**Alcinoos:** King of the Phaiacians

**Anticleia:** Odysseus’s mother who died while he was away from Ithaca

**Antinoos:** “Ringleader” of Penelopeia’s suitors

**Argos:** Odysseus’s old hunting dog

**Athena:** Goddess of wisdom; Odysseus’s helper

**Calypso:** Witch/nymph who wanted Odysseus as her husband

**Circe:** Witch/goddess“Terrible goddess with lovely hair, who spoke in the language of men”; daughter of Helios

**Eumaios:** Swineherd; a faithful servant of Odysseus

**Eurycleia:** Faithful old servant of Odysseus and his family; “she loved him [Telemachos] more than any other of

the household, and she had been his nurse when he was a little tot.”

**Eurymachos:** One of Penelopeia’s cruelest suitors

**Hyperion:** Sun-god

**Iros:** Beggar at Odysseus’s home

**Laertes:** Odysseus’s father; lives in seclusion in the country

**Odysseus:** Protagonist unable to reach home after the Trojan War; “wise beyond all mortal men”

**Penelopeia:** Odysseus’s faithful wife

**Poseidon:** God of the sea; bore a lasting grudge against Odysseus; often called “Earthshaker”

**Polyphemos:** “Most powerful of all the Cyclopians”; son of Poseidon

**Telemachos:** Odysseus’s son; “a fine-looking boy”; approximately twenty years old

**Teiresias:** Blind Theban prophet

BOOK I: WHAT WENT ON IN THE HOUSE OF ODYSSEUS

Athena appeals to Zeus for permission to help Odysseus reach home. Odysseus’s home in Ithaca is overrun with suitors who are trying to win Penelopeia’s hand. With the help of Athena disguised as Mentes, Telemachos finds the courage to confront the suitors.

1. Where is Odysseus? Calypso’s Island—prisoner of the Goddess who wishes Odysseus to remain and be her husband—1 year period of time

2. What or whom is Athena disguised as? Mentes—a family friend (bring word that Odysseus is alive and will return home)

3. Why do Telemachos and his mother need Odysseus? Male suitors have descended upon Odysseus’ castle—eating them out of house and home—taking advantage of their hospitality—all in an effort to win the hand of Penelopeia in marriage

4. Why does Odysseus’s wife have suitors? Everyone, including Telemachos, presume Odysseus dead—they want to marry Penelopeia and take Odysseus’ wealth, life, and kingdom

5. What does Athena advise Telemachos to do? She advises Telemachus to call together the suitors and announce their banishment from his father’s estate. She then tells him that he must make a journey to Pylos and Sparta to ask for any news of his father.

BOOK II: HOW THE COUNCIL MET IN THE MARKET-PLACE OF ITHACA; AND WHAT CAME OF IT

In a town meeting, Telemachos announces his intentions to locate his father and rid his house of the suitors. He is met with ridicule and doubt, especially from Antinoos who confronts Telemachos twice. Athena helps Telemachos prepare for his journey, and he sets sail in secret that night.

BOOK III: WHAT HAPPENED IN SANDY PYLOS

Following Athena’s advice, Telemachos visits King Nestor of Pylos to get information about his father. Athena

accompanies him disguised as an old family friend, Mentor. Nestor tells Telemachos stories about Odysseus. Telemachos continues his search on horseback with Nestor’s son Megapenthes.

BOOK IV: WHAT HAPPENED IN LACEDAIMON

Telemachos and Megapenthes arrive at and are welcomed into the home of Menelaos and Helen. Menelaos tells

Telemachos of his travels with Odysseus and that Odysseus is trapped on an island by Calypso. Meanwhile, Antinoos has learned that Telemachos has embarked on his journey and plots with the other suitors to kill him upon his return to Ithaca. Penelopeia learns of Telemachos’s leaving and is upset**. \*Penelopeia’s sister comes to her in a dream and assures her Telemachos is under Athena’s protection**

1. What clues cue Menelaos and Helen that Telemachos is Odysseus’s son? **The purple robe; Telemachus’ tears over hearing about Odysseus; his striking resemblance to his father**

