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Activity Pack
Literature Made Fun!

The Iliad
BY HOMER

Prestwick House

Table of Contents

All references come from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics edition of *The Iliad*, published in 2005.

Name: _____   Date:_____

Pre-Reading

Epic Poem

Objective: Understanding the terms "classic" and "epic"

Activity

Working in small groups, review and discuss the following summary about classic literature and epics. You may also cite other classics and epics with which you may be familiar, either in print, movies, or television.

The Notes that introduce this edition of *The Iliad* say that a classic is a story, written at least one hundred years ago, that still grips the reader both by its momentum and its message.

Other marks of a classic include its characters, who are often larger-than-life in their idealism, passion, and talents. Unfortunately, their flaws are often larger as well. In addition, characters in a classic work are often examples of a type; that is, they illustrate a certain kind of personality. In this way, the reader can learn from the characters, who display universal traits, often in exaggerated measure.

The plot of a classic work of fiction is often particularly intricate, with characters entering, leaving, and reappearing in the story's twisted path. Turns and reverses often add suspense to the plot, and the reader learns not to count a character out the first time he or she seems to have been vanquished. While the plot turns and twists, many of these developments depend on a high level of action that both adds suspense and acts to emphasize the traits of the characters.

Because *The Iliad*, like many classics, has numerous characters and plot twists, many readers will want to chart the characters as they read. Future activities will, in fact, impose this order on the story.

A classic, in addition to telling a story, introduces themes that lift the story above the commonplace and invites the reader to think about universal ideas such as the power of friendship, the cost of dishonesty, the nature of heroism, and the role of loyalty in life.

The term "classical" is often used interchangeably with "classic." However, classical literature has a narrower meaning, referring to works that survive from ancient Greece (such as *The Iliad*) or Rome.

The Iliad is also called an epic, which is really a subset of the classic. An epic is narrowly defined as a poem set in a far-distant time and place and peopled by characters who are almost super-human in their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, an epic usually features intervention by supernatural forces, in this case, the Greek gods, who have their own fights, complications, and alliances.

The Iliad qualifies as an epic, and yet this edition is not poetry but prose. However, the original—or at least earlier—versions of *The Iliad* were poetic in form. The difficulties of translation from ancient Greek have led most modern translators to opt for a finished product in prose.

Name: _____   Date:_____

Books I – VIII

Logic

Objectives: Developing the ability to draw inferences
Using clues in the text to expand understanding of the relative forces of the two armies

Activity

A catalog of the Achaean and Trojan armies is an important element in Book II. Note that detail is given on the background of each group of warriors. The purpose of this is to remind Homer's intended audience (the Greeks of his day) of their cultural history and their dominance of their part of the world. For them, the story is one that recalls how the independent city-states came together into a more cohesive culture. In addition, Homer's contemporaries would come to view the cities that supported the winning side (Achaeans, or Greeks) more favorably than the other cities.

In pairs or small groups, list the clues that the reader is given to assess the ultimate victor in this war, then total the might of the Achaean army. After completing the chart, compare it to the information we have provided on the Trojan army, then discuss the questions that follow.

1.   Which army appears to be larger? On what do you base your answer?

2.   Which army does Homer favor? On what do you base your answer?

3.   What is the significance of naming so many Greek heroes?

4.   Why are there so few familiar names among the Trojans?

Name: _____   Date:_____

Books I – VIII

Art

Objectives: Visualizing
Identifying concepts of interest
Marketing
Artistic interpretation

Activity

Propose a new front cover for *The Iliad* with text and illustrations, and a back cover with text and "blurbs" from other writers praising the book. Choose one of the following options:
- Market the book as a war story.
- Market the book as a story of adventure and romance.
- Market the book as a classic every student should read.

Name: _____   Date:_____

Books I – VIII

Artistic: Designing a Stage Set

Objective: Visualizing the setting

Activity

For a new movie based on *The Iliad*, design the stage set of King Priam's palace, where each of his sons has apartments. Include storage vaults for the treasure Priam has captured in battles, storehouses for grain and olive oil, and pens for animals to be kept as future food. While some detail is given, feel free to add other buildings, furniture, decorative objects, an armory, stables, or any other items you would call for as part of your stage set.

You can present your ideas using drawings, fabric, photographs from magazines, models, or convey your thoughts in any visually effective way.

Name: _____   Date:_____

Books XIX – XXIV

Writing

Objectives: Understanding of the flow of the story
Increasing comprehension

Activity

This edition of *The Iliad* has notes at the beginning of each book to help students follow the story. Imagine that you are the editor of the book, and you have decided to add spice to your edition of *The Iliad* by giving each book a title. To save time, you also decide to skip the task of reading the whole story and depend instead on the introductory notes as the basis for your titles.

The following chart lists the notes from Books XIX-XXIV in the order they appear. Create a new title for each book.

TITLE CHART

Book Number	Introductory Notes	New Title for This Book
XIX	Achilles is reconciled with Agamemnon; Puts on the Armour which Vulcan had made him, and goes out to fight	
XX	The gods hold a council and determine to watch the fight from the hill Callicolone, and the barrow of Hercules; A fight between Achilles and Aeneas is interrupted by Neptune, who saves Aeneas; Achilles kills many Trojans.	
XXI	The fight between Achilles and the river Scamander; The gods fight among themselves; Achilles drives the Trojans within their gates	
XXII	The death of Hector	
XXIII	The funeral of Patroclus, and the funeral games	
XXIV	Priam ransoms the body of Hector; Hector's funeral	

Name: _____   Date:_____

Books XIX – XXIV

Character Assessment

Objective: Evaluating response to different characters

Activity

Review the characters listed in the following chart and write information (words, phrases, sentences) from the text that supports your evaluation of each character. As a class, take a poll that evaluates these characters on their morality. Then vote on the most despicable character and the purest character in the story.

CHARACTER EVALUATION CHART

Character	Good Character: High Morality	Neutral Character: Average Morality	Evil Character: Low Morality
Achilles			
Hector			
Helen			
Jove			
Juno			
Mercury			
Paris (Alexandrus)			
Priam			
Thetis			
Ulysses			

Most despicable character _____

Purest character _____

Name: _____   Date:_____

Wrap-Up

Drama

Objective: Visualizing the action of a story through dramatic interpretation

Activity

Working in small groups, select a scene from *The Iliad* and develop a dramatic interpretation that expresses the tone and content of the scene. Your group will decide the method of presentation and assign roles. Gender does not need to be a factor when choosing roles.

Choose one of the following methods of presenting the scene:
- Act out your parts with dialog that you develop.
- Mime the actions as a narrator reads the re-worked scene.
- Have each character deliver a monologue reporting the action from his or her own point of view.