



DATELINE:
TROY

PAUL FLEISCHMAN



NEW UPDATED EDITION

SYNOPSIS

The story of the Trojan War is the first written record of Western civilization. It comes to us through the writings of the ancient Greeks, most notably in a long poem, *The Iliad*, composed by Homer around 800 B.C. It is really made up of many linked stories, each of which could stand alone. Many plays, novels, movies, dances, statues, and paintings have been based on these characters and events.

The story begins with the nightmare of pregnant Hecuba, queen of Troy, in which she gives birth to a mass of flaming snakes. It ends, as the priest Calchas has foretold, with death, destruction, and the fall of Troy.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

GREEKS

Warriors

Achilles, son of Thetis

Agamemnon, king of Mycenae

Ajax

Diomedes, king of Argos

Idomeneus, king of Crete

Menelaus, king of Sparta

Neoptolemus, son of Achilles

Odysseus, king of Ithaca

Patroclus, friend of Achilles

Philoctetes, master archer

Prince Palamedes

Protesilaus, first to be killed

Goddesses Aiding the Greeks

Athena, goddess of wisdom and battle

Hera, wife of Zeus

Thetis, sea nymph and
mother of Achilles

Priest

Calchas, priest of Apollo,
formerly of Troy

Women

Briseis, captive concubine

Chryseis, captive concubine

Iphigenia, Agamemnon's daughter

TROJANS

Warriors

Hector, eldest son of Priam

Paris, son of Priam and Hecuba

Priam, king of Troy

Gods and Goddesses Aiding the Trojans

Aphrodite, goddess of love

Zeus, king of the gods

Priest

Laocoön

Women

Cassandra, a prophetess,
daughter of Priam

Hecuba, queen of Troy

Helen, wife of Menelaus, formerly of Troy

Polyxena, daughter of Priam

Civilian Men

Antenor

Nauplius, father of Palamedes

OTHER GODDESSES

Artemis, goddess of the hunt

Eris, goddess of strife

DISCUSSION POINTS

Before reading:

Although Homer's *Iliad* was probably written about 800 B.C., it describes events that may have happened somewhere around 1100 B.C. Find a timeline that shows what was going on elsewhere in the world at this time. How long was the Trojan War after the building of the pyramids in Egypt, or Stonehenge in England? How long before the lives of Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed? How long before the Roman Empire or the age of knights in Europe? How long before you were born? Number from 1 to 10 on a sheet of paper. After number 1, write, "War is horrifying, awful, and wrong" and after number 10, write, "War is interesting, exciting, and necessary." Where does your own opinion fall between these two opposites? What might be some of the other positions on the scale?

While reading:

1. Why has Paul Fleischman chosen to pair the events of the story with contemporary newspaper articles? In the introduction, he says, "The Trojan War is still being fought." (p. 9) What does this mean and what does it say about humanity and war?
2. The three goddesses each want to be judged the most beautiful by Paris—and everybody else. Why do we feel it is so important to be beautiful? Do you think the newspaper article's findings are true (p. 15) — that ugly people are treated badly just because of their looks? How important is appearance to you in choosing your friends? What about someone you would date?
3. Even though Priam sent the infant Paris away to die, he is overjoyed to have his lost son back. Why does he change his mind about his son's survival? He says, "Better that Troy should burn than that my precious son should die!" (p.18) Was it? The story of a baby left in the wilderness to die who is saved and returns as an adult is a common one in folklore. Can you think of another example? Why is this idea so intriguing?
4. Cassandra, Paris's sister, has been cursed by Apollo to always see the truth but never to be believed when she warns people about what is sure to happen. Can you think of any modern Cassandras? Have you ever felt this way?
5. Both Odysseus and Achilles use tricks to try to avoid going to war. Are people justified in refusing to fight in a war they don't care about or think is wrong? Are there any circumstances about a war that might change your answer? What are some ways Americans have attempted to evade serving in the military? Is this always cowardice? Is it always moral courage?

