

## SYNOPSIS

Beginning with an invocation to the muse and opening *in medias res*, the traditional epic style of starting in the middle, Homer's story of Odysseus, King of Ithaka and clever general of the Trojan War, opens on Kalypso's isle, where the Greek leader languishes in the powers of a radiant nymph who wants to marry him. At a council of Olympian gods, Athena, goddess of wisdom who favors Odysseus for his lively mind, claims that Odysseus is unfairly tormented. Zeus countermands the spite of Poseidon, god of the sea, waylays the wandering sailor and detains him from home and family in Ithaka, his kingdom on Greece's northwestern shore. Zeus explains Poseidon's hatred: Odysseus blinded the sea god's son Polyphêmos, the greatest of the Kyklopês.

Disguised as Mentês, Athena travels to Ithaka and finds Odysseus's palace beset by greedy suitors, who waste Odysseus's stores while they court Penélopê, his lonely wife who may not rule Ithaka as sole sovereign once she is widowed. She advises Odysseus's only son, Telémakhos, who was an infant twenty years earlier when his father left for the Trojan War on what is now the Asian shore of Turkey. Mentês urges him to sail to Pylos and Sparta to gain information about Odysseus from King Nestor and from King Menelâos. Eurykleia, Telémakhos's nanny, keeps secret his departure until he can establish some distance between himself and his fretful mother.

On his fact-finding journey, Telémakhos receives courteous treatment at the home of Nestor, talkative king of Pylos, who sends his visitor to Sparta on the Peloponnesus to learn more about Odysseus from Queen Helen and King Menelâos, brother of Agamémnon, commander-in-chief of Greek allied forces. Meanwhile, Penélopê learns that her son has set out from home without her knowledge and fears that the conniving suitors will kill him before he can return to Ithaka.

On a distant isle, Hermes delivers Zeus's command to Kalypso: help Odysseus depart for home. Odysseus, freed from a beguiling lover, builds a boat, stocks it with supplies, and sets sail, but his boat sinks in a storm. Exhausted and naked, he struggles ashore at Phaiákia. At Athena's suggestion, Princess Nausikaa happens to be washing clothes. She locates the bedraggled stranger, welcomes him, and leads him to the palace of her father, King Alkínoos. After proper amenities, Odysseus tells an enthralled audience of Phaiákians of his adventures with the Lotos Eaters and Polyphêmos, the Cyclops whom Odysseus blinds in order to make his escape from a sealed cave. Odysseus's wanderings take him to the island of Aiolos, King of the Winds, who gives Odysseus a bag wrapped tightly around adverse gales and tied with silver wire. At last within sight of Ithaka, Odysseus's greedy crew, believing the bag holds a secret treasure, untie the strings and free the winds, which blow their ship back to Aiolos's shores.

Because Aiolos rejects further pleas for aid, Odysseus and his men sail on to the island of the Laistrygonians, fierce cannibals who attack and sink all but one of his fleet of ships. The survivors press on to Aeaea, where an enchantress, Kirkê, changes a party of Odysseus's sailors into swine. With *molû*, a magic black-rooted plant with white blossoms, Odysseus overcomes Kirkê's magic and rescues his men. Kirkê and Odysseus live together as lovers for a year. Eventually, she agrees to help him return home. At her instruction, he descends into the land of Death to learn the future from Teirêsias, the famed blind seer.

The journey is fraught with danger and requires a blood offering to ghosts who press around for the life-giving fluid. Odysseus meets Elpênor, an unburied crewman. He talks with his mother, Antikleía, who died after he left for war, and views famous women of Greek mythology. He sees Akhilleus and other of his fallen comrades, is snubbed by Aías, and confers with Agamémnon, who warns him of spiteful wives. Teirêsias predicts Odysseus's future, including his peaceful death near the sea. With tearful farewell, Odysseus returns to the world of the living. Forewarned of the dangers of the Seirênês; the sea monsters, Skylla and Kharybdis; and the cattle sacred to Hêlios, the sun god, Odysseus avoids trouble, but is capsized near Ogygia, home of Kalypso. He ends his lengthy narrative at this point.

The hospitable Phaiákians, completely taken with the brave, winsome hero, entertain him with athletic games and songs, heap him with gifts, and send him on his way aboard their ships the short distance to Ithaka. Back on his home shore, Odysseus encounters Athena, who disguises him as an aged beggar and sends him to the farm of Eumaios, his faithful swineherd. Here Odysseus joins forces with Eumaios and Telémakhos, who shares a tender meeting with his father. Telémakhos returns to the palace and keeps secret the arrival of Ithaka's rightful king.

Without calling attention to himself unduly, Odysseus enters the palace, where rough, loud-mouthed suitors jostle him and dishonor his lowly status as a beggar. An obnoxious fellow beggar resents the intruder as unfair competition at the rowdy gathering. Odysseus tells a fictitious story to Penélopê, who fails to recognize him as her husband, but weeps at the stranger's eyewitness account of Odysseus on the island of Krete. He takes part in a challenge match against younger men, successfully strings Odysseus's bow, and shoots an arrow through twelve aligned axe heads before turning his anger against Penélopê's loutish, drunken suitors. With the help of Eumaios, Telémakhos, and Eurykleia, Odysseus's old nurse, he traps the suitors in the hall and slays them one by one, leaving alive the poet Phêmios and Telémakhos's companion Medôn.

Odysseus, revealed at last to the joyous household, commands his staff to cleanse the hall of blood and corpses. He rewards his good servants and executes those who con-

## THE ODYSSEY

spired with the suitors. He identifies himself to a skeptical Penélopê by describing their bed, which he carved out of a single olive tree. They spend a long night making love and relating their adventures during their twenty-year separation. The next day, Odysseus visits Laërtês, his aged father, and counters a revolt led by the suitors' relatives. Zeus and Athena help Odysseus establish peace and just rule in Ithaka once more.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Although few facts about Homer can be stated with certainty, the author of Greece's ancient epics was a real person whose language and subject matter can be identified by time and place. A study of his blended dialect—Ionic and Aeolic—suggests that Homer, whose name translates as *hostage*, was born in the ninth century B. C. on the island of Chios or in Ionia, which is now the western coast of Turkey. Legend maintains that he was a blind *rhapsode* or bard who made his living by traveling about singing the traditional lore of his homeland, collecting along the way local variations which communities made up to include the name of their town or favorite hero or royal family. A more recent query arises about the authorship of the *Odyssey*, which some critics believe may have been composed by a woman, perhaps Nausikaa herself, who reputedly fell in love with the handsome visitor and refused all other suitors after he left her homeland.

