



READING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods.

RC-12(A) Reflect on understanding to monitor comprehension.

from the *Iliad*

Epic Poem by Homer Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

Meet the Author

Homer about 700 B.C.

Roughly a thousand years before the Beowulf Poet composed his epic poem, another oral poet, Homer, created two great epics. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were an essential part of the ancient Greek world. Schoolchildren memorized verses from the poems, and scholars discussed their meaning. Alexander the Great slept with a gold-encrusted copy of the *Iliad* under his pillow. But little or nothing was known about the poet himself.

Man of Mystery Nothing much has changed today. Legend and mystery abound in the life of Homer. According to one of the most persistent legends, Homer was blind. However, some scholars have pointed out that the ancient Greeks typically depicted a sage or philosopher as a blind man to emphasize his exceptional inner vision.

The poet's birthplace and date of birth are also matters for speculation. For centuries, scholars even debated about whether Homer ever really existed. Today most agree that the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was indeed a man named Homer who lived sometime between 800 and 600 B.C. and was born either in western Asia Minor or on one of the nearby Aegean islands. Evidence of his life has been gathered

indirectly from writings of ancient Greece and from Homer's poems.

Clash of Titans The *Iliad* relates events of the Trojan War, a conflict between Greeks and Trojans in the ancient city of Troy in Asia Minor. Most historians believe that some sort of war really did take place between Greece and Troy around 1200 B.C.

According to Homer's poem, the Trojan War began when Paris, a prince of Troy, kidnapped Helen, the world's most beautiful woman, from her husband, King Menelaus (mĕn'ə-lā'əs) of Greece. In retaliation, the king's brother, Agamemnon (ăg'ə-mĕm'nŏn), led the Greek army in an invasion of Troy. The Greeks laid siege to the city for ten years before finally achieving victory. The *Iliad* describes the final year of that siege.

Unlettered Genius Homer was able to draw on a rich oral tradition of stories about heroes and gods. Many scholars believe that he composed his epics orally, despite their great length and complexity. Homer probably could not read or write, but he may have recited his epics for someone else to record, thereby preserving the poems that became the foundation of Western literature.

Author Online

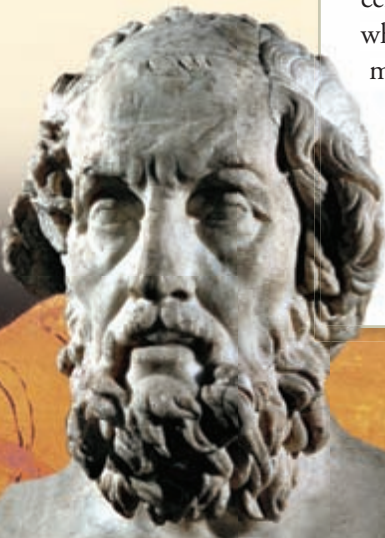


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DID YOU KNOW?

Homer ...

- was probably illiterate.
- inspired Alexander the Great, who carried the *Iliad* with him on all of his military campaigns.
- is quoted more often than any other Western poet, with the possible exception of Shakespeare.



LITERARY ANALYSIS: SIMILE AND EPIC SIMILE

Homer often helps readers visualize the action in his epics with a **simile**, a figure of speech that uses the word *like* or *as* to make a comparison between two unlike things. A long simile, often continuing for a number of lines, is called an **epic simile**. In the following epic simile, Achilles compares his hatred for Hector to the hatred between enemies in nature:

*As between men and lions there are none,
no concord between wolves and sheep, but all
hold one another hateful through and through,
so there can be no courtesy between us . . .*

As you read the selection from the *Iliad*, look for examples of similes and epic similes.

Review: Epic

READING SKILL: CLASSIFY CHARACTERS

The *Iliad* is a complex poem involving many characters—both human and divine. To help you keep track of the epic’s various characters as you read the *Iliad*, use a chart like the one shown to **classify** each character as a Greek, a Trojan, or a god. For each god, indicate whether he or she is helping the Greeks or the Trojans. Then note the important actions and characteristics of each character.

Character	Greek, Trojan, or God?	Actions/Characteristics
Thetis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a sea goddess helps the Greeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tries to console Achilles loving toward son

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

These words in the poem help convey the passions and exploits of war. Substitute the boldfaced word in each of the following sentences with a word from the list.

WORD LIST

abstain	havoc	scourge
defile	ponderous	vulnerable
felicity	rancor	

- The feuding families viewed each other with **hatred**.
- The elephant’s **weighty** leg broke the trainer’s stool.
- The monster left behind a terrible trail of **devastation**.

