

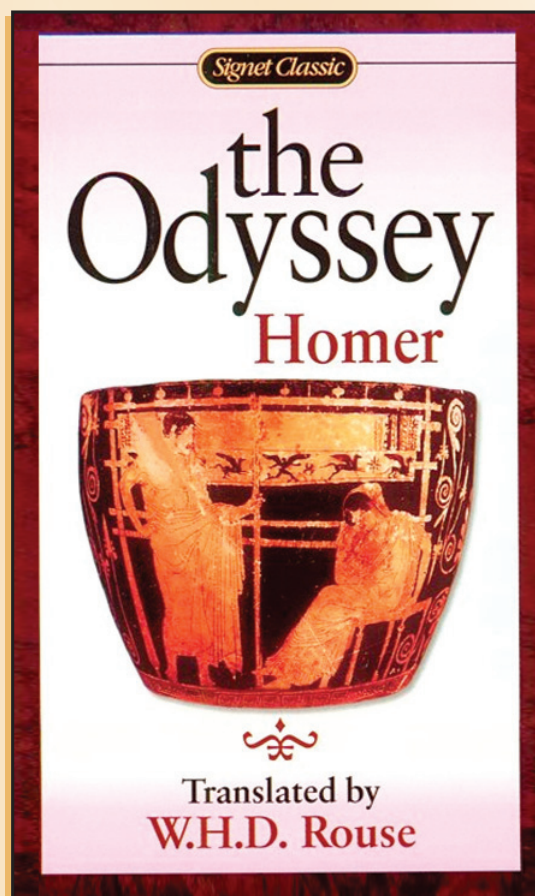
*Signet Classic*

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSIC EDITION OF

HOMER'S

# THE ODYSSEY

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S E R I E S   E D I T O R S :

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Odyssey* is an excellent work of literature for ninth or tenth grade students to read. By this time most students have already been introduced to mythology, so that the world of Odysseus is not completely foreign to them. Learners of all ability levels enjoy the adventurous and imaginative stories of the Greek gods and mortals, and *The Odyssey* is a good introduction to similar stories, such as *Beowulf*, that they may encounter later in their high school studies.

Lower-ability learners can follow this story. The language at times may seem formidable, but with additional visuals and frequent plot summaries, they should be able to understand the basic journey of Odysseus and the obstacles that he encounters along the way. Students can enjoy studying the interesting customs and beliefs of the ancient Greeks, evaluating characters and their decisions throughout the story as they delight in the action and adventure.

One of the themes of *The Odyssey* is the development of Telemachos from a dependent boy into a mature, responsible adult. Students can identify with the fact that he begins to accept more responsibility as he grows up. He is trying to figure out who he is and what he should do with himself, especially in the absence of his father. Students who live in a one-parent home can identify with his dilemmas. They may also recognize some of Penelopeia's and Odysseus's situations and feelings, especially those of helplessness, mistrust, and yearning. The value of family and home in the epic can be stressed in the classroom.

When students read this epic, they will be developing skills that may not be addressed in shorter works of literature. They will learn to follow the activities of several characters at a time; they will become comfortable with settings and names that may be foreign to them; they will relate to characters with whom they initially thought they had nothing in common; and they will become more mature readers, putting aside the immediate gratification of simply finishing the epic for the joy of the adventure.

The teacher may wish to prepare less mature students for some material that appears in the story. In particular the term *bitch* appears several times, and there are a few sexual references. Each teacher needs to decide how to address these matters with students. The following is a list of page numbers teachers may want to be sure to preview before reading them with the class: 64, 94, 118, 119, 132, 196, 210, 220, 226, 259.

This guide includes activities to precede, accompany, and follow reading. The discussion and essay topics can be expanded as necessary to suit the educational needs of students. These activities are meant to help students understand the story and its characters and themes, as well as explore issues dealt with in the book that are important in students' lives today.

## BEFORE READING

Before reading Homer's *The Odyssey*, students should be introduced to the concepts of epic poetry and epic heroes, as well as to the author and his preceding work, *The Iliad*.

An epic poem is a long narrative poem. Epic dramas frequently are broadcast on television, usually shown for several hours each night for a week (e.g.: *North and South and Roots*). An epic is not something that can be told in one sitting. These tales are complex, revolving around several main characters and spanning many years. Homer's epics tell of the adventures of heroes. Some translations retain the format of a poem, while some are in prose story form.

