



Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's

# An Iliad

Based on Homer's *The Iliad*,  
translated by Robert Fagles

Directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

**February 28-May 9, 2021**



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Pictured: Carolyn Ratteray, Evan Lewis Smith, and Veralyn Jones, *Gem of the Ocean* 2019. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Character Maps: <i>An Iliad</i> and <i>The Iliad</i> . . . . .                              | 4  |
| Synopsis . . . . .  | 6  |
| About the Author: Homer . . . . .   | 7  |
| About the Adaptors: Denis O’Hare and Lisa Peterson . . .                                    | 8  |
| History of <i>The Iliad</i> : A Timeline . . . . .  | 10 |
| Ancient Greek Society . . . . .   | 11 |
| Ancient Oral Poetic Tradition . . . . .   | 12 |
| Greek Mythology: The Role of the Muses . . . . .  | 13 |
| Gods, Monsters, and Men in Greek Mythology . . . . .  | 14 |
| The Hero’s Journey . . . . .  | 15 |
| Themes . . . . .  | 17 |
| The Trojan War: Fact or Fiction? . . . . .  | 18 |
| A Big Splash: A Conversation with<br>A Noise Within’s Production Team about the Pool Set. . | 19 |
| Pre-Show Preparation: Research . . . . .  | 20 |
| Pre-Show Preparation: Activities . . . . .  | 21 |
| Essay Questions . . . . .   | 23 |
| Additional Resources . . . . .  | 24 |

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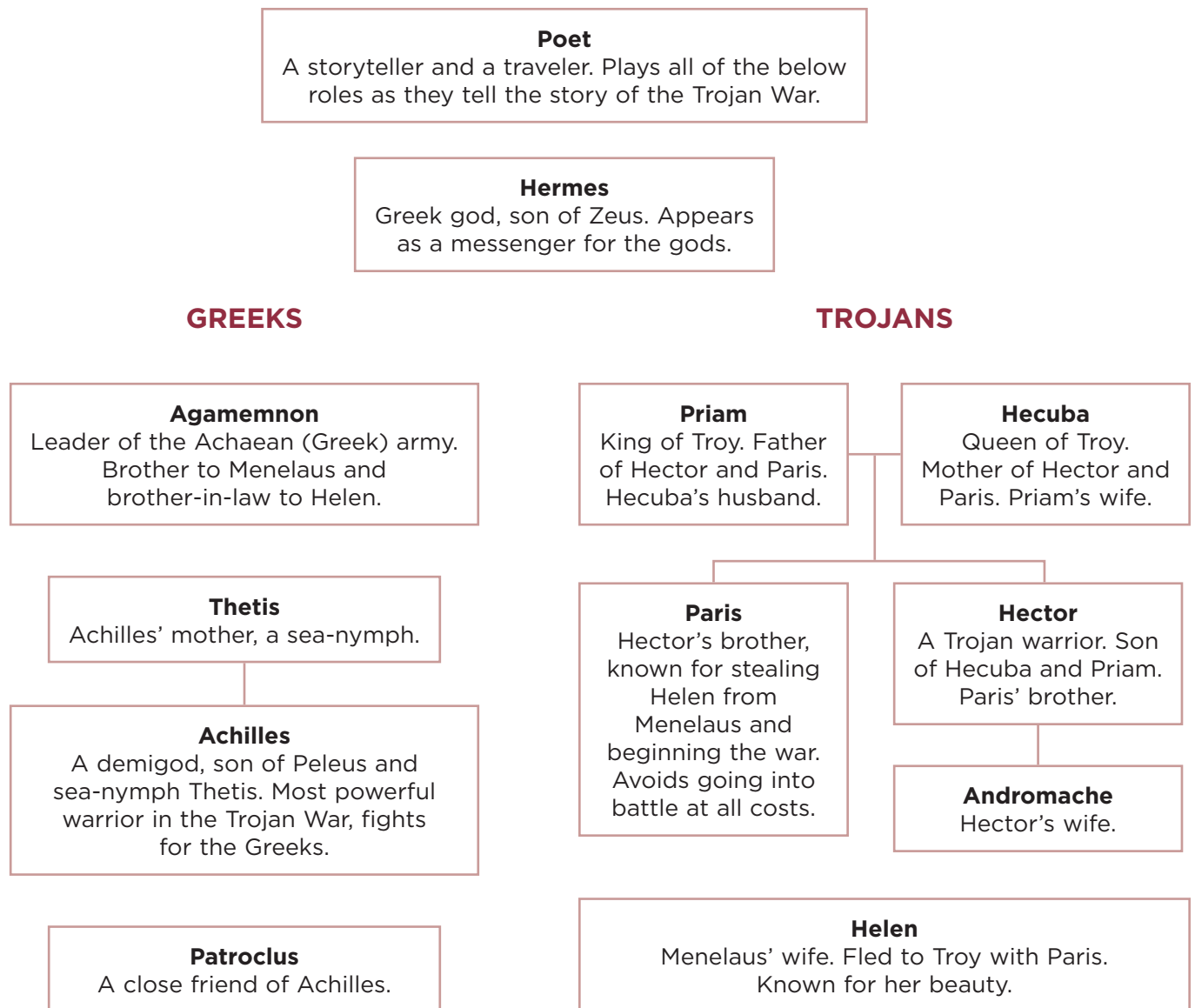
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## CHARACTER MAP *AN ILIAD*