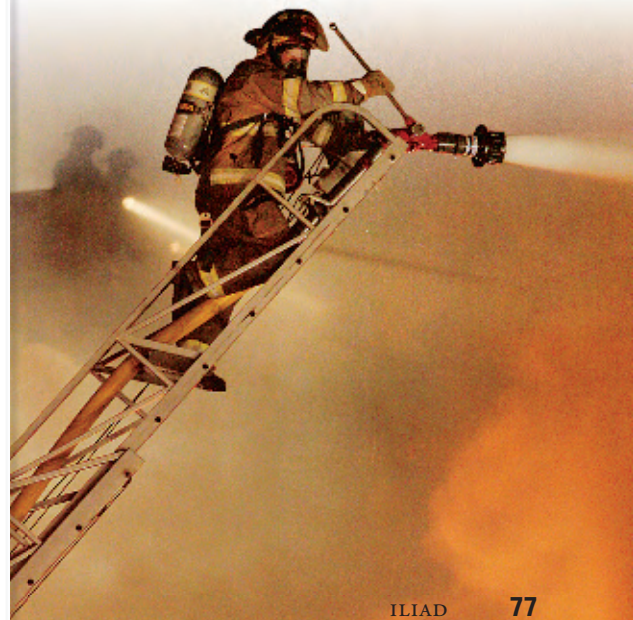


Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

What inspires COURAGE?

Running into a burning building to rescue a child. Standing up against gangs. Saving a drowning swimmer. These are all acts of courage. But what motivates people to perform them? After all, the logical thing to do when faced with danger is to run away. The three main characters in this epic draw on different types of strength when they confront their adversaries. What helps you find the courage to face your enemies and everyday dangers?

DISCUSS With a partner, discuss acts of courage you have witnessed or heard about. Talk about why these heroes did what they did. Are they different from other people? Is everyone capable of courageous acts?





The ILIAD

HOMER

While the Greeks are laying siege to Troy, a quarrel breaks out between Agamemnon and his greatest warrior, Achilles (ə-kīl'ēz). As a result, the angry Achilles decides to remain in his tent and let the Greeks fight without him. The Trojans, under the leadership of Hector, are able to drive the Greeks back to the sea. During the battle, Hector kills Achilles' best friend, Patroclus (pə-trō'kləs). While grieving for his friend, Achilles is visited by his mother, Thetis (thē'tīs), a goddess of the sea.

from Book 18 THE IMMORTAL SHIELD

Bending near
her groaning son, the gentle goddess wailed
and took his head between her hands in pity,
saying softly:

- “Child, why are you weeping?
5 What great sorrow came to you? Speak out,
do not conceal it. Zeus
did all you asked: Achaeon troops,
for want of you, were all forced back again
upon the ship sterns, taking heavy losses
10 none of them could wish.”

The great runner
groaned and answered:

- “Mother, yes, the master
of high Olympus brought it all about,
but how have I benefited? My greatest friend
is gone: Patroclus, comrade in arms, whom I
15 held dear above all others—dear as myself—

Analyze Visuals ►

What traits and emotions are suggested by this painting of Achilles? Which details help convey them?

6–7 Previously Achilles asked Thetis to persuade Zeus (zōōs), ruler of the gods, to turn the tide of battle against the Greeks so that they would see how much they needed him.

7 **Achaeon** (ə-kē'ən): Greek.

12 **Olympus** (ə-līm'pəs): the highest mountain in Greece, on whose peak the Greek gods and goddesses were thought to dwell.

Achilles Contemplating the Body of Patroclus, Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini. Musée Municipal, Soissons, France.
© Giraudon/Art Resource, New York.



now gone, lost; Hector cut him down, despoiled him
of my own arms, massive and fine, a wonder
in all men's eyes. The gods gave them to Peleus
that day they put you in a mortal's bed—
20 how I wish the immortals of the sea
had been your only consorts! How I wish
Peleus had taken a mortal queen! Sorrow
immeasurable is in store for you as well,
when your own child is lost: never again
25 on his homecoming day will you embrace him!
I must reject this life, my heart tells me,
reject the world of men,
if Hector does not feel my battering spear
tear the life out of him, making him pay
30 in his own blood for the slaughter of Patroclus!" **A**

Letting a tear fall, Thetis said:

"You'll be
swift to meet your end, child, as you say:
your doom comes close on the heels of Hector's own."

Achilles the great runner ground his teeth
35 and said:

"May it come quickly. As things were,
I could not help my friend in his extremity.
Far from his home he died; he needed me
to shield him or to parry the death stroke.
For me there's no return to my own country.
40 Not the slightest gleam of hope did I
afford Patroclus or the other men
whom Hector overpowered. Here I sat,
my weight a useless burden to the earth,
and I am one who has no peer in war
45 among Achaean captains—
though in council
there are wiser. Ai! let strife and **rancor**
perish from the lives of gods and men,
with anger that envenoms even the wise
and is far sweeter than slow-dripping honey,
50 clouding the hearts of men like smoke: just so
the marshal of the army, Agamemnon,
moved me to anger. But we'll let that go,

16–17 Patroclus wore Achilles' armor to frighten the Trojans. "Despoiled him of my own arms" refers to Hector's taking the armor from Patroclus' corpse.

18 Peleus (pē'lē-əs): Achilles' human father.

A CLASSIFY CHARACTERS

Reread lines 26–30. Notice that Achilles suggests that his heart is guiding him rather than his head. What characteristics does Achilles reveal in these lines?

38 parry: to turn aside; deflect.

rancor (răng'kər) *n.* bitter, long-lasting anger; ill will

48 envenoms (ĕn-vĕn'əmz): fills with poison.

though I'm still sore at heart; it is all past,
and I have quelled my passion as I must.

