**The Adventures of Odysseus, Sailing from Troy, and The Lotus-Eaters**

*What city did Odysseus and his men plunder?*

Odysseus and his men plundered the city of Troy.

*Who has asked Odysseus to tell his tale?*

Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, asks Odysseus to tell his story.

*What beliefs and values are reflected in lines 65-69?*

The sailors’ grief indicates how close they are to one another and how much they honor the men with whom they fight.

*What words in line 82 remind you that this part is a flashback?*

The phrase “that time” indicates that Odysseus is retelling one of the many incidents that happened on his journey.

*Which characteristics of an epic hero does Odysseus show in “The Lotus-Eaters”?*

Odysseus displays wisdom when he sends out a scouting party, rather than putting all of his men at risk. When Odysseus realizes the danger of the Lotus, he acts decisively, ordering his ships to sail immediately. He also shows leadership in explaining to his men why they must leave.

***Thinking about the Selection***

1. *What is your first impression of Odysseus? Which of his qualities do you admire? Explain.*

{Opinion question}

2. *(a) While on Ismarus, in what ways do Odysseus’ men disobey orders? (b) What is the result of this disobedience? (c) What lesson might Odysseus take away from this experience?*

(a) The Greeks mutinied, drank wine, and refused to come back to the ship.

(b) As a result of their disobedience, they are attacked by the Cicones and many Greeks are killed.

(c) Odysseus might learn that he needs to exercise discipline over his men.

3. *(a) What happens to the men who eat the Lotus? (b) What does this episode suggest about the main problem that Odysseus has with his men? (c) Do you think Odysseus responds appropriately to the three men who long to stay with the Lotus-Eaters? Why or why not?*

(a) The men who eat the Lotus are lulled into a state of calm forgetfulness and no longer want to return home.

(b) Odysseus apparently has trouble instilling a sense of self-control and discipline into his men.

(c) {Opinion question}

4. *(a) Note two points at which Odysseus mentions a desire to return home. (b) What significant role might his longing for home play in Odysseus’ epic journey?*

(a) He mentions a desire to return home as he describes being held by Circe (line 35) and when he describes his escape from the Lotus-Eaters (line 105).

(b) His longing for home might give Odysseus extra strength or drive to escape from difficulties.

**The Cyclops**

*Based on Odysseus’ criticism of the Cyclopes, what kind of society do you think the Greeks valued?*

The Greeks must have valued an ordered society that practiced agriculture and abided by rules of law.

*Where is Cyclops when Odysseus and his men enter the cave?*

The Cyclops is in the field taking care of his sheep.

*What character flaw does Odysseus reveal by refusing to leave the cave?*

Odysseus’ curiosity leads him to disregard good advice. He knows it would be wise to seize the food and leave, but he is too curious to see the “cave man.”

*What ancient Greek beliefs regarding the gods, military might, and respect for strangers does Odysseus express in his words to the Cyclops?*

Odysseus’ answer shows that the Greek custom of hospitality is well established. The rules of hospitality are part of the Greeks’ religious beliefs and are thought to be enforced by the gods.

*What heroic qualities does Odysseus reveal as he plots against the Cyclops?*

Odysseus shows the ability to construct a carefully detailed plan. He has the discipline to carry through each step of the plan, without rushing in a way that would tip off the Cyclops that he is about to be tricked.

*What plan do you think Odysseus has in mind by offering the Cyclops the wine?*

Odysseus hopes to slow the Cyclops’ reaction time or perhaps put him to sleep.

*What does Odysseus plan to do with the stake that he and his men made?*

Odysseus plans to blind the Cyclops by ramming the stake into the creature’s eye.

*What cultural values are represented in Odysseus’ reference to “the gods” in line 323 (“Now, by the gods, I drove my big hand spike / deep in the embers…”)?*

Odysseus’ response shows that he is a man who respects the authority of the gods. The reference to “the gods” shows that he asks for help from a greater power in his time of need.

*What does Odysseus’ gleeful response to his successful trick reveal about his character?*

Odysseus’ laughter shows his great love of life. He takes enormous pleasure in his trick and is able to set aside the suffering he has endured to appreciate how thoroughly his wordplay fooled the Cyclops.

*What do the other Cyclopes think Polyphemus is saying when he says, “Nohbdy’s tricked me”?*

The other Cyclopes think that Polyphemus is saying “I am in pain, but no one has tricked me.” They believe that there is nothing they can do to help Polyphemus.

*Despite his heroism, what human weaknesses does Odysseus reveal as he sails away?*

Odysseus allows his anger and arrogance to get the best of him. It would have been much wiser to be quiet. He is acting in a boastful and vindictive nature.

*How do the men escape from Cyclops’ cave?*

Odysseus smuggles his men out by tying the Cyclops’ sheep together in sets of three and binding one man under the middle sheep of each set. The men escape when the Cyclops releases his sheep to graze.

*What does the Cyclops ask for in his prayer to Poseidon?*

The Cyclops prays that Odysseus will lose all his men and, if he returns at all, that he may arrive home only after many “dark” years of hardship. The Cyclops’ prayer amounts to an extremely precise prophecy.

**The Land of the Dead**

*What details suggest that the source of wind was mysterious to ancient Greeks?*

Odysseus claims that Circe, a nymph, creates the wind.

