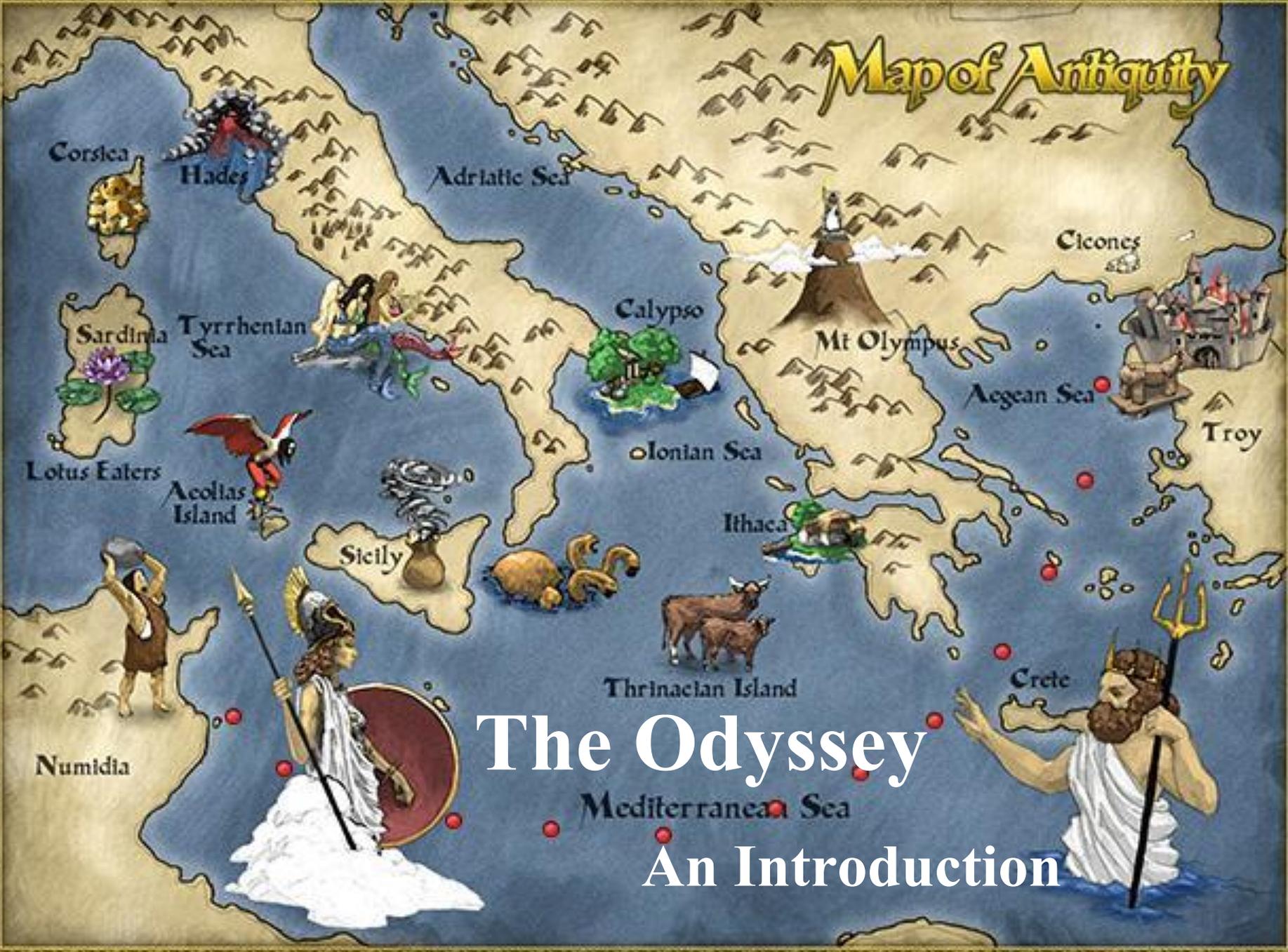


Map of Antiquity



The Odyssey

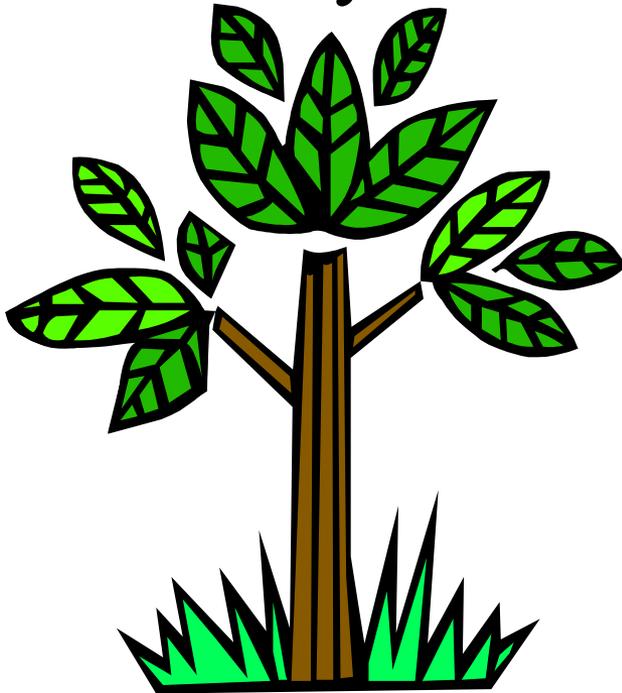
An Introduction

SETTING: GREECE 1250 B.C.



What is a myth?

- A myth is an explanation of something in nature; how everything in the universe came into existence (men, animals, trees, the sun, earthquakes, etc.) and all that happens
- Myths are early science but also entertainment



