

A LEVEL

Candidate style answers

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

H408

For first assessment in 2019

H408/11: Homer's *Odyssey*

Version 1

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Introduction

OCR has produced this resource to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new A Level Classical Civilisation specification and to bridge the gap between new specification's release and the availability of exemplar candidate work following first examination in summer 2019.

The questions in this resource have been taken from the H408/11 World of the Hero specimen question paper, which is available on the OCR website. The answers in this resource have been written by students in Year 12. They are supported by an examiner commentary.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers. Whilst a senior examiner has provided a possible mark/level for each response, when marking these answers in a live series the mark a response would get depends on the whole process of standardisation, which considers the big picture of the year's scripts. Therefore the marks/levels awarded here should be considered to be only an estimation of what would be awarded. How levels and marks correspond to grade boundaries depends on the Awarding process that happens after all/most of the scripts are marked and depends on a number of factors, including candidate performance across the board. Details of this process can be found here:

<http://ocr.org.uk/Images/142042-marking-and-grading-assuring-ocr-s-accuracy.pdf>.

Question 3

Homer, *Odyssey* 10. 112–133

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The passage can be found in the H408/11 specimen paper.

5

10

15

Trans : *E. V. Rieu*

On entering his fine palace, they found his wife there, massive as a mountaintop, and they were shocked. She called her husband, mighty Antiphates, straight from their gathering place, and he embarked on their cruel destruction. He promptly seized one of my men, and prepared to eat him, while the other two sprang up and fled to the ships. Then Antiphates roused the city, and hearing his cry the huge Laestrygonians crowded in from all sides, a countless host of Giants not men.

5

From the cliffs they pelted us with the largest rocks a man could lift, and from all the ships there rose the groans of dying men and the splintering of timbers. Spearing the men like fishes, they carried them off to their loathsome feast. While they were killing those in the harbour's depths, I drew my sharp sword and cut the cable of my dark-prowed vessel. Then calling to my men I ordered them to the oars, so we might escape from danger. With the fear of death on them they thrashed the sea with their blades, and to our joy the ship shot away from the towering cliffs, leaving the rest to founder where they were.'

10

Trans : *A.S. Kline*

Explain how Homer makes this passage an exciting piece of narrative. Use references to the passage to support your answer.

[10]

Example 1

The use of hyperbole in this passage makes it more exciting. The wife of Antiphates is described as being a woman of "mountainous proportions" showing the audience that she was very intimidating and unnatural. Also the imagery of the "countless" Laestrygonians who looked like "giants" is very exciting as it shows that Odysseus is facing a very powerful and seemingly invincible enemy. This makes it much more shocking and impressive to the audience that Odysseus actually manages to escape. The fact that there is a "countless" number of them creates an image of a flood of massive men coming to destroy Odysseus and his crew.

Also, the image of massive, heavy "lumps of rock" being effortlessly "pelted" at the ships makes the passage even more exciting as it draws to mind a shower of rocks like rain which the ships cannot hope to escape. This, along with the image of the flood I described above creates a semantic field of the Laestrygonians being compared to an unescapable force of nature that Odysseus and his men cannot hope to evade. This makes the passage both very effective and very exciting.

Homer's description of the sound of the "groans of dying men" overpowering the "splintering of timbers" is horrifying and conveys to the audience the sheer amount of destruction and death and horror the Odysseus' men were facing. It is terrifying to imagine that there were enough men dying to overpower the sound of many ships being destroyed. The use of the simile also makes the scene more disturbing and memorable. The corpses and dying men being described as being carried away "like fishes on a spear" increases the sense of hopelessness and their vulnerability in the situation and makes the Laestrygonians seem even more monstrous and horrible.

The desperation of Odysseus and his remaining crew to escape makes the scene even more exciting as they are so in sync with each other that the line like "one man" showing that they are all equally desperate to escape and this desperation leads them to work to the best of their ability.

Examiner Commentary

- makes good use of the passage
- across whole passage
- shows real engagement with the text
- uses apt quotation
- perceptive

Low Level 5

Example 2

Homer makes this passage exciting through his use of extreme vocabulary, similes, sound effects and dynamic verbs.

