

GCSE (9–1)
Set Text Guide

CLASSICAL GREEK

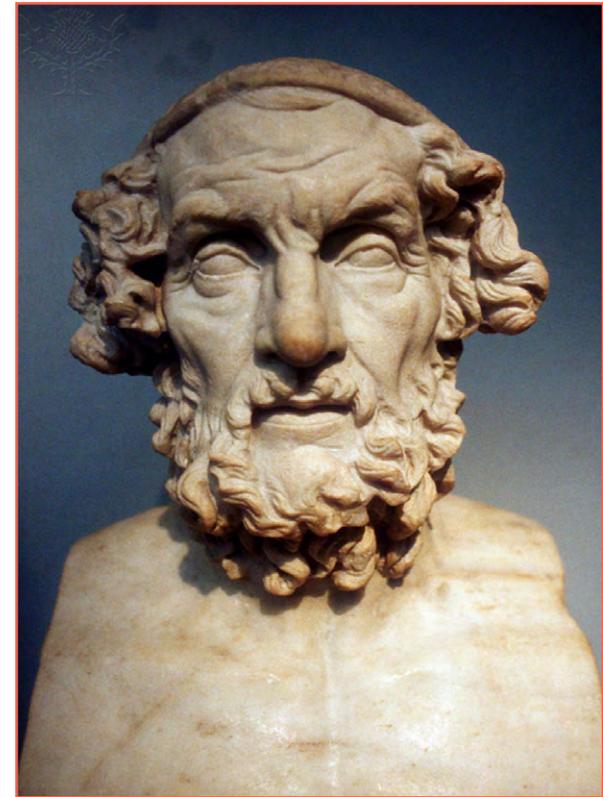
J292
For first teaching in 2016

Set Text Guide
*Homer's *Odyssey**



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Homer (8th century BC) Greek epic poet.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Homer

Homer is one of the most famous and influential authors in the Western tradition, but also one of the most problematic. There is a general agreement that the *Odyssey* was composed somewhat later than the *Iliad* in eighth or seventh century BC, and that the poet was Ionian. The poem was composed in an era of orally recited poems, in a society where the travelling bard was a well-known character; these bards drew their tales from a stock of common themes and characters, based in a mythical past which preserve some historical echoes of the bronze age of four to five hundred years earlier. 'Homer' (probably originally a nickname) was one of these bards: but instead of being content to simply perform his poetry at banquets, turned his performance into long, continuous, *written* stories.

The earliest biographies of Homer were written in the sixth century BC, when he was already famous, but even these do not contain any reliable information about his life. They do show that because of the popularity of his poems, people were curious about the man behind them. Homer's was the only poetry thought worthy by Alexander the Great to be taken on campaign, and by the Hellenistic period there were even temples dedicated to Homer; for example, by the Egyptian Hellenistic king Ptolemy Philopator. Homer was, to the Greeks of the Classical period and later, the earliest and the greatest of all Greek authors. Beyond what we can guess from the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, however, nothing about him or his life is certain or secure.

Epic

Epic story-telling

The most obvious defining feature of epic as an ancient genre is its poetic form: all ancient Greek and Roman epic is written in a metre called dactylic hexameter. Epic verse is also notable for its length; the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* consist of 24 books each, and unlike other long works of antiquity (notably historical writing) keep a clear focus on a connected chain of events throughout the whole work; in the case of the *Iliad*, the wrath of Achilles, and in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' desire to return home.

Epic poetry deals with great heroic deeds, taken from larger narratives of Greek heroic mythology. Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* assume a familiarity with the characters and plot-lines; Greek tragedy later takes on other parts of the

mythological story, and even shows that there were alternative or competing versions of the same stories.

Gods and the Divine

One striking feature of epic which seems strange to modern eyes is the prominent role played by the gods. The gods intervene in human affairs, engage in battle with mortals and with each other, and have rivalries, jealousies and temper-tantrums. Since ancient times, readers (including, famously, Plato) have been concerned and worried about this portrayal of the gods – as well as entertained and amused. Some have tried to read the divine as allegories for the natural world or moral truths; others have interpreted the stories as an ancient people trying to deal with the uncertainties of a world they could not control, and in which life was often cruel and short. Others again just think they are highly entertaining stories. These were hotly contested questions from at least the sixth-century BC, and will continue to be so!

