

Virgil, “The Fall of Troy”: A Discussion Guide

By David Bruce

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Preface

This is a short discussion guide for Book 2 of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which is the fullest surviving ancient account of the Fall of Troy, one of the most important myths in the Western world.

Summary—Book 2:”The Fall of Troy”

In Book 2 of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Aeneas tells Dido, the Queen of Carthage, how the Greeks used the trick of the Trojan Horse and the lies of Sinon to conquer Troy. Aeneas tells Dido how he, his father, and his son escaped Troy, although his wife died in the carnage. He tells of how he returned to Troy to search for his wife, and of how her ghost appeared to him. Her ghost told him that he would arrive safely in a land in the West. Her ghost also told him not to grieve for her.

Glossary

Note: Some characters have both a Roman and a Greek name. Their mythologies were similar, and the Romans borrowed many cultural elements from the Greeks.

Here is a list of some gods and goddesses with their Greek and Latin names:

Greek	Latin
Zeus	Jupiter
Hera	Juno
Aphrodite	Venus
Athena	Minerva
Poseidon	Neptune
Hermes	Mercury
Hephaestus	Vulcan
Hades	Pluto
Artemis	Diana
Ares	Mars

Greeks

Achilles: Achilles was the main warrior for the Greeks. Homer's *Iliad* tells of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles that led to the deaths of many Greeks. Achilles died in the tenth year of the war, before Troy finally fell.

Agamemnon: Agamemnon was the leader of the Greek forces against the Trojans. His brother is Menelaus, the lawful husband of Helen, who was stolen by Paris and became Helen of Troy.

Diomedes: Diomedes is a Greek warrior who fought alongside Ulysses, whose Greek name is Odysseus.

Menelaus: Menelaus is the younger brother of Agamemnon, who led the Greek forces against the Trojans after the Trojan prince Paris ran off with Helen, Menelaus' wife. Whether Helen ran away willingly with Paris or Paris kidnapped her is unknown.

Phoenix: Phoenix is a father-figure to Achilles and the leader of some of Achilles' men.

Pyrrhus: Pyrrhus is Achilles' son. He is also known as Neoptolemus. After Achilles died in the final year of the Trojan War, Pyrrhus came to Troy. During the Fall of Troy, he killed Priam, the King of Troy.

Sinon: Sinon is a talented liar. His lies convince the Trojans that the Greeks have sailed home and that if the Trojan Horse is taken inside the walls of Troy, then Troy will never fall.

Ulysses: Ulysses is a Greek warrior who thought up the idea of the Trojan Horse. His Greek name is Odysseus, and Homer's ancient epic the *Odyssey* is about his adventures and return to Ithaca, his home island, after the Fall of Troy.

Trojans

Aeneas: Aeneas is the hero of Virgil's *Aeneid*. One of the main Trojan warriors, he survived the Fall of Troy, and he led other Trojan survivors to Italy, where they became important ancestors of the Romans. Aeneas is known for his *pietas*: his devotion to duty. Aeneas' mother is the immortal goddess Venus.

Anchises: Anchises is Aeneas' father. During the Fall of Troy, Anchises at first wants to die, but an omen convinces him to leave Troy with his son and his grandson.

Ascanius: Ascanius is Aeneas' son. During the Fall of Troy, Aeneas carries his father on his back and leads his son by the hand.

Cassandra: Cassandra is a daughter of Priam. She has the gift of prophecy, but she is cursed because no one believes her when she foretells the future. During the Fall of Troy, Cassandra is raped in the temple of Athena. She becomes Agamemnon's spear-bride, aka sex-slave, and she is killed when Agamemnon returns home to Mycenae only to be killed by his wife and her lover.

Creusa: Creusa is Aeneas' Trojan wife. She dies during the Fall of Troy.

Hector: Hector is the foremost Trojan warrior. In Homer's *Iliad*, we read of how Hector killed Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, in battle. Enraged, Achilles then killed Hector. The death of Hector meant that Troy would soon fall. Hector's parents are the King and Queen of Troy: Priam and Hecuba.

Hecuba: Hecuba is the aged Queen of Troy. After the Fall of Troy, she becomes a slave.

Helen: Helen's lawful husband is Menelaus, the King of Sparta. She came to Troy with the Trojan prince Paris. Whether she did so willingly or unwillingly is unknown.

Laocoon: Laocoon is a Trojan priest of the sea-god Neptune. He advises against taking the Trojan Horse inside the walls of Troy, but sea-snakes kill him and his sons, and the Trojans disregard his advice.

Paris: A Trojan prince who visited Menelaus, the King of Sparta, and ran away with his wife and some of his treasure. This is the cause of the Trojan War.

Priam: Priam is the King of Troy; he is also the father of Hector. Achilles' son, Pyrrhus, kills Priam during the Fall of Troy.

Ripheus: Ripheus is a Trojan warrior known for his justice who dies during the Fall of Troy. In the *Aeneid*, he is only a minor character, but he appears in Dante's *Divine Comedy* as a pagan who was able to enter Paradise.

A Carthaginian

Dido: Dido is the Queen of Carthage. Following a storm at sea, Aeneas and his men landed at Carthage. In Book 2 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas tells Dido his story, including what he experienced during the Fall of Troy. Aeneas and Dido have a love affair.

Gods

Apollo: In both Roman and Greek mythology, Apollo is the god of archery and of healing. In the Trojan War, Apollo favored the Trojans.

Juno: Juno is the wife of Jupiter, King of the Gods. Juno's Greek name is Hera. In the Trojan War, Juno favored the Greeks.

Jupiter, aka Jove: Jupiter is the main and most powerful god. He is the King of the Gods. Jupiter's Greek name is Zeus.

Mars: Mars is the god of war. Mars' Greek name is Ares. In the Trojan War, Mars favored the Trojans.

Minerva: Minerva is the goddess of wisdom. Minerva's Greek name was Pallas Athena. In the Trojan War, Minerva favored the Greeks.

Neptune: Neptune is the god of the sea. Neptune's Greek name is Poseidon. In the Trojan War, Neptune favored the Greeks.

Venus: Venus is the goddess of sexual passion. Venus' Greek name is Aphrodite. In the Trojan War, Venus favored the Trojans. Venus is the mother of the mortal Trojan warrior Aeneas.

Places

Carthage: Carthage was a city in North Africa on the Mediterranean Sea. Dido founded Carthage, and it later became a great enemy of the Romans, who eventually destroyed it. Hannibal, who much later crossed the Alps with elephants in order to attack the Romans, was a Carthaginian general.

Tenedos: Tenedos is an island off the coast of Troy. The Greeks, led by Agamemnon, pretended to sail away from Troy, but they merely sailed behind and hid behind this island.

Troy: Troy is a city in what is now Turkey. Homer's *Iliad* tells the story of the events of a few weeks in the final year of the ten-year war between the Greeks and the Trojans. The Greeks lay

siege to Troy after Paris, a Prince of Troy, ran away with Helen, the lawful wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta.

Book 2: “The Fall of Troy”

The *Aeneid* was written in Latin by Virgil in 19 B.C.E.

This translation into English is by John Dryden (1631-1700).

Note: The notes and the headings on the translation below are by David Bruce.

Aeneas Begins to Tell the Story of the Fall of Troy

All were attentive to the **godlike man**,¹
When from his lofty couch he thus began:

“**Great queen**,² what you command me to relate
Renews the sad remembrance of our fate:
An empire from its old foundations rent,
And ev’ry woe the Trojans underwent;
A peopled city made a **desart**³ place;
All that I saw, and part of which I was:
Not ev’n the hardest of our foes could hear,
Nor stern **Ulysses**⁴ tell without a tear.
And now the latter watch of wasting night,
And setting stars, to kindly rest invite;
But, since you take such int’rest in our woe,
And Troy’s disastrous end desire to know,
I will restrain my tears, and briefly tell
What in our last and fatal night befell.

Description of the Trojan Horse and the Greeks’ Plot

“By destiny compell’d, and in despair,
The Greeks grew weary of the tedious war,
And by **Minerva**’s⁵ aid a **fabric**⁶ rear’d,

¹ The “godlike man” is Aeneas, the second-best Trojan hero (Hector was the best Trojan hero). At the beginning of Book 2, Aeneas begins to tell the story of the Fall of Troy to Dido, the Queen of Carthage, where he and his ships have landed after fleeing from Troy and wandering around the Mediterranean.

² The “great queen” is Dido, queen of Carthage. She was Phoenician, but left the Phoenician city of Tyre after her husband, Sychaeus, was murdered by her brother, Pygmalion.

³ “Desart” means “desert.” Troy became a deserted city after it fell. John Dryden (1631-1700) lived just after Shakespeare’s day, so his language is old-fashioned. I am using this translation because it is not copyrighted and so I can save you some money; in addition, Dryden is a major poet.

⁴ “Ulysses” is Odysseus. The *Aeneid* is a Latin poem, and Ulysses is the Latin name for the Greek Odysseus.

⁵ “Minerva” is the Latin name for the goddess Athena. (She was often called “Pallas Athena.”) Minerva especially favored the Greek warrior Ulysses (Odysseus), she supported the Greeks in their war against the Trojans, and she was the special protectress of Athens.

Which like a steed of monstrous height appear'd:
 The sides were plank'd with pine; they feign'd it made
 For their return, and this the vow they paid.
 Thus they pretend, but in the hollow side
 Selected numbers of their soldiers hide:
 With inward arms the dire machine they load,
 And iron bowels stuff the dark abode.
 In sight of Troy lies **Tenedos**,⁷ an isle
 (While Fortune did on **Priam's**⁸ empire smile)
 Renown'd for wealth; but, since, a faithless bay,
 Where ships expos'd to wind and weather lay.
 There was their fleet conceal'd. We thought, for Greece
 Their sails were hoisted, and our fears release.

The Trojans Think that the War is Finally Over

“The Trojans, coop'd within their walls so long,
 Unbar their gates, and issue in a throng,
 Like swarming bees, and with delight survey
 The camp deserted, where the Grecians lay:
 The quarters of the sev'ral chiefs they show'd;
 Here **Phoenix**,⁹ here **Achilles**,¹⁰ made abode;
 Here join'd the battles; there the navy rode.
 Part on the pile their wond'ring eyes employ:
 The pile by **Pallas**¹¹ rais'd to ruin Troy.
Thymoetes¹² first ('t is doubtful whether hir'd,
 Or so the Trojan destiny requir'd)
 Mov'd that the ramparts might be broken down,
 To lodge the monster fabric in the town.
 But **Capys**,¹³ and the rest of sounder mind,
 The fatal present to the flames designed,
 Or to the wat'ry deep; at least to bore

⁶ “Fabric” does not mean cloth. It means “A product of skilled workmanship.” The meanings of words change over time, and the meaning of this word has changed over time. A good source to use in checking how words were used in olden days is the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁷ Tenedos is an island off the coast of Troy. Just as the text says, the Greek ships appeared to sail away from Troy, but instead they hid behind Tenedos. After night had fallen, the ships returned to Troy. When the Greek warriors who had been hidden inside the Trojan Horse came out and made their way to the gates of Troy and opened them, the warriors who had been on the ships came into Troy.

⁸ Priam is the King of Troy and the father of Hector, Paris, and the prophetess Cassandra.

⁹ Phoenix was a father figure to Achilles and leader of some of Achilles' men.

¹⁰ Achilles was the greatest Greek warrior. After Hector killed Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, Achilles killed Hector. In the final book of the *Iliad*, Achilles allows Hector's father, Priam, to ransom his son's body.

¹¹ “Pallas” refers to the goddess Pallas Athena. She is sometimes just called “Athena.” Her Latin name is Minerva.

¹² Thymoetes is a Trojan.

¹³ Capys is a Trojan.

The hollow sides, and hidden frauds explore.
 The giddy vulgar, as their fancies guide,
 With noise say nothing, and in parts divide.

Laocoon Advises that the Trojan Horse Be Destroyed

“**Laocoon**,¹⁴ follow’d by a num’rous crowd,
 Ran from the fort, and cried, from far, aloud:
 ‘O wretched countrymen! what fury reigns?
 What more than madness has possess’d your brains?
 Think you the Grecians from your coasts are gone?
 And are Ulysses’ arts no better known?
 This hollow fabric either must inclose,
 Within its blind recess, our secret foes;
 Or ’t is an engine rais’d above the town,
 T’ o’erlook the walls, and then to batter down.
 Somewhat is sure design’d, by fraud or force:
 Trust not their presents,¹⁵ nor admit the horse.’

Thus having said, against the steed he threw
 His forceful spear, which, hissing as it flew,
 Pierc’d thro’ the yielding planks of jointed wood,
 And trembling in the hollow belly stood.
 The sides, transpierc’d, return a rattling sound,
 And **groans of Greeks inclos’d come issuing thro’ the wound**¹⁶
 And, had not Heav’n the fall of Troy design’d,
 Or had not men been fated to be blind,
 Enough was said and done t’inspire a better mind.
 Then had our lances pierc’d the treach’rous wood,
 And **Ilian**¹⁷ tow’rs and Priam’s empire stood.

Sinon the Lying Greek is Discovered

“Meantime, with shouts, the Trojan shepherds bring
 A **captive Greek**,¹⁸ in bands, before the king;
 Taken to take; who made himself their prey,

¹⁴ Laocoon is a Trojan and he is a priest of Neptune. Neptune is the Latin name for the god Neptune (Greek name Poseidon), who rules the sea.

¹⁵ This is a famous line that is often rendered, “I fear the Greeks — especially bringing gifts.” For you Latin buffs, the line that Virgil wrote is “*timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*.” “*Danaos*” here refers to Danaans, one of the many terms Virgil (and Homer) used to refer to the Greeks. “Greek gifts” is now a proverbial term in English — they are gifts given to you to soften you up so you may be taken advantage of in some way.

¹⁶ If only the Trojans had been listening more closely, they could have heard the men inside the Trojan Horse.

¹⁷ “Ilian” refers to Troy. One of Troy’s other names was Ilios.

¹⁸ “The captive Greek” is Sinon, who has been planted to persuade the Trojans to bring the Trojan Horse inside the walls of Troy. His speech is a masterpiece of persuasion. Notice how he exploits the Trojan hatred of Ulysses. Ulysses, of course, was well regarded by the Greeks, but hated and feared by the Trojans.

T' impose on their belief, and Troy betray;
 Fix'd on his aim, and obstinately bent
 To die undaunted, or to circumvent.
 About the captive, tides of Trojans flow;
 All press to see, and some insult the foe.
 Now hear how well the Greeks their wiles disguis'd;
 Behold a nation in a man compris'd.
 Trembling the miscreant stood, unarm'd and bound;
 He star'd, and roll'd his haggard eyes around,
 Then said: 'Alas! what earth remains, what sea
 Is open to receive unhappy me?
 What fate a wretched fugitive attends,
 Scorn'd by my foes, abandon'd by my friends?'
 He said, and sigh'd, and cast a rueful eye:
 Our pity kindles, and our passions die.
 We cheer youth to make his own defense,
 And freely tell us what he was, and whence:
 What news he could impart, we long to know,
 And what to credit from a captive foe.

