

**Literature 203**  
**Professor Lewis**

## **Response Paper 9**

1. The beginning of a text is usually very important. It sets up what the text is about and solidifies our expectations about where the text is going to go. So, focus on **the beginning** of the *Odyssey*. What do the first 12-15 lines of the poem tell us about what the poem is going to be about? What expectations do you have about the poem after reading the opening lines? What expectations does the very first speech in the poem (by Zeus) raise about where this poem is going to go? What themes and ideas is Homer introducing? Does Homer give us any idea how we're supposed to think about those themes and ideas?
2. What are the standards of Greek culture that Homer introduces in Book 1? How can you tell? Are any of these standards more important than other ones? How would they rank?
3. Focus on **Telémakhos** in Books I-III. Telémakhos is clearly a good guy -- young, naive, infinitely promising. So, if Telémakhos is a good guy, what is good about him? Wherein lies his goodness? What does he do that makes him a good guy? How is he different from the bad guys (i.e., the suitors)? What does his goodness tell us about what Homer and Homer's culture valued as good in people? Telémakhos passes an important test in Book I with Athena, and the suitors fail the test. How does Telémakhos's behavior with Athena differ from that of the suitors? What does his behavior tell us about what Homer's culture valued most?
4. Why does Homer constantly refer back to the story of Agamemnon and how his death was avenged by Orestes? What important themes could Homer be repeating and emphasizing by referring to this tale? Should we expect a similar or different outcome with Odysseus's fate?
5. Nestor says that he and Odysseus are of the same mind. What about Nestor might be similar to Odysseus? Are we getting a preview of Odysseus's character through Nestor? Are we getting a preview of Odysseus through Telemakhos? After seeing these two characters, what do you think Odysseus will be like?
6. Focus on **Helen and Meneláos** in Book IV. They seem good on the outside, but they're also kind of suspicious and strange. What is wrong with their behavior? How are they different from Telémakhos?