6. Do you think Menelaus is primarily motivated by love when he sets out to retrieve Helen? What are some other emotions that might be involved? Is getting Helen back the main reason the other princes agree to go to war? Do you think Agamemnon might have had other motivations for wanting to sack Troy? It has been said that there are two reasons for every war—the one the leaders tell the people and the one that is the real cause. Many historians believe that the real cause for this war was that Troy collected tolls from ships passing through the Dardenelles Strait. Can you think of some modern examples of popular and hidden causes for wars?
7. Iphigenia gives up her life willingly so the Greek ships can have favorable winds from Artemis. Was this heroic? What do you think of people who kill themselves to dramatize a cause they believe in, as the headlines opposite this passage describe? Do their actions differ from those of terrorist suicide bombers? If so, how?
8. Protesilaus is the first Greek to be killed in the war, and when his wife learns of his death, she stabs herself to be with him in the afterlife. What sorrows, risks, and dangers are particular to women in war? Poll your friends to see if the girls' attitude toward war differs from that of the boys. Is there a significant difference? Does that surprise you?
9. On page 51, the article describes a U.S. government plan under the Reagan administration in which false information, or “disinformation,” was fed to important American media to convince Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi that he was about to be attacked. Do you think lying to the people for strategic reasons can be justified?
10. In the descriptions of the battles in this book, and in most movies, we see individuals facing off and trying to kill each other. How is modern war different from this scenario? Which would make you feel worse—to kill one other person face-to-face or to kill thousands by pushing a button?
11. When his friend Patroclus is killed in battle with Hector, Achilles howls for revenge. Calls for revenge—as in the case of the Trojan War—have a way of escalating rather than ending violence. Are there other responses open to individuals and countries who feel they've been wronged?
12. Which character best fits each of these words: *tricky*, *conceited*, *loyal*, *heroic*, *treacherous*, *dumb*, *tough*, *loving*, *frustrated*, *envious*. What actions show this? What one character do you like best? Which one would you like to play in a film?
13. There are several places in the story where the Trojan War might have been avoided if certain actions had taken place. What are some of them? Why is it so hard to stop the momentum building toward a war?

14. In most stories about war, there are the bad guys on one side and the good guys on the other. How is this story different? Can you name any other war books or movies that show the war from both armies' perspectives? If you didn't know how the war was going to turn out and you had to choose to be on one side or the other, would you join up with the Greeks or the Trojans? Why?
15. The sack of Troy leaves all males in the city—young and old—dead and the women carried off as slaves. Whom do we count when we add up the cost of a war? Can you find some statistics on the London blitz or the Dresden firebombing in World War II? What about the nuclear bomb attack on Hiroshima or Iraqi civilian casualties in the current war?
16. When the war and the homecoming are over, who of the following are still left alive: Agamemnon, Achilles, Paris, Hector, Ajax, Palamedes, Patroclus, Odysseus, Menelaus, and Helen? “After ten years of fighting,” the book ends, “who could tell the victor from the vanquished?” (p. 74) Do all wars follow this pattern? What does it mean to “win” a war?

Further Discussion

Look at the list of opinions about war you made before reading this book. Has your position on the scale changed? Why or why not?

Are there ever just wars? Does the Trojan War pass your justification test? What about the wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries?

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL FLEISCHMAN

- Q.** *How old were you when you first began to hear stories about the Trojan War? What were the circumstances?*
- A.** I somehow missed both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in junior high and high school. The book that hooked me was Robert Graves's *The Siege and Fall of Troy*, a simple retelling that I came upon in college. I was amazed to find that the Trojan War was such a terrific story. Twenty years later, that ember was still glowing in my mind and led to *Dateline: Troy*.
- Q.** *Homer's Iliad focuses on the wrath of Achilles during the Trojan War and its outcome. Why did you choose to go back and include the whole story leading up to these events?*
- A.** The Robert Graves book had opened my eyes to how much of the Trojan War's story takes place before and after the *Iliad*. Those scenes contain great drama—Paris's birth and rescue, Agamemnon sacrificing his daughter, the wooden horse being pulled into Troy. They also give readers a background from which the war

grows. Homer could begin the *Iliad* in the war's tenth year because his listeners would have known all the scenes that came before.

Q. *What were your main sources for these stories? Did you find any conflicts or different versions?*

A. I read many different versions, from Graves to Nathaniel Hawthorne to modern retellings. Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths* was valuable not only for its anthropology but for the many variants it included — one of which had Odysseus slain by his son upon arriving back in Ithaca. Since it mirrored the unhappy ends that many of the Greeks met, I used that event in the first edition of *Dateline: Troy*, but I replaced it in the update with the more commonly known version from the *Odyssey*.

Q. *How long did it take you to collect all those newspaper articles? How many newspapers did you read daily?*

A. I spent several years, on and off, on the book. By the end, I could thread every kind of microfilm known to man. Coming up with modern-day parallels was the first task—not always easy. As for clippings, the Internet didn't exist when I worked on the first edition, in the mid-1990s, meaning I was limited to papers I could actually see in libraries—the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the local papers from my region of California. Whenever I traveled, I ducked into the library, prayed the local paper had been indexed, and worked on various clipping ideas that had stumped me. Some I never solved to my complete satisfaction. The Internet brought access to thousands of papers and the ability to search by headline—a dream come true. This made it infinitely easier to both bring in the last decade's top stories and improve on those troublesome matches.

Q. *Why do you think this story has survived for three thousand years?*

A. Because human nature and human predicaments are eternal—and full of compelling drama. Love, grief, fear, lies, secrets, surprises . . . we know these emotions, dilemmas, disasters. Literature travels at the speed of light, connecting us with all people and all places.

