The Adventures of Ulysses

Teacher’s Answer Key

Chapter 1   Ships and Men

Vocabulary: prow     hulls     shear     stays     booty
            loot

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. Why might Ulysses’ men prefer to attribute their troubles to a god? What might you say were the causes of their misfortunes? Even in awkward, hard-to-manage, primitive boats, men are not inclined to disparage their own craftsmanship or navigation. It is easier to blame fate or the weather or the gods. Moreover, they are all old war-horses, still spoiling for a fight, despite their frail ships.

2. The sailors believed they were greatly enriched by military victory. How did this victory work against them? The booty overburdened the ships and allowed them to carry less food and water; to be blown out to sea could be disastrous.

3. Do you agree that “bad luck makes good stories?” Think of other stories you have read that prove this statement. (Answers will vary).

Chapter 2   The Ciconians

Vocabulary: scudded  tunics  kinsmen
            scything  flailing  foundering  holds
            baubles
Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. Why do they choose to sack the city when their ships are already overloaded with loot?
Greed and the savagery engendered by years of soldiering.

2. What are Eurylochus’ arguments for attacking the city?
It looks like an easy mark, and Eurylochus uses religion to suit his own aims by saying that the gods will be angered if the sailors spurn these gifts that seem to be there for the taking.

3. Describe the Ciconians’ “secret weapon.”
Brass chariots with blades projecting from the wheels.

4. How is Ulysses portrayed as the Greeks’ most effective weapon?
He rallies his men singlehandedly and then is lifted astride a timber from which he directs his “fire power” upon the horses of the enemy.

5. In this adventure what do you learn of Ulysses as a man? As a leader of men? What is the effect of his casting his own share of the booty overboard first? (Answers may vary).

6. Does Poseidon’s punishment tend to fit the “crime” in your opinion? (Answers will vary).
Chapter 3  The Lotus-Eaters

Vocabulary:  repose  hovered  exerting  ether  helm  taut

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. What powers has Morpheus received from his father?  
Hades, Ruler of the Dead, spreads sleep to mankind through Morpheus.  
Sleep, painted in dismal shades, foreshadows man’s death.

2. How has his aunt altered these powers?  
Persephone has given Morpheus a secret pocket containing dreams.

3. What powers does Morpheus work upon the men?  How does his “treatment” change when he finds Ulysses asleep?  
He erases the bloody dreams of battle from the sailors’ minds and replaces them with visions of home.  Recognizing Ulysses as a hero, he does not interfere with his dreams, but observes them, seeing the foreshadowings of Ulysses’ future adventures.

4. How does Ulysses again come to the rescue of his men?  
He alone is able to resist the lotus, carries his men aboard ship, and maneuvers all three boats well out to sea.

5. What elements in this adventure make you want to read on to learn more?  (Answers will vary).

Chapter 4  The Cyclop’s Cave

Vocabulary:  landfall  moor  skiff  aghast  agile  phlegmy  niche  gullet  tethered  sorceries  taunt  gluttonous
1. What is the history of the dreadful Cyclopes?  
   They were once the blacksmiths of Zeus, forging thunderbolts. Banished to a bleak island, they prey upon sailor’s flesh.

2. Describe Polyphemus.  
   A single eye like a glowing furnace door in the middle of an enormous brow, a figure treetop-tall with baling-hook fingers. Generally nasty.

3. Since physical force is useless against this giant, what powers does Ulysses employ?  
   First, psychology. He outwits Polyphemus with smooth talk and then gets him drunk and blinds him. When the giant falls into an understandable blind rage, Ulysses effects a mass escape under the bellies of the sheep that Polyphemus allows to stampede from the cave.

4. Why don’t Polyphemus’ fellow monsters come to his aid?  
   Ulysses has given his own name as “Nobody.” When the Cyclopes learn from Polyphemus that “Nobody” blinded him they decided that his wound is self-inflicted.

5. After a spectacular escape, Ulysses makes a tragic error. What is it? (Answers will vary).

6. Turn back to the first adventure to learn how many men Ulysses’ crew numbered. How many now survive? (Answers will vary).

