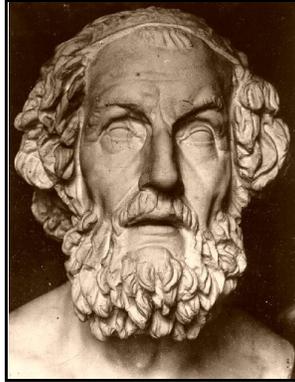


THE ILIAD

by Homer



THE AUTHOR

The two great epic poems of ancient Greece, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, have always been attributed to a shadowy figure by the name of Homer. Little is known of him beyond the fact that his was the name attached in antiquity by the Greeks themselves to the two great poems. That there was an epic poet called Homer, said to be blind, and that he played the primary part in shaping the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* - so much may be said to be probable. If this assumption is accepted, then Homer must assuredly be one of the greatest of the world's literary artists. Given the sparse information available, most scholars believe he lived in Greece or the Greek islands sometime in the eighth century BC. This study guide is based on the prose translation by Alston Chase and William Perry, Jr.

PLOT SUMMARY

Book I - The story of the kidnaping of Helen, wife of Menelaus, by Paris, prince of Troy, is in the distant background of the narrative. By the time the story starts, the Trojan War has been going on for nine years. The precipitating cause of the conflict that begins the action of the story is the visit to the Achaean army by the priest Chryses, who seeks to ransom his daughter Chryseis, who has been captured by Agamemnon, commander of the Achaean forces. Agamemnon refuses his offer and sends him rudely away. Chryses then prays to Apollo, and the god rains destruction down on the Achaean army for nine days. Hera puts a stop to the carnage, and Calchas the seer reveals the cause for Apollo's anger. Agamemnon agrees to give the girl back to her father if he can have another prize instead. Achilles promises him a larger share of the plunder once Troy falls, but this does not satisfy him. Instead he takes Briseis, Achilles' captive, in place of Chryseis.

Achilles draws his sword and is about to kill Agamemnon, but Athena appears and stops him. He sheathes his sword, then unleashes a torrent of insults against Agamemnon, swears that he will fight no more, and prophesies that the Achaeans will soon beg for him to unsheathe his sword again. Wise old Nestor begs them to reconcile, but they both stubbornly refuse. Agamemnon sends Chryseis back to her father, along with appropriate sacrifices to Apollo, in the care of Odysseus, and orders Briseis to be brought to his tent. Achilles then sits by the sea and sulks and his mother Thetis comes to comfort him. He begs his mother, who is a favorite of Zeus, to intercede with the king of the gods and bring about the destruction of the Achaean army at the hands of the Trojan forces.

Meanwhile, Odysseus successfully completes his mission and in the process restored Apollo's favor to the Achaeans.

Twelve days later, Thetis appear before Zeus with her son's request. Zeus is reluctant to grant her prayer because it will put him at odds with his wife Hera, who constantly nags him about favoring the Trojans too much. He nevertheless swears an unbreakable oath to grant the wish of Thetis, but implores her to keep the conversation secret from Hera. The wife of Zeus quickly figures out what is going on, but Zeus tells her to be quiet lest he lay hands upon her. Her son Hephaestus urges her to submit lest rancor between the two upset the peace of the gods on Olympus, and Hera reluctantly agrees. The gods then enjoy a great feast and go contentedly to their beds.

Book II - Zeus decides to fulfill his promise to Thetis by sending Agamemnon a deceitful dream. He appears to the sleeping Agamemnon in the form of Nestor, his trusted counselor, and tells him to attack the Trojans immediately because they are in a weakened condition. The next morning Agamemnon decides to test his troops. He tells them that Zeus has advised them to give up and go home. Much to his dismay, the homesick men all rush for their ships. Athena, seeing what is happening, quickly comes down and tells Odysseus to move among the men and encourage them to pursue the battle because they are failing their commander's test and are revealing their cowardice. The men return to the assembly, but loud-mouthed Thersites tells them not to listen to Agamemnon, who simply wants more plunder for himself. Odysseus silences him and beats him with his scepter, then turns to the army. He tells them he understands their desire to go home, but reminds them of an earlier prophecy of Calchas that the war with Troy would be won in the tenth year; this means that victory is nigh. Nestor supports him, and Agamemnon follows with a rousing speech that raises the bloodlust of his warriors. As they frantically prepare for war, Athena moves among them and stirs them up to violence. [The poet then lists the names of the kings and mighty men among the Achaeans.] As the Achaean forces charge across the plain toward Troy, the goddess Iris warns Priam, king of Troy, and tells Hector, the greatest Trojan warrior, to prepare for battle. Hector musters his troops, assisted by Aeneas, who will later become the hero of his own epic. [Homer then lists the leaders among the Trojan forces.]

Book III - At dawn the Trojans lift their battle cry and advance toward the Achaeans, who march forward in silence. Paris (here called Alexander) challenges the Achaeans to hand-to-hand combat, and Menelaus, whose wife Helen he had stolen, takes up the challenge. Paris immediately retreats to the safety of his comrades, and his brother Hector upbraids him for his cowardice, especially since his vile deed started the war in the first place. Paris then offers to fight Menelaus in single combat for Helen and the spoils if both armies will sit down and agree to return to their homes after the fight is over. Menelaus agrees, and the soldiers of both sides lay down their arms and rejoice over the imminent end of the horrible war.

The commanders of the armies call for sacrifices to be brought, and the aged Priam, king of Troy, and the homesick Helen are summoned to the city wall to observe the conflict. Priam asks Helen about the leading Achaean warriors, and she identifies Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Ajax. Odysseus draws lots for the battle, and Paris gets to throw his spear first, but his thrust fails to penetrate Menelaus' shield. Menelaus then takes his turn. His spear goes through Paris' shield, breastplate, and tunic, but misses his body. He then advances with his sword and strikes Paris a mighty blow on his helmet, but the sword shatters. When Menelaus retrieves his spear to strike the mortal blow, Aphrodite rescues Paris and hides him in his bedchamber. She then tells Helen to go to her husband, but Helen realizes that she rightfully belongs to Menelaus, the victor, though Paris

is still alive. Reluctantly she obeys the goddess, however. Meanwhile, Agamemnon claims victory for Menelaus and demands that Helen and the treasure be turned over to the Achaeans.

