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# **Reflections:**

A Student Response Journal for...

# The Odyssey by Homer

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#### To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

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#### To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

# **Class Record Sheet**

25.	24.	23.	22.	21.	20.	19.	18.	17.	16.	15.	14.	13.	12.	11.	10.	9.	8.	7.	6.	5.	4.	3.	2.	1.
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# Response Sheet

Name	Section	Date

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- 1. Athene, daughter of Zeus, shows compassion to Odysseus and pleads with her father to send Hermes to set him free. In the meantime, she goes to speak with Telemachus, son of Odysseus, to convince him that Odysseus may still be alive and that he should get rid of the men who are wooing his mother. How do you think Telemachus feels in the midst of all of this, knowing his father may still be alive? How would you feel in a similar situation?
- 2. Although the goddess, Athene, disguised herself as the man Mentes as she departed from Telemachus, "he knew a god was with him." Have you ever felt the presence of a supernatural being such as and angel or spirit? Were you comforted or frightened by their presence? When did this occur? Answer these questions as an entry in your diary.

П

- 3. When Telemachus brings to the attention of his mother's suitors that he is unhappy with the way they have ravaged his home and his family's livestock, one of them responds, "I tell you the Achean suitors are not at all to blame; your mother is to blame, whose craft exceeds all women's." Has anyone ever blamed you for something you didn't do? How did it make you feel? Have you ever blamed someone for something you did? How did that make you feel?
- 4. As Telemachus rushes to leave on his journey to seek knowledge of his father, he orders Eurycleia, who guards his father's chamber and its contents from the suitors, to gather supplies for himself and the ship's crew. Make a list of at least ten things you would pack for such a trip.

#### $\Pi\Pi$

- 5. The purpose of the journey of Telemachus and his crew is to find out whether his father Odysseus, who has been away for twenty years, is alive or dead. Imagine you are Telemachus, and write your long-absent father a letter explaining what has been going on in your life, how your mother is doing, and how you wish he were home.
- 6. As Telemachus and his companions approach Nestor and those present with him, they are welcomed, seated, and fed before anyone even asks who they are or for what purpose they are there. The same thing happens in Book I when Athene, disguised as Mentor, enters the home of Odysseus. Why do you suppose such hospitable customs are not common in our society today? What effect do you think the practicing of these customs would have on the world?
- 7. The last paragraph of Book III begins with the rising of the sun and ends with the setting of the sun: "Then as the early rosy-fingered dawn appeared...Then the sun sank and all the ways grew dark." These two phrases are used often in this poem to characterize sunrise and sunset. Write a descriptive paragraph depicting the most beautiful sunrise or sunset you have ever seen. Try to write it without the words "I" or "me."

#### IV

- 8. Menelaus recalls an incident in which he questions Proteus, the old man of the sea, about the fate of those who fought with him in Troy. At this time, that Telemachus is given hope that his father may still be alive. Has there ever been a time in your life when you thought someone or something you loved was gone forever, but then you learned there was a chance the person or thing would return or be returned? Write a diary entry describing how your hopelessness was then transformed into eager anticipation.
- 9. The obnoxious suitors of helpless Penelope, upon hearing of the departure of Telemachus, are bewildered: "the others were amazed. They did not think Telemachus was gone to Pylos, to the land of Neleus; they thought he was still somewhere at the farm, among the flocks, or with the swineherd." They immediately plan to kill him before he can return, fearing he will bring back news that Odysseus is still alive, thus ending their plundering of his property. Compose a Letter to the Editor of your local newspaper, *The Grecian Times*, from the point of view of one of Penelope's suitors and explain your actions.

#### V

- 10. Hermes now tells Calypso she must free Odysseus so he may return home: "This is the man whom Zeus now bids your send away, and quickly too, for it is not ordained that he shall perish far from friends." Was there ever a time when you had to stay somewhere you didn't want to stay? How did you feel when you were finally able to leave?
- 11. Odysseus must build the raft he uses to sail home. Have you ever built anything? Describe in detail what it looks like and how you went about building it. Do you still have it? Why or why not?
- 12. Nausicaa, when she first sees Odysseus, finds him unattractive; however, after he bathes in the river, and the goddess Athene adds to his stature and looks, her opinion changes, "A while ago, he really seemed to me ill-looking, but now he is like the gods who hold the open sky." Describe a negative opinion that you had about someone or something that changed to a positive one? What made you change your opinion? Why did it change?