The style Homer uses in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* suggests that he was a learned poet who steeped himself in the oral tradition of the Mediterranean world and composed long poems based on well-known folk tales, legends, genealogies, and history. The event that forms the nucleus of the epics was probably a dispute over routes for the grain trade and took place between 1193 and 1184 B. C., as deduced by nineteenth- and twentieth-century archeologists. By infusing a mundane trade war with the trappings of epic poetry, Homer gave the world a glimpse of a civilization later unearthed at Hissarlik, Turkey, by the German archeologist Heinrich Schliemann.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

The *Odyssey*, one of the world's great adventure stories, has influenced a host of tellers of tales. The list of Homer's protégés rings with names of illustrious writers—Plato, Aeschylus, Virgil, Milton, Dante, Chaucer, Boccaccio, Tasso, Petrarch, Pope, Goethe, Tennyson, Joyce, Kafka, and Derek Walcott, Caribbean poet and 1992 Nobel Prize-winning author of *Omeros*, the Greek spelling of *Homer*. From the *Odyssey* have come characters, themes, motifs, and style that can truly be termed classic. The creation of the international hero Odysseus—or Ulysses in Latin—parallels the Norse Sigurd, Babylonian Marduk, Arabian Sinbad, biblical Jonah, wandering Jew, Rama of India, Celtic Saint Brendan, Nikos Kazantzakis's Odysseus, American Paul Bunyan, and William Shakespeare's Prospero, protagonist of *The Tempest* (1611).

Odysseus, the consummate strategist and ideal hero, faces a challenge for wife and kingdom late in life. At his side stands Telémakhos, who comes of age during the long wait for Odysseus's return. The cataclysmic scene in which the great doors of the palace are shut and the suitors meet their doom is the culmination of years of wandering and bloodshed and the preface to his reward, a reunion with patient, wily Penélopê, the perfect mate for cunning, outspoken Odysseus.

Additional stories of Odysseus's clever engineering skills occur in Aeschylus's *Philoctetes*, Dictys Cretensis's *Trojan War Diary*, Euripides's *Cyclopes*, *Hecuba*, and *Trojan Women*, Hyginus's *Fables*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Plato's *Poetry of Homer*, Sophocles's *Ajax*, *Odysseus*, and *Philoctetes*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*, which fills in the gaps of the Trojan saga.

A twentieth century adventurer, writer Ernle Bradford, served in the British navy during World War II and, while monitoring Nazi ship movements, filled restless nights by reading in ancient Greek of Odysseus's voyage. Bradford matched poetic details to Mediterranean landmarks and contends that Odysseus's itinerary is real: from Hissarlik, Turkey, north to Ismarus, southwest through the Cyclades, around Cape Malea, Greece, and west to Jerba, an island off Tunisia in northern Africa. Again seabound north, he touched the island of Favignana (Goat Island) and observed Mount Eryx in Sicily, made landfall at the island of Ustica north of Sicily, then sailed to southern Corsica or Sardinia. Traveling southeast to Terracina, Italy, he made a side venture to Gibraltar—the mythical voyage to hell—then passed through the Strait of Messina that divided Sicily and Italy. Arriving at Taormina on Sicily's eastern coast, he paused before journeying to Malta and to Corfu, Nausikaa's home, before ending his journey at Ithaka, now called Vathi, Greece.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To comprehend standard aspects of epic, particularly intervention of anthropomorphic gods in human activities
2. To isolate elements of magic and other supernatural influences
3. To enumerate incidents of dehumanization, menace, torment, and savagery
4. To compare types of danger and the degree of harm that comes to ships and sailors
5. To contrast details of light and dark, pain and comfort, sorrow and joy
6. To analyze the symbolism of the journey as the wandering of everyman
7. To characterize the Mediterranean microcosm of Homer's day
8. To isolate moral and psychological themes and motifs
9. To locate examples of compassion and hospitality
10. To connect the date of Homer's life with important events in world history, such as the use of iron for tools and weapons and the invention of harness and armor

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To place Odysseus's adventures in time order
2. To explain why Telémakhos leaves home without his mother's permission
3. To note the importance of Eumaios's loyalty
4. To account for Athena's preference for Odysseus over other heroes
5. To recapitulate Odysseus's role in the Greek victory over Troy
6. To illuminate the role of Alcinous in Odysseus's return to Ithaka
7. To enumerate calamities that keep Odysseus at sea for nine years
8. To describe elements of suspense that highlight the final

## THE ODYSSEY

meeting between Penélopê and her husband

9. To predict the future of Odysseus's reign in Ithaka
10. To justify the cruel deaths of Odysseus's mockers and the desecration of Melánthios's corpse

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning. Explain each. Book and page numbers pinpoint the context in which each item appears.

