THE ODYSSEY – STUDY GUIDE

Book I

1. Where is Odysseus?

2. What or who is Athena disguised as?

3. Why do Telemachus and his mother need Odysseus?

4. Why does Odysseus’s wife have suitors?

5. What does Athena advise Telemachus to do?

Book II

1. Describe the trick that Penelope plays on her suitors.

2. What specifically does Athena help Telemachus do in this book?

Book III

1. What is Nestor’s opinion of Odysseus?

2. Describe Nestor’s reaction when he realizes that Telemachus’s companion is Athena.

Book IV

1. What clues cue Menelaus and Helen that Telemachus is Odysseus’s son?

2. What is Menelaus’s opinion of Odysseus?

3. Describe Antinous’s plan to destroy Telemachus.

Book V

1. Who is Hermes, and what is his mission?

2. What can Hermes do with his wand?

3. Who is holding Odysseus captive? What does she offer him?

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?

Book VI

1. What “subliminal” message does Athena give to Nausicaa while she lies sleeping?

2. Who is the only person who does not run away from Odysseus? Why doesn’t she?

3. Is it pure luck that Nausicaa helps Odysseus? Explain.

4. Why won’t Nausicaa let Odysseus ride in her cart?

5. What instructions does she give to Odysseus about approaching her parents?

Book VII

1. What skills are the Phaeacians best known for?

2. Describe how Odysseus treated as a guest.

Book VIII

1. Describe the activities that King Alcinous arranges to entertain Odysseus.

2. What contrast is made between Odysseus and the Phaeacian athletes?

3. Who is Demodocus and what effect does he have on Odysseus?

4. How is King Alcinous helping Odysseus to get home?

Book IX

1. What is the effect of the Lotus plant?

2. Why does Odysseus wait in the cave despite his men’s urging otherwise?

3. What is the first villainous thing the Cyclops does?

4. What does Odysseus give the Cyclops as a gift?

5. What gift does Polyphemus give him in return?

6. What does Odysseus tell the Cyclops his name is? Why is this clever?

7. Why doesn’t Odysseus kill Polyphemus when he has the chance?

8. How do Odysseus an his men sneak out of the Cyclops’s cave?

9. What foolish thing does Odysseus do as he escapes in his ship?

10. What did a soothsayer once predict would happen to Polyphemus?

11. What does the Cyclops ask his father Poseidon to do for him?

Book X

1. Who is Aeolus and what does he do for Odyyseus and his men?

2. What mistake do the men on Odysseus’s ship make?

3. What happens in the land of the Laestrygonians?

4. What does Circe do to Odysseus’s men?

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

6. What instructions does Circe give Odysseus when he leaves her island?

Book XI

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 embrace his dead mother?

Book XII

1. Who are the Sirens and why should Odysseus be wary of them?

2. What does Odysseus do to protect himself and his men from the Sirens?

3. Describe Scylla. What does she do?

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

5. What promise does Odysseus ask of his men? What secret does he keep from them?

6. How do Odysseus’s shipmates die? Is it Odysseus’s fault?

Book XIII

1. How does Odysseus journey home from Scheria?

2. How does Poseidon punish the Phaeacians?

3. What decision does Alcinous make because of Posedon’s wrath?

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

5. Whom does Athena want Odysseus to visit first? Why?

Book XIV

1. Who is Eumaeus? What sort of a man is he? Explain.

2. What does Odysseus tell the swineherd about himself?

Book XV

1. What is Eumaeus’s history?

2. How does Telemachus avoid the suitors’ ambush?

Book XVI

1. What does Telemachus call Eumaeus? Why?

2. How does Athena change Odysseus’s appearance for Telemachus?

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

4. What do Odysseus and Telemachus plan to do?

5. Describe Penelope’s confrontation with Antinous.

Book XVII

1. What does Theoclymenus prophesy to Penelope?

2. How does Odysseus test the suitors?

3. Who recognizes Odysseus first? What happens?

4. Who is Melanthius?

5. What makes Odysseus extremely angry?

6. Why does Odysseus want to test his servants and his wife before revealing his

identity?

Book XVIII

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

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

3. Which three characters anger Odysseus in this book?

Book XIX

1. What does Odysseus the beggar tell Penelope about Odysseus?

2. How does Eurycleia recognize Odysseus?

3. Describe Penelope’s challenge for the suitors.

Book XX

1. Name two people in this book who are cruel to Odysseus the beggar.

2. Who is Philoetius, and how does he prove himself a kind and faithful servant?

Book XXI

1. How do Eumaeus and Philoetius help Odysseus and Telemachus in their plan against

the suitors?

2. Why don’t the suitors want Odysseus to attempt to string the bow?

3. What happens when Telemachus attempts Penelope’s challenge?

4. How does Odysseus prove his true identity?

Book XXII

1. Whom does Odysseus kill first and why?

2. How does Eurymachus plead his case with Odysseus?

3. Whom does Telemachus catch raiding the storeroom of weapons, and what do they do

to him?

4. Which two servants are spared and why?

5. How does Odysseus identify the unfaithful maids?

6. What does Odysseus do to the unfaithful maids?

7. What is done to Melanthius?

Book XXIII

1. Why does Penelope test Odysseus?

2. How does she test him?

3. What is the last task that Teiresias told Odysseus to complete? What will be his

reward for this task?

4. After Odysseus tells Penelope about all his adventures, he sets out again. What does

he go to do? What does he tell Penelope to do until his return?

Book XXIV

1. How does Odysseus prove that he is really Laertes’ son?

2. Who comes to battle Odysseus? What is the outcome?