

# Iliad's conflict

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In the poem Iliad by Homer, Homer begins the epic by asking the goddess to sing about the rage of Achilles. That is the main theme of the poem. The reason why there is so much anger and conflict in the Iliad is because the Homeric law of honor and respect is being insulted which results to rage, honor and conflict. The honor of every person in Homeric culture is very important. To the hero, their honor is supreme. They cannot tolerate any kind of insults; they feel like they have to protect their reputation until death. As a hero in the Greek times, they would rather die with honor than live with dishonor. During the battle, nearly a decade after the start of the Trojan War, the Achaeans capture two beautiful maidens Chryseis and Briseis. Chryseis is the daughter of Chryses who is a priest of Apollo in a Trojan- allied town and Briseis is a war prize of Achilles, The most powerful warrior in the Achaean army. When Agamemnon, leader of the Achaean army is forced to return Chryseis to her father, he appropriates Briseis as compensation, sparking Achilles' great rage. Therefore, Achilles is angry at Agamemnon because he insulted his personal honor by taking away his war prize. In response, Achilles withdraws from the war, which produces greater anger both personally and in the background of the war because in order to gain glory and honor in battle, one has to fight to get to the top. Since Achilles wasn't able to perform his ability as a great warrior to gain glory and recognition therefore he is more enraged. Chryses offers Agamemnon a ransom for his daughter, but the Greek king refuses to accept it. As a result, Chryses appeals to Apollo. Under the priest's request, Apollo sent plague to punish the Greek army. Throughout the epic, everybody is either angry or conflicted with one another; therefore revenge also plays an important part in the plot.

Later, Achilles is angry at Hector, the mightiest warrior in the Trojan army, because Hector kills Patroclus, Achilles' companion. Patroclus continues to attack Troy despising Apollo's warning because he is eager for glory. In the end, he is hit by a shaft from Apollo and then struck down by Hector. As an act of revenge, Achilles did not honor the Trojan hero's corpse. Near death, Hector pleads Achilles to return his body to the Trojans for burial. Instead Achilles abuses Hector's body and drags it around his dead companion's tomb and lets the dogs and scavenger birds attack the Trojan hero. In an act of respect, the Trojan hero's corpse should be in proper burial where the city men can honor it. To show that honor is important to the heroes.

Although we talked about anger within mortal heroes, we have to also consider the quarrels and conflicts amongst the divine gods and the immortals. Contradiction is also talked about. Zeus tries to bring a peace truce among the Trojan and the Greeks. In the epics, Zeus and Hera are arguing over whose side to take. Zeus favors the Trojan side while Hera is working with Athena to crush the Trojans because she passionately hates them. In the Iliad, Hera finds Zeus sitting on top of Olympus, she asks Zeus: "Father Zeus, doesn't Ares infuriate you With his reckless destruction of so many Greeks, Much to my sorrow, while Cypris and Apollo, Smug at their success, are lounging around With this mindless bully who knows no law? Father Zeus, will you be angry with me? If I knock Ares silly out of the battle?" (Iliad 5. 815) This quote alone shows the sense of side taking amongst the gods but at the same time, an understanding to maintain an organized authoritative order; even though the gods have power over the lives of the mortals, they also understand the need of balance and limits between their

controls. Right after Hera poses the question to Zeus, Zeus contradicts his own belief by telling her to send Athena to handle the dirty works. (Iliad 5. 818) This clearly would set a bad example for the mortals Greeks and Trojan. When the Homeric law of honor and respect is being insulted, the great consequences are rages, revenge, anger and conflicts. From the beginning we see how the Greek warrior's rage started by someone insulting their personal honor to the end where revenge comes in because of improper honor and respect. In the last five books of the Iliad, the conflict is changed into the heroic rage that Achilles displays as a warrior. His passion is fueled by the same thing that fuels this great tale: heroes and gods looking to keep intact the honor they hold so sacred.