# CHARACTER MAP *THE ILIAD*

## GODS

### Greeks

### Trojans

#### Zeus

Hera

Ares

Athena

Apollo

Poseidon

Aphrodite

Thetis

## MORTALS

### Greeks

### Trojans

#### Helen

Agamemnon

Priam

Menelaus

Hecuba

Odysseus

Paris

Achilles

Hector

Patroclus

Andromache

Ajax

Cassandra

Ajax the Lesser

Laodice

Diomedes

Lycaon

Nestor

Aeneas

Antilochus

Agenor

Idomeneus

Antenor

Phoenix

Theano

Teucer

Pandarus

Calchas

Polydamas

Sarpedon

Glaucus

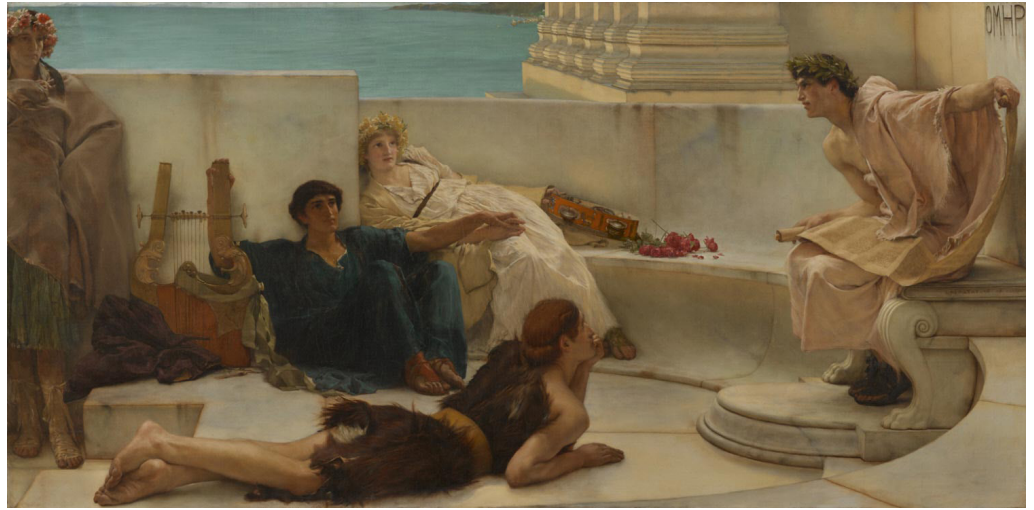
## SYNOPSIS

*An Iliad* is a one-person show adapted by Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson from Robert Fagles' translation of Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*. In this adaptation, the character of the Poet drops in and out of the story, mixing modern-day commentary with ancient stories. The play is set in the present, and the Poet has been telling this story for ages.

The story begins nine years into the Trojan War, and the leader of the Greek armies, Agamemnon, has just taken the daughter of a priest of Apollo as a prize of war. Angry that Agamemnon has stolen the girl, Apollo sends a plague to wreak destruction on the Greek army. When Agamemnon learns he must give the girl up in order to quell the plague, he takes Briseis—Achilles' companion—from his strongest fighter as a replacement. This throws Achilles into a fit of rage, declaring that he will never fight for Agamemnon again.

In spite of Achilles' refusal to fight, the Greeks are still prevailing in battle with Athena fighting on their side. On a day that is especially challenging for the Trojans, Hector—Troy's strongest warrior—rushes home in the middle of battle to urge the people of Troy to beg Athena to stop fighting on behalf of the Greeks. After his plea, Hector visits his wife Andromache and their baby, Astyanax. Andromache implores Hector to retreat, but his pride and the cause compel him to fight on.

With Hector's renewed strength and the Trojans' renewed determination, the Greeks face danger. A close friend of Achilles, Patroclus, begs Achilles to set his conflict with Agamemnon aside and return to the battlefield, but he refuses. Instead, Achilles suggests that Patroclus wear Achilles' armor to intimidate the Trojan soldiers into retreat—Achilles' strength as a fighter is so well known that the mere sight of him on the battlefield could send the Trojans running, and turn the tides of war back to the favor of the Greeks. This tactic begins as planned: Patroclus dons the armor of Achilles and Trojan soldiers begin to retreat in fear. However, as Patroclus gains on the Trojan army, Apollo knocks



off Patroclus' helmet, revealing his identity. As soon as his helmet is off, Patroclus is immediately wounded by a young soldier, Dardan, and then brutally killed by Hector. Hector then takes Achilles' armor from Patroclus' body as a prize.

Patroclus' death sends Achilles into a grief-stricken rage. Once he has been made new armor, Achilles chases Hector down, bent on avenging the murder of his friend. At first, Hector tries to run from Achilles, but when this fails, he turns to challenge Achilles to a spear-throwing battle. Achilles' new shield protects him from Hector's first and only throw. Achilles, knowing the weaknesses of the armor Hector wears, is able to swiftly kill Hector on his next attack. Victorious, Achilles ties Hector's body to his chariot and drags it in circles around Patroclus' tomb for ten days. Achilles' parade of Hector's body becomes so much for Greeks and Trojans alike to endure that ultimately, the gods intervene.

Hermes escorts Hector's father, Priam, to Achilles' chariot to negotiate burial terms for Hector's body. After his conversation with Priam, Achilles agrees to give over Hector's body and to cease fighting for eleven days to allow time for a proper burial.

This is where the story ends—the Poet knows that this is not the end of the war but refuses to tell of even more violence. The Poet has told the story of *The Iliad*, but their work as a poet and as a storyteller is never done. ♦

Image: A Reading from Homer by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema c. 1885.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **HOMER**



Portrait of the Poet Homer, by Flemish c. 1639.

**Much of what is known** of Homer is speculation and legend. Homer is the attributed author of the epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Based on the Greek dialect used in the epics, scholars generally agree that he would have been from the Aegean island of Chios, which is now off the west coast of Turkey. The ‘Homeridae,’ or the children of Homer, were a group of poets following after Homer who also originated from Chios. It is believed that *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were written in the late eighth or early seventh century BCE, with the setting of the tales being approximately four hundred years before they were transcribed. It is certainly possible that Homer himself could have been a singer of poetry, performing these epic stories and participating in a part of the oral storytelling tradition that passed the stories from generation to generation.

Homer has often been said to have been blind. This legend could come from the translation of the Greek word ‘Homeros,’ meaning blind. Thus, many theories exist about the role Homer truly played in the writing of the epics. Some believe him to be an editor or transcriber of stories that had existed and had been told for years, others believe that he originated the tales long before another figure wrote them down, and others still believe that “Homer” is not a single figure but a group or lineage of poets. The ambiguity of Homer as a historical figure may be seen as inspiration for the character of the Poet in O’Hare and Peterson’s *An Iliad*. ♦

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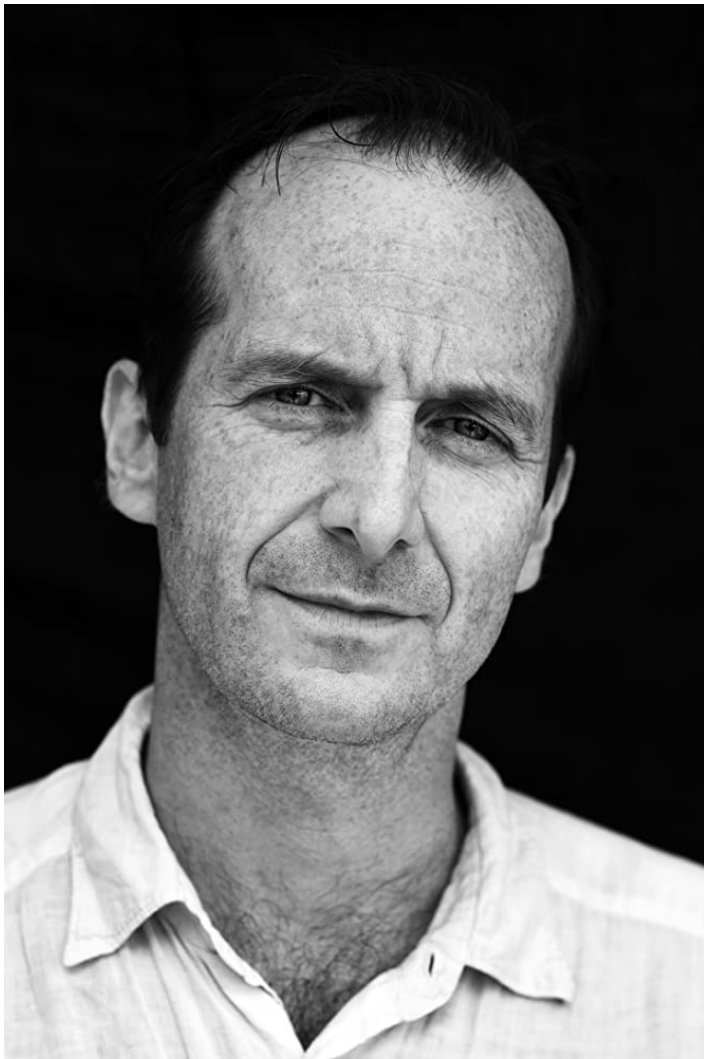
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Homer’s Iliad, cod. F 205 inf. Late 5th-early 6th c. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana

