

# Candidate 1 evidence

An exploration of narcissism in *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt

*The Secret History* by Donna Tartt is a novel which centers Richard as he tells the story of his time in college, the novel follows him as we watch his narcissistic tendencies corrupt him. This dissertation will explore the concept of narcissism and how this is depicted within the novel. Richard is a working-class Californian man who is accepted and attends the fictional college of Hampden in New England, USA in an unspecified year most likely in the 1980s. The reader has derived at the conclusion of the year due to the lack of noted technology cited within the novel. During his time at the college, he is accepted into an elitist group of five classics students and their professor. In order to be invited into their group Richard creates a fake life of rich parents and a lavish childhood. We watch Richard as he does unspeakable things to gain the validation of the group. Tartt throughout the novel uses descriptive and emotive language to convey the idea that Richard believes himself to be not only above his family and peers but also that he believes that the normal rules within society do not apply to him. Tartt uses this character to explore narcissism. We see Richard's narcissism consume him through his own eyes in a first-person narrative and his perception of those around him changes as he allows himself to be consumed by his strive for perfection or as he refers to it as "a morbid longing for the picturesque at all costs."<sup>1</sup>

Tartt uses the prologue to introduce the concept of narcissism through the character Richard. The novel begins with the murder of Bunny, we are given no motive for the murder or any reason as to why the characters would want their victim dead. When Richard first starts to describe the murder, he sounds proud of it like it was an achievement. "It is difficult to believe that such an uproar took place over an act for which I was partially responsible"<sup>2</sup> he seems to be reveling in the attention he is indirectly receiving from the murder, fueling his ego. Tartt wants us to know that Richard will do anything to fuel his need to be superior before we learn anything else about him. We know he is an egotistical killer before we even know his name. Richard then tries to say that he does in fact feel guilty but then starts describing the scenery of the day when he killed Bunny. He makes it seem beautiful and somewhere that you would want to be, describing a picturesque scene to distract the reader from the true atrocities that Richard and the other classics students have committed. Richard is a murderer with a victim complex, a common trait of narcissism is to believe that they are the most important person in any situation which Richard does. He murders someone and can only talk about how he would feel in the victim's shoes and the amount of potential attention he could receive from it. Towards the end of the prologue, he begins to describe the group of classic students and himself as "a family on vacation"<sup>3</sup> this makes them seem innocent and wholesome. Again, Tartt is using Richard's choice of words to distract the reader and warp our perception of the characters. By the end of the prologue, we are starting to see them as positive figures again instead of murderers "talking like children"<sup>4</sup> this reinforces that Richard is attempting to convey a sense of innocence, and makes the murder seem almost playful. Richard's character clearly wants us to see them and their

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<sup>1</sup> *The Secret History*, Donna Tartt, Penguin Books, 1993, pg5

<sup>2</sup> *The Secret History*, pg1

<sup>3</sup> *The Secret History*, pg2

<sup>4</sup> *The Secret History*, pg2

actions as being right, this in itself contradicts the structure that Tarrt has set us by placing them in the roles of killers before they are anything else to us showing that we should be questioning Richard's morals from the beginning of the novel. In doing this Tarrt embodies the key traits of narcissism which are clear patterns of self-centeredness, lack of empathy and exaggerated need for attention and validation. Tarrt manages to encapsulate this within the prologue in relation to Richards Character.

The story is told from the perspective of Richard through first person narration, it is a recollection of his time spent at the college. Richard is an unreliable and biased narrator, after an incriminating prologue in which he confesses to a brutal murder he starts victimising himself. He talks about his parents being unable to give him the lavish lifestyle he longs for as if being working class was a conscious choice that they made to spite him again narcissistically believing that every bad thing has happened in his life was a direct attack on him. He uses words like "dull"<sup>5</sup> and "expendable"<sup>6</sup> to describe his childhood, Tarrt wants us to side with Richard by trying to make us see Richard's childhood as bleak and unimportant. Introducing us to Richard through describing his childhood is an effective way to get us to connect with Richard and makes him seem relatable as it is a very personal experience, and we will believe what he tells us as he is the only one who has experienced it therefore there is no way to disprove what he tells us. Tarrt appears to attempt to establish reader empathy for the character of Richard and in doing so starts to form the notion of trusting Richard's perspective. Richard wants us to see him as a hardworking, hard done by all American boy at the beginning of the novel after admitting to committing atrocities as if he is presenting his best qualities to a jury before he is declared as innocent or guilty. Richard subtly mentions his past throughout the novel but still maintains a distance between not only himself and the past but also the reader, he makes the reader believe that we are going to learn something about his past for example when he talks about a relationship, he was in, but he does not say the girls name instead referring to her by "Kathy"<sup>7</sup>, therefore giving little glimmers of insight but not completely divulging information. We are led to believe that we have an insight into Richard's inner thoughts and feelings when in reality Tarrt is manipulating the reader into believing all of the subtle lies and half-truths that Richard tells us, this is another significant way that Tarrt depicts narcissism.