#### VII

- 13. As Odysseus enters the city of Phaeacia, he approaches Athene, who has disguised herself as a young girl, to ask for directions: "My child, could you not guide me to the house of one Alcinous, who is ruler of this people? For I am a toil-worn stranger come from far, out of a distant land." Describe a time you were lost and had to ask someone for directions. Were you embarrassed? Were you able to find your way after having gotten directions?
- 14. Odysseus stands outside of the house of King Alcinous a while before entering, taking in all of the beauty of the dwelling and its surroundings. Describe in detail the most beautiful home you have ever seen, or the home you imagine yourself someday having.

#### **VIII**

15. After the feast at the home of Alcinous, Demodocus, the sacred bard, sings a song about Odysseus and many of the trials he has had. Odysseus, hiding his face, begins to cry. No one knows that he, in fact, is Odysseus. How do you suppose he feels, having to hear this account of his past? Why do you suppose he doesn't tell them who he is?

16. Before sending Odysseus home, Alcinous has another feast after which he has some games planned "so that the stranger, going home, may tell his friends how greatly we surpass all other men in boxing, wrestling, leaping, speed of foot." Why do you suppose it is so important to Alcinous that others think his people are superior sportsmen? What are some of your favorite sports, and why do you like them? Make a list of at least four sports and across from each, in a sentence, write why you like it.

Follow this form:

<u>Sport</u> <u>Reason</u>

Soccer Running is good exercise.

17. "For a friend with an understanding heart is worth no less than a brother." This is the last line of Book VII. Do you now, or have you ever had a friend who was like a brother or sister? Write that person a letter telling them how special they are to you.

#### IX

- 18. Odysseus, when asked by Polyphemus his name, replies, "My name is Noman." Explain to a classmate who doesn't understand why he chooses this name.
- 19. As Odysseus and his crew escape from Polyphemus by ship, Odysseus begins yelling insults at the blinded Cyclops. In his anger, the Cyclops hurls a hilltop, then a large stone at them, coaxing their ship back to the shore. How do suppose the crew members feel about Odysseus at this time? Have you ever been in a situation where you nearly escaped trouble, but someone made a mistake and you were caught? Describe what happened.
- 20. Polyphemus prays to his father, Poseidon, to make the journey home for Odysseus a long and treacherous one. Write a short poem to Poseidon either pleading for Odysseus' safety or for his destruction.

#### X

- 21. As Odysseus' ship nears its destination and he falls asleep, his crewmen begin to discuss their jealousy concerning gifts he receives wherever he goes. They decide to open a sack given to him by Aeolus and release winds that send the ships off their course. Describe a situation where someone's jealousy or impatience caused a perfectly good plan to go off course. It can be from real life, a movie, or a book. What was the result?
- 22. Odysseus sends Eurylochus and twenty-two of his crew members to the house of Circe. He later returns to tell Odysseus what has happened to the others, but "Strive as he might, he could not speak a word, so stricken was he to the soul with great distress; his eyes were filled with tears, his heart felt anguish." Write a journal entry describing a time when you were so upset you couldn't speak.
- 23. Several times in Book X, the author uses the phrase, "but no good came to them from their lamenting." What good, if any, do you believe comes from mourning or grieving? Explain why you believe sorrow or prayer is or is not beneficial.

#### ΧI

24. After Odysseus pours an offering to the dead, he is able to see them and speak to them. If you could speak with one person who has passed away, who would you choose? What would you say? Begin your conversation:

You: I've wanted...

- 25. Odysseus makes an end of his storytelling; however, Alcinous encourages him to continue: "I could be well content till sacred dawn, if you were willing in the hall to tell us of your woes." Do you know anyone who tells such fascinating stories that you could listen to them all night? Which story is your favorite? Why?
- 26. The spirit of the dead Agementon tells Odysseus, "Never be you, then, gentle to your wife, nor speak out all you really mean; but tell a part and let a part be hid." Do you think this is wise advice? Why or why not?
- 27. Odysseus asks Circe, "might I not possibly escape from fell Charybdis, and then beat off the other when she assails my crew?" Circe answers, "Foolhardy man! Still bent on war and struggle!...Courage is nothing; flight is best." Explain to a classmate, who doesn't agree, why it is sometimes better to walk away from a confrontation rather than to fight.

28. "The Sirens' song" is a phrase that is still used in modern times. List some other phrases that you can think of that have meanings different than their words. Across from the phrase, explain what it means.

