The Odyssey
Homer

Reading Packet

Name: ___________________      Period: _____

English 9R
Guided Reading Questions

Directions: As you read the text, use the following questions to guide your note taking. Remember to always cite specific evidence from the text. For this text, citations include the book # and the page #. Model Citation: (2.112-113).

Book I: Athena Inspires the Prince: Due Date: ______________________________
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 Penelope’s hand in marriage. With the help of Athena disguised as Mentes, Telemachus finds the courage to confront the suitors.

Concept/Vocabulary:

Telemachy (n) – Is the first four books of the Odyssey. The focus is on Telemachus, Odysseus’s son.

Achaean(s) (n) – Refers to the inhabitants or characteristics of the people of Achaea in Greece. However, the meaning of Achaea changed during the course of ancient history, and thus, Achaean/Achaean may have several different meanings. ***Achaeans (Homer), a name used by Homer in the Iliad and the Odyssey for Mycenaean-era Greeks in general.

Xenia (n) – The Greek concept of hospitality, or generosity and courtesy shown to those who are far from home. It is often translated as "guest-host friendship" (or "ritualized friendship") because the rituals of hospitality created and expressed a reciprocal relationship between guest and host.

Kleos (n) – Means “fame on the lips of men.” It is a Greek word often translated to "renown," or "glory." It is related to the word "to hear" and carries the implied meaning of "what others hear about you." A Greek hero earns kleos through accomplishing great deeds, often through his own death. Kleos is invariably transferred from father to son; the son is responsible for carrying on and building upon the "glory" of the father.

Juxtaposition (n) – An act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast.

Epithet (n) – A descriptive word or phrase accompanying or occurring in place of the name of a person or thing, which has become a fixed formula.

1. Why do the gods call an assembly?

2. Who is Orestes and what did he do? Note how many times the story of Orestes is told in this book. Why?

3. Who is Odysseus’ only enemy? Why?
4. Who is Mentes? How does Telemachus receive/greet Mentes?

5. What is the significance of setting the first scene in Ithaca at dinner time?

6. Who are the suitors? How are they characterized?

7. Why does Athena send Telemachus on a journey to discover whether his father is dead or alive when she already knows the answer?

8. What do we learn about Odysseus in Book I?

Emerging Thematic Ideas/Themes:
CLASS NOTES:

According to the Greek epic, what are the qualities of a well-run society?

Book II: Telemachus Sets Sail: Due Date: ______________________________

Telemachus holds an assembly in which he announces his intentions to locate his father and rid his house of the suitors. He is met with ridicule and doubt, especially from Antinous who confronts Telemachus twice. Athena helps Telemachus prepare for his journey, and he sets sail in secret that night.

Concept/Vocabulary:

Juxtaposition (n) – An act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast.

1. In Book II, Telemachus calls an assembly. What is the purpose of an assembly? When was the last time an assembly was held in Ithaca? Why?
2. How does Telemachus’s assembly compare with Zeus’s assembly in Book I? Use the following chart for points of comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book I -- Assembly of the Gods</th>
<th>Book II – Assembly in Ithaca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reason:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior of Members:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Behavior of Members:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outcome:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Why do you think Homer creates this parallel between Books I and II?

4. Describe Telemachus (physically and emotionally) throughout the course of the assembly. Do you think he is fulfilling his role as the son of Odysseus?

5. Describe the trick that Penelope plays on the suitors. What does this tell us about her character?

6. What specifically does Athena do to help Telemachus in this book?
Following Athena’s advice, Telemachus visits King Nestor of Pylos to get information about his father. Athena accompanies him disguised as an old family friend, Mentor. Nestor tells Telemachus stories about Odysseus. Telemachus continues his search on horseback with Nestor’s son Pisistratus.

1. What event is taking place at the beginning of Book III? Why is this significant?

**Concept/Vocabulary:**

_Xenia (n)_ – The Greek concept of hospitality, or generosity and courtesy shown to those who are far from home. It is often translated as "guest-host friendship" (or "ritualized friendship") because the rituals of hospitality created and expressed a reciprocal relationship between guest and host.

_Kleos (n)_ – Means “fame on the lips of men.” It is a Greek word often translated to "renown," or "glory." It is related to the word "to hear" and carries the implied meaning of "what others hear about you." A Greek hero earns _kleos_ through accomplishing great deeds, often through his own death. _Kleos_ is invariably transferred from father to son; the son is responsible for carrying on and building upon the "glory" of the father.

_Juxtaposition (n)_ – An act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast.
2. Note the differences between Odysseus’ Kingdom and Nestor’s Kingdom. Use the following chart for points of comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ithaca – Odysseus’s Kingdom (Books I &amp; II)</th>
<th>Pylos – Nestor’s Kingdom (Book III)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to the Gods:</td>
<td>Relationship to the Gods:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenia:</td>
<td>Xenia:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/Social Structure:</td>
<td>Leadership/Social Structure:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Why do you think Homer creates such a sharp comparison between the two kingdoms?

