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## Homer's The Iliad

First of all, we have to keep in mind that Homer was a blind poet. This information is based on his description of a poet or singer in The Odyssey. Scholars believed that he lived in around the early 9<sup>th</sup> or late 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE in Ionia, a region in what is now Turkey.

Homer belonged to a time when there was probably oral poetry tradition. Very little is known about the ancient poet, Homer except that he is the poet to whom the Greeks attributed the epic poems – The Iliad and its sequel, The Odyssey. Homer was born at Smyrna in the Ionian region of Asia Minor (or possibly on the island of Chios), and that he died on the Cycladic island of Ios.

Some ancient accounts depict Homer as a wandering minstrel, and a common portrayal is of a blind, begging singer who travelled around the harbour towns of Greece, associating with shoemakers, fisherman, potters, sailors and elderly men in the town gathering places.

### Homer's works

- 1.) Homer was responsible for just the two outstanding epics, “**The Iliad**”• and “**The Odyssey**”.
- 2.) Stylistically they are similar, and one view holds that “**The Iliad**”• was composed by Homer in his maturity, while “**The Odyssey**”• was a work of his old age.
- 3.) Other parts of the “**Epic Cycle**”(e.g. “*Kypria*”• , “*Aithiopus*”• , “*Little Iliad*”• , “*The Sack of Ilion*”• , “*The Returns*” and “*Telegony*”• ) are now considered to be almost certainly not by Homer.
- 4.) The “*Homeric Hymns*”• and “*Epigrams of Homer*”, were certainly written significantly later, and therefore not by Homer himself.

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## Context of The Iliad

\*\*\* The Iliad is narrated from a third-person omniscient point of view. Trojan War is the central and defining event of Greek prehistory. It is believed that the great war might have been fought in the 13<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The continued interest in it in Homer's time is significant. Homer describes the Greek Army in Book 2 of The Iliad as originating from more than 150 different locations from all over mainland

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Greece and the Peloponnese. It is not possible to infer any historical detail of the war from the poem. But some evidences show that the ancient city, Troy was probably destroyed in war around 1250 BCE.

The City of Troy is believed to have been located in northwestern Asia Minor, near the mouth of Hellespont, now called the Dardanelles in Modern-day Turkey. As such, the Trojans were a separate people divided from Greece by Aegean Sea.

As depicted in The Illiad, The Trojan War was caused by the Paris's seduction and theft of Helen from Menelaus.

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### Characters

- Achilles – He is the son of Thetis, a Sea Goddess, and Peleus, a mortal. He is a pure warrior concerned with honour and glory- merciless in fierce in battle.
- Hector – He is the prince of Troy. He is fighting for his city and family as much as for honour and glory. His interactions with his wife and son, as well as his brothers, demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility for protecting his city and the people in his family.
- Agamemnon – A powerful and proud man and he is also the top commander of the Greek army. He feels entitled to take any prizes and honours he wants without apology. He applies this with Achilles and he raises the great hero's anger and as a result, he sees the dire consequences of the whole army. He is a good fighter but his style of leadership is harsh and he shows no mercy to enemies.
- Priam – He was the king of the Trojans. He shows compassion to Helen although she brought ten years of war upon his city.
- Thetis- Achilles's sea-goddess mother. She protects and advocates for him throughout the poem. She is tortured throughout the poem by the knowledge that her son is fated to die.
- Paris – He is the younger brother of Hector, Trojan Prince. He committed a daring act in stealing Helen away from Menelaus, but he is more a lover than a fighter at heart. His status as a prince and the favour of the goddess Aphrodite make him one of the heroes of Troy. After the end of the The Illiad, he is the one who kills Achilles.

