

The Story of Aeneas

The *Aeneid* is divided into 12 books. The first 6 resemble Homer's *Odyssey* in that they deal with the hero's wanderings. Shortly after the end of the Trojan War, Aeneas, his father, and his son, together with a band of refugees, leave Troy. They sail westward for Italy, as the ghost of Aeneas' wife has told him to do. Near Sicily, a storm separates Aeneas from his companions, and he lands on the African coast. There he meets Dido, the beautiful queen of Carthage. Strongly attracted to Aeneas, she gives a banquet in his honor. At the banquet, Aeneas relates his adventures, including the fall of Troy. Aeneas and Dido fall deeply and passionately in love. Aeneas, however, must leave her to fulfill his divine mission of finding a new home for the Trojans—the settlement that will become the city of Rome. Sailing from Carthage, he notices the flames of a funeral pyre. Dido, heartbroken over his departure, has taken her life.

Later, Aeneas visits a prophetess, the Cumaean Sibyl. With her, he descends to the underworld, where he meets his now-dead father, who shows him a vision. Aeneas sees the future generations of Romans who will descend from him. The line of descent culminates in the emperor Augustus.

The last 6 books of the *Aeneid* deal with warfare, thus resembling Homer's *Iliad*. They describe Aeneas' arrival in Latium, near the future site of Rome. The local king, Latinus, offers him alliance and the hand of his daughter Lavinia. Turnus, one of Lavinia's suitors, attacks the Trojans, killing Pallas, a young soldier whom Aeneas has promised to protect. Before the two armies, Aeneas and Turnus fight in single combat. Enraged to find that Turnus is wearing the armor of Pallas, Aeneas kills him with a sword.

Cast of Characters

Gods

- Juno** (jōō'nō): the queen of the gods
- Mars** (mārz): the god of war
- Neptune** (nĕp'tōōn'): the god of the sea
- Pallas** (pāl'əs): the goddess of wisdom; also known as **Minerva** (mĭ-nŭr'və)
- Venus** (vē'nəs): the goddess of love and beauty, mother of Aeneas

Greeks

- Menelaus** (mĕn'ĕ-lā'əs): a leader of the expedition against Troy; husband of Helen
- Neoptolemus** (nĕ'ŏp-tōl'ĕ-məs): a mighty warrior, son of the hero Achilles; also known as **Pyrrhus** (pĭr'əs)
- Sinon** (sĭ'nən): a warrior purposely left behind in Troy when the Greeks sailed away, pretending to give up the fighting
- Ulysses** (yŏō-lĭs'ĕz'): a leader known for his wily schemes

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Iulus (yŏ
Creusa
Laocoön
Anchis
Priam (pr
Politēs (p

Trojans

Aeneas (ī-nē'əs): the hero of the epic and the son of the goddess Venus and Anchises, a mortal

Anchises (än-kī'sēz'): the father of Aeneas

Cassandra (kə-sän'drə): a daughter of Priam, whose prophecies always come true but are never believed

Creusa (krē-ōō'zə): the wife of Aeneas

Hecuba (hēk'yə-bə): the wife of Priam and queen of Troy

Helen (hēl'ən): the wife of the Greek leader Menelaus, who betrayed him by running off with the Trojan prince Paris

Iulus (yōō'ləs): the young son of Aeneas and Creusa; also known as **Ascanius** (äs-kā'nē-əs)

Laocoön (lä-ōk'ō-ōn'): a nobleman, brother of Anchises

Priam (prī'em): the king of Troy

Polites (pə-lī'tēz'): a son of Priam

Connect to Your Life

At the end of this excerpt, Aeneas sets out to lead a band of refugees from Troy to Italy. Think of people from different walks of life whom you regard as good leaders. They may be politicians, teachers, military officers, or even characters from books or movies. What qualities do good leaders have? How do they respond to adversity and misfortune? Share your ideas with a small group of classmates.


Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS: CULTURE HERO

A **culture hero** is a larger-than-life figure who reflects the values of a people. A culture hero provides a noble image to inspire and guide the actions of all who share that culture. As you read, think about the character of Aeneas. Consider the qualities that make him heroic.

