Rodolfo Cociani Ulysses’ activities

1. Read the poem through and say:
   * The speaker is Ulysses, who is speaking to someone who is reading the poetry. In particular, there is not a definite reader, but he should know something about Ulysses’ story and mythology.
   * His age is not defined, but he is old.
   * He is back to Ithaca
   * He is speaking to his past, because he does not like his present and wants to travel.
2. 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 | He is speaking to his past life, talking about his good moments and his sufferings. In particular, he focuses the attention on what he has known. |
| View of present and future (19-32) | He does not like his present situation. He wants to travel for the rest of his life. |
| Attitude to Telemachus (33-44) | He love his son Telemachus, indeed he leaves the sceptre and the isle to him. |
| Address to his mariners (45-70) | He proposes to his mariners a new travel and he is optimistic. |

3a) How is Ulysses portrayed in the poem?

In the text is exalted Ulysses’ eternal restless aspiration. His identity is revealed by his own words. He is an old man who returned back to Ithaca but he does not like his present situation and prefers to travel. The entire poem is spoken by his words. But Ulysses’ inner aspect is fundamental, because he is forced to overcome very difficult moments during his life.

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

Ulysses says that Telemachus is the most blameless. Knowing that the poet speaks about Ulysses’ words, the poet himself criticized Telemachus’ way of thinking.

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, because the poem does not only concerned Ulysses, but also represent the emotional journey of the poet, who writes shortly after the death of his young friend Arthur Henry Hallam.

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?

Ulysses speech is characterized by a fluid and natural quality. Indeed, this quality is imparted by the structured of the lines, which are in blank verse.