

Odyssey Notes

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These notes were taken during reading the Odyssey in AP Literature. Many of the quotes are direct quotes from the Odyssey.

Context:

- The Odyssey is about man
- Odysseus is fluid and can adapt
- The Iliad introduces the hero (Achilles) first thing but The Odyssey waits a bit to introduce Odysseus
- The Trojan war is over
- To survive, Odysseus has to lie, hide, and disguise
- Telemachus's father died and he is portrayed as weak
- Athena tells Telemachus that Odysseus might be alive
- Telemachus learns about his father everywhere he goes
- Telemachus goes to Nestor and Nestor
- Ajax died of arrogance
- When Menelaus gets out of the Trojan horse, he wants to kill Helen but then he sees her and is like...never mind
- Calypso offers Odysseus immortality to live with her but he chooses to be mortal
- Odysseus likes to come home to his family

Books 1-4:

- Telemachus looks everywhere for his dad (Odysseus)

Book 5

- Odysseus has been on an island for 7 years with Calypso (she keeps him there)
- He is crying because he wants to go home to his wife and kids

- “Off he sat on a headland, weeping there as always, wrenching his heart with sobs and groans and anguish”
- Hermes comes to the cave where Calypso keeps Odysseus
- Hermes says Zeus made him come and wants her to send Odysseus back
 - “Now Zeus commands you to send him off with all good speed: it is not his fate to die here, far from his own people. Destiny still ordains that he shall see his loved ones, reach his high-roofed house, his native land at last.”
- Calypso is like, you just don’t appreciate the mortal-on-immortal lifestyle! I took care of him! But okayyyyyy
 - “I welcomed him warmly, cherished him, even vowed to make the man immortal, ageless, all his days ... But since there is no way for another god to thwart the will of storming Zeus and make it come to nothing, let the man go—if the Almighty insists”
- Odysseus and Calypso, um, make love
 - He says she cast a spell on him
- Odysseus builds a raft
- Calypso gives him wine, food, water, wind, and directions to steer by the stars
- Calypso says on the 18th day, he will reach the Phaeacians’ island
- Poseidon didn’t know what the gods had planned but he sees Odysseus floating away (he hates Odysseus because Odysseus punches his cyclops son)
 - “Outrageous! Look how the gods have changed their minds about Odysseus”
- Odysseus is like ahhhh so much water! I wish I died in the war (this is the heroic code- he wants to die gloriously)
 - “my friends-in-arms who died on the plains of Troy those years ago, serving the sons of Atreus to the end. Would to god I’d died there too and met my fate that day the Trojans, swarms of them, hurled at me with bronze spears, fighting over the corpse of proud Achilles! A hero’s funeral then, my glory spread by comrades— now what a wretched death I’m doomed to die!”
- Poseidon is about to make him drown but Athena puts the winds to sleep so Odysseus can swim

- Odysseus has to swim for 2 days but on the third he finds land
- Odysseus isn't sure what to do
 - "the end in sight, there's no way out of the boiling surf—I see no way!"

Book 6

- The Princess Narcissa and her maids are playing and washing in the river
- Naked Odysseus stands up
- Athena makes Odysseus look young and beautiful
- Narcissa takes Odysseus home and sneaks him into the castle
- He begs for the king and queen to please accept him
- They have a fun day
- They finally ask Odysseus who he is
- He says who he is
 - "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known to the world for every kind of craft—my fame has reached the skies."
- He says he misses Ithaca, his home
 - "I know no sweeter sight on earth than a man's own native country."
- He reflects on his adventures
- Adventure #1: Troy
- Adventure #2: Ismarus
 - He ended up in Ismarus: "The wind drove me out of Ilium on to Ismarus, the Cicones' stronghold"
 - He ransacked the city: "There I sacked the city, killed the men, but as for the wives and plunder, that rich haul we dragged away from the place"
 - He said they had enough and should get out but his people wouldn't leave because of greed: "Then I urged them to cut and run, set sail, but would they listen? Not those mutinous fools"
 - The Cicones army came for them: "Zeus presented us with disaster, me and my comrades doomed to suffer blow on mortal blow"

