



The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

What are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?

Epic poems
... attributed to Homer
... about the Trojan War.

Epic Poetry

- Long compilations of individual tales about heroes and heroic events.
- Oral tradition
 - Cultural material and traditions transmitted orally from one generation to another, perhaps for hundreds or thousands of years.
 - Told by bards, storytellers that sang the poem accompanied by music.
- Another characteristic of epic poetry is that it has universal aspects...

Homeric Epithets

“Swift-footed Achilles”
“Wide-ruling Agamemnon”
“Wily (many-minded) Odysseus”
“Rosy-fingered dawn”

Homer used epithets to complete the rhythm pattern (dactylic hexameter) of his epics and to inform or remind the audience something about the character described.

Epithets for Achilles

Son of Peleus
Swift-footed
Shining
Breaking through the ranks
Lion-hearted
Like to the gods

“Universal”

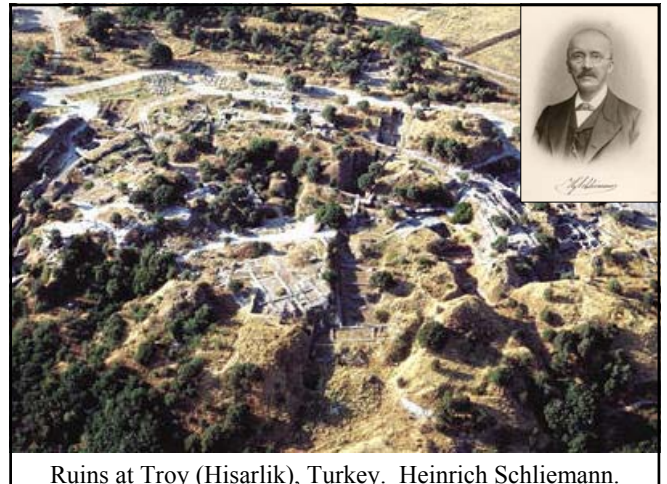
- Great literature addresses questions that are universal, familiar, and meaningful—questions centered on the role of the individual within a family, within a society, and in relation to the gods.

Who was Homer?

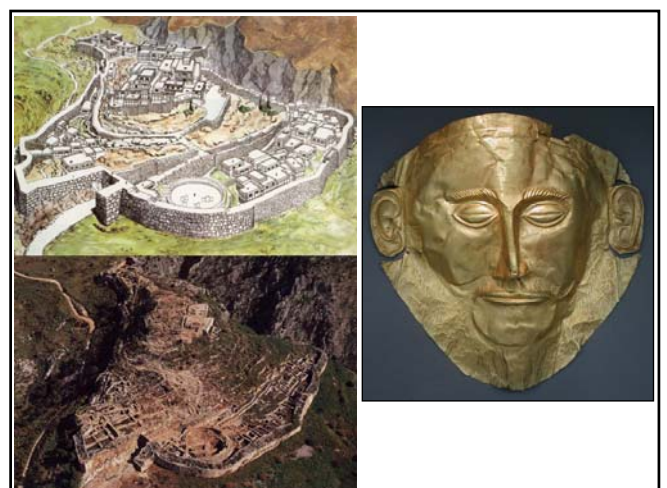
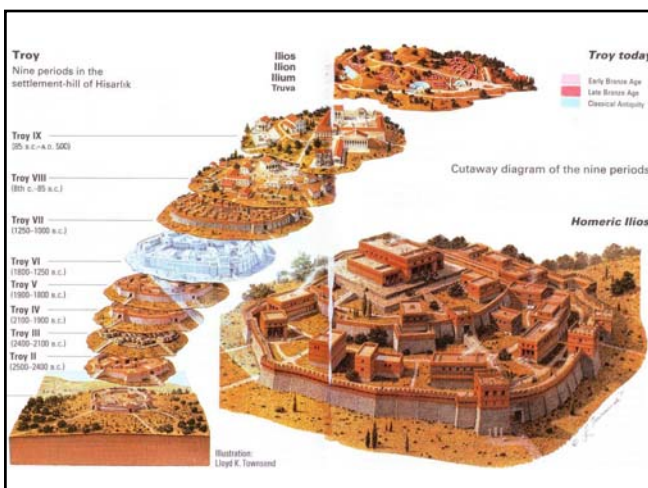
- Tradition holds that Homer was a blind poet who composed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* around 800 BC. Various Ionian cities claimed to be his birthplace, but otherwise his biography is a blank slate.
- There has been considerable academic debate over the **Homeric Question**.
 - When did Homer live? Was he a real person?
 - How many authors do the poems really have?
 - Was Homer actually a woman?