4. Why does Homer have Nestor tell the story of Orestes?

5. Telemachus travels to Pylos to inquire if Nestor has any information with regard to Odysseus. Nestor knows nothing. Why does Homer send Telemachus to someone who knows nothing?
Book IV: The King and Queen of Sparta: Due Date: ______________________________

Telemachus and Pisistratus arrive at and are welcomed into the home of Menelaus and Helen. Menelaus tells Telemachus of his travels with Odysseus and that Odysseus is trapped on an island by Calypso. Meanwhile, Antinous has learned that Telemachus has embarked on his journey and plots with the other suitors to kill him upon his return to Ithaca. Penelope learns of Telemachus' leaving and is upset.

Concept/Vocabulary:

Xenia (n) – The Greek concept of hospitality, or generosity and courtesy shown to those who are far from home. It is often translated as "guest-host friendship" (or "ritualized friendship") because the rituals of hospitality created and expressed a reciprocal relationship between guest and host.

Kleos (n) – Means “fame on the lips of men.” It is a Greek word often translated to "renown," or "glory." It is related to the word "to hear" and carries the implied meaning of "what others hear about you." A Greek hero earns kleos through accomplishing great deeds, often through his own death. Kleos is invariably transferred from father to son; the son is responsible for carrying on and building upon the "glory" of the father.

Juxtaposition (n) – An act or instance of placing close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast.

Foil (n) – In literature, a foil is a character that shows qualities that are in contrast with the qualities of another character with the objective to highlight the traits of the other character. The term foil, though generally being applied for a contrasting character, may also be used for any comparison that is drawn to portray a difference between two things.

Epic Simile (n) – Also called Homeric simile is a detailed comparison in the form of a simile (explicit comparison, often using "like" or "as.") that is many lines in length.

Emerging Thematic Ideas/Themes:

1. Although Athena is no longer travelling with Telemachus, he has gained a new travel companion. Explain the significance.

2. What event is being celebrated in Sparta when Telemachus arrives? What is the significance of this event?
3. In this book, we meet Menelaus. How is he characterized?

4. In this book, we meet Helen. Who is she and how is she characterized? How does she serve as a foil to Penelope?

5. How does the Spartan society compare or contrast with the other societies in the text?

6. How has Telemachus changed throughout the course of his journey?

7. Homer devotes the final section of Book IV to the developing situation in Ithaca. Why do you think he does this?

 Emerging Thematic Ideas/Themes:
CLASS NOTES:

Book IV contains an epic simile. Determine the purpose of the simile.

| Book IV Lines 374-379 | Simile: “Weak as the doe that beds down her fawns / in a mighty lion’s den – her newborn sucklings - / then trails off to the mountain spurs and grassy bends / to graze her fill, but back the lion goes to his own lair / and the master deals both fawns a ghastly bloody death, / just what Odysseus will deal that mob-ghastly death.”

Items Being Compared: The lion killing the fawns and Odysseus killing the suitors. Both dealt a “ghastly death.”

Purpose of the Comparison:

Book V: Odysseus – Nymph and Shipwreck: Due Date: ____________

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.

Concept/Vocabulary:

(Stasra) Calypso (/ˈkælɪpsoʊ/; Greek: Καλυψώ, Kalypsó) was a nymph in Greek mythology, who lived on the island of Ogygia, where she detained Odysseus for several years. She is generally said to be the daughter of Atlas the Titan.

A nymph is a mythological spirit of nature imagined as a beautiful maiden inhabiting rivers, woods, or other locations. Mortal (n) - Susceptible to death by aging, sickness, injury, or wound; not immortal.

Immortal (n) - Not susceptible to death; living forever; never dying.

Irony (n) - A state of affairs or an event that seems deliberately contrary to what one expects and is often amusing as a result.

Epic Simile (n) – Also called Homeric simile is a detailed comparison in the form of a simile (explicit comparison, often using “like” or “as.”) that is many lines in length.
1. Book V contains several epic similes, as you come upon the following similes in your reading, identify the items being compared and determine the purpose of the simile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book V</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Simile:</th>
<th>Items Being Compared:</th>
<th>Purpose of the Comparison:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book V</td>
<td>436-439</td>
<td>“Joy… warm as the joy that children feel / when they see their father’s life dawn again, / one who’s lain on a sickbed racked with torment, / wasting away, slowly, under some angry power’s onslaught - / then what joy when the gods deliver him from his pains! / So warm, Odysseus’ joy when he saw that shore, those trees, as he swam on, anxious to plant his feet on solid ground again.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book V</td>
<td>476-477</td>
<td>“Like pebbles stuck in the suckers of some octopus / dragged from its lair – so strips of skin torn / from his clawing hands stuck to the rock face.”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book V</td>
<td>540-545</td>
<td>“As a man will bury his glowing brand in black ashes, / off on a lonely farmstead, no neighbors near, / to keep a spark alive – no need to kindle fire / from somewhere else – so great Odysseus buried himself in leaves and Athena showered sleep upon his eyes.”</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. At the beginning of the book, we witness an assembly of the gods. Explain the task Hermes is sent to perform.

