The *Iliad*: A Young Reader Adventure

Teacher’s Guide

Originally written by Alfred Church

Edited and Updated by Debby Carroll

Hot Topics Hot Serials
Background:

Long considered one of the greatest written works, the Iliad was an epic poem possibly written by Homer, detailing the Trojan War. It was a blend of fact, legend, and myth, originally composed in ancient Greek. Translators have since presented it in prose so that it reads like a novel. The fact is that no one really knows for certain who wrote the poem. The *Iliad* was probably written when alphabetic writing was introduced to Greece, but the events described in the story took place in the 13th century B.C. or approximately 500 years before the story was written down.

Historians believe that the story was passed down orally by storytellers who would travel and tell tales for food, shelter, or money. When writing was introduced, one or more persons wrote it.

Alfred Church (1829-1912) rewrote the prose classic for young readers and titled his work “The Iliad for Boys and Girls.” That work is now in the public domain and has been edited to fit into a newspaper serial format. The story focuses on the siege of Troy during the final year of a ten-year battle between the Greeks and the Trojans.

This teacher’s guide will facilitate lessons utilizing this classic bit of literature. Begin by asking students to talk about their knowledge of mythology. Which characters do they know? What stories have they heard of or read?

Share some of the story’s history and introduce the leading players. You may want to create a chart of the characters or display it on an interactive whiteboard while the students read the story chapters.
Principal Characters:

**Greeks**

**Achilles:** Greek warrior and king of the Myrmidons. Achilles leads the Myrmidons against the Trojans. He is considered the greatest warrior in the world. Achilles is the son of Peleus, the former king of the Myrmidons, and a sea goddess named Thetis.

**Agamemnon:** Commander-in-chief of the Greek armies. He angered Achilles when he took back a prize girl, Briseis.

**Menelaus:** King of Sparta and brother of Agamemnon. After a Trojan named Paris took his wife, Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, the Greeks declared war on Troy.

**Helen:** wife of Menelaus, kidnapped by Paris

**Ulysses:** wise Greek warrior

**Aiak the Great:** gigantic warrior

**Patroclus:** Greek warrior and best friend to Achilles

**Diomedes:** superior Greek warrior

**Calchas:** Greek soothsayer who advises Agamemnon

**Nestor:** wise old king who advises Agamemnon

**Diomedes:** powerful Greek warrior

**Briseis:** beautiful captive of Achilles, taken by Agamemnon

**Trojans**

**Priam:** King of Troy

**Hector:** bravest and most accomplished of the Trojan warriors; son of Priam

**Paris:** Trojan who took Helen From Menelaus, Hector’s brother, son of Priam

**Dolon:** Trojan spy who checks out the Greek camp

**Pandarus:** superior Trojan archer
**Gods**

**Zeus:** king of the gods who promises Thetis he’ll take Achilles’ side

**Hera:** queen of the gods, who favors the Greeks

**Athena:** goddess of wisdom and war, who favors the Greeks

**Hephaestus:** god of the forge, who favors the Greeks

**Aphrodite:** goddess of love and beauty, who sides with the Trojans

**Apollo:** feared sun god, who sides with the Trojans

**Ares:** god of war, who sides with the Trojans

**Thetis:** sea goddess who is the mother of Achilles

**Iris:** messenger goddess

**Poseidon:** god of the sea

**Literary Themes**

**Anger**
The main focus of the Iliad is the anger of the Greek warrior Achilles and the revenge he seeks against those who wronged him, especially Agamemnon, and then Hector.

**Glory and Honor**
The war begins because a Trojan offended Greek honor by taking the wife of a Greek king. The war continues—for 10 years—in part because the combatants seek glory on the battlefield.

**Revenge**
The Greeks seek revenge against the Trojans because a Trojan took the wife of a Greek king. Achilles seeks revenge against Agamemnon because Agamemnon insulted him. Later, after he reenters the battle, Achilles seeks revenge against Hector for the death of Patroclus, his friend.

**Persistence**
For 10 years, the Greeks fight a foreign war. Although they miss their families and they have lost many men, they refuse to give up. Ultimately, they win. Of course, the Trojans are also persistent, but they lose in the end.

