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**The Odyssey by Homer**

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Literary devices to know in “The Odyssey.”**

***EPITHET:*** a brief descriptive phrase used to characterize a particular person or thing.

*EX: Odysseus is known by various epithets, including “son of Laertes” and “raider of cities.”*

***ALLUSION:*** reference to a famous person, place or event.

***SIMILE:*** a comparison between two unlike things, using the word like or as.

***EPIC SIMILE:*** a simile that is developed at great length, so that it goes on for several lines.

***Book 1: A Goddess Intervenes***

1. This invocation (lines 1-15) introduces us to Odysseus, “that man skilled in all ways of contending.” What traits is Odysseus shown to have?

***Book 5: Calypso, the Sweet Nymph***

1. Identify the epic simile in lines 9-12. What does this comparison tell you about Hermes?
2. Lines 15-31 describe the home of Calypso, who has held Odysseus captive for the past 7 years.
   1. In what kind of dwelling does Calypso live?
   2. What relationship does she appear to have with nature?
   3. What do you know about Calypso from this first description?
3. Reread lines 22-31. Identify some of the sensory details that are described.
   1. How do the sensory details of the island reflect the character traits of Calypso?
4. Reread lines 43-54. Which of Odysseus’ qualities is emphasized here?
5. Reread Odysseus’ answer to Calypso in lines 81-86. Why do you think he is referred to in line 80 as “the strategist Odysseus? Explain.
6. In addition to flattery, what strategies does Calypso use to try to convince Odysseus to stay with her?
7. What do lines 69-79 reveal about Odysseus and Calypso?

***Book 9: New Coasts and Poseidon’s Son***

1. Reread lines 24-26. What does Odysseus value most highly?
2. How do the Lotus Eaters pose a threat to Odysseus and his men?
3. Odysseus devotes only about 25 lines to the Lotus Eaters. Why do you think he didn’t extend his description of this adventure?
4. Do you think Odysseus handled the situation with the Lotus Eaters effectively? Was he too lenient or too harsh? Explain your answer.
5. Why doesn’t Odysseus respect the Cyclopes?
6. Notice the descriptive phrase used to characterize the dawn in line 68. What does this description tell you about the dawn?
7. Lines 80-92 introduce the setting of Odysseus’ next adventure and foreshadow his great conflict with the Cyclops.
   1. What did Odysseus see as they approached land?

* 1. What words does Odysseus use to describe the Cyclops?

1. Identify the metaphor in lines 91-92. What does Odysseus’ metaphor imply about the Cyclops?
2. In lines 96-115, Odysseus has been referred to as “the Strategist.” How does he reveal that trait in this passage?
   1. What other qualities does Odysseus reveal in this passage?
3. Why does Odysseus refuse his men’s “sound” request?
4. Reread lines 163-169. Agamemnon was the Greek king who led the war against the Trojans. Consider what Odysseus says about Agamemnon; what point is he making about himself by claiming this association?
5. What warning does Odysseus giving the Cyclops?
6. What is the Cyclopes’ attitude toward the gods?
7. Reread lines 185-190. Why does Odysseus lie to the Cyclops about his ship?
8. Why doesn’t Odysseus kill the Cyclops?
9. What epithet is repeated in lines 211-212?
10. What does Odysseus plan to do to the Cyclops?
11. What three things have happened that showed luck was on Odysseus’ side?
12. How does Odysseus take advantage of his good luck?
13. What do his reactions reveal about his character?
14. Which do you think will be most important to the outcome of Odysseus’ conflict with the Cyclops: careful planning or good luck? Explain your answer.
15. Why does Odysseus offer the Cyclops the liquor he brought from his ship?
16. Lines 264-281 illustrate how Odysseus’ plan depends on the Cyclops’ carelessness.
    1. How many bowls of wine did the Cyclops drink?
    2. Why didn’t Odysseus tell the Cyclops his name as soon as he asked?
    3. Why did the Cyclops believe that Odysseus’ name was Nohbdy?
17. Say the name Nohbdy outloud and listen to what it sounds like.
    1. What might Odysseus be planning?
    2. What does this tell you about Odysseus’ character?
18. What do the other Cyclopes assume to be the source of Polyphemus’ pain?
19. What do you learn about Polyphemus from the allusion made in lines 312-322?
20. Identify the irony in regard to the Cyclops and what you have just learned about him.
21. What leadership qualities does Odysseus, the hero, display in lines 292-299?
22. What is Odysseus’ great mental struggle in lines 330-336?
    1. What clever plan has he managed to come up with on the spot?
23. What character traits has Odysseus demonstrated in his dealings with Polyphemus?
24. Notice that Odysseus uses the warlike epithet “raider of the cities” in his second boast to the Cyclops.
    1. What trait does he display in revealing so much about himself?
25. How have the actual events turned out differently from what Polyphemus expected?
26. Reread lines 437-440. Odysseus was a great hero.
    1. Are his faults of heroic proportions? Or are they failings that you would expect most people to share?
27. Reread lines 437-452. Paraphrase Polyphemus’ curse.
    1. How has Odysseus brought this curse upon himself?
28. Lines 453-473 show the resolution of Odysseus’ great conflict with Polyphemus.
    1. What did the Cyclops do after cursing Odysseus?
    2. What happened to Odysseus’ ship?
    3. What did Odysseus and his crew do after they landed?

