



# HOMER'S WORLD

The acropolis of Athens, Greece, was the high point of the city and a place to worship the goddess Athena, the city's patroness.

## Examining the Homeric Epics

Composed in Greece around 750–725 B.C., the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are perhaps the greatest masterpieces of the epic form, narrative poetry about a hero's adventures. Both stories were first told orally, perhaps even sung, and it may not have been until several generations later that they were set down in writing. The poems are traditionally credited to a blind poet named Homer. Although there have been many translations of the poems into English, Robert Fitzgerald's verse renderings are considered among the best at capturing the poems' high drama and intense emotions. Three important elements of the plot of each epic are the Trojan War, the heroism of Odysseus, and the interference of the gods.

**The Trojan War** This legendary war seems to have occurred sometime around 1200 B.C. The earliest literary accounts of it, found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are elaborated in later classical literature.

According to legend, the Trojan War began after Paris, a Trojan prince, kidnapped the beautiful Helen from her husband, Menelaus (mə'n-ə-lā'əs), the king of Sparta. Menelaus recruited kings and soldiers from all over Greece to help him avenge his honor and recover his wife. The Greeks held Troy under siege for ten years.

The *Iliad* takes place during the tenth year of this war. It tells the story of the Greek warrior Achilles and his quarrel with Menelaus' brother Agamemnon, ending with the death and funeral of Paris' brother Hector.

After Hector's death, the Greeks brought the war to an end thanks to the cleverness of Odysseus, ruler of the island of Ithaca. To break the ten-year stalemate, Odysseus thought of a scheme to make the Trojans think that the Greeks had finally given up. He ordered a giant wooden horse to be built and left at the gates of Troy. The Trojans, waking to find it there—without a Greek in sight—assumed that the enemy had fled and left them a peace offering. They took the horse inside the city, only to discover, too late, that it was filled with Greek soldiers and that Troy was doomed.



Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo's *The Procession of the Trojan Horse into Troy*, painted in 1773

**The Heroic Story of Odysseus** The *Odyssey* deals with Odysseus' adventures as he makes his way home from Troy and with events that take place on Ithaca just before and after his return. The first excerpts that you will read depict some of the wanderings of Odysseus after his departure from Troy with a fleet of 12 ships carrying about 720 men. This time his opponents are not military ones. Instead, he encounters various monsters who try to devour him and enchanting women who try to keep him from his wife, Penelope. The final excerpts describe Odysseus' homecoming and his reunion with Penelope and his son, Telemachus. In addition to great strength and courage, what sets Odysseus apart from others is a special quality that has been called his craft or guile: the ingenious tricks he uses to get himself out of difficult situations.

**The Intervention of the Gods and Goddesses**

Adding another dimension to the human struggles recounted in Homer's epics are the conflicts among the gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus (ə-līm'pəs). In Homer's time, most Greeks believed that their gods not only took an active interest in human affairs but also behaved in recognizably human ways, often engaging

in their own trivial quarrels and petty jealousies. For example, Athena, the goddess of war and practical wisdom, supported the Greek cause in the Trojan War and championed Odysseus, while Aphrodite (ă'f'rə-dī'tē), the goddess of love, sided with Paris and his fellow Trojans. The story of Odysseus' return from Troy contains some notable instances of divine interference. Odysseus has Athena on his side, but he has displeased the gods who were on the side of Troy. Furthermore, as you will see, he angers another god during one of his first adventures and still another later on. As a result, he is forced to suffer many hardships before he manages to return home.

To Homer's audience, the *Odyssey*, with its interfering gods and goddesses and its strange lands and creatures, must have seemed as full of mystery and danger as science fiction and fantasy adventures seem to people today. Just as we can imagine aliens in the next galaxy or creatures created in a laboratory, the ancient Greeks could imagine monsters living just beyond the boundaries of their known world. It was not necessary for them to believe that creatures such as one-eyed giants did exist, but only that they might.

This detail of a late 18th-century frieze depicts several Greek gods and goddesses.



**Eros**  
God of love  
(also known  
as Cupid)

**Aphrodite**  
Goddess of  
love and  
mother of Eros

**Apollo**  
God of music,  
poetry, and  
prophecy

**Athena**  
Goddess of war,  
wisdom, and  
cleverness

**Muses**  
Daughters of Zeus (three  
shown here), often viewed as  
sources of divine inspiration

## Homer: The Epic Poet

**Shadowy Figure** Although the ancient Greeks credited a man named Homer with composing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, scholars have long debated whether Homer really existed. There are many theories about who Homer may have been and when and where he may have lived. According to ancient accounts, he lived sometime between 900 and 700 B.C., possibly on the island of Chios in the eastern Aegean Sea, and he was blind. Most modern scholars agree that the Homeric poems are the work of one or two exceptionally talented bards—singers who made up their verses as they sang.

**Oral History** Homer's epics are all that remains of a series of poems that told the whole story of the Trojan War. In later centuries, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were memorized by professional reciters, who performed them at religious festivals throughout Greece. They were also the first works read by Greek schoolchildren. By 300 B.C. many slightly different versions of the poems existed, and scholars began to work at restoring them to their original form.

**Models for the Ages** Homer's epics became models for many later writers, including the Roman poet Virgil, who wrote his own epic in Latin. Poets

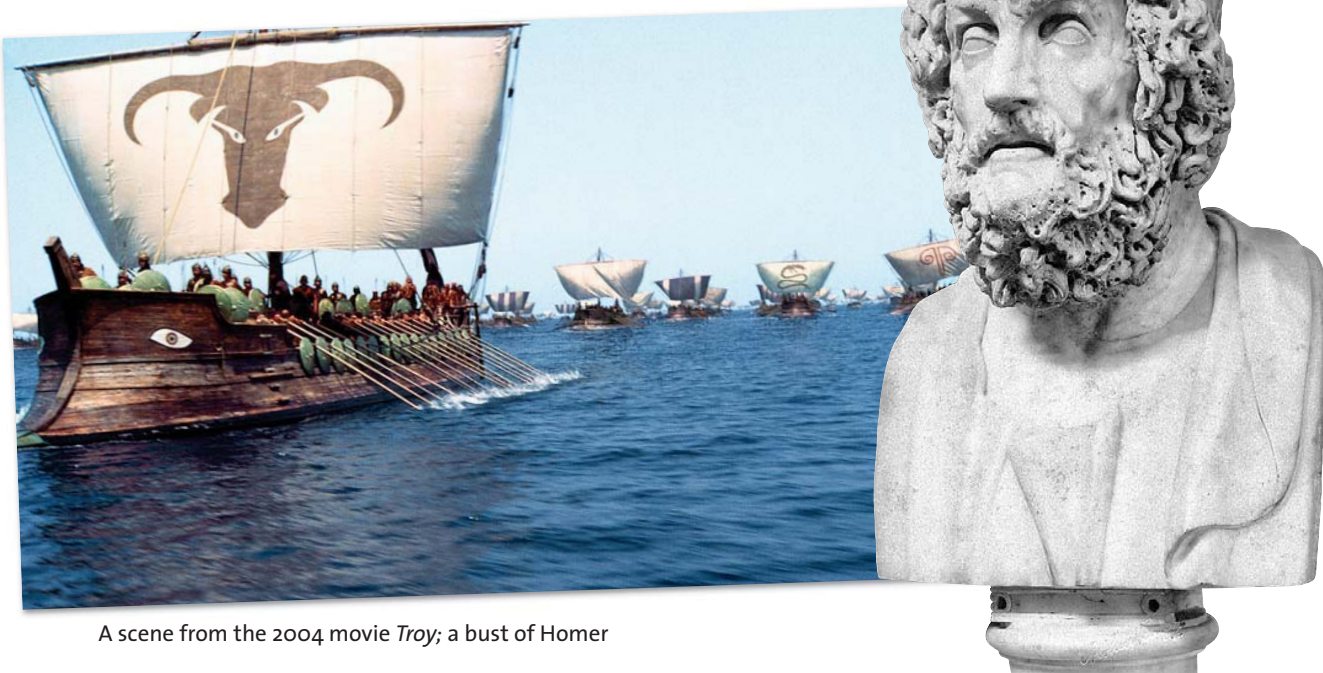
throughout English literature, from Chaucer in the Middle Ages to Shakespeare in the Renaissance to Keats in the Romantic era, have found inspiration in Homer's epics. Moreover, by helping to shape classical Greek culture, the epics contributed to the development of many later Western ideas and values.

**A Living Tradition** Artists of all kinds continue to be inspired by Homer's work. In 1922, the Irish writer James Joyce published his groundbreaking novel *Ulysses* ("Ulysses" is a Latin form of Odysseus' name), in which he turned a day in the life of an ordinary man into an Odyssean journey. In 2000, the Coen brothers' film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* told the story of a Depression-era Ulysses, an escaped convict returning home to prevent his wife from marrying another man. The 2004 movie *Troy* is a more straightforward adaptation of Homer's *Iliad*.



### MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For more on Homer, visit the Literature Center at [ClassZone.com](http://ClassZone.com).



A scene from the 2004 movie *Troy*; a bust of Homer

## People and Places of the *Odyssey*

You will find it helpful to become familiar with important people and places in the *Odyssey* before you begin reading. The map identifies real places mentioned in the poem, such as Troy, Sparta, and Ithaca. It also shows where later readers have thought that some of the imaginary lands visited by Odysseus could have been located, after applying Mediterranean geography to Homer's descriptions. Following is a list of important characters. All Greek names used in Robert Fitzgerald's translation have been changed from their original spelling to a more familiar, Latinized spelling.



### IMPORTANT CHARACTERS IN THE *ODYSSEY* (in order of mention)

#### BOOK 1

**Helios** (hē'lē-ōs')—the sun god, who raises his cattle on the island of Thrinacia (thrī-nā'shə)

**Zeus** (zōōs)—the ruler of the Greek gods and goddesses; father of Athena and Apollo

**Telemachus** (tə-lēm'ə-kəs)—Odysseus' son

**Penelope** (pə-nēl'ə-pē)—Odysseus' wife

#### BOOK 5

**Hermes** (hūr'mēz)—the god of invention, commerce, and cunning; messenger of the gods

**Calypso** (kə-līp'sō)—a sea goddess who lives on the island of Ogygia (ō-gīj'yə)

**Laertes** (lā-ūr'tēz)—Odysseus' father

#### BOOK 9

**Alcinous** (āl-sīn'ō-əs)—the king of the Phaeacians (fē-ā'shənz)

**Circe** (sūr'sē)—a goddess and enchantress who lives on the island of Aeaea (ē-ē'ə)

**Cicones** (sī-kō'nēz)—allies of the Trojans, who live at Ismarus (īs-mār'əs)

**Lotus Eaters**—inhabitants of a land Odysseus visits

**Cyclopes** (sī-klō'pēz)—a race of one-eyed giants; an individual member of the race is a Cyclops (sī'klōps)

**Apollo** (ə-pōl'ō)—the god of music, poetry, prophecy, and medicine

**Poseidon** (pō-sīd'n)—the god of the seas, earthquakes, and horses; father of the Cyclops who battles Odysseus

#### BOOK 10

**Aeolus** (ē'ə-ləs)—the guardian of the winds

**Laestrygones** (lē's-trī-gō'nēz)—cannibal inhabitants of a distant land

**Eurylochus** (yūr'il'ə-kəs)—a trusted officer of Odysseus'

**Persephone** (pər-sēf'ə-nē)—the wife of Hades, ruler of the underworld

**Tiresias** (tī-rē'sē-əs) of Thebes (thēbz)—a blind prophet whose spirit Odysseus visits in the underworld

#### BOOK 11

**Elpenor** (ēl-pē'nôr)—one of Odysseus' crew, killed in an accident

#### BOOK 12

**Sirens** (sī'rənz)—creatures, part woman and part bird, whose songs lure sailors to their death

**Scylla** (sīl'ə)—a six-headed sea monster who devours sailors

**Charybdis** (kə-rīb'dīs)—a dangerous whirlpool personified as a female sea monster

#### BOOK 16

**Athena** (ə-thē'nə)—the goddess of war, wisdom, and cleverness; goddess of crafts

**Eumaeus** (yūr-mē'əs)—a servant in Odysseus' household

#### BOOK 17

**Argos** (ār'gōs)—Odysseus' dog

#### BOOKS 21–23

**Antinous** (ān-tīn'ō-əs)—a suitor of Penelope's

**Eurymachus** (yūr-rīm'ə-kəs)—a suitor of Penelope's

**Philoetius** (fī-lē'shəs)—a servant in Odysseus' household

**Amphinomus** (ām-fīn'ə-məs)—a suitor of Penelope's

**Eurynome** (yūr-rīn'ə-mē)—a female servant in Odysseus' household

**Eurycleia** (yūr'ī-klē'ə)—an old female servant, still loyal to Odysseus

## The *Odyssey* in Art

Artists have been representing images from the *Odyssey* since the seventh century B.C., when Greek artists painted Odyssean images and scenes as decoration on ceramic urns and vases. Since then, artists have continued to tell Odysseus' story in painting, sculpture, and other media.

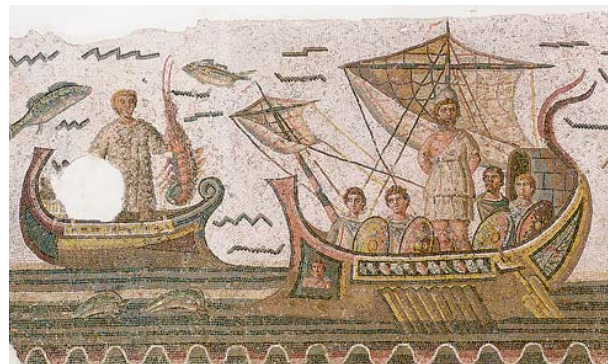
Throughout the unit, you will see how numerous artists have interpreted this epic in a range of styles and forms. As you look at the art illustrating each episode, ask yourself what the artists were trying to show about each part of the story and what their own attitudes toward characters and events may have been.

**Looking at Art** You've seen how understanding a writer's craft can help you appreciate the beauty and meaning of a literary text. In the same way, knowing about artists' techniques can help you understand and appreciate their work. The following list of terms and related questions may help you identify and think about the choices each artist made. Consider how these choices have contributed to the meaning and beauty of each piece.

Term	Questions
<b>composition</b>	What shape or space is emphasized?
<b>material</b>	Has the artist used paint, clay, pencil, ink, or some other material?
<b>function</b>	Is the piece useful, decorative, or both?
<b>color</b>	Does the piece have a broad palette (range of colors) or a limited one?
<b>line</b>	Are the lines clean, simple, rough, ornate, or jagged?
<b>shape</b>	Does the piece have large, bold shapes or smaller, more complex ones? Are they geometric or organic (free-form)?
<b>texture</b>	In painting, are the brush strokes distinct or smooth looking? In sculpture or ceramics, is the surface polished or rough?
<b>scale</b>	Does the piece show large things or small ones?
<b>representation</b>	Are the images realistic, stylized, or abstract?

**Landscapes** When you look at a Homeric landscape, ask questions like the ones that follow. See if the answers help you understand each artist's purpose.

- Which of the following two landscapes is more **realistic**? How so?
- What **material** has each artist used? Which do you prefer, and why?
- Look at the **composition** of each piece. What part of the scene is emphasized in the painting? What is emphasized in the collage?
- Describe the **mood** and **tone** of each piece. Which is more lush, and which is more spare? Consider the techniques that created these differences.



**200s:** *Ulysses and the Sirens*, Roman. Mosaic, 130 cm x 344 cm. Musée du Bardo, Tunis, Tunisia. © Bridgeman Art Library.



**About 1650:** *Ulysses Returns Chryseis to Her Father*, Claude Lorraine. Oil painting.

**Portraiture** As you look at a portrait, ask yourself what the image suggests about the character or characters being depicted. Try to identify the techniques that helped the artist create that impression.

- What does the **position** of the characters tell you about the scene rendered in terra cotta?
- Consider the difference in **dimension** between the two pieces; one is flat, while the other is in **relief**. How does that difference affect the feel of each piece?
- The pastel drawing is a highly **abstract** figure, as opposed to a realistic one. What do you think of it? Why might an artist choose such an abstract style?



About 460–450 B.C.: Terra cotta plaque showing the return of Odysseus



1931–1932: *Ulysses*, Georges Braque. Pastel drawing.

**Narrative Art** Most of the artwork in this selection tells a story in one way or another. Consider how the artist's choices affect your sense of the events portrayed in each work.

- One of the following pieces is a decorative scene painted on a useful object, and the other is a book illustration. How does each piece's **function** affect its **style**?
- Compare the **backgrounds** on which the two scenes are painted. How does each background affect the way you view and understand the scene?
- Which scene makes more sense to you? Explain.



About 450–440 B.C.: Clay urn showing Odysseus slaying Penelope's suitors



About 1915: Illustration from *Tales of the Gods and Heroes* by Sir G. W. Cox, Innes Fripp. Hermes, messenger of Zeus, urges the nymph Calypso to release Odysseus.

## The Epic

Extraordinary heroes and hideous monsters. Brutal battles and dangerous voyages. Spectacular triumphs and crushing defeats. The epic tradition, still very much alive in today’s movies and novels, began thousands of years ago with the orally told epic poem. In ancient Greece, listeners crowded around poet-storytellers to hear about the daring exploits of a hero named Odysseus. With its storm-tossed seas, powerful evildoers, and narrow escapes, it’s no wonder that Homer’s *Odyssey* remains one of most famous epics in Western literature. It captivates us because it is a compelling narrative and a window into a time and place quite different from our own.

### Part 1: Characteristics of the Epic

In literature, an **epic** is a long narrative poem. It recounts the adventures of an **epic hero**, a larger-than-life figure who undertakes great journeys and performs deeds requiring remarkable strength and cunning. As you journey through many episodes from the *Odyssey*, expect to encounter the following elements.

