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The Odyssey
BY HOMER



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-reading**Setting**
History**Objective:** Researching the historical setting of *The Odyssey***Activity**

The main events of *The Odyssey* take place in Ithaca, an island off the coast of Greece, sometime during the eighth century B.C.

Divide the class into small groups. Using the library, the Internet, or both, research the history of the setting, and use this research to complete the **Setting Chart** on the next page. Focus on the time period in which *The Odyssey* is set.

The **Setting Chart** has been started for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter II

Creative Thinking

Objective: Devising a strategy and creating a bulletin

Activity

Odysseus fails to return after the Trojan War, and many suitors attempt to force Penelope, Odysseus' wife, to remarry. Penelope, in an attempt to delay the marriage, announces that she must finish weaving a robe for her father-in-law before choosing a new husband. She deceives the suitors by unraveling her work at the end of the day. Her plan is discovered after four years of deceiving the suitors.

Devise a new plan for Penelope to use to delay the marriage further. The plan may be a challenge for the suitors to carry out, or a new project that Penelope must complete. Be sure that the idea is plausible and convincing. Draft a memo that outlines the proposal. In the memo, clearly state the purpose, any applicable rules, and the allotted timeframe.

The project may be either hand-written or computer generated. If you wish, add pictures to enhance the bulletin's appearance. Be creative in your design.

Example:

NOTICE TO ALL SUITORS

A CONTEST IS TO BE HELD FOR ANY MAN SEEKING THE HAND OF PENELOPE:

QUEST FOR THE GOLDEN FLEECE

The rules:

1. One ship per contestant.
2. The crew is not to exceed forty-two men.
3. The quest must be completed in three years.
4. The contest begins next lunar cycle.
5. First contestant to return with the fleece wins.

All contestants must notify Telemachus for contest entry.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter VI

Plot

Objective: Changing the plot

Activity

Athene greatly affects Odysseus' life by aiding him in all his exploits. Through Athene's intercession, Odysseus lands safely in Phaeacia, meets Nausicaä, and is openly received by the Phaeacians. Without Athene's intervention, Odysseus' fate would likely be quite different.

Rewrite Chapter VI by removing Athene from the plot. Write what you suppose would happen to Odysseus without help from the goddess. What events, if any, would change without her involvement?

The revised chapter should be at least three pages in length and written in the same point of view and style as *The Odyssey*. The composition should start with Odysseus' arrival in Phaeacia and end just before his journey into the city.

A brief sample is provided.

Example:

Great Odysseus awoke among the thickets, alarmed by the sound of shouting. As a lion stalks its unsuspecting prey, so did Odysseus creep through the woods to see who was nearby. In a clearing, Odysseus spied the maidens at work; they were gathering their baskets in preparation to return home. Only fair Nausicaä remained behind, curious of the rustling that came from the brush. Royal Odysseus quickly rose from his hidden position and called out to the maid:

"Tell me, lady, at which land I have arrived. For over the seas I have traveled, and seen many exotic places with women fair, but in no land was there a woman possessing such beauty as you do possess. Have I arrived at Olympus? Whether you are a goddess or a mortal, please show pity upon me. I am in a strange land without clothing or food, and need a guide."

Then answered curious Nausicaä: "Sir, much strife must you have endured to be in such a way. Surely, this is not the celebrated Olympus, though this land cannot be less endearing to me. It is my home, Phaeacia, whose people have special meaning to Zeus himself. Tell me, stranger, from what land you come and for what purpose? Before you speak, however, I warn you not to approach further, else I shall call to my maids."

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters I-XVII

Critical Thinking

Objective: Identifying binary opposition

Activity

The Odyssey contains several minor conflicts, some of which are hard to notice. These conflicts, called binary oppositions, are intricate parts of every conflict in *The Odyssey*.

Honesty versus deception is an example of a binary opposition. In his travels, Odysseus often tells fictional stories about himself to the people he meets. Sometimes his lies are necessary, such as when Odysseus meets the Cyclops, but, at times, his lies are unfounded. The conflicting circumstances bring to mind the question, "Is Odysseus an honest man who only lies when necessary, or does he enjoy lying?"

The **Opposition Chart** contains several binary oppositions that are found in *The Odyssey*. The right column is comprised of questions that are a result of a specific opposition listed on the left. For each question, supply the letter of the corresponding opposition. Letters may be used more than once.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter XXIII

Interpreting Homer

Objective: Interpreting Homer's language

Activity

The Odyssey contains archaic language that, at times, may be difficult to understand.

The following excerpts are taken from the scene in which Penelope and Odysseus are reunited. Imagine how the characters must feel after being separated for twenty years, and the emotions each is feeling.

With this scenario in mind, rewrite the following quotations in modern English.

1. Penelope to nurse:

Why should you thus mock me when I have trouble enough already—talking such nonsense, and waking me up out of a sweet sleep that had taken possession of my eyes and closed them? I have never slept so soundly from the day my poor husband went to that city with the ill-omened name. Go back into the women's room; if it had been anyone else who had woke me up to bring me such absurd news I should have sent her away with a severe scolding. As it is your age shall protect you. (Pg. 233)

2. Nurse to Penelope:

Then nurse Euryclea said, "My child, what are you talking about? but you were all hard of belief and have made up your mind that your husband is never coming, although he is in the house and by his own fire side at this very moment. Besides I can give you another proof; when I was watching him I perceived the scar which the wild boar gave him, and I wanted to tell you about it, but in his wisdom he would not let me, and clapped his hands over my mouth; so come with me and I will make this bargain with you—if I am deceiving you, you may have me killed by the most cruel death you can think of. (Pg. 234)