

Novel Series

The Odyssey

teacher resource



The Odyssey

Homer

Curriculum Unit
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About the Cover

An angry Poseidon made it far from easy for the hero, Odysseus, to return home to Ithaca from the Trojan War.

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Introduction

The Odyssey reaches back in time and stands as a wonderful example of a folk epic. According to tradition, Homer wrote it down, but its genesis lies in Greek mythology and history and in the oral storytelling tradition. The story has everything that draws audiences to books and movies today: love, adventure, a memorable hero, and a happy ending. With guidance, today's students can enjoy encountering a superhero who is a fallible human being, a compassionate family man, a military hero, and a just leader.

Gods and goddesses figure prominently in *The Odyssey*, so some knowledge of Greek mythology is helpful. Of particular importance are Zeus, Athena, and Poseidon, although other deities also appear. Zeus is the king of the Olympians, but he is by no means all-wise or omnipotent. The father of Helen of Troy, he is in a way responsible for the entire Trojan War. Odysseus earns the wrath of Poseidon, the god of the sea, when he blinds Polyphemus; the result is Poseidon's determination to get revenge. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, helps Telemachus, Odysseus, and Penelope on the way to their reunion in the second half of the epic.

The twenty-four books of *The Odyssey* reveal a careful structure. The epic divides neatly into two sections. The first twelve books present the current situation in Ithaca, Telemachus's desire to find his father, and Odysseus's adventures from leaving Troy to leaving Phaeacia for Ithaca. The final twelve deal with reclaiming the kingdom and his household from the suitors. Books 9 through 12 detail the epic's most famous events, as Odysseus tells the story of his many adventures and trials on the way home. Many students will already have encountered the stories of the blinding of Polyphemus, the encounter with the fearsome Scylla and Charybdis, and outwitting Circe, the sorceress who turns men into swine. In reading the epic as a whole, they will see that these episodes fit in the context of a much more complex narrative.

The Odyssey exemplifies typical characteristics of the epic form. It originated in the oral tradition, is written in poetry, and has a dignified and serious style. The protagonist is a heroic figure who experiences a series of adventures and challenges, including a descent into Hades, in the process of his journey. He exemplifies the values of his culture: intelligence, courage, physical strength, williness, and family commitment. The story begins in the middle of things and flashes back to reveal former events, and it includes constant awareness of the power of the gods.

Many translations of *The Odyssey* are available: some in prose, some in poetry. You will want to choose a text that suits your students' abilities and maturity levels. Younger students who can enjoy the adventure story elements may find a poem translation daunting. More experienced and advanced classes can benefit from poetic translations that strive to convey Homer's style, including imagery and figures of speech.

Teacher Notes

This unit can be used with any translation of *The Odyssey*. The author of these lessons and handouts made primary use of two: the prose version by W. H. D. Rouse and the poetic version by Robert Fagles. Younger students and those with minimal patience or experience with poetry often benefit from a prose translation. More advanced students can take on the additional challenge and pleasure of poetry.

One consequence of translators' choices is variations in the spelling of some names. Athena is sometimes Athene, sometimes Minerva (the Roman version). Penelope is sometimes Penelopeia. Antinous is sometimes Antinoos. The lessons in this unit use the spellings that seem most prevalent today: Penelope, Antinous, Eumaeus, Melanthius, Menelaus, Alcinoos, to name a few.

The Odyssey is very symmetrical; it consists of twenty-four books or chapters. The first four, sometimes called the Telemacheiad, emphasize the situation in Ithaca twenty years after Odysseus left for Troy and focus on Odysseus's son. Then, in the next four books, the epic switches its attention to Odysseus on the final leg of his journey home and his experiences in Phaeacia. The last four books in the first half of the epic, probably the most famous section, detail his encounters with danger from the time he left Troy to his arrival at Calypso's island, Ogygia.

The second half of the epic describes Odysseus's return home, his understanding of what has been going on in his absence, the massacre of the suitors and disloyal servants, and his reunion with his wife and kingdom. Students sometimes get a little bogged down in this reading, so you will want to encourage them to focus on the big picture without trying to grasp every little detail.

Because *The Odyssey* is not a short book, some teachers advocate a jigsaw approach; the entire class reads only selected portions of the text, while the rest is allotted to small groups, who then report information back to their classmates. If you choose this method, you may want to have all of the students read books 1, 9 through 12, and 21 through 24. For a full appreciation and understanding of the classical epic, however, it is recommended that all students take time to read the entire work.

Lessons 1 and 2 emphasize prereading activities and introduce the nature of an epic and the basics of Greek mythology. Subsequent lessons use the following reading schedule:

Books 1 and 2 for Lesson 3

Books 3 and 4 for Lesson 4

Books 5 through 8 for Lesson 5

Books 9 and 10 for Lesson 6

Books 11 and 12 for Lesson 7

Books 13 through 16 for Lesson 8

Books 17 through 20 for Lesson 9

Books 21 through 24 for Lesson 10

To complete Lessons 11 and 12, students need to understand the entire epic.

The supplementary materials at the end of the unit include a reading guide and suggested responses. Some classes benefit from beginning the lessons with a systematic review of reading guide answers. The supplementary materials also include an objective test and answer key.

Materials in this unit address state and national standards that challenge students to encounter a variety of texts, including classic works, and to derive insight into life and human nature. Procedures involve students in multiple learning strategies and draw on personal experiences to enhance understanding. Internet research is also included. The unit emphasizes students' responsible and informed participation in the learning community.

Answers to handouts will vary unless otherwise indicated. Students may need additional paper to complete some handouts.

Lesson 1

What Is an Epic?

Objectives

- To understand the nature of an epic
- To anticipate situations in *The Odyssey*

Notes to the Teacher

Epics are usually described as long narrative poems about the adventures and misadventures of cultural heroes. Folk epics have their origins in the oral tradition and include great works such as the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, the French *Song of Roland*, and the Spanish *El Cid*. In reading *The Odyssey*, students are approaching one of the oldest epics—the story of the hero Odysseus after the Trojan War and his efforts to reclaim home and family in Ithaca.

The basic situation at the beginning of the epic is fraught with peril. The king of Ithaca has been gone for a very long time—twenty years—and many of the men on the island are eager to usurp his position. His wife is beset with suitors, all eager to marry her in order to claim both power and wealth. Loyal to her long-missing husband, she has attempted for years to stave off these would-be kings. Odysseus’s son, Telemachus, on the verge of manhood but not quite there yet, would like to take charge but finds himself inadequate to the task.

Meanwhile, Odysseus, after years in the war described in *The Iliad*, has had many adventures in his efforts to return home, including encounters with fearsome monsters and enticing goddesses. All of his comrades have been lost, and he has washed up on the shores of Laodocia, still trying to find his way back to Ithaca. All three characters need help, and that help is provided by Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

In this lesson, students first learn about the epic genre. They then consider the opening situation in *The Odyssey*.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into five small groups, and assign each group one of the following epics: *The Iliad*, *The Song of Roland*, *El Cid*, *Beowulf*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Distribute **Handout 1**, and ask the groups to record information.

2. Have groups report to the class as a whole.

Suggested Responses

The Iliad tells the story of the Trojan War and the hero Achilles.

The story starts in the middle of things and ends with the defeat of Troy and funeral of the Trojan prince, Paris. The story emphasizes military combat and intervening deities. The hero is a skilled and capable warrior who represents values of classical Greek culture.

The Song of Roland describes the war adventures of the young French hero, Roland. He is with Charlemagne during the Crusades of the Middle Ages. The story ends with the hero's death and Charlemagne's reluctance to continue the Crusades. Roland has a youthful innocence and idealism unique to him. He represents medieval French culture.

El Cid is the Spanish epic about the great military hero El Cid and depicts a fully adult and very masculine protagonist. Readers see him as an aggressive and confident leader. He returns home after war and is later killed. This is the Spanish national epic.

Beowulf is an Anglo-Saxon epic about a hero named Beowulf who fights and defeats several monsters and a dragon. Beowulf is brave and very strong, and he lives a long life. In the end, he dies of wounds inflicted by the dragon. Throughout the epic, Beowulf has a strong belief in the power of fate.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is an American novel about the experiences of a young boy with an escaped slave before the Civil War. The novel tells the story of a long journey on a raft and a number of land adventures. The protagonist is uneducated but intelligent and reflective.

3. Point out that all five are adventure stories, and they reflect diverse cultures. Explain that the first four started out as legends passed on by word of mouth until someone finally wrote them down. The last comes from the United States, a relatively new culture, and was written in prose by a famous author named Mark Twain, but it is often considered to be the great American epic.
4. Distribute **Handout 2**, and use it to explain the nature of an epic.
5. Distribute **Handout 3**, and have students complete the exercise. Follow with class discussion. (Today men still go off to war and can be missing for short or long periods of time, leaving their families worried and uncertain about what might have happened. Modern technology makes it probable that the person would not be lost for such a long time.)

A Story of a Cultural Hero

Directions: Use the Internet or print resources to research information about the epic assigned to you. Then answer the following questions.

Title of epic: _____

Author: _____

1. What is the story about? Who is the hero in the story?

2. How does the story begin and end?

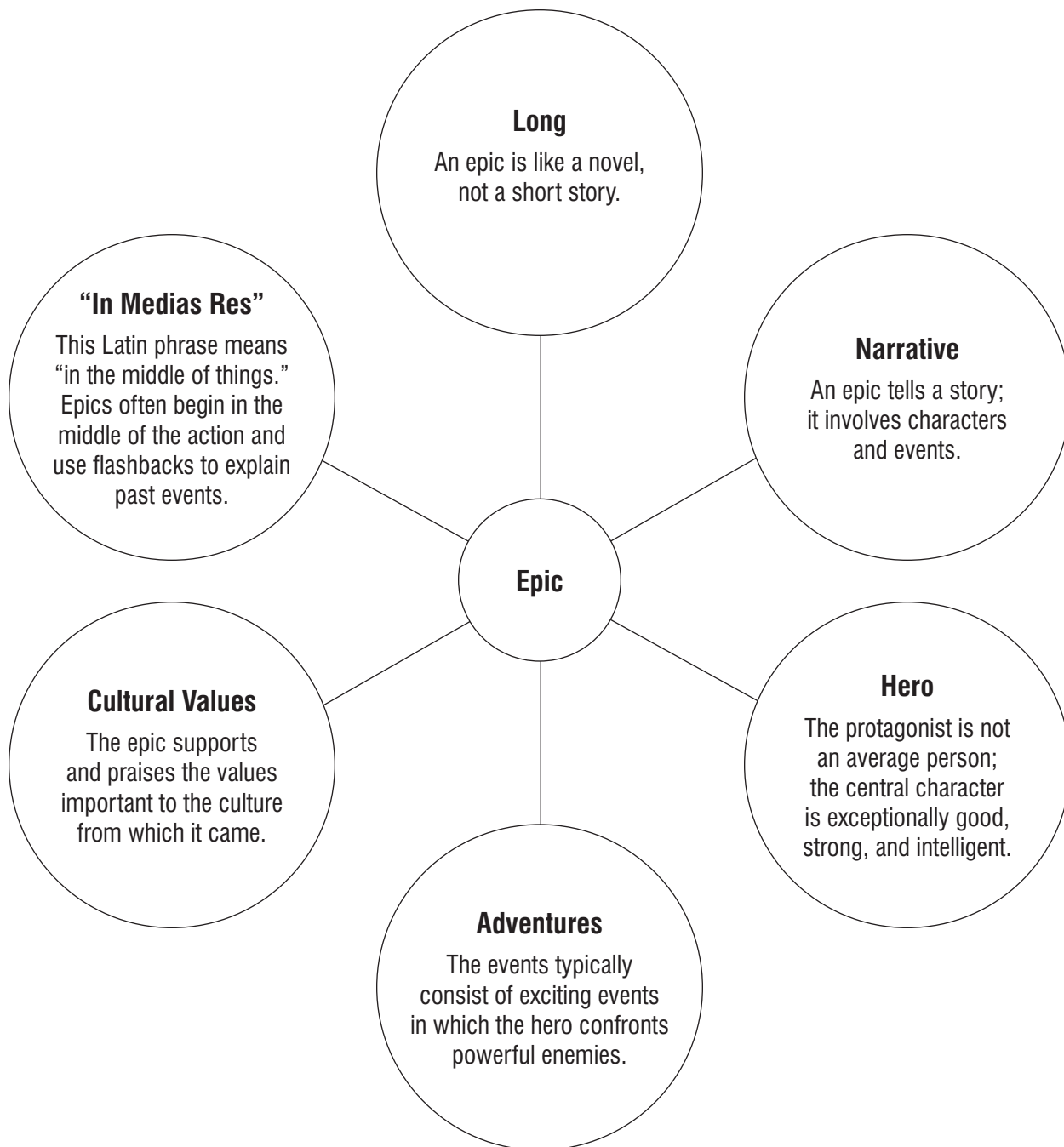
3. What experiences does the hero have in the course of the narrative?

