

THE ILIAD

GARETH HINDS

ABOUT THE BOOK

More than three thousand years ago, two armies faced each other in an epic battle that changed the course of history and came to be known as the Trojan War. Homer's legendary account of it, *The Iliad*, is one of the greatest war stories of all time. This striking graphic novel adaptation captures all the grim glory of Homer's epic, taking readers directly to the plains of Troy and into the battle itself. Narration, dialogue, and detailed, dynamic pictures capture the action and the emotions of the men, women, and gods whose struggles are immortalized in this timeless classic.

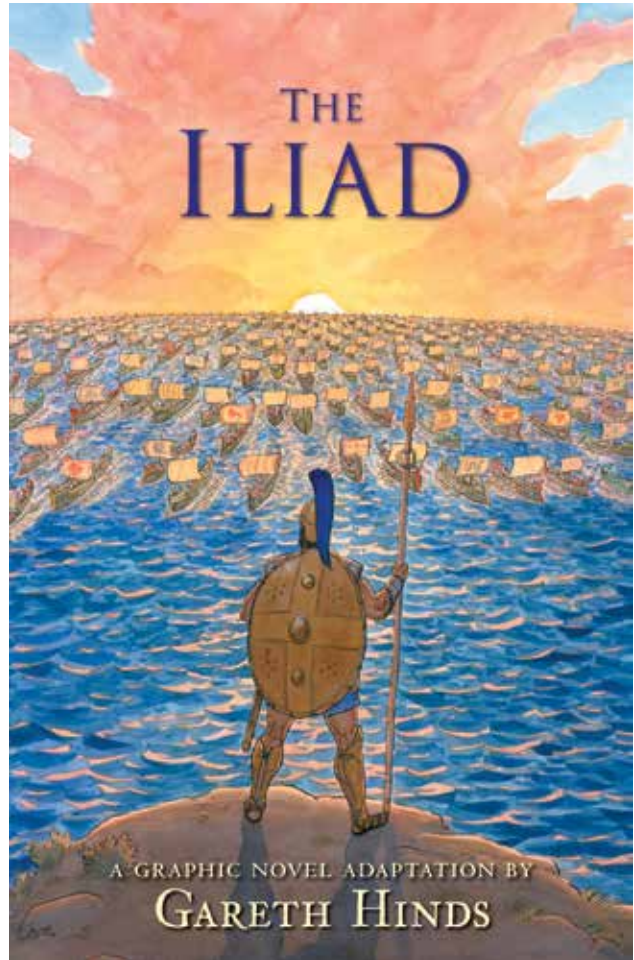
ABOUT GARETH HINDS



Photo by Scott LaPierre

Gareth Hinds grew up drawing and reading in small-town Vermont, where he created his first comics in elementary school and drew editorial illustrations and comics for his high school newspaper. After graduating

from Parsons School of Design, he worked for ten years making video games while drawing graphic novels in his spare time. He has created many critically acclaimed graphic novels based on literary classics, including *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, and *King Lear*, and is a Boston Public Library Literary Lights for Children honoree. Gareth Hinds lives outside Washington, D.C.



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Common Core Connections

This teachers' guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare Hector and Achilles in terms of background, personality, and actions, giving specific examples. What does each of them value? Which of them is a better leader, and why? What regrets do you think each of them has about their major choices and the consequences of those choices?
2. To what extent do the characters in the epic have free will? To what extent do the gods and goddesses dictate the outcomes? Analyze the motives of different deities in interfering with humans. Discuss the concept of fate, citing places it is important in the story. Talk about free will versus fate in your own life or in the world around you.
3. Find examples of similes and metaphors, which are especially striking during the battle scenes. Discuss what comparisons are made by the figures of speech and what areas of life the comparisons draw from, such as farming or household tasks. Focus on five examples and analyze their impact on readers in the context of scenes where they are used.
4. In *The Iliad*, some of the women are labeled “prizes” and “spoils of war.” What does this mean? Give examples of such women from the story. What is life like for those women? What have they lost? What other roles do women have in the story? Compare the human women in *The Iliad* to the goddesses in terms of their status and powers.
5. Achilles expresses a range of emotions to Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax, who serve as emissaries from Agamemnon (pages 96–97). Achilles explains that he has two possible destinies, death in battle with eternal glory or a long life with no fame. Which does he choose, and why? Discuss his observation that “life is more precious than any treasure.” Explain which choice you would make in his place and why you would make it.
6. Phoenix asks Achilles to conquer his pride, saying that “until now your anger has been honorable” (page 97). Talk about the meaning of honor as demonstrated in *The Iliad*. What is the relationship between honor and anger? How can anger be honorable? Why does Phoenix think Achilles’ anger is no longer honorable? In what way are worldly goods and possessions related to honor and being honored?
7. After his brutal treatment of Hector’s corpse, why does Achilles treat Priam so civilly when the old man begs for his son’s body (pages 237–243)? What does Priam say that sways Achilles? Give other examples of how family ties matter to the characters in *The Iliad*, both parent-child ties and those between siblings. Discuss the colors, close-ups, and placement of panels in this scene and how they create an emotional impact.
8. Analyze how the panels in the artwork create pacing in the story, pointing to specific pages. What kinds of panels slow down the pace? What kinds speed it up? Describe the panels used in battle scenes and their effect. How are the panels and their artwork about the gods different from the ones about the humans?

