

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Epic Poetry

FROM THE

# AENEID

THE FALL OF TROY ■ BY VIRGIL

TRANSLATED BY  
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**PREVIEW** Aeneas gives an eyewitness account of the fall of Troy. He describes a deadly trick by the Greeks, a fierce battle in the royal palace, and then a tragic personal loss.

## FOCUS

After ten long years of war, the Greeks suddenly depart from Troy, leaving behind a huge wooden horse. Read to find out how the Trojans react to the wooden horse.

Use this guide for help with unfamiliar words and difficult passages.

3 **Danaan** (də-nā'ən): Greek.

6 **sheathed**: covered.

14 **Priam's kingdom**: the city of Troy, which was ruled by King Priam (prī'əm).

18 **Mycenae** (mī-sē'nē): the city ruled by the Greek commander, Agamemnon.

19 **Teucer's** (tōō'sərz) **town**: Troy. (Teucer was the first Trojan king.)

21 **Dorian** (dōr'ē-ən): Greek.

22 **Dolopians** (də-lō'pē-ənz): a group of Greek allies.

23 **Achilles** (ə-kīl'ēz): a fearless Greek warrior.

27 **the cold unbedded goddess**: Pallas, protector of the Greeks; also known as Minerva.

28 **Thymoetes** (thī-mē'tēz').

30 **citadel** (sīt'ə-dəl): stronghold.

32 **Capys** (kăp'īs).

“Knowing their strength broken in warfare, turned  
Back by the fates, and years—so many years—  
Already slipped away, the Danaan captains

By the divine handicraft of Pallas built  
A horse of timber, tall as a hill,  
And sheathed its ribs with planking of cut pine.  
This they gave out to be an offering  
For a safe return by sea, and the word went round.  
But on the sly they shut inside a company  
Chosen from their picked soldiery by lot,  
Crowding the vaulted caverns in the dark—  
The horse's belly—with men fully armed.

Offshore there's a long island, Tenedos,  
Famous and rich while Priam's kingdom lasted,  
A treacherous anchorage now, and nothing more.  
They crossed to this and hid their ships behind it  
On the bare shore beyond. We thought they'd gone,  
Sailing home to Mycenae before the wind,  
So Teucer's town is freed of her long anguish,  
Gates thrown wide! And out we go in joy  
To see the Dorian campsites, all deserted,  
The beach they left behind. Here the Dolopians  
Pitched their tents, here cruel Achilles lodged,  
There lay the ships, and there, formed up in ranks,  
They came inland to fight us. Of our men  
One group stood marveling, gaping up to see  
The dire gift of the cold unbedded goddess,  
The sheer mass of the horse.

Thymoetes shouts  
It should be hauled inside the walls and moored  
High on the citadel—whether by treason  
Or just because Troy's fate went that way now.  
Capys opposed him; so did the wiser heads:  
'Into the sea with it,' they said, 'or burn it,  
Build up a bonfire under it,

## WORDS TO KNOW

**gaping** (gā'pɪŋ) *adj.* staring open-mouthed **gape** *v.*

35 This trick of the Greeks, a gift no one can trust,  
Or cut it open, search the hollow belly!’

Contrary notions pulled the crowd apart.  
Next thing we knew, in front of everyone,

Laocoön with a great company

40 Came furiously running from the Height,  
And still far off cried out: ‘O my poor people,  
Men of Troy, what madness has come over you?  
Can you believe the enemy truly gone?  
A gift from the Danaans, and no ruse?  
45 Is that Ulysses’ way, as you have known him?  
Achaean must be hiding in this timber,  
Or it was built to butt against our walls,  
Peer over them into our houses, pelt  
The city from the sky. Some crookedness  
50 Is in this thing. Have no faith in the horse!

Whatever it is, even when Greeks bring gifts  
I fear them, gifts and all.’

He broke off then

And rifled his big spear with all his might  
Against the horse’s flank, the curve of belly.

55 It stuck there trembling, and the rounded hull  
Reverberated groaning at the blow.

If the gods’ will had not been sinister,  
If our own minds had not been crazed,

He would have made us foul that Argive den

60 With bloody steel, and Troy would stand today—  
O citadel of Priam, towering still!

But now look: hillmen, shepherds of Dardania,  
Raising a shout, dragged in before the king

An unknown fellow with hands tied behind—

65 This all as he himself had planned,

Volunteering, letting them come across him,

39 **Laocoön** (lā-ōk’ō-ōn): a Trojan nobleman.

