

The Odyssey

Book 5 ~ Study Guide

from John McIlvain

[An Overview for the Student](#)

[Book-by-Book Study Guide](#)

[Literary Responses to the Odyssey](#)



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.

Books:

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#) [21](#) [22](#) [23](#) [24](#)

ODYSSEUS - NYMPH AND SHIPWRECK

SCENE: Ogygia

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS:

Odysseus, Calypso, Athena, Zeus, Poseidon, A sea nymph. Ino/Leucothoe: A goddess of the sea who saves Odysseus.

When we first meet Odysseus he is longing for home. Hermes arrives and after admiring the glorious gardens, he informs Calypso that Zeus has commanded her to release her captive. She complains about the double standard of male gods but knows she has no choice. Odysseus can hardly believe his change of fortune, but he is careful not to offend his companions. She in turn help him equip for his sea journey. The voyage is fought with hardship thanks to Poseidon. Odysseus is careful to be appreciative of anything a god can do to help him.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

- Odysseus weeping, his longing for home.
- The council of the Gods. (Note that it seems to introduce this section in a similar way to how the assembly in the Book 1 introduces the “Telemachy.”)
- The lushness of the island, the beauty of Calypso.
- Hermes' appreciation of the lushness, his tact, his businesslike manner.

- Calypso reluctant acceptance of the ruling of Zeus.
- Her agreeing to help Odysseus with tools and other gifts.
- Odysseus' tact when he explains to Calypso why he so wants to go home.
- The sexual nature of their relationship.
- Odysseus' purposefulness in building the raft.
- The wrath of Poseidon.
- Ino's gift and Odysseus' mistrust of it.
- Athena's aid and Odysseus' survival skills.
- Odysseus' prayer to the unnamed river god.
- What Odysseus does to make sure he survives his first night back on land.

EPITHETS: Who is . . .

- "lustrous goddess, queenly nymph?"
- "the guide and giant killer?"
- "long enduring?"
- "god of the earthquake?"

QUESTIONS:

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. How would you characterize the making of the raft, and the departure of Odysseus?
7. For how many days does Odysseus swim?
8. Why does Zeus, despite his liking of Odysseus, allow Poseidon to make this journey such an ordeal?
9. Ino-Leucothea, in the guise of a seabird, gives him her veil. Why veil?
10. Why does Odysseus return Ino's veil to the sea?
11. After two days of swimming, note several phases of decision-making. Does Odysseus accomplish his rescue on his own?

QUOTES TO REMEMBER:

A great fire (64)

blazed on the hearth and the smell of
cedar
cleanly split and sweetwood burning
bright
wafted a cloud of fragrance down the
island.
Deep inside she sang, the goddess
Calypso, lifting
her breathtaking voice as she glided
back and forth
before her loom, her golden shuttle
weaving.
Thick, luxuriant woods grew round the
cave,
alders and black poplars, pungent
cypress, too,
and there birds roosted, folding their
long wings,

owls and hawks and the spread beaked
ravens of the sea,
black skimmers who make their living
off the waves.
And round the mouth of the cavern
trailed a vine
laden with clusters, bursting with ripe
grapes.
Four springs in a row, bubbling clear
and cold,
running side by side, took channels
left and right.
Soft meadows spreading round were
starred with violets,
lush with beds of parsley. Why even a
deathless god
who came upon this place would gaze
in wonder.

But lustrous Calypso shuddered at (129)
those words
and burst into a flight of indignation.
"Hard hearted
you are you gods! You unrivaled lord
of jealousy -
scandalized when goddesses sleep
with mortals. . ."

"But since there is no way for another (153)
god to thwart
the will of storming Zeus and make it
come to nothing,
let the man go -"

[Calypso] found him there on the (167)
headland, sitting still,
weeping, his eyes never dry, his sweet
life flowing away
with the tears he wept for his foiled
journey home,
since the nymph no longer pleased. In
the nights, true,
he'd sleep with her in the arching cave
- he had no choice -
unwilling lover beside a lover all to
willing. . .

"Ah, great goddess," (236)

worldly Odysseus answered, "don't be
angry with me.
All that you say is true, how well I
know,
Look at my wise Penelope. She falls
far short of you,
your beauty, stature.

Even as he spoke, (228)

the sun set . . .
long in each others arms, they lost
themselves to love.

He set to cutting trunks - the work was (268)
done in no time.

But now Poseidon, god of the (310)
earthquake, saw him - (
. . . he spied Odysseus sailing down
the sea
and made his fury boil even more. . .
"Outrageous! Look how the gods have
changed their minds
about Odysseus!"

But half drowned as he was, he'd not (356)
forget his craft -
he lunged after her through the
breakers, laying hold
and huddling amidships fled the stroke
of death.

then and there (479)
unlucky Odysseus would have met his
death -
against the will of fate -
but the bright eyed one inspired him
yet again.
Fighting out from the breakers,
pounding toward the coast,
out of danger he swam on, scanning
the land. . .

"I throw myself on your mercy, on (495)
your current now.
I have suffered greatly. Pity me lord,
your suppliant cries for help."

Long -enduring great Odysseus, (538)
overjoyed at the sight
bedded down in the midst and heaped
up the leaves around him.
As a man will bury his glowing brand
in black ashes,
off on a lonely farmstead, no
neighbors near,
to keep a spark alive, so great
Odysseus buried
himself in leaves and Athena
showered sleep
upon his eyes. . . sleep in a swift wave
delivering him from all his pains and
labors,
blessed sleep that sealed his eyes at

last.

▲ [Odyssey Guide](#)



[Least Tern](#) - John McIlvain - February 29, 2004