Book IV - The gods on Mount Olympus are watching what transpires below. They are divided in their allegiances, with Hera and Athena supporting the Achaeans and Aphrodite favoring the Trojans. Zeus taunts them, musing about whether he should allow the war to continue or bring peace between the rival factions. Hera and Athena are furious that he will not grant to Menelaus his well-earned victory. Zeus knows that Hera yearns for the destruction of Troy and yields to her wishes despite the fact that the Trojans have faithfully offered sacrifices to him, warning her that she should not interfere if in the future he decides to destroy a city she favors. Hera convinces Zeus to send Athena among the Trojans to move them to violate the truce and reinitiate hostilities. She appears in the form of a warrior and tempts the Trojan Pandarus to kill Menelaus with his bow and arrow. His shot is true, but Athena deflects it so the wound Menelaus receives is not a mortal one. The furious Agamemnon summons a physician for Menelaus, then declares that the faithless Trojans will suffer the utter destruction of their city in response to their act of perfidy. As the battle is once again joined, Agamemnon goes among the Achaeans encouraging his troops. Spurred on by Athena, the Achaeans advance, but by the end of the day blood flows over a battlefield strewn with the bodies of both armies.

Book V - As the battle continues, the Achaean warrior Diomedes confronts two sons of the priest of Hephaestus, killing one and putting the other to flight. Athena then takes Ares aside and proposes that both of them retreat from the battlefield and leave the soldiers to their own devices. Each Achaean warrior slays the foe against whom he is fighting. When Diomedes is wounded by Pandarus with a long-distance bowshot, he fights even more fiercely, killing every Trojan he encounters until he finally reaches and slays the archer who shot him. At the same time he throws a rock and breaks the hip of Aeneas, who survives only because he is protected and taken from the battlefield by his mother Aphrodite. Diomedes pursues them and wounds Aphrodite in the wrist, but Aeneas, under the protection of Apollo, escapes further harm despite the repeated attempts of Diomedes to kill him. Aphrodite then borrows horses from Ares so she can travel to Mount Olympus and tend to her wound. There her mother heals her hand while Athena mocks her for scratching her wrist on one of her brooches.

Apollo takes Aeneas to Pergamum, where Artemis heals his injury. Meanwhile Ares and Hector urge the Trojans to fight harder, and their courage is bolstered by the return of Aeneas to the battlefield. They counterattack, but neither side gives ground as the blood continues to flow. Hera and Athena, seeing that Ares had entered the fray on the side of the Trojans, go among the Achaeans to spur them on. Diomedes, after wounding Aphrodite, is reluctant to go to battle against any of the other gods, but Athena tells him that he should not be afraid to take on Ares himself. She personally drives his chariot into battle, and when Ares throws his spear at him, she deflects it. Diomedes then spears Ares in the stomach and he flees to Olympus to nurse his wound and complain to Zeus about Athena's behavior. Zeus heals his son, and soon Hera and Athena return to Olympus, having succeeded in removing Ares from the field of battle.

Book VI - The slaughter continues. Menelaus defeats a Trojan warrior who begs for his life, promising a fortune in ransom from his family, but Agamemnon rebukes his brother and thrusts the man through with his spear, telling his men to kill every Trojan, man, woman, and child, even those women with babies in their wombs. Nestor reminds them that after all the Trojans are dead, plenty

of plunder may be had by all. The Trojan soldiers are ready to flee to the city for protection, but Aeneas and Hector rally their troops. Meanwhile, the old women of Troy go to the temple of Athena to promise sacrifices and beg the goddess to spare their city.

Soon Diomedes meets Glaucus on the field of battle. He asks if he is mortal or the offspring of a god so he knows whether to engage him or not. When Glaucus shares his family history, Diomedes realizes that their families are old friends, so the two exchange armor with one another as a token of friendship and turn their weapons against others rather than fighting each other.

When the women of Troy pray to Athena, she refuses their request. Hector then confronts Paris, who is sitting in his palace with Helen while the battle rages outside the city gates. Helen, who thinks that the war is her fault, has already urged him to join the battle but has come to recognize that he is a fundamentally weak man. Before returning to the battlefield, Hector seeks out his wife Andromache and his infant son. She begs him not to return to the battle, but to direct it from the city walls so that she will not be left a widow and her son an orphan. He realizes that he is going to die and that she will be taken captive as a slave, but he prays that he will be beneath the earth before trouble descends upon his family. He then returns to the battle, accompanied at last by Paris.

Book VII - Hector and Paris turn the tide of battle in favor of the Trojans, so Athena quickly returns from Mount Olympus to aid her favored Achaeans. She is intercepted by Apollo, who favors the Trojans, and the two agree to engineer a truce during which Hector will challenge a representative of the Achaeans to single combat. Hector offers the challenge, but no Achaean steps forward to accept it until Menelaus declares himself ready to do so, but he is quickly talked out of it by his brother Agamemnon. Nestor then taunts them for their cowardice, recalling his younger days when he eagerly met such challenges and defeated his foes. In response to this nine men step forward, including Agamemnon, Diomedes, Ajax, and Odysseus. Nestor instructs them to cast lots to choose their champion, and the lot falls on Ajax.

Each man casts his spear at the other. Hector's spear fails to penetrate Ajax's heavy shield, but the spear of Ajax passes through Hector's shield and breastplate and wounds him slightly. They then charge one another, and Ajax wounds Hector in the neck with his spear and nearly crushes him under the weight of a great stone. Apollo lifts Hector up, and the two draw their swords. At this point messengers from Zeus put an end to the fight, since the king of the gods does not desire to see either of these brave men die at this point and the sun is setting. The two men exchange gifts, part as friends, and promise to fight again another day.

That night, counselors for both armies advise them to make peace. Nestor tells the Achaeans to collect their dead, burn the bodies, set up a memorial over the funeral pyre, and fortify the harbor where their ships landed in case it is ever needed again. Antenor counsels the Trojans to turn Helen and the treasure over to the Achaeans and return to their city in peace. Paris objects, however, insisting that he will never turn Helen over to Menelaus, though he is willing to give up the treasure. Priam realizes the Achaeans will never cease hostilities unless Helen is returned, so he decides to send a messenger offering return of the treasure and calling a truce until the dead can be properly burned, after which the war may resume until a victor is determined. Diomedes responds to the messenger by accepting the temporary truce but refusing the treasure, arguing that at this point even the return of Helen would be insufficient to purchase peace since the Trojans are clearly on the verge of defeat. After the dead are burned, the Achaeans fortify the harbor, but Zeus is furious because they did so without offering sacrifices to him. He therefore orders Poseidon to destroy the fortifications as soon as the Achaeans sail for home. As both armies feast that night, an angry Zeus plots their destruction.

