

THE ODYSSEY

In addition to the *Iliad*, Homer wrote another long poem about the adventures of the Greek hero Odysseus [oh-DIS-see-uhs], the King of Ithaca, as he journeyed home following the end of the Trojan War. This poem is called the *Odyssey*.

PART ONE

Ten years had gone by since the fall of Troy, and no one knew what had happened to Odysseus. His son, Telemachus [teh-LEM-uh-kuhs], had grown up, but did not have the authority to assert himself as king of Ithaca. He could not keep away the greedy suitors who wanted to marry his mother, Penelope [pen-EL-oh-pee], who was always faithful to Odysseus. For years she managed to put them off by telling them she had to finish weaving a funeral shroud for Odysseus's old father. She worked on it during the day and unwove it at night. She and her son were marking time, somehow believing that Odysseus would return—someday. As the years passed and Telemachus grew into a young man, he became more and more determined to make a journey of his own and look for his father. The goddess Athena [uh-THEEN-uh], for whom Odysseus was a special favorite, began to notice his son. Telemachus was a thoughtful and prudent young man. With proper guidance, he could do great things like his father. The goddess began to plan how to get them back together. But she was thwarted by another god, Poseidon [poh-SIE-don] of the sea, who hated the resourceful Odysseus as much as Athena admired and loved him.

Meanwhile, where was Odysseus and what was he doing? Why, after ten years of war, was it going to take another ten years to get home again, back to his loved ones, faithful Penelope and thoughtful Telemachus?

The Wanderings of Odysseus

Odysseus began his long voyage to Ithaca after the conclusion of the Trojan War. On the way, he and his crew visited the land of the Lotus-eaters, where it seemed always a summer afternoon and

where his men wished to stay forever. Eating the sweet fruit of the lotus made them forget past and future, kin and home, everything but the happy, drowsy, blissful present. Odysseus finally managed to drag them away from this paradise, and they traveled on to the island of the terrible one-eyed Cyclops [SI-klops], Polyphemus [paw-lee-FEE-muhs], son of his enemy Poseidon. Odysseus and his men escaped from Polyphemus by first blinding him and then riding and hanging



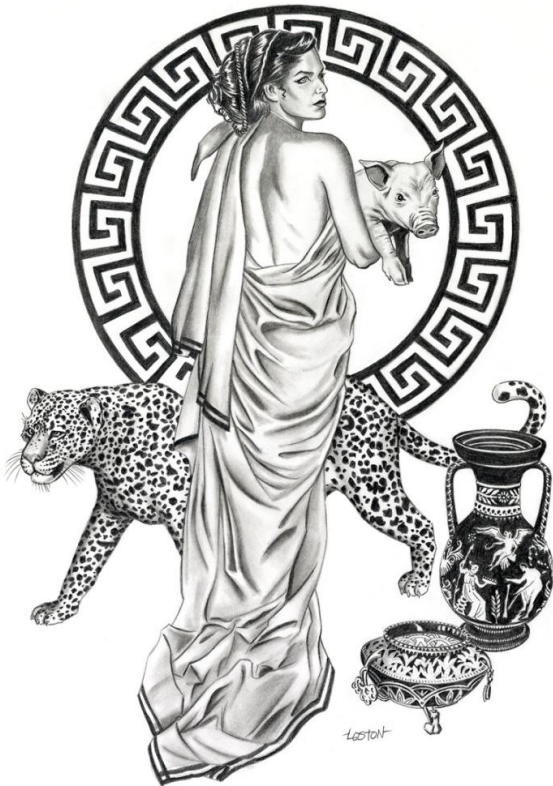
on under the shaggy bellies of sheep as they fled the monster's cave. Then they visited Aeolus [EE-oh-luhs], lord of the winds, on his floating island, who gave them a fair wind to blow them home and all the other winds tied up in a bag. But some of the men were too curious and untied the bag, and the ship was driven back to Aeolus, who refused to help them again.

