

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST
TRANSCRIPTS**

**EPISODE 12:
EARLY GREEK, HITTITE AND THE TROJAN WAR**

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EPISODE 12: EARLY GREEK, HITTITE AND THE TROJAN WAR (Extended Version)

[NOTE: This transcript is for the extended version of the episode posted in October, 2020]

Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 12: Early Greek, Hittite and the Trojan War. Over the last few episodes, we have looked at the migration of the original Indo-European tribes from the Eurasian steppes to the areas where the modern Indo-European languages are located. We will now begin to look at each of the individual Indo-European languages which have directly impacted the history of English. And we'll begin with the early Greeks.

But before I begin, let me give a quick thanks to Louis Henwood and naturalearthdata.com for the fantastic maps which Louis prepared for the website, historyofenglishpodcast.com. If you haven't checked out the site recently, you might want to check out the pages for Episodes 9, 10 and 11. The maps included there are wonderful maps that fully illustrate the migrations which I discussed in those episodes. So thanks again to Louis.

Now this time, I want to introduce you to the ancient Greeks and I want to explore the Indo-Europeans roots of those original Greek-speaking people.

The Greek language is the biggest influence on modern English outside of Latin and, of course, the English's native Germanic roots. Even if you're not interested in ancient history, you probably know that Greek culture was a major influence on western civilization. The Greek influence extends into many disciplines that were pioneered in Greece, including music, philosophy, politics, drama and poetry – all words that come from Greek by the way.

But this is not a podcast about western civilization. It's a podcast about English. And Greek has had two major influences on English. The first is vocabulary. As you know by now, English is a Germanic language, but it has borrowed heavily from other languages. The biggest source of borrowed words is Latin, including words taken from French which is a derivative of Latin. But the second biggest source of English loanwords words is Greek. Now ancient Greece existed long before the Anglo-Saxons arrived in Britain, and therefore early Anglo-Saxon English didn't really borrow directly from Greek. Anglo-Saxon or Old English was much closer to a pure Germanic language.

But after the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, Latin and French words began to pour into English. And this is also the point at which Greek words begins to flow into English. And the reason for this connection is the fact that Latin itself had borrowed heavily from Greek. The Romans were fascinated by Greek culture, and they generally sought to adopt the best parts of it into Roman culture. And that meant they borrowed a lot of words from Greek. So a lot of the Latin words which English adopted had Greek origins. And we will look at a lot of those words as we look at the Greeks in more detail.

The next major deposit of Greek words occurred during and after the Renaissance in the late Middle Ages. As you may know, there were two dominant languages in the Roman Empire. Latin of course dominated the western portion of the Empire, but Greek was the dominant language in the east. Greek had been a lingua franca in the eastern Mediterranean before the Roman conquest, and Latin was never able to replace it there. In fact, when the Roman Empire was eventually divided into western and eastern portions, it was this linguistic divide which served as the basis for the division. The Latin speaking west evolved into the Western Roman Empire, and the Greek speaking east evolved into the Eastern Roman Empire – or later called the Byzantine Empire – with its capital at Constantinople.

But in 1453, Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire. And that led to the disbursement of Greek scholars throughout western Europe. They brought with them manuscripts which had been written in ancient Greek which were previously unknown in the west. The discovery of this pre-Christian Greek culture caused an intellectual, social and cultural revolution in the west. This was the Renaissance. And it came with an influx of Greek words associated with all of those things I mentioned earlier – music, philosophy, politics, drama and poetry. It also extended to architecture, science and literature. Many of these Greek words were therefore borrowed directly from Greek during the period of Modern English. But the major point here is that most Greek words came into English during the Middle English and Modern English periods. So they were later additions to the language for the most part.

So Greek vocabulary has influenced English. But I said that there were two major Greek contributions to English. The other influence was the way we write those words – the alphabet. In fact the word *alphabet* itself comes from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet – *alpha* and *beta*. The history of the alphabet is a fascinating story in itself. And much of the early history of the alphabet involves the entire eastern Mediterranean. So while the Greeks will be the focus of the next few episodes, I will actually be talking about the entire region in order to see all the moving pieces which ultimately came together to deliver the alphabet to the Greeks.

The story of the early Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean also presents some themes which will extend throughout ancient history, and arguably still exist today. During this period we start to see the conflicts between the Indo-European languages and cultures settling in from the north and the Egyptian, Semitic and other languages and cultures from the south. We see this in the rivalry between the Hittites and the Egyptians, the Hebrews and the Philistines, the Greeks and the Phoenicians, and the Roman Empire and the native Aramaic speakers during the early Christian era. Each of these cases involves a conflict between Indo-European-speaking civilizations and Egyptian or Semitic civilizations. So it's interesting to look at these events from a linguistic perspective. Many of these events also provide a backdrop to the development and spread of the alphabet.

So in this episode I am going to look at the settlement of the first Indo-Europeans into Anatolia and Greece. And I'm going to explore the rise and fall of the Hittite Empire and the first Greek civilization. And I'm going to explain how these events are connected to emergence of the first alphabet and the adoption of that alphabet by the Greeks. So there is lots of ancient history here.

Let's begin the story of the Greeks and the eastern Mediterranean with the arrival of the first Indo-Europeans – the Hittites and the Greeks.

When we think about ancient Greece, I think we tend to think about the early rivalry between Athens and Sparta, and we think about the rise of Greek culture, the great philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. We think of architecture like the Acropolis and the Parthenon, and military heroes like Alexander the Great. But all of those things are part of the era which extended from around 800BC to the first century BC when the Greeks were defeated by the Romans. And until the late 1800s, this was oldest known period of Greek history. Virtually nothing was known about Greece before this period. Greek history basically began with the rise of the various city-states like Athens, Sparta and Corinth.

Now we did have a couple of epic poems which you have probably heard of – The Iliad and the Odyssey. These epics were attributed to a blind poet named Homer around the very beginning of this period. And these epic poems described an ancient Greek civilization at war with Troy in the so-called Trojan War, but these were considered fictional accounts. They weren't really considered history. The poems mentioned a Greek city called Mycenae and the city-state of Troy, as well as other cities which no longer existed. So all of this was generally considered the stuff of legend. Mycenae and Troy were placed in the same category as Atlantis – legendary but mythological places.