Book VIII - At dawn the next day, Zeus gathers the gods on Olympus and threatens to cast into Tartarus any who dare interfere further with the conflict going on outside the walls of Troy. Athena begs to be allowed to give counsel to the Achaeans, and Zeus smiles on his daughter and tells her that she should not take his horrible threat seriously. Watching from the clouds, Zeus brings out his scales and they turn against the Achaeans, who retreat in confusion. Nestor's horse is wounded, and as Hector bears down upon him, Diomedes intercedes and pulls him into his chariot, then turns and heads back to the ships because he realizes that Zeus has decreed that this day will belong to the Trojans. Hector mocks him as he retreats.

On Mount Olympus, Hera tries to organize a mutiny against her husband, encouraging other gods to join her in assisting the Achaeans. She gets no response, but determines to intervene anyway. As Hector charges toward the harbor intending to set afire the Achaean ships, Hera encourages Agamemnon to rouse his warriors to take their stand. The Achaeans then mount a counterattack. As the battle rages back and forth, Athena decides to put on her father's armor and fight directly for the Achaeans. When Zeus sees what she is doing, he threatens to send a thunderbolt that will destroy her chariot and give her a wound from which she will take ten years to recover. His daughter clearly needs to be taught a lesson. He is not so angry with Hera, her co-conspirator, however, because she always tries to frustrate his will and he has come to expect it. When they hear of Zeus' threat, Hera and Athena decide to accede to his wishes and let the battle play out according to his will. Hera and Athena are furious and continue to plot evil against the Trojans, but Zeus stands firm, telling them that Hector will continue to kill Achaeans until the day when Achilles stops sulking and stands against him. As night falls, Hector gives a rousing speech to his troops about the destruction he will wreak upon the Achaeans when the sun rises.

Book IX - The morale of the Achaeans is at its lowest ebb, and Agamemnon calls his council together and advises that they board their ships and return to Greece. Diomedes rebukes him for his cowardice and insists that he will remain and fight even if his commander leaves the field of battle. Nestor advises that they enjoy a banquet together and consider counsel from all sources before making a decision. After they eat and drink, Nestor advises that Agamemnon mend his broken relationship with Achilles, the mightiest warrior among the Achaeans. Agamemnon admits he was wrong to take Briseis from Achilles and offers to return her untouched, along with many other rich gifts, in addition to slaves and plunder from Troy, land and seven cities back home in Greece, and marriage to one of Agamemnon's daughters.

Emissaries under the leadership of Odysseus go to communicate Agamemnon's offer and find Achilles alone in his tent with his friend Patroclus. Achilles welcomes them as friends and serves them a sumptuous meal. Odysseus then tells Achilles of the desperate situation faced by the Achaeans and begs him to return to the battlefield, enumerating the gifts promised by Agamemnon should he agree to do so. Achilles bluntly refuses the offer, however, arguing that Agamemnon always mistreated his warriors by giving equal shares of plunder to those who fought and those who stayed behind. Even plunder won by Achilles, when it was turned over to Agamemnon, was not shared equally, but was largely kept by the commander, who had not taken part in the battles at all. No amount of gifts can convince him to forgive Agamemnon, and he intends to load his ships and return home the following day. Furthermore, he cites a prophecy from his mother Thetis that if he fights against Troy, his life will be lost but his fame will be undying, but if he returns home, he will live a long life but will lose his renown. The elderly Phoenix, who has known Achilles since he was a child, tries to persuade him with many arguments, but again fails to do so, though Achilles offers

to take him back to Greece with him on the following day. At this point Odysseus and the others leave and report that Achilles is intractable in his rage and bitterness against Agamemnon.

Book X - The Achaeans sleep near their ships in order to guard them from the Trojans, but Agamemnon and Menelaus are unable to sleep. Agamemnon goes to find Nestor and the other members of the council, hoping that they can help him devise some plan to defeat their foes, while Menelaus rouses the camp. Nestor advises that they send a spy into the Trojan camp to find out their plans. Diomedes volunteers and takes Odysseus with him. Before they go, they pray to Athena that they might return safely and covered with glory. Hector does the same thing in the Trojan camp, sending a spy named Dolon, who is quickly seen and captured by Diomedes and Odysseus. He begs for his life and offers a rich ransom. Odysseus interrogates him, gaining valuable information about the disposition of the Trojan forces, then Diomedes decapitates him with one blow of his sword. They then go to an undefended Thracian encampment, where Diomedes kills thirteen sleeping men while Odysseus steals their horses. They then return to the Achaean camp and give Athena thanks for their victory.

Book XI - When dawn breaks, the battle commences anew. Led by Agamemnon, the Achaeans drive the Trojans back, break through their lines, and send them running back toward their city in a rout. In the afternoon Agamemnon is wounded and has to return to his ship. At this point Hector rallies the Trojans and they once again advance against the Achaeans, driving them back toward their ships. Odysseus and Diomedes encourage the Achaeans to hold their lines, and the battle continues with neither side gaining an advantage. Diomedes flings his spear at Hector, but the point glances off Hector's helmet, stunning him but doing no real damage. Paris then shoots an arrow that pins the foot of Diomedes to the ground. Odysseus shields him while he removes the arrow, but Diomedes is forced to return to his ship to tend to his wound. This leaves Odysseus alone among the leaders of the Achaeans, and he is soon surrounded by Trojan warriors. He slays many Trojans but is wounded in the process. He cries out, Ajax rushes to his aid and drives off the Trojans, and Menelaus leads the wounded Odysseus from the field of battle. At one end of the battlefield, Ajax drives back the Trojans, but at the other end, Hector is routing the Achaeans. But Zeus fills Ajax with fear, and he retreats. From his ship, Achilles sees that the Achaeans are sore pressed, and he sends Patroclus to find out the state of affairs. Nestor, angry because Achilles still refuses to fight, advises Patroclus to put on Achilles' armor and take to the field, hoping that the Trojans will mistake him for his mighty friend and flee.

Book XII - By this time Hector and the Trojans have the Achaeans pinned down in their ships, which are protected by a strong wall with a ditch surrounding it whose sharp stakes prevent any attempt to assault the wall with horses or chariots. Hector thus decides to attack the wall on foot, and his men follow suit. As they advance through the ditch, they see an evil omen from Zeus - an eagle carrying a serpent in its beak drops the serpent into their midst and turns away, indicating that they will not successfully complete the mission in which they are engaged. Hector, however, ignores the omen and pursues the attack, breaching the wall by throwing a huge stone through the gates and bursting them apart. He then leads the Trojans through the gap while the Achaeans retreat to their ships.

Book XIII - Once Zeus helps the Trojans to breach the Achaean defenses, he turns his attention elsewhere. But Poseidon, furious with Zeus for helping the men of Troy, mounts his chariot and goes among the Achaeans in the form of Calchas the seer, encouraging them to stand firm against the Trojan onslaught. The battle continues throughout the day with many mighty men falling on each side, but with neither side gaining ground.