#### THE EPIC AT A GLANCE

##### EPIC HERO

- Possesses superhuman strength, craftiness, and confidence
- Is helped and harmed by interfering gods
- Embodies ideals and values that a culture considers admirable
- Emerges victorious from perilous situations



##### EPIC PLOT

Involves a long journey, full of complications, such as

- strange creatures
- large-scale events
- divine intervention
- treacherous weather



##### EPIC SETTING

- Includes fantastic or exotic lands
- Involves more than one nation



##### ARCHETYPES

All epics include **archetypes**—characters, situations, and images that are recognizable in many times and cultures:

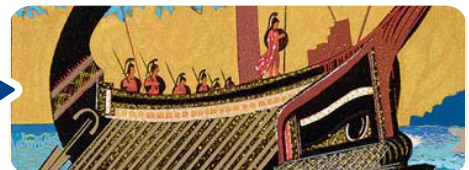
- sea monster
- buried treasure
- epic hero
- wicked temptress
- suitors’ contest
- loyal servant



##### EPIC THEMES

Reflect such universal concerns as

- courage
- a homecoming
- loyalty
- the fate of a nation
- beauty
- life and death



## The Wanderings of Odysseus *from the Odyssey*

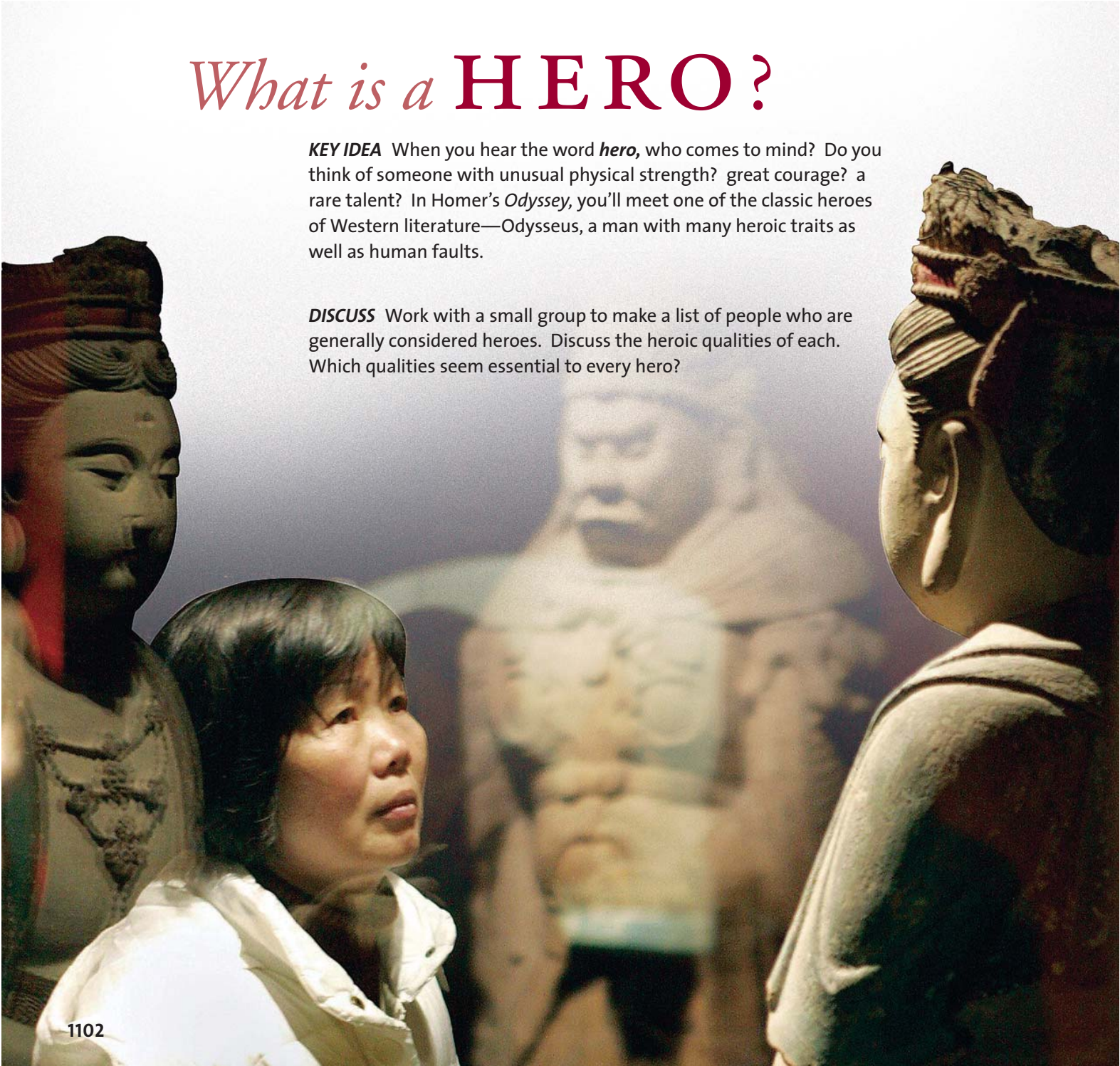
Epic Poem by Homer

Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

### *What is a* **HERO?**

**KEY IDEA** When you hear the word *hero*, who comes to mind? Do you think of someone with unusual physical strength? great courage? a rare talent? In Homer's *Odyssey*, you'll meet one of the classic heroes of Western literature—Odysseus, a man with many heroic traits as well as human faults.

**DISCUSS** Work with a small group to make a list of people who are generally considered heroes. Discuss the heroic qualities of each. Which qualities seem essential to every hero?





## LITERARY ANALYSIS: EPIC HERO

The **epic hero** is a larger-than-life character, traditionally a man, who pursues long and dangerous adventures. Alternately aided and blocked by the gods, he carries the fate of his people on his shoulders. The epic hero is an **archetypal** character—one found in works across time and cultures. Odysseus, one of the most famous heroes in Western culture, has shaped our ideas about the traits that a hero should have.

- extraordinary strength and courage
- cleverness and deceit, also known as guile
- extreme confidence and a tendency to dismiss warnings

Every epic hero embodies the values of his culture. As you read the *Odyssey*, consider how Odysseus faces various conflicts. What does this tell you about his character? What do his character traits tell you about what the ancient Greeks found admirable?

## READING STRATEGY: READING AN EPIC POEM

The strategies for reading an epic are very similar to those for reading any narrative poem.

- Keep track of the events.
- Visualize the **imagery**.
- Notice how the **figurative language**, including **epic similes**, can make the story more vivid and interesting.
- Read difficult passages more than once. Use the side notes for help in comprehension.
- Read the poem aloud, as it was originally conveyed.

As you read, keep a list of major events and consider whether they lead Odysseus any closer to home.

## VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Place each of the following words in the appropriate column.

<b>WORD LIST</b>	abominably	assuage	meditation
	adversary	beguiling	ponderous
	appalled	foreboding	profusion
	ardor	harried	travail

<i>Know Well</i>	<i>Think I Know</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>

## Overview

**Book 1: A Goddess Intervenes** The poet introduces Odysseus, a successful warrior who, after conquering the city of Troy, has wandered the seas for many years. Now he wants only to return safely to his home and family.

**Book 5: Calypso, the Sweet Nymph** Odysseus has been held captive for many years by the goddess Calypso on her island. Zeus sends the god Hermes to order her to release Odysseus; she offers her advice and helps him build a raft on which he can sail to Scheria, his next destination.

**Book 9: New Coasts and Poseidon's Son** Odysseus has met King Alcinous and begins telling him of his adventures since leaving Troy. He relates the tale of the Lotus Eaters and his encounter with the brutal Cyclops, a son of the sea-god Poseidon. Odysseus continues his tales in Books 10–12.

**Book 10: Circe, the Grace of the Witch** Eventually, Odysseus and his men arrive at the island home of Circe, a goddess and enchantress. She detains the men for a year, allowing them to go home only if they will visit the land of the dead and hear a prophecy from the ghost of Tiresias.

**Book 11: The Land of the Dead** Odysseus and his crew travel to the underworld, where Tiresias warns Odysseus against stealing the cattle of Helios, god of the sun. According to the prophecy, if Odysseus raids the cattle, he will lose his ship and crew and return home only after many years alone at sea.

**Book 12: The Sirens; Scylla and Charybdis** Odysseus and his men return to Circe's island, where she advises him on how to get past the bewitching Sirens and the horrible sea monsters Scylla and Charybdis. He successfully evades the Sirens but does not escape the monsters without losing some of his men.

## PART ONE: THE WANDERINGS OF ODYSSEUS

### BOOK 1:

#### *A Goddess Intervenes*

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story  
of that man skilled in all ways of contending,  
the wanderer, **harried** for years on end,  
after he plundered the stronghold  
5 on the proud height of Troy.

He saw the townlands  
and learned the minds of many distant men,  
and weathered many bitter nights and days  
in his deep heart at sea, while he fought only  
to save his life, to bring his shipmates home.  
10 But not by will nor valor could he save them,  
for their own recklessness destroyed them all—  
children and fools, they killed and feasted on  
the cattle of Lord Helios, the Sun,  
and he who moves all day through heaven  
15 took from their eyes the dawn of their return. **A**

Of these adventures, Muse, daughter of Zeus,  
tell us in our time, lift the great song again. . . .

*The story of Odysseus begins with the goddess Athena's appealing to Zeus to help Odysseus, who has been wandering for ten years on the seas, to find his way home to his family on Ithaca. While Odysseus has been gone, his son, Telemachus, has grown to manhood and his wife, Penelope, has been besieged by suitors wishing to marry her and gain Odysseus' wealth. The suitors have taken up residence in her home and are constantly feasting on the family's cattle, sheep, and goats. They dishonor Odysseus and his family. Taking Athena's advice, Telemachus travels to Pylos for word of his father. Meanwhile, on Ithaca, the evil suitors plot to kill Telemachus when he returns.*

**1 Muse:** a daughter of Zeus, credited with divine inspiration.

**harried** (hă'r'ēd) *adj.* tormented;  
harassed **harried** *v.*

**11–13 their own recklessness . . . the Sun:**  
a reference to an event occurring later  
in the poem—an event that causes the  
death of Odysseus' entire crew.

#### **A** EPIC HERO

This invocation (lines 1–15)  
introduces us to Odysseus,  
“that man skilled in all ways of  
contending.” What **traits** is he  
shown to have?

#### ANALYZE VISUALS

This 1930s print, *The Ship of Odysseus*, is part of an *Odyssey* series by Francois-Louis Schmieid. What qualities of this ship has Schmieid emphasized with his use of color and shape? Explain.

*The Ship of Odysseus*, Francois-Louis Schmieid. From *Homer the Odyssey*, published Paris (1930–1933). Color lithograph. The Stapleton Collection. © Bridgeman Art Library. © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



# BOOK 5:

## *Calypso, the Sweet Nymph*

*For seven of the ten years Odysseus has spent wandering the Mediterranean Sea, he has been held captive by the goddess Calypso on her island. As Book 5 begins, Zeus sends the god Hermes to tell Calypso to release Odysseus. However, she is only to help him build a raft. He must sail for 20 days before landing on the island of Scheria, where he will be helped in his effort to return home.*

No words were lost on Hermes the Wayfinder,  
who bent to tie his beautiful sandals on,  
ambrosial, golden, that carry him over water  
or over endless land in a swish of the wind,  
5 and took the wand with which he charms asleep—  
or when he wills, awake—the eyes of men.  
So wand in hand he paced into the air,  
shot from Pieria down, down to sea level,  
and veered to skim the swell. A gull patrolling  
10 between the wave crests of the desolate sea  
will dip to catch a fish, and douse his wings;  
no higher above the whitecaps Hermes flew **B**  
until the distant island lay ahead,  
then rising shoreward from the violet ocean  
15 he stepped up to the cave. Divine Calypso,  
the mistress of the isle, was now at home.  
Upon her hearthstone a great fire blazing  
scented the farthest shores with cedar smoke  
and smoke of thyme, and singing high and low  
20 in her sweet voice, before her loom a-weaving,  
she passed her golden shuttle to and fro.  
A deep wood grew outside, with summer leaves  
of alder and black poplar, pungent cypress.  
Ornate birds here rested their stretched wings—  
25 horned owls, falcons, cormorants—long-tongued  
beachcombing birds, and followers of the sea.  
Around the smoothwalled cave a crooking vine  
held purple clusters under ply of green;  
and four springs, bubbling up near one another  
30 shallow and clear, took channels here and there  
through beds of violets and tender parsley.

**1–6 Hermes** (hûr' mēz): the messenger of the gods, also known for his cleverness and trickery.

**8 Pieria** (pī-îr' ē-ə): an area next to Mount Olympus, home of the gods.

### **B** EPIC SIMILE

Identify the epic simile in lines 9–12. What does this comparison tell you about Hermes?

### ANALYZE VISUALS

How has the painter characterized Calypso in this 1906 portrait? Consider any relationship between her white dress and the white clouds.

**28 purple clusters:** grapes.

*Calypso* (about 1906), George Hitchcock. Oil on canvas, 111 cm × 89 cm. © Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana/Bridgeman Art Library.

# BOOK 9:

## *New Coasts and Poseidon's Son*

*In Books 6–8, Odysseus is welcomed by King Alcinous, who gives a banquet in his honor. That night the king begs Odysseus to tell who he is and what has happened to him. In Books 9–12, Odysseus relates to the king his adventures.*

### “I AM LAERTES’ SON”

“What shall I  
say first? What shall I keep until the end?  
The gods have tried me in a thousand ways.  
But first my name: let that be known to you,  
5 and if I pull away from pitiless death,  
friendship will bind us, though my land lies far.

I am Laertes’ son, Odysseus.

Men hold me  
formidable for guile in peace and war:  
this fame has gone abroad to the sky’s rim.  
10 My home is on the peaked sea-mark of Ithaca  
under Mount Neion’s wind-blown robe of leaves,  
in sight of other islands—Dulichium,  
Same, wooded Zacynthus—Ithaca  
being most lofty in that coastal sea,  
15 and northwest, while the rest lie east and south.  
A rocky isle, but good for a boy’s training;  
I shall not see on earth a place more dear,  
though I have been detained long by Calypso,  
loveliest among goddesses, who held me  
20 in her smooth caves, to be her heart’s delight,  
as Circe of Aeaea, the enchantress,  
desired me, and detained me in her hall.  
But in my heart I never gave consent.  
Where shall a man find sweetness to surpass  
25 his own home and his parents? In far lands  
he shall not, though he find a house of gold. **E**

### ANALYZE VISUALS

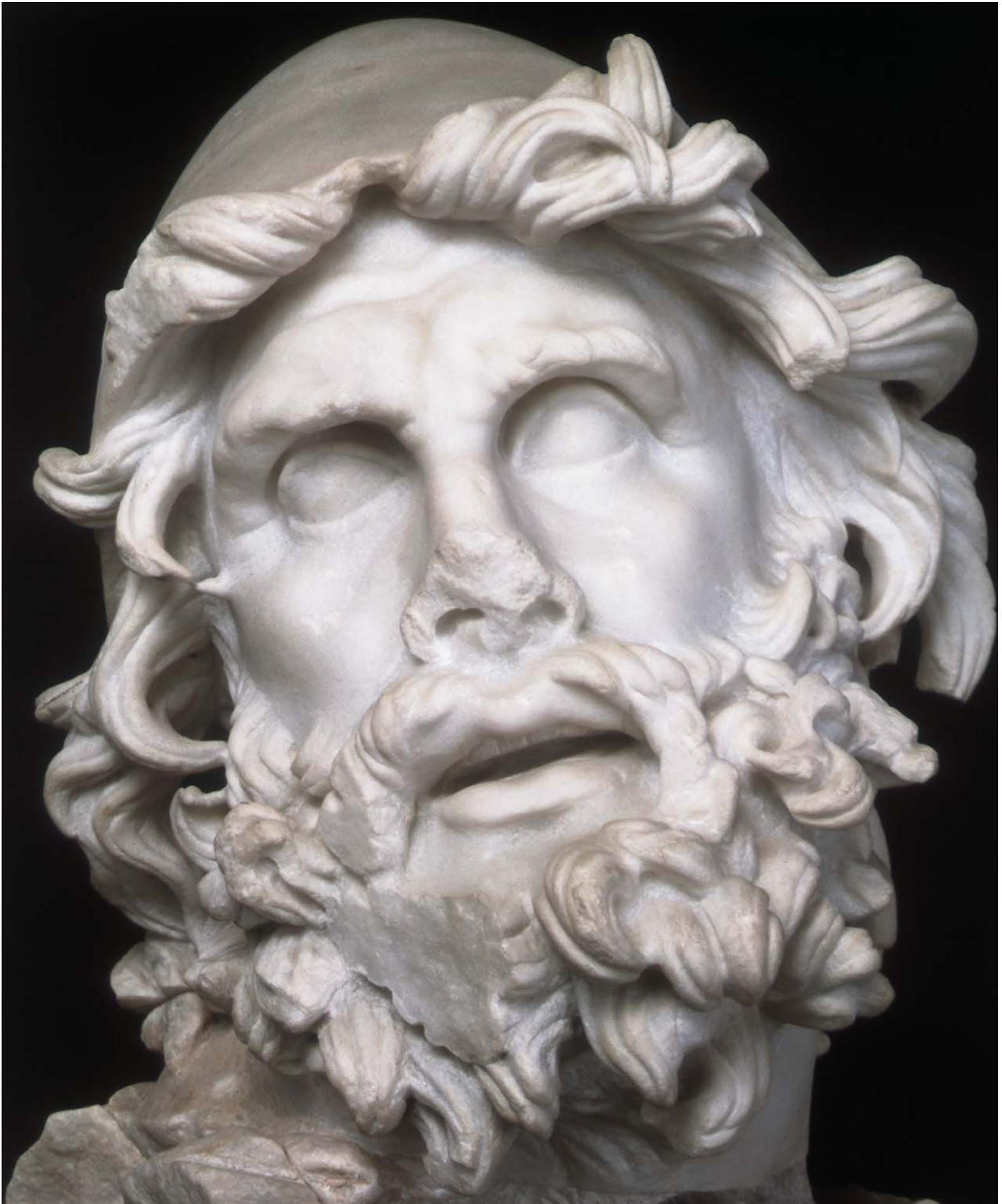
This sculpture of Odysseus was produced in Rome sometime between A.D. 4 and 26. How would you describe the expression on his face?