2. What is Menelaos’ opinion of Odysseus? **He seems to think very highly of him—mentions how hard-working and loyal Odysseus was—how he mourns over his loss daily; he states that he “loved him”**

3. Describe Antinoos’ plan to destroy Telemachos.  **The suitors gather a crew of twenty men and prepare a ship; the suitors sail to the island Asteris, and lie in wait to catch the prince on his way home**

BOOK V: HERMES IS SENT TO CALYPSO’S ISLAND;

ODYSSEUS MAKES A RAFT AND IS CARRIED TO THE COAST OF SCHERIA

Athena again pleads to Zeus for Odysseus’s release. Zeus sends Hermes to Calypso with orders that she release Odysseus. Calypso grudgingly complies. Odysseus is given much trouble by Poseidon, but with the help of Leucothea and Athena, he finally reaches the land of the Phaiacians, where he collapses, exhausted.

1. Who is Hermes, and what is his mission? Hermes is the messenger of the Gods—he brings to Calypso Zeus’s “unchangeable will”—that she must release Odysseus; but he is to have no assistance in leaving or in sailing home (he must build a raft and go on alone)

2. What can Hermes do with his wand? Lays spells on the living or awakens the dead

3. Who is holding Odysseus captive? Calypso

4. What is Calypso’s reaction to having to let Odysseus go? She is angered—claims the other Gods are jealous and claims they have a double-standard (the make Gods see no problem being with mortal women, but are shocked when a Goddess chooses a mortal man)

5. What is the main problem Odysseus faces while traveling by sea? Poseidon, The Earth-Shaker brings storms, winds, giant waves

6. What happens to Odysseus at the end of Book 5? He is shipwrecked and brought safely by Athena to the shore of a distant land

BOOK VI: HOW ODYSSEUS APPEALED TO NAUSICAA,

AND SHE BROUGHT HIM TO HER FATHER’S HOUSE

Athena appears in Nausicaa’s dream, telling her to go to the river and wash clothes. Nausicaa and her maids meet Odysseus at the river, and all but Nausicaa are frightened of him because of his appearance. He begs her to help him and she agrees.He bathes and follows Nausicaa’s instructions for asking her parents for assistance.

BOOK VII: WHAT HAPPENED TO ODYSSEUS IN THE PALACE OF ALCINOOS

Odysseus arrives at the palace of Alcinoos and Arete and begs for their help in getting him home. They feed him, ask about his situation, and agree to give him the help he needs.

1. What craft are the Phaiacians best known for?

2. How is Odysseus treated as a guest?

BOOK VIII: HOW THEY HELD GAMES AND SPORTS IN PHAIACIA

The next day Alcinoos sends the boys of the town to construct a ship for Odysseus’s voyage and gathers the men for a day of entertainment for Odysseus. Demodocos sings of famous men, including Odysseus. When Alcinoos sees Odysseus crying during the minstrel’s story, he commences the games and dancing to keep his guest happy. At dinner, Odysseus again weeps when Demodocos sings about the Trojan War. At this point, Alcinoos finally demands to know who Odysseus is.

BOOK IX: HOW ODYSSEUS VISITED THE LOTUS-EATERS AND THE CYCLOPS

Odysseus tells Alcinoos who he is and what things have happened to him since he left Troy. He tells of his adventures in Ismaros, in the land of the Lotus-Eaters, and in the land of the Cyclopians. He describes the Cyclopians as “violent and lawless” (102), and he and his men run into trouble with one of the Cyclopians. Men are killed and Poseidon’s vendetta against Odysseus begins.

