

The Odyssey: Chapter Abstracts

Book 1

- * Athene persuades Zeus to allow Odysseus, who has been trapped on Ogygia by Calypso for many years, to return home.
- * Odysseus' home and wife, Penelope, are besieged by suitors trying to marry the queen and become the king.
- * Telemachus receives Mentos, a visitor who comes giving news and advice.
- * Telemachus calls for a meeting of the assembly because he feels it's time to do something about the suitors.

Book 2

- * Before the entire assembly, Telemachus appeals to everyone's better judgment and decency in regards to the suitors.
- * The suitors, who blame everything on Penelope, decide to continue to court Penelope and take advantage of Telemachus' hospitality without making amends.
- * Athene, first as Mentor then as Telemachus, procures a ship and crew for Telemachus to make his journey to Pylos and Lacedaemon.

Book 3

- * Telemachus arrives at Nestor's house during a sacrifice.
- * Nestor doesn't have much information about Odysseus since they parted ways many years ago.
- * Nestor does tell the story of Agamemnon and his reunion with his wife.
- * Athena reveals herself to Telemachus and Nestor.
- * Nestor supplies Telemachus for his journey to see Menelaus.

Book 4

- * Telemachus arrives at Menelaus' house during a wedding feast.

- * Menelaus tells Telemachus what he knows, which he gathered by trapping an immortal.
- * He tells Telemachus that Odysseus is trapped on an island without crew or boat.
- * The suitors plan to ambush and kill Telemachus on the open sea before he reaches Ithaca.

Book 5

- * By order of Zeus, Calypso is told to release Odysseus.
- * She gives him supplies and sends him off with a gentle breeze.
- * While returning to Mt. Olympus from Ethiopia, Poseidon notices Odysseus just as Odysseus sees land.
- * Odysseus survives Poseidon's wrath and makes it to land with Ino's help.

Book 6

- * Athena visits Nausicaa's dreams to move her to go to the river.
- * Nausicaa and her maids discover Odysseus near the river while washing clothes.
- * She gives him food, clothing, and a bath.
- * Nausicaa also gives Odysseus directions to Alcinous' house and instructions on how to ask for help.

Book 7

- * Athena, in the form of a young girl, leads Odysseus to Alcinous' palace.
- * Odysseus falls at Arete's knees asking for help.
- * Odysseus tells the most recent leg of his journey, and Alcinous is impressed by Odysseus' judgment and bearing.
- * Alcinous pledges to help Odysseus.

Book 8

- * Alcinous gathers all the Phaeacian lords to pledge their help to Odysseus.
- * During the feast, Odysseus weeps while Demodocus the bard sings about Odysseus and Ajax.

* Next, the men participate in sports. One of the young men ridicules Odysseus for not participating, so Odysseus throws the discus farther than all the others.

* They feast again as discussions become heated, and Odysseus' weeping makes Alcinous ask his identity.

Book 9

* Odysseus reveals his identity to Alcinous and the Phaeacians and begins recounting his tale of woe.

* Upon leaving Troy, Odysseus plundered the Ciconians, met the Lotus-eaters, and barely escaped from the Cyclops.

* Polyphemus, the Cyclops, flouts convention regarding strangers asking for help and instead begins eating Odysseus' men, two a meal.

* Odysseus and his remaining men blind the cyclops and escape on the undersides of his rams.

* Polyphemus calls on Poseidon to curse Odysseus, which is the beginning of all his problems.

Book 10

* Odysseus gets aid from Aeolus, yet within sight of Ithaca his crew unleashes the gift Aeolus has given.

* When they meet the Laestrygonians, all perish except for Odysseus' boat.

* Finally they end up with Circe, who initially turns half his crew into pigs, but is outmaneuvered by Odysseus with Hermes' help.

* After a year, his restless crew nudges Odysseus to action, asking Circe for help.

Book 11

* Odysseus and his crew reach the underworld, make the proper sacrifices, and speak with many spirits.

