



The two epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which together contain 28,000 lines of verse, are the first works of literature in Europe. They were written by Homer, who lived in Greece in about the eighth century BCE.

The *Iliad* concerns the war with Troy, also known as Ilium, and the heroes who fought in it.

The *Odyssey* describes the adventures of one of the kings who took part in the Trojan War, from its conclusion until his return to his homeland.

The cause of the Trojan War was the anger of the Spartan king Menelaus. He had received Paris, the son of the king of Troy, as a guest at his palace; Paris ate, drank and made merry, but finally seduced Menelaus' wife, the beautiful Helen, and took her with him to Troy.

The Greeks viewed this as a national insult. In response, the most powerful of the Greek kings, Agamemnon, who was the brother of Menelaus and the ruler of Mycenae, amassed an army and ships with his friends and allies, and together they went to Troy to punish Paris and bring back Helen.

A force of 1,186 ships arrived in Troy, full of soldiers and fifty heroic leaders from 164 cities in Greece. They moored and set up camp, erecting wooden huts around the city. Every so often they lined up to mount an attack, but to no avail. The city was well fortified and in charge of its defence was Hector, the eldest son of Priam, king of Troy.

Within its walls were the two people who were the cause of the war: the king's youngest son, Paris,

and the beautiful Helen, the wife of the Spartan king, Menelaus.

Outside the city, Menelaus, his brother Agamemnon and their Greek allies laid siege to the city for nine long years, and Troy would have endured for longer if one incident had not forced the gods to become involved. The poem relates the tenth and last year of the Trojan War.

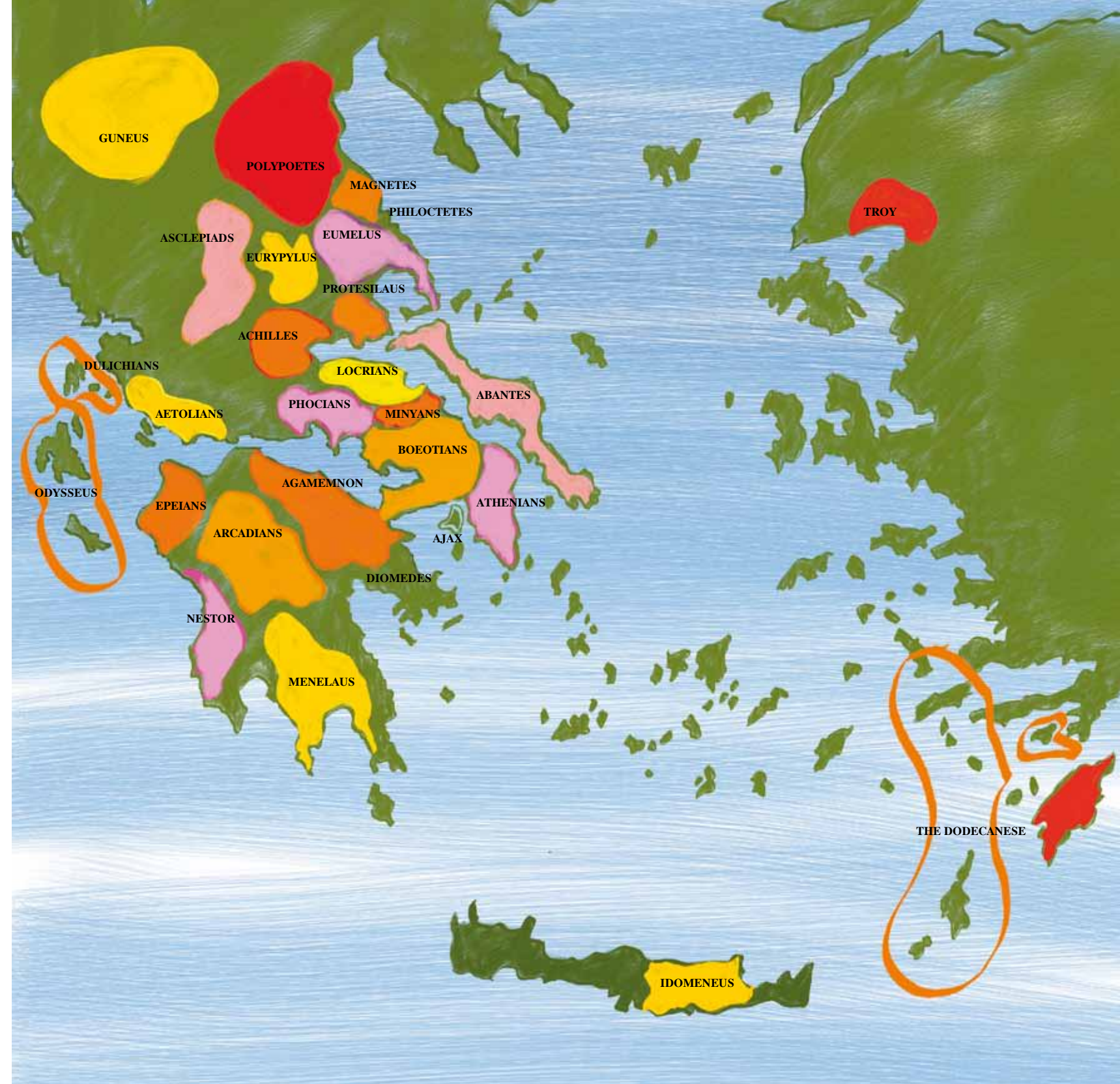
Scholars in the Alexandrian period divided the ancient texts of the Iliad and the Odyssey into 24 parts known as "rhapsodies", one for each letter of the Greek alphabet. The books in the Iliad are referred to by the capital letters from alpha to omega and those in the Odyssey by the lower case letters. Each book has a different number of lines.

