



# 外国文学经典 作家作品选读（英文版）

**Collections of Foreign Classical  
Writers and Works**

蔡同庆 主 编  
陈建敏 副主编



东南大学出版社  
SOUTHEAST UNIVERSITY PRESS

# 外国文学经典作家作品选读

(英文版)

**Collections of Foreign Classical Writers and Works**

主 编 蔡同庆

副主编 陈建敏

东南大学出版社

• 南京 •

## 内 容 提 要

本教材是全英文著作,主要是对外国文学史上经典的作家及其作品进行选读与赏析。教材的脉络大体与《外国文学史》(郑克鲁主编,高等教育出版社)的脉络保持一致,因此可与《外国文学史》配套使用。

教材共分为五章:

第一章为古希腊文学,内容包括:古希腊文学概述;荷马、埃斯库罗斯、索福克勒斯、欧里庇得斯、阿里斯托芬等人的生平与创作及其代表作的选读与赏析。

第二章为中世纪文学,内容包括:中世纪文学概述;但丁的生平与创作及其《神曲》的选读与赏析;《一千零一夜》创作概述及其内容选读与赏析。

第三章为近代文学,内容包括:近代文学概述(文艺复兴文学、17世纪文学、18世纪启蒙文学);塞万提斯、莎士比亚、莫里哀、歌德等人的生平与创作及其代表作的选读与赏析。

第四章为19世纪文学,内容包括:19世纪文学概述(浪漫主义文学、现实主义文学、自然主义文学);华兹华斯、拜伦、雨果、司汤达、巴尔扎克、福楼拜、狄更斯、艾米莉·勃朗特、哈代、普希金、托尔斯泰、易卜生、陀思妥耶夫斯基等人的生平与创作及其代表作的选读与赏析。

第五章为20世纪文学,内容包括:20世纪文学概述(现代主义文学、后现代主义文学);卡夫卡、乔伊斯、艾略特、伍尔夫、劳伦斯、海明威、罗曼·罗兰、萨特、马尔克斯、泰戈尔、川端康成等人的生平与创作及其代表作的选读与赏析。

本教材主要是文学专业师生必读专业教材,也可供专业人员借鉴和选读。

## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

外国文学经典作家作品选读:英文/蔡同庆主编.

—南京:东南大学出版社,2016.10

ISBN 978-7-5641-6854-4

I. ①外… II. ①蔡… III. ①外国文学-文学欣赏-  
高等学校-教材-英文 IV. ①I106

中国版本图书馆(CIP)数据核字(2016)第273356号

## 外国文学经典作家作品选读(英文版)

### *Collections of Foreign Classical Writers and Works*

主 编	蔡同庆	电 话	(025)83795627 / 83362442(传真)
责任编辑	陈 跃	电子邮件	chenyue58@sohu.com

出版发行	东南大学出版社	出 版 人	江建中
地 址	南京市四牌楼2号	邮 编	210096
销售电话	(025)83794121 / 83795801	电子邮箱	press@seupress.com
网 址	http://www.seupress.com		

经 销	全国各地新华书店	印 刷	江苏地质测绘院
开 本	787mm×1092mm 1/16	印 张	27.5
字 数	705千字		
版 次	2016年12月第1版		2016年12月第1次印刷
书 号	ISBN 978-7-5641-6854-4		
定 价	63.00元		

\* 本社图书若有印装质量问题,请直接与营销部联系。电话:025-83791830

# 前 言

写作这本全英文教材,于我是诚惶诚恐。虽然在苏州大学攻读硕士学位和博士学位期间,我曾经在学习英语之外,又学习了日语、法语和俄语,但十几年的第一线教学与科研,对于日语、法语和俄语那是早已生疏了,于英语我也退步了不少。所幸的是,我的合作者陈建敏博士是英语专业出身,是她给了我信心和勇气,再加上本教材也是扬州大学教学改革的结晶。数年来,我们一直尝试在《外国文学史》的授课中实行双语教学甚至是全英语教学,本教材所选取的大部分作家及其作品,我们都在课堂实践中讲授过,经受了多届中文本科学生、各位教学督导、教师同行的检阅与核查,因此,虽是赶鸭子上架之举,却也是经年累月的积淀与心血。

