



The Song of Achilles: A Novel

By Madeline Miller

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—Ann Patchett

“Mary Renault lives again!” declares Emma Donoghue, author of *Room*, referring to *The Song of Achilles*, Madeline Miller’s thrilling, profoundly moving, and utterly unique retelling of the legend of Achilles and the Trojan War. A tale of gods, kings, immortal fame, and the human heart, *The Song of Achilles* is a dazzling literary feat that brilliantly reimagines Homer’s enduring masterwork, *The Iliad*. An action-packed adventure, an epic love story, a marvelously conceived and executed page-turner, Miller’s monumental debut novel has already earned resounding acclaim from some of contemporary fiction’s brightest lights—and fans of Mary Renault, Bernard Cornwell, Steven Pressfield, and Colleen McCullough’s Masters of Rome series will delight in this unforgettable journey back to ancient Greece in the Age of Heroes.

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The Song of Achilles: A Novel By Madeline Miller Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best Books of the Month, March 2012: Betrayal, ardor, war, and prophecies--in *The Song of Achilles*, author Madeline Miller brings together everything I love about *The Iliad* without the labor of epic poetry. In this new twist on the Trojan War story, Patroclus and Achilles are the quintessential mismatched pair--a mortal underdog exiled in shame and a glorious demigod revered by all--but what would a novel of ancient Greece be without star-crossed love? Miller includes other good tragic bits--foreknowledge of death, ruthless choices that pit pride and reputation against the lives of innocents, the folly of men and gods--and through her beautiful writing my spine chilled in the presence of Achilles' mother, the sea goddess Thetis, and I became a bystander in the battlefield of Troy awash with blood, exaltation, and despair. *The Song of Achilles* infuses the essence of Homer with modern storytelling in a combination that is utterly absorbing and gratifying--I can't wait to see what Miller tackles next. --*Seira Wilson* **Gregory Maguire Interviews Madeline Miller**

Gregory Maguire is the best-selling author of *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, *Lost*, *Mirror Mirror*, the *Wicked Years*, a series that includes *Wicked*, *Son of a Witch*, *A Lion Among Men*, and most recently, *Out of Oz*.

Gregory Maguire: Ms. Miller, you write with the confidence of the zealously inspired, taking as your material one of the great foundation texts of world literature. In three millennia, *The Iliad* has garnered somewhat wider attention than *The Wizard of Oz*, with which I have played, so I have to ask: where do you get the noive? How did you come to dare to take on such a daunting task, and for your first book?

Madeline Miller: A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and in my case it was just dangerous enough to get me started. If I had stopped to ponder, I think I might have been too intimidated. But it helped that Patroclus is such an underdog—giving him voice felt like standing up for him. I had been intensely frustrated by a number of articles that kept side-stepping the love between him and Achilles, which to me felt so obviously at the story's heart. So I wanted to set the record straight, as I saw it.

Maguire: The novel tells the story of the rise, fall and immortalization of the golden Achilles. You approach his famous story from a sideline, that of Patroclus, his bosom companion and lover. Was it hard to keep the mighty arc of legend from overwhelming shadowy Patroclus, and did you write more of him than you ended up using, just to be sure you had him firmly grounded in your mind?

Miller: Definitely yes to the second. I actually spent five years writing a first draft of the novel, took a good long look at it, then threw it out and started from scratch. Even though not a word survived, that draft was an essential first step. It helped me understand the story and characters, especially Patroclus, from the inside out.

As for the overwhelming legends, I actually think they worked in my favor—because Patroclus is overwhelmed by them himself. He is this ordinary person who is pulled into a terrifying world of angry deities and destiny because of his love for Achilles.

Maguire: Having glancingly heard of this legend before, I knew more or less how it would end. I had no idea how you might handle the loss of perspective and point of view when tragedy would inevitably strike. You managed to narrate an almost impossible transition from life into myth in part, I think, by your instinctual use of a combination of present and past tense, to say nothing of a masterly combining of

authorial and first person observations. How many slaughtered bulls did you sacrifice, and on whose altar, to deserve the talent to risk such dangerous technique?