Book XIV - Nestor, seeing the Trojan armies fighting near the Achaean ships, calls together a council to discuss the situation. Agamemnon recommends taking the ships and anchoring them offshore, but Odysseus rebukes him, pointing out that the Achaeans will give up the fight if they see their ships leaving the harbor. Agamemnon then asks if anyone has a better idea, and Diomedes suggests that the wounded warriors stand behind the Achaean lines to encourage the troops. Poseidon then speaks to Agamemnon in the form of an old man and lets loose a war cry as loud as that of a thousand men, loud enough to be heard on Olympus. Hera, seeing what is happening, decides to seduce Zeus in order to distract him from the battle and obtains a love charm from Aphrodite. Once Zeus is asleep, Poseidon begins to help the Achaeans openly. The tide begins to turn when Ajax hurls a rock at Hector, knocking him senseless so that his friends must withdraw him from the battle.

Book XV - At this point Zeus wakes up, realizes that Hera has tricked him, and threatens to beat her. She insists that Poseidon has involved himself in the battle without her consent or knowledge. He orders Poseidon to leave the battle and go home, then tells Apollo to go down and revive Hector. He tells Hera that he has decreed that Hector will kill Patroclus, then Achilles will kill Hector, after which nothing will be able to stop the Achaeans from sacking Troy. When Hera returns to Olympus and reports her conversation to the other gods, Ares is determined to enter the battle. Athena, however, talks him out of it, fearing that Zeus will vent his rage on all the gods and goddesses, innocent and guilty alike, if any disobey his command to disengage.

Hector, energized and accompanied by Apollo, reenters the battle and the Achaeans begin again to retreat, though the bravest make a stand to cover the return of the others to their ships. As the Trojans advance, Hector warns them not to take time to gather plunder from the dead, but to head straight for the ships of the Achaeans. Apollo meanwhile bridges the ditch and tears down the wall protecting the harbor where the Achaeans are anchored, so that their backs are against the ships they seek to protect. At this point Patroclus goes to Achilles to try to convince him to join the fray. The two armies achieve a standoff, with many warriors on each side meeting their doom. Hector orders his men to set fire to the ships, but Ajax stands firm and kills any who approach bearing a torch.

Book XVI - Patroclus, meanwhile, continues in his effort to convince Achilles to join the battle. Achilles still refuses, and finally Patroclus offers to wear his armor into the field, thinking that this would encourage the Achaeans and frighten the Trojans. Achilles agrees on condition that Patroclus return to him once the Trojan forces are on the run and not pursue them back to the walls of Troy. On the battlefield, Hector breaks the spear of Ajax, then sets fire to his ship. Achilles then rouses his followers, the Myrmidons, and urges them to follow Patroclus into the battle while he remains behind to pray for his friend's safe return. The counterattack led by Patroclus soon puts the Trojans to flight, but many of them find themselves trapped between the ships and the ditch protecting what is left of the wall, and Patroclus rampages among them dealing death.

The Lycian warrior Sarpedon, a son of Zeus, then advances on Patroclus. Zeus has already decreed his death, but is on the verge of changing his mind when Hera warns him that, if he spares Sarpedon, all the other gods will want to spare their favorites as well. Besides, his friends will be sure to give him a nice funeral. Zeus refrains from getting involved, and in due time Patroclus slays Sarpedon. Glaucus, now the commander of the Lycians, prays to Apollo that his wound may be healed so he can continue the fight, and Apollo answers his prayer. After a period of long, bloody fighting over the body of Sarpedon, Zeus sends a spirit of cowardice upon Hector, who calls for a retreat, after which the Achaeans strip the armor from Sarpedon and send it back to their ships. Apollo then rescues the body of Sarpedon and carries it back to his homeland for burial.

Patroclus, contrary to Achilles' instructions, leads the pursuit of the fleeing Trojans. Patroclus would have taken the city had not Apollo personally prevented him from doing so. When Patroclus realizes that Apollo is fighting against him, he retreats, but Apollo then tells Hector to pursue him. Apollo then knocks the helmet from Patroclus' head and strips off his armor. A Trojan warrior then spears him in the back and Hector moves in to finish him off. Before he dies, Patroclus prophesies that Hector will soon meet his own death at the hands of Achilles.

Book XVII - Menelaus sees the death of Patroclus and goes to defend the body lest it be stripped and dismembered. A Trojan warrior attempts the deed, but Menelaus kills him. At this point Apollo points out to Hector what is going on, and he forces Menelaus to run away. While Hector is stripping Patroclus of his armor, Menelaus finds Ajax and the two of them return. Hector prepares to send the armor back to Troy, but Ajax prevents him from taking Patroclus' body. When Hector realizes that the armor worn by Patroclus belongs to Achilles, he exchanges it for his own. Zeus on Olympus shakes his head, knowing that Hector will not wear the armor of Achilles for long.

Hector rallies the Trojans, who boldly charge the Achaean lines, though Ajax continues valiantly to defend the body of Patroclus. The Achaeans begin to drive the Trojans back toward their city, but Apollo again intervenes, encouraging Aeneas to rush to the forefront and urge the Trojans to stand firm. Fighting rages throughout the day, most heatedly over the body of Patroclus, but Achilles does not yet realize that his best friend is dead. Zeus again favors the Trojans and the Achaeans are routed. As they retreat, Menelaus, with the protection of Ajax, lifts up the body of Patroclus and takes it back to the Achaean ships, telling a messenger to inform Achilles of the death of his friend because he knows that the great warrior is the only hope that remains for the invading army.

Book XVIII - Achilles, brooding at the ships, sees the Achaeans in retreat and has a foreboding of the death of Patroclus, which is quickly confirmed by the arrival of the messenger. Achilles is overcome with bitter grief, and his mourning is so loud that the sound reaches his mother Thetis in her father's kingdom at the bottom of the sea. She determines to go to him, though she knows he is doomed to die in the battle. He tells his mother of the death of his friend, then swears that he will not rest until he avenges that death on Hector's body, but she warns him that he will die soon after he kills the mighty Trojan warrior. Achilles prepares to enter the fray, but Thetis reminds him that Hector now wears his armor, which he took from Patroclus. She promises to bring him a new suit of armor made especially for him by Hephaestus.

