

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 Thrinacie, 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 Euryclia 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. Euryclia 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	Euryclia 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.