For example, Homer describes Antiphates' "mountainous" wife "confront[ing]" Odysseus' men. The verb "to confront" is a hostile, violent verb and the emphasis on the enormity of the woman provides tension in this passage because it is clear that Odysseus' men are in trouble. Antiphates even announces his "murderous intentions" which could leave the audience wondering how they are going to escape.

The size and strength of the Laestrygonians makes this passage exciting. They have such great strength that they can "pelt" Odysseus' men with rocks an "ordinary man could barely lift". The unnaturalness and superhuman strength make the Laestrygonians exciting because they are unlikely anything known to man. Homer does this to provoke the audience's imagination which makes the passage more thrilling.

Homer also uses sound effects of "the groans of dying men" to make the passage exciting and suspenseful. The sound effects produce pathos for the audience, making them feel pity towards the men and sympathy suggests the audience can imagine how terrible the scene is.

Another way this passage is made exciting is through the use of a simile. The Laestrygonians "carried them [Odysseus' men] off like fishes on a spear", suggesting that killing so many men was easy for the giants; as easy as fishing. The hopelessness of Odysseus' men makes the passage exciting because it seems impossible for anyone to come out alive.

Homer leaves it till the end of the passage to say that Odysseus and his remaining men "shot out to sea" which leaves on exciting impression that Odysseus managed to make a swift get away and escaped with his life.

Examiner Commentary

- makes good use of the passage
- across whole passage
- makes a range of sensible points which are well linked back to the question
- uses apt quotation
- very workmanlike in its approach and perhaps lacking the incisiveness of a Level 5 response

High Level 4

Example 3

Homer entwines excitement in this passage with how he describes the appearance of the Laestrygonians and their actions because in this they are monstrous. Homer starts off with Antiphates' wife, who is of mountainous proportions. This description builds excitement as we see that Odysseus' men have a serious monster to deal with and confers images of some horrific woman so huge her head is not visible. This is then soon very effectively juxtaposed with actions of the Laestrygonians, when Antiphates announces his intentions by "pouncing on" one of Odysseus' men. We are shocked, from the description of Antiphates wife, we can assume Antiphates himself to be gigantic thus one would assume that he would be a slow hulking beast for him to so suddenly jump and to move it heightens the drama intensely. Homer does this purposefully to build suspense and to much effect.

Next Homer describes the Laestrygonians pursuit of Odysseus' men, the sound and imagery not only is the sound implied monstrous but the personification in raising the noise is intense as well, as if you could see the murderous intent rising over the Laestrygonian village, this is very effective in exciting an audience by bringing them into the action.

Finally, an impressive amount of similes and expressions fill Homer's description, in particular, Homer's description of men "like fishes on a spear" is particularly effective, showing both the intense brutality of the Laestrygonians attack, leaving them impaled, but also shows the casualty with which the Laestrygonians take their massacre, to treat it as we treat fish. Furthermore it implies their cannibalism which is disrespectful and heightens the drama for the audience.

Examiner Commentary

- makes some use of the passage
- includes some relevant points which are focussed on the question.
- but needs to make greater reference to the whole of the passage for a more even spread to the question

Low Level 3

Question 4

'Odysseus is never made to feel welcome on his travels.' To what extent do you agree that Odysseus is shown poor hospitality (*xenia*) in Books 5–12 of the *Odyssey*?

You may use this passage as a starting point, and should justify your response.

[20]

Example 1

In this passage printed on the examination paper, Odysseus was obviously not made to feel welcome by the Laestrygonians as they attacked and killed all of Odysseus' men except for Odysseus and the men on his ship. This brutal attack was almost immediate, and no form of *xenia* was shown to him and his men, thus supporting the statement that Odysseus was never made to feel welcome during his travels.

Polyphemus did not adhere to the rule of *xenia* when Odysseus and his men entered his cave, but neither did Odysseus. He ate six of Odysseus' men and was very rude to Odysseus and claimed that he was above the gods and their laws of hospitality. Polyphemus also displayed poor *xenia* to Odysseus when he showed that his idea of rewarding Odysseus for the gift of wine was to eat him last! Although it could be said that Odysseus deserved such treatment for eating the Cyclops' food and eventually blinding him, Polyphemus also disregarded the laws of *xenia* when he threw boulders at Odysseus' ship as it was leaving and called on Poseidon to stop him. It is nigh on impossible to argue that Polyphemus showed Odysseus any sort of proper welcome according to the laws of *xenia* or that he welcomed him during his visit, especially as Odysseus and his men were not staying willingly, but were trapped by the Cyclops.

