Assessment of this WS: Excellent
This student demonstrated a clear understanding of the article’s content (question 3), organization (4), and use of evidence (2, 5, and 6). She was able to articulate the fact that the article’s thesis depends on the fact that the play was written and performed for an ancient audience; the article seeks to recover that context for modern readers.

CLSX 148, Spring 15
Research worksheet #2 (100 points)
DUE: Monday 10/19 by midnight online

Instructions
Please choose one of the articles on this sheet, read it carefully a few times, and download and complete this worksheet to submit via SafeAssign by midnight on 10/19. All the articles are available online at JSTOR (www.jstor.org), freely accessible from any campus computer or through the KU Library’s website.

Goals
In this assignment you are asked to read a scholarly article on a topic of myth of ancient literature relevant to our class, and to summarize and analyze it. The articles are not particularly long, but they are rich with information and critical content. You will have to stretch – some articles include untranslated Greek or Latin, refer to texts we have not read, or use line numbers not analogous to our translations. You can do it!

The goals of this assignment are many, complex, and interrelated. The assignment focuses on reading and responding to the work of others, i.e., joining an intellectual conversation and formulating and supporting an argument and putting the work of others to new uses determined by the interests of the writer. By closely reading an article and analyzing its content and organization, we hope you will gain competence at the following:

interrelating ideas, identifying the limits of the readings, naming, defining, and organizing phenomena (critical terms, parts of an argument, etc.), recognizing an author’s agenda, appreciating the purposeful use of quotations and effective framing of the quoted materials, understanding effective use of footnotes, acknowledging the contingency of myth (i.e., that meaning depends on the author and audience)

These relate to the following course goals as stated on the syllabus:
1) situate Greek and Roman myths in the cultural framework of the people who told them
2) compare these myths to myths from other ancient cultures, and to modern myths
3) recognize several genres of ancient literature (tragedy, epic, hymn) and read them with ease
4) discern among and evaluate competing claims or approaches to myths or to the problems they explore
5) read critical scholarly literature, identifying and assessing the shape and agenda of a scholarly argument and interrelating it to other texts/readsings
6) build and articulate your own scholarly argument about an ancient myth or myths
7) understand the cultural and individual contingency of myth

Strategies
Get a good head start on this assignment. You might wish to read through the worksheet questions first, then read the article AT LEAST TWICE before starting to complete the worksheet. Sketch out an outline for the article – it will help. Please do all this enough in advance – a week before the due date – that we can have plenty of time to help you should you need help.
Articles – choose 1


*This one has 2 tough technical paragraphs (one on etymology, one on ancient commentaries), but the sense emerges clearly.


*This one is particularly difficult

Worksheet:

1. Describe: Please list the full bibliographic record for the article/chapter (how would you cite this article in a bibliography). Any standard format will do, but Chicago Manual of Style’s Name-Date method is easy (Author. Date. “Article title.” *Journal title*: issue number: page numbers.)


2. Describe: What portions or passages of the subject text does it cover? Please be descriptive rather than numerical. (e.g., not “Agamemnon lines 442-3” but rather “the choral ode on Helen”).

The article primarily discusses the scene where Clytemnestra lays down the cloth/robe in front of Agamemnon for him to walk on and the importance of Cassandra’s presence. In this scene it specifically discusses Clytemnestra referring to Cassandra as a swallow as well. The article lightly refers to the passage in Agamemnon where the torchlights signaled Agamemnon’s return (p3), Agamemnon’s deceitful act in luring Iphigeneia to her death (p4), the reference to the myth of Philomela by Clytemnestra, Cassandra, and the Chorus, and Cassandra’s vision of the killing of Agamemnon (p16).
3a. Describe: What question or gap in our understanding is the author trying to answer or address? Sometimes this is explicit; sometimes it is not.

The author states “What fabric, if any, would have been versatile enough to function as a tapestry, a robe, and a blanket, and would have inspired outrage when used as a rug?” (1) Put in other words, McNeil is trying to answer the question of whether the fabric used in the carpet scene is significant and how could it have represented all those following pieces.

From the article, the author states “May we yet unravel from the divergent interpretations of the “figured cloth” its dramatic purpose and symbolism?” (2) Here, put in other words McNeil is revealing the question of what this “figured cloth” symbolizes.

3b. Describe: What is the author’s response to this question or gap? Put otherwise, what is the article’s thesis? Please give the sentence and page number, if possible. Sometimes, again, the thesis is explicit and sometimes it is not.

“The cloth’s meaning is intertwined with the aesthetics and ethics of fifth-century Athenian notions of reciprocal gift-giving (kharis), in this case as kharis relates to textiles and their visual power”. (2).

4. Describe: How is the article organized? Or, what are the major components of the argument? What we’d like is for you to reconstruct the major outline of the article. The sub-questions will help you discover the organization.

