

Outline of Homer's Iliad

Book 1

The Iliad begins with the poet calling on the Muse to sing of the wrath of Achilles and its consequences. Apollo's priest Chryses comes to the Achaian camp and asks to ransom back his daughter Chryseis, who has been captured. Agamemnon sends him rudely away, and Chryses prays to Apollo to punish the Greeks, which Apollo does by sending a plague upon them. Achilles calls an assembly to ask the seer Kalchas why Apollo is angry. First Kalchas secures Achilles' promise that he will protect him from reprisals, then he explains the situation. Agamemnon angrily denounces Kalchas. Agamemnon agrees to give up Chryseis, who is his concubine, but demands some other "prize" to replace her. Achilles answers that another prize will come later, when Troy is sacked. Agamemnon angrily threatens to take the captive woman of Achilles or of another of the Achaian chiefs, and Achilles responds to this slight by denouncing Agamemnon and threatening to go home to Phthia. Agamemnon repeats his threat to take Achilles' prize, and Achilles is about to draw his sword when Athene appears to him and stops him. Instead of attacking Agamemnon, Achilles berates him some more, and swears an oath to stay out of the battle so that the Achaians can see how important he is. Nestor tries to reconcile the two chiefs, but without much success. Achilles agrees to surrender his captive woman, Briseis, without a fight. When the messengers from Agamemnon arrive, Achilles hands her over. He then meets with his mother, Thetis the sea-nymph, and tells her the whole story of how he has been dishonored. He asks her to convince Zeus to make the Trojans win for a while, so the Greeks will realize how much they need Achilles. Thetis leaves, and the Achaians set about returning Chryseis to her home and propitiating Apollo. Thetis meets with Zeus and explains the situation; he owes her a favor, so he agrees to give glory to the Trojans on Achilles' behalf. Hera, who favors the Greeks, expresses her displeasure over this plan, but Zeus asserts his authority and she is silenced. Hephaistos comforts his mother Hera, and soon all the gods are again at peace, and the day ends.

Book 2

Zeus sends Agamemnon a deceitful dream indicating that this is a good time for the Achaians to attack. Next morning, Agamemnon summons the chiefs to an assembly and tells them about the dream. Nestor approves, and the chiefs call an assembly of the whole army. Agamemnon takes the sceptre and addresses the multitude, telling them that the time has come to give up the struggle (now in its ninth year) and go home. The Achaians are delighted by this and rush for

the ships, but Hera sends Athene to intervene. On Athene's orders, Odysseus goes around stopping the flight. To noble men he recalls their duty as leaders, and to common soldiers he asserts the authority of the kings, backed by a blow from the staff. When the army is reassembled, a funny-looking commoner named Thersites rises to address the crowd. He rails against Agamemnon, calling him greedy and implying that he is in the wrong in the quarrel with Achilles. Odysseus rises and shouts Thersites down, chiefly on the grounds that a common soldier such as he ought not to defy his betters. The crowd delights in seeing Odysseus humiliate Thersites. Odysseus now addresses Agamemnon, noting that the omens for Greek victory have been good and urging him to stay until Troy is taken. Nestor expresses a similar opinion, advising Agamemnon to allow any who wish to leave to go, so that only those eager for the fight will remain. Agamemnon agrees, and sends the Achaeans off to eat and then to prepare themselves for war. The chiefs sacrifice an ox and pray to Zeus for success in the fighting, then they feast together. All the Argives assemble for battle, and the poet again asks the aid of the Muses, this time for the task of listing all the contingents. This list of the leaders (the "Catalogue of Ships") falls into two parts. First, the Greek leaders are enumerated. There follows an interlude in which Iris (disguised as Priam) induces the Trojans to muster their forces, and then the list of Trojan and allied leaders continues to the end of the book .

Book 3

The two armies come together. Paris sees Menelaos and shrinks back into the ranks in fear, earning a bitter reproach from Hektor. Chastised, Paris proposes a single combat between himself and Menelaos. Hektor is pleased and conveys this proposal to the Greeks, whereupon Menelaos quickly accepts the challenge. While the two sides prepare to seal the bargain with sacrifices, the scene shifts to Helen, whom we find in her chamber weaving a tapestry depicting the Trojan War. Iris summons Helen to the wall, and as Helen goes by the Trojan elders marvel at her beauty. Together Helen and Priam look out over the armies, and Helen identifies various heroes among the Achaian ranks: first Agamemnon, then Odysseus, then Telamonian Aias. One of the Trojan elders, Antenor, recalls being impressed by the oratorical skill of Odysseus on a previous occasion. Priam and Antenor go out onto the battlefield to preside over the oaths under which Menelaos and Paris are to fight in single combat. The single combat is intended to end the war, and the winner is to have Helen. Paris draws the lot granting him first cast, but his spear does not pierce Menelaos' shield. Menelaos throws, but merely grazes Paris. Although Menelaos closes in to kill Paris with his sword, Aphrodite wraps Paris in a cloud and spirits him off the battlefield. Aphrodite goes to Helen and summons her to join Paris in the bedroom. At first Helen protests, but she cannot defy the goddess. Similarly, when confronting Paris in

person she begins by reviling him and suggesting that he is a coward, but ends up in bed with him.