Sinon the Lying Greek Tells His Story

"His fear at length dismiss'd, he said: 'Whate'er
 My fate ordains, my words shall be sincere:
 I neither can nor dare my birth disclaim;
 Greece is my country, Sinon is my name.
 Tho' plung'd by Fortune's pow'r in misery,
 'T is not in Fortune's pow'r to make me lie.
 If any chance has hither brought the name
 Of Palamedes, not unknown to fame,
 Who suffer'd from the malice of the times,
 Accus'd and sentenc'd for pretended crimes,
 Because these fatal wars he would prevent;
 Whose death the wretched Greeks too late lament—
 Me, then a boy, my father, poor and bare
 Of other means, committed to his care,
 His kinsman and companion in the war.
 While Fortune favor'd, while his arms support
 The cause, and rul'd the counsels, of the court,
 I made some figure there; nor was my name
 Obscure, nor I without my share of fame.
 But when Ulysses, with fallacious arts,
 Had made impression in the people's hearts,
 And forg'd a treason in my patron's name
 (I speak of things too far divulg'd by fame),
 My kinsman fell. Then I, without support,

In private mourn'd his loss, and left the court.
 Mad as I was, I could not bear his fate
 With silent grief, but loudly blam'd the state,
 And curs'd the direful author of my woes.
 'T was told again; and hence my ruin rose.
 I threaten'd, if indulgent Heav'n once more
 Would land me safely on my native shore,
 His death with double vengeance to restore.
 This mov'd the murderer's hate; and soon ensued
 Th' effects of malice from a man so proud.
 Ambiguous rumors thro' the camp he spread,
 And sought, by treason, my devoted head;
 New crimes invented; left unturn'd no stone,
 To make my guilt appear, and hide his own;
 Till **Calchas**¹⁹ was by force and threat'ning wrought—
 But why—why dwell I on that anxious thought?
 If on my nation just revenge you seek,
 And 't is t' appear a foe, t' appear a Greek;
 Already you my name and country know;
 Assuage your thirst of blood, and strike the blow:
 My death will both the kingly brothers please,
 And set insatiate **Ithacus**²⁰ **at ease.**'²¹

This fair unfinish'd tale, these broken starts,
 Rais'd expectations in our longing hearts:
 Unknowing as we were in Grecian arts.

Sinon Continues to Tell His Tale

“His former trembling once again renew'd,
 With acted fear, the villain thus pursued:
 ‘Long had the Grecians (tir'd with fruitless care,
 And wearied with an unsuccessful war)
 Resolv'd to raise the siege, and leave the town;
 And, had the gods permitted, they had gone;
 But oft the wintry seas and southern winds
 Withstood their passage home, and chang'd their minds.
 Portents and prodigies their souls amaz'd;
 But most, when this stupendous pile was rais'd:
 Then flaming meteors, hung in air, were seen,
 And thunders rattled thro' a sky serene.

¹⁹ Calchas was a Greek prophet. According to Sinon's story, Calchas is influenced very much by Ulysses' wishes—that is, manipulated by Ulysses.

²⁰ “Ithacus” is Ulysses, who was the king of the Greek island of Ithaca.

²¹ Notice the manipulation in these lines. Sinon says that his death will please the kingly brothers—Agamemnon and Menelaus, the leaders of the war against Troy—and will please Ulysses. Of course, the Trojans have no desire whatsoever to please these men.

Dismay'd, and fearful of some dire event,
Eurypylus²² t' enquire their fate was sent.
 He from the gods this dreadful answer brought:
 "O Grecians, when the Trojan shores you sought,
 Your passage with **a virgin's blood**²³ was bought:
 So must your safe return be bought again,
 And Grecian blood once more atone the main."

The spreading rumor round the people ran;
 All fear'd, and each believ'd himself the man.
 Ulysses took th' advantage of their fright;
 Call'd Calchas, and produc'd in open sight:
 Then bade him name the wretch, ordain'd by fate
 The public victim, to redeem the state.
 Already some presag'd the dire event,
 And saw what sacrifice Ulysses meant.
 For twice five days the good old seer withstood
 Th' intended treason, and was dumb to blood,
 Till, tir'd, with endless clamors and pursuit
 Of **Ithacus**,²⁴ he stood no longer mute;
 But, as it was agreed, pronounc'd that I
 Was destin'd by the wrathful gods to die.
 All prais'd the sentence, pleas'd the storm should fall
On one alone, whose fury threaten'd all.²⁵
 The dismal day was come; the priests prepare
 Their leaven'd cakes, and fillets for my hair.
 I follow'd **nature's laws**,²⁶ and must avow
 I broke my bonds and fled the fatal blow.
 Hid in a weedy lake all night I lay,
 Secure of safety when they sail'd away.
 But now what further hopes for me remain,
 To see my friends, or native soil, again;
 My tender infants, or my careful sire,
 Whom they returning will to death require;
 Will perpetrate on them their first design,
 And take the forfeit of their heads for mine?
 Which, O! if pity mortal minds can move,

²² Eurypylus is a Greek. According to Sinon's story, he was sent to the Oracle at Delphi to find out what the gods wanted the Greeks to do. This Oracle was greatly trusted, so Sinon refers to it to make his story more persuasive to the Trojans.

²³ To get a favorable wind and make sailing to Troy possible, Agamemnon sacrificed his oldest daughter, Iphigenia.

²⁴ "Ithacus" is Ulysses, who was the king of the Greek island of Ithaca.

²⁵ This detail is psychologically plausible. The Oracle of Delphi, according to Sinon's story, has decreed that the Greeks must perform a human sacrifice. All the other Greeks are relieved when Sinon is chosen to be the sacrifice—as a result of Ulysses' manipulation of Calchas. If Sinon is chosen to be sacrificed, then the other Greeks are safe, so they are very willing to sacrifice Sinon.

²⁶ This is the law of self-preservation. Why stay and be killed, if you can run away?

If there be faith below, or gods above,
 If innocence and truth can claim desert,
 Ye Trojans, from an injur'd wretch avert.'

The Trojans Take Pity on Sinon

“**False tears true pity move;**²⁷ **the king**²⁸ commands

To loose his fetters, and unbind his hands:

Then adds these friendly words: ‘Dismiss thy fears;
 Forget the Greeks; be mine as thou wert theirs.
 But truly tell, was it for force or guile,
 Or some religious end, you rais'd the pile?’

Sinon Continues to Tell His Lies

“Thus said the king. **He**,²⁹ full of fraudulent arts,

This well-invented tale for truth imparts:

‘Ye lamps of heav'n!’ he said, and lifted high
 His hands now free, ‘thou venerable sky!
 Inviolable pow'rs, ador'd with dread!
 Ye fatal fillets, that once bound this head!
 Ye sacred altars, from whose flames I fled!
 Be all of you adjur'd; and grant I may,
 Without a crime, th' ungrateful Greeks betray,
 Reveal the secrets of the guilty state,
 And justly punish whom I justly hate!
 But you, O king, preserve the faith you gave,
 If I, to save myself, your empire save.
 The Grecian hopes, and all th' attempts they made,
 Were only founded on Minerva's aid.

**But from the time when impious Diomede,
 And false Ulysses, that inventive head,**

Her fatal image from the temple drew,³⁰
 The sleeping guardians of the castle slew,
 Her virgin statue with their bloody hands
 Polluted, and profan'd her holy bands;
 From thence the tide of fortune left their shore,
 And ebb'd much faster than it flow'd before:

²⁷ Notice how good the Trojans appear in relation to Greeks. Sinon the Greek is a liar. However, the Trojans show mercy to him and allow him to live. In the *Aeneid*, of course, the Trojans are the heroes and the ancestors of the Roman people.

²⁸ Priam, King of Troy.

²⁹ Sinon.

³⁰ Sinon refers to Diomedes' and Ulysses' exploit of stealing a statue of Minerva from the Trojans. According to Sinon's lie, Minerva was not pleased, and thus her statue—normally an inanimate object—moves. This is a bad omen for the Greeks.

Their courage languish'd, as their hopes decay'd;
 And Pallas, now averse, refus'd her aid.
 Nor did the goddess doubtfully declare
 Her alter'd mind and alienated care.
 When first her fatal image touch'd the ground,
 She sternly cast her glaring eyes around,
 That sparkled as they roll'd, and seem'd to threat:
 Her heav'nly limbs distill'd a briny sweat.
 Thrice from the ground she leap'd, was seen to wield
 Her brandish'd lance, and shake her horrid shield.
 Then Calchas bade our host for flight
 And hope no conquest from the tedious war,
 Till first they sail'd for Greece; with pray'rs besought
 Her injur'd pow'r, and better omens brought.
 And now their navy plows the wat'ry main,
 Yet soon expect it on your shores again,
 With Pallas pleas'd; as Calchas did ordain.
 But first, to reconcile the blue-ey'd maid
 For her stol'n statue and her tow'r betray'd,
 Warn'd by the seer, to her offended name
 We rais'd and dedicate this wondrous frame,
 So lofty, lest thro' your forbidden gates
 It pass, and intercept our better fates:
 For, once admitted there, our hopes are lost;
 And Troy may then a new **Palladium**³¹ boast;
 For so religion and the gods ordain,
 That, if you violate with hands profane
 Minerva's gift, your town in flames shall burn,
 (Which omen, O ye gods, on Graecia turn!)
 But if it climb, with your assisting hands,
 The Trojan walls, and in the city stands;
**Then Troy shall Argos and Mycenae burn,
 And the reverse of fate on us return.**³²

“With such deceits he gain'd their easy hearts,
 Too prone to credit his perfidious arts.
 What **Diomede**,³³ nor **Thetis' greater son**,³⁴

³¹ The Palladium is a sacred image of Minerva, aka Pallas Athena. It is the statue that Diomedes and Ulysses stole.

³² “The convincing lie that Sinon has just told explained how Minerva had ordered the Greeks to build the wooden horse to make amends for the desecration of her sacred image, the Palladium. The Palladium, so he said, would have protected Troy as long as it remained inside Troy: so Ulysses and Diomedes stole it, but spoiled the whole operation by killing some guards and touching the sacred statue with blood still on their hands. They now had to leave the wooden horse and return to Greece, in order to begin the whole expedition afresh. The horse had been deliberately made too big to pass through the gate into Troy, because if the Trojans damaged it their city would be destroyed: while if it were brought into the city intact, Troy would be strong enough to attack the Greeks in their homeland. Note that Sinon could hardly have used Minerva's name to back up his lies unless she was in fact supporting him.” (Source: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/aeneidframes.htm>—6-26-01)

A thousand ships, nor ten years' siege, had done—
False tears and fawning words the city won.

The Omen of Laocoon and His Sons

“A greater omen, and of worse portent,
Did our unwary minds with fear torment,
Concurring to produce the dire event.
Laocoon, Neptune's priest by lot that year,
With solemn pomp then sacrific'd a steer;
When, dreadful to behold, from sea we spied
Two serpents,³⁵ rank'd abreast, the seas divide,
And smoothly sweep along the swelling tide.
Their flaming crests above the waves they show;
Their bellies seem to burn the seas below;
Their speckled tails advance to steer their course,
And on the sounding shore the flying billows force.
And now the strand, and now the plain they held;
Their ardent eyes with bloody streaks were fill'd;
Their nimble tongues they brandish'd as they came,
And lick'd their hissing jaws, that sputter'd flame.
We fled amaz'd; their destin'd way they take,
And to Laocoon and his children make;
And first around the tender boys they wind,
Then with their sharpen'd fangs their limbs and bodies grind.
The wretched father, running to their aid
With pious haste, but vain, they next invade;
Twice round his waist their winding volumes roll'd;
And twice about his gasping throat they fold.
The priest thus doubly chok'd, their crests divide,
And tow'ring o'er his head in triumph ride.
With both his hands he labors at the knots;
His holy fillets the blue venom blots;
His roaring fills the flitting air around.
Thus, when an ox receives a glancing wound,
He breaks his bands, the fatal altar flies,
And with loud bellowings breaks the yielding skies.

³³ Diomedes was a great Greek warrior who wounded both Venus (Aphrodite) and Mars (Ares) in the *Iliad*.

³⁴ “Thetis' greater son” is Achilles, who was a greater warrior than Diomedes.

³⁵ “The dramatic death of Laocoon and his two sons is the subject of a famous ancient Greek sculpture, known from a Roman copy in the Vatican Museum. Virgil's zoologically improbable sea-snakes exhibit every possible feature of snakes, both real and imagined. In fact sea-snakes (possibly the most abundant reptile on earth) are confined to the warm water of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. They are highly poisonous, but swim—like all snakes—with transverse movements. Interestingly they can tie themselves in knots. This passage may be the origin of the ‘Loch Ness Monster’ type of sea-monster which swims with ‘humps’” (Source: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/aeneidframes.htm>—6-26-01)

Their tasks perform'd, the serpents quit their prey,
 And to the tow'r of Pallas make their way:
 Couch'd at her feet, they lie protected there
 By her large buckler and protended spear.
 Amazement seizes all; the gen'ral cry
 Proclaims Laocoon justly doom'd to die,
 Whose hand the will of Pallas had withstood,
 And dared to violate the sacred wood.

The Trojans Take the Horse Inside the City

“All vote t' admit the **steed**,³⁶ that vows be paid
 And incense offer'd to th' offended **maid**.³⁷
A spacious breach is made;³⁸ the town lies bare;
 Some hoisting-levers, some the wheels prepare
 And fasten to the horse's feet; the rest
 With cables haul along th' unwieldy beast.
 Each on his fellow for assistance calls;
 At length the fatal fabric mounts the walls,
 Big with destruction. Boys with chaplets crown'd,
 And choirs of virgins, sing and dance around.
 Thus rais'd aloft, and then descending down,
 It enters o'er our heads, and threatens the town.
 O sacred city, built by hands divine!
 O valiant heroes of the Trojan line!
 Four times he struck: as oft the clashing sound
 Of arms was heard, and inward groans rebound.
 Yet, mad with zeal, and blinded with our fate,
 We haul along the horse in solemn state;
 Then place the dire portent within the tow'r.
Cassandra³⁹ cried, and curs'd th' unhappy hour;
 Foretold our fate; but, by the **god's decree**,⁴⁰
 All heard, and none believ'd the prophecy.
 With branches we the fanes adorn, and waste,
 In jollity, the day ordain'd to be the last.

³⁶ The “steed” is the Trojan Horse.

³⁷ The “maid” is Minerva, aka Pallas Athena, one of the three virgin goddesses of Greece.

³⁸ To admit the Trojan Horse, which was purposely made wider than the gates of Troy, the Trojans tear down part of their own walls. This, of course, makes the Greek conquest of Troy easier. The Trojans will not take the Trojan Horse apart to get it into Troy because they believe that would offend Minerva.

³⁹ Cassandra is one of the daughters of Priam. She was given the gift of true prophecy by Apollo, but when she refused to sleep with him, he cursed her by making it so no one would ever believe her prophecy. Therefore, even though Cassandra is prophesying the fall of Troy in this passage, none of the Trojans believe her.

⁴⁰ Apollo had decreed that no one would believe Cassandra, even though her prophecies were true.