本教材共选取了外国文学史上 35 位经典作家及其经典作品,对于漫长而悠远的外国文学长河来说,这个数量自然是微不足道的。不过,这 35 位作家及其作品就如璀璨的 35 颗星星,闪烁在美丽的文学星空之中,他们是美丽而伟大的,也是不可跨越的。这些作家及其作品,值得我们仰望与学习。至于其他的经典作家与作品,只能希望在以后的教材再版时,再予以补充与完善。

感谢扬州大学文学院的各位领导,本教材是在文学院的全额资助下出版的。尤其要诚挚感谢陈学广院长,是他分管文学院的教学工作,是他一手领导了我们的教学改革,直至今日取得了丰硕的成果。本教材是在陈院长的关心、指导与督促下完成的,在此,谨向陈学广院长致以诚挚的敬意与感谢!

感谢东南大学出版社提供了出版的机遇,尤其是本书的编辑多次与我就教材的写作进行沟通、协商与督促,给了我们许多宝贵的意见与建议,才使本教材的编写得以顺利完稿。

感谢华中师范大学的黄晖教授。黄晖教授原本是我的同事,后因故移职于华中师范大学。本教材的体例与框架都是黄晖教授一手拟定的,原本说好要合作出版本教材的,却因故没有实现,实在是遗憾的事情。

感谢我的研究生张向超同学、刘静同学。张向超学习认真,做事细腻,善于

关心他人,本教材的许多外文资料,都是张向超为我搜索并提供的;刘静在塞尔维亚孔子学院任教期间,也为我提供了许多有价值的外文文献资料。

本教材在每章、每节的结尾都有参考文献和相关的扩展资料。在此,向为本教材的写作提供帮助和参考意见的各位学者和专家表示诚挚的谢意。如有遗漏,先此致歉,待再版时补充、完善。

最后,本教材的缺点在所难免,敬请各位方家批评指正。

蔡同庆

2016年秋月于三戒斋

# 目 录

## 前言

<b>第一章 古代文学</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 古希腊文学概述	1
1.2 荷马	4
1.3 埃斯库罗斯	8
1.4 索福克勒斯	14
1.5 欧里庇得斯	21
1.6 阿里斯托芬	31
<b>第二章 中世纪文学</b>	<b>37</b>
2.1 中世纪文学概述	37
2.2 但丁	39
2.3 《一千零一夜》	47
<b>第三章 近代文学</b>	<b>54</b>
3.1 近代文学概述	54
3.2 塞万提斯	64
3.3 莎士比亚	71
3.4 莫里哀	83
3.5 歌德	91
<b>第四章 19 世纪文学</b>	<b>100</b>
4.1 19 世纪文学概述	100
4.2 华兹华斯	109
4.3 拜伦	113
4.4 雨果	120
4.5 司汤达	128
4.6 巴尔扎克	136
4.7 福楼拜	146

4.8 狄更斯	155
4.9 艾米莉·勃朗特	171
4.10 哈代	185
4.11 普希金	193
4.12 托尔斯泰	219
4.13 易卜生	228
4.14 陀思妥耶夫斯基	241
<b>第五章 20 世纪文学</b>	<b>263</b>
5.1 现代主义文学概述	263
5.2 卡夫卡	268
5.3 乔伊斯	280
5.4 艾略特	292
5.5 伍尔夫	308
5.6 劳伦斯	317
5.7 海明威	332
5.8 罗曼·罗兰	353
5.9 萨特	371
5.10 马尔克斯	403
5.11 泰戈尔	415
5.12 川端康成	424

# Contents

## Preface

<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>Ancient Literature</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Ancient Greek Literature	1
1.2	Homer	4
1.3	Aeschylus	8
1.4	Sophocles	14
1.5	Euripides	21
1.6	Aristophanes	31
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>Medieval Literature</b>	<b>37</b>
2.1	Medieval Literature	37
2.2	Dante	39
2.3	One Thousand and One Nights	47
<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b>Modern Literature</b>	<b>54</b>
3.1	Modern European Literature	54
3.2	Cervantes	64
3.3	Shakespeare	71
3.4	Molière	83
3.5	Goethe	91
<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b>The 19th Century Literature</b>	<b>100</b>
4.1	The 19th Century Literature	100
4.2	Wordsworth	109
4.3	Byron	113
4.4	Hugo	120
4.5	Stendhal	128
4.6	Balzac	136
4.7	Flaubert	146
4.8	Charles Dickens	155
4.9	Emily Jane Brontë	171
4.10	Thomas Hardy	185



