

Helen of troy essay sample



In Greek mythology, Helen of Troy was the most beautiful woman in the world. A daughter of the god Zeus*, she is best known for the part she played in causing the Trojan War*, a story told by Homer in the Iliad] and the Odyssey]. Some scholars suggest that Helen was also a very ancient goddess associated with trees and birds. Birth and Early Life. Some myths say that Helen's mother was Leda, the wife of King Tyndareus of Sparta*. Others name Nemesis, the goddess of revenge, as her mother. Helen had a sister Clytemnestra, who later became the wife of King Agamemnon* of Mycenae, and twin brothers Castor and Pollux, known as the Dioscuri. Stories claiming Leda as Helen's mother tell how Zeus disguised himself as a swan and raped the Spartan queen. Leda then produced two eggs. From one came Helen and her brother Pollux. Clytemnestra and Castor emerged from the other. Other versions of the myth say that Zeus seduced Nemesis, and she laid the two eggs.

A shepherd discovered them and gave them to Queen Leda, who tended the eggs until they hatched and raised the children as her own. In some variations of this legend, Helen and Pollux were the children of Zeus, but Clytemnestra and Castor were actually the children of Tyndareus. When Helen was only 12 years old, the Greek hero Theseus* kidnapped her and planned to make her his wife. He took her to Attica in Greece and locked her away under the care of his mother. Helen's brothers Castor and Pollux rescued her while Theseus was away and brought her back to Sparta. According to some stories, before Helen left Attica, she had given birth to a daughter named Iphigenia. Some time after Helen returned to Sparta, King Tyndareus decided that it was time for her to marry. Suitors came from all

over Greece, hoping to win the famous beauty. Many were powerful leaders. Tyndareus worried that choosing one suitor might anger the others, who could cause trouble for his kingdom. Among those seeking to marry Helen was Odysseus*, the king of Ithaca. Odysseus advised Tyndareus to have all the suitors take an oath to accept Helen's choice and promise to support that person whenever the need should arise.

The suitors agreed, and Helen chose Menelaus, a prince of Mycenae, to be her husband. Helen's sister Clytemnestra was already married to Menelaus's older brother, Agamemnon. The Trojan War. For a while, Helen and Menelaus lived happily together. They had a daughter and son, and Menelaus eventually became the king of Sparta. But their life together came to a sudden end. Paris, a prince of Troy, traveled to Sparta on the advice of the goddess Aphrodite*. She had promised him the most beautiful woman in the world after he proclaimed her the " fairest" goddess. When Paris saw Helen, he knew that Aphrodite had kept her promise. While Menelaus was away in Crete, Paris took Helen back to Troy. Some stories say Helen went willingly, seduced by Paris's charms. Others claim that Paris kidnapped her and took her by force. When Menelaus returned home and discovered Helen gone, he called on the leaders of Greece, who had sworn to support him if necessary. The Greeks organized a great expedition and set sail for Troy.

Their arrival at Troy marked the beginning of the Trojan War. During the war, Helen's sympathies were divided. At times, she helped the Trojans by pointing out Greek leaders. At other times, however, she sympathized with the Greeks and did not betray them when opportunities to do so arose. Helen had a number of children by Paris, but none survived infancy. Paris died in

the Trojan War, and Helen married his brother Deiphobus. After the Greeks won the war, she was reunited with Menelaus, and she helped him kill Deiphobus. Then Helen and Menelaus set sail for Sparta. Later Life. The couple arrived in Sparta after a journey of several years. Some stories say that the gods, angry at the trouble Helen had caused, sent storms to drive their ships off course to Egypt and other lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

