***The Odyssey***

**Guided Reading**

**Book 1: Athena Advises Telemachus**

***Homer opens with an invocation, or prayer, asking the Muse[[1]](#footnote-1) to help him sing his tale. Notice how the singer gives his listeners hints about how his story is to end.***

He was very sad and didn’t fight unnecessarily. He could not save his men and they all died!

They ate Lord Helio’s cattle and he killed them.

Goddess of the arts, help me to tell the story of smart and brave Odysseus who wandered for years after his victory over Troy.

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| **TEXT FROM EPIC** | **SUMMARY** | **IMPORTANCE/ ANALYSIS** |
| Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story  Of that man skilled in all ways of contending[[2]](#footnote-2),  The wanderer, harried for years on end,  After he plundered the stronghold  On the proud height of Troy.  He saw the townlands  And learned many bitter nights and days  In his deep heart at sea, while he fought only  To save his life, to bring his shipmates home.  But not by will nor valor could he save them,  For their own recklessness destroyed them all—  Children and fools, they killed and feasted on the cattle of Lord Helios, the Sun,  And he who moves all day through heaven  Took from their eyes the dawn of their return.  Of these adventures, Muse daughter of Zeus,  Tell us in our time, lift the great song again. |  | **Notice how the first line of the epic is spoken to a divinity (god). What does this say about Homer and his audience?**  **We know how this ends now! How does this build suspense for Homer’s audience?**  **Explain the metaphor:**  ***Took from their eyes the dawn of their return.*** |

Muse, Help me tell the story in all its glory

***Odysseus has been gone for 20 years now and Athena has finally convinced Zeus to help him get home. Meanwhile, Athena goes to Ithaca to help Odysseus’s son, Telemachus, cope with another problem. His home—the palce of Odysseus—is overrun with suitors. Those arrogant men have taken over Odysseus’s house. They are partying on the boy’s inheritance and are demanding that his mother, Penelope, take one of them as a husband.***

***Now the Goddess Athena arrives on the scene in Ithaca. Disguised as Mentor, an old family friend, she mingles with the mob of suitors and waits to talk to Telemachus.***

Hello, Stranger! Welcome! Eat! Haven’t seen you in a while!

Telemachus put her spear into his father’s spear rack on the wall.

Telemachus went straight to greet Athena—embarrassed that he was rude to the visitor. He took her hand and her spear.

Telemachus spots the guest at the door—he was daydreaming, “I wish my dad would come back and chase the men out of here.”

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| **TEXT FROM EPIC** | **SUMMARY** | **IMPORTANCE/ ANALYSIS** |
| Long before anyone else, the prince Telemachus  now caught sight of Athena—for he, too,  was sitting there, unhappy among the suitors,  a boy, daydreaming. What is his great father  came from the unknown world and drove these men,  like dead leaves through the place, recovering  honor and lordship on his own domains?  Then he who dreamed in the crowd gazed out at Athena.  Straight to the door he came, irked with himself  to think a visitor had been kept there waiting,  and took her right hand, grasping with his left  her tall bronze-bladed spear. Then he said warmly:  “Greetings, stranger!” Welcome to our feast.  There will be time to tell your errand later.  He led the way, and Pallas Athena followed  Into the lofty hall. The boy reached up  And thrust her spear high in a polished rack  Against a pillar, where tough spear on spear  Of the old soldier, his father, stood in order.  Then, shaking out a splendid coverlet,  He seated her on a throne with footrest—all  Finely carved—and drew his painted armchair  Near her, at a distance from the rest.  To be amid the din, the suitors’ riot,  Would ruin his guest’s appetite, he thought,  And he wished privacy to ask for news  About his father, gone for years. |  | **What was Telemachus doing?**  **Explain the Homeric Simile.**  **How do Telemachus’ actions show his courtesy? Greek values and customs?**  **What does this say about the importance of food in Greek customs?**  **How does Telemachus show concern for the visitor?**  **Why does he want privacy to ask for news of his father?**  **How do you think Telemachus feels about his father?** |

He put a beautiful blanket on a fine throne and pulled up a chair.

He didn’t want her to have to sit among the rude suitors. He wanted to see if the traveler had news of his father.

***As Telemachus and the goddess-in-disguise talk, the suitors are partying loudly all around them. Telemachus tells the goddess that the men are eating through all they have, courting his mother, and using his house as if I were theirs to wreck and plunder.***

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| **TEXT FROM EPIC** | **SUMMARY** | **IMPORTANCE/ ANALYSIS** |
| Pallas Athena was disturbed, and said:  “Ah, bitterly you need Odysseus, then!  high time he came back to engage these upstarts.  I wish we saw him standing helmeted  there in the doorway, holding shield and spear,  looking the way he did when I first knew him…  If I were you,  I should take steps to make these men disperse.  listen, now, and attend to what I say:  at daybreak call the islanders to assembly,  and speak your will, and call the gods to witness:  the suitors must go scattering to their homes.  Then here’s a course for you, if you agree:  get a sound craft afloat with twenty oars  and go abroad for news of your lost father—  perhaps a traveler’s tale, or rumored fame  issued from Zeus abroad in the world of men.  Talk to that noble sage, at Pylos, Nestor,  then go to Menelaus, the red-haired king  at Sparta, last man home of all the Achaeans[[3]](#footnote-3).  If you should learn your father is alive  And coming home, you could hold out a year.  Or if you learn that he is dead and gone,  Then you can come back to your own dear country and raise a mound for him, and burn his gear,  Wit hall the funeral honors due the man,  And give your mother to another husband.  When you have done all this, or seen it done,  It will be time to ponder  Concerning these contenders in your house—  How you should kill them, outright or by guile[[4]](#footnote-4).  You need to bear this insolence[[5]](#footnote-5) of theirs,  You are a child no longer. |  |  |

1. There were nine muses, daughters of Zeus. They inspired people to produce music, poetry, dance, and all other arts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Contending**: fighting, arguing [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Acheans=Greeks [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **guile**=slyness, trickery [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **insolence=** rudeness, lack of respect [↑](#footnote-ref-5)