But archaeological discoveries in the late 1800s and early 1900s revealed that there actually was a Mycenae and a city of Troy. And shields described by Homer as basically having the shape of a figure 8 were also unearthed. Shields of this nature had only been known in these epic poems which were thought to be fiction. They didn't exist during the later Greek period. And yet, here they were.

We now know that at least parts of the Iliad and the Odyssey were likely rooted in fact. Not that the stories themselves were factual, but it turns out there really was a city of Troy and an ancient Greek civilization that pre-dated the known history of Greece. And it turns out that there probably was a Trojan War. And that war may have provided the backdrop for the stories that passed through the generations in the oral tradition before they were finally reduced to writing. And by the way, not coincidentally, the Iliad and the Odyssey were written down for the first time just after the alphabet was adopted by the Greeks in the eighth century BC. So these were some of the first works to be captured for posterity by the alphabet. And for the same reason, these two epic poems are generally considered to be the beginning of European literature. [SOURCE: *'IN Search of the Trojan War,' Michael Wood, p. 123*]

These two poems also coincide with the beginning of regular historical records in Greece. Once the alphabet was adopted, historical records could be maintained. And that is why our knowledge of Greece before that time was largely unknown. There was no alphabet before then, so no known written records existed. That meant that everything before then was 'pre-history.'

And the same thing was basically true of the Hittites to the east in Anatolia. Prior to early 1900s, nothing was really known about them outside of a few references in the Old Testament of the Bible. For example, it is stated that King David had a Hittite named Uriah killed in battle in order to steal his wife, Bathsheba. But everyone assumed that the Hittites were just some random Near Eastern tribe like many others mentioned in the Old Testament.

But archaeological discoveries changed everything. In the mid 1800s, the ruins of a large ancient city were discovered in central Anatolia. The city contained walls, monuments and reliefs with hieroglyphic inscriptions. But no one knew what the city was or what language the inscriptions were written in. Over the next few decades, people in Anatolia began to come across monuments, statues, reliefs and stamp seals – all with similar-looking hieroglyphics. And these were being found throughout central Anatolia. All of this suggested some ancient civilization, but no one really knew what it was.

In the late 1800s, an Oxford professor named Archibald Henry Sayce claimed to have found a connection between all of these monuments. And he also claimed that he had partially deciphered one of the stone reliefs. He concluded that all of the inscriptions belonged to the Hittites. Again, at this time, no one really knew anything about the Hittites. The big surprise was that these Hittites occupied such a large kingdom and weren't just some obscure tribe as previously thought.

After this discovery, archaeologists began to travel to Turkey to investigate this ancient civilization. These archaeologists uncovered even more tablets, but these were written in a separate form of early writing called cuneiform. Many of these texts were composed in Akkadian which was the international language of the region at the time. Since Akkadian had already been deciphered, it was possible to actually read these inscriptions. And the excavations soon revealed a clay tablet which referred to a certain 'unpleasantness' between the Egyptians and the Hittites. The tablet was actually a peace treaty between the Hittites and the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II which was signed after the Battle of Kadesh. That made the treaty over 3000 years old. It is generally considered to be the first known written peace treaty. And today, it is actually exhibited at the entrance to the Security Council of the United Nations in New York.

As I said, many of the texts were composed in Akkadian which was sort of a lingua franca of the region. But many others were composed in an unknown language which scholars concluded had to be Hittite. The Czech linguist Bedrich Hrozný studied the inscriptions and he quickly concluded that the language was an Indo-European language. One day he isolated the word for 'bread.' And he concluded that a phrase containing the word 'bread' also had to have words for 'eat' and 'drink.' And from that, he deciphered a complete sentence: "Now you will eat bread. Further you will drink water." What Hrozný had discovered was Hittite – the oldest known Indo-European language. Based upon Hrozný's initial work, other scholars were able to decipher over 25,000 tablets and other inscriptions all written in this Hittite language. This included treaties, letters, laws, rituals and prayers. These documents also mentioned specific cities, kings, queens, and historical events.

From these inscriptions and other research, we now know a great deal about the ancient Hittite Empire and the Hittite people. But since the Hittite language did not have any direct impact on English, I am not going to spend a lot of time on it here. But the Hittite civilization is a player in our overall story of the eastern Mediterranean. So there are a few things you should know about that civilization.

As I mentioned in the last episode, the Hittites entered Anatolia from the Indo-European homeland north of the Black Sea sometime around 2000 BC.

Now, the area where the Hittite ancestors settled in Anatolia was previously occupied by people called the *Hatti*. And they called this particular region *Hatti*. And the arriving Hittites apparently moved in and conquered the native Hatti people around 1700 BC. The Hittites called the area the ‘Land of Hatti’ after the Hattians they had conquered. And this is the basis of the name *Hittite*. It is believed that around 1650 BC, the Hittite ruler managed to join all the various local people under his rule, thereby establishing the Hittite kingdom. The Hittite kingdom soon evolved into a great empire. It actually took a place beside Egypt and Assyria as a major political power in the Near East. And these major regional powers were soon to be joined by the early Greeks – but more on that in a minute.

Soon after the Hittites conquered the native Hattians, their armies became powerful enough to challenge the great powers of the Near East. They looted Babylon and they fought the Assyrians. The Hittite Empire reached its peak in the 14th century BC. And it expanded its power to the south into Syria at the expense of the Egyptians. Meanwhile, Egyptian influence and control extended from Egypt northward all the way to the Hittite territory around Syria. So the stage was set for a major showdown between these two ancient powers.

And interestingly, one of the sparks which ignited the great battle between the Egyptians and the Hittites involved the Egyptian ruler who would become known as one of the most famous mummies in the world – King Tut.

Around 1327 BC, King Tut – or Tutankhamon – died very young without any children. His widow frantically sent a letter to the Hittite king proposing a marriage alliance between herself and one of the Hittite king’s sons. In the letter, Tut’s widow vowed that she would not marry one of her subjects and that she was “very much afraid.” The Hittite king sent one of his sons to Egypt, but the son was murdered as soon as he reached the Egyptian border. And then Tut’s widow was forced to marry one of her subjects – a royal advisor. But an immediate war was averted when the Hittite king himself died a short time later. But the murder of the Hittite king’s son and the surrounding circumstances led to a great deal of unease between the Hittites and the Egyptians. There was a period of ‘cold war’ for a while. But in 1265 BC, the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II launched a campaign against the Hittites to seize control of Kadesh in modern Syria. This was an attempt to break the Hittite power and gain control over the region for Egypt. The Battle of Kadesh is considered the first documented battle in world history, and it is also considered the greatest chariot battle of all time. Ramses II was nearly defeated early in the battle. But he had split his army and the reinforcements arrived just in time to prevent defeat. But the battle ultimately resulted in a stalemate. The result of this battle was the peace treaty

between the Hittites and Egyptians which I mentioned earlier – and which is still located at the United Nations in New York.