**Women’s Roles in Ancient Times**
Helen is the immediate cause of the Trojan War. Briseis is the cause of the split between Agamemnon and Achilles. Athena, Aphrodite, Hera, and the sea-nymph mother of Achilles—Thetis—all affect the action of The Iliad significantly. But, their roles are all background, as the women don’t go to war.
Plot Summary:

A young prince of Troy, Paris, has come to Greece and kidnapped Helen, beautiful wife of King Menelaus of Greece. The Greeks go to Troy to win Helen back and to avenge this dishonorable act. The war rages for nine years with neither side gaining the upper hand.

In the tenth year, King Agamemnon insults warrior Achilles by taking back a prize given to Achilles during an earlier victory – the slave girl Briseis. Achilles refuses to go back into battle and Achilles’ mother, Thetis, convinces the god Zeus to support Achilles in his plan by holding victory back from the Greeks. In general, the gods are supposed to stay out of these mortal battles but they do have their favorites. Among the deities favoring the Trojans are Ares, Aphrodite, and Apollo. On the side of the Greeks are Athena and Hera—the wife of Zeus and there would be great trouble if Zeus were to take a side. But Zeus is god of thunder and lightning and he knows he can do as he wants. Swayed by the pleas of Thetis, he gives strength to the Trojans against the Greeks.

The Greeks fight hard but with the support of Zeus going to the Trojans, and in particular to the Trojan warrior, Hector, the Trojans hang on. Many Greeks and Trojans are killed in battle while Achilles stays out of the fray. Agamemmon tries to patch things up with Achilles but Achilles refuses to make peace and re-enter the war. That is until Achilles’ friend Patroclus enters the battle wearing Achilles’ armor so that the Trojans will be fooled into thinking he’s Achilles and they will flee. Patroclus is killed and Achilles is angry and out for revenge against Hector, the Trojan who killed him. (with Apollo’s help)

Hector suffers a humiliating death at the hand of Achilles. However, King Priam of Troy risks life and limb and goes to Achilles with “ransom” gifts to claim the body of his son, Hector. Humbly, Priam kisses Achilles’ hand. Deeply moved, Achilles welcomes Priam and orders an attendant to prepare Hector’s body. Troy mourns Hector for nine days, and then buries his remains.

Ultimately, when the Greeks enter Troy using the subterfuge of the Trojan Horse, Troy is destroyed.

Rational for Reading

Real or imaginary, the story of the siege of Troy is a wonderful teaching tool. It introduces students to a culture other than their own and is a terrific introduction to the beliefs of people who lived thousands of years ago. It increases their appreciation for literature and helps them think analytically about contemporary beliefs. A unit of study involving mythology can be part of a literature unit, a humanities unit, or a history unit. Understanding a myth helps students to understand allusions in poetry and literature and even those in the news. Popular allusions that come from mythology include Herculean tasks, a weak point being someone’s Achilles’ heel, a book of maps is known as an atlas from the god of the same name and so on.

Myths are educational and entertaining. Stories of the gods and goddesses are fodder for students’ imaginations. When this unit is over, invite students to research the gods and write tales of their own based on what they learned.
The title, The Iliad, is likely a word your students haven’t heard before. It comes from the Greek word for Troy – *Ilios* or *Ilion*. The suffix “ad” means “associated with,” hence the Iliad is a story associated with Troy.

The story is a mix of fact, legend and myth. You may want to ask your students why they think legends or myths were written. Allow time for a discussion about the gods worshipped by people more than 3,000 years ago. Why would people have created the world of Mount Olympus and gods of the sea, or thunder and lightening or war? When Homer wrote the epic poem *The Iliad*, people who used imagination to explain some things they couldn’t understand populated the world. Do your students think that still happens today?

The story of the siege of Troy was handed down orally from generation to generation. By the time Homer heard the story and wrote the Iliad, it was several hundred years after the war had supposedly happened. Was Troy a real city? Did this war ever happen? No one really knows for sure. Scholars agree that it’s likely Troy was a real place and it’s likely a war of sorts did happen there, most likely in northwestern Turkey.

The crux of the story centers on a universal theme – anger. Begin by asking students about the last fight they were involved in or witnessed and how that made them feel. Do they understand the feeling of being “dishonored”? Allow time for a discussion of how anger or shame makes people act.

Then ask if they’ve heard of the Trojan War. What do they know about it?

