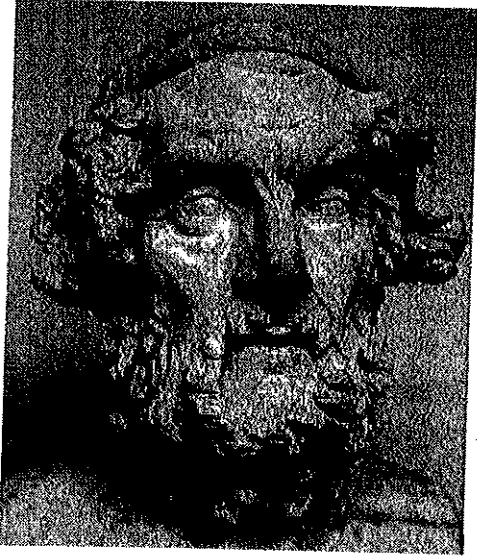


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Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing

Author Biography: Homer



Homer, one of the earliest and greatest known poets of the classical period, is generally regarded as the creator of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Exactly when he was born or died, and the details of his life are generally unknown. Tradition and ancient legends have it that he was a blind poet and rhapsode (an ancient actor) who lived in the late eighth and early seventh centuries B.C.E. on an island called Chios off the western coast of Asia Minor (what is now Turkey). While there is no complete agreement on the details of Homer's life, some have said that he was born to Menes and Cretheis the nymph, his given name was

Melisigenes, he worked in Chios, and died on Ios, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea.

But this information is suspect at best and is part of what has become the *Homeric Question*—the doubts and consequent debates over the existence and identity of Homer, and the real story of who wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Though the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are set in the Greek Bronze Age in about the twelfth century B.C.E., most scholars, analyzing the linguistic (language) and other historical evidence, claim that the poems were composed between 750 and 650 B.C.E., when rather than telling stories orally, people started writing things down. Other scholars argue that the poems were written later, perhaps in the sixth century B.C.E. in Athens, when the first written versions of the poems appeared. Many scholars believe that these epics represent the work of many generations of poets, with Homer acting as organizer and editor.

While the *Iliad*, which was written first, is packed with relentless slaughter and tragedy, the *Odyssey* is a tale of wandering and homecoming, and some argue that these differences reveal the possibility of more than one author. Others argue that the *Iliad* is a work of a young, mischievous, and adventuresome Homer, while the *Odyssey* is the work of a wiser, more mature Homer.

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Standards Focus: The Genre of Mythology, the Epic Hero, and the Epic Poem

Mythology refers to the field of knowledge dealing with the systematic collection, study, and interpretation of myths. The word *mythology* (from Greek, *muthologia*, storytelling: *muthos*, story + *logos*, speech) refers to a body of myths and legends that a particular culture believes to be true about itself and its ancestors, heroes, and deities.

The term *myth* commonly refers to the mythology of ancient Greece and Rome. These myths were passed on via the oral tradition until they were later written down, and for many ancient peoples, these myths were an irrefutable reality, generated by social needs and a product of cultural concerns. While legends are based largely on historical events and are focused on human heroes, myths are considered to be symbolic stories that explain natural phenomena, the creation of the world, the establishment of civilization, the nature of humanity, and the organization of the universe.

The *Odyssey* represents the culmination of several ancient Greek myths and legends. It follows a basic pattern of other narratives—known as the hero's journey—from around the world. This hero performs deeds with great valor and exemplifies certain characteristics that are valued by the society from which the hero originates, and he embodies the cultural and religious beliefs of his people.

Odysseus is the epitome of the **epic hero**. He is the larger-than-life figure who goes on a journey, faces antagonists, and returns home considerably transformed. Performing ordinary tasks that others might find impossible, he is cunning, brave, and superhuman.

An **epic hero** need not exhibit all these traits, but here are some of his essential features:

1. Unusual circumstances surround the hero's noble birth.
2. He often possesses supernatural abilities or qualities.
3. The hero is on a journey or quest where his worthiness is tested.
4. He encounters women who hinder his progress.
5. He interacts with mythical beings and has human and animal helpers and companions.
6. The hero's travels take him to supernatural worlds—even the underworld—that mortals are forbidden from entering.
7. The hero reaches a low point where he gives up or is apparently defeated.
8. This *nadir* (an emotional or physical low point) is followed by a resurrection.
9. The journey ends with the restoration of the hero to his rightful place on the throne.

Examples of other epic heroes include: Achilles, Beowulf, Hercules, and King Arthur. There are even epic heroes in video games, though they are sometimes corrupt or

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become corrupt: Dante (D.M.C.), Kratos (god of war), Sonic the Hedgehog, and Sub-Zero (Mortal Kombat).