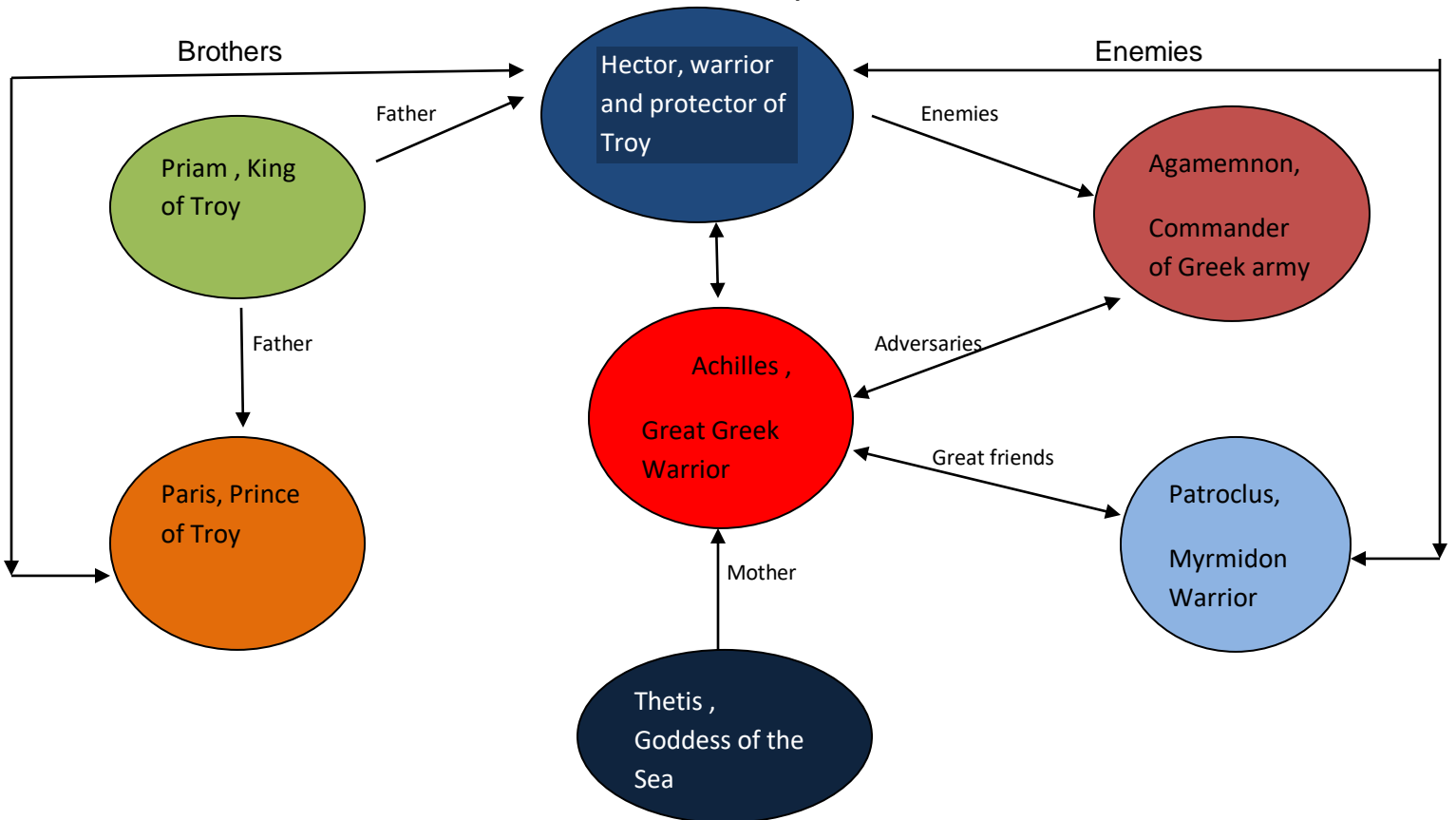


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- Patroclus – Achilles and Patroclus are the close friends. Though Achilles is his king and commander, Patroclus is older and wiser. They were as the two brothers.

### Character Map



### Minor Characters

- Aenas- Aenas is a commander in the Trojan army, who is protected by his mother, the goddess Aphrodite.



