**Aeneas** - The protagonist of the *Aeneid.* Aeneas is a survivor of the siege of Troy, a city on the coast of Asia Minor. His defining characteristic is piety, a respect for the will of the gods. He is a fearsome warrior and a leader able to motivate his men in the face of adversity, but also a man capable of great compassion and sorrow. His destiny is to found the Roman race in Italy and he subordinates all other concerns to this mission. The *Aeneid* is about his journey from Troy to Italy, which enables him to fulfill his fate.

Read an [IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF AENEAS.](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/aeneid/character/aeneas/)

**Ascanius** - Aeneas’s young son by his first wife, Creusa. Ascanius (also called Iulus) is most important as a symbol of Aeneas’s destiny—his future founding of the Roman race.

**Anchises** - Aeneas’s father, and a symbol of Aeneas’s Trojan heritage. Although Anchises dies during the journey from Troy to Italy, he continues in spirit to help his son fulfill fate’s decrees, especially by guiding Aeneas through the underworld and showing him what fate has in store for his descendants.

**Creusa** - Aeneas’s wife at Troy, and the mother of Ascanius. Creusa is lost and killed as her family attempts to flee the city, but tells Aeneas he will find a new wife at his new home.

**Gods and Goddesses**

**Juno** - The queen of the gods, the wife and sister of Jupiter, and the daughter of Saturn. Juno (Hera in Greek mythology) hates the Trojans because of the Trojan Paris’s judgment against her in a beauty contest. She is also a patron of Carthage and knows that Aeneas’s Roman descendants are destined to destroy Carthage. She takes out her anger on Aeneas throughout the epic, and in her wrath acts as his primary divine antagonist.

**Venus** - The goddess of love and the mother of Aeneas. Venus (Aphrodite in Greek mythology) is a benefactor of the Trojans. She helps her son whenever Juno tries to hurt him, causing conflict among the gods. She is also referred to as Cytherea, after Cythera, the island where she was born and where her shrine is located.

**Jupiter** - The king of the gods, and the son of Saturn. While the gods often struggle against one another in battles of will, Jupiter’s will reigns supreme and becomes identified with the more impersonal force of fate. Therefore, Jupiter (also known as Jove, and called Zeus in Greek mythology) directs the general progress of Aeneas’s destiny, ensuring that Aeneas is never permanently thrown off his course toward Italy. Jupiter’s demeanor is controlled and levelheaded compared to the volatility of Juno and Venus.

**Neptune** - God of the sea, and generally an ally of Venus and Aeneas. Neptune (Poseidon in Greek mythology) calms the storm that opens the epic and conducts Aeneas safely on the last leg of his voyage.

**Mercury** - The messenger god. The other gods often send Mercury (Hermes in Greek mythology) on errands to Aeneas.

**Cupid** - A son of Venus and the god of erotic desire. In Book I, Cupid (Eros in Greek mythology) disguises himself as Ascanius, Aeneas’s son, and causes Dido to fall in love with Aeneas.

**Characters from Homer’s *Iliad* Relevant to the *Aeneid***

**Hector** - The greatest of the Trojan warriors, killed at Troy. Hector is in some ways a parallel figure to Turnus, who also defends his native city to the death.

**Andromachë** - Hector’s wife, who survives the siege of Troy. Andromachë meets Aeneas in his wanderings, tells him her story, and advises his course to Italy.

**Paris** - A Trojan prince, son of Priam and Hecuba, and brother of Hector. The handsomest of men, Paris is asked to judge which goddess is most beautiful: Venus, Juno, or Minerva. Venus promises him Helen as his wife in exchange for his judgment, so Paris selects Venus. This selection inspires the permanent wrath of Juno against the Trojans. Stealing Helen from her Greek husband, Menelaus, Paris provokes the Trojan War.

**Helen** - The most beautiful of mortal women and wife of Menelaus. Helen’s abduction to Troy by Paris sparks the Trojan War.

**Menelaus** - A Greek king who wed Helen and made a pact with her other suitors to fight anyone who tried to steal her. When Paris took Helen, the pact was invoked and the Trojan War began.

**Agamemnon** - The leader of the Greek army at Troy, and the king of Argos, a city in Greece. Upon his return from the war, Agamemnon is killed by his adulterous wife, Clytemnestra.

**Priam** - The king of Troy. Priam is slain before Aeneas’s eyes during the Greeks’ sacking of Troy.

**Pyrrhus** - The son of Achilles. Pyrrhus, also called Neoptolemus, appears in Aeneas’s account of the siege of Troy as the brutal murderer of Priam and Priam’s sons.