

**“Ithaka” and Book One of *The Odyssey***

**Directions: In the box below, paraphrase the poem “Ithaka”.**

**What are your initial interpretations of the poem?**

**After you have read the invocation, underline the independent and dependent clauses and phrases of the sentences in the invocation and rewrite the sentences in normal subject-verb-object sentences in the box.**

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story  
of that man skilled in all ways of contending,  
the wanderer, harried for years on end,  
after he plundered the stronghold  
on the proud height of Troy.

He saw the townlands  
and learned the minds of many distant men,  
and weathered many bitter nights and days  
in his deep heart at sea, while he fought only  
to save his life, to bring his shipmates home.  
But not by will nor valor could he save them,  
for their own recklessness destroyed them all —  
children and fools, they killed and feasted on  
the cattle of Lord Hêlios, the Sun,  
and he who moves all day through the heaven  
took from their eyes the dawn of their return. . .

**What are the major conflicts going to be? Write a brief summary:**

**List the events in Book One:**

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**List the characters in Book One:**

Character and Description	Friend or Enemy of Odysseus?

**How do the conflicts with the enemies challenge Odysseus?**

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Read the following quote from Aristotle, about *The Odyssey* and *Poetics*:

“...The story of Odysseus can be stated briefly. A certain man is absent from home for many years; he is jealously watched by Poseidon, and left desolate. Meanwhile his home is in a wretched plight-suitors are wasting his substance and plotting against his son. At length, tempest-tost, he himself arrives; he makes certain persons acquainted with him; he attacks the suitors with his own hand, and is himself preserved while he destroys them. This is the essence of the plot; the rest is episode.”

Now answer the following questions:

- 1) What claims about *The Odyssey* does Aristotle make?
- 2) *The Odyssey* is 24 books long. Why does Aristotle say that “the story of *The Odyssey* can be stated briefly”? What does he mean?
- 3) Consider the events of Book One. How did you react to Odysseus’s situation, Telemachus’s situation, and Penelope’s situation? Why might you want to see them resolved in the “episodes” that Aristotle references?
- 4) Consider the information provided in the invocation, “Ithaka,” and the quotation from Aristotle. In each text, the story of *The Odyssey* is captured in brief. In fact, we know how the story ends. So why do we read it? Similarly, why do we listen to stories retold by friends and family even though we know how they end? What does the experience of hearing or reading a story in full do for us?