The Night, Sinon Lets the Greeks Out of the Trojan Horse

“Meantime the rapid heav’ns roll’d down the light,
 And on the shaded ocean rush’d the night;
 Our men, secure, nor guards nor sentries held,
 But easy sleep their weary limbs compell’d.
 The Grecians had embark’d their naval pow’rs
 From Tenedos, and sought our well-known shores,
 Safe under covert of the silent night,
 And guided by th’ imperial galley’s light;
 When Sinon, favor’d by the partial gods,
 Unlock’d the horse, and op’d his dark abodes;
 Restor’d to vital air our hidden foes,
 Who joyful from their long confinement rose.
 Tysander bold, and Sthenelus their guide,
 And dire Ulysses down the cable slide:
 Then Thoas, Athamas, and **Pyrrhus**⁴¹ haste;
 Nor was the Podalirian hero last,
 Nor injur’d Menelaus, nor the fam’d
Epeus,⁴² who the fatal engine fram’d.
 A nameless crowd succeed; their forces join
 T’ invade the town, oppress’d with sleep and wine.
Those few they find awake first meet their fate;
Then to their fellows they unbar the gate.⁴³

During the Sack of the City, Hector’s Ghost Appears to Aeneas

“’T was in the dead of night, when sleep repairs
 Our bodies worn with toils, our minds with cares,
 When Hector's ghost before my sight appears:
 A bloody shroud he seem’d, and bath’d in tears;
 Such as he was, when, by **Pelides**⁴⁴ slain,
 Thessalian coursers dragg’d him o’er the plain.
Swoln were his feet, as when the thongs were thrust
Thro’ the bor’d holes;⁴⁵ his body black with dust;
 Unlike that Hector who return’d from toils

⁴¹ “Pyrrhus” is another name for Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. Neoptolemus came to Troy after the death of his father.

⁴² Ulysses had the idea for the Trojan Horse, but Epeus built it.

⁴³ Troy is virtually defenseless. The Trojans are asleep, thinking that the war is over and they have won. The gate has been opened and the wall breached to admit the Trojan Horse. The very few sentries on duty have just been killed and the Greek warriors let into the city. All Troy is now at the mercy of the Greek warriors, who show no mercy.

⁴⁴ “Pelides” is another name for Achilles. It means “son of Peleus.”

⁴⁵ After Achilles killed Hector, he cut holes in Hector’s ankles, then put a rawhide strap through the holes so he could drag Hector’s body behind his chariot.

Of war, triumphant, in Aeacian spoils,
 Or him who made the fainting Greeks retire,
 And launch'd against their navy Phrygian fire.
 His hair and beard stood stiffen'd with his gore;
 And all the wounds he for his country bore
 Now stream'd afresh, and with new purple ran.
 I wept to see the visionary man,
 And, while my trance continued, thus began:
 'O light of Trojans, and support of Troy,
 Thy father's champion, and thy country's joy!
 O, long expected by thy friends! from whence
 Art thou so late return'd for our defense?
 Do we behold thee, wearied as we are
 With length of labors, and with toils of war?
 After so many fun'erals of thy own
 Art thou restor'd to thy declining town?
 But say, what wounds are these? What new disgrace
 Deforms the manly features of thy face?'

Hector's Ghost Speaks to Aeneas

“To this the specter no reply did frame,
 But answer'd to the cause for which he came,
 And, groaning from the bottom of his breast,
 This warning in these mournful words express'd:
 'O **goddess-born!**⁴⁶ escape, by timely flight,
 The flames and horrors of this fatal night.
 The foes already have possess'd the wall;
 Troy nods from high, and totters to her fall.
 Enough is paid to Priam's royal name,
 More than enough to duty and to fame.
 If by a mortal hand my father's throne
 Could be defended, 't was by mine alone.
 Now Troy to thee commends her future state,
 And gives her gods companions of thy fate:
 From their assistance walls expect,
 Which, wand'ring long, at last thou shalt erect.’
 He said, and brought me, from their blest abodes,
The venerable statues of the gods,⁴⁷
 With ancient Vesta from the sacred choir,
 The wreaths and relics of th' immortal fire.

⁴⁶ Aeneas was the son of the goddess Venus, aka Aphrodite.

⁴⁷ The ghost of Hector brings to Aeneas the household gods, statues that guard the household. When Aeneas flees Troy later, he takes his household gods with him.

Aeneas Wakes Up and Realizes that the Greeks are Inside the City

“Now peals of shouts come thund’ring from afar,
 Cries, threats, and loud laments, and mingled war:
 The noise approaches, tho’ our palace stood
 Aloof from streets, encompass’d with a wood.
 Louder, and yet more loud, I hear th’ alarms
 Of human cries distinct, and clashing arms.
 Fear broke my slumbers; I no longer stay,
 But mount the terrace, thence the town survey,
 And hearken what the frightful sounds convey.
 Thus, when a flood of fire by wind is borne,
 Crackling it rolls, and mows the standing corn;
 Or deluges, descending on the plains,
 Sweep o’er the yellow year, destroy the pains
 Of lab’ring oxen and the peasant’s gains;
 Unroot the forest oaks, and bear away
 Flocks, folds, and trees, and undistinguish’d prey:
 The shepherd climbs the cliff, and sees from far
The wasteful ravage of the wat’ry war.⁴⁸
 Then Hector’s faith was manifestly clear’d,
 And Grecian frauds in open light appear’d.
 The palace of Deiphobus ascends
 In smoky flames, and catches on his friends.
Ucalegon⁴⁹ burns next: the seas are bright
 With splendor not their own, and shine with Trojan light.
 New clamors and new clangors now arise,
 The sound of trumpets mix’d with fighting cries.
 With frenzy seiz’d, I run to meet th’ alarms,
 Resolv’d on death, resolv’d to die in arms,
 But first to gather friends, with them t’ oppose
 (If fortune favor’d) and repel the foes;
 Spurr’d by my courage, by my country fir’d,
 With sense of honor and revenge inspir’d.

Aeneas Speaks to a Priest of Apollo

“Pantheus, Apollo’s priest, a sacred name,
 Had scap’d the Grecian swords, and pass’d the flame:
 With relics loaden, to my doors he fled,
 And by the hand his tender grandson led.
 ‘What hope, O Pantheus? whither can we run?

⁴⁸ This is the end of two heroic similes describing the Greeks ravaging Troy. In the first simile, the Greeks are compared to a fire destroying all in the path. In the second simile, the Greeks are compared to a flood destroying all in its path.

⁴⁹ Ucalegon is Aeneas’ next-door neighbor. The fires are very close to Aeneas’ own house.

Where make a stand? and what may yet be done?’
 Scarce had I said, when Pantheus, with a groan:
 ‘Troy is no more, and Ilium was a town!
 The fatal day, th’ appointed hour, is come,
 When wrathful **Jove’s**⁵⁰ irrevocable doom
 Transfers the Trojan state to Grecian hands.
 The fire consumes the town, the foe commands;
 And armed hosts, an unexpected force,
 Break from the bowels of the fatal horse.
 Within the gates, proud Sinon throws about
 The flames; and foes for entrance press without,
 With thousand others, whom I fear to name,
 More than from **Argos**⁵¹ or **Mycenae**⁵² came.
 To sev’ral posts their parties they divide;
 Some block the narrow streets, some scour the wide:
 The bold they kill, th’ unwary they surprise;
 Who fights finds death, and death finds him who flies.
 The warders of the gate but scarce maintain
 Th’ unequal combat, and resist in vain.’

Aeneas Decides to Fight the Greeks

“I heard; and Heav’n, that well-born souls inspires,
 Prompts me thro’ lifted swords and rising fires
 To run where clashing arms and clamor calls,
 And rush undaunted to defend the walls.
 Ripheus and Iphitus by my side engage,
 For valor one renown’d, and one for age.
 Dymas and Hypanis by moonlight knew
 My motions and my mien, and to my party drew;
 With young **Coroebus**,⁵³ who by love was led
 To win renown and fair Cassandra’s bed,
 And lately brought his troops to Priam’s aid,
 Forewarn’d in vain by the prophetic maid.
 Whom when I saw resolv’d in arms to fall,
 And that one spirit animated all:
 ‘Brave souls!’ said I,—‘but brave, alas! in vain—
 Come, finish what our cruel fates ordain.
 You see the desp’rate state of our affairs,
 And heav’n’s protecting pow’rs are deaf to pray’rs.
 The passive gods behold the Greeks defile

⁵⁰ “Jove” is Jupiter, whose Greek name is Zeus.

⁵¹ Argos is a city in Greece.

⁵² Agamemnon was King of Mycenae.

⁵³ Coroebus, a recent arrival in Troy, was engaged to marry Cassandra.

Their temples, and abandon to the spoil
 Their own abodes: we, feeble few, conspire
 To save a sinking town, involv'd in fire.
 Then let us fall, but fall amidst our foes:
 Despair of life the means of living shows.'⁵⁴
 So bold a speech encourag'd their desire
 Of death, and added fuel to their fire.

Aeneas has Some Success in Battle

"As hungry wolves, with raging appetite,
 Scour thro' the fields, nor fear the stormy night —
 Their whelps at home expect the promis'd food,
 And long to temper their dry chaps in blood—
 So rush'd we forth at once; resolv'd to die,
 Resolv'd, in death, the last extremes to try.
 We leave the narrow lanes behind, and dare
 Th' unequal combat in the public square:
 Night was our friend; our leader was despair.
 What tongue can tell the slaughter of that night?
 What eyes can weep the sorrows and affright?
 An ancient and imperial city falls:
 The streets are fill'd with frequent funerals;
 Houses and holy temples float in blood,
 And hostile nations make a common flood.
 Not only Trojans fall; but, in their turn,
 The vanquish'd triumph, and the victors mourn.
 Ours take new courage from despair and night:
 Confus'd the fortune is, confus'd the fight.
 All parts resound with tumults, complaints, and fears;
 And grisly Death in sundry shapes appears.
Androgeos⁵⁴ fell among us, with his band,
 Who thought us Grecians newly come to land.
 'From whence,' said he, 'my friends, this long delay?
 You loiter, while the spoils are borne away:
 Our ships are laden with the Trojan store;
 And you, like truants, come too late ashore.'
 He said, but soon corrected his mistake,
 Found, by the doubtful answers which we make:
 Amaz'd, he would have shunn'd th' unequal fight;
 But we, more num'rous, intercept his flight.
 As when some peasant, in a bushy brake,
 Has with unwary footing press'd a snake;
 He starts aside, astonish'd, when he spies

⁵⁴ The description of the fall of Troy is realistic in many ways. There is a lot of confusion, and it would be easy to mistake foe for friend, as the Greek Androgeos does in this scene.

His rising crest, blue neck, and rolling eyes;
 So from our arms surpris'd Androgeos flies.
 In vain; for him and his we compass'd round,
 Possess'd with fear, unknowing of the ground,
 And of their lives an easy conquest found.
 Thus Fortune on our first endeavor smil'd.

The Trojans Disguise Themselves with Greek Armor

“Coroebus then, with youthful hopes beguil'd,
 Swoln with success, and a daring mind,
 This new invention fatally design'd.
 ‘My friends,’ said he, ‘since Fortune shows the way,
 ’T is fit we should th’ auspicious guide obey.
 For what has she these Grecian arms bestow'd,
 But their destruction, and the Trojans’ good?
 Then change we shields, and their devices bear:
 Let fraud supply the want of force in war.
 They find us arms.’ This said, himself he dress'd
 In dead Androgeos’ spoils, his upper vest,
 His painted buckler, and his plummy crest.
 Thus Ripheus, Dymas, all the Trojan train,
 Lay down their own attire, and strip the slain.
 Mix'd with the Greeks, we go with ill presage,
 Flatter'd with hopes to glut our greedy rage;
 Unknown, assaulting whom we blindly meet,
 And strew with Grecian carcasses the street.
 Thus while their straggling parties we defeat,
 Some to the shore and safer ships retreat;
 And some, oppress'd with more ignoble fear,
 Remount the hollow horse, and pant in secret there.

Cassandra, One of King Priam's Daughters, is Taken Captive

“But, ah! what use of valor can be made,
 When heav'n's propitious pow'rs refuse their aid!
 Behold the royal prophetess, the fair
 Cassandra, dragg'd by her dishevel'd hair,
 Whom not Minerva's shrine, nor sacred bands,
 In safety could protect from sacrilegious hands:
 On heav'n she cast her eyes, she sigh'd, she cried—
 'T was all she could—her tender arms were tied.
 So sad a sight Coroebus could not bear;
 But, fir'd with rage, distracted with despair,

Amid the barb'rous ravishers he flew:⁵⁵

Our leader's rash example we pursue.

But storms of stones, from the proud temple's height,

Pour down, and on our batter'd helms alight:

We from our friends receiv'd this fatal blow,

Who thought us Grecians, as we seem'd in show.

They aim at the mistaken crests, from high;⁵⁶

And ours beneath the pond'rous ruin lie.

Then, mov'd with anger and disdain, to see

Their troops dispers'd, the royal virgin free,

The Grecians rally, and their pow'rs unite,

With fury charge us, and renew the fight.

The **brother kings⁵⁷** with **Ajax⁵⁸** join their force,

And the whole squadron of **Thessalian⁵⁹** horse.

The Greeks Attack Aeneas and the Other Trojans

“Thus, when the rival winds their quarrel try,

Contending for the kingdom of the sky,

South, east, and west, on airy coursers borne;

The whirlwind gathers, and the woods are torn:

Then Nereus strikes the deep; the billows rise,

And, mix'd with ooze and sand, pollute the skies.

The troops we squander'd first again appear

From several quarters, and enclose the rear.

They first observe, and to the rest betray,

Our different speech; our borrow'd arms survey.

Oppress'd with odds, we fall; Coroebus first,

At Pallas' altar, by Peneleus pierc'd.

Then **Ripheus⁶⁰** follow'd, in th' unequal fight;

⁵⁵ Coroebus, who is engaged to marry Cassandra, tries to free her from the Greek warriors. Cassandra had just been raped in the temple of Minerva. During the Sack of Troy, the Greeks committed many outrages that made the gods and goddesses angry at them. Many Greek warriors either paid for these transgressions with their lives or found it very difficult to travel home to Greece again. For example, Little Ajax, who raped Cassandra, drowned during his journey home to Greece.

⁵⁶ Experienced soldiers know not to don their enemies' armor and use their enemies' weapons. In this scene, the Trojans have donned the Greeks' gear and used it to surprise the Greeks, but now the other Trojans attack them because they think the Greek armor-wearing Trojans are Greeks. In World War II, some inexperienced American soldiers captured some German submachine guns and used them against the Germans. Other American soldiers heard the distinctive sound of German submachine guns coming from a grove of trees and fired shells into the grove of trees until all the soldiers were dead. This, to me, is another example of realism in Aeneas' description of the fall of Troy.

⁵⁷ The “brother kings” are Agamemnon and Menelaus.

⁵⁸ This is Little Ajax. Ajax the Greater committed suicide earlier after going insane.

⁵⁹ Thessaly is an area of Greece.

⁶⁰ Ripheus is a minor character in Virgil's *Aeneid*, but he will appear in Dante's *Paradiso*. Ripheus is known for his justness.

