***The Odyssey* Viewing Guide and Poem Comparison**

The poem starts with Telemachus and his decision to search for his father, his journey, and what he learns. The film begins differently. In *The Odyssey*, we don’t learn of Odysseus’s adventures until he gets to Phaeacea, where he is telling the story of his adventures to King Alcinous.

1. What important personal event takes place for Penelope and Odysseus at the beginning of the film?

**the birth of their son**

1. What is the name of Odysseus’s kingdom?

**Ithaca**

1. What happened that changed Odysseus’s life?

**he must go to war with Troy**

1. What two areas were at war with each other?

**Troy & Greece**

1. Why was Odysseus obligated to go with Greece to fight?

**Blood oath/alliance with the Greek kings**

\*Special Interest: What was the cause of the Trojan War?

**\*Menelaus’s wife, Helen**

1. What does Odysseus’s mother ask that he leave at home?

**his bow**

1. To whom does Odysseus pray before leaving for war?

**Athena**

* 1. What does he ask her?

**for a way to prevent war**

1. What does Odysseus tell Penelope before he leaves?

**to care of his son, to give him his kingdom**

* 1. What must she promise to do?

**to remarry**

1. Who appears to Odysseus aboard his ship?

**Athena**

* 1. What does she want Odysseus to do?

**defeat Troy**

1. What does she know of Odysseus’s personality?

**his pride and vanity**

1. The narrator, Odysseus, describes the two leaders of the war. Who are they?

**Achilles and Hector**

1. Why was it so difficult for the Greek armies to defeat Troy in the Trojan war?

**Troy was surrounded by a great wall**

\*\*How does Achilles die?

**shot in the heel by Paris**

1. What was Odysseus’s plan?

**Trojan Horse**

1. What is the soothsayer’s warning?

**Beware the Greeks & their gifts**

1. What happened to the soothsayer, according to the Greek soldier, that causes the Trojans to believe the Greeks?

**He was swallowed by a sea serpent sent by Poseidon.**

1. How were the Trojans finally defeated?

**Trojan Horse filled with Greeks**

1. What does Odysseus brag about?

**defeating Troy without the gods**

1. Who speaks to Odysseus and what is his warning?

**Poseidon, Odysseus will suffer for his arrogance**

1. How long had Odysseus been away from home fighting the Trojan War?

**10 years**

1. What causes Penelope to tell her mother-in-law that she has a heart of stone?

**She told Penelope to move on with her life.**

1. What is the king’s son’s name?

**Telemachus**

Most of THE ABOVE INFORMATION for the movie IS BACKSTORY FROM Homer’s *The Illiad.* The story of *The Odyssey* is actually told as flashback. The movie does not contain the information of many other lands that Odysseus and his men find.

Odysseus’s first journey after leaving Troy leads him to the island of Ismaros, off the coast of Cicones. He and his ships were caught by a driving windstorm and lost their way.. Odysseus describes how his men foolishly raided the land of the Cicones. They took wine, butchered sheep and cattle and feasted. The men of Cicones, however, were trained to fight. Odysseus and his crew finally escape, having lost six men per ship. A storm sent by Zeus sweeps them along for nine days before bringing them to the land of the Lotus-eaters, where the natives give some of Odysseus’s men the intoxicating fruit of the lotus. As soon as they eat this fruit, they lose all thoughts of home and long for nothing more than to stay there eating more fruit. Only by dragging his men back to the ship and locking them up can Odysseus get them off the island.

