

Baillie's Brief Guide to The Odyssey

BOOKS 9, 10, 21, 22 and 23

Important Facts and Concepts

KLEOS

Is the Greek concept equivalent to honour, glory and renown; Odysseus' various reckless acts are often done to improve his Kleos these include;

- Getting gifts from those you visit (Cyclops)
- Being aided by the Gods; the fact that Odysseus only beats Circe with the aid of Hermes is not a sign that he is weak because he cannot do it alone, it is a sign that he is good enough to be favoured by the gods and thus gains kleos.

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is an unwritten but immensely potent law to the Greeks at this time, and goes by certain rules. Zeus, ruler of the gods, is the champion of guests and thus breaking these laws is an act of irreverence to him.

BEGGING

When a character puts his arms around another's knees, it is for begging; an act of utter submission, putting the character's very life in the hands of another. This was only done in very drastic circumstances.

EPITHETS

Are important in the Odyssey; all the characters are as much known by their epithets as their names. An epithet is any addition to someone's name, thus Odysseus' various epithets include "sacker of cities" and "lion-hearted", whereas Hermes is known as the "giant-slayer".

REPETITION

As the Odyssey was originally a verbally given poem, many phrases and metaphors are repeated. The most notable include;

- Dawn is almost always "fresh and rosy-fingered" when it comes.
- "For x days and x nights we sailed"

SIMILES

Homer uses a lot of similes in the text of the Odyssey. In the text notes, they are marked in green.

THE GODS

The Gods are very important in the Odyssey. They drink and eat nectar and ambrosia respectively, which is mentioned at times, and live mostly but not entirely on Mount Olympus.

QUOTES

In this text, quotes are in blue.

Lands and Cities

Aeaea

Is the island where Circe lives. It is forested, and her palace is at the centre.

Aeolia

Is an island that floats. It has an unbroken wall of bronze around it, and sheer cliffs.

Ilium

See Troy.

Island near the Cyclopes

This is the island where Odysseus actually lands his fleet. It shares many of the properties of plenty that characterise the Cyclopean homeland. There are masses of wild goats there, and woodlands cover most of the island. It has water-meadows that would be perfect for growing grapes, and good potential farmland. Finally, it has an excellent natural harbour which is so good that the ships do not even need to be tied up.

Ismarus

The city of the Cicones. It is a port, and its patron god is Apollo.

Ithaca

Ithaca is Odysseus' homeland. "Mount Neriton with its quivering leaves" is its main landmark. It is the furthest island out to sea, and Odysseus says it is a "rough land, but nurtures fine men".

Land of the Cyclopes

A very fertile and pleasant land, but inhabited by rather less pleasant beings. All crops can and do grow there with no need of farming, including wheat, barley and grapevines. We know it has caves, as Polyphemus lives in one.

The Laestrygonian Land

A land inhabited by the Laestrygonians. It has high mountains, and a long, thin, narrow harbour, which is "closed in on all sides by an unbroken ring of precipitous cliffs". This proves to be fatal when the Ithacan fleet is trapped inside. The strangest feature of this country is that the nights are so short that "herdsmen bringing their flocks in at night exchange greetings with other herdsmen driving out at dawn". These features have led some to suggest that this land is in fact meant to be Norway or another polar region.

Land of the Lotus Eaters

A land where the Lotus fruits grow. It is a strange fruit that has the effect of making the eater forget about everything but eating Lotus Fruit.

Telepylus

A stronghold in the Laestrygonian land, where Antiphates and other Laestrygonians live.

Troy

The city Odysseus played a major part in sacking, central scene of the Iliad. It is also known as Ilium.

Races and Species

The following are in order of their appearance in the books studied.

