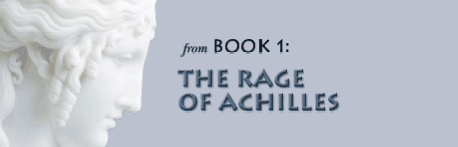
**the Iliad**



**Background**

At the time of the Trojan War, Greece was not a unified nation. The Greek campaign against the Trojans was led by a loose group of independent tribal lords, or kings, who commanded their own soldiers. Leaders like Achilles and Agamemnon did not owe each other unconditional allegiance.

 Rage—Goddess, sing[**1**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0001.html'))the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles,

[Progress literary.analysis](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/ltWM_sena07_u4_Homer_p.0001.html'))

 murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans[**2**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0002.html'))countless losses,

 hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,

 great fighters’ souls, but made their bodies carrion,

5feasts for the dogs and birds,

 and the will of Zeus was moving toward its end.

 Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,

 Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.

 What god drove them to fight with such a fury?

10Apollo the son of Zeus and Leto. **[Incensed](javascript:openGlossaryWnd('ltWMu4_Homer.t01')" \o "Glossary Term, link opens in new window)** at the king

 he swept a fatal plague through the army—men were dying

 and all because Agamemnon spurned Apollo’s priest.

 Yes, Chryses approached the Achaeans’ fast ships

 to win his daughter back, bringing a priceless ransom

15and bearing high in hand, wound on a golden staff,

 the wreaths of the god, the distant deadly Archer.

 He begged the whole Achaean army but most of all

 the two supreme commanders, Atreus’ two sons,

 “Agamemnon, Menelaus—all Argives geared for war!

20May the gods who hold the halls of Olympus[**3**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0003.html'))give you

 Priam’s city[**4**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0004.html'))to **[plunder](javascript:openGlossaryWnd('ltWMu4_Homer.t02')" \o "Glossary Term, link opens in new window)** , then safe passage home.

 Just set my daughter free, my dear one . . . here,

 accept these gifts, this ransom. Honor the god

 who strikes from worlds away—the son of Zeus, Apollo!”

25And all ranks of Achaeans cried out their assent:

 “Respect the priest, accept the shining ransom!”

 But it brought no joy to the heart of Agamemnon.

 The king dismissed the priest with a brutal order

 ringing in his ears: “Never again, old man,

30let me catch sight of you by the hollow ships!

 Not loitering now, not slinking back tomorrow.

 The staff and the wreaths of god will never save you then.

 The girl—I won’t give up the girl. Long before that,

 old age will overtake her in *my* house, in Argos,[**5**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0005.html'))

35far from her fatherland, slaving back and forth

 at the loom, forced to share my bed!

 Now go,

 don’t tempt my wrath—and you may depart alive.”

 The old man was terrified. He obeyed the order,

 turning, trailing away in silence down the shore

40where the battle lines of breakers crash and drag.

 And moving off to a safe distance, over and over

 the old priest prayed to the son of sleek-haired Leto,

 lord Apollo, “Hear me, Apollo! God of the silver bow

 who strides the walls of Chryse and Cilla **[sacrosanct](javascript:openGlossaryWnd('ltWMu4_Homer.t03')" \o "Glossary Term, link opens in new window)** —

45lord in power of Tenedos[**6**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0006.html'))—Smintheus,**[7](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0007.html')" \o "7)**god of the plague!

 If I ever roofed a shrine to please your heart,

 ever burned the long rich bones of bulls and goats

 on your holy altar, now, now bring my prayer to pass.

 Pay the Danaans back—your arrows for my tears!”

50His prayer went up and Phoebus Apollo heard him.

 Down he strode from Olympus’ peaks, storming at heart

 with his bow and hooded quiver slung across his shoulders.

 The arrows clanged at his back as the god quaked with rage,

 the god himself on the march and down he came like night.

55Over against the ships he dropped to a knee, let fly a shaft

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 and a terrifying clash rang out from the great silver bow.

 First he went for the mules and circling dogs but then,

 launching a piercing shaft at the men themselves,

 he cut them down in droves—

60and the corpse-fires burned on, night and day, no end in sight.

