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## Troy on Screen vs. Troy in History: What Really Happened?

### (Paragraph 1)

The 2004 Hollywood film *Troy*, directed by Wolfgang Petersen and starring Brad Pitt as Achilles, introduced a modern audience to one of the most famous legends of ancient times. The movie opens with a swift and romanticized chain of events: Prince Paris of Troy falls in love with Helen, the queen of Sparta, during a diplomatic mission. Ignoring political consequences, Paris secretly brings Helen back to Troy, sparking outrage in Greece. Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, uses this as an excuse to rally Greek forces—not just to retrieve Helen, but also to assert dominance over Troy and the trade-rich eastern Aegean.

While the film sets the tone with visual flair and emotional urgency, its simplicity may mislead viewers. Was the entire Trojan War really about love? Or was Helen merely a symbol used to ignite a war that had deeper geopolitical roots? These are the kinds of questions historians continue to debate.

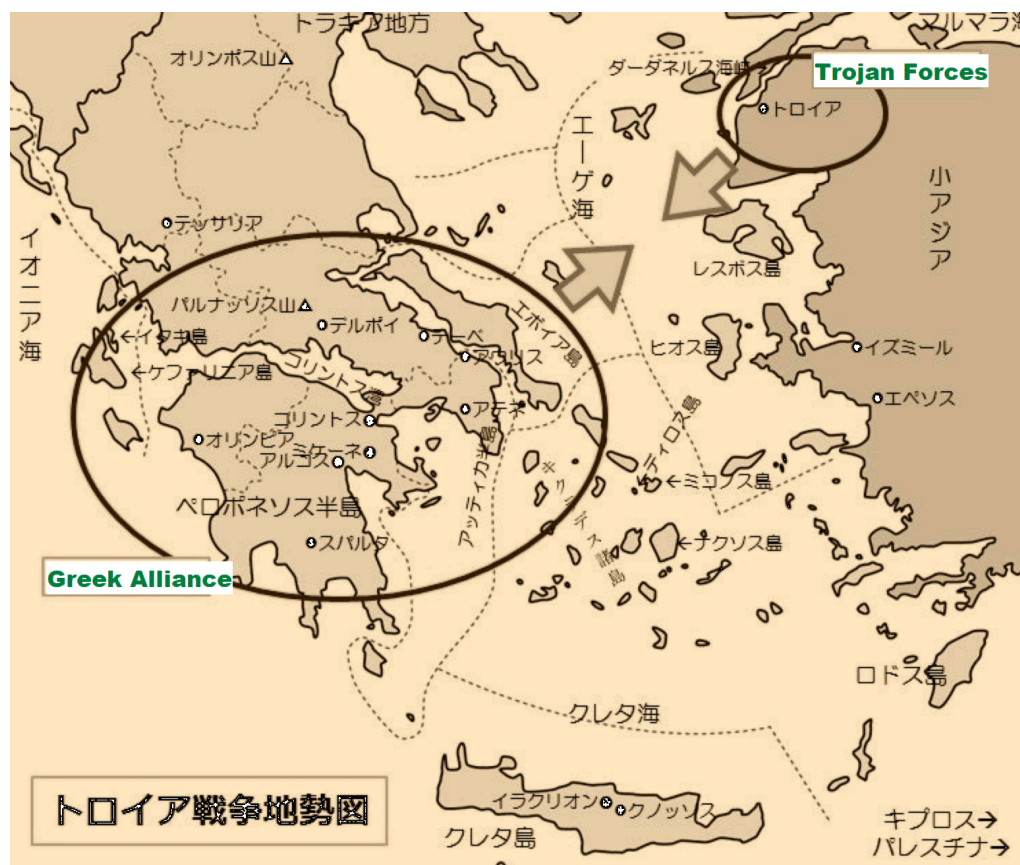


[photo01] *Paris and Helen's escape scene from the film*

(Paragraph 2)

In classical literature, especially Homer's *Iliad*, the story is much more complex. Helen is often depicted as a pawn—desired for her beauty but also used as a justification for the Greeks to attack Troy. At the time, Troy controlled access to the Dardanelles Strait, a critical point for maritime trade between the Aegean and the Black Sea. Gaining control over Troy would have brought immense economic and strategic benefits. So while love may have added emotional drama, the real causes of the war likely involved wealth, power, and politics.