Just of his word, observant of the right:
 Heav'n thought not so. Dymas their fate attends,
 With Hypanis, mistaken by their friends.
 Nor, **Pantheus**,⁶¹ thee, thy miter, nor the bands
 Of awful **Phoebus**,⁶² sav'd from impious hands.
 Ye Trojan flames, your testimony bear,
 What I perform'd, and what I suffer'd there;
 No sword avoiding in the fatal strife,
 Expos'd to death, and prodigal of life;
 Witness, ye heavens! I live not by my fault:
 I strove to have deserv'd the death I sought.

Aeneas and the Trojans Go to King Priam's Palace

“But, when I could not fight, and would have died,
 Borne off to distance by the growing tide,
 Old Iphitus and I were hurried thence,
 With Pelias wounded, and without defense.
 New clamors from th' invested palace ring:
 We run to die, or disengage the king.
 So hot th' assault, so high the tumult rose,
 While ours defend, and while the Greeks oppose
 As all the **Dardan and Argolic race**⁶³
 Had been contracted in that narrow space;
 Or as all Ilium else were void of fear,
 And tumult, war, and slaughter, only there.
 Their targets in a tortoise cast, the foes,
 Secure advancing, to the turrets rose:
 Some mount the scaling ladders; some, more bold,
 Swerve upwards, and by posts and pillars hold;
 Their left hand gripes their bucklers in th' ascent,
 While with their right they seize the battlement.
 From their demolish'd tow'rs the Trojans throw
 Huge heaps of stones, that, falling, crush the foe;
 And heavy beams and rafters from the sides
 (Such arms their last necessity provides)
 And gilded roofs, come tumbling from on high,
 The marks of state and ancient royalty.
 The guards below, fix'd in the pass, attend
 The charge undaunted, and the gate defend.

⁶¹ Pantheus is a worshipper of Apollo.

⁶² Phoebus is Phoebus Apollo, the god.

⁶³ This means the Trojans and the Greeks. As Homer did, Virgil uses many names for the Trojans and the Greeks. Among the names for the Greeks are Achaeans, Argives, Danaans, Dolopians, Dorians, etc. The Dardans are Trojans. “Dardans” refers to the descendants of Dardanus, who lived in the area around Troy. “Argolic” refers to “Argolis,” an area in Greece.

Renew'd in courage with recover'd breath,
 A second time we ran to tempt our death,
 To clear the palace from the foe, succeed
 The weary living, and revenge the dead.

Aeneas and the Trojans Enter the Palace Through a Secret Passage, Then They Fight

“A postern door, yet unobserv'd and free,
 Join'd by the length of a blind gallery,
 To the king's **closet**⁶⁴ led: a way well known
 To Hector's wife, while Priam held the throne,
 Thro' which she brought **Astyanax**,⁶⁵ unseen,
 To cheer his grandsire and his grandsire's queen.
 Thro' this we pass, and mount the tow'r, from whence
 With unavailing arms the Trojans make defense.
 From this the trembling king had oft descried
 The Grecian camp, and saw their navy ride.
 Beams from its lofty height with swords we hew,
 Then, wrenching with our hands, th' assault renew;
 And, where the rafters on the columns meet,
 We push them headlong with our arms and feet.
 The lightning flies not swifter than the fall,
 Nor thunder louder than the ruin'd wall:
 Down goes the top at once; the Greeks beneath
 Are piecemeal torn, or pounded into death.
 Yet more succeed, and more to death are sent;
 We cease not from above, nor they below relent.

The Greeks Take King Priam's Palace

“Before the gate stood **Pyrrhus**,⁶⁶ threat'ning loud,
 With glitt'ring arms conspicuous in the crowd.
 So shines, renew'd in youth, the crested snake,
 Who slept the winter in a thorny brake,
 And, casting off his slough when spring returns,
 Now looks aloft, and with new glory burns;
 Restor'd with poisonous herbs, his ardent sides
 Reflect the sun; and rais'd on spires he rides;
 High o'er the grass, hissing he rolls along,

⁶⁴ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a closet is “The private apartment of a monarch or potentate; the private council-chamber; a room in a palace used by the sovereign for private or household devotions.”

⁶⁵ Astyanax is the son of Hector and Andromache. In the *Iliad*, he is frightened by his father's helmet. Following the Sack of Troy, he is killed by other helmeted warriors—the Greeks throw him down to the ground from the walls of Troy. Astyanax is one of King Priam's grandchildren.

⁶⁶ “Pyrrhus” is another name for Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. Neoptolemus came to Troy after the death of his father.

And brandishes by fits his forky tongue.
 Proud Periphas, and fierce Automedon,
 His father's charioteer, together run
 To force the gate; the Scyrian infantry
 Rush on in crowds, and the barr'd passage free.
 Ent'ring the court, with shouts the skies they rend;
 And flaming firebrands to the roofs ascend.
 Himself, among the foremost, deals his blows,
 And with his ax repeated strokes bestows
 On the strong doors; then all their shoulders ply,
 Till from the posts the brazen hinges fly.
 He hews apace; the double bars at length
 Yield to his ax and unresisted strength.
 A mighty breach is made: the rooms conceal'd
 Appear, and all the palace is reveal'd;
 The halls of audience, and of public state,
 And where the lonely queen in secret sate.
 Arm'd soldiers now by trembling maids are seen,
 With not a door, and scarce a space, between.
 The house is fill'd with loud laments and cries,
 And shrieks of women rend the vaulted skies;
 The fearful matrons run from place to place,
 And kiss the thresholds, and the posts embrace.
 The fatal work inhuman Pyrrhus plies,
 And all his father sparkles in his eyes;
 Nor bars, nor fighting guards, his force sustain:
 The bars are broken, and the guards are slain.
 In rush the Greeks, and all the apartments fill;
 Those few defendants whom they find, they kill.
 Not with so fierce a rage the foaming flood
 Roars, when he finds his rapid course withstood;
 Bears down the dams with unresisted sway,
 And sweeps the cattle and the cots away.
 These eyes beheld him when he march'd between
 The brother kings: I saw th' unhappy queen,
 The hundred wives, and where old Priam stood,
 To stain his hallow'd altar with his brood.
 The fifty nuptial beds (such hopes had he,
 So large a promise, of a progeny),
 The posts, of plated gold, and hung with spoils,
 Fell the reward of the proud victor's toils.
 Where'er the raging fire had left a space,
 The Grecians enter and possess the place.

King Priam is Killed by Pyrrhus

“Perhaps you may of Priam’s fate enquire.
 He, when he saw his regal town on fire,
 His ruin’d palace, and his ent’ring foes,
 On ev’ry side inevitable woes,
 In arms, disus’d, invests his limbs, decay’d,
 Like them, with age; a late and useless aid.
 His feeble shoulders scarce the weight sustain;
 Loaded, not arm’d, he creeps along with pain,
 Despairing of success, ambitious to be slain!
 Uncover’d but by heav’n, there stood in view
 An altar; near the hearth a laurel grew,
 Dodder’d with age, whose boughs encompass round
 The household gods, and shade the holy ground.
 Here **Hecuba**,⁶⁷ with all her helpless train
 Of dames, for shelter sought, but sought in vain.
 Driv’n like a flock of doves along the sky,
 Their images they hug, and to their altars fly.
 The Queen, when she beheld her trembling lord,
 And hanging by his side a heavy sword,
 ‘What rage,’ she cried, ‘has seiz’d my husband’s mind?
 What arms are these, and to what use design’d?
 These times want other aids! Were Hector here,
 Ev’n Hector now in vain, like Priam, would appear.
 With us, one common shelter thou shalt find,
 Or in one common fate with us be join’d.’
 She said, and with a last salute embrac’d
 The poor old man, and by the laurel plac’d.
 Behold! Polites, one of Priam’s sons,
 Pursued by Pyrrhus, there for safety runs.
 Thro’ swords and foes, amaz’d and hurt, he flies
 Thro’ empty courts and open galleries.
 Him Pyrrhus, urging with his lance, pursues,
 And often reaches, and his thrusts renews.
 The youth, transfix’d, with lamentable cries,
 Expires before his wretched parent’s eyes:
 Whom gasping at his feet when Priam saw,
 The fear of death gave place to nature’s law;
 And, shaking more with anger than with age,
 ‘The gods,’ said he, ‘requite thy brutal rage!
 As sure they will, barbarian, sure they must,
 If there be gods in heav’n, and gods be just—
 Who tak’st in wrongs an insolent delight;

⁶⁷ Hecuba is Priam’s wife, the Queen of Troy.

With a son's death t' infect a father's sight.
 Not he, whom thou and lying fame conspire
 To call thee his—not he, thy vaunted sire,
 Thus us'd my wretched age: the gods he fear'd,
 The laws of nature and of nations heard.
**He cheer'd my sorrows, and, for sums of gold,
 The bloodless carcass of my Hector sold;
 Pitied the woes a parent underwent,
 And sent me back in safety from his tent.'**⁶⁸

“This said, his feeble hand a javelin threw,
 Which, flutt'ring, seem'd to loiter as it flew:
 Just, and but barely, to the mark it held,
 And faintly tinkled on the brazen shield.
 Then Pyrrhus thus: ‘Go thou from me to fate,
 And to my father my foul deeds relate.
 Now die!’ With that he dragg'd the trembling sire,
 Slidd'ring thro' clott'rd blood and holy mire,
 (The mingled paste his murder'd son had made,)
 Haul'd from beneath the violated shade,
 And on the sacred pile the royal victim laid.
 His right hand held his bloody falchion bare,
 His left he twisted in his hoary hair;
 Then, with a speeding thrust, his heart he found:
 The lukewarm blood came rushing thro' the wound,
 And sanguine streams distain'd the sacred ground.
 Thus Priam fell, and shar'd one common fate
 With Troy in ashes, and his ruin'd state:
 He, who the scepter of all Asia sway'd,
 Whom monarchs like domestic slaves obey'd.
 On the bleak shore now lies th' abandon'd king,
A headless carcass, and a nameless thing.⁶⁹

Aeneas Sees Helen of Troy

“Then, not before, I felt my cruddled blood
 Congeal with fear, my hair with horror stood:
 My father's image fill'd my pious mind,
 Lest equal years might equal fortune find.
 Again I thought on my forsaken wife,
 And trembled for my son's abandon'd life.

⁶⁸ In Book 24 of the *Iliad*, in a remarkable scene, Priam journeys under cover of night to visit Achilles and to ransom the corpse of Hector so it can be properly buried. Begging that Achilles allow him to ransom the corpse of his son Hector, Priam kisses the hands of Achilles—the hands that killed Hector.

⁶⁹ The Greeks behaved badly when they conquered Troy. Cassandra was raped in a temple of the virgin goddess Athena, and Hector's Astyanax was killed by being thrown from the high walls of Troy. Here, Achilles' son kills the old king, Priam.

I look'd about, but found myself alone,
 Deserted at my need! My friends were gone.
 Some spent with toil, some with despair oppress'd,
 Leap'd headlong from the heights; the flames consum'd the rest.
 Thus, wand'ring in my way, without a guide,
 The graceless **Helen**⁷⁰ in the porch I spied
 Of Vesta's temple; there she lurk'd alone;
 Muffled she sate, and, what she could, unknown:
 But, by the flames that cast their blaze around,
 That common bane of Greece and Troy I found.
 For Ilium burnt, she dreads the Trojan sword;
 More dreads the vengeance of her injur'd lord;
 Ev'n by those gods who refug'd her abhorr'd.
 Trembling with rage, the strumpet I regard,
 Resolv'd to give her guilt the due reward:

‘Shall she triumphant sail before the wind,
 And leave in flames unhappy Troy behind?
 Shall she her kingdom and her friends review,
 In state attended with a captive crew,
 While unreveng'd the good old Priam falls,
 And Grecian fires consume the Trojan walls?
 For this the Phrygian fields and Xanthian flood
 Were swell'd with bodies, and were drunk with blood?
 'T is true, a soldier can small honor gain,
 And boast no conquest, from a woman slain:
 Yet shall the fact not pass without applause,
 Of vengeance taken in so just a cause;
 The punish'd crime shall set my soul at ease,
 And murm'ring manes of my friends appease.’

Venus Saves Helen of Troy and Gives Aeneas Special Sight

“Thus while I rave, a gleam of pleasing light
 Spread o'er the place; and, shining heav'nly bright,
 My mother stood reveal'd before my sight
 Never so radiant did her eyes appear;
 Not her own star confess'd a light so clear:
 Great in her charms, as when on gods above
 She looks, and breathes herself into their love.
 She held my hand, the destin'd blow to break;
 Then from her rosy lips began to speak:
 ‘My son, from whence this madness, this neglect

⁷⁰ Helen, of course, is Helen of Troy. When Aeneas sees her, he wants to kill her because of the fall of Troy, but his mother, Venus, stops him. The Trojan War started after Paris, a prince of Troy, ran away with Helen, who was married to Menelaus, the King of Sparta. It is unclear whether Helen was kidnapped or ran away with Paris willingly.

Of my commands, and **those whom I protect**?⁷¹
 Why this unmanly rage? Recall to mind
 Whom you forsake, what pledges leave behind.
 Look if your helpless father yet survive,
 Or if **Ascanius**⁷² or **Creusa**⁷³ live.
 Around your house the greedy Grecians err;
 And these had perish'd in the nightly war,
 But for my presence and protecting care.
 Not Helen's face, nor Paris, was in fault;
 But by the gods was this destruction brought.
 Now **cast your eyes around**,⁷⁴ while I dissolve
 The mists and films that mortal eyes involve,
 Purge from your sight the dross, and make you see
 The shape of each avenging deity.
 Enlighten'd thus, my just commands fulfil,
 Nor fear obedience to your mother's will.
 Where yon disorder'd heap of ruin lies,
 Stones rent from stones; where clouds of dust arise —
 Amid that smother **Neptune**⁷⁵ holds his place,
 Below the wall's foundation drives his mace,
 And heaves the building from the solid base.
 Look where, in arms, imperial **Juno**⁷⁶ stands
 Full in the Scaean gate, with loud commands,
 Urging on shore the tardy Grecian bands.
 See! Pallas, of her snaky buckler proud,
 Bestrides the tow'r, refulgent thro' the cloud:
 See! **Jove**⁷⁷ new courage to the foe supplies,
 And arms against the town the partial deities.
 Haste hence, my son; this fruitless labor end:
 Haste, where your trembling spouse and sire attend:
 Haste; and a mother's care your passage shall befriend.'
 She said, and swiftly vanish'd from my sight,
 Obscure in clouds and gloomy shades of night.
 I look'd, I listen'd; dreadful sounds I hear;

⁷¹ Venus is the protectress of Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. In the famous Judgment of Paris, the Trojan prince must choose whom among three goddesses is the most beautiful. Each goddess offers Paris a bribe; Venus offers him marriage to the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris chooses Venus, and Venus gives him Helen. Unfortunately, Helen is already married, and The Trojan War starts when her husband, Menelaus, and his older brother, Agamemnon, go to Troy to get her back.

⁷² Ascanius is Aeneas' son. Ascanius is also known as Iulus.

⁷³ Creusa is Aeneas' wife.

