Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Odyssey

by Homer

written by Michael Fisher

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Background Information

The man historians call Homer is actually quite an elusive and mysterious character. Of course, no actual records of his life exist, and what has been strung together about the life of the poet throughout the years is all no more than speculation and hearsay. What we do know is that two major works—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—were written down at some time around the sixth century B.C., and survive from that period to the modern era in essentially the same form. Today, both of these works serve as a fragment of living history that provide us insight into that ancient world.

The birth of Homer is estimated to be as early as 1200 B.C.; However, the styles of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* correlate with a style that is thought to have existed much later, which has led some historians to doubt the validity of that early birth date. To further complicate matters, it is likely that a group of Homer’s students or followers were responsible for the written versions of the poems since writing was not a part of the early oral tradition from Homer’s time. In this scenario, the written forms of the two poems are surely much different than the original oral composition, which would have undergone many changes over the years as it was passed along in the oral tradition. With only a speculative time-frame to work with, the task of assessing how much could have changed in style, tone, and content from the time until the time when they were finally written down much more difficult.

Records discovered by some modern scholars indicate that not even the ancient Greeks knew the true origin of the poems. In fact, some ancient Greek scholars who investigated Homer’s life believed that the works attributed to him were actually written by a woman. Whatever is the true case, and whomever is the mysterious author behind the epic poems that remain, we are left with are a pair of vivid, humorous, and often graphic tales of heroics in a mythologically enchanted ancient Greek landscape. It is reasonable to assume that some of the stories within each epic are based on fact, while others are pure fiction—but both give us invaluable insights into the thinking, values, and cultural lives of the ancient Greeks.

In addition to the changes the poems may have gone through as they were told and retold before being written down, the modern versions of these poems have also seen many translations and adaptations. The original poems were written in the Greek language, and featured a flourishing, lyrical verse. Many modern translations have changed the text into a modern prose that is more readable and digestible. This has made the literature more accessible to the modern reader, as part of an effort to keep the legacy of these great works alive.
Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. show how the *Odyssey* fits the defined characteristics of the epic poem and discuss how elements of the *Odyssey* are remnants of its oral tradition, such as:
   - the use of epithets
   - recitation of lineage
   - the use of *in medias res*

2. define and cite instances of the following literary terms:
   - allusion
   - anthropomorphism
   - black humor
   - conflict
   - *deus ex machina*
   - digression
   - epic simile
   - epithet
   - flat or static character
   - foreshadowing
   - *in medias res*
   - irony
   - omen
   - parable
   - paradox
   - round or dynamic character
   - symbol

3. discuss the omniscient narrator and how it works in the *Odyssey*.

4. recognize and point out instances of dramatic irony in the *Odyssey*.

5. discuss the ancient Greek notions of fate and omens.

6. identify the following gods, and discuss their roles in the *Odyssey*:
   - Zeus
   - Athena
   - Poseidon
   - Hermes
   - Apollo
7. identify the major themes and motifs in the *Odyssey* and expound upon the ways in which they are revealed in the text:
   - the importance of humility and the dangers of *hubris*
   - the importance of knowing one’s place in society
   - spiritual and emotional growth
   - vengeance and reciprocity
   - appearance versus reality
   - the importance of perseverance
   - the importance of loyalty
   - the importance and obligation of hospitality

8. identify and explain the major symbols in the *Odyssey*, including:
   - the sea
   - Laertes’ shroud
   - Odysseus’ bow
   - Penelope and Odysseus’ bed
   - home (Ithaca)

9. look objectively at the differences in values between today’s society and the society of Homer’s ancient Greece as they relate to:
   - the qualities of a hero
   - the roles and rights of women
   - class roles
   - religion, prophets, and omens
   - hospitality

10. define and list the qualities of the epic hero and show how Odysseus fits this mold. Compare the epic hero to the modern hero by discussing values, attributes, and virtues.

11. compare the gods of ancient Greece, which were polytheistic and anthropomorphized, to the modern monotheistic idea of a superhuman, flawless god.

12. identify the conflicts that run throughout the *Odyssey*, including: man vs. man, man vs. nature, man vs. himself, and man vs. society.

13. explain the relationship between Helen and the Trojan War.
Questions for Discussion and Essay

1. Discuss the literary techniques of *in medias res* and *digression* as they apply to the *Odyssey*. Why are these methods of narration effective in the *Odyssey*? What is added to the story by the use of these techniques?

2. What characteristics define epic and modern heroes? How are they different? How does Odysseus display the characteristics of an epic hero?

3. There are repeated references to the fate of Agamemnon in the story. What significance does the prevalence of Agamemnon’s tale have to the story of Odysseus?

4. Discuss the character of Penelope. Is she always loyal to Odysseus? What circumstances of ancient Greek society make it difficult for her to be completely loyal?

5. Discuss the ethics of the *Odyssey* and how they differ from ethics typically accepted in modern society. How are cunning and deception looked at in the *Odyssey*? How are stealing and using one’s power to take advantage of others looked upon in the *Odyssey*?

6. Discuss both the positive and negative attributes of the Greek gods. How does the ancient Greek concept of godliness differ from the modern one? What differences exist between the powers of male and female gods?

7. Discuss Odysseus’ values. How do they differ from modern values? Is Odysseus a loyal husband to Penelope? Is Odysseus a faithful commander to his crew? What choices does Odysseus make that seem to inhibit or contradict his stated priority of making it home?

8. Characters are described as static (flat) or dynamic (round). Identify the major characters in the *Odyssey* according to these characterizations and justify your distinctions.

9. Present a brief biography of Homer, and discuss his treatment of minstrels in the *Odyssey*.

10. Discuss the roles of women in ancient Greek society. How are women portrayed in the story?

11. Using the Phaeacians and the Cyclopes as examples, discuss the ancient Greek notion of hospitality. Discuss some possible reasons for this elevated notion of hospitality as it applied to ancient Greek society at large.
12. Define oral tradition. Why were stories repeated in ancient societies? What are the practical values of this tradition? How do epithets, recitation of lineage, and repetition become important within the oral tradition? What is the importance of dramatic irony and humor?

13. Discuss the role of religion in ancient Greek society. What was the cultural importance of prophets, omens, and sacrifices?

14. Although Athena has taken up Odysseus' cause, he must still endure many travails and much suffering before he can fulfill his destiny. Discuss this fact in the context of the ancient Greek notion of deus ex machina, fate, and the roles of the gods.

15. Discuss the major symbols in the Odyssey, including: the sea, Laertes' shroud, Odysseus' bow, and the bed and home (Ithaca).

16. Discuss the spiritual and emotional growth of Telemachus throughout the Odyssey. What is signified by the fact that Telemachus almost strings the bow, but is stopped by his father before he does so?

17. As an epic hero, Odysseus is a complex character with positive and negative traits. Discuss Odysseus' traits, and how they both assist and impede him in the story.

18. Does Odysseus complete his mission? Why or why not? How does the story end? How might you have changed the ending to make it more believable in a modern sense?

19. Show that Athena and the other gods in the Odyssey are static characters, while Odysseus and Telemachus are both dynamic.
1. After spending each day weaving, Penelope unravels the shroud she is making each night because
   A. she cannot get any more wool.
   B. the gods have ordained that at the moment she finishes weaving the shroud, Laertes, Odysseus' father, will die.
   C. the gods have ordained that at the moment she finishes weaving the shroud, her son, Telemachus, will leave forever.
   D. she has promised to remarry when the shroud is completed.
   E. she is under a spell.

2. The tale of the fate of Agamemnon, who returned from the Trojan War only to be murdered at the hands of a devious suitor and a treacherous wife, is repeated throughout the Odyssey because
   A. it is part of the oral tradition to repeat stories so the listener can be reminded of the details.
   B. it is part of the oral tradition to repeat stories so that the storyteller can give the audience a break from taking in new material.
   C. it illustrates a fate that is deplorable to the ancient Greeks, who found honor in dying in battle or of old age.
   D. it foreshadows the one of the possible fates awaiting Odysseus on his return to Ithaca.
   E. all of the above

3. What is the token of recognition Odysseus uses to prove his identity upon his return home?
   A. a birthmark on his right temple
   B. a gold medallion given to him at birth
   C. a scar on his knee from a hunting trip as a youth
   D. the king's brand on his right thigh
   E. the talon of a bird he kept as a pet

4. The story begins somewhere in the middle of the plot. The literary term used to describe this convention is
   A. *deus ex machina.*
   B. *cogito ergo sum.*
   C. *caveat emptor.*
   D. *semper fi.*
   E. *in medias res.*

5. Calypso decides to let Odysseus go because
   A. she realizes he is not in love with her.
   B. she sees an omen of an eagle with a snake in its talons.
   C. Hermes, messenger of the gods, tells her that Zeus has commanded it.
   D. Hermes, messenger of the gods, tells her that Circe is in love with Odysseus.
   E. she planned to keep him with her for exactly seven years, and the time is up.
6. The Trojan War began when
   A. Menelaus’ wife, Helen, ran off with Paris, a prince of Troy.
   B. the Trojans refused the gift of a fine horse from the Greeks.
   C. the Trojans kidnapped Helen and held her hostage.
   D. Paris, prince of Troy, insulted Helen, saying she was not the most beautiful woman in the world.
   E. Agamemnon quarreled with Odysseus.

7. On what was seemingly a simple voyage home after the Trojan War, Odysseus’ troubles began when he and his crew decided to
   A. test the theory that no ship could pass between Scylla and Charybdis.
   B. raid and pillage the Cicons to collect treasure before returning home.
   C. sail to Egypt to visit an ancient Pharaoh with potent life-giving herbs.
   D. shoot magic arrows into the clouds to provoke the west wind.
   E. find the fleece of Jason.

8. The trait in Odysseus that Athena finds most alluring is his
   A. cunning.
   B. charity.
   C. cruelty.
   D. chastity.
   E. strength.

9. Odysseus travels to Hades to speak to the souls of the dead because
   A. he wants to know the fate of his mother.
   B. Circe tells him to talk to Agamemnon.
   C. Circe tells him to talk to the blind seer Teiresias.
   D. Circe tells him he must take Elpenor there.
   E. he wants to converse with the souls of the great dead.

10. Odysseus does not tell his men about the monster Scylla because
    A. he is afraid they will want to challenge her.
    B. he is afraid they will try to steal her sacred goats.
    C. he forgets to tell them because he is under Circe’s spell.
    D. he wants to see the monster for himself.
    E. he is afraid his men will abandon their oars.

11. How long do Odysseus and his men stay at Circe’s house?
    A. five hours
    B. one year
    C. one month
    D. ten years
    E. three days
12. What is the name of the eternal resting place for souls favored by the gods?
   A. Elysium
   B. Gymnasium
   C. Heaven
   D. Omphalos
   E. Limbolos

13. Poseidon wants to make Odysseus suffer because
   A. Ithaca does not have a temple dedicated to him.
   B. Odysseus forgot to offer hecatombs to Poseidon before sailing.
   C. Odysseus’ father shot an arrow through the sea-god’s ears.
   D. Odysseus and his men ate all the fish in the Aegean Sea.
   E. Odysseus blinded Poseidon’s son.

14. Before Telemachus calls for an assembly in Ithaca, how many other assemblies had been called since his father, Odysseus, left for Troy?
   A. one
   B. two
   C. three
   D. nineteen
   E. none

15. What is the nickname for the seals that sleep in shoals around the god Proteus in the sea cave?
   A. the barking dogs of Hecate
   B. Halosydne’s chickens
   C. the knights of Sophocles
   D. the Argives
   E. Charybdis’ otters

16. What animal is most often associated with omens in the Odyssey?
   A. dog
   B. fish
   C. snake
   D. bird
   E. basilisk

17. Which mythological creature below is not present in the Odyssey?
   A. Medusa
   B. the sirens
   C. Scylla
   D. Charybdis
   E. Cyclops
18. What does the name *Odysseus* mean?
   A. king of men
   B. wandering soul
   C. loyal heart
   D. child of anger
   E. child of the gods

19. Who speaks the following line: “I will now see whether Apollo will vouchsafe it to me to hit another mark which no man has yet hit.” (Pg. 223)
   A. Antinous
   B. Eurymachus
   C. Telemachus
   D. Odysseus
   E. Zeus

20. Athena intervenes to end the fighting between Odysseus and Telemachus and the relatives of the slain suitors who have come seeking revenge; however, she does not stop the fighting right away because
   A. she wants to wait until Odysseus and Telemachus are about to be slaughtered, to prove a point.
   B. she is enjoying the violence and is not quite ready to stop it.
   C. Zeus commands that she allow it to go on.
   D. she wants Telemachus to get a scar like the one his father has on his knee.
   E. she wants Telemachus to display his mettle in battle with his father so that Laertes can witness his son and his grandson fighting side by side.

**Essay (Answer any two)**

1. Show, through events in *The Odyssey*, that Odysseus is an epic hero.

2. Discuss the themes of loyalty and reciprocity in *The Odyssey*. Cite examples from the text to support your arguments.

3. Discuss both Odysseus and Telemachus as dynamic characters in *The Odyssey*. Cite examples from the text to support your arguments, and make contrasts against some of the static characters to provide emphasis.
# The Odyssey

## Test

**Answer Key**

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The Odyssey

Study Guide
Teacher's Copy

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Book I

Vocabulary
acquainted – familiar or knowledgeable
asunder – apart
atrociously – horribly, terribly
bard – a poet
barrow – a mound of dirt or stones placed over a burial site
bearing-post – a post that is vital to holding up the building
clamorous – loud, riotous
counsel – advice
embellishments – final touches
ewer – an oval pitcher with a base and wide spout, with decorations on the body
fleece – a soft, woolen blanket
havoc – chaos, ruin
hecatomb – a great sacrifice; in Greek times, involving 100 oxen
hied – hurried
insolence – rudeness, disrespect
lyre – a small harp with two curved arms, connected by a bar across the top
mettle – courage
nymph – a minor goddess who usually either lives in or personifies water, a tree, or a mountain
pacified – calmed, soothed
partaken – eaten
persecuted – harmed in an unfair way
pretext – an excuse
propitiate – to appease; to gain forgiveness
quells – subdues, silences
redoubtable – causing fear, awe
renown – fame, glory
sea-girt – surrounded by the sea
sheer – pure, absolute
short shrift – rude treatment
soothsayer – a fortune-teller
spunging – living at another person's expense
staid – dignified, serious
suitors – men seeking to marry a woman
tongue – language
torments – tortures
weal – well-being
1. Where is Odysseus at the beginning of the story? What has become of his men?

   *Odysseus is being kept captive by the goddess Calypso—who is in love with him and wants to marry him—on an island. Men were killed by the sun-god because they ate Apollo's cattle.*

2. When the gods adjourn for council, what is preoccupying Zeus?

   *Zeus is preoccupied by the disrespectful actions of Aegisthus, who murdered Agamemnon after stealing his wife. After the gods warned Aegisthus not to do either, Agamemnon's son, Orestes, murdered Aegisthus in retribution. Zeus is concerned that people will blame the gods for the chaos, even though the gods are not to blame.*

3. Why does Poseidon hold a grudge against Odysseus even though the other gods favor him?

   *Odysseus blinded Poseidon's son, Polyphemus.*

4. Where is Poseidon when the gods at council decide to help Odysseus to return home?

   *Poseidon is in Ethiopia, where the people are holding a festival in his honor.*

5. Why does Zeus reason that Poseidon will be pacified that the gods have decided to help Odysseus reach his home?

   *Because the gods have all decided on the matter together, Zeus reasons that Poseidon “can hardly stand out against us.” (Pg. 12)*

6. What two actions does Athena deem should be taken on Odysseus' behalf?

   1. *Hermes should be sent to tell Calypso that she must free Odysseus.*
   2. *Athena should go to Ithaca to encourage Odysseus' son, Telemachus, to speak out against the suitors, who are eating him out of house and home in the auspices of courting his mother, and to seek out his father by traveling abroad to inquire into news about him.*

7. Why does Athena want Telemachus to go out in search of news of his father?

   *Because it will make people speak well of him.*

8. Where do the gods hold their councils?

   *They are held on the top of Mt. Olympus.*
9. Who does Athena instruct Telemachus to visit in search of news of his father?

   Nestor (King of Pylos) and Menelaus (King of Sparta), two chiefs who were with Odysseus in Troy, help Telemachus.

10. What example does Athena (disguised as Mentes) use to encourage Telemachus to kill the suitors that plague his home with discourtesy and disrespect?

   Athena points out the praises that are being sung in Orestes’ name for having slain his father’s murderer.

11. Which of Odysseus’ qualities does Zeus cite in order to convince Athena that he is partial to the hero?

   Zeus says there is no man more capable, nor more liberal in his offerings to the gods, than Odysseus.

12. Cite instances where the idea of fate is invoked in book one.

   1. Mentes (Athena) says of Odysseus, “It rests with heaven to determine whether he is to return, and take his revenge in his own house or no.” (Pg. 15)

   2. Eurymachus says to Telemachus, “It rests with heaven to decide who shall be chief among us.” (Pg. 17)

13. Telemachus tries to assert his dominance as the master of the house by ordering his mother up to her room and threatening the suitors with death if they ignore his “formal notice to depart” (Pg. 17) in the morning. How do the suitors react to his behavior.

