The Odyssey

Book 1

1. What do you see as the attitude of the Gods' towards men?
2. What do you see as the attitude of the Greeks towards hospitality?
3. Describe Telemachos as the novel begins.
4. How does Athena plan to affect Telemachus?
5. How does Telemachus show strength with Penelope?
6. How does this relate to the visit of Athena?

Book 2

1. What is the suitor's attitude towards Penelope's reluctance to choose one of them?
2. Why do they think it is their right to "demand" that she choose?
3. What are the two different interpretations of the omen?
4. How does Telemachus respond to the position put forward by Antinous?

Book 3

1. How does Athena help Telemachus prepare for Nestor?
2. Why is it important for Telemachus to meet Nestor in particular? What does he seem to represent?
3. What does Telemachus learn about himself? About the meaning of being a son? About the treatment of guests? About sacrifices to the gods?

Book 4

1. How do Menelaus and Helen compare with Nestor as hosts?
2. How do they contrast with the suitors as guests?
3. What do you make of the relationship between Menelaus and Helen?
4. What is impressive about their palace?
5. Who is Proteus? How does Menelaus catch him? With whose help?
6. What does Menelaus tell Telemachus about Odysseus' whereabouts?
7. Why does Telemachus need to go to two homes, and visit the two of the Captains who destroyed Troy?

Book 5

1. How long does Odysseus stay on Calypso's island?
2. What is the source of Calypso's power over Odysseus?
3. What do we learn of Calypso's feelings for Odysseus?
4. What will Calypso give Odysseus if he stays with her?
5. Calypso asks Odysseus to compare her with Penelope; does Odysseus respond satisfactorily?
6. Why does Zeus, despite his liking of Odysseus, allow Poseidon to make this journey such an ordeal?
7. Ino, in the guise of a seabird, gives him her veil. What does it do?

Book 6

1. Why does Nausicaa go to the river to wash clothes?
2. What is the explanation she offers her father?
3. What does Odysseus choose not to do when he sees Nausicaa?
4. What does he choose to do instead?
5. What do you think Odysseus' speech to Nausicaa tells us about him?
6. Why does Nausicaa not want to escort Odysseus to the palace?

Book 7

1. How does the palace and the way it is run compare to other palaces we have seen?
2. What is the difference between the way Odysseus greets Nausicaa and the way he greets Arête?
3. Why does Odysseus sit in the ashes?
4. What does Odysseus say when asked asks to identify who he is?
5. What is Arête’s role in helping Odysseus on his journey?
6. How does Odysseus explain why Nausicaa did not bring him directly to the palace?

Book 8

1. Why might Demodocus' blindness be significant?
2. With whom is Odysseus quarreling in the first song by Demoducus?
3. What does Alcinous do when he sees how Odysseus reacts?
4. What does Odysseus do to win the respect of the young Phaeacians? Why ?
5. What does Alcinous ask Odysseus at the end of Bk. 8?

Book 9

1. Where do Odysseus and his men go first after they leave Troy?
2. Who are the Cicones?
3. Who are the lotus eaters?
4. How does Polyphemus prevent Odysseus and his men from leaving his cave?
5. What does Polyphemus' diet consist of?
6. Are the Cyclopes in any way civilized?
7. What mistake does Odysseus makes as he sails away?

Book 10

1. After the attack from the Laestrygonians, how many ships are left out of the original twelve?
2. What sort of character is Circe? What craft does she practice that Penelope also practices?
3. Why (aside from her magic) is she able to turn Odysseus' men into swine? How do they offend her?
4. Into what does Circe transform Odysseus' crew?
5. What does Hermes give to Odysseus?
6. What makes Odysseus give in to Circe's enticements? Is this typical of him?
7. How long does Odysseus stay in Circe's palace?
8. Why does he want to leave?
9. Where must Odysseus go to learn his way home?

Book 11

1. What favor does Elpenor ask of Odysseus?
2. What ritual does Odysseus perform in order to meet those in the Underworld?
3. What does Tiresias do in order to speak to Odysseus?
4. What does Odysseus learn about his journey from Tiresias in Hades?
5. What does Odysseus learn from Anticleia? What does he try to do when after she speaks to him? Why does he fail?
6. What does Agamemnon tell Odysseus about how men should feel about women? Is it significant that earlier in the book we hear about celebrated women?
7. What is the reason for Ajax's anger at Odysseus?
8. What is the Greek Underworld (Hades) like?
9. What do you make of [Tantalus](http://www.leasttern.com/HighSchool/odyssey/SG11.html#tantalus) and [Sisyphus](http://www.leasttern.com/HighSchool/odyssey/SG11.html#sisyphus)?