 Nine days the arrows of god swept through the army.

 On the tenth Achilles called all ranks to muster—

 the impulse seized him, sent by white-armed Hera

 grieving to see Achaean fighters drop and die.

65Once they’d gathered, crowding the meeting grounds,

 the swift runner Achilles rose and spoke among them:

 “Son of Atreus, now we are beaten back, I fear,

 the long campaign is lost. So home we sail . . .

 if we can escape our death—if war and plague

70are joining forces now to crush the Argives.

 But wait: let us question a holy man,

 a prophet, even a man skilled with dreams—

 dreams as well can come our way from Zeus—

 come, someone to tell us why Apollo rages so,

75whether he blames us for a vow we failed, or sacrifice.

 If only the god would share the smoky savor of lambs

 and full-grown goats, Apollo might be willing, still,

 somehow, to save us from this plague.”

 So he proposed

 and down he sat again as Calchas rose among them,

80Thestor’s son, the clearest by far of all the seers

 who scan the flight of birds.[**8**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0008.html'))He knew all things that are,

 all things that are past and all that are to come,

 the seer who had led the Argive ships to Troy

 with the second sight that god Apollo gave him.

85For the armies’ good the seer began to speak:

 “Achilles, dear to Zeus . . .

 you order me to explain Apollo’s anger,

 the distant deadly Archer? I will tell it all.

 But strike a pact with me, swear you will defend me

90with all your heart, with words and strength of hand.

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 For there is a man I will enrage—I see it now—

 a powerful man who lords it over all the Argives,

 one the Achaeans must obey . . . A mighty king,

 raging against an inferior, is too strong.

95Even if he can swallow down his wrath today,

 still he will nurse the burning in his chest

 until, sooner or later, he sends it bursting forth.

 Consider it closely, Achilles. Will you save me?”

 And the matchless runner reassured him: “Courage!

100Out with it now, Calchas. Reveal the will of god,

[Progress reading.strategy](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/ltWM_sena07_u4_Homer_p.0004.html'))

 whatever you may know. And I swear by Apollo

 dear to Zeus, the power you pray to, Calchas,

 when you reveal god’s will to the Argives—no one,

 not while I am alive and see the light on earth, no one

105will lay his heavy hands on you by the hollow ships.

 None among all the armies. Not even if you mean

 Agamemnon here who now claims to be, by far,

 the best of the Achaeans.”

 The seer took heart

 and this time he spoke out, bravely: “Beware—

110he casts no blame for a vow we failed, a sacrifice.

 The god’s enraged because Agamemnon spurned his priest,

 he refused to free his daughter, he refused the ransom.

 That’s why the Archer sends us pains and he will send us more

 and never drive this shameful destruction from the Argives,

115not till we give back the girl with sparkling eyes

 to her loving father—no price, no ransom paid—

 and carry a sacred hundred bulls to Chryse town.

 Then we can calm the god, and only then appease him.”

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 So he declared and sat down. But among them rose

120the fighting son of Atreus, lord of the far-flung kingdoms,

 Agamemnon—furious, his dark heart filled to the brim,

 blazing with anger now, his eyes like searing fire.

 With a sudden, killing look he wheeled on Calchas first:

 “Seer of misery! Never a word that works to my advantage!

125Always misery warms your heart, your prophecies—

 never a word of profit said or brought to pass.

 Now, again, you divine[**9**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0009.html'))god’s will for the armies,

 bruit it about, as fact, why the deadly Archer

 multiplies our pains: because I, I refused

130that glittering price for the young girl Chryseis.

 Indeed, I prefer *her* by far, the girl herself,

 I want her mine in my own house! I rank her higher

 than Clytemnestra, my wedded wife—she’s nothing less

 in build or breeding, in mind or works of hand.

135But I am willing to give her back, even so,

 if that is best for all. What I really want

 is to keep my people safe, not see them dying.

 But fetch me another prize, and straight off too,

 else I alone of the Argives go without my honor.

