reading odyssey
ignite your curiosity

Moderator Guide Homer's Iliad

JANUARY–APRIL 2012

Session One: Iliad, pages 1–159
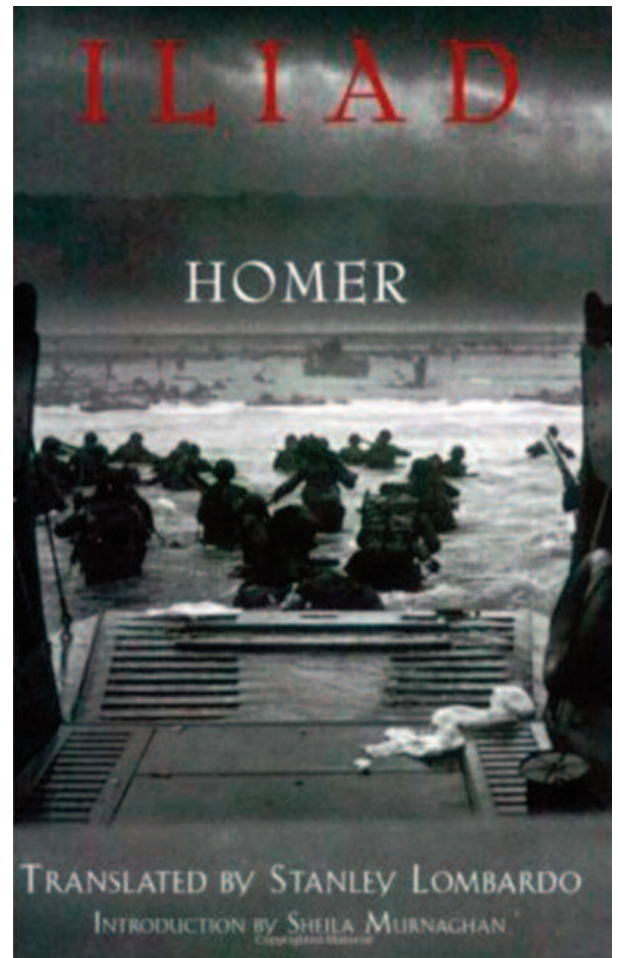Monday, January 9 @8pm (1 hour)

Session Two: Iliad, pages 160–331
Monday, February 13 @8pm (1 hour)

Session Three: Iliad, pages 332–492
Monday, March 12 @8pm (1 hour)

Q & A with Professor Paul Cartledge, Cambridge University
Monday, April 2 @7pm Eastern time
(1 hour via live webinar/teleconference)

ILIAD

HOMER

TRANSLATED BY STANLEY LOMBARDO
INTRODUCTION BY SHEILA MURNAGHAN

What Is Reading Odyssey?

Through making it possible for adults to read together some of the most important texts of humanity, Reading Odyssey ignites curiosity and lifelong learning.

Reading Odyssey was formed when Phil Terry, a businessman and passionate reader, asked his longtime friend, Pat Wictor, a musician and equally passionate reader, for help. Phil had decided to read the three hundred or so great books of the human tradition over the remainder of his lifetime but knew he could not and would not be able to do it alone. So in 2005 he asked Pat to join him on a reading journey—and the odyssey began.

While reading their first book together, Homer's Odyssey, they learned they could work through it without any special expertise. Contrary to reading in school, there was no "correct" way to read these texts, no teachers, no grades. They found that as adults with a variety of life experiences they could bring meaning and insight to the text on their own.

While reading their second book, Herodotus' Histories, along with several friends, Phil decided to reach out to scholars to see if they would be willing to join the conversation. Phil first contacted Professor John Marincola, editor of the Penguin edition of Herodotus, to ask if he would be willing to participate in a conference call at the end of their reading. Professor Marincola agreed without hesitation. He called in and was delighted (maybe even surprised) at the high level of conversation and quality of the questions. As a result, he began to introduce Reading Odyssey to other scholars. Thus began the partnership with scholars that has come to define a core part of the Reading Odyssey experience.

Reading Odyssey is peer-led so each adult can share responsibility for creating the conversation that makes the learning and reading possible for everyone. The assistance and participation of scholars from leading universities such as Cambridge and Harvard, among many others, make Reading Odyssey's programs richer and the individual's experience deeper. Reading Odyssey today combines the passion ignited by adult readers who discover the joy of reading these texts with the delight of scholars who love the experience of talking to—and supporting—interested, curious adults.

The Job of the Moderator: Create the Context

While being peer-led, Reading Odyssey groups do have moderators. The moderator role is played by one of the readers who volunteers to be a "first among equals."

The moderator is neither a teacher nor an authority on the text. The moderator's job is to help the process of the reading group and to be confident yet humble; humility is important for all readers of these wonderful yet challenging works.

