

The Homeric World Study Guide

Developing Skills for GCSE OCR Classical Civilisation

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Homer as Evidence

There is no additional material required for this section as only questions on the prescribed literature will be set. What is more important is how the texts relate to the topics set.

The prescribed author for J199/11 is Homer. OCR publishes two booklet forms of the prescribed literature: PDF and editable Word document. This section of the guide follows the OCR **editable Word document** but both are the same translation and can be found at:

zzed.co.uk/11261-Homer

Each section is set in context and considers the prescribed themes and characterisation as relevant. There are some suggestions for stylistic questions also.

After the Mycenaeans: Are the poems of Homer of any value as historical evidence?

Around 1100 BC the Mycenaean centres lay in ruins. Dorians had come into Greece and around this time became more powerful. These people were farmers and far less wealthy than the Mycenaeans; they left less evidence of themselves, especially because the art of writing was lost. As they did not trade on the same scale as the Mycenaeans, there are no widespread clues as to their lifestyle. The Dark Ages began.

As the Dorians became more dominant, Greeks in the north sailed along the coast and eventually settled on the west coast of Turkey. Those in the south went to a region to the south of Turkey which is known as Ionia. These people spoke Greek with an Ionian accent. The Ionians continued to trade and built some fine cities, such as Ephesus and Miletus.

At the end of the Dark Ages, literature started up from this civilised area. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are epic poems (24 books each). They represent the final versions of stories passed down from the Mycenaean age by minstrels and bards possibly celebrating the 'good old (Mycenaean) days' or 'back home'.

We have seen that the Mycenaean age was an age of wealth. Kings lived in palaces and had vast wealth in gold, silver and bronze. Yet Homer was a man from a different age and, therefore, he gives away clues about life in his own times such as craftsmen or meetings.

Homer's *Odyssey*, still set in a bronze age, wanders with Odysseus into the realms of a wonderland of adventures both bizarre and frightening (such as Books 9 and 10). However, its second half (including Books 19, 21, and 22) concentrates on the struggles of a man to regain his kingdom.

We glance into the age of bronze through Homer's Dark Age eyes, nearer to him than us but without the sophisticated equipment of modern archaeology. He gives us a **flavour** of what his stories remember of the glory of Mycenae with its palaces and kings but also adds what life was like for him.

Activity 46

Information about the text of Homer. Edith Hall explains how we get to read the written texts of Homer today: zzed.co.uk/11261-Edith-Hall



Literary Techniques and Composition

Having studied the Mycenaean age, learners now need to be familiar with the *Odyssey* and the historical and cultural background in which it was written. Homer's *Odyssey* is an epic poem. Epic poems were not just long poems.

The *Odyssey* is written in the style of *oral poetry*. We do not know whether epic poems were written deliberately in the style or whether they are actually a collection of poems passed down by word of mouth by bards. Most people believe that they were originally oral. Oral poetry was chanted to the lyre. The rhythm and metre was helped by this. To help him further, the bard used various devices. These were pre-packaged / prepared in advance to aid memory.

Features of oral poetry	Examples from prescribed books
Subject matter: Trojan War stories. However, the poet could also introduce other themes and short side stories.	Book 9: leaving Troy and the Cicones
Divine intervention: the gods help mortals	Book 10: Hermes helps Odysseus Book 22: Athena helps Odysseus
Stories of wanderings and strange adventures	Book 9: meeting the Cyclops Book 10: meeting Circe
Repetition of scenes	When people leave and arrive. There seems to be a formula: X arrives, situation described, visitor is seen, meet/greet, hospitality, food, questions. Book 10: Aeolus
Flashback: Homer uses flashback often over several books	Books 9 and 10
Digression into fantasy and supernatural: other digressions or sub-stories can be linked back to the main story	Book 9: Cyclops Book 10: Circe
Epithets and formulae: High use of the same adjectives attached to the same people, and formulae for speaking and answering	Shrewd Odysseus Sensible Telemachus Gatherer of the clouds (Zeus)
Direct speech	Books 19, 21, 22: used to impart knowledge and create character
The use of similes	Comparing an idea in the epic with something familiar to the audience Just as... Like a...
Often these stories had a moral message for the listening audience	Books 19, 21, 22: behaviour of the suitors

Homer's Odyssey

Book 9: The Cyclops

OCR Booklet Book 9: 1–62 Odysseus tells his tale: The Cicones

Understand the plot

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. Who is Odysseus and where does he live?
2. What did Calypso and Circe do to Odysseus?
3. What happened when Odysseus and his comrades met the Cicones? Make a bulleted timeline.

