

Name: _____

BOOKS 14-20

YOUR TASK= Read this summary and know it! Take notes in the left hand margin. In particular:

✓ Be able to identify and explain the significance of the **names** that are bolded.

☞ **Read** excerpt of encounter with **Melanthius** (Od. 17. 222-280). Any predictions of what will happen to Melanthius?

☞ **Read** excerpt of encounter with Argos (Od. 17.317-360). Have some tissues handy because a “deep desire for tears” may “well up” in you!

☞ **Read** the encounter with Irus (Od. 18. 1- 124).

☞ **NOTE how the quotes are woven in and cited.** Aim to follow this type of model.

Vocabulary- know definition and part of speech for the following:

- *Berate*
- *Charlatan*
- *Pernicious*

Who in this summary could be called *pernicious*? Why?

SUMMARY OF BOOKS 14-20

Spotlight on Eumaeus – Book 14

In Book 14 Odysseus-- disguised as a beggar (Do you remember how he got this disguise? Explain in margin!)—travels to the hut of his old servant **Eumaeus** in order to find out information about the situation in Ithaca. Eumaeus is Odysseus’s old **swineherd** (the keeper of the pigs), and he lives in the countryside near the palace. This is a chapter that centers on *characterization* (developing the characters, helping the reader see them as *rounded* and complex individuals). We see Odysseus’s *caution* and *intelligence* as he continues to lie about his identity so he can figure out if Eumaeus is still loyal and what the exact situation at the palace is, in order to plan his revenge upon the suitors. The character of Eumaeus is **almost unbelievably loyal** to the memory of his old master Odysseus. He confesses that “the heart inside me breaks when anyone mentions my dear master” (Od. 14.195-6), which shows his continuing devotion to Odysseus. In addition, he is so responsible and protective of Odysseus’s herd of swine that he sleeps outside at night to protect them.

In this chapter, Odysseus (disguised as the beggar) claims that he has news that “Odysseus is close by and will return soon.” (What kind of irony is this???- Answer in margin and be able to explain why.) Eumaeus doesn’t believe a word of this claim, and we learn that others have previously come to Ithaca claiming to have news of Odysseus. Notwithstanding his lack of faith in the old beggar’s/ Odysseus’s claims, Eumaeus treats Odysseus with great generosity, which shows Eumaeus to be a good man who follows Zeus’s command to be kind to strangers (good *xenia*!). He also offers libations to the gods before he eats, which is a definite give away by Homer that Eumaeus is one of the good guys (14. 507-509).

The chapter ends with a final example of Eumaeus’s kindness to the old beggar/Odysseus: Eumaeus lends his warmest cloak to the “stranger” as a blanket to keep the “stranger” warm as he sleeps.

Telemachus Returns! – Book 15

The action shifts back to Sparta where Telemachus is tossing and turning unable to sleep. Things get weird when he notices that Athena is literally hovering/ floating over his bed. She orders him to leave ASAP to return home to save his property from the suitors. He immediately wakes up Pisistratus. Telemachus and Pisistratus are pretty relaxed together by now: Telemachus gives poor sleeping Pisistratus “a heel in his ribs” because they are like brothers (15.51). Kicks to one’s brother and other general horseplay among close friends must have been as common then as they are now! Telemachus then tells Menelaus that they have to leave. Menelaus and Helen load the departing guests up with parting gifts – a mixing bowl of silver and gold made by Hephaestus himself and a robe woven by Helen to be given to Telemachus’s “own bride to wear/ when the blissful day of marriage dawns” (15. 139-140). It takes the lads two days to travel back to Telemachus’s ship in Pylos. Because Telemachus is in a big rush, he wants to avoid stopping in to see King Nestor (a true *xenia* maniac) because he knows that Nestor will insist on entertaining him for a few more days. In desperation, he begs Pisistratus to just drop him off at his ship and not stop at Nestor’s palace:

Pisistratus agrees, but lets Telemachus know that Nestor will be *really* annoyed and that Telemachus owes him a favor for this! Telemachus sails home, and with Athena’s help sneaks past the suitors who are lying in wait to ambush him outside the harbor. He goes straight to Eumaeus’s hut (Again, this is because Athena puts this idea in his head.) (Do you remember who Eumaeus is???) – Note your answer in the margin.)

