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| Lecture Notes – Odyssey Introduction and Four Motifs |
| * Give overview of *The Iliad*   + Helen of Troy/Menelaus of Sparta   + Ten years – solved by Odysseus w/ Trojan horse, Troy burned down * Relate to actual war – Iraq, Afghanistan * Problem of homecoming, reincorporation into society * Post-traumatic stress   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Information - Epics**  In its strict sense the term epic or heroic poem is applied to a  work that meets at least the following criteria:   * it is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, * told in a formal and elevated style, * and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race.   Traditional epics were written versions of what had originally been oral poems about a tribal or national hero.  Among these are the Iliad and *Odyssey* that the Greeks  ascribed to Homer; the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*; the *French Chanson*  *de Roland* and the Spanish *Poema del Cid* in the twelfth century;  and the thirteenth-century German epic *Nibelungenlied*.  Literary epics are highly conventional compositions which usually share the  following features, derived by way of the Aeneid from the traditional epics of Homer:   * The hero is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance. * The setting of the poem is ample in scale. Odysseus wanders over the Mediterranean basin (the whole of the world known at the time), and in Book XI he descends into the underworld. * The action involves superhuman deeds in battle or a long, arduous, and dangerous journey intrepidly accomplished, such as the wanderings of Odysseus on his way back to his homeland, in the face of opposition by some of the gods. * In these great actions the gods and other supernatural beings take an interest or an active part. * An epic poem is a ceremonial performance, and is narrated in a ceremonial style which is deliberately distanced from ordinary speech and proportioned to the grandeur and formality of the heroic subject and architecture.   **Background Terms**   * Teach three crucial concepts for understanding Greek literature   + **Kleos** – Fame     - This is what Achilles wants.     - Given choice between happy (anonymous) life and short, famous one, he chooses fame     - Becomes greatest warrior in Greek society.   + **Nostos** – Homecoming   + **Xenia** – Hospitality, civilization, basis of civilized society   **CULTURAL DISSONANCE**   * + - Be aware of the fact that this is a different culture – many values will be ones we share, but many will seem alien.     - As you read, keep notes of which moments seem culturally alien.   **Form of the Epic - General**   * Oral narrative composed around 700 BC. * Written down around 546 BC. * Actual war had taken place earlier, around 1200 BC. * Told as long poem * Dactylic hexameter * Epithets used unusually – “Far-seeing Aegisthus,” when Aegisthus wasn’t being particularly far-seeing * **In medias res** – begins with Odysseus having been gone for ten years   **Structure**   * First four books focus on Odysseus’ son Telemachus – the Telemachy * Pattern of ANALOGY and ANTITHESIS * We are invited to look at parallel situations   + Agamemnon/Odysseus   + Orestes/Telemachus   + Telemachus/Odysseus * Unreliable narrators   + Example: Menelaus’ version of events vs. Helen’s   **FOUR MAJOR MOTIFS**  **Motif #1: Identity**   * Names * Ask kids: What is your name? What is its significance? Why do you have that name? * Odysseus = Son of Pain or Scar * Telemachus = Far from Battle * Calypso = I conceal * Circe = I encircle * Odysseus will name himself “nobody” or “No-man,” but we will see he has to become “noman” himself before he can return to his home. * Odysseus plays all roles: King, son, father, beggar, lover, warrior * **Epithets for Odysseus**   + Polymetis = Man of many designs   + Polymechanos = Man of many deivces   + Polytropos -…of many twists and turns   + Polyatlas …much-enduring * **Telemachus’ Identity**   + In the Telemachy, as far as identity goes, Telemachus is given many assurances that he is Odysseus’ true son.   + Important for Telemachus to establish his own sense of identity   + Identity also means establishing your relationship to others, his right to be the son of Odysseus and fight for Ithaca   **Motif #2 – Xenia**   * What does it mean to be civilized? The whole Trojan war was caused by a violation of *xenia* * Calls up the whole interrelationship between host/guest, stranger/friend * Odysseus must restore xenia in Ithaca * Post-traumatic stress/restoration of civilization   + When he and his men first leave, they are totally in wartime mode   + They rape and pillage the village   + They violate xenia in the Cyclopes’ island   + Odysseus must restore xenia in Ithaca   **Motif #3: Immortality versus Mortality**   * “Do you want to live forever?” * Odysseus rejects kleos aphthiton (undying fame) * Odysseus rejects it again when he is offered immortality on the island of Calpyso. * “I long, I pine all my days to travel home…”   **Motif #4: Leadership**   * What are the qualities of an effective leader? * Does being a leader in battle require different skills from being a king? * Is Odysseus a good leader? * Tests everyone by the following means:   + Tells a false story   + Asks an uncomfortable question   + Reveals himself.   + What story does he tell Telemachus? Eurycleia? What aspect – father, son, etc. – does he reveal of himself? * Will Telemachus assume a good leadership after Odysseus is gone? |

*\*Most of the really good ideas in this unit came from Carol Jago,* [*Classics in the Classroom*](http://www.amazon.com/Classics-Classroom-Designing-Accessible-Literature/dp/0325005907)*.*