Finally, ask students what they believe is worth fighting for. What do they believe is worth dying for?

Before reading the story, you may want to search online for images of some of the gods and mortals depicted in this story.

You’ll also want to suggest that students keep a journal while they read so that they can make notes about the characters. There are many characters to keep track of and a journal will help. In it they can jot down any questions that come up during their reading and ask them in class or in discussion groups.

This teacher’s guide includes for each chapter: a summary, a “Getting Ready to Read” activity, vocabulary builders, comprehension questions, a connection to your local newspaper, discussion points, and a writing prompt.
Chapter One: Of How the War with Troy Began

Summary: Paris, Prince of Troy has come to Sparta (Greece) and kidnapped Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Greece. The Greeks went to Troy to get Helen back and war has raged for nine years. In that time the Greeks have conquered other cities and taken many spoils of victory. King Agamemnon took a daughter of a priest of the god, Apollo, angering that god. When Achilles questioned Agamemnon’s action in angering the god, Agamemnon, Achilles suggested that Agamemnon return the girl and make Apollo happy. Agamemnon was angry about Achilles’ suggestion and in turn, he took back a girl that Achilles had been given after a victory. Achilles was angry with Agamemnon about this and he refuses to go back to war with the Greeks in Troy.

Getting Ready to Read:

Ask students to talk about arguments they have had with friends and how they were resolved. Allow time for them to discuss how anger makes people feel and how some react to it.

Vocabulary Words:

- oath
- besieged
- quarrel
- spoils
- assembly
- villain
- rage
- companions
- flee

Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

Comprehension Questions: (answers provided)

1. How did Paris, Prince of Troy, start the Trojan War? He went to Greece and captured Menelaus’ wife Helen.

2. What did Agamemnon do that angered the god, Apollo? After conquering the city of Chrysé, Agamemnon was given the girl Chryseis as part of his winnings or “spoils.” She was the daughter of a priest of Apollo and when that priest tried to buy her back from Agamemnon, he refused. Apollo didn’t like the way his priest was treated by Agamemnon.
3. How did Agamemnon anger Achilles and what did Achilles do in response? Agamemnon took back the girl that Achilles had won in battle. This shamed Achilles. Achilles asked his mother to ask the god Zeus to see to it that the Greeks did not conquer Troy without Achilles’ help.

**Discussion Points:**

Was the kidnapping of Helen a good reason to fight a war? How does it compare to the reason we fight wars today?

Why is Achilles so angry? Why does he feel humiliated? Do your students think that Achilles overreacted? Does he have a right to be angry? And is he right to stay back from the battle because he is angry?

What roles do the women play in this chapter?

How do both Agamemnon and Achilles “save face”?

**Newspaper Connection Activity:**
Can students find someone in the newspaper who has reacted to a situation out of anger? How has anger made news today? Students should write about what they found.

**Writing Prompt:**
Students can finish this sentence:

*When I feel ashamed or angry I…*
Chapter Two: The Battle and the Oath

Summary:
Achilles’ mother Thetis, asks Zeus to make sure the Trojans prevail in battle so that the Greeks realize they can’t win without Achilles. Zeus is conflicted but he agrees. Later, it is decided that Paris should fight Menelaus man to man. Menelaus wins the battle when the goddess Aphrodite removes Paris from the fray and with Paris gone, Menelaus wins, but the Trojans don’t return Helen as they promised and the war rages on.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask students what they think should happen if people agree to something and then one of the people doesn’t keep the promise. Allow time for them to discuss promises made, kept and broken.

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

- kneeled
- prevailed
- deceived
- conquered
- vengeance
- covenant

Comprehension Questions:

1. What did Thetis ask Zeus to do? She asked him to make sure the Trojans don’t lose the war so that the Greeks will see they can’t win without Achilles’ help.
2. What did Achilles do when the Greeks returned to the war? Achilles and his people stayed behind.
3. Describe the action in the fight between Paris and Menelaus. The two men fight and as Menelaus was about to win, the goddess Aphrodite stepped in to help Paris by spiriting him away from the fight and returning him to his house, all in a cloud of mist so that Menelaus couldn’t see what had happened.

