

Student Activities

The Iliad and the Trojan War **Classroom Edition**

Homer's Epic Adapted for Young Readers

by Frances Bianchi & Mara Seronda



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Homer's Epic Adapted for Young Readers, with Student Activities and Teacher Guidance

by Frances Bianchi and Mara Seronda

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This work is a literary adaptation of *Homer's The Iliad*, rewritten and simplified for young readers for educational purposes.

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Editorial Note

This edition has been adapted to make the original epic accessible to middle-grade readers. Certain scenes, descriptions, and narrative structures have been modified or expanded to support comprehension and age-appropriate engagement.

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Student Activities Chapters 1 - 2

The Apple of Discord & The Abduction of Helen

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. Why was Eris excluded from the wedding of Peleus and Thetis?
2. What words were written on the golden apple, and why did they cause a conflict among the goddesses?
3. What did each goddess promise Paris in exchange for his choice?
4. Why did Paris choose Aphrodite's offer?
5. Why was Helen's departure from Sparta considered an insult not only to Menelaus but to all Greece?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Who do you think is most responsible for the Trojan War: Paris, Helen, the gods, or the Greek kings? Explain why.
2. Paris chooses love over power and wisdom. Do you see this choice as brave, selfish, or unavoidable?
3. To what extent do the gods control human actions in this story? Do the characters have real freedom of choice?
4. Helen is often blamed for the war. Is this fair? How much control does she actually have over what happens to her?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • The Trial of Paris

Imagine Paris is put on trial for starting the Trojan War.

- **Write a short argument for the prosecution, explaining why Paris should be held responsible.**
- **Write a short argument for the defense, explaining why he should not be blamed.**

You may refer to:

- the role of the gods.
- fate and divine influence.
- Paris's intentions.
- the oath sworn by Helen's suitors.

Option B • A Voice from the Story

Write a short diary entry or letter from the point of view of **one character** involved in the events.

You may choose:

- **Helen, on the night she leaves Sparta.**
- **Paris, after judging the goddesses.**
- **Menelaus, after discovering Helen is gone.**

Focus on:

- **thoughts and emotions.**
- **whether the choice feels free or forced.**

Did You Know?

- In ancient Greece, breaking a solemn oath was believed to offend the gods.
- Helen's suitors unknowingly created a powerful military alliance by swearing to protect her marriage.
- Many Greek myths explain wars not as accidents, but as the result of pride, rivalry, and wounded honor.

Vocabulary

- **Discord** – serious disagreement or conflict.
- **Oath** – a solemn promise, often sworn to the gods.
- **Alliance** – an agreement between groups for mutual support.
- **Desire** – a strong wish or longing.
- **Abduction** – taking someone away by force or deception.
- **Fate** – a power believed to control events.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe something from the story.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

In a short paragraph, answer:

Can a single decision change the course of history, or do many forces always work together?

Use examples from the story to support your answer.

Student Activities Chapter 3

Preparing for War

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences.

1. Why are the Greek ships unable to sail for Troy at the beginning of the expedition?
2. What reason is given to explain why the gods are preventing the expedition from beginning?
3. Why is Agamemnon reluctant to accept what the gods demand at first?
4. What sacrifice is required in order to appease the gods?
5. What internal conflict does Agamemnon face when the oracle's demand becomes clear? What does he finally decide, and why?
6. How do the soldiers react when Artemis appears and accepts Iphigenia? What does this moment suggest about the role of the gods in the army's decisions?

Think and Discuss

Discuss the following questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Can a leader demand an extreme sacrifice for the sake of a shared goal? Why or why not?
2. Is Agamemnon acting as a responsible leader, or is he abusing his power?
3. Do you think the army has a real choice in this situation?
4. How does fear of the gods influence human decisions in this episode?
5. Would the outcome be different if the decision had been made collectively?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • A Leader's Decision

Write a short reflection from the point of view of Agamemnon on the night before the sacrifice.

Consider:

- **pressure from the gods.**
- **fear of losing authority.**
- **responsibility toward the army.**
- **personal loss versus public duty.**

Option B • Voices of the Army

Write a short text from the point of view of:

- **a soldier in the army, or a Greek soldier who is watching Agamemnon face his decision and does not know what to think.**

Focus on:

- **fear.**
- **loyalty.**
- **obedience.**
- **moral doubt.**

Did You Know?

