

Troy: from myth to movie essay

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Written Assignment The two thousand four movie “ Troy” (Peterson) is a modernized version of the Greek poet Homer`s epic The Iliad. The film tells the story of how Paris, a prince of Troy stole Helen from her husband Menelaus, King of Sparta, after Sparta and Troy have agreed to peacefully coexist, and the war between all of Greece and Troy as a result of Paris`s kidnapping/ seduction of Helen. Viewers see the story unfold mainly from the view point of Achilles, granting the character a focal point in the movie which remains true to Homer`s epic, but also switches between characters on both sides of the conflict.

While the movie does not follow the original epic in every detail, it would be difficult to tell the story of the Trojan War without incorporating the equally famous Trojan horse. Although the movie does not include everything the myths do about the Trojan horse, it does show its construction, the Trojans discovering it in the ruins of the abandoned Greek camp, the religious significance of the horse, and the festival the Trojans threw to celebrate the “ end” of the war and the horse`s place in it. Since the movie borrows elements from Homer`s Odyssey, books four and eight, Virgil`s Aeneid book two, Pausanias`s Description of Greece book one and Quintus Smyrnaeus The Fall of Troy books twelve and thirteen of these stories and mixing and matching them to create the version shown in the film, it would be only logical that each source be used in analysing how the modern film “ Troy”. Each writer not only updates the story of Troy to fit in their time, but also shows how a story can evolve and change depending on the values of the culture in which it is being retold.

While examining a story from any time period, it is obviously important to start with the original story, which in this case is Homer's *Odyssey*. Ignoring the debates of when Homer lived or if he was even a real person, the first written story detailing the events that happened during the Trojan War, and the wooden horse constructed by the Greeks is attributed to him, so it makes sense to examine this story first. After Homer, the movie seems to borrow much of its scenes involving the Trojan horse from the *Aeneid* written by the Roman Virgil in the first century A.

D. which views the war not from the Greek perspective, but from that of the Trojan Prince Aeneas, so it too should be included. Next, the Greek poet Quintus Smyrnaeus, in the last books of his *Posthomerica* retells the fall of Troy using the Homeric style epic verse. This shows that even roughly thirteen hundred years after Homers lifetime, people were still entertained by new versions of his works.

As *Troy* shows, stories of the Trojan war, whether using the *Iliad* or other ancient sources for their basis are still being retold to this very day. Movie viewers unfamiliar with the origin of the Trojan horse are first introduced to it when at two hours twelve minutes forty nine seconds, they see Odysseus, portrayed by Sean Bean, come up with the idea of building a wooden horse after witnessing a common Greek soldier carving a small toy for his son back in Greece. The scene cuts to Odysseus standing back, supervising a small workforce of Greeks gathering up timber from burnt ships in a loose pile, with small sections resembling that of a horse. Scenes are then presented showing how a horseman rides into Troy bringing news of the Greeks seeming departure (two hours fifteen minutes thirty seven seconds), the <https://assignbuster.com/troy-from-myth-to-movie-essay/>

Trojans arriving on the beach front to behold Greek plague victims and the massive wooden horse(two hours sixteen minutes eighteen seconds). A Trojan priest explains was left behind as an offering to Poseidon for safe passage across the Aegean Sea while Paris, portrayed by Orlando Bloom tells his father Priam to burn it.

The Trojans, ignoring Paris's warning and wanting to claim the favor of Poseidon for themselves drag the statue into the heart of Troy on wooden piles and celebrate the end of the war by throwing a festival(two hours seventeen minutes forty seven seconds. Soon after, the Greeks led by Odysseus and Achilles, storm out of the horse once the Trojans have fallen asleep " passed out", open the gates for the awaiting Greek army and sack Troy(two hours eighteen minutes fifty seconds to two hours twenty six minutes seventeen seconds). The movie does not give the viewers a specific time period for how long it took to construct the horse, but does show that it was built at some point during the twelve days the Greeks gave to the Trojans for Hectors funeral games. Now this is a fairly accurate Hollywood portrayal of the Trojan horse and its importance during the Trojan War. However, being only a one hundred sixty three minute movie it is understandable that certain accounts and characters were not included in the scenes involving the horse or the movie in general. Homer's tale of the Odyssey books four and eight (A.

T. Murray), focus on the Trojan War as a past adventure of Odysseus. Although both books do mention the horse and the role it played in the war (Homer, Odyssey.

4. 265, 8. 485); it is in the past tense focusing more on Odysseus than any other character. Homer gave Helen a much more active role in book four, telling an audience in Sparta how she encountered Odysseus when he slipped into Troy alone disguised as a beggar and how she danced around the horse once it had been brought into the city(Homer, Odyssey.

