

Book Review

The Iliad Out Loud

Zappa (W.), Pp. xiv + 169. Seven Hills, NSW:
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The Iliad Out Loud by William Zappa is an ambitious attempt to render the *Iliad* in the form of a play script, written for oral performance, which captures the essence of the poem's original words in English. Although Zappa did not himself produce an original translation for this text, it is nevertheless an original construct of the writer, the words having been drawn from no fewer than 17 different translations of the *Iliad* with some abridgements. Even abridged, the play takes around six hours to perform in its entirety, meaning that fitting in a complete reading with a single class, even over the course of many lessons, may well prove untenable for many teachers. Nevertheless, Zappa clearly sees *The Iliad Out Loud* as a text with pedagogical potential, the text itself including sections offering guidance to teachers on using it in a classroom. I would have to say that I echo these sentiments. If you teach about the Trojan War at any point over the course of a school year, you will undoubtedly deal with material drawn from the *Iliad*. *The Iliad Out Loud* offers both an alternative medium through

which to explore the narrative of the original poem whilst staying very true to its original content, offering teachers a way to get their students to actively engage with the narrative which they are studying without themselves having to produce any adaptations. I myself am planning to utilise sections of *The Iliad Out Loud* in my own lessons in order to encourage students to think about the emotional weight of certain sections of the poem and to also scrutinise some of the narrative's key themes, such as the twin pursuits of fame and wealth.

However, this recommendation does come with some caveats. Most notably, given that *The Iliad Out Loud* is an amalgamation of various translations of the *Iliad*, it is not a text which is differentiated for a younger readership or students with a relatively low reading age. This puts it at odds with a resource such as the *Classic Tales* adaptation of the *Iliad*, which includes notably simplified prose. The complexities of the language will prove very challenging for some students to be able to grapple with unless suitable differentiation is put in place by the teacher. Whilst differentiation is an obvious and necessary component of a good lesson plan, I mention it here in light of my above comments on *The Iliad Out Loud* being a text which can be used as a means of saving time whilst planning and creating resources. Furthermore, strong language is used at various points in the text, which might lead a teacher to avoid using the text when teaching certain parts of the poem. This is therefore by no means a ready-made teaching resource. But as a means of engaging students directly with a text, and offering challenge in terms of comprehension and language, this is a highly recommendable resource.

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