When they finally arrived in Sparta, the couple lived happily, although by some accounts, Menelaus remained suspicious of Helen's feelings and loyalty. Many stories say that Helen remained in Sparta until her death. But others say that she went to the island of Rhodes after Menelaus died, perhaps driven from Sparta by their son Nicostratus. At first she was given refuge on Rhodes by Polyxo, the widow of Tlepolemus, one of the Greek leaders who had died in the Trojan War. Later, however, Polyxo had Helen hanged to avenge the death of her husband. One very different version of Helen's story claims that the gods sent an effigy, or dummy, of Helen to Troy but that she actually spent the war years in Egypt. Helen and stories about her inspired many ancient writers, including the Greek playwright Euripides* and the Roman poets

Etymology

The etymology of Helen's name has been a problem for scholars until the present. Georg Curtius related Helen (Ἑλένη) to the moon (Selene Σελήνη). Émile Boisacq considered Ἑλένη to derive from the noun ἑλένη meaning "torch".[1] It has also been suggested that the λ of Ἑλένη arose from an original ν, and thus the etymology of the name is connected with the root of

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Venus. Linda Lee Clader, however, says that none of the above suggestions offers much satisfaction.[2] If the name has an Indo-European etymology, it is possibly a suffixed form of a root *wel- “to turn, roll”,[3] or of *sel- “to flow, run”.[4] The latter possibility would allow comparison to the Vedic Sanskrit Saraṇyū, a character who is abducted in Rigveda 10. 17. 2. This parallel is suggestive of a Proto-Indo-European abduction myth. Saraṇyū means “swift” and is derived from the adjective saraṇa (“running”, “swift”), the feminine of which is saraṇā; this is in every sound cognate with Ἑλένα, the form of her name that has no initial digamma.[5] The possible connection of Helen’s name to ἐλένη (“torch”), as noted above, may also support the relationship of her name to Vedic svaranā (“the shining one”).

Prehistoric and mythological context

The origins of Helen’s myth date back to the Mycenaean age.[8] The first record of her name appears in the poems of Homer, but scholars assume that such myths invented or received by the Mycenaean Greeks made their way to Homer. Her mythological birthplace was Sparta of the Age of Heroes, which features prominently in the canon of Greek myth: in later ancient Greek memory, the Mycenaean Bronze Age became the age of the Greek heroes. The kings, queens, and heroes of the Trojan Cycle are often related to the gods, since mythic origins gave stature to the Greeks’ heroic ancestors. The fall of Troy came to represent a fall from an illustrious heroic age, remembered for centuries in oral tradition before being written down. [9]Recent archaeological excavations in Greece suggest that modern-day Laconia was a distinct territory in the Late Bronze Age, while the poets narrate that it was a rich kingdom. Archaeologists have unsuccessfully

looked for a Mycenaean palatial complex buried beneath present-day Sparta.

[10] An important Mycenaean site at the Menelaion was destroyed by ca. 1200 BC, and most other Mycenaean sites in Lakonia also disappear. There is a shrinkage from fifty sites to fifteen in the early twelfth century, and then to fewer in the eleventh century. Life/Birth

In most sources, including the Iliad and the Odyssey, Helen is the daughter of Zeus and Leda, the wife of the Spartan king Tyndareus (no reference given for Helen as the daughter of Leda). Euripides' play Helen, written in the late 5th century BC, is the earliest source to report the most familiar account of Helen's birth: that, although her putative father was Tyndareus, she was actually Zeus' daughter. In the form of a swan, the king of gods was chased by an eagle, and sought refuge with Leda. The swan gained her affection, and the two mated. Leda then produced an egg, from which Helen emerged. The First Vatican Mythographer introduces the notion that two eggs came from the union: one containing Castor and Pollux; one with Helen and Clytemnestra. Nevertheless, the same author earlier states that Helen, Castor and Pollux were produced from a single egg. Pseudo-Apollodorus states that Leda had intercourse with both Zeus and Tyndareus the night she conceived Helen. On the other hand, in the Cypria, one of the Cyclic Epics, Helen was the daughter of Zeus and the goddess Nemesis. The date of the Cypria is uncertain, but it is generally thought to preserve traditions that date back to at least the 7th century BC.

