

Reading *The Odyssey*
Wednesdays 2-4 p.m. at Applewood

The *Odyssey* is the second of two epic poems written in Greek, about 800 b.c.e., and attributed to Homer. It tells of the journey of Odysseus (Roman name Ulysses) following the battles in Troy, described in the earlier poem, the *Iliad*.

The poem has been translated many times; recent translations by Richmond Lattimore, Robert Fagles and Robert Fitzgerald are most commonly used by students new to Homer.

In this workshop each participant will be responsible for a few chapters – leading a class discussion that may include readings of particular passages, questions related to themes, plot development, revelation of character, background information on context and culture, analysis of poetic style or anything else that adds to the understanding and enjoyment of the story.

Sample questions might be:

- * consider the implications of Odysseus' refusal to accept Kalypso's offer of immortality. What does this refusal tell us about Odysseus' view of what it means to be human?
- * Odysseus' dog Argos is shown lying at the door --aged, decrepit and abused,- - waiting for his master's return. How does the story of Argos illustrate the larger story of dissolution and neglect at Ithaca?
- * our sympathy for Odysseus may be tested by the cruel treatment he metes out to the disloyal slaves. In the context of the ethos of his day, is his vengeance justified?
- *two great themes of the Odyssey are *nostos* (homecoming or return) and *xenia* (a guest-host relationship). Where do we see these themes played out as we follow Odysseus on his journey home?
- * what roles do the gods and goddesses play in the story? Could the story make sense if it was rewritten to eliminate the deities?

Participants may use any translation they want to; there are several available as pdf's on the internet. It would be helpful to have one with line numbers; also a glossary or list of characters (mortals and immortals) will be useful.

If a large quantity of photocopying becomes necessary, the moderator may collect up to \$2 per person to cover those costs.

Call Lise Armstrong, moderator, at 549-9171 or email esarmstrong@comcast with questions or for more information. I will be sending a list of resources during the summer for those who have enrolled in the seminar.