4. What are the hero's main personal characteristics?

5. What culture does the hero represent?

The Definition of an Epic

Directions: Use the graphic organizer to understand the nature of an epic.



The Opening Situation in *The Odyssey*

Directions: As the epic begins, the characters are in the following situations. Read the scenarios, and think of ways they could be reflected in stories about twenty-first-century people.

Odysseus

This strong man has been away from home for twenty years, first involved in the big war between Greece and Troy, then encountering numerous obstacles in his attempts to get home to his family and his kingdom.

Penelope

Odysseus's wife has been waiting all those years for her husband to return, but she knows nothing of what might have happened to him. Lots of other men want to marry her because she is the queen, but she wants to be faithful to her missing husband.

Telemachus

The son of Penelope and Odysseus, Telemachus is just between boyhood and manhood. He never knew his father, and he resents the suitors, but he lacks the strength and skills necessary to oust his mother's would-be second husbands.

Suitors

These men of Ithaca can see that the king, Odysseus, has been gone for many years and may never return. By marrying Penelope, any one of them could instantly acquire great wealth and power.

Lesson 2

Greek Mythology

Objectives

- To learn the basics of Greek mythology
- To understand the anthropomorphic nature of the Greek deities

Notes to the Teacher

Greek mythology is an inherent part of *The Odyssey*, which is a primary source for our knowledge of the classical understanding of the Olympian and minor deities. With Poseidon in powerful opposition to Odysseus after the blinding of Cyclops, it is unlikely that Odysseus would ever have returned home without the intervention of Athena.

The gods are an integral part of the events Homer narrated in both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. These deities are anthropomorphic, more like people than like today's understanding of the nature of a god. According to myth, Zeus came to earth as a swan and mated with a girl named Leda, fathering the legendary and incomparably beautiful Helen of Troy, whose abduction and/or elopement led to the Trojan War.

Without a rudimentary understanding of the gods, students find it difficult to understand key events in *The Odyssey*. In this lesson, they learn about the Olympians and about some of the minor deities that play important roles in *The Odyssey*.

Procedure

1. Explain that the ancient Greeks had a polytheistic culture, meaning that they believed in a multitude of gods. Like all cultures reaching back to ancient times, they had creation myths and believed in supernatural forces involved in the human world. This belief is strongly reflected in *The Odyssey*, so it helps to know the basics of Greek mythology before starting to read the epic.
2. Distribute **Handout 4**, and read the directions aloud. Then assign individuals or groups to research the figures listed on the handout and to prepare to present information to the class as a whole. Follow with class presentations.

Suggested Responses

1. Zeus was the king of the gods and wielded a lot of power, but he was not omnipotent. He shared the universe with his brothers, Poseidon and Hades, and he had to be careful to respect their rights. Zeus mated with many women, both divine and human, and had many offspring.
2. Hera was the queen of the gods and a protector of home and family. She could be vain and jealous and disliked competition from other females. She was one of the original descendants of the Titans.
3. Hestia, another first-generation descendant of the Titans, was the protector of the household. She was a virgin goddess with no children of her own.
4. Demeter, a daughter of Cronus and Rhea, was associated with agriculture and the earth's growing cycles.
5. Hades, a brother of Zeus, was given charge of the Underworld, the land of the dead. In Greek mythology, he seems more a force or condition than a distinct individual.
6. Poseidon, another brother of Zeus, had a very distinct personality and was given charge of the sea, making him a very important force to contend with.
7. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, sprang from the head of Zeus. She frequently played a role in human events, and she was a big help to Odysseus and his family.
8. Artemis was the goddess of the moon and of the hunt; she was a virgin goddess, unattainable by any male figure, whether divine or human.
9. Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, was responsible for bringing winter to the earth. Each year she must return to Hades for six months, and during that time, the earth grows cold and barren.
10. The son of Zeus and a minor goddess, Hermes was the messenger god who served Zeus. He was winged and could travel quickly and deliver messages without fail.
11. Calypso was a nymph, a minor nature goddess, beautiful and immortal, as well as subject to the authority of Zeus. She was associated with an island called Ogygia.
12. Dionysus was a god of revelry and wine; worship of him led eventually to the evolution of Greek theater. He is usually depicted in rural areas.
13. The Cyclops were huge, fierce giants with only one eye; most of them were descendants of Poseidon.

14. Circe was a beautiful goddess, according to some legends the daughter of the sun god Helios; she was also a witch or sorceress who turned men into swine.
 15. Eos was an ancient deity, the goddess of the dawn.
3. Have students read the opening paragraphs of book 1 of *The Odyssey*, through Athena's approach to Zeus.
 4. Distribute **Handout 5**, and have small groups answer the questions. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. The Greek gods act the way human beings act; they get angry and jealous and are capable of cruelty, even to their own families. They take revenge on humans who offend them; they also sometimes help humans. They sometimes fight with each other. They are not omniscient or omnipotent.
 2. Poseidon has a grudge against Odysseus because of the blinding of Polyphemus, a Cyclops descendant of the god of the sea. Because Poseidon is far away in Ethiopia, the other gods have an opportunity to help Odysseus.
 3. The gods are talking about the Trojan War. Most of the Greeks who survived the war have returned home; only Odysseus and his men are still missing. Agamemnon returned home only to be killed by his wife and her lover because of the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter before his departure for Troy.
 4. The Greek gods appear to be very interested in human affairs. They take sides and sometimes act to deter human actions.
 5. Zeus has a positive attitude toward Odysseus and sees him as both wise and properly respectful of the gods.
 6. Athena thinks it is time for them to do something to help out with the situation of Odysseus and his family.
5. If you wish, distribute the reading guide (see Supplementary Materials) for students' use as they read *The Odyssey*.
 6. Assign students to read the rest of book 1 and all of book 2.

The Greek Gods

Directions: According to classical legends, the universe began in chaos, which generated various forces that led eventually to the creation of the Titans, two of whom were Cronus and Rhea. Determined not to let any of his children usurp his power, Cronus ate them as soon as they were born, but one of these, Zeus, fought his way out and freed his siblings. They became the first of the Olympian gods. The Greek gods are not perfect; rather, they have all of the flaws that characterize human beings, but much more power. Use the Internet or print sources to describe the following mythological figures.

1. Zeus
2. Hera
3. Hestia
4. Demeter
5. Hades
6. Poseidon
7. Athena

8. Artemis

9. Persephone

10. Hermes

11. Calypso

12. Dionysus

13. Cyclops

14. Circe

15. Eos

Getting into *The Odyssey*

Directions: Read the first few pages of the epic, and use the following questions to clarify your understanding.

1. Describe the personalities of the gods as Homer depicts them in the first few pages of *The Odyssey*.
2. Why is it important that Poseidon has gone off to Ethiopia?
3. What is the significance of the references to Agamemnon?
4. How would you describe the relationship of the gods to humans?
5. What is Zeus's attitude toward Odysseus?
6. What does Athena want to do?

Lesson 3

Focus on Telemachus

Objectives

- To understand Telemachus's experiences in books 1 and 2
- To analyze his character as it is presented in the opening books

Notes to the Teacher

The first four books of *The Odyssey* are often referred to as the Telemachiad because they focus on Telemachus, the son, rather than on the hero of the epic. To Telemachus, Odysseus is a heroic figure about whom he has heard, but whom he has never known. He seems to have spent the most time with his mother and his nurse, so the feminine and protective influence on his life has been strong. Athena can see that he needs help to cross from ineffectual boyhood to manhood.

Book 1 shows his efforts, at the urging of the goddess, to assume control over the unruly suitors, as well as his failure. Book 2 reveals the beginning of his introduction to a far bigger world and the company of men who can both give him information and boost his self-confidence. It is evident that it was no easier to transition from youth to adulthood in ancient Greece than it is today.

The reading guide at the end of this unit (see Supplementary Materials) can help students to organize their understanding of the epic, and some classes benefit from a systematic review of answers to the questions. This lesson starts with a quick overview and then focuses on Telemachus himself.

Procedure

1. Ask students to describe the general situation in Ithaca and Telemachus's position in it. (The greedy, crude suitors are vying to marry Penelope; to them, Telemachus is an annoyance and perhaps a future threat. Penelope is trying in her own quiet and dignified way to defer the necessity of choosing one of them as her second husband. Telemachus resents the suitors but is too immature to be able to do anything about them.)
2. Distribute **Handout 6**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. Telemachus is around twenty; he has never known his father, who went off to war in Troy twenty years ago.

2. Odysseus probably was not much older than that when he went to Troy; Telemachus does seem to be behind in his maturation process. He did not have his father as a role model, and he has probably been overprotected by Penelope and Eurycleia. The crude suitors provided no manly or princely ideals for him to emulate.
 3. Telemachus seems to be inherently respectful, intelligent, sincere, and honest. The anger is a result of the obnoxious behavior of the suitors; his shyness probably results from his powerlessness in his situation.
 4. Telemachus is no match for the suitors. The experience would have done nothing for his self-confidence.
 5. Athena wants to help Telemachus to mature.
 6. Travel can be a broadening experience; Telemachus will see how other people live, and he may find himself respected and treated like the prince he is. His self-confidence can grow.
3. Point out that one of the issues in this ancient epic is growing up. Distribute **Handout 7**, and ask students to complete it. Follow with discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. Young people today, like Telemachus, need strong role models and diverse experiences as they mature. They need to recognize bad role models for what they are. They need to learn to make their own decisions and to take care of themselves. Diverse experiences, including travel, help maturity. Like Telemachus, many young people today grow up in single-parent homes.
 2. Friends are a notable absence in Telemachus's life; most young people today find peer relationships to be key elements in the process of growing up. Today technology makes it possible to learn a lot about the world without ever leaving home. The many addictions available in our world can inhibit maturation—gambling, alcohol, drugs, computer games, for example.
 3. Strong positive role models, healthy competition, and diverse experiences, including those involving responsibility, can contribute to maturity. College is seen by some as an essential part of this process, but others see it as a delaying factor.
4. Assign students to read books 3 and 4.

A Look at Young Telemachus

Directions: The first few books of *The Odyssey* focus on Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope. Use the following exercise to analyze what the chapters reveal about him.

1. How old is Telemachus? How well does he know his father?
2. Is Telemachus immature for his age? If so, what might have caused this?
3. Circle the words that describe him as he is shown in the first two books.

bold	humorous	honest
respectful	intelligent	greedy
shy	cooperative	ambitious
angry	sincere	combative
4. How do you think Telemachus felt after his effort to hold a meeting with the suitors? Why?
5. What is the motive behind Athena's intervention with Telemachus?
6. Why would Athena want Telemachus to take a journey?

Growing Up in Ancient Greece and Today

Directions: Use the Venn diagram to compare and contrast the experience of becoming an adult in ancient Greece with growing to maturity in today's world. Then answer the questions.

Growing Up in Ancient Greece

Growing Up Today



Lesson 4

Foil Families

Objectives

- To understand characters and events in books 3 and 4
- To see how Menelaus and Helen operate as foils for Odysseus and Penelope
- To learn about Agamemnon and Clytemnestra and see how they operate as foils

Notes to the Teacher

Books 3 and 4 continue the story of Telemachus, and then *The Odyssey* leaves him behind until Odysseus finally makes it back to Ithaca. Athena is continuing to educate Telemachus and prepare him for a role in ousting the treacherous suitors and reinstating Odysseus in his home and kingdom. Telemachus meets some of the great men of his day and grows in confidence and maturity.

Several families mentioned in the Telemachiad operate as foils. One is that of Menelaus and Helen. Telemachus meets them in Sparta, where they are king and queen. Now they seem a devoted couple, despite the incident that gave rise to the Trojan War, and they are happily awaiting marriages for their children. Menelaus is able to give Telemachus some information about Odysseus. Previously, in book 3, Telemachus met King Nestor, who also provided him with information about his father and about the tragic events surrounding Agamemnon and his family.

Menelaus and Agamemnon both serve as foils to Odysseus, and their wives are foils for Penelope. The three men are all kings, great soldiers, and natural leaders; they are all friends; they are all married men and fathers. The foil situations highlight the fidelity between Odysseus and Penelope.

