



Major Character List

Below you will find list of characters in the Iliad, subdivided into the Greeks, the Trojans, and the Gods.

Greeks (known in the *Iliad* as Achaeans, Argives or Danaans)

Achilles – son of Peleus, grandson of Aeacus, the foremost Greek warrior and the central figure of the *Iliad*. His withdrawal from the fighting in Book 1 allow Hector and the Trojans to run riot against the Greeks. In Book 9, he is offered enormous reparations by Agamemnon to return to the fighting, but refuses – much to the astonishment of his colleagues. Achilles' world is turned upside-down in Book 18 when he learns about the death of his dear companion (and lover?) Patroclus. Vowing revenge at all costs, he returns to battle in Book 20 and devastates the Trojan forces, including killing Hector in a one-on-one duel.

Odysseus – Clever, cunning, and crafty, the foremost speaker among the Greeks at Troy. Delivers the first of the three speeches in the delegation to Achilles in Book 9. Achilles seems to have an instinctive dislike of Odysseus: "I hate like the gates of Hades the man who hides one thing in his heart and says another."

Phoenix – Aged companion of Achilles, who helped raise him as a child. Delivers the second of the three speeches in the delegation to Achilles in Book 9 – the longest speech in the poem – but does not appear anywhere else in the poem.

Ajax, son of Telamon – the Greater Ajax, not to be confused with **Ajax, son of Oileus**; the foremost Greek warrior after Achilles. Brusque, no-nonsense, to-the-point. Delivers the third of the three speeches in the delegation to Achilles in Book 9. 'The two Aiantes' refers to both Ajaxes together.

Agamemnon – son of Atreus, commander-in-chief of the Greek forces. Arrogant and overbearing, his quarrel with Achilles in Book 1 over a slave-girl leads to Achilles' withdrawal from the fighting, which proves catastrophic for the Greek forces.

Patroclus – son of Menoetius, the chief companion – and potentially lover – of Achilles. His death in Book 16 is the catalyst that leads to Achilles' return to battle in Book 20.

Antilochus – son of Nestor, delivers the unpleasant news to Achilles in Book 18 that Patroclus has been killed in battle.

Ajax, son of Oileus – the Lesser Ajax, not to be confused with **Ajax, son of Telamon**. 'The two Aiantes' refers to both Ajaxes together.



Helen – wife of Menelaus whose abduction by the Trojan Paris is the primary cause of the Trojan War.

Automedon – companion of Achilles.

Trojans (and their Allies)

Hector – son of Priam and brother of Paris; the foremost Trojan warrior who enjoys great success on the battlefield in Achilles' absence.

Paris – son of Priam; a dandy and a seducer who caused the Trojan war by abducting Menelaus' wife Helen. Also known as 'Alexander' or 'Alexandros'.

Priam – king of Troy, father of both Hector and Paris and a further forty-eight children, many of whom have already perished in the fighting.

The Gods

Zeus – king of the gods, associated with justice and fate. The events of the *Iliad* are described in the opening lines of Book 1 as the 'plan of Zeus'. In Book 1, he is persuaded by Thetis to punish the Greeks for their mistreatment of Achilles by backing Hector and the Trojans in battle. The plan backfires (as far as Achilles is concerned) when his companion, Patroclus, is killed by a rampaging Hector.

Thetis – daughter of the sea-god Nereus, wife of the mortal Peleus, and mother to Achilles. A constant helpmeet to her son, especially in Book 1 when she persuades Zeus to back Hector and the Trojans against the Greeks in revenge for the Greeks' mistreatment of her son. In Book 18, she is responsible for procuring a new set of armour for Achilles.

Hera – wife of Zeus and staunchly pro-Greek.

Hephaestus – the blacksmith god. In the second half of Book 18, Hephaestus manufactures a magnificent new set of armour for Achilles.

Athena – daughter of Zeus and staunchly pro-Greek.

Apollo – son of Zeus and staunchly pro-Trojan.

Iris – the messenger-god.