The Odyssey
Literary Research Paper

Literary Research Paper Assignment: write an analytical essay of three to five pages that critically examines some element of Homer’s Odyssey.

✓ You must follow MLA format for layout, font, margins and citation style. See the MLA Power Point on the Turn-It-In & MLA webpage for details, or Lauralton’s library link.

Three sources are required: Robert Fagles text, one print source, and one web source; you will include a Works Cited page when you turn in your final piece.

✓ Your essay must be analytical & include literary criticism; do not just summarize the story; (avoid the temptation to become “the great teller of tales.”)

✓ You will be responsible for various components throughout this process: topic choice, thesis statement, source information (including the source citation and the material – quotes or ideas you will use from each source), outlines, draft revisions, final paper.

TOPIC IDEAS

The hero archetype
The use of omens and prophecy
Sleeping
Brains vs. brawn
Temptation & the role of women
The use of transformations/disguises
Formulaic passages & significance
Heroes, Gods and Monsters

✓ The list of topic choices goes on and on. Think of one on your own and once you have selected a topic you will need to do some reading and checking of literary criticism to help formulate a thesis statement. Look through the books that are not specifically about the poem but that deal with more general topics – like Greek mythology or the hero’s quest, etc.
1. Introduction: effective 2-part title
   a. Interesting lead/introductory sentence
   b. Clear thesis (at end of paragraph)
   c. No supporting quotes (yet)
   d. Directs reader to thesis statement
   e. Lays groundwork & identifies main ideas & paragraph moves from general to specific
   f. Writing flows and is free of awkward phrasing/construction/grammar errors
   g. No dictionary “definitions” – lacks originality & sophistication

2. Body
   a. Well structured & flow is easy to follow
   b. Sections follow logical order
   c. Paragraphs reflect unity and coherence
   d. Transitions tie paragraphs together
   e. Clear topic sentences
   f. Clear linking sentence b/tween t.s. and first support
   g. No over-used words or “training-wheel” phrases (i.e. firstly, secondly, in conclusion)

3. Content
   a. Thesis is supported w/ relevant research
   b. Significance of quotes apparent
   c. Cites sources when specific statements are made
   d. Introduce source 1st time you use a quote or paraphrase (critic’s name, article, etc.)
   e. Research paper – not a book report; no need for lengthy summaries!
   f. Evidence of deep thinking, insight, & analysis
   g. All 3 sources are effectively incorporated
   h. Smooth incorporation of quotes (no “this quote shows”)
   i. Conclusion does not simply restate intro; close with thoughtful final analysis

4. Clarity
   a. Writing is clear and concise (not “wordy”)
   b. Consistency in voice (you sound like the same writer throughout)
   c. Uses active voice where appropriate
   d. Academic audience is considered (no slang/casual terms)
   e. Present tense verbs
   f. Phrasing is fluid; free of awkward/cumbersome construction
   g. No clichés; unique phrasing (i.e. “better late than never”)
   h. Appropriate word choice; varied word choice; no repetitive phrasing

5. Grammar
   a. Free of grammatical errors/sentence errors
   b. Written in third person (no 1st or 2nd person pronouns)

6. Source citations/formatting requirements
   a. Use of 3 sources & follows MLA formatting requirements
   b. 3 to 5 page paper length (not under or over)

Total ______/100 x 2
Miscellaneous Information:

- The actual text must be used as a “source” in addition to one print source and one credible web source; use literary criticism...articles and essays written by scholars (no Schmoop or Spark Notes Analysis)
- If there is evidence of plagiarism in your paper, you will receive a grade of “0” and a parent/administrator will be informed and a conference will follow.
- ½ of a point will be deducted for each error in a specified category! For example, if you have one MLA citation error, you will lose ½ of a point in the MLA category.
- Your paper must be submitted to turnitin.com in order for it to be graded. (If you have an issue submitting on turn-it-in...trouble shoot WELL BEFORE the due date. Telling me you were unable to submit your paper the day it is due is not grounds for an extension and your paper will be considered “late.”
- For each day your paper is late, 10 points will be deducted from your grade. This includes days over weekends and school breaks.
- Two points will be deducted for each page that is over or under the required page length! This is a 3 to 5 page research paper – the works cited page does not count toward final page count!

Writing tips & suggestions:

The introductory paragraph of your paper begins with a strong, interesting lead (topic) sentence. Do not use a quote in your lead. An introductory paragraph is like a well-made sandwich; it has bread, a filling, and other items, like lettuce, tomato, onion and condiments. It should be at least 8 sentences long. The intro contains:

- Your lead (1st topic sentence of the paper)
- 3-4 sentences of background information about the literature/topic under investigation
- 1 sentence for each of your main points
- Thesis statement at the close of the paragraph

Introductions ~ your introductory paragraph sets up your whole argument or position! You must write forcefully, directly, and with precision. Avoid vague generalities. Remember that your first sentence should be engaging, interesting, creative, and direct. You need to write an excellent topic sentence to “hook” your reader. Beginning with “Calypso is an important figure within the epic...” does not constitute an interesting sentence.

Thesis ~ all papers need a thesis, or argument. Even if your task includes supplying historical or biographical information, you still need a thesis telling the reader what you are going to say about the literature as it relates to any background material. Put the thesis in your introduction at the close of the paragraph; “history” style 3-point thesis is acceptable or try to simply express your thesis is a sentence or two.

Body Paragraphs: Each body paragraph has its own topic sentence. The topic sentence must be about one of your main points and must advance your thesis. The paragraph is going to prove this main point. Each body paragraph contains:

- Your topic sentence (no quotes in it!)
- Your comments or lead into the introduction of supporting quotes
- Ideally two, or three quotes that support your argument
- Your discussion (analysis/commentary) of each quote
- You are not simply rephrasing or summarizing the quote!
**Topic sentences** – treat all topic sentences the way you treat your lead . . . with great care! Each topic sentence should: be direct, forceful and interesting; present the major point of your paragraph; be written in YOUR OWN WORDS; NOT CONTAIN A QUOTE or part of a quote. Save quotes for later in the paragraph when you begin to “support” your main point made within the topic sentence.

**Passive voice:** Passive voice really wrecks an otherwise good sentence. For example, “It is said that a good sentence can be diminished by the use of passive voice.” YUCK! This phrasing is stronger: “A good, strong and authoritative sentence uses an active voice.”

- Avoid phrasing like – it is said, it is considered, it is characterized by, it makes the reader interested, which makes the audience wonder, etc.
- Passive voice makes your writing sound weak and hesitant. Get rid of it!

**1st & 2nd Person Pronouns** [Not sure what they are? Review our parts-of-speech PowerPoints]
- Not allowed.

**Citations**
- Citations are required for all quoted or paraphrased material, unless the material is common knowledge; for example, Homer is a blind poet (common knowledge). Use MLA parenthetical format for your citations.

**Works Cited Page**
- This is the last page of your document, but does not count as a page of your “paper”. If you are assigned a 3 page paper, that does not mean two pages of “paper” and a third page listing Works Cited!
- PLEASE see the MLA PowerPoint for formatting. **This is your responsibility.** See LH Media Center link A Guide to MLA Documentation.

**Introducing and Integrating quotations**
Quotations can add a great deal to your essay and effectively help you “prove” your points, but use them judiciously and remember that you must do several things every time you use a quote.

- First, you must fully identify the source the first time you use the source in your paper. Give the author’s full name and/or the title of the article or book, and any important identifying information, such as, professor at Harvard University, or literary critic, etc. If and when you use a quote from this source again, just use the last name when you incorporate the quote.
- Next, introduce the quote. Supply the context for the quotation. Be sure to give enough context before the quotation: explain who is speaking, anyone else mentioned in the quote, and when the situation occurred (if quoting the literature).
- **When introducing a quote do so in an academic, smooth manner.** DO NOT USE PHRASES SUCH AS . . .
  
  “On page 23, it says . . .”
  “In Book Three, Homer says . . .”
  “Like when it says . . .”
  “This is the quote” or after the quote . . . “this quote shows . . .”
- Next, integrate the quote into a sentence. No quotation should appear by itself!
- **For example:** Odysseus expresses his fear as he enters the underworld and claims “a blanching terror gripped me” (11.481). He is uncharacteristically anxious when he approaches the shades and hesitates; this is not the heroic Odysseus the reader knows from the previous experiences with the lovely Circe.

- Be sure to **discuss, comment, or analyze the quotation.** Do not just drop it in (quote bomb) and leave it there; explain it and how it connects and helps support your point.
- **NEVER end a paragraph with a quote;** supporting quotes will always be in the middle of the paragraph.
• Do not use a quotation as your leading topic sentence in an introduction or in a topic sentence.
• Avoid quoting facts or other obvious material; paraphrase that material and insert a parenthetical citation; for example, “The Odyssey was written by the great bard Homer in 750 B.C.” You should simply put this information in your own words - and include a citation from the text.
• REMEMBER the quotation is supposed to support your major point; it is not a substitute for your major point.
• In a paper of literary analysis, it is a good practice to pull out a couple of words from the quote in your analysis. Highlight these in your discussion. They might be words related to an image, theme, symbol or a concept you are discussing in the paper. Does the quote involve a metaphor, an epic simile or some other literary device? If so, then comment on that and demonstrate your INSIGHT! This is an ANALYSIS paper!

Conclusions
• A conclusion is not SIMPLY a boring restatement of the thesis and your main ideas! It should be interesting, EXTEND your ideas in a fresh way and encompass what your final revelations are having laid out this marvelous paper filled with effective supporting quotes & analysis; in other words, what is your final analysis? AND remember this is NOT the place to incorporate any additional quotations, even if a cute little quote seems to be calling your name . . . avoid the temptation. This will make an effective paper seem trite as you close – not the impression you want to leave on your reader! A concluding paragraph does not contain repetition and should most definitely be more than four sentences long. This paragraph is essentially your final word, your closing argument, make it matter!

★ Please be proactive and come to see me if you are having difficulties finding sources, incorporating textual support, etc. Once you have committed to a thesis consider it “in stone.” In order to feel confident with your choice of topic/argument, please make sure you do the preliminary research FIRST! I cannot stress how important this is!!!!
★ Paper Due: Wednesday, 3/23 on Turn-it-In by 11:59 pm.