You may want to begin this lesson by reviewing answers to the reading guide at the back of this unit. In this lesson, students identify the influential people Telemachus meets on his travels. They then define the term *foil* before analyzing Menelaus and Agamemnon as foils.

Procedure

1. Ask students to describe the main content of books 3 and 4. (Telemachus, traveling with Athena, is learning about his father and gaining in maturity.)
2. Ask students to describe Penelope's vision at the end of book 4. (In the vision, her sister appears to tell her Telemachus will be fine, but the vision will reveal nothing certain about Odysseus.)

3. Explain that authors often use minor characters to illuminate qualities of the main characters. These minor figures are often referred to as foil characters. Distribute **Handout 8**, and have partners collaborate to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

1. Other students might be caught cheating in an important exam, while this young man does the best he can with what he knows. Their dishonesty reveals the protagonist's value as an honest and reliable person, far more trustworthy than others who, at first glance, seem to have more potential.
 2. If her college roommate received a scholarship for both tuition and board, but had so much fun that her studies fell by the wayside and resulted in very poor grades, she could be a foil for the protagonist, demonstrating the value of her diligence and determination.
 3. The volunteer's efforts might look like something just about anyone would do until the author mentions another young person on the beach who was too fearful to get involved.
4. Point out that *The Odyssey* includes foil characters for Odysseus and Penelope. Assign half the class to record in detail information about Menelaus and Helen, the other half to research Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Sources can include *The Odyssey* itself, print materials, and the Internet. Then have the class as a whole pool information.
 5. Distribute **Handout 9**, and ask students to answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. Both couples were king and queen of island nations. Both were powerful and wealthy; both men were brave and competent soldiers and sailors.
2. Menelaus did not manage to hold his wife's undying fidelity; Menelaus was willing to leave Agamemnon behind at Troy.
3. Helen was reputedly the most beautiful woman in the world; she succumbed to the wooing of Paris, a prince from Troy. In contrast, Penelope's strength of character is stressed, as she has remained faithful even after her husband's twenty-year absence.
4. The contrast stresses the bravery and loyalty of both Odysseus and Penelope.
5. Agamemnon and Clytemnestra were the king and queen in Mycenae, parallel to Odysseus and Penelope in Ithaca.
6. Agamemnon's fear of the gods led him to kill his daughter, thus evoking Clytemnestra's wrath. She quickly fell into a love affair with Aegisthus. Agamemnon was very trusting when he

returned home. Odysseus is properly respectful of the gods but does not appear to fear them; his wiliness is stressed over and over again. Penelope is a model of marital fidelity.

7. Once again, the contrast emphasizes the greatness of Odysseus and the fidelity of Penelope.
 8. The foils magnify the strong traits of the protagonists.
6. Introduce students to the next section of the epic by reading aloud the first few pages of book 5. Point out the active presence of the gods, and explain that the next books of *The Odyssey* switch attention to Odysseus himself.
 7. Assign students to read books 5 through 8. (Note: You may want to allow several days for this reading assignment.)

Foils for Odysseus and Penelope

Directions: Use the questions to analyze what foils reveal about Odysseus and his wife.

1. What do Menelaus and Helen have in common with Odysseus and Penelope?
2. How does Menelaus differ from Odysseus?
3. How does Helen differ from Penelope?
4. What do the contrasts emphasize?
5. What did Agamemnon and Clytemnestra have in common with Odysseus and Penelope?
6. What differences are evident?
7. What do the contrasts emphasize?
8. What seem to be the main purposes of Homer's use of foils?

Lesson 5

A Visit in Phaeacia

Objectives

- To recognize the influence of the gods in the epic
- To identify key figures and activities during Odysseus's visit in Phaeacia

Notes to the Teacher

Book 5 turns attention to Odysseus, the hero, who at last, with the intervention of Athena and Zeus, is able to leave Calypso's island on a raft and head for home. Poseidon spots him, though, and Odysseus is forced to swim to safety on an island. Books 5 through 8 sometimes seem long and repetitive to students, so a jigsaw approach can work well here.

The chapters reveal social values, including hospitality toward a stranger and a love for athletic competition. A minstrel sings stories from history and mythology, one so touching to Odysseus that he finds himself in tears. It is also evident that young Nausicaa takes a keen interest in Odysseus. The chapters lay the groundwork for what will come in the next four books—Odysseus's tale of his own incredible experiences since leaving Troy.

In this lesson, students consider Odysseus's situation with Calypso. They then identify key figures in Phaeacia, and they note qualities in Odysseus's character.

Procedure

1. Ask students to identify the shift in focus in book 5. (We see the gods discussing the situation of Odysseus, and then we read about him, not about his son.)
2. Ask students the following questions.
 - Where has Odysseus been stranded for a number of years? (He has been on an island, Ogygia, with a goddess named Calypso.)
 - What seems to have been Calypso's attitude toward Odysseus? (She loved him and even offered him immortality if he would stay with her. Still, Calypso had to abide by Zeus's orders, so she helped Odysseus to prepare for his departure.)
 - How does Odysseus feel about Calypso? (He acknowledges that she is more beautiful than any mortal woman, including his wife Penelope, but he wanted to go home.)

- What happens to interfere with Odysseus's journey? (Poseidon sees him and causes a storm. With the help of a few goddesses, Odysseus manages to swim to shore.)
3. Distribute **Handout 10**, and have students complete it in small groups.

Suggested Responses

1. Nausicaa is a young woman, a princess in Phaeacia. She and her servants come upon Odysseus near the shore; he is naked and salt-crust-ed. Alcinous and Arete are the king and queen. Pontonous is a servant.
 2. Alcinous and Arete welcome Odysseus with great hospitality.
 3. The people seem to enjoy athletic competitions and listening to stories.
 4. As he listens to stories from his own life, Odysseus is in tears for lost comrades.
 5. The young men are very competitive, and Odysseus becomes annoyed with them.
 6. Although Nausicaa is much younger than Odysseus, she seems to take a tentative romantic interest in him.
 7. The Phaeacians are superb seamen, although there is an old prophecy that the day will come when they will be cut off from the sea.
 8. Alcinous wants Odysseus to tell about the experiences he has had on his journey.
4. Explain that *The Odyssey* is one of our main sources for information about ancient Greek myths, and point out that book 8 includes a detailed account of a story involving Aphrodite. Ask students to summarize the myth. (Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, was married to the Hephaestus, a hardworking god who was far from handsome. She had an affair with his brother, Ares, the god of war, who was very handsome indeed. Hephaestus devised a clever plan and caught the two of them in the act, exposing them to derision and mockery.)
5. Ask students to identify an example of foreshadowing at the conclusion of book 8. (Alcinous tells of a prediction that one day Poseidon would become angry at the Phaeacians for providing safe sea travel to others and would close them off from the sea. Knowing Poseidon's attitude toward Odysseus, the reader anticipates that this will happen soon.)

6. Distribute **Handout 11**, and have students complete it.

Suggested Responses

1. At this point, Odysseus has tired of adventures and wishes only to be home with his wife and family. He declined Calypso's offer and spent most of his time longing for Ithaca.
 2. Odysseus is well aware that the gods have been actively involved in his affairs. He knows he is a mere human. His humility is visible when he prays to Athena for help.
 3. In singing of Agamemnon, the minstrel sings of events that brought Odysseus far from Ithaca in the first place and reminds him of lost comrades. It is evident that he is an emotional and warmhearted person.
 4. Odysseus is not shy; he speaks his mind bluntly.
 5. The wooden horse at Troy was Odysseus's idea; the minstrel is singing of Odysseus's own life. Odysseus is a clever person who thought of a way to finally end the long war with Troy.
7. Have students read aloud the first few paragraphs of book 9. Point out that the next four books, the most famous section of *The Odyssey*, tell the story of Odysseus's trials and adventures after he left Troy and attempted to return home. Assign students to read books 9 and 10.

A Look at Phaeacia

Directions: Use the following questions to clarify your understanding of books 5–8 of *The Odyssey*.

1. Who are some of the people that Odysseus encounters in Phaeacia?
2. How do the king and queen treat Odysseus?
3. What forms of entertainment do the people enjoy?
4. How does Odysseus react when the minstrel sings about Troy?
5. How and why does Odysseus react to some of the young men?
6. What seems to be Nausicaa's attitude toward Odysseus?
7. What special skills do the Phaeacians have?
8. At the end of book 8, what does Alcinous ask Odysseus to do?

Focus on Odysseus

Directions: Readers encounter *The Odyssey* in medias res. Odysseus has been absent from his home in Ithaca for a long time; he is alone, so something must have happened to his ships and the crew with which he left Troy. He is no longer a young man, and he has undoubtedly changed a great deal since his departure from home and family twenty years ago. Indicate what you deduce about his character from the following data.

Information about Odysseus	Inferences
1. Odysseus declined Calypso's offer of immortality if he would stay with her.	
2. Odysseus prays to Athena before heading on to the home of Nausicaa.	
3. Odysseus grieves when the minstrel sings the story of Agamemnon.	
4. Odysseus scolds Laodamas for baiting him into competition.	
5. Odysseus breaks into tears when the minstrel sings of the wooden horse at Troy.	

Lesson 6

The First Part of Odysseus's Journey Home

Objectives

- To begin to trace Odysseus's journey from Troy back to Ithaca
- To catalog additional traits in Odysseus's personality

Notes to the Teacher

Odysseus's journey after the Trojan War is one fraught with peril. From his experiences, we get the word *odyssey*, meaning a long and often convoluted journey of discovery. Odysseus left Troy with ships and full crews of men. The ships are lost, and all of the men except Odysseus die. Books 9 and 10 describe the first stages of the journey and include the fights with the Ciconians, the encounter with the lotus-eaters, the blinding of Polyphemus, help from the island of the winds, seeing the Laestrygonians, and the enchantments of Circe.

There have been many debates and suppositions about the places mentioned in *The Odyssey*. Some archeologists believe that Troy was in Persia; the historical roots of the epic reach far into the past, and land masses have changed during the ensuing centuries. As the story passed from generation to generation through oral tradition, changes and exaggerations were bound to occur, and dangers doubtless seemed even more threatening when later remembered.

In this lesson, students begin a mural depicting Odysseus's journey. For this, they will need yarn and art paper or poster boards. Students then focus on symbolism and on traits of both Odysseus and his men.

Procedure

1. Tell students that they are now engaged in the narrative of Odysseus's perilous journey from Troy back to Ithaca. Use yarn to trace a path along the walls of your classroom from Troy to Circe's island. At the beginning of the yarn, place art paper with the word *Troy* and perhaps a picture of a wooden horse. Divide the class into six groups, and assign each group one of the places Odysseus describes in books 9 and 10. Provide supplies, and have the groups devise illustrations and brief summaries of events for presentation to the class.
2. Have groups present information to the class, and mount the visuals on the wall in order as events occur in the epic.

3. Distribute **Handout 12**, and have students complete it individually or with partners. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

1. Odysseus and his men were coming from a war in which they were victorious. They were trained in combat, and their desire for battle and victory was very strong. If they stopped to fight at every opportunity, the return home could have been delayed forever.
 2. The lotus-eaters lived in a state of constant, stupefied contentment that was so pleasurable no one would want to leave it behind. The temptation would be to opt for sensate satisfaction instead of returning home to family and responsibility.
 3. The world seems to have been filled with huge and vicious humanlike creatures. Despite the danger, Odysseus and his men were curious and eager for adventures.
 4. Odysseus kept to himself the knowledge of what was in the bag of wind, and he took a nap instead of staying alert and on guard at a critical moment. There was a kind of brash arrogance to Odysseus; his men respected him but did not fully trust him.
 5. Circe was exquisitely beautiful and would definitely have had a strong effect on men who had been away from their wives for a long time, turning them into “swine,” intent on only one thing. Odysseus opted for a break from dangers at sea and lived with Circe for a full year. There is definitely a sexual double standard in *The Odyssey*.
 6. Odysseus is brash, wily, brave, curious, strong, caring, intelligent, and proud.
4. Ask students to identify Elpenor and explain what happened to him. (This young soldier fell asleep on the roof of Circe’s house; he fell off and died when he broke his neck. His soul went to Hades, which is also where Odysseus had to go before heading back to Ithaca.)
 5. Ask students to select any adventure in books 9 and 10 and to write about it from the point of view of someone other than Odysseus. If necessary, provide examples: a Ciconian woman when Odysseus and his men first attack; one of Polyphemus’s neighbors; one of the swine in Circe’s yard when Odysseus’s men first arrive.
 6. Have students share drafts in small groups and provide one another with suggestions for revision and editing. Set a date for submission of final drafts.
 7. Assign students to read books 11 and 12.