140That would be a disgrace. You are all witness,

 look—*my* prize is snatched away!”

 But the swift runner

 Achilles answered him at once, “Just how, Agamemnon,

 great field marshal . . . most grasping man alive,

 how can the generous Argives give you prizes now?

145I know of no troves of treasure, piled, lying idle,

 anywhere. Whatever we dragged from towns we plundered,

 all’s been portioned out. But collect it, call it back

 from the rank and file? *That* would be the disgrace.

 So return the girl to the god, at least for now.

150We Achaeans will pay you back, three, four times over,

 if Zeus will grant us the gift, somehow, someday,

 to raze Troy’s massive ramparts to the ground.”

 But King Agamemnon countered, “Not so quickly,

 brave as you are, godlike Achilles—trying to cheat me.

155Oh no, you won’t get past me, take me in that way!

 What do you want? To cling to your own prize

 while I sit calmly by—empty-handed here?

 Is that why you order me to give her back?

 No—if our generous Argives *will* give me a prize,

160a match for my desires, equal to what I’ve lost,

 well and good. But if they give me nothing

 I will take a prize myself—your own, or Ajax’

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 or Odysseus’ prize—I’ll commandeer her myself

 and let that man I go to visit choke with rage!

165Enough. We’ll deal with all this later, in due time.

 Now come, we haul a black ship down to the bright sea,

 gather a decent number of oarsmen along her locks

 and put aboard a sacrifice, and Chryseis herself,

 in all her beauty . . . we embark her too.

170Let one of the leading captains take command.

 Ajax, Idomeneus, trusty Odysseus or you, Achilles,

 you—the most violent man alive—so you can perform

 the rites for us and calm the god yourself.”

 A dark glance

 and the headstrong runner answered him in kind: “Shameless—

175armored in shamelessness—always shrewd with greed!

 How could any Argive soldier obey your orders,

 freely and gladly do your sailing for you

 or fight your enemies, full force? Not I, no.

 It wasn’t Trojan spearmen who brought me here to fight.

180The Trojans never did *me* damage, not in the least,

 they never stole my cattle or my horses, never

 in Phthia[**10**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0010.html'))where the rich soil breeds strong men

 did they lay waste my crops. How could they?

 Look at the endless miles that lie between us . . .

185shadowy mountain ranges, seas that surge and thunder.

 No, you colossal, shameless—we all followed you,

 to please you, to fight for you, to win your honor

 back from the Trojans—Menelaus and you, you dog-face!

 What do *you* care? Nothing. You don’t look right or left.

190And now you threaten to strip me of my prize in person—

 the one I fought for long and hard, and sons of Achaea

 handed her to me.

 My honors never equal yours,

 whenever we sack some wealthy Trojan stronghold—

 my arms bear the brunt of the raw, savage fighting,

195true, but when it comes to dividing up the plunder

 the lion’s share is yours, and back I go to my ships,

 clutching some scrap, some pittance that I love,

 when I have fought to exhaustion.

 No more now—

 back I go to Phthia. Better that way by far,

200to journey home in the beaked ships of war.

 I have no mind to linger here disgraced,

 brimming your cup and piling up your plunder.”

 But the lord of men Agamemnon shot back,

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 “*Desert,* by all means—if the spirit drives you home!

205I will never beg you to stay, not on *my* account.

 Never—others will take my side and do me honor,

 Zeus above all, whose wisdom rules the world.

 You—I hate you most of all the warlords

 loved by the gods. Always dear to your heart,

210strife, yes, and battles, the bloody grind of war.

 What if you are a great soldier? That’s just a gift of god.

 Go home with your ships and comrades, lord it over

 your Myrmidons![**11**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0011.html'))

 You *are* nothing to me—you and your overweening anger!

 But let this be my warning on your way:

215since Apollo insists on taking my Chryseis,

 I’ll send her back in my own ships with my crew.

 But I, I will be there in person at your tents

 to take Briseis in all her beauty, your own prize—

 so you can learn just how much greater I am than you

220and the next man up may shrink from matching words with me,

 from hoping to rival Agamemnon strength for strength!”

