

**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities  
for the Enriched Classic edition of  
*The Odyssey* by Homer  
1-4165-0036-7 • \$5.95 / \$8.50 Can.**

Activities created by Katie Gideon

Each of the three activities includes:

- NCTE standards covered
- An estimate of the time needed
- A complete list of materials needed
- Step-by-step instructions
- Questions to help you evaluate the results

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## Lesson Plan #1

### **“The Foundation of All Western Literature”** (A Lesson in Literary Elements)

In order to fully appreciate and analyze *The Odyssey*, students must acquire a sophisticated academic vocabulary. This introductory activity sets the tone for a rigorous unit; it challenges students to build a culture of scholarship and provides them with understanding of the academic language that they should be using in all written and oral discussions of the text. The graphic organizer assists students in moving beyond definitions and towards meaningful synthesis.

This lesson takes one fifty-minute class period to introduce and includes two nights of homework. You will need about ten minutes of class on the second day to reaffirm students’ understanding of the assignment before students independently continue the activity as they read the text.

#### **NCTE Standards Covered:**

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

#### **What To Do:**

1. Give each students the following assignment for homework: Read the publisher’s introduction (pages xi-xx), as well as the interpretive notes labeled “major characters,” “themes and symbols,” and “questions for discussion” (pages 371-375; 389-390). Though they don’t have to read it, students should be made aware of the Pronunciation Guide and figure out how to use it (pages 341-355).

2. The next day in class, ask the students about their reading. What intrigued them? What confused them? How will these pre-reading items work as resources once they begin reading the actual text of *The Odyssey*? What are they most looking forward to when it comes to this classic text? What do they feel apprehensive about?

3. From page 389, read aloud the first question for discussion (regarding Odysseus' journey as a template for "less fantastic, but just as difficult, mental and physical journeys through life"). Ask students if they've encountered—in any media—a character/group of characters that must complete some sort of mental, physical, and or emotional odyssey before coming to a greater understanding of self and/or sense of belonging within a community. Most students will probably relate the questing template to movies—*Wizard of Oz*, *Goonies*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Star Wars* are a few obvious examples. Ask students why creative people (bards, authors, moviemakers, etc) frequently return to the idea of journeys. What is it about personally arduous journeys that captures the human imagination?

4. Segue from this discussion to a discussion of Handout #1—perhaps by connecting the foundational nature of *The Odyssey* to the terms "archetype" or "motif." Explain that, in order to fully appreciate Homer's seminal work, students must be able to comfortably engage in an academic discourse. Pass out Handout #1 and explain that students will use this activity to solidify their understanding of each of the key terms listed. (Even students who already know these terms could definitely use the review!)

5. Give students directions for the handout's usage. As they read, they will cite an example of each literary element from *The Odyssey*. Then, they'll find an example of that same element as it occurs in a contemporary movie, book, or song. Students will come up with their own, original example of the term as well. Finally, students have to explain why each of their examples (from *The Odyssey*, contemporary media, and their own creative output) correctly demonstrates the literary element. Students should be aware that some elements will be easy to cite (point them towards the personification example), while some elements (such as theme) will be a larger, more complex issue that they can't just point towards on any given page. Elements like "theme" will definitely require careful reading, cumulative analysis, and class discussion (assure them that you will provide support). Use the example provided—for personification—to ensure that students understand the expectations.

6. For homework, have students read Book I. Tell them to look for an allusion to a Greek myth that Homer clearly expects his audience to know (although they might not understand the allusion, it's safe to assume that Homer's original audience would have). They can fill in the allusion portion of their chart—all three examples, with explanations.

7. The next day in class, spend a few minutes checking for understanding. Did students correctly identify the allusion to the story of Agamemnon? Could they find an example of allusion in contemporary culture? (If students struggle, you may point out that allusions commonly reference nursery rhymes, myths, fairy tales, the Bible, and famous characters/events/lines from major works of prose and poetry. For instance, the recent teen movie *She's the Man* is based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. In the final soccer game, the male lead—Duke—says, "Some are born great / some achieve greatness / and some have greatness thrust upon them." This is one of

Malvolio's lines in *Twelfth Night* and makes the movie more enjoyable for culturally knowledgeable viewers that understand the allusion.)

8. Ask students what they need in order to do the next terms independently. Answer their questions and provide support along the way as needed.