⁷⁴ In the following scene, Venus allows Aeneas to see the gods in action, tearing apart Troy. This is an awe-inspiring scene.

⁷⁵ Neptune is the Latin name for the sea-god Poseidon.

⁷⁶ Juno is the Latin name of Hera, Zeus' (in Latin, Jupiter's) wife.

⁷⁷ Jove is another name for Jupiter.

And the dire forms of hostile gods appear.
 Troy sunk in flames I saw (nor could prevent),
 And **Ilium**⁷⁸ from its old foundations rent;
 Rent like a mountain ash, which dar'd the winds,
 And stood the sturdy strokes of lab'ring hinds.
 About the roots the cruel ax resounds;
 The stumps are pierc'd with oft-repeated wounds:
 The war is felt on high; the nodding crown
 Now threatens a fall, and throws the leafy honors down.
 To their united force it yields, tho' late,
 And mourns with mortal groans th' approaching fate:
 The roots no more their upper load sustain;
 But down she falls, and spreads a ruin thro' the plain.

Aeneas Returns to His Family, But His Father Refuses to Leave Troy

“Descending thence, I scape thro' foes and fire:
 Before the goddess, foes and flames retire.
 Arriv'd at home, he, for whose only sake,
 Or most for his, such toils I undertake,
 The good **Anchises**,⁷⁹ whom, by timely flight,
 I purpos'd to secure on **Ida's height**,⁸⁰
 Refus'd the journey, resolute to die
 And add his fun'rals to the fate of Troy,
 Rather than exile and old age sustain.
 'Go you, whose blood runs warm in ev'ry vein.
 Had Heav'n decreed that I should life enjoy,
 Heav'n had decreed to save unhappy Troy.
 'T is, sure, enough, if not too much, for one,
 Twice to have seen our Ilium overthrown.
 Make haste to save the poor remaining crew,
 And give this useless corpse a long adieu.
 These weak old hands suffice to stop my breath;
 At least the pitying foes will aid my death,
 To take my spoils, and leave my body bare:
 As for my sepulcher, let Heav'n take care.
 'T is long since I, for my **celestial wife**⁸¹
 Loath'd by the gods, have dragg'd a ling'ring life;
 Since ev'ry hour and moment I expire,
 Blasted from heav'n by Jove's avenging fire.’
 This oft repeated, he stood fix'd to die:

⁷⁸ Ilium is another name for Troy.

⁷⁹ Anchises is Aeneas' father.

⁸⁰ Ida is a mountain outside of Troy.

⁸¹ Anchises' wife is the goddess Venus.

Myself, my wife, my son, my family,
 Intreat, pray, beg, and raise a doleful cry —
 ‘What, will he still persist, on death resolve,
 And in his ruin all his house involve!’
 He still persists his reasons to maintain;
 Our pray’rs, our tears, our loud laments, are vain.

Omens Appear

“Urg’d by despair, again I go to try
 The fate of arms, resolv’d in fight to die:
 ‘What hope remains, but what my death must give?
 Can I, without so dear a father, live?
 You term it prudence, what I baseness call:
 Could such a word from such a parent fall?
 If Fortune please, and so the gods ordain,
 That nothing should of ruin’d Troy remain,
 And you conspire with Fortune to be slain,
 The way to death is wide, th’ approaches near:
 For soon relentless Pyrrhus will appear,
 Reeking with Priam’s blood—the wretch who slew
 The son (inhuman) in the father’s view,
 And then the sire himself to the dire altar drew.
 O goddess mother, give me back to Fate;
 Your gift was undesir’d, and came too late!
 Did you, for this, unhappy me convey
 Thro’ foes and fires, to see my house a prey?
 Shall I my father, wife, and son behold,
 Welt’ing in blood, each other’s arms infold?
 Haste! gird my sword, tho’ spent and overcome:
 ’T is the last summons to receive our doom.
 I hear thee, Fate; and I obey thy call!
 Not unreveng’d the foe shall see my fall.
 Restore me to the yet unfinish’d fight:
 My death is wanting to conclude the night.’
 Arm’d once again, my glitt’ring sword I wield,
 While th’ other hand sustains my weighty shield,
 And forth I rush to seek th’ abandon’d field.
 I went; but sad Creusa stopp’d my way,
 And cross the threshold in my passage lay,
 Embrac’d my knees, and, when I would have gone,
 Shew’d me my feeble sire and tender son:
 ‘If death be your design, at least,’ said she,
 ‘Take us along to share your destiny.
 If any farther hopes in arms remain,
 This place, these pledges of your love, maintain.

To whom do you expose your father's life,
 Your son's, and mine, your now forgotten wife!
 While thus she fills the house with clam'rous cries,
 Our hearing is diverted by our eyes:
 For, while I held my son, in the short space
 Betwixt our kisses and our last embrace;
 Strange to relate, from young Iulus' head
A lambent flame arose,⁸² which gently spread
 Around his brows, and on his temples fed.
 Amaz'd, with running water we prepare
 To quench the sacred fire, and slake his hair;
 But old Anchises, vers'd in omens, rear'd
 His hands to heav'n, and this request preferr'd:
 'If any vows, almighty Jove, can bend
 Thy will; if piety can pray'rs commend,
 Confirm the glad presage which thou art pleas'd to send.'
 Scarce had he said, when, on our left, we hear
 A peal of rattling thunder roll in air:
 There shot a streaming lamp along the sky,
 Which on the winged lightning seem'd to fly;
 From o'er the roof the blaze began to move,
 And, trailing, vanish'd in th' Idaean grove.
 It swept a path in heav'n, and shone a guide,
 Then in a steaming stench of sulphur died.

The Omens Convince Anchises to Leave Troy

“The good old man with suppliant hands implor'd
 The gods' protection, and their star ador'd.
 'Now, now,' said he, 'my son, no more delay!
 I yield, I follow where Heav'n shews the way.
 Keep, O my country gods, our dwelling place,
 And guard this relic of the Trojan race,
 This tender child! These omens are your own,
 And you can yet restore the ruin'd town.
 At least accomplish what your signs foreshow:
 I stand resign'd, and am prepar'd to go.'"

Aeneas and His Family Flee from Troy

“He said. The crackling flames appear on high.
 And driving sparkles dance along the sky.
 With Vulcan's⁸³ rage the rising winds conspire,

⁸² This is the first of two positive omens, both of which convince Aeneas' father, Anchises, to leave Troy. The second omen is the thunderclap and the meteor in the next few lines.

⁸³ Vulcan is the Latin name of the god Hephaestus.

And near our palace roll the flood of fire.

‘Haste, my dear father, (’t is no time to wait,)
 And load my shoulders with a willing freight.
 Whate’er befalls, your life shall be my care;
 One death, or one deliv’rance, we will share.
 My hand shall lead our little son; and you,
 My faithful consort, shall our steps pursue.
 Next, you, my servants, heed my strict commands:
 Without the walls a ruin’d temple stands,
 To Ceres hallow’d once; a cypress nigh
 Shoots up her venerable head on high,
 By long religion kept; there bend your feet,
 And in divided parties let us meet.
 Our country gods, the relics, and the bands,
 Hold you, my father, in your guiltless hands:
In me ’t is impious holy things to bear,
Red as I am with slaughter, new from war,⁸⁴
 Till in some living stream I cleanse the guilt
 Of dire debate, and blood in battle spilt.’

Thus, ord’ring all that prudence could provide,
 I clothe my shoulders with a lion’s hide
 And yellow spoils; then, **on my bending back,**
The welcome load of my dear father take;
While on my better hand Ascanius hung,⁸⁵

And with unequal paces tripp’d along.
 Creusa kept behind; by choice we stray
 Thro’ ev’ry dark and ev’ry devious way.
 I, who so bold and dauntless, just before,
 The Grecian darts and shock of lances bore,
 At ev’ry shadow now am seiz’d with fear,
 Not for myself, but for the charge I bear;
 Till, near the ruin’d gate arriv’d at last,
 Secure, and deeming all the danger past,
 A frightful noise of trampling feet we hear.
 My father, looking thro’ the shades, with fear,
 Cried out: ‘Haste, haste, my son, the foes are nigh;
 Their swords and shining armor I descry.’

Some hostile god, for some unknown offense,
 Had sure bereft my mind of better sense;
 For, while thro’ winding ways I took my flight,
 And sought the shelter of the gloomy night,

⁸⁴ Aeneas cannot carry the household gods, as his hands are polluted with the blood of Greek warriors he has slaughtered; therefore, his father, Anchises, carries the household gods.

⁸⁵ The image of Aeneas carrying his aged father on his back and leading his son, Ascanius, by the hand is very famous. In it, Virgil shows Aeneas carrying the past on his back and leading the future by the hand. This image appears in many artworks over the centuries.

Alas! I lost Creusa: hard to tell
 If by her fatal destiny she fell,
 Or weary sate, or wander'd with affright;
 But she was lost for ever to my sight.
 I knew not, or reflected, till I meet
 My friends, at Ceres' now deserted seat.
 We met: not one was wanting; only she
 Deceiv'd her friends, her son, and wretched me.

Aeneas Returns to Troy to Search for Creusa, His Wife

“What mad expressions did my tongue refuse!
 Whom did I not, of gods or men, accuse!
 This was the fatal blow, that pain'd me more
 Than all I felt from ruin'd Troy before.
 Stung with my loss, and raving with despair,
 Abandoning my now forgotten care,
 Of counsel, comfort, and of hope bereft,
 My sire, my son, my country gods I left.
 In shining armor once again I sheathe
 My limbs, not feeling wounds, nor fearing death.
 Then headlong to the burning walls I run,
 And seek the danger I was forc'd to shun.
 I tread my former tracks; thro' night explore
 Each passage, ev'ry street I cross'd before.
 All things were full of horror and affright,
 And dreadful ev'n the silence of the night.
 Then to my father's house I make repair,
 With some small glimpse of hope to find her there.
 Instead of her, the cruel Greeks I met;
 The house was fill'd with foes, with flames beset.
 Driv'n on the wings of winds, whole sheets of fire,
 Thro' air transported, to the roofs aspire.
 From thence to Priam's palace I resort,
 And search the citadel and desart court.
 Then, unobserv'd, I pass by Juno's church:
 A guard of Grecians had possess'd the porch;
 There Phoenix and Ulysses watch prey,
 And thither all the wealth of Troy convey:
 The spoils which they from ransack'd houses brought,
 And golden bowls from burning altars caught,
 The tables of the gods, the purple vests,
 The people's treasure, and the pomp of priests.
 A rank of wretched youths, with pinion'd hands,
 And captive matrons, in long order stands.

Creusa's Ghost Appears to Aeneas

“Then, with ungovern'd madness, I proclaim,
 Thro' all the silent street, Creusa's name:
 Creusa still I call; at length she hears,
 And sudden thro' the shades of night appears—
 Appears, no more Creusa, nor my wife,
 But a pale specter, larger than the life.
 Aghast, astonish'd, and struck dumb with fear,
 I stood; like bristles rose my stiffen'd hair.
 Then thus the ghost began to soothe my grief
 'Nor tears, nor cries, can give the dead relief.
 Desist, my much-lov'd lord, t' indulge your pain;
 You bear no more than what the gods ordain.
 My fates permit me not from hence to fly;
 Nor he, the great controller of the sky.
 Long wand'ring ways for you the pow'rs decree;
 On land hard labors, and a length of sea.
 Then, after many painful years are past,
 On Latium's happy shore you shall be cast,
 Where gentle Tiber from his bed beholds
 The flow'ry meadows, and the feeding folds.
 There end your toils; and there your fates provide
 A quiet kingdom, and a royal bride:
 There fortune shall the Trojan line restore,
 And you for lost Creusa weep no more.
 **Fear not that I shall watch, with servile shame,
 Th' imperious looks of some proud Grecian dame;
 Or, stooping to the victor's lust, disgrace
 My goddess mother, or my royal race.**⁸⁶
 And now, farewell! The parent of the gods
 Restrains my fleeting soul in her abodes:
 I trust our common issue to your care.’
 She said, and gliding pass'd unseen in air.
 I strove to speak: but horror tied my tongue;
 And **thrice about her neck my arms I flung,**⁸⁷
 And, thrice deceiv'd, on vain embraces hung.
 Light as an empty dream at break of day,
 Or as a blast of wind, she rush'd away.

⁸⁶ The Trojan women who survived the Sack of Troy and were captured by the Greeks would become slaves. In the case of young, pretty women, slavery included sleeping with the master.

⁸⁷ Aeneas does what Odysseus does in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus travels to the Underworld, where he meets the ghost of his dead mother. Three times he tries to embrace her, but since she is a ghost, three times he fails. Note that the death of Aeneas' wife in the fall of Troy allows him to remarry in Italy and become father of the Roman people.

Aeneas Returns to His Father and His Son

“Thus having pass’d the night in fruitless pain,
 I to my longing friends return again,
Amaz’d th’ augmented number to behold,⁸⁸
 Of men and matrons mix’d, of young and old;
 A wretched exil’d crew together brought,
 With arms appointed, and with treasure fraught,
 Resolv’d, and willing, under my command,
 To run all hazards both of sea and land.
 The Morn began, from Ida, to display
 Her rosy cheeks; and Phosphor led the day:
 Before the gates the Grecians took their post,
 And all pretense of late relief was lost.
I yield to Fate, unwillingly retire,
And, loaded, up the hill convey my sire.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Following the fall of Troy, the surviving Trojans who have escaped the city meet at Ida. Aeneas becomes their leader and leads them to Italy, where they become ancestors of the Romans, according to myth and the *Aeneid*.

⁸⁹ Remember that Book 2 has been told in Aeneas’ own words. He has been telling his story to Dido, Queen of Carthage.

A Discussion Guide

Background Information

• What are the Greek and Latin names of the gods and goddesses?

Here is a list of some gods and goddesses with their Greek and Latin names:

Greek	Latin
Zeus	Jupiter
Hera	Juno
Aphrodite	Venus
Athena	Minerva
Poseidon	Neptune
Hermes	Mercury
Hephaestus	Vulcan
Hades	Pluto
Artemis	Diana
Ares	Mars

• What is the *Aeneid* about?

The *Aeneid* is a Roman epic poem by Virgil that tells the story of Aeneas, a Trojan prince who survived the fall of Troy and led other survivors to Italy. His adventures parallel the adventures of Odysseus on his return to Ithaca. In fact, they visit many of the same places, including the island of the Cyclopes. One of Aeneas' most notable characteristics is his *pietas*, his respect for things for which respect is due, including the gods, his family, and his destiny. His destiny is to found the Roman people, which is different from founding Rome, which was founded long after his death. Aeneas journeyed to Carthage, where he had an affair with Dido, the Carthaginian queen. Because of his destiny, he left her and went to Italy. Dido committed suicide, and Aeneas found a war to establish himself in Italy. After killing Turnus, the leader of the armies facing him, Aeneas married the Italian princess Lavinia, and they became important ancestors of the Roman people.

• What is the basic story of the Trojan War?