- In ancient Greece, seers and prophets were believed to speak on behalf of the gods. Ignoring them was considered dangerous.
- Sacrifices were thought to restore balance between humans and the divine, especially before wars or major journeys.

Vocabulary

- **Divine will** – the belief that the gods are directing events.
- **Sacrifice** – giving up something valuable for a greater cause.
- **Authority** – the power to give orders and make decisions.
- **Obedience** – following orders or commands.
- **Burden** – a heavy responsibility or obligation.
- **Appease** – to calm or satisfy (often a god or authority).

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe the events of this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

When, if ever, is it acceptable to sacrifice one person for the good of many?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 4

The Wrath of Achilles

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. What event causes the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon?
2. Why does Achilles feel he has been treated unfairly?
3. How does Agamemnon justify his actions?
4. What decision does Achilles make in response to the conflict?
5. How might Achilles' decision affect the Greek army?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Is Achilles' anger understandable? Why or why not?
2. Does Agamemnon act as a leader trying to maintain authority, or does he abuse his power?
3. Should personal honor be more important than the needs of the group?
4. What alternatives could Achilles have chosen instead of withdrawing?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • A Moment of Choice

Write a short text from Achilles' point of view just after the conflict.

Consider:

- **feelings of anger or humiliation.**
- **sense of honor.**
- **responsibility toward the army.**
- **possible consequences of his decision.**

Option B • Another Voice

Write a short response from the point of view of:

- **a Greek soldier affected by Achilles' decision, or**
- **a leader who disagrees with both Achilles and Agamemnon.**

Focus on:

- **fear or frustration.**
- **loyalty**
- **concern for the group.**
- **the cost of personal conflict.**

Did You Know?

- In ancient Greek society, **honor and reputation** were central to a person's identity.
- Public disputes between leaders could weaken an entire army.
- Many myths explore how **uncontrolled anger** leads to long-lasting consequences.

Vocabulary

- **Honor** – respect earned through actions or reputation.
- **Pride** – a strong sense of self-worth, sometimes excessive.
- **Authority** – the power to command or make decisions.
- **Conflict** – a serious disagreement or clash.
- **Withdrawal** – the act of stepping back or refusing to participate.
- **Consequence** – the result of an action or decision.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

Can anger ever be justified, or does it always make situations worse?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 5

The Heart of Troy

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. How does the chapter show Hector as both a warrior and a family man?
2. What fears does Andromache express, and how does Hector respond to them?
3. How does Hector lead the Trojan army before and during the battle?
4. What happens when the Trojans attack the Greek camp?
5. How does the battle end for the Trojans that day, and what stops them from achieving a complete victory over the Greeks?
6. How does the chapter end, and what mood does it leave the reader with?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Do you think Hector is right to fight even though his family fears for his life? Why or why not?
2. How does Hector's leadership differ from other leaders seen earlier in the story?
3. Why do you think the chapter begins and ends with family scenes instead of battle scenes?
4. Does this chapter make war seem heroic, tragic, or both? Explain your answer.

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • Hector's Thoughts

Write a short reflection from Hector's point of view at the end of the day.

Consider:

- **exhaustion after battle.**
- **concern for his family.**
- **responsibility toward Troy.**
- **awareness that the war is far from over.**

Option B • Andromache's Voice

Write a short diary entry or letter from Andromache's point of view after Hector returns home.

Focus on:

- **fear and relief.**
- **love and frustration.**
- **hopes for the future.**
- **living with constant uncertainty.**

Did You Know?

- In ancient stories, heroes were often shown not only in battle but also in moments of family life, to highlight what was at stake.
- Cities at war depended on leaders who fought alongside their soldiers, not behind them.
- Many myths use nightfall and silence to show reflection after violence.

