

## The Wooden Horse of Troy

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was an ancient city named Troy. Troy was located on the coast of Turkey, across the sea from the Greek city-state of Sparta.

In those days, people used to build walls around their city to help protect them. Some walls were only a few feet high. Others as much as twenty feet high!

The people built gates in the wall. The gates could be opened to let people inside the city. In times of war, the gates could be closed and locked to stop intruders from getting inside.

Along the wall, inside of the city, a set of stairs wound up to the top. Warriors could stand at the top of the stairs and shoot arrows down at intruders who were trying to get inside the city. There were also holes built high on the wall. Archers could shoot arrows through the holes as well. If the wall was high enough and strong enough, it could do a pretty good job keeping intruders from coming inside.

The walls around Troy were very high and very strong. According to the legend of Trojan Horse, for ten long years, the Greeks had been trying to get over the wall around the city of Troy. But the Greeks could not get over the wall. And the Trojans could not drive the Greeks away. Year after year they fought. And year after year, neither side won.

One day, a Greek general, Odysseus, had a tricky idea. "Let's pretend to sail away," he suggested. "We'll leave a gift for Troy, a gift to announce the end of the war, a wooden horse with 30 men hidden inside. At night, these men can sneak out and open the gate of Troy!" That was the way things were done back then. When you admitted defeat, you supplied a gift. It could be a gift of money, art, slaves, anything really. It made sense to leave a gift of art. The Greeks were famous for their art.

The Greeks thought it was a brilliant idea. They had their best artists build the horse. It was a magnificent horse. When it was ready, the Greeks brought the huge wooden horse as close to Troy's city gates as they could get without being shot full of arrows. The Greeks pretended to sail away.

When the Trojan archers at the top of the stairs saw the Greeks leaving, they could not believe their eyes. Were the Greeks giving up at last? Had the Trojans won the war? It certainly appeared so! The Trojans dragged the horse inside their city and closed the gates.

Some people wanted to burn the horse, which would have been a sad fate for the Greek soldiers hidden inside. But the Trojan people said, "NO! It's too beautiful! We'll keep it forever as a reminder of our victory!" (The Greeks had counted on that reaction. The Greeks might be famous for their art, but the Trojans were famous for their bragging. The Greeks were sure the Trojans would want to display the magnificent horse. Sure enough, that's exactly what happened, or so legend says.)

That night, while the Trojan people slept soundly, exhausted from their celebrations, the 30 Greek men hidden inside the wooden horse climbed out and opened the gates of Troy and let the Greek army inside. That was the end of Troy.

There is an old saying, one still used today - *Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!* That old saying refers to the legend of the Trojan Horse.