



# The World of the Hero: Homer's *Iliad*

Guide for A Level OCR Classical Civilisation

[zigzageducation.co.uk](http://zigzageducation.co.uk)

POD  
12588

Publish your own work... Write to a brief...  
Register at [publishmenow.co.uk](http://publishmenow.co.uk)

Follow us on X (Twitter) [@ZigZagClassics](https://twitter.com/ZigZagClassics)

# Contents

<b>Product Support from ZigZag Education .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Terms and Conditions of Use .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Teacher’s Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section A: Historical Context.....</b>	<b>2</b>
The mythological origins.....	2
The poem .....	2
The social, cultural and religious context .....	3
<b>Section B: Prescribed Literature .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Book 1: Plague and Wrath .....	4
Book 3: A Duel and a Trojan View of the Greeks.....	7
Book 4: The Oath is Broken and Battle Joined.....	10
Book 6: Hector and Andromache .....	12
Book 9: The Embassy to Achilles.....	14
Book 10: Diomedes and Odysseus: the Night Attack .....	16
Book 16: The Death of Patroclus .....	17
Book 17: The Struggle over Patroclus.....	19
Book 18: Achilles’ Decision .....	20
Book 19: The Feud Ends.....	22
Book 22: The Death of Hector .....	23
Book 23: The Funeral and the Games.....	24
Book 24: Priam and Achilles .....	25
<b>Section C: Thematic Summary and Exam Advice .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Specified topics .....	27
The exam itself.....	28
Modern scholarship and secondary literature .....	30

# Teacher's Introduction

The aim of this guide is to develop the knowledge and skills required to answer questions for OCR's Classical Civilisation A Level examination: H408/11 The World of the Hero.

Candidates may study Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey* as part of this component. **This guide is for the *Iliad*.** Students must also study Virgil's *Aeneid*, for which a separate guide exists.

The guide has three sections:

1. **Section A:** where relevant historical context is introduced
2. **Section B:** where a commentary is provided for the prescribed literature, linked to relevant themes and topics, as set out in the specification
3. **Section C:** where themes are drawn together, and exam advice

Learners are advised to use the guide as follows:

1. Read the historical context (Section A).
2. Read each prescribed book through first, using the summaries to help understand and consolidate knowledge of the more important people, places and events (Section B).
3. Study the notes, which are arranged around themes listed in the specification, as appropriate to each individual book. This layout is designed specifically to reduce the tendency for candidates to give narrative or chronological accounts in responses. Discuss the characters and themes, and complete the activities for each book (Section B). Activities based on the question styles in the exam will help students develop their critical and analytical skills.
4. After a study of each of the prescribed books, consider the *Iliad* as a whole (Section C).

## Books to be studied

- |    |   |    |                             |
|----|---|----|-----------------------------|
| 1  | Plague and Wrath                        | 17 | The Struggle Over Patroclus |
| 3  | A Duel and a Trojan View of the Greeks  | 18 | Achilles' Decision          |
| 4  | The Oath is Broken and Battle Joined    | 19 | The Feud Ends               |
| 6  | Hector and Andromache                   | 22 | The Death of Hector         |
| 9  | The Embassy to Achilles                 | 23 | The Funeral and the Games   |
| 10 | Diomedes and Odysseus: the Night Attack | 24 | Priam and Achilles          |
| 16 | The Death of Patroclus                  |    |                             |

## Text

This guide uses *The Iliad* translated by EV Rieu, revised and updated by Peter Jones with DCH Rieu (Penguin), as endorsed by OCR. OCR also endorses the online translation by A Kline, available at [www.poetryintranslation.com](http://www.poetryintranslation.com)

Where required for close comment, passages from both versions will be printed on the examination paper. The line numbers given are approximations based on Rieu's translation, which has increments of 10 in the margins.

August 2024

## Section A: Historical Context

### The mythological origins

The mythological origins of the possibly real war at Troy are well known: Zeus is, as so often, dallying, on this occasion, with Thetis, a daughter of the sea god Poseidon. It is prophesied that the son of Thetis will be a better man than his father. While this might be a matter of pride in any mortal man, to Zeus it is unacceptable: Thetis must marry another. This is the theme of the wedding feast of Thetis and the mortal Peleus – with the exception of Eris (Strife) who, for obvious reasons, has not been invited. Nevertheless, she makes an impression by casting a golden apple into the throng. Engraved ‘For the Fairest’, it causes immediate discord between Hera, Athene and Aphrodite. Zeus declines to judge this famous beauty contest, instead delegating the responsibility to Paris, a prince of Troy. It is Aphrodite who successfully convinces Paris to award the apple to her, offering in return the most beautiful woman in the world: Helen. But Helen is married to Menelaus, King of Sparta. Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, lead an armada to sail to Troy and recover Helen. The Greeks establish their camp with the plain between them and the walls of Troy lies the plain on which the battle will be fought. The war lasts ten years. The events of a fifty-day period in the tenth year of the war are recorded in the *Iliad*. The events do not include the conclusion of the war.



Helen

### The poem

In the briefest terms possible, the plot of our *Iliad* concerns the conflict and eventual resolution of a quarrel between Achilles, son of Peleus and Thetis, and Agamemnon, commander-in-chief of the Greek forces at Troy.

The poem is composed of 24 Books, each of somewhere between 500–1,000 lines of hexameter verse. According to conventional wisdom, the *Iliad* evolved orally, over many generations of bards, passed from father to son, the whole a conglomeration of the efforts of countless anonymous artists, each telling and retelling the various episodes until they came to be shaped, polished and compiled into a version that was eventually committed to writing, and which has come down to us, credited to ‘Homer’. The Trojan War is supposed to have taken place in the thirteenth century BC, and stories have been told about it until the eventual compilation of a settled *Iliad* in the eighth century BC. However, it should be said that some scholars, most recently Robin Lane Fox (*Homer and his Iliad*, 2023), make cogent arguments for the existence of a single author, ‘Homer’, specific in time and space.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## The social, cultural and religious context

The poem serves as an invaluable source of knowledge and understanding not only of Trojan heroes, but also of their attitudes and values – or at least the values and attitudes of their creator, whether he was a single poet or a committee working over decades – compelling to the poem’s audience.

For example, the character of Achilles embodies an awareness, at least, of the idea of the power of Fate. His first words to his mother, the living Thetis, at 1.352 hint at this: ‘I bore me to live the briefest of lives...’ Thetis is more explicit (1.415ff):

*‘My son, why do you curse in my child-bearing, was it for this I nursed you? I have been your nurse, but you pass your days without tears or trouble beside the ships, since death is short for you, no time at all. As it is, you are not only doomed to an early death but a miserable life. It was indeed to an evil destiny that I brought you into the world.’*

In case we missed it, we are left in no doubt when Thetis approaches Zeus at 1.500: ‘I am out for an early death...’ and later, at 9.410, Achilles himself is clear:

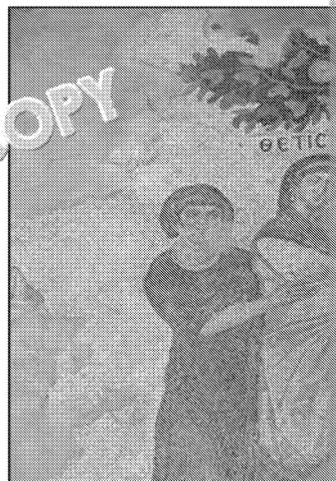
*‘My divine mother, silver-footed Thetis, says that destiny has left two courses open for my journey to the grave. If I stay here and fight it out round Ilium, there is no glory, but there will be eternal glory instead. If I go back to the land of my fathers, my life will be long and I will be spared an early death.’*

Achilles seems to present these as possibilities between which he has made a choice. To what extent are we meant to think that Achilles was really free to choose? If he was fated to die, was he not fated to choose to do so? Thus wider ideas about free will and determinism are on the surface of Homer’s narrative.

As with so many seemingly discreet episodes in the *Iliad*, this too is a part of the fabric of narrative which contributes to the overall picture of this single aspect, Achilles’ confrontation with his mortality, offers a window into the wider world. For example, we find here, too, a glimpse into Greek ideas about the relationship between mothers and children.

