

# MHID IILIAD

Read by **Anton Lesser** 

	BOOK 1 The Quarrel by the Ships	
1	'Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles, son of Peleus'	6:42
2	'Encouraged, the wise prophet then declared:'	7:28
3	'Glittery-eyed Athene then spoke in reply:'	6:39
4	'Thus the pair of them continued arguing.'	7:02
5	'Thetis, shedding tears, answered her son, Achilles:'	6:55
6	'Thetis finished. Cloud gatherer Zeus did not respond.'	7:14
	BOOK 2 Agamemnon's Dream and The Catalogue of Ships	
7	'Gods and warriors slept through the entire night.'	6:26
8	'So Nestor spoke. Then he began to make his way back'	6:27
9	'So Athene spoke. Odysseus knew her from her voice'	6:23
10	'Son of Atreus, now the Achaeans wish to disgrace you'	5:55
11	'Mighty Agamemnon then answered Nestor:'	6:29
12	'Just as goathords sort out with ease the wandering beasts.'	E-17

Total time on CD 1: 78:57

1	'From Salamis Ajax commanded twelve ships.'	1:51
2	'Among these warriors, as they armed themselves'	5:50
3	'Troops from Phylace, flowering Pyrasus, shrine of Demeter'	6:52
4	'Men rushed to arm themselves. They opened up the gates.'	4:06
	BOOK 3 Paris, Menelaus, and Helen	
5	'Once troops had formed in ranks under their own leaders'	7:02
6	'Achaeans and Trojans were elated, full of hope'	7:01
7	'Priam, the old man, saw a third figure, Ajax, and asked:'	5:15
8	'Hear me, you Trojans, you well-armed Achaeans.'	4:48
9	'Then Aphrodite went to summon Helen.'	5:03
	BOOK 4 The Armies Clash	
10	'The gods all sat assembled in the golden courtyard'	6:33
11	'Athena spoke and thus swayed his foolish wits.'	6:27
12	'At Talthybius' words Machaon's spirits were stirred up'	6:48
13	'To these words Geranian horseman Nestor said:'	7:07
14	'As for the Trojans, they were like thousands of ewes'	1:35

Total time on CD 2: 76:18

1	'Antilochus was the first to kill a man'	5:50
_	BOOK 5 Diomedes Goes to Battle	
2	'Then Pallas Athene gave Diomedes, son of Tydeus'	6:59
3	'But his sharp arrow hadn't killed Diomedes'	6:48
4	'Aeneas, leader of the Trojans, then replied:'	6:21
5	'Meanwhile, Sthenelus, son of Capaneus, did not forget'	6:54
6	'When they spoke, the father of gods and men smiled'	6:39
7	'Agamemnon spoke, then quickly hurled his spear.'	7:09
8	'Yes, Tlepolemus, Hercules did destroy sacred Ilion'	6:41
9	'Meanwhile, Aphrodite and Apollo, with his silver bow'	6:49
10	'Father Zeus, aren't you incensed at this barbarity?'	2:20
	BOOK 6 Hector & Andromache	
11	'Now the grim war between Trojans and Achaeans'	6:34
12	'Hector was convinced by his advice.'	6:57
13	'Diomedes, skilled at war cries, rejoiced.'	3:07

Total time on CD 3: 79:08

1	'Great Hector of the shining helmet then replied:'	5:53
2	'Great Hector of the shining helmet answered Helen:'	6:19
3	'With these words, glorious Hector stretched his hands out'	4:07
	BOOK 7 Hector & Ajax	
4	'After glorious Hector had talked with Paris'	6:31
5	'Lord Menelaus, have you lost your mind?'	6:48
6	'Even in Hector's chest the heart beat rapidly.'	6:39
7	'Wide-ruling Agamemnon, heroic son of Atreus'	6:31
8	'He came, stood in their midst, and delivered his report.'	4:22
	BOOK 8 The Trojans Have Success	
9	'As Dawn first spread her yellow robe across the earth	6:35
10	'Diomedes' words missed godlike, firm Odysseus'	6:59
11	'Mighty Earthshaker Poseidon, very angry, answered Hera:'	5:43
12	'Mighty son of Atreus, why urge me on?'	5:35
13	'White-armed Hera agreed with her.'	6:37

