

# Notes on Quiz #2: The Bronze Age and its Homeric Echo

1. How would you say gender plays a role the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles in the reading from *Iliad* ("Agamemnon's Insult")? What do you think Homer was trying to say about Agamemnon by telling this story?

Agamemnon and Achilles come into conflict over the "prize" of the princess, Briseis, whom Agamemnon claims as due to him as overlord of the Greek forces. This involves gender in two ways: by including noblewomen as spoils of war, to be treated as indicators of status for those who hold them, and by emphasizing the expectations of male warriors and how the Agamemnon and Achilles see them differently.

Agamemnon's greed for glory is what makes him willing to use a woman as a mere prize and, through the stature of this prize, as an indication of his own status. Achilles further lambastes him for not actually fighting with the other Greeks, preferring to lead from the rear, exposing his lack of true virtue and valor. Agamemnon's treatment of Briseis and Achilles is an indictment of Agamemnon as prideful, arrogant, and covetous of power and glory.

2. In this week's chapter, Pomeroy discussed two patterns of marriage that coexisted in heroic Greek society. What were these two patterns? Which was more beneficial for the woman involved, and why?

In the **patrilocal pattern**, a suitor brings back a bride to his own house, and this bridges the families of the husband and the bride's father. Variant: Marriage by capture (e.g., Briseis).

In the **matrilocal pattern**, a roving warrior marries a princess and settles down in her kingdom. Variant: Marriage by contest, in which the kingdom is a prize for the right suitor.

Though the bride seldom had the choice of husbands in either pattern, the matrilocal scenario allowed the bride to remain within her support system of friends and family members.

- EC1. When Nausicaa meets Odysseus, she does all of the following EXCEPT:

- ✓ (a) Accompanies him boldly into town and into her father's presence
- (b) Admires his beauty once he's had a bath
- (c) Chastises her handmaidens for running away from him
- (d) Tells him he should ignore her father and try to win over her mother instead

- EC2. Why is Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife, treated harshly in Homer? How does this marriage reveal a double standard? How is Penelope, Odysseus's wife, contrasted with Clytemnestra?

Agamemnon expected his concubine to be accepted as part of his retinue when he returned home, but Clytemnestra, who had likewise taken a lover, was abused for her infidelity.

Penelope's steadfastness and purity in remaining true to Odysseus was praised for two reasons: in so doing she strengthens the idea of marriage for all Ithaca, and she also single-handedly preserves the kingdom for Odysseus to reclaim on her return.