Meanwhile, Hector has grasped the feet of the body of Patroclus and is engaged in a tug-of-war with the Achaeans. He intends to cut off the head and mount it on a stake. While Achilles waits for his armor, he approaches the trench and gives a great shout, which is enough to frighten the

Trojans and allow the Achaeans to bring the body of Patroclus safely into their camp. The sun then sets, and the two armies gather to plan their strategies for the following day. Among the Trojans, some counsel retreat behind the walls of the city, fearful of the havoc that Achilles is likely to wreak among them. Hector, however, stands firm in insisting that retreat would be cowardly. In the Achaean camp, they mourn Patroclus, and Achilles swears that he will not bury his friend until he can bring back the armor and head of Hector. While this is going on, Hephaestus forges a strong, beautiful, and intricate shield for Achilles, along with a breastplate and helmet, which Thetis quickly rushes to her son.

Book XIX - Thetis finds Achilles holding the dead Patroclus in his arms. She gives him the armor forged by Hephaestus and he prepares to do battle, but is afraid that, while he is gone, flies will enter the wounds in Patroclus' body, breed maggots, and lead to decay. She assures him that she will protect the body of his friend from any such eventuality. He then calls an assembly of the Achaean warriors and advises Agamemnon that the two of them set their differences aside and unite against the Trojans. Agamemnon protests that the quarrel was not his fault, but had been caused by the gods. He nonetheless agrees to send the gifts to Achilles that had been promised, and the men turn their attention to the forthcoming battle. Odysseus recommends that they eat and drink first lest their strength fail them in the midst of battle, and Agamemnon agrees, offering to bring out the gifts for Achilles for all to view. Achilles, however, insists that not a moment be wasted before going to battle, and argues that there will be plenty of time for feasting after their victory. Odysseus ignores him and brings out the gifts, including the maiden Briseis over whom the quarrel began. She sees the body of Patroclus and collapses on him mourning. Achilles still refuses to eat, claiming that only blood can soothe the agony of his soul. Athena, however, instills ambrosia into him to prevent him fainting from hunger. Achilles then arms for battle, but his horse speaks to him, letting him know that he will return safely this time, but that the time of his death is near.

Book XX - As the two armies prepare for battle, Zeus calls an assembly of the gods on Olympus. He tells them that he plans to be a passive observer during the conflict, but that they are free to help whichever side they favor. Hera, Athena, Poseidon, Hermes, and Hephaestus join the Achaeans, while Ares, Apollo, Artemis, and Aphrodite assist the Trojans. The Trojans are terrified at the sight of Achilles in his shining armor, but the gods on both sides urge men on to battle. Achilles cares for no one but Hector, so that he might kill him and avenge the death of Patroclus. Apollo encourages Aeneas to fight Achilles, but he is reluctant to do so because Achilles has Athena on his side. Apollo then reminds him that he has a god supporting him as well, so he marches toward the great champion of the Achaeans. Achilles reminds Aeneas that he defeated him once before and urges him to go back lest he lose his life, but Aeneas refuses to back down. Both men throw their spears, but their shields protect them. Achilles then takes up his sword while Aeneas, clearly at a disadvantage, picks up a stone. Poseidon, seeing that Aeneas is likely to perish, urges the other gods to protect him since he is fated to survive the battle. Poseidon then physically removes Aeneas from the scene and tells him to stay away from Achilles, for no other Achaean soldier will be able to kill him. Achilles and Hector spur on their respective armies to engage in hand-to-hand combat. Achilles slaughters all who come before him until he finally encounters Hector, but every time he thrusts his spear toward his enemy, Apollo encases him in mist. Achilles realizes that Apollo will not permit the combat to take place at this time, so he continues to kill and dismember whatever Trojans come

before him, trampling shields and bodies with his mighty steed until his armor and hands are covered with blood.

Book XXI - Achilles drives the Trojans ever backward until they fall into the river. He then jumps in and with his sword wreaks havoc until the river flows with blood. He captures twelve young men as the blood price for the slain Patroclus and sends them bound back to his ship. Even those who surrender and beg to be ransomed Achilles slaughters without mercy until the river Scamander tells him to continue his murderous business on the land. Scamander topples him with a wave and pursues him on shore with a flood until he prays for help to Zeus, at which point Poseidon and Athena rescue him from the river's onslaught. They advise him to drive the Trojans back behind their city walls and seek to slay only Hector. Scamander refuses to give up and continues to try to destroy Achilles until Hera order Hephaestus to send fire on the plain, drying up the water, burning trees and corpses alike, until Scamander finally surrenders. As the gods battle one another, Zeus on Olympus laughs. Athena wounds both Ares and Aphrodite, standing over them and boasting that such will be the fate of all who help the Trojans, while Hera strikes Artemis with her own bow and arrows and sends her whimpering back to the knees of Zeus. Meanwhile, Priam stands in the tower along the city walls of Troy and watches Achilles routing his army. He orders the keepers of the gates to open them, admitting the retreating soldiers, but to close them before Achilles can enter the city.

Book XXII - Achilles is furious with Apollo for allowing the Trojans to escape into the city, knowing that he could have killed many more of them. Hector, however, remains outside the gates, eager to do battle with Achilles. Priam begs his son to come inside the city lest he bring his gray hairs down to the grave with grief. Hector considers negotiating with Achilles, but realizes that would be an exercise in futility. The sight of Achilles so terrifies him, however, that he runs away as the Achaean champion approaches, and Achilles chases after him. Round and round the city they go, circling its walls three times. The men on the city walls are too far away to help Hector, and Achilles forbids the Achaeans from loosing their arrows at his prey. Finally Zeus determines that the hour of Hector's death has arrived, and Athena goes to him in the form of a friend and convinces him to stand and fight against Achilles. If Hector wins, he offers to take Achilles' armor but return his body to the Achaeans, but Achilles refuses to make the same promise should he come out the victor. Achilles throws his spear and misses, but Athena retrieves it for him. Hector then hits the middle of Achilles' shield with his spear, but it bounces off, doing no damage. Hector rushes toward Achilles with drawn sword, but Achilles drives his spear through his throat, the only place not protected by the armor he had taken from Patroclus. As Hector is dying, he begs Achilles to return his body to his family rather than taking it back to the Achaean camp to be dismembered, but Achilles refuses. After Hector dies, Achilles strips off his armor and the nearby Achaeans drive their swords and spears into his body. Achilles then tied the body to the back of his chariot by the heels and dragged it back to the Achaean camp.

Priam and Hecuba, Hector's parents, bewail the loss of their hero along with the rest of the Trojans within the gates. Hector's wife, however, does not yet realize that he took on Achilles alone outside the city and is weaving at her loom. When she hears the weeping and wailing, she goes to see what has happened and is told of her husband's death. When she sees Hector's body being dragged away, she faints, and when she retains consciousness she mourns her widowhood and the fact that her young son has been left an orphan.

