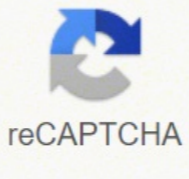




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Ajax play sparknotes

The play begins with two gods, Athena and Poseidon, descending from the heavens to discuss the aftermath of the war between the invading Greek armies and the people of the city of Troy. Poseidon has supported the Trojans, whereas Athena has supported the Greeks. However, she has now turned against them. The Greek warrior, Ajax, raped the Trojan princess Cassandra in Athena's temple, which the goddess sees as an act of great disrespect. As a result, she has called on Poseidon, as well as Zeus, to work with her to create stormy seas to punish the Greeks on their journey home. The gods exit, and the mortal plot unfolds. The stage shows a ruined wall, and in front of it a tent containing the recently enslaved women of Troy. Hecuba, the former queen of Troy, laments the destruction of her city, and the horrible treatment her family has endured. The Chorus, made up of her former handmaidens and other noble Trojan women, joins her, and together they sing, wondering what will become of them and which Greeks will be their masters. Talthibius, a Greek guard, enters and tries to inform Hecuba of the death of her daughter, Polyxena. He uses euphemistic language, and Hecuba does not initially understand what he is trying to say. He also announces to the women that they will all be taken as slaves by different Greek men, and so will have to leave their homeland essentially alone. Cassandra, Hecuba's daughter, who was cursed with the ability to see the future, enters the stage from the tent. She is in a wild, panicked mood — she has seen that Agamemnon will enslave her, and that her enslavement will lead to her death and the death of his entire family. She talks of Agamemnon as her husband, and likens her enslavement to marriage. Because she can see the future, she knows that she cannot fight it, and leaves willingly for Agamemnon's ship. Next, Andromache, Hecuba's daughter-in-law and husband of the late warrior Hector, enters carrying her baby Astyanax. She and Hecuba sing a song of mourning together. Andromache reveals that Greek soldiers killed Polyxena. She tries to comfort Hecuba by arguing that it is better to be dead than to be alive and suffering. Andromache is taken away to the ship of her new master, but before she goes Talthibius informs her that she cannot take her baby. A panel of Greek warriors has decided Astyanax must die, because if he were to live and grow into a man he could pose a potential threat to his Greek captors. Devastated, Andromache gives Astyanax to Talthibius, and the two exit the stage. Menelaus, the Spartan king, comes to claim Helen. Helen was formerly his wife, but she eloped with the Trojan prince, Paris. Menelaus rallied his allies and came after her, thus starting the Trojan War. Menelaus now plans to transport Helen back to Sparta and kill her, as a warning to all unfaithful wives, but first she tries to plead her case. Hecuba, who has been listening, argues that Helen is twisting the truth. While Helen says she was taken to Troy and kept there against her will, Hecuba argues she eloped willingly and is to blame for the destruction of the city. Menelaus is not convinced by Helen, and the two leave together, she as his slave. In the play's final scene, Talthibius returns with the body of Astyanax. He allows Hecuba to dress him and perform funeral rites, and gives her Hector's shield, which will serve as a coffin for the child. Hecuba laments this loss of young life, and reflects upon the destruction of her city and her loved ones. The Greek ships begin to leave, and as they leave the remaining Greek soldiers set Troy on fire. As their home burns, the Trojan women sing a sad song together, and prepare for their new lives. In subscribing to our newsletter by entering your email address you confirm you are over the age of 18 (or have obtained your parent's/guardian's permission to subscribe) and agree to Hollywood.com's Privacy Policy and Terms of Service. Did you know you can highlight text to take a note? x Odysseus has the defining character traits of a Homeric leader: strength, courage, nobility, a thirst for glory, and confidence in his authority. His most distinguishing trait, however, is his sharp intellect. Odysseus's quick thinking helps him out of some very tough situations, as when he escapes from the cave of the Cyclops in Book 9, or when he hides his slaughter of the suitors by having his minstrel strike up a wedding tune in Book 23. He is also a convincing, articulate speaker and can win over or manipulate his audience with ease. When he first addresses Nausicaa on the island of Scheria, for example, his suave, comforting approach quickly wins her trust. Like other Homeric heroes, Odysseus longs to win kleos ("glory" won through great deeds), but he also wishes to complete his nostos ("homecoming"). He enjoys his luxurious life with Calypso in an exotic land, but only to a point. Eventually, he wants to return home, even though he admits that his wife cannot compare with Calypso. He thinks of home throughout the time he spends with the Phaeacians and also while on Circe's island. Sometimes his glory-seeking gets in the way of his home-seeking, however. He sacks the land of the Cicones but loses