

***The Odyssey Lesson Plan 4***  
Homecoming and Resolutions  
Created by Emily Pearson

**Overview:**

This lesson will ask students to consider the ending of *The Odyssey* and grapple with the parts they might find unsatisfying. The lesson will open with a brief class recap of the events of the last 5 books before turning to a writing activity that asks students to reimagine some part of the narrative's ending. This lesson includes information from Books 20-24 and discusses the ending of the narrative, so it is best suited for the last day of the unit.

This lesson has been adapted from the “Script Doctor” exercise included in Diana Fuss and William A. Gleason’s *The Pocket Instructor, Literature: 101 exercises for the college classroom* (Fuss and Gleason 85-87).

**Objectives:**

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Discuss and debate the complex and violent ending of *The Odyssey*
2. Write, discuss, and evaluate alternate endings for the narrative

**Class Structure:**

*15 minutes:* Review activity

- Open class by inviting students to recap what happened in the final 5 books of *The Odyssey*. Track their answers on the board with a brief outline.
- Ask students if the ending felt satisfying, and ask what, if anything, they found dissatisfying.

*50 minutes:* Script doctors activity

- “Invite students to think like script doctors: if they were charged with rewriting [some part of the final books], how might they conclude it differently? Remind them that script doctors are those unsung, uncredited writers whose primary job is to retool specific elements of scripts that need fixing—be it plot, dialogue, characterization, tempo, or theme” (Fuss & Gleason 85-86)
- Give students roughly five to six minutes to jot down one or more proposals for some elements of the final books that they would “doctor.”
- Now place students into groups of 3-4. Ask students to discuss their different ideas for “doctoring” scenes, and choose one idea to develop as a group. Give students 5-10 minutes to “rewrite” one moment in the final 5 books. Each group should be prepared to share their doctored scene and discuss:
  - Why did your group choose this passage to change?

- What do you gain or solve by changing this passage?
- What was the logic, purpose, or value in the original passage?
- What has the “doctored” scene made more legible about the original text?
- Go around the room, asking each group to share their doctored passage and their answers to the above questions.

*10 minutes:* Class discussion

- Once all groups have answered, consider the following questions:
  - When considering the “doctored” passages as a whole, what crucial elements of *The Odyssey* might be lost?
  - Is there anything about the original ending that no one in the class dared to change? Why or why not?

Additional discussion questions, if time allows:

- What is special about the bow and arrows Penelope brings Odysseus? Why didn’t he take them to Troy?
- How does Odysseus reveal himself to the suitors? Why does he choose this moment?
- Who locks the door to the megaron? Why?
- Which suitor does Odysseus kill first? Why?
- How do the suitors try to reason with Odysseus? Who is shown mercy?
- What do Odysseus & Telemachus do with the women servants who have ‘betrayed’ him? What about Melanthius? How do you react to this?
- How do the rest of the serving women react to Odysseus?
- How does Odysseus prevent the Ithacans from finding out what happened to the suitors too soon?
- How does Homer describe Penelope’s feelings when she finally believes/accepts that Odysseus has returned?
- How truthful is Odysseus when he tells Penelope of his travels?
- What is Agamemnon’s assessment of Odysseus & Penelope?
- What happens when the Ithacans learn of the slaughter of the suitors? What would have happened if Athena hadn’t intervened?

### **Sources:**

Fuss, Diana, and William A. Gleason, editors. *The Pocket Instructor, Literature: 101 Exercises for the College Classroom*. Princeton UP, 2016.

Wilson, Emily, translator. *The Odyssey*. By Homer. Norton, 2018