Discussion Points:

Achilles is angry with Agamemnon so he refuses to fight alongside the other Greeks against the Trojans. Do your students think this is a good way for Achilles to handle his anger? Why? What do they think the other Greeks think of Achilles as they go off to battle the Trojans without him?

Do students think that Zeus, who is a god, should meddle in the affairs of the mortals? Why?

What adjectives describe Achilles? Have students brainstorm a list.
Newspaper Connection Activity:
Which news story in today’s newspaper has the most in common with the story of the siege of Troy? Students can create a mind map showing the connections.

Writing Prompt:
Students can write a character sketch of Achilles based on what they know of him thus far. As they read further in the story, they can add to or adjust their description of him.

Common Core Standard: Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting

Chapter Three: How the Oath Was Broken

Summary:
After Menelaus won the battle with Paris the Trojan were to return Helen and other valuables to the Greeks. But, the goddesses Athena and Hera decided to help the Greeks so they devised a plan to trick the Greeks into thinking that the Trojans had broken their promise and were attacking the Greeks again. Athena disguised herself as a son of King Priam of Troy and incited a gifted archer to kill Menelaus with an arrow. While Athena protected Menelaus from death, the shooting of that arrow reignited the battle between the Greeks and the Trojans.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask students to talk about a time when they involved themselves in someone else’s business that didn’t really involve them. How did they feel about it later?

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

desired
wicked
deeds
slaying
cast

Comprehension Questions:
1. Pandarus saw one of King Priam’s sons who told him to shoot an arrow at Menelaus. Who was it really? It was the goddess Athena in disguise who wanted to help the Greeks.
2. Why did Agamemnon want to start the war again? He believed that the Trojans had shot an arrow at Menelaus, his brother, thereby not keeping their promise to end the war.
3. Which side did Hera and Athena want to help? They chose to help the Greeks by helping Diomed wound Ares, the god of war who was fighting with the Trojans.
**Discussion Point:**
The women in this chapter who are goddesses have a great impact on the story. How would you describe the character of each of these women? Are they honest and straightforward? How are they different from the men in this chapter?

**Newspaper Connection Activity:**
Find a person in today’s news who is acting most like Athena or Hera.

**Writing Prompt:**
*Once I was tricked when…*

Common Core Standard: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**Chapter Four: Hector**

**Summary:**
Hector asks his mother to pray to Athena for help. She does, but Athena refuses the plea. Then Hector goes to Paris to enlist his help in the battle. Paris agrees to return. Hector goes to see his wife and son.

**Getting Ready to Read:**
Ask students to talk about what it means to be a good husband and father. Do they think that the Greeks and Trojans are good husbands and fathers? Why?

**Vocabulary Words:**
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

- prophet
- bidding
- heifers
- noblest
- perish
- comrades

**Comprehension Questions:**
1. Why does Hector ask his mother to pray to Athena? He is told to do so by a prophet.
2. What reasons does Hector give to Paris for returning to the battle? He says that Paris’ countrymen are fighting and he should, too. Also, he says that Paris started the trouble originally.
3. What does Hector do before returning to battle? He goes to see his family.
Discussion Point:
Hector takes time out from the fight to see his wife and child. What does that tell you about Hector’s character?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Find an example of a responsible parent in today’s news. Write about what that person is doing that illustrates good parenting.

Writing Prompt:
Finish this sentence and write a paragraph to follow.
When I am a parent I will…

Common Core Standard: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

Chapter Five: How Hector and Ajax Fought

Summary:
Apollo and Athena work together to stop the fighting for one day by arranging Hector to fight with one of the Greeks. Ajax accepts the challenge and they fight with no clear winner. They decide to stop fighting and part amicably.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask students how they solve conflicts with friends and how that compares to the way they would solve a problem with someone they didn’t know very well.

Then ask students to brainstorm why wars are fought.

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

repent
arms
grazed

Comprehension Questions:

1. What do Apollo and Athena agree to do? They agree to get the Greeks and Trojans to stop fighting for one day by suggesting to Hector that he challenge just one Greek to battle.
2. When no Greeks step up to Hector’s challenge, how is a warrior chosen? They draw lots out of a helmet and Ajax’ name is picked.
3. What happens when Ajax and Hector fight? No one wins and they declare a tie and they exchange gifts.
Discussion Points:
Hector believes in “fate” and that he will die when it is his fate to do so. Do you believe in fate? Why?

