

# Classical Civilisation

## Topic: The Odyssey: Books 9 and 10

This topic covers the following:

- 1 The structure of The Odyssey
- 2 Book 9: Plot Analysis
- 3 Book 9: Character Analysis
- 4 Book 10: Plot Analysis
- 5 Book 10: Character Analysis
- 6 Literary techniques used in Books 9 and 10

Name:

# Knowledge Map: The Odyssey (Overview)

This component is called the 'Literature Study' and will form 50% of the Homeric World paper. It is focused entirely on Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. This topic focuses on the plot of the Odyssey, with a particular focus on Books 9, 10, 19, 21, and 22. It also analyses the literary techniques employed by its author, Homer. Certain characters need to be analysed, particularly Odysseus, the main protagonist. The key themes that are threaded through the book, such as the concept of *xenia* (guest friendship and hospitality), must be examined.

## Background to The Odyssey

1	Summary	The plot of the Odyssey is a relatively simple one: a man, Odysseus, seeks to return home to the island of Ithaca after twenty years away. In his attempts to sail home, he gets lost, and all his crew die in horrific circumstances. When he does finally return, his problems are not over; he has to reclaim his kingdom from his enemies.
2	Structure of Story	The story is complicated by the structure of the narrative. The story is not written in chronological order. The chronological order of events is not the same as the order that they occur in the story.
3	Flashbacks	Homer adopts a flashback technique in the story which explains why the story does not occur in chronological order. Often Odysseus will recount stories that have happened on his journey home.
4	Books 1 to 4	The early books of the Odyssey describe events that occur at the end of Odysseus' ten-year journey home and are generally referred to as <i>The Telemachy</i> and focuses on the return of Telemachus to Ithaca.
5	Books 5 to 8	Books 5 to 8 focus on the homecoming of Odysseus and his involvement with the Phaeacians. The Phaeacians, upon discovering his identity, agree to help him return to Ithaca.
6	Books 9 to 12	Books 9 to 12 are the flashback aspect of the story. He describes some of his perilous adventures to his hosts. These stories include his encounter with Polyphemus, the Cyclops, perhaps the most famous part of the book.
7	Books 13 to 24	Books 13 to 24 focus on Odysseus in Ithaca. He sees Odysseus test the loyalties of his friends and, with the help of Telemachus, he takes his revenge on the suitors of his wife. He is reunited with his wife and returns to his throne as king of Ithaca.

## Themes of The Odyssey

8	The Power of Fate	It might be presumed that Odysseus was always 'fated' to return to Ithaca and reclaim his throne, but the Greeks believed differently in the concept of fate. This is more about how the gods determined, even pre-determined, the fate of humans through their actions; Odysseus is a key example.
9	Xenia: Hospitality and Friendship	In his journey, Odysseus is often dependent on the hospitality of strangers. The Greeks believed in a custom called <i>Xenia</i> where travellers would be given food, shelter, and protection. This theme is played out throughout the poem.
10	Deceit and Trickery	Despite seemingly negative characteristics of someone, the Greeks admired Odysseus' trickery and lies. The Odyssey is full of examples of his lies. Indeed Books 9 and 10 could be entirely fabricated as they are all told from the viewpoint of Odysseus who is prone to lying.
11	Civilisation and Barbarism	Throughout the book there is an examination of what it is to be civilised and uncivilised. It is often the monsters that are viewed as barbarous through their behaviour and failure to offer <i>Xenia</i> .
12	Revenge and Justice	This theme is examined throughout and, as readers, we are asked to question what is justice and what is revenge and can the two be linked. An examination of Odysseus' actions to the suitors asks whether he carried out justice or revenge.
13	Nostos	<i>Nostos</i> is the name given to the desire to return home, and is the root of the word nostalgia. It is essential for Odysseus to have this focus permanently in his mind to keep him focused on his journey home.

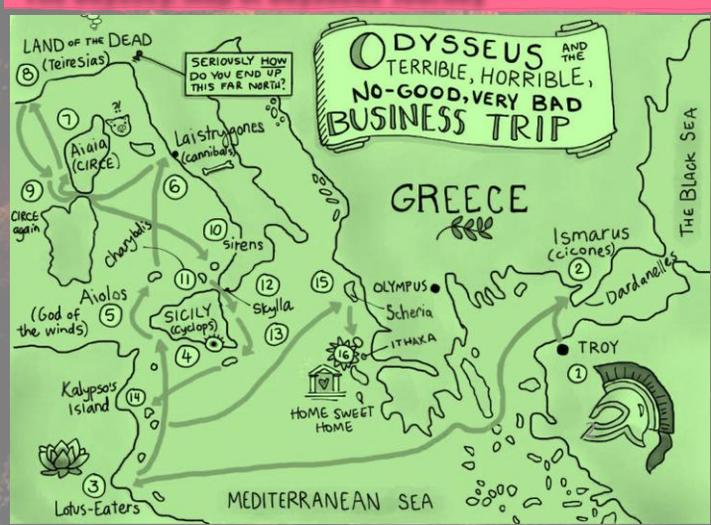
## Key Characters (Gods)

14	Zeus	King of the Olympian Gods and fundamental to the story of Odysseus. He speaks the first lines of the book and makes the point that men blame the Gods for their troubles but are themselves responsible for what happens.
15	Athena	Athena plays a vital role in the book as Odysseus' protector. It is she who secures the release of Odysseus from Calypso, and supports Odysseus in his plans to defeat the suitors.
16	Poseidon	God of the Seas, who takes great offence at Odysseus, primarily because he blinds his son, Polyphemus, the cyclops.
17	Hermes	Messenger of the Gods, he appears in the story at two key moments: to order the release of Odysseus from Calypso under Zeus' instructions, and to provide Odysseus with an antidote to Circe's potions.

## Key Characters (Mortals and Monsters)

18	Odysseus	The main protagonist of the story. He is King of Ithaca, a Greek island, and he wants to return home after having been away for ten-years fighting in the Trojan War. He employs guile as well as courage to return to Ithaca, defeat the suitors, and resume his proper place as king.
19	Penelope	Wife of Odysseus. Whilst Odysseus was away, she had to fight off over a hundred suitors who wanted to marry her thinking that Odysseus was dead. She is depicted as shrewd, resourceful, and faithful.
20	Telemachus	The son of Odysseus. He would spend the first part of the story trying to find his father. Telemachus was born just when Odysseus left for the Trojan War, so is about twenty-years old at the point of his return.
21	Lae rtes and Anticleia	Odysseus' father, the old king lives humbly and in solitude on a small farm where he mourns the absence of his son; once reunited with Odysseus, he is restored to dignity. Odysseus' mother, she dies grieving her son's long absence and sees him only during his visit to the land of the dead.
23	Alcinous and Arete	Alcinous is a Phaeacian king, and Arete his queen. He befriends Odysseus and helps him on his journey. She is descended from Poseidon, and is considered a wise woman in the story.
24	Euryclaea	A maid in Odysseus' palace, she is loyal to Odysseus and Penelope and helps in Odysseus' pursuit of the suitors. She would recognise him when he is disguised.
25	Eumaeus and Philoetichus	Odysseus' loyal swineherd and cowherd, who grew up on Ithaca with Odysseus. They would be loyal friends to both Odysseus and Telemachus and help them return to the palace to rid it of the suitors.
26	Melanthius and Melantho	Odysseus' disloyal goatherd and maid, who side with the suitors in Odysseus' absence. Each face a grisly death.
27	Agamemnon	King of Mycenae and commander of the Greek forces at Troy, he was assassinated by his wife (Clytemnestra) and her lover (Aegisthus). Odysseus sees him in the land of dead.
28	Antinous	One of the main suitors in the story. A violent and over-confident character who strives hard to take Odysseus' throne.
29	Eurydamachus	Another of the suitors. He is sly and manipulative, at one point fooling Penelope that he has no ill-intent. He arranges for the death of Telemachus, only to be outwitted by him.
30	Calypso	She is a goddess-nymph who keeps Odysseus captive and under her control for seven years. She only releases him when she is ordered to by Hermes after Zeus sends him to her demanding she release him.
31	Polyphemus	One-eyed giant of son of Poseidon, and one of the Cyclopes in the Odyssey. After eating some of Odysseus' men, Odysseus would blind him by driving a stake through his one eye.
32	Circe	Circe is an enchantress or witch and renowned for her vast knowledge of potions and herbs. She would transform her enemies into animals; in this case, Odysseus' men into swine.

## The Odyssey: Map of Odysseus' Journey



## Books 1 to 4: The Telemachy

30	Book 1	It is ten years since the Trojan War ended and Odysseus is being kept on an island by Calypso, a nymph. She has kept him there against his will for seven years and he longs to return to his wife, Penelope. At a council of Gods, Athena begs Zeus to let him return, he agrees, and sends Hermes to tell Calypso.
31	Book 2	Telemachus is told by Athena that Zeus has allowed him to return to Ithaca. Emboldened by this, Telemachus summons all the suitors to his palace and criticises them. Zeus sends an omen and Telemachus secretly leaves to find his father. Athena accompanies him on his travels as Mentor, an old friend of Odysseus.
32	Book 3	Telemachus visits Nestor, a Greek warrior who fought in the Trojan War, in Pylos. He finds out about the return home of other Greek warriors, but gets no news of Odysseus.
33	Book 4	Telemachus visits Helen and Menelaus in Sparta. They tell him about Odysseus' exploits in Troy, and that his father is still alive. He leaves for Ithaca. The suitors, meanwhile, plan to ambush him.

## Books 5 to 8: The Homecoming of Odysseus

34	Book 5	Zeus sends Hermes to order Calypso to release Odysseus. She reluctantly agrees, and he builds a raft and leaves. Before he can reach land, Poseidon destroys his raft, but finally, with the help of Ino, Queen of the Sea, he eventually lands and falls asleep.
35	Book 6	Odysseus has reached the land of the Phaeacians. Athena sends a dream to Nausicaa suggesting she should go down to the river to wash some clothes. When she is there she meets the naked Odysseus, whom she looks after and then directs to the palace. She asks him not to accompany her, for fear of scandal.
36	Book 7	Odysseus is directed to the palace by Athena in disguise. A detailed description of the palace and gardens shows how special this place is. When Odysseus arrives in the hall, he begs for help from Arete. He is well received by King Alcinous and is promised transport home. Arete recognises his clothes and asks who he is, but he evades the question. They all go to bed.
37	Book 8	The Phaeacian assembly agrees to take Odysseus home, and everybody goes back to the palace for a banquet. The bard, Demodocus, entertains them. Alcinous sees that Odysseus is upset and so suggests an athletics contest. Odysseus is challenged and hurls the discus the furthest. Alcinous introduces some dancing, and Demodocus sings of the affair of Ares and Aphrodite. Odysseus weeps at a song about Troy, and Alcinous finally asks him who he is.

## Books 9 to 12: The Wanderings of Odysseus

38	Book 9	Odysseus reveals his identity and tells the story of his adventures with the Cyclopes, the Lotus Eaters, and Polyphemus, the Cyclops. As he leaves the blinded Cyclops, Odysseus shouts out his own name, thus allowing the giant to call upon his father, Poseidon, to punish Odysseus.
39	Book 10	Odysseus arrives at the island of Aelous and stays for a month. As he leaves, he and his crew are blown off course just before they reach Ithaca. Odysseus eventually lands at Aea, the home of the witch, Circe. She would transform his men into pigs, but Odysseus is protected by Hermes. Before he leaves, and with his crew restored to being humans, Circe tells him he must visit the Land of the Dead. Before they leave, Elpenor falls off a roof and dies.
40	Book 11	Odysseus travels to the Land of the Dead and carries out rituals that summon various dead souls. He speaks to Elpenor; Teiresias, who tells him of his future; and his mother, who answers questions about his family. Odysseus wants to finish his tale, but Arete and Alcinous want him to continue. He mentions encounters with Agamemnon, Achilles, Ajax, and various other heroes and villains.
41	Book 12	Odysseus and his men return to Circe's palace to bury Elpenor. Circe warns Odysseus of the dangers on the voyage home. They reach Thrinacia, where the men eat the cattle of the sun god. He demands vengeance and Zeus destroys their ships. Odysseus is the sole survivor. He eventually gets to Calypso's island (and so to Book 5).

## Books 13 to 24: Odysseus in Ithaca

42	Book 13	Odysseus' tale ends, and laden with gifts, he sets sail for home. He is asleep when the Phaeacians leave him on Ithaca. Poseidon wants to punish the Phaeacians for transporting Odysseus, by encircling their city with mountains, though Zeus tries to dissuade him. Odysseus wakes up not knowing where he is, but Athena arrives in disguise and Odysseus lies to her about his identity. Athena reveals herself and helps him plan his return to the palace. She then goes to Sparta to fetch Telemachus.
43	Book 14	Odysseus goes to see Eumaeus, a loyal swineherd. Eumaeus laments the absence of his master and tells of his disgust at the behaviour of the suitors. He shows perfect xenia towards his guest.
44	Book 15	Telemachus leaves Sparta and returns to Ithaca, safely slipping past the murderous suitors. Meanwhile, Eumaeus tells Odysseus his story.
45	Book 16	Telemachus arrives at Eumaeus' hut and meets the beggar (Odysseus). Telemachus sends Eumaeus to the palace and Athena tells Odysseus to reveal himself to his son. In the palace the suitors are furious that Telemachus has evaded their ambush, and Penelope berates Antinous for plotting against her son.
46	Book 17	Telemachus greets his mother. The suitors are enjoying themselves. Eumaeus and the beggar meet the servant Melanthius, who is abusive. They arrive at the palace. The beggar (Odysseus) enters the hall, begs for food, and is assaulted by Antinous. Penelope sends for the beggar, who replies that he will talk to her later.
47	Book 18	Odysseus fights with Irus and wins. Penelope sees the suitors, and beautified by Athena, extorts valuable gifts from them. Odysseus is impressed by her cunning. He is insulted by Eurymachus, who throws a stool at him. He ducks and it misses. Amphinomus calms the situation.
48	Book 19	Odysseus and Telemachus remove the weapons from the hall. Odysseus tells Penelope about his travels. His tale is a mixture of truth and lies. Penelope asks Eurycleia to wash the beggar's feet, and the nurse sees the scar. Odysseus warns her to say nothing. Penelope tests the beggar to find out if he really did meet Odysseus, as he claims.
49	Book 20	Odysseus and Penelope both have sleepless nights worrying about the suitors. The next day, the suitors return for a festival. Odysseus is introduced to Philoetius. Zeus sends further omens.
50	Book 21	Penelope brings a bow to the suitors and issues a challenge. Telemachus attempts to string it and almost succeeds. The suitors all fail. Odysseus reveals himself to Eumaeus and Philoetius. Eurycleia bars the doors, and Odysseus strings the bow.
51	Book 22	Odysseus begins to shoot the suitors. Telemachus goes to the storeroom to fetch more weapons. He realises that he has left the door open and catches Melanthius taking weapons. Athena, disguised as Mentor, helps Odysseus, and eventually all the suitors are killed. The house is cleansed and the treacherous servants killed.
52	Book 23	Eurycleia tells Penelope that Odysseus has returned, but she does not believe her maid. Eventually she goes down and sits with her husband in the hall. Athena has made him handsome, but she will not acknowledge him until she has tested him. Penelope is finally convinced of his identity, and they embrace.
53	Book 24	The ghosts of the suitors arrive in Hades. Odysseus is reunited with his father. The suitors' relatives prepare to take their revenge, but Zeus and Athena intervene, restoring peace to Ithaca.

# 3 Knowledge Map: The Odyssey (Book 9)

This component is called the 'Literature Study' and will form 50% of the Homeric World paper. It is focused entirely on Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. This topic focuses on the plot of the Odyssey, with a particular focus on Books 9, 10, 19, 21, and 22. It also analyses the literary techniques employed by its author, Homer. Certain characters need to be analysed, particularly Odysseus, the main protagonist. The key themes that are threaded through the book, such as the concept of *xenia* (guest friendship and hospitality), must be examined.

## Summary of Book 9

1	Book 9	Odysseus reveals his identity to the Phaeacians and tells the story of his adventures with the Cicones, the Lotus Eaters, and Polyphemus, the Cyclops. As he leaves the blinded Cyclops, Odysseus shouts out his own name, thus allowing the giant to call upon his father, Poseidon, to punish Odysseus.
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## Breakdown of Book 9 (Line-by-Line)

2	Lines 1-62	<b>The Cicones</b> Odysseus recounts the tale of his arrival in Ismarus at the city of Cicones. He tells how his men sacked the city only to face a counter-attack in which a number of his men died.
3	Lines 63-104	<b>The Lotus-Eaters</b> Odysseus recounts them landing at the island of the Lotus-Eaters after nine days at sea in storms. Here a number of his crew eat the lotus and enter into a dream-like status. Odysseus drags his crew back to the ships, but not all make it.
4	Lines 105-151	<b>The Land of the Cyclopes</b> Odysseus begins the tale that will be the rest of Book 9 – his adventures on the land of the Cyclopes. He introduces the landscape of the island, its population, and weather.
5	Lines 152-192	<b>The Cyclopes' Cave</b> Odysseus continues his story by focusing on his exploration of the island and his discovery of Polyphemus' cave.
6	Lines 193-255	<b>Polyphemus Returns</b> Odysseus recounts entering the cave and admiring its contents. Despite his crews wishes, he wants to stay and meet the Cyclops and test his <i>xenia</i> .
7	Lines 256-306	<b>Trapped</b> Odysseus tells of how he asks for hospitality and Polyphemus refuses and even eats two of his crew, trapping Odysseus and the rest within the cave.
8	Lines 307-359	<b>Offering the Cyclops Wine</b> Odysseus sets in motion his plan to escape by blinding Polyphemus with a stake after the Cyclops has drunk some of Odysseus' wine.
9	Lines 360-412	<b>Blinding the Cyclops</b> Odysseus tells of how they blinded Polyphemus and tricked him into believing that no-one had attacked him.
10	Lines 413-479	<b>Escape</b> Odysseus explains how they escaped the cave the next morning by clinging to the bellies of Polyphemus' sheep and rams, eventually taking them on board their ships for food.
11	Lines 480-525	<b>Telemus' Prophecy</b> Odysseus and his men escape to their ships, but Odysseus cannot resist revealing who he was to Polyphemus. This act of arrogance will bring about the wrath of Poseidon.
12	Lines 526-566	<b>Polyphemus' Curse</b> Odysseus tells of how when his men sailed away, Polyphemus cried out to his father, Poseidon, for help in avenging him.

## Key Characters in Book 9 (Mortals, Monsters, and Gods)

13	Odysseus	The main protagonist of the story. In Book 9, he is currently shipwrecked in Phaeacia where he recounts the story of his journey from Troy. Book 9 primarily focuses on his story of his battle with Polyphemus, but does touch on two other adventures: The Cicones and The Lotus-Eaters.
14	Alcinous and Arete	Alcinous is a Phaeacian king, and Arete his queen. He befriends Odysseus and helps him on his journey. She is descended from Poseidon, and is considered a wise woman in the story. Odysseus recounts his story of the cyclops to them.
15	Polyphemus	One-eyed giant of son of Poseidon, and one of the Cyclopes in the Odyssey. After eating some of Odysseus' men, Odysseus would blind him by driving a stake through his one eye.
16	Poseidon	Whilst not directly involved in this book, his presence is felt. God of the Seas, who takes great offence at Odysseus, primarily because he blinds his son, Polyphemus, the cyclops.

## Themes in Book 9

17	Fate	Book 9 questions the concept of Odysseus' fate being determined by the Gods. It is not the gods that take him to the land of the cyclops, and it is not the gods that make Odysseus explore the island and meet Polyphemus. These are the actions of Odysseus, but fate will play a part with the intervention of Poseidon.
18	Judgement	Book 9's heaviest theme is Odysseus' judgement which is shown to be very good for most of the time, but foolish on occasions. Perhaps the biggest example of this, is his decision to tell Polyphemus his name despite having already escaped.
19	Revenge	Another theme of Book 9 is revenge. Odysseus seeks revenge on Polyphemus for killing some of his crew so murderously, but equally, Polyphemus will want revenge on Odysseus for him blinding him.
20	Xenia	Book 9 explores the theme of <i>Xenia</i> in a number of ways. Primarily, there is the failure of Polyphemus to offer <i>xenia</i> in how it should be. He does not take on the role of host to his guests, and indeed, even eats some of his crew.
21	Deceit and Trickery	Book 9 is laden with examples of Odysseus' celebrated trickery. The best example is the way that he tricks Polyphemus by giving him a false name meaning he will not face the wrath of other cyclops who come to Polyphemus' aid.

## Key Literary Techniques and Examples:

22	Epithet	Line 1	'Resourceful Odysseus answered the king, saying: 'Lord Alcinous, most illustrious of men, it is a fine thing, in truth, to hear a bard such as this, with a godlike voice.'
23	Epithet	Lines 154 and 285	'The Nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, disturbed the mountain goats, driving them towards my hungry comrades.' and '...since the Cyclopes care nothing for aegis-bearing Zeus: we are greater than they.'
24	Epithet	Lines 290 and 524	'...and answered him with cunning words: Poseidon, Earth-Shaker, smashed my ship...' and '...and send you to the House of Hades, as surely as the Earth-Shaker will fail to heal your eye.'
25	Formulae	Line 152	'As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we explored the island, marvelling at what we saw.'
26	Formulae	Line 167	'As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I gathered my men together, saying: "The rest of you loyal friends stay here, while I and my crew take ship and try to find out who these men are, whether they are cruel, savage and lawless, or good to strangers, and in their hearts fear the gods."
27	Formulae	Line 307	'As soon as rosy-fingered dawn appeared, cyclops relit the fire.'
28	Simile	Lines 54-55	'At dawn they came, as many as the leaves and flowers in spring: and disaster sent by Zeus overtook us, doomed, as we were, to endless trouble.'
29	Simile	Lines 295-296	'Two he seized and dashed to the ground like whelps, and their brains ran out and stained the earth.'
30	Simile	Lines 296-298	'He tore them limb from limb for his supper, eating the flesh and entrails, bone and marrow, like a mountain lion, leaving nothing.'
31	Simile	Lines 375-379	'They held the sharpened olivewood stake, and thrust it into his eye, while I threw my weight on the end, and twisted it round and round, as a man bores the timbers of a ship with a drill that others twirl lower down with a strap held at both ends, and so keep the drill continuously moving.'
32	Simile	Lines 382-383	'As a great axe or adze causes a vast hissing when the smith dips it in cool water to temper it, strengthening the iron, so his eye hissed against the olivewood stake.'