In the Cypria, Nemesis did not wish to mate with Zeus. She therefore changed shape into various animals as she attempted to flee Zeus, finally becoming a goose. Zeus also transformed himself into a goose and mated

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with Nemesis, who produced an egg from which Helen was born.

Presumably, in the Cypria, this egg was somehow transferred to Leda. Later sources state either that it was brought to Leda by a shepherd who discovered it in a grove in Attica, or that it was dropped into her lap by Hermes. Asclepiades of Tragilos and Pseudo-Eratosthenes related a similar story, except that Zeus and Nemesis became swans instead of geese.

Timothy Gantz has suggested that the tradition that Zeus came to Leda in the form of a swan derives from the version in which Zeus and Nemesis transformed into birds. Pausanias states that in the middle of the 2nd century AD, the remains of an egg-shell, tied up in ribbons, were still suspended from the roof of a temple on the Spartan acropolis. People believed that this was “ the famous egg that legend says Leda brought forth”. Pausanias traveled to Sparta to visit the sanctuary, dedicated to Hilaeira and Phoebe, in order to see the relic for himself. Abduction by Theseus and youth

Two Athenians, Theseus and Pirithous, thought that since they were both sons of gods, both of them should have divine wives; they thus pledged to help each other abduct two daughters of Zeus. Theseus chose Helen, and Pirithous vowed to marry Persephone, the wife of Hades. Theseus took Helen and left her with his mother Aethra or his associate Aphidnus at Aphidnae or Athens. Theseus and Pirithous then traveled to the underworld, the domain of Hades, to kidnap Persephone. Hades pretended to offer them hospitality and set a feast, but, as soon as the pair sat down, snakes coiled around their feet and held them there. Helen’s abduction caused an invasion of Athens by

Castor and Pollux, who captured Aethra in revenge, and returned their sister to Sparta.

In most accounts of this event, Helen was quite young; Hellanicus of Lesbos said she was seven years old and Diodorus makes her ten years old. On the other hand, Stesichorus said that Iphigeneia was the daughter of Theseus and Helen, which obviously implies that Helen was of childbearing age. In most sources, Iphigeneia is the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, but Duris of Samos and other writers followed Stesichorus' account. Ovid's *Heroides* give us an idea of how ancient and, in particular, Roman authors imagined Helen in her youth: she is presented as a young princess wrestling naked in the palaestra; an image alluding to a part of girls' physical education in classical (and not in Mycenaean) Sparta. Sextus Propertius imagines Helen as a girl who practices arms and hunts with her brothers: [...] or like Helen, on the sands of Eurotas, between Castor and Pollux, one to be victor in boxing, the other with horses: with naked breasts she carried weapons, they say, and did not blush with her divine brothers there.

Suitors of Helen

When it was time for Helen to marry, many kings and princes from around the world came to seek her hand, bringing rich gifts with them, or sent emissaries to do so on their behalf. During the contest, Castor and Pollux had a prominent role in dealing with the suitors, although the final decision was in the hands of Tyndareus. Menelaus, her future husband, did not attend but sent his brother, Agamemnon, to represent him. There are three available and not entirely consistent lists of suitors, compiled by Pseudo-Apollodorus <https://assignbuster.com/helen-of-troy-essay-sample-essay-samples/>

(31 suitors), Hesiod (11 suitors), and Hyginus (36 suitors), for a total of 45 distinct names. There are only fragments from Hesiod's poem, so his list would have contained more. Achilles' absence from the lists is conspicuous, but Hesiod explains that he was too young to take part in the contest. Taken together, the list of suitors matches well with the captains in the Catalog of Ships from the Iliad; however, some of the names may have been placed in the list of Helen's suitors simply because they went to Troy. It is not unlikely that relatives of a suitor may have joined the war. Six Suitors listed in all three sources

