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World Literature: a Study of International Writers

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Introduction

A World Literature course should be documented on every high school student's transcript. Understanding the value of writing offered by great authors and poets from around the world and different historical time periods provides a deeper understanding that will help students as they're introduced to college literature courses. As well, integrating writing, verbal skills, higher level thinking and project organization provides further training for more intense academic studies. All high school students should complete the Epi Kardia *Essays Styles* course (visit www.epikardia.com for more information) or a comparable course as a prerequisite for World Literature. If a student attempts this course without previous essay writing instruction, he may find the essay assignments overly challenging, particularly the higher level essays such as persuasive and comparison/contrast.

This curriculum was designed to expose students to a wide variety of writing styles and types from international authors and poets. The books were carefully chosen bearing in mind such components as literary elements, writing styles, quality of writing, story content and character value. As with all Epi Kardia courses and curricula, we have personally read and evaluated each of the books.

Selecting books for this course offered a challenge as we sought to include not only well written material, but also books that supported our Christian worldview. This does not mean that each book is Christian based, but the assignments related to each are designed to lead the students to examine the material from a Christian worldview. A greater understanding of how literature has impacted our culture, both past and present, allows students to develop a better understanding of God's hand in each.

Our goals for the students who utilize Epi Kardia literature-based curricula include:

- A greater love for reading
- The capacity to identify valuable literature
- The ability for students to examine literature from a Biblical perspective
- Enhanced knowledge of literary elements and the written word
- Increased skills related to researching, organizing, writing and editing
- Improved oral narration abilities
- Overall confidence in language arts proficiency

As with all Epi Kardia high school curricula, we have included distinctive and helpful components for both the student and the teacher. Some valuable highlights of this particular curriculum include:

- An introduction with information about the writing process and how to fully use the curriculum
- Assignment units including reading levels, goals and objectives, literature summaries and comprehensive instructions for writing and evaluating each assignment
- Step by step instructions offering a wide variety of activities and writing assignments directly related to the selected literature
- Evaluation directions, rubric usage and recommendations for the teacher
- The opportunity to utilize the course for Honors credit
- A glossary of terms.
- Appendices containing helpful tools such as:
 - Study Guide template and instructions
 - Point of View notes
 - Answer Keys
 - Graphic Organizers
 - Plot Map
 - Writing Your Own Psalm

- Accordion Book Resources
- Vocabulary
- Grading rubrics predesigned for all major assignments and instructions on how to calculate rubric grades

As well as lessons and reading assignments, we have included literature summaries and evaluation guidelines designed to assist teachers with content and grading without adding the burden of you having to read each book thoroughly. However, you may certainly desire to go even deeper into the content and meaning of the literature by reading assigned books completely. If you should choose to further explore the materials using the Internet, we strongly warn you against assuming that web material is accurate. With literature in particular, we have found that distortions have occurred which have little or no basis in the actual writing.

The selections for this course are as follows and the appropriate edition of each may be ordered at www.epikardia.com on the *Books!* page:

- *The Iliad* by Homer (epic poetry)
- *Psalms* from the Bible (historical poetry)
- *The Book of Esther* from the Bible (historical literature)
- *Inferno* by Dante Alighieri (novel)
- *The Three Musketeers* by Alexander Dumas (novel)
- *Quo Vadis* by Henryk Sienkiewicz (historical novel)
- *The Poison Tree* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (novel)
- *Misery* by Anton Chekhov and *The Necklace* by Guy De Maupassant (short stories)
- *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Leo Tolstoy (novel)
- *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Aleksander Solzhenitsyn (novel)
- Haikus and Tanka by selected poets (poetry)

Teacher's Notes

Group Activities

You may want to consider working on this curriculum with a small group of other high school families. It is ideal for weekly discussion groups. Having other students and parents with whom you and your student can discuss and share the assignments may enhance the overall course experience. As well, certain assignments, such as the study guides, can be completed by individuals or in groups. As each participant would need his own copy of this course, please contact info@epikardia.com and ask about co-op pricing.

Choosing Assignments

One decision that you will need to make is how many and which assignments you'll want your student to complete. Although you may work through the assignments as written, especially with those books with multiple assignments, you may want to limit your choice somewhat. You may also adapt an assignment to better meet the needs of your student. For example, you might want to make an assignment shorter. For a college prep course, the student should complete approximately 8-10 assignments for the year, which would average into 1-2 of the regular assignments for each book selection. This should not include a few of the quicker, oral assignments. Also consider quality over quantity. Particularly with challenging writing assignments and essays, allowing the student more time to create a better end result often makes more sense than having the student complete several different shorter assignments.