3. Lines 65-81 focus on descriptive imagery of Calypso’s island, Ogygia. How is the physical aspect of the island described?

4. Book V focuses on life outside of the civilized world. As you read the book, cite evidence that suggests that Calypso’s island exists outside of civilization.

5. In your own words, describe the introduction of the epic’s hero. Identify the irony.

6. In lines 192-199, the epic’s hero speaks for the first time. Conduct a close reading of these 8 lines. What do we learn about Odysseus based on his first speech?

   “Passage home? Never. Surely you’re plotting
   something else, goddess, urging me—in a raft—
   to cross the ocean’s mighty gulfs. So vast, so full
   of danger not even deep-sea ships can make it through,
   swift as they are and buoyed up by the winds of Zeus himself.
   I won’t set foot on a raft until you show good faith,
   until you consent to swear, goddess, a binding oath
   you’ll never plot some new intrigue to harm me!”
7. Odysseus’s building of the raft is the first action we see him take in the poem. What do we learn about Odysseus in this scene?

Emerging Thematic Ideas/Themes:

CLASS NOTES:

1. Odysseus rejects Calypso’s offer to make him immortal. Read the following piece of literary criticism. What idea does this action underscore (underline, highlight, emphasize)?

**Literary Criticism:** “In giving his hero the option of becoming immortal, the poet has depicted as emphatically as possible Odysseus’ renewed commitment to his given lot. He is a mortal, a human being, whose fate it is to die. Immortality is not for him, nor, Homeric poetry suggests, for any man. The trials and tribulations of the gods are trivial precisely because they live forever. By a harsh paradox, it is death, the fact that one will not always be alive, which makes life important. In the course of his seven-year stay with Calypso, Odysseus has found, despite the real temptation, that the idyllic round of pleasure that she offers holds no meaning. At best, it represents a vegetable existence. By the time we first encounter him, therefore, he has come to reject her offer of immortality and has committed himself to living life with all its suffering to the fullest” (Tracey 33).

2. In Greek the verb **Kalypsato** means “to bury.”

**Literary Criticism:** “Calypso has other important associations with death. Her very name is derived from the verb Kalypo, which is a common word in Greek for burying, and her island is located most strikingly ‘where the navel of the sea is.’ For the Greeks the navel marked the entrance to the underworld…” (Tracey 33).

Explain how Odysseus’s seven year stay with Calypso has been a sort of living death.
3. The idea that Odysseus has experienced a living death is further developed with the suggestion of his rebirth when he is on the raft and fighting for survival. In literature, the emergence from the water often symbolizes rebirth. Consider the process of birth and identify the parallels below.

1. Raft serves as __________________________________________
2. Waves serves as _________________________________________
3. Scarf serves as __________________________________________
4. Water serves as __________________________________________
5. Odysseus is naked: ________________________________________

(Note: Telemachus is on a journey to find his identity. Odysseus is on a journey to secure his identity.)

Book IX: In the One-Eyed Giant’s Cave: Due Date: ______________________________
Odysseus tells Alcinous 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.

Concept/Vocabulary:
- **Utopia (n)** - a community or society possessing highly desirable or near perfect qualities
- **Xenophobia (n)** – Intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.
- **Hubris (n)** - Arrogance; excessive self-pride and self-confidence. In Greek tragic heroes this leads them to ignore warnings from the gods and thus invites catastrophe.
- **Tragic Flaw (n)** - Is the secret weakness of character that brings about a tragic hero's (in this case, the epic hero's) downfall. The Greeks had another word for such a character failing, which was hamartia, literally “fault,” “failure,” or “guilt.”
- **Foreshadowing (n)** – Subtle hint or clue of events to come.

2. Identify foreshadowing at the beginning of Book IX. What is being foreshadowed?
3. Note the differences between the Cyclops’s society and the societies of Pylos and Sparta. Use the following chart for points of comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cyclop’s Society</th>
<th>Pylos and Sparta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with the gods:</td>
<td>Relationship with the gods:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenia:</td>
<td>Xenia:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Order:</td>
<td>Social Order:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How does Odysseus demonstrate that he is a man of “twists and turns” in Book IX?

5. In Book IX, Odysseus displays an instance of hubris. This is his tragic flaw. Explain.

6. What did a soothsayer once predict would happen to the Cyclops?
7. What does the Cyclops ask his father Poseidon to do for him?

Emerging Thematic Ideas/Themes: