

wronged Achilles. He sends a delegation of ambassadors to offer amends and to ask Achilles and his comrades to return to battle. Achilles' immense pride is revealed as he stubbornly refuses to accept Agamemnon's gifts. He tells the delegates that he has decided to return to his kingdom and live out his life in comfort, forgoing the honor of dying a hero's death in battle.

When the Trojans break through the Greek defenses, Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, pleads with the hero to permit him to rejoin the fighting. Achilles reluctantly agrees (Books 11–15). As the battle rages, the god Apollo strikes Patroclus from his horse, giving Hector the opportunity to slay the warrior and strip the corpse of its armor.

On hearing of Patroclus's death, Achilles is overcome with grief and rage. Vowing to avenge his friend, he finally returns to the battle, mercilessly slaying the Trojan forces (Books 19–21). As Book 22 opens, the exhausted Trojans take refuge behind the high walls of the city. One Trojan remains outside the walls: Hector.

BOOK 22: Desolation Before Troy

Once in the town, those who had fled like deer
wiped off their sweat and drank their thirst away,
leaning against the cool stone of the ramparts.^o
Meanwhile Achaeans with bright shields aslant
5 came up the plain and nearer. As for Hector,
fatal destiny pinned him where he stood
before the Scaean Gates, outside the city.

Now Achilles heard Apollo calling
back to him:

“Why run so hard, Achilles
10 mortal as you are, after a god?
Can you not comprehend it? I am immortal.
You are so hot to catch me, you no longer
think of finishing off the men you routed.
They are all in the town by now, packed in
15 while you were being diverted here. And yet
you cannot kill me; I am no man's quarry.”

Achilles bit his lip and said:

“Archer of heaven, deadliest
of immortal gods, you put me off the track,
20 turning me from the wall this way. A hundred
might have sunk their teeth into the dust

3. **ramparts** *n. pl.* defensive embankments surrounding a town.

? 9–16. Why does Apollo question the wisdom of Achilles' pursuit?

before one man took cover in Ilion!
You saved my enemies with ease and stole
my glory, having no punishment to fear.
I'd take it out of you, if I had the power."

25 Then toward the town with might and main he ran,
magnificent, like a racing chariot horse
that holds its form at full stretch on the plain.
So light-footed Achilles held the pace.
30 And aging Priam was the first to see him
sparkling on the plain, bright as that star
in autumn rising, whose unclouded rays
shine out amid a throng of stars at dusk—
the one they call Orion's^o dog, most brilliant,
35 yes, but baleful as a sign: it brings
great fever to frail men. So pure and bright
the bronze gear blazed upon him as he ran.
The old man gave a cry. With both his hands
thrown up on high he struck his head, then shouted,
40 groaning, appealing to his dear son. Unmoved,
Lord Hector stood in the gateway, resolute
to fight Achilles.

Stretching out his hands,

old Priam said, imploring him:

"No, Hector!

Cut off as you are, alone, dear son,
45 don't try to hold your ground against this man,
or soon you'll meet the shock of doom, borne down
by the son of Peleus. He is more powerful
by far than you, and pitiless. Ah, were he
but dear to the gods as he is dear to me!
— 50 Wild dogs and kites would eat him where he lay
within the hour, and ease me of my torment.
Many tall sons he killed, bereaving me,
or sold them to far islands. Even now
I cannot see two sons of mine, Lycaon^o
55 and Polydorus,^o among the Trojans massed
inside the town. A queen, Laothoe,
conceived and bore them. If they are alive
amid the Achaean host, I'll ransom them
with bronze and gold: both I have, piled at home,
60 rich treasures that old Altes, the renowned,
gave for his daughter's dowry. If they died,
if they went under to the homes of Death,
sorrow has come to me and to their mother.
But to our townsmen all this pain is brief,
65 unless you too go down before Achilles.

34. **Orion:** constellation named after a hunter who was loved and accidentally killed by the goddess Artemis.

