

Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020

L.I. I understand the final journey of Odysseus.

Lesson 22: Arriving Home



I awoke from my sleep on my home island, Ithaka. Athena, goddess of \_\_\_\_\_, appeared to me and told me how things stood:

‘Odysseus, you have reached your island homeland of Ithaka. I am Athena, goddess of wisdom, who guards you in your wanderings. But the prophecy has come true, because your men ignored the prophecy of Circe, and killed Apollo’s cattle. Wicked suitors are causing trouble in your home, eating up your livelihood, offering wedding gifts to your royal wife Penelope. All

this time she has waited for your homecoming, with **loyalty** wishing for your return. I am here to make a **cunning** scheme with you, to warn you of all the trials you will have to go through within your palace. Tell not a single person, man or woman, that you are back from your wanderings; endure all **aggravation** in silence.’

‘By Olympus! I would certainly have been murdered directly as I set foot in my house, had you not made this clear to me. Athena, devise some **cunning** scheme of revenge.’

‘I am going to change you beyond all recognition; I shall clothe you in rags, wither your skin and dim your bright eyes until you are repulsive and loathsome, even to your wife Penelope and son Telemachus who you left at home. Now for your part - you must go to the swineherd in charge of your pigs. His heart is **loyal** to your son Telemachus and wise Penelope.’



And Athena withered my skin, robbed my head of hair, covered my body in wrinkles, dimmed my bright eyes, and changed my clothing into a shabby cloak, grimy rags and a filthy tunic. Then she left.

I hurried down the rough, dusty path to the swineherd’s hut. Eumaeus had been ordered to send several hogs to the arrogant suitors to slaughter and feed on the flesh. Eumaeus thought I was a beggar, and addressed me: ‘Come in, my friend, you must be hungry. Have you any news? Did you hear what happened to King Odysseus? He never came back from Troy. The gods give me pain and grief! Here I sit, **yearning** for the best of Kings, fattening his hogs for others to eat - others who plot to kill his son Telemachus! - while he, likely starving, is lost in foreign lands and strange places

- if he is still alive. But follow me, old man, let's go to my hut, so you can have all the bread and wine you want.'

Suddenly, the door opened. In came a young man. 'Prince Telemachus!' the swineherd gasped. 'Come in, come in, and avoid that terrible gang of evil suitors who are plotting to kill you!' And Athena transformed me back to youthful vigour, with a fresh cloak and tunic. Telemachus gave me a look of amazement, for fear that I might be a god. But patient and long-enduring I said, 'I am no god, Telemachus. Why do you take me for an immortal? But I am your father, for who you have endured so much sorrow and suffered so much pain.' But Telemachus could not accept that it was his father, and asked if it this transformation was some trick. So I told him the disguise was the work of the goddess Athena. And so Telemachus embraced me, his long-lost father.

'Telemachus, my son, I came here on Athena's prompting so that we could plan the destruction of our enemies. Tell me about the men who plot to steal my kingdom.'

'Father,' said Telemachus, 'you speak of the impossible. Two men could not possibly take on so many men. There are not just ten suitors, or twenty, but hundreds. We may pay a cruel and terrible price for the outrages you have come to **avenge**.'

But I replied: 'Listen carefully. Athena is on our side. I will come to the palace disguised as a wretched beggar. When I meet with insults, **steel your heart**. When Athena prompts me, I will give you a nod. Directly gather the weapons of war. If you are really my son and my blood flows in your veins, see that not a soul hears Odysseus is back.'

Next morning, I went as a beggar with the swineherd when he drove his pigs to the palace. 'Every day the princes come to ask Queen Penelope which one she will marry,' said the swineherd. 'She asks them to leave but they won't go away until she chooses one of them. They have done this for years, eating up your livelihood,' he sighed.

I hurried into the great hall where the suitors were eating and drinking. I picked up a bowl and went to the table, to beg for food and find out what the suitors planned to do. They cast me away **in scorn**. One threw a stool at me. Telemachus was furious, but he had promised his father to wait patiently, endure and say nothing. When Queen Penelope heard that a wandering beggar was in the palace, she sent her old nurse to fetch him. I stood in the shadows. I was afraid my wife might recognise me even though I was in disguise. I was heartbroken to see Penelope so sad. 'Odysseus is alive and is very near to home now,' I said to comfort her. 'Thank you,' said Penelope, 'my nurse will look after you.'



That evening, feasting on another of the swineherd Eumaeus' hogs, the suitors shouted drunkenly: 'Enough is enough! Penelope must choose one of us as her husband today. Then we will kill her son.' Just then, Penelope came in, carrying a huge ivory bow. 'This bow belonged to my husband, King Odysseus,' she said. 'I shall marry the man who is strong enough to put a string on it. But first he must also shoot an arrow through these twelve axes.' She ordered the target to be set up. The suitors wanted to show how strong they were. Each one tried as hard as he could but could not string the bow. 'It's old and stiff,' they shouted, and rubbed the bow with oil. They tried again and again but still could not bend it. At last, tired and cross, they gave up. 'We'll try again later,' they said, 'now bring us some food and wine.' I stepped forward. 'May I try?' he asked. The suitors laughed. 'A beggar wants to be King,' they said. I picked up the bow, and, bending it easily, put on the string. I took an arrow, pulled the

string and fired. The arrow shot through the axes and right into the centre of the target. The princes watched in horror.

Athena, goddess of wisdom, had changed into a sparrow and was watching from the ceiling. As soon as the arrow hit the target, she turned my rags back into armour. 'I am Odysseus,' I cried, taking another arrow. 'I have come back for my revenge.' And I shot a suitor dead. Telemachus drew his sword and ran to help his father. The suitors ran to escape but Telemachus had locked the doors. The suitors fought desperately but Telemachus and I killed them all. We also hanged 12 of Penelope's maids. The women's heads were held fast in a row, with nooses round their necks, to bring them to the most pitiable ends. For a little while their feet twitched, but not for very long.



Penelope came down from a balcony. 'How do I know you are Odysseus?' she asked. 'Perhaps the gods are playing a trick on me. Perhaps they have made a beggar look just like my husband.' Then she thought of a test. 'Go and move the big bed into the other room,' she said. 'Wait,' I cried, 'the bed can't be moved. I built it round a tree.' Penelope smiled: 'That proves you are Odysseus. Only you know about the tree.' And man of many wanderings, I smiled back: 'I am Odysseus, my faithful wife, and I have come home safely at

last. I will tell you and my brave son, Telemachus, everything.'

**Activity A:** Read the events below. Write a number next to each event to put it into the correct order.

- Odysseus arrives at his palace
- The suitors devise a challenge to win Penelope's heart
- Odysseus reveals his identity to Telemachus
- Penelope tests Odysseus
- Odysseus challenges the suitors
- Athena advises Odysseus

**Activity B:** label the following statements T (true) or F (false).

- Odysseus follows Athena's instructions to the letter.
- Odysseus is not able to pass Penelope's test.
- Penelope remained loyal to Odysseus throughout his absence.
- Telemachus plots to kill his father.
- Athena supports Odysseus to return home.

**Activity C:** think about all the Greek myths you have read. Underline the adjectives which apply to the heroes you have studied.

Courageous	Determined	Curious	Cunning	Proud	Respectful
Disrespectful	Knowledgeable	Persistent	Intelligent		
Foolhardy	Stubborn	Bloodthirsty	Cruel	Arrogant	Selfish
Glory-hunting		Boastful			

In the space below, choose one Greek hero and explain why they are heroic. Use at least three of the adjectives above.

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