



## 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE REQUIRED SUMMER READING

For uniformity purposes in class, every effort should be made to acquire the specific edition listed; hence, the publisher, year (when necessary) and ISBN are provided.

### TEXT

*The Iliad* by Homer, translated by Robert Fagles, Penguin Classics, ISBN 0140275363.

Note: While it is recommended that you read the entire poem, the following book (chapters) are required for your summer reading: Books 1-3, 5-7, 9, 11, 16, 18-19, 22, 24.

### INTRODUCTION

Long before the fairy tales of Cinderella and Snow White were told at bedtime to children in Western Europe, poems of a war and its heroes were sung wherever people gathered in ancient Greece. However, unlike the tales of Cinderella and Snow White, we know that a great deal of this story is actually true. *The Iliad* is more than a war story. It is the story of a jealous husband and his brother, Menelaus and Agamemnon respectively, both willing to allow their people to die in battle because of their reckless pride. The central theme revolves around the rage of Achilles who is in pursuit of glory (*kleos*) that will last beyond a mortal descent into the afterlife: a world of shadow and shade. It also tells of another hero, Hector, who pursues honor and protects his people at any cost. Pay attention to these motifs as you read. Takes notes regarding the character of these men, especially that of Achilles, Ajax, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, Paris, Patroclus, and Priam.

### WRITTEN RESPONSES

On the first day of class you will need to submit to me your portfolio (collection of 8 responses). How you organize your portfolio is entirely up to you. Although, **each response must be at least one FULL page and double-spaced**. You should have at least 8 separate pages total.

### PROMPTS

1. Why is Achilles full of rage? What transpired that made him this way?
2. Why do Paris and Menelaus fight? What happens during their duel?
3. How does Agamemnon attempt to mend his relationship with Achilles? Is his offer a good one?
4. How does Homer capture the thrill of battle? What is he saying about war in general?
5. Compare and contrast the duel of Hector and Achilles to the duel between Paris and Menelaus.
6. Explain the dimensions of the heroic choice that faces Hector. Did he really have a choice?

7. What is Achilles' theory of the jars? How is it like and unlike Christian providence that says God is sovereign?
8. Given that the epic ends with a funeral, what are the reader's thoughts about the tone Homer sets? Can one side (Achaean or Trojan) be labeled "good" and the other "bad"? Explain your answer.

## **REGARDING VARIOUS ONLINE SUMMARIES**

Online summaries (i.e. Spark Notes, Cliff Notes... etc.) have their place in the world of academics when it comes to putting the content into plainer and more concise language. However, they are no substitute to reading the selected text. They are merely a broad stroke of the brush to what this piece of art conveys. Much is missed by those who only read summaries. You do yourself a great disservice by neglecting these famed authors of classical literature for watered-down summaries. If this does not convince you, know that I am familiar with such texts and write my quizzes and tests accordingly.

## **STUDY HELPS**

What follows is a reproduction of material found in the *Rhetoric School Handbook*.

## **READING A BOOK**

What we mean by this is that it is helpful to have a plan as you read a book. When you are not reading strictly for pleasure (which we hope you do often), having a plan aids you in getting the most out of your reading without becoming frustrated or too quickly bored.

## **FOR NON-FICTION OR TEXTBOOKS**

1. Remember that textbooks and other non-fiction books are written by people. That is, these books didn't drop from heaven as authorless works of authority. These books are written by people who have definite ideas, prejudices, worldviews, and goals. Part of becoming someone who can say he or she is educated is getting to the point where you are not immediately in awe of a "textbook." Approach the textbook by saying, "Let's see what he or she (the author) has to say about this subject." Remember that the author was once in junior high or high school just like you. Of course, the author has probably studied more than you since then and has the right to be heard, but he or she is still a person, not a "they" or "book" of the famous phrases "they say" or "the book says."
2. Do not be passive as you read. The author is trying to convince you of something. Engage in conversation with the author.
3. Read the things most people normally skip before you try to read the book.
  - a. The Title: Note the title. Is there a subtitle? This normally provides a more detailed description of what is in the book.
  - b. The Author's Name: Is there any information on the author on the back of the book or in the Preface? Knowing more about the author can help your understanding of the material.
  - c. The Introduction: The introduction often provides the main idea and plan of the book.
  - d. The Table of Contents: This is the map of the book—look at the map before you travel and get a feel for where you are headed.
4. As you read the chapters, note the subheadings. These are like the map within a map. Also note things that are underlined or italicized or in bold type since these are likely to be important.
5. If you own the book, underline and annotate as you read. Don't just underline, but write yourself notes in the margin as to why you underlined. Write questions you have or mark the things with which you disagree and why. Look up words you don't know and write their definitions in the

margin. It is during this stage of your reading that you begin to engage in conversation with the author. [If you don't own the book, keep track of these things in a notebook.]

6. At the end of each chapter, write a brief summary of the chapter either in the book or in your notebook. Look for the connections between the chapters.

## **BOOKS OF FICTION**

Books of fiction that you read at the Geneva School of Boerne are not assigned merely because they are good stories, although most are at least that. These books are read for the significant ideas or themes that the author explores and for how the books have impacted readers through the ages. With this in mind, we provide these helps for reading fiction.

1. Most of the suggestions listed above for reading non-fiction also apply to fiction.
2. Read the material, if any, on the back cover of the book. This sometimes gives helpful insights about the plot or characters or its impact upon other readers.
3. If there is an introduction, do not skip it. If it is by the author, he or she may reveal the intent for writing the book or helpful suggestions in reading the book. If it is by someone other than the author, these same things may be explored, along with why the book has been regarded as significant and what themes are presented.
4. Keep a list of characters and significant events as you read. Ask yourself why certain events happen and what may be the role of certain characters. Through the plot, what values and ideas are being defended or attacked? Do you agree or disagree? Why? Keep track of all of this through margin notes or in a notebook.

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK OF THE AUTHOR OF ANY BOOK**

Whether the book is a work of fiction or non-fiction, every author has beliefs and a worldview that will come out in what and how he or she writes. Therefore, you should read critically and try to figure out what the author thinks about the following questions:

1. What does the author believe about God? Does he or she believe God exists? If so, in what kind of God does the author believe? [Answering these questions reveals the author's Theology.]
2. What does the author believe about ultimate reality? Is there anything beyond the physical universe? Is the physical universe all there is? Can creation happen? [Answering these questions reveals the author's Metaphysics.]
3. What does the author believe about knowledge and how we come by it? Does he or she believe in absolute truth? Does he or she believe there are things that are true whether anyone believes them or not? [Answering these questions reveals the author's Epistemology.]
4. What does the author believe about morality (right and wrong) and making judgments? Are right and wrong the same for everybody? Upon what standard do we base our judgments? [Answering these questions reveals the author's Ethics.]
5. What does the author believe about the nature of humanity? Are people the end result of evolution? Do people have any worth? [Answering these questions reveals the author's Anthropology.]
6. What does the author believe about the point of history? Do things happen for a reason? Is time linear or cyclical? Do historical events matter? [Answering these questions reveals an author's Teleology.]

Whether you understand the specialized words after each question or not, you need to know that the combination of what someone believes about these six things is what makes up a person's worldview. Becoming a good reader means, among other things, that you keep these questions in mind so that you do not become a victim or mindless follower of the latest idea you happen to read.