Moreover, the *Iliad* itself doesn't cover the entire war but focuses on just a few weeks during the final year. This narrative gap allowed later writers, such as Virgil in the *Aeneid*, to fill in the rest—creating a blend of history, myth, and national storytelling. The film *Troy* draws from all these sources but often prioritizes cinematic clarity over nuance.



[photo02] *Ancient map of the Aegean with trade routes highlighted*

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### (Paragraph 3)

The portrayal of Achilles in the movie is another point of contrast. While Brad Pitt's performance captures Achilles' strength, pride, and inner conflict, the character's emotional motivation is heavily tied to his relationship with Briseis—a fictional love interest based loosely on myth. In the film, their bond adds depth to Achilles' character and humanizes him beyond the battlefield. Their final moments together are depicted as the emotional climax of his story.

However, in ancient texts, Briseis is more symbolic than romantic. She represents Achilles' honor and his tension with Agamemnon, who seizes her and sparks Achilles' famous withdrawal from the war. On the other hand, Patroclus, Achilles' close companion, plays a far more pivotal emotional role. Ancient Greek audiences often understood their relationship as intimate, possibly romantic. The film minimizes Patroclus' significance, possibly to align with modern commercial sensibilities, but in doing so, it distorts a relationship that deeply affected Achilles' decisions in the original myth.



[photo03] *Achilles with Briseis – a scene of affection from the movie*



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## (Paragraph 4)

Perhaps the most iconic and puzzling moment in both the film and the legend is the use of the Trojan Horse. In *Troy*, Paris warns King Priam that the horse might be a trap, but Priam, touched by what he perceives as a Greek offering to the gods, insists it be brought into the city. The next scene shows Greek soldiers emerging from the horse under cover of night, opening the gates for their army, and bringing about Troy's destruction.

To a modern viewer, Priam's decision may seem irrational—how could an experienced king ignore such a clear risk? However, ancient cultures placed great trust in religious signs and divine gifts. Rejecting an offering might have angered the gods and brought curses upon the city. Furthermore, deception in war was not uncommon in ancient myths. Odysseus, credited with inventing the trick, is often described as “wily” or “clever,” suggesting that cunning was admired, not condemned. The horse may have served as both a psychological and religious weapon—one that blurred the line between human strategy and divine will.



[photo04] *The wooden horse being brought into Troy*

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## (Paragraph 5)

From a historical perspective, the existence of the Trojan Horse remains highly debated. No archaeological evidence of a massive wooden horse has ever been found. However, the city of Hisarlik in modern-day Turkey, identified as the site of ancient Troy, has revealed multiple layers of destruction and rebuilding—indicating the city was attacked several times over centuries. One layer, dated to around 1180 BCE, shows signs of intense fire and collapse, matching the timeline proposed by scholars for a major conflict.

Some researchers suggest the “horse” may have been metaphorical. It could have referred to a siege machine or a corrupted alliance that allowed the enemy inside the walls. Others argue it was a mythological device used to dramatize the city’s fall in oral storytelling traditions. Either way, the tale of the wooden horse endures, not because of historical accuracy, but because of its narrative power.



[photo05] *Ruins of ancient Troy with overlay of historical dating*

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## (Paragraph 6)

The film ends in flames: Troy is destroyed, Achilles is killed, and the surviving Trojans scatter into legend. It's a powerful cinematic conclusion that blends tragedy, heroism, and myth. Yet, much of what we see on screen is a modern interpretation of ancient texts—condensed, romanticized, and sometimes distorted. For learners and travelers alike, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity: to engage with myth not just as entertainment, but as a window into ancient values and worldviews.