<u>Phrase</u> sirens' song

Meaning a lure that leads to danger

#### XII

- 29. As everyone feasted and made merry the eve of the departure for Ithaca, "Odysseus would often turn his face toward the still shining sun, eager to see its setting, because he was impatient to be gone." When in your life have you been eager to see the sun set, because you knew what the following day would bring?
- 30. Odysseus says to Queen Arete as he is leaving, "Fare you well, queen, for all the years until old age and death, which visit all, shall come." What do you want to accomplish before you turn 20? 30? 40? 60?
- 31. Odysseus tells Athene, who is disguised as a shepherd, "false misleading tales." Do you know anyone who makes up stories to impress other people? Write a letter to that person explaining why it would be better off telling the truth.

#### XIV

- 32. As Odysseus walks toward the swineherd, he is greeted by four dogs ready to attack him. The swineherd then says to him, "Old man, my dogs had nearly torn you to pieces here all of a sudden, and so you would have brought reproach on me." What, in your opinion, does he mean by this?
- 33. Odysseus has been made aware of the suitors who daily make themselves a nuisance to his wife, son, and servants while wasting his assets. Write a letter, as if you were Odysseus, explaining what you want them to do and what the penalty will be for disobeying.
- 34. "Glad was Odysseus that Eumaeus took such care of his estate while he was gone." Give your own definition of loyalty, and then explain why it is such an important quality.

#### XV

- 35. Menelaeus won't let Telemachus return home until he has given him gifts. What is the best gift you've ever received? Why was the gift so special? Who gave it to you?
- 36. The references to the eagle and the hawk show the Greeks' superstitions concerning birds. What are some superstitions you know of? Do you believe any of these superstitions?

#### XVI

- 37. Book XVI begins with Odysseus and Eumaeus preparing breakfast. Describe in detail your favorite breakfast or your perfect meal, if you could have it.
- 38. Antinous speaks these words concerning Telemachus upon his arrival home: "Strange, how the gods help this man out of danger." Do you know people who never seem to get into any trouble no matter what they do? Write a newspaper article about one of their most dangerous escapades.
- 39. At the end of the day of the reunion of Odysseus and Telemachus, "they turned toward bed and took the gift of sleep." How do you feel about sleeping? Do you wake up tired? What's the best part of sleeping?

#### XVII

- 40. Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, and Eumaeus, while entering the town, are accosted by Melanthius, who "broke into abuse, and speaking to them, used rude and indecent words, which stirred Odysseus' blood." Write an editorial for your school newspaper explaining how society treats those who are less fortunate than the rest of society, like the homeless or the elderly.
- 41. As Odysseus enters his palace still disguised as a beggar. Describe the best Halloween costume you ever saw, or wore. Why was it so good?

#### XVIII

- 42. This book, titled "The Fight of Odysseus and Irus," portrays how some people enjoy watching other people engage in physical violence. Why do you suppose this is? Name some sports that show this is still common today.
- 43. The fact that Telemachus is now a bearded man seems to signify that he has become a man. Make a list of things one must do to become a man?

#### XIX

- 44. Eurycleia notices the scar on Odysseus' leg when she washes his feet and instantly knows who he is. Explain to a friend, who doesn't get it, why he is so adamant that she not tell anyone his identity.
- 45. Penelope tells Odysseus of a dream she had and asks him to interpret it. Describe a strange dream you've had, and what you think it could've meant?

#### XX

- 46. Odysseus is unable to sleep as he thinks about how he will get revenge on the suitors. Have you ever been so anxious about something that you were unable to sleep? What was the situation, and what was the outcome?
- 47. As he lies awake, Odysseus tells himself, "Bear up, my heart! A thing more hideous than this you once endured with patience, that day the Cyclops, unrestrained in fury, devoured your sturdy comrades. Then you bore up till crafty planning brought from the cave you who had thought to die." Why is it sometimes wiser to be patient and plan your steps, rather than to simply act without thinking? Explain your answer.
- 48. Odysseus says of Penelope's suitors, "They have no touch of shame." Have you ever known someone who, no matter how inconsiderate he or she was, seemed to have no shame? Write them a letter explaining why they should try to be more considerate.

#### XXI

- 49. The bow to be used to try the suitors is a cherished gift given to Odysseus by Iphitus. Describe the most important present you ever received. Make sure to explain why the gift is important.
- 50. Antinous speaks of Eurytion and how "the beginning of woe he himself caused by wine." How do you feel about the effects that alcohol can have on peoples' behavior?