1. What was the effect of the Lotus plant? The men forget about home—lose desire to return

2. How heavy is the door of the Cyclops’ cave? It is a giant boulder—only the Cyclops can move it

3. What is the first villainous thing the Cyclops does? He does not offer hospitality and he insults/belittles the Gods; he then kills and devours two of Odysseus’ men

4. Why doesn’t Odysseus kill the Cyclops when he has the chance? He realizes they will be trapped and die inside—only the cyclops can remove the great boulder

5. What does Odysseus give the Cyclops as a gift? Wine—“a drink offering”

6. What gift does the Cyclops give in return? He promises to eat Odysseus (“NoMan”) last

7. What does Odysseus tell the Cyclops that his name is? “No Man” is my name…

8. How do Odysseus and his men sneak out of the Cyclops’ cave? The blind the cyclops with a spear they fashioned out of birch, when the cyclops yells for help he says “No Man” is hurting him (no one comes to help as a result), the cyclops moves the boulder aside and Odysseus’s men escape the cave by hiding under the rams….

9. What foolish thing does Odysseus do? Once in his ship, Odysseus calls back to Polyphemus, mocking the great Cyclops—in his pride, Odysseus reveals his true identity, supplying Polyphemus with a name to give his father Poseidon

10. What did a soothsayer once predict would happen to the Cyclops? A soothsayer predicted he would lose his sight at the hands of Odysseus

11. What does the Cyclops ask his father Poseidon to do for him? “a happy voyage”—he asks his father, Posiedon, the Earth-Shaker, to prevent Odysseus from ever reaching home OR if he does return to Ithaca, may he first lose all his companions and then find chaos in his house upon return

BOOK X: THE ISLAND OF THE WINDS; THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN; CIRCE

Odysseus tells of his visit to Aiolia, where Aiolos Hippotades, manager of the winds, helps Odysseus and his crew get home. He puts wind in a bag, which Odysseus carries on board the ship. Unfortunately, his curious crew decides to open the bag, and the released winds drive them away from home. They arrive at the land of the Laestrygonians, who eat most of Odysseus’s crew before his ship escapes. Then they land on the island of Aiaia, the home of Circe. She traps some of the men and turns them into pigs. Odysseus, with the help of Hermes, gets her to release his men and help him reach home. She instructs him to visit Hades, where he will meet Tieresias, who will tell him how to get home.

1. Who is the god of wind? The God Aiolos (Poseidon’s brother)

2. What favor does he do for Odysseus and his men? He bottles all the violent winds and places them in a bag to allow safe passage home (favorable winds, calm journey)

3. What stupid mistake do some of the men make on the ship? They open the bag out of curiosity—they release a violent storm that blows them off course and back out to sea

4. How do even more men die after the bag accident? They are eaten by cannibals—the Laestrygonians (another race of inhuman giants)—ALL the ships, save Odysseus’, are now gone

5. What does Circe do to some of Odysseus’s men?

6. How does Odysseus get her to release his men?

7. What instructions does Circe give Odysseus?

BOOK XI: HOW ODYSSEUS VISITED THE KINGDOM OF THE DEAD

Odysseus follows Circe’s instructions. In Hades, he first sees a dead shipmate, Elpenor, then his mother, Anticleia, then Tieresias. Tieresias tells him what will happen to him next, including a warning about the cattle of Helios and how to reconcile with Poseidon. He then gets to talk with his mother, and she answers many questions for him. At this point, Odysseus tries to conclude his storytelling, but Alcinoos begs him to continue. Odysseus says only that he met the souls of many who passed away, then he left Hades.

1. What does Odysseus do to call the souls of the dead to him?

2. Who is Teiresias and what does Odysseus want from him?

3. What does Teiresias predict for Odysseus?

4. What should Odysseus do to the suitors at his house?

5. What does Teiresias say Odysseus should do after dealing with the suitors?

6. What is the name of Odysseus’s mother and how did she die?

7. Why can’t Odysseus hug his dead mother?

BOOK XII: THE SINGING SIRENS, AND THE TERRORS OF SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

Odysseus tells of their return to Aiaia to bury Elpenor and of Circe’s warning of the dangers to come: the Sirens, Scylla, Charybdis, and Helios’s cattle. The men make it through the perils of the sea, as predicted. On land, when they run out of provisions, they eat Helios’s cattle even though Odysseus made them promise not to. At sea, all except Odysseus are killed as punishment. Odysseus is adrift for nine days before landing on the island of Ogygia, Calypso’s home. Alcinoos and the other listeners are now up-to-date on the travels of Odysseus.

