

Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's

An Iliad

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

Directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

September 12–October 3, 2021

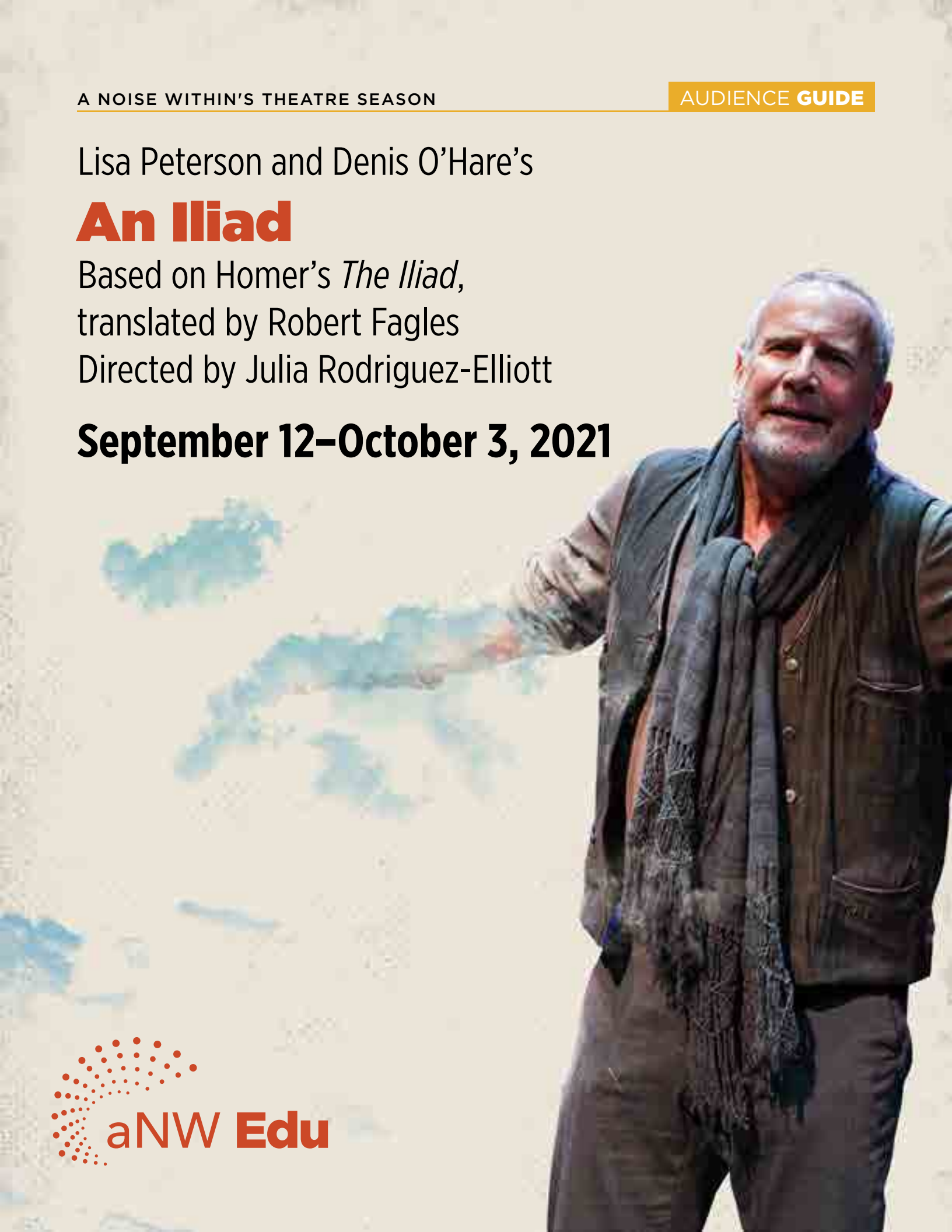


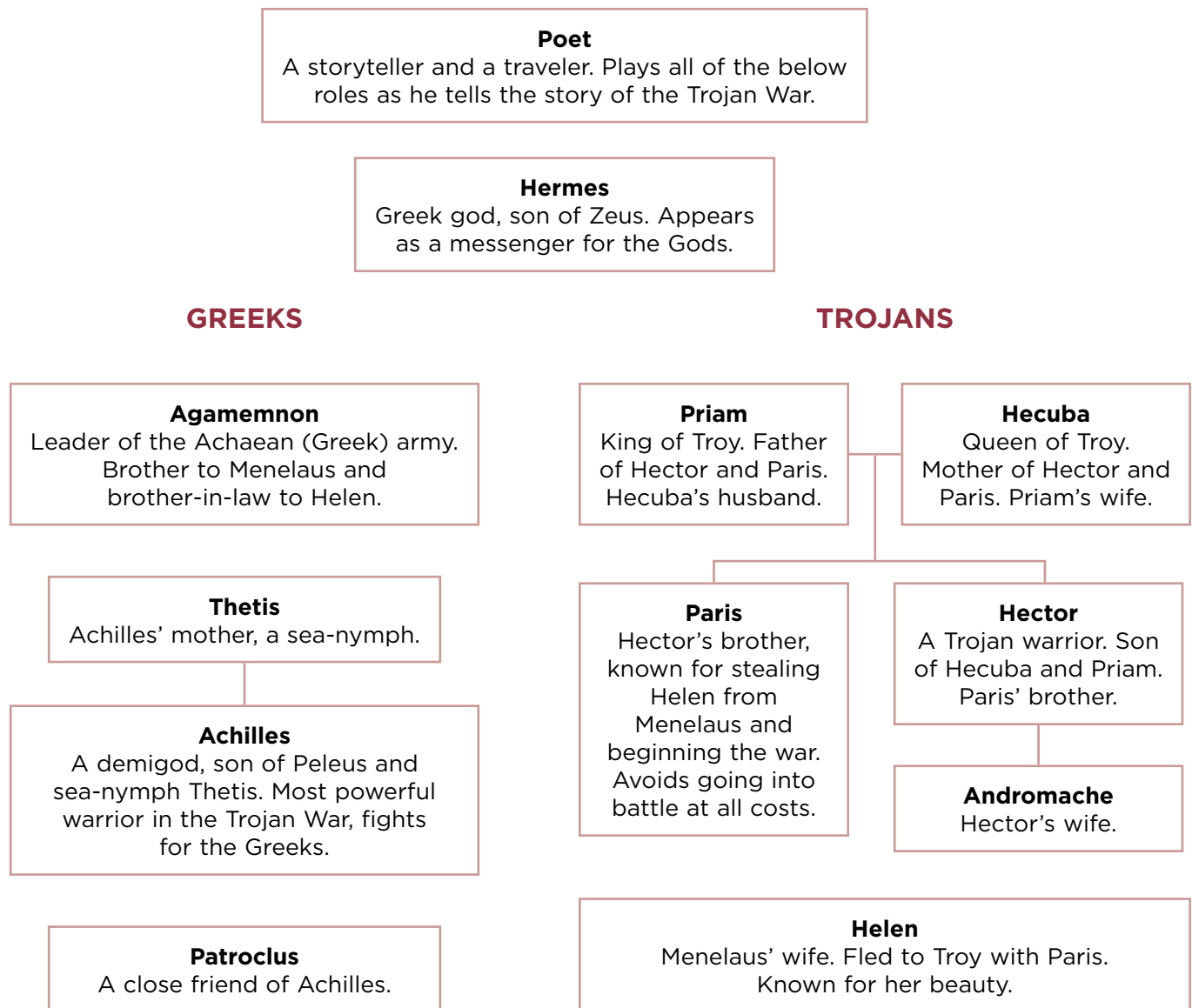
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Character Maps: <i>An Iliad</i> and <i>The Iliad</i>	3
Synopsis	5
About the Author: Homer	6
About the Adaptors: Denis O’Hare and Lisa Peterson . . .	7
History of <i>The Iliad</i> : A Timeline	9
The Backdrop To <i>The Iliad</i> : Ancient Greece	10
Ancient Oral Poetic Tradition	11
Greek Mythology: The Role of the Muses	12
Gods, Monsters, and Men in Greek Mythology	13
The Hero’s Journey	14
Themes	16
The Trojan War: Fact or Fiction?	17
Additional Resources	18