This guide is for readers who have chosen—or are considering—this role.

Good moderators (and readers) are:

• humble, curious, playful

• passionate about learning and sharing

• focused on bolstering confidence

• interested in asking questions that make people think

• good listeners who help quiet people speak up and active people listen

Good moderators don't mind doing the nitty gritty work before and after each meeting:

• sending reminders about meetings and follow-up notes

• encouraging questions and dialogue before and during sessions, and in follow-up emails

• reading the text (and just a little bit ahead of everyone else)

• assigning questions to individual readers

• talking to other moderators about what's working in their groups

• modeling for everyone that this is not a competitive sport but a collaborative effort

Rule #1: Your job is NOT to be the expert.
The moderator's job is to help the process of the reading group, not to be the expert. The point is to help create the context for the adult readers—including *you*—to explore and discover that they can read and discuss these texts.

Rule #2: Listen to your own questions.
Because you are reading this text for the first time along with everyone else (or for the first time in a long time), your own questions and reactions are important. Listen to the things that confuse you; they probably confuse other people, too. Listen to the moments that delight you; they may delight others. Enjoy your own naiveté—and use it to bring energy and freshness to the conversation.

Rule #3: Your job is fairly easy IF people do the reading.
If readers come to the monthly sessions having read the material, then moderating the conversation is fairly easy. They are typically excited to share their thoughts and questions. Your job, then, is to truly moderate and to make sure that introverted members contribute and extroverted members do not dominate. You also—by your own example—demonstrate an openness, humility, and curiosity.

**Rule #4: Your most important work
is before and after each meeting.**
Between sessions you perform what appears to be the boring administrative tasks of reminding and confirming. This "boring" work is actually the most important work you do. Why? It plays a key role in motivating and reminding people to read the text. And if they read the text, then the discussions are lively, fun, interesting, and relatively easy to manage. It might be a relief to know that this prep work, not "teaching" or skilled moderation, is the fundamental element in creating a good environment for discussions.

Rule #5: Be curious, playful, and welcoming.
When you are in the actual reading group session, the most critical thing you do is model openness and curiosity and not focus on being right or getting to the right answer (there are typically not many "right" answers in these conversations). Be playful with the ideas and the text. Your example helps the other readers see how to share their thoughts and connect with the reading.

Rule #6: If you're stumped in a session, move on.
That dreaded silence caused by unanswerable questions can be broken by just moving on to the next question. The group and you can seek answers and discuss in follow-up emails with each other and participating scholars.

A Few Notes on Iliad

1. The joy of reading a foundational text
Homer's Iliad, written down sometime in the eighth century B.C.E., has played and continues to play a key role in the life and imagination of people around the world.

At Reading Odyssey, we like to celebrate the joy of reading something that has been a part of the human tradition for thousands of years. We like to imagine the millions of people who have read the text (or heard it, in the case of epic poetry) before us, and we like the connection to the original poet (possibly not a single author named Homer), who sometime in the distant past created this magnificent testament to the power of human creativity.

While your readers will have many questions about the text, it's important as moderator to continually bring a kind of naive joy to the activity of reading Iliad.

2. Epic poetry is captivating
Iliad is an epic poem that was shared orally long before it was written down. There are many questions about how to translate the style of the ancient Greek poetry to a modern language (and some of these are reviewed in the helpful Preface and Introduction to the Stanley Lombardo edition that we recommend you read) but beyond those important but technical questions lies the simple power of poetry.

Part of the challenge of reading Homer for first-time readers (or those who have not read Homer for many years), is becoming accustomed to reading epic poetry. You and your readers should know that, like reading (or listening to) Shakespeare, you'll eventually get the hang of it. Just keep going. You'll fall in love with the experience of reading the poetry.

3. About the Stanley Lombardo translation
We have chosen the Stanley Lombardo translation because of its connection to the spoken word. Professor Lombardo is not only a classicist but he's one of the only regular performers of this epic poem. From hundreds of performances, he has honed the rhythm of the English words. Enjoy Lombardo's translation—and imagine hearing this poem performed live.

4. No Trojan Horse
To the surprise of many first-time readers, the Trojan Horse is not in Iliad. Enjoy that surprise—and others along the way.

5. Specific reading questions for each section of Iliad
We will email you specific questions to share with readers ahead of each discussion (and to help guide your discussion). For now, we want to share only these thoughts—and not overdetermine your experience of reading this great poem.

Frequently Asked Questions

What's the one tip for reading these challenging books?
Keep going—i.e., the first time you read a challenging book like Herodotus or Plato or Darwin or epic poetry from Homer it's important to keep reading even if you get confused. Don't stop to try to figure it out. Many first-time readers never recover from stopping. Just keep reading. The big picture will emerge. And when you get to the monthly discussions you'll discover that you did gain some important insights and you'll also get help from your fellow readers.