Total time on CD 4: 78:39

1	'Now the sun's bright light sank down into the ocean'	4:54
	BOOK 9 Peace Offerings to Achilles	
2	'Meanwhile, as the Trojans maintained their careful watch'	6:45
3	'Mighty son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men'	6:44
4	'With these words, lord Achilles conducted them inside his hut'	6:59
5	'Swift-footed Achilles then answered Odysseus:'	7:38
6	'Glorious Achilles, if your mind is really set on going back'	5:47
7	'I recall an old tale from long ago.'	7:17
8	'Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:'	4:36
	BOOK 10 A Night Raid	
9	'By their ships, Achaea's most important leaders'	6:18
10	'Geranian horseman Nestor then said in reply:'	6:54
11	'Then Diomedes, expert in war cries, spoke up:'	7:13
12	'Hector spoke. He'd sworn an empty oath'	6:49

Total time on CD 5: 77:54

1	'Mighty Diomedes scowled at Dolon and said:'	5:17
2	'When the pair came to where they'd slaughtered Hector's spy'	3:16
3	BOOK 11 The Achaeans Face Disaster 'As Dawn rose from her bed beside lord Tithonus' 'The first to kill a man was Agamemnon.'	5:51 6:52
5	'Wind-swift Iris obeyed, going down from Ida to sacred Ilion.'	6:34
6	'Who were the first, who were the last men slaughtered?'	6:43
7	'Famous spearman Odysseus came up and made a stand'	6:14
8	'Hector did not notice Ajax, for he was fighting'	6:58
9	'Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:'	6:50
10	'Now, there's a certain city Thryoessa'	4:35
11	'Later, when we'd had our fill of food and drink'	4:26
	BOOK 12 The Fight at the Barricade	
12	'Thus, as Patroclus, Menoetius' fine son, looked after'	6:06
13	'Other Trojans and their famous allies followed'	7:07

Total time on CD 6: 76:49

2	'Hector with his gleaming helmet scowled and said:' 'Menestheus finished. Thoötes heard him and obeyed.'	7:06 7:39
4 5 6 7	BOOK 13 The Trojans Attack the Ships 'Thus Zeus brought Hector and the Trojans to the ships.' 'Shame on you Argives, nothing but young boys!' 'At that point, Poseidon, angry' 'Like swift Ares, Meriones led the way' 'Idomeneus did not relent his fighting frenzy.'	5:52 7:00 7:08 6:10 6:34
8	'The close fighting over Ascalaphus continued.'	5:53
9	'Peisander doubled up and then collapsed.'	6:41
10	'The arrows drained the Trojans' fighting spirit.'	7:00
11	BOOK 14 Zeus Deceived  (As Nector set dripking wine listening to the pairs of war. /	6.27
=	'As Nestor sat drinking wine, listening to the noise of war'	6:37
12	'Agamemnon, king of men, replied:'	3:10

Total time on CD 7: 76:50

1	'As this was happening, on a peak of mount Olympus'	6:52
2	'Ox-eyed queen Hera then answered him:'	5:29
3	'Sweet Sleep rushed to the Achaean ships, to inform Poseidon'	7:01
4	'Ajax shouted this, knowing very well the man he'd killed.'	3:08
	BOOK 15 The Battle at the Ships	
5	'Trojans, in full retreat, passed the wall and ditch'	7:00
6	'Striking his sturdy thighs with the flat of his hands'	6:43
7	'Cloud-gatherer Zeus then spoke to Apollo:'	6:01
8	'But when Apollo stared directly at the swift Danaans'	6:36
9	'Hector threw his bright spear at Ajax, but missed.'	5:41
10	'Apollo would not let Panthoös' son be killed'	6:44
11	'But Hector killed only one man – Periphetes of Mycenae'	6:13
	BOOK 16 Patroclus Fights & Dies	
12	'While the men kept on fighting at the well-decked ships'	6:02
13	'As these two were talking on like this together '	<b>4</b> ⋅09

Total time on CD 8: 71:26

1	'Achilles had brought fifty ships to Troy'	5:33
2	'The armed warriors who went with brave Patroclus'	5:24
3	'Idomeneus' pitiless bronze then struck Erymas'	6:09
4	'Ox-eyed queen Hera then replied to Zeus:'	6:26
5	'Glaucus finished. Trojans were completely overwhelmed'	6:30
6	'As Zeus pondered, he thought the best plan would be'	6:27
7	'This said, Patroclus rushed at warrior Cebriones'	7:30
	BOOK 17 The Fight Over Patroclus	
8	'In that battle, warlike Menelaus, son of Atreus'	6:53
9	'As Menelaus thought these matters over in his mind and heart'	6:14
10	'The son of Cronos spoke, then nodded his dark brow.'	7:06
11	'Right then war-loving Achaeans would have driven'	6:22
12	'Men talked like this to strengthen their companions.'	5:10
13		