4.11	Alexander Pushkin	193
4.12	Tolstoy	219
4.13	Ibsen	228
4.14	Dostoyevsky	241

## Chapter Five The 20th Century Literature 263

5.1	Literary Modernism	263
5.2	Kafka	268
5.3	Joyce	280
5.4	Eliot	292
5.5	Virginia Woolf	308
5.6	David Herbert Lawrence	317
5.7	Ernest Miller Hemingway	332
5.8	Romain Rolland	353
5.9	Jean-Paul Sartre	371
5.10	Márquez	403
5.11	Tagore	415
5.12	Yasunari Kawabata	424

## Ancient Literature

### 1.1 Ancient Greek Literature

Greek literature refers to writings composed in areas of Greek influence, throughout the whole period in which the Greek-speaking people have existed. Ancient Greek literature refers to literature written in Ancient Greek from the oldest surviving written works in the Greek language until approximately the fifth century AD and the rise of the Byzantine Empire. At the beginning of Greek literature are works of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the classical period many of the genres of western literature became more prominent. The two major lyrical poets were Sappho and Pindar. The Classical era also saw the dawn of drama. Two of the most influential historians were Herodotus and Thucydides. In the 4th century BC, three philosophers were notable: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Later Greek poetry flourished primarily in the 3rd century BC. During the Roman era, the physician Galen, in the history of ancient science, was the most significant person in medicine after Hippocrates.

Byzantine literature refers to literature of the Byzantine Empire written in Atticizing, Medieval and early Modern Greek. Chronicles, distinct from historic, arose in this period. Encyclopedias also flourished in this period. Modern Greek literature refers to literature written in common Modern Greek, emerging from late Byzantine times in the 11th century AD. The Cretan Renaissance poem *Erotokritos* is the masterpiece of this early period of modern Greek literature. Much later, *Diaphotismos* was an ideological, philological, linguistic and philosophical movement among the 18th century Greeks that translated the ideas and values of European Enlightenment into the Greek world. Adamantios Korais and Rigas Feraios were two of the most notable figures. The years before the Greek Independence, the Ionian islands became the center of the Heptanese School (literature). Notable representatives were Andreas Laskaratos, Andreas Kalvos, Aristotelis Valaoritis and Dionysios Solomos.

Later the intellectual center was transferred in Athens. A major figure of this new era was Kostis Palamas (1859—1943), considered “national poet” of Greece. Modern Greek literature is usually (but not exclusively) written in polytonic orthography. Modern Greek literature is represented by many writers, poets and novelists. George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The Greek language arose from the proto-Indo-European language, though roughly one-third of its words cannot be derived from various reconstructions of the tongue. A number of

alphabets and syllabaries had been used to render Greek, but surviving Greek literature was written in a Phoenician-derived alphabet that arose primarily in Greek Ionia and was fully adopted by Athens by the fifth century BC.

### 1.1.1 Classical and Pre-Classical Antiquity

This period of Greek literature stretches from Homer until the 4th century BC and the rise of Alexander the Great. The earliest known Greek writings are Mycenaean, written in the Linear B syllabary on clay tablets. These documents contain prosaic records largely concerned with trade (lists, inventories, receipts, etc.); no real literature has been discovered. Several theories have been advanced to explain this curious absence. One is that Mycenaean literature, like the works of Homer and other epic poems, was passed on orally, since the Linear B syllabary is not well-suited to recording the sounds of Greek.

Greek literature was divided in well-defined literary genres, each one having a compulsory formal structure, about both dialect and metrics. The first division was between prose and poetry. Fictional literature was written in verse, while scientific literature was in prose. Within the poetry we could separate three super-genres: epic, lyric and drama. We can observe here that the Greek terminology has become the common European terminology about literary genres. Lyric and drama were further divided into more genres: lyric in four (elegiac, iambic, monodic lyric and choral lyric); drama in three (tragedy, comedy and pastoral drama). About literature in prose there was more freedom; the main areas were historiography, philosophy and political rhetoric.

### 1.1.2 Epic Poetry

At the beginning of Greek literature stand the two monumental works of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The figure of Homer is shrouded in mystery. Although the works as they now stand are credited to him, it is certain that their roots reach far back before his time (see Homeric Question). The *Iliad* is the famous story about the Trojan War. It centers on the person of Achilles, who embodied the Greek heroic ideal.