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

The *Odyssey* is in some sense a sequel to the *Iliad*, which tells the story of the successful Greek campaign against the city of Troy. The *Odyssey* tells the story of the journey home of one of these Greek warriors. Just as importantly, the themes and settings of the *Odyssey* form a contrast and counterpoint to those of the *Iliad*. Whereas the *Iliad* is set in a society at war, the *Odyssey* deals with peace-time; the *Iliad* is all heroic saga, whereas the *Odyssey* has a great deal which comes from sailors' fables and folk-tale elements. The weird and marvellous (visits to the underworld, witches, and giants) are balanced by a focus on the domestic. The sphere of ordinary life is much more important than in the *Iliad*: shepherds sitting in their huts, stories being around an open, and (as in our selection) women in a large household worrying about love and marriage, and making sure the washing gets done!

The *Odyssey*

Odysseus is one of the Greek heroes from the Trojan War, famed for his cunning even more than his prowess in battle. It is his journey homewards to Ithaca which forms the substance of the 24 books of the *Odyssey*.

It begins ten years after the fall of Troy; the prologue tells us, however, that although he longs for home, he has suffered numerous disasters, lost all his companions, and is languishing on the island Ogygia with the nymph Calypso. The first four books are mostly about Odysseus' son, Telemachus, who was born just as Odysseus was setting off; now about twenty, he goes off to find news of his father. The situation on Ithaca is unhappy: Penelope, Odysseus' faithful wife, is surrounded by arrogant suitors who want her to give up on Odysseus and marry one of them. Whilst they wait for her to make up her mind they have taken over Odysseus' house and are living off his wealth.

At the same time, Athena, Odysseus' divine champion, successfully persuades Zeus to allow Odysseus' return. He is released by Calypso, but Poseidon shipwrecks Odysseus and in book 6 (from which our selection comes) he is shipwrecked on the island of Scheria. The king's daughter, Nausicaa (by Athena's planning) finds him on the shore, and he makes his way into the city of the Phaeacians and is entertained at King Alcinous' court. While there, he recounts the story of his journey from Troy to Ogygia, which makes up the bulk of the fantastic, weird and wonderful tales of the *Odyssey* – the famous stories of the Lotus-eaters, the Cyclops, the Laestrygonian giants, the Sirens – witches, monsters, magical transformations, and descents to the underworld. It is a much more colourful cast of characters than the warrior world of the *Iliad*.

The last part of the epic sees the hero's return home. Initially disguising himself as a beggar on his arrival in Ithaca, he discovers the situation of the arrogant suitors and the plight of the faithful Penelope. Telemachus has returned from his travels, and in league with him, Odysseus reveals himself, kills the suitors and is reunited with his wife – at last.



Odysseus (Ulysses) tied to the mast of his ship to save him from the Sirens. Homer Odyssey, epic Greek poem. Roman mosaic, 3rd century AD, Tunis.

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>What do we mean we refer to epic as a 'genre'? What genres are we familiar with in the modern world?</i></p>	<p>This could be linked to the learner activity, 'using genre' below.</p> <p>Whilst we come to a text like the <i>Odyssey</i> with some idea of what it's about, an ancient audience will have listened to the text with a full set of 'generic expectations' - even before the poet has opened his mouth (or at least as soon as they hear the dactylic hexameter rhythm of the first line) they knew what to expect -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who the main characters would be • what the main plot lines were likely to be • that the gods would be involved • that there would be epic similes. <p>The poet excelled by meeting these expectations, by adding new twists to them, and sometimes by subverting them.</p> <p>Modern genres might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fantasy films/ books • Murder mysteries • Cop shows • Horror films • Romantic comedies <p>Get them to think of two or three things they can guess are going to happen once they know the genre - e.g. they know if it's a rom-com, the couple will hate each other at first but get together in the end; if it's a horror film, no-one should go down to the basement alone.</p>