Other aspects of social life in the Mycenaean age, too, are accessible via this extraordinary example, distinct social hierarchies emerge, both in the Greek camp and inside the city (as the most powerful of the Greek kings) and Priam (as king of Troy) down past the nobles and Hector, through unnamed warriors to slaves and prisoners, valued more as booty in war than as people. Although the Greeks have, of course, brought no women with them, a number of women in the Greek camp captured in war and enslaved, and the role of the servant class, can be clearly discerned in Homer’s depiction of Trojan society. The way in which the servant class is seen in action throughout the poem: the way in which characters address each other (and in which they conduct their duels on the battlefield?) is highly stylised, so not perfectly realistic but rather a distillation of the most significant aspects of real life. Examples might include the convention of guest-friendship (*xenia*), as played out especially (but not only) in Book 9 of the *Iliad*, ‘The Embassy to Achilles’, where the formal rituals associated with hospitality are so clearly laid out before us.

Thus it can be said that the *Iliad* provides a unique and extremely rich and valuable insight into Greek society of the Mycenaean age: it will reward a lifetime’s reading and rereading; indeed to explore every aspect of the *Iliad* is perhaps the work of many lifetimes!



Achilles' face

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Section B: Prescribed Literature

The action of the poem begins in the tenth year of the Greek siege of Troy. Unless each book follow without passage of time.

### Book 1: Prayer and Wrath

**Summary:** The Trojan priest of Apollo, **Chryses**, comes to the Greek camp to negotiate for his daughter, **Chryseis**. The Greek commander-in-chief, **Agamemnon**, against the will of the priest's request (and a generous ransom offer). Chryses withdraws, but prays to Apollo for the Greeks. On the tenth day of the plague, **Achilles**, inspired by Hera, calls a public assembly of the Greek army. A Greek prophet **Calchas** to discover a possible way forward. Calchas reports that Chryseis is the cause of the plague. Agamemnon accepts this, on condition that he receive another 'prize' in return to help himself from Achilles' booty. Achilles reminds Agamemnon that he, Achilles, is the best of the Greeks; he threatens to return to Greece. Agamemnon declines to beg Achilles to return to Troy; he threatens to return to Greece. Agamemnon declines to beg Achilles to return to Troy. Agamemnon's advice does Achilles refrain from disembowelling Agamemnon. **Nestor** tries but fails. Achilles withdraws to his hut while Agamemnon prepares a ship for the return of Chryseis and Eurybates to fetch **Briseis** from Achilles' hut. Achilles gives her up before sitting down to commune with his mother, the sea nymph **Thetis**. He reminds her how she once helped him and Athene had plotted against him – so Zeus must owe her a favour: Achilles persuades Thetis to influence Zeus to punish Zeus to punish Agamemnon by giving success to the Trojan army. Zeus returns Chryseis to her father, who prays to Apollo, and asks him to end the plague. Apollo grants Achilles' request, to which he agrees. Hera challenges Zeus about his secret plotting. Zeus and Hera are reconciled by Hephaestus.

#### Notes

Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and Menelaus, king of Sparta, are brothers, sons of King Atreus. Helen, wife of Menelaus, was taken to Paris to his home, Ilium, or Troy, in western Asia. Agamemnon, approached by Menelaus, has gathered together an expeditionary force, including many Greek warlords and their troops: Odysseus of Ithaca, Nestor of Pylos, Achilles of Phthia, and many more.

Achilles is the son of Peleus and the sea nymph Thetis, who enjoys a unique relationship with Zeus (she had helped protect him when the other gods attempted to overthrow him), whom she visits at his home on Mount Olympus, where he lives with other immortals such as Hera, Athene, Apollo, Hephaestus, etc.



The war

#### Themes

##### *mênis*

The first word of the first line of the first poem in Western literature, *mênis*, *menis* in Greek. In Homer's original Greek, the Muse is then invoked before the name of the audience.

*μήνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος*  
Homer, *Iliad* 1.1

Scholars suggest that it is a word associated with the gods, so the heightened 'wrath' is often chosen as the best English translation.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



- Do you agree that Achilles' anger in Book 1 (and the rest of the *Iliad*, in due course) is a natural human emotion?
- Is a 'godlike' wrath a more or less understandable emotion in the circumstances?
- Why is Achilles so angry?

**Death, mortality, and *kleos* (reputation) and *timē* (honour)**

Achilles addresses Thetis (line 352): 'Mother... you bore me to live the briefest of lives. At the very beginning of the poem, we (and Achilles) are aware that death is close at hand, the gift of a goddess, but he himself is mortal and must face that mortality, perhaps so that he can desire for *kleos*, the reputation that will outlive him, the closest thing to immortality. And it is why he takes so much offence at Agamemnon's failure to show him proper *timē*.

**Conflict and Resolution**

The story of the *Iliad* occurs in the context of major conflict between Greeks and Trojans, and of internal conflicts; the development and eventual resolution of all of these will be the focus of the poem.

**Activity 1**

Copy and complete the following table, cataloguing instances of conflict in Book 1.

Who?	Why?	Resolution?
Chryses vs Greeks	The Greeks must return Chryseis	Chryses prays to Apollo

**Characterisation**

Agamemnon is commander-in-chief of the allied Greek forces; Achilles is the greatest warrior. Each is the natural leader in his own way. By a close reading of how they interact with each other, how Homer contrasts the pair, the more clearly to delineate each of them as psychological characters.

**Activity 2**

Consider the following questions. Where possible, provide quotations from the text to support your responses.

- What is Agamemnon's opinion of Achilles, and Achilles' opinion of Agamemnon?
- How far are these opinions justified?
- Why does Agamemnon take Briseis?
- To what extent is Achilles justified in his reaction to the loss of Briseis?

The Book is populated with several less prominent characters, both mortal and immortal. How does Homer make these more than mere names... or does he?

**Activity 3**

Based on your reading of Book 1, write 30–50 words or more on each of the following characters, giving your impression of each of the following.

- Chryseis
- Calchas
- Nestor
- Thetis
- Hera
- Hephaestus

**COPYRIGHT PROTECTED**



## Social, cultural and religious context

### The role of the immortals

Book 1 includes some action set on Mount Olympus. Think about:

- how this episode serves to enhance the rest of the Book;
- parallels, if any, between events set in the Greek camp and those on Olympus;
- how the Homeric gods compare in character and/or ability with other ideas of gods.

It is noteworthy that not only gods but also mortals play a prominent part in the first book. Calchas, who pleads with Agamemnon for the return of his daughter Chryseis, is a priest of Apollo. He follows the advice of the Greek seer Calchas. As mentioned previously, Achilles' relationship with his mother and the knowledge of the shortness of his life is an acknowledgment of the immortals.

### Life in the Greek camp

Homer does not, yet, give us much sense of life in the Greek camp, although (at about 1.105–110) he describes 'his hut and ships.' This feels fairly natural; however, it is perhaps more surprising that Achilles, who is 'Achilles had the men summoned to assembly.' That Homer, without further comment, depicts Achilles as a man who is decidedly not the officer commanding, act in this way does give us an interesting insight into the character of Achilles.

### Men, women and family relationships

Women, too, are important (and will continue to be so, in later Books): although Agamemnon enjoys 'centre stage', they nevertheless drive the plot as Agamemnon and Achilles argue (and how far their argument is really about Chryseis and Briseis is open to question).

Family, too, is important: Chryses has come to rescue his daughter; before long Agamemnon will take his mother.

## Literary techniques and composition

### Speeches

A large proportion of Homer's *Iliad*, in general, and Book 1 in particular, is comprised of speeches. This is a narrative variety that could otherwise risk being reduced to no more than a list of events, the detailed description notwithstanding.

Speeches are also an important tool in the poet's armoury when it comes to characterisation. Achilles is like, not only because of what he does, but also, perhaps more usefully, because of how he says it.

The main action of Book 1 of the *Iliad* can easily be imagined as a Greek drama, and this section is particularly dramatic. The bard embodies the characters, who, in his performance, are brought to life.

### Activity 4

Read *Iliad* 1.105–190. Find evidence in the speeches of Agamemnon and Achilles.

- (a) Homer reveals character through direct speech
- (b) Homer uses speeches to progress the plot

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



[In Book 2, Agamemnon has readied the Greeks for battle]

## Book 3: A Duel and a Trojan View of

**Summary:** Greeks and Trojans approach for battle. **Paris** steps out from the Trojan comers. From the Greek side, **Menelaus** steps forward. Paris immediately retreats but accepts that he should fight. Hector and Menelaus discuss the details of the duel and impending combat; **Helen** joins **Priam** at the **Scaean gate**, where she identifies to Ajax. After a sacrifice and exchange of gifts, lots are drawn, Paris and Menelaus begins; Menelaus' sword cuts Paris, but he grabs Paris' helmet and drags him toward the city. Athena intervenes to break Menelaus' grip and remove Paris in a mist. She takes him to his quarters where he is reunited with Helen. Helen initially refuses to go. Aphrodite insists, and Paris and Helen are reunited. In Book 4, Agamemnon, declaring Menelaus the victor of the duel, demands that Helen be given to him.