When they were finally underway again they sailed for many weeks without sighting land. Desperate to replenish their supplies of food and water, they stopped at the first island they came to. Odysseus and his sailors waded ashore, tired, hungry and dispirited, in search of fresh water. Odysseus climbed a hill for a bird's-eye view. He saw no people or houses, just a thin spiral of blue smoke from a distant clump of trees. Hoping it was a friendly hearth, he sent Eurylochus [yoo-RIL-oh-kuhs] with half the men to investigate while he and the rest of the crew stayed to guard the ship.

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Led by the smoke, Eurylochus and his men came to a beautiful marble palace. But they were terrified to see wild animals roving about: lions, tigers, and wolves, though too drowsy and quiet to be dangerous. Recovering their courage, the men crept on to the palace. The animals did not jump at them, but lay down and tried to lick their hands, like good dogs. Eurylochus thought he saw a pleading look in their eyes, almost human, like the eyes of confused and troubled men. Patting their heads, he walked on to the main door of the palace. He heard music and singing. He called out, and a beautiful woman appeared. She seemed to be floating toward him, her dress and scarves fluttering in the soft breeze. In a low, sweet voice, she invited him in.

But her eyes - small, glittering, and cruel - gave her away. As his men crowded into the hall, Eurylochus quietly backed away from the door.



The beasts gathered around him and began to utter mournful cries.

Eurylochus crept up to a window and looked into the hall. A great banquet was going on - all kinds of hot food and luscious fruits and sweets. Eurylochus was extremely hungry. Had

he been too cautious? He waited and watched his men finish their meal and stretch themselves, yawning; some were falling asleep in their chairs. Then their hostess took up a little ivory wand and lightly touched each one of them. What a change! Long ears began to grow out of their heads, their skins grew bristly, their noses turned to snouts, and their hands and feet to hoofs. They fell on all fours and began to waddle about, grunting. They had been turned into pigs!

Now Eurylochus knew that this lovely lady, with a voice so sweet and low, was Circe [SIR-see] the Enchantress. No wonder the lions and tigers had looked at him so sadly. They had been men, too.

Circe led the pigs out of the palace and shut them up in a filthy sty. Tossing them a bagful of acorns, she laughed at them as they crowded to the fence with pleading looks.

Eurylochus hurried back to the ship and told what had happened. Odysseus at once ran off to rescue his men, sword in hand. Suddenly, the god Hermes [HER-meez] appeared to him. "You are a brave man," Hermes said, "but you can't fight Circe's sorcery. Your sword is of no use against her magic." He gave Odysseus a green twig called moly. "Hang on to this; it will keep you safe from sorcery." Hermes disappeared, and Odysseus went on to the palace. Circe met him, all smiles. The poor beasts crowded close, almost as though to warn him.

Circe seated him at the table and watched him eat. What a strong, handsome man he was! What a fine, large boar he would make!

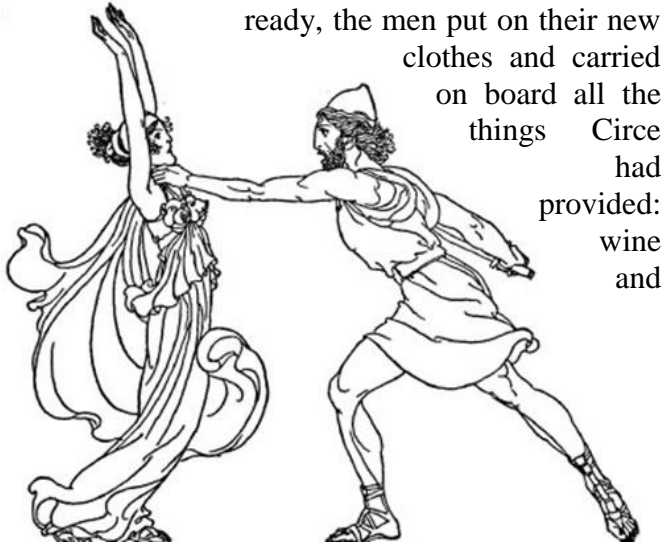
But when she touched him with the wand, nothing happened! Odysseus did not go down on all fours or start grunting. No! He leaped at her with sword drawn, the moly in his left hand. "Witch!" he cried. "Release my friends!" She was so terrified that she knelt down and screamed for mercy. Yes! She would do anything he asked. She would free them all and then help them on their way.