**7–8 hold me formidable for guile:** consider me impressive for my cunning and craftiness.

**11–13 Mount Neion’s** (nē’ōnz’); **Dulichium** (dōō-līk’ē-əm); **Same** (sā’mē); **Zacynthus** (zə-sīn’tħəs).

**18–26** Odysseus refers to two beautiful goddesses, Calypso and Circe, who have delayed him on their islands. (Details about Circe appear in Book 10.) At the same time, he seems nostalgic for his family and homeland, from which he has been separated for 18 years—10 of them spent fighting in Troy.

**E EPIC HERO**  
Reread lines 24–26. What does Odysseus value most highly?



What of my sailing, then, from Troy?  
What of those years  
of rough adventure, weathered under Zeus? . . .”

*Odysseus explains that soon after leaving Troy, he and his crew land near Ismarus, the city of the Cicones. The Cicones are allies of the Trojans and therefore enemies of Odysseus. Odysseus and his crew raid the Cicones, robbing and killing them, until the Ciconian army kills 72 of Odysseus’ men and drives the rest out to sea. Delayed by a storm for two days, Odysseus and his remaining companions then continued their journey.*

### THE LOTUS EATERS

“I might have made it safely home, that time,  
30 but as I came round Malea the current  
took me out to sea, and from the north  
a fresh gale drove me on, past Cythera.  
Nine days I drifted on the teeming sea  
before dangerous high winds. Upon the tenth  
35 we came to the coastline of the Lotus Eaters,  
who live upon that flower. We landed there  
to take on water. All ships’ companies  
mustered alongside for the mid-day meal.  
Then I sent out two picked men and a runner  
40 to learn what race of men that land sustained.  
They fell in, soon enough, with Lotus Eaters,  
who showed no will to do us harm, only  
offering the sweet Lotus to our friends—  
but those who ate this honeyed plant, the Lotus,  
45 never cared to report, nor to return:  
they longed to stay forever, browsing on  
that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland.  
I drove them, all three wailing, to the ships,  
tied them down under their rowing benches,  
50 and called the rest: ‘All hands aboard;  
come, clear the beach and no one taste  
the Lotus, or you lose your hope of home.’  
Filing in to their places by the rowlocks  
my oarsmen dipped their long oars in the surf,  
55 and we moved out again on our sea faring.

30 **Malea** (mä-lē’ä).

32 **Cythera** (sī-thīr’ə).

38 **mustered**: assembled; gathered.

44–52 **those who ate . . . hope of home.**  
*How do the Lotus Eaters pose a threat to  
Odysseus and his men?*

### THE CYCLOPS

In the next land we found were Cyclopes,  
giants, louts, without a law to bless them.  
In ignorance leaving the fruitage of the earth in mystery  
to the immortal gods, they neither plow

56 **Cyclopes** (sī-klō’pēz): refers to the  
creatures in plural; *Cyclops* is singular.

60 nor sow by hand, nor till the ground, though grain—  
wild wheat and barley—grows untended, and  
wine-grapes, in clusters, ripen in heaven's rain.  
Cyclopes have no muster and no meeting,  
no consultation or old tribal ways,  
65 but each one dwells in his own mountain cave  
dealing out rough justice to wife and child,  
indifferent to what the others do. . . .”

58–67 *Why doesn't Odysseus respect the Cyclopes?*

*Across the bay from the land of the Cyclopes was a lush, deserted island. Odysseus and his crew landed on the island in a dense fog and spent days feasting on wine and wild goats and observing the mainland, where the Cyclopes lived. On the third day, Odysseus and his company of men set out to learn if the Cyclopes were friends or foes.*

“When the young Dawn with finger tips of rose **F**  
came in the east, I called my men together  
70 and made a speech to them:

**F EPITHET**

Notice the descriptive phrase used to characterize the dawn in line 68. What does this description tell you about the dawn?

‘Old shipmates, friends,  
the rest of you stand by; I'll make the crossing  
in my own ship, with my own company,  
and find out what the mainland natives are—  
for they may be wild savages, and lawless,  
75 or hospitable and god fearing men.’

At this I went aboard, and gave the word  
to cast off by the stern. My oarsmen followed,  
filing in to their benches by the rowlocks,  
and all in line dipped oars in the gray sea.

77 **stern:** the rear end of a ship.

80 As we rowed on, and nearer to the mainland,  
at one end of the bay, we saw a cavern  
yawning above the water, screened with laurel,  
and many rams and goats about the place  
inside a sheepfold—made from slabs of stone  
85 earthfast between tall trunks of pine and rugged  
towering oak trees.

82 **screened with laurel:** partially hidden by laurel trees.

A prodigious man  
slept in this cave alone, and took his flocks  
to graze afield—remote from all companions,  
knowing none but savage ways, a brute  
90 so huge, he seemed no man at all of those  
who eat good wheaten bread; but he seemed rather  
a shaggy mountain reared in solitude.  
We beached there, and I told the crew

91–92 *What does Odysseus' metaphor imply about the Cyclops?*



to stand by and keep watch over the ship;  
95 as for myself I took my twelve best fighters  
and went ahead. I had a goatskin full  
of that sweet liquor that Euanthes' son,  
Maron, had given me. He kept Apollo's  
holy grove at Ismarus; for kindness  
100 we showed him there, and showed his wife and child,  
he gave me seven shining golden talents  
perfectly formed, a solid silver winebowl,  
and then this liquor—twelve two-handled jars  
of brandy, pure and fiery. Not a slave  
105 in Maron's household knew this drink; only  
he, his wife and the storeroom mistress knew;  
and they would put one cupful—ruby-colored,  
honey-smooth—in twenty more of water,  
but still the sweet scent hovered like a fume  
110 over the winebowl. No man turned away  
when cups of this came round.

A wineskin full

I brought along, and victuals in a bag,  
for in my bones I knew some towering brute  
would be upon us soon—all outward power,  
115 a wild man, ignorant of civility.

We climbed, then, briskly to the cave. But Cyclops  
had gone afield, to pasture his fat sheep,  
so we looked round at everything inside:  
a drying rack that sagged with cheeses, pens  
120 crowded with lambs and kids, each in its class:  
firstlings apart from middlings, and the 'dewdrops,'  
or newborn lambkins, penned apart from both.  
And vessels full of whey were brimming there—  
bowls of earthenware and pails for milking.  
125 My men came pressing round me, pleading:

'Why not

take these cheeses, get them stowed, come back,  
throw open all the pens, and make a run for it?  
We'll drive the kids and lambs aboard. We say  
put out again on good salt water!'

Ah,

130 how sound that was! Yet I refused. I wished  
to see the caveman, what he had to offer—  
no pretty sight, it turned out, for my friends.

**97–98 Euanthes** (yōō-ăn'thēz); **Maron** (mâr'ōn').

**101 talents:** bars of gold or silver of a specified weight, used as money in ancient Greece.

**112 victuals** (vīt'lz): food.

**121–122** The Cyclops has separated his lambs into three age groups.

**123 whey:** the watery part of milk, which separates from the curds, or solid part, during the making of cheese.

**129 good salt water:** the open sea.

**130–132** *Why does Odysseus refuse his men's "sound" request?*

We lit a fire, burnt an offering,  
and took some cheese to eat; then sat in silence  
135 around the embers, waiting. When he came  
he had a load of dry boughs on his shoulder  
to stoke his fire at suppertime. He dumped it  
with a great crash into that hollow cave,  
and we all scattered fast to the far wall.  
140 Then over the broad cavern floor he ushered  
the ewes he meant to milk. He left his rams  
and he-goats in the yard outside, and swung  
high overhead a slab of solid rock  
to close the cave. Two dozen four-wheeled wagons,  
145 with heaving wagon teams, could not have stirred  
the tonnage of that rock from where he wedged it  
over the doorsill. Next he took his seat  
and milked his bleating ewes. A practiced job  
he made of it, giving each ewe her suckling;  
150 thickened his milk, then, into curds and whey,  
sieved out the curds to drip in withy baskets,  
and poured the whey to stand in bowls  
cooling until he drank it for his supper.  
When all these chores were done, he poked the fire,  
155 heaping on brushwood. In the glare he saw us.

‘Strangers,’ he said, ‘who are you? And where from?  
What brings you here by sea ways—a fair traffic?  
Or are you wandering rogues, who cast your lives  
like dice, and ravage other folk by sea?’

160 We felt a pressure on our hearts, in dread  
of that deep rumble and that mighty man.  
But all the same I spoke up in reply:

‘We are from Troy, Achaeans, blown off course  
by shifting gales on the Great South Sea;  
165 homeward bound, but taking routes and ways  
uncommon; so the will of Zeus would have it.  
We served under Agamemnon, son of Atreus—  
the whole world knows what city  
he laid waste, what armies he destroyed. **G**  
170 It was our luck to come here; here we stand,  
beholden for your help, or any gifts  
you give—as custom is to honor strangers.  
We would entreat you, great Sir, have a care  
for the gods’ courtesy; Zeus will avenge  
175 the unoffending guest.’

**133 burnt an offering:** burned a portion of the food as an offering to secure the gods’ goodwill. (Such offerings were frequently performed by Greek sailors during difficult journeys.)

**151 withy baskets:** baskets made from twigs.

**157 fair traffic:** honest trading.

**G ALLUSION**

Reread lines 163–169. Agamemnon was the Greek king who led the war against the Trojans. Consider what Odysseus says about Agamemnon; what point is he making about himself by claiming this association?

**172–175** It was a sacred Greek custom to honor strangers with food and gifts. Odysseus is warning the Cyclops that Zeus will punish anyone who mistreats a guest.

He answered this  
from his brute chest, unmoved:

‘You are a ninny,  
or else you come from the other end of nowhere,  
telling me, mind the gods! We Cyclopes  
care not a whistle for your thundering Zeus  
180 or all the gods in bliss; we have more force by far.  
I would not let you go for fear of Zeus—  
you or your friends—unless I had a whim to.  
Tell me, where was it, now, you left your ship—  
around the point, or down the shore, I wonder?’

185 He thought he’d find out, but I saw through this,  
and answered with a ready lie:

‘My ship?  
Poseidon Lord, who sets the earth a-tremble,  
broke it up on the rocks at your land’s end.  
A wind from seaward served him, drove us there.  
190 We are survivors, these good men and I.’ **H**

Neither reply nor pity came from him,  
but in one stride he clutched at my companions  
and caught two in his hands like squirming puppies  
to beat their brains out, spattering the floor.  
195 Then he dismembered them and made his meal,  
gaping and crunching like a mountain lion—  
everything: innards, flesh, and marrow bones.  
We cried aloud, lifting our hands to Zeus,  
powerless, looking on at this, **appalled**;  
200 but Cyclops went on filling up his belly  
with manflesh and great gulps of whey,  
then lay down like a mast among his sheep.  
My heart beat high now at the chance of action,  
and drawing the sharp sword from my hip I went  
205 along his flank to stab him where the midriff  
holds the liver. I had touched the spot  
when sudden fear stayed me: if I killed him  
we perished there as well, for we could never  
move his **ponderous** doorway slab aside.  
210 So we were left to groan and wait for morning.

When the young Dawn with fingertips of rose  
lit up the world, the Cyclops built a fire **I**  
and milked his handsome ewes, all in due order,



Detail of *The Cyclops* (about 1914) Odilon Redon. Oil on canvas. Kroller-Muller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands. © Peter Will/SuperStock.

178–182 *What is the Cyclopes’ attitude toward the gods?*

#### **H** EPIC HERO

Reread lines 185–190. Why does Odysseus lie to the Cyclops about his ship?

**appalled** (ə-pŏld’) *adj.* filled with dismay; horrified **appall** *v.*

**ponderous** (pŏn’dər-əs) *adj.* heavy in a clumsy way; bulky

207–210 *Why doesn’t Odysseus kill the Cyclops right now?*

#### **I** EPITHET

What **epithet** is repeated in lines 211–212? Look for more repetitions like this one.

putting the sucklings to the mothers. Then,  
215 his chores being all dispatched, he caught  
another brace of men to make his breakfast,  
and whisked away his great door slab  
to let his sheep go through—but he, behind,  
reset the stone as one would cap a quiver.  
220 There was a din of whistling as the Cyclops  
rounded his flock to higher ground, then stillness.  
And now I pondered how to hurt him worst,  
if but Athena granted what I prayed for.  
Here are the means I thought would serve my turn:

225 a club, or staff, lay there along the fold—  
an olive tree, felled green and left to season  
for Cyclops' hand. And it was like a mast  
a lugger of twenty oars, broad in the beam—  
a deep-sea-going craft—might carry:  
230 so long, so big around, it seemed. Now I  
chopped out a six foot section of this pole  
and set it down before my men, who scraped it;  
and when they had it smooth, I hewed again  
to make a stake with pointed end. I held this  
235 in the fire's heart and turned it, toughening it,  
then hid it, well back in the cavern, under  
one of the dung piles in **profusion** there.  
Now came the time to toss for it: who ventured  
along with me? whose hand could bear to thrust  
240 and grind that spike in Cyclops' eye, when mild  
sleep had mastered him? As luck would have it,  
the men I would have chosen won the toss—  
four strong men, and I made five as captain.

At evening came the shepherd with his flock,  
245 his woolly flock. The rams as well, this time,  
entered the cave: by some sheep-herding whim—  
or a god's bidding—none were left outside.  
He hefted his great boulder into place  
and sat him down to milk the bleating ewes  
250 in proper order, put the lambs to suck,  
and swiftly ran through all his evening chores.  
Then he caught two more men and feasted on them.  
My moment was at hand, and I went forward  
holding an ivy bowl of my dark drink,  
255 looking up, saying:

216 **brace**: pair.

218–219 The Cyclops reseals the cave with the massive rock as easily as an ordinary human places the cap on a container of arrows.

226 **left to season**: left to dry out and harden.

228 **lugger**: a small, wide sailing ship.

**profusion** (prə-fyŭō'zhen)  
n. abundance

238–243 *What does Odysseus plan to do to the Cyclops?*

‘Cyclops, try some wine.

Here’s liquor to wash down your scraps of men.  
Taste it, and see the kind of drink we carried  
under our planks. I meant it for an offering  
if you would help us home. But you are mad,  
260 unbearable, a bloody monster! After this,  
will any other traveller come to see you?’

He seized and drained the bowl, and it went down  
so fiery and smooth he called for more:

‘Give me another, thank you kindly. Tell me,  
265 how are you called? I’ll make a gift will please you.  
Even Cyclopes know the wine-grapes grow  
out of grassland and loam in heaven’s rain,  
but here’s a bit of nectar and ambrosia!’

Three bowls I brought him, and he poured them down.  
270 I saw the fuddle and flush come over him,  
then I sang out in cordial tones:

‘Cyclops,

you ask my honorable name? Remember  
the gift you promised me, and I shall tell you.  
My name is Nohbdy: mother, father, and friends,  
275 everyone calls me Nohbdy.’

And he said:

‘Nohbdy’s my meat, then, after I eat his friends.  
Others come first. There’s a noble gift, now.’ **J**

Even as he spoke, he reeled and tumbled backward,  
his great head lolling to one side: and sleep  
280 took him like any creature. Drunk, hiccupping,  
he dribbled streams of liquor and bits of men.

Now, by the gods, I drove my big hand spike  
deep in the embers, charring it again,  
and cheered my men along with battle talk  
285 to keep their courage up: no quitting now.  
The pike of olive, green though it had been,  
reddened and glowed as if about to catch.  
I drew it from the coals and my four fellows  
gave me a hand, lugging it near the Cyclops  
290 as more than natural force nerved them; straight  
forward they sprinted, lifted it, and rammed it

**255–261** *Why does Odysseus offer the Cyclops the liquor he brought from the ship?*

**268** **nectar** (nĕk'tər) **and ambrosia** (ăm-brō'zhə): the drink and food of the gods.

**270** **fuddle and flush**: the state of confusion and redness of the face caused by drinking alcohol.

**J** **EPIC HERO**

Say the name *Nohbdy* out loud and listen to what it sounds like. What might Odysseus be planning? Consider what this tells you about his **character**.

**286** **the pike**: the pointed stake.

deep in his crater eye, and I leaned on it  
turning it as a shipwright turns a drill  
in planking, having men below to swing  
295 the two-handed strap that spins it in the groove.  
So with our brand we bored that great eye socket  
while blood ran out around the red hot bar.  
Eyelid and lash were seared; the pierced ball  
hissed broiling, and the roots popped.

In a smithy

300 one sees a white-hot axehead or an adze  
plunged and wrung in a cold tub, screeching steam—  
the way they make soft iron hale and hard—:  
just so that eyeball hissed around the spike. **K**  
The Cyclops bellowed and the rock roared round him,  
305 and we fell back in fear. Clawing his face  
he tugged the bloody spike out of his eye,  
threw it away, and his wild hands went groping;  
then he set up a howl for Cyclopes  
who lived in caves on windy peaks nearby.  
310 Some heard him; and they came by divers ways  
to clump around outside and call:

‘What ails you,

Polyphemus? Why do you cry so sore  
in the starry night? You will not let us sleep.  
Sure no man’s driving off your flock? No man  
315 has tricked you, ruined you?’

