

# **Inside the Walls of Troy Study Guide**

**Inside the Walls of Troy by Clemence McLaren**

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## Plot Summary

"Inside the Walls of Troy" tells the story of the Trojan War and the events leading up to the war. The beginning of the story is told from Helen's perspective. It is Helen's decision to run away with Paris that starts the war. Helen's great beauty makes her the jewel of Greece. However, since she is only twelve years old at the beginning of the book, she is more interested in horses and games than in her beauty or its implications.

Helen is kidnapped by Theseus, the ruler of Athens, because of her beauty. Through Theseus, Helen learns that her only value lies in her beauty and her only goal in life should be to be a good wife. Theseus tells Helen she must transform herself into exactly what her husband wants her to be, giving up her own identity in the process. Eventually Helen is ransomed by her brothers and returned to her home in Sparta, but by that time rumors of her kidnapping have spread and the most powerful princes of Greece are making their way to Sparta to attempt to win her before anyone else can.

Eventually Helen is given to Menelaus, brother to the great King Agamemnon, because he is the wealthiest and most powerful of her suitors. Helen has come to look at her beauty as a burden because it prevents her from being allowed to make her own decisions and choose the path of her own life. Her beauty makes her into a possession because that is all any man ever sees. However, Helen begins to appreciate her life with Menelaus because she realizes that he really does love her and when they have a daughter he becomes an excellent father. Just as Helen is deciding that her life is actually pretty good, Paris of Troy arrives and Helen is swept off of her feet by the beauty of his face, form, and words. Helen abandons her position as a wife, mother, and queen of Sparta when she falls in love with the Trojan prince. And her abandonment sets in motion the events that will eventually lead to the Trojan War. However, it is not Helen's actions that ultimately cause the war. Her actions are used as an excuse. The cause of the war is the pride of the Kings of Greece and Troy, and it is the pride of men that perpetuates the slaughter and horrors of the Trojan War.

The second half of the story is told from the perspective of Cassandra, a princess of Troy, because it is the people of Troy who are most affected by the events of the second half of the novel. Cassandra is gifted with the ability to see into the future and she sees visions of the arrival of Helen and the downfall of Troy, but no one will listen to her warnings. Cassandra eventually becomes friends with Helen because she realizes Helen's actions were merely an excuse for the pride and avarice of men. However, this realization does not lessen Cassandra's grief over the death of her brothers and friends at the walls of Troy. Cassandra is forced to watch in her visions and in reality as her brothers, friends, and countrymen are brutally slaughtered on the battlefield before the city gates.

Cassandra knows she is powerless to stop the war and she sympathizes with Helen's predicament. She realizes Helen should be allowed to love whomever she chooses and Helen should be allowed to decide the path of her life for herself. She realizes Helen is a victim of the culture they live in just as much as she is. But by the end of the story it is



Helen and the women of Troy who play the large roles in the end of the war. The great Greek warrior Achilles slaughters hundreds of the warriors of Troy, but ultimately he is brought down by a woman. Achilles is taken with Cassandra's sister Polyxena and it is with her he shares the secret of his vulnerability. It is Polyxena who betrays Achilles and begins to turn the tide of the war. In the end, Troy will fall but the princesses of Troy, Cassandra, Polyxena, Laodice, and Andromache, remain standing. It is the women of Troy who gather together in the Temple of Apollo in defiance of the invading Greek army and it is the princesses of Troy who will carry on the legacy and memory of their culture.



# Part 1, Helen's Story: Chapters 1-3

## Summary

Chapter 1 opens with a twelve-year-old Helen playing knucklebones with her cousin, Penelope. Penelope is fifteen and doesn't care for games anymore, but Helen is enjoying being a child. Penelope tells Helen to put on a veil when she is riding her horse because she can't be the most beautiful girl in Greece with a sunburned nose. Helen answers she doesn't care about her nose. While they are playing, Theseus of Athens storms in and announces he is kidnapping Helen for ransom. According to Theseus, news of Helen's beauty is spreading throughout Greece, and he will be the first of many men coming to claim her. Helen's parting words to her cousin are instructions to take care of her foal.

Theseus places Helen and her maid, Hessia, on his ship, The Minotaur. Helen puts up a brave face and insists she and Hessia be given food and water. Helen thinks Theseus might actually be a decent person but she is frightened. Seeing the fear beneath her imperious behavior, Theseus assures her she is in no danger. He says none of the men on board would dare harm her; they consider it a great honor to have a daughter of Zeus on board their ship. Helen replies this is servant's gossip. The next morning, Helen awakens to find Hessia arguing merrily with the ship's crew, and Helen realizes Hessia considers this excursion as something of a holiday. Helen thinks about how angry her brothers will be at her kidnapping and how hungry they are for war. She recalls Theseus's words from the night before and wonders how her beauty could be a gift if it caused men to die for her.

Theseus tells Helen about his friend Pirithous who is a wild warrior from Mount Olympus. This makes Helen think about her own supposedly sacred heritage. Helen and her twin brothers are the only blond children born into a family of typical dark-haired Greeks with dark complexions. Helen denies she is a daughter of Zeus and when Theseus teases her about it, she asks him how Zeus could have accomplished such a feat, especially since he was supposed to have come to her mother in the guise of a swan. Theseus admits he doesn't really believe Zeus assumed the guise of a swan or that her mother was unwilling. He says he thinks these parts of the stories are just a good excuse for wives who have been unfaithful. Theseus tells Helen about his wife, Hippolyta, an Amazon he stole from her tribe and who died many years ago while saving his life. Helen notices he loved Hippolyta greatly. They arrive in Piraeus and Helen is shocked by the throngs of people lining the streets and calling her name. When she asks why, Theseus replies it is because she is the most beautiful woman the world will ever know. Helen feels a shiver of fear run down her spine.



## Analysis

Chapter 1 begins by introducing Helen as a girl who does not understand the power of her own beauty. She recognizes herself in her love for horses and playing the flute as well as her habit of biting her nails. But she doesn't recognize herself in her own face. She still considers herself a child and it is clear she is totally unprepared for the major role she will be called on to play. Helen is more concerned about the health of her horses than the fact that she is being stolen from her home.

Theseus feels a kind of kinship to Helen because he is also supposed to have the sacred blood of the gods flowing through his veins. Helen's disbelief in her sacred lineage is similar to her ignorance of her own beauty. She senses nothing sacred or magnificent about herself or her face and so she is unable to believe these mythical stories about her person. While Hestia immediately becomes friends with the crew, they are shy of Helen and look at her but avoid her. This strained interaction with the crew foreshadows Helen's difficult relationships with men because of her beauty. She will be desired by many but truly loved by few. Helen thinks about the blood thirst and hotheadedness of her brothers and wonders if they will attempt to create a war. The moment she considers people dying because of her beauty foreshadows her later role in the Trojan War.

Helen's suspicion of the stories about Zeus are repeated throughout the novel by many characters. However, like Theseus, many of the characters are convinced of the existence of the gods and their interference in the daily lives of human beings, although they may not believe a few of the more fantastical elements of the stories. As an Amazon, Hippolyta came from a tribe of warrior women who shunned the society of men and were extremely gifted in battle. Theseus stole Hippolyta from her tribe and her love for Theseus became her doom. This story foreshadows the doomed love of Helen and Paris, as well as the doom of Cassandra. Hippolyta was a strong, independent woman until she fell in love and her own life became subordinate to Theseus's life. Helen's fear when Theseus compliments her beauty as the greatest the world will ever see reveals her own perception that there is danger in great beauty.

## Vocabulary

extraordinary, gloating, clatter, portal, terrifying, illustrious, invoke, rivulets, accumulate, badgered, medley



# Part 1, Helen's Story: Chapters 4-6

## Summary

Helen is transformed by a bath and the styling and dressing of Theseus's servants. She looks in the mirror and does not recognize herself. She feels like there is something greater in the mirror, some deeper meaning, that she is able to perceive in herself. When Theseus sees Helen he tells her that her beauty makes her a figure of myths and legends, marked by the gods for a great destiny, just as he has been. He tells her to stop biting her nails, act more gracefully, and have a more pliable manner so she will be able to fulfill her destiny to return home and marry a great king. Theseus continues to lecture her on being a good wife during her stay. He tells her she must always act as if she admires her husband. Helen learns everything in her life must revolve around her husband, his happiness and peace of mind, once she is married. Helen finally objects to all of these instructions and claims her destiny as her own. However, she soon repents of her temper and realizes her destiny is in the hands of the gods and she must submit.

