

# 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

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| 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)

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| 2  | Lines 1–55    | <b>The Bag of Winds</b><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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><br>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)

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| 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

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| 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:

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| 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." |