Social, historical and cultural context

Cicones were from Thrace in northern Greece and were allies of the Trojans. *Ismarus* was the capital of the Cicones. On leaving Troy, Odysseus would have sailed north along the coast and rounded the top of Greece. Odysseus, as a Greek, would have felt his attack on the Cicones legitimate. *Women* were usually carried off as slaves. Men were killed in the fighting and there are not many male slaves in Homer. There were six men lost *from each ship*. Odysseus left Troy with 12 ships, so already 72 men have been lost.

Prescribed themes

Nostos is a word which describes the epic hero returning home by sea. This desire to return home drives Odysseus. He does not do this for sentimental reasons. He is king of Ithaca and the land and possessions give him the status he has. There are others who return, such as Agamemnon, but his homecoming was not so fortunate.

Activity 47

Reread The Myth of Agamemnon in section A page 12.



The character of Odysseus

Odysseus has good social skills. He gives a model after-dinner speech to his host Alcinous, King of the Phaeacians, praising the music and feast. He has good *oratorical skills*. He is reluctant to tell his tale, but will do so as Alcinous has asked. He is not falsely modest. Heroes in Homer do not use insincere modesty. The story begins with the attack on the Cicones. Odysseus is quite happy to plunder the allies of his enemies in an act of piracy.

The portrayal of key characters

Crew: Odysseus's men do not follow Odysseus without question or complaint. He in turn can be critical of them.

Guided Activity 16

What does this passage tell us about the attitude of Odysseus and his crew towards one another? You might like to consider the following phrases:

1. As far as I could determine no man lacked an equal share
2. But my foolish followers wouldn't listen
3. They drank the wine and slaughtered many sheep
4. We held our ground and kept their greater force at bay



Literary techniques and composition

Guided Activity 17

How can we tell that Odysseus is very fond of Ithaca? Consider the different adjectives used, the weather, the geography of the land and the types of people.

OCR Booklet Book 9: 63–104 Odysseus tells his tale: The lotus-eaters**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What did Zeus do after Odysseus set sail from the Cicones?
2. What happened when Odysseus's men ate the lotus?
3. How did Odysseus get his men back on the ships?

Context

three times saluted: the triple cry was a ritual religious act aiming to call souls home. *Malea* and *Cythera* are the last places on Odysseus's journey which can be found on a map. The route of the rest of his journey is just speculation and prepares the audience for the fantasy and adventure to come.

Lotus eaters who eat the *lotus fruit*: this was a mythical fruit, nothing to do with the lotus flower of today. Some scholars believe the lotus eaters may have been situated in North Africa, which is a long way to be blown off course. People can only guess at the fruit (this is the only place where the men eat fruit). Some say it was the poppy. At this point Odysseus leaves the real world and enters wonderland.

The character of Odysseus

Odysseus as a leader feels some responsibility towards his men. He says: *I dragged those men back to the shore myself by force*. His crew are men from Ithaca like himself and he does not want them to *forget their homes*.

Literary techniques and composition

Activity 48

How is the storm portrayed? Make a list of words.

Activity 49

What are the epithets for: Zeus, Dawn? Why is Zeus's epithet very appropriate at this point?

OCR Booklet Book 9: 105–151 *Odysseus tells his tale: The land of the Cyclopes*

Understand the plot

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What do the Cyclopes have instead of a code of law?
2. How do we know the Cyclopes do not go sailing?
3. How is Odysseus protected as he sails into the harbour?

Context

Cyclopes' island: some people think the Cyclopes lived near Etna. Their name means 'round-eyed'. There is no clear statement by Homer that the Cyclopes actually had only one eye. Some scholars have suggested there was a mark (an eye?) branded or tattooed on their forehead as a sign of their trade as blacksmiths, which led to the myth of one-eyed giants. There are one-eyed giants in many Turkish, Persian, Finnish and Norwegian folk tales. The Cyclops has a name: *Polyphemus*.



Activity 50

The picture of the island is idyllic, a striking contrast to what will happen. What words are used? Make a list.

