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Let Us Discuss Nolan: The Benefits of Reading *The Odyssey* in School and at Home

Porozmawiajmy o Nolanie, czyli o pożytkach płynących z czytania *Odysei* w szkole i domu

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Abstract

Aim. From the perspective of educational and instructional work with children and youth, both at school and at home, the cultural and publishing events premiering in July 2026 may carry profound significance for human development in the context of fostering numerous competences – ranging from literacy and critical thinking to lifelong learning. The fundamental aim undertaken and pursued within this paper is to create a catalogue of instructional areas for parents and teachers, alongside ideas and solutions for utilizing a nearly three-thousand-year-old text in 21st-century lessons that can become interesting, attractive, and engaging, not only for young people.

Methods and materials. For the purposes of this paper, an analysis of the subject literature was conducted, covering the history of pedagogical thought, the latest legal acts regulating the instructional and educational process in the Polish education system, and, above all, the fields of literary studies, translation theory, and social sciences. The selection of texts subjected to analysis stems from an attempt to identify the meaning and presence of Hom-

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er's *Odyssey* in both historical and contemporary contexts, within education as well as broadly defined culture.

Results and conclusion. The outcome of the analysis of primary and secondary literature conducted in the proposed paper will include a catalogue of proposed activities for teachers in the classroom and for parents engaging with children at home. These activities can be initiated and implemented in relation to reading Homer's *Odyssey* or viewing its cinematic, theatrical, or musical adaptations.

Keywords**:** *paideia*, literacy level, Homeric epic, *The Odyssey*, reception of ancient texts, homeroom lesson

Abstrakt

Cel. Z perspektywy pracy wychowawczej i dydaktycznej z dziećmi i młodzieżą zarówno w szkole, jak i w domu wydarzenia kulturalne i wydawnicze, mające swoje premiery w lipcu 2026 roku, mogą mieć niebagatelne znaczenie dla rozwoju człowieka w kontekście kształcenia wielu kompetencji: od czytelniczej, krytycznego myślenia, aż po kompetencje ustawicznego uczenia się. Zasadniczym celem podjętym i realizowanym w ramach niniejszego szkicu będzie stworzenie dla rodziców i nauczycieli katalogu obszarów pracy z uczniem i dzieckiem oraz pomysłów i rozwiązań z użyciem tekstu sprzed niemal trzech tysięcy lat na lekcje w XXI wieku, które mogą stać się ciekawe, atrakcyjne i angażujące nie tylko dla młodego człowieka.

Metody i materiały. Na potrzeby realizacji niniejszego szkicu została wykorzystana analiza literatury przedmiotu z zakresu historii myśli pedagogicznej, najnowszych aktów prawnych regulujących proces dydaktyczny i wychowawczy w polskim systemie oświaty, a przede wszystkim tekstów z obszaru literaturoznawstwa, teorii przekładu i nauk społecznych. Wybór tekstów poddanych analizie wynika z próby odnalezienia znaczenia i obecności tekstu *Odysei* Homera w kontekście historycznym i współczesnym zarówno w edukacji, jak i szeroko pojętej kulturze.

Wyniki i wnioski. Wynikiem analizy literatury podmiotu i przedmiotu podjętej w proponowanym tekście będzie między innymi katalog propozycji dla nauczyciela na lekcje z uczniem czy rodzica w domu z dzieckiem, które można zainicjować i przeprowadzić w kontekście czytania *Odysei* Homera lub obejrzenia jej adaptacji filmowej, teatralnej, musicalowej *etc*.

Słowa kluczowe**:** *paideia*, poziom czytelnictwa, epos homerycki, *Odyseja*, recepcja starożytnych tekstów, lekcja wychowawcza

Introduction

July 2026 brought us two events related to the reception of Homer's work that captured significant audience's interest: an international film premiere and a Polish book launch. On July 17, 2026, the global theatrical release of Christopher Nolan's *Odyssey* started (Thomas & Nolan, 2026), while two days earlier, Węcowski's book *Homer na nasze czasy* [Homer for our times] (2026) was released on the Polish publishing market. Although belonging to different spheres of contemporary culture, both premieres once again focused the attention of a broad audience on Homer's epic.

The scale of interest in Nolan's film proved significant. Global box office receipts exceeded 1.68 billion dollars (Box Office Mojo, 2026). Meanwhile, the adaptation itself became the subject of numerous commentaries and discussions regarding both the interpretation of the Homeric epic and the feasibility of translating it into the contemporary popular culture. Audience's interest in the film was also evidenced by the coverage of the mentioned issues in mainstream media. One example is a TOKfm broadcast from August 7, 2026, titled: *Dlaczego kinowa adaptacja „Odysei" Homera wywołuje tak gorące spory?* [Why does the film adaptation of Homer's Odyssey spark such heated debates?], which invited listeners to join the discussion about the film (Sulik, 2026).