Helen's brothers arrive after three months and pay Theseus's ransom. Helen's brothers attempt to provoke Theseus into a fight because they feel their honor is at stake, but Theseus remains levelheaded and courteous. As Helen and her brothers prepare to leave, Theseus warns Helen her beauty has made her an obsession and there may be danger in the conflicting claims of her many suitors. Once she arrives home, Helen is faced with eleven of Greece's most powerful warriors and knows more will arrive. She sees the servants placing bets on her future husband and wants to object because she is a person, not an object to be won, but she knows they would simply laugh at her and accuse her of putting on airs. Helen receives a letter from her sister advocating the suit of her brother-in-law whom she believes will offer Helen the greatest amount of power and wealth.

Helen meets Menelaus who admires her in flamboyant poetic terms but never speaks to her directly. Instead he addresses his remarks to her father. Helen resents this type of impersonal treatment but is too young to understand the source of this dislike. Instead she says she dislikes his hairy arms. Penelope tells her she will have to marry one of the twelve suitors and that will be her father's choice. Penelope adds she herself will be forced to marry one of the men who is rejected by Helen. Helen mulls over the fact that she is such a popular choice for marriage although she has no desire to get married, while Penelope has no obvious prospects and has a great desire for marriage. Helen wonders why they are chosen like melons with no consideration for the person inside. Penelope assures her her husband will learn to love the person inside because Helen's inner character is just as beautiful as her face. Odysseus of Ithaca arrives and all the servants disdain him because he is not wealthy and lives on a remote, rocky island. Helen notices Penelope looks somehow different.



## Analysis

Helen recognizes the greatness of her own beauty but does not recognize herself in the mirror. She defines herself by who she is in terms of her character and personality rather than her outward appearance. However, her outward appearance is so magnificent it is the only thing men are able to see. Theseus emphasizes this fact when he begins to instruct Helen how to be a proper wife. He essentially tells her to hide all thought and character so her husband can be pleased with just her pretty face. He tells her she must learn the flute in order to please her husband. She must stop biting her nails in order to please her husband. She must move more gracefully in order to please her husband. She must have a more docile personality in order to please her husband. Everything about her must be focused primarily on enhancing her husband's happiness. Helen momentarily objects to this way of thought before she resigns herself to her life as the subject of the gods and of men. This moment serves to underscore Helen's weak character and her inability to fight against the rules of society.

Helen's marriage will be an alliance of wealth and kingdoms. There will be no emotion or feeling involved. Her sister tells her she must base her choice on who will provide her with the most wealth, prestige, and power. However, her sister also recognizes the choice will not be given to Helen. Ultimately, Helen's fate lies in the hands of her father and action and argument would be fruitless. The fact is that she is treated as an object and a prize to be won rather than as a thinking and feeling human being. She has no voice of her own and she is not allowed to exercise her own will or desires.

Emphasizing Helen's lack of value as a human being, Menelaus does not even directly address her when they meet. Instead he tells her father how much he admires her appearance. Penelope has also resigned herself to the fate of women and knows she will have to marry one of Helen's rejected suitors. She will not even be able to choose from between the rejects. However, everything changes for Penelope with the arrival of Odysseus. Odysseus and Penelope talk quietly and seem to understand one another in a way that reveals their similar natures. When Helen notices Penelope's glow and the alteration of her appearance, she is seeing Penelope's happiness reflected in her outward appearance. Odysseus's love makes Penelope feel like the most beautiful woman in the world and her outward appearance reflects these feelings. Penelope's love and happiness make her feel like the most beautiful woman in the world, while Helen can actually lay claim to the title of most beautiful woman in the world but is about to enter a loveless marriage.

## Vocabulary

cowardice, frolicking, amusing, inseparable, vanquish, tiresome, spectacular, smitten, predicament, lumbering, glower, pensive





# Part 1, Helen's Story: Chapters 7-9

## Summary

Odysseus eventually approaches Helen's father with a plan to allow him to choose a suitor without causing a war to break out. So Helen's father tells the suitors before he reveals his choice, they must all swear to the Oath of Horse that they will all defend the victor from any who might envy his good fortune or try to steal Helen from him. Helen's father makes sure the suitors all understand this is a lifelong oath that will bind them all as blood brothers. During the preparations for the ceremony of the Oath, Helen realizes Odysseus is not participating because he will be marrying Penelope as a reward for finding a peaceful solution to the suitor issue. She feels betrayed by Penelope's willingness to leave her and the fact that she did not share her plans. The suitors all swear the oath and Helen's father announces her husband will be Menelaus. Helen recognizes the fact that she has no control over her own life and must simply accept this decision. Menelaus gives Helen a golden diadem to celebrate their engagement, but accidentally drops it on the floor before he is able to put it on Helen's head. Penelope and Odysseus are married and Helen feels truly alone.

Helen is married a year after Penelope's marriage and after the death of her two brothers. Therefore, when Menelaus comes to claim his bride he claims not only the most beautiful woman in the world but her entire kingdom as well. Theseus sends Helen a beautiful white Arabian horse bred by the Trojans of Asia Minor as a wedding present and a mirror with a handle in the shape of the goddess Aphrodite. Penelope comes to visit and Helen cannot help but feel jealous of her loving relationship with Odysseus. The day before her wedding, Helen offers a sacrifice to the goddess Artemis of the toys of her childhood. Theseus comes to the wedding and asks if she is still seeking love and she tells him she has given up on love. He says that is good, and when she asks him why, he replies true love is full of pain as well as joy. He advises her to be satisfied.

During the first five years of marriage, Helen follows Theseus's advice and finds out marriage to Menelaus is not that terrible. Soon Helen gives birth to a daughter and rather than scolding her for not providing an heir, Menelaus dotes on their daughter. The men of Sparta traditionally ride in the battle with their faces and heads shaved so their enemy will not be able to hold them by their hair in battle. But Menelaus allows his hair to grow because he says he is done with war. However, as rumors spread of a war between Greece and Troy, the atmosphere in Sparta becomes restless. Menelaus decides to open negotiations with the Trojans in order to work toward a peaceful prevention of war.

## Analysis

The Oath of the Horse taken by all of Helen's suitors foreshadows the immense armies of Greece later on when they come to battle the heroes of Troy. These men have sworn



to defend Menelaus and do battle with any man who would take his wife, thus they are forced to enter the battle against Troy when Helen runs away with Paris. Helen feels trapped and angry, as she cannot imagine her life with any of her suitors and dislikes some of them. She is not sure whether she is angry or relieved when her father chooses Menelaus but, as usual, she submits her will. When Menelaus drops the diadem at their engagement, it foreshadows the breaking of their marriage and the short amount of time Helen will be his queen.

Helen sacrifices the toys of her childhood as a symbolic gesture of her growth into adulthood at the age of thirteen. In becoming a wife, she must leave behind forever the days of her childhood. Theseus's gift of the Trojan horse provides a parallel image of the Greek horse that will later destroy the walls of Troy. Just as the Greeks are able to infiltrate the Trojan walls and destroy the kingdom, so the Trojan Prince Paris will infiltrate the home of Helen and Menelaus and destroy their marriage. When Theseus tells Helen it is good that she has given up on love and love deals out equal parts pain and joy, he is referring to the painful loss of the loved one. His comments also foreshadow Menelaus's rage at the loss of Helen and Helen's later sorrow at the loss of Paris.

Menelaus is portrayed as a kind husband, doting father, and good ruler. He lets his hair grow in order to symbolize the fact he loves his family and will no longer be going to war or fighting because he wants to remain with them. He has no idea events are conspiring to tear his family apart and draw him into one of the most famous wars in history. In a way, Menelaus furthers his own doom by opening discussions of negotiation with Troy.