1. Alkinoös, this will not pass for courtesy: a guest abased in ashes at our hearth? Everyone here awaits your word; so come, then, lift the man up; give him a seat of honor, a silver-studded chair. Then tell the stewards we'll have another wine bowl for libation to Zeus, lord of the lightning—advocate of honorable petitioners. (Book 7, pp. 115-116)  
*(Book 7 is a tribute to the status of civilization in Homer's day. Ekhenêos puts into words the duties of the host and hostess in the ancient world, where guests were accorded honor and given welcome, shelter, and lodging without requirement that they identify themselves by name or nationality. As Ekhenêos indicates, wine is the usual gift or propitiation to Zeus, whose power is symbolized by thunder and who watches over seekers of aid and mercy.)*
2. Our banquet's ended, so you may retire; but let our seniors gather in the morning to give this guest a festal day, and make fair offerings to the gods. In due course we shall put our minds upon the means at hand to take him safely, comfortably, well and happily, with speed, to his own country, distant though it may lie. And may no trouble come to him here or on the way; his fate he shall pay out at home, even as the spinners spun for him on the day his mother bore him. (Book 7, pp. 116-117)  
*(The conclusion of the guest welcome requires that local people protect the visitor from harm. Alkinoös intends that Odysseus meet with the destiny that the Spinners—the Fates or Parkae—intended. Also known as Moirae or "allotted portions," the Fates are metaphorically pictured as spinners of thread. Klotho, the spinner, is the principal fate, who winds out the will of the gods. Her sister, Lakheis, determines the length of the thread, i. e., the length of an individual life. Atropos, the arbitrary bringer of death, cuts the thread without warning and with no opposition.)*
3. If, as may be, he is some god, come down from heaven's height, the gods are working strangely: until now, they have shown themselves in glory only after great hekatombs—those figures banqueting at our side, throned like ourselves. (Book 7, p. 117)  
*(The Greeks are careful to appease their gods by leaving token drops of wine on the hearth or altar or at tombs of deceased family members. The major reason for Odysseus's ten years of wandering as well as the sufferings of the other members of the Greek high command is the dreaded delusion of self-importance that lures human beings to think of themselves as godlike. Swelled with the fatal sin of pride after tricking the Trojans with Odysseus's ingenious wooden horse, the victorious Greeks departed from Troy without showing proper respect to the gods.)*
4. Friend, I, for one, have certain questions for you. Who are you, and who has given you this clothing? Did you not say you wandered here by sea? (Book 7, p. 118)  
*(According to the guest code that governed relationships between hosts and strangers, a guest was entitled to courtesy, food, shelter, and other amenities before hosts could question identity or destination. Clothing, the job of the female, was an important item because each garment was formed of fibers gathered from sheep or thistle or flax seed, then spun into thread, woven into cloth, shaped, and dyed or decorated with embroidery, beading, or metallic thread. The storage place was called a "guard-robe" because clothing was of great worth in terms of hours of labor and was thus a target of thieves. Nausikaa made a noble gesture of trust and welcome by awarding Odysseus garments from the royal chest.)*
5. Then my heart rejoiced—pitiable as I am! For blows aplenty awaited me from the god who shakes the earth. Cross gales he blew, making me lose my bearings, and heaved up seas beyond imagination—huge and foundering seas. All I could do was hold hard, groaning under every shock, until my craft broke up in the hurricane. (Book 7, p. 119)  
*(Odysseus angers Poseidon, one of the almighty triad of Olympian gods, by blinding his one-eyed son, the Kyklops Polyphêmus, with a sharpened stake. Because Odysseus boldly brags of his deed and reveals his name, Polyphêmus places a curse on the hapless sailor which follows Odysseus about the Mediterranean—that he come home late and wretched, in another man's ship, without his companions, and find with troubles at home. Eventually, the other gods counter Polyphêmus's enmity and enable Odysseus to return to Ithaka, but not before he loses his ships and sailors and treasure in a series of harrowing misadventures. Just as Polyphêmus had described, arrival home does not free Odysseus from the daunting task of ridding his palace of a pack of suitors.)*
6. In this manner they conversed with one another; but the great lady called her maids, and sent them to make a kingly bed, with purple rugs piled up, and sheets outspread, and fleecy coverlets in an eastern colonnade. The girls went out with torches in their hands, swift at their work of bedmaking; returning they whispered at the lord Odysseus' shoulder: "Sir, you may come; your bed has been prepared." How welcome the word "bed" came to his ears! (Book 7, pp. 120-121)  
*(In the ancient world, most clothing was either a natural color or bleached white from soaking in seawater and drying in the sun. Purple dye, made from shellfish, was a rare and costly commodity and a valuable trade item. For this reason, purple was the color of royalty and the rich and privileged. Arête's choice of purple rugs to adorn Odysseus's bed is a special touch, denoting honor and perhaps suggesting that she recognizes kingly behavior and royal courtesy.)*
7. Call in our minstrel, Demódokos, whom God made lord of song, heart-easing, sing upon what theme he will. (Book 8, p. 126)  
*(Homer pays tribute to the singer of songs, who was more than an entertainer or musician in the ancient world. Because of contact with wandering poets, isolated*

## THE ODYSSEY

communities learned the legends, myths, hymns, and tales that formed their common Greek heritage. After communal meals, the audience listened to the singer's song, which was chanted to the strum of a lyre or harp. The listeners memorized verses so that they might acquaint themselves with the glories of the past in the form of extensive genealogies of heroes and tales of noble courtships, battles, adventures, and deeds.

The tradition of blindness and poets occurs in the scene with Demódokos: "The crier soon came, leading that man of song whom the Muse cherished; by her gift he knew the good of life, and evil—for she who lent him sweetness made him blind." (Book 8, p. 127) Some critics interpret this line as a thumb-nail self-portrait of Homer himself. It is more likely that blindness is a metaphor for a different kind of sight—one that looks inward at the soul. Whatever its meaning, Homer does not dwell on the subject of blindness. Note that the Muse favors Demódokos and is responsible for offsetting his blindness with his talent for music.)

8. In time, when hunger and thirst were turned away, the Muse brought to the minstrel's mind a song of heroes whose great fame rang under heaven: the clash between Odysseus and Akhilleus, how one time they contended at the godfeast raging, and the marshal, Agamémnon, felt inward joy over his captains' quarrel; for such had been foretold him by Apollo at Pytho—hallowed height—when the Akhaian crossed that portal of rock to ask a sign—in the old days when grim war lay ahead for Trojans and Danaans, by God's will. So ran the tale the minstrel sang. (Book 8, p. 127)

(One of the conventions of ancient lore is the misinterpretation of prophecy. Phoebus Apollo, the chief source of future knowledge in ancient Greece, resided in Delphi, where supplicants came to learn of the future and to beg for Apollo's healing intercession against pain and disease. Apollo's spokeswoman, Pythia, was one of a series of priestesses who stood over a fissure in the earth and, overwhelmed by the natural vapors that arose, babbled equivocal messages that foretold the future.)

Agamémnon, eager to capture Troy, naively thinks the undertaking will be brief because Odysseus and Akhilleus had satisfied one condition of Apollo—that there be a quarrel between warriors. The real quarrel that portends the end of the war occurs in the tenth year of the conflict and becomes the focus of the Iliad. The first line of Homer's masterpiece begins: "Sing goddess the wrath of Akhilleus." Ironically, the pivotal argument focuses on the taking of a woman, Briseis, just as the Trojan War itself had begun over the theft of Queen Helen, wife of Menelaos and sister-in-law to Agamémnon.)

9. O son of Atreus, illustrious Lord Marshal, Agamémnon, what was the doom that brought you low in death? Were you at sea, aboard ship, and Poseidon blew up a wicked squall to send you under, or were you cattle-raiding on the mainland or in a fight for some strongpoint, or women, when the foe hit you to your mortal hurt? (Book 11, p. 198)  
(Upon his arrival in the Underworld, Odysseus learns of events that have occurred since his departure from

home and his separation from his comrades on their way from Troy. Agamémnon, who had sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to obtain favorable winds for the Greek fleet, returned to an angry wife. Klytáimnéstra and her lover Aigisthuss murdered the returning king and his Trojan concubine, Kassandra, a royal princess and prophet of Apollo. In his grief over the double murder, Agamémnon warns Odysseus, "Let it be a warning even to you. Indulge a woman never, and never tell her all you know. Some things a man may tell, some he should cover up." (p. 199) Agamémnon compares Klytáimnéstra to Penélopê and admits that Odysseus is blessed with a better spouse, "Not that I see a risk for you, Odysseus, of death at your wife's hands. She is too wise, too clear-eyed, sees alternatives too well.")