Aeolus is another individual who showed poor hospitality to Odysseus when Odysseus came to the island for the second time. Aeolus refused to help him and turned him away, saying that Odysseus must be hated by the gods. However, Aeolus did welcome Odysseus and show him good *xenia* during his first visit, providing for Odysseus and his crew for a month and finally providing him with the gift of a bag of winds and a westerly wind to help him get home to Ithaca. Therefore, this hospitality cannot be disregarded and so I cannot agree that Odysseus was shown poor *xenia* throughout his travels.

At first, Circe showed Odysseus very poor *xenia* as she first attempted to turn him into a pig, and then attacked him with her wand. The only reason why she relented was because Odysseus had overpowered her using the advice and help from Hermes. However, her showing him great hospitality and care for a year, during which Odysseus and his men were content, overshadows this initial poor welcoming of Odysseus. She is also a good host when she provides Odysseus with instructions about how to get to the Underworld and seek the advice of Tiresias. She also gives him clear advice about what to do when he encountered the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis. Therefore, this is another occasion about which it is unfair to say that Odysseus was shown poor hospitality throughout his travels.

With Calypso the problem was not with poor *xenia* but rather too much care and hospitality. She looked after and provided for Odysseus for seven years and even offered him immortality if he stayed by her side. Therefore, the statement that Odysseus was never made to feel welcome is proven to be false on another occasion. Finally, Nausicaa and the Phaeacians show Odysseus excellent *xenia* and appear to be the perfect hosts. Nausicaa provides Odysseus with clothes, food and olive oil to wash with and has the courage to face Odysseus whilst none of her companions dared. She also gave him directions to the palace and offered him advice about how to approach her mother, Arete. Although it could be argued that she displayed poor *xenia* by not escorting him to Alcinous' palace herself, she had a good reason for not doing so and Odysseus did not seem upset or offended by her decision, especially as he defended her against Alcinous. Alcinous also showed good hospitality as he sets up the Phaeacian Games and calls for Demodocus to entertain and honour Odysseus. The Phaeacians also provide Odysseus with a wealth of gifts. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the Phaeacians showed poor *xenia* to Odysseus, especially since they escorted Odysseus back to Ithaca regardless of the prophecy that Poseidon would seek revenge on them for doing so.

In conclusion, although Odysseus is shown poor *xenia* by the Laestrygonians, Polyphemus and, to some extent, Aeolus and Circe, for the most part Odysseus is shown good hospitality by Calypso, the Phaeacians and Aeolus for a month and Circe for a year. The bad hospitality shown to Odysseus mainly affected his crew and in time only lasted for a short time when compared to the years of good hospitality and welcome that Odysseus actually enjoyed.

Examiner Commentary

- covers Laestrygonians from passage [though does not have to do so]
- Polyphemus
- Aeolus
- Circe
- Calypso
- Nausicaa and Phaeacians
- Looks at both positive and negative aspects of each

AO1 = Level 4, sound knowledge and understanding

AO2 = Level 5 wide range of relevant points backed up by perceptive comments

Example 2

Odysseus experiences a lot of hospitality on his travels and while he is often met with misfortune, there is *xenia* displayed almost everywhere he goes even if it is then met with a terrible turn that calls for bad *xenia*. *Xenia* is the way of welcoming guests, visitors and travellers, not only does showing good *xenia* strengthen the host to guest bond, it speaks a lot about their character. The way people treat others in the *Odyssey* gives us a clear picture of who they really are.

In Book Five following Hermes request, Calypso reluctantly assists Odysseus on his departure from Ogygia, helping him build the raft, supplying food and nourishment for his travels, as well as a new set of garments is all an example of good *xenia*, not to forget a favourable wind in the proper direction but aside from this we must keep in mind that she only agreed to assist after keeping Odysseus captive on her island for seven years which was extremely bad *xenia* indeed.