Now Egypt and the Hittite kingdom co-existed for around another century and they even entered into an alliance around 1258 BC against the rising power of the Assyrians to the east. And it is at this point they we have to turn our attention to the west to the rise of a new power in the region – the ancient Greek civilization.

The exact time and manner in which the first Indo-Europeans arrived in Greece is unknown. They might have come through western Anatolia and then traveled to Greece by sea around 2400-2200 BC. This was a period when Greece was experiencing a great deal of immigration. And this view would help to explain some of the connections between the Greek language and the earliest Armenian language and Indo-Iranian languages.

The other view is that the Indo-Europeans arrived in Greece via the Balkans from beyond the Danube. That's the view which I presented in the last episode. A third related possibility is that they arrived via the Balkans and then traveled into Anatolia, where they stayed for a while, and then traveled westward to Greece.

Regardless, it appears that the first Indo-European Greeks settled into modern Greece shortly after 2000 BC. So this was around the same time the Hittites were settling into central Anatolia to the east. It also appears that successive waves of Indo-Europeans arrived in the Greek peninsula, with each subsequent group speaking a slightly different dialect, which may explain the division of Greek dialects into western and eastern groups.

So as we look at Greece, we have to consider what was there when the Indo-Europeans arrived. For the most part, we have some native peoples who fished and hunted and some lived in small farming communities. They also were making bronze tools by mixing copper and tin (or sometimes copper and arsenic). But outside of some general archaeological evidence, very little is known about these people who preceded the Indo-Europeans in mainland Greece.

Now part of the reason for using 2000 BC as the arrival date of the Indo-Europeans in Greece is the archaeological evidence. This evidence indicates that sites throughout the region were sacked and burned by invaders in a wave around 2100 BC, and then in a second and larger wave around 1900 BC. And objects from this period that have been unearthed contain depictions of peoples with heavy beards and a distinctly European appearance accompanied by long swords, chariots and horses. All of those things are closely associated with the Indo-Europeans as I've discussed in prior episodes.

So that's mainland Greece and the many surrounding small islands. But, if we move away from the Greek mainland and look southward into the Aegean Sea, we find a large island known as Crete. And it turns out that there was not only a civilization in place there when the Indo-Europeans arrived, but it was in fact a very old and advanced civilization. It was the ancient Minoan civilization which was unearthed and excavated just over a century ago by the Englishman Arthur Evans. According to Greek legend, this civilization had a legendary king

named Minos, so Evans called it the Minoan civilization. But remember this civilization on Crete was in place before the Indo-Europeans arrived. So they did not speak an Indo-European language. And even though it existed in the area we know today as Greece, many historians consider it to be pre-Greek since the Greek language is associated with the Indo-Europeans who arrived later.

Now in the centuries following their arrival in Greece at around 2000 BC, the Indo-Europeans established their own civilization centered around the city of Mycenae. Therefore, this civilization is known to us today as the Mycenaean civilization, and their language was the ancient ancestor of Classical Greek, and eventually modern Greek. They also developed a highly centralized, bureaucratic system of administration.

Now as you may recall from earlier, the Hittite Empire over in Anatolia began to rise to power about 1650 BC. And at this same time in Greece, Mycenaean warrior kings ruled over Mycenae and other parts of Greece. So Mycenaean power grew in Greece just as Hittite power grew in Anatolia.

The Mycenaean quickly adapted to the sea once they settled in mainland Greece and the many islands that surrounded it. Over the following centuries, they would become famous for their seafaring. That allowed them to interact with that existing Minoan civilization on the large island of Crete. It led to trade between the two peoples, and probably led to a rivalry over time. In fact, that rivalry with the Minoan civilization on Crete probably accounts for a very well-known Greek legend about the Minoan king Minos.

According to that legend, Minos had a half-man half-bull creature call a Minotaur. And he kept that creature in a complicated maze called a Labyrinth. No one who entered the maze was able to find his or her way out, and the Minotaur fed on the people who entered the maze. Supposedly, Minos's son was killed by the Greek king Aegeus, and the Greeks had to atone for the murder by sending seven boys and girls to the Minoan capital every nine years. They would enter the maze and meet their death at the hands of the Minotaur. But eventually, the Greek king's son Theseus offered to go and kill the Minotaur. When he entered the Labyrinth, he had a ball of thread which he tied to the entrance, and he unwound it as he traveled though the maze. He eventually found the Minotaur and killed it, and he was able to find his way out of the maze by following the thread back to the entrance.

When Theseus returned to Greece, he was supposed to change the color of the sails on his ship from black to white to indicate his success, but he forgot to do so. When his father King Aegeus saw the black sails approaching, he thought that his son had been killed by the Minotaur, and in despair, he threw himself in to the ocean and died. And according to the legend, the sea was thereafter known as the Aegean Sea, so named because King Aegeus met his death in the sea under the mistaken assumption that his son had been killed by the Minotaur.

I wanted to recount that story because it explains an interesting change in the meaning of a very common English word. That's the word *clue*. Today, we normally associate the word *clue* with a hint or something that provides an answer to a question or a solution to a problem. Well, the

word *clue* originally meant a ball of yarn or thread. It's an Old English word, and it had that meaning in the period of Old English. But this story of Theseus and Minotaur was very popular in England in the Middle Ages, and it was so well-known that writers sometimes used the word *clue* to mean a ball or yarn or thread used to find one's way out of a maze. So they used the word in reference to the famous story of the Labyrinth and the Minotaur. And from that sense of the word *clue* was a way to solve a maze or puzzle, it started to acquire a broader sense as a way to solve any kind of problem. And that gave us the modern sense of the word *clue*. However, the word *clue* can still be found in English with its original meaning as a ball of yarn or thread, but it's usually spelled 'c-l-e-w-' when it's used in that context. So even though the words seem like distinct words today, in actuality, 'c-l-u-e' meaning a hint and 'c-l-e-w' meaning a ball of thread are ultimately the same word. The different spellings reflect the modern difference in meaning.

