

## Achilles

Achilles was one of the greatest warriors and heroes in Greek Mythology. He was a major character in the Iliad by Homer where he fought in the Trojan War against the city of Troy. Achilles' father was Peleus, king of the Myrmidons, and his mother was Thetis, a sea nymph. After Achilles was born, his mother wanted to protect him from harm. She held him by the heel and dipped him into the river Styx. In Greek Mythology, the river Styx was located in the Underworld and had special powers. Achilles became invulnerable everywhere but at his heel where his mother held him. Because Achilles was a half-god, he was very strong and soon became a great warrior. However, he was also half human and wasn't immortal like his mother. He would get old and die someday and he could also be killed.

When Helen, the wife of the Greek King Menelaus, was taken by the Trojan Prince Paris, the Greeks went to war to get her back. Achilles joined the battle and brought along a group of powerful soldiers called the Myrmidons. During the Trojan War, Achilles was unstoppable. He killed many of Troy's greatest warriors. However, the battle raged on for years. Many of the Greek gods were involved, some helping the Greeks and others helping the Trojans.

At one point during the war, Achilles captured a beautiful princess named Briseis and fell in love with her. However, the leader of the Greek army, Agamemnon, became angry with Achilles and took Briseis from him. Achilles became depressed and refused to fight.

With Achilles not fighting, the Greeks began to lose the battle. The greatest warrior of Troy was Hector and no one could stop him. Achilles' best friend was a soldier named Patroclus. Patroclus convinced Achilles to lend him his armor. Patroclus entered the battle dressed as Achilles. Thinking that Achilles was back, the Greek army was inspired and began to fight harder. Just when things were improving for the Greeks, Patroclus met up with Hector. The two warriors engaged in battle. With the help of the god Apollo, Hector killed Patroclus and took Achilles' armor. Achilles then rejoined the battle in order to avenge his friend's death. He met Hector on the battlefield and, after a long fight, defeated him.

Achilles continued to battle the Trojans and it seemed like he could not be killed. However, the Greek god Apollo knew his weakness. When Paris of Troy shot an arrow at Achilles, Apollo guided it so that it struck Achilles on the heel. Achilles eventually died from the wound. The term "Achilles' heel" is used to describe a point of weakness that could lead to ones' downfall.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### **Achilles – Questions**

1. Who was the ancient Greek character Achilles?
2. What war did Achilles fight in?
3. What did Achilles' mother do to protect him from harm?
4. What was the only spot where Achilles was vulnerable?
5. What did Achilles do for Greece when Helen was taken by Prince Paris?
6. How did he perform as a warrior?
7. Who did Achilles fall in love with while in battle?
8. What caused Achilles to refuse to fight?
9. How did Achilles' refusal to fight affect the war?
10. What did Achilles' friend Patroclus do to inspire the Greeks to fight harder?
11. What happened when Hector and Patroclus fought?
12. What happened when Hector and Achilles fought?
13. How did Achilles die?
14. What does the term "achilles heel" mean today?