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Brave or foolish

Investigate
the voices
from Troy



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Teachers guide



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This lesson package consists of the following resources:

- Teacher's guide
- Student workbook
- Animation video
- Interview with a researcher
- PowerPoint presentation

All materials are available at www.rug.nl/lespakketten.

This educational material was created by a multidisciplinary team within the **Scholierenacademie (Pre-University Academy)** of the University of Groningen. During development, the Scholierenacademie collaborated with researchers, exchange teachers, and secondary school teachers to create accessible educational resources about classical antiquity.

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For more information about the CITADEL project, see the back cover of this publication.

Target Audience and Level

This material is designed for lower secondary students at grammar schools.

Contact and Feedback

For questions, comments, or suggestions, please email: scholierenacademie@rug.nl

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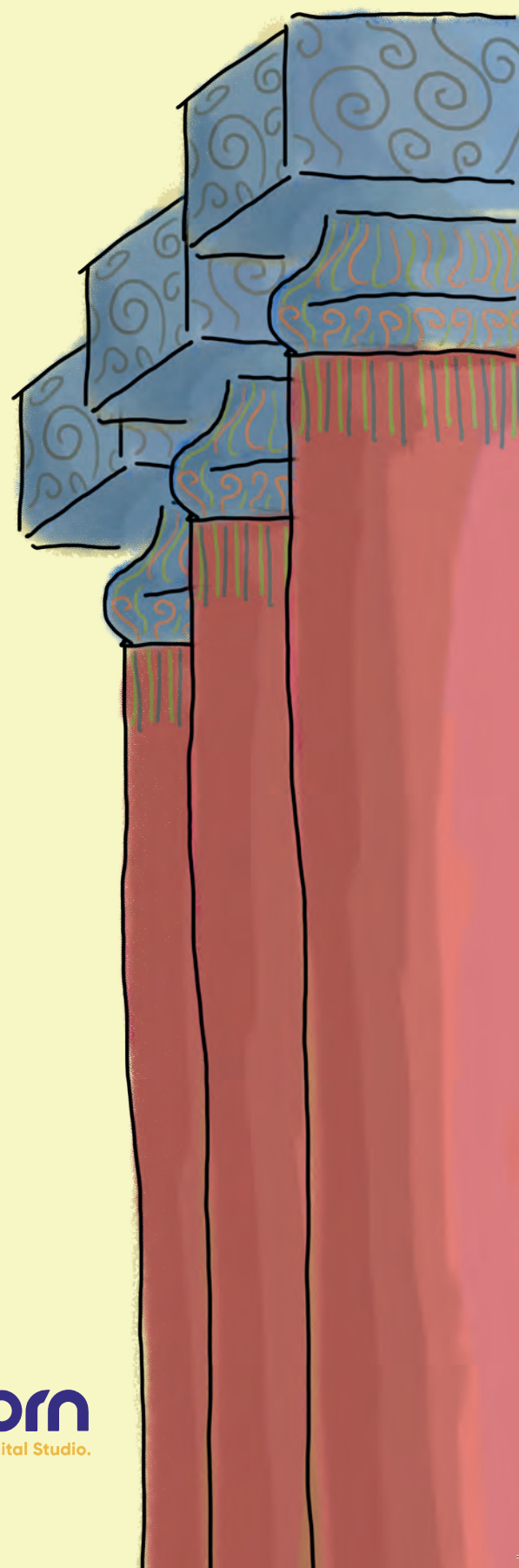
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Introduction

Stories from classical antiquity are usually told from the male perspective we have known for centuries. In these tales, Achilles is a hero, Medusa is a monster, and many women are portrayed as objects or villains. However, in recent years, mythological stories have increasingly been retold from a feminist perspective.

An example is *The Silence of the Girls*: in this retelling of the *Iliad*—focusing on Achilles' wrath at the end of the Trojan War—Pat Barker gives a voice to Briseis and other women from *the Iliad*.