- 55 Now I must go to look for the destroyer
of my great friend. I shall confront the dark
drear spirit of death at any hour Zeus
and the other gods may wish to make an end.
Not even Heracles escaped that terror
60 though cherished by the Lord Zeus. Destiny
and Hera's bitter anger mastered him.
Likewise with me, if destiny like his
awaits me, I shall rest when I have fallen!
Now, though, may I win my perfect glory
65 and make some wife of Troy break down,
or some deep-breasted Dardan woman sob
and wipe tears from her soft cheeks. They'll know then
how long they had been spared the deaths of men,
while I **abstained** from war!
70 Do not attempt to keep me from the fight,
though you love me; you cannot make me listen."

Achilles seeks to avenge Patroclus by slaughtering Trojans. Apollo, a god who protects Troy, opens the gates of the city so the Trojans can rush to safety inside the walls. Only Hector is left outside. Achilles chases him around the walls three times. Finally the goddess Pallas Athena, disguised as Hector's brother Deiphobus (dē-īf'ə-bəs), appears to Hector and persuades him to fight Achilles.

from Book 22 **DESOLATION BEFORE TROY**

And when at last the two men faced each other,
Hector was the first to speak. He said:

- "I will no longer fear you as before,
75 son of Peleus, though I ran from you
round Priam's town three times and could not face you.
Now my soul would have me stand and fight,
whether I kill you or am killed. So come,
we'll summon gods here as our witnesses,
80 none higher, arbiters of a pact: I swear
that, terrible as you are,
I'll not insult your corpse should Zeus allow me
victory in the end, your life as prize.
Once I have your gear, I'll give your body
85 back to Achaeans. Grant me, too, this grace." **B**

59–61 Heracles (hě'r'ə-klēz'): another name for Hercules, the greatest legendary hero of ancient Greece, son of Zeus and a mortal woman named Alcmena (ălk-mē'nə). Zeus' wife, the goddess Hera (hī'r'ə), hated and persecuted Heracles until his death.

66 Dardan (där'dn): Trojan.

abstain (ăb-stān') v. to hold oneself back from doing something

76 Priam's (prī'əmz) **town**: Troy. Priam is the Trojan King.

80 arbiters (ār'bĭ-tərz): judges; referees.

B CLASSIFY CHARACTERS

In lines 82–85, Hector refers to the Greek and Trojan custom of returning the bodies of slain warriors to their people. What does this speech reveal about Hector?



Achilles Dragging the Body of Hector Around the Walls of Troy, Donato Creti. Oil on canvas, 142.5 cm. × 241.5 cm. Musée Massey, Tarbes, France. © Bridgeman Art Library.

But swift Achilles frowned at him and said:

“Hector, I’ll have no talk of pacts with you,
forever unforgiven as you are.

As between men and lions there are none,

90 no concord between wolves and sheep, but all
hold one another hateful through and through,
so there can be no courtesy between us,
no sworn truce, till one of us is down
and glutting with his blood the wargod Ares.

95 Summon up what skills you have. By god,
you’d better be a spearman and a fighter!
Now there is no way out. Pallas Athena
will have the upper hand of you. The weapon
belongs to me. You’ll pay the reckoning
100 in full for all the pain my men have borne,
who met death by your spear.”

He twirled and cast
his shaft with its long shadow. Splendid Hector,
keeping his eye upon the point, eluded it
by ducking at the instant of the cast,
105 so shaft and bronze shank passed him overhead
and punched into the earth. But unperceived
by Hector, Pallas Athena plucked it out
and gave it back to Achilles. Hector said: **C**

90 concord (kŏn’kôrd’): peace or harmony.

94 glutting with his blood the wargod Ares (âr’ēz): satisfying Ares, the god of war, by bleeding to death.

97–98 Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom, favors the Greeks.

C EPIC

Reread lines 102–108. What characteristic of an epic is revealed in these lines?

“A clean miss. Godlike as you are,
 110 you have not yet known doom for me from Zeus.
 You thought you had, by heaven. Then you turned
 into a word-thrower, hoping to make me lose
 my fighting heart and head in fear of you.
 You cannot plant your spear between my shoulders
 115 while I am running. If you have the gift,
 just put it through my chest as I come forward.
 Now it’s for you to dodge my own. Would god
 you’d give the whole shaft lodging in your body!
 War for the Trojans would be eased
 120 if you were blotted out, bane that you are.”

With this he twirled his long spearshaft and cast it,
 hitting his enemy mid-shield, but off
 and away the spear rebounded. Furious
 that he had lost it, made his throw for nothing,
 125 Hector stood bemused. He had no other.
 Then he gave a great shout to Deiphobus
 to ask for a long spear. But there was no one
 near him, not a soul. Now in his heart
 the Trojan realized the truth and said:

130 “This is the end. The gods are calling deathward.
 I had thought
 a good soldier, Deiphobus, was with me.
 He is inside the walls. Athena tricked me.
 Death is near, and black, not at a distance,
 135 not to be evaded. Long ago
 this hour must have been to Zeus’s liking
 and to the liking of his archer son.
 They have been well disposed before, but now
 the appointed time’s upon me. Still, I would not
 140 die without delivering a stroke,
 or die ingloriously, but in some action
 memorable to men in days to come.”