Total time on CD 9: 78:10

	'Menelaus, expert in war shouts, answered her:'	8:13
2	'Menelaus finished speaking.'	3:56
	BOOK 18 The Arms of Achilles	
3	'As the men fought on like a blazing fire raging'	6:01
4	'Through her tears, Thetis then answered Achilles:'	6:18
5	'With these words, swift-footed Iris went away.'	6:28
6	'Hector spoke. The Trojans roared out in response.'	6:25
7	'Huge god Hephaestus got up from the anvil block'	5:18
8	'Then the people gathered in the assembly'	7:38
	BOOK 19 Achilles & Agamemnon	
9	'When Dawn in her yellow robe rose from Ocean's stream'	5:23
10	'My friends, Danaan warriors, companions of the war god Ares'	6:34
11	'Agamemnon, king of men, answered Odysseus:'	5:41
12	'Saying this, Achilles quickly ended the assembly.'	5:03
13	'Achaeans then came swarming out from their fast ships'	4.36

Total time on CD 10: 77:34

POOK 20 Achilles Peturns to Pattle

	BOOK 20 Actimes Returns to battle	
1	'Then, son of Peleus, Achaeans armed themselves'	6:37
2	'Apollo, son of Zeus, then said to Aeneas:'	6:07
3	'Aeneas then said in response:'	6:32
4	'Ox-eyed queen Hera then said to Poseidon:'	6:46
5	'When Hector saw his brother Polydorus there'	5:56
	BOOK 21 Achilles Fights the River	
6	'When the Trojans reached the ford across the Xanthus'	7:14
7	'Achilles finished. Then Lycaon's knees gave way'	5:21
8	'Saying this, he pulled his bronze spear from the river bank.'	6:04
9	'With these words, the two gods went away.'	4:57
10	'White-armed goddess Hera, as soon as she'd heard this'	6:58
11	'With these words, Hera caught both arms of Artemis'	3:29
12	'Still in a rage, Achilles chased them with his spear'	4:28
	BOOK 22 The Death of Hector	
13	'At this point, the Trojans, having fled like deer'	5:10
14	'As the old man spoke, his hands tugged his grey hair'	3:36

**Total time on CD 11: 79:15** 

1	'That's what Hector thought as he stood there waiting.'	7:10
2	'Then Hector of the shining helmet answered her:'	5:26
3	'Hector finished speaking. He pulled out his sharp sword'	6:09
4	'Achilles finished. Then on noble Hector's corpse'	5:56
5	'When she recovered and her spirit had returned to her'	3:16
	BOOK 23 The Funeral Games for Patroclus	
6	'Meanwhile, as Trojans were lamenting in the city'	6:46
7	'Swift-footed Achilles then said in reply:'	6:46
8	'After saying this, Iris left.	6:39
9	'Antilochus, you may still be quite young'	6:20
10	'Behind him came Atreus' son, fair-haired Menelaus.'	5:44
11	'As Achilles spoke, Tydeus' son came charging in'	7:02
12	'Saying this, Menelaus gave the mare to Noëmon'	6:02

Total time on CD 12: 73:16

1	'For the Danaans, Peleus' son then set out a display	6:00
2	'Antilochus finished speaking.'	4:20
3	'Achilles finished speaking.'	2:32
	BOOK 24 Achilles & Priam	
4	'Once the funeral gathering broke up, the men dispersed	5:55
5	'Silver-footed Thetis then said in reply:'	6:58
6	'My lady, a messenger has come to me from Zeus'	4:49
7	'Priam finished.'	5:17
8	'Hermes the Guide, killer of Argus, hearing Zeus'	6:58
9	'With these words, Hermes jumped up in the chariot'	4:52
10	'Priam finished. His words roused in Achilles a desire'	6:38
11	'Godlike Achilles spoke, then went back once more'	6:23
12	'Hermes spoke. At his words, the old man grew afraid.'	8:32

Total time on CD 13: 69:14 Total time on CDs 1 - 13: 16:33:30

# **Homer**

# THE ILIAD

Homer's The Iliad, the earliest and greatest epic poem in Western culture, was composed in the eighth century BC, almost certainly as an oral composition incorporating a number of different stories from a rich poetic tradition of works now lost to us. The identity of Homer has been fiercely but inconclusively debated since ancient times. The Greeks believed he was a single person, and various cities competed for the honour of naming him a citizen. However, nothing reliable is known about him, although some traditions insist that he was blind The poem was originally designed for recitation on important occasions by a professional bard, at least until the sixth century BC when, according to Greek traditions, the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus had the poem written down and codified in a form similar to the work we know todav.

