

Kubus AP English Literature, *Iliad* Process Essay

Great works of literature ask big questions: cultural questions, existential questions, metaphysical questions—the kinds of questions every human being wrestles with, the kinds of questions most worth pondering. Here are a few big questions Homer asks:

- Why is rage so dangerous? Why do we give in to rage?
- What is wisdom? How do we become wise?
- What is honor? Is it always a high value?
- What is the relationship between men and gods?
- What makes a leader? What is leadership?
- Why do we suffer? Does suffering have value?
- How do we make decisions?
- How do we balance reason and emotion?



Your final process essay of the semester asks you to reach a thematic conclusion about the *Iliad*'s answer to a big question like one of the above through the study of some aspect of the text: You'll find plentiful prompts below.

- When?** November 27, 8:00 AM
- What?** 1500-word essay (10% rule)
- How?** Printed and posted to turnitin.com
- Why?** It's worth 50% of the fall final and an additional major grade.

Do the usual preparation. Choose a topic from the list below, then comb the text for all relevant passages. See what those passages show you. Look not just for what they tell you but also for **how** they tell you. Look for repetitions of figurative language, images, words, emotions, etc. Those patterns encourage good thinking.

Having studied the text, write a provisional thesis, what you think you'll argue. Then plan the developing arguments. I want to see form in these essays, a clear plan at work, orderly development.

I also want to see opening paragraphs, developing paragraphs, and closing paragraphs that reflect the models I've shown you. And I especially want to see lots of close reading. Let's have lively thinking and lively writing. I'm going to be more critical than you may be used to in the reading of your essay: Since this essay is your last for the semester, I expect to see your abilities at full tilt. Show me what you've learned. As ever, please bring an idea, a thesis, a draft for a conference. No AI. No Googling. No dishonesty of any kind.

The Prompts

"Forgiving and being forgiven are two names for the same thing. The important thing is that a discord has been resolved." In what ways does Homer's text defend C.S. Lewis's statement?

"Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame." Is Ben Franklin's aphorism true for Homer?

"The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it. Now error and sin both have this property, that the deeper they are, the less their victim suspects their existence; they are masked evil. Pain is unmasked, unmistakable evil every man knows that something is wrong when he is being hurt." In what ways does Homer's text defend C.S. Lewis's statement?

Read [this letter from George Marshall](#). What's leadership like in Homer's poem?

Discuss Homer's portrayal of the gods in the *Iliad*. What is their relationship with mortals? With fate? What do you think is their primary functions in the work? What larger statement does Homer seem to be making by depicting the gods as he does?

Does Achilles/Hector/Helen ultimately emerge as a sympathetic character? Why or why not? Use examples from the text to explain your answer.

What roles do the women characters play in the poem?

Investigate what it means, and does not mean, to be a Homeric "hero." Be careful not to be too general: Concentrate instead on one or two specific scenes in presenting your interpretation.

A topic of your choosing