## Vocabulary

cronies, devour, unpredictable, anticlimax, begrudge, ornate, betrothal, belated, falter, bountiful



# Part 1, Helen's Story: Chapters 10-12

## Summary

On his last trip to Troy, Menelaus becomes friends with the Trojan prince named Paris and he decides to invite him to Sparta in order to further the peace negotiations. As Helen rides with Menelaus down to the sea to meet the ship that will bring Paris, she realizes the gods haven't brought her such a bad destiny after all. As the ship approaches the shore, their daughter sees Paris and asks if he is a god. Menelaus tells her Paris is just a man. Helen sees his curly, gleaming hair and bronzed, muscular body and immediately falls in love with him on sight. Helen thinks her maid, Hestia, would say she had been bewitched by Aphrodite. Helen attempts to make an excuse at dinner but Menelaus and Paris insist she remain. Paris commences the story of his birth and childhood. He talks about how his parents received a bad prophecy from an oracle regarding his birth and how they decided to sacrifice him by leaving him in the mountains. A shepherd was supposed to leave him there but took pity on the child and took him home to raise as his own son. Fifteen years later, Paris arrived at the annual games in Troy and beat all of the royal princes in all of the competitions. Angered by their own defeat, the princes insisted the upstart peasant be killed but the shepherd once again saved his life by revealing his true identity. The king and queen of Troy welcomed Paris back into their family although the oracles still thought he would bring bad fortune.

Helen attempts to hide in her room during Paris's stay, but Menelaus tells her he wants her to join the celebrations because he enjoys showing her off. Helen wears a robe like the sea, which highlights her beauty. Menelaus becomes progressively drunker as the night wears on, even while Helen and Paris talk and come to know one another. When Menelaus passes out they arrange a meeting for that night. Helen comes to Paris on the moonlight and they share their mutual love. Paris reveals the fact Aphrodite promised Helen to Paris in return for his judgment of her as the most fair. Helen enjoys Paris's "practiced kisses" and for the first time in her life she feels truly beautiful from the inside out. Paris talks about leaving Menelaus, but Helen is reluctant, even more so when she remembers her daughter. She asks Paris about her daughter and he doesn't seem happy at the thought of bringing her along, but he assures Helen Aphrodite will send them a sign.

The next morning a messenger arrives with the news that Menelaus's uncle has died on the island of Crete and Menelaus must go to his funeral. After he leaves, Hestia comes upon Helen while she is packing up her daughter's things. Hestia asks what Menelaus has done that he deserves to be punished by the loss of his daughter as well as his wife. She tells Helen Priam, King of Troy, will think of Helen as nothing more than Paris's latest whore. Helen slaps Hestia. Hestia threatens to rouse the guards if Helen tries to leave with her daughter, and Helen submits but she insists she will take the treasure that she inherited rather than being shamed by going to Paris with nothing. Helen keeps saying she can't do this. And she thinks this same thought just before they



board their ship. Their journey is charmed and the weather is beautiful and Helen is in love. She soon forgets her kingdom, her husband, and her daughter.

## Analysis

Just as Helen consciously begins to appreciate her life, she sees Paris and falls in love. Her contradictory, sudden reversal of thought suggests perhaps some higher power is tampering with Helen's emotions. The immediacy of her feelings also supports this theory. She falls in love with Paris before she has even seen him fully. She even thinks Hestia would say she has been struck by one of Aphrodite's arrows. However, it is also possible Helen falls in love with Paris because she recognizes her ideal in Paris. Helen was just a child when she was married to Menelaus, who was a fully grown man. While Paris is fully grown, there is something about his personality and the descriptions of his appearance that lends a boyish element to his character. Paris is also Helen's equal in appearance. Like Helen he is fair and beautiful. He is even mistaken for a god by Helen's daughter. It is possible that, in Paris, Helen sees a reflection of herself and a perfect match for all of her ideals.

Up to this point, Helen has been unable to revolt in any way against societal norms. Even when her will and desires point in the opposite direction of the path laid out for her, she has always submitted. It seems to go against her nature to suddenly break with the rules of her world and the ruling of the men around her. The unnaturalness of her decision suggests the influence of an outside force. Helen feels truly beautiful for the first time with Paris, but it is not entirely clear why this is so. Paris, like all other men, is preoccupied with Helen's face. It is true that they talk while Menelaus drinks, but there is nothing in Paris's behavior to suggest he is in any way different from the rest of the men Helen is surrounded by. In fact, the narrative suggests Paris is not as innocently worshipping of Helen as other men. While most men grow shy and self-conscious in the presence of her beauty, Paris openly seduces her with his "practiced kisses." He even reveals to her the fact she is a prize given to him by Aphrodite. She is just a prize to Paris.

In support of the concept that Helen is no longer in control of her emotions or her decisions, Helen continually says "I can't do this" as she packs up her belongings and prepares to leave her home. She even thinks it, just as she is beginning her journey. However, Helen is weak-willed and it is quite possible her will is simply not able to sustain a battle against her love for Paris. Honor plays a large role in the events of the novel, women's honor as well as men's. Helen is determined she will not come to Paris empty handed and so she takes back her treasure from Menelaus. Marrying a man without any bridal present would bring shame on any woman and place her in the position of a beggar. Helen clearly considers her flight with Paris in the light of a marriage. In trying to establish her own honor, Helen has greatly injured Menelaus's. She is not only betraying him by her flight but she is also robbing him when she leaves. Helen's actions reveal just how immature she is. Helen is clearly not being presented as an admirable heroine, particularly when she says she soon forgets her daughter, her husband, and her kingdom.

## Vocabulary

gesture, lofty, scurry, vermillion, pronounce, discard, divert, evaporate, unsuspecting, embark



## Part 2, Cassandra's Story: Chapters 1-4

### Summary

Cassandra has a vision of her brother Paris and a beautiful blond woman on his boat. The woman is playing a flute. Cassandra has always disliked Paris for his lack of character and selfishness, but she senses a foreboding presence in the dream that swallows up her annoyance and leads her to believe she is seeing a vision. As Cassandra watches, the woman lifts her flute and offers it to her as a gift. The light catches on the flute and turns to flame, and the flute explodes into fire as the woman tosses it directly over Cassandra's head. Cassandra's vision changes to the plains in front of the walls of Troy. She is walking among a field full of dead warriors, some of them still alive and writhing. Polyxena, Cassandra's sister, wakes her up but Cassandra doesn't tell her sister about her vision. Cassandra runs to tell her twin brother, Helenus, about her vision.

Helenus is waiting for Cassandra when she arrives and tells Cassandra he sensed danger in Paris's journey from the beginning and was opposed to his trip to Sparta. Cassandra tells Helenus about her vision and he says he had a similar feeling of doom and knew Paris was lying when he talked about his trip to Sparta. Helenus and Cassandra know that no one will heed their warnings and feel discouraged. No one ever listens to Cassandra's warnings, although they do sometimes listen to Helenus. Helenus's explanation for this is that Apollo fell in love with Cassandra after gifting her with sight, but when she rejected his love he cursed her so no one would ever believe her. Cassandra's mother explains the sight of Cassandra and Helenus with the story that they fell asleep in Apollo's temple as children and serpents came and licked their ears. However, neither explanation makes sense to Cassandra. Troy was a place that was greatly influenced by religion and King Priam often made sacrifices to Zeus and all of the other gods on Olympus.

News of Paris and Helen arrives with Phoenician traders and a month later the delegation from Greece arrives in order to right the wrong of Paris. Cassandra attends the Council of Elders even though women generally did not attend these meetings. Priam says Paris could not have removed Helen and her treasure from Sparta against her will. Odysseus says regardless of Helen's willingness, Paris's act violated the laws of hospitality. Priam prides himself on being advanced and civilized and this accusation gets his attention. Priam promises as soon as Paris returns, he will return Helen to Menelaus. The city has a holiday of feasting with the Greek envoys. Two suitors, Othronus and Coroebus, vie for Cassandra's hand but Cassandra has no wish to be married. After days of suspense and rumor, Cassandra tells her brother she has decided to become a temple virgin of Apollo. Helenus laughingly advises her against this choice, but Cassandra grows angry and says she will not be bargained off, she would rather run away. Cassandra says she wishes she was a man and Helenus tells her men are not completely free either, but he says that he pities Cassandra who is, "so out of fit with the world you were born into" (86). Helenus advises her to enjoy the



attention from her suitors and learn about the marriage market, and he tells her neither courtship will come to anything. Cassandra takes her brother's advice and soon becomes friends with Othronus although they do not speak the same language. Hector, thinking that Cassandra favors Othronus, tells her he will do his best to sway their father. Cassandra realizes there are men who are willing to put their sister's happiness above political concerns. Immediately following this conversation with Hector, Cassandra has a vision of Hector lying dead at her feet. She runs to her father to warn him and delivers the warning of her vision just as Paris and Helen arrive. But her father is enchanted by Helen and does not heed Cassandra's warning.