In Book Six, we meet princess of Phaeacia – Nausicaa, who is polite, kind and extremely hospitable towards Odysseus – with Athene's help of course. When Odysseus approaches Nausicaa, Athene takes the fear from Nausicaa's body and instils confidence within her. Nausicaa states "we must look after him", not only is this due to her soft and hospitable nature, but also because the gods would never place an enemy on Phaeacian soil, as they are beloved by the Gods. Not only does Nausicaa after washing his body and applying olive oil to his body, she also gives him a tunic and cloak so he can freshen himself up, they also feed the wise Odysseus and Nausicaa tells him exactly where to go. Every choice Nausicaa makes is a step in the right direction in terms of *xenia*.

In Book Eight, when Odysseus tells the tale of the Cyclopes, he is met with horrible *xenia*, after displaying bad *xenia* himself. Polyphemus is a cruel and ruthless cyclopes that as his *xenia* gift to Odysseus is being eaten last, Polyphemus then locks the men inside his cave with no way out – again keeping someone captive does not express *xenia* in a positive light.

In Book Ten which begins in Aeolia, King Aeolus is more than happy to let his men stay at his palace and entertain them for a whole year, even giving a *xenia* gift which should have assisted Odysseus greatly, but unfortunately Odysseus is met with a *xenia* misfortune when he returns to Aeolia, to which the king kicks him off the island as it obvious the gods do not like him.

Overall, I believe Odysseus is met with more good *xenia* than poor *xenia* on his *nostos*.

Examiner Commentary

- Calypso
- Nausicaa
- Aeolus
- Polyphemus

Level 3 for both AO1 and AO2. Some relevant detail and argument which considers both sides of the question but room to explore the question in greater depth.

Example 3

Odysseus is shown bad *xenia* (hospitality) throughout the *Odyssey* such as with the Laestrygonians and Cyclopes, however sometimes he is shown the opposite like with the Phaeacians and hosts like Calypso who end up helping him in the end.

For example, in the passage, Odysseus and his men were terrorised by the Laestrygonians, and no good *xenia* was shown. The Laestrygonians killed 11 ships worth of men even though Odysseus' men didn't show signs of hostility, they were treated poorly and senselessly murdered.

Similarly, Polyphemus, the Cyclops, showed Odysseus bad *xenia* by eating several of his men and taunting Odysseus with the "gift" of eating him last. On the other hand, it could be argued that Odysseus didn't make a good quest for Polyphemus and he and his men "helped [them]selves to some cheeses" whilst breaking into someone's home, however it doesn't warrant for murder.

Also, Odysseus is shown poor hospitality from Calypso. Whilst she might have fed and clothed him which is good *xenia*, she held him captive on Ogygia for 7 years when Odysseus wanted nothing more than to return home to Ithaca. Despite this, when given instructions from Zeus, Calypso finally let Odysseus leave and "brought him boring-tools" to help make a raft with. She also gave him food, wine and fresh clothes as gifts when they parted ways – giving gifts is considered good *xenia*. Calypso also sent a wind to help Odysseus' raft along. Whilst she did keep him captive for 7 years, she did treat him well while he was staying and she also helped him start his journey home so she didn't show him completely poor hospitality.

Likewise, Circe showed bad *xenia* to begin with when she turned Odysseus' men into pigs and gave them a drug that made them forget about their native land. However when Odysseus went to talk to her she offered him food before they talked and turned his men back to human. She also kept her solemn oath that she wouldn't use any more tricks. Circe then fed and bathed Odysseus' men. After this, Circe was so hospitable that Odysseus stayed with her for an entire year and had to be prompted by his men to leave.

In comparison to this, the Phaeacians show Odysseus nothing but good hospitality. Nausicaa ordered her servants to bathe and clothe Odysseus after his supplication and back at the palace, they didn't ask questions until after he had eaten – this is considered good *xenia*. Another way the Phaeacians show good *xenia* is by entertaining their guest through a bard singing and through the Phaeacians games. They also give him a lot of treasure to take with him and give him passage home on their ships that can travel anywhere in a day. They even defy the Gods and risk their lives for Odysseus by taking a foreigner (him) on their ship which Poseidon told them not to do.

In conclusion, Odysseus is shown poor hospitality by the Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes as well as Calypso and Circe, however the latter makes up for their mistakes by treating Odysseus well and giving him help and advice for his next journey. The Phaeacians treat Odysseus well from the beginning and follow all the rules of *xenia*, such as only asking questions after he's eaten, providing entertainment, and giving gifts. Whilst Odysseus is treated poorly by some he is also treated well by others.

