

The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad

By Seth L. Schein

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From the Preface:
This book is addressed mainly to non-specialist readers who do not know Greek and who read, study, or teach the Iliad in translation; it also is meant for classical scholars whose professional specialization has prevented them from keeping abreast of recent work on Homer. It is grounded in technical scholarship, to which it constantly referes and is intended to contribute, and I hope that even Homeric specialists will find ideas and interpretations to interest them. I have tried to present clearly what seem to me the most valuable results of modern research and criticism of the Iliad while setting forth my own views. My goal has been to interpret the poem as much as possible on its own mythological, religious, ethical, and artistic terms. The topics and problems I focus on are those that have arisen most often and most insistently when I have thought the poem, in translation and in the original, as I have done every year since 1968.

This book is a literary study of the Iliad. I have not discussed historical, archaeologoical, or even linguistic questions except where they are directly relevant to literary interpretation. Throughout I have emphasized what is thematically, ethically, and artistically distinctive in the Iliad in contrast to the conventions of the poetic tradition of which it is an end product.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

"The most judicious, balanced, unhobbyhorsical, insightful book on the Iliad that I have ever read, deeply versed in scholarship, . . . profoundly in touch with what seems to me the true greatness of the poem; a combination of carefully researched, eclectic knowledge and opinion on the one hand and often striking, but never sensationalistic, original insight on the other. . . .I should think that every teach of the Iliad . . . would find the book invaluable."
--Norman Rabkin, English, University of California, Berkeley

"Schein does a good job of conveying the essential moral questions of the Iliad with respect for the text and a well-chosen synthesis of the linguistic and structural contributions of recent scholars like Benveniste, Nagy, Redfield, Austin, Nagler, and Kakridis . . . . The usefulness of the work lies in the integration of diverse approaches into a readable and lucid whole and an obvious love of the poem and thorough familiarity with the text. For the student or harried humanities instructor who wants to read one literary study of the Iliad, this would be a good choice."
--Charles Segal, Classics, Brown University

"Seth Schein's book is a carefully written and lucid expose of the current state of Homeric studies. Interesting and reliable, it will be of great service to novices and specialists alike."
--Gregory Nagy, Classics, Harvard University

About the Author

Seth L. Schein is Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature at University of California, Davis.

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From reader reviews:

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