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**Response Journal**

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*The Odyssey*  
Homer

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**Prestwick House**

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## *Response Journal*

### **To The Student**

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

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## *The Odyssey*

### I

1. Athene, daughter of Zeus, shows compassion to Odysseus and pleads with her father to send Hermes to set him free. In the meantime, she goes to speak with Telemachus, son of Odysseus, to convince him that Odysseus may still be alive and that he should get rid of the men who are wooing his mother. How do you think Telemachus feels in the midst of all of this, knowing his father may still be alive? How would you feel in a similar situation?
2. Although the goddess, Athene, disguised herself as the man Mentos as she departed from Telemachus, “he knew a god was with him.” Have you ever felt the presence of a supernatural being such as an angel or spirit? Were you comforted or frightened by their presence? When did this occur? Answer these questions as an entry in your diary.

### II

3. When Telemachus brings to the attention of his mother’s suitors that he is unhappy with the way they have ravaged his home and his family’s livestock, one of them responds, “I tell you the Achaean suitors are not at all to blame; your mother is to blame, whose craft exceeds all women’s.” Has anyone ever blamed you for something you didn’t do? How did it make you feel? Have you ever blamed someone for something you did? How did that make you feel?
4. As Telemachus rushes to leave on his journey to seek knowledge of his father, he orders Eurycleia, who guards his father’s chamber and its contents from the suitors, to gather supplies for himself and the ship’s crew. Make a list of at least ten things you would pack for such a trip.

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*The Odyssey*

**IV**

8. Menelaus recalls an incident in which he questions Proteus, the old man of the sea, about the fate of those who fought with him in Troy. At this time, that Telemachus is given hope that his father may still be alive. Has there ever been a time in your life when you thought someone or something you loved was gone forever, but then you learned there was a chance the person or thing would return or be returned? Write a diary entry describing how your hopelessness was then transformed into eager anticipation.
  
9. The obnoxious suitors of helpless Penelope, upon hearing of the departure of Telemachus, are bewildered: “the others were amazed. They did not think Telemachus was gone to Pylos, to the land of Neleus; they thought he was still somewhere at the farm, among the flocks, or with the swineherd.” They immediately plan to kill him before he can return, fearing he will bring back news that Odysseus is still alive, thus ending their plundering of his property. Compose a Letter to the Editor of your local newspaper, *The Grecian Times*, from the point of view of one of Penelope’s suitors and explain your actions.

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*The Odyssey*

**IX**

18. Odysseus, when asked by Polyphemus his name, replies, “My name is Noman.” Explain to a classmate who doesn’t understand why he chooses this name.
  
19. As Odysseus and his crew escape from Polyphemus by ship, Odysseus begins yelling insults at the blinded Cyclops. In his anger, the Cyclops hurls a hilltop, then a large stone at them, coaxing their ship back to the shore. How do suppose the crew members feel about Odysseus at this time? Have you ever been in a situation where you nearly escaped trouble, but someone made a mistake and you were caught? Describe what happened.
  
20. Polyphemus prays to his father, Poseidon, to make the journey home for Odysseus a long and treacherous one. Write a short poem to Poseidon either pleading for Odysseus’ safety or for his destruction.

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*Response Journal*

28. “The Sirens’ song” is a phrase that is still used in modern times. List some other phrases that you can think of that have meanings different than their words. Across from the phrase, explain what it means.

Phrase

sirens’ song

Meaning

a lure that leads to danger

**XII**

29. As everyone feasted and made merry the eve of the departure for Ithaca, “Odysseus would often turn his face toward the still shining sun, eager to see its setting, because he was impatient to be gone.” When in your life have you been eager to see the sun set, because you knew what the following day would bring?
30. Odysseus says to Queen Arete as he is leaving, “Fare you well, queen, for all the years until old age and death, which visit all, shall come.” What do you want to accomplish before you turn 20? 30? 40? 60?
31. Odysseus tells Athene, who is disguised as a shepherd, “false misleading tales.” Do you know anyone who makes up stories to impress other people? Write a letter to that person explaining why it would be better off telling the truth.