The men are happy to have Paris home and the men and women of Troy are all charmed by Helen's beauty and kind nature. Helen becomes close to Cassandra's sisters, Polyxena and Laodice. Cassandra is slightly jealous. Cassandra informs them that the Greek delegation will be arriving soon and that Greek ships are being amassed on the coast nearby in case her father should refuse to return Helen. When Helen wonders what will happen to them all, Cassandra refrains from asking why she didn't think of that when she was running away with Paris. Cassandra mulls over the fact the ultimate decision regarding Helen's fate lies in her father's hands. As a woman, Helen is merely supposed to do as she is told. Cassandra bitterly considers the fact Helen cannot live where she pleases or do as she likes. Even though she is a queen, she has no power. Cassandra sees Helen's situation in a new light and realizes Helen should be allowed to choose her own destiny. Priam refuses to return Helen, insisting Helen has a right to choose where she wants to live and with whom. Even the Trojans recognize this argument as false. Paris has paid a man named Antimachus to stand up in the council and defend his flight with Helen and demand war.

## Analysis

Cassandra's vision foreshadows the doom of Troy. Just as the burning flute flies out of Helen's hands so her fate is not her own to control and the cause of the war ultimately lies at the feet of Priam. As a woman Helen has no choice in whether or not she returns to her husband, and although her flight from Sparta is what began this journey to war, it is not the ultimate cause. As the flute flies down directly over Cassandra, she understands the approaching doom will be on the heads of her people. The fire foreshadows the funeral pyres of Troy's dead warriors and the eventual burning and destruction of the city.

Once again the cause of the war can be laid at the feet of King Priam. Helenus and Cassandra know their father will not heed their warnings and they know it would be useless to attempt to speak to him about their visions. Therefore Troy receives no warning about the approaching danger of Helen's arrival. Although King Priam constantly prays and sacrifices to the gods, he does not believe in the gift from Apollo to Helenus and Cassandra. His own arrogance and conceit blinds him to the truth of their visions and prevents him from heeding their warnings. Although Cassandra's life has actually been intimately shaped by the gods, she does not believe her gift comes from Apollo. She does not believe in the stories of her brother and mother. Both of their



stories are based on supposition and imagination and Cassandra finds this to be insufficient proof. There is a suggestion that she does not believe in the influence of the gods on the daily lives of human beings.

Cassandra herself hears her father promise to give Helen over to the Greeks upon Paris's return. Odysseus traps Priam into this promise by arguing that Paris's actions violated the sacred code of honor that exists in the relationship between a guest and his host. There is a strict code of honor and Paris has violated it. His suggestion implies that Priam and his family are not civilized enough to follow the codes of common courtesy. Priam, who prides himself on his advanced civility, finds this argument insupportable and agrees to return Helen. However, he is entranced by Helen and once again ignores Cassandra's warning. The fault for the fall of Troy can be found directly in the actions of Priam. If he had not been too prideful to listen to his daughter and too caught up in Helen's beauty, then he would have kept his promise to the Greeks and war could have been avoided.

Cassandra resents Helen's closeness with her sisters and her presence in her city because she knows the danger her presence brings. Cassandra knows her brother will not give Helen up and although she doesn't have any confidence, she hopes her father will keep his promise to return Helen. Cassandra realizes she is making the same judgments and adhering to the same concepts as the rest of society. She realizes Helen should be allowed to choose where she lives and who she lives with. She realizes Helen should be allowed to choose her own destiny, just as she wishes she could. This new insight into her own prejudiced feelings against Helen leads her to become far more forgiving of Helen. She also realizes the fate of her country doesn't lie in Helen's hands because, as a woman, she has no choice in whether she remains in Troy or returns to Sparta. Ironically, King Priam bases his argument against the Greek claim for Helen on the idea that Helen should be able to choose the path of her life for herself. King Priam knows as well as anyone else this is not the way the world works, and he would never allow his own daughters to make their own choices in marriage or life in general.

## Vocabulary

foreboding, slain, roused, potential, attuned, speculations, patronage, bombastic, preceding, rectify, chaste, taciturn, nemesis





## Part 2, Cassandra's Story: Chapters 5-8

### Summary

A few people in the city begin to recall the prophecy connecting Paris's birth with the sacking of Troy. Women begin to blame and resent Helen. Hector's wife, Andromache, becomes pregnant and becomes one of Helen's most bitter enemies. Hector, however, continues to treat Helen with kindness. The people of Troy stand divided on the eve of battle. The Greeks wait for favorable winds while the Trojans develop defense strategies. Both of Cassandra's suitors offer to join the Trojans as allies. Cassandra goes to the temple of Apollo to pray her gift of sight be taken from her. She sees Helen at the temple and understands Helen is simply far too weak to resist the magnetic pull of Paris. Cassandra warns Helen that Priam could still decide to send her back and Helen replies sometimes she wishes he would. Andromache arrives at the temple and her hatred of Helen is obvious. Cassandra tells Helen Andromache's child will be stillborn and she will hate Helen even more after the birth of her dead child. Helen asks Cassandra if there is ever any chance of avoiding the destiny of her visions; Cassandra replies if the gods ever hold out any chance of change, it is because they enjoy a good joke.

Andromache's son is born dead that autumn. The women are forced to wait in ignorance and suspense while the men develop strategies and the Greeks muster their forces. Agamemnon consults an oracle who tells him with the death of his oldest daughter, he will be guaranteed the westerly winds that will allow him to sail to Troy. Agamemnon summons his daughter and then takes her by surprise when he offers her as a sacrifice to the gods. Helen and Cassandra and the other women are horrified by the stories of Iphigenia's sacrifice. While they resent the lack of independence and opportunity in their own lives, they have never considered something so horrible as the sacrifice of a daughter. Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia violates her self-rule and value as a human being in a way that is unheard of. Cassandra and Helen develop a close friendship. Helen asks Cassandra why she doesn't hate her like the other women and Cassandra knows it is because she believes Helen should be allowed to choose the path of her life. Cassandra tells Helen she knows Helenus will not die in the battle although she fears for Hector's life because he will have to face Achilles. Helen mentions with hope the prophecy that says Achilles will not survive the war. The Trojans have a holiday feast before war breaks out. The celebration is interrupted by the arrival of the Greek fleet. The Trojans stand on their city walls and watch the approaching armies. Paris comes up and wraps his arms around Helen as he whispers encouragement and tells her Aphrodite will protect them because Helen has been promised to him. Cassandra looks at Helen reproachfully and Helen shamefacedly pulls away from Paris.

Cassandra considers the old saying that the gods test those they love and thinks the gods must love the people of Troy who are tested mightily over the next six years. The women of Troy watch from the walls as their men are slaughtered by the Greek soldiers.



Achilles stands out from the other soldiers because of his long golden hair, magnificent armor, and disturbing joy in killing his fellow men. Cassandra's suitor, Coroebus, becomes one of Achilles's first victims and Othronus is also eventually killed by Achilles. As she and Cassandra clean his body in preparation for burial, Helen weeps over the beauty of Othronus. Cassandra simply wishes he had never come to Troy but had instead lived a happy, long life in his home with a wife and children. Cassandra's sorrow and impatience stem from the fact that she knows the motivation from the war is not a righteous cause but death and vengeance.

The battles end in stalemates and the war drags on. Greek armies continue to arrive and even in the midst of war, the Trojans' lives continue much as they always had, although their hatred of Paris and Helen grows daily. Andromache delivers a healthy baby boy. Cassandra, Helen, Polyxena, and Laodice go to a forest pool to bathe and wash their clothing. While there, Achilles arrives and sees Polyxena and admires her beauty. Helen considers the idea that without Achilles the Greeks would be unable to win the war and she begins to develop a scheme to ally the Greeks and Trojans through the marriage of Achilles and Polyxena. Cassandra refuses to consider the plan and refuses to sacrifice her sister.

The Greek armies want to return home and so they renew the viciousness of their fighting. Agamemnon and Achilles fall into an argument when Agamemnon steals one of Achilles's war brides. Achilles refuses to join in the battle after this insult. Priam looks on these events as a sign that the fortunes of the war have turned and Troy now has the upper hand. The morale of the Greek soldiers lowers daily as their ranks are cut down by the Trojan army, especially Hector. Helen again proposes an alliance between Achilles and Polyxena in order to end the war. Cassandra angrily argues against the sacrifice of her sister and demands that Helen not go forward with this plan. She physically restrains Helen to get her to promise not to promote her scheme.

