

READING COMPREHENSION & ANALYSIS QUESTIONS - *The Odyssey*

ALL RESPONSES MUST BE WRITTEN IN COMPLETE SENTENCES. DO NOT START SENTENCES WITH PRONOUNS (HE, SHE, THEY, ETC.).

Book 1

1. The invocation (lines 1-15) introduce us to Odysseus as “that man skilled in all ways of contending.” What traits does this epithet imply he has?
2. What are two epithets used to describe Lord Helios?
3. To whom is the poet speaking in this first book? Why?

Book 5

4. Identify the epic simile in lines 9-12. What does this comparison tell you about Hermes?
5. What is Zeus' command to Calypso?
6. Which god or goddess brings Zeus' command to Calypso?
7. What is the purpose of lines 17-31? How is it achieved?
8. What is Odysseus' struggle in lines 47-54?
9. Reread lines 43-54. Which of Odysseus' qualities is emphasized here?
10. 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
11. Reread lines 87-92. Explain what two things are being compared in this epic simile. Why does it work here?

Book 9

12. Which encounter does Odysseus and his men have before the Lotus Eaters?
13. Why is it necessary for Odysseus to take some of his men by force away from the land of the Lotus-Eaters?
14. Reread lines 24-26. What does Odysseus value most highly? How is this an epic hero quality?
15. Why doesn't Odysseus respect the Cyclopes? (lines 58-67)
16. What does Odysseus' metaphor in lines 90-91 imply about the cyclops?
17. How is Odysseus able to wound Polyphemus?
18. How is the craftiness and cunning of Odysseus revealed in this escape?
19. Why does Odysseus reveal his name to Polyphemus after he has escaped?
20. Why does Odysseus refuse his men's “sound” request in lines 130-132?
21. 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?
22. What epithet is repeated in lines 211-212? What purpose does it serve?
23. Odysseus tells the cyclops his name is “Nohbdy.” What trait does this reveal? Explain.
24. Find the epic similes in lines 292-297 and 299-303. What two things are being compared in each case? What are the effects of the figurative language?
25. What epic hero traits does Odysseus demonstrate in his dealings with Polyphemus?
26. Reread lines 437-452. Paraphrase these lines. Then tell how Odysseus has brought this curse on himself.

Book 10

27. What natural phenomenon is controlled by Aeolus?
28. How does Aeolus show his goodwill when Odysseus is about to leave?
29. Odysseus and his men come within sight of Ithaca. Why do they not land?
30. Odysseus asks for further help from Aeolus. What is his reply? Why?
31. Describe the Laestrygonians.
32. In lines 6-11, explain the simile involving Circe's wolves and mountain lions. To what are they being compared? Why?
33. What happens to Odysseus' men after they drink Circe's potion?
34. Who helps Odysseus outwit Circe? Why?
35. Why must Odysseus visit the house of Hades?

Book 11

36. How does Odysseus gain access to the underworld?
37. What does Odysseus learn from/about Elpenor? What promise does Odysseus make him?
38. Why is Odysseus' mother in the underworld?
39. What does Teiresias tell Odysseus about his journey home? Make sure you explain both the positive and negative possibilities?
40. What lesson does Odysseus learn in his dealings with Poseidon?
41. What are three epithets used to describe Odysseus in lines 68-73?

Book 12

42. How do the Sirens destroy men, and how do Odysseus and his men avoid destruction?
43. What are Scylla and Charybdis? Explain both of their dangers.
44. Draw a picture of the scene and dangers described in lines 30-70
45. What happens to Odysseus' companions?
46. What happens to Odysseus?
47. Do the choices Odysseus makes in this book make him more of a hero or a villain?
48. Look at lines 193-199. Explain the epic simile. What two things are being compared? What is the effect on the reader?
49. Copy lines 76-82. Paraphrase carefully by rewriting these lines in YOUR own words. You may want to set this up as a side-by-side format.

Book 16

50. How does Athena assist Odysseus when he returns to Ithaca? Why?
51. What instructions does Odysseus give to Telemachus?
52. Explain lines 19-23. What two things are being compared and how is this relevant here?
53. Reread lines 26-30. How do these lines indicate an epic setting?
54. What does Athena do in lines 61-67. Why?
55. Reread lines 61-90. What central conflict is beginning to find resolution in this scene?
56. What is being compared in the epic simile in lines 101-105. Why is this an effective comparison?

Book 17

57. Who is Argos, and what happens to him?
58. What universal theme is revealed in the episode about Odysseus's dog?

Book 21

59. What contest does Penelope devise to test the suitors?
60. To what men does Odysseus reveal his identity?
61. What is Odysseus' plan?
62. Reread lines 8-10. What archetypal image do you recognize from these lines? How does that image help build suspense?
63. Reread lines 60-69. What archetypal trait is shown here in these two servants? Provide one other example of this trait from books or movies you have read or seen.
64. Book 21 ends with father and son facing more than 100 enemies. How can this be considered an epic moment?

Book 22

65. Which men does Odysseus spare from the slaughter?
66. Whom does Odysseus kill first? Why does he do it in such a terrible and sudden way?
67. Why do you think Odysseus rejects Eurymachus' explanation and offer restitution (61-67)?
68. Reread lines 34-40. PARAPHRASE them.
69. How has the battle with the suitors taken on epic proportions?
70. How does Telemachus conduct himself in the conflict with the suitors (109-126). What, if any, qualities of an epic hero does he exhibit?

Book 23

80. 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 for 20 years? Consider her experiences in his absence.
81. How has Penelope tricked Odysseus into proving his identity? What do her actions suggest about archetypal character?
82. How does Odysseus react to this test and why?
83. What is Penelope compared to in lines 81-90?

Part II Text Analysis

Answer questions 5-11 on page 1267.