Honors Credit

As you examine this course, you will note that certain assignments are required for Honors credit. Before beginning, you will want to decide whether to work through the Honors course load or the College Prep course load. An Honors curriculum is more challenging and time consuming, typically requiring higher

level thinking skills and more effort. However, it is an asset to any student's transcript when seeking college admission and scholarships, particularly in a state with a weighted grade point average. For Honors credit, the student will need to complete the previously mentioned number of assignments plus at least four of the Honors assignments for the entire year. This means that the student will not need to complete an Honors assignment for every book selection. Obviously, if the teacher feels that the student should complete more than recommended, that is entirely up to the discretion of the teacher. Another option for Honors is that the student can complete a research paper for the year in lieu of completing the Honors assignments. There is any number of topics presented within the curricula that would support a research paper.

Concerning Writing

As there are many writing assignments associated with this curriculum, we've included the following information to assist you and your student as needed.

The Process of Writing

Understanding the process of writing is essential for completing the writing assignments in this course. With each style of essay, students will be required to minimally do the following:

- Take sufficient notes to complete the essay
- Write a thesis statement
- Create an outline
- Use the outline to write an essay 4-8 paragraphs in length
- Use a checklist to self-edit writing
- Write multiple drafts that improve with each effort
- Complete a final draft that demonstrates knowledge of the essay style, content and writing skills.

It is imperative that students complete every step of the writing process. The process of writing is covered in more detail in the *Epi Kardia Teacher's Manual*,


available for purchase on our website. Even if a student is talented enough to write an essay without an outline (not many demonstrate such ability), it is essential to develop this skill for more challenging work in the future. Initially, the teacher should evaluate each step of the process to make sure that the student is completing it thoroughly and correctly.

Note: this is a sample – in the actual curriculum we describe the types of essays required for this course and how the essays are to be presented.

Understanding the Units

Each of the World Literature units is similarly designed but is not necessarily in chronological order based on the time periods of the writing or the story settings. We chose this order to best execute assignments and related skills rather than simply putting the materials in order by publication.

The assignments may be chosen by the teacher and student, but note the abbreviations listed before each numbered assignment to determine when an assignment is best completed in relation to the reading for that assignment. The abbreviation key is: **PR** – Prior to Reading, **AR** – As you Read and **FR** – Following Reading.



Pay particular attention to who is to read each section of the curriculum, as some sections are written to the teacher, some are to be read by both the teacher and the student, and some are written directly to the student. For clarity, the sections written directly to the student will be indicated throughout the curriculum by a light bulb  at the beginning of the section.

Particularly in the evaluation sections, directions are often repeated, but they may vary by a few significant words and therefore, should still be read carefully.

In fact, we strongly suggest that teachers adequately prepare to teach each unit by first reading it through several times.

The unit sections are as follows:

- **Reading Level** – this curriculum uses books with a variety of reading levels and we noted the levels as we perceived them. Included in parentheses are the reasons for our noted level indication. It shouldn't be assumed that a short story is naturally easier than a long book. If you find that a book is too challenging for your student, there are several ways to overcome this issue:
 - Give him more time to read the material so he can read less in each sitting.
 - Let him listen to the book on CD.
 - Read the book aloud with him. When doing so, plan extra time because reading aloud takes longer than reading silently. Discuss the book in small segments with your student as he reads to insure comprehension.
- **Timeframe for Completion** – this is an estimate for the average student. Your student may need more or less time with either the reading or the written assignments, which is fine as long as the work is properly completed. Honors students should be given additional time to complete their extra assignments, as needed. This is an excellent opportunity for high school students to learn to set and meet deadlines. You may want to have consequences for late deadlines to reinforce this important life skill.
- **Objectives – While written to the teacher**, these two types of goals should be read and understood by the student, as well. They provide direction for what the student should accomplish with this unit and also focus on what will be evaluated in the end.

-  **Literature Summary** – Directed to both the student and the teacher, this overview provides an introduction to and preview of the written work.
-  **Assignments** – Written for the student to follow, they provide detailed instructions on how to complete the various literature assignments and activities. The order of most of the assignments is not relevant and the teacher, along with student, may select the most desired or appropriate assignments. If there are rubrics connected to the evaluation of the assignment, it will probably benefit the student to read through the rubric before starting the assignment. This way he has a clearer picture of what is expected of him.
- **Evaluation** – Written to assist the teacher, this procedure was designed to make the evaluation process easier and more understandable for both the teacher and the student.

Note: this is a sample. In the actual curriculum there is additional information in this section.