### **What You Need:**

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *The Odyssey* (1416500360) for each student

Copies of Handout #1 (Xerox as double-sided)

### **How Did It Go?**

Were students able to find examples of each term in *The Odyssey*? Could they also find examples in books, movies, or songs from contemporary culture? Could they write their own examples of the terms? Could they fully explain how each of their entries exemplified the term in question? Did they then go on to use this academic language in their written and oral discussions of the text?

## Lesson Plan #2

### **“You Will Not Let Yourself Be Beaten”** (A Lesson in Reading Comprehension)

In a narrative as long and complex as *The Odyssey*, students may struggle with keeping the characters and events clear in their minds. Creating a game is an engaging way for students to monitor and enhance their own comprehension. Furthermore, it requires students to distinguish between the key moments, supporting details, and irrelevant material of the text.

This lesson will initially take two or three fifty-minute class periods. It’s predicated on the assumption that students have read through Book IV. Students should update their games every few chapters; at the end of their reading, students can play the game to review.

#### **NCTE Standards Covered:**

- 3.** Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
- 5.** Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- 6.** Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- 11.** Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

#### **What To Do:**

1. Begin by asking students what strategies they use to ensure that they understand what they’ve read. If you told them that you’d be giving them a test on the first four books of *The Odyssey*—both plot events and literary elements employed by Homer—how would they study for the test? Brainstorm their list of strategies on one half of the board.
2. Next, ask students to brainstorm a list of board games that they like to play. Write that list on the other half of the board. After they’ve had a few minutes to brainstorm, ask them whether or not the games can teach them anything—whether it be a skill or a value (e.g., *Clue* tests problem-solving skills, such as the players’ ability to use process of elimination). Ask students if board games can ever be educational, and then have them explain their answers. (If students aren’t

getting it, you might extend the *Clue* example: process of elimination is a skill used while taking multiple choice tests.)

3. Ask students how successful they've been in tracking the characters, events, and ideas in *The Odyssey* thus far. Assure them that the text is considered complex by all scholars—not just student readers. In order to ensure that students comprehend the key elements of Homer's text, student groups will create a review game as they read the text. There will be time after every few chapters to incorporate new knowledge into the game (while recall and comprehension is fresh). After we finish reading the text, student groups will have a chance to play one another's game as a means of review before the unit test.

4. Put students in groups. Pass out Handout #2 to each student. Also, pass out Handout #3 to each group. Encourage students to take notes directly on the rubric handout as you read the handout aloud and respond to any questions students may have. Note that students will be grading themselves and each other—as creators and users of the games, this is the most authentic form of assessment. Remind them that this game should be a review for a test, which they will take individually (and you, as the teacher, will grade).

5. Though the activity should be fun, it should also be taken seriously. As such, students should pay special attention to the “Knowledge Gained” category that appears in both grading sections of the rubric. What are the key components that their game should be designed to review? Key characters, events, ideas, and literary elements discovered in the text. Also, direct their attention to the “preparedness” category on the player rubric. The only materials provided by the teacher are blank game cards and art supplies. Students will need to provide their own dice, spinners, game board, etc.

6. Present students with a timeline for their initial set-up of the game. They'll have the next few days in class to decide on a game format, write the rules, bring in the necessary materials, and write their review questions for the first four chapters of *The Odyssey*. They must also figure out a way to store all of their materials neatly in the classroom. Basically, students should have their game template roughed out. Future class-time for the game will be limited, and students should spend that time updating their questions and/or the graphics of their game board.

7. Assist groups as necessary while they work—during the initial setup, and then later during game updates. By the time students have finished the text and begin to play the games, you may need to copy new rubrics (as the original ones may be lost). Students should have at least one full class period to play the games.

### **What You Need:**

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *The Odyssey* (1416500360) for each student

Copies of Handout #2 (one per student)

Copies of Handout #3 (one per group, copied on cardstock, plus extras for later additions)

Art supplies

Example board games (optional)

### **How Did It Go?**

Did the games created meet the standards set in the rubric? Were game creators able to grade themselves honestly on the effectiveness of the activity? Were players able to learn from the games other groups created? Could the players grade the game creators honestly and fairly? Did the activity provide a good check for reading comprehension? Were game creators and players able to review the material in a meaningful fashion?

