Hey Summer Readers!

I hope you will enjoy reading this abridged edition of Homer's *Odyssey*; it is a famous adventure story. I wonder if you will see similarities to stories, books and movies of today.

Since it is poetic, you might have to read sections several times to understand what's happening. Don't be discouraged that you can't zip right through the reading. Just think it's building your comprehension skills!

Since you will be tested on your reading, pay particular attention to the characters so that you can do well in matching characters with their descriptions. In addition, know the plot so that you can answer multiple choice questions that deal with the storyline.

Please keep this booklet in very good condition. Too much wear or writing within the booklet will mean that you must purchase the booklet for $5. For your convenience, a PDF format will be available for you to download from the school website.

Wishing you a great summer 😊

Captain Horlings
These battles might have taken place as early as 1200 B.C.—a time that was at least as long ago for Homer’s audience as the Pilgrims’ landing at Plymouth Rock is for us.

Almost three thousand years ago, people who lived in the starkly beautiful part of the world we now call Greece were telling stories about a great war. The person credited with later gathering all these stories together and telling them as one unified epic is a man named Homer (*Homéros*, in Greek). Homer’s great war stories are called, in English, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. (In Greek, the *Iliad* is *Iliás* and the *Odyssey* is *Odysseyía*.)

Homer’s stories probably can be traced to historical struggles for control of the waterway leading from the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. These battles might have taken place as early as 1200 B.C.—a time that was at least as long ago for Homer’s audience as the Pilgrims’ landing at Plymouth Rock is for us.

Homer’s first epic was the *Iliad*, which tells of a ten-year war fought on the plains outside the walls of a great city called Troy (also known as Ilion). The ruins of Troy can still be seen in western Turkey. In Homer’s story the Trojan War was fought between the people of Troy and an alliance of Greek kings (at that time each island and area of the Greek mainland had its own king). The *Iliad* tells us that the cause of the war was sexual jealousy: The world’s most beautiful woman, Helen, abandoned her husband, Menelaus, a Greek king, and ran off with Paris, a prince of Troy. (See “The Beautiful Helen,” page 107.)

The *Odyssey*, Homer’s second epic, is the story of the attempt of one Greek soldier, Odysseus, to get home after the Trojan War. All epic poems in the Western world owe something to the basic patterns established by these two stories.

**EPICS AND VALUES**

Epics are long narrative poems that tell of the adventures of heroes who in some way embody the values of their civilizations. The Greeks for centuries used the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in schools to teach Greek virtues. So it is not surprising that later cultures that admired the Homeric epics created their own epics, imitating Homer’s style but conveying their own value systems.
Still, for all the epics written since Homer's time and for all the ones composed before it, when people in the Western world think of the word epic, they think primarily of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Rome's Aeneid, France's Song of Roland, Italy's The Divine Comedy, the ancient Mesopotamian tale of Gilgamesh, India's Mahabharata and Ramayana, Mali's Sundiata—all are great stories in the epic tradition. But Homer's epics are at the heart of the epic tradition.

The Iliad is the primary model for the epic of war. The Odyssey is the model for the epic of the long journey. The theme of the journey has been basic in Western literature—it is found in fairy tales, in such novels as The Incredible Journey, Moby-Dick, and The Hobbit, and in such movies as The Wizard of Oz and Star Wars. Thus, the Odyssey has been the more widely read of Homer's two great stories.

**The War-Story Background:**

**Violence and Brutality**

The background for Odysseus's story is found in the Iliad, which is set in the tenth and final year of the Trojan War. According to the Iliad, the Greeks attacked Troy to avenge the insult suffered by Menelaus, king of Sparta, when his wife, Helen, ran off with Paris, a young prince of Troy. The Greek kings banded together under the leadership of Agamemnon,
The Odyssey is a story marked by melancholy and a feeling of postwar disillusionment.

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the brother of Menelaus. In a thousand ships, they sailed across the Aegean Sea and laid siege to the walled city of Troy.

The audience of the Odyssey would have known this war story. Listeners would have known that the Greeks were eventually victorious—that they gained entrance to Troy, reduced the city to smoldering ruins, and butchered all the inhabitants, except for those they took as slaves back to Greece. They would have known all about the greatest of the Greek warriors, Achilles, who died young in the final year of the war. The audience would probably have heard other epic poems (now lost) that told of the homecomings of the various Greek heroes who survived the war. They would especially have known about the homecoming of Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces, who was murdered by his unfaithful wife when he returned from Troy.

Finally, Homer’s listeners might well have been particularly fascinated by another homecoming story—this one about a somewhat unusual hero, known as much for his brain as for his brawn. In fact, many legends had already grown up around this hero, whose name was Odysseus. He was the subject of Homer’s new epic, the Odyssey.

ODYSSEUS: A HERO IN TROUBLE

In Homer’s day, heroes were thought of as a special class of aristocrats. They were placed somewhere between the gods and ordinary human beings. Heroes experienced pain and death, but they were always sure of themselves, always “on top of the world.”

Odysseus is different. He is a hero in trouble. We can relate to Odysseus because like him we also face a world of difficult choices. Like Odysseus we have to cope with unfair authority figures. Like him we have to work very hard to get what we want.

The Odyssey is a story marked by melancholy and a feeling of postwar disillusionment. Odysseus was a great soldier in the war, but his war record is not of interest to the monsters that populate the world of his wanderings. Even the people of his home island, Ithaca, seem to lack respect for him. It is as if society were saying to the returning hero, “You were a great soldier once—or so they say—but times have changed. This is a difficult world, and we have more important things to think about than your record.”

In the years before the great war, Odysseus had married the beautiful and ever-faithful Penelope, one of several very strong women in the man’s world of the Greek epic. (One critic, Robert Graves, was so impressed by the unusual importance of women and home and hearth in the Odyssey that he believed Homer must have been a woman.)

Penelope and Odysseus had one son, Telemachus (te·lem’·a·kəs). He was still a toddler when Odysseus was called by Agamemnon and
Menelaus to join them in the war against Troy. But Odysseus was a homebody. He preferred not to go to war, especially a war fought for an unfaithful woman. Even though he was obligated under a treaty to go, Odysseus tried draft-dodging. It is said that when Agamemnon and Menelaus came to fetch him, he pretended to be insane and acted as if he did not recognize his visitors. Instead of entertaining them, he dressed as a peasant and began plowing a field and sowing it with salt. But the “draft board” was smarter than Odysseus. They threw his baby, Telemachus, in front of his oncoming plow. Odysseus revealed his sanity by quickly turning the plow aside to avoid running over his son.

**THE WOODEN-HORSE TRICK**

Once in Troy, Odysseus performed extremely well as a soldier and commander. It was he, for example, who thought of the famous wooden-horse trick that would lead to the downfall of Troy. For ten years the Greeks had been fighting the Trojans, but they were fighting outside Troy’s massive walls. They had been unable to break through the walls and enter the city. Odysseus’s plan was to build an enormous wooden horse and hide a few Greek soldiers inside its hollow belly. After the horse was built, the Greeks pushed it up to the gates of Troy and withdrew their armies, so that their camp appeared to be abandoned. Thinking that the Greeks had given up the fight and that the horse was a peace offering, the Trojans brought the horse into their city. That night the Greeks hidden inside the hollow belly came out, opened the gates of Troy to the whole Greek army, and began the battle that was to win the war.