The Iliad tells the story of a few weeks in the tenth year of the Trojan War. It includes relatively few of the well-known narrative details of that famous conflict. for it starts in the middle of the fighting and ends a short time later with the war still continuing. The plot focuses on the famous incident when the great Achaean (Greek) hero Achilles withdraws from fighting because he feels he has been insulted by the leader of the Achaean expedition, Agamemnon. In his absence, the Trojan enjoy spectacular success on the battlefield, thanks largely to the heroic effort of their leader, Hector, who succeeds in reaching the Achaean fleet and setting one ship alight. Achilles relents slightly and sends out his dear friend Patroclus to assist the Achaeans, but Hector kills Patroclus. That death enrages Achilles, and he returns to battle, slaughters many Trojans, and kills Hector. The poem ends with the return and burial of Hector's body.

The Iliad is famous and enormously influential as a vision of pagan religion and warrior culture. Faced with a world ruled by all-powerful and capricious gods and goddesses, extremely beautiful but often cruel and unpredictable deities, for whom irrational conflict is the fated condition of the universe, these warriors choose to stand up and confront the harsh realities of their existence as bravely as possible. Since the gods provide no detailed and consistent moral code for them to follow. the leaders live by their warrior code, which insists that they strive always to assert their own individual heroic natures as fully as possible, even though that may well bring death sooner rather than later. Since they always carry out their actions in full view of everyone else, their lives are ruled by the twin priorities of gaining status and avoiding shame. They repeatedly express how much they would like to live without such constant conflict, but since the gods create constant strife and human beings cannot change that condition and have to deal with it and since everyone will die

sooner or later, they believe they should manifest their individual virtues in action as fully as possible for as long as they can.

This is a stern faith, too, because there is no sense here of a life after death. Whatever Hades offers, it is pale and unwelcome compared to life on earth. The only way a warrior can transcend the finality of death is through the memory he leaves behind of his great deeds, the achievements that have earned him an honoured place among his peers on the battlefield. And this memory of his glorious life, his excellence, will be enshrined in the stories his children and his community tell about him and, ironically enough, by the impressive size of his burial mound.

The result is a profound vision of warfare, the finest war poem in our traditions. The war is brutal, and Homer spares us none of the horrific details. He emphatically reminds us again and again of what war involves, the sudden destruction of beautiful young men, the enslavement of women, the aching loss of life for parents, children, friends, and fellow citizens. At the same time, war is, in a paradoxical way, energizing,

thrilling, and often intensely beautiful. It allows human beings to manifest some of their most astonishing and admirable characteristics. The destructive endeavour is, by one of the most disturbing of ironies, also an intensely creative activity. Many weapons, for example, are products of great artistic skill, yet they are used to kill. Warriors are truly beautiful as they move out to fight. But the fighting covers their lovely bodies with blood, mud, and gore, and often leaves them biting the dirt or holding their bowels in their death throes. The life-sustaining earth which nourishes these human beings becomes their final resting place. Homer is famous for offering us both aspects of war, without taking sides or seeking to moralize this particular conflict. In that sense, The Iliad can be a very disturbing poem, for its vision undercuts some of our most cherished beliefs about warfare.

The Iliad is also the story of Achilles, our greatest warrior and our first tragic hero. At the start of the poem, when he quarrels with Agamemnon, Achilles adheres to the warrior code. He is famous for his battlefield skills, but he sees the world

as his companions do. In fact, the initial quarrel arises over the issue of status and shame. In his isolation from the fighting, however, Achilles begins to change, and when (in Book 9) the Achaeans seeks to persuade him to return by conferring enormous status on him, he unexpectedly refuses, declaring that he would sooner go home, in effect, repudiating the code he and his comrades have always lived by. Later, however, responding to his remaining sense of comradeship, he does allow his closest friend, Patroclus, to return to battle in his armour in order to help the Achaeans, who are in desperate straits. When Patroclus is killed. Achilles is devastated, overwhelmingly so, since he suddenly recognizes, in a way that no one else in the poem does, the ironic contradictions at the heart of the warrior experience.