## Analysis

As the people of Troy grow to hate and resent Helen for her part in the war against their city, Cassandra feels a growing kinship with Helen. She understands Helen is too weak to resist temptation and forgives her weakness because she knows it cannot be helped. She also knows the cause of the war is not ultimately Helen because societal rules place the choice in the hands of her father. She also realizes in light of her own convictions, she should forgive Helen for the decision to take her destiny into her own hands and follow her desires rather than the demands of men and society as a whole.

Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia, is an extreme illustration of the lack of will and independence women are allowed in Greek and Trojan society. Iphigenia's fate lies totally in her father's hands. Not only does he decide the path of her life but he decides the time and form of her death. While the women of this time are generally resigned to their fate and their subordinate status to men, this act of Agamemnon is still extremely shocking in its explicit statement of dominance and control. Iphigenia becomes no more than a sheep or a cow to be sacrificed for the pleasure of the gods.



She is the property of Agamemnon and if he decides she must be sacrificed for favorable winds for his ships, then she will be sacrificed.

While Greece has many great and powerful warriors, Helen's old suitors being among the best, Achilles stands out from the others because of his god-like appearance, his prowess in battle, and the way he seems to enjoy killing his fellow men. There is something in Achilles's eyes during battle--an absence of human emotion and the presence of a grotesque kind of relish--that causes his opponents to flee in fear. And it is this monster to whom Helen wants to sacrifice Polyxena. Helen becomes no better than Agamemnon as she considers the idea of giving Polyxena over to Achilles in order to appease his violent temper. The war started with Helen's decision to follow her heart and she is unwilling to give up her relationship with Paris, but she is willing to sacrifice Polyxena's happiness and future in order to insure her own safety. Cassandra understands the motives of the war are the greed and pride of the men of Greece and Troy, that it is their desire for vengeance and glory that drives the war. And so she refuses to even consider the idea of sacrificing her sister on the altar of a man's pride.

As the Greek armies amass and Achilles withdraws from battle, Helen sees the opportunity to prevent the impending fight. She knows the fighting will be more violent and fatal now that there are more Greek soldiers, and she knows Achilles will be more open to an alliance with Troy now that he is arguing with the King of Greece. However, Cassandra is completely unwilling to listen to Helen's proposition and physically restrains her as she demands she give up the scheme. Helen's determination to secure her own safety and the safety of Troy through the sacrifice of Polyxena demonstrates the fact she is no better than the oppressive men who rule the lives of these women. She is immature and callous enough to view Polyxena merely as an object of trade.

## Vocabulary

inconsequential, relayed, radiant, fury, disposition, miraculous, appraising, stalemate, fascinated, considerable



## Part 2, Cassandra's Story: Chapters 9-12

### Summary

Cassandra's brother, Deiphobus, taunts Paris until he provokes him into agreeing to challenge Menelaus to a duel. Deiphobus stipulates if Paris is defeated or doesn't go through with the challenge then Helen will belong to him. Paris takes up his brother's challenge and goes onto the battlefield the next day to challenge Menelaus. Menelaus accepts and Paris attempts to escape but Hector forces him to face Menelaus. The battle is fierce and quick and ends with Paris disappearing within a mysterious cloud of dust. The Greek army shouts insults at the Trojans and calls them traitors, but they soon realize the Trojans are just as confused as they are. Helen decides to look for Paris and asks Cassandra to accompany her but Cassandra refuses. As she walks off, Cassandra is frustrated by her own sensitivity and follows Helen.

The two women discover Paris calmly stretched out on the bed he shares with Helen and invites her to share it with him. As Cassandra stands in the doorway with righteous indignation, Paris explains that Aphrodite brought the dust cloud to save him and he asks Helen to join him in bed. Helen glances at Cassandra with sad blue eyes as she is unable to resist Paris and Cassandra leaves the room. Cassandra decides she cannot be angry with Helen because it is her own kind, gentle nature that makes her so susceptible to Paris. Cassandra's mother instructs her to go find Hector and tell him where Paris is. She says Hector would like nothing better than to hand Paris over to Menelaus but Priam would never allow it. An arrow is shot from the Trojan lines during the cease-fire of the argument over Paris's behavior. The arrow shoots Menelaus and causes a fierce battle to break out. Hector arrives within the city gates and Cassandra tells him where to find Paris but sends a maid to warn Paris to be presentable and separated from Helen when Hector arrives. Hector is distracted by the sight of his wife and son.

Hector calls Paris a disgrace to the family but Paris just shrugs off the insult. Helen is ashamed of Paris's behavior, and perhaps in order to redeem himself, Paris goes with Hector to rejoin the battle. However, he is very careful to avoid Menelaus on the battlefield. As the people of Troy become more resentful of Paris, he promises to return Helen's treasure to Menelaus in order to satisfy their anger. Their messengers return with the news of Menelaus's refusal of the offer. Helenus despairs of his family's honor as he considers how Deiphobus now insists Helen belongs to him because Paris did not win his duel, how Paris abandoned the duel like a coward, and how their allies are abandoning Troy because of the behavior of the royal family. Hector comes forward to finish the fight begun by Paris and challenge one of the Greek warriors to fight. Cassandra comes upon Andromache and Helen, putting aside their differences in order to plot the alliance of Polyxena and Achilles. When Cassandra angrily confronts them, Helen tells her she lives in a dream world and Polyxena's destiny is to marry a great warrior. The Greeks send greater Ajax forth to fight Hector.



The two great warriors are evenly matched and fight for hours without one of them winning the upper hand. As they battle, the moon rises in the midday sky. Ajax and Hector are forced to end their fighting at sunset as is the custom. Both warriors are relieved because they respect one another. The Greeks propose a truce to give both armies the opportunity to burn their dead. Cassandra watches as the armies come together to gather their dead and sees Odysseus and Helenus in a serious discussion. Cassandra recalls how Odysseus didn't want to participate in the war and pretended to be mad in order to avoid being forced to fight.

## Analysis

Paris's disappearance into the cloud of dust suggests there are supernatural forces at work in the lives of the human beings involved in the Trojan War. The dust cloud develops with an unusual swiftness and rises up without any cause. In any case, Paris runs from the battlefield like a coward and further annihilates the honor of the men of Troy. Their honor has already been tainted by Paris's theft of Helen and her treasure, Priam's decision to go back on his word and refusal to turn Helen over to the Greeks, and now Paris's cowardly flight from combat. As the Trojan allies abandon the city because of the dishonorable behavior of the royal family, it does seem as if the gods are conspiring against Troy.

Paris explains the dust cloud as Aphrodite's protection and action to spare his life. Cassandra doesn't seem to place much trust in this explanation but she doesn't argue with her brother. There is no apparent human source of the arrow that pierces Menelaus during the discussion of Paris's disappearance. This occurrence again suggests the gods are working to end the war and allow the Trojans to be defeated. A mysterious arrow without a human source, hitting Menelaus during a break in the fighting certainly suggests an act of the gods. In the mind of many of the Greeks and the Trojans, the lack of honor in the actions of the Trojan royal family has led the gods to abandon the city of Troy. It seems Troy will not be able to escape its doom.

Menelaus's refusal to accept Helen's treasure as a peace offering illustrates his determination to be satisfied with nothing less than Paris's death. For Menelaus this war is a personal crusade of vengeance. Paris insulted his hospitality by coming to his home under false pretenses and then stealing something that belonged to him. Helen violated his honor and his feelings by willingly going with Paris. Menelaus has been injured and insulted by the actions of Paris and Helen. Helen's determination to see Polyxena offered to Achilles as a peace offering underscores her weak nature and immaturity. While Cassandra would rather storm the battlefield and join the fight like an Amazon warrior, Helen wants to sacrifice another woman in order to save her own skin. Helen is clearly incapable of accepting the consequences of her actions and facing them bravely. Helen even advocates the cultural suppression of women by saying Polyxena's fate as the wife of Achilles would be admirable and the highest compliment. She would be married to one of the greatest warriors the world has ever seen and no woman could hope for more.



