’s ironic observation that Helen is a victim of the war of which she is also the cause.

Andromache: From [Madeline Miller](#): “Born a princess of Cilicia, near Troy, she became the loyal and loving wife of Hector. She hated Achilles, who killed her family in a raid. During



As titled by source: *Ulysses [Odysseus] throws the infant Astyanax from the walls in front of the powerless Andromache*. Italian engraving. Artist and date unknown; other figures unidentified. My guess is that they are Hecuba and Neoptolemus at left, and either Philoctetes, the wielder of the bow of Heracles, or a battlement soldier, lying on the ground

the sack of Troy, she was taken captive by Pyrrhus and carried back to Greece. After his death, she and Helenus, Hector's brother, founded the city of Buthrotum, which they built to resemble the lost Troy. Vergil tells their story in Book 3 of the *Aeneid*".

Of all the characters in the *Iliad*, Andromache's story is among the most heartbreaking. She learned of her beloved husband's death shortly after she had a rare, sweet moment with him and their baby son, Astyanax, and while she was drawing a bath to cleanse and soothe him after his return from battle. When Troy was sacked, her child was taken from her and brutally murdered by throwing him from the walls of the city. Legend has either Odysseus or Neoptolemus, aka Pyrrhus, performing the harrowing deed.

Now Neoptolemus' concubine, she was forced on a ship headed for Greece before she could properly bury her baby. At least she did not have to see his broken body, an image that would have haunted her the rest of her life.

She was now the property of the son of Achilles, the man who killed her husband and dragged his corpse through the dirt for days. Neoptolemus may or may not have murdered her son, but certainly murdered her father-in-law, Priam. In Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Neoptolemus first kills her brother-in-law, Polites, in front of his father, who is at the temple of Zeus, seeking sanctuary. Neoptolemus then drags Priam to the altar where he kills him. (See p. 26 of this glossary for a vase painting depicting the event.)

In an alternate version of the story of Priam's end, Neoptolemus clubs Priam to death with the Astyanax's lifeless body. It is shown on some Greek vase paintings, including the one on the next page.

That version of Priam's death doesn't seem to sync with the timing of the other events as described by Euripides in *The Trojan Women*. Astyanax's death would have followed that of Priam's. After the army spilled from the Trojan Horse in the dead of night, they slaughtered the citizens and set fire to the city's buildings. The royal family fled to the temples to seek shelter. At daybreak, the Achaeans went after them as well, murdering all, including Priam, except for those they took captive, Andromache and Astyanax among them.

The excessive brutality of the Achaeans at Troy, slaying or enslaving all who fell into their hands and violating the temples, enraged Athena. In Euripides' *Daughters of Troy*, she told Poseidon "I will impose on them a return that is no return." With Poseidon's help, one of the ways she fulfilled this promise was to delay the ships that were sent to retrieve the Greeks and their Trojan prisoners. Despite the delay, when Astyanax's lifeless body was surrendered to the family for burial, Andromache had just set sail. Therefore, Astyanax would not yet have died when Priam was killed.

Legend has that Neoptolemus would be killed, and Andromache would become queen of Epirus, where she and Neoptolemus had settled after he conquered the Molossian people, becoming their king. Her brother-in-law Helenus, who had been enslaved by Neoptolemus, would become her husband and reign as king. As she grew older, Andromache went to live with her youngest son, Pergamus in Pergamum, where she died of old age.



Neoptolemus clubs Priam to death with the body of Astyanax
Detail of an Attic black-figure amphora, ca. 520 BC–510 BC, by Vulci

For more about Andromache’s life post-Troy, this [link](#) will take you to her profile on *GreekLegendsandMyths.com*.