Again, this legend of the Labyrinth and the Minotaur developed in Greece, and it probably reflects an ancient trading relationship and rivalry between the Mycenaean Greeks on the mainland and the Minoan civilization on Crete.

The Mycenaeans gradually began to assimilate the Minoan culture into their own culture. Over time, Mycenaean art, architecture, clothing and customs all began to show distinct Minoan influences. And the Mycenaeans also began to write down their language for the first time by adopting a script that the Minoans had been using.

And since this is one of the first instances of an Indo-European people adopting a written language, I think it's important to take a look at exactly what was going on here. Now remember that the Minoans on the island of Crete pre-dated the arrival of the Indo-Europeans. So they were pre-Greek. And they kept official records by writing symbols on clay. They had adopted that writing system shortly after the civilization was established. The system had started as simple picture writing somewhat similar to Egyptian hieroglyphics. But sometime between 1900 BC and 1700 BC, the Minoans had developed a second script, which was a linear script known today as Linear A. Again, it was linear meaning that it wasn't made up of pictures like hieroglyphics or wedge-shape markings like cuneiform. It was written in lines and, at first glance, resembled an alphabet. But it was not an alphabet as we'll see in a moment. Interestingly, linguists have never been able to decipher this script. There is no bilingual Rosetta Stone to help. But the language written in Linear A is definitely not Greek. The Greeks were just beginning to settle into mainland Greece at this time, and their influence had not yet reached the Minoans down in Crete.

Again, this Minoan Linear A script was unique. It wasn't an alphabet. It was a syllabic form of writing. In other words, it used the same basic approach as hieroglyphics and cuneiform which I will discuss in more detail later. All of these forms of writing used symbols for the sound of syllables. So /ba/ would have a symbol, and /ot/ would have a symbol, and /ow/ would have a symbol. And as we will see, this system works, but it is not efficient. Syllables are made up of two or more sounds put together, usually a vowel and one or more consonants. And there are lots of possible sound combinations in any given language. And if you are going use a separate symbol for each syllable or sound combination, you're going to need a lot of symbols. That was the problem with syllabic writing systems. They were difficult to learn and use because there were so many symbols involved.

But an alphabet takes a different approach. It breaks syllables down to their basic sounds or phonemes. So rather than a symbol for /ba/, there is a symbol – called a ‘letter’ – for /b/ and a separate symbol or letter for /a/. And an alphabet allows you to put those two together to form /ba/. And here is why that idea was so revolutionary. Unlike syllables, there are only a few basic sounds or phonemes in most languages. You can combine them in all sort of ways, but there are only a handful of those basic sounds. Typically there are only about a couple of dozen of those sounds or phonemes. So with an alphabet, you only have to master a handful of letters. In Modern English, it’s just twenty-six. And with those few letters, you can spell any word in that language. Even children can learn to do it, and they do in fact learn to do it in grade school, if not before. But again, with a syllabic writing system, there are hundreds and even thousands of symbols to represent each possible syllable that may exist within that language. So you can see why the alphabet quickly replaced syllabic writing systems once it was introduced.. The alphabet was easy to learn and it made writing much easier and more efficient. So the alphabet spread very, very quickly, and literacy spread with it. But at this earlier point in Greek history, there was no alphabet yet. The Mycenaean Greeks did not have a writing system at all, and the Minoans down on Crete had to work with the syllabic script known as Linear A.

Now as I’ve noted, the Mycenaean Greeks spread throughout the Greek mainland and the surrounding islands. And eventually, as their power grew, they set their sights on the Minoan civilization in Crete. Around 1450 BC, it appears that the Mycenaeans invaded the island of Crete and defeated the Minoans. And many historians think that this invasion was made in conjunction with – or shortly after – a volcanic eruption which destroyed a large portion of the capital city of Crete. Regardless of the method and motivation, the Mycenaeans took control of Crete around 1450 BC. And part of the reason why we know the conquest happened around that time is because that Minoan script – Linear A – disappeared around that time. And that old script was replaced with a completely new script called Linear B. And this Linear B script not only existed for several centuries after this point in Crete, it also began to appear throughout mainland Greece as well. And here’s why that change in script is so important. In 1952, literally a few decades ago, that Linear B script was finally deciphered, and it turned out that the writings composed in that script were actually a very early form of Greek. In fact, it was what we call today Mycenaean Greek – the earliest known form of the Greek language spoken by the first Indo-European Greeks.

Since this shift from the original Linear A script to the new Linear B script occurred in Crete around 1450 BC, it is believed that this represents the point at which the Mycenaean Greeks took over there. And it also suggests that the Mycenaeans borrowed this script for their own Indo-European language and converted it into the new Linear B script. And from there, this script spread throughout mainland Greece.

But remember that this was still a syllabic script. And as I have already explained, syllabic scripts were hard to work with. They required scribes to memorize symbols for every possible syllable that occurred in the language. Very few people could actually do that. Linear B consisted of 85 signs and dozens of other symbols. It is estimated that as few as 5% of the Mycenaean Greeks could actually read or write that Linear B script. So these early Mycenaean Greeks had a written language, but it was of very limited use – pretty much just for government and commercial

functions. Very few people were capable of writing with it. The Greeks would have to wait another 500 years for the alphabet to arrive, which was much more efficient to work with, and which changed communication forever.

But the fact that the Mycenaean Greeks had a written language at all is very important to historians because it means that there are surviving records that can be analyzed. And those records shed light on this early Greek culture. For example, some Linear B tablets include a list of gods and deities that received offerings like honey, wine, olive oil, animals and even human slaves. Those tables include references to deities like Zeus and Poseidon and Ares. So those tablets confirm that those deities existed in Greek mythology and religion long before the period of classical Greece. [SOURCE: *'The War That Killed Achilles,' Alexander, p. 110.*]

Now even though these early Greeks had a common script used for writing, that doesn't mean that they all spoke the same way. In fact, there were actually several different Greek dialects being spoken throughout Greece. Those dialects included Mycenaean, Aeolic, Doric and Attic-Ionic. The Attic dialect was spoken in and around Athens. And as Athens emerged as a dominant city-state, the Attic dialect eventually emerged as the dominant dialect in Greece, forming the basis for Classical Greek and eventually modern Greek. But that is later in our story.

Following the Mycenaean takeover of Crete, Mycenaean civilization spread with trade and cultural influences throughout the Aegean and they spread to Egypt, Phoenicia in the Middle East, and the Hittite Kingdom in Anatolia. They even spread to southern Italy. And Mycenaean Greece emerged as one of the three great powers in the eastern Mediterranean, together with the Hittite Kingdom in the east and the Egyptian civilization to the south.

