

Ancient Greece Notes for English I Pre-AP

Homer: Greek, birthplace and date unknown, lived around 900-700 BCE, perhaps blind, wrote the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

Oral tradition/ rhapsodes: stories passed orally from one generation to the next

Epic: a long narrative poem about the exploits of great heroes and gods set against a vast backdrop

In Media Res: In the middle of the actions, to begin a story in the middle (The *Odyssey*)

Invocation of the Muse: a poet's plea, at the beginning of an epic, for assistance by the goddesses known as the 9 muses who preside over the arts. Calliope is the muse of epic poetry. It was believed the muse breathed into the poet's mind the poem he sang. (inspiration = breathe in)

Epithet: a repeated phrase associated with a certain character or situation; probably served as a memory device for the poet (mnemonic = memory aide = Mnemosyne = muses) Athena = "the grey-eyed goddess" or "the swift runner Achilles"

Homeric/ Epic Simile: a very lengthy comparison in an epic in which the poet compares some of the story to something outside of the story familiar to the intended reader. They will begin with the word *like* or *as*, and end with *so*.

Example:

Now, long ablaze as he was to fight the Trojans,
triple the fury seized him-claw-mad **as** a lion
some shepherd tending woolly flocks in the field
has just grazed, a lion leaping into the fold,
but he hasn't killed him, only spurred his strength
and helpless to beat him off the man scurries for shelter,
leaving his flocks panicked, lost as the ramping beast

mauls them thick-and-fast, piling corpse on corpse and in one furious bound clears the fenced yard—
so raging Diomedes mauled the Trojans.

The ancient Greeks: tough, restless, ambitious, hard-living, imaginative, honorable, feisty and vengeful, admired physical strength, admired beauty, admired intelligence, man was the measure of all things

Greek Heroes: adventurers and fighters-bold, experienced, fierce, strong, and clever; their feats were far above those of ordinary humanity; they also had serious failings that sometimes ruined them--flaws such as overweening pride, rashness, cruelty as a result of their ambition--intense and aspiring to godlike powers

Literary Devices we will consider while reading:

Motif: a repeated image or idea that gains thematic significance as it is repeated

Juxtaposition: the placing of opposites side by side so as to better see the contrast in their attributes

Ancient Greek Culture Terms:

Time': honor, glory

Aidos: disgrace, loss of honor

Hubris: excessive pride that is self-destructive

Arete: excellence, the highest Greek ideal; the result of a well-lived life

Xenia: guest-host relationship

Fate: the shadowy, mysterious force that controls the direction and final outcome of human life; even the Greek gods did not fully control or comprehend Fate. (The Fates were also goddesses)