## ABOUT THE ADAPTORS: **DENIS O'HARE AND LISA PETERSON**



Denis O'Hare  
Photo by Alexander Berg (2006).

### **DENIS O'HARE**

Denis O'Hare was born on January 17, 1962 in Kansas City, Missouri, and was raised in Southfield, Michigan. His father, John M. O'Hare, was a businessman and his mother, Margaret Karene, was a pianist. O'Hare grew up surrounded by music. From a young age, he spent a great deal of time learning music, playing the organ, and studying opera—in a way, he was destined for a life of performance. However, it was not until high school that he developed an appreciation for theater. He had worked as a paperboy, at a McDonald's, as a waiter, and he planned to be a priest. His interest in acting began when he went to a summer Stanislavski camp at age sixteen. He went on to study acting at Northwestern University.

O'Hare moved to New York in 1992, where he began building a resume with both Broadway and Off-Broadway credits. In 2002, he won a Tony® starring in *Take Me Out*, a Richard Greenberg play about baseball.

O'Hare's Tony win in his forties launched his TV and film career. He has appeared in several TV shows including *True Blood*, *American Horror Story*, and *The Good Wife*. His film appearances include *Dallas Buyers Club* and *Milk*. He enjoys finding sympathy with characters that are outsiders.

O'Hare began writing as a way to create work for himself as a performer. He wrote *An Iliad* in 2012 with his writing partner, Lisa Peterson, and performed in it regularly around the world for several years. O'Hare continues his work both on-camera and on the stage. He appeared in *Tartuffe* at the National Theatre in 2019, and his first screenplay, *The Parting Glass*, was recently produced. He currently lives in Paris with his husband and young son. Today, he is still an active actor and writer—he has made a commitment to himself to continue to develop his writing by writing five pages per day in addition to the acting work he continues.



## ABOUT THE ADAPTORS: CONTINUED...



Lisa Peterson  
Photo by Fred Hayes

### LISA PETERSON

Lisa Peterson co-adapted *An Iliad* with Denis O'Hare and directed the original production in which O'Hare starred. Peterson grew up in Aptos, California, as the daughter of an architect and a weaver. The creative professions of her parents influenced the path of her career. She took her first acting class when she was five after seeing a production of *My Fair Lady*. She spent her childhood playing pretend and always knew she would be involved in theatre professionally.

Peterson attended Yale for her undergraduate education. At first, she planned to be an actor, until a professor there convinced her to try her hand at directing. From then on, Peterson considered herself a director.

The route to the professional stage was circuitous for Peterson. After graduating in 1983, she signed

up with the casting agency Bramon/Hopkins in New York—not the usual step for budding directors. "I didn't know what else I would do, but it became the equivalent of graduate training in directing," she said. "I learned so much about casting and working with actors by watching old pros like Jerry Zaks. And it paid the bills for seven years."

Her first real break came at the Hangar Theater in Ithaca, where Robert Moss, the artistic director (who is now at Syracuse Stage), oversaw her adaptation of "The Waves" by Virginia Woolf.

Peterson met Denis O'Hare in the late eighties, when she directed him in a play in Chicago. Years later, around 2005, Peterson was inspired to write a piece about war and contacted O'Hare in hopes that working with an actor in writing would prove successful. Similar to O'Hare, Peterson did not originally consider herself a writer. Nevertheless, their play was met with great success, winning an Obie Award for Direction and the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Solo Show. After the success of *An Iliad*, Peterson and O'Hare also co-wrote a play centering on the Bible titled *The Good Book*.

Peterson's early career credits include being Associate Director at La Jolla Playhouse from 1992-1995. Following this, she was Resident Director at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles for ten years, from 1995 to 2005. In addition to many other Off-Broadway directing credits, Peterson worked from 2014-2016 at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and then became Associate Director at Berkeley Rep Theatre. ♦

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## HISTORY OF *THE ILIAD*: A TIMELINE

### c.2000 BCE

Bronze Age begins in Greece, marked by the use of bronze in tool making.

### 1600-1200 BCE

Mycenaean period, possible date of origin for the oral tradition of poetry in Greece.

### 1300-1150 BCE

Late Bronze age in Greece, likely the setting for Homer's epics.

### c.1200 BCE

The city of Troy is destroyed in warfare. It is unknown in what war, but Greek mythology points to the siege of Troy near the end of the Trojan War.

### 1200-800 BCE

The Dark Age in Greece following the fall of the Bronze Age.

### 900-700 BCE

Early Iron Age in Greece in which the feudal system thrived. This period also may influence the setting for Homer's epics.

### c.750-650 BCE

*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are completed.

### 415 BCE

Euripides writes *Trojan Women*, a tragedy that takes place immediately following the Trojan War.

### 19 BCE

Virgil's epic poem, *The Aeneid*, details Aeneas' escape from Troy after the war and his eventual journey to Rome.

### 1609

William Shakespeare writes *Troilus and Cressida*, a tragedy which takes place during the later years of the Trojan War.

### 1870

The ruins of the city of Troy are discovered using *The Iliad* as reference.

### 1935

Jean Giraudoux writes *La Guerre de Troi N'aura Pas Lieu* (translated: *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*), a play that takes place in Troy the day before the outbreak of the Trojan War.

### 1955

Christopher Fry translates Jean Giraudoux's play, *La Guerre de Troi N'aura Pas Lieu* into English under the title *Tiger at the Gates*.

### 1981

Christopher Logue publishes *War Music*, a modernist adaptation of Homer's *The Iliad*.

### 1995

Christopher Logue publishes *The Husbands: An Account of Books 3 and 4 of Homer's "The Iliad"*

### 2004

*Troy*, a film directed by Wolfgang Petersen premieres. The film stars Brad Pitt, Orlando Bloom, and Eric Bana.