An epic hero is a man who seems able to conquer most problems he encounters, although he does not possess any "super" powers. He is faithful to his family, his country, and his god. He is brave; although he often feels fear, he overcomes his fears because he knows he has responsibilities, which are mainly to defeat evil and allow goodness to prevail. The epic hero is intelligent. Because he has no special powers, he must rely on his brain to get him out of difficult situations. Sometimes, however, a higher force or being will help guide him on his quest. This greater force does not do things for him, rather the force helps him do things for himself.

In Homer's *The Iliad*, Odysseus participated in the Trojan War. The most famous story from this epic is that of the Trojan horse. Odysseus and his men built a giant wooden horse and left it outside the gates of Troy as a peace offering. The Trojans accepted it and rolled it into the city. However, the Greeks had hidden inside the horse, and that night, they sneaked out of the horse and opened the city gates to the entire Greek army. Because of this trick, the Greeks won the Trojan War.

Students also may be interested to know that when soldiers came to recruit Odysseus to go to war, he tried to escape enlistment by pretending to be mad. However, they proved his sanity by throwing his infant son, Telemachos, in the way of his plow. Odysseus swerved to miss the child, thereby proving his mental stability.

Most historians believe that Homer was a blind minstrel who lived about 3000 years ago. He was considered by the Greeks as their greatest and finest poet, traveling around the land singing stories to people for their entertainment and enlightenment. Students will recognize Demodocos as Homer's "cameo appearance" in this story.

### LIST OF CHARACTERS

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This list does not include all characters who appear in *The Odyssey*, but it does include the ones who are most essential to the action of the story. The "Pronouncing Index," beginning on page 300 of the Mentor edition, will assist the reader in sounding out many of the names throughout the story.

**Alcinoos:** King of the Phaiacians

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

**Antinoos:** "Ringleader" of Penelopeia's suitors

**Arete:** King Alcinoos' wife, known for her kindness and beauty

**Argos:** Odysseus's old hunting dog

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

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

**Circe:** "Terrible goddess with lovely hair, who spoke in the language of men" (115); daughter of Helios

**Demodocos:** Blind minstrel

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

**Eupeithes:** Father of Antinoos

**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." (21)

**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" (12)

**Melanthios:** One of Penelopeia's cruelest suitors; a goatherd

**Nausicaa:** Daughter of King Alcinoos; "tall and divinely beautiful" (73)

**Penelopeia:** Odysseus's faithful wife

**Philoitios:** Faithful cattle drover

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

**Polyphemus:** "Most powerful of all the Cyclopians" (12); son of Poseidon

**Telemachos:** Odysseus's son; "a fine-looking boy" (13); approximately twenty years old

**Theoclymenos:** Prophet who returns to Ithaca with Telemachos

**Teiresias:** Blind Theban prophet

### VOCABULARY

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Numerous words appearing in this epic may be unfamiliar to students. The following list is comprised of words that are either

used repeatedly throughout the book or are archaic. These words can be used as the beginning of a vocabulary journal kept by students who will add unfamiliar words as they are encountered. Students should try to interpret the meaning of each word through context clues. For further understanding, students may want to group words according to similarities in meaning.

Periodic discussions over the meaning of the words in context of the story can lead to development in vocabulary skills and an increased understanding of the story. This procedure can be followed throughout the entire epic.

**mentor:** special teacher or leader

**nectar and ambrosia:** food and drink of the gods (wine and fruit)

**nymph:** beautiful immortal maidens who lived in mountains, forests, and water

**cuckold:** a man whose wife is unfaithful

**cudgel:** a short, heavy club

**hind:** a farm assistant; female of the red deer

**lacrimation:** excessive crying

**minx:** an ill-behaved, provocative woman

**cajole:** to persuade with flattery

**gaffer:** old man; employer or overseer

## JOURNAL TOPICS

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Before the actual reading of the story, it is helpful to make students aware of some of the elements involved in this work. The following activities are designed to get students involved in their reading by encouraging them to think about some of these elements. These activities can be done by small groups or as individual assignments. It will be helpful to have the resultant products shared with the whole class.

- Interview someone who has been on an interesting trip, possibly one that entailed some type of danger or excitement. Write a poem accurately depicting the journey, using as much detail and description as possible.
- Have you ever wanted to know what people said and thought about you when you weren't around? If you could disguise yourself in some way and be around the people you know, how would you carry it out? Describe your ideal disguise and a scenario that you imagine would take place if you could be "a fly on the wall."
- Do you believe in guardian angels? Explain and give examples.
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? Describe them and how they affect your life.
- Interview someone whose long-lost relative or friend eventually returned. Describe the experience. Don't forget to include the person's feelings throughout the entire experience.

## WHILE READING

The following questions for each book of the story can be used in a variety of ways. Assigned to each student or to small groups, the questions can be used as class discussion starters, formal study guides, a review for a test, writing assignments, etc. They are especially useful for helping average and low-ability level students follow the plot.