*What does Circe say that Odysseus must do in order to reach home?*

Circe says that Odysseus must go to Hades, the land of the dead, in order to reach home. In Hades, Odysseus must consult the blind prophet Tiresias.

*Whom is Odysseus trying to summon by making sacrifices?*

Odysseus is trying to summon the dead prophet Tiresias.

*What ancient Greek values and beliefs are suggested by Elpenor’s requests?*

He describes a burial that involves heaping stones over his corpse and putting a personal artifact – his oar – among the stones. Elpenor’s request suggests that his spirit will be able to find peace after his corpse is treated according to ancient Greek ritual.

*According to Tiresias, what will Odysseus find when he returns home?*

Tiresias predicts that Odysseus will find his home full of suitors eating his food and courting his wife.

***Thinking about the Selection***

1. *What do you think of Odysseus’ plan for escaping from Polyphemus? Explain.*

{Opinion question}

2. *(a) Before the meeting with the Cyclops, what had Odysseus received from Maron at Ismarus? (b) What does the encounter with Maron reveal about ancient Greek attitudes regarding hospitality?*

(a) From Maron, Odysseus received gold, a silver winebowl, and twelve jars of brandy.

(b) Hospitality is highly valued; hosts are judged by their courteousness and the richness of the gifts they present to their guests.

3. *(a) How do Odysseus and his companions expect to be treated by the Cyclops? (b) What “laws” of behavior and attitude does Polyphemus violate?*

(a) Odysseus and his men believe an appeal to the custom of honoring strangers will be respected.

(b) He violates the laws of hospitality, of honoring the gods – and the taboo against cannibalism.

4. *(a) How do Odysseus and his crew escape from the Cyclops? (b) What positive and negative character traits does Odysseus demonstrate in his adventure with the Cyclops?*

(a) They attach themselves to the underside of the Cyclops’ sheep. Thus, camouflaged from the Cyclops’ groping hands, they escape when Polyphemus lets his flocks out to graze.

(b) Odysseus displays a stubborn curiosity that le ads him into danger and a vindictive boastfulness. He also displays positive qualities, such as cleverness, leadership, and bravery.

5. *(a) Compare and contrast Odysseus’ reactions to the three ghosts he meets in the Land of the Dead – Elpenor, Anticlea, and Tiresias. (b) What character trait does Odysseus display in the Land of the Dead that he did not reveal earlier?*

(a) Odysseus weeps when he encounters Elpenor. He also weeps when he sees his mother, Anticlea, but he does not let her approach. When he sees Tiresias, he allows him to approach and listens to his prophecy.

(b) Odysseus shows compassion for his mother and for Elpenor; he reveals determination to achieve his goal even when he is afraid.

6. *(a) What difficulty does Tiresias predict for the journey to come? (b) Why would Odysseus continue, despite the grim prophecies?*

(a) Tiresias predicts Odysseus will lose ship and crew, struggle alone for years, and arrive home only to find his house filled with trouble.

(b) Odysseus may note that the grim fate can be averted by avoiding the cattle of Helios. Or, he may feel he has no other choices.

7. *(a) Judging from Tiresias’ prediction, which heroic qualities will Odysseus need to rely upon as he continues his journey? Explain.*

Based on the prophecies, Odysseus will need courage, resourcefulness, and strong leadership.

**The Sirens**

*What does Odysseus reveal about his character by sharing information with his men?*

Odysseus shows that he trusts his men to follow his orders. He also shows that he is not a leader who must keep all knowledge and power to himself.

*What instructions does Odysseus give his shipmates as they prepare to deal with the Sirens?*

Odysseus has asked his men to tie him to the mast.

*What does Odysseus’ mention of Helios reveal about ancient Greek beliefs regarding astronomical events?*

Greeks believed that gods controlled the sun and the planets. They thought that the god Helios provided the light and heat of the sun.

*How does Odysseus keep his shipmates from hearing the Sirens sing?*

Odysseus puts wax in his men’s ears so they cannot hear the Sirens.

*Which details in the Sirens’ song are designed to flatter the epic hero?*

The description of the Greeks’ victory over Troy is designed to flatter Odysseus.

*What demand does Odysseus make of his men as they approach the rough waters?*

Odysseus orders his shipmates to row hard and set a course.

***Thinking about the Selection***

1. *In which adventure in this section do you think Odysseus acts most heroically? Explain.*

{Opinion question}

2. *(a) How do the Sirens lure travelers to their destruction? (b) How does the danger posed by the Sirens compare to that posed by the Lotus-Eaters?*

(a) They sing an irresistible song that lures travelers to destruction.

(b) Both involve the perils of giving in to temptation. The Sirens lure sailors by singing a seductive song. The Lotus-Eaters cause men to forget their homes and their journey by feeding them the Lotus. The Sirens seem to be aware that they are doing something wrong, whereas the Lotus-Eaters do not.

3. *(a) Was Odysseus right not to tell his men about his decision to sail toward Scylla? (b) What might have happened if Odysseus had told them everything?*

(a) {Opinion} – Odysseus was wise to keep the information from his men in order the minimize their panic, **or** The men have a right to know what danger lies in store for them.

(b) Had they known what awaited them, Odysseus’ men might have panicked or refused to sail through the strait.