Book 4

The gods sit in council, and Zeus wonders if there is still a way to get Helen back to Menelaos without utterly destroying the city of Troy. Hera expresses her displeasure at this idea and Zeus backs off, although not without some blustering about his position of supremacy. In response Hera asserts her own ancestry and suggests a compromise: the war will go on, but the Trojans will be the first to break the truce. Athene flies to earth and convinces a Trojan, Pandaros, to shatter the truce by firing an arrow at Menelaos. The arrow only grazes him, but it is enough to break the truce. Machaon, the doctor, treats the wound. The battle is joined again, and Agamemnon goes through the ranks, urging on the good fighters with praise and the slackers with reproaches. He encounters the Kretan Idomeneus, and the two exchange words of encouragement, then Agamemnon moves on, pausing to deliver pep talks to the two Aiantes and to Nestor and his men. Coming upon Odysseus and his men, who seem to be hanging back, Agamemnon speaks harshly to them. But Odysseus responds that he intends to fight hard, and Agamemnon almost apologizes. Next Agamemnon meets Diomedes standing among the chariots, and again he speaks harshly, this time comparing Diomedes unfavorably to his father Tydeus. Diomedes does not respond, being unwilling to challenge Agamemnon's authority, and he even rebukes his friend Sthenelos for trying to defend him. The Trojans attack, shouting fearfully, and the battle is joined. Several warriors on each side are killed.

Book 5

The aristeia (period of pre-eminence) of **Diomedes** begins, with Athene at his side helping him. Several warriors die on each side, as Diomedes rages among them like a flooded river. Pandaros wounds Diomedes with an arrow, and Diomedes prays to Athene for help in killing him. She appears and reassures Diomedes, while also warning him not to attack any of the gods, except Aphrodite. Diomedes rages on, and many Trojans fall before his spear. Aineias meets Pandaros and asks why he is not shooting arrows at Diomedes; Pandaros replies that he is disgusted by his two grazing shots (at Menelaos and Diomedes) and wishes he had come to battle with a chariot and a spear. Aineias invites him to ride with him, and they set out after Diomedes. Sthenelos advises Diomedes to flee, but Diomedes refuses. Awaiting the onslaught, he remarks that Sthenelos should try if possible to capture Aineias' horses, which are from a

famous line. Diomedes kills Pandaros, and when Aineias tries to protect the body he himself is gravely wounded. Diomedes moves in to finish him off, but Aphrodite comes to whisk Aineias away, while Sthenelos captures the team. Diomedes remembers Athene's instructions and attacks Aphrodite, wounding her and sending her back to Olympos. On Olympos, Aphrodite's mother Dione comforts her with stories of other gods who have had to endure pain and defeat. Aphrodite is thus forced to abandon Aineias, but Apollo takes her place and is able to protect Aineias from Diomedes, chiefly by removing the real Aineias and leaving behind a mere facsimile on the battlefield. Not knowing this, Sarpedon chides Hektor for allowing Aineias to lie unprotected, and Hektor redoubles his efforts, just as the real Aineias returns, alive and well. The battle rages on, until Diomedes sees Hektor rushing upon the Greeks with Ares at his side, and the Achaians retreat a bit. The Achaian Tlepolemos meets Sarpedon and boasts of his ancestry, for he is the son of Herakles; not bothering to counter with his own, more glorious father (Zeus) Sarpedon kills Tlepolemos, though he is wounded in the process. He begs Hektor to save him, but Hektor is in a hurry to get on with the battle and ignores him. Sarpedon is saved by someone else, while the Achaians continue to retreat before Hektor and Ares. Athene and Hera arm themselves and drive their chariot to Zeus. In response to their complaints, Zeus gives permission for Athene to oppose Ares. Athene visits Diomedes and chides him for slacking off. He replies that she herself instructed him not to attack any god but Aphrodite; how can he fight with Ares? Athene says that now he may attack Ares, and she herself drives his chariot up to the war-god, and Diomedes is able to wound Ares with his spear. Ares goes to Zeus and complains that Athene is out of control, but Zeus is unreceptive. Thus all the gods retire from the battlefield.