# 4 Knowledge Map: The Odyssey (Book 10)

This component is called the 'Literature Study' and will form 50% of the Homeric World paper. It is focused entirely on Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. This topic focuses on the plot of the Odyssey, with a particular focus on Books 9, 10, 19, 21, and 22. It also analyses the literary techniques employed by its author, Homer. Certain characters need to be analysed, particularly Odysseus, the main protagonist. The key themes that are threaded through the book, such as the concept of *xenia* (guest friendship and hospitality), must be examined.

## Summary of Book 10

1	Book 10	Odysseus arrives at the island of Aeolia and stays for a month. As he leaves, he and his crew are blown off course just before they reach Ithaca. Odysseus eventually lands at Aeaëa, the home of the witch, Circe. She would transform his men into pigs, but Odysseus is protected by Hermes. Before he leaves, and with his crew restored to being humans, Circe tells him he must visit the Land of the Dead. Before they leave, Elpenor falls off a roof and dies.
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## Breakdown of Book 10 (Line-by-Line)

2	Lines 1–55	<b>The Bag of Winds</b> Odysseus recounts the tale of how he and his crew fleeing from the Land of the Cyclopes, land on Aeolia, island of the wind god, Aelous. Aelous imprisons all winds but the West Wind in a bag and sends his crew on his way home to Ithaca, but the crew open the bag and release all the winds blowing them off course.
3	Lines 56–102	<b>The Laestrygonians</b> Odysseus recounts how they eventually, but unknowingly, land on Telegylus, home of the Laestrygonians, who were giants and cannibals. They moor their ships and a search party goes ashore.
4	Lines 103–132	<b>Escape from the Cannibals</b> Odysseus tells of how his search party met the king, Antiphates, who ate one of his men before calling all his giants to attack Odysseus and his men. Odysseus' ship is the only one that survives after he moored his ship in a different place to the rest of his fleet.
5	Lines 133–197	<b>Circe's Island</b> Odysseus continues his story about how his ship and the remaining crew arrive at the island of Aeaëa, Circe's island. He feeds his crew and then discusses exploring the island by finding the smoke that rose in the middle of the island.
6	Lines 198–250	<b>The Magic Spell</b> Odysseus tells of how Eurylochus takes a search party out and find Circe's home which is inhabited by numerous wild animals. She soon turns Odysseus' men into pigs using magic, but for Eurylochus, who flees back to Odysseus to tell him.
7	Lines 251–301	<b>Help from Hermes</b> Odysseus initially wants to rescue his men by force, but Hermes intervenes, disguised as a man, and gives Odysseus a herb to prevent Circe's magic working on him. He also instructs him to not refuse Circe any of her requests should he want to free his men.
8	Lines 302–347	<b>Encountering Circe</b> Odysseus tells of how he meets Circe and her magic fails on him. After an initial confrontation, she reveals that Hermes once told her that Odysseus would visit her. They go to bed together but only after Odysseus has her swear she will not harm him.
9	Lines 348–399	<b>Circe Frees the Crew</b> Odysseus tells of how Circe turns his men back to human form the next morning after Odysseus requests it.
10	Lines 400–448	<b>He Gathers His Men</b> Odysseus then explains how he and his men went back to the ships, moored them, and returned to Circe who has offered his men hospitality. Only Eurylochus questions Odysseus' decision to stay, but eventually joins them.
11	Lines 449–502	<b>He Seeks to Leave</b> After one year, Odysseus is keen to leave but Circe tells him he must first visit the Land of the Dead, and visit Persphone via Teiresias. Odysseus is initially reluctant but knows that if he is to return home, then this is his fate.
12	Lines 503–574	<b>The Death of Elpenor</b> Odysseus tells his crew about where they must travel and his crew initially crew out and weep at not returning home. It is when Odysseus gets his crew together, Elpenor – the youngest of the crew – has an accident and dies by falling from a roof.

## Key Characters in Book 10 (Mortals, Monsters, and Gods)

13	Odysseus	The main protagonist of the story. In Book 10, he is currently shipwrecked in Phaeacia where he recounts the story of his journey from Troy. Book 10 primarily focuses on his encounter with Circe on her island, and his subsequent escape.
14	Circe	Circe is an enchantress or witch and renowned for her vast knowledge of potions and herbs. She would transform her enemies into animals; in this case, Odysseus' men into swine.
15	Hermes	Messenger of the Gods, he appears in the story at two key moments: to order the release of Odysseus from Calypso under Zeus' instructions, and to provide Odysseus with an antidote to Circe's potions (Book 10).
16	Eurylochus	Odysseus' crewman and closest 'friend'. He originally leads the search party to Circe's house, but remains hidden as Circe turns the crew to pigs. Later, when explaining what happened to Odysseus, he refuses to return to Circe's house to help the rescue, leading Odysseus to nearly kill him.

## Themes in Book 10

17	Fate	Book 10 questions the concept of Odysseus' fate being determined by the Gods. It is his own men's doing that they fail to reach Ithaca and end up on Circe's island, but it is the intervention of the god Hermes that allows Odysseus to free his men, but remain on her island under her control for a year.
18	Judgement	The theme of Odysseus' judgement is in Book 10 again, which is shown to be very good for most of the time, but foolish on occasions. Perhaps the biggest example of this, is how he befriends and impresses the wind god, Aelous, but soon loses control over his men when they are so close to getting home.
19	Xenia	Book 10 explores the theme of Xenia. At first, xenia is not offered by Circe in the traditional way of welcoming strangers on her island as she turns the crew to pigs, but she does eventually offer xenia to Odysseus and his crew for a year once they have been freed from her spell.
20	Deceit and Trickery	Book 10 does tackle the theme of deceit and trickery as Odysseus is prepared to sleep with Circe for a year in order to free his men. It is clear he is at first faking his feelings towards Circe in order to fulfil his ultimate aim of getting home. It could be argued though that these forced feelings change as the book progresses.
21	Nostos	Book 10 certainly tackles the issue of Nostos – the desire to return home – as Odysseus and his crew spend a year with Circe, only for his desire to return home reignited by his crew. When his nostos is reawakened, he immediately sets out on the next stage of his journey.

## Key Literary Techniques and Examples:

22	Epithet	Lines 324–327	"You must be Odysseus, that man of many resources, whom the <b>Slayer of Argus</b> , with the Golden Wand, told me would come from Troy here, travelling homewards, in his swift dark ship."
23	Foreshadowing	Lines 18–20	'But he first called on the West Wind to blow and set my ships and their crews on our homeward course, though it was not to benefit us, ruined by our own foolishness.'
24	Formulae	Line 141	"But when <b>Dawn of the lovely tresses</b> gave birth to the third day I took my sharp sword and spear and climbed swiftly from the ship to a high lookout point, hoping to see signs of men, and hear their voices."
25	Formulae	Lines 190–191	"When <b>rosy-fingered Dawn</b> appeared, I called the men together and addressed them all."
26	Simile	Lines 126–127	" <b>Spearing the men like fishes</b> , they carried them off for their loathsome feast."
27	Simile	Lines 406–411	" <b>Like calves in a farmyard that frisk around the herd of cows that return from grazing</b> , free from their pens and gambolling together, lowing constantly round their mothers, so those men, at the sight of me, crowded around weeping, and in their hearts they were home again in rugged Ithaca, in the town where they were born and bred."

# Glossary: The Odyssey

	Keyword	Definition
1	<b>Odyssey</b>	A long and eventful, or adventurous journey.
2	<b>Bard</b>	A public storyteller who recited vast amounts of poetry, often during banquets.
3	<b>Oral Poem</b>	A poem that is composed and told without the aid of writing.
4	<b>Epithet</b>	An adjectival word or phrase regularly added to a name to denote a personal or physical quality.
5	<b>Simile</b>	A comparison made using 'like' or 'as' to create a vivid, and relatable, image.
6	<b>Anthropomorphism</b>	A type of imagery in which non-human objects or animals are given <i>literal</i> human characteristics; this is similar to personification but different in that personification is not meant literally.
7	<b>Dramatic Irony</b>	A technique where the reader knows something that the character does not, creating tension, suspense, or a sense of tragedy.
8	<b>Direct Speech</b>	A technique used to provide an insight into a character's thoughts or inner voice. It can also help reveal plot or create tension.
9	<b>Pathos</b>	A technique that evokes an emotional response in the reader, usually pity or empathy, towards a character.
10	<b>Pace</b>	The technique of controlling the speed at which a story unfolds; manipulating the pace is a powerful technique to build tension.
11	<b>Graphic Description or Imagery</b>	This technique is used to create vivid mental pictures for the reader, often appealing to one or more of the senses. This makes the story more immersive.
12	<b>Foreshadowing</b>	A technique where an author plants hints or clues in a story to suggest future events, plot twists, or character developments.
13	<b>Xenia</b>	Hospitality given unconditionally to a traveller, involving the giving of any help needed; known as 'guest-friendship'.
14	<b>Nostos</b>	The desire to return to your homeland.
15	<b>Fate</b>	The development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power.
16	<b>Civilised</b>	To bring (a place or people) to a stage of social and cultural development considered to be more advanced.
17	<b>Barbarism</b>	The absence of culture and civilisation; extreme cruelty or brutality.
18	<b>Kleos</b>	The glorious reputation a Homeric warrior hopes to win.
19	<b>Cyclopes</b>	A race of savage one-eyed giants.
20	<b>Cyclops</b>	A savage one-eyed giant.
21	<b>Enchantress</b>	A woman who uses magic to put someone or something under a spell.
22		

# 1 How is The Odyssey structured?

**Task:** Read the following plot summary of The Odyssey.

## Synopsis:

After an invocation to the Muse of poetry, the epic begins in medias res (“in the middle of things”). Odysseus has been gone from Ithaca for about twenty years – the first ten years spent fighting the Trojan War, the last ten trying to get home.

Meanwhile, Odysseus’ wife, Penelope, tries to fend off about one hundred suitors who have invaded the royal palace, seeking her hand in marriage (and the chance to rule Ithaca), and indulging in great amounts of food and wine at the hosts’ expense. Telemachus, son of Odysseus and Penelope, is just coming of age (he is approximately twenty-one years old) and is at a loss as to what to do about the suitors. Mother and son yearn for Odysseus’ return.

## Books 1-4: The Telemachy

The first four books deal with Telemachus’ struggle (in fact, Odysseus does not appear in the epic until Book 5). A secondary plot in The Odyssey is Telemachus’ coming of age, his own quest, which scholars sometimes refer to as the “Telemachy”.

The goddess Athena appears to the young prince in disguise and advises him to gather an assembly of the island’s leaders to protest the invasion of the suitors. Soon after, he is to visit King Nestor of Pylos and King Menelaus of Sparta, old comrades of his father to gather from them any news of Odysseus.

At the Assembly, two leading suitors – the aggressive Antinous and the smooth-talking Eurymachus – confront the prince. They accuse Penelope of delaying too long in her choice of a new husband. Telemachus speaks well but accomplishes little at the assembly because the suitors are from some of the strongest families in the area and are impatient with Penelope’s delays.

As Telemachus secretly sets off for Pylos and Sparta, the suitors plot to assassinate him. At Pylos, Telemachus learns a little of his father but is encouraged to visit Sparta where King Menelaus reports that Odysseus is alive but held captive by the Goddess nymph Calypso.

## Books 5 to 8: The Homecoming of Odysseus

Homer leaves the story of Telemachus as the suitors are about to ambush his ship on his return to Ithaca. At Athena’s urging, the gods have decided to free Odysseus from Calypso. Hermes, the messenger god, delivers the order to Odysseus’ captor. Odysseus has spent the last seven years with the goddess, sleeping with her at night and pining for his family and home during the day. Calypso is a beautiful, lustful nymph who wants to marry Odysseus and grant him immortality, but he longs for Penelope and Ithaca. Reluctantly, Calypso sends Odysseus on his way.

Poseidon, the sea god, spots the wayfarer and, seeking revenge because Odysseus blinded Poseidon’s son, Polyphemus – a cyclops – shipwrecks Odysseus on Phaeacia, which is ruled by King Alcinous. The Phaeacians, civilised and hospitable people, welcome the stranger and encourage him to tell of his adventures. Though Odysseus’ narration, the reader goes back ten years and hears his tale.

## Books 9 to 12: The Wanderings of Odysseus

Known as “The Wanderings of Odysseus” this section is the most famous of the epic. At the end of the Trojan War, Odysseus and his men sail first to the land of the Cicones. The Greeks succeed in raiding the central city but linger too long and are routed by a reserve force. Hoping to sail directly home, the flotilla instead encounters a severe storm, brought on by Athena, that blows them far off course to the land of the Lotus-eaters. These are not hostile people, but eating the lotus plant removes memory and ambition; Odysseus is barely able to pull his men away and resume the journey.

Curiosity compels Odysseus to explore then land of the Cyclops, a race of uncivilised, cannibalistic, one-eyed giants. One of them, Polyphemus, traps Odysseus' scouting party in his cave. To escape, Odysseus blinds the one-eyed monster, incurring the wrath of the giant's father, Poseidon.

Aeolus, the wind god, is initially a friendly host. He captures all adverse winds and bags them for Odysseus, who is thus able to sail within sight of Ithaca. Unfortunately, his men suspect that the bag holds treasure and open it while Odysseus sleeps. The troublesome winds blow the party back to Aeolus, who wants no more to do with them, speculating that they must be cursed by the gods.

The next hosts, the cannibalistic Laestrygonians, sink all the ships but Odysseus' in a surprise attack. The remaining Greeks reach Aeaea, home of the beautiful enchantress Circe, who turns several of them into pigs. With advice from Hermes, Odysseus cleverly defeats Circe and becomes her lover. She lifts the spell from his men and aids in the group's eventual departure a year later, advising Odysseus that he must sail to the Land of the Dead. There, he receives various Greek heroes, a visit from his mother, and an important prophecy from the seer Tiresias. Odysseus resumes his journey.

Barely surviving the temptations of the Sirens' songs and an attack by a six-headed monster named Scylla, Odysseus and his crew arrive at the island of the Sun-god Helios. Despite severe warnings not to, the men feast on the cattle of the Sun-god during Odysseus' brief absence. Zeus is outraged and destroys the ship as the Greeks depart, killing all but Odysseus, who is washed ashore at Calypso's island, where he stays until released seven-years later.

## **Books 13 to 24: Odysseus in Ithaca**

The story of his adventures finished, Odysseus receives the admiration and gifts of the Phaeacians who follow their tradition of returning wayfaring strangers to their homelands by sailing them to Ithaca. Meanwhile, Athena helps Telemachus avoid the suitors' ambush and arranges for him to meet his father at their pig farm not from the palace.

Reunited with his son and with the assistance of Athena and his faithful swineherd, Eumaeus, Odysseus returns to his home palace disguised as a beggar. For the time, he resists striking back at the suitors who insult and assault him. Penelope seems at least suspicious that he is her husband, but it is Eurycleia, a loyal nurse who cared for Odysseus when he was a child, who has no doubt of his identity as she discovers an old scar on his leg when she bathes him.

Penelope arranges a contest, vowing to wed any man who can string the great bow of Odysseus and shoot an arrow through a dozen axes as he used to do. The suitors all fail; only Odysseus himself can perform the feat. With deft planning and more help from Athena, he and Telemachus and two faithful herdsmen slaughter the suitors. Odysseus and Penelope are reunited, as are Odysseus and his aging father, Laertes.

Athena makes peace with the suitors' vengeful friends and families, avoiding civil war.

Odysseus is home at last.

**Task:** Using the information on pages 10 and 11, answer the following questions:

1. What are the four sections of The Odyssey titled, and how many 'books' are in each section?

1. We are introduced to Telemachus, Odysseus' son, in Books 1 to 4 of The Odyssey called 'The Telemachy' as it is suggested that Telemachus is to go on his own 'Odyssey'. What does he have to do on this Odyssey?

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2. At the start of Book 5, we are introduced to Odysseus for the first time. Where is he and how long has he been there?

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3. At the end of the "The Homecoming of Odysseus" Odysseus is shipwrecked on Phaeacia. Describe the Phaeacians.

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3. Put the following events from "The Wanderings of Odysseus" in the correct order.

Event	Correct Order
The Sirens	
Circe the Enchantress	
Battle with the Cicones	
Aeolus, the Wind God	
Land of the Dead	
End of the Trojan War	
Visit the island of Thrinacia	
The Sea Monsters: Scylla and Charybdis	
Land of the Lotus-Eaters	
Polyphemus the Cyclops	
Helios' cattle eaten by Odysseus' crew	
The Laestrygonians	
Captured on Calypso's Island	

5. Describe who the following characters are:

Name	Description
Odysseus	
Telemachus	
Penelope	
Antinous	
Eurymachus	
King Alcinous	
Polyphemus	
Circe	
Eurycleia	

We first meet Odysseus in Book 5 of The Odyssey. Due to how Homer structures The Odyssey, Books 5 to 8 come early in the novel, yet in time order it is relatively near to the end of his journey home.

Book 5 starts with the Gods all meeting at Athena's request to decide the fate of Odysseus and whether he should be allowed to return home to Ithaca. The Olympians are all there with the important exception of Poseidon. Odysseus is currently imprisoned on Calypso's island where he has been for the last seven years and it is agreed that he should be allowed to leave. Hermes delivers this message to Calypso and despite her love for Odysseus reluctantly agrees to Zeus' commands.

It is at this point we are introduced to Odysseus for the first time.

**Task:** Read the following extract from Book 5 of The Odyssey and then answer the accompanying questions:

### BK V:148-191 CALYPSO PROMISES TO FREE ODYSSEUS

**W**ith this the *mighty slayer* [p. 508] of *Argus* [p. 468] departed, and the lovely Nymph, mindful of *Zeus'* [p. 384] command, looked for valiant *Odysseus* [p. 533]. She found him sitting on the shore, his eyes as ever wet with tears, life's sweetness ebbing from him in longing for his home, since the Nymph no longer pleased him. He was forced to sleep with her in the hollow cave at night, as she wished though he did not, but by day he sat among rocks or sand, tormenting himself with tears, groans and anguish, gazing with wet eyes at the restless sea.

The lovely goddess spoke as she approached him: 'Be sad no longer, unhappy man, don't waste your life in pining: I am ready and willing to

send you on your way. Fell tall trees with the axe, make a substantial raft, and fasten planks across for decking, so it can carry you over the misty sea. And I will stock it with bread and water, and red wine to your heart's content, to stave off hunger and thirst, and I'll give you clothing too. And I'll raise a following wind, so you reach home safely, if that is the will of the gods who rule the wide heavens, since they have more power than I to fulfil their purpose.'

At this noble enduring Odysseus shuddered, and he spoke to her winged words: 'Goddess, you must mean something other, suggesting I cross the dangerous, daunting sea's vast gulf on a raft, where not even the fine swift sailing ships go, enjoying the winds of Zeus. I will not trust myself to a raft when you do not wish it, unless you, goddess, give me your solemn word that you are not planning something new to harm me.'

*Calypso* [p. 476], the lovely goddess, smiled at his words and, stroking his arm, replied: 'What a rascal you are, with a devious mind, to think of speaking so to me? So let Earth be my witness now, and the underground waters of *Styx* [p. 568], this the blessed gods' greatest most dreadful oath, that I will not plan anything new to harm you. Rather my thoughts and advice are like those I would have for myself if I needed them. My intentions are honest ones, and my heart is not made of iron. It too can feel pity.'



After setting sail for Ithaca, Odysseus meets further disaster and agony. Poseidon, who has a real hatred for Odysseus, and we will learn why, causes a storm and shipwrecks Odysseus once more.

He lands on the island of Phaeacia where he is offered food and shelter as a stranger should be under the ancient concept of *xenia*. Throughout Books 6, 7, and 8, Odysseus does not reveal his name to his hosts, and there is no expectation that he should – the Phaeacians are the best example of *xenia* being offered in the whole of *The Odyssey*. It would only be at the beginning of Book 9 that he reveals who he is and as he is about to tell his hosts of his tale.

As part of the hospitality, Odysseus watches some games or athletic events that are put on for his benefit. He is also encouraged to join in with the games. Read the extract below from Book 8.