? **42–70.** What reasons does Priam give in his attempt to convince Hector not to confront Achilles?

54. **Lycaon** (lī·kā'ān).

55. **Polydorus** (pāl·i·dō'rəs).

Come inside the wall, child; here you may
 fight on to save our Trojan men and women.
 Do not resign the glory to Achilles,
 losing your own dear life! Take pity, too,
 on me and my hard fate, while I live still.
 70 Upon the threshold of my age, in misery,
 the son of Cronus^o will destroy my life
 after the evil days I shall have seen—
 my sons brought down, my daughters dragged away,
 75 bedchambers ravaged, and small children hurled
 to earth in the atrocity of war,
 as my sons' wives are taken by Achaeans'
 ruinous hands. And at the end, I too—
 when someone with a sword-cut or a spear
 80 has had my life—I shall be torn apart
 on my own doorstep by the hounds
 I trained as watchdogs, fed from my own table.
 These will lap my blood with ravenous hearts
 and lie in the entranceway.

Everything done

85 to a young man killed in war becomes his glory,
 once he is riven^o by the whetted bronze:
 dead though he be, it is all fair, whatever
 happens then. But when an old man falls,
 and dogs disfigure his gray head and cheek
 90 and genitals, that is most harrowing
 of all that men in their hard lives endure."

The old man wrenched at his gray hair and pulled out
 hanks of it in both hands, but moved
 Lord Hector not at all. The young man's mother
 95 wailed from the tower across, above the portal,
 streaming tears, and loosening her robe
 with one hand, held her breast out in the other,
 saying:

"Hector, my child, be moved by this,
 and pity me, if ever I unbound
 100 a quieting breast for you. Think of these things,
 dear child; defend yourself against the killer
 this side of the wall, not hand to hand.
 He has no pity. If he brings you down,
 I shall no longer be allowed to mourn you
 105 laid out on your bed, dear branch in flower,
 born of me! And neither will your lady,
 so endowed with gifts. Far from us both,
 dogs will devour you by the Argive ships."

72. son of Cronus: Zeus,

86. riven v.: split or torn
 apart.

? 98–108. What does
 Hector's mother predict
 will happen if Hector fights
 Achilles?

With tears and cries the two implored their son,
 110 and made their prayers again, but could not shake him.
 Hector stood firm, as huge Achilles neared.
 The way a serpent, fed on poisonous herbs,
 coiled at his lair upon a mountainside,
 with all his length of hate awaits a man
 115 and eyes him evilly: so Hector, grim
 and narrow-eyed, refused to yield. He leaned
 his brilliant shield against a spur of wall
 and in his brave heart bitterly reflected:
 "Here I am badly caught. If I take cover,
 120 slipping inside the gate and wall, the first
 to accuse me for it will be Polydamas,^o
 he who told me I should lead the Trojans
 back to the city on that cursed night
 Achilles joined the battle. No, I would not,
 125 would not, wiser though it would have been.
 Now troops have perished for my foolish pride,
 I am ashamed to face townsmen and women.
 Someone inferior to me may say:
 'He kept his pride and lost his men, this Hector!'
 130 So it will go. Better, when that time comes,
 that I appear as he who killed Achilles
 man to man, or else that I went down
 fighting him to the end before the city.
 Suppose, though, that I lay my shield and helm
 135 aside, and prop my spear against the wall,
 and go to meet the noble Prince Achilles,
 promising Helen, promising with her
 all treasures that Alexandros^o brought home
 by ship to Troy—the first cause of our quarrel—
 140 that he may give these things to the Atridae?
 Then I might add, apart from these, a portion
 of all the secret wealth the city owns.
 Yes, later I might take our counselors' oath
 to hide no stores, but share and share alike
 145 to halve all wealth our lovely city holds,
 all that is here within the walls. Ah, no,
 why even put the question to myself?
 I must not go before him and receive
 no quarter, no respect! Aye, then and there
 150 he'll kill me, unprotected as I am,
 my gear laid by, defenseless as a woman.
 No chance, now, for charms from oak or stone
 in parley with him—charms a girl and boy
 might use when they enchant each other talking!

