

TROY STORY 3

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, with additional material by John O'Connor

THE BACKGROUND

I can't think of a high school that has staged *Troilus and Cressida*: it's over-long, contains too many static monologues, is short on laughs and has a downbeat and inconclusive ending. Despite all that, it is a brilliant play and one of the most powerful anti-war statements in the language. And we are good enough to do it!

In creating the script, what we have done is to take Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and cut it down to about 80 minutes, keeping the essential plot and all the characters, but trimming some of the longer speeches and cutting obscure passages. John has then added about 35 minutes of scenes featuring the Greek gods which serve as a kind of framework. These scenes are based on what Homer tells us about the gods in the *Iliad* (Homer himself appears in a couple of scenes) but many of them are given a comic spin.

Troy Story 3 therefore remains in essence Shakespeare's play but with added material, some serious, some comic. The title drives from the fact that the first Troy story was Homer's, the second Shakespeare's, and the third – with new material - is now Blair's.

THE CHARACTERS

There are 50 characters, so there will be a good deal of doubling (and gender flexibility in casting). Here are the key roles:

THE GODS include...	THE TROJANS include...	THE GREEKS include...
ZEUS, the King of the gods	KING PRIAM	AGAMEMNON
HERA, the Queen	PRINCE TROILUS	MENELAUS (his brother)
HERMES, Zeus's PA	PRINCE HECTOR	ACHILLES (greatest warrior)
ATHENE, very intense	PRINCESS CASSANDRA	PATROCLUS (his friend)
ARES, a military type	CRESSIDA	Old NESTOR
APHRODITE, self-absorbed	CALCHAS, her father	Cunning ULYSSES
ARTEMIS, moral, determined	PANDARUS, her uncle	Suave DIOMEDES
APOLLO, smug, all-knowing	ANDROMACHE, Hector's wife	Cynical THERSITES
THE NINE MUSES	AENEAS, later founder of Rome	Strong but dim-witted AJAX
THE THREE FATES	PARIS, Helen's abductor	
SYBIL, a prophetess/newsreader		
...and, of course, the poet HOMER		

THE PLOT

Here's an outline of the plot: the scenes John has written are in parentheses and italics.

(The play starts on Mount Olympus where Hermes is telling Zeus about the war raging down below between the Greeks and the Trojans. The Greek Helen, he explains, has been abducted by the Trojan prince Paris from her husband Menelaus of Sparta. To get her back, the Greeks have assembled a huge fleet and have been at war with Troy for seven years. Zeus feels obliged to go down and take a look...)

- Troilus, a Trojan prince, is distracted from fighting because of his love for Cressida, the daughter of Calchas – a Trojan defector to the Greeks – whom he is wooing with the help of her uncle Pandarus.

(Having observed Troilus, Zeus and Hermes look in on the Greeks...)

- Meanwhile, the Greeks are quarreling among themselves: Achilles, their greatest champion, is refusing to fight and is sulking in his tent with his friend Patroclus. Ulysses tries, unsuccessfully, to entice Achilles back into the war by making him jealous of Ajax, a rival warrior, whom he acclaims their new hero.

(Back on Olympus, other gods assemble and argue. They are clearly taking sides. Hera and Athene go down to support the Greeks, while Ares, Artemis, Apollo and Aphrodite descend to help out the Trojans.)

- The Trojan leaders are arguing whether they should carry on fighting or simply give Helen back. Their greatest warrior, Hector, argues that Helen isn't worth the lives she is costing, but nonetheless supports his brother Troilus's view that 'honor' demands that they carry on fighting to keep her. Hector sends a challenge to the Greeks and meets Ajax in single combat. It ends in friendship, but Achilles ruins the moment by insulting Hector.

(There are several intervening scenes involving the gods; in one, Hermes explains to Zeus how the gods had come to take sides in the war.)

- No sooner have Troilus and Cressida become lovers but they are parted: despite her protests, she is forced in an exchange of prisoners to be reunited with her father in the Greek camp. There, confused and vulnerable, she turns to the Greek warrior Diomedes as a protector.

(We meet the nine Muses – goddesses in charge of the arts and sciences: they are extremely decorative but do wonder what their role is. Suddenly one of them is 'invoked' and descends to meet the poet Homer who is writing an epic...)

- On a diplomatic visit to the Greek camp, Troilus secretly looks on as Cressida meets Diomedes at his tent and believes she has, as he sees it, betrayed him.

(The three Fates are meanwhile visited by Athene who wants to know how long Hector has to live.)

- The next day, despite his sister Cassandra's doom-laden warnings and the fears of his wife Andromache, Hector goes into battle.

(The Muses and the Fates lament Hector's approaching death.)

- In battle, Hector is treacherously and dishonorably murdered by Achilles, who has been roused to the field by the death of his much-loved Patroclus.

(The Fates predict Achilles' death.)

- When the Greeks hear about Hector's death, they believe victory cannot be far off...

(...But the pro-Trojan gods – Artemis, Apollo, Ares and Aphrodite – determine not to make it easy for them.)

- With Troy's fall all but certain, Troilus takes on Hector's role as the Trojan champion and Pandarus is left to bemoan his miseries.

(The Olympian gods, Fates and Muses all gather round as Apollo foretells what will happen to the Greek and Trojan survivors. As they depart, the prophetess/newsreader Sybil reports that a huge wooden horse has been dragged through the broken walls of the city...)

Kelly Newman O'Connor, John O'Connor. May, 2018