Book XXIII - As the Trojans mourn the death of Hector, the Achaeans return to their ships and mourn Patroclus. As Achilles prepares a funeral banquet, he repeats his oath to give the body of Hector to the dogs as the funeral pyre consumes the body of Patroclus. As Achilles sleeps that night, the ghost of Patroclus appears to him and rebukes him for taking so long to bury his body, since he cannot pass the gates of Death until he has been properly buried. He reminds Achilles that he, too, is fated to die before the walls of Troy and asks that their bones be buried together in the same urn. The next morning they build the funeral pyre of Patroclus, one hundred feet in diameter, and cast on the pyre the bodies of many sacrificial animals. Achilles honors his dead friend by slaughtering twelve Trojan captives and throwing their bodies on the pyre as well, but Aphrodite and Apollo protect the body of Hector from the ravenous dogs. The Achaeans are unable to light the funeral pyre, so they pray to the winds to fan the pyre into flame, and they do so. The next morning they quench the fire, and Achilles orders his men to gather the bones of Patroclus and put them in a golden urn, which will later hold his bones as well.

Achilles then organizes a chariot race, offering rich prizes to the winner. Not surprisingly, the gods interfere in the race; Apollo wrenched the whip from the hands of Diomedes, but Athena picked it up and gave it back to him, then broke the yoke on the horses of Eumelus, casting him to the ground and forcing him from the race. This puts Diomedes in the lead, but Antilochus, the son of Nestor, the most highly skilled of the horsemen, threatens his steeds with death if they do not at least pass Menelaus and finish in second place. At a narrow spot in the road, Antilochus forces his horses forward and Menelaus, afraid of a collision, reins his in, allowing Antilochus to pass him. Diomedes wins the race, followed by Antilochus and Menelaus. Eumelus finishes last, but Achilles decides to give him second prize because of the misfortune he encountered during the race. Antilochus understandably objects, and Achilles gives Eumelus different prizes from his store of treasure instead. Menelaus then objects that Antilochus beat him by trickery. In order to keep the peace, Antilochus offers to give his second-prize to Menelaus; the latter is pleased with his response and returns the mare, warning Antilochus not to cheat in the future. Boxing and wrestling matches follow. In the footrace, Ajax son of Oileus is in the lead, but Athena trips him so that he falls into a pile of bull dung and Odysseus is able to win the race. The next contest is a fight in armor, in which Diomedes and Ajax son of Telemon compete. This is followed by a competition in throwing a heavy piece of iron, then archery, and finally the javelin. Thus Achilles honors his beloved friend Patroclus.

Book XXIV - At the end of a busy day, the Achaeans go to their beds, but Achilles is unable to sleep because of his sorrow for his friend. In the morning he ties the body of Hector to the back of his chariot and drags it around the remains of Patroclus' pyre three times, but Apollo keeps the body from being torn to pieces as Achilles intends. The gods are indignant at Achilles' cruelty and some even propose stealing the body of Hector and returning it to his family. Zeus objects to this and proposes instead that the mother of Achilles convince him to return the body in exchange for a ransom. Thetis obeys Zeus' command and Achilles yields to his mother's pleas. Priam then gathers his treasures and, despite Hecuba's fears that Achilles will kill him, takes them toward the Achaean ships, praying to Zeus for safety. Zeus sends Hermes to escort him to Achilles and protect him from any who would slay him and steal his treasure. Achilles receives Priam cordially, accepts the ransom, and orders that the body of Hector be prepared for the journey the following morning. Priam asks for a twelve-day truce so that Hector may be mourned properly by the Trojans, and Achilles agrees. While the Achaeans sleep, Hermes spirits Priam and the body of Hector out of the

camp and brings them safely back to Troy, where mourning for Hector commences. As Andromache weeps over the body of her husband, she prophesies the defeat and destruction of Troy, her own captivity, and the death of her infant son. The funeral then takes place as the Trojans await the attack of the Achaean warriors.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Achilles - The son of Peleus and Thetis, the daughter of a sea god, he is the greatest warrior among the Achaeans. When he was a baby, his mother held him by his heel and dipped him in the river Styx to make him invincible. The entire plot of the *Iliad* revolves around Achilles' failure to accept an apology from Agamemnon for a wrong done to him and his later wrath at the death of his best friend Patroclus at the hands of Hector.
- Aeneas - A Trojan warrior who will later become the progenitor of the Romans and the hero of the *Aeneid*, he is wounded by Diomedes and rescued by his mother Aphrodite.
- Agamemnon - The commander of the Achaean forces in the assault on the city of Troy, he is the son of Atreus and the brother of Menelaus. His act of commandeering Briseis, a maiden claimed as a prize by Achilles, causes Achilles to withdraw from the fighting.
- Ajax the Greater - A hulking warrior, the son of Telemon, he is second only to Achilles in strength among the Achaeans.
- Ajax the Less - The son of Oileus, he is known for his speed. He often fights alongside his stronger namesake.
- Andromache - The wife of Hector, she begs him in vain to withdraw from the fighting.
- Aphrodite - The goddess of love and mother of Aeneas, she favors the Trojans, having promised Helen to Paris before the war began.
- Apollo - Son of Zeus, his intervention on behalf of Chryses leads to the wrath of Achilles, who in anger against Agamemnon returns to his tent and refuses to fight against the Trojans. He favors the Trojans and often interferes in the war to promote their cause.
- Ares - The god of war who stirs up both sides to bloodshed but generally supports the Trojans.
- Athena - The goddess of wisdom, she is the daughter of Zeus and supports the Achaeans.
- Briseis - A captive of Achilles who is seized by Agamemnon, causing Achilles to quit fighting and sulk in his tent. Agamemnon is furious because he considers her more beautiful and talented than his lawful wife Clytemnestra.