Book 6

The battle goes on without the gods, and the Greeks begin to gain the upper hand. Helenos sends Hektor back into the city, so he can tell the women of Troy to try to propitiate Athene. Glaukos and Diomedes meet on the battlefield, and Diomedes (not wanting to attack a god) asks Glaukos who he is. Glaukos replies with a famous simile; why ask his lineage, when men are as impermanent as the leaves? Nonetheless he gives it at length, including in it the story of how his ancestor Bellerophon overcame a variety of dangers to become king of Lykia. Diomedes realizes that there is a tradition of hospitality (xenia) between his family and Glaukos'; instead of fighting, they exchange armor and part on good terms. But Diomedes gets the better of Glaukos, since he receives gold armor in exchange for bronze. Hektor arrives at Troy and encounters his mother, Hekabe. She offers him wine and the chance to pour a libation, but he turns it down, saying he is not clean enough for religious rituals. He gives her instructions about

what to do for Athene, and she obeys, but Athene is unmoved. Next Hektor goes to Paris' house, where he chastises his brother for not being on the battlefield. Helen tries to get Hektor to sit down next to her, but he refuses. Hektor goes to his own house to find his wife Andromache, but learns that she is up on the wall with his baby son Astyanax. There he meets them. Weeping, Andromache reminds him of her life story. Achilles killed her whole family, and Hektor is all she has. She advises him not to go back out onto the battlefield. Hektor replies that he must go or be thought a coward. He imagines Andromache as a captive woman, and is sorrowed by the thought. He seems certain that he will die soon, but he can see no real alternative except to fight on. Next he tries to hold his son, but the baby is frightened by his war gear. Hektor removes his helmet and places it on the ground, and the baby comes into his arms. Hektor prays that one day his son may be a warrior even more glorious than his father. In his parting words to Andromache, Hektor takes pity on her and suggests that perhaps he may survive the battle after all. Hektor and Paris return to the battlefield.

Book 7

The battle resumes. Athene and Apollo confer, and they decide to slow the killing by setting up another contest of individuals. Inspired by them, Helenos tells Hektor to issue his challenge for a single Greek opponent. At first no one of the Achaians will answer the challenge. Menelaos volunteers, but Agamemnon will not allow it. Nestor chides the Argives, sounding the theme that they cannot compare to the sort of warriors whom Nestor knew in his youth. The speech works, and nine Greeks volunteer; they cast lots, and Telamonian Aias wins. Hektor and Aias exchange menacing words, then both throw their spears, but neither cast is effective. They continue to fight, and Aias appears to be winning, but night falls and the contest is stopped. Hektor and Aias exchange gifts, and part with mutual admiration. The Greeks feast, and then Nestor proposes building a ditch and a rampart to protect the ships. Meanwhile in the Trojan assembly Antenor's proposal to give Helen back and end the war is quashed by Paris. Next day, on Priam's orders, the Trojans propose a truce for collecting the dead, and the Greeks agree. Meanwhile the gods meet in council, and Poseidon expresses frustration at the prospect that the wall built by the Greeks will be more famous than the one he himself built around Troy. Zeus replies that the Greeks' wall will be destroyed soon after the city is taken.

Book 8

The gods meet in council, and Zeus orders them all to stay out of the battle. He then retires to Mt. Ida to watch the war unfold. The Trojans pour out of the city gates, and Zeus' scales show that they are fated to win the day. Paris wounds Nestor with an arrow, and Diomedes is forced to take the old man onto his chariot. Diomedes comes close to Hektor in the battle, but he is unwilling to attack the son of Priam, since both sides are aware that fate is on the Trojan side this day. Hektor urges the Trojans on, longing to kill Nestor and Diomedes. Hera is enraged and tries to convince Poseidon to intervene, but he is mindful of the injunction of Zeus. Hera acts alone, however, inspiring Agamemnon to cry out words of encouragement to the Argives, and to make a prayer to Zeus for the preservation of the Greeks. Zeus responds affirmatively with a bird-sign, and the Greeks regain their valor. Teukros has a brief *aristeia*, striking down many Trojans with arrows from his bow. Again and again he tries to hit Hektor and misses, until finally Hektor charges him and wounds him gravely with a stone. The tide again turns in favor of the Trojans. Hera and Athene arm themselves and drive their chariot towards the battlefield, but Zeus sees them and sends Iris to intercept them. Zeus' threat to hit their chariot with a thunderbolt is too much for the two goddesses, and they retire back again to Olympos. Zeus returns to Olympos to tell Hera and Athene not to sulk, since they are no match for his power. Hera is still angry, but she meekly acquiesces. Zeus foretells the fighting close by the ships over the body of Patroklos (Book 17). Night falls, and the Greeks are glad. The Trojan forces hold an assembly, and Hektor proposes making camp there on the plain, so that in the morning the Trojans may force their way up to the ships. This plan is adopted, and the book ends with a picture of the Trojan campfires burning in the plain.

