

Teachers' notes

Trojan War factfile

- The Trojan War lasted for ten years. It happened around 1200 BC. This was at the very beginning of the Ancient Greek civilisation and almost 400 years before Homer wrote his poem the *Iliad*, 500 years before the first Olympic Games and 600 years before the city-state of Athens was at its most powerful.

- In 1200 BC, Mycenae was the most powerful kingdom in Greece. Other strong kingdoms included Sparta and Ithaca. By this time, the Ancient Greeks were already skilled and successful warriors on land and at sea.

- Greece's vast coastline, scattered islands and geographical position close to other great Mediterranean trading nations, meant that boats and ships were a vital part of everyday life for the Ancient Greeks. They were expert sailors and used ships for transport, trade and warfare. Many battles were fought at sea as great armies fought to defend their own lands and also to increase their wealth and territories abroad.

- Armies were large and well disciplined. The troops had protective body armour and weapons such as shields, spears and arrows that were made from bronze. Many of the kings and princes wore armour and carried weapons that were specially made for

them from gold and other precious metals. Achilles, one of the Greek heroes, was said to have worn magic armour made by Hephaestus, the god of metals, to protect him in battle.

- Important warriors, like Achilles, had war chariots, but most of the troops were foot soldiers. Later in the Greek civilisation, armies used battering rams and catapults or flame-throwers made of burning tar. But, as the Greeks could not breach the strong city walls of Troy after ten years, they could not have had such sophisticated war weapons. Once they had tricked their way inside the city walls, using the wooden horse, they were able to set Troy on fire and destroy it from within.

- Did the war take place, or was it just an exciting story? It actually did take place. In 1870, a German archaeologist called Heinrich Schliemann, proved that once and for all when he found the lost city of Troy and its treasures. Schliemann was following clues contained in Homer's *Iliad*.

- Was there really a wooden horse? Homer doesn't mention it. The story comes from the Roman poet, Virgil, who was writing more than a thousand years later. The Romans, who conquered Greece in 146 BC, adopted many Greek myths and often embellished them with their own ideas.