Astyanax, his son, who's just, oh, maybe six months old: A lot is written about Astyanax in my glossary entry for Andromache above, but here’s a brief bio from [Brittanica.com](#), with an alternative name and ending for his story:

Astyanax, in Greek legend, prince who was the son of the Trojan prince Hector and his wife Andromache. Hector named him Scamandrius after the River Scamander, near Troy. The Trojans named him Astyanax (“Lord of the City”) as the son of Troy’s greatest warrior. In the sixth book of the *Iliad*, Homer relates that Astyanax disrupted the last meeting of his parents by crying at the sight of his father’s plumed helmet. After the fall of Troy, Astyanax was hurled from the battlements of the city

by either Odysseus or the Greek warrior—and son of Achilles—Neoptolemus. His death is described in the last epics of the so-called epic cycle (a collection of post-Homeric Greek poetry), *The Little Iliad* and *The Sack of Troy*. The best-known extant description of the death of Astyanax is in Euripides' tragedy *Trojan Women* (415 BC). In ancient art his death is often linked with the slaying of Troy's King Priam by Neoptolemus. According to medieval legend, however, he survived the war, established the kingdom of Messina in Sicily, and founded the line that led to Charlemagne.

Have you ever seen a frontline? Let's take - I want to show you what that bloody field looked like, what Hector walked back to just then, with all those other boys scattered across it. It's like, it's like- I have a picture here. It's from another war:

The heartbreaking photo below is of the brutal aftermath of trench warfare in WWI, which would be the time frame The Poet mentions and aligns with what The Poet describes and traces on her palm.



Patroclus: [Madeline Miller](#) writes: “The son of King Menoitius. Exiled from his home for accidentally killing another boy, Patroclus found shelter in Peleus’ court, where he was fostered with Achilles. He is a secondary character in the *Iliad*, but his fateful decision to try to save the Greeks by dressing in Achilles' armor sets in motion the final act of the story. When he is killed by Hector, Achilles is devastated and takes brutal vengeance upon the Trojans”.



Achilles tending Patroclus wounded by an arrow, identified by inscriptions on the upper part of the vase. Tondo of an Attic red-figure kylix, ca. 500 BC. From Vulci.

A cup depicting Achilles bandaging Patroclus' arm, signed by the Sosias Painter/Potter, but attributed Beazley or Robertson, the Kleophrades Painter, or Euthymides (per the archeologist Martha Ohly-Dumm)

The Poet tells much of Patroclus' story, but Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*, which Patroclus narrates, gives us *him*. The author both regards him from a loving, perceptive, and compassionate perspective, and embodies him. In an interview with Gregory Maguire, a fellow author, she explains the former: "Patroclus is such an underdog—giving him voice felt like standing up for him. I had been intensely frustrated by a number of articles that kept side-stepping the love between him and Achilles, which to me felt so obviously at the story's heart. So, I wanted to set the record straight, as I saw it". For the latter, her embodiment of him, she says, "I give all the credit to my background in theater. When I first started writing, I had this idea that I should be in control of the story, forcing it forward. It never worked. What I needed to do was learn how to get in character and write from

there". In order to "keep the mighty arc of legend from overwhelming shadowy Patroclus," as Maguire puts it, Miller came to understand how Patroclus is overwhelmed himself. Like a good actor building her character, she went deep inside him, seeing him as "this ordinary person who is pulled into a terrifying world of angry deities and destiny because of his love for Achilles". Zachary Mason, author of *The Lost Books of the Odyssey*, writes, "The *Iliad* turns on Achilles' pride and his relationship with Patroclus, but Homer is sparing with the personal – so much so that, though we believe in their friendship, we do not understand it. *The Song of Achilles* brings light to their love. This is a beautiful book."

Many publishers, reviewers and readers compare Madeline Miller to Mary Renault, who wrote vivid and brilliantly researched historical fiction, focused on ancient Greece and the time of Alexander the Great. Renault's *The Persian Boy* is also narrated by the male lover, Bagoas, of Alexander the Great, another powerful warrior known for his beauty.

