Analytical Assignment #2 (Textual Interpretation)

Instructions
This assignment has three parts, in which you will:
   a) Post to Bb a response to the prompt – due by midnight on Thursday, 9/15 (10 pts)
   b) Participate in a conversation in class on Friday, 9/16 (5 pts)
   c) Turn in a short paper via SafeAssign by Monday, 9/19 (35 pts)

The focus of this assignment is deeper understanding of Odysseus’ narration to the Phaiacians of his own adventures. By looking closely at the inset tale as well as to the frame narrative (the bits on either side), you will better understand the character of Odysseus and the functions of this narrative in the larger Odyssey, including its narratological complexity and its status as a poem both orally composed and solidified (at some point) in writing.

Goals
This assignment addresses five of the intellectual goals listed on the syllabus:

   1) situate Greek and Roman myths in the cultural framework of the people who told them
   2) understand and use a technical vocabulary for ancient literature
   3) discern among and evaluate competing claims or approaches to myths or to the problems they explore
   4) understand myth’s context in and dependence on the culture and individual who tell it
   5) recognize myths at work and play in your own culture and life

Strategies
Please read through the whole assignment before you do the first part. Then spend some time with Odysseus on his adventures, paying special attention to how Odysseus presents himself in the story.

Part 1: Online post
By midnight on Thursday, Sept 15, please post a response to the following prompt on Bb in your discussion group.

- When Odysseus narrates his adventures to the Phaiacians, to what extent is he telling the truth? If he is not telling the truth, why?

Your response should be in two parts. The first part should be 3-4 sentences responding directly to these questions. The second part should give an example FROM THE TEXT that either supports your position, or is impacted by your position. Good places to look for such textual material is any passage that talks about Odysseus’ song (what the Phaiacians say about it when they request it, how they respond to it, what Odysseus says when he starts it, his emotions in telling it, etc.). This second part should include the text with proper citation, and a sentence or two about how you are interpreting it.

Proper citation looks like this made-up example:

- “When Odysseus says, ‘Make no mistake, I fought at Troy’ (Odyssey 12.494), he seems to be reassuring the Phaiacians that he is not lying…”
or “‘Make no mistake, I fought at Troy,’ says Odysseus at *Odyssey* 12.494. He seems to be reassuring the Phaiacians…”

- or “Odysseus reassures the Phaiacians when he says in book 12, ‘Make no mistake, I fought at Troy’” (*Odyssey* 12.494).

**Part 2: In class**

In your small group on **Friday, September 16**, share your different opinions on the prompt and the bits of text you chose as relevant to the prompt. Next discuss what “truth” means to you. Finally, talk about Jonathan Shay’s interpretation of the meaning of Odysseus’ story as the effects of PTSD (Shay’s thesis will be on the overhead).

**Part 3: Turn in**

Sometime on **Monday, September 19**, turn in (via SafeAssign) a short paper on this topic:

> Storytelling in the *Odyssey* accomplishes many purposes: it generates pleasure, it forges bonds among people (as part of the guest-host relationship, or by way of introduction, or among audience members), it creates or solidifies memory, and it garners fame for the singer and the subject. Choose one of these and explore how Odysseus’ tale of his own adventures fulfills that purpose.

Your paper should be 400-500 words (a little less than 1 single spaced typed page), likely broken into paragraphs as your argument requires. Your paper must have a thesis statement and must cite at least two passages from the *Odyssey*. 