



The Bronze Age and its Homeric Echo

Women in Antiquity | Meeting #4

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Upcoming Dates

- Monday, March 9
• Images Essay Due
- Monday, March 23
• Proposal Due
- Sunday, March 8
• Responses for Week 4 Due

2

Five things today

- The Greek Dark Age
- *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- Marriage in Homer
- Penelope and Nausicaa
- Helen and Klytaemnestra

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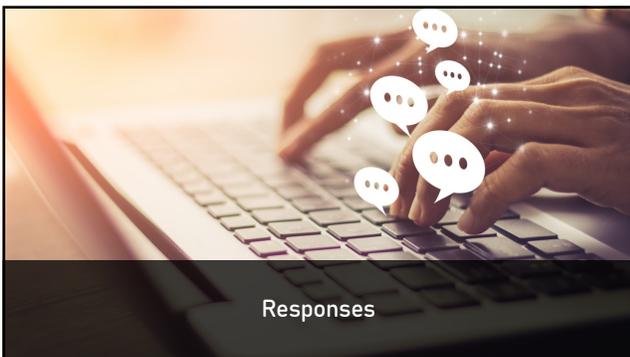
Quiz #2 | The Bronze Age and Homer

- In heroic Greek society, marriage patterns between powerful families included:
 - matrilocal marriage (a roving warrior marries a princess and settles in her kingdom)
 - patrilocal marriage (a suitor brings a bride back to his lands and family)
 - all mature women being expected to marry in order to ensure the city's future defense
 - all of the above
- The legendary queen who, enraged by her husband sacrificing their daughter, cast him aside and married his cousin instead was:
 - Phigeneia
 - Helen
 - Clytemnestra
 - Mary Queen of Scots
- In Greek art, the exclusively female Amazons were often depicted as:
 - fighting against centaurs, who were originally thought of as exclusively male
 - ugly, representing their unfeminine nature
 - having a secret king
 - makers and sellers of household goods
- Women were a larger proportion of which group in heroic Greek society?
 - Landholders
 - Slaves
 - Actors
 - Seamanagers
- When Nausicaea meets Odysseus, she does all of the following [EXCEPT](#):
 - Accompanies him bodily into town and into her father's presence
 - Admires his beauty once he's had a bath
 - Chastises her handmaidens for running away from him
 - Tells him he should ignore her father and try to win over her mother instead

Extra Credit:

EC. According to Pomeroy, why might the matrilocal pattern of marriage be better for the bride?

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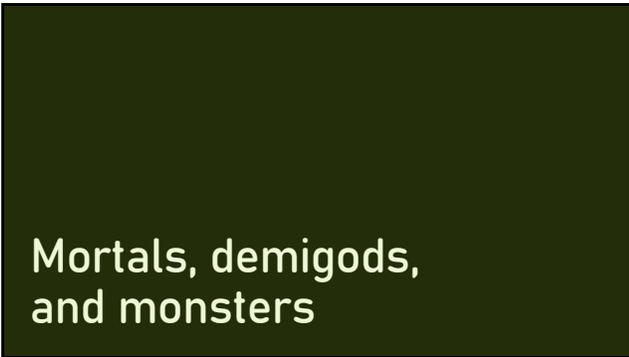
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Questions about whatever



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Mortals, demigods,
and monsters

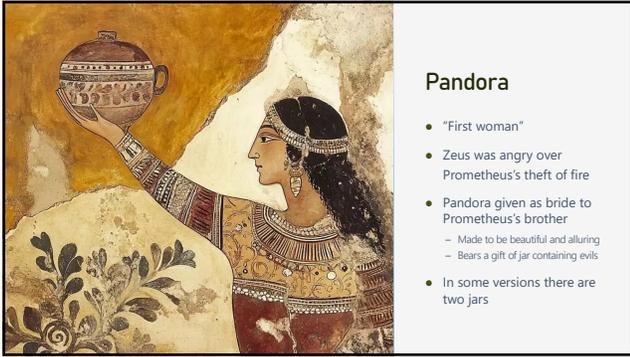


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What is the deal with Pandora?



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Pandora

- "First woman"
- Zeus was angry over Prometheus's theft of fire
- Pandora given as bride to Prometheus's brother
 - Made to be beautiful and alluring
 - Bears a gift of jar containing evils
- In some versions there are two jars

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What does Medusa represent to the Greeks?

