1. Read the poem through and say:

Who is speaking and to whom: Ulysses is speaking. He is speaking to his soldiers and companions

How old he is: he is old

Where he is: he is on a boat

What he is setting out on: he is setting out on in Ithaca

1. Now read the text again, this time paying attention to the development of the argument. Summarize what Ulysses says and feels following the guidelines on the left. For each point consider also Tennyson's vocabulary indicating which words and phrases, in particular, reveal in the hero's traits and attitudes. The first point has been written for you.

Lacks

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| Life on Ithaca (lines 2-5) | It is uncivilised and… Negative adjectives such as idol, aged convey Ulysses’ total dissatisfaction with life on Ithaca |
| His past life (6 – 18) | He remembers that like his own real life.  He likes his past life because “all times he has enjoyed greatly, has suffered greatly, both with those that loved him”. During his past life “Much has he seen and known; cities of men and manners, climates, councils, governments, himself not least” and he also “is a part of all that he has met” |
| View of present and future (19-32) | Ulysses did not like stay in the same place: he likes travelling around the world indeed “How dull it is to pause, to make an end, to rust unburnished, not to shine in use!”. He wants “to follow knowledge like a sinking star, Beyond the utmost bound of human thought”  This is his target: reach something far away and keep discovering to reach it and by reaching it catching something new for your own life |
| Attitude to Telemachus (33-44) | In this part Ulysses introduce his son Telemachus whom “when Ulysses has gone works his work”. Telemachus is a good sovereign as Ulysses says: “discerning to fulfil this labour, by slow prudence to make mild a rugged people, and through soft degrees subdue them to the useful and the good” |
| Address to his mariners (45-70) | Ulysses turns to his sailors saying “the thunder and the sunshine, and opposed free hearts, free foreheads — you and I are old; old age hath yet his honour and his toil; death closes all: but something ere the end, some work of noble note, may yet be done”. With these words he wanted to address to all his sailors and push them to take a new travel which could get them satisfied about their life |

3a) How is Ulysses portrayed in the poem? To answer the question, consider:

* His present situation:

He has guide people through a world full of unequal laws and events but he does not like this role and so he decided to take on a new travel with his companions that will bring them around the world and get them the opportunity to have new experiences and getting something new to bring with them.

* The contrast with Telemachus:

Ulysses and Telemachus are on the opposite side: Ulysses does not like to stay in the same place and so he decided to travel and discover the world; on the opposite side there is Telemachus whom would to reign on his kingdom and so, to do this, he has to live in Ithaca without the possibility to travel around the world like his father

* What he can be taken to be symbolic of:

He could be taken as a metaphor of the real hero that is always a hero and fight against the adversity of the world: he indeed travel to discover something new for getting new ideas and methods to use for helping his kingdom. He could also represent a prefiguration of Nietzschean “Ubermensch”.

* Whether he differs from the picture we usually associate with the hero of the Odyssey

Tennyson Ulysses has to fight an interior battle: he has to fight against the boredom and to do this he travels a lot. On the opposite side there is Odyssey’s Ulysses whom has to fight against other soldiers and against his passions and impulses.

3b) What is the poet’s attitude to Ulysses and Telemachus? With whom does its side?

The poet sides with Ulysses because he recognizes his own spirit in Ulysses’ one: both them want to make new discoveries and have adventures.

1. The poem was composed when Tennyson was still suffering for the death of his dearest friend, A. Hallam, in 1883. Does the poem reflect a sense of loss?

Yes, it does. It reflects a sense of loss; it is shown by the travel that Ulysses would take: Ulysses’ travel for discovering something new is comparable to Tennyson’s travel. Tennyson probably would take a mind travel to see newly his dear friend.

1. As you will have realised the hero’s feelings are communicated through a careful choice of words. What observations can you make about the meter and the music of the poem and the relationship with its meaning?

The poet uses a high number of enjambement to slow down and put reader’s attention in some parts of the text. In addition to this he frequently alternates a high number of positive terms with a high number of negative terms: this might be used for creating a sense of indecision and loss that probably reflects his owns thoughts about his dear friends whom had died.

ULYSSES

Considering the title, an intelligent reader could image that the poem is about something related to the Homeric hero.

When he starts reading the poem, he immediately understands that the narrator is someone interior to the poem indeed, in line 3 there is the pronoun “I” that indicate this aspect. In addition to this, he could also understand that the speaking voice is a sovereign because he says “I mete and dole unequal las unto a savage race, that hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me”. Here the reader could image that the poem at all is about how the Homeric Ulysses lives and thoughts: he could image that this is a kind of biography of Ulysses.

Going ahead reading the poem he could find out that Ulysses “cannot rest from travel”: he must travel. For what? He finds it out from verse 6 to verse 19. In these verses the reader could note that he had done a lot of great things but he still needs to going ahead discovering himself. The protagonist brings to the reader a propose: you must travel and discover yourself.

At verses 33 – 44 the reader could note that the narrator brings this aspect out again: he indeed tells about his son Telemachus whom is a good sovereign but he must stay in the same place and could not find himself at all because he did not travel. The final part of the poem is focused on the need of travelling too. Indeed, Ulysses tells that he pushes his companions to get into another travel despite they are old.

The reader, in the end, knows that the intention of the writer was to describe Ulysses’ life for giving all people a message: everyone have to travel a lot, have to make new experiences with the scope of find himself and be who he really is.

The need of the protagonist of find himself is underlined from the mix and contraposition of positive and negative words that are alternated in the text: this could create a sense of disorientation and the protagonist is going to take a travel just for find his route and find himself. This aspect is underlined by words such as “unequal laws” (v.4), “suffered greatly” (v.8), “hungry heath” (v.12), “battle with my peers” (v.16), “sinking star” (v.31).