Themes

Civilisation

The Cyclopes do not have, according to Odysseus, what is necessary for civilisation:

1. agriculture
2. assemblies for making laws
3. legal codes
4. an agreed community organisation higher than the family

By Homer's time, the kings and overlords described in Section A were not so powerful. The people had more say in their communities, such as making laws. Homer is giving us a mixed picture: some of the Bronze Age, where citadels had overlords, and some of his own age.

The character of Odysseus

We do not yet know what the Cyclops is going to be like. Odysseus does not like him (for good reason we find out later) because he is different from him. Odysseus does not get on with people who have different ways of living. He looks down on people who do not know how to sail. He also emphasises what they do not do.

Literary techniques and composition

Odysseus is trying to give a negative view of the Cyclopes and their way of life.



Activity 51

Highlight the examples in the passage of: *no, never, neither, nor*.

OCR Booklet Book 9: 152–192 Odysseus tells his tale: The Cyclops' cave**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. How many goats were killed, and in what way?
2. Where did the crew get the wine?
3. Describe the cave.

The character of Odysseus

Odysseus is a good organiser of his men, dividing them into hunting parties, *splitting them three ways*, to provide them with their needs – in this case meat and wine, which is the main diet of people in Homer. They rarely eat vegetables and fruit.

Odysseus makes *strategic decisions*, meaning he thinks ahead of what he needs and plans. He leaves most of his men on the island while he sails across in just one ship.

Literary techniques and composition**Activity 52**

There are clues given in this section that the Cyclops will not be friendly.

Underline or make a list of words and phrases.

**OCR Booklet Book 9: 193–255 Odysseus tells his tale: Polyphemus returns****Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. How many men went with Odysseus to explore the cave?
2. What did they see inside the cave?
3. What did they do while waiting for the Cyclops to return?

Context

The Cyclops does not cook food, so the wood he uses is for heat and light. The Cyclops has two meals per day. Breakfast-lunch, and evening meal. This is an ancient system practised by the heroes as well.

Activity 53

The wine will form an important part of the plot. It needs to be special.

How does Homer make the wine seem attractive?

**Themes****Xenia**

The Cyclops does not follow the accepted custom. Polyphemus has not made his guests welcome and in this case asks: *Strangers, who are you? Where do you sail from over the sea-roads?* He is suspicious that they are pirates.

The character of Odysseus

Again Odysseus is *inquisitive and acquisitive*. He wants to see who lives in the cave and he wants to *test his hospitality*. As a hero Odysseus would expect a range of gifts.

The portrayal of key characters

Crew: They are beginning to doubt Odysseus. Things did not work out, according to them, as planned in the land of the Cicones, and now they *begged* him to just take what they needed as provisions.

Cyclops**Activity 54**

How does Homer introduce the Cyclops to the listener? What do we think he will be like?

**Activity 55**

How does Homer emphasise the size and power of the Cyclops?



At this point do we feel some sympathy for the Cyclops? He is obviously very caring about his animals and skilled in making cheese.

1. He separates out his flocks
2. He has well-made pails and bowls for milking
3. He has his cheese in baskets
4. He is careful in preparing his cheese and organising his own food

He certainly does not expect Odysseus to be camping around a fire in his cave when he returns.

OCR Booklet Book 9: 256–306 Odysseus tells his tale: Trapped**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What does Odysseus tell the Cyclops about himself and crew?
2. What does the Cyclops do to two of his crew?
3. Why can Odysseus not kill the Cyclops there and then?

Context

Notice how the men pray: *raising our hands to heaven*. This was the normal way the ancients prayed. The terracotta figures from Mycenae are shown with their arms raised.

ThemesXenia and civilisation

Odysseus is *hoping for hospitality*. He reminds the Cyclops that this is the normal custom for travellers. However, the Cyclops comes from a different culture. He even says *the Cyclopes care nothing for aegis-bearing Zeus*. As a non-Greek, the Cyclops is portrayed as uncivilised.

The character of Odysseus

Odysseus is known for his *cunning*. He does not tell the truth. This is acceptable to Odysseus as he lies to protect himself and his men.

The portrayal of key characters

Cyclops: He is not strictly speaking a cannibal, though he is often described as one. He is not eating others of his own kind. Notice how Homer does not describe the character of or make any judgement on the Cyclops. The audience has to work this out from what is said.

Guided Activity 18

Look at the words spoken by the Cyclops. What does this tell us about his character? You might consider these phrases initially and find others:

You are a foreigner or a fool; I would spare neither you nor your friends

**Activity 56**

How does Homer make the behaviour of the Cyclops in this passage shocking?