Menoetius: Patroclus was the son of Menoetius by either Philomela or Polymele, Sthenele, Periopis, or Damocrateia. Homer names Menoetius as the person who gave Patroclus to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

According to GreekMythology.com:

Menoetius was a Titan god, son of Titans Iapetus and Clymene, and brother of Atlas, Prometheus, and Epimetheus. His name derives from the Ancient Greek words "menos" (might) and "oitos" (doom), meaning "doomed might". Based on the descriptions of various resources, he may have been the Titan of violent anger, rash action, and human mortality, and he often committed hubris, having superfluous pride. During the Titanomachy, Zeus killed Menoetius and banished him to Tartarus.

Tartarus is one of the houses in the underworld in Greek mythology, a deep abyss used as a dungeon for the eternal torment of the wicked, and specifically, as a prison for the Titans. Based on Madeline Miller's description of Menoetius in *The Song of Achilles*, it is exactly where he belongs. Patroclus was well rid of him.

Odysseus: Per [Madeleine Miller](#): "The wily prince of Ithaca, beloved by the goddess Athena. He proposed the famous oath requiring all Helen's suitors to swear a vow to uphold her marriage. As his reward, he claimed her clever cousin Penelope as his wife. During the Trojan War, he was one of Agamemnon's chief advisors, and later devised the trick of the Trojan horse. His voyage home, which lasted another ten years, is the subject of Homer's *Odyssey*, and includes the famous encounters with the Cyclops, the witch Circe, Scylla and Charybdis, and the Sirens. Eventually he returned to Ithaca, where he was welcomed by his wife and grown son, Telemachus".

Because of his diplomatic skills, Odysseus was principal among the emissaries sent to persuade Achilles to rejoin the war. As the war progressed, Odysseus' role expanded. He and his sidekick, Diomedes, conducted several special operations against the Trojans. According to TheCollector.com they "killed the Trojan ally Rhesus and stole the Palladium from the temple of Athena in Troy. After Ajax and Odysseus retrieved the body of Achilles,

Odysseus was awarded Achilles' armor, which led to Ajax committing suicide [see p. 32 of this glossary]. Ultimately it is Odysseus who engineered the Fall of Troy first by bringing Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, and Philoctetes, the wielder of the bow of Heracles, into the Greek camp, and by creating the famed Trojan Horse. His journey home after the war is described in the epic poem the *Odyssey*; and Odysseus himself has been frequently depicted in both Ancient and Modern art".

Odysseus' fraught journey home to Ithaca lasted 10 years because of Poseidon's bitter anger towards him after he blinded his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus, earlier in his travels.



Odysseus urges Achilles to re-enter the battle
Attic Red-Figure Kylix by Douris and Kleophrades, 490-470 BC

The article, "[Aftermath of the Trojan War and Returns of the Achaean Leaders](#)" on Maicar.com summarizes the events that followed:

On his return to Ithaca, he succeeded in killing the suitors of Penelope, who had started a sedition. Because of this massacre, some say, Odysseus was accused by the kinfolk of the slain suitors. The case was submitted to the judgment of King

Neoptolemus of Epirus, who condemned him to exile. Some think that Neoptolemus judged in this way because he wanted to get possession of the island of Cephallenia, which is close to Ithaca. Odysseus is also reported to have gone to Thesprotia in Epirus, where he offered a certain sacrifice, following the instructions he had received in the Underworld from Tiresias. There he married Queen Callidice, and had by her a son Polypoetes, to whom he bequeathed the kingdom when he returned to Ithaca. Others say, however, that Odysseus went to Aetolia, where he married the daughter of the former leader of the Aetolians against Troy—King Thoas of Calydon—having by her a son Leontophonus. In any case, Odysseus returned to Ithaca, where he died.

Dardan: The Dardanoi (Dardanians or Dardans in anglicized and modern form) in ancient Greece were closely related to the Trojans, an ancient people of the Troad, located in northwestern Anatolia. The Dardanoi derived their name from Dardanus, the mythical founder of Dardania, an ancient city in the Troad. Rule of the Troad was divided between Dardania and Troy. Homer makes a clear distinction between the Trojans and the Dardanoi. However, "Dardanoi"/"Dardanian" later became essentially metonymous – or at least is commonly perceived to be so – with "Trojan," especially in the works of Virgil such as the *Aeneid*. ([Wikipedia](#))

Hephaestus, the crippled god of fire.