The classical epic heroes are the male protagonists of epic poetry. An **epic poem** is a long narrative piece in an elevated style (using dignified language), celebrating heroic deeds and events significant to a culture or nation. Homer is sometimes referred to as the father of epic poetry. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are regarded as the first important epic poems, and they define the form. These first epics are known as primary, or original, epics, and were first transmitted orally through song. Epics that attempt to imitate these, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, are known as literary, or secondary, epics.

Other more modern examples of epic stories in the form of movies include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Harry Potter* series, and *Troy*.

Epics have several important characteristics:

1. The hero has a magnificent presence and holds mythical and legendary importance.
2. The setting covers vast geographical distances, including many oceans, nations, and supernatural realms.
3. The conflicts require the hero to perform deeds of superhuman courage, especially in battle.
4. Supernatural forces are perpetually at work throughout the epic.
5. The style of the epic is formal and ceremonial, often with long, formal speeches.
6. The story opens *in media res*, invokes a Muse (a goddess who inspires creativity), and uses heavy repetition.

The *Odyssey*, even after 2,700 years, still captivates audiences. It is read for pleasure, adventure, understanding, and the satisfaction of reading superior literature. The themes—the pitfalls of temptation and the power of cunning over strength—are as timeless as human nature itself. A central virtue in the *Odyssey* is the ability to see another person as potentially like oneself. But perhaps the most compelling part of the poem is its universality: there are the stories of growing up (Telemachus), not giving up (Penelope), and homecoming (Odysseus). Indeed, this epic is an allegory for everyone's personal journey homeward. The myths and legends are combined with realistic narrative to give voice to our innermost fears and desires and speak to the common thread we all share: the human condition.

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Exploring Expository Writing: Genre

Directions: Use a dictionary to give a brief definition of the following terms from the article.

1. deities (par. 1): _____
2. irrefutable (par.2): _____
3. phenomena (par.2): _____
4. culmination (par.3): _____
5. exemplifies (par. 3): _____
6. embodies (par. 3): _____
7. epitome (par. 3): _____
8. antagonists (par. 4): _____

Directions: Write the letter of the correct answer on the line provided.

- _____ 9. What is a myth?
- a. a story that is told as if it were an actual historical event
 - b. an untrue religion
 - c. a story in which the events are symbolic rather than historical
 - d. stories that are transmitted exclusively through the oral tradition
- _____ 10. Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of an epic hero?
- a. He must go on a quest, remaining unchanged by his journey.
 - b. He is favored or even partially descended from deities.
 - c. He exemplifies the values of the society from which the epic originates.
 - d. He is braver, stronger, and smarter than the average human.
- _____ 11. Which of the following most closely describes the opinion of the author regarding the relevance of the *Odyssey*?
- a. The author derives great satisfaction from reading the *Odyssey*.
 - b. The author appreciates the universality of the *Odyssey*'s themes.
 - c. The author believes that epic poetry plays a minor role in our lives.
 - d. Epic poetry is the author's favorite genre.