ACTIVE READING: PREDICTING

As a reading skill, **predicting** involves using clues in a story, along with prior knowledge and experience, to make reasonable guesses about what will happen later in the story. Good readers make and revise predictions almost unconsciously as they read.

 **READER'S NOTEBOOK** As you read Aeneas' account of the fall of Troy, look for clues that seem to foreshadow future events. On a chart like the one below, jot down your predictions and the clues that led you to them. An example is shown.

Prediction	Clue
The wooden horse will bring about the destruction of Troy.	"... it cast a shadow / Over the city's heart." (lines 122-123)

from the Aeneid The Fall of Troy

Virgil

Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

GUIDE FOR READING

FOCUS Aeneas is telling Queen Dido about the end of the Trojan War. After ten long years, the Greeks suddenly depart from Troy, leaving behind a huge wooden horse. Read to find out how the Trojans react to this parting gift.

“**K**nowing their strength broken in warfare, turned
Back by the fates, and years—so many years—
Already slipped away, the Danaan captains
By the divine handicraft of Pallas built
5 A horse of timber, tall as a hill,
And sheathed its ribs with planking of cut pine.
This they gave out to be an offering
For a safe return by sea, and the word went round.
But on the sly they shut inside a company
10 Chosen from their picked soldiery by lot,
Crowding the vaulted caverns in the dark—
The horse’s belly—with men fully armed.

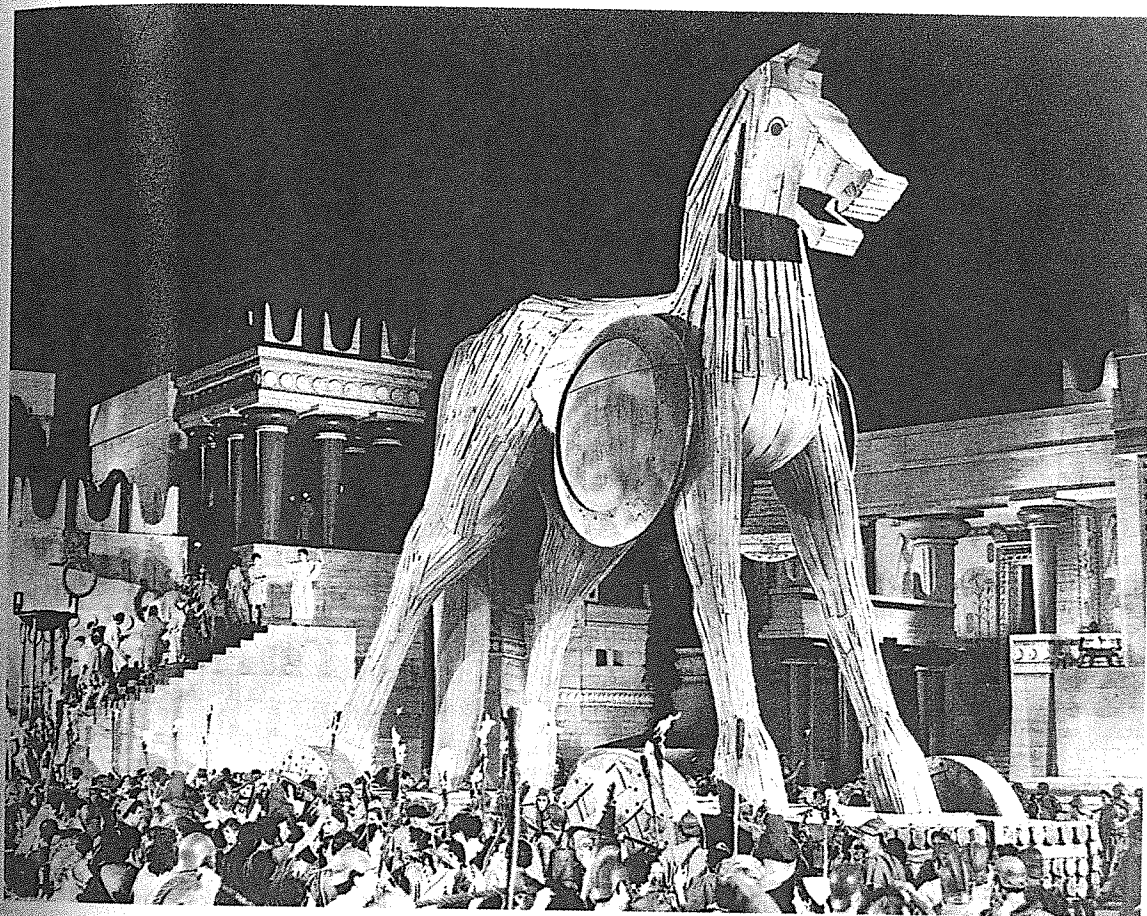
Offshore there’s a long island, Tenedos,
Famous and rich while Priam’s kingdom lasted,
15 A treacherous anchorage now, and nothing more.
They crossed to this and hid their ships behind it
On the bare shore beyond. We thought they’d gone,
Sailing home to Mycenae before the wind,
So Teucer’s town is freed of her long anguish,
20 Gates thrown wide! And out we go in joy