men and time in the process. He waits too long in the cave of Polyphemus, enjoying the free milk and cheese he finds, and is trapped there when the Cyclops returns. Homeric characters are generally static. Though they may be very complex and realistic, they do not change over the course of the work as characters in modern novels and stories do. Odysseus and especially Telemachus break this rule. Early in his adventures, Odysseus's love of glory prompts him to reveal his identity to the Cyclops and bring Poseidon's wrath down on him. By the end of the epic, he seems much more willing to temper pride with patience. Disguised as a beggar, he does not immediately react to the abuse he receives from the suitors. Instead, he endures it until the traps he has set and the loyalties he has secured put him in a position from which he can strike back effectively. The son of the military man Peleus and the sea-nymph Thetis. The most powerful warrior in The Iliad, Achilles commands the Myrmidons, soldiers from his homeland of Phthia in Greece. Proud and headstrong, he takes offense easily and reacts with blistering indignation when he perceives that his honor has been slighted. Achilles' wrath at Agamemnon for taking his war prize, the maiden Briseis, forms the main subject of The Iliad. Read an in-depth analysis of Achilles. Agamemnon (also called "Atreides") King of Mycenae and leader of the Achaean army; brother of King Menelaus of Sparta. Arrogant and often selfish, Agamemnon provides the Achaeans with strong but sometimes reckless and self-serving leadership. Like Achilles, he lacks consideration and forethought. Most saliently, his tactless appropriation of Achilles' war prize, the maiden Briseis, creates a crisis for the Achaeans, when Achilles, insulted, withdraws from the war. Read an in-depth analysis of Agamemnon. Patroclus Achilles' beloved friend, companion, and advisor. Patroclus grew up alongside the great warrior in Phthia, under the guardianship of Peleus. Devoted to both Achilles and the Achaean cause, Patroclus stands by the enraged Achilles but also dons Achilles' terrifying armor in an attempt to hold the Trojans back. Odysseus A fine warrior and the cleverest of the Achaean commanders. Along with Nestor, Odysseus is one of the Achaeans' two best public speakers. He helps mediate between Agamemnon and Achilles during their quarrel and often prevents them from making rash decisions. Diomedes (also called "Dydimos") The youngest of the Achaean commanders. Diomedes is bold and sometimes proves impetuous. After Achilles withdraws from combat, Athena inspires Diomedes with such courage that he actually wounds two gods, Aphrodite and Ares. Great Ajax An Achaean commander. Great Ajax (sometimes called "Telamonian Ajax" or simply "Ajax") is the second mightiest Achaean warrior after Achilles. His extraordinary size and strength help him to wound Hector twice by hitting him with boulders. He often fights alongside Little Ajax, and the pair is frequently referred to as the "Aeantes." Little Ajax An Achaean commander. Little Ajax is the son of Oileus (to be distinguished from Great Ajax, the son of Telamon). He often fights alongside Great Ajax, whose stature and strength complement Little Ajax's small size and swift speed. The two together are sometimes called the "Aeantes." Nestor King of Pylos and the oldest Achaean commander. Although age has taken much of Nestor's physical strength, it has left him with great wisdom. He often acts as an advisor to the military commanders, especially Agamemnon. Nestor and Odysseus are the Achaeans' most deft and persuasive orators, although Nestor's speeches are sometimes long-winded. Menelaus King of Sparta; the younger brother of Agamemnon. While it is the abduction of his wife, Helen, by the Trojan prince Paris that sparks the Trojan War, Menelaus proves quieter, less imposing, and less arrogant than Agamemnon. Though he has a stout heart, Menelaus is not among the mightiest Achaean warriors. Idomeneus King of Crete and a respected commander. Idomeneus leads a charge against the Trojans in Book 13. Machaon A healer. Machaon is wounded by Paris in Book 11. Calchas An important soothsayer. Calchas's identification of the cause of the plague ravaging the Achaean army in Book 1 leads inadvertently to the rift between Agamemnon and Achilles that occupies the first nineteen books of The Iliad. Peleus Achilles' father and the grandson of Zeus. Although his name often appears in the epic, Peleus never appears in person. Priam powerfully invokes the memory of Peleus when he convinces Achilles to return Hector's corpse to the Trojans in Book 24. Phoenix A kindly old warrior, Phoenix helped raise Achilles while he himself was still a young man. Achilles deeply loves and trusts Phoenix, and Phoenix mediates between him and Agamemnon during their quarrel. The Myrmidons The soldiers under Achilles' command, hailing from Achilles' homeland, Phthia. The Trojans Hector A son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba, Hector is the mightiest warrior in the Trojan army. He mirrors Achilles in some of his flaws, but his bloodlust is not so great as that of Achilles. He is devoted to his wife, Andromache, and son, Astyanax, but resents his brother Paris for bringing war upon their family and city. Read an in-depth