The basic story of the Trojan War can be told very quickly. Paris, prince of Troy, visits Menelaus, king of Sparta, then Paris runs off with Menelaus' wife, Helen, who of course becomes known as Helen of Troy. This is a major insult to Menelaus and his family, so he and his elder brother, Agamemnon, lead an army against Troy to get Helen (and reparations) back. The war drags on for 10 years, and the greatest Greek warrior is Achilles, while the greatest Trojan warrior is Hector, Paris' eldest brother. Eventually, Hector is killed by Achilles, who is then killed by Paris, who is then killed by Philoctetes. Finally, Odysseus comes up with the idea of the Trojan Horse, which ends the Trojan War.

• **Who is Achilles, and what is unusual about his mother, Thetis?**

Achilles, of course, is the foremost warrior of the Greeks during the Trojan War. His mother, Thetis, is unusual in that she is a goddess. The Greeks' religion was different from modern religions in that they were polytheistic (believing in many gods) rather than monotheistic (believing in one god). In addition, the gods and human beings could mate. Achilles is unusual in that he had an immortal goddess as his mother and a mortal man, Peleus, as his father. Achilles, of course, is unusual in many ways. Another way in which he is unusual is that he and Thetis have long talks together. Often, the gods either ignore their mortal offspring or choose not to reveal themselves to them. For example, Aeneas' goddess mother is Aphrodite (Roman name: Venus). Although Aphrodite does save Aeneas' life or help him on occasion, the two do not have long talks together the way that Achilles and Thetis do.

• **Which prophecy about Achilles was given to his mother, Thetis?**

The prophecy about Thetis' male offspring was that he would be a greater man than his father. This is something that would make most human fathers happy. (One exception would be Pap, in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Pap does not want Huck, his son, to learn to read or write or to get an education or to live better than Pap does.)

• **Who is Zeus, and what does he decide to do as a result of this prophecy?**

Zeus is a horny god who sleeps with many goddesses and many human beings. Normally, he would lust after Thetis, but once he hears the prophecy, he does not want to sleep with Thetis. For one thing, the gods are potent, and when they mate they have children. Zeus overthrew his own father, and Zeus does not want to give birth to a greater man than he is because his son will overthrow him. Therefore, Zeus wants to get Thetis married off to someone else. In this case, a marriage to a human being for Thetis would suit Zeus just fine. A human son may be greater than his father, but is still not going to be as great as a god, and so Zeus will be safe if Thetis gives birth to a human son.

• **Who is Peleus?**

Peleus is the human man who marries Thetis and who fathers Achilles. At the time of the *Iliad*, Peleus is an old man and Thetis has not lived with him for a long time.

• **Why is Eris, Goddess of Discord, not invited to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis?**

Obviously, you do not want discord at a wedding, and therefore, Eris, Goddess of Discord, is not invited to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis. Even though Eris is not invited to the wedding feast, she shows up anyway.

• **Eris, Goddess of Discord, throws an apple on a table at the wedding feast. What is inscribed on the apple?**

Inscribed on the apple is the phrase “For the fairest,” written in Greek, of course. Because Greek is a language that indicates masculine and feminine in certain words, and since “fairest” has a feminine ending, the apple is really inscribed “for the fairest female.”

• **Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite each claim the apple. Who are they?**

Three goddesses claim the apple, meaning that each of the three goddesses thinks that she is the fairest, or most beautiful.

Hera

Hera is the wife of Zeus, and she is a jealous wife. Zeus has many affairs with immortal goddesses and mortal women, and Hera is jealous because of these affairs. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

Athena

Athena is the goddess of wisdom. She becomes the patron goddess of Athens. Athena especially likes Odysseus, as we will see especially in the *Odyssey*. Athena is a favorite of Zeus, her father. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

Aphrodite

Aphrodite is the goddess of sexual passion. She can make Zeus fall in love against his will. Zeus would like to keep on her good side.

Roman Gods and Goddesses

The Greek gods and goddesses have Roman equivalents. The Greek name is followed by the Roman name:

Zeus: Jupiter

Hera: Juno

Athena: Minerva

Aphrodite: Venus

Artemis: Diana

• **Why doesn't Zeus want to judge the goddesses' beauty contest?**

Zeus is not a fool. He knows that if he judges the goddesses' beauty contest, he will make two enemies. The two goddesses whom Zeus does not choose as the fairest will hate him and likely make trouble for him.

Please note that the Greek gods and goddesses are not omnibenevolent. Frequently, they are quarrelsome and petty.

By the way, Athens, Ohio, lawyer Thomas Hodson once judged a beauty contest featuring 25 cute child contestants. He was running in an election to choose the municipal court judge, and he thought that judging the contest would be a good way to win votes. Very quickly, he decided never to judge a children's beauty contest again. He figured out that he had won two votes—the votes of the parents of the child who won the contest. Unfortunately, he also figured out that he had lost 48 votes—the votes of the parents of the children who lost.

• **Who is Paris, and what is the Judgment of Paris?**

Paris is a prince of Troy, and Zeus allows him to judge the three goddesses' beauty contest. Paris is not as intelligent as Zeus, or he would try to find a way out of judging the beauty contest.

• **Each of the goddesses offers Paris a bribe if he will choose her. What are the bribes?**

Hera

Hera offers Paris political power: several cities he can rule.

Athena

Athena offers Paris prowess in battle. Paris can become a mighty and feared warrior.

Aphrodite

Aphrodite offers Paris the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

• **Which goddess does Paris choose?**

Paris chose Aphrodite, who offered him the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife.

This is not what a Homeric warrior would normally choose. A person such as Achilles would choose to be an even greater warrior, if that is possible.

A person such as Agamemnon is likely to choose more cities to rule.

When Paris chooses the most beautiful woman in the world to be his wife, we are not meant to think that he made a good decision. Paris is not a likable character.

• **Does the Judgment of Paris appear in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*?**

We are not certain that Homer knew of the myth of the Judgment of Paris; however, we know that Virgil knew of the myth because he mentions it near the beginning of Book 1 of the *Aeneid*.

• **Does myth develop over time?**

Myth does develop over time. Possibly, the myth of the Judgment of Paris was created after Homer had created the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

• **As a result of Aphrodite's bribe, Paris abducts Helen. Why?**

Aphrodite promised Paris the most beautiful woman to be his wife. As it happens, that woman is Helen. Therefore, Paris abducts Helen, with Aphrodite's good wishes.

Did Helen go with Paris willingly? The answer to this question is ambiguous, and ancient authorities varied in how they answered this question.

• **To whom is Helen already married?**

Helen is already married to Menelaus, the king of Sparta. Paris visits Menelaus, and when he leaves, he carries off both a lot of Menelaus' treasure and Menelaus' wife, Helen. Obviously, this is not the way that one ought to treat one's host.

• **Who are Agamemnon and Menelaus?**

Agamemnon and Menelaus are the sons of Atreus. They are brothers, and Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, is the older brother and the brother who rules a greater land, as seen by the number of ships the two kings bring to the Trojan War. Menelaus brings 60 ships (Fagles 2.678-679). Agamemnon brings 100 ships (Fagles 2.667-672).

• **Who is responsible for leading the expedition to recover Helen?**

Agamemnon is the older brother, so he is the leader of the Greek troops in the Trojan War.

• **Why do the winds blow against the Greek ships?**

When the Greek ships are gathered together and are ready to set sail against Troy, a wind blows in the wrong direction for them to sail. The goddess Artemis (Roman name Diana) is angry at the Greeks because she knows that the result of the Trojan War will be lots of death, not just of warriors, but also of women and children. This is true of all wars, and it is a lesson that human beings forget after each war and relearn in the next war.

• **Why does Artemis demand a human sacrifice?**

Artemis knows that Agamemnon's warriors will cause much death of children, so she makes him sacrifice one of his daughters so that he will suffer what he will make other parents suffer.

• **Who does Agamemnon sacrifice?**

Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter, Iphigeneia. This is a religious sacrifice of the life of a human life to appease the goddess Minerva.

• **Did Homer know about this sacrifice?**

Very possibly, he did. In Book 1, Agamemnon tells the prophet Calchas that he always brings bad news to Agamemnon. Calchas is the prophet who told Agamemnon that he had to sacrifice his daughter in order to get winds that would sail the ships to Troy.

• **What do Menelaus and Agamemnon do?**

After the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon and Menelaus set sail with all the Greek ships for Troy. They land, then they engage in warfare.

• **Who are Achilles and Hector?**

Achilles is the foremost Greek warrior, while Hector is the foremost Trojan warrior. Both warriors are deserving of great respect.

• **Does Homer assume that Achilles is invulnerable?**

Absolutely not. Achilles needs armor to go out on the battlefield and fight.

• **What happens to Hector and Achilles?**

Hector kills Achilles' best friend, Patroclus, in battle. Angry, Achilles kills Hector.

• **What is the story of the Trojan Horse?**

Odysseus, a great strategist, thought up the idea of the Trojan Horse. Epeus built it.

The Greeks build a giant wooden horse, which is hollow and filled with Greek warriors, then they pretend to abandon the war and to sail away from Troy. Actually, Agamemnon sails behind an island so that the Trojans cannot see the Greek ships. The Greeks also leave behind a lying Greek named Sinon, who tells the Trojans about a supposed prophecy that if the Trojans take the horse inside their city, then Troy will never fall. The Trojans do that, and at night the Greeks come out of the Trojan Horse, make their way to the city gates and open them. Outside the city gates are the Greek troops led by Agamemnon, who have returned to the Trojan plain. The Greek warriors rush inside the city and sack it.

Virgil's *Aeneid* has the fullest account of the Trojan Horse. Of course, he tells the story from the Trojan point of view. If Homer had written the story of the Trojan Horse, he would have told it from the Greek point of view. For the Greeks, the Trojan War ended in a great victory. For the Trojans, the Trojan War ended in a great disaster.

• **Which outrages do the Greeks commit during the sack of Troy?**

King Priam is killed by Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, aka Pyrrhus, at the altar of Zeus. This is an outrage because anyone who is at the altar of a god is under the protection of that god. When Neoptolemus kills Priam, an old man (old people are respected in Homeric culture), Neoptolemus disrespects the god Zeus.

Hector's son is murdered. Hector's son is a very small child who is murdered by being hurled from the top of a high wall of Troy. Even during wartime, children ought not to be murdered, so this is another outrage.

Cassandra is raped by Little Ajax even though she is under Athena's protection. Cassandra is raped in a temple devoted to Athena. This is showing major disrespect to Athena. Again, the Greeks are doing things that ought not to be done, even during wartime.

The Greeks sacrificed Priam's young daughter Polyxena. The Trojan War begins and ends with a human sacrifice of the life of a young girl. This is yet another outrage.

• **How do the gods and goddesses react to these outrages?**

The gods and goddesses make things difficult for the Greeks on their way home to Greece.

• **What happens to the Greeks after the fall of Troy?**

Nestor is a wise old man who did not commit any outrages. He makes it home quickly.

Odysseus did not commit any outrages, but apparently his patron goddesses, Athena, is angry at all of the Greeks, because she does not help him on his journey home until 10 years have passed.

Little Ajax, who raped Cassandra, drowns on his way home.

Agamemnon returns home to a world of trouble. His wife, Clytemnestra, has taken a lover during his 10-year absence, and she murders Agamemnon.

Menelaus is reunited with Helen, but their ship is driven off course, and it takes them years to return home to Sparta.

• **What happens to Aeneas?**

Aeneas fights bravely, and he witnesses such things as the death of Priam, king of Troy; however, when he realizes that Troy is lost, he returns to his family to try to save them. He carries his father on his back, and he leads his young son by the hand, but although he saves them, his wife, who is following behind him, is lost in the battle.

Aeneas becomes the leader of the Trojan survivors, and he leads them to Italy, where they become the founders of the Roman people.

• **Who were the Roman people?**

The Romans had one of the greatest empires of the world.

Book 2: “The Fall of Troy”

• **What is the importance of Book 2 of the *Aeneid*?**

Book 2 of the *Aeneid* is very important because it provides the fullest account of the Fall of Troy.

The Trojan War myth has been one of the most important myths in human culture.

• **How are Books 2-3 of the *Aeneid* similar to the *Odyssey*?**

In writing the *Aeneid*, Virgil was influenced by Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

In writing Books 2-3 of the *Aeneid*, Virgil was influenced by Books 9-12 of Homer’s *Odyssey*.

In Books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is a guest of the Phaeacians, who show him very good hospitality. He tells his Phaeacian hosts the story of his wanderings following the Trojan War. He does not tell about the Fall of Troy; instead, he tells his story beginning immediately after the Fall of Troy. This section of the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus tells his own story, is known as the Great Wanderings.

In Books 2-3 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is a guest of Queen Dido of Carthage. He tells her of two things: 1) the Fall of Troy and 2) his wanderings after Troy fell. Like Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, Aeneas tells his own story.

Books 2-3 of the *Aeneid* and Books 9-12 of the *Odyssey* have many similarities:

- 1) Both heroes are guests. Odysseus is a guest of the Phaeacians, an island people who are renowned for providing good hospitality and a return home for guests in need of transportation. Aeneas is a guest of Queen Dido of Carthage. Centuries later, Carthage is one of Rome’s greatest enemies, but in the *Aeneid* Queen Dido falls in love with Aeneas.
- 2) The visit of both heroes causes trouble for their hosts. Poseidon, the Greek sea-god, becomes angry at the Phaeacians for helping Odysseus, whom he is already angry at because Odysseus blinded Poseidon’s son the Cyclops Polyphemus. Poseidon turns the Phaeacian ship that carried Odysseus home to stone. Poseidon also threatens to put a mountain in the Phaeacians’ port, but it is not certain that he does that. In the *Odyssey*, the King of the Phaeacians prays to Poseidon not to put a huge mountain in their port, and it is possible that as a result of the prayer and attendant sacrifices that Poseidon does not

do this. In the *Aeneid*, Queen Dido falls in love with Aeneas, and when he leaves her to go to Italy and fulfill his destiny, she commits suicide.

3) Both heroes could possibly get married and stay with their hosts. Odysseus meets the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa, who shows an interest in marrying him. Indeed, Nausicaa's father the King invites Odysseus to marry Nausicaa. Similarly, Queen Dido would like Aeneas to marry her and become King of Carthage.

4) Both heroes are in some danger despite having friendly hosts. If Odysseus were to marry the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa, he would forget his homecoming and never return to his home island, Ithaca; his wife, Penelope; his son, Telemachus; and his father, Laertes. If Aeneas were to marry Queen Dido and stay in Carthage, he would never fulfill his destiny of going to Italy and becoming an important ancestor of the Roman people.

5) The stories of Odysseus and Aeneas both begin at Troy and end with the arrival of the hero at the home of his hosts. Odysseus begins at Troy, tells about his adventures wandering the Mediterranean, and ends with his arrival at Scheria, the home island of the Phaeacians. Aeneas begins with the Fall of Troy, tells about his adventures wandering the Mediterranean, and ends with his arrival at Carthage.

6) Aeneas visits many of the same places that Odysseus visited. For example, Odysseus landed on the island of the Cyclopes, where he blinded Polyphemus. Shortly after Odysseus left the island of the Cyclopes, Aeneas arrives there, and he picks up a man whom Odysseus left behind. (In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is a hero. In the *Aeneid*, Odysseus is a bad guy. Of course, in the *Aeneid*, Odysseus is known as Ulysses.)