- Are there section headings? If not, you might wish to look at every paragraph to see its main point, and then list the out to reconstruct an outline.
- Does the 1st paragraph or page give a “road map” of the blocks of the argument?
- Does the argument follow in order the ancient text under scrutiny? Or theme-by-theme? Or compare-contrast?
- Do all sections of the argument seem to be of equal weight, or are some more important? If the latter, where do the more important parts appear – beginning, middle, or end?
- Does the article lead up to the big ideas, or start big then taper off with proof?

The article is organized into seven section headings, each giving an idea of what that section is about. The first paragraph does not give a “road map” of the article, but simply introduces the topic to the audience and ends with a question, provoking the audience to think of the subject. Since the article’s main point of discussion is how the cloth (used in the carpet scene of *Agamemnon*) has so much significance and symbolizes so much, therefore the article is organized by the different symbols the cloth can have. The article seems to bring more attention to the section titled “Nuptial Cloths and Cautionary Tales” as it fills about five pages of the whole article. Also, by placing this section in the end, the author uses the technique of having this argument leave the most impression on the audience as it is the last topic in their mind as the article comes to a close. At the beginning of the article, the author presents her thesis and argument, and leaves the rest of the article to show textual proof and different approaches to how she concluded her statement.
5. Describe: How does the author position the argument within the world of ideas?

5a. Describe: What are the footnotes like – are they mini-essays, or just citations, or both? Please give an example.

The footnotes are used as both citations and side notes. For example, footnote eleven the author references Barber and quotes what he/she thought about “royal story cloths” (5). In big part, the author uses the footnotes to give further insight from other scholars on the statement found in the article. To the author’s credit this technique increases her ethos or credibility because by showing what other scholars said, it shows the audience that she studied texts and other works to then come to her own conclusion. It shows that she has done research and is knowledgeable about this topic and her argument.

5b. Does the author offer solutions, or questions? Put differently, does the author present the thesis as the, or the only, or the right idea? Or is it presented as a possible solution among many? Find some phrases that support your observation, and give page numbers. (Some indicators of the latter approach are words such as “tension” and “ambiguity”).

The author asks a question and answer that question in her thesis. The thesis of this paper is rather broad, stating that the cloth in the carpet scene is very symbolic and is not merely an expensive purple carpet that Clytemnestra urges Agamemnon to walk on, but symbolizes a nuptial cloth and coverlet for a marriage bed (2), a balance between society (7), sexual union (8), and more. Therefore, this article’s very thesis presents that there are many different solutions to what the cloth may represent.

5c. Is the author respectful toward other ideas or dismissive of them? Find an example.

This article is filled with references to other scholars’ assertions and the author is respectful towards them and uses the ideas as guidelines to go from one idea to the next. For example, the author states “According to Barber…Furthermore” (5) which shows that the author is embracing Barber’s idea and expanding the thought.

6. Analyze: How does the author see this text operating in the world? Is it a text that can be best understood in the context of Greek civilization, or does its meaning transcend that context? Explain.

The author sees this as relating very well to the Greek civilization as she mentions that the audience would have probably been able to make connection with Agamemnon to other Greek myths such as Philomela, Oakley and Sinos, and Catullus. The author also makes a major point that Agamemnon can be associated with Athenian weddings as there is a resemblance in the torchlights scene, actual wedding processions, and how families welcomed the newlyweds into their family. The author even goes as far to say the “reading rests upon parallels in the Agamemnon with fifth-century Athenian wedding rites, cloths, and their symbolism [and] in addition, the play resounds with Homeric precedents, undoubtedly known to Aeschylus’ audience” (2), so this play would have had much symbolic meaning to the Greek civilization back then.

7. Describe: What conclusions does the author draw? Where does the author suggest as go next with this question? Where do you think this approach/argument might take us?

In summary the author draws the conclusion that Aeschylus “relied upon the mnemonic and symbolic power of ekphrasis and iconography” (17) or in other words Aeschylus was an author that would have simple tangible items created with such symbolic backgrounds. McNeil at the end also draws the conclusion that the bridal cloth of Clytemnestra has the power and importance to mean so much.
symbolically and even draw peace between old Athens and the new fifth-century Athens (17). Therefore, the author might be trying to take this further into saying that symbols in writing in general are powerful because they allow the mind of the reader to unlock new and deeper meaning into the text. It has the power to unite people with like ideas, to let people reflect on their own lives, and more.

8. Analyze: How “portable” is the argument or method to other aspects of your study of Greek and Roman mythology? What questions or thoughts does this article raise for you about other texts or myths?

The general argument made by McNeil in this article is very portable to other aspects of the study of Greek and Roman mythology because McNeil in a broad sense is arguing that simple items or actions used in plays and stories have more meaning than what may come across. That idea is relatable to almost every other play we have read because there are always items or actions that have a more meaningful idea hidden behind it. For example, in the Hymn to Demeter the pomegranate that Persephone eats represents that she will forever be linked to the underworld with Hades. This article then raises the interesting thought that back then if a cloth could symbolize something so much as marriage, and the audience would have known that, then what meek objects do we have today that are known around the world to mean symbolic? One might include a wedding ring for marriage, but are there hidden meanings behind other items or actions?