 He broke off and anguish gripped Achilles.

 The heart in his rugged chest was pounding, torn . . .

 Should he draw the long sharp sword at his hip,

225thrust through the ranks and kill Agamemnon now?—

 or check his rage and beat his fury down?

 As his racing spirit veered back and forth,

 just as he drew his huge blade from its sheath,

 down from the vaulting heavens swept Athena,

230the white-armed goddess Hera sped her down:

 Hera loved both men and cared for both alike.

 Rearing behind him Pallas seized his fiery hair—

 only Achilles saw her, none of the other fighters—

 struck with wonder he spun around, he knew her at once,

235Pallas Athena! the terrible blazing of those eyes,

 and his winged words went flying: “Why, why now?

 Child of Zeus with the shield of thunder, why come now?

 To witness the outrage Agamemnon just committed?

 I tell you this, and so help me it’s the truth—

240he’ll soon pay for his arrogance with his life!”

 Her gray eyes clear, the goddess Athena answered,

 “Down from the skies I come to check your rage

 if only you will yield.

 The white-armed goddess Hera sped me down:

245she loves you both, she cares for you both alike.

 Stop this fighting, now. Don’t lay hand to sword.

 Lash him with threats of the price that he will face.

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 And I tell you this—and I *know* it is the truth—

 one day glittering gifts will lie before you,

250three times over to pay for all his outrage.

 Hold back now. Obey us both.”

 So she urged

 and the swift runner complied at once: “I must—

 when the two of you hand down commands, Goddess,

 a man submits though his heart breaks with fury.

255Better for him by far. If a man obeys the gods

 they’re quick to hear his prayers.”

 And with that

 Achilles stayed his burly hand on the silver hilt

 and slid the huge blade back in its sheath.

 He would not fight the orders of Athena.

260Soaring home to Olympus, she rejoined the gods

 aloft in the halls of Zeus whose shield is thunder.

 But Achilles rounded on Agamemnon once again,

 lashing out at him, not relaxing his anger for a moment:

 “Staggering drunk, with your dog’s eyes, your fawn’s heart!

265Never once did you arm with the troops and go to battle

 or risk an ambush packed with Achaea’s picked men—

 you lack the courage, you can see death coming.

 Safer by far, you find, to foray all through camp,

 commandeering the prize of any man who speaks against you.

270King who devours his people! Worthless husks, the men you rule—

 if not, Atrides,[**12**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0012.html'))this outrage would have been your last.

 I tell you this, and I swear a mighty oath upon it . . .

 by this, this scepter, look,

 that never again will put forth crown and branches,

275now it’s left its stump on the mountain ridge forever,

 nor will it sprout new green again, now the **[brazen](javascript:openGlossaryWnd('ltWMu4_Homer.t04')" \o "Glossary Term, link opens in new window)** ax

 has stripped its bark and leaves, and now the sons of Achaea

 pass it back and forth as they hand their judgments down,

 upholding the honored customs whenever Zeus commands—

280This scepter will be the mighty force behind my oath:

 someday, I swear, a yearning for Achilles will strike

 Achaea’s sons and all your armies! But then, Atrides,

**[harrowed](javascript:openGlossaryWnd('ltWMu4_Homer.t05')" \o "Glossary Term, link opens in new window)** as you will be, *nothing* you do can save you—

 not when your hordes of fighters drop and die,

285cut down by the hands of man-killing Hector! Then—

 then you will tear your heart out, desperate, raging

 that you disgraced the best of the Achaeans!”

*Nestor, one of the wisest Greek commanders and counselors, advises Agamemnon and Achilles to concede to each other; both men refuse. To appease the gods and spare the Achaeans further annihilation, Agamemnon orders Odysseus to return Chryseis. As compensation for his lost war prize, Agamemnon abducts Achilles’ Briseis. Dishonored, Achilles swears that never again will he join the Achaeans in fighting against the Trojans. He convinces Thetis to persuade Zeus to help the Trojans defeat the Achaeans.*

[Progress literary.analysis](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/ltWM_sena07_u4_Homer_p.0009.html'))

 But *he* raged on, grimly camped by his fast fleet,

 the royal son of Peleus, the swift runner Achilles.