Odysseus and his men then sail through the murky night to the land of the Cyclopes, a rough and uncivilized race of one-eyed giants. After making a meal of wild goats captured on an island offshore, they cross to the mainland. There they immediately come upon a cave full of sheep and crates of milk and cheese. The men advise Odysseus to snatch some of the food and hurry off, but, to his and his crew’s detriment, he decides to linger. The cave’s inhabitant soon returns—it is the Cyclops Polyphemus, the son of Poseidon. Polyphemus makes a show of hospitality at first, but he soon turns hostile. He devours two of Odysseus’s men on the spot and imprisons Odysseus and the rest in his cave for future meals. Odysseus wants to take his sword to Polyphemus right then, but he knows that only Polyphemus is strong enough to move the rock that he has placed across the door of his cave. Odysseus thus devises and executes a plan. The next day, while Polyphemus is outside pasturing his sheep, Odysseus finds a wooden staff in the cave and hardens it in the fire. When Polyphemus returns, Odysseus gets him drunk on wine that he brought along from the ship. Feeling jovial, Polyphemus asks Odysseus his name. Odysseus replies that his name is “Nobody” (9.410). As soon as Polyphemus collapses with intoxication, Odysseus and a select group of his men drive the red-hot staff into his eye. Polyphemus wakes with a shriek, and his neighbors come to see what is wrong, but they leave as soon as he calls out, “Nobody’s killing me” (9.455). When morning comes, Odysseus and his men escape from the cave, unseen by the blind Polyphemus, by clinging to the bellies of the monster’s sheep as they go out to graze. Safe on board their ships and with Polyphemus’s flock on board as well, Odysseus calls to land and reveals his true identity. With his former prisoners now out of reach, the blind giant lifts up a prayer to his father, Poseidon, calling for vengeance on Odysseus.

1. What do the soldiers at Odysseus’s ship discover that foreshadows their danger?

**A giant footprint**

1. Whose home/island have Odysseus and his men invaded first in the movie?

**The Cyclops Polyphemus**

1. Who are the parents of the giant and what is his name?

**Poseidon & a sea nymph**

1. How does Odyssesus prevent the giant from eating another soldier?

**They blind the Cyclops**

1. Discuss why Odysseus tells the giant that his name is “Nobody”?

**So the Cyclops will not know where he is**

1. Why don’t the soldiers kill the giant as soon as he is asleep?

**They cannot move the stone to open the cave**

1. How do Odysseus and his men escape from the giant’s cave?

**The blind the Cyclops**

\*\*Why does Odysseus tell the Cyclops his name?

**Because he’s too proud**

\*\*Why is that significant?

**Poseidon has already warned him about his pride**

1. The second unknown land Odysseus and his soldiers find belongs to whom? (He is named Aeolus)

**The wind god (Poseidon’s cousins)**

1. Why does the inhabitant of this land called Aeolia want to help Odysseus?

**Odysseus uses his mind!**

* 1. How does he try to help him?

**He gives him a sack of wind because Odysseus is a thinker – always learning**

1. What does this inhabitant tell Odysseus to do with the sack he has filled for him?

**Wait nine days to open it**

1. What makes Odysseus’s men open the sack so close to home?

**Curiosity**

1. What has happened to Odysseus and his ship as a result of the men’s actions?

**They miss Ithaca and end up on the other side of the world.**

Odysseus and his men then adventure to the land of the Laestrygonians, gigantic cannibals. After more of his men are killed, Odysseus’s ship land on Aeaea, home of the witch Circe.

1. On whose island has Odysseus and his men landed?

**Circe**

1. What is the story the soldier returned to tell about the pig?

**The with has turned the men into pigs.**

Odysseus goes in search of his men. He is stopped by Hermes, the messenger god who gives Odysseus a plant to eat that protects him from the witch’s spell. Protected by the plant’s magic, Odysseus resists Circe’s sorcery. Circe changes the soldiers back to men. She persuades Odysseus to stay with her for food and wine. Unknown to Odysseus, on Aeaea, time stands still, and he and his men have stayed with Circe longer than they thought.

1. Telemachus, Odysseus’s son is now grown. What does he attempt to do that Penelope finds amusing?

**String his father’s bow \*\*no tears\*\***

1. What does Odysseus’s mother do?

**She goes to the sea to kill herself**

1. Where does the witch Circe tell Odysseus he must do in order to find his way home?

**He must go to Hades, the underworld, to see Teiresias.**

* 1. What must he do when he arrives there?

**Sacrifice a lamp, enter the fire, and find Teiresias.**

Odysseus must seek the famous blind prophet from the city of Thebes, Teiresias.

