

## Homer Revision 1999

1. Write down 10 words or phrases which you think are important in summarising

- a) the **Iliad**.
- b) the **Odyssey**

2. Write down 10 words or phrases which you think are important in summarising **Homer**.

3. What is the significance of these words or phrases? Which of these phrases refer to the Iliad, the Odyssey, or both? Where appropriate group phrases together.

oral poetry	reciprocation
bard	hero
structure	story-telling
homeric epithet	pathos
heroic code	iron age
aristeia	time
formulaic composition	Iliad
catalogues	Odyssey
simile	epyllion
xenia	Paris
fate	Helen
immortality/mortality	Iphigenia
armour	Agamemnon
noblesse oblige	Achilles
duel	Hector
tragedy	Priam
reputation	Patroclus
nostoi	Telemachus
false tales	Penelope
journey	Orestes
education	monsters
divine intervention	identity
women	shield
genealogies	hubris
honour	epic
acclaim	bronze age
anger	

## **Homer – Odyssey**

'The portrayal of Greek society in the Odyssey suggests that women were not important.' How far do you agree with this view? In your answer you should include discussion of what mortal women do and say in Ithaca, Sparta and the land of the Phaeacians

Homer's poetry held a central place in the education of the ancient Greeks. Write a letter to the Secretary of State for Education explaining why these poems should continue to be taught in modern schools.

How effective do you find the characterisation of women in the Odyssey?

What features of Homer's stories about the gods do we find surprising today?

What are the main subdivisions of the plot of the Odyssey? How successfully are they blended into a unified poem?

What impression of the style of Homer have you gained from your reading?

What qualities of Odysseus in the Odyssey contribute to his survival and success?

Why does the poet of the Odyssey send his hero down to the Underworld?

For what reasons does Homer include the episode of Odysseus' visit to the Underworld?

Is the Odyssey anything more than an adventure story?

Describe the support which Athene and other gods give to Odysseus in the Odyssey. Why is he given this support and is he a feebler or greater man as a result?

Show how separate stories and different versions of stories have been combined in the making of the Odyssey.

Demonstrate the importance of the family in the Odyssey.

Which scenes show Homer at his most successful in telling the story of Odysseus between his return to Ithaca and his slaughter of the suitors?

What do we know about the way poets worked in the time of Homer? Are Homer's own descriptions of poets likely to be accurate?

Show how frequently we meet the theme of -hospitality- in the Odyssey and suggest why Homer considered it so important.

Do you consider that Homer's presentation of Odysseus' return after his arrival on Ithaca is slow and uneventful?

If the Odyssey were to be made into a television serial, how many episodes would you divide it into, and what scenes would the episodes contain? Give reasons for your choices.

How much knowledge of a bygone age does Homer actually preserve?

Discuss the structure of the plot of the Odyssey.

What qualities of character does Odysseus show in facing the dangers of Book IX-XII of the Odyssey?

Comment on the character and behaviour of Penelope.

-Realism is markedly more important than fantasy in the Odyssey.- Discuss.

How does Homer know about real, historical Greek and Trojan life and culture more than 400 years before his own times? How do we come to know more than Homer about this - Mycenaean- age?

Describe the part played by Telemachus in the *Odyssey* and suggest what Homer was trying to achieve by paying so much attention to his character.

The *Odyssey* is perhaps a trivial poem, being concerned with issues that are either escapist fantasy or unheroic.- To what extent can the *Odyssey* be defended against such criticism?

What do you view as Homer's greatest strengths as a poet and narrator? Illustrate your answer by reference to particular passages and to a range of features.

Homer is the bible of the Greeks.- Explain what this statement might mean and discuss to what extent it is true.

Discuss the effect of the long absence of Odysseus on his family (his father, mother, wife and son).

Illustrate from either the tale of the Cyclops Polyphemus, or the washing of Odysseus' feet by Eurycleia, Homer's skill as a story-teller.

Give examples of the way in which the *Odyssey* has been affected by a tradition of oral poetry.