## BK VIII:152-198 ODYSSEUS ENTERS THE GAMES

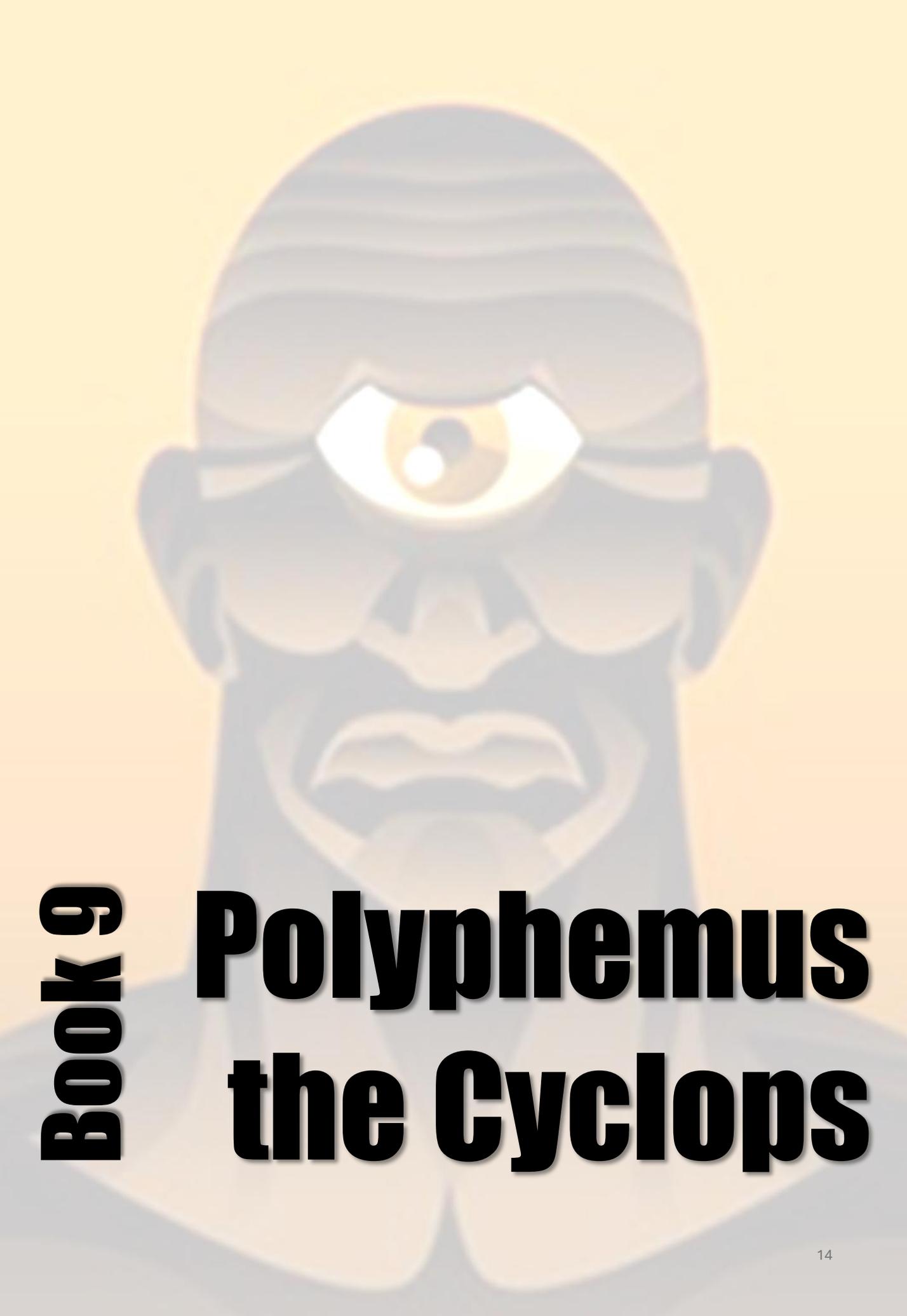
**L**aodamas<sup>l</sup> [l<sup>517</sup>] replied resourceful *Odysseus* [l<sup>533</sup>], ‘why provoke me with a challenge? My mind is on trouble not on play, since I have toiled and suffered greatly in the past, and now I long only to return home, and so I sit in your gathering and plead with your king and people.’

*Euryalus* [l<sup>497</sup>] answered then, mocking him to his face: ‘Indeed, stranger, you look like a man unused to manly sports, more like the captain of a merchant crew, trading to and fro in a sailing ship, careful for his cargo, keeping a greedy eye on freight and profit. You are no athlete.’

With a dark look, resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘Stranger, you speak unwisely, you are a man blinded by foolishness. How true it is that the gods seldom grace men equally with their gifts, of mind, form or speech. One man is meagre in appearance, but the gods crown his words with beauty, and men delight in him as he speaks sweetly in modest eloquence, conspicuous in a crowd, and looked on like a god as he crosses the city. Another seems an immortal, but his words lack grace. You too have exceptional looks a god could not better yet your mind is crippled. You have roused my spirit by speaking rudely. I am no novice in your sports: indeed I was one of the best when I had my youth, and strength lay in my hands. While now I’m constrained by pain and suffering, since I have endured many things in my passage through mortal warfare and hostile seas. And yet, though I’ve suffered deeply, I will join your contest, since your speech has stung me, and your words have riled me to the heart.’

With this he leapt to his feet, still wrapped in his cloak, and seized a discus bigger than the rest, thicker and heavier by some way than those the Phaeacians normally used in competition. Spinning around, he sent it from his huge hand, and it hummed as it flew: the *Phaeacians* [l<sup>550</sup>] covered, those





**Book 9**

**Polyphemus  
the Cyclops**

Book 9 is the first of the four books categorised as 'The Wanderings of Odysseus'. These four books are where Odysseus tells his tale to the Phaeacians about how he arrived in Phaeacia. It is the story of how he left Troy with a full crew of 600 men and how he ended up shipwrecked on an island with his crew all dead. Homer uses a flashback technique here. By pausing the story of Odysseus about to return to Ithaca with the Phaeacians help, Homer is able to tell of how Odysseus got there and all his adventures. The first story is primarily about his encounter with Polyphemus the Cyclops.

### Key Characters:

Odysseus		The main protagonist of The Odyssey. A hero in the Trojan War who saw about the destruction of Troy with his Trojan Horse. He leaves Troy at the end of the war with his crew to return to Ithaca, but his journey is fraught with problems, and it takes him ten years to get home.
Polyphemus		Polyphemus is a Cyclops and the main antagonist of Book 9. Presented as a savage beast by Homer. It would be his curse that would see to Odysseus' return home being so difficult.
Odysseus' Crew		When Odysseus left Troy, he has a loyal crew of 600 men, divided between 12 ships. His crew are integral to the plot of The Odyssey and provide a tool for us to examine Odysseus' leadership qualities.
Zeus (mentioned)		The king of all the gods assumes he can bend everyone to his will. He is referenced in Book 9.
Poseidon (mentioned)		The king of the seas, Zeus' brother, and father of Polyphemus.

### Key Themes in Book 9:

Theme 1		<b>Fate</b>	Perhaps the greatest example of fate and destiny and that Odysseus' fate is in the hands of the gods, occurs in Book 9 when Polyphemus brings down a curse on Odysseus after he reveals his name.
Theme 2		<b>Xenia</b>	The ancient Greek concept of offering hospitality to strangers. This theme is explored through Polyphemus and his treatment of Odysseus and his crew.
Theme 3		<b>Civilisation and Barbarism</b>	This theme is undoubtedly explored in Book 9 with Polyphemus representing the barbarism element of this.
Theme 4		<b>Deceit and Trickery</b>	Deceit and trickery play a major role in how Odysseus and his crew escape Polyphemus. Odysseus convinces Polyphemus he is 'Nobody' and manages to escape the cave by hiding under the sheep and rams.
Theme 5		<b>Revenge and Justice</b>	When Odysseus blinds Polyphemus it is out of revenge, and this is further added to with the revealing of his name. He wants Polyphemus to suffer physically and mentally by knowing who blinded him. Polyphemus exacts revenge on Odysseus by bringing his curse upon him.

## The Cicones

Resourceful Odysseus answered the king, saying: ‘Lord Alcinous, most illustrious of men, it is a fine thing, in truth, to hear a bard such as this, with a godlike voice. I say myself there is nothing more delightful than when all the people feel this joy, and the banqueters sit in their rows, listening to the minstrel in the hall, tables in front of them laden with meat and bread, while the steward pours wine from the bowl, and carries it round and fills the cups. It seems the loveliest thing of all to me.

But your heart prompts you to ask of my sad troubles, and make me weep and groan the more. **How shall I start and end my tale? First let me give you my name, so you all know, and if I escape from pitiless fate later, I will play host to you, though I live far off. I am Odysseus, Laertes’ son, known to all for my stratagems, and my fame has reached the heavens. My home is under Ithaca’s clear skies:** our Mount Neriton, clothed with whispering forest is visible from afar: and clustered round it are many isles, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus. Ithaca itself lies low in the sea, furthest towards the west, while the others are separate, towards the dawn and the rising sun. It’s a rugged land, but nurtures fine young men: and speaking for myself I know nothing sweeter than one’s own country. Calypso, the lovely goddess, kept me there in her echoing caves, because she wished me for her husband, and in the same way Circe, the Aeaean witch, detained me in her palace, longing to make me hers: but they failed to move my heart. Surely nothing is sweeter than a man’s own parents and country, even though he lives in a wealthy house, in a foreign land far from those parents. But let me tell you of my sad voyage back from Troy, that Zeus had willed.

**The wind carried me from Ilium to Ismarus, city of the Cicones. I sacked the city and slew the men, and the women and riches we split between us, so that as far as I could determine no man lacked an equal share. Then as you might imagine I ordered us to slip away quickly, but my foolish followers wouldn’t listen. They drank the wine, and slaughtered many sheep and shambling cattle with twisted horns. Meanwhile the Cicones rounded up others, their neighbours further inland, more numerous and braver, men skilled at fighting their enemies from chariots and on foot, as needed. At dawn they came, as many as the leaves and flowers of the spring: and disaster sent by Zeus overtook us, doomed, as we were, to endless trouble.** Drawing up their ranks by the swift ships, they fought us, each side hurling bronze-tipped spears at the other. Through that morning, while the sacred light grew stronger, we held our ground and kept their greater force at bay. But as the sun fell, at the time when oxen are unyoked, the Cicones succeeded in routing the Achaeans, and six of my well-armoured comrades died from each ship, but the rest of us cheated death and evil fate.’

We start Book 9 with Odysseus enjoying the hospitality of the King of Phaeacia.

It is the first example we have of ‘*xenia*’ in The Odyssey, with *xenia* being the custom of offering hospitality to strangers. Odysseus arrived on the shores of this island after being shipwrecked by Poseidon – we learn why as this book progresses – with no crew, no ship, nor anyway of getting home.

The Phaeacians have given him sanctuary and Odysseus prepares to tell them his tale.

It is the first time he reveals his name to them, and the line where he says, ‘I am Odysseus, Laertes’ son, known to all for my stratagems, and my fame has reached the heavens.’ is not said in boast, but almost a regret.

You see, this is Odysseus at the end of ten long years trying to get back from Troy to Ithaca, his homeland.

Over the next four books (9 to 12) he recounts his tales of the last 9 years of getting back from the Trojan War. We concentrate on just Books 9 and 10.

His first tale is that of his encounter with the Cicones (“kick-oh-nes”).

Here we get an insight into early Odysseus, a brave warrior and leader, who after the success in destroying Troy continues this with the city of Ismarus, but he is arrogant and complacent at this point of his story.

His men sack the city and spend the evening drinking and celebrating rather than leaving, allowing the Cicones to regroup and attack them. Due to his poor leadership, some of his men dying unnecessarily. Of the 12 ships that left Troy with c.50 men on board each, about 72 men were killed in the battle with the Cicones.

## Lines 63-104: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Lotus Eaters

'From Ismarus we sailed, with heavy hearts for the loyal friends lost, though happy to have escaped death ourselves: nor would I let the curved ships leave till we had called three times in ritual to each of our luckless comrades, who died there on the plain, at the hands of the Cicones. But Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, stirred the north wind against our ships, in a blinding tempest, hiding the land and sea alike in cloud, while darkness swept from the sky. Headlong the ships were driven, sails torn to shreds by the force of the gale. In terror of death we lowered the masts on deck, and rowed the vessels wildly towards land.

There we stayed for two days and nights, troubled at heart with weariness and grief. But when Dawn of the lovely tresses gave birth to the third day, we upped masts, hoisted the white sails, and took our seats aboard, and the wind and helmsman kept us on course. Now I would have reached home safely, but as I was rounding Cape Malea, the north wind and waves and the ocean currents beat me away, off course, past Cythera.

**For nine days I was driven by fierce winds over the teeming sea: but on the tenth we set foot on the shores of the Lotus-eaters, who eat its flowery food. On land we drew water, and my friends ate by the ships. Once we had tasted food and drink, I sent some of the men inland to discover what kind of human beings lived there: selecting two and sending a third as herald. They left at once and came upon the Lotus-eaters, who had no thought of killing my comrades, but gave them lotus to eat. Those who ate the honey-sweet lotus fruit no longer wished to bring back word to us, or sail for home. They wanted to stay with the Lotus-eaters, eating the lotus, forgetting all thoughts of return. I dragged those men back to the shore myself by force, while they wept, and bound them tight in the hollow ships, pushing them under the benches. Then I ordered my men to embark quickly on the fast craft, fearing that others would eat the lotus and forget their homes.** They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars.'

The Lotus Eaters is perhaps one of the most famous scenes from The Odyssey, yet is only a few lines in Book 9.

It tells of how Odysseus' crew get swept up in a storm created by Zeus for nine days, before, on the tenth day, having no idea where they are, land on the shores of the Lotus Eaters.

The Lotus is a fruit that acts like a drug to all those that take it. After sending in three men to scout the island, they partake in the lotus and lose all desire to return home and want to stay there.

It is Odysseus who rescues them here. It is he who drags them back to the ships and ties them down to prevent a mutiny.

This is an example of Odysseus as a strong and decisive leader. He makes the decision to help his men and not leave them behind. It might only be three men, but it is symbolic that Odysseus refuses to willingly lose men.

Is this a sign that he has learnt from the last experience with the Cicones?

## Lines 105-151: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Land of the Cyclopes

'From there we sailed with heavy hearts, and came to the land of the Cyclopes, a lawless, aggressive people, who never lift their hands to plant or plough, but rely on the immortal gods. Wheat, barley, and vines with their richly clustered grapes, grow there without ploughing or sowing, and rain from Zeus makes them flourish. **The Cyclopes have no council meetings, no code of law, but live in echoing caves on the mountain slopes, and each man lays down the law to his wives and children, and disregards his neighbours.**

A fertile island lies slantwise outside the Cyclopes' harbour, well wooded and neither close to nor far from shore. Countless wild goats inhabit it, since there is nothing to stop them, no hunters to suffer the hardship of beating a path through its woods, or to roam its mountaintops.

We now enter the main story of Book 9 – Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus.

Homer takes the opportunity – through Odysseus' telling of the story – to set out the context to readers of what the Cyclopes were.

He portrays them as savages – '...lawless, aggressive...' – and uncivilised. Homer is clearly setting up the Cyclopes to be the antagonists to Odysseus.

There are no flocks, and no ploughed fields: but always unsown, and untilled it is free of mankind and nurtures only bleating goats. The Cyclopes have no vessels with crimson-painted prows, no shipwrights to build sound boats with oars, to meet their need and let them travel to other men's cities, as other races visit each other over the sea in ships, no craftsmen that is who might also have turned it into a fine colony. For this island is by no means poor, but would carry any crop in due season. There are rich well-watered meadows there, along the shore of the grey sea, where vines would never fail. There is level land for the plough with soil so rich they could reap a dense harvest in season. And there's a safe harbour where there's no need for moorings, neither anchor stones nor hawsers: you can beach your ship and wait till the wind is fair and the spirit moves you to sail.

Now, at the head of the harbour a stream of bright water flows out from a cave ringed by poplars. We entered, and some god must have guided us through the murky night, since it was too dark to see, a mist shrouded the ships, and the moon covered with cloud gave not a gleam of light. No one could see the land, or the long breakers striking the beach, until we had run our oared ships aground. Once they were beached we lowered sail and went on shore, then we lay down where we were to sleep, and waited for the light of dawn.'

## Lines 152-192: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Cyclops' Cave

'As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we explored the island, marvelling at what we saw. The Nymphs, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, disturbed the mountain goats, driving them towards my hungry comrades. Quickly we brought our curved bows and long spears from the ships, and splitting three ways began to hunt them, and the god soon gave us a fine enough kill. Nine goats were given to each of the twelve ships in my command, and there were ten left for me.

So all day long till the sun set we sat and feasted on copious meat and mellow wine, since each of the crews had drawn off a large supply in jars when we took the Cicones' sacred citadel, and some of the red was left. Looking across to the land of the neighbouring Cyclopes, we could see smoke and hear their voices, and the sound of their sheep and goats. Sun set and darkness fell, and we settled to our rest on the shore.

**As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I gathered my men together, saying: "The rest of you loyal friends stay here, while I and my crew take ship and try and find out who these men are, whether they are cruel, savage and lawless, or good to strangers, and in their hearts fear the gods."**

With this I went aboard and ordered my crew to follow and loose the cables. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars. When we had reached the nearby shore, we saw a deep cave overhung with laurels at the cliff's edge close to the sea. Large herds of sheep and goats were penned there at night, and round it was a raised yard walled by deep-set stones, tall pines and high-crowned oaks. **There a giant spent the night, one that grazed his herds far off, alone, and keeping clear of others, lived in lawless solitude. He was born a monster and a wonder, not like any ordinary human, but like some wooded peak of the high mountains, that stands there isolated to our gaze.'**

*At dawn, and after feasting on goats, Odysseus decides to explore the island.*

*The reason he does this is he is dependent on the hospitality of others to continue his journey home. If he cannot take resources (like at Ismarus), he must depend on xenia being offered by others as without it he and his crew would surely starve.*

*Odysseus decides to take just his ship closer to the island of the Cyclops, leaving the others on a small island just outside of the harbour.*

*That they have to sail to the island is an important detail to the later story when they are trying to flee it.*

*Odysseus in telling this story, foreshadows much of what is to come: he talks of a cave, of a giant and a monster that lives in solitude.*

## Lines 193-255: Odysseus tells his tale

### Polyphemus Returns

**'Then I ordered the rest of my loyal friends to stay there and guard the ship, while I selected the twelve best men and went forward. I took with me a goatskin filled with dark sweet wine that Maron, son of Euanthes, priest of Apollo guardian god of Ismarus, had given me, because out of respect we protected him, his wife and child. He offered me splendid gifts, seven talents of well-wrought gold, and a silver mixing-bowl: and wine, twelve jars in all, sweet unmixed wine, a divine draught.** None of his serving-men and maids knew of this store, only he and his loyal wife, and one housekeeper. When they drank that honeyed red wine, he would pour a full cup into twenty of water, and the bouquet that rose from the mixing bowl was wonderfully sweet: in truth no one could hold back. I filled a large goatskin with the wine, and took it along, with some food in a bag, since my instincts told me the giant would come at us quickly, a savage being with huge strength, knowing nothing of right or law.

Soon we came to the cave, and found him absent, **he was grazing his well-fed flocks in the fields. So we went inside and marvelled at its contents. There were baskets full of cheeses, and pens crowded with lambs and kids, each flock with its firstlings, later ones, and new-born separated. The pails and bowls for milking, all solidly made, were swimming with whey. At first my men begged me to take some cheeses and go, then to drive the lambs and kids from the pens down to the swift ship and set sail. But I would not listen, though it would have been best, wishing to see the giant himself, and test his hospitality. When he did appear he proved no joy to my men.**

So we lit a fire and made an offering, and helped ourselves to the cheese, and sat in the cave eating, waiting for him to return, shepherding his flocks. He arrived bearing a huge weight of dry wood to burn at suppertime, and he flung it down inside the cave with a crash. **Gripped by terror we shrank back into a deep corner. He drove his well-fed flocks into the wide cave, the ones he milked, leaving the rams and he-goats outside in the broad courtyard. Then he lifted his door, a huge stone, and set it in place. Twenty-two four-wheeled wagons could not have carried it, yet such was the great rocky mass he used for a door.** Then he sat and milked the ewes, and bleating goats in order, putting her young to each. Next he curdled half of the white milk, and stored the whey in wicker baskets, leaving the rest in pails for him to drink for his supper. When he had busied himself at his tasks, and kindled a fire, he suddenly saw us, and said: **"Strangers, who are you? Where do you sail from over the sea-roads? Are you on business, or do you roam at random, like pirates who chance their lives to bring evil to others?"**

Of his crew, Odysseus selects twelve of his best men, and goes off to explore the island and look for whatever lives there.

Importantly, he takes a wineskin of very strong wine that they stole from the Cicones – so strong it is described as 'a divine draught.' This is important as this wine will be used later in the story. Homer throughout these passages in setting up the key elements and details of the story.

Odysseus and his crew now stumble across the cave of the Cyclops, and for someone who is supposedly so savage and uncivilised, we are presented with contrasting or conflicting images. The fact he lives in a cave supports the idea of uncivilised behaviour, but this cave contains cheeses, and pens for animals suggesting someone with the knowledge to make dairy products and someone who cares for his dairy animals.

We also get another glimpse into Odysseus' character as his crew, obviously scared, beg him to take the food and leave. Odysseus, by his own admission, does not listen as he wished to see the giant with his own eyes, and 'test' his hospitality. So, they wait.

When the giant arrives, immediately we are given a sense of his size and power, as everyone is 'gripped by terror' and tries to hide within the cave.

Due to Odysseus' poor leadership, the crew are now trapped in the cave when Polyphemus pushes a huge boulder across the entrance to the cave, trapping them in.

We then see the contrasting image of a 'terror' as he starts the process of separating the curds and whey to make cheese. It is then he notices them.

## Lines 256-306: Odysseus tells his tale

### Trapped

'Our spirits fell at his words, in terror at his loud voice and monstrous size. Nevertheless I answered him, saying, "We are Achaeans, returning from Troy, driven over the ocean depths by every wind that blows. Heading for home we were forced to take another route, a different course, as Zeus, I suppose, intended. We are followers of Agamemnon, Atreus' son, whose fame spreads widest on earth, so great was that city he sacked and host he slew. **But we, for our part, come as suppliant to your knees, hoping for hospitality, and the kindness that is due to strangers. Good sir, do not refuse us: respect the gods. We are suppliants and Zeus protects visitors and suppliants, Zeus the god of guests, who follows the steps of sacred travellers.**"

Brave Odysseus answers his questions as to who they are, and asks for hospitality and that they pose no threat.

