

THE STORY BEHIND TROILUS & CRESSIDA

Troilus and Cressida is based on Homer's epic poem the Iliad, one of the earliest surviving pieces of Western literature. This poem covers just part of the tale of the Trojan War, a 10 year battle between Troy and Greece. It's still famous even now, with countless adaptations in film, television and in literature.

Would you like to know more about the characters in the story through tiny Playmobil figures? Check out our guide to find out a bit more about Shakespeare's best piece of fan fiction...



THE MAIN PLAYERS

Trojan = Blue
Greek = Purple
Straight Line = Related
Dotted Line = Married/in Love

Trojan Royal Dynasty

Cassandra
Princess of Troy
Daughter of King Priam
Priestess of Apollo
Cursed to see the future
but no one believes her.



Hector
Crown Prince of Troy
Son of King Priam
Leader of the Trojans
Married to Princess
Andromache



Paris
Prince of Troy
Son of King Priam
Married to Oenone but
eloped with Helen
Raised in secret as a
shepherd



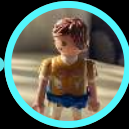
Aeneas
Prince of Troy
Son of the Goddess Aphrodite
and Prince Anchises
Second cousin of Hector,
Cassandra, Paris and Troilus
Hero of the Aeneid (a 'sequel'
to the Iliad)



Pandarus
Cressida's Uncle
Trojan Nobleman



Troilus
Prince of Troy
Son of King Priam
Loves Cressida



Cressida
Trojan Noblewoman
Daughter of Calchas
In love with Troilus



Calchas
Cressida's father
A Trojan who has
defected to the Greeks
A seer and prophet of
Apollo



House of Atreus

Menelaus
Helen's Husband
King of Sparta
Brother of Agamemnon



Agamemnon
Brother of Menelaus
King of Mycenae
Leader of the Greek forces
Husband to Clytemnestra



Odysseus
King of Ithaca
Hero of the Odyssey (a
'sequel' to the Iliad)
Favourite of the Goddess
Athena
Married to Penelope



Diomedes
One of the Greece's top warriors
King of Argos
Favourite of the Goddess
Athena
injures 2 gods during the Iliad
(Aphrodite and Ares)



Spartan Royal Dynasty

Helen
Face that 'launched
1000 ships'
Daughter of Zeus
Queen of Sparta
Married to Menelaus
Eloped with Paris



Clytemnestra
Half sister of Helen
Wife of Agamemnon
Queen of Mycenae
Princess of Sparta



Penelope
Wife of Odysseus
Queen of Ithaca
Cousin of Helen and
Clytemnestra



Achilles
Prince of Phthia
The greatest of all the Greek warriors
Lover of Patroclus
Commander of the Myrmidon warriors
Son of the sea nymph Thetis



Patroclus
Prince of Opus
Lover of Achilles
Grecian Warrior



Ajax "The Great"
Prince of Salamis
Cousin of Achilles
One of Greece's top warriors
Distantly related to the Trojan royal family



BACKGROUND INFO

Helen of Sparta is the most beautiful woman in the world – and as her father has no son, whoever marries her will become King of Sparta. Jealous suitors compete for her hand. Her family fears that when she chooses a husband, the rejected suitors will break into violence.

Wily Odysseus devises a plan: to compete for her hand, all suitors must swear to defend the man she eventually weds. She marries Menelaus, and all the great heroes of Greece are now sworn to defend them. Odysseus marries Helen's cousin Penelope, and Agamemnon marries Helen's sister Clytemnestra.



Three goddesses of Olympus ask the mortal shepherd Paris to choose which of them is the fairest. Hera offers him power, while Athene offers wisdom. Aphrodite says if he chooses her she will grant him the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris chooses Aphrodite.



Cassandra is a princess of Troy, and priestess in the temple of Apollo. When she rejects Apollo's seduction, he curses her to be able to foretell the future, but never be believed when she speaks.



Paris learns he is actually a prince of Troy. He visits Sparta and meets Queen Helen. He is struck by her beauty, and after Aphrodite's promise, it feels like fate. He abducts her and brings her back to Troy.



Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon are outraged by Helen's abduction. They call upon the rest of the Greek princes to honour their vow.

Not all wish to fight. Odysseus tries to fake madness, and Achilles hides himself disguised as a woman, but their tricks are discovered. All must join the army sailing for Troy.

But Agamemnon has angered the goddess Artemis. His army is ready on the beach, but there is no wind to launch the ships. They wait and wait. Finally, the seer Calchas tells Agamemnon he must sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to the goddess. The sacrifice works and Artemis allows the ships to sail. But Clytemnestra is enraged by the murder of her daughter and vows revenge.

OUR STORY TONIGHT

Seven long years have passed. The Greek army, led by King Agamemnon, besieges Troy. But the city, led by Prince Hector, continues to resist.



Prince Troilus, brother of Paris and Hector, has fallen in love with Cressida, daughter of the seer Calchas. Cressida's uncle Pandarus helps them to meet in secret. They declare their love and promise to be true to each other.



Achilles is the greatest warrior in the Greek army. He is ambitious for glory and honour. But he has quarrelled with king Agamemnon and now refuses to fight. He and his lover Patroclus remain in his tent.