Humans

The main species of sentient being in literature, let alone the Odyssey. Most of Odysseus' encounters are with humans, the Trojan War is fought almost exclusively

between humans, the Gods are generally shown as relatively human, and so on. The important tribes and nations are explained below;

Achaean

Are the “Greek” Greeks. They include the Ithacans, Spartans, Mycenaeans, Corinthians, and other Greek states. The Cicones (Thracian), Trojans (Asia Minor) and other nationalities are NOT counted as Achaean. Note that Poseidon tends to favour the Achaeans, but hates Odysseus for blinding his son.

Cicones

A tribe, probably from modern Thrace. They use chariots and foot-soldiers, and build the city of Ismarus. They seem reasonably similar to the Achaeans, in that they fight similarly and worship Apollo, a Greek god.

Lotus Eaters

A people from an unknown location, who seem to do little other than eat Lotus fruit as the effect of eating Lotus fruit is to gain the desire to eat more Lotus fruit, etc.

Trojans

The antagonists of the Trojan War, from Asia Minor. Include Hector, Aeneas and Paris. They are similar to the Greeks, and favoured by Aphrodite, Ares and Apollo in the Trojan War.

Cyclopes

The Cyclopes are a wild and lawless race of one-eyed Giants, from a strange land, which is always fertile and plentiful so that they do not need to farm it or do much other than herd their giant sheep. They have no real social structure but live in family groups at the largest, or alone in their caves. Likewise, they have no artisans, builders or shipwrights, and thus cannot visit other lands (even the island near them which Odysseus visits seems to be empty of them) or exploit the resources of their own. They can make wine from their grapes, but it does not seem to be very strong as Polyphemus does not realise that Maron’s wine should be watered down a lot.

Nymphs

Described as the “Children of Zeus”, these mysterious beings drive the goats on the Island near the Cyclopes towards the Ithacans.

Laestrygonians

The Laestrygonians are giants, that live in the strange land that bears their name. They are huge, and eat the Ithacans they encounter. They do not seem to be as uncultured as the Cyclopes; herding is mentioned, and wagons carrying timber from the mountains (the latter in contrast to Odysseus saying that the Cyclopes did not trade or travel). They have a stronghold, Telepylus, a leader, Antiphates, and an assembly-place.

BOOK NINE

Dramatis Personae

Alcinous

King of Phaeacia; Odysseus is telling him his story.

Odysseus

King of Ithaca, son of Laertes, husband of Penelope and father of Telemachus. He is the protagonist of the poem, and tells books 9 and 10 in the first person.

Maron

Priest of Apollo in Ismarus; he, his wife and their child are saved by Odysseus and in gratitude gives him various presents, including strong wine. His father was called Euanthes, but nothing more is known.

Polyphemus

Cyclops, son of Poseidon. He attempts to trap and eat Odysseus and some of his men in his cave, but Odysseus gets him drunk, blinds him and then escapes beneath his giant sheep.

Telemus

A seer, presumably human, who once lived among the Cyclopes. He foretold that Polyphemus would lose his sight to a man named Odysseus.

Cicones

- Odysseus, returning victorious from Troy, sails to the port city of the Cicones, a place called Ismarus.
- He sacked it with his men; he had 12 ships of Ithacans.
- His troops stayed and ate and drank despite Odysseus trying to get them to move.
- The Cicones from inland counterattacked at dawn with chariots and footsoldiers.
- “As thick as the leaves in spring”
- The Achaeans held all day by the ships, but by early evening the Achaean line was broken and Odysseus fled.
- He lost 6 men from each ship (thus a total of 72) before escaping.
- Zeus then blew a gale, Odysseus stops on land for 2 days and 2 nights
- When he re-embarks, his ships are again blown off course.

Lotus Eaters

- For nine days the ships are blown off course
- Reaches land of the Lotus Eaters on the tenth
- Sends 2 men + herald to check out the locals
- Fed lotus fruit, which makes them forget about their home and only want to stay and eat more forever
- Odysseus has to force them back onto the ships and ties them up under the benches, then sails away.