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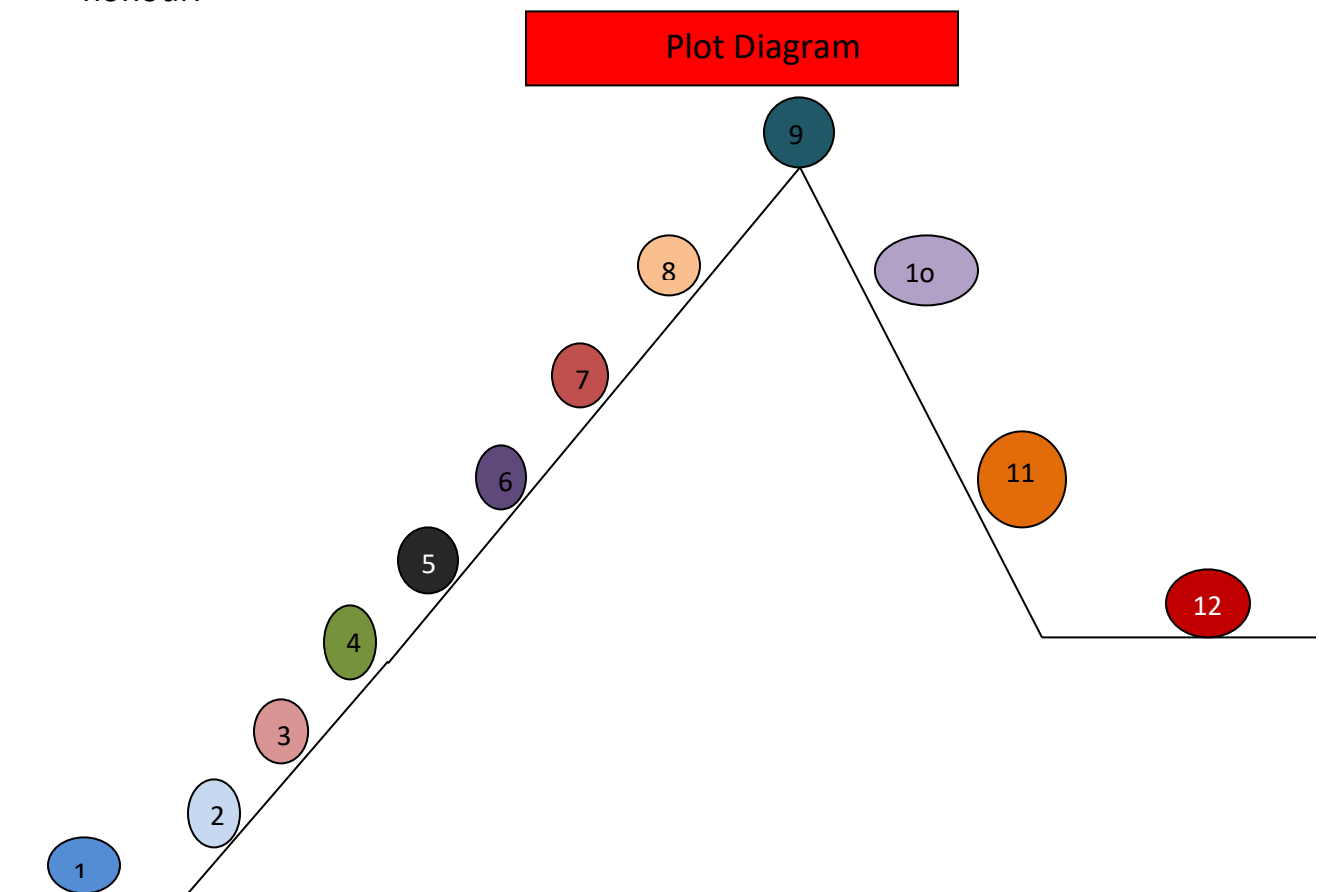
- Andromache – Hector’s wife
- Apollo- God of archers medicine , who supports the Trojans.
- Astyanax- son of Hector and Andromache.
- Athena - Goddess of war and handicrafts, who supports the Greeks.
- Briseis – Achilles’s prize who is taken from him by Agamemnon.
- Chryseis- The daughter of Chryses, a priest of Apollo, who was taken as a prize by Agamemnon
- Diomedes –Greek fighter known for his war cry who wounds two gods.
- Glaucus – The leader of the Lycians who are allies of the Trojans.
- Great Ajax- A giant and the second-best fighter in the Greek army.
- Hecuba- Wife of king Priam and Hector’s mother.
- Helen – Former wife of King Menelaus, who was stolen by prince Paris of Troy.
- Hera – The queen of the gods and wife of Zeus, who passionately hates the Trojans.
- Menelaus – He is like his brother, Agamemnon, is a Greek King and son of Atreus, as well as the former husband of Helen.
- Nestor- The oldest commander in the Greek army who often provides wise advice and tells long stories.
- Odysseus – King of Ithaca
- Pandarus- Trojan archer
- Phoenix – One of the Greek commanders.
- Polydamas – Commander in the Trojan army whose advise Hector fatefully doesn’t take.
- Poseidon- Brother of Zeus and the Sea-god.
- Sarpedon- Zeus’s son and the commander of the Trojan allies from Lycia whom he cannot save.



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- Thersites- Common foot soldier.
- Zeus- King of the gods who agrees to punish the Greeks for the insult to Achilles's honour.



1. **Introduction** – Apollo inflicts a plague on the Greek army.

**Rising Action**

2. Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles.



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3. Zeus agrees to punish the Greeks for Achilles.
4. Mortals and gods fight and are wounded in battle.
5. Zeus forbids the other gods to interfere in the war.
6. With Zeus's help, Hector breaks through to Achaean ( Greeks ) ships.
7. Hector kills Patroclus in battle.
8. Achilles and the gods return to the fighting.

### **Climax**

9. Achilles kills Hector in single combat.

### **Falling Action**

10. Priam begs Achilles for Hector's body.
11. Achilles returns Hector's body to Priam.

### **Resolution**

12. Hector is buried in Troy.

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### **Main Themes of The Iliad**

1. War
2. Humanity



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### 3. Honour and Pride

### 4. Gods and Fate

## Gods and Fate In The Iliad

Each mortal's fate, or destiny, is spun at birth. By whom or what we are not told. He or she cannot escape fate.

Grand events, like the fall of Troy, are also fixed by fate.

Fate is synonymous with death in the case of mortals, destruction in a case like Troy's fate.

The gods know what fate ordains for mortals, but gods cannot avert fate and are therefore subordinate to it.

They have no fates of their own, in the mortal sense of death, because they cannot die or be destroyed.

The poet frequently states that a certain event might have occurred, "contrary to fate," but for the occurrence of something else, often divine intervention. Likewise, for example, Zeus considers averting the fate of his mortal son Sarpedon, but he does not do so.

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