### Notes

Paris and Hector are brothers, sons of Priam, king of Troy; Paris has returned to Troy with Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta.

The Scaean gate is one of the most famous landmarks in the topography of Troy (others include, for example, various trees and rivers). The gate, a defensive architectural feature in the Mycenaean style, is supposed to have overlooked the main battlefield where much of the action of the *Iliad* is set.

Iris, goddess of the rainbow, acts as the gods' messenger; Aphrodite, goddess of physical love, supports the Trojans in general and Paris in particular: he awarded her the prize of the golden apple after the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, long preceding the events retold in the *Iliad*.

### Themes

#### Life in Troy

Troy is a city under siege: life happens behind high walls and closed gates. Beyond these constraints, however, Homer gives little sense of hardship in daily life, at least for the aristocratic class: in Book 3, when Iris visits Helen as the Trojan War is about to begin, she finds her 'in the hall at work on a great web of purple cloth'. There are waiting-women, 'set out from her room... In a little while they reached the Scaean gate in conference with the elders of the town...'. Later, after Aphrodite has snatched Helen from Menelaus, 'she put him down in his own perfumed, fragrant bedroom.' Soon, Helen is in her 'house', and makes her way to 'her lofty bedroom'.

### Characterisation

In Book 3, we meet the Trojan heroes for the first time. How similar to / different from the Greek heroes are they?

#### Activity 5

What sort of character is Paris? Consider his appearance, his actions, what he says, what others say about him. How is your first impression (from *Il* 3.15–75) reinforced or subverted by his actions in Book 3? How is your impression of Paris reinforced or subverted by Helen at *Il* 3.425–445? Quote from the text to justify your response.

Helen, too, plays a significant role in this Book. Although not a large 'speaking role' for her, she is central to the plot – it is for her, after all, that the whole Trojan War is being fought, and it is Paris and Menelaus who are going to fight it out with their spears for the woman'.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



**Activity 6**  
 How is Helen regarded by the Trojans in Book 3? Is their attitude to her what you would expect? How is her attitude to herself and her own situation? How do your answers to these questions compare with those of Peter Jones? Peter Jones says that ‘Helen is revealed as a woman full of self-remorse, Paris as a woman full of self-importance’. How far do you think that Book 3 supports his assessment?

**Heroic values**

**Activity 7**  
 Note Hector's speech rebuking Paris at // 3.40–45: what are his criticisms of his brother's values? How far are these values aligned with those of Achilles in Book 9?

**Social, cultural and religious context**

**Oaths**

The Homeric epics are commonly cited in support of the idea that Mycenaean society was polytheistic. It is certainly true that the gods play an important part in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. A detailed description of how the arrangements for the duel are agreed between the two sides (// 3.15–315). This involves:

- i. ritual cleansing
- ii. ceremonial cutting of animal hair
- iii. distribution of animal hair among the key witnesses
- iv. the oath itself, invoking Zeus and other all-seeing gods
- v. slaughter of the animals
- vi. libation of wine
- vii. closing prayer, again to Zeus

(The dead animals are then removed from the house by Priam: this is an oath, not a sacrifice.)

**The gods**

What is the nature of a ‘Greek god’ as presented to us by Homer? Certainly they are stronger and more powerful than men, and they have power over life and death. However, it seems that even Zeus does not know everything; gods cannot be in two places at once; they generally but do not always disguise themselves when they walk among mortals; they even receive immediate respect or obedience from Helen (see // 3.385–445).

**Activity 8**  
 What power does Aphrodite display in Book 3? What powers or qualities that you would expect of a goddess does she lack? In what ways, if any, are Homer's immortals better than his mortal heroes?

**Women**

Women of both high and low social status, mortal and immortal, appear in Book 3.

**Activity 9**  
 Of the women who appear in Book 3, which are named, and which are anonymous? How do they interact with (a) each other; and (b) men?

**COPYRIGHT  
 PROTECTED**



## Literary techniques and composition

### Epithets

Epithets are characteristic of the Homeric epics and, indeed, it makes a certain amount of sense to be called 'warlike' (20) and Iris 'swift-footed' (130). But what does Homer mean when he refers to 'godlike Paris' (15, etc.)? Is Helen's waiting-woman Clymene called 'ox-eyed' (somehow) like those of an ox – or because she looks (somehow) like ox-eyed Helen? 'Ox-eyed' in the first place? Epithets are easy to spot but not always easy to explain. Do they really add characterisation? *Really?* If so, do they work, then?

### Activity 10

Collect epithets from Book 3. What is the purpose, in each case, of the epithet? How does it serve the purpose in every case?

### Similes

As with epithets, similes in the *Iliad* are easy to find (there are over 300) – but they repay close study, providing insights not only into the events or characters being compared but also into Homer's real-life world, beyond his text. Book 3 provides a variety of similes.

### Activity 11

Copy and complete the following table, cataloguing the similes in Book 3.

Tenor (thing being compared)	Vehicle (what it's being compared to)	Category (natural world / human)
Trojan advance (3.1 ff.)	cranes attacking Pygmies	animals

Now look again at each simile you have catalogued: in each case, how does the simile enhance the appreciation of the surrounding text; in other words, what does the comparison achieve?

### Time

It has long been noticed that, when events unfold simultaneously in Homer, the period of time taken to deal with one matter is taken to have passed. Book 3 provides an example: at line 115, Hector sends Homer 'cuts' to Iris visiting Helen, and Helen's conversation with Priam at the Scaean Gate turns again to the heralds, *who by now have arrived* in Troy. Thus Homer achieves a lot by keeping the narrative moving forward.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



INSPECTION COPY



# Book 4: The Oath is Broken and Battle

**Summary:** The Book opens with an **assembly** of the gods on **Olympus**: Zeus observes supporting Menelaus, take no active part in the war; Aphrodite, though, has just proposed that the gods make peace; the goddesses will have none of it. Athene, the Trojan **Pandarus** to **shoot an arrow** at Menelaus. Pandarus shoots, but Athene does not seriously injured. Nevertheless, the **truce** is broken. Agamemnon inspects his rebuking others. The Greeks move into battle in a force and as relentlessly as the sheep. Ares for the Trojans, Athene for the Greeks and then Apollo, urging the Trojans. **Pergamus**, all get involved. The Greek and Trojan heroes kill each other in

## Notes



At // 1.55, Achilles called an assembly of the Greek warriors; Book 4 opens with the gods sitting down 'in assembly with Zeus on Olympus' golden floor'. Homer makes little of this, but it is an interesting hint at a protodemocratic way of organising society: the dramatic date of the poem is the thirteenth century BCE; 'Homer' is 'writing' in the eighth century; histories of 'Greek democracy' typically begin in the sixth century.

Pandarus, the Trojan who precipitates the end of the truce, does so with bow and arrow. Although the Romans would cast this as the weapon of cowards (such as their enemies, the Parthians), and it is with an arrow, i.e. from a distance, that Paris will (outside the text of the *Iliad*) cause the death of Achilles, it should be remembered that Apollo, too, uses bow and arrow to strike 'from afar'.

The truce was established in Book 3 for the purpose of the duel between Paris and Menelaus. It should be remembered that while the terms of the duel itself were ratified by the gods, the truce between the armies was a voluntary agreement. In other words, the Greek Pandarus is not guilty rather it is the Trojans who have 'trampled on the sacred oaths', i.e. the terms of line 155.

Pergamus is the name of the citadel in the centre of the city of Ilium (Troy); sometimes 'Pergamus' can be used to refer to the city as a whole.

## Themes

**Heroic values: *timē* (honour) and *kleos* (reputation)**

Agamemnon makes a tour of his forces (lines 250–420). In his encouragement to the his chastisement of those by whom he is disappointed, his (and his followers') devotion reputation are to the fore. He plays on these – more or less skilfully – in his efforts to

### Activity 12

How effective are Agamemnon's 'leadership skills' as demonstrated at // 4.250–4 appeal to? Are there any other values which he might do better?