Another aspect of the story that is impacted through Richard's narration is the setting. Richard is someone who regards aesthetics very highly, choosing the university he wanted to attend through a brochure photo, rather than focusing on more important details such as what academics are offered and if he could even afford to attend. When Tarrt wants us to agree with Richard she will often describe the setting such as when she wants us to agree that the area Richard grew up in was inadequate, she uses sentence upon sentence of negative descriptions of the "despair"<sup>8</sup> he felt from his surroundings. The detail Tarrt puts into these descriptions makes us feel as if we are there wandering aimlessly around the bleak streets of lower-class California. Hampden completely

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<sup>5</sup> The Secret History, pg4

<sup>6</sup> The Secret History, pg5

<sup>7</sup> The Secret History, pg60

<sup>8</sup> The Secret History, pg8

contrasts with Richard's hometown; it is full of vibrant trees in autumn and historic buildings that become coated in a blanket of snow in winter. It sounds beautiful and it is completely understandable to the reader as to why Richard would leave. However, when Richard is not as hopeful, and his plan is not working the way that he expected it to the descriptions become unpleasant such as when he stays in the warehouse over winter break, he describes it as full of hippies and dark and damp. This is interesting because in the prologue he sticks to his beautiful description even though he had just committed a murder, suggesting that the murder was a positive event for Richard at the time. As stated previously Tartt uses the character of Richard to convey narcissism, another key trait of this is the inability to accept responsibility for one's own actions, Richard at times of distress or despair externalises his angst through his environment and this is depicted as such in the novel.

Henry Winters is a strong point of interest for Richard, almost bordering on obsession at some points throughout the novel. A common descriptor used for Henry is that he is "large"<sup>9</sup> or "big"<sup>10</sup> showing the presence that Henry has in Richard's life during his time at Hampden and years after he leaves. Richard sees Henry as the ideal person he should be, he is vastly wealthy and well-educated, speaking multiple languages with this in mind it is easy to see why Richard would see him as above the others and envy him the most as what Richard values above all else is power which Henry has over the group. Richard's view of Henry as an almost godly figure is furthered when Richard has to live in a communal warehouse during a harsh winter, the cold dampness of the warehouse causes Richard to fall ill. Initially we see Richard feeling almost untouchable when discussing the living conditions "I'd heard, of drunks, of old people, of careless skiers freezing to death, but for some reason none of this seemed to apply to me"<sup>11</sup>. Tartt drags out this chapter in an attempt to make the reader suffer like Richard does, Tartt's use of slow pace and over descriptive text almost instills a sense of boredom and chore "everything is white and empty"<sup>12</sup>. Much like Richard we become tired of the endless descriptions of how cold it is, and we feel the dark atmosphere that Tartt is trying to convey. Henry then comes to visit Richard as his illness becomes worse, Richard collapses into Henry's arms and Henry takes him to the hospital. Henry returning at the time he did was completely coincidental but Richard frames him like he is a savior and not that it was by chance he was there at the time that he was. We are presented a distorted, incorrect version of Henry through the eyes of Richard. Henry is the conspirator behind two murders, one of which was his lifelong friend, while Richard tries to show that he is a good person. This shows us again that the character's morals in the novel are not dependent on how they act but how well it serves Richard and his ego at that time in the story, this is further evidenced by the aforementioned depiction of Henry being a saviour.

