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The Homeric Hero: A Life of Glory and Tragedy

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Oral Presentation 1.1

THE HOMERIC HERO: A LIFE OF GLORY AND TRAGEDY

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It can be reasonably assumed that warriors and their ability to defend their own people were essential components for the survival of an ancient city, such as Troy or Mycenae. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* make it clear that it took amazing qualities in order for a man to be an effective warrior and therefore become a hero. He had to have strength, courage, and the ability to be a leader among men. Achilles, and other warriors such as Odysseus, Agamemnon, and Diomedes, are the ultimate heroes since they achieve *kleos* (glory) in their tragic lives through their lack of "seasonality" and their antagonistic relationships with a god.

Though the women in these cities have different qualities, they are no less important or effective. Lest we forget, the women whose praises are sung by Homer are also heroes. Mothers and wives have the responsibility of providing life, lamenting the dead, and of making sure destruction does not fall upon those she must care for. A faithful and loyal wife, such as Penelope can offer her warrior husband a successful *nostoi* (homecoming), unlike the sinister Clytaemestra who plans to kill her husband Agamemnon when he returns to his kingdom. Thus, heroic women also have the power to plot an event resulting in either happiness or doom. In fact, one of the most important functions these women serve is how they aid or how they hinder a warrior's progress towards a heroic status. In essence, through the exploration of individual actions and of the interaction between the warrior and the woman, a definition can be made of what makes a person a hero.