Cyclops

- Odysseus comes to the land of the Cyclopes
- “A fierce, lawless people”
- He lands on an island not far from the main land of the Cyclopes
- He and his men hunt goats driven to them by Zeus and his nymphs
- Each ship gets nine goats, but that of Odysseus gets ten.
- As they eat, they notice the fires of the Cyclopes.
- Odysseus goes over and sees the scale of the Cyclopean lair
- He takes 12 men with him, and a large goatskin of immensely strong wine given to him in Ismarus (see Maron); the Greeks normally watered down their wine with one part wine to three parts water, whereas this was one to twenty.
- They go inside the cave, as the owner is not in. There are baskets of cheeses, pens of huge sheep, and a lot of milk.

- Odysseus' men beg him to take supplies and go. He refuses in the hope of getting gifts (see Kleos)
- The Cyclops returns, along with his flocks and huge amounts of firewood. He seals the cave mouth with a rock that "twenty-two four-wheeled wagons could not shift"
- The Cyclops demands of them their business, and when Odysseus answers honestly and demands his hospitality (see laws of hospitality) he answers that;
- "We Cyclopes care nothing for Zeus or his aegis, nor for the rest of the blessed gods"
- He then asks where Odysseus' ship is, but Odysseus claims to be shipwrecked.
- He then kills and eats two of Odysseus' men.
- "as though they had been puppies"
- "he tore them to pieces to make his meal, which he devoured like a mountain lion"
- Odysseus considers killing him, but realises that if he does they cannot escape.
- They wait until morning and the Cyclops leaves, shutting them in with the door-stone.
- "as though he were putting the lid on a quiver"
- A green olive rod as large as a ship's mast is in the cave
- Odysseus and his men cut off a fathom's length (about 1.82 metres). They sharpen and fire-harden it.
- He selects four men to help him blind the Cyclops by lot (although it lands on the four men he would have chosen himself)
- The Cyclops returns and eats two more men
- Odysseus gives him a bowl of Maron's strong wine
- "a drop of real nectar and ambrosia"
- The Cyclops asks him his name, telling him he will give him a gift
- Odysseus says his name is Me Tis (meaning Nobody). This is a pun, as when run together as Metis it means "cunning scheme".
- The Cyclops' gift is that he will eat Odysseus last.
- He then topples over, drunk.
- Odysseus and his men heat the pole in the fire, then lift it and screw it into the Cyclops' eye like a drill, with Odysseus on the top providing weight to push it down.
- "The Cyclops' eye hissed round the olive stake in the same way that an axe or adze hisses when a smith plunges it into cold water"
- He screams for help, but when he tells his neighbours that "Me Tis" (nobody) has blinded him, they think he must just be ill and go home.
- When dawn comes, the blind Cyclops opens the cave then feels the backs of his sheep to check there are none of the humans escaping.
- Odysseus straps his men to three of the huge sheep each, with willow twigs. The sheep are strapped together, so the man is under the middle one and there is a sheep on either side to make sure Polyphemus just feels three sheep.
- As the last man, Odysseus just has to grab the fleece of the biggest ram and hang on tight.
- Polyphemus talks to the ram before letting it pass, with Odysseus still underneath.
- Odysseus quickly gets with his remaining men to the ships
- As he flees, he shouts and taunts the Cyclops, who tears bits of rock off and throws them at the ship but misses.

- Odysseus finally shouts his name, to get the glory (kleos) for his deeds. The Cyclops uses his name to pray to Poseidon for revenge. Poseidon is against Odysseus for the rest of the Odyssey.
- They sacrifice Odysseus' escape ram to Zeus, but he does not hear the prayer.

BOOK TEN

Dramatis Personae

Aeolus

Ruler of Aeolia, can control the winds. Lives with his six sons and six daughters (who are married to each other) and spends his time feasting.

Antiphates

Ruler of the Laestrygonians. Eats people.

Eurylochus

Friend and kinsman of Odysseus, often speaks bitterly against Odysseus when he does something seemingly dangerous.

Hermes

Messenger god, known as "the god of the golden wand" or "the giant-slayer" who gives Odysseus the moly flower.