3 Danaan (də-nā’ən): Greek.

6 sheathed: covered.

18 Mycenae (mī-sē’nē): the city ruled by the Greek commander, Agamemnon.

19 Teucer’s (tōō’sərz) town: Troy. (Teucer was the first Trojan king.)



Wooden horse inside the city of Troy, surrounded by Trojans; scene from *Helen of Troy* (1955).

To see the Dorian campsites, all deserted,
 The beach they left behind. Here the Dolopians
 Pitched their tents, here cruel Achilles lodged,
 There lay the ships, and there, formed up in ranks,
 25 They came inland to fight us. Of our men
 One group stood marveling, gaping up to see
 The dire gift of the cold unbedded goddess,
 The sheer mass of the horse.

Thymoetes shouts

It should be hauled inside the walls and moored
 30 High on the citadel—whether by treason
 Or just because Troy's fate went that way now.
 Capys opposed him; so did the wiser heads:
 'Into the sea with it,' they said, 'or burn it,
 Build up a bonfire under it,
 35 This trick of the Greeks, a gift no one can trust,
 Or cut it open, search the hollow belly!'

21 Dorian (dōr'ē-en): Greek.

22 Dolopians (dō-lō'pē-enz): a group of Greek allies.

27 the cold unbedded goddess: Pallas, protector of the Greeks.

28 Thymoetes (thī-mē'tēz').

30 citadel (sīt'ə-dəl): stronghold.

32 Capys (kăp'ŷs).

WORDS TO KNOW

gaping (gā'pīng) *adj.* staring open-mouthed **gape** *v.*

Contrary notions pulled the crowd apart.
 Next thing we knew, in front of everyone,
 Laocoön with a great company
 40 Came furiously running from the Height,
 And still far off cried out: 'O my poor people,
 Men of Troy, what madness has come over you?
 Can you believe the enemy truly gone?
 A gift from the Danaans, and no ruse?
 45 Is that Ulysses' way, as you have known him?
 Achaeans must be hiding in this timber,
 Or it was built to butt against our walls,
 Peer over them into our houses, pelt
 The city from the sky. Some crookedness
 50 Is in this thing. Have no faith in the horse!
 Whatever it is, even when Greeks bring gifts
 I fear them, gifts and all.'

He broke off then
 And rifled his big spear with all his might
 Against the horse's flank, the curve of belly.
 55 It stuck there trembling, and the rounded hull
 Reverberated groaning at the blow.
 If the gods' will had not been sinister,
 If our own minds had not been crazed,
 He would have made us foul that Argive den
 60 With bloody steel, and Troy would stand today—
 O citadel of Priam, towering still!

But now look: hillmen, shepherds of Dardania,
 Raising a shout, dragged in before the king
 An unknown fellow with hands tied behind—
 65 This all as he himself had planned,
 Volunteering, letting them come across him,
 So he could open Troy to the Achaeans.
 Sure of himself this man was, braced for it
 Either way, to work his trick or die.
 70 From every quarter Trojans run to see him,
 Ring the prisoner round, and make a game
 Of jeering at him. Be instructed now
 In Greek deceptive arts: one barefaced deed
 Can tell you of them all.