Compare the character of Odysseus in the *Odyssey* with that of the hero of any modern adventure story.

How convincing is the characterisation of Penelope in the *Odyssey*?

The *Odyssey* is more like a novel than an epic poem.- Discuss.

Consider Odysseus' relations with the various women and goddesses who appear in the *Odyssey*.

Discuss Odysseus' visit to the underworld (*Odyssey XI*), taking into consideration both the people that he sees there and the function of the book in the plot of the epic.

What features of Homer's stories about the gods do we find surprising today?

How dependent is the *Odyssey* story on fairy-tale and folk-tale themes?

What does the poet aim to achieve by the successive stages in the recognition of Odysseus by the other members of his household and by Penelope?

How does Homer explore concepts of what is normal or abnormal in civilised society in the *Odyssey*?

Show how Homer has used a wide range of female characters in the *Odyssey* in order to define the role and importance of women in heroic society.

Homer composed his poems so long ago that it is difficult for us to enjoy his poems today.- How much truth is there in this statement?

Why does Homer make such extensive use of "recognition scenes" in the second half of the *Odyssey*?

Show how Homer uses elaborate descriptions of landscapes and places to create atmosphere and tension in the *Odyssey*.

What makes the Odyssey an epic poem rather than a collection of folk tales?

'Which scenes from the second half of the Odyssey (Books 13-24) would you choose to show Homer's skills as a poet and a story-teller, and why?

Homer's poetry held a central place in the education of the ancient Greeks. Write a letter to the Secretary of State for Education explaining why these poems should continue to be taught in modern schools.

'The way Odysseus acts in his adventures on his journey from Troy to Calypso's shows that most of the time he is a good leader of his men.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? You should consider books 9 to 12 in your answer.

How does Homer use suspense to make the story of the Odyssey exciting in books 13 to 21? You should consider events from his arrival on Ithaca to the contest of the bow.

'The portrayal of Greek society in the Odyssey suggests that women were not important.' How far do you agree with this view? In your answer you should include discussion of what mortal women do and say in Ithaca, Sparta and the land of the Phaeacians.

'Homer has selected and organised the events in the Odyssey to make an exciting narrative.' How far do you agree with this view? In your answer you should include discussion of suspense, flashback and the pace of the narrative.

### **Virgil**

'Aeneas is not an ideal family man.' How far would you agree with this view. In your answer you should include discussion of his relationships with women and with his father and son.

'In the Aeneid, war is more tragic than heroic.' How far do you agree with this view? In your answer you should include discussion of Book 2 and the second half of the Aeneid.

Why are the gods and goddesses so important to Virgil's Aeneid?

How and why does Virgil vary the pace of events in the first half of the Aeneid?

West says that the Aeneid 'is full of individual human beings behaving as human beings still do.' How far do you agree with this statement?

To what extent does Virgil succeed in making Aeneas a person who acts of his own free will rather than as a puppet of the gods?

How far do you agree with the opinion that Virgil praises Augustus rather than flatters him in the Aeneid?

Why does Virgil give the role and character of Juno more attention in the Aeneid than that of Aeneas' mother Venus?

Does Virgil portray emotions well? You should draw your examples from more than one Book of the Aeneid.

How important is religion to Aeneas in the Aeneid, and why?

What narrative techniques does Virgil employ to maintain the reader's interest in the Aeneid?

How important is religion to Aeneas in the Aeneid, and why?

Virgil is said to have requested the destruction of the Aeneid before he died. How would you have tried to persuade him to withdraw his request?

What narrative techniques does Virgil employ to maintain the reader's interest in the Aeneid?

How important is religion to Aeneas in the Aeneid, and why?

What relevance, if any, does the Aeneid have for us today?

Why does Virgil give the role and character of Juno more attention in the Aeneid than that of Aeneas' mother Venus?

Show how Book 2 of the Aeneid (The Fall of Troy) demonstrates Virgil's skill as a storyteller.

