Mary B. Smith

Sample 2

Role of Women in Ancient Greek Literature

Women in ancient Greece had virtually no rights. Most women in the period were generally limited in education, mobility, and in all things thought to interfere with domestic or childbearing responsibilities (O’Pry, 7). Women were expected to maintain a house and bear children, particularly sons. If her family were city dwellers, she oftentimes had a household of servants/slaves she needed to oversee to make sure everything ran smoothly. She might spin and weave tapestries or cloth to pass her time while her husband was off at work or war. Rural women might have to gather fruits and vegetables in addition to keeping up the household. Women were also slaves used to run a household and do the tasks the lady of the house deemed necessary. Occupied with running the household, weaving and child rearing, the woman of antiquity had little time to involve herself in the political goings on in her area (O’Pry, 7). While reading Greek literature, women as characters are often portrayed this way but there are also instances when the author decides to break away from stereotyping and make the female character strong, clever, and cunning. Penelope uses her wits to save her from an unwelcome second marriage. Medea takes revenge to a whole new level. Lysistrata comes up with a plan to use only women to end the wars between the city states. How are the central characters in *The Odyssey*, *Medea*, and *Lysistrata* able to overcome their inferior social status to get what they want?

Homer’s The Odyssey tells the story of the aftermath of the Trojan war and the hero Odysseus. When Odysseus went off to fight the Trojan War, he left behind his wife Penelope and his newly born son Telemachus. While Odysseus was off fighting in the war, there was still a chance that he would return as long as he was still seen as living.