

Iliad Theme

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Themes

Religion: In The Iliad, the role of the gods and goddesses is most important. The war is not fought only by human hands but also moves according to the will of the gods. Zeus, Hera, Athena, Apollo, and Aphrodite all take sides. Some help the Greeks, others help the Trojans. They descend directly onto the battlefield, thrusting spears, protecting warriors, or weakening them. For example, Apollo sends a plague, Athena calms Achilles, and later gives him strength. The gods intervene sometimes for revenge, sometimes for favoritism, and sometimes for love. Religion here is an inseparable part of human life. Before battles, warriors offer sacrifices and pray for victory. Yet Homer shows that the gods are not always just; they act according to their own will. Thus, religion means not only prayer but also the gods' control over fate and destiny. This reflects ancient Greek belief: nothing is possible without the gods.

Fate: In The Iliad, fate is portrayed as an unavoidable power. No matter how much humans try, in the end, fate's decision always prevails. Achilles knew that if he killed Hector, his own death would follow soon. Still, he did not stop. Hector, too, knew his death was destined outside the city walls, yet he chose to face battle. Even the gods cannot change fate. For example, Zeus wanted to save his beloved son Sarpedon but could not. Fate pushed him toward death. This teaches that while men may be brave, the final truth is not in their hands. Homer shows that accepting fate itself is true heroism. Death is inevitable, but a warrior can still achieve glory. Thus, fate, though harsh, also gives human life its purpose. The Iliad teaches that men are merely small players in the game of gods and fate.

Pride: Pride is one of the central themes of The Iliad. At the very beginning of the war, the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles happens over pride and honor. When Agamemnon is forced to give up Chryses's daughter, he feels insulted. In revenge, he seizes Briseis, Achilles's prize of honor. This wounds Achilles's pride, and he withdraws from battle. This clash of pride becomes the cause of the bloodshed throughout the epic. Hector, too, is proud; he refuses to abandon his duty of defending the city, though he could have fled. His pride leads him to death. Pride inspires men to perform heroic deeds, but it also brings ruin. Homer shows that pride hardens the human heart and drives men toward rage and vengeance. A warrior like Achilles, because of pride, loses his friend Patroclus and ultimately prepares the way for his

own death.

Glory: In Greek culture, kleos, or fame after death, was considered the highest ideal. Every hero in The Iliad fights for honor and glory. Achilles knew that if he wanted a long life, he would have to avoid war. Yet he chose a life of glory, even though it meant dying young. Hector, too, chose glory over family life. Though he knew death was near, he sacrificed himself to defend the honor of the city. This hunger for glory drove the Greek heroes. For them, being remembered after death was more important than living. Homer teaches that a warrior's true success lies not in wealth, but in having his name live on for generations. That is why in The Iliad, there is no fear of death, only a contest to win eternal glory.

Heroism: Heroism shines brightly in The Iliad. A hero is not only strong but also ready for sacrifice. Achilles, though an unmatched warrior, withdraws because of personal pride. Hector, despite his deep love for his wife and child, never leaves the battlefield. He knows death is certain, yet he fights on. Patroclus, too, is a symbol of heroism; he gives his life to defend his friend's honor. Diomedes displays incredible courage, even striking against the gods themselves. Heroism here means not just physical strength but also mental firmness. Homer shows that true heroism is fulfilling one's duty while ignoring the fear of death. Thus, in The Iliad, heroes are not only warriors, they are symbols of ideal courage.

War: The central setting of The Iliad is war itself. Here, both the terror and the glory of war are depicted side by side. War brings death, sorrow, and destruction, yet warriors see it as the path to glory. War is born from human pride, revenge, and the will of the gods. Apollo sends a plague, Athena strengthens warriors, and Hera plots against the Trojans, all make the war fiercer. Both Achaeans and Trojans lose families, see their cities shattered, yet they never stop fighting. Homer shows that war is a harsh reality of human life. It contains grief and bloodshed, but also shines with courage and honor. That is why The Iliad presents war not only as destruction, but also as a field where human character is tested.