Father and Son – Together at Last! – Book 16

Telemachus arrives at Eumaeus’s hut and meets “the beggar” Odysseus. Of course, Telemachus doesn’t recognize his father at this point. Shortly afterward, Eumaeus is sent by Telemachus on an errand and Athena transforms Odysseus into his regular (middle aged, but fabulously handsome and buff) self. Telemachus is amazed and thinks Odysseus is a god! Odysseus reassures him that he is not a god, but announces that he is the next best

thing—his daddy, Odysseus, sacker of cities! The father and son both burst into tears and not just ordinary man tears, these are tears of epic proportions:

Telemachus threw his arms
around his great father, sobbing uncontrollably
as the deep desire for tears welled up in both.
They cried out, shrilling cries, ...
Both men so filled with compassion, eyes streaming tears...
(16.243-9)

After they finally dry their eyes, the men start making their plans to take back the palace and kill the suitors. Telemachus gives Odysseus some crucial information about the situation, especially the fact that there are 108 suitors. The odds are NOT in Odysseus's favor here. Before Eumaeus returns from his errand, Odysseus swears Telemachus to secrecy and Athena turns Odysseus back into the old beggar. Eumaeus returns, and the next day just as "Dawn with her rose-red fingers shone once more," Telemachus straps on his rawhide sandals and sets off for the palace to let those suitors check out his new-found manliness.

Odysseus Arrives at the Palace- Books 17 & 18

Odysseus and Eumaeus also leave for the palace a short time later. On the trail, they encounter one of Odysseus's old servants named **Melanthius**, who is the goatherd for Odysseus's family. Melanthius is the complete opposite of Eumaeus—he is rude, crude and completely disloyal to the memory of Odysseus (**foil**, anyone?- Do you remember what a foil is? Write answer in the margin!) Melanthius insults Eumaeus and curses and kicks Odysseus (who appears to be just an old beggar). As if this isn't enough to completely tick off Odysseus, Melanthius says a prayer—right in front of the old beggar/ Odysseus—asking Apollo to kill Telemachus that very day. (I bet you can make a prediction about the type of death Melanthius will receive from Odysseus.) Amazingly, Odysseus keeps his cool and doesn't show his seething anger to either Eumaeus or Melanthius. Maybe he did learn to keep that pesky hubris under control after the fiasco with the Cyclops.

The emotional stress doesn't end here though. At the castle gate, Odysseus is recognized instantly by his faithful, but very old, dog **Argos**, a dog that Odysseus raised as a pup and that has waited for 20 years for his master to return. Having seen his master, the faithful hound dies in peace, knowing that his master is back. Odysseus wipes away a tear. We'll read this section in class. See 17. 316-360.

Vocab. word alert!
Definition=

Odysseus enters the palace and begs food from the suitors. **Antinous** *berates* Odysseus and refuses to give him even a crust of bread. He hurls a stool at Odysseus, hitting him in the back. This makes even the other suitors nervous, for sometimes the gods masquerade as mortals to test humans.

A real beggar shows up at the palace and warns Odysseus to get off his turf. This man, whose nickname is **Irus**, is always running errands for the suitors. Odysseus says that there are pickings enough for the two of them, but Irus challenges Odysseus to a fight and the suitors encourage him.

Odysseus rises to the challenge and rolls up his tunic. The suitors goggle at the muscles revealed. Almost immediately, Odysseus breaks Irus's jaw and throws him out into the courtyard of the palace. This is foreshadowing of what awaits the suitors—underestimation of Odysseus and then swift and deadly force from him.

Eurymachus seals his fate when he throws another stool at Odysseus, just as Antinous did before. Eurymachus will also offend the gods in an upcoming chapter as he mocks a godly prophet (sort of a spokesperson for the gods) and calls him a “charlatan” (20. 424).