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>Sometimes the Homeric epics are referred to as ‘the Bible of the Greeks’. What do you think this might mean? How might it be similar or different to the way the Bible is viewed in modern western culture?</i></p>	<p>This should be able to provoke some interesting discussion about authoritative texts and how we view them.</p> <p>The comparison has been discussed by a number of authors; the common elements discussed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a fundamental part of education and literate culture (though this is changing for the Bible in western culture) • They can be understood as divine revelations – but this is disputed and problematic (both the bible and Homer have their public detractors) • Source of many recognised proverbs and sayings. <p>Differences include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the idea that Homer was a guide to living or morals was more problematic (though in some interpretations it was viewed as such) • the use of the text for religious worship doesn’t seem to have been part of the history of Homer

CONTEXT

The Homeric Age

The world depicted in the Homeric epics is partly memory of an earlier time, as passed down by word-of-mouth, partly a reflection of the world that Homer knew, and partly fiction; which part is which is difficult to judge, however!

The key figures in this world are elite males: above all the heroes of the Trojan war. They are both the wealthiest members of society, and the most powerful – although decisions seem to be taken by the assembly of all free men of a community gathered together. Amongst the Phaeacians, for instance, the assembly of all free men is called together to make decisions, but presided over by twelve *basileis*, 'kings' (see lines 54-55). Life at home for most ordinary men, when not called to war, was working on small farms producing enough for his family to live on.

The most important ideal in this society was honour (τιμή), and its opposite, shame (αἰσχύνη/αἴσχος): how a man was seen and respected by other men was more important than intrinsic virtue or guilt. The moral code of the Greek world, especially in Homeric society, is often summed up as to help one's friends and harm one's enemies.

Much of the *Odyssey* takes place within the houses of these powerful figures, like that of Alcinous from our text. These were simple: just a large hall attached to a courtyard. This main hall is where communal feasting and story-telling happened, and where during the day the women might sit and spin. There were also other rooms attached, particularly separate women's quarters, possibly on an upper story.

Women led for the most part an entirely segregated, domestic life, spending their days in the laborious task of spinning and weaving wool, as well as other domestic tasks - notably, for our text, taking clothes to the river to be washed. Below these free-born characters is a substructure of slavery; more common among women, taken in wars as prisoners, than men (who, being more of a threat, would have been put to death). As we see from the stories of Penelope and Nausicaa, a woman's hopes rested entirely upon her father and then her husband.

The composition of the *Odyssey*

Debates about who composed the *Odyssey* and how it was composed have been raging for thousands of years. The earliest debates were about whether the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were by different poets. Certainly there are differences in both style and content between the two poems, but the question is still undecided.

In the nineteenth century, some scholars began arguing that the *Odyssey* we have wasn't really a single story by one author, but was a collection of originally separate stories stitched together by a later editor. This argument was based on the fact that there are lots of slight inconsistencies within the *Odyssey* itself. In the early twentieth century, however, an American scholar called Milman Parry researched the living traditions of oral poetry which still existed in the Balkans. His studies into how poets who were used to performing and singing, rather than writing, gave another possible way of explaining these inconsistencies: as results of the process of oral composition.

The illiterate Serbo-Croatian singers Parry listened to did not have a whole performance memorised, but rather had to hand a store of stories and scenarios around which they could frame their compositions. On a smaller level, they had a treasury of stock phrases and elements which formed lines or half-lines and could be fitted together as circumstance demanded. The same elements – repeated half-lines, epithets, and stock descriptions of dawns, arrivals, departures, and introductions to speeches, for instance, all show these characteristics. This 'off-the-cuff' style of composition, when written down, would lead to the inconsistencies which had nagged at critics in the nineteenth century.

These and other considerations have given strength to the 'unitarian' case (that the poems are the work of a single author), though with the recognition that there is much traditional material used and reconfigured by the poet.

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p>Could an archaeological find prove or disprove the Homeric epics?</p>	<p>There is a long history of debate over the 'historicity' of the Homeric epics - most famously in the nineteenth-century career of Heinrich Schliemann, who uncovered the site of the historic Troy. Even if, however, there is some historical kernel at the core of the epic tradition, does it make a difference to how we read it as literature? Some archaeological finds might be exciting and help us to understand the daily lives, political organisation, or economy of either the society lived in or the semi-fictional bronze past he writes about (a great example can be found here: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1306042/The-legend-Homers-Odyssey-true-Archaeologists-palace-began.html), but fundamentally, it doesn't change the <i>Odyssey's</i> beauty or importance as literature.</p>
<p>What are the main similarities and differences between Homeric society and the modern world?</p>	<p>There will be lots of material for discussion here! Some key themes that will be important for the episode of the set text are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of gender - Nausicaa is a beautifully drawn female character, but virtue for both her and her mother consists in getting married and concerned themselves with domestic duties. • The role the ancients believed was played by divine powers - even religious believers in the modern world tend to believe in a just and ordered relationship between the divine and humanity, rather than the fickle, unpredictable selfish Greek gods of epic. • The terrible dangers of ordinary life - the possibility of ship-wreck or violent attack.

