

# Heroes, Heroines and The Trojan War : 200 Questions and Answers



ATHENA Editions

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**Everything you need to know about  
The Iliad and The Odyssey**

# **Heroes, Heroines and the Trojan War : 200 Questions and Answers**

*« This book is dedicated to the manes of Heinrich Schliemann –  
the man who discovered the ruins of the ancient city of Troy. »*

*« Some people say that a troop of horsemen or foot soldiers is the most beautiful thing on the dark earth; others say it is a fleet of ships. For me, the most beautiful thing on earth is whatever each person most adores. »*

**Sappho**

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# ***The Lead-up to the Trojan War***



**1**

## **Why did the gods Zeus and Poseidon decide that Thetis – the most beautiful of the Nereids – should marry the hero Peleus ?**

**Z**eus and Poseidon both wanted to marry the stunning Thetis. Thetis was the most beautiful of the Nereids; the fifty daughters born to the old sea god Nereus. However, the Titan Prometheus revealed to Zeus and Poseidon that any son produced by their union with Thetis would be stronger, cleverer and more illustrious than his father, and would take the throne from him... Shrewd as ever – shrewdness being a divine attribute par excellence – ‘wide-eyed’ Zeus and Poseidon, ‘the god of the dark-blue hair’, promptly put a stop to their courtship of Thetis and decided to marry her off to a mortal. With the faithful centaur Chiron acting as a middleman, they offered her as a bride to the heroic Peleus. This is the point at which the wheels of Fate were really set in motion against the ‘beautifully walled’ city of Troy; the opulent metropolis in which King Priam and Queen Hecuba had until then enjoyed a quiet, untroubled life.

**2**

## **What was the cause of the disagreement between the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite that led to the Judgement of Paris ?**

**W**ith the exception of Eris, all the gods and goddesses attended the celebrations for Thetis and Peleus’ marriage on Mount Pelion, where Chiron the Centaur lived. Eris was purposely not invited – according to the poet Hesiod, she was the daughter of Night and the personification of Discord and Strife. Indignant at having been left out, Eris was keen to get her own back, and she realised that the golden apples of the Hesperides could help her. Eris decided to steal one of the golden apples and use it and its status as a symbol of love to inflict suffering so great that it would serve as an example to all gods. The root cause of the conflict was literally in her hands; she threw the apple, now a harbinger of war, into the wedding ceremony, causing uproar among the jealous goddesses. Hera, proud of being married to – and sharing a bed with – Zeus, arose in amazement, keen to have the apple to herself (the ‘golden apple’ was in fact a pomegranate, the most highly prized fruit among all ancient Mediterranean civilisations, and one that the Romans called the ‘apple of Carthage’). Aphrodite, believing herself superior to all other goddesses, was desperate to acquire the apple, given its associations with love. Hera would not relent, though, and nor would Athena...





*« Thetis, the most beautiful of the Nereids, emerges from the water; she will play a pivotal role in this story. The daughter of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea, she is also Achilles' mother. »*



Zeus, seeing the goddesses' rivalry, called to his son Hermes, who sat alongside him, saying: 'My son, if you've heard, as I believe you have, of Paris, son of Priam – the handsome young man who tends to his cattle on the hills of Troy, along the course of the Xanthus – give him the golden apple of the Hesperides and have him judge the goddesses; the curve of their eyelids and the oval of their faces. Let whichever goddess he deems fairest receive the prize that has been offered to the most beautiful – the jewel of Love. »

### 3

## Comment fut instaurée l'idée du jugement de Pâris ?

**L**a légende raconte que c'est au cours du festin de noces du mariage de la Néréide Thétis et de Pélée que naquit la dispute entre les déesses Héra, Athéna et Aphrodite pour « le prix de la beauté ». Sur le « conseil de Zeus », il fut décidé que la rivalité des trois déesses serait tranchée par la décision du bouvier Pâris. Ce jugement voulu par Zeus s'insérait dans la suite des causes qui mènerait infailliblement à la guerre de Troie. Les déesses n'étant elles-mêmes dans leur rivalité que l'instrument du Destin.