45 **Ulysses** (yōō-lī’s’ēz): a Greek leader known  
for his strength, courage, and clever schemes.

46 **Achaean** (ə-kē’ənz): Greeks.

56 **reverberated**: echoed.

59 **foul that Argive** (är’jīv’) **den**: slash the  
Greek hiding place.

62 **Dardania** (där-dā’nä-ə): the region  
surrounding Troy.

**WORDS TO KNOW**

**ruse** (rōōs) *n.* a trick

**sinister** (sīn’ī-ster) *adj.* having an evil disposition or intent

So he could open Troy to the Achaeans.  
Sure of himself this man was, braced for it  
Either way, to work his trick or die.

70 From every quarter Trojans run to see him,  
Ring the prisoner round, and make a game  
Of jeering at him. Be instructed now  
In Greek deceptive arts: one barefaced deed  
Can tell you of them all.

73 **deceptive arts:** trickery.

*The Greek spy, Sinon, tells a convincing lie about the Trojan horse. He explains that the Greeks built the wooden horse to win back the favor of the goddess Athena. He says that they were planning to sacrifice him to the goddess but he narrowly escaped. Sinon tells the Trojans to treat the statue with respect and to bring it within their city walls. If they do so, they will avoid doom and ensure that the Greeks will meet a terrible fate.*

75 And now another sign, more fearful still,  
Broke on our blind miserable people,  
Filling us all with dread. Laocoön,  
Acting as Neptune's priest that day by lot,  
Was on the point of putting to the knife  
80 A massive bull before the appointed altar,  
When ah—look there!  
From Tenedos, on the calm sea, twin snakes—  
I shiver to recall it—endlessly  
Coiling, uncoiling, swam abreast for shore,  
85 Their underbellies showing as their crests  
Reared red as blood above the swell; behind  
They glided with great undulating backs.  
Now came the sound of thrashed seawater foaming;  
Now they were on dry land, and we could see  
90 Their burning eyes, fiery and suffused with blood,  
Their tongues a-flicker out of hissing maws.

78 **Neptune** (něp'tōōn'): the god of the sea.

91 **maws:** mouths.

**WORDS TO KNOW**

**undulating** (ün'jə-lā'-tīng) *adj.* moving with a wavelike motion **undulate** *v.*  
**suffused** (sə-fyōōzd') *adj.* overspread; filled **suffuse** *v.*

We scattered, pale with fright. But straight ahead  
They slid until they reached Laocoön.

94 **boys:** sons.

Each snake enveloped one of his two boys,  
95 Twining about and feeding on the body.  
Next they ensnared the man as he ran up  
With weapons: coils like cables looped and bound him  
Twice round the middle; twice about his throat  
They whipped their back-scales, and their heads towered,  
100 While with both hands he fought to break the knots,  
Drenched in slime, his head-bands black with venom,  
Sending to heaven his appalling cries  
Like a slashed bull escaping from an altar,  
The fumbled axe shrugged off. The pair of snakes  
105 Now flowed away and made for the highest shrines,  
The citadel of pitiless Minerva,  
Where coiling they took cover at her feet  
Under the rondure of her shield. New terrors

102 **appalling:** horrifying.

108 **rondure:** circle.

110–112 **Laocoön had paid . . . its flank:**  
Pallas had punished Laocoön for treating the  
wooden horse with disrespect by throwing his  
spear at it.

110 Ran in the shaken crowd: the word went round  
Laocoön had paid, and rightfully,  
For profanation of the sacred hulk  
With his offending spear hurled at its flank.

‘The offering must be hauled to its true home,’  
They clamored. ‘Votive prayers to the goddess  
115 Must be said there!’

115 **breached:** broke through.

So we breached the walls  
And laid the city open. Everyone  
Pitched in to get the figure underpinned  
With rollers, hempen lines around the neck.  
Deadly, pregnant with enemies, the horse  
120 Crawled upward to the breach. And boys and girls  
(Sang hymns) around the towrope as for joy  
They touched it. Rolling on, it cast a shadow  
Over the city’s heart. O Fatherland,  
O Ilium, home of gods! Defensive wall  
125 Renowned in war for Dardanus’s people!  
There on the very threshold of the breach

124 **Ilium** (il’ē-ēm): another name for Troy.

**131 Cassandra** (kə-săn'drə): a daughter of Priam, whose predictions always come true but are never believed.

**139 Myrmidons** (mûr'mə-dŏnz'): Greeks.

**140 Teucrians** (tōō'krē-ənz): Trojans.

**150–155 Thessandrus** (thə-săn'drəs) . . .

**Sthenelus** (sthĕn'ə-ləs) . . . **Acamas**

(ăk'ə-məs) . . . **Thoas** (thō'əs) . . .