### The portrayal of war

In Book 4 Homer shows us for the first time the joining of battle by the armies in an emphatic and dramatic way, introducing the scene with extended similes, and including the involvement of other immortals (Terror, Panic and Strife), Homer 'zooms in' on seven deaths kill each other with alternate success; Apollo rallies the Trojans; there is one more the end of the Book, by which time the Greeks have lost three heroes, the Trojans creates a sense of wide and indiscriminate slaughter in the closing lines of the Book lay there in their multitudes...'

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



### Death and mortality

The fighting described on the battlefield is detailed; the deaths (the Greeks Elpenor, Echeopolus, Simoïsius, Democoön and Peiros; 'Trojans and Greeks in their multitud... When Menelaus is wounded by Pandarus' arrow, Agamemnon says, '... if your life... course, how bitterly I shall lament you.' It seems that death is to be regretted – b

### Characterisation

#### Activity 13

Consider the men encountered by Agamemnon in his tour (lines 250–420):

- Idomenus
- Ajax
- Teucer
- Odyseus
- Diomedes
- Sthenelus

How does Homer characterise each of them? Does he use the same techniques in... Which characters do you think are most effectively brought to life?

### Social, cultural and religious context

#### Fate

The lives of men are governed by fate or destiny as much as by their own actions... lament Menelaus if his life 'has really run its destined course'; later, 'destiny shall

#### Activity 14: Discussion

Is this the same usage as the great headlines of the narrative (Troy is fated to fall... Or merely a shorthand for 'their time had come' with little or no meaningful meta... what are the implications of your answers to these questions?

#### Role of the immortals

The gods play an important part in Book 4, as it is through them that the fighting... Book 3. Zeus has already (in Book 1) promised Thetis that the Greeks will suffer;... golden apple... the annihilation of Troy. Therefore fighting must resume... happen – but... to protect her favoured Greeks – which she proceed... and less critically to the plot, Ares (440) and Apollo (505) urge on the Trojans; Ath

#### Activity 15

Consider the relationship between gods and men: how much do you think the gods... they do, why?

### Literary techniques and composition

#### Activity 16

Consider the deaths of:

- Elpenor
- Leucus
- Simoïsius
- Democoön
- Peiros

How does Homer maintain the reader's interest? Does he use the same technique...

#### Activity

Il 4.127, 'you, Menelaus': what effect does Homer achieve with his use of apostrophe...

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



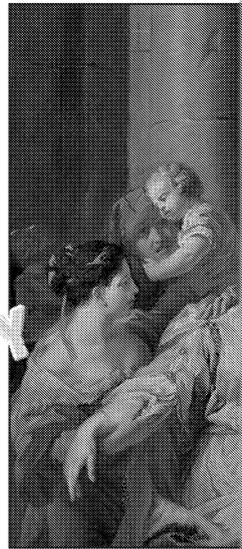
## Book 6: Hector and Andromach

**Summary:** The battle continues; the Book begins with a catalogue of Greek successes. Brother **Helenus**, a prophet, rallies the Trojans before retreating inside Troy to tell **sacrifice** to Athene. On the battlefield, Greek Diomedes challenges Trojan Glaucus with the story of **Bellerophon**; the pair discover a **family bond**, agree to exchange armour. Meanwhile, in Troy, Hector meets his mother **Hecabe**; she and her ladies-in-waiting **shakes her head**. Hector rebukes Paris and rebukes him; Paris agrees to join the battle. **Andromach** and Paris meet at the Scaean gate. When Hector reaches the baby cradle, he is frightened by his father's plumed helmet. Hector and Paris depart.

### Notes

The Greeks' (and, as far as Homer knew) the Trojans' relationships with their gods were transactional; hence Helenus' advice to Hector here that Hecabe sacrifice to Athene her most valuable robe, with the promise of further animal offerings to come in return for protection from Diomedes. (Later in the Book, when the offering is made, and Theano voices the prayer to Athene, and when the goddess shakes her head in refusal, Homer gives no explanation.)

Diomedes' meeting with Glaucus on the battlefield provides a vivid description of how the convention of *xenia* might actually have worked, at least in the folk-imagination: one guest invites another to identify himself; the host presents a potted family history; his guest finds a connection, and their guest-friendship is cemented, in this case with an exchange of armour, albeit an unequal one.



Hector's

Hector rebuked Paris in Book 3, and reprises this role again here; Paris again accepts

### Themes

**Heroic values: *xenia* (guest-friendship), *timē* (honour) and *kleos* (reputation)**  
The conventions of *xenia* are more often associated with the *Odyssey*, but the encounter with Glaucus in Book 6 of the *Iliad* provides an excellent example of how Homer imagined it worked on dry land, between mortals. While obviously highly stylised, this episode is detailed enough to have been credible to the poem's audience.

#### Activity 18

Discuss the exchange between Hector and Glaucus in *Iliad* 6.119–236. How does Glaucus' myth link him to Diomedes? What are the benefits to each warrior of this new-found friendship? How does it have to do with *timē* or *kleos*?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT PROTECTED



## Characterisation

### Activity 19

Compare the conversation between Hector and Paris here (lines 320–340) with the conversation in Activity 7: what (if anything) is the same about the characters and the relationship? If anything, is different?

### Activity 20

Hector and Helen, Hecabe, Andromache (and Astyanax): What is Hector's relationship with each of the women? How does he address them? Does he treat them all in the same way? If not, how do you detect, and how do you explain these?



## Religious context

### Activity 21

Answer the following questions:

- In Book 6, who prays?
- To whom?
- Why?
- What is the response?
- Why?

## Literary techniques and composition

### Activity 22

- Retell Book 6 in your own words, without the use of direct speech: what is good about this?
- Find an example of 'Zieliński's law' (see page 9).



COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



[In Book 7, Hector's duel with Ajax is described]

[In Book 8, Hector enjoys success on the battlefield and confidently encourages t

## Book 9: The Embassy to Achilles

**Summary:** It has become clear to Agamemnon that his dream (from the end of Book 2), promising Greek victory, was false. He accepts Nestor's suggestion that Agamemnon catalogue the gifts he will offer Achilles, if only he will return to the war. Nestor and Ajax approach Achilles with the offer, which Achilles immediately rejects. He is angry. Phoenix reminds Achilles of their close relationship since the latter's childhood, and Achilles softens. Nestor and Ajax, too, makes an appeal; Achilles says that he won't return until the Greeks cause destruction to his own ships or men.

### Notes

That the gods should communicate with mortals via dreams goes unremarked in other times and in other places); furthermore, now that it has become clear that he is desperate, but not resentful (the gods will have their reasons, we need not

### Themes

#### Heroic values: *timē* (honour) and *kleos* (reputation)

Homer's heroes are driven not only by their desire for glory and their concern for reputation; they are also undeniably materialistic: they fight for booty. So when Agamemnon accepts Nestor's advice that he should seek reconciliation with Achilles, this will naturally take the form of a physical transfer of tangible wealth: that this will be sufficient for Achilles seems a reasonable assumption by all. However, what Agamemnon has failed to see (and as Jones points out, for Achilles this is not about gifts: it is about respect. So the embassy is bound to fail – which is, of course, important to the overall plot of the poem.

#### Life in the Greek war camp

The embassy makes its way to the Myrmidons' 'huts and ships' at about line 185. In spite of a lack of explicit description by Homer, we do nevertheless get some impression of Achilles' accommodation and living conditions. What is this impression? What details contribute to it in your mind's eye?

#### *menis* (wrath, anger)

It might be said that anger is at the heart of the *Iliad*: as we have seen, it claims the first word of the epic, and it is responsible for much of the action of the plot. But the famous wrath of Achilles need not always be the florid, teeth-gnashing rage of Book 1: here, in Book 9, Achilles' anger, while clearly continuing to smoulder, is of a quite different nature from his anger in Book 1. Explore the various shapes of anger present throughout the poem.

#### Conflict/reconciliation

Think about Agamemnon's attempt to reconcile his conflict with Achilles: on what realistic weight do you place his offer? How [un]reasonable is Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's offer? Consider the perspectives of other characters in your calculations.

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



## Characterisation through literary technique

All the direct speech in Book 9 adds significantly to our understanding of the characters who make up Agamemnon's embassy, and of Homer's artful technique in the 'Odysseus', Phoenix's and Ajax's speeches, and each of Achilles' rejections. How, in what way and to what extent? Are Achilles' rejections reasonable or irrational? How do they change or reinforce what he says and how he says it in Book 9?