Chapter 5 Keeper of the Winds

Vocabulary: shrouds brawling demigod anointed
motley skirmish abduction ambushing sheath
reveling
Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. How did the people of Homer’s time explain the source of wind?
The gods had imprisoned the winds in a hollow mountain, assigning Aeolus as jailer. He and his children can release the winds at will, by stabbing holes in the cave walls.

2. Since Aeolus likes a good story, what does Ulysses tell him?
He tells of the most famous events of the Trojan War, placing an emphasis upon his own heroic deeds. He caps the story by describing the famous Trojan horse, his own invention.

3. What of Ulysses’ stories pleases Aeolus most?
The blinding of Polyphemus, Aeolus’ hated relative.

4. How does Aeolus reward Ulysses for his bravery and entertaining story telling?
Aeolus offers him a West Wind to drive Ulysses’ boats home and a bag of potent winds to be attached to the mast for use under extraordinary circumstances.

5. Aeolus is described “demigod,” that is, half god, half man. Which of his traits appears godlike? Which are like mortal man? (Answers will vary).

6. How is Aeolus’ friendliness a cruel experience for Ulysses? (Answers will vary).

Chapter 6    Cannibal Beach

Vocabulary:    prudent
Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. The natural beauty of this landfall only masks supernatural horrors. What is the first unexplainable occurrence that Ulysses notices?

   Day and night follow one another at a terrific rate: night falls, “like a hound hunting a deer”; they cycle takes place “in the time that it takes to eat a meal.”

2. Ulysses exercises great care to protect one of his ships. What other danger is he unprepared for?

   He sends off sentries who mysteriously disappear at their posts in the top of a “tree.”

3. Describe the “tree” up which Ulysses climbs.

   The bark lies in curious fabric-folds, ominously easy to climb. Near the top, he encounters a strange foliage, the beard of a toothy giant.

4. How do the two supernatural aspects of the island combine in horror?

   Since the tree giant sleeps only in darkness, the brevity of the night gives Ulysses little time for escape.

5. This adventure is entitled, “Cannibal Beach.” We usually think of cannibals as savage tribes of people, not woodsy giants with moss beards. Which do you consider the more terrifying, dangerous people or dangerous unexplainable forces? Why?

   (Answers will vary)

Chapter 7 Circe
Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. Many animals live on the island. What is unusual about them?  
The howling of the pack frightens Ulysses in a way ordinary animal cries would not affect him. The great deer he kills has an almost human dignity. The beasts surrounding Circe’s castle flock around the sailors, trying to warn them of expressive, human eyes.

2. Describe Circe.  
She is an immortal, divinely descended, a sorceress who spins and sings with womanly allure and transforms the unwary into beastly forms with deadly dish, half pigfeed, half ambrosia.

3. How does Hermes explain Circe’s ill will to Ulysses and his men?  
She is the faithful great-granddaughter of Poseidon who still plots evil to Ulysses.

4. Though Hermes can prevent Ulysses from being turned into a pig, he admits that Circe is otherwise irresistible. What is his advice?  
To extract an oath from Circe before he succumbs to her wiles that she will not harm him.

5. How does Ulysses save himself and his men?  
By heeding Hermes’ warning and by using the moly flower, he out-talks and out-thinks Circe, forcing her finally to release his men from their state.

6. How is Ulysses finally able to resist Circe’s temptations?
She has never quite been able to erase his thoughts of home and family. He sees his own hard destiny as a mortal man and leader.

7. Ulysses’ conversations with Circe differ from his contact with other foes. What strikes you as amusing about what he says to Circe? (Answers will vary)

Chapter 8  The Land of the Dead

Vocabulary: yawed flay tacking tainted

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. What event turns Ulysses’ crewmen against him as they approach the land of the dead?
   Elpenor, his watch, falls from the mast to his death. The other crew members suspect Ulysses of killing him in order to follow his departing spirit into the underworld.

2. Once ashore, how does Ulysses summon the dead spirits?
   He orders a trench to be dug and filled with goats’ blood. The spirits, always in search of blood to fill their dry veins, draw near.

3. Whom does Ulysses encounter?
   The shades of his mother; of Achilles, his fallen comrade in the war; of Ajax, his fallen enemy in the war; of Elpenor, who demands a decent burial; and Teiresias, sage of Thebes, master of prophecy.

