



# TROJAN WARS

Forget Achilles and Helen, we're talking about the battles archaeologists have been fighting ever since



In *The Iliad*, Homer's epic tale of adventure, battle and relationships-gone-bad, a full-scale war is sparked by the notoriously smokin' hot Helen of Troy. Though there's no proof that such a war actually happened, a very real, modern day Trojan War was recently won by Ernst Pernicka, an archaeology professor at the University of Tübingen in Germany. His excavation of Troy has validated some of Homer's words, as well as the beliefs of self-taught archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann and Pernicka's predecessor, archaeologist Manfred Korfmann.

Destroyed and rebuilt 10 times, Troy represented almost 4,500 years of life. Subsequently, making accurate excavations has proved to be, well... challenging. In 1822, Scottish journalist Charles Maclaren suggested a narrow strait in northwest Turkey was the site of Homeric Troy, and from 1870 to 1890, Heinrich Schliemann excavated this area and found tons of artifacts. He was convinced that he had found Homer's Troy, but others believed *The Iliad* was nothing more than a fantastical myth. Five decades later, archaeologists agreed that the city Schliemann had found wasn't big enough to be the

massive metropolis described by Homer – obviously a total buzzkill for Greco-Roman history fanatics.

A 2002 *New York Times* article reported that Korfmann and Frank Kolb, an ancient history professor at the University of Tübingen, were in a bitter feud over the interpretation of the various Troy excavations. Korfmann's digging led him to discover the existence of a lower city dating from around 1500 B.C. This city was surrounded by an impressive U-shaped ditch, about 13 feet wide and 6 feet deep – making Troy 10 to 15 times bigger than previously thought – and a perfect match to Homer's description in *The Iliad*.

**However, Kolb argued** the ditches were just a massive drainage system, and Korfmann died in the midst of this heated conflict. But he was vindicated when Pernicka found Bronze-age "refrigerators" in the lower city Korfmann uncovered. These vessels – used to preserve and hold water, oil and food – indicate that the grounds previously believed to be the city's outskirts were actually an extension of the city. In addition, the mountains, rivers and city near the Dardanelles Strait described in *The Iliad* match the northwest corner of modern day Turkey where the Troy excavations took place. "The story told in *The Iliad* may be fiction, but the background is accurate," Pernicka says.

One thing Pernicka doubts finding proof of is the infamous Trojan horse. There *is* a tacky wooden horse standing near the site's parking lot, but it seems that part of the legend really was nothing more than the vivid imagination of a blind poet. – OLUBUNMI ISHOLA

»»» About 200,000 people each year from all parts of the world trek to the ruins of the legendary city of Troy, located in northwest Turkey. Unfortunately, you can't catch a glimpse of the dug-up goods unless a Turkish government rep is present. But that may soon change – architects are taking proposals for a museum to be built at the site. The Turkish government provided the funding for the first phase, but professor Ernst Pernicka says the actual building may eventually cost about \$63 million in order to achieve "high-class architecture."

The ancient city of Troy

