

# The Trojan Horse

retold by Stephanie Paris

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The war had already been going for 10 years. Greece was fighting the city of Troy. The Greeks were led by Odysseus. They had laid siege to the city. They had surrounded it. But they could not get past the huge walls. Both sides were tired. The Greeks had been away from their families for too long. The Trojans wanted their freedom. They wanted to walk across the countryside. They wanted to trade with their neighbors. The armies were stuck. No one could win.



One morning, the Trojans looked out. They were delighted! They saw that the Greeks were getting ready to leave. The Greeks packed their tents. They loaded supplies onto wagons. Soldiers formed into lines. In one corner was a group of craftsmen. They were building something big. It took several days for the army to get on the move. But one sunrise, it happened. The guards of Troy could see the ships of Greece. They were putting out their sails. They were moving out to sea. There was only one man left. He stood next to a giant wooden horse.

“Who are you? What has happened here?” the Trojans said. The man said, “I am Sinon. The Greek army has left me here! I have nothing! There is only this wooden statue to protect me!”

“And what is that wooden horse?” the Trojans asked.

“That is an offering to Athena. It is so she will let the ships go back to Greece. It is to keep them safe,” spat Sinon. “They made it big. They don’t want you to take it into the city. They don’t want you to get Athena on your side!”

The Trojans were not trusting. One priest was named Laocoon. He warned, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!” He thought there might be men hidden inside the horse! So the Trojans asked Helen to come out. They wanted to try a trick. She knew the men that might be inside. So she pretended to be their wives.

She called out, “Odysseus! Are you inside there, my love? Please come out! I have been captured!” But there was no answer. Next, she tried calling for Anticlus. She used a different voice. But all was silent.



The Trojans now believed Sinon. They decided to take the horse into the city. They hoped to get Athena’s blessing. They thought that Athena might even harm the Greek fleet!

Cassandra was the soothsayer of Troy. She was gifted with sight. She could tell the future. She tried to warn King Priam. He was the leader of Troy. “This horse will be the downfall of Troy. It will end the royal family!” she said. But she was ignored. The great horse was dragged through the heavy gates. It was put into the main square for all to see.

That night, the Trojans were relieved. They threw a huge feast. They wanted to celebrate. It was the end of the war! Many people looked up to the horse as a symbol of their victory. They rejoiced! By the small hours of the morning, they were exhausted. Everyone went to sleep. Only a few guards were awake.

But Laocoon and Cassandra had been right! Inside the horse were hidden 30 of the best Greek fighters. They were led by Odysseus. They crept out of the horse. Quickly, they overpowered the guards. Next, they threw open the gates of Troy. They let in the Greek army. The Greeks had sailed away during the day. But they had sailed back at night. Now, the whole army had sneaked back to Troy. They took over the unprepared city. King Priam was killed. And at last, the long war was finally over.

People today repeat Laocoon’s advice. “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts,” they say. This means they want to warn you about enemies who are now acting friendly. And sometimes people talk about a “Trojan horse.” Then they mean to say that a gift that looks good on the outside might hide something unpleasant within!

## Element Focus: Language Usage

Today, the term *Trojan horse* is used as a metaphor. When might a gift be thought of as a Trojan horse?



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The war between Troy and Greece had been raging for a full decade. The Greeks were led by Odysseus. They had laid siege to the city of Troy. They had surrounded it. But they could not get past the huge walls. The troops of both sides were tired. The Greeks had been away from their families for too long. The Trojans wanted their freedom to walk at will across the countryside. They wanted to trade with their neighbors. They were at a stalemate.



One morning, the Trojans looked out on the enemy camps. To their delight, they saw that the Greeks were readying themselves to leave! The tents were being packed. Supplies were being loaded onto wagons. And soldiers were forming into lines. In one corner, a group of craftsmen busied themselves. They were building a large wooden figure. It took several days for the army to get on the move. But one sunrise, the guards of Troy could see the ships of Greece. They were unfurling their sails and moving out to sea. Where the camps had been remained only one man. He stood next to a giant wooden horse.

