**Book I – What Went On in the House of Odysseus**

1. Where is Odysseus at the beginning of the story? What has happened to the men who helped him sack Troy?

2. Why is Zeus frustrated with Aigisthos (he kills Agamemnon after he returns from the war)?

3. What qualities does Odysseus possess that endear him to Zeus and make the hero worthy of Zeus’ help?

4. Why do you think Athena decides it is a good time to solicit Zeus’ help in freeing Odysseus from the island?

5. What two actions do the gods decide to take on Odysseus’ behalf?

6. Describe Telemachos’ conduct toward the visitor Mentes (Athena in disguise). What does he hope to learn from Mentes? Why is Athena pleased with Telemachos’ action?

7. Read the definition of epithet. List two epithets used in this book to describe Odysseus. Why are epithets used so often?

8. Read the following passage. What do you suppose is the significance of “birds” in The Odyssey?

“Well, now, I will play the prophet, and tell you what is in the mind of the immortals, and what

I think will come to pass; although I am no prophet really, and I do not know much about the meaning of birds.”

9. What sorrows, sent from the gods, does Telemachos describe to Mentes?

10. State a theme using the following passage as an example.

“As to any gift which your kind heart bids you offer, when I come back you may give it me to take home. If you choose me a good one, you shall have as good in return.”

11. Describe the activities appropriate for Penelopeia after her son tells her to let the minstrel sing whatever songs he wants.

12. Why do you think Penelopeia is astonished to hear her son tell her to leave the minstrel alone?

13. Support the following statement with a quotation: Telemachos knows Mentes is Athena in disguise.

**Book II – How the Council met in the Market-place of Ithaca; and What Came of It**

1. What are the two reasons Aigyptios, the father of Eurynomos, one of the suitors, thinks are appropriate for a session of Council to be called?

2. Why does Telemachos think the Council should help him get rid of the men who want to marry his mother?

3. Why does Antinoös, a suitor who often speaks for the others, blame Telemachos’ mother Penelopeia for the conduct of the suitors?

4. List the qualities Penelopeia possesses which make her sought after by so many men.

5. Why does Telemachos not send his mother back to her father?

6. What is the significance of the eagles sent from Zeus to fly over the Council?

7. What advice does Eurymachos, one of the men trying to marry his mother, give Telemachos?

Why does he threaten the prophet Halitherses?

8. What offer does Telemachos make to the council?

9. What argument does Mentor, friend of Odysseus who is often Athena in disguise, make to persuade the men of Ithaca to help Telemachos?

10. In the form of Mentor, what predictions does Athena make about Telemachos’ future?

11. What oath does Telemachos ask Eurycleia, his old nurse, to swear?

12. List three ways Athena helps Telemachos leave on his voyage.

13. You may have noticed that there is much repetition in these chapters. Why do you suppose that is?

**Book III – What Happened in Sandy Pylos**

1. What indication is there to the reader that the people of Pylos will be favored by the gods?

2. One of the conventions of an epic is a listing of numerous heroes and soldiers. Find a quotation in this section to show that The Odyssey is an epic.

3. List the qualities of an epic hero that Nestor, King of Pylos, attributes to Odysseus.

4. State a theme for this story based on the following quotation:

“Again, when we had sacked the tall city of Troy, and embarked, and God scattered the fleet, ah, then Zeus ordained a lamentable home-coming for us; for not all were sensible and fair-minded, and so a great many of them drew upon themselves an evil fate.”

5. Why is the story of Aigisthos, who killed Agamemnon, and his death repeated in this book?

6. What advice does Nestor give Telemachos?

7. List the steps Telemachos and Nestor, King of Pylos, follow to properly make a sacrifice to the gods. Why is it important to act justly?

8. Why does Nestor say to Telemachos, “My friend, I do not think you will turn out a coward or a craven, if in your young days you have gods to escort you!”? What promise does the old man make to Athena?

9. List the steps King Nestor and Telemachos follow when the yearling cow is sacrificed.

10. Why do you think Homer uses the epithet “dawn showed her rosy fingers”?

**Book IV – What Happened in Lacedaimon**

1. Support the following statement: King Menelaos is a good host and shows proper respect for the gods.

2. How does King Menelaos know Odysseus?

3. Why does Helen, King Menelaos’ wife, put a drug in the wine?

4. Helen states that she longed to go home to Sparta when she was held in the city of Troy and was glad Odysseus killed many Trojans. Why then, do you think she walked around the Trojan horse saying the names of the men and mimicking the voices of their wives, trying to get them to reveal their hiding place?

5. Find an example of an epic simile in this section.

6. What advice does Eidothea, daughter of Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, give King Menelaos on how to catch her father and make Proteus tell Menelaos how to get home?