Another character whose portrayal in the novel is completely dependent on what he is offering Richard is Bunny, the victim of the murder we are told about in the prologue. Bunny is the most

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<sup>9</sup> The Secret History, pg17

<sup>10</sup> The Secret History, pg51

<sup>11</sup> The Secret History, pg125

<sup>12</sup> The Secret History, pg117

welcoming of Richard to the group, he is enthusiastic about everything from their first meeting quickly offering to shake Richard's hand after he helps them with a translation. After Richard first starts to become a part of the group Bunny takes him out for an expensive meal and this is when Richard starts to question Bunny's character. Bunny encourages Richard order copious amounts of expensive drinks and then when they are finally finished Bunny asks Richard to pay for the meal "seem to have left my wallet at home"<sup>1</sup> this does not seem suspicious at first but later in the novel it is revealed that bunny does this frequently and that much like Richard the wealth he claims to possess is just a façade. After this is revealed, Bunny no longer serves the purpose that Richard needs him too, when Henry suggests killing Bunny it is easy for Richard to agree this is when there is a shift in the portrayal of Bunny to the reader. The character of Bunny becomes completely unlikeable, a way that Tartt achieves this is by increasing Bunny's use of vulgar homophobic language. The group wanted to murder Bunny because he wanted to turn them in for a murder that they committed that neither Bunny nor Richard were present for, Richard does not want them to be turned into the police because when they go as does his newfound status and his main source of validation. This is the reason that Richard wants us to view Bunny in a negative light. The use of excessive homophobic language and his misogynistic attitude towards women to make the reader believe that Bunny did deserve to die strips him of the complexity that Tartt offers the other characters. Richard focuses on Bunny's prejudices and ignores all other traits. Bunny is no longer Richard's friend but a burden. Bunny felt guilty just knowing about the murder and was not an active participant and for that he was made into a villain by Richard. However even after murdering Bunny, when recollecting the events Richard still refers to him as a friend again, showing that Richard really does not feel as remorseful as he wants the reader to think that he does or that his actions were in fact a crime. Richard doesn't feel guilty for killing Bunny because he believed that it would be beneficial for him and further his status as a member of the group, this enforces the notion of narcissism.

To conclude Tartt depicts the character of Richard as a narcissist, he is portrayed as a biased narrator who spends the entirety of the novel attempting to persuade the reader to be on his side. He achieves this by making us believe that we are invited into his mind and that he will confess everything he has done but instead only claims his wrong doings when it boosts his status or his ego. Tartt is mostly successful throughout the novel, her framing of the character Bunny through Richard's eyes is very convincing, and it makes the groups progression to his murder seem natural and after being initially shocked by the prologue we get to the murder and are almost impatient for it to happen. Henry's character is framed as above all other characters and Richard does successfully make him into a very admirable character despite being the catalyst for not one but two murders. Richard appears to hold Henry in high regard as he had served him well in being his savior. Tartt also uses setting to convey Richard's state of mind in various parts of the novel and at times it seems as though Richard is using these lengthy descriptions to distract the reader from what he is doing. Richard wants us to see him as the victim and has a complete disregard of what he is truly doing to other people.

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## Candidate 2 evidence

“A comparative analysis of how narrative perspective in two modern retellings of the Trojan War, *Song of Achilles* by Madeline Millar and *A Thousand Ships* by Natalie Haynes, provide differing dominant views on war and its impact.”

The story of the Trojan War, a conflict started in supposedly the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century between ancient Greeks and the inhabitants of Troy<sup>1</sup> is one that has been retold many times, often with a narrative emphasis on the main fighters on either side, as the Greeks fought to retrieve the Lady Helen after she was taken from her husband by Paris of Troy. The war took place over many years, causing numerous casualties on both sides, before being won by the Greeks through using a decoy wooden horse to trick the Trojans into letting them into the main city. In both *Song of Achilles* by Madeline Millar and *A Thousand Ships* by Natalie Haynes, this narrative cliché is subverted as the story is told from the perspective of those who are unwillingly a part of the war, and how they deal with the situations thrust upon them. Both writers use characterisation to explore the traumatic experience of war, but the audience's response to its impact and the overall tone of the novels is shaped by the difference in how the narrator's process and cope with their situations. The endings of both novels can both be classed under the category of tragedy, as according to the Pen & the Pad website, the difference between classical and modern tragedy is stated as such:

