

## CLASSICAL MYTHS

### Unit 3. The Trojan War

1. The fragments below belong to the text you are about to read. Work in pairs to decide where they should go.

- a) the son of Thetis and Peleus
- b) the king of Troy
- c) but was destined never to be believed
- d) sister of Helen
- e) According to the legend, the son of Ilos was Laomedon, who was regarded as a cheat and a liar
- f) It was a formidable fleet and army which left the Greek shores to embark on the siege of Troy
- g) Odysseus decided it was time to use some guile
- h) a priest of Apollo
- i) Menelaus, in the other hand, lived happily for many years with Helen
- j) During the wedding festivities the uninvited Eris, goddess of Discord, threw down a golden apple
- k) whom Zeus had seduced when he came to her in the disguise of a swan
- l) The Greeks began sacking the city
- m) and dragged the body three times round the city wall behind his chariot
- n) the man the Greeks had left behind

### THE TROJAN WAR

Greek legends tell of a 10-year war between the Greeks and the people of Troy in Asia Minor. Troy was said to have been founded by a man called Teucer who became its first king and under his great-great-grand-son, Ilos, it received the name Ilion

\_1\_. Apollo and Poseidon built a wall round Troy for him, but Laomedon refused to give them the payment he had promised. In revenge the gods sent a sea monster to ravage Troy but the hero Heracles promised to kill it on the condition that Laomedon gave him his horses. Heracles killed the monster but, once again, Laomedon broke his word. In a rage Heracles sacked Troy and killed Laomedon. He did, however, spare Laomedon's son, Priam, who was king of Troy at the time of the Trojan War.

The cause of the war was an event at the wedding of the Nereid Thetis and Peleus, a prince of Thessaly. \_2\_ which was inscribed "for the fairest". The goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite who were attendant at the wedding all claimed the apple. It was decided that a Trojan prince called Paris should arbitrate and choose "the fairest" in what became known as the "Judgment of Paris". Paris was the son of Priam, \_3\_, and Hecuba. When he was a baby Paris's mother Hecuba dreamt that he would one day cause the destruction of Troy so she took him to the hills and abandoned him. He was found and brought up by some shepherds until he was eventually reclaimed by Priam.

Each of the three goddesses attempted to bribe Paris; Hera offered him power and promised to make him ruler of all Europe and Asia Minor; Athena offered him wisdom saying he would become a great soldier and statesman who would lead Troy to victory over the Greeks; Aphrodite offered him the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris chose Aphrodite. The woman Aphrodite chose for Paris was Helen, a daughter of Zeus and the Spartan princess Leda \_4\_. Helen was already married to Menelaus, the king of Sparta, when Paris came to his court and abducted her.

Menelaus called for the aid of his brother Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, and asked for as many Greek heroes as he could muster to sail in pursuit of Paris to Troy where Helen had been taken. Amongst the heroes who sailed to the siege of Troy was Achilles, \_5\_, who

was considered to be the greatest warrior of them all. Other warriors were Ajax, king of Salamis and Diomedes, king of Argos. The guile of the expedition was to be provided by Odysseus, king of Ithaca and the wise Nestor, king of Pilos.

\_ 6 \_ . The walled Trojan city, with its wise king Priam and his courageous son Hector, was equal to the Greeks. They camped on the plains outside Troy for years with the occasional skirmishes taking place outside the city walls. Occasionally the gods would intervene in events; Athena and Hera, still smarting from the judgment of Paris, supported the Greeks whilst Apollo and Aphrodite were on the side of the Trojans. In a dreadful and bloody fight Achilles slew Priam's son Hector \_ 7 \_ to taunt the Trojans but still they would not give up. After Achilles was killed by Paris –who was assisted by Apollo to reach Achilles' vulnerable heel - and then Paris was himself killed by the Greek hero Philoctetes from Meliboia, \_ 8 \_ . He instructed the carpenter Epeius to build a large wooden horse with the inside hollowed out and big enough to carry armed soldiers. Odysseus, Epeius and Menelaus were among the men who climbed into the wooden horse which was left on the open plain outside Troy. With the exception of a man called Sinon the rest of the Greek fleet sailed away apparently having given up the siege. The Trojans came out of their city and stared in wonderment at the giant wooden horse and, although some were suspicious of it, others wanted to drag it inside the city walls.