There are many more retellings written from feminist perspectives. This trend did not escape Dr Jacqueline Klooster, a researcher at the University of Groningen specialising in classical languages and cultures. Inspired by her own research, she launched a project—with schools and universities in Poland and Malta—to make knowledge of classical antiquity more accessible in secondary education.

Together with the Scholierenacademie, a team of five classics teachers, and university lecturer Bram van der Velden, she developed this lesson package. The goal? To help students see that classical stories are also relevant and valuable to them.

This is the result: a lesson package centred on research into retellings of classical stories. In the first section, students explore the story of *the Iliad*. Next, they learn about the concept of perspective and practise with classic fragments. In the third section, they watch an interview with Jacqueline about her research, followed by a creative retelling exercise. The fourth section connects ancient stories to modern themes. Finally, in the fifth section, students reflect on their personal judgements of characters and how perspective influences this.

You can follow the entire lesson package from start to finish, or use the assignments from sections 2 to 5 with another story. You can also adapt or use individual assignments in your lessons.

We hope you and your students will dive into these assignments with enthusiasm. May they discover how important it is who tells a story and realise that classical tales are not entirely disconnected from the world today.

Further reading...

Bracke, E. 2025. *Leidraad door het labyrint. De macht van klassieke mythen in onzekere tijden*, Gent.

Doherty, L. 2001. *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth*, Londen.

Goff, B. 2022. 'Do we have a new song yet? The New Wave of Women's Novels and the Homeric Tradition', *Humanities* 11, 49.

Klooster, J. 2023. 'De revisionistische muze. Recente hervertellingen van klassieke mythen vanuit een vrouwelijk perspectief', *Lampas* 56, 201-218.

Klooster, J. 2025. *Medusa in de spiegel. Wat mythen ons vertellen over wie we zijn*, Amsterdam.

Plate, L. 2008. 'Rewriting. Literatuur als parallel script', *Vooy's Tijdschrift voor letteren* 26.3, 63-73.

Schott, C. 2023. *Canon Fanfiction: Reading, Writing and Teaching with Adaptations of Pre-Modern Literature*, Berlijn.

Theodorakopoulos, E. & F. Cox (edd.). 2012. *Female Transgressions: Classical Reception and Contemporary Women Writers*, Oxford.

Theodorakopoulos, E. & F. Cox (edd.). 2019. *Homer's Daughters: Women's Responses to Homer in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. Oxford.

Practical information

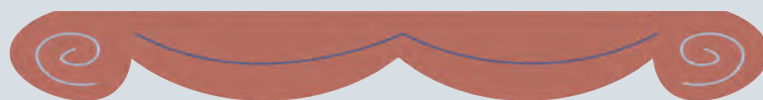
School subjects	Classics / Dutch / English
Available Materials (via www.rug.nl/lespakketten)	• Teacher's guide • Student workbook • PowerPoint presentation • Animation video on perspective • Video interview with a researcher
Target group	Students aged 12-14 (lower secondary)

Structure of the lesson package

	Section 1	Section 2
Topic	<i>The Iliad</i>	Perspectives
Assignment(s)	Assignment 1: <i>The Iliad</i>	Assignment 2: Perspectives in the Iliad Assignment 3: Give Them a Voice!
Learning objectives	Students will gain an overview of the events and characters in <i>the Iliad</i> . Students will understand the causes of the events in <i>the Iliad</i> .	Students can identify perspectives in <i>the Iliad</i> . Students can empathise with characters who have little or no voice in the original story. Students can explain the effect of a changed perspective on the reader.
Required materials	Student workbook, PowerPoint.	Student workbook, PowerPoint, animation video.
Notes	This lesson package is based on the Iliad. Use Assignment 1 to refresh students' knowledge of the story. The assignments in the other sections can also be applied to any other story.	