**Literary techniques and composition****Activity 57**

Whose epithets are these:

Atreus's son	
Aegis-bearing	
Earth-shaker	

**OCR Booklet Book 9: 307–359 Odysseus tells his tale: offering the Cyclops wine****Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. Where does the Cyclops go in the morning?
2. What does Odysseus plan to do with the Cyclops' club?
3. How many men are eaten in this section? How many altogether?

Context

wine: much was made of the description of the wine as it is a key factor in the story. Before the invention of glass bottles, wine was kept in earthenware jars or skins. Homeric wine is always red and was strong. Although sometimes called sparkling it was not fizzy but it caught the light. The wine from Ismarus is especially potent. It was mixed with water in the ratio 1:20, and normal wine was mixed 1:3. Odysseus does not dilute the wine so it would have been extremely potent.

Club: the description of the club is very detailed as, like the wine, it will be an important part of the story.

Activity 58

How does Homer emphasise the size of the club?



In this story, Homer's Iron Age times are revealed: casting of lots is fair and deemed civilised for all members of society.

The character of Odysseus

Again Odysseus shows his ingenuity by working out a way to get out of the cave. If the Cyclops cannot see them they will be able to escape.

Literary techniques and composition

Dramatic irony: we know what is about to happen but the Cyclops does not.

OCR Booklet Book 9: 360–412 Odysseus tells his tale: Blinding the Cyclops

Understand the plot

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What does Odysseus say is his name?
2. What causes the Cyclops to be blinded?
3. When his neighbours ask what has happened, what does Polyphemus reply?

Context

Iron: This metal was known to Homer but was not available in the Bronze Age when the story is set.

adze: This was a key tool in shipbuilding.



The character of Odysseus

Odysseus leads by example, and with teamwork they are able to blind the Cyclops.

Activity 59

How do Odysseus and his men work together?



Literary techniques and composition

The blinding of the Cyclops

Sample Activity 4

Consider how Homer makes his description in this passage horrific.

Throughout the passage there is a large variety of literary techniques which paint a horrific picture:

1. The listener hears sounds such as *hissing*
2. Onomatopoeia: *hissed, crackled*
3. Alliteration: *blood boiled*
4. Emotion: *frenzied hands*
5. Choice and use of words create a sense of horror: *red-hot stake, twisted it round and round*
6. Auditory simile which is an extended simile: particularly powerful as it makes two comparisons



Simile

The blacksmith in the simile is definitely from the Iron Age. Odysseus is part of the Bronze Age. The two similes associated with the blinding of the Cyclops recall Homer's time.

Activity 60

Complete the table by studying the similes and giving details of the two trades:

383–385	
390–392	

OCR Booklet Book 9: 413–479 Odysseus tells his tale: Escape**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What did Odysseus do with the rams?
2. What happened when Odysseus tried to get past the Cyclops?
3. How does Odysseus mock the Cyclops?

The character of Odysseus

As said above, there is no such thing as false modesty with a Greek hero. Odysseus used his cunning and it paid off for him: *While I laughed to myself at how the name and the clever scheme had deceived him.*

Notice how Odysseus does not say anything, but uses facial expressions to control his men: *with a nod and a frown.*

Activity 61

What words in the passage show that Odysseus considers himself to be superior to the Cyclops?

Literary techniques and composition**Activity 62**

Look at the passage as a whole.

Make a list of the words which show that the Cyclops is in pain.

What does the Cyclops say which makes us lose sympathy for him?

OCR Booklet Book 9: 480–525 Odysseus tells his tale: Telemus's prophecy**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. How does the Cyclops nearly destroy Odysseus's ship?
2. What truth does Odysseus eventually tell the Cyclops?
3. What did Telemus foretell?

Themes**Justice and revenge**

The Greeks believed that vengeance was incomplete if the sufferer did not know the full name of the perpetrator and the reason. However, Odysseus commits *hubris* – lack of respect for the gods – by speaking on behalf of a god, suggesting that Poseidon will not heal the Cyclops, and it is this which angers Poseidon.

The character of Odysseus

The crew are starting to challenge Odysseus's judgement. They suggest that he is *stubborn*. They just want to get away, but Odysseus needs to ensure the Cyclops knows who he is. Odysseus's reputation is important to him.

