

Agamemnon's Insult By Homer *The Iliad*



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The Story:

-Agamemnon, King Of Mycenae, kidnaps Chryses (a priest of Apollo) daughter and refuses to free her or ransom her



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The Achaeans pay the price

The Achaeans and namely, their soldiers incur the wrath of the scorned priest and are besieged by Apollo's missiles (lightning bolts???) for nine days causing massive death and destruction

*The Achaeans are under direct control by Agamemnon



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Enter Achilles...

- Achilles, leader of the Danaans, and the best warrior, seeks to resolve this terrible situation
- He ascertains that Apollo is angry and it is linked to Agamemnon's kidnapping of Chryses daughter.



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A Proposal....

- Achilles requests for Agamemnon to free Chryses
- Agamemnon agrees on the condition that he is given equal compensation by Achilles and his men
- Achilles says the only reward on hand would be the soldier's war spoils which are so paltry (no thanks to Agamemnon) it would leave them with nothing.
- Achilles says perhaps a future agreement of war spoils in a possible invasion of Troy would suffice.

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The Argument

- Agamemnon infers he can take whatever he wants, whenever he wants, from whomever he wants
- Agamemnon says Achilles should load up a boat with Chryses daughter, 100 slaughtered oxen, rowers and a commander and offer it as a sacrifice to Apollo.
- Achilles says he has had it. He is packing up and going home. He is fed up with Agamemnon's wars of dubious origins that never end, for little pay & at great peril of the men is over with.



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The Argument

-Agamemnon says he will let Achilles leave, he will return Chryses daughter then go to Achilles's home and steal Achilles woman, Brises, as compensation and a final showing of who is the mightier man.

-Achilles is about to draw his sword on Agamemnon when Athena the goddess appear profession her love of both men and requesting a peace



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The Closure...for the moment

-Achilles sheaths his sword but calls Agamemnon an armchair general (One who likes to order around armies and instigate wars. But, never directly fighting in them and never being near the battlefield.)

-Achilles warns Agamemnon he will need Achilles to deal with the mighty warrior Hector of Troy. However, Achilles will not be there to save his army.



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The True Meaning

Homer shows us the differences between tyrants and leaders.

-Achilles illustrates what a good leader is.

-Achilles places the needs of his men first.

-He never puts himself in a position where he can take away from his men.

-Achilles cares about the welfare of his men and always places himself second to them.



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The True Meaning

- Agamemnon on the other hand is the prototype for a tyrant.
- His appetites know no bounds and are insatiable.
- Agamemnon constantly speak in the tone of "I" it's always about himself and anyone else is a distant second at best
- Agamemnon takes more than his fair share, gives little in credit, or, tribute to his soldiers that sacrifice, die for him and give him the prestige that he does have.

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The True Meaning

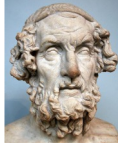
- Also, Agamemnon misconstrues his arrogance for bravery and might.
- As Achilles points out, Agamemnon loves to start and order around people for war but is hard pressed to directly participate or lead in the frontlines by example.



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The True Meaning

- Homer is trying to show us what makes an effective leader and just ruler and what does not...
- in an age where true, just, rulers and tyrants were at a disproportionate ratio in favor of the tyrants.



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