

Please answer **TWO** of the following questions in English. (100%)

**Question 1 (50%)**

The following excerpt is taken from Homer's *Odyssey*. Please read the recognition scene between Odysseus and Penelope carefully and give a close reading of your understanding of it.

He sat then in the same chair by the pillar,  
facing his silent wife, and said:

“Strange woman,  
the immortals of Olympus made you hard,  
harder than any. Who else in the world  
would keep aloof as you do from her husband  
if he returned to her from years of trouble,  
cast on his own land in the twentieth year?

Nurse, make up a bed for me to sleep on.  
Her heart is iron in her breast.”

Penélopé  
spoke to Odysseus now. She said:

“Strange man,  
if man you are . . . This is no pride on my part  
nor scorn for you—not even wonder, merely.  
I know so well how you—how he—appeared  
boarding the ship for Troy. But all the same . . .

Make up his bed for him, Eurýkleia.  
Place it outside the bedchamber my lord  
built with his own hands. Pile the big bed  
with fleeces, rugs, and sheets of purest linen.”

With this she tried him to the breaking point,  
and he turned on her in a flash raging:

“Woman, by heaven you’ve stung me now!  
Who dared to move my bed?  
No builder had the skill for that—unless  
a god came down to turn the trick. No mortal  
in his best days could budge it with a crowbar.  
There is our pact and pledge, our secret sign,  
built into that bed—my handiwork  
and no one else’s!

An old trunk of olive  
grew like a pillar on the building plot,  
and I laid out our bedroom round that tree,  
lined up the stone walls, built the walls and roof,  
gave it a doorway and smooth-fitting doors.  
Then I lopped off the silvery leaves and branches,  
hewed and shaped that stump from the roots up  
into a bedpost, drilled it, let it serve  
as model for the rest. I planed them all,  
inlaid them all with silver, gold and ivory,  
and stretched a bed between—a pliant web  
of oxhide thongs dyed crimson.

There’s our sign!  
I know no more. Could someone’s else’s hand  
have sawn that trunk and dragged the frame away?”

Their secret! as she heard it told, her knees  
grew tremulous and weak, her heart failed her.  
With eyes brimming tears she ran to him,  
throwing her arms around his neck, and kissed him,  
murmuring:

“Do not rage at me, Odysseus!  
No one ever matched your caution! Think  
what difficulty the gods gave: they denied us  
life together in our prime and flowering years,  
kept us from crossing into age together.  
Forgive me, don’t be angry. I could not  
welcome you with love on sight! I armed myself  
long ago against the frauds of men,  
impostors who might come—and all those many  
whose underhanded ways bring evil on!  
Helen of Argos, daughter of Zeus and Leda,  
would she have joined the stranger, lain with him,  
if she had known her destiny? known the Akhaians  
in arms would bring her back to her own country?  
Surely a goddess moved her to adultery,  
her blood unchilled by war and evil coming,  
the years, the desolation; ours, too.  
But here and now, what sign could be so clear  
as this of our own bed?  
No other man has ever laid eyes on it—  
only my own slave, Aktoris, that my father  
sent with me as a gift—she kept our door.  
You make my stiff heart know that I am yours.”

Now from his breast into his eyes the ache  
of longing mounted, and he wept at last,  
his dear wife, clear and faithful, in his arms,  
longed for

as the sunwarmed earth is longed for by a swimmer  
spent in rough water where his ship went down  
under Poseidon’s blows, gale winds and tons of sea.

Few men can keep alive through a big surf  
to crawl, clotted with brine, on kindly beaches  
in joy, in joy, knowing the abyss behind:  
and so she too rejoiced, her gaze upon her husband,  
her white arms round him pressed as though forever.

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## Question 2 (50%)

The following excerpt is taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*. A high point of the second book, the story of the fall of Troy, is the death of Priam at the hand of Achilles' son Pyrrhus, who is also called Neoptolemus, a name that means "New War." Please read the excerpt carefully and give a close reading of your understanding of it.

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What was the fate of Priam, you may ask.  
Seeing his city captive, seeing his own  
Royal portals rent apart, his enemies  
In the inner rooms, the old man uselessly  
Put on his shoulders, shaking with old age,  
Armor unused for years, belted a sword on,  
And made for the massed enemy to die.  
Under the open sky in a central court  
Stood a big altar; near it, a laurel tree  
Of great age, leaning over, in deep shade  
Embowered the Penatès. At this altar  
Hecuba and her daughters, like white doves  
Blown down in a black storm, clung together,  
Enfolding holy images in their arms.  
Now, seeing Priam in a young man's gear,  
She called out:

'My poor husband, what mad thought  
Drove you to buckle on these weapons?  
Where are you trying to go? The time is past  
For help like this, for this kind of defending,  
Even if my own Hector could be here.  
Come to me now: the altar will protect us,  
Or else you'll die with us.'

She drew him close,  
Heavy with years, and made a place for him  
To rest on the consecrated stone.

Now see  
Politéès, one of Priam's sons, escaped  
From Pyrrhus' butchery and on the run  
Through enemies and spears, down colonnades,  
Through empty courtyards, wounded. Close behind  
Comes Pyrrhus burning for the death-stroke: has him,  
Catches him now, and lunges with the spear.

Goes down, pouring out his life with blood.  
Now Priam, in the very midst of death,  
Would neither hold his peace nor spare his anger.

'For what you've done, for what you've dared,' he said,  
'If there is care in heaven for atrocity,  
May the gods render fitting thanks, reward you  
As you deserve. You forced me to look on  
At the destruction of my son: defiled  
A father's eyes with death. That great Achilles  
You claim to be the son of—and you lie—  
Was not like you to Priam, his enemy;  
To me who threw myself upon his mercy  
He showed compunction, gave me back for burial  
The bloodless corpse of Hector, and returned me  
To my own realm.'

The old man threw his spear  
With feeble impact; blocked by the ringing bronze,  
It hung there harmless from the jutting boss.  
Then Pyrrhus answered:

'You'll report the news  
To Pelidès, my father; don't forget  
My sad behavior, the degeneracy  
Of Neoptolemus. Now die.'

With this,  
To the altar step itself he dragged him trembling,  
Slipping in the pooled blood of his son,  
And took him by the hair with his left hand.  
The sword flashed in his right; up to the hilt  
He thrust it in his body.

That was the end  
Of Priam's age, the doom that took him off,  
With Troy in flames before his eyes, his towers  
Headlong fallen—he that in other days  
Had ruled in pride so many lands and peoples,  
The power of Asia.

On the distant shore  
The vast trunk headless lies without a name.