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Medusa

- One of the Gorgons
- Anyone who looked upon her was turned to stone
- Men's fear of women
 - Vulnerable to beauty
 - Extreme beauty = extreme vulnerability

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The Homeric Era

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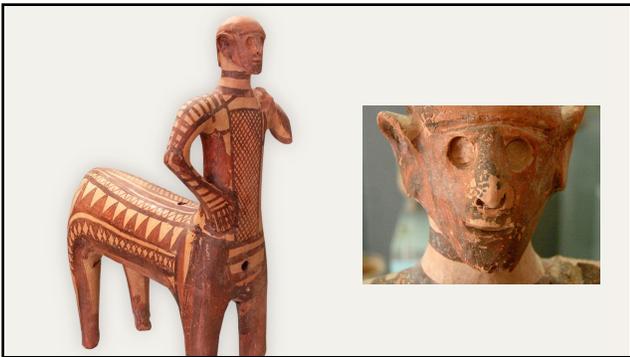
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The rhapsode

- Master storytellers of epic poetry in larger communities
- Chanting to the accompaniment of a lyre
- Stories retold to connect with each audience
- Apprentice becomes master rhapsode to next generation

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The Greeks and their gods

- No priestly class
- Their understanding of the gods comes from literature
- Gods react to mortals' betrayals of the community
- Rarely punish the wrongdoer only, often visiting suffering on family and descendants

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Recovery of writing preserves Homeric society

- Regional diversity of custom and tradition
- Emergence of hellenism and contrasting idea of barbaroi
- *Xenia* — guest friendship
- Critical importance of marriage bond
- Agonal society
 - *Timē* — honor and respect
 - *Aretē* — achievement of excellence

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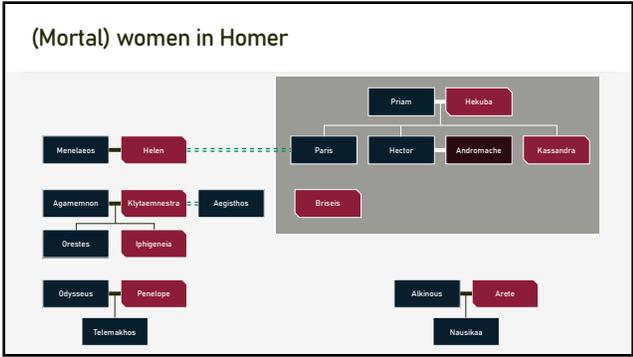
Homer's Trojan War

- Story of the Aegean trade conflict
- Emphasis on the bonds and connections within a community
- Expectations of human behavior, often contrasted with the gods' behavior

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Women of Homer

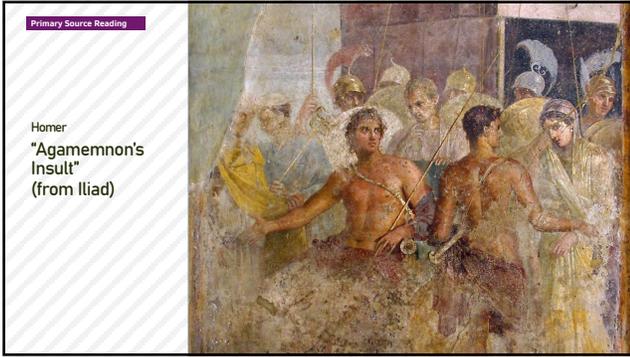
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Primary Source Reading

Homer
"Agamemnon's
Insult"
(from Iliad)

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What does Briseis represent?

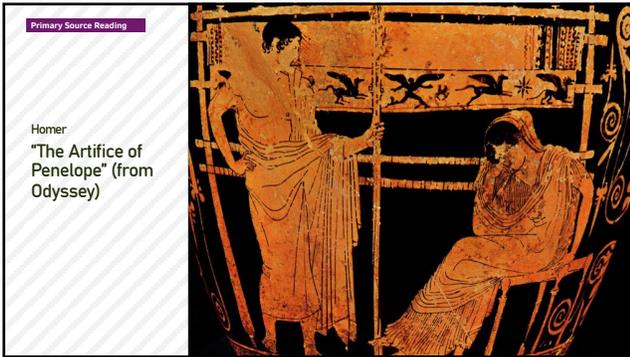
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The boys and Briseis

- Briseis is being claimed as a prize, causing conflict
 - Briseis degraded by the Greeks because the Greek men are prideful and greedy
 - Mistreatment of women is the result of male hubris
 - Homer is writing this story as an indictment of the Bronze Age Greeks
- Greek gods respond to actions by mortals that damage human society
 - Punish human behavior that doesn't greatly affect the gods
 - Greeks have moved beyond the basic function of ancient religion

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Primary Source Reading

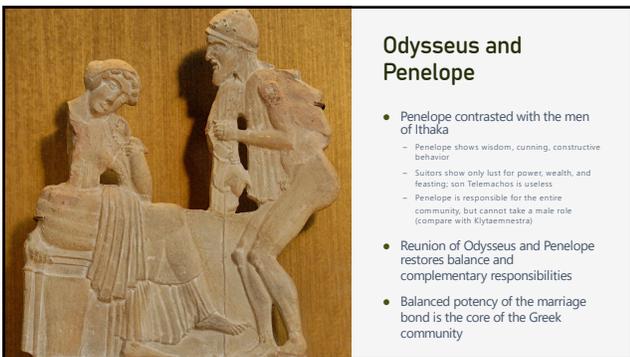
Homer
"The Artifice of Penelope" (from Odyssey)

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What does Penelope's story tell us?