At the same time, Węcowski's book *Homer na nasze czasy* also attracted significant attention. This is particularly interesting given the book's specialized nature and thus its distinct target audience compared to that of a high-budget film production. While the exact size of the initial print run was not publicly disclosed, the stock was exhausted, prompting the publisher to order a reprint. By late August 2026, the author himself was announcing the availability of the reprinted copies on social media (Marek Wecowski, 2026).

Juxtaposing these events is particularly interesting in the context of data on reading habits. On one hand, studies by the National Library indicate that Poles' engagement with books remains limited, with scholarly literature being among the less frequently chosen types of publications (Chymkowski *et al*., 2026). On the other hand, a work created nearly three millennia ago became a focal point of interest for the film industry, the publishing market, the media, and public discourse during the summer of 2026. Although this certainly does not allow us to draw the conclusion that reading habits have undergone a lasting shift, it does demonstrate that a text belonging to the canon of classical culture can re-enter the cultural mainstream when presented in new forms and contexts. This apparent discrepancy between readership statistics and the scale of interest in the contemporary reception of *The Odyssey* serves as a starting point for further reflection on the significance of Homer's work in modern education and culture.

The premise outlined above, which serves as the starting point for this paper's discussion on the significance of Homer's ancient texts and their reception in education and cul-

ture, particularly regarding the promotion of reading, is not explicitly scholarly in nature. This is because the print runs of contemporary books are unknown due to publishers' trade secrets. Data on reading preferences reveal visible diversity of interest across different literary genres. In this context, the interest shown in Węcowski's book *Homer na nasze czasy* — a specialized publication dedicated to Homer and his work — is particularly noteworthy. The initial print run sold out shortly after the book's release, triggering a decision to reprint it (Węcowski, 2026). It is worth highlighting here that, according to the report on the state of book reading in Poland in 2025, scholarly literature was read by 9% of the surveyed readers, whereas crime or thriller novels were read by 27%, and contemporary fiction by 19%. The top three most popular authors in 2025 were, in order: Remigiusz Mróz, followed by Stephen King, and — in third place — Henryk Sienkiewicz (Chymkowski *et al*., 2026). Moreover, neither Homer nor Węcowski appeared among the fifteen most frequently cited authors — a fact that further emphasizes the scale of interest generated in 2026 by publications and events concerning the reception of *The Odyssey*. It is possible, however, that the National Library's report on reading habits for 2026 will show a shift in the table of the year's most widely read authors, placing Węcowski among the top fifteen. However, determining whether this interest will be reflected in future studies of reading practices requires data from subsequent editions of the research.

The presence of *The Odyssey* across various cultural spheres in 2026 — in the form of film adaptations, new editions and translations of the epic, as well as academic and popular science publications dedicated to Homer and the reception of his work — induces a re-examination of the work's significance for the contemporary audience. Of particular importance to this discussion are its educational and formative values, as well as the potential to use *The Odyssey* to foster cultural engagement, reading habits, and the competencies of young people – including those related to lifelong learning. The presented analysis is interdisciplinary and comparative in nature, referring to works in the field of history of pedagogical thought, literary studies, translation theory, and the social sciences. The discussion is grounded in both studies illustrating *The Odyssey's* place in the history of education and pedagogical thought, as well as publications concerning the contemporary reception of Homer and his work. The aim of the following analysis of the relevant literature is not only to present the historical and contemporary reception of Homer's work but also to confront these perspectives and identify, on that basis, areas where the discussed epic can be applied in educational contexts. Moreover, the analysis of relevant provisions within the core curriculum is also essential for broadening the scope of the perspective. Gathering and interpreting the findings of these analyses will enable the formulation of proposals regarding the use of *The Odyssey* in educational activities within both school and family settings.

The considerations presented above lead to a broader question, what can the historical and contemporary reception of *The Odyssey* tell us about its place in education today? Two related questions seem particularly important here. First, what educational values were attributed to Homer's work in Greek and Roman educational traditions, and which of them remain relevant in contemporary discussions on education? Second, what possibilities for using *The Odyssey* in school and family settings can be identified on the basis of the selected literature, contemporary interpretations of the epic, and the provisions of the Polish core curriculum? These questions guide the following discussion, with particular attention to the relationship between the educational significance traditionally attributed to Homer's work and the possibilities suggested by its contemporary reception. The intention is not to assess the effectiveness of particular teaching practices, but to identify and consider possible areas of educational application.