### Hospitality and guest-friendship (*xenia*)

One aspect of *xenia* came to the fore in Book 5 (see page 12), when Glaucus and Odysseus, having uncovered a distant connection through Bellerophon; another is shown in the relationship between Achilles and his guests here: can you discern the formal elements of *xenia* in the text?



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



# Book 10: Diomedes and Odysseus: the

**Summary:** Agamemnon cannot sleep; he sets out to visit Nestor. Menelaus, too, visits Agamemnon, who says that he will fetch Nestor, while Menelaus should gather arms. When they have gathered, Nestor suggests a night attack on the Trojans. Diomedes and Odysseus agree, and they set off, having prayed to Athene, who hears their prayer. Meanwhile, Hector sends Dolon to the Trojans to steal out and gather intelligence of the Greeks' movements. Dolon, when he has set off, is captured by Diomedes and Odysseus, who, with Odysseus, threatens him to reveal the positions of the Trojan sentries and their watches. Diomedes kills Dolon, and proceeds to attack the Trojan sentries during their sleep, while Odysseus manages the theft of their horses. The pair return to the Greek camp to retrieve Patroclus's armor on their way past his corpse.

## Notes

Jones (p. 164) is convincing in his argument that this stand-alone episode (sometimes considered a later addition to 'Homer's' 'original' *Iliad*). Not so late, however, that it was unknown to Virgil when he composed the ninth Book of the *Aeneid*.

## Themes

### Characterisation and heroic values: *timē* (honour) and *kleos* (reputation)

To what extent are Odysseus and Diomedes concerned with honour and reputation in Book 10? How similar are their behaviours and attitudes in Book 10 to those of other characters elsewhere in the *Iliad*? How consistent are they here with their own behaviour elsewhere?



Diomedes

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



[In Books 11–15, many and various battles are described, as the war progresses Trojans in the ascendant...]

## Book 16: The Death of Patroclus

**Summary:** Patroclus approaches Achilles in great distress over recent Trojan success, pleading with Achilles to stop his proud and cruel retreat. Achilles repeats his grievance against Agamemnon, concedes that he can let Patroclus fight, but concedes he has pushed the Trojans back: he must go no further into the hands of Hector. Patroclus arms himself, Achilles inspires the Myrmidons and both strengthen their resolve to protect Patroclus. The Greeks enjoy success, although for a while. At last they begin to scatter, but are rallied by Sarpedon, a son of Zeus, who considers Sarpedon's life as he engages with Patroclus. Hera points out that this would be a bad omen for Sarpedon in a duel; Greeks and Trojans struggle for his body. The Greeks win his body, and Apollo to save the corpse. Zeus inspires Patroclus to go further than Achilles had done, before urging Hector against him. Apollo strikes Patroclus, knocking Achilles back. Euphorbos, a Trojan on his first day in battle, spears him from behind before he is rescued up with Patroclus as he moves back and stabs him to death. Patroclus' dying words will not be long-lived.

### Notes

Cognate with vocabulary related to *μυρμηξ*, an ant, the Myrmidons were Thessalian warriors and, in the *Iliad*, effectively Achilles' private army.

Sarpedon was Zeus' son by Laodamia. Zeus calls him 'dearest of my children', and pays tribute to his 'dear son'. In *Iliad* 10.471, Jupiter acknowledges Sarpedon as a son of Zeus: 'So many sons of gods fell under the high walls of Troy, and with them fell also my son Sarpedon'.

The struggle for Sarpedon's body here is an obvious foretaste of the whole of Book 17. We read at Herodotus (7.224f.) of a similar struggle for the body of Leonidas at Thermopylae. The actions of the Greeks that day, or Herodotus' account (or both) were surely inspired by these lines of the *Iliad*.

It perhaps bears explicit mention that in Homer's *Iliad*, Hector kills Patroclus in full view of Achilles.

'Apollo... Euphorbos... Hector' (not to mention Achilles' rage at Patroclus himself): what are the dying words of Patroclus?

Dying words were often held to be imbued with the truth of prophecy – and so were the words of Patroclus.



Achilles weeps

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT PROTECTED



## Heroic values

### *timē* (honour) and *kleos* (reputation)

Take note of Achilles' speech at 16.50ff., especially lines 80–90, '... I want you to w... You will diminish my honour'. Consider how Achilles' honour is likely to be affected, how Achilles is keen to take credit (and wary of attracting opprobrium) for them. ('so that they give my lovely woman back to me and provide splendid gifts as well Agamemnon's gift-offerings in Book 9?')

### *menis* (wrath, anger)

This Book, the end of the section of the *Iliad*, marks the turning point from A... main driver of the plot. From now on, record Achilles' motives: has a lust for revenge added to it? What is the real difference, if any, between anger and revenge?



## Social, cultural and religious context

Sarpedon is 'destined to be killed by Patroclus' (433f.). Zeus seems to consider one possibility, and Hera, too, concedes that Zeus can 'do what you like'. But she implies that all the rest of us gods will approve.' In the end, Zeus does not (cannot?) save Sarpedon. The gods in epic are subject to the demands of Fate, compare this passage with Jupiter 10.632, 'How I wish you would recast your plans, for you can do so, and choose a course that Jupiter does not or cannot, after all, 'do so'.

### Activity 23

In the *Iliad* (and/or *Aeneid*), how powerful is Zeus (Jupiter) really?



INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



# Book 17: The Struggle over Patroclus

**Summary:** Menelaus takes his stand over the body of Patroclus, to save it for Achilles, but is challenged by the Trojan Euphorbos, whom he kills. Apollo draws Hector's attention. As Hector approaches, Menelaus, recognising that he faces defeat, withdraws to find Hector off, but not before he has removed Patroclus' (i.e. Achilles') armour. Hector suggests that if the Trojans capture Patroclus' body, the Greeks will release Sarpedon and the armour; meanwhile Zeus prophesies that Andromache will never see him alive. Hector rouses their men, and battle is joined. Hector rages, with interventions from Athena (for the Greeks) and Apollo (for the Trojans) inspires Achilles' horses to take Patroclus' chariot. The Greeks at last win, but Zeus is **presently** favouring the Trojans, so they send to Hector for Patroclus' body, although they know that Achilles will not re-enter the fray without Hector). Finally, the Greeks manage to remove Patroclus' body from the battle and carry it towards the ships.

## Notes

For the importance to Mycenaean Greek culture of proper burial, we need look no further than Elpenor in the *Odyssey* – and the whole plot of the Antigone myth.

Since the episode of the Judgement of Paris, Hera has always been against the Trojan side. Zeus, of course, supports and/or undermines both sides as he sees fit.

## Activity 24

Revisit the earlier Books and record when and how each side, Greek or Trojan, is victorious. Add to your records as you read on.

## Literary techniques and emphasis

According to Jones (1999), over 15% of the book is taken up with similes, a high proportion. What do you think is peculiar about Book 17 that it should attract or require such a high proportion of similes?

How many similes can you find in Book 17? In each case, record the (literal) 'tenor' and 'vehicle'. Why does Homer use simile (in general); and why these similes, here, in Book 17? What common theme or themes? Which is/are the most effective – and can you explain why? Which is an ineffective simile? Again, explain how so.



The Greeks and the Trojans fighting over the body of Patroclus

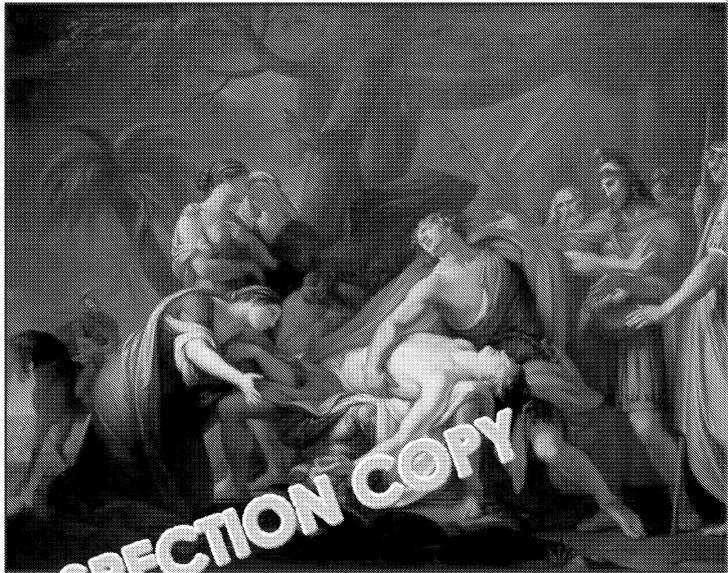
INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