analysis of Hector. Priam King of Troy and husband of Hecuba, Priam is the father of fifty Trojan warriors, including Hector and Paris. Though too old to fight, he has earned the respect of both the Trojans and the Achaeans by virtue of his level-headed, wise, and benevolent rule. He treats Helen kindly, though he laments the war that her beauty has sparked. Hecuba Queen of Troy, wife of Priam, and mother of Hector and Paris. Paris (also known as "Alexander") A son of Priam and Hecuba and brother of Hector. Paris's abduction of the beautiful Helen, wife of Menelaus, sparked the Trojan War. Paris is self-centered and often unmanly. He fights effectively with a bow and arrow (never with the more manly sword or spear) but often lacks the spirit for battle and prefers to sit in his room making love to Helen while others fight for him, thus earning both Hector's and Helen's scorn. Helen Reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the ancient world, Helen was stolen from her husband, Menelaus, and taken to Troy by Paris. She loathes herself now for the misery that she has caused so many Trojan and Achaean men. Although her contempt extends to Paris as well, she continues to stay with him. Aeneas A Trojan nobleman, the son of Aphrodite, and a mighty warrior. The Romans believed that Aeneas later founded their city (he is the protagonist of Virgil's masterpiece the Aeneid). Andromache Hector's loving wife, Andromache begs Hector to withdraw from the war and save himself before the Achaeans kill him. Astyanax Hector and Andromache's infant son. Polydamas A young Trojan commander, Polydamas sometimes figures as a foil for Hector, proving cool-headed and prudent when Hector charges ahead, but Hector seldom acts on it. Glaucus A powerful Trojan warrior, Glaucus nearly fights a duel with Diomedes. The men's exchange of armor after they realize that their families are friends illustrates the value that ancients placed on kinship and camaraderie. Aeneas A Trojan warrior who attempts to fight Achilles in Book 21. Aeneas delays Achilles long enough for the Trojan army to flee inside Troy's walls. Dolon A Trojan sent to spy on the Achaean camp in Book 10. Pandarus A Trojan archer. Pandarus's shot at Menelaus in Book 4 breaks the temporary truce between the two sides. Antenor A Trojan nobleman, advisor to King Priam, and father of many Trojan warriors. Antenor argues that Helen should be returned to Menelaus in order to end the war, but Paris refuses to give her up. Sarpedon One of Zeus's sons. Sarpedon's fate seems intertwined with the gods' quibbles, calling attention to the unclear nature of the gods' relationship to Fate. Chryseis Chryseis' daughter, a priest of Apollo in a Trojan-allied town. Briseis A war prize of Achilles. When Agamemnon is forced to return Chryseis to her father, he appropriates Briseis as compensation, sparking Achilles' great rage. Chryseis A priest of Apollo in a Trojan-allied town; the father of Chryseis, whom Agamemnon takes as a war prize. The Gods and Immortals Zeus King of the gods and husband of Hera, Zeus claims neutrality in the mortals' conflict and often tries to keep the other gods from participating in it. However, he throws his weight behind the Trojan side for much of the battle after the sulking Achilles has his mother, Thetis, ask the god to do so. Hera Queen of the gods and Zeus's wife, Hera is a conniving, headstrong woman. She often goes behind Zeus's back in matters on which they disagree, working with Athena to crush the Trojans, whom she passionately hates. Athena The goddess of wisdom, purposeful battle, and the womanly arts; Zeus's daughter. Like Hera, Athena passionately hates the Trojans and often gives the Achaeans valuable aid. Thetis A sea-nymph and the devoted mother of Achilles, Thetis gets Zeus to help the Trojans and punish the Achaeans at the request of her angry son. When Achilles finally rejoins the battle, she commissions Hephaestus to design him a new suit of armor. Apollo A son of Zeus and twin brother of the goddess Artemis, Apollo is god of the sun and the arts, particularly music. He supports the Trojans and often intervenes in the war on their behalf. Aphrodite Goddess of love and daughter of Zeus, Aphrodite is married to Hephaestus but maintains a romantic relationship with Ares. She supports Paris and the Trojans throughout the war, though she proves somewhat ineffectual in battle. Poseidon The brother of Zeus and god of the sea. Poseidon holds a long-standing grudge against the Trojans because they never paid him for helping them to build their city. He therefore supports the Achaeans in the war. Hephaestus God of fire and husband of Aphrodite. Hephaestus is the gods' metalsmith and is known as the lame or crippled god. Although the text doesn't make clear his sympathies in the mortals' struggle, he helps the Achaeans by forging a new set of armor for Achilles and by rescuing Achilles during his fight with a river god. Artemis Goddess of the hunt, daughter of Zeus, and twin sister of Apollo. Artemis supports the Trojans in the war. Ares God of war and lover of Aphrodite, Ares generally supports the Trojans in the war. Hermes The messenger of the gods. Hermes escorts Priam to Achilles' tent in Book 24. Iris Zeus's messenger.

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