THE TEXT

Odyssey 6-8: Odysseus amongst the Phaeacians

Books 6-8 make up a unified section of the *Odyssey*, set amongst the Phaeacians, a peaceful sea-going people. The episode, and the Phaeacians, inhabit a mid-way point between the geographically recognisable human, Greek, world of Ithaca, and the mythological, monstrous world of Odysseus' earlier adventure; although some have tried to suggest that there is a 'real' Scheria (guesses tend to focus on modern Corfu). The Phaeacians, however, seem to have an ideal utopian society; cut off from the world, their ships sail miraculously, and they are free from threat of invasion or war. In all other respects, though, they are a model of an eighth-century Greek city-state, or *polis*.

Odysseus stumbles on a city gathered together for the festival of Poseidon; he is welcomed as a stranger according to the Greek rules of *xenia* (the protection of travellers and strangers) but conceals his true identity. The next day the city meets in an assembly, presided over by Alcinous and eleven other *basileis*, kings or leaders, and decides to provide a ship to send Odysseus home. There is feasting, competitive athletic games, and a bard sings from the stock of common heroic stories; as it happens, about the sack of Troy, which brings Odysseus to tears and forces him to reveal his true identity, and thus begins the narrative of his earlier adventures. When the Phaeacians do take Odysseus home; our last vision of them is ominous; in punishment for helping Odysseus, Poseidon turns their ship to stone.

Homer *Odyssey*, Book 6 lines 48–159

Book 6 begins with a brief description of Odysseus collapsed on the sea-shore of Scheria, having been shipwrecked there by Poseidon. We then move to Athena appearing in a dream to Nausicaa, reminding her of her duties as a daughter and her concerns as a girl of marriageable age; she must preserve her own reputation and her family's by appearing in lovely clothes, especially as she looks forward to her wedding day. It is Athena who suggests the washing trip to the beach. Our prescribed section begins at dawn, with Nausicaa waking from her dream.

Nausicaa approaches her parents about her plan to take the clothes to wash them by the river; her father gives instructions for a waggon to be organised for her trip, and her mother organises a picnic to be placed in, too. Nausicaa sets off with her companions.

They clean the clothes by the river bed, and the girls then bathe and anoint themselves, and start playing a kind of ball-game or dance; the first epic simile of the prescribed text compares Nausicaa to Artemis (famously a virgin, unwed goddess of wild places and hunting) standing out amongst a chorus of nymphs.

Athena contrives for a throw of the ball to go amiss, and the girls' cry wakes Odysseus from his sleep. The scene of his introduction to the girls is comic: naked and covered with sea-scurf, he debates with himself what to do before walking out before the girls, a branch covering his nakedness. His appearance is described in the second simile, as a ravaging lion forced to attack human settlements through hunger (comically displaced from a more natural military setting). The rest of the girls run off, but Nausicaa stands her ground, where Odysseus addresses her as a needy suppliant.

This is where our section ends; Nausicaa, expressing her admiration of the stranger to her maidens, will go on to help him find his way into the city and get help from her parents.

Themes and Motifs

The Phaeacians as an ideal community

As noted before, Scheria is depicted as the home to an ideal city-state. Nausicaa's family is thus presented in idealistic Greek terms. Nausicaa's mother, Arete ('Virtue') does not speak when Nausicaa approaches her parents, and is engaged in spinning at the hearth; Alcinous is on his way out to the (male) political world of the council (lines 48-56). This mirrors the Greek view that women should be kept indoors, and public activity, especially political decision-making, is a purely male concern. Nausicaa is modest and respectful to her father; although she couches her request as of benefit to him (lines 57-65), he guesses her concerns and hopes about marriage (lines 66-7). We gain an impression of tightly-hierarchically ordered, but close-knit and caring family; little touches like the colloquial, familiar address to her father as *πάππα*, help develop this tone.

