

The Aeneid by Virgil

The epic begins on the high seas where Juno stirs up a storm to keep Aeneas and the Trojans from their fated home of Italy. Neptune stops the storm and they wash up, splitting into two groups on the shore of Africa near Carthage. Venus, Aeneas' mother asks him for assurances that the Trojans' suffering will stop and he prophesies the founding of Rome. Venus helps her son into the city of Carthage and he watches his lost companions meet Queen Dido. Aeneas is uncovered from his disguise and reunited with his companions. Venus sends Cupid to Dido so that she will fall in love with Aeneas.

Aeneas tells Dido the story of the fall of Troy. The Greeks built a giant wooden horse and left a man behind to convince the Trojans to bring it inside the city. Once inside the city walls, the Greek army snuck out of the horse and began to sack the city. Aeneas woke with a vision of a dead hero and rushed out. With companions, he witnessed the death of many. He rushed back to his house and took his son and father with him leading his wife behind him. He lost her in the city and when he goes back to find her, her ghost tells him to go to Italy. The Trojan refugees sailed to Thrace and were sent off by a dead comrade. In Crete, the statues of their ancestors came alive. They went to the island of the Harpies and were given a dire prophecy. Finally they arrived at an island ruled by a Trojan. He prophesied for them and told them of many things to come: where they would find their new home and how to get there. Aeneas' father dies when they stop in Sicily. They sailed away and ended up in the storm

Dido is love struck by the Trojan hero. Juno tries to make a treaty with Venus to keep the pair together. They arrange for a hunting party during which the two sleep together. Dido thinks this is a marriage. Jupiter has Aeneas ordered to leave for Italy. When Dido finds out that he is leaving, she goes crazy. He must leave swiftly. She begs him, but he will not stay. As he sails away, she kills herself.

They return to Sicily and have funeral games for Aeneas' father. There is a galley race, a foot race, a boxing match and an archery contest. During the children's display, Juno inspired the Trojan women to set the ships on fire. Jupiter puts out the fire with rain but four ships are lost. Aeneas must leave many of the women and the old men in Sicily. They sail to Italy and Aeneas finds the Sibyl who instructs him how to get to the underworld. They descend together and Aeneas meets many people he knew, including Dido. She doesn't talk to him. He finds his father and is told the future of his descendants as they look on the souls waiting for a second chance at life. Aeneas returns to the upper world and sails to the mouth of the Tiber River.

Here his men make camp and he sends envoys to the local leader Latinus who means to have his daughter marry Aeneas. His wife, however, and her chosen son-in-law Turnus, oppose this. As the Latins argue among themselves, Juno creates a conflict and has Aeneas' son kill the pet deer of a Latin native. This escalates into a war as Latinus' people join in and call their allies. The river Tiber feels sorry for Aeneas so he advises him that there is a tribe of people upriver who will help him in the battle. Aeneas goes upstream to King Evander and his son Pallas. They welcome him and offer their help. Evander admits, however, that he can't give them too much help so he sends them further upstream to a tribe of Tuscans who have a grudge against some of the Latins.

While Aeneas is away, the Latins attack his camp. The Trojans are besieged and they fight gallantly to hold their walls. The Latins rest for the night. During the night, two of the Trojans try to escape and tell Aeneas what has happened, but they are killed. In the morning, Turnus tries to have the ships burned but they turn into nymphs. Aeneas gets the help of the Tuscans and is sailing back to the mouth of the river when one of the nymphs tells him that his camp is besieged. He rushes back and they enter battle. Many men are killed and eventually Pallas falls at the hand of Turnus. Juno takes Turnus away from the battle to protect him. Aeneas rages and then holds a funeral for Pallas.

The Latins debate ending the war, but Turnus decides he cannot bear to give up Lavinia. They attack the city and the warrior-virgin Camilla holds many of them off. Many Trojans die before she is killed. The Trojans push up to the Latins' wall and almost take it. The next day Turnus offers himself in a one-on-one match to end the battle. When the match comes, however, Juno has Turnus' nymph sister inspire the men to break the truce. There is another great battle and Aeneas is wounded. His mother eventually heals his wound. He returns to battle and fights, pushing ever closer to the walls of the city. Turnus overcomes his sister and calls for the match. He is beaten quickly. When he asks Aeneas for mercy, the Trojan considers, but he sees Pallas' belt on Turnus and kills him in a blind rage.