The Odyssey in Greek, Roman and Contemporary Educational Thought

How many Polish translations of Homer's *Odyssey* do we have? Before answering this question, it is worth moving back for a moment to ancient Rome, more specifically to the time in its history when Romans first encountered a translation of this Homeric epic, marking a milestone in the history of European literature. Three facts regarding this event are particularly interesting: when it occurred, who authored the Latin translation, and the reason for the translation itself. Romans gained access to Homer's *Odyssey* in their native tongue approximately five hundred years after the city's founding; hence, the chronology of the work's reception within Roman culture deserves special attention. Livius Andronicus's translation of *The Odyssey* appeared about five centuries after the traditionally accepted date of the founding of Rome — a period when Latin literature was beginning to flourish under the strong influence of Greek culture. Earlier Roman writing was primarily utilitarian in nature, linked to areas such as law, religion, and public life. Thus, the translation of Homer's epic marked a crucial stage in the development of the Roman literary tradition. Significantly, the inhabitants of the Eternal City would have to wait for an epic that would capture the founding myth of the Romans and Rome itself in literary form until the late 1st century BC. This means a span of nearly seven hundred and fifty years. For a long time, Romans showed no interest in poetry. However, this was changed by Octavian Augustus at the end of the 1st century BC. Differences in cultural and social conditions naturally preclude a direct comparison of the reading practices of Roman society with contemporary reading habits.

Marrou, a distinguished twentieth-century historian, writes about Livius Andronicus — the translator of *The Odyssey* into Latin and a freedman of the very man whose children he had raised and educated (having arrived in Rome as a Greek captive from

Tarentum) — that he was the first Latin poet, and simultaneously the first teacher of Latin literature, the same Livius Andronicus of Tarentum whom we have encountered as the earliest of the Greek masters teaching in Rome. He translated *The Odyssey* into Latin using the old native rhythm, the so-called Saturnian verse. This translation was literal, line by line. However, one should not think that Livius sought to facilitate, as a line-by-line translation does, his students' familiarity with Homer's Greek text. According to Livius, the translation was the text itself, which he would explicate — *praelegebat* — just as the Greek classics were explicated (Marrou, 1969). Thus, we see that *The Odyssey*, as translated by Andronicus, was not primarily a literary translation of the original into Roman hexameter for the sheer pleasure of reading poetry, it rather served as a kind of an educational exercise within the secondary school curriculum. It served as an excuse for learning – teaching material for students, adopted directly from the Greek *paideia*. For until the 1st century BC, the Greek language and culture were a guarantee of a good education; parents — particularly those from aristocratic circles — hired teachers of Greek origin, or even native Greeks, to educate and raise their sons, who aspired to hold important state roles and participate actively in public life. It was not until the end of the 1st century BC when Virgil, through *The Aeneid*, came to be for the Romans what Homer was for the Greeks. His text would be regarded as a treasury of wisdom and beauty stored in the very depths of memory. His verses would recur to the mind whenever there was a need to recall, express more powerfully, or reinforce a particular emotion or thought (Marrou, 1969). It is worth noting that while Virgil drew upon both of Homer's works in *The Aeneid*, *The Odyssey* undeniably forms its core; the adventures of Odysseus served as the primary inspiration for the experiences of Aeneas as he fled burning Troy.

Under the guidelines of the current core curriculum, a student at a modern Polish secondary school will encounter the texts of Homer — or, more precisely, selected excerpts from them — only during the first year of secondary school. As the authors of the core curriculum for the 3rd educational stage (secondary school) argue, self-directed learning — understood as preparation for lifelong learning meaning the upbringing of an individual with a creative and dynamic attitude toward life and culture — should play a significant role in Polish language education. The school's task is to prepare students not merely to acquire knowledge independently, organize it, and approach it critically, but to move away from encyclopaedic learning in favour of learning based on understanding and the evaluation of the utility and veracity of information; it is also about fostering the conviction that one should learn to plan and shape one's own future. The education of young people during Polish language classes takes place through reflection — in an axiological and existential dimension — regarding language, literature, and culture. It is the teacher's duty to organize internal integration within the subject — that is, to combine literary and cultural education, language instruction, the de-

velopment of utterance skills, and self-directed learning (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2018). In the context of discussing Nolan's *Odyssey* or reading excerpts from Homer's text — with self-directed learning recognized in official documents as a key future competency — teachers can foster engagement by encouraging students to independently seek out contexts and interpretations. They can link axiological reflection with an analysis of the characters' decisions and attitudes, compare the ancient text with a contemporary adaptation to facilitate literary and cultural education, and confront the critical media reception with the analysis of the discourse on Nolan's film.