- Calchas - A seer who reads omens and prophesies the future and the will of the gods, he convinces Agamemnon to return his captive Chryseis to her father, which leads to the rift between Agamemnon and Achilles.
- Diomedes - Son of Tydeus, he is an Achaean warrior who is second to Achilles in skill and courage and dares even to make war against the gods.
- Hector - The son of Priam, king of Troy, and his wife Hecuba, he is the Trojans' greatest warrior. After killing Patroclus in battle, he is slain by Achilles.
- Helen - The most beautiful woman in the world, she is kidnaped from her husband's kingdom of Sparta by Paris and spirited off to Troy, initiating the Trojan War.
- Hephaestus - The crippled blacksmith of the gods, he makes a new suit of armor for Achilles when Hector takes Achilles' armor from the slain Patroclus.
- Hera - The wife of Zeus, she favors the Achaeans and often goes behind her husband's back to promote their cause.
- Hermes - The messenger of the gods, he escorts Priam safely to the tent of Achilles when the former begs for the body of his son Hector.
- Menelaus - Son of Atreus and brother of Agamemnon, he is the king of Sparta whose wife Helen is kidnaped by Paris, initiating the Trojan War.
- Nestor - The aged king of Pylos is Agamemnon's most trusted counselor.
- Odysseus - The clever Achaean warrior who devises a way to defeat the walled city of Troy.
- Paris - The son of Priam, king of Troy, he runs off with Helen, the wife of Menelaus of Sparta, starting the Trojan War. Because he prefers to stay at home with his new wife, his role in the battles described in the epic is limited.
- Patroclus - The best friend of Achilles, he goes into battle in place of the great warrior and is killed by Hector after slaughtering many Trojans.
- Poseidon - The sea god who favors the Achaeans.
- Priam - King of Troy, his son Paris steals the beautiful Helen from Menelaus, king of Sparta, sparking the hostilities between Achaia and Troy.
- Zeus - The king of the gods, from Mount Olympus he directs the outcome of the war and its consequences for individual warriors, though he often tries to remain neutral and prevent the other gods from interfering.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Sign, O goddess, of the wrath of Peleus’ son Achilles, the deadly wrath that brought upon the Achaeans countless woes and sent many mighty souls of heroes down to the house of Death and made their bodies prey for dogs and all the birds, as the will of Zeus was done, from the day when first the son of Atreus, king of men, and godlike Achilles parted in strife.” (Book I)

“Alexander and Menelaus, dear to Ares, will fight for you with long spears, and you shall be called the wife of him who conquers.” (Iris, Book III)

“This time Menelaus has won with Athena’s help, but another time I shall vanquish him. For there are gods on our side, too.” (Paris, Book III)

“Beware, son of Tydeus, and give way, nor seek to match your spirit with the gods, for in no way alike are the race of immortal gods and that of men who walk the earth.” (Apollo, Book V)

“For my mother, the silver-footed goddess Thetis, says that two fates bear me to the goal of death. If I remain here and fight around the Trojans’ city, then my homecoming is lost to me but my glory shall be undying; but if I come home to my dear native land, my glorious fame is lost to me but my life shall last long, nor will the end of death soon overtake me.” (Achilles, Book IX)

“There is one best omen, to fight for our native land.” (Hector, Book XII)

“The latter [Achilles] will rouse his comrade Patroclus, and glorious Hector will slay Patroclus with his spear before Ilium, when Patroclus has slain the other warriors in great numbers, and among them my son, godlike Sarpedon. In anger for Patroclus, godlike Achilles will slay Hector. From then on I shall cause a continual, unceasing rout back from the ships, until the Achaeans take steep Ilium through Athena’s counsels.” (Zeus, Book XV)

“Zeus does not fulfill all purposes for men.” (Achilles, Book XVIII)

“But what has been let us pass by, grieved though we be, mastering perforce the spirit in our breasts.” (Achilles, Book XIX)

“Let me not perish tamely or without glory, but having done some great deed for the ears of generations who are yet to be.” (Hector, Book XXII)

“Would that my angry heart would let me cut off your raw flesh and eat it, for what you have done to me.” (Achilles, Book XXII)

“It is Achilles whom you gods wish to help, he whose heart is not just, nor is the mind placable within his breast, but he is set on cruelty like a lion that sets upon men’s flocks in his great strength and proud spirit to get its meat. So Achilles has murdered pity, and he has no sense of shame.” (Apollo, Book XXIV)

“So they held the funeral of Hector, tamer of horses.” (Book XXIV)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Analyze the famous opening sentence of Homer’s *Iliad*: “Sign, O goddess, of the wrath of Peleus’ son Achilles, the deadly wrath that brought upon the Achaeans countless woes and sent many mighty souls of heroes down to the house of Death and made their bodies prey for dogs and all the birds, as the will of Zeus was done, from the day when first the son of Atreus, king of men, and godlike Achilles parted in strife.” How does this announce the three major themes of the epic - the will of Zeus, the wrath of Achilles, and the Trojan War? How are these themes brought together over the course of the epic so that they are effectively woven into a single story?
2. In Book VI of Homer’s *Iliad*, Agamemnon exhorts the Achaean warriors to kill every Trojan, man, woman, and child, including women with babies in their wombs. Compare and contrast this command with God’s instruction to the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites completely when they entered the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 7:1-2 among other verses). Be sure to consider the motives and the morality of the massacres that are involved in the two stories.
3. Homer’s *Iliad* is an extremely violent book. Compare the violence found there to that in Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Which is more violent? Which provides a more realistic picture of war? Be sure to consider the purpose behind the violence. Are the two authors trying to accomplish the same thing, or do they have different reasons for their graphic descriptions?
4. Homer’s *Iliad* is an extremely violent book. Compare the violence found there to that in Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage*. Which is more violent? Which provides a more realistic picture of war? Be sure to consider the purpose behind the violence. Are the two authors trying to accomplish the same thing, or do they have different reasons for their graphic descriptions?
5. Discuss the role played by the desire for fame and glory in Homer’s *Iliad*. Is Homer right in suggesting that these are worthwhile aims, even at the cost of one’s life, or is glory only achieved by the victors? Consider also the value of these goals in the light of biblical teaching on the subject, thinking especially of the attitude of David toward war.
6. The gods are very active throughout the course of Homer’s *Iliad*. Some have argued that this portrayal of the gods shows that people’s lives are controlled by fate and that they have no real choice with regard to their destinies. Does Homer believe this? Why or why not? Support your conclusions with specifics from the poem.

