The Following Examples of Student Work all received a grade of 3/3 for Online Assignment 1 (also known as “Learning Group Assignment 1”) on Homer’s *Odyssey*

The Comments below each submission in BLUE represent my analysis of the differences in quality among these posts. This reflects a much closer analysis of the individual responses than we were able to give when grading these in bulk. According to the rubric, there was no need for the kind of subtlety and polish that I identify as missing in several posts below. This analysis is meant to illustrate the diversity among the responses that garnered 3/3 (100%) for this assignment.
In Book 5 of the *Odyssey*, the author Homer tells us a story about how Calypso helps Odysseus with building a raft to go back home to his wife and land, even after he rejects her proposition to stay and be immortal. (5.202–350). Calypso begs Odysseus to stay with her because there bound to be lots of danger and suffering on his journey back to Ithaca; however, Odysseus is determined to go back, even though he knows he will encounter obstacles, to his wife Penelope. Calypso helps him find all the materials he needs to build the raft because Zeus sent Hermes to tell her to let him return back home. Calypso is Odysseus’s lover. Because she helped him find the material for building the boat and clothes to keep him warm on the journey, Poseidon saw him coming up to Phaeacia. Poseidon was mad that the other Gods changed their minds about Odysseus and set him free so he decided to make things difficult for him and conjured up a storm. The plot thickens as Odysseus is thrown off his raft and then saved by Ino, who tells him to abandon the heavy clothes that Calypso gave him and swim for his life to Phaeacia with an immortality veil. At first Odysseus is skeptical about trusting Ino, but then he does not have a choice but to use her advice and veil. These scenes show us that the Greek Gods are very powerful immortals and that they are very controlling over mortals.

Scioli Comments: A strong post. This student followed the prompt by integrating responses to the individual questions into a cohesive paragraph. Citation of book and line numbers is done correctly (although placement of citation in parens is incorrect). The writing is generally free of errors. Weakness: final sentence generalizes; also does not present itself as “speculation about Greek ideas regarding the gods’ roles in the lives of mortals,” but rather restates what the passage from Homer demonstrates.
In book 6 of Homer's *Odyssey*, Athena's ways were very sly, the "owl-eyed" goddess, came to Scheria, where she devised a passage home for Odysseus. Within this passage, goddess Nausicaa, finds herself falling for Odysseus, helping him. Athena told Nausicaa to go down to the wash hole, a ways down the road from her home, her father allowed her the mules, and carriage to take the clothing needed washed because of her "wedding" coming up, and her mother packed her a lunch, with oils included for her and her maids to wash up while at the wash hole. As the girls arrived at the wash hole, they ended up playing ball awaiting time for their clothing to dry. Finding the ball going with the current, Nausicaa screams, awaking Odysseus, and surprising him to see another soul there, especially surprised at a beautiful one. He quick to get up, yet not so sure how he should approach the young girls because of not knowing whether Nausicaa was mortal or a goddess. Once all introductions were made and Odysseus found what they were there for, he asked the young girl for a garment to wear because he was still naked from being washed up from the violence of the sea. Days without clothing, bathing, or food, Nausicaa gave him all the above. Once all was understood and done, Nausicaa gave Odysseus permission to follow with the maids in the back of the mules, to the town in seek of help home. Odysseus and Nausicaa were bound to get married as of by the towns people's words when they saw Odysseus the muscle man shining, the new comb of town. This was an epiphany for certain for Nausicaa, to bring Odysseus into town to meet her father, and for him to find what he was in search for. Ironic how that worked wasn't it!

Scioli Comments: Average response. Student’s response was thoughtful and showed engagement with the text, but lacks some elements of the prompt. It suffers from an abundance of plot summary in place of analysis. Additional weaknesses: lack of editing/grammar/spellcheck (i.e., sentence 2 where Nausicaa is referred to as a goddess; sentence lacks sence); no citations of specific lines within Book 6; no speculation about what this passage tells us about the Greeks’ ideas about the divine.
Poseidon and Odysseus

