

Summary of Iliad, Books, End of book 9 and then 10-17

End of Book 9: After the failure to persuade Achilles to return to the battle, Odysseus and Ajax return to tell Agamemnon that Achilles is not willing to rejoin the battle. Odysseus relays to Agamemnon: "That man has no intention of quenching his rage. He's still bursting with anger, more than ever -- he spurns you, spurns all your gifts." (Il., Fagles trans. 9.826-29) All in the camp are stunned and silent. Diomedes breaks the silence and tells Agamemnon to forget about Achilles. Diomedes encourages all the Greeks to unite as one and then suggests that they all head for bed.

Book 10: All of the Greeks are fast asleep except Agamemnon and his brother, Menelaus. The two decide to convene a meeting in the middle of the night to weigh their options. Nestor once again offers his advice, suggesting that the Greeks send a spy behind the Trojan lines to see what their plans are. Diomedes volunteers for the mission along with Odysseus. On their way to the Trojan camp, Diomedes and Odysseus encounter a Trojan spy, Dolon, who has been sent by Hektor on a reconnaissance mission to see if the Greeks are planning to escape. Diomedes and Odysseus extract information about the Trojans from Dolon and then Diomedes kills him. Diomedes and Odysseus then make their way to the camp of the Thracians, who were vulnerable to attack based on the information they gained from Dolon. Upon reaching the Thracian camp, Diomedes and Odysseus proceed to kill 12 men and steal the king's chariot. Athena intervenes and warns Diomedes and Odysseus that one of the gods is likely to take vengeance on them for the murders which prompts the two warriors to run back to Nestor and the other Greeks who were eagerly awaiting their safe return.

Book 11: In response to the ambush on the Thracian camp, Zeus sends down a storm of rain that looks like blood. The Greeks are ambushed in the morning's battle and suffer terrible losses. By the afternoon, the tide has turned and Agamemnon takes part in the battle, where he is seen as a victorious warrior, killing many Trojans. Eventually, Agamemnon is wounded in his hand and has to retreat from the battle. Following this, Hektor enters the battle but is also forced to retreat after Diomedes and Odysseus nearly kill him with a spear. Odysseus is then ambushed by several Trojans, is hit by Socus, a Trojan warrior, and is carried off the battlefield by Ajax. Hector leads an attack on Ajax that forces him to retreat. At this point, the tide has turned once again in the Trojans favor. Nestor urges Patroclus to beg Achilles to return to the battle since it is clear that the Trojans are surging and will likely overwhelm the Greeks.

Book 12: Early in book 12 there are two omens, one that indicates ruin for the Greeks, the other predicts that the Trojans will fail if they attack the Greek camp. Both omens are ignored and each side continues to fight. In a memorable scene, the Lydian warrior, Sarpedon, aided by his right-hand man, Glaukos, go over the wall into the Greek camp whereupon Hector and the Trojans follow behind them and attack the Greeks within their camp.

Book 13: Observing the Trojan assault, Zeus retreats from the battle, pleased with the Trojan advance. In his absence, Poseidon enters the battle disguised as Calchas and urges Great Ajax and Little Ajax to withstand the assault. The Greeks rally and another omen appears, this time predicting that the Greeks will prevail.

Book 14: Despite withstanding the Trojan assault, Nestor takes in the number of losses on the Greek side and grows dispirited. Agamemnon reacts to the losses and decides in favor of

abandoning the war and leaving for home. Odysseus dresses him down by calling him a coward while Diomedes argues for staying, which rallies the Greeks spirits. Meanwhile, Hera enlists Aphrodite's assistance to distract Zeus and lull him to sleep, setting up an opportunity for Poseidon to aid the Greeks. The plan works like a charm, (literally), and after Zeus falls for Hera's enhanced allure, he proceeds to fall asleep, which gives Poseidon the cover he needs to enter the battle.

Book 15: Zeus wakes from his love spell and realizes what Poseidon and Hera have done while he was asleep. Zeus summons Iris the messenger and tells her to order Poseidon to leave the battlefield, which he does. With Poseidon no longer assisting the Greeks, Hektor and the Trojans advance to within feet of the Greek ships.

Book 16: Patroclus, following Nestor's request to ask Achilles to return to battle, asks Achilles to rejoin the battle. Achilles declines and as a last resort, Patroclus asks Achilles if he will let him wear his armor into battle. Achilles agrees on the condition that Patroclus wear his armor only to defend the Greek ships. Achilles sends his Myrmidon soldiers to accompany Patroclus. As Patroclus gets ready to join the battle, Achilles prays to Zeus that Patroclus return and that the Greek ships will survive the Trojan onslaught. We learn that Zeus will grant only one of the wishes, foreshadowing Patroclus's death. In the ensuing battle, Patroclus kills Sarpedon, the Lydian warrior who was second only to Hektor on the Trojan side. Patroclus now emboldened, defies Achilles's command to only defend the Greek ships and pursues the Trojans who are now in retreat. At this point, Apollo intervenes again on the Trojan side and inspires Hektor to go after Patroclus. As Patroclus pursues, he kills Hektor's chariot driver, Cebriones. In response, Apollo attacks Patroclus from behind and wounds him. Weakened, Patroclus is easy prey for Hektor, who kills him.

Book 17: Patroclus's dead body is fought over by the Trojans and Greeks. The Trojans try to drag the body away but are stopped by Menelaus. Menelaus kills one Trojan and is then aided by Ajax who prevents Hektor from taking the body. Instead of taking the body, Hektor removes Patroclus's armor, (which is really Achilles's armor), and heads for the city walls. Aided by Apollo, Aeneas attempts to stop the Trojans from retreating and urges them to recover Patroclus's body from the battlefield. Achilles's charioteer, Automedon, attempts to recover the body but is prevented by Hektor. In the ensuing battle, Automedon kills a Trojan warrior and recovers the armor which is an attempt to reconcile the loss of Patroclus's armor but falls short. There is more divine intervention on both sides as Athena, disguised as Phoenix, bolsters Menelaus's spirits while Apollo, disguised as a Trojan soldier, encourages Hektor. Zeus actively supports the Trojans at this point, even though he knows the Trojans are destined to lose the battle owing to the omen that appeared earlier in Book 13. Despite Zeus's intervention, Menelaus and Meriones manage to recapture Patroclus's body and bring the body back to the Greek camp and to Achilles who does not yet know that Patroclus was killed.