Book 12

1. Why has Odysseus returned to Aeaea?
2. How does Circe help him?
3. What does the episode of the Sirens tell us about Odysseus' character? Homer's understanding of the power of music?
4. What advice does Odysseus take that Circe gives him about Scylla and Charybdis? What does this tell us about leadership?
5. Why are the cattle of Helios' island so tempting?
6. What warning does Odysseus give his men?
7. This is not the first time Odysseus' warnings are ignored. Whose fault is this?
8. This is also not the first time Odysseus's orders are defied. Does this absolve him of responsibility?

Book 13

1. How do Poseidon and Zeus interact in this book? What is the balance of power between them? How does Zeus assert his authority? How does Poseidon assert his displeasure?
2. How does Odysseus first feel as he lands on Ithaca?
3. How much does he tell the "shepherd" he meets about his true identity and intentions?

Book 14

1. How is the swineherd (Eumaeus) connected to Odysseus?
2. What is the prediction about Odysseus that the stranger swears "on my oath" to Eumaeus?
3. How does Eumaeus react to this information?
4. Odysseus tells the swineherd he is from what kind of background? Suffered what kind of hardships?
5. How does Eumaeus react to Odysseus' story?

Book 15

1. What is the omen which precedes Telemachus' departure?
2. Who is unsure of how to interpret it? Who knows how to interpret it?
3. Why does Telemachus not want to revisit Nestor? How does Pisistratus react to this?
4. Who is Theoclymenus? What portent does he interpret?
5. What aspect of Eumaeus' story causes Odysseus to say, "You've moved my heart deeply"?

Book 16

1. How does Eumaeus greet Telemachus?
2. What errand is Eumaeus sent on?
3. Why does Odysseus reveal his identity to Telemachus?
4. How does Odysseus' look when he reveals himself to his son?
5. How does Telemachus react when Odysseus identifies himself?
6. What are the three major points of strategy in the plan which Odysseus tells to Telemachus?
7. What does Antinous try to get the suitors to do? Who offers a different perspective?
8. How does Penelope learn of what the suitors are thinking?

Book 17

1. Where has Argos been lying in the absence of his master?
2. What is Odysseus' reaction to seeing Argos?
3. How does Odysseus handle his "humiliation"? Does he seem more at ease with it than Eumaeus and Telemachus? If so, why?
4. Who throws a footstool at Odysseus? Why do even the other suitors take exception to this?

Book 18

1. What is Antinous' reaction to the unfriendly words Irus speaks to Odysseus?
2. What is the prize for the beggar who wins the fight?
3. Who is Penelope's father?
4. What is the implication of the maids' inappropriate behavior

Book 19

1. What ruse does Odysseus tell Telemachus to carry out at the beginning of the book?
2. How does Penelope react to what she hears of Odysseus? How does Odysseus react to her reaction?
3. What prediction does Odysseus give to Penelope?
4. How did Odysseus obtain the scar that Eurycleia recognizes?
5. What is the dream which Penelope describes to Odysseus? How does he interpret it?
6. How does the stranger affect Penelope? Why is she favorably disposed toward the stranger?
7. How does Penelope plan to test the suitors to see which one she will marry?

Book 20

1. What does Athena do in this book to boost Odysseus' spirits? To test them?
2. Why do the suitors behave even more inappropriately than usual?
3. What is Penelope doing at the end of the book?

Book 21

1. What must the stringer of the bow do with his shot?
2. What is Antinous' and Eurymachus' reaction to the challenge?
3. Melanthius is ordered to do what in order to make the bow easier to bend?
4. How does Odysseus prove his identity to the cowherd and the swineherd?

Book 22

1. What is Antinous doing when Odysseus shoots him? Why is he the first victim?
2. How do the other suitors appeal to Odysseus?
3. How much does Athena help Odysseus, and how much is the victory his?
4. The dead suitors are compared to what kind of creatures?
5. Which appendages does Melanthius lose? Where do they end up?

Book 23

1. What future problems does Odysseus see as a result of the killing of the suitors?
2. What does Odysseus want those outside his palace believe is happening within the palace?
3. Where does Penelope order Eurycleia to make up the bed? How does Odysseus react to this?
4. Who made the bed and what is remarkable about it?
5. What reason does Penelope give for not recognizing Odysseus earlier?
6. Who is responsible for holding Dawn at bay while Penelope and Odysseus spend their first night together?
7. Where is Odysseus headed at the end of the book?

Book 24

1. What different views of their fates do Agamemnon and Achilles seem to hold?
2. When they speak to Agamemnon and Achilles how do suitors' shades feel about their responsibility for Odysseus' actions?
3. How does Odysseus prove to his father who he is?
4. What reasons does Eupithes give when encouraging revenge on Odysseus?
5. What does Athena (disguised as Mentor) do to insure that the families will not succeed in revenging the suitors' deaths? What does she do to ensure that Odysseus won't cause further havoc?