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CHARACTER MAP *AN ILIAD*



CHARACTER MAP *THE ILIAD*

GODS

Greeks

Trojans

Zeus

Hera

Ares

Athena

Apollo

Poseidon

Aphrodite

Thetis

MORTALS

Greeks

Trojans

Helen

Agamemnon

Priam

Menelaus

Hecuba

Odysseus

Paris

Achilles

Hector

Patroclus

Andromache

Ajax

Cassandra

Ajax The Lesser

Laodice

Diomedes

Lycaon

Nestor

Aeneas

Antilochus

Agenor

Idomeneus

Antenor

Phoenix

Theano

Teucer

Pandarus

Calchas

Polydamas

Sarpedon

Glaucus

SYNOPSIS

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **HOMER**



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

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

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

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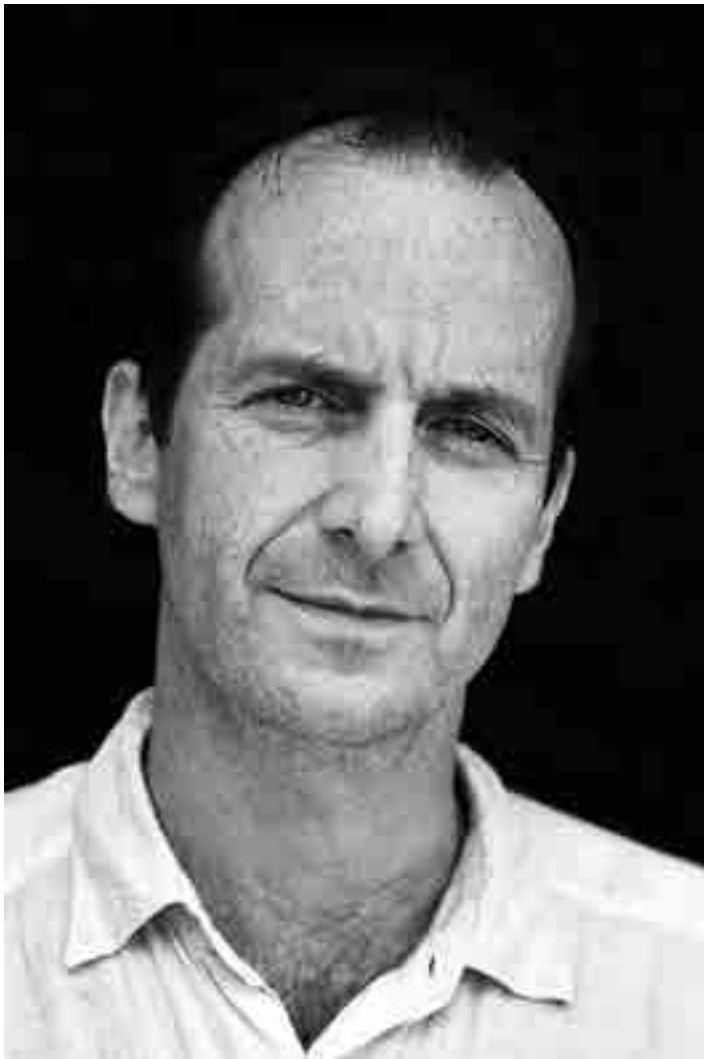
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Homer’s Iliad, cod. F 205 inf. Late 5th-early 6th c. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana

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



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

DENIS O'HARE

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

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

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

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

ABOUT THE ADAPTORS: CONTINUED...