He invokes the ancient concept of *xenia* in honour of the gods.

His answer was devoid of pity. "Stranger, you are a foreigner or a fool, telling me to fear and revere the gods, since the Cyclopes care nothing for aegis-bearing Zeus: we are greater than they. I would spare neither you nor your friends, to evade Zeus' anger, but only as my own heart prompted.

But tell me, now, where you moored your fine ship, when you landed. Was it somewhere nearby, or further off? I'd like to know."

His words were designed to fool me, but failed. I was too wise for that, and answered him with cunning words: "Poseidon, Earth-Shaker, smashed my ship to pieces, wrecking her on the rocks that edge your island, driving her close to the headland so the wind threw her onshore. But I and my men here escaped destruction."

**Devoid of pity, he was silent in response, but leaping up laid hands on my crew. Two he seized and dashed to the ground like whelps, and their brains ran out and stained the earth. He tore them limb from limb for his supper, eating the flesh and entrails, bone and marrow, like a mountain lion, leaving nothing.** Helplessly we watched these cruel acts, raising our hands to heaven and weeping. When the Cyclops had filled his huge stomach with human flesh, and had drunk pure milk, he lay down in the cave, stretched out among his flocks. Then I formed a courageous plan to steal up to him, draw my sharp sword, and feeling for the place where the midriff supports the liver, stab him there. **But the next thought checked me. Trapped in the cave we would certainly die, since we'd have no way to move the great stone from the wide entrance. So, sighing, we waited for bright day.'**

Polyphemus' response now highlights how brutal and savage he is. The line 'Devoid of pity' and his dismissal of the gods shows how uncivilised he is.

He then demands to know where they have come from and not liking the answer, the reader is shocked when he grabs suddenly grabs two of Odysseus' crew and brutally kills them.

The simile used by Homer to describe Polyphemus' killing of the two crew members is incredibly powerful. He compares them to 'whelps' [puppies] suggesting they are helpless against the powerful Polyphemus.

Homer then adds in a further simile describing the manner in which Polyphemus eats the crew to a 'mountain lion' adding to the idea he is a savage beast.

We also see a glimpse into Odysseus' resourcefulness here. As Polyphemus lies down to sleep, clearly not fearing the humans in the slightest, Odysseus wishes to kill him but stops thinking beyond that moment. If he did kill the Cyclops, he and his crew would also die as they would still be trapped in the cave. Odysseus somehow has to get the antagonist to open the cave door first.

## Lines 307-359: Odysseus tells his tale

### Offering the Cyclops Wine

'As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Cyclops relit the fire. Then he milked the ewes, and bleating goats in order, putting her young to each. When he had busied himself at his tasks, he again seized two of my men and began to eat them. When he had finished he drove his well-fed flocks from the cave, effortlessly lifting the huge door stone, and replacing it again like the cap on a quiver. Then whistling loudly he turned his flocks out on to the mountain slopes, leaving me with murder in my heart searching for a way to take vengeance on him, if Athena would grant me inspiration. The best plan seemed to be this:

**The Cyclops' huge club, a trunk of green olive wood he had cut to take with him as soon as it was seasoned, lay next to a sheep pen. It was so large and thick that it looked to us like the mast of a twenty-oared black ship, a broad-beamed merchant vessel that sails the deep ocean. Approaching it, I cut off a six-foot length, gave it to my men and told them to smooth the wood. Then standing by it I sharpened the end to a point, and hardened the point in the blazing fire, after which I hid it carefully in a one of the heaps of dung that lay around the cave. I ordered the men to cast lots as to which of them should dare to help me raise the stake and twist it into the Cyclops' eye when sweet sleep took him. The lot fell on the very ones I would have chosen, four of them, with myself making a fifth.**

He returned at evening, shepherding his well-fed flocks. He herded them swiftly, every one, into the deep cave, leaving none in the broad yard, commanded to do so by a god, or because of some premonition. Then he lifted the huge door stone and set it in place, and sat down to milk the ewes and bleating goats in order, putting her young to each. **But when he had busied himself at his tasks, he again seized two of my men and began to eat them.**

The idea of Polyphemus being a savage beast is further shown when he wakes and eats two more of the crew immediately.

But this savagery is then contrasted with how he then takes his flocks out of the cave to feed on the pastures.

It is in this moment that Odysseus concocts his plan to exact revenge on Polyphemus.

The first stage of the plan is to blind Polyphemus, not kill him. They need him to eventually open the cave door, but so long as they are trapped they are in danger. This danger is reduced if he cannot see the crew. They will blind him by creating a stake that they will drive through his eye whilst he sleeps.

That was when I went up to him, holding an ivy-wood bowl full of dark wine, and said: "Here, Cyclops, have some wine to follow your meal of human flesh, so you can taste the sort of drink we carried in our ship. I was bringing the drink to you as a gift, hoping you might pity me and help me on my homeward path: but your savagery is past bearing. Cruel man, why would anyone on earth ever visit you again, when you behave so badly?"

**At this, he took the cup and drained it, and found the sweet drink so delightful he asked for another draught: "Give me more, freely, then quickly tell me your name so I may give you a guest gift, one that will please you. Among us Cyclopes the fertile earth produces rich grape clusters, and Zeus' rain swells them: but this is a taste from a stream of ambrosia and nectar."**

In order to help him sleep, they deceive Polyphemus by offering him wine – the wine from Ismarus – but it is undiluted and too strong.

## Lines 360-412: Odysseus tells his tale

### Blinding the Cyclops

**'As he finished speaking I handed him the bright wine. Three times I poured and gave it to him, and three times, foolishly, he drained it. When the wine had fuddled his wits I tried him with subtle words: "Cyclops, you asked my name, and I will tell it: give me afterwards a guest gift as you promised. My name is Nobody. Nobody, my father, mother, and friends call me."**

Those were my words, and this his cruel answer: "Then, my gift is this. I will eat Nobody last of all his company, and all the others before him".

As he spoke, he reeled and toppled over on his back, his thick neck twisted to one side, and all-conquering sleep overpowered him. In his drunken slumber he vomited wine and pieces of human flesh. Then I thrust the stake into the depth of the ashes to heat it, and inspired my men with encouraging words, so none would hang back from fear. When the olivewood stake was glowing hot, and ready to catch fire despite its greenness, I drew it from the coals, then my men stood round me, and a god breathed courage into us. **They held the sharpened olivewood stake, and thrust it into his eye, while I threw my weight on the end, and twisted it round and round, as a man bores the timbers of a ship with a drill that others twirl lower down with a strap held at both ends, and so keep the drill continuously moving.** We took the red-hot stake and twisted it round and round like that in his eye, and the blood poured out despite the heat. His lids and brows were scorched by flame from the burning eyeball, and its roots crackled with fire. **As a great axe or adze causes a vast hissing when the smith dips it in cool water to temper it, strengthening the iron, so his eye hissed against the olivewood stake.** Then he screamed, terribly, and the rock echoed. Seized by terror we shrank back, as he wrenched the stake, wet with blood, from his eye. He flung it away in frenzy, and called to the Cyclopes, his neighbours who lived in caves on the windy heights. They heard his cry, and crowding in from every side they stood by the cave mouth and asked what was wrong: "Polyphemus, what terrible pain is this that makes you call through deathless night, and wake us? Is a mortal stealing your flocks, or trying to kill you by violence or treachery?"

**Out of the cave came mighty Polyphemus' voice: "Nobody, my friends, is trying to kill me by violence or treachery."**

To this they replied with winged words: "If you are alone, and nobody does you violence, it's an inescapable sickness that comes from Zeus: pray to the Lord Poseidon, our father."

Polyphemus, in his gluttony and foolishness, drinks cup after cup.

Again, we see Odysseus' forward planning and scheming come to the fore. In what seems like Odysseus just not wanting to reveal his name to Polyphemus, it is in fact Odysseus thinking beyond the moment.

By giving his name as 'Nobody' he is planning for a possible eventuality later on. It also symbolises Polyphemus' ignorance or naivety as he very much falls for it.

We then get to one of the most dramatic moments of the book when Odysseus and his crew blind Polyphemus. Homer's account is very vivid, and he uses an extended simile to really draw out how the crew 'drill' the stake into Polyphemus' eye. This simile is particularly affective as it mirrors the drilling of a ship, something very much associated with a naval crew.

It is then that Odysseus further planning comes to fruition.

Polyphemus' neighbours hear his screams and ask him what is happening. Polyphemus responds with 'nobody' is hurting him – he thinks he is shouting out the name of the person who is maiming him but in reality, he is just confirming to the others that he is ok, or only suffering from illness.

## Escape

'Off they went, while I laughed to myself at how the name and the clever scheme had deceived him. Meanwhile the Cyclops, groaning and in pain, groped around and laboured to lift the stone from the door. Then he sat in the entrance, arms outstretched, to catch anyone stealing past among his sheep. That was how foolish he must have thought I was. I considered the best way of escaping, and saving myself, and my men from death. I dreamed up all sorts of tricks and schemes, as a man will in a life or death matter: it was an evil situation. **This was the plan that seemed best. The rams were fat with thick fleeces, fine large beasts with deep black wool. These I silently tied together in threes, with twists of willow on which that lawless monster, Polyphemus, slept. The middle one was to carry one of my men, with the other two on either side to protect him. So there was a man to every three sheep. As for me I took the pick of the flock, and curled below his shaggy belly, gripped his back and lay there face upwards, patiently gripping his fine fleece tight in my hands. Then, sighing, we waited for the light.**

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, the males rushed out to graze, while the un-milked females udders bursting bleated in the pens. Their master, tormented by agonies of pain, felt the backs of the sheep as they passed him, but foolishly failed to see my men tied under the rams' bellies. My ram went last, burdened by the weight of his fleece, and me and my teeming thoughts. And as he felt its back, mighty Polyphemus spoke to him:

"My fine ram, why leave the cave like this last of the flock? You have never lagged behind before, always the first to step out proudly and graze on the tender grass shoots, always first to reach the flowing river, and first to show your wish to return at evening to the fold. Today you are last of all. You must surely be grieving over your master's eye, blinded by an evil man and his wicked friends, when my wits were fuddled with wine: Nobody, I say, has not yet escaped death. If you only had senses like me, and the power of speech to tell me where he hides himself from my anger, then I'd strike him down, his brains would be sprinkled all over the floor of the cave, and my heart would be eased of the pain that nothing, Nobody, has brought me."

With this he drove the ram away from him out of doors, and I loosed myself when the ram was a little way from the cave, then untied my men. Swiftly, keeping an eye behind us, we shepherded those long-limbed sheep, rich and fat, down to the ship. And a welcome sight, indeed, to our dear friends were we, escapees from death, though they wept and sighed for the others we lost. I would not let them weep though, but stopped them all with a nod and a frown. I told them to haul the host of fine-fleeced sheep on board and put to sea. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars. **When we were almost out of earshot, I shouted to the Cyclops, mocking him: "It seems he was not such a weakling, then, Cyclops, that man whose friends you meant to tear apart and eat in your echoing cave. Stubborn brute not shrinking from murdering your guests in your own house, your evil deeds were bound for sure to fall on your own head. Zeus and the other gods have had their revenge on you."**

The next stage of the plan now comes into operation – he needs to get him and his crew safely out the cave.

Polyphemus does open the cave door and, despite his blindness, sits in the doorway hoping to catch Odysseus and his crew by grabbing anyone who attempts to leave.

Odysseus plans for this by tying his crew to the underside of Polyphemus' flock of sheep. By tying them underneath, they hope to slip by Polyphemus. Odysseus will hold onto the underside of Polyphemus' prize ram, a symbol of Odysseus' importance perhaps.

Homer adds a moment of jeopardy here as it appears that Odysseus may not escape as he plans. Polyphemus can tell something is wrong with his ram – suggesting a level of civilised behaviour – but he gets the reasoning wrong, assuming that it is because the ram is sad about his owner's injury.

Once they have escaped, Odysseus and his crew race to their ship and plan to get away.

However, we now see an element of Odysseus' character that will lead to his struggles getting home, and his whole crew being perished in the journey home to Ithaca. As they leave the cave, Odysseus cannot help himself and mocks Polyphemus drawing his attention upon the escaping crew. This is such poor leadership, driven by an egotistical nature, that endangers his whole crew for no reason.

Rather than escaping easily and quietly, they now have to deal with an angry Polyphemus once more.

## Lines 480-525: Odysseus tells his tale

### Telemus' Prophecy

'He was enraged all the more by my words, and shattering the crest of a tall cliff, he hurled it at us, so that it fell seaward of our blue-prowed vessel, and almost struck the steering oar. The water surged beneath the stone as it fell, and the backwash like a tidal swell from the open sea, carried the ship landward and drove it onto the shore. But seizing a long pole in my hands, I pushed the boat off, and rousing my men ordered them with urgent signs to bend to the oars and save us from disaster. They bent to their oars and rowed, but as soon as we had put water behind us and doubled our distance I began shouting to the Cyclops, though the men round me called out on every side, trying to deter me with their appeals: "Why provoke the savage to anger in this stubborn way? The rock he threw into the sea just now drove the ship back on shore, and we thought we were done for. If he had been able to hear us speak but a word, he would have hurled another jagged stone, and crushed our heads and the ship's timbers with the power of his throw."

**So they argued, but could not daunt my ardent spirit, and I shouted to him again in anger: "Cyclops, if any man asks how you came by your blindness, say that Odysseus, sacker of cities, Laertes' son, a native of Ithaca, maimed you."**

At this he groaned, and said in answer: "Alas! The truth of that prophecy spoken long ago is fulfilled! Telemus, the seer, son of Eurymus, a tall fine man, lived here once, the greatest of prophets, and grew old here as soothsayer among the Cyclopes. He told me that all of this would come to pass one day, and I would lose my sight at Odysseus' hands. But I always expected some tall fine man, one of great strength, and now a puny good-for-nothing weakling blinds my eye, after plying me with wine. Come here, Odysseus, nevertheless, so that I might grant you guest gifts, and urge the great Earth-Shaker to see you home, since I am his son, and he says he is my father, and he, of his will, can heal me, where no other of the blessed gods or men can."

I replied, saying: "I wish I could rob you of life and spirit, and send you to the House of Hades, as surely as the Earth-Shaker will fail to heal your eye."

We see hear a demonstration of Polyphemus' strength as he pulls of a section of a cliff and hurls the rock at the escaping crew.

Having just missed his ship, Odysseus still does not learn and continues to goad Polyphemus despite the protestations of his crew.

In a show of pride and a need, like other heroes, for his reputation to grow, he reveals his true name to Polyphemus. He wants Polyphemus to know that it was him who did this.

Interestingly, fate is once again discussed here as it is revealed by Polyphemus that it was prophesied that a man called Odysseus would blind him.

This topic of fate is worth exploring here. It appears that Odysseus is the master of his own downfall by revealing his name to Polyphemus that he did not need to do, yet was it fate that he did? This is further supported by the notion that it was already preordained that Odysseus would blind Polyphemus, suggesting that Odysseus was never in control of his own actions in arriving at the island and the need to explore it.

## Lines 526-566: Odysseus tells his tale

### Polyphemus' Curse

**'At my words, he stretched out his hands to the starry heavens, and prayed to the Lord Poseidon: 'Hear me, Poseidon, dark-tressed Earth-Bearer, if I am your son, if you say you are my father, let Odysseus, sacker of cities and son of Laertes, never reach his home on Ithaca: yet if he is destined to see his friends and his fine house in his own country, may he come there late and in sore distress, in another's ship, losing all comrades, and let him find great trouble in his house.'**

So he prayed, and the dark-tressed god heard him. Then the Cyclops lifted an even larger rock, swung it in the air, and hurled it, with all his strength. It fell not far behind our blue-prowed ship, narrowly missing the tip of the steering oar, and the sea surged up around the falling stone, and its wave carried the ship forward and drove it to the far shore.

This is perhaps the most important moment in the book as Polyphemus curses Odysseus and calls upon his father, Poseidon, to never allow Odysseus home or, if he must [destined to] may he return home alone and in sore distress.

This would all come true.

He would get back to Ithaca, but it would take a long time, he would suffer, and he would return alone with his crew not making it.

So we reached the island where our other oared ships lay, with our friends round them, watching for us, and weeping. There we beached our vessel, and went on shore. We landed the Cyclops' flocks from the hold and divided them among us, so that as far as I could determine no man lacked an equal share. The ram my comrades in arms granted to me, as a separate gift, and when the flocks had been divided there on the shore I sacrificed to Zeus of the dark clouds, son of Cronos, lord of all, and I burned the thigh pieces. But he ignored my sacrifice, planning instead the destruction of my oared ships and my faithful friends.

All day long till sunset we sat feasting on our plentiful supplies of meat and sweet wine, and when the sun was down and darkness fell we settled to sleep on the sand. As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I roused my men, and ordered them to embark and loose the hawsers. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars.

So we sailed on, with heavy hearts for the loyal friends lost, though happy to have escaped death ourselves.'

As part of our study of Book 9 of The Odyssey, we need to not only understand the plot and recognise key quotations from it, but we also have to be able to write about the key characters: Odysseus and Polyphemus.

We have to understand where they fit in the plot of the story, but also about their personalities and characteristics.

Let's look at example for Odysseus:

"How shall I start and end my tale? First let me tell you my name, so you all know...I am Odysseus...known to all for my stratagems, and my fame has reached the heavens."

The quotation above has a number of key word choices that are highlighted below:

"How shall I start and end my tale? First let me tell you my name, so you all know...I am Odysseus...known to all for my stratagems, and my fame has reached the heavens."

In this example, we get a small insight into Odysseus' character and personality at this point in the story. We must remember that contextually, Odysseus is nearing the end of his ten-year journey to get home, he is alone as his whole crew have perished on the way, and he may be feeling guilty for being the cause of these deaths. He is a changed man from when he first starts this voyage.

When he says, "How shall I start and end my tale?" suggests that at this moment of being asked to tell his story that he has no idea how to tell it. Is he talking to the King of Phaeacia or this a moment of self-reflection, something that did not exist with Odysseus when he left Troy? It is a rhetorical question suggesting that only he can answer. It also suggests a level of melancholy from his experiences; a realisation that it is has been an emotionally painful and exhausting adventure.

Going further, the line '...known to all for my stratagems...' gives us an insight into his wider reputation and what Odysseus feels this reputation is built on. It is quite subdued in its language – he does not say 'I am known as a hero and responsible for the destruction of the Trojans.' or anything such as this. He does not say this boastfully or with any real sense of pride, again, seemingly with a hint of melancholy.

When he says, '...my fame has reached the heavens.' it again said without any real sense of pride or ego. That tone appears to be melancholy and almost regret that his name is even referred to by them.

Taking all this into account, we get a sense of a broken man, a man seemingly defeated by what has happened to him over the past ten-years, and understandably. Interestingly, in the actual order of the book, we are yet to learn the details of what he has been through, and following this line, he will start to tell that tale.

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of **Odysseus** through Book 9 of the *Odyssey*. Below is a series of extracts about Odysseus from the book. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Odysseus' characteristics, personality, and his qualities. You must then come up with words to describe him and support these words with evidence.

1

"How shall I start and end my tale?  
First let me tell you my name, so you all  
know...I am Odysseus...known to all for  
my stratagems, and my fame has  
reached the heavens."

2

"I dragged those men back to the shore  
myself by force, while they wept, and  
bound them tight in the hollow ships,  
pushing them under the benches. Then I  
ordered my men to embark quickly..."

3

"At first my men begged me to take  
some cheeses and go...But I would not  
listen, though it would have been best,  
wishing to see the giant himself, and  
test his hospitality."

4

"Then I formed a courageous plan to  
steal up to him, draw my sharp sword,  
and feeling for the place where the  
midriff supports the liver, stab him  
there. But the next thought checked  
me."

5

"Then whistling loudly, he turned his  
flocks out on to the mountain slopes,  
leaving me with murder in my heart  
searching for a way to take vengeance  
on him, if Athene would grant me  
inspiration."

6

"When the wine had fuddled his wits I  
tried him with subtle words: "Cyclops,  
you asked my name, and I will tell it:  
give me afterwards a guest gift as you  
promised. My name is Nobody.  
Nobody, my father, mother, and friends  
call me.""

7

"We took the red-hot stake and twisted  
it round and round like that in his eye,  
and the blood poured out despite the  
heat."

8

"...I began shouting to the Cyclops,  
though the men round me called  
out...trying to deter me with their  
appeals...So they argued but could not  
daunt my ardent spirit, and I shouted  
to him again in anger: "Cyclops, if any  
man asks how you came by your  
blindness, say that Odysseus, sacker of  
cities, Laertes' son, a native of Ithaca,  
maimed you."

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of **Odysseus** through Book 9 of the Odyssey. Below is a series of extracts about Odysseus from the book. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Odysseus' characteristics, personality, and his qualities. You must then come up with words to describe him and support these words with evidence.

The quotation suggests that Odysseus is a man who feels defeated by his experiences. The tone of the quote is one that is melancholy and regretful, especially in how he refers to himself. The rhetorical question suggests a man who is reflecting on things out loud, some internal conflict rather than about to tell a story of adventure and excitement.

1 Melancholy, Regretful	2	3
4	 Odysseus	5
6	7	8

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of **Polyphemus** through Book 9 of the *Odyssey*. Below is a series of extracts about Polyphemus from the book. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Polyphemus' characteristics, personality, and his qualities. You must then come up with words to describe him and support these words with evidence.

1

"Then we sailed with heavy hearts, and came to the land of the Cyclopes, a lawless, aggressive people, who never lift their hands to plant or plough...The Cyclopes have no council meetings, no code of law, but live in echoing caves on the mountain slopes..."

2

"Then he lifted his door, a huge stone, and set it in place. Twenty-two four-wheeled wagons could not have carried it, yet such was the great rocky mass he used for a door. Then he sat and milked the ewes..."

