*The Odyssey* Essay Topics

We will begin work on the essays once we’ve completed the reading. Between now and then you need to consider the following topics and choose one for your paper. Read over each topic; as we continue to read, listen for lines that will fit with your topic (that you can use in your paper!). You will commit to a topic later.

1. On at least three occasions in the Odyssey, good advice is offered and not taken, and disaster and suffering result. Discuss three such examples.

2. In Part 2 of the Odyssey, Penelope shows that she is a strong woman, and therefore a good match for Odysseus, because she is clever. Discuss three times when Penelope was clever.

3. What is the role of females in the Odyssey? Taking into consideration such characters as Penelope, Circe, Athena, the Sirens, and Anticlea (Odysseus’ mother), discuss how women are portrayed.

4. What is the importance of the father/son relationships in the Odyssey? Thinking about what the story presents about the relationships between Odysseus and Laertes, Odysseus and Telemachus, and Polyphemus and Poseidon, describe what characteristics of this relationship the Greeks valued.

5. The Odyssey contains some very graphic violence, some of which is done in anger and some of which is not. Select examples of each, and explain the purpose of each violent scene.

6. Hospitality, the concept of welcoming visitors and treating them well, was important to the Ancient Greeks. Find examples in the Odyssey of times when the “rules” of hospitality are followed and times when it wasn’t. What role did these examples play in the epic?

7. Explore the theme of deception and lying in *The Odyssey*. In what sense is it a virtue? In what sense is it corrupt? What are the various aims of deception? Consider how it relates to the motifs of disguise and transformation. How might it relate to poetry?