   The suitors marvel at Telemachus’ bold speech, for it is not something he has demonstrated previously. Antinous calls Telemachus’ speech, “bluster and tall talking,” and curses him never to be a chief, like his father was. (Pg. 17) Eurymachus placates Telemachus, telling him that he will not be challenged as master of his own house, then changes the subject.
1. When Telemachus makes his way to his father’s seat at the head of the council, “all marveled at him…even the oldest councilors made way for him.” (Pg. 19) Why is this? What does this tell us about the values of ancient Greek society?

*Telemachus is revered because Athena “endowed him with a presence of such divine comeliness that all marveled at him as he went by.” (Pg. 19) The quote demonstrates the high value ancient Greeks placed on physical beauty.*
2. At the assembly, the elder, Aegyptius, reminds the crowd that not a single assembly has been called since before Odysseus left for Troy, which was almost twenty years ago. For what reasons does Telemachus justify his calling for an assembly of the councilors?

Telemachus admits his grievances are personal, but he asks for the help of the citizens, friends of his father, in defending his house against the suitors who “…ere long will be the utter ruin of my estate…” (Pg. 20) He also asks for a ship and crew so that he can go to Pylos and Sparta in search of word of his father.

3. When Telemachus is making his pleas to the council for help in ridding him of the suitors, to what social customs does he appeal?

Telemachus appeals to the councilors on the grounds of their own consciences, public opinion, and the opinion of the gods.

4. Antinous, speaking on behalf of the suitors, makes a case for their innocence and says that Telemachus' mother, Penelope, is to blame for her son's misfortunes. How does Antinous make his case against Penelope?

Antinous says that Penelope has been driving each suitor mad by secretly encouraging each of them with empty words. He also describes the deceit she played on them by promising to marry one of them after she had finished making a pall for Odysseus' father, Laertes, but then, all the while, she has been unraveling the daily work she had accomplished each night.

5. Antinous offers Telemachus a solution to his problem by suggesting that he send his mother away to her father's house, and let her father choose the man she will marry. Why does Telemachus say he cannot do this?

Telemachus reasons that he cannot possibly turn the mother who bore him out of his father's house when he does not know whether his father is alive or dead. Telemachus says: "It would not be a creditable thing to do." (Pg. 21) Telemachus also notes that he would have to pay back Penelope's father, Icarius, the wedding dowry, and face the wrath of Icarius, the gods in heaven, and the Erinyes—vulture-like divinities who avenge wrongdoings within families.

6. How does the prophet Halitherses interpret the omen of the eagles that fly over the assembly?

Halitherses says that the omen means Odysseus is coming home after twenty years and will deal out death and destruction as revenge for the disrespect done to his house.
7. What is Eurymachus response to the prophesy? How does he try to discredit Halitherses?

Eurymachus threatens Halitherses with “a heavier fine than [he] will at all like paying…” (Pg. 22) Eurymachus tries to discredit Halitherses by saying that he too can read the omens of birds and these omens meant nothing. He also says that the old man is trying to win favor with Telemachus to gain a gift.

8. What compromise does Telemachus offer the council if they will give him a ship and crew that he might go in search of news of his father?

Telemachus says that if he learns his father is alive and on his way home, he will put up with the suitors for another twelve months. If, however, he learns that his father is dead, he will honor his father with a funeral and force his mother to marry.

9. Why is Mentor (Athena in disguise) angry at the men of Ithaca, who will not step up and help Telemachus in his plight?

Mentor says that they have forsaken Odysseus, who ruled them as if he were their father, and that they could easily help if they chose, “for you are many and they are few.” (Pg. 23)

10. The suitors make gibes at Telemachus, proffer their doubts as to his convictions, and try to inhibit him in his journey. Athena, however, makes certain that the journey takes place. List the things Athena does to aid Telemachus in preparing for his voyage.

• She offers him encouragement in the form of Mentor.
• She acquires a ship and crew for the voyage.
• She induces the suitors in Telemachus’ house to sleep so that he can get away unnoticed.
• She provides wind to speed the ship along.

11. What oath does Telemachus make his old nurse, Euryclea, swear?

Telemachus makes her swear not to tell his mother about his voyage until he is gone for twelve days.
Book III

Vocabulary
bandying – trading
bane – undoing; nemesis
batten – to overfeed
befell – happened to
certify – to confirm, prove
citadel – a fortress city
embarked – departed, took off
embers – ashes
firmament – a firm surface thought to be in the heavens, where the stars sat
gilding – gold leaf, used as decoration
guilds – military units
helm – steering control
import – significance
incessant – without stopping
mettle – courage
precedence – a place of honor
propitiate – to agree, appease
spits – long metal sticks on which meat was roasted
stratagem – a strategy, tactic
suppliant – placing oneself at another's mercy

1. What does Telemachus find the people of Pylos doing when he arrives? What does this activity illustrate about ancient Greek culture? Why is the situation ironic?

The people of Pylos are down at the sea making sacrifices to Poseidon as part of a festival in the sea-god's name. This activity illustrates the ancient Greek tradition of making sacrifices to the gods in order to receive good tidings in return. The situation is ironic because it is Poseidon who is keeping Telemachus' father from reaching home, and Telemachus makes a prayer and drink offering in the god's name.

2. What trademark of the epic poem is illustrated by Nestor's recollecting of the Trojan War for Telemachus on Page 29?

Listing numerous heroes and their past deeds is a trademark of the epic poem. Nestor lists many heroes as he recounts the Trojan War for Telemachus.

3. What qualities of the epic hero does King Nestor attribute to Odysseus in his recollections of him?

Nestor recalls Odysseus as a great leader and councilor when he says “there was no one who could compare with [Odysseus] in subtlety.” (Pg. 29)
4. What cultural belief is illustrated by the passage below?

“When, however, we had sacked the city of Priam, and were setting sail in our ships as heaven had dispersed us, then Zeus saw fit to vex the Argives on their homeward voyage; for they had not all been either wise or understanding, and hence many came to a bad end…” (Pg. 29)

Answers may vary. Example: This passage illustrates the cultural belief that the gods punish those who are insolent and fatuous, and by behaving in such a manner, the offender is bringing the punishment on his own head.

5. What might be the reason that the story of Agamemnon’s murder is repeated so often in this story?

Answers will vary. Example: In keeping with the oral tradition, many details are repeated throughout the story to keep the listener conscious of them. Also, the story of retribution by Agamemnon’s son serves as an parable of just desert, or reciprocity (which is a theme of The Odyssey) and foreshadows Telemachus’ role in avenging the disrespect being shown to his father.

6. What advice does Nestor give Telemachus, and why?

Nestor suggests that Telemachus go to visit Menelaus in Sparta (Lacedaemon) because, having only recently returned from his voyage in Egypt, Menelaus may have more recent news of Odysseus than Nestor has.

7. According to Nestor’s recounting, why did Menelaus and Agamemnon split ways?

Menelaus wanted to head home, while Agamemnon wanted to make an offering to Athena.

8. When was the last time Nestor saw Odysseus?

Nestor last saw Odysseus just before Odysseus headed back to rejoin Agamemnon.

9. How does Nestor react after Athena turns into an eagle?

Nestor is astonished and tells Telemachus that he is going to be a great hero some day since he is being attended to at such a young age by the gods. He makes a prayer to Athena, whom he is certain is the god in question, promising to sacrifice an unbroken heifer to her.
Book IV

Vocabulary
affliction – a trial
ambrosia – food of the gods
ambuscade – a caravan
avail – to use
banishes – eliminates
baths – tubs for water
bereft of – robbed of
bondsmen – men bound to work for others
bustled – hurried
chalice – a drinking vessel made from precious metals
clamorous – unruly, loud
cloister – a fortified house
cunning – sly
dissipated – broken up
exterminate – to destroy completely
fall to – to eat
freemen – independent men (as opposed to slaves)
hemming – confining
hewn – carved
hussies – promiscuous women
intercourse – a relationship
lotus – an addictive plant
miscreants – criminals
perfidy – treachery
prevaricate – to lie
rue – to regret
shoals – land left exposed by low tides
singularly – unusually
transport – to fit
usurp – to wrongly fill a place
valiant – brave
vouchsafed – granted, gave
yearned – ached

1. Use information from the text to support the following statement: King Menelaus is a good host in the ancient Greek tradition and shows proper respect to the unmatched divinity of the gods.

   Despite the fact that Menelaus is already hosting a wedding and has a full house, he orders his servant to invite the strangers (Telemachus and Pisistratus) in for supper, orders baths and fresh clothes for them, and has his servants take care of their horses. These actions are in keeping with the ancient Greek tradition of hospitality and also with the will of the gods. Menelaus shows reverence for the gods when he demurs after it is suggested that his home is as fine as Zeus.'
2. How does King Menelaus know Odysseus?

_They fought together in the Trojan War._

3. In Book IV, we are introduced to King Menelaus’ wife, Helen. Most of the listeners of ancient times would have known instantly that this was the fabled Helen of Troy, over whom the Trojan War was fought. Since modern readers may not be familiar with the story, they are forced to wait until she offers some clues as to her identity. What story does she tell that first clues readers to the fact that she is the fabled Helen of Troy?

_Helen speaks of her experience with Odysseus, who stole into Troy disguised as a beggar and later entered Troy inside the Trojan Horse. Helen says she was glad that Odysseus was able to kill many Trojans and gather information, in order to make his plan for sacking the city._

4. Now that Helen is back with her lawfully wedded husband, King Menelaus, on whom does she blame her past indiscretions? (Namely: having left King Menelaus to be with Paris, prince of Troy, which caused the Trojan War.)

_She blames the goddess Aphrodite: “…I was unhappy about the wrong that Aphrodite had done me…” (Pg. 41)_{}

5. During the Trojan War, Odysseus revealed himself to Helen after he stole into Troy disguised as a beggar to plot the ambush by the wooden horse. Although she swore not to betray him, there was some ambiguity surrounding the motivation of her actions when Odysseus and his men returned in the horse. We are told by King Menelaus, who was with Odysseus inside the Trojan Horse, that Helen walked around the horse three times, patting it and imitating the voices of the wives of the soldiers inside—trying to provoke the soldiers to give themselves away. King Menelaus interprets her behaviors, again, as induced by a god who favored Troy. What are some other possible motives for Helen’s behavior?

_Answers will vary. Example: Helen did not want to return to Greece. She wanted to expose the Argives, but was torn. Later, she knows she can blame her actions on “temporary insanity,” induced by the will or whim of some god. This is a common excuse for the questionable actions of both women and men throughout the story. Homer, however, seems to be questioning this forbearance of guilt in his society when he has Zeus make claim that men’s actions are their own, as in the case of Agamemnon’s murder, etc._
6. Find an example of an epic simile describing how Odysseus will take his revenge on the suitors.

“A hind might as well lay her new born young in the lair of a lion, and then go off to feed in the forest or in some grassy dell: the lion when he comes back to his lair will make short work with the pair of them—and so will Odysseus with these suitors.” (Pg. 42)

7. For what reason does King Menelaus say that the gods detained him on the island of Pharos, off the coast of Egypt? Why does King Menelaus say that Idothea, daughter to Proteus, the old man of the sea, decides to help him to get off the Island?

Menelaus claims that the gods detained him because “[his] hecatombs had not given them full satisfaction, and the gods are very strict about having their dues.” (Pg. 43) He says that Idothea took pity on him because she had “taken a great fancy to [him]…” (Pg. 43)

8. How does the goddess, Idothea, help King Menelaus and his men disguise themselves while they lay in wait for Proteus, the old man of the sea?

She fetches four seal skins for Menelaus and his men to wear and digs four pits for them to lie in. She also gives them some ambrosia to put under their nostrils, which helps them endure the stench of the skins.

9. Show examples of where Homer emphasizes the fact that it is difficult, or even nearly impossible, for a mortal to get the best of a god. Why does Homer do this?

When Idothea suggests that Menelaus try to capture Proteus, Menelaus says he will need help, “for a god is not easily caught—not by a mortal man.” (Pg. 43) When King Menelaus catches Proteus, Proteus asks him which of the gods it was that “hatched this plot with [King Menelaus] for snaring [Proteus]…” (Pg. 45) Answers will vary for the latter question. Example: These portions serve as reminders to the audience of the iniquities of gods and mortals—a belief upon which the success of the story depends.

10. What does King Menelaus learn from the old man of the sea about Odysseus?

He learns that Odysseus is being held captive by the nymph Calypso on an island, and Odysseus has neither ships nor sailors to take him home.
11. What is the Elysian Plain? How does the god, Proteus, describe it? For what reasons, according to Proteus, will King Menelaus be taken to the Elysian Plain?

The Elysian Plain is the place where the souls of those who are beloved by the gods go after they die. Proteus describes it as such: “There fair-haired Rhadamanthus reigns, and men lead an easier life than anywhere else in the world, for in Elysium there falls not rain, nor hail, nor snow, but Oceanus breathes ever with a West wind that sings softly from the sea, and gives fresh life to all men.” (Pg. 46) Proteus tells King Menelaus that “[he] shall not die in Argos, but the gods will take you to the Elysian Plain, which is at the ends of the world… This will happen to you because you have married Helen, and are Zeus’ son-in-law.” (Pg. 46)

12. Who are the ringleaders of the suitors? How do the suitors learn of Telemachus’ journey? What does Antinous say he will do to Telemachus?

Antinous and Eurymachus are the ringleaders of the suitors. The suitors learn of Telemachus’ journey when Noemon comes to ask them if they know when Telemachus will return. Telemachus has Noemon’s ship, and Noemon wants to use it to go to fetch one of his unbroken foals from Elis. Antinous says he will lay in wait for Telemachus in a ship, then ambush and kill him upon his return.

13. When Medon, the servant who overhears the suitors plotting to ambush Telemachus, comes to alert the Queen Penelope of this malicious plan, she makes a speech condemning the waste made upon Odysseus’ estate. Whom does Penelope blame? Whom does she blame for not telling her about her son’s journey? What does this example illustrate about ancient Greek civilization?

Penelope blames the servants for the waste and for not telling her about her son’s journey. Answers will vary for the latter question. Example: This interaction shows some of the disparity between classes in ancient Greek society and gives the reader some insight as to the relationship between masters and servants.

14. Athena creates a vision in the form of Penelope’s sister, Iphthime, to appear before Penelope. What does the vision tell Penelope to calm her fears? What does it decline to tell her, and why? What does this illustrate?

The vision tells Penelope that her son has not done harm to the gods, and thus will return safely. It tells her that Athena accompanies her son and has compassion for Penelope. The vision will not tell Penelope about Odysseus. Answers will vary as to why and what the example illustrates. Example: It is difficult to say why the apparition will not tell Penelope about Odysseus. Homer constantly re-illustrates the point that the gods are whimsical in their decisions to help and not to help throughout the book, and this seems to serve as another instance of that prevalent ambiguity.
Book V

Vocabulary
adze – a tool used to cut wood
astride – sitting atop
augers – drills
bliss – joy
bounteous – generous, fruitful
calamities – disasters
cormorant – a predatory bird found near the sea
dehmed – thought
dismay – sorrow
harbinger – an omen, sign
keel – the bottom of a boat
raiment – clothing
reek – odor
reeled – turned violently
squally – stormy, rainy
transgress – to disobey
trident – a long, three-pronged fork (symbol of Poseidon)

1. In making her case for the gods to help Odysseus return home to avenge his house, what literary device does Athena make use of? Cite the example from the text and explain the literal meaning.

   Athena makes use of verbal irony. She says, “I hope there may never be such a thing as a kind and well-disposed ruler any more, nor one who will govern equitably. I hope they will be all henceforth cruel and unjust…” (Pg. 53) Athena is being sarcastic while making the point that despite the fact that Odysseus was a good and fair ruler. Because the men who benefited from Odysseus’ equanimity and graciousness as a ruler have forsaken him, they should never benefit from anything similar in a ruler again because they are undeserving.

2. What human emotion does Calypso accuse the gods of for making her free Odysseus? What ancient Greek notion about the gods does this accusation illustrate? Is this an example of anthropomorphism? Why or why not?

   Calypso feels that it is jealousy that motivates the gods. This accusation illustrates the notion idea that the gods are ‘human,’ despite being immortal. Answers will vary for the latter question. Example: The attribution can be construed as anthropomorphism. However, anthropomorphism implies the giving of human characteristics to inanimate things, and the gods in this sense are not inanimate—therefore, it is a bit vague.
3. Why does Calypso agree to free Odysseus, despite her objections?

   She releases Odysseus because she fears the wrath of Zeus.

4. What is the oath that Calypso takes to prove to Odysseus she means no mischief against him?

   Calypso makes an oath sworn by the waters of the river Styx. —“...the most solemn oath which a blessed god can take.” (Pg. 56)

5. What does Odysseus use to navigate as he sails away from the island?

   He follows the constellations in the sky.

6. King Poseidon, returning from Ethiopia, catches sight of Odysseus escaping and realizes that the gods have changed their minds as to Odysseus’ fate. Why is he not afraid—as Calypso was—to continue to cause strife for Odysseus? What does this example illustrate about the power relationships of the gods?

   Poseidon, Zeus’ brother, is a more powerful god than Calypso. This example shows the hierarchy that existed among the immortal gods.