* Ajax - Son of Telamon. Led 12 ships from Salamis to Troy. Commits suicide there. * Elephenor - Son of Chalcodon. Led 50 ships to Troy and died there * Menelaus - Son of Atreus. Led 60 ships from Sparta to Troy. He returned home to Sparta with Helen. * Menestheus - Son of Peteos. Led 50 ships from Athens to Troy. He returned to Athens after the war. * Odysseus - Son of Laertes. Led 12 ships from Ithaca to Troy. He returned home after 10 years of wandering the seas. * Protesilaus - Son of Iphicles. Led 40 ships from Phylace to Troy. He was the first Greek to die in battle at the hands of Hector. Nineteen Suitors listed by both Apollodorus and Hyginus

* Agapenor - Son of Ancaeus, King of Arcadia. Takes 60 ships of men to Troy. Returns home. * Ajax (AKA Ajax the Lesser or Locrian Ajax) - Son of Oileus. Led 40 ships to Troy, drowned on the way home when Poseidon split the rock he was on. * Amphimachus - Son of Cteatus. With Polyxenus and Thalpius, he led 40 ships from Elis to Troy. Killed by Hector. * Antilochus - Son of Nestor. Went with his father and 90 ships to Troy. Killed in battle while protecting his father from Memnon. * Ascalaphus - Son of Ares and King of

Orchemenus. Led 30 ships to Troy. Killed in battle by Deiphobus. * Diomedes - Son of Tydeus. Diomedes was one of the Epigoni and King of Argos. He led 80 ships to Troy. His wife took a lover and Diomedes lost his kingdom, so after the war he settled in Italy. * Eumelus - Son of Admetus and King of Pherae. Led 11 ships to Troy. * Eurypylus - Son of Euaemon. Led 40 ships from Thessaly to Troy. * Leonteus - Son of Coronos. With Polypoetes he led 40 ships of the Lapiths to Troy. * Machaon - Son of Asclepius, brother of Podalirius. An Argonaut and physician. Led 30 ships. Killed in battle by Eurypylus (the son of Telephus). * Meges - Son of Phyleus. Led 40 ships to Troy.

* Patroclus - Son of Menoetius. His younger cousin Achilles went with him to Troy. Killed by Hector. * Peneleos - Son of Hippalcimus. An Argonaut. He went with the Boetian force of 50 ships to Troy. Killed in battle by Eurypylus (the son of Telephus). * Philoctetes - Son of Poeas. Led 7 ships from Thessaly to Troy, he was an archer and killed Paris. * Podalirius - Son of Asclepius, brother of Machaon. A physician. After the war he founded a city in Caria. * Polypoetes - Son of Pirithous. With Leonteus, he led 40 ships of the Lapiths to Troy. * Polyxenus - Son of Agasthenes. With Amphimachus, and Thalpius, he led 40 ships from Elis to Troy. * Sthenelus - Son of Capaneus. One of the Epigoni, he went with Diomedes to Troy. * Thalpius - Son of Eurytus. With Amphimachus and Polyxenus, he led 40 ships from Elis to Troy. One Suitor listed by Apollodorus and Hesiod

* Amphilochnus - Son of Amphiaraus and younger brother of Alcmaeon. One Suitor listed by Hesiod and Hyginus

* Idomeneus - Son of Deucalion and King of Crete. Led 80 ships to Troy.

Survived the war, but was exiled from Crete. Three Suitors listed only by Hesiod

* Alcmaeon - Son of Amphiaraus and one of the Epigoni. * Lycomedes - a Cretan.

* Podarces - The younger brother of Protesilaus. He led the troops after his brother's death. Ten Suitors listed only by Hyginus

* Ancaeus -

* Blanirus -

* Clytius -

* Meriones - A companion of Idomeneus of Crete.

* Nireus - He led 3 ships from Syme to Troy.

* Phemius -

* Phidippus - He led 30 ships to Troy.