Meanings behind the Adventures

Directions: Books 9 and 10 of *The Odyssey* describe Odysseus's journey from Troy through his one-year stay with Circe. Use the following questions to consider some of the deeper meanings behind the dangerous events.

1. What would have been the mood of Odysseus and his men when they left Troy? How does this explain their actions with the Ciconians? What danger might this pose on the long journey home?
2. Why were the men reluctant to leave the land of the lotus-eaters? What temptation did they face there?
3. What do the descriptions of the Ciconians, Polyphemus, and the Laestrygonians have in common? Odysseus and his men could have simply sailed past all three communities. Why didn't they?
4. What big mistakes did Odysseus make when he and his men left Aeolus? What do those errors in judgment show about him? What do the men's actions show about them?
5. What words could be used to describe Circe? In what ways is her effect on the men symbolic? Why did Odysseus stay with her for a whole year before once again leaving to return home?
6. Based on events in books 9 and 10, list eight adjectives that describe Odysseus's character and personality.

Lesson 7

More Adventures for Odysseus

Objectives

- To understand events in books 11 and 12
- To visualize the challenges faced by Odysseus and his men

Notes to the Teacher

In book 11, Odysseus visits Hades, the land of the dead, where he sees the spirits of people he knew and of mythological figures. He also learns of events in Ithaca. This section of *The Odyssey* is a treasure trove of aspects of Greek mythology. The men then return to Circe's island to give Elpenor a proper burial, and Circe provides them with helpful information about the next steps in their journey.

Odysseus manages to hear the enchanting music of the Sirens, and then he and his men must brave the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis. This is followed by the days at the island of Helios and the men's violation of the sacred cattle. When they leave, there is a dreadful storm, and the ship is lost; Odysseus must pass Scylla and Charybdis again, and this time he manages to escape Charybdis and then goes on, all alone, to Ogygia.

In this lesson, students complete the wall mural they began previously. Note in your yarn arrangement that Odysseus must land twice at Circe's island and he must pass Scylla and Charybdis twice. You will probably want the yarn to take a sharp dip downward for the visit to Hades. After tracing the journey, students consider the journey as a whole.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into groups, and have them complete the mural of the journey of Odysseus from Troy to Phaeacia. Have the groups complete the visuals and summaries of the visit to Hades, the return to Circe's island, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, the Island of Helios, Ogygia, and Phaeacia.
2. When all the groups have finished, have the class tour the total journey and point out details. (Examples might include Odysseus in the tree above Charybdis and Odysseus building a raft on Ogygia.)
3. Distribute **Handout 13**, and have students complete it individually to assess their knowledge of the steps in the journey of Odysseus. (Note: The wall mural should be a helpful clue for everyone.)

Suggested Responses

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Scylla | 10. hollow wooden horse |
| 2. Teiresias | 11. Agamemnon |
| 3. Circe | 12. Helios |
| 4. Polyphemus, Cyclops | 13. lotus-eaters |
| 5. Elpenor | 14. Noman |
| 6. Sirens | 15. Nausicaa |
| 7. Poseidon | |
| 8. Calypso | |
| 9. wind | |

4. Remind students that sailors and archaeologists have made many efforts to trace the events and travels described in *The Odyssey*. This is almost impossible to do with any certainty, since the earth's geography is altered by catastrophic events such as floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes, as well as more gradually by erosion. Still, it is likely that the events described by Homer had some historical basis. Ask students what happens to stories that are passed on orally. (Details may change; storytellers may forget some things or exaggerate others.)
5. Distribute **Handout 14**, and ask students to complete it.

Suggested Responses

The lotus-eaters probably used some kind of drug that induced feelings of complete satisfaction, perhaps an opiate. This would be the opposite of ideals of moderation and stoicism, so the heroic Odysseus must force his men away from temptation.

Cyclops may have just been originally a barbaric shepherd and goat keeper who lost an eye in some kind of accident; over time and the storytelling tradition, he got bigger and bigger.

Sailing ships depend on wind, and it is not unusual for the wind to die and leave a ship helpless. At times like that, it is easy to blame the gods.

To men who have been at war for a long time and then got lost at sea, a beautiful woman on an island would seem like a goddess.

A journey to the land of the dead is a frequent epic motif. Perhaps Odysseus had some really powerful dreams, possibly as a result of a fever.

Scylla is the ultimate sea monster, probably a result of imagination and rumors about giant squid and octopi with terrifying tentacles.

Charybdis was certainly a powerful whirlpool.

The alluring song of the Sirens may actually have resulted from the sounds of wind and sea over rocks and weeds on sandy islands, luring ships to a dangerous shoreline.

6. Have students read aloud the opening pages of book 13. Point out that Odysseus has now finished his story and is eager to return to his home. The Phaeacians, master mariners, are prepared to take him there.
7. Assign students to read books 13 through 16. (Note: You will want to allow several days for this assignment. Some students find this section of *The Odyssey* to be pretty slow going. It is possible to do these four books jigsaw style, with the class divided into four groups, one responsible for each chapter.)

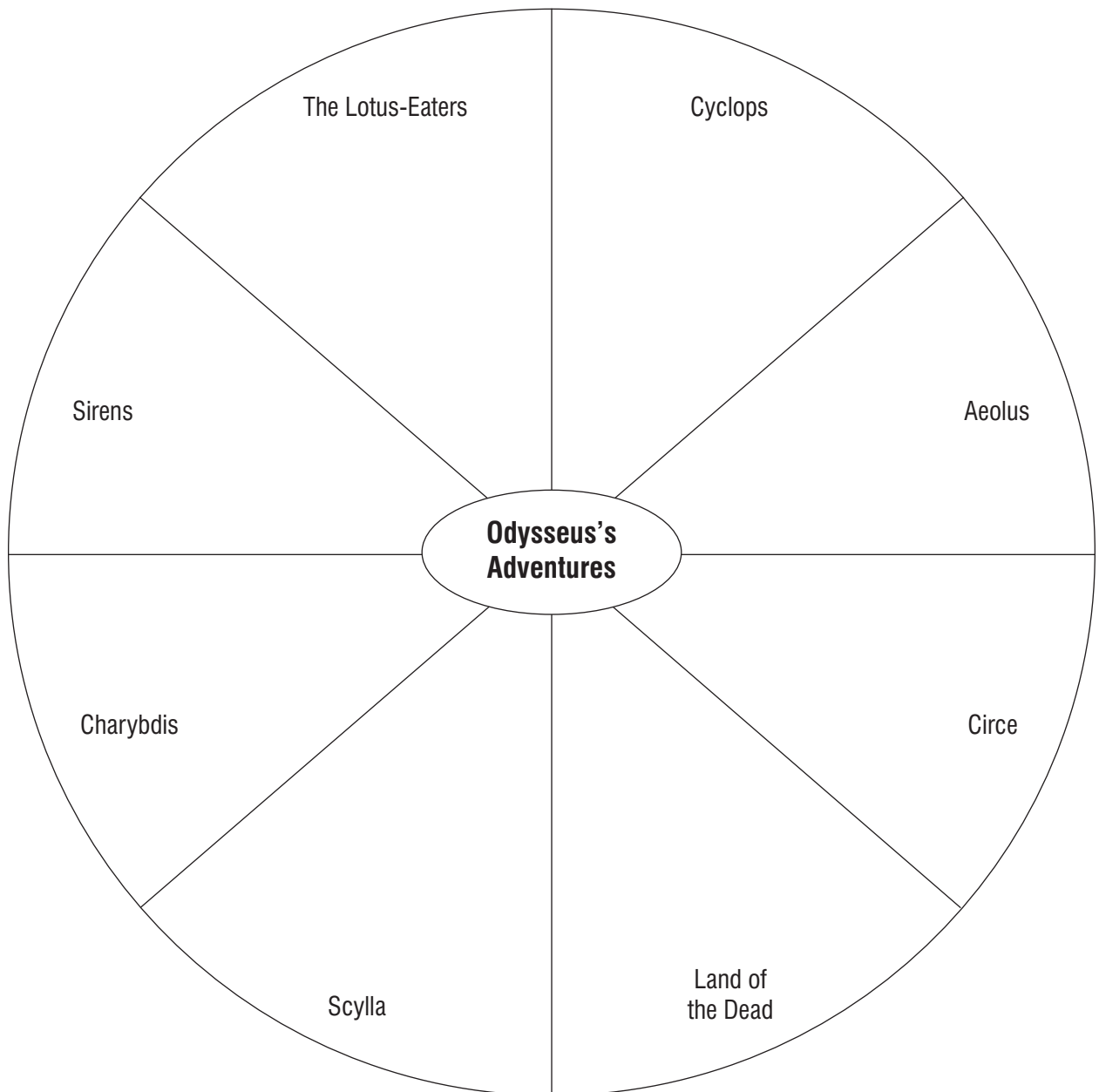
Odysseus's Perilous Journey Home to Ithaca

Directions: Identify the following people and things from Odysseus's difficult journey.

- _____ 1. A six-headed monster that grabbed men from Odysseus's ship
- _____ 2. A prophet in Hades who tells Odysseus he will get home
- _____ 3. Goddess who turns men into pigs
- _____ 4. One-eyed creature that lives in a cave and raises sheep and goats
- _____ 5. Young man who fell to his death from a roof
- _____ 6. Beautiful voices that lure men to their death
- _____ 7. God who became angry when Odysseus blinded a Cyclops
- _____ 8. Goddess who offered to make Odysseus immortal
- _____ 9. Contents of the bag the men opened while Odysseus was asleep
- _____ 10. Idea of Odysseus that enabled the Greeks to win the war against Troy
- _____ 11. Comrade of Odysseus whose wife killed him when he returned from Troy
- _____ 12. God whose sacred cattle were killed by Odysseus's men
- _____ 13. People who ingest certain plants that make them happy
- _____ 14. Name by which Odysseus first identifies himself to the Cyclops
- _____ 15. Girl whose parents were Odysseus's host in Phaeacia

What Was It Really?

Directions: Use research and your imagination to conjecture about the real identity of some of Odysseus's adventures.



Lesson 8

Odysseus Returns to Ithaca

Objectives

- To summarize events in books 13 through 16
- To assess the suitors' guilt or innocence in their pursuit of Penelope

Notes to the Teacher

Books 13 through 16 return Odysseus to Ithaca, but his troubles are not yet over. He has been gone for many years, and his house is full of suitors more than eager to take his place. When he awakens on the shore, he at first does not know where he is; with Athena's help, he makes it to the home of the swineherd, Eumaeus, who has remained loyal all these years.

Meanwhile, Athena also prompts Telemachus to return home, and the suitors decide it is not in their best interest to kill him right away. He, too, makes his way to the home of the swineherd, bringing father and son together at last.

In this lesson, students work in small groups to analyze the books and present information to the rest of the class.

Procedure

1. Ask students what happens to the Phaeacians after they deliver Odysseus safely to Ithaca. (Poseidon is angry with them, and he fulfills the old prophecy by heaving mountains up about the city, ending their seafaring days.)
2. Reaffirm that in the world depicted in *The Odyssey*, the gods are very active in human affairs, sometimes helping, sometimes causing trouble.
3. Divide the class into groups, and assign each group one of the four chapters. Ask students to prepare detailed summaries of events in Ithaca in the four chapters.
4. Distribute **Handout 15** for note-taking purposes. Have the groups present their summaries. Follow with whole-class discussion of character insights.

Suggested Responses

Book 13

Events—Odysseus fell asleep on the way home, and the Phaeacians left him on the shore of Ithaca. When he awakens, he does not know where he is, and Athena covers the island with

mist so that he does not recognize it. Athena approaches him disguised as a young shepherd. Odysseus makes up a story about having come from Crete, and Athena admires his ingenuity and identifies herself to him. After hiding the gifts from the Phaeacians, Athena and Odysseus begin to plan. She tells him about Telemachus and advises Odysseus to go to the swineherd's hut. She also uses magic to make him look old, weak, and ragged.

Insights—Odysseus is very tired of landing in strange places where he does not know what kinds of people or creatures he will encounter. He is also aware of how easy it would be to meet the same fate as Agamemnon. He is a good storyteller who can make up adventures without having to think them out ahead of time. He is wily, inventive, never at a loss—all traits Athena admires in him.