**Machaon** (mə-kă'ŏn') . . . **Epeos** (ĕ-pĕ'əs).

**153 Neoptolemus** (nĕ'ŏp-tŏl'ə-məs): a mighty Greek warrior, son of the hero Achilles; also known as Pyrrhus (pŭr'əs).

**154 Menelaus** (mĕn'ə-lă'əs): a leader of the Greek expedition against Troy; he wants to reclaim his wife, Helen, who ran off with a Trojan prince.

It jarred to a halt four times, four times the arms  
In the belly thrown together made a sound—  
Yet on we strove unmindful, deaf and blind,  
130 To place the monster on our blessed height.  
Then, even then, Cassandra's lips unsealed  
The doom to come: lips by a god's command  
Never believed or heeded by the Trojans.  
So pitiably we, for whom that day  
135 Would be the last, made all our temples green  
With leafy festal boughs throughout the city.

As heaven turned, Night from the Ocean stream  
Came on, profound in gloom on earth and sky  
And Myrmidons in hiding. In their homes  
140 The Teucrians lay silent, wearied out,  
And sleep enfolded them. The Argive fleet,  
Drawn up in line abreast, left Tenedos  
Through the aloof moon's friendly stillnesses  
And made for the familiar shore. Flame signals  
145 Shone from the command ship. Sinon, favored  
By what the gods unjustly had decreed,  
Stole out to tap the pine walls and set free  
The Danaans in the belly. Opened wide,  
The horse emitted men; gladly they dropped  
150 Out of the cavern, captains first, Thessandrus,  
Sthenelus and the man of iron, Ulysses;  
Hand over hand upon the rope, Acamas, Thoas,  
Neoptolemus and Prince Machaon,  
Menelaus and then the master builder,  
155 Epeos, who designed the horse decoy.  
Into the darkened city, buried deep  
In sleep and wine, they made their way,  
Cut the few sentries down,  
Let in their fellow soldiers at the gate,  
160 And joined their combat companies as planned.

Pause & Reflect

The ghost of **Hector** visits Aeneas in his sleep, warning him about the Greek invasion. Hector tells Aeneas to flee the city so that one day he will be able to establish another great city—Rome. Aeneas awakens, puts on his armor, and goes out into the streets of the burning city. He and his comrades defeat a small band of Greek soldiers, take their armor, and put it on to disguise themselves. They continue to fight the invaders. Eventually, the Greeks see through the Trojans' disguise, and many of Aeneas' companions are killed.

### FOCUS

Terrible fighting rages outside the palace of Priam, the king of Troy.

**MARK IT UP** As you read, underline details that help you picture the fighting. An example is boxed on this page.

161–166 **Ashes . . . death:** Aeneas says that he fought hard and would have died to defend Troy and its people. It was his destiny, however, to live.

167 **Iphitus** (ɪ'fɪ-təs) and **Pelias** (pəl'ē-əs): Trojan soldiers.

172 **Mars:** the god of war; **berserk:** recklessly violent.

173–174 **the gate . . . shields:** The attacking Greeks enter the gate with their shields overlapping in a pattern that resembles a turtle's shell.

178 **cornice** (kôr'nɪs): a molding at the top of a wall.

### Ashes of Ilium!

Flames that consumed my people! Here I swear  
That in your downfall I did not avoid  
One weapon, one exchange with the Danaans,  
165 And if it had been fated, my own hand  
Had earned my death. But we were torn away  
From that place—Iphitus and Pelias too,  
One slow with age, one wounded by Ulysses,  
Called by a clamor at the hall of Priam.  
170 Truly we found here a prodigious fight,  
As though there were none elsewhere, not a death  
In the whole city: **Mars gone berserk, Danaans**  
**In a rush to scale the roof; the gate besieged**  
**By a tortoise shell of overlapping shields.**  
175 Ladders clung to the wall, and men strove upward  
Before the very doorposts, on the rungs,  
Left hand putting the shield up, and the right  
Reaching for the cornice. The defenders  
Wrenched out upperworks and rooftiles: these  
180 For missiles, as they saw the end, preparing  
To fight back even on the edge of death.  
And gilded beams, ancestral ornaments,  
They rolled down on the heads below. In hall  
Others with swords drawn held the entrance way,  
185 Packed there, waiting. Now we plucked up heart  
To help the royal house, to give our men

### WORDS TO KNOW

**prodigious** (prə-dɪ'ʒəs) *adj.* impressively great; stupendous

182 **gilded:** golden.

