



## Readings

*Odyssey 1, 2, & 4 by Homer* available in the Schola Rosa Schoolroom

## Theme

Quest, Rites of Passage, Fathers and Sons

## Discussion Tips

1. **OVERVIEW:** This week we are doing the first of two weeks dedicated to Homer's *Odyssey*. In this week's reading we learn about Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, whose ultimate quest is to understand the meaning of manhood, but whose more immediate task is to go out from home in search of information about his father. We watch him as he encounters several characters whom we met in the *Iliad*, now home from the war. He learns about his father and himself; we discuss the meaning of his quest; the idea of rites of passage generally; and how and what part our parents play in determining who we are as adults.
2. **TRAJECTORY:** The great "ah-hah"s that we want the students to experience are several, here. First, there is the realization of an overarching trajectory to life itself; it begins somewhere, travels an arch, and returns to its beginning in a denouement. Second, we also hope they come to see the way that trajectory is tied to the situation into which we were born. We don't get to choose our duties, our history, our cultural and familial bonds and trappings. Contrary to the popular ethos, however, this is not merely limiting; it is also liberating and enriching. Each of us is born into a story, rather than cast forth onto a blank page and the actions and natures of our forebears stand as guides and giftings and challenges for us as we make our way into the future. Third, we want them to see the value of rites of passage. They ought to cast a critical gaze upon our modern culture, which allows boys and girls to slide into physical maturity without ever challenging them with rite's of passage that encourage spiritual maturity.
3. **CURRENT EVENTS & HOT TOPICS:** Going off to college ought to be a rite of passage into adulthood, if anything ought to be in our common, American culture. Instead, it is usually a passage into a bizarre state of advanced adolescence wherein greater freedom, wealth, and power are coupled with comparable or even decreased responsibility. In addition, students are faced with the new challenges of isolation, freedom from oversight, progressively tilted cultural situations, and a slew of new ideas to be processed. There are alternatives in approach to the standard American one and all colleges are not created equal, but we ought to do more to prepare ourselves for life as adults before it is thrust upon us. This doesn't, contra any set of academic standards, mean more occupational training. It does mean that we need to develop or rediscover rites of passage that are spiritually profound and work to make us adults. The question is how do we do this?

## Prep Checklist

- Read and Notate texts
- Review and Notate Script
- Contact Schola Rosa with questions or concerns



## Discussion Script

1. Greetings
2. Prayer
3. Arrange the room
4. Review the rules:
  - Read the assignments (carefully, thoughtfully, and fully!)
  - Listen to the speaker
  - Speak to the listeners
  - Be respectful to everyone
5. Briefly summarize readings if necessary (pick or ask a volunteer); you may wish to use the Reading Questions to help the group review. And/Or you may read the following aloud:.

Heading off on a trip or new adventure of any kind is very exciting: new sights and sounds every day, strange encounters with people along the way, some danger, some thrills, and the chance to spend time with your closest comrades. This feeling is even greater when it is the first time that you go adventuring on your own, away from the safety and protection of your family. Some would say that it isn't until we take this step, until we undergo this trial, that we become grown-ups—real men and women. But not all adventures are the same—some undertake some difficult task or new role that they must do themselves without leaving home at all, some go off to college or to job training, some follow a vocation. Despite these differences, each of these undertakings is a quest, a great task or adventure, that belongs to and changes the adventurer in important ways. In our reading this week we focus not just on a hero of the war at Troy about whom we didn't hear much in the last reading—Odysseus—but also on his son, Telemachus. Odysseus has been away from home for a very long time, ten years for the war and another ten for the journey home. In his absence, his infant son has grown to maturity and now faces the prospect of learning to be a man in the absence of his father. Just like him each of you will need to consider what your quest is, what it is that you will leave home to pursue and achieve, and how you need to be changed in order to take up a role like your father or mother. This quest will put your very lives to the test, if not at risk, but without it, it is fair to ask: How can you become a man or woman?

## General to Specific

6. OPENER: How do you know when you are a man or woman and no longer a child?  
FOLLOW-UPS:
  - What is a child?
  - What is maturity?
  - What is an adult?
  - Is adulthood “earned” or simply grown into?



- Do men and women earn adulthood in different ways?
- Is growth ever truly finished?
- What is the measure of successful humanhood?
- Are there children who are better men and women than some grown ones?

7. OPENER: Some call these movements from child to adult “rites of passage.” What is a good definition for that?

FOLLOW-UPS:

- What is supposed to be on the other side of a rite of passage?
- How do these two things change in a rite of passage: rights and responsibilities?
- What is the relationship between rights and responsibilities?
- What happens, if you have or are given only one or the other?
- Do we have any situations like that in our rites of passage?
- What are our rites of passage?
- Do we have any shared ones in this class? In this community? In this country?
- Have you passed through any rites of passage?
- Are yours similar to Telemachus’ or different?
- Should ours be more like his in any important ways?
- Are all rites of passage quests?
- Is a quest necessary, just a good idea, or optional for making the step into adulthood?
- What is Telemachus’ overarching quest?
- What should yours be?

8. OPENER: Our family life is very important in determining what our idea of adulthood looks like. How do our parents contribute to our idea of how to be a human?

FOLLOW-UPS:

- How much do they contribute naturally/genetically?
- How much do they contribute in terms of education?
- Can we “break free” from what our parents teach us?
- Should we ever do that lightly?
- Can we do better than what our parents teach us?
- What do we owe them?
- What do they owe us?
- How will being a grown-up child be different from being a child child?
- What does Telemachus get from his father?
- Why is it significant that God has told us to call him “Father”?

9. WRAP UP SEQUENCE (begin this when you have about 10 minutes left)

- What should the legal age of adulthood be? What rights and responsibilities should an adult have?
  - Let everyone have a final say.



## Specific to General

10. OPENER: What is Telemachus' quest?

FOLLOW-UPS:

- What things does Telemachus do that establish or define him as a man to himself or his community?
- Some call these "rites of passage." What is a good definition for that?
- What is supposed to be on the other side of a rite of passage?
- Have you passed through any rites of passage?
- Are yours similar to Telemachus' or different?
- Do we have any shared ones in this class? In this community? In this country?
- How do these two things change in a rite of passage: rights and responsibilities?
- What happens, if you have or are given only one or the other?
- Do we have any situations like that in our rites of passage?

11. OPENER: During a quest, how do you know when you are a man or woman and no longer a child?

FOLLOW-UPS:

- What is a child?
- What is maturity?
- What is an adult?
- Is adulthood "earned" or simply grown into?
- Is growth ever truly finished?
- Do men and women earn adulthood in different ways?
- Is there a difference between being a mature human being and being a good human being?
- What is the measure of successful humanhood?
- Are there children who are better men and women than some grown ones?

12. OPENER: How do our parents contribute to our idea of how to be a human?

FOLLOW-UPS:

- How much do they contribute naturally/genetically?
- How much do they contribute in terms of education?
- Can we break free from what our parents teach us?
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