

Course: **Reading and Teaching *The Odyssey***

Lesson 13: **Post-Seminar Interview** with Dr. Hannah Hintze

Notes:

(0:01) **HH:** In this seminar, I asked a question about Penelope, and we talked about many of the elements of the story that complement her role in the epic. That's a good thing when that happens. Sometimes when you ask a question, students fill in the negative space, or anything that *isn't* about that question.

We talked about especially the adventure of the oar and in the end we came back around to Penelope's role in that journey, which seems to have nothing to do with her. That kind of structure is very common in a conversation. You might think the students are not responding to the question, but often the conversation comes back around to it again.

(1:07) **HH:** What pleased me about the seminar? I learned things! I love a seminar in which something obvious, but hitherto unknown to me, comes to the fore. I hadn't thought of the oar as a tree, but in an epic with so much emphasis on trees, it should be obvious. I'll have to mull that over. These moments in a seminar are great.

Are people, as I'm looking around the room, hearing things that surprise and delight them? Even if it's relatively quiet but that's still happening, it's worthwhile.

(2:10) **HH:** Why did I choose this question? My sincere worry, concern, and ignorance prompted a discussion about the very end, because I feel let down by the end of the epic. I know I'm concerned about the absence of Penelope. I want to know why she's not there. With the extended appearance of Penelope in Book 23, why isn't she in the end? I wanted to ask a larger question about the end, but I didn't want to make the question all about my emotional response, so I made it about the details of the text.

(3:22) **HH:** After every seminar, you think of what you should or shouldn't have said. But you can't be a prophet. In the middle of the seminar I did wonder how far afield we'd go from the initial question. In another setting, I might have brought the conversation back to the original question. On the other hand, it would be interesting after a seminar to go around and ask everyone how they thought the conversation went. You might get lots of different responses. The teachers feel the highs and lows much more deeply than the students do since they are responsible. But we would learn a lot by asking such a question of the students.

(4:58) **HH:** It's always interesting that we say we do things for the students' sake. But doing a seminar outside of the structure of school—they came of their own free will. One said, "I was planning to read *The Odyssey* over break anyway." Things were a lot freer in the conversation since it wasn't one of a set of ongoing readings over the year. People did talk about *The Aeneid* or music. Maybe this experience was more about this particular book by itself, which could be a worthwhile thing. If you were looking to teach a book, it might be good to have a freewheeling study group first and see what that looks like, and then put it into the structure of a full course.

It's been delightful for me. As always, I learn a lot from the students. They're good readers.

(6:38) **HH:** Part of this experience has been a little frightening since it's a risk to try to have a conversation in front of a camera. Having a conversation that is observed at all is always a risk, because when some are watching and some are speaking, there's always distance in the room. Yet all conversations are risky; lecturing and note-taking are safe. But conversations are invigorating.