Hector hopes to end the war by fighting Achilles one-on-one. He challenges the Greek army to send out their best warrior. Achilles refuses to fight. Ajax volunteers to fight instead. A brief ceasefire is declared while the challenge takes place and the two armies meet on neutral territory. The fight ends in a draw.



Calchas demands that his daughter Cressida is sent out of the city to join him in the Greek camp. Cressida doesn't want to leave Troilus but she has no choice. When she arrives in the Greek camp, Diomedes is immediately attracted to her. Recognising she has no hope of returning to Troy, Cressida knows her best chance of survival is to encourage Diomedes' affections and gain his protection. Odysseus tells Troilus who is devastated.



Patroclus knows the Greek army needs Achilles to lead them. Achilles still refuses to fight, so Patroclus disguises himself in Achilles' armour and goes into battle. Seeing 'Achilles', the Greek soldiers return to the fight. Hector kills Patroclus, believing him to be Achilles.



Achilles is filled with rage and grief at the death of Patroclus. He returns to the fight looking for revenge. He kills many warriors in his rage (including fighting the the river God Scamander) before finally he finds and kills Hector. His revenge is complete.

AFTER TONIGHT'S TALE (SPOILERS!)



Achilles ties Hector's body to the back of his chariot and drags him round the walls of Troy. Hector's father Priam pleads for his son's body to give him a proper funeral and after seeing Priam's tears, Achilles finally agrees.



Achilles has been invulnerable all his life. Born half human, half god, his mother burned his mortality away in the hearth fire. The only remaining mortal spot was his heel, by which she'd been holding him. Paris manages to shoot Achilles from the walls of Troy – the arrow strikes his ankle and he dies.



Ajax and Odysseus rescue Achilles's body and bury it with his lover Patroclus. The two men then compete over who should keep Achilles's magic armour. Ajax loses the competition and devastated, he kills himself.

Paris is mortally wounded by an arrow. Helen begs Paris's first wife, the nymph Oenone to heal him. She is still bitter that Paris left her for Helen and refuses to help. Paris dies and Helen returns alone to Troy.



Disguised as a beggar, Odysseus goes to spy inside Troy, but is recognised by Helen. Homesick, Helen plots with Odysseus to help the Greek soldiers. Tired of the endless battle, Odysseus devises a cunning plan to end the war.

The Greeks pretend to leave Troy. They build a huge hollow statue of a horse (the 'Trojan Horse') and leave it behind on the beach.

Thinking they have won, the Trojans pull the horse inside the city as a trophy. Cassandra warns them it is a trap, but no one believes her prophecy.

The Greek soldiers led by Odysseus have been hiding inside the horse. When night falls, they climb out to open the gates of Troy and destroy the city.

After 10 years, Troy has fallen. The Greeks have won the war.

AFTER THE FALL OF TROY (SPOILERS!)



What happens to the characters who survive the story of *Troilus and Cressida* after our story ends? Many of them return home, and have stories of their own.

Troilus dies in Troy (in most versions killed by Achilles), never to see Cressida again. Diomedes returns home to Argos and becomes a famous king. And what of Cressida herself? She doesn't appear in the original myths, so her fate remains a mystery...



Helen and Menelaus reconcile and return to Sparta where they end their days peacefully. Their daughter Hermione goes on to marry first Achilles' son, and later Orestes, the son of Agamemnon.



Aeneas is one of the few heroes to escape the fall of Troy. After years of wandering, he arrives in Carthage – where he and Queen Dido fall in love. She invites him to stay and rule with her but Zeus insists he must leave. Aeneas sails to Italy, where he becomes ancestor to Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome – while Dido kills herself out of grief. When they meet again in the underworld, she refuses to speak to him.



Agamemnon returns home, bringing Cassandra with him as a trophy. His wife Clytemnestra has not forgotten the death of Iphigenia, and with her lover she kills Cassandra and then murders Agamemnon in his bath.



It takes Odysseus 10 years to get from Troy to his home in Ithaca. On the way, he battles monsters, tricks a cyclops, and hears the song of the sirens. He also meets Circe, a sorceress who turns many of his sailors into pigs, and the nymph Calypso who enchants him to become her lover for seven years. At home in Ithaca, many suitors try to persuade Penelope to stop waiting for Odysseus and marry them instead. She manages to hold them off through her skill and cunning, until Odysseus returns and reclaims his throne.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

We hope that our guide to the story of the Trojan War helps you to enjoy watching our production of *Troilus and Cressida*. Intrigued by the story and want to learn more? There are lots of books, films and TV shows which explore this story. We've listed just a few below as a starting point, and we hope you enjoy learning more about this fascinating and complex myth.

Read:

- The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller
- Troy by Stephen Fry
- A Thousand Ships by Natalie Haynes
- The Silence of the Girls by Pat Barker
- The Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer
- The Aeneid by Virgil
- Elektra by Jennifer Saint
- Ithaca by Claire North
- Clytemnestra by Constanza Casati
- The Tale of Troy by Roger Lancelyn Green

Watch:

- Troy (2004)
- Troy: Fall of a City (2018)

Thank you to Catherine Woolley and Cate Nunn for producing this guide, and to Lake Street Nursery and Xander Reilly for providing the Playmobil!

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