These principles of modern education are in line with the functions attributed to literature in Greek and Roman education, where literary texts played a key role in intellectual, moral, and cultural development. This is particularly evident in the case of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The availability of numerous Polish translations of *The Odyssey* expands the scope for its use in the classroom, enabling teachers to select a version suited to their students' age, language proficiency, and specific needs.

Teachers can thus select a translation suited to the age, language proficiency, and needs of their students. It is worth noting that the latest Polish translation of *The Odyssey*, by Anna Maciejewska, was published in July 2026 (Kałużny, 2026). It is also when Jan Parandowski's translation was reissued, featuring new illustrations. The timing of these publications — coinciding with the premiere of a Nolan film and the release of Węcowski's book *Homer na nasze czasy* — further strengthened the presence of Homer's work in contemporary culture. New translations and reissues of this classic text can also hold educational value, as they offer teachers and parents the opportunity to choose a version tailored to the needs of modern audiences.

The release of a modern translation — or a reissue featuring new illustrations and commentary — is of significant importance to teachers and parents, as they make the ancient text more accessible not only to young people but to adults as well. The most contemporary translation is more likely to spark interest and inspiration, simply encouraging readers to engage with the text for a longer period — perhaps even to its very end — because it is more understandable and approachable. In an interview for the University of Łódź, Maciejewska states plainly:

> I really like Parandowski's translation, but it is nearly a hundred years old. Even if old-fashioned in some parts, it still remains communicative to me. For younger readers, however, that linguistic gap may be wider. Texts by Homer or Shakespeare require periodic renewal so that they continue to resonate with audiences. [1] (Kałużny, 2026)

[1] Author's own translation.

It seems worth asking here whether the fact that Homer stirs the emotions of people in the third decade of the twenty-first century is solely due to the director of the latest adaptation of *The Odyssey*? Or maybe primary and secondary education render the two Greek epics so fundamental that almost everyone feels compelled to share their opinion on the subject? Perhaps Węcowski is right when he argues that both we and the Greeks received from Homer merely an example to ponder, an invitation to reflect on human ambitions and limitations within the human world — no answers, only questions and provocations. The uniqueness of the Greek tradition, and its supreme value for us, lies in the fact that, from then on, this would always be the case in Greek literature (Węcowski, 2023).

In the first half of the 20th century — a few years before the outbreak of World War II — Jaeger noted that Plato mentions a view prevalent in his time that Homer was the educator of all Greece. Since then, the poet's influence has extended far beyond the borders of Hellas; not even Plato's impassioned philosophical critique could stop it, though that critique did make the world aware of certain inherent limitations to which all the educational impact of poetry is subject. For the Greeks, regarding the poet as the educator of his nation — in the broadest and deepest sense of the word — was always natural, and this concept never lost its significance for them (Jaeger, 2001). In his further reflections, the German scholar warns against a utilitarian approach to poetry – against reading it according to the *fabula docet* principle or treating it as a repository of all knowledge and expertise. He appears to do so while witnessing the construction of a new world, a new system of education, and a new type of citizen in the Nazi-dominated Third Reich – a regime that ruthlessly, instrumentally, and crudely attempted to enlist, or perhaps rather annex, the tradition of ancient Greece for its own criminal purposes. Jaeger protects the legacy of Hellas and its reception, emphasizing that Homer must be considered and evaluated as the first and greatest of the creators who shaped the Greek idea of humanity (Jaeger, 2001). It seems that both Nolan and his consultants studied the German classical philologist's reflections with great thoroughness.

Let us pause for a moment to consider the educational aspect of how Homer was received by the Athenians during the zenith of their *polis* and, indeed, throughout much of Classical Hellas. Excerpts from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* were a mandatory part of every boy's curriculum. Their oral recitation served as a starting point for training not only in music, astronomy, or law, but perhaps above all in moral education. Nicias, the Athenian general, reportedly had his son memorize both of Homer's works so that the boy might become a good man (Łapiński, 2025). Łapiński cites this anecdote in his biography of Socrates to highlight the importance of using literature to cultivate goodness – fostering respect for one's elders and their achievements, particularly noble deeds, with the use of role models (Łapiński, 2025).