In book 5 of Homer's *Odyssey*, Homer tells us that Poseidon tried to stop Odysseus's escape from Calypso's island, but since Odysseus was almost able to escape, Poseidon decided to at least obstruct Odysseus's way by creating waves of destruction with winds of all kinds, along with clouds and "lightning-charged Boreas" (lines 289 ~ 298). To Poseidon, Odysseus is an enemy: he despises Odysseus and celebrated upon Odysseus's misery (lines 380 ~ 382). Because of Poseidon's obstruction, Odysseus's heart weakened: he was overcome with sorrow and regretted that he had lived through the Trojan War (lines 308 ~ 313). Additionally, Poseidon's actions twisted Zeus's original plan as additional intervention from the gods were needed for Odysseus to arrive on Phaeacia. From Poseidon's attempt to bar Odysseus from his way home, one can speculate that the role of the gods in mortals' lives is the inducer of fear and misery. As Poseidon did to Odysseus, rendering him courage-less and induced fear in him.

Scioli Comments: This post is above average but not strong. Student provides good citations and integrates answers to most of the questions into the response (but lacks responses to 2 of the 6 questions – “why Poseidon acted this way” and “how this affected Odysseus’ decisions”). The response suffers from grammatical errors. The students does include speculation about what this scene tells us about Greek ideas about the role of the gods in the lives of mortals, but the answer is limited. Rather than saying that this might reveal that Greeks believed that the role of the gods was “inducer of fear and misery” it would have been better to speculate that this passage gives us evidence that the gods have power to torment, or to manipulate the lives of mortals out of strong emotions towards mortals.
In Book 6 of the Odyssey, Athena appears to Princess Nausicaa disguised as her friend and encourages her to go to the river the next day to wash her clothes. In doing so, it would make her more attractive to the men she was courting. The river was also where Odysseus was stranded at the time after being washed ashore from the violent storm Poseidon drew up (lines 25-40). Athena does this to help Odysseus. She knew how prominent the Princess and her family were in the city and they would be able to help get him home. Athena influences the Princess but does it for her friend, Odysseus. Her actions affect the plot in a major way because once Odysseus gets to the Palace, he meets with the family who offers to get him on a ship back home. Later, near the end, Nausicaa's father offers Odysseus his daughters hand in marriage. The God's have so much influence over the lives of mortals. It's good to be on the good side of a God because if you aren't, they can literally do anything to ruin someone's life. However, in Odysseus' case, even though he has so much conflict with Poseidon, Athena still has so much power to affect his life in so many good ways.

Scioli Comments: This is a fairly strong post. It demonstrates comprehension of the passage and attention to the prompt, but is missing some key features. The student discusses an episode in book 6, but the lines cited refer to a small portion of the larger passage and are not directly relevant to the larger discussion. There are some grammatical errors (misplaced or missing apostrophes, e.g.) but on the whole the writing is clear. The real weakness is in the speculation portion, where the speculation is not identified as such, but rather is presented as a generalization about the role of the divine.
Calypso

Posted Date:
September 16, 2014 9:47 PM
Status:
Published

XXX YYY [Name of peer removed] refers to Calypso as a friend to Odysseus. Calypso can also be seen as an enemy to Odysseus, by trapping him on her island and stopping his journey home to Penelope. It is only after Hermes tells Calypso that Zeus wants Odysseus to go home that she helps him. While she did save him by bringing him onto her island and nursing him back to health, she tries to bribe him onto staying on the island by promising him immortality. Odysseus gently refuses because he wants to Penelope. Before Odysseus leaves her island she give him some clothes that weigh Odysseus down after Poseidon moves against Odysseus.

Scioli Comments: Weak-average post. This student makes a good effort to engage in virtual discussion with a peer, which was encouraged in the instructions, but it does not do enough to make its case strongly. While this post does include some material that responds to the prompts, it lacks proper citation; contains several grammatical errors; lacks speculation about the role of the divine in lives of mortals.
In book 5 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is sailing towards the island of Phaeacia on his raft when Poseidon sends a mighty storm to make his journey difficult (292-297). Poseidon resents Odysseus because his son, Polyphemus was rendered blind from Odysseus's escape from Polyphemus' cave. Odysseus is an enemy to Poseidon ever since he blinded Polyphemus. Poseidon's actions affect the plot by making Odysseus's raft break apart and making him swim the rest of the way to the island of Phaeacia, which makes him very dirty salty. This event also triggers an interaction with Ino, a goddess, who helps him get the shore alive. This will affect his appearance later in the book with his interaction with Nausicaa when he finds her in the woods washing her clothes. The storm sent by Poseidon forces Odysseus to brave yet another hurdle sent by a divine god, and forces him into the sea. This action further reinforces Odysseus's dislike of the divines, and thus he inclines not to trust any god or goddess. This mindset affects Odysseus's actions when he is approached by Ino and rejects her offer until he has no other choice. This scene might be an indication of how the Ancient Greek people explain sudden sea storms and how the gods punish the mortals through natural disturbances such as earthquakes and storms.