OCR Booklet Book 9: 526–566 Odysseus tells his tale: Polyphemus's curse**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What curse does the Cyclops place on Odysseus?
2. Who hears his prayer?
3. What does Odysseus do with the ram which saved him?

Themes**The gods**

Athena: Having given so much help in previous books, it is a surprise that Athena does not help Odysseus at all in this book. The reason is that she cannot interfere with the area of responsibility of another god and so she might complicate the situation with Poseidon.

Literary techniques and composition**Epithets and formulae:**

These helped the oral poet. There is a large number in Book 9 and many formulae finish the book.

1. When the sun set and darkness fell we settled to sleep on the sand
2. Rosy-fingered dawn
3. Took their place on the benches
4. With heavy hearts

This was also a sign to Homer's audience that the story was coming to an end.

Guided Activity 19

What would Homer's audience have enjoyed when they listened to *Odyssey* 9?

Think about:

1. Who was the audience likely to be? This would make a good introduction.
2. Exciting storyline
3. Descriptive passages
4. Moral message on civilisation



Book 10: Circe

OCR Booklet Book 10: 1–55 Odysseus tells his tale: The bag of winds

Understand the plot

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. How long did Odysseus stay with Aeolus?
2. Which wind was not in the bag of winds, and why?
3. What did Odysseus's men think was in the bag?

Context

Aeolus: king of the winds, and *dear to the deathless gods*, he lives on *Aeolia*, which has not been identified, so is a fantasy island. Said to be 'floating', the ancients thought it was off the north coast of Sicily. Aeolus's name means *changeable*. Odysseus visits him twice and is treated differently on each occasion so the name is appropriate. Aeolus's father was Hippotas. The image created is one of a happy home, which is something Odysseus is missing.

Themes

Nostos

Odysseus comes so close to Ithaca he can see *men tending fires*. The crushing disappointment at not reaching home shows in his deep despair.

Xenia

The opening lines of Book 10 form almost a complete *xenia* sequence.

1. There is constant banqueting: *always feasting*
2. Aeolus gives Odysseus hospitality for a *month*
3. He is asked questions: *questioning me*
4. He is given a gift suitable for him, and it is the most precious gift for Odysseus: *a leather bag – a bag of winds*

The character of Odysseus

Odysseus reaches his lowest point. He debates with himself whether to jump overboard.

The portrayal of key characters

Crew:

Homer always emphasises the fact that the people in general are to blame for their own downfall (a moral message). There is a tension between Odysseus and his own men – Odysseus mistrusts his companions and tries to stay awake: *handing over to none of my crew*. The crew lack confidence in Odysseus.

Activity 63

What do the men say which shows they do not consider Odysseus to be a fair leader?



Literary techniques and composition

Activity 64

Find the following features of epic poetry in the passage:

patronymic (son of...)	
alliteration	
direct speech	
fantasy	



OCR Booklet Book 10: 56–102 Odysseus tells his tale: The Laestrygonians

Understand the plot

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What does Aeolus tell Odysseus to do when he returns to Aeolia?
2. What was special about the harbour of the Laestrygonians?
3. What could Odysseus see from the headland?

Context

Laestrygonian citadel: at first sight, this is a fantasy place, but it is possible that the oral tradition is reflecting a distant knowledge of lands to the north such as Scandinavian countries, where the summers have continual daylight: *where the herdsman driving in his flocks at the day's end calls to the herdsman driving his out as the day begins*. Certainly Homer's audience would have been amazed by this.

The character of Odysseus

Odysseus is still a hero of Troy and he knows there is nothing he can do, so waits until there is an opportunity by sitting by the entrance to Aeolus's megaron. However, he still blames his men – and the fact that he fell asleep.

Literary techniques and composition

Activity 65

As with the Cyclops incident, the description of the harbour seems to lull Odysseus and his men into a false sense of security. How is it described?



OCR Booklet Book 10: 103–132 Odysseus tells his tale: Escape from the cannibals

Understand the plot

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. Whom do Odysseus's men meet by the well?
2. What happened when the men entered the palace?
3. How did Odysseus get his ship away from the harbour?

Context

Antiphates is the giant king. The people are *sturdy* as the king's daughter is described so while drawing water. *Artacia*: there is a fountain near the Black Sea with the same name. It features in the story of Jason and the Argonauts. *Antiphates' wife*: also a tall woman, *as massive as a mountaintop*. However, she does not appear to be attractive to Odysseus.