Methodological Assumptions

The starting point for the present discussion is an examination of *The Odyssey* in the context of its historical and contemporary presence in education. An analysis of selected works in the fields of the history of education, literary studies and pedagogy, supplemented by references to translations of the epic and the Polish National Curriculum, allows us to view Homer's work both as an element of cultural heritage and as a source of inspiration for contemporary educational practice. Particular attention has been paid to how the educational significance of the epic has been interpreted over the centuries and what place it might occupy in contemporary pedagogical reflection. Comparing the historical perspective with contemporary interpretations reveals both the enduring nature of certain values attributed to it and the changing ways in which these are understood. What is important here is not only the work's message itself, but also the opportunities it offers to engage in discussion about human choices, responsibility and relationships with others. The adopted perspective therefore serves to identify those values and themes in *The Odyssey* that can inspire educational activities undertaken at school and within the family environment.

Results of the Analysis: Educational Applications of *The Odyssey* in School and at Home

Although the presence of *The Odyssey* in the upbringing and education of young people has been analysed and developed by great thinkers from antiquity to the present day, it currently appears to be somewhat marginalized in the educational process. Consequently, a recent adaptation of the epic or a new translation of the tale of Odysseus's return to his native Ithaca could serve as a valuable tool for educational or didactic work, both in schools and at the family home. The wealth of scholarly texts — both historical and contemporary — as well as material from the realm of popular culture that explores the universal significance of *The Odyssey*, allows us to identify — in light of current guidelines such as the core curricula for Polish and Latin language classes — several potential areas for working with children and students.

In the late 1st century AD, Quintilian — a Roman rhetorician, lawyer, theorist of style, teacher of oratory, and educator who was the first teacher to receive a regular salary from the state treasury and was honoured (in what may be considered a historical precedent) with the title of consul *honoris causa* — wrote some remarkably important words about Homer in his seminal work *The Orator's Education*, focusing on the significance of Homer's works to students mastering the art of rhetoric. In Book X, Chapter 10, he compiles a sort of catalogue of Homer's merits – qualities that a teacher

or parent must consider when instructing someone in oratory, particularly regarding the selection of reading materials, the gathering of subject material, and the development of an extensive vocabulary. Quintilian points out that familiarity with Homer's works is crucial to the rhetorical education of a young person, preparing them for active participation in public life. He asserts, among other things, that the author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* provided the origin and model for every aspect of rhetoric. No one has surpassed him either in the sublimity of style used to describe great events or in the naturalness and simplicity suited to less momentous subject matter. In short, he is the supreme master not only of perfect poetry but also of the art of oratory (Kwintylian, 2005). Furthermore, Quintilian also notes that Homeric speeches of a laudatory, exhortatory, or consolatory nature can be successfully employed in judicial and deliberative oratory (Kwintylian, 2005).

The author of *The Orator's Education* emphasizes that comparisons, the heightening of the significance of described facts, cited examples, digressions, proofs — both factual and inferential — as well as other methods of substantiating one's own case and refuting an opponent: all of these appear in this bard's work in such abundance that even authors of treatises on rhetoric drew many examples of specific rhetorical phenomena precisely from him (Kwintylian 2005). This view expressed by Quintilian highlights the importance attributed to Homer's works in Roman rhetorical education.

Quintilian also recognizes what is perhaps the most essential element defining the uniqueness of Homer's texts: the story itself. In *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, it is the narrative that proves most captivating. Above all, the story is compelling and complex, and therein lies its power. Despite the passage of nearly three thousand years, the tales of Achilles, Patroclus, Hector, Penelope, and Odysseus remain a vibrant part of culture; their enduring nature stems, in part, from the multitude of possible readings and interpretations they offer. This openness to interpretation, combined with the narrative character of *The Odyssey*, creates extensive opportunities to use excerpts from the work in educational settings – particularly in activities involving storytelling.

The narrative nature of *The Odyssey* offers an opportunity to develop interpretive and linguistic skills, articulate and defend one's own position, recognize characters' perspectives, discuss values, and compare different ways of understanding the same event. These skills appear crucial in today's world, particularly given the scarcity of storytelling in school practice and the prevalence of image-based culture in ubiquitous social media. Recent PISA results confirm the severity of reading comprehension issues; urgent remedial action is required to address the growing phenomenon of functional illiteracy among Polish 15-year-olds, a problem affecting nearly one in four young people (Kaźmierczak, 2026). Hence, it seems worthy to derive from the potential of Homer's tales to teach young people how to converse, tell stories, engage in reasoned debate, uncover meaning, and simply develop the imagination.