Circe ran to the pig sties and touched all the boars, and they became men again. She did the same with the other animals. They rose up as men and stretched and talked with each other, no

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longer grunting and growling, but speaking as men do.

The enchantress, tamed by bold Odysseus, kept her word. She gave them water, wine, and food. She gave them new clothes and a new sail for their ship. When everything was ready, the men put on their new



clothes and carried on board all the things Circe had provided: wine and water, barley meal and smoked meats. They grabbed their oars, the sail bellowed out with a favoring tail wind, and they were off again toward Ithaca and home.

PART TWO

The Wanderings of Odysseus (continued)

After leaving Circe's isle, Odysseus and his men continued their voyage. They had been warned that they would have to sail past the island of the Sirens [SI-rens], whose sweet songs lured men to death. Odysseus knew what to do. As they approached the Sirens' isle, he cut a cake of wax into small bits with his sword and filled the ears of his men so that, laboring at the oars, they could not hear the Siren's song. His own ears, however, remained open. He had his men bind him to the mast, and they rowed on past the rocks where the white bones of dead men gleamed in the dark water. The Song of the Sirens rose sweet and clear:

Come on, great Odysseus, slow down your ship. Listen! No one has ever passed this way without pausing to hear our honey-

sweet voices. We know of you and your fame and glorious deeds. We know how the Trojans wrought and fought in the Great War. We know all the toils and triumphs of Mankind on the whole wide earth.

Odysseus trembled with desire to stay; he strained at his bonds. He begged his comrades to unbind him; they only bound him tighter and rowed faster till they were well beyond those delectable and deadly voices. Then they drew the wax from their ears and unbound their chief.

But now - a new danger! They had to pass through a narrow strait of water where on one side there was a man-eating monster with six heads named Scylla [SIL-luh] and on the other side a whirlpool called Charybdis [kuh-RIB-dis], which sucked in the waters and drew them down to the bottom of the sea, then spewed them up again to spatter against the rocky cliffs. In trying to escape one peril, they might fall to the other. Staring down in dread at the whirlpool, Charybdis, they were aware too late of the six heads and necks and mouths of Scylla approaching from the other side. She seized six of the crew, drew them up the cliff, and devoured them at the mouth of her cave. Odysseus saw them, heard their cries, and could do nothing to save them. It was the most pitiful sight, he said, he had ever seen in all his suffering and journeying.

Escaping these perils at the price of six comrades lost, they passed to the Island of the Sun, where sleek cattle and fat sheep grazed. Circe had warned them to stay away from it, but Eurylochus and the rest pleaded their exhaustion. One night would do no harm.

Odysseus argued against it, but finally consented on condition that no one touch the browsing flocks and herds. But while he slept, his men, who felt they were dying of hunger, slew and butchered some of the cattle and roasted the steaks for a good meal. The old Sun God, Helius [HEE-lee-uhs], was furious and complained to Zeus [ZOOS]. If atonement were not made, he said, he would put a spoke in the wheel of

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Apollo's [uh-PAW-lohz] chariot so that the sun would cease to shine. Zeus told him he would take care of the punishment of these cattle thieves.

The men feasted for six days and on the seventh sailed off. Suddenly, a cloud shut in around them, and a terrible storm arose. In the midst of this, Zeus hurled a thunderbolt, which hit the ship with such force that the rowers were thrown into the sea, drowning them all.



Odysseus, alone, made a raft from the mast and part of the keel. As the ship sank, he took his seat on the raft and rowed hard with his hands.

For nine days he rode that raft, and on the tenth night the gods brought him to the isle of Ogygia. Here lived a beautiful sea nymph with braided hair, Calypso [kuh-LIP-soh] by name. She found him on the beach nearly dead and took pity on him. Reviving him, she led him to her home and nursed and cared for him. Soon her pity turned to love. She longed to have him for her lord and master, promising him that if he took her as his bride he would never grow old or die. He was grateful to Calypso, who had saved his life, and he stayed with her seven years. But eventually his longing for home became too strong. He yearned for Penelope and Telemachus and the people of Ithaca. The day finally came when the fair goddess helped him to resume his journey.

