

The Odyssey

Book 7 ~ 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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PHAEACIA HALLS AND GARDENS

SCENE: The island of Scheria, land of the Phaeacians.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS: Odysseus, Athena, Alcinous, Arête

A mist enshrouded Odysseus is escorted to the palace by Athena disguised as a young girl. After admiring the beautiful gardens Odysseus enters the palace. He greets the Queen humbly and is soon made to feel welcome. Once again, hospitality is emphasized and although Odysseus (whose keeps his identity to himself) indicates his desire to return home, the Phaeacian king Alcinous, see him as a potential husband for his daughter.

PAY ATTENTION TO:

- How the Book begins with Odysseus praying.
- The way Odysseus enters the palace.
- Note parallels to the way Hermes acts when he reaches Ogygia and greets Calypso.
- The description of the palace and its gardens and the god-favoured status of the Phaeacians.
- How Odysseus greets Arête (as recommended by Nausicaa).
- How the nobleman (Echeneus) chides Alcinous for not being more hospitable.
- How the Phaeacians are familiar with visits from the Gods.
- How Odysseus avoids identifying himself.
- How Alcinous suggest Nausicaa should have brought him directly to the Palace?

EPITHETS: Who is the "man of craft?"

QUESTIONS:

1. How does the palace and the way it is run compare to other palaces we have seen?
2. How might the impression Odysseus and we receive of Phaeacia be significant for
3. Odysseus' subsequent return to Ithaca?
4. What is the difference between the way Odysseus greets Nausicaa and the way he greets Arête?
5. What does this tell us about Odysseus' perception of the two women?
6. Why does Odysseus sit in the ashes?
7. What does Odysseus say when asked asks to identify who he is?
8. What is Arête's role in helping Odysseus on his journey?
9. How does Odysseus explain why Nausicaa did not bring him directly to the palace?

QUOTATIONS TO REMEMBER:

Pallas Athena, harboring (16)
kindness for the hero,
drifted a heavy mist around
him, shielding him
from any swaggering
islander who'd cross his
path,
provoke him with taunts
and search out who he was.
Instead, as he was about to
enter the welcome city,
the bright eyed goddess

herself came up to greet
him there,
for all the world like a
young girl, holding a
pitcher,
standing face to face with
the visitor.

A radiance strong as the (98)
moon or rising sun came
flooding
through the high roofed
halls of generous King
Alcinous.

Walls plated in bronze,
crowned with a circling
frieze
glazed as blue as lapis, ran
to left and right
from outer gates to the
deepest court recess.
Solid golden doors
enclosed the palace.

Outside the courtyard, (129)
fronting the high gates,
a magnificent orchard
stretches four acres deep
with a strong
fence running round it side
to side.

Here luxuriant trees are
always in their prime,
pomegranates and pears,
and apples glowing red,
succulent figs and olives
swelling sleek and dark.
And the yield of all these
trees will never flag or die,

Such (154)
the gifts, the glories
showered down by the gods

on King Alcinous' realm.
And then,
the moment he flung his
arms around Arete's knees,
the godsent mist rolled back
to reveal the great man.
And silence seized the
feasters all along the hall-

"This is no way, Alcinous. (189)
How indecent, look,
our guest on the ground, in
the ashes by the fire!
Your people are holding
back, waiting for your
signal.
Come, raise him up and
seat the stranger now,
in a silver studded chair,
and tell the heralds to mix
more wine for all
so we can pour out cups to
Zeus who loves the
lightning,
champion of suppliants-
suppliants' rights are sacred.

"Alcinous!" (242)
wary Odysseus countered,
"cross that thought from
your mind.
I'm nothing like the
immortal gods who rule the
skies,
either in build or breeding.
I'm just a mortal man."

"How much I have suffered (259)
. . . Oh just let me see
my lands, my serving men
and the grand high roofed
house-
then I can die in peace."

"Your majesty," diplomatic (346)
Odysseus answered,
"don't find fault with a
flawless daughter now,
not for my sake, please. "
She urged me herself to
follow with her maids.
I chose not to, fearing
embarrassment in fact -



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