Odyssey Discussion Questions

Book 1
1) Have the students explain where Odysseus has been and why.

2) Why is Athena in the story? (Character function)

3) What evidence is there to show how Athena thought highly of Odysseus?

4) What steps are in the plan that Athena gave Telemachus?

Book 2
5) What happens with the plan? – Explain

6) Why are the suitors angry?

Book 1-4
7) Suppose you were Telemachus and your father had been gone for as long as you remember. Your mother is in trouble, you are not sure if your father is dead or alive, and you have all these suitors to deal with...what would you do?

Book 4
8) Explain how Helen could be emotionally effected by seeing Telemachus. Look back at the story and see what she has to do with it all.

Book 5
9) Does Odysseus want to stay with Calypso or go home? Cite evidence.

10) What does this society value? What rules do they seem to live by in daily life? What is expected of the people, and what is considered rude?

11) Sketch Calypso's home island. Make sure you are reading to include all the details.

12) Why doesn't Odysseus just tell Calypso he doesn't want to be with her and that Penelope is much better? How does this give us clues about their lives in that culture?


Book 6
14) How many of you have ever practically begged to do the laundry? What would your parents think if you did?

15) This story shows a different type of relationship between the common people and the gods/goddesses than we understand in our culture. List the differences and explain what they could mean about our societies.
16) Why doesn't Athena just bring him home? (pg. 739-40 bottom) (Secret rules of society)

17) Pg. 741 talks about first impressions. What was Nausica's first impression of Odysseus? Was she right? Have you judged people based on first impressions?

18) What is Nausica's plan for going through town and why does she need one?

Book 8

19) The customs of Greek society then are different from our society now – especially concerning hospitality. Explain the differences and take a guess as to why it is so different (pg. 743).

20) Draw all the scenes that are explained: (in groups)
   - End of war (Trojan Horse)
   - Lotus Eaters
   - Cyclops
   - Bag of wind being let loose
   - Circe (witch) and her 'animals'
   - Land of the Dead (underworld)
   - Sirens and how they got away
   - Scylla
   - Charybdis
   - Calypso's Island
   - End where Odysseus kills suitors

21) Put all his adventures in chronological order (whole group) — Explain "in media res"...

22) Choose a character and do a character sketch: (in groups)
   - Odysseus
   - Athena
   - Nausica
   - Telemachus
   - Cyclops
   - Penelope
   - Sailors (as a whole)

23) What was the function (role) of the Bard (storyteller)? How were they viewed by society and why?

Book 9
24) If you were one of his sailors, after the Cyclops adventure, would YOU follow Odysseus? Why or why not?

Book 11
25) Site at least 3 examples of rituals in the story. Why are they so important? What happens if you make a mistake? Examples of rituals in our society? Purpose of these rituals?

Book 12
26) Why would the sailors disobey Odysseus' orders (specifically regarding Helios' cattle)? Didn't they have faith in him? Didn't they believe him? Were they just too hungry? What?

27) What does In Media Res mean?

28) Think about what you know about Odysseus' character now. What do you learn of him after he loses 6 men to Scylla? Have you ever seen him boastful or confident?

Book 13
29) Why does Odysseus arrive home the way he does?

Book 14
30) What role does Eumaeus play in the story? What is his character's function? (explain character function) What lesson might Homer be trying to teach the audience through his character?

Book 16
31) How is it that Odysseus is revealed to Telemachus?

32) What does Telemachus mean when he says, “Meddling spirits conceived this trick to twist the knife in me!”

Book 17
33) What significance is there in the relationship between Odysseus and Argos?

34) What is the point of this statement: “For Zeus who views the wide world takes away half the manhood of a man, that day he goes into captivity and slavery.”

Book 19
35) What is revealed about the characters of Telemachus and Penelope by how they treat the beggar?

36) Why is it that the nurse recognizes Odysseus but his own wife does not?

Book 21
37) Describe Penelope's test. Why has she chosen to give one?

38) Draw the beggar winning the test. Make sure you have accurate details (pg. 782).
39) Who backs Odysseus in his plan? (name or describe them all)

40) What is Odysseus’ plan to deal with the suitors?

41) How are the maids paid for their loyalty? What lessons are learned through this all?

42) If you were Penelope how would you react to this beggar/husband? And why?

43) Sketch the bed that is described on pg. 791. Do you see why Odysseus saw it couldn’t be true?

44) What is Odysseus’ last duty and what does this tell us about his character or the values of that society?

45) What physical traits are valued in this society? How do we know they are valued? (pg. 793)

46) Compare Odysseus and Penelope’s bed to their marriage.

47) Explain the role of the gods/goddess’ in the story. (Do the gods/goddess’ make things happen that couldn’t otherwise be explained?)