### 2005

U.S. war with Iraq inspires Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's adaptation of *The Iliad*. Peterson and O'Hare then workshopped the play for the following years.

### 2006

Margaret George publishes *Helen of Troy*, an adaptation of *The Iliad* told through Helen's point-of-view.

### 2011

Madeline Miller writes *The Song of Achilles*, an adaptation of *The Iliad* told through Patroclus' point of view.

### 2012

*An Iliad* premieres Off-Broadway produced by New York Theatre Workshop. This production stars Denis O'Hare as the Poet.

## THE BACKDROP TO AN *ILIAD*: ANCIENT GREEK SOCIETY

**Homer's *The Iliad*** takes place in a time period a few centuries prior to the time it was written down, the late Bronze age. Because there is so little written from the time, there remains some dispute as to whether the society depicted in *The Iliad* reflects one that actually existed or is an amalgamation of ancient Greek societies over time. To understand the historical backdrop of *The Iliad*, therefore, we can consider changes that took place in ancient Greece over centuries.

We can think of ancient Greek civilization as being broken up into a number of specific time periods, each characterized by different philosophical, political, and artistic thought.

The Bronze Age began in Greece in roughly 2000 BCE, marking the emergence of bronze in tool making. Greece became the economic center of the Mediterranean in this period. This was the time the great mythological warriors such as Jason, Agamemnon, Achilles, and Odysseus are said to have lived. The end of this period was most likely when the events of *The Iliad* were intended to be set. The fall of Troy (approximately 1200 BCE) was followed by the fall of other prosperous Bronze Age civilizations, perhaps in part because of the drain of the Trojan War and civil wars that followed.

Greece then entered a “Dark Age,” during which many former settlements were abandoned, and artistic production was limited. This period lasted from about 1200 BCE until 900 BCE.

The Early Iron Age began in Greece around 900 BCE. At this time, the feudal system developed in Greece, giving more power to land-owning aristocrats. Some scholars believe that aspects of society in this period are also reflected in Homer's epics. They were likely written in the later eighth century and may have been influenced by the social and economic changes in this time period, as well as including specific advancements in metalwork and battle tactics that were made after the Bronze Age. Additionally, the ‘polis,’ or city-state, was beginning to emerge around the time that Homer's epics were written, replacing the feudal system. Homer wrote about periods of strength in Greece at a time of great change.

The Archaic period in Greek society lasted from approximately 800-500 BCE. This period saw great advances in art, poetry, and technology, but most notably, it saw the rise of Greek city-states. City-states—called poleis in Greek—were communities that developed their own forms of government,



The School of Athens by Raphael c. 1509-1511, Public Domain.

imposed their own taxes, and raised their own armies.

The Classical period followed. The Classical period was the golden age for Athens—the Acropolis was built, a democratic system of government was established, philosophical thinkers such as Plato began to rise, and playwrights such as Sophocles began to write. This age lasted from about 480 BCE to 330 BCE. Alexander the Great rose to power in the late Classical Period and began his quest to expand the civilization. He conquered Persia, invaded Egypt, and made territorial gains in Asia Minor. This was the start of the Hellenistic Age. As Alexander continued to expand his territory, he also spread Grecian and Hellenistic values to new territories. The Hellenistic Age continued until Romans began to take hold of Greek lands. By 31 BCE, Greece was part of the Roman Empire. ♦

Edited from:

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<https://www.ancient.eu/greece/>

## ANCIENT ORAL POETIC TRADITION

**Both** *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* likely derived from episodic songs that were performed in ancient oral storytelling tradition. This tradition dates back at least to the Mycenaean period in Greece.

For centuries before Greek myths were set down in writing, they were passed down from generation to generation through spoken word. Mythical stories were created in order to explain the phenomena of the natural world. These tales tell of gods and goddesses intervening in the trajectory of mortals' lives and helped to establish a common cultural vocabulary. Often, storytellers in ancient Greece would travel from town to town to tell common tales, usually setting their story to music. Eventually, myths and stories became woven into the cultural and collective consciousness of ancient Greek society.

The bards that performed these poems orally are called 'aoidoi,' translating to singers. The poems that aoidoi learned from one another and performed are 'aoidai,' meaning songs. The poets likely worked with short aoidai centering on a mythical story that could be performed on a single occasion. The songs were not rigid in the way they were told, and the language used varied from singer to singer with personal style. However, there were likely certain phrases or portions of the story with thematic importance that were repeated verbatim between singers and across performances.

Though not restricted to a rigid script, singers used certain formulaic phrases. For example, epithets were likely used frequently, as they are in Homer's text. An epithet is an adjective or descriptor accompanying the name of a character. In *The Iliad*, Homer uses epithets for Achilles: "swift-footed Achilles," "swift Achilles," "godlike Achilles." Singers learned the songs from one another, and likely repeated phrases and epithets they heard from other singers exactly.

Around 800 BCE, however, a new form of storytelling emerged—that of written epic poetry. Homer is credited as the first Western epic poet for his work in setting down the stories of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* in writing. Epic poems are long, narrative poems that typically tell of some grand and difficult journey. They often are written in elevated language and meter, and they center on a hero who has some connection to the gods and whose actions are important to history and



Homer as the blind bard, by Jean-Baptiste Auguste Leloir c. 1841

humanity. It is thought that epic poems derived from episodic stories that were gradually unified into a singular narrative.

While myths were typically used as explanations for otherwise mysterious natural occurrences, epic poems tend to focus on a character's heroism. Epics typically open with an invocation of a Muse in which the author or narrator of the epic calls upon a goddess to inspire the following story. The poet then typically opens the work by clearly stating the theme of the poem.

This ancient tradition of oral storytelling is rediscovered in O'Hare and Peterson's adaptation. *An Iliad* is a one-person show in which a single poet tells the hour-long story of *The Iliad*, using some of Homer's language and some modern commentary. The Poet in the play is a modern aoidos, keeping this tradition alive in a theatrical format. ♦

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## GREEK MYTHOLOGY: THE ROLE OF THE MUSES



Dance of Apollo and the Muses by Baldassare Peruzzi, Public Domain

**The Muses in Greek mythology** are a group of sister goddesses, originally the patron goddesses of poets. They are the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. There have been nine Muses canonically dating back to the writing of *The Odyssey*.

The nine Muses are Clio, Euterpe, Thalia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato, Polymnia (Polyhymnia), Urania, and Calliope. Calliope, the leader of the muses, is the Muse of epic poetry. Clio is the Muse of history, Erato of lyric, Euterpe of music, Melpomene of tragedy, Polymnia of sacred poetry, Terpsichore of dancing, Thalia of comedy, and Urania of astronomy.