The respect that Ajax and Hector have for one another illustrates the respect of the two enemy armies. This sense of respect between the men highlights the fact that the passion of the battle is really between Menelaus and Paris. This is a fight of vengeance and reprisal for injury. Neither side is particularly honorable and the battle is not really supported by either of the two armies. The men are simply following orders and have been forced to fight to defend the honor of two unworthy men. The eventual unity of Helenus and Odysseus in their effort to end the war is foreshadowed when Cassandra sees them whispering together as the armies gather their dead. The story of Odysseus's pretended madness also illustrates his crafty nature and foreshadows his role in the downfall of Troy.

## Vocabulary

battered, bespattered, restrain, redeem, loping, stipulate, brawling, agonized, tousled, obligation



## Part 2, Cassandra's Story: Chapters 13-16

### Summary

The fighting grows more violent and determined as the armies become desperate to end the long war. Hector kills Patroclus, thinking he is Achilles because he wears Achilles's armor, and then refuses to return the body for burial ceremonies. Helenus has a vision of Hector's death and Cassandra fears for her beloved brother. Helenus tells Cassandra she is the only reason he doesn't simply abandon the fight and leave Troy to survive in the wilderness. He also tells Cassandra he believes Menelaus would kill Helen if he got the chance.

Achilles is enraged because he loved his cousin and arrives on the battlefield the next day with an even more magnificent set of armor and a fierce enjoyment of battle. The Trojans are panic stricken and run back to the city to escape from Achilles's mad wrath. Hector alone stands outside the city walls to face Achilles. Cassandra runs to inform Andromache of the duel that is about to take place before the walls of Troy. She finds Andromache calmly embroidering and realizes that Andromache has decided to ignore the events of the war and pretend everything is normal. Cassandra remains with Andromache until they hear the wails of mourning coming from the gates of Troy.

After killing Hector, Achilles cuts holes above his heels, ties him to his chariot and drags him around the battlefield within the sight of the royal family. Helen weeps as she watches Achilles's brutality and Cassandra accuses her of thinking this could have been prevented by Polyxena's sacrifice. Helen doesn't argue with her but insists Polyxena has more power than the entire Trojan army. For more than a week, Achilles circles the walls of Troy, desecrating Hector's body. Priam decides to approach Achilles personally to request the body of his son. Polyxena volunteers to go along with her father, knowing Achilles will be more receptive to his request if she is there. Cassandra objects and looks for an ally in Helenus, who is too depressed by their hopeless situation to become overly upset. Polyxena and Priam return the next day with Hector's body and Andromache observes Hector has been supernaturally preserved and there is no sign of deterioration or abuse on his body. Andromache collapses over his body and wails for over an hour. A few days later Cassandra approaches Polyxena to ask her what happened with Achilles. Polyxena tells her their father ate dinner with Achilles and fell asleep in his tent while she dealt with Achilles.

On the third day after fighting resumes, Paris kills Achilles by shooting him in his right heel with an arrow. The Trojan supplies are running low and it is now apparent they will have a famine on their hands after the end of the war. Cassandra goes to Polyxena to ask her about her role in Achilles's death. Polyxena reveals Achilles told her the secret of his vulnerability the night she went to collect Hector's body. She says she was the only one Achilles ever told that his right heel was just like the flesh of mortal men



because that was the only part of him his mother did not dip into the river Styx in order to make him invincible. Cassandra asks why she would tell Paris and not some other warrior and Polyxena replies she wanted Achilles to be killed by the least glorious son of Troy. She wanted Achilles to feel dishonored in the last moments of his life and she wanted him to know she was the one who had brought about his doom. Like Polyxena, the people of Troy become numb for the next month. They have been overwhelmed by loss and grief and they simply cannot process it any more. It is during this time Paris is injured and killed and Helen is driven mad with grief. Cassandra says that it is as if Helen's soul has left her body. Deiphobus claims Helen as his own and no one intervenes because they are all too preoccupied with the war. Cassandra goes to Helenus claiming they are all acting like barbarians and he tells her women have always been the pawns of war and there is no use trying to change the future. One morning, the Trojans awaken to find that the Greeks have abandoned the battlefield and left behind the gift of an enormous wooden horse.

## Analysis

Hector's behavior after killing Patroclus seems out of character with his sensible and honorable behavior preceding this event. His withholding of Patroclus's body threatens his ability to enter heaven in the Greek belief system. Here Hector is offending and injuring the Greek army and seems to be purposefully provoking Achilles. Either Hector's actions and emotions are being controlled by the gods as Helen's have possibly been, or he believes he has a chance of defeating Achilles and knows the war will only end after Achilles is dead. Helenus loves Hector almost as much as Cassandra, and his fear and concern for Hector's life foreshadow his later depression after Hector's death.

Achilles looks like a god as he swoops down upon the Trojan army. If he was frightening in his enjoyment of the kill before, he is terrifying in his determined rage. The Trojans see the fact of their own death in his eyes. Achilles is clearly unstable and the death of his cousin has pushed him beyond all reason. Andromache handles her grief in the opposite way and retreats from all knowledge of doom. She knows her husband will die and she is unable to face her overwhelming grief in light of this fact. And so she mentally and emotionally retreats from her knowledge and pretends things are normal.

It turns out Helen was right and Polyxena does have more power than the entire Trojan army. After desecrating Hector's body for more than a week and slaughtering any Trojan soldiers that come within his sight, Achilles willingly gives Hector's body over to his father merely because of the presence of Polyxena. Through this selfless act, Polyxena becomes the Trojan equivalent to Iphigenia. She becomes a human sacrifice to the warmongering pride of men. Helenus's unwillingness to fight against Polyxena's sacrifice or admit the wrongness of her act stems from his deep depression after the death of Hector. Helenus has seen visions of his beloved brother's death and been forced to stand by and watch while his visions come true, and his brother is not only brutally murdered but his body is desecrated as well. Helenus no longer believes the future can be changed and thinks any effort to end the war or make a deal is beneficial.





Polyxena is too traumatized to show much emotion or triumph at the death of Achilles, but she feels she has exacted some kind of revenge by orchestrating Achilles's death at the hands of the least honorable warrior in Troy. Polyxena is perceptive enough to realize that honor and glory mean everything to Achilles. While he cared about his cousin, he is one of the only people Achilles felt any alliance to and not even Patroclus earned a place above Achilles's own glory. She knew the most effective way of wounding Achilles was to bring about an inglorious death. It is certain that her revenge hit its mark. The people of Troy are numbed by their grief and loss and in this numb state of extreme depression, the people of Troy are primed for the downfall of their city, which will come through the presence of the Greek horse within their walls.

## Vocabulary

generated, wince, parched, contingent, flanked, routed, overtake, perish, pallor, desecrate, trudge, anoint, frenzied, dirge



## Part 2, Cassandra's Story: Chapters 17-19

### Summary

When Cassandra sees the horse, she instinctively senses there is some trick. She experiences her vision of the mass of dead soldier's once again and calls for the horse to be burned, but she is ignored. Instead, the people of Troy, led by Deiphobus, tear down their own walls surrounding the gate in order to bring the massive construction into their city. A priest rushes up shouting a warning, but he too is ignored and taken away. The people hold a festival with drinking and dancing as they celebrate the departure of the Greeks and admire their parting gift. When Cassandra attempts to burn the horse, Deiphobus almost does her an extreme injury before Helenus steps in. Helenus tells Cassandra there are Greek warriors concealed within the interior of the horse and he is the one who showed the Greeks how to build the horse. He takes Cassandra to the temple of Apollo to explain and tells her the gods have abandoned Troy. Cassandra exclaims they are all monsters and Helenus agrees. Helenus tells her they cannot escape their fate, but they can choose how they die. He tells her he created the horse in exchange for his life and Cassandra's. However, Agamemnon has gone back on his word and is determined to take Cassandra as a war bride. Helenus says he will kill Agamemnon, but Cassandra tells him not to because she could not bear it if he died. She tells him to stay alive and work to free them and build another Troy. She says she will take care of Polyxena, Laodice, and Helen.

Cassandra goes to Helen and tells her about the horse and informs her that Menelaus will kill her when he finds her. She tells Helen to betray Deiphobus and explain her actions by telling him Aphrodite made her go with Paris. Cassandra gets Helen ready and washes and dresses her so she will be beautiful and Menelaus will be swayed by her beauty. She goes to get her sisters while Helen is still pleading with her not to leave her side. On her way to meet her sisters at the temple of Apollo, Cassandra is tempted to give in to her fate, but she decides to continue to struggle for her own free will. She remembers Andromache and Hector's son and turns back to collect them and take them to the temple.