7. The gods are very active throughout the course of Homer's *Iliad*. Some have argued that this portrayal of the gods shows insight into human psychology, that for Homer the gods simply move people to fulfill their inward desires. Do you agree with this psychological interpretation of the theology of the epic? Why or why not? Support your conclusions with specifics from the poem.
8. In Book XIX of Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon protests that the quarrel between him and Achilles was not his fault, but was brought about by the gods. To what extent is his attempted rationalization of his behavior justifiable? Do the actions of the gods eliminate any culpability on the part of men? Answer the question on the basis of the worldview of the epic.
9. In Book XIX of Homer's *Iliad*, Agamemnon protests that the quarrel between him and Achilles was not his fault, but was brought about by the gods. To what extent is his attempted rationalization of his behavior justifiable? Do the actions of God eliminate any culpability on the part of men? Answer the question on the basis of the Bible's teaching about the relationship between the sovereignty of God and human moral responsibility.
10. In William Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Gloucester says, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods. They kill us for their sport." When you consider Homer's *Iliad*, do you think the Greek epic poet would agree with Gloucester? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the poem.
11. Contrast the involvement of the gods in the action of Homer's *Iliad* with the Bible's picture of divine providence. How do the two pictures differ? How would the two views of God's involvement in human affairs affect your attitude if you were going into battle?
12. Research the Just War Theory and apply it to the Trojan War described in Homer's *Iliad*. Would you argue that both the Achaeans and the Trojans were justified in waging war, that neither was justified, or that one was and the other was not? Support your answer using specific elements of the Just War Theory and details from the epic.
13. Discuss the role of women in Homer's *Iliad*. Do they have an active role to play or are they nothing more than the property of men? In your analysis consider as well the part played by goddesses and their relationship to the gods.
14. One approaching Homer's *Iliad* for the first time may be quite surprised if he has some prior knowledge of the events surrounding the Trojan War. Where, he might ask, are the judgment of Paris, the abduction of Helen, the death of Achilles by means of an arrow in his heel, the Trojan Horse, and the utter destruction of Troy? Instead, the epic focuses on a very short period of time near the end of the war. Evaluate the wisdom of this decision. Would the story have been more effective and enjoyable if it had covered a broader range of events? Why or why not? Defend your conclusion with details from the poem.

15. Who is the most heroic character in Homer's *Iliad*? In defending your choice, be sure to indicate the qualities that make him a hero and explain why he is more deserving of the title than other potential candidates.
16. The two great epic poems ascribed to Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are very different in content despite their similarities in form. Which do you consider the more enjoyable story? Why? Be sure to cite specifics from both poems to support your conclusion.
17. Would you consider Homer's *Iliad* a pro-war or anti-war book? Why do you think so? Support your conclusion with specifics from the epic.
18. The gods of Greek mythology are highly anthropomorphic, as may readily be observed in Homer's *Iliad*. Do the gods in the epic appear better or worse than their human counterparts, or basically the same? Why would a society invent gods who are no better than they are? What does this tell you about that society's understanding of itself? Be sure to use specific examples and quotations from the epic to support your answer.
19. In Book V of Homer's *Iliad*, Apollo says to Diomedes, "Beware, son of Tydeus, and give way, nor seek to match your spirit with the gods, for in no way alike are the race of immortal gods and that of men who walk the earth." How true is Apollo's assertion? Are the gods and men in the epic really "in no way alike"? Discuss the similarities and differences between the gods and men of Homer's narrative and consider how these similarities and differences drive the plot of the story.
20. Several of the main characters in Homer's *Iliad* are forced to choose between gaining glory on the field of battle and being able to return to their families and loved ones. What do the choices made by these men indicate about the relative values of glory and family in the eyes of the poet? Would soldiers seeking to pursue biblical morality and values make the same choices? Why or why not? Support your conclusions from both the poem and the Bible.
21. In Philippians 2:3-4, Paul writes, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." How would the tale told in Homer's *Iliad* have turned out differently had the main characters taken the words of Paul seriously? Choose three characters who could have benefitted from Paul's exhortation and explain why their lives, and the story as a whole, would have turned out better had they taken heed to this teaching.
22. How might Achilles, the greatest warrior in Homer's *Iliad*, have profited from Paul's instructions in Ephesians 4:25-32? How does the contrast between his behavior and attitudes and those laid out in this passage illustrate the uniqueness of Christian morality?
23. Which characters in Homer's *Iliad* are most associated with wisdom? What do they do to earn their reputations? Do they prove themselves to be more or less wise than Athena, the goddess of wisdom, as she continually inserts herself into the action of the story?

24. Compare and contrast the three mortal women who play significant roles in Homer's *Iliad*. Helen, Andromache, and Hecuba are all wives of prominent Trojans. Which is most admirable? Which least? Consider how they feel about the war, how they respond to their husbands and the roles the men play in the conflict, and what these qualities reveal about them as individuals.
25. Some critics of Homer's *Iliad* have suggested that the scenes showing the interactions among the gods provide comic relief, breaking up the unending descriptions of blood and slaughter among the mortals. Do you agree? If so, why would the poet choose to make the gods so petty and ineffectual? If not, what purpose do these scenes serve in the narrative and how do they support the themes of the epic?
26. Many writers use foreshadowing in their stories to give hints to the reader about how the tale will end, but the poet in Homer's *Iliad* goes far beyond normal use of the technique. Frequently throughout the narrative, Homer puts into the mouths of various characters, both mortal and immortal, blatant statements of the fall of Troy and the deaths of figures like Hector, Patroclus, and Achilles. Does knowing how the story ends take away from your enjoyment of the epic? Why or why not? Keep in mind that the story would have been a very familiar one to Homer's readers before he ever wrote it down, so he wasn't ruining any surprises for his audience; no "spoiler alert" would have been needed.
27. In Homer's *Iliad*, one can easily see that the mortal warriors are motivated by emotions like anger, jealousy, and the desire for glory, but what motivates the gods and goddesses? Why do they favor one side rather than the other or choose to protect certain mortals? Are their motives worthy ones? To what extent do they mirror those of the mortals with whose lives they constantly interfere?
28. Does any character in Homer's *Iliad* qualify as a villain? Why or why not? Dramatic interest often is built on a conflict between good and evil. How can such dramatic interest be sustained without a figure or figures who clearly represent the evil against which those who are good must struggle?
29. In Homer's *Iliad*, was Achilles justified in his response to the calculated insult of Agamemnon? If so, why? If not, why not? Does your opinion of his response change as the poem progresses, especially after Agamemnon's attempt to make things right is rejected?
30. Homer's *Iliad* depicts few changes in the characters of the story, but Achilles is an exception to this rule. Discuss how and why Achilles changes in the course of the poem, and how those changes contribute to the overall themes of the epic. Be sure to use specifics in your analysis.

31. Because of oracles and prophecies, leading characters such as Achilles and Hector in Homer's *Iliad* go into battle knowing that, if they do, they will never see their homes and families again. Nonetheless, they choose to go rather than trying to avoid certain death. What do these choices say about the values and priorities of the societies of which these men were a part? Are these choices to be celebrated, or should we view them as misguided? Support your conclusions with specifics from the poem.

32. In the last book of Homer's *Iliad*, Apollo complains to the gods on Olympus about their favoritism toward the Achaeans when he says, "It is Achilles whom you gods wish to help, he whose heart is not just, nor is the mind placable within his breast, but he is set on cruelty like a lion that sets upon men's flocks in his great strength and proud spirit to get its meat. So Achilles has murdered pity, and he has no sense of shame." Is this an accurate assessment of Achilles' character? Why or why not? Be sure to cite both incidents and quotations in supporting your argument.