7. What does the Old Man of the Sea tell King Menelaos about Odysseus?

8. List the parting gifts King Menelaos offers Telemachos. Why does Telemachos turn one down? What is offered instead?

9. Why does Antinoös, leader of the bridegrooms, say that Telemachos has scored first? What does he plan to do to Telemachos?

10. How does Penelopeia learn that her son is on a voyage and that there is a plot to murder him when he returns?

11. What does Athena do to ease Penelopeia ’s worries about her son’s safety?

12. These first four chapters are frequently referred to as “The Quest for Telemachos.” List the things that Telemachos is seeking.

**Book V – Hermes is Sent to Calypso’s Island; Odysseus Makes a Raft and is Carried to the Coast of Scheria**

1. Why does Calypso, mischievous daughter of Atlas, accuse the other gods of being hardhearted?

2. What fate does Zeus describe for Odysseus after Calypso tells him he can leave?

3. Support the following statement: Odysseus does not trust Calypso.

4. Support the following statement: Odysseus is a wonderful diplomat and is able to get what he wants with little effort.

5. What does the Earthshaker (Poseidon) do to Odysseus? How does Ino, the White Sea Goddess, help him?

6. List four ways Athena helps Odysseus make it to shore.

7. Find an example of an epic simile in the last paragraph of Book V.

**Book VI – How Odysseus Appealed to Nausicaä, and She Brought Him to Her Father’s House**

1. Why does Princess Nausicaä, daughter of Alcinoös, King of Scheria, decide to wash all of the linen?

2. Find an example of an epic simile describing Nausicaä’s beauty.

3. Why does everyone except the princess run from Odysseus?

4. Describe how Odysseus views the ideal future for the princess.

5. State a theme for this story using the following quotation:

“...but happiness is something which Olympian Zeus above allots to men, whether good or bad, to each according to his will. Your fortune is what he has given you, and you must endure it in any case.”

6. Why does Princess Nausicaä want Odysseus to enter the town alone?

7. Define piety. How does Odysseus demonstrate piety?

**Book VII – What Happened to Odysseus in the Palace of Alcinoös**

1. List the qualities Queen Arete possesses which make her an honored woman, and identify her.

2. How does Odysseus’ behavior as a guest differ from the behavior demonstrated by his son when visiting Menelaos? What does this difference say about the two men’s status?

3. What does Odysseus say to King Alcinoös when the King suggests he marry his daughter and stay in Scheria?

4. List four of the “gods’ glorious gifts in the palace of Alcinoös.”

**Book VIII – How They Held Games and Sports in Phaiacia**

1. What does Odysseus do when the minstrel Demodocos begins to sing about the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, a famous warrior who died in the Trojan War? Do you think King Alcinoös knows the stranger is Odysseus?

2. List five of the games the men play. In which one does Odysseus demonstrate his skill? Why?

3. What element of a parable is present in the song the minstrel Demodocos sings about Ares, Aprhrodite, and Hephaistos?

4. List the three ways the Trojans planned to deal with the Trojan horse. According to the minstrel’s song, they wanted to:

5. What prophecy does King Alcinoös hear from his father about Poseidon?

**Book IX – How Odysseus Visited the Lotus-eaters and the Cyclops**

1. How do Odysseus’ men cause him trouble with the Ciconians and the lotus-eaters?

2. What does Odysseus mean when he says the Cyclopians “trust to providence”?

3. Describe the wine Odysseus takes with him to explore the island.

4. Why does Odysseus ignore his men when they want to take cheese and goats from the cave and go back to their ships without meeting the Cyclops?

5. What does the Cyclops do before he lights the fire in the cave?

6. Support the following statement, using events from this section: Odysseus is an epic hero because he is intelligent and creative.

7. Support the following statement, using events from this story: Odysseus is an epic hero because, while intelligent, he still makes very human mistakes.

8. What prayer does the Cyclops say to Poseidon?

**Book X – The Island of the Winds; the Land of the Midnight Sun; Circe**

1. How does Aiolos, manager of the winds, try to help Odysseus and his men reach their home? What do the men do to spoil the easy voyage?