Understanding why ancient people believed these stories—and why modern audiences still retell them—helps bridge the gap between past and present. Whether the story of Troy is fact or fiction may not matter as much as the questions it raises: about love, war, pride, and the nature of legacy.



[photo06] *Final burning scene from the movie (cinematic reconstruction)*





## Vocabulary List

- **Legend** ('lɛdʒənd) — a traditional story passed down through generations, often with mythical elements
- **Pawn** (pɔ:n) — a person used by others for their own purpose, often without realizing it
- **Geopolitical** (,dʒi:əʊpə'li:tkəl) — relating to political and geographic factors influencing power and relations between countries
- **Companion** (kəm'pænjən) — someone who shares experiences, often closely and emotionally
- **Naive** (naɪ'i:v) — lacking experience or judgment; too trusting
- **Deception** (dɪ'sɛpʃən) — the act of making someone believe something that is not true
- **Metaphor** ('mɛtəfɔ:r) — a figure of speech that symbolizes something else without using “like” or “as”
- **Siege** (si:dʒ) — a military operation where forces surround a city to cut off supplies and force surrender
- **Legacy** ('lɛɡəsi) — something left behind by someone or something from the past, such as ideas, reputation, or achievements
- **Oral tradition** ('ɔ:rəl trə'dɪʃən) — cultural stories and knowledge passed down by word of mouth rather than written records



## Day 1 Questions

### 1. Fill in the blank

The film *Troy* suggests the war began because Paris fell in love with \_\_\_\_\_, the queen of Sparta.

## 2. Choose the correct definition: *Pawn*

- A) A royal leader
- B) A person used by others
- C) A powerful warrior

## 3. Multiple Choice

Why does Achilles withdraw from battle in the *Iliad*, according to ancient myth?

- A) He is wounded in battle
- B) Briseis is killed
- C) Agamemnon takes Briseis away from him

## 4. Matching

Match the movie depiction with the historical interpretation:

- | A. Helen's love story | 1. Possibly a metaphor for political conflict |
- | B. The wooden horse | 2. Romanticized cause of war, not fully historical |
- | C. Achilles and Briseis | 3. Film-invented emotional arc, not central in myth |
- | D. Control of Troy | 4. Strategic location for trade and power in the region |

## 5. True or False

The *Iliad* tells the complete story of the Trojan War from beginning to end.

- ☐ True      ☐ False





## Day 2 Questions

### 1. Short Answer

Why might King Priam have accepted the wooden horse despite the risk?

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### 2. Fill in the blank

The city believed the wooden horse was a \_\_\_\_\_ to the gods, and rejecting it might bring divine punishment.

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### 3. Matching

Match each character or element with its **most accurate historical or mythological role**:

- | A. Patroclus | 1. Companion deeply connected to Achilles emotionally |
  - | B. Dardanelles Strait | 2. Strategically vital for ancient maritime trade |
  - | C. Briseis | 3. Symbol of honor in myth, romanticized in the movie |
  - | D. Achilles | 4. Hero portrayed with personal love interests in the film |
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### 4. Multiple Choice

What is a possible modern interpretation of the “Trojan Horse”?

- A) A weapon of mass destruction
  - B) A metaphor for a virus
  - C) A siege device or act of internal betrayal
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### 5. Chronological Order

Put the following in the order they occur in the film:

1. Paris takes Helen to Troy
  2. Greeks land on Troy’s shores
  3. The wooden horse is brought inside the city
  4. Achilles is killed
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## Discussion Prompts

(会話・意見交換向け)

1. In your opinion, should movies follow historical accuracy, or is storytelling more important? Why?
2. Do you think the ancient people of Troy were really deceived by a wooden horse, or is it just a powerful metaphor?
3. Which character in the film did you find most believable or sympathetic? Why?
4. What lessons about pride, power, or love can we still learn from the story of Troy today?