In the tradition of oral poetry, the poet is considered an imperfect messenger, unable to rely solely on their own memory of the songs. So, the poet calls on the Muses for assistance in telling the story. Muses were also called upon for assistance with

musical accompaniment. When a poet calls on the Muses, it is called the invocation of the Muses. The invocation of the Muses may have served functional purposes in oral storytelling as well; to give the performer time to recall something complex, to heighten suspense, or to give the audience a sense of authentication for the story. Divine inspiration was likely seen as an authenticating measure of good poetry and of truthful stories.

In *An Iliad*, the Poet calls upon the Muses just as a traditional poet would have. The Poet invokes the Muses to aid memory and provide music and strength throughout the performance. The role of the Muses is traditionally in relation to the storyteller—they rarely appear as characters in the plot of the myth or epic. ♦

Edited from:

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Muse." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 18 Oct. 2019, [www.britannica.com/topic/Muse-Greek-mythology](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Muse-Greek-mythology).

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Apollo and the Muses by Heinrich Maria von Hess, c. 1826 Public Domain

## GODS, MONSTERS, AND MEN IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

**The interaction** between gods, monsters, and men is characteristic of mythic and epic stories. Often, at least one god or goddess follows the hero of the epic to ensure his safe journey. These monsters and gods challenge the various mortals, testing their will, strength, leadership, loyalty, and morality. In this sense, encounters with monsters and gods provide the mortal characters with opportunities for great growth as much as they present opportunities for peril.

The legends of these encounters form the basis of Greek mythology. The word "myth" comes from the Greek word "Mythos," which translates to "word," or (perhaps more importantly) "story." A myth is a story that can be thought of as having two primary characteristics: significance and staying power. Significance here means that the subject matter for the myth is something important, about how the world works or how the world came to be as it is. Staying power, in this context, means that stories have survived through centuries (and sometimes millennia). A myth's staying power is a testament to the deep meaning or functional importance of the story it tells. Scholar Joseph Campbell noted that mythology is significant because it is "ultimately and always the vehicle through which the individual finds a sense of identity and place in the world."

In 1955, the poet and scholar Robert Graves wrote, "Myth has two main functions. The first is to answer the sort of awkward questions that children ask, such as 'Who made the world? How will it end? Who was the first man? Where do souls go after death?'"... The second function of myth is to justify an existing social system and account for traditional rites and customs." Mythical gods and monsters played a significant role in both functions. The gods often create or manipulate the social structures of the humans, and monsters often uphold those structures or uphold natural phenomena.

Each god and monster in Greek mythology has authority over specific aspects of life: Aphrodite's



Athena Appearing to Odysseus to Reveal the Island of Ithaca by Giuseppe Bottani, Public Domain.

domain is love and beauty, while Athena's field of expertise is wisdom and war, and Apollo controls the sun, music, poetry, prophecy, and plague. While every divine being in Greek mythology has a niche, it is common for gods and monsters to clash over the exact nature and extent of their individual powers. The only gods with indisputable powers are the Fates—three goddesses who control the destinies of all mortals.

Gods in Greek mythology resemble humankind in that they are easily swayed by such forces as pride, lust, love, jealousy, anger, and revenge. They are not necessarily omniscient and often make mistakes. Because the gods are vulnerable to the same vices and weaknesses as humans, they are not perfect in their judgements or actions—in fact, their distinctly human-like behavior tends to get them into tricky situations throughout the mythological canon. ♦

Edited from:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeX6CX5LEi0&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7\\_&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeX6CX5LEi0&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7_&t=0s)

## THE HERO'S JOURNEY

**The main event** in epic poetry is the hero's journey. A hero sets out on a quest, whether to recover a stolen item, to return home, or to find a new home. In pursuit of his quest, the hero is met with many challenges and calls to action. He usually finds a mentor or group of friends as he travels through unfamiliar territory, and he typically succeeds, to some extent, in his quest. While the hero's journey is an archetype for epic poetry—one that is seen in *The Odyssey*, *The Iliad*, and *The Aeneid*—it has become an archetypal structure for all kinds of stories. Stories like *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Lion King* all follow the structure of the Hero's Journey.

The Hero's Journey is an archetypal framework developed by author Joseph Campbell—a literary scholar who specialized in the study of comparative mythology—in the 1980s from myths such as Homer's epics and now popularly used to break down stories. Homer's *The Iliad* can fit partially within this framework through the journey of Achilles as the hero. The twelve steps of the Hero's Journey as outlined by Campbell are listed below, as



Achilles Slays Hector by Peter Paul Rubens ca. 1630-1635, Public Domain

well as an interpretation of how the story of Achilles in *The Iliad* fits within them. ♦

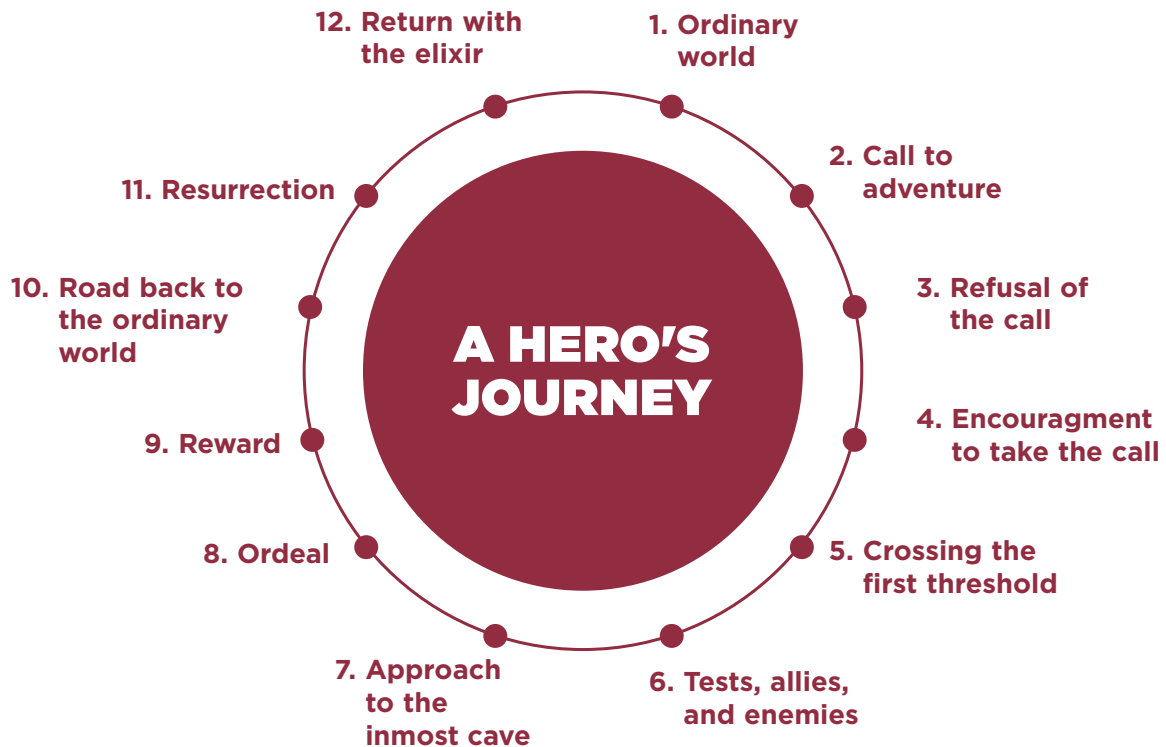
Edited from:

“Subject Guides: The Monomyth (The Hero's Journey): The Hero's Journey.” *The Hero's Journey - The Monomyth (The Hero's Journey) - Subject Guides At*, 10 Apr. 2020, libguides.gvsu.edu/c.php?g=948085&p=6857311.

|                                   |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>THE ORDINARY WORLD</b>         | The original world of the hero, usually lacking in some way.  | Achilles' ordinary world is not seen in <i>The Iliad</i> , as he has already been away from his home at war for years when the epic begins.                                      |
| <b>THE CALL TO ADVENTURE</b>      | The hero is given a challenge or goal.  | Achilles is called to fight with the Achaeans in the Trojan War. Achilles is known as the greatest warrior in the army, so his call to fight is important in the war as a whole. |
| <b>THE REFUSAL TO THE CALL</b>    | The hero is reluctant to take action in pursuit of the goal established by the call to adventure.   | Achilles refuses to fight when Agamemnon takes Briseis from him.   |
| <b>MEETING WITH THE MENTOR</b>    | A wise figure encourages the hero to take the call. The mentor typically gives advice or an item needed for the hero to prepare for the journey, but does not accompany them. | Patroclus asks Achilles to join the fight.   |
| <b>CROSSING THE THRESHOLD</b>     | The hero commits to the challenge of the call.  | First refusing the call once again by sending Patroclus to battle in his armor, Achilles then decides to join the battle by killing Hector when he learns of Patroclus' murder.  |
| <b>TESTS, ALLIES, AND ENEMIES</b> | The hero meets new people and learns the new rules of the world they have entered. This often reveals the true character of the hero.   | Achilles seeks the help of his mother Thetis as his ally, who helps him get a new shield and armor.  |

## THE HERO'S JOURNEY CONTINUED...

|                                    |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>APPROACH TO THE INMOST CAVE</b> | The hero reaches the point where the object of the quest lays. This could be a physical object, or an ultimate test leading to a realization. | Achilles chases after Hector.  |
| <b>THE SUPREME ORDEAL</b>          | The hero faces a great psychological or physical danger.  | Hector and Achilles duel.  |
| <b>REWARD</b>                      | The hero survives the ordeal and can now take possession of the object or wisdom they sought on the adventure.                                | Achilles kills Hector.   |
| <b>THE ROAD BACK</b>               | The hero faces the decision to return to the ordinary world while facing the imminent consequences of his actions.                            | Achilles parades his triumph by dragging Hector's body around the tomb of Patroclus.   |
| <b>RESURRECTION</b>                | The hero faces a final test and is reborn or transformed.   | King Priam asks Achilles to give him the body of Hector so that he may be properly mourned.  |
| <b>RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR</b>      | The hero returns home to the ordinary world with the object or wisdom they gained on their quest in their possession, sharing it with others. | Achilles allows for a temporary ceasefire so that Hector may be mourned. The fighting will temporarily halt because of the journey Achilles has taken. |





## THEMES

In *An Iliad*, the prevailing themes concern war. O'Hare and Peterson were inspired to adapt the play in 2005, when the U.S. was at war in Iraq. The play explores vengeance, violence, loss, and the ever-present nature of war, persisting throughout history from ancient times into the modern day.

### VENGEANCE

"Now I'll go and meet that murderer head on, that Hector who destroyed the dearest life I know."  
—Achilles, Part 5

Vengeance is a driving factor for characters in the story, especially for the character of Achilles. At the beginning of the play, Achilles decides not to fight as an act of vengeance against Agamemnon for stealing Briseis. However, it is also vengeance that spurs Achilles to join the fight once more—he rejoins the army to avenge the death of his dear friend, Patroclus. Vengeance is a deeply personal motive, and through Achilles and his unwavering desire for vengeance, the play explores the role personal motives play in war efforts.

### VIOLENCE

"Whole earth ran red with BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD./ And RED DEATH! AND IT FEELS GOOD!"  
—Poet, Part 4

While describing Patroclus' death, the Poet devolves into an episode of thrashing and yelling, becoming lost in the spirit of bloodlust in the violent scene. The violence of war becomes visceral, disturbing, and present in the moment. The Poet has tried to hide their violent nature from the audience, but in this moment, it is exposed at full force. Violence and war are intrinsically linked—war does not exist without violence. The Poet is overcome by a violent episode while describing a violent scene, which emphasizes the fact that war necessitates violence—it is unavoidable.

### LOSS AND GRIEF

"Enough. Enough grief, enough tears. What good will our tears do? I won't see my father again. You can't bring your son back to life."  
—Achilles, Part 7

Grief takes many forms in *An Iliad*. First, we see the grief manifest as the vengeance of Achilles when Patroclus is killed by Hector. When Hector is killed by Achilles, we see his wife, Andromache, react in shock and in anger. Priam, Hector's father, then weeps in front of Achilles—his enemy—as he begs him for the body of his son. In this way, grief's universality creates a common language and brings out a sense of humanity even among enemies. The universality of grief and its language allows Achilles to understand Priam's pain, and prompts Achilles to allow for eleven days of a ceasefire. This play does not shy away from the pain of loss. War brings about unnecessary loss of life, and from this, ultimate pain and suffering in grief. In the end, it is grief that brings about a break from the fighting, giving Hector's family time to properly bury and mourn him.

### THE PERSISTENCE OF WAR

"It was a terrible hot day during the Conquest of Sumer—I mean the Conquest of Sargon—uh—The Persian War—no—"  
—Poet, Part 6

After telling the audience of Hector's death, the Poet begins to compare the scene to the Conquest of Sumer, then corrects themselves again and again, listing wars that have happened over time for over five minutes. By doing this, the Poet shows us that the suffering and violence that comes with war did not end with the Trojan War—it persists to the present. ♦

## THE TROJAN WAR: FACT OR FICTION?

**There is** little historical documentation of the ancient Greek Bronze Age, and *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* provide some of the only written records of a Trojan War between the people of Troy and an Achaean army occurring. Because Homer's epics provide some of the only records of the war, there is still much dispute as to the validity of historical knowledge coming from these epics.