With this he drew the whetted blade that hung
 upon his left flank, **ponderous** and long,
 145 collecting all his might the way an eagle
 narrows himself to dive through shady cloud
 and strike a lamb or cowering hare: so Hector
 lanced ahead and swung his whetted blade.
 Achilles with wild fury in his heart

Language Coach

Fixed Expressions Words that, combined, have a special meaning are called **fixed expressions**. When Hector says, “by heaven” (line 111), he means, “as the gods are my witnesses.” What similar expressions do we use today?

120 **bane**: a cause of distress, death, or ruin.

125 **bemused** (bĭ-myōōzd’): dazed; confused.

135–139 Zeus’ “archer son” is Apollo, god of the sun, whose arrows may represent the sun’s rays. Apollo typically favored the Trojans, while Zeus helped individuals on both sides.

ponderous (pŏn’dər-əs) *adj.*
 very heavy

150 pulled in upon his chest his beautiful shield—
 his helmet with four burnished metal ridges
 nodding above it, and the golden crest
 Hephaestus locked there tossing in the wind.
 Conspicuous as the evening star that comes,
 155 amid the first in heaven, at fall of night,
 and stands most lovely in the west, so shone
 in sunlight the fine-pointed spear
 Achilles poised in his right hand, with deadly
 aim at Hector, at the skin where most
 160 it lay exposed. But nearly all was covered **D**
 by the bronze gear he took from slain Patroclus,
 showing only, where his collarbones
 divided neck and shoulders, the bare throat
 where the destruction of a life is quickest.
 165 Here, then, as the Trojan charged, Achilles
 drove his point straight through the tender neck,
 but did not cut the windpipe, leaving Hector
 able to speak and to respond. He fell
 aside into the dust. And Prince Achilles
 170 now exulted:

“Hector, had you thought
 that you could kill Patroclus and be safe?
 Nothing to dread from me; I was not there.
 All childishness. Though distant then, Patroclus’
 comrade in arms was greater far than he—
 175 and it is I who had been left behind
 that day beside the deepsea ships who now
 have made your knees give way. The dogs and kites
 will rip your body. His will lie in honor
 when the Achaeans give him funeral.”

180 Hector, barely whispering, replied:

“I beg you by your soul and by your parents,
 do not let the dogs feed on me
 in your encampment by the ships. Accept
 the bronze and gold my father will provide
 185 as gifts, my father and her ladyship
 my mother. Let them have my body back,
 so that our men and women may accord me
 decency of fire when I am dead.”

153 Hephaestus (hĭ-fēs’təs): the god of fire and blacksmith of the gods, who made Achilles’ new armor.

D EPIC SIMILE

Note the epic simile in lines 154–160. What two things are being compared? What does the comparison suggest about the power of Achilles’ spear?

177 kites: hawklike birds of prey.

178 “His [body]” refers to that of Patroclus.

185–186 Hector’s father is Priam, and his mother is Hecuba (hĕk’ya-bə).

188 Burning the bodies of the dead was customary. Truces were often arranged for this purpose.

Achilles the great runner scowled and said:

- 190 “Beg me no beggary by soul or parents,
whining dog! Would god my passion drove me
to slaughter you and eat you raw, you’ve caused
such agony to me! No man exists
who could defend you from the carrion pack—
195 not if they spread for me ten times your ransom,
twenty times, and promise more as well;
aye, not if Priam, son of Dardanus,
tells them to buy you for your weight in gold!
You’ll have no bed of death, nor will you be
200 laid out and mourned by her who gave you birth.
Dogs and birds will have you, every scrap.”

194 carrion (kăŕ’ē-ən) **pack**: the wild animals that feed on dead flesh.

197 Dardanus (dăr’dn-əs): the founder of the line of Trojan kings. Here *son* means “descendant.”

Then at the point of death Lord Hector said:

- “I see you now for what you are. No chance
to win you over. Iron in your breast
205 your heart is. Think a bit, though: this may be
a thing the gods in anger hold against you
on that day when Paris and Apollo
destroy you at the Gates, great as you are.”

205–208 Although Achilles is still alive as the *Iliad* ends, other tales of the Trojan War tell how he is eventually killed by Hector’s brother Paris, with the aid of Apollo.

- Even as he spoke, the end came, and death hid him;
210 spirit from body fluttered to undergloom,
bewailing fate that made him leave his youth
and manhood in the world. And as he died
Achilles spoke again. He said:

- “Die, make an end. I shall accept my own
215 whenever Zeus and the other gods desire.”

- At this he pulled his spearhead from the body,
laying it aside, and stripped
the bloodstained shield and cuirass from his shoulders.
Other Achaeans hastened round to see
220 Hector’s fine body and his comely face,
and no one came who did not stab the body.
Glancing at one another they would say:

218 cuirass (kwĭ-răs’): an armored breastplate. Hector is wearing the armor of Achilles that he took from Patroclus’ body.

vulnerable (vül’nər-ə-bəl) *adj.*
open to attack; easily hurt

224 Hector’s torching of the ships occurred when the Trojans forced the Greeks (fighting without Achilles) back to the sea.