7. Who does Odysseus think is causing the storm?

   Odysseus blames Zeus for the storm.

8. How does Ino—who was once a mortal but has since risen to the rank of marine goddess—try to help Odysseus? How effective is her help? Who eventually helps Odysseus again?

   Ino gives Odysseus her veil, telling him no harm can come to him so long as he wears it. Despite the veil, Odysseus is crushed against the rocks and almost drowns. The text says that “poor Odysseus would have certainly perished even in spite of his own destiny…” if it were not for the help of Athena. (Pg. 60) Therefore, Ino’s help was ineffective.

9. Cite the epic simile in the last paragraph of Book V. Explain its literal meaning in the context of the story.

   “Then, as one who lives alone in the country, far from any neighbor, hides a brand as fire-seed in the ashes to save himself from having to get a light elsewhere, even so did Odysseus cover himself up with leaves.” (Pg. 61) Interpretations of the epic simile will vary. Example: The epic simile refers to the fact that Odysseus has to hide himself because he is friendless and alone and does not wish to venture out in seeking help since for he may find trouble instead.
Book VI

Vocabulary
begrimed – covered (usually associated with dirt, grime)
cruse – an ornamental jar, vessel
discomfits – irritates
disparaging – insulting
ravenously – with extreme hunger and thirst
scandalized – embarrassed
scion – a son
unkempt – messy
unweariable – incapable of being tired
want – having lack or need

1. How does Athena arrange the meeting of Odysseus and King Alcinous’ daughter, Nausicaa? In terms of literary devices, what is this an instance of?

   Athena disguises herself as Nausicaa’s friend and convinces Nausicaa that they must wash the linen of all her attendants. (Nausicaa can earn a good name for herself by having her attendants looking sharp) Thus, Nausicaa and her maids go to the stream near the place where Odysseus is sleeping to do the washing. When they are finished washing and about to leave Athena makes Nausicaa throw the ball they had been playing with at one of the handmaids. After the maid misses the ball and it goes into deep water, they shout and consequently Odysseus wakes up. Even though Odysseus is naked and haggard, and his appearance causes the handmaids to be frightened and run off, Athena takes away Nausicaa’s fear so that she will deal with Odysseus’ pleas for assistance. This is an example of “deus ex machina,” which is very common in The Odyssey and in Greek mythology in general.

2. Cite the epic simile used to illustrate Nausicaa’s beauty.

   “As the huntress Artemis goes forth upon the mountains of Taygetus or Eurymanthus to hunt wild boars or deer, and the wood nymphs, daughters of Aegis-bearing Zeus, take their sport along with her (then is Leto proud at seeing her daughter stand a full head taller than the others, and eclipse the loveliest amid a whole bevy of beauties), even so did the girl outshine her handmaids.” (Pg. 65)

3. As part of his plea for assistance, Odysseus prays that heaven grants Nausicaa all the things her heart desires. What are the things he specifies that this should be? How does he justify his statement? What does this illustrate about ancient Greek culture?

   Odysseus specifies the following items: a husband, a house, and a happy, peaceful home. Odysseus says that there is “nothing better in this world than that a man and wife should be of one mind in a house. It discomfits their enemies, makes the hearts of their friends glad, and they themselves know more about it than anyone.” (Pg. 66) Answers to the last question will vary. Example: Odysseus’ assumptions as to what Nausicaa should desire give insight to the social orders and thinking of the time.
4. State a theme that runs in accordance with Nausicaa's statement in response to Odysseus' flattery, whereby she says “There is no accounting for luck; Zeus gives prosperity to rich and poor just as he chooses, so you must take what he has seen fit to send you, and make the best of it.” (Pg. 66)

*Answers will vary. Example: Humans, despite their positive or negative traits or dispositions, are at the mercy of the gods, whose will is beyond the realm of the comprehension of men.*

5. Why does the princess Nausicaa wish Odysseus to enter the town alone? What does this illustrate about ancient Greek culture?

*Nausicaa is worried about the gossip that will spring up amongst the town's people if she should arrive with a stranger en tow. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: This example speaks to the exclusivity of some of the Greek cities and the importance put on public opinion.*

6. Why might the Phaeacians have a temple dedicated to the god Poseidon? Why is it ironic, in the context of ancient Greek mythology, that Odysseus would be sheltered and kept from Poseidon's harm by the Phaeacians? What kind of irony is illustrated by this example?

*The Phaeacians are sea-faring folk, thus it makes sense that they would have a temple to Poseidon—the Sea-god. It is ironic because the Phaeacians do not know that they are helping Odysseus against the will of their patron god who will be very unhappy with them. We learn later that King Alcinous and his queen, Arete, are both descended from Poseidon as well. It is an example of dramatic irony.*

7. How does Nausicaa direct Odysseus to behave when he enters her house? What prophesy does she offer him?

*Nausicaa tells Odysseus to go directly to her mother, ignoring her father, and to lay his hands on her mother's knees in appeal. She says, “If you can gain her over, you may hope to see your own country again, no matter how distant it may be.” (Pg. 68) Answers to the latter question will vary.*

8. Why does Athena not show herself openly to Odysseus at the end of Book VI?

*Athena is afraid of the wrath of her uncle Poseidon (Zeus' brother), who will be angry with her for helping Odysseus.*
Book VII

Vocabulary
comely – beautiful
consummate – absolute
disposition – personality
dowered – blessed
importunate – insistent
precincts – confines, limits
shuttles – spinning devices
westering – sinking (in the west)

1. How does Athena aid Odysseus in getting to the house of King Alcinous?

   *Athena sheds a thick mist around Odysseus to make him invisible and then appears to him in the form of a little girl to direct him to King Alcinous’ house.*

2. What are we told is different about the Phaeacians (compared to other Greeks) that necessitates Athena’s protection?

   *They do not like strangers.*

3. Why might it be that Odysseus has to gain the good will of Arete in order to be furthered along his way home? What lesson of ancient Greek society is encapsulated in this vignette?

   *Answers will vary. Example: Arete represents the ideal woman in Greek society and is favored by the gods. This aspect of the story speaks to the role of men and women in ancient Greek society. Although men are considered to be stronger, they must still prove themselves to women in order to obtain validation.*

4. What excuse does Odysseus make to prevent Nausicaa from being scolded for not bringing him directly to the house? How does this action embody the archetype of the epic hero?

   *Odysseus lies and says that Nausicaa bid him to follow along with the maids but he demurred because he was ashamed of his appearance. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: The epic hero is cunning and shrewd and comes up with quick solutions to most of the problems he encounters. This is a quick, cunning response. It is also chivalrous—a quality that the epic hero shares with the modern one.*

5. In boasting of the proficiency of his ships, how long does King Alcinous say it took his sailors to make the journey to Euboea—the furthest of any known place? What does this tell us about the size of the known world in ancient Greece?

   *It took them one day. The known world was very small compared to the size of the actual world.*
Book VIII

Vocabulary
amiss – wrongly (to offend)
chieftains – lower-level leaders
cloisters – tents, gazebos, porches
defiled – stained, violated, made impure
festooned – decorated
freighting – hauling
intrigue – a secret plot
loth – [loath] unwilling
piteously – very sadly
raiment – garments, dress
reviled – loathed, despised
vestibule – an outer chamber (a large foyer)

1. Throughout *The Odyssey*, Athena beautifies men in her favor by making them appear taller, more muscular, and younger—in a word, “godlike.” What does this tell the reader about values in ancient Greek culture?

   *Answers will vary. Example: The ancient Greeks believed that those who exhibited beauty and health demonstrated the favor of the gods. The worthy people were those with these attributes.*

2. The famous bard, Demodocus, has been gifted by the heavenly muse with an aptitude for song, but at what price? How is this similar to Homer?

   *He lost his eyesight. Homer was also thought to be blind.*

3. What is King Alcinous’ first clue that the stranger might be Odysseus?

   *Alcinous sees the stranger weeping bitterly as the bard recounts the tale of the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles that marked the beginning the Trojan War.*
4. Why was Agamemnon glad that his chieftains (Odysseus and Achilles) were quarrelling?

(This question requires some history of the Trojan War. We get small sections recounted to us in the manner of in medias res.) Agamemnon had been foretold the occurrence of this argument in the form of an oracle by Apollo at Pytho. Apollo told Agamemnon that the quarrelling of these two chieftains would trigger the onset of the Trojan War, which Agamemnon was in favor of to avenge his brother King Menelaus, whose wife Helen had defected to Troy with Paris.

5. Why do you think King Alcinous suggests the athletic contests?

Answers will vary. The possible reasons are multiple: One possibility is that Alcinous sees Odysseus weeping and suggests the athletic contests to bring an end to the bard's song. A second reason, which Alcinous proffers in his speech, is so that “[Odysseus] on his return home may be able to tell his friends how much [the Phaeacians] surpass all other nations as boxers, wrestlers, jumpers, and runners.” (Pg. 81) This goes along with the theme of athletic fitness being next to godliness in ancient Greek society. The king wants to advertise the prowess of his people in athletic feats. A third reason may be that the king wants to test Odysseus' identity—for if he is indeed Odysseus, the hero of legend, he should be able to display unmatched prowess in these events.

6. Epic heroes had flaws just like everyone else. What flaw does Odysseus display in Book VIII?

Odysseus allows himself to be taunted into displaying his physical prowess in discus throwing, even though he did not want to reveal his identity by showing off.

7. In what way does Odysseus show himself to be a worthy epic hero by deferring to the customs of ancient Greek hospitality and to the gods and dead heroes?

Odysseus shows deference to the code of social conduct by refusing to box with Laodamas, even though Laodamas had taunted him, because “[Odysseus] is his guest, and one cannot compete with one's own personal friend.” (Pg. 82) Then, when he is boasting, Odysseus says, “I far excel everyone else in the whole world, of those who still eat bread upon the face of the earth…” deferring in his speech to both the dead and to the gods. (Pg. 83)

8. What sport does Odysseus not claim greatness in? What is his reason? What sport does King Alcinous then say his men excel in? How might this be an example of Odysseus deferring to the ancient Greek custom of hospitality?

Running. Odysseus says he is weak from being at sea without food. King Alcinous says his men excel in running. Answers to the last question will vary. Example: It is possible that Odysseus omitted running so that King Alcinous could save face and avoid an awkward position. King Alcinous graciously accepted, as part of the code of hospitality.
9. The bard’s tale following the games is in the form of a parable. Cite the passage that tells the lesson of the parable.

“Ill deeds do not prosper, and the weak confound the strong.” (Pg. 84)

10. Having possibly offended the king earlier as to the athletic prowess of his people, what compliment does Odysseus offer after the bard’s tale?

He says the Phaeacian dancers are the most nimble in the world.

11. From the bard’s song we learn about the Trojans’ reaction to the fabled Trojan Horse, in which Odysseus and the other chieftains were laying in wait at the gates of the city. What were the two alternate courses of action the Trojans debated before settling on the fateful third which was to let it remain as an offering and propitiation to the gods?

The Trojans debated breaking up the wooden horse as firewood, then and there, or dragging it to a nearby cliff and hauling it over.

12. Cite an example of foreshadowing in the form of prophesy at the close of Book VIII.

King Alcinous tells Odysseus, “Still I do remember hearing my father say that Poseidon was angry with us for being too easy-going in the manner of giving people escorts. He said that one of these days he should wreck a ship of ours as it was returning from having escorted someone, and bury our city under a high mountain.” (Pg. 88)
Book IX

Vocabulary
array – a formation
besmirched – covered, smeared
entrails – intestines, inner organs
esconced – buried
gobbets – chunks
hoggets – sheep that are at least one year old
invoked – prayed for
livelong – entire
ramping – fussing
renown – fame
smote – struck

1. State the apparent paradox in Odysseus’ description of himself to King Alcinous, when he says, “I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, renowned among mankind for all manner of subtlety, so that my fame ascends to heaven.” (Pg. 91)

*Boasting about being renowned for subtlety is paradoxical.*

2. What is ironic about Odysseus’ description of the men from Ithaca, of whom he tells King Alcinous: “…my eyes know none that they love better to look upon.” (Pg. 91)

*This statement is ironic because Odysseus will kill a large number of them upon his return; namely the suitors.*

3. According to Odysseus, what are the things most dear to a man?

*Men desire their own country (home) and parents.*

4. How do Odysseus’ men cause him trouble, both on Ismarus and in the land of the Lotus-eaters?

*After the sacking of the city of Ismarus, Odysseus’ men refuse to leave, remaining instead to drink wine and slaughter animals to eat. This gives the Cicons time to re-group and many of Odysseus’ men are killed before they escape. In the land of the Lotus-eaters, three of Odysseus’ men get a taste of the Lotus, which is so good they refuse to leave. Odysseus must force them back to the ships.*
5. Explain the apparent irony in the fact that Odysseus worries about meeting “some savage who would be of great strength, and would respect not right or law.” (Pg. 94)

*Odysseus and his men have acted like lawless savages many times—including the sacking of the Cicons’ city, Ismarus, and various lootings.*

6. Where did Odysseus get the highly-potent, sweet black wine he takes with him onto the Cyclopes’ island?

*It was given to him by Maron, the priest of Apollo, whose life he spared when sacking Ismarus.*

7. Besides the problems he has with his men, Odysseus himself makes some foolish mistakes due to pride and arrogance. This is in keeping with the tradition of the epic hero, who is flawed, despite his greatness. What are two mistakes he makes in Book IX which cost lives? What are the reasons for each of these mistakes?

*Odysseus’ men want to leave with the booty they have pilfered from the Cyclops’ cave, but Odysseus decides to stay. He wants to meet the Cyclops in the hope that the Cyclops will give him a present. This is despite the fact that he knows the Cyclopes to be unruly and lawless types. The second major mistake is when Odysseus jeers the Cyclops despite the pleas of his men, and tells the Cyclops his name for the sake of boasting. The Cyclops, knowing Odysseus’ name, is able to aid Poseidon in exacting revenge.*

8. In the tradition of the Epic Hero, Odysseus shows creativity and wit in making his escape from the Cyclops’ cave. Describe the clever scheme Odysseus uses to escape.

*Odysseus tricks the Cyclops into getting drunk on the wine and falling asleep. He and his men then drive a pole into the Cyclops’ eye, blinding it. Knowing that the Cyclops would cry out for help to the others, Odysseus told the Cyclops that his name was ‘Noman,’ so that when the other Cyclopes ask him “who is trying to kill you?,” his response is ‘no man.’ Also, knowing that the blinded Cyclops would think he would try to escape immediately after the attack, Odysseus has his men wait and go out in the morning, bound to the bellies of the sheep.*
Book X

Vocabulary
arrayed – set up, arranged
dumb – unable to speak
fathom – a unit of length equal to six feet
fawned – made a fuss over
flayed – skinned
flit – to fly about without a particular goal
forthwith – immediately
gambol – to frolic
gossamer – a sheer, translucent fabric
halloo-ballooing – loud weeping or moaning
lairs – hiding places
lamented – moaned, complained
prevailed – won
reconnoiter – to spy from a distance
savour – aroma

1. How does Aeolus, captain over the winds, try to help Odysseus reach home? What goes wrong with the plan?

Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag of west wind. When Odysseus is sleeping, his men become roguishly curious—thinking there is treasure in the bag—and open it, letting the wind out.

2. How does Odysseus lose all the ships in his fleet?

The giant ogres of the rocky stronghold smash his ships with boulders. Only Odysseus’ ship is able to escape.

3. Why is Eurylochus not turned into a swine along with the rest of the men he leads to meet Circe?

Eurylochus suspects the goddess of mischief and stays outside.

4. In another instance of “deus ex machina,” Hermes appears in the form of a young man to aid Odysseus in his encounter with Circe. What does Hermes tell Odysseus will happen to him if he gives in to the seduction? What does this illustrate about Circe’s role in mythology as relates to the dynamic between men and women in ancient Greek society?

“She will unman [him] and make him fit for nothing.” (Pg. 108) Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: Circe represents a woman who can strip a man of his value by changing him into a beast of burden. There are many references in the story to women who are the downfall of men, or the cause of great strife for men.
5. How long do Odysseus and his men stay with Circe? Why does Odysseus finally decide to leave? Is Odysseus under a spell? If not, what does this suggest about Odysseus’ true desire to get home? Can Odysseus’ actions be construed as unfaithful in terms of ancient Greek culture?

*They stay with Circe for one year. Odysseus decides to leave because his men are nagging him to get home.*

*Answers to the latter questions will vary. Odysseus seems to be charmed by Circe, but we do not learn of his being under a spell, and he is clearly free to leave as he pleases, as Circe allows him to leave, and even helps him when he expresses his desire to do so. There are some inherent contradictions in The Odyssey and this seems to be one of them. Odysseus seems to forget about his hunger to get home, and is contented, temporarily, on the island of Circe. This can be counted among his faults and is in keeping with the archetype of the epic hero. It would be difficult to construe Odysseus’ actions as unfaithful, for, just like Helen was forgiven for running off with Paris at the whim of Athena, Odysseus’ will is no match for the will of the goddess, Circe, and his behavior would be excused. In ancient Greek culture, there was a double standard as to what a person could be excused for if the action was thought to be induced by a god, which made for a readily available excuse.*

6. When Eurylochus accuses Odysseus of being at fault for the loss of many lives, what is Odysseus’ reaction?

*Odysseus would kill him, but the men intervene.*

7. What mission does Circe tell Odysseus that he must undertake before he can go home?

*Circe tells Odysseus that he must visit Hades to consult the blind prophet, Teiresias.*

8. How does Circe describe Hades?

*Hades is described as Fertile, with groves of tall poplars that shed their fruit untimely.*

9. What happens to Elpenor when he hears the men bustling about in preparation to leave that causes him to precede the rest of the crew to Hades?