Cassandra is able to get Andromache and her baby out of Troy just as the Trojans begin to burn and pillage. Cassandra thinks of her loved ones still in the city and shudders in horror even as she remembers gratefully that Helenus is safe. She also considers the fact Helen could be a powerful ally for them in their captivity if she is able to convince Menelaus she has been a pawn of the gods. Even as the city of Troy burns to the ground, four women join together in the temple of Apollo to defy their fate and live with hope for the future.



## Analysis

Once again, the blame for the fall of Troy can be placed directly on the Trojans. If they had listened to Cassandra or the priest, they would have possibly won the war. If they had burned the horse, they would have killed the leaders of the Greek army and although they might have had to face a few more battles, the will of the Greek army would have been broken with the deaths of their leaders. Instead, the people of Troy are drunk with relief before they even begin to celebrate and do not heed the warnings of Cassandra and the priest. Helenus helps the Greeks construct the horse in an effort to end the war. He knows Troy would face a famine at the end of the war, that his father's will is broken, and that the people of Troy are no longer the same. After suffering through a war where he saw the conclusion of his brother's death and the defeat of his city without being able to stop anything, he has decided to give into fate and simply end things.

Cassandra goes to Helen and warns her of Menelaus's plans because she knows Helen could be an ally if she is taken into captivity. She knows Helen will attempt to argue for the freedom of the Trojan princesses if she is able to become Queen of Sparta once more. It is ironic that such a weak, frail woman is queen of the fiercest warriors in Greece. Helen's frailty and immaturity are revealed once again when she pleads with Cassandra to remain with her, forgetting the fates of Cassandra, Polyxena, and Laodice would be far worse than her own. When Cassandra thinks about how extreme the punishment will be for the wife and son of Hector, the warrior who killed so many Greek soldiers, she realizes she must rescue Andromache and Hector's son, as well as her own sisters.

Cassandra's return to Troy is an act of self-sacrifice as she runs the risk of being killed or captured and delivered to Agamemnon. As the women gather together in the temple of Apollo, they form a confederacy of women fighting against the suppression and fate of woman during this time. They are held together by the strength, wit, and determination of Cassandra, who realizes even when faced with the worst of fates there is still a choice if you have the will to claim it.

## Vocabulary

prosperity, writhing, lamentation, rampart, decipher, roused, treachery, tranquil, disengaged, rhythmic, stricken



# Author's Epilogue

## Summary

The author's epilogue concludes the narrative by detailing the mythical and literary conclusions of the characters in the novel. According to legend, Helen is able to convince Menelaus she was a pawn of the gods and she returns to her home to live a long life. As the oracles predicted, it takes Odysseus ten years to return to his home. Helenus escapes from the sacking of Troy and founds a new Troy in a place called Buthrotum. He is able to ransom Andromache and they marry and have several children. There are conflicting accounts of the fate of Cassandra, who is said in one source to have been driven mad by the fall of Troy. Another source says she leads the women in a mass suicide, another that she goes with Agamemnon to Mycenae and is killed by his wife, and other sources say she survived the war to forge a new destiny. There is no record anywhere that discusses the women trapped inside the walls of Troy, watching as their destinies are determined by the wars of men. And there is no literary or historical proof of the friendship between Helen and Cassandra.

## Analysis

The point of the author's epilogue is there have been myths and legends regarding the people and events of the Trojan War for centuries and their stories will continue to be told. These are stories about people, stories that deal with the universal themes of identity, freedom, and the soul. These stories and the people in them will never fade from memory because their story contains a timelessness that is universally applicable in its depiction of the struggle for life.

## Vocabulary

ancient, predict, siege, exploits, incidentally, dynasty, embody, conspicuous, capacity, quota



# Characters

## Helen

The most beautiful woman in the world, Helen is promised to Paris by Aphrodite in order to win a contest. Helen leaves her husband, daughter, and role as queen in order to be with Paris in Troy, and this starts the war.

## Cassandra

The royal sister of Paris, Cassandra is independent and strong. Cassandra has visions of the future but no one ever believes her.

## Paris

The king and queen of Troy sent their baby, Paris, to the mountains to die because of a prophecy, but a shepherd took pity on the baby and raised it as his own. When his true identity was revealed, Paris returned to his rightful place as a prince of Troy.

## Hector

The oldest of the princes of Troy, Hector is also the most honorable. Hector is killed by Achilles after accidentally killing his cousin, thinking he was Achilles.

## Achilles

The fiercest of the Greek warriors, Achilles enjoys killing people and has chosen to die in battle with glory rather than live a long and happy life. Achilles is eventually killed by Paris.

## Priam

King of Troy, Priam is incredibly proud of his wealth and the civilization of his city.

## Menelaus

Helen's husband, Menelaus, is the brother of the king of all of Greece and comes to Troy seeking vengeance for Helen and Paris's betrayal.



## Agamemnon

Agamemnon is ruler of Greece and brother to Menelaus. He has envied the wealth of Troy for a long time, and Paris and Helen's betrayal of Menelaus gives him a legitimate reason for war.

## Helenus

Cassandra's twin brother, Helenus, also shares her ability to see the future. Helenus survives the war at Troy and is said to have founded a new Troy.

## Polyxena

Cassandra's youngest sister, Polyxena, is admired by Achilles and is the only person who is able to retrieve Hector's body from Achilles. Polyxena learns Achilles's secret vulnerability and tells Paris.

## Penelope

Helen's cousin and childhood companion, Penelope falls in love with Odysseus and leaves Helen to go with him to Ithaca.



# Objects/Places

## Sparta

Sparta is one of the major city-states of ancient Greece, known for its military power. The strict social structure of Sparta focuses on physical prowess with the strongest and best fighters at the top of the pyramid.

## Athens

Athens is a powerful city-state in ancient Greece, known for its pursuit of and emphasis on the arts, learning, and philosophy.

## The Minotaur

The Minotaur is Theseus's ship, named after his greatest foe and most famous victory. Theseus sails away on the Minotaur with Helen when he kidnaps her as a child.

## Troy

Troy is a Turkish city once thought to be purely mythical but discovered by Heinrich Schliemann in 1868. The fields in front of the walls of Troy are the site of the bloody battles of the Trojan War.

## The Trojan Horse

The Trojan Horse is the horse built by the Greeks in order to trick and defeat the Trojans. The Greeks hide inside the massive wooden horse and when the Trojans bring it inside their city gates, thinking it is a gift, the Greeks are able to take them by surprise and demolish their city.

## The Armor of Achilles

The armor of Achilles is supposedly created for him by the god Hephaestus and gives his own personal prowess in battle a more terrifying edge. When Patroclus, Achilles' cousin, is killed in battle, Hephaestus makes him new armor with a shield that depicts the world.



## **Mount Olympus**

Mount Olympus is the mythical home of the twelve Olympian Greek gods and goddesses and the highest mountain in Greece.

## **Mycenae**

Mycenae is the place ruled by Menelaus before his marriage to Helen. Mycenae is one of the major locations of civilization, culture, and influence in Greece.

## **The Temple of Apollo**

The temple of Apollo is the site of the mythical bestowal of the gift of second sight to Cassandra and her twin brother, Helenus. There are many temples of Apollo throughout Greece.

## **Helen's Treasure**

Helen's treasure is the treasure inherited by Helen and owned by her husband, Menelaus. Helen betrays Menelaus when she runs away with Paris, but she also insults him when she takes her treasure with her.





# Themes

## Feminism

Feminism is an important theme in the novel "Inside the Walls of Troy". The women of the Bronze Age have little to no freedom, depending on what part of the world they live in. The women in this novel are not able to choose their husbands or the paths of their own lives. They are not even allowed to choose their own interests or personalities, as these must be based on the wishes of their husbands and male guardians. Women are considered property to be bartered and traded to increase the wealth of a kingdom or negotiate for peace, among other things. Iphigenia and Polyxena are both sacrificed on the altar of masculine pride. Agamemnon sacrifices his oldest and favorite daughter because it will ensure his swift and safe sea voyage to the shores of Troy, where he hopes to win glory and renown by sacking the city. Polyxena sacrifices herself in order to retrieve the body of her beloved brother from the clutches of her despised enemy. However, within the book there is a subtle power these women have and some of them fight for more power with a hope for the future. Although she can see the future and do nothing about it, Cassandra is unwilling to give up hope and to quit fighting for her own freedom of will. Polyxena has more power than the entire Trojan army in her ability to subdue the powerful Achilles, and she is at least given the opportunity of a choice in her sacrifice. Helen is finally able to discover the power in her beauty at the end of the novel when she must convince her husband to take her back so she can have the opportunity to rescue the princesses of Troy.