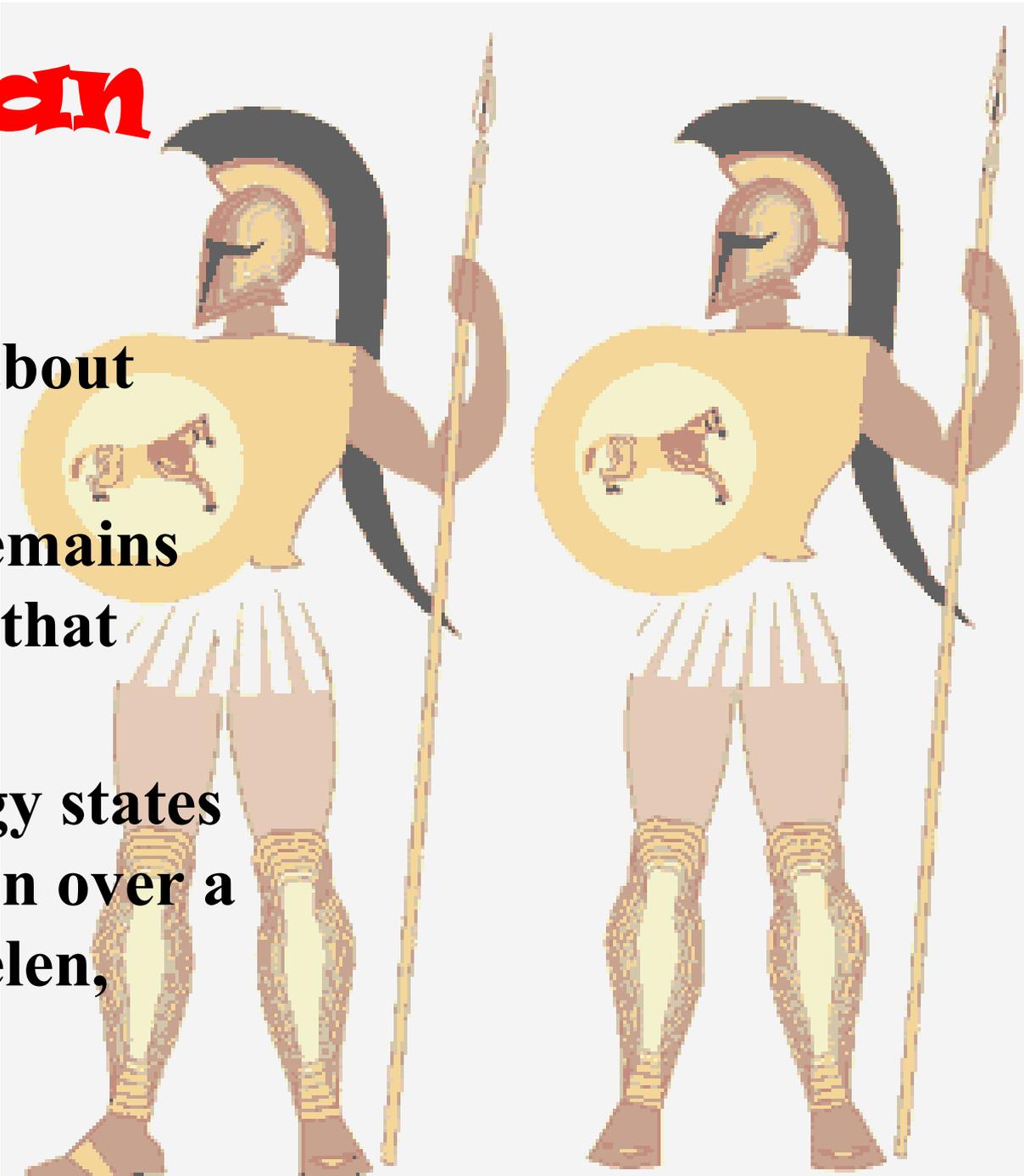
Gods & Goddesses

- the universe created the gods
- the gods lived on Mount Olympus
- Zeus: controlled weather & sky
 - Athena: goddess of wisdom
 - Helen: most beautiful woman
- Poseidon: god of the sea
 - Charybdis: devourer of land
 - Polyphemus: chief monster of the Cyclopes
 - Aeolus: keeper of winds
- Hades: ruler of the underworld
 - Morpheus: god of sleep and dreams



The Trojan War

- took place from about 1260-1250 B.C.
- Archaeological remains provide evidence that there was a war
- Ancient mythology states that the war began over a single woman, Helen, Queen of Sparta



King Peleus Marries Sea Nymph Thetis



- All the gods on Olympus were invited except ERIS, the evil goddess of Discord
- In retaliation, she throws an apple “For The Fairest”
- Hera (Queen of Gods), Athena, (Goddess of Wisdom/War), Aphrodite (Goddess of Love)
- Paris, Prince of Troy, will be the judge



The Bribes for the Judge

- **Hera - POWER**
- **Athena - WISDOM**
- **Aphrodite - MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN**

Paris chooses Aphrodite

AS A RESULT...

Helen is Abducted!



Giordano Luca 1634-1705: Enlèvement d'Hélène. Photo © Maicar Förlag - GML

- **Helen- beautiful daughter of King of Sparta (in Greece)**
- **Helen has many suitors- they swear oath to protect Helen and her new husband**
- **Father chooses Menelaus- makes him King of Sparta also**
- **Paris abducts Helen**
- **1000 ships, including Odysseus & Achilles, leave for Troy**

The Gods Take Sides

TROJANS
(Paris, Hector)

- Aphrodite
- Ares
- Apollo
- Artemis
- Zeus (favored, but stayed neutral to please Hera)

GREEKS
(Achilles, Odysseus)