# Book 18: Achilles' Decision

**Summary:** Achilles receives the news of Patroclus' death with expressions of great grief, which is heard and carried on by Thetis and her sister **Nereids**. She visits Achilles; they grieve together. Thetis laments Achilles' death, which he accepts. She sets out for Olympus, to commission more armour for the Greek warriors are trying to make their way back to the ships with Patroclus' body. She is met by **Hector**. Inspired by **Iris**, on a mission from Hera, Achilles is given without armour, a helmet, and a spear on the battlefield and makes a **war cry**, echoed by the Greeks. Such chaos ensues amongst the Trojans, many are killed, and the body of Patroclus is returned to the Greek camp. Night falls and the Greeks retreat back inside Troy. **Hector** and **wins the argument**. In the Greek camp, Achilles debates with Patroclus. Thetis, on the other hand, rebukes Hera on having successfully rallied the Greeks. The goddess Thetis gives Achilles new armour for Achilles. Hephaestus sets to work and **the arm**



*Achilles lamenting the death of Patroclus*

## Notes

Thetis and her 49 sisters were the Nereids, daughters of the minor sea god Nereus.

Iris was the messenger goddess, her emblem the rainbow, acting here at the behest of Hera.

The debate here, in which Hector prevails, reflects other protodemocratic moments in the *Iliad* (the Assembly called by Achilles in Book 1).

Thetis has previously (Book 1) called in favours from Zeus; she seems to have equated her son's fate with Zeus's. She saved him when Hera had cast him from Olympus into the sea – so he is in her debt.

## Themes

### Death and mortality

Achilles is more sanguine than Thetis, who is 'in tears' (line 94), as they discuss his imminent death. He is not interested in attempting to escape death ('even mighty Hera does not escape his doom', 117); he is determined to live long enough to 'win heroic glory' (119).



*Vul*

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



### *xenia*

The concept of *xenia* comes to the fore on various occasions in the *Iliad*, perhaps when Glaucus and Diomedes exchanged armour on the battlefield; and in Book 9, when Nestor's embassy from Agamemnon. Here, we are shown that good hospitality is equally

#### Activity 25

Outline the formal elements of Thetis' arrival and arete in Hephaestus' palace. Compare this episode with the arrival of the embassy at Achilles' tent in Book 9. What further elements do you find in the poem?

### Literary techniques

#### *ekphrasis*

The extended literary description of a work of art is called *ekphrasis* (*ecphrasis*); *Iliad* 18. Homer's description of the shield fashioned for Achilles by Hephaestus. Note the design and decoration.

- What do each of the elements symbolise?
- How is each relevant to any of the rest of the *Iliad*?
- How, through his description of the shield, does Homer suggest Hephaestus' character?
- Apart from a description of the shield's appearance, what else does Homer achieve with his *ekphrasis* here?



*The shield of Achilles*

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



# Book 19: The Feud Ends

**Summary:** Achilles receives his new armour from Thetis, who also reassures him of his body from decay. Achilles addresses Agamemnon and **declares his anger abated**, and the pair are reconciled. Achilles is keen to rejoin battle, but Odysseus advises Agamemnon presents his compensation to Achilles, who **refuses to eat** and Achilles in turn laments Patroclus' death. Athena inspires Achilles who, with the aid of his horse Xanthos, readies himself for battle. Hera inspires Achilles' horse Xanthos to prophesy his death.

## Notes

This Book 19 sees the final – if not wholly satisfactory – resolution of the feud that began in Book 1. Thetis understands the importance of a public declaration of the cessation of hostility between Agamemnon and Achilles, and encourages her son to renounce his anger before the army, just as the original feud had begun at a similar Assembly. Although Odysseus introduces the idea of food as a practical measure, its symbolic importance should not be overlooked: eating together is an integral part of the convention of *xenia* (see also, for example, 9.200ff.) and will help everyone concerned to 'move on' from past to future.



The reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon

Achilles' horse, Xanthos, is the offspring of the winged god Zephyros, thus immortal and therefore (unusually) capable of prophecy.

## Conflict and resolution

Read again the passage in Book 1 (lines 130ff.) where we witness the beginnings of the conflict. In the intervening period, what are your feelings on hearing Achilles' speech?

Book 19 sees the formal resolution of the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon. How do Achilles' renunciation of his anger – and Agamemnon's response – reflect their characters? Are these speeches exactly what you might have expected – or does anything surprise you?

## Literary technique

Compare lines 19.65f. with 18.112f. To what extent and in what way (if at all) does the language affect their meaning?

What effect does Homer achieve by the inclusion here of Xanthos' prophecy (lines 19.110-115)?

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



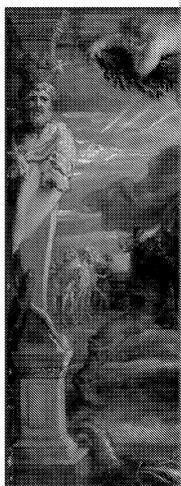
[In Books 20–21, Achilles re-enters the fray; the gods, too, become heavily involved. Apollo rescues Hector from Achilles. Gods fight against each other, and Apollo persuades Agenor to lure Achilles away from the city]

## Book 22: The Death of Hector

**Summary:** The Trojans are relieved that Achilles has gone, although Hector remains. Hector reveals to Achilles that he has been deceived. Achilles, further **angered**, turns Hector into a star, such that Priam begs Hector to be brought back within the walls, appealing to his humanity. Hecabe adds to Priam's pleas. Hector soliloquises, admitting that he was wrong to let the Trojans stray and that he will draw as soon as Achilles returned to the battlefield; that he will die himself, either by drawing him or being killed by him 'gloriously'. He begins to consider a form of treaty and compensation, but dismisses this idea. Achilles arrives; Hector is dragged around the city taking the pair past various Trojan landmarks; Zeus seems for a moment to spare Hector's life, but is reminded by Athene that she and the other gods would not accept this; Zeus accepts this; Athene descends towards the duel. She inspires Achilles before the duel and addressing Hector, encouraging him to stop and fight. Hector suggests to Achilles that if he (Hector) will not despoil his (Achilles') corpse; will Achilles promise the same with Hector: **friendship** between them is impossible. The fight begins. During the fight Hector realises that Achilles has Athene's help. Achilles finds Hector's windpipe wound and once more appeals for the proper treatment of his body. Achilles once more refuses. Hector dies at the hands of Paris (and Apollo). Remembering Patroclus, Achilles binds Hector and makes for the ships. Hecabe, Priam and the onlooking Trojans lament. Andromache rushes to the tower where she delivers her lament.

### Notes

The heroic code is vividly displayed, if not always observed in every respect by both Hector and Achilles. In book 22: Achilles is angered to have been driven from battle; men's fathers are to be honoured by their sons; the ultimate aim is the glorious death; the code is non-negotiable and must be accepted as such; respect between men and honourable burial is to be expected and should be granted. Jones (p. 289) calls Hector's words at 22.297–395) 'the epitome of the heroic ethos'.

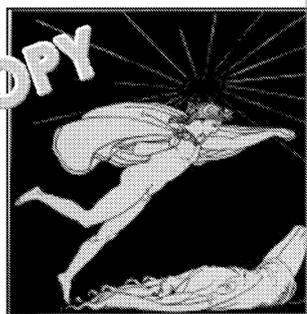


### Literary techniques and composition

The Book's centrepiece, the final duel between Achilles and Hector, might be considered the climax of the plot of the *Iliad*... in which case, why does Homer present it to us here, with two Books remaining? Or, to put it another way, is this really the climax of the *Iliad*?

The duel (lines 131–369) repays close study:

- How does Homer maintain the reader's interest over such an extended episode?
- Which elements of this duel are the same as, and which are different to, other duels elsewhere in the *Iliad*?



Hector's body dragged

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



# Book 23: The Funeral and the Games

**Summary:** Achilles leads the appropriate mourning for Patroclus, including a funeral pyre visited by the ghost of Patroclus, who asks that he now be properly buried, and that he be buried together with him. Achilles is unable to embrace the ghost. Achilles organises a funeral pyre, and upon it throws also four horses, two dead and two alive. In his farewell to Patroclus, he says that Hector's body will be treated quite differently. Athena protects Hector from further abuse. With the help of the gods, Patroclus' pyre is built, and the treatment of Patroclus' remains is described. Achilles arranges games in honour of his friend, and the competitions themselves are vividly described: chariot race; boxing; running; shot-put; and javelin.