Book 14

Events—While Athena goes to fetch Telemachus, Odysseus makes his way to the swineherd, who has been loyal. As he nears the house, watchdogs leap at him, but Eumaeus chases them away. He does not recognize Odysseus but provides hospitality to what he perceives as a stranger. Again, Odysseus claims to have come from Crete, and he assures the swineherd that the long-missing Odysseus will return home. He also talks about participating in the Trojan War and about spending years in Egypt. Odysseus goes to sleep in the house, but the swineherd goes outside to sleep with his pigs.

Insights—Eumaeus is a simple, honest, loyal servant who practices hospitality with strangers; he has ceased to hope that Odysseus will ever make it home. Again, we see Odysseus's gift for storytelling and playing a role.

Book 15

Events—While Athena alerts Telemachus to the danger when he returns home, Odysseus is still at the swineherd's house. He has a plan to go in disguise as a beggar, to see what is going on in his own home. It is evident that Eumaeus is also a gifted storyteller. At the end of the book, Telemachus arrives in Ithaca, manages to send on his companions without him, and heads alone to the swineherd's home.

Insights—Telemachus has grown up a good deal since we first saw him in book 1. Odysseus is in the process of planning what to do about the suitors and his own household. He is a man of action. Both father and son are courteous and independent.

Book 16

Events—Telemachus arrives at the home of Eumaeus and is warmly welcomed by the swineherd. When the swineherd leaves, Athena transforms Odysseus back to strength; he discloses his identity to his son, who at first does not believe him. Telemachus admits that he feels powerless against the suitors, but Odysseus is confident that, with Zeus and Athena on their side, he and Telemachus need no additional help to defeat the suitors.

Insights—Telemachus still feels more like a boy than a man, and he views the swineherd as a father figure. Odysseus wants to be known by his own family; he relies on the gods; he is eager to get his own home back.

5. Distribute **Handout 16**, and have students complete both part A and part B individually. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

Part A.

1. The suitors' desire to marry Penelope and rule the kingdom is not in itself blameworthy; however, they are rude and vulgar, not the quality of person to rule a kingdom well. Besides, Penelope does not want any of them.
 2. There is no way of knowing if they have always been this way, but twenty years of living on another person's goods has made them lazy, useless, and mean.
 3. They do not deserve the death penalty unless they actively try to carry out this plan; the idea itself shows how evil they can be.
 4. Penelope still lives in the hope that Odysseus will return; yes, she could have chosen one of the suitors, but she did not want them and should not have to sacrifice herself for the sake of Ithaca.
 5. The subsequent books will show how the suitors respond to a stranger in Ithaca, as well as Odysseus's verdict about the penalty they deserve. If the return of the king causes the suitors to apologize, pack up, and leave, perhaps they could be left with a minor punishment or no punishment at all.
6. Assign students to read books 17 through 20. With reluctant readers, you may want to make this a jigsaw assignment.

The Odyssey: Books 13 through 16

Directions: Use the chart to record information about events and characters.

Section	Events	Character Insights
Book 13		
Book 14		
Book 15		
Book 16		

The Guilt of the Suitors

Part A.

Directions: Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements, and give reasons for your ideas.

Agree Disagree 1. Odysseus has been gone for twenty years; no one should blame the suitors for wanting to take his place as the king of Ithaca and the husband of Penelope.

Agree Disagree 2. The suitors are lazy, good-for-nothing men who just want an easy way to attain wealth and power.

Agree Disagree 3. The suitors deserve the death penalty for their plan to ambush and kill Telemachus, the heir to the kingdom of Ithaca.

Agree Disagree 4. Twenty years is a very long time; Penelope should have solved the problem of the suitors by selecting one of them and marrying him.

Agree Disagree 5. The real test for what should happen to the suitors depends on how they react to the return of Odysseus.

Part B.

Directions: Decide what punishment(s) you think the suitors deserve, and give reasons for your judgment.

death penalty

solitary confinement

exile

financial penalty

imprisonment

no punishment

community service

other: _____

Lesson 9

Odysseus as a Beggar

Objectives

- To understand Odysseus's experiences when he, disguised as a beggar, returns to his own home
- To recognize ways the suitors condemn themselves

Notes to the Teacher

Books 17 through 20 bring Odysseus back into his own house, where he can personally assess the behavior of the suitors, who have become accustomed to lazing around Penelope's estate, eating, behaving rudely, and giving her occasional gifts. They disregard traditional values of courtesy and hospitality and try to make Odysseus the butt of insults and practical jokes. Many of them are just names without distinct personalities of their own. By far the most vicious and malevolent is Antinous, who seems to have no redeeming characteristics. Eurymachus is certainly greedy. Melanthius seems more ignorant than evil, but he has gotten in the habit of rude behavior. Some of the female servants are obviously disloyal and involved with the suitors.

Odysseus sees for himself the crude, greedy, and disrespectful behavior of the suitors. Homer builds up suspense about how the hero will avenge the violation of his family and his home.

In this lesson, students focus on the behaviors of the suitors and on the responses of Odysseus and Telemachus.

Procedure

1. Emphasize that Odysseus, king of Ithaca, spent ten years at the Trojan War, has had affairs with two goddesses, and has triumphed over fierce creatures such as Polyphemus, Scylla, and Charybdis. Ask students these questions: How does he return home? Why does he do this? (He comes in disguise as a beggar to find out about the situation and people at his house.)
2. Distribute **Handout 17**, and ask small groups to answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. There are a lot of suitors, some of them with similar sounding names. Perhaps even Penelope had trouble telling one from the other. A few stand out as obnoxious individuals.

2. Antinous is a belligerent and vicious individual who stands out for his negative leadership. He seems to have no redeeming characteristics.
 3. Eurymachus and Melanthius stand out as individuals but seem less malicious and more ignorant.
 4. The names seem strange, almost laughable to modern readers.
 5. The suitors have become accustomed to idleness and debauchery. They are more than willing to seek entertainment at the expense of others. Like all bullies, they react to apparent weakness with cruelty.
 6. The suitors are in radical need of behavior modification. In today's world, they might need therapy and community service projects.
 7. Odysseus is a warrior whose home is being violated. He is unlikely to forgive and forget.
 8. Odysseus knows from the story of Agamemnon how easy it is to start a blood feud and how difficult it is to stop it.
3. Point out that students have nearly finished reading a very famous old story. Distribute **Handout 18**, and have students complete the writings individually. Follow with whole-class discussion.

Suggested Responses

Telemachus knows that the beggar really is his father, Odysseus, and he understands that the gods are on their side. He has stored up years of resentment against the suitors and is eager to see them vanquished. He sees his father as a hero who cannot be defeated.

Penelope is curious about the beggar and aware of her dream of the eagle and the geese. She is far from certain about what is really going on; she does not want to be fooled by yet another suitor—and she has been waiting for Odysseus for a very long time.

Eurycleia recognizes Odysseus immediately when she washes his feet. She is overjoyed that the king has returned at last, and it is very hard to keep the information to herself. She feels as if she is bursting with the news. She is also worried; there are so many suitors.

Antinous is cocksure of himself and feels superior to this ragged old beggar. He anticipates more fun at the old man's expense and is eager for an opportunity to get rid of Telemachus once and for all.

4. Assign students to read books 21 through 24; it is best not to use the jigsaw approach with the concluding events in *The Odyssey*.

The Suitors

Directions: Examine books 17 through 20 for information about and insights into the suitors.

1. To what extent do the suitors emerge as distinct individuals?
2. Who seems to be the most belligerent and vicious of the suitors? Give examples of his behavior.
3. Who are Eurymachus and Melanthius?
4. Give the names of some of the other suitors. How do the names affect readers?
5. These suitors come from good families and were probably raised in the tradition of hospitality to strangers. Why do they try to bully Odysseus?
6. Now that you, along with Odysseus, have taken a closer look at the suitors' behavior, what punishment(s) do you think they deserve?
7. What punishment do you think Odysseus will decide they deserve?
8. What dangers could still face Odysseus, Penelope, and Telemachus?

Many Sides to Every Story

Directions: Put yourself in the shoes of the following characters, and write paragraphs describing their view of the situation at the end of book 20 of *The Odyssey*.

Telemachus

Penelope

Eurycleia

Antinous

Lesson 10

Restoration of Order in Ithaca

Objectives

- To recognize Homer’s vivid descriptions of the confrontation between Odysseus and his enemies
- To understand the harmonious resolution of *The Odyssey*

Notes to the Teacher

The contest with the bow, one of the most famous sections of the epic, is a preamble to the bloody fight described in book 22. No one but Odysseus is able to bend and string the bow, and he uses it to punish the suitors. Later, the disloyal maids are also punished. Neither Odysseus nor Telemachus feels any inclination toward mercy for the guilty parties. The violence in the scene can easily match that in any modern adventure movie.

The final two books focus on relationships: avoidance of the blood feud that could result from the killing of the suitors and maids; the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope; Odysseus’s meeting with his old father; the need to appease Poseidon. With Athena’s help, peace is completely restored to Ithaca.

In this lesson, students focus on events and characters in the conclusion of *The Odyssey*. They then create visuals for selected scenes; to complete the activity, they will need access to art supplies.

Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 19**, and have small groups collaborate to answer the questions.

Suggested Responses

1. Book 21 demonstrates that Odysseus is stronger than any other man present. Despite their best efforts, the other men cannot string the bow. Odysseus does so easily, without stress.
2. The suitors were probably chagrined at their own unsuccessful efforts and amazed at the strength of the old beggar they treated so disrespectfully. They may have felt uneasy, but their shock at the beginning of the next book indicates that they did not expect to be killed.
3. Antinous is the first suitor to die; of all of the men, he was the most malicious and obnoxious.

4. The description of the massacre is vivid: an arrow through the neck; an arrow through a liver; a spear clear through a body; a nose cut off. The hall itself is awash in blood.
 5. The maids were rude to Telemachus and at least some of them were more than friendly with the suitors. The maids are hanged in a pathetic and frightened row. Homer stresses their hopelessness in the twitching feet that did not twitch for long.
 6. Like Odysseus, Penelope is a wily, clever person. She does not want to be duped into believing that an imposter is her husband. She suggests moving the bed—an impossibility since one of the bedposts is a tree. When Odysseus knows that secret, she realizes that her husband has indeed returned home.
 7. Odysseus shows Laertes the old scar from the incident when a boar gored his leg.
 8. Townspeople arrive to avenge the killing of the suitors, and Telemachus and Odysseus are ready to fight them, but Athena intervenes and puts the conflict to rest.
2. Point out that the story of Agamemnon comes up repeatedly in *The Odyssey*. Distribute **Handout 20**, and ask students to complete the activity individually or with partners.

Suggested Responses

- The contrasts emphasize the importance of a faithful wife; in both stories, Athena is necessary to put an end to the cycle of revenge. Agamemnon returns home in the full glory of a hero and meets treachery and death. Odysseus returns disguised as a lowly beggar; he meets treachery, but overcomes it. Above all, Odysseus and Penelope are both wily and clever; they can use intelligence to prevail.
3. Remind students of the visuals they constructed for Odysseus's eventful journey from Troy, including encounters with lotus-eaters, Cyclops, Circe, Scylla and Charybdis, Calypso, and others.
 4. Divide the class into groups, and ask the groups to construct visual depictions of scenes that they consider especially interesting or important to the epic as a whole. To help prevent repetition, assign groups to specific sections of the epic: books 1–4, 5–8, 13–16, 17–20, 21–24. If necessary, provide examples: young Telemachus when he tries unsuccessfully to control the suitors; his meeting with Menelaus and Helen; Hermes arriving to tell Calypso to let Odysseus leave; nearly naked Odysseus creeping out to see Nausicaa and the maids; Odysseus and his old dog, Argos.
 5. When the groups have finished, direct them to present results to the rest of the class. Then post the visuals in order around the classroom.