4. 275-285), pretending to be the dead wives of men hiding inside the horse in an attempt to lure them out, but again this would have shifted the focus off the Greek side of the story and would not really forward the storyline at all. Book eight (A. T. Murray) tells the readers of a bard signing a description of the wooden horse(Homer, Odyssey. 8.

490-500), and how Odysseus along with a group of soldiers broke out of the horse and storm Troy, but there is little mention of other characters from the war. Much of the movie scenes appear to be taken from Virgil's accounts in Aeneid Book two (Virgil. Aeneid.

2. 40). Where he talks about not only the construction of the horse itself, but how the Greek army pretended to leave, how the Trojans came upon the statue (Virgil.

Aeneid. 2. 145), how the horse was used to smuggle Greek soldiers led by Odysseus into Troy (Virgil, Aeneid. 2. 250) and how those soldiers opened the gates of Troy to allow the secretly returned army in to sack the city. Now the movie does down play and remove various religious aspects such as Odysseus being given the idea of the horse from Athena, or her Romanized counterpart Minerva, who sent large snakes to consume Laocoon and his two sons for wanting to burn the horse(Virgil, Aeneid.

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2. 195). Yet if the movie writers did not feel the need to call Laocoon by his name, the addition of a scene showing his dramatic death, swallowed whole by a snake would serve only to confuse the audience. In addition, there is also no mention of Sinon (Virgil, Aeneid. 2. 77), a Greek who was left behind for the sole purpose of explaining to the Trojans what the horse is for; instead the screen writers cover the information Sinon would have provided by having a nameless Trojan Priest. The movie is also able to visually show the Greek bodies of plague victims and move the story forward without the addition of what is going on, thereby removing the need for explanatory characters.

Pausanias's, (Jones) in his description of Greece book one gives a very good short description of a bronze statue he saw in the Athenian Acropolis depicting a wooden horse, built by Epeius to breach the walls of Troy. He comments on how the design fits the story well and how people are even shown peeking out of the horse over imagined sleeping Trojans. But Pausanias seems to be simply listing and describing statues he can see around the Acropolis more than retelling the story of the war and therefore cannot add anything to the two thousand four adaptation.

However, where the statue is located does imply the significance the horse played in the war, and more importantly the Athenians would have made the mythological connection between the dream that Epeius had, in which Athena/Minerva gave Epeius the idea and ability to construct the horse, to their own city, as Athena was the patron goddess of Athens. If the movie takes most of its information from how Virgil describes it, then *The Fall of Troy*, book seven by Quintus Smyrnaeus is second in line. It talks about the <https://assignbuster.com/troy-from-myth-to-movie-essay/>

Greeks agreeing on a torch being used as a war signal being waved from the top of a gate house after the Greek heroes escaped from the Trojan horse, informing the Greek army that the gate had been opened, which the movie has Odysseus do. The construction of the Trojan horse is written about in great detail which unfortunately, one can assume due to time constrictions and general lack of character or plot development was not included in the movie.

Where the Greeks hide to trick the Trojans into believing they have sailed across the Aegean is covered as is Sinon. Quintus even provides the reader with a list of who was chosen to be inside the horse. In his book eight Quintus talks about the feast and festival the Trojans throw to celebrate the wars conclusion and although the movie only shows one day of the festival, it is still shown. What the movie did not take from any of the historical accounts is the Greek god's active roles in the myths, specifically Athena/Minerva appearing to either Epeus or Odysseus in a dream and telling them to construct a hollow horse and Athena/Minerva sending giant sea snakes to consume Laocoon and his two sons. Admittedly the Trojans debate wither to burn the horse, push it off a cliff or bring it into the city were greatly down played, but the core arguments were summed up quite nicely by Paris telling his father to burn the statue and a priest of Troy countering by reminding king Priam that this is a gift to the gods and should be taken to the temple of Poseidon.

From what historians know about ancient Greek theatre, it is not a great leap to say that an ancient Greek would miss the details most historical accounts in relation to the construction of the horse, as well as how minor the religious

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attachments placed upon the horse were portrayed, but would be able to easily recognise how the human aspects were clearly the focus on this, the two thousand four film adaption. Even a movie with the budget of millions of dollars cannot always afford every ' historical' detail, so writers have to focus on what forwards the storyline in the most logical fashion. Today we have the use of technology combined with visual media, which allows us to easily incorporate minor details into the overall scene of the movie, which removes the need for the direct reference to very minor characters as the visual qualities allow directors to simply incorporate such characters as faceless extras.