

Summary

After hearing the tales of Odysseus's wanderings, King Alcinous orders the Phaeacians to prepare him gifts and escort him home to Ithaca. Odysseus is left on the shore of Ithaca, still asleep. Poseidon is angered that Odysseus managed to make it home, and decides to destroy the Phaeacian ship as a punishment for helping him. When Odysseus awakes, he is unaware of his location due to Athena's interference. Disguised as a shepherd boy she tells him that he is in Ithaca, to which he tells a made-up story of his travels. Athena then reveals her true nature and gives him more details of the happenings of Ithaca and the state of his family. Together, they hide the treasure that Odysseus received from the Phaeacians in a cave and begin plotting how to kill Penelope's suitors. Finally, Athena disguises Odysseus as an old beggar and leaves to bring Odysseus's son, Telemachus, back home.

This chapter was mainly about Odysseus returning to Ithaca and learning from Athena what has transpired in his kingdom.

Prediction

I predict that Odysseus will kill all of the suitors that reside in his palace. This is previously indicated when Odysseus is in the land of the dead and Tiresias, a famous seer, tells him, "You will find a world of pain at home, crude, arrogant men devouring all your goods, courting your noble wife, offering gifts to win her. No doubt you will pay them back in blood when you come home" (253). I think that he will defeat the suitors in a clever and unorthodox way. Throughout the book, Odysseus is described as a cunning trickster and I think that he will continue to use his wits to his advantage in the future.

Questions

Why does Athena disguise herself as a shepherd when Odysseus first encounters her?

- It is clearly unimportant that her identity remains a secret as she later reveals herself.

Why then, was it necessary for her to be disguised in the first place?

Why does Odysseus lie about his past when first talking to Athena?

Why is Odysseus's disguise so in depth?

- If he doesn't want to be recognized, is it necessary for him to be dressed as a beggar?

What does the job of a herald entail?

Important Quotation

"Come, weave us a scheme so I can pay them back!

Stand beside me, Athena, fire me with daring, fierce

As the day we ripped Troy's glittering crown of towers down" (299).

I chose this passage because it shows Odysseus's determination to exact revenge upon the suitors. It demonstrates how he prefers to plan ahead, instead of acting rashly. It also illustrates Odysseus's relationship with Athena. He recognizes that she has the capabilities to motivate

him and make him victorious. By asking for her help, he is being respectful and increasing his chances of being successful.

Personal Response

I can relate to the way that Odysseus spoke to Athena before he knew who she truly was. When they first meet, he tells her a story of his past that is not true. His intentions are not clear, however, I think that he wanted to project a certain image of himself and did not trust this “stranger” with his personal information. When I am getting to know people, I may tell small lies before I can fully trust them. I care about how others perceive me and want to be seen as a kind and intelligent person. For example, if I were asked about a new movie, TV show, or song, I may not give my true opinion if I think it will make the person dislike me.

Connections and Conventions

This book contains many of the conventions of an epic. The narrative is focused on an epic hero who is a great warrior. He receives supernatural help from the goddess Athena. The text features many extended similes which make the story easier to understand by comparing things with more common objects and scenarios.

Athena disguising herself as a young boy reminds me of the beginning of “Beauty and the Beast.” The prince is visited by an old woman with a ragged appearance, as a test of his kindness. The woman is actually a goddess, who turns him into a beast for treating her unkindly. Athena is also a goddess who disguises herself. Both the prince and Odysseus are unaware of who they are talking to. This causes them to act differently than they would if they knew they were talking to a deity.

Odysseus sleeping in the boat reminded me of the story in the Bible where Jesus calms the storm. Both Odysseus and Jesus are seen as leaders and strong men. In the gospel of Mark, when Jesus and his disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee, Jesus is sleeping below deck. Similarly, Odysseus slept for the entire journey from Phaeacia to Ithaca.