Book 9

Agamemnon calls a meeting of the Greek leaders and proposes abandoning the struggle. Diomedes asserts his resolve to remain, and Nestor counsels patience. After feasting, the chiefs assemble again, and Nestor advises Agamemnon to make overtures to Achilles. Agamemnon agrees, admitting that he was not in his right mind when he dishonoured Achilles. He gives a long list of gifts and honors which Achilles will receive if he returns to the battle; this list includes Briseis, whom Agamemnon swears he has not touched. Agamemnon closes with four less tactful lines, comparing the pitilessness of Achilles to that of Hades, the god of death, and opining that Achilles ought to yield to higher authority. The assembly selects three ambassadors (Odysseus, Phoinix, and Aias) and sends them to Achilles. They find him playing the lyre and singing epic verses by the shore. They feast, and then Odysseus makes the first of

the speeches imploring Achilles to return. First he apprises Achilles of the strategic situation, using the rhetorical device of hyperbole to magnify the danger in which the Achaians find themselves. Second, he touches Achilles' heart by speaking in the voice of his father Peleus, sending him off to Troy and warning him to avoid quarrels. Third, he repeats Agamemnon's list of gifts and honors, artfully substituting the glorious prospect of killing Hektor for the original last four lines. Achilles responds with an impassioned speech, rejecting Odysseus' arguments roughly in reverse order. What good will honor do if he is dead? Why has Agamemnon waited so long to share the plunder equitably? If Menelaos and the rest have gone to war for the sake of Helen, why should not Achilles do the same against Agamemnon for the sake of Briseis? Achilles again threatens to return home to Phthia, claiming that he prefers what awaits him there to all the gifts promised by Agamemnon. As if convincing himself of the rightness of this course, he recalls Thetis' prophecy about his two futures: a quick but glorious death at Troy, or a return home and a long life of domestic tranquility. Next Phoinix, an old friend of Achilles' family, takes his turn at persuasion. He recalls his own personal history, how he came to live in the palace of Peleus, and saw Achilles grow up. He warns Achilles about the dangers of Ruin (Atê). To illustrate the principle that all stubbornness is eventually overcome, he tells the story of Meleagros, slayer of the Kalydonian boar. During the war between the Aitolians and the Kouretes, Meleagros stayed away until the city of Kalydon was nearly taken, then entered the battle and saved the day. In his response, Achilles admits that Phoinix has moved him, but still he refuses to comply. Last of all, Aias takes his turn. In his blunt way, he suggests that Achilles has moved well outside the realm of societal norms (nomos); in society, even a murderer can be forgiven. Unmoved, Achilles swears not to return to the battle until the Trojans have set the Achaian ships ablaze. The embassy returns and reports Achilles' decision; Diomedes says they must fight on without him, and the others agree.

Book 10

Both worried about the Greek setbacks, Agamemnon and Menelaos meet at night and agree to work on sending spies to the Trojan camp. Agamemnon goes to Nestor's shelter, while Menelaos collects the other chiefs. Nestor addresses the collected leadership, and asks for volunteers to infiltrate the Trojan camp. Diomedes volunteers and chooses Odysseus to go with him. Odysseus' armor includes a helmet of boar-tusks (Mycenaean). After prayers to Athene, Odysseus and Diomedes set out. Meanwhile, Hektor has done the same thing on the Trojan side, choosing Dolon as his spy. Odysseus and Diomedes see Dolon coming, so they ambush him and chase him down. Odysseus interrogates Dolon, who answers all the questions without demur. Dolon describes the Trojan order of encampment, including the splendid chariot of the

Thracian King Rhesos. Dolon pleads for his life, but Diomedes kills him anyway. Diomedes and Odysseus find the Thracians asleep, so they slaughter twelve of them and escape with the chariot and team of Rhesos, back to the Greek camp. On the way they pause to pick up the arms stripped from Dolon's corpse for a dedication to Athene.

Book 11

Zeus sends Hate (Eris) to rouse the Greeks to battle. Agamemnon's armor is described in detail, for he will play a key role in the battle today. Zeus' evil intent towards the Greeks is figured as clouds dripping blood. All morning the battle rages, until finally at noon the Greeks begin to gain the upper hand. Agamemnon kills many Trojans, refusing to take prisoners; he is compared to a lion hunting a deer, and to a raging fire. Zeus sends Iris to tell Hektor to stay out of it until he sees Agamemnon wounded and retiring in his chariot. Iphidamas almost succeeds in wounding Agamemnon, but dies in the attempt. Iphidamas' older brother Koön then wounds Agamemnon in the struggle over the corpse, only to be killed himself by the wounded champion.