9. The epic is divided into books. Consider the titles of each book and the opening panels for each one. Choose a few to analyze closely. How does the title relate to what happens in that book? How does the opening panel set the tone or introduce the action of that book? What difference would it make visually and to the narrative if the epic was not divided into books but read straight through from beginning to end?
10. This graphic novel version of *The Iliad* has fewer words than the original. How does the art replace the missing text? What do you know about major characters like Achilles and Hector from the artwork that isn't expressed in words? Give examples of how the illustrations rather than the text convey the setting in terms of time and place.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

These activities correlate to Common Core ELA Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.7–12.1, 7–12.2, 7–12.3; Craft and Structure RL.7–12.6; ELA Speaking & Listening Standards: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.7–12.1, 7–12.2; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.7–12.5; and ELA Writing Standards: Text Types and Purposes W.7–12.2, 7–12.3; Research to Build and Present Knowledge W.7–12.7.

1. Have each student choose one of the major gods or goddesses in the story to research using print and digital sources. They should then analyze the part played by that deity in the plot of *The Iliad* and their influence on specific characters. Each student should write an essay that sums up their research and draws connections between their research and the role of the god or goddess in this version of *The Iliad*. The essay should include the deity's physical appearance in the graphic novel and how this depiction relates to the research findings.
2. Proper burial was enormously important to both sides in the Trojan War, making how Achilles treated Hector's body all the more horrifying to the Trojans. As a class, compile details about the death and burial rites described and shown in the graphic novel. Then have students work in pairs to learn about another culture's death and burial customs, either a current culture or one in the past. They should compare and contrast the Trojan and Greek approach to burial to the one they research. Then each pair can choose a format through which to convey their findings to their classmates, such as an essay, poster, slide show, speech, and so on.
3. Art from ancient times, including Greek vases, depicts scenes from the Trojan War. Have students work in small groups to look at some of the artwork on the websites below that show scenes from *The Iliad*. Each group should choose a few of the pieces of art, including vases that show Achilles, and compare them to the art in the graphic novel, answering questions such as: Do you think Gareth Hinds was influenced by the style on the vases or other art you saw? How do the scenes of Achilles on vases, such as the one where he's dragging Hector's body, compare to the same scenes in the book?

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: <https://bit.ly/2poyi38>

Oxford University Press: <https://bit.ly/2HOH6L1>

4. Gareth Hinds explains in the notes that he designed the warriors' shields using symbols that reflect each character (page 256). After looking at the artwork in the book and on the websites mentioned in the previous activity, have each student design and draw a large shield for him or herself. The student should write a short paragraph explaining the symbols that they chose and how those symbols relate to their life and personality. An alternative is for a student to create a shield for a character in another book that they've enjoyed. Post them on a Wall of Shields in the classroom.
5. *The Iliad* focuses on the main characters but mentions many others. Have each student choose one of those others and consider the story or part of the story from their point of view. For example, how does Briseis feel about being a "spoils of war"? What does one of the common soldiers think about fighting for ten years to recover a king's wife? Students should write a monologue in prose, poetry, or rap that expresses the character's thoughts and feelings, then share it with the class.

READ GARETH HINDS'S ADAPTATION OF HOMER'S OTHER TIMELESS EPIC



The Odyssey

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Teachers' guide available at www.candlewick.com

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean, a school librarian for more than fifteen years, who now presents professional development workshops on new books for young people. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and is the author of guides to children's books, including *Great Books About Things Kids Love*.



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