1. Why should Odysseus be wary of the Sirens?

2. What should he and his men do to keep safe from the Sirens?

3. Describe Scylla.

4. What will Charybdis do if Odysseus’s ship gets too close?

5. What does Odysseus keep secret from his men?

6. Describe the circumstances of Odysseus’s shipmates’ deaths. Is it Odysseus’s fault?

BOOK XIII: HOW ODYSSEUS CAME TO ITHACA

Odysseus is done telling his story. King Alcinoos gives Odysseus a ship with a crew and supplies, and the townspeople all give him gifts. The crew delivers Odysseus to Ithaca and returns home. Poseidon, who is mad that anyone would make Odysseus’s travels by sea so easy, turns the ship and crew into stone as they return to their harbor. Odysseus does not believe he is home until Athena convinces him. She disguises him as an old beggar and sends to him to his faithful pigkeeper.

1. Describe Odysseus’s journey home from Scheria.

2. What does Poseidon initially want to do to the Phaeacian ship?

3. What decision does Alcinovs make because of the wrath of Poseidon?

4. Why and for how long does Athena want Odysseus to be in disguise?

5. What does Athena instruct Odysseus to do now that he has returned to Ithaca?

6. Whom does Athena instruct Odysseus to visit first?

BOOK XIV: ODYSSEUS AND THE SWINEHERD

Athena goes to Lacedaimon to bring Telemachos home. Odysseus goes to the swineherd Eumaios’ house. Odysseus is made welcome and is pleased to see how faithful Eumaios has been during his absence.

1. What is the name of the swineherd?

2. What does Odysseus tell the swineherd about himself?

3. Describe Odysseus’s disguise.

BOOK XV: HOW TELEMACHOS SAILED BACK TO ITHACA

Athena finds Telemachos at the mansion of Menelaos and instructs him to return home. Odysseus learns from Eumaios about his (Odysseus’s) parents and how Eumaios was bought by Laertes when he was a child. Telemachos lands safely back in Ithaca and, by Athena’s instructions, goes straight to Eumaios.

BOOK XVI: HOW TELEMACHOS MET HIS FATHER

Athena instructs Odysseus to reveal his identity to Telemachos and to plan their revenge on the suitors. Eumaios tells Penelopeia that Telemachos has returned safely to Ithaca. When the suitors, led by Antinoos, learn that their plan to kill Telemachos has failed, they plot to kill him another way.

1. What does Telemachos call Eumaios? Why?

2. Describe Athena’s changes to Odysseus’s appearance.

3. Who does Telemachos think Odysseus is when Athena removes his disguise?

4. What do Odysseus and Telemachos plan to do?

5. Describe Penelopeia’s confrontation with Antinoos.

BOOK XVII: HOW ODYSSEUS RETURNED TO HIS OWN HOME

Telemachos returns home, accompanied by Theoclymenos. Eumaios brings the disguised Odysseus to his home where the suitors are entertaining themselves as usual. Odysseus is recognized only by Argos, his old hunting dog, who dies after hearing his master’ s voice one last time. Odysseus tests the suitors by begging for food from each one. Penelopeia tells Eumaios to bring the beggar to her; she wants to know if he has any news about Odysseus.

1. How does Odysseus test the suitors?

2. Who recognizes Odysseus right away? How does he recognize him?

3. Who makes Odysseus extremely angry?

4. Why does Odysseus want to test his servants and his wife before revealing his identity?

BOOK XVIII: HOW ODYSSEUS FOUGHT THE STURDY BEGGAR

Odysseus fights with another beggar, Iros, who is used to being the only beggar at the castle. Penelopeia decides to address the suitors, saying she will choose a husband according to who brings her the best gift. Odysseus recognizes this as a trick on the suitors. Odysseus is further antagonized by Melantho, a maid, and Eurymachos.

