* Words to know: epithet, epic simile, epic setting, call to the divine, archetype
* En medias res = in the middle. We refer to the Odyssey as this because it is not told in chronological order, but rather picks up ‘in the middle’ of the overall story.

Book 5

* Odysseys live with Calypso on her island where he pines for his wife (Penelope) by day, but humors Calypso (by taking her to bed) at night. Athena sees him upset and appeals to Zeus to free him. Zeus sends Hermes to free Calypso and she helps him build a raft to escape and try to make it home.

Book 9

* Odysseys and his men visit the island of the cyclopes. They find a cave of meats and cheeses that the men soon suggest they plunder and steal. The inhabitant of the cave returns and it is the Cyclops Polyphemus- son of Poseidon. He is brutal, eating mean and ravaging the troops. He seals the cave closed with a giant boulder.
  + Though Odysseus wants to take his sword to Polyphemus right then, he realizes that if he does that – he will be stuck in the cave forever, because the cyclops is the only one who can move the boulder from in front of the cave.
  + Odysseus waits and hardens a staff in the fire. They then get Polyphemus drunk and drive the red-hot staff into his eye.
  + Other Cyclops come running to help, but Polyphemus screams that ‘Nbdy is killing me” making them think that nothing is wrong.
  + The next morning a blind Polyphemus lets his sheep out to graze, and Odysseus and the men cling to their bellies to escape.
  + As they are leaving the island, Odysseus shouts out his identity and Polyphemus calls out to Poseidon (his father) for vengeance against him.

Book 10

* Odysseus and his men sail away from the Cyclopes and to the land of the winds.
* Aeolus presents Odysseus with a bag containing all of the westerly wind. This will allow him to get home to Ithaca and rejoice in joining his wife (Penelope) and son.
* They get within sight of Ithaca
* Odysseus’ shipmates get jealous and think that the gift is a bag of gold/silver and open the bag. The winds release and he ends up right back in the land of the winds.
* They ask Aeolus for help again, but he refuses because he believes Odysseus is cursed by the Gods.
* They then row to the land of Laestrygonians- where Odysseus fleet, except for his own ship, is sank in the harbor.
* From there, Odysseus and his men travel to Aeaea, home of the beautiful witch-goddess Circe.
* Circe drugs a band of Odysseus’s men and turns them into pigs.
* When Odysseus goes to rescue them, Hermes approaches him in the form of a young man. He tells Odysseus to eat an herb called moly to protect himself from Circe’s drug and then lunge at her when she tries to strike him with her sword.
* Odysseus follows Hermes’ instructions, overpowering Circe and forcing her to change his men back to their human forms.
* Odysseus soon becomes Circe’s lover, and he and his men live with her in luxury for a year.
* When his men finally persuade him to continue the voyage homeward, Odysseus asks Circe for the way back to Ithaca. She replies he must sail to Hades, the realm of the dead, to speak with the spirit of Tiresias, a blind prophet who will tell him how to get home.
* Before he can leave, a crewman named Elpenor falls off of a roof and dies.

Book 11

* Odysseus goes to the realm of the dead and encounters souls:
  + the first to appear is that of Elpenor, the crewman who broke his neck falling from Circe’s roof. He begs Odysseus to return to Circe’s island and give his body a proper burial.
  + the Theban prophet Tiresias, who reveals that Poseidon is punishing the Achaeans for blinding his son Polyphemus. He foretells Odysseus’s fate—that he will return home, reclaim his wife and palace from the wretched suitors, and then make another trip to a distant land to appease Poseidon. He warns Odysseus not to touch the flocks of the Sun when he reaches them; otherwise, he won’t return home without suffering much more hardship and losing all of his crew.
* Odysseus soon finds himself mobbed by souls wishing to ask about their relatives in the world above. He becomes frightened, runs back to his ship, and immediately sails away.

Book 12

* Odysseus goes back to the island Aeaea and buries Elpenor and spends one more night with Circe.
* Circe warns him of the harships he will face on his journey and gives him advice on how to handle them.
* They approach the island of the lovely Sirens, and Odysseus, as instructed by Circe, plugs his men’s ears with beeswax and has them bind him to the mast of the ship.
* He alone hears their song flowing forth from the island, promising to reveal the future. The Sirens’ song is so seductive that Odysseus begs to be released from his ties, but his faithful men only bind him tighter.
* Once they have passed the Sirens’ island, Odysseus and his men must navigate the straits between Scylla and Charybdis
* Scylla is a six-headed monster who, when ships pass, swallows one sailor for each head. Charybdis is an enormous whirlpool that threatens to swallow the entire ship.
* As instructed by Circe, Odysseus holds his course tight against the cliffs of Scylla’s lair. As he and his men stare at Charybdis on the other side of the strait, the heads of Scylla swoop down and gobble up six of the sailors.

People to know:

* Helios
* Tiresias
* Odysseus
* Paris
* Homer
* Circe
* Charybdis
* Scylla
* Calypso
* Poseidon