**THE ANCIENT WORLD AND OURS**

The world of Odysseus was harsh, a world familiar with violence. In a certain sense, Odysseus and his men act like pirates on their journey home. They think nothing of entering a town and carrying off all its worldly goods. The “worldly goods” in an ancient city might have been only pots and pans and cattle and sheep. The “palaces” the Greeks raided might have been little more than elaborate mud and stone farmhouses. Yet, in the struggles of Odysseus, Penelope, and Telemachus in their “primitive” society that had little in common
Odysseus and his family are people searching for the right relationships with one another and with the people around them.

A SEARCH FOR THEIR PLACES IN LIFE
Odysseus and his family are people searching for the right relationships with one another and with the people around them. They want to find their proper places in life. It is this theme that sets the tone for the Odyssey and determines the unusual way in which the poem is structured.

Instead of beginning at the beginning with Odysseus's departure from Troy, the story begins with his son, Telemachus. Telemachus is now twenty years old. He is threatened by rude, powerful men swarming about his own home, pressuring his mother to marry one of them. These men are bent on robbing Telemachus of his inheritance.

Telemachus is a young man who needs his father, the one person who can put things right at home.

Meanwhile, we hear that his father is stranded on an island, longing to find a way to get back to his wife, child, and home. It is ten years since Odysseus sailed from Troy, twenty years since he left Ithaca to fight in Troy. While Telemachus is in search of his father, Odysseus is in search of a way out of what we might today call his midlife crisis. He is searching for inner peace, for a way to reestablish a natural balance in his life. The quests of father and son provide a framework for the poem and bring us into it as well—because we all are in search of our real identities, our true selves.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE GODS
This brings us to mythic and religious questions in the Odyssey. Myths are traditional stories, rooted in a particular culture, that usually explain a belief, a ritual, or a mysterious natural phenomenon. Myths are essentially religious because they are concerned with the relationship between human beings and the unknown or spiritual realm.

As you will see, Homer is always concerned with the relationship between humans and gods. Homer is religious: For him, the gods control all things. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, is always at the side of Odysseus. This is appropriate, because Odysseus is known for his mental abilities. Thus, in Homer's stories a god can be an alter ego, a reflection of a hero's best or worst qualities. The god who works against Odysseus is Poseidon, the god of the sea, who is known for arrogance and a certain brutishness. Odysseus himself can be violent and cruel, just as Poseidon is.

WHO WAS HOMER?
No one knows for sure who Homer was. The later Greeks believed he was a blind minstrel, or singer, who came from the island of Chios.
Some scholars feel there must have been two Homers; some think he was just a legend. But scholars have also argued about whether a man called Shakespeare ever existed. It is almost as if they were saying that Homer and Shakespeare are too good to be true. On the whole, it seems sensible to take the word of the Greeks themselves. We can at least accept the existence of Homer as a model for a class of wandering bards or minstrels later called rhapsodes (ræp'sədz). These rhapsodes, or “singers of tales,” were the historians and entertainers as well as the mythmakers of their time. There was probably no written history in Homer’s day. There were certainly no movies and no television, and the Greeks had nothing like a Bible or a book of religious stories. So it was that the minstrels traveled about from community to community singing of recent events or of the doings of heroes, gods, and goddesses. It is as if the author of the Book of Kings in the Bible, the writer of a history of World War II, and a famous pop singer were combined in one person. The people in Homer’s day saw no conflict among religion, history, and good fun.

**HOW WERE THE EPICS TOLD?**

Scholars have found that oral epic poets are still composing today in Eastern Europe and other parts of the world. These scholars suggest that stories like the Iliad and the Odyssey were originally told aloud by people who could not read and write. The stories followed a basic story line, but most of the actual words were improvised—made up on the spot—in a way that fit a particular rhythm or meter. The singers of these stories had to be very talented, and they had to work very hard. They also needed an audience that could listen closely.

We can see from this why there is so much repetition in the Homeric epics. The oral storyteller, in fact, had a store of formulas ready in his memory. He knew formulas for describing the arrival and greeting of guests, the eating of meals, and the taking of baths. He knew formulas for describing the sea (it is “wine-dark”) and for describing Athena (she is “gray-eyed Athena”).

Formulas such as these had another advantage: they gave the singer and his audience some breathing time. The audience could relax for a moment and enjoy a familiar and memorable passage, while the singer could think ahead to the next part of his story.

When we think about the audience that listened to these stories, we can also understand the value of the extended comparisons that we today call Homeric or epic similes. These similes compare heroic or epic events to simple and easily understandable everyday events—
events the audience would recognize instantly. For example, at one point in the *Iliad*, Athena prevents an arrow from striking Menelaus. The singer compares the goddess’s actions to an action that would have been familiar to every listener:

> She brushed it away from his skin as lightly as when a mother
> Brushes a fly away from her child who is lying in sweet sleep.

Epic poets such as Homer would come to a city and would go through a part of their repertory while there. A story as long as the *Odyssey* (11,300 lines) could not be told at one sitting. We have to assume that if the singer had only a few days in a town, he would summarize some of his story and sing the rest in detail, in as many sittings as he had time for.

This is exactly what will happen in the selections from the *Odyssey* that are presented here. We’ll assume that Homer wants to get his story told to us, but that his time is limited. We’ll also assume that the audience, before retiring at the end of each performance, wants to talk about the stories they’ve just heard. You are now part of that audience.

**A LIVE PERFORMANCE**

What was it like to hear a live performance of the *Odyssey*? We can guess what it was like because there are many instances in the epic itself in which traveling singers appear and sing their tales. In the court of the Phaeacian king, Alcinous (a·lik·nōs), in Book 8, for instance, there is a particularly wonderful singer who must make us wonder if the blind Homer is talking about himself. Let’s picture the setting of a performance before we start the story.

Imagine a large hall full of people who are freshly bathed, rubbed with fine oils, and draped in clean tunics. Imagine the smell of meat being cooked over charcoal, the sound of voices. Imagine wine being freely poured, the flickering reflections of the great cooking fires, and the torches that light the room. A certain anticipation hangs in the air. It is said that the blind minstrel Homer is in the city and that he has new stories about that long war in Troy. Will he appear and entertain tonight?

Ruins of an amphitheater at the temple of Hephaestus in Athens.
PEOPLE AND PLACES IN THE ODYSSEY

The following cast of characters lists some of those who take part in the sections of the Odyssey included in this book. Note that the Greeks in the Odyssey are often referred to as Achaeans (ə-kē′ənz) or Argives (ər′givz′). Achaeans is the most general term, which also includes the people of Ithaca, the island off the west coast of Greece where Odysseus ruled. The word Achaeans is taken from the name of an ancient part of northeastern Greece called Achaia. The name Argives usually refers to the Greeks who went to fight at Troy.

THE WANDERINGS: CHARACTERS AND PLACES

Aeaea (ə′ē′ə): home of Circe, the enchantress and goddess.

Alcinous (al′sin′əs): king of Phaeacia. Odysseus tells the story of his adventures to Alcinous's court.

Calypso (ka-lip′sō): beautiful nymph goddess who keeps Odysseus on her island for seven years.

Charybdis (ka-rəb′dēs): female monster who sucks in water three times a day to form a deadly whirlpool. (Scholars believe the character is based on a real whirlpool in the Strait of Messina.)

Cicones (sə-kō′niz′): people living on the southwestern coast of Thrace who battled Odysseus and his men on their journey.

