Homer, *The Iliad*

The Greeks were at war with the Trojans for ten years. *The Iliad* is an epic poem that describes a short period of time near the end of the war, during which Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Greeks, and Hector, the greatest warrior of the Trojans, battle. In this battle, Hector is killed. The poem ends with Priam, Hector’s father, begging for the body of his son in order to give it a proper burial.

After the events of which the poem tells, Achilles was himself killed by a stray arrow shot by Hector’s brother Paris.

*At one point in the epic, Achilles is faced with a choice. His mother tells him that he can stay in Troy and fight or he can return home. If he stays, through his valor he would win great fame, but he would consequently die on the battlefield. If he chose to leave and return home he would became be king and would live a long and happy life, but would fade into obscurity.*

*Choice of Achilles: Homer, *Iliad*, Book 9, lines, 410–416*

Many a time was I minded when at home in Phthia to woo and wed a woman who would make me a suitable wife, and to enjoy the riches of my old father Peleus. My life is more to me than all the wealth of Troy. … Cattle and sheep are to be had for harrying, and a man buy both tripods and horses if he wants them, but when his life has once left him it can neither be bought nor harried back again.

My mother Thetis tells me that there are two ways in which I may meet my end. If I stay here and fight, I shall not return alive but my name will live forever; whereas if I go home my name will die, but it will be long before death takes me. …