4. What future dangers is Ulysses warned of?
   Elpenor describes the Hobson’s choice of Scylla and Charybdis and advises the wiser course of action. Teiresias warns against the herds of the Sun-Titan on Sicily.

5. For centuries after the Odyssey men thought that the western boundaries of the ocean dropped off into unfathomable chaos,
something like Ulysses’ sloping sea at the mouth of Hades. What other ideas have you read that men had before they realized the world was round?  (Answers will vary)

6. What general picture of life-after-death did ancient men have? (Answers will vary)

Chapter 9  The Wandering Rocks

Vocabulary: inept spawned rendezvous

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. How does Ulysses try to discredit the warning he has received? He tries vainly to believe that Ajax, Achilles, and Elpenor are not all-knowing. He tries to laugh off these gloomy ghosts who are in the business of scaring mortals.

2. Describe the wandering rocks and their purpose. They float on the surface of the sea, grouping themselves in order to maneuver Ulysses towards ominous Sicily.

3. What do you think Ulysses’ is saying, “Heroes are made, I see, when retreat is cut off” means? Can you think of other instances that tend to prove the truth of this saying?  (Answers will vary)

Chapter 10  The Sirens

Vocabulary: strait lure caulked purled spume appalled aspect
Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. How does Ulysses prepare himself and his men for the Sirens’ lures?
   He puts beeswax in the crew’s ears and is bound to the mast.

2. How are his preparations almost rendered futile?
   He is so overcome with the beautiful song that he bursts his bounds and must be restrained by his deafened men and retied with the hawser.

3. Describe the Sirens when they at last come into view?
   They are ghastly vulture-types with female faces. They perch upon the bleached bones of previous victims.

4. What dangers in this adventure remind you of Lotus-land? Of Circe? (Answers will vary)

Chapter 11 Scylla and Charybdis

Vocabulary: torrent insatiable tentacles contending veer

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. How did ancient men seek to explain the tides?
   Zeus had condemned Charybdis, daughter of Poseidon, to an everlasting thirst. Into her great bladder-body she draws up water every day, spitting it forth again. Thus, daily, she returns the land which she desires to inundate.

2. In what ways is Scylla a deadlier threat than Charybdis?
   She works more behind the scenes, drawing the submerged oars her way. She has six tentacle-hands for grasping and six mouths for feeding (upon human flesh, of course).
3. Homer’s imagination appears inexhaustible. What supernatural creatures from other stories have you read about that are as effectively horrifying as this gruesome twosome, Charybdis and Scylla? (Answers will vary)

Chapter 12  The Cattle of the Sun

Vocabulary: dire routed meddlesome kine
vortex tumult

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. Describe the island as the men find it. How realistic a setting is it?

In addition to the forbidden cattle, they found plenty of water, resins for caulking their boat, a very limited supply of game and edibles. It is a natural setting, in sharp contrast to Tartarus.

2. How do the men invite disaster? How is Ulysses drawn into sharing their blame?

Overcome with hunger, they inevitably slaughter some of the sacred cattle. Ulysses wakes, fearing the worst, but is enticed to eat by Eurylochus, who swears the flesh is venison.

3. What punishment does the enraged Sun-Titan plan?

He vows to Zeus that he will withdraw the sun from the land of the living and shine it on Hades. He settles for incinerating Ulysses’ boat and its crew.

4. In what ways is Ulysses brought lower by this adventure than by any previous one?

He loses everything and everyone. He is drawn back into toils of a previous enemy, Charybdis, and escapes as a castaway, drifting on a crude raft.
5. What element in this adventure follow a pattern already familiar to Ulysses? What parts do sleep and hunger play? (Answers will vary).

Chapter 13 Calypso

Vocabulary:  exploits   apt   abase   consort   libation   osprey

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. How has the impressive Calypso managed to save Ulysses?
Spying him on his raft, she changes him into a fist just as he falls overboard. Saving him from a gull, she scoops him out of the sea.

2. How is Calypso a mistress of time?
Being one of the Titan breed, she can rearrange the sequence of events, reading into her hearth fire the events of the past and the future.