- Hera
- Athena
- Poseidon

The Bloody Battle



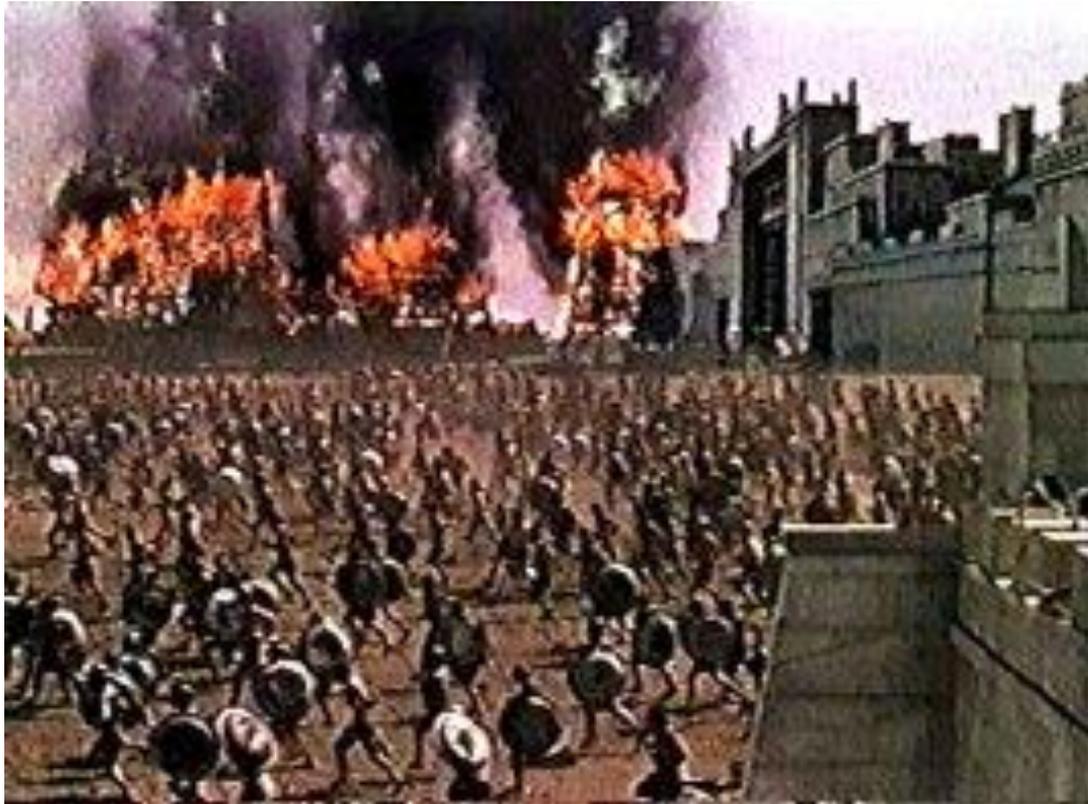
- lasted for 10 long years
 - Hand to hand combat
 - Periods of temporary truce to bury the dead
 - No fighting after sunset

The Clever Odysseus



- **Greeks build a gigantic hollow horse & hide inside**
- **Sinon chosen to tell a tale of the Greeks leaving**
- **Priest Laocoon tried to warn Trojans “I fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts”**
- **Poseidon sent serpent to kill Laocoon**

Troy in Flames!



- In middle of night Greeks leave horse and attack
- Troy is in flames before Trojans know what has happened
- King of Troy dead
- Women and Children become slaves
- Helen is returned to Menelaus

Odysseus angers the gods



- Trojans were slaughtered and city sacked and burned
- Greeks violated Trojan temples
- Greeks did not offer sacrifices to the gods to thank them for their victory
- Odysseus, creator of Horse, will suffer the most