While the *Iliad* is pure tragedy, the *Odyssey* is a mixture of tragedy and comedy. It is the story of Odysseus, one of the warriors at Troy. After ten years fighting the war, he spends another ten years sailing back home to his wife and family. Penelope was considered the ideal female, Homer depicted her as the ideal female based on her commitment, modesty, purity, and respect during her marriage with Odysseus. During his ten-year voyage, he loses all of his comrades and ships and makes his way home to Ithaca disguised as a beggar. Both of these works were based on ancient legends. The stories are told in language that is simple, and direct. The Homeric dialect was an archaic language based on Ionic dialect mixed with some element of Aeolic dialect and Attic dialect, the latter due to the Athenian edition of the 6th century BC. The epic verse was the hexameter.

The other great poet of the preclassical period was Hesiod. Unlike Homer, Hesiod speaks of himself in his poetry; it remains true that nothing is known about him from any external source. He was a native of Boeotia in central Greece, and is thought to have lived and worked around 700 BC. His two works were *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. The first is a faithful

depiction of the poverty-stricken country life he knew so well, and it sets forth principles and rules for farmers. Theogony is a systematic account of creation and of the gods. It vividly describes the ages of mankind, beginning with a long-past Golden Age. Together the works of Homer and Hesiod comprised a kind of Bible for the Greeks; Homer told the story of a heroic relatively near past, which Hesiod bracketed with a creation narrative and an account of the practical realities of contemporary daily life.

### 1.1.3 Lyric poetry

The type of poetry called lyric got its name from the fact that it was originally sung by individuals or a chorus accompanied by the instrument called the lyre. Although, despite the name, the lyric poetry in this general meaning was divided in four genres, two of which were not accompanied by cithara, but by flute. These two latter genres were elegiac poetry and iambic poetry. Both were written in ionic dialect, elegiac poetry was in elegiac couplets and iambic poems in iambic trimeter. The first of the lyric poets was probably Archilochus of Paros, circa 700 BC, the most important iambic poet. Only fragments remain of his work, as is the case with most of the poets. The few remnants suggest that he was an embittered adventurer who led a very turbulent life. The lyric in narrow sense was written in aeolic dialect and meters were really varied. The most famous authors were the so-called Nine lyric poets, and particularly Alcaeus and Sappho for monodic lyric and Pindarus for choral lyric.

### 1.1.4 Drama

Ancient Greek drama developed around Greece's theater culture. Drama was particularly developed in Athens, so works are written in Attic dialect. The dialogues are in iambic trimeter, while chorus are in the meters of choral lyric.

In the age that followed the Greco-Persian Wars, the awakened national spirit of Athens was expressed in hundreds of superb tragedies based on heroic and legendary themes of the past. The tragic plays grew out of simple choral songs and dialogues performed at festivals of the god Dionysus. In the classical period, performances included three tragedies and one pastoral drama, depicting four different episodes of the same myth. Wealthy citizens were chosen to bear the expense of costuming and training the chorus as a public and religious duty. Attendance at the festival performances was regarded as an act of worship. Performances were held in the great open-air theater of Dionysus in Athens. All of the greatest poets competed for the prizes offered for the best plays.

All fully surviving Greek tragedies are conventionally attributed to Aeschylus, Sophocles or Euripides; there are two Greek tragedies, however, for which the authorship is disputed. Seven tragedies of Aeschylus' survive, among which are the Oresteia, the only extant Greek trilogy. One of these seven (Prometheus Bound), however, may actually be the work of his son Euphorion. Seven works of Sophocles have survived, the most acclaimed of which are the three Theban plays. From Euripides, 19 tragedies have survived, the most well-known among them being Medea, Hippolytus, and Bacchae; Rhesus is sometimes thought to have been written by Euripides' son, or to have been a posthumous reproduction of a play by Euripides.

Like tragedy, comedy arose from a ritual in honor of Dionysus, but in this case the plays

were full of frank obscenity, abuse, and insult. At Athens, the comedies became an official part of the festival celebration in 486 BC, and prizes were offered for the best productions. As with the tragedians, few works still remain of the great comedic writers. Of the works of earlier writers, only some plays by Aristophanes exist. These are a treasure trove of comic presentation. He poked fun at everyone and every institution. For boldness of fantasy, for merciless insult, for unqualified indecency, and for outrageous and free political criticism, there is nothing to compare to the comedies of Aristophanes. In *The Birds*, he held up Athenian democracy to ridicule. In *The Clouds*, he attacked the philosopher Socrates. In *Lysistrata*, he denounced war. Only 11 of his plays have survived.