Hector suggests at the end of his fight with Ajax that they exchange gifts and “part in friendship.” What does that illustrate about Hector’s character?

Why were Hector and Ajax able to agree so easily just after they had just been battling so ferociously?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Search the comics for an example of a peaceful resolution to a conflict. Draw the next panel as it might appear after the conflict is resolved.

Writing Prompt:
Choose one of the characters in this chapter and write a set of five interview questions to ask. Write the questions and the answers you imagine the character might give.

Common Core Standard: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, use the ability to evaluate intricate arguments

Chapter Six: The Battle on the Plain

Summary:
Zeus orders the gods to stay out of the battle between the Greeks and the Trojans but Hera (Zeus’ wife) and Athena go to help the Greeks anyway. Zeus sends a messenger to tell them to stop and they do. The battle rages and many are killed, but neither side is victorious.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask the students was it means to be brave and what it means to be a coward? Why is being brave so difficult?

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

hinder
coward
chariot
mocked
Comprehension Questions:
1. What did Zeus command the gods and goddesses to do? He ordered them not to help either the Greeks or the Trojans.
2. What does Diomed not want Hector to think of him? Diomed doesn’t want Hector to think he is a coward.
3. Hera and Athena decide to help the Greeks but before they reach the battlefield, they change their minds. Why? Zeus sent a messenger to tell them that if they persisted, he would strike them with a thunderbolt. They decide not to disobey Zeus’ order.

Discussion Points:
Why were the Greeks and Trojans afraid of thunder? What does thunder from Zeus represent?

The last paragraph of this chapter presents a vivid image of the Trojans sitting in their camp. Which words or phrases paint the picture?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Who is the bravest person in today’s news? Who is the biggest coward? Why? How do they compare to each other?

Writing Prompt:
In describing my room at home in a way which paints the clearest picture, I would say

Common Core Standard: demonstrating understanding of figurative language
Chapter Seven: The Repentance of Agamemnon

Summary:
Agamemnon is sad when he realizes that the way he treated Achilles was wrong and it cost him a great warrior. He sends messengers to Achilles with great gifts and an apology. Achilles refuses the gifts and says he will not return to battle.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask students to talk about times when they have been wronged or done wrong to someone else. Can an apology always fix the situation? Why? Should a person always accept an apology graciously?

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

repentance

counsel

damsel

allies

scorn

vehement

Comprehension Questions:
1. What does Agamemnon realize? He realizes that he made a mistake in treating Achilles poorly and he lost a great warrior as a result of his foolish action.
2. What does Agamemnon decide to do? He sends messengers with gifts to try to make up with Achilles so that he will return to battle.
3. What does Achilles answer? Achilles refuses to accept the gifts and he refuses to return to battle.

Discussion Point:
Would Agamemnon have been sorry about the way he treated Achilles if the Greeks were winning the war? Is he really sorry about his actions?

If Agamemnon had gone to Achilles in person instead of sending messengers, would that have mattered to Achilles? Why?

What are the qualities of a good leader? Who is the best leader in this story so far? Why?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Find a leader in today’s news and describe what makes her or him good at that job. Which Help Wanted ad in today’s newspaper would best be filled by a person with good leadership qualities?
Writing Prompt:
Write a diary entry that Agamemnon might have written when he realized the error of his ways. He says he knows he acted foolishly. How might he have explained how he felt when he came to that conclusion? Detail what he might have realized and how it made him feel.

Common Core Standard: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples

Chapter Eight: The Story of Old Phoenix

Summary:
Wise old Phoenix tells Achilles a story of another man who let his anger hold him back from battle and from defending his countrymen. Achilles is not moved and does not change his mind. The messengers return to Agamemnon without Achilles.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask students this question:
Has an adult you respect ever told you a story about something that happened to him or her? Do you enjoy hearing those stories? Why?

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

lest
embassy
strife
cherishes

Comprehension Questions:
1. Summarize the story told by old Phoenix. When Meleager was angry with his mother, it resulted in a war between two cities. Meleager let his anger keep him back from the battle. Finally, he did go to battle but he never won any spoils or gifts.
2. Did hearing the story change Achilles’ mind? No. Achilles was still angry and was almost angry at old Phoenix for telling him the story.
3. When does Achilles say he will return to battle? He will go when the Trojans

Discussion Points:
What is the point of the story in this chapter as told by old Phoenix? Did the point get across to his intended target, Achilles? Why?