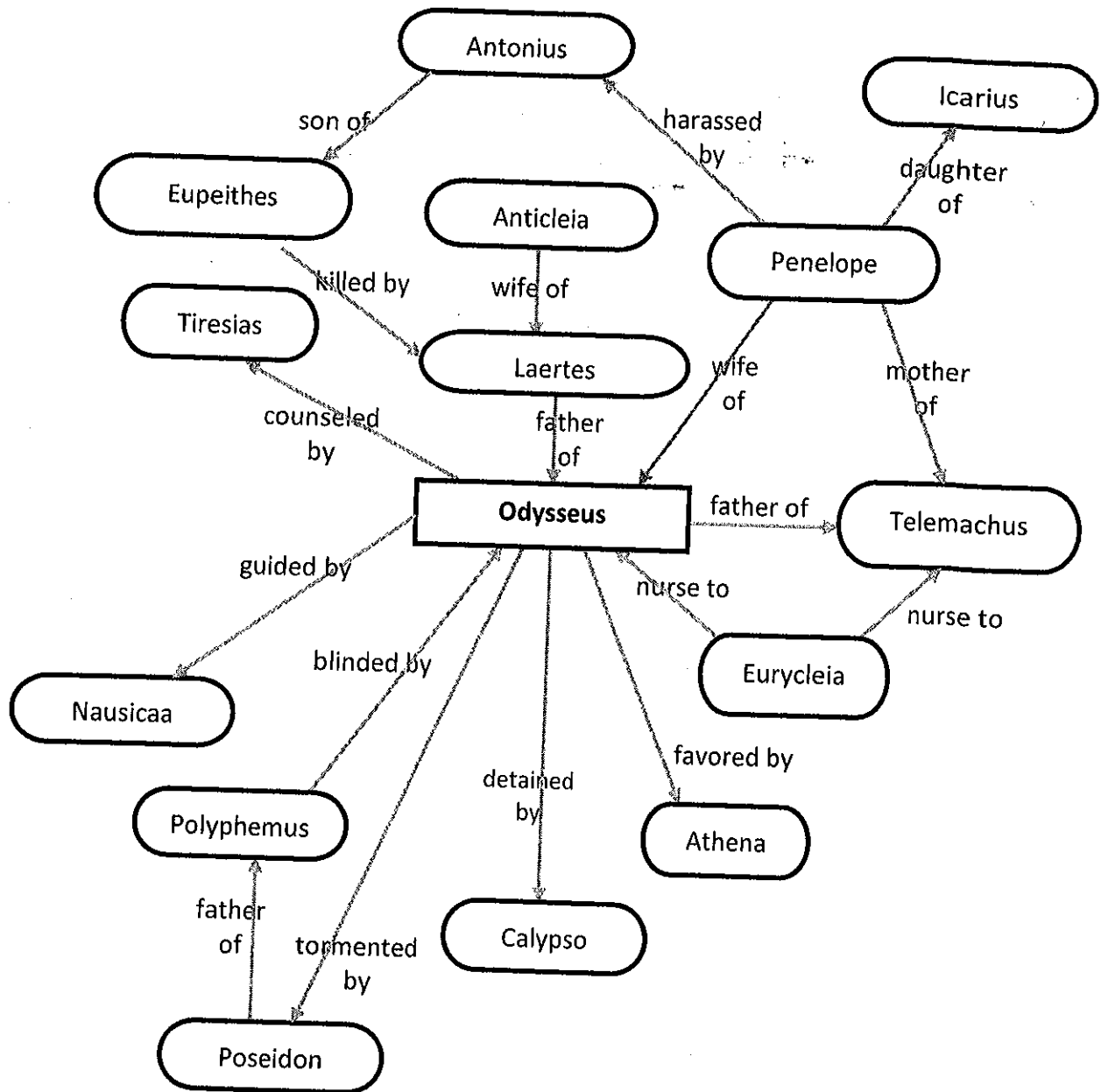
Directions: Answer the following questions on the back of this sheet or a separate piece of paper using complete sentences.

12. Give an example of an epic hero and five specific ways he fits into the role of the epic hero.
13. Using a dictionary to define the terms, explain how epic poetry differs from *prose* and *drama*.
14. According to the author, why is the *Odyssey* still popular today?

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Map of Character Relationships from the *Odyssey*

Below is a very basic map of the relationships between major characters found throughout the *Odyssey*. Use this map to help you keep track of characters and their relationships, adding characters and their relationships to the map as you read.



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Anticipation Guide

Directions: Before reading the epic, write "yes" if you agree with the statement, "no" if you disagree with the statement, and "?" if you do not have a strong opinion or are not sure about the statement.

Before Reading	Statement
	1. Strength of character is more important than physical strength.
	2. One of the greatest accomplishments a person could make is to learn about oneself.
	3. The heroes/heroines of today are good role models.
	4. Killing someone to avenge that person's wrongdoings is justifiable.
	5. Spouses should always be faithful to each other, regardless of what the other spouse does.
	6. It is better to be old and wise than young and foolish.
	7. People don't change.
	8. Any goal can be accomplished and any obstacle can be overcome with enough courage and determination.
	9. People cannot escape their fates.
	10. Hubris, or excessive pride, is the greatest downfall of humankind.

After completing the "Before Reading" column, get into small groups, then tally the number of "yes", "no," and "?" responses for each question. Each group member should keep track of the tally.

Group Members: _____

Statement #	Yes	No	I Don't Know
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

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6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Once you have collected your data, discuss those issues about which your group was divided. Make your case for your opinions, and pay attention to your classmates' arguments. Once you have discussed all of the issues, answer the Pre-Reading Individual Reflection questions below on your own.

Pre-Reading Individual Reflection

Directions: Use the information and discussion from the "Before Reading" responses to answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper. Be sure to use complete sentences.

1. Which statements triggered the most powerful ideas or heated discussion?
2. Summarize the discussion/debate. (Who argued what?)
3. For any of the statements that you discussed, what were some of the strongest arguments or most thought-provoking points made by your group members?
4. What was your reaction when a group member disagreed with the way you feel about an issue? How did your other group members react when someone disagreed with them?
5. Was any argument strong enough to make you change your mind or want to change any of your initial responses? Why or why not? What made the argument effective?


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Standards Focus: Note-Taking and Summarizing

Directions: As you read each book of the *Odyssey*, use words or short phrases to summarize the action in each of the categories below. Completing this activity will help you understand and appreciate what you are reading, follow the action, and relate to the epic, its events, and its characters. A sample chart for Book One following this model has been done for you on the next page.