Calypso loaned him tools to build a small ship and helped equip it. He sailed off toward the isle

of Phaeacia, keeping the constellation of the Big Bear on his left-as a guide, as Calypso had told him. Poseidon, though, was still his bitter foe and out to get him. In a fury, the Sea God stirred up the waves with his three-pronged fishing spear, the trident. In this terrible storm, Odysseus went overboard, but he was saved by a sea nymph, Ino



[I-noh], who threw him a magic veil that held him up like a life preserver until he could swim ashore. In this way he came to Phaeacia, unkempt, nearly naked, and almost dead.

Here on the beach he was found by Princess Nausicaä [noh-SIK-ee-uh], daughter of King Alcinous [al-SIN-oo-uhs], and her maidens. While her maids ran off shrieking with fright at the sight of a strange man, Nausicaä revived Odysseus with food and drink and gave him clothing. She told him exactly how to reach her father's palace, how to be discreet, where to go, and what to do. In the great room he would find her mother, the queen, weaving yarn dyed the color of the wine-purple sea, and her father, drinking wine like a god. She told him to kneel down as a suppliant, embrace her mother's knees, and make his plea for aid to reach his home. If he did that, she was sure all would be well.

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Odysseus did as she advised and was received with great hospitality. King Alcinous hosted his guest with games and gifts and a great feast. Odysseus, though enjoying the supper and entertainment with a glad heart, had not yet told who he was; his hosts believed he was just a wayfarer trying to get home again. But when the bard (minstrel), old Demodocus [dee-MAWD-oh-kuhs], tuned his lyre and began to sing about the sack of Troy and the Wooden Horse, Odysseus was so overcome that he wept. King Alcinous, now suspicious that his guest was not just a commoner, politely suggested that he tell them his name. Odysseus could hold back no longer. He told his name, his home, and his travels and adventures since leaving Troy.

At the end of the last tale, Alcinous, much moved, could only say, simply but with utmost courtesy: "King Odysseus, be assured: we will send you home. That is a promise."

PART THREE

The Homecoming of Odysseus

As Odysseus was struggling against many dangers to get back to Ithaca, his son, Telemachus, set out to find news of him. He traveled to Sparta, where King Menelaus [men-eh-LAY-uhs] told him he had heard that Odysseus was a lonely prisoner of the nymph, Calypso. Saddened by this news, Telemachus began his own journey back to Ithaca.

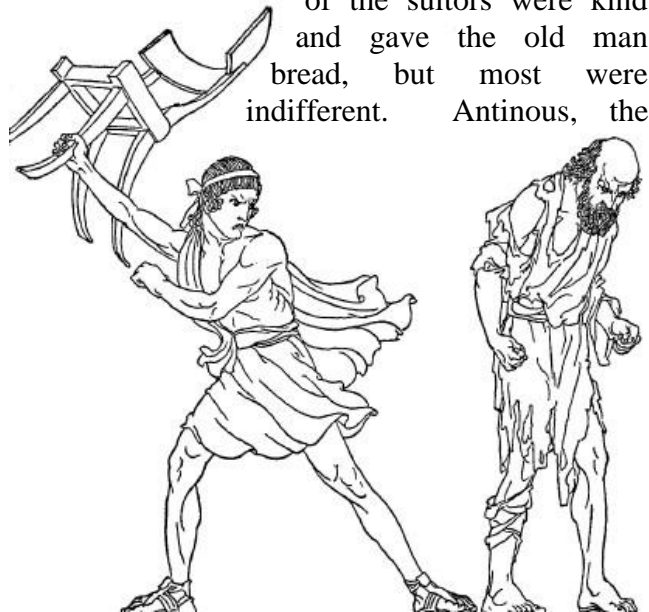
Meanwhile, King Alcinous, true to his word, sent Odysseus back to Ithaca in one of the Phaeacian ships. When they reached the shore of his native land, the crew laid him, sleeping, on the beach and left him. When he awoke, Athena appeared to him. She told him that he was home at last, and then explained the dangerous situation at his house. His wife's suitors were eating them out of house and home. The bully of the suitors, Antinous [an-TIN-oo-uhs], had found out that Penelope had tricked them with the never-finished shroud, so now Penelope had no more excuses; she would be forced to choose a new husband.