Themes

Civilisation

Again Odysseus comes across a people with different values from him. He is not impressed, especially as he did not get the hospitality he desired nor, presumably, the gifts.

The Laestrygonians, however, do show signs of being civilised. It is just a different type of society:

1. They build some sort of road for collecting wood: *well-worn track*
2. They have *fine* palaces
3. They live in communities and work together

The character of Odysseus

Like most heroes, Odysseus has good sailing skills and can get himself out of trouble. However, he leaves the others *to founder where they were*. He does not risk his own safety and the men in his boat are fortunate as he saves them.

Literary techniques and composition

Guided Activity 20

How does Homer show the violent nature of the Laestrygonians?

You might like to consider: a range of verbs, adjectives, the effect on Odysseus's crew. Include reference to the simile and what it represents.



OCR Booklet Book 10: 133–197 Odysseus tells his tale: Circe's island**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. How long do the men rest when they land on Aeaëa?
2. What meal did Odysseus provide?
3. What does Odysseus say he has seen from the rocky lookout?

Context

Aeaëa: the word is linked with the word *gaia* = earth. It is the island home of *Circe*. *Aia* is another name for *Colchis*, where the Golden Fleece was kept. There is some influence of the Jason stories here. *Aeetes* is Circe's brother and he was King of Colchis when Jason came for the Golden Fleece. Again there is an overlap with the Jason stories. Circe and Aeetes are brother and sister and both are children of *Helios*, the sun god.

The character of Odysseus

Not only can Odysseus hunt successfully, but he can also make ropes.

Activity 66

How does Odysseus try to win his crew around?

Actions	Words

OCR Booklet Book 10: 198–250 Odysseus tells his tale: The magic spell**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What do Eurylochus and his men find in the forest?
2. What do Polites and the men do?
3. Why is Eurylochus able to tell Odysseus what has happened?

Context

Shook lots in a bronze helmet: although the armour is from the Bronze Age, drawing lots is a better reflection of Homer's own time. Even in Homer's time though there would have been a belief that the gods guided the decision.

Cheese and barley meal is a thick, sweet, sticky mess. *Pramnium wine* is described as black and harsh. In the *Iliad* it is offered with an onion. *Meal* means ground up grain of any sort, which in this case is barley. The food seems to have been a mixture of grain and alcohol. This is a common combination in prehistoric man, but it also resembles beer, which was drunk by people in northern Europe as grapes could not be grown to produce wine.

Activity 67

Circe touched the men with her wand. How did the men change, and what stayed the same?

Literary techniques and composition

Activity 68

Study the simile. What are the correspondences of the following?

Dogs	
Fawning round their master	

Activity 69

Make a list of the words and phrases which describe emotions in this passage.

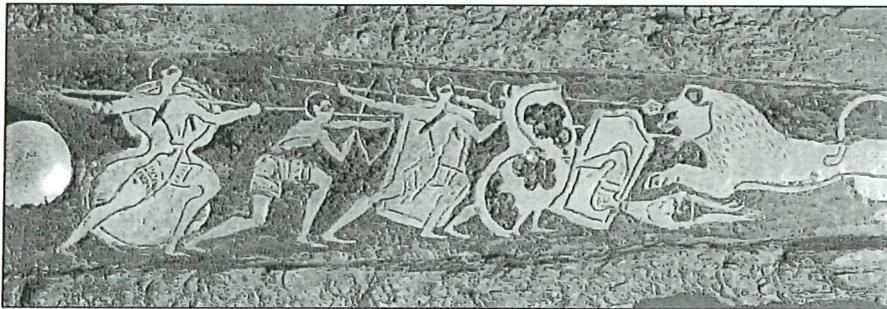
OCR Booklet Book 10: 251–301 Odysseus tells his tale: Help from Hermes**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. After Eurylochus tells Odysseus what has happened, what does Odysseus do?
2. What does Hermes look like when he appears to Odysseus?
3. What does Hermes offer to do?

Context

Bronze silver embossed sword: we have already seen similar swords from Mycenae. This is another from a tholos tomb at Pylos.

**Themes****Divine intervention**

Hermes: as with all gods, he appears in disguise as a young man at that charming age when down first covers the cheeks. He obviously has some useful knowledge. Circe tells Odysseus later that it was Hermes.

Activity 70

Hermes is very clear in his information. There are fewer adjectives and descriptions than usual. What does Hermes say will happen, and what should Odysseus do?