Book Number		
Title: Assign each book an original title after you've completed the reading.	Setting: Describe the time and place of the action of each book. (The where and when)	Characters: Write the names of the major characters involved in each book.
Plot: Also referred to as the narrative, write the main events, the most important information, and the relevant details from this book. (The what)		
Connection: Write down anything that you found familiar in this book. Has anything similar ever happened to you or someone you know? How would you handle a comparable situation? Are you reminded of other stories? Are there any lessons or themes that you recognize?	Prediction: Make a guess as to what may happen next in the poem. Write what you think will happen and the effect it will have on the characters and on the plot.	
Thoughts/Illustration: Record your thoughts or illustrate a summary of the book using a simple but detailed drawing (i.e., one that you will be able to refer to later and understand how it relates to your knowledge of the <i>Odyssey</i> .)		

Note-Taking and Summarizing: Sample—Book One

Book One		
Title: Athena Persuades Telemachus	Setting: Ithaca, in Odysseus's palace	Characters: Athena and Zeus, the suitors (we are introduced to Antinous, the primary leader of Penelope's suitors), Telemachus, Penelope, and Eurycléia
Plot: Homer begins his epic asking for inspiration from one of the muses (i.e., Mneme) for guidance in telling the tale of a man who has endured much deprivation. Athena petitions Zeus for the release of Odysseus—the only Greek who has not yet returned from the Trojan war—who is being unfairly detained on the island of the nymph Calypso. Pitiless Poseidon, angered by Odysseus's blinding of Poseidon's son, Polyphemus, has relentlessly frustrated Odysseus's homeward journey. Zeus agrees and dispatches Hermes to liberate Odysseus, while Athena, disguised as Mentès, visits Ithaca to counsel Odysseus's son, Telemachus. She predicts that his father will return and encourages Telemachus to stand up to the suitors and seek more information about his father. Odysseus's home has been invaded by suitors seeking the hand of his wife, Penelope. Odysseus is believed to be dead, except by Penelope (because of her intuition) and by Telemachus (because of his visit from Athena). Telemachus, as he lay in his bed, contemplates the journey Athena has advised him to make.		
Connection: I would feel completely frustrated at my powerlessness to overthrow the suitors. Telemachus is fortunate to have divine intervention, which reminds me of the divine help the legendary King Arthur received in pulling the sword from the stone.	Prediction: I think Telemachus, with the help of Athena, will make a successful journey. The suitors will realize that they are no longer dealing with a mere boy and will have to adjust their strategy accordingly.	
Thoughts/Illustration: In front of the suitors, the bard is singing of the hardships of the Greeks returning from Troy, which upsets Penelope:		
		

Name _____ Period _____

Books _____

Note-Taking and Summarizing Chart

Directions: As you read each book of the Odyssey, use words or short phrases to summarize the action in each of the categories below. Completing this activity will help you understand and appreciate what you are reading, follow the action, and relate to the epic, its events, and its characters.

Book		
Title:	Setting:	Characters:
Plot:		
Connection:	Prediction:	
Thoughts/Illustration:		

Books 1-2**Standards Focus: Character Types**

Characters are the individuals in a story. As the narrator relates the story to the reader, certain character types emerge out of the conflict: protagonist and antagonist.

- The **protagonist** is the central character of a story. This protagonist is trying to accomplish something, and without this struggle, nothing can happen. It might help to think of the protagonist as a **spear**, the one who initiates or drives the action.
- The **antagonist** of a story opposes the main character. This is what the protagonist struggles with or against, such as another character, oneself, nature, the supernatural, or fate. The antagonist tries to stop the protagonist. It might help to think of the antagonist as a **shield**, the one who struggles against or blocks the hero.

Protagonists and antagonists can be classified further by five general character types:

- **Round:** This is a detailed character with a complex personality and contradictory traits, just like a real person.
- **Flat:** This is a stereotypical, clichéd character representing a single idea or having only one or two personality traits and who may be summed up with a single phrase (e.g., a dumb jock, a city slicker, a crooked cop, or a beautiful princess).
- **Dynamic:** This character changes in some important way as a result of the story's action. The changes that occur in this character are permanent.
- **Static:** This is a character who does not change during the course of the story. Events in the story do not alter a static character's outlook, personality, motivation, perception, or habits.
- **Foil:** This character is used to enhance other characters through contrast. The foil is usually a minor character, although if there are two protagonists, they may be foils of each other.

