

Mini-Essay (15%) || Due Friday, Oct. 22 to Turn-It-In Link on CCLE

This essay should exhibit an informed reaction either *to an image from Greek material culture* or *to a select chunk of primary reading* (that is, a portion of Homer, Herodotus, lyric poetry, etc., but not McInerney, which is a secondary, scholarly source). This essay is to be no more than 500 words, double-spaced (= 2 pages). Your essay should have a thesis statement within the first few lines, stating clearly the view you intend to put forth. No secondary materials are required for this essay, though you may wish to consult the textbook. If you consult the textbook, it should be cited in footnotes.¹ All primary-source citations should be footnoted, too.²

These mini-essays are your chance to write a close, well-reasoned, but concise analysis of an image or text that interests you. You will demonstrate your ability to show *how* an image or text conveys (or fails to convey) its meaning, and you may situate the image or text in the context of other course material. TA's will grade the mini-essay on clarity, coherence, persuasiveness, and absence of typos. The weekly "Questions to Consider" may prove helpful as prompts; in addition, a few prompts can be found below.

- Choose a book from the *Iliad* that we did *not* read for class. Read it carefully, then choose a brief passage from that book for analysis. Situate your brief analysis in relation to a theme or issue of broader importance in studying Homer. For instance, you might choose a passage from Book 6 of the *Iliad* about Hector and write a short analysis of the idea of heroism or excellence as it relates to Hector, or from the same book you might choose to focus on the role of Helen as she is represented at Troy. Or you could consider a scene from the last book (*Iliad* 24) and comment on how the epic imparts a final impression of Achilles' character. Or something else altogether.
- Choose a site plan (an archaeological plan) from the textbook and analyze how the structure in question conveys a sense of power and meaning. You may also wish to include brief analysis of the ways in which the plan fails to convey aspects of the original structure. What mysteries of interpretation remain?
- Choose an object (statue, vase, artefact) that was not explicitly discussed in lecture. Perform a close "reading" of the object. What can a close analysis of its form reveal about its possible meaning(s)? In what ways might its meaning(s) shift from its original context to a later period, such as ours?
- Write a brief analysis of a lyric poem or two (i.e, a poem by Mimnermus, Sappho, etc.). Consider the following: who speaks? what role does gender play? what "happens" in the poem? how is your interpretation of the poem affected when you consider that it would have been performed in a symposium?

¹ McInerney 2019: 57.

² *Iliad* 1.237.

Formatting for Mini-Essay
Discovering the Greeks – Classics 10

The first page of your paper must be a cover-page containing the following information, none of which counts against your overall word-count:

Your Name

Name of Your Teaching Assistant

October 22, 2021

Your electronic signature beneath the following Statement:

I have read and understood the relevant sections concerning plagiarism in the UCLA Student [Code of Conduct handbook](#). This paper is my own work and has in no way violated UCLA's Code of Conduct.

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In so short an essay, it is helpful to be clear in the first few lines what you wish to say. The rest of your essay will be your chance to substantiate your claim. Think of the essay like an op-ed in a newspaper. **Some examples of a thesis sentence include the following:** “Although Achilles is often viewed sympathetically in the first book of the *Iliad*, I argue in this brief essay that Agamemnon is in fact justified in his actions.” **Or another:** “Solon is frequently viewed as a moderate legal reformer, but I suggest several ways in which his reforms in fact enabled only the wealthy.” **Or another:** “In this essay I discuss the snake-goddess figurine, to argue that Minoan culture accorded women important roles, evident as well in their frescoes, where the focus on the natural world only reinforces the snake-goddess’s mastery of earthly creatures.” **Or another:** “Focusing on one lyric poem by Mimnermus, I will argue briefly that the poems are preoccupied with death, but use natural imagery to soften death’s threat.” **Or this:** “In this short paper I show how Andromache’s references to the future move readers outside the time of the story, in counterpoint to the present-tense focus of the fight between Achilles and Hector.” **Or finally:** “In this paper I examine animal imagery on the Dipylon Vase, showing how even the creatures (horses especially) seem to be engaged in mourning and reinforce the projected wealth of the deceased.”

It is sometimes asked, “What makes for a good paper?” or “What do I do to get an A on this paper?” **Well, the answer is: *there is no one answer, formula, or trick*.** Here, however, are some tips:

- A good paper makes a claim (an argument, a contention, an observation that needs substantiating, *etc.*).
- A good paper tries to say something that is not readily obvious or apparent about a passage, an image, a concept, an idea, *etc.*

- A good paper tries as much as possible to avoid plot summary or “data-dumping,” though summary is sometimes necessary to set up part of an argument. As much as possible, a good paper makes a series of analytic (*i.e.*, critical, interpretive) claims.
- Your thesis need not come in the first sentence, but it should appear in the first paragraph. Sometimes the thesis is two-part or requires more than one sentence.
- A good thesis has consequences. One way to think is (a) “What am I saying?” and (b) “Why does what I’m saying matter?” In a short paper, it is more likely that you can only suggest or float (b). You should certainly come up with an (a).
- A good paper has a limited scope. Don’t try to say too much.
- A good paper comes from you: I learn what *you* want to say, and I learn how the evidence reflects, supports, and gives substance to your informed reaction.