

A (Possible) Timeline of the *Iliad*

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This timeline comes from the Cave's
The Best of Homer's Iliad.

DAY 1 (BOOK 1): Apollo's priest, Chryses, asks Agamemnon to return his daughter and Agamemnon's honor-prize, Chryseis, for a ransom. When the Achaean leader refuses, Chryses asks Apollo to cast a plague upon the Achaeans. The god does.

DAYS 2-9 (BOOK 1 continued): The plague persists, killing many of the Achaean men and animals.

DAY 9 (BOOK 1 continued): Zeus and the other gods journey to the far land of the Ethiopians to feast with them.

DAY 10 (BOOK 1 continued): After nine days of Apollo's

plague, Agamemnon and Achilles quarrel. The occasion: Achilles calls for the Achaean assembly during which the seer Calchas ties Apollo's anger and subsequent plague to Agamemnon's refusal to return Chryseis.

Upon hearing Calchas, Agamemnon is angry! Still, he agrees to return Chryseis back to her father. To make up for his loss, though, he threatens to take the honor-prize of another Achaean and settles on Achilles' Briseis.

The threat enrages Achilles! Nevertheless, Agamemnon eventually commands two henchmen to take her.

While Agamemnon sends a mission off to Chryse

to return Chryseis and appease Apollo with sacrifice, Achilles complains to his mother Thetis and requests that she ask Zeus to do something to honor him. She agrees to go but says the gods will be gone feasting with the Ethiopians for another eleven days.

DAY 11 (BOOK 1 continued): The men on mission to give back Chryseis and offer a holocaust offering to placate Apollo return.

DAYS 12-20 (BOOK 1 continued): Achilles stokes his anger, refusing to participate in the Achaean assembly or any of the fighting.

DAY 21 (BOOK 1 continued): Thetis goes to visit Zeus after he and the other gods return from feasting with the Ethiopians.¹ She asks him to honor Achilles. Led by Hera, the gods nearly quarrel with Zeus. But in the end, thanks to Hephaestus' counsel, they feast and go off to sleep.

DAY 22 (BOOK 2): Agamemnon cannot sleep (during the night prior to and early morning of Day 22). Zeus sends him the Nestor-dream. He wakes up, and after meeting with the chief Achaean leaders, he gathers all the army together.

(BOOK 3) The Achaean army marches out to battle the Trojan army. Under the conditions of a sworn truce, Paris fights Menelaus in single combat. Nearly defeated, Paris is spirited away by Aphrodite. Agamemnon claims victory for the Achaeans.

(BOOK 4) Thanks to the decision of the gods in council, Pandarus shoots Menelaus with an arrow, thereby breaking the sworn truce. The Achaeans and Trojans fight.

(BOOK 5) Diomedes ferociously battles against men and gods, giving Homer the opportunity to sing him a glory report (*aristeia*). He wounds Aphrodite after the goddess rescues Aeneas.

(BOOK 6) Hector returns to Troy. He briefly visits his mother and Helen before saying goodbye to his son, Astyanax (Scamandrius), and his wife, Andromache. Diomedes and Glaucus nearly fight before they realize they are guest-friends.

(BOOK 7) The battle continues. After challenging him, Hector duels with Telamonian Ajax. They finally break off with no victor, bringing an end to the day of battle in obedience to night. The Achaeans and the Trojans gather in their respective assemblies, and the Achaeans accept the Trojan request for a truce in order to gather and bury the dead.

DAY 23 (BOOK 7 continued): Early in the morning, the Achaeans and Trojans gather and wash the dead. The Trojans burn their dead and return to Troy. The Achaeans do the same, piling up a mound over the dead. Afterwards, they build the wall and dig the trench that surrounds their camp. Poseidon is not happy with this because they failed to honor the gods. The Achaeans and Trojans feast and sleep.

DAY 24 (BOOK 8): Zeus forbids divine participation in the ongoing struggle for Troy. Many of the gods are not pleased with this command. The Achaeans and Trojans battle back and forth. Teucer shoots many Trojans. As night falls, Hector calls for a Trojan assembly.

(BOOK 9) Meanwhile, in the Achaean camp, Nestor admonishes Agamemnon, who readily admits his blindness and agrees to send men to Achilles in the attempt to make things right. Odysseus, Telamonian Ajax, and Phoenix go but fail to convince Achilles to give up his anger.

(BOOK 10) When Agamemnon cannot sleep due to anxiety over the proximity of the Trojan camp, he assembles the leaders and asks for a volunteer to go spy on the Trojans. Diomedes volunteers and chooses Odysseus to go with him. While out, they apprehend Dolon, who similarly has been sent out by Hector to spy on the Achaeans, and kill him. Using information given by Dolon, the two Achaeans move on to kill the Thracian king, Rhesus, and many of Rhesus' men, before returning to camp early the morning of day 25.

DAY 25 (BOOK 11): The battle goes on. Agamemnon slaughters many Trojans, earning a glory report. He finds success until the Trojan warrior Coön wounds

him; then, after killing Coön, and experiencing great pain, he retreats. Now, many of the chief Achaeans are wounded—Diomedes, Odysseus, Eurypylus, and Machaon. Achilles sends Patroclus to find out what is happening. He learns from Nestor that the Trojans are advancing.