Additionally, authors write about a character in two ways:

- **Direct characterization** is when the author, narrator, another character, or the characters themselves inform the audience what they are like. The narrator **tells** about the character when he says: "*Well done, Odysseus, Laertes's wily son.*"
- **Indirect characterization** is when readers deduce for themselves what the characters are like through the characters' words, thoughts, feelings, actions, appearance, and interaction with other characters. Readers can also learn about characters through what other characters say to them or how they feel and act toward to them. The narrator **shows** the reader what type of person a character is through his words: "*Cyclops, / You ask me my name, my glorious name, / And I will tell it to you. Remember now, / To give me the gift just as you promised. / Noman is my name. They call me Noman— / My mother, my father, and all my friends, too.*"

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Directions: To help you explore and gain a better understanding of the characters' interactions with others and their environment through direct and indirect characterization, fill in the chart below after you read Books 1 and 2 of the poem. An example has been done for you.

Character	Telemachus
Direct Characterization	Athena, disguised as Mentos, to Telemachus: 'You have to be aggressive, strong—look at how big/And well-built you are—so you will leave a good name.' (Book 1, 318-319)
Indirect Characterization	Telemachus, despondently observing the suitors: "He was sitting with the suitors, nursing/His heart's sorrow, picturing in his mind/His noble father, imagining he had returned/And scattered the suitors, and that he himself,/Telemachus, was respected at last." (Book 1, 122-127)
Protagonist, Antagonist, or Other	Protagonist
Round or Flat, Dynamic or Static and/or Foil	Round and Dynamic, a minor Foil for Odysseus as Robin would be to Batman (Telemachus : Odysseus : : Robin : Batman)
Character	Odysseus
Direct Characterization	
Indirect Characterization	
Protagonist, Antagonist, or Other	
Round or Flat, Dynamic or Static and/or Foil	
Character	Athena
Direct Characterization	

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Indirect Characterization	
Protagonist, Antagonist, or Other	
Round or Flat, Dynamic or Static and/or Foil	
Character	Penelope
Direct Characterization	
Indirect Characterization	
Protagonist, Antagonist, or Other	
Round or Flat, Dynamic or Static and/or Foil	
Character	Antinous
Direct Characterization	
Indirect Characterization	
Protagonist, Antagonist, or Other	
Round or Flat, Dynamic or Static and/or Foil	

Name _____ Period _____

Books 3-4
Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why is Athena so confident that Telemachus can successfully approach and inquire of Nestor?
2. What is the aegis?
3. Name some of the heroes who were killed in Troy.
4. Who caused the quarrel between Atreus's two sons?
5. Explain why Nestor knew nothing of who survived and who was lost in the Trojan War.
6. What would Mentor/Athena rather do than be killed at his/her hearth?
7. What advice does Nestor give Telemachus?
8. When Peisistratus and Telemachus arrived at the hollows of Lacedaemon, they drove on to where? What was taking place there?
9. Expand on the reasons why Menelaus was greatly displeased with Eteoneus's comments.
10. What is the prime cut of roast beef a mark of?
11. To which goddess is Helen compared when she arrives in the hall?
12. Describe how Helen helps them get over their sorrow.
13. Why did Telemachus go to Sparta?
14. Summarize Menelaus's description of death for the suitors.

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Books 5-6 Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What "galled" Athena?
2. How does Calypso defend herself?
3. Discuss the oath that Odysseus makes Calypso swear.
4. How did Odysseus know where to steer his raft?
5. How was Odysseus able to make it so far across the sea without being bothered by Poseidon?
6. To what is Odysseus compared when he is clinging to the rocks?
7. Who gave Odysseus the quickest release from pain and fatigue, and how did she do it?
8. How was Athena able to talk to Nausicaa?
9. To whom are Nausicaa and her attendants compared?
10. What woke Odysseus?
11. To what is Odysseus compared as he emerges from the bushes?
12. To what is Athena's makeover of Odysseus compared?
13. Explain why Nausicaa wants Odysseus to wait outside the city.
14. Why did Athena not meet Odysseus face to face?

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Books 5-6

Standards Focus: Dramatic Irony

The word **irony** is derived from the Latin word *ironia*, which means “feigned ignorance.” Irony is the difference between what actually happens and what might be expected to happen, especially when this disparity seems laughable or absurd. There are three types of irony: *verbal*, *situational*, and *dramatic*. For the purposes of this exercise, we will look at dramatic irony in detail.

Dramatic Irony

In dramatic irony, the audience knows what is happening but the characters do not, and the results can be comic or tragic.

- *Example:* In *Oedipus Rex*, by Sophocles, Oedipus is searching for the murderer of the former king of Thebes, only to discover that he is the unwitting killer, a fact that the audience has known all along.
- *Example from the Odyssey:* In book 6, when Odysseus encounters Nausicaa, the Phaeacian princess, he pleads for assistance and gets it. Nausicaa is wholly unaware that she is being petitioned by a seasoned warrior of the Trojan War.
- *Effect on the Plot:* romance, suspense

Directions: Read the following excerpts from Books 5 and 6 and explain what the audience knows that the characters do not (dramatic irony). Next, describe the effect on the plot. Does it add comedy, tragedy, mystery, action, suspense, horror, sarcasm, humor, fulfillment, romance, retaliation, anticipation, tension, justice, adventure, or some other effect? An example has been done for you.

