

Compare and
contrast song of
roland and the iliad.
similarities and
differences



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Compare and Contrast the Song of Roland and The Iliad: Similarities and Differences. The Iliad was written by the ancient Greek Homer in around the eighth century BC and the Song of Roland was written more than a thousand years later by an anonymous French writer in around the twelfth century AD. They are both classic texts, examples of the earliest known writings in their different languages and they have many features that are similar, and also some important differences. The most obvious similarities lie in the form of the two works. Both were written in verse and in a style which is known as "epic." This was originally intended to be recited aloud. The poems are long works and so they are broken into shorter verses and chapters, which makes it easier for the performers to remember. There are many repeated phrases that are used to refer to individual characters or places. Athena is usually referred to in terms of her grey eyes, for example, and there are a lot of references to Roland's youth and nobility. The content is also similar. Both poems tell the stories of heroic warriors who fight with each other on behalf of great kings. There is a lot of focus on battles, and the women play a secondary role, usually being taken captive like Helen in the Iliad and Bramimonde in the Song of Roland and displayed as a trophy for the winner of a battle. There is a strong narrator who reports what happens, what people are thinking and saying, and even what gods and other divine messengers are doing. The contrast between the human and divine dimensions is very important in epics. There are obvious differences in terms of the historical period and culture of the two poems. Homer talks about war between Greeks and Trojans, while the Song of Roland deals with the Frankish followers of Charlemagne and their enemies the Muslim Saracens.

In the Greek/Trojan world there are many different gods who take an active
<https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-song-of-roland-and-the-iliad-similarities-and-differences/>

part in the battles. Sometimes the gods disagree, and the poet reports discussions between Athena and Apollo, for example, where Apollo asks his sister Athena: "How do you plan to make them break off battle." (Iliad, book 7, line 40, page 156) She replies that she will do this by firing Hector's spirit. During the actual battle Apollo steps in and helps Hector to his feet (Iliad, book 7 line 319, page 164). In the Song of Roland there is only one Christian God, sometimes assisted by priests, saints and angels who do His will: "Charles staggers and almost fell; Saint Gabriel came back to his side And asked him: 'Mighty king, what are you doing' (The Iliad, lines 3608-3611, page 144.) The Christian dimension also appears when Roland dies, and is taken off to his heavenly reward. This is the most important difference between the two works, because in Homer's world the heroes like Achilles, Priam and Odysseus follow their fate to a tragic end. Their only consolation is fame. Roland, however, gets his reward in heaven, and so there is less tragedy and a more consistent single God who determines what happens. References Anonymous. The Song of Roland. Translated by Glyn Burgess. London and New York: Penguin Group, 1990. Homer. The Iliad. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2004.