***Book 10: Circe, the Grace of the Witch***

1. Who is Aeolus?
2. What are Laestrygonians?
3. In lines 6-11, what is the simile involving Circe’s wolves and mountain lions?
   1. What is the point of comparison?
   2. How does it affect your impression of Circe’s hall?
4. If you were among this group, whom would you follow; Polites or Eurylochus? Explain your answer.
5. What happens to the men after they drink Circe’s magic potion?
6. Who is Tiresias?

***Book 11: The Land of the Dead***

1. In lines 17-20, Odysseus makes a sacrifice to “sovereign Death,” or Hades, and “pale Persephone” his bride, who is forced to live with him for 6 months of every year. Her mother, Demeter, goddess of the harvest, grieves during that time, causing fall and winter.
   1. What does this background information tell you about Hades?
   2. How does this information affect your impression of the underworld?
2. What words or images appeal to your senses in lines 10-16?
   1. What mood do these words and images create?
3. Reread lines 44-67. What does the reader learn about Odysseus from his encounters with Elpenor and Aniclea?
4. How well do you think Odysseus handled his meetings with Elpenor and Anticlea?
5. Reread lines 77-117. Do you think that Odysseus’ fate will unfold exactly as Tiresias foretells it? Explain your answer.

***Book 12: The Sirens; Scylla and Charybdis***

1. Odysseus learns from Circe about the terrible danger that the Sirens present to any sailor who hears their song. What have you learned about Odysseus that suggests he will listen to the Sirens’ song?
2. Lines 4-21 explain the danger of the Sirens and how Odysseus can avoid that danger and listen to their song.
   1. What happens to sailors who hear the Sirens?
   2. How can Odysseus protect his men from this danger?
   3. How can Odysseus listen to their song and survive?
3. In lines 68-85, what is Circe’s advice to Odysseus?
4. Do you think he will follow her advice? Explain your answer.
5. Reread lines 104-107 and reconsider your thoughts about Tiresias’ prophecy. Do you think Odysseus has the power to steer his fate? Explain your answer.
6. Consider Odysseus’ behavior in lines108-179. Do you think he is a good leader? Explain your opinion.
7. Refer to lines 141-164 to answer the following questions:
   1. On the basis of their actions, do you think the crew trusts Odysseus?
   2. Does Odysseus lead effectively by withholding the truth from his men? Explain your answer.
8. As Odysseus nears Scylla, he forgets Circe’s warning and takes up spears and ties on his cuirass (lines 166-167). Why doesn’t Odysseus attempt to stop the monster when they finally pass Scylla?
9. In lines 193-199 we are presented with a simile that illustrates the powerfulness of the men caught in Scylla’s grasp.
   1. To what does Homer compare the men caught in Scylla’s grasp?
   2. How does this image express their hopelessness?
   3. Fishing is an ordinary activity. How does this add to the horror of the simile?

***Book 16: Father and Son***

1. Odysseus has been gone from his home for 20 years. What changes does Odysseus find on his homecoming?
2. In lines 19-23, what theme is being developed in this epic simile?
3. Reread lines 26-30. How do these lines indicate an epic setting?
4. Lines 26-50 introduce Telemachus and develop the character of Eumaeus.
   1. What words does the narrator use to describe Telemachus?
   2. How does Odysseus treat Eumaeus?
   3. How does Eumaeus treat Odysseus? What does this tell us about Eumaeus?
   4. Why might Penelope and Odysseus have chosen swineherd to help raise their son?
5. Review lines 36-60. What is ironic about this scene?
   1. What effect does the irony have?
   2. How does this meal compare with other important meals in “The Odyssey”?
6. What supernatural event is described in lines 61-67?
7. How does Odysseus show himself to be “noble and enduring” (line 76) in his first conversation with Telemachus?
   1. How is your understanding of Odysseus’ character deepened by this interaction?
8. Reread lines 61-90. What central conflict is beginning to find resolution in this scene?
   1. What elements indicate the importance of this moment?
9. Reread lines 99-107. What striking character trait is emphasized in both Odysseus and Telemachus? Why is this unusual?