Examiner Commentary

- Passage
- Polyphemus
- Calypso
- Circe
- Phaeacians

Good recall of a range of relevant episodes with some apt comment exploring both sides of the question. Room to have explored the first two examples in greater depth.

High Level 4 for both AO1 and AO2.

Essay question

- 9 'In the *Odyssey* Penelope is the only female character depicted as being without fault or flaw.' To what extent do you think this is true of the way women are portrayed in the *Odyssey*? [30]

Example 1

The *Odyssey* is an epic poem written by the wandering blind bard Homer around the time of 700 BC. It was a largely influential poem throughout the Greek *polis*, reflecting on the "Dark Ages" of Hellas, which was originally formed in 1900 BC by "nomad" settlers. In this essay I will discuss how in the *Odyssey* Penelope is both depicted to be great and flawed and look at the portrayal of other female protagonists.

One may argue Penelope is depicted to be without flaws due to the *metis* she portrays where by torchlight every night she "unravelling the wares" she had been weaving that day. This illustrates Penelope's cunning as she had tricked the suitors for ten years into believing she had not yet completed her tapestry and thus could not marry one of them. However, Berkeley would argue this *metis* is indeed one of her flaws as "perhaps she [Penelope] unconsciously enjoys the attention of the suitors and does not want Odysseus to come back". Instead of being clever in deterring the suitors due to her faithfulness to Odysseus, Penelope could instead be commandeering attention, highlighting she too is flawed as a character as she is manipulative.

Penelope could also be seen as flawed in the way she attempts to domineer power in the household. Telemachus is brought to condone her actions stating "go and attend to your work, the loom and the spindle" for "making decisions must be men's canon". Here Telemachus is enforcing the Archaic ideology of separate spheres: the role of women was to attend to the house (creating *nostos*) and weave and men's was combat and decision making. A. Harding enforces this by stating "Although in later times women were no longer segregated their role was still firmly in the home". Penelope is thus revealed to be flawed in the way she outstepped her boundaries, perhaps exemplifying Hubris.

Calypso is also seen to attack the gender divide where she states "you are hard-hearted you Gods and unmatched for jealousy". Calypso attempts to "attack" the gender division "at a divine God" (Morrison), although perhaps demonstrating her to be brave, ultimately she is villainised, Odysseus stating she is a "cold-lover, ardent lady". Calypso can be seen to be furtherly flawed in the way her selfishness prevents Odysseus' *nostos*, the gods defining attribute to a hero in Greek mythology. It is only when commanded by "Father Zeus" does she give release Odysseus", demonstrating her unrelenting nature.

However, not all women are portrayed to be flawed in "The *Odyssey*". Arete is defined to "settle even men's disputes" highlighting the level of respect she receives in her household. In this way she could even be seen as an equal to her husband, due to her wisdom. Arete is also presented in a positive light in the way she exemplifies good *xenia*. The Phaeacians are seen to give Odysseus "countless gifts of bronze, gold, and woven staffs", particularly due to his *kleos*, to

demonstrate their outstanding level of hospitality. *Xenia* was an important custom in Greece due to the being "God's constant intervention in human affairs" [Allen] could mean you could at any point be with a disguised god. Arete's example of good *xenia*, along with her wisdom, points to no evidence that the character is flawed.

Again, Penelope, aside from being flawed to an extent, could also be seen to present positive attributes. Homer likes to emphasise the repeated theme throughout the novel "her eyes were never free from tears", demonstrating how she mourns Odysseus. Morrison compares the loss Homer evokes to a more modern context, looking at the Vietnam War in the 1960s and "70s"; he states Homer effectively portrays the loss felt by a wife when their husband "is left unaccounted for in combat". Aside from Bulkeley presuming Penelope likes the attention, it is unfair to state she is flawed in this manner, as at no point does Penelope cheat, unlike some of her maid-servants. Penelope still clearly mourns Odysseus, as demonstrated both her emotive speeches throughout the epic, illustrating her faithfulness to her husband.