“Classical tragedy preserves the unities -- one timespan, one setting, one story -- as they originated in the Greek theater. It also defines a tragic plot as one with a royal character losing, through his own pride, a mighty prize. Modern tragedy redefines the genre, with ordinary protagonists, realistic timelines and settings, and multiple plots.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Augustyn, Adam. *Trojan War*. Available at <https://www.britannica.com/event/Trojan-War>, Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Stratford, Michael. *The Difference Between a Classical and a Modern Tragedy in Literature*. Available at <https://penandthepad.com/difference-between-classical-modern-tragedy-literature-3710.html>, Accessed 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

Both novels explore the concept of tragedy to describe the impact of the war; with *Song of Achilles* using the classical usage of tragedy to highlight the ignorance of the narrator, and therefore the lack of proper understanding of the danger of war, which leads to his downfall. In comparison, in *A Thousand Ships* Haynes uses the modern usage of tragedy to enhance the reliability of the narrators, as they are victims of the war, utilizing the viewpoint of many different people to show the severity of the horrors of the war and its impact on all of those involved. *Song of Achilles* is written from the point of view of Patroclus, portrayed as Achilles' lover, who has witnessed the horrors of death at an early age and wishes to separate himself from violence, when he is exiled to a small country called Pthia. From here he meets the fabled warrior Achilles, and the story follows their lives up until and during the Trojan War. *A Thousand Ships* follows the stories of women in the war, focusing on their experiences and how immeasurable the losses were that they went through. The story starts with the muse Calliope preparing to tell the tales of the Trojan War and shifts to a different character as the chapters change. Many of the characters overlap in the novels, as they are set at the same time, and this dissertation will focus on the characters of Creusa and Briseis, as well as the collective stories form the novel as a whole. This dissertation will explore how drastically differently each novel portrays the characters and how that changes the reader's experience of the war and its impact.

*Song of Achilles* uses a chronological structure, following the lives of the narrator, Patroclus, and his childhood friend to lover, Achilles. Starting from childhood, the story watches them grow up and realise the reality of the world, however it also enforces the idea that your fate is inevitable, and that you cannot escape your destiny. From youth, Achilles is aware of his fate, knowing that he is the fabled warrior that will one day go into battle. "That I will be the best warrior of my generation."<sup>3</sup> The chronological structure is used to emphasise that fact, as the actions of the story are all leading up to the war, as he is taught and prepared to be the greatest fighter in Greece. Even Patroclus, a healer with no fighting ability is unable to stay away from the war, as within the first few chapters of the novel he is tied into the final

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<sup>3</sup> Miller, Madeline. *Song of Achilles*. Bloomsbury, 2011. p.36

conflict, as he is forced to become a suitor for Helen of Troy and bound by a blood oath to defend her, if necessary, in the future. The impact of the war on the characters, however devastating, is muted for them, as in their opinion, the war is foretold and destined to happen. Even Patroclus, who despises the war and the devastation it brings, does not try and fight against it happening, as he believes in Achilles' fate more than his own personal reaction to the war.

In comparison, *A Thousand Ships* uses a nonlinear structure to depict the chaos of the war and how unprepared the women of Troy were through the use of the muse Calliope, who is retelling stories of the Trojan women. However, as each chapter starts, Calliope's narration changes so that the story is told from the point of view of the woman the story is about. The first narrator of her story is Creusa, who has lived throughout the war for the past few decades in the city of Troy. Her narration starts a few days after the Greeks have left the island, with her waking to her city burning, and her family gone from the house. After searching the immediate area in the smoke, she begins to fear for her husband and son's safety and recalls back to when the Greeks first left the island, and the relief that the city felt.

"Creusa had been caught up in the festival atmosphere that spread through the city..."<sup>4</sup>

This cut back to the revelation of freedom in the midst of the chaos of the fire shows how underprepared Creusa is, despite having lived through many years of the war, she has not yet experienced first-hand the dangers until this moment which causes her to feel overwhelmed and unable to process the devastation. This makes her remember the events that led up to the disaster while she tries to flee from the smoke, causing flashbacks. She regrets not being more cautious in the days before the fire, as she had suspicions about Sinon, the man who brought the Trojan horse into Troy, and this is explored in the flashback as she describes his arrival as "A hissing sound, like a snake." Here she compares the way Sinon talks to a snake, which has connotations of being lied to or deceived, which shows her concerns towards Sinon's intentions as she is rightly distrustful of his presence, as it is because of him that the Trojan horse is accepted into Troy, leading to its demise. The flashback then ends, and the scene