191 **Andromachē** (än-dröm'ə-kē), **poor lady**:  
Andromachē's husband, the Trojan prince Hector,  
had been killed by Achilles earlier in the war.

193 **Astyanax** (ə-stī'ə-näks'): the son of Hector  
and Andromachē.

196 **promontory** (pröm'ən-tôr'ē): a ridge of  
land extending into a body of water.

A respite, and to add our strength to theirs,  
Though all were beaten. And we had for entrance  
A rear door, secret, giving on a passage  
190 Between the palace halls; in other days  
Andromachē, poor lady, often used it,  
Going alone to see her husband's parents  
Or taking Astyanax to his grandfather.  
I climbed high on the roof, where hopeless men  
195 Were picking up and throwing futile missiles.  
Here was a tower like a promontory  
Rising toward the stars above the roof:  
All Troy, the Danaan ships, the Achaean camp,  
Were visible from this. Now close beside it  
200 With crowbars, where the flooring made loose joints,  
We pried it from its bed and pushed it over.  
Down with a rending crash in sudden ruin  
Wide over the Danaan lines it fell;  
But fresh troops moved up, and the rain of stones  
205 With every kind of missile never ceased.

## Pause & Reflect

### FOCUS

The Greek warriors are about to break into the palace. Read to find out whether the Trojans can fight them off.

**MARK IT UP** ➤ As you read, circle details that describe the important events in the battle.

214 **Periphas** (pə-rī'fəs) . . . **Automedon**  
(ô-töm'ə-dön').

216 **the young of Scyros** (skī'rəs): the followers of Pyrrhus, who lived on the island of Scyros.

Just at the outer doors of the vestibule  
Sprang Pyrrhus, all in bronze and glittering,  
As a serpent, hidden swollen underground  
By a cold winter, writhes into the light,  
210 On vile grass fed, his old skin cast away,  
Renewed and glossy, rolling slippery coils,  
With lifted underbelly rearing sunward  
And triple tongue a-flicker. Close beside him  
Giant Periphas and Automedon,  
215 His armor-bearer, once Achilles' driver,  
Besieged the place with all the young of Scyros,

### WORDS TO KNOW

**respite** (rēs'pīt) *n.* a rest

**writhe** (rith) *v.* to twist about; squirm



Hurling their torches at the palace roof.  
 Pyrrhus shouldering forward with an axe  
 Broke down the stony threshold, forced apart  
 220 Hinges and brazen door-jambs, and chopped through  
 One panel of the door, splitting the oak,  
 To make a window, a great breach. And there  
 Before their eyes the inner halls lay open,  
 The courts of Priam and the ancient kings,  
 225 With men-at-arms ranked in the vestibule.  
 From the interior came sounds of weeping,  
 Pitiful commotion, wails of women  
 High-pitched, rising in the formal chambers  
 To ring against the silent golden stars;  
 230 And, through the palace, mothers wild with fright  
 Ran to and fro or clung to doors and kissed them.  
 Pyrrhus with his father's brawn stormed on,  
 No bolts or bars or men availed to stop him:  
 Under his battering the double doors  
 235 Were torn out of their sockets and fell inward.

232 **brawn**: muscular strength.

238 **seethe**: boil; surge.

241 **whelms every parapet**: overflows every protective wall.

245 **the two Atridae** (ā-trī'dē): Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon.

246 **Hecuba** (hĕk'yə-bə): the wife of Priam and Queen of Troy.

249–252 **Those fifty . . . the Greeks**: The bridal chambers represent the hope of future generations, a hope that has been destroyed by the downfall of Troy.

Sheer force cleared the way: the Greeks broke through  
 Into the vestibule, cut down the guards,  
 And made the wide hall seethe with men-at-arms—  
 A tumult greater than when dikes are burst  
 240 And a foaming river, swirling out in flood,  
 Whelms every parapet and races on  
 Through fields and over all the lowland plains,  
 Bearing off pens and cattle. I myself  
 Saw Neoptolemus furious with blood  
 245 In the entrance way, and saw the two Atridae;  
 Hecuba I saw, and her hundred daughters,  
 Priam before the altars, with his blood  
 Drenching the fires that he himself had blessed.  
 Those fifty bridal chambers, hope of a line  
 250 So flourishing; those doorways high and proud,  
 Adorned with takings of barbaric gold,  
 Were all brought low: fire had them, or the Greeks.