Circe (sər′sē): enchantress and goddess who turns Odysseus's men into swine.

Cyclops: See Polyphemus, below.

Erebus (er′ə-bas): dark area of the underworld where the dead reside.

Eurylochus (yōr′lō-kōs′): a member of Odysseus's loyal crew.

Lotus Eaters: people who feed Odysseus's men lotus plants to make them forget Ithaca.

Phaeacians (fə-a′shən): island kingdom ruled by King Alcinous. The Phaeacians are shipbuilders and traders.

Polyphemus (pəl′fē′məs): son of the sea god Poseidon and blinded by Odysseus. Polyphemus is a Cyclops (sī′klāps′), one of a race of brutish one-eyed giants, the Cyclopes (sī′klo-pēz′), who live solitary lives as shepherds, supposedly on the island now known as Sicily.
THE GODS

Apollo (ə-pāl’ə): god of poetry, music, prophecy, medicine, and archery.

Athena (ə-thē’nə): favorite daughter of Zeus; the great goddess of wisdom as well as war and peace. She favored the Greeks during the Trojan War. She is often called Pallas Athena.

Cronus (krō’nəs): Titan (giant god) who ruled the universe until his son Zeus overthrew him.

Helios (hēlē’-əs'): sun god.

Hephaestus (hē-fēs’təs): god of metalworking.

Hermes (hur’-mēz’): messenger god.

Poseidon (pō-sī’dən): god of the sea; brother of Zeus. Poseidon is called Earth Shaker because he is believed to cause earthquakes. He is an enemy of Odysseus.

Zeus (zōōs): the most powerful god. His home is on Olympus.

ITHACA: THE PEOPLE AT HOME

Antinous (án-tin’ō əs): one of Penelope's main suitors; an arrogant and mean young noble from Ithaca.

Eumaeus (yōō-mē’əs): swineherd, one of Odysseus's loyal servants.

Eurycleia (yōō’ ri-klē’ə): Odysseus's old nurse.

Eurymachus (yōō-ri-mə-kas): suitor of Penelope.

Eurynome (yōō-rin’ə-mē): Penelope's housekeeper.

Penelope (pa-neł’ə-pē): Odysseus's faithful wife.

Philoctetes (fi-lōk’tətəs): cowherd, one of Odysseus's loyal servants.

Telemachus (te-lēm’ə-kas): Odysseus's son.
from the Odyssey, Part One

Make the Connection
Quickwrite
What makes a hero? Write down the names of people, real or fictional, whom you consider heroic. Then, list character traits that you think a hero should have. Are these traits universal, or do they reflect only our own culture? Add to your notes as you read the Odyssey.

Literary Focus
Heroes at Large
We admire them in books and movies, on TV shows, and in the news, and if we look closely, even in our own lives. They're our heroes—real or fictional.

In fiction, as in real life, heroes often set off on a journey that we're all on: the quest to discover who we are and what we can do. Encountering challenges and dangers, heroic characters face external conflicts—struggles with other characters (these are often subordinate characters who play a secondary role in the story) or with the forces of nature.

Whether heroes fail or succeed on their journeys, they do it on a grand scale, giving us new perspectives on our own lives. As you read these tales of Odysseus's wanderings, think about how he overcomes his conflicts. What makes him heroic?

Reading Skills
Monitor Your Comprehension
As you read this epic, stop now and then to ask yourself questions and to sum up what you've read. Ask:

- What has happened so far?
- Why did it happen?
- What are the important events in this episode?
- When do the events take place?
- What might happen next?
- Can I visualize what is being described?
- What is my evaluation of the characters' decisions and actions?
- What connections can I make between what I've read and my own life?

The questions at the open-book signs will help you monitor your comprehension. If you can't answer the questions, go back through the text to find the answers.

Vocabulary Development
adversity (ad·vär'sä·tē) n.: hardship; great misfortune.
formidable (för·ma·dab·l) adj.: awe-inspiring by reason of excellence; strikingly impressive.
ravage (ráv'ij) v.: destroy violently; ruin.
profusion (prō·fyōō'shun) n.: large supply; abundance.
adversary (ad·vär·ser'ē) n.: enemy; opponent.
rancor (rán'kar) n.: bitter hatred; ill will.
abominably (ə·bām·ə·nē·bēl) adv.: in an extremely unpleasant or disgusting manner.
arbor (ār'dar) n.: passion; enthusiasm.
tumult (tōō'mult) n.: commotion; uproar; confusion.
restitution (res'ta·tōō'shan) n.: compensation; repayment.
from the

ODYSSEY

Homer

translated by Robert Fitzgerald

1. Troy
2. Cicones
3. Lotus Eaters
4. Cyclops
5. Island of Aeolus
6. Laestrygonians
7. Circe
8. Tiresias and the Land of the Dead
9. Circe
10. Sirens
11. Charybdis
12. Scylla
13. Thrinakia
14. Calypso
15. Phaeacia
16. Ithaca
Tell the Story

Homer opens with an invocation, or prayer, asking the Muse to help him sing his tale. Notice how the singer gives his listeners hints about how his story is to end.

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 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. 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 took from their eyes the dawn of their return.

Of these adventures, Muse, daughter of Zeus, tell us in our time, lift the great song again. Begin when all the rest who left behind them headlong death in battle or at sea had long ago returned, while he alone still hungered for home and wife. Her ladyship Calypso clung to him in her sea-hollowed caves—a nymph, immortal and most beautiful, who craved him for her own.

And when long years and seasons wheeling brought around that point of time ordained for him to make his passage homeward, trials and dangers, even so, attended him even in Ithaca, near those he loved. Yet all the gods had pitied Lord Odysseus, all but Poseidon, raging cold and rough against the brave king till he came ashore at last on his own land. . . .

*The Greeks believed that there were nine Muses, daughters of Zeus, the chief god. The Muses inspired people to produce music, poetry, dance, and all the other arts.

2. contending (kon·tent′ing) v. used as n.: fightings; dealing with difficulties.

Oral presentation.
1–32. Read this prayer to the Muse aloud. (You and a partner could read it as a chorus, or you could alternate with single voices.) What does Homer tell you about the hero and about what is going to happen to him?

(from Book 1)
PART ONE: THE WANDERINGS

CALYPSO, THE SWEET NYMPH

Books 1–4 of the epic tell about Odysseus’s son, Telemachus. Telemachus has been searching the Mediterranean world for his father, who has never returned from the ten-year Trojan War. (Today, Odysseus would be listed as missing in action.)

When we first meet Odysseus, in Book 5 of the epic, he is a prisoner of the beautiful goddess Calypso. The old soldier is in despair. He has spent ten years (seven of them as Calypso’s not entirely unwilling captive) trying to get home.

The goddess Athena has supported and helped Odysseus on his long journey. Now she begs her father, Zeus, to help her favorite, and Zeus agrees. He sends the messenger god Hermes to Calypso’s island to order Odysseus released. Although Calypso is not described as evil, her seductive charms—even her promises of immortality for Odysseus—threaten to keep the hero away from his wife, Penelope.

No words were lost on Hermes the Wayfinder who bent to tie his beautiful sandals on, ambyrosial, golden, that carry him over water or over endless land in a swish of the wind, 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 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 until the distant island lay ahead, then rising shoreward from the violet ocean 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 in her sweet voice, before her loom aweaving, 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—horned owls, falcons, cormorants—long-tongued beachcombing birds, and followers of the sea. Around the smooth-walled cave a crooking vine held purple clusters under ply of green;

35. ambrosial (am-brōz'ē-al) adj.: fit for the gods; divine. Nectar and ambrosia are the drink and food that kept the gods immortal.