As the Greeks spread their influence eastward into Anatolia, they encountered a city called Troy. The city was located on the western coast of Anatolia, which is modern-day Turkey. So it was located across the Aegean Sea from mainland Greece, but it was part of the Greek sphere of influence. The Greeks were seafarers, and the western part of Anatolia was easily accessible by boat or ship.

The people of Troy were called the Trojans, and very little is known about them with any certainty. It's not even clear what language they spoke. They apparently didn't have a written language. One theory is that the Trojans spoke an Indo-European language that was closely related to Hittite. The language is known as Luwian, and it was spoken in western parts of Anatolia. Archaeologists have unearthed a Hittite seal in the remains of Troy which was inscribed in Luwian. [SOURCE: *'The War That Killed Achilles,' Alexander, p. 6.*] If true, that would suggest that the ancestors of the Trojans settled in western Anatolia around the same time that the ancestors of the Hittites settled in the central part of Anatolia. Again, both Hittite and Luwian are part of the same Anatolian sub-family within the larger Indo-European family of languages. But again, no one really knows for sure if the Trojans spoke that language. And even if they did, it appears that the Hittite civilization had very little influence on Troy itself.

As I noted, the Trojans apparently had much a closer connection with the Mycenaean Greeks than the Hittites. Mycenaean artifacts have been uncovered at Troy, and that suggests that there was extensive trade between the two regions. But we may never know the full story of the relationship between Troy and Greece.

Whatever that relationship was, it apparently led to a major conflict around the year 1250 BC. That's when the oral tradition tells us that the Mycenaeans invaded Troy and the Trojan War began. Once again, very little is known with certainty about the war, but it was apparently such a major event in Greek history that later generations loved to tell stories and sing songs about the war and the aftermath of the war. Those stories were passed down from one generation to the next, and when the Greeks finally adopted the alphabet about four centuries later, some of these stories were written down and preserved in the epic poems we know today as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Those stories were attributed to a poet named Homer, but they were almost certainly derived from older legends and stories that were passed down over the centuries in the oral tradition. Other stories and legends about the war were preserved in other works composed in Greece and Rome over the following centuries.

Together, these stories told of a massive invasion of Troy by the Greeks which resulted in a ten-year siege of city. Again, there is no way to confirm such a siege, but it does appear that the city of Troy was destroyed around the time that the war supposedly happened. However, in retrospect, the destruction of Troy may not have been all that unusual. According to archaeologists, the version of Troy that was destroyed around the time of the Trojan War was actually the seventh city built on the site, and the unearthed remains suggest that the city that existed during the war was a shell of its former self. And it does not appear to match the descriptions in *The Iliad* at all. So again, these later stories may have been rooted in an actual event, but they mostly the stuff of legend and myth.

It's easy to dismiss the Trojan War as a conflict that took place in the distant past and didn't really have any bearing on the later development of English. But just as this war fascinated the people of Classical Greece, it also fascinated the Romans, as well as the poets and writers of medieval Europe. The story of the Trojan hero Aeneas provided the basic foundation myth of Rome. Writers in medieval England extended the story of Aeneas and proclaimed that his descendant Brutus was the mythological founder of Britain and also the source of the name *Britain*. Again, this was all the stuff of myth and legend, but many people in medieval Britain assumed that it was true. Britain had its own legendary king – King Arthur. And Arthur was also supposedly descended from the Trojan hero Aeneas and Brutus. This mythological connection encouraged later English poets like Geoffrey Chaucer to harken back to ancient Greece and the Trojan War. The war provided the backdrop for one of Chaucer's most famous poems – *Troilus and Criseyde*. William Shakespeare composed his own version of the story – *Troilus and Cressida*. And in fact, the first book to be printed in the English language was a collection of stories about the Trojans and the Greeks called 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye.' So while the real-life Trojan War is shrouded in mystery, the legend of the war has spanned the centuries and has fascinated generations of readers throughout the Western world.

As we look back to the actual evidence on the ground, archaeologists have determined that the city of Troy was destroyed around 1200 BC. And that destruction was a precursor of things to come. In the century that followed the destruction of Troy, just about everything I've discussed in this episode was demolished and wiped away. Mycenaean Greece, the Mycenaean writing system Linear B, the Hittite kingdom – all of it was eradicated. And even the mighty Egyptian civilization was rocked to its core and almost destroyed. And to this day, historians only have a vague sense of what happened.

This period is sometimes referred to as the 'Bronze Age Collapse.' Some historians attribute this collapse to an event which is sometimes referred to as the 'invasion of the sea peoples' based upon an inscription found in Egypt which described the episode. And there are many theories about what happened.

It appears that around the time of the Trojan War, Mycenaean Greece was starting to become overpopulated – which led to a period of instability as groups competed for limited resources. But the more important factor was a development that took place north of Greece. Some scholars think there was a renewed migration of Indo-European tribes in the region north of Greece in and around the Balkans. There were still Indo-European tribes in that region, and it appears that some of them were still on the move.

By now, we know that most modern European languages are descended from dialects spoken by Indo-European tribes that migrated in the second and third millennium BC. But not every tribe gave birth to a language that is spoken today. Some of those tribes were lost to history, and they never contributed to the modern linguistic landscape. Those tribes may have been small in number, or they may have been assimilated into other tribes and cultures over time. But at this point in our story, they were still out there moving around. And many of them were located in the area north of Greece in the Danube Valley and in the Balkans. Remember from the last episode that the ancestors of the Latin-speakers and the Celts were also situated in that region for many centuries around this same period. These tribes and other Indo-European tribes were putting constant pressure on the Mycenaean Greeks to the south.

Around the time that Troy was destroyed, or shortly thereafter, it appears that some of those people from the Balkans region swept down through Mycenaean Greece and initiated a domino effect of destruction and devastation throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Historians originally thought these invaders from the north were the Dorians – a distinct group of Indo-Europeans who eventually blended in with the other Greek ethnic groups. Some scholars think there was a Dorian invasion, and that invasion was a trigger for the disruptions that followed. Some historians still advance that view, but it now appears that the Dorians arrived around 1100 BC, which would have been a little too late for them to have been the initial cause of the destruction. The fact is history cannot really identify exactly who these people were, but they did wear horned helmets and they used ox-drawn covered wagons. Every indication is that these people were Indo-European tribes ultimately from the Eurasian steppe just like the ancestors of the Mycenaean themselves.