“Now Hector has turned **vulnerable**, softer
than when he put the torches to the ships!”

225 And he who said this would inflict a wound.
When the great master of pursuit, Achilles,
had the body stripped, he stood among them,
saying swiftly:

“Friends, my lords and captains
of Argives, now that the gods at last have let me
230 bring to earth this man who wrought
havoc among us—more than all the rest—
come, we’ll offer battle around the city,
to learn the intentions of the Trojans now.
Will they give up their strongpoint at this loss?
235 Can they fight on, though Hector’s dead?

But wait:

why do I ponder, why take up these questions?
Down by the ships Patroclus’ body lies
unwept, unburied. I shall not forget him
while I can keep my feet among the living.
240 If in the dead world they forget the dead,
I say there, too, I shall remember him,
my friend. Men of Achaea, lift a song!
Down to the ships we go, and take this body,
our glory. We have beaten Hector down,
245 to whom as to a god the Trojans prayed.”

Indeed, he had in mind for Hector’s body
outrage and shame. Behind both feet he pierced
the tendons, heel to ankle. Rawhide cords
he drew through both and lashed them to his chariot,
250 letting the man’s head trail. Stepping aboard,
bearing the great trophy of the arms,
he shook the reins, and whipped the team ahead
into a willing run. A dustcloud rose
above the furrowing body; the dark tresses
255 flowed behind, and the head so princely once
lay back in dust. Zeus gave him to his enemies **E**
to be **defiled** in his own fatherland.
So his whole head was blackened. Looking down,
his mother tore her braids, threw off her veil,
260 and wailed, heartbroken to behold her son.
Piteously his father groaned, and round him
lamentation spread throughout the town,
most like the clamor to be heard if Ilion’s

228–229 captains of Argives
(är’jīvz’): Greek officers.

havoc (häv’ək) *n.* widespread
destruction

240 The “dead world” is the house of
Hades, or the underworld, where the
Greeks believed the shades of the
dead to reside.

E CLASSIFY CHARACTERS
Reread lines 246–256. Why do
you think Achilles mistreats
Hector’s body in this manner?

defile (dĭ-fil’) *v.* to make filthy or
impure; to violate the honor of

263 Ilion’s (ĭl’ē-ənz): Troy’s.

towers, top to bottom, seethed in flames.

265 They barely stayed the old man, mad with grief,
from passing through the gates. Then in the mire
he rolled, and begged them all, each man by name:

“Relent, friends. It is hard; but let me go
out of the city to the Achaean ships.

270 I’ll make my plea to that demonic heart.
He may feel shame before his peers, or pity
my old age. His father, too, is old.

Peleus, who brought him up to be a **scourge**
to Trojans, cruel to all, but most to me,

275 so many of my sons in flower of youth
he cut away. And, though I grieve, I cannot
mourn them all as much as I do one,
for whom my grief will take me to the grave—
and that is Hector. Why could he not have died
280 where I might hold him? In our weeping, then,
his mother, now so destitute, and I
might have had surfeit and relief of tears.”

scourge (skûrj) *n.* a source of
great suffering or destruction

282 surfeit (sûr’fî’t): more than
enough for satisfaction.

Achilles and his warriors return to their camp and carry out the burial rites for Patroclus. Three times, Achilles drags Hector’s body behind his chariot around Patroclus’ grave. Afterwards, the gods cleanse and restore the body, and Zeus asks Thetis to tell Achilles to return the body to the Trojans. Priam sets out for the Greek camp to ask Achilles to return the body. He is not aware that the god Hermes (hûr’mêz) helps him by putting the sentries to sleep and opening the gates. Hermes leads Priam to Achilles’ tent and then vanishes.

from Book 24 A GRACE GIVEN IN SORROW

Priam,

the great king of Troy, passed by the others,
285 knelt down, took in his arms Achilles’ knees,
and kissed the hands of wrath that killed his sons.

When, taken with mad Folly in his own land,
a man does murder and in exile finds
refuge in some rich house, then all who see him

290 stand in awe.

So these men stood. **F**

Achilles

gazed in wonder at the splendid king,

F EPIC SIMILE

Note the epic simile in lines 287–291. What does the simile emphasize about Priam’s action?

and his companions marveled too, all silent,
with glances to and fro. Now Priam prayed
295 to the man before him:

“Remember your own father,
Achilles, in your godlike youth: his years
like mine are many, and he stands upon
the fearful doorstep of old age. He, too,
is hard pressed, it may be, by those around him,
300 there being no one able to defend him
from bane of war and ruin. Ah, but he
may nonetheless hear news of you alive,
and so with glad heart hope through all his days
for sight of his dear son, come back from Troy,
305 while I have deathly fortune. **G**

Noble sons
I fathered here, but scarce one man is left me.
Fifty I had when the Achaeans came,
nineteen out of a single belly, others
born of attendant women. Most are gone.
310 Raging Ares cut their knees from under them.
And he who stood alone among them all,
their champion, and Troy’s, ten days ago



Achilles Besought by Priam for the Body of his Son Hector (1776), Giovanni Battista Cipriani. Oil on canvas, 42¹/₁₆” × 41³/₄”. The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

G CLASSIFY CHARACTERS

Reread Priam’s speech in lines 295–305. What tactic is Priam using to persuade Achilles to return Hector’s body?