40. Pieria (pi-rē'ē-a): place in central Greece not far from Olympus; a favorite spot of Hermes.’

60. ply (pli) n.: twisted strands.
and four springs, bubbling up near one another
shallow and clear, took channels here and there
through beds of violets and tender parsley.
Even a god who found this place
would gaze, and feel his heart beat with delight:
so Hermes did; but when he had gazed his fill
he entered the wide cave. Now face-to-face
the magical Calypso recognized him,
as all immortal gods know one another
on sight—though seeming strangers, far from home.
But he saw nothing of the great Odysseus,
who sat apart, as a thousand times before,
and racked his own heart groaning, with eyes wet
scanning the bare horizon of the sea. . . .

Hermes tells Calypso that she must give up Odysseus forever.
Now we are directly introduced to Odysseus. Notice what this
great warrior is doing when we first meet him.

The strong god glittering left her as he spoke,
and now her ladyship, having given heed
to Zeus’s mandate, went to find Odysseus
in his stone seat to seaward—tear on tear
brimming his eyes. The sweet days of his lifetime
were running out in anguish over his exile,
for long ago the nymph had ceased to please.
Though he fought shy of her and her desire,
he lay with her each night, for she compelled him.
But when day came he sat on the rocky shore
and broke his own heart groaning, with eyes wet
scanning the bare horizon of the sea.
Now she stood near him in her beauty, saying:

“O forlorn man, be still.
Here you need grieve no more; you need not feel
your life consumed here; I have pondered it,
and I shall help you go. . . .”

Calypso promises Odysseus a raft and provisions to help him
homeward without harm—provided the gods wish it. Now
Odysseus and Calypso say goodbye.

Swiftly she turned and led him to her cave,
and they went in, the mortal and immortal.
He took the chair left empty now by Hermes,
where the divine Calypso placed before him victuals and drink of men; then she sat down facing Odysseus, while her serving maids brought nectar and ambrosia to her side. Then each one’s hands went out on each one’s feast until they had had their pleasure; and she said:

“Son of Laertes, versatile Odysseus, after these years with me, you still desire your old home? Even so, I wish you well. If you could see it all, before you go—all the adversity you face at sea—you would stay here, and guard this house, and be immortal—though you wanted her forever, that bride for whom you pine each day. Can I be less desirable than she is? Less interesting? Less beautiful? Can mortals compare with goddesses in grace and form?”

To this the strategist Odysseus answered:

“My lady goddess, there is no cause for anger. My quiet Penelope—how well I know—would seem a shade before your majesty, death and old age being unknown to you, while she must die. Yet, it is true, each day I long for home, long for the sight of home. . . .”

So Odysseus builds the raft and sets sail. But the sea god Poseidon is by no means ready to allow an easy passage over his watery domain. He raises a storm and destroys the raft. It is only with the help of Athena and a sea nymph that Odysseus arrives, broken and battered, on the island of Scheria (skē′rē-ə). There he hides himself in a pile of leaves and falls into a deep sleep.

A man in a distant field, no hearth fires near, will hide a fresh brand in his bed of embers to keep a spark alive for the next day; so in the leaves Odysseus hid himself, while over him Athena showered sleep that his distress should end, and soon, soon.

In quiet sleep she sealed his cherished eyes.

(from Book 5)

Vocabulary
adversity (ad-ver’sa-tē) n.: hardship; great misfortune.
Calypso
Suzanne Vega

My name is Calypso
And I have lived alone
I live on an island
And I waken to the dawn
5
A long time ago
I watched him struggle with the sea
I knew that he was drowning
And I brought him into me
Now today
10
Come morning light
He sails away
After one last night
I let him go.

My name is Calypso
15
My garden overflows
Thick and wild and hidden
Is the sweetness there that grows
My hair it blows long
As I sing into the wind
I tell of nights
Where I could taste the salt on his skin

Salt of the waves
And of tears
And though he pulled away
25
I kept him here for years
I let him go.

My name is Calypso
I have let him go
In the dawn he sails away
30
To be gone forever more
And the waves will take him in again
But he'll know their ways now
I will stand upon the shore
With a clean heart
35
And my song in the wind
The sand will sting my feet
And the sky will burn
It's a lonely time ahead
I do not ask him to return
40
I let him go
I let him go.

The Departure of Ulysses from the Isle of Calypso (1848–1849) by Samuel Palmer.
Odysseus is found by the daughter of Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians. That evening he is a guest at court (Books 6–8).

To the ancient people of Greece and Asia Minor, all guests were godsent. They had to be treated with great courtesy before they could be asked to identify themselves and state their business. That night, at the banquet, the stranger who was washed up on the beach is seated in the guest's place of honor. A minstrel, or singer, is called, and the mystery guest gives him a gift of pork, crisp with fat, and requests a song about Troy. In effect, Odysseus is asking for a song about himself.

Odysseus weeps as the minstrel's song reminds him of all his companions, who will never see their homes again. Now Odysseus is asked by the king to identify himself. It is here that he begins the story of his journey.

Now this was the reply Odysseus made: . . .

"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.

My home is on the peaked seamark of Ithaca
under Mount Neion's windblown robe of leaves,
in sight of other islands—Doulikhion,
Same, wooded Zakynthos—Ithaca
being most lofty in that coastal sea,
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
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
his own home and his parents? In far lands
he shall not, though he find a house of gold.

What of my sailing, then, from Troy?

What of those years
of rough adventure, weathered under Zeus?

Vocabulary
formidable (for'ma-de-bal) adj. awe-inspiring by reason of excellence; strikingly impressive.
The wind that carried west from Ilion,
brought me to Ismaros, on the far shore, 
a stronghold on the coast of the Cicones. 
I stormed that place and killed the men who fought. 
Plunder we took, and we enslaved the women, 
to make division, equal shares to all—
but on the spot I told them: 'Back, and quickly! 
Out to sea again!' My men were mutinous, 
fools, on stores of wine. Sheep after sheep 
they butchered by the surf, and shambling cattle, 
feasting—while fugitives went inland, running 
to call to arms the main force of Cicones. 
This was an army, trained to fight on horseback 
or, where the ground required, on foot. They came 
with dawn over that terrain like the leaves 
and blades of spring. So doom appeared to us, 
dark word of Zeus for us, our evil days. 
My men stood up and made a fight of it— 
backed on the ships, with lances kept in play, 
from bright morning through the blaze of noon 
holding our beach, although so far outnumbered; 
but when the sun passed toward unyoking time, 
them the Achaeans, one by one, gave way. 
Six benches were left empty in every ship 
that evening when we pulled away from death. 
And this new grief we bore with us to sea:
our precious lives we had, but not our friends. 
No ship made sail next day until some shipmate 
had raised a cry, three times, for each poor ghost 
unfleshed by the Cicones on that field. 
Now Zeus the lord of cloud roused in the north 
a storm against the ships, and driving veils 
of squall moved down like night on land and sea. 
The bows went plunging at the gust; sails 
cracked and lashed out strips in the big wind. 
We saw death in that fury, dropped the yards,° 
unshipped the oars, and pulled for the nearest lee:" 
then two long days and nights we lay offshore 
worn out and sick at heart, tasting our grief, 
until a third Dawn came with ringlets shining. 
Then we put up our masts, hauled sail, and rested, 
letting the steersmen and the breeze take over.