Section 3	Section 4	Section 5
Retellings	Modern relevance	Personal judgement
Assignment 4: What does a classics researcher do? Assignment 5: Creative retelling	Assignment 6: Living links Assignment 7: Timeless themes	Assignment 8: A personal message Assignment 9: What did they think of the war?
Students can explain what a researcher of classical antiquity does. Students can empathise with a minor character from <i>the Iliad</i> and create a creative retelling. Students understand the influence of perspective on a story.	Students can connect ancient classical works to modern themes or major life themes. Students see that the story of <i>the Iliad</i> is still relevant today.	Students can form a personal opinion about a character's actions in <i>the Iliad</i>. Students see that <i>the Iliad</i> presents a variety of characters, each with their own perspective on the Trojan War.
Student workbook, PowerPoint, interview video with researcher, Post-it notes, student devices.	Student workbook, PowerPoint, excerpt from <i>the Iliad</i> or another work, student devices.	Student workbook, PowerPoint, posters.

Section 1: *The Iliad*



Assignment 1: *The Iliad*

- Learning objectives:**
- Students will gain an overview of the events and characters in *the Iliad*.
 - Students will understand the causes of the events in *the Iliad*.

What to do?

Introduce students to the origin myth of the Trojan War by first activating their prior knowledge and then expanding on it.

How to do it?

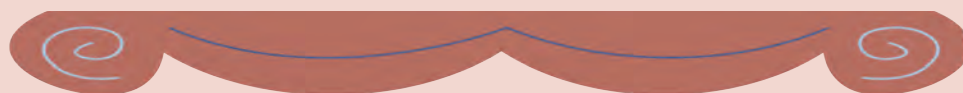
1. Start with a formative quiz to assess students' prior knowledge. Use the PowerPoint to display multiple-choice questions. Students indicate their answers by holding up 1, 2, 3, or 4 fingers.
2. Tell students that by the end of this lesson, they should be able to describe the main events and characters of *the Iliad*.
3. Provide a brief background to the story (see PowerPoint).
4. Divide students into groups of four. Have them complete Assignment 1 in their workbooks: they arrange fragments of the Iliad in the correct order and answer three questions.
5. Discuss the correct order of the story with the class (see PowerPoint). Also discuss the remaining questions from Assignment 1.

Practical details:

Lesson durations	15-30 minutes
Required materials	PowerPoint and student workbook



Section 2: Perspectives



Assignment 2: Perspectives in *the Iliad*

Learning Objective: • Students can identify perspectives in *the Iliad*.

What to do?

Students will be introduced to the concept of ‘perspective’ and watch the animation video on perspectives. Then, they will work with simplified fragments from *the Iliad*.

How to do it?

1. Watch the animation video on perspective with the class.
2. Explain that you will explore the perspectives in *the Iliad*.
3. Have students complete Assignment 2 in their workbooks. They will analyse two fragments from *the Iliad* with accompanying questions:
 - Agamemnon takes Briseis away (*Iliad* 1.318–344).
 - Helen speaks with Hector about Paris (*Iliad* 6.352–368).
4. Discuss the questions in class using the PowerPoint. Answers can be found on the following page.
5. Together with the students, draw a conclusion about perspective in *the Iliad*. Explain that *the Iliad* uses an omniscient perspective: the narrator can tell what both Greeks and Trojans are thinking. Characters like Achilles, Agamemnon, Helen, and Hector are prominent, but figures like Briseis have little or no voice.

Practical details:

Lesson duration	30-45 minutes
Required materials	PowerPoint, animation video on perspective, student workbook

Answers to assignment 2

Fragment 1

1. Which characters are speaking in this passage?

Agamemnon (to Talthybius and Eurybates) and Achilles (to Talthybius and Eurybates, later to Patroclus).

2. Which characters are mentioned but do not speak?

Talthybius, Eurybates, and Briseis.

3. How do Talthybius and Eurybates feel about going to Achilles?

They are clearly fearful and reluctant.

4. Can we know how Briseis feels?

No, the text does not reveal Briseis' feelings.

5. What emotion might Achilles be feeling when he says, "Dear friend, bring the girl outside and let her be taken away"?

Possible interpretations: He could be calm, or he might be trying to hide his anger or frustration.

Fragment 2

6. Helen and Hector are talking about Paris. What does Helen think of Paris? What does Hector think of Paris?

Helen says Paris is not brave and never will be, so Hector should not expect much from him. Hector believes Paris should try harder and expects him to fight on the battlefield.

