

Connecting the Pieces: *The Odyssey* Mediterranean Hall

Educators Guide and Lesson Plan created by Jamee
Atkinson, May ISD



Grade Level

9th Grade, English I

Time Required

60 minutes

Supplies/Materials Needed

- *“Connecting the Pieces”*
Morphological chart
- *Amphora Template*
- *“Connecting the Pieces–Personal Connection”*
- *Pottery manipulatives*
(ceramic or paper template)
- *Paint/colored pencils*
- *The Odyssey by Homer*

Standards

English I TEKS
4(E), 4(F), 4(G), 4(H),
5(A), 5(B), 5(C), 5(D)
5(E), 5(F), 5(G)

Key Vocabulary

Hubris – Excessive, dangerous pride or self-confidence that leads a hero to defy the gods or violate social norms.

Essential Question(s)

- What has been consistent in the human experience through time?
- What themes in *The Odyssey* have stood the test of time?
- How can artwork contribute to a reader’s understanding of a story?

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Students will be able to analyze ancient Greek pottery artifacts to identify visual storytelling techniques and synthesize connections to plot events, themes, and cultural values in Homer’s *The Odyssey*.
- Students will be able to design an original piece of pottery (using terracotta or a paper template) that visually depicts a meaningful personal narrative or life milestone.

Pre-Visit

Students should complete units for Homer’s *The Odyssey*. While it is not required that the text have been read in its entirety, a broad understanding of the text and its plot and themes ensures student success. **Before attending the tour**, review **universal themes** and **motifs** that students discovered throughout the text, as where as where these elements were found. Students may bring these notes while the tour is conducted.

Take a portion of a day to review common artistic techniques in Greek pottery, such as:

- **Scale = Importance** (Hieratic Proportion): Giants, gods, and heroes are drawn larger. If someone takes up the entire height of a vessel, they dominate the scene.
- **Direction = Action & Momentum**: Figures facing/moving right are often attacking, advancing, or making progress; figures pushed left or falling back are in retreat.
- **Color Conventions**:
–Black-Figure Style: Silhouette-based, dramatic, high contrast.

Amphora – A tall ancient Greek or Roman jar with two handles and a narrow neck, primarily used for storing wine, oil, or grain.

Black-Figure Technique – A style of ancient Greek pottery painting where silhouettes of figures are painted in dark slip against the natural red clay background.

Red-Figure Technique – A later pottery style where the background is painted black, leaving the figures in the natural red color of the clay for greater detail.

Motif – A recurring element, image, pattern, or visual design that holds symbolic meaning throughout a work of art.

Universal Theme – An idea, value, or lesson that applies to anyone, anywhere, regardless of culture or time period.

–Red-Figure Style: Allowed for fine interior lines, muscle definition, and facial expressions.

–White Slip: Often used to highlight female figures or set heroes apart from the background squad.

Pose & Gesture:

–Reaching toward a chin = pleading/begging for mercy (supplication).

–Hands on head = mourning or despair.

–Tilted body weight = active physical force (metis or bia).

Museum Visit

Tour Mediterranean Hall

View urn replicas and discuss:

- What elements of everyday life do you see represented in the presented pottery?
- How are the pottery pieces (the scenes presented, the ornateness, attention to detail) a representation of what the people valued?
- How do the values of the people compare to values today? What values do we share? Which do we no longer carry?
- Where do we see connections to events in *The Odyssey*?
**Note, there are three pieces that directly represent events in The Odyssey. Many represent events of the Trojan War.*

Complete the handout, “[Connecting the Pieces](#)”

- Asks students to compare scenes depicted in the pottery to events and themes in *The Odyssey*. It is then followed by a STAAR-aligned short constructed response.

Post-Visit

Complete the extension activity

Ask students to consider what events from *The Odyssey* they believe are most key to the plot. Then, ask students to consider how each of the episodes in the text contribute to universal themes found throughout the text.

In groups, ask students to create a visual (using the [Amphora Template](#)) that depicts the most crucial scene in *The Odyssey*. They should be able to defend why the scene is the most representative of themes in the text, as well as provide the universal theme that the text represents.