*Elpenor falls from the rooftop, where he had been sleeping off his liquor, and breaks his neck. As a dead soul, he is transported to Hades before Odysseus.*
Book XI

Vocabulary
aft – the rear of the ship (wind that blows in the same direction as a ship)
asphodel – the flowers of Hades
august – noble
charlatan – a trickster or scoundrel
ebb – to flow out
feckless – weak, timid
indomitable – invincible
prodigious – unusually large in size
rankle – to burn, irritate
winnowing – separating straw from wheat

1. Who is the first ghost that approaches Odysseus in Hades? What does the ghost ask Odysseus to do? What does he threaten if Odysseus should refuse him his request?

   Elpenor is the first. He asks Odysseus to go back to the Aeacan Island to retrieve his body and give him a proper burial. He also threatens to bring heaven's anger against Odysseus, if Odysseus does not comply.

2. Who is the second ghost Odysseus sees? Why must he wait to talk to her?

   Odysseus sees his mother. Circe told Odysseus that he must not allow any of the ghosts to drink the blood of his sacrifice—which is needed to make them able to communicate with living souls—until after Teiresias has drunk first.

3. Teiresias warns Odysseus that when he passes the Thrinacian Island en route to Ithaca, to not harm the flocks of the sun-god Apollo. What are the consequences Teiresias warns Odysseus of if he should harm the flocks?

   Teiresias tells Odysseus that his ship and his men will be destroyed if they harm the flocks. Odysseus will then be forced to return home in another man's ship, where he will find trouble in his house in the form of the suitors.

4. How does Odysseus' mother explain her death?

   She died of heart-break, which she explains with these words: “...but my longing to know what you were doing and the force of my affection for you—this was the death of me.” (Pg. 118)
5. How does Poseidon father Pelias and Neleus? What does this illustrate about the ancient Greek concept of gods and their qualities?

Poseidon rapes the virgin, Tyro, by disguising himself as her lover, and then induces her into a deep sleep. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: The ancient Greeks accepted flaws and devious behavior in their gods—even such extreme examples as rape and murder. They seem to have had a similar leniency for their heroes. Odysseus and his men, for example, took the women of the Cicons, whom they slaughtered for no apparent reason after leaving Troy.

6. What famous Greek tragedy is alluded to by Odysseus in his accounting of his meetings with the ghosts?

Odysseus alludes to Oedipus the King, by Sophocles.

7. The betrayed Agamemnon gets a chance to tell his much-heard tale in the first person in Book XI. His attitude towards women is sour, and he does not resist in telling it. Although he heeds to the good-naturedness of Odysseus' wife, Penelope, what advice of caution does Agamemnon give Odysseus concerning women?

Agamemnon says, “Be sure, therefore, and not too friendly even with your own wife. Do not tell her all that you know perfectly well yourself. Tell her a part only, and keep your own counsel about the rest.” (Pg. 122) “Furthermore I say...do not tell people when you are bringing your ship to Ithaca, but steal a march upon them, for after all, there is no trusting women.” (Pg. 122)

8. When Odysseus tries to cheer Achilles up and urges the fallen hero not to be despondent because he is dead, what is Achilles' response? What can you infer from this hero's response about the ancient Greek concept of death?

Achilles responds by saying, “Say not a word in death's favor; I would rather he a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than a king of kings among the dead.” (Pg. 123) Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: In the ancient Greek society, honor and glory were gained in life. Death was a state of dishonor, one to which the gods never fell.

9. Towards the end of Book XI, Odysseus lists many of the famous men that he saw in Hades and describes their eternal fates. Some fates are good, while some are hellish. What does this tell the reader about Hades and the ancient Greek idea of the afterlife?

Answers will vary. Example: Hades is a place where both the blessed and the damned go after death. Some are rewarded there while others must bear out endless torments.

10. After speaking to Heracles, Odysseus decides to wait around to see if any other of the "mighty dead" will come and speak to him. What makes Odysseus change his mind and decide to leave in a hurry?

So many of the ghosts crowd around Odysseus with their appalling cries that it makes him panic and fear that Persephone might send up the head of the Gorgon.
Book XII

Vocabulary
backstay – a brace holding the mast of a ship up from the back
behests – demands
coherent – logical, understandable
jutted – stuck out sharply
unwarily – without caution

1. What does Circe instruct Odysseus to do that will allow him to hear the song of the Sirens without falling victim to their spell?

   She tells Odysseus he must get his men—whose ears must be stuffed with wax—to bind him to the mast of the ship so that he cannot be lured into the sirens’ midst. He must instruct his men that if he begs them to unloose him, they must bind him faster.

2. After he passes the Sirens, Odysseus must make a choice of two courses through a narrow pass called the Wanderers. What are his options, as Circe describes them? Although Circe says the choice is up to Odysseus, which option does she push him toward?

   Odysseus can try passing by the immortal monster, Charybdis, or he can try to go past the immortal monster, Scylla, and he will lose at least six men. Circe urges Odysseus to pass Scylla, and lose six men, rather than risk losing everything.

3. Why does Odysseus tell his men about the dangers of the Sirens, but not about Scylla, to whom six of them will lose their lives?

   He tells the men about the Sirens because he needs them to cooperate with the plan by stuffing their ears with wax and binding him to the mast so he can listen to the song. He does not tell them about Scylla and the losses they are sure to face at her hand because he is worried the men will mutiny if he tells them.

4. Three times each day, Charybdis “vomit[s] forth her waters, and three times she sucks them down again.” (Pg. 129) What, therefore, is Charybdis?

   Charybdis is a whirlpool.

5. What does Scylla’s yelp sound like? Why is this fitting for an immortal monster in Greek mythology?

   Scylla has a yelp like a small dog. Immortal monsters in ancient Greek mythology often use tricks and deception to lure mortals to their demise.
6. Based on information from Book XII, make the case that the gods are working against Odysseus and his men, forcing him to fulfill the prophesy of his destiny.

   Answers will vary. Example: When they first arrive on the island, Odysseus and his men do not even think of eating the sun-god's flocks, for they know what might happen. However, for an entire month the winds blow against them and they can not leave the island; their food runs out and they are starving to death. It is when Odysseus goes off to pray for a means of escape and is lulled to sleep by the gods that his men seize the opportunity to conspire against him and slaughter the cows.

7. Odysseus describes Scylla's eating of his men as “the most sickening sight that I saw throughout all my voyages.” (Pg. 131) Why do you think this sight was more unsettling to him than seeing the Cyclops eat his men?

   Answers will vary. Example: It is possible that Odysseus feels guilty because he sacrificed the men to save his own life and return home.

8. What does the sun-god threaten to do if Zeus and the other gods seek revenge against Odysseus' crew?

   He threatens to go down to Hades and shine among the dead.

9. What supernatural signs do the gods give that let Odysseus know they are going to carry out the prophesy and kill his men?

   The hides of the dead cattle crawl around, and the bones and the meat of the slaughtered cows low like living cows.

10. How do Odysseus men' meet their demise?

    After The ship is blown back into Charybdis, only Odysseus survives.

11. Where is Odysseus at the end of his tale? What does this have to do with in medias res?

    At the end of this tale, Odysseus is in the cave of Calypso. The conclusion of this tale brings us back to where Odysseus was at the start of the story, which began, in medias res.

12. Why is the last line of Book VII Ironic?

    Odysseus says he hates saying the same thing over and over again. This is an ironic joke because repetition is one of the most heavily used devices of The Odyssey.
Book XIII

Vocabulary
blear – to fog up, or cloud
diadem – a crown
enthralled – captivated
mien – a facial expression

1. How does King Alcinous plan to pay for the lavish gifts he bestows upon Odysseus?

   He will tax his people to pay for the gifts.

2. Why will it look bad for Poseidon if Odysseus makes it home safely from the island of the Phaeacians?

   Odysseus now has more treasure than he would have brought back from Troy. Also, Poseidon is the patron-god of the Phaeacians, and he feels he will lose face if people see that the Phaeacians have shown him disrespect by helping Odysseus and lauding him with gifts.

3. What does Zeus recommend that Poseidon do?

   Zeus suggests that Poseidon turn the returning ship into a rock while the Phaeacians are watching from the shore so they will know of his displeasure, and then bury the city under a mountain.

4. Find evidence in Book XIII that lying is not only acceptable in Homer’s ancient Greece, but lauded by the gods as well.

   Answers will vary. Example: The narrator describes the “instinctive wiliness of [Odysseus’] heart” as a reason for his concocting a needless story (Pg. 141). Athena says to Odysseus: “He must be indeed a shifty lying fellow who could surpass you in all manner of craft even though you had a god for your antagonist. Dare devil that you are, full of guile, unwearying in deceit, can you not drop your tricks and your instinctive falsehood, even now that you are in your own country again? We will say no more, however, about this, for we can both of us deceive upon occasion—you are the most accomplished counselor and orator among all mankind, while I for diplomacy and subtlety have no equal among the gods.” (Pg. 142)
5. The story of Agamemnon's death, which has been retold throughout *The Odyssey*, is a parable illustrating the themes of reciprocity and loyalty. How does its relevance become apparent in the events of Book XIII?

*Without Athena’s help, Odysseus would have certainly met a similar fate to that of Agamemnon’s.*

6. How does Athena disguise Odysseus so he might be unrecognized in his own home? Who does she send him to first?

*Athena disguises Odysseus as an old beggar. She sends him first to Eumaeus, the swineherd, who is a faithful servant to Odysseus.*

7. Support the following statement: Odysseus, though he is said to be a man of subtlety, is not afraid to directly question the goddess Athena as to her motives and her methods.

*Odysseus asks Athena directly why she sent Telemachus “sailing about amid all kinds of hardship while others are eating up his estate,” questioning the goddess’ motives and rationale.* (Pg. 144)

8. How does Athena respond to this question? Why does she not regard it as insolent?

*Athena tells him to never mind, and claims she did it so that Telemachus would get a good name. Odysseus is regarded by Athena with favor and it seems he can do no wrong with her.*
Book XIV

Vocabulary
apace – rapidly
billet – a club
clouts – clothes
doughty – courageous
frugal – thrifty
stint – hesitation
strewed – spread out
styes – places for pigs to lie

1. What is ironic in this comment that Eumaeus says to Odysseus?

“Even the fierce freebooters who go raiding on other people's land, and Zeus gives them their spoil—even they, when they have filled their ships and got home again live conscience-stricken, and look fearfully for judgment…” (Pg. 147)

This is ironic because Odysseus has raided other people’s land, however, he is not conscience-stricken and has no concerns about judgment. It is also ironic because Eumaeus, with this statement, is criticizing the suitors who are freeloading on Odysseus’ estate for doing just the same sort of thing that Odysseus has done to others.

2. State a theme from the book based on the fact that Odysseus has the gods on his side in trying to avenge his estate, even though he has done the same and worse to others. Elaborate on how this theme speaks to certain cultural notions of entitlement in ancient Greek society.

Answers will vary. Example: The theme in question relates to the capricious nature of the gods, who often display no rhyme or reason for their choices, but choose to help whomever they like the best, despite any clear rules of conduct. The gods seem to favor those who are already favored by their lot in life: those who are rich, strong, courageous, and wily. This would seem to suggest an underlying idea of privileged entitlement that pervades the ancient Greek society. Those who are endowed with good things are those who somehow deserve them.

3. Why does the swineherd wish that Helen's whole race were utterly destroyed? Why is this ironic?

Eumaeus feels that Helen is responsible for taking Odysseus away to fight in the Trojan War, which has left Eumaeus in a fruitless situation with no one to reward him for his hard work. This is ironic because Odysseus does not feel the same way toward Helen, nor do the gods. Further, Helen was a kind host to Telemachus in his journey to discover the whereabouts of his father and was helpful to him.
4. Why is it ironic that Odysseus says “I hate a man, even as I hate hell fire, who lets poverty tempt him into lying.” (Pg. 148)

It is ironic because it represents a double standard. Odysseus himself lies all the time. He is, in fact, in the midst of a lie when he says this. Odysseus is deceiving the swineherd as to his identity and is about to engage in a giant tale about his past that is completely untrue. Odysseus justifies his own lying as necessity, but he cannot see how poverty can necessitate lying.

5. What is the point of the long, invented narrative of the journey that landed the beggar (Odysseus) in Ithaca? Why does Eumaeus refuse to believe it?

The tale is meant to convince Eumaeus that Odysseus is alive and on his way home. It also serves to improve Odysseus' standing while in the care of Eumaeus, for if Eumaeus thinks that the beggar whom he is hosting was once a great man, he might treat him better. Eumaeus does not believe the beggar's tale because he says he knows that the gods detest Odysseus or they would have let him die in battle or among friends where he could have been properly buried. The reasoning, which is a bit questionable, illustrates the supposedly lower intelligence of the servants. This theme of class distinctions is seen throughout The Odyssey.

6. Why does the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) tell Eumaeus of the cloak Odysseus obtained for him? How does he describe the manner in which Odysseus obtained this cloak for him that Eumaeus is impressed? What does this example illustrate about the way cunning and guile were looked upon in ancient Greece?

Odysseus tells Eumaeus the story to inspire Eumaeus to garner him a cloak in imitation of the actions of his beloved master. As the beggar, Odysseus tells Eumaeus a story of how Odysseus fooled one of his men into running back from the front line of the battle to the ships (most likely a very long journey) so that he could make use of the cloak the man discarded. Answers to the last question will vary. Example: It seems that the ancient Greeks enjoyed stories of clever deception.

7. Why is Odysseus impressed by Eumaeus' conduct?

Eumaeus has taken very good care of Odysseus' flocks, during his absence, while others have taken advantage of Odysseus' absence to neglect their duties and steal. Eumaeus, on the other hand, has made improvements to the grounds with use of his own money and continues to be a guardian who is faithful to his master's memory.
1. What does Athena instruct Telemachus to do upon his return to Ithaca?

   *She tells Telemachus to go directly to the swineherd and then send the swineherd to tell Penelope of his return.*

2. Why is Pisistratus against leaving Sparta immediately, as Telemachus wishes?

   *It is nighttime, and Pisistratus argues that they cannot drive the chariot in the darkness, even if they wanted to. Further, Pisistratus thinks it would be rude to leave without thanking their host and wants to wait for the presents Menelaus will give them.*

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

   *Telemachus sees an eagle with a great white goose in its talons. Helen says the eagle represents Odysseus—who has traveled a long way from home and suffered much—returning to take his revenge.*

4. Why does Theoclymenus, the seer, beseech Telemachus to take him back to Ithaca? How might this be interpreted as foreshadowing?

   *Theoclymenus has killed a man of his own race and is being hunted down by the man’s relatives. Answers will vary. Example: This foreshadows the fact that Odysseus will likewise be hunted down after he takes his revenge on the suitors.*

5. What reason does Eumaeus give when he tells the disguised Odysseus that the suitors would not think that Odysseys was a servant?

   *Eumaeus says that the suitors’ servants are all young, good-looking, and well-dressed men, while Odysseus appears to be old and downtrodden.*

6. What does Eumaeus counsel Odysseus about the value of sleep?

   *He tells Odysseus that too much sleep is as bad as too little.*
7. According to Eumaeus’ story, how did the Phoenician woman who kidnapped him meet her end?

She was struck dead by the goddess Artemis.

8. What condolences does Odysseus offer Eumaeus after hearing his story? How is this an example of dramatic irony?

Odysseus tells Eumaeus that besides his hardships, Zeus has given him some good: a good master, an abundance of food and drink, and a good life. Odysseus, in disguise, however has to resort to begging from city to city. It is ironic because Odysseus is not a beggar at all, but in fact the master who treats Eumaeus well.

9. How does Theoclymenus interpret the omen of the hawk—Apollo’s messenger—with the dove in its talons?

Theoclymenus tells Telemachus that this omen signifies that Telemachus will remain powerful and that his house will be the most royal in Ithaca.

10. Where does Telemachus tell Theoclymenus to go for hospitality before Theoclymenus offers him the prophesy? How about after? Why the difference?

Before Theoclymenus offers his prophesy, Telemachus tells him to seek hospitality in the house of Eurymachus, chief of the suitors. After the prophesy, Telemachus asks his friend Piraeus to take Theoclymenus into his own home as a personal favor. Answers will vary as to why. Example: At first, Telemachus wants to force Eurymachus to repay some of the debt to his own estate by sending him a houseguest. After the prophesy, Telemachus is feeling better about the revenge, and asks his friend for a favor, which he will repay.
Book XVI

Vocabulary
boon – a blessing
compunction – having a guilty feeling
dissuade – to talk someone out of doing something
exploit – to test
heinous – outrageous; unspeakably evil
propitious – merciful
redoubtable – courageous
superintend – to oversee
wrought – made in a fire

1. Why does Telemaechus not want to take the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) into his home?

‘Telemaechus fears that the suitors will mistreat the beggar and he, as master of the house, will be unable to stop them—thus furthering his feeling of shame at being an ineffectual commander of his own house.’