Is Achilles handling is anger in a healthy way? What happens to people who hold onto anger for a long time? Is that a good idea?
Newspaper Connection Activity:
Who is the angriest person in today’s news? Describe the situation in detail.

Writing Prompt:
Write about a time when you were really angry. How did you handle it?

Common Core Standard: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

Chapter Nine: The Adventure of Diomed and Ulysses

Summary:
Both the Greeks and the Trojans send spies to find out what the other side is up to. Dolon, the Trojan spy, was caught and killed by the Greek spies.

Getting Ready to Read:
Invite students to consider how the armies of today find out what their enemies are up to.

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.
murmurs
astonished
wits
prudent
lingering

Comprehension Questions:
1. Why did Menelaus suggest sending a spy to the Trojans? Menelaus is upset because he knows that he caused this war to begin.
2. Why did Ulysses and Diomed have an advantage over Dolon? Dolon was alone but Diomed had been wise to insist that the Greeks send two men to spy.
3. Was the spying mission successful? It was successful for the Greeks because they found out about where the Trojans were camping and how many were there. It was not successful for Dolon or the Trojans because Dolon was caught and killed so the Trojans learned nothing and lost a warrior.

Discussion Point:
Why did Hector promise to give Dolon Achilles’ horses if he (Hector) knew that Dolon couldn’t handle them? Does a good leader make promises he knows he won’t keep? Should a leader lie to followers? Why?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Find a competent leader in today’s news. Describe the attributes that make him or her a good leader.
**Writing Prompt:**

What are the attributes of a great leader? Do you think you possess those characteristics? Write an essay explaining whether you are a good person to lead others. Exchange with a partner and peer edit each other’s work.

Common Core Standard: develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting

**Chapter Ten: The Wounding of the Chiefs**

**Summary:**
Many chiefs are wounded in both camps. Achilles watches the battle and sees that someone is being taken away in a ship. He sends Patroclus to see who was wounded. Meanwhile a “sign” is seen over the Trojan camp.

**Getting Ready to Read:**
Are your students superstitious? What does that word mean to them? Do they believe in good luck and bad luck?

**Vocabulary Words:**
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

- throng
- physician
- heed
- smite

**Comprehension Questions:**
1. Why didn’t Hector stand up to Agamemnon? Hector got a message from Zeus telling him to wait until Agamemnon was injured before fighting.
2. After Agamemnon was hurt and then Diomed, why wouldn’t the other Greek chiefs fight beside Ulysses? They were afraid after seeing their leaders fall.
3. Why did Achilles send Patroclus to see what was happening? Achilles wanted to know which of the Greek chiefs was injured. He was expecting the Greeks to come begging for his help.
4. What was the “bird sign” that the Trojans found so frightening? It was an eagle that caught a snake and then was bitten by the snake. Polydamas the wise man interpreted that as a sign that the Trojans were the eagle and the Greeks were the snake who would “bite” them once caught.
5. How does this chapter end? It ends with Hector storming the gates of the Greeks.

**Discussion Point:**
Why does Achilles watch the battle so closely if he doesn’t want to fight with his fellow Greeks? Why does he care about what’s happening?
**Newspaper Connection Activity:**
Polydamas believed that the eagle and the snake were a sign of things to come but Hector didn’t think so. In the newspaper, some people who believe in such things read their horoscopes. Read the horoscope for a person with your birthday and tell whether you believe in those predictions.

**Writing Prompt:**
Do you ever get what you consider to be “signs” that are meant to direct you in some way?

Common Core Standard: Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events

**Chapter Eleven: The Battle at the Ships**

**Summary:**
Poseidon loved the Greeks so he disobeyed Zeus’s order about not getting involved and he helped the Greeks. Zeus was very angry and sent Apollo to help the Trojans. The Trojans were about to triumph.

**Getting Ready to Read:**
Ask students if they have siblings and if so, are the older brothers and sisters often the boss of the younger ones? How does birth order affect the way brothers and sisters get along?

