

# Predictions

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



The drama found in The Iliad of Homer is not characterized by surprises. The reader always knows what to expect because of the gods' explicit prophecies as well as the behaviors of the mortals. The latter more subtly foreshadows future events. A perfect example is found in book 6, where the conversations and actions that occur tragically foretell the death of Hektor. Upon returning home, Hektor finds that his wife, Andromache, "had taken her place on the tower in lamentation" (VI. 373). Although he is still alive, Andromache has already begun to lament over his death because she is certain of his fate. She even prophesizes to Hektor that his "own great strength will be [his] death" (VI. 407), and then she continues to predict that she "soon must be [his] widow" (VI. 408). Her belief that he will die is further strengthened by the fact that her family has already suffered because of Achilles. This single man had killed her father and her seven brothers, and he also took her mother away. Hektor is the only person she has left and she refers to him as her "father, honoured mother, brother, and young husband" (VI. 429-430). Hektor represents all of those who Andromache has lost to Achilles, which indicates that he, too, will face the same fate. It seems destined that all her loved ones will suffer at Achilles' hands, including her husband. Knowing this, Andromache continues to mourn when Hektor leaves because she firmly believes that "he would never again come back from the fighting/alive" (VI. 501-502). Hektor, himself, is also aware of his fate. He tells Andromache: "I know this thing well in my heart, and my mind knows it:/there will come a day when sacred Ilion shall perish,/and the people of Priam" (VI. 447-448). He knows that he is one of the "people of Priam." Furthermore, he predicts that after the fall of Troy, the Achaians will take his wife as ransom. He does

not use words such as ‘if’ to imply possibility. Rather, he says: “when some bronze-armoured/Achaian leads you off” (VI. 454-455); he is certain of what will happen and thus certain of his own death. The scene in which Hektor removes his helmet clearly foreshadows his death. In *The Iliad*, the removal of the helmet is equated with vulnerability. Without the helmet, the soldier lacks protection where it is most needed and he becomes extremely weak. More crucially, he “laid it in all its shining upon the ground” (VI. 473). The placement of a soldier’s helmet on the ground is equivocal to his death. Hektor finds himself in such a situation in book 22 after he is killed: Achilles drags him around the city so that “all that head(was tumbled/in the dust” (XXII. 402-403). Hektor’s death in book 22 prefigures the fall of Troy. Hektor is intrinsically tied to the city. He “alone(defended the gates and the long walls” (XXII. 507). He is the most important and most feared defender of Troy. When he challenges the Achaians to one-on-one combat, the Achaians “stayed stricken to silence” (VII. 92). The loss of Hektor boosts the Achaians’ morale, and the defeat of the Trojans has begun. The Trojans are also aware of this. When the Trojans discover that Hektor is dead, “all his people about him/were taken with wailing and lamentation all through the city./It was most like what would have happened, if all lowering/Ilium had been burning top to bottom in fire” (XXII. 408-411). They react to Hektor’s death as if they have already lost because they know that this will happen. Also, when Andromache discovers that Hektor is dead, she gives a lengthy speech regarding her son’s, Astyanax, loss of a father. She says that “with his dear father gone, he has much to suffer” (XXII. 505). Just as Astyanax is now an orphan, so is Troy. Troy finds itself in the same situation as Astyanax:

helpless and weak. The way in which Hektor faces his death also foreshadows how Troy will fall. During the fight, Hektor is wearing Achilles' armor, which he had stripped off of Patroklos after he had slain him. Wearing Achilles' suit gives him a false sense of security and makes him feel more confident when facing Achilles. More important is the deceitful role which Athene plays during this battle. Athene assumes the likeness of Hektor's brother, Deiphobos, and urges him to stop fleeing and encourages him to "stand fast against him and beat him [Achilles] back" (XXII. 231). However, Athene knows Hektor will die, yet "[leads] him on by beguilement" (XXII. 247) and speeds him to his death. This is similar to the way in which the Achaians will defeat the Trojans. The beguiling presentation of the Trojan horse provides the Trojans with a false sense of security. As a result, they become less wary of attack and the city is defeated in this deceitful atmosphere. Book 6 clearly prefigures book 22, which in turn clearly prefigures the fall of Troy. The characters anticipate the future because certain events provide them with insight and prepares them as well. Andromache begins lamenting over Hektor's death in book 6 when he is still alive. Thus when she hears the news in book 22, it does not come as a complete shock. Rather, it serves as a confirmation of something she had already expected to occur which she had begun to accept earlier. The reaction of Hektor's son, Astyanax, shows his anticipation of his father's death as well. When Hektor reaches out for his son, he "shrank back to his fair-girdled nurse's bosom/screaming, [frightened]" (XXII. 467-468). Rather than being happy to see his father who has been away, Astyanax cries, indicating the tragic end his father is to face.