◀ Analyze Visuals

How do the gestures and facial expressions in this painting convey what happens in the scene between Priam and Achilles? Explain.

you killed him, fighting for his land, my prince,
Hector.

It is for him that I have come
315 among these ships, to beg him back from you,
and I bring ransom without stint.

316 **stint**: limitation.

Achilles,
be reverent toward the great gods! And take
pity on me, remember your own father.
Think me more pitiful by far, since I
320 have brought myself to do what no man else
has done before—to lift to my lips the hand
of one who killed my son.”

Now in Achilles
the evocation of his father stirred
new longing, and an ache of grief. He lifted
325 the old man’s hand and gently put him by.
Then both were overborne as they remembered:
the old king huddled at Achilles’ feet
wept, and wept for Hector, killer of men,
while great Achilles wept for his own father
330 as for Patroclus once again; and sobbing
filled the room. **H**

326 **overborne**: overcome;
overwhelmed.

But when Achilles’ heart
had known the luxury of tears, and pain
within his breast and bones had passed away,
he stood then, raised the old king up, in pity
335 for his grey head and greybeard cheek, and spoke
in a warm rush of words:

“Ah, sad and old!
Trouble and pain you’ve borne, and bear, aplenty.
Only a great will could have brought you here
among the Achaean ships, and here alone
340 before the eyes of one who stripped your sons,
your many sons, in battle. Iron must be
the heart within you. Come, then, and sit down.
We’ll probe our wounds no more but let them rest,
though grief lies heavy on us. Tears heal nothing,
345 drying so stiff and cold. This is the way
the gods ordained the destiny of men,

H CLASSIFY CHARACTERS

Notice the change in Achilles’ attitude in lines 322–331. What qualities of Achilles do these lines reveal?

Language Coach

Word Definitions You often have to consider several definitions to find the one that fits. The word *ordained* can mean 1) made a priest, 2) designed, or 3) destined. Which meaning fits the use of the word in line 346? How can you tell?

to bear such burdens in our lives, while they
 feel no affliction. At the door of Zeus **I**
 are those two urns of good and evil gifts
 350 that he may choose for us; and one for whom
 the lightning's joyous king dips in both urns
 will have by turns bad luck and good. But one
 to whom he sends all evil—that man goes
 contemptible by the will of Zeus; ravenous
 355 hunger drives him over the wondrous earth,
 unresting, without honor from gods or men.
 Mixed fortune came to Peleus. Shining gifts
 at the gods' hands he had from birth: **felicity**,
 wealth overflowing, rule of the Myrmidons,
 360 a bride immortal at his mortal side.
 But then Zeus gave afflictions too—no family
 of powerful sons grew up for him at home,
 but one child, of all seasons and of none.
 Can I stand by him in his age? Far from my country
 365 I sit at Troy to grieve you and your children.
 You, too, sir, in time past were fortunate,
 we hear men say. From Macar's isle of Lesbos
 northward, and south of Phrygia and the Straits,
 no one had wealth like yours, or sons like yours.
 370 Then gods out of the sky sent you this bitterness:
 the years of siege, the battles and the losses.
 Endure it, then. And do not mourn forever
 for your dead son. There is no remedy.
 You will not make him stand again. Rather
 375 await some new misfortune to be suffered."

The old king in his majesty replied:

"Never give me a chair, my lord, while Hector
 lies in your camp uncared for. Yield him to me
 now. Allow me sight of him. Accept
 380 the many gifts I bring. May they reward you,
 and may you see your home again.
 You spared my life at once and let me live."

Achilles, the great runner, frowned and eyed him **I**
 under his brows:

"Do not vex me, sir," he said.
 385 "I have intended, in my own good time,

I CLASSIFY CHARACTERS

Reread lines 345–348. What is
 Achilles' attitude toward fate?

felicity (fĭ-lĭs'ĭ-tē) *n.* happiness;
 good fortune

359 Myrmidons (mŭr'mə-dŏnz'):
 a people of Thessaly in Greece,
 subjects of Achilles' father, Peleus.

363 "Of all seasons and of none"
 suggests that Achilles expects an
 early death for himself.

367–368 Lesbos (lēz'bŏs) . . . **Phrygia**
 (frĭj'ē-ə) . . . **the Straits:** Lesbos is
 an island off the western coast of
 Asia Minor; Phrygia was an ancient
 kingdom in western Asia Minor; the
 Straits are the Dardanelles.