Circe

Ruler of Aeaea, child of the sun and Perse, daughter of the ocean. She turns visitors into animals.

Teiresias

Blind prophet from Thebes; he retained his powers of prophesy even after death.

Elpenor

The youngest of Odysseus' men; "not much of a fighter and not very clever".

Aeolus

- Odysseus comes to Aeolia. He is welcomed by Aeolus, who feasts him and his men for a month.
- To help Odysseus get home, Aeolus gives him a bag with the unfriendly winds tied up, and brings up a good breeze on a wind to take him to Ithaca
- Odysseus does not tell his men what is in the bag.
- Odysseus single-handedly sails his ship for nine days and nights in his anxiety to get home, then falls asleep
- Even as they near Ithaca, Odysseus' men (thinking Aeolus has given him treasure) decide to open the bag
- The winds escape and Odysseus's fleet, within sight of Ithaca, is blown right back to Aeolia
- Aeolus reacts angrily, declaring Odysseus is cursed, and sends him away.

Laestrygonians

- For six days and nights they carried on sailing
- Came to Telepylus, a stronghold in the Laestrygonian land
- All ships except that of Odysseus enter the narrow harbour (11 of them)
- Odysseus moors his outside
- He sends two men and a messenger inland
- They meet the daughter of Antiphates (the Laestrygonian chief) at a spring called Artacie. She shows them where her father's palace is.

- The men go to the palace, but meet Antiphates' HUGE wife, who they find shocking. She calls for her husband, who jumps up and eats one man. The others escape to the ships.
- The ships in the harbour are destroyed as Antiphates pursues them then gets his fellow giants to hurl rocks at them, smashing them to pieces. The humans are simply carried off and eaten.
- "like fishes on a spear"
- Odysseus cuts the tether on his ship and his men alone manage to escape.

Circe

- Odysseus comes to the island of Circe, Aeaea.
- He goes hunting and kills a huge stag, so big he could not carry it on one shoulder.
- As his men are eating it, he tells them they are lost, but reveals he has seen smoke inland, so there must be inhabitants.
- His men, remembering the Laestrygonians and the Cyclops, are afraid at this. Some break down in tears.
- Odysseus splits the party into two, and then casts lots to see which group will scout inland. The other party, under Eurylochus, gets the lot and goes inland.
- They come to Circe's palace. A man called Polites leads the men into the palace, but Eurylochus stays out, suspecting a trap. Circe feeds the men drugged food, then turns them into pigs.
- Eurylochus goes and tells Odysseus his story. Odysseus tells Eurylochus to lead him to Circe, but Eurylochus begs him not to.
- Odysseus goes inland and meets Hermes, who gives him a flower called a moly. The moly;
 - o Is dangerous for mortals to pick
 - o Has a white flower and a black root
 - o Stops magic working on the bearer
- Hermes then tells him what to do against Circe.
- Odysseus then goes to Circe's palace
- Circe gives him drugged food and then taps him with her wand, but he is not changed and draws his sword at her.
- She offers to take him to bed, but he makes her swear an oath not to create any more trouble for him before doing so.
- She then serves him food, but he gets her to restore his men from being pigs first.
- Odysseus fetches his men from the shore. Eurylochus speaks bitterly and angrily against him, and Odysseus considers killing him but does not.
- The Ithacans stay on Aeaea for a year, until Odysseus' men remind him that they need to go.
- Odysseus agrees, and reminds Circe that she must help him.
- Circe tells him he must go to the Underworld, to consult the dead prophet Teiresias about his route. She gives him directions to go there, and tells him what to do;
 - o Dig a trench as wide as a man's forearm
 - o Pour offerings to the dead, first with honey and milk, then sweet wine, then water.
 - o Sprinkle barley over it and begin praying to the dead.