149. Ilion (ɪlˈe-ənˈ): another name 
for Troy.

152-160. What do you think 
of the way Odysseus and his men be- 
have toward the Cicones? Do armies 
behave like this in modern times?

184. yard (yardz) n.: rods support- 
ing the sails.
185. lee (lē) n.: place of shelter from 
the wind.

Odyssey, Part One 657
I might have made it safely home, that time, 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."

(from Book 9)

THE LOTUS EATERS

"Upon the tenth 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 midday meal. Then I sent out two picked men and a runner 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, 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, 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, and we moved out again on our seafaring..."

(from Book 9)

194. Cythera (si-thir'ə).
201. mustered (must'ərəd) v.: gathered; assembled.

204–215. Why does Odysseus tie down the three men? What does this action tell you about him?
Troy: It Casts a Spell

The ancient Greeks and Romans had no doubt that the Trojan War really happened. They believed it took place around 1200 B.C. The Greek historian Thucydides (c. 460–c. 400 B.C.) believed that the real causes of the war were economic and political—he rejected Homer’s story of Helen’s abduction and the vengeance taken on Troy by the Greeks. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, most historians had dismissed the Trojan War as a legend.

Enter Heinrich Schliemann (1822–1890). Schliemann was a wealthy German merchant who turned archaeologist when he was middle-aged and archaeology was in its infancy. Armed with a well-thumbed copy of Homer’s Iliad, Schliemann arrived in northwestern Turkey in 1871. A few miles from the Dardanelles, the narrow and windy sea lane that divides Europe from Asia, Schliemann began excavations at a small hill called Hissarlik, perched about a hundred feet above a wide plain.

After five long years, Schliemann made an electrifying discovery. He unearthed gold cups, bracelets, and a spectacular gold headdress. Homer had called Troy “rich in gold,” and Schliemann now told the world he had found the treasure of Priam, the last king of Troy. (The gold’s eventful history was not over. Schliemann took the treasure to Berlin, where it disappeared at the end of World War II. “Priam’s gold” surfaced again in 1993 in Moscow’s Pushkin Museum.)

Schliemann went on to excavate Mycenae, the home of King Agamemnon in Greece. There he also found treasure.

Despite his successes, he was plagued by doubts about whether he had really found Troy. The level, or stratum, where the gold was discovered seemed too ancient to date from the traditional time of the Trojan War.

We now know that Schliemann’s treasure came from a stratum (called Troy II) that dated back to a thousand years before the Trojan War. Another level (Troy VIIA) showed violent destruction by fire around 1200 B.C. Could this have been Homer’s Troy? During the 1930s, another team of archaeologists (this time from the United States) thought so. Despite the inconsistencies that remain, the hill of Hissarlik is now widely accepted as the most likely location of the Trojan War.

In the 1990s, a fifteen-year archaeological project began in Turkey, directed by Professor Manfred Korffmann from the University of Tübingen in Germany. Whatever Korffmann and his international team of seventy scientists and ninety local workers discover, their presence at Troy in the third millennium is powerful proof that this ancient war still casts a spell.
THE CYCLOPS

In his next adventure, Odyssey describes his encounter with the Cyclops named Polyphemus, Poseidon's one-eyed monster son. Polyphemus may represent the brute forces that any hero must overcome before he can reach home. Now Odyssey must rely on the special intelligence associated with his name. Odyssey is the cleverest of the Greek heroes because he is guided by the goddess of wisdom, Athena.

It is Odyssey's famed curiosity that leads him to the Cyclops's cave and that makes him insist on waiting for the barbaric giant.

Odyssey is still speaking to the court of King Alcinous.

"We lit a fire, burnt an offering,
and took some cheese to eat; then sat in silence 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.
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,
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;
thickened his milk, then, into curds and whey,
sieved out the curds to drip in withy baskets,\(^9\)
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,
heaping on brushwood. In the glare he saw us.

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

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;
homeward bound, but taking routes and ways
uncommon; so the will of Zeus would have it.
We served under Agamemnon,\(^9\) son of Atreus\(^9\)—
the whole world knows what city

he laid waste, what armies he destroyed.
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
the unoffending 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

\(^9\) Vocabulary
ravage (rav'ij) v.: destroy violently; ruin.

Odyssey, Part One 661
Ulysses and His Companions on the Island of the Cyclops (16th century) by Pellegrino Tibaldi.
care not a whistle for your thundering Zeus
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?'

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 to tremble,
broke it up on the rocks at your land's end.
A wind from seaward served him, drove us there.
We are survivors, these good men and I.'

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.
Then he dismembered them and made his meal,
gaping and crunching like a mountain lion—
everything: inards, flesh, and marrow bones.
We cried aloud, lifting our hands to Zeus,
powerless, looking on at this, appalled;
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
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.
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
and milked his handsome ewes, all in due order,
putting the sucklings to the mothers. Then,
his chores being all dispatched, he caught
another brace5 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.6

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289–295. Why doesn't Odysseus kill the Cyclops at this
moment? What factors must Odysseus consider in devising a
successful plan of escape?

302. brace (brās) n.: pair.

305. quiver (kwiv'or) n.: case for
arrows.
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:

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\textsuperscript{a} of twenty oars, broad in the beam—a deep-seagoing craft—might carry:

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 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 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, his woolly flock. The rams as well, this time, entered the cave: by some shepherding 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 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, looking up, saying:

'Cyclops, try some wine.

Here's liquor to wash down your scraps of men. Taste it, and see the kind of drink we carried.

\textbf{Vocabulary}

\textit{profusion (prə-fyə-sən) n.:} large supply; abundance.
under our planks. I meant it for an offering
if you would help us home. But you are mad,
unbearable, a bloody monster! After this,
will any other traveler 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,
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.
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,
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.’

Even as he spoke, he reeled and tumbled backward,
his great head lolling to one side; and sleep
took him like any creature. Drunk, hiccuping,
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
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
as more than natural force nerved them; straight
forward they sprinted, lifted it, and rammed it
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
the two-handled 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.

385. In a smithy
one sees a white-hot axhead 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.

390. The Cyclops bellowed and the rock roared round him,
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.

395. Some heard him; and they came by divers ways
to clump around outside and call:

Polyphemus? Why do you cry so sore
in the starry night? You will not let us sleep.

400. Sure no man’s driving off your flock? No man has tricked you, ruined you?

Out of the cave

405. the mammoth Polyphemus roared in answer:
‘No hbdy, No hbdy’s tricked me. No hbdy’s ruined me!’

To this rough shout they made a sage reply:

410. ‘Ah well, if nobody has played you foul
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.’

So saying

415. they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter
to see how like a charm the name deceived them.
Now Cyclops, wheezing as the pain came on him,
fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone
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.
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,
Odysseus escaping the cave of Polyphemus under the belly of
the ram. Detail from a krater, a vessel for holding wine (c.
510 B.C.).
Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, Germany.

until a trick came—and it pleased me well.
The Cyclops’ rams were handsome, fat, with heavy
fleeces, a dark violet.

I tied them silently together, twining
cords of willow from the ogre’s bed;
then slung a man under each middle one
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
in sheepskin ringlets for an iron grip.
So, breathing hard, we waited until morning.

