

# Achilles vs. hector - comparative essay

[Literature](#), [Mythology](#)



Sainath Gopi Mrs. Policastro August 30 2009 Achilles vs. Hector " He who knows others is wise; he who knows himself is enlightened. " This quote was once stated by a Chinese man named Tao Te Ching. The reason this quote was stated is because it encompasses the meaning of the Iliad. Not in a great way but in a vague but familiar way. The Iliad was a tale about the wrathful withdrawal from battle of Achilles, the premiere Greek warrior, after King Agamemnon dishonored him - an internecine quarrel disastrous to the Greek cause. Achilles was a very temperamental person, throughout the entire story he would get frustrated at simple things, such as the beginning where Achilles gets so frustrated at Agamemnon he decides to drop out of the war. Since Achilles makes such hasty decisions it affects himself and his people. Although Achilles possesses amazing strength, he may strike readers as less than heroic. He has all the skills of a great warrior, and proves the mightiest man in the Achaean army, but his deep-seated character flaws constantly impede his ability to act with nobility and integrity. He cannot control his pride or the rage that surges up when that pride is injured. This attribute so poisons him that he abandons his comrades and even prays that the Trojans will slaughter them, all because he has been slighted at the hands of his commander, Agamemnon. Achilles is driven primarily by a thirst for glory. Part of him yearns to live a long, easy life, but he knows that his personal fate forces him to choose between the two. Ultimately, he is willing to sacrifice everything else so that his name will be remembered. Hector is the strongest warrior in the Trojan army. Although he met his death in Achilles, he wreaks havoc on the Achaean army during Achilles' period of absence. He leads the assault that finally penetrates the Achaean ramparts,

he is the first and only Trojan to set fire to an Achaean ship, and he kills Patroclus. Yet his leadership contains discernible flaws, especially toward the end of the epic, when the participation of first Patroclus and then Achilles reinvigorates the Achaean army. He demonstrates a certain cowardice when, twice in Book 17, he flees Great Ajax. Indeed, he recovers his courage only after receiving the insults of his comrades—first Glaucus and then Aeneas. He can often become emotionally carried away as well, treating Patroclus and his other victims with rash cruelty. Later, swept up by a burst of confidence, he foolishly orders the Trojans to camp outside Troy's walls the night before Achilles returns to the battle, thus causing a crucial defeat the next day. But although Hector may prove overly impulsive and insufficiently prudent, he does not come across as arrogant or overbearing, as Agamemnon does. Moreover, the fact that Hector fights in his homeland, unlike any of the Achaean commanders, allows Homer to develop him as a tender, family-oriented man. Hector shows deep, sincere love for his wife and children. Indeed, he even treats his brother Paris with forgiveness and indulgence, despite the man's lack of spirit and preference for lovemaking over military duty. Hector never turns violent with him, merely aiming frustrated words at his cowardly brother. Moreover, although Hector loves his family, he never loses sight of his responsibility to Troy. Achilles does not develop significantly over the course of the epic. Although the death of Patroclus prompts him to seek reconciliation with Agamemnon, it does not alleviate his rage, but instead redirects it toward the other mighty warrior Hector. Whereas Hector runs from Achilles at first and briefly entertains the delusional hope of negotiating his way out of a duel. However, in the end he

stands up to the mighty warrior, even when he realizes that the gods have abandoned him. His refusal to flee even in the face of vastly superior forces makes him the most unfortunate figure in the story