Out of the cave

the mammoth Polyphemus roared in answer:

‘Nohbdy, Nohbdy’s tricked me, Nohbdy’s ruined me!’

To this rough shout they made a sage reply:

‘Ah well, if nobody has played you foul  
320 there in your lonely bed, we are no use in pain  
given by great Zeus. Let it be your father,  
Poseidon Lord, to whom you pray.’ **L**

So saying

they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter  
to see how like a charm the name deceived them.  
325 Now Cyclops, wheezing as the pain came on him,  
fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone

**299 smithy:** blacksmith’s shop.

**300 adze** (ădz): an axlike tool with a curved blade.

**K EPIC SIMILE**

Find the epic similes in lines 292–297 and lines 299–303. What two things are being compared in each case? What are the effects of this figurative language?

**310 divers:** various.

**312 Polyphemus** (pŏl’ə-fē’məs): the name of the Cyclops.

**318 sage:** wise.

**319–322** Odysseus’ lie about his name has paid off. *What do the other Cyclopes assume to be the source of Polyphemus’ pain?*

**L ALLUSION**

What do you learn about Polyphemus from the allusion in lines 321–322?

and squatted in the breach with arms thrown wide  
for any silly beast or man who bolted—  
hoping somehow I might be such a fool.  
330 But I kept thinking how to win the game:  
death sat there huge; how could we slip away?  
I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics,  
reasoning as a man will for dear life,  
until a trick came—and it pleased me well.  
335 The Cyclops' rams were handsome, fat, with heavy  
fleeces, a dark violet. **M**

### Three abreast

I tied them silently together, twining  
cords of willow from the ogre's bed;  
then slung a man under each middle one  
340 to ride there safely, shielded left and right.  
So three sheep could convey each man. I took  
the woolliest ram, the choicest of the flock,  
and hung myself under his kinky belly,  
pulled up tight, with fingers twisted deep  
345 in sheepskin ringlets for an iron grip.  
So, breathing hard, we waited until morning.

When Dawn spread out her finger tips of rose  
the rams began to stir, moving for pasture,  
and peals of bleating echoed round the pens  
350 where dams with udders full called for a milking.  
Blinded, and sick with pain from his head wound,  
the master stroked each ram, then let it pass,  
but my men riding on the pectoral fleece  
the giant's blind hands blundering never found.  
355 Last of them all my ram, the leader, came,  
weighted by wool and me with my **meditations**.  
The Cyclops patted him, and then he said:

'Sweet cousin ram, why lag behind the rest  
in the night cave? You never linger so,  
360 but graze before them all, and go afar  
to crop sweet grass, and take your stately way  
leading along the streams, until at evening  
you run to be the first one in the fold.  
Why, now, so far behind? Can you be grieving  
365 over your Master's eye? That carrion rogue  
and his accurst companions burnt it out  
when he had conquered all my wits with wine.  
Nohbdy will not get out alive, I swear.

327 **breach**: opening.

### **M** EPIC HERO

Notice Odysseus' great mental struggle in lines 330–336. As you read on, note the clever plan he has managed to come up with on the spot.

353 **pectoral fleece**: the wool covering a sheep's chest.

**meditation** (mĕd'ĭ-tā'shən)  
*n.* the act of being in serious, reflective thought

This 1910 color print depicts Odysseus taunting Polyphemus as he and his men make their escape.



Detail of *Odysseus and Polyphemus* (1910), after L. du Bois-Reymond. Color print. From *Sagen des klassischen Altertums* by Karl Becker, Berlin. © akg-images.

Oh, had you brain and voice to tell  
370 where he may be now, dodging all my fury!  
Bashed by this hand and bashed on this rock wall  
his brains would strew the floor, and I should have  
rest from the outrage Nohbdy worked upon me.'

He sent us into the open, then. Close by,  
375 I dropped and rolled clear of the ram's belly,  
going this way and that to untie the men.  
With many glances back, we rounded up  
his fat, stiff-legged sheep to take aboard,  
and drove them down to where the good ship lay. **N**  
380 We saw, as we came near, our fellows' faces  
shining; then we saw them turn to grief  
tallying those who had not fled from death.  
I hushed them, jerking head and eyebrows up,  
and in a low voice told them: 'Load this herd;  
385 move fast, and put the ship's head toward the breakers.'  
They all pitched in at loading, then embarked  
and struck their oars into the sea. Far out,  
as far off shore as shouted words would carry,  
I sent a few back to the **adversary**:

390 'O Cyclops! Would you feast on my companions?  
Puny, am I, in a Caveman's hands?  
How do you like the beating that we gave you,  
you damned cannibal? Eater of guests  
under your roof! Zeus and the gods have paid you!'

395 The blind thing in his doubled fury broke  
a hilltop in his hands and heaved it after us.  
Ahead of our black prow it struck and sank  
whelmed in a spuming geyser, a giant wave  
that washed the ship stern foremost back to shore.  
400 I got the longest boathook out and stood  
fending us off, with furious nods to all  
to put their backs into a racing stroke—  
row, row, or perish. So the long oars bent  
kicking the foam sternward, making head  
405 until we drew away, and twice as far.  
Now when I cupped my hands I heard the crew  
in low voices protesting:

'Godsake, Captain!  
Why bait the beast again? Let him alone!'

### **N** EPIC HERO

What **character traits** has Odysseus demonstrated in his dealings with Polyphemus?

**385 put . . . the breakers:** turn the ship around so that it is heading toward the open sea.

**adversary** (ăd'vər-sĕr'ē)  
*n.* an opponent; enemy

**390–394** Odysseus assumes that the gods are on his side.

**395–403** The hilltop thrown by Polyphemus lands in front of the ship, causing a huge wave that carries the ship back to the shore. Odysseus uses a long pole to push the boat away from the land.

**406 cupped my hands:** put his hands on either side of his mouth in order to magnify his voice.



‘That tidal wave he made on the first throw  
410 all but beached us.’

‘All but stove us in!’

‘Give him our bearing with your trumpeting,  
he’ll get the range and lob a boulder.’

‘Aye

He’ll smash our timbers and our heads together!’

I would not heed them in my glorying spirit,  
415 but let my anger flare and yelled:

‘Cyclops,

if ever mortal man inquire  
how you were put to shame and blinded, tell him  
Odysseus, raider of cities, took your eye:  
Laertes’ son, whose home’s on Ithaca!’

○ **EPITHET**

Notice that Odysseus uses the warlike **epithet** “raider of cities” in his second boast to the Cyclops. What **trait** does he display in revealing so much about himself?

420 At this he gave a mighty sob and rumbled:

‘Now comes the weird upon me, spoken of old.  
A wizard, grand and wondrous, lived here—Telemus,  
a son of Eurymus; great length of days  
he had in wizardry among the Cyclopes,  
425 and these things he foretold for time to come:  
my great eye lost, and at Odysseus’ hands.  
Always I had in mind some giant, armed  
in giant force, would come against me here.  
But this, but you—small, pitiful and twiggy—  
430 you put me down with wine, you blinded me.  
Come back, Odysseus, and I’ll treat you well,  
praying the god of earthquake to befriend you—  
his son I am, for he by his avowal  
fathered me, and, if he will, he may  
435 heal me of this black wound—he and no other  
of all the happy gods or mortal men.’

**421 Now comes . . . of old:** Now I recall the destiny predicted long ago.

**421–430 Now comes . . . you blinded me:** Polyphemus tells of a prophecy made long ago by Telemus, a prophet who predicted that Polyphemus would lose his eye at the hands of Odysseus. *How have the actual events turned out differently from what Polyphemus expected?*

**432 the god of earthquake:** Poseidon.

**433 avowal:** honest admission.

Few words I shouted in reply to him:  
‘If I could take your life I would and take  
your time away, and hurl you down to hell!  
440 The god of earthquake could not heal you there!’

At this he stretched his hands out in his darkness  
toward the sky of stars, and prayed Poseidon:

‘O hear me, lord, blue girdler of the islands,  
if I am thine indeed, and thou art father:  
445 grant that Odysseus, raider of cities, never  
see his home: Laertes’ son, I mean,  
who kept his hall on Ithaca. Should destiny  
intend that he shall see his roof again  
among his family in his father land,  
450 far be that day, and dark the years between.  
Let him lose all companions, and return  
under strange sail to bitter days at home.’ **P**

In these words he prayed, and the god heard him.  
Now he laid hands upon a bigger stone  
455 and wheeled around, titanic for the cast,  
to let it fly in the black-prowed vessel’s track.  
But it fell short, just aft the steering oar,  
and whelming seas rose giant above the stone  
to bear us onward toward the island.

There

460 as we ran in we saw the squadron waiting,  
the trim ships drawn up side by side, and all  
our troubled friends who waited, looking seaward.  
We beached her, grinding keel in the soft sand,  
and waded in, ourselves, on the sandy beach.  
465 Then we unloaded all the Cyclops’ flock  
to make division, share and share alike,  
only my fighters voted that my ram,  
the prize of all, should go to me. I slew him  
by the sea side and burnt his long thighbones  
470 to Zeus beyond the stormcloud, Cronus’ son,  
who rules the world. But Zeus disdained my offering;  
destruction for my ships he had in store  
and death for those who sailed them, my companions.

Now all day long until the sun went down  
475 we made our feast on mutton and sweet wine,  
till after sunset in the gathering dark  
we went to sleep above the wash of ripples.

When the young Dawn with finger tips of rose  
touched the world, I roused the men, gave orders  
480 to man the ships, cast off the mooring lines;  
and filing in to sit beside the rowlocks  
oarsmen in line dipped oars in the gray sea.  
So we moved out, sad in the vast offing,  
having our precious lives, but not our friends.”

**P EPIC HERO**

Reread lines 437–452. Paraphrase Polyphemus’ curse. How has Odysseus brought this curse upon himself?

**455 titanic for the cast:** drawing on all his enormous strength in preparing to throw.

**457 aft:** behind.

**459 the island:** the deserted island where most of Odysseus’ men had stayed behind.

**470 Cronus’ son:** Zeus’ father, Cronus, was a Titan, one of an earlier race of gods.

**483 offing:** the part of the deep sea visible from the shore.

## BOOK 10:

### *Circe, the Grace of the Witch*



Detail of *Tilla Durieux as Circe* (about 1912–1913), Franz von Struck. Oil on paper, 53.5 cm × 46.5 cm. Private collection. Photo © akq-images.

*Odysseus and his men next land on the island of Aeolus, the wind king, and stay with him a month. To extend his hospitality, Aeolus gives Odysseus two parting gifts: a fair west wind that will blow the fleet of ships toward Ithaca, and a great bag holding all the unfavorable, stormy winds. Within sight of home, and while Odysseus is sleeping, the men open the bag, thinking it contains gold and silver. The bad winds thus escape and blow the ships back to Aeolus' island. The king refuses to help them again, believing now that their voyage has been cursed by the gods.*

*The discouraged mariners next stop briefly in the land of the Laestrygones, fierce cannibals who bombard the fleet of ships with boulders. Only Odysseus, his ship, and its crew of 45 survive the shower of boulders. The lone ship then sails to Aeaea, home of the goddess Circe, who is considered by many to be a witch. There, Odysseus divides his men into two groups. Eurylochus leads one platoon to explore the island, while Odysseus stays behind on the ship with the remaining crew.*

“In the wild wood they found an open glade,  
around a smooth stone house—the hall of Circe—  
and wolves and mountain lions lay there, mild  
in her soft spell, fed on her drug of evil.

5 None would attack—oh, it was strange, I tell you—  
but switching their long tails they faced our men  
like hounds, who look up when their master comes  
with tidbits for them—as he will—from table.

Humbly those wolves and lions with mighty paws

10 fawned on our men—who met their yellow eyes  
and feared them. ❶

In the entrance way they stayed  
to listen there: inside her quiet house  
they heard the goddess Circe.

Low she sang

in her **beguiling** voice, while on her loom

15 she wove ambrosial fabric sheer and bright,

10 **fawned on:** showed affection for.

#### ❶ EPIC SIMILE

In lines 6–11, notice the simile involving Circe’s wolves and mountain lions. What is the point of this comparison? How does it affect your impression of Circe’s hall?

**beguiling** (bĭ-gĭ’lĭng) *adj.* charming; pleasing **beguile** *v.*

15 **ambrosial:** fit for the gods.

by that craft known to the goddesses of heaven.  
No one would speak, until Polites—most  
faithful and likable of my officers, said:

17 **Polites** (pə-lī'tēz).

‘Dear friends, no need for stealth: here’s a young weaver  
20 singing a pretty song to set the air  
a-tingle on these lawns and paven courts.  
Goddess she is, or lady. Shall we greet her?’

So reassured, they all cried out together,  
and she came swiftly to the shining doors  
25 to call them in. All but Eurylochus—  
who feared a snare—the innocents went after her.  
On thrones she seated them, and lounging chairs,  
while she prepared a meal of cheese and barley  
and amber honey mixed with Pramnian wine,  
30 adding her own vile pinch, to make them lose  
desire or thought of our dear father land.  
Scarce had they drunk when she flew after them  
with her long stick and shut them in a pigsty—  
bodies, voices, heads, and bristles, all  
35 swinish now, though minds were still unchanged.  
So, squealing, in they went. And Circe tossed them  
acorns, mast, and cornel berries—fodder  
for hogs who rut and slumber on the earth.

23–26 *If you were among this group, whom would you follow—Polites or Eurylochus? Why?*

Down to the ship Eurylochus came running  
40 to cry alarm, foul magic doomed his men!  
But working with dry lips to speak a word  
he could not, being so shaken; blinding tears  
welled in his eyes; **foreboding** filled his heart.  
When we were frantic questioning him, at last  
45 we heard the tale: our friends were gone. . . .”

27–36 *What happens to the men after they drink Circe’s magic potion?*

**foreboding** (fōr-bō'dīng) *n.* a sense of approaching evil

*Eurylochus tells Odysseus what has happened and begs him to sail away from Circe’s island. Against this advice, however, Odysseus rushes to save his men from the enchantress. On the way, he meets the god Hermes, who gives him a magical plant called moly to protect him from Circe’s power. Still, Hermes warns Odysseus that he must make the goddess swear she will play no “witches’ tricks.” Armed with the moly and Hermes’ warning, Odysseus arrives at Circe’s palace.*

*Circe gives Odysseus a magic drink, but it does not affect him and he threatens to kill her with his sword. Circe turns the pigs back into men but puts them all into a trance. They stay for one year, until Odysseus finally begs her to let them go home. She replies that they must first visit the land of the dead and hear a prophecy from the ghost of Tiresias.*

# BOOK 11:

## *The Land of the Dead*

*Odysseus and his crew set out for the land of the dead. They arrive and find the place to which Circe has directed them.*

“Then I addressed the blurred and breathless dead,  
vowing to slaughter my best heifer for them  
before she calved, at home in Ithaca,  
and burn the choice bits on the altar fire;  
5 as for Tiresias, I swore to sacrifice  
a black lamb, handsomest of all our flock.  
Thus to **assuage** the nations of the dead  
I pledged these rites, then slashed the lamb and ewe,  
letting their black blood stream into the wellpit.  
10 Now the souls gathered, stirring out of Erebus,  
brides and young men, and men grown old in pain,  
and tender girls whose hearts were new to grief;  
many were there, too, torn by brazen lanceheads,  
battle-slain, bearing still their bloody gear.  
15 From every side they came and sought the pit  
with rustling cries; and I grew sick with fear.  
But presently I gave command to my officers  
to flay those sheep the bronze cut down, and make  
burnt offerings of flesh to the gods below—  
20 to sovereign Death, to pale Persephone. **R**  
Meanwhile I crouched with my drawn sword to keep  
the surging phantoms from the bloody pit  
till I should know the presence of Tiresias.

One shade came first—Elpenor, of our company,  
25 who lay unburied still on the wide earth  
as we had left him—dead in Circe’s hall,  
untouched, unmourned, when other cares compelled us.  
Now when I saw him there I wept for pity  
and called out to him:

**assuage** (ə-swāj′) v. to calm or pacify

**10 Erebus** (ĕr′ə-bəs): a region of the land of the dead, also known as the underworld or Hades. Hades is also the name of the god of the underworld.

**18 flay:** to strip off the outer skin of.

### **R ALLUSION**

In lines 17–20, Odysseus makes a sacrifice to “sovereign Death,” or Hades, and “pale Persephone” (pər-sĕf′ə-nĕ), his bride, who was kidnapped and forced to live with him for six months of every year. Her mother, goddess of the harvest, grieves during that time, causing winter to fall. What does this background information tell you about Hades? Consider how this information affects your impression of the underworld.



*Ulysses Descending into the Underworld* (16th century), Giovanni Stradano. Fresco. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.  
Photo © Scala/Art Resource, New York.

‘How is this, Elpenor,  
30 how could you journey to the western gloom  
swifter afoot than I in the black lugger?’

He sighed, and answered:

‘Son of great Laertes,  
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,  
bad luck shadowed me, and no kindly power;  
35 ignoble death I drank with so much wine.  
I slept on Circe’s roof, then could not see  
the long steep backward ladder, coming down,  
and fell that height. My neck bone, buckled under,  
snapped, and my spirit found this well of dark.  
40 Now hear the grace I pray for, in the name  
of those back in the world, not here—your wife  
and father, he who gave you bread in childhood,  
and your own child, your only son, Telemachus,  
long ago left at home.

#### ANALYZE VISUALS

This 16th-century painting illustrates the descent of Ulysses (Odysseus) into the underworld. How has the artist distinguished between Ulysses and the dead, also known as shades?

