Teaching Guide

Minecraft: *Iliad* Illuminated

Use this guide in conjunction with the *Iliad* Illuminated world in Minecraft.

Unit Overview

In this epic Minecraft world, students will travel through Sparta and Troy and interact with the characters of the *Iliad*. Students will experience the stories of the *Iliad* unfolding firsthand. They will observe how Achilles changes and grows over time, and the challenges–physical, mental, and emotional–that the characters face. Along the way, students will fight in battles, respond to journal prompts, and snap selfies to keep in their portfolio.

Estimated time per lesson: 30 min

Unit objectives

- Observe Achilles throughout the game to answer these guiding questions and write a news feature:
    - How does Achilles change over time?
    - How does his decision whether to go to war change throughout the story?
    - How do his motivations drive the plot of the story?
- Use reading strategies to help understand the *Iliad* and answer comprehension questions.
- Explain the interactions between characters, events, and ideas in the story.
- Analyze how story elements interact.
- Explain how characters, events, and ideas relate.
- Identify the central idea and analyze how it develops.
- Decode symbolism and figurative language in the *Iliad*.
- Find the theme or central idea of the story and explain the interactions between characters, events, or ideas.

Unit assessment

Journal: Prompts are located in the journal (purple book); students must respond using the Book & Quill. Both the journal and Book & Quill can be exported. To export the journal, simply press Export. To export the Book & Quill, students must first sign and complete the book and then press Export. (Note: Once students sign the book, they can no longer edit it.)

- Prompt 1: Imagine you are Achilles. Write a pros/cons list to help decide whether or not to go to war. Then, consider whether this decision is easier or harder than Odysseus's.
- Prompt 2: What's a story or movie that starts in medias res? Explain.
- Prompt 3: Respond to one of Achilles's questions:
    - What kind of lessons do you think I might learn from my anger?
    - What do you think makes this argument noteworthy: the cause, the effects, the characters involved? Might my anger bring harm to my own people?
    - Do you think the Greeks would be proud of me for allowing my anger to take over?
- Prompt 4: What central idea in the story is revealed by Hector's inspiration to fight in battle?
- Prompt 5: How would you try to convince Achilles to rejoin the battle? What would you say to him? Write the persuasive speech you'd give to win over Achilles.
- Prompt 6: What might be the symbolism of Achilles's previously unscathed helmet falling to the earth? What might this predict about Achilles's fate?

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- Prompt 7: A warrior's armor represents his honor. Why would it be particularly important to possess Achilles's armor? What would it say about the Greeks and especially Achilles if the Trojans possessed Patroclus's body?
- Prompt 8: How has Achilles changed over the course of the story? How have his motivations to join the war driven the plot?
- Prompt 9: React to the symbolism and meaning of Achilles's shield. What does it tell you about the ancient Greeks? About Achilles? About Homer and the themes of the *Iliad*?
- Prompt 10: Write a feature article about Achilles using all the hands-on research you've conducted. Your feature article should answer the three questions you've been investigating all along: **How does Achilles change over time, how does his decision whether to go to war or not change over time, and, how do his motivations drive the plot of the story?** (The chalkboard has more information.)

Portfolio: Students will also use the in-game camera to snap photos and selfies and caption them in their Portfolio. To export the Portfolio, simply press Export Portfolio.

Lesson 1

Lesson goals

- Read about what happened before the stories of the *Iliad*.
- Travel through Sparta and Troy, interacting with characters, taking selfies, and experiencing firsthand the events that led to the Trojan War.
- Respond to journal prompts about Achilles and Odysseus.
- Take and caption pictures to add to a portfolio.