Vocabulary

- **Duty** – responsibility toward others or a cause.
- **Resolve** – firm determination.
- **Steadfastness** – the quality of remaining firm and loyal under pressure.
- **Burdened** – weighed down by responsibility or worry.
- **Uncertainty** – not knowing what will happen next.
- **Cost** – what must be given or lost to achieve something.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

Is Hector's courage more about strength in battle or strength in caring for others?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 6

The Judgment of Swords

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. Why do the Greeks and Trojans agree to a truce at the beginning of the chapter?
2. What solution does Hector propose to end the war?
3. How does the duel between Paris and Menelaus unfold?
4. What happens when Menelaus is about to win?
5. How does Aphrodite's intervention affect the truce?
6. How do Hector and Helen react to what happens?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Do you think Hector's proposal was fair? Why or why not?
2. Who is most responsible for the duel's failure: Paris, the gods, or the war itself?
3. How does Helen's reaction change the way we see her character?
4. What does this chapter suggest about the power of human agreements?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • Hector's Frustration

Write a short reflection from Hector's point of view after the duel fails.

Consider:

- **shame and anger.**
- **responsibility toward Troy.**
- **frustration with the gods.**
- **fear of what comes next.**

Option B • Helen's Truth

Write a short diary entry or monologue from Helen's point of view after confronting Paris.

Focus on:

- **guilt and clarity.**
- **anger and disappointment.**
- **awareness of the war's cost.**
- **loss of hope for peace.**

Did You Know?

- In ancient stories, duels were sometimes used to limit wider bloodshed.
- Breaking sworn oaths was believed to anger both gods and humans.
- Many myths show gods interfering when humans attempt to restore order.

Vocabulary

- **Truce** – an agreement to stop fighting temporarily.
- **Intervention** – stepping in to change events.
- **Shame** – deep embarrassment or guilt.
- **Justice** – fairness or moral rightness.
- **Resignation** – acceptance that something cannot be changed.
- **Accountability** – responsibility for one's actions and their consequences.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

When human agreements fail and the gods intervene, who bears the greatest responsibility for the consequences: the people who made the agreement, the gods who broke it, or both?

Use examples from this chapter to support your answer.

Student Activities Chapter 7

The Armor of Achilles

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. Why does Patroclus ask to wear Achilles' armor?
2. What conditions does Achilles set before allowing him to go?
3. How do the Greeks and Trojans react when they see the armor?
4. What detail in the text suggests that Patroclus does not follow Achilles' instructions?
5. How does Apollo change the course of the fight?
6. How does Hector react when he discovers who he has killed?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Do you think Achilles made the right decision by lending his armor? Why or why not?
2. Was Patroclus acting out of loyalty, ambition, or both?
3. How does wearing the armor change Patroclus's role in the battle?
4. Do you think Hector had a real choice when facing the warrior he believed was Achilles?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • Patroclus's Promise

Write a short reflection from Patroclus's point of view during the battle, as he begins to push the Trojans back.

Consider:

- **loyalty to Achilles.**
- **desire to protect the Greek army.**
- **temptation of success and glory.**
- **fear or excitement in battle** .

Option B • Hector's Realization

Write a short diary entry or monologue from Hector's point of view after discovering Patroclus's identity.

Focus on:

- **shock and regret.**
- **sense of responsibility.**
- **fear of what this means for the future.**
- **thoughts about the gods and the war.**

Did You Know?

- In ancient stories, armor often represented a warrior's identity and reputation, not just protection.
- Disguises and mistaken identity frequently lead to tragic outcomes in myths.
- Many myths show gods intervening when humans cross important limits.

Vocabulary

- **Disguise** – hiding one’s true identity.
- **Loyalty** – faithfulness to a person or cause.
- **Limit** – a boundary that should not be crossed.
- **Intervention** – stepping in to change events.
- **Tragedy** – a serious event with painful consequences.
- **Consequence** – the result of an action or decision.

Use the Words

Choose **three** words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context

Reflection

Is Patroclus more a hero or a victim of his own choices?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 8

The Fire Reborn

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. How does Hector react immediately after killing Patroclus?
2. Why is Achilles's armor so important after Patroclus's death?
3. Why do the Greeks fight so fiercely to protect Patroclus's body?
4. How does Achilles react when he learns that Patroclus has fallen?
5. What warning does Thetis give Achilles?
6. What decision does Achilles make by the end of the chapter?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Is Achilles driven more by guilt or by love for Patroclus? Explain.
2. Why is honoring the dead so important in this chapter?
3. Does Achilles truly have a choice after Patroclus's death?
4. How is this Achilles different from the one we saw earlier in the story?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • Achilles's Lament

Write a short reflection from Achilles's point of view after Patroclus's body is brought back to the camp.