Agamemnon retreats in his chariot, and Hektor begins killing the Greeks. Diomedes and Odysseus respond by killing some Trojans. Alexandros shoots an arrow at Diomedes and wounds him in the foot; Diomedes ridicules his shouts of triumph, but is forced to leave the battle anyway. Without Diomedes, Odysseus is surrounded, and Sokos manages to wound him (but at the cost of his own life). Menelaos and Aias go to the rescue, with Menelaos leading Odysseus off while Aias holds the enemy at bay, killing many of them. Meanwhile, Paris shoots an arrow and wounds Machaon, physician to the Greeks. Nestor rescues Machaon. Hektor attacks the Greeks (but not Aias) and meanwhile Aias is being driven back. At the ships, Achilles sees Nestor carrying Machaon off of the battlefield and sends Patroklos to find out what happened. Patroklos arrives at Nestor's shelter and sees Machaon; he tries to return to Achilles right away, but Nestor delivers a speech which chides Achilles for staying out of the battle and includes a long digression about a war from Nestor's own glory days. He closes by urging Patroklos to don Achilles' armour and lead the Myrmidons into battle himself, a foreshadowing of the events of Bk. 16. Leaving Nestor, Patroklos meets Eurypylos, who assures him that the Greeks are near defeat. Although anxious to return to Achilles, Patroklos pauses to treat Eurypylos' wound.

Book 12

The Trojans and Achaians fight around the ditch and wall which protect the Greek camp. The wall was destined to be destroyed by floods, but not until after the fall of Troy. Since the ditch is impassable to horses, the Trojans decide to dismount and attack it on foot. After seeing an omen (an eagle dropping a snake) Poulydamas advises Hektor not to press on towards the ships, but Hektor rejects this counsel. Battle rages on around the wall, and Zeus inspires his son Sarpedon to lead the charge against one of the gates. Sarpedon makes his famous speech (12. 310-328) to Glaukos affirming the principles of the heroic code. Led by Sarpedon, the Lykians attack the gates, but Telamonian Aias comes over to help defend it and the Lykians cannot break through. Finally Hektor smashes in one of the gates with a stone, and the Trojans pour through the gap.

Book 13

While Zeus' attention is elsewhere, Poseidon arms and prepares to aid the Greeks. He inspires the two Aiantes to new heights, and urges on the other Greeks as well. Battle rages around the Greek ships. The battle narrative pauses for a conversation between Idomeneus (the Kretan) and Meriones, who is getting a new spear. Idomeneus and Meriones then enter the battle and fight well, but Poseidon is reluctant (for fear of Zeus) to take an active part. Instead he intervenes in small ways, such as by causing an opponent of Idomeneus to hold still for the spear-cast, or protecting the body of a fallen Greek. Essentially an *aristeia* of Idomeneus, the book seems to be moving towards a single contest between Idomeneus and Aineias, but this never comes. Instead there is vivid description of a variety of individual clashes, until finally Hektor decides to heed the advice of Poulydamas. Hektor rallies the Trojans and, after a final exchange of threats and insults with Telamonian Aias, prepares to withdraw.

Book 14

During the lull in the fighting, Nestor meets with the wounded leaders (Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes). Discouraged by the breaching of the wall, Agamemnon proposes to prepare the ships for flight. Odysseus reproaches him, pointing out that the Achaians will be slaughtered as they drag their ships to the sea. Diomedes then proposes that they all re-enter the fray, wounded as they are, and this proposal is adopted. Poseidon encourages Agamemnon and inspires all the Greeks with a mighty war-cry. Meanwhile Hera convinces Aphrodite to help her

become more desirable, and persuades Sleep to assist her in putting Zeus out of the action. Hera then seduces Zeus on Mt. Ida, and after they make love he falls asleep. This frees Poseidon to lead the Greeks back into battle. Aias manages to wound Hektor with a rock, but the Trojans are able to rescue him. Thus encouraged, the Greeks are generally successful in the fighting.

Book 15

The Trojans are driven back across the ditch to where their chariots are parked. Zeus awakens and reproaches Hera, who blames Poseidon for the Greek success. Zeus remembers his promise to Thetis and again plans to help the Trojans. Hera returns to Olympos. When Ares hears that his son Askalaphos has been killed, he is enraged and prepares to enter the battle on the Trojan side; Athene dissuades him by reminding him of Zeus' instructions. Hera sends Iris and Apollo to meet with Zeus. Zeus in turn sends Iris to tell Poseidon to leave the battlefield, and Poseidon reluctantly obeys. Next Zeus directs Apollo to discourage the Achaians and to rejuvenate the wounded Hektor, which Apollo quickly does. With the help of Apollo, the Trojans now regain the upper hand, and again cross the ditch to attack the ships. Still nursing Eurypylos, Patroklos observes the Achaian discomfiture and runs to tell Achilles. Meanwhile, in balancing speeches, Hektor and Aias urge on their comrades. Finally Hektor is able to grab the prow of one of the ships, and the book ends with the Trojans threatening to burn the vessels.