Who usually reads with Reading Odyssey?
Artists, journalists, business people, teachers, librarians, musicians, social workers, inventors, unemployed actors, clerks—just about any adult who is curious and willing to go on a reading odyssey.

Why is community important?
Reading these books is much easier—and more enjoyable—when reading them with other adults. They, like you, have had some life experiences to bring meaning and insight to the texts. As a result, they will understand things you don't—and get confused by things you understand. The community—and trust—that gets built from the monthly discussions is the highlight of the experience for many readers.

Why is it free?
It's *free* because we know that it's hard enough for most adults to make the decision to read what sounds like a dull and boring old book. Yet, in our experience, if someone reads just one of these books with us, then their curiosity will be ignited—and they'll read more with us or on their own. That's the reason—because we want to get more adults reading more good books. If that happens, then we know that more adults will become more curious and thoughtful and that we believe will have all kinds of unexpected and good consequences for our world.

To make our services free, we rely on the incredible generosity of our scholar partners, sponsors like Citrix Online, our volunteers, and talented designers like Kim Llewellyn, who designed this Moderator Guide, our logo, and our web-related materials.

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Moderator Calendar

DECEMBER 2011

Tues, Dec 13	Send out welcome email to readers who have signed up
Mon, Dec 26	Send out Session 1 questions
Wed, Dec 28	Assign individual questions to readers

JANUARY 2012

Mon, Jan 2	Get RSVPs for Session 1
Mon, Jan 9	Send out day of meeting reminder in the morning
	8pm Session 1: Iliad, pages 1–159
	Send follow-up thank you note
Mon, Jan 30	Send out Session 2 questions

FEBRUARY 2012

Wed, Feb 1	Assign individual questions to readers
Mon, Feb 6	Get RSVPs for Session 2
Mon, Feb 13	Send out day of meeting reminder in the morning
	8pm, Session 2: Iliad, pages 160–331
	Send follow-up thank you note
Mon, Feb 27	Send out Session 3 questions
Wed, Feb 29	Assign individual questions to readers

MARCH 2012

Mon, Mar 5	Get RSVPs for Session 3
Mon, Mar 12	Send out day of meeting reminder in the morning
	8pm, Session Three: Iliad, pages 332–492
	Send follow-up thank you note and invitation to Cartledge teleconference
Mon, Mar 26	Get RSVPs for Cartledge teleconference

APRIL 2012

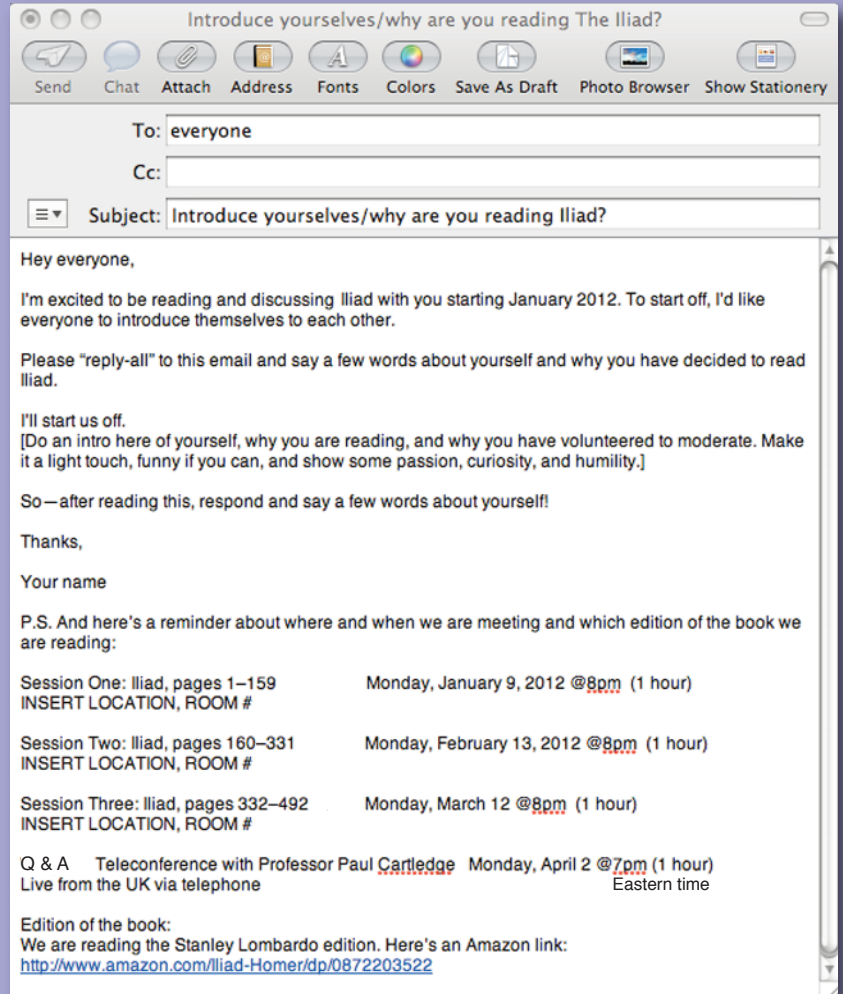|	
Mon, April 2	Send out day of call reminder for Cartledge teleconference
	7pm, Eastern time, Q & A Webinar/Teleconference with Professor Paul Cartledge