7. How would you describe Hector's character?

He comes across as brave, especially compared to Paris. He feels responsible for fighting for his people and seems caring because he wants to see his family.

8. What difference do you notice between Briseis in Text 1 and Helen in Text 2?

(Note: This question seems to reference a comparison not fully outlined in the provided text. Students may explore how Briseis is silent and objectified, while Helen actively expresses her opinions.)



Assignment 3: Give them a voice!

Learning Objectives:

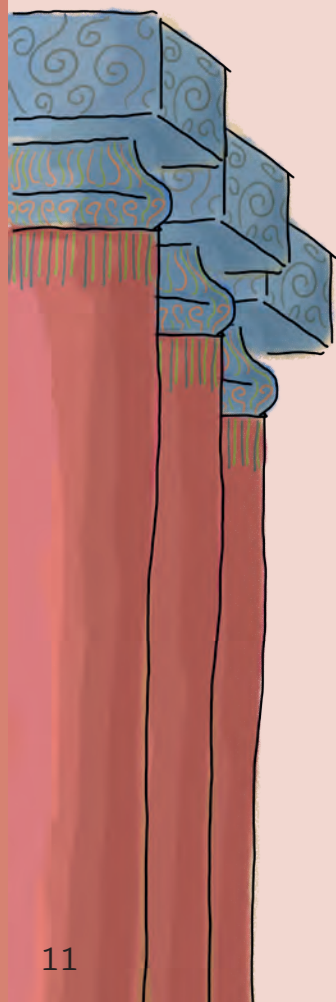
- Students can empathise with characters who have little or no voice in the original story.
- Students can explain the effect of a changed perspective on the reader.

What to do?

Students write a dialogue between two or more characters who have little or no speaking role in the original story.

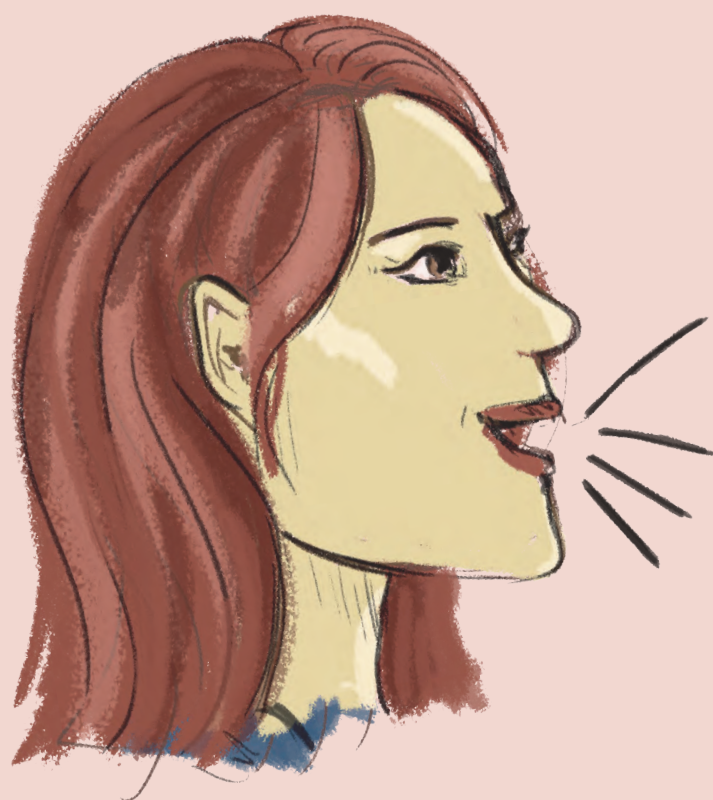
How to do it?

