Writing Assignment 1

In book 1, Athena makes a speech to Zeus explaining that it was time for Odysseus to stop suffering and go back to his homeland. “We should send Hermes to tell that nymph that long-suffering Odysseus gets to go home and I myself will go to Ithaca to put some spirit into his son” (lines 88-113). Zeus agrees to bring Odysseus home even though Poseidon was away with the Ethiopians and if he found out, he would be angry. Odysseus is stuck on an island with the beautiful dread goddess Calypso and she will not let him go home. Athena decides to interfere and go to Ithaca to tell Telemachus to make inquiries of his father’s return.

In book 5 of *The Odyssey*, Homer tells of Poseidon’s interference with Odysseus’ journey home to Ithaca. “Damn it all, the gods must have changed their minds about Odysseus but I’ll bet I can still blow some trouble his way” (lines 281-299). Poseidon sees Odysseus sailing the sea and becomes furious because he feels betrayed by the other gods. He creates a big storm so Odysseus will take longer to get home. He is determined to make trouble for Odysseus because earlier in his journey, Odysseus blinded the Cyclops, Polyphemus who is in fact Poseidon’s son. From this scene, we can see that Poseidon is an enemy of Odysseus, wishing to ruin his chances of returning home rather than aiding him.
The first scene with Athena is obviously a friendly intervention where Odysseus is being affected positively. She is the one who takes advantage of Poseidon’s absence in Olympia to persuade Zeus and the other gods to let Odysseus come home. If it were not for Athena, Odysseus would still have been in the Island of Ogygia with Calypso. On the other hand, the second scene is a hostile intervention where Poseidon is affecting Odysseus negatively. Poseidon creates a storm to prevent Odysseus from having a safe and fast journey. The scenes are alike in that they are both affecting the same mortal character but in a slightly different way because both scenes have to do with Odysseus’ journey home. Athena is making him go home and Poseidon is preventing him from getting home.

Another comparison that can be made between Athena and Poseidon is through their personality and actions. Their personality is the main factor in the outcomes of both scenes. Athena is a strong and wise warrior. She has excellent planning and thinking abilities. It is because of these traits that she is able to successfully convince her father Zeus to let Odysseus come home. On the other hand, Poseidon is a force of nature. He is reckless when angry and does not think before he acts. He is impulsive and it is because of this that as soon as he sees Odysseus in the sea, he becomes enraged and blows a violent storm toward him causing him to rely on his raft.

The gods definitely play a prominent role in the lives of the mortals. Both of these scenes highlight the give and take nature that the gods have for the mortals. Athena gives while Poseidon takes. The gods are to be feared and worshipped, but they can also be of great help and can produce blessings for the characters. One could go as far as to say that the intervention of the gods in the lives of the characters tell us that the mortals do not
really have any control over their actions. The gods are behind everything, whether they are disguising themselves on earth, sending messages through dreams, or making thunder and lightning to send omens but they are always intervening on a day-to-day basis. Some gods make events happen for the best of the mortals but other gods make things happen to watch the mortals suffer.  

Excellent work!