

Name: _____

Due: _____

Tales from the Odyssey
Book Five: Return to Ithaca
By: Mary Pope Osborne

Answer all questions at the end of each chapter. Make sure to **use complete sentences** and that you read the questions fully. You should highlight unknown words, new characters, and important or interesting points within the story when you are reading. **Write notes on the side - it lets me know what you're thinking when reading.** If you have questions that come up when reading, write them down on the right hand side - sometimes asking yourself questions when reading helps you better understand the text.

Chapter 6: The Mysterious Shepherd

When Odysseus awoke, he found himself surrounded by a mist. Through the haze, he saw strange winding paths and ghostly high cliffs. Nothing looked familiar. When he saw the gifts from the king piled near him, he fell into despair.

Why did King Alcinous order his men to sail to this place? he wondered. Why have they abandoned me here?

Odysseus paced up and down the beach, angry at the king for sending him to an unknown shore. When he saw a young shepherd coming toward him, he rushed to meet him.

"Greeting, friend!" Odysseus shouted through the mist. "I beg you not to fear me, but to tell me the truth -- where am I? What country is this?"

"Sir, you must be a stranger to this region, if you do not know this island," said the shepherd. "It is known far and wide, from the glow of dawn to the gloom of twilight. It is a rugged place, not good for horses, but it grows grain and grapes. It receives plenty of rain, so it has good water and good grass for goats and cattle. Even those who have traveled from as far away as Troy know the island's name: it is Ithaca."

Odysseus could not believe his ears. *Surely, I would recognize my own country,* he thought. He feared the shepherd might be trying to trick him, so he quickly invented a story.

Questions/Comments/Notes

“Ah, yes, I thought so.” he said, “I myself came here to Ithaca to escape punishment for killing a thief who tried to steal my treasure from the Trojan War.” He pointed to the gleaming gifts on the sand.

The shepherd smiled. Then, in the wink of an eye, the young man was transformed into a tall, striking woman with gray, glinting eyes.

“Athena,” breathed Odysseus.

“Odysseus, you are the world’s most cunning storyteller,” she said. “But still you did not know me, your guardian and protector. I have come here to help you again. I did not come here to help you again. I did not want others to see you, so I again shrouded you in a mist. It made your surroundings look unfamiliar to you. But never fear, this indeed your homeland.”

“Goddess, how do I know you are telling me the truth?” said Odysseus. How can I know that I have really come home?”

Athena waved her wand. “Look about you now, Odysseus,” she said, “and you will see the olive trees with their long leaves. You will see the dusky cave where nymphs weave their sea-purple webs. You will see the springs that never run dry. Behold -- Ithaca.” As she said these words, the goddess dispersed the mist that surrounding them.

In the bright, clear air, Odysseus saw all the things the goddess had described. Joyfully he fell to his knees and kissed the ground.

“Come,” said Athena, “let us hide these treasures in the cave of the nymphs. Then we will make a plan.”

Together Odysseus and Athena stowed the gold and bronze and woven clothes in the cave. Then Athena rolled a stone over the cave’s entrance.

When the stone was in place and the treasures were safe, Athena and Odysseus sat on the ground beneath an olive tree. There Athena told him all about the suitors who had invaded his home.

"For several years, Penelope fought off the evil men," she said. "Finally, she promised to choose one to marry, but she never intended to do so. One of her maids reported her deceit and the suitors raged against her. Now time is running out. She mourns for you but does not give up hope."

Odysseus fought to contain his anger against those who had tormented his faithful wife. He quietly asked the goddess to help him. "Tell me what to do," he said. "Give me courage. With your help, I can fight three hundred men."

"You will fight them," said Athena. "But now, you must tell no one who you are. Suffer all you hear and see in silence, until you can take your revenge."

"But might not some of my countrymen recognize me?" said Odysseus.

"I will see to it that they do not," said Athena. "I will disguise you as an old man. I will take the hair from your head and wrinkle your flesh and dim your eyes. I will give you rags to wear, like those worn by a wretched beggar."

With these words, Athena raised her wand and passed it over Odysseus. She shriveled the smooth skin that covered his body. She took the hair from his head and the light from his eyes. She draped a ragged cloak about his shoulders and gave him a walking stick and a tattered bag.

"Be on your way now," the goddess said. "Go to the hut of your swineherd. He is a good and honest man. Stay with him while I go to Telemachus. I will bring him home from the sea where he seeks some sign that you are still alive."

"O goddess, why did you let my son drift in despair, searching for me?" asked Odysseus. "Why did you not tell him the truth?"

"Do not fear, I was with him for much of his journey," said Athena. "And even though evildoers plot to murder him, I promise you -- *they* will soon die instead."