1. Recap the scene discussed in the previous assignment: Achilles, Briseis, Patroclus, Talthybius, and Eurybates (Iliad 1.318–344/348). Use the PowerPoint to refresh their memory.
2. Explain that today, you will focus on giving a voice to characters who have little or no dialogue in the original story. This means changing the perspective.
3. Divide the class into groups of four. Each group writes a dialogue. The options for dialogues are listed in the student workbook and PowerPoint.
4. After about 15 minutes, have each group read their dialogue aloud. Ask other students to give tips and tops (feedback) using the guidelines in the PowerPoint.
5. Reflect as a class. Consider questions such as:
 - What did you find most challenging about this assignment?
 - What did you learn about the characters and their emotions?
 - How can changing perspectives help us better understand, appreciate, or judge a scene?



Practical details:

Lesson duration	30-50 minutes
Required materials	PowerPoint and student workbook



Section 3: Retellings

Assignment 4: What does a classics researcher do?

Learning objective: • Students can explain what a researcher of classical antiquity does.

What to do?

Students reflect on the work of a researcher in classical languages and cultures. They watch a video about research and expand their prior knowledge.

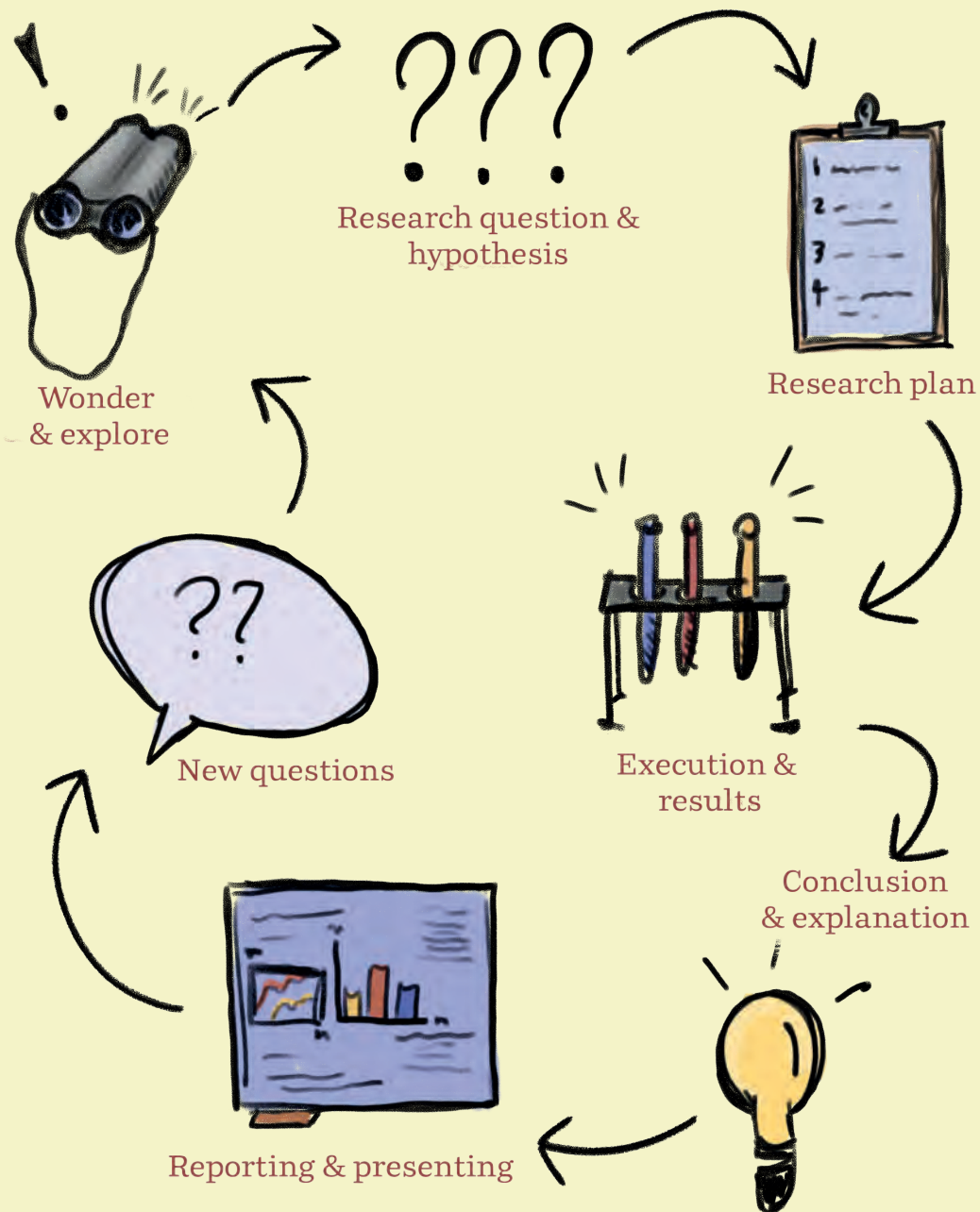


How to do it?

1. Tell students that today you will discover what a researcher in Classics and Ancient Cultures does. This will be done through a video where researcher Dr Jacqueline Klooster explains her work (in Dutch).
2. Ask students to write on a Post-it note what they think a researcher in Classics and Ancient Cultures does.
 - Each idea should be written on a separate Post-it.
 - Students place their Post-its on the left side of their desks.
3. Show the research cycle on the PowerPoint. Explain that most research follows this cycle. Ask students to compare their Post-its to the research cycle. If any terms from the cycle match their ideas, they move those Post-its to the right side of their desks.
4. Give the following instructions before watching the video:
 - Pay attention to whether you recognise steps from the research cycle in the video.
 - See if any of your Post-it ideas appear in the video.
 - If something in the video matches a Post-it, move it from the left to the right side of your desk.
5. Watch the video together.
6. Ask students which Post-its were moved from left to right during the video. Discuss whether the Post-its that remained on the left are necessarily incorrect.
7. Try to reach a conclusion together: What does a researcher in Classics actually do? Is this different from what you expected?

Practical details:

Lesson duration	10-15 minutes