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Welcome Letter & Introduction to the Reading Group

Send a welcome email.
(4 weeks before first meeting)
Send a welcome email to your group. Introduce yourself and say why you are reading and why you have volunteered to moderate. Ask the readers to "reply-all" to this email with a few words about themselves and why they are reading. Include a reminder of the entire agenda with reading schedule, meeting times, and locations. It should also include the specific edition to be read. In this case, an Amazon link has been given for the Stanley Lombardo edition of Iliad.

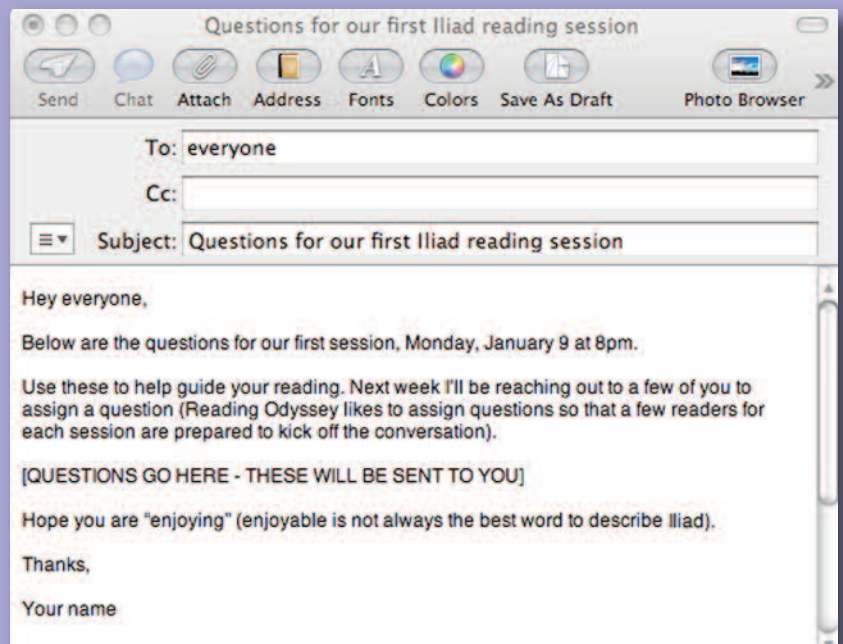NOTE: email templates and this guide may be downloaded at:
http://www.readingodyssey.com/pages/iliad-moderator

Introduce yourselves/why are you reading The Iliad?

Send | Chat | Attach | Address | Fonts | Colors | Save As Draft | Photo Browser | Show Stationery

To: everyone
Cc:
Subject: Introduce yourselves/why are you reading Iliad?

Hey everyone,

I'm excited to be reading and discussing Iliad with you starting January 2012. To start off, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves to each other.

Please "reply-all" to this email and say a few words about yourself and why you have decided to read Iliad.

I'll start us off.
[Do an intro here of yourself, why you are reading, and why you have volunteered to moderate. Make it a light touch, funny if you can, and show some passion, curiosity, and humility.]

So—after reading this, respond and say a few words about yourself!

Thanks,

Your name

P.S. And here's a reminder about where and when we are meeting and which edition of the book we are reading:

Session One: Iliad, pages 1–159   Monday, January 9, 2012 @8pm (1 hour)
INSERT LOCATION, ROOM #

Session Two: Iliad, pages 160–331   Monday, February 13, 2012 @8pm (1 hour)
INSERT LOCATION, ROOM #

Session Three: Iliad, pages 332–492   Monday, March 12 @8pm (1 hour)
INSERT LOCATION, ROOM #

Q & A   Teleconference with Professor Paul Cartledge   Monday, April 2 @7pm (1 hour)
Live from the UK via telephone   Eastern time

Edition of the book:
We are reading the Stanley Lombardo edition. Here's an Amazon link:
http://www.amazon.com/Iliad-Homer/dp/0872203522

Session 1

1. Send out Session 1 questions to readers.
(2 weeks before Session 1)
Send out the questions to guide the reading for Session 1. These questions will be sent to you 2 weeks ahead of time (we are constantly refining them) and you then send them on to your group.