290Now he no longer haunted the meeting grounds

 where men win glory, now he no longer went to war

 but day after day he ground his heart out, waiting there,

 yearning, always yearning for battle cries and combat.

 But now as the twelfth dawn after this shone clear

295the gods who live forever marched home to Olympus,

 all in a long cortege, and Zeus led them on.

 And Thetis did not forget her son’s appeals.

 She broke from a cresting wave at first light

 and soaring up to the broad sky and Mount Olympus,

300found the son of Cronus gazing down on the world,

 peaks apart from the other gods and seated high

 on the topmost crown of rugged ridged Olympus.

 And crouching down at his feet,

 quickly grasping his knees with her left hand,

305her right hand holding him underneath the chin,

 she prayed to the lord god Zeus, the son of Cronus:

 “Zeus, Father Zeus! If I ever served you well

 among the deathless gods with a word or action,

 bring this prayer to pass: honor my son Achilles!—

310doomed to the shortest life of any man on earth.

 And now the lord of men Agamemnon has disgraced him,

 seizes and keeps his prize, tears her away himself. But you—

 exalt him, Olympian Zeus: your urgings rule the world!

 Come, grant the Trojans victory after victory

315till the Achaean armies pay my dear son back,

 building higher the honor he deserves!”

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## from: Book 6: Hector Returns to Troy

*At Thetis’ request, Zeus intervenes to help the Trojans defeat the Achaeans. Bitter fighting resumes, causing massive casualties on both sides. Although the Achaeans suffer a disadvantage from Achilles’ absence, they manage to subdue the Trojans. Under the leadership of Diomedes, the Achaeans drive the Trojans back into temporary retreat behind the city gates. Realizing the gravity of the Trojan cause, Hector and his men go to Priam’s palace to urge the gods to take pity on Troy. Hector also tries to persuade his brother Paris, who caused the war by abducting Helen, to fight. Finally, Hector goes in search of his wife, Andromache.*

 A flash of his helmet

 and off he strode and quickly reached his sturdy,

 well-built house. But white-armed Andromache—

 Hector could not find her in the halls.

5She and the boy and a servant finely gowned

 were standing watch on the tower, sobbing, grieving.

 When Hector saw no sign of his loyal wife inside

 he went to the doorway, stopped and asked the servants,

 “Come, please, tell me the truth now, women.

10Where’s Andromache gone? To my sisters’ house?

 To my brothers’ wives with their long flowing robes?

 Or Athena’s shrine where the noble Trojan women

 gather to win the great grim goddess over?”

 A busy, willing servant answered quickly,

15“Hector, seeing you want to know the truth,

 she hasn’t gone to your sisters, brothers’ wives

 or Athena’s shrine where the noble Trojan women

 gather to win the great grim goddess over.

 Up to the huge gate-tower of Troy she’s gone

20because she heard our men are so hard-pressed,

 the Achaean fighters coming on in so much force.

 She sped to the wall in panic, like a madwoman—

 the nurse went with her, carrying your child.”

 At that, Hector spun and rushed from his house,

25back by the same way down the wide, well-paved streets

 throughout the city until he reached the Scaean Gates,[**1**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0013.html'))

 the last point he would pass to gain the field of battle.

 There his warm, generous wife came running up to meet him,

[Progress reading.strategy](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/ltWM_sena07_u4_Homer_p.0011.html'))

 Andromache the daughter of gallant-hearted Eetion[**2**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0014.html'))

30who had lived below Mount Placos[**3**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0015.html'))rich with timber,

 in Thebe below the peaks, and ruled Cilicia’s people.[**4**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0016.html'))

 His daughter had married Hector helmed in bronze.

 She joined him now, and following in her steps

 a servant holding the boy against her breast,

35in the first flush of life, only a baby,

 Hector’s son, the darling of his eyes

 and radiant as a star . . .

 Hector would always call the boy Scamandrius,

 townsmen called him Astyanax, Lord of the City,

40since Hector was the lone defense of Troy.