121. Polydamas

(pō·lid'ə·mās): Trojan leader



119–146. What three options must Hector choose between as he ponders his difficult decision? What do you learn about Hector through his self-questioning?

138. Alexandros: another name for Paris. *Alexandros* means "champion."

155 Better we duel, now at once, and see
to whom the Olympian awards the glory."

These were his shifts of mood. Now close at hand
Achilles like the implacable god of war
came on with blowing crest, hefting the dreaded
160 beam of Pelian ash° on his right shoulder.
Bronze light played around him, like the glare
of a great fire or the great sun rising,
and Hector, as he watched, began to tremble.
Then he could hold his ground no more. He ran,
165 leaving the gate behind him, with Achilles
hard on his heels, sure of his own speed.
When that most lightning-like of birds, a hawk
bred on a mountain, swoops upon a dove,
the quarry dips in terror, but the hunter,
170 screaming, dips behind and gains upon it,
passionate for prey. Just so, Achilles
murderously cleft the air, as Hector
ran with flashing knees along the wall.
They passed the lookout point, the wild fig tree
175 with wind in all its leaves, then veered away
along the curving wagon road, and came
to where the double fountains well, the source
of eddying Scamander.° One hot spring
flows out, and from the water fumes arise
180 as though from fire burning; but the other
even in summer gushes chill as hail
or snow or crystal ice frozen on water.
Near these fountains are wide washing pools
of smooth-laid stone, where Trojan wives and daughters
185 laundered their smooth linen in the days
of peace before the Achaeans came. Past these
the two men ran, pursuer and pursued,
and he who fled was noble, he behind
a greater man by far. They ran full speed,
190 and not for bull's hide or a ritual beast
or any prize that men compete for: no,
but for the life of Hector, tamer of horses.
Just as when chariot-teams around a course
go wheeling swiftly, for the prize is great,
195 a tripod° or a woman, in the games

Vocabulary

implacable (im·plak'ə·bəl) *adj.*: incapable of being pacified.

160. **Pelian** (pēl'ē·ən) *ash*:
wood cut from trees on
Mount Pelion, one of the
highest mountains in Greece.

? **157–166.** How does
Hector respond as
Achilles gets close to him?

178. **Scamander**
(skə·man'dər): river of Troy.

193–198. Homer often
uses **similes**, or compar-
isons, to convey events.

? What does Homer com-
pare Achilles and Hector
to in these lines? What effect
does this comparison create?

195. **tripod** *n.*: bronze altar
used in sacrifices.

held for a dead man, so three times these two
at full speed made their course round Priam's town,
as all the gods looked on. And now the father
of gods and men^o turned to the rest and said:

200 "How sad that this beloved man is hunted
around the wall before my eyes! My heart
is touched for Hector; he has burned thigh flesh
of oxen for me often, high on Ida,^o
at other times on the high point of Troy.
205 Now Prince Achilles with devouring stride
is pressing him around the town of Priam.
Come, gods, put your minds on it, consider
whether we may deliver him from death
or see him, noble as he is, brought down
by Peleus' son, Achilles."

210 said to him: Gray-eyed Athena

"Father of the blinding bolt,
the dark stormcloud, what words are these? The man
is mortal, and his doom fixed, long ago.
Would you release him from his painful death?
215 Then do so, but not all of us will praise you."

198–199. father of gods and
men: Zeus.

203. **Ida:** Mount Ida, in Phry-
gia, the source of many rivers,
including the Scamander.

? **200–215.** Why does
Zeus favor Hector in the
conflict with Achilles? How
does Athena reply to Zeus's
suggestion that Hector might
be spared from his fate?