Lisa Peterson
Photo by Fred Hayes

LISA PETERSON

Lisa Peterson co-adapted *An Iliad* with Denis O'Hare and directed the original production in which O'Hare starred. Peterson grew up in Aptos, California as the daughter of an architect and a weaver. The creative professions of her parents influenced the path of her career. She took her first acting class when she was 5 after seeing a production of *My Fair Lady*. She spent her childhood playing pretend and always knew she would be involved in theatre professionally.

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

The route to the professional stage was circuitous for Peterson. After graduating in 1983 she signed up with the casting agency Bramon/Hopkins in New York— not the usual step for budding directors. "I

didn't know what else I would do, but it became the equivalent of graduate training in directing," she said. "I learned so much about casting and working with actors by watching old pros like Jerry Zaks. And it paid the bills for seven years."

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

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

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

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HISTORY OF *THE ILIAD*: A TIMELINE

c. 2000 BCE

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

1600-1200 BCE

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

1300-1150 BCE

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

c.1200 BCE

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

1200-800 BCE

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

900-700 BCE

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

c.750-650 BCE

The Iliad and *The Odyssey* are completed.

415 BCE

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

19 BCE

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

1609

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

1870

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

1935

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

1955

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

1981

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

1995

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

2004

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

2005

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

2006

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

2011

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

2012

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

THE BACKDROP TO *THE ILIAD*: ANCIENT GREECE

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

imposed their own taxes, and raised their own armies.

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

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ANCIENT ORAL POETIC TRADITION

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

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

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

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

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



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

stories that were gradually unified into a singular narrative.

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

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

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GREEK MYTHOLOGY: THE ROLE OF THE MUSES



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GODS, MONSTERS, AND MEN IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

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

Greek gods and monsters developed out of myth. “Myth” comes from the Greek word “Mythos” which translates to “word,” or (perhaps more importantly) “story.” A myth is a story that can be thought of as having two primary characteristics: significance and staying power. Significance here means that the subject matter for the myth is about something important, about how the world works, or how the world came to be as it is. Staying power, in this context, means that stories have survived through centuries (and sometimes millennia). A myth’s staying power is a testament to the deep meaning or functional importance of the story it tells. Joseph Campbell, a scholar in the field of comparative mythology, describes mythology’s significance: “mythology is ultimately and always the vehicle through which the individual finds a sense of identity and place in the world.”

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

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



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

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

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

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeX6CX5LEi0&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7_&t=0s