What was the fate of Priam, you may ask.

255 Seeing his city captive, seeing his own  
Royal portals rent apart, his enemies  
In the inner rooms, the old man uselessly  
Put on his shoulders, shaking with old age,  
Armor unused for years, belted a sword on,  
And made for the massed enemy to die.

260 Under the open sky in a central court  
Stood a big altar; near it, a laurel tree  
Of great age, leaning over, in deep shade  
Embowered the Penatēs. At this altar  
Hecuba and her daughters, like white doves  
265 Blown down in a black storm, clung together,  
Enfolding holy images in their arms.  
Now, seeing Priam in a young man's gear,  
She called out:

'My poor husband, what mad thought  
Drove you to buckle on these weapons?

270 Where are you trying to go? The time is past  
For help like this, for this kind of defending,  
Even if my own Hector could be here.  
Come to me now: the altar will protect us,  
Or else you'll die with us.'

She drew him close,

275 Heavy with years, and made a place for him  
To rest on the consecrated stone.

Now see

Politēs, one of Priam's sons, escaped  
From Pyrrhus' butchery and on the run

280 Through enemies and spears, down colonnades,  
Through empty courtyards, wounded. Close behind  
Comes Pyrrhus burning for the death-stroke: has him,  
Catches him now, and lunges with the spear.  
The boy has reached his parents, and before them  
Goes down, pouring out his life with blood.

285 Now Priam, in the very midst of death,  
Would neither hold his peace nor spare his anger.

263 **embowered the Penatēs** (pə-nā'tēz):  
sheltered the images of the household gods.

272 **Hector**: a Trojan warrior and prince killed by  
Achilles.

276 **consecrated** (kŏn'sŭ-krāt'əd): set apart as  
sacred.

279 **colonnades** (kŏl'ə-nādz'): rows of columns.

288 **atrocious** (ə-trōs'Y-tē): horrible cruelty.

291 **defiled**: stained; polluted.

296 **compunction**: pity.

299 **feeble**: weak.

300 **jutting boss**: the raised center of a shield.

302 **Pelidēs** (pē-lī'dēz'): "son of Peleus"—that is, Achilles, who was killed earlier in the war.

303 **degeneracy**: decline into wickedness.

315 **the vast trunk**: Priam's huge body.

'For what you've done, for what you've dared,' he said,  
'If there is care in heaven for atrocity,

May the gods render fitting thanks, reward you

290 As you deserve. You forced me to look on

At the destruction of my son: defiled

A father's eyes with death. That great Achilles

You claim to be the son of—and you lie—

Was not like you to Priam, his enemy;

295 To me who threw myself upon his mercy

He showed compunction, gave me back for burial

The bloodless corpse of Hector, and returned me

To my own realm.'

The old man threw his spear

With feeble impact; blocked by the ringing bronze,

300 It hung there harmless from the jutting boss.

Then Pyrrhus answered:

'You'll report the news

To Pelidēs, my father; don't forget

My sad behavior, the degeneracy

Of Neoptolemus. Now die.'

With this,

305 To the (altar) step itself he dragged him trembling,

Slipping in the pooled blood of his son,

And took him by the hair with his left hand.

The sword flashed in his right; up to the hilt

He thrust it in his body.

That was the end

310 Of Priam's age, the doom that took him off,

With Troy in flames before his eyes, his towers

Headlong fallen—he that in other days

Had ruled in pride so many lands and peoples,

The power of Asia.

On the distant shore

315 The vast trunk headless lies without a name.

Pause & Reflect

## FOCUS

When Aeneas notices Helen, he gets very angry. He believes that she is to blame for Troy's destruction. Find out how Aeneas deals with her.

321 **Creusa** (krē-ōō'zə): the wife of Aeneas.

328 **the Vesta**: the temple of Vesta, goddess of the hearth.

330 **the daughter of Tyndareus** (tīn-dār'ē-əs): Helen. (Tyndareus, although not actually Helen's father, was the husband of her mother, Leda.)

335-336 **her abandoned husband's anger**: the anger of Menelaus, the husband Helen deserted to run off with Paris.

336 **Helen**: the wife of the Greek leader Menelaus, who betrayed him by running off with the Trojan prince Paris; Helen's betrayal of her husband triggered the Trojan War.

342 **Sparta** (spār'tə): the city ruled by Menelaus.

345 **Phrygian** (frīj'ē-ən): Trojan.

347 **littoral** (līt'ər-əl): seashore.