The Lion Gate at Mycenae
(detail) (c. 1250 B.C.E.).



Zeus who gathers cloud replied:

"Take heart,

my dear and honored child. I am not bent
on my suggestion, and I would indulge you.
Act as your thought inclines, refrain no longer."

- 220 So he encouraged her in her desire,
and down she swept from ridges of Olympus.
Great Achilles, hard on Hector's heels,
kept after him, the way a hound will harry
a deer's fawn he has startled from its bed
225 to chase through gorge and open glade, and when
the quarry goes to earth under a bush
he holds the scent and quarters till he finds it;
so with Hector: he could not shake off
the great runner, Achilles. Every time
230 he tried to spring hard for the Dardan gates^o
under the towers, hoping men could help him,
sending missiles down, Achilles loomed
to cut him off and turn him toward the plain,
as he himself ran always near the city.
235 As in a dream a man chasing another
cannot catch him, nor can he in flight
escape from his pursuer, so Achilles
could not by his swiftiness overtake him,
nor could Hector pull away. How could he
240 run so long from death, had not Apollo
for the last time, the very last, come near
to give him stamina and speed?

Achilles

- shook his head at the rest of the Achaeans,
allowing none to shoot or cast at Hector—
245 none to forestall him, and to win the honor.
But when, for the fourth time, they reached the springs,
the Father poised his golden scales.

He placed

- two shapes of death, death prone and cold, upon them,
one of Achilles, one of the horseman, Hector,
250 and held the midpoint, pulling upward. Down
sank Hector's fatal day, the pan went down
toward undergloom, and Phoebus Apollo left him.
Then came Athena, gray-eyed, to the son
of Peleus, falling in with him, and near him,
saying swiftly:

255

the two of us, Achilles loved by Zeus,
shall bring Achaeans triumph at the ships

"Now at last I think



Great Achilles, hard
on Hector's heels,
kept after him, the way
a hound will harry a
deer's fawn...

230. Dardan gates: gates of
Troy. Dardania, a city built
near the foot of Mount Ida,
became part of Troy.

? 246–252. How does
Zeus's weighing of
Hector's and Achilles' fates
foreshadow the ending of
the conflict between Achilles
and Hector?

by killing Hector—unappeased
though he was ever in his thirst for war.
There is no way he may escape us now,
260 not though Apollo, lord of distances,
should suffer all indignity for him
before his father Zeus who bears the stormcloud,
rolling back and forth and begging for him.
265 Now you can halt and take your breath, while I
persuade him into combat face to face.”

These were Athena’s orders. He complied,
relieved, and leaning hard upon the spearshaft
armed with its head of bronze. She left him there
270 and overtook Lord Hector—but she seemed
Deiphobus° in form and resonant voice,
appearing at his shoulder, saying swiftly:

“Ai! Dear brother, how he runs, Achilles,
harrying you around the town of Priam!
Come, we’ll stand and take him on.”

275 To this,
great Hector in his shimmering helm replied:

“Deiphobus, you were the closest to me
in the old days, of all my brothers, sons
of Hecuba and Priam. Now I can say
280 I honor you still more
because you dared this foray for my sake,
seeing me run. The rest stay under cover.”

Again the gray-eyed goddess spoke:

“Dear brother, how your father and gentle mother
285 begged and begged me to remain! So did
the soldiers round me, all undone by fear.
But in my heart I ached for you.
Now let us fight him, and fight hard.
No holding back. We’ll see if this Achilles
290 conquers both, to take our armor seaward,
or if he can be brought down by your spear.”

This way, by guile, Athena led him on.
And when at last the two men faced each other,
Hector was the first to speak. He said:

295 “I will no longer fear you as before

271. **Deiphobus** (dē’ə-fō’bəs):
one of Hector’s brothers.

? 269–292. How does
Athena trick Hector into
agreeing to fight Achilles?