10. He claims an old tie with Odysseus, too—in his home country the Minoan land of Krete. From Krete he came, a rolling stone washed by the gales of life this way and that to our own beach. If he can be believed he has news of Odysseus near at hand alive, in the rich country of Thesprótia, bringing a mass of treasure home. (Chapter 17, p. 328)

(One of Odysseus's special talents is lying, which the Greeks valued as a survival method. In the touching scene with Penelope in Book 19, Odysseus tells of meeting the wanderer twenty years earlier, when he wore "a purple cloak, and fleecy, he had on—a double thick one. Then, he wore a brooch made of pure gold with twin tubes for the prongs, and on the face a work of art: a hunting dog pinning a spotted fawn in agony between his forepaws—wonderful to see how being gold, and nothing more, he bit the golden deer convulsed, with wild hooves flying. Odysseus' shirt I noticed, too—a fine closefitting tunic like dry onion skin, so soft it was, and shiny." (pp. 360-361) For good measure, Odysseus describes his squire Eurybatês as additional proof that the stranger has seen Penelope's husband. As she weeps with the truth of the description, Odysseus comforts her by weaving in the truth—that the king approaches Ithaka after leaving Thrinákia, washing up on Phaiakian soil, and finding favor with the Thesprótian king. To seal the telling of this subterfuge, Odysseus calls on "god of the zenith, noblest of gods" and swears an oath on Odysseus' hearth that the king will return "before the crescent moon.")

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the epic.

#### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe Odysseus's labors as he prepares to leave Kalypso's Island.  
(Homer reduces suspense by indicating that Odysseus will eventually return to his kingdom. After the gods take pity on the voyager, Zeus determines that he has suffered enough. Hermês the Wayfinder carries to Kalypso a stern message: "But it is not to be thought of—and no use—for any god to elude the will of Zeus. He notes your friend, most ill-starred by renown of all the peers who fought for Priam's town—nine years of war they had,

## THE ODYSSEY

before great Troy was down. Homing, they wronged the goddess with grey eyes, who made a black wind blow and the seas rise, in which his troops were lost, and all his gear, while easterlies and current washed him here. Now the command is: send him back in haste. His life may not in exile go to waste." His destiny, his homecoming, is at hand, when he shall see his dearest, and walk on his own land.

Kalypso urges her guest to stop lamenting, cut timber, shape a broad-beamed flatboat, and stock the hull with bread, water, red wine, and clothing. The nymph provides a bronze axehead, adze, auger, and sail cloth, which he uses to make planking and ribs for the hull. He fences the sides with willow and ballasts with logs to protect against heavy seas. After rigging the braces and halyards in place, he drags the boat over rollers to the sea.)

2. How does Alkínoös entertain Odysseus during his visit to Phaiakia?

(The day after Odysseus's arrival, Alkínoös provides a banquet of twelve freshly slaughtered sheep, eight pigs, and two oxen. He serves wine and furnishes Odysseus and guests places of honor. Pontónoös places a silver-studded chair in the center of the room for Demódokos, the blind minstrel, to occupy while he entertains the group with a song accompanied on the lyre. Demódokos chooses a popular lay about Odysseus's quarrel with Achilles. Odysseus weeps and conceals his sorrow in his cloak. Alkínoös, realizing the pain that Demódokos's song gives his guest, calls for a change of pace—outdoor games, including boxing, wrestling, broadjump, and running. Odysseus declines to participate and claims, "hard days, and many, have I seen, and suffered.")

The group's courteous reception ends after Seareach insults Odysseus's prowess. He calls the valiant sailor a "skipper of some tramp that crawled from one port to the next, jam full of chaffering hands; a tallier of cargoes, itching for gold—not, by your looks, an athlete." Leaping to his feet, Odysseus calls him a fool and hurls a discus farther than any man in the group can outdistance. Alkínoös, who is nettled by Seareach's poor manners, sends for Demódokos's instrument and calls for dancing. To the delight of his audience, the blind bard sings about Aphrodité's adultery with Arês and Hephaistos's capture of the couple in an invisible net.

At the king's order, two men—Halios and Laódamas—dance solo and demonstrate their skill with a carved purple ball in a kind of gymnastic virtuoso performance. Alkínoös demands parting gifts for Odysseus from the chiefs and princes in the audience. Seareach apologizes for his rudeness and presents his gift—a bronze sword with silver hilt and carved ivory sheath. Returning to the palace, Alkínoös calls for a chest, cloak, tunic, a golden inlaid chalice, and warm bath for Odysseus, followed by dinner and more of Demódokos's music, which includes details about the wooden horse.)

3. Describe Odysseus's first meeting with Penélopê upon his return to Ithaka.

(Penélopê falls asleep and is made radiant by the arts of Athena. Bathed in ambrosia, grand in height and shape, and clear of complexion, she awakens with her pain forgotten. She chases her maid for making rude remarks to

the stranger and orders the housekeeper to bring a bench and sheepskin so Odysseus can be seated and answer her questions.

Penélopê explains how she tricked the suitors for over three years by weaving a death cloth for Laërtês and pulling out her work each night until her maids recognized her guile. He tells her of a meeting in Krete, where Odysseus was his guest for twelve days. The details cause her to weep tears and to ask the details of his dress and his company. She recognizes from the data and the description of Eurybatês, Odysseus's herald, that the stranger does know the facts and proclaims him a friend and honored guest. She summons maids and Eurykleia to wash the guest's feet and prepare a bed of colored rugs and coverlets. Encouraged to confide in the stranger, Penélopê asks his opinion of the suitors, of her maturing son, and of a troublesome dream in which twenty geese died from the attack of one great eagle. Odysseus predicts that Penélopê's husband will return and kill the wooers "before one of these lads can stretch or string that bow or shoot to thread the iron!")

4. Explain the advice that Teirêsias gives Odysseus about returning to Ithaka.)

(After drinking from the pit of blood, Teirêsias, the Theban seer, warns that the return home will be difficult: "Though you survive alone, bereft of all companions, lost for years, under strange sail shall you come home, to find your own house filled with trouble: insolent men eating your livestock as they court your lady. Aye, you shall make those men atone in blood! But after you have dealt out death—in open combat or by stealth—to all the suitors, go overland on foot, and take an oar, until one day you come where men have lived with meat unsalted, never know the sea, nor seen seagoing ships." He concludes that Odysseus will die a seaman's death "when you are wearied out with rich old age, and your country folk in blessed peace around you.")

5. How does Zeus account for Poseidon's hatred of Odysseus?

(To Athena's charge that Zeus bears an untenable grudge against Odysseus, Zeus retorts that he admires the wise sailor and adds, "no mortal gave so much to the lords of open sky." The god explains that Poseidon hates Odysseus for blinding Polyphêmos, Poseidon's son, the strongest of the one-eyed Kykloplês. Zeus promises that "Poseidon must relent for being quarrelsome will get him nowhere, one god, flouting the will of all the gods.")

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. Explain why Odysseus is Athena's favorite.

(Athena, Zeus's daughter and the goddess of war and wisdom, holds Odysseus in great esteem because he is a strong warrior and because he is cleverer than the other Greeks. Odysseus saves himself from difficult situations by his glib tongue, quick deceptions, and ingenious strategies. A chief example, his escape from the cave of Polyphêmos, illustrates how he fools the Kyklops, blinds him, and exits the cave under the very nose of the raging giant. However, the incident also illustrates Odysseus's great weakness, the vaunting pride that inspires him to admit his real name is Odysseus, not "Nobody.")