#### XXII

51. Construct a dialogue between you and a friend based on this situation: You have been away for a long time. Your friend is curious about what has happened in the time you were gone. The dialogue might begin as follows:

You: I'm glad to be back.

Friend: You just have to tell me...

#### XXIII

- 52. Penelope does not believe the news of Odysseus' return. Explain to someone who doesn't understand why she refuses to believe it, and what Odysseus says to her that proves his identity. List some ways you would prove to Penelope that you had returned.
- 53. When Penelope finally knows Odysseus is who he says he is, she embraces him and asks him not to be angry that she did not believe him at first. Make a list of reasons she was unsure who her husband actually was.
- 54. After they have held each other and wept, Odysseus says to Penelope, "But come, my wife, let us to bed, that there we may refresh ourselves with pleasant sleep." What do you think it is about sleeping in one's own bed that is so comforting? Do you have trouble sleeping in a bed that you are not used to? Why?

#### XXIV

- 55. As Hermes leads the spirits of the suitors to their final resting place, Atreus speaks of, "many Achean heroes." Name or identify some of today's heroes. What qualities do they possess that makes them heroes?
- 56. One of the spirits points out how faithful and upright Penelope is and has been, unlike the daughter of Tyndareus, whose deeds will, "bring an ill repute on all the sex of women, even on well-doers too" Write about a moment in history, in your life, or in something you read or saw, where the deeds of one person caused negative consequences for an entire group of people.
- 57. Laertes is glad when going to battle with Odysseus and Telemachus. Three generations are represented in this battle. Think about a time when many generations of your family were together. What did you do together that made it a special time?

#### WRAP-UP

- 58. Write a letter to a friend telling why you did or did not like reading The Odyssey.
- 59. If you had a chance to speak with Homer, what questions you would ask him?
- 60. If you were to tell a friend what you think the message of this novel is, what would it be?
- 61. If you were to choose one character from this novel to be your husband or wife, who would it be? In your answer, give a least five reasons why you have made this choice. Be sure that your answer is written in complete sentences.

#### Test

- 1. After spending the day weaving, Penelope unravels the shroud each night because
  - A. she finds pleasure and solace in weaving, but she must keep reweaving the same piece because she can get no more wool.
  - B. the gods have ordained that the moment she finishes the shroud or stops weaving, Odysseus will die.
  - C. she has promised to marry when the shroud is completed.
  - D. Both A and B
  - E. A, B, and C
- 2. The story of Agamemnon and his murder after coming home from the Trojan War is repeated because
  - A. it is part of oral tradition to repeat stories so the listener can be reminded of important details.
  - B. it is part of oral tradition to repeat stories so that the storyteller can take a break from the invention of new material.
  - C. it illustrates one of the fates awaiting returning warriors.
  - D. it shows the fate that might await Odysseus at the hands of the pretenders when he returns home.
  - E. All of the above
- 3. Telemachus leaves Ithaca to seek his father, Odysseus, who has
  - A. not yet returned home from a hunting trip.
  - B. been reported by the Acheans as having been lost at sea.
  - C. abandoned Telemachus and his mother to live with the goddess Calypso.
  - D. been gone for twenty years since leaving to war with the Trojans.
- 4. "And the ship!-As four fine stallions in a team leap like one, when touched up with the whip, and gallop along the road with bounding paces, so her stern bounded aloft on the purple wave which followed big over the sounding sea."

The quotation above is an example of

- A. a parable.
- B. an epic simile.
- C. dramatic irony.
- D. an epithet.
- E. a digression

- 5. Nausicaa and her waiting-women find Odysseus while they are at the river
  - A. fishing.
  - B. having a picnic.
  - C. washing clothes.
  - D. fetching water.
- 6. Calypso lets Odysseus go because
  - A. she realizes he is not in love with her, and she is not powerful enough to fight Zeus.
  - B. Hermes, sent by the gods, directs her to release Odysseus.
  - C. the gods tell her to release him, and she obeys because she thinks Poseidon will kill him at sea.
  - D. she knows he is unhappy and wants to go home.
  - E. he has suffered enough.
- 7. A bard is a
  - A. large cargo ship.
  - B. person who sings stories.
  - C. bird of omen.
  - D. a cup used for pouring out offerings to the gods.
- 8. Who does Athene instruct Odysseus to seek first upon his arrival home?
  - A. the swineherd
  - B. the goatherd
  - C. the neatherd
  - D. the shepherd
- 9. Odysseus undergoes many trials in his quest to
  - A. regain his kingdom.
  - B. return to his home and family.
  - C. find the Holy Grail.
  - D. learn the meaning of life.
  - E. find the truth.