Example: 5, 20-22 “And now the islanders are plotting to kill his son/As he heads back home. He went for news of his father/To sandy Pylos and white-bricked Sparta.”

- a. **What the audience knows:** Odysseus is unaware that his son’s life is in danger, and Telemachus is unaware that his father is still alive and is being held captive on Ogygia.
 - b. **Effect on plot:** suspense, adventure
1. 5, 31-44 Zeus proclaims that Odysseus must be released from Calypso’s island and that he will go home with more loot than he would have ever gotten from Troy.
 - a. What the audience knows: _____

 - b. Effect on plot: _____
 2. 5, 89-91 “My dear Hermes, to what do I owe/The honor of this unexpected visit? Tell me/What you want, and I’ll oblige you if I can.”

Name _____ Period _____

a. What the audience knows: _____

b. Effect on plot: _____

3. 5, 148-158 Calypso, composing herself, goes to relay Zeus's message to an incessantly grieving Odysseus. Odysseus is dying of longing for his wife, family, and home.

a. What the audience knows: _____

b. Effect on plot: _____

4. 5, 181-190 Calypso swears that she is not planning any more trouble for Odysseus.

a. What the audience knows: _____

b. Effect on plot: _____

5. 5, 380-382 Poseidon says, "That's right. Thrash around in misery on the open sea/Until you come to human society again./I hope that not even then will you escape from evil."

a. What the audience knows: _____

b. Effect on plot: _____

6. 6, 20-40 Athena disguises herself as Nausicaa's friend and, in a dream, gently chides Nausicaa for having dirty clothes and tells her to get up at the break of dawn to wash them.

a. What the audience knows: _____

b. Effect on plot: _____

Name _____ Period _____

Books 7-8

Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Tell what Athena did to Odysseus as he started out for the city.
2. Who was the young girl carrying a pitcher? What is her significance?
3. At what craft are the women of Phaeacia skilled?
4. What does Odysseus ask of Arete?
5. To whom does Odysseus compare himself?
6. How is Odysseus able to forget his troubles?
7. In what way does Alcinous say Nausicaa was out of line?
8. Describe Pallas Athena's disguise as she went through the city.
9. Why did Athena pour a "shimmering grace" on Odysseus?
10. Who is the godlike singer of tales?
11. How well did Odysseus fare against the Phaeacian athletes?
12. How did Odysseus seal the gift chest?
13. What did Odysseus ask Demodocus to sing about?
14. How is 8.564-575 a simile (refer to page xxiii of the *Introduction*)?

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Books 9-10
Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. How does Odysseus introduce himself to the Phaeacians?
2. Describe how Odysseus rescued his men from the Lotus Eaters.
3. What kind of social life do the Cyclopes have?
4. Why did Odysseus ignore the crew's suggestion?
5. What will be Polyphemus's gift to Odysseus?
6. Explain why Polyphemus's brothers did not help him.
7. What was Odysseus reasoning as he called out to Polyphemus that he, Odysseus, was the one who put out his eye?
8. Why did Aeolus let the West Wind out?
9. Why did the ships go back to Aeolia?
10. What kind of *xenia* (hospitality) do Odysseus's men encounter among the Laestrygonians?
11. How does Hermes help Odysseus?
12. What does Odysseus's response to Circe's invitation say about the power of an oath?
13. Why does Odysseus briefly consider killing his own friend and kinsman Eurylochus, and what does this say about Odysseus's character?
14. Where does Circe tell Odysseus he must go before heading home?

Name _____ Period _____

Books 11-12
Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Who asked to be buried and mourned? Why?
2. Describe what will happen if Odysseus or his men harm the cattle of Helios the Sun.
3. How did Anticleia die?
4. Why does Odysseus agree to stay with the Phaeacians?
5. What does Alcinous mean when he tells Odysseus "...you have told your tale with the skill of a bard"?
6. Who was still furious with Odysseus and why?
7. What did Odysseus fear Persephone would send?
8. Which ship has made it through the Wandering Rocks? How did it do it?
9. Describe what lives in the misty cave.
10. What sucks down and belches out the black water?
11. Why did Odysseus smear wax in his men's ears?
12. Explain why Odysseus did not mention Scylla.
13. How were Odysseus's men drawn up the cliff?
14. Why was Odysseus saved from Scylla?