When you make sail

45 and put these lodgings of dim Death behind,  
you will moor ship, I know, upon Aeaea Island;  
there, O my lord, remember me, I pray,  
do not abandon me unwept, unburied,  
to tempt the gods' wrath, while you sail for home;  
50 but fire my corpse, and all the gear I had,  
and build a cairn for me above the breakers—  
an unknown sailor's mark for men to come.  
Heap up the mound there, and implant upon it  
the oar I pulled in life with my companions.'

**50–51 fire my corpse . . . cairn:** Elpenor wants Odysseus to hold a funeral for him.

55 He ceased, and I replied:

'Unhappy spirit,  
I promise you the barrow and the burial.'

So we conversed, and grimly, at a distance,  
with my long sword between, guarding the blood,  
while the faint image of the lad spoke on.  
60 Now came the soul of Anticlea, dead,  
my mother, daughter of Autolycus,  
dead now, though living still when I took ship  
for holy Troy. Seeing this ghost I grieved,  
but held her off, through pang on pang of tears,  
65 till I should know the presence of Tiresias.  
Soon from the dark that prince of Thebes came forward  
bearing a golden staff; and he addressed me:

**58 with my long sword . . . blood:** the ghosts are attracted to the blood of the sacrifice; Odysseus must hold them at bay with his sword.

**66 prince of Thebes:** Tiresias, the blind seer, comes from the city of Thebes (thēbz).

'Son of Laertes and the gods of old,  
Odysseus, master of land ways and sea ways,  
70 why leave the blazing sun, O man of woe,  
to see the cold dead and the joyless region?  
Stand clear, put up your sword;  
let me but taste of blood, I shall speak true.'

At this I stepped aside, and in the scabbard  
75 let my long sword ring home to the pommel silver,  
as he bent down to the sombre blood. Then spoke  
the prince of those with gift of speech:

'Great captain,  
a fair wind and the honey lights of home  
are all you seek. But anguish lies ahead;  
80 the god who thunders on the land prepares it,  
not to be shaken from your track, implacable,

in rancor for the son whose eye you blinded.  
 One narrow strait may take you through his blows:  
 denial of yourself, restraint of shipmates.

85 When you make landfall on Thrinacia first  
 and quit the violet sea, dark on the land  
 you'll find the grazing herds of Helios  
 by whom all things are seen, all speech is known.  
 Avoid those kine, hold fast to your intent,  
 90 and hard seafaring brings you all to Ithaca.  
 But if you raid the beeves, I see destruction  
 for ship and crew. Though you survive alone,  
 bereft of all companions, lost for years,  
 under strange sail shall you come home, to find  
 95 your own house filled with trouble: insolent men  
 eating your livestock as they court your lady.  
 Aye, you shall make those men atone in blood!  
 But after you have dealt out death—in open  
 combat or by stealth—to all the suitors,  
 100 go overland on foot, and take an oar,  
 until one day you come where men have lived  
 with meat unsalted, never known the sea,  
 nor seen seagoing ships, with crimson bows  
 and oars that fledge light hulls for dipping flight.

105 The spot will soon be plain to you, and I  
 can tell you how: some passerby will say,  
 “What winnowing fan is that upon your shoulder?”  
 Halt, and implant your smooth oar in the turf  
 and make fair sacrifice to Lord Poseidon:  
 110 a ram, a bull, a great buck boar; turn back,  
 and carry out pure hekatombs at home  
 to all wide heaven's lords, the undying gods,  
 to each in order. Then a seaborne death  
 soft as this hand of mist will come upon you  
 115 when you are wearied out with rich old age,  
 your country folk in blessed peace around you.  
 And all this shall be just as I foretell.' . . .” **S**

**89–91 kine; beeves:** two words for cattle.

**101–102 where men have lived with meat unsalted:** refers to an inland location where men do not eat salted (preserved) meat as sailors do aboard a ship.

**S EPIC HERO**

An epic hero's fate is often a matter of great importance to the gods and to the hero's homeland. In lines 77–117, Odysseus' fate is the subject of a prophecy by Tiresias, a blind seer who now dwells among the dead. A prophecy such as this can serve as **foreshadowing** in an epic or other story. Do you think that Odysseus' fate will unfold exactly as Tiresias foretells it? Explain why you think as you do.

*Odysseus speaks to the shade of his mother. She tells him that Penelope and Telemachus are still grieving for him and that his father, Laertes, has moved to the country, where he, too, mourns his son. Odysseus' mother explains that she died from a broken heart. Odysseus also speaks with the spirits of many great ladies and men who died, as well as those who were being punished for their earthly sins. Filled with horror, Odysseus and his crew set sail.*



# BOOK 12:

## *The Sirens; Scylla and Charybdis*

*Odysseus and his men return to Circe's island. While the men sleep, Circe takes Odysseus aside to hear about the underworld and to offer advice.*

“Then said the Lady Circe:

‘So: all those trials are over.

Listen with care

to this, now, and a god will arm your mind.

Square in your ship's path are Sirens, crying

5 beauty to bewitch men coasting by;

woe to the innocent who hears that sound!

He will not see his lady nor his children

in joy, crowding about him, home from sea;

the Sirens will sing his mind away

10 on their sweet meadow lolling. There are bones

of dead men rotting in a pile beside them

and flayed skins shrivel around the spot.

Steer wide;

keep well to seaward; plug your oarsmen's ears

with beeswax kneaded soft; none of the rest

15 should hear that song.

But if you wish to listen,

let the men tie you in the lugger, hand

and foot, back to the mast, lashed to the mast,

so you may hear those harpies' thrilling voices;

shout as you will, begging to be untied,

20 your crew must only twist more line around you

and keep their stroke up, till the singers fade.

What then? One of two courses you may take,

and you yourself must weigh them. I shall not

plan the whole action for you now, but only

25 tell you of both.

### ANALYZE VISUALS

This detail from a 19th-century painting shows Odysseus tied to the mast of his ship to protect him from the Sirens' tempting song. Notice that his men have all covered their ears. How does the artist's depiction of the Sirens affect your understanding of the story? Explain.

**2–3** In Circe, Odysseus has found a valuable ally. In the next hundred lines, she describes in detail each danger that he and his men will meet on their way home.

**14 kneaded** (nē'dīd): squeezed and pressed.

**18 those harpies' thrilling voices:** the delightful voices of those horrible female creatures.



Ahead are beetling rocks  
and dark blue glancing Amphitrite, surging,  
roars around them. Prowling Rocks, or Drifters,  
the gods in bliss have named them—named them well.  
Not even birds can pass them by. . . .

30 A second course

lies between headlands. One is a sharp mountain  
piercing the sky, with stormcloud round the peak  
dissolving never, not in the brightest summer,  
to show heaven's azure there, nor in the fall.  
35 No mortal man could scale it, nor so much  
as land there, not with twenty hands and feet,  
so sheer the cliffs are—as of polished stone.  
Midway that height, a cavern full of mist  
opens toward Erebus and evening. Skirting  
40 this in the lugger, great Odysseus,  
your master bowman, shooting from the deck,  
would come short of the cavemouth with his shaft;  
but that is the den of Scylla, where she yaps  
**abominably**, a newborn whelp's cry,  
45 though she is huge and monstrous. God or man,  
no one could look on her in joy. Her legs—  
and there are twelve—are like great tentacles,  
unjointed, and upon her serpent necks  
are borne six heads like nightmares of ferocity,  
50 with triple serried rows of fangs and deep  
gullets of black death. Half her length, she sways  
her heads in air, outside her horrid cleft,  
hunting the sea around that promontory  
for dolphins, dogfish, or what bigger game  
55 thundering Amphitrite feeds in thousands.  
And no ship's company can claim  
to have passed her without loss and grief; she takes,  
from every ship, one man for every gullet.

The opposite point seems more a tongue of land  
60 you'd touch with a good bowshot, at the narrows.  
A great wild fig, a shaggy mass of leaves,  
grows on it, and Charybdis lurks below  
to swallow down the dark sea tide. Three times  
from dawn to dusk she spews it up  
65 and sucks it down again three times, a whirling  
maelstrom; if you come upon her then  
the god who makes earth tremble could not save you.

**25 beetling:** jutting or overhanging.

**26 glancing Amphitrite** (ăm'fī-trī'tē): sparkling seawater. (Amphitrite is the goddess of the sea and the wife of Poseidon. Here, Circe uses the name to refer to the sea itself.)

**31 headlands:** points of land jutting out into the sea; promontories.

**34 heaven's azure** (ăzh'ər): the blue sky.

**abominably** (ə-bŏm'ə-nə-blē) *adv.*  
in a hateful way; horribly

**43–55** Circe presents a very unpleasant image of Scylla. *To get a better idea of what Odysseus and his crew will be up against, try using this detailed description to either visualize or draw a picture of Scylla.*

**66 maelstrom** (māl'strəm): a large, violent whirlpool.

No, hug the cliff of Scylla, take your ship  
through on a racing stroke. Better to mourn  
70 six men than lose them all, and the ship, too.’

So her advice ran; but I faced her, saying:

‘Only instruct me, goddess, if you will,  
how, if possible, can I pass Charybdis,  
or fight off Scylla when she raids my crew?’

75 Swiftly that loveliest goddess answered me:

‘Must you have battle in your heart forever?  
The bloody toil of combat? Old contender,  
will you not yield to the immortal gods?  
That nightmare cannot die, being eternal  
80 evil itself—horror, and pain, and chaos;  
there is no fighting her, no power can fight her,  
all that avails is flight.

Lose headway there

along that rockface while you break out arms,  
and she’ll swoop over you, I fear, once more,  
85 taking one man again for every gullet. **T**  
No, no, put all your backs into it, row on;  
invoke Blind Force, that bore this scourge of men,  
to keep her from a second strike against you.

Then you will coast Thrinacia, the island  
90 where Helios’ cattle graze, fine herds, and flocks  
of goodly sheep. The herds and flocks are seven,  
with fifty beasts in each.

No lambs are dropped,

or calves, and these fat cattle never die.  
Immortal, too, their cowherds are—their shepherds—  
95 Phaethusa and Lampetia, sweetly braided  
nymphs that divine Neaera bore  
to the overlord of high noon, Helios.  
These nymphs their gentle mother bred and placed  
upon Thrinacia, the distant land,  
100 in care of flocks and cattle for their father.

Now give those kine a wide berth, keep your thoughts  
intent upon your course for home,  
and hard seafaring brings you all to Ithaca.  
But if you raid the beeves, I see destruction  
105 for ship and crew.

**82 all . . . flight:** all you can do is flee.

**T EPIC HERO**

Summarize the exchange between Odysseus and Circe in lines 68–85. What is Circe’s advice to Odysseus? Do you think he will follow her advice? Explain.

**87 invoke . . . men:** pray to the goddess Blind Force, who gave birth to Scylla.

**89 coast:** sail along the coast of.

**95–96 Phaethusa** (fā’ē-thōō’sə);  
**Lampetia** (läm-pē’sə); **Neaera** (nē-ē’rə).

**101–105** Circe warns Odysseus not to steal Helios’ fine cattle because Helios will take revenge.

Rough years then lie between  
you and your homecoming, alone and old,  
the one survivor, all companions lost.’ . . .” U

*At dawn, Odysseus and his men continue their journey. Odysseus decides to tell the men only of Circe’s warnings about the Sirens, whom they will soon encounter. He is fairly sure that they can survive this peril if he keeps their spirits up. Suddenly, the wind stops.*

“The crew were on their feet  
briskly, to furl the sail, and stow it; then,  
110 each in place, they poised the smooth oar blades  
and sent the white foam scudding by. I carved  
a massive cake of beeswax into bits  
and rolled them in my hands until they softened—  
no long task, for a burning heat came down  
115 from Helios, lord of high noon. Going forward  
I carried wax along the line, and laid it  
thick on their ears. They tied me up, then, plumb  
amidships, back to the mast, lashed to the mast,  
and took themselves again to rowing. Soon,  
120 as we came smartly within hailing distance,  
the two Sirens, noting our fast ship  
off their point, made ready, and they sang. . . .

The lovely voices in **ardor** appealing over the water  
made me crave to listen, and I tried to say  
125 ‘Untie me!’ to the crew, jerking my brows;  
but they bent steady to the oars. Then Perimedes  
got to his feet, he and Eurylochus,  
and passed more line about, to hold me still.  
So all rowed on, until the Sirens  
130 dropped under the sea rim, and their singing  
dwindled away.

My faithful company  
rested on their oars now, peeling off  
the wax that I had laid thick on their ears;  
then set me free.

But scarcely had that island  
135 faded in blue air than I saw smoke  
and white water, with sound of waves in tumult—  
a sound the men heard, and it terrified them.  
Oars flew from their hands; the blades went knocking  
wild alongside till the ship lost way,  
140 with no oarblades to drive her through the water.

**U EPIC HERO**

Reread lines 104–107, and reconsider your thoughts about Tiresias’ prophecy. Do you think Odysseus has the power to steer his fate? Explain.

**117–118 plumb amidships:** exactly in the center of the ship.

**ardor** (är’dər) *n.* passion

**126 Perimedes** (pěŕ’ĭ-mě’dēz).

**134–139** The men panic when they hear the thundering surf.

Well, I walked up and down from bow to stern,  
trying to put heart into them, standing over  
every oarsman, saying gently,

‘Friends,

have we never been in danger before this?  
145 More fearsome, is it now, than when the Cyclops  
penned us in his cave? What power he had!  
Did I not keep my nerve, and use my wits  
to find a way out for us?

Now I say

by hook or crook this peril too shall be  
150 something that we remember.

Heads up, lads!

We must obey the orders as I give them.  
Get the oarshafts in your hands, and lay back  
hard on your benches; hit these breaking seas.  
Zeus help us pull away before we founder.  
155 You at the tiller, listen, and take in  
all that I say—the rudders are your duty;  
keep her out of the combers and the smoke;  
steer for that headland; watch the drift, or we  
fetch up in the smother, and you drown us.’

154 **founder**: sink.

157 **combers**: breaking waves.

158–159 **watch . . . smother**: keep the  
ship on course, or it will be crushed in  
the rough water.

160 That was all, and it brought them round to action.  
But as I sent them on toward Scylla, I  
told them nothing, as they could do nothing.  
They would have dropped their oars again, in panic,  
to roll for cover under the decking. Circe’s  
165 bidding against arms had slipped my mind,  
so I tied on my cuirass and took up  
two heavy spears, then made my way along  
to the foredeck—thinking to see her first from there,  
the monster of the gray rock, harboring  
170 torment for my friends. I strained my eyes  
upon that cliffside veiled in cloud, but nowhere  
could I catch sight of her.

And all this time,

in **travail**, sobbing, gaining on the current,  
we rowed into the strait—Scylla to port  
175 and on our starboard beam Charybdis, dire  
gorge of the salt sea tide. By heaven! when she  
vomited, all the sea was like a cauldron  
seething over intense fire, when the mixture  
suddenly heaves and rises. **V**

**travail** (trə-vāl') *n.* painful effort

176 **gorge**: throat; gullet.

**V EPIC HERO**

Consider Odysseus’ behavior in lines  
108–179. Do you think he is a good  
leader? Explain your opinion.

The shot spume  
180 soared to the landside heights, and fell like rain.

**179 shot spume:** flying foam.

But when she swallowed the sea water down  
we saw the funnel of the maelstrom, heard  
the rock bellowing all around, and dark  
sand raged on the bottom far below.  
185 My men all blanched against the gloom, our eyes  
were fixed upon that yawning mouth in fear  
of being devoured.

**185 blanched:** became pale.

Then Scylla made her strike,  
whisking six of my best men from the ship.  
I happened to glance aft at ship and oarsmen  
190 and caught sight of their arms and legs, dangling  
high overhead. Voices came down to me  
in anguish, calling my name for the last time.

**189 aft:** toward the rear of the ship.

A man surfcasting on a point of rock  
for bass or mackerel, whipping his long rod  
195 to drop the sinker and the bait far out,  
will hook a fish and rip it from the surface  
to dangle wriggling through the air:

so these

were borne aloft in spasms toward the cliff.

**198 borne aloft in spasms:** lifted high while struggling violently.

She ate them as they shrieked there, in her den,  
200 in the dire grapple, reaching still for me—  
and deathly pity ran me through  
at that sight—far the worst I ever suffered,  
questing the passes of the strange sea.

**200 grapple:** grasp.

We rowed on.

The Rocks were now behind; Charybdis, too,  
205 and Scylla dropped astern. . . .”

### ANALYZE VISUALS

Apart from depicting a different narrative moment, how does this 16th-century painting differ from the one on page 1131? Be specific in describing the differences in style and mood.

*Odysseus tries to persuade his men to bypass Thrinacia, the island of the sun god, Helios, but they insist on landing. Driven by hunger, they ignore Odysseus' warning not to feast on Helios' cattle. This disobedience angers the sun god, who threatens to stop shining if payment is not made for the loss of his cattle. To appease Helios, Zeus sends down a thunderbolt to sink Odysseus' ship. Odysseus alone survives. He eventually drifts to Ogygia, the home of Calypso, who keeps him on her island for seven years. With this episode, Odysseus ends the telling of his tale to King Alcinous.*



*Scylla and Charybdis* from the *Ulysses Cycle* (1580), Alessandro Allori. Fresco. Banca Toscana (Palazzo Salviati), Florence. Photo © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.



## Comprehension

- 1. Recall** Why does Odysseus want to leave Calypso and her island?
- 2. Recall** How does Odysseus escape from Polyphemus?
- 3. Recall** What happens to Eurylochus' men after they drink Circe's wine?
- 4. Recall** What does Tiresias predict will happen if Odysseus raids the herds of Helios?
- 5. Summarize** How does Odysseus survive the dangers posed by the Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis?

