

The Odyssey

Book 3 ~ Study Guide

from John McIlvain

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Image source: http://www.beloit.edu/~classics/main/courses/classics100/museum2/art_museum2.html

Note: This site is designed to be used with Robert Fagles' translation of the *Odyssey*, published by Penguin USA. It was prepared for a 9th grade English class.

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KING NESTOR REMEMBERS

SCENE: Pylos

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS: Telemachus, Athena, Nestor, Pisistratus.

This Book begins and ends with sacrifices to the vying gods (Poseidon and Athena) of the Odyssey. In it Telemachus learns from both Nestor and Pisistratus the importance of hospitality and of respect for the gods. Athena seems especially impressed by "old fashioned" ways of Nestor. Telemachus is treated with great respect and he begins to learn what it means to be his father's son. At the end of the Book Telemachus is sent inland to Sparta to meet Menelaus who might know of Odysseus' whereabouts.

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?

QUOTES TO REMEMBER:

Pylos... where the people lined the beaches, (5)
sacrificing sleek black bulls to Poseidon,
god of the sea blue mane who shakes the earth.

"Some of the words you'll find within yourself, (29)
the rest some power will inspire you to say."

"All men need the gods, (54)
but the man is younger, just about my age
that's why I give this gold cup first to you."
With that
Pisistratus placed in her hand the cup of mellow wine
and Pallas rejoiced at the prince's sense of tact.

Poised Telemachus answered, (84)
filled with heart, the heart Athena herself had inspired
to ask about his father, gone so long
and make his name throughout the mortal world.

". . . it meant no joy to Agamemnon, not at all, (159)
he meant to detain us there and offer victims,
anything to appease Athena's dreadful wrath –
poor fool, he never dreamed Athena would not comply.

The minds of everlasting gods don't change so (225)
quickly." "And you, my friend –
how tall and handsome I see you now – be brave, you,
too, (like Orestes)
so men to come will sing your praises down the years."

"Now, O Queen, be gracious! Give us high renown, (425)
myself, my children, my loyal wife and queen.
And I will make you a sacrifice, a yearling heifer
broad in the brow, unbroken, never yoked by men."

The women shrilled their cry . . . then hoisting up (506)
the victim's head from the trampled earth, they held her
fast
as the captain of men Pisistratus slashed her throat.
Dark blood gushed forth, life ebbed from her limbs –





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