2. How does Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) chide Telemaechus for his hesitancy in dealing with the suitors?

‘Odysseus chides Telemaechus by telling him that if they changed places, he would “rather die fighting in [his] own house than see such disgraceful sights day after day.” (Pg. 167)"

3. What does Telemaechus send the swineherd to do?

‘Telemaechus sends the swineherd to inform his mother of his return.’

4. Why does Telemaechus doubt that it is indeed his father, Odysseus, who he sees enter the swineherd’s hut?

‘Telemaechus knows that a mortal man cannot change his appearance in the way Odysseus has just changed. He thinks that the apparition that claims to be his father is a god “flattering [him] with vain hopes.” (Pg. 168)"

5. How many men will Telemaechus and his father face in their house (including suitors and their servants)?

‘The total is 114.’
6. Who does Odysseus claim as allies in trying to bolster his son's courage?

He believes that Athena and Zeus will be with them.

7. What three things does Odysseus tell his son to do in helping him set the stage for his revenge?

1. Odysseus tells Telemachus he must not intervene when the suitors mistreat him in his beggar's disguise.

2. He must gather all the weapons and armor in the house—except for a sword, spear and shield apiece for the two of them—and hide them.

3. He must tell no one that Odysseus has returned.

8. Having eluded their ambuscade and made it safely back to Ithaca, what are the suitors afraid Telemachus will do to ruin them?

The suitors fear that Telemachus will call a public assembly and tell the people of Ithaca about how they plotted to kill him. This, the suitors fear, will surely turn public opinion strongly against them and may lead to exile.

9. Amphinomous says he is against killing Telemachus, unless what?

Telemachus may live unless the oracles of Zeus advise against it.

10. Eurymachus makes a vow to Penelope that Telemachus will not be harmed under his watch, except for one clause that deals with fate. What is the clause?

Eurymachus says, “Of course, if death comes to him from the gods, he cannot escape it.” (Pg. 172)
**Book XVII**

**Vocabulary**

- **abominable** – worthy of hatred
- **gadding** – flaunting, showing off
- **lavishly** – richly

1. What is Telemachus’ reaction when his mother greets him upon his return? What does he order her to do?

   *Telemachus tells his mother not to scold him for having left without warning and sends her off to her room “to promise full and sufficient hecatombs to all the gods if Zeus will only grant [them their] revenge upon the suitors.”*(Pg. 176)

2. What does Theoclymenus, the seer, tell Penelope about Odysseus?

   *Theoclymenus tells Penelope that Odysseus is in Ithaca, and that he is plotting revenge on the suitors.*

3. What does Penelope promise Theoclymenus if his prophesy should prove true?

   *She promises him “gifts and such good will from [her] that all who see [Theoclymenus] shall congratulate [him].”*(Pg. 178)

4. When Eumaeus and Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) are overtaken by the goatherd, Melanthius, on their way to town, what does Melanthius say to them?

   *Melanthius uses abusive language toward them and tells them that if Eumaeus takes the beggar to Odysseus’ house to beg “he will get his head broken by the stools they fling at him, till they turn him out.”*(Pg. 179)

5. According to Odysseus’ speech on Page 180, what enemy is it that causes men to make war upon others?

   *It is caused by their stomachs*
6. Interpret the following statement by Eumaeus: “Servants never do their work when their master’s hand is no longer over them, for Zeus takes half the goodness out of a man when he makes a slave of him.” (Pg. 180)

*Answers may vary. Example: Eumaeus is saying that the master’s hand keeps servants honest, for they are only half-men by nature. This statement is indicative of the perceptions of the differences between slaves and masters in the ancient Greek society.*

7. Athena encourages Odysseus to beg the suitors for bread in order to determine who among them is good and who is bad. However, we are told that despite the suitors’ reactions, the goddess will not spare a single one of them. What ancient Greek lesson is illustrated by this vignette? Why does Athena bother having Odysseus test the suitors if their reactions will make no difference?

*Answers will vary. Example: This is an illustration of fate. The suitors have forged their fates, and it is too late to escape with a single good deed. Athena’s asking Odysseus to test them anyway is perhaps a bit of black humor.*

8. Why are the other men at the table fearful when Antinous hits the beggar with the stool?

*They fear the beggar could be a god in disguise, who is testing them.*

9. Why does the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) wish to wait until after sundown to speak with Penelope?

*He wishes to avoid the suitors, who will abuse him if they are aware of his approaching Penelope.*
Book XVIII

Vocabulary
braziers – torches
cudgel – to beat violently
drubbing – beating
gibes – insults
importunity – impudence, insolence
incorrigible – incapable of change for the better
infamy – notoriety, fame for a negative reason
propriety – social right and wrong
smithy – a blacksmith’s forge
staid – courageous, solid
vixen – a treacherous woman

1. In what two ways does Odysseus display his cleverness in his fight with Irus, the beggar who insults him?

   He makes the suitors promise beforehand not to get involved in the fight so that it will be fair. He decides not to deal Irus a death-blow in the fight, but holds back so that the suitors will not suspect his true identity.

2. Why is Irus not deserving of sympathy? What does this illustrate about ancient Greek culture?

   Irus is not deserving of sympathy because he is of low class. This example illustrates the class distinctions and different treatments received in ancient Greek society.

3. What is the suitors’ reaction to the beggar’s swift victory in the fight? How does Odysseus take their reaction? Why is the situation ironic?

   The suitors laud the beggar and make a prayer to Zeus that he should get whatever he should want. Odysseus takes this as a good omen. It is ironic because the suitors essentially pray for their own deaths.

4. Odysseus seems to take pity on Amphinomus, offering him a warning of his impending destruction; however, we are told that his fate is already decided by Athena—he will fall by Telemachus hand. What is this example another illustration of?

   Answers will vary. This example is another illustration of the power of fate in ancient Greek thinking. Free-will is of much lesser significance in ancient Greek thinking than in modern thinking. In this mode, once a fate is decided, it cannot be changed; in modern times, though men can change their ways and make a better future for themselves. Fate is not viewed as having the same strength.
5. On Page 190 we learn a lesson in ancient Greek culture as to how a woman could win honor for her household. What is it?

A woman in ancient Greek culture won honor for her husband and son by presenting herself in such a way as to be desired by other men.

6. What does Athena do to make Penelope even more beautiful? What does this illustrate about the ancient Greek concept of beauty?

She washes Penelope’s face with ambrosia, makes her taller and her complexion whiter. Tallness and fairness of complexion were considered attributes of beauty in ancient Greek culture.

7. How does Penelope show her cleverness in Book XVIII—making Odysseus proud of her as a wife fitting for an Epic Hero?

Penelope entices the suitors into thinking that she will soon choose one of them to marry. She then shames the suitors for “not wooing [her] after the custom of [her] country,” and demands that they give her gifts. (Pg. 192) Odysseus is proud because he knows she does not mean what she says and is tricking the suitors in order to regain some of the property they have taken from his estate.

8. In the ancient Greek tradition, what crime is the pretty maid, Melantho, guilty of? What does this indictment against Melantho illustrate about class differences in ancient Greek culture?

Melantho is in love with Eurymachus and used to “misconduct herself” with him. (Pg. 193) It is treacherous for a maid to be involved with a suitor of her mistress.

9. Why does Athena make the suitors continue to behave in an insolent way?

Athena wants to make sure Odysseus does not soften in his anger toward the suitors until he exacts a full revenge.

10. What insult does Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) make to Eurymachus?

He taunts Eurymachus, saying that he could best the suitor in any of numerous tests of strength, stamina, or courage; and claims that Eurymachus only thinks himself great because he has sheltered himself into a small world, but would be no match for Odysseus and would flee if he saw him.
Book XIX

Vocabulary
fatuous – insignificant
perjurer – one who lies under oath
plausible – believable
portended – prophesied, foretold
wanton – to strut

1. What excuse does Odysseus instruct Telemachus to make when the suitors ask him why he has removed the arms from the hall?

Telemachus is to tell the suitors that the armor has become soiled and begrimed with soot and that he is afraid Zeus might set the suitors to quarrelling over their wine, “for the sight of arms sometimes tempts people to use them.” (Pg. 195)

2. What are the pressures Penelope is under to re-marry, as explained to Odysseus?

She is under pressure from her parents, and she feels pressure to alleviate the burden of the suitors from Telemachus, who is the inheritor of Odysseus’ estate.

3. Why does Odysseus make up a story about his identity rather than reveal himself to his wife? How is this an example of a digression?

Answers will vary. Example: Odysseus is trying to test his wife’s loyalty. Further, he does not want her to know of his presence before he takes revenge on the suitors for fear that she might try to stop him. It is an example of a digression because the reader is in a state of anticipation, awaiting the recognition by Penelope of her long-lost husband, but Odysseus’ tale further delays this occurrence, adding to the suspense.

4. What test does Penelope put to the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) to challenge the truthfulness of his tale? How does the beggar answer?

Penelope asks the beggar to describe Odysseus and the clothes he was wearing when she last saw him. The Beggar describes a mantle of purple wool fastened by a golden brooch.

5. Cite the epic simile describing Penelope’s tears for Odysseus on Page 199. What makes the situation ironic?

“As the snow wastes upon the mountain tops when the winds from South East and West have breathed upon it and thawed it till the rivers run bank filled with water, even so did her cheeks overflow with tears for the husband who was all the time sitting by her side.” (Pg. 199) The simile describes its own irony, noting that all the while Penelope is crying for Odysseus, he is seated right beside her.
6. According to the beggar, what is the goal of the errand currently delaying Odysseus in his return home? How does the beggar praise this stratagem? Why is this deeply ironic?

The beggar tells Penelope that Odysseus would already be home “had he not thought better to go from land to land gathering wealth…” (Pg. 200) The beggar praises Odysseus as more wily than any man alive for making this decision. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: It is ironic because if Odysseus had come directly home after the Trojan Wars, rather than follow this stratagem of trying to gather wealth by pillaging and looting, he would have been home many years ago, and none of the suffering around which the story is built would have occurred.

7. What reason does Penelope give for her doubts that Odysseus will ever reach home?

Penelope says, “for so surely as that Odysseus ever was, there are no longer any such masters in the house as he was, to receive honorable strangers or to further them on their way home.” (Pg. 200)

8. State a theme from the following:

“Men live but for a little season; if they are hard, and deal hardly, people wish them ill so long as they are alive, and speak contemptuously of them when they are dead, but he that is righteous and deals righteously, the people tell of his praise among all lands, and many shall call him blessed.” (Pg. 201)

Answers will vary. Example: This passage speaks to the theme of honor or renown. It was seen as virtuous to deal fairly with others, and the legend that went with one’s name, even after death, was of great value.

9. Why does Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) demand that “an old and respectable woman, who has gone through as much trouble as [he] has,” be the one to wash his feet? (Pg. 201) What does this exhibit of his character? What suspense arises from this request?

Odysseus is behaving with the propriety fitting the character he claims to be—a character much like Odysseus himself. This exhibition of humility further endears Penelope, who has just made a speech praising noble behavior. Odysseus soon realizes that by this request, his old nurse from boyhood, Euryclea, will be the one to wash his feet, and she will certainly recognize him by the scar on his leg. This adds to the suspense.
10. How is Odysseus’ grandfather, Autolycus, described? How is this description pertinent in keeping with the ancient Greek idea that traits are handed down through family?

*Autolycus is described as “the most accomplished thief and perjurer in the whole world.” (Pg. 202)*  The fact that Odysseus is descended from a legendary thief is in keeping with the notion of the handing down of traits, for Odysseus is as cunning and wily as they come.

11. What does Odysseus threaten to do to Euryclea if she should reveal his identity? What does Euryclea say to convince Odysseus that she will not reveal him?

*Odysseus threatens to kill Euryclea if she reveals him. Euryclea claims that her tongue is like “a stone of a piece of iron” and offers Odysseus a list of the maids “who have been ill-behaved, and of those who are guiltless.” (Pg. 204)*

12. Cite the Epic Simile Penelope uses to describe the indecision that keeps her awake at night.

“As the dun nightingale, daughter of Pandareus, sings in the early spring from her seat in the shadiest covert hid, and with many a plaintive trill pours out the tale how by mishap she killed her own child Itylus, son of king Zethus, even so does my mind toss and turn in its uncertainty…” (Pg. 204)

13. What does Penelope say of dreams? What are the two gates through which dreams come?

*Penelope says that “dreams are very curious and unaccountable things.” (Pg. 205)*  Dreams come through two gates: one is of horn and meaningful; the other is of ivory, and false.

14. What epithet is applied to the city of Troy by Penelope?

*It is referred to as the city with a hateful name*

15. Why do you think Penelope decides it is time to hold the tournament of axes, by which the suitors will contest for her hand in marriage?

*Answers will vary. Example: Penelope is feeling guilty about her indecision and the pain it has caused Telemachus. In addition, she has been encouraged by the beggar and his interpretation of her dream—that the time to act is nigh.*
Book XX

Vocabulary
public house – a pub, or bar
ribald – rowdy
stockman – a man who keeps his master’s cattle
suffering – here, permitting

1. What does Odysseus hear as he is trying to get to sleep that makes his “heart growl with anger”? (Pg. 207)

Odysseus hears the maids sneaking out to go sleep with the suitors.

2. What does Odysseus tell Athena he is concerned about in enacting his revenge upon the suitors?

Odysseus tells Athena that he is having doubts about how he will be able to kill all the suitors single-handedly and how he is to escape retribution by their families after the slaughter.

3. What is it that prompts Penelope to wake up in the middle of the night and pray that she would rather die than “yield [herself] to a worse man than [Odysseus] was.” (Pg. 208)

Penelope dreams that Odysseus is sleeping beside her.

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

Odysseus prays for a sign “out of the mouth of some one or other of those who are now waking within the house, and [another] sign from outside.” (Pg. 209) Zeus sends a thunderbolt. One of the miller women prays that this be “the very last day that the suitors dine in the house of Odysseus.” (Pg. 209)

5. What does the maid Euryclea say to chide Telemachus for being critical of his mother’s ability to judge character?

Euryclea chides Telemachus, saying, “Do not find fault child, when there is no one to find fault with.” (Pg. 209)
6. What omen do the suitors see? What does Amphinomus interpret it to mean? What does he suggest they do in response to this omen?

The suitors see an eagle with a dove in its talons fly past on their left hand. Amphinomus interprets the omen to mean that their plot to kill Telemachus will fail. Amphinomus suggests that the suitors go to dinner instead.

7. What evidence is there in Book XX that Telemachus is growing into his role as master of his house?

Answers will vary. Example: Telemachus stands up to the suitors, telling them that each man at his tables, including the beggar, will be served equal portions. He tells them, “keep your hands and your tongues to yourselves, or there will be mischief.” (Pg. 212) After Ctesippus throws a heifer’s foot at Odysseus, Telemachus scolds him fiercely, and makes a speech condemning the actions of the suitors and threatening them with violence if they continue to insult him in his house.

8. When Agelaus insists again that Telemachus should encourage his mother to choose one of the suitors to marry so that he will be able to “manage [his] own inheritance, and to eat and drink in peace,” what is Telemachus response? (Pg. 213) Whom does Telemachus place the blame for the delay upon?

Telemachus says that he puts no obstacles before his mother’s marriage; however, he “dare not insist that she shall leave the house against her wishes.” (Pg. 213) Depending on how you interpret it, the blame is placed either on “Heaven,” or on Penelope herself.

9. Why does the seer Theoclymenus leave Odysseus’ house?

Theoclymenus sees the unnatural laughter of the men and other apparitions of darkness as a sign that “not one of [the suitors] who are insulting people and plotting ill deeds in the house of Odysseus will be able to escape.” (Pg. 213) He leaves because the suitors chide him for self-preservation, he does not want to be present for the slaughter.
Book XXI

Vocabulary

pretext – an excuse
louts – people with no manners
prowess – power
holding – a settled property
twit – to ridicule

1. Where did Odysseus meet Iphitus—who gave him the mighty bow to be used in the tournament of axes? Why was each man there?

Odysseus met Iphitus in Lacedaemon, where Odysseus was trying to recover a debt of stolen sheep. Iphitus was there attempting to recover twelve brood mares and their foals.

2. How and why did Heracles (Hercules) shame himself to quench his own greed?

Heracles killed Iphitus when he was his guest, which was shameful in ancient Greek society. He did this because he wanted Iphitus’ mares.

3. Why does Telemachus compete in the tournament of axes? Why do you think Odysseus stops him before he successfully strings the bow?

Telemachus says that if he wins the prizes which his father won before him, his mother will stay in the house. Answers to the second question will vary. Example: It is possible that Odysseus stops Telemachus from stringing the bow because, if he is successful, the suitors would leave, and the revenge would not be enacted. It is also possible that if Telemachus strings the bow, it will spoil Odysseus’ plan because Odysseus will not then get a chance to hold the bow. Further, it is possible that Odysseus does not want Telemachus to succeed quite yet, as he does not think his son is quite ready for the responsibilities of manhood.