- 10. In addition to his loyalty, Odysseus is best known for his
  - A. intelligence.
  - B. charity.
  - C. cruelty.
  - D. defiance of the gods.
  - E. strength.
- 11. Eurycleia discovers Odysseus' identity when she
  - A. sees him asleep without his disguise.
  - B. hears him talking to Telemachus.
  - C. is visited in a dream by the goddess Athene.
  - D. feels the scar on his leg.
- 12. Odysseus tells his men about the dangers from the Sirens, but he does not tell them about Scylla because
  - A. he wants them to understand the importance of keeping the wax in their ears.
  - B. he wants them to keep him tied up.
  - C. he thinks his men will abandon their oars if they know some of them will be snatched by Scylla.
  - D. All the above.
- 13. Which of the following is an epithet used in this story?
  - A. Odysseus, that patient man
  - B. Odysseus, that arrogant hero
  - C. Odysseus, the man who is never at a loss
  - D. Odysseus, never at fault
  - E. All the above
- 14. The death and mutilation of Melanthios and the hanging of the twelve maidens
  - A. are used to show the cruelty of these primitive people.
  - B. are used to make the point that vengeance is never as satisfying as one expects it to be.
  - C. demonstrate the importance that these people attached to the idea of loyalty.
  - D. Both A and B.

- 15. "Imagine a deer in the jungle, which has laid her suckling fawns just born to sleep in the den of a strong lion, while she goes over the hillocks and into the grassy dells to seek her food; then the lion comes back to his lair, and deals death on the lot of them, dam and fawns, and tears them to pieces!"
  - What is the point of the epic simile above, which is told by Menelaos?
  - A. It foreshadows the death of the suitors and return of Odysseus.
  - B. It points out the tragedy that befalls Troy because of the treachery of Helen.
  - C. It gently chastises Penelope for her neglect of the house and children.
  - D. It is a warning for Telemachus to take care of business before he dies.
- 16. Which of the following events demonstrates that Telemachus has matured from a boy to a man?
  - A. He tells his mother to go back upstairs to her rooms and leave the minstrel alone.
  - B. He tells the pretenders that he would rather be killed than allow violence in his house.
  - C. He goes on a voyage to get information about his father.
  - D. He kills the women by hanging rather than running them through with a sword as his father suggests.
  - E. All the above.
- 17. Which of the following deaths is an example of irony?
  - A. Antinoös, who is the biggest talker and leader, is killed with an arrow through his throat.
  - B. Ctesippos, who throws a cow foot at Odysseus, is killed by the cow herder.
  - C. Agamemnon is killed by the son that he tries to kill.
  - D. Both A and B.
  - E. All the above.

- 18. Which of these items does Penelope choose to try the strength of the suitors?
  - A. javelin
  - B. bow
  - C. discus
  - D. sword
- 19. After Odysseus kills all the suitors
  - A. peace and harmony immediately return to the kingdom.
  - B. the gods tell Odysseus that he must do penance before peace and harmony can return to the land.
  - C. his wife does not believe he has returned.
  - D. Athena slays the remaining troublemakers.
  - E. he falls mysterious asleep.
- 20. Circe would only let Odysseus and his men free if they would agree to
  - A. pour her out an offering.
  - B. go to the halls of Hades and consult a spirit.
  - C. attend a feast and participate in games.
  - D. never return.

# Test Student Answer Sheet

Name:	
1	11
	12
2	
3	13
4	14
5	15
6	16
7	17
8	18
9	19
10	20

# An Annotated Bibliography on Response Journals

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# Test Answer Key

1.<u>C</u>

11.<u>D</u>

3.<u>D</u>

13.<u>E</u>\_

4.\_\_B\_\_

14.\_\_<u>C</u>\_\_

15.<u>A</u>\_

6.<u>B</u>\_

16.<u>E</u>

17.<u>D</u>

8.<u>A</u>

18.<u>B</u>

9.<u>B</u>

10.<u>A</u>

20.<u>B</u>

#### Notes

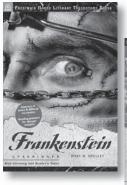
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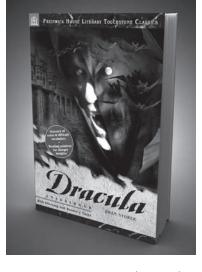
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