Corinthian bronze helmet
(c. 540 B.C.E.).

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
Gift of funds from Ruth and Bruce

round Priam's town three times and could not face you.
Now my soul would have me stand and fight,
whether I kill you or am killed. So come,
we'll summon gods here as our witnesses,
300 none higher, arbiters^o of a pact: I swear
that, terrible as you are,
I'll not insult your corpse should Zeus allow me
victory in the end, your life as prize.
305 Once I have your gear, I'll give your body
back to Achaeans. Grant me, too, this grace."

But swift Achilles frowned at him and said:

"Hector, I'll have no talk of pacts with you,
forever unforgiven as you are.
310 As between men and lions there are none,
no concord between wolves and sheep, but all
hold one another hateful through and through,
so there can be no courtesy between us,
no sworn truce, till one of us is down
315 and glutting with his blood the wargod Ares.
Summon up what skills you have. By god,
you'd better be a spearman and a fighter!
Now there is no way out. Pallas Athena
will have the upper hand of you. The weapon
320 belongs to me. You'll pay the reckoning
in full for all the pain my men have borne,
who met death by your spear."

He twirled and cast
his shaft with its long shadow. Splendid Hector,
keeping his eye upon the point, eluded it
325 by ducking at the instant of the cast,
so shaft and bronze shank passed him overhead
and punched into the earth. But unperceived
by Hector, Pallas Athena plucked it out
and gave it back to Achilles. Hector said:

330 "A clean miss. Godlike as you are,
you have not yet known doom for me from Zeus.
You thought you had, by heaven. Then you turned
into a word-thrower, hoping to make me lose
my fighting heart and head in fear of you.
335 You cannot plant your spear between my shoulders
while I am running. If you have the gift,
just put it through my chest as I come forward.
Now it's for you to dodge my own. Would god
you'd give the whole shaft lodging in your body!

301. arbiters *n. pl.* judges.

303–322. Hector vows to treat Achilles' corpse with respect if Hector wins the fight. However, Achilles refuses to extend the same courtesy to Hector.

? What reason does Achilles give for refusing Hector's request?



Athena constructing the Trojan Horse, from a red-figure kylix (detail) (6th century B.C.E.).
Museo Archeologico, Florence.

340 War for the Trojans would be eased
if you were blotted out, bane^o that you are."

With this he twirled his long spearshaft and cast it,
hitting his enemy mid-shield, but off
and away the spear rebounded. Furious
345 that he had lost it, made his throw for nothing,
Hector stood bemused. He had no other.
Then he gave a great shout to Deiphobus
to ask for a long spear. But there was no one
near him, not a soul. Now in his heart
350 the Trojan realized the truth and said:

"This is the end. The gods are calling deathward.
I had thought
a good soldier, Deiphobus, was with me.
He is inside the walls. Athena tricked me.
355 Death is near, and black, not at a distance,
not to be evaded. Long ago
this hour must have been to Zeus's liking
and to the liking of his archer son.^o
They have been well disposed before, but now
360 the appointed time's upon me. Still, I would not
die without delivering a stroke,
or die ingloriously, but in some action
memorable to men in days to come."

With this he drew the whetted blade that hung
365 upon his left flank, ponderous and long,
collecting all his might the way an eagle
narrows himself to dive through shady cloud
and strike a lamb or cowering hare: so Hector
lanced ahead and swung his whetted blade.
370 Achilles with wild fury in his heart
pulled in upon his chest his beautiful shield—
his helmet with four burnished metal ridges
nodding above it, and the golden crest
Hephaestus^o locked there tossing in the wind.
375 Conspicuous as the evening star that comes,
amid the first in heaven, at fall of night,
and stands most lovely in the west, so shone
in sunlight the fine-pointed spear
Achilles poised in his right hand, with deadly
380 aim at Hector, at the skin where most
it lay exposed. But nearly all was covered
by the bronze gear he took from slain Patroclus,
showing only, where his collarbones

341. **bane** *n.*: cause of distress,
death, or ruin.