2. Why is visiting the land of the midnight sun disastrous for Odysseus?

3. Why is Eurylochos, the spokesman for Odysseus’ crew, not turned into a pig along with the other men?

4. How does Hermes help Odysseus make friends with Circe?

5. Why does Odysseus have to go to Hades before returning home?

6. List the steps Odysseus must follow to talk to the souls of the dead successfully. He must:

7. What happens to Elpenor, a young member of Odysseus’ crew?

**Book XI – How Odysseus Visited the Kingdom of the Dead**

1. What does Elpenor ask Odysseus to do for him?

2. List the five steps the seer Teiresias tells Odysseus to follow if he wishes to return home to Ithaca.

3. Why has Odysseus’ mother died? What does he learn about his father?

4. What happens to a soul after death?

5. In what way does Book XI show once again that this story is an Epic?

6. Briefly describe the lives of the following souls Odysseus meets:

 • Epicaste

 • Cloris

 • Iphimedeia

7. Why is the story of Agamemnon’s death retold again in this chapter?

8. What advice about women does Agamemnon give Odysseus?

9. Which elements of an epic hero’s character are expressed by Achilles in the below passage?

Give an example of an epithet from this quotation.

“Here is Prince Odysseus who never fails! O you fool-hardy man! Your ingenious brain will never do better than this. How did you dare to come down to Hades, where dwell the dead without sense or feeling, phantoms of mortals whose weary days are done?”

10. Briefly describe the punishments for the following souls:

 • Tityos

 • Tantalos

 • Sisyphos

11. What can you infer about Hades by the presence of Hercules [Heracles]?

**Book XII – The Singing Sirens, and the Terrors of Scylla and Charybdis**

1. Who are the Sirens? How is Odysseus going to survive their powers?

2. What is the danger in the moving rocks and in Scylla? How is Odysseus going to decide which dangerous course to take?

3. Why does Odysseus tell his men about the danger of the Sirens, but not about Scylla’s threat?

 4. What is charybdis, in modern terms?

5. What evidence is there that the gods are working against Odysseus and his crew on Helios?

6. Why does Zeus destroy their boat, leaving only Odysseus alive?

**Book XIII – How Odysseus Came to Ithaca**

1. What does Poseidon do to the people of Scheria after they help Odysseus return home?

Do you think King Alcinoös’ plan to appease Poseidon will work?

2. What evidence is there that lying is acceptable in Homer’s time and applauded by the gods?

3. The story of Agamemnon’s death has been told several times in this Epic. Find another reason, in Book XIII, explaining why that same story is retold so frequently.

4. How does Athena disguise Odysseus? Where does she tell him to go after they store his treasures in the cave?

5. Support the following statement: Odysseus is not afraid to question Athena and the methods she is using to help him.

**Book XIV – Odysseus and the Swineherd**

1. What reward does Eumaios, the swineherd, expect if Odysseus returns from the war?

2. State a theme for this book, using Odysseus’ reason for hating a man “like the gates of hell.”

3. In what ways is the gaffer’s (Odysseus’) fictional story of his life similar to the truth of Odysseus’ life?

4. Why does Eumaios not believe that Odysseus will return? How is this an example of dramatic irony?

5. Why does the gaffer tell Eumaios about the cloak Odysseus obtained for him?

6. List the qualities that make Eumaios a good man in Odysseus’ eyes.

**Book XV – How Telemachos Sailed Back to Ithaca**

 1. List the instructions Athena gives Telemachos to help him return safely home.

Telemachos should:

2. State a theme for this book, using the following quotation:

“I think it most improper that any one in the place of a host should go too far in his likes and too far in his dislikes. The best rule is moderation in all things.”

3. What is the good omen Telemachos sees before leaving for home? How does Helen interpret the omen?

4. Why does Theoclymenos, the prophet, want to go with Telemachos to Ithaca?

5. Support the following statement: Zeus gives Eumaois good along with evil after he is stolen from his home by a servant.

6. How does Theoclymenos interpret the omen of the falcon that appears and kills a dove?

**Book XVI – How Telemachos Met His Father**

1. Why do you think Telemachos will not fight the men who are courting his mother, like the old gaffer suggests?

2. What makes Telemachos doubt that the gaffer, changed back into Odysseus by Athena, is his father?

3. List the things Odysseus asks his son to remember when he returns home and his father appears there as a beggar.

4. Why do you think Telemachos doubts that Odysseus will defeat the pretenders, even after hearing about his father’s great deeds?

5. What is the swineherd going to tell Penelopeia ?

6. Support the idea that Penelopeia is unsuccessful in her attempt to persuade the men not to kill Telemachos.

**Book XVII – How Odysseus Returned to His Own Home**

1. Find an example of an epic simile describing how Odysseus will deal with the pretenders.

2. Why is Odysseus sad when he sees Argos, his old hound? Why does Argos die?

3. State a theme for this story about slavery and how it affects a man.

4. Why does Athena encourage Odysseus to beg bread from the men in his house?

5. Why are the other men at the table fearful when Antinoös, their leader and speaker, hits the beggar with the stool?

6. What is the significance of Telemachos’ sneezing at the same time his mother says, “If only

Odysseus would come back to his own country, he and his son would soon punish the men!”

