



The Iliad

Author
Homer

Year Written
c. 750–650

Original Language
Ancient Greek

THEMES

Rage against the World

As the Trojan War grinds through its 10th year, powerful Achilles grows furious when his pride is insulted. He won't fight for the Achaeans (Greeks) until he gets an apology, even if it means letting Troy win. Tragedy abounds, and Achilles will soon face his own fate—but not before reconnecting with his humanity.

War

Violence is glorious and terrible and an unavoidable fact of life.

Humanity

A sense of common humanity balances the horror of war.

Pride

Inflexible pride and honor take a heavy toll on the Greeks.

Fate

The gods decide humans' fate, but sometimes mortals have a choice.

Main Characters



Apollo
God of the sun



Zeus
King of the gods



Athena
Goddess of war



Thetis
Sea goddess;
Achilles's mother

SUPPORTING TROJANS

GODS

SUPPORTING GREEKS



Hector
Trojan protector



Paris
Hector's brother



Achilles
Greatest Greek warrior



Patroclus
Achilles's comrade



Agamemnon
Proud king of Mycenae



Priam
Noble king of Troy



Helen
Captured by Paris



Menelaus
Agamemnon's brother;
Helen's husband

Symbols

Achaean Ships

As the Achaeans' only way home, the ships symbolize their survival and future.

Eating

Food and discussions about eating symbolize characters' states of mind.

Achilles's Shield

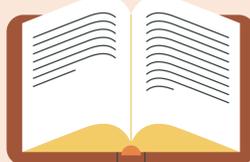
Covered in images of war and peace, it contrasts two inevitable parts of life.



HOMER
c. 9TH/8TH CENTURY BCE

Historians believe that Homer—much like Teiresias, the blind prophet who appears in *The Odyssey* and Sophocles's writings—may have been blind. Little is known about Homer's life, but historians think he may have been from Ionia, near Troy. Scholars believe many people in classical Greece memorized *The Iliad*, looking to it for heroic examples.

The Iliad by the Numbers



15,693

Lines of verse in *The Iliad*



~1,200

Ships belonging to all the Greeks, as described in Book 2



24

Papyrus scrolls needed to record *The Iliad*—possibly the origin of the 24 books



10

Book some scholars believe was added to *The Iliad* by a later author

Even for me, I tell you / death and the strong force of fate are waiting.

Achilles, Book 21, Lines 123–124