Hephaestus with tongs and hammer, riding a donkey
Athenian red-figure skyphos. C5th BC

From Brittanica.com:

According to myth, Hephaestus was born lame and was cast from heaven in disgust by his mother, Hera, and again by his father, Zeus, after a family quarrel. He was brought back to Olympus by Dionysus and was one of the only gods to have returned after exile. A blacksmith and craftsman, Hephaestus made weapons and military equipment for the gods and certain mortals, including a winged helmet and sandals for Hermes and armour for Achilles. Traditionally, his ill-matched consort was Aphrodite, though Homer lists Charis, the personification of Grace, as Hephaestus's wife in the *Iliad*.

As god of fire, Hephaestus became the divine smith and patron of craftsmen; the natural volcanic or gaseous fires already connected with him were often considered to be his workshops. In art Hephaestus was generally represented as a middle-aged bearded man, although occasionally a younger, beardless type is found. He usually wore a short sleeveless tunic and a round close-fitting cap on his unkempt hair.

**But now beware, or my curse will draw god's wrath
Upon your head, that day when Paris and lord Apollo-
For all your fighting heart- destroy you at the Scaean Gates!**

See pp. 24-25 of this glossary

Conquest of Sumer - I mean the Conquest of Sargon- uh- the Persian War- no-

This is the beginning of the list of wars that have occurred since recorded time, which The Poet recites with growing emotion.

Hera: from [Madelaine Miller](#): "Queen of the gods, and sister-wife of Zeus. Like Athena, she championed the Greeks, and hated the Trojans. In Vergil's Aeneid, she is the principal antagonist, constantly harassing the Trojan hero Aeneas after Troy has fallen".

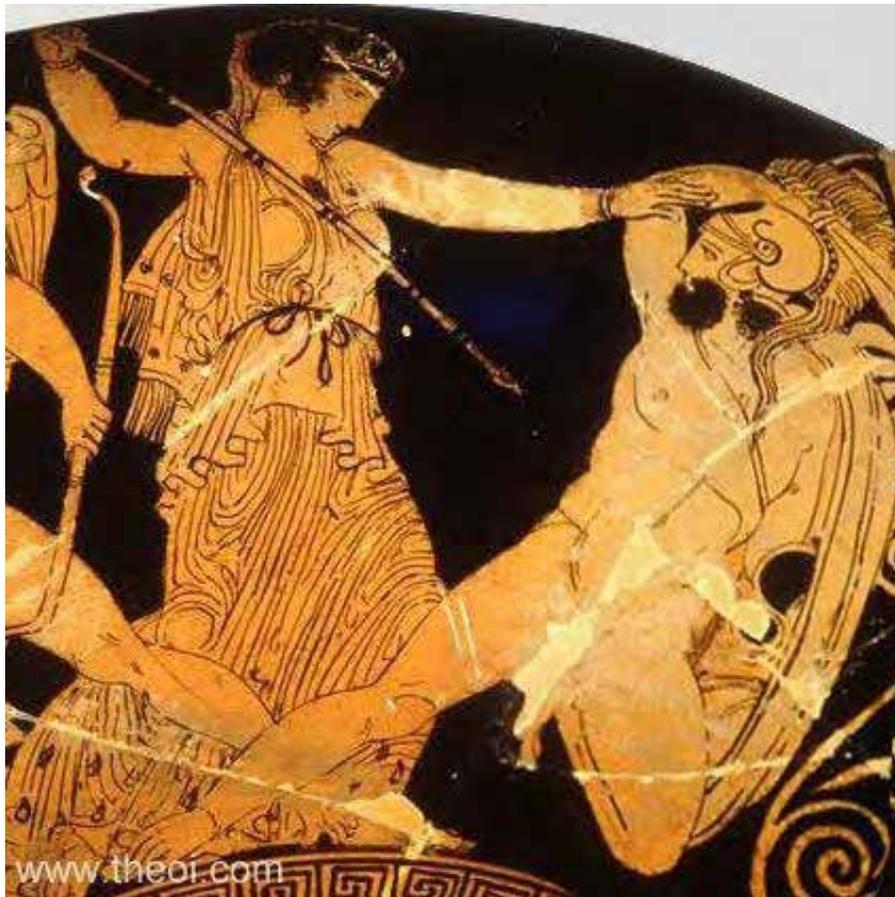
Zeus may have quietly "lay his head on Hera's shoulder," but he gave the gods a good dressing down on Mt. Olympus for their excessive interference in the Trojan War saga. He told them there'd be no more of that. Not everyone obeyed, but they did take it down a notch.