Required materials	Interview video with the researcher, Post-it notes



Research cycle

Assignment 5: Creative retelling

- Learning Objectives:**
- Students can empathise with a minor character from the Iliad and create a creative retelling.
 - Students understand the influence of perspective on a story.

What to do?

Students will creatively retell a story from the perspective of a character they choose.

How to do it?

1. Recap the video watched in Assignment 4. Ask students which topic Jacqueline found particularly interesting (the role of Medusa—was she really the villain or a victim of circumstances?). Use this as an example to encourage students to consider alternative perspectives.
2. Have students complete Assignment 5 in their workbooks. They choose a minor character from the Iliad, research more about them, and then create a creative retelling. Options include:
 - Writing a diary entry
 - Making a video
 - Designing a book cover
 - Writing a story

Use the PowerPoint for inspiration. You can also choose a different classical story to focus on.

Practical details:

Lesson duration	50 minutes or more
Required materials	PowerPoint, student workbook, student devices



Section 4: Modern relevance

Assignment 6: Living links

Learning objective:

- Students can connect ancient classical works to modern emotions.

What to do?

Students identify universal themes in classical stories. These could be feelings, emotions, or values.

How to do it?

1. Choose a fragment from the Iliad (or another classical work) and read it with the students.
2. Explain that in this assignment, students will look for timeless feelings and make connections between ancient works and emotions we still experience today.
3. Have students complete Assignment 6 in their workbooks. Use the emotion card in the PowerPoint as a tool. This card categorises emotions by feeling (positive/negative) and energy (high/low). Students can use it to articulate the emotions they read about.
4. At the end of the assignment, students complete a creative task. They can choose from:
 - Creating a playlist
 - Making or selecting a piece of art
 - Writing or selecting a poem
5. Have students briefly present their work.

Practical details:

Lesson duration	30-50 minutes
Required materials	PowerPoint, student workbook, student devices



Assignment 7: Timeless themes

Learning objective:

- De leerlingen zien in dat het verhaal van de *Ilias* ook vandaag de dag nog relevant is.

What to do?

Students compare the themes of the *Iliad* with a modern theme.

How to do it?

1. Choose a fragment to read with the class.

Suggestion: Achilles is angry and sad because Agamemnon has taken 'his' girl. In protest, he refuses to fight. Patroclus tries to persuade him and decides to fight himself, only to die. This leads Achilles to rejoin the battle.