Miller: It was a lot of bulls. And whatever ended up working, I give all the credit to my background in theater. When I first started writing, I had this idea that I should be in control of the story, forcing it forward. It never worked. What I needed to do was learn how to get in character, and write from there.

It took me a long time to find just the right tone for the ending—I kept writing and throwing away, writing and throwing away. Then, in the middle of apartment-hunting, inspiration struck. All the other ideas had started out well, but would gum up before they got anywhere near the finish line. But this one kept humming right along. And it was the simplest, so there you go.

Maguire: Oscar Wilde said something like, “The Odyssey was written by Homer, or another Greek of the same name.” But Oscar Wilde had clearly not met you. This is not a question. It is a salute.

Review

“I loved it.” (J.K. Rowling)

“Fast, true and incredibly rewarding...A remarkable achievement.” (USA Today)

“Wildly romantic [and] surprisingly suspenseful....[B]ringing those dark figures back to life, making them men again, and while she’s at it, us[ing] her passionate companion piece to The Iliad as a subtle swipe at today’s ongoing debate over gay marriage. Talk about updating the classics.” (Time magazine)

“One of the best novelistic adaptations of Homer in recent memory, and it offers strikingly well-rounded and compassionate portrait of Achilles....[Miller] injects a newfound sense of suspense into a story with an ending that has already been determined.” (Wall Street Journal)

“Powerful, inventive, passionate, and beautifully written.” (Boston Globe)

“Beautifully done. . .In prose as clean and spare as the driving poetry of Homer, Miller captures the intensity and devotion of adolescent friendship and lets us believe in these long-dead boys...deepening and enriching a tale that has been told for 3,000 years.” (Washington Post)

“One of 2012’s most exciting debuts...seductive, hugely entertaining....[I]magining the intimate friendship between Achilles and the devoted Patroclus...Miller conjures...soulmates. The resulting novel is cinematic—one might say epic—in scope, but refreshingly, compellingly human in detail.” (Vogue)

“You don’t need to be familiar with Homer’s The Iliad (or Brad Pitt’s Troy, for that matter) to find Madeline Miller’s The Song of Achilles spellbinding....her explorations of ego, grief, and love’s many permutations are both familiar and new....[A] timeless love story.” (O magazine)

“Madeline Miller’s brilliant first novel...is a story of great, passionate love between Achilles and Patroclus....[R]ewriting the Western world’s first and greatest war novel is an awesome task to undertake. That she did it with such grace, style and suspense is astonishing.” (Dallas Morning News)

“The Song of Achilles...should be read and enjoyed for itself, but if Madeline Miller’s novel sends the reader back to Homer and his successors, she is to be thanked for that as well.” (Washington Independent Review)

of Books)

“A psychologically astute Iliad prelude featuring the heady, star-crossed adolescence of future heroes Patroclus and Achilles.” (Vogue)

“[Miller] makes a persuasive argument for the timeliness of her subject. . . . Miller’s winning debut focuses on Patroclus, a young prince living in Achilles’ golden shadow. Miller also gives voice to many of the women who were also consigned to the shadows.” (Publishers Weekly, Spring 2012 Preview, Top 10 Literary Fiction)

“Masterfully brings to life an imaginative yet informed vision of ancient Greece featuring divinely human gods and larger-than-life mortals. She breaks new ground retelling one of the world’s oldest stories about men in love and war [and] extraordinary women.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review), Pick of the Week)

“A masterly vision of the drama, valor, and tragedy of the Trojan War. Readers who loved Mary Renault’s epic novels will be thrilled with Miller’s portrayal of ancient Greece. This reviewer can’t wait to see what she writes next.” (Library Journal (starred review))

“A captivating retelling of *THE ILIAD* and events leading up to it through the point of view of Patroclus: it’s a hard book to put down, and any classicist will be enthralled by her characterisation of the goddess Thetis, which carries the true savagery and chill of antiquity.” (Donna Tartt, *THE TIMES*)

“A modern take on *The Iliad*, full of love and feats of glory and told in an open, lyric, loose-limbed fashion that should appeal to many readers.... Next up from Miller—the story of Circe...historical fiction fans, get in on the ground floor.” (Library Journal)