## Literary Analysis

- 6. Analyze Epic Hero** Create a two-column chart to analyze Odysseus' strengths and weaknesses. To what extent do the traits in each column seem fitting for an epic hero? Explain.

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<i>shows loyalty in his desire to reach home</i>	<i>pride</i>

- 7. Analyze Epithets** Identify at least five epithets used to describe Odysseus in Part 1. For each epithet, explain what it tells you about his **character**.
- 8. Understand Character Motivation** After Odysseus escapes from Polyphemus, he makes sure that Polyphemus knows who outwitted him. Why does he care? What are the consequences of Odysseus' behavior?
- 9. Interpret Epic Simile** Reread the epic simile on page 1136, lines 193–198, which describes the men being caught by Scylla. Explain what two items are being compared. What does the comparison help to emphasize?
- 10. Interpret Allusions** In the opening lines of Book 1, the poet calls upon Muse, a daughter of Zeus often credited with inspiration. Why would he open the epic in this way? What does this allusion tell you about him as a poet?
- 11. Examine Theme** One theme of the adventures described in Part 1 is that a hero must rely on clever deceit, or guile, to survive. Explain how this theme is conveyed. Can you identify any other themes in Part 1?

## Literary Criticism

- 12. Critical Interpretations** In discussing Homer's use of epic similes, the critic Eva Brann contends that "similes do much the same work in Homeric epic as do the gods, who also beautify and magnify human existence." Think about how the gods interact with humans in the *Odyssey*. Do you agree that they "beautify and magnify" human existence? Then consider the epic similes you have encountered so far; how might they be seen to do the same? Explain whether or not you think Brann is making a worthwhile comparison.

## Vocabulary in Context

### VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether the words in each pair are synonyms or antonyms.

1. harried/calmed
2. appalled/dismayed
3. profusion/shortage
4. ardor/indifference
5. assuage/soothe
6. adversary/friend
7. ponderous/awkward
8. travail/relaxation
9. beguiling/entrancing
10. foreboding/prediction
11. abominably/atrociously
12. meditation/contemplation

### VOCABULARY IN WRITING

Write a paragraph describing one of the tricks Odysseus uses to escape from danger. Use four or more vocabulary words. Here is a sample beginning.

#### EXAMPLE SENTENCE

*Odysseus had been warned about the Sirens' beguiling him.*

### VOCABULARY STRATEGY: WORDS WITH THE PREFIX *fore-*

The prefix *fore-*, which means “earlier,” “in front of,” or “beforehand,” is used in forming numerous English words. In *foreboding*, it is combined with the verb *bode*, “to give signs of something.” *Fore-* is also combined with many common words, as in *forehead* and *foretell*. Recognizing this prefix when it appears in words can help you determine their meanings.

**PRACTICE** Choose a word from the box to complete each sentence. Refer to a dictionary if you need help.


1. Our \_\_\_\_\_ came to this land looking for freedom.
2. Diandra tried to \_\_\_\_\_ Jack before he walked right into the trap.
3. In the \_\_\_\_\_ of the painting was a large house; behind the house was a barn.
4. Casual comments early in a story often \_\_\_\_\_ coming events.
5. The tennis star's strong \_\_\_\_\_ made her a formidable opponent.
6. To \_\_\_\_\_ a quick vote on the issue, the committee voted to study it further.
7. In what way was the horse and buggy the \_\_\_\_\_ of the automobile?

#### WORDS WITH *fore-*

forefathers  
foreground  
forehand  
forerunner  
foreshadow  
forestall  
forewarn

#### WORD LIST

abominably  
adversary  
appalled  
ardor  
assuage  
beguiling  
foreboding  
harried  
meditation  
ponderous  
profusion  
travail

 **VOCABULARY PRACTICE**  
For more practice, go to the **Vocabulary Center** at [ClassZone.com](http://ClassZone.com).

## The Homecoming *from the Odyssey*

Epic Poem by Homer

Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

*How does it feel  
to come HOME again?*

**KEY IDEA** If you spend enough time at any airport or bus station, you're bound to witness an emotional scene. A long-awaited **homecoming** can touch us more deeply than almost anything. Imagine a traveler who's been away for years, whose family thought he might never return. What kind of scene might you expect at his homecoming?

**QUICKWRITE** Recall a time when you or someone you know returned home after some time away. Write a brief description of the scene, and explain the emotions that went along with it.



## LITERARY ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EPIC

In the simplest terms, an epic is a long adventure story. An epic **plot** spans many years and involves a long journey. Often, the fate of an entire nation is at stake. An epic **setting** spans great distances and foreign lands. Epic **themes** reflect timeless concerns, such as courage, honor, life, and death.

Epics also contain **archetypes**, or patterns found in works across different cultures and time periods. As explained in Part 1, the epic hero is an archetype. So is the notion of a heroic journey. Other archetypes are also found in the *Odyssey*.

- intervention by gods
- descent into the underworld
- floods and storms
- heroic battles against monsters

As you read the second part of the *Odyssey*, look for these and other archetypes. Consider where else you might have encountered them in literature, art, or film.

## READING STRATEGY: SUMMARIZING

Writing a **plot summary**—a brief retelling of a story—is a good way to make sure you’re following the events of a narrative. An epic consists of many episodes, each with its own set of characters, conflicts, and resolution. As you read, record information that will help you summarize each episode.

<i>Episode: Father and Son</i>	
<i>Characters: Odysseus, Eumaeus</i>	<i>Setting: Odysseus' homeland of Ithaca</i>
<i>Conflict:</i>	<i>Resolution:</i>

## VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Replace the words in bold with synonyms from the word list.

<b>WORD LIST</b>	adversity	desolation	revulsion
	aloof	implacable	tremulous
	commandeer	restitution	
	contemptible	revelry	

1. It's **disgusting** to be **shaky** in the face of **hardship**.
2. He felt an **unforgiving hatred** for his captors.
3. Don't act **distant**; forget **sorrow** and join the **celebration!**
4. He could **seize** enemy ships as **repayment** for wrongs.

## Overview

**Book 16: Father and Son** Sent safely on his way by King Alcinous, Odysseus reaches Ithaca. The goddess Athena disguises him as an old man so that he may surprise the evil suitors who are courting his wife, Penelope. Odysseus greets Eumaeus, his faithful swineherd, and Telemachus, his own son, returned home after many years abroad.

**Book 17: The Beggar and the Manor** Disguised as a beggar, Odysseus returns to his home.

**Book 21: The Test of the Bow** Not recognizing the beggar as her husband, and weary from grief and waiting, Penelope proposes an archery contest to the suitors, with marriage to her as the prize. Still disguised as an old man, Odysseus beats them all in the contest.

**Book 22: Death in the Great Hall** With Telemachus and Eumaeus at his side, Odysseus sheds his disguise and does battle with the suitors, showing them no mercy.

**Book 23: The Trunk of the Olive Tree** Hardened by years of waiting, Penelope is not convinced that this man is really her husband. She tests him, playing a trick that only Odysseus would recognize. Odysseus passes the test, and husband and wife are reunited.



Penelope weaving at her loom.

## PART TWO: THE HOMECOMING

# BOOK 16:

## *Father and Son*

*In Books 13–15, King Alcinous and his friends send Odysseus on his way home. Odysseus sleeps while the rowers bring him to Ithaca. When he awakens, he fails to recognize his homeland until Athena appears and tells him that he is indeed home. She disguises him as an old man, so that he can surprise the suitors, and then urges him to visit his faithful swineherd, Eumaeus. The swineherd welcomes the disguised Odysseus and tells him about what has been happening in Odysseus' home. Athena goes to Telemachus and tells him to return home. She warns him of the suitors' plot to kill him and advises him to stay with the swineherd for a night. Telemachus does as she bids.*

But there were two men in the mountain hut—  
Odysseus and the swineherd. At first light  
blowing their fire up, they cooked their breakfast  
and sent their lads out, driving herds to root  
5 in the tall timber.

When Telemachus came,  
the wolvish troop of watchdogs only fawned on him  
as he advanced. Odysseus heard them go  
and heard the light crunch of a man's footfall—  
at which he turned quickly to say:

“Eumaeus,  
10 here is one of your crew come back, or maybe  
another friend: the dogs are out there snuffling  
belly down; not one has even growled.  
I can hear footsteps—”

But before he finished  
his tall son stood at the door.

### ANALYZE VISUALS

Review the information given in the summary at the top of this page. What do you think Marc Chagall wanted to capture in this painting?



## The swineherd

15 rose in surprise, letting a bowl and jug  
tumble from his fingers. Going forward,  
he kissed the young man's head, his shining eyes  
and both hands, while his own tears brimmed and fell.  
Think of a man whose dear and only son,  
20 born to him in exile, reared with labor,  
has lived ten years abroad and now returns:  
how would that man embrace his son! Just so  
the herdsman clapped his arms around Telemachus **A**  
and covered him with kisses—for he knew  
25 the lad had got away from death. He said:

“Light of my days, Telemachus,  
you made it back! When you took ship for Pylos  
I never thought to see you here again.  
Come in, dear child, and let me feast my eyes;  
30 here you are, home from distant places! **B**  
How rarely anyway, you visit us,  
your own men, and your own woods and pastures!  
Always in the town, a man would think  
you loved the suitors' company, those dogs!”

35 Telemachus with his clear candor said:

“I am with you, Uncle. See now, I have come  
because I wanted to see you first, to hear from you  
if Mother stayed at home—or is she married  
off to someone and Odysseus' bed  
40 left empty for some gloomy spider's weaving?”

Gently the forester replied to this:

“At home indeed your mother is, poor lady,  
still in the women's hall. Her nights and days  
are wearied out with grieving.”

## Stepping back

45 he took the bronze-shod lance, and the young prince  
entered the cabin over the worn door stone.  
Odysseus moved aside, yielding his couch,  
but from across the room Telemachus checked him:

“Friend, sit down; we'll find another chair  
50 in our own hut. Here is the man to make one!”

### **A** EPIC

Reread lines 19–23. What **theme** is being developed in this **epic simile**?

**27 when you took ship for Pylos:** Ten years earlier, Telemachus went to Pylos (pī'lās') in search of knowledge about Odysseus' whereabouts.

### **B** EPIC

Reread lines 26–30. How do these lines indicate an epic **setting**?

The swineherd, when the quiet man sank down,  
built a new pile of evergreens and fleeces—  
a couch for the dear son of great Odysseus—  
then gave them trenchers of good meat, left over  
55 from the roast pork of yesterday, and heaped up  
willow baskets full of bread, and mixed  
an ivy bowl of honey-hearted wine.  
Then he in turn sat down, facing Odysseus,  
their hands went out upon the meat and drink  
60 as they fell to, ridding themselves of hunger. . . .

*Telemachus sends the swineherd to let his mother know he has returned safely.  
Athena appears and urges Odysseus to let Telemachus know who he really is.*

Saying no more,  
she tipped her golden wand upon the man,  
making his cloak pure white and the knit tunic  
fresh around him. Lithe and young she made him,  
65 ruddy with sun, his jawline clean, the beard  
no longer grew upon his chin. And she  
withdrew when she had done.



Detail of *Goddess Athena Disguises Ulysses as Beggar* (18th century), Giuseppe Bottani. Civiche Racc d'Arte, Pavia, Italy. Photo © Dagli Orti /The Art Archive.



Then Lord Odysseus **C**  
reappeared—and his son was thunderstruck.  
Fear in his eyes, he looked down and away  
70 as though it were a god, and whispered:

“Stranger,  
you are no longer what you were just now!  
Your cloak is new; even your skin! You are  
one of the gods who rule the sweep of heaven!  
Be kind to us, we’ll make you fair oblation  
75 and gifts of hammered gold. Have mercy on us!”

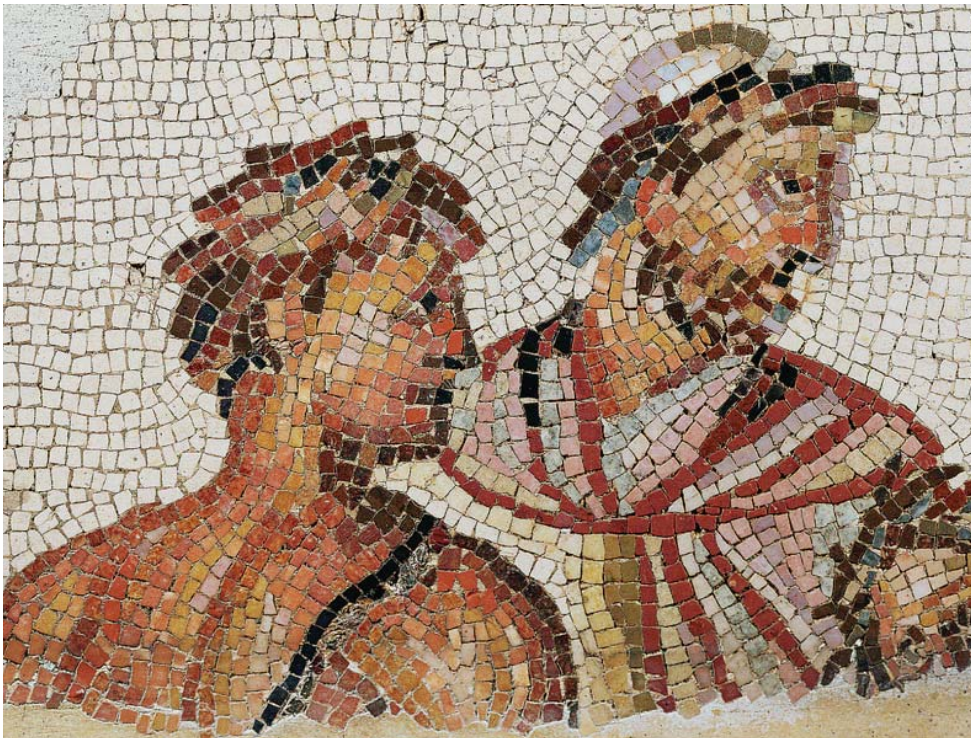
The noble and enduring man replied:

“No god. Why take me for a god? No, no.  
I am that father whom your boyhood lacked  
and suffered pain for lack of. I am he.”  
80 Held back too long, the tears ran down his cheeks  
as he embraced his son.

**C EPIC**  
What supernatural event is  
described in lines 61–67?

**74 oblation:** sacrifice

**ANALYZE VISUALS**  
This detail of an ancient Roman  
mosaic shows Odysseus (Ulysses)  
and Telemachus. How does the  
technique of clustering colored tiles  
together affect the kind of image  
that can be created? Be specific.



*Ulysses and His Son Telemachus* (A.D. first century). Mosaic.  
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

Only Telemachus,  
uncomprehending, wild  
with incredulity, cried out:

“You cannot  
be my father Odysseus! Meddling spirits  
85 conceived this trick to twist the knife in me!  
No man of woman born could work these wonders  
by his own craft, unless a god came into it  
with ease to turn him young or old at will.  
I swear you were in rags and old,  
90 and here you stand like one of the immortals!” **D**

Odysseus brought his ranging mind to bear  
and said:

“This is not princely, to be swept  
away by wonder at your father’s presence.  
No other Odysseus will ever come,  
95 for he and I are one, the same; his bitter  
fortune and his wanderings are mine.  
Twenty years gone, and I am back again  
on my own island. . . .”

Then, throwing  
100 his arms around this marvel of a father  
Telemachus began to weep. Salt tears  
rose from the wells of longing in both men,  
and cries burst from both as keen and fluttering  
as those of the great taloned hawk,  
105 whose nestlings farmers take before they fly.  
So helplessly they cried, pouring out tears,  
and might have gone on weeping so till sundown. . . . **E**

*Telemachus lets Odysseus know that they face more than 100 suitors. Odysseus tells Telemachus to return home. He will follow—still disguised as an old man—and Telemachus must pretend not to know him. He must also lock away Odysseus’ weapons and armor.*

**D EPIC**

Reread lines 61–90. What central **conflict** is beginning to find resolution in this scene? What elements indicate the importance of this moment?

**91 brought his ranging mind to bear:** took control of his wandering thoughts.

**E EPIC**

Reread lines 99–107. What striking **character trait** is emphasized in both Odysseus and Telemachus? Why is this unusual?

# BOOK 17:

## *The Beggar at the Manor*

*Telemachus returns home, and Odysseus and the swineherd soon follow.  
Odysseus is still disguised as a beggar.*

While he spoke

an old hound, lying near, pricked up his ears  
and lifted up his muzzle. This was Argos,  
trained as a puppy by Odysseus,  
5 but never taken on a hunt before  
his master sailed for Troy. The young men, afterward,  
hunted wild goats with him, and hare, and deer,  
but he had grown old in his master's absence.  
Treated as rubbish now, he lay at last  
10 upon a mass of dung before the gates—  
manure of mules and cows, piled there until  
fieldhands could spread it on the king's estate.  
Abandoned there, and half destroyed with flies,  
old Argos lay.

But when he knew he heard

15 Odysseus' voice nearby, he did his best  
to wag his tail, nose down, with flattened ears,  
having no strength to move nearer his master.  
And the man looked away,  
wiping a salt tear from his cheek; but he  
20 hid this from Eumaeus. Then he said:

“I marvel that they leave this hound to lie  
here on the dung pile;  
he would have been a fine dog, from the look of him,  
though I can't say as to his power and speed  
25 when he was young. You find the same good build  
in house dogs, table dogs landowners keep  
all for style.”

And you replied, Eumaeus:

“A hunter owned him—but the man is dead  
in some far place. If this old hound could show

### ANALYZE VISUALS

This illustration of Odysseus and his dog comes from the late 19th or early 20th century. Compare it with the scene depicted on the clay urn shown on page 1093. What elements do the two pieces have in common?



*Ulysses and His Dog* (about 1900). © Bettman/Corbis.