Scioli Comments: This is a very strong response, indeed deserving of 3/3. The post is well-written and integrates smoothly the responses to individual questions into a well-composed paragraph. Particularly strong is the articulation of the student’s speculation about what this passage might tell us about Greek ideas regarding the role of the gods in the lives of mortals. The idea is thoughtful, specific, and is phrased as a speculation (“this scene might be an indication...”).
In book 8 of the *Odyssey*, Athena poured a shimmering grace onto Odysseus' head and shoulders in order to make him taller and more muscular (lines 15-24). Athena does this for Odysseus so that he will be able to accomplish the feats the Phaecacians would set before him in order to test him and so that he would be welcomed as a man worthy of respect by the Phaecacians. Odysseus, as a friend to Athena, used these blessings in order to impress the Phaecacians; which he successfully does. Without the blessings from Athena, Odysseus would not have been successful in gaining passage from the Phaecacians. If he did not have these blessings, Odysseus wouldn't have decided to throw the larger discus to prove his point to the others. By being an avid believer and friend to Athena, Odysseus was blessed by the goddess. Allowing him to perform feats no normal man could. Faith in the gods and goddesses can reward you with the power to accomplish great feats.

**Scioli Comments:** An average-weak submission. This student responds to all of the questions in a coherent paragraph. One strength is that this is a passage that not many others chose, and thus provides an opportunity for the student to say something about a passage that is not as obvious as others students were drawn to. There are some grammatical errors (e.g. mixing up tenses when talking about Athena’s actions in the poem) and an incomplete sentence. The central problem, as revealed in the speculation sentence, is a generalization about “faith” that reflects a misinterpretation of the passage (see references to “faith” “believer” and “blessing” in the contemporary senses throughout the paragraph). The student seems to confuse theological models in the response.
In book 6 of the *Odyssey*, Homer tells us that Athena has disguised herself as Nausicaa’s friend, Dymas, and has told Nausicaa to go to the river the next day in her dream (lines 20-40). Athena has encouraged Nausicaa that if she washes her clothes in the river at the break of dawn, then “all the best young men in Phaeacia” will be eager to marry her. Athena knows that Nausicaa will meet Odysseus at the river and help him; she does this in order to help Odysseus achieve his goal and finally get back home. Athena knows Nausicaa, “a girl as lovely as a goddess”, because she is the daughter of noble Alcinous. If Athena did not enter into Nausicaa’s dream and tell her to go the river at the break of dawn, then the helpful Nausicaa would have not found Odysseus. This reading shows that there are many ways in which gods can play a role in the lives of mortals. Specifically, in this passage where Athena is able to take the form of a mortal in order to deceive one and control the outcome of a situation.

Scioli Comments: This is an above average-strong response. Student cites text properly and responds to most of the questions posed. The weakness is in the articulation of the speculation about Greek ideas about the role of the gods in the lives of mortals. The sentence summarizes the events of the passage rather than extrapolating from these events to make a larger statement about divine intervention.
This particular example displays what I think is the hopelessness of self-defeat, and doubt in one's ability to go on. For it is out of desperation that Odysseus prays for a savior, not hope. And he receives one: the calm waters that let him ashore.

In this passage, Odysseus is challenged beyond his power and forced to overcome his own doubt by the acts of several different gods; Calypso with the bronze ax, Ino with her veil. But it is the actions of the "Riverlord" Odysseus cries out to save him from the crushing waves of Poseidon that plays the biggest of roles for him on his journey to Phaeacia, for it is he that "made his waters calm" (line 458) and allowed Odysseus to climb up the rocky shore and fulfill his destiny.

I wouldn't call him a friend of Odysseus, but certainly a friend to what he admitted himself as being: "a fugitive from the sea and Poseidons persecution, a wandering mortal, pitiful to the gods". It was because of this assertion that he was saved by the "Riverlord" and allowed to reach the shore. This shows us that even at our most helpless, pitiful times, there is still hope that something can save us.