

Passage: "...the two went tussling over the corpse as lions up on the mountain ridges over a fresh-killed stag—both ravenous, proud and savage—fight it out to the death...As the East and the South Winds fight in killer-squalls deep in a mountain valley thrashing stands of timber, oak and ash and cornel with bark stretched taut and hard and they whip their long sharp branches against each other, a deafening roar goes up, the splintered timber crashing—so Achaeans and Trojans crashed...As when some lion overpowers a tireless wild boar up on a mountain summit, battling in all their fury over a little spring of water, both beasts craving to slake their thirst, but the lion beats him down with sheer brute force as the boar fights for breath..." (XVI,382-384,39-396,461-465).

Question: How do the comparisons Homer makes between war and nature illustrate the brutality and horror of this battle, yet at the same time, highlighting the needs and impulses of humans, as creatures of nature?

Issue: Issue of Theme. Throughout *The Iliad* there is this underlying conflict in every situation, external and internal. Just as Achilles fights with Agamemnon; so Hector fights within himself: for family or for country. During the course of Book XVI, Homer makes several comparisons between the raging battle and the conflicts of nature: the hunt, storms, and merely fighting to survive.

Critical Approach: The Psychoanalytic Approach could be used to describe the primitive core of a human being, the id. What drives us to these conflicts within a person and with the outside world? First, there is the basic needs one must fulfill: food and shelter. Human beings, however, do not stop there. Humans are creatures of desire, when basic needs have been met, and so there is conflict. In *The Iliad*, the characters desire glory and honor through the spoils of war. They seem to stop at nothing to gain these, to them, essential needs of life.

Answer: Homer compares the battle with conflicts that occur in nature; perhaps, to illustrate the raw animalistic carnage that befalls the participants. Nature is not merciful. Hurricanes destroy without bias or care; lions hunt and feed without remorse or pity. The comparisons to nature give the reader an intense feeling of the savagery and an idea into what these men were willing to endure for their glory and honor. The comparisons also dig into the essence of what is a human. At our very primal being is that animal instinct, the instinct to defend or even to attack. In the thick battle, men almost forget civilization and become the lions and the wild boars fighting over water or a fresh kill.