The character of Odysseus

Odysseus, as a leader, feels *bound by necessity* to go and help his men. He is going to have to trust Hermes. Odysseus is usually suspicious as this is a form of protection.

The portrayal of key characters

Crew: Eurylochus has obviously had a fright. He reacts in a surprising way, from the modern audience's point of view. He clings to Odysseus's knees. This is something people did when begging for a favour or protection. The act of clasping someone's knees is called *supplication*.

OCR Booklet Book 10: 302–347 Odysseus tells his tale: Encountering Circe**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What does Hermes give to Odysseus as protection?
2. What does Circe do to make Odysseus welcome?
3. When her potion does not work, what does Odysseus do to threaten Circe?

Context

Slayer of Argus: Hermes had killed a monster with 100 eyes called Argus.

Golden wand: Hermes is shown with a 'wand' called a *caduceus*.

Moly: Hermes directly intervenes to help with *moly*. Homer seems to imply that the gods use a different language from mortals: *Moly the gods call it*. It is also possible that this is really what remains of the difference between the Greek invaders who invaded the mainland and the pre-Greek population. It is even possible that this word is from the remains of the oldest language: Indo-European. The plant itself is probably imaginary, but some people think it is garlic!

Themes**Xenia****Activity 71**

In what ways does Circe follow the rules of xenia?

How does she abuse the rules?

**The character of Odysseus**

His reputation, *kleos*, has reached Circe as she realises that it is Odysseus: *you must be Odysseus*. Again he shows his mistrust. On being offered to go to bed with Circe, he follows Hermes' advice and makes her swear an oath as he is suspicious she will *rob me of courage and manhood*.

The portrayal of key characters

Circe

Activity 72

How does Circe show that she is in charge in her palace?

**OCR Booklet Book 10: 348–399 Odysseus tells his tale: Circe frees the crew****Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. In what ways is Odysseus given 'luxury treatment'?
2. Why does Odysseus say he cannot eat and drink?
3. How does Circe change Odysseus's men back into humans?

The character of Odysseus

After receiving luxury treatment, Odysseus then shows his responsibility towards his men. His aim on coming to Circe was to set them free: *set them free and let me see my loyal friends with my own eyes*.

Literary techniques and composition**Activity 73**

List or highlight all the metals.

What impression of the inside of the palace is given?



OCR Booklet Book 10: 400–448 Odysseus tells his tale: He gathers his men**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What does Circe tell Odysseus to do?
2. How do the men on the shore react to Odysseus's return?
3. Who challenges Odysseus?

Context

scion: means a descendant of a famous or important family. In this case it is *scion of Zeus*. Zeus was believed by some to be the great-great-grandfather of Odysseus.

The character of Odysseus

Is Odysseus fully in charge? Even when they are on Circe's island, the men do not support him fully. Eurylochus implies that Odysseus has let them down before. Odysseus does not take criticism well. He wants to kill Eurylochus: *I felt like drawing the long sword*. Odysseus is obstinate in sticking to his plan. Leadership is not a democratic thing. Eurylochus joins them, *fearing my stern rebuke*.

Literary techniques and composition

Remember this is oral poetry. The bard takes the opportunity to repeat almost exactly the words spoken by Circe: *Drag your ship on land: store your tackle and goods in the caves*, and Odysseus's orders: *Drag the ship on land, and store our tackle and goods in the caves*.

Activity 74

Simile: What do these represent?

Calves	
Herd of cows	
Lowling constantly round their mothers	

Odysseus believes that the men look to him for their care.

OCR Booklet Book 10: 449–502 Odysseus tells his tale: He seeks to leave**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. How long did Odysseus and his men stay with Circe?
2. Who prompts Odysseus to leave?
3. Where does Circe say Odysseus must go next?

Context

House of Hades: this is the Underworld. As Odysseus points out: *No man has ever sailed to Hades*. *Persephone* was Queen of the Underworld. *Blind Theban seer Teiresias*: Teiresias was a prophet and Odysseus needs to speak to him to get instructions for getting home. As he is now dead, Odysseus will have to go to the Underworld.

Themes**Xenia**

Circe's hospitality is initially questionable.

Activity 75

How does Circe eventually treat Odysseus's men?

Nostos

remember your native country now: this is an example of where Odysseus is not completely focused on getting home. He has been enjoying *eating food in plenty*. His men have a desire to go home, not just Odysseus.