The third dramatic genre was the satyr play. Although the genre was popular, only one example has survived in its entirety, Euripides' *Cyclops*.

### References

1. M. Hadas. (2013). *A History of Greek Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press.

### Further reading

2. Beye, Charles Rowan. (1987). *Ancient Greek Literature and Society*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
3. Easterling, P. E.; Knox, B. M. W. (eds.). (1985). *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: Volume 1: Greek Literature*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press.
4. Flacelière, Robert. (1964). *A Literary History of Greece*. Translated by Douglas Garman. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co.
5. Gutzwiller, Kathryn. (2007). *A Guide to Hellenistic Literature*. Blackwell.
6. Hadas, Moses. (1950). *A History of Greek Literature*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
7. Lesky, Albin. (1966). *A History of Greek Literature*. Translated by James Willis and Cornelis de Heer. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
8. Schmidt, Michael. (2004). *The First Poets: Lives of the Ancient Greek Poets*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
9. C. A. Trypanis. (1981). *Greek Poetry from Homer to Seferis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 10 Whitmarsh, Tim. (2004). *Ancient Greek Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

### External links

Ancient Greek Literature Library — Found at [Demonax.info](http://Demonax.info)

## 1.2 Homer

Homer was an Ancient Greek Epic Poet of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.

### 1.2.1 Life

Homer's ancestry can be traced from *Odyssey*. He was the son of Epikaste and Telemachus. Born around the 8th-9th century BC, he was said to be a court singer and a story teller. Even if these details about Homer are available, not much is known about him. In fact his existence is

somewhat doubted. Some say he was born on the island of Chios while argue that he existed in Ionia. But the dialect and the description in the poems pointed that Homer lived in Ionia.

When we think of the blind poet Homer with relation to Ancient Greece, the first thing that comes to our mind is his beautiful epic poems Iliad and Odyssey. While there is disagreement, whether Homer alone wrote these poems or many other people, the “analysts” and the ancient Greek people and the “unitarians” are on Homer’s side. These poems were an important part of the Greek culture as they were written during the famous Trojan war era.

The argument whether Odyssey was written by Homer or not has been going on for a long time. Even if the epics are controversial, there is enough evidence that the Odyssey is written in a consistent style, and this fact is doubtful if they had been written by different authors. Another argument is that whether Homer wrote both Iliad and Odyssey. The difference in style and languages of the epics leads to debate. One ancient Greek literary critic, namely Longinus argued that the styles differed because Homer wrote both these poems in different stages of his life period. While Iliad was created during his youth, Odyssey was written as Homer aged.

There is also much debate about how Homer composed such long poems, because it seems impossible for people now to memorize such long stanzas. It’s said some editors merged all his works as one whole epic. The fact that uncomfortable transitions from topic to topic in his poems supports the argument.

An argument has tried to subsidize with the reasoning that lengthy works can be composed orally by poets whose recitations belong to a long tradition of storytelling. The oral poet constructs his poem from verbal formulas, groups of two or more words that have already been composed in order to serve recurring needs in the narrative. These may be used, for example, when the poet wishes to reintroduce a character that he has already described.

Many scholars agree that Iliad and Odyssey underwent change and were improved during the 8th century from the original material. Athenian tyrant Hipparchus played an important role in this improvement. The refinement of the Homeric text must have involved the production of canonical written text.

While Iliad and Odyssey have become famous, his Homeric Hymns have not remained far behind. The Homeric Hymns are short poems celebrating the various Gods. The styles of the Homeric Hymns are the same as the Iliad and the Odyssey, the reason for which they are attributed to Homer.

As Homer was non-literate, how these poems were written are arguable. Perhaps, he dictated his poems to a scribe who wrote them. The Greek alphabet was also introduced around the 8th century, so Homer must have been among the first rhapsodes who were literate.

The poems of Iliad depict the seige of the city of Ilion or Troy during the Trojan War. The word Iliad itself means “something concerned with Ilion”. Ilion was the city based in the state of Troy. When Iliad was created is arguable. Some scholars are adamant that it was written around the 8th-9th century, while some debate it must have been written during the 6th-7th century.

