

Who WAS Homer?

WORD BANK

Iliad - a poem written about the Trojan War, which took place a long time ago

Odyssey - a poem written about the hero Odysseus and his trip home

Influential - very important, impacting or teaching people and books afterwards

Existed - was real or alive

Dark Ages - a time period with little progress and not a lot of information

Chios - a Greek island

Epics - long poems or stories

Wandering bard - a singer who travels and performs

The Mycenaean Age - a time period around 3,000 - 4,000 years ago

Millennia - 1000 years

Oral tradition - teaching people information via stories and words

Archaeological finds - discoveries of historical artifacts, buildings and works of art

Attributed - to say someone did or said something

Homer is considered one of the greatest poets who ever lived. His poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are two of the most important and **influential** books ever written.

But who was Homer? Was he a truck driver? No, trucks didn't exist then. Was he a kinder egg opener? No, they didn't even have chocolate yet! Poor kids, what did they have for dessert?

The answer is a little bit complicated...

For a long time people have questioned not just who Homer was, but if he **existed** at all. Did Homer actually write *the Iliad* and *the Odyssey*, and if not, then who?

The Life of Homer

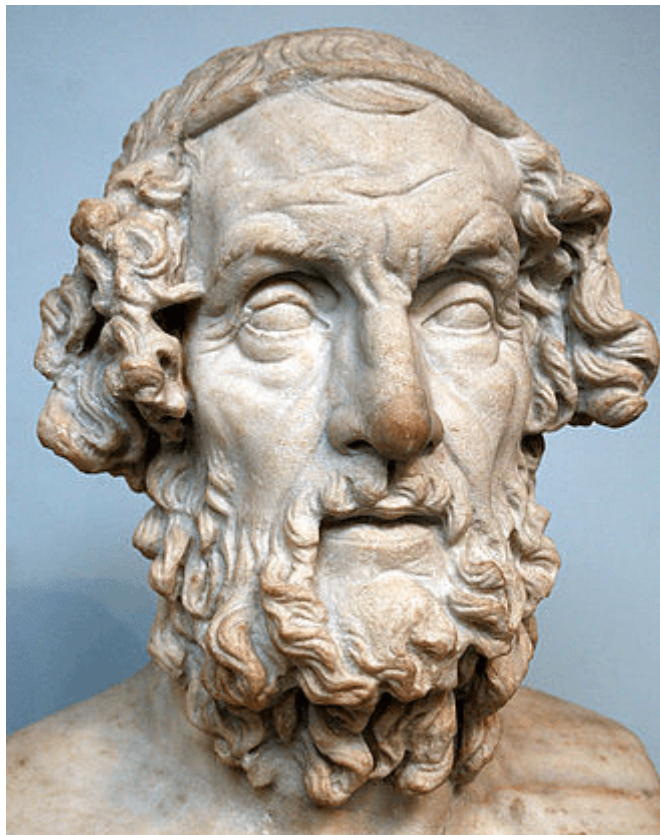
In ancient times, people thought Homer wrote his great works in the Greek Dark Ages (9-8th century BC). They thought he was born on the island of **Chios** and was blind. They believed he was a wandering bard, who sang his **epics** at festivals. The poems are based on events and heroes from the **Mycenaean Age** (12th-11th century BC), which were first stories that were told and then later written down. Though the stories had been changed and edited, it was still believed that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written by one man: Homer.

However, even back then, there were some who questioned if Homer really did write the epics...

The Homeric Question

Now we're going to jump forward in time quite a bit. Just a couple of **millennia!**

Beginning in the 1600s, critics began to suspect that the works of Homer were not actually written by just one person.



A Classical Era Bust of Homer

They believed that 'Homer' was the name given to a much larger oral tradition of storytelling. There is **archeological evidence** that the objects in the story come from different time periods, some later than when the story took place! This may show that the most famous epics in all of literature were not written by one man named Homer. It was, instead, the creation of many minds.

So Who DID Write the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*?

Today, many think it was a group of wandering bards who sang stories about the Trojan War, events and heroes from the Mycenaean Age. Later bards added to the stories, including local details and myths.

It is possible that Homer was a famous performer, and the epics were mistakenly attributed to him. It's also possible that the popular image of Homer as the blind bard was simply a creation of an oral tradition. Either way, we are grateful that these works have survived thousands of years so we can still learn from and enjoy them today.



A 19th century painting of a scene from the *Iliad*