3

"His answer was devoid of pity...I would spare neither you nor your friends...leaping up laid hands on my crew. Two he seized and dashed to the ground like whelps, and their brains ran out and stained the earth. He tore them limb from limb for his supper, eating the flesh and entrails, bone and marrow, like a mountain lion, leaving nothing."

4

"Then he screamed, terribly, and the rock echoed. Seized by terror we shrank back, as he wrenched the stake, wet with blood, from his eye. He flung it away in a frenzy..."

5

"Polyphemus, what terrible pain is this that makes you call through deathless night, and wake us? Is a mortal stealing your flocks, or trying to kill you by violence or treachery? Out of the cave came mighty Polyphemus' voice: "Nobody, my friends is trying to kill me by violence or treachery"

6

"He was enraged all the more by my words, and shattering the crest of a tall cliff, he hurled it at us, so that it fell seaward or our blue-prowled vessel, and almost struck the steering oar."

7

"Hear me, Poseidon, dark-tressed Earth-Bearer, if I am your son, if you say you are my father, let Odysseus, sacker of cities, Laertes' son, never reach his home of Ithaca."

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of **Polyphemus** through Book 9 of the Odyssey. Below is a series of extracts about Polyphemus from the book. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Polyphemus' characteristics, personality, and his qualities. You must then come up with words to describe him and support these words with evidence.

The quotation, whilst not directly about Polyphemus, it describes the Cyclopes in general. Homer makes them out to be very uncivilised, almost savage in their behaviours and actions. This is best illustrated with the line '*...a lawless, aggressive people.*'

1 Uncivilised; Savage; Beastly	2	3
4	 Polyphemus	5
6	7	8

**Book 10**

**Odysseus  
and Circe**

Book 10 is the second of the four books categorised as 'The Wanderings of Odysseus'. These four books are where Odysseus tells his tale to the Phaeacians about how he arrived in Phaeacia. It is the story of how he left Troy with a full crew of 600 men and how he ended up shipwrecked on an island with his crew all dead. Homer uses a flashback technique here. By pausing the story of Odysseus about to return to Ithaca with the Phaeacians help, Homer is able to tell of how Odysseus got there and all his adventures. The second story is primarily about his encounter with Circe the Enchantress and is another fantastical tale.

### Key Characters:

Odysseus		The main protagonist of The Odyssey. A hero in the Trojan War who saw about the destruction of Troy with his Trojan Horse. He leaves Troy at the end of the war with his crew to return to Ithaca, but his journey is fraught with problems, and it takes him ten years to get home.
Circe		Circe is an enchantress, who is the daughter of the sun-god, Helios, and the ocean nymph, Perseis – making her a minor goddess. She is famed for her magical powers and potions, especially transforming men into animals.
Odysseus' Crew		When Odysseus left Troy, he has a loyal crew of 600 men, divided between 12 ships. His crew are integral to the plot of The Odyssey and provide a tool for us to examine Odysseus' leadership qualities.
Eurylochus		Odysseus second-in-command, and related to Odysseus through marriage.
Hermes		The messenger of the gods, sent by Zeus to help Odysseus in his struggle with Circe.

### Key Themes in Book 9:

Theme 1		<b>Fate</b>	The concept of fate is evident in Book 10 as Circe reveals a prophesy given to her by Hermes that Odysseus would visit her one day and be immune to her magic. Indeed, Hermes intervenes directly with Odysseus by telling him how to avoid Circe's magic.
Theme 2		<b>Xenia</b>	Both good and bad Xenia is displayed in Book 10. At first Circe is a poor host by turning Odysseus' crew to pigs without even a second's thought. Yet, once Circe frees the men, she becomes the perfect host and Odysseus and his crew stay with Circe for a whole year.
Theme 3		<b>Nostos</b>	Nostos is definitely a theme running through Book 10. Odysseus contemplates dying after his ship is blown off-course when he is so close to home. Yet, his nostos could be questioned in Book 10 as he has to be reminded by his crew of returning to Ithaca after a year on Circe's island.
Theme 4		<b>Deceit and Trickery</b>	Here is an element of deceit and trickery played by Odysseus in his plan to free his men. He avoids revealing who he is to Circe – a common theme for Odysseus – and pretends to accept her potion knowing that it will not affect him.

## Lines 1 – 55: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Bag of Winds

‘So we came to the floating island of Aeolia, where Aeolus lived, son of Hippotas, dear to the deathless gods. A wall of unbroken bronze surrounds it, and the cliffs are sheer. In those halls his twelve children live as well, six daughters and six fine sons, and he has given his daughters to his sons in marriage. They are always feasting with their brave father and good mother, with endless good food set before them. All day long the house is full of savoury smells, and the courtyard echoes to the banquet’s sound, while at night they sleep by the wives they love, on well-covered well-strung beds.

We came, then, to their city with its fine palace, and Aeolus entertained me there for a month, questioning me on everything: Troy, the Argive fleet, and the Achaean return. And I told him the whole tale in order.

**When I asked, in turn, to depart with his help, he too denied me nothing. He gave me a leather bag, made from the flayed hide of a nine-year old ox, and imprisoned all the winds there. The son of Cronos had made him the winds’ keeper, able to raise or calm them as he wished. He placed the bag in my hollow ship and tied it tight with shining silver wire, so not even the smallest breath might escape.** But he first called on the West Wind to blow and set my ships and their crews on our homeward course, though it was not to benefit us, ruined by our own foolishness.

Nine days and nights we sailed, and on the tenth our own land was in sight, near enough to see men tending fires. Then sweet sleep came to me in my weariness, since I had hauled on the sheets ceaselessly, handing over to none of my crew, in order to reach home more swiftly. Now my men talked among themselves, speculating about the treasures of gold and silver that Aeolus, mighty son of Hippotas, had given me. As they exchanged glances they said: “How honoured and loved Odysseus is by the men of every land and city! He carries home fine things from the spoils of Troy, while we who went the same journey return empty-handed. Now Aeolus, for love alone, gives him all these gifts. Come on, let’s see how much gold and silver there is in the bag.”

**Among them, talking like this, wicked thoughts prevailed. They opened the bag and all the winds rushed out. Then a tempest seized us, and carried us out to sea away from our own land. Then I woke, and debated in the depths of my heart whether to hurl myself from the ship and drown, or suffer in silence among the living. I stayed and suffered: wrapping my head in my cloak, I lay down on the deck. So, as my men groaned, the ships were carried back to the Aeolian island by a wicked gale.’**

Homer starts Book 10 by setting up the fantasy world of Aeolia – the land of Aeolus, the God of Winds. It is very much in contrast to the Land of the Cyclopes. This land belongs to a God whose home is loving, affluent, and full of feasting and entertainment.

Aeolus is another example of *xenia* being offered as it should – Aeolus hosts Odysseus and his crew for a whole month, before helping him return to Ithaca. This help is given by trapping all the winds that may blow Odysseus off-course and tying the bag up and placing it in Odysseus’ crew. He then calls on the West wind to help.

This is a crucial moment as this bag of wind will demonstrate that Odysseus’ destiny is already pre-determined, and it will also demonstrate that the relationship between Odysseus and his crew his is fraught and distrustful.

As soon as Odysseus falls asleep his men immediately start plotting against him assuming that Aeolus has given him treasure he is not willing to share – it really demonstrates the distrust that his crew have of him, perhaps due to the events of Polyphemus.

His crew believe that Odysseus has not been fair with them since Troy, and that they have gone ‘empty-handed’; they also suggest he takes all the fame. It shows real jealousy and envy from them. What is interesting is that it is not true – throughout Book 9 he shares everything equally.

As a consequence, his crew open the bag of winds and the result is that they are all swept back to Aeolus’ island. Odysseus’ *nostos* is seriously tested, he even contemplates drowning himself rather than have to suffer further. It also demonstrates how not even a god can alter destiny; Aeolus tried to help but couldn’t – maybe Odysseus’ crew are just instruments to make sure destiny fulfils itself.

## Lines 56-102: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Laestrygonians

‘We went ashore and replenished our water, my men eating a meal quickly by the swift ships. When we had eaten and drunk, I set out for Aeolus’ fine palace, taking with me a herald and one other of my men. I found the king feasting with his wife and children. We entered and sat down at the threshold by the doorposts. They were amazed, asking me: “Odysseus, how do you come to be here? What cruel god opposed you? We sent you off with care, heading for your home and country, as you wished.”

Aeolus is now shown in complete contrast to what he was before. Rather than *xenia* being offered, Odysseus is sent away as Aeolus fears upsetting the gods by helping a man clearly hated by the gods – he almost implies Odysseus has abused his previous hospitality – Aeolus’ attitude has fundamentally changed to Odysseus. Interestingly, Aeolus name means ‘changeful’; Odysseus visits him twice and is treated differently on each occasion.

## Lines 56-102: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Laestrygonians

Sad at heart, I answered: "Sleep and my foolish crew brought me harm, but you, my friends, have the power to set all to rights." They were silent at my speech, despite its flattering words. **Then the father replied, saying: "Leave our island, now, lowest of living men. It would be against religion for me to set a man on his course when the blessed gods revile him. Go, for you come as one the immortals hate."**

With this, he dismissed me from his palace, I groaning deeply. Grieving at heart, we sailed away. The men's spirits were depressed by the heavy work of rowing, since never a breeze came to help us on our way, because of their foolishness.

Six days and nights we sailed, and on the seventh we reached Telepylus, the great Laestrygonian citadel of Lamus, where the herdsman driving in his flock at the day's end calls to the herdsman driving his out as the day begins. There night and day is one, and a man who needs no sleep could earn a double wage, one for herding the cattle, one for grazing the white sheep. **We reached a fine harbour, with a stretch of sheer cliff on both sides, and narrow access between the opposing headlands, jutting out at its mouth. My captains took their curving ships inside, and moored them close together in the cavernous harbour, since all around us was shining calm, with never a wave, great or small. But I, alone, moored my black ship outside, near the cliffs, making fast to a rock.** Then I climbed the rugged headland, and stood there to look out: no cattle could be seen or buildings, only a trace of smoke rising inland. So I sent a party of my men to find out what sort of beings lived there. I chose two to go and a third as herald.'

The next stage of their journey is to reach the island of Telepylus - another fantasy island created by Homer to show how uncivilised non-Greeks were.

This is another prime example of Odysseus' poor leadership. He allows 11 of his 12 ships to moor in a harbour that is surrounded by cliffs as he saw this as a potential problem or danger. Yet, he does not share his worries or concerns with his men and allows them to stay in this hazardous place. He, in contrast, moors his ship safely outside of the harbour.

He then decides to send men out to explore the island having seen smoke rising inland, almost mirroring the same mistakes he makes on Polyphemus' island.

## Lines 103-132: Odysseus tells his tale

### Escape from the Cannibals

'Once ashore, they found a well-worn track down which wagons carried wood to the city from the mountain heights. Near the citadel they came across a girl drawing water, the sturdy daughter of Laestrygonian Antiphates. She had come to Artacia's flowing stream, from which the city drew its water. They approached her and asked who was the king of her people, and who the people were whom he ruled. She pointed at once to her father's lofty house.

**On entering his fine palace, they found his wife there, massive as a mountaintop, and they were shocked.** She called her husband, mighty Antiphates, straight from their gathering place, and he embarked on their cruel destruction. **He promptly seized one of my men, and prepared to eat him, while the other two sprang up and fled to the ships.** Then Antiphates roused the city, and hearing his cry the huge Laestrygonians crowded in from all sides, a countless host of Giants not men.

From the cliffs they pelted us with the largest rocks a man could lift, and from all the ships there rose the groans of dying men and the splintering of timbers. **Spearing the men like fishes, they carried them off to their loathsome feast.** While they were killing those in the harbour's depths, I drew my sharp sword and cut the cable of my dark-prowed vessel. Then calling to my men I ordered them to the oars, so we might escape from danger. With the fear of death on them they thrashed the sea with their blades, and to our joy the ship shot away from the towering cliffs, leaving the rest to founder where they were.'

Homer then goes into great detail to set the scene for what is about to happen.

Whilst not Cyclopes, the inhabitants of the island are giants and Homer stresses this with similes such as "...massive as a mountaintop".

Unlike the Cyclopes, there is an element of civilisation to the Laestrygonians as Antiphates, the king, lives in a "palace".

However, this potential scene of civility is broken suddenly as Antiphates acts very much in the vein of Polyphemus and just eats one of Odysseus' crew.

The crew are attacked and race to the harbour where all but Odysseus' ship is trapped.

Homer uses a simile to show how powerful and easy it was for the cannibals to eat Odysseus' crew - he compares the men to fishes being speared.

## Circe's Island

'So we sailed on, with heavy hearts for the loyal friends lost, though happy to have escaped death ourselves, and came to the island of Aeaëa, where Circe of the lovely tresses lived, a fateful goddess with a human voice, sister to dark-minded Aeetes: both children of the Sun that lights the world, and Perse, daughter of the Ocean. Here our ship closed the shore in silence, entering a harbour fit for vessels, guided by a god. When we had gone ashore we lay there for two days and nights consumed by weariness and grief.

But when Dawn of the lovely tresses gave birth to the third day I took my sharp sword and spear and climbed swiftly from the ship to a high lookout point, hoping to see signs of men, and hear their voices. I reached a rocky height with a wide view, and standing there I saw smoke rising through thick scrub and woodland, from the wide clearing where Circe's halls lay. **Seeing that smoke from a fire, I pondered whether to go and explore, but it seemed better to return to the ship and the shore, and allow my men a meal, then send them to investigate.**

**Then as I neared the swift ship some god took pity on me in that solitude, and sent a huge stag with great antlers right across my trail. The power of the sun had troubled him and sent him down from his woodland pasture to drink at the river's edge. As he came from the water I struck him on the spine with my bronze-spear, in the centre of his back, and it pierced right through, so he fell in the dust with a groan, and his spirit passed. Then I planted my foot on his carcass, drew the bronze spear from the wound, and laid it on the ground while I gathered willow shoots then wove a rope, six foot long, by splicing them together end to end. Next I tied the great creature's feet together, and carried him down to the black ship on my back, using my spear to lean on, since he was too large to sling over my shoulder and steady with my hand. I threw him down in front of the ship and cheered my crew with comforting words, tackling each man in turn:**

"We're not bound for the Halls of Hades ahead of time, my Friends, despite our troubles. Come, while there's still food and drink in our swift ship, let's think about eating, not waste away with hunger."

They soon responded to my words. They drew their cloaks from their faces to marvel at the stag's huge size, as he lay on the barren shore. When they had sated their sight with gazing, they washed their hands and readied a fine feast. All day long till the sun went down we sat and feasted on meat in plenty, and drank sweet wine. But once the sun had set and darkness fell, we lay down on the sand to sleep. When rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I called the men together and addressed them all:

"Listen, Friends, and understand our plight. We have no idea how far East or West we are, how far it is to where the light-giving sun rises or where he sinks below the earth. Though we should consider what options we have left, I suspect we have few. I climbed to a rocky lookout point and could see that the island is low-lying, ringed by the boundless waves. And in the centre I saw smoke rising through thick scrub and woodland."

The story sees Odysseus and his remaining ship continue on their journey unsure of where they are or how far from home. They arrive at Circe's island, Aeaëa.

Again, in a similar scene to what has gone before, Odysseus climbs up high and sees smoke rising in the middle of the island suggesting inhabitants and possible xenia.

We then see a glimpse into Odysseus' leadership qualities. He thinks about sending them off to investigate the smoke, but thinks they should have a proper meal first.

At this point a stag emerges - Odysseus thinks sent by a god - and we see how skilfully Odysseus captures the stag and carries it back to the ship for his men to feast on.

He then moves around them talking to each in turn and offering comforting words.

## Lines 198-250: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Magic Spell

**'At this, their hearts sank, remembering Laestrygonian Antiphates, and the fierce violence of the man-eating Cyclops. They groaned aloud, and wept great tears. But all their lamentation did no good.**

**I split my armed comrades into two groups, each with its own leader. I took command of one, and the other was led by noble Eurylochus.**

Then we shook lots in a bronze helmet, and brave Eurylochus's lot leapt out. Off he went with twenty-two tearful men, leaving us behind with our grief. **They found Circe's house of polished stone, in a clearing in the forest glades. Round it wolves and mountain lions prowled, bewitched by Circe with her magic drugs. Instead of rushing to attack my men, they rose on their hind legs and wagged their tails. Like dogs fawning round their master, back from a feast, bringing them the titbits they enjoy, the wolves and sharp-clawed lions fawned round my men, while they seeing these dread creatures were gripped by fear.** They stood there at the gate of the goddess with lovely tresses, and they could hear Circe's sweet voice singing inside, as she went to and fro in front of a vast divine tapestry, weaving the finely-made, lovely, shining work of the goddesses.

Then Polites, the dearest and most trusted of my friends, a man of initiative, spoke: "Friends, a woman, a goddess perhaps, is singing sweetly within, walking to and fro in front of a great tapestry, and the whole place echoes. Let's call out to her, now."

**At that, they shouted, and called to her, and Circe came to open the shining doors, and invite them to enter: and so they innocently followed her inside. Eurylochus alone, suspecting it was a trap, stayed behind. She ushered the rest in, and seated them on stools and chairs, and mixed them a brew of yellow honey and Pramnian wine, with cheese and barley meal. But she mixed in wicked drugs, as well, so they might wholly forget their native land. When they had drunk the brew she gave them, she touched them with her wand, and herded them into the pigsties. Now they had the shape and bristly hide, the features and voice of pigs, but their minds were unaltered from before. There they wept in their pens, and Circe gave them acorns, beech mast, and cornel fruit to eat, such as pigs feed on as they churn the mud.**

**But Eurylochus ran back to the swift black ship,** to convey the news of his friends and their sad fate. Much as he wished to, he could not speak a word, his heart was so full of anguish, and his eyes filled with tears, and his mind with sorrow. Only when we questioned him, amazed, did he manage to say what had happened to his friends:'

It is at this stage, that Odysseus has to tell his crew that they must explore the source of the smoke as they are dependent on xenia for their survival. Understandably, his crew react negatively to this thinking of the two previous encounters with strangers.

Yet, and this could be considered strong leadership, Odysseus continues with his plan realising the need to seek help. The easy option might have been to give in to his men's concerns, but he takes the harder one.

He splits the crew into two and we are introduced for the first time to Eurylochus, Odysseus' next in command. It is he who will lead the expedition.

They come across Circe's house and Homer foreshadows what will happen to the crew as they meet 'animals' outside Circe's home displaying human characteristics.

Circe offers them xenia, or so they think, and the crew foolishly rush headlong into her home. Mixing a spell, she turns them all into pigs and sends them off into pigsties. We learn of how cruel this is as they remain humans in mind, if not body. We also have no explanation as to why Circe does this.

It is only Eurylochus from the party that is not turned into a pig as he did not enter the house, and he rushes back to Odysseus and the remaining crew.

## Lines 251-301: Odysseus tells his tale

### Help from Hermes

"We went through the woods, noble Odysseus, as you ordered. In a clearing in the forest glades we found a fine palace built of cut stone. Someone inside, a woman or a goddess, was singing in a clear voice as she walked to and fro, in front of a huge tapestry. The men shouted and called to her, and she came to open the shining doors, and invited them to enter: and so they innocently followed her inside. But I, suspecting it was a trap, stayed behind. Then they all disappeared, and no one emerged again, though I sat a long time watching."

**At Eurylochus' words, I slung my great bronze silver-embossed sword over my shoulders, and my bow as well, and told him to take me there by the selfsame road.**

Eurylochus tells his tale and this acts the perfect opportunity for Odysseus to display his leadership and loyalty to his men. His first reaction - like at the island of the Lotus Eaters, is to rescue his men even if he does not yet know.

But he clutched at me with his hands, and clasped my knees, and spoke winged words, through his tears: "Favourite of Zeus, leave me here: don't force me to return unwillingly. I know you and our comrades will never come back. Let us escape quickly with those who are still here, and we may still evade the day of evil."

I replied: "Eurylochus, by all means stay here by the black ship's hull, eating and drinking, but I, bound by necessity, will go."

With this I climbed away from the ship and the shore. But as I walked through the sacred grove, towards the great house of Circe, a goddess skilled in magic potions, **Hermes of the Golden Wand, in the likeness of a young man at that charming age when down first covers the cheeks, met me as I approached. He clasped me by the hand and spoke to me:**

"Wretched man, where are you off to, wandering the hills of an unknown island all alone? Your friends are penned in Circe's house, pigs in close-set sties. Have you come to free them? I tell you, you won't return, you'll end up like the rest. But I will save you and keep you free from harm. You must take a powerful herb with you, and go to Circe's house, and it will ward off the day of evil. I will tell you all Circe's fatal wiles. She will mix a drink for you, blending drugs with the food, but even so she will fail to enchant you: the powerful herb I will give you will prevent it. Let me tell you the rest. When Circe strikes you with her length of wand, draw your sharp sword and rush at her, as if you intend to kill her. She will be seized with fear. Then she'll invite you to her bed, and don't refuse the goddess' favours, if you want her to free your men, and care for you too. But make her swear a solemn oath by the blessed gods that she won't try to harm you with her mischief, lest when you are naked she robs you of courage and manhood."

Eurylochus' reaction to this surprises Odysseus. He does not want to return to Circe's house, and would prefer even to flee the island altogether, but we see Odysseus suggest this is something he cannot do.

Homer is laying the foundations for a later scene when Odysseus returns from Circe's house having freed his men, only to find Eurylochus oppose him again. This scene is the start of Homer suggesting to the reader how important loyalty is to Odysseus - we will see this theme return later in this book but be more evident in Book 22.

The theme of fate is also brought into this scene when we see Odysseus travelling to Circe's house on, what he thinks is his own accord, only to find Hermes stop his journey to help him.

Hermes, whilst disguised, gives Odysseus the means to defeat Circe's magic that without would have probably seen him turned to an animal like Eurylochus warned.