Odysseus as suppliant (110-25)

The theme of supplication is a common one in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, where a powerless figure appeals to the *aidos*, or sense of honour, of another, to gain a favour or protection. Here, the situation seems inverted: the epic hero is begging help from a teenage girl. Odysseus is at his lowest ebb as a hero. On the technical aspects of supplication, see under the technical terms. Rather than a full supplication, however, he modestly stays a distance from her, demonstrating his tact. Nausicaa's response is exactly what that to a suppliant should be: offering him a bath, food and clothing.

Romance

Some have Nausicaa as Odysseus' last temptation: the romantic possibility of a new wife in an ideal, peaceful human society. Right from the beginning, when Athena visits her dream, Nausicaa is a figure connected with romance and marriage. Her motivation for going to wash clothes at the river is to make sure she is preparing herself in the right way for marriage, and in literature, the scene of a young girl on the edge of the city is often a precursor to a story of romance and passion.

After our selection she herself comments on the handsomeness of Odysseus, and her parents offer her in marriage to Odysseus. She behaves, however, as the paragon of Greek modesty and restraint. Although both Athena and Odysseus seem to manipulate her crush on Odysseus and impressionability to make sure Odysseus is kept safe, there is no real suggestion that her attraction might have an effect on the action of the epic.

Stylistic Features

There are a number of typically Homeric stylistic features which can be noted, including;

- **Use of epithets:** ἀπήνην / ὑψηλήν εύκυκλον (lines 57-8) form one of the more unique combinations in these lines.
- **Alliteration and assonance:** the alliteration of *pi* in 124 is clearly striking; the assonance of ἀμφήλυθε θήλυς ἀυτή (line 121) is possibly also significant and related. Assonance and alliteration are difficult to analyse, even where their use must be deliberate (as in 124) rather than coincidental.

Given the contrast between the **civilised and uncivilised** is often rendered in Greek thought as the difference between being able to speak and not being able to the alliteration here might flag up the tension and fear in Odysseus' thought: is he a civilised man in an uncivilised land?

- **Chiastic arrangement** (lines 61-65): the reasons Nausicaa gives for her request of the chariot are bookended by infinitives βουλάς βουλεύειν and ἐς χορὸν ἔρχεσθαι; in both sentences the stress is not on these infinitive phrases, but on the participial phrases: καθαρὰ χροῖ εἶματ' ἔχοντα and its near repetition, νεόπλυτα εἶματ' ἔχοντες.

There are two **epic similes** in the set lines; the first, at lines 102-9, compares Nausicaa to Artemis among her nymphs. The key focus of the simile is Nausicaa's outstanding beauty and stature, but the simile gives us much more than that single point of comparison; it is one of the longest in the *Odyssey* and one of only nine in the work which are five lines or longer. While Nausicaa is playing with a ball, and Artemis is on the mountain hunting, both are engaging in leisure activities and enjoying themselves in lonely place away from the city; the nymphs, often associated with singing and dancing, echo Nausicaa's maidens in their dance, and the framing of the simile as Leto, Artemis' mother, taking pleasure in the scene echoes the domestic harmony of Nausicaa's family. Moreover, Artemis, as a fiercely virgin goddess, reminds of Nausicaa's status as unwed and her motivation for coming out to wash the clothes – to prepare herself for her wedding day. It is significant that in Odysseus' speech to her he begins by suggesting she may be Artemis, again reminding us of these themes.

The second simile, at lines 130-4, describes Odysseus as a ravening lion. Each of the two main characters thus has their own simile, which prepares the audience for their meeting. Lion similes are particularly common in Homeric epic, and this shares typical features with many others: the lion is hungry and falls upon goats, sheep or deer. The main force here is to emphasise Odysseus' hunger, but it also flags how potentially threatening his appearance might seem to the girls. But the context of other uses of lion similes is warriors in battle – the effect here is deliberately comic in its mock-heroic tone.