4. Who is the first of the suitors to attempt to string the great bow? What are we told about him that makes him different from the other suitors? What does he prophesize after he fails to string it that makes Antinous rebuke him?

Leiodes is the first to attempt to string the bow. We are told that he was the only man among the suitors who hated the evil deeds of the others. He prophesies that the bow will take the life and soul of many of the chiefs—who will fail at stringing the bow. This makes Antinous angry because he thinks he is the strongest and will be able to string the bow.
5. Despite his boasting, what does Antinous propose be done to the bow to make it easier to string?

He proposes that they warm the bow and grease it.

6. Why does Odysseus reveal himself to Eumaeus, the swineherd, and Philoetius, the stockman? How does he prove his identity to them?

Odysseus reveals his identity to the swineherd and the stockman because he has decided he can trust them and needs to enlist their help to carry out his plan of revenge. Odysseus proves his identity by showing them the scar from the boar’s tooth that he got on Mt. Parnassus as a young man.

7. What does Odysseus ask Eumaeus and Philoetius to do to aid him in his plan?

Odysseus asks Eumaeus to hand him the bow—for the suitors will try to prevent him from getting hold of it—and to tell the women to go to their chambers and lock their doors. He asks Philoetius to lock the outer gates to the house so that none of the suitors can escape to go get help.

8. What excuse does Antinous make for not stringing the bow? What does he propose they do?

Antinous makes the excuse that it is the day of the feast of Apollo, the mighty archer, and no one can be expected to string such a bow on that day. He proposes that they put the bow aside until tomorrow when they will have Melanthius, the goatherd, bring his best goats to make sacrifices to Apollo, so that the god will grant them the strength to string it.

9. Why do the suitors become angry and refuse Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) the chance to attempt to string the bow? Are they afraid that the beggar might win Penelope’s hand in marriage out from under them? What does this illustrate about class differences in ancient Greek society?

The suitors know that Penelope will not marry the beggar, but they become angry because they are afraid that the beggar will string the bow and shame them all by his superior strength. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: This example illustrates the class rifts in ancient Greek society by showing that those who were without status were not given the same chances as those of good breeding. It would be a matter of great shame to be outdone by a nameless man.
10. What Epic Simile does Antinous offer in rebuking the beggar for insolence—suggesting that the beggar's boldness is induced by wine? Show how this is an example of dramatic irony.

“It was wine that inflamed the Centaur Eurytion when he was staying with Peirithous among the Lapithae. When the wine had got to his head, he went mad and did ill deeds about the house of Peirithous; this angered the heroes who were there assembled, so they rushed him and cut off his ears and nostrils; then they dragged him through the doorway out of the house, so he went away crazed, and bore the burden of his crime, bereft of understanding.” (Pg. 220) This passage is an example of dramatic irony because Antinous does not realize he is talking to Odysseus, but the reader knows this. Further, the reader knows that, in fact, it will be Antinous who will bear the burden of his crimes, as the simile suggests, not Odysseus.

11. Cite another example on Page 221 of Telemachus’ coming-of-age—proof that he is indeed a dynamic character. What is illustrated about the role of men and women in ancient Greek society by this passage?

When Penelope tries to interject on behalf of the beggar's right to try the bow, Telemachus cuts her off and then sends her about her business—her loom, her distaff, and the ordering of the servants—telling her that “This bow is a man’s matter, and mine above all others, for it is I who am master here.” (Pg. 221) Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: This passage illustrates distinct roles set for the man and the woman in ancient Greek society, such that the son, in the absence of his father, becomes ‘master of the house” when he is ready and able to assume such a duty; he then commands the will of his own mother.

12. What omen causes the heart of Odysseus to rejoice, and causes the suitors to “turn color” as they hear it? (Pg. 222)

*A loud thunderclap from Zeus is heard as Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) proves the string of the mighty bow.*
Book XXII

Vocabulary
weltering – soaking

1. Who was the first suitor to fall to Odysseus’ bow? Why did Antinous feel safe with the bow in the beggar’s hands?

   Antinous is the first suitor to be killed. We are told that “He had no thought of death—who amongst the revelers would think that one man, however brave, would stand alone among so many, and kill him?” (Pg. 223)

2. After Antinous is killed, the suitors rebuke the stranger telling him they will kill him in retribution. Why do they soon change their tune and beg him for mercy? What does Eurymachus say in hopes of placating the stranger?

   At first, the suitors think that the stranger has killed Antinous by mistake, and they are outraged. However, when he reveals to them that he is indeed Odysseus—returned after many years and bent upon revenge—they fear for their lives and try to placate him. Eurymachus claims that Antinous was the leader of the insults against Odysseus’ house and property, and it was Antinous who plotted to kill Telemachus. He promises that if Odysseus will spare the rest of their lives, they will not only repay him in full for all they have eaten and drunk, but will continue to provide him lavish gifts until his heart is softened.

3. Who is the first suitor killed by Telemachus? Where was this foretold?

   Telemachus kills Amphinomus as he lunges at Odysseus. Athena foretold this killing in Book XVIII when Odysseus questioned whether the suitor should be spared.

4. How does the goatherd, Melanthius, attempt to aid the suitors? What mistake does Telemachus admit that has allowed this? What is Melanthius’ fate?

   Melanthius retrieves weapons and armor for the suitors from the stash in the store-room. Telemachus admits to his father that he left the door to the store-room open. Melanthius is caught in the store-room by Eumaeus and Philoetius, who bind his hands and string him up in the rafters with a noose. After the battle, Telemachus and Odysseus “cut off his nose and ears; they drew out his vitals and gave them to the dogs raw, and then in their fury they cut off his hands and feet.” (Pg. 231)
5. How do the suitors try to dissuade Mentor (Athena in disguise) from siding with Odysseus? What is Athena’s reaction? Why does Athena make Odysseus fight for full victory?

The suitors threaten Mentor, saying that after they defeat Odysseus they will kill Mentor and seize his property and make exiles of his family. Athena is angered by this threat and goads Odysseus to fight more valiantly. Athena does not give Odysseus full victory right away because she wants Telemachus to have a chance to prove himself in the battle alongside his father and learn to be a great man like Odysseus. Her plan allows both men to enjoy the savors of victory after the fight.

6. Why is it ironic that the stockman, who is in charge of Odysseus' cattle, should kill Ctesippus?

It is ironic that the stockman kills Ctesippus because it was Ctesippus who threw the heifer’s foot at Odysseus—an insult meant for someone much lower in rank than the offender—when he was begging in his own house. This is another example of a bit of black humor in The Odyssey.

7. Despite Athena’s intervention in the battle, the suitors still manage to strike a few minor blows. What does this illustrate?

Answers will vary. Example: The intervention of the gods in ancient Greek mythology is never absolute and they err much in the same way that humans do. If Athena should somehow become distracted during the battle, Odysseus could be in big trouble.

8. What does Athena brandish to make the suitors panic and fle the fight? Why are they afraid when they see this object?

Athena brandishes her “deadly aegis”—a shield with the head of medusa at its center. The suitors panic when they see this because they recognize it as the shield carried by Athena and they know they have no chance of living with the goddess against them.

9. How does Odysseus respond when Leiodes—the sacrificial priest of the suitors, who we were told despised them—falls to his knees and begs Odysseus for his life?

Odysseus shows him no quarter. He essentially says that the man is guilty by association and beheads him right there.
10. Why does Odysseus spare the minstrel, Phemius, and Medon, one of the suitors? Might Homer have had a personal reason for allowing the bard to live?

Odyseus spares these men only at the behest of Telemachus, who intervenes on their behalves. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: Homer was renowned to have been a minstrel himself. He often described the minstrels in his stories as guiltless and worthy of praise—thus it makes sense that he might have wanted to spare the minstrel as a moral lesson for the society he lived in.

11. What does Odysseus make the disloyal maids do before they are killed? Why is this especially cruel?

Odysseus forces the disloyal maids to aid in the cleaning up and stacking of bodies from the massacre. It is especially cruel because the women would have to carry the bodies of the slain suitors they loved. In addition, they had to clean the remnants of a massacre only to face their own deaths as soon as they were finished.

12. Why does Telemachus say he wants to hang the women rather than let them die a clean death by sword? Why is this expression of will significant?

Telemachus says he wants the women hanged because they were insolent to the household and showed them disrespect by sleeping with the suitors. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: It is significant because Telemachus is showing further independence and strength while simultaneously developing into a ruthless man, like his father—a quality that is necessary for leadership.

13. What grim epic simile is used to make the description of the women's death by hanging more vivid to the reader? Explain it.

“...and as thrushes or doves beat against a net that has been set for them in a thicket just as they were getting to their nest; and a terrible fate awaits them, even so did the women have to put their heads in nooses one after the other and die most miserably.” (Pg. 231) Answers to the latter part will vary. Example: The simile describes the panic the women must have felt at being able to see their own horrible fates while being helpless to prevent them.
Penelope suspects that it must have been some god—angry at the suitors and avenging Odysseus in his absence—who is responsible for the deaths of the suitors. Penelope says there are certain “tokens with which [she and Odysseus] alone are acquainted, and which are hidden from all others,” which will allow her to tell for sure. (Pg. 235)

2. Why does Odysseus fear that he will soon have to fight again?

Odysseus rightly fears that when the word of the slaughter gets out, the friends and kinsmen of the slain will come to seek him out to avenge those who died at his hand.

3. What clever deception does Odysseus play to provide a window of time for their getaway?

Odysseus has the maids and servants dress in their best clothes and has the minstrel play a dance so that people passing on the street will think there is a wedding going on.

4. How is the public opinion of the townsfolk of Ithaca expressed in Book XXIII?

A passerby who hears the music and thinks Penelope has decided to marry says, “She ought to be ashamed of herself for not committing to protect her husband’s property until he comes home.” (Pg. 236)

5. Despite seeing her husband cleaned up by Athena to appear as an immortal, Penelope is still not convinced that it is indeed Odysseus she is speaking to. How does she try to trick him into revealing a false identity? How does Odysseus’ response convince her that he is truly her husband?

Penelope tells the maid to take the bed that Odysseus made with his own hands outside the bed chamber; but Odysseus—knowing that this is impossible because he built the bed around the stump of an olive tree so that it could not be moved—tells her of how he crafted the bed. Only Odysseus, Penelope, and a single maid know the secret of the bed—thus it is ample proof to her.

6. How does Odysseus plan to replenish his stock of sheep and goats that were eaten by the suitors?

Odysseus will go to other lands and take their sheep and goats by force; further, he will lay a levy on his own people until the stocks are replenished.
Book XXIV

Vocabulary

dirge – a song of mourning
infused – injected

1. What is the epithet applied to Hermes in Book XXIV as he leads the ghost of the suitors down into Hades?

   Hermes is called “the healer of sorrow.” (Pg. 241)

2. When the ghost of Agamemnon sees Amphimedon and his fellow suitors, how does he assume that they all might have met their premature end?

   Agamemnon assumes that the suitors may have lost their lives at sea or in battle while trying to sack a city.

3. When the ghost of Amphimedon tells the ghost of Agamemnon how Penelope fooled the suitors and then plotted with Odysseus to bring about their demise, what is Agamemnon's reaction? Why is his reaction so strong?

   The ghost of Agamemnon lauds Penelope for her loyalty to her lord, Odysseus, and makes an oath that the legacy of Penelope's virtue shall be captured in an immortal song. Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: The strength of Agamemnon's reaction to hearing of Penelope's virtue as a wife is a direct result of his being betrayed by his own wife, who he says “brought disgrace on all womankind even on the good ones.” (Pg. 244)

4. Why do you think Odysseus decides it best to “be crafty” with his father, rather than approach the old man directly? (Pg. 245)

   Answers will vary. Example: This is not clear. Perhaps Odysseus does not want to shock the old man, who appears to him “so old and full of sorrow.” (Pg. 245) It is also possible that Odysseus no longer trusts anyone and wants to test the old man's loyalty before he reveals himself. (The fact that Odysseus reveals himself only after his father pours dust over his head, in the Greek tradition of mourning, is evidence to the latter. However, the fact that Laertes nearly goes into a swoon upon seeing the evidence that Odysseus uses to prove his identity is indicative of the former.)
5. How are Medon, whom Telemachus spared, and Halitherses, the old prophet, able to convince half of the bereaved of Ithaca to abandon their quest for revenge against Odysseus?

Medon tells the assembly that Odysseus killed the suitors by the will of heaven and that he had an immortal god on his side. Halitherses reminds the people that he warned them to “check the folly of [their] sons who were doing much wrong in the wantonness of their hearts—wasting the substance and dishonoring the wife of [Odysseus].” (Pg. 249)

6. When Athena asks Zeus’ counsel, how does the god of gods reply?

Zeus reminds her that the whole scheme was of her design, but he suggests that she orchestrate a peace accords within Ithaca—allowing Odysseus to rule again, as before the Trojan Wars.

7. What does Odysseus say to encourage Telemachus before the battle with the group being led by the families of the suitors? Why is this important in the context of ancient Greek culture?

Odysseus tells Telemachus, “be sure not to disgrace your ancestors, who were eminent for their strength and courage the world over.” (Pg. 250) Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: Lineage is very important in the ancient Greek world. If Telemachus is to rule after his father, he must show his mettle in battle.

8. Why does Laertes rejoice at the coming battle, despite the dangers?

Laertes rejoices because he is getting a chance to witness his son and his grandson “vying with one another in a matter of valor.” (Pg. 250) Despite the dangers, valor is more important than any other merit in the ancient Greek society, especially among the ruling classes.

9. In the most gratuitous example of “deus ex machina” in The Odyssey, how does Athena stop the fighting in Ithaca? Why does Odysseus not stop when she first commands it?

Athena raises her voice and commands the warriors to stop fighting. They are “so frightened that their arms dropped from their hands and fell upon the ground at the sound of the goddess’ voice, and they fled back to the city for their lives.” (Pg. 250) Answers to the latter question will vary. Example: Odysseus is not scared by the appearance of the goddess, for he is used to her presence and knows she is on his side. He is consumed in the carnage and refuses to stop until Athena threatens Odysseus with the wrath of Zeus, at which point he stops “gladly.” (Pg. 250) Athena then assumes to form of Mentor to “[make] a covenant of peace between the two contending parties,” bringing the story to a close. (Pg. 250)
The Odyssey

Study Guide
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Book I

Vocabulary
acquainted – familiar or knowledgeable
asunder – apart
atrociously – horribly, terribly
bard – a poet
barrow – a mound of dirt or stones placed over a burial site
bearing-post – a post that is vital to holding up the building
clamorous – loud, riotous
counsel – advice
embellishments – final touches
ewer – an oval pitcher with a base and wide spout, with decorations on the body
fleece – a soft, woolen blanket
havoc – chaos, ruin
hecatomb – a great sacrifice; in Greek times, involving 100 oxen
hied – hurried
insolence – rudeness, disrespect
lyre – a small harp with two curved arms, connected by a bar across the top
mettle – courage
nymph – a minor goddess who usually either lives in or personifies water, a tree, or a mountain
pacified – calmed, soothed
partaken – eaten
persecuted – harmed in an unfair way
pretext – an excuse
propitiate – to appease; to gain forgiveness
quells – subdues, silences
redoubtable – causing fear, awe
renown – fame, glory
sea-girt – surrounded by the sea
sheer – pure, absolute
short shrift – rude treatment
soothsayer – a fortune-teller
spunging – living at another person’s expense
staid – dignified, serious
suitors – men seeking to marry a woman
tongue – language
torments – tortures
weal – well-being
1. Where is Odysseus at the beginning of the story? What has become of his men?

2. When the gods adjourn for council, what is preoccupying Zeus?

3. Why does Poseidon hold a grudge against Odysseus even though the other gods favor him?

4. Where is Poseidon when the gods at council decide to help Odysseus to return home?

5. Why does Zeus reason that Poseidon will be pacified that the gods have decided to help Odysseus reach his home?

6. What two actions does Athena deem should be taken on Odysseus' behalf?
7. Why does Athena want Telemachus to go out in search of news of his father?

8. Where do the gods hold their councils?

9. Who does Athena instruct Telemachus to visit in search of news of his father?

10. What example does Athena (disguised as Mentes) use to encourage Telemachus to kill the suitors that plague his home with discourtesy and disrespect?

11. Which of Odysseus’ qualities does Zeus cite in order to convince Athena that he is partial to the hero?

12. Cite instances where the idea of fate is invoked in book one.

13. Telemachus tries to assert his dominance as the master of the house by ordering his mother up to her room and threatening the suitors with death if they ignore his “formal notice to depart” (Pg. 17) in the morning. How do the suitors react to his behavior.
Book II

Vocabulary
abetting – assisting
aggrieved – offended, upset
artful – tricky
bade – asked someone to do something; requested
barren – without life
barrow – a burial mound
braggart – one who boasts
comeliness – attractiveness
convene – to call together
creditable – reputable, honorable
criers – people who would run through the town and shout announcements
discernment – perceptiveness; having keen judgment
drawing – pouring
er – before
flaying – cutting open, skinning
forestays – braces on the front side of the mast to keep it vertical
hawsers – ropes used to tow a ship or secure it to a dock
henceforward – from here on out
hoisted – lifted
omen – a sign of things to come
pall – a burial cover
plaguing – harassing
prating – talking foolishly, instead of acting
remedy – a compensation
rigorously – harshly
tackle – fishing equipment
tambour frame – a circular frame, across which the work is stretched for sewing
victuals – food and drink
vying – competing
watches – the night was divided into different “watches”—duty shifts when certain sailors had to stay awake

1. When Telemachus makes his way to his father’s seat at the head of the council, “all marveled at him…even the oldest councilors made way for him.” (Pg. 19) Why is this? What does this tell us about the values of ancient Greek society?
2. At the assembly, the elder, Aegyptius, reminds the crowd that not a single assembly has been called since before Odysseus left for Troy, which was almost twenty years ago. For what reasons does Telemachus justify his calling for an assembly of the councilors?