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Odysseus and Penelope

- Penelope contrasted with the men of Ithaka
 - Penelope shows wisdom, cunning, constructive behavior
 - Suitors show only lust for power, wealth, and feasting; son Telemachos is useless
 - Penelope is responsible for the entire community, but cannot take a male role (compare with Clytemnestra)
- Reunion of Odysseus and Penelope restores balance and complementary responsibilities
- Balanced potency of the marriage bond is the core of the Greek community

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Primary Source Reading

Homer
"Nausicaa and the Stranger"
 (from *Odyssey*)

- Nausicaa contrasted with Odysseus
 - Nausicaa shows wisdom, cunning, constructive behavior
 - Odysseus reacts
 - Nausicaa must maintain her reputation/virtue
- Nausicaa and her handmaidens
- Nausicaa's parents



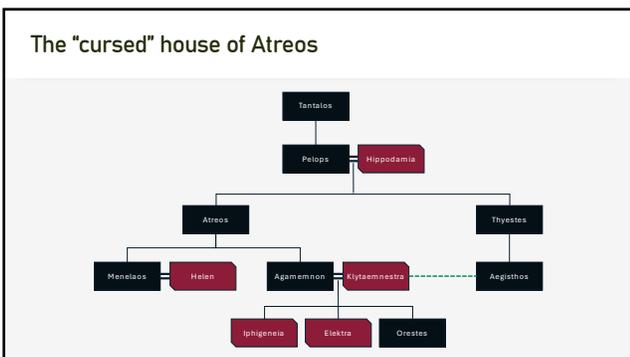
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Bad couples in Homer

- Menelaus and Helen
- Agamemnon and Klytaemnestra

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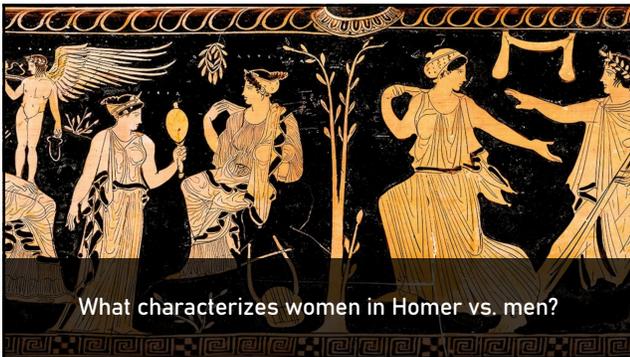
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Secondary Source Reading

Ken Dowden
"Approaching Women Through Myth: Vital Tool or Self-Delusion?"

- Klytaemnestra as a polarizing figure (then and now)
 - Starting point for a lot of conversations about gender in Greek fiction
- Mythology can't be mapped onto Greek society
- Stories are told that express cultural bylaws
 - ... through violation
 - ... through people that are unreal, to cast the normal into relief

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Secondary Source Reading

Sherry B. Ortner
"Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?"

- **Categorical assumptions**
 - Starting with "all societies repress" leads to an expectation of misogyny
 - Judgment rather than actual understanding
- **Biological differences made women the "other"**
 - Social roles closer to nature
 - Nature has an incomprehensible potency = powerful and obscure
 - Supernatural aspect
 - Women more attuned to the occult (especially if a foreigner) → witchcraft



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Ideal couples in Homer

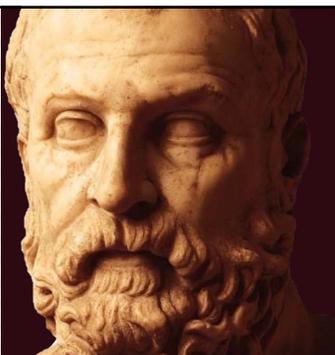
- (Reformed) Odysseus and Penelope
- Hektor and Andromache

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Secondary Source Reading

Marilyn B. Arthur
"Early Greece: The Origins of the Western Attitude Toward Women"

- **Hektor and Andromache as the marital ideal**
 - Hektor has public duties, Andromache has private duties
 - Both are equally important to the survival of the community
- **Athens undergoes constant social evolution**
 - Reforms are about social organization—rules constantly changing
 - Effects on gender are secondary



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Secondary Source Reading

Marilyn B. Arthur
"The Divided World of Iliad VI"

- More on Hektor and Andromache
- How Homer depicts marital relationships
 - Hektor and Andromache
 - Menelaos and Helen
 - Agamemnon and Klytaemnestra
 - Odysseus and Penelope



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