

**THE ODYSSEY**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**Characters/Locations**

Acheans	Calypso	Hermes	Persephone
Agamemnon	Charybdis	Illium	Polyphemus
Alcinous	Circe	Ithaca	Poseidon
Amphinomous	Cronus	Laertes	Scylla
Antinous	Elpenor	Laestrygonians	Sirens
Apollo	Eumaeus	Lampetia	Telemachus
Argos	Eurylochus	Odysseus	Tiresias
Athena	Eurymachus	Penelope	Zeus
Calliope	Eurynome	Perimedes	

**PART 1: “The Adventures of Odysseus” p. 1045**

1. What does it mean to “invoke the muse”? *to call upon the muse to provide inspiration*  
 Who does this in the first selection in your book? *Homer*  
 Who is the muse of epic poetry? *Calliope*
2. What event does Homer allude to in the first stanza? *the Trojan War*
3. How does Homer characterize Odysseus’ journey in the second stanza? Be specific.
4. How does he characterize Odysseus in the second stanza? (What personality trait does he exhibit)?
5. What is the reason that many of Odysseus’ men died on their voyage?

**“The Adventures of Odysseus” – continued from text**

Begin when all the rest who left behind them  
 headlong death in battle or at sea  
 had long ago returned, while he alone still hungered                      20  
 for home and wife. Her ladyship Calypso  
 clung to him in her sea-hallowed caves –  
 a nymph, immortal and most beautiful,  
 who craved him for her own.

And when long years and seasons  
wheeling brought around that point of time 25  
ordained for him to make his passage homeward,  
trials and dangers, even so, attended him  
even in Ithaca, near those he loved.  
Yet all the gods had pitied Lord Odysseus,  
all but Poseidon, raging cold and rough 30  
against the brave king till he came ashore  
at last on his own land.

6. What is the reason that Odysseus does not return home with his fellow Greeks?
7. Who is the one god that did not have pity for Odysseus?
8. What does this first section tell us about how Odysseus' journey will end?

### **Part One: The Wanderings**

*The first part of the epic (Books 1-4) tells about Odysseus' son, Telemachus. Telemachus has been searching the Mediterranean world for his father, who had never returned from the ten-year Trojan War. (Today, Odysseus would be listed as missing in action.)*

*When we first meet Odysseus, in Book 5 of the epic, he is a prisoner of the beautiful goddess Calypso. The old soldier is in despair: He has spent ten years trying to get home. However, even when Calypso finally releases Odysseus, the sea god, Poseidon, refuses to allow his safe passage over the treacherous seas. Odysseus is nearly dead when he is washed up on the island of Scheria, home of the Phaeacians. Welcomed by Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, Odysseus is a guest at court that evening (Books 6-8)*

*To the ancient people of Greece and Asia Minor, all guests were god-sent. They had to be treated with great courtesy before they could be asked to identify themselves and state their business. That night, at the banquet, the stranger (Odysseus) who was washed up on the beach is seated in the guest's place of honor. A minstrel, or singer, is called, and the mystery guest gives him a gift of pork, crisp with fat, and requests a song about Troy. In effect, Odysseus is asking for a song about himself.*

*Odysseus weeps as the minstrel's song reminds him of all his dead companions, who will never see their homes again. Now Odysseus is asked by the king to identify himself. It is here that he begins the story of his journey.*

### **Part One: The Wanderings (handout – above)**

1. What are books 1-4 of the epic about?
2. What is the setting and situation as Book 5 opens?
3. Where is Odysseus in Books 6-8?

4. How are guests treated by the ancient people of Greece and Asia Minor?

**“Sailing from Troy” – page 1047**

1. Whom is Odysseus addressing when he states, “I am Laertes’ son...”?
2. What does the word “guile” mean? What does it have to do with Odysseus?
3. Define epithet. Give an example of an epithet from this section. (see line 32)
4. How does Odysseus express how important his home is to him? Quote specific lines/words.
5. How do Odysseus’ men behave toward the Cicones on Ismarus?
6. What character trait gets Odysseus’ men in trouble in Ismarus?
7. What was the result of Odysseus’ men’s actions?
8. An epic reveals a culture’s values and customs. What do the following lines reveal about Greek culture/values?  
lines 35-37  
  
lines 44-45  
  
lines 67-69
9. Identify four effective similes, metaphors, or examples of personification and give the line number(s).
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.

**“The Lotus Eaters” page 1048**

1. Identify the epithet in line 70.
2. What do lines 92-93 reveal about Odysseus’ character?
3. What does Odysseus say the plant does (lines 98-100, 105)? What does the lotus plant seem to parallel in modern times?
4. How does Odysseus lead the men safely onward? Give specifics.
5. Identify three examples of figurative language in this section. Cite the line, identify the device and give the line number(s).
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

**“The Cyclops” p. 1050**

1. Whose son is the Cyclops?
2. To whom is Odysseus telling this story?
3. How does Odysseus expect to be treated by Polyphemus?
4. What is the Cyclops’ response when Odysseus voices his expectations?
5. How does Odysseus’ guile come into play in this exchange on p. 989?
6. Why does Odysseus tell Polyphemus that his ship was destroyed?
7. What does the Cyclops do to Odysseus’ men?
8. What trait does Odysseus exhibit in lines 244-250?
9. What is ironic about Polyphemus saying he will eat Nohbdy last?
10. Describe Odysseus’ plan to escape the Cyclops.

