

The *Iliad* presents an array of narrative features that can seem problematic to the modern reader: endless catalogues, repetition of type scenes, extended similes and seemingly infinite characters, most of whom die within lines of their introduction. Yet there are parallels to be drawn for these kinds of narrative devices that not only appeal to a modern, more generalised audience, but can also serve as an entryway into understanding ancient narrative devices. Parallels to narrative action in the *Iliad* can easily be observed in a vast variety of films, from war movies like *Saving Private Ryan* and fantasy epics like *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy to superhero films like *Batman* and westerns and action movies like *Unforgiven* and *Die Hard*. While parallels to some of these film genres are necessarily based in the content of these ‘texts’- the large army charging into battle, the city besieged, the character arming before an inevitable single ‘showdown’- perhaps the important thing for teaching epic is to show that these parallels are *structurally* significant. Zooming out to show the vastness of an army is often juxtaposed with a tight focus in on an individual struggle (and, more often than not, an individual death): this allows the audience to be overwhelmed by scale as well as affected by personal character-identification. Extended similes are like lingering or panning shots- giving the audience pause to consider whatever (or whomever) the narrative is focusing on. Showing a character arming before a major confrontation builds audience anticipation for the battle to come, and allows audience investment in the arming character. So while the series of arming scenes in the *Iliad* can feel like they are merely a repetitive feature of oral composition, one can show students that the arming scenes in the *Batman* films (or almost any other franchise- from *Alien* to *Die Hard*) are just as much a part of expected narrative as the final ‘showdown’ between characters that follows, and these narrative dynamics are similar to those that type-scenes create in the *Iliad*. Even the overwhelming number of men introduced only to be killed in the *Iliad* finds parallels in modern narratives: any war movie or slasher film will suffice, but ask a Trekkie about the fate of that new guy in the red shirt, and you’ll have an easy parallel for the long, unlucky line of Hektor’s charioteers. The deaths of these ‘expendables’ allow a sense of danger to penetrate the narrative, reminding the audience of the threat to the main characters in whom they are emotionally invested. While some of the connections between Homeric narrative and cinematic techniques have been discussed in past scholarship (Latacz 1977; Newman 1986, 1991; de Jong and Nünlist 2004; Winkler 2007), this paper will hope to show how wide a range of film parallels there really is with epic narration, not just in terms of narrative structure, but also in terms of audience response. This is why teaching the *Iliad* with cinematic parallels to its narrative techniques can allow students to access the text more readily, dispel myths about many of the ‘shortcomings’ of oral composition, and give a greater appreciation for just why the narrative of the *Iliad* is so enduring.