Glossary of Key Terms

alliteration: the repetition of consonant sounds.

assonance: the repetition of vowel sounds, especially simple rhyme.

chiasmus: the arrangement of words in any A-B-B-A pattern.

epic/ Homeric/extended simile: an extended comparison between some aspect of the action and something quite different: often something from the natural world, or the world of ordinary experience. Usually the simile will have multiple features which correspond to the action being described.

epithet: a descriptive word attached as a defining formula to a noun: e.g.

figura etymologica: the use of two words together which come from the same root: e.g. βουλάς βουλεύειν (l. 61). It is reasonably common in the *Odyssey*.

nymph: Minor goddesses; in Homer, they are often called 'daughters of Zeus', and are mostly associated with water.

supplication/ suppliant: The theme of supplication is common in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and forms an important part of the social world of the epics. One becomes a suppliant when at the mercy of another (either in battle, or as here, in their territory/city) and supplication is the act of trying to win their favour. Ideally, the suppliant should crouch or kneel and grasp or kiss the knees of the intended benefactor. Suppliants were seen to be powerfully protected by Zeus Hikesios.



Alexandre de Laborde (1774-1842). *Collection des vases grecs de Ms.le Comte de Lamberg, Paris, 1813-1824. Nymphs (Muses) playing lyre and flute before Apollo. Engraving by Piringer after Greek original.*

Talking Points

Talking Point	Explanation and Teacher Notes
<p><i>How does an epic simile work? What makes it effective?</i></p>	<p>An epic simile gives a vivid picture of one aspect of a scene; either to suggest inner feelings or states of mind, the imagery is often drawn from the natural world, or a comparison.</p> <p>Get the students to make up their own epic similes.</p>
<p><i>Why would a poet keep using an epithet for someone or something? Are there any modern equivalents?</i></p>	<p>A discussion of the value of the practical benefits of epithets for an oral poet might follow; but they continue to be used even when epics become primarily written texts. Their value in defining key features of a character or helping to set the mood for the passage is important – a ‘high, well-wheeled waggon’ as here suggests luxury, spaciousness and wealth, all contributing to our picture of Phaeacian society.</p> <p>For modern epithets, students might be able to think of nicknames of sporting stars which pick out defining characteristics.</p>

ACTIVITIES AND STUDENT TASKS

Activities

Vocabulary List for *Odyssey 6*

The Perseus Project

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0135:book=6>

Click on 'vocab tool' in the right-hand column for a vocabulary list which gives the most frequent words used in *Od. 6*.

The Perseus text can be used on its own by students – especially helpful is the morphological analysis of individual words.

Particularly useful, however, is its option for creating a specific vocab list for *Od. 6*. Taking the top 50% of words used in the book will give a list of just over 120 words, many of which (especially at the top) won't need to be learnt. This is great as a tool (if learnt off by heart) to get students familiar with the vocabulary of the text so that they can prepare it themselves, and see the process of reading the text as reading – not just as memorizing a translation by rote.

In Our Time: *The Odyssey*

BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p004y297>

Discussion of the *Odyssey* as a whole: Melvyn Bragg with Edith Hall, Oliver Taplin and Simon Goldhill.

The Odyssey Game

The Classics Pages

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/odchoice.htm>

Online game based on the *Odyssey*: play as Telemachus, Penelope or the great Odysseus.

A fun way to get students familiar with the basic characters and episodes of the *Odyssey*.

Ancient images of Nausicaa

The Beazley Archive

<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/index.htm>

Using the search function, students (or teachers) can navigate to ancient vase images of Nausicaa, as well as other Odyssean episodes.

The images are unfortunately black-and-white; a little searching on google, however, should bring up some excellent colour examples, too.



Odysseus and Athena at the meeting with Nausicaa, attic red-figured amphora from Vulci, 440 BC, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich.

