1. To what extent has Odysseus, in books 5-8, lived up to the expectations generated of him in books 1-4?

Consider:

- The characteristics of Odysseus laid out in the proem and in Athene’s speech to Zeus.
- The information given about Odysseus by Mentes, Nestor and Menelaus.
- His physical prowess, as shown by his building of the raft, struggles in the sea and in the Phaeacian Games.
- His careful handling of Calypso, Nausicaa, Alcinous and Arete.
- His desire to return home.

Expectations generated:

- Intelligent, shrewd: a ‘resourceful man’ (in the proem) – can use his intelligence to devise shrewd plans. ‘He will think of a way to return – he is endlessly resourceful’ (Mentes, Bk 1). Mentes gives the anecdote of O searching for a deadly poison. Halitherses in Bk 2 ‘that self-reliant man’ Nestor’s praise: ‘the admirable Odysseus who in every kind of strategy proved himself supreme. Helen tells the story of Odysseus’ disguise which helped him to find his way into Troy on a reconnaissance mission and was shrewd enough to mistrust Helen. Wise: ‘wise and unlucky Odysseus’ (Ath, Bk 1), ‘he is not only the wisest man alive’ (Zeus Book 1)
  - Skill and resourcefulness shown in book 5 by the detailed description of his meticulously building. Also a skilful sailor – navigates by the stars.
  - Shrewdness shown by his mistrust of Calypso and Leucothoe.
  - Understands how to persuade Nausicaa and Arete/Alcinous e.g. reassures Nausicaa that he is a man of principles whilst revealing that he is also a man of some standing, flatters her and enlists her sympathy.
  - Taken furthest through Demodocus’ telling of the Trojan horse.
- A heroic warrior: ‘he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy’ (proem) – a heroic warrior. Mentes’ confidence that if Odysseus returned, he would slay the Ss most promptly: ‘there’d be a quick death and a sorry wedding for them all’. Menelaus also predicts that the Suitors will meet a ‘grisly fate’ at Odysseus’ hand. Physical prowess – beat Philomeleides in a wrestling match.
  - Physical endurance of many days at sea, including two days and nights swimming.
Feat of discus-throwing: takes further his almost unparalleled strength and skill: ‘Philoctetes was the only archer better than me’ ‘none of the Phaeacians will make as good a throw, let alone a better.’

Demodocus tells that ‘he engaged in the most terrible of all his fights, which in the end he won with the help of the indomitable Athene’

much suffering: ‘he suffered great anguish on the high seas’ (proem). Halitherses refers to his prediction of much suffering for O in Bk 2. Linked also to his endurance – the epithet ‘patient’ is applied to him on several occasions and Helen praises his ‘steadfastness and iron resolution’ when waiting inside the Trojan horse.

this expectation borne out by his sufferings in book 5: ‘he was sitting disconsolate on the shore...tormenting himself with tears and sighs and heartache’ [81]. A man of great feeling but also of great endurance. ‘I have a heart that is inured to suffering and I shall steel it to endure that too.’ [223].

dedicated to his home and family: ‘the home and wife he yearned for’ (proem), ‘Odysseus who would give anything for the mere sight of the smoke rising up from his own land’ (Athene, Bk 1)

this expectation borne out by his refusal of Calypso even though it would mean immortality ‘I long to reach my home...it is my never-failing wish’ [220]

desirable: ‘Calypso, who longed for him to marry her’ (proem)

Book 6: ‘he was radiant with grace and beauty’ ‘I wish I could have a man like him for my husband’

a skilful speaker: Nestor praises Telemachus’ speech in saying that he resembles his father in speaking.

taken much further by books 6-7: masterful speech to Nausicaa, careful reassurance of Arete that he has not acted improperly towards Nausicaa, warm praise of the Phaeacians to flatter Alcinous, saying that he marvels at the sight of his dancers.

loved by the gods: Nestor recounts the unique relationship that O had with Athene: ‘for never in my life have I seen the gods display such open affection as Pallas Athene showed in her championship of Odysseus’

Athene and Leucothoe help in Book 5, Athene continues to help him in Books 6-8 e.g. causing Nausicaa and her attendants to go down to the river whereupon their shrieks wake up Odysseus who prevails upon them to help, Athene veils Odysseus in the mist until he has reached a position of safety in supplicating Arete.

pious: ‘has been most generous in his offerings to the immortals’ (Book 1 Zeus)
- don’t get to see this one particularly – he prays several times, to the river god, to Athene and to Zeus, but he has no opportunity of sacrificing.

- loved by his family and people: Penelope’s faithfulness ‘there she wept for Odysseus, her beloved husband’
  - no opportunity for this either – he is separated from his people

- a good king/leader: ‘once king amouns you here and gentle as a father to you all’ (T Bk 2), Mentor testifies to this ‘the godlike Odysseus ruled with a father’s loving care’. Nestor praises Odysseus ‘good sense and judgement’. Led by example – Menelaus says ‘it was Odysseus who strove the hardest and achieved the most’. Penelope says ‘Odysseus never wronged a soul’ ‘never a harsh word, never an injustice to a single people in the land’.
  - the opportunity for this expectation will come in books 9-12