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<sup>4</sup> Haynes, Natalie. *A Thousand Ships*. Pan Macmillan, 2019. p.9



then cuts back to the burning city, which shows the impact of the war as she is left disorientated in the mayhem, while still trying to escape the city, as the smoke closes in:

The tone of the novels is most comparable when analysing the narrative viewpoint, as the portrayal of the character Briseis changes drastically depending on who is narrating. In *A Thousand Ships*, Briseis is presented as cold and harsh as she deals with the reality of being kidnapped from her home. She uses her uncompromising façade to stand up against her captors, refusing to allow them to see her fear in so that they cannot believe that they have won: “They will not see my grief.”<sup>5</sup> She is fully aware of the situation she is in, and what horrors lie ahead for her, as she will be offered to the soldiers in the morning, but she refuses to show weakness around the Greek men, as she is too proud to allow the soldiers to believe they have broken her and uses her remorse to power her strength and dignity. Both novels feature her relationship with the Greek Patroclus, however *A Thousand Ships* has a more realistic portrayal of how the dynamic between the two of them would have been than in *Song of Achilles*, as she is owned by Patroclus as a spoil of war, and although he treats her with a small level of respect, she is still rightfully wary of him, as he is relentlessly loyal to Achilles, the man responsible for the decimation of her town and family. She remains distant to Patroclus, even when he exploits his sexual power over her, as a survival tactic as well as a disguise for her grief:

“She did not weep when Patroclus took her to his bed, even though the memory of her husband was still so raw she could sense his presence...”<sup>6</sup>

Her relationship with Patroclus is heavily one sided, as he initiates any interaction with her, however she does not hold a grudge against him personally, she sees him only as a pawn in the greater monstrosity of the Greeks, and by extension, Achilles himself. Upon Patroclus’ death, she takes the opportunity to mourn both her husband and the man Patroclus could have been, if he had been given a different life, as even though he had been her captor, Briseis has enough self-awareness of her situation to know that she could have been claimed by a more

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<sup>5</sup> Haynes, Natalie. *A Thousand Ships*. Pan Macmillan, 2019. p.75

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.100

aggressive soldier who would not have treated her with any form of respect, which would have made her life as a captive much more dangerous.

However, in *Song of Achilles*, the relationship between Briseis and Patroclus is drastically changed from how it is perceived in *A Thousand Ships*, as Patroclus is portrayed as in love with Achilles, causing him to have no romantic attraction to Briseis. Instead, he sees her standing alone as a spoil of war, and requests that Achilles claims her as his property in an attempt to save her from the atrocities of the other soldiers. Through this, they begin a rough friendship, as Patroclus helps her learn Greek to lessen the differences between them. His relationship with Achilles allows her to realise that he means her no harm, and from this she begins to build up confidence around them, unlike in *A Thousand Ships* where she kept her distance.

“She flinched as if expecting a blow...I could not bear it...I turned to Achilles and seized the front of his tunic. I kissed him.”<sup>7</sup>

In Miller's retelling of the war Patroclus is a much kinder character, and more responsive and understanding to Briseis' situation. As he shows his lack of sexual intention towards her, they become close friends, spending many hours together as the war goes on. Briseis is characterised as more passive and less affected by the war and her part in it, due to Patroclus' friendship and the comforts he provides for her, and the other woman he claims as the war rages on. The fear and hatred that Briseis is portrayed to have in *A Thousand Ships* is lost through Patroclus' narrative, as in his eyes he has saved her from the horrors of the soldiers, rather than thinking about the devastation she has just witnessed as she has been separated from her hometown and family. Later on, it is stated that the women took on Greek lovers and husbands; as if they have normalised the fact that they are still considered spoils of war, or perhaps it simply because it is written from Patroclus' view, and he has not had to fathom such a possibility, as he still perceives himself as their saviour. In contrast to *A Thousand Ships*, Briseis is the one to try and initiate a romantic relationship between her and Patroclus, as she develops feelings for him, however he remains loyal to Achilles. This

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<sup>7</sup> Miller, Madeline. *Song of Achilles*. Bloomsbury, 2011. p.216

shows that the war through Patroclus' eyes creates a lesser negative impact on the women of the war, as Briseis is almost unaffected by the demolition of her past life, and willingly accepts her new place in the Greek's camp.