The biggest voice of dissent came from Laocoön, \_ 9 \_ , who argued vehemently against taking this "gift" into the city. The gods on the Greek side intervened and sent two giant serpents to crush Laocoön and his two sons to death. The Trojans took this as a proof that the horse was a sacred object which the priest had insulted and to convince them further Sinon, \_ 10 \_ , was discovered and brought before King Priam. He told them that he had deserted the Greeks and that if they took the horse into the city it would forever protect Troy. As they dragged the horse through the city gates there was one last voice of caution. This came from Cassandra, a daughter of Priam, who had been given the gift of prophesy \_ 11 \_ .

That night when the Trojans were feasting and celebrating Sinon crept to the wooden horse and undid the hidden trapdoor which released the armed men inside. \_ 12 \_ and lit beacons on the city walls to recall their fleets which had not sailed home had merely hidden on the nearby island of Tenedos. King Priam took refuge at the altar of Zeus but was slain by Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. One of the Trojans who did escape was a son of Aphrodite, Aeneas, whose travels and eventual arrival in Italy where he was said to be founder of Rome are recounted in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

When the Greek king Agamemnon returned home he found that his wife Clytemnestra, \_ 13 \_ , had taken a lover. The pair then murdered Agamemnon. Clytemnestra's son Orestes was later to avenge his father's murder by in turn killing his mother. \_ 14 \_ whom he had rescued in Troy and brought back to Sparta.

Adapted from THOMSON, I. *Ancient Greek Mythology*. London: Sunburst Books, 1996

2. Why do you think that Paris chose Aphrodite as "the fairest"?

3. The text explains how Paris took Helen to Troy. Compare that version of the myth with the one provided by the Greek writer Apollodorus. Which is the difference?

He decided in favour of Aphrodite, and sailed to Sparta with ships built by Phereclos. He was entertained for nine days by Menelaos, and on the tenth, when Menelaus departed for Crete to celebrate the funeral of his maternal grandfather Catreus, Alexander\* persuaded Helen to go away with him.



\* Alexander is another name for Paris

Apollodorus, *Epitome* 3

- Which version do the following paintings represent?



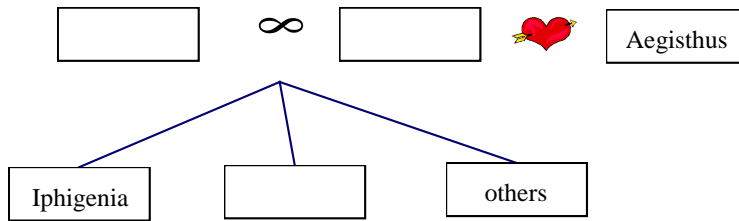
### Francesco Primaticcio, 1530-39

 means 'lovers'  
 means 'husband and wife'

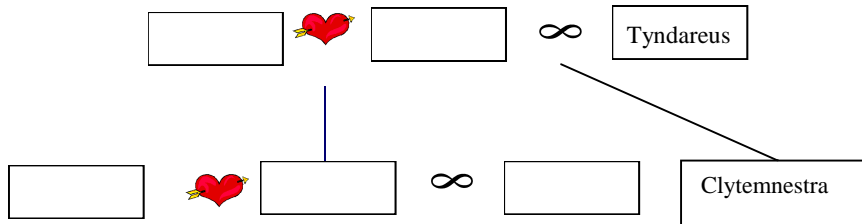
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graph TD
    A[ ] --- B[Batia]
    B --- C[Dardanus]
    B --- D[Erichthonius]
    D --- E[Tros]
    E --- F[ ]
    F --- G[ ]
    G --- H[Hecuba]
    G --- I[ ]
    G --- J[others]
    I --- K[ ]
    I --- L[ ]
    I --- M[Astyanax]
    I --- N[others]
    L --- O[ ]
    L --- P[Andromache]
  
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## HOUSE OF MYCENAE



## HOUSE OF SPARTA



### 5. Look at the map of Mycenaean Greece.

- Highlight the Greek towns mentioned in the text and write the name of each zone's chief in the labels.



