The Apple of Discord

The Trojan War has its roots in the marriage between Peleus and Thetis, a sea-goddess. Peleus and Thetis had not invited Discordia, the goddess of disagreements, to their marriage and the outraged goddess stormed into the wedding banquet and threw a golden apple onto the table. The apple belonged to, Discord said, whomever was the fairest.

Juno, Minerva, and Venus each reached for the apple and argued over it for many years. Jupiter proclaimed that Paris, prince of Troy and thought to be the most beautiful man alive, would act as the judge.

Mercury went to Paris, and Paris agreed to act as the judge. Juno promised him power, Minerva promised him wealth, and Venus promised the most beautiful woman in the world.

Paris chose Venus, and she promised him that Helen, wife of Menelaus, would be his wife. Paris then prepared to set off for Sparta to capture Helen. Twin prophets Cassandra and Helenus tried to persuade him against such action, as did his mother, Hecuba. But Paris would not listen and he set off for Sparta.

In Sparta, Menelaus, husband of Helen, treated Paris as a royal guest. However, when Menelaus left Sparta to go to a funeral, Paris abducted Helen (who perhaps went willingly) and also carried off much of Menelaus' wealth.

In Troy, Helen and Paris were married. This occurred around 1200 B.C. (Wood, 16).

Greek Armament

Menelaus, however, was outraged to find that Paris had taken Helen. Menelaus then called upon all of Helen's old suitors, as all great warriors in Greece who had made an oath long ago that they would all back Helen's husband to defend her honor. Namely the clever Odysseus, the great warrior Achilles – the son of Peleus and Thetis, and his brother Agamemnon, who was their leader.

Unfortunately for Agamemnon, the seer Calchas proclaimed that Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, must be sacrificed before the fleet could set sail or they would never arrive. This was done, and the Greek ships set off in search of Troy.

The War

The first nine years of the war consisted of both war in Troy and war against the neighboring regions. The Greeks realized that Troy was being supplied by its neighboring kingdoms, so Greeks were sent to defeat these areas.

The Greeks won many important battles and the greatest Trojan hero and prince Hector fell against Achilles. However, the Greeks could not break down the walls of Troy. Achilles was felled by Paris, after being shot in his heel, the only week part of his body.

The Trojan Horse

Still seeking to gain entrance into Troy, clever Odysseus (some say with the aid of Athena) ordered a large wooden horse to be built. Its insides were to be hollow so that soldiers could hide within it.

Once the statue had been built, a number of the Greek warriors, along with Odysseus, climbed inside. The rest of the Greek fleet sailed away, so as to deceive the Trojans.

One man, Sinon, was left behind. When the Trojans came to marvel at the huge creation, Sinon pretended to be angry with the Greeks, stating that they had tried to sacrifice him. He assured the Trojans that the wooden horse was safe and would bring luck to the Trojans. Only two people, Laocoon and Cassandra, spoke out against the horse, but one was killed and one was ignored. The Trojans celebrated what they thought was their victory, and dragged the wooden horse into Troy.

That night, after most of Troy was asleep or in a drunken stupor, Sinon let the Greek warriors out from the horse, and they slaughtered the Trojans. Priam – the king of Troy was killed as he huddled by Jupiter’s altar.

After the War

After the war, Polyxena, daughter of Priam, was sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles and Astyanax, son of Hector, was also sacrificed, signifying the end of the war.

Aeneas, a Trojan prince and the son of Venus, managed to escape the destruction of Troy, and Virgil's *Aeneid* tells of his flight from Troy. His journeys eventually led him to Italy where he founded the Roman race.

Menelaus, who had been determined to kill his faithless wife, was soon taken by Helen's beauty and seductiveness that he allowed her to live.

The surviving Trojan women were divided among the Greek men along with the other plunder. The Greeks then set sail for home, which, for some, proved as difficult and took as much time as the Trojan War itself especially Odysseus. For some, like Agamemnon, going home was worse than being at war.