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**Literature**  
Teaching Unit  
*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



## The Iliad

by Homer (Butler Trans.)

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# *The Iliad*

## Note to Teacher

*The Iliad* begins in the ninth year of the Trojan War (see Book II), so the students may need some help understanding that personal alliances and grudges have some longstanding basis. In addition, students may be relieved to know that *The Iliad* covers only the final, climactic year of the war.

Cultural norms of the time included serial monogamy, as in the case of Helen, who was lawfully married to Menelaus and then to Alexandrus without an intervening divorce. In addition, it was quite normal for warriors to have women in their tents, and these relationships were sexual in nature, although they often grew to be more than sexual eventually, as in the case of Achilles and Briseis. Another view of this is Priam's comment in Book XXIV that he had 50 sons when the Achaeans first attacked Troy, 19 of these being by one woman (Hecate) and the others by "the women of my household." (Pg 310)

*The Iliad* is a war story first and foremost; its commanding descriptions of warfare are one of its lasting achievements. These descriptions include cruelty, gore, and death. One purpose of including all these elements was to encourage peaceful resolution to strife.

All references are from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics™ edition of *The Iliad*, copyright 2007.

# *The Iliad*

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss *The Iliad* in its historical context, including its importance in codifying elements of the oral tradition into a written work.
2. summarize the elements of an epic and cite the elements in *The Iliad* that classify it as such, including the techniques of repetition, the use of the *aristeia*, direct address to the muses or gods, investment of power in inanimate objects, the importance of a person's pedigree and history as a warrior, and the role of fate.
3. identify the main gods and goddesses and their areas of influence as included in *The Iliad*.
4. construct a timeline of the events portrayed in *The Iliad*.
5. discuss the burial rituals of the time.
6. discuss the meaning of the terms "hero" and "champion" and give examples from the story.
7. identify the main heroes of the story and give a thumbnail sketch of their roles and loyalties.
8. be able to evaluate the relative strengths of the two armies.
9. compare and contrast the treatment of women as portrayed among the human characters and among the gods/goddesses.
10. discuss why Homer included certain events and scenes, such as the detailed gore of battle, the seemingly monotonous repetition of a person's ancestry and heritage, and information on funeral games.
11. appreciate the rituals of hospitality as evidenced in *The Iliad*, including feasts, the exchange of gifts, and courtesies due to those in power or those of great age.
12. compare and contrast the lives and characters of the two greatest warriors of the time: Achilles and Hector.

# The Iliad

## Notes on Teaching *The Iliad*

One element of the writing of *The Iliad* that makes it a challenge for today's readers is Homer's prolific use of honorary titles rather than simple given names. Making a chart of the names and honorifics of the main characters will help students keep the characters straight. It might also be well to label mortals as to whether they were Trojans or Achaeans.

One useful classroom activity would be to build the charts as the reading progresses; working out this information helps students absorb it. Basic charts for the major characters are shown below.

Name	Descriptor	Loyalty	Other notes
Achilles	Son of Peleus	Achaean	Famous warrior
Agamemnon	Son of Atreus	Achaean	King and overall commander; brother to Menelaus
Menelaus	Son of Atreus	Achaean	His wife was Helen, whose being stolen away was the event that started the war.
Nestor	Son of Neleus, prince of Pylos, knight of Gerene	Achaean	Oldest and wisest counselor
Ulysses	Son of Laertes, crafty Ulysses	Achaean	Wise in counsel, great warrior
Ajax	Son of Telamon	Achaean	The greater Ajax
Ajax	Son of Oileus	Achaean	
Diomed	Son of Tydeus	Achaean	Achieved many killings
Idomeneus		Achaean	
Teucer		Achaean	Famous bowman
Patroclus	Son of Menoetius	Achaean	Comrade of Achilles
Priam		Trojan	Trojan king
Alexandrus or Paris	Evil-hearted Paris	Trojan	
Hector	Son of Priam, tamer of horses	Trojan	Greatest Trojan warrior; son of Priam and Hecate; married to Andromache
Aeneas	Son of Anchises	Trojan	Famous warrior; son of Venus
Sarpedon			Son of Jove
Glaucus	Son of Hippolochus		Grandson of Bellerophon
Helen			Daughter of Jove

## Vocabulary (Cont.)

**viler** – more evil or despicable

**weal** – a welt or wound

**welkin** – the sky

**wended** – proceeded along

**whet** – to sharpen

**wont** – accustomed

1. Although Jove has promised Thetis that he will help the Trojans to spite Agamemnon, he is not resting well. Why?
2. What plan does Jove settle on?
3. One characteristic of an epic is the power that inanimate objects are thought to give their rightful owners. What example of this occurs in Book II?
4. How long has this war been going on?
5. Why is the dream repeated several times in this chapter?
6. After sacrificing a fat bull to Jove, Agamemnon prays to Jove. What does he ask for?

**BOOK VII**  
**Pages 87-95**

**Vocabulary**

**assented** – agreed

**baldric** – a leather strap worn across the chest to hold a sword

**behests** – commands, orders

**boon** – a benefit or advantage

**doughty** – tough, brave

**effaced** – wiped out; obliterated

**elated** – overjoyed, delighted

**flayed** – peeled the skin off

**mace** – a heavy club with spikes at the top

**millstone** – a large stone used for grinding grain

**prodigious** – exceptional, impressive

**surnamed** – gave an additional name to; nicknamed

**ween** [*archaic*] – to think

1. Apollo and Minerva are concerned about the course of the war. What do they decide to do?
2. What assurance does Minerva give Hector when she asks him to fight as the Trojan champion?
3. What do Minerva and Apollo do while Hector talks to the Trojans and Agamemnon speaks to the Achaeans?
4. Who is the first Achaean to volunteer to fight Hector?