Questions for our first Iliad reading session

Send | Chat | Attach | Address | Fonts | Colors | Save As Draft | Photo Browser

To: everyone
Cc:
Subject: Questions for our first Iliad reading session

Hey everyone,

Below are the questions for our first session, Monday, January 9 at 8pm.

Use these to help guide your reading. Next week I'll be reaching out to a few of you to assign a question (Reading Odyssey likes to assign questions so that a few readers for each session are prepared to kick off the conversation).

[QUESTIONS GO HERE - THESE WILL BE SENT TO YOU]

Hope you are "enjoying" (enjoyable is not always the best word to describe Iliad).

Thanks,

Your name

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2. Assign individual questions to readers.
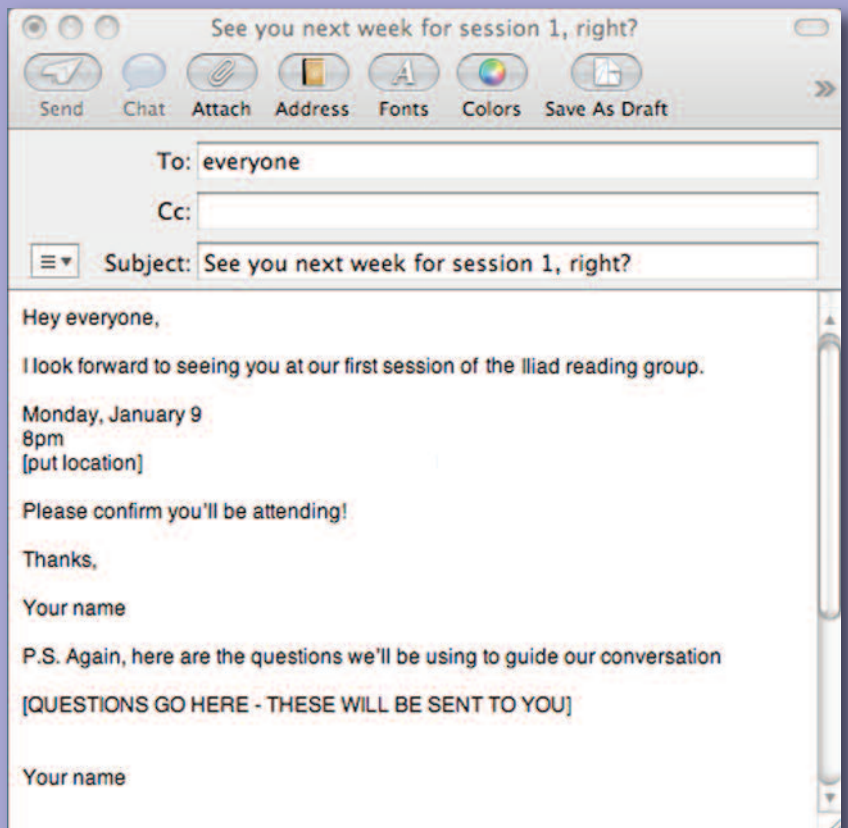**(10 days before Session 1)**
Assign a single question from the list of questions mentioned above to each of 4 to 5 readers you select. Send a personal email to each one asking that they prepare initial comments on the question. Note that for this first session you may not know all your readers (though all should have introduced themselves) so there isn't much science to how you pick. Pick people you have some comfort and affinity (or may know) to help get things started.

Can you prepare question #[x]?

To: each individual (send one note at a time to the 5 people you are assigning)
Cc:
Subject: Can you prepare question #[x]?

Hey [firstname],

Would you mind preparing question #[x]?

[put question here]

The goal is not to become an expert but to think about it and jot some notes so I can call on you to help us get started.

What do you think?