? **349–360.** What does
Hector realize once he
finds that Deiphobus is not
really by his side?

358. **archer son:** Apollo.

374. **Hephaestus** (hē-fes'təs):
blacksmith of the gods, who
forged new arms for Achilles
after Patroclus, wearing
Achilles' armor, was slain by
Hector.

divided neck and shoulders, the bare throat
385 where the destruction of a life is quickest.
Here, then, as the Trojan charged, Achilles
drove his point straight through the tender neck,
but did not cut the windpipe, leaving Hector
able to speak and to respond. He fell
390 aside into the dust. And Prince Achilles
now exulted:

“Hector, had you thought
that you could kill Patroclus and be safe?
Nothing to dread from me; I was not there.
All childishness. Though distant then, Patroclus’s
395 comrade in arms was greater far than he—
and it is I who had been left behind
that day beside the deep-sea ships who now
have made your knees give way. The dogs and kites
will rip your body. His will lie in honor
400 when the Achaeans give him funeral.”

Hector, barely whispering, replied:

“I beg you by your soul and by your parents,
do not let the dogs feed on me
in your encampment by the ships. Accept
405 the bronze and gold my father will provide
as gifts, my father and her ladyship
my mother. Let them have my body back,
so that our men and women may accord me
decency of fire when I am dead.”

410 Achilles the great runner scowled and said:

“Beg me no beggary by soul or parents,
whining dog! Would god my passion drove me
to slaughter you and eat you raw, you’ve caused
such agony to me! No man exists
415 who could defend you from the carrion pack—
not if they spread for me ten times your ransom,
twenty times, and promise more as well;
aye, not if Priam, son of Dardanus,
tells them to buy you for your weight in gold!
420 You’ll have no bed of death, nor will you be
laid out and mourned by her who gave you birth.
Dogs and birds will have you, every scrap.”

Then at the point of death Lord Hector said:

375–390. Hector is wearing Achilles’ old armor. Achilles had given the armor to his friend Patroclus, whom Hector killed.
? How does Achilles wound Hector?

402–422. Hector begs Achilles to return his body to his parents so that they can cremate and bury it. His plea emphasizes the idea that his soul will never be allowed to rest if his body is not properly buried.
? How does Achilles respond to Hector’s request? How does his response reinforce the rage and bitterness Achilles feels toward Hector?

425 "I see you now for what you are. No chance
to win you over. Iron in your breast
your heart is. Think a bit, though: this may be
a thing the gods in anger hold against you
on that day when Paris and Apollo
destroy you at the Gates,^o great as you are."

430 Even as he spoke, the end came, and death hid him;
spirit from body fluttered to undergloom,
bewailing fate that made him leave his youth
and manhood in the world. And as he died
Achilles spoke again. He said:

435 "Die, make an end. I shall accept my own
whenever Zeus and the other gods desire."

At this he pulled his spearhead from the body,
laying it aside, and stripped
the bloodstained shield and cuirass^o from his shoulders.
440 Other Achaeans hastened round to see
Hector's fine body and his comely face,
and no one came who did not stab the body.
Glancing at one another they would say:

445 "Now Hector has turned vulnerable, softer
than when he put the torches to the ships!"

And he who said this would inflict a wound.
When the great master of pursuit, Achilles,
had the body stripped, he stood among them,
saying swiftly:

450 "Friends, my lords and captains
of Argives, now that the gods at last have let me
bring to earth this man who wrought
havoc among us—more than all the rest—
come, we'll offer battle around the city,
to learn the intentions of the Trojans now.
455 Will they give up their strongpoint^o at this loss?
Can they fight on, though Hector's dead?