When he returns to fight, Achilles is a changed man. He no longer cares about status or shame, or, for that matter, about eating or sleeping. He wishes simply to kill, to take out his revenge, not just against Hector but against the conditions of existence itself. In his killing rampage

he attacks the gods before slaking his passion by killing Hector, repeatedly mutilating his corpse, and slaughtering animals and Trojan captives on the funeral pyre for Patroclus.

Homer's epic does not include the story of Achilles' death, although by the end there is a profound sense that he does not have long to live (and if we see the extraordinary detail given in the descriptions of the funeral of Patroclus as prefiguring Achilles' burial, then, in a sense we do have the conclusion of his story). But Achilles qualifies as a tragic hero because he enters a realm of suffering experience beyond all conventional social codes and asserts himself in the clear-eyed awareness of what the true realities of life are, something no one else in the poem undergoes or even understands.

The poem concludes with one of the most famous and moving episodes in the Trojan War story, the meeting between Priam, king of Troy, and Achilles, the killer of Priam's children. Here, for the first time in the poem, two opponents, one young, the other very old, commiserate quietly and respectfully about their

mutual suffering and share a sense of their common humanity as participants in a cruel and destructive world, in which warfare will resume soon enough.

Homer's *The Iliad* was immensely influential in ancient Greek culture, the closest thing the Greeks had to a shared holy text (although one should not push comparisons with the Bible too hard). It helped to foster among the Greeks a sense of pagan virtue as a constantly competitive self-assertion in all aspects of life, a desire to demonstrate in action (not necessarily in warfare alone) one's own particular human excellence. These traditional virtues became important, above all, in the ethical writings of Aristotle, and through those, in later Western traditions.

The artistic influence of Homer's poem cannot be overestimated. It became a fecund resource for later Greek and Roman writers, especially the tragedians, Virgil, and Ovid, and an obvious inspiration to generations of painters and sculptors. It helped to make the Trojan War the single most important literary narrative in our Western tradition.

Tracing the direct influence of Homer on that tradition, however, is at times difficult, because for many centuries Homer's text was unavailable in Western Europe. While his name was always celebrated and the Trojan War endlessly retold in different ways, Homer's vision remained unknown until the late fifteenth century, when his works were printed in Florence. From that time on, the direct influence of Homer's The Iliad on Western culture has continued to grow, so that now there are more translations of his works available and more people reading and listening to his words than ever hefore

#### Notes by Ian Johnston

### The principal characters and names in The Iliad

#### THE GREEKS

**Agamemnon** – son of Atreus, King of Argos and leader of the Greek expedition to Troy

Menelaus – King of Sparta and Agamemnon's brother. Husband of Helen

Achilles – the son of Peleus and the goddess Thetis

Patroclus - close friend of Achilles

Odysseus – cunning King of Ithaca, husband of Penelope

**Diomedes** – strong fighter

Ajax – son of Telamon and brave fighter

Nestor - King of Pylos

Phoenix - aged warrior

**Bryseis** – the maid who becomes the focus of the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles

The Argives, the Danaans, the Achaeans– names for the Greek army

The Myrmidons – soldiers led by Achilles

Pallas Athene, Hera, Poseidon, Hermes, Hephaestus – Gods on the Greek side

#### THE TROJANS

**Priam** – King of Troy

Hecuba - his wife

**Hector** – their son

Andromache - Hector's wife

**Paris** – Hector's brother. He had awarded the golden apple to Aphrodite who had given him Helen in return. Paris' abduction of Helen from Sparta to Troy initiated the Greek attack

Aeneas - son of Anchises

**Pandarus** – son of Lycaon. Goaded by Pallas Athena, he shoots the arrow at Menelaus to break the truce

**Sarpedon** – Lycian warrior fighting for Troy

**The Trojans, the Dardanians, Lycians** – defenders of Troy

Phoebus Apollo, Aphrodite, Ares, Artemis, Hermes – Gods on the Trojan side



**Anton Lesser** is one of Britain's leading classical actors. He has played many of the principal Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company including Petruchio, Romeo and Richard III. His career has also encompassed contemporary drama, notably *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Oresteia, The Cherry Orchard, Troilus and Cressida* and *The Mill on the Floss.* He also reads Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Homer's *The Odyssey* and *A Tales of Two Cities* for Naxos AudioBooks

#### Credits

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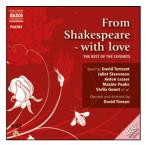
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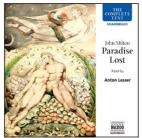
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