11. What is ironic about the scene where the Cyclops is addressing the ram?
12. Why do the men's faces turn to grief when Odysseus and the men who had been in the cave return to the ship?
13. What do you think about Odysseus' judgment when he taunts the Cyclops? (start on line 431)
14. What does this episode imply is one of Odysseus' flaws?
15. How does the identity of Odysseus surprise the Cyclops?
16. What does the Cyclops foreshadow about Odysseus' journey home?

The Witch Circe – (text page 1064 and below)

*After sailing from the Cyclops's island, Odysseus and his men land on the island of Aeolia. There, the wind kind, Aeolus, does Odysseus a favor. He puts all the stormy winds in a bag so that they will not harm the Ithacans. The bull's-hide bag containing the winds is wedged under Odysseus' afterdeck. But during the voyage, the suspicious and curious sailors open the bag, thinking it contains treasure, and the evil winds roar up into hurricanes to threaten the luckless Odysseus again.*

*After many of his men are killed and eaten by the gigantic cannibals called Laestrygonians, Odysseus' ship lands on Aeaea, the home of the witch Circe. Here, a party of twenty-three men, led by Eurylochus, goes off to explore the island. Odysseus is still telling his story to King Alcinous and his court.*

“In the wild wood they found an open glade,  
 around a smooth stone house—the hall of Circe—  
 and wolves and mountain lions lay there, mild  
 in her soft spell, fed on her drug of evil.  
 None would attack—oh, it was strange, I tell you—  
 but switching their long tails they faced our men  
 like hounds, who look up when their master comes  
 with tidbits for them—as he will—from table.  
 Humbly those wolves and lions with mighty paws  
 fawned on our men—who met their yellow eyes  
 and feared them.

In the entrance way they stayed  
 to listen there: inside her quiet house  
 they heard the goddess Circe.

Low she sang

in her beguiling voice, while on her loom  
 she wove ambrosial fabric sheer and bright,  
 by that craft known to the goddesses of heaven.  
 No one would speak, until Polites—most  
 faithful and likable of my officers, said:

‘Dear friends, no need for stealth: here’s a young weaver  
singing a pretty song to set the air  
a-tingle on these lawns and paven courts.  
Goddess she is, or lady. Shall we greet her?’  
So reassured, they all cried out together,  
and she came swiftly to the shining doors  
to call them in. All but Eurylochus—  
who feared a snare—the innocents went after her.  
On thrones she seated them, and lounging chairs,  
while she prepared a meal of cheese and barley  
and amber honey mixed with Pramnian wine,  
adding her own vile pinch, to make them lose  
desire or thought of our dear father land.  
Scarce had they drunk when she flew after them  
with her long stick and shut them in a pigsty—  
bodies, voices, heads, and bristles, all  
swinish now, though their minds were still unchanged.  
So, squealing, in they went. And [Circe] tossed them  
acorns, mast [various kinds of nuts used as food for hogs], and cornel berries—fodder  
for hogs who rut and slumber on the earth.

Down to the ship Eurylochus came running  
to cry alarm, foul magic doomed his men!  
But working with dry lips to speak a word  
he could not, being so shaken; blinding tears  
welled in his eyes; foreboding filled his heart.  
When we were frantic questioning him, at last  
we heard the tale: our friends were gone . . .”

*Odysseus leaves the ship and rushes to Circe’s hall. The god Hermes stops him to give him a plant that will weaken Circe’s power. (Homer calls it a moly; it might have been a kind of garlic. Protected by the plant’s magic, Odysseus resists Circe’s sorcery. The witch, realizing she has met her match, frees Odysseus’ men. Now Circe, “loveliest of all immortals,” persuades Odysseus to stay with her. There Odysseus shares her meat and wine, and she restores his heart. But, after many seasons of feasting and other pleasures, Odysseus and his men beg Circe to help them get home.*

*She responds to their pleas with the command that Odysseus alone descend to the Land of the Dead, “the cold homes of Death and pale Persephone,” queen of the Underworld. There, Odysseus must seek the wisdom of the blind prophet Teiresias.*