## THE ODYSSEY

7. Explain why the guest code is so important in the ancient world.

*(Because wanderers and hosts were mutually bound to honor each other, people were able to find safe lodging for the night, food and water, medical care, sanctuary from brigands, and a degree of companionship during long journeys. The guest code bound both host and guest: the host had to provide sleeping quarters and food for travelers; the guest, receiving the courtesy of a stranger, was expected to do no harm to his host or to the host's home or family during the stay.)*

*The guest code is a boon to both Odysseus and Telémakhos during their sojourns from Ithaka. As Telémakhos comes in contact with the courtesies of Nestor's and Menelaos's courts, he learns important examples of deportment, generosity, and trust. Odysseus, too, learns that strength alone is not enough to get him through the ordeal of his wanderings. Without courtesy and mutual respect, he would never have charmed Kalypso or Alkínoös and Arêtê, their subjects, and their daughter Nausikaa, who rescued him from the lowest point on his journey.)*

8. How does divine interference in human life both aid and hinder the Greeks?

*(Odysseus is a prime example of a mortal whose life is altered by divine intervention. Because he kills the one-eyed giant Polyphêmos, Odysseus is hounded by storms and sea monsters at the will of Poseidon, Polyphêmos's father, who hears his son's prayer and answers with the weapons of the second most powerful Olympian god. Aiolos aids the seaman and his crew by tying the winds in a bag, but the offer is not repeated after the sailors open the bag and the winds return them to the wind god's residence. Odysseus's savior is Athena, the goddess of wisdom and Zeus's daughter. She transforms him into a beggar when he returns to Ithaka; she intervenes in a minor incident to lead him home safely and to rescue Telémakhos from harm.)*

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Explain how Odysseus's journey represents the wanderings of all seekers.

*(According to some anthropologists, historians, and critics, Odysseus's wanderings symbolize all people's search for fulfillment. He accepts the challenge of society by accompanying the Greek fleet to Troy and fighting a common enemy. When divine opposition separates him from his family, he uses his intelligence and strength to combat dangers, both natural and supernatural. Upon his return, he reestablishes his relationship with son and wife before regaining control of his kingdom.)*

*Like Odysseus, all human beings face challenges to life, family, livelihood, and personal achievement. Much of Odysseus's struggle involves self-control, particularly over an excess of pride. So too do ordinary people learn that without mastery of self, life becomes more complicated, more unpleasant and onerous. Also, like Odysseus, most people discover their most challenging enemies close to home, whether in the form of external dangers or the more common threats—boredom, unrest, dissatisfaction, or domestic strife.)*

10. Explain why this epic is a world classic.

*(For human beings in general, the challenges of war,*

*religion, love, and maturity form life's struggles. Because Homer deals with these universal themes—the longing for home, coming to maturity, confronting temptations, search for a personal relationship with the gods, stresses on the family, concern over death and the afterlife, and aftermath of political upheaval—he creates a world classic that is applicable to all people in all times and places. The influence of Homer upon later classic authors, particularly Dante, Virgil, Horace, Tennyson, and Longfellow, illustrates the universality of his ageless epic.)*

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Write a summary of Alfred Tennyson's poem "Ulysses." Contrast information you find in the poem with facts given by Homer. Quote lines to support your analysis.
12. Compose a song honoring Demódokos. Add lines that compare his skill and taste with Homer's. Comment on earthly honors that the minstrel deserves.

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Homer's style, present the following terms and applications to his novel:

**epic** a long formal poem narrating a serious story about a race or nation facing a war or other threats to its existence or value system, such as Ithaka's loss of its king and the suitors' wooing of the queen. The epic focuses on the interplay between gods or divinities, such as Zeus and Athena, and human agents, such as Odysseus and his wife and son. Derived from scraps of folk stories, visions, tales, hymns, myths, legends, rituals, sagas, song lyrics, genealogies, or poems, the segments of action in an epic form a unified history or chronicle.

**hubris** excessive pride, arrogance, or conceit, which is the major sin in ancient Greek philosophy and the cause of the downfall of a tragic hero like Odysseus. Because the hero fails to curb his pride, he continues to suffer at the hands of the gods. Central to the *Odyssey* is one example of foolishness: Odysseus's taunting of Polyphêmos, to whom he introduces himself as Nohbdy. After Odysseus's men flee the one-eyed giant's cave, Odysseus cannot resist calling out his real name. Polyphêmos, whom Odysseus has blinded, calls on his father Poseidon to exact a penalty against the Ithacan. Thus, the sea god holds Odysseus at his mercy, battering him so severely that he arrives in Phaiakia without ship or crew and washes ashore naked and dazed for Nausikaa to find.

**rhythm** an exact or approximate pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables or words that binds together a work of literature. Robert Fitzgerald uses a loose iambic pentameter, which follows a pattern of five feet, each carrying a long and short beat. In the description of preparations for a guest, Homer writes:

- ' / - ' / - ' / - ' / - ' /  
Their own retainers made a busy sight  
- ' / - ' / - ' / - ' / - ' /  
with houseboys mixing bowls of water and wine,  
- ' / - ' / - ' / - ' / - ' / -  
or sopping water up in sponges, wiping  
' / - ' / - ' / - ' / - ' /  
tables to be placed about in hall,  
- ' / - ' / - ' / - ' / - ' / - j  
or butchering whole carcasses for roasting.

## THE ODYSSEY

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### Art

1. Sketch a frieze depicting a Greek sailor's life aboard an ancient vessel: loading a ship with stores, launching it, setting sails, securing the tiller, sleeping, cooking, making landfall, trading with natives, battling a storm, refitting damaged rigging, arriving home, beaching the ship and removing the steering oar and mast.
2. Sketch a series of coins, seals, or good luck charms featuring contrasting females in Odysseus's life: Kirkê, Kalypso, Penélopê, Nausikaa, Helen of Troy, Queen Arete, Athena, Antikleia, and Eurykleia.

#### Geography

1. Indicate on a wall map the Mediterranean world featured in Greek mythology. Include the major cities of Athens, Alexandria, Corinth, Sparta, Thebes, Troy, and Delphi. Add important islands: Crete, Cyprus, the Cyclades, Samos, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Mytilene, and Gibraltar. Using an atlas of the ancient world, label areas that now have modern names: the Peloponnesus, Macedon, Thrace, Troy, Pontus, and Magna Graecia.
2. Draw a map depicting Ernie Bradford's proposed route for Odysseus. Note the number of times the route crosses and recrosses the same points.
3. Discuss the role of Heinrich Schliemann in turning the study of mythology into a useful science.