For the first time that night, inhuman shuddering  
Took me, head to foot. I stood unmanned,  
And my dear father's image came to mind  
As our king, just his age, mortally wounded,  
320 Gasp'd his life away before my eyes.  
Creusa came to mind, too, left alone;  
The house plundered; danger to little Iulus.  
I looked around to take stock of my men,  
But all had left me, utterly played out,  
325 Giving their beaten bodies to the fire  
Or plunging from the roof.

It came to this,  
That I stood there alone. And then I saw  
Lurking behind the doorsill of the Vesta,  
In hiding, silent, in that place reserved,  
330 The daughter of Tyndareus. Glare of fires  
Lighted my steps this way and that, my eyes  
Glancing over the whole scene, everywhere.  
That woman, terrified of the Trojans' hate  
For the city overthrown, terrified too  
335 Of Danaan vengeance, her abandoned husband's  
Anger after years—Helen, that Fury  
Both to her own homeland and Troy, had gone  
To earth, a hated thing, before the altars.  
Now fires blazed up in my own spirit—  
340 A passion to avenge my fallen town  
And punish Helen's whorishness.

'Shall this one  
Look untouched on Sparta and Mycenae  
After her triumph, going like a queen,  
And see her home and husband, kin and children,  
345 With Trojan girls for escort, Phrygian slaves?  
Must Priam perish by the sword for this?  
Troy burn, for this? Dardania's littoral  
Be soaked in blood, so many times, for this?  
Not by my leave. I know  
350 No glory comes of punishing a woman,

The feat can bring no honor. Still, I'll be  
Approved for snuffing out a monstrous life,  
For a just sentence carried out. My heart  
Will teem with joy in this avenging fire,  
355 And the ashes of my kin will be appeased.'

So ran my thoughts. I turned wildly upon her,  
But at that moment, clear, before my eyes—  
Never before so clear—in a pure light  
Stepping before me, radiant through the night,  
360 My loving mother came: immortal, tall,  
And lovely as the lords of heaven know her.  
Catching me by the hand, she held me back,  
Then with her rose-red mouth reproved me:

360 **my loving mother:** Venus, the goddess of  
love and beauty.

364 **goad:** drive; urge.

370 **foraging:** plundering.

373 **the woman of Laconia** (lə-kō'nē-ə):  
Helen.

'Son,  
Why let such suffering goad you on to fury  
365 Past control? Where is your thoughtfulness  
For me, for us? Will you not first revisit  
The place you left your father, worn and old,  
Or find out if your wife, Creusa, lives,  
And the young boy, Ascanius—all these  
370 Cut off by Greek troops foraging everywhere?  
Had I not cared for them, fire would by now  
Have taken them, their blood glutted the sword.  
You must not hold the woman of Laconia,  
That hated face, the cause of this, nor Paris.  
375 The harsh will of the gods it is, the gods,  
That overthrows the splendor of this place  
And brings Troy from her height into the dust.  
Look over there: I'll tear away the cloud  
That curtains you, and films your mortal sight,  
380 The fog around you.—Have no fear of doing  
Your mother's will, or balk at obeying her.—  
Look: where you see high masonry thrown down,  
Stone torn from stone, with billowing smoke and dust,  
Neptune is shaking from their beds the walls

**WORDS TO KNOW**  
reprove (rī-'proov') v. to scold

385 **undermining:** digging under  
the foundations.

387 **Juno** (jōō'nō): the queen of the gods.

390 **Tritonia** (trī-tō'nē-ə): a title of Pallas.

391 **Gorgon:** the monstrous Medusa, whose  
head Pallas bears on her shield.

385 That his great trident pried up, undermining,  
Toppling the whole city down. And look:  
Juno in all her savagery holds  
The Scaean Gates, and raging in steel armor  
Calls her allied army from the ships.  
390 Up on the citadel—turn, look—Pallas Tritonia  
Couched in a stormcloud, lightening, with her Gorgon!  
The Father himself empowers the Danaans,  
Urges assaulting gods on the defenders.  
Away, child; put an end to toiling so.  
395 I shall be near, to see you safely home.'

She hid herself in the deep gloom of night,  
And now the dire forms appeared to me  
Of great immortals, enemies of Troy.  
I knew the end then: Ilium was going down  
400 In fire, the Troy of Neptune going down,  
As in high mountains when the countrymen  
Have notched an ancient ash, then make their axes  
Ring with might and main, chopping away  
To fell the tree—ever on the point of falling,  
405 Shaken through all its foliage, and the treetop  
Nodding; bit by bit the strokes prevail  
Until it gives a final groan at last  
And crashes down in ruin from the height.