If any of the suitors recognized him, Odysseus's life would be in danger. So Athena disguised him as an old beggar and sent him to stay with Eumaeus [you-MAY-uhs], the swineherd, until he could formulate a plan for dealing with the vile suitors.

In a few days, Telemachus returned, and Athena, for a time, restored his father to his usual form so that the son would recognize him. After the joyful reunion, Odysseus and Telemachus together began to lay plans for giving the suitors what they deserved. They decided not to let Penelope know that Odysseus had returned - she had almost given up hope that her dear husband would ever come home again.

Once their plans were made, the men wasted no time in putting them into action. Telemachus went ahead to the palace to prepare the way, and his father, disguised as an old man, followed with Eumaeus. Near the door of the outer court lay an old dog, Argus [AR-guhs], whom Odysseus had raised as a pup years ago. Odysseus had left for Troy before the dog was fully grown. Now, as Odysseus drew near, the old dog knew him and feebly wagged his tail. Looking his last upon his loving master, he dropped his head and died. Faithful Argus had waited for his master twenty years.

Greeted at the door by Telemachus, they entered the hall. Odysseus, a beggar in his own house, had to endure many humiliations. A few of the suitors were kind and gave the old man bread, but most were indifferent. Antinous, the

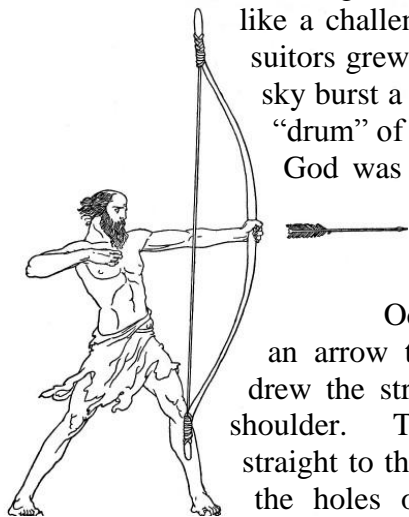


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bully, contemptuously threw a footstool at the beggar, striking his shoulder. Unfaithful servants, their discipline gone lax over the years, insulted him. This lack of courtesy and respect for a suppliant guest violated one of the basic rules of ancient Greek life, but the fated avenger put up with it for a time.

As the days passed, Penelope, who never dreamed her husband was home, reluctantly decided that Odysseus was surely dead and she had no alternative but to choose another husband. She sent word that, to finally settle the matter, she would give herself to whoever could bend the great bow of Odysseus. Odysseus, disguised in rags, claimed the right to try too, though the suitors laughed and jeered. Eumaeus placed the bow in Odysseus's hands. Then he went to the housekeeper, old Eurycleia [yoo-ree-KLEE-uh], and told her to shut all the inner doors and keep the women and servants inside, whatever happened. A loyal ox-herd, Philoitios [phil-OY-tee-ohs], whom Odysseus had taken into his confidence, went forth and barred the outer gates, tying them with ropes. To fight the wicked suitors - and there were many of them - were just four men: Odysseus, Telemachus, Eumaeus, and Philoitios.

As Athena restored him to his usual form, Odysseus bent the bow easily and twanged the bowstring. The sound was like a challenge to arms; the suitors grew pale. From the sky burst a thunderpeal, the "drum" of Zeus. The High God was weighing all in the balance.



Odysseus notched an arrow to the bow and drew the string back to his shoulder. The arrow flew straight to the mark, through the holes of twelve axes, one behind the other, and into the wall behind.

The suitors were amazed and afraid, but they had no warning of what was to come. They

tried to go on with the feast, but Odysseus let fly with the bow and arrows and killed all the suitors.

It was not a fight, but a massacre. Yet the slaughter of the suitors was not undeserved. They had been wasting the substance of that household for years, they had harassed and insulted the lady of that house and her son, and they had broken heaven's laws designed to protect the poor, the weak, and the stranger. Odysseus had a personal feud with these men, but he was also an agent of Divine Justice.