Finally, another character who can be seen as unflawed in the epic, contrasting the questions original statement is Athene. Athene is portrayed to be "the goddess of the flushing eyes" in highlighting her beauty, and is seen as a consistent help to Odysseus. She largely assists in the hero's disguise "withering the smooth skin on his supple limbs" allowing the hero to exercise his *metis* and defeat the suitors. At no point is the Goddess critiqued, likely due to Homer's respect for her, demonstrating that she, along with Arete, is an unflawed character.

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement "In the *Odyssey* Penelope is the only female character depicted as being without fault or flaw". Penelope herself is at fault with the way she attempts to take control of the household and overstep archaic boundaries. Equally other women could be seen as flawless in the *Odyssey*; Arete exemplifies cunning and *xenia* and Athene largely helped progress Odysseus' homecoming.

Examiner Commentary

Several relevant points and examples about Penelope, especially her flaws and inclusion of other female figures and scholarship. Room to have fleshed this essay out with greater reference and more details from the epic but there is a good, valid line of argument running through this.

Top of Level 3 for AO1 and Level 4 for AO2.

Example 2

I do not entirely agree with this statement. While many female characters are depicted with faults and flaws (the most obvious being Melanthe but others such as Circe and Calypso too have their faults) Penelope is not the only female character to be shown to be without fault.

In many cultures, female deviousness and deceptiveness is a negative trait – a flaw. Penelope, in her weaving trick is shown to be exercising this trait. The Italian Renaissance humanist Boccaccio in his book of biographies of notable women from ancient times, which was to be used as an example of how to behave, portrays Penelope in a positive light. While some of the other women, who use their deceptiveness to deceive their husbands take lovers and come to sticky ends, Penelope uses her astuteness or feminine wiles, to keep her husband. Christine de Pizan in her *'Book of the City of Ladies'* goes further, and uses the epithet of cunning, rather than merely astute, to hold Penelope equal to her husband in terms of cleverness and further exalts her virtue in keeping her husband through deception and guile.

Many of the female characters in the *Odyssey* are depicted as having flaws – Melanthe in exposing Penelope's weaving trick and becoming mistress to one of the Suitors shows her lack of loyalty and virtue, two characteristics which are greatly desirable of a maid. Circe, in trying to turn Odysseus and all of his men into pigs certainly has flaws, as does Calypso who, in Book 5, has kept Odysseus prisoner on her island for many years. These last two do have some redeeming characteristics in that when forced to they do help Odysseus but ultimately they both have major faults.

From the perspective of a modern audience, it could be argued that Penelope too, has flaws. She spends the majority of the *Odyssey* crying and praying for death due to her lack of husband, and seems incapable, despite being Queen of Ithaca, to get rid of the Suitors despite the fact that they have both shown bad *xenia* in their behaviour and long outstayed the welcome allowed to them by *xenia*. However in the time this epic was authored, these would not have been seen as flaws. As a woman, Penelope would not have been able to remove the suitors from her house, and as a loyal wife she would be expected to mourn for her husband.

Arete, Queen of the Phaeacians is depicted as being wise and shows no faults at all when she is involved in the storyline. She willingly does as asked by her husband and is clearly knowledgeable, capable and a good wife. Her daughter, Nausicaa is possibly shown to have faults when first introduced in Book 7 – her untidy bedroom could be regarded as a fault and thus reflect badly on her mother, arguably perhaps putting Arete at fault because it takes Athene's prompting before Nausicaa does anything about it but I don't think that Nausicaa does anything about it but I don't think that Nausicaa untidy bedroom puts Arete at fault as a queen, she would have had little to do with Nausicaa's day to day living and upbringing, so she is not at fault because of this.

Athene is also shown to be a female character without fault or flaw – she may not always be there to help Odysseus but she has her reasons for this and if she helped him with everything there would be no story. It could be argued that her lack of action in some parts of the epic, for example leaving Odysseus on the island of Ogygia as a prisoner of Calypso is a fault but as a Goddess she cannot watch over Odysseus alone, and it could easily be argued that by leaving Odysseus and allowing him to have to think for himself and find his own way out of situations is a virtue – if she did not leave him, and instead chose to help him at every opportunity, he would lose a great deal of character and depth.