3. When Telemachus is making his pleas to the council for help in ridding him of the suitors, to what social customs does he appeal?

4. Antinous, speaking on behalf of the suitors, makes a case for their innocence and says that Telemachus’ mother, Penelope, is to blame for her son’s misfortunes. How does Antinous make his case against Penelope?

5. Antinous offers Telemachus a solution to his problem by suggesting that he send his mother away to her father’s house, and let her father choose the man she will marry. Why does Telemachus say he cannot do this?

6. How does the prophet Halitherses interpret the omen of the eagles that fly over the assembly?
7. What is Eurymachus response to the prophesy? How does he try to discredit Halitherses?

8. What compromise does Telemachus offer the council if they will give him a ship and crew that he might go in search of news of his father?

9. Why is Mentor (Athena in disguise) angry at the men of Ithaca, who will not step up and help Telemachus in his plight?

10. The suitors make gibes at Telemachus, proffer their doubts as to his convictions, and try to inhibit him in his journey. Athena, however, makes certain that the journey takes place. List the things Athena does to aid Telemachus in preparing for his voyage.

11. What oath does Telemachus make his old nurse, Euryclea, swear?
Book III

Vocabulary
bandying – trading
bane – undoing; nemesis
batten – to overfeed
befell – happened to
certify – to confirm, prove
citadel – a fortress city
embarked – departed, took off
embers – ashes
firmament – a firm surface thought to be in the heavens, where the stars sat
gilding – gold leaf, used as decoration
guilds – military units
helm – steering control
import – significance
incessant – without stopping
mettle – courage
precedence – a place of honor
propitiate – to agree, appease
spits – long metal sticks on which meat was roasted
stratagem – a strategy, tactic
suppliant – placing oneself at another's mercy

1. What does Telemachus find the people of Pylos doing when he arrives? What does this activity illustrate about ancient Greek culture? Why is the situation ironic?

2. What trademark of the epic poem is illustrated by Nestor's recollecting of the Trojan War for Telemachus on Page 29?

3. What qualities of the epic hero does King Nestor attribute to Odysseus in his recollections of him?
4. What cultural belief is illustrated by the passage below?

“When, however, we had sacked the city of Priam, and were setting sail in our ships as heaven had dispersed us, then Zeus saw fit to vex the Argives on their homeward voyage; for they had not all been either wise or understanding, and hence many came to a bad end…” (Pg. 29)

5. What might be the reason that the story of Agamemnon’s murder is repeated so often in this story?

6. What advice does Nestor give Telemachus, and why?

7. According to Nestor’s recounting, why did Menelaus and Agamemnon split ways?

8. When was the last time Nestor saw Odysseus?

9. How does Nestor react after Athena turns into an eagle?
Book IV

Vocabulary
affliction – a trial
ambrosia – food of the gods
ambuscade – a caravan
avail – to use
banishes – eliminates
baths – tubs for water
bereft of – robbed of
bondsmen – men bound to work for others
busted – hurried
chalice – a drinking vessel made from precious metals
clamorous – unruly, loud
cloister – a fortified house
cunning – sly
dissipated – broken up
exterminate – to destroy completely
fall to – to eat
freemen – independent men (as opposed to slaves)
hemming – confining
hewn – carved
hussies – promiscuous women
intercourse – a relationship
lotus – an addictive plant
miscreants – criminals
perfidy – treachery
prevaricate – to lie
rue – to regret
shoals – land left exposed by low tides
singularly – unusually
transport – to fit
usurp – to wrongly fill a place
valiant – brave
vouchsafed – granted, gave
yearned – ached

1. Use information from the text to support the following statement: King Menelaus is a good host in the ancient Greek tradition and shows proper respect to the unmatched divinity of the gods.
2. How does King Menelaus know Odysseus?

3. In Book IV, we are introduced to King Menelaus’ wife, Helen. Most of the listeners of ancient times would have known instantly that this was the fabled Helen of Troy, over whom the Trojan War was fought. Since modern readers may not be familiar with the story, they are forced to wait until she offers some clues as to her identity. What story does she tell that first clues readers to the fact that she is the fabled Helen of Troy?

4. Now that Helen is back with her lawfully wedded husband, King Menelaus, on whom does she blame her past indiscretions? (Namely: having left King Menelaus to be with Paris, prince of Troy, which caused the Trojan War.)

5. During the Trojan War, Odysseus revealed himself to Helen after he stole into Troy disguised as a beggar to plot the ambush by the wooden horse. Although she swore not to betray him, there was some ambiguity surrounding the motivation of her actions when Odysseus and his men returned in the horse. We are told by King Menelaus, who was with Odysseus inside the Trojan Horse, that Helen walked around the horse three times, patting it and imitating the voices of the wives of the soldiers inside—trying to provoke the soldiers to give themselves away. King Menelaus interprets her behaviors, again, as induced by a god who favored Troy. What are some other possible motives for Helen’s behavior?

6. Find an example of an epic simile describing how Odysseus will take his revenge on the suitors.

7. For what reason does King Menelaus say that the gods detained him on the island of Pharos, off the coast of Egypt? Why does King Menelaus say that Idothea, daughter to Proteus, the old man of the sea, decides to help him to get off the Island?
8. How does the goddess, Idothea, help King Menelaus and his men disguise themselves while they lay in wait for Proteus, the old man of the sea?

9. Show examples of where Homer emphasizes the fact that it is difficult, or even nearly impossible, for a mortal to get the best of a god. Why does Homer do this?

10. What does King Menelaus learn from the old man of the sea about Odysseus?

11. What is the Elysian Plain? How does the god, Proteus, describe it? For what reasons, according to Proteus, will King Menelaus be taken to the Elysian Plain?

12. Who are the ringleaders of the suitors? How do the suitors learn of Telemachus’ journey? What does Antinous say he will do to Telemachus?

13. When Medon, the servant who overhears the suitors plotting to ambush Telemachus, comes to alert the Queen Penelope of this malicious plan, she makes a speech condemning the waste made upon Odysseus’ estate. Whom does Penelope blame? Whom does she blame for not telling her about her son’s journey? What does this example illustrate about ancient Greek civilization?

14. Athena creates a vision in the form of Penelope’s sister, Iphthime, to appear before Penelope. What does the vision tell Penelope to calm her fears? What does it decline to tell her, and why? What does this illustrate?
Book V

Vocabulary
adze – a tool used to cut wood
astride – sitting atop
augers – drills
bliss – joy
bounteous – generous, fruitful
calamities – disasters
cormorant – a predatory bird found near the sea
deemed – thought
dismay – sorrow
harbinger – an omen, sign
keel – the bottom of a boat
raiment – clothing
reek – odor
reeled – turned violently
squally – stormy, rainy
transgress – to disobey
trident – a long, three-pronged fork (symbol of Poseidon)

1. In making her case for the gods to help Odysseus return home to avenge his house, what literary device does Athena make use of? Cite the example from the text and explain the literal meaning.

2. What human emotion does Calypso accuse the gods of for making her free Odysseus? What ancient Greek notion about the gods does this accusation illustrate? Is this an example of anthropomorphism? Why or why not?

3. Why does Calypso agree to free Odysseus, despite her objections?
4. What is the oath that Calypso takes to prove to Odysseus she means no mischief against him?

5. What does Odysseus use to navigate as he sails away from the island?

6. King Poseidon, returning from Ethiopia, catches sight of Odysseus escaping and realizes that the gods have changed their minds as to Odysseus’ fate. Why is he not afraid—as Calypso was—to continue to cause strife for Odysseus? What does this example illustrate about the power relationships of the gods?

7. Who does Odysseus think is causing the storm?

8. How does Ino—who was once a mortal but has since risen to the rank of marine goddess—try to help Odysseus? How effective is her help? Who eventually helps Odysseus again?

9. Cite the epic simile in the last paragraph of Book V. Explain its literal meaning in the context of the story.
Book VI

Vocabulary
begrimed – covered (usually associated with dirt, grime)
cruse – an ornamental jar, vessel
discomfits – irritates
disparaging – insulting
ravenously – with extreme hunger and thirst
scandalized – embarrassed
scion – a son
unkempt – messy
unweariable – incapable of being tired
want – having lack or need

1. How does Athena arrange the meeting of Odysseus and King Alcinous’ daughter, Nausicaa? In terms of literary devices, what is this an instance of?

2. Cite the epic simile used to illustrate Nausicaa’s beauty.

3. As part of his plea for assistance, Odysseus prays that heaven grants Nausicaa all the things her heart desires. What are the things he specifies that this should be? How does he justify his statement? What does this illustrate about ancient Greek culture?
4. State a theme that runs in accordance with Nausicaa’s statement in response to Odysseus’ flattery, whereby she says “There is no accounting for luck; Zeus gives prosperity to rich and poor just as he chooses, so you must take what he has seen fit to send you, and make the best of it.” (Pg. 66)

5. Why does the princess Nausicaa wish Odysseus to enter the town alone? What does this illustrate about ancient Greek culture?

6. Why might the Phaeacians have a temple dedicated to the god Poseidon? Why is it ironic, in the context of ancient Greek mythology, that Odysseus would be sheltered and kept from Poseidon’s harm by the Phaeacians? What kind of irony is illustrated by this example?

7. How does Nausicaa direct Odysseus to behave when he enters her house? What prophesy does she offer him?

8. Why does Athena not show herself openly to Odysseus at the end of Book VI?
Book VII

Vocabulary
comely – beautiful
consummate – absolute
disposition – personality
endowed – blessed
importunate – insistent
precincts – confines, limits
shuttles – spinning devices
westering – sinking (in the west)

1. How does Athena aid Odysseus in getting to the house of King Alcinous?

2. What are we told is different about the Phaeacians (compared to other Greeks) that necessitates Athena’s protection?

3. Why might it be that Odysseus has to gain the good will of Arete in order to be furthered along his way home? What lesson of ancient Greek society is encapsulated in this vignette?

4. What excuse does Odysseus make to prevent Nausicaa from being scolded for not bringing him directly to the house? How does this action embody the archetype of the epic hero?

5. In boasting of the proficiency of his ships, how long does King Alcinous say it took his sailors to make the journey to Euboea—the furthest of any known place? What does this tell us about the size of the known world in ancient Greece?
Book VIII

Vocabulary
amiss – wrongly (to offend)
chieftains – lower-level leaders
cloisters – tents, gazeboes, porches
defiled – stained, violated, made impure
festooned – decorated
freighting – hauling
intrigue – a secret plot
loth – [loath] unwilling
piteously – very sadly
raiment – garments, dress
reviled – loathed, despised
vestibule – an outer chamber (a large foyer)

1. Throughout The Odyssey, Athena beautifies men in her favor by making them appear taller, more muscular, and younger—in a word, “godlike.” What does this tell the reader about values in ancient Greek culture?

2. The famous bard, Demodocus, has been gifted by the heavenly muse with an aptitude for song, but at what price? How is this similar to Homer?

3. What is King Alcinous’ first clue that the stranger might be Odysseus?

4. Why was Agamemnon glad that his chieftains (Odysseus and Achilles) were quarrelling?

5. Why do you think King Alcinous suggests the athletic contests?
6. Epic heroes had flaws just like everyone else. What flaw does Odysseus display in Book VIII?

7. In what way does Odysseus show himself to be a worthy epic hero by deferring to the customs of ancient Greek hospitality and to the gods and dead heroes?

8. What sport does Odysseus not claim greatness in? What is his reason? What sport does King Alcinous then say his men excel in? How might this be an example of Odysseus deferring to the ancient Greek custom of hospitality?

9. The bard's tale following the games is in the form of a parable. Cite the passage that tells the lesson of the parable.

10. Having possibly offended the king earlier as to the athletic prowess of his people, what compliment does Odysseus offer after the bard's tale?

11. From the bard's song we learn about the Trojans' reaction to the fabled Trojan Horse, in which Odysseus and the other chieftains were laying in wait at the gates of the city. What were the two alternate courses of action the Trojans debated before settling on the fateful third which was to let it remain as an offering and propitiation to the gods?

12. Cite an example of foreshadowing in the form of prophesy at the close of Book VIII.
1. State the apparent paradox in Odysseus’ description of himself to King Alcinous, when he says, “I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, renowned among mankind for all manner of subtlety, so that my fame ascends to heaven.” (Pg. 91)

2. What is ironic about Odysseus’ description of the men from Ithaca, of whom he tells King Alcinous: “…my eyes know none that they love better to look upon.” (Pg. 91)

3. According to Odysseus, what are the things most dear to a man?
4. How do Odysseus’ men cause him trouble, both on Ismarus and in the land of the Lotus-eaters?

5. Explain the apparent irony in the fact that Odysseus worries about meeting “some savage who would be of great strength, and would respect not right or law.” (Pg. 94)

6. Where did Odysseus get the highly-potent, sweet black wine he takes with him onto the Cyclopes’ island?

7. Besides the problems he has with his men, Odysseus himself makes some foolish mistakes due to pride and arrogance. This is in keeping with the tradition of the epic hero, who is flawed, despite his greatness. What are two mistakes he makes in Book IX which cost lives? What are the reasons for each of these mistakes?

8. In the tradition of the Epic Hero, Odysseus shows creativity and wit in making his escape from the Cyclops’ cave. Describe the clever scheme Odysseus uses to escape.
Book X

Vocabulary
arrayed – set up, arranged
dumb – unable to speakathom – a unit of length equal to six feet
fawned – made a fuss over
flayed – skinned
flit – to fly about without a particular goal
forthwith – immediately
gambol – to frolic
gossamer – a sheer, translucent fabric
halloa-ballooing – loud weeping or moaning
lairs – hiding places
lamented – moaned, complained
prevailed – won
reconnoiter – to spy from a distance
savour – aroma

1. How does Aeolus, captain over the winds, try to help Odysseus reach home? What goes wrong with the plan?

2. How does Odysseus lose all the ships in his fleet?

3. Why is Eurylochus not turned into a swine along with the rest of the men he leads to meet Circe?
4. In another instance of “deus ex machina,” Hermes appears in the form of a young man to aid Odysseus in his encounter with Circe. What does Hermes tell Odysseus will happen to him if he gives in to the seduction? What does this illustrate about Circe’s role in mythology as relates to the dynamic between men and women in ancient Greek society?

5. How long do Odysseus and his men stay with Circe? Why does Odysseus finally decide to leave? Is Odysseus under a spell? If not, what does this suggest about Odysseus’ true desire to get home? Can Odysseus’ actions be construed as unfaithful in terms of ancient Greek culture?

6. When Eurylochus accuses Odysseus of being at fault for the loss of many lives, what is Odysseus’ reaction?

7. What mission does Circe tell Odysseus that he must undertake before he can go home?

8. How does Circe describe Hades?

9. What happens to Elpenor when he hears the men bustling about in preparation to leave that causes him to precede the rest of the crew to Hades?
Book XI

Vocabulary
aft – the rear of the ship (wind that blows in the same direction as a ship)
asphodel – the flowers of Hades
august – noble
charlatan – a trickster or scoundrel
ebb – to flow out
feckless – weak, timid
indomitable – invincible
prodigious – unusually large in size
rankle – to burn, irritate
winnowing – separating straw from wheat

1. Who is the first ghost that approaches Odysseus in Hades? What does the ghost ask Odysseus to do? What does he threaten if Odysseus should refuse him his request?

2. Who is the second ghost Odysseus sees? Why must he wait to talk to her?

3. Teiresias warns Odysseus that when he passes the Thrinacian Island en route to Ithaca, to not harm the flocks of the sun-god Apollo. What are the consequences Teiresias warns Odysseus of if he should harm the flocks?

4. How does Odysseus’ mother explain her death?
5. How does Poseidon father Pelias and Neleus? What does this illustrate about the ancient Greek concept of gods and their qualities?

6. What famous Greek tragedy is alluded to by Odysseus in his accounting of his meetings with the ghosts?

7. The betrayed Agamemnon gets a chance to tell his much-heard tale in the first person in Book XI. His attitude towards women is sour, and he does not resist in telling it. Although he heeds to the good-naturedness of Odysseus’ wife, Penelope, what advice of caution does Agamemnon give Odysseus concerning women?

8. When Odysseus tries to cheer Achilles up and urges the fallen hero not to be despondent because he is dead, what is Achilles’ response? What can you infer from this hero’s response about the ancient Greek concept of death?

9. Towards the end of Book XI, Odysseus lists many of the famous men that he saw in Hades and describes their eternal fates. Some fates are good, while some are hellish. What does this tell the reader about Hades and the ancient Greek idea of the afterlife?