Materials

- *Iliad* Illuminated world
- Book & Quill (in game)
- Journal (in game)
- Camera (in game)
- Portfolio (in game)
- "What Happened Before the *Iliad*" PDF (accessed in Minecraft world)

Vocabulary

- setting – where and when a literary work takes place
- plot – what happens in a story; the sequence of events

Activities

1. **Words to Know:** Review vocabulary students will encounter in the assigned reading by providing an example sentence and asking them to try to define the word from the context clues. Then provide the definition.
    a. prophecy – The prophecy had come true. – a prediction
    b. discord – There was discord between them. – lack of harmony
    c. mortal – He worried about the mortal as he watched him travel across the sea. – human
2. **Minecraft game play:** Have students log in to Minecraft to start the world and learn that their avatar in the game is apprenticing as a reporter and will be following and observing Achilles throughout the world in order to write a feature article about how he changes over time.
    a. Students will begin by reading "What happened Before the *Iliad*."
    b. After meeting Achilles, they will go on to talk with King Priam of Troy and learn about his sons.
    c. They will travel to Mount Ida to find Paris and interact with the goddesses.

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   d. In Sparta, they will encounter Helen, Menelaus, and Odysseus.

3. **Review student work:** After students have completed the tasks in this lesson, encourage them to describe some of the interesting characters they encountered and places they visited. Ask guiding questions about the characters, setting, and plot to help them recall the events and analyze how story elements interact.

Assessment: Have students answer the journal prompt, as well as caption the pictures they took.

Lesson 2

Lesson goals

- Read the beginning stories of the *Iliad*:
  - "Prologue: The Long Siege"
  - "The Quarrel"
  - "Hector and Andromache."
- Travel from Sparta to Troy, interacting with characters, taking selfies, fighting in battle, and experiencing firsthand the events of the Trojan War.
- Respond to journal prompts about in medias res and the stories' central idea.
- Take and caption pictures to add to a portfolio.

Materials

- *Iliad* Illuminated world
- Book & Quill (in game)
- Journal (in game)
- Camera (in game)
- Portfolio (in game)
- "Stories from the *Iliad*" PDF (accessed in Minecraft world)

Vocabulary

- *in medias res* – beginning a story in the middle rather than at the beginning for narrative effect
- conflict – a clash or struggle between people, ideas, or feelings; characters can have a conflict within themselves, with another character, with society, or with nature

Activities

1. **Words to Know:** Review vocabulary students will encounter in the assigned reading by providing an example sentence and asking them to try to define the word from the context clues. Then provide the definition.

   a. siege – They started a siege on the castle. – a military blockade

   b. ransom – She held the valuable item for a ransom. – a demand for a release of something or someone from imprisonment

   c. fate – He knew that losing the battle would seal his fate, as would winning it. – an inevitable outcome

2. **Minecraft game play:** Have students log in to Minecraft to start the world. They will pick up where they left off in Lesson 1 and continue their journey through *Iliad* Illuminated.

   a. Students will begin by reading "Prologue: The Long Siege," "The Quarrel," and "Hector and Andromache."

   b. Students will then travel by ship to Troy and have the option of fighting in battle. They will bring Agamemnon spoils of war and learn about his quarrel with Achilles.

   c. Students will then talk with Hector and discover a central idea of the stories of the *Iliad*.

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3. **Review student work:** After students have completed the tasks in this lesson, encourage them to describe some of the interesting characters they encountered and places they visited. Ask guiding questions about the characters, setting, and plot to help them recall the events and analyze how story elements interact.

Assessment: Have students answer the journal prompt, as well as caption the pictures they took.

Lesson 3

Lesson goals

- Read the middle stories from the *Iliad*.
    - "Agamemnon's Appeal to Achilles"
    - "The Arming of Patroclus"
- Explore the characters and conflicts behind the Trojan War, interacting with characters, taking selfies, and trying to convince Achilles to rejoin the war.
- Respond to journal prompts about Achilles and his fate.
- Take and caption pictures to add to a portfolio.

