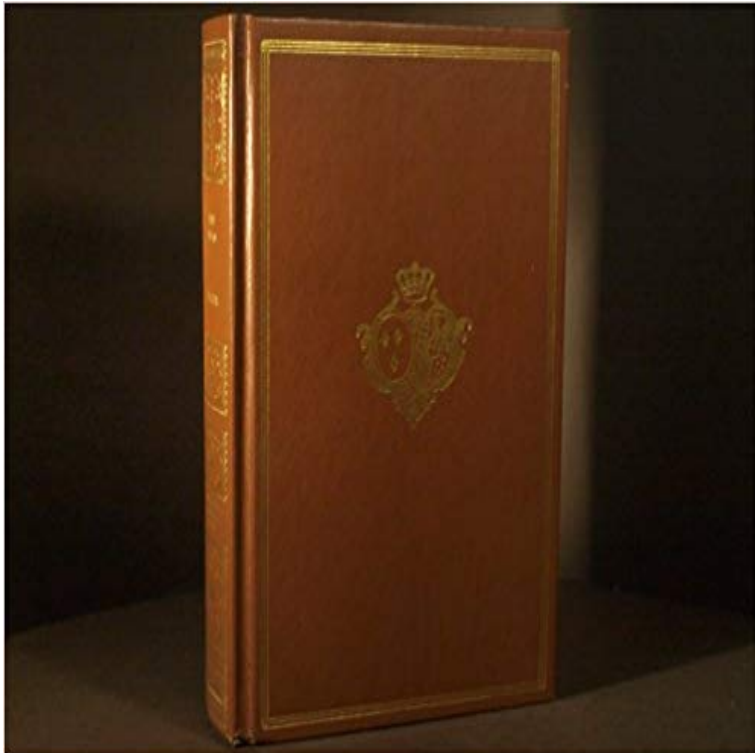


The Iliad



Homer's works, observe many critics, were best-sellers among the ancient Greeks. The educated read and studied him closely; the common folk thronged in thousands to hear public recitations of the historic achievements of their national heroes. Like the tales and episodes that comprise The Odyssey, the matter of The Iliad was handed down by word of mouth through the centuries by professional storytellers called rhapsodes (whence our word rhapsody). It was not until some 500 years after the fall of Troy, however, that the poet Homer selected the most romantic of the tales and wove them into the earliest-and probably still the greatest-written epics in our heritage, The Iliad and The Odyssey. Even then, the Greek public delighted in hearing these poems read out in full in special celebrations held every four years. Your Collectors Library edition is the new superb, vigorous, modern blank verse translation by Robert Fitzgerald, an outstanding American poet and Harvard classicist, of whose The Odyssey Horace Gregory wrote in the New York Times book review, One of the great merits of Fitzgerald's book is its rendering of Homer's heroic dignity, his moral force, his religious spirit-and this without loss of narrative clarity and action... In reading Fitzgerald's Homer one never forgets that Homer was a poet, a poet of serious purpose and austere imagery.

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