TROY AND THE TROJAN WAR

The *Iliad*, an epic poem by Homer, a Greek poet who lived around 800BC, tells of a war between Greece and Troy – a city in Asia Minor (now Turkey). There was a war around 1250BC, but we don't know if it was the same one that Homer described in his poem.

THE LEGEND

Legend has it that the Trojan War was caused by Helen, Princess of Sparta – the most beautiful woman in the world. All the Greek kings wanted to marry her, but her father made them swear to support the man he chose as her husband – Menelaus of Sparta, brother of Agamemnon of Mycenae.
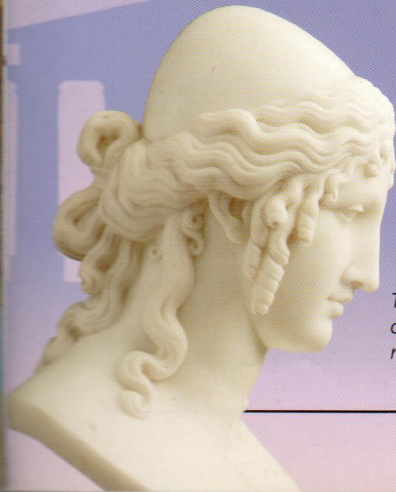
HELEN MEETS PARIS

King Priam of Troy sent some men to Greece to bargain for the return of a Trojan princess who had been kidnapped. Among them was Paris, Priam's son. When Helen and Paris met, they fell in love and ran away together to Troy. Furious, Menelaus and Agamemnon organized a great military expedition to bring Helen back.

THE TROJAN HORSE

For ten years the Greeks laid siege to Troy and a battle raged outside the city walls. At last, the Greek king Odysseus thought of a trick to win the war. He got his men to build a huge wooden horse, which they left outside the city gates. The Greeks then sailed away under cover of darkness.

GREEK VICTORY

The Trojans thought that the horse was a gift to the goddess Athene. They dragged it inside the city, unaware that Greek soldiers were hidden inside it. That night, the Greeks crept out and opened the city gates. The Greek army returned to storm in and destroy the city.

INTERNET LINK

For links to websites where you can read about the story and characters of the Trojan War, go to **www.usborne-quicklinks.com**

This is a portrait of Helen of Troy, carved in about 1819 by the Italian neoclassical sculptor, Antonio Canova.