30 the form he had when Lord Odysseus left him,  
going to Troy, you'd see him swift and strong.  
He never shrank from any savage thing  
he'd brought to bay in the deep woods; on the scent  
no other dog kept up with him. Now misery  
35 has him in leash. His owner died abroad,  
and here the women slaves will take no care of him.  
You know how servants are: without a master  
they have no will to labor, or excel.  
For Zeus who views the wide world takes away  
40 half the manhood of a man, that day  
he goes into captivity and slavery.” **F**

Eumaeus crossed the court and went straight forward  
into the mégaron among the suitors;  
but death and darkness in that instant closed  
45 the eyes of Argos, who had seen his master,  
Odysseus, after twenty years. . . .

*Odysseus enters his home as a beggar, and the suitors mock and abuse him.  
Penelope asks to speak with the beggar, but Odysseus puts her off until nightfall.*

**F EPIC**

Reread lines 28–41. Eumaeus still does not know that he is speaking to Odysseus in disguise. This is known as **dramatic irony**—when the reader knows more than a character knows. What event does this speech cause you to anticipate?

**43 mégaron:** the main hall of a palace or house

# BOOK 21:

## *The Test of the Bow*

*In Books 18–20, Odysseus observes the suitors and finds that two in particular, Antinous and Eurymachus, are rude and demanding. Penelope asks Odysseus the beggar for news of her husband. He says he has heard that Odysseus is on his way home. Penelope, however, has given up hope for Odysseus’ return. She proposes an archery contest to the suitors, with marriage to her as the prize. She enters the storeroom and takes down the heavy bow that Odysseus left behind.*

Now the queen reached the storeroom door and halted.  
Here was an oaken sill, cut long ago  
and sanded clean and bedded true. Foursquare  
the doorjambs and the shining doors were set  
5 by the careful builder. Penelope untied the strap  
around the curving handle, pushed her hook  
into the slit, aimed at the bolts inside  
and shot them back. Then came a rasping sound  
as those bright doors the key had sprung gave way—  
10 a bellow like a bull’s vaunt in a meadow— **G**  
followed by her light footfall entering  
over the plank floor. Herb-scented robes  
lay there in chests, but the lady’s milkwhite arms  
went up to lift the bow down from a peg  
15 in its own polished bowcase.

Now Penelope

sank down, holding the weapon on her knees,  
and drew her husband’s great bow out, and sobbed  
and bit her lip and let the salt tears flow.  
Then back she went to face the crowded hall,  
20 tremendous bow in hand, and on her shoulder hung  
the quiver spiked with coughing death. Behind her  
maids bore a basket full of axeheads, bronze  
and iron implements for the master’s game.  
Thus in her beauty she approached the suitors,  
25 and near a pillar of the solid roof

### ANALYZE VISUALS

This is a detail from an 18th-century portrait of Penelope. What qualities are emphasized in this portrait, and how do they compare with qualities emphasized in the text on this page? Explain.

### **G** ARCHETYPE

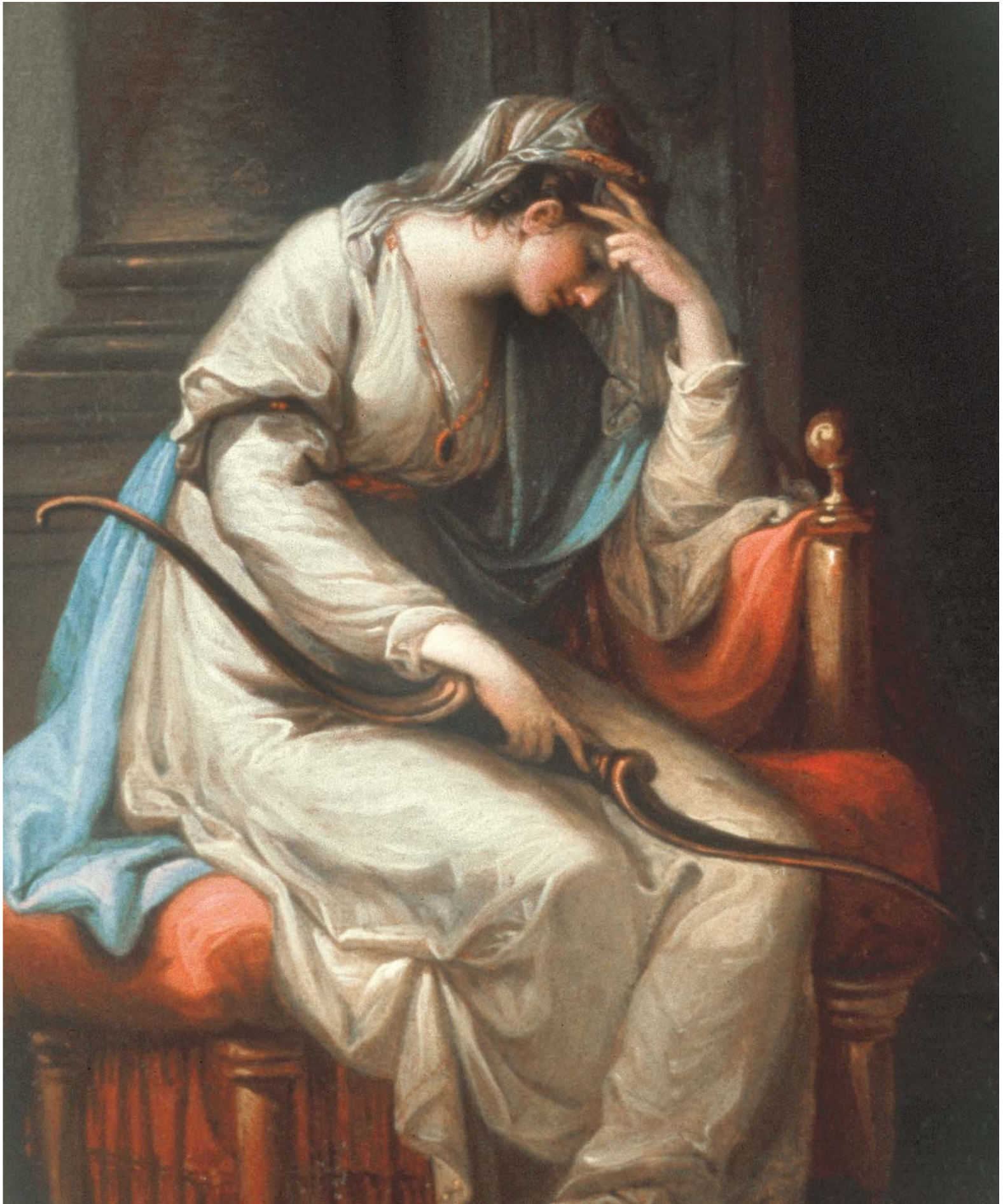
Reread lines 8–10. What archetypal image do you recognize in these lines? Explain how this image helps to build **suspense**.

**15–18** Notice that Penelope still grieves for Odysseus, even after 20 years.

**21** **quiver** (kwĭv’ər): a case in which arrows are carried. *What is meant by “the quiver spiked with coughing death”?*

**22–23** **axeheads . . . game**: metal heads of axes (without handles) that Odysseus employs in a display of archery skill.

Detail of *Penelope Weeping Over the Bow of Ulysses* (about 1779), Angelica Kauffmann. Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Wolverhampton, United Kingdom (OP 531).



she paused, her shining veil across her cheeks,  
her maids on either hand and still,  
then spoke to the banqueters:

“My lords, hear me:

suitors indeed, you **commandeered** this house  
30 to feast and drink in, day and night, my husband  
being long gone, long out of mind. You found  
no justification for yourselves—none  
except your lust to marry me. Stand up, then:  
we now declare a contest for that prize.  
35 Here is my lord Odysseus’ hunting bow.  
Bend and string it if you can. Who sends an arrow  
through iron axe-helve sockets, twelve in line?  
I join my life with his, and leave this place, my home,  
my rich and beautiful bridal house, forever  
40 to be remembered, though I dream it only.” . . .

**commandeer** (kŏm’ən-dīr’) v. to take control of by force

**35–37** Note that the contest has two parts: first the suitor must bend the heavy bow and string it—a task that requires immense strength and skill—and then he must shoot an arrow straight through the holes in 12 axe heads set up in a row.

*Despite heating and greasing the bow, the lesser suitors prove unable to string it. The most able suitors, Antinous and Eurymachus, hold off. While the suitors are busy with the bow, Odysseus—still disguised as an old beggar—goes to enlist the aid of two of his trusted servants, Eumaeus, the swineherd, and Philoetius, the cowherd.*

Two men had meanwhile left the hall:  
swineherd and cowherd, in companionship,  
one downcast as the other. But Odysseus  
followed them outdoors, outside the court,  
45 and coming up said gently:

“You, herdsman,  
and you, too, swineherd, I could say a thing to you,  
or should I keep it dark?

No, no; speak,  
my heart tells me. Would you be men enough  
to stand by Odysseus if he came back?  
50 Suppose he dropped out of a clear sky, as I did?  
Suppose some god should bring him?  
Would you bear arms for him, or for the suitors?”

The cowherd said:

“Ah, let the master come!  
Father Zeus, grant our old wish! Some courier  
55 guide him back! Then judge what stuff is in me  
and how I manage arms!”

Likewise Eumaeus

fell to praying all heaven for his return,  
so that Odysseus, sure at least of these,  
told them:

“I am at home, for I am he.

- 60 I bore **adversities**, but in the twentieth year  
I am ashore in my own land. I find  
the two of you, alone among my people,  
longed for my coming. Prayers I never heard  
except your own that I might come again.  
65 So now what is in store for you I’ll tell you:  
If Zeus brings down the suitors by my hand  
I promise marriages to both, and cattle,  
and houses built near mine. And you shall be  
brothers-in-arms of my Telemachus. **H**  
70 Here, let me show you something else, a sign  
that I am he, that you can trust me, look:  
this old scar from the tusk wound that I got  
boar hunting on Parnassus. . . .”

**adversity** (ăd-vûr’sĭ-tē) *n.* hardship;  
misfortune

**H ARCHETYPE**

Identify the **trait** that Odysseus values so highly in these two servants. Where else in film or literature have you encountered these archetypal characters?

**73 Parnassus** (păr-năs’əs): a mountain in central Greece.

Shifting his rags

- 75 he bared the long gash. Both men looked, and knew,  
and threw their arms around the old soldier, weeping,  
kissing his head and shoulders. He as well  
took each man’s head and hands to kiss, then said—  
to cut it short, else they might weep till dark—  
80 “Break off, no more of this.  
Anyone at the door could see and tell them.  
Drift back in, but separately at intervals  
after me.

Now listen to your orders:

- when the time comes, those gentlemen, to a man,  
85 will be dead against giving me bow or quiver.  
Defy them. Eumaeus, bring the bow  
and put it in my hands there at the door.  
Tell the women to lock their own door tight.  
Tell them if someone hears the shock of arms  
90 or groans of men, in hall or court, not one  
must show her face, but keep still at her weaving.  
Philoetius, run to the outer gate and lock it.  
Throw the cross bar and lash it.” . . . **I**

**I EPIC**

Identify the **plot stage** in lines 84–93. What do you think is about to happen?



*Odysseus the beggar asks the suitors if he might try the bow. Worried that the old man may show them up, they refuse, but Penelope urges them to let Odysseus try. At Telemachus' request, Penelope leaves the men to settle the question of the bow among themselves. Two trusted servants lock the doors of the room, and Telemachus orders the bow be given to Odysseus.*



### ANALYZE VISUALS

How does 20th-century-artist N. C. Wyeth show suspense in this detail from the painting *The Trial of the Bow*? Be specific.

Detail of *The Trial of the Bow* (1929), N. C. Wyeth.  
Illustration from *The Odyssey of Homer*, translated by George Herbert Palmer. © 1929 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

And Odysseus took his time,  
95 turning the bow, tapping it, every inch,  
for borings that termites might have made  
while the master of the weapon was abroad.  
The suitors were now watching him, and some  
jested among themselves:

“A bow lover!”

100 “Dealer in old bows!”

“Maybe he has one like it  
at home!”

“Or has an itch to make one for himself.”

“See how he handles it, the sly old buzzard!”

And one disdainful suitor added this:

“May his fortune grow an inch for every inch he bends it!” **J**

### **J** EPIC

What is the primary conflict in lines 94–104?

105 But the man skilled in all ways of contending,  
satisfied by the great bow's look and heft,  
like a musician, like a harper, when  
with quiet hand upon his instrument  
he draws between his thumb and forefinger  
110 a sweet new string upon a peg: so effortlessly  
Odysseus in one motion strung the bow.  
Then slid his right hand down the cord and plucked it,  
so the taut gut vibrating hummed and sang  
a swallow's note.

In the hushed hall it smote the suitors

115 and all their faces changed. Then Zeus thundered  
overhead, one loud crack for a sign.  
And Odysseus laughed within him that the son  
of crooked-minded Cronus had flung that omen down.  
He picked one ready arrow from his table  
120 where it lay bare: the rest were waiting still  
in the quiver for the young men's turn to come.  
He nocked it, let it rest across the handgrip,  
and drew the string and grooved butt of the arrow,  
aiming from where he sat upon the stool.

Now flashed

125 arrow from twanging bow clean as a whistle  
through every socket ring, and grazed not one,  
to thud with heavy brazen head beyond.

Then quietly

Odysseus said:

“Telemachus, the stranger  
you welcomed in your hall has not disgraced you.

130 I did not miss, neither did I take all day  
stringing the bow. My hand and eye are sound,  
not so **contemptible** as the young men say.  
The hour has come to cook their lordships' mutton—  
supper by daylight. Other amusements later,  
135 with song and harping that adorn a feast.”

He dropped his eyes and nodded, and the prince  
Telemachus, true son of King Odysseus,  
belted his sword on, clapped hand to his spear,  
and with a clink and glitter of keen bronze  
140 stood by his chair, in the forefront near his father. **K**

**106 heft:** weight.

**107–111** In this epic simile, Odysseus' stringing of the bow is compared to the stringing of a harp. *What qualities of Odysseus does this comparison emphasize?*

**114 smote:** struck; affected sharply.

**115–116** The thunder, a sign from Zeus, indicates that the gods are on Odysseus' side.

**118 Cronus** (krō'nəs): Zeus' father.

**122 nocked it:** placed the arrow's feathered end against the bowstring.

**127 brazen:** made of brass.

**contemptible** (kən-těmp'tə-bəl) *adj.*  
deserving of scorn; despicable

**K EPIC**

Book 21 ends with the image of father and son standing side by side facing more than 100 enemies. How can this be considered an epic moment?

# BOOK 22:

## *Death in the Great Hall*

Now shrugging off his rags the wiliest fighter of the islands  
leapt and stood on the broad door sill, his own bow in his hand.  
He poured out at his feet a rain of arrows from the quiver **L**  
and spoke to the crowd:

“So much for that. Your clean-cut game is over.

5 Now watch me hit a target that no man has hit before,  
if I can make this shot. Help me, Apollo.” **M**

He drew to his fist the cruel head of an arrow for Antinous  
just as the young man leaned to lift his beautiful drinking cup,  
embossed, two-handed, golden: the cup was in his fingers:  
10 the wine was even at his lips: and did he dream of death?  
How could he? In that **revelry** amid his throng of friends  
who would imagine a single foe—though a strong foe indeed—  
could dare to bring death’s pain on him and darkness on his  
eyes?

Odysseus’ arrow hit him under the chin  
15 and punched up to the feathers through his throat.

Backward and down he went, letting the winecup fall  
from his shocked hand. Like pipes his nostrils jetted  
crimson runnels, a river of mortal red,  
and one last kick upset his table  
20 knocking the bread and meat to soak in dusty blood.

Now as they craned to see their champion where he lay  
the suitors jostled in uproar down the hall,  
everyone on his feet. Wildly they turned and scanned  
the walls in the long room for arms; but not a shield,  
25 not a good ashen spear was there for a man to take and throw.  
All they could do was yell in outrage at Odysseus:

### ANALYZE VISUALS

What stylistic elements of Wyeth’s *The Slaughter of the Suitors* emphasize the conflict? Explain.

### **L** GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Identify the **metaphor** in line 3. What does this detail add to the description of Odysseus as a warrior?

### **M** EPIC

Note that Odysseus calls upon the help of the god Apollo, who was, among other things, the supporter and protector of archers. The bow was his sacred weapon.

**revelry** (rĕv’əl-rĕ) *n.* noisy merrymaking; festivity

**18 runnels:** streams.

**7–20** *Why does Odysseus kill Antinous first? Why does he do it in such a sudden, terrible way?*

**23–25** Earlier, in preparation for this confrontation, Odysseus and Telemachus removed all the weapons and shields that were hanging on the walls.



“Foul! to shoot at a man! That was your last shot!”

“Your own throat will be slit for this!”

“Our finest lad is down!  
You killed the best on Ithaca.”

“Buzzards will tear your eyes out!”

30 For they imagined as they wished—that it was a wild shot,  
an unintended killing—fools, not to comprehend  
they were already in the grip of death.  
But glaring under his brows Odysseus answered:

“You yellow dogs, you thought I’d never make it  
35 home from the land of Troy. You took my house to plunder,  
twisted my maids to serve your beds. You dared  
bid for my wife while I was still alive.  
Contempt was all you had for the gods who rule wide heaven,  
contempt for what men say of you hereafter.  
40 Your last hour has come. You die in blood.” **N**

As they all took this in, sickly green fear  
pulled at their entrails, and their eyes flickered  
looking for some hatch or hideaway from death.  
Eurymachus alone could speak. He said:

45 “If you are Odysseus of Ithaca come back,  
all that you say these men have done is true.  
Rash actions, many here, more in the countryside.  
But here he lies, the man who caused them all.  
Antinous was the ringleader; he whipped us on  
50 to do these things. He cared less for a marriage  
than for the power Cronion has denied him  
as king of Ithaca. For that  
he tried to trap your son and would have killed him.  
He is dead now and has his portion. Spare  
55 your own people. As for ourselves, we’ll make  
**restitution** of wine and meat consumed,  
and add, each one, a tithe of twenty oxen  
with gifts of bronze and gold to warm your heart.  
Meanwhile we cannot blame you for your anger.” **O**

60 Odysseus glowered under his black brows  
and said:

**N EPIC**

Paraphrase Odysseus’ speech in lines 34–40. What reasons does he give for killing the suitors?