#### Social Studies

1. Discuss the position of a widowed queen in the ancient world. Determine why Penélopê cannot eject the suitors. Explain why the guest code requires her patience with their bad manners, arguments, drunkenness, plotting, and freeloading until Odysseus returns.
2. Make a wall chart of social status in Odysseus's time. Create levels that feature the swineherd, nurse, servants, slaves, sailors, soldiers, citizens, royalty, visitors, widows, daughters, and beggars. Add a separate list that orders major and minor gods, goddesses, sea nymphs, and such monsters as the Kyklopês, Skylla, Kharybdis, and the Laistrygonians according to their power and importance.
3. Explain in a paragraph the moral debt that Odysseus owes Elpênor, the dead sailor.

#### Mathematics and Logic

1. Explain why the size and type of ship and the number of passengers determines how often the captain must land to take on water and stores. Discuss why seaside communities prospered from the size and depth of their harbors, the availability of pitch and wood, and the number of dock workers who could expedite the process of loading and unloading.
2. Search the text for clues to the amount of time Odysseus spends at each spot. Chart his adventures in time order, filling in lengths of stays and time spent at sea. Explain why his journey is given as twenty years away from Ithaka.
3. Sketch maps of constellations. Explain where they got their names—Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, Sagittarius, Cassiopeia, Cancer—and how ancient mariners like Odysseus used the sky as a chart to steer by. Discuss why this style of navigation is no longer adequate for

precise measurement of land, sea, and space objectives.

#### Science and Health

1. Explain why Odysseus arrives at Phaiákia with salt crusting his body.
2. Research the development of the sailing ship from Homer's time to present day sailboats.
3. Explain how an understanding of plate tectonics aids the researcher who seeks information about the sunken city of Atlantis, Odysseus's Ithaka, Troy, and other ancient Mediterranean sites.
4. Discuss why the Pythia and Delphi were vital to healers and to the sick, who often slept in the temple in hopes of gaining a message from Apollo during a dream.

#### Language Arts

1. Contrast several translations of Polyphêmos's prayer to Poseidon in the last four paragraphs of Book 9. Discuss why this prayer is a pivotal part of the story.
2. Compile a database of nicknames, patronyms, and designations for characters and places in the *Odyssey*. For example, show Dawn with "finger tips of rose," Kharybdis as "Prowling Rocks" or "Drifters," Athena as "Pallas," Poseidon as "god of earthquake," Hermês as "Kyllênê" or "Wayfinder," the Naiadês as "immortal girls," and Zeus as Kroníon or Father Zeus, "driver of the stormcloud."

#### History

1. Make a time line of the most famous works in early literature: Jason's voyage on the Argo, Beatitudes, Sequoia's syllabary, Hippocratic oath, David's psalms, *Ramayana*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, Sermon on the Mount, Ghost Dance, Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, Hammurabi's laws, *Book of the Dead*, Plato's *Republic*, Josephus's *History of the Jewish War*, *Qu'ran*, Confucius's *Analects*, *I Ching*, *Edda*, *Gilgamesh*, *Tao Te Ching*, Mayan calendar, Gautama Siddhartha's meditation under a bo tree, and Ten Commandments. Add other works: poems, description, laws, speeches, adventures, prophecy, and scripture.
2. Give an oral presentation explaining why history in the time of Thucydides and Herodotus was filled with exaggeration, myth, legend, and outrageous tales.

#### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compare the heroic image of Odysseus with that of Jason, Medea, Agamémnon, Helen of Troy, Atalanta, Aeneas, Penthesilea, and Theseus and with the American legendary and historical figures Paul Bunyan, Calamity Jane, John Henry, Crispus Attucks, Annie Oakley, High John the Conqueror, Sarah Winnemucca, Davy Crockett, Pocahontas, Deganawidah, Hiawatha, Lewis and Clark, Squanto, Sacajawea, Molly Pitcher, Paul Revere, Belle Starr, and Daniel Boone.
2. Read aloud from stories of Cuchulainn, Brendan, the Queen of Sheba, Roland, El Cid, Queen Boudicca or Boadicea, Beowulf, Parsifal, Launcelot, Elaine, Galahad, Tristan, Isolde, King Arthur, Hiawatha, Montezuma, Queen Guinevere, Merlin, Alexander the Great, Morgan le Fay, and Joan of Arc. Compare leadership qualities of these characters and of Odysseus.
3. Act out episodes from the story that demonstrate a blend of character traits of the hero, including courtesy, hostility,

## THE ODYSSEY

ty, curiosity, piety, respect, craftiness, loyalty, pride, anger, foolhardiness, tenderness, intelligence, apprehension, craftsmanship, vulnerability, self-control, and courage.

4. Make a computer-generated genealogy of the Titan and Olympian gods and goddesses. Show the connecting link between the two charts. Include data about the powers of each deity. For example, Apollo was god of the sun, light, healing, prophecy, and creativity.
5. Write a few unrhymed lines about a hero or heroine in which you demonstrate dactylic hexameter, the metric style used by Homer and his imitators. Place stresses to show where emphasis falls in each line.
6. Explain how Homer's works influenced Virgil when he composed the *Aeneid*, the Latin literary epic commissioned by Augustus Caesar, Rome's first emperor. Note the difference between a folk epic and a literary epic. Discuss how Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha* fits the definition of epic.
7. Give an oral presentation on the courtship of Helen of Troy. Explain the roles of Leda, the swan, Kastor, Pollux, Klytemnestra, Odysseus, Menelaos, Aias, Agamémnon, and Akhilleus.
8. Draw a map of the Mediterranean Sea and mark the places where archeologists have uncovered evidence of ancient settlements, temples, battlegrounds, sunken cities and fleets, and seaports. Locate Ithaka and suggest routes by which Odysseus might have returned home safely after the Trojan War without venturing to Tunisia, Corsica, Sicily, the Strait of Messina, or Gibraltar.
9. Compose a news story for the local newspaper in which you describe Odysseus's homecoming, Telémakhos's journey to Sparta, and the battle with the suitors. Explain how peace comes to Ithaka.
10. Sketch costumes for the major characters—warriors, queens, servants, kings, islanders, and sailors. Show each figure engaged in a normal activity, such as cooking, sacrificing to the gods, playing, weaving, swimming, or sitting at the table and enjoying the tale of a wandering minstrel.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of Odysseus's love, competitiveness, courage, skill, grace, athletic ability, composure under pressure, anger, and courtesy.
2. Compile lines that express Homer's ability to flesh out an ordinary scene with specific details, for example, Odysseus's description of his own brooch.
3. Compose a scene in which the nurse or Odysseus's father dies. Carry the ritual into the land of Death and reunions with familiar spirits.
4. Make a character list and explain the relationship of each to Odysseus. Include Aias, Kirke, Hermês, Athena, Antikleia, Elpênor, Kalypso, Helios, Telémakhos, Argos, Agamémnon, Zeus, Nausikaa, Nestor, Alkínoös, Arêtê, Menelaos, Iros, the Ismarians, Demódokos, Melánthios, Nohbdy, and Poseidon.