## Lines 302-347: Odysseus tells his tale

### Encountering Circe

'With this the Slayer of Argus pulled the herb from the ground, and gave it to me, pointing out its features. It was black at the root with a milk-white flower. Moly the gods call it, difficult for mortals to uproot, though the gods of course can do anything. Hermes headed off through the wooded isle to high Olympus, while I approached the house of Circe, thinking black thoughts as I went along.

There I stood, at the gate of the goddess of the lovely tresses, and I called to her and she heard my voice. She came out straight away to open the shining doors, and invited me to enter. I did so, with a troubled heart. Once inside she brought me a beautiful silver-embossed chair, richly made, and with a stool for my feet. Then she mixed me a drink in a golden cup, and with evil intent added her drugs. When she gave it me, and I drank it down, though without feeling its enchantment, she struck at me with her wand, and cried: "**Off to your sty now, and lie there with your friends.**"

**At this, I drew my sharp sword and rushed at her, as if I meant to kill her, but with a cry she slipped beneath the blade to clasp my knees, and weeping spoke to me with winged words: "What man are you, and where are you from? What city is yours? And who are your parents? I wonder that you drank my potion, and were not bewitched. No other man when once he drank, and swallowed it, has ever withstood the spell. Surely your mind is not one to be swayed. You must be Odysseus, that man of many resources whom the Slayer of Argus, with the Golden Wand, told me would come from Troy here, travelling homewards, in his swift dark ship. Come, sheathe your sword, and let us two go to my bed, so we may learn to trust one another by twining in love."**

Armed with the powerful herb that will prevent Circe's magic working, Odysseus reaches the home of Circe and we are presented with a similar scene to before.

Circe invites him in, offers him a chair, and then refreshment with the drink being mixed with her powerful drugs. This is a confident Circe, a Circe used to having her own way and defeating potential threats using her magic.

Once it fails to work, we see a different Circe - one who has to beg for mercy. Odysseus follows Hermes instructions to the letter - again, how much humans have control over their lives is debated here. This concept of fate is then further explored when we realise that Circe - like Polyphemus before - has been expecting a man called Odysseus.

It is as though the whole of Odysseus' journey, which looks so accidental, spontaneous, and unplanned, has been preordained all along.

Those were her words, and I replied: "Circe, how can you demand that I be tender to you, you who have turned my friends to animals in your house, and now detain me, drawing me to your room, to your bed, with cunning intent, to rob me of courage and manhood when I am naked. I have no desire to go to bed with you, goddess, unless you swear a solemn oath by the blessed gods not to try and harm me with your mischief."

## Lines 348-399: Odysseus tells his tale

### Circe Frees the Crew

'When I had done, she quickly swore an oath not to harm me, as I required. And when she had sworn the oath I went with Circe to her fine bed.

Meanwhile her four handmaids, who serve her round the house, were busy in the hall. One of those children of springs, groves and sacred rivers that run to the sea threw linen covers over the chairs and spread fine purple fabrics on top. Another drew silver tables up to the chairs, and laid out golden dishes, while a third mixed sweet honeyed wine in a silver bowl, and served it in golden cups. The fourth fetched water and lit a roaring fire beneath a huge cauldron. When the water boiled in the shining bronze, she sat me in a bath, and bathed me with water from the great cauldron mixed with cold to suit, pouring it over my head and shoulders till she drew the deep weariness from my limbs.

When she had bathed me and rubbed me with oil, and dressed me in a fine tunic and cloak, she led me into the hall, and seated me on a beautiful silver-embossed chair, richly made, and with a stool for my feet. Then a maid brought water to wash my hands in a lovely golden jug, and poured it out over a silver basin so I could rinse them, and drew up a shining table beside me. The faithful housekeeper brought bread, and set it before me with heaps of delicacies, giving freely of her stores. Then she begged me to eat, though I had no heart for eating. My mind was full of other thoughts and my spirit was full of forebodings.

**When Circe saw me sitting there, not stretching out my hands to the food, but weighed down with sorrow, she approached and spoke with winged words: "Odysseus, why do you sit as if you were dumb, eating your heart out, not touching the food or drink? Are you suspicious of some new ruse? Have no fear, I have sworn you a solemn oath already not to do you harm."**

**To this I answered: "Circe, what decent man could bring himself to eat and drink before he had freed his men, and seen them face to face? If you wish me in truth to eat and drink as you ask, then set them free and let me see my loyal friends with my own eyes."**

At this, Circe, taking her wand, went out of the hall and opened the gates of the sty, and drove out what seemed to be full-grown pigs. They stood there and she went among them smearing each one with a fresh potion. Then the bristles, that Circe's previous hateful spell had made them sprout, fell from them, and they became men again, younger and handsomer and taller by far than they were before. **They knew me now, and each man clasped my hands, and all were wracked with weeping, till the walls echoed, mournfully, and even the goddess was moved to pity.'**

The 'new' Circe is very different to the one we have met previously. She now, rather than using xenia as a means to trap her prey, now carries it out in exemplary fashion.

Odysseus is fed and bathed, and Odysseus uses this situation to his advantage. Askign why he is not eating, Odysseus uses the moment to free his men by suggesting he will not eat or be happy until his men are free.

This is another insight into Odysseus' character and resourcefulness. He uses words and speech to manipulate situations to his advantage. Circe responds to his words and frees his men.

They return to their human form and there is genuine affection between Odysseus and his freed crew members. They embrace and weep that all are safe.

## Lines 400-448: Odysseus tells his tale

### He Gathers his Men

‘Then the lovely goddess drew near, and said: “Odysseus, of many resources, scion of Zeus, Laertes’ son, go now to your swift ship and the shore. Drag your ship on land: store your tackle and goods in the caves. Then return with your loyal friends.”’

To this my proud heart consented, and I went down to the swift ship and the shore, and there by the speedy vessel I found my faithful comrades, lamenting and shedding tears. Like calves in a farmyard that frisk around the herd of cows that return from grazing, free from their pens and gambolling together, lowing constantly round their mothers, so those men, at the sight of me, crowded round weeping, and in their hearts they felt as though they were home again in rugged Ithaca, in the town where they were born and bred. Still grieving, they spoke with winged words: “We are as happy, favourite of Zeus, as though we were back in Ithaca, but tell us the fate of the rest of our friends.”

I replied with calming words: “First drag the ship on land, and store our tackle and goods in the caves, then hurry, follow me, and you’ll see your friends eating and drinking in Circe’s halls, where there’s enough food and drink to last for ever.” They quickly responded to my words. **Only Eurylochus of all my friends hung back. And he spoke to them with winged words: “Wretched fools, where are you off to? Are you so in love with trouble you’ll visit Circe’s house, she who will change you all to pigs, or wolves, or lions to guard her great hall under duress? Remember how Cyclops too behaved, when our friends entered his cave with reckless Odysseus, this man through whose foolishness they died.”**

**Those were his words, and I felt like drawing the long sword strapped to my sturdy thigh and striking his head to the ground, though he was a kinsman of mine by marriage, but my friends each checked me with soothing words: “Scion of Zeus, let’s leave him behind, if you will, to stay and guard the ship, while you lead us to Circe’s sacred house.”**

So we left the ship and shore, but Eurylochus did not stay behind by the hollow hull, he came with us, fearing my stern rebuke.’

Circe then makes the suggestion to get all his crew and return to the house so that all his crew can have their fair share of hospitality. Odysseus does so and returns to get his men himself. The simile tries to convey just how happy his crew are to see him return and their reaction to seeing him. Homer compares his reaction to that of young calves seeing their mother after they have been parted, and how they leap about in joy on being reunited. The comparison of Odysseus to being their parent is not accidental and implies how they feel about him as a leader. It is also no accident that the simile involves animals bearing in mind that Circe had turned some of the crew into pigs.

It is at this moment we get the realisation of the Eurylochus story and how important loyalty is to Odysseus.

Eurylochus’ response to returning to Circe’s house might be rooted in fear, but Odysseus sees it as betrayal. Eurylochus’ speech to the crew about Odysseus might be what they are all thinking, but Odysseus cannot have this disloyalty. He is called “reckless” and “through whose foolishness they died” when talking about lost crew members.

This disloyalty or betrayal now needs to be dealt with – exploring the theme of revenge and justice – and Odysseus’ first reaction is to draw his sword and kill Eurylochus. He only doesn’t as, for once, he listens to his crew who beg him to show mercy. Surprisingly, Odysseus does, suggesting a leader that is now more willing to listen to his crew.

## Lines 449-502: Odysseus tells his tale

### He Seeks to Leave

‘Meanwhile my friends had been bathed in Circe’s house, through her kind ministrations, and had been rubbed with rich oil, and dressed in tunics and fleece-lined cloaks, and we found them feasting happily in the hall. When my two companies saw each other face to face, they wept and moaned in recognition, and the whole house echoed. Then the lovely goddess approached me, saying: “Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, calm this outpouring of grief. I know myself all you have suffered on the teeming waves, and all the wrongs that enemies have done to you on land. But, come now, eat my food and drink my wine, till you each regain the spirit you had when you left your homes on rugged Ithaca. You are spiritless, and drained by endless thought of your harsh journey, and your hearts are always joyless, for in truth you have suffered.”’

Our proud hearts yielded to her words. And so we stayed there, day after day, eating food in plenty, and drinking the sweet wine. **But when a whole year had gone by, as the months and seasons passed, and the longer days had returned my loyal friends took me aside and said: “Man who is kin to the gods, remember your native country, now, if it is still your fate to escape, and reach your lofty house, and your own land.”**

Two further themes are explored in the next section: *xenia* and *nostos*.

Circe continues to demonstrate perfect *xenia* to Odysseus and his crew, and they end up staying much longer than they all anticipated. Homer references “a whole year has gone by” suggesting that one year out of the ten is spent in the company of Circe as much due to the comfort she offers as anything else.

After this year, Odysseus only feels his *nostos* – desire to return home – after being prompted by his men.

My proud heart yielded to their words. A further long day, till sunset, we feasted on meat in plenty and drank sweet wine. When the sun sank and darkness fell, they settled down to sleep in the shadowy hall, but I went to Circe's lovely bed, and clasped her knees, and the goddess listened as I spoke winged words: **"Circe, keep the promise you gave and send me on my way, since my spirit is eager for home, and so too are my friends', who weary me with their grief whenever you happen to be absent."**

To this the lovely goddess replied swiftly: "Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, don't stay here a moment longer against your will, but before you head for home you must make another journey. You must seek the House of Hades and dread Persephone, and consult the ghost of the blind Theban seer, Teiresias. His mind is still unimpaired, for even in death Persephone grants him mental powers, so that he alone has wisdom, while the others flit like shadows."

**At her words my spirits fell, sitting there on the bed I wept, and I no longer wished to live, and see the sunlight. But when I was wearied with weeping and wringing my hands, I answered her, saying: "Circe, who will guide us on the way? No man yet has ever sailed to Hades in a black ship."**

The nostos of Odysseus that was questioned before is no longer in doubt. As Odysseus hears that Circe will willingly let him go, his heart is broken by her revelation that he cannot return straight home to Ithaca but before doing so must travel to the land of the dead to seek the knowledge of a seer called Teiresias.

Odysseus' response is once again to contemplate whether he can go on – his nostos was never in question just forgotten – and he contemplates ending his cruel struggle. Thinking this through, this is in just the first two years of his journey home – he will eventually have to be imprisoned on Calypso's island for a further 7-8 years.

## Lines 503-574: Odysseus tells his tale

### The Death of Elpenor

"The lovely goddess replied swiftly: "Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, don't think of finding a pilot to guide your vessel, but raise your mast and spread your white sail, and take your seat aboard, and the North Wind's breath will send her on her way. When you have crossed the Ocean stream, beach your ship by the deep swirling waters on a level shore, where tall poplars, and willows that shed seed, fill the Groves of Persephone. Then go to the moist House of Hades. There is a rock where two roaring rivers join the Acheron, Cocytus, which is a tributary of the Styx, and Pyriphlegethon. Draw near then, as I bid you, hero, and dig a trench two feet square, then pour a libation all around to the dead, first of milk and honey, then of sweet wine, thirdly of water, sprinkled with white barley meal. Then pray devoutly to the powerless ghosts of the departed, swearing that when you reach Ithaca you will sacrifice a barren heifer in your palace, the best of the herd, and will heap the altar with rich spoils, and offer a ram, apart, to Teiresias, the finest jet-black ram in the flock.

And when you have petitioned the glorious host of the dead, with prayers, sacrifice a ram and a black ewe, holding their heads towards Erebus, while you look behind towards the running streams. Then the hosts of the dead will appear. Call then to your comrades, and tell them to flay and burn the sheep killed by the pitiless bronze, with prayers to the divinities, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone. You yourself must draw your sharp sword and sit there, preventing the powerless ghosts from drawing near to the blood, till you have questioned Teiresias. Soon the seer will come, you leader of men, and give you your course, and the distances, so you can return home over the teeming waters."

And when you have petitioned the glorious host of the dead, with prayers, sacrifice a ram and a black ewe, holding their heads towards Erebus, while you look behind towards the running streams. Then the hosts of the dead will appear. Call then to your comrades, and tell them to flay and burn the sheep killed by the pitiless bronze, with prayers to the divinities, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone. You yourself must draw your sharp sword and sit there, preventing the powerless ghosts from drawing near to the blood, till you have questioned Teiresias. Soon the seer will come, you leader of men, and give you your course, and the distances, so you can return home over the teeming waters.”

Circe finished speaking, and with that came golden-throned Dawn. Then the Nymph dressed me in a tunic and cloak, and clothed herself in a beautiful long white closely-woven robe, and clasped a fine belt of gold around her waist, and set a veil on her head. Then I walked through the halls, rousing my men with cheerful words, speaking to each in turn: “My lady Circe has explained what I need to know: don’t lie there culling the flower of sweet sleep: let us be on our way.”

**Those were my words, and their proud hearts yielded. But even now I could not get my men away unscathed. The youngest of all was Elpenor, not one of the cleverest or bravest in battle. Heavy with wine he had climbed to the roof of Circe’s sacred house, seeking the cool night air, and had slept apart from his friends. Hearing the stir and noise of their departure, he leapt up suddenly, and forgetting the way down by the long ladder, he fell headlong from the roof. His neck was shattered where it joins the spine: his ghost descended, to the House of Hades.**

My crew were already on their way, as I addressed them: “No doubt you think you are heading home, but Circe has set us on a different course, to the House of Hades and dread Persephone where I must consult the ghost of Theban Teiresias.” At this their spirits fell, and they sat right down where they were and wept, and tore at their hair. But their lamentations served no purpose.

While we made our way to our swift vessel and the shore, grieving and shedding tears, Circe went on ahead of us, and tethered a ram and a black ewe by the black ship. She had easily slipped by us: who can observe a goddess passing to and fro, if she wishes otherwise?’

Odysseus has found his inner strength and his determination to continue and now knowing what he must do, he realises that they must leave and follow what destiny has in store for them. The moments of doubt are gone and Odysseus resembles the heroic character we expect.

The story of Elpenor is an interesting one as it appears right at the end of Book 10. Remember that Odysseus is telling this tale to King Alcinous, and we are learning of Elpenor’s death as a flashback. It is interesting how Odysseus sounds here – he is almost humble and upset at himself they he still could not protect his crew, showing his love for them despite their tempestuous relationship. Words such as ...‘but even now I could not get my men away unscathed.’ show an Odysseus reflecting on events that are out of his control.

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of **Odysseus** through Book 10 of the Odyssey. Below is a series of extracts about Odysseus from the book. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Odysseus' characteristics, personality, and his qualities. You must then come up with words to describe him and support these words with evidence.

1 "They opened the bag and all the winds rushed out...Then I woke, and debated in the depths of my heart whether to hurl myself from the ship and drown, or suffer in silence among the living."

2 "I threw him down [a stag] in front of the ship and cheered my crew with comforting words, tackling each man in turn: "We're not bound for the Halls of Hades ahead of our time, my Friends, despite our troubles."

3 "At this their hearts sank, remembering Laestrygonian Antiphates, and the fierce violence of the man-eating Cyclops. They groaned aloud, and wept great tears. But all their lamentation did no good. I split my armed comrades into two groups..."

4 "'Off to your sty now, and lie with your friends." At this, I drew my sharp sword and rushed at her, as if I meant to kill her..."

5 "To this I answered: "Circe, what decent man could bring himself to eat and drink before he had freed his men, and seen them face to face? If you wish me in truth to eat and drink as you ask, then set them free and let me see my loyal friends with my own eyes."

6 "Those were his [Eurylochus] words, and I felt like drawing the long sword strapped to my sturdy thigh and striking his head to the ground, though he was a kinsman of mine by marriage, but my friends each checked me with soothing words..."

7 "At her [Circe] words my spirits fell, sitting there on the bed I wept, and I no longer wished to live, and see the sunlight. But when I was wearied with weeping and wringing my hands, I answered her, saying: "Circe, who will guide us on the way? No man yet has ever sailed to Hades in a black ship.""

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of **Odysseus** through Book 10 of the *Odyssey*. Below is a series of extracts about Odysseus from the book. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Odysseus' characteristics, personality, and his qualities. You must then come up with words to describe him and support these words with evidence.

1	2	3
4	 <b>Odysseus</b>	5
6	7	

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of Circe through Book 10 of the *Odyssey*. Below is a series of extracts about Polyphemus from the book. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Polyphemus' characteristics, personality, and his qualities. You must then come up with words to describe him and support these words with evidence.

1 "They found Circe's house of polished stone, in a clearing in the forest glades. Round it wolves and mountain lions prowled, bewitched by Circe with her magic drugs."

2 "...they shouted and called to her, and Circe came to open the shining doors, and invite them to enter: and so they innocently followed her inside...and mixed them a brew of yellow honey and Pramnian wine...But she mixed in wicked drugs as well...When they had drunk the brew she gave them, she touched them with er wand, and herded them into the pigsties."

3 "Then she mixed me a drink in a golden cup, and with evil intent added her drugs. When she gave it to me, and I drank it down, though without feeling its enchantment, she struck at me with her wand, and cried: "Off to your sty now, and lie there with your friends.""

4 "...but with a cry she slipped beneath the blade to clasp my knees, and weeping spoke to me with winged words: "What man are you, and where are you from?...No other man when once he drank, and swallowed it, has ever withstood the spell.""

5 ""Come sheath your sword, and let us to go to my bed, so we may learn to trust one another by twining in love". Those were her words...She quickly swore an oath not to harm me, as I required. And when she had sworn the oath I went with Circe to her fine bed."

6 "At this, Circe, taking her wand, went out of the hall and opened the gates of the sty, and drove out what seemed to be full-grown pigs...and she went among them smearing each one with a fresh potion...and they became men again...and all were wracked with weeping...and even the goddess was moved to pity."

7 "To this the lovely goddess replied swiftly: "Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, sone Laertes, don't stay here a moment longer against your will, but before you head for home, you must make another journey.""

8 "While we made our way to our swift vessel and the shore, grieving and shedding tears, Circe went on ahead of us, and tethered a ram and a black ewe by the black ship. She has easily slipped by us: who can observe a goddess passing to and fro, if she swishes otherwise?"

**Task:** We are going to explore the character of Demeter through the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. Below is a series of extracts about Demeter from the hymn. Your task is to analyse each one and consider what they tell you about Demeter's characteristics, personality, and her qualities. You must then come up with words to describe her and support these words with evidence.

1	2	3
4	 Circe	5
6	7	8

## What literary techniques have been used in Books 9 and 10?

Like any author, be it ancient or modern, Homer uses several literary techniques to add depth and colour to his writing. The aim is always to create effective characters, settings, narratives, and themes. When studying *The Odyssey*, you may well be asked to comment on some of these techniques and the effective they have on the reader; very much like you would when studying a text in English Literature.

Below are a list of the techniques used by Homer and their definitions.

Literary Device	Description
<b>Simile</b>	A comparison made using 'like' or 'as' to create a vivid, and relatable, image.
<b>Anthropomorphism</b>	A type of imagery in which non-human objects or animals are given <i>literal</i> human characteristics; this is similar to personification but different in that personification is not meant literally.
<b>Dramatic Irony</b>	A technique where the reader knows something that the character does not, creating tension, suspense, or a sense of tragedy.
<b>Direct Speech</b>	A technique used to provide an insight into a character's thoughts or inner voice. It can also help reveal plot or create tension.
<b>Pathos</b>	A technique that evokes an emotional response in the reader, usually pity or empathy, towards a character.
<b>Pace</b>	The technique of controlling the speed at which a story unfolds; manipulating the pace is a powerful technique to build tension.
<b>Graphic Description or Imagery</b>	This technique is used to create vivid mental pictures for the reader, often appealing to one or more of the senses. This makes the story more immersive.
<b>Foreshadowing</b>	A technique where an author plants hints or clues in a story to suggest future events, plot twists, or character developments.

In the example below, we can identify several of the above techniques being used.

They found Circe's house of polished stone, in a clearing in the forest glades. **Round it wolves and mountain lions prowled, bewitched by Circe with her magic drugs.** Instead of rushing to attack my men, they rose on their hind legs and wagged their tails. **Like dogs fawning round their master, back from a feast, bringing them the titbits they enjoy,** the wolves and sharp-clawed lions **fawned** round my men, while they seeing these dread creatures were gripped by fear. They stood there at the gate of the goddess with lovely tresses, and they could hear Circe's sweet voice singing inside, as she went to and fro in front of a vast divine tapestry, weaving the finely-made, lovely, shining work of the goddesses. Then Polites, the dearest and most trusted of my friends, a man of initiative, spoke: **"Friends, a woman, a goddess perhaps, is singing sweetly within, walking to and fro in front of a great tapestry, and the whole place echoes. Let's call out to her, now."**

### Simile:

The simile here is to compare the actions of supposed wild animals to domestic ones. The effect of this is to make the reader understand the actions of the animals are more akin to how domestic animals behave around their owner - wild animals, such as wolves, would not behave in this manner and Homer wishes to emphasise the importance of this moment to readers.