**Vocabulary Words:**
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

meddle
bid
dominion
reign
enmity
trench

**Comprehension Questions:**
1. Poseidon is Zeus’s brother and yet he disobeyed an order given by Zeus. What did he do? Poseidon helped the Greeks even though his older brother Zeus had ordered the gods to stay out of the battle.
2. Did Poseidon back down when Zeus sent the messenger Iris to him? No, Poseidon insisted that if Zeus favored the Trojans, he would favor the Greeks and there would be bad feelings between the brothers that wouldn’t cease.
3. How did Hector recover from his wound? Apollo came to Hector and infused him with new strength.
Discussion Point:
Is the central conflict of the *Iliad* an internal or external one? Does the story concern itself more with a conflict inside a person (or persons) or more with a conflict outside of a person (or persons), such as the war?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Find an example of each – an internal conflict and an external one in today’s news.

Writing Prompt:
Do you get along well with your siblings or other members of your family? Describe how you usually get along.

Common Core Standard: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

Chapter Twelve: The Deeds of Patroclus

Summary:
Patroclus begs Achilles to let him wear Achilles’ armor and go to battle. Achilles agrees but tells Patroclus not to fight, just to let the Trojans think he is Achilles. Patroclus ignores the order and enters the battle. He is slain by Hector. Achilles is distraught and decides to fight in order to avenge Patroclus’ death. He arms himself and heads into the fray.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask students if they have ever made a vow or promise that they were later sorry about. Can they think of times when their pride may have led them astray?

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

- boast
- yield
- wailed
- rouse
- morrow
Comprehension Questions:

1. Does Patroclus think that Achilles has made a good choice in staying away from the battle? No, he does not. He asks Achilles to at least let him go in Achilles’ place if Achilles won’t go himself.
2. Achilles agrees to let Patroclus go to battle wearing Achilles’ armor but he gives him one order. What is it? Achilles tells Patroclus not to fight, just to go wearing his armor so that the Trojans will think Achilles has come to fight and they will be scared.
3. Who killed Patroclus? Apollo killed Patroclus.
4. Why is Achilles so distraught? Patroclus, is best friend, is dead and he has no armor to go to battle and avenge the death.

Discussion Points:
Do you think Achilles feels responsible for Patroclus’ death? Why?

Singer/songwriter Sting once wrote, “There’s no such thing as a winnable war, it’s a lie I don’t believe anymore.” How does that song lyric relate to this story? How does it relate to the real world of today?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Find a story in today’s news that either negates or supports the statement, “There’s no such thing as a winnable war.” Write about your conclusions.

Writing Prompt:
Why do you think countries go to war?

Common Core Standard: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics

Chapter Thirteen: Achilles Takes Up Arms

Summary:
Achilles has new armor made for him and he makes peace with Agamemnon. He wants to go directly into battle but Agamemnon wants the Greeks to feast first. Achilles refuses to eat. He says that he doesn’t care if he dies; he only wants to battle the Trojans and avenge his friend’s death.

Getting Ready to Read:
Ask students if they have ever had a big argument with someone and later made peace. How do they feel at the end of such a battle?
Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

forge
plumes
exceedingly
bygones
disperse

Comprehension Questions:
1. Who does Thetis go to for new armor for Achilles? Thetis goes to the god of the forge, Hephaestus. He makes armor that could only have been fashioned in heaven.
2. What does Achilles say to make up with Agamemnon? Achilles says that it was foolish for them to fight over a girl, that too many people have died as a result and that he is ending his anger.
3. How does Agamemnon react? Agamemnon said it wasn’t his fault, that it was the Fury who made madness come into this mind. But, he would like to make amends.

Discussion Point:
Do you feel that either Achilles or Agamemnon took full responsibility for the argument that cost so many lives? If you fight with someone, is it important to apologize? Why?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
Find someone in the news who has a reason to apologize. Write that person a letter urging him or her to say, “I’m sorry.” Give reasons why such an apology might help the situation to be resolved.

Writing Prompt:
Finish this sentence: The last time I said I’m sorry was…

Common Core Standard: organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
Chapter Fourteen: **The Battle of Achilles and Hector**

**Summary:**
Hector and Achilles battle. Athena tells Achilles that he will win and she disguises herself as Hector’s brother in order to trick Hector into fighting Achilles. Achilles kills Hector and tells him that he will not give Hector’s body back to his family for an honorable burial.