(BOOK 12) Sarpedon tells Glaucus they must fight. The two Ajaxes cheer their side on. Finally, Hector and the Trojans venture across the trench and break into the Achaean camp.

(BOOK 13) When Zeus glances away from the battle for a moment, Poseidon fires up the Achaeans under different guises. There's fighting back and forth. Cretan Idomeneus earns a glory report. Polydamas advises retreat—again.

(BOOK 14): Despite the desire of many to slip off during the night, Odysseus challenges the Achaean leaders to return to the fight. Hera seduces Zeus, causing him to lose sight of the battle. Telamonian Ajax takes Hector out of the fight for the moment by throwing a massive stone at him. The combat rages back and forth, victory going to one side, then the other.

(BOOK 15) Zeus wakes up, rebukes Hera, orders Poseidon to stop fighting for the Achaeans, and has Apollo revive Hector. Patroclus returns to Achilles to give him a report. Hector battle rages, commanding his men to fire the Achaean ships.

(BOOK 16) The ships burning, Achilles sends his men, the Myrmidons, out to fight alongside his dear friend Patroclus. The latter earns a glory report, slaying Sarpedon among many others. Finally, Patroclus dies before the walls of Troy.

(Book 17) The Trojans and Achaeans fight over Patroclus' body. Hector strips Patroclus of Achilles' armor and takes it for himself.

(Book 18) Achilles learns of Patroclus' death. He vows revenge but cannot fight without armor. Thetis consequently journeys to Olympus to ask the smith god Hephaestus for new armor. With the aid of Athena, Achilles shouts out loud, bringing an end to the day's battle. This end allows the Achaeans to retrieve Patroclus' body, wash it, and mourn him. Polydamas advises retreat. But for a third time, Hector

declines, bragging that he will fight Achilles in the morning. While all this is happening on the plain before Troy, Hephaestus is making Achilles' new armor.

DAY 26 (BOOK 19): Thetis gives Achilles his new armor. Achilles and Agamemnon reconcile. After feasting, the Achaeans ride off to fight.

(BOOK 20) The gods assemble, and Zeus gives them permission to join in the battle. They divide into their respective sides. Achilles fights Aeneas until the latter is spirited away. Achilles goes on a slaughtering rampage, including a fight with Hector, during which the Trojan leader is saved by Apollo.

(BOOK 21) Achilles angers Xanthus (the Scamander river) by stopping him up with corpses. The divine river nearly drowns him. Among the various gods that do battle, Hephaestus fights Xanthus, and Athena defeats Ares and Aphrodite. When Achilles drives the Trojans into Troy, a disguised Apollo draws him off so that he cannot enter the city.

(BOOK 22) Achilles slays Hector after a long chase around Troy. Achilles subsequently drags Hector behind his chariot, and the Trojans mourn him—his wife, Andromache, most of all.

(BOOK 23) The Myrmidons mourn Patroclus. That night, Patroclus appears to Achilles as a dream-apparition.

DAY 27 (BOOK 23 continued): The following day, the Myrmidons gather wood, and toward the evening, they burn Patroclus on a great funeral pyre. Thanks to the North and West Winds, the fire burns all night.

Day 28 (Book 23 continued): Achilles holds the funeral games in honor of Patroclus—a chariot race, boxing and wrestling matches, a footrace, single armed combat, the iron weight throw, archery, and a spear throw.

(BOOK 24) The Achaeans feast and sleep after the games, all but for Achilles who cannot sleep as he continues to mourn for Patroclus.

DAY 29 (BOOK 24 continued): Unable to sleep, Achil-

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les rises to drag Hector behind his chariot around Patroclus' funeral mound. Seeing this, the gods pity Hector.

DAYS 30-39 (BOOK 24 continued): Achilles continues to abuse Hector in order to honor Patroclus. As the days go on, Apollo defends Hector's flesh with the golden aegis.

DAY 40 (BOOK 24 continued): On the twelfth day of this abuse, the gods agree to allow Priam to retrieve Hector's corpse for a ransom. Priam goes to Achilles' shelter to ask for the return of his son's body. Achilles agrees, promising to hold back the Achaean army during the time the Trojans are laying Hector to rest. Priam requests eleven days, saying they will fight again on the twelfth day "if they must."² After feasting together, Priam stays most of the night at Achilles' bidding.

DAY 41 (BOOK 24 continued): Early in the morning, Priam returns to Troy with Hector's corpse. The Trojans mourn him—Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen, among others. The people begin gathering wood for a funeral pyre.

DAYS 42-49 (BOOK 24 continued): The Trojans continue to mourn Hector and to gather wood for his funeral pyre.

DAY 50 (BOOK 24 continued): The Trojans burn Hector atop a great funeral pyre.

DAY 51 (BOOK 24 continued): The Trojans gather Hector's bones and place them in an urn. They stack rocks around the urn and pile a mound over his grave. After, they station lookouts to watch for an Achaean attack while they feast in Priam's halls to honor Hector. So ends the *Iliad*.

So ends "A (Possible) Timeline of the *Iliad*." See you in another item.

NOTES

¹ Homer gives the time of return as twelve dawns after leaving—so day 20 or 21 of the *Iliad* depending on how the "twelfth dawn" is counted.

² What would be Day 52.

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