* Prothous - He led 40 ships from Magnetes to Troy.

* Thoas - He led 40 ships from Aetolia to Troy.

* Tlepolemus - He led 9 ships from Rhodes to Troy.

Five Suitors listed only by Apollodorus

* Epistrophus - Son of Iphitus, brother of Schedius.

* Ialmenus - Companion of Ascalaphus, who led 30 ships to Troy * Leitus - Son of Alector

* Schedius - Son of Iphitus, brother of Epistrophus. He was killed by Hector who was trying to throw a spear towards Ajax. * Teucer - The half-brother of Ajax. Survived the war.

The Oath of Tyndareus

Tyndareus was afraid to select a husband for his daughter, or send any of

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the suitors away, for fear of offending them and giving grounds for a quarrel. Odysseus was one of the suitors, but had brought no gifts because he believed he had little chance to win the contest. He thus promised to solve the problem, if Tyndareus in turn would support him in his courting of Penelope, the daughter of Icarius. Tyndareus readily agreed, and Odysseus proposed that, before the decision was made, all the suitors should swear a most solemn oath to defend the chosen husband against whoever should quarrel with him. After the suitors had sworn not to retaliate, Menelaus was chosen to be Helen's husband. As a sign of the importance of the pact, Tyndareus sacrificed a horse. Helen and Menelaus became rulers of Sparta, after Tyndareus abdicated. The marriage of Helen and Menelaus marks the beginning of the end of the age of heroes. Concluding the catalog of Helen's suitors, Hesiod reports Zeus' plan to obliterate the race of men and the heroes in particular. The Trojan War, caused by Helen's elopement with Paris, is going to be his means to this end. Seduction by Paris

Some years later, Paris, a Trojan prince, came to Sparta to claim Helen, in the guise of a supposed diplomatic mission. Before this journey, Paris had been appointed by Zeus to judge the most beautiful goddess; Hera, Athena, or Aphrodite. In order to earn his favour, Aphrodite promised Paris the most beautiful woman in the world. Swayed by Aphrodite's offer, Paris chose her as the most beautiful of the goddesses, earning the wrath of Athena and Hera. Although Helen is sometimes depicted as being raped by Paris, Ancient Greek sources are often elliptical and contradictory. Herodotus states that Helen was abducted, but the Cypria simply mentions that, after giving Helen gifts, "Aphrodite brings the Spartan queen together with the Prince of Troy."

Sappho argues that Helen willingly left behind Menelaus and Hermione, her nine-year-old daughter, to be with Paris:

Helen in Egypt

At least three Ancient Greek authors denied that Helen ever went to Troy; instead, they suggested, Helen stayed in Egypt during the duration of the Trojan War. Those three authors are Euripides, Stesichorus, and Herodotus. In the version put forth by Euripides in his play *Helen*, Hera fashioned a likeness of Helen (eidolon, εἶδωλον) out of clouds at Zeus' request, Hermes took her to Egypt, and Helen never went to Troy, spending the entire war in Egypt. Eidolon is also present in Stesichorus' account, but not in Herodotus' rationalizing version of the myth.

Herodotus adds weight to the "Egyptian" version of events by putting forward his own evidence—he traveled to Egypt and interviewed the priests of the temple of (Foreign Aphrodite,) at Memphis. According to these priests, Helen had arrived in Egypt shortly after leaving Sparta, because strong winds had blown Paris's ship off course. King Proteus of Egypt, appalled that Paris had seduced his host's wife and plundered his host's home in Sparta, disallowed Paris from taking Helen to Troy. Paris returned to Troy without a new bride, but the Greeks refused to believe that Helen was in Egypt and not within Troy's walls. Thus, Helen waited in Memphis for ten years, while the Greek and the Trojans fought. Following the conclusion of the Trojan War, Menelaus sailed to Memphis, where Proteus reunited him with Helen. Helen in Troy