In one of his essays on the significance of literature and the act of reading in the modern world, Koziołek argues that it is crucial to show students that linguistic proficiency, imagination, and social sensitivity are among the most important attributes gained at school. What prevents us from using *Janko Muzykant* [Janko the Musician] to engage in serious discussions with fifth-graders and to pose shared questions — questions to which even the teacher does not know the answers — such as: Who is Janko's father? Why does the author not mention him? Why is the child beaten? When did corporal punishment in schools end, and why? Who should help the mother? Would she have received the 500+ benefit? Would Janko have a chance of getting into a music school today? (Koziołek, 2023). This passage exemplifies how a literary text can be used to address issues extending beyond basic literary analysis, thereby linking Polish language education with social and educational reflection. Koziołek offers merely one example; the aforementioned Positivist novella could easily be replaced by titles of various texts from earlier eras, allowing for the creation of a question bank designed to help students grasp the meaning of literature and the reading process itself.

If a teacher selects excerpts from *The Odyssey* for interpretation or reinterpretation during a Polish language or homeroom lessons, a discussion with students about Odysseus as a commander could prove fascinating. One might ask what kind of commander Odysseus is, given that he returns from Troy alone while all his comrades-in-arms perish. A conversation with students regarding a leader's responsibility for their group and the consequences of decisions made can serve as an incentive for broader social, cultural, or literary reflection. It is also worth examining the figure of Helen and her significance regarding the perception of women's roles in society from ancient times to the present day. The social construction of women's roles — and, above all, how they are interpreted — may prove to be a relevant and engaging topic for young people. The story of Argos — Odysseus's dog, who waits faithfully for him and is one of the few to recognize his master after twenty years — can serve as a starting point for analysing the meaning of loyalty, respect, friendship, and even love. Perhaps it would also be worth discussing with young people whether, in another two thousand eight hundred years — assuming humans and movie theatres still exist on Earth — audiences will attend premieres of new adaptations of *The Odyssey*, or rather of *Spider-Man*. A question phrased in this way — drawing on language and experiences familiar to young people — can serve as a starting point for a moderated discussion on the enduring nature of Homeric motifs, their presence in contemporary popular culture, and the cultural vitality of canonical texts.

Maciejewska, the author of the latest Polish translation of *The Odyssey*, also draws attention to Homer's keen psychological insight and highlights the complexity of the relationship between Penelope and Telemachus. It might be worth initiating a discussion with students — during a homeroom lesson, a Polish language class, or a Latin lesson — to explore why the son distrusts his mother and why Penelope fears

Telemachus intends to banish her from their home; why, in short, both misinterpret each other's intentions. Are they unable to communicate? (Kałużny, 2026). Introducing such a topic into a moderated discussion with young people makes it possible to highlight the enduring nature of Homeric motifs, their presence in contemporary popular culture, and the cultural vitality of canonical texts.

In his treatise on education, Quintilian wrote that likewise, regarding a person's states of mind — whether calm or agitated — there is surely no ignoramus who would not admit that the poet held complete mastery over them (Kwintylian, 2005). This statement could begin an interesting discussion. The multitude of motifs, characters, and themes present in *The Odyssey* allows excerpts from the work to be used to address issues relevant to the contemporary world as well. Klęczar titled the essay included in the latest edition of Maciejewska's translation *Czasem sami nawet nie wiemy, kiedy myślimy i mówimy Homerem* [Sometimes we do not even know when we are thinking and speaking in a Homeric way]. The title immediately draws the reader's curiosity and prompts reflection – but, more importantly, Klęczar created a comprehensive overview of the presence of Odysseus and his journey home in modern pop culture (Klęczar, 2026). This text offers a wealth of inspiration for watching, reading, and, above all, discussing the work together.

It should be emphasized here that reading a passage from *The Odyssey* together — or watching an adaptation — can serve as a starting point for a conversation between parent and child about responsibility, loyalty, family relationships, trust, homecoming, decision-making, and the consequences of one's choices. As a secondary setting for engaging with the text, the family can use the story of Odysseus as a pretext for lengthy discussions; the hero's adventures alone can inspire parents and children — or young people — to create their own stories together.