When Dawn spread out her fingertips of rose
the rams began to stir, moving for pasture,
and peals of bleating echoed round the pens
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.
Last of them all my ram, the leader, came,

439. pectoral fleece: wool on an
animal’s chest.
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, 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 over your Master’s eye? That carrion rogue and his accursed companions burnt it out when he had conquered all my wits with wine. Nobody will not get out alive, I swear.

Oh, had you brain and voice to tell 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 Nobody worked upon me.’

He sent us into the open, then. Close by, 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. 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; 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 offshore as shouted words would carry, I sent a few back to the adversary:

‘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!’

Vocabulary

adversary (ad’var-er*e) n.: enemy; opponent.
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.
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
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!'

'That tidal wave he made on the first throw
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,
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!'

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,
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—
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
heal me of this black wound—he and no other
of all the happy gods or mortal men.'

Few words I shouted in reply to him:

'It if I could take your life I would and take
your time away, and hurl you down to hell!
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:
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 fatherland,
far be that day, and dark the years between.
Let him lose all companions, and return
under strange sail to bitter days at home.' . . .'

(from Book 9)

Here we will imagine that Homer stops reciting for the night. The
blind poet might take a glass of wine before turning in. The listeners
would go off to various corners of the local nobleman's house. They
might discuss highlights of the poet's tale among themselves and
look forward to the next evening's installment.
Welcome: A Religious Duty

Today's visitors to Greece are often struck by the generous hospitality of its people. An ancient tradition lies behind the traveler's welcome in Greece—and it is a tradition that was fundamentally religious before it became a part of social custom.

Zeus, the king of the gods, demanded that strangers be treated graciously. Hosts had a religious duty to welcome strangers, and guests had a responsibility to respect hosts. The close interconnections and mutual respect in this host-guest relationship are reflected in the fact that the word xenos (zen's) in ancient Greek can mean both "host" and "guest." The relationship is often symbolized in the Odyssey by the presentation of gifts. Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians, for example, gives Odysseus a magically swift ship in which to sail home.

What happens when the host-guest relationship is abused or otherwise breaks down? In Homer's epic songs about the Trojan War, the Iliad and the Odyssey, the customs of hospitality are violated at least three times. The first occasion caused the war itself: Paris, prince of Troy, ran off with the beautiful Helen from Sparta while he was the guest of Helen's husband, Menelaus. For the Greeks this insult to xenia (hospitality) was at least as serious as Helen's unfaithfulness, and it meant that Zeus would, in the end, allow the Greeks to triumph in the long war.

The second example of violated hospitality has its humorous and ironic side. In the Odyssey the Cyclops is monstrous not only because of his huge size and brutish appearance. He is set apart from civilized beings precisely because of his barbaric outlook on xenia. When Odysseus begs the Cyclops for hospitality and warns that Zeus will avenge an injured guest, the Cyclops replies that he and his kind "care not a whistle for . . . Zeus" (line 265). With dark humor the Cyclops uses the word xereion (Greek for "guest-gift" or "noble gift") when he tells Odysseus that he will have the privilege of being eaten last (lines 362–363). The poetic justice of the Cyclops's blinding would not be lost on Homer's Greek audience.

The final example of a breach in the law of hospitality underlies the entire plot structure of the Odyssey: Back in Ithaca, year after year the suitors abuse the hospitality of Odysseus—an absent "host"—and threaten to take away his wife. The bloody vengeance that Odysseus wreaks on these suitors should be understood in the context of their outrageous violation of religious law. The suitors have turned hospitality into a crude mockery. Perhaps it is not accidental that Odysseus invokes the host-guest relationship just before the battle, when he quietly gives his son, Telemachus, the signal to fight (lines 1208–1209):

"Telemachus, the stranger [xenos] you welcomed in your hall has not disgraced you."
The Cyclops in the Ocean

Nikki Giovanni

Moving slowly... against time... patiently majestic...
the cyclops... in the ocean... meets no Ulysses...

Through the night... he sighs... throbbing against the
shore... declaring... for the adventure...

5 A wall of gray... gathered by a slow touch... slash and
slither... through the waiting screens... separating into
nodules... making my panes... accept the touch...

Not content... to watch my frightened gaze... he clamors
beneath the sash... dancing on my sill...

10 Certain to die... when the sun... returns...

Tropical Storm Dennis
August 15–18, 1981, Florida
THE ENCHANTRESS CIRCE

After sailing from the Cyclops’s island, Odysseus and his men land on the island of Aeolia. There the wind king, Aeolus (é·ə·lōs), does Odysseus a favor. He puts all the stormy winds in a bag so that they will not harm the Ithacans. The bull’s-hide bag containing the winds is wedged under Odysseus’s afterdeck. During the voyage, when the curious and suspicious sailors open the bag, thinking it contains treasure, the evil winds roar up into hurricanes that blow the ships back to Aeolia. Aeolus drives them away again.

On the island of the Laistrygonians (la·str-i·gō·nē·ənz), gigantic cannibals, all the ships but one are destroyed and their crews devoured. Odysseus’s ship escapes and lands on Aeaea, the home of the enchantress and goddess Circe. Here a party of twenty-three men, led by Eurylochus, goes off to explore the island. Odysseus is still telling his story to Alcinous and his court.

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

In the entranceway 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
she wove ambrosial fabric sheer and bright,
by that craft known to the goddesses of heaven.

No one would speak, until Polites—most
faithful and likable of my officers—said:
‘Dear friends, no need for stealth:9 here’s a young weaver
singing a pretty song to set the air
atingle 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
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, adding her own vile pinch, to make them lose desire or thought of our dear fatherland.

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 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.

Down to the ship Eurylochus came running 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 we heard the tale: our friends were gone.

(from Book 10)


575. mast n.: various kinds of nuts used as food for hogs.

549–583. Note your responses to this horrible experience. What have the men done to deserve being turned into pigs? How does Circe violate the laws of hospitality?
Odysseus leaves the ship and rushes to Circe’s hall. The god Hermes stops him to give him a plant that will weaken Circe’s power. (Homer calls it a moly; it might have been a kind of garlic.) Protected by the plant’s magic, Odysseus resists Circe’s sorcery. The goddess, realizing she has met her match, frees Odysseus’s men. Now Circe, “loveliest of all immortals,” persuades Odysseus to stay with her. Odysseus shares her meat and wine, and she restores his heart. After many seasons of feasting and other pleasures, Odysseus and his men beg Circe to help them return home.

She responds to their pleas with the command that Odysseus alone descend to the Land of the Dead, “the cold homes of Death and pale Persephone,” queen of the underworld. There Odysseus must seek the wisdom of the blind prophet Teiresias.

Odysseus pursuing Circe.
Greek vase.
Louvre, Paris, France.

THE LAND OF THE DEAD

In the Land of the Dead, Odysseus seeks to learn his destiny. The source of his information is Teiresias, the famous blind prophet from the city of Thebes. The prophet’s lack of external sight suggests the presence of true insight. Circe has told Odysseus exactly what rites he must perform to bring Teiresias up from the dead. Odysseus continues telling his story to Alcinous’s court.

“Then I addressed the blurred and breathless dead,
585 vowing to slaughter my best heifer for them
before she calved, at home in Ithaca,
and burn the choice bits on the altar fire;
as for Teiresias, I swore to sacrifice
590 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 well pit.
Now the souls gathered, stirring out of Erebus,
595 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.
From every side they came and sought the pit
with rustling cries; and I grew sick with fear.
600 But presently I gave command to my officers
to flay⁹ those sheep the bronze cut down, and make
burnt offerings of flesh to the gods below—
to sovereign Death, to pale Persephone.⁹
Meanwhile I crouched with my drawn sword to keep
the surging phantoms from the bloody pit
till I should know the presence of Teiresias. . . .

Soon from the dark that prince of Thebes came forward
bearing a golden staff; and he addressed me:

'Son of Laertes and the gods of old,
610 Odysseus, master of landways and seaways,
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
let my long sword ring home to the pommel silver,
as he bent down to the somber 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;

601. flay (flā) v.: strip the skin from.
603. Persephone (pər-ˈsē-fə-nē).
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.
When you make landfall on Thrinakia 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,
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,
berest of all companions, lost for years,
under strange sail shall you come home, to find
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,
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.
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:
a ram, a bull, a great buck boar; turn back,
and carry out pure hecatombs at home
to all wide heaven’s lords, the undying gods,
to each in order. Then a sea-borne death
soft as this hand of mist will come upon you
when you are wearied out with rich old age,
your countryfolk in blessed peace around you.
And all this shall be just as I foretell. . . .”

Vocabulary

rancor (ran’kar) n.: bitter hatred; ill will.

622. implacable (im·plak’ə·bal) adj.: unyielding; merciless.

630. kine (kin) n.: old term for “cattle.”

632. beeves n.: another old term for “cattle.”

648. winnowing fan: device used to remove the useless dry outer covering from grain. (These people would never have seen an oar.)

652. hecatombs (hek’ə·təmz’) n.: sacrifices of one hundred cattle at a time to the gods. In Greek, hekatom means “one hundred.”

618–658. What prophecy does Odysseus receive? Take notes on how you might film this important scene in the underworld. How many actors would you need? What props would you use? You might sketch the scene as you visualize it.
Odysseus and his men return to Circe's island, where Circe warns Odysseus of the perils that await him. In the following passage, Odysseus, quoting Circe, is still speaking at Alcinous's court.

"Listen with care to this, now, and a god will arm your mind. Square in your ship's path are Sirens, crying 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 on their sweet meadow lolling. There are bones of dead men rotting in a pile beside them and flayed skins shriveling around the spot.

Steer wide; keep well to seaward; plug your oarsmen's ears with beeswax kneaded soft; none of the rest 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, your crew must only twist more line around you and keep their stroke up, till the singers fade. . . ."

The next peril lies between two headlands. Circe continues her warning.

". . . That is the den of Scylla, where she yaps abominably, a newborn whelp's cry, 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, 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 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 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 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. No, hug the cliff of Scylla, take your ship through on a racing stroke. Better to mourn six men than lose them all, and the ship, too.

689. promontory (prəmˈont·ərē) n.: high area of land that juts out into a body of water.

691. Amphitrite (amˈfə-trītē): goddess of the sea and wife of Poseidon.

702. maelstrom (māˈləstrəm) n.: large, violent whirlpool.
Then you will coast Thrinakia, the island
where Helios's cattle graze, fine herds, and flocks
of goodly sheep. The herds and flocks are seven,
with fifty beasts in each.

710 No lambs are dropped,
or calves, and these fat cattle never die. . . .
Now give those kine a wide berth, keep your thoughts
intent upon your course for home,
and hard seafaring brings you all to Ithaca.

715 But if you raid the beews, I see destruction
for ship and crew. . . ."

The Ithacans set off. Odysseus does not tell his men of Circe's last
prophecy—that he will be the only survivor of their long journey.
Still speaking to Alcinous's court, Odysseus continues his tale.

"The crew being now silent before me, I
addressed them, sore at heart:

720 'Dear friends,
more than one man, or two, should know those things
Circe foresaw for us and shared with me,
so let me tell her forecast: then we die
with our eyes open, if we are going to die,
or know what death we baffle if we can. Sirens
weaving a haunting song over the sea
725 we are to shun, she said, and their green shore
all sweet with clover; yet she urged that I
alone should listen to their song. Therefore
you are to tie me up, tight as a splint,
erect along the mast, lashed to the mast,
and if I shout and beg to be untied,
take more turns of the rope to muffle me.'
I rather dwelt on this part of the forecast,
while our good ship made time, bound outward down
the wind for the strange island of Sirens.

735 Then all at once the wind fell, and a calm
came over all the sea, as though some power
lulled the swell.

The crew were on their feet
briskly, to furl the sail, and stow it; then,
each in place, they poised the smooth oar blades
and sent the white foam scudding by. I carved
740 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
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\textsuperscript{o}
amidships, back to the mast, lashed to the mast,
and took themselves again to rowing. Soon,
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
'Untie me!' to the crew, jerking my brows;
but they bent steady to the oars. Then Perimedes\textsuperscript{o}
got to his feet, he and Eurylochus,
and passed more line about, to hold me still.
So all rowed on, until the Sirens
dropped under the sea rim, and their singing
dwindled away.

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
faded in blue air when 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,
with no oar blades to drive her through the water.

\textbf{Vocabulary}

\textit{ardor} (ærdər) n.: passion; enthusiasm.
\textit{tumult} (to̱məlt) n.: commotion; uproar; confusion.
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? 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 something that we remember. Heads up, lads!

We must obey the orders as I give them. Get the oar shafts in your hands, and lie back hard on your benches; hit these breaking seas. Zeus help us pull away before we founder.°

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.'

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 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 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 and on our starboard beam Charybdis, dire gorge° of the salt sea tide. By heaven! when she vomited, all the sea was like a caldron seething over intense fire, when the mixture suddenly heaves and rises.

°founded (fran'dar) v.: sink.

°combers (köm'`arz) n.: large waves.

°smother (smu`thər) n.: commotion; violent action or disorder.

770–793. Think about what kind of leader Odysseus is. What does he tell his men, to reaassure them? What does he decide not to tell them? Why?

°cuirass (kwı' ras) n.: armor for the breast and back.

°travail (tro-vał) n.: hard, exhausting work or effort; tiring labor.

°gorge (gor) n.: throat and jaws of a greedy, all-devouring being.
The shot spume soared to the landside heights, and fell like rain.

810 But when she swallowed the sea water down we saw the funnel of the maelstrom, heard the rock hollowing all around, and dark sand raged on the bottom far below.

815 My men all blanched⁵ against the gloom, our eyes were fixed upon that yawning mouth in fear of being devoured.

Then Scylla made her strike, whisking six of my best men from the ship.

I happened to glance aft at ship and oarsmen 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.

A man surf-casting on a point of rock for bass or mackerel, whipping his long rod 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.

She ate them as they shrieked there, in her den, in the dire grapple,⁶ reaching still for me—and deathly pity ran me through at that sight—for the worst I ever suffered questing the passes of the strange sea.

We rowed on.

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

Then we were coasting the noble island of the god, where grazed those cattle with wide brows, and bounteous flocks of Helios, lord of noon, who rides high heaven.

835 From the black ship, far still at sea, I heard the lowing of the cattle winding home and sheep bleating; and heard, too, in my heart the words of blind Teiresias of Thebes and Circe of Aea: both forbade me the island of the world’s delight, the Sun. . . .”

