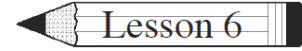


A Sample Lesson from The Gold Book World Anthology

Summary of the Trojan War



4. e. Summary of the Trojan War

Priam, King of Troy, had a son with his wife Hecuba. It was prophesized that this son, Paris, should be killed at birth because he would one day grow up and destroy the city. Before this could happen, he was rescued by shepherds and taken away. When he was grown, he returned to the city and was recognized. He rejoined the royal family.

Peleus fell in love with Thetis, a sea nymph. Zeus was also interested in Thetis but allowed Peleus and Thetis to marry because of a prophesy that she would give birth to a son greater than his father. Eris, the goddess of strife, was not invited to the birth celebration. She showed up anyway, bringing with her a golden apple with the words “For the fairest” written on it. Zeus’ wife Hera and his daughters Aphrodite and Athene each claimed the apple. They asked Zeus to decide who deserved it. He refused to get involved and the job fell to Paris. Each of the goddesses promised to give Paris a gift if he would pick her. Hera promised power, Athene promised military glory and wisdom, and Aphrodite promised him the most beautiful woman in the world to wed. Paris gave the apple to Aphrodite.

At this time, Helen, a mortal daughter of Zeus, was considered the most beautiful woman in the world. She was the wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. Helen’s sister Clytaemnestra was married to Menelaus’ brother Agamemnon, King of Argos. He was the most powerful king in Greece. As Aphrodite had promised, Paris and Helen fell in love and ran away to Troy, taking much of the city’s treasure with them. The Spartans sent a delegation requesting the return of Helen and the treasure but the Trojans refused. The Greeks sent an army to attack Troy, thus beginning the Trojan War.

According to prophesy, Achilles, the son of Peleus and Thetis, would die in battle. To protect him, Thetis bathed him in the waters

of the river Styx when he was a baby. This made him invulnerable to any weapon. When the war began, Agamemnon was told that he could not conquer Troy without Achilles. Odysseus tricked Achilles into joining Agamemnon. Achilles was accompanied by his good friend Patroclus as Agamemnon sailed with one thousand Greek ships to Troy. When his appeal for the return of Helen and the treasure was denied by King Priam, the Greek army set up a siege that lasted many years.

The Iliad begins in the tenth year of the siege. Agamemnon and Achilles have a bitter quarrel and Achilles refuses to fight for the Greeks. After which Hector, Priam's son breaks through the Greek's defenses and sets their ships on fire. Achilles' friend Patroclus is killed in this fight by Hector. The Greeks beg Achilles to return to the battle. Outraged by the death of Patroclus, Achilles decides to rejoin the Greeks. After a fierce fight, Achilles kills Hector and drags his body around the city. A grieving Priam asks Achilles to give him the body of his son in return for a ransom. Achilles agrees.

The prophesy about Achilles dying in battle comes true. When Apollo's mother dipped him in the river she held him upside-down by his heel creating a vulnerable spot where the waters of the River Styx did not touch him. Paris shoots an arrow into Achilles heel and kills him.

The Greeks then devise a plan to take the city. They build a wooden horse and fill it with soldiers. Leaving the horse in front of the city gates, they then pretend to sail away leaving one Greek soldier Sinon behind. He convinces the Trojans that the horse is a gift to Athene. The Trojans are warned by Laocoon not to trust Sinon, but they do not listen. They tear down part of the city wall and drag the horse inside. After a big celebration, the Trojans go to bed and the Greek soldiers creep out of the horse, open the city gates, and signal to the Greek army to return. The city is completely destroyed and Helen is taken back to Menelaus.