- They got away but not without death: “Out of each ship, six men-at-arms were killed; the rest of us rowed away from certain doom.”
- Adventure #3: Lotus-eaters
 - “our squadron reached the land of the Lotus-eaters,”
 - The Lotus flower made them apathetic: “Lotus-eaters who had no notion of killing my companions, not at all, they simply gave them the lotus to taste instead ... Any crewmen who ate the lotus, the honey-sweet fruit, lost all desire to send a message back, much less return”
 - He had to force them back: “But I brought them back, back to the hollow ships, and streaming tears—I forced them,”

Book 7

- Odysseus is stopped by a young girl who is Athena in disguise. She offers to guide him to the king’s house and shrouds him in a protective mist that keeps the Phaeacians, a kind but somewhat xenophobic people, from harassing him.
- She also advises him to direct his plea for help to Arete, the wise and strong queen who will know how to get him home.
- Once Athena has delivered Odysseus to the palace, she departs from Scheria to her beloved city of Athens.
- Odysseus finds the palace residents holding a festival in honor of Poseidon.
- As soon as he sees the queen, he throws himself at her feet, and the mist about him dissipates. At first, the king wonders if this wayward traveler might be a god, but without revealing his identity, Odysseus puts the king’s suspicions to rest by declaring that he is indeed a mortal.
- He then explains his predicament, and the king and queen gladly promise to see him off the next day in a Phaeacian ship.
- Later that evening, when the king and queen are alone with Odysseus, the wise Arete recognizes the clothes that he is wearing as ones that she herself had made for her daughter Nausicaa.

- Suspicious, she interrogates Odysseus further. While still withholding his name, Odysseus responds by recounting the story of his journey from Calypso's island and his encounter with Nausicaa that morning, which involved her giving him a set of clothes to wear. To absolve the princess for not accompanying him to the palace, Odysseus claims that it was his idea to come alone. Alcinous is so impressed with his visitor that he offers Odysseus his daughter's hand in marriage.

Book 8

- The next day, Alcinous calls an assembly of his Phaeacian counselors.
- Athena tells everyone there will be a new godlike visitor
- Alcinous says they should give him a ship to get home
- That is approved and Alcinous invites people for a feast and celebration
- There is a blind guy who talks about what happened to Odysseus and Achilles
- Odysseus cries
- The king notices Odysseus is sad and starts the games
- Odysseus didn't want to play but then wins the discus toss and challenges the other people to another competition.
- Young men entertain Odysseus and give him gifts
- Odysseus asks Demodocus to talk about the Trojan horse and all that jazz
- He cries again and this time the king asks for his story

Book 9

- **Adventure #4: He goes into a cave and finds a cyclops**
 - They explore the cave and find cheese and lambs and all sorts of goodies
 - Odysseus's comrades suggested to steal and run
 - Odysseus is like, abide by godly customs
 - Polyphemus says he isn't scared of the gods
 - Polyphemus takes his flocks out to the fields, trapping Odysseus's men
 - Odysseus's men finds his big club, chopped some off, smoothed it down, and made it into a point

- Odysseus suggests Polyphemus tries some wine and pours him 3 bowls (enough to get him drunk)
- Odysseus tells Polyphemus his name is Nobody and the cyclops is like, okay I'll eat Nobody last, then passes out
- They rammed the club into Polyphemus's eye
- Polyphemus is asked by the surrounding people what's wrong and he says "Nobody is killing me!"
- Odysseus laughs and is like HAHA PRANKED
- Odysseus and his men sneak out with the sheep
- With his former prisoners now out of reach, the blind giant lifts up a prayer to his father, Poseidon, calling for vengeance on Odysseus.
- Polyphemus is like, Dad please ruin Odysseus
 - "Poseidon, god of the sea-blue mane who rocks the earth! If I really am your son and you claim to be my father— come, grant that Odysseus, raider of cities, Laertes' son who makes his home in Ithaca, never reaches home."