3. What does Ulysses learn of his home from her?
That Penelope, though still faithful, is besieged by suitors who would take their places beside her and upon his throne. That his son, Telemachus, has grown to young manhood, defending his mother.

4. Calypso, like Circe, has a bad habit of turning her husband into beasts. How does Ulysses use this trick against her?
Learning that the flock of birds is actually a flock of cast-off lovers, he selects a nosy crow to fly to Ithaca in order to bring him a true picture of home events.

5. When Ulysses applies to Calypso for help in returning home, what does she reveal to him?

A depressing picture of his own old age: all his glories departed, forced to demean himself before Poseidon for a few miserable years of senility, death by the hand of his own son.

6. The crow in this adventure, though in a sorry plight, is highly amusing- almost a cartoon character. Did you or did you not think he was a suitable addition to this story? Give a reason to support your answer. (Answers will vary).

Chapter 14  Ino’s Veil

Vocabulary: buoyant

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. When Poseidon’s storm swamps his boat, how is Ulysses saved?

A friendly Nereid, Ino, instructs him to wrap himself in her magic veil, which will buoy him up, allowing him to swim ashore.

2. Is Ino’s help all Ulysses needs to find safety? Explain.

No, the green veil will prevent his drowning, but it is of no use against the coast rocks. Ulysses must depend upon his own might.
Chapter 15  Nausicaa

Vocabulary: supplicant  javelin  prudence  hefted  cudgel  invincible

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. Why is King Alcinous particularly anxious to see his daughter wed?
   She has refused so many hot-tempered nobles that her father fears a series of wars will erupt about him.

2. What prophecies do both daughter and father receive?
   Nausicaa is visited in a dream by Aathene who hints that a marriage-minded girl would do well to take her clothes to the river for a day of washing. Athene departs leaving a vision of her hideous Gorgon head shield, which figures later in the story. King Alcinous consults his oracle, who warns him that he will incur Poseidon’s wrath if he entertains, shipwrecked strangers who are given to storytelling. Poseidon’s punishment will take the form of a mountain blocking the harbor.

3. Describe the meeting of Nausicaa and Ulysses.
   While the princess and her handmaidens disport themselves at the river’s edge, they discover Ulysses, half dead in the rushes. Nausicaa is first intrigued, and then attracted. She leads Ulysses back to the palace to be entertained.

4. What is the king’s reaction when Queen Arete informs him of the stranger’s presence?
   He is horrified and enraged that the fulfillment has come hard on the heels of the prophecy. He plans to offer the stranger to Poseidon as a sacrifice,
but he is bound by law of hospitality to do Ulysses no harm while he is a guest.

5. **How does Ulysses prove himself both to the young men of the court and to the royal family?**
The athletes aim to please the king by staging a mock accident on the playing fields. Ulysses, taunted into participating in the discus throw, bests them all, of course, and they are so impressed that they discontinue their plans. At the banquet Nausicaa replaces the bard and sings of glories of the Trojan War. When his own exploits are celebrated, Ulysses reveals his identity to general acclaim.

6. **How does Poseidon punish the king for helping Ulysses reach home? Is the oracle’s prophecy fulfilled?**
Alcinous’ ship and sailors, returning from Ithaca, are turned to stone in the harbor by the sight of the Gorgon’s head. Thus, the mountain blocking the harbor, which the oracle forewarned, becomes a fact.

7. **After Ulysses’ departure, what happens to Nausicaa?**
She becomes the first lady bard, celebrating in song the glories of the Trojan War throughout the ancient world.

8. **When Ulysses first lays eyes on Nausicaa, he addresses her as if she were Artemis, Goddess of the Chase. Do you believe he really thought she was the daughter of Zeus? Why or why not?**
(Answers will vary).

9. **Nausicaa is perhaps the most delightful and realistic of all Ulysses’ ladies. What did you learn about her that made her seem the true portrayal of a lovely young girl? If she had possessed**
supernatural powers, would she have been more interesting to you? Why or why not? (Answers will vary).

Chapter 16  The Return

Vocabulary:  spurned  clamor  fledged  churl  torpor

Questions: Must be answered in complete sentences.