“I loved this book. The language was timeless, the historical details were slipped in perfectly. I hope *SONG OF ACHILLES* becomes part of the high school summer reading lists alongside *PENELOPIAD*.” (Helen Simonson, bestselling author of *MAJOR PETTIGREW'S LAST STAND*)

“Mary Renault lives again! A ravishingly vivid and convincing version of one of the most legendary of love stories.” (Emma Donoghue, New York Times bestselling author of *ROOM*)

“At once a scholar’s homage to *THE ILIAD* and a startlingly original work of art by an incredibly talented new novelist. Madeline Miller has given us her own fresh take on the Trojan war and its heroes. The result is a book I could not put down.” (Ann Patchett, bestselling author of *BEL CANTO* and *STATE OF WONDER*)

“Although the details of the story are Miller’s own, the world is one that all who love the *Iliad* and its epigones will recognize. Reading this book recalled me to the breathless sense of the ancient-yet-present that I felt when I first fell in love with the classics.” (Catherine Conybeare, Professor of Classics, Bryn Mawr College)

“*THE ILIAD* turns on Achilles’ pride and his relationship with Patroclus, but Homer is sparing with the personal—so much so that, though we believe in their friendship, we do not understand it. *THE SONG OF ACHILLES* brings light to their love. This is a beautiful book.” (Zachary Mason, author of *THE LOST BOOKS OF THE ODYSSEY*)

“Miller somehow (and breathtakingly so) mixes high-action commercial plotting with writing of such beautiful delicacy you sometimes have to stop and stare.” (The Independent)

“Miller’s prose is more poetic than almost any translation of Homer... This is a deeply affecting version of the Achilles story: a fully three-dimension man - a son, a father, husband and lover - now exists where a superhero previously stood and fought.” (The Guardian)

“In the tradition of Mary Renault... Miller draws on her knowledge of classical sources wisely... Well-paced, engaging and tasteful.” (London Times Literary Supplement)

“Extraordinary... Beautifully descriptive and heartachingly lyrical, this is a love story as sensitive and intuitive as any you will find.” (Daily Mail)

From the Back Cover

Achilles, "the best of all the Greeks," son of the cruel sea goddess Thetis and the legendary king Peleus, is strong, swift, and beautiful—irresistible to all who meet him. Patroclus is an awkward young prince, exiled from his homeland after an act of shocking violence. Brought together by chance, they forge an inseparable bond, despite risking the gods' wrath.

They are trained by the centaur Chiron in the arts of war and medicine, but when word comes that Helen of Sparta has been kidnapped, all the heroes of Greece are called upon to lay siege to Troy in her name. Seduced by the promise of a glorious destiny, Achilles joins their cause, and torn between love and fear for his friend, Patroclus follows. Little do they know that the cruel Fates will test them both as never before and demand a terrible sacrifice.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Troy Jones:

The reserve untitled The Song of Achilles: A Novel is the book that recommended to you to study. You can see the quality of the reserve content that will be shown to anyone. The language that author use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The author was did a lot of study when write the book, therefore the information that they share for you is absolutely accurate. You also will get the e-book of The Song of Achilles: A Novel from the publisher to make you a lot more enjoy free time.

Lillie Granado:

The reason? Because this The Song of Achilles: A Novel is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap it but latter it will surprise you with the secret that inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such incredible way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book include such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I had been you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Janice Arias:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you, why because this The Song of Achilles: A Novel guide written by well-known writer we are excited for well how to make book that could be understand by anyone who all read the book. Written with good manner for you, still dripping wet every ideas and composing skill only for eliminate your personal hunger then you still doubt The Song of Achilles: A Novel as good book not merely by the cover but also from the content. This is one publication that can break don't ascertain book by its include, so do you still needing one more sixth sense to pick this kind of!? Oh come on your looking at sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

Vanessa Gilliam:

With this era which is the greater individual or who has ability to do something more are more treasured than other. Do you want to become one of it? It is just simple strategy to have that. What you have to do is just spending your time little but quite enough to experience a look at some books. On the list of books in the top list in your reading list is The Song of Achilles: A Novel. This book that is certainly qualified as The Hungry Slopes can get you closer in getting precious person. By looking way up and review this e-book you can get many advantages.

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