- Make appropriate sentences without looking at the map



Argos	is			north	of Peloponnesian peninsula		
Ithaca				south			
Mycenae		a town	in the	east			
Pilos				west		Aegean	
Salamis		an island			in the	Ionian	Sea
Sparta							

The Ionian Sea is an arm of the Mediterranean Sea. It is bounded by southern Italy to the west and by southwestern Albania and a large number of Greek islands to the east.

Ithaca	is			Argos
Mycenae				Peloponnesus
Salamis		north	of	Mycenae
		south		
		east		
		west		

The Aegean Sea is an arm of the Mediterranean Sea located between the mainlands of Greece and Turkey.

6. All the Greek heroes and their armies came to help Menelaus, according to the oath they took, in case anyone would take Helen from the chosen husband (see unit 2). The meeting was in Aulis and the fleet was ready to sail, but contrary winds did not allow them to leave.

- Locate Aulis in the map of exercise 5.
- Read the texts A and B and answer the questions in pairs.

#### TEXT A

A storm raised by the wrath of Artemis kept the Achaeans in Aulis: it is said because when out hunting a deer, Agamemnon had arrogantly disparaged Artemis. When he consulted the priests, Calchas told Agamemnon that this could be only expiated if he sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia. Hearing this, Agamemnon began to raise objections. Odysseus persuaded him to change his mind; Odysseus with Diomedes, was sent to fetch Iphigenia. When he met her mother, Clytemnestra, Odysseus pretended that Iphigenia would be given in marriage to Achilles. They returned to Aulis with her. When his father was about to sacrifice her, Artemis took pity on the young and, interposing a mist, substituted a deer in her place. She bore Iphigenia through the clouds to the land of the Taurians, and made her a priestess in her temple in Tauris.

Hyginus, *Fabulae*

#### TEXT B

You, o Greeks, appeased the winds with the blood of a sacrificed young girl when you first came to the shores of Ilion.