But wait:

460 why do I ponder, why take up these questions?
Down by the ships Patroclus's body lies
unwept, unburied. I shall not forget him
while I can keep my feet among the living.
If in the dead world they forget the dead,
I say there, too, I shall remember him,
my friend. Men of Achaea, lift a song!
Down to the ships we go, and take this body,

428–429. Paris . . . Gates:

Achilles is later slain by Paris,
who shoots an arrow into
Achilles' heel, the only part of
his body that is vulnerable.

439. cuirass (kwi-ras') *n.*:
armor protecting the breast
and back.

? **440–446.** What do
other Achaeans do to
Hector's body after he is
killed by Achilles?

455. strongpoint *n.*: Troy.

465 our glory. We have beaten Hector down,
to whom as to a god the Trojans prayed.”

Indeed, he had in mind for Hector’s body
outrage and shame. Behind both feet he pierced
the tendons, heel to ankle. Rawhide cords
470 he drew through both and lashed them to his chariot,
letting the man’s head trail. Stepping aboard,
bearing the great trophy of the arms,^o
he shook the reins, and whipped the team ahead
into a willing run. A dustcloud rose

475 above the furrowing body; the dark tresses
flowed behind, and the head so princely once
lay back in dust. Zeus gave him to his enemies
to be defiled in his own fatherland.

So his whole head was blackened. Looking down,
480 his mother tore her braids, threw off her veil,
and wailed, heartbroken to behold her son.
Piteously his father groaned, and round him
lamentation spread throughout the town,
most like the clamor to be heard if Ilion’s
485 towers, top to bottom, seethed in flames.

They barely stayed the old man, mad with grief,
from passing through the gates. Then in the mire
he rolled, and begged them all, each man by name:

“Relent, friends. It is hard; but let me go
490 out of the city to the Achaean ships.
I’ll make my plea to that demonic heart.
He may feel shame before his peers, or pity
my old age. His father, too, is old.
Peleus, who brought him up to be a scourge
495 to Trojans, cruel to all, but most to me,
so many of my sons in flower of youth
he cut away. And, though I grieve, I cannot
mourn them all as much as I do one,
for whom my grief will take me to the grave—
500 and that is Hector. Why could he not have died
where I might hold him? In our weeping, then,
his mother, now so destitute, and I
might have had surfeit^o and relief of tears.”

505 These were the words of Priam as he wept,
and all his people groaned. Then in her turn

Vocabulary

destitute (des'tə·tōōt') *adj.*: abandoned.

? **467–478.** What does
this description make
you realize about Achilles?

472. great trophy of the arms;
Hector’s armor.

Zeus gave him to his
enemies to be defiled
in his own fatherland.

503. surfeit *n.*: excess.



Hecuba led the women in lamentation:

“Child, I am lost now. Can I bear my life
after the death of suffering your death?
You were my pride in all my nights and days,
510 pride of the city, pillar to the Trojans
and Trojan women. Everyone looked to you
as though you were a god, and rightly so.
You were their greatest glory while you lived.
Now your doom and death have come upon you.”

515 These were her mournful words. But Hector’s lady
still knew nothing; no one came to tell her
of Hector’s stand outside the gates. She wove
upon her loom, deep in the lofty house,
a double purple web with rose design.
520 Calling her maids in waiting,
she ordered a big caldron on a tripod
set on the hearthfire, to provide a bath
for Hector when he came home from the fight.
Poor wife, how far removed from baths he was

Achilles dragging the body
of Hector around the walls
of Troy (detail). Attic black
figure. Hydria.

Attributed to the Antiope Group.
William Francis Warden Fund, Museum
of Fine Arts, Boston (63.473).

? 509–513. In these
lines, what do you learn
about the way Hector was
viewed by his fellow Trojans?

525 she could not know, as at Achilles' hands
Athena brought him down. Then from the tower
she heard a wailing and a distant moan.
Her knees shook, and she let her shuttle^o fall,
and called out to her maids again: "Come here."