WorldHistory.org describes Hera's involvement in the Trojan War:

Hera was a major protagonist in the story of the Trojan War as told in Homer's *Iliad*. The goddess supports the Achaeans and frequently schemes with other deities to bring the downfall of Troy, as she never forgave the Trojan prince Paris for choosing Aphrodite above her as the most beautiful goddess. In the *Iliad*, Hera mentions three cities particularly dear to her - Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae (or Mykene). We are also told that as a child she was raised by Ocean and Tethys whilst Zeus battled with Cronos. Homer most often describes Hera as 'white-armed', 'ox-eyed', and 'Hera of Argos'. Hesiod, in his Theogony, similarly describes Hera as: 'of Argos' and more frequently as 'golden-sandaled'.

The painting below is an Attic Red Figure Kylix, ca. 410 - 400 BC, signed by Aristophanes. It is a detail of Hera battling the giant Phoetus (Phoitos), part of a montage of two photos of the vase, depicting the Gigantomachy, or War of the Giants.

The goddess Hera brandishes a spear and wears a stephane crown, which is widest in the middle over the forehead and grows narrower toward the temples. It is often seen in ancient Greek statues of divinities. Her fallen Gigante opponent, Phoetus, is equipped with a crested helm, large shield, and sword.



The Gigantomachy, a fight between the Giants or Gigantes, sons of Gaea and Uranus, and the Olympian gods who were trying to overthrow the old religion and establish themselves as the new rulers of the cosmos. It was the most definitive battle in Greek mythology. Many of the Giants were buried under islands. In fact, it was believed that earthquakes and volcanic eruptions were caused by the Giants moving in their tombs. (GreekMythology.com)

I don't want to tell you about what happens next ... no, it's too much, all these songs ...
The Trojan Horse, the sack of Troy, all the "songs" mentioned, are described throughout the pages of this glossary except the song of Aeneas escaping with his father on his back, described on the next page.

the song of Aeneas escaping with his father on his back: From [Madeleine Miller](#), Aeneas was “A Trojan noble, the son of the goddess Aphrodite and the mortal Anchises, renowned for his piety. He fought bravely in the Trojan war but was known best for his adventures afterwards. As Vergil tells in the Aeneid, he escaped the city’s fall and led a group of survivors to Italy, where he married a native princess and founded the Roman people”.