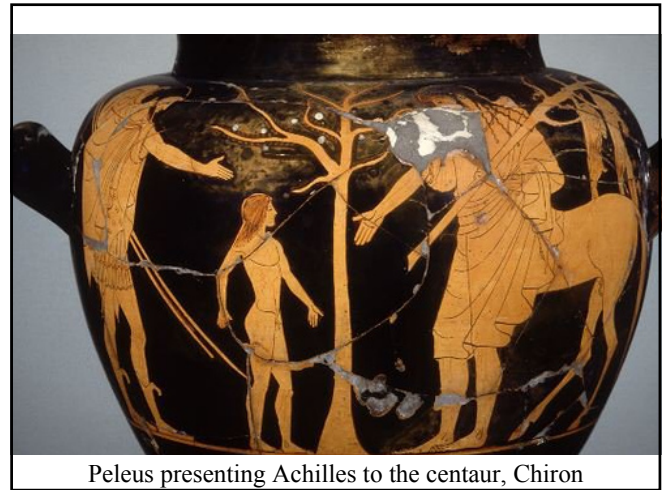
Historical Reality of the Epics?

- The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* -- likely written between 750 and 700 B.C.-- are about an earlier, more heroic time when gods often meddled in human affairs.
- The traditional material from which the epics were drawn comes from Mycenaean Bronze Age culture, but the story is told from the perspective of Archaic Greece.



Ruins at Troy (Hisarlik), Turkey. Heinrich Schliemann.





Peleus presenting Achilles to the centaur, Chiron

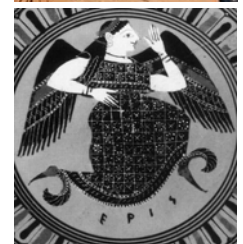
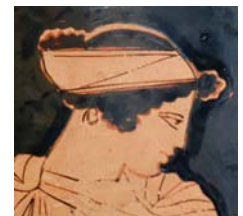


What is the subject matter of the *Iliad*?



The Trojan War:
What was the cause?

- A trade dispute between neighboring states of the Aegean?
- Helen of Troy?
 - The face that launched a thousand ships
- Strife among the gods?
 - Eris, goddess of strife



Greek Religion

- Some older gods represent the personification of ideas or things, such as sleep (Hypnos), dream (Morpheus), death (Thanatos), vengeance (Nemesis), discord (Eris)...
- Greek religion was a mix of deities (gods) derived from the original settlers as well as foreigners and invaders; we call this mixing syncretism.
- Syncretism explains why some Greek gods have many specialties and why so many Greek myths seems to contradict each other.

The Olympian Deities

- | | | |
|-----|------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Zeus | Chief deity |
| 2. | Hera | Mother goddess |
| 3. | Poseidon | Ruler of the seas |
| 4. | Hades | Ruler of the underworld |
| 5. | Hestia | Protector of the hearth |
| 6. | Apollo | God of wisdom and prophesy... |
| 7. | Artemis | Virgin goddess of the hunt |
| 8. | Ares | God of war and violence |
| 9. | Aphrodite | Goddess of love and beauty |
| 10. | Hephaestus | Patron of craftspeople |
| 11. | Athena | Goddess of heroic endeavors... |
| 12. | Hermes | God of merchants and thieves |
| 13. | Dionysus | God of wine... |



The wedding of Peleus and Thetis.



The Judgement of Paris: Hermes leading Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite before Paris.

The Epic Cycle

- The Epic Cycle was a collection of Ancient Greek epic poems that related the story of the Trojan War, not necessarily including Homer's works.
- All Greeks were familiar with the tales surrounding the events of the Trojan War.

What is the subject matter of the *Iliad*?

“Mene allede thea...”

*Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles,
son of Peleus—
that murderous anger which condemned Achaeans
to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls
deep into Hades, leaving their dead bodies
carrion food for dogs and birds—
all in fulfillment of the will of Zeus.*

*Start at the point where Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
that king of men, quarreled with noble Achilles...*

Subject Matter of the *Iliad*

- The Trojan War, but...
 - It begins when Agamemnon takes Briseis
 - and ends with the funeral of Hector.
- The major theme of the *Iliad* is the wrath of Achilles and its consequences
- Although the Trojan war is thought to have lasted ten years, the *Iliad* actually only covers about two months near the end of the war.

Iliad – Main Characters

Achilles	Hector
Menelaus	Paris and Helen
Agamemnon	Priam
Odysseus	Aeneas
Patroclus	Cassandra

Greek (Homeric) Values in the *Iliad*

- Individualistic ethic of achievement
- *arete* – excellence
 - Achilles, Hector, even Helen
- *kleos* – renown, glory, fame
 - Agamemnon, Odysseus → Telemachus
- What if Michael Jordan, Queen Elizabeth II, and Mother Theresa walk into a room . . . ?