- Promise them the sacrifice of a barren heifer.
- Offer Teiresias himself a jet-black sheep.
- Sacrifice a ram and a black ewe
- Get the men to burn the sheep
- Do not let any ghosts come near the blood until Teiresias has
- An Ithacan called Elpenor who was sleeping on Circe's palace roof falls and breaks his neck.
- Odysseus sets off for the underworld.

BOOK TWENTY-ONE

Dramatis Personae

Penelope

Wife of Odysseus; she has remained faithful to him through various stratagems through many years, despite the hall being flooded with suitors trying to gain her throne and wealth.

Eumaeus

Swineherd on Ithaca; he is loyal to Odysseus, and takes him in when he comes as a beggar. Eumaeus was a favourite character for Homer, to the point at which he sometimes addresses him in the second person (you) while telling the story.

Eurycleia

Odysseus' former maid; now cares for Penelope. She recognises Odysseus by a boar-hunting scar he got while in Parnassus.

Iphitus

A friend of Odysseus who he met at the house of Ortilochus in Messene; he dies before they can visit one another.

Heracles

Son of Zeus; he murders Iphitus and breaks the laws of hospitality.

Leodes

Priest of the suitors. He dislikes the suitors' recklessness and idiocy greatly, but does not stop them or leave the group.

Melanthius

The goat-herd. He is a friend to the suitors, and helps them against Odysseus.

Philoetius

The cow-herd. He helps Odysseus in the hall

Antinous

The villainous, nasty leader of the suitors, he wants to get Penelope's wealth.

Eurymachus

Another leader of the suitors. He is described as having "godlike looks" but is otherwise a very nasty character; less abrasive than Antinous, but more sly and slippery.

The rest of the story

Odysseus, via various other adventures, comes to Phaeacia, which is where he tells his story as with Books 9 and 10. He is then taken by the Phaeacians to Ithaca, but is hidden by Athena in disguise as a beggar. He is taken in by Eumaeus the swineherd, and goes to the palace where Penelope, thinking him a beggar, gives him some charity; by the beginning of book 21, the only ones to have realised his identity are Telemachus, who he has told, and his old nurse Eurycleia, who was told to bath the

beggar by Penelope but noticed an old boar-hunting scar which gave his identity away. His dog also recognised him, but dropped dead as soon as it had greeted its long-lost master.

The Great Bow

- Penelope is prompted by Athena to give the suitors a contest of their skill. She takes Odysseus' bow and some axes he has won at contests long ago (these latter have rings at the end of the handle, and so are to be used as targets).
- The tale of the bow is recounted;
 - o A man named Iphitus had given it to Odysseus when they met in Messene. Odysseus gave Iphitus a sword and spear in return.
 - o Odysseus was there to recover a debt, as some Messenians had stolen 300 Ithacan sheep
 - o Iphitus was in search of a dozen lost mares.
 - o Eventually Iphitus died when Heracles invited him in, gave him a feast then killed him to get his horses.
 - o Odysseus did not take the bow to war, but kept it in memory of his friend.
- Penelope opens the store-room door **“like the roar of a bull”**
- She gives the suitors the challenge of stringing the bow and shooting through all the axes.
- Eumaeus cries at the sight of the bow, but is rebuked by Antinous.
- Homer starts giving hints already of what is to come, saying Antinous **“would be the first to sample an arrow from the hands of Odysseus”**
- Telemachus has first go with the bow. He fails three times to string it; on the fourth he is going to succeed, but Odysseus, in the hall still looking like a beggar, shakes his head and he gives up.
- Leodes, the priest of the suitors, has the first try but gives up. He tells the other suitors that the bow **“will break the heart and spirit of many a champion here.”**
- Antinous brushes his comments off, then tells Melanthius the goatherd to make a fire and fetch tallow, so he and the other suitors can warm and grease the bow before trying to string it.
- Antinous and Eurymachus hang back, letting the other suitors fail before they attempt the task of stringing the bow.
- Odysseus slips outside to see Eumaeus and his friend, the cowherd Philoetius. He asks them whether they would favour Odysseus over the suitors and, hearing that they would welcome him home, reveals his identity.
- He tells Eumaeus to give him the bow when he asks for it, and to warn the women in the palace to lock the door to their rooms and not stir at any noise.
- Philoetius is told to bolt the courtyard doors, thus making sure no suitors can escape.
- Eurymachus is now failing to string the bow, and complaining at the disgrace of being so weak compared to Odysseus.
- Antinous points out that the day is a holiday in honour of Apollo, and suggests that they stop for the day and try again the next.
- Odysseus, still masquerading as a beggar, agrees with Antinous but asks to try the bow.
- The suitors, afraid he will succeed, hurl abuse at Odysseus. They threaten him with terrible punishments for stepping above his station.
- Penelope rebukes them, dismissing the idea that the old man could ever make her his wife.