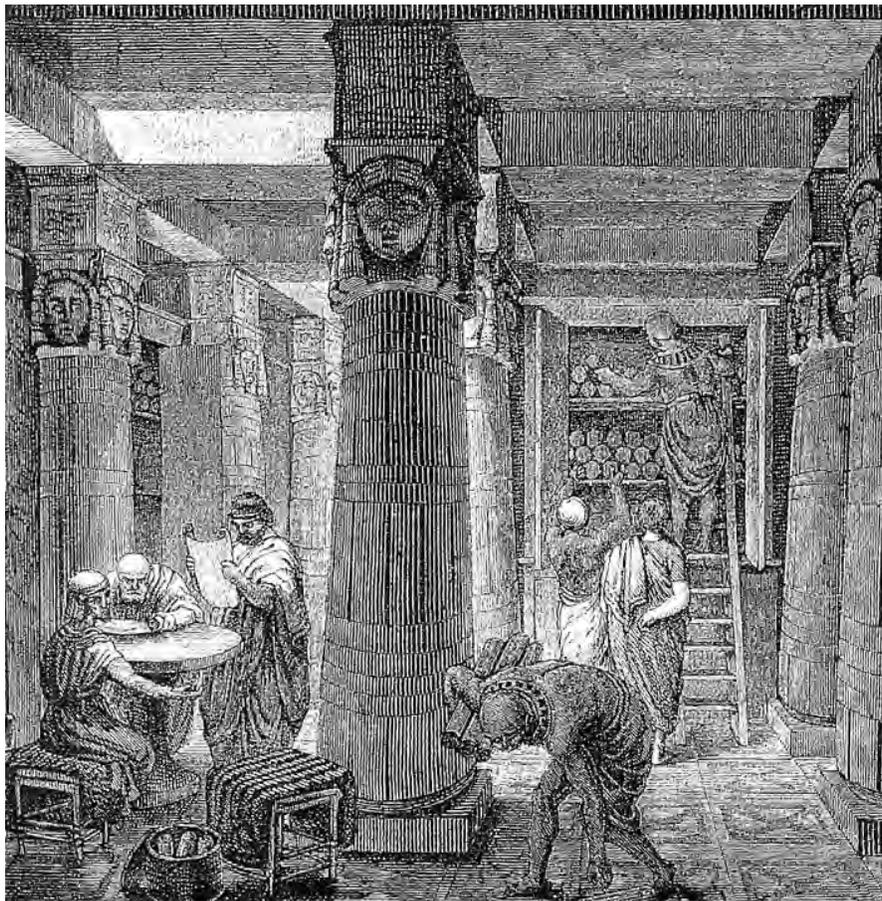
Aeneas carrying his father Anchises and the Penates, followed by the young Ascanius
Genoa. After 1661. Artist unknown

In a case where a picture tells a thousand words, the photo above is of a monumental statue of Aeneas, which stands nearly eight feet high. He is shown carrying his father Anchises and the Penates, followed by the young Ascanius. An [article by Filippo Parodi for Gulbenkian.pt](#), the website of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, describes the statue and in doing so, tells the story of Aeneas during the sack of Troy:

This group [sculpture of three persons] is inspired by Virgil's epic *The Aeneid*, whose hero, Aeneas, has to flee a burning Troy, carrying his elderly father Anchises on his back, followed by his son Ascanius, shown here as a young child. Aeneas was held up as a role model due to his exceptional commitment to his moral duty, whether before the Gods (the Penates carried by his father), or before other men, as represented by his own father, whom he refused to abandon. [The Penates was one of the household gods of Troy, the other being Lares.]

The group can also be seen as representing the three ages of Man: Aeneas represents the present, he who takes on the mission of changing the world; Anchises, his father, represents the past, functioning as a reference point; while his son Ascanius is the promise of an auspicious and cheerful future with all its inherent potential.

Imagine it for yourselves, the destruction of a city, a civilization, you know what that looks like ... like ... Alexandria, all that history lost ...



The Great Library of Alexandria by O. Von Corven
19th century engraving based on some archaeological evidence

Believe it or not, Wikipedia has a rather good [article on the Library of Alexandria](#). It discusses its history and brings up something I hadn't heard before:

Despite the widespread modern belief that the Library of Alexandria was burned once and cataclysmically destroyed, the Library actually declined gradually over the course of several centuries. This decline began with the purging of intellectuals from Alexandria in 145 BC during the reign of Ptolemy VIII Physcon, which resulted in Aristarchus of Samothrace, the head librarian, resigning from his position and exiling himself to Cyprus. Many other scholars, including Dionysius Thrax and Apollodorus of Athens, fled to other cities, where they continued teaching and conducting scholarship. The Library, or part of its collection, was accidentally burned by Julius Caesar during his civil war in 48 BC, but it is unclear how much was actually destroyed and it seems to have either survived or been rebuilt shortly thereafter; the geographer Strabo mentions having visited the Mouseion in around 20 BC and the prodigious scholarly output of Didymus Chalcenterus in Alexandria from this period indicates that he had access to at least some of the Library's resources.