## PLOT SUMMARIES AND STUDY QUESTIONS

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### 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 Mentos, Telemachos finds the courage to confront the suitors.

1. Where is Odysseus?
  2. What or whom is Athena disguised as?
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3. Why do Telemachos and his mother need Odysseus?
4. Why does Odysseus's wife have suitors?
5. What does Athena advise Telemachos to do?

### **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.

1. Describe the trick that Penelopeia plays on her suitors.
2. What specifically does Athena do to help Telemachos in this book?

### **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.

1. What is Nestor's opinion of Odysseus?
2. Describe Nestor's reaction when he realizes that Telemachos's companion is Athena.

### **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.

1. What clues cue Menelaos and Helen that Telemachos is Odysseus's son?
2. What is Menelaos' opinion of Odysseus?
3. Describe Antinoos' plan to destroy Telemachos.

### **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?
  2. What can Hermes do with his wand?
  3. Who is holding Odysseus captive?
  4. What is Calypso's reaction to having to let Odysseus go?
  5. What is the main problem Odysseus faces while traveling by sea?
  6. What happens to Odysseus at the end of Book 5?
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### **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.

1. What "subliminal" message does Athena give to Nausicaa while she lies sleeping?
2. Who is the only person who doesn't run away from the terrifying Odysseus? Why doesn't she run away?
3. Is it pure luck that Nausicaa helps Odysseus? Explain.
4. What does the fact that Odysseus won't bathe in front of the girls tell us about the kind of person he is?
5. Does Nausicaa believe her parents will help Odysseus?
6. Why won't Nausicaa let Odysseus ride in her cart?
7. What instructions does she give Odysseus?

### **BOOK VII: WHAT HAPPENED TO ODYSSEUS IN THE PALACE OF ALCIHOOS**

Odysseus arrives at the palace of Alcihoos 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 Alcihoos 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 Alcihoos 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, Alcihoos finally demands to know who Odysseus is.

1. Describe the activities that King Alcihoos arranges to entertain Odysseus.
2. Who is Demodocos?
3. How is King Alcihoos helping Odysseus to get home?
4. What is Odysseus's reaction whenever Demodocos sings about the Trojan War?

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

Odysseus tells Alcihoos 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?
  2. How heavy is the door of the Cyclops' cave?
  3. What is the first villainous thing the Cyclops does?
  4. Why doesn't Odysseus kill the Cyclops when he has the chance?
  5. What does Odysseus give the Cyclops as a gift?
  6. What gift does the Cyclops give in return?
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7. What does Odysseus tell the Cyclops that his name is?
8. How do Odysseus and his men sneak out of the Cyclops' cave?
9. What foolish thing does Odysseus do?
10. What did a soothsayer once predict would happen to the Cyclops?
11. What does the Cyclops ask his father Poseidon to do for him?

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

Odysseus tells of his visit to Aiolia, where Aiolos Hipponates, 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 Tiresias, who will tell him how to get home.

1. Who is the god of wind?
2. What favor does he do for Odysseus and his men?
3. What stupid mistake do some of the men make on the ship?
4. How do even more men die after the bag accident?
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 Tiresias. Tiresias 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 Alcinoo 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. Alcinoo 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 Alcinoo 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 Alcinoo 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.

1. How has Eumaios proven his faithfulness in this and previous books?
2. Who do you think will be the first person to know Odysseus for who he really is?

### **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?
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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. What does Theoclymenos prophesy to Penelopeia?
2. How does Odysseus test the suitors?
3. Who recognizes Odysseus right away? How does he recognize him?
4. Describe Melanthios.
5. Who makes Odysseus extremely angry?
6. 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. (See page 235, footnote 2 for explanation.)

1. What does Odysseus the beggar tell Penelopeia about Odysseus?
2. How does Eurycleia recognize Odysseus?
3. How did Odysseus get the scar on his leg?
4. Describe Penelopeia's challenge for the suitors.

### **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.

1. Name two people who are cruel to Odysseus the beggar.
  2. Who proves himself to be a kind and faithful servant?
  3. What do you think Odysseus is going to do to the suitors?
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**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 Philoitiros 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?
6. Which two servants were spared?
7. How does Odysseus identify the unfaithful maids?
8. What does Odysseus do to the unfaithful maids?
9. 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 Tiresias, 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 Tiresias 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 Eupheithes, Antinoos' father, come to battle Odysseus. Odysseus kills Eupheithes, then Athena stops the battle and makes peace between the two sides.

