

Ancient Literature Summer Reading: *The Odyssey*

Dear LTA Student:

This book is full of adventure! You will meet many of these characters again when we read *The Iliad* in the fall. *The Iliad* is about the Trojan War; *The Odyssey* is about poor Odysseus' long trip home after the war. We are reading the epic poems in reverse order. Maybe you can discover the reason. At the very least, reading *The Odyssey* will make your experience of *The Iliad* more meaningful and more enjoyable.

If you like knowing the background of a book before you read it, you are welcome to read the book's introduction. I recommend jumping in and letting Homer make the first impression, i.e., let the author speak for himself. If you like geography, you might search the Internet to print a map of Odysseus' journey so that you can follow his footsteps.

There is a helpful glossary in the back of the book to help you get to know the characters and places. You might even find it helpful to make a character list, especially when it comes to the names of the gods and goddesses. Feel free to create a list in the book.

By all means, make notes in the book (annotations) as you go. In other words, read with your pencil. This book has wide margins for notes. The book belongs to you! Annotations are a way of "conversing" with the author. The author is dead, of course, so he has nothing to gain from the conversation, but you do. Writing is thinking. Things worth marking in the book are:

- **Significant events** so that you can go back to refresh your memory
- When **odd** things happen
- **Unfamiliar words** (Write the definition near the word.)
- When **wonderfully good** things happen, or when **tragically bad** things happen
- When **words are used in an unusual way**
- Themes (when **phrases** or **ideas repeat**)
- When you find something that is **beautifully written**
- When you find something that is **profoundly true** (universals)
- When **things don't make sense**

When I read this book, I found it helpful to make a timeline on a blank page of the book. *The Odyssey*, like some movies you might have watched, begins in the middle of things (*in medias res*). Put a sticky note on your timeline page so that you could add to the timeline as you move along. It also helps to list the most important things that happen in each book (chapter) on the first page of every chapter like a short table of contents. This can be done in the margins as well.

Your siblings and parents might enjoy hearing about Odysseus' adventures. Retelling the stories helps you remember what happens in the book.

Bring your annotated book with you the first day of class. I am interested in finding out what you glean from the book. I hope you have a wonderful summer, and I look forward to getting to know you in the fall.

-Mrs. Jambor