When he discovered that his wife was missing, Menelaus called upon all the other suitors to fulfill their oaths, thus beginning the Trojan War. The Greek fleet gathered in Aulis, but the ships could not sail, because there was no wind. Artemis was enraged with a sacrilegious act of the Greeks, and only the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia, could appease her. In Euripides Iphigenia in Aulis, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia's mother and Helen's sister, begs her husband to reconsider his decision, calling Helen a "wicked woman". Clytemnestra (unsuccessfully) warns Agamemnon that sacrificing Iphigenia for Helen's sake is, "buying what we most detest with what we hold most dear". Before the opening of hostilities, the Greeks dispatched a delegation to the Trojans under Odysseus and Menelaus; they endeavored to persuade Priam to hand Helen back without success. A popular theme, The Request of Helen (Helenes Apaitesis, Ἑλένης Ἀπαίτησις) was the subject of a drama by Sophocles, now lost. Homer paints a poignant, lonely picture of Helen in Troy.

She is filled with self-distaste and regret for what she has caused; by the end of the war, the Trojans have come to hate her. When Hector dies, she is the third mourner at his funeral, and she says that, of all the Trojans, Hector and Priam alone were always kind to her: Wherefore I wail alike for thee and for my hapless self with grief at heart; for no longer have I anyone beside in broad Troy that is gentle to me or kind; but all men shudder at me. These bitter words reveal that Helen gradually realized Paris' weaknesses, and she decided to ally herself with Hector. There is an affectionate relationship between the two of them, and Helen has harsh words to say for Paris, when she compares the two brothers: Howbeit, seeing the gods thus ordained

these ills, would that I had been wife to a better man, that could feel the indignation of his fellows and their many revilings. [...] But come now, enter in, and sit thee upon this chair, my brother, since above all others has trouble encompassed thy heart because of shameless me, and the folly of Alexander. During the fall of Troy, Helen's role is ambiguous.

In Virgil's Aeneid, Deiphobus gives an account of Helen's treacherous stance: when the Trojan Horse was admitted into the city, she feigned Bacchic rites, leading a chorus of Trojan women, and, holding a torch among them, she signaled to the Greeks from the city's central tower. In Odyssey, however, Homer narrates a different story: Helen circled the Horse three times, and she imitated the voices of the Greek women left behind at home—she thus tortured the men inside (including Odysseus and Menelaus) with the memory of their loved ones, and brought them to the brink of destruction. After the death of Hector and Paris, Helen became the paramour of their younger brother, Deiphobus; but when the sack of Troy began, she hid her new husband's sword, and left him to the mercy of Menelaus and Odysseus.

In Aeneid, Aeneas meets the mutilated Deiphobus in Hades; his wounds serve as a testimony to his ignominious end, abetted by Helen's final act of treachery. However, Helen's portraits in Troy seem to contradict each other. From one side, we read about the treacherous Helen who simulated Bacchic rites and rejoiced over the carnage of Trojans. On the other hand, there is another Helen, lonely and helpless; desperate to find sanctuary, while Troy is on fire. Stesichorus narrates that both Greeks and Trojans gathered to stone her to death. When Menelaus finally found her, he raised his sword to kill her. He had demanded that only he should slay his unfaithful wife; but, when <https://assignbuster.com/helen-of-troy-essay-sample-essay-samples/>

he was ready to do so, she dropped her robe from her shoulders, and the sight of her beauty caused him to let the sword drop from his hand. Electra wails: Alas for my troubles! Can it be that her beauty has blunted their swords? Fate

Helen returned to Sparta and lived for a time with Menelaus, where she was encountered by Telemachus in *The Odyssey*. According to another version, used by Euripides in his play *Orestes*, Helen had long ago left the mortal world by then, having been taken up to Olympus almost immediately after Menelaus' return. According to Pausanias the geographer (3. 19. 9-10): " The account of the Rhodians is different. They say that when Menelaus was dead, and Orestes still a wanderer, Helen was driven out by Nicostratus and Megapenthes and came to Rhodes, where she had a friend in Polyxo, the wife of Tlepolemus. For Polyxo, they say, was an Argive by descent, and when she was already married to Tlepolemus, shared his flight to Rhodes.