2 Epic Poems written in 725 B.C. by Homer, a blind poet



The Illiad

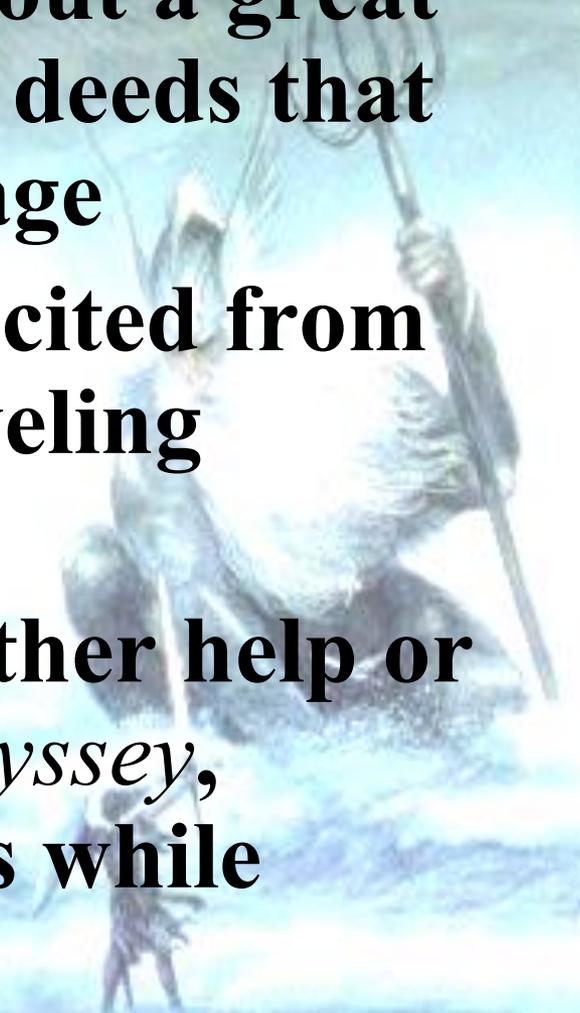
- First written record of Greece
- Describes the events of 51 days during the last year of the war

The Odyssey

- Describes the 10-year journey of Odysseus as he tries to go home to Ithaca after the Trojan War
- He and his men face monsters, giants, cannibals, temptation, and death

What is an epic?

- **An epic is a story-poem about a great hero who performs daring deeds that require superhuman courage**
- **Told orally, not written, recited from memory by minstrels (traveling entertainers)**
- **In Greek epics, the gods either help or hinder the hero. In *The Odyssey*, Poseidon hinders Odysseus while Athena helps him.**



Epics often...

- Concern eternal human problems such as the conflict between *GOOD and EVIL*
- Written or told on a *grand scale* and often in *ceremonial style*

Two Types of Epics

1. **Folk Epic**- *oral* compositions passed on from storyteller to storyteller and has *changed* over time.

EX. – *Gilgamesh, Beowulf, the Iliad, and the Odyssey*

2. **Literary Epic**- *written* compositions that are *unchanged* over time.

EX. -*Aeneid and Paradise Lost*

Epic Characteristics

There are five main
epic characteristics.

Epic Characteristic #1

- The hero is *a great leader who is identified strongly with a particular people or society.*

Epic Characteristic #2

- The *setting is broad and often includes supernatural realms,* especially the land of the dead.

Epic Characteristic #3

- The hero *does great deeds in battle or undertakes an extraordinary journey or quest.*

Epic Characteristic #4

- Sometimes *gods or other supernatural or fantastic beings take part in the action.*

Epic Characteristic #5

- The story is *told in*
heightened language

Some other epic characteristics
called...

EPIC CONVENTIONS- Shared characteristics of epics writers drew upon *to establish the epic quality of their poems.*

EPIC CONVENTION

#1

- There is an *INVOCATION* or formal plea for aid/help.
- This plea is usually to a deity or some other spiritual power.

EPIC CONVENTION #2

- The action begins

IN MEDIA RES...

- literally meaning
“in the middle of things”

EPIC CONVENTION #3

- The epic begins *in media res* and then *flashes back* to events that took place before the narrator's current time setting

