

Odyssey Notes

Book 3: The Lord of the Western Approaches

Characters: Telémakhos
Athena/Mentor
Neleus, the deceased father of Nestor
Nestor, King of Gerenia, garrulous but respected advisor in the Trojan War
Peisístratos, unmarried son of Nestor
Thrasymedes, Ekhéphron, Stratíios, Perseus, Aretós, sons of Nestor
Polykáste, Nestor's youngest daughter
Aigísthos, lover of Agamemnon's wife Klytaimnéstra, murderer of Agamemnon
Orestes, Agamemnon's son and avenger

Greek (Akhaian) characters whom Nestor remembers from fighting in the Trojan War:
Antílokhos, Nestor's son who died in the Trojan War, friend of Akhilleus
Agamemnon, King of Mycene, leader of Greek forces in the Trojan War
Meneláios, King of Lakedaimon, brother of Agamemnon
Diomedes, King of Argos. Best warrior after Akhilleus
Idómeneus, King of Krete. Known for his strength and courage

Literary Devices:

Epithets: "blue-maned god who makes the islands tremble," "Earthshaker" (9), (Poseidon)
"the grey-eyed goddess" Athena
"prince of charioteers" (Nestor)
"Priam's town" (Troy)
"the red-haired captain" (Meneláios)
"son of Neleus," "master charioteer," "prince of charioteers" (Nestor)

Hyperbole: lines 1-4

Greek Concepts:

- *Time*: honor
- *Xenia*: guest-host relationship

1-24 Telémakhos' ship arrives off Pylos, the stronghold of Nestor, son of Neleus. They see a sacrifice of black bulls to Poseidon. Athena urges Telémakhos, who is holding back, to go to Nestor. "Ask him with courtesy" she urges, "and ...he will tell you history and no lies."

26-29.1 Telémakhos: How can I approach him when I have not experience with elaborate speech, and it seems rude to interrogate him?

30-55 Athena/Mentor encourages him and he followed her to altars where the meat from the sacrifices of bulls was offered for a feast. Telémakhos finds Peisistratos, the young prince. Food and wine are shared. Peisistratos asks Athena to invoke Poseidon and for Telémakhos to pray also. He gave her a goblet of sweet wine.

56-66 Athena/Mentor prays to Poseidon saying, "Earthshaker, listen and be well disposed." She asks Poseidon to honor Nestor and his sons, every man of Pylos, and permission for her and Telémakhos to perform their errand.

- 67-74 She passed the wine cup to Telémakhos, who drank and prayed also. They feasted and then heard from Nestor.
- 75-81 Nestor: Who are you? Where are you sailing from and to? Have you business here or are you pirates?
- 82-109 Telémakhos: We come from Ithaka and I see news of my father, Odysseus. People say he fought with you at Troy. Unlike other missing men, no one knows for sure where he was killed. "Tell me of his death, sir... The man was born for Trouble. Please, "recall those things for me the way they were."
- 110-131 You make me remember the "rough days of battle around Priam's town... So many good men gone: Aias, Akhilleus, Patroklos, Antíflokhos." "Think: we were there 9 years, and we tried everything, all stratagems against them... and as to stratagems, no man would claim Odysseus' gift for those. He had no rivals, your father, at the tricks of war."
- 132-97 Nestor: "I marvel at the sight of you." You are like him. But when we left Troy, Poseidon scattered the Akhaians to make their homecoming hard. Angry Athena caused it by making Agamemnon and Menelaos quarrel one evening over when to leave. The next day, they left in all directions. Zeus made them quarrel again. Half the army stayed behind with Agamemnon; the other half pulled away. We made good time, but Zeus set us at odds again. One lot turned, under command of Odysseus, to please Agamemnon. I, however, fled with every ship I had, fearing fate. Diomedes roused his men. Meneláos fled too and later caught up with us at Lesbos. "We asked for a sign from heaven, and the sign came to cut across the open sea to Euboia." After four days, Diomedes' company arrived in Argos and I made it to Pylos.
- 197-218 Nestor: Since then, I have heard that the son of Achilleus led the Myrmidons home, Idómeneus returned to Krete and none of them lost a man. Agamémnon was killed by Aigísthos, but Agamémnon's son Orestes avenged his father. "That is a good thing, now, for a man to leave a son behind him... You, too, are tall and well set-up, I see; be brave, you too, so men in times to come will speak well of you."
- 219-226 Telémakhos: I would be happy to take revenge, like Orestes, but I don't know how or whether my father died. "Still, I must hold fast."
- 227-241 Nestor: "I hear a crowd of suitors for your mother lives with you, uninvited, making trouble." How do the Akhaians respond? Has some oracle affected their attitude? "Who knows, your father may come home someday..." If Athena loved you as she did Odysseus, (and never did any god help a man so openly) the suitors might quit."
- 242-245 Telémakhos: I don't think that could happen, "even if the gods willed it."
- 246-256 Athena/Mentor: "A god could save the man by simply wishing it." Odysseus would prefer to get home safe than be knifed as Agamémnon was. The gods cannot prevent death, though.
- 257-271 Telémakhos: Mentor, you know my father must be dead. Nestor can tell us the story of what happened to Agamémnon. Where was Meneláos?
- 272-362 Nestor: You know what would have happened if Meneláos had caught Aigísthos in that