Materials

- *Iliad* Illuminated world
- Book & Quill (in game)
- Journal (in game)
- Camera (in game)
- Portfolio (in game)
- "Stories from the *Iliad*" PDF (accessed in Minecraft world)

Vocabulary

- theme – the main message that an author wants to communicate to a reader

Activities

1. **Words to Know:** Review vocabulary students will encounter in the assigned reading by providing an example sentence and asking them to try to define the word from the context clues. Then provide the definition.
    a. hinder – She did not want to hinder the progress. – hamper
    b. lack – He found the lack of provisions alarming. – to be missing
    c. cherish – They both cherish their pet. – nurture
2. **Minecraft game play:** Have students log in to Minecraft to start the world. They will pick up where they left off in Lesson 2 and continue their journey through *Iliad* Illuminated.
    a. Students will begin by reading "Agamemnon's Appeal to Achilles" and "The Arming of Patroclus."
    b. Then students will participate in battles before the high walls of Troy and document the war with a focus on which warriors are there, where they've placed themselves on the battlefield, and which warriors are not present.
    c. Then students will attend the Gathering of the Greek Chiefs and hear Agamemnon's change of heart and plan to send an apology to Achilles.
    d. Students will go along with the three chiefs, Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoenix, to Achilles's camp to deliver Agamemnon's apology and try to convince Achilles to return to battle.
    e. Finally, they will ride with Patroclus on Achilles's chariot as he goes into battle (as if as Achilles, in his armor) and meets his death.

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3. **Review student work:** After students have completed the tasks in this lesson, encourage them to describe some of the interesting characters they encountered and places they visited. Ask guiding questions about the characters, setting, and plot to help them recall the events and analyze how story elements interact.

Assessment: Have students answer the journal prompt, as well as caption the pictures they took.

Lesson 4

Lesson goals

- Read the closing stories from the *Iliad*:
    - "How the Death of Patroclus Roused Achilles"
    - "The Making of the Arms"
    - "The Vengeance of Achilles"
- Explore symbolism in the *Iliad*.
- Experience the events that led up to the fall of Troy by interacting with characters, taking part in battles, and taking selfies.
- Respond to journal prompts about Achilles and the symbolism of a warrior's armor.
- Write a feature article about Achilles answering the game's three guiding questions: **How does Achilles change over time, how does his decision whether to go to war or not change over time, and, how do his motivations drive the plot of the story?**
- Take and caption pictures to add to a portfolio.

Materials

- *Iliad* Illuminated world
- Book & Quill (in game)
- Journal (in game)
- Camera (in game)
- Portfolio (in game)
- "Stories from the *Iliad*" PDF (accessed in Minecraft world)

Vocabulary

- simile – a type of figurative language that compares two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*
- extended simile – compares two unlike things in detail with vivid language and description
- epic poetry – poetry written on a grand scale that uses extended similes to add depth to the stories

Activities

1. **Minecraft game play:** Have students log in to Minecraft to start the world. They will pick up where they left off in Lesson 3 and continue their journey through *Iliad* Illuminated.

    a. Students will begin by reading "How the Death of Patroclus Roused Achilles," "The Making of the Arms," and "The Vengeance of Achilles."

    b. Students will travel with a messenger to tell Achilles of Patroclus's death and then, along with Achilles, enter the god realm where they'll assist Hephaestus in making new arms for Achilles.

    c. Finally, they will accompany Achilles as he battles with Hector over the body of Patroclus.

2. **Review student work:** After students have completed the tasks in this lesson, encourage them to describe some of the interesting characters they encountered and places they visited. Ask guiding questions about the characters, setting, and plot to help them recall the events and analyze how story elements interact. Encourage them to discuss themes of the *Iliad* and how these themes may resonate within their own lives.

Assessment: Have students answer the journal prompts, including writing their news feature about Achilles, as well as caption the pictures they took.

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Optional Extension Activities

- Invite students to select a monologue from the *Iliad* to memorize, dramatize, and recite.
- Have students work in small groups to select a scene from the *Iliad* to memorize and dramatize for the rest of the class.
- Have students reference an emotions wheel and map Achilles's (or a character of their choosing) emotions over the course of the *Iliad*.
- Have students reflect on the two important themes in the stories of the *Iliad*—how characters demonstrate excellence and what it means to live a life worthy of honor—and apply them to their own lives. Invite students to write a letter to their future selves delineating how they will have lived these values in the years to come.

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