Whoever these invaders from the north were, they sacked and burned the Mycenaean cities around 1120 BC. They overran Greece and by 1100 BC, all of the main Mycenaean centers had fallen to attacks of these invaders. They continued on eastward through the Hittite Empire in Anatolia which collapsed during that same century, and the invaders continued down the Phoenician coast all the way to Egypt where they were finally defeated by Ramses III. Egyptian historical records refer to an invasion of 'Sea People' at this time which could be a reference to these invaders from the north or it could also be a reference to Mycenaean Greeks who were fleeing the devastation in Greece. Either way, after their defeat by the Egyptians, these northern invaders were generally lost to history. But they left total devastation in their wake. In the aftermath of the invasion, Mycenaean Greeks flooded outward looking for new lands, and their early Greek civilization faded into history. The domino effect that had been set in motion contributed to waves of mass migrations and disruptions throughout the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean.

As I said, both the Mycenaean Greek civilization and the Hittite civilization were destroyed and lost to history until modern archaeologists rediscovered them. And even though Egypt was able to beat back the 'Sea People,' Egypt's influence was pushed back to the Nile and its influence in Palestine was effectively ended. States in Syria, Palestine and Cyprus were also attacked. Babylonia dissolved at the same time in 1154 BC after wars with Assyria and Elam. So the destruction occurred throughout the entire region.

In the wake of the collapse of the Hittite civilization, a group of Indo-Europeans settled in from the north there as well. These people were called the Phrygians. They settled in the northwestern part of Anatolia, but again, they apparently had no written language. Greek tradition says that the Phrygians came from an earlier homeland in southeastern Europe. As you may recall from Episode 3 on the Indo-European Family Tree, I mentioned Phrygian as another branch of the Indo-European family tree. Some linguists include it as a branch, even though we know almost nothing about the language itself.

The Phrygians actually prospered under a King named Midas or Mita. And the later-day Greeks were so impressed with the rule of King Mita that they developed the legend of King Midas from his reign. Everything King Midas touched turned to gold. And this is the root of the term 'Midas Touch' which often appears in English. A 'Midas Touch' is the ability to profit from any effort.

With the collapse of the Hittite Kingdom and the Mycenaean Greek civilization, and the weakening of ancient Egypt, a major power vacuum resulted in the areas around modern day Lebanon and Israel. This vacuum allowed the largely Semitic populations in and around Palestine to establish small independent states in that region along the eastern Mediterranean. Two of the most prominent Semitic-speaking groups in the region were the Hebrews and the Phoenicians. So here we have the beginnings of Israel, as well as the Phoenicians who developed an early alphabet which is the basis of the alphabet used throughout the Western world today.

And another group of people also settled in the same narrow strip of land, they were the Philistines who were the arch-enemies of the early Hebrews and who are believed by many historians to be remnants of the 'Sea Peoples' defeated by the Egyptians. If true, these Philistines

would have been either part of the original Indo-European invaders who caused the disruptions or Greek refugees who were beaten back the Egyptians and settled in the same general area as the Hebrews and Phoenicians. Excavations of ancient Philistine cities have revealed pottery made in a style that was common in Greece. And a recent DNA study of remains acquired from Philistine burial sites revealed that the bodies shared a significant amount of DNA with the people of southern Europe. So this period of destruction brought an end to many of the civilizations in the eastern Mediterranean, but it also allowed others to take root and flourish in the aftermath.

To the northwest, the Mycenaean Greek civilization was not able to recover. It disappeared in the wake of these disruptions, as did its Linear B script. For the next three centuries virtually nothing is known about the history of Greece. This period represents the so-called Greek Dark Ages. It is very similar to the period after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in Europe which is also called the Dark Ages there. That period is sometimes called the Dark Ages because written historical accounts largely disappeared for several centuries. So it is like someone turned the lights out. Well, the same thing happened at this point in Greece. The Mycenaean inscriptions disappear from the archaeological record, and we have to wait three hundred years for the later Greeks to pick up the alphabet from the Phoenicians. When that finally happened around 800 BC, the Greeks could start writing again. And thanks to the alphabet, which was easy to learn and master, literacy spread like wildfire.

And it is probably not surprising that one of the first works written in this new alphabet was a collection of epic poems about that great conflict – the Trojan War. These poems recounted the ancient past of Greece – of Mycenae and Troy. The stories had been passed along and recounted by bards for centuries in the oral tradition, which was the only way to preserve the stories without a written language. Throughout the Greek Dark Ages, these stories were told and sung, and probably embellished. And even though the written versions of these stories which we know today as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are attributed to a blind bard named Homer, we don't really know if he was the source or not. We don't even know if he really existed, but we do know that *The Iliad* had been composed and was reduced to writing by 750 BC. And *The Odyssey* came a short time later.

The Iliad concerned the siege of Troy, and *The Odyssey* concerned the travels of the Greek hero Odysseus on his way back home after the war was over. Those works also mark Greece's emergence from three centuries of Dark Ages. And they represent the beginning of the period of Greek history which is most familiar to us today.

The new Greek alphabet allowed poets and authors to write down their words for the first time in several centuries. And the Greeks had several words for 'words' or 'lots of words put together in a narrative.' One of those words was *mythos*, which gave us words like *myth* and *mythic*. Another Greek term for 'word' or 'words' was *logos*, which gave us words like monologue, dialogue, logic, and the '-ology' in words like *apology*, *analogy* and *terminology*. Those two Greek words – *mythos* and *logos* – were even combined to produce the English word *mythology*.

The Greeks also had another term for a ‘word’ or ‘group of words.’ That term was *epos*, and it gave us the English word *epic*. This word typically describes a type of extended narrative featuring characters who perform heroic deeds or go on grand adventures. They usually involve some type of physical or emotional journey. And as a style of poetry, the word *epic* is often associated with ancient works like the Iliad and the Odyssey.

As I noted, those two epic poems are some of the oldest works to be preserved with the brand-new Greek alphabet in the eighth century BC.

The Iliad isn’t really the story of the Trojan War. It’s actually a story set during a brief two-week period in the final year of the war. So it doesn’t really address the cause of the war or explain how the war ended with the famous story of the Trojan Horse. Those details are provided by other poems which appeared in subsequent centuries.