Now I descended where the goddess guided,  
410 Clear of the flames, and clear of enemies,  
For both retired; so gained my father's door,  
My ancient home. I looked for him at once,  
My first wish being to help him to the mountains;  
But with Troy gone he set his face against it,  
415 Not to prolong his life, or suffer exile.

Pause & Reflect

*Unmoved by the protests of his family, Aeneas' father refuses to leave his home. However, he is finally persuaded by two divine signs. First, a small flame appears on the head of Iulus, Aeneas' son, touching the boy but not burning him. After Aeneas and his wife put out the flame, there comes the second sign—a crack of thunder outside, followed by a falling star.*

### FOCUS

Aeneas tries to lead his father, wife, and son to safety. Read to find out whether he succeeds.

422 **portent:** a sign of future events; omen.

433 **Ceres the Bereft:** the goddess of grain, whose daughter Proserpina was stolen away by Pluto, god of the underworld.

Now indeed

My father, overcome, addressed the gods,  
And rose in worship of the blessed star.

'Now, now, no more delay. I'll follow you.  
420 Where you conduct me, there I'll be.

Gods of my fathers,  
Preserve this house, preserve my grandson. Yours  
This portent was. Troy's life is in your power.  
I yield. I go as your companion, son.'  
Then he was still. We heard the blazing town  
425 Crackle more loudly, felt the scorching heat.

'Then come, dear father. Arms around my neck:  
I'll take you on my shoulders, no great weight.  
Whatever happens, both will face one danger,  
Find one safety. Iulus will come with me,  
430 My wife at a good interval behind.

Servants, give your attention to what I say.  
At the gate inland there's a funeral mound  
And an old shrine of Ceres the Bereft;  
Near it an ancient cypress, kept alive  
435 For many years by our fathers' piety.  
By various routes we'll come to that one place.  
Father, carry our hearthgods, our Penatès.  
It would be wrong for me to handle them—  
Just come from such hard fighting, bloody work—  
440 Until I wash myself in running water.'

When I had said this, over my breadth of shoulder  
And bent neck, I spread out a lion skin

For tawny cloak and stooped to take his weight.  
Then little Iulus put his hand in mine  
445 And came with shorter steps beside his father.  
My wife fell in behind. Through shadowed places

On we went, and I, lately unmoved  
By any spears thrown, any squads of Greeks,  
Felt terror now at every eddy of wind,  
450 Alarm at every sound, alert and worried  
Alike for my companion and my burden.

I had got near the gate, and now I thought  
We had made it all the way, when suddenly  
A noise of running feet came near at hand,  
455 And peering through the gloom ahead, my father  
Cried out:

‘Run, boy; here they come; I see  
Flame light on shields, bronze shining.’

I took fright,  
And some unfriendly power, I know not what,  
Stole all my addled wits—for as I turned  
460 Aside from the known way, entering a maze  
Of pathless places on the run—

Alas,  
Creusa, taken from us by grim fate, did she  
Linger, or stray, or sink in weariness?  
There is no telling. Never would she be  
465 Restored to us. Never did I look back  
Or think to look for her, lost as she was,  
Until we reached the funeral mound and shrine  
Of venerable Ceres. Here at last  
All came together, but she was not there;

470 She alone failed her friends, her child, her husband.  
Out of my mind, whom did I not accuse,  
What man or god? What crueler loss had I  
Beheld, that night the city fell? Ascanius,  
My father, and the Teucrian Penatès,  
475 I left in my friends’ charge, and hid them well  
In a hollow valley.



477 **cinching:** fastening tightly.

484 **my heart misgave me:** I had feelings of dread.

503 **wraith:** ghost.

511–513 **You may not . . . leave:** Creusa's ghost tells Aeneas that he must go on without her because that is the will of the gods.

I turned back alone  
Into the city, cinching my bright harness.

Nothing for it but to run the risks  
Again, go back again, comb all of Troy,

480 And put my life in danger as before:

First by the town wall, then the gate, all gloom,  
Through which I had come out—and so on backward,  
Tracing my own footsteps through the night;  
And everywhere my heart misgave me: even

485 Stillness had its terror. Then to our house,  
Thinking she might, just might, have wandered there.

Danaans had got in and filled the place,  
And at that instant fire they had set,

Consuming it, went roofward in a blast;

490 Flames leaped and seethed in heat to the night sky.

I pressed on, to see Priam's hall and tower.