Consider:

- **grief and guilt.**
- **memories of friendship.**
- **fear of what lies ahead.**
- **acceptance of his fate.**

Option B • The Weight of the Armor

Write a short monologue from Hector's point of view while wearing Achilles's armor for the first time.

Focus on:

- **pride mixed with unease.**
- **awareness of danger.**
- **thoughts about the coming conflict.**
- **sense of inevitability.**

Did You Know?

- In many ancient cultures, protecting a fallen warrior's body was considered a sacred duty.
- Public mourning rituals helped communities share grief and strengthen bonds.
- Myths often show heroes changing not through victory, but through loss.

Vocabulary

- **Grief** – deep sorrow caused by loss.
- **Honor** – respect shown through actions.
- **Vengeance** – the desire to punish for a wrong.
- **Fate** – the idea that some events cannot be avoided.
- **Resolve** – firm determination.
- **Transformation** – a deep and lasting change .

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

Is Achilles choosing revenge, responsibility, or both?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 9

Duel of Heroes

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. Why does Achilles decide to fight on this day?
2. How do Priam and Hecuba react to Hector's decision?
3. What agreement does Hector propose before the duel, and how does Achilles respond?
4. How do the gods influence the outcome of the fight?
5. What happens after Hector is defeated?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Does Hector have a real choice when he faces Achilles? Why or why not?
2. Is Achilles acting out of justice, vengeance, or fate? Explain.
3. How does the chapter challenge traditional ideas of heroism?
4. What makes this duel different from earlier battles in the story?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • Hector's Last Thoughts

Write a short internal monologue from Hector's point of view just before the duel begins.

Consider:

- **duty toward Troy.**
- **fear and acceptance.**
- **thoughts of family.**
- **awareness of fate.**

Option B • Achilles After Victory

Write a short reflection from Achilles's point of view after the duel.

Focus on:

- **grief and anger.**
- **sense of victory or emptiness.**
- **thoughts about mercy and honor.**

Did You Know?

- In ancient epics, duels often symbolized the fate of entire armies.
- Greek myths frequently link heroism with loss rather than reward.

Vocabulary

- **Fate** – events believed to be inevitable.
- **Vengeance** – the desire to punish for a wrong.
- **Mercy** – compassion shown to an enemy.
- **Honor** – respect earned through actions.
- **Inevitability** – the quality of being unavoidable.
- **Consequence** – the result of an action or decision.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

After the duel, Achilles refuses to return Hector's body, even though Hector asked him to. Does this decision strengthen or weaken the heroism Achilles has shown?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 10

The Forgiveness of Achilles

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. Why does Priam decide to go to Achilles's tent himself?
2. How do the gods assist Priam on his journey?
3. What action by Priam shocks Achilles the most?
4. What memories change Achilles's response to Priam?
5. What decision does Achilles make regarding Hector's body?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Is Priam's action an act of courage, desperation, or love? Explain.
2. Why does Achilles see his own father in Priam?
3. Achilles still grieves for Patroclus when he agrees to return Hector's body. What does this suggest about what forgiveness means in this chapter — is it about letting go of pain, or about choosing not to cause more of it?
4. How does this chapter change our understanding of Achilles?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • Priam's Journey

Write a short internal monologue from Priam's point of view as he approaches Achilles's tent.

Consider:

- **fear and love.**
- **memories of Hector.**
- **the risk he is taking.**
- **hope for mercy.**

Option B • Achilles After Forgiveness

Write a short reflection from Achilles's point of view after Priam leaves the camp.

Focus on:

- **release of anger.**
- **sense of responsibility.**
- **thoughts about war and peace.**
- **memories of Patroclus.**

Did You Know?