Eurykleia, too, has few faults, if any at all. She agrees to remain silent to help Odysseus when he wishes to remain disguised even from his wife and she goes to help him discerns the good maids and those who have helped the Suitors. Perhaps her only flaw is that she takes too much delight in seeing the Suitors dead, but after having to live with them for nearly 20 years, that is understandable.

Overall, I don't entirely agree with this statement – Penelope is not the only female character in the *Odyssey* who has no faults or flaws while many do, for example Malanthe, Circe, Calypso and to some extent Nausicaa and Eurycleia, Arete is not shown to have any flaws and neither is Athene. Penelope is merely one of the few female characters in the *Odyssey* who has no faults or flaws.

Examiner Commentary

Room to have included more on Penelope herself, but not a bad range of other female figures and some detail on them too. The secondary sources need to be built into the essay more securely.

A lower Level 4 response for both AO1 and AO2

Example 3

Penelope is portrayed as being desirable and idealistic in the *Odyssey*. However I don't believe that she is the only female character to be portrayed positively or that she is portrayed without flaw.

In the 1900 BC the "Nomads" brought over their influence of Athene into stories. This can be seen in the *Odyssey*. The God's concern for mortals and their constant intervention in human affairs is one of the most striking aspects of the Homeric epics [Allan]. This can be seen through Athene's character who constantly aids Odysseus on his return home (*nostos*). She aids him through methods such as disguise by "withering the smooth sun" on his "supple limbs". It could be argued that without Athene's help and interference, Odysseus wouldn't have returned home. Athene is portrayed as having *metis*, a valued Greek trait, which contrasts the statements of Penelope being the only female without flaw.

Calypso is another example of a female who has little flaws. She is often described as being the "divine Calypso" (Homeric hexameter and epithets are attributed to the writing style), showing the desirableness and idealisticness. She also attacks the double standard at the divine level (Morrison), challenging the other gods who have different rules for female gods. This shows her power and strength, and that she is not afraid to stand up for what she believes in. Calypso also offers Odysseus immortality, before aiding him on his return home. Therefore, I disagree with the statement because of Calypso's strength and power – showing that she also could be described as without flaw.

Penelope could be argued as having fault because "perhaps she unconsciously enjoyed the attention of the suitors, and didn't want Odysseus to come back (Bulkeley). Unloyalty was not an admiral trait in Ancient Greece, showing that she has flaw. Although Penelope doesn't marry any of the suitors, she doesn't attempt to make them leave or ask Telemachus to make them leave. This again could be evidence for Bulkeley's theory that although she didn't want to marry a suitor, she enjoyed the attention while Telemachus was away. Therefore his points out a flaw in that she is unloyal to an extent by allowing the Suitors to stay.

Another female character present without flaw is Nausicaa. Although her presence isn't as evident in the epic, she inevitably aids Odysseus on his return home. She leads Odysseus to her father's palace where he receives help for his journey home. In this section of the epic, again Athene is aiding Odysseus by giving courage to Nausicca so she doesn't run away, and by making Odysseus appear as handsome and strong. Both Nausicaa and Athene aid Odysseus in his *nostos*. Nausicaa also shows *metis* by not allowing herself to be seen with Odysseus to stop rumour.

On the other hand, it could be argued that Penelope is without flaw. She shows *metis* by fooling the Suitors by "unravelling her work" so she doesn't have to marry one. Her cunning shows that she is equal to Odysseus as they both have *metis*. It is also claimed that "one can settle even men's disputes", portrays her as powerful and admired. Women were still firmly in the home (*oikos*) (Howard), which meant that Penelope was possibly unable to remove the Suitors from her house.

However, Circe also uses her *metis* on Odysseus' men, possibly out of caution. After Odysseus makes her change his men back into humans, she allows Odysseus and his men to stay with her for a year. She shows good *xenia* by offering them food and drink and providing shelter. *Xenia* was a valued Greek trait which suggests that Circe also had few faults, as she has both *xenia* and *metis*. She was also described as having magnificent singing voice which entices people in.

To conclude, although Penelope is presented as having few flaws, she isn't the only female character who is depicted as being flawless. Other female characters are far more valuable in Odysseus' *nostos*.

Examiner Commentary

Another low Level 4 response. Consideration of both sides of the argument and inclusion of a range of female figures but lacking the precision of detail from the epic itself for a Level 5, especially on Penelope herself.



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