10. After speaking to Heracles, Odysseus decides to wait around to see if any other of the “mighty dead” will come and speak to him. What makes Odysseus change his mind and decide to leave in a hurry?
Book XII

Vocabulary
backstay – a brace holding the mast of a ship up from the back
behests – demands
coherent – logical, understandable
jutted – stuck out sharply
unwarily – without caution

1. What does Circe instruct Odysseus to do that will allow him to hear the song of the Sirens without falling victim to their spell?

2. After he passes the Sirens, Odysseus must make a choice of two courses through a narrow pass called the Wanderers. What are his options, as Circe describes them? Although Circe says the choice is up to Odysseus, which option does she push him toward?

3. Why does Odysseus tell his men about the dangers of the Sirens, but not about Scylla, to whom six of them will lose their lives?

4. Three times each day, Charybdis “vomit[s] forth her waters, and three times she sucks them down again.” (Pg. 129) What, therefore, is Charybdis?

5. What does Scylla’s yelp sound like? Why is this fitting for an immortal monster in Greek mythology?
6. Based on information from Book XII, make the case that the gods are working against Odysseus and his men, forcing him to fulfill the prophesy of his destiny.

7. Odysseus describes Scylla's eating of his men as “the most sickening sight that I saw throughout all my voyages.” (Pg. 131) Why do you think this sight was more unsettling to him than seeing the Cyclops eat his men?

8. What does the sun-god threaten to do if Zeus and the other gods seek revenge against Odysseus' crew?

9. What supernatural signs do the gods give that let Odysseus know they are going to carry out the prophesy and kill his men?

10. How do Odysseus men' meet their demise?

11. Where is Odysseus at the end of his tale? What does this have to do with in medias res?

12. Why is the last line of Book VII Ironic?
Book XIII

Vocabulary
blear – to fog up, or cloud
diadem – a crown
enthralled – captivated
mien – a facial expression

1. How does King Alcinous plan to pay for the lavish gifts he bestows upon Odysseus?

2. Why will it look bad for Poseidon if Odysseus makes it home safely from the island of the Phaeacians?

3. What does Zeus recommend that Poseidon do?

4. Find evidence in Book XIII that lying is not only acceptable in Homer's ancient Greece, but lauded by the gods as well.
5. The story of Agamemnon’s death, which has been retold throughout The Odyssey, is a parable illustrating the themes of reciprocity and loyalty. How does its relevance become apparent in the events of Book XIII?

6. How does Athena disguise Odysseus so he might be unrecognized in his own home? Who does she send him to first?

7. Support the following statement: Odysseus, though he is said to be a man of subtlety, is not afraid to directly question the goddess Athena as to her motives and her methods.

8. How does Athena respond to this question? Why does she not regard it as insolent?
Book XIV

Vocabulary
apse – rapidly
billet – a club
clouts – clothes
doughty – courageous
frugal – thrifty
stint – hesitation
strewed – spread out
styes – places for pigs to lie

1. What is ironic in this comment that Eumaeus says to Odysseus?

   “Even the fierce freebooters who go raiding on other people's land, and Zeus gives them their spoil—even they, when they have filled their ships and got home again live conscience-stricken, and look fearfully for judgment…” (Pg. 147)

2. State a theme from the book based on the fact that Odysseus has the gods on his side in trying to avenge his estate, even though he has done the same and worse to others. Elaborate on how this theme speaks to certain cultural notions of entitlement in ancient Greek society.

3. Why does the swineherd wish that Helen's whole race were utterly destroyed? Why is this ironic?
4. Why is it ironic that Odysseus says “I hate a man, even as I hate hell fire, who lets poverty tempt him into lying.” (Pg. 148)

5. What is the point of the long, invented narrative of the journey that landed the beggar (Odysseus) in Ithaca? Why does Eumaeus refuse to believe it?

6. Why does the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) tell Eumaeus of the cloak Odysseus obtained for him? How does he describe the manner in which Odysseus obtained this cloak for him that Eumaeus is impressed? What does this example illustrate about the way cunning and guile were looked upon in ancient Greece?

7. Why is Odysseus impressed by Eumaeus’ conduct?
Book XV

Vocabulary
dearth – a shortage, lack
gewgaws – trinkets

1. What does Athena instruct Telemachus to do upon his return to Ithaca?

2. Why is Pisistratus against leaving Sparta immediately, as Telemachus wishes?

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

4. Why does Theoclymenus, the seer, beseech Telemachus to take him back to Ithaca? How might this be interpreted as foreshadowing?

5. What reason does Eumaeus give when he tells the disguised Odysseus that the suitors would not think that Odysseus was a servant?
6. What does Eumaeus counsel Odysseus about the value of sleep?

7. According to Eumaeus’ story, how did the Phoenician woman who kidnapped him meet her end?

8. What condolences does Odysseus offer Eumaeus after hearing his story? How is this an example of dramatic irony?

9. How does Theoclymenus interpret the omen of the hawk—Apollo’s messenger—with the dove in its talons?

10. Where does Telemachus tell Theoclymenus to go for hospitality before Theoclymenus offers him the prophesy? How about after? Why the difference?
Book XVI

Vocabulary
boon – a blessing
compunction – having a guilty feeling
dissuade – to talk someone out of doing something
exploit – to test
heinous – outrageous; unspeakably evil
propitious – merciful
redoubtable – courageous
superintend – to oversee
wrought – made in a fire

1. Why does Telemachus not want to take the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) into his home?

2. How does Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) chide Telemachus for his hesitancy in dealing with the suitors?

3. What does Telemachus send the swineherd to do?

4. Why does Telemachus doubt that it is indeed his father, Odysseus, who he sees enter the swineherd’s hut?
5. How many men will Telemachus and his father face in their house (including suitors and their servants)?

6. Who does Odysseus claim as allies in trying to bolster his son's courage?

7. What three things does Odysseus tell his son to do in helping him set the stage for his revenge?

8. Having eluded their ambuscade and made it safely back to Ithaca, what are the suitors afraid Telemachus will do to ruin them?

9. Amphinomous says he is against killing Telemachus, unless what?

10. Eurymachus makes a vow to Penelope that Telemachus will not be harmed under his watch, except for one clause that deals with fate. What is the clause?
Book XVII

Vocabulary
abominable – worthy of hatred
gadding – flaunting, showing off
lavishly – richly

1. What is Telemachus’ reaction when his mother greets him upon his return? What does he order her to do?

2. What does Theoclymenus, the seer, tell Penelope about Odysseus?

3. What does Penelope promise Theoclymenus if his prophesy should prove true?

4. When Eumaeus and Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) are overtaken by the goatherd, Melanthius, on their way to town, what does Melanthius say to them?

5. According to Odysseus’ speech on Page 180, what enemy is it that causes men to make war upon others?
6. Interpret the following statement by Eumaeus: “Servants never do their work when their master’s hand is no longer over them, for Zeus takes half the goodness out of a man when he makes a slave of him.” (Pg. 180)

7. Athena encourages Odysseus to beg the suitors for bread in order to determine who among them is good and who is bad. However, we are told that despite the suitors’ reactions, the goddess will not spare a single one of them. What ancient Greek lesson is illustrated by this vignette? Why does Athena bother having Odysseus test the suitors if their reactions will make no difference?

8. Why are the other men at the table fearful when Antinous hits the beggar with the stool?

9. Why does the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) wish to wait until after sundown to speak with Penelope?
Book XVIII

Vocabulary
braziers – torches
cudgel – to beat violently
drubbing – beating
gibes – insults
importunity – impudence, insolence
incorrigible – incapable of change for the better
infamy – notoriety, fame for a negative reason
propriety – social right and wrong
smithy – a blacksmith's forge
staid – courageous, solid
vixen – a treacherous woman

1. In what two ways does Odysseus display his cleverness in his fight with Irus, the beggar who insults him?

2. Why is Irus not deserving of sympathy? What does this illustrate about ancient Greek culture?

3. What is the suitors' reaction to the beggar's swift victory in the fight? How does Odysseus take their reaction? Why is the situation ironic?

4. Odysseus seems to take pity on Amphinomus, offering him a warning of his impending destruction; however, we are told that his fate is already decided by Athena—he will fall by Telemachus hand. What is this example another illustration of?
5. On Page 190 we learn a lesson in ancient Greek culture as to how a woman could win honor for her household. What is it?

6. What does Athena do to make Penelope even more beautiful? What does this illustrate about the ancient Greek concept of beauty?

7. How does Penelope show her cleverness in Book XVIII—making Odysseus proud of her as a wife fitting for an Epic Hero?

8. In the ancient Greek tradition, what crime is the pretty maid, Melantho, guilty of? What does this indictment against Melantho illustrate about class differences in ancient Greek culture?

9. Why does Athena make the suitors continue to behave in an insolent way?

10. What insult does Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) make to Eurymachus?
Book XIX

Vocabulary
fatuous – insignificant
perjurer – one who lies under oath
plausible – believable
portended – prophesied, foretold
wanton – to strut

1. What excuse does Odysseus instruct Telemachus to make when the suitors ask him why he has removed the arms from the hall?

2. What are the pressures Penelope is under to re-marry, as explained to Odysseus?

3. Why does Odysseus make up a story about his identity rather than reveal himself to his wife? How is this an example of a digression?

4. What test does Penelope put to the beggar (Odysseus in disguise) to challenge the truthfulness of his tale? How does the beggar answer?

5. Cite the epic simile describing Penelope’s tears for Odysseus on Page 199. What makes the situation ironic?
6. According to the beggar, what is the goal of the errand currently delaying Odysseus in his return home? How does the beggar praise this stratagem? Why is this deeply ironic?

7. What reason does Penelope give for her doubts that Odysseus will ever reach home?

8. State a theme from the following:
   “Men live but for a little season; if they are hard, and deal hardly, people wish them ill so long as they are alive, and speak contemptuously of them when they are dead, but he that is righteous and deals righteously, the people tell of his praise among all lands, and many shall call him blessed.” (Pg. 201)

9. Why does Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) demand that “an old and respectable woman, who has gone through as much trouble as [he] has,” be the one to wash his feet? (Pg. 201) What does this exhibit of his character? What suspense arises from this request?

10. How is Odysseus’ grandfather, Autolycus, described? How is this description pertinent in keeping with the ancient Greek idea that traits are handed down through family?
11. What does Odysseus threaten to do to Euryclea if she should reveal his identity? What does Euryclea say to convince Odysseus that she will not reveal him?

12. Cite the Epic Simile Penelope uses to describe the indecision that keeps her awake at night.

13. What does Penelope say of dreams? What are the two gates through which dreams come?

14. What epithet is applied to the city of Troy by Penelope?

15. Why do you think Penelope decides it is time to hold the tournament of axes, by which the suitors will contest for her hand in marriage?
Book XX

Vocabulary
public house – a pub, or bar
ribald – rowdy
stockman – a man who keeps his master’s cattle
suffering – here, permitting

1. What does Odysseus hear as he is trying to get to sleep that makes his “heart growl with anger”? (Pg. 207)

2. What does Odysseus tell Athena he is concerned about in enacting his revenge upon the suitors?

3. What is it that prompts Penelope to wake up in the middle of the night and pray that she would rather die than “yield [herself] to a worse man than [Odysseus] was.” (Pg. 208)

4. What does Odysseus pray for when he awakens? How is his prayer answered?
5. What does the maid Euryclea say to chide Telemachus for being critical of his mother's ability to judge character?

6. What omen do the suitors see? What does Amphinomus interpret it to mean? What does he suggest they do in response to this omen?

7. What evidence is there in Book XX that Telemachus is growing into his role as master of his house?

8. When Agelaus insists again that Telemachus should encourage his mother to choose one of the suitors to marry so that he will be able to “manage [his] own inheritance, and to eat and drink in peace,” what is Telemachus' response? (Pg. 213) Whom does Telemachus place the blame for the delay upon?

9. Why does the seer Theoclymenus leave Odysseus' house?
Book XXI

Vocabulary

pretext – an excuse
louts – people with no manners
prowess – power
holding – a settled property
twit – to ridicule

1. Where did Odysseus meet Iphitus—who gave him the mighty bow to be used in the tournament of axes? Why was each man there?

2. How and why did Heracles (Hercules) shame himself to quench his own greed?

3. Why does Telemachus compete in the tournament of axes? Why do you think Odysseus stops him before he successfully strings the bow?

4. Who is the first of the suitors to attempt to string the great bow? What are we told about him that makes him different from the other suitors? What does he prophesize after he fails to string it that makes Antinous rebuke him?

5. Despite his boasting, what does Antinous propose be done to the bow to make it easier to string?

6. Why does Odysseus reveal himself to Eumaeus, the swineherd, and Philoetius, the stockman? How does he prove his identity to them?
7. What does Odysseus ask Eumaeus and Philoetius to do to aid him in his plan?

8. What excuse does Antinous make for not stringing the bow? What does he propose they do?

9. Why do the suitors become angry and refuse Odysseus (disguised as a beggar) the chance to attempt to string the bow? Are they afraid that the beggar might win Penelope’s hand in marriage out from under them? What does this illustrate about class differences in ancient Greek society?

10. What Epic Simile does Antinous offer in rebuking the beggar for insolence—suggesting that the beggar’s boldness is induced by wine? Show how this is an example of dramatic irony.

11. Cite another example on Page 221 of Telemachus’ coming-of-age—proof that he is indeed a dynamic character. What is illustrated about the role of men and women in ancient Greek society by this passage?

12. What omen causes the heart of Odysseus to rejoice, and causes the suitors to “turn color” as they hear it? (Pg. 222)
Book XXII

Vocabulary
weltering – soaking

1. Who was the first suitor to fall to Odysseus’ bow? Why did Antinous feel safe with the bow in the beggar’s hands?

2. After Antinous is killed, the suitors rebuke the stranger telling him they will kill him in retribution. Why do they soon change their tune and beg him for mercy? What does Eurymachus say in hopes of placating the stranger?

3. Who is the first suitor killed by Telemachus? Where was this foretold?

4. How does the goatherd, Melanthius, attempt to aid the suitors? What mistake does Telemachus admit that has allowed this? What is Melanthius’ fate?

5. How do the suitors try to dissuade Mentor (Athena in disguise) from siding with Odysseus? What is Athena’s reaction? Why does Athena make Odysseus fight for full victory?

6. Why is it ironic that the stockman, who is in charge of Odysseus’ cattle, should kill Ctesippus?
7. Despite Athena’s intervention in the battle, the suitors still manage to strike a few minor blows. What does this illustrate?

8. What does Athena brandish to make the suitors panic and fle a the fight? Why are they afraid when they see this object?

9. How does Odysseus respond when Leiodes—the sacrificial priest of the suitors, who we were told despised them—falls to his knees and begs Odysseus for his life?

10. Why does Odysseus spare the minstrel, Phemius, and Medon, one of the suitors? Might Homer have had a personal reason for allowing the bard to live?

11. What does Odysseus make the disloyal maids do before they are killed? Why is this especially cruel?

12. Why does Telemachus say he wants to hang the women rather than let them die a clean death by sword? Why is this expression of will significant?

13. What grim epic simile is used to make the description of the women’s death by hanging more vivid to the reader? Explain it.
Book XXIII

Vocabulary

*depreciate* – to insult

1. Penelope is slow to accept that the stranger—who had been dressed as a beggar and killed all the suitors—is truly her long-lost husband, Odysseus. She finds it particularly hard to believe that Odysseus could have killed all the suitors single-handedly. What does she suspect is really the cause of the suitors’ demise? How does she say she will come to know if the stranger is truly Odysseus?

2. Why does Odysseus fear that he will soon have to fight again?

3. What clever deception does Odysseus play to provide a window of time for their getaway?

4. How is the public opinion of the townsfolk of Ithaca expressed in Book XXIII?

5. Despite seeing her husband cleaned up by Athena to appear as an immortal, Penelope is still not convinced that it is indeed Odysseus she is speaking to. How does she try to trick him into revealing a false identity? How does Odysseus’ response convince her that he is truly her husband?

6. How does Odysseus plan to replenish his stock of sheep and goats that were eaten by the suitors?
Book XXIV

Vocabulary

dirge – a song of mourning
infused – injected

1. What is the epithet applied to Hermes in Book XXIV as he leads the ghost of the suitors down into Hades?

2. When the ghost of Agamemnon sees Amphimedon and his fellow suitors, how does he assume that they all might have met their premature end?

3. When the ghost of Amphimedon tells the ghost of Agamemnon how Penelope fooled the suitors and then plotted with Odysseus to bring about their demise, what is Agamemnon's reaction? Why is his reaction so strong?

4. Why do you think Odysseus decides it best to “be crafty” with his father, rather than approach the old man directly? (Pg. 245)
5. How are Medon, whom Telemachus spared, and Halitherses, the old prophet, able to convince half of the bereaved of Ithaca to abandon their quest for revenge against Odysseus?

6. When Athena asks Zeus’ counsel, how does the god of gods reply?

7. What does Odysseus say to encourage Telemachus before the battle with the group being led by the families of the suitors? Why is this important in the context of ancient Greek culture?

8. Why does Laertes rejoice at the coming battle, despite the dangers?

9. In the most gratuitous example of “deus ex machina” in The Odyssey, how does Athena stop the fighting in Ithaca? Why does Odysseus not stop when she first commands it?
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