Questions:

1. Who shows up to help Odysseus?

2. What is Odysseus changed into in this chapter?

3. Based off of what Athena tells Odysseus about the suitors in the end of the chapter, predict how this will happen.

Chapter 7: The Swineherd

Odysseus leaned on his walking stick and trod slowly over the stony path that led away from the sea. He hobbled through the woods and over the hills to his estate.

Finally Odysseus came upon the swineherd who had long tended his hundreds of hogs. The old man sat in front of a crude stone shelter near the swine pens. He was making a pair of leather sandals. Near him lay four savage dogs that guarded the hogs.

When the dogs caught sight of Odysseus, they lunged forward, snarling and growling.

Odysseus threw down his stick and crouched on the ground. The swineherd rushed forward, shouting and throwing stones at the vicious dogs, driving them away.

“You are lucky, old man,” the swineherd said to Odysseus. “In another minute, they might have killed you. Stand and come into my hut. I will give you food and wine. Then you can tell me your story -- from where you have come, and what sorrows you have known.”

Keeping the dogs at bay, the swineherd led Odysseus inside his simple hut. He made a seat of soft twigs, covered it with a shaggy goatskin, and invited Odysseus to sit down.

"You are kind, sir," said Odysseus. "May mighty Zeus bless you for your hospitality. May he grant your greatest wish."

"I have only one wish -- that my dear master was still alive," said the swineherd. "Had he lived he would surely have given me a reward for caring tenderly for his livestock these many years. He might have given me a house, a wife, and a piece of land. But alas, my good master has been gone for twenty years. He died far away from home, returning from the war with Troy. Storm spirits destroyed his ships and all his men."

"And what of his family?" Odysseus asked softly.

"Ah, his wife waits for him in vain, while other men try to force her to marry. His mother gave up hope of his return long ago and died of grief. His father wishes to die now also -- the old man no longer lives in the palace, but sleeps alone in the vineyards. As for the son of Odysseus -- the poor boy wanders the earth, looking for his father. It is tragic indeed."

The faithful swineherd sighed deeply, then stood up. "Let me feed you now, good sir," he said.

The swineherd set about preparing a meal for Odysseus. He served him meat still hot on the spit and sprinkled with barley meal. He gave him wine in a cup made from ivy wood.

As they ate and drank together, the swineherd complained to Odysseus about Penelope's suitors. "They butcher the best hogs of the farm," he said. "They slaughter the cattle and rob the storehouses and drink my master's wine. Worst of all, they torment my poor mistress night and day, demanding that she forget Odysseus and marry one of them. Ah, but she is faithful beyond compare. She weeps for her lost husband and will not give up hope for his return."

"Do her suitors not heed her wishes?" asked Odysseus.

“Nay, these men will not leave her alone! They are cruel and without pity. I hear rumors that they now lie in wait, plotting to murder her son.”

Odysseus said nothing. But in his mind, he coldly brooded upon revenge, and the seeds of the suitors’ deaths were sown.

As Odysseus and the swineherd finished their meal, a storm began to blow outside. Wind and rain pelted the roof of the small hut. The swineherd gave Odysseus more wine and asked him to tell about himself.

Odysseus lied. He said that he was born in Crete and had wandered many towns until he had come to Ithaca. “But I must tell you this,” he said, “on my travels, I met a king who told me that Odysseus of Ithaca is still alive. The king said Odysseus will return home on a dark night, when the new moon is hidden. He said he might return openly or he might return in secret.”

The swineherd shook his head sadly. “Do not try to raise my hopes, friend,” he said. “In the past, other wanderers have passed through Ithaca with rumors about Odysseus. Each time, they have tormented his poor wife with their falsehoods. Again and again she has imagined that she might soon see her husband. Long ago, I myself believed a man who told me that my master would return in summer or in autumn. But Odysseus has never come back -- and never will. I am certain that the fish have devoured him by now, and his bones lie deep in the sand of some faraway place.”

As rainy darkness descended upon the stone hut, the swineherd made Odysseus a bed of sheepskins. He spread a thick cloak over him.

Then the faithful servant wrapped himself in the hide of a goat and left the hut. He went out into the dark, windy night and lay under the shelter of a rock, guarding his master’s swine.

Questions:

1. What does the swineherd think has happened to Odysseus?

2. What do you think the phrase “the seeds of the suitors’ deaths were sown.” means?

3. What kind of mood does the weather at the end of chapter create?

Chapter 8: Return of the Son

While Odysseus had been making his way home to Ithaca, his son Telemachus had stayed on as a guest in the palace of the king and queen of Sparta.

For many days, Telemachus had wondered what to do. One night, as he tossed restlessly in bed, the goddess Athena appeared in his chambers.

