On today’s post, we featured a tablet containing text from the Gilgamesh epic. There are many solid translations of this epic for you to read at home. While you explore the text, we suggest the following OI articles and publications:

To examine one of the Oriental Institute Gilgamesh tablets, see Highlights of the Collections of the Oriental Institute Museum, p. 41.


To explore one aspect of the epic, read: Samuel Kramer, Gilgamesh and the Huluppu-Tree.

Stories are told in many different ways. The Battle of Kadesh (1274 BC), for example, was a struggle between the Egyptians (under Ramses II) and the Hittites (under Muwatalli II) at the site of Kadesh in Syria. Despite the wealth of documentation about the battle, most of the surviving evidence comes from the Egyptian point of view. Recording the battle was clearly considered important and it decorated the walls of several temples, including Karnak, Luxor, and Abu Simbel which were decorated with reliefs and texts about the battle. It is clear that Ramses II wanted to record multiple versions of the event. Fewer Hittite sources survive. Although limited Hittite sources suggest that the Hittites beat the Egyptians, they do not refer to the Battle of Kadesh specifically.

Even before there was an Oriental Institute, James Henry Breasted was writing about the Battle of Kadesh! See his The Battle of Kadesh: A Study in the Earliest Known Military Strategy, published all the way back in 1903!

For a more on the Hittite-Egyptian conflict, see William J. Murnane’s The Road to Kadesh: A Historical Interpretation of the Reliefs of King Seti I at Karnak.

To see the reliefs, you can consult the Epigraphic Survey volume: Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak IV: The Battle Reliefs of Sety I.

Speaking of ancient Anatolia... In recent months, the OI has partnered with Court Theater to present Court’s production of An Iliad in our galleries. Did you know that the OI has a fragment of Homer’s epic on papyrus found in Egypt? To learn more about why this Greek epic was found in Egypt, read Tasha

If you are looking to explore tales that are more light-hearted, less battle-centric, we suggest reading Brian Muh’s article, “Wenamun’s Bad Trip” in News and Notes, issue 241.