WORDS TO KNOW

46 Achaeans (ə-kē'ənz): Greek

56 reverberated: echoed

59 foul that Argive (ār'jiv): den-
slash the Greek hiding place

62 Dardania (dār-dā'nē-ə): the
region surrounding Troy

73 deceptive arts: trickery



The Greek spy, Sinon, tells a convincing lie about the Trojan horse. He explains that the Greeks built the wooden horse to win back the favor of the goddess Athena. He says that they were planning to sacrifice him to the goddess but he narrowly escaped. Sinon tells the Trojans to treat the statue with respect and to bring it within their city walls. If they do so, they will avoid doom and ensure that the Greeks will meet a terrible fate.

75 **A**nd now another sign, more fearful still,
Broke on our blind miserable people,
Filling us all with dread. Laocoön,
Acting as Neptune's priest that day by lot,
Was on the point of putting to the knife
80 A massive bull before the appointed altar,
When ah—look there!
From Tenedos, on the calm sea, twin snakes—
I shiver to recall it—endlessly
Coiling, uncoiling, swam abreast for shore,
85 Their underbellies showing as their crests
Reared red as blood above the swell; behind
They glided with great undulating backs.
Now came the sound of thrashed seawater foaming;
Now they were on dry land, and we could see
90 Their burning eyes, fiery and suffused with blood,
Their tongues a-flicker out of hissing maws.
We scattered, pale with fright. But straight ahead
They slid until they reached Laocoön.
Each snake enveloped one of his two boys,

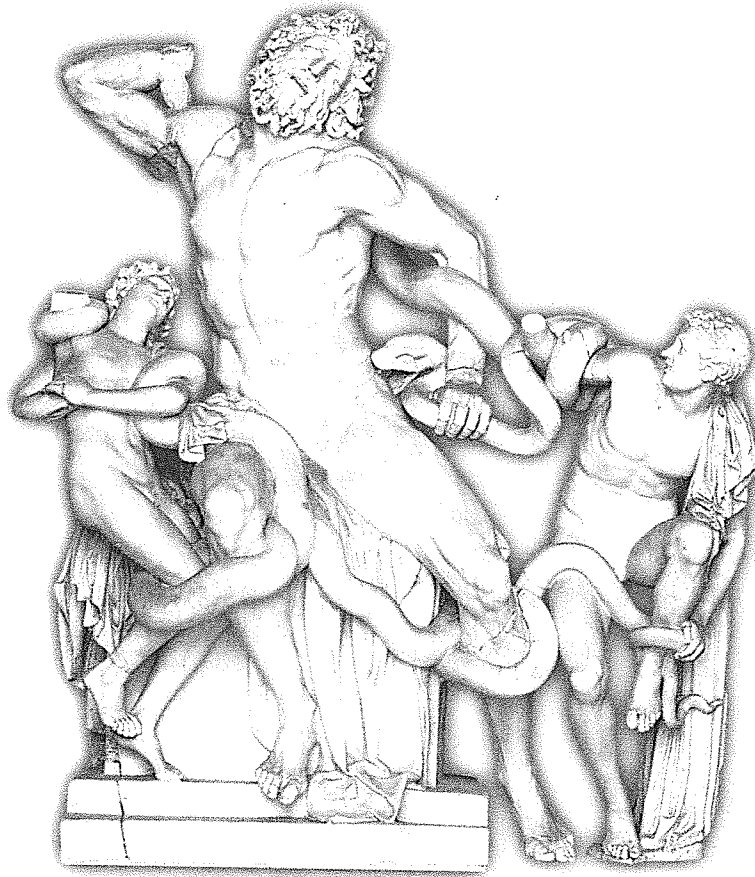
91 maws: mouths.

94 boys: sons.

WORDS TO KNOW

undulating (ŭn'jə-lā'-tīng) *adj.* moving with a wavelike motion **undulate** *v.*

suffused (sə-fyōōzd') *adj.* overspread; filled **suffuse** *v.*



Sculpture of Laocoön (first century B.C.). Vatican Museums, Vatican State.

HUMANITIES CONNECTION This marble statue shows Laocoön and his two sons being crushed by sea serpents. Laocoön suffers for having warned his people about the Trojan horse. This statue was an original Hellenistic Greek work that may have been imported to Rome. Greek statues like this one met with great acclaim in the Roman world.