A third important suitor enters the picture: **Amphinomus**. This suitor is actually a nice guy. He is “the man who pleased Penelope the most” and Homer notes that Amphinomus has “good clear sense” (16. 441-2). Amphinomus argues *against* the suitors' plans to murder Telemachus and offers libations to the gods to show that he's not Mr. Hubris. Even Odysseus (in disguise as the old beggar) likes Amphinomus and tries to warn him to leave the suitors that he's hanging out with, but Amphinomus, who is the model of the good guy who hangs out with a bunch of creeps and thugs does not listen to Odysseus, and the narrator predicts that with Amphinomus's refusal to listen to Odysseus, “Athena had bound him fast to death at the hands of Prince Telemachus and his spear” (18. 178-9). So much for the gods' mercy for good guys.

♥ Penelope and Odysseus Speak Face-to-Face! – Book 19

Penelope hears about the fight between Irus and Odysseus and asks to have a private meeting with the “old beggar.” In this scene Penelope's maid, whose name is **Melantho** (she's the sister of Melanthius and really just like him), curses at Odysseus/ the old beggar, and he returns the curse right back at her. Penelope joins in the fun and calls Melantho a “brazen, shameless bitch” (19. 99). (Things are really heating up in Ithaca!) Penelope and Odysseus settle into a strange conversation where Odysseus continues to pretend that he is just an old beggar. He has plenty of opportunity to reveal his identity to Penelope, but he doesn't. Things get even weirder when Penelope starts acting as if she *does know* it's Odysseus, but she too never comes out and says anything directly to make this clear. She reveals all sorts of personal information to him and even calls him “the master” in front of **Eurycleia**, who has been called in to wash Odysseus's/ the old beggar's feet. While Eurycleia is washing Odysseus's feet, Eurycleia notices a scar that Odysseus has on his thigh, and she knocks over the wash basin in shock because she recognizes the scar as belonging to Odysseus. Eurycleia cries out in recognition that her master is home, but Penelope conveniently doesn't

notice this commotion, and Odysseus shows that he is getting a little tense when he overreacts (a bit):

Odysseus--
His right hand shot out, clutching his nurse's throat,
with his left [hand] he hugged her to himself and muttered,
...quiet! Not a word to anyone in the house.
Or else, I warn you—and I mean business too—
...I will not spare you—my old nurse that you are—
when I kill the other women in my house. (19.542-555)

Not surprisingly, Eurycleia agrees to keep her mouth shut. Penelope confides in Odysseus/ the old beggar that she has finally decided to pick a suitor to marry. She informs him that she will hold a contest the next day—which happens to be the feast of Apollo the Archer—to see what suitor is able to string Odysseus's bow and to shoot an arrow through 12 axe handles. That suitor who can string the bow and shoot the arrow cleanly through the axe handles will win the contest AND Penelope's hand in marriage. Odysseus/ the old beggar supports this plan wholeheartedly because he knows that at least HE can do this and it will give him an opportunity to get his hand on a deadly weapon while the suitors are right there with him.

Suspense Builds – Book 20

This chapter puts the plot in a holding pattern. Odysseus tells Telemachus of his plans and both men nervously anticipate the challenges of the upcoming battle with the suitors. Zeus sends a random lightning bolt on a cloudless day as the feast day of Apollo dawns. Odysseus feels the positive support of Zeus, and is even more confident when another loyal servant—the **cow herder Philoetius**—arrives at the palace and speaks of how much he misses Odysseus. Philoetius says that “my eyes still brim with tears, remembering Odysseus...I still dream of my old master...if only he'd drop in from the blue and drive these suitors all in a rout throughout the halls (20. 225-251). Although he hasn't yet revealed his true identity to Eumaeus and Philoetius, Odysseus knows he can now count on 3 mortal allies—Telemachus, Eumaeus, and Philoetius—to help him face the 108 suitors. But it is his 2 immortal allies—Athena and Zeus—who will insure that Odysseus will prevail against such odds.