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

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

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



Achilles Slays Hector by Peter Paul Rubens ca. 1930-1935, Public Domain

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

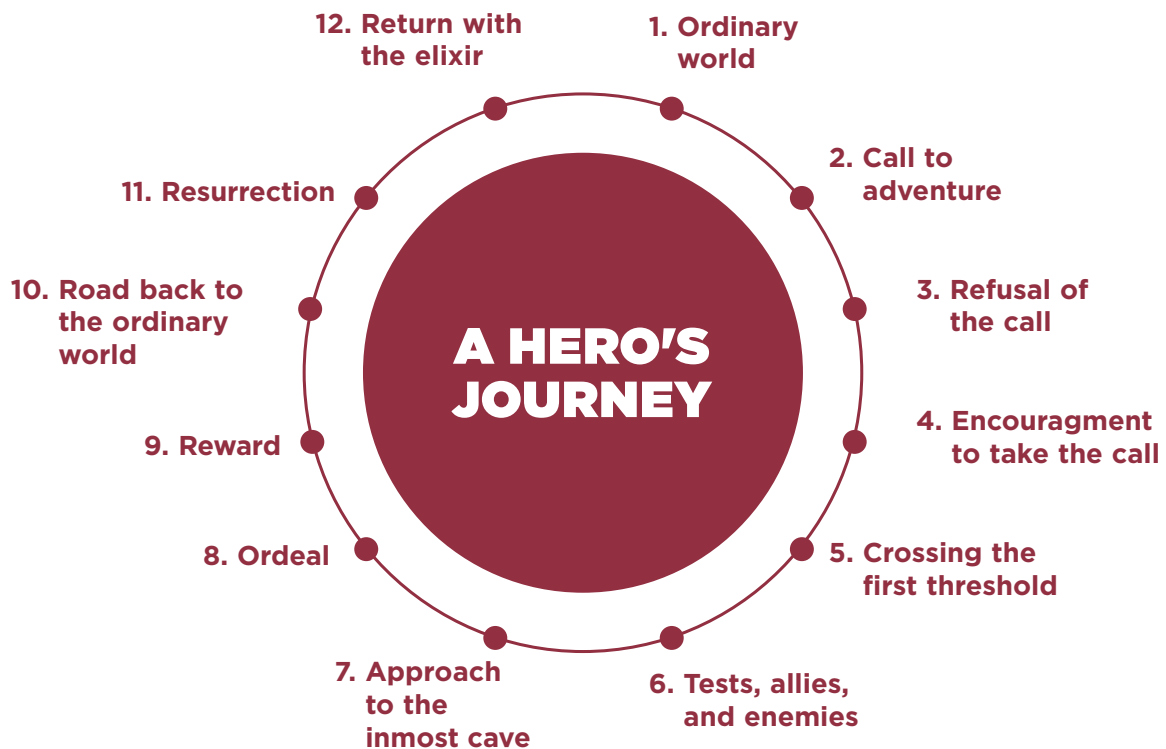
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THE ORDINARY WORLD	The original world of the hero, usually lacking in some way.	Achilles' ordinary world is not seen in <i>The Iliad</i> , as he has already been away from his home at war for years when the epic begins.
THE CALL TO ADVENTURE	The hero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

THE HERO'S JOURNEY CONTINUED...

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



THEMES

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

VENGEANCE

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

Vengeance is a driving factor for characters in the story, especially for the character of Achilles. At the beginning of the play, Achilles decides not to fight out of spite for Agamemnon and as an act of vengeance against Agamemnon for stealing Briseis. However, it is also vengeance that spurs Achilles to join the fight once more—he rejoins the army to avenge the death of his dear friend, Patroclus. In both situations, his vengeance is rooted in a place of love and friendship and comes to fruition when that love and friendship that is taken from him unjustly. Vengeance is a deeply personal motive, and through Achilles and his unwavering desire for vengeance, the play explores the role personal motives play in war efforts.

VIOLENCE

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

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

LOSS AND GRIEF

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

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

THE PERSISTENCE OF WAR

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

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

THE TROJAN WAR: FACT OR FICTION?

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

First considering archaeological evidence for the existence of the Trojan War, it is commonly accepted that the city of Troy was destroyed in war around 1200 BCE.

Troy was allegedly found using *The Iliad* as reference; however, it is unknown exactly why the city fell. Homer's epics suggest that it was destroyed by the Greek army in the Trojan War, but there is little to no other evidence to support or refute this.

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

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



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

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

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



Edited from:

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

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

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

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EPIC POEMS:

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

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

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

BOOKS:

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

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

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

PLAYS:

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

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

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

ARTICLES:

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

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

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

FILM AND TELEVISION:

Helen of Troy directed by Robert Wise (1956)

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

Troy directed by Wolfgang Peterson (2004)

ONLINE RESOURCES:

Crash Course World Mythology: What is Myth?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeX6CX5LEj0&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7_&t=0s

Crash Course World Mythology: Theories of Myth

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIFaiB5kj6I&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNCG9Vq7vdvJytS-F-xGi7_&t=0s

ABOUT **A NOISE WITHIN**

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

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

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

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

Audience Guide Credits

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