Book 16

A weeping Patroklos tells Achilles of the Greeks' plight. He asks Achilles to allow him to wear Achilles' armor and to lead the Myrmidons into battle. Achilles reiterates his own reasons for staying out of the contest; although his anger has abated, he can not fight until the battle reaches his own ships. But he consents to the plan of Patroklos, warning him not to advance into the plain, but only to drive the Trojans away from the ships. Meanwhile, Hektor forces Aias to retreat from the defence of his ship, and the burning of the Greek hulls begins. Achilles sees this and hurries to muster the Myrmidons, while Patroklos arms himself. Achilles pours a libation and prays to Zeus for Patroklos' success. Led by Patroklos, the Myrmidons attack, drive the Trojans back from the ships, and put out the fire. Patroklos himself kills many Trojans between the ships and the ditch, while others flee back towards Troy. Sarpedon comes up to face Patroklos in single combat, and Zeus wonders whether he should rescue his son; but Hera advises him to let destiny take its course, and Zeus agrees. Patroklos kills Sarpedon, who with his dying breath calls upon Glaukos to protect his corpse. Glaukos prays to Apollo, and Apollo

responds by healing his wounds, enabling Glaukos to collect a band of Trojans for the fight over Sarpedon's body. Battle rages around the carcass of Sarpedon, but in the end Zeus decides to postpone Patroklos' death, and the Greeks are able to strip the body while the Trojans and Lykians flee. Zeus sends Apollo to remove the denuded corpse from the battlefield. Meanwhile Patroklos forgets the warning given him by Achilles, and pursues the Trojans across the plain up to the city walls. Apollo urges Hektor to attack Patroklos, but Patroklos continues his rampage, killing ten more men before Apollo himself finally knocks him down and takes away his armor. The dazed and defenceless Patroklos is wounded by a Trojan, Euphorbos, and Hektor comes in to finish him off. As he dies, Patroklos predicts the death of Hektor at the hands of Achilles.

Book 17

Menelaos fight Euphorbos over Patroklos' body and kills him, but is then forced to withdraw before Hektor and the Trojans. Hektor strips the armor from Patroklos' corpse, but Aias and Menelaos together are able to take a stand over the body. This causes a crisis of confidence among the Trojans, and Glaukos denounces Hektor. Hektor withdraws and dons the armor of Achilles, then summons the Trojans for another try at Patroklos' body. Battle rages on at length over the corpse. In a short interlude, we see the immortal horses of Achilles grieving over the death of Patroklos, until Zeus breathes new life into them and they carry the charioteer Automedon back into the fray. The focus shifts briefly away from the struggle for Patroklos' body as Hektor and Aineias try, without success, to capture the divine horses. Athene intervenes to inspire Menelaos, but Apollo encourages Hektor, and with Zeus' help the Trojans begin to gain the upper hand. At the insistence of Aias, Menelaos sends Antilochos to get word to Achilles that Patroklos' corpse is in danger of being dragged away by the Trojans. But the issue is decided when Menelaos and Meriones are able to carry the body back to the ships, while the two Aiantes hold the Trojans at bay.

Book 18

Antilochos reports the death of Patroklos to Achilles, whose cry of woe reaches the ears of Thetis. She leads all the nymphs in a song of mourning (threnody), then goes to see Achilles. He explains that Patroklos is dead, and mother and son grieve together, both knowing that this means Achilles must reenter the battle and eventually die young at Troy. Without admitting fault, Achilles regrets that there is such a thing as anger among men. Thetis agrees that he

must fight now, but tells him to wait while she fetches new armor from Hephaistos. Meanwhile on the battlefield Hektor again threatens to win Patroklos' body. On Iris' instructions, Achilles steps out beside the ditch and shouts his war cry. This, together with Athene's own shout and a terrifying flame she creates above Achilles' head, is enough to frighten off the Trojans and to get Patroklos' body back to Achilles' shelter. The Trojans withdraw and assemble; Poulydamas suggests that they retreat within the walls and defend the city rather than face Achilles on the plain. But Hektor rejects this good advice and declares himself ready to take on Achilles. In ceremony over Patroklos' body, Achilles swears not to bury him until Hektor's head and body lie beside their shelter. He also promises to decorate Patroklos' funeral pyre with the heads of twelve Trojans (human sacrifice). Hera acknowledges to Zeus that she is happy about Achilles' return. Now Thetis arrives at Hephaistos' workshop, and he recalls that he owes her a favor. She tells him Achilles' whole story, and requests that he forge new armor for her son. He begins with the shield, on which are depicted various scenes: (1) the universe, with heavens, earth, and sea; (2) a marriage festival; (3) a judicial scene, a murder trial before a court of elders; (4) a city under siege, and battle around the walls; (5) agricultural scenes, including farmers ploughing, laborers reaping, a vineyard at harvest time, a herd of cattle under attack by lions, and a meadow; (6) a dancing floor (orchestra), with the dance under way. All around the rim of the shield, as if around the world itself, is the circle of Ocean. Hephaistos also crafts the rest of Achilles' armor, and Thetis takes it to him.