2. Divide the class into groups of 3–4 students. They complete Assignment 7 in their workbooks. They think about modern themes that also appear in the *Iliad*. They choose one theme and find a newspaper article, short YouTube clip, book, or film where they see this theme. They then compare their modern example with the fragment from the *Iliad*.

Example for the theme 'friendship': the friendship between Frodo and Sam (Samwise Gamgee) in *The Lord of the Rings*. Loyal friendship, Sam as the loyal friend, not the greatest hero, Frodo as the crucial link in the success of the mission.

3. Each group briefly presents their findings.

4. Conclude with questions such as:

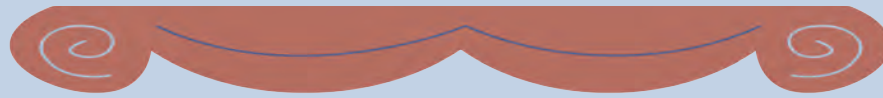
- What are the similarities between friendships in the *Iliad* and modern friendships?
- What would you do if you were forced to do something

Practical details:

Lesson duration	30-50 minutes
Required materials	A fragment from the <i>Iliad</i> , student devices, student workbook



Section 5: Personal judgement



Assignment 8: A Personal Message

Learning objective: • Students can form a personal opinion about a character's actions in *the Iliad*.

What to do?

Students write a personal message to a character of their choice. In this message, they share their opinion about the character's actions or ask questions about the choices the character made.

How to do it?

1. Have students complete Assignment 8 in their workbooks. They choose a character from *the Iliad* they “have something to say” to. They reflect on the following questions:
 - What does this character value in life?
 - What are their core values?
 - Do they act according to these values?
 - What dilemmas does this character face?
 - What was your first impression of this character?
 - Has this impression changed during this lesson?
2. Students then write a personal message to the character. In this message, they share their opinion about the character's actions and ask one or more questions about the choices the character made.
3. Finally, reflect as a class. Discuss whether a character becomes “more human” when you learn about their dilemmas, whether people today still face similar dilemmas, and whether students now think differently about the character.

Practical details:

Lesson duration	20-30 minutes
Required materials	PowerPoint, student workbook

Assignment 9: *The Iliad* from multiple perspectives

Learning objective: • Students see that *the Iliad* presents a variety of characters, each with their own perspective on the Trojan War.

What to do?

Students apply their knowledge of *the Iliad* and perspective. On a poster, they explore how different characters viewed the Trojan War.

How to do it?

1. The teacher divides the class into groups of four. Each group receives one poster.
2. On the poster, the city of Troy is in the centre. Around it are two male and two female characters with empty thought bubbles. Students choose four characters from the *Iliad* and write their names next to the figures on the poster.
3. Each student chooses one character and writes in their thought bubble how their character viewed the Trojan War. What happened in Troy according to X? How did X feel about it? How did X feel during the war? Who was right? Encourage students to look for additional information.
4. Have one student from each group walk around to look at the other posters. These students explain what they saw to their own group. The group can then adjust their poster if needed. Repeat this with different students until the teacher indicates time is up.
5. Conclude with a reflection. Ask: What is the influence of perspective on your opinion or judgement of characters in *the Iliad*?

Practical details:

Lesson duration	30-50 minutes
Required materials	PowerPoint, student workbook



Project CITADEL began as a creative idea by Skye Vassallo, then a Classics student at the University of Malta's Department of Classics and Archaeology.

While studying Survey of Classical Epic, led by Dr. Carmel Serracino—now the project's Principal Investigator—Skye explored Homer's Iliad through a mix of traditional and creative teaching methods, including role-playing, character skill-cards, and digital design. Inspired by these innovative approaches, she envisioned a video game based on the Iliad and developed a game demonstration as part of her coursework.

Recognizing its potential, the idea evolved beyond the classroom. The University of Malta, in collaboration with international partners, transformed it into what is now Project CITADEL—a groundbreaking initiative bringing classical literature to life through digital gaming.

