

***The Odyssey* in Historical Context**

Work and the Human Condition: Fall 2008

I. Ancient Greek Culture

II. Orality and Oral Literature

III. Homer

Ancient Greek Culture

“Greek” not “Greece”

Four “Ages”

A. Mykenaeen Age (c. 1500-1100 BCE)

- historical setting of Homer’s *Iliad* & *Odyssey*
- Dorian invasions

B. Dark Age (c. 1100-750)

- cultural setting of Homer

C. Archaic Age (c.750-500)

- *Iliad* and *Odyssey* written down

D. Classical age (c. 500-322)

- Homer the “moral curriculum”

II. Orality and Oral Literature

Odyssey: A text of an oral poem

Primary Orality

Greek Orality during the Dark Age

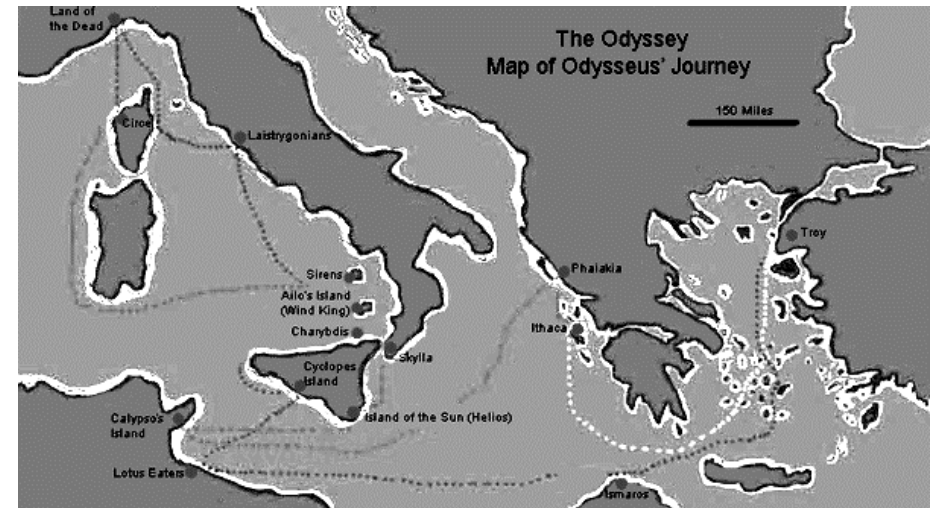
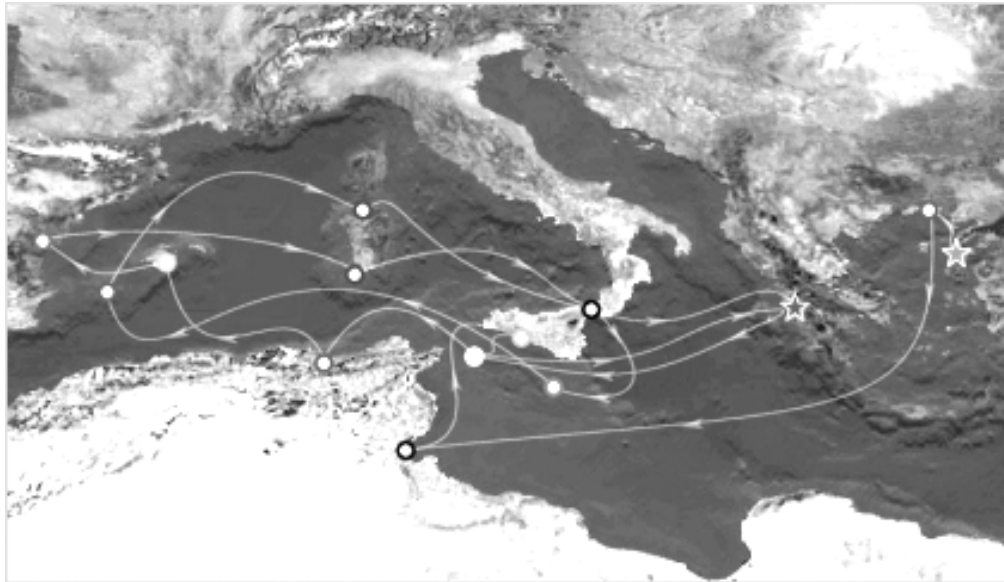
Features of Oral Poetry

- **Formulaic**
- **Repetitive**
- **Standardized epithets**
- **Additive**
- **Concrete**
- **Conservative**

Homer

A. Historical Evidence of Events in Homer

- Achaeans
- Troy
- War, c. 1200 BCE



B. Growth of Homeric Epics

- Oral Culture after Dorian invasions
- Bards
- Rhapsodes
- Greek alphabet, end of Dark Ages
- Continuation of Oral Tradition
- Moral Curriculum of Classical Era

C. Homer as Historical Evidence

What does Homer tell us about...

... the rhapsodes?

... the audience?

... Greek social structure?

... Greek ideals and values?

The Household

The Polis