## Lesson Plan #3

### **“Odysseus Will Return”** (A Creative Assessment)

The following assessment activity is designed to challenge students’ synthesizing ability in an engaging, creative way. In this lesson, students will critically examine the form and function of *The Odyssey* in order to create a journey tale of their own.

This lesson will take at least two fifty-minute class periods to complete, and also includes homework.

#### **NCTE Standards Covered:**

- 3.** Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
- 5.** Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- 6.** Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- 11.** Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
- 12.** Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

#### **What To Do:**

1. Have this journal prompt posted at the beginning of class:

“Remember back at the beginning of the unit, when we discussed the archetypal quality of Odysseus’ journey? Refresh your memory regarding the strenuous journeys through life often depicted in our media. What are some contemporary books or movies that use an odyssey as their major plotline? What do contemporary media have in common with *The Odyssey*? How do they differ from *The Odyssey*? Be specific!”

2. Give the students time to brainstorm on their own. Then, have them share as a class. If they're having a hard time with the question, give them a jumpstart by discussing the movies mentioned in the first activity.

3. Students should arrive at the conclusion that Homer has, indeed, provided a foundation for all Western literature. They should be able to recognize familiar archetypes, motifs, and plot devices in modern journey stories. Now, ask students to examine their own life story. Would it be possible—perhaps with a little artistic license—to turn their own lives into a journey story?

4. Explain that students will be writing a creative journey story as part of their final assessment for the unit. The stories can be realistic or fantastical. Pass out copies of Handout #4. Explain that successful writers carefully read all of the information provided for an assignment before they commence work. Encourage students to underline key words and phrases as you read the story prompt and rubric out loud.

5. Brainstorm the different ways in which students might address the rubric. Obviously, students don't have time to compose an *Odyssey*-length story. How can they ensure that all elements of the rubric are addressed in the short amount of time given them for completion of the story? Could they perhaps write story excerpts and connect them with summaries? What kinds of excerpts might be conducive to highlighting the difference between civilization and barbarism? How might students construct an allegory?

6. Again, it may be helpful to refer to the movies mentioned in the first activity. To recall how the theme of "civilization versus barbarism" works in *The Odyssey*, students can review page 373 and the story of Cyclops. To recall how allegory works in *The Odyssey*, review page 375 and the story of Circe. Also, students should review their literary elements graphic organizer.

7. Ask if there are any further questions that the whole group needs to hear. If not, release the students to work independently. For the rest of the assessment period, you'll be working with each student about individual concerns. Your guidelines for the whole class are as follows: they should complete the framing prologue as homework. There's one more class day to work on the character prologue and story—anything students don't finish in class is homework.

8. Students should turn in the final draft of their story with Handout #4 attached, so that you can use it to grade them.

### **What You Need:**

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *The Odyssey* (1416500360) for each student

Copies of Handout #4

### **How Did It Go?**

Were students able to recognize the influence of *The Odyssey* on their own media? Could they compare and contrast those archetypes with the ones used by Homer? Did their final stories show an understanding of journey narratives? Were they able to include all elements from the rubric?

*The Odyssey: Literary Elements*

Term	In <i>The Odyssey</i>	In Contemporary Culture	Your Creative Take
<p><b>allegory</b> – a story, picture, or play that symbolically represents an abstract idea or principle.</p>			
<p><b>allusion</b> – passing reference, indirect mention, or implied reference to something. Assumes prior knowledge on the part of the reader, and can therefore be culturally biased.</p>			
<p><b>archetype</b> – a character type that consistently recurs in fairy tales and myths; psychologist Carl G. Jung theorized that these are ancient patterns of personality embedded in the collective human unconscious.</p>			

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<p><b>motif</b> – a repeated element in a literary or artistic work.</p>			
<p><b>personification</b> – the practice of giving human characteristics to objects, animals or things</p>	<p><i>“Now, when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Telemachus rose and dressed himself.”</i> (pg.15) <i>Since times of day can’t literally give birth to living beings, this is personification.</i></p>	<p><i>“... With every mistake we must surely be learning / Still my guitar gently weeps...”</i> (Beatles, “While My Guitar Gently Weeps”) <i>This is an example of personification because guitars can’t actually cry.</i></p>	<p><i>“The sun smiled down on the cross-country runners.”</i> <i>The sun doesn’t have a mouth. It can’t actually smile; therefore, this is personification.</i></p>
<p><b>symbol</b> – a person, place, or thing that also represents something else (often used to represent an abstract idea, or a group of ideas/characteristics, i.e., a heart symbolizes love)</p>			
<p><b>theme</b> – a broad idea in a story; the underlying message or truth. Something fundamental, universal, and bigger than plot.</p>			

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Handout #2

**Game Rubric One: Creators**

\_\_\_\_\_ / 20

CATEGORY	10	8	7	5
<b>Knowledge Gained</b>	All creators of the game could easily and correctly describe at least 10 key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> without looking at the game.	All creators of the game could correctly describe between 7 and 9 key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> without looking at the game.	Most creators of the game could correctly describe between 4 and 6 key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> without looking at the game.	Several of the game's creators could NOT correctly describe key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> without looking at the game.
<b>Cooperative work</b>	The group consistently stayed focused, managed time responsibly, and worked well together. Each member contributed high quality work.	The group generally stayed focused, managed time responsibly, and worked well together. Each member contributed some quality work.	The group worked fairly well together with all members contributing some work.	The group often did not work well together and the game appeared to be the work of only 1-2 students in the group.

**Game Rubric Two: Players**

\_\_\_\_\_ / 40

CATEGORY	10	8	7	5
<b>Knowledge Gained</b>	This game was carefully designed and helped all players review at least 10 key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> . There were no factual errors—the game was an accurate review of the text.	This game helped all players review between 7 and 9 key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> . There were no factual errors—the game was an accurate review of the text.	This game helped most players review several key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> .  There was only one factual error.	The game did NOT help players review key components of <i>The Odyssey</i> .  There was more than one factual error.
<b>Rules</b>	Rules were written clearly enough that all could easily participate.	Rules were written, but one part of the game needed slightly more explanation.	Rules were written, but people had some difficulty figuring out the game.	The rules were not written.
<b>Preparedness</b>	It was easy to find all of the necessary game materials in the packaging.	All materials were present, but hard to identify and/or locate.	One necessary component for game play was missing.	There was more than one component missing from the game.
<b>Attractiveness</b>	Contrasting colors and at least 3 original graphics were used to give the cards and game board visual appeal. This group put great effort into creating their game!	Contrasting colors and at least 1 original graphic were used to give the cards and game board visual appeal. The group put some effort into creating their game.	Contrasting colors and "borrowed" graphics were used to give the cards and game board visual appeal.	Little or no color or fewer than 3 graphics were included.

Handout #3

**Game Cards**


**Handout #4**

*The Odyssey* Creative Writing Assignment

**Directions:** Imagine yourself as a modern-day Homer. Your goal? To write part of a chronicle that details a difficult mental, physical, and/or emotional journey. The journey described can be literal or metaphorical, but—as many others have done before—you should use *The Odyssey* as your model. The rubric below explains the expectations in detail.

Rubric

- + Excellent! You have this area mastered (30 points)
- ✓ Satisfactory, but could use some improvement (25 points)
- You need some help; please see me (20 points)

**Theme: Civilization vs. Barbarism**

- Society presented in the story has a clear definition of “civilization” (somehow, narrative shows us what the society values and how a model citizen should behave).
- Narrative also shows us “barbarism”—the protagonist struggles against characters, events, or societies that embody the opposite of “civilization.”

**Literary Elements**

- Narrative makes meaningful use of two of the four following literary elements: allusion, motif, symbol, or allegory.
- Narrative includes an example of personification.
- Key characters resonate as recognizable archetypes.

**Return Home**

- Narrative addresses what “home” signifies to the protagonist
- Narrative addresses how the protagonist has changed in his/her efforts to reach home
- Narrative addresses how “home” has changed in the protagonist’s absence
- Narrative shows the protagonist’s thwarted efforts to return home
- Narrative shows the protagonist actually returning home

**Narrative as a Whole**

- Logical organization gives some sense of completion.
- Exhibits intentional word choice: action verbs, few repeats, intentional vocabulary, few unintentional clichés/jargon
- Follows standard English rules for usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Complete sentences (except purposeful phrases and clauses used for effect).
- Indicates paragraphs consistently
- Includes interesting title

_____ / 120 points
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