

ODYSSEY STUDY QUESTIONS¹

Books 1-6

1. Identify the following characters. What family relationships (e.g., "husband and wife") and political relationships (e.g., "king and subjects" or "allies in war") exist among these characters? Antinoös, Athene, Kalypso, Eurymachos, Helen, Hermes, Menelaos, Nausikaa, Odysseus, Orestes, Penelope, Poseidon, Proteus, Telemachos, and Zeus.
2. What characters in question 1 are gods? How are the gods different from humans in the *Odyssey*?
3. Look up the word '**epithet**' in a good English dictionary. What kinds of epithets are applied to characters in book 1?
4. Look up the word '**theodicy**'. At what points do people blame the gods for their problems? How does the *Odyssey* answer these charges? What are the similarities between this beginning and the beginning of Job? What are the differences between the explanations of the causes of suffering in Job and the *Odyssey*?

Books 7-12

5. Arrange the events of books 1-24 in chronological order, moving from the fall of Troy to Odysseus' homecoming.
6. Identify Achilles, Aeolus, Agamemnon, Circê, Lotus Eaters, Persephone, Polyphemus, Teiresias, Scylla & Charybdis, Sirens.

Books 13-24

7. What is the significance of the contest with the great bow?
8. Identify Eurycleia, Laertes, Mentor, Penelope's web.
9. Referring to the theodicy question above, describe the similarities and differences between the ending of the *Odyssey* and the ending of Job.
10. How does Odysseus prove his identity to Penelope? To Eurycleia? Laertes?
11. Look up the phrase **deus ex machina**. What does it mean? Where do you find an example of this literary devise?

¹These questions are taken or adapted from Fisher 120-124.