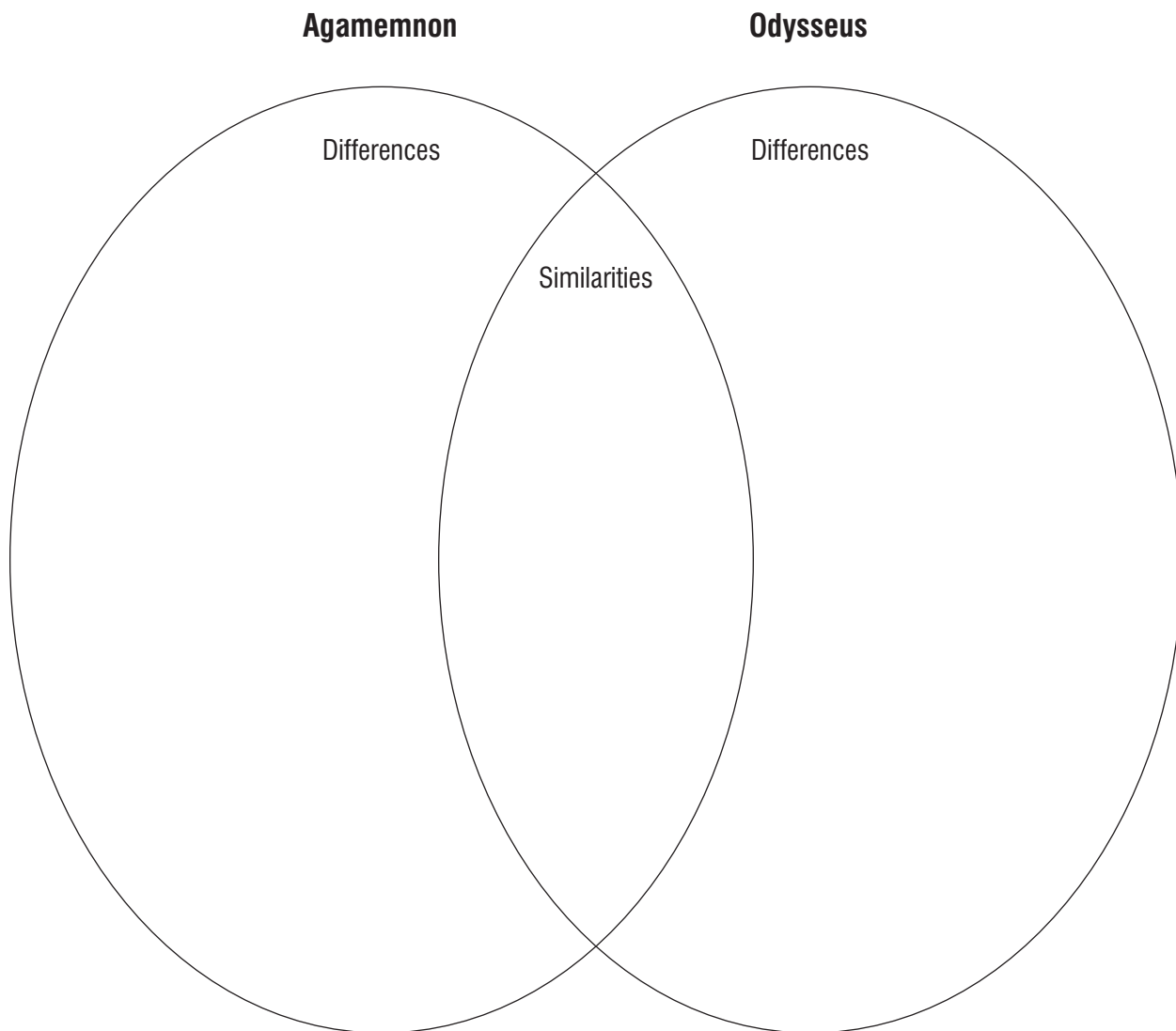
The End of *The Odyssey*

Directions: Use the following questions to analyze and respond to the final four books in the epic.

1. What does Homer accomplish in book 21?
2. What do you think the suitors are thinking and feeling when Odysseus is able to string the bow?
3. Which suitor does Odysseus kill first? Why?
4. How graphic is the violence in book 22? Give examples.
5. Why and how do Telemachus and Odysseus kill the maids? What does Homer's description emphasize?
6. What test does Penelope use to prove that this man really is her long-missing husband, Odysseus? What does this show about her?
7. How does Odysseus prove his identity to his father?
8. What almost happens at the end of the epic? How is this averted?

Agamemnon and Odysseus

Directions: Use the Venn diagram to compare and contrast these two Greek heroes. Then write a paragraph in which you explain the significance of their differences.



Lesson 11

Focus on the Main Characters

Objective

- To analyze Odysseus, Penelope, Athena, and Telemachus as they are revealed in the epic as a whole

Notes to the Teacher

The Odyssey dates back thousands of years and is based largely on an old mythology. Still, the characters even today seem amazingly real and, despite the time lapse, surprisingly like people today. Homer includes details and nuances that make the people in the epic much more than stock characters.

Odysseus, king and military hero, falls asleep when staying awake would be better, sheds tears over lost comrades, longs for his family and home, and seems to delight in making up stories. Penelope is a loyal wife who has long resisted pressure from suitors; she also dotes on and overprotects her son, delights in the thought of competition among the suitors, and cleverly tests the strange visitor before she will believe he really is Odysseus. Telemachus, awkwardly on the cusp of boyhood and manhood, wants to assert himself but then falls short; with the help of Athena, he comes a long way, but at the end, his maturation is not yet complete. The goddess Athena has a lot of power but is subject to decisions made by Zeus; she is interested in the plight of Odysseus and his family, and her assistance makes the happy ending possible. She is delighted by Odysseus's mental agility; he seems never at a loss, and this endears him to her.

In this lesson, small groups focus on the characters and report their findings to the rest of the class.

Procedure

1. Explain that the class is going to focus on the four most important characters in *The Odyssey*. Assign groups, and give each group one of **Handouts 21, 22, 23, or 24**. Ask students to record specific textual support for their insights.
2. Give students the handouts they did not yet receive, and ask the group(s) that focused on **Handout 21** to share information with the class.

Suggested Responses

1. When Odysseus sees the gathering clouds, he feels that the gods are toying with him and actually for a time wishes he had perished in Troy. Returning home begins to seem like a hopeless dream. Without the help of Ino, he might have given up. He seems exhausted.
 2. Odysseus, naked and salt-caked, holds a branch in front of himself. His behavior is profoundly respectful and dignified. He has no wish to embarrass or frighten the young girls; he desperately needs the help of the rulers of this island.
 3. Odysseus shouts back at Polyphemus and identifies himself with his real name, which leads to Poseidon's grudge. Odysseus is full of hubris at this moment and glories in outsmarting and blinding the Cyclops.
 4. Each of Scylla's heads grabs and devours a man. In their struggles, the men reach out imploringly toward Odysseus, wanting him to save them. He is powerless, and their terror and pain grieve him.
 5. Armed with the bow, Odysseus strips off his beggar's rags and confronts all of the suitors. His first arrow kills Antinous. He is a figure demanding implacable justice, as he bravely and confidently faces a horde of men.
 6. Odysseus addresses Penelope forthrightly and angrily at first, but after she explains her motivation, he tells the story of his travels, and they go to sleep together. Even after their long separation, Odysseus and Penelope are honest, not flirtatious, in their communication.
3. Point out that Odysseus is not just a stereotypical hero; he is not a one-dimensional stock character. The epic shows many aspects of his character: brave hero, clever thinker, homesick wanderer, concerned father and husband, caring leader, boasting conqueror, respectful guest.
 4. Have the group(s) that focused on Penelope (**Handout 22**) report their findings.

Suggested Responses

1. Penelope claimed she had to weave a shroud for Laertes before she could get married. She would weave during the day, then undo all the weaving that night, so that the marriage was delayed indefinitely. She is capable of subterfuge; she wants to believe that Odysseus will someday be home.

2. She is a protective and loving mother who is bothered that Telemachus went away without talking it over with her. She seems to react tearfully to his return, and then she wants to rest for a while. She tries to be a good mother.
 3. Penelope forthrightly tells Eurymachus about her desire for Odysseus to come home. She says that the suitors, instead of feasting in her home and behaving in their rude ways, should be honoring her. To her, their boorish behavior is an insult.
 4. After listening to Odysseus's explanation of her dream about the eagle and the geese, Penelope refuses to accept simplistic answers. She has an intelligent and inquiring mind.
 5. Penelope now knows that this man is Odysseus, and she gives her love to him. Her intelligence and hope are evident, as is her faithful love for her husband.
5. Ask students whether *The Odyssey* has a double standard when it comes to sexuality. (Penelope has been living chastely for twenty years, hoping for her husband's return. Odysseus lived with Circe for a year and with Calypso for seven years, and both of them hated to see him leave. On the other hand, there is no evidence of affairs with mortal women, just with goddesses.)
 6. Have the students who focused on Telemachus (**Handout 23**) report their findings.

Suggested Responses

1. Telemachus calls the meeting and tries to take charge; he is angry with the suitors for their abusive treatment of his home. Although he struggles bravely in the confrontation, he is not able to prevail. He is still more boy than man.
2. Telemachus feels that he is unequal to meeting with a great man like Nestor. He has been very protected and is actually shy; he lacks self-confidence.
3. Telemachus is quick to believe that Odysseus is his father; he is overjoyed and happy to accept Odysseus's leadership. Telemachus can keep a secret.
4. Telemachus is overexcited; of course, he cannot string the mighty bow. He taunts the suitors to try to string it.
5. Telemachus is the one who wants to kill the maids for their insulting manner to him and their disrespect for Penelope. Somehow killing the women seems below the dignity of Odysseus.

7. Ask students how Telemachus changes during the course of the epic. (With the help of Athena and the leadership of his father, he has new experiences and acquires self-confidence. He is on the way to manhood, but not quite there yet. He may never reach his father's stature.)
8. Have the students who focused on Athena (**Handout 24**) present their findings to the class.

Suggested Responses

1. Athena has a close relationship with Zeus and wants to intervene with the situation involving Odysseus and his family. She wants to know what Zeus has against Odysseus. She is respectful but forthright.
 2. Having helped Telemachus to a wider experience of the world, Athena now turns her attention to Odysseus, who needs help to get away from Calypso. Athena again gets the permission of Zeus to pursue her intentions.
 3. Athena finds Odysseus to be a delightful person and sees many similarities to her own resourcefulness. She wants to help him.
 4. During the battle, Athena goads Odysseus into full fury and revenge. It is really her decision that the suitors have to die.
 5. At the end, Athena steps in to make peace in Ithaca. She is the goddess of wisdom and can accomplish things impossible for mere human beings.
9. Ask students to summarize their perceptions about the Greek gods. (They are anthropomorphic, with the same strengths and weaknesses people have; they can change their shapes at will; they meddle with people's lives, sometimes helpfully, sometimes in mischief; they are not omnipotent or all-knowing. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, respects Zeus's will. She enjoys what she does with Odysseus and his family.)

Odysseus: Never at a Loss

Directions: Reread the passages from *The Odyssey*. Then use the chart to record information about Odysseus and insights into his character.

Passage	Summary	Insights
1. Book 5, Odysseus on the raft as clouds gather		
2. Near the beginning of book 6, when Odysseus meets Nausicaa near the beach		
3. Near the end of book 9, as Odysseus and his men row away from the Cyclops		

Passage	Summary	Insights
4. Book 7, when some of the men are snatched by Scylla		
5. The beginning of book 22, when the great battle in the hall begins		
6. Book 23, when Penelope and Odysseus talk about the bed		

Penelope: Faithful and Smart

Directions: Reread the passages from *The Odyssey*. Then use the chart to record information about Penelope and insights into her character.

Passage	Summary	Insights
1. Book 2, the description of the ruse with the shroud		
2. Beginning of book 17, with Telemachus		
3. Book 18, Penelope talking with Eurymachus		
4. End of book 19, about the dream		
5. Book 23, after Odysseus talks about the bedpost		

Telemachus: Somewhere between Boy and Man

Directions: Reread the passages from *The Odyssey*. Then use the chart to record information about Telemachus and insights into his character.

Passage	Summary	Insights
1. Book 2, Telemachus at the meeting with the suitors		
2. Book 3, when Telemachus arrives in Pylos		
3. Book 16, the reunion with his father		
4. Book 21, with the bow		
5. The end of book 22		

Bright-Eyed Athena

Directions: Reread the passages from *The Odyssey*. Then use the chart to record information about Athena and insights into her character.

Passage	Summary	Insights
1. The opening pages of book 1		
2. The beginning of book 5		
3. The closing pages of book 13		
4. Book 22, the great battle		
5. The conclusion of book 24		

Lesson 12

The Values in *The Odyssey*

Objectives

- To understand that epic heroes reflect the main values and top priorities of the cultures that engender them
- To identify major values and beliefs endorsed by *The Odyssey*

Notes to the Teacher

Folk epics celebrate the values and endorse the beliefs held dear by the cultures that produced them. The hero is the ideal man as visualized by the people telling the story. While epic heroes have much in common, they are also unique in some ways. Spanish and French ideals are not identical, so there are significant differences between El Cid and Roland, and Beowulf contrasts with both of them.