“Who are you? What has happened here?” the Trojans demanded. The man said, “I am Sinon of Greece. The cursed Greek army has left me here! I have nothing but this wooden statue to protect me.”

“And what exactly is that wooden horse?” the Trojans wanted to know.

“That is an offering to Athena. It is so she will allow safe passage of the ships back to Greece,” replied Sinon bitterly. “They made it large. They hoped to prevent you from taking it into Troy. They don’t want you asking the goddess’s favor for yourselves!”

The Trojans were not trusting. One priest, Laocoon, warned, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!” He thought there might be men hidden inside the horse! So the Trojans asked Helen of Troy to come out. They wanted to try a trick. She knew the men that the Greeks would trust with such a task. So she pretended to be their wives.

First, she called out, “Odysseus! Are you inside there, my beloved? Please come out! They have captured me!” But there was no answer. Next, she tried calling for Anticlus. She used a different voice. But again, all was silent.



The Trojans were satisfied. They believed Sinon. So they decided to take the great horse into the city. They hoped to get Athena’s blessing for themselves. And they thought that Athena might even disrupt the Greek journey home!

Cassandra was the soothsayer of Troy. She was gifted with sight to tell the future. She tried to warn King Priam, the leader of Troy. “This horse will be the downfall of Troy. It will end the royal family!” she said. But she was ignored. The great horse was carefully dragged through the heavy gates. It was put into the main courtyard for all to see.

That night, the Trojans heaved a sigh of relief. They threw a huge feast. They wanted to celebrate. It was the end of the war! Many people looked up to the horse as a symbol of their victory. They rejoiced! By the small hours of the morning, they were exhausted. All except for a few guards went to sleep.

But as it turned out, Laocoon and Cassandra had been right! Inside the giant horse were hidden 30 of Greece’s best fighters. Led by Odysseus, they crept out of the horse. Quickly, they overpowered the few soldiers still on duty. Next, they threw open the gates of Troy and let the Greek soldiers into the main courtyard. The Greeks had sailed away during the day. But they had sailed back under cover of darkness. Now, the entire army had sneaked back to Troy. They easily conquered the unprepared city! King Priam of Troy was killed. And at last, the long war was finally over.

To this day, people repeat Laocoon’s fateful advice. “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts,” they say when they want to warn about enemies suddenly acting friendly. And when someone discusses a “Trojan horse,” they mean to say that a gift that looks good on the outside might hold something unpleasant within!

## Element Focus: Language Usage

Today, the term *Trojan horse* is used as a metaphor. Describe what you think this metaphor means.



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The war between Troy and Greece had been raging for a full decade. The Greeks, led by Odysseus, had laid siege to the city of Troy. They had surrounded the city but had never been able to breach its sturdy walls. The troops of both sides were weary. The Greeks had been away from their families for far too long. The Trojans wanted their freedom to walk at will across the countryside and resume trade with their neighbors. No one had yet found a solution to the stalemate.



One morning, the Trojans looked out on the enemy camps. To their delight, they noted that the Greeks were readying themselves to leave! The tents were being packed, supplies were being loaded onto wagons, and soldiers were forming into caravans. In one corner of the compound, a group of craftsmen busied themselves building a large wooden figure. It took several days for the army to get completely on the move. But one sunrise, the guards of Troy saw the ships of Greece unfurling their sails and moving out to sea. Where the camps had been now remained only one man. He was standing beside a giant wooden horse.

“Who are you, and what has happened here?” they demanded of the man. He replied, “I am Sinon of Greece. The accursed Greek army has abandoned me here with nothing but this wooden mockery to protect me!”

“And what exactly is that wooden horse?” the suspicious Trojans wanted to know.

“That is an offering to Athena so that she will allow safe passage of the ships back to Greece,” replied Sinon bitterly. “They made it so large to prevent you from taking it into Troy and claiming the goddess’s favor yourselves!”