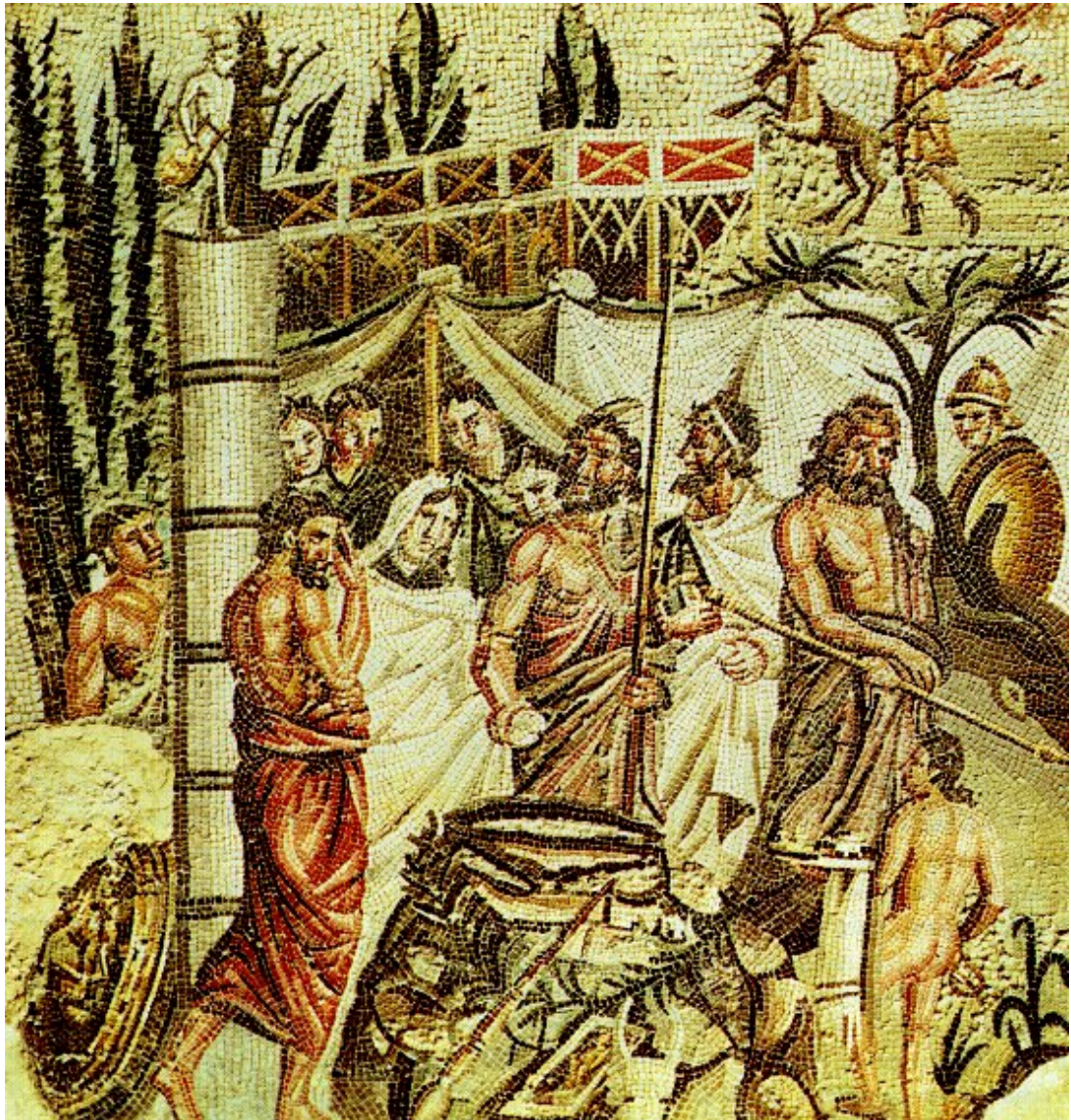
Vergil, *Aeneis* II 115

- Who are the Achaeans?
- What town is Ilion? Can you remember where this name comes from?
- What happened at the end to Iphigenia according to the text A?
- What happened to her according to the text B?
- What would have happened if Agamemnon had not accepted the sacrifice of daughter?



f) Which arguments would justify Agamemnon's action?

- Look at this Roman mosaic found in *Empúries*. Which version of the myth does it depict? Justify your answer.



- Identify on the mosaic:

a) Iphigenia

b) The altar for the sacrifice

c) A statue of Apollo

7. The following pictures depict some episodes of the Trojan War. Put them in the right order of events.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7



A



*The building of the Trojan horse. Etruscan bronze mirror. Ca. 300 BC. Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris)*

C



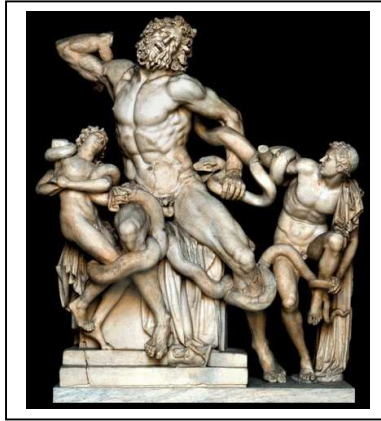
*Tiepolo. The procesión of the Trojan horse into Troy. 1760 National Gallery (London)*

F



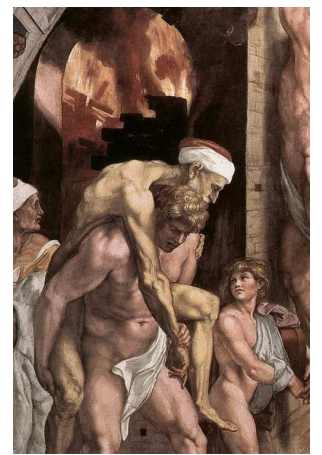
*R. Bearden. The burning of Troy. Serigraph. 1979. In 'A Graphic Odyssey: Romare Bearden as Printmaker'. Oxford University Press.*

B



*Laocoön and his sons. Hellenistic sculpture 1st century BC. Vatican Museums*

E



*Raphael. Aeneas carrying Anchises out of Troy. Fresco painting. 1514. Vatican Museums (Rome)*

D



*Ajax carrying the body of Achilles. Attic black figure vase. Ca. 770 BC Archaeological Museum (Florence)*

G



*Apollo directs the hand of Paris. Attic red figure vase. Ca. 460 BC. Ruhr University (Germany)*

H

*Murder of Agamemnon. Red figure vase. Ca. 470 BC. Museum of Fine Arts (Boston)*