- Eurymachus tells her how their reputation will be damaged if they fail and the beggar succeeds.
- Penelope replies that his reputation can get no lower, and says that she will aid the beggar if he succeeds, giving him a fine new cloak and tunic, a two-edged sword, and a javelin.
- Telemachus then asserts his claim to the bow, and tells his mother to go to her quarters; he will oversee the contest. She is “taken aback” but does as he asks.
- The suitors hurl abuse at Eumaeus as he brings the bow to Odysseus, threatening to set dogs on him. He almost stops, but Telemachus delivers a threat in return and he brings the bow.
- Eumaeus then tells Eurycleia to go and lock the women’s quarters, as Odysseus told him to do. Philoetius bars the courtyard door.
- Odysseus looks at the bow carefully to jeers from the suitors
 - o He strings the bow as simply and easily as a minstrel stringing a lyre
 - o He then plucks the string;
 - o “it sang as he plucked it with a sound like a swallow’s note”
 - o The suitors look mortified and the colour drains from their cheeks
 - o A thunderclap shows that Zeus approves
 - o He selects an arrow, shoots it...
 - o ... and doesn’t miss a single axe.
 - o “the arrow sped with its burden of bronze”
- He does all the above *without even standing up* from his stool.
- Odysseus stands and tells Telemachus it is time to “get the suitors’ supper ready”.
- Telemachus stands at Odysseus’ side; the fight is about to begin.

BOOK TWENTY-TWO

Dramatis Personae

Amphinomous

One of the more sympathetic characters among the suitors, generally friendly and doesn’t like the cold-blooded schemes of Antinous and Eurymachus.

Agelaus

A suitor who rallies his fellows when Odysseus is winning; after his death, Odysseus uses his sword to decapitate Leodes

The Battle in the Hall

- Odysseus throws off his rags
- He then tells the suitors he is going to try and shoot “another target no man has yet hit”
- He then shoots Antinous through the throat; he drops his cup and dies pitifully.
- “His life-blood gushed from his nostrils in a turbid jet”
- The other suitors tell him he will die, not realising who it is or that he has not done it by accident
- Odysseus shouts angrily at them and they realise who he is
- Eurymachus appeals to Odysseus; he blames everything on Antinous, and offers a public levy to replace all the lost goods and food from the suitors’ stay.

