

The iliad homer

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The Iliad Homer Major Themes The interaction between fate and free will: A complicated theme, the interaction between fate and free will is present in every book of the Iliad. At times it seems that men have no real freedom. The gods intercede repeatedly, altering events as they please. But Homer was no determinist, and there is a place in the Iliad for human agency. At key points, Homer makes it clear that mortals make important choices, and a few times mortals nearly overturn the dictates of fate itself. Zeus's will determines much of fate, but even he is sometimes subject to a higher necessity that is never personalized in the Iliad. Pride: Pride is a theme of pivotal importance, not only for the Iliad, but for all of Greek literature. Where pride in Christianity is a vice paired off against the central Christian virtue of humility, pride to the ancient Greeks was the source of both ruin and greatness. The central hero of Christianity, Jesus Christ, is the embodiment of humility. Divine, he suffers humiliation that not even mortals should bear. In contrast, it is hard to imagine a male heroic Greek hero who is humble; for the Greeks, pride is inextricable from heroic action. The pursuit of Glory: Closely linked to the above theme, the pursuit of glory is a consuming occupation for Homeric heroes. A Homeric hero wins glory by performing great deeds, the memory of which will outlive him. There is no comforting afterlife in Homer. Shades go down to the gloomy world of Hades. Emphasis is on the deeds of this life for the sake of this life, and a hero must win glory that will be remembered always by the living even after he is gone. The glory of battle and the horror of war: Homer has never been surpassed in his ability to portray both the beauty and horror of war. War brings out the best in his heroes, as they tap previously unknown reserves of strength,

courage, and loyalty. But war also can bring out the worst in men. The endless carnage and cruelty of the poem dehumanizes many of the men of the Iliad, and Homer never shirks from depicting the brutality of battle. Although Homer glorifies warriors, the Iliad is full of an unmistakable love for peace. Iliad. The Iliad is, along with the Odyssey, one of the two major Greek epic poems traditionally attributed to Homer, a supposedly blind Ionian poet. Scholars dispute whether Homer existed, and whether he was one person, but it is clear that the poems spring from a long tradition of oral poetry. The epics are considered by most modern scholars to be the oldest literature in the Greek language, though some classical Greeks thought that the works of the poet Hesiod were composed earlier.

The Iliad and the Odyssey are traditionally dated to the 8th century BC, but many scholars now prefer a date of the 7th century or even the 6th century BC. The poem concerns events during the last year in the siege of the city of Ilium, or Troy. The word Iliad means "pertaining to Ilium" (Latin Ilium), the name of the city proper, as opposed to Troy, the state centered around Ilium, over which Priam reigned. The names are often used interchangeably. The story of the Iliad. The Iliad opens with: Sing, goddess, the rage of Achilles the son of Peleus, the destructive rage that sent countless pains on the Achaeans... The first word of the Iliad is "rage" or "wrath." This word announces the major theme of the Iliad: the wrath of Achilles.

When Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek forces at Troy, dishonors Achilles by taking Briseis, a slave woman given to him as a prize of war, Achilles becomes enraged, and withdraws from the fighting. Without Achilles' prowess in battle, the Greeks are nearly defeated by the Trojans. Achilles

reenters the fighting when his close friend Patroclus is killed by the Trojan Hector. Achilles slaughters many Trojans, and kills Hector. Priam, the father of Hector, ransoms his son's body, and the Iliad ends with the funeral of Hector. Of the many themes in the Iliad, perhaps the most important is the idea of what a hero is. Achilles is forced to make a choice between living a long life or dying young on the battlefield. For the Greeks of Homer's day, the latter would have been a better choice because death in battle leads to honor and glory which were the most important values of the day – more important than even right and wrong. One of the remarkable things about the Iliad is the way that Achilles, especially in Book 9, both embraces concepts of honor and glory and also rejects them. It should be noted that, despite the fact that he is the antagonist in the story, Hector probably best displays the qualities of an ancient Mediterranean hero. Many Greek myths exist in multiple versions, so Homer had some freedom to choose among them to suit his story.

Background to the Iliad: the Trojan War

The action of the Iliad covers only a few weeks of the tenth and final year of the Trojan War. Neither the background and early years of the war (Paris' abduction of Helen from King Menelaus), nor its end (the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy), are directly narrated in the Iliad. Many of these events were narrated in other epic poems collectively known as the Cyclic epics or the epic cycle; these poems only survive in fragments. See Trojan War for a summary of the events of the war.

Overview

Apollo has sent a plague against the Greeks, who had captured Chryseis, the daughter of the priest Chryses, and given her as a prize to Agamemnon. Agamemnon is compelled to restore Chryseis to her father. Out of pride, Agamemnon

takes Briseis, whom the Athenians had given to Achilles as a spoil of war. Achilles, the greatest warrior of the age, follows the advice of his mother, Thetis, and withdraws from battle in revenge and the allied Achaean (Greek) armies nearly lose the war. In counterpoint to Achilles' pride and arrogance stands the Trojan prince Hector, son of King Priam, with a wife and child, who fights to defend his city and his family. The death of Patroclus, Achilles' dearest friend or lover, at the hands of Hector, brings Achilles back to the war for revenge, and he slays Hector. Later Hector's father, King Priam, comes to Achilles alone (however he was aided by Hermes) to ransom his son's body back, and Achilles is moved to pity; the funeral of Hector ends the poem.

Book summaries * Book 1: Ten years into the war, Achilles and Agamemnon quarrel over a slave girl, Achilles withdraws from the war in anger * Book 2: Odysseus motivates the Greeks to keep fighting; Catalogue of Ships, Catalogue of Trojans and Allies * Book 3: Paris challenges Menelaus to single combat * Book 4: The truce is broken and battle begins * Book 5: Diomedes has an aristeia and wounds Aphrodite and Ares * Book 6: Glaucus and Diomedes greet during a truce, Hector returns to Troy * Book 7: Hector battles Ajax * Book 8: The gods withdraw from the battle * Book 9: Agamemnon retreats: his overtures to Achilles are spurned * Book 10: Diomedes and Odysseus go on a spy mission * Book 11: Paris wounds Diomedes, and Achilles sends Patroclus on a mission * Book 12: The Greeks retreat to their camp and are besieged by the Trojans * Book 13: Poseidon motivates the Greeks * Book 14: Hera helps Poseidon assist the Greeks * Book 15: Zeus stops Poseidon from interfering * Book 16: Patroclus borrows Achilles' armour, enters battle,

kills Sarpedon and then is killed by Hector * Book 17: The armies fight over the body and armour of Patroclus * Book 18: Achilles learns of the death of Patroclus and receives a new suit of armour * Book 19: Achilles reconciles with Agamemnon and enters battle * Book 20: The gods join the battle; Achilles tries to kill Aeneas * Book 21: Achilles fights with the river Scamander and encounters Hector in front of the Trojan gates * Book 22: Achilles kills Hector and drags his body back to the Greek camp * Book 23: Funeral games for Patroclus * Book 24: Achilles lets Priam have Hector's body back, and he is burned on a pyre