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Books 13-14
Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. To what is Odysseus being compared in 13.32-35?
2. What is the importance of wine after Odysseus's farewell dinner on Scheria?
3. Why did the Phaeacians lay Odysseus away from the path?
4. What did Athena call herself and Odysseus?
5. How did Athena convince Odysseus that he was, indeed, on Ithaca?
6. What kind of disguise is Athena scheming for Odysseus?
7. Where is Athena going to go?
8. How does Eumaeus welcome the disguised Odysseus?
9. Why does Eumaeus accuse the disguised Odysseus of fabricating a story about news of Odysseus?
10. Why does Eumaeus not want to talk about Odysseus anymore?
11. Where do you think Odysseus gets the idea for his story in 14.326-342?
12. Why does Eumaeus continue to show respect and kindness to an alleged liar?
13. How did the swineherd honor the immortals when slaughtering an animal?
14. Where does Eumaeus sleep?

Name _____ Period _____

Books 15-16
Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why are Penelope's father and brothers pressuring her to marry Eurymachus?
2. Why did Peisistratus resist Telemachus's request to leave immediately?
3. What is the eagle a sign of?
4. Why does Telemachus want to avoid going to Nestor's house?
5. Why is Theoclymenus on the run?
6. In Eumaeus's case, how has Zeus "set some good/Alongside the evil . . ."?
7. What is the omen that the hawk brings?
8. In the simile in 16.19-21, what is Eumaeus being compared to?
9. How does Telemachus show respect for his father even before he knows his identity?
10. Why does Athena advise Odysseus to reveal his identity to Telemachus?
11. In the simile in 16.229-232, what are Odysseus's and Telemachus's tears compared to?
12. Who does Odysseus say will be their allies?
13. Why does Telemachus question Odysseus's choice of allies?
14. How did Penelope find out that the suitors were plotting to kill Telemachus?

Name _____ Period _____

Books 17-18

Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. How did Odysseus and Telemachus cleverly find a way to leave Eumaeus's hut together?
2. Why did Telemachus tell Peiraeus to keep the gifts from Menelaus?
3. How did Nestor welcome Telemachus?
4. How did Odysseus respond to Melanthius's abuse?
5. Why are ships launched to wage war?
6. Why did Athena prompt Odysseus to beg from the suitors?
7. Why did Odysseus want to wait until evening to meet Penelope?
8. How is Irus like the suitors?
9. Why does Odysseus warn Amphinomus?
10. Why did Penelope want to be accompanied by Autonoë and Hippodameia?
11. Penelope scolds the suitors for what unusual courting behavior?
12. Why did Athena want the "*pain/To sink deeper into Odysseus's bones*"?
13. To what contests does Odysseus challenge Eurymachus?
14. Whose speech pleased the suitors? Why do you think they found it pleasing?

Name _____

Period _____

Books 19-20

Comprehension Check

Directions: *To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.*

1. What is Telemachus planning to say to the suitors when he takes the weapons out of the hall?
2. To which two goddesses is Penelope being compared?
3. In the simile in 19.221-223, to what are Penelope's tears being compared?
4. How did Penelope know that the stranger had seen Odysseus?
5. Do you think that Penelope recognizes the beggar as her husband? Why or why not? (Cite examples from the text to illustrate your answer.)
6. How did Odysseus get the scar on his thigh?
7. Why did Eurycleia's words in 19.520-521 fail to arouse any response from Penelope?
8. In the simile in 20.17-18, to what is Odysseus being compared?
9. Even though the suitors have been intolerable, why has Philoetius stayed faithful?
10. Why were the heralds making a sacrifice to Apollo? (Refer to 21.294 and 22.7.)
11. Why did Amphinomus suddenly change his mind about plotting to kill Telemachus?
12. What is significant about 20.381-384?
13. What is the meal that a goddess and a hero will soon serve to the suitors?
14. In 20.430, how does Homer justify to the audience the slaughter of the suitors?

Name _____

Period _____

Books 21-22
Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why did Eumaeus and Philoetius cry as they set out the bow and axe heads for the suitors?
2. Why does Telemachus offer to try to string the bow?
3. How did Odysseus prove to Eumaeus and Philoetius that he was Odysseus?
4. When Eurymachus cannot string the bow, he is not sad about losing the marriage, but what is he sorry for?
5. What is Eurymachus afraid of, and how does Penelope put him in his place?
6. How does Telemachus ease the tension in the room?
7. In the simile in 21.432-434, to what is Odysseus being compared?
8. What three crimes of the suitors does Odysseus mention when he begins the slaughter?
9. How does Eurymachus try to persuade Odysseus?
10. How did Athena help Odysseus and Telemachus in their battle against the suitors?
11. To what are Odysseus and his men being compared in the simile in 22.319-320?
12. Which suppliants does Odysseus spare in the battle in the hall? Why?
13. To what are the suitors being compared in the simile in 22.409-413?
14. Do you think what happened to the twelve women and Melanthius was a just punishment? Explain your answer.

