

SHORT TOPICS

1. Who is Ulysses?

Ulysses is the Greek hero of the 'Illiad' and the 'Odyssey' of Homer. He was one of the great heroes, who brought about the fall of Troy. He fought for ten years on the battle fields of Troy and spent ten years more in wandering through different lands and seas. He returned to his home island of Ithaca after a long absence for twenty years.

2. "To follow knowle like the snkig star Bey9nd the ulmost bound of human thought."

Estimate briefly Ulysses's ideal of life in the light of the above lines.

Tennyson's Ulysses does not like to pass his days in his island home at Ithaca in the company of his 'aged wife' and 'savage people'. Such a life seems monotonous and soul-killing to him. He is haunted with a spirit of romance and adventure. He desires to leave this life and embrace a life of endless voyages and alluring visions. Ulysses's yearning has no end. His purpose of life is to see the unseen, to know the unknown, and to attain the unattainable. His is not a circumscribed goal which, when attained, leaves nothing further to ask for. His motto of life is to pursue new knowledge, new thrill and new experience without any halt. To him the essence of life lies in movement, and not in rest, in aspiration, and not in mere attainment.

"How dull it is to pause, to make an end."

3. "The poem (Ulysses) contrasta two different ideals of life"—
Elucidate critically.

Ulysses and his son Telemachus stand for two different ideas of life. The father and the son are sharply contrasted in their approach to the ideals of life. They uphold two different modes of living—one of ideality and the other of reality.

Ulysses and Telemachus are complementary to each other. The world requires both the ideals represented by the father and the son for its healthy progress and natural movement.

4. "He works his work, I mind."

—Who are the persons referred to here ?

The persons, referred to here, are Ulysses and Telemachus.

5. What impression do you form of Ulysses from his exhortation to his Crew ?

The exhortation of Ulysses to his mariners clearly brings out the mission of his life. Ulysses represents the questing human soul that can never rest, and is always allured to action by the call of the unknown. He longs for a goal of ideal perfection, never to be fully attained in this mortal world. His purpose of life is to

“.....Follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.”

6. “To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.”

What did Ulysses mean by these words ?

By these words, Ulysses meant all out-efforts in quest of a great ideal, without any submission to odds and difficulties. He had the noble zeal to spend every moment of his life profitably by gaining new knowledge and new experience. He bore in him an undaunted spirit, which no misfortune could deter, no labour could exhaust. The above lines sharply bring out this great aspect of Ulysses's character.

7. “I will drink
Life to the lees.”

Who is the speaker ? What does he mean by ‘drink life to the lees’ ?

Ulysses of Tennyson's poem after the same name is the speaker.

By the term ‘drink life to the lees,’ Ulysses refers to his desire to exhaust all the possibilities of life. Just as a glass of drink can be enjoyed to the last dregs, so, too, Ulysses proposes to utilize the blessing of his life to the last point.

8. “This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle.”

—Why does the speaker want to leave ‘the sceptre and the isle’ to his son.

The speaker is Ulysses. He wants to leave his royal power and kingdom to his son, because the latter fully deserves the same.