house alive. He would have left Aigísthos for the dogs. When Agamemnon left, Klytáimneséstra rebuffed him and remained faithful, but she eventually gave in. Meneláos didn't get home unscathed—his steersman died and they landed to give him honor in funeral. Once back at sea, Zeus sent a gale and the ships were bashed against rocks. The ships were sunk but the crews were saved. The rest of the ships, including Meneláos' ship, made it to Egypt. Meneláos made a fortune there, in "sea traffic." When Orestes killed Aigísthos, that day Meneláos came back with ships filled with gold. "Don't stay too long away from home, leaving your treasure there, and brazen suitors near; they'll squander all you have or take it from you, and then how will your journey serve?" Go talk to Meneláos. Take your ship. "Ask him with courtesy, and in his wisdom/ he will tell you history and no lies." While Nestor was talking, the sun set.

363-76 Athena/Mentor: Sir, this is welcome and helpful, but it's getting late. Why not mix libations for the gods now and then we can retire. Soon stewards help people wash, make sacrifices and drink. Finally, Telémakhos and Athena/Mentor Nestor turned toward the ship, but Nestor stopped them.

377-86 Nestor invited them to stay with his sons and him at his home.

387-406 Athena/Mentor: Telémakhos should go with you and I will join our ship and talk to the crew, since I am the most senior. Most of them are no older than Telémakhos. I have to leave at daybreak to collect a debt from the Kaukonians. Then she flew away like a seahawk, astonishing everyone around her.

407-418 Nestor was awed to realize that Telémakhos' companion was a god. He thought it must be Athena, so he prayed to her and Athena heard him.

419-435 Nestor led his sons and Telémakhos to his great house and gave them comfortable thrones and chairs, mixed water with good wine, repeated his prayers to Athena. They made libations and drank deep. Nestor showed Telémakhos to a fine bed near the bed of his unmarried son Peisístratos. Then Nestor went to his own bedchamber.

436-505 At dawn, Nestor went to his throne and with his scepter spoke with his sons. Telémakhos joined them. Nestor said: Athena was my guest at our feat. Sacrifice to her with a heifer with gilded horns. Go to Telémakhos' ship and invite all but two of his crew to a feast. (lots of detail about the process of preparing the sacrifice. Nestor was a gracious and civilized host.

506-542 Polykáste, Nestor's youngest daughter, gave Telémakhos a bath and brought him to the feast. Then Nestor ordered that two blood mares be brought out and Peisístratos acted as charioteer for Telémakhos, who rode with him to Pherai. There Diókses welcomed them for the night and they continued the next day to Lakedaimon .