

Subject: Ideas for reading the Telemachia
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To: [Participants in Course 403]

I thought the first class went well, and I am looking forward to moving from the front of the class to sitting as a member of the seminar. The office said that we can rearrange the chairs so that we can see one another, which will be the class structure during the rest of this course.

With a review of the background of the Trojan War and some specifics about Odysseus, we are ready to read. I hope you will come to the next class with questions you have, passages you want to examine more closely, and ideas to share with all of us. I hope this will be a true seminar. At your request, I have some questions that you might consider as part of your reading this week:

1. Watch the changes in Telemachus from the boy we encounter in Book 1 through his visit to Helen and Menelaus in Book 4. Locate the behavior and statements that demonstrate his development.
2. How does Athena affect Telemachus; how much of the change in Telemachus can be attributed to her?
3. Hospitality: what are the components of hospitality in the first books? How do the courts of Nestor and Menelaus illustrate through contrast the hostility and betrayal of hospitality by the suitors in Ithaca?
4. What information about Odysseus is provided to us before the readers actually encounter him?
5. Since the story of Odysseus was spoken for hundreds of years before it was written down, how does this explain the unique style/characteristics of the written epic form?

I look forward to seeing you next week and sharing your questions, insights, and concerns. Remember there is a single storyteller and the long speeches make more sense than dialogue although it can be frustrating until you get into the flow of the epic. Contact me if I can help you.

Barbara Nelson