

Astronomy S/G
Odysseus Sets Sail
Activity

Name: _____ Period: _____

By this point you are familiar with the Celestial Sphere and have surely taken the time to go outside and observe some constellations with your starmaps. Now, consider the excerpt below and then answer the questions on the back.

The following passage is found in Book V of The Odyssey of Homer:

Now the fourth day came and all his work was done. And on the fifth the beautiful Calypso sent him on his way from the island after she had bathed him and clothed him in fragrant raiment. On the raft the goddess put a skin of dark wine, and another, a great one, of water, and provisions, too, in a wallet. Therein she put abundance of dainties to satisfy his heart, and she sent forth a gentle wind and warm. Gladly then did goodly Odysseus spread his sail to the breeze; and he sat and guided his raft skillfully with the steering-oar, nor did sleep fall upon his eyelids, as he watched the Pleiades, and late-setting Bootes, both slow to set, and the Bear, which men also call the Wain, which ever circles where it is and watches Orion, and alone has no part in the baths of Ocean. The gracious goddess Calypso had bidden him to keep the Great Bear on his left as he sailed over the sea. For seventeen days then he sailed over the sea, and on the eighteenth appeared the shadowy mountains of the land of the Phaeacians, where it lay nearest to him; and it shewed like unto a shield in the misty deep.

(Verse translation by Allen Mandelbaum, U. Cal. Press, 1990)

QUESTIONS

- 1) Identify the constellations mentioned by Homer.
- 2) Which constellations are circumpolar from the point-of-view Odysseus?
- 3) In what direction was Odysseus sailing? Defend your answer from the passage. Your response should be in the form of a paragraph.