The whole Iliad is devoted to war of Troy, giving a detailed poetic description of the war. The characters of the fighters, their battle cries and all the intricate details of the war are mentioned. The epic has strong religious and supernatural influence. Both warring parties are extremely religious and the Greek and Trojan heroes draw strength from favored gods, giving

them divine power. Regularly making sacrifices to Gods, while the Gods constantly intervene in the war on behalf of their believers, almost treating the humans as puppets for their own causes.

The Iliad covers only the final and tenth year of the Trojan war. The initial war years, the background of the war and the end of the war are given a miss.

The Odyssey was composed in 12,110 lines of dactylic hexameter. The most extraordinary part of the poem is the modern plot and that the events construction depended as much upon the women as the warriors. Today Odyssey occupies an important part of classical literature.

Homer was a celestial personality for the ancient Greeks. Along with his work he was a source of model for his heroic conduct. His epics, poems have inspired many poets, storytellers, and dramatists such as William Shakespeare. His works have been translated into English by George Chapman (1616) and Alexander Pope and they occupy a permanent place in classical literature.

## 1.2.2 Excerpts from THE ILIAD

### BOOK I

Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus, that brought countless ills upon the Achaeans. Many a brave soul did it send hurrying down to Hades, and many a hero did it yield a prey to dogs and vultures, for so were the counsels of Jove fulfilled from the day on which the son of Atreus, king of men, and great Achilles, first fell out with one another.

And which of the gods was it that set them on to quarrel? It was the son of Jove and Leto; for he was angry with the king and sent a pestilence upon the host to plague the people, because the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses his priest. Now Chryses had come to the ships of the Achaeans to free his daughter, and had brought with him a great ransom; moreover he bore in his hand the sceptre of Apollo wreathed with a suppliant's wreath and he besought the Achaeans, but most of all the two sons of Atreus, who were their chiefs.

"Sons of Atreus," he cried, "and all other Achaeans, may the gods who dwell in Olympus grant you to sack the city of Priam, and to reach your homes in safety; but free my daughter, and accept a ransom for her, in reverence to Apollo, son of Jove."

On this the rest of the Achaeans with one voice were for respecting the priest and taking the ransom that he offered; but not so Agamemnon, who spoke fiercely to him and sent him roughly away. "Old man," said he, "let me not find you tarrying about our ships, nor yet coming hereafter. Your sceptre of the god and your wreath shall profit you nothing. I will not free her. She shall grow old in my house at Argos far from her own home, busying herself with her loom and visiting my couch; so go, and do not provoke me or it shall be the worse for you."

The old man feared him and obeyed. Not a word he spoke, but went by the shore of the sounding sea and prayed apart to King Apollo whom lovely Leto had borne. "Hear me," he cried, "O god of the silver bow, that protectest Chryse and holy Cilla and rulest Tenedos with thy might, hear me oh thou of Sminthe. If I have ever decked your temple with garlands, or burned your thigh-bones in fat of bulls or goats, grant my prayer, and let your arrows avenge these my tears upon the Danaans."

by Homer, trans. by Samuel Butler (Gutenberg text)

### 1.2.3 Appreciation and Analysis

These two epic poems, consisting of over 30,000 lines, are based on traditional poetic stories that were told orally, often accompanied by lyre music. They were passed down from many generations, years before they were written. As for authorship, these stories were probably dictated to scribes by many different story-tellers. While not historically accurate, linguistics experts say they reflect certain aspects of the Late Bronze and Dark Ages (1200–900 BC).

The *Homeric* style, devised when writing was a new convention, consists of often repeated formulaic metered lines of six metrical units known as “dactylic hexameter” or “heroic hexameter”. Virgil also used this style in his *Aeneid* (c. 19 BC) which was inspired by Homer’s works and tells of Aeneas’ journey to Rome after the Trojan War. The development of this poetic formula provided ease in composing poetry to fit the needs of the orator or singer; it gave them the flexibility to change words or phrases, yet adapt their work to their audience. They might be retelling a well-known poem and while the basic meaning stayed the same, in changing the arrangement of the words, it was fresh and new.

Another characteristic of Homer’s style is the use of epithets, a mnemonic aid, that helps the author and the audience remember certain events or human attributes. For example *god-like* men, *fair-haired* women. Other examples are; Aeneas, “counselor of the Trojans”; Agamemnon, “shepherd of the people”; Apollo, “son of Zeus” and “rouser of armies”; Achilles, “son of Peleus” and often referred to as “swift-footed”; and Odysseus, “mastermind of war”, “sacker of cities” and “man of action”.