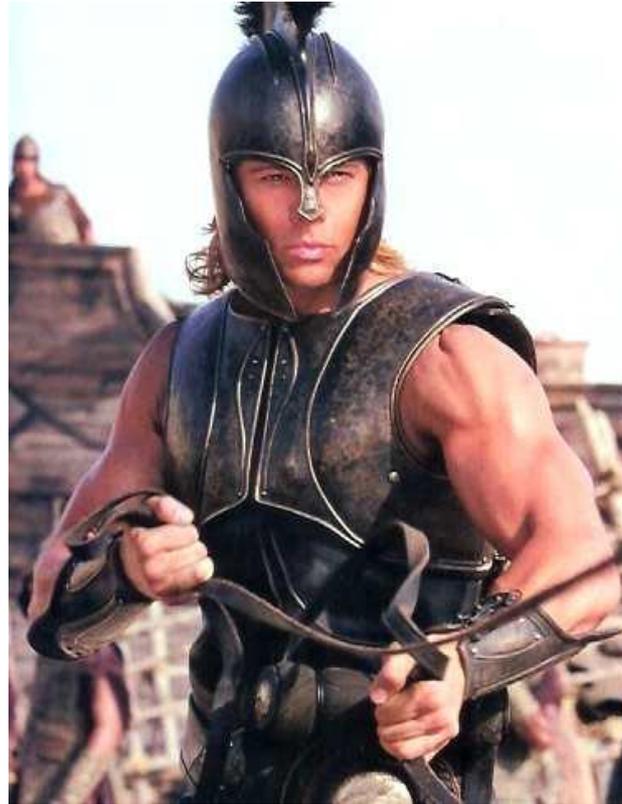
EPIC CONVENTIONS #4

- *Epic Similes (a.k.a. Homeric simile)*- elaborately extended comparisons relating heroic events to simple, everyday events using like, as, so, and just as.

EPIC CONVENTIONS #5

- Epithet: a descriptive phrase that presents a particular trait of a person or thing. It can be a quick aid to characterization.
- Ex: Odysseus is a “raider of cities.” Odysseus is “a man skilled in all ways of contending.”

The Epic Hero



Epic Hero *Characteristics*

- The epic hero is a **“*LARGER THAN LIFE PERSON*”** who embodies the highest ideals of his culture

Epic Hero Characteristics

- The epic hero usually undertakes a *QUEST/ JOURNEY* to achieve something of great value to themselves or society

Epic Hero Characteristics

- Epic heroes

“LIVE ON AFTER DEATH”...

- meaning they are forever remembered by those who live after them...
- achieving a type of *IMMORTALITY*

Epic Hero Characteristics

- Overcomes great obstacles/opponents but *maintains HUMANITY*

Epic Hero Characteristics

- Epic hero *experiences typical*
HUMAN EMOTIONS/
FEELINGS, yet is able to master and control these human traits to a greater degree than a typical person

Epic Hero Characteristics

- Not a *“Superman” with magical powers,* but a *“REGULAR”* human (sometimes part god/part human) whose aspirations and accomplishments set him/her apart

Epic Hero Characteristics

- It is often necessary for the epic hero to *connect/make contact with*
“LESSER” humans
in order to succeed

The Importance of Hospitality in Greek Culture

XENIA

- Greek concept of unconditional hospitality
- Means “guest-friendship”
- *Xenos* = “foreigner”
- 3 Elements of hospitality:
 - Respect from host to guest—provide food, drink, and bath (if required)
 - Respect from guest to host—be courteous and not a burden
 - Parting gift from host to guest

It's All Greek to Me

- *Hubris*—the Greek concept of excessive pride
- *Kleos* – glory or renown that one earns in the eyes of others by performing great deeds
- *Hamartia* (ha-mart-tee-uh) a tragic flaw or error in judgment
 - Succumbing to temptation
 - Greed complicates the Greeks' *nostos* (return voyage home)

Rhapsodes



- Homer was a model for a class of storytellers called *rhapsodes*
- Known as “singers of tales,” they were the historians and entertainers as well as myth-makers
- None of these stories were written down. Each storyteller would have had to memorize the entire work and told it in such a way that it would be part performance.
- They did not memorize the story word for word but knew the basic story and improvised on the spot, following a basic rhythm of the words.
- There is a great deal of repetition in the stories, which makes it a bit simpler to tell.

Additional features of Homer's style

Epithet

an adjective or descriptive phrase used to characterize a person or thing

(Odysseus, “wiliest of fighters,” “raider of cities”)

Homeric simile- extended comparison of two actions or objects to develop suspense or excitement

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