**Getting Ready to Read:**
Have your students ever attended a funeral? Do they think funerals are important rituals? Why?

**Vocabulary Words:**
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

- bereave
- trembled
- piteous
- entreat

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. Why does the writer use this description “… fast did Achilles pursue him, just as a hawk, which is more swift than all other birds, pursues a dove among the hills.”? It is a vivid way to show how much faster Achilles was than Hector and at the same time to show a difference in their character in battle as a hawk is more fierce than a dove.
2. Why did Athena disguise herself as Hector’s brother? She wanted to trick him into meeting Achilles in battle so that Achilles could slay him.
3. What was Hector’s dying request? Hector asked Achilles to return his body to his family.

**Discussion Point:**
What do you think Achilles and Hector think of each other?

**Newspaper Connection Activity:**
The writing in this chapter is lively and picturesque. Find some examples of similar vivid and descriptive writing in today’s newspaper.
Writing Prompt:
Achilles and Hector are alike in some ways but different in many others. For example, each man is a mighty warrior, the best in their respective armies. Also, they both have character flaws. Achilles is angry and wants revenge. Hector, is impetuous, as when he persuades Trojan warriors to leave the safety of Troy’s walls shortly before Achilles returns to battle. However, they are unlike in many ways. Hector is a loving family man but Achilles has no wife or children. Have students write an essay that compares and contrasts Achilles and Hector.

Common Core Standard: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language

Chapter Fifteen: The End of Troy

Summary:
Zeus commands Achilles to return the body of Hector to his family. Hector’s father, King Priam comes to Achilles to pay a ransom for the body and Achilles, being touched by the nobleness of the king, agrees to give him the body. He also agrees to stop the war for nine days so that they can go home and bury Hector. When the war resumes, Achilles is killed, Paris is killed and finally, the Greeks devise a clever plan. They build a giant wooden horse and put it outside the city of Troy. In it are hidden Greek warriors. The Trojans see the horse and believe it is a gift so they bring it inside the city walls. The Greek warriors come out of the horse and conquer Troy.

Getting Ready to Read:
Do your students think that after ten years the Greeks and the Trojans even remember what they’re fighting about? Have students ever had an argument with someone and later couldn’t even remember why they were fighting?

Vocabulary Words:
Assign students to define each word and to use it in a sentence.

dishonor
sorrows
lament
truce
herald
pretense

Comprehension Questions:
1. Why does Achilles agree to return Hector’s body to his family? Zeus commands Achilles. Later, he is also moved by King Priam’s noble behavior.
2. How does the reader know that Achilles is touched by King Priam? Achilles invites King Priam to eat, drink and rest. He also has Hector’s body cleaned when King Priam isn’t looking so as not to upset him.
3. How did the Greeks use deception to win the war? They built a horse and put it outside the city of Troy, making the Trojans believe it was some kind of gift. Inside, Greek warriors hid. When the Trojans brought the “gift horse” inside the city walls, the Greeks attacked them and won the war.
Discussion Point:
Did any of the characters learn any lessons? Which ones and what did they learn?

Newspaper Connection Activity:
The Iliad is a story about war and about the battles fought when one person or nation feels that another has done a bad deed to them. How is this situation relevant today? Discuss this point with reference to modern history and, especially, events of your own lifetime. Find news stories to support your point of view.

Writing Prompt:
Which character do you most admire? Which character do you least admire? Is your selection based on qualities the character shares with you or on qualities of the character that you would like to have but lack? Overall, what does your choice say about your own personality and characteristics?

Common Core Standard: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening

EXTENSION LESSON RESOURCES
Homer’s original Iliad is an epic poem. Here are the first lines translated into English.

Rage: Sing, Goddess, Achilles' rage,
Black and murderous, that cost the Greeks
Incalculable pain, pitched countless souls
Of heroes into Hades' dark
And left their bodies to rot as feasts
For dogs and birds, as Zeus' will was done.
Begin with the clash between Agamemnon—

Share the lines with your class and they may be interested in reading more of the original work.

Invite students to explore this interactive game site about The Iliad
http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/iliad/iliadstart3.htm

Whole Class Non-Violent Simulation Game Activity about the Trojan War
http://www.mythologyteacher.com/Trojan-War-Game.php