West says that the Aeneid 'is full of individual human beings behaving as human beings still do.' How far do you agree with this statement?

Virgil referred to the second half of the Aeneid as 'a grander theme' in the opening lines of Book 7. What aspects of the second half of the Aeneid make it 'grander'?

Virgil is said to have requested the destruction of the Aeneid before he died. How would you have tried to persuade him to withdraw his request?

How and why does Virgil vary the pace of events in the first half of the Aeneid?

To what extent does Virgil succeed in making Aeneas a person who acts of his own free will rather than as a puppet of the gods?

Why are the gods and goddesses so important to Virgil's Aeneid?

How far do you agree with the opinion that Virgil praises Augustus rather than flatters him in the Aeneid?

Either (a) Would any female figure from the Aeneid make a good role-model for women today?

Or (b) Would any male figure from the Aeneid make a good role-model for men today?

'In the Aeneid, war is more tragic than heroic.' How far do you agree with this view? In your answer you should include discussion of Book 2 and the second half of the Aeneid.

'Aeneas is not an ideal family man.' How far would you agree with this view. In your answer you should include discussion of his relationships with women and with his father and son.

### **Virgil/Homer**

'How similar is the role of Jupiter in the Aeneid to the role of Zeus in the Odyssey?

How would you define -epic-? Does your definition fit the Aeneid and the Odyssey equally well?

What are the distinguishing characteristics of oral epic? Illustrate your answer from both the Odyssey and the Aeneid.

Who has a closer relationship with his father, Odysseus or Aeneas?

'The Odyssey has a greater emotional impact than the Aeneid.' How far would you agree with this view?

'How similar is the role of Jupiter in the Aeneid to the role of Zeus in the Odyssey?

Compare and contrast the ways in which Book 6 (Aeneas in the Underworld) and Book 8 (Aeneas at Pallanteum) of the Aeneid would have appealed to a Roman of the Augustan Age.

To what extent can Aeneas be said to have changed from a Homeric character into a Roman hero in the Aeneid?

'Virgil shows a greater understanding of human nature than Homer does.' How far would you agree that the characters of the Aeneid are more true to life than those of the Odyssey.

'The first half (Books 1-6) of the Aeneid is a better adventure story than the first half (Books 1-12) of the Odyssey.' How far do you agree with this view?

Is the concept of the family more important in the Odyssey than in the Aeneid?

### **Tragedy**

How does the structure of an ancient Greek tragedy differ from that of a more modern play?

Were the distinctive conventions of the Athenian tragic theatre a help or a hindrance?

What did the Greeks consider the essential ingredients of a tragedy? Do you agree in the light of later dramas which you have read?

Compare the dramatic effectiveness of any treatment of a plot from Greek tragedy by a later playwright with that of the original play.

Greek tragedians believed that there were things that men should do and things that women should do and the two should not be mixed up.- Discuss this view with reference to any two Greek tragedies which you have read.

Can modern audiences understand Greek tragedy? (If you wish, you may include reference to any modern productions which you have seen or modern adaptations which you have read.)

Do you think that Greek tragedians were helped or hindered by the fact that their audience already knew the plot? In your answer you should refer to at least two plays which you have studied.

To what extent do you think that the themes in Greek tragedy are still relevant today?

In what ways did religion affect the production and content of Greek tragedy?

Discuss the problems of staging an ancient Greek tragedy in translation on the modern stage.

Assess the effectiveness of any twentieth century dramatisation of a theme from ancient Greek tragedy.

Discuss the role of the chorus in either Aeschylus or Sophocles.

Explain the basic structure and conventions of a Greek tragedy to a modern theatre-goer unversed in the classics.

What makes a play a tragedy? Which of the Greek plays which you have read comes closest to your definition?

How did ancient Greek tragedy differ in its conventions from the modern drama of western Europe?

How far was a performance of a tragedy in fifth century Athens more of a religious experience than an entertainment?

Compare any hero of a Greek tragedy to the hero of a tragedy of a later period. What differences can you see in the approach of the two authors to their hero?