Before Telemachus could speak, Athena gave him urgent advice: “Linger here no longer, Telemachus. Go home at once and protect your house. But beware -- your mother’s suitors plan to kill you. Right now, they wait to ambush you in the strait between Ithaca and the island of Samos.”

“What should I do?” asked Telemachus.

“Sail quickly through the passage, hugging neither shore,” said Athena. “The gods will send a fair wind to speed your ship on to a safe port. When you land, send your crew to town. Then go alone to your father’s swineherd, the man who tends his hogs. Send him to your mother to tell her of your safe return.”

Before Telemachus could ask more questions, Athena vanished from the room. Telemachus dressed hurriedly, then ran to King Menelaus' chambers. "My lord, I am sorry to take leave of you so soon, but I must set off for home immediately."

The king hated to see the son of Odysseus leave Sparta, but he consented and ordered that a chariot be prepared for him.

As Telemachus said farewell to King Menelaus and Queen Helen, a strange sight appeared in the sky. An eagle flew overhead. It clutched a great white goose in its talons.

Men and women ran across the fields. They pointed at the weird sight and cried out in amazement and fear.

"What omen is this?" someone shouted.

"What can it mean?"

Queen Helen calmly answered. "The gods have revealed to my heart the meaning of this sign," she said. "The eagle stands for Odysseus. The goose stands for his home. After he has traveled far and wide, Odysseus will return home to Ithaca and take his revenge."

"May the gods make it so," said Telemachus. With that, the son of Odysseus snapped the reins of the horses and began his long journey home.

Telemachus' chariot raced across the plains of Sparta, then on to the harbor of Pylos. There Telemachus found his crew and ship waiting for him. He quickly boarded the vessel and ordered his men to raise the sail. Athena sent a fair west wind to start them on their way.

On their journey, Telemachus was careful to heed Athena's advice. He ordered his men not to sail close to either shore when they passed through the strait between Ithaca and the island of Samos.

As the black ship sped safely toward his home, Telemachus remembered more words from the goddess: "*When you land in*

Ithaca, send your crew to town. Then go alone to your father's swineherd, the man who tends his hogs . . . “

Just before they reached the port of Ithaca, Telemachus ordered his crew to strike their sail and row to land. When the ship was anchored, the crew went ashore and made a fire to cook their meat.

After all his men had eaten their fill, Telemachus spoke to them. “Now, row on to the city's port without me,” he said. “I must travel alone and seek out my father's swineherd.”

Once the men had cast off and the ship was on its way, Telemachus laced his fine leather sandals and picked up his mighty bronze spear. With rapid steps, he headed for the farmstead where the swineherd kept watch over the hogs.

Questions:

1. Where are the suitors waiting to attack Telemachus?

2. What was the omen that Telemachus saw in Sparta and what do you think it means?

Chapter Nine: Reunion

Morning was breaking over the swineherd's hut. The swineherd had built a fire and was preparing breakfast for himself and Odysseus. As he poured their wine, the dogs began yelping outside.

“Your dogs sound happy -- they do not snarl or growl,” Odysseus said to the swineherd. “They must be greeting someone they know and trust.”

Before Odysseus could say more, a young man appeared in the doorway of the hut.

The swineherd jumped up, dropping the cups of wine. He ran to the young man and tearfully kissed him. "Telemachus! My eyes' sweet light!" the old man said.

Odysseus gazed upon his son's handsome face. He was unable to move or speak. When he had last seen his beloved boy, Telemachus had been a baby. Now he was a young man with broad shoulders and a proud chest, reddish hair, and lively, bright eyes. Indeed, he looked very like his father.

Telemachus smiled at the swineherd. "You are a welcome sight to my eyes, too!" he said. "Tell me first -- how is my mother? What has happened to her since I left?"

"Word came to her that you were in grave danger," said the swineherd. "She will be overjoyed to hear that you have found your way home alive. Come inside. Eat and rest."

As Telemachus drew near the hearth, Odysseus rose silently from his seat and offered it to his son.

Telemachus shook his head. "Keep your seat, old man." he said. "Another will serve me as well."

Odysseus nodded and took his place again. His face half hidden by the hood of his cloak, he continued to gaze with wonder upon the young man.

The swineherd threw fresh logs on the fire and spread a fleece on the ground for Telemachus. Then he prepared meat from the previous night's meal and a basket of bread. He served honeyed wine in wooden cups.

When the three men had finished their meal, Telemachus spoke softly to the swineherd. "Tell me, where does your guest come from?" he said. "What ship and what crew brought him here?"

"He comes from Crete and has traveled over the world. I put him in your hands now. Offer him the hospitality of your father's house."