First, considering archaeological evidence for the existence of the Trojan War, it is commonly accepted that the city of Troy was destroyed in war around 1200 BCE. Troy was allegedly found using *The Iliad* as reference; however, it is unknown exactly why the city fell. Homer's epics suggest that it was destroyed by the Greek army in the Trojan War, but there is little to no other evidence to support or refute this.

The specific depictions of battle in *The Iliad* are also cause for disagreement among scholars. While the descriptions of armor and of battle strategies are consistent with other findings from ancient Greece, they are inconsistent to a singular time. The evolutionary nature of the oral storytelling tradition can explain these inconsistencies, but does it also invalidate any possible historical findings from the source?

In *The Iliad*, gods are depicted as humans, fighting on the battlefield of the Trojan War, divided in their allegiance. Some argue that the Trojan War likely did not take place because of these supernatural elements, but this argument may perhaps overlook certain interpretations or possibilities. The inclusion of Greek gods in the epics may be seen as political propaganda, bolstering Greek pride as city-states were on the rise. Alternatively, one sees that gods in Homeric epics lack magical elements present in the myths, including for example Achilles' heel



The Procession of the Trojan Horse in Troy by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo c. 1760, Public Domain.

as his only weakness. The characters of the gods then appear as mortal, possibly a writing device to highlight themes of war.

While Greeks of the Classical period believed *The Iliad* to be a factual account of history, today, there is no apparent scholarly consensus on whether or not the Trojan War took place, nor to what degree Homer's work reflected an actual time in Greek history. Ultimately, we must remember that Homer's epics are works of art and appreciate them as such.



Edited from:

"Ancient Greece." *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda*, by Philip M. Taylor, Manchester University Press, Manchester; New York, 2003, pp. 25-34. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155jd69.7](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155jd69.7). Accessed 15 Apr. 2020.

Irene J. F. de Jong. "Convention versus Realism in the Homeric Epics." *Mnemosyne*, vol. 58, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1-22. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/4433613](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4433613). Accessed 15 Apr. 2020.

M. I. Finley, et al. "The Trojan War." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 84, 1964, pp. 1-20. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/627688](http://www.jstor.org/stable/627688). Accessed 15 Apr. 2020.

## A BIG SPLASH: A CONVERSATION WITH A NOISE WITHIN'S PRODUCTION TEAM ABOUT THE POOL SET

All three of A Noise Within's Spring 2021 productions are utilizing an onstage pool as the centerpiece to their sets. Sam Sintef, A Noise Within's Production Manager and Resident Artist, and Catherine Lee, A Noise Within's Technical Assistant, discuss the thematic and practical functions of this ambitious set design.

### What history does A Noise Within have with using the same set for multiple productions?

**Sam Sintef:** A Noise Within is no stranger to producing plays that connect thematically with overlapping design concepts. 2015's *The Threepenny Opera* and *Julius Caesar* had the same backdrop constructed of industrial scaffolding. In 2017, *King Lear* and *Man of La Mancha* shared the same curved wall that was 24 ft tall and 54 ft wide. The third attempt at unifying a repertory season within a single scenic design is the most ambitious yet. The idea to have this season based around water started with Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*. Water is an integral aspect of *Metamorphoses*, and it would be nearly impossible to produce it without having a pool. Water informs the physical action of the play and reinforces the themes of transformation and rebirth. These themes are echoed in *An Iliad* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, so it made poetic sense to visually unify all three productions with an interchangeable scenic design.

### How is the pool utilized from production to production?

**Sam Sintef:** Water, the most protean of the elements, already lends itself to be able to undergo transformations. It can present itself as a solid, liquid or gas. Onstage it transforms depending on which production is playing. It can be the River Styx in *Metamorphoses*, a stream in the woods in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the shoreline of Troy in *An Iliad*. The pool offers new possibilities for staging and allows the actors to tap into a different kind of vulnerability. Actors are able to move in ways that would not be possible on dry land. They can float in the water, fall into the water, and of course swim. The water becomes a scene partner and is another obstacle a character must overcome to achieve their objective.

### What kind of research did you do in preparation to build the set?

**Cathy:** Once we got the announcement of what ANW was doing for the spring—that we are building a pool on stage—we knew there was a lot of research to do. There are a lot of factors we need to consider about a pool on stage, the main one being water. How do we contain the water, onstage and backstage, so that nothing gets damaged? In the house, we have the AC going, so how do we make sure the water is comfortable for the actors to be in? How do we keep the water sanitary?

Fortunately, there have been several theatres who have done the daunting task of making a pool on stage. We were able to get advice from them and we watched some of their online videos of how they did it. We also did our own research; we looked into how hot tubs function, what kind of pool equipment exists on the market, and what kind of math we need to do.

### What are some of the technical considerations of this set?

**Sam Sintef:** From a technical standpoint, there are many factors to consider with having a pool onstage. A cubic square foot of water weighs roughly 62 lbs, so when installing the pool, it is imperative to make sure the stage is properly reinforced to take the additional weight. The frame is insulated with foam to help retain heat and the pool is securely covered with pond liners to minimize leakage. The water is heated to approximately 99 degrees before every performance and is filtered to keep sanitary. Since the pool is being used for 3-4 months, we need to empty it for cleaning and re-fill it every few weeks. There are "heating stations" backstage so the actors can dry off in-between scenes, and the floor is covered with mats, so no one slips. The pool also informed how the other departments approached their designs. Costumes needed to test various fabrics to determine which can endure the cleaning chemicals used in the water. Lighting and sound had to coordinate with scenic to make sure their equipment was placed in water-safe areas. Each Stage Management team was required to be trained on pre-show and post-show procedures. Producing a single show with a pool is exceptional, but producing three productions with a pool creates an unparalleled theatrical experience.

## PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **RESEARCH**

**Purpose:**

These research prompts will help students develop an understanding of the social, historical, and cultural context of *An Iliad*.

**Prepare:**

To prepare for seeing *An Iliad*, have students break into small groups and research the following topics, either as groups or individually. When they are finished, have students present their findings to the class.

---

**The Bronze Age in Ancient Greece**

- The start and end of the period
- The Mycenaeans and major settlements
- Technological advancements

---

**The Iron Age in Ancient Greece**

- The start and end of the period
- Changes in culture
- Technological advancements

---

**The Trojan War**

- The myths surrounding the war
- The story of *The Odyssey*
- The start and end of the war

---

**Epic Poems**

- The oral tradition
- Important epic poems
- When they were written

---

**Homer**

- When and where he lived
- What he wrote and his legacy
- Legends about him

---

**Greek Mythology**

- Achilles and his mother, Thetis
- Important Greek Gods
- The Muses

## PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES**

### **Purpose:**

These activities will prompt students to think critically about the themes in *An Iliad*.