Thanks,

Your name
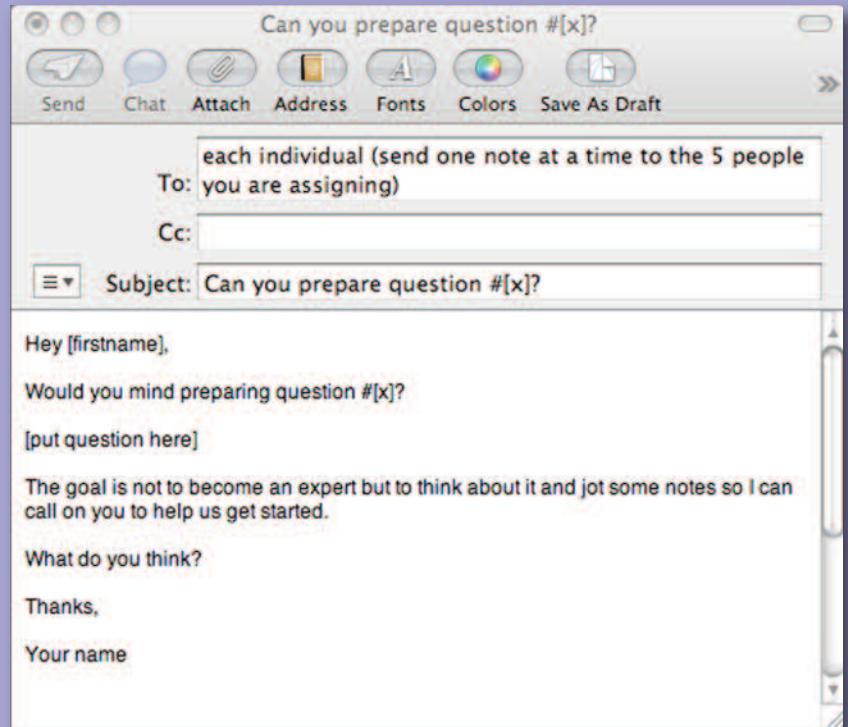
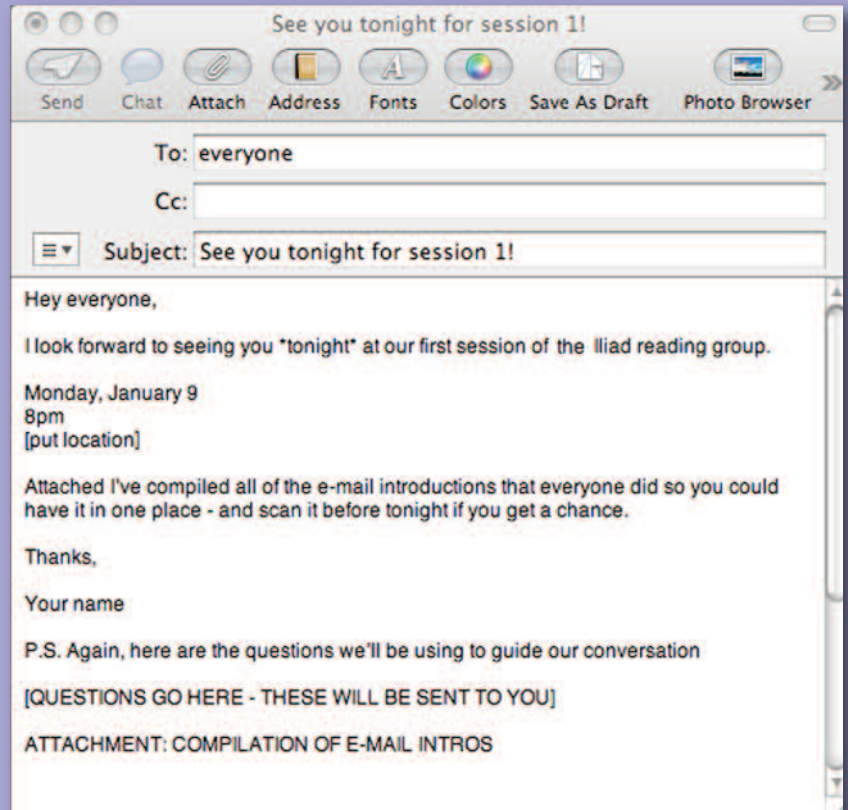## 3. Ask for RSVPs for Session 1.
(1 week before Session 1)
You want to know who is coming, so it's helpful to send out a RSVP email and assume in it that of course everyone is coming. Be sure to include the location, room number, and any other important details.

See you next week for session 1, right?

To: everyone
Cc:
Subject: See you next week for session 1, right?

Hey everyone,

I look forward to seeing you at our first session of the Iliad reading group.

Monday, January 9
8pm
[put location]

Please confirm you'll be attending!

