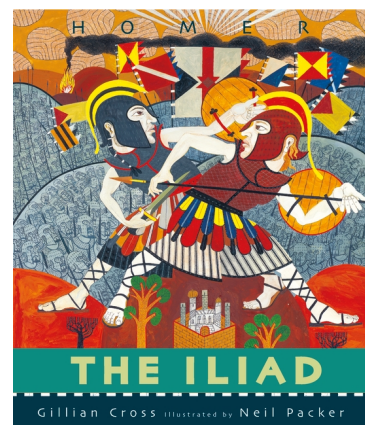


Gillian Cross , Neil Packer

## The Iliad

United Kingdom (2015)

TAGS: [Achilles](#) [Aeneas](#) [Agamemnon](#) [Aphrodite](#) [Apollo](#) [Architecture](#) [Ares](#) [Artemis](#) [Asclepius](#) [Athena](#) [Cassandra](#) [Eris](#) [Gods](#) [Greek History](#) [Hector](#) [Helen](#) [Hera](#) [Hermes](#) [Homer](#) [Iliad](#) [Juno](#) [Katabasis](#) [Menelaus](#) [Minerva](#) [Odysseus / Ulysses](#) [Odyssey](#) [Paris \(Trojan Prince\)](#) [Penelope](#) [Thetis](#) [Trojan Horse](#) [Trojan War](#) [Troy](#) [Underworld](#) [Zeus](#)



Illustrations copyright  
© 2015 Neil Perker  
From **THE ILIAD** by  
**Gillian Cross &  
Illustrations by Neil  
Parker**

Reproduced by  
permission of Walker  
Books Ltd., London  
SE11 5HJ.  
[walker.co.uk](http://walker.co.uk) (accessed:  
August 1, 2018).

General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	The Iliad
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	United Kingdom
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	United Kingdom
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2015
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Gillian Cross, Neil Packer, ill., <i>The Iliad</i> . London: Walker Books Ltd., 2015, 175 pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	9781406314212
<i>Genre</i>	Adaptations, Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works, Myths, Picture books
<i>Target Audience</i>	Young adults
<i>Author of the Entry</i>	Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton, <a href="mailto:sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk">sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk</a>

Sonya Nevin, "Entry on: The Iliad by Gillian Cross, Neil Packer", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Hanna Paulouskaya. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/152>. Entry version as of July 10, 2026.

---

<i>Peer-reviewer of the Entry</i>	Susan Deacy, University of Roehampton, s.deacy@roehampton.ac.uk Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl
-----------------------------------	--



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood... The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016-2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

## Creators



### **Gillian Cross , b. 1945 (Author)**

Gillian Cross is a British children's author from London. She studied at Somerville College Oxford, before taking a PhD from the University of Sussex. For some years, Gillian Cross worked as a government advisor promoting public libraries. Since turning to writing, she has had considerable success with the popular *Demon Headmaster* series and has won many awards. Although not usually specialising in historical fiction, Gillian Cross' publications nonetheless include *The Odyssey* (Walker Books, 2012), *Down with the Dirty Danes!* (HarperCollins, 2000), *Brother Aelred's Feet* (HarperCollins, 2007), and *The Roman Beanfeast* (Barn Owl Books, 1997).

Sources:

Official [website](#) (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Twitter [profile](#) (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton,  
[sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk)



### **Neil Packer , b. 1961 (Illustrator)**

Neil Packer trained at the Colchester School of Art. He worked as a graphic design before becoming a full-time freelance illustrator in the 1980s. He has done a considerable amount of work for the Folio Society. His work for tem includes illustrated volumes of Robert Graves' *I Claudius* (1994), *The Arabian Nights* (2003), Petronius'

*Satyrice* (2003) and the fairy-tales of Hans Christian Andersen (2005). Neil Packer also illustrated Gillian Cross' *Odyssey* (Walker Books, 2012).

Source:

Official [website](#) (accessed: June 26, 2018).

Bio prepared by Sonya Nevin, University of Roehampton,  
[sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:sonya.nevin@roehampton.ac.uk)

---



## Additional information

### Summary

Gillian Cross' *The Iliad* opens with events prior to the Trojan War, starting with the three goddesses arguing over the apple. The text then moves on to a retelling of Homer's Iliad itself, before concluding with an "Afterwards" chapter relating Achilles' death, the quarrel over his armour, the wooden horse, Cassandra's insight (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.246), the fall of Troy, Diomedes' and Odysseus' post-Troy journeys, and Agamemnon's murder (see esp. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*).

This is a retelling of ancient myth with an emphasis on striking visualisation.

---

### Analysis

This is a sensitive retelling of the *Iliad*, which makes use of Homeric imagery such as "like two wild boars," and Homeric expressions such as "smiling through tears." Some of the original direct speech is paraphrased to good effect. There is also a thoughtful reference to a boars tusk helmet, one of the legacies of the Mycenaean Age that survives in the Homeric epic (Homer, *Iliad*, 10.260-270); unfortunately, this detail has been slightly misunderstood, so that there is a reference to the tusks "decorating" a helmet rather than being made of them and the illustrator, likewise, presents the helmet as a standard hoplite helmet with large tusks affixed like Hollywood Viking horns.