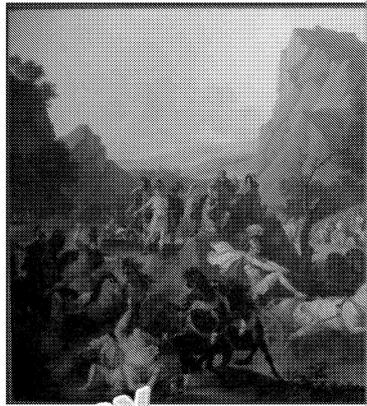


## Notes

Eating together, as always, symbolically punctuates important moments. Since the last fighting sequences occurred in Book 17, the Games here stand in as a sort of warfare.

The brief but unmissable appearance here of human sacrifice is shocking to us as it must have been to Homer's audience. The mutilation of corpses (Patroclus', Hector's) was clearly displeasing to the gods, but Achilles' murder of these twelve Trojan prisoners passes without comment from Homer or any character – evidence of shock beyond words, perhaps. Virgil has Aeneas sacrifice captives (an unspecified number) at the funeral of Priam at *Aeneid* 10 (80ff.), again with no comment.

Games have often been linked to the business of purification and honouring the dead: one mythological origin story of the Olympic Games (established 776 BC) was that Pelops organised chariot races as a thanksgiving to the gods and as funeral games in honour of King Oenomaus, whom he had defeated (and killed) in his quest for the hand of Hippodamia.



Games in honour of Patroclus



The funeral of Patroclus

## Heroic values

### *timē* (honour) and *kleos* (reputation)

According to George Orwell (*The Sporting Spirit*, 1945), 'Serious sport has nothing to do with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all else, and sadistic pleasure in defeating the other fellows with words it is war minus the shooting.'

- How do the Games in Book 23 mirror the 'real' warfare of the rest of the *Iliad*?
- How closely can you relate to the heroes' behaviour as athletes to their behaviour as warriors?

## Social, cultural and religious context

Achilles, as host of the Games, is in charge of providing and awarding the prizes. Consider the dispute in regard to the chariot race (lines 536ff.). How does a comparison with the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon over Briseis as a 'prize' in Book 1 illuminate Mycenaean values here?



COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED



INSPECTION COPY

## Book 24: Priam and Achilles

**Summary:** Achilles continues to weep for Patroclus. Every day for eleven days, he goes to Patroclus' **grave-mound**, although the corpse is protected from mutilation by Apollo. Priam appeals to the other gods to renounce their support of Achilles' behaviour. Zeus orders Thetis from her attentions to Achilles, and to invite her to come to him. Zeus directs Hermes to ransom Hector's body to Priam. Meanwhile, Zeus sends Iris to Priam, with instructions under protection of Hermes, to parley with Achilles. Priam receives his instructions, but she demurs, urging Priam to remain in Troy. Priam defies his wife: he gathers his **sons** fetch a mule-wagon and they pray to Zeus for an omen; Zeus obligingly sends a lightning bolt. On their way, they encounter the disguised Hermes, who says he is coming to Achilles' tent – which he then proceeds to do, before revealing his true identity. Priam approaches Achilles and **supplicates** him, invoking Achilles' father Peleus and Priam weeps for his son, Achilles for his father. They discuss the vicissitudes of life and Priam asks to be washed and returned to Priam; they **eat**; they learn respect for each other, and Priam offers a bed for Priam. Achilles agrees a truce of nine days to allow the **proper mourning** for Patroclus. Achilles sleeps, while Hermes rouses Priam and they return to Troy. On their arrival in Troy, they are met by Andromache, Hecabe and Helen. The poem ends with a description of Hector's funeral.

### Notes

**Grave-mound:** a tumulus grave, still in use at the site of the Battle of Marathon (490 BC).

Across Greek mythology, Priam seems to have had as many as 68 sons and 18 daughters by various wives and concubines. Homer names 22 sons and three daughters.

The eagle is commonly attached to Zeus in mythology: it is by releasing a pair of eagles that he defines the centre of the world (*omphalos*) at Delphi; he was depicted accompanied by an eagle in chryselephantine statuary by Phidias at Olympia. Examples abound.

The supplication here of Priam to Achilles mirrors that of Chryses to Agamemnon in Book 1. Thetis, too, supplicates Zeus, and many defeated warriors offer supplication to their victorious opponents throughout the fighting.

We read of the two-day *prothesis* (laying out of the body) in post-Mycenaean times, followed by a three-day period of mourning. The difference between Homeric and other evidence concerning the composition of the *Iliad*, and by the fact that 'ancient Greek culture' covers a long period, different conventions such as burial and funerary rites can be expected to have changed over time.



Priam and Achilles

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



INSPECTION COPY



## Characterisation

Consider the relationship between Priam and Hecabe, as illuminated by lines 190-200. How do their conversation contribute to our knowledge and understanding of their characters and their marriage?

While there is no doubt in Priam's mind (is he wrong about this?) that he has received the command to visit the Greek camp to ransom Hector's body, he nevertheless seeks Hecabe's approval. When she in turn tries to dissuade him from this plan (why?), he is swift and unadvised.

Note that Hecabe gives no voice to the divine origin of the proposal; also that her concern for Achilles is even more biting than that of Priam's. However, she has a different way of dealing with the gods: she has Priam's interests at heart, while he is apparently careless of them.



**Activity 26**

- Which of the pair do you identify with more closely? Explain why.
- How far is the character of Priam as presented in Book 24 consistent with the character of Priam in Book 2? Quote parallels/contrasts/development.
- How far is the character of Hecabe as presented in Book 24 consistent with the character of Hecabe in Book 22? Quote parallels/contrasts/development.

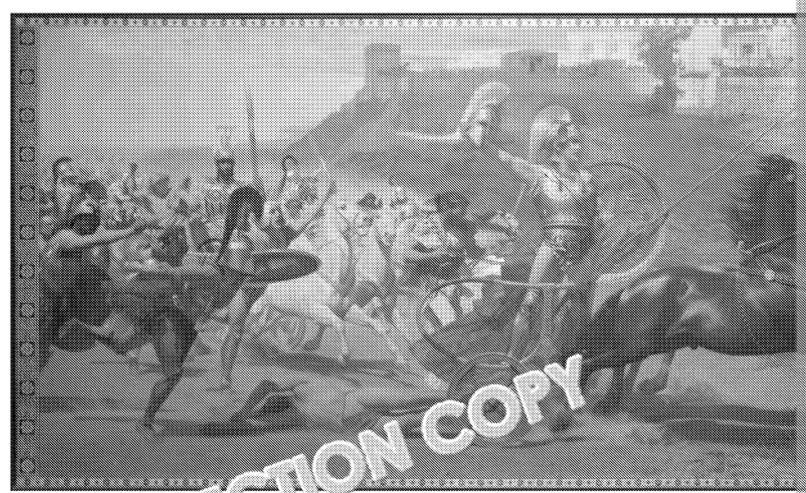
## Social, cultural and religious context

The proper observances of ritual associated with death and burial have played a significant role in the Iliad already (see, for example, Book 17). In Book 24, the proper burial of Hector is a significant event for the gods, as well as being of ultimate importance to his father Priam.

Achilles once more plays host to a visiting 'em' as 'em' is a nut. Outline the main events of Book 24.486-506; describe and explain the effect of these words on Achilles.

The story of Bellerophon was told in Book 6, and of Meleager in Book 9; here Achilles (527ff.) and of Niobe (527ff.). Do you find Achilles' use of myth effective? Explain.

- What evidence do you find in // 24 that Achilles' anger has abated?
- What evidence do you find in // 24 that Achilles' anger remains unabated?



*Achilles triumphant*



**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



## Section C: Thematic Summary and Evaluation

### Specified topics

The OCR specification identifies the following 'key topics' as the basis for examination:

- literary techniques and composition
- the heroic world: characterisation and themes, including
  - concept, values and behaviour, including the ideas of *timē* (honour)
  - life in Troy and the Greek world
  - characterisation of heroes and minor characters
  - the Trojan War
  - death and mortality
  - *menis* (wrath, anger)
  - reconciliation
- the social, cultural and religious context, including
  - power of fate
  - role of the immortals and relationship between immortals and mortals
  - family and friendship
  - hospitality and guest-friendship (*xenia*)
  - relationships between men and women, parents and children
  - part played by women in the epic and their position in society
  - role of slaves

Candidates are essentially required to be able to use the text of the poem as the basis for discussion of these topics.

