***ACTIVITY ON ULYSSES***

*EXERCISE 1*

* The narrative voice does not coincide with the poet’s voice. Indeed, it is Ulysses who is reflecting on his personal experience and on his life, revealing his inner nature. Since the writer uses the technique of the dramatic monologue as the most suitable means in order to highlight the character’s interiority and to allow the reader to identify with him, Ulysses speaks to somebody who surrounds him but never answers. The most likely listener is the reader of the poem.
* Although no precise age is provided, Ulysses is a strength-less old man, who is about to reach the peak of his life, so he is mature enough to reflect on the experiences acquired during his life.
* He is in Ithaca, the city of which he is the king.
* Ulysses is setting out on a voyage, which is an opportunity to gradually know himself and to feeling part of all he meets. The voyage is also a way to leave a way which is unsuitable to him, which has made him loose the balance between heart and head. He wishes to return to navigate in order to face the reality, to live and suffer greatly, giving meaning to his life and rediscovering his identity.

*EXERCISE 2*

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| Life on Ithaca (lines 2-5) | It is uncivil and unequal, as well as oppressive and unhappy. Negative adjectives such as idle, aged convey Ulysses’s total dissatisfaction with life on Ithaca. |
| His past life | The story of Ulysses' past appears as a reflection on his life and on what it has transmitted to him. Ulysses puts the reader's attention on the way he and his sailors lived. More in details, he emphasizes the passion with which they dealt with both the positive and the negative sides of their lives. Each voyage was an opportunity to get to know the outside and himself. His experiences which have made him a name are barely mentioned, such as the battle of Troy. Ulysses’s philosophy of life is conveyed by the writer through the phrase “All times I have enjoy’d greatly, have suffer’d greatly, both with those that love me, and alone”, while the wisdom gained from experience is expressed by the phrase: “I am part of all that I have met”. |
| View of present and future (lines 19-32) | Ulysse cannot stand the present when he is forced to live. It is seen as a useless pause in his life, the death of his interiority. Yet, Ulysses still has time before his real death and the future is his chance to continue his search of knowledge, even beyond the limit allowed to men. Ulysses uses irony as the most suitable means in order to highlight his desire to live fully his life: “As tho’ to breathe were life!”. The similarity between knowledge and the sinking star places knowledge as the aim of Ulysses’s life. It guides him as the stars do with sailors. |
| Attitude to Telemachus (lines 33-44) | Although Ulysses seems possessive towards his son, Telemachus, according to the traditional view of the family as guided by the father (as the reader cannot but-notice through the terms my, mine own), he recognizes that they are two totally different entities. Ulysses is proud of his son, defining him as irreproachable, and he describes him as a skillful administrator of the island and its coarse inhabitants, as well as of the house. |
| Address to his mariners (lines 45-70) | The mariners have been Ulysses’s traveling companions in the past (Ulysses uses the possessive adjective “my” associated with the mariners). They have fought throughout their lives, accepting every situation that life set before them, in full balance between heart and mind (“free hearts, free foreheads”). They have done great things together (“not unbecoming men that strove with Gods”). Ulysses asks them to continue their journey undertaken in the past in order to expand their knowledge of the “newer world”, despite their age and destiny, contemptuous of danger thanks to their willpower (“one equal temper of heroic hearts”). |

*EXERCISE 3a*

The writer uses the dramatic monologue as the most suitable means in order to bring out the interiority of Ulysses, the narrative voice. Indeed, by reflecting on his past, the character gives the readers an image of himself completely different from the classic one of the Odyssey. He is an old man at the peak of his life with a great wisdom acquired through experience. He has returned to the island of which he is the king, yet he is not at all satisfied. The oppressive reality is an opportunity for reflection on his past life and on his future intentions. It is Ulysses himself who characterizes himself as a man of strong temperament, capable of overcoming every challenge that life placed before him, with courage and determination. He believes that the journey is not only an opportunity to escape a reality that is uncomfortable for him, but is also a means to pursue knowledge of the external world and of himself. By interacting with others, making experience, Ulysses became part of everything he lived, learning and therefore changing. It made him a man with multiple identities, unfit for a static life. In this he is opposed to his son Telemachus, symbol of Victorian society, who has the necessary qualities to govern and to control the uncivilized city of Ithaca. Taking the distance from every form of normality, Ulysses represents the rejection of tradition and the dynamism of poets, who possess a greater interiority than ordinary people, and are far from the perspective of profit and rules of the Victorian age.

*EXERCISE 3b*

From the words of Ulysses who expressed himself through the dramatic monologue, the opinion of the writer on the characters emerged. Although Ulysses appears aware of his imminent death and therefore of the vanity of his hope of continuing his knowledge of the world and of himself, he still possesses the desire and determination of the past, which are qualities that are praised by the writer. On the contrary, Telemachus appears laid and static, suited to the common practices of command and administration of the people, becoming the representation of Victorianism. For his qualities he would be impeccable, yet Ulysses detaches himself from his son. For these reasons, the poet seems to stand on the side of Ulysses, eager to live the rest of his life in an authentic way.

*EXERCISE 4*

The poem reflects a sense of loss through Ulysses’s loss of freedom. Returning home, he was forced to renounce to the expression of his identity due to the rules imposed by the society. He has given up his work, his independence, the search for knowledge and the dynamism of experiences, finding himself lost and dissatisfied with the present. Indeed, he has lost his “sinking star”: knowledge. It is the pretext to reflect on his life and on his future.

The sense of loss is also perceived by the imminent loss of life itself, represented by the advanced age of the protagonist. He describes death as the end of everything, and, consequently, as the loss of everything.

*EXERCISE 5*

Ulysses written by Tennyson is not intended to represent a poem, but a mixture of narration and reflection by the character. It is the reason why the poem has no rhyme or verse of the same length. In order to fix the fundamental junctions of his own reasoning, Ulysses uses repetitions, alliterations and enjambements, which are also functional to create the rhythm. The entire poem is aimed at transmitting the centrality of interiority in the protagonist, as the reader can notice from the use of the personal pronoun "I" often located at the center of the sentence, and on the contrast between heart and head, a typical theme of Victorian age. For this purpose, Ulysses sometimes reverses the order of words, to shift the reader's attention to the fundamental parts of the narrative.