Student task sheets

Using genre	
<p>Introduction to the task – specifically aimed at the student:</p>	<p>We have to remember that because it was an epic, ancient readers came to the <i>Odyssey</i> with fixed expectations about the content and style of the work; in our set text, Homer both plays with and undermines his audience's expectations. To get an idea of what this felt like for an ancient audience, look at the introductory sentence below - can you guess which genre they belong to? Try to continue each with another two sentences, packing as many cliches from that genre into them as possible.</p>
<p>The activity (all task information, questions, answers etc.),</p>	<p>a) Lightning lit up the old, craggy, battlements as the couple shivered on the porch and rang the doorbell; it didn't see particularly welcoming, but this was the only house on the dark, deserted stretch of road where their car had broken down.</p> <p>b) Saraborn the Red mopped the sweat off his brow as he panted as the top of the spiral staircase which led up the east tower, an old wizened figure in his grey flowing robes; it was not often he had to climb up here - not often the ancient scrolls of prophecy had to be consulted.</p> <p>c) Detective Inspector Sandstrom shook his head and wandered back under the police tape. Two murder victims were bad. That he hadn't a coffee yet was worse.</p>
<p>Extension activities/questions:</p>	<p>Challenge the students to create comic effects by mixing in elements from other genres into their stories. Would people in other cultures or at other times have understood these genres or found mixing these elements funny? How much of a whole culture or literary tradition do we need to understand before we can truly appreciate an individual piece of writing? These will be stretching questions even for a bright GCSE group.</p>

Task 1: Using genre

Look at the introductory sentence below - can you guess which genre they belong to? Try to continue each with another two sentences, packing as many clichés from that genre into them as possible.

	What genre?	How do I know?	Continuing on...
<i>Lightning lit up the old, craggy, battlements as the couple shivered on the porch and rang the doorbell; it didn't see particularly welcoming, but this was the only house on the dark, deserted stretch of road where their car had broken down.</i>			
<i>Saraborn the Red mopped the sweat off his brow as he panted as the top of the spiral staircase which led up the east tower, an old wizened figure in his grey flowing robes; it was not often he had to climb up here - not often the ancient scrolls of prophecy had to be consulted.</i>			
<i>Detective Inspector Sandstrom shook his head and wandered back under the police tape. Two murder victims were bad. That he hadn't a coffee yet was worse.</i>			

The twitter <i>Odyssey</i>	
<i>Introduction to the task – specifically aimed at the student:</i>	Try to re-write the set text as a twitter conversation – think up appropriate handles for different characters who might be tweeting (e.g. @imissithaca for Odysseus), and play out the events and reactions as a twitter conversation between them.
<i>The activity (all task information, questions, answers etc.),</i>	<p>Ancient epic had a set of rules that everyone knew and respected; each line could only be a certain length, a certain style of language was expected, and conventions like similes and epithets were always included. In many ways this is similar to twitter, where tweets are limited to 140 characters at a time, twitter handles work like Homeric epithets, and certain stylised forms of language are expected (lolz, l8r...).</p> <p>Some sites will allow you to generate it in a form that imitates twitter itself - e.g.</p> <p>http://simitator.com/generator/twitter/tweet, or http://www.lemmetweetthatforyou.com/</p>
<i>Extension activities/questions:</i>	What are the most difficult parts of the Homeric world to translate into the modern world? What are the easiest?

Odysseus: hero or villain?	
Introduction to the task – specifically aimed at the student:	Odysseus is known to us as a Homeric ‘hero’; but even in ancient Greece, there was debate about heroic he really was. Use the list of facts and arguments to help you argue for one side or the other - and come up with some of your own from the text.
The activity (all task information, questions, answers etc.),	<p>There are several ways of setting up this kind of debate, depending on how many in the class and what the dynamic is usually like. Ideally, with a small class (of 8 or less), you can divide into two teams of three speakers each (possibly with a fourth, ‘silent’, speaker who helps prepare and come up with rebuttal during the debate). Make sure they prepare their case as a team so they’re not just repeating the same arguments! With the prompts on the attached list, anywhere from 15 minutes upwards should be sufficient preparation time. This kind of debate will work the best if they have already covered the major episodes in the <i>Odyssey</i> so that they can bring in their own knowledge of some of Odysseus’ more and less heroic moments.</p> <p>Ideally, in an hour lesson you could have half an hour’s prep and half an hour’s debate followed by discussion. For the debate itself a time limit of 2 minutes is usually quite good; a speaker in favour of Odysseus as a hero speaks first, and then the sides alternate.</p> <p>With more students in a class, you can have two teams each preparing each side of the debate, but only one debate – the other teams are allowed a period of ‘floor debate’ after the second speakers, where statements can be challenged, new arguments made from the floor, and rebuttals offered.</p> <p>Give the position of closing speakers to the most confident speakers of the class – their job should be to summarize and condense all the key argument which have been made.</p> <p>Odysseus the hero!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically impressive: δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς...βῆ δ’ ἴμεν ὧς τε λέων ὄρεσίτροφος ἀλκι πεποιθώς, (Il. 127, 130) • Magnificent warrior - at the end of the <i>Odyssey</i> he single-handedly kills all the suitors! • Faithful - despite being offered immortality by Calypso, and is forced to be her lover, all he wants is to get home to his wife. • Is championed by one of the immortals, Athena. • Saves his men through his quick thinking and intelligent planning - e.g. in the cave of the Cyclops, Polyphemus. • Abides by the polite Greek customs of the suppliant, even though he could have overpowered the girls and stolen food and clothes from them.