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1. How does Odysseus prove that he is really Laertes' son?
2. What is Laertes afraid of?
3. Who comes to battle Odysseus? Whom are they led by?
4. Whom does Odysseus kill?
5. Who stops the battle?

### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. After reading an entire book from *The Odyssey*, students should answer these questions individually. Then in groups of three, they can compare their answers, discuss differences, and reach a consensus. If an agreement cannot be reached, a group representative may consult other groups to aid them.
2. Students who seem to have a better understanding of the events of the epic may be paired with those who seem to be experiencing trouble. These pairs of students should be given time periodically to discuss and quiz each other about characters and events in the epic.
3. Students should be encouraged to write their own plot summaries after each book. In groups or as a whole class, these summaries can be shared to help students improve or augment their summaries. These can be kept in a notebook to be used as a study guide for quizzes and tests or as a reference for projects and essays.
4. Artistic students may draw a favorite scene from the epic. These can be kept in a teacher's collection that can be added to each year. Students can play a game, trying to guess what each one depicts.
5. Students may choose a character to follow throughout the epic. In the voice of the character, the student can keep a journal, recording the character's thoughts and feelings throughout the story. The student also may choose to write letters from their chosen character to other characters.
6. Each student can draw a picture of a character. (Artistic ability does not matter.) This drawing should be a representation of the character, based on the book's description.

### AFTER READING

#### QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

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1. Suppose you were Telemachos and your father had never returned from a long war, and your mother was pestered by men who wanted to marry her and who were sponging off her. How would you handle your problems?
2. Is there anything that you really want that your parents don't want you to have or to do? Why won't they let you? Why do you think you should be allowed to have or do this? Write a letter to your parents explaining to them that you are enough of an adult to handle this situation. Be persuasive and convincing!
3. If someone claimed to be your long-lost relative, how would you test them to be sure of their identity? Explain your plan and your reasons for it.

#### ESSAY TOPICS

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Students may discuss the following topics using information found solely in the book, or they may research to find information that supports evidence found in the book. Some of these topics are easily adaptable for complete projects with artwork, models, etc.

- the ritual of sacrificing animals to the gods
  - the treatment of strangers visiting others' homes
  - the difference in speech between the characters of different classes (example: Eurycleia vs. Penelopeia)
  - the existence and use of fate in the story (gods' wills, prophecies, etc.)
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- death rituals
- the role of women
- the attributes of an epic hero
- Biblical allusions
- omens and signs
- the daily life of the ancient Greeks
- a character analysis of Penelopeia
- a character analysis of Telemachos, including his journey from boyhood to manhood
- a description of the physical appearance of Ithaca or any of the other lands that Odysseus traveled through
- Suppose Shakespeare got the idea for his characters from Homer. Compare the following sets of characters:
  - Eurycleia and Nurse (Romeo and Juliet)
  - Anticleia and Lady Montague (Romeo and Juliet)
  - Antinoos and Cassius (Julius Caesar)

## EXTENDED LEARNING

### DRAMATIC ACTIVITIES

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1. Choose a scene from the epic and re-enact it for the class live or on video. Pay special attention to costume and language.
2. Convert a scene to a radio drama. Present a live or taped version to the class. Include an announcer and sound effects.
3. Convert a scene into a puppet show. Make simple puppets (from sticks, paper bags, or socks), and present the scene to the class.
4. Prepare a call-in radio show with a host accepting editorial comments from the listening audience. The callers should be members of the ancient Greek society of Odysseus.
5. Conduct a trial of one of the major characters to determine his guilt or innocence in the epic. Stage the trial in class with each student being assigned a role of judge, juror, attorney, stenographer, bailiff, observer, or some specific character. Some characters should serve as witnesses.
6. Dress and make up as a major character in the book. Prepare and present an original soliloquy that the character might have given.

### ARTS/CRAFTS ACTIVITIES

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1. Construct a board game that follows Odysseus's path from the beginning to the end of the epic. The object of the game is to get Odysseus home. Be sure to include all of Odysseus's obstacles. Directions for the game must be included.
  2. Using a computer with graphic software, draw a map which illustrates a particular setting in *The Odyssey* or the entire journey of Odysseus. Label important places on the map.
  3. Give a thematic pictorial presentation or a "roll-movie" (Put a series of pictures in sequence along a strip of paper. Attach ends to rollers and place in a cardboard box.) with musical accompaniment for the class. A written explanation of the presentation can be handed in to the teacher.
  4. Make a new book jacket. It should include an attractive picture or cover design, a summary of *The Odyssey*, and information about the author and his times.
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5. Draw a scale model of an item in the epic, such as Odysseus's bow, ship, or hand-crafted bed. An alternative may be to construct a replica of an item.
6. Dress a mannequin, doll, or yourself like one of the characters in *The Odyssey*.
7. Make a weaving or tapestry that portrays some scene or design in the epic.
8. Design and make your own t-shirt with an illustration about the epic. Create your design using color-fast marking pens or fabric paint.
9. Convert the events of the epic into a ballad or song. Write the lyrics and music or adapt words to someone else's melody.

