

Close Read: Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad

Skills Focus

1. Paragraph 2 introduces Eris, the goddess of discord. In what way does her title help you understand her actions? Highlight evidence from the text that indicates the motive, or reason, she has for behaving that way. Then use textual evidence from paragraphs 4 and 5 to analyze why she challenges the goddesses to what is essentially a beauty contest. Highlight details and make annotations that support your thinking.
CA-CCSS: [? CA.RL.6.1](#), [CA.RL.6.3](#), [CA.RL.6.5](#)
2. In paragraph 7, the narrative pauses to describe the actions of the Greek gods on Olympus. What information is conveyed here, and why is this section important to the story? Highlight relevant evidence from the text and make annotations to explain what the information indicates.
CA-CCSS: [? CA.RL.6.1](#), [CA.RL.6.5](#)
3. Foreshadowing, or hinting at an event that may happen further on in a story, is a plot device often used to structure a story. Paragraph 7 states that in the time the gods spent quarreling about the goddesses and the golden apple, a child could have grown up and “become a warrior or a herdsman.” Highlight textual evidence in paragraphs 8 and 9 that indicate the statement foreshadows something about Paris’s life. Make annotations to explain your ideas.
CA-CCSS: [? CA.RL.6.1](#), [CA.RL.6.5](#)
4. Readers of *Black Ships Before Troy* could likely follow the plot of the story without the mention of Oenone in paragraph 10. What does knowledge of her presence add to your understanding of Paris and his actions in the final paragraphs of the myth? Annotate ideas and highlight relevant evidence from the text to support your answer.
CA-CCSS: [? CA.RL.6.1](#), [CA.RL.6.5](#)
5. Compare and contrast how the goddess Athene is presented in the selections *Black Ships Before Troy* and *Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus*. From both texts, what can you infer about this goddess? Annotate ideas and highlight relevant evidence from both texts to support your answer.
CA-CCSS: [? CA.RL.6.1](#), [CA.RL.6.9](#)

Read

Excerpt From “The Golden Apple”

In the high and far-off days when men were heroes and walked with the gods, Peleus, king of the Myrmidons, took for his wife a sea **nymph** called Thetis, Thetis of the Silver Feet. Many guests came to their wedding feast, and among the mortal guests came all the gods of high Olympus.

But as they sat feasting, one who had not been invited was suddenly in their midst: Eris, the goddess of **discord**, had been left out because wherever she went she took trouble with her; yet here she was, all the

same, and in her blackest mood, to **avenge** the insult.

All she did—it seemed a small thing—was to toss down on the table a golden apple. Then she breathed upon the guests once, and vanished.

The apple lay gleaming among the piled fruits and the brimming wine cups; and bending close to look at it, everyone could see the words “To the fairest” traced on its side.

Then the three greatest of the goddesses each claimed that it was hers. Hera claimed it as wife to Zeus, the All-father, and queen of all the gods. Athene claimed that she had the better right, for the beauty of wisdom such as hers surpassed all else. Aphrodite only smiled, and asked who had a better claim to beauty’s prize than the goddess of beauty herself.

They fell to arguing among themselves; the argument became a quarrel, and the quarrel grew more and more bitter, and each called upon the assembled guests to judge between them. But the other guests refused, for they knew well enough that whichever goddess they chose to receive the golden apple, they would make enemies of the other two.

In the end, the three took the quarrel home with them to Olympus. The other gods took sides, some with one and some with another, and the ill will between them dragged on for a long while. More than long enough, in the world of men, for a child born when the quarrel first began to grow to manhood and become a warrior or a herdsman. But the immortal gods do not know time as mortals know it.

Now on the northeast coast of the Aegean Sea, there was a city of men. Troy was its name, a great city surrounded by strong walls, and standing on a hill hard by the shore. It had grown rich on the tolls that its kings demanded from merchant ships passing up the nearby straits to the Black Sea cornlands and down again. Priam, who was now king, was lord of wide realms and long-maned horses, and he had many sons about his hearth. And when the quarrel about the golden apple was still raw and new, a last son was born to him and his wife Queen Hecuba, and they called him Paris.

There should have been great rejoicing, but while Hecuba still carried the babe within her, the **soothsayers** had foretold that she would give birth to a firebrand that should burn down Troy. And so, when he was born and named, the king bade a servant carry him out into the wilderness and leave him to die. The servant did as he was bid; but a herdsman searching for a missing calf found the babe and brought him up as his own.

The boy grew tall and strong and beautiful, the swiftest runner and the best archer in all the country around. So his boyhood passed among the oak woods and the high hill-pastures that rose toward Mount Ida. And there he met and fell in love with wood nymph called Oenone, who loved him in return. She had the gift of being able to heal the wounds of mortal men, no matter how sorely they were hurt.

Among the oak woods they lived together and were happy—until one day the three jealous goddesses,

still quarreling about the golden apple, chanced to look down from Olympus, and saw the beautiful young man herding his cattle on the slopes of Mount Ida. They knew, for the gods know all things, that he was the son of Priam, king of Troy, though he himself did not know it yet; but the thought came to them that he would not know who they were, and therefore he would not be afraid to judge between them. They were growing somewhat weary of the argument by then.

So they tossed the apple down to him, and Paris put up his hands and caught it. After it the three came down, landing before him so lightly that their feet did not bend the mountain grasses, and bade him choose between them, which was the fairest and had best right to the prize he held in his hand.

First Athene, in her gleaming armor, fixed him with sword-gray eyes and promised him supreme wisdom if he would name her.

Then Hera, in her royal robes as queen of heaven, promised him **vast** wealth and power and honour, if he awarded her the prize.

Lastly, Aphrodite drew near, her eyes as blue as deep-sea water, her hair like spun gold wreathed around her head, and, smiling honey-sweet, whispered that she would give him a wife as fair as herself, if he tossed the apple to her.

And Paris forgot the other two with their offers of wisdom and power, forgot also, for that moment, dark-haired Oenone in the shadowed oak woods; and he gave the golden apple to Aphrodite.

Then Athene and Hera were angry with him for refusing them the prize, just as the wedding guests had known that they would be; and both of them were angry with Aphrodite. But Aphrodite was well content, and set about keeping her promise to the herdsman who was a king's son.

Excerpted from *Black Ships Before Troy* by Rosemary Sutcliff, published by Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Annotations