Odysseus: hero or villain?	
	<p>Odysseus the villain...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulative - αὐτίκα μείλιχον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῦθον. (l. 148) • He deliberately flirts with Nausicaa so she will help him, even though he has no real interest in her. • Often lies to gain some advantage, and even disguises himself rather than letting his wife know he has returned. • He cheats on his wife with Calypso and Circe (before he gets to Scheria). • Lets his men die but survives himself - sometimes through his own arrogance, like his taunts to Polyphemus. • Is overly violent - kills all the suitors without any mercy on his return to Ithaca. • Is hated by one of the immortals, Poseidon (who shipwrecked him on Scheria).
<p>Extension activities/questions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find specific quotations from the set text which support each side of the case. Ask students at the end whether they had changed their minds, and why. What were the strongest and most convincing arguments from each side. A further extension could ask whether the qualities of heroic are different for the Greeks than they are for us in the modern world. What has changed? What counts as heroic now?

Task 2: Odysseus: Hero or Villain?

Evidence	Explanation and argument	How might this be countered?

Closing statement:

My verdict:

Because:

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

For teachers

Irene De Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

A.F. Garvie, *Odyssey, Books VI-VIII*. (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Alfred Heubeck, Stephanie West, J. B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Suzanne Saïd, *Homer and the Odyssey* (originally published 1998). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<http://www.aoidoi.org/articles/meter/intro.pdf>

(an article on Greek meters).

For students

W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Homer*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.

Robert Graves, *Homer's Daughter* (originally published 1955). Penguin Modern Classics, 2012. (A fictional reconstruction – very speculative! – about the origins of the *Odyssey*).

<http://www.showme.com/sh/?h=7trqGTg>

(Video: part of a series on Homeric hexameter).

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hom.+Od.+6&from-doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0135>

(The text of *Odyssey* 6 on Perseus)

<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Greek/Odyssey6.htm>

(A readable but reasonably close online translation)

<http://www.nadasisland.com/odyssey/>

(Lots of good background information)





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Greek to GCSE: Part 1: Revised edition for OCR GCSE Classical Greek (9–1)

John Taylor
9781474255165
August 2016
£15.99

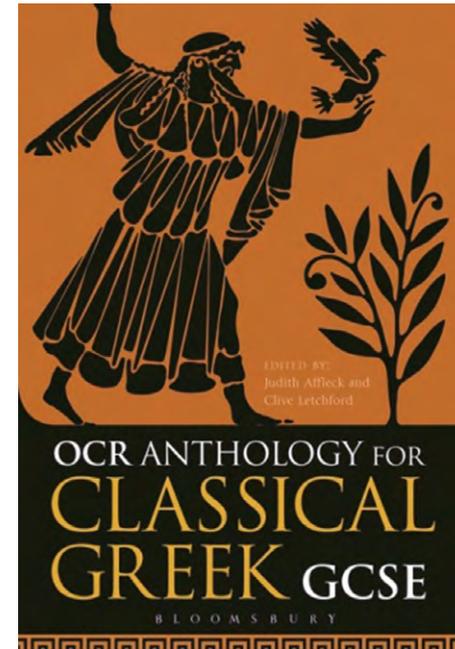
Greek to GCSE: Part 2: Revised edition for OCR GCSE Classical Greek (9–1)

John Taylor
9781474255202
August 2016
£15.99

Set texts:

OCR Anthology for Classical Greek GCSE

Edited by Judith Affleck & Clive Letchford
9781474265485
June 2016
£18.99



A website of supplementary online resources is planned

All details may be revised at any time



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