THE GREEK FORCES

TRIBES	SHIPS	LEADERS
Boeotians	50	Peneleus, Leitus, Arcesilaus, Prothoenor, Clonius
Minyans	30	Ascalaphus, Ialmenus
Phocians	40	Schedius, Epistrophus
Locrians	40	Ajax (son of Oileus)
Abantes (Euboea)	40	Elephenor
Athenians	50	Menestheus
Salaminians	12	Ajax (son of Telamon)
Argives	80	Diomedes, Sthenelus, Euryalus
Mycenaeans	100	Agamemnon
Lacedaemonians	60	Menelaus
Pyliaus	90	Nestor
Arcadians	60	Agapenor
Epeians	40	Amphimachus, Thalpius, Diore, Polyxeinus
Dulichians	40	Meges
Cephalenians	12	Odysseus
Aetolians	40	Thoas
Cretans	80	Idomeneus, Meriones
Rhodians	9	Tlepolemus
The kingdom of Nireus	3	Nireus
The Dodecanese	30	Pheidippus, Antiphus
Myrmidons, Hellenes & Achaeans	50	Achilles
The kingdom of Protesilaus	40	Protesilaus
The kingdom of Eumelus	11	Eumelus
The kingdom of Philoctetes	7	Philoctetes
Asclepiads	30	Machaon, Podalirius
The kingdom of Eurypylus	40	Eurypylus
The kingdom of Polypoetes	40	Polypoetes, Leonteus
Aenianes & Perrhaebi	22	Guneus
Magnetes	40	Prothous

THE TROJAN FORCES

REGION	TRIBES	LEADERS
TROY	Dardanians	Aeneas
	Zelians	Pandarus
	Adrasteians	Adrastus, Amphius
	Percotians	Asius
EUROPE	Pelasgians	Hippothous, Pylaeus
	Thracians	Acamas, Peirous
	Ciconians	Euphemus
ASIA	Paeonians	Pyraechmes
	Paphlagonians	Pylaemenes
	Alizonians	Epistrophus, Odius
	Mysians	Chromius, Ennomus
	Phrygians	Ascanius, Phorcys
	Maeonians	Antiphus, Mesthles
	Carians	Nastes
	Lycians	Sarpedon, Glaucus



This tale, which ought to have been about the war, is actually more concerned with what happened after a quarrel between two noblemen in the same camp. During the nine-year siege of Troy, the Greeks had killed fewer of the enemy than had perished on their own side as a result of discord between friends and allies.

Agamemnon had captured a beautiful young woman in a raid near Troy and made her his slave. She was the daughter of the priest Chryses, who, as soon as he found out what had happened, ran and prostrated himself at the feet of the king, offering a ransom for his daughter.

“Leave and go back where you came from,” said Agamemnon contemptuously. “Your daughter is coming with me to Argos, where she will live and grow old.”

Disconsolate, the old man prayed for assistance from Apollo; in response, the god sent a terrible illness that struck down the Greek camp.

So they remained for nine days, until Achilles, prompted by the goddess Hera, stood up and addressed the others:

“We must ask a seer what we have done to deserve

such punishment. If things continue like this we will all die, and not a single one of us will return home.”

Then the seer Calchas stood up and spoke to Achilles:

“Promise me your protection, my lord, as what I have to say might not be welcome to all. King Agamemnon must release Chryses’ daughter.”

“Impossible!” retorted Agamemnon with a face like thunder. However, realising almost at once that he had no choice, he turned vengefully on Achilles: “Very well,” he said angrily, “send Chryseis to her father. But in return, Achilles, I shall have your slave girl, since it was your idea.”

“What base ingratitude is this?” cried Achilles.

“I only came here to help you and your brother, and this is the thanks I get! I’ve a good mind to leave!”

“Leave, then. We don’t need you!”

Fortunately, the goddess Athena was standing behind Achilles and held him back, or he would have lunged at Agamemnon with his sword.

Old Nestor, the king of Pylos, stepped between them. He was well-respected and everyone listened when he spoke. “Imagine how delighted Priam and his sons would be to see us like this, fighting among ourselves. Stop these quarrels!”

At that, Achilles and his friend Patroclus got up and left.

Agamemnon sent a ship to return the daughter of Chryses. Commanded by Odysseus, it was filled with gifts for the god Apollo.

However, Agamemnon remained obdurate; he immediately sent two messengers to bring him the beautiful young woman that Achilles had taken as a prize and was keeping in his hut. With tears of indignation in his eyes, Achilles ran down to the