Odysseus is brave, strong, proud, and skilled in battle; he is a daring person who likes adventures, a man of action who faces and survives dangers. He is also a wealthy and powerful king. Athena admires him for his wily and inventive character; he is a natural storyteller, and he can lie with ease. He loves his wife and son and has warm feelings for his old nurse and the loyal swineherd, as well as for his very old dog. He believes in and relies on the gods; his choices reflect a commitment to justice more than to mercy.

In this lesson, students first identify values and beliefs that pervade *The Odyssey*. They then relate the epic to Tennyson's "Ulysses."

Procedure

1. Remind students of the definition of an epic, studied in the first lesson in this unit. Point out that *The Odyssey* is certainly a long story about the adventures of a hero. It begins when Odysseus has been away from home for a long time, traces the story backward, and then moves forward to his reclaiming his family and home. By studying it, we can learn what values and ideas were important to the ancient Greeks.
2. Ask students what characteristics writers and moviemakers today give to heroes because of the importance of those traits in our culture (good looks, bravery, independence, practical intelligence, trustworthiness, patriotism).

3. Explain that Superman can be considered an American hero. Ask students what national values he reflects. (On the surface, Superman is an ordinary man with an ordinary job. He flies to help those in danger, but he seeks neither fame nor financial rewards for his heroism. He has a girlfriend; he also has an enemy and an area of vulnerability.)
4. Distribute **Handout 25**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

Suggested Responses

Part A.

The Odyssey certainly endorses belief in gods, bravery, competition, creativity, family loyalty, hospitality, intelligence, justice, peace, respect, self-control, teamwork, and verbal skills. Bodily pleasures are not a prime concern; for example, Odysseus rejects the life of the lotus-eaters. Equality does not seem important; society comes in hierarchy. Forgiveness and mercy do not seem imperative; people must pay the price for what they have done. The epic does not stress privacy, but it does keep some topics private. Physical beauty is nice, but it also seems to come and go at the whim of the gods. The youth that seems so important in our culture today is weak in comparison to the middle-aged grandeur of Odysseus and Penelope.

Part B.

Views of the top four values are likely to vary but may include bravery, family loyalty, intelligence, and justice.

5. Distribute **Handout 26**, and have students read “Ulysses.” You may want to read it aloud, have a drama student prepare a dramatic reading, or play a recording.
6. Ask students the following questions.
 - The poem is a dramatic monologue. Who is the speaker? (Odysseus/Ulysses)
 - What is the situation? (Odysseus has been home for quite a long time, and he is bored and eager for more adventures. Telemachus is old enough to be in charge now, and Odysseus, in his old age, wants to set sail with his comrades again.)
 - What does the last line suggest? (Human beings at their best never give up on striving for a full, active, and meaningful life.)
7. Ask students to write short essays in which they describe Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s view of Odysseus and his purpose in writing “Ulysses.” (Tennyson portrays Odysseus as an untiring hero who refuses to succumb to idleness in his old age but rather is eager, despite risks, to embark on more adventures in pursuit of a full life.)

8. Ask students to brainstorm contemporary examples of this kind of Odysseus/Ulysses (a retiree who goes back to school to get a degree in nursing; a grandfather who sets out to explore the country on his new motorcycle; someone with a lucrative but tedious desk job who decides to join the NASCAR circuit; a person who stops playing video games and starts going to the gym for pickup basketball games).

Focus on Values in *The Odyssey*

Part A.

Directions: Odysseus reflects the values and beliefs of the culture that produced him. Circle the traits that seem very important in *The Odyssey*.

belief in gods

forgiveness

privacy

bodily pleasures

hospitality

respect

bravery

intelligence

self-control

competition

justice

teamwork

creativity

mercy

verbal skills

equality

peace

youth

family loyalty

physical beauty

Part B.

Directions: Identify four dominant values in *The Odyssey*, and explain your choices.

Tennyson's "Ulysses"

Directions: Ulysses is the Roman name for Odysseus. The Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote the following poem giving his impressions of the great epic hero. Read it, and list ways you can connect it with ideas and values in *The Odyssey*.

Ulysses

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known—cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honor'd of them all—
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

***The Odyssey* Reading Guide**

Directions: Use the following questions to focus your attention as you read.

Book 1

1. In Ithaca, what problem is Penelope facing?
2. What does Athena want Telemachus to do? Why?
3. Who is Eurycleia?

Book 2

1. What prompts Telemachus to call a meeting? How well does he handle it?
2. What clever scheme has Penelope used to delay having to marry one of the suitors?

Book 3

1. What steps toward maturity does Telemachus take?
2. What is the story of Agamemnon?

Book 4

1. Whom does Telemachus visit?
2. What does he learn about his father?
3. Back in Ithaca, what do the suitors plan?

Book 5

1. What are the gods' attitudes toward Odysseus?
2. Who is Calypso? What is her relationship with Odysseus? Why does she let him go?
3. How does Odysseus get to Phaeacia?

Book 6

1. Describe the household of Alcinous.
2. How and why do Nausicaa and the other girls react to the sight of Odysseus?

Book 7

1. Describe Phaeacia.
2. Nausicaa gives Odysseus one reason why he should not follow the girls through town; he gives the father a different reason. How do the two stories differ?

Book 8

1. What events highlight the king's hospitality? What brings Odysseus to tears?
2. How and why does Odysseus react to the Trojan horse story?
3. What request does Alcinous make at the end of book 8?

Book 9

1. How does book 8 lay the groundwork for book 9? Where does Odysseus begin his story?
2. Describe the encounter with the lotus-eaters.

3. What happened when Odysseus and his men encountered Polyphemus?
4. How did this event impact Odysseus's efforts to return home to Ithaca?

Book 10

1. What catastrophe took place while Odysseus was asleep? Why did it happen?
2. Who were the Laestrygonians?
3. How did Circe affect Odysseus and his men?

Book 11

1. Where did Odysseus journey? What people did he encounter?
2. When Odysseus feels his story has been long enough, about whom does Alcinous want to hear?

Book 12

1. What two sea monsters did Odysseus and his men encounter? What happened?
2. What was the incident involving Helios's cattle?
3. How does this book travel full circle?

Book 13

1. Where does the story pick up?
2. How does Homer manage to get Odysseus to Ithaca without his knowing where he is?
3. How does Athena disguise herself?
4. What specific changes come to Odysseus when Athena passes her wand over him?

Book 14

1. Who is Eumaeus?
2. What story does Odysseus make up?

Book 15

1. How does Athena get Telemachus to head for home?
2. What does Homer finally accomplish in this section?

Book 16

1. How does Athena transform Odysseus?
2. What plans do Odysseus and Telemachus make for going home?
3. How have the suitors' plans for Telemachus changed?
4. What do Telemachus and his father exchange when the swineherd is not looking? How might this small detail be important in the story?

Book 17

1. How do Eurycleia and Penelope react when they see that Telemachus has returned home? How has he changed?
2. Of what does Odysseus become completely convinced in the course of this section? Why?

Book 18

1. How do the suitors show their cruelty at the beginning of this book?
2. How does Penelope respond when Eurymachus extols her beauty?
3. What does Homer accomplish in this book?

Book 19

1. What task faces Odysseus and Telemachus?
2. In conversation with Odysseus, what does Penelope reveal that she has done to delay the suitors?
3. What story does Odysseus fabricate?
4. What is the significance of Penelope's dream?

Book 20

1. What one fear does Odysseus voice to Athena? How does she allay that fear?
2. How does Melanthius incur Odysseus's wrath?
3. How do the suitors taunt Telemachus about the beggar and the seer? What fate do they propose for the two?
4. How does this book end?

Book 21

1. What happens with the bow? How does Homer build suspense in the description?
2. What transpires between father and son at the end of this book?

Book 22

1. What two things does Odysseus do to start this book?
2. What details make the fight with the suitors vivid?
3. What does the minstrel say in an effort to save his own life?
4. What causes Odysseus to smile?
5. Odysseus does not take killing lightly. How does he purify the house?

Book 23

1. What causes Odysseus to smile for the second time?
2. What deception is organized to prevent the townspeople from knowing what has happened?
3. With what secret does Penelope test Odysseus before she will accept him as her husband?
4. What two serious events keep the story from being wrapped up immediately?

Book 24

1. What is happening at the beginning of this book?
2. What happens among the gods regarding events in Ithaca?
3. How does Homer tie together the loose ends to bring about a happy ending?

Suggested Responses to the Reading Guide

Book 1

1. Penelope is besieged by men who want to marry her. They are also helping themselves to all of the food and beverages at her home, and they behave crudely.
2. Athena wants Telemachus to set out to find information about his father. She can see that he is very young and inexperienced and needs to widen his horizons so that he can grow up into manhood.
3. Eurycleia, a trusted woman servant in Odysseus's home, still dotes on Telemachus.

Book 2

1. Athena urges Telemachus to call an assembly of the men of Ithaca. At the meeting, his attempts to be a leader are a fiasco. He publicly denounces the suitors, but his protests are ineffective. He is obviously not ready to assume leadership.
2. Antinous reveals that Penelope has tricked the men by claiming that she must make a shroud for her father-in-law. For three years, she has industriously woven it during the day and then just as industriously unraveled it at night.

Book 3

1. At first, Telemachus is so shy that Athena has to encourage him to trust himself and his mission. He accepts the cup Athena disguised as Mentor offers to him; he states clearly his desire to find his father; he listens. He becomes fearful that he will not find Odysseus, but eventually his treatment at Nestor's home leaves him much more determined and confident.
2. Before going to Troy, Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter to the gods. While he was gone, his wife took a lover, and when Agamemnon returned, he was killed. Eventually, his son Orestes avenged his death. The implication is that Telemachus is justified in seeking information about his father and resisting the suitors.

Book 4

1. Telemachus visits Menelaus, the husband of Helen of Troy. The Helen he meets is remorseful about the deaths that resulted from her actions and seems to be a kind, matronly hostess.
2. Odysseus, like Menelaus, was a leader in the Trojan War, and the two were friends. Telemachus learns of his father's bravery from someone who has seen him in combat. By hearing about the return of some and the deaths of others, he learns about the dangers of his father's trip home. He sees a settled way of life unlike the chaos caused by the greedy, crude suitors in Ithaca. Finally, he is accepted among men as a princely person worthy of being heard and taken seriously.
3. The suitors learn that Telemachus has escaped the island, and they plan to ambush and kill him when he returns.

Book 5

1. Except for the antagonism of Poseidon, the gods seem to be sympathetic toward Odysseus. This is particularly true of Athena, who persuades Zeus to intervene, and Hermes is sent to help.
2. Calypso is the ruler of her island, Ogygia; she is a minor divinity who has kept Odysseus with her for years and who wants him to stay, even promising him immortality if he will agree to do so. She must submit to the rule of Zeus, and so Odysseus is able to make a raft to set out for home.
3. Poseidon spots Odysseus on the raft and makes trouble. Ino, the white sea goddess, helps by persuading him to swim to shore. Athena intervenes, too, and Odysseus with difficulty makes it to land and crawls into a thicket for some much needed rest.

Book 6

1. The picture of Alcinous's household is one of orderliness and plenty, though it is hardly a king's palace. The servants merely assist the family, for the mother packs the lunch and Nausicaa works with the maids to do the laundry.
2. When Odysseus emerges out of the thicket into the sight of the girls, he is naked except for a leafy branch; he has cuts and bruises and is covered with sea brine. The girls are frightened by the appearance of this unexpected man, but Athena intervenes to calm Nausicaa, who provides Odysseus with clothing.

Book 7

1. Phaeacia has wonderful harbors, and Alcinous's home is beautiful. The people are skilled seafarers. They are also athletic, as dinner is followed by a variety of competitions.
2. Nausicaa wants to avoid the gossip that might arise from bringing a strange man home; Odysseus claims that he was too shy to follow the girls home. In this culture, a good reputation is important, and Odysseus respects that.

Book 8

1. King Alcinous holds a feast and rigs up a ship to take Odysseus home; he also holds more athletic competitions. Odysseus reacts with tears when the minstrel sings of experiences Odysseus himself has had.
2. The Trojan horse was Odysseus's idea and the ruse that led to the defeat of Troy; when the minstrel sings about it, Odysseus is reduced to tears, so Alcinous tells the minstrel to stop the story.
3. Alcinous asks Odysseus to tell him all about the experiences that brought him to Phaeacia.

Book 9

1. Alcinous's request to hear about Odysseus's travels sets the stage for the narrative in the next four books.
2. The lotus-eaters give the men some lotus to eat; immediately, they lose all desire to go home and have to be dragged back to the ship.