When the terrible fight was over, Odysseus made himself known to his wife. At first Penelope could not believe it was truly Odysseus standing before her. After twenty years, faithful, long-suffering wife that she was, she demanded proof. Odysseus told her how he had built their bed out of a living olive tree in the courtyard and built up their bedroom around that tree. Only the two of them knew this. Then Penelope believed and ran to embrace and kiss him. They held each other closely and wept with joy.

That night, their good angel, Athena, held back the dawn and the Horses of the Sun to make longer their first night of reunion and happiness.

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

The Odyssey: Part One

1. Penelope was the faithful _____ of Odysseus. 60

2. She kept the unwelcome suitors at bay by pretending to weave a funeral _____
for Odysseus's father.

3. Telemachus was the thoughtful, prudent _____ of Odysseus.

4. Among the gods, the special friend of Odysseus was _____ .

5. His particular enemy among the gods was _____ .

6. In their long voyage home they came to the land of the _____ ,
where people forgot time, and it seemed always to be a summer afternoon.

7. In another adventure they encountered a one-eyed monster called the _____ .

8. On a floating island they met Aeolus, lord of the _____ .

9. On Circe's isle, Odysseus sent his right-hand man, _____ , to spy out the
land.

10. When Odysseus went to rescue his men from Circe, he met the god Hermes, who gave him
a sprig of a plant called _____ to protect him from Circe's magic.

10

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

The Odyssey: Part Two

1. The sea nymphs whose deadly songs lured men to death were the _____.
Odysseus escaped them by filling the ears of his men with _____ so that they could not hear.
2. Passing through a narrow strait, the sailors encountered the double danger of the devouring six-headed monster, _____, on one side and the whirlpool, _____, on the other.
3. The cattle of the Pastures of the Sun were sacred to the old Sun God (before Apollo), _____.
4. The goddess who owned the island of Ogygia was the beautiful nymph, _____, with whom Odysseus stayed for seven years.
5. When he finally left her, he guided himself, as she directed him to do, by the constellation of Callisto, or the _____, on his left hand.
6. On his way to Phaeacia, his enemy, _____, nearly drowned him, but he was saved by the sea-nymph, _____.
7. On the beach of Phaeacia, half dead, he was found by the royal princess, _____.
8. She told him how to approach the queen, her mother, and her father, King _____.
9. At the banquet he gave himself away by weeping when Demodocus, the _____, sang of the Trojan War.
10. The king promised he would _____.