 The great man of war breaking into a broad smile,

 his gaze fixed on his son, in silence. Andromache,

 pressing close beside him and weeping freely now,

 clung to his hand, urged him, called him: “Reckless one,

45my Hector—your own fiery courage will destroy you!

 Have you no pity for *him,* our helpless son? Or me,

 and the destiny that weighs me down, your widow,

 now so soon? Yes, soon they will kill you off,

 all the Achaean forces massed for assault, and then,

50**[bereft](javascript:openGlossaryWnd('ltWMu4_Homer.t06')" \o "Glossary Term, link opens in new window)** of you, better for me to sink beneath the earth.

 What other warmth, what comfort’s left for me,

 once you have met your doom? Nothing but torment!

 I have lost my father. Mother’s gone as well.

 Father . . . the brilliant Achilles laid him low

55when he stormed Cilicia’s city filled with people,

 Thebe with her towering gates. He killed Eetion,

 not that he stripped his gear—he’d some respect at least—

 for he burned his corpse in all his blazoned bronze,

 then heaped a macr-mound high above the ashes

60and nymphs[**5**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0017.html'))of the mountain planted elms around it,

 daughters of Zeus whose shield is storm and thunder.

 And the seven brothers I had within our halls . . .

 all in the same day went down to the House of Death,

 the great godlike runner Achilles butchered them all,

65tending their shambling oxen, shining flocks.

[Progress reading.check](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/ltWM_sena07_u4_Homer_p.0012.html'))

 And mother,

 who ruled under the timberline of woody Placos once—

 he no sooner haled her here with his other plunder

 than he took a priceless ransom, set her free

 and home she went to her father’s royal halls

70where Artemis,**[6](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0018.html')" \o "6)**showering arrows, shot her down.

 You, Hector—you are my father now, my noble mother,

 a brother too, and you are my husband, young and warm and strong!

[Progress literary.analysis](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/ltWM_sena07_u4_Homer_p.0013.html'))

 Pity me, please! Take your stand on the rampart here,

 before you orphan your son and make your wife a widow.

75Draw your armies up where the wild fig tree stands,

 there, where the city lies most open to assault,

 the walls lower, easily overrun. Three times

 they have tried that point, hoping to storm Troy,

 their best fighters led by the Great and Little Ajax,[**7**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0019.html'))

80famous Idomeneus,**[8](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0020.html')" \o "8)**Atreus’ sons, valiant Diomedes.[**9**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0021.html'))

 Perhaps a skilled prophet revealed the spot—

 or their own fury whips them on to attack.”

 And tall Hector nodded, his helmet flashing:

 “All this weighs on my mind too, dear woman.

85But I would die of shame to face the men of Troy

 and the Trojan women trailing their long robes

 if I would shrink from battle now, a coward.

 Nor does the spirit urge me on that way.

 I’ve learned it all too well. To stand up bravely,

90always to fight in the front ranks of Trojan soldiers,

 winning my father great glory, glory for myself.

 For in my heart and soul I also know this well:

 the day will come when sacred Troy must die,

 Priam must die and all his people with him,

95Priam who hurls the strong ash spear . . .

 Even so,

 it is less the pain of the Trojans still to come

 that weighs me down, not even of Hecuba[**10**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0022.html'))herself

 or King Priam, or the thought that my own brothers

 in all their numbers, all their gallant courage,

100may tumble in the dust, crushed by enemies—

 That is nothing, nothing beside your agony

 when some brazen Argive hales you off in tears,

 wrenching away your day of light and freedom!

 Then far off in the land of Argos you must live,

105laboring at a loom, at another woman’s beck and call,

 fetching water at some spring, Messeis or Hyperia,[**11**](javascript:openCrossRef('../bm/fa_hu4homer0023.html'))

 resisting it all the way—

 the rough yoke of necessity at your neck.

 And a man may say, who sees you streaming tears,

110’There is the wife of Hector, the bravest fighter

 they could field, those stallion-breaking Trojans,

 long ago when the men fought for Troy.’ So he will say

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 and the fresh grief will swell your heart once more,

 widowed, robbed of the one man strong enough

115to fight off your day of slavery.