**42 entrails:** internal organs.

**47 rash:** foolish; thoughtless.

**51 Cronion** (krō’nē-ōn’): Zeus, the son of Cronus.

**restitution** (rēs’tī-tōō’shən) *n.* a making good for loss or damage; repayment

**57 tithe:** payment.

**O EPIC**

What is Eurymachus’ **motivation** in lines 45–59? What is his strategy for achieving his goal?

“Not for the whole treasure of your fathers,  
all you enjoy, lands, flocks, or any gold  
put up by others, would I hold my hand.  
There will be killing till the score is paid.  
65 You forced yourselves upon this house. Fight your way out,  
or run for it, if you think you’ll escape death.  
I doubt one man of you skins by.”

They felt their knees fail, and their hearts—but heard  
Eurymachus for the last time rallying them.

70 “Friends,” he said, “the man is **implacable**.  
Now that he’s got his hands on bow and quiver  
he’ll shoot from the big door stone there  
until he kills us to the last man.

Fight, I say,

let’s remember the joy of it. Swords out!  
75 Hold up your tables to deflect his arrows.  
After me, everyone: rush him where he stands.  
If we can budge him from the door, if we can pass  
into the town, we’ll call out men to chase him.  
This fellow with his bow will shoot no more.”

80 He drew his own sword as he spoke, a broadsword of fine  
bronze,  
honed like a razor on either edge. Then crying hoarse and loud  
he hurled himself at Odysseus. But the kingly man let fly  
an arrow at that instant, and the quivering feathered butt  
sprang to the nipple of his breast as the barb stuck in his liver.

85 The bright broadsword clanged down. He lurched and fell  
aside,  
pitching across his table. His cup, his bread and meat,  
were spilt and scattered far and wide, and his head slammed  
on the ground.

**Revulsion**, anguish in his heart, with both feet kicking out,  
he downed his chair, while the shrouding wave of mist closed  
on his eyes.

90 Amphinomus now came running at Odysseus,  
broadsword naked in his hand. He thought to make  
the great soldier give way at the door.  
But with a spear throw from behind Telemachus hit him  
between the shoulders, and the lancehead drove  
95 clear through his chest. He left his feet and fell  
forward, thudding, forehead against the ground. **P**

**61–67** *Why do you think Odysseus rejects Eurymachus’ explanation and offer of restitution?*

**67 skins by:** sneaks away.

**implacable** (ĩm-plăk’ə-bəl) *adj.*  
impossible to soothe; unforgiving

**revulsion** (rĩ-vŭl’shən) *n.* a sudden feeling of disgust or loathing

**88–89** Eurymachus’ death is physically painful, but he also has “revulsion, anguish in his heart.” *What do you think causes this emotional pain?*

**90 Amphinomus** (ăm-fĩn’ə-məs): one of the suitors.

**93–100** Telemachus proves to be a valuable help to his father.

**P EPIC**  
How has the battle with the suitors taken on epic proportions?

Telemachus swerved around him, leaving the long dark spear  
planted in Amphinomus. If he paused to yank it out  
someone might jump him from behind or cut him down with  
a sword

100 at the moment he bent over. So he ran—ran from the tables  
to his father’s side and halted, panting, saying:

“Father let me bring you a shield and spear,  
a pair of spears, a helmet.

I can arm on the run myself; I’ll give  
105 outfits to Eumaeus and this cowherd.  
Better to have equipment.”

Said Odysseus:

“Run then, while I hold them off with arrows  
as long as the arrows last. When all are gone  
if I’m alone they can dislodge me.”

Quick

110 upon his father’s word Telemachus  
ran to the room where spears and armor lay.  
He caught up four light shields, four pairs of spears,  
four helms of war high-plumed with flowing manes,  
and ran back, loaded down, to his father’s side.

115 He was the first to pull a helmet on  
and slide his bare arm in a buckler strap.  
The servants armed themselves, and all three took their stand  
beside the master of battle. **Q**

While he had arrows

he aimed and shot, and every shot brought down  
120 one of his huddling enemies.

But when all barbs had flown from the bowman’s fist,  
he leaned his bow in the bright entry way  
beside the door, and armed: a four-ply shield  
hard on his shoulder, and a crested helm,  
125 horsetailed, nodding stormy upon his head,  
then took his tough and bronze-shod spears. . . .

*The suitors make various unsuccessful attempts to expel Odysseus from his post at the door. Athena urges Odysseus on to battle, yet holds back her fullest aid, waiting for Odysseus and Telemachus to prove themselves. Six of the suitors attempt an attack on Odysseus, but Athena deflects their arrows. Odysseus and his men seize this opportunity to launch their own attack, and the suitors begin to fall. At last Athena’s presence becomes known to all, as the shape of her shield becomes visible*

### ANALYZE VISUALS

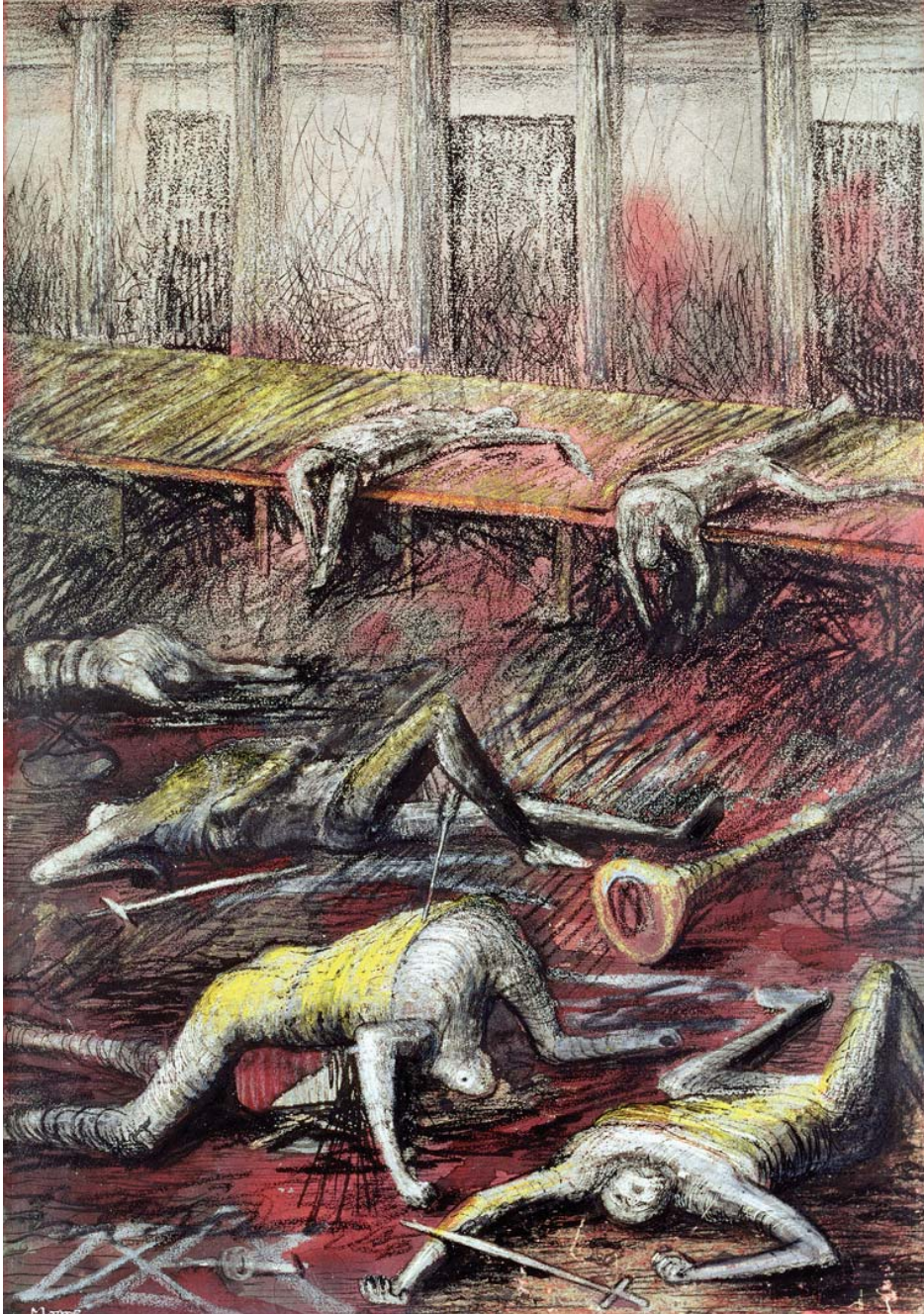
Describe the **mood** of this 1944 chalk and ink drawing. How has the artist’s use of color and black line contributed to this mood?

113 **helms:** helmets.

### **Q** EPIC

How does Telemachus conduct himself in this **conflict** with the suitors?

above the hall. The suitors, recognizing the intervention of the gods on Odysseus' behalf, are frantic to escape but to no avail. Odysseus and his men are compared to falcons who show no mercy to the flocks of birds they pursue and capture. Soon the room is reeking with blood. Thus the battle with the suitors comes to an end, and Odysseus prepares himself to meet Penelope.



*Death of the Suitors: The Odyssey* (1944), Henry Spencer Moore. Black chalk, wash, and ink on paper, 13.3 cm × 28.8 cm. Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford, Bedfordshire, United Kingdom. Photo © Bridgeman Art Library. © The Henry Moore Foundation. This image may not be reproduced or altered without prior consent from the Henry Moore Foundation.



# BOOK 23:

## *The Trunk of the Olive Tree*

Greathearted Odysseus, home at last,  
was being bathed now by Eurynome  
and rubbed with golden oil, and clothed again  
in a fresh tunic and a cloak. Athena  
5 lent him beauty, head to foot. She made him  
taller, and massive, too, with crisper hair  
in curls like petals of wild hyacinth  
but all red-golden. Think of gold infused  
on silver by a craftsman, whose fine art  
10 Hephaestus taught him, or Athena: one  
whose work moves to delight: just so she lavished  
beauty over Odysseus' head and shoulders.  
He sat then in the same chair by the pillar,  
facing his silent wife, and said:

“Strange woman,

15 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?

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

Penelope

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.  
25 I know so well how you—how he—appeared  
boarding the ship for Troy. But all the same . . . **R**

### ANALYZE VISUALS

This terracotta plaque from ancient Greece depicts Odysseus pleading with his wife. What can you tell about this moment in the story from looking at this image? Explain.

**2 Eurynome** (yŏō-rĭn'ə-mē): a female servant.

**10 Hephaestus** (hĭ-fēs'təs): the god of metalworking.

**11 lavished:** showered.

**15 immortals of Olympus:** the gods, who live on Mount Olympus.

**aloof** (ə-lōōf') *adj.* distant; remote; standoffish

### **R** EPIC

Reread lines 22–26. What do you think is the **motivation** for Penelope's skepticism about this man who claims to be the husband she hasn't seen in 20 years? Consider her experiences in his absence.



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

**27–30** The bed, built from the trunk of an olive tree still rooted in the ground, is actually unmovable.

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?  
35 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  
40 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.  
45 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,  
50 and stretched a bed between—a pliant web  
of oxhide thongs dyed crimson.

**50–51** a pliant web . . . crimson: a network of ox-hide straps, dyed red, stretched between the sides of the bed to form a springy base for the bedding.

There’s our sign!

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

Their secret! as she heard it told, her knees  
55 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, **S**  
murmuring:

**tremulous** (trēm’yə-ləs) *adj.* marked by trembling or shaking

**S ARCHETYPE**

How has Penelope tricked Odysseus into proving his identity? What do her actions suggest about archetypal characters?

“Do not rage at me, Odysseus!

No one ever matched your caution! Think  
60 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

65 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,  
 70 if she had known her destiny? known the Achaeans  
 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.  
 75 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, Actoris, that my father  
 sent with me as a gift—she kept our door.  
 80 You make my stiff heart know that I am yours.” **T**

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  
 85 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:  
 90 and so she too rejoiced, her gaze upon her husband,  
 her white arms round him pressed as though forever. . . . **U**

*Odysseus and Penelope tell each other about all that happened to them while Odysseus was away. Then Odysseus visits his father, Laertes, to give him the good news of his safe return. Meanwhile, the townspeople, angry about the deaths of the young suitors, gather to fight Odysseus. In the end, Athena steps in and makes peace among them all.*

**68 Argos** (är’gōs); **Leda** (lē’də).

**desolation** (dēs’ə-lā’shən) *n.* lonely grief; misery

**78 Actoris** (äk-tōr’īs).

**T EPIC**

Reread lines 58–80. What **traits** of Penelope’s does this speech reveal?

**U EPIC SIMILE**

What is Penelope compared to in these final lines?

## Connect: Poem

Dorothy Parker, an American writer of the early 20th century, wrote many poems offering a woman's perspective on life. In "Penelope," Parker imagines what Odysseus' wife might have thought about his journeys.



DOROTHY PARKER

In the pathway of the sun,  
    In the footsteps of a breeze,  
Where the world and sky are one,  
    He shall ride the silver seas,  
5         He shall cut the glittering wave.  
I shall sit at home, and rock;  
Rise, to heed a neighbor's knock;  
Brew my tea, and snip my thread;  
Bleach the linen for my bed.  
10         They will call him brave.

### Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why is Telemachus fearful when his father first reveals his identity?
2. **Recall** How does Odysseus react when Argos recognizes him?
3. **Recall** Who helps Odysseus fight the suitors?
4. **Clarify** Why does Penelope test Odysseus?

### Literary Analysis

5. **Summarize the Plot** Review the chart you created as you read these episodes about Odysseus' homecoming. Use the chart to write a plot summary of Part 2; feel free to use the overview on page 1141 as a starter.
6. **Analyze Character** Why do you think Penelope devises the contest with the bow? What does this contest reveal about her character?
7. **Examine Archetypes** Think about other contests you have encountered in literature or film. Would you say that the contest of the bow is archetypal? Explain why or why not.
8. **Analyze Universal Theme** The *Odyssey* has themes reflecting timeless and universal concerns, such as courage and honor, good and evil, life and death, and the importance of home. Choose one of these topics. What message about this topic does Homer convey? Give evidence from the text to support your answer.
9. **Evaluate Epic Characteristics** One thing that all epics have in common is tremendous **scale**. Everything about an epic is big: an extended and complicated plot, a long journey over great distances, powerful gods and horrible monsters, and major universal themes. Identify one aspect each of epic **plot, setting, character, and theme** in the *Odyssey*. Which do you consider most impressive? Give reasons for your choice.
10. **Compare and Contrast Texts** In Dorothy Parker's poem "Penelope," is the attitude toward Odysseus similar to or different from Penelope's attitude in the *Odyssey* excerpts you have just read? Cite evidence to support your answer.

### Literary Criticism

11. **Social Context** Assume that Odysseus represents the ancient Greeks' ideal of a man and that Penelope represents their ideal of a woman. In what ways are the characters similar to and different from the ideal man and woman of today?

## Vocabulary in Context

### VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether each item is true or false.

1. A person making **restitution** is trying to get revenge.
2. If I **commandeer** your boat, I have asked your permission before taking it.
3. A person who acts **aloof** often is unwilling to make friends.
4. One might feel **desolation** at the death of a close relative.
5. If I feel **revulsion** for you, I enjoy spending time with you.
6. **Adversity** is a serious skin condition.
7. A **tremulous** person tends to have very steady hands.
8. If my anger is **implacable**, I am not going to get over it soon.
9. New Year's Eve is a common night for **revelry**.
10. Being kind to a pet is **contemptible** behavior.

### WORD LIST

adversity  
aloof  
commandeer  
contemptible  
desolation  
implacable  
restitution  
revelry  
revulsion  
tremulous

### VOCABULARY IN WRITING

Using four or more vocabulary words, write a paragraph to describe how Odysseus' old servants feel about events going on in the palace. You might start like this.

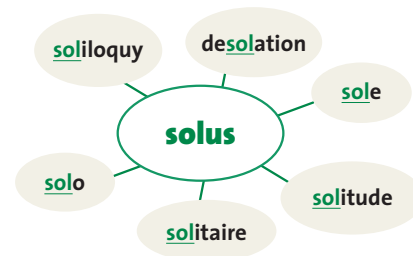
#### EXAMPLE SENTENCE

The servants felt a strong **revulsion** toward the suitors in the palace.


### VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE LATIN WORD ROOT *solus*

The vocabulary word *desolation* contains a form of the Latin root *solus*, which means "alone." This root is found in numerous other English words. To understand the meaning of words formed from *solus*, use context clues as well as your knowledge of the root.

**PRACTICE** Insert the word from the word web that best completes each sentence. Use context clues to help you or, if necessary, consult a dictionary.



1. After months of training with an instructor, he was ready for his first \_\_\_\_ flight.
2. Jeannette often plays a game of \_\_\_\_ on her computer.
3. Rupert lived on a desert island because he wanted \_\_\_\_.
4. The \_\_\_\_ requirement for joining the club is that you are 13 or older.
5. An actor delivering a \_\_\_\_ generally stands on the stage alone.

 **VOCABULARY PRACTICE**  
For more practice, go to the **Vocabulary Center** at **ClassZone.com**.