The use of classical tragedy is seen clearly through the character of Patroclus in *Song of Achilles*, as his eventual demise is due to his own over confidence. There are many instances comparing Achilles' pride to Patroclus' modesty, as Patroclus is aware of both his and Achilles' role in history, or his lack thereof. Patroclus is shown to be an unskilled warrior and has little confidence in himself and his place amongst other men, which is contrasted to the end of the novel where he decides to don Achilles' armour, an action which seems out of character for him. "The words shocked us both. They seemed to come through me, not from me, as though spoken straight from a god's mouth."<sup>8</sup> The violent nature of the decision contrasts Patroclus' peaceful disposition thus far, suggesting that this idea comes from a different side to Patroclus that he may have been repressing since he was a child, as his first experience with violence is surrounded by negative connotations, causing him to suppress any other violent impulses he may have. "I was listening to the drumbeat of my own impatient heart."<sup>9</sup> Although he makes this decision to help save lives, there is something desperate and primal about the way Patroclus prepares for the war, as if a part of his nature he has hidden from everyone, even himself, has been released now that he is able to enter the fight, a more violent and overzealous version of himself which now revealed allows itself to corrupt Patroclus' views on himself and his own ability, causing his demise as his own recently uncovered pride betrays him. This characterisation also ties into Oscar Wilde's quote "Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth."<sup>10</sup> With the ability to hide behind Achilles' armour, and therefore his preceding reputation, Patroclus feels able to be a stronger, more warrior-like version of himself, and revels in this hidden nature, drunk on the power the mask gives

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<sup>8</sup> Miller, Madeline. *Song of Achilles*. Bloomsbury, 2011. p.308

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.310

<sup>10</sup> Oscar Wilde Quotes. BrainyQuote.com, BrainyMedia Inc, 2022. [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/oscar\\_wilde\\_104298](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/oscar_wilde_104298), accessed March 20, 2022.

him, ignoring the warning signs and falling into a trap of his own hubris. Up until this point, Patroclus has only seen the demolishing impact of war from a distance, from his position as a healer, so whereas he was aware of the damage happening, it did not affect his living experience like the lives of those around him. This caused him to have a more naïve view on the war, leaving him unprepared for the dangers of the battlefield.

Comparatively, the modern use of tragedy is seen in *A Thousand Ships*, as the use of the multiple character narrative creates the opportunity to see the war from all sides, allowing for a realistic timeline to be created as it is not only seen from one character's point of view, creating reliable narrators and a lack of bias in the stories, as the war is experienced and reacted to by all of those involved in a similar fashion, with fear and dismay. This is shown through both Briseis and Creusa, as their stories end differently, but are both accurate depictions of normal civilians who were affected forever by the war. The novel is filled with numerous tales from women who were all impacted by the war, which is important to modern tragedy as it shows how many women's lives were destroyed during the war; as they were killed, sold to soldiers as possessions or spoils of war or taken hostage during pillages. This shows how the impact for women in the war differs from the impact for the Greek men who fought in it, as the Greeks expected to die for their cause, whereas the women, specifically those of Troy, were forced into the fight and could do little to protect themselves or their families, causing them to lose everything in a war they wanted no part in.

In conclusion, the two novels have contrasting depictions of the war, due to the differing in narrative viewpoints, as *A Thousand Ships* provides a more realistic interpretation of the war and the horrendous impacts that the devastation and destruction would have had on those who were a part of it, due to it being written from not only the losing side of the war, but most importantly the women, whose stories are often overlooked or not discussed as history focuses on the men who succeeded. The wide variety of female perspective and storyline creates a more impactful experience for the reader as the war is shown to be catastrophic to such a large extent, to the point where the women's lives can never be the same, even though they had no control in the fighting or ability to stop the ongoings of the war. In comparison, *Song of Achilles* is an idealised version of the war, by being portrayed only through the eyes of Patroclus who does not realise the serious extent of the war, as he is not privy to all the

trials and tribulations that those who were directly involved had to face, being able to hide behind Achilles' strength when in battle and then his position as a healer. This causes the reader to feel a disconnect to the calamity of the war, especially as it is presented as being a part of destiny, and the reader cares more for Patroclus' personal tragedy rather than including all those who died before and after him.

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