I EPIC

Note the use in line 383 of a
stock epithet, a brief phrase
 (similar to a kenning) that points
 out traits associated with a
 character. What epithet is used
 to describe Achilles in this line?
 What traits does it underscore?

to yield up Hector to you. She who bore me,
 the daughter of the Ancient of the sea,
 has come with word to me from Zeus. I know
 in your case, too—though you say nothing, Priam—
 390 that some god guided you to the shipways here.
 No strong man in his best days could make entry
 into this camp. How could he pass the guard,
 or force our gateway?

Therefore, *let me be*.

Sting my sore heart again, and even here,
 395 under my own roof, suppliant though you are,
 I may not spare you, sir, but trample on
 the express command of Zeus!”

When he heard this,
 the old man feared him and obeyed with silence.
 Now like a lion at one bound Achilles
 400 left the room. Close at his back the officers
 Automedon and Alcimus went out—
 comrades in arms whom he esteemed the most
 after the dead Patroclus. They unharnessed
 mules and horses, led the old king’s crier
 405 to a low bench and sat him down.
 Then from the polished wagon
 they took the piled-up price of Hector’s body.
 One chiton and two capes they left aside
 as dress and shrouding for the homeward journey.
 410 Then, calling to the women slaves, Achilles
 ordered the body bathed and rubbed with oil—
 but lifted, too, and placed apart, where Priam
 could not see his son—for seeing Hector
 he might in his great pain give way to rage,
 415 and fury then might rise up in Achilles
 to slay the old king, flouting Zeus’s word. **K**
 So after bathing and anointing Hector
 they drew the shirt and beautiful shrouding over him.
 Then with his own hands lifting him, Achilles
 420 laid him upon a couch, and with his two
 companions aiding, placed him in the wagon.
 Now a bitter groan burst from Achilles,
 who stood and prayed to his own dead friend:

“Patroclus,

do not be angry with me, if somehow

387 “The Ancient of the sea” is the sea god Nereus (nĭr’ē-əs), father of Thetis.

395 suppliant (sŭp’lĕ-ənt): one who begs or pleads earnestly.

401 Automedon (ô-tŏm’ə-dn) . . .
Alcimus (ăl’sə-məs).

408 chiton (kĭt’n): a shirtlike garment; tunic.

K CLASSIFY CHARACTERS
 Reread lines 410–416, which reveal Achilles’ thoughts. What do the lines suggest about Achilles’ temperament?

425 even in the world of Death you learn of this—
 that I released Prince Hector to his father.
 The gifts he gave were not unworthy. Aye,
 and you shall have your share, this time as well.”
 The Prince Achilles turned back to his quarters.
 430 He took again the splendid chair that stood
 against the farther wall, then looked at Priam
 and made his declaration:

“As you wished, sir,
 the body of your son is now set free.
 He lies in state. At the first sight of Dawn
 435 you shall take charge of him yourself and see him.
 Now let us think of supper. We are told
 that even Niobe in her extremity
 took thought for bread—though all her brood had
 perished,
 her six young girls and six tall sons. Apollo,
 440 making his silver longbow whip and sing,
 shot the lads down, and Artemis with raining
 arrows killed the daughters—all this after
 Niobe had compared herself with Leto,
 the smooth-cheeked goddess.

She has borne two children,
 445 Niobe said, How many have I borne!
 But soon those two destroyed the twelve.

Besides,

nine days the dead lay stark, no one could bury them,
 for Zeus had turned all folk of theirs to stone.
 The gods made graves for them on the tenth day,
 450 and then at last, being weak and spent with weeping,
 Niobe thought of food. Among the rocks
 of Sipylus’ lonely mountainside, where nymphs
 who race Achelous river go to rest,
 she, too, long turned to stone, somewhere broods on
 455 the gall immortal gods gave her to drink.

Like her we’ll think of supper, noble sir.
 Weep for your son again when you have borne him
 back to Troy; there he’ll be mourned indeed.”

*Priam and Achilles agree to an 11-day truce. During that
 time, the Trojans will mourn Hector’s body before its burial.*

436–455 The mortal woman Niobe (nī’ə-bē) claimed that having so many children made her superior to the goddess Leto (lē’tō), who had only two. Leto’s son and daughter, Apollo and Artemis (ār’tə-mŷs), punished Niobe by killing all her children. After many days of grieving, Niobe asked the gods to relieve her by turning her to stone.

452 Sipylus (sĭp’ə-ləs): a mountain in west-central Asia Minor.

453 Achelous (ăk’ə-lō’əs): a river near Mount Sipylus.

455 gall: bitterness; bile.

Comprehension

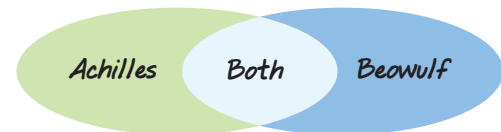
1. **Recall** Why does Achilles vow to kill Hector?
2. **Recall** What does Achilles do with Hector after he kills him?
3. **Summarize** What happens when Priam confronts Achilles?



READING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, figurative language, and dramatic structure in poetry across literary time periods. **RC-12(A)** Reflect on understanding to monitor comprehension.