The character of Odysseus

He admits to not initially liking being prompted to go home: *my proud heart...*

OCR Booklet Book 10: 503–574 Odysseus tells his tale: The death of Elpenor**Understand the plot**

Read the whole section. Answer these comprehension questions:

1. What information does Odysseus not tell his men?
2. How did Elpenor die?
3. What parting gift does Circe give Odysseus?

Context

Ocean stream: the ancients believed that the ocean flowed around the earth in a ring. The rivers which were associated with the Underworld were: *Acheron, Cocytus, Styx and Pyriphlegethon*. Homer's audience would have been familiar with the term *libation*. This was when wine or honey and milk were poured on the ground during a religious ceremony (see the rhyton in Section A). *Erebus* is one of the names of the god of the Underworld.

Circe's instructions: Despite having to go and see *Teiresias*, the blind Theban prophet in the *Halls of Hades*, for instructions to return to Ithaca, in fact Circe also gives Odysseus a lot of help in finding him in the first place.

Activity 76

Make a list of what Odysseus must do.

**Literary techniques and composition****Activity 77**

How does Homer add an air of mystery to Circe's instructions?

**Activity 78**

Look again through Book 10. Identify examples of oral poetry.

Flashback	

**Guided Activity 21**

Assess Odysseus as a leader in Book 10. You might like to think:

1. Would you serve with him?
2. Do you trust his judgement?
3. What are his good points?
4. What are his bad points?



Books 11–18: Summary

11	Odysseus sees the prophet Teiresias. Odysseus's mother, Anticleia, who has died while he was away, tells him of happenings at Ithaca.
12	Odysseus passes the monster Scylla and whirlpool Charybdis. They reach the island of the sun god. Odysseus's men eat some of the cattle although Teiresias told Odysseus not to, and he loses all his men. Odysseus is washed up on the nymph Calypso's island, but after seven years is allowed to go.
13	After Odysseus left Calypso's island he set sail, but was shipwrecked again and lands on the land of the Phaeacian. He is welcomed by Princess Nausicaa and entertained in the palace of her father King Alcinous (Books 9 and 10 take place here). Odysseus is given gifts and rowed home by the Phaeacians. Odysseus is laid on the shore of Ithaca still asleep. The Phaeacians row away. Poseidon, who heard the Cyclops curse in Book 9, turns the Phaeacians' boat into a rock out to sea because they helped Odysseus. The goddess Athena reveals to Odysseus where he is. Athena turns Odysseus into a beggar to protect him.
14	Odysseus goes to his swineherd Eumaeus's hut. He is still loyal. Eumaeus complains about the suitors. Odysseus invents a story about his past and Eumaeus does not know who Odysseus really is.
15	Athena tells Telemachus to return from visiting Menelaus. She warns of the plot to ambush him. Menelaus offers gifts and final hospitality. Back at Eumaeus' hut, Odysseus intends to go to town. He asks for news of (his father) Laertes. Telemachus goes to Eumaeus's hut.
16	Telemachus is given a warm welcome by Eumaeus. They eat a simple meal. Telemachus tells the 'stranger' of his problems with the suitors. Telemachus sends Eumaeus to Penelope with news of Telemachus's return. Odysseus is changed back by Athena. He reveals himself to Telemachus. They discuss tactics. Penelope hears of Telemachus's return. The suitors are angry that Telemachus has returned safely. Antinous hatches a new plan. Eumaeus returns home. Odysseus becomes a beggar again.
17	Telemachus wants to get back to the palace. He tells Eumaeus to bring Odysseus. Telemachus returns to Penelope and Eurycleia. Eumaeus brings Odysseus to town. They meet Melanthius, who kicks Odysseus. They arrive at the palace. Odysseus is recognised by his old dog, Argus, who then dies. Odysseus begs in disguise. Odysseus annoys Antinous, who hits him with a stool. Penelope is told of Antinous's behaviour. She summons Odysseus but he refuses to go.
18	Odysseus is insulted by Irus, another beggar. They agree to fight for food. Athena intervenes and makes Odysseus strong. The suitors laugh. Odysseus wins. Penelope decides to appear before the suitors. Penelope admits that she must marry. She asks for gifts and receives some from all the suitors. Melantheo insults Odysseus and another suitor throws a stool at Odysseus but misses and hits the wine steward.