3. Curiosity impels Odysseus to explore the island; he and twelve trusted men find Polyphemus's cave, full of cheeses, lambs, and goats. When Polyphemus returns, he kills and devours some of the men. When Polyphemus gets drunk, Odysseus gouges out his eye, and he and the remaining men escape clinging to the bellies of the big sheep. As the ship leaves, Odysseus proudly shouts out his name to the Cyclopians.
4. If Odysseus had been content to be known only as "Noman," Poseidon might never have known that he was the one who blinded Polyphemus; Odysseus might have gotten home much more quickly.

Book 10

1. Odysseus did not tell his men what was in the bag; while he was asleep, they opened it, and the precious wind that would have blown them back to Ithaca was lost.
2. The Laestrygonians were a huge, vicious, and cannibalistic group of people.
3. Circe is a beautiful goddess and a sorceress; she turned men into pigs. With help from Hermes, Odysseus subdued her and then lives with her for a year.

Book 11

1. Odysseus went to Hades, the land of the dead. The first person he saw was Elpenor, the young man who died when he fell off the roof. He also saw the blind prophet Teiresias, who told him of Poseidon's anger over the blinding of Polyphemus and also said that Odysseus would get home. He saw his mother, Persephone, Jocasta, and many other dead souls.
2. Alcinous wants to know if Odysseus saw the souls of any of his comrades who were killed in the Trojan War; Odysseus tells of Agamemnon and Achilles.

Book 12

1. Circe warned Odysseus about Scylla and Charybdis, one a six-headed monster with fearsome teeth, the other a powerful whirlpool. Following Circe's advice, Odysseus went closer to Scylla and felt great pity for the men the monster grabbed and devoured.
2. Odysseus did not want to stop at the island of Helios, but his men were tired. While Odysseus was asleep, the men stole some of the sacred cattle, had a sacrifice, and ate, earning the wrath of Zeus.
3. Odysseus managed to get by Charybdis and went to Ogygia, Calypso's island, which is where his story began.

Book 13

1. Odysseus has just finished the tale of his journeys and adventures; he is ready to head for home.
2. Odysseus sleeps all the way home and is left with his gifts on the beach while the oarsmen return to Phaeacia. Athena prepares a mist so that he will not immediately recognize where he is.
3. Athena first disguises herself as a young shepherd but then reveals her true identity and assures Odysseus that Penelope is faithfully awaiting him.

4. As Athena passes her wand over Odysseus, his skin withers, his hair thins and grays, his muscles lose their tone, and his clothes become ragged. She gives him a walking stick and a coarse, rugged bag. The transformation into a beggar is complete.

Book 14

1. The swineherd is a hospitable person who has been loyal to Odysseus and who laments the greed of the suitors.
2. In an effort to convince Eumaeus that Odysseus will return home, Odysseus makes up a story about fighting against Troy and going to Egypt, where he amassed wealth but then encountered both slavery and piracy.

Book 15

1. Athena makes Telemachus dream that he must return home to Ithaca. She warns him of the ambush and tells him to go to the home of his father's swineherd when he lands.
2. Homer is finally bringing about the event suggested in book 1, the meeting of Odysseus with Telemachus.

Book 16

1. Athena touches Odysseus with her golden rod and transforms him into a tanner, younger looking man with a dark beard.
2. Odysseus and Telemachus decide that, because Athena and Zeus will help them fight, they will need no other human help. Telemachus will go home first. Eumaeus will bring Odysseus there as a beggar. When Athena reveals that it is time to act, Odysseus will nod to Telemachus, who will hide all weapons except two swords, two spears, and a few leather shields.
3. The suitors decide not to kill Telemachus right away because that would be too dangerous.
4. Telemachus smiles knowingly at his father when Eumaeus cannot see him do it; this glance is important, for it shows a mutual understanding and trust between father and son.

Book 17

1. Eurycleia, the nurse, runs to Telemachus and begins to cry for joy; Penelope throws her arms around him, cries, and kisses him. He has grown in self-confidence.
2. Odysseus becomes completely convinced that the suitors must be punished. He can see their behavior for himself.

Book 18

1. The suitors' cruelty is evident when they arrange a fight between Odysseus and another beggar. To the suitors, these men are there only to provide entertainment, and they find it a laughing matter when injuries occur.

2. When Eurymachus extols Penelope's beauty, she chides him for the men's unnatural way of wooing a woman. They should have brought gifts rather than ravage her house with their gluttony and revelry.
3. The book exposes the baseness of the suitors, thus showing Odysseus's right to revenge.

Book 19

1. Odysseus and Telemachus have to lock away weapons to prevent the suitors from being able to defend themselves.
2. Penelope convinced the suitors she had to weave a shroud for Odysseus's father Laertes; then, each night, she unraveled what she had woven that day; she also insisted that Telemachus was too young to manage a household of his own.
3. The story Odysseus tells about his background includes that he is a descendant of King Minos of Crete and has met Odysseus, who was at the time bound for Troy. A fierce wind forced Odysseus and his men to stay for twelve days, after which they sailed on.
4. Penelope dreamed that a great eagle swooped down and killed geese that were eating in the farmyard. The dream is a premonition of Odysseus's fight with the suitors.

Book 20

1. Odysseus's one fear is that his revenge might cause a blood feud that would endanger Penelope and Telemachus. Athena assures him that the gods approve and will provide protection.
2. Melanthius incurs Odysseus's anger by saying he will probably have to fight Odysseus to send him begging somewhere else.
3. The suitors taunt Telemachus because they say he has hunted up the beggar and the prophet. They say they will send both of them to Sicily as slaves.
4. The book shows some additional people who have been loyal to Odysseus. At the end, the suitors remain rude and treacherous.

Book 21

1. None of the suitors are able to bend the bow; Homer builds suspense by having Odysseus balance and examine the bow; when he has strung it, he plucks at the taut sheepgut.
2. The father nods to his son, who grasps his sword and stands ready for battle.

Book 22

1. Odysseus jumps onto the threshold and then lets an arrow fly straight at Antinous's throat.
2. Vivid details include arrows piercing a man's liver or running completely through his chest, the plume of Odysseus's helmet nodding threateningly at the men, the shield covered with dirt, pulling Melanthius by the hair and hauling him up to the beams, and enumerating the specific men that the four combatants kill.

3. The minstrel asks to be spared, for he is merely a singer; he has been forced to entertain, and he has never plotted against Odysseus.
4. Odysseus smiles for the first time and saves the life of both the minstrel and the marshal.
5. Odysseus fumigates the house with both fire and sulphur.

Book 23

1. Odysseus's second smile is prompted by Penelope's saying that she and he have secrets that will reveal his identity to her.
2. To delay any action from the townspeople, the minstrel will play; the household will sound as if a party is going on.
3. Penelope mentions the bed he made for them. When he describes it, she runs to his arms and explains that she has been afraid that some imposter would come to deceive her into thinking that he was Odysseus.
4. The two serious notes are the danger of a blood feud and the need for Odysseus to make a journey to present a sacrifice to Poseidon.

Book 24

1. The book begins in Hades with Achilles, Agamemnon, the dead suitors, and others. Agamemnon is impressed with the daring and skill of Odysseus and the fidelity of Penelope. He sees his own death as an ignominious result of treachery.
2. Athena consults Zeus, who tells her that she is in charge; she can restore peace in Ithaca.
3. Homer ties loose threads together by justifying Odysseus's actions through having even those in Hades approve and by showing that Odysseus's sorrowful father can find joy now that his son has returned. In addition, no blood feud will endanger Odysseus's family, so everyone can live happily ever after.

Objective Test: *The Odyssey*

Directions: Choose the best answers.

- _____ 1. The deity that becomes determined to assist Odysseus and his family is
- Athena.
 - Zeus.
 - Aphrodite.
 - Poseidon.
- _____ 2. A goddess who turns men into swine is
- Calypso.
 - Athena.
 - Hera.
 - Circe.
- _____ 3. A goddess who offers immortality to Odysseus is
- Minerva.
 - Calypso.
 - Ino.
 - Hera.
- _____ 4. A god who becomes very angry with Odysseus and wants to punish him is
- Ares.
 - Hermes.
 - Poseidon.
 - Hades.
- _____ 5. Creatures who use a special food that makes them totally happy and peaceful are
- Sirens.
 - Ciconians.
 - Cyclopians.
 - lotus-eaters.
- _____ 6. Odysseus tells Polyphemus that his name is
- Noman.
 - Everyman.
 - Menelaus.
 - Laertes.

-
- _____ 7. Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag that contains
- gold.
 - food.
 - letters.
 - wind.
- _____ 8. A person who dies when he falls off of Circe's roof is
- Agamemnon.
 - Achilles.
 - Elpenor.
 - Eurymachus.
- _____ 9. A six-headed sea monster is
- Charybdis.
 - Scylla.
 - Laestrygonian.
 - Circe.
- _____ 10. The last of Odysseus's companions are killed after they
- listen to the Sirens.
 - kill the sacred cattle of Helios.
 - visit the lotus-eaters.
 - kill the Ciconian women.
- _____ 11. How long does Odysseus stay with Circe?
- a week
 - a month
 - a year
 - two years
- _____ 12. How long does Odysseus stay with Calypso?
- a month
 - a year
 - five years
 - seven years
- _____ 13. When Odysseus visits Hades, he talks with a blind prophet named
- Achilles.
 - Agamemnon.
 - Eumaeus.
 - Teiresias.

- _____ 14. Nausicaa is
- a princess in Phaeacia.
 - Odysseus's niece.
 - the daughter of Calypso.
 - a loyal servant in Ithaca.
- _____ 15. The queen in Phaeacia is
- Arete.
 - Helen.
 - Melanthia.
 - Leona.
- _____ 16. When Odysseus first returns to Ithaca, he
- makes an offering of gratitude to the gods.
 - goes in disguise to see his wife.
 - goes to the home of a swineherd.
 - does not know where he is.
- _____ 17. Eurycleia is
- a disloyal young female servant.
 - the wife of Eumaeus.
 - an elderly woman who took care of Telemachus.
 - a princess in Phaeacia.
- _____ 18. Eumaeus takes care of
- pigs.
 - goats.
 - sheep.
 - boats.
- _____ 19. Odysseus returns to his home dressed as
- a soldier.
 - a beggar.
 - a Cretan businessman.
 - a priest.

- _____ 20. Penelope delayed choosing one of the suitors by
- insisting that Odysseus was still alive.
 - unweaving her own work.
 - taking a long trip to Phaeacia.
 - pretending to be ill.
- _____ 21. Back home, Odysseus first demonstrates his superior strength by
- lifting a boulder.
 - stringing a bow.
 - winning a boxing match.
 - walking through a door.
- _____ 22. Back in Ithaca, Odysseus makes up a complicated story of being from
- Sicily.
 - Malta.
 - Cyprus.
 - Crete.
- _____ 23. The first suitor killed by Odysseus is
- Alcinous.
 - Eurymachus.
 - Antinous.
 - Melanthius.
- _____ 24. Odysseus's main concern in taking revenge against the suitors is
- fear of being killed.
 - avoiding a blood feud.
 - anxiety that Penelope no longer cares for him.
 - fear of the wrath of Poseidon.
- _____ 25. Penelope tests Odysseus by
- asking him questions about their courtship.
 - pretending that she is leaving Ithaca.
 - ordering that the bed be removed from the bedroom.
 - challenging him to respond to riddles.

Test Answer Key

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. a | 14. a |
| 2. d | 15. a |
| 3. b | 16. d |
| 4. c | 17. c |
| 5. d | 18. a |
| 6. a | 19. b |
| 7. d | 20. b |
| 8. c | 21. b |
| 9. b | 22. d |
| 10. b | 23. c |
| 11. c | 24. b |
| 12. d | 25. c |
| 13. d | |

The Odyssey

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Entire Unit

- | | |
|------------|---|
| RL.11-12.2 | Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. |
| RL.11-12.3 | Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). |
| RL.11-12.4 | Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.) |
| RL.11-12.5 | Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact. |
| RL.11-12.6 | Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement). |
| RL.11-12.7 | Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.) |
| RI.11-12.1 | Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. |
| W.11-12.2b | Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. |
| W.11-12.2c | Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts. |

- W.11-12.2d Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
- W.11-12.3a Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- W.11-12.3b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
- W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
- W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- SL.11-12.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
- SL.11-12.1b Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
- SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- SL.11-12.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
- SL.11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- L.11-12.2b Spell correctly.
- L.11-12.3a Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte’s *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

- L.11-12.4a Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- L.11-12.4b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *conceive*, *conception*, *conceivable*).
- L.11-12.4c Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.
- L.11-12.5a Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
- L.11-12.5b Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

Source

Common Core State Standards (Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)



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