

1) "Tell the Story"

- a) Homer opens his storytelling with an invocation (prayer) to the Muse.
 - i) There are nine muses, daughters of Zeus.
 - ii) The invocation asks for help in telling the story--basically, a prayer to allow the narrator--Homer--to tell the story as well as possible.
- b) He introduces Odysseus as "that man skilled in all ways of contending."
 - i) This is an epithet, or nickname for Odysseus.
 - ii) This device will be used often for characterization and line length in telling the story.
- c) He recalls some of the things Odysseus encounters along his journey.
 - i) This foreshadows what we will read about/what his listeners would hear.
 - ii) Repetition of these details would have helped his listeners better keep track of what is going on in the story.
- d) Homer indicates that we will meet Odysseus at the point of his journey when he is trapped by Calypso.
- e) Homer foreshadows the conflict between Odysseus and Poseidon and the extreme length of his journey.

2) "Calypso, the Sweet Nymph"

- a) We are told that Athena favors Odysseus and asks Zeus to have him released from being trapped by Calypso.
 - i) Calypso is a nymph, or a minor goddess. She is immortal, and tempts Odysseus with the possibility of immortality if he stays. He has been there seven years.
 - ii) Zeus sends Hermes, the messenger god, to deliver the order to release Odysseus.

(1) When we read about him flying in lines 41-44, that is an epic simile; his flight is compared to that of a fish catching seagull.

- b) With that message delivered, Calypso reluctantly lets Odysseus leave.
 - i) Prior to his departure, Calypso wonders what Odysseus could see in his mortal wife.
 - (1) She is visibly jealous of Penelope.
 - (2) Odysseus still prefers his "quiet" wife even though she will age and he says she would be a "shade" in comparison to Calypso.
 - ii) He builds a raft to leave, and it is destroyed by Poseidon.
 - (1) Remember: The Cyclops incident has already happened. Poseidon is still punishing Odysseus here for blinding his son Polyphemus.
 - iii) He washes up on the island of Scheria, where the Phaeacians and King Alcinous are. He falls asleep in a pile of leaves (with another epic simile describing this event).

3) "I am Laertes' Son..."

- a) The Greek virtue/value of hospitality is displayed prominently in this section, for before even introducing himself Odysseus is treated to a great banquet by the Phaeacians.
 - i) Once King Alcinous asks him to identify himself, Odysseus becomes the narrator and tells of his adventures.
 - (1) He mentions first that he was detained by Circe and Calypso, but then he starts over from his sailing from Troy.
 - (a) Now, in chronological order, he tells us of his journey via flashback.
 - (2) After leaving Troy, he and his men made it to Ismaros, home of the Cicones, killing the men they encountered and taking their possessions.
 - (a) Because his men were too foolish to leave right away, another army of men ambushed them, and being outnumbered, many of Odysseus' crew died.
 - (i) "Six benches were left empty in every ship"
 - (ii) This is the first of many instances in which a refusal to listen to wise advice costs men their lives.
- 4) Their next destination takes them to the land of the Lotus Eaters, who were much nicer to them.
 - a) Unfortunately, those who ate the lotus no longer wished to go home.
 - i) Odysseus refuses to allow this and forces them back to the ship to head home.
 - (1) We see here Odysseus' determination to finish his journey, and to reach home.
 - (2) Home is clearly valued.
- 5) The encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus is next, and this may well be the section in which Odysseus is best characterized.
 - a) He and his men have settled into the Cyclops' cave where he keeps his rams, taking some of his cheese and lighting a fire.
 - i) They truly make themselves at home, thinking that the Cyclops will honor the virtue of hospitality--which he does not.
 - (1) He eats some of Odysseus' men instead.
 - b) Odysseus displays much of his famed intellect and craftiness--his positive traits--in attempting to escape Polyphemus.
 - i) He lies about where their ship is, saying it got destroyed, all in hope of keeping it hidden and intact for a future getaway.
 - ii) He does not kill the Cyclops when he has the opportunity to do so, realizing that it would be suicide.
 - (1) The Cyclops is the only one who can open the boulder at the mouth of the cave.
 - iii) He waits instead for the right moment and offers the Cyclops some wine.
 - (1) This disarms the Cyclops, putting him to sleep.

- iv) He tells the Cyclops that his name is “Nohbdy,” allowing him to remain essentially anonymous at first.
 - v) Once the Cyclops is asleep, Odysseus and his men are able to stab him in the eye with a large burning stake and violently blind the creature.
 - vi) Later on, he and his men escape under the bellies of the fat, hairy rams the Cyclops keeps in the cave.
- c) Sadly, once he has succeeded in escaping the cave, Odysseus’ foolish pride takes over.
- i) They round up the sheep, load them on the ship, and then Odysseus taunts his adversary from afar.
 - (1) The Cyclops throws a hilltop (yes, a hilltop) at them and creates a wave that almost takes the ship out.
 - (a) This should be enough warning for Odysseus to stop as his men implore him to do, but he keeps on.
 - ii) Odysseus now lets his “anger flare” and tells the Cyclops his true identity, bragging about how he put him to shame.
 - (1) This brings upon Odysseus and his men the worst punishment yet: the wrath of Poseidon.
 - (a) Polyphemus prays to his father Poseidon in response to discovering Odysseus’ identity and wishes upon him a long, arduous journey in which he loses all companions and returns under “strange sail” to “bitter days at home”--which he does.
- 6) The wind king Aeolus next tries to help Odysseus by bagging up all of the stormy winds, which allows much safer passage home.
- a) Unfortunately, a jealous shipmate opens it up, thinking the bag has treasure, and causes them to be blown back to Aeolia, where King Aeolus is. He will not help them again.
- 7) Their next stop is where the Laestrygonians live, and it is a poor choice in destination.
- a) They are gigantic cannibals; as that description implies, all ships but one are destroyed and their corresponding crewmates are devoured.
- 8) They next meet Circe, who seems like a nice, hospitable lady.
- a) She tricks his men with her innocent charms and “beguiling voice,” so they drop their guard and trust her.
 - b) She offers his men a feast, which they accept, and when they partake of it they are transformed into swine, and she shuts them in a pigsty.
 - i) Odysseus is able to resist her initially with the help of Hermes, but once she transforms his men back to their original state Odysseus is nonetheless persuaded to stay with her for “many seasons” before they beg to be on their way home again.
- 9) To be allowed to return home, Circe insists that Odysseus visit Teiresias, the prophet, in the Land of the Dead, so he goes to the underworld to learn again of his destiny.
- a) Teiresias tells Odysseus that:

- i) "Anguish lies ahead" on his journey because Poseidon is still trying to punish him for blinding his son the Cyclops.
- ii) There is but one "narrow strait" they can take to avoid Poseidon's wrath, but it poses dangers and will require Odysseus to deny himself (his desires) and restrain his shipmates.
 - (1) This refers to the Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis.
- iii) Once they reach the location where Helios, the sun god, keeps his cattle, they must not eat them.
 - (1) If they do, they will all die, and their ship will be destroyed.
 - (a) Hint: This totally happens.
- iv) Odysseus will "survive alone, bereft of all companions, lost for years."
- v) He will return home under "strange sail" and find his house under siege by men wishing to marry Penelope and take over his riches.
 - (1) He will make these men pay with their lives.
- vi) He will ultimately have to make an offering to Poseidon later to atone for what he did to anger him.
- vii) Odysseus will die peacefully later in his old age.

10) "Sirens; Scylla and Charybdis"--discuss in class

11) "The Cattle of the Sun God"--discuss in class