The Odyssey Book 11: The Land of the Dead

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The Land of the Dead

Odysseus following Circe’s instructions travels to the Land of the Dead, where he is to dig a ditch at the prescribed site, pour milk, water, honey, and wine. He was to sprinkle barley and sacrifice a ram and an eve.
The Land of the Dead

The blood from the ram and the eve would attract the dead. Once a shadow (spirit) drank from it they then would be able to talk to Odysseus for a short period of time.
The Land of the Dead

First one to drink the blood was Elpenor, one of Odysseus’ men that died just before they left Circe’s home. He had been drinking, he climbed up onto Circe’s roof and fell, breaking his neck. Odysseus and his crew were not able to bury his body, he was mad at Odysseus and wanted them to go back and give him a proper funeral.
The Land of the Dead

Circe had told Odysseus to go to the Land of the Dead to speak with Tiresias, a blind prophet, who would be able to tell him how he and his men would return home safely.
The Land of the Dead

Tiresias warns Odysseus that Poseidon is angry with him for blinding his son Polyphemus, and he would cause Odysseus and his men many problems.
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Tiresias also warns them not to harm the Cattle of Helios no matter what. If they do Odysseus’ men would die, fulfilling Polyphemus’ curse.
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The next person to approach the blood is Odysseus' own mother, this is a surprise to him who didn’t even know his mother had died. After his mother drank the blood she tells him about the situation back home, Telemachus his son if growing up without a father, Penelope is still loyal to him, and she herself had died from loneliness waiting for her son to return.
Next he sees the shadows of Agamemnon and Achilles two of his comrades from Troy, Agamemnon tells him the tragic story of his murder and his son Orestes’ revenge against Aegisthus and Klytaimestra.
The Land of the Dead

One of the most shocking deaths was the death of Achilles, the great, immortal warrior. Odysseus praises for all the honor and glory he received in the Trojan War. Achilles responds by saying, death is the worst he rather be a poor country farmer who is alive then a hero in the underworld.
Homeric Similes

1. “So she spoke, and I pondered in heart, and was fain to clasp the spirit of my dead mother. Thrice I sprang towards her, and my heart bade me clasp her, and thrice she flitted from my arms like a shadow or a dream, and pain grew ever sharper at my heart” - This simile is comparing the spirit of Odysseus’ mother to a shadow or a dream. This is a Homeric Simile because it is graphic.

2. “For the sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together, but the strong might of blazing fire destroys these, as soon as the life leaves the white bones, and the spirit, like a dream, flits away, and hovers to and fro” - This simile is comparing what happens to a person's body after they die to a dream. This is a Homeric Simile because it is graphic.
How this fits the elements of an Epic Story

1. Supernatural realms- Book 11 of The Odyssey takes place in The Land of the Dead, a place where dead spirits are able to talk to the living for a short period of time
2. Epic quest/ journey- The Land of the Dead is one of the many places that Odysseus has to travel to, to return to his home and family after the Trojan War
3. Supernatural beings- In the Land of the Dead, Odysseus is able to talk to dead spirits
4. Great Leader- In The Odyssey, Odysseus is the king of Ithaca, he is known for fighting and win the Trojan War
Quiz

1. Who was Odysseus’ first visitor?
2. Why did Circe sent Odysseus to The Land of the Dead?
3. What was not put into the sacrificing pit?
   a. milk    b. water    c. Odysseus’s blood    d. wine
4. What did Odysseus’ mother say was the reason she died?
5. What animal did Tiresias warn Odysseus not to harm?