Complete the personal connection activity

Using the [Amphora Template](#), or provided pottery and paint, challenge students to design a piece of pottery that represents a valuable lesson they have learned in their lives and to connect it to a theme from Homer's *The Odyssey*. Teachers may choose to use the handout, "[Connecting the Pieces–Personal Connection](#)" as a resource for instruction.

Variations and Extensions

Advanced placement modification: Provide text evidence from *The Odyssey* to support connection to urns found in the Mediterranean Hall.

Students may participate in a **gallery walk** during post-visit activity of their interpretation of key scenes in *The Odyssey*.

Students may present their **pottery designs**, practicing effective speech delivery and defense of analyses.

Activity may also be paired with:

Antigone by Sophocles

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles

Stand-alone units on Greek myths

Instructions: Select four distinct pieces of ancient Greek pottery found in The Mediterranean Hall. For each piece, fill out the chart to analyze how Greek visual arts mirrored the narrative themes and cultural values of *The Odyssey*. Then, use your chart to answer the short answer prompt. *Only one may be a pottery piece that is a direct representation of events in The Odyssey* (i.e. “Odysseus mounts his horse”).

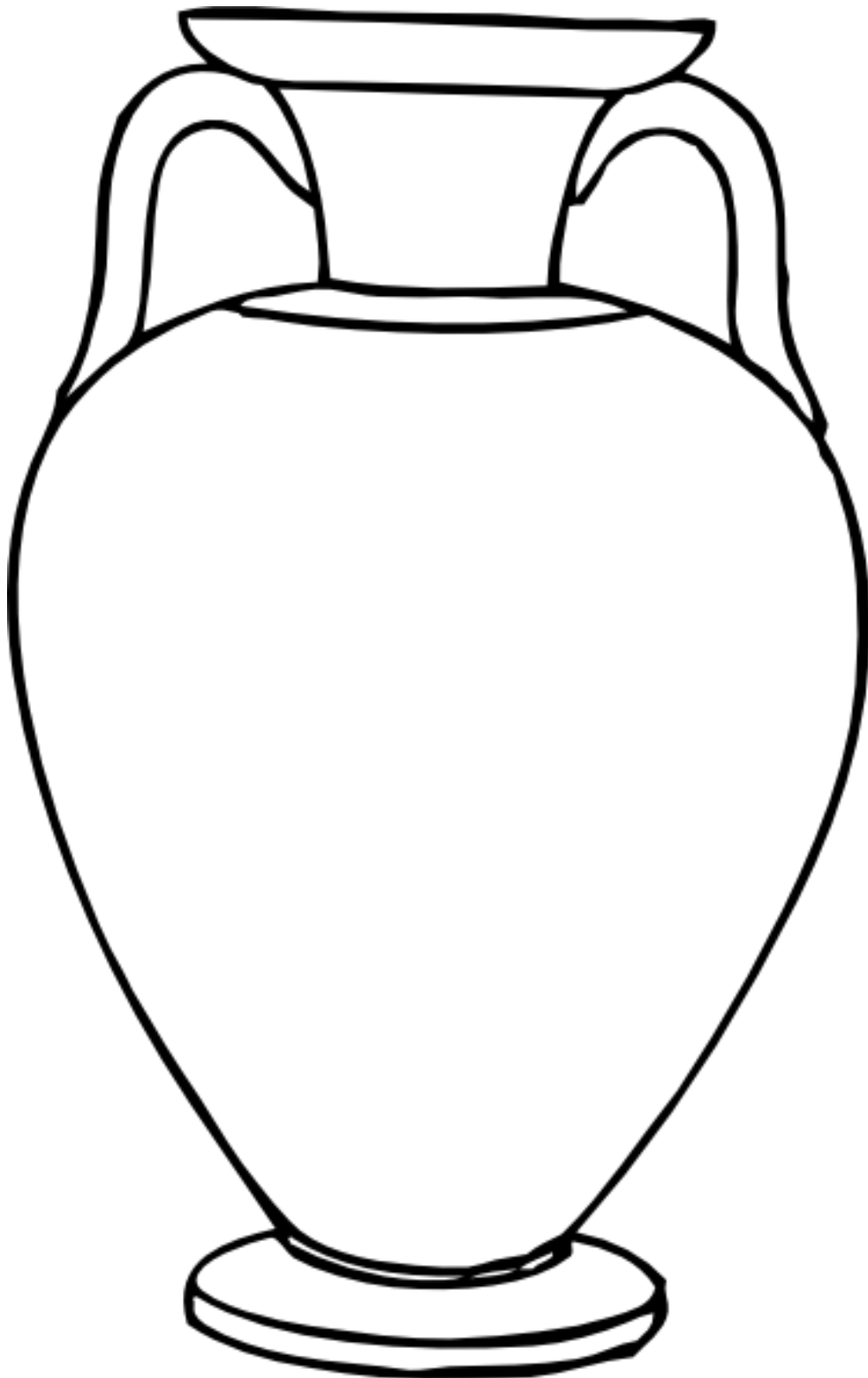
Artifact Label & Origin	Visual & Physical Description	Textual Connection (The Odyssey)	Advanced Connection: Textual Evidence
“A Greek soldier, dressed for battle and armed with a spear, rushes to meet the enemy.” Bottom row.	It is a small jar, primarily black, and has geometric white design on the top and bottom. In terra cotta, it depicts a very simple outline of a man holding a spear, with chaotic designs around him.	Plot Point: The Slaughter of the Suitors (Book 22): Connects directly to Odysseus throwing on his armor, seizing his weapon, and charging the suitors to reclaim his home. Values: (Glory through Battle): It represents the heroic ideal of facing armed conflict directly to achieve immortal renown. (Spirited Courage): It illustrates the inner rage and warrior spirit needed to rush headlong into the chaos of battle.	"Odysseus, revealing his identity, leaped onto the great threshold with his bow and quiver filled with arrows... Then he seized two heavy spears, tipped with bronze, and stood ready to strike." Analytical Connection: The figure's active, forward-leaning stance and spear mirror Odysseus' transition from disguised beggar to vengeful king in <u>Book 22</u> . The "chaotic designs" surrounding the solitary warrior on the jar visually reflect the uproar in the great hall as Odysseus faces an enemy horde.