1. Why does Odysseus get in a fight with Iros? Who wins?

2. What trick does Penelopeia play on the suitors in this book?

3. Which three characters anger Odysseus in this book?

BOOK XIX: HOW THE OLD NURSE KNEW HER MASTER

The women are shut up in their rooms, and Odysseus and Telemachos hide all the weapons in a storeroom. Odysseus, still disguised as a beggar, goes to see Penelopeia. He convinces her that he did meet Odysseus and that he has heard also that Odysseus is on his way home. Penelopeia is grateful and orders Eurycleia to bathe and clothe the beggar. Eurycleia recognizes Odysseus by a scar on his leg, but he swears her to secrecy. Penelopeia, discouraged, decides to go ahead and marry whomever can meet the challenge that she will put forth to the suitors: to string Odysseus’s bow and shoot an arrow through twelve axe-heads in a row.

BOOK XX: HOW GOD SENT OMENS OF THE WRATH TO COME

It is a new day and Telemachos receives the beggar (Odysseus) into his house. The beggar is ridiculed by many, but he remains calm. Philoitios proves himself a faithful and kind servant.

BOOK XXI: THE CONTEST WITH THE GREAT BOW

Penelopeia issues her challenge to the suitors, but none of the men can bend the bow to string it. Odysseus finds a chance to confide in Philoitios and Eumaios and to include them in his plans for revenge. Odysseus easily strings the bow and shoots an arrow through the twelve axe-heads. Eumaios tells the women to lock themselves in the bedrooms, and Telemachos and Odysseus arm themselves against the suitors.

1. Whom does Odysseus trust to help him defeat the suitors?

2. Why don’t the men want Odysseus to try to string the bow?

3. How does Odysseus prove his true identity?

BOOK XXII: THE BATTLE IN THE HALL

Immediately Odysseus reveals himself and kills Antinoos with an arrow. Eurymachos tries to convince Odysseus that Antinoos is to blame for everything and that he shouldn’t kill the other suitors. Odysseus gives them a chance to run away, but they choose to fight, led by Eurymachos. Odysseus, Telemachos, and the two servants kill everyone except Phemios and Medon. Odysseus asks Eurycleia to identify the maids who have been unfaithful and bring them to him. He makes them clean up the blood and dead bodies in the hall and then Telemachos hangs them. Melanthios is cut up and fed to the dogs. The maids and servants come and celebrate the return of Odysseus.

1. What did Odysseus prove about his abilities when he shot the arrow through the twelve axes? Why is that important now?

2. Whom does Odysseus kill first and why?

3. How does Eurymachos plead his case with Odysseus?

4. Whom does Telemachos catch raiding the storeroom of weapons and what do they do with him?

5. What does Odysseus do to the unfaithful maids?

6. What is done to Melanthios?

BOOK XXIII: HOW ODYSSEUS FOUND HIS WIFE AGAIN

Odysseus reveals his identity to Penelopeia, but she is skeptical. She tests Odysseus by having Eurycleia provide Odysseus a place to sleep by moving a bed into the hallway. Odysseus becomes angry because he built this bed out of a tree trunk so that it could not be moved. Penelopeia then knows that he is truly her husband. He tells her that, according to Tieresias, he must carry an oar inland and make sacrifices to Poseidon. He also feels he must regain all the livestock and goods that he lost because of the suitors. He sets out to see his father and tells Penelopeia to stay locked in her room with her maids until he returns.

1. How does Penelopeia test Odysseus?

2. Why does she test him?

3. Describe the one last task that Tieresias told Odysseus to complete. What will be his reward for this task?

4. After Odysseus tells Penelopeia about all his adventures, he sets off again. What does he go to do? What does he tell Penelopeia to do?

BOOK XXIV: HOW ODYSSEUS FOUND HIS OLD FATHER AND HOW THE STORY ENDED

The souls of the dead men pass to Hades, led by Hermes. Odysseus goes to see Laertes, pretending to be someone else at first, but then he reveals his identity. Laertes asks for proof that he is Odysseus. He tells about the scar on his leg and spending time in his father’s orchard. Relatives of the suitors, led by Eupeithes, Antinoos’ father, come to battle Odysseus. Odysseus kills Eupeithes, then Athena stops the battle and makes peace between the two sides.

A D D I T I O N A L A C T I V I T I E SAFTER READING