530 Two must follow me, to see this action.
I heard my husband's queenly mother cry.
I feel my heart rise, throbbing in my throat.
My knees are like stone under me. Some blow
is coming home to Priam's sons and daughters.
535 Ah, could it never reach my ears! I die
of dread that Achilles may have cut off Hector,
blocked my bold husband from the city wall,
to drive him down the plain alone! By now
he may have ended Hector's deathly pride.
540 He never kept his place amid the chariots
but drove ahead. He would not be outdone
by anyone in courage."

Saying this, she ran
like a madwoman through the megaron,^o
her heart convulsed. Her maids kept at her side.
545 On reaching the great tower and the soldiers,
Andromache stood gazing from the wall
and saw him being dragged before the city.
Chariot horses at a brutal gallop
pulled the torn body toward the decked ships.
550 Blackness of night covered her eyes; she fell
backward swooning, sighing out her life,
and let her shining headdress fall, her hood
and diadem,^o her plaited band and veil
that Aphrodite once had given her,
555 on that day when, from Eetion's house,
for a thousand bridal gifts, Lord Hector led her.
Now, at her side, kinswomen of her lord
supported her among them, dazed and faint
to the point of death. But when she breathed again
560 and her stunned heart recovered, in a burst
of sobbing she called out among the women:

"Hector! Here is my desolation. Both
had this in store from birth—from yours in Troy
in Priam's palace, mine by wooded Placus
565 at Thebe in the home of Eetion,
my father, who took care of me in childhood,
a man cursed by fate, a fated daughter.

528. **shuttle** *n.*: as used here,
an instrument that carries
thread back and forth, used in
weaving.

? 527–549. How does
Andromache learn that
her husband has been killed?

543. **megaron** (meg'ə-rān) *n.*:
central hall of the house.

553. **diadem** *n.*: ornamental
headband.

How I could wish I never had been born!
 Now under earth's roof to the house of Death
 you go your way and leave me here, bereft,
 570 lonely, in anguish without end. The child
 we wretches had is still in infancy;
 you cannot be a pillar to him, Hector,
 now you are dead, nor he to you. And should
 this boy escape the misery of the war,
 575 there will be toil and sorrow for him later,
 as when strangers move his boundary stones.^o
 The day that orphans him will leave him lonely,
 downcast in everything, cheeks wet with tears,
 580 in hunger going to his father's friends
 to tug at one man's cloak, another's chiton.^o
 Some will be kindly: one may lift a cup
 to wet his lips at least, though not his throat;
 but from the board some child with living parents
 585 gives him a push, a slap, with biting words:
 'Outside, you there! Your father is not with us
 here at our feast!' And the boy Astyanax
 will run to his forlorn mother. Once he fed
 on marrow only and the fat of lamb,
 590 high on his father's knees. And when sleep came
 to end his play, he slept in a nurse's arms,
 brimful of happiness, in a soft bed.
 But now he'll know sad days and many of them,
 missing his father. 'Lord of the lower town'
 595 the Trojans call him. They know, you alone,
 Lord Hector, kept their gates and their long walls.
 Beside the beaked ships now, far from your kin,
 the blowflies' maggots in a swarm will eat you
 naked, after the dogs have had their fill.
 600 Ah, there are folded garments in your chambers,
 delicate and fine, of women's weaving.
 These, by heaven, I'll burn to the last thread
 in blazing fire! They are no good to you,
 they cannot cover you in death. So let them
 605 go, let them be burnt as an offering
 from Trojans and their women in your honor."

Thus she mourned, and the women wailed in answer.

? 571–594. What does
 Andromache predict will
 happen to her son now that
 Hector is dead?

577. **move his boundary
 stones:** steal his land and
 estates.

581. **chiton** (kī'tən) *n.*: tunic.

597–606. These lines
 convey the importance of
 proper burial of the dead.
**? Do you predict that
 Hector will be buried
 properly? Why or why not?**