Artifact Label & Origin	Visual & Physical Description	Textual Connection (The Odyssey)	Advanced Connection: Textual Evidence



Short answer: Based on *The Odyssey* and the depicted Greek pottery, explain what human values stand the test of time. Support your answer with evidence from both the text and the artwork.





Ancient Greek potters didn't just decorate jars—they recorded the values, turning points, and heroic struggles of their culture for future generations to see.

Now, you will design your own piece of pottery that depicts an **important life lesson or personal turning point**. Just like Homer's *The Odyssey*, your artwork will showcase a universal theme—such as perseverance, facing fear, learning from mistakes, loyalty, or overcoming an obstacle.

Before you draw, map out your ideas:

1. **The Life Lesson (Theme):** What is a key lesson or value you've learned in your life so far? (*Example: "Never give up when things get hard," or "True friends stay loyal through storms."*)
2. **The Visual Scene:** What specific moment from your life represents this lesson.
3. **Symbols & Motifs:** What simple figures, objects, or geometric borders will you include to help tell the story?
4. **Homeric Connection:** Which character, event, or value from *The Odyssey* shares a similar theme to your life lesson? (*Example: Facing a tough challenge connects to Odysseus facing the Cyclops or the Sirens.*)

Using Ancient Greek techniques like black-figure or red-figure style (silhouettes, simple outlines, and bold patterns):

- Draw your central scene on the belly or neck of your vessel.
 - Use geometric patterns or borders on the top and bottom to frame your story.
 - Include visual clues (actions, expressions, objects) so a viewer can guess the emotion or conflict without reading words.
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Short answer: Respond to the following prompts in complete short answer format:

My Life Lesson: What life lesson or theme does your pottery depict? Describe the specific scene you drew.

The Odyssey Connection: How does your life lesson connect to a theme, value (*Xenia*, *Metis*, *Kleos*, etc.), or character choice in *The Odyssey*? Explain the similarity.