Literary Analysis

4. **Analyze Epic Similes** Reread the following passages, which contain epic similes. Explain what is being compared in each simile, and identify the quality or qualities emphasized in the comparison.
 - “As between men . . . Ares.” (lines 89–94)
 - “With this he . . . whetted blade.” (lines 143–148)
 - “Conspicuous as . . . exposed.” (lines 154–160)
5. **Classify Characters** Review the chart in which you classified the characters from the *Iliad*. Are the gods responsible for what happens to the mortals in the epic? Support your answer with specific details from the *Iliad*.
6. **Interpret Characters’ Actions** Characters in the *Iliad* show courage in different ways. What courageous actions do Achilles, Hector, and Priam perform?
7. **Draw Conclusions** Reread lines 31–33. In these lines and in others, it is apparent that Achilles and other characters in the epic know that he is fated to die soon. What do you think prevents Achilles from attempting to change his fate?
8. **Make Judgments** In your opinion, do Achilles’ feelings about his friend Patroclus justify the way he treats Hector? Use evidence from the epic to explain your answer.
9. **Compare Epic Heroes** Compare and contrast Achilles and Beowulf as epic heroes. Use a diagram like the one shown to list and compare their traits and their actions. Which character do you think is more heroic?



Literary Criticism

10. **Critical Interpretations** Critic John Scott has said that although the *Iliad* is set during wartime, “the real greatness of that poem is in the portrayal of powerful human emotions rather than in military exploits.” Do you agree or disagree? Cite evidence to support your response.

What inspires **COURAGE?**

Which character in the *Iliad* would you define as most courageous? Which do you consider the least courageous? Why?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Identify the word that is not related in meaning to the other words in each numbered set.

1. (a) ponderous, (b) swift, (c) weighty
2. (a) cleanse, (b) defile, (c) corrupt
3. (a) strong, (b) vulnerable, (c) defenseless
4. (a) destruction, (b) havoc, (c) protection
5. (a) guardian, (b) protector, (c) scourge
6. (a) abstain, (b) proceed, (c) perform
7. (a) bitterness, (b) rancor, (c) felicity

WORD LIST

abstain
defile
felicity
havoc
ponderous
rancor
scourge
vulnerable

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• concept • culture • parallel • section • structure

Discuss the **concept** of revenge as it applies to this section of the *Iliad*. How does revenge act as a **parallel** motivation for Hector and Achilles? Use at least one additional Academic Vocabulary word in your discussion.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: DICTIONARY ETYMOLOGIES

Learning to decode a word's **etymology**, or history, deepens your understanding of its connotations and derivations. Here is a typical dictionary's etymology:

scourge (skûrj) *n.* [ME < OFr *escorgie* < L *ex*, off, from + *corrigia*, a strap, whip]

The etymology is usually in brackets after the pronunciation and part of speech. The < symbol means "derived from." The etymology for *scourge* reads, "a Middle English (ME) word, from the Old French (OFr) *escorgie*, which comes from the Latin (L) prefix *ex-* ('off' or 'from') and *corrigia*, ('a strap' or 'whip')."

PRACTICE Use a dictionary to answer the following questions about these vocabulary words. (Your dictionary's introduction will likely have information about the abbreviations and symbols used in its etymologies.)

1. What Middle English word does *havoc* come from?
2. Which word above comes from an Old French word meaning "to trample"?
3. Look up *excoriate*. Which word above is related to *excoriate*?
4. Which word above derives from the Latin word *tenere*, to hold back?
5. What Latin word or words are *vulnerable* and *revulsion* both related to?



READING 1D Analyze and explain how the English language has developed and been influenced by other languages. **1E** Use a general dictionary.

The Epic in Translation

The following versions of *Beowulf* prove the power of the translator. Although both describe the same passage (Grendel's murderous raid on Herot), they are stunningly dissimilar.

*"Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel
Went up to Herot, wondering what the warriors
Would do in that hall when their drinking was done.
He found them sprawled in sleep, suspecting
Nothing, their dreams undisturbed.*

—Translated by Burton Raffel

*"So, after nightfall, Grendel set out
for the lofty house, to see how the Ring-Danes
were settling into it after their drink,
and there he came upon them, a company of the best
asleep from their feasting, insensible to pain
and human sorrow.*

—Translated by Seamus Heaney

Writing to Compare and Contrast

Write a short essay comparing and contrasting Raffel's and Heaney's translations. Which do you prefer? Why? Examine each translator's word choice, style, and the rhetorical devices they use. How does each translator portray the qualities of an epic?

Since you are writing a comparison-contrast essay, apply the Point-by-Point method. Use at least one body paragraph to show how the translations are similar. Then continue with additional similarities or move to differences between the two passages.

Point-by-Point Method

Topic Sentence/Paragraph

- Translation 1
- Translation 2

Topic Sentence/Paragraph

- Translation 1
- Translation 2

Extension Online

INQUIRY & RESEARCH With one or more of your classmates, use the Internet to compile a list of literary and cinematic epics. Starting with a primary search engine, you may also want to search online movie databases as well as literary reference sites. Of the works you find, which feature heroes closest in spirit and deeds to Beowulf?



The character Aragorn, a hero from the modern-day epic *The Lord of the Rings*



WRITING 15C Analyze the aesthetic effects of an author's use of stylistic or rhetorical devices.