
Andromache's Lament as an Important Element of the "Iliad"

Andromache, one of the few female characters in the Iliad, is part of perhaps one of the tenderest sections of Iliad. Along with Helen, she is the only other mortal woman to have any substantial speaking lines in the entire epic. Unlike women in general in the Iliad, Andromache's role goes beyond being just another spoil of the war. Homer treats her as a counterpart to Hektor (she is, in a sense, his "equal"), giving her actions and words a greater significance. Andromache's lament (Book 22, lines 437-515) is particularly powerful because Homer effectively uses literary techniques here that bring out audience empathy. In the Iliad, Andromache's lament is a poignant, intense passage that serves as a characterization of Andromache, providing the reader with a further understanding of Hektor, Trojan life, and the impact of the Trojan War.

Andromache's lament emphasizes the impact of the Trojan War on life at home and on the family. The Iliad focuses on Achilles, Hektor, and other heroes in a war-like atmosphere; Andromache provides a contrast to this setting. Through their behavior, the male characters embody war, aggression, and honor, while Andromache becomes the representative for peace, love, and family. Andromache's lament acutely portrays the sense of despair, loss, and sadness that comes with the war. Here, Homer's use of an emotive tone serves to highlight the sense of tragedy in a way that the audience could relate to. That is, Homer chooses to use diction evocative of the helplessness of a child, such as "boy," "baby," "child," "cheeks," "tug," "tiny," and "soft bed." Andromache does not center her speech on only Hektor's death or the immediate events of the war. Instead, she concentrates much of the passage on her dismal predictions about her son, Astyanax's, life without a father. By focusing on Astyanax, Homer reminds the audience of the bigger picture of the Trojan War and the impact of war on all people, not just the impact on the protagonists of the story.

Andromache's speech sheds light not only on the effects of war, but also on the relationship between Andromache and Hektor. The love between Andromache and Hektor is very powerful, and the depth of their bond gives the reader a sense of strength and integrity in Andromache and Hector. Because of the way Homer portrays Andromache's relationship with Hektor, Andromache's reaction to Hektor's death generates audience empathy. Andromache's rampart scene with Hektor in book 6 provides the audience with prior knowledge about Hektor and Andromache's relationship. Consequently, Andromache's lament becomes all the more powerful and touching. We see these emotions via the imagery used to portray Andromache running out of the house like a "raving woman with pulsing heart (Book 22, line 460-461)". When

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

Andromache learns of Hektor's death, she too "dies": Homer uses the phrase "the darkness of night misted over the eyes of Andromache (Book 22, line 466)," which parallels the phrase used to describe death throughout Iliad, "the dark mist gathered around him (Book 20, line 417)." In addition, the use of a morbid and rancid tone illustrates the great loss of Hektor. Andromache talks of "writhing worms" and "dogs" that will feed on Hektor's "naked corpse (Book 22, line 509-510);" all of which convey a miserable picture of Hektor's plight.

As much as Andromache is a reflection of Hektor, she is also a representation of Troy itself. With the loss of Hektor, Andromache's world shatters. This shattering in turn foreshadows Troy's downfall. "... [she]threw from her head the shining gear that ordered her headdress, the diadem and the cap...(Book 22, line 468-470)" The veil in ancient Greece is a symbol of husband and wife. By ripping off the veil, Andromache symbolically throws away her marriage with Hektor. With this comes the loss of her "chastity," forewarning the raping and pillaging of both Troy and its women. In addition, Andromache's son's name is "Astyanax," which means "lord of the city." If Astyanax is a representation of Troy, then "others will take his [Troy's] lands (Book 22, line 489)," and that he [Troy] will "bow his head before every man (Book 22, line 491)."

Andromache represents all of the aforementioned because she, like Helen, is an observer in the epic. Even her location within the text, "on the wall" (Book 22, line 463) when she sees that Hektor is dead, shows this view from the outside. In the beginning of the passage, Andromache has not watched the duel like everyone else. Instead, she is "weaving a web (Book 22, line 440)." Thrice she gives speeches in the Iliad, all of which serve as insight into the mindset of the collective people during the time, as opposed to just what the main characters are thinking. Thus, Andromache's lament is one of the key passages of the Iliad that provides insight into life within the Trojan War.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)