- Odysseus tells him that even if he gave up all his possessions he would still kill him and the other suitors for what they did.
- Eurymachus rallies the suitors to hold the tables up as shields and find weapons.
- He charges at Odysseus, wielding his sword, with a “blood-curdling” shout, but Odysseus shoots him, hits him in the nipple and pierces his liver with the force of the arrow.
- Amphinomous then charges with his sword, but Telemachus spears him in the back midway between the shoulders. He leaves the spear and jumps back in case a suitor attacks him while he is pulling it out.
- Telemachus goes away from the battle and fetches armour and weapons from the store-room
- Odysseus shoots a lot more suitors
- Eumaeus is set to guard the side-door
- Agelaus suggests that they try and break through the side door to get help
- Melanthius tells him this will be impossible; the passage is too narrow. He then suggests that he goes to get armour from the store-room
- Using hidden passages, he goes to the store-room and fetches armour and weapons for the suitors.
- Odysseus sees the suitors donning armour; Telemachus realises he left the store-room door open
- Eumaeus is ordered to go after Melanthius and stop him getting more supplies
- Eumaeus and Philoetius find Melanthius coming out of the store-room with a helmet and an old shield that used to belong to Laertes.
- They jump on him, tie his hands and feet behind his back, throw him in the store-room, strap him to a plank, tie a rope around him and hoist him up into the rafters (these are Odysseus’ orders).
- At this point, Homer refers to Eumaeus as “you, Eumaeus” (this shows the great love of the character that he had)
- The herders taunt Melanthius then return
- Athene, disguised as Odysseus’ old friend Mentor, appears. Odysseus appeals to her for aid (guessing who she is) but the suitors threaten and jeer at her. She rebukes Odysseus for his lack of courage but says she will stand at his side.
- She then turns into a swallow and flies up into the roof
- Agelaus rallies the suitors
- Agelaus persuades his comrades to hold back so he and 5 others can gain the glory
- Athene makes them all miss
- Odysseus, Telemachus, Eumaeus and Philoetius throw their javelins, kill 4 suitors.
- More suitors throw and miss, though Amphimedon grazes Telemachus’ wrist and Ctesippus scratches Eumaeus’ shoulder.
- Odysseus and co kill another 4 suitors, including Amphimedon and Ctesippus, who Philoetius gets revenge on for throwing things at Odysseus when he looked like a beggar.
- Odysseus stabs Agelaus with his great spear
- Telemachus stabs Leocritus in the side so hard the point comes out the other side;

- “Telemachus struck Euenor’s son Leocritus right in the flank with a spear, driving the point clean through the man, who fell face down and hit the ground with his forehead.”
- Athene, still in the rafters, raises her aegis, turning the suitors to flight with fear.
- “They scattered through the hall like a herd of cattle that a darting gadfly has attacked and stampeded”
- Odysseus and co chase them down;
- “But the others swooped down on them just as vultures from the hills, with curving claws and crooked beaks, swoop down upon the smaller birds...”
- “Ghastly screams” are heard, as “men’s heads were smashed in, and the whole floor ran with blood”
- Leodes comes and clasps Odysseus’ knees, begging to be spared for his efforts to stop the suitors debauchery.
- Odysseus, knowing how Leodes must have prayed that he did not come home so he would have a chance at Penelope, kills him anyway with Agelaus’ sword.
- He hits him so hard in the neck that Leodes’ head hits the ground before it has even stopped speaking.
- Phemius, the minstrel who the suitors have forced to sing for them, also comes to clasp Odysseus’ knees and tell him that he will be cursed if he kills a minstrel
- Telemachus tells his father to save Phemius, and Medon the Herald if he is still alive with all the killing
- It turns out that Medon, at the first sign of trouble, wrapped himself in an ox-hide and hid under a chair
- Medon comes and appeals to Telemachus
- Odysseus spare the two men, and tells them to leave until all the bloody work is over.
- Odysseus looks round, and realises that all the suitors are dead.
- “like fish that the fishermen have dragged out of the grey surf in the meshes of their net on to a curving beach, to lie in masses on the sand”
- He sends Telemachus to get Eurycleia
- When she comes she finds Odysseus “spattered with blood and gore, like a lion”
- She feels like crying out in triumph, but Odysseus rebukes her, saying that the suitors have been sent punishment by the Gods.
- Odysseus asks her which women have been unfaithful, and tells her not to wake Penelope yet.
- He tells Telemachus and the herders to make the unfaithful women clean up the bloody mess, then kill them all by the sword.
- They do this, but Telemachus (not wanting to give the unfaithful a decent death) hangs all the women by a ship’s cable instead of using his sword;
- “For a little while their feet twitched, but not for very long”
- They then drag Melanthius out, slice his nose and ears off, rip off his genitals and feed them to the dogs, and lop off his hands and feet.
- Odysseus tells Eurycleia to get sulphur and fire to clean the pollution of death. She asks if he wants a cloak first, but he refuses and so she gets the fire and sulphur he asks for.
- The other women of the palace come out and greet Odysseus home.