Thanks,

Your name

P.S. Again, here are the questions we'll be using to guide our conversation

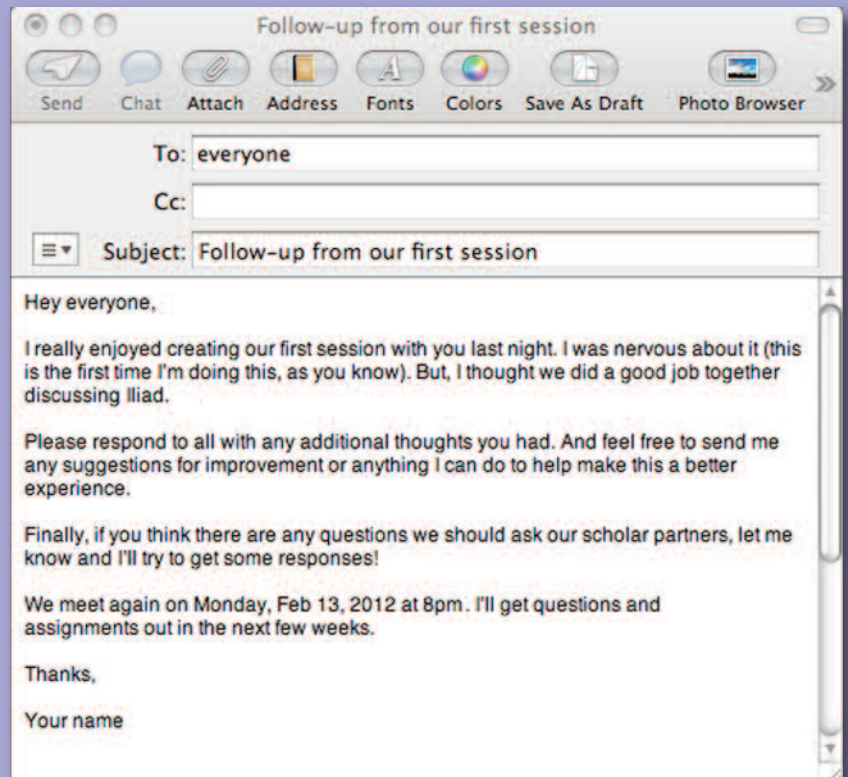[QUESTIONS GO HERE - THESE WILL BE SENT TO YOU]

Your name

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4. Send "see" you tonight email. (day of Session 1)
Send a last reminder early in the day of the session. Be sure to include the location, room number, and any other important details.

See you tonight for session 1!

Send Chat Attach Address Fonts Colors Save As Draft Photo Browser

To: everyone

Cc:

Subject: See you tonight for session 1!

Hey everyone,

I look forward to seeing you *tonight* at our first session of the Iliad reading group.

Monday, January 9
8pm
[put location]

Attached I've compiled all of the e-mail introductions that everyone did so you could have it in one place - and scan it before tonight if you get a chance.

Thanks,

Your name

P.S. Again, here are the questions we'll be using to guide our conversation

[QUESTIONS GO HERE - THESE WILL BE SENT TO YOU]

ATTACHMENT: COMPILATION OF E-MAIL INTROS

5. Send a follow-up thank you email the same evening or the next day.
Encourage readers to ask questions, promote discussion, and submit suggestions via "reply-all" emails.

Follow-up from our first session

Send Chat Attach Address Fonts Colors Save As Draft Photo Browser

To: everyone

Cc:

Subject: Follow-up from our first session

Hey everyone,

I really enjoyed creating our first session with you last night. I was nervous about it (this is the first time I'm doing this, as you know). But, I thought we did a good job together discussing Iliad.

Please respond to all with any additional thoughts you had. And feel free to send me any suggestions for improvement or anything I can do to help make this a better experience.

Finally, if you think there are any questions we should ask our scholar partners, let me know and I'll try to get some responses!

We meet again on Monday, Feb 13, 2012 at 8pm. I'll get questions and assignments out in the next few weeks.

Thanks,

Your name

Session 2

REPEAT ALL THE STEPS FROM SESSION 1

1. Send Session 2 questions (2 weeks before)

**2. Assign individual questions to readers (10 days before
    Session 2)**

3. Ask for RSVPs for Session 2 (1 week out)

4. Send "see" you tonight note (day of)

5. Send follow-up thank you note (day of or next day)

Session 3

Follow the same procedures as with Sessions 1 and 2 except your final
email will contain a thank you for participating in the reading group, an
invitation to "sit down" with Cambridge scholar Paul Cartledge (via
teleconference for a Q & A session), and an encouragement to participate
in another Reading Odyssey reading group.

Q & A Session via Teleconference

As a participant in the Iliad Reading Odyssey group, you are invited to
a teleconference with Cambridge scholar Paul Cartledge who will give
his insights on essential aspects of the material we have just read. This
is a wonderful opportunity! Just call in to the toll-free number:
 +1 (888) 298-1699 and enter 3470834#.
Mon, April 2, 2012 @7pm, Eastern time (1 hour)

Downloadable Email Templates

The text of the emails above and this Moderator Guide as a pdf is available
for download at http://www.readingodyssey.com/pages/iliad-moderator.

Script for you to take into the session

We recommend you use this script to moderate your first session. Please bring with you:

• printout of compiled introductions (for yourself, though you could elect to print it for everyone else—it's up to you)

• list of people's names who RSVP'd

• list of questions with names of persons you assigned a question

• [optional] name badges and tent cards if group is meeting in person

AN IMPORTANT NOTE: If you find awkward silence in the dialogue or lack of feedback on questions, just keep going onto the next question. The group will soon reach a comfortable rhythm and stride.