 No, no,

 let the earth come piling over my dead body

 before I hear your cries, I hear you dragged away!”

 In the same breath, shining Hector reached down

 for his son—but the boy recoiled,

120cringing against his nurse’s full breast,

 screaming out at the sight of his own father,

 terrified by the flashing bronze, the horsehair crest,

 the great ridge of the helmet nodding, bristling terror—

 so it struck his eyes. And his loving father laughed,

125his mother laughed as well, and glorious Hector,

 quickly lifting the helmet from his head,

 set it down on the ground, fiery in the sunlight,

 and raising his son he kissed him, tossed him in his arms,

 lifting a prayer to Zeus and the other deathless gods:

130“Zeus, all you immortals! Grant this boy, my son,

 may be like me, first in glory among the Trojans,

 strong and brave like me, and rule all Troy in power

 and one day let them say, ’He is a better man than his father!’—

 when he comes home from battle bearing the bloody gear

135of the mortal enemy he has killed in war—

 a joy to his mother’s heart.”

 So Hector prayed

 and placed his son in the arms of his loving wife.

 Andromache pressed the child to her scented breast,

 smiling through her tears. Her husband noticed,

140and filled with pity now, Hector stroked her gently,

 trying to reassure her, repeating her name: “Andromache,

 dear one, why so desperate? Why so much grief for me?

 No man will hurl me down to Death, against my fate.

 And fate? No one alive has ever escaped it,

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145neither brave man nor coward, I tell you—

 it’s born with us the day that we are born.

 So please go home and tend to your own tasks,

 the distaff and the loom, and keep the women

 working hard as well. As for the fighting,

150men will see to that, all who were born in Troy

 but I most of all.”

*Andromache goes home, where she and her handmaidens mourn Hector in anticipation of his death. Paris takes arms and joins Hector in driving the Achaeans out of Troy. Hector and the Trojans campaign vigorously until they completely drive the Achaeans off the battlefield back to their ships. To prevent the Achaeans from sailing away, the Trojans light watchfires and camp on the plain overnight, ready to attack in the morning. The demoralized Achaean army feels handicapped by Achilles’ absence. To persuade their most valuable fighter to reconsider and join the battle, Agamemnon sends Ajax and Odysseus on an embassy to Achilles.*

*In his speech to Achilles, Odysseus reminds him of his father’s advice. Peleus had told Achilles that the Argives would hold him in higher honor if he did not let the anger of his proud heart get the best of him. Odysseus adds that if Achilles gives up his anger and joins the Achaeans in battle, Agamemnon has promised to give Achilles numerous war prizes, including the prize he stole: Briseis. Finally, Odysseus pleads with Achilles to fight, if not in acceptance of Agamemnon’s offer, at least for the afflicted Achaeans who will honor Achilles as a god. Agamemnon’s offer serves only to drive Achilles deeper into his pride. Hurt, dishonored, and, above all, angry, he refuses to help the Greeks defeat Hector and the Trojans. Odysseus and Ajax return to Agamemnon with the news of their unsuccessful embassy.*

## Critical Reading

**1. Respond:**With whom would you side in the argument between Achilles and Agamemnon in Book 1? Why?

**2. (a) Recall:**As the *Iliad* begins, what problem confronts the Greeks?**(b)Infer:**Why is the problem of such importance to the soldiers and their campaign?

**3. (a) Recall:**Why does Agamemnon claim Briseis as his prize?**(b) Analyze Causes and Effects:**How does this action relate to Achilles’ decision to withdraw from battle?

**4. (a) Recall:**In Book 6, what prediction does Hector make about Troy’s destiny?**(b) Compare and Contrast:**In light of this prediction, compare and contrast the poem’s portrayals of Achilles and Hector as heroes so far.

**5. (a) Generalize:**What does the concept of honor seem to mean in the Homeric world? Explain.**(b) Take a Position:**Do you agree with this notion of honor? Why or why not?