The origin of the war is detailed in a later poem called The Cypria. That poem has actually been lost to history, but fragments of it survive, as does a summary of the poem composed at a later date. It is in effect a prequel to the Iliad since it covers the origin and earlier years of the Trojan War.

That poem also explains the mythological origins of the Trojan War. It began with a golden apple. The apple was inscribed with the phrase “For the Fairest.” Three goddesses claimed the apple because each of them felt they were most beautiful. The goddesses were Aphrodite, Athena and Hera. Eventually, Zeus decided to resolve the argument by selecting the Trojan prince Paris be the final judge. Each of the goddesses offered Paris a bride to decide in her favor. Aphrodite offered Paris the most beautiful woman in the world as his wife, and he ultimately accepted the bribe and gave Aphrodite the apple.

The most beautiful woman in the world was Helen – a Greek queen married to the king of Sparta. Paris and his entourage went to Sparta and abducted Helen and brought her back to Troy. The Spartan king and his Greek allies then launched an invasion of Troy to recover Helen and to defeat the Trojans who had taken her away.

So in a sense, the entire conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans was caused by a dispute over an apple. And that has give us the term ‘Apple of Discord’ to refer to the ultimate source or crux of a much larger dispute. That story also explains why Helen is referred to as ‘the face that launched a thousand ships.’ That was a term coined by the Elizabethan poet Christopher Marlow who wrote:

Is this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

According to another legend, Helen’s beauty was widely regarded even as a child. And she had actually been abducted at least one time before. As a child, she had been abducted by an Athenian prince who intended to hold her in captivity until she was old enough to marry him. When the Spartans went to Athens to retrieve her, an Athenian named Academus told them

where Helen was to spare the city. Academus was venerated for saving the city, and a grove on the outskirts of the city was named in his honor. This spot became known as the Grove of Academus. And in the fourth century BC, Plato moved next to the grove and began teaching his students there. His school was later named after that nearby Grove of Academus. And that gave us the word *academy*, as well as related terms like *academic* and *academia*. Those words ultimately came from the name of a legendary Athenian who helped the Spartans recover Helen the first time she was abducted. [SOURCE: 'Thereby Hangs a Tail,' Charles Earle Funk, p. 217-8]

But now, she was abducted again by the Trojans. In that passage where Marlow referred to her as 'the face that launched a thousand ships,' notice that he referred to 'the topless towers of Ilium,' not the 'topless towers of Troy.' That's because *Ilium* was another name from Troy. It's actually a Latin version of the original Greek terms *Ilios* and *Ilion*. It was just another common term that the Greeks used for Troy. And it is also the source of the title of Homer's epic poem 'The Iliad.'

As I noted earlier, the Iliad covers a brief period in the final year of the 10-year war. The conflict has turned into a stalemate. The Greek ships rest on the beach below Troy, as the Greek fighters are unable to pierce the gates of the city. The central character in the story is the Greek warrior Achilles. He is the nearly unbeatable fighter who leads a contingent of Greek soldiers. But the story begins with an argument between Achilles and his Mycenaean king and commander Agamemnon. After the argument, Achilles leaves the Greek army and withdraws from the war out of anger and frustration.

With Achilles gone, the Greek commander Agamemnon gathers his forces and offers a prayer to the Zeus to grant them victory against the Trojans, and in the words of the poem, to force the Trojans to 'fall headlong into the dust, teeth biting the soil.' This phrase was rendered in later English translations variously as 'bite the ground' [by William Cowper (1838)] and 'bite the dust' [by William Cullen Bryant (1870)]. And that appears to be the origin of the modern phrase 'bite the ground' or 'bite the dust' meaning 'to die.'

With the fighting renewed, the king of Troy named Priam meets with Helen, and they discuss the leaders of the Greek forces. Priam says that he once fought against the Amazons in Phrygia – that region of Anatolia east of Troy that I mentioned earlier. But Priam says that as intimidating as the Amazons were, there were not as many of them as the Greeks who had descended upon Troy. This is apparently the first recorded reference to the Amazons in written literature. Greek mythology taught that the Amazons were a tribe of fierce female warriors who lived in the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in the region of the Indo-European homeland. The legends held that these female warriors had fought against the tribes of Anatolia and had even invaded Greece itself. So this ties into that persistent Greek concern about warring tribes to the north which we looked at earlier. According to the legend of the Amazons, they met up with a tribe of men once a year, and the two groups mated, but any boys born to the women were either killed or sent to their fathers. The legend of the Amazons was so well-known that it ultimately produced the name of the river in South America, at least according to the most popular etymology. Supposedly, when Spanish explorers in the region encountered native tribes where the women fought beside the men, the explorers likened them to the legendary Amazons, and

they named the river the *Amazon*. In the 1990s, Jeff Bezos was starting an online retail store, and he wanted a name for the company that began with the letter A so it would be listed first in most directories. Since the Amazon was generally regarded as the largest river in the world, and he wanted to build the largest online retail store, he decided to call the store *Amazon*, which is indeed one of the largest and most successful businesses of the internet era. And it all began with this earliest written reference to the Amazons in the Iliad.

At one point in the renewed warfare between the Greeks and the Trojans, the two armies take a rest, and a soldier from each side agrees to engage in personal combat in the middle of the gathered forces. One of the soldiers named Glaucus says that he is the grandson of the warrior Bellerophon who was well-known as a slayer of monsters in Greek mythology. Glaucus recalls that his grandfather slaughtered the Amazons, but the gods became jealous of him and caused the death of two of his sons. The Iliad says that he then ‘wandered alone in the plain . . . eating his heart out.’ It meant that he felt great despair and loss, but that phrase is apparently the first recorded version of the modern-day phrase ‘eat your heart out,’ usually uttered by a victor to someone who has experienced defeat or loss.

As the war continues, the Trojan forces are led by their commander Hector. Hector is a Trojan prince and the greatest of the Trojan warriors. And his name has given English a common verb – ‘to hector’ meaning ‘to browbeat or bully or torment.’ The modern sense of the verb is probably a little unfair to the character in the Iliad who is generally presented as a noble and honorable leader. It appears that London street gangs appropriated the name of Hector in the 1600s, and they began calling themselves *Hectors*, and that gave English the modern sense of the word as ‘browbeat’ or ‘bully.’ [SOURCE: ‘Thereby Hangs a Tale,’ Charles Earle Funk, p. 358-9]

With Achilles’ withdrawal from the war, Hector takes advantage of the situation and eventually drives the Greeks back to their ships. In one battle, Hector manages to kill Patroclus who was one of the leading Greek warriors and Achilles’ close friend. The death of Patroclus finally spurs Achilles to re-enter the war to avenge his friend’s death. He is warned by his mother that he will die if he tries to avenge his friend’s death, but he does so anyway.

