

from the Aeneid

by Virgil

Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

About the Reading Virgil wrote the *Aeneid* to record the glorious story of Rome's founding and to celebrate the Rome of his day. At the center of the poem stands the hero Aeneas, survivor of the Trojan War and son of the goddess Venus. After wandering for seven years, Aeneas finally reaches southern Italy—then known as Ausonia. Here, Aeneas's friend Ilioneus leads a group of representatives to visit a nearby Latin settlement.

AS YOU READ Try to identify each group's goals and desires.

Latinus

Called the Teucrians before him, saying
Tranquilly as they entered:

"Sons of Dardanus—

You see, we know your city and your nation,
As all had heard you laid a westward course—
Tell me your purpose. ❶ What design or need
Has brought you through the dark blue sea so far
To our Ausonian coast? Either astray
Or driven by rough weather, such as sailors
Often endure at sea, you've broached the river,
Moored ship there. Now do not turn away
From hospitality here. Know that our Latins
Come of Saturn's race, that we are just—
Not by constraint or laws, but by our choice
And habit of our ancient god . . ."
Latinus then fell silent, and in turn
Ilioneus began:

"Your majesty,

Most noble son of Faunus, no rough seas
Or black gale swept us to your coast, no star
Or clouded seamark put us off our course. ❷

Aeneas, from an
Italian painting
of the 1700s



GUIDED READING

WORD HELP

tranquilly calmly
astray off course
broached crossed
moored anchored
constraint force
gale storm

❶ Both "Teucrians" and "sons of Dardanus" are ways of referring to Trojans.

❷ Ilioneus says that the Trojans are not lost. A seamark is similar to a landmark, a feature sailors use to find their way.

How does Ilioneus address the king? Why do you think he does so?

We journey to your city by design
And general consent, driven as we are
From realms in other days greatest by far
The Sun looked down on, passing on his way
From heaven's far eastern height. **3** Our line's from Jove,
In his paternity the sons of Dardanus
Exult, and highest progeny of Jove
Include our king himself—Trojan Aeneas,
Who sent us to your threshold . . . **4**
So long on the vast waters, now we ask
A modest settlement of the gods of home,
A strip of coast that will bring harm to no one,
Air and water, open and free to all . . .
Our quest was for your country. Dardanus
Had birth here, and Apollo calls us back,
Directing us by solemn oracles
To Tuscan Tiber . . . **5** Here besides
Aeneas gives you from his richer years
These modest gifts, relics caught up and saved
From burning Troy . . ."

Latinus heard

Ilioneus out, his countenance averted,
Sitting immobile, all attention, eyes
Downcast but turning here and there. The embroidered
Purple and the scepter of King Priam
Moved him less in his own kingliness
Than long thoughts on the marriage of his daughter,
As he turned over in his inmost mind
Old Faunus' prophecy.

"This is the man,"

he thought, "foretold as coming from abroad
To be my son-in-law, by fate appointed,
Called to reign here with equal authority—
The man whose heirs will be brilliant in valor
And win the mastery of the world." **6**

GUIDED READING

WORD HELP

progeny offspring

threshold door

oracle person who gives advice

averted turned away

immobile unmoving

3 Ilioneus explains that the Trojans have come to Italy "by design"—both on purpose and with help from the gods.

4 Aeneas and Dardanus, the founder of Troy, were both believed to be descendants of Jove, the king of the gods.

5 The Romans believed that Troy's founder Dardanus was born in Italy.

What does Ilioneus ask the king to give the Trojans?

6 Virgil included this vision of Rome's great future to point out the city's greatness to his readers.

CONNECTING LITERATURE TO HISTORY

1. Analyzing Rome's leaders wanted their city to have a glorious past that would make the Roman people proud. What details in this passage would make Roman readers proud of their past?

2. Drawing Conclusions When Aeneas reached Italy, he formed an alliance with the Latins. Think about how Virgil portrays the Latins in this passage. What words or phrases would you use to describe them? Why might such people make good allies?