The *Homeric Hymns*, composed with the same dialect and “dactylic hexameter” as in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, have also been attributed to Homer. They range in length from a few lines to hundreds of lines. Most of them address the Greek gods and “To Earth, the Mother of All”.

As for the *Homeric Question*, similar to the life, it is difficult to ascribe much in the way of personal details to the man Homer, if he even existed. Some say “Homer” was a common name given to blind men who roamed the country entertaining people with their recitations of poetry. They plied their trade from town to town, singing of everyday events or the heroic deeds of notable people. They stood to crowds in open markets, at festivals, or in the courts of kings. Ancient Greek historian and “Father of History” Herodotus, or “Pseudo-Herodotus” for those who question his existence, and who lived much later than Homer wrote *Life of Homer* (c. 500 BC). Homer has been said to have lived in the area of Ionia as far back as the 12th century BC although now most scholars place his existence between the 7th and 8th centuries. Some say “he” is a construct of many ancient Greek scholars. Many claim that *Iliad* and *Odyssey* contain autobiographical details. Some say his mother was named Themisto; or that she was a nymph named Kretheis, his father the river Meles. Many cities claim to be Homer’s birthplace including Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey), the Island of Chios in the Aegean Sea, Athens, and Rhodes, Greece. They say Homer died on the island of Ios. As to the doubt of his identity, existence and authorship is posed the Homeric Question which Homeric Scholars study yet today.

Nothing about the man Homer is certain, except for the fact that he was greatly influential in the history of Greek and Western culture, spirituality, government, literature, education,



the arts, and everyday society. Homer, “the father of poetry”, continues to inspire modern intellectuals, poets, artists, film makers, and authors. Maybe it matters not who the author, translator, or the reader of his works are, but certainly in the timeless works of Homer we will continue to see reflections from past civilizations, and of our own, and of those in the future. The scribes, storytellers, biographers, historians, and poets all have played a part in shaping the Homer that we know today.

### References

1. Iliad; P. V. Jones. (ed.). (2003). *Homer's Iliad. A Commentary on Three Translations*, London.
2. Odyssey; A. Heubeck. (gen. ed.). (1990—1993). *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (3 volumes; orig. publ. 1981—1987 in Italian). Oxford.
3. P. Jones. (ed.). (1988). *Homer's Odyssey: A Commentary Based on the English Translation of Richmond Lattimore*. Bristol.
4. I.J.F. de Jong. (ed.). (2001). *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*. Cambridge.

### Further reading

- Buck, Carl Darling. (1928). *The Greek Dialects*. Chicago; University of Chicago Press.
- Evelyn-White, Hugh Gerard. (tr.) (1914). *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homeric*. The Loeb Classical Library. London; New York; Heinemann; MacMillan.
- Ford, Andrew. (1992). *Homer: the Poetry of the Past*. Ithaca, NY; Cornell University Press.
- Graziosi, Barbara. (2002). *Inventing Homer: The Early Perception of Epic*. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.
- Kirk, G.S. (1962). *The Songs of Homer*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.

### External links

- Homer; Murray, A.T. *The Iliad with an English Translation (in Ancient Greek and English)*. I, Books I-XII. London; New York; William Heinemann Ltd.; G.P. Putnam's Sons; Internet Archive.
- The Chicago Homer
- Daitz, Stephen (reader). “Homer, Iliad, Book I, Lines 1–52”. Society for the Reading of Greek and Latin Literature (SORGLL).
- Heath, Malcolm (May 4, 2001). “CLAS3152 Further Greek Literature II: Aristotle's Poetics; Notes on Homer's Iliad and Odyssey”. Department of Classics, University of Leeds; Internet Archive. Archived from the original on September 8, 2008. Retrieved 2014-11-07.

## 1.3 Aeschylus

Aeschylus (c. 525—456 BC) was an ancient Greek tragedian.

### 1.3.1 Life

Aeschylus was born in c. 525 BC in Eleusis, a small town about 27 kilometers northwest of Athens, which is nestled in the fertile valleys of western Attica, though the date is most likely based on counting back forty years from his first victory in the Great Dionysia. His family was wealthy and well established; his father, Euphorion, was a member of the Eupatridae, the ancient nobility of Attica, though this might be a fiction that the ancients invented to account for