***Book 17: The Beggar at the Manor***

1. At the start of book 17, where are Telemachus, Odysseus, and Eumaeus?
2. How does Odysseus feel about seeing his old dog? Why didn’t he let Eumaeus know?
3. What do we learn about the suitors from the way they treat Odysseus?
4. Reread lines 28-41. Eumaeus still does not know that he is speaking to Odysseus in disguise (DRAMATIC IRONY). What event does this speech cause you to anticipate?

***Book 21: The Test of the Bow***

1. Lines 5-25 introduce Penelope and illustrate her own conflict.
   1. What words are used to describe Penelope?
   2. How can you tell that Penelope is physically strong?
   3. Why is she carrying the bow?
   4. How can you tell that she still loves Odysseus?
2. Reread lines 8-10. What archetypal image do you recognize in these lines? Explain how this image helps to build suspense.
3. What is Penelope doing in lines 15-18?
4. Lines 28-40; what has Penelope decided to do?
5. What is Penelope’s attitude toward the suitors?
6. Why does she decide to hold the contest?
7. Do you think Penelope’s contest is a good way to resolve her ordeal?
8. Describe the contest that is discussed in lines 35-37.
9. What is the prize for the man who wins the contest?
10. In line 40, Odysseus chooses to test the allegiance of Eumaeus and Philoetius. Why does he choose this moment?
11. How might Odysseus assess his chances at the end of the encounter with Eumaeus and Philoetius?
12. Identify the trait that Odysseus values in Eumaeus and Philoetius?
13. Identify the plot stage in lines 84-93. What do you think is about to happen?
14. What is the primary conflict in lines 94-104?
15. Why do you think the servant locked the doors of the room?
16. Identify the epic simile in lines 107-111.
17. What qualities of Odysseus does this epic simile emphasize?
18. Refer to lines 94-97 and lines 115-32 to answer the following question:
    1. What details does the narrator use to suggest that Odysseus is relishing this part of the homecoming?
19. Book 21 ends with the image of father and son standing side by side facing more than 100 enemies. How can this be considered an epic moment?

***Book 22: Death in the Great Hall***

1. Identify the literary device (type and specific example) in line 3.
2. Refer back to the literary device in line 3. What does this detail add to the description of Odysseus as a warrior?
3. Why does Odysseus call upon the god Apollo in line 6?
4. Does Odysseus seem to have the support of Apollo? Explain why or why not.
5. Why does Odysseus kill Antinous first?
6. Why does he do it in such a sudden, terrible way?
7. Lines 27-33 illustrate how Odysseus’ plan counts on the element of surprise.
   1. Why did the suitors think Odysseus’ killing Antinous was “a wild shot”?
   2. Why does the narrator call them fools?
8. Paraphrase Odysseus’ speech in lines 34-40.
9. What is Eurymachus’ motivation in lines 45-59? What is his strategy for achieving his goal?
10. Why do you think Odysseus rejects Eurymachus’ explanation and offer of restitution (lines 61-37)?
11. What heroic qualities does Eurymachus possess?
12. Do you think Eurymachus is a good leader? Explain your opinion.
13. How has the battle with the suitors taken on epic proportions?
14. How does Telemachus conduct himself in this conflict with the suitors?
15. How is the role of Athena crucial to Odysseus’ homecoming?

***Book 23: The Trunk of the Olive Tree***

1. Lines 1-16 set up the scene for Odysseus’ meeting with Penelope.
   1. What did Athena do to get Odysseus ready to meet his wife?
   2. Why did Athena go to such lengths to make Odysseus handsome?
   3. Why does Odysseus need the help of a goddess now?
   4. Do you think Odysseus’ beauty will melt Penelope’s heart? Give your reasons.
2. Reread lines 22-26. What do you think is the motivation for Penelope’s skepticism about this man who claims to be the husband she hasn’t seen in 20 years? Consider her experiences in his absence.
3. How are Penelope’s actions similar to those of Athena at Odysseus’ homecoming? How are they different?
4. How has Penelope tricked Odysseus into proving his identity?
5. Reread lines 58-80. What traits of Penelope’s does this speech reveal?
6. Lines 75-91 conclude the epic with Odysseus’ and Penelope’s reunion.
   1. What does Penelope mean by her “stiff heart”?
   2. How is Penelope different from Helen of Argos?
   3. What worries do Odysseus and Penelope still have to face?
7. What is Penelope compared to in the final lines?