1. What do the two nobles of Ithaca tell Telemachus about his father?

**He is either dead or has abandoned them.**

1. What do the two nobles expect of Penelope?

**She will choose to marry one of them.**

1. How does Penelope feel about these two guests?

**She must follow custom and welcome them as quests, but that’s it.**

1. As Odysseus and his men reach the land of the dead, the underworld--Hades, what is revealed about Odysseus’s faithful warriors?

**They love him and are devoted to him.**

1. Where does the blind prophet tell Odysseus he must go?

**Straights of Scylla**

1. Whom does the Odysseus see as he leaves the land of the dead? (her name is Anticleia)

**His mother**

1. What does this spirit tell him about his home and his wife?

**That she is alive and waiting for him, but he must hurry – men are trying to steal his world.**

Unlike the movie, Circe told Odysseus to seek the wisdom of Teiresias. In the text, Teiresias tells Odysseus that he and his men must avoid feasting on the cattle of Helios, the sun god. Teiresias also told Odyseeues that only he would survive and return to Ithaca. He is also told of the suitors and that Odysseus must slay them and then make sacrifices to Poseidon.

In the text, Odysseus and his men then return to Circe who warns him of The Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis. Circe warns that anyone who hears the Sirens singing will stay there and die. She tells Odysseus that if he should want to listen to the Sirens, he should have his men tie him to the mast of the ship so that he would not stay. Odysseus does so and he and his men are spared from the Sirens.

Circe also warns of Scylla and Charybdis. She warns that Odysseus will lose some of his men. She also warns Odysseus to hug the cliff. She tells him that Charybdis lurks below the cliff. She warns Odysseus that he and his men must not raid the cattle of Helios or their destruction will follow.

1. More men arrive in Ithaca to persuade Penelope to be their wife. What does she say she must do before she chooses one of them?

**She begins to weave a shroud for her husband. Upon completion, she will make a choice.**

Odysseus and his men arrive at the Strait of Messina. They first meet Scylla, the female monster (hydra) each head having a triple row of fangs (thought to be the dangerous rock in the Straight of Messina. Odysseus and his men then meet Charybdis, the femail monster who suck in water three times a day to form a deadly whirlpool (thought to be the real whirlpool in the Straight of Messina)

In the text, Odysseus and his men meet Scylla and lose six men, but the ship and others are spared from Charybdis. They then arrive at the land of the sun god, Helios. Odysseus warns his men not to raid the cattle. A storm prevented the men from return to sea. The gods then drove Odysseus into a deep sleep. While asleep, his men talk of starvation being the worst of all deaths. They decide to slaughter the animal. They felt that if the gods wanted death upon them, it was better for them to die at sea, than to starve to death.

Odysseus awakes to see their feast. He and his men set sail again and they are punished by death—a thunderbolt from Zeus destroys their boat and all the men drown. Only Odysseus survives.

1. Whose island has Odysseus landed upon? (The island is called Ogygia)

**Calypso**

1. What advice does Penelope give her son?

**Call on his father’s loyal followers to ask for help**

1. What does Telemachus want to do?

**Kill the suitors, ask them to rid their house of the suitors**

1. What do the suitors plan?

**Give telemachus a ship to let him look for his father/to die or be killed upon his return**

1. What does Calypso offer Odysseus if he stays with her?

**Immortality**

Odysseus attempts to leave Calypso’s island when he sees a ship in the distance, but is stopped my Calypso’s maids. He is a prisoner on the island.

1. Telemachus speaks to Mentor. Who is disguised as Mentor?

**Athena**

1. Where will Telemachus go?

**Sparta**

Athena has spoken to her father Zeus to persuade him to allow her favored Odysseus to return home. Zeus sends Hermes, messenger god to tell Calypso that she must release Odysseus or her island will be driven to the bottom of the sea.

1. What happens when Penelope’s suitors find that she has been unraveling the screen she was weaving?

**The suitors destroy it/burn it.**

1. What does King Menelaus think has happened to Odysseus?

**That Odysseus has died.**

* 1. What does he tell Telemachus he must do?