### WRITING ACTIVITIES

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1. The class can become a newsroom in which each student is a reporter for the Ithaca Daily News. Each student should write one article for the paper. Students can date and chronologically arrange articles to be run off for a class collection. The class may also choose to post the articles around the room as the events occur.
2. Write a portion of the epic from one character's limited point of view. Include the character's thoughts, opinions, and motives.
3. Write an sequel to *The Odyssey*, presenting imagined subsequent events in the characters' lives, especially Odysseus, Penelopeia, and Telemachos.

### MEDIA ACTIVITY

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Show *Star Wars* to your class. Create a unit of study on the hero based on the information given on page 5 of this guide. Analyze Luke Skywalker as a hero and compare him and his journey to Odysseus.

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- Houston, Mary G. *Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume & Decoration*. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1947. Filled with illustrations, including hairstyles and accessories.
- Lessing, Erich. *The Voyages of Ulysses*. West Germany: Herder, 1965. A photographic interpretation of *The Odyssey* with a pictorial and literary index.
- Michalopoulos, Andre. *Homer*. New York: Twayne Publisher, Inc., 1966. Provides good background information for the teacher of *The Odyssey*, including a look at the women of Homer's epics.
- Obregon, Mauricio. *Ulysses Airborne*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. An investigative look at the settings of *The Odyssey* through aerial photos.

**SUGGESTED TITLES**

Homer's *The Iliad*, translated by W. H. D. Rouse

Vergil's *The Aeneid*, translated by Patric Dickinson

*Gilgamesh*, translated by Herbert Mason

Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, translated by Douglass Parker

Euripides' *The Bacchae*, translated by Michael Cacoyannis

Petronius' *The Satyricon*, translated by William Arrowsmith

Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, translated by Carroll Moulten

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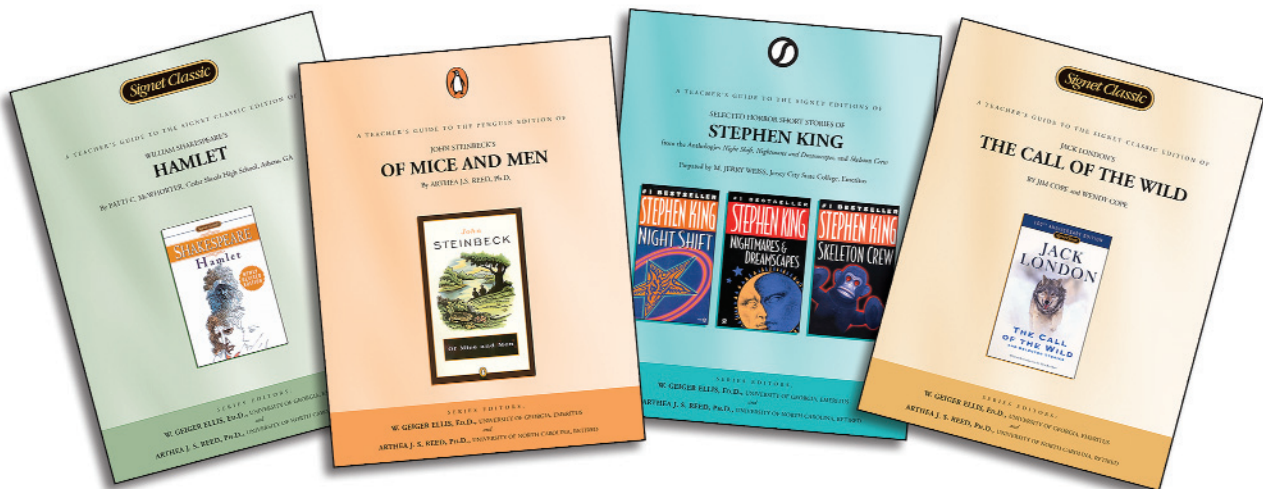
W. GEIGER ELLIS, Professor Emeritus, University of Georgia, received his A.B. and M.Ed. degrees from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) and his Ed.D. from the University of Virginia. His teaching focused on adolescent literature, having introduced the first courses on the subject at both the University of Virginia and the University of Georgia. He developed and edited *The ALAN Review*.

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