

MAJOR CHARACTERS & DEITIES in the *Iliad*

The Achaians: (Ah-ki-ans) Ἀχαιοί — The terms “Achaian,” “Argive” (Ἀργεῖος) and “Danaan” (Δαναός) are all names for the Greeks. The word “Greek” itself is Latin; the Greeks’ name for their own country was “Hellas.”

Achilles: (Ah-kill-ees) Ἀχιλλεύς — The son of Peleus (Πηληϊάδης) and the sea nymph Thetis, Achilles was the leader of the Myrmidons (Μυρμιδόνες). He was generally acknowledged to be the greatest warrior at Troy, characterized by his headstrong individualism and hot temper. This wrath is largely what the *Iliad* is about. Shortly after the poem's end he is slain (with Apollo's help) by Paris.

Aeneas: (An-ee-us) The son of Anchises and Aphrodite, goddess of love, second highest ranked prince of Troy.

Agamemnon: (Ag-a-mem-non) Ἀγαμέμνων — Son of Atreus, king of Mycenae, commander-in-chief of the Achaian army, and brother of Menelaus.

Aias: (**eye**-us, also called Ajax) Αἴας — Son of Telamon, king of Salamis. He is the largest warrior on the battle field and, next to Achilles, the best warrior. After Achilles' death, he kills himself when he loses a contest with Odysseus for Achilles' armor.

Alexander: (**Al-ex-zan-der**) Ἀλέξανδρος see Paris.

Andromache: (An-**drom**-ach-e) Ἀνδρομαχη — Wife of Hector, daughter of Eetion. After the war she is awarded to Achilles' son Neoptolemus as a battle prize.

Aphrodite: (Af-ro-**di**-te) Ἀφροδίτη — Goddess of love; some say she is a daughter of Zeus and Dione; others say she was created from the foam that gathered around the genitals of Zeus' father Chronos after Zeus castrated him and threw the genitals in the sea. Her name means "foam born." She is a defender of Troy.

Apollo: (Ah-**poll**-o) Ἀπόλλων — Son of Zeus and Leto, god of poetry and prophecy, he is also associated with plagues. He defends the walls of Troy, which he and Poseidon built.

Ares: (**Ay**-rees) Ἄρης — Son of Zeus and Hera, god of war. He often gets drunk and gets into fights, and is one of Aphrodite's many lovers. Also a defender of Troy.

Argives: (**Ar**-gives) see Achaians.

Artemis: (**Ar**-te-mus) Ἄρτεμις — Daughter of Zeus and Leto, twin sister of Apollo, goddess of the hunt and of wild animals. Associated with quick painless death for women, she fights on the Trojan (Τρῳέων) side.

Athena: (Ah-**thee**-na, often referred to as Pallas Athena) Παλλάς Ἀθηνῆ — a daughter of Zeus, she has no mother but sprang full grown, from the head of Zeus, wearing armor. Thus, she is a goddess of wisdom, strategy, and weaving, as in clothing and plots. She wants very much to destroy the city of Troy.

Briseis: (**Bri**-see-us) Βρισηΐς — A woman who was awarded to Achilles as a battle prize, but who was then taken away by Agamemnon. Achilles refers to her as his wife.

Calchas: (**Kal**-kus) Κάλχας — Chief prophet and seer of the Achaians, hated by Agamemnon. It was he who told Agamemnon he would have to sacrifice one of his daughters in exchange for favorable winds to sail to Troy. In Book I, he tells Agamemnon he must return Chryseis to her father.

Chryseis: (**Kri**-see-us) Χρυσηΐς — Daughter of Chryses (Χρῦσης), priest of Apollo, whom the Argives award to their great king as a battle prize, angering the god.

Danaans: (Dah-**nay**-ans) see Achaians.

Deiphobus: (Dee-**eff**-a-bus) Δειφοβος — a brother of Hector, he is impersonated by Athena, who tricks Hector into standing and fighting Achilles.

Diomedes: (Di-o-**meed**-ees) Διομεδης — Son of Tydeus, prince of Argos, he is young and brave, but altogether a "company man," unlike Achilles.

Hades: (**Hay**-dees) Ἅδης — Son of Cronos and Rhea, brother of Zeus, lord of the underworld.

Hector: (**Heck**-tor) Ἑκτωρ — son of Priam and champion of the Trojans

Hecuba: (**Heck**-u-ba) Ἥκυβε — Chief consort of Priam, mother of Hector and queen of Troy.

Hephaestus: (Heff-**eye**-stos) Ἥφαιστος — Son of Zeus and Hera, god of metal smithing, crafts and fire, born with a club foot, often laughed at by other gods, he makes Achilles' armor.

Hera: (**Heh**-ra Ἥρα — Daughter of Chronos and Rhea, queen of heaven, sister and wife of Zeus, whom she nags and plays tricks on, despite his threats of physical violence. At one point, she offers to let Zeus destroy one of her own favorite cities if only he will let her and her allies sack Troy.

Hermes: (**Her**-mees) Son of Zeus and Maia, god of roads and wayfarers, who also guides the souls of the dead down to the underworld. Sometimes, like Iris, he acts as a messenger of the gods.

Iris: (**Eye**-ris) She acts primarily as a messenger.

Menelaus: (Men-a-**la**-os) Μενέλαος — Son of Atreus, king of Sparta and brother of Agamemnon, Menelaus was Helen's first husband, until she was stolen by the Trojan prince Paris.

Nestor: (**Nes**-tor) Νέστωρ — Son of Neleus, king of Pylos (Πύλος), he is the oldest lord among the Argives. As a member of an older generation of heroes, he is seen as a wise counsellor whose words are heeded and respected.

Odysseus: (**O-dis**-ee-us) Οδύσσεύς — Son of Laertes, king of Ithaca, noted for his strategies and his guile, a favorite of Athena. He is also the hero of the *Odyssey*.

Paris: (**Pa**-ris) Παρις — also referred to as Alexander, a son of Priam, brother of Hector. He started the war by seducing Helen, wife of Menelaus, while on a diplomatic mission to Sparta. He was favored by Aphrodite.

Patroclus: (**Pa-trok**-los) Πάτροκλος — Son of Menoetius, squire and best friend of Achilles, Patroclus is slow to anger and feels pity for the suffering of the Argive warriors. Achilles kills Hector to avenge his death.

Phoenix: (**Fee**-nix) Φοεινίξ — Son of Amyntor, king of Dolopes, he was the tutor of Achilles and acts as a father figure.

Poseidon: (**Pos-eye**-don) Ποσειδάων — Son of Chronos and Rhea, brother of Zeus. While Zeus is god of Olympus and the upper world, Poseidon is god of earthquakes and of the sea. He favors the Argives, but respects Zeus' authority because Zeus is older.

Priam: (**Pree**-am) Πρίαμος — Son of Laomedon, aged king of Troy (Τροίη, also called Ilios, Ιλιος). Father of Hector and Paris, he has fifty sons altogether, begot on various wives and concubines.

Sarpedon: (**Sar-pee**-don) Σαρπηδών — a son of Zeus, killed by Patroclus.

Thetis: (**Thee**-tis) Θέτις — Daughter of Nereus, mother of Achilles, she was obliged by Hera to marry his father Peleus.

Zeus: (**Zoos**) Ζεύς — Son of Chronos and Rhea, often referred to as “father of gods and men,” he rules Olympus, where the highest gods, the Olympians, live. He supports the Argives, but agrees to let them lose for a while, as a favor to Thetis.