**Return to Ithaca & fight for what is his & was his father’s**

1. Odysseus fights a terrible storm at sea. He calls to Poseidon. What does Poseidon want Odysseus to understand?

**He wants Odysseus to suffer and to understand that without gods, man is nothing**

Athena appears to Princess Nausica, daughter of King Alcinous of Phaeacea. Athena tells the princess that she must go to the washing pools the next morning to wash all her gowns and linens. The princess finds Odysseus and offers him clothing and escort into town.

In the movie, Odysseus finally lands on the island of Scheria, home of the Phaecians. King Alcinous welcomes the unknown guest as was the custom of the time. He askes that his guest reveal his identity**. It is here where Odysseus tells his story in flashback.**

King Alcinous offers Odysseus his finest ship and warriors to bring him home.

1. What does Odysseus come to understand?

**He is at the mercy of the gods.**

Odysseus and Telemachus arrive and meet each other for the first time.

1. Why is it important that Odysseus wait to reveal himself to his home?

**Because the suitors are there**

1. What does Athena tell Odysseus?

**That he’s afraid Penelope has been untrue to him**

* 1. How does she disguise him?

**As a beggar**

1. When Telemachus arrives home, how is he greeted by the suitors?

**The suitors greet him cautiously with a plan to eliminate him.**

* 1. What does he tell the suitors he has learned about his father?

**King Menelaus told Telemachus that Odysseus is dead, at the bottom of the sea**

1. What have the suitors planned?

**To kill him in the ring after Penelope chooses someone as long as he tries to kill them first.**

1. What does Penelope realize when she sees her son again?

**That Telemachus has a beard, is a man, and she must make a choice.**

* 1. What does Telemachus tell his mother about her father?

**That he knows his father is alive**

1. What happens in the fight with one of the suitors?

**He tries to kill the suitor with a knife/sword.**

* 1. Who saved Telemachus’s life?

**The beggar/Odysseus**

* 1. How? **He yells, “No, being angry is easy!”**

1. Penelope greets the beggar. What does she tell him about her situation?

**She thanks him, apologizes for his being treated poorly; she must end the madness. – make a choice**

1. What is Penelope’s plan to choose a new husband?

**They must string Odysseus’ bow, then shoot the bow through 12 axes.**

1. How does Odysseus reveal himself?

**After he strings the bow and shoot the arrow through twelve axes, he changes.**

1. How does Odysseus regain his kingdom?

**He kills all the suitors**

1. What did Odysseus say was the suitors crime?

**They tried to steal his world – no one will take that from him.**

1. How does the movie end?

**Athena appears to Penelope. Odysseus and Penelope see one another for the first time in 20 years. They go back to the tree of life.**

**FOR A MAJOR GRADE:**

Discussion Questions:

**Choose two** of the following questions and answer in grammatically correct, well-developed paragraphs with specific details from the play/movie.

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| * Discuss the similarities between the journey of Odysseus and events that have occurred in your own life. Think about the different choices Odysseus is required to make during his journey. * Discuss the women in Homer's work. What role do women play in the Odyssey, and how do you think they represent the women of ancient Greece? * Explain how the struggles of Odysseus to reach Ithaca are a contest between Poseidon and Athena as well. * Select an event from popular culture in which a hero or heroine is placed in a struggle. Examples from movies include *Shane, Schindler's List* , *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade , Saving Private Ryan , Patch Adams ,* and *Alien* . Describe how the director or writer makes you feel toward the hero or heroine and his or her opponents. Compare and contrast this to the characters in the Odyssey. * The ancient Greeks truly believed in caring for strangers. Traditional voices in our culture have attempted to continue that tradition by advising all to care for strangers in need and teaching that such assistance is particularly pleasing to God. The media is quick to praise good Samaritans, and civic groups still award medals to humanitarians. But what forces in our time threaten to extinguish this tradition of kindness to and care for strangers? What can we do to care for strangers in need? * Revenge as a means of obtaining justice was more acceptable in Homer's society than in our modern society, which has a formidable criminal justice system. Even so, Homer's idea of revenge bears qualification. Define the nature of revenge in the Odyssey that suggests under what conditions it is an acceptable means of justice. |
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