



## History 101

### The Iliad

*The Iliad* (sometimes referred to as the *Song of Ilion* or *Song of Ilium*) is an ancient Greek epic poem in dactylic hexameter, traditionally attributed to Homer. Set during the Trojan War, the ten-year siege of the city of Troy (Ilium) by a coalition of Greek states, it tells of the battles and events during the weeks of a quarrel between King Agamemnon and the warrior Achilles.

Although the story covers only a few weeks in the final year of the war, the *Iliad* mentions or alludes to many of the Greek legends about the siege; the earlier events, such as the gathering of warriors for the siege, the cause of the war, and related concerns tend to appear near the beginning. Then the epic narrative takes up events prophesied for the future, such as Achilles' looming death and the sack of Troy, although the narrative ends before these events take place. However, as these events are prefigured and alluded to more and more vividly, when it reaches an end, the poem has told a more or less complete tale of the Trojan War.

*The Iliad* is paired with something of a sequel, the *Odyssey*, also attributed to Homer. Along with the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad* is among the oldest extant works of Western literature, and its written version is usually dated to around the 8th century BC. Recent statistical modeling based on language evolution gives a date of 760–710 BC. In the standard accepted version, the *Iliad* contains 15,693 lines; it is written in Homeric Greek, a literary amalgam of Ionic Greek and other dialects.

*The Iliad* was a standard work of great importance already in

Classical Greece and remained so throughout the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods. It made its return to Italy and Western Europe beginning in the 15th century, primarily through translations into Latin and the vernacular languages. Prior to this reintroduction, a shortened Latin version of the poem, known as the *Ilias Latina*, was very widely studied and read as a basic school text. The West, however, had tended to look at Homer as a liar, as they believed they possessed much more down to earth and realistic eyewitness accounts of the Trojan War written by Dares and Dictys Cretensis who were supposedly present at the events.

[<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iliad>]



Wenceslas Hollar's engraved title page of a 1660 edition of the *Iliad*, translated by John Ogilby.