Telemachus shook his head sadly, "How can I take a guest into our house when it is overrun by my mother's suitors? I can only offer him gifts. I will clothe him in a cloak and tunic and give him fine sandals and a sword and send him wherever he wants to go. But for now, I will visit with him, while you hurry to my mother and tell her of my safe return."

The swineherd nodded and stood up.

"Speak to her in secret," said Telemachus. "Let no one else know I am here."

"I understand," said the swineherd. Then he took his leave of Telemachus and Odysseus and set off for the palace.

After the swineherd had left, Odysseus saw a tall, fair woman appear in the doorway of the hut. Telemachus seemed not to take notice of her, but the dogs whimpered and cowered in fear.

The woman beckoned to Odysseus. He quietly left the fire and stepped outside. He followed her to a stone wall. Facing the woman in the morning light, Odysseus saw that it was the goddess Athena.

"Odysseus, it is time to tell your son the truth," the goddess said. "Then the two of you must plan your revenge on the suitors and make your way to town together. I will follow closely behind. I am ready for a fight."

Athena touched Odysseus with her wand. Instantly, the ragged garments fell away from his body and he was clad in a fine tunic and cloak. He was taller and looked much younger. His face was bronzed; his cheeks full. He had dark hair and a dark beard.

Athena had restored Odysseus to his strongest, most vital self. Before Odysseus could speak, the goddess vanished in the morning light.

Odysseus returned to the hut. When Telemachus saw him, a look of wonder and fear came over his face. He could barely speak. "Stranger -- you have changed!" he stammered. "You must be a

god from Mount Olympus! Spare me harm -- allow me to make a sacrifice to you!”

Odysseus spoke quietly. “I am no god, Telemachus,” he said. “I am the one you have mourned for, the one for whom you have suffered great pain and injury. I am your father.”

The tears that Odysseus had long held back now streamed down his face. But Telemachus shook his head. “No -- you cannot be my father -- you are a demon casting a spell, or you are a god. You were an old man, and now you are young --”

“I am not an immortal,” said Odysseus, “but I have been blessed by a goddess. After twenty years of wandering and torment, Athena has brought me home to Ithaca. She changed me into an old man, and now I am a young man once more. It is easy for the gods to cast a man down and then raise him up again.”

Hearing these words, Telemachus began to weep. He grabbed his father and hugged him, and the two sobbed together. Their cries were wild and piercing, like those of eagles whose young have been stolen from them. After twenty long years, father and son were finally reunited.

Questions:

1. Why does Telemachus say he cannot take a guest into his house?

2. When Odysseus returns from talking to Athena, who does Telemachus think he is?

3. The author uses a simile in the last paragraph. What is the simile used (you can write down the sentence below).

Chapter 10: A Plan for Revenge

Sitting together in the swineherd's hut, Odysseus and Telemachus asked many questions of each other. "What ship brought you here, Father?" said Telemachus. "Where is your crew?"

Odysseus told how King Alcinous had sent him home with the help of the best sailors in the world. "I slept all through the voyage," he said, "only to wake and find myself alone on shore, surrounded by gold and bronze treasure. With the help of Athena, I hid everything in the cave of the nymphs. Then Athena sent me here to find you. She wishes us now to plot revenge against our enemies."

"It may be hard for us to fight all of them" said Telemachus. "We are only two, and they number nearly one hundred and twenty."

"I believe Athena will help us," said Odysseus, "as will her father, Zeus. Do you think we will then be strong enough?"

"With the help of Zeus and Athena, we will surely defeat our enemies," said Telemachus. "Tell me what we must do."

"Tomorrow at daybreak, you must go home alone," said Odysseus. "I will disguise myself as a beggar again and travel to the palace. Do not protest if the suitors abuse me when I arrive. Even if they shout names at me or throw things at me, do not speak a word in my favor."

"When will we fight them?" asked Telemachus.

"When Athena whispers to me that the time has come, I will nod to you. You must then take all the swords and spears and shields from the hall and hide them in an upstairs room."

"What will I tell the others when they ask why I am doing this?" asked Telemachus.

"Say that you are removing the weapons so they will not be harmed from the smoke of the fires. Leave weapons only for you and me -- two swords, two spears, and two leather shields. And remember, my son -- tell no one that you have seen me -- not the

swineherd, nor any of the servants, nor my old father, not even your mother ... “

As the day wore on, Odysseus and Telemachus made further plans. Though Odysseus had finally returned to Ithaca, he knew he could still not rest. There was one more great battle to fight -- but this one he would fight with his son.

Questions:

1. What is the plan that Odysseus and Telemachus have come up with to defeat the suitors?