The section in which the Greeks build the wall follows the *Iliad* very closely but differs from it in Zeus' response (Homer, *Iliad*, 7.430-460). In Homer's *Iliad*, Poseidon complains about the lack of offerings that accompanied the wall, and about the possibility that it will become more famous than the walls he built at Troy. Zeus dismisses this, before going on to frighten Greeks and Trojans alike with thunder, with malicious thoughts towards them. In Cross' *Iliad* (p. 45), "Zeus was not pleased when he saw the wall. He wanted the Greeks to rely on his protection, not on man-made defences." This adjustment moves the plot along with the brevity needed for an abridged version, yet it does so in a way that introduces a theological concept that is at odds with the ancient Greeks' concept of what the gods expected from them.

Cross' *Iliad* does not shy away from much of the unpalatable violence



of the original; the night attack is included, as is Achilles' killing of Iphidamus, complete with its touching backstory. The more graphic descriptions of wounds are omitted. Sexual content is kept to a minimum or alluded to delicately, so that, for example, following Paris' duel with Menelaus, Hector seeks out Paris and berates him, but Helen speaking to Aphrodite and sleeping with Paris is cut; Cassandra's story refers to how "Apollo was in love with her," and how he cursed her "when he stopped loving her," (see Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1203ff.).

While the author has done a fine job of retelling the *Iliad*, this edition is arguably most distinctive in its illustration. The edition is heavily illustrated throughout; few double-pages go without illustration, there are many full-page illustrations, and several two-page illustrations featuring only a few words. Classical armour, clothing, and other equipment situate the events in Greek antiquity (the only exception being some Y-front underwear, p. 104). The illustrations frequently have labels and additional text in Greek script. A Greek alphabet is provided at the end of the book. Beyond that, the style of the illustration places the events in a surreal, fantastical environment. Figures are represented with a semi-grotesque hyper-realism, such as heads or limbs out of proportion, faces aged and distorted. There is extensive use of extremes of either multi-colour, or black-and-white, or silhouette, with the suggestion of the influence of shadow-puppetry at points. Architecture is presented in an angular, stylised fashion, with people appearing within the architecture out of proportion, yet in proportion with their emotional impact within the scene. There are some chilling visual details, such as collections of skulls and bones, and the frequent presence of vultures. On at least one occasion (p. 36), the vultures are labelled with the names of on-looking gods, adding a further layer of creative interpretation. Humans and deities are depicted with a range of skin tones and ethnicities. In the image with the god-vultures, the Greeks sit in lines staring out of the page at the viewer. On the one hand, this fits the context in which Hector requests a duel, placing the viewer in Hector's position; on the other, the Greeks' presentation evokes WW1 and other informal military photographs, or even sport-team photographs, bestowing poignant relatable humanity upon the ancient warriors.

This is a compelling version of *The Iliad* that makes a bold statement about the ancient epic's ability to inspire new artistic works.



Classical, Mythological,  
Traditional Motifs,  
Characters, and  
Concepts

[Achilles](#) [Aeneas](#) [Agamemnon](#) [Aphrodite](#) [Apollo](#) [Architecture](#) [Ares](#)  
[Artemis](#) [Asclepius](#) [Athena](#) [Cassandra](#) [Eris](#) [Gods](#) [Greek History](#) [Hector](#)  
[Helen](#) [Hera](#) [Hermes](#) [Homer](#) [Iliad](#) [Juno](#) [Katabasis](#) [Menelaus](#) [Minerva](#)  
[Odysseus / Ulysses](#) [Odyssey](#) [Paris \(Trojan Prince\)](#) [Penelope](#) [Thetis](#)  
[Trojan Horse](#) [Trojan War](#) [Troy](#) [Underworld](#) [Zeus](#)

---

Other Motifs, Figures,  
and Concepts Relevant  
for Children and Youth  
Culture

[Death](#) [Friendship](#) [Gender expectations/construction](#) [Heroism](#) [Identity](#)  
[Individuality](#) [Intellect](#) [Justice](#) [Morality](#) [Parents \(and children\)](#) [Past](#)  
[Relationships](#) [Society](#) [Storytelling](#)

---

Further Reading

Eccleshare, Julia, *Interview with Gillian Cross (Telling Tales)*, London: Egmont UK Ltd, 1999.

Haywood, Jan and Naoise Mac Sweeney, *Homer's Iliad and the Trojan War. Dialogues on Tradition*, London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

The University of Chicago Library, '[The Children's Homer](#)', part of [Homer in Print: The Transmission and Reception of Homer's Works](#), available at [lib.uchicago.edu](http://lib.uchicago.edu) (accessed: August 1, 2018).

---

Copyrights

Illustrations copyright © **2015 Neil Perker**

From **THE ILIAD by Gillian Cross & Illustrations by Neil Parker**

Reproduced by permission of Walker Books Ltd., London SE11 5HJ.

[walker.co.uk](http://walker.co.uk) (accessed: August 1, 2018).

---