* From Tiresias, Odysseus discovers how to get home and how to placate Poseidon.

* Odysseus also speaks with a fallen comrade, his mother, many heroes wives, and heroes who offer advice.

* Agamemnon tells Odysseus to be wary of his wife.

Book 12

- * Odysseus returns to Aeaëa, where he gets further advice from Circe on how to navigate the Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis.
- * They successfully pass the Sirens, Scylla and Charibdis, and land on the island of the sun.
- * Though Odysseus implores his men to continue sailing, they are too tired and need a break.
- * He makes his crew swear not to touch the cattle because the warning Tiresias gave to him is heavy on his heart.
- * Odysseus' crew breaks their oath and slays some of the cattle.
- * Zeus destroys the ship and crew, leaving Odysseus to float for days at sea until he reaches Ogygia.

Book 13

- * Odysseus is brought safely home with all his goods, but he doesn't believe it because he slept the entire voyage and woke up alone on the beach.
- * Poseidon seeks to punish the Phaeacians for helping Odysseus by destroying the ship and building a mound about the city. He turns the ship into stone within sight of the city, but the Phaeacians make sacrifices to appease his wrath.
- * Athene reveals herself to Odysseus, and they form a plan to get vengeance on the suitors.

Book 14

- * Odysseus, disguised as an old man, learns the depth of love and loyalty that Eumaeus the swineherd bears for Odysseus.
- * He also learns about the suitors and the trials which those loyal to Odysseus have been forced to endure.

Book 15

- * Telemachus hastens home with his gifts from Menelaus and Helen.
- * He arrives safely while giving aid to Theoclymenus, a man fleeing from murder.
- * Odysseus continues to test Eumaeus as well as gather information on his family.

Book 16

- * As instructed by Athena, Telemachus goes to Eumaeus upon his return to Ithaca, where he discovers his father.
- * They develop a plan to finally rid the house of the suitors.
- * Meanwhile, the suitors realize Telemachus has escaped their plot and are forced to make new plans.

Book 17

- * Telemachus shares the tales of his travels with his mother.
- * Odysseus makes his way to town and suffers abuse from his goatherd and Antinous.

Book 18

- * Odysseus fights Irus, another beggar, to the amusement of the suitors.
- * Penelope appears among the host, and she is given many fine gifts after shaming the men.
- * Odysseus receives rude treatment from Melanthis and Eurymachus.

Book 19

- * Odysseus and Telemachus move all the armor into a chamber.
- * Odysseus, as the stranger, begins to tell Penelope his fictional woes as well as news of Odysseus.
- * Eurykleia recognizes Odysseus by his scar.
- * Penelope devises the bow test for the suitors.

Book 20

- * Odysseus spends a sleepless night in his house, troubled by how he is going to take on the suitors.
- * He suffers more abuse from servants and suitors.
- * Athene causes the suitors to act crazed which makes Theoclymenus leave.

Book 21

- * Penelope announces her contest - whoever strings Odysseus' bow and shoots an arrow through the twelve arrows she will marry.
- * Odysseus reveals himself to Eumaeus and Philoetius, enlisting their help in the coming slaughter.
- * The suitors cannot wield the bow and are enraged and humiliated by the old beggar.

Book 22

- * Odysseus begins the slaughter by killing Antinous.
- * Eurymachus blames everything on Antinous and tries to negotiate for their lives by offering recompense.
- * Everyone is slain except the bard and the page.
- * The disloyal maids clean up the hall, and then they are killed.

Book 23

- * Eurycleia tells Penelope that Odysseus has returned and killed the suitors.
- * Penelope disbelieves until Odysseus talks about his bed.

Book 24

- * The heroes' shades hear about the end of the suitors and are happy for Odysseus.
- * Odysseus sees his father and they feast.
- * Half the men of Ithaca mount an attack on Odysseus, who repels them.
- * Athene brings peace.