Achilles returns and routs the Trojans leading to the final confrontation between Achilles and Hector. During the fight, Achilles stabs Hector in the throat killing him. After the battle, the body of Achilles’ friend Patroclus is placed on a burning funeral pyre. After initially disregarding the body of Hector, Achilles finally agrees to return the body to Hector’s father – the Trojan king Priam – and the Trojan commander’s body is also burned in a funeral pyre. This brings an end to the Iliad.

So the epic ends with Achilles still alive and the Trojan War still unresolved. Of course, all listeners or readers would have known the ultimate outcome of those events, which were common knowledge among the latter-day Greeks, and which were recorded in other poems in the centuries after the Iliad was composed.

The death of Achilles is foretold several times in the Iliad, and one popular account outlined in other works of Greek mythology tell how Achilles' mother held him by his heel and dipped him into the river Styx as a child to make him immortal. But that meant his heel never got wet and never acquired the same protection, and it left him with that one vulnerability. It was Paris – the Trojan prince who abducted Helen – who took advantage of that one weakness and shot an arrow into the heel of Achilles and killed him. This legendary story gave us the term 'Achilles' heel' to refer to a weak point or a vulnerable spot. It also produced the term 'Achilles tendon' for the tendon that attaches to the heel bone in the foot.

The Iliad also fails to address the end of the war. Again, other sources fill in that part of the legend, and those sources give us the very well-known story of the Trojan Horse. This event is also alluded to in the Odyssey, so this part of the story would have been well-known to all who listened to or read the Iliad.

According to the legend, the Greeks made it appear that they were abandoning their camp and were heading back home to Greece. But the Greek hero Odysseus had told them to build a hollow horse out of wood and fill it with Greek warriors. The horse was left in the marketplace of Troy as a 'gift' to the city. The Trojans opened the gates of the city and brought the horse inside, whereupon the Greeks jumped out and destroyed the city. So it was all a trick. A grand example of subterfuge.

It also gave us the term 'Trojan horse' which refers to something that undermines an opponent from within. It is especially common in Modern English as a type of computer virus because those viruses often work the same way as the Greek's famous Trojan horse. You might download an innocent-looking file or program, but it actually has a virus inside, and once it's in your computer, the virus comes out and wreaks havoc. So even in the modern digital era, we harken back to this ancient story about the Trojan War.

Now even though the Trojan horse was a clever ruse, some later readers considered it deceitful and dishonest – and it tainted the Greek victory over the Trojans. This helps to explain why the founding myth of Rome was based around the Trojan hero Aeneas who survived the fall of Troy. The Roman poet Virgil picked up the story of Aeneas after the end of the war in his classic work known as the Aeneid. And that work contains the following line from Aeneas's uncle, a priest named Laocoon: "Do not trust the horse, Trojans. Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts." This line ultimately produced the Modern English proverb, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts." [SOURCE: *It's Greek to Me*, Michael Macrone, p. 13-14] It means 'Don't trust your enemies.'

The Iliad is the first of the two epics attributed to Homer which cover the Trojan War and its aftermath. The other work is the Odyssey. The Odyssey is really the story of the Greek hero Odysseus and his attempt to make it back home to Ithica after the war was over. The title of the epic is based on the name of its main character – Odysseus. And since it involves a long journey filled with adventures, it has given us the English word *odyssey* with the same meaning.

I should note that *Odysseus* is the form of the name based on the original Greek version, but the name evolved slightly within Latin and English where it was sometimes rendered as Ulysses. So ultimately, *Odysseus* and *Ulysses* are different versions of the same name.

The Odyssey is the story of Odysseus and his journey, but it is also the story of his family back home in Ithica awaiting his return. In fact, the story begins with his wife and son in Ithica a decade after the war has ended. Odysseus still hasn't returned, and it isn't clear if he will ever return. We are told that when Odysseus first left Ithica on his way to Troy twenty years earlier, he left his son in the care of his friend Mentor. Mentor remained loyal to Odysseus, and in the story, his guise is often assumed by the goddess Athena. Even though the character of Mentor plays a very limited role in the Odyssey, it was expanded by other writers in the modern era. Mentor was represented as a man who gave wise counsel, and through that association, the name of the character gave us the Modern English word *mentor* meaning an advisor or counselor. [SOURCE: 'It's Greek to Me, Michael Macrone,' p. 12]

Among the creatures encountered by Odysseus and his men on their journey are the Sirens. They are sea-nymphs that sing alluring songs which enchant and distract the sailors and cause them to become shipwrecked and never want to leave. Though the passage is relatively short, the sirens were very memorable creatures. And in the 1800s, when a Frenchman named Charles de la Tour invented a device that made a piercing tone, it was soon adopted by ship captains who used it as a type of warning signal on the water. The distracting sound harkened back to the distracting sound of the sirens, and even though this new sound was piercing, it came to be known as a *siren*. And it gave us the Modern English word *siren*, which is often used today by police cars and emergency vehicles.

Now Odysseus did eventually find his way back home to Ithica. In fact, stories about a hero's journey home were very popular with the Greeks. So much so that they actually had a word for those types of stories. A story about a homecoming was called a *nostos*, which literally meant 'a return.' The Greeks also had the word *algos* which meant 'pain.' Later writers sometimes put those two Greek words together – *nostos* meaning 'a return or homecoming' and *algos* meaning 'pain.' It referred to the pain or longing for home. It was the feeling that you had for a place that you hadn't seen for a while. And it gave us the English word *nostalgia*, which means a longing for an earlier time or a familiar place.

So as you can see, those epic stories about the Trojan War have given us lots of words and phrases in Modern English. But those epic poems were written down long after the war was over – if the war even happened at all. They were written down with that brand-new Greek alphabet which appeared in the eighth century BC, and which marked the end of the Greek Dark Ages. That new alphabet ushered in a period of literature and scholarship and philosophy which we know today as the period of Classical Greece.

So next time, we'll turn our focus to the story of literate Greece – Greece with the alphabet and a written language that was available to the masses.

Until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.