Book 10

- Adventure #5: They go to Aeolus, who controls the wind
 - They are finally able to rest
 - Aeolus lets one wind free to bring them to Ithaca
 - On the 10th day, they can see Ithaca but Odysseus's treasure makes them greedy and distasteful
 - "the crews began to mutter among themselves, sure I was hauling troves of gold and silver home,"
 - The winds bring them back to King Aeolus but Aeolus is like...you must be cursed by the gods to leave
 - "it proves the immortals hate you! Out—get out!"
- Adventure #6: They reach a cannibal land

- “Six whole days we rowed, six nights, nonstop. On the seventh day we raised the Laestrygonian land,”
 - They eat a bunch of Odysseus’s men and only Odysseus’s squadron escapes
- Adventure #7: they reach Circe’s island
 - Circe turns men to pigs
 - Circe is like a siren singing and she summons them
 - “Polites, captain of armies, took command, the closest, most devoted man I had: ‘Friends, there’s someone inside, plying a great loom, and how she sings—enthraling! The whole house is echoing to her song. Goddess or woman—let’s call out to her now!’”
 - She drugs them and turns them into pigs with a potion
 - Odysseus is like, I must save my men before we can leave
 - Hermes comes with a magic herb that will stop him from being under a spell, he suggests he goes lies naked with Circe
 - She is in awe when her potion doesn’t work
 - “I’m wonderstruck—you drank my drugs, you’re not bewitched! Never has any other man withstood my potion, never, once it’s past his lips and he has drunk it down. You have a mind in you no magic can enchant! You must be Odysseus, man of twists and turns”
 - Circe suggests they, um, make love
 - He spends a year with her
 - Circe finally turns them back into men
 - Odysseus begs her to send him home
 - “‘Circe, now make good a promise you gave me once— it’s time to help me home. My heart longs to be home, my comrades’ hearts as well”
- Adventure #8: the underworld!
 - Tiresias (the blind prophet from Oedipus is there)
 - All the dead people swarm the trench to drink blood

- Tiresias told Odysseus will reach an island with “fat flocks” that belong to Helios (god of the sun). He is told not to harm a single beast and he will return home. Odysseus has to curb their greed.
 - “harm them in any way, and I can see it now: your ship destroyed, your men destroyed as well.”
- Check “Underworld Characters” document for interactions

Book 12

- Odysseus is instructed how to get home
- Adventure #9: Sirens
 - He has to pin himself to the mast to get past sirens
 - They make it past
- Adventure #10: Scylla and Charybdis
 - Whirlpools vs a cave with a grizzly monster
 - Whirlpools would kill everyone but Scylla would only kill 6
 - She does eat 6
 - They get caught in a whirlpool
- They’ve been rowing like crazy and then there is a mutiny
- Adventure #11: Helios’s place
 - “Then you will make the island of Thrinacia ... where herds of the Sungod’s cattle graze”
 - They’re tired and starving so the idiots eat the Sun God’s cattle
 - Helios is mad
- Zeus comes out to play and destroys the ship, throwing out all the men, and then the people drowned
- Adventure #12: Calypso
 - “On the tenth, at night, the gods cast me up on Ogygia, Calypso’s island, home of the dangerous nymph with glossy braids who speaks with human voice, and she took me in, she loved me ...”
 - He spent a year with her

Book 13

- He finishes telling his story to the Phaeacians
- He talks to a disguised Athena
- Odysseus finally makes it back to Ithaca
- He wants to test if his wife is faithful
- Athena transforms Odysseus so no one will recognize him (an old beggar) and tells him to wait with the swine
- Athena will bring Telemachus home and plan

Books 14-15:

- Telemachus comes home

Book 16:

- Odysseus as an old beggar “need help”
- Telemachus expresses that he needs help too
 - He says his mom (Penelope) is torn about what to do
- Odysseus hates the suitors
- Athena returns Odysseus to himself
- Odysseus reveals himself as his father
 - “No, I am your father— the Odysseus you wept for all your days, you bore a world of pain, the cruel abuse of men.”
- They want to know which women slept with the suitors
- The suitors want to kill T
 - “Strike first, I say, and kill him!— clear of town, in the fields or on the road. Then we’ll seize his estates and worldly goods”
- Penelope goes OFF
 - “You, Antinous! Violent, vicious, scheming— you, they say, are the best man your age in Ithaca, best for eloquence, counsel. You’re nothing of the sort!”