- In many ancient cultures, returning a body was considered a sacred duty.
- Ancient epics often present forgiveness as a form of strength.
- Early in the story we learn that Achilles' father is the king Peleus. In Greek mythology, Peleus was also one of the Argonauts, the heroes who sailed with Jason in search of the Golden Fleece.

Vocabulary

- **Forgiveness** – letting go of resentment.
- **Mercy** – compassion shown to someone in one's power.
- **Ransom** – payment to recover something taken.
- **Compassion** – concern for another's suffering.
- **Reconciliation** – restoring peace after conflict.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

How does remembering his own father change Achilles's response to Priam?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 11

The Twilight of Heroes

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. What new allies arrive to fight alongside Troy at the start of the chapter, and how does their arrival change the balance of the battle?
2. What wounds remind Achilles of his mortality?
3. How does Paris's action lead to Achilles's death?
4. How do both armies react to the hero's fall?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Why does Achilles continue fighting even knowing his fate?
2. Is Achilles's death portrayed as defeat or fulfillment? Explain.
3. What role do the gods play in the hero's final moments?
4. How does the chapter change the tone of the war?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • The Moment of Silence

Write a short reflection from the point of view of a Greek or Trojan soldier witnessing Achilles's death.

Focus on:

- **shock and stillness.**
- **loss of hope or certainty.**
- **the end of a legend.**

Option B • Achilles's Legacy

Write a short paragraph explaining how Achilles will be remembered after his death.

Consider:

- **glory and loss.**
- **friendship with Patroclus.**
- **what remains of heroism.**

Did You Know?

- Many myths end the hero's journey before the war itself concludes.
- Achilles's death marks the end of the heroic age within the story.
- In fact, the events involving Penthesilea, Memnon, and the death of Achilles do not appear in Homer's *Iliad*. They were told in another ancient epic called the *Aethiopis*, written by the poet Arctinus of Miletus.

Vocabulary

- **Mortality** – the condition of being subject to death.
- **Fate** – events believed to be unavoidable.
- **Legacy** – what remains after death.
- **Intervention** – interference by a higher power.
- **Mourning** – expressing grief.
- **Twilight** – the fading of light, symbolizing an ending.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

What does Achilles's death suggest about the limits of heroism in war?

Support your answer with ideas from the text.

Student Activities Chapter 12

The Last Dawn

Understand the Story

Answer the questions using complete sentences. You may refer back to the text.

1. Why do the Trojans believe the war is over?
2. What warnings does Cassandra give, and how are they received?
3. How do the Greeks use the wooden horse to enter the city?
4. What happens to Priam during the fall of Troy?
5. How does the chapter describe the aftermath of the war?

Think and Discuss

Discuss these questions in pairs, small groups, or as a class.

1. Why is deception more effective than force in this chapter?
2. Who is responsible for Troy's fall: the Greeks, the Trojans, or both?
3. Why is Cassandra unable to change the outcome, even though she knows the truth?
4. Does the chapter present the Greek victory as meaningful or empty?

Create

Choose one activity.

Option A • Cassandra's Silence

Write a short reflection from Cassandra's point of view after the horse enters the city.

Focus on:

- **frustration and helplessness.**
- **knowledge without power.**
- **watching disaster unfold.**

Option B • After the Fire

Write a brief scene set the morning after Troy's fall, from the point of view of a survivor.

Consider:

- **silence and ruins.**
- **memory of what was lost.**
- **uncertainty about the future .**

Did You Know?

- In many myths, the fall of a city marks the end of an age.
- Cassandra represents the tragedy of truth ignored.
- The Trojan Horse became a lasting symbol of deception. Because of this story, the expression “Trojan Horse” is still used today to describe a trick that hides danger inside something that seems harmless.

Vocabulary

- **Deception** – deliberately misleading others.
- **Illusion** – something that appears real but is not.
- **Aftermath** – the period following a destructive event.
- **Blindness** – failure to see or understand the truth.
- **Collapse** – sudden failure or breakdown.
- **Legacy** – what remains after destruction.

Use the Words

Choose three words from the list.

- Write one sentence using each word to describe events from this chapter.
- Write one new sentence using the same word in a modern or personal context.

Reflection

Looking back at the entire story, how has the meaning of victory changed from the beginning of the war to its end?

