In *the Iliad* the goddess Athena is portrayed as a representation of much of what is respected in *the Iliad*. The most masculine of the goddesses, Athena is the goddess of “…ingenuity and resourcefulness…” (p 646). In *the Iliad*, these actions come in the form of battle strategy (specifically relating to glory) and in the skill of crafts (such as weaving). Many of the decisions made by the male characters in the story revolve around honor and glory, either through possessions or through skill in battle. Women, although not respected in the modern sense of the word, are respected for their skills (specifically weaving) by which their worth is measured. While beauty is valued in both women and men, it is not respected in the same way practical skills such as weaving and battle prowess are. Athena represents what *the Iliad* portrayed as the respected values or qualities in men and women.

Athena, although not the traditional entity of War, is one of the more active of the Olympians on the battlefield, and is the first to offer glory to a mortal on the battlefield, and continues to do so throughout the story. Athena is mentioned on the battlefield more than even the God of War, Ares, and is often called upon by Zeus to alter the path of the war. Athena, at the commands of Zeus to start the fighting again, tempts the archer Pandarus with glory for firing the first shot against the Achaians after Paris was swept off the battlefield by Aphrodite: “Here’s glory, son of Lycaon—let me tempt you, you with your archer’s skill! Have you the daring to wing an arrow at Menelaus? Just think of what thanks, what fame you’d win in the eyes of all the Trojans…” (4.107). Pandarus takes Athena’s offer, willing to trust her and her motives readily because of her knowledge of battle strategies. The glory he wins is due to Athena (as well as Apollo, the god of archery among other things, but to a lesser degree), her pushing and
her planning, that Pandarus wins his glory. Athena is present on the battlefield many other times throughout the story, egging the soldiers on: “…Athena swept through the Argive armies, driving soldiers harder, lashing the fighting-fury in each Achaeans heart—no stopping them now…” (2.533). When described, Athena is described as a warrior:

Then Athena…donned the battle-shirt of the lord of lightning, buckled her breastplate geared for wrenching war, and over her shoulders slung her shield, all tassels flaring terror—Panic mounted high in a crown around it, Hate and Defense across it, Assault to freeze the blood and right in their midst the Gorgon’s monstrous head, that rippling dragon horror, sign of storming Zeus. Then over her brows Athena placed her golden helmet fronted with four knobs and forked with twin horns, engraved with the fighting men of a hundred towns. Then onto the flaming chariot Pallas [Athena] set her feet and seized her spear—weighted, heavy, the massive shaft she wields to break the battle lines of heroes the mighty Father’s daughter storms against. (5.844-856)

In stark contrast is Hera, who is referred to with the more feminine description of “the white-armed goddess Hera” (1.230) throughout the story. In the Iliad, Athena represents what is respected in men: wealth, battle prowess, glory (through war acts), and the ability to inspire allies.

As the goddess of craft skills, Athena also represents what is respected in women in the Iliad. Although women and their skills are not respected in the same way they are today, women who excelled at the feminine skill of weaving were recognized for it. Agamemnon describes the gifts he will give Achilles if Achilles agrees to fight as his ally against the Trojans: “Seven women I’ll give him, flawless, skilled in crafts…” (9.153) Agamemnon then goes on to describe their social rank before they were captured, and then again mentions their beauty. The women’s skills in crafts were second only to their flawless when Agamemnon describes their value. Helen, for
whom the entirety of the Trojan was fought, commands not only a terrible beauty, but a skill at the loom: “… Helen was in her rooms…weaving a glowing web, a dark red folding robe, working into the weft the endless bloody struggles stallion-breaking Trojans and Argives armed in bonze had suffered all for her at the god of battle’s hands.” (3.150). Although the war was not fought for Helen’s skills alone, her obvious skill at weaving (for who but the most accomplished would attempt to weave such a tale?) undoubtedly increased her value (and thus her husband’s honor). When Hector returns from battle, searching for Paris, he tells his mother to pick the most beautiful cloth she could find, and “…spread it across the sleek-haired goddess’ knees… if only she’ll pity Troy, the Trojan wives and all our helpless children…” (6.324). Hector commands his mother to make a women’s offering to Athena, in the hopes that Athena will spare the Trojan women and children from Diomedes. In the Iliad, offerings men make are war trophies, with the hopes of gaining prowess in battle. Hector has his mother make a woman’s offering, so that the women and children will gain the goddess’ favor. “Then Athena, child of Zeus whose shield is thunder, letting fall her supple robe at the Father’s threshold—rich brocade, stitched with her own hands’ labor…” (5.481) Athena’s unmatched skill at weaving is synonymous for the form of respect which men in the Iliad give the women who are talented in crafts.

Athena represents what is respected in men and women in the Iliad. In men, Athena’s prowess in battle is synonymous for the respect which glory in battle wins men. Athena’s unmatched skill at weaving represents the value and (the form of) respect given to women who are skilled at crafts.