### Direct Speech:

Homer uses direct speech to for two purposes. It gives us an insight into how the crew are feeling at this point in the story - when they should be afraid, they are not. Secondly, it moves the narrative on to the next stage. It is they who will initiate contact with Circe and the plot can then develop further.

### Personification:

The wild animals in the extract have been personified. Wolves cannot 'fawn', which means to exaggerate affection to gain favour. Animals might be affectionate to their owners, but it is not in a manipulative manner that the word fawn implies.

### Foreshadowing:

Whilst not the best example, it is an example of foreshadowing. Homer lays the hint that something may well happen to these men which has happened to others before them. The manner in which the animals run to the crew, and the mention in the same sentence of her magic, combined with the later personification, is a subtle sign that these animals were once human.

**Task:** Your task is to explore the extracts and identify what literary techniques Homer has employed in them. You will be asked to explain the intended effect it has on the reader.

### Extract 1: From Lines 1 – 60: Odysseus tells his tale: The Cicones

‘Meanwhile the Cicones rounded up others, their neighbours further inland, more numerous and braver, men skilled at fighting their enemies from chariots and on foot, as needed. At dawn they came, as many as the leaves and flowers of the spring: and disaster sent by Zeus overtook us, doomed, as we were, to endless trouble.’

1. Identify and highlight the **simile** in the above extract.
2. What is the **simile** comparing, and what effect does it have on the reader?

### Extract 1: From Lines 193 - 255: Odysseus tells his tale: Polyphemus Returns

‘Then I ordered the rest of my loyal friends to stay there and guard the ship, while I selected the twelve best men and went forward. I took with me a goatskin filled with dark sweet wine that Maron, son of Euanthes, priest of Apollo guardian god of Ismarus, had given me, because out of respect we protected him, his wife and child. He offered me splendid gifts, seven talents of well-wrought gold, and a silver mixing-bowl: and wine, twelve jars in all, sweet unmixed wine, a divine draught. None of his serving-men and maids knew of this store, only he and his loyal wife, and one housekeeper. When they drank that honeyed red wine, he would pour a full cup into twenty of water, and the bouquet that rose from the mixing bowl was wonderfully sweet: in truth no one could hold back. I filled a large goatskin with the wine, and took it along, with some food in a bag, since my instincts told me the giant would come at us quickly, a savage being with huge strength, knowing nothing of right or law.’

1. Identify and highlight the **foreshadowing** in the above extract.
2. Identify and highlight the **detailed description (imagery)** of the wine.
3. Why has Homer described this wine in such detail and why so early in the book?

### Extract 3: From Lines 256 - 306: Odysseus tells his tale: Trapped

‘Devoid of pity, he was silent in response, but leaping up laid hands on my crew. Two he seized and dashed to the ground like whelps, and their brains ran out and stained the earth. He tore them limb from limb for his supper, eating the flesh and entrails, bone and marrow, like a mountain lion, leaving nothing. Helplessly we watched these cruel acts, raising our hands to heaven and weeping. When the Cyclops had filled his huge stomach with human flesh, and had drunk pure milk, he lay down in the cave, stretched out among his flocks.’

1. Identify and highlight the **two similes** in the above extract.
2. Identify where the **pace** of the narrative changes in the extract.
3. Identify an example of **detailed description** in the extract.
4. Identify an example of **pathos** in the extract.
5. Explain each literary technique used above by Homer and the effect of each of the above on the reader.

Technique	Example	Effect
<b>Simile</b>		
<b>Simile</b>		
<b>Detailed Description</b>		
<b>Pathos</b>		
<b>Pace Changing</b>		

## Extract 4: From Lines 360 - 412: Odysseus tells his tale: Blinding the Cyclops

'As he finished speaking I handed him the bright wine. Three times I poured and gave it to him, and three times, foolishly, he drained it. When the wine had fuddled his wits I tried him with subtle words: "Cyclops, you asked my name, and I will tell it: give me afterwards a guest gift as you promised. My name is Nobody. Nobody, my father, mother, and friends call me."

1. Can you identify the literary technique being used in the above extract?

2. Explain your answer?

## Extract 5: From Lines 360 - 412: Odysseus tells his tale: Blinding the Cyclops

1. In the passage below, identify as many literary techniques as you can, highlighting them and labelling them.

Those were my words, and this his cruel answer: "Then, my gift is this. I will eat Nobody last of all his company, and all the others before him".

As he spoke, he reeled and toppled over on his back, his thick neck twisted to one side, and all-conquering sleep overpowered him. In his drunken slumber he vomited wine and pieces of human flesh. Then I thrust the stake into the depth of the ashes to heat it, and inspired my men with encouraging words, so none would hang back from fear. When the olivewood stake was glowing hot, and ready to catch fire despite its greenness, I drew it from the coals, then my men stood round me, and a god breathed courage into us. They held the sharpened olivewood stake, and thrust it into his eye, while I threw my weight on the end, and twisted it round and round, as a man bores the timbers of a ship with a drill that others whirl lower down with a strap held at both ends, and so keep the drill continuously moving. We took the red-hot stake and twisted it round and round like that in his eye, and the blood poured out despite the heat. His lids and brows were scorched by flame from the burning eyeball, and its roots crackled with fire. As a great axe or adze causes a vast hissing when the smith dips it in cool water to temper it, strengthening the iron, so his eye hissed against the olivewood stake. Then he screamed, terribly, and the rock echoed. Seized by terror we shrank back, as he wrenched the stake, wet with blood, from his eye. He flung it away in frenzy, and called to the Cyclopes, his neighbours who lived in caves on the windy heights. They heard his cry, and crowding in from every side they stood by the cave mouth and asked what was wrong: "Polyphemus, what terrible pain is this that makes you call through deathless night, and wake us? Is a mortal stealing your flocks, or trying to kill you by violence or treachery?"

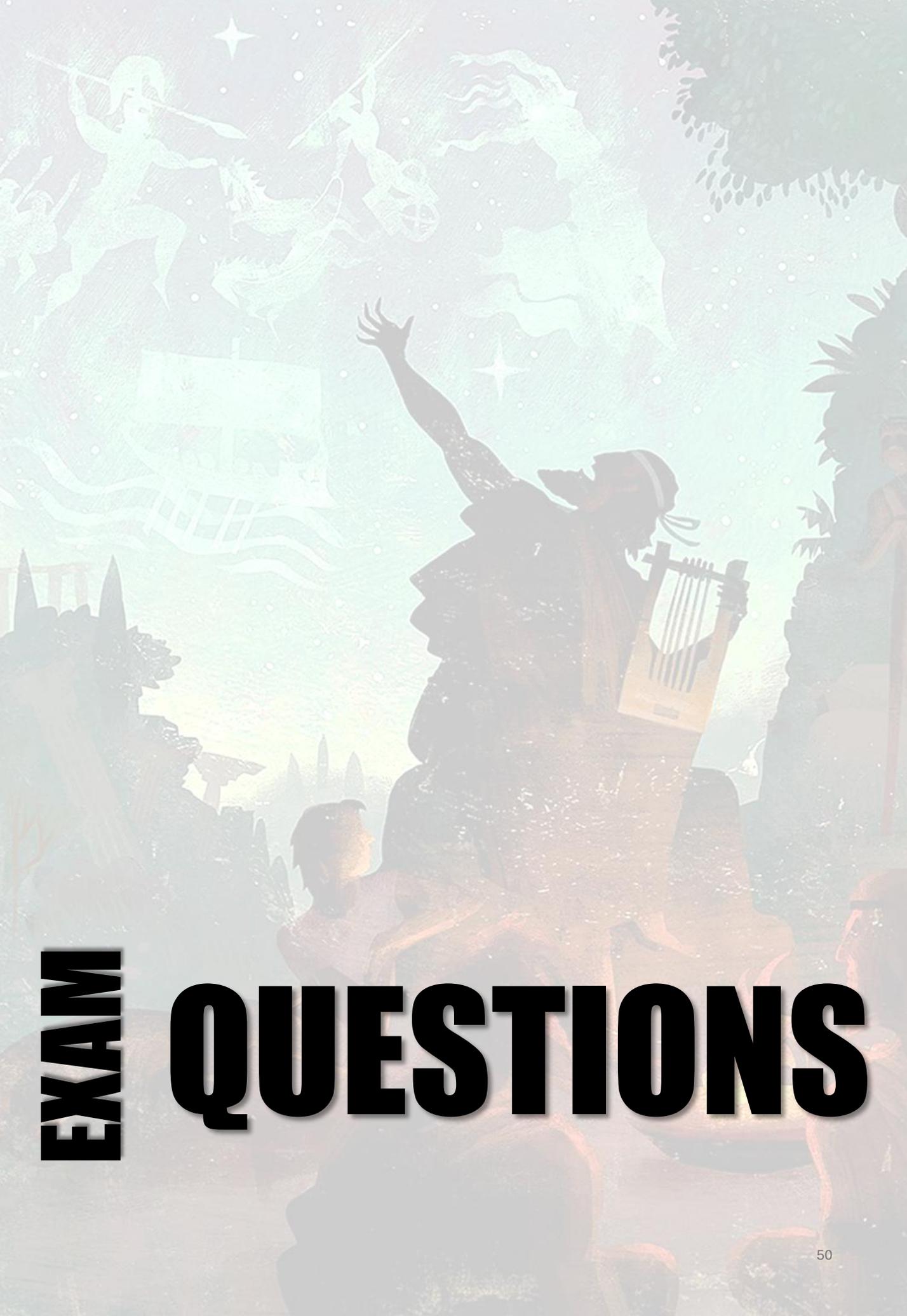
Out of the cave came mighty Polyphemus' voice: "Nobody, my friends, is trying to kill me by violence or treachery."

## The Odyssey: Literary Techniques

Below is a list of similes from Books 9 and 10 from *The Odyssey*. They are the most memorable ones, and all have a purpose and an intended effect. Fundamentally, all similes are a comparison to something else, using 'like' or 'as'. Their purpose is to limit the use of adjectives in describing something and make a *figurative* rather than a literal comparison. By doing this, the writer is hoping to help the reader *see* or *feel* what they are describing. By comparing something figuratively, the writer is showing the reader rather than telling them.

Homer uses similes throughout the five books we read. Some of these are simple similes, but others are what we call, **extended similes**. These are used by Homer to paint complex pictures, evoke emotions, and enhance the reader's understanding of characters and events. Interestingly, they sometimes also offer us an insight into life in ancient Greece.

Book	Simile	Explanation
9	'At dawn they came, <b>as many as the leaves and flowers in spring</b> ; and disaster sent by Zeus overtook us, doomed, as we were, to endless trouble.'	<p>This simile is found early in Book 9 when Odysseus and his crew have ransacked Ismarus after they left Troy.</p> <p>The simile is describing the sheer number of Cicones who suddenly attack Odysseus and his crew. As in spring, all plants and flowers bloom and the scale of it is vast and wide, conveying that the Cicones' army was huge. It is an unusual simile in how it compares a destructive army and soldiers to something beautiful and fragile.</p>
9	'Two he seized and dashed to the ground <b>like whelps</b> , and their brains ran out and stained the earth.'	<p>This simile can be found in Book 9 when Polyphemus suddenly attacks two of Odysseus' men in his cave.</p> <p>The simile brilliantly describes how defenceless and weak the two men are compared to the giant as he compares them to small puppies [whelps]. It gives an impression of how easily he kills them and how the men are unable to fight back.</p>
9	'He tore them limb from limb for his supper, eating the flesh and entrails, bone and marrow, <b>like a mountain lion</b> , leaving nothing.'	<p>This simile can be found in Book 9 when Polyphemus is eating two of Odysseus' crew.</p> <p>The simile conveys the savagery and brutality of Polyphemus in how he devours the men. The comparison to a mountain lion, which would have been found in ancient Greece, is a good one as the manner in which a lion eats its prey by tearing flesh from a carcass gives the reader a strong image of how Polyphemus treated the two men.</p>
9	'They held the sharpened olivewood stake, and thrust it into his eye, while I threw my weight on the end, and twisted it round and round, <b>as a man bores the timbers of a ship with a drill</b> that others twirl lower down with a strap held at both ends, and so keep the drill continuously moving.'	<p>This simile appears in Book 9 when Odysseus is blinding Polyphemus in his cave.</p> <p>This is an example of an extended simile used by Homer to describe how Odysseus twisted the stake into Polyphemus' eye. He compares it to how holes are bored on a ship using a drill. By comparing it to a drill, it really emphasises the twisting motion of the stake and the resistance it would have felt. It also offers us an insight into how holes on ships (or other areas) were made using ancient drills and straps.</p>
9	' <b>As a great axe or adze</b> causes a vast hissing when the smith dips it in cool water to temper it, strengthening the iron, so his eye hissed against the olivewood stake.'	<p>This simile can be found in Book 9 when Odysseus is blinding Polyphemus in his cave.</p> <p>Adding further to the above simile, this simile describes the heat of the olivewood stake and the sound it made when it pierced Polyphemus' eye. Like the use of a drill, Homer refers to another tool/trade in this simile by describing the sound as one associated with a blacksmith who cools red hot iron in water. It really works as a simile as it provides the reader with a clear sound to accompany the drilling of the eye completing the horrific nature of what was happening to Polyphemus.</p>
10	' <b>Spearing the men like fishes</b> , they carried them off for their loathsome feast.'	<p>This simile appears in Book 10 when Odysseus' crew have been trapped by the giant cannibals, the Laestrygonians.</p> <p>This simile is trying to describe how the giants are killing the crew and how easy it is. Like hunters catching fish through a method of spearing them, the cannibals are doing likewise, except there are arms are the spears. The simile portrays an image of giants plunging their arms into the water just grabbing men to eat. The image also gives an impression of the sheer number of Odysseus' crew helpless against the attacks.</p>
10	' <b>Like calves in a farmyard that frisk around the herd of cows that return from grazing</b> , free from their pens and gambolling together, lowing constantly round their mothers, so those men, at the sight of me, crowded around weeping, and in their hearts they were home again in rugged Ithaca, in the town where they were born and bred.'	<p>This simile appears in Book 10 when Odysseus returns to his crew after freeing the rest of the crew from Circe's spell.</p> <p>The simile tries to convey just how happy his crew are to see him return and their reaction to seeing him. Homer compares his reaction to that of young calves seeing their mother after they have been parted, and how they leap about in joy on being reunited. The comparison of Odysseus to being their parent is not accidental and implies how they feel about him as a leader. It is also no accident that the simile involves animals bearing in mind that Circe had turned some of the crew into pigs.</p>



**EXAM**

# **QUESTIONS**

**Source E:**

'The wind carried me from **Ilium** to Ismarus, city of the Cicones. I sacked the city and slew the men, and the women and riches we split between us, so that as far as I could determine no man lacked an equal share. Then as you might imagine I ordered us to slip away quickly, but my foolish followers wouldn't listen. They drank the wine, and slaughtered many sheep and shambling cattle with twisted horns. Meanwhile the Cicones rounded up others, their neighbours further inland, more numerous and braver, men skilled at fighting their enemies from chariots and on foot, as needed. At dawn they came, as many as the leaves and flowers of the spring: and disaster sent by Zeus overtook us, doomed, as we were, to endless trouble. Drawing up their ranks by the swift ships, they fought us, each side hurling bronze-tipped spears at the other. Through that morning, while the sacred light grew stronger, we held our ground and kept their greater force at bay. But as the sun fell, at the time when oxen are unyoked, the Cicones succeeded in routing the Achaeans, and six of my well-armoured comrades died from each ship, but the rest of us cheated death and evil fate.'

Odyssey 9: 39–61 (Trans: A.S. Kline)

**Study Source E**

**11 (a)** Who had asked Odysseus to tell of his adventures?

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**(1)**

**11 (b)** By what name is **Ilium** better known?

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**(1)**

**12** Odysseus took women and riches from Ismarus. Why else would Odysseus have sacked Ismarus? Make **two** points.

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**13** 'At dawn...endless trouble' (Kline lines 6-8).

Why does Odysseus describe the arrival of the Cicones in the manner that he does? Make **two** points.

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**[2]**

**Source D:**

‘For nine days I was driven by fierce winds over the teeming sea: but on the tenth we set foot on the shores of the Lotus-eaters, who eat its flowery food. On land we drew water, and my friends ate by the ships. Once we had tasted food and drink, I sent some of the men inland to discover what kind of human beings lived there: selecting two and sending a third as herald. They left at once and came upon the Lotus-eaters, who had no thought of killing my comrades, but gave them lotus to eat.’

*Odyssey* 9: 82–93 (Trans: A.S. Kline)

**Study Source D**

**14** Suggest **two** ways that Odysseus might be regarded as a good leader in this passage. Justify your answer.

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**(4)**

**15** After eating the lotus fruit, Odysseus’ men lose the desire to return home. What is the name the Greeks gave to this desire?

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**(1)**

**16 (a)** Describe **two** things that Odysseus did before he sailed away when he realised the effect that eating lotus had.

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**(2)**

**(b)** Suggest **one** thing that this suggests about him.

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**(1)**

**Source E:**

**Source E**

'You have never lagged behind before, always the first to step out proudly and graze on the tender grass shoots, always first to reach the flowing river, and first to show your wish to return at evening to the fold. Today you are last of all. You must surely be grieving over your master's eye, blinded by an evil man and his wicked friends, when my wits were fuddled with wine: Nobody, I say, has not yet escaped death.'

*Odyssey 9.448–455 (trans. A.S. Kline)*

**Study Source E**

**14** Explain why Odysseus chose to escape in the manner he did. Make **two** points.

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**(2)**

**15** What happened to the ram after Odysseus and his crew had left Polyphemus' island?

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**16** What impression do you get of Polyphemus from this passage? Make **two** points.

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**(4)**

**Source F:**

**Source F**

'So we came to the floating island of Aeolia, where Aeolus lived, son of Hippotas, dear to the deathless gods. A wall of unbroken bronze surrounds it, and the cliffs are sheer. In those halls his twelve children live as well, six daughters and six fine sons, and he has given his daughters to his sons in marriage. They are always feasting with their brave father and good mother, with endless good food set before them. All day long the house is full of savoury smells, and the courtyard echoes to the banquet's sound, while at night they sleep by the wives they love, on well-covered well-strung beds.

'We came, then, to their city with its fine palace, and Aeolus entertained me there for a month, questioning me on everything: Troy, the Argive fleet, and the Achaean return. And I told him the whole tale in order. When I asked, in turn, to depart with his help, he too denied me nothing. He gave me a leather bag, made from the flayed hide of a nine-year old ox, and imprisoned all the winds there.'

*Odyssey 10.1–20 (trans. A.S. Kline)*

**Study Source F**

**17a** Odysseus' crew believed that there was gold and silver in the bag. State **two** other things that they said/spoke of while Odysseus slept.

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**(2)**

**17b** Give evidence to suggest one way in which one of these other things was untrue.

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**(1)**

**18** Explain **three** ways that Aeolia **and** its inhabitants interest the reader in the passage.

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**(6)**

**Source D: The Laestrygonians attack Odysseus' men**

On entering his fine palace, they found his wife there, massive as a mountaintop, and they were shocked. She called her husband, mighty Antiphates, straight from their gathering place, and he embarked on their cruel destruction. He promptly seized one of my men, and prepared to eat him, while the other two sprang up and fled to the ships. Then Antiphates roused the city, and hearing his cry the huge Laestrygonians crowded in from all sides, a countless host of Giants not men.

From the cliffs they pelted us with the largest rocks a man could lift, and from all the ships there rose the groans of dying men and the splintering of timbers. Spearing the men like fishes, they carried them off to their loathsome feast. While they were killing those in the harbour's depths, I drew my sharp sword and cut the cable of my dark-prowed vessel. Then calling to my men I ordered them to the oars, so we might escape from danger. With the fear of death on them they thrashed the sea with their blades, and to our joy the ship shot away from the towering cliffs, leaving the rest to founder where they were.'

The Odyssey, Book 10, Lines 212-233 (A.S. Kline Translation)

**Study Source D**

**13** What had Odysseus' men already seen in the land of the Laestrygonians?

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**(2)**

**14** What evidence is there in **Source D** that the Laestrygonians show signs of being a civilised society? Make **two** points.

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**(2)**

**15**

How does Homer create sympathy in his description of the death of the crew? Make **two** points and support your answer with reference to **Source D**.