BOOK TWENTY-THREE

The Bed

Odysseus built his bed in the following way;

1. He built his room around a great olive tree in the courtyard
2. He built a room of stone around it, with a tight door so no-one would see what he was doing.
3. He lopped the leaves and branches off the tree, trimmed it from the roots up, and rounded it off to be a bedpost.
4. He then drilled holes in it and constructed rest of the bed.
5. He finished the bed with gold, silver, and ivory, and fixed a set of purple straps across the frame.

Odysseus and Penelope

- Eurycleia comes up the stairs and tells Penelope that Odysseus is home
- Penelope assumes Eurycleia has gone mad with age, and tells her to go away, saying that she had slept the best she had done since Odysseus left and now she has been woken up.
- Eurycleia tries to explain the truth
- “Penelope’s heart leapt up” – she begs Eurycleia to tell her how Odysseus beat the suitors.
- Eurycleia tells her that she doesn’t know, but heard the groans of dying men and then saw the dead suitors.
- Penelope tells Eurycleia not to be so exultant, still believing that Odysseus must be dead and assuming that one of the Gods has killed the suitors.
- Eurycleia tells her about Odysseus’ boar scar, and swears that it is actually Odysseus.
- Penelope goes down to see Odysseus, still disbelieving.
- She looks at Odysseus, not really recognising him because he is still wearing rags. She feels very bewildered.
- Telemachus rebukes his mother for being so cold to Odysseus
- She tells him that the shock has numbed her, but that she will be able to convince herself that it is him due to signs “which only we two know”
- Odysseus tells Telemachus to leave his mother, and points out that they must now consider the problem that they have killed most of Ithaca’s young men.
- Telemachus tells him that it is his duty to do the thinking, as a famed strategist.
- Odysseus tells his companions to wash, put on fresh clothes, and pretend to have a wedding feast and dance with music. This will stop people outside suspecting the carnage until they can sneak out to their farm and weigh up the situation.
- They do this, and passers-by assume Penelope is finally getting married.
- Odysseus takes a bath, and is re-clothed and given visual improvements (the former by a maid, the latter by Athene).
- Odysseus tells Penelope how strange it is that she is staying away from him, and asks Eurycleia to make up a bed for him to sleep in alone.
- Penelope, trying to test Odysseus, tells the Nurse to bring their bed out of the bedroom that Odysseus had built for him to sleep on.

- Odysseus rounds on her, explaining how he built the bed and how it should have been impossible to move it. He explains how he built the bed, proving that he is Odysseus.
- Penelope rushes up, knowing the truth, and apologises for doubting him but says how she was worried that some false person would pretend to be Odysseus.
- They stayed together for a long time, so long that Athene had to stop Dawn from yoking up her chariot and bringing the day to give them more time.
- Odysseus explains to Penelope what Teresias told him about his future;
 - o Odysseus must carry a well-balanced oar and carry it from city to city
 - o He will eventually come to a people who know nothing of the sea, and never use salt.
 - o He will meet a traveller who refers to the oar as a winnowing-fan
 - o When this happens, Odysseus must plant the oar in the earth and offer Poseidon a ram, a bull, and a breeding boar.
 - o He must then go home and make offerings to all the gods in precedence order.
 - o Death will come to him in old age, peacefully, surrounded by prosperous people.
- They then go “**And blissfully they lay down on their own familiar bed**”.
- Telemachus and co. stop dancing.
- Odysseus and Penelope recount their stories to each other
- Finally, Athene prompts Odysseus to leave and visit his orchard farm. He tells Penelope to go with her ladies upstairs and stay quiet. He then puts on his armour, and with his companions sneaks out, hidden by Athene.