843. Suppose you wanted to write a screenplay dramatizing this famous part of the Odyssey—the crew’s struggle against the Sirens and against Scylla and Charybdis. Who would be your main characters? How would you use music and visuals—especially in the Sirens scene? Write down your ideas about filming the epic.
Odysseus urges his exhausted crew to bypass Thrinakia, the island of the sun god, Helios. When the men insist on landing, Odysseus makes them swear not to touch the god's cattle. Odysseus is still speaking to Alcinous's court.

“In the small hours of the third watch, when stars that shone out in the first dusk of evening had gone down to their setting, a giant wind blew from heaven, and clouds driven by Zeus shrouded land and sea in a night of storm; so, just as Dawn with fingertips of rose touched the windy world, we dragged our ship to cover in a grotto, a sea cave where nymphs had chairs of rock and sanded floors. I mustered all the crew and said:

‘Old shipmates, our stores are in the ship’s hold, food and drink; the cattle here are not for our provision, or we pay dearly for it.

Fierce the god is who cherishes these heifers and these sheep: Helios; and no man avoids his eye.’

To this my fighters nodded. Yes. But now we had a month of onshore gales, blowing day in, day out—south winds, or south by east. As long as bread and good red wine remained to keep the men up, and appease their craving, they would not touch the cattle. But in the end, when all the barley in the ship was gone, hunger drove them to scour the wild shore with angling hooks, for fishes and sea fowl,

---

The Companions of Ulysses Slaying the Cattle of the Sun God Helios (16th century) by Pellegrino Tibaldi. Palazzo Poggi, Bologna, Italy.
whatever fell into their hands; and lean days
wore their bellies thin.

The storms continued.

870 So one day I withdrew to the interior
to pray the gods in solitude, for hope
that one might show me some way of salvation.
Slipping away, I struck across the island
to a sheltered spot, out of the driving gale.

875 I washed my hands there, and made supplication to the gods who own Olympus, all the gods—but they, for answer, only closed my eyes under slow drops of sleep.

Now on the shore Eurylochus
made his insidious plea:

879. insidious (in·sidˈə·əs) adj.:
treachery; more dangerous than is apparent.

‘Comrades,’ he said,

‘You’ve gone through everything; listen to what I say.
All deaths are hateful to us, mortal wretches,
but famine is the most pitiful, the worst end that a man can come to.

Will you fight it?

Come, we’ll cut out the noblest of these cattle
for sacrifice to the gods who own the sky;
and once at home, in the old country of Ithaca,
if ever that day comes—we’ll build a costly temple and adorn it with every beauty for the Lord of Noon.

But if he flares up over his heifers lost,
wishing our ship destroyed, and if the gods make cause with him, why, then I say: Better open your lungs to a big sea once for all than waste to skin and bones on a lonely island!’

885 Thus Eurylochus; and they murmured ‘Aye!’
trooping away at once to round up heifers.
Now, that day tranquil cattle with broad brows were grazing near, and soon the men drew up around their chosen beasts in ceremony.

They plucked the leaves that shone on a tall oak—
having no barley meal—to strew the victims, performed the prayers and ritual, knifed the kine and flayed each carcass, cutting thighbones free to wrap in double folds of fat. These offerings, with strips of meat, were laid upon the fire.

Then, as they had no wine, they made libation:

886. libation (li·baˈdən) n.:
offering of wine or oil to the gods.

875. supplication (supˈla·kəˈshən) n.: humble requests; prayers.
with clear spring water, broiling the entrails first; and when the bones were burnt and tripes shared, they spitted the carved meat.

Just then my slumber left me in a rush, my eyes opened, and I went down the seaward path. No sooner had I caught sight of our black hull, than savory odors of burnt fat eddied around me; grief took hold of me, and I cried aloud:

'O Father Zeus and gods in bliss forever, you made me sleep away this day of mischief. O cruel drowsing, in the evil hour! Here they sat, and a great work they contrived.'

Lampetia in her long gown meanwhile had borne swift word to the Overlord of Noon:

'They have killed your kine.'

And the Lord Helios burst into angry speech amid the immortals:

'O Father Zeus and gods in bliss forever, punish Odysseus' men! So overweening, now they have killed my peaceful kine, my joy at morning when I climbed the sky of stars, and evening, when I bore westward from heaven. Restitution or penalty they shall pay—and pay in full—or I go down forever to light the dead men in the underworld.' . . .

(from Book 12)

When Odysseus and his men set sail again, they are punished with death—a thunderbolt from Zeus destroys their boat, and all the men drown. Only Odysseus survives. Exhausted and nearly drowned, he makes his way to Calypso's island, where we met him originally, in Book 5.

Odysseus has brought us up to date. He can now rest and enjoy the comforts of Alcinous's court—but not for long. Ahead lies his most difficult task—reclaiming his own kingdom.

At this moment of suspense, Homer might have put aside his harp until the next night.

Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>entrails</td>
<td>intestines; guts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tripes</td>
<td>stomach parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overweening</td>
<td>excessively proud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

921–930. What exactly has happened to cause the god's fury?

Zeus seated on his throne, holding thunderbolts. Bronze statuette found on Mount Lyceum (6th century B.C.).
Response and Analysis

from the Odyssey, Part One

Reading Check
1. In a chart like the one below, summarize the external conflict and its resolution in each episode.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adventure</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calypso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotus Eaters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyclops</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Circe</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scylla; Charybdis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle of the Sun God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What does Odysseus learn about his future from blind Teiresias in the Land of the Dead?

Thinking Critically
3. "Nobody" in Greek is *outis*, which sounds like *Odysseus*. In his conflict with the Cyclops, how does Odysseus overcome the monster through a clever use of language? What curse at the end of this adventure foreshadows trouble?

4. What conclusions about the deceptive nature of beauty can you draw from the Circe episode?

5. Book 5 of the Odyssey focuses on Odysseus's captivity on Calypso's island. Suzanne Vega (see the Connection on page 655) expresses Calypso's view of the affair. How does her song compare with Homer's story? Whom do you sympathize with—Odysseus or Calypso?

6. From what you've observed of Odysseus, how would you describe what the Greeks valued in a hero? Do we value these same traits today? Check your Quickwrite notes for page 649.

Extending and Evaluating
7. How many of the monsters or threats to Odysseus in this part of the epic are female? What do you think of the way women are portrayed so far?

WRITING
It's Alive!
In "The Cyclops in the Ocean" (see the Connection on page 672), the modern poet Nikki Giovanni personifies a tropical storm—that is, she describes the storm as if it were a living creature. Write a paragraph personifying some other violent force of nature. Describe how it looks and sounds and what it does with its victims.

Cause and Effect
Characters in the Odyssey often use cause-and-effect arguments when they try to persuade. For example, when Odysseus asks the Cyclops for help, he warns the Cyclops of the effects of offending the gods by harming a guest. Calypso tries to persuade Odysseus to remain with her by mentioning the effects he will suffer if he leaves her. Choose one argument from the epic, and describe why it is persuasive or how you think it could be strengthened.

Use "Persuading with Cause and Effect," pages 734–741, for help with this assignment.
Vocabulary Development

Semantic Mapping

**Practice 1**

With a partner, create a semantic map for each Word Bank word. Make up questions about each word, and provide your own answers. A sample map is done for formidable. Compare your maps in class.

- **Who is formidable in the Odyssey?**
  - Odysseus
  - the god

- **Do I want to be called formidable?**
  - Yes, I'd like to be formidable as a center forward.

- