

Critical Lens Assignment: The Odyssey

Introduction: Literature can be looked at through a variety of critical lenses. We will be applying these lenses to various pieces of literature throughout this year. For this assignment, you will work with four. After each one, I suggest questions which will help you identify moments which connect to each lens, as well as characters. Feel free to think outside the box.

1. Gender/power issues (Feminist)

- Related questions: What rights do women have? How are women characterized? What do they say about themselves? What is not said?
- Characters to consider: Penelope, Telemachus, Helen, Clytemnestra, Calypso

2. Gender/construction of masculinity & femininity

- Related questions: What kinds of characteristics are shown by men and women – beauty, strength, weeping? How are their behaviors described?
- Characters to consider: Penelope, Telemachus, Menelaus, Odysseus

3. Social class

- Related questions: High-ranking visitors must be welcomed as guests. How are they recognized and described? How does Athena appear? Is a person's social standing visible? How are slaves treated and described?
- Characters to consider: Athena; Eurycleia; Telemachus & Pisistratus when they meet Menelaus

4. Youth vs. Age

- Related questions: Look at issues of respect, or the lack of it. How is youth or old age connected to respect?
- Characters to consider: Telemachus, Halitherses, Mentor, Laertes

Directions:

1. Skim text for supporting quotes and record book, page and line numbers. Requires 2 quotes for each lens (8 minimum). Set up charts (1" margin & landscape) with book column and quote column completed. Group column will be filled in during class with group.
2. Discussion with Group: Share, read, discuss and analyze related textual moments; record thoughts on charts. (Each person fills in her/his own chart).
3. Hand in 4 group interpretation charts in a packet at the end of class. 20 pts.

Lens/Book.line (pg)	Quote (partial if very long)	Group interpretation
Gender/Power Issues 1.414 (89)	...I hold the reins of power in this house. – Telemachus	<i>Explain.</i> How does this quote relate to this lens? What is revealed about cultural attitudes?