7. List the two reasons the old gaffer wants to wait until sunset to see Penelopeia .

**Book XVIII – How Odysseus Fought the Sturdy Beggar**

1. How does Odysseus again demonstrate his intelligence before he agrees to fight Arnaios, the beggar?

2. Why does Odysseus hold back and not kill Arnaios with one blow?

3. State a theme for this story, using the following speech from Odysseus to Amphinomos, a pretender, but a good man:

“I myself was once like to be happy amongst men, but I gave way to violent passions and did reckless deeds, trusting to the support of brothers and father. Therefore no man should ever disregard justice, but let him enjoy in silence the gifts which the gods may give him.”

4. How does Penelopeia shame the pretenders into giving her gifts? Do you think she is serious when she encourages their attentions?

5. What does Odysseus say to infuriate Eurymachos, one of the pretenders?

**Book XIX – How the Old Nurse Knew Her Master**

1. Why do you think Odysseus, as a beggar, teases Penelopeia with a story about her husband being a guest in her house, yet does not reveal his true identity to her?

2. What test for truthfulness does Penelopeia give the beggar? What does he say that convinces her that he has seen her husband? How is his story an example of digression?

3. Why do you think Odysseus asks for an old maid to wash his feet? How does this request add suspense to the story?

4. How is the old nurse going to help Odysseus after he kills the suitors?

5. How does Odysseus interpret Penelopeia ’s dream?

6. What two “gates” do dreams come from? Which ones are true?

7. Why do you think Penelopeia decides to set up the contest for her hand in marriage right away?

**Book XX – How God Sent Omens of the Wrath to Come**

1. Why are Odysseus and Penelopeia unable to sleep?

2. What does Odysseus pray for when he awakens? How is his prayer answered?

3. Why do the pretenders decide it is not a good time to murder Telemachos?

4. How does the throwing of the cow’s foot help the reader understand how much Telemachos has matured?

5. Why does the prophet Theoclymenos leave the house to stay with Peiraios, a loyal member of Telemachos’ crew?

**Book XXI – The Contest with the Great Bow**

1. How is the passage below an example of dramatic irony?

 Antinoös, the leader of the pretenders says, “...go outside and leave the bow here to settle our rivalry once and for all; for I don’t think it will be easy to bend that fine bow. There is not a man in all this company as good as Odysseus. I have seen him myself, and I remember him well, although I was only a boy.’

 That is what he said, though he really expected to bend the bow himself and to shoot through the line of axes. But he was to have the first taste of an arrow from Odysseus”

2. Who is the first one to try to string the bow? How does this action challenge the other men in the hall?

3. What does Odysseus ask Eumaios and Philoitios, the drover, to do to help him?

4. Why will the pretenders not give the beggar a chance to bend the bow? Are they worried he will win Penelopeia ’s hand in marriage?

5. After Odysseus strings the bow and plucks the string, what happens to make him glad?

**Book XXII – The Battle in the Hall**

1. After Odysseus reveals himself to the pretenders and kills Antinoös, the leader of the pretenders, how does Eurymachos, one of the pretenders, try to stop the slaughter?

2. How does Melanthios Dolios, the goat herder, offer to help the pretenders win the battle?

What happens to him?

3. Why is the death of Ctesippos, one of the pretenders, by Philoitios, the cow herder, an example of irony?

4. Why does Odysseus spare the lives of the minstrel and Medon? Do you think Homer has

a personal reason for writing the story so that the life of the minstrel is saved?

5. List the chores Odysseus gives the women who have been disloyal to him.

6. Why is it significant that Telemachos decides to kill the women by hanging them, instead of killing them cleanly with a sword as his father suggests?

**Book XXIII – How Odysseus Found His Wife Again**

1. At first Penelopeia throws her arms around the neck of her nurse, glad that Odysseus has returned. Why do you think she then doubts that the stranger really is her husband and says:

“No, no, it is one of the immortal gods who killed these proud men.… But Odysseus has lost his hope of return far away from this land, he is lost himself.”

2. Why does Odysseus think he will soon have more men to fight?

3. What is the secret of the bed? How does it symbolize the strength of their marriage?

4. List the two tasks Odysseus must perform before he can live in happiness.

**Book XXIV – How Odysseus Found His Old Father and How the Story Ended**

1. List the ways each of the following men have died or will die:

 • Achilles

 • Agamemnon

 • Amphimedon

 • Odysseus

2. What do you think about the way Odysseus reveals himself to his father? Is he mean?

3. How do Medon, the marshal, and Halitherses, the man who interprets the future through birds, persuade half of the people not to avenge the deaths of the men who wanted to marry Penelopeia?

4. Why does Athena intervene to stop the battle, even though Odysseus and Telemachos are winning?