After 10 long years of war, the Trojans were understandably skeptical. One priest, Laocoon, warned, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!” He thought there might be men hidden inside the horse! So the Trojans asked Helen of Troy to try a trick. Helen had lived among the Greeks. She well knew the men who might have been entrusted with such a mission. She also was acquainted with their families. So now, the Trojans called upon her to impersonate the heroes’ wives.

First, she called out, “Odysseus! Are you inside there, my beloved Odysseus? Please come out! The Trojans have captured me!” But there was no response from within. So she proceeded to call out for Anticlus, using a different voice. But again, all was silent.



Finally, the Trojans were satisfied. They decided to take the great horse into the city. In this way, they hoped to get Athena’s blessing for themselves and perhaps even disrupt the Greek journey home!

Cassandra was the soothsayer of Troy, gifted with sight to tell the future. She tried to warn King Priam, insisting, “This horse will be the downfall of Troy and the royal family!” But she was ignored. The wooden horse was carefully dragged through the heavy gates of the city. It was placed in the main courtyard for all to see.

That night, the Trojans finally heaved a sigh of relief. They threw a huge feast to celebrate the end of the war. Many people looked up to the horse as a symbol of their victory and rejoiced. By the small hours of the morning, they were exhausted. All except for a few guards fell into a deep and hopeful sleep.

But as it turned out, Laocoon and Cassandra had been right all along! Inside the giant horse were hidden 30 of Greece’s best fighters. Led by Odysseus, they crept out of the horse. Quickly, they overpowered the few soldiers still on duty. Next, they threw open the gates of Troy and let the Greek soldiers into the main courtyard. The Greeks had sailed away during the day. But they had sailed back under cover of darkness. Now, the entire army had sneaked back to Troy. They easily conquered the unprepared city! King Priam of Troy was killed, and at last, the long war was finally over.

To this day, people repeat Laocoon’s fateful advice: “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.” They intend to warn someone about enemies who are suddenly acting friendly. And when someone discusses a “Trojan horse,” they mean to say that a gift that looks good on the outside might hide an unpleasant surprise within!

## Element Focus: Language Usage

Describe the ways that the Trojan horse has taken on a metaphorical meaning.



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The war between Troy and Greece had been raging for a complete decade. The Greeks, led by the hero Odysseus, had laid siege to the city of Troy, surrounding it, but had never been able to breach its sturdy walls. The troops of both sides were incredibly weary. The Greeks had been away from their families for far too long. The Trojans, of course, wanted the freedom to walk at will across the countryside and resume trade with their neighbors. No one had yet found a solution to the stalemate.



One morning, the Trojans looked out on the enemy camps, and to their delight, noted that the Greeks were readying themselves to leave! The tents were being packed, supplies were being loaded onto wagons, and soldiers were forming into traveling caravans. In one corner of the compound, a group of craftsmen busied themselves building a large wooden figure. It took several days for the army to get completely on the move, but one sunrise, the guards of Troy looked out to see the ships of Greece unfurling their sails and moving out to sea. Where the camps had been now remained only one man standing beside a giant wooden horse.

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First, she called out, “Odysseus! Are you inside there, my beloved Odysseus? Please come out! The Trojans have captured me!” But there was no response or any sound from within. So she proceeded to call out for Anticlus, using a different voice, but again, all was silent.



Finally, satisfied that what Sinon had said was true, the Trojans decided to take the great horse into the city. In this way, they hoped to get Athena’s blessing for themselves and perhaps even disrupt the Greek journey home!

Cassandra was the soothsayer of Troy, gifted with sight to tell the future. She tried to warn King Priam, the leader of Troy, insisting, “This horse will be the downfall of Troy and the royal family!” But she was ignored, and the great horse was carefully dragged through the heavy gates of the city. It was deposited into the main courtyard for all to see.

That night, the Trojans finally heaved a sigh of relief and threw a huge feast to celebrate the end of the war. Many people looked up to the horse as a symbol of their victory and rejoiced. By the small hours of the morning, they were exhausted. All except for a few guards fell into a deep and hopeful sleep.

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## Element Focus: Language Usage

What pictures do the words in this story paint in your mind?