Stories That Endure

How Greek poems and plays shaped lasting questions

9-12.WC.6 "Explain the significance of ancient Greek literature, including, but not limited to the Iliad and the Odyssey."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one choice or conflict in each paragraph, then circle a sentence that explains why the work mattered to its audience. Draw a line connecting each underlined detail to its circled explanation.

More Than Ancient Stories

1 An ancient Greek listener hearing the *Iliad* would not just hear about battles. This epic, traditionally linked to the poet Homer, follows a short stretch near the end of the legendary Trojan War. When the warrior Achilles refuses to fight, his choice affects the whole Greek army. Later, Priam, the father of Achilles' slain enemy Hector, begs Achilles to return his son's body. Achilles agrees. The scene puts grief beside the pursuit of honor. For Greek audiences, the poem offered a way to weigh a warrior's fame against the suffering that war brings to families.

2 The *Odyssey*, also linked to Homer, follows Odysseus as he struggles to get home after the war. On one island, the Cyclops eats some of his men instead of treating strangers as guests. Odysseus escapes through clever planning, but his proud boast afterward helps bring the anger of Poseidon, the Cyclops's father. The episode invites listeners to consider hospitality, intelligence, and the risks of pride. Told and retold across Greek communities, both epics supplied familiar characters and scenes that people could use to discuss how a person should act, even when the stories offered no simple rule.

3 Greek literature also reached audiences through plays. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, a young woman defies a ruler's order so she can bury her brother. Her choice raises a difficult question: What should someone do when a city's law conflicts with family and religious duties? Athenians watched tragedies at public festivals, where such conflicts could become shared subjects of debate. Later generations copied, translated, and adapted Greek poems and plays, carrying their questions far beyond ancient Greece. Modern readers can also challenge these works, asking whose voices they include and whose they leave out. Their significance lies in discussion as well as survival.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the meeting between Achilles and Priam make the *Iliad* more than a story about winning a war?

2. How do the Cyclops's actions and Odysseus's boast make the *Odyssey* useful for discussing behavior?

3. Why might watching *Antigone* at a public festival have mattered to an Athenian audience?

4. According to the passage, how can readers today keep ancient Greek literature significant without agreeing with everything in it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word sign inviting students to read ancient Greek literature. Name the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, use a different detail from each to pose a question people could debate today, and explain why reading both matters beyond knowing their plots.

ANSWER KEY

Stories That Endure

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one choice or conflict in each paragraph, then circle a sentence that explains why the work mattered to its audience. Draw a line connecting each underlined detail to its circled explanation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the meeting between Achilles and Priam make the *Iliad* more than a story about winning a war?	**Achilles returns Hector's body to Priam, placing grief and compassion beside warrior honor. The scene lets audiences weigh fame against war's cost to families.**
2	How do the Cyclops's actions and Odysseus's boast make the *Odyssey* useful for discussing behavior?	**The Cyclops violates expectations of hospitality, while Odysseus's boast shows the risks of pride even after a clever escape.**
3	Why might watching *Antigone* at a public festival have mattered to an Athenian audience?	**The play gave people a shared way to debate conflicts among city laws, family duties, and religious duties.**
4	According to the passage, how can readers today keep ancient Greek literature significant without agreeing with everything in it?	**They can continue discussing and adapting its questions while challenging the works by asking whose voices are included or left out.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Why read a poem about an ancient war? In the *Iliad*, Achilles returns Hector's body to a grieving father. When does compassion matter more than winning a conflict? In the *Odyssey*, a boast after a clever escape brings new trouble. Can pride undo a smart decision? Reading both works lets us compare what people admire with the damage their choices can cause. These questions still matter when we argue about public leaders, personal rivals, and the costs of claiming victory.

Accept supported explanations of each work's significance, not just plot summaries. For the sign, look for two distinct passage details, two debatable questions with present-day relevance, and an explanation of why both works matter.