### **DESIGN-A-COSTUME**

In this activity, students can work as a class, in small groups, or individually to imagine their own theatrical adaptation of Homer's *The Iliad* and design their own costumes. Students can trace figures and add costumes using collage or can draw their designs entirely themselves. Students can then also write out or present their accompanying adaptation concept.

When you see *An Iliad*, you only see the character of the Poet. The Poet plays many roles throughout the story that they tell, but they do not wear their characters' clothes. If you were to do your own adaptation of Homer's *The Iliad* which called for each character to be costumed, what would your costumes look like? Design your own costumes for three of the following characters:

Achilles

Hector

Andromache

Agamemnon

Patroclus

Thetis

Hermes

Priam

### **Things to consider as you design:**

1. The world of your adaptation
  - a. Is it in the modern day? Is it the ancient world? A time in between?
  - b. Where is it set? A real place? An imagined place? The city of Troy?
  - c. Is it a magical world or a realistic world?
2. Colors and materials
  - a. How will the colors or materials you use support the storytelling?
  - b. Will both armies wear the same colors and materials?
  - c. Will all the costumes only use a certain color scheme?
3. Specific attributes of each character
  - a. What would this character wear if they were choosing?
  - b. What does the costume need to tell the audience about the character?
  - c. Does this character have specific costume pieces given in the script?

### **THE HERO'S JOURNEY**

Homer's epics are often analyzed using Joseph Campbell's model of the Hero's Journey. In this activity, students will gain a better understanding of Campbell's model by analyzing a story of their choice using the Hero's Journey.

1. Working in small groups, choose a popular film or book whose story matches the structure of the Hero's Journey.
2. Identify each step on the journey in the film or book you have chosen.

3. Create a diagram of the twelve steps you have identified. Illustrate this diagram on a poster or PowerPoint.
4. Present your diagram to the class.

## PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES** CONTINUED...

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### STORY PERFORMANCE

*The Iliad* comes from an ancient storytelling tradition that is brought back to life in O'Hare and Peterson's adaptation. In the following activity, students will explore the art of storytelling and the role the storyteller plays in the way the story is conveyed.

Working in small groups, recall the important story points of *The Iliad*. Refrain from writing down an exact script. Choose one person from your group to tell the story of *The Iliad* to the class in under two minutes. Have this person rehearse for their small group and receive notes from other group members. Then, invite each storyteller to tell the story for the whole class.

Following hearing the story from several different storytellers, discuss the following questions:

1. What were the most effective moments in the telling of the story?
2. What did storytellers do that made you believe the story they were telling?
3. What did each storyteller highlight in the story? How did the story differ from person to person?
4. How might the ancient oral tradition of epic poetry have been affected by the storytellers that performed the poems?

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. In a thesis-driven essay, analyze the relationship between gods and mortals in *The Iliad*. Use examples from Homer's text and/or from O'Hare and Peterson's script to support your claim.
2. How is language in the play or in the epic reminiscent of an oral storytelling tradition?
3. Is Achilles a hero? Refer to Campbell's Hero's Journey in your answer.
4. Compare and contrast the characters of Achilles and Hector. Use examples from Homer's text and/or from O'Hare and Peterson's script.
5. Consider the depiction of war and suffering in *An Iliad*. How does the design in the production you saw support these themes? Or, in what ways does the text express these themes?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### EPIC POEMS:

*The Iliad* by Homer. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald. Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2004.

*The Odyssey* by Homer. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald. Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 1998.

*The Aeneid* by Virgil. Translated by David Ferry. Published by University of Chicago Press in 2017.

### BOOKS:

*The Power of Myth* by Joseph Campbell et al. Published by Turtleback Books in 2012.

*Myth: A Handbook* by William Doty. Published by University of Alabama Press in 2007.

*The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller. Published by Ecco in 2012.

### PLAYS:

*Trojan Women* by Euripides. Translated by Gilbert Murray. Published by Project Gutenberg in 2011. (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35171/35171-h/35171-h.htm>)

*Troilus and Cressida* by William Shakespeare. Published by The Folger Shakespeare Library. ([https://shakespeare.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/troilus-and-cressida/?\\_ga=2.184130726.1637133166.1590595188-1142493862.1589571980](https://shakespeare.folger.edu/shakespeares-works/troilus-and-cressida/?_ga=2.184130726.1637133166.1590595188-1142493862.1589571980))

*Tiger at the Gates* by Jean Giraudoux. Translated by Christopher Fry. Published by Samuel French in 1956.

### ARTICLES:

“War is Unavoidable—and Other Hard Lessons from Homer’s Iliad” by Simon Worrall. Published by National Geographic (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2016/01/160110-homer-iliad-ancient-world-alexander-ngbooktalk/>)

“The Embodiment of Human Tragedy in the Iliad” by Lindsay D. Clark. Published by *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 1(11) in 2009. (<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=62>)

“Tragic form and feeling in the Iliad” by R. B. Rutherford. Published by *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 102, 145-160. doi:10.2307/631133 in 1982. (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-hellenic-studies/article/tragic-form-and-feeling-in-the-iliad/177608CCAFDD0825DBE5DE8530E35997>)

### FILM AND TELEVISION:

*Helen of Troy* directed by Robert Wise (1956)

*Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth* docuseries created by Bill D. Moyers (1988)

*Troy* directed by Wolfgang Peterson (2004)

### ONLINE RESOURCES:

Crash Course World Mythology: What is Myth?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeX6CX5LEj0&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7\\_&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeX6CX5LEj0&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7_&t=0s)

Crash Course World Mythology: Theories of Myth

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIFaiB5kj6I&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7\\_&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIFaiB5kj6I&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7_&t=0s)



## ABOUT THEATRE ARTS: KEY THEATRICAL TERMS

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After this *A Noise Within* performance, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

**blocking:** The instructions a director gives actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

**character:** The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

**conflict:** The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

**dramatic irony:** A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

**genre:** Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

**motivation:** The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

**props:** Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

**proscenium stage:** There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

**set:** The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

**setting:** The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

**stage areas:** The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as they face the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as they face the audience.

**theme:** The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

**thrust stage:** A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

## ABOUT A NOISE WITHIN

**A NOISE WITHIN** produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists performing in rotating repertory immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue. Our plays will be performed in rotating repertory, sometimes simultaneously in multiple spaces, and buttressed by meaningful supporting programs to create a symphonic theatrical experience for artists and audience.

In its 27-year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 45,000 individuals attend productions at A Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 18,000 student participants to its Education Program. Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides.

### Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org). The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

### Study Guide Credits

|                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Alicia Green      | <i>Education Director and Editor</i> |
| Abby Howell       | <i>Author</i>                        |
| Rachael McNamara  | <i>Dramaturg</i>                     |
| Craig Schwartz    | <i>Production Photography</i>        |
| Teresa English    | <i>Graphic Design</i>                |
| Bridgette Ramirez | <i>Editor</i>                        |



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