## HOMER'S WORKS

*Iliad*  
*Odyssey*  
*Hymn to Aphrodite*  
*Hymn to Apollo*  
*Hymn to Dionysus*  
*The Battle of the Frogs and Mice*  
*Margites*  
*Kerkopes*

### RELATED READING

Ernie Bradford's *Ulysses Found*  
Euripides's *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*  
Bernard Evslin's *The Adventures of Ulysses*  
John Gardner's *Grendel*  
Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*  
Moses Hadas's *Jason and the Argonauts*  
Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*  
Homer's *Iliad*  
Mary Renault's *The Bull from the Sea*, *The Nature of Alexander*, and *The King Must Die*  
Sophocles's *Philoctetes*  
Mary Stewart's *The Crystal Cave* and *The Hollow Hills*  
Virgil's *Aeneid*  
Derek Walcott's *Omeros*

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bell, Robert. *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clío, 1982.
- . *Women of Classical Mythology*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clío, 1991.
- Bowder, Diana, ed. *Who Was Who in the Greek World*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1982.
- Casson, Lionel. *The Ancient Mariners*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990.
- Evslin, Bernard. *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths*. New York: Bantam, 1968.
- Feder, Lillian. *The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology*. New York: New American Library, 1970.
- Grimal, Pierre. *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1942.
- Homer. *Odyssey*.  
[the-tech.mit.edu/Classics/Homer/odyssey.sum.html](http://the-tech.mit.edu/Classics/Homer/odyssey.sum.html), July 26, 1996.
- "Homer's Odyssey,"  
[www.li.suu.edu/library/courses/hum101/homer.html](http://www.li.suu.edu/library/courses/hum101/homer.html), July 26, 1996.
- Howatson, M. C., ed. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- MacKendrick, Paul, gen. ed. *Greece and Rome*. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic, 1977.
- Manguel, Alberto, and Gianni Guadalupi. *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.
- Moore, Michael, and Tom Lewis. "Commentary on the Odyssey of Homer."  
[don.skidmore.edu/foureyes/english/EVOLVING\\_CANON/EC\\_TEXT\\_FILES/Odyssey\\_Commentary.html](http://don.skidmore.edu/foureyes/english/EVOLVING_CANON/EC_TEXT_FILES/Odyssey_Commentary.html), July 26, 1996.
- Rose, H. I. *Gods and Heroes of the Greeks*. New York: Meridian, 1960.



## THE ODYSSEY

Rosenberg, Donna. *World Mythology*. Lincolnwood, Ill.:  
Passport Books, 1992.

Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Greek Classics*. Lincoln, Neb.: Cliffs  
Notes, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Voyages in Classical Mythology*. Denver: ABC-  
Clio, 1994.

Staff, Chester G. *A History of the Ancient World*. New York:  
Oxford Univ. Press, 1991.

Wood, Michael. *In Search of the Trojan War*. London: British  
Broadcasting Corp., 1985.

## THE ODYSSEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

Select a term from the list below to replace underlined words in the selection that follows. You will have answers left over when you finish.

adrift	filigree	lofted	ramparts	sup
bestowed	fumes	lusty	rouse	tripod
bottling	landfall	plunder	sheer	warden
domain	lodged	provisioning	stinted	wedged

We made our approach (1) \_\_\_\_\_ on Aiolia Island, kingdom (2) \_\_\_\_\_ of Aiolos Hippotadês, the wind king dear to the gods who never die—an isle floating (3) \_\_\_\_\_ upon the sea, ringed round with brazen barriers (4) \_\_\_\_\_ on a steep (5) \_\_\_\_\_ cliff-side. Twelve children had old Aiolos at home—six daughters and six bold (6) \_\_\_\_\_ sons—and he gave girls to boys to be their gentle brides; now those lords, in their parents' company, dine (7) \_\_\_\_\_ every day in hall—a royal feast with smoke (8) \_\_\_\_\_ of sacrifice and winds that pipe' round hollow courts; and all the night they sleep on beds of netting (9) \_\_\_\_\_ beside their ladies. Here we put in, accommodated (10) \_\_\_\_\_ in the town and palace, while Aiolos played host to me. He kept me one full month to hear the tale of Troy, the ships and the return of the Akhaians, all which I told him point by point in order. When in return I asked his leave to sail and asked furnishings (11) \_\_\_\_\_, he limited (12) \_\_\_\_\_ nothing, adding a bull's hide sewn from neck to tail into a mighty bag, restraining (13) \_\_\_\_\_ storm winds; for Zeus had long ago made Aiolos guardian (14) \_\_\_\_\_ of winds, to awaken (15) \_\_\_\_\_ or calm at will.

## THE ODYSSEY

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Name the characters described below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ queen who gives guests a soothing drug
2. \_\_\_\_\_ goddess who changes Odysseus into a beggar
3. \_\_\_\_\_ falls dead at Odysseus's approach
4. \_\_\_\_\_ spies a scar on Odysseus's leg
5. \_\_\_\_\_ helps Odysseus from the shore to the Phaiakian palace
6. \_\_\_\_\_ changes men into swine
7. \_\_\_\_\_ answers the blinded Kyklops's prayer
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the blind poet who sings of the adultery of Arês and Aphroditê
9. \_\_\_\_\_ deceives suitors by pulling out woven strands from loomed work
10. \_\_\_\_\_ tells Telémakhos a long story about Troy
11. \_\_\_\_\_ is the blind seer living in the land of Death
12. \_\_\_\_\_ arrives from Olympos with a command to Kalypso to let Odysseus go
13. \_\_\_\_\_ lures sailors to their death on rocks
14. \_\_\_\_\_ tells Odysseus the status of his parents
15. \_\_\_\_\_ are hanged like doves and larks

#### Part II: Fact/Opinion (20 points)

Mark each of the following statements either F for fact if the text justifies it or O for opinion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Odysseus's son must make his own way in the world if he is to succeed his father on the throne of Ithaka.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. False slave women are executed because they consorted with the fortune-hunting suitors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Escape from the Kyklops's cave is possible because Athena gives Odysseus the idea of hiding under sheep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Zeus takes pity on Odysseus because he has suffered enough and allows him to return home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Penélopê is courteous to the beggar because she fears the gods' punishment if she is unkind.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Nausikaa chooses to help Odysseus because he suits her better than the young men who court her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Argos tries to remain alive so he can welcome his master home one more time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Elpênor has reason to petition Odysseus to bury his remains.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Odysseus deliberately seeks a turn at the bow to prepare for the slaughter of the suitors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Penélopê takes her time before accepting the stranger as Odysseus because she wants to be sure of his identity.

## THE ODYSSEY

### Part III: Matching (20 points)

Match the following statements with a place name.