Q. *Do you think that Homer's story of the Trojan War glorifies war or deplors it? Or does it do both?*

A. The *Iliad* is no army recruiting film. Homer spends as much time lamenting deaths as reveling in them. “And darkness covered his eyes” is his standard—always haunting—line describing a warrior's death. Fallen warriors don't ascend to Valhalla or receive parades, but rather are stripped of their armor while their souls make their way to the gloom of the underworld. Though battles are described in great detail, everything is richly described in Homer. His subject

seems to me to be less the glory of killing than the tragedy of death — a mourning for men robbed of the sight of their wives and homelands, sent to Hades before their time for the sake of a squabble kept alive by the gods.

OTHER BOOKS TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Goddess of Yesterday by Caroline B. Cooney (Delacorte, 2002)

A young girl is taken as a hostage from her island home by a king on his way to visit Troy—with very bad timing.

The Greek News (History News Series) (Candlewick, 1996)

Life in ancient Greece is presented in the form of a daily newspaper written at the time.

The Hero Schliemann: The Dreamer Who Dug for Troy by Laura Amy Schlitz (Candlewick, 2006)

Archaeologist? Mythmaker? Crook? Decide for yourself after reading this biography of the man who found the real Troy.

Hiroshima by Clive A. Lawton (Candlewick, 2004)

A renowned authority investigates the events that led up to the disaster at Hiroshima in 1945—and discusses the consequences we are still living with today.

Inside the Walls of Troy: A Novel of the Women Who Lived the Trojan War by Clemence McLaren (Simon Pulse, 2004)

Helen and Cassandra tell their side of the story.

September 11, 2001: Attack on New York City by Wilborn Hampton (Candlewick, 2003)

One horrifying day in history as described by those who experienced it firsthand.

WEBSITES

Timeless Myths: The Trojan War

<http://www.timelessmyths.com/classical/trojanwar.html>

A treasury of highly detailed yet readable links to every aspect and character of the Trojan War story.

Quiz—The Trojan War and the *Iliad*

<http://www.infoplease.com/quizzes/iliad/1.html>

High scores are easy for anybody who's read *Dateline: Troy*.

Achilles at the Gates

<http://www.archaeology.org/online/interviews/shanower.html>

An extremely interesting interview with Eric Shanower, the creator of *Age of Bronze*, in which he talks about his archaeological research.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



PAUL FLEISCHMAN has written thirty-two books — eleven novels, two collections of short stories, three books of poetry, three books of nonfiction, nine picture books, three plays, and *Dateline: Troy*, in a category all its own. His works are often new and surprising, such as *Zap*, a smart, farcical play aimed at a generation of short attention spans with a taste for razor-sharp comedy, and *Graven Images*, a Newbery Honor–winning trio of eerie, beguiling short stories about the unexpected ways in which an artist’s creations can reveal truths.

Fleischman grew up in Santa Monica, California, hearing his writer father, Sid Fleischman, read aloud from his own books as he wrote them. Paul Fleischman says, “Words have always been my world.” After two years of college at the University of California at Berkeley, he took off across the country by bicycle and ended up in a two hundred-year-old house in New Hampshire, where he lived for several years without electricity or a telephone. He went on to graduate from the University of New Mexico, after which his jobs have included bookstore clerk, library book shelfer, proofreader, bagel baker, and, finally, prize-winning author. Fleischman has two grown sons, Seth and Dana, and lives with his wife, Patty, in northern California, where even their home village—Aromas—has a surprising name.

Paul Fleischman’s books are available wherever books are sold and through educational distributors nationwide.

This discussion guide was prepared by Patty Campbell, a critic, librarian, writer, editor, and teacher in the field of young adult literature, and winner of the Grolier Award from the American Library Association and the ALAN Award from the National Council of Teachers of English.

Cover photographs: copyright © 2006 by Chris Hondras/Getty Images (background); copyright © 2006 by Ashley Gilbertson/Aurora/Getty Images (foreground soldier); copyright © 2006 by MARWAN NAAMANI/AFP/Getty Images (soldiers with rifles); Greek battle image copyright © 2006 by Stapleton Collection/CORBIS; Greek figure used by permission of the Antikensammlung, Munich.

This discussion guide contains website addresses to third-party sites for informational purposes. These sites are provided solely as a convenience to you, and the inclusion of any such site does not imply endorsement by Candlewick Press, Inc., of such third-party sites or the contents thereof. Candlewick Press, Inc., is not responsible for the contents of the referenced third-party sites and makes no representations or warranties, express or implied, regarding the contents, accuracy, or functionality of the third-party sites. If you use the third-party sites, you do so at your own risk.

www.candlewick.com



CANDLEWICK PRESS