The Trojan Horse

(How Odysseus got into Troy.)

Student: The Trojan Horse?

*Tutor: Yes.*

I’ve heard of the Trojan Horse.

*Everyone has, haven’t they?*

It’s from an ancient Greek myth.

*And we still talk about it today.*

Not bad, when you think how old the story is.

*It’s about 3,000 years old.*

Yes, I know.

*Called the Iliad.*

Yes, I know.

*It’s all about a war.*

Between the Greeks and the Trojans.

*Called the Trojan War.*

Of course*.*

*The Trojans lived in a city.*

Called Troy.

*Mmmm.*

This war was fought over a woman.

*A woman called Helen.*

Helen of Troy.

*She was the most beautiful woman in the world.*

Said to be.

*Although the world was quite small.*

To the ancient Greeks.

*Greece, Turkey, bits of Italy maybe…*

Not the whole world.

*No.*

Not as we know it today, anyway.

*No*.

The Greeks hadn’t a clue about most of the world.

*They had no idea about America, for instance.*

Or China. Or India. Or Africa.

*Well, they might have known about North Africa.*

But they had no idea that Africa was so big.

*No.*

But anyway, Helen of Troy was very beautiful.

*And she was married to a king.*

A Greek king.

*That’s right.*

So when the story begins she was a Greek queen.

*Yes.*

But then she ran off with another man.

*To Troy.*

Some people think he may have kidnapped her.

*It isn’t very clear in the story.*

Either way, it made the Greek king cross.

*Of course it did.*

So he declared war on Troy.

*The Greeks took thousands of men and set off.*

But the war took years.

*So the story says.*

The first problem was that they couldn’t find Troy.

*They couldn’t find it at all.*

It sounds a bit ridiculous, now.

*But in those days cities were often small.*

And they were often hidden, too.

*And there were no maps.*

No good maps, anyway.

*No smart phones.*

No computers.

*No Google.*

No sat nav.

*No GPS.*

No.

*So the Greeks couldn’t find Troy.*

But at last they did.

*Well, someone told them where it was.*

But then they discovered that Troy had huge walls.

*Huge gates.*

Very strong.

*Very high walls.*

The Greek army couldn’t break into Troy.

*So they laid siege to it.*

They camped outside and tried to stop anyone from getting in or out.

*And stop any food getting into the city.*

Tried to starve the city into giving up.

*But although Troy was by the sea, it backed onto mountains.*

The Greeks couldn’t stop food from there getting into Troy.

*So the siege didn’t work.*

No.

*But the Trojan army was too small to defeat the Greek army.*

Yes.

*So there was a stalemate.*

A complete stalemate.

*A stalemate which lasted for years.*

Ten years.

*For ten years the Greeks sat there, outside Troy.*

And for ten years the Trojans sat there, inside Troy.

*Stalemate.*

Complete stalemate.

*But one of the Greek soldiers was a famous warrior.*

Odysseus*.*

*And he found a way to get the Greek army into Troy.*

The Trojan Horse.

*Yes. The Trojan Horse*.

*The Greeks were never going to take Troy.*

It was no good just waiting outside.

*They were never going to take Troy.*

So they decided to go home.

*But in those days, if an army did that it would leave a gift.*

Leave a gift on the battlefield.

*This was an old custom.*

An old custom which the Trojans knew about.

*The plan Odysseus came up with was simple.*

Sort of simple, anyway.

*His plan was to trick the Trojans.*

Fool them.

*Fool them into thinking the Greeks had left.*

Thinking they had all gone home.

*His plan was to build a wooden horse and leave it behind them.*

The Trojans would think it was a gift.

*They would think the Greeks had gone away.*

The wooden horse would be enormous.

*Absolutely enormous.*

Big enough for 30 men to hide inside.

*So the Greeks would hide 30 men in the horse.*

*Then sail away.*

But only a few miles away.

*They would pretend to leave Troy.*

But really, they would wait a few miles out to sea.

*Where they could not be seen.*

And the Trojans would come out to see the gift the Greeks had left.

*An enormous wooden horse.*

With 30 men hiding inside.

*They would drag it into the city.*

And then 30 Greek soldiers would be inside Troy.

*So that is what the Greeks did.*

They built a huge wooden horse.

*They hid 30 of their best soldiers inside it.*

And dragged it up to the gates of Troy.

*Then they packed up their camp.*

Got into their ships.

*And sailed away.*

Everything went quiet.

*The Trojans watched all this.*

They watched the horse being dragged up to their gates.

*They watched the Greeks packing up camp.*

Getting into their ships.

*And sailing away.*

Peace!

*No more war!*

That’s what the Trojans thought, anyway.

*Not all of them, though.*

No. Not all of them.

*Some of the Trojans suspected a trick.*

Because it seemed too good to be true.

*Which it was, of course.*

They tried to tell everyone.

*It might be a trick!*

They tried to get them to be careful.

*To leave that horse outside the gates.*

In case it was a trick.

*Which it was, of course.*

But the mood in Troy was so high.

*Everyone was happy.*

They just wanted to celebrate.

*So they pulled the horse into the city.*

And had a huge party.

*They ate too much.*

And drank too much.

*They probably sang and danced all night.*

Probably.

*But then they were dog tired.*

So they slept.

*The whole city slept.*

Well, they were at peace now.

*Weren’t they?*

And dog tired.

*Dog tired.*

So they slept.

*The whole city slept.*

And then, the men in the horse opened the secret door and crept out.

*Nobody saw them.*

Everyone was fast asleep.

*Absolutely everyone.*

So the 30 Greek men crept to the gates of the city and opened them.

*They probably lit a fire.*

On the beach, perhaps.

*Like a signal.*

The Greeks saw this and sailed back.

*As fast as they could.*

The Greek army rushed off their ships.

*Into the city of Troy.*

With their swords in their hands.

*The story gets very nasty, then.*

Yes. They killed a lot of Trojans.

*And they captured Helen.*

And that’s the story of the Trojan War.

*As told in the Iliad.*

Nobody knows how much of the Iliad is true.

*No.*

There’s no way of knowing.

*There’s probably some truth in it.*

Some bits are probably true.

*But some are probably made up.*

Some are definitely made up!

*Or just exaggerated.*

Storytellers like to exaggerate.

*They do, don’t they?*

Every storyteller probably exaggerated a bit.

*A bit here and a bit there.*

And these stories were first told by storytellers.

*They weren’t written down to begin with.*

Not for many years.

*No.*

*They weren’t written stories.*

In those days storytellers went from place to place.

*Telling stories about great events.*

Sort of like newspapers, really.

*Sort of, I suppose.*

So stories like these were only told by storytellers.

*Yes. Before they were written down.*

So they might have changed a bit.

*Well, there were so many different storytellers.*

And each storyteller changed the story a bit.

*Probably.*

The stories probably got a bit better every time they were told.

*I expect so.*

They probably became more and more exciting.

*The heroes became more and more handsome.*

People became more and more like gods.

*The warriors became more and more brave.*

The women became more and more beautiful.

*The battles became more and more ferocious.*

The stories became more and more fantastic.

*Every time they were told.*

In the end they were a mix.

*A mix of fact and fiction.*

Some bits were true.

*Probably.*

But some were exaggerated.

*Probably.*

That’s how it is with stories, I suppose.

*I suppose it is!*