Name _____

Period _____

Books 23-24
Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the novel, answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is Penelope's first reaction to Eurycleia's announcement that Odysseus was really home?
2. Why do you think that Odysseus smiles when Penelope says, "*There are secrets between us no one else knows*"?
3. How is music used to deceive?
4. To what are Odysseus's head and shoulders being compared in the simile in 23.163-166?
5. What is the secret between Penelope and Odysseus?
6. To what was Penelope's joy being compared in the simile in 23.240-245?
7. Why does Odysseus instruct Penelope to "*Go upstairs with your women and sit quietly/Don't look outside or speak to anyone*"?
8. In the simile in 24.7-9, to what are the ghosts being compared?
9. Why does Achilles say that Agamemnon had "*a most pitiable death*"?
10. Who flew to the city and told everyone what happened to the suitors?
11. According to Medon, how did Odysseus manage to kill all the suitors?
12. Who does Halitherses blame?
13. What happened to Eupheithes?
14. In the simile in 24.561, to what is Odysseus being compared?

Name _____

Period _____

Books 23-24

Standards Focus: Theme

The theme of a literary work is an underlying and unifying idea or lesson that recurs through the work and makes an insightful statement about human nature, life, or the world. Themes may be major, referred to frequently in the work and becoming one of the most important ideas of the story, or minor, referred to occasionally in the work. Additionally, a problem, a relationship, or an object might symbolize the theme. Because the theme of a piece of literature is usually not directly stated, it must be inferred by the readers.

Determining the Theme

Readers can use the following steps to uncover the theme of a literary work:

1. Identify the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist.
2. Note the protagonist's thoughts and feelings that are repeated throughout the work.
3. Look for the thoughts and feelings that are expressed through the protagonist's actions.
4. Ask yourself what the protagonist learns in the story. How did the protagonist change?
5. Be aware of any objects that are repeatedly mentioned and how the characters interact with them.
6. How do the elements of literature (plot, setting, tone, foreshadowing, and point of view) contribute to the discovery of some truth about the subject?

Recognizing Themes in the *Odyssey*

Directions: In the activity below, next to each numbered theme found in the *Odyssey*, place the letter of its corresponding example from the choices on the next page. The first one has been done for you.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <u>C</u> 1. The power of cunning over strength | _____ 12. The characteristics and |
| _____ 2. The significance of hospitality | benefits of perseverance |
| _____ 3. Respect for the deities | _____ 13. Justified and deserved |
| _____ 4. The importance of establishing | revenge and vengeance |
| lineage | _____ 14. Spiritual growth |
| _____ 5. The necessity of loyalty | paralleling physical |
| _____ 6. Appearance versus reality | maturity |
| _____ 7. The significance of pride and honor | _____ 15. God-like justice |
| _____ 8. The pitfalls of temptation | _____ 16. The effect of fate on a |
| _____ 9. Living life to the fullest | character's development |
| _____ 10. The misery of separation | _____ 17. The need for reconciliation |
| _____ 11. The power of leadership | |

Name _____ Period _____

- A. Leaders rule by divine right and force of character—there's not an ounce of democracy.
- B. At the epic's end, Athena makes certain that the people of Ithaca accept Odysseus.
- C. ~~Odysseus achieves both *kleos* (glory) and what Achilles covets, *nostos* (homecoming).~~
- D. Odysseus's mantra: he understands the importance of making the most of every moment.
- E. Telemachus's spiritual growth is linear, one that mirrors his physical maturity.
- F. Odysseus's treatment of the suitors and disloyal servants is gruesome, formidable, and just.
- G. A new character is introduced with one's pedigree, which often includes a deity.
- H. Odysseus is fated to return home, but he would not be able to realize his fate if he did not possess strong moral fiber.
- I. Odysseus's crew yields to hunger (slaughtering Helios's cattle) and also opens Aeolus's gift.
- J. Odysseus's sentence for the disloyal servants parallels the swift and brutal justice of the gods.
- K. In Book 9, Odysseus is excessively boastful when he shouts his identity to Polyphemus.
- L. First shown to Telemachus by Nestor, then shown to Odysseus by Alcinous and Arete.
- M. Odysseus is separated from his family and throne, Penelope from her husband, Telemachus from his father, and Argus from his master.
- N. Odysseus and Penelope are well matched because they are both strong-minded survivors.
- O. Athena is constantly disguising herself and changing Odysseus's appearance, making it difficult for Penelope to recognize him.
- P. Disrespect leads to disaster, as Odysseus can attest with regards to Poseidon.
- Q. Penelope's faithfulness to Odysseus and the devotion of Eurycleia and Argus.

****Choose one of the themes on the previous page and write a one-page essay about how the theme is prevalent in the poem. Be sure to provide support in the form of specific examples from the text.***