- |                         |           |             |               |                  |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|------------------|
| A. Troy                 | C. Krete  | E. Olympos  | G. Pylos      | I. land of Death |
| B. Scylla and Kharybdis | D. Ithaka | F. Phaiakia | H. Lakedaimon | J. Aiolia        |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. place Odysseus falsely claims to have met the great Ithakan warrior
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. home of Helen and Menelaos
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. court where Odysseus tells of his wanderings
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. home of a faithful swineherd
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. city Odysseus leaves before killing the men of Ismaros
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. island where Odysseus acquires the winds in an oxhide bag
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. deadly strait
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. place where Odysseus reunites with his mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. home of the gods
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. court of Nestor

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how and why Odysseus makes peace with angry relatives in the final chapter.
2. Enumerate Penélopé's qualities as queen, hostess, wife, and mother.
3. Describe the destructive power of Skylla and Kharybdis.
4. Discuss how Odysseus's foolish boasting costs him more years of loss and loneliness.
5. Account for the suitors' many years in Penélopé's home.

## THE ODYSSEY

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Identification (30 points)

Identify the objects that fit the following descriptions. Choose from the list below:

Achilles's armor	bag	footstool	lyre	scar
adze	cattle	gorgon	Odysseus's bow	tripod
anvil	discus	invisible net	pit	twelve axes
auger	distaff	laundry	roof	weaving

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. tool that Odysseus uses to bore holes for his boat
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. object hurled at an aged beggar
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. object that a servant hangs near Demódokos's fingertips
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. load that Nausikaa takes by mule-cart to the shore
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. three-legged object given as an award
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. excavation that Odysseus makes in the land of Death
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. prize for which Aías challenges Odysseus
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. place from which Elpênor falls
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. object the king of the winds makes out of oxhide
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. mark that helps Eurykleia identify Odysseus
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Penélopê's craft
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. target for Odysseus's bow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. symbol of Hephaistos's power
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Helios's prized possessions
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. object that the suitor fails to bend

#### Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the following lines with names, places, or objects.

1. Odysseus proves his identity by explaining how he made his \_\_\_\_\_ from a living tree.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ warns Odysseus that some wives are not to be trusted.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ sucks up the ocean all the way to the sandy bottom.
4. From \_\_\_\_\_, Zeus rules the world with his loud thunder.
5. By burning \_\_\_\_\_, servants cleanse the hall of bodies and gore.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ meets Odysseus on the shore of Ithaka and changes him into an old man.
7. Odysseus greets with great formality his aged \_\_\_\_\_.
8. An \_\_\_\_\_ marks Elpênor's grave.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ lives with the gods rather than with the mortal dead.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ gives the company an anodyne that relieves sadness.

## THE ODYSSEY

### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the letter of an answer for each question below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Telémakhos conceals his departure from A. Eurykleia. B. Odysseus. C. Penélopê. D. Nestor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Odysseus requires advice from A. Teirêsias. B. the spirit of his dead mother. C. Agamémnon. D. Aîas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Arêtê makes Odysseus welcome by offering him A. cloth of purple. B. a discus to hurl. C. a cauldron and tripod. D. a chest of healing drugs from Egypt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Odysseus claims to have seen the great Ithakan in A. the land of Death. B. Ismaras. C. Krete. D. Skheria.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The greatest honor to a corpse goes to that of A. Alkínoös. B. Elpênor. C. Argos. D. Melánthios.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Penélopê's hesitation to welcome her husband causes A. Telémakhos to command her to stop stalling. B. Eurykleia to chuckle. C. her father-in-law to mourn. D. Odysseus to smile.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Telémakhos insists on sparing the life of A. Melánthios. B. Medôn. C. Demódokos. D. the swineherd.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The "Wayfinder" is the special name of A. Athena. B. Poseidon. C. Hermês. D. Teirêsias.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Iros is unwilling to share the hall with A. another beggar. B. a blind minstrel. C. Odysseus's son. D. women who consort with the suitors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Alkínoös himself packs A. Odysseus's ship. B. purple robes in the chest. C. Kalypso's adze and auger. D. the altar with meat for Zeus and Poseidon.

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Discuss how Penélopê suits Odysseus as the appropriate wife for a wily, clever sailor.
2. Project the type of king Telémakhos will make.
3. Summarize the types of loss that Odysseus must suffer before returning home.
4. Contrast the Seirênês, Laistrygonians, and Lotos Eaters as hindrances to Odysseus's return.
5. Describe a day in Ithaka while Odysseus and Telémakhos are away from the court.



## THE ODYSSEY

### ANSWER KEY

#### VOCABULARY TEST

- |             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1. landfall | 9. filigree      |
| 2. domain   | 10. lodged       |
| 3. adrift   | 11. provisioning |
| 4. ramparts | 12. stinted      |
| 5. sheer    | 13. bottling     |
| 6. lusty    | 14. warden       |
| 7. sup      | 15. rouse        |
| 8. fumes    |                  |

#### COMPREHENSION TEST A:

##### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Helen     | 9. Penélopê   |
| 2. Athena    | 10. Nestor    |
| 3. Argos     | 11. Teirésias |
| 4. Eurykleia | 12. Hermês    |
| 5. Nausikaa  | 13. Seirênês  |
| 6. Kirke     | 14. Eumaios   |
| 7. Poseidon  | 15. maids     |
| 8. Demódokos |               |

##### Part II: Fact/Opinion (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. O | 6. O  |
| 2. F | 7. O  |
| 3. O | 8. F  |
| 4. F | 9. F  |
| 5. O | 10. F |

##### Part III: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. J  |
| 2. H | 7. B  |
| 3. F | 8. I  |
| 4. D | 9. E  |
| 5. A | 10. G |

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

#### COMPREHENSION TEST B

##### Part I: Identification (30 points)

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. auger             | 9. bag             |
| 2. footstool         | 10. scar           |
| 3. lyre              | 11. weaving        |
| 4. laundry           | 12. 12 axes        |
| 5. tripod            | 13. anvil          |
| 6. pit               | 14. cattle         |
| 7. Akhilleus's armor | 15. Odysseus's bow |
| 8. roof              |                    |

##### Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. bed       | 6. Athena   |
| 2. Agamémnon | 7. father   |
| 3. Kharybdis | 8. oar      |
| 4. Olympos   | 9. Herakles |
| 5. brimstone | 10. Helen   |

##### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. D  |
| 2. A | 7. B  |
| 3. A | 8. C  |
| 4. C | 9. A  |
| 5. B | 10. A |

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



**THE STRONGEST BOOKS YOU CAN BUY**

PERMA-BOUND BOOKS • 617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650  
Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169

PERMA-BOUND CANADA • Box 517, Station A • Willowdale, Ontario M2N 5T1  
Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-705-876-9703

email: [perma-bound@worldnet.att.net](mailto:perma-bound@worldnet.att.net)

VISIT OUR WEB SITE: <http://www.perma-bound.com>