At the time she was queen of the island, having been left with an orphan boy. They say that this Polyxo desired to avenge the death of Tlepolemus on Helen, now that she had her in her power. So she sent against her when she was bathing handmaidens dressed up as Furies, who seized Helen and hanged her on a tree, and for this reason the Rhodians have a sanctuary of Helen of the Tree." [50] Tlepolemus was a son of Heracles and Astyoche. Astyoche was a daughter of Phylas, King of Ephyra who was killed by Heracles. Tlepolemus was killed by Sarpedon on the first day of fighting in the *Iliad*. Nicostratus was a son of Menelaus by his concubine Pieris, an Aetolian slave. Megapenthes was a son of Menelaus by his concubine Tereis,

no further origin. In Simonianism, it was taught that Helen of Troy was one of the incarnations of the Ennoia in human form.

Plot summary

The film begins with the birth of Paris, and Cassandra's prophecy that he would be the cause of Troy's destruction. Worried, his father King Priam leaves him on Mount Ida, where he is found and raised by the shepherd Agelaus. When he is an adult, he judges Aphrodite as the fairest of the three goddesses, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. After awarding her the golden apple she promises him the love of Helen of Sparta, the most beautiful woman in the world. Meanwhile in Sparta, Helen sees in a pool Paris's judgement, and happily accepts his choice of her love. She later meets the Mycenaean King, Agamemnon, who has come to claim her sister, Clytemnestra, as his bride, but is also immediately taken by her attractiveness. During the wedding, Helen is kidnapped by two Athenians, Theseus, and his friend Pirithous. They take her to Athens, where Helen falls for Theseus, before her brother Pollux raids Athens and kills him. As he is dying, Theseus stabs Pollux. In Sparta, Helen's father Tyndareus rages at his daughter, blaming her for losing his heir.

He presents her to the many suitors who seek her hand, bidding them to do as they wish. The suitors draw lots after swearing an oath suggested by clever Odysseus that if anyone disrespect her husband's claims to her, they should unite and wage war against him. Odysseus rules himself and Agamemnon out of the lot, since they are both married. They agree to the oath, and Agamemnon's brother Menelaus wins. Agamemnon is visibly jealous. Agamemnon suggests to Menelaus that he should have Helen

present herself nude before the other suitors, as a way for him to demonstrate that their marriage is worth the suitors' protection. While Helen is bathing, Clytemnestra tries to dissuade her from doing as Menelaus asks, but is unsuccessful. Before Helen leaves, she says to Clytemnestra, " They can look all they want, but they'll never see me." The doors open and Helen walks naked through the crowd of men, to great appreciation. She stops before Menelaus, then turns around and steps onto a dais, putting her naked body in full view of everyone in the room.

Agamemnon is clearly feasting his eyes on Helen's body throughout her presentation. Meanwhile, Paris' favorite bull is taken for the Trojan tribute games. Paris insists on competing, despite his father's protests. After winning in every competition and being recognized by his sister Cassandra, Paris is welcomed by an overjoyed Priam to Troy. Cassandra and his elder brother Hector are upset at their father's decision. Paris is sent to Sparta to draw out a peace treaty with the Atreids, Agamemnon and Menelaus. His treaty is refused and Agamemnon plots to have him murdered. While there, however, he recognizes Helen as she is standing naked on the dais. Later, he prevents her from committing suicide. He then gains her love, and she helps him flee. Together they sail to Troy. When Menelaus finds this out, he demands that his brother launch war on Troy, and the former suitors are gathered to fulfill their oath.

But the winds are not in their favor and after a month, a soothsayer reveals that Athena wants Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia.