They sat there, on the tower, these Trojan elders,
like cicadas perched up on a forest branch, chirping
soft, delicate sounds. Seeing Helen approach the tower,
they commented softly to each other—their words had
wings:

*“There's nothing shameful about the fact
that Trojans and well-armed Achaeans
have endured great suffering a long time
over such a woman—just like a goddess,
immortal, awe-inspiring. She's beautiful.”*

Universal Aspects of the *Iliad*

- Personal desires versus civic duty.
- Achilles embodies the individual, alienated from his society, operating within the framework of his own code of pride and honor. He tends to represent passion and emotion.
- In contrast, Hector, the great Trojan hero, is more dutiful. He represents reason over passion. He has a wife and son. He fights to save his city even though he knows the basis for the quarrel is not worthy of the inevitable destruction.



Achilles killing Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons.



What about all of the other
Greeks and Trojans?

Why do they play along?

The *Iliad*, Book XVII

And Zeus pitied them, watching their tears flow.
He shook his head and addressed his own deep
heart: "Poor creatures, why did we give you to
King Peleus, a mortal doomed to death...
you immortal beasts who never age or die?
So you could suffer the pains of wretched men?
*There is nothing alive more agonized than man
of all that breathe and crawl across the earth.*

So they talked. Priam then called out to Helen.

"Come here, dear child. Sit down in front of me,
so you can see your first husband, your friends,
your relatives. As far as I'm concerned,
it's not your fault. For *I blame the gods.*
*They drove me to wage this wretched war
against Achaeans.*

Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles,
son of Peleus—
that murderous anger which condemned Achaeans
to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls
deep into Hades, leaving their dead bodies
carrion food for dogs and birds—
all in fulfillment of the will of Zeus.

Why does the *Iliad* end with the
funeral games of Hector?

What did Achilles learn?



Who was Aeneas?



Troy compared with the Iliad

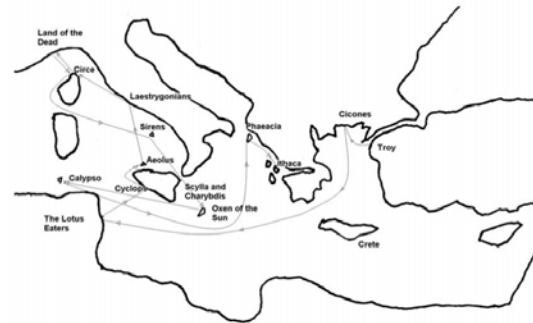
- How does *Troy* begin and end?
- How does the *Iliad* begin and end?
- What lessons can we take from *Troy*?
- What lessons can we take from the *Iliad*?

What is the subject matter of
the *Odyssey*?

Subject Matter of the *Odyssey*

- The *Odyssey* is about Odysseus' return to Ithaca after the war:
 - It begins *en media res* (in the middle of the story) with Odysseus on Calypso's island
 - and ends with Odysseus reunited with his family and restored to his throne.
- The “Wandering of Odysseus” is actually a tale within the tale, as Odysseus tells his hosts of his travels since the end of the Trojan War.
- The *Telemachia* is the name given to the story of Telemachus' journey to manhood while his father is away.

Map of Odysseus' Wanderings



This map represents a possible route for Odysseus' wanderings. The most confusing geographical point is the location of Calypso's island, which some commentators place far in the west at the Straits of Gibraltar, others just off the coast of North Africa, and others further to the east.



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Odyssey – Main Characters

Odysseus
Penelope
Telemachus
Mentor
Athena
Circe
Calypso

Themes in the *Odyssey*

- (Hubris: too much pride; so much that it offends the gods.)
- Hospitality
- Vengeance
- Loyalty
- Spiritual growth

Hospitality (Xenia)



Glaukos and Diomedes exchanging armor.

Vengeance



Loyalty



Servants in Ithaca according to the *Iliad*.

Loyal Servants

- Euryclea (nurse)
- Eumaeus (goatherd)
- Philoeteus (cowherd)

Disloyal Servants

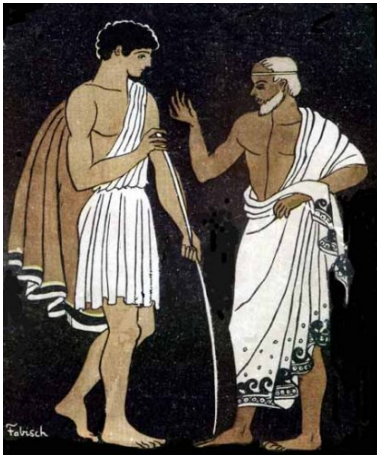
- Melanthius (swineherd)
- 12 household maids



Spiritual Growth in the *Odyssey*

The main characters must all overcome significant challenges, not all from without:

- Odysseus is crafty, but he must become wise.
- Telemachus must become a man before he is done away with by Penelope's many suitors.
- Penelope has to keep her virtue and home intact for Odysseus' return.



Practice Questions

- What does it mean that the issues faced by the characters in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are universal? Give examples of the universal issues found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.
- Of all the characters in the *Iliad* (*Troy*) and the *Odyssey*, who do you most relate to? Why?

Do you think the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had the same author?

How would you characterize each tale?
What values are being promoted in each story?