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| Lecture Notes |
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| **I. Background and Key Terms**   * + One of the two major epics from the culture of ancient Greece   + 8th century BC (between 800 BC to 701 BC)   + (That means somewhere from 800 BC to the year 701 BC)   + We’re not sure who really composed it. Tradition says that it was composed by the poet Homer.   + Notice how I’m saying “composed,” not “wrote.” That’s because the 8th century BC in Greece, even though they had written language, was still more of an oral culture – stories were passed down by memorization, not by being written down.   + The *Odyssey* was written down in the 6th century, around the year 529 or so.   **EPICS**   * + Epics told the stories of great men, great heroes, great deeds.   + These stories were central to understanding who they were, how they thought of themselves.   + Hard to understand American culture without understanding Batman or Superman.   + They reflect our values, the qualities we admire about ourselves.   + They were originally SUNG, or chanted to music.   + More in common with rap than opera.   + That’s why there are so many “labels” in the text.   + Ex: Hector, the tamer of horses, faithful Penelope, far-seeing Odysseus, and so on   + These “labels” (generally known as epithets) helped to finish the line or round out the meter.   + Usually centered on the deeds of a hero and his journey and acquisition of wisdom or other valuable qualities.   + Written in dactylic hexameter  |  | | --- | | **Key Terms – A Basic Guide**   * **Nostos** = This word gives us our word nostalgia, meaning “the longing for home.” Nostos means “homecoming” and the recognition and welcome that homecoming implies. * **Kleos** = Fame, especially fame that lives after one’s own death. * **Aristeia** = Moment of greatness, one’s “place in the sun” in an epic * **Xenia** = Hospitality. In ancient Greece, the laws of hospitality were sacred. | |