In the bare colonnades of Juno's shrine

Two chosen guards, Phoenix and hard Ulysses,

Kept watch over the plunder. Piled up here

495 Were treasures of old Troy from every quarter,

Torn out of burning temples: altar tables,

Robes, and golden bowls. Drawn up around them,

Boys and frightened mothers stood in line.

I even dared to call out in the night;

500 I filled the streets with calling; in my grief

Time after time I groaned and called Creusa,

Frantic, in endless quest from door to door.

Then to my vision her sad wraith appeared—  
Creusa's ghost, larger than life, before me.

505 Chilled to the marrow, I could feel the hair

On my head rise, the voice clot in my throat;

But she spoke out to ease me of my fear:

'What's to be gained by giving way to grief

So madly, my sweet husband? Nothing here

510 Has come to pass except as heaven willed.

You may not take Creusa with you now;

It was not so ordained, nor does the lord

515 **Hesperia** (hě-spîr'ē-ə): "western land"—that is, Italy.

516 **Lydian Tiber** (līd'ē-ən tī'bər): the river beside which Rome would be built—called Lydian here because it flowed through the lands of the Etruscans, who originally came from Lydia in Asia Minor.

530–532 **Three times . . . a flitting dream:** Aeneas says he tried to hug his wife's ghost three times, but each time her spirit slipped through his fingers, leaving him holding nothing but air.

540 **Ida's ridges:** the crests of a mountain range near Troy.

Of high Olympus give you leave. For you  
Long exile waits, and long sea miles to plow.

515 You shall make landfall on Hesperia  
Where Lydian Tiber flows, with gentle pace,  
Between rich farmlands, and the years will bear  
Glad peace, a kingdom, and a queen for you.  
Dismiss these tears for your beloved Creusa.  
520 I shall not see the proud homelands of Myrmidons  
Or of Dolopians, or go to serve  
Greek ladies, Dardan lady that I am  
And daughter-in-law of Venus the divine.  
No: the great mother of the gods detains me  
525 Here on these shores. Farewell now; cherish still  
Your son and mine.'

With this she left me weeping,  
Wishing that I could say so many things,  
And faded on the tenuous air. Three times  
I tried to put my arms around her neck,  
530 Three times enfolded nothing, as the wraith  
Slipped through my fingers, bodiless as wind,  
Or like a flitting dream.

So in the end  
As night waned I rejoined my company.  
And there to my astonishment I found  
535 New refugees in a great crowd: men and women  
Gathered for exile, young—pitiful people  
Coming from every quarter, minds made up,  
With their belongings, for whatever lands  
I'd lead them to by sea.

The morning star  
540 Now rose on Ida's ridges, bringing day.  
Greeks had secured the city gates. No help  
Or hope of help existed.  
So I resigned myself, picked up my father,  
And turned my face toward the mountain range."

## Pause & Reflect

**WORDS TO KNOW**  
**tenuous** (tēn'yōō-əs) *adj.* thin or flimsy

## Glossary

### Gods and Goddesses

**Juno:** The queen of the gods

**Mars:** The god of war

**Neptune:** The god of the sea

**Pallas:** The goddess of wisdom; also known as **Minerva**; epithet: "the cold unbedded goddess"

**Venus:** The goddess of love and beauty, mother of Aeneas

### Greeks

(Also known as **Achaeans, Argives, Danaans, Dorians, and Myrmidons**)

**Menelaus:** A leader of the expedition of Troy, husband of Helen

**Neoptolemus:** A mighty warrior, son of the hero Achilles; also known as **Pyrrhus**

**Sinon:** A warrior sent into Troy as a spy

**Ulysses:** A leader known for his wily schemes

### Trojans

(Also known as **Phrygians, Teucrians**)

**Aeneas:** The hero of the epic and the son of the Venus and Anchises

**Anchises:** The father of Aeneas

**Cassandra:** A daughter of Priam; whose prophecies always come true but are never believed

**Creusa:** The wife of Aeneas

**Hecuba:** The wife of Priam and the queen of Troy

**Helen:** The wife of the Greek leader Menelaus, who betrayed him by running off with the Trojan prince Paris; epithets: "that Fury," "the daughter of Tyndareus," "woman of Laconia"

**Iulus:** The young son of Aeneas and Creusa; also known as **Ascanius**

**Laocoön:** A nobleman, brother of Anchises

**Priam:** The king of Troy; epithet: "the power of Asia"

**Polité:** A son of Priam

**Troy:** Also known as **Ilium**; epithets: "citadel of Priam," "Fatherland," "Teucer's town"