• **How are Books 2-3 of the *Aeneid* different from Books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*?**

Despite the great similarities of Books 2-3 of the *Aeneid* and Books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*, these sections have great differences as well:

1) The focuses of the two narratives are very different. Odysseus' narrative shows how clever he is at surviving under great difficulties—something that he has to do once he returns to Ithaca, where he discovers that almost everyone thinks that he has died and where over 100 suitors are courting his wife, Penelope, in hopes of marrying her. These suitors would kill Odysseus if they knew that he had returned to Ithaca without an army to protect him. Aeneas' narrative focuses on two things: 1) his fate and destiny, and 2) his sorrows. Aeneas' destiny is to go to Italy and become an important ancestor of the Roman people. However, although this is fated to happen, this is not going to be easy to accomplish. In fact, it is very difficult. Aeneas would prefer an easier fate: to go to Carthage and marry Queen Dido, but despite the great difficulties he does go to Italy and fulfill his fate.

When Odysseus begins to tell his story, he says,

“I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known to the world
for every kind of craft—my fame [*kleos*] has reached the skies.” (Fagles 9.21-22)

What Aeneas says when he begins to tell his story is quite different:

“Sorrow too deep to tell, your majesty,
You order me to feel and tell once more.” (Fitzgerald 2.3-4)

In a different translation:

[...] “Sorrow, unspeakable sorrow,
my queen, you ask me to bring to life once more.” (Fagles 2.3-4)

2) Aeneas tells the story of the Fall of Troy; Odysseus does not. Most of Book 2 of the *Aeneid* is concerned with the Fall of Troy.

3) In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is a hero who cares about his men and does his best to get them back to Ithaca so that they can see their day of homecoming. He fails to do this, and his men all die, but Homer makes a major effort to show that the men died because of their own foolish actions. In the *Aeneid*, Ulysses is a bad guy who even leaves a man behind on the island of the Cyclopes.

4) The characters of Odysseus and Aeneas are quite different. Odysseus is the great individualist. When he arrives home on Ithaca, he is alone (although he does get help from the goddess Athena). All of his men and ships have been lost. Aeneas is the great leader. He succeeds in bringing many of his ships and his men to Italy.

• **How do Aeneas and Odysseus differ in their motivations following the Trojan War?**

The motivation of the two heroes is very different as well:

Odysseus

Odysseus is happy with the outcome of the Trojan War: His side won. Now Odysseus is ready to return home. The *Odyssey* begins with an emphasis on homecoming, and throughout the first 12 books of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is eager to be home again, in part because of prophecies that bad things will happen if he is late returning home. Of course, even without the prophecies Odysseus would be eager to return home to see his wife, his son, and his father.

Aeneas

For Aeneas and the Trojans, of course, the end of the Trojan War is a disaster. They have lost loved ones during the war, and at the end of the war they lose their city and homeland. Aeneas is in exile from his homeland. He spends the first half of the *Aeneid*

searching for a new homeland, and he spends the second half of the *Aeneid* getting established in his new homeland. Aeneas will never return to Troy.

• **Is the *Aeneid* simply a Roman *Odyssey*?**

The *Aeneid* is very different from Homer's *Odyssey* despite the similarities. The focuses of the two epic poems are different, although both are concerned with homelands. Odysseus must return to Ithaca and reestablish himself as King. Aeneas must find a new homeland and establish himself there.

The *Odyssey* is very much concerned with the adventures of one man: the hero named Odysseus. Odysseus is a great individualist, and his return to Ithaca actually means little to history, although of course the *Odyssey* has been enormously important in culture.

The *Aeneid* is very much concerned with the adventures of one man: the hero named Aeneas. However, Aeneas has a destiny. His destiny is to become an important ancestor of the Roman people. Whether or not Aeneas makes it to Italy is enormously important. We are to understand that if Aeneas does not make it to Italy but instead stays in Carthage and marries Queen Dido that no Roman people and no Roman Empire will exist. Instead of studying the Roman Empire in ancient history classes, we would be studying the Carthaginian Empire. So the *Aeneid* is really about one man's destiny: Aeneas must go to Italy and become an important ancestor of the Roman Empire. Aeneas is dutiful, and he does this, but fulfilling his destiny is difficult, and if it were not for his destiny, he would choose an easier path.

• **What do most of the Trojans assume when they wake up and find a huge wooden horse outside their walls and find that the Greeks appear to have returned to Achaia?**

When *Aeneas* begins to tell his story, he immediately mentions the Trojan Horse. The Trojan Horse was thought up by Ulysses (his Greek name was Odysseus). The Trojan Horse is a huge hollow wooden horse that is filled with Greek soldiers. Of course, the Trojans don't know that the Trojan Horse is filled with Greek soldiers. If they knew that, they would destroy the Trojan Horse and the warriors inside it, and they would win the war. Such major Greek warriors as Ulysses and Menelaus, the husband of Helen, over whom the war is being fought, are inside. With many important Greek warriors, and especially with the husband of Helen dead, the Trojans would win the war.

The plan of the Greeks is excellent. They build the Trojan Horse, fill it with soldiers, and then pretend to leave Troy (which is in modern-day Turkey) and sail back home to Greece. However, they don't sail back home to Greece. Instead, they sail behind an island named Tenedos so that the Trojans are not able to see the Greek ships and men.

The Greeks sail behind the island at night, and the Trojans are astonished to wake up one day and see that no Greeks are camped before Troy. They see the empty camps where the Greeks had stayed for the 10 years of the war, and they see the huge wooden horse.

Of course, the Trojans are very happy because they believe that the long war is over and that they have been victorious. They think that the Greeks have sailed away for their homes, leaving behind the Trojan Horse as an offering to the gods.

Making an offering to the gods is something that would be good for the Greeks to do, by the way. Before undertaking something important, the Greeks (and Trojans) would sacrifice to the gods (the Greeks and the Trojans believed in the same gods) to get them on their side. The ancient Greek and Roman gods do bad things to humans who have displeased them, and not sacrificing to the gods before undertaking something important is not wise for human beings to do. After winning the Trojan War, Menelaus did not sacrifice to the gods before he left to sail back to Greece. The gods blew him off course, he and Helen (with whom he had been reunited) stayed in Egypt for a number of years, and he was the last Greek (except for Ulysses) to return home to Greece.

• **What is the caution that Laocoön gives the Trojans?**

Not everyone lacks suspicion about the Trojan Horse. Laocoön, a priest of the sea-god Neptune (whose Greek name is Poseidon), is suspicious of the horse.

Robert Fitzgerald translates perhaps the most famous words of the *Aeneid*—which are spoken by Laocoön—in this way:

“[...] Have no faith in the horse!
Whatever it is, even when the Greeks bring gifts,
I fear them, gifts and all.”

(Fitzgerald 2.68-70)

• **What example of double motivation do we see when the Trojans do not recognize that the huge wooden horse is hollow?**

Double motivation is a term that is often used in Homeric and Virgilian studies. It refers in part to the impact that the gods have on human beings. In Book 4 of the *Iliad*, Athena convinces Pandarus to attempt to assassinate Menelaus although it means violating the truce.

In ancient Greece, the gods and goddesses were thought of in part as doing the work that we assign to psychological impulses today. Aphrodite is the goddess of sexual passion. When a heterosexual man sees a beautiful naked woman, the man will be sexually aroused. The ancient Greeks would say that Aphrodite (her Roman name is Venus) caused that sexual arousal.

We moderns might say that the sight of a beautiful naked woman is enough in itself to cause the sexual arousal, but the ancient Greeks would say that there is an additional motivation in the fact of the goddess causing sexual arousal in the man.

This is double motivation. A realistic motivation exists for something to occur, but a god or the gods or fate also decrees that something will occur. We moderns might say that Troy fell because of the superior numbers of warriors fighting against it, but the ancient Greeks would say that in addition fate decreed that Troy would fall.

In double motivation, motivation exists on two levels: the god level and the human level.

We should keep in mind, of course, that the gods and goddesses are more than mere psychological impulses. They also take direct part in the action. For example, in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, Athena is sent by Hera to go to Achilles and tell him not to kill Agamemnon. And in Book 3 of the *Iliad*, Aphrodite saves Paris from being slaughtered by Menelaus.

In Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, we see double motivation. Laocoön throws his spear against the side of the Trojan Horse. From the sound that the spear makes when it hits the horse, it is obvious that the horse is hollow. However, the Trojans ignore this.

Laocoön was correct. The Trojans should fear the Greeks, even when the Greeks appear to be leaving them a gift such as the Trojan Horse.

Aeneas then points out why the Trojans ignored Laocoön's warning. In Robert Fitzgerald's translation, Aeneas says,

“If the gods’ will had not been sinister,
If our own minds had not been crazed,
He would have made us foul that Argive den
With bloody steel, and Troy would stand today—
O citadel of Priam, towering still!”

(Fitzgerald 2.76-80)

Here we have double motivation. The Trojans' minds were “crazed” (2.77), and “the gods’ will” was “sinister” (2.76). The Trojans were so happy to believe that the Greeks had sailed away and the Trojans had won the war that they believed that the Trojan Horse was not dangerous. In addition, the gods were set on destroying Troy and so they helped the Trojans to believe that the Trojans had won the war.

Virgil's Latin says,

*Et, si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset,
impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare letabras,
Trojaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres.*

(Pharr 2.54-56)

“*Fata deum*” means the fate of the gods. “*Mens*” means the “mind” of the Trojans. The adjective *laeva* modifies both *fata* and *mens*. “*Laeva*” means “opposed” or “against.” Because the same word is applied to the fate of the gods and to the mind of men, we can see that the two are very closely related. Neither the fate of the gods nor the mind of the Trojans would allow the Trojans to discover the treachery of the Trojan Horse.

On the human level, we have adequate reason to understand why the Trojans did not discover the treachery of the Trojan Horse; however, the gods also kept them from discovering the truth of the Trojan Horse. That the Trojans did not discover the treachery of the Trojan Horse is doubly motivated both by the gods and by the Trojans' own actions and failings.

• **What lies does Sinon tell when he is captured?**

Sinon, a Greek, is captured while the Trojans are debating what to do about the Trojan Horse.

Sinon is a Greek who has been deliberately left behind to lie to the Trojans and convince them to take the Trojan Horse inside the city of Troy. Of course, to the Trojans he is treacherous (and Dante will put Sinon among the liars in the Inferno in his *Divine Comedy*), but we have to realize that what Sinon does takes a lot of courage.

Sinon asks the Trojans for mercy. He tells the Trojans a story that is designed to convince the Trojans to bring the Trojan Horse inside the city of Troy. His story is an example of good rhetoric. His story is very persuasive.

One of the first things that Sinon does is to say that Ulysses hated him. Because the Trojans also hate Ulysses, this statement is designed to get the Trojans to support Sinon. If Ulysses wants Sinon dead, the Trojans would want Sinon to stay alive because they would not want to do anything that Ulysses would approve of.

Sinon mentions a man named Palamedes, who opposed the Trojan War. Because of this, the Greeks executed him. (By the way, Palamedes is not mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*.) Sinon was a friend of Palamedes, and because of that, he says that Ulysses kept persecuting him. Eventually, Ulysses was able to convince a prophet, Calchas, to name Sinon as the person to be sacrificed to the gods before the Greeks started their voyage back home to Greece. At the beginning of the Trojan War, Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks, had sacrificed Iphigenia, his own daughter, to the gods so that he would have fair winds that would take the Greek ships to Troy. Therefore, it is symmetrical that the Greeks also sacrifice a human being before they set sail to return to Greece.

One of the exploits of Ulysses and Diomedes during the Trojan War was to steal the Palladium, a statue of the goddess Minerva (her Greek name is Athena), out of Troy. This, Sinon says, angered Minerva. Because it is never a good idea to have a god or a goddess angry at you, the Greeks returned home to sacrifice to Minerva. If they could appease Minerva and get her back on their side, they would return to Troy.

Sinon also says that the Trojan Horse is a gift to Minerva. The Greeks had stolen the Palladium (a statue of Minerva) out of Troy, and they built the Trojan Horse as an offering to make up for their offense against Minerva.

Of course, the Trojan Horse is very large. Sinon says that the horse was made so large so that the Trojans could not take it into Troy. If the Trojans were to take the horse inside the city, then Troy would never fall.

Of course, these lies are very persuasive, and they are designed to convince the Trojans to take the horse inside their city. The Trojans don't want their city to fall, and if taking the Trojan

Horse inside the walls of their city means that Troy will never be conquered, then they are very happy to take the Trojan Horse inside the walls of their city.

• **Are Sinon's lies persuasive?**

Sinon's lies are definitely persuasive. Sinon is a very good and persuasive liar, and the Trojans believe his lies. Sinon has designed his lies to be persuasive. He uses good rhetoric.

In addition, of course, the Trojans are good people. In the *Aeneid*, they are the good guys. (Actually, in Homer's *Iliad*, many of the Trojans were difficult to hate. They were not cardboard caricatures of bad guys who are easy to hate. Hector, the crown prince of Troy, loved his wife and son, and it is easy to relate to and to care for him.)

Because the Trojans are good people, they listen to Sinon, and they believe him. If they had been different kinds of people, they would have immediately put Sinon to death, not even allowing him to speak and to tell them lies.

King Priam was very likeable in Homer's *Iliad*, and he is very likeable in Virgil's *Aeneid*. He gives mercy to Sinon, and he tells him that he can stay in Troy and not worry about being killed.

• **What causes the downfall of the Trojans?**

The Trojans err on the side of mercy, and they pay for it. The Trojans have all sorts of good qualities: they are kind, they are compassionate, they are merciful, and they are trusting. They are decent human beings.

The Trojans have the good qualities that the Romans saw themselves as having. The Romans identified with the Trojans much more than they did with the Greeks. Of course, the Romans saw Aeneas and the other Trojans whom Aeneas brought to Italy from Troy as being their ancestors. Therefore, the Greeks in the Trojan War are the bad guys, according to the Romans.

In addition, the Romans mistrusted the Greeks, who were too slick with their words, according to the Romans. The Greeks studied rhetoric and public speaking from the Sophists. One of the things people do in debate classes is to learn to argue either side of an issue. A good exercise is to write a paper or make a speech for something, and then to write a paper or make a speech against the same thing you just argued for. Sophists did this, for example, by arguing that Helen was innocent and did not run away willingly with Paris, and then the next day arguing that Helen was guilty and did run away willingly with Paris. This may be a good way to learn rhetoric and argumentation, but people can misuse what they learn and make the weaker side appear to be the stronger. An unethical person (including politicians) can use a knowledge of rhetoric to mislead and manipulate people. Sinon does that here. He uses rhetoric to persuade the Trojans to take the Trojan Horse inside Troy. This will lead to the fall of Troy.

Unfortunately, because of the Trojans' good qualities, Sinon is able to deceive them.

• **What happens to Laocoön and his two sons?**

Laocoön and his two sons are killed by sea-snakes. The sea-snakes swim out of the ocean while Laocoön is sacrificing to Neptune. The sea-snakes kill the two sons, and they kill Laocoön as he tries to save his son's lives.

This scene is the subject of some famous art. If you Google “Laocoon” images, several paintings of this scene will appear.