Book 17

- Telemachus goes to his mom and recaps her
- Odysseus is walking to his palace
- Odysseus is still a beggar
- Odysseus comes across a goat herder who insults him
- Argos, Odysseus's dog, was sad and neglected
 - "he's run out of luck now, poor fellow ... his master's dead and gone, so far from home, and the heartless women tend him not at all."
 - "the moment he sensed Odysseus standing by he thumped his tail, nuzzling low, and his ears dropped, though he had no strength to drag himself an inch toward his master"
- Odysseus went into his home
- Odysseus goes to beg the suitors and see which will help him
- Antinous (the worst suitor) declines Odysseus
- The Gods value hospitality and the common people know that AND that gods disguise themselves as humans
- Antinous doesn't care and struck a stranger anyway
 - Shows ignorance and arrogance
 - He was warned but didn't care. He thinks he is all that.
- The gods are angered

Book 18

- Arnaeus is a beggar too and Odysseus is in his territory- Arneaus tries to get rid of him
 - As Kenny said: fighting over a squat spot
- Odysseus is ready to fight but unsure if he should
- Odysseus beats the beggar
- Arnaeus will later be killed
- Everyone rooted for Odysseus and cheered him
- Athena gives Penelope a makeover to make her suitors lose their minds

- Penelope is distraught
- The maids of Odysseus kept fires going??
- Better summary from SparkNotes because this book confused me:
 - A rude beggar named **Arnaeus** (**Irus** for short) wanders into the palace. He insults **Odysseus**-the-beggar when they meet on the grounds, and **Antinous** decides to pit them against each other so that the suitors can enjoy the fight; the prize is **sausage** and a seat at the suitors' table. Odysseus-the-beggar pulls up his rags to reveal a powerful-looking body, and Irus is filled with fear.
 - Odysseus decides to hurt him only slightly; he punches Irus on the neck and flings him outside. The suitors laugh and invite the stranger to eat at their table.
 - The suitor **Amphinomus** is especially kind to **Odysseus**-the-beggar. As they talk, Odysseus mentions his own past violence and error, advises him to live lawfully, and hints at the suitors' impending deaths. Amphinomus feels very ill at ease, but the narrator notes that there is nothing to be done – he is fated to die on **Telemachus's** spear.
 - **Athena** inspires **Penelope** to come down and speak to the suitors. The queen tells the suitors that if they hope to win her hand they should give her gifts, as is customary.
 - **Odysseus** is pleased at this clever trick. The suitors send their servants to bring fine treasures and begin to dance and sing.
 - **Athena** wants to rile **Odysseus** as much as possible, so she inspires **Eurymachus** to mock him once more, but Odysseus remains calm and predicts the suitors' deaths.
 - Eurymachus throws a stool at Odysseus-the-beggar but the stool hits a servant instead.
 - **Telemachus** scolds the suitors and sends them all to bed.

- Melantho yells at Odysseus
- Odysseus says who he is in front of Penelope and describes giving gifts to beggars
- Penelope talks to Odysseus (who is still disguised)
 - “How well you knew—you heard from my own lips— that I meant to probe this stranger in our house and ask about my husband ... my heart breaks for him”
- Penelope makes Odysseus comfortable
- Penelope asks Odysseus about himself
- Odysseus just praises Penelope and says talking about the past would make him sad (so she won’t)
 - “please, search out my birth, my land, or you’ll fill my heart to overflowing even more as I bring back the past ... I am a man who’s had his share of sorrows. It’s wrong for me, in someone else’s house, to sit here moaning and groaning”
- Odysseus is testing to see if she was faithful and Penelope cleverly says: “I yearn for Odysseus, always, my heart pines away”
- Penelope tells him how she smartly deceived the suitors
 - “Three whole years I deceived them blind, seduced them with this scheme.”
- Emotional
 - “As she listened on, her tears flowed and soaked her cheeks as the heavy snow melts down from the high mountain ridges”
- Blah blah blah
- Penelope says Odysseus isn’t coming back
- Penelope makes a comment that Odysseus looks like Odysseus
- The nurse maid says the same
 - “Many a wayworn guest has landed here but never, I swear, has one so struck my eyes— your build, your voice, your feet—you’re like Odysseus ... to the life!”
- The nurse maid sees the scar on his foot and knows its him