Agenda

:05
Brief introductions [5 minutes+, 30 seconds per person]
Ask all members to give their names in turn.

:10
A few words from you [3 minutes]
"Just a reminder that my job as moderator is not to be the expert but rather to help all of us discuss this reading. I've assigned questions to help kick us off and I need your help. I want your permission to cut off anyone who may be talking too much and bring in anyone that's quiet. The Reading Odyssey method works if this is a shared conversation and if we are building some bonds of friendship while creating an intellectual environment. And certainly let me know what I can do to improve and make this a better experience for all of us. So let's get started!"

:13
Start with a question not assigned [5–10 minutes or so]
"Before we get into the actual questions, I'd like to ask one non-assigned question: 'What did you think?' 'What surprised you in this first section of Iliad?' 'What, if anything, is resonating with you. Anyone?'"

:18
Question 1 [5 minutes or so]   Assigned to _____
"Let's switch gears and talk about the questions. [Firstname] graciously agreed to prepare some thoughts. So, [Firstname], can you get us started in talking about question 1?"

:23
Digressions/other questions [5 minutes or so]
Look for related questions or issues—listen to the discussion:
"That brings up an interesting point. Does anyone agree or disagree?
How do you think about it?. . ."

:28
Question 2 [5 minutes or so]   Assigned to _____
"Let's switch gears and talk about question 2. [Firstname] graciously
agreed to prepare some thoughts. So, [Firstname] can you get us started
in talking about question 2?"

:33
Quiet members [5 minutes or so]
Ask a quiet member to say a few words.
"[Firstname], Reading Odyssey has asked me to look for anyone who
has been quiet and ask them to jump in and share something. So, if you
don't mind, what do you think? I noticed you seemed to respond when
[Firstname] said [_____] or [_____]?"

:38
Question 3 [5 minutes or so]   Assigned to _____
"Let's talk about question 3. [Firstname] graciously agreed to prepare
some thoughts. So, [Firstname], can you get us started in talking about
question 3?"

:43
Digressions/other questions [5 minutes or so]
Look for related questions or issues—listen to the discussion:
"That brings up an interesting point. Does anyone agree or disagree?
How do you think about it? . . ."

:48
Question 4 [5 minutes or so]   Assigned to _____
"Let's talk about question 4. [Firstname], please get us started."

:53
Question 5 [5 minutes or so]   Assigned to _____
"We are nearing the end of our first session, so let's make sure to spend
a few minutes talking about the last question."

:58
"Thank YOU! Thanks, everyone, for participating in our first session,
and for helping me lead my first session. I'll be in touch with follow-up
emails and questions for our next session. Let me know if you have
any questions for the scholar(s) or any feedback for me!"

Our Board

Below are the volunteers—scholars, readers, and sponsors—who are on the Board and volunteer to help make all of the programs of the Reading Odyssey possible.

SCHOLARS

Paul Cartledge — A. G. Leventis Chair of Ancient Greek Culture, Cambridge University

John Dowling — Llura and Gordon Gund Professor of Neuroscience, Harvard University

John Marincola — Leon Golden Professor of Classics, Florida State University

Barry Schwartz — Dorwin Cartwright Professor of Social Theory and Social Action, Swarthmore College

Robert B. Strassler — Independent scholar and businessman; founder and editor of the Landmark ancient history series: The Landmark Arrian, Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and forthcoming titles

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Jerry Goldman — Partner, Anderson Kill

So Young Park — Executive Vice President, HarteHanks

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Constant Contact provides all of our newsletter and email database services making possible this invitation and all of our other email-based communications. Go try Constant Contact. You'll be pleased.

http://www.constantcontact.com

Kim Llewellyn Design provides art direction, design, editorial, and web-related materials for Reading Odyssey. With work ranging from design of The Landmark Ancient Histories series to authors such as Shel Silverstein and Matt Groening, each project is treated with patience and individuality to realize its full potential.

LlewellynDesign@gmail.com

National Humanities Center supports the Reading Odyssey by helping us provide our free program resources to all of their many members. We thank them. They deserve all of our support and more.

http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org

Phillips Data provides hosting, domain and development services to the Reading Odyssey and all of our programs. One of the friendliest "vendors"—get in touch with Phillips Data if you want some hosting or web application programming. Tell them Phil Terry sent you.

http://www.phillipsdata.com

Squarespace provides website building and hosting services for the programs of the Reading Odyssey. If you have a website to build, then go to Squarespace. Their easy-to-use tools are great for individuals, small business, nonprofits, and projects of all kinds.

http://www.squarespace.com