Agamemnon is horrified, but nevertheless carries out the deed. Helen and Paris arrive at Troy with the Greek army at their heels. Priam is at first

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reluctant to allow Helen to remain at Troy, until he sees her. When the Greeks send an embassy of Menelaus and Odysseus to demand Helen's return, Priam refuses, and the Greeks plan an attack. In the morning, the battle is joined on the beach of Troy, with Hector nearly killed by Agamemnon. The battle ends with the Trojan army's crushing defeat and the Greeks camping on the beach. Ten years pass. Agamemnon agrees to end the war with a single combat, between Menelaus and Paris. If Menelaus wins, Helen will be returned. If Menelaus loses, the Trojans may keep her. Whatever the outcome, the Greeks have to leave Troy. Agamemnon cheats, poisoning Menelaus' javelin without telling him.

During the duel Paris is cut and the poison disorientates him. Menelaus, however, does not take advantage of him; instead, they stop fighting and make peace between each other as a fog hides them from view. As the fog lifts, Agamemnon's cheating is exposed. Hector challenges Agamemnon to a duel that will end the war—this time, to the death. Achilles takes up the challenge, fighting for Agamemnon, but agrees to fight not for Helen but for his own honor. Achilles easily succeeds in killing Hector. That night Helen, fearing for Paris's safety, goes to the seer Cassandra and asks to know what she can do to protect Paris. Cassandra replies that her only choice is to give herself to the Greeks. Helen agrees, presenting herself in Agamemnon's tent and offering a trade—her for the body of Hector. Agamemnon refuses, as he does not want his daughter's death to be in vain, and chases her around the camp, but Paris arrives in time to save her, challenging Agamemnon for the safety of Troy. Achilles charges at him, but Paris seizes a bow and shoots Achilles in the heel, killing him.

Afterwards the Greeks attack him, but he hides and is reunited with Helen. Shortly thereafter, Agamemnon finds him and stabs Paris in the chest after a quick duel. He dies in Helen's arms, whispering the word, " goddess". During Paris' funeral, the Greeks are reported to have sailed away—leaving a massive wooden horse on the shore. It is taken into the city, and Troy celebrates late into the night. When they are all asleep, the Greeks come out and sack the city, slaying Priam and Hecuba. The great Agamemnon seats himself proudly on Troy's throne as the new Emperor of the Aegean and Ruler of the World. Agamemnon has his men bring Helen to his throne and orders her to kneel at his feet. Agamemnon strokes Helen's hair, then begins to rape her. Menelaus tries to stop him, but is held back by Agamemnon's guards. He orders Agamemnon to leave his wife alone, but his brother pays no mind to his commands and continues to rape Helen. Odysseus is also shocked at Agamemnon's act, but could do nothing.

The next morning, as the Greek soldiers ravage the ruins of Troy of its riches and its people as slaves, Clytemnestra arrives in the royal palace of Troy, where she ventures into the royal pool. There, she finds Agamemnon and Helen, both naked. Agamemnon relaxes in triumph, while Helen lies in a corner, not saying a word. Clytemnestra covers her sister with a robe and sends her away, leaving her (Clytemnestra) alone with Agamemnon. She tells him she comes for their daughter, Iphigenia. When Agamemnon replies that she is not here, Clytemnestra, having figured out herself, throws a net on her husband and stabs him to death. Helen wanders woefully through the ruined city, finally coming to the spot where Paris was slain. There, she sees an apparition of Paris and they embrace. Helen begs Paris to take her with

him to the afterlife, and he tells her that he has prepared a place for her, but she must wait until it is her time. He disappears, and Menelaus crosses her path, sword in hand. Helen prepares for her punishment, but Menelaus can do nothing but feel sorry for her. Helen tells him she cannot love him, but she “ will follow”. The two head back to the Greek ships, ready to live the rest of their lives as King and Queen of Sparta.