

Identifying Satire – The Simpsons do The Odyssey

A Short Definition:

Satire is primarily a literary genre or form, although in practice it can also be found in the graphic and performing arts. In satire, **vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule**, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, and society itself, into improvement (political satire).

A common feature of satire is **strong irony or sarcasm**—"in satire, irony is militant"—but **parody, burlesque, exaggeration, juxtaposition, comparison, analogy, and double entendre** are all frequently used in satirical speech and writing. This "militant" irony or sarcasm often professes to approve (or at least accept as natural) the very things the satirist wishes to attack.

Satire is nowadays found in many artistic forms of expression, including literature, plays, commentary, and media such as lyrics.

Our Assignment:

We're going to look at a lighter side of satire – The Simpsons! The Simpsons tv show often uses its platform to satirize current events, political figures, and social trends. However, in the clip we're going to see, they've used many of the techniques listed above (parody, juxtaposition, double entendre, etc.) to satirize The Odyssey. It's meant to be ironic and funny, but as you're enjoying it, consider the ways in which characterization and language are used satirically.

Be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Why is Homer as Odysseus ironic? (Think of the epithets you recorded for him in your foldable notes. Does Homer Simpson fit these?) What tool of satire is used here?
- Consider how the gods are portrayed. Would this fit with the Greeks ideas of their deities?
- Find an example of double entendre. Why is this funny?
- What other elements of this clip work to make it ironic and satirical?