

WEEK TWO: The Original Enemies – Greeks and Trojans I

Tuesday: Greeks and Trojans I:

For Tuesday, you will read the openings of Homer's *Iliad* and Herodotus' *Histories*. Start with the Herodotus selection, which lays out the alleged origins of wars between Greeks and various groups in the Near East. We will spend a good amount of time with Herodotus in the weeks to come, but for now please note how vital the Trojan War is to the Greeks. It stands as a defining moment within their social memory, enough so that an account of fighting between the Greeks and Persian occurring hundreds of years after the Trojan War takes a brief narrative of this epic conflict as a starting point.

The first book of the *Iliad* will introduce to you the themes of the epic and several key concepts to the Homeric World. Though the *Iliad* is often referred to as the "epic about the Trojan War," the twenty-four books describe the events of just a few weeks' time near the end of the decade-long war. The focus of the epic is on a disagreement between Achilles, the greatest warrior on the Greek side, and Agamemnon, the acknowledged hegemon of the expedition (based primarily on the fact that he controls the most ships and soldiers) and the results of Achilles' withdrawal from fighting. Book One describes the start of this quarrel. Pay attention to how these two heroes are portrayed and how they (and the narrator) treat and describe their enemies (current and former). Everyone should also read pp. ix-xii of the introduction to Rieu's translation just to remind yourselves of the overall plot of the *Iliad*. If this is your first introduction to this wonderful text, I would also recommend that you read through remaining portions of this introduction (up to p. xli).

Assignment:

Herodotus, *Histories* 1.1-5 (= Strassler, pp. 3-5)

Homer, *Iliad* 1 (= Rieu, pp. 3-20)

Introduction in Rieu's translation: pp. ix-xii required; up to p. xli recommended.

Reading Questions:

- How does the Greek army function in this passage?
- How do Agamemnon and Achilles treat each other? How do they treat their enemies and those they have already defeated?
- What is really at the heart of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon?
- What roles do Chryseis and Briseis play in these events?
- How and why do the gods and goddesses intervene in these events?
- Why might Herodotus make a note of the Trojan War, an event occurring centuries before his target period (the Greco-Persian Wars), to begin his *Histories*?
- If this were the national epic describing the defining moment in your ancestors' history, how would you feel about this opening?

Thursday: Fighting the Enemy: *Aristeiai*:

Thursday's assignment focuses on one of the conventions of epic poetry: the heroic *aristeia*. Epic heroes demonstrate their excellence, courage, and skill by going on a nearly unstoppable rampage among their enemies. First, we will read selections from Book Five, which begins with the *aristeia* of Diomedes, who steps up in Achilles' absence as the foremost warrior on the Greek side. We will also get our first glimpse of Hector, the best of the Trojans. Next, we will leap forward in the narrative to Achilles' grand return to the fighting after Patroclus' death. Aside from his soon-to-come duel with Hector, this sequence of combat is what makes Achilles famous as the greatest hero of the Trojan War.

Since the *aristeia* is supposed to represent the pinnacle of a hero's accomplishments in battle, these passages usually describe the hero facing numerous opponents, both famous and nameless, human and divine, formidable and not-so-skilled. Examine the types of enemies that our heroes meet, how they interact, and what (if anything) happens to them after they encounter the hero.

Assignment:

Diomedes and Hector: Homer, *Iliad* 5, lines 1-710 (= Rieu, pp. 74-93)

Achilles: Homer, *Iliad* 21, lines 1-383 (= Rieu, pp. 363-373)

RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE**Reading Questions:**

- How are each of the three main heroes—Diomedes, Hector, and Achilles—portrayed during their *aristeiai*? Are there differences in the way each goes about his *aristeia*?
- How does the epic narrator describe and portray the enemies they face during these *aristeiai*? How do the heroes themselves describe/treat/characterize their opponents?
- What types of enemies do the heroes face in these passages? Are there differences in how the opponents are treated and described?
- What poetic devices are commonly used to describe combat in the *Iliad*? Why might these be used?
- Are these heroes that *you* could root for, idolize, and memorialize?

People, Terms, Events and Concepts, to know from Weeks One and Two:

<i>aristeia</i>	Diomedes	<i>kleos</i>
Homer	Hector	Briseis
Achilles	Aphrodite	Chryses and Chryseis
Agamemnon	Ares	The "Heroic Code"
Thetis	Glaucus	Scamander
Athena	<i>xenia</i>	Hephaestus