Preston Chesser doesn't go quite that far in his article "[The Burning of the Library of Alexandria](#)", written for Ohio State University's history department website, eHistory.com. He does tell us, "The loss of the ancient world's single greatest archive of knowledge, the Library of Alexandria, has been lamented for ages. But how and why it was lost is still a mystery. The mystery exists not for lack of suspects but from an excess of them".

He then goes on to discuss all of them in succession. It's an interesting read.

Cassandra: Per Carlos Parada, for the [Greek Mythology Link](#):

Have I missed the mark, or, like true archer, do I strike my quarry? Or am I prophet of lies, a babbler from door to door? (Cassandra. Aeschylus, Agamemnon 1194)

My son, much tried by the fate of Ilium, you must know that Cassandra alone declared to me this fortune. Now I recall her predicting these things as our people's destiny, often naming Hesperia, often the Italian realm. (Anchises 1 to Aeneas (in exile). Virgil, Aeneid 3.182).

Cassandra (also called Alexandra) is the Trojan seeress who uttered true prophecies, but lacking the power of persuasion, was never believed.

J. G. Frazer refers to a couple of scholiasts when he says that Cassandra and her brother Helenus¹ acquired their prophetic power, when they, as children, were left overnight in the temple of Apollo Thymbraeus, and in the following morning serpents were seen licking their ears. Others have said that Apollo himself, wishing to gain her love, promised to teach her the prophetic art. But Cassandra, having learned it, refused her favors, and then the god, not wishing to take back his gift, deprived her prophecy of the power to persuade. This is why she, later in life, lamented:

"Apollo, my destroyer, for you have destroyed me ..." (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1080).

... and acknowledged:

"I promised consent to Apollo but broke my word ... and ever since that fault I could persuade no one." (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1208ff.).



Cassandra warns the Trojans about the Acheans' wooden horse
Engraving by Bernard Picart, 1673-1733

In Euripides' *Andromache*, Cassandra predicted that Paris would destroy Troy, shrieking, "Kill him! Kill the destroyer of Priam's city! Kill that child!" (p. 293). She was ignored. Years later, she turned around and declared him her brother after he fought and defeated all contenders for a prize bull during funeral games on Mount Ida. This time, they either

believed her or figured that someone that powerful had to be *somebody*. Priam then acknowledged him as his son and received him into the palace.

After Aphrodite promised him Helen, Paris sailed to Sparta to kidnap her. Cassandra hurled new prophecies at him, "Where are you going? You will bring conflagration back with you. How great the flames are that you are seeking over these waters, you do not know." (Ovid, *Heroides* 16: 120). He ignored her. When he returned with Helen, Cassandra, enraged, denounced her, tore her hair, and pulled off her golden veil. However, the Trojans did not heed her, and welcomed Helen.

As the Trojan War neared its end, Cassandra announced that there was an armed force hidden inside the wooden horse that the Achaeans had abandoned outside the city of Troy, after which they feigned retreat. Once again, no one listened.

In the horror that followed, Cassandra was captured and raped by Ajax the Lesser (see p. 30) in the sanctuary of Athena. Legend has it that she clung to a wooden image of the goddess, which fell from its stand as Ajax dragged her away. Her suitor Coroebus defended her, attacking Ajax "in a passion of rage," but was killed by him.



*Ajax, Cassandra and the Palladion. Skyphos painting.
Campania "painter of Capua 7531". 350-330 BC*

In the division of the spoils after Troy was captured, Cassandra was apportioned to Agamemnon. When Agamemnon's wife, Clytemnestra, was told that he was bringing Cassandra into their household as a concubine, Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus,

conspired to murder him and Cassandra. Cassandra foresaw her death shortly after her arrival to Mycenae, "... for me waits destruction by the two-edged sword." (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1149).

Christopher Durang wrote a hilarious character, Cassandra, in his 2012 play, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. Like her counterpart in antiquity, she too could read signs and make accurate predictions that no one give her credit for.