One might be asked to consider, for example, how far it is true to say that Homer's strong response might usefully consider the notion of 'glorification' before going either side of the argument. This should include a consideration of a wide range of depictions of mass and individual fighting; descriptions of the appearance and attitude and fighting techniques, their wounds and/or death; the reaction of others to the sometimes, the poet's own editorial interjections. To what extent the balance falls its opposite will be up to the individual candidate to judge. Marks are awarded on the quality of the evidence presented (AO1), and the thoroughness and sophistication at a convincing conclusion, one way or the other (AO2).

For each of OCR's specified topics, candidates should consider carefully what evidence for example preparing notes in response to questions such as 'How far do you agree

- the style in which the story is told is just as important as its content
- there is nothing more important to the heroes of the *Iliad* than the ideas of *timē*
- life in Troy is completely different from / exactly the same as that in the Greek world
- Homer fully brings to life even the minor characters
- the *Iliad* glorifies war
- death and mortality are at the heart of the *Iliad*
- *menis* (wrath, anger) is the driving force behind every major event described
- the power of fate is greater even than the power of the gods in Homer's *Iliad*
- the role of the immortals in the *Iliad* totally undermines the seriousness of the relationship between immortals and mortals in the *Iliad* makes the poem impossible for a realistic interpretation
- Homer's *Iliad* places no value on family and friendship
- the conventions of hospitality and guest-friendship (*xenia*) appear absurdly out of place
- the *Iliad* depicts completely unrealistic relationships between men and women
- women are given no role of any significance in the epic and their position in society is not discussed in the *Iliad*
- the heroes of the *Iliad* owe their success largely to their slaves

INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



In all of the aforementioned cases, it should be possible to find evidence in the text to support the statement. Candidates should practise writing both for and against each proposition. The points taken by the aforementioned suggestions should be noted: this is deliberate, and done so at A Level, so that the candidate is more or less obliged always to answer that he or she has thus allowing evidence to be presented on both sides of any given argument. This is done so taken, because AO2 marks are awarded according to the skilful handling of the material in their judgement of precisely to what 'extent' they agree. Stronger candidates will be able to argue an argument to which they finally align themselves.

Past papers and mark schemes are available from OCR, are an invaluable resource which candidates should exploit. Here you will find a selection of past papers to familiarise yourself with the various questions and the way examiners think they expect to see being made (AO2), and the evidence used to support them. Information on mark schemes is explicitly not exhaustive, but it is indicative, and should be used as a guide.

## The exam itself

Time allowed: 2 hours 20 minutes

Total marks: 100

Section A (Homer): answer all questions on the *Iliad* OR the *Odyssey* [30 marks]

Section B (Virgil): answer all questions on the *Aeneid* [30 marks]

Section C (Homer and Virgil): answer the question comparing the *Aeneid* to EITHER the *Iliad* OR the *Odyssey* [10 marks]; AND answer the question on EITHER the *Iliad* OR the *Odyssey* OR the *Aeneid* [10 marks]

**Section A** will begin with translations (Rieu/Jones and AS Kline are both presented). Candidates will be given appropriate text as the basis for two questions, the first (worth 10 marks) general (how is a certain character presented; how the poet makes the passage especially interesting), and the second (worth 20 marks) an extended response question focusing on a single character or event (e.g. Achilles (2019), the death of Patroclus (2020), social structure at Troy (2021), the behaviour of mortal women (2022)).

**Section B** follows the same pattern.

**Section C** firstly requires candidates to compare the passage they have analysed in Section B; this is followed by a choice of fully fledged essay questions. It should be possible to compare between texts – for each text, only one question is offered.

All responses in this examination are assessed according to **marking grids** (to be found in the marking schemes, available in full from OCR at [zzed.uk/12588-OCR](http://zzed.uk/12588-OCR))

For top-level marks in the 10-mark analysis of a literary passage, or in the comparison of two passages (Section C), responses must show *very good knowledge and understanding of the range of well selected, accurate and precise material from it (them) (AO1)*; and *fulfil the question, with perceptive, critical analysis and interpretation of the provided sources, and make points which are well-supported and developed.*

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



In the **20-mark extended responses**, AO1 and AO2 are assessed separately, for 10 (knowledge and understanding), examiners are looking for **very detailed knowledge and understanding of the material studied; the use of a range of well selected, accurate classical sources and appropriate, effective use of their cultural context and possible** For 10 AO2 marks (analysis, interpretation and evaluation), examiners require a **question containing a wide range of relevant points leading to convincing conclusions supported by perceptive critical analysis, interpretation and evaluation of classical texts, logically structured, with a well-developed, sustained and coherent line of reasoning**

This means that learners should answer the questions as asked, not the questions or the questions they think might have been asked: learners should read the question carefully. In their answers to the 10-mark literary analysis questions, learners should endeavour to refer to the beginning, middle and end of each passage under discussion; they should use relevant texts in support of their opinions.

In their responses to both 10- and 20-mark questions, learners should explicitly link their explanations to the precise terms of the question. This will help with focus ('engage with the text'). In 20-mark questions, candidates are informed that 'You may use Passage A as a starting point for your response, in case you were in any doubt, to use information printed on the page as part of your response, and while you are not required to do this, it seems likely that they will be inspired by 'Passage A' in the mark scheme: why not take advantage of it?

**Section C** offers a choice of **essay questions, worth 30 marks**, of which candidates will be asked to answer one. These questions will demand knowledge, understanding, interpretation and analysis of the text drawn from across the whole poem. Examples include 'Explain whether you think the human way or the heroic way in the *Iliad*' (2022) and 'Anger (*menis*) is at the heart of the human condition'. Candidates are required to explain to what extent they agree with such statements along the lines discussed previously ('Specification', page 27).



INSPECTION COPY

**COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED**



INSPECTION COPY



## Modern scholarship and secondary literature

One further criterion is invoked for the 30-mark essay: not only must learners be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the *Iliad*; in the course of their response, they are also required to 'show evidence of their reading of sources, scholars and/or academic works'. The latest guidance requires citation from 'post-Gibbon' scholars.

In this high-tariff response, credit is given to candidates who properly attribute to their sources and to the scholars they rely on for the force of their argument. It is indeed, with which they choose to do so, that will be given for formulations such as 'as some scholars say...'

For example, in a discussion of the character of Achilles, it may be pertinent to turn to other heroes in the *Iliad*. Consider the following:

1. Achilles is physically superior to all the other heroes: he is the fastest and most powerful in the *Iliad*. He is also more single-mindedly dedicated to the pursuit of glory than any other hero. **Not without merit, although some supporting detail will be required.**
2. According to some scholars, Achilles' difference from the other Greeks is due to his superiority on the battlefield. **The candidate hopes that this gesture will be rewarded. It isn't.**
3. As Michael Silk says, Achilles 'fights simply and solely for glory', which makes him different from the other heroes, who seek glory more for what it can bring with it, like wealth or status. **attributed reference to secondary scholarship. However, this mere phrase is not enough to support an argument. It is an observation of fact, as in version 3 above.**
4. Achilles is different from the other heroes, but this does not necessarily make him more honourable. Honour, which comes from his dedication to glory, is 'at once the source of his error (Silk).' **Here, the candidate quotes the scholar to support an argument. It is an observation of fact, as in version 3 above.**

Therefore, do not ignore 'suggestions for further reading', wherever you find them in the secondary literature. As you read, be ready to quote scholars in support of your own arguments. You will not be graded!

### Activity 27

Gather a small library of books or introductions to and chapters from books about the *Iliad* (if you have a shortage!). Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the scholars' core arguments: do not just say that you have read them, but say what they add to your knowledge and understanding of the poem. Try to find a scholar whose argument you like, and which sums this up.

Where you can, examine any differences between scholars' interpretations; which is more convincing? Say why.

To get you started, consider:

- Ahuvia Kahane, *Homer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury, 2012)
- Barbara Graziosi, *Homer* (OUP, 2016)
- Chapters in larger works, for example ed. Paul Cartledge, *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (CUP, 2004)
- Articles from *Omnibus*, the *Journal of the Classical Association* for students. Archive (1982–2016) here: <https://www.classicalassociation.com/omnibus-magazine/>

INSPECTION COPY

COPYRIGHT  
PROTECTED