- 95 Twining about and feeding on the body.
Next they ensnared the man as he ran up
With weapons: coils like cables looped and bound him
Twice round the middle; twice about his throat
They whipped their back-scales, and their heads towered,
100 While with both hands he fought to break the knots,
Drenched in slime, his head-bands black with venom,
Sending to heaven his appalling cries
Like a slashed bull escaping from an altar,
The fumbled axe shrugged off. The pair of snakes
105 Now flowed away and made for the highest shrines,
The citadel of pitiless Minerva,
Where coiling they took cover at her feet
Under the rondure of her shield. New terrors
Ran in the shaken crowd: the word went round

102 appalling: horrifying.

108 rondure: circle.

110 Laocoön had paid, and rightfully,
For profanation of the sacred hulk
With his offending spear hurled at its flank.

T

he offering must be hauled to its true home,⁷
They clamored. 'Votive prayers to the goddess
115 Must be said there!'

So we breached the walls
And laid the city open. Everyone
Pitched in to get the figure underpinned
With rollers, hempen lines around the neck.
Deadly, pregnant with enemies, the horse
120 Crawled upward to the breach. And boys and girls
Sang hymns around the towrope as for joy
They touched it. Rolling on, it cast a shadow
Over the city's heart. O Fatherland,
O Ilium, home of gods! Defensive wall
125 Renowned in war for Dardanus's people!
There on the very threshold of the breach
It jarred to a halt four times, four times the arms
In the belly thrown together made a sound—
Yet on we strove unmindful, deaf and blind,
130 To place the monster on our blessed height.
Then, even then, Cassandra's lips unsealed
The doom to come: lips by a god's command
Never believed or heeded by the Trojans.
So pitifully we, for whom that day
135 Would be the last, made all our temples green
With leafy festal boughs throughout the city.

A

s heaven turned, Night from the Ocean stream
Came on, profound in gloom on earth and sky
And Myrmidons in hiding. In their homes
140 The Teucrians lay silent, wearied out,
And sleep enfolded them. The Argive fleet,
Drawn up in line abreast, left Tenedos
Through the aloof moon's friendly stillnesses
And made for the familiar shore. Flame signals
145 Shone from the command ship. Sinon, favored
By what the gods unjustly had decreed,
Stole out to tap the pine walls and set free

110–112 Laocoön had paid . . . its
flank: Pallas had punished Laocoön
for treating the wooden horse
with disrespect by throwing his
spear at it.

115 breached: broke through.

119 pregnant: filled.

124 Ilium (ĩ'ē-em): another name
for Troy.

139 Myrmidons (mŭr'mə-dŏnz'):
Greeks.

140 Teucrians (tŏō'krē-enz):
Trojans.

The Danaans in the belly. Opened wide,
The horse emitted men; gladly they dropped
150 Out of the cavern, captains first, Thessandrus,
Sthenelus and the man of iron, Ulysses;
Hand over hand upon the rope, Acamas, Thoas,
Neoptolemus and Prince Machaon,
Menelaus and then the master builder,
155 Epeos, who designed the horse decoy.
Into the darkened city, buried deep
In sleep and wine, they made their way,
Cut the few sentries down,
Let in their fellow soldiers at the gate,
160 And joined their combat companies as planned.

150–155 Thessandrus (thē-săn'dr)
... Sthenelus (sthĕn'ĕ-lĕs)
Acamas (ăk'ĕ-mĕs) ... Thoas
(thō'ĕs) ... Machaon (mĕ-kă'ŏn)
... Epeos (ĕ-pĕ'ĕs).

PAUSE & REFLECT Why do the Trojans bring the wooden horse inside their city?



FOCUS Terrible fighting rages outside the palace of Priam, the king of Troy. As you read, look for details that help you visualize this fighting.

The ghost of Hector visits Aeneas in his sleep, warning him about the Greek invasion. Hector tells Aeneas to flee the city so that one day he will be able to establish another great city—Rome. Aeneas awakens, puts on his armor, and goes out into the streets of the burning city. He and his comrades defeat a small band of Greek soldiers, take their armor, and put it on to disguise themselves. They continue to fight the invaders. Eventually, the Greeks see through the Trojans' disguise, and many of Aeneas' companions are killed.