Book 19

Achilles receives the armor and is filled with lust for battle. Assured by Thetis that she will prevent Patroklos' corpse from decaying, he calls the Achaians to assembly. Without admitting fault, he wishes aloud that he and Agamemnon had never quarreled, and even that Briseis had died before ever becoming the object of the strife. Achilles declares his anger to be at an end. Agamemnon replies at awkward length, likewise denying any personal responsibility, but blaming instead Zeus and Destiny and Delusion (Atê). As an example of the power of Atê, he tells the story of how Hera tricked Zeus into making his son Herakles labor for Eurystheus. Agamemnon closes by reminding Achilles that his previous offer of gifts still stands. Achilles briefly replies that he does not care about the gifts; he is eager only for battle. Odysseus intervenes, insisting that the men must eat before fighting, and that Briseis and the gifts must be presented publicly and with full ceremony. Agamemnon agrees, but Achilles wants none of it. He says he will not eat or drink until he has avenged Patroklos. After Odysseus insists, Briseis and the gifts are brought out, and Agamemnon swears an oath that he has not touched her. Briseis laments over the body of Patroklos. The other Achaians feast, but since Achilles

continues to refuse food and drink Zeus sends Athene to fill him up with nectar and ambrosia. Achilles then arms himself, and exhorts his horses to bring him safely out of the battle when it is over. The lead horse, Xanthos ("Tawny"), agrees to do this, but also reminds Achilles that his appointed day of death is near.

Book 20

Zeus assembles the gods and gives them permission to intervene in the battle at will, especially to help protect the Trojans against Achilles. To the Greek side go Hera, Athene, Poseidon, Hermes, and Hephaistos; to the Trojans Ares, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite, Leto, and the river-god Skamandros. Apollo convinces Aineias that he can take on Achilles. The gods on the Achaian side consider whether to help Achilles, and decide to let him fight on his own for a while. They withdraw to an observation point. Achilles then challenges Aineias, reminding him that once on an earlier occasion Aineias fled before his spear. Aineias responds with a lengthy recitation of his genealogy, and closes by daring Achilles to match his deeds to his words. They fight, and Achilles is on the point of killing Aineias when Poseidon notices, and remarks that Aineias is destined to carry on the Trojan stock after the fall of the city. Although a partisan of the Greeks, Poseidon removes Aineias from the battle, leaving Achilles to marvel at how much Aineias is loved by the gods. Achilles and Hektor each urge on their men; for a moment, it seems as if these two are about to fight, but Apollo tells Hektor it is not yet time. Achilles goes on a rampage and kills many Trojans, including Hektor's brother Polydoros. This brings Hektor out to face Achilles, but before Achilles can kill him Apollo hides Hektor in a cloud and removes him. Achilles' killing spree continues.

Book 21

The aristeia of Achilles goes on. He captures twelve Trojans and sends them back to the Greek camp to be used as human sacrifices in Patroklos' honor. Next Achilles catches Lykaon, whom previously he had ransomed as a P.O.W.; Lykaon is unarmed, and he formally supplicates Achilles, begging him to spare his life. Achilles ignores the plea, killing Lykaon and boasting over his body, which he dumps in the river Skamandros. This angers the river-god, who inspires Asteropaios to challenge Achilles. Asteropaios is himself the son of a river-god, so when Achilles kills him Skamandros is more upset than ever. Achilles continues to fill the river with corpses, until finally the river-god complains that he is choking on the dead bodies. Achilles seems to agree to stop it, but a moment later we see him locked in combat with the river itself.

Losing the struggle, Achilles appeals to the gods. Poseidon reassures him, and Hera assigns Hephaistos to fight the river with fire. Soon Skamandros is subdued, and the gods turn to fighting each other. Ares challenges Athene, but she knocks him down with a stone. As Aphrodite is leading Ares away, Athene strikes her down as well. Poseidon then challenges Apollo, arguing that Apollo ought to oppose the Trojans because long ago Poseidon and Apollo were swindled in a deal with Priam's ancestor Laomedon. Apollo refuses to fight Poseidon, which earns him a severe rebuke from Artemis. In return, Hera boxes Artemis' ears and sends her weeping off the field. Meanwhile Priam sees that the Trojans are losing, and orders the city gates opened. Apollo distracts Achilles, allowing the Trojan forces to take refuge behind the walls.