It is also worth paying special attention to yet another way of using Homer's texts — one mentioned by Węcowski in his latest work — which may represent another facet of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey's* universalism in the truest sense of the word. In his book *Homer na nasze czasy*, Węcowski discusses the figure and professional achievements of Jonathan Shay, a Boston-based clinical psychiatrist who treated American Vietnam War veterans suffering from PTSD. In the mentioned psychiatrist's two books, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (1994) and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (2002), Homer became for Shay not so much a historical point of reference, but a guide to the experience of war and its long shadow – to what happens to a person after returning from the front. Both Achilles and Odysseus are exceptionally well-suited to serve as patron figures for work with such veterans. Achilles, consumed by rage and a thirst for vengeance, desecrates the body of a slain enemy for days on end, having previously — out of a sense of grievance — abandoned his comrades on the battlefield. This figure of rage, which severs one's ties to the community and drives the person possessed by

it to cross acceptable boundaries, embodies an experience familiar to many veterans. Odysseus, in turn — after the war has been won, while on his way home — brings about the deaths of all his men through hubris and recklessness (Węcowski, 2026). The author of the monograph on Homer and his body of work himself notes that, while the characters of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* can serve as an excellent starting point for exploring the psychological, philosophical, and social significance of the experiences undergone by Shay's patients, superimposing veterans' stories onto the tales of Homer risks leading one to mistake the two epics for actual wartime memoirs. It is the sphere where Węcowski sees the danger of instrumentalizing Homer's texts. Nevertheless, the use of *The Odyssey* in psychotherapeutic work with soldiers returning from war is worth emphasizing, particularly in the context of Nolan's latest film adaptation. As a high school teacher, I personally observed how intrigued my students became when they heard the story of an American psychiatrist using Homer's texts to treat PTSD when we discussed the latest adaptation of *The Odyssey*. This interest was shared not only by students who had already seen Nolan's film during the summer break but also by those who, following the discussion, declared their intention to watch it. It must be clearly noted here that this teaching experience serves a purely illustrative purpose, as it does not constitute data collected within a planned study. The conversation arose spontaneously during several Latin classes in September of this year.

In the context of the importance of learning from stories told on screen, Jakubowski argues that for a text from the past to speak to us, we must relate it to our own world and historical horizon; hence, we can also speak of a hermeneutic model of text interpretation (Jakubowski, 2021). In the proposed approach, the dialogue with the text — including a film text — shifts the interpreter's focus away from the historical dimension and toward what is significant for the viewer, and what can be regarded as truth here and now, for us (Jakubowski, 2021). It appears that Nolan's adaptation of *The Odyssey* can serve as a starting point for such a hermeneutic interpretation, whether with students at school or the family home. The essence of hermeneutic interpretation lies in juxtaposing excerpts from Homer's text with their film adaptation, and in reflecting on what original elements the adaptation preserves, which parts it alters, and how these changes influence the perception of characters, their motivations and decisions, and the events transposed onto the big screen in the twenty-first century. Jakubowski notes, however, that the question remains as to how a viewer might be prepared for such a dialogic reception. It seems that the viewer's capacity for reflection and their horizon of experience are what matter most; the technical knowledge of a film critic is of little use in this context (Jakubowski, 2021). This final remark requires further emphasis and reinforcement, particularly given the media discourse surrounding the film, much of which happened on social media. When fostering the competencies of the future in young people, it is crucial to develop the ability to distinguish

opinions from arguments, verify information, compare viewpoints, and critically engage with the short-form content published on social media. Interpreting Nolan's film while simultaneously referencing specific passages from Homer's text can serve as a ground for an in-depth discussion on media literacy. As the core curriculum for Polish language classes at the third educational stage (secondary school) states, Polish language education at the third educational stage also prepares young people for the conscious reception, critical analysis, and processing of media messages and communications. Students should understand the significance and role of media in the contemporary world and use them consciously (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2018). This aspect appears particularly significant when considering the implications of Nolan's adaptation of *The Odyssey*. It is the task of modern teachers, educators, and parents to encourage students and children to discuss the events that unfolded on social media around the film's premiere; the lesson drawn from this online storm represents a continuation of Greek and Roman *paideia* in the twenty-first century — highlighting the need for personal, profound engagement with culture, as well as the experience of and wonder at the story itself. Forming an opinion on a given topic based solely on short posts by random individuals who feel compelled to weigh in is merely a shortcut that hardly touches the surface of the issue. Education, among other things, should offer a mode of communication that stands in contrast to the one that dominates social media. That is why watching the Nolan's film and reading Homer's *Odyssey* can provide teachers, parents, and, above all, young people with the tools and arguments needed for a shared dialogue.

