
Note to Readers

My text and draft-commentary on *Iliad* 1.1-100 are work-in-progress, the first portion of a commentary on the entire Book, which I plan to complete in the next few years. The commentary is intended mainly for those who study and teach the *Iliad* in Greek, as well as to students of other literatures and non-academic readers who wish to read or consult the poem in the original language. I hope that my work also will be of interest to advanced scholars, including those who specialize in Homeric epic.

The *Iliad* has been one of my favorite literary works, since I first read it at age 12 or 13 in the prose translation by nineteenth-century English novelist, Samuel Butler, and in the new (at the time) verse translation by the poet and classical scholar Richmond Lattimore. I read Lattimore's translation again as a first-year undergraduate, which led me to begin studying Greek, and I read the entire poem in Greek in my final baccalaureate year, an experience which greatly influenced my decision to pursue graduate study in Classics rather than English literature and to specialize in Homeric epic and Attic tragedy. In 45 years of full-time university teaching, I taught the *Iliad* in English translation almost every year and selected books in Greek every two or three years. Whenever I taught the *Iliad* in Greek, I began with Book 1, and I always regretted the lack of a commentary that would give my students the kind and amount of help that I thought would help them to read it with pleasure and understanding and to improve their ability to read and enjoy other Greek texts.

My commentary is both linguistic and literary. I provide help with morphology, grammar, and syntax, and I emphasize Homeric diction, meter, style, rhetoric, characterization, narrative technique and overall poetic architecture. I aim to elucidate the meaning(s) of Book 1 as an artistic unity in its own right and as an appropriate opening of the *Iliad* as a whole. I emphasize the depiction in Book 1 (and throughout the poem) of mortals and immortals and relationships between them; the poetic significance of the poem's representation of social, political, ethical, and religious institutions, values, and conflicts; the poem's exploitation, adaptation, and transformation of traditional elements of oral formulaic style and traditional mythological motifs in accordance with the poem's distinctive artistic themes and values.. I refer frequently

in the commentary to fuller discussion in my (as yet unwritten) introduction of these and other topics, including the date of the poem, its historical context, ancient and modern receptions, and the changing concerns of ancient and modern Homeric scholars and critics.

The present version of my commentary on *Iliad* 1.1-100 is about 25% shorter than my initial draft. This reduction reflects my changing conception of what my readers will want to and ought to know, if they are to read with pleasure and understanding. I have devoted more space to the first 100 lines of Book 1, especially lines 1-11, than I will give to any other 100-line portion of the Book. My goal is a volume that is shorter by c. 33% than the commentary on Sophocles' *Philoctetes* that I published a few years ago. In that work I frequently translated passages where the syntax and style seemed especially difficult, but there are far fewer "difficult" passages in *Iliad* 1 than in *Philoctetes* and less need for this kind of help with translation. I also wrote at greater length on metrical matters than I do in my commentary on Book 1, where there is nothing to compare with the complexities of the play's choral meters. Finally, in my *Philoctetes* I cited and discussed the work of other scholars more often and at greater length than I do in the *Iliad* 1 commentary. At least in North American universities, students usually read Homer in their second year of Greek and Attic tragedy in their third or fourth year (though the reverse is true in the U.K.). In my experience the more advanced students reading tragedy tend to be somewhat more interested in diverse scholarly viewpoints and discussions than those reading Homer, who are primarily concerned with problems of translation and literary criticism.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my current version of commentary on *Iliad* 1.1-100 in your seminar. I will be happy to clarify and expand upon what I have written in this brief Note, and I will be most grateful for your comments, criticism, questions, and suggestions regarding my commentary