



# The Aeneid

*Virgil*

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*Virgil*

## **The Aeneid** Virgil

The Aeneid is a Latin epic poem, written by Virgil between 29 and 19 BC, that tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans. It comprises 9,896 lines in dactylic hexameter. The first six of the poem's twelve books tell the story of Aeneas's wanderings from Troy to Italy, and the poem's second half tells of the Trojans' ultimately victorious war upon the Latins, under whose name Aeneas and his Trojan followers are destined to be subsumed. The hero Aeneas was already known to Greco-Roman legend and myth, having been a character in the Iliad. Virgil took the disconnected tales of Aeneas's wanderings, his vague association with the foundation of Rome and a personage of no fixed characteristics other than a scrupulous pietas, and fashioned this into a compelling founding myth or national epic that at once tied Rome to the legends of Troy, explained the Punic wars, glorified traditional Roman virtues, and legitimized the Julio-Claudian dynasty as descendants of the founders, heroes, and gods of Rome and Troy. Virgil is traditionally ranked as one of Rome's greatest poets. His Aeneid has been considered the national epic of ancient Rome from the time of its composition to the present day. Modeled after Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, the Aeneid follows the Trojan refugee Aeneas as he struggles to fulfill his destiny and arrive on the shores of Italy—in Roman mythology the founding act of Rome. Virgil's work has had wide and deep influence on Western literature, most notably Dante's Divine Comedy, in which Virgil appears as Dante's guide through hell and purgatory.

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