1. What precautions does Ulysses take now that he is on home ground?
Knowing that his wife’s loutish suitors will kill him on sight, he disguises himself as a beggar and seeks out Eumaeus, his faithful swineherd, testing his disguise on his old friend.

2. How does Athene, Ulysses’ protectress, intercede in his behalf?
Knowing that his wife’s loutish suitors will kill him on sight, she tricks Poseidon, who is still enraged at Ulysses. She tells him that the boatload of suitors who mean to kill Telemachus are Ulysses’ friends. Poseidon, believing her, shrouds their ship in mist, thus allowing Telemachus to return safely.

3. When is Ulysses’ true identity first learned?
Athene sends Telemachus to the swineherd’s hut. The boy goes, expecting to hear new of his father from Eumaeus. Instead he finds the unknown stranger by the hearth. Ulysses, overcome at the sight of his son, reveals his identity, and the three men lay plans to obliterate the suitors.
4. What plans do Ulysses and Telemachus make for righting the wrong at the palace?
Telemachus is to go on ahead, telling the suitors that his father is dead and his mother will now choose a husband. Ulysses is to follow, still disguised, in order to take the suitors by surprise. Penelope is to know nothing of the plot until Ulysses can claim her.

5. Who recognizes Ulysses first? What is the first battle he must fight?
His faithful old dog recognizes him and dies in his arms. Ulysses, pretending to beg for food at the suitors’ tables, has to defend himself against another beggar.

6. Describe Ulysses’ first meeting with Penelope.
Telemachus introduces him to her as a beggar who has known her husband. She receives him with hospitality. He tells her tales that emphasize Ulysses’ lasting love and faithfulness to her, stories which please her exceedingly. He leaves her with the idea that she should choose as husband the man who can bend Ulysses’ bow.

7. What is the contest in which all Penelope’s suitors must compete?
Twelve battle-axes are driven into the ground so that their rings are aligned. Each suitor must bend Ulysses’ gigantic bow to send a single arrow straight through all the rings.

8. How does Ulysses manage to compete in the contest even though he appears to be a lowly beggar?
When all the other suitors fail, they turn to Telemachus in rage and frustration. At this strategic moment, Ulysses steps forth and demands a try. Telemachus, as quick-thinking as his father, forces the suitors to let him have a chance, shaming them before a beggar.
9. Having won the competition, how does Ulysses dispatch the suitors?
Recognizing him for who he is, they beg for clemency, but he begins killing them. He and Telemachus and their friends are greatly outnumbered and retreat behind barricades. The fighting is steady until Ulysses sees that his son is wounded. Then he rises up with a great stone slab and crushes the majority, leaving only four to be killed by himself, Telemachus, and their two servants.

10. Why do you suppose a dog and an ancient servant woman are the only two to recognize Ulysses upon his return? (Answers will vary).

11. Considering all Ulysses’ adventures— and particularly the last one— do you agree with the statement that Ulysses breaks men’s heads and women’s hearts? Why or why not? (Answers will vary).
**Ulysses Writing Options**

1. Homer’s Imagination was extremely fertile. He created supernatural creatures in a variety of forms—some ghastly, some glamorous. Write an additional adventure for Ulysses. Create a new creature whom Ulysses must encounter and escape from. Remember that Ulysses could not always depend on his physical powers; he often had to use wit and words against his enemies.

2. The people of Homer’s day seldom ventured far from home. Thus, they were inclined to believe the strange tales that the bards sang about faraway places. We are a bit like that today about stories of other planets. Write a paper comparing a modern science-fiction story you have read or seen on TV with the adventures of Ulysses, drawing the parallels between strange lands, vegetation, and creatures.

3. Circe and Calypso turned men into beasts, and both ladies picked animals that suited their victims’ personalities. Pretend that you have fallen prey to such a sorceress. Write a paper that describes the kind of animal you would probably be turned into, and give ample reasons for your decision.

4. Men of Homer’s time devised imaginative stories to explain the works of nature. Charybdis, for example, created the tides by swallowing and disgorging the sea. The sun was a lantern on Hyperion’s chariot. Poseidon caused earthquakes. Pick a work of nature-snow, hurricane, and eclipse—and compose a myth like the ancient ones explaining its supernatural source.