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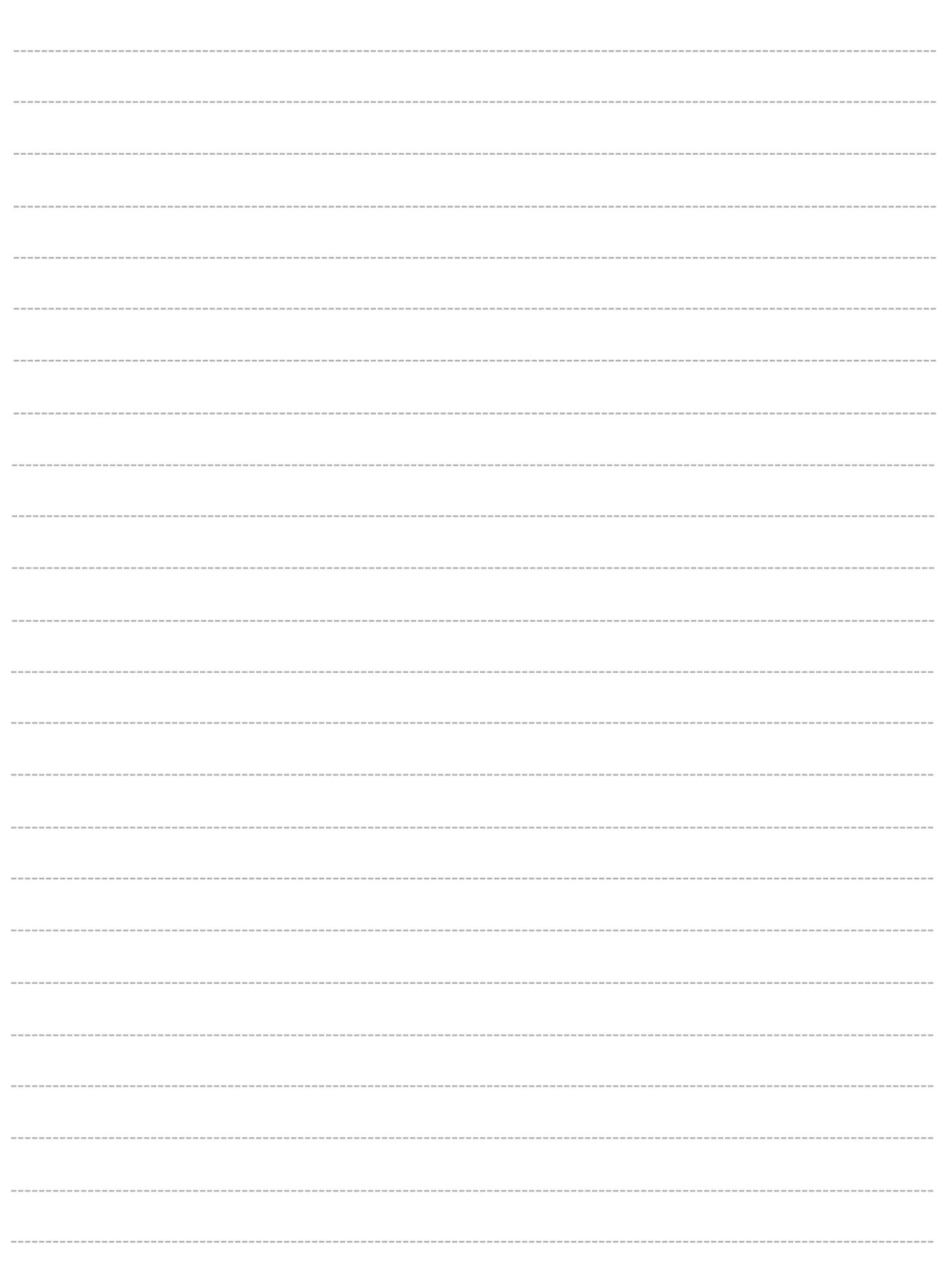
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**(4)**



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**22** 'Books 9 and 10 of the Odyssey are thoroughly enjoyable for a modern reader.'

How far do you agree with this assessment?

**(15)**

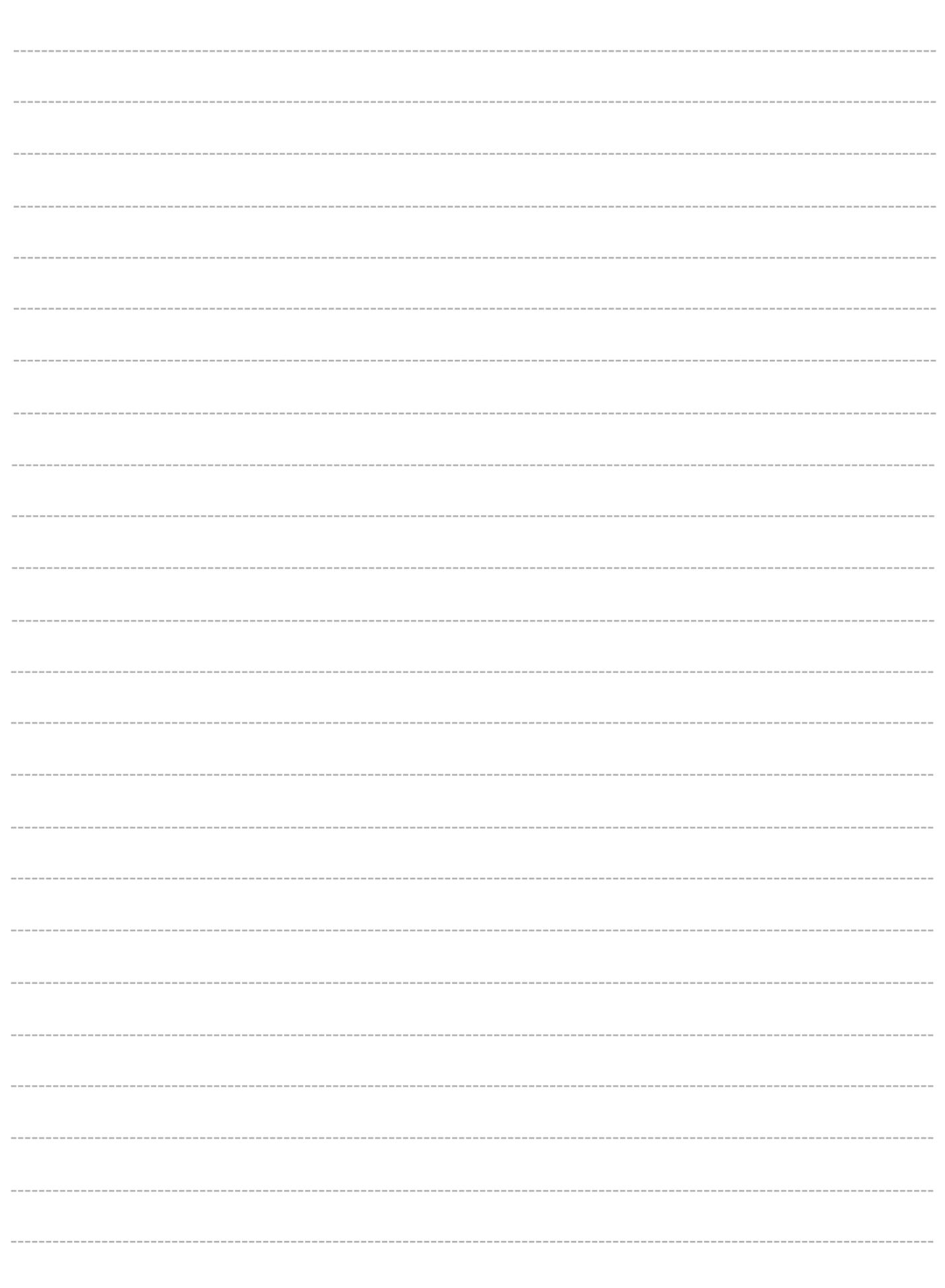
To a large extent, Books 9 and 10 of The Odyssey are thoroughly enjoyable to a modern reader as they contain elements that should entertain and intrigue a reader such as magic, fantasy, and suspense. Both Books 9 and 10 are set in the section of the Odyssey referred to as the 'Wanderings of Odysseus' and tell of his adventures across the Mediterranean to get back home to Ithaca. Fundamentally, they are adventure stories involving monsters and witches. The plots of the two books combined with the clever language used by Homer and the tension he creates, only adds to the enjoyment of the books. However, not every aspect of the books are as successful to a modern reader as they would be to a listener in Ancient Greece. There are times where the tension is not held and the reader can feel disappointed with how the plot unfolds, particularly in Book 10.

Both Books 9 and 10 contain three individual stories within them: Book 9 has the battle with the Cyclopes, the land of the Lotus-Eaters, and the adventure with Polyphemus; Book 10 has the interaction with Aeolus, the Wind God, the catastrophe of the land of the Laestrygonians, and the adventure with Circe. All of these stories involve adventure, drama, and to a large extent, the fantastical. It is these fantastical elements that many modern readers will enjoy. This is particularly evident with the two main antagonists of the books: Polyphemus and Circe. Polyphemus is, on first impressions, a typical antagonist. He is a monstrous cyclops that eats Odysseus' crew on more than one occasion. He is ferocious, unpredictable and violent. Homer really explores the violent nature of Polyphemus and revels in the gore. At one point, he smashes the brains of two of Odysseus' crew on the floor staining it with blood. These gory elements might very much appeal to a modern reader. Circe, on the other hand, is a different type of antagonist. Rather than using violence, she uses magic and potions to harm Odysseus's crew. She is really compelling as a character, acting in a very calm way as she turns Odysseus's crew into pigs after tricking them into entering her home. This contrast to Polyphemus by Homer only adds to the intrigue, especially as we never really find out why she does turn humans into animals.

The two main plots from Books 9 and 10 offer a modern reader a reading experience that is built around Homer creating tension with the reader unsure if Odysseus and his crew will ever escape alive. This is particularly the case with Book 9 and the story of Polyphemus. The tension is built by Homer the moment they are trapped in the cave with no way out. The reader is taken on an adventure that sees Polyphemus blinded, Odysseus's crew killed, and them escaping by tying themselves to the flock of sheep. There are various moments when you think that Odysseus may be caught which adds to the tension, particularly when Polyphemus stops the ram and questions why it is last out. However, the tension is further increased when the reader thinks they have finally escaped, only for Odysseus to call back after Polyphemus which sees them only narrowly escape again.

**Your task: Write a further paragraph about Books 9 and 10 on one of the following themes:**

- **The character of Odysseus and why that would appeal to modern readers;**
- **The use of language (similes) by Homer to enhance the descriptions;**
- **The theme of xenia running through both books.**





**22**

‘Odysseus’ true character is revealed much more clearly during his time on Circe’s island than during his time on Polyphemus’ island.’

How far do you agree with this statement?

**(15)**

**Your task: Write an answer about Odysseus’ character in Books 9 and 10.**

**▪ Introduction:**

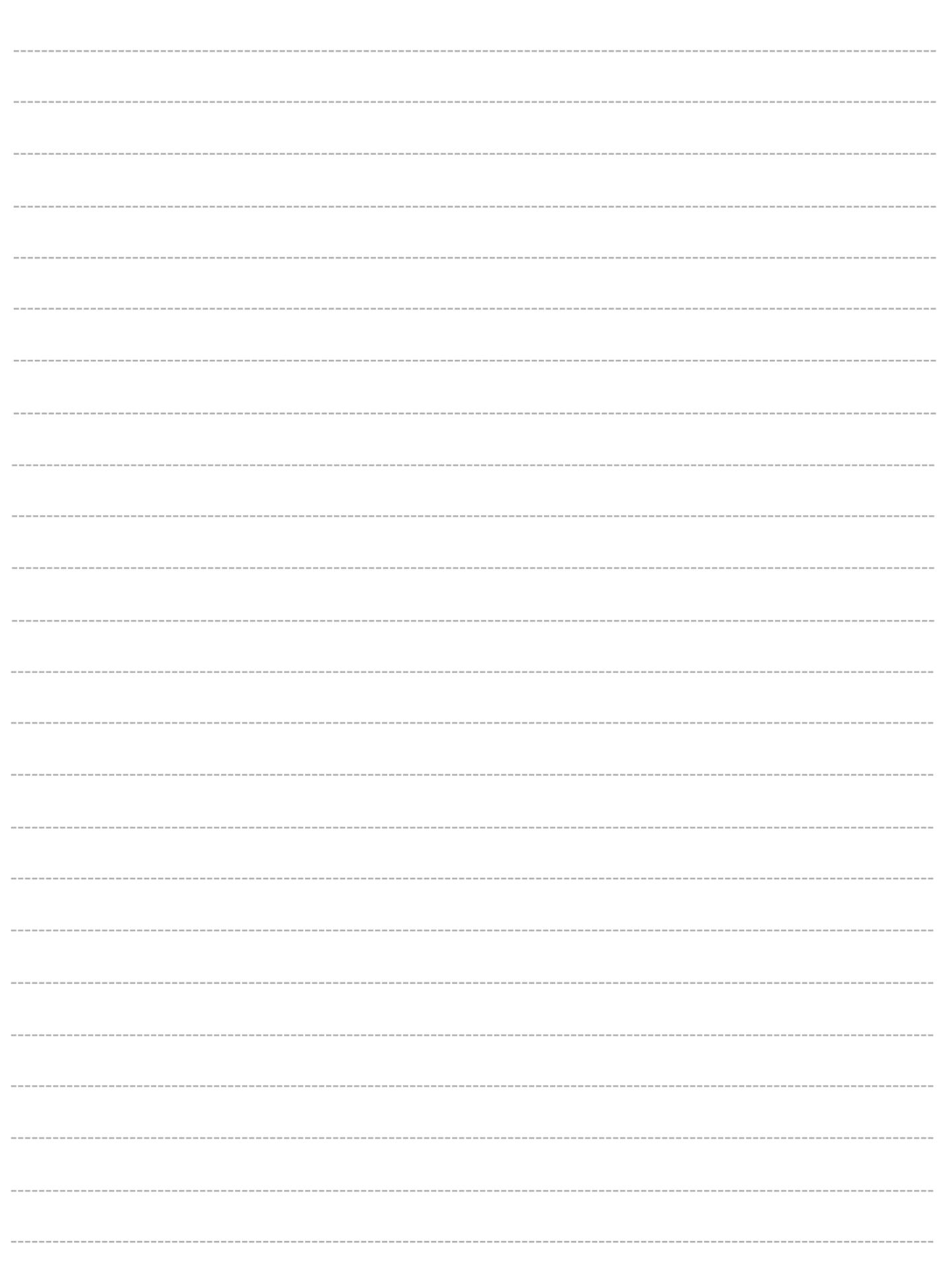
- Explain that Odysseus is a complex character and we see so many different sides to his personality through his adventures in Books 9 and 10, and it changes from Books 9 to 10.

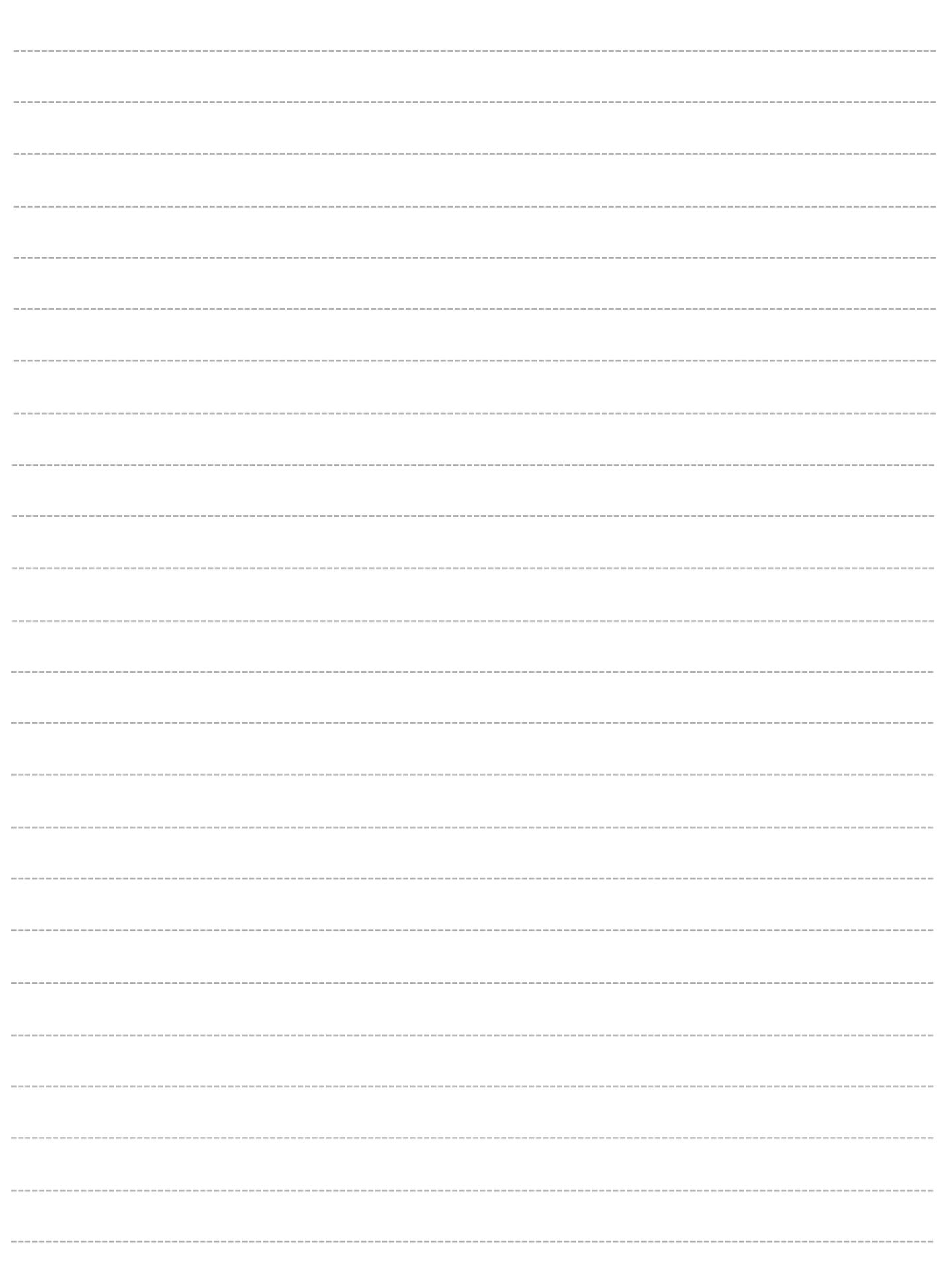
**▪ Approach 1:**

- Explore his personality through Book 9 explaining individual characteristics (such as cunning and resourcefulness) and backing up with examples from the stories to prove it.
- Explore his personality through Book 10 explaining individual characteristics (such as leadership) and use examples from the stories to prove it.
- Conclude with an answer to the question.

**▪ Approach 2:**

- Explore one aspect of his personality and how it changes/does not change over the two books. For example, his leadership or his relationship with his crew.
- Continue the answer by focusing the next paragraphs on another aspect of his personality and showing whether it changes across the two books.
- Conclude with an answer to the question.



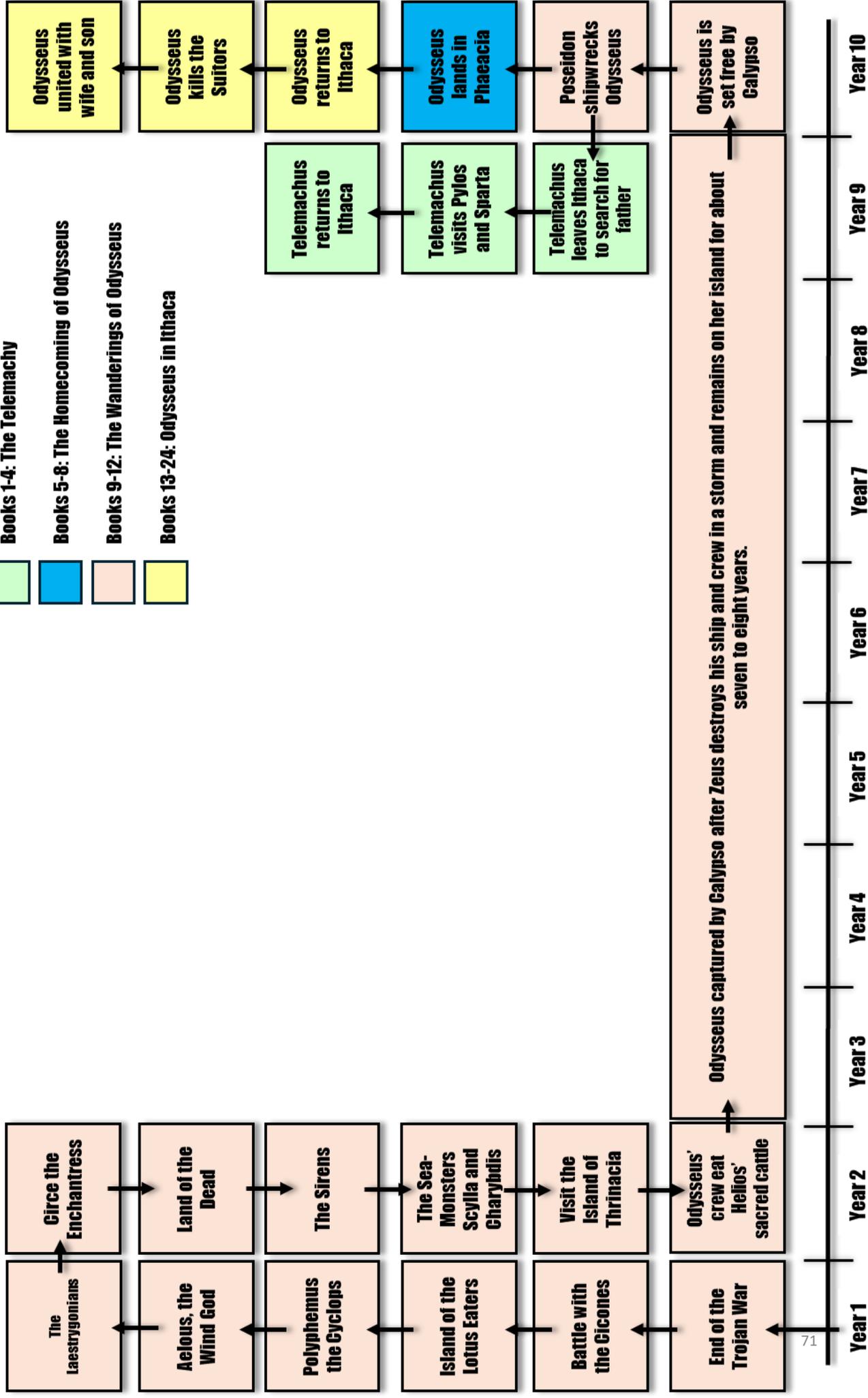


# The Odyssey: Timeline of Odysseus' Journey

Key:



- Books 1-4: The Telemachy
- Books 5-8: The Homecoming of Odysseus
- Books 9-12: The Wanderings of Odysseus
- Books 13-24: Odysseus in Ithaca



## Additional Notes Section

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