## Honor

Honor is a huge theme in the novel "Inside the Walls of Troy". Honor is extraordinarily important in the classical world. There is nothing else as important as a man's honor. Honor is what defines a man, and his reputation is staked upon it. A good name is the summit of a man's life. Achilles chooses to go to battle rather than live a long and happy life at his home because he knows that battle will bring honor and glory to his name, even as it will bring his death. Paris illustrates the extremity of his carelessness when he violates his own honor and the honor of his family by stealing Helen away from Menelaus. The fate of Troy becomes more and more clearly doomed as their actions progressively bring dishonor on their household. The codes of honor are one the most important elements of society in the Bronze Age and anyone who violates them could cause incredible repercussions as seen in the example of this story.

## Beauty

For much of this novel "Inside the Walls of Troy", beauty is depicted as more of a curse than a blessing. Coddled and indulged because of her beauty, Helen grows into a weak and immature woman. It is also her beauty that brings about her own doomed



relationship with Paris and her unforgivable abandonment of her daughter and husband. Helen's brothers are also beautiful, but their beauty leads them to be headstrong and foolish, more concerned with their own prestige and honor than with preserving their lives. Paris is also beautiful and his beauty molds him into a shallow, self-involved, flippant character. Cassandra's beauty is what brings about Agamemnon's notice of her and threatens her life and her sanity. However, by the end of the novel, there is the possibility that beauty can also provide great power in the hands of a determined will. Polyxena is able to use her beauty to subdue Achilles and accomplish a feat beyond the entire Trojan army when she discovers the secret to his defeat. Finally, Helen holds within her grasp the power to save her life and the lives of her friends through the use of her beauty.



# Style

## Point of View

In the first part of the narrative, the story is written from a first-person perspective in the voice of Helen. The second part of the narrative is written in the first-person perspective in the voice of Cassandra, princess of Troy. The use of the first-person perspective allows these mythical stories to come to new life. The people and places become real. The reader is allowed entry into Helen's mind and understands that she is a kind, gentle, but weak individual whose beauty is often more of a burden than a gift. Cassandra is a strong, independent prophetess who is frustrated by the limits of her position as a woman in society. This first-person perspective also allows the reader to see Cassandra's visions, which predict Helen's role in the downfall of Troy and much of the outcome of the war itself.

## Setting

The narrative deals with the historical and mythical era of the Bronze Age in Greece and Troy. Helen's story begins in Sparta, the land of her birth, and then follows her removal from Sparta in her flight with Paris. Cassandra's story begins more than a year before the arrival of Helen and Paris when Cassandra sees a vision of them sailing together on a Trojan ship. The narrative generally remains close to the surviving stories and myths that provide the details of the war between Troy and Greece. The descriptions of the landscapes, transportation, and households closely echo those composed by Homer in his ancient account of the Trojan War in *The Iliad*. The plains of Troy are the setting for the battle and the author's descriptions of the battle scenes also echo Homer's epic with details of terrible brutality and extreme bloodshed.

## Language and Meaning

Although the setting of the novel closely resembles Homer's ancient descriptions, the language of the novel is modern. The first-person viewpoints and modern language combine to make the story far more contemporary and personal than most other novels about the Trojan War. This modern, personalized vision of the war and the events leading up to it makes the novel and story it contains far less epic than Homer's composition. The figures involved in the war and the events surrounding it cannot be as godlike or heroic because they are presented simply as people with talents and faults just like anyone else. The power of tragedy in classical literature, like Homer's epic, is that the hero falls from a great height. The heroic figures in classical literature are godlike specimens of perfection and honor. Their fall into corruption or death is tragic because of their greatness. In terms of classic literature, the tragedy of the fall of Achilles and Hector is reduced because they are simply people. Helen is not a figure of myth as beautiful as the gods of Olympus, she is a gentle woman who is often weak in



the face of difficulty. Cassandra is not a powerful sorceress with the predictive powers of an oracle; she is a bold, independent female frustrated by her powerlessness as a woman.

## Structure

Inside the Walls of Troy is separated in two parts. The first part of the novel is about the life of Helen of Sparta. It details her life as a young princess of Sparta, her abduction by Theseus, and later her introduction to Paris and flight with him. After this brief biography of Helen and depiction of the events leading up to the Trojan War, the second part of the novel is written from the viewpoint of Cassandra. Cassandra is a princess of Troy and the sister of Hector and Paris. This second portion of the novel describes the events that occurred just before the war as well as during the battles. Cassandra is a strong woman who goes into places women usually aren't allowed. Therefore, the reader sees the war from the masculine perspective with the details of the battle and the discussions among the men as well as the female perspective of the household and village.



## Quotes

How could my beauty be a gift of the gods if it would cause men to die for me? (Part 1, Chapter 2)

Daughter of Zeus, you are a treasure more precious than gold, because your beauty will not last for centuries. It is a prize that must be possessed now, in the pulsebeat of one mortal lifetime. (Part 1, Chapter 4)

We mortals live under the rule of the gods. All we can do with destiny is learn to accept it. My destiny was to marry and to keep my husband happy. (Part 1, Chapter 4)

I lost my heart to him before the hull grated against the sand. All at once I understood how Penelope could have left me to follow Odysseus anywhere on earth, and I forgave her for it. (Part 1, Chapter 10)

Guests, no matter how unwelcome, are completely safe inside an enemy citadel. Their hosts would never harm them. It is just as unthinkable for visitors to steal from their hosts. (Part 2, Chapter 3)

Hector was in fact a larger, darker imprint of our now world-famous second brother. He was also as noble and kind as Paris was selfish and mean-spirited. (Part 2, Chapter 3)

Helen's beauty was more than physical. It went deeper. The shepherds have an expression for it, for that occasional sheep that is so gentle the others in the flock become gentle in its presence. 'Bone sweet,' they call it. (Part 2, Chapter 4)

None of the children cried out. We stood like statues, surrounded by the whoosh of the wind, and still they kept coming, those proud-masted ships, rounding the westernmost point of the island and scudding toward Troy. (Part 2, Chapter 6)

That's what this was all about, after all, killing and avenging. They had Achilles, we had Hector, my kind, honorable brother. (Part 2, Chapter 7)

For the two combatants now facing each other, all the years of their lives had funneled into this time and space. On this summer morning, in a clearing on the windy plains of Troy, one of them would die. The other would take home the world's most beautiful woman and all her treasure. (Part 2, Chapter 9)

That was the mood of our city for the next month. No matter what happened on the battlefield, people's reactions were muted. (Part 2, Chapter 16)



# Topics for Discussion

## Topic 1

Is beauty a curse or a blessing? Does Helen seem to think either way? How did her beauty shape her life and her personality? Why is Helen so different from the stereotypical Spartan female who is strong and fearless?

## Topic 2

Why are horses mentioned so often in the novel? What do they represent? What does the mention of horses mean in each individual reference?

## Topic 3

What are the differences between the kingdoms of Sparta, Athens, and Troy? Why do Athens and Troy seem so much more advanced than Sparta? What are the differences between the rulers of Sparta, Athens, Troy, and Greece in general?

## Topic 4

Are the accounts of the two narrators totally reliable? Do you think they perceive the characters, actions and events around them correctly? If so, what is an instance of their correct perception of complicated events or people? If not, what are the prejudices or faults that make them mistaken?

## Topic 5

What influencing factors developed Cassandra's personality? Why does she have such strength of conviction and such fierce determination? It was said that Cassandra was beloved of Apollo; what are the characteristics of the god Apollo? How do they relate to Cassandra's own character?

## Topic 6

Why does Theseus not appear in the siege of Troy? Why would Athens, of all the Greek city-states, not participate in the war?



## Topic 7

What are the differences between the heroes of the battle? How are Achilles, Hector, and Odysseus different from one another? Do any of them fulfill the classical definition of manhood?

## Topic 8

There are many strange occurrences in the novel. Which are explained as actions of the gods? Do you think these occurrences are supposed to be supernatural in the novel? Helen continually says that she could not help herself when she ran away with Paris and she fell in love with him before she was even able to see him completely; do you think there was some supernatural power at work?