## “The Witch Circe”

1. Who is Aeolus and what does he do?

2. What happens to the bag? Why should this not surprise you?
  
3. How does Odysseus characterize Circe's power in the first stanza? What has she done with this power?
  
4. How does Circe first appear or seem to the men? Give two details that contribute to this impression.
  
5. Why didn't Eurylochus go in to meet Circe?
  
6. How does Circe trick Odysseus' men? What does she do to them?
  
7. Why is Odysseus able to resist Circe's sorcery?
  
8. What is the condition under which Circe will release Odysseus? What must Odysseus do?
  
9. Who are the Laestrygonians and what do they do?

**“The Land of the Dead” p. 1064**

1. What is the region of The Men of Winter and what is it like? (lines 538-545)

2. Why does Odysseus dig a pit and put blood in it?
3. What does he pour around the pit? Why?
4. What is Erebus?
5. What types of people emerge from Erebus as Odysseus describes?
6. Why does Odysseus guard the pit with his sword?
7. Who is Elpenor and how did he get to this place of darkness faster than Odysseus and the crew did?
8. What does Elpenor ask Odysseus to do at Aeaean Island?
9. Who is Anticlea and why does seeing her shock Odysseus?
10. How does Odysseus prove his strength/intelligence around her?
11. Who is Tiresias?
12. What does he warn concerning Poseidon?
13. What does Tiresias advise the crew to do at Thrinacia?
14. What does Tiresias predict for Odysseus and his crew if they do not heed his advice?
15. Tiresias foretells the final outcome for Odysseus. What does he say?



**“The Sirens” p. 1071**

1. How does Circe tell Odysseus to protect his crew?
2. How will Odysseus be protected from the song of the Sirens?
3. Find two epithets in this section. Identify the person being described and write the epithet. Give the line number.

**“Scylla and Charybdis” p. 1073**

1. Describe Scylla.\* (not in text, use another source)
2. Describe Charybdis. What epithet is used to describe Charybdis? Explain the simile used to describe Charybdis and cite the line number(s).
3. Why does Circe advise Odysseus to steer toward Scylla instead of Charybdis? (Not in text; try to figure this out on your own.)
4. How does Odysseus encourage his men to continue their dangerous journey when they become discouraged?
5. One of the epic conventions is for the hero to ask the gods for assistance. Where does Odysseus do that in this section?
6. Why do you think Odysseus does not tell his men about the danger of Scylla? Is his silence

justified?

7. What epithet describes Scylla?
8. Explain the epic simile at the end of this section. Cite line numbers.
9. How does the sight of Scylla devouring his men affect Odysseus?

**ODYSSEY—“The Cattle of the Sun God” page 1076**

1. As you read this section, find epithets for Dawn, Helios and Zeus. Write the epithets and the line numbers.
2. Where has Odysseus gone when the men slaughter the cattle?
3. What argument does Eurylochus use to convince the crew to kill the kine?
4. How do they plan to appease the gods?
5. What threat does Helios make to Zeus if the men are not punished?
6. What strange things do the gods cause to occur as a warning of things to come?
7. How does Zeus punish the crew?
8. What evidence do we see of the Greeks’ belief in a soul?

9. Odysseus ties the keel and mast together and floats toward Charybdis. How does he survive Charybdis?
10. What/whom enables him to survive Scylla? Explain.
11. After nine days of drifting, he lands on Ogygia Isle. Who lives here?
12. Explain the Homeric simile in lines 978-982.

Calypso kept Odysseus with her for seven years and promised him immortality if he remained with her forever.

## ***ODYSSEY PART TWO***

### **The Return of Odysseus—“Twenty years gone, and I am back again” p. 1089**

1. How does Odysseus finally arrive in Ithaca?
2. What goddess helps him again? Why do you think she helps Odysseus?
3. Who is Telemachus?
4. What has happened in Odysseus' absence?
5. Who is Penelope and what is she the archetype of?
6. Who is Eumaeus?
7. How is Odysseus disguised?
8. What does Telemachus reveal about Odysseus' fame? (Lines 1089-1090)

9. What plan do they work out?

**“Argus” p. 1082**

1. Describe Argos as a puppy.
2. Where does he stay now?
3. What happens to Argos?

**“The Suitors” p. 1092**

1. Who is Antinous and what does he say to the disguised Odysseus?
2. What does Odysseus reply about hospitality?
3. What does Antinous throw at Odysseus?
4. Who are the Furies?
5. What does Odysseus say that he hopes will happen to Antinous?
6. What does Penelope say about Antinous?
7. Who is Eurynome and what does she wish for the suitors?
8. What do lines 1284-85 reveal about Penelope?

**“Penelope” p. 1100**

1. Describe Penelope after reading this section. Use **five** adjectives to clearly describe her physically and her inner character.
2. What ruse does Penelope devise to postpone her choice of a future husband?
3. What does Odysseus promise Penelope?

**ODYSSEY—“The Challenge” p. 1103**

1. Describe the test of the bow.
2. Who devises this test?
3. What does she promise to the man who strings the bow?
4. What things are being compared in the Homeric simile in lines 1370-1379?
5. Who is the “son of crooked-minded Cronus and what is the sign that he flings down?
6. What does this sign foreshadow?
7. What does the phrase “true son of Odysseus” imply about Telemachus?  
(Read lines 1402-1405)

**“Odysseus’ Revenge” p. 1107**

1. What can you infer about the suitors from their reaction to Odysseus’ attack?
2. How does Homer suggest that the suitors are cowards?

3. What does Eurymachus propose?
4. Do you think the suitors' punishment fits their crimes? Explain your answer.

**“Penelope’s Test” p. 1111**

1. How does Penelope test this man to make sure he is Odysseus?
2. Describe how Odysseus made their bed.
3. How is Odysseus compared to a swimmer in the Homeric simile in lines 1615-1621?