In 1506, a famous sculpture of this scene was discovered. The sculpture is now in the Belvedere Garden at the Vatican. The sculpture was missing Laocoön's right arm. Michelangelo suggested that Laocoön's right arm should be bent over his back, while other sculptors suggested that the arm should be outstretched. Pope Julius II ordered that a replacement arm—outstretched—be added to the sculpture.

In 1957, Laocoön's right arm was discovered, and we now know that Michelangelo's suggestion was correct.

After killing Laocoön and his two sons, the two sea-snakes go into Minerva's temple.

• **How do the Trojans interpret the omen of what happens to Laocoön and his two sons? What is the real interpretation of the omen?**

Such things as what happened to Laocoön and his two sons are omens sent by the gods. One problem with omens, unfortunately, is that interpreting them correctly can be difficult. In fact, the Trojans misinterpret this omen.

Laocoön had argued that the Trojan Horse was a trick of the Greeks. The gods send sea-snakes to kill Laocoön and his two sons, and so the Trojans conclude that Laocoön is being punished for believing that the Trojan Horse is a trick. This is true.

They also conclude, however, that the Trojan Horse is not a trick. Here they misinterpret the omen. Very definitely, the Trojan Horse is a trick.

The correct interpretation of the omen is that the gods who sent the two sea-snakes want Troy to fall to the Greeks. This is not how the Trojans interpret the omen.

Here we have more double motivation. Sinon's lies are enough motivation for the Trojans to take the Trojan Horse into the city, but the omen and their misinterpretation of that omen is additional motivation for the Trojans to take the Trojan Horse inside the city.

• **What do the Trojans do with the huge wooden horse?**

In fact, the Trojans take the Trojan Horse inside the walls of Troy.

Because the Trojan Horse is so big, the Trojans have to tear down part of their walls by the gates so that they can take the horse inside the city.

This, of course, makes it easier for the Greeks to conquer Troy. The Trojans have torn down part of their own fortifications.

• **What do the Achaeans do at night?**

At night, Sinon goes to the Trojan Horse, opens it up, and releases the Greek warriors from inside the Trojan Horse.

The Greek warriors then make their way to the gates of Troy, kill the Trojan guards, and open the gates.

Meanwhile, Agamemnon has led the other Greek warriors back from Tenedos. They are waiting outside the Trojan gates. Agamemnon and the other Greek warriors enter Troy and sack the city.

• **What advice does the ghost of Hector give to Aeneas?**

Like most of the Trojans, Aeneas is asleep. While he is asleep, the ghost of Hector, the foremost Trojan warrior (who was killed by Achilles, the foremost Greek warrior, in the *Iliad*) appears to him and tells him that Troy is being sacked and that it is doomed. Because it is doomed, fighting will not help, and Hector advises Aeneas to flee Troy, taking with him his family and his household gods.

The household gods are the Penates. They are actually Roman household gods, but Virgil backdates them here and makes them the household gods of Troy.

Modern Jews, Christians, and Muslims would call the Penates idols.

• **What the Penates (the Roman household gods)?**

The Penates are Roman household gods. They are idols that the Romans would have a shrine for in their houses and venerate.

Of course, the Penates are Roman household gods, but Virgil has Aeneas carry the Penates out of Troy and to Italy as a way of establishing that the Trojans are ancestors of the Roman people. If the Penates originally came from Troy, then Aeneas must be an ancestor of the Roman people.

The proem (beginning) of the *Aeneid* speaks of the hardships that Aeneas would face (Robert Fitzgerald's translation)

Till he could found a city and bring home
His gods to Latium, land of the Latin race,

(Fitzgerald 1.10-11)

The “gods” mentioned at 1.10 refer to the Penates, the household gods mentioned by Hector in Aeneas’ dream.

• **What does Aeneas do instead of following Hector’s advice?**

Hector has advised Aeneas to flee the city, but Aeneas decides to fight instead. He is a brave warrior, and his first impulse is to fight. He climbs to his roof to see what is going on, sees Troy in chaos, under attack, and he decides to fight.

Aeneas and some other Trojan warriors whom he meets do fight for a while, and they have some success. They are able to kill several Greek warriors, but they lose warriors of their own. In addition, they are unable to stop the Fall of Troy.

In this part of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas describes what he saw when he was fighting. His description is a realistic description of what would happen during the fall of an ancient city.

• **What happens when the Trojans put on the armor of the enemy Greeks?**

Aeneas and the Trojans with him have success at first. In the confusion of the sacking of Troy, they are able to kill some Greek warriors.

The Trojans decide to put on the Greeks’ armor. That way, when they meet Greek warriors, the Greeks will look at their armor and think at first that they are fellow Greek warriors. This works at first, but it eventually backfires.

Unfortunately, other Trojan warriors look at the Greek armor and think that Aeneas and the other Trojans wearing Greek armor are actually Greeks, and they fight them. This is an ancient example of friendly fire.

Something similar happened in World War II. Andy Rooney writes about American soldiers who killed some Germans, then used the German machine guns against the Germans. Other American soldiers heard the sound of the German machine guns coming from some woods (the sound of the German machine guns was different from the sound of the American machine guns), thought that Germans were in those woods, then trained artillery on that area until the sound of the German machine guns could no longer be heard—because the American soldiers who had been shooting the guns were all dead. (Experienced soldiers know not to do what those American soldiers did.)

• **What happens to Cassandra?**

Aeneas sees Cassandra, the virgin daughter of King Priam. She is being dragged from the temple of Minerva, with her hands in chains. Because she can’t raise her hands to Heaven, she raises her eyes to Heaven.

In the ancient world, women taken captive in the capture of a city would become slaves. If they were young and desirable, they would become sex-slaves.

From other sources, we learn that Cassandra was raped by Little Ajax in the temple of Minerva. (Great Ajax is dead, having killed himself after suffering a period of insanity due to anger at Ulysses, who was awarded the armor of Achilles after Achilles died.)

Rape is an outrage in itself. The rape of a virgin is even more outrageous. Being raped in the temple of a goddess who is herself virgin is more outrageous yet. Anyone who is in a temple or at the altar of a god is under the protection of that god, according to the ancient Greeks.

Because of this and other outrages that occurred during the Sack of Troy, Minerva and the other gods and goddesses became angry at the Greeks, and many of the Greeks either died while returning home or were late in returning home.

Cassandra, by the way, is a prophetess, but she is cursed because no one believes her prophecies until they come true. (Apollo gave her the gift of prophecy, but because she declined to sleep with him, he cursed her by making it so that no one believes her prophecies until they come true.) She becomes Agamemnon's slave and is taken by him back to his homeland: Mycenae. There, Cassandra prophesies that she and Agamemnon will be slaughtered by Clytemnestra (Agamemnon's wife) and her lover. No one believes or understands her, and yes, she and Agamemnon are slaughtered by Clytemnestra and her lover,

• **How does King Priam die?**

King Priam is also killed during the Fall of Troy. Aeneas has made his way to King Priam's palace and made his way inside through a secret passageway. He witnesses the death of King Priam.

King Priam is an aged man; his son Hector was the general of the Trojan forces during the Trojan War until he was killed. However, now King Priam puts on armor.

His wife, the aged Hecuba, begs him to stay with her at the altar, where they will be under the protection of the god. Of course, she is aware that the Greeks may not respect the god, but if that happens, she hopes that King Priam and she will be killed together.

Achilles' son, here called Pyrrhus, has made his way to the Trojan War. He chases down Polites, a young son of Priam, and kills him in front of King Priam. Although King Priam is old and weak, he is outraged, and he throws a spear at Pyrrhus, which barely grazes his shield. Pyrrhus then kills King Priam at the altar.

The sight of the aged King Priam being killed reminds Aeneas of his own aged father.

• **What happens when Aeneas sees Helen of Troy?**

Aeneas sees Helen of Troy in the shadows. Enraged at the Fall of Troy, he considers killing her. However, his mother, the immortal goddess Venus, stops him from doing that.

Helen's character is ambiguous in antiquity. The ancients argued about whether Helen was guilty of voluntarily running away with the Trojan prince Paris or whether Paris kidnapped her.

In Aristophanes' comic play *Lysistrata*, Menelaus sees Helen during the Fall of Troy and considers killing her, but she bares her breasts, and overcome by her beauty, Menelaus allows her to live.

In Book 4 of Homer's epic poem the *Odyssey*, Helen controls Menelaus by drugging him with heart's-ease, a drug she learned about in Egypt. A man who is drugged with heart's-ease will feel no sorrow—not even if all his family is slaughtered in front of him.

• **What vision does Venus give to Aeneas?**

Venus saves Helen's life, and she also gives advice to Aeneas. Her advice, which is good, is for Aeneas to rescue his family. He needs to go home and lead his family to safety.

Venus tells Aeneas that the Fall of Troy is the will of the gods.

Venus gives Aeneas special sight: He is able to see the gods as they destroy Troy. (In Book 5 of the *Iliad*, Venus gave Diomedes special sight: He was able to recognize the gods on the battlefield before Troy.) In Robert Fagles' translation, Venus tells Aeneas,

“Look around. I'll sweep it all away, the mist
so murky, dark, and swirling around you now,
it clouds your vision, dulls your mortal sight.”

(Fagles 2.748-750)

Aeneas sees Neptune tearing up “the foundation-stones of Troy” (2.756). Juno, Minerva, and even Jupiter are on the side of the Greeks.

Seeing the gods destroying Troy convinces Aeneas that his city is doomed. The best thing for him to do is to try to save his family.

Note that Aeneas is not to blame for fleeing Troy. He has fought bravely, he has killed many Greeks, and no one will blame him for leaving Troy when the gods and goddesses are set on destroying the city.

• **What happens when Aeneas tries to persuade his father (Anchises) to leave Troy?**

Aeneas returns to his home to try to save his family.

Unfortunately, his father, Anchises, is a stubborn old man. He refuses to leave Troy, saying that he is too old to leave the city and travel elsewhere. Indeed, he is old, and when he finally agrees to leave Troy, Aeneas must carry him on his back.

Aeneas is aware of his duty, which is to protect his father. If Anchises will not leave Troy, Aeneas will stay in Troy and go down fighting the Greeks as he tries to keep them from harming his father. This is an example of the *pietas* (PEE-a-tahs) for which Aeneas is renowned.

Pietas can be difficult to translate. In his edition of the first six books of the *Aeneid*, Clyde Pharr translates it as “loyalty, devotion, sense of duty” (16). Aeneas is *insignem pietate virum* (Pharr 1.10)—a man noted for his *pietas*.

Aeneas’ wife, Creusa, does not want him to fight, but since his father will not agree to leave Troy, Aeneas is determined to keep on fighting.

• **What makes Anchises decide to leave Troy?**

An omen convinces Anchises to leave Troy. Non-burning fire envelopes young Iulus’ head like a crown.

Anchises interprets the omen as promising great things for his descendants: Both Aeneas and Iulus will be crowned as kings.

Anchises now agrees to leave Troy, and Aeneas carries Anchises on his shoulders and leads Iulus by the hand as they try to escape from Troy. Anchises carries the household gods, and Aeneas’ wife, Creusa, follows the group at a distance.

• **Analyze the image of Aeneas leaving Troy with his father on his back, his son at his side, and his wife following at a distance.**

Aeneas is a good leader. He is not afraid to die himself, but he does worry about the safety of his family. That is a quality of a good leader. In Robert Fitzgerald’s translation:

“[...] Through shadowed places
On we went, and I, lately unmoved
By any spears thrown, any squads of Greeks,
Felt terror now at every eddy of wind,
Alarm at every sound, alert and worried
Alike for my companion and my companion.”

(Fitzgerald 2.942-947)

Aeneas carries his father on his back, and he leads his son by the hand. His father carries the household god, and his wife follows at a distance.

This scene is the subject of some famous art. If you Google “Aeneas” images, several paintings of Aeneas’ flight from Troy will appear.

In this scene, we have symbols. According to the 6th edition of *A Handbook to Literature*, by C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon,

A *symbol* is something that is itself and also stands for something else; as the letters *a p p l e* form a word that stands for a particular objective reality; or as a flag is a piece of colored cloth that stands for a country. All language is symbolic in this sense, and many of the objects that we use in daily life are also. (466)

In this scene, we can say that some of the people are symbols:

Iulus

Iulus is a symbol of the future.

Anchises

Anchises is a symbol of the past that we can take with us. Aeneas successfully carries Anchises out of Troy. Aeneas can take the traditions of Troy with him. He can take the household gods with him.

Creusa

Creusa is a symbol of the past that we cannot take with us. Creusa dies during the Fall of Troy. Aeneas cannot take his home with him; he has to leave it behind, as symbolized by Creusa.

When Aeneas carries Anchises on his back and leads Iulus by the hand, he is carrying the past and leading the future.

It is odd that Aeneas tells Creusa to, in Robert Fagles' translation, "follow me at a distance" (2.885). One would think that Aeneas would want Creusa to stay close to him.

Creusa must die, by the way, because Aeneas must be free to marry when he finally reaches Italy. Aeneas and his Italian wife will become important ancestors of the Roman people.

• What happens to Creusa in Book 2? What does Aeneas do in response?

Creusa dies during the Fall of Troy. Aeneas hears a noise that may be caused by enemy warriors, so he takes off running. When he gets out of Troy, his wife is not with him, so he leaves his father and his son outside Troy, and he goes into Troy to try to find his wife.

The ghost of Creusa appears before him. She tells Aeneas that she is dead, and she lets Aeneas know that he has a destiny: to find a new homeland and marry a queen.

• At the end of Book 2, what do the Trojan refugees do?

Other survivors have made their way out of Troy. Aeneas is a high-ranking Trojan warrior, so he becomes their leader. He leads them out of the valley they had gathered in and to the mountains.

They need to get away from Troy. If the Greeks were to see them in the morning, they would kill them or make them slaves.

The Trojan War has come to an end after 10 years. The Greeks are triumphant. The Trojans are defeated. To the Greeks, the Fall of Troy is a magnificent accomplishment. To the Trojans, it is a disaster. The Trojans have lost their city, and many, many Trojans, including civilians such as Creusa and old men such as King Priam, have died during the Fall of Troy.

• Write a short character analysis of Aeneas based on what you learn from Book 2. What would Dido think when she hears his story?

Of course, Aeneas is telling his story to Dido, Queen of Carthage, and we need to think about what Dido would think as she hears this story.

Also, we need to remember something from Book 1. Venus' son, Cupid, is making Dido fall in love with Aeneas. This is double motivation, of course. Dido would like to have a husband to help her build and rule Carthage, and Aeneas' story shows that he is perfect husband material. This is enough motivation for her to be interested in Aeneas, but Venus' son, Cupid, provides additional motivation for her to be interested in Aeneas.

Aeneas' story shows that he follows *pietas*. He has a duty to his city and to his family, and he has done his best to do his duty. He fought bravely until it became clear to him that the gods had doomed Troy to fall. He then did his best to lead his family to safety. When he discovered that his wife had not made it out of Troy, he bravely went back into Troy to try to find her. She died, but Aeneas did his best to get her to safety.

As Dido hears Aeneas' story, she will think that Aeneas is perfect husband material.

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