The next few pages include assignments for our first book selection.

The Iliad

By Homer

Time Period: Written sometime between 750 and 650 BC

Reading level: Challenging (content, length, vocabulary)

Time Frame for Completion: 5-6 weeks

Objectives

Literary:

1. Examine and write about the different components in a literature study guide.
2. Document the variety of characters.
3. Demonstrate the understanding of themes, such as *heroism*.
4. Recognize similes and metaphors in context.
5. Identify and analyze literary dramatic speeches.

Language/Other Subject Connections:

1. Research Homer and learn more about his life.
2. Write a descriptive essay describing a literary scene.
3. Compare and contrast God and gods.
4. Memorize and present a speech from the literary piece.



Literature Summary: The Iliad is a Greek epic that is believed to have been handed down orally through many generations before actually being put in writing. There are even questions concerning authorship: specifically, whether Homer was the only author of the written work. The story itself takes place during the Trojan War and as in many Greek works, the human characters interact with their gods to rescue fair maidens and win battles.



Literature Assignments

Note: For students who need or desire vocabulary for this book, see Appendix D.

AR, FR 1. Using the template in Appendix A, fill in the appropriate study guide components. We advise that this assignment be completed over a period of 2-3 weeks while reading the material. It may be completed after finishing the reading, but it will be more time consuming. If you need help understanding how to complete the template, see Appendix A for a template with instructions. Be sure to review the grading rubric in Appendix B for this assignment so you will know how this assignment will be evaluated.

PR, AR 2. Research the author, Homer. Write 2-3 paragraphs, in your own words, explaining what you learn about the author of this book. If desired, this could also be an oral presentation.

AR 3. There are a multitude of characters in this epic and it can be challenging to keep everyone straight. Begin a chart of characters and add to the chart as you come across major characters in your reading. Include a brief description of each. Also note whether the character is a human or a god. You may want to use the general character chart in Appendix H. There are many names mentioned in the book who are not main characters, so be cautious about listing every name mentioned.

AR, FR 4. This assignment has two parts: 1. Heroism – one of the primary **themes** in this book is a code of honor. Examine the context as you read and make notes about how this honor code appears in the story. Keep notes, including quotes from the book, to support how you think heroism is demonstrated in *The Iliad*. 2. Write a 3-5 paragraph essay explaining the theme of heroism in the book being sure to include your book quotes as support throughout your essay. Be sure to review the grading rubric in Appendix B for this assignment so you will know how this assignment will be evaluated.

AR, FR 5. Write a **descriptive essay**. Select one scene from the book that had an impact on you. Write a 5+ paragraph descriptive essay about this scene. Describe the scene in your own words and analyze why you view this particular scene as significant to the story. Be sure to follow the steps of the writing process (thesis statement, outline and multiple drafts) as described on page 7 and format your essay for presentation as noted on page 8. Review the grading rubric in Appendix B for this assignment so you will know how this assignment will be evaluated.

AR, FR 6. Ancient writing often contained comparisons and figurative language. **Similes** and **metaphors** – locate and write down at least three examples of each in the text.

AR, FR 7. Worldview assignment – in chart form or bulleted notes, compare and contrast the gods as presented in *The Iliad* to the one true God. Think about how the gods behave in various situations and how they interact with humans. Also consider the attributes of God and how those attributes apply, if at all, to the ancient mythical gods. You should have at least one full page of double paged bulleted notes or a full page chart.

Teacher note: *If your student struggles with this assignment, consider completing it together, discussing the attributes of God and examining the literature for examples of how the gods behave, and then having the student create the list or chart.*



Honors Assignments

PR, AR, FR 1. Research the gods noted in this book and write a brief description of each based on ancient **myths**. *Note: this assignment ties in well with assignment seven and Honors assignment three.*

FR 2. *The Iliad* contains quite a few dramatic speeches. Select one speech, write what it means in your own words and explain how it is relevant in the literary context.

FR 3. Memorize the speech from Honors assignment two and present it, in character as demonstrated by expression and tone. Be sure to review the grading rubric in Appendix B for this assignment so you will know how this assignment will be evaluated.

FR 4. Comparison/contrast essay – using the notes from assignment seven, write a comparison/contrast essay of 5-7 paragraphs about the gods in the book and God. Be sure to follow the steps of the writing process (thesis statement, outline and multiple drafts) as described on page 7 and format your essay for presentation as noted on page 8. Review the grading rubric in Appendix B for this assignment so you will know how this assignment will be evaluated.

Note: This is a sample. In the complete curriculum, following the assignments are evaluation tips for the teacher.