

Morrison, James. **A Companion to Homer's *Odyssey***. Greenwood, 2003. 210p  
bibl index afp ISBN 0-313-31854-9, \$45.00. Reviewed in 2003dec CHOICE.

Morrison (Centre College, KY) offers a guide to Homer's *Odyssey* to assist first-time readers—including fairly young ones—and instructors not familiar with the classics. Included are sensible introductory accounts of the Trojan War cycle, the nature of oral composition, the distinctive artistry of the epic narrative, Homer's value system, and the historical background of his epics. But the author devotes the bulk of the companion to a book-by-book commentary, ranging from three to eight pages per book, with commendable special attention to three unifying themes: homecoming, hospitality, and identity. The author's forte is perceptive, meat-and-potatoes literary criticism, somewhat in the manner of that offered by E.T. Owen in his wonderful *Story of the Iliad* (1946). Six appendixes provide a roster of characters; remarks on the influence of Odysseus and the *Odyssey* in art, literature, and cinema; references to further reading (in both printed and online media); and suggestions for classroom activities and projects. The last makes the book valuable for teachers, provided they can tolerate a sometimes breezy colloquial idiom ("what's up with all that?"; "let's not get hung up"; "freaky!"; "you know the drill") designed to appeal to a youthful readership.

**Summing Up:** Recommended. Junior high school, high school, and undergraduate college readers and their instructors; general audiences.

— J. P. Holoka, *Eastern Michigan University*