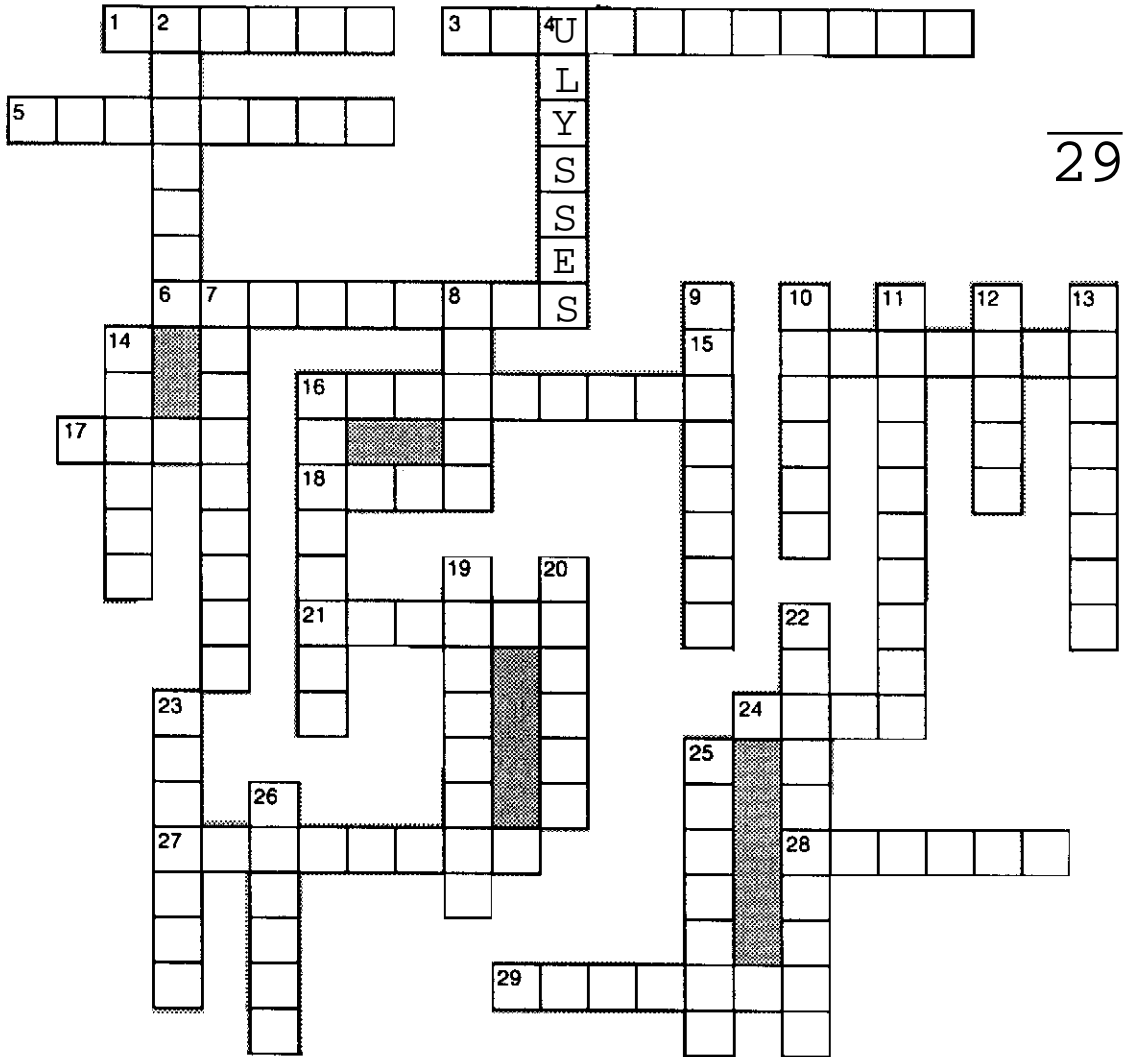
Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

The Odyssey: Part Three

1. Antinous was the _____ of the suitors.
2. Seeking news of his father, Telemachus visited King Menelaus at _____.
3. To hide his identity, Athena disguised Odysseus to look like an old _____.
4. As Odysseus, Telemachus, and Eumaeus approached the palace, Odysseus encountered
dying _____, his faithful dog.
5. Penelope said she would give herself to whoever could bend Odysseus's _____.
6. Odysseus shot an arrow through the holes of _____, one
behind the other.
7. Odysseus revealed himself to Penelope and proved his identity by noting how he had built
their bed out of an _____ in the courtyard.
8. That night Athena, to increase their happiness, made the _____ come later.

Name _____ Date _____

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ACROSS

1. What Penelope was weaving
3. Zeus destroyed the ship with it
5. She rescued Odysseus on the beach at Phaeacia
6. The old bard
15. Odysseus's bed was made from it (two words)
16. The whirlpool
17. Magical green twig
18. Musical instrument that the minstrel played
21. Six-headed monster
24. What Circe turned the men into
27. Bully suitor
28. Odysseus's home
29. Beautiful sea nymph; Odysseus stayed with her for seven years

DOWN

2. The suitors wanted to be Penelope's _____
4. Odysseus's Roman name
7. The housekeeper
8. The sorceress
9. Odysseus's enemy
10. Their songs lured men to their death
11. Odysseus's son
12. Faithful dog
13. Odysseus's wife
14. Lord of the winds
16. The Big Bear constellation
19. King of Phaeacia
20. What the men killed on the Island of the Sun
22. Loyal ox-herd who helped in the fight
23. The swineherd
25. One-eyed monster
26. Goddess who was fond of Odysseus