Book 22

Hektor remains alone outside the walls as Achilles realizes that he has been tricked. Priam and Hekabe plead with their son, urging him to come inside the walls and not to face Achilles alone. Hektor ignores their pleas, while in his own mind he ponders his fate, wishfully imagining that it might be possible to make terms with Achilles, but in the end resolved to stand up to him. When Achilles draws near, Hektor is seized by fear and runs away, with Achilles close behind. Zeus considers rescuing Hektor, but Athene convinces him to allow her to help Achilles instead. Zeus weighs the destinies of both men in the scales, and Hektor's is heavier; his death is therefore at hand. Athene disguises herself as Hektor's brother Deïphobos, and so persuades Hektor to stop running away so that the two of them may face Hektor together. Hektor stops and addresses Achilles, proposing that before fighting they should agree that the winner will treat the loser's body correctly. Achilles refuses this deal and attacks. His first cast misses, but Athene retrieves the spear for him. Hektor's spear bounces off the shield of Achilles, and after calling in vain on Deïphobos to provide another Hektor realizes how Athene has mislead him. Now Achilles kills Hektor, boasts aloud of his intention to maltreat Hektor's body, and says that he will never ransom it back to Priam for proper funereal rites. The Achaïans crowd around and stab the corpse, then Achilles drags it back to the camp behind his chariot. The focus shifts to the city, where we get the mournful reactions of Priam, Hekabe, and Andromache. Andromache's worst fears, imagined in Book 6, have now come to pass; her lament is mostly about what a hard life now lies ahead for her fatherless son, Astyanax.

Book 23

The Greeks hold more ceremonies for Patroklos. Achilles may now eat, but he refuses to bathe or cut his hair until Patroklos is properly buried. That night, Patroklos' ghost visits Achilles in a dream. The ghost requests a quick burial, and also that his ashes may eventually share an urn with those of Achilles. Achilles agrees, but as he attempts to hug Patroklos the ghost slips away. The Achaians collect timber and place Patroklos upon the pyre, and Achilles dedicates a lock of his hair. He places grave offerings on the pyre, and sacrifices victims as well, including the twelve Trojans. With the help of the winds, the bonfire is lit and a huge flame consumes Patroklos' body, while Achilles mourns alongside. The Argives collect the bones of Patroklos and bury them under a mound. Achilles now convokes the funeral games, and brings out prizes for the winners. The first contest is a chariot race, in which Achilles (although he has the best horses) will not compete. The charioteers are Antilochos, Eumelos, Menelaos, Meriones, and Diomedes. Nestor gives his son Antilochos detailed advice about how to win the race. At first Eumelos is winning and Diomedes is second, but Athene makes Eumelos crash. Meanwhile Antilochos uses his skill to get past Menelaos, who has faster horses. Diomedes wins easily, with Antilochos second, Menelaos third, Meriones fourth, and Eumelos last. A series of squabbles ensues, but eventually everyone is satisfied with his prize. An extra prize is given to Nestor, who long-windedly recalls his own days of athletic prowess. In the next contest, boxing, Epeios defeats Euryalos and wins. In the wrestling, Odysseus and Telamonian Aias grapple to a draw. In the foot-race, Odysseus wins after the other Aias slips on a cow patty. In the contest at arms, Diomedes is declared the winner over Telamonian Aias, who comes out unhurt. Polypoites wins the shot-put, and Meriones proves himself the best among the archers.

Book 24

For twelve days Achilles tries to abuse Hektor's body, but Apollo keeps it in pristine condition. The gods debate over what to do about this situation, and Zeus decides that Achilles must be convinced to ransom the body. Zeus summons Thetis to Olympos, and orders her to speak to Achilles about ransoming Hektor and to convey to him the displeasure of the gods. This Thetis does, and Achilles readily agrees. Zeus then sends Iris to tell Priam that he must go to Achilles in person and ask for his son's body. Over the protestations of Hekabe, Priam prepares to enter the Greek camp. Hekabe tells Priam to pour a libation and pray to Zeus before starting out. Priam obeys, and Zeus signals acceptance of the prayer with a bird-sign. On Zeus' orders, Hermes poses as one of Achilles' men, and guides Priam through the Greek camp to Achilles' shelter. On their arrival, Hermes reveals himself and departs, after reassuring Priam that

Hektor's body is still unblemished. Priam enters and supplicates Achilles, strongly reminding him of his own beloved father Peleus. Together Achilles and Priam weep, each for his own. Then Achilles replies to Priam's speech, voicing admiration for his courage in coming, and painting a famous picture of the inconstancy of mortal happiness (the two urns of Zeus). Achilles orders his servants to clean and wrap the body for moving, but to keep it out of Priam's sight. He apologizes to Patroklos for breaking his promise and allowing Hektor to be buried. Achilles then tells Priam the story of Niobe, whose twelve children all died as a result of her hubris, to illustrate the principle that even amidst great sadness people must eat. They feast, and Achilles agrees to restrain the Achaians for twelve days while the Trojans have Hektor's funeral. Priam goes to sleep outside of Achilles' shelter, until Hermes awakens him in the middle of the night and guides him back to the city. The three women closest to Hektor now take turns leading the lament. First is Andromache, who repeats her earlier theme of the hard future ahead for herself and Astyanax, then closes with a wish that the last moments she had with Hektor had been more intimate. Second is Hekabe, who asserts that Hektor was her favorite son. Third is Helen, who praises Hektor for having befriended her when others were harsh. The Trojans gather wood for the pyre for nine days. On the tenth they immolate Hektor, and on the eleventh they bury him.

by David Silverman