- Penelope asks Odysseus if she should stay with her son or allow herself to be courted
 - Sounds like she knows it's him because why ask a beggar?
- She asks him to interpret her dream
- She sets up a challenge to shoot a bow and arrow the way Odysseus did, winner wins her heart

Book 20

- mean suitors

Book 21

- Penelope gets Odysseus's bow
- Penelope will marry whatever suitor that can shoot his arrow through a line of axes
- Telemachus sets up the axes and then tries but fails
- The suitors all try and all fail.
- Odysseus is outside for some reason
 - Oh he followed Eumaeus and Philoetius to test their loyalty
 - He shows the scar
 - He promises to treat them as Telemachus's brothers if they fight the suitors with him
- Odysseus goes back
- Antinous says they should stop and sacrifice to Apollo
- Odysseus (disguised Odysseus) asks for the bow.
 - All the suitors are like NO don't beat us
- Antinous says Odysseus is drunk and stupid
- Telemachus makes Eumaeus give Odysseus the bow.
- Odysseus easily hits all the axes

Book 22

- Odysseus also shoot Antinous.

- The suitors are like WHAT? Must be an accident
- Then Odysseus reveals he is Odysseus and the suitors are like....oh no
- The suitors are trapped in the hall
- Eurymachus tries to calm Odysseus down by saying they are not all like Antinous
- That doesn't calm him so Eurymachus runs at Odysseus
- Telemachus kills someone too and gets more weapons for Eumaeus and Philoetius,
- Telemachus was dumb and forgot to lock up the weapons so a suitor gets some weapons for them
- Eumaeus and Philoetius figure them out and lock him in the storage room
- Big battle
- Athena appears disguised as Mentor and encourages Odysseus but doesn't help
- Odysseus and his men kill a bunch of suitors and are not badly hurt
- Once Athena joins in, the battle is over

Book 23

- Penelope slept through the whole thing
- Eurycleia goes upstairs to talk to her but she doesn't believe him
- She still doesn't believe it even when she sees Odysseus
- Telemachus is like MOM that's your husband!
- Odysseus is like "this is great and all but I just killed a bunch of good young men...their parents probably aren't happy."
- They have to lay low
- Happy music = nothing bad happened at the palace
- Penelope tells Eurycleia to move her bed but Odysseus says it can't move since it's built from a trunk??
- The fact that he knew about the olive trunk was proof of his identity
- They catch up
- Odysseus tells Penelope about the prophecy he must fulfill
- The following day, Odysseus and Telemachus go to Laertes' orchard and tell Penelope just to stay locked in there

- Athena cloaks Odysseus and Telemachus in darkness so that no one will see them as they walk through the town.

Book 24

- Down in the underworld, the suitor's ghosts and old Greek warriors return
- Agamemnon and Achilles argue over who had the better death.
- Agamemnon talk about Achilles' funeral.
- All the suitors enter
 - Amphimedon shares what happened.
 - He says it was Penelope's fault
- Back in Ithaca, Odysseus goes to a farm
- Odysseus's servants make sure he can be alone with his dad, Laertes has
- His dad doesn't recognize him
- His dad cries over him
- Odysseus shows his scar, says its him, and hugs his dad
- They have lunch and catch up
- the goddess Rumor tells everyone what happened in the palace
- Eupithes, Antinous's father, is angry and wants revenge
 - His army tracks Odysseus down but Athena (in disguise) stops them
 - Athena makes the Ithacans forget the massacre of their children
- Odysseus is king again and there is peace

Other notes:

- The Odyssey is very focused on women
- Homer points out how bad human greed is
- The gods are like, stupid mortals!
- Both Odysseus and Penelope are characterized as crafty and smart
- Odysseus's drive to get back to his kingdom and rule it keeps him alive
- Penelope lives and deceives in the name of survival too