Conclusion

In recent years, many classical philologists have prophesied a pessimistic vision of a modern world deprived of its ancient cultural heritage and of the Greek and Latin languages. In a joint text published a few years ago, Bibik and Mizera (2018), among others, offered this diagnosis and prediction: there are increasingly fewer natural bearers of ancient culture — those educated before the war — while subsequent generations do not ground their shared language and imagination in the adventures of Odysseus or the conquests of Caesar or Alexander the Great. Consequently, there is no one to build, nor anyone to receive, messages rooted in the concepts, symbols, and imagery of the classical tradition. References to antiquity long ago ceased to be a vital element of public and communal discourse, instead becoming the field of interest of enthusiasts, specialists, and polymaths – in short, a niche subject destined for an elite few. However, enthusiasts of ancient culture do not lose hope that, in keeping with the cyclical nature of cultural processes, antiquity will return to favour and once again become part of the common system of communication (Bibik & Mizera, 2018). It seems that reports of the death of antiquity were

somewhat exaggerated as the pendulum of cultural change has swung back, and Odysseus is once again on many people's lips.

The role and significance of Homer's *Odyssey* within the realms of contemporary education, upbringing, culture, pop culture, and psychology appear to be substantial. Successive adaptations — whether for the stage, cinema, theatre, opera, or musicals — are a reality and, quite interestingly, a subject of debate or even *a sui generis* war of arguments between opponents and proponents of a director's vision. In the context of education and upbringing, it seems essential for teachers or parents to engage with students or children in the process of interpreting this text — it does not matter if it is a blockbuster film, a new translation, or a recent stage production — as the possibilities following such viewing or reading appear limitless. As Węcowski notes, a social project titled *Ancient Greeks/Modern Lives* — hosted by the New York-based Aquila Theatre and inspired by the writings of Shay — achieved immense artistic success. As part of this initiative, public readings of texts by ancient authors, including Homer, were held on over a hundred stages across the United States, featuring participants such as scholars of Greek literature, veterans, and their families. Węcowski explicitly emphasizes, that it was not just group therapy (Węcowski, 2026).

Quintilian wrote explicitly about the importance of poetry in human education and upbringing two thousand years ago, arguing that young minds — which deeply absorb whatever falls upon that receptive soil, as yet devoid of experience — should learn not only what is beautiful in language but also, and indeed primarily, what is noble in content. Hence, it is an excellent custom to begin the study of authors with Homer and Virgil, even though a more mature judgment is required to fully appreciate their beauty. Yet the time for that will come later, for they will be read more than once (Kwintylian, 2005). Here we find a categorical pedagogical manifesto: a child should not be exposed to texts of low literary quality but should instead engage from an early age with fine literature — works that raise important issues, pose significant questions, offer models of conduct, and cultivate the imagination. Homer fits this description perfectly, a fact emphasized by Nolan in July 2026 with his adaptation of *The Odyssey*.

The analysis of the selected literature presented in this paper has enabled the formulation of a catalogue of educational ideas regarding the use of *The Odyssey* in both school and home settings. It highlights the enduring value of Homer's text in upbringing and education – a value cherished by successive generations of scholars and recognized as relevant by contemporary audiences. Additionally, the work can be a source of inspiration for teachers and parents, proposing a wide range of educational activities: from storytelling and rhetorical exercises to engaging students and children in discussions on social, literary, and cultural topics, and even fostering critical engagement with social media. Although there are limitations in the chosen perspective and the areas discussed do not exhaust the full scope of *The Odyssey's* educational potential, they nonetheless represent a curated and structured proposal based on the author's own approach.

For over two thousand years, *The Odyssey* has been recognized for its significance as a text that fosters interpretive and linguistic skills. Being a starting point for axiological and social reflection, it provides material for argumentation and debate, facilitates dialogue on human relationships and experiences, and acts as a reference point for analysing contemporary popular culture and media. In the twenty-first century, we remain heirs to the Greek *paideia*; although we no longer require students or children to recite entire books of Homer's epics from memory, we — and, notably, popular culture itself — clearly recognize the enduring potential of the story of Odysseus returning home after a long and harrowing war. Gadamer argues that the meaning of a text surpasses its author not only occasionally but always. Thus, understanding is not merely a reproductive process but it is of a creative character (Gadamer, 1993). Creatively utilizing film adaptations and modern translations — such as those of *The Odyssey* — when working with young people on storytelling, rhetoric, axiology, and social issues seems a natural choice for educators, particularly given that advertising professionals, public relations specialists, and creators of popular culture have long been doing exactly that. A discussion about Nolan and Homer, along with reading the works of Jaeger and Węcowski, could prove valuable. Children and young people need — and perhaps even require — a bridge between the past and the present, a sense of anchorage and belonging, and the assurance that their opinions matter and that they can participate in discussions, conversations, and, above all, contemporary culture.

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