**ATHENA INSPIRES THE PRINCE**

SCENE: Calypso's island (briefly), Olympus (briefly), Ithaca, (mainly)

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS:

**Gods**: Poseidon, Hermes, Athena/Mentes, Zeus

**Mortals**: Telemachus, Mentes (Athena): King of the Taphians, friend of Odysseus, Penelope,Eurycleia (nurse) Phemias (the singer), the "suitors," especially Antinous and Eurymachus.

The Book begins with the invocation to the Muse followed by Athena's plea to Zeus to allow her favorite mortal Odysseus to travel home from Ogygia, where he has been held captive for seven years by the nymph Calypso. Zeus agrees but not without insisting the trip be arduous. He does not want to enrage the absent Poseidon, who is angry at Odysseus for having blinded his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus. Athena goes to Ithaca to spur Telemachus, Odysseus' son, into action and start him toward manhood. There we met the suitors of Odysseus wife, Penelope, who are abusing the rules of hospitality. We also learn that Penelope has done whatever she could to keep them from taking her hand in marriage. Almost everyone on Ithaca believes Odysseus to be dead.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

* Invocation
* Story of Orestes (including Zeus' attitude toward of Aegisthus).
* The Gods' discussion of Odysseus. Who is on his side? Who is not? Why?
* What Zeus "rules."
* Problems of Odysseus: Where is he? Why? How long has he been away?
* Athena's disguise.
* Youth of Telemachus.
* The violation of hospitality
* Penelope's situation.
* Penelope's actions.

EPITHETS: Who is...

* "The bewitching nymph"
* "Son of Cronos"
* "Who marshals the thunderheads"
* "The clear eyed goddess"
* "Cool headed"

QUESTIONS:

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. How would you characterize Telemachus at this point? What are his strengths?
4. What are his weaknesses?
5. How does Athena plan to affect Telemachus?
6. What tragic homecoming story do we hear of? How does it relate to the situation in Ithaca?
7. Who is Phemius?
8. How does Telemachus show strength with Penelope?
9. How does this relate to the visit of Athena?

Book II

PAY ATTENTION TO:

* Athena, goddess of the household who looks over the family.
* The economic importance of the household.
* The bird omen and the reactions to it.
* Assembly and debate.
* The "new" Telemachus.
* The abuse of and departure of Telemachus.

EPITHETS: Who is...

* "self possessed?"
* "Daughter of Zeus?"
* What has "rose red fingers?"

QUESTIONS:

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 III

PAY ATTENTION TO:

* The sacrifice to Poseidon at the beginning of the book.
* Athena's "prayer to Poseidon.
* Respect paid to Odysseus.
* Athena's role at the end of the war. Her wrath.
* Nestor's hospitality.
* The Orestes story again.
* The sacrifice to Athena at the end of the book

EPITHETS:

* Who is "the noble charioteer?"
* What is "wine dark?"

QUESTIONS:

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. Why is it important for Telemachus to meet Pisistratus?
4. What does Telemachus learn about himself? about the meaning of being a son? about the treatment of guests? about sacrifices to the gods?

Book IV

PAY ATTENTION TO:

* More Greek hospitality and feasting.
* Helen’s contribution to the "meal.”
* Menelaus' return from Troy.
* What Telemachus learns from Menelaus about Odysseus.
* The stories of Troy told by Helen.
* Menelaus’ reaction to Helen’s story.
* The story of Proteus
* The plot to kill Telemachus

EPITHETS: Who is . . .

* "red haired?”
* "son of Atreus?”
* "the pearl of women?"
* "The Old man of the Sea?"

QUESTIONS:

1. How do Menelaus and Helen compare with Nestor as hosts?
2. How do they contrast with the suitors the suitors as guests?
3. Do Menelaus and Helen know who Telemachus is at the beginning of the book?
4. What do you make of the relationship between Menelaus and Helen?
5. What is impressive about their palace?
6. Who is Proteus? How does Menelaus catch him? With whose help?
7. What does Menelaus tell Telemachus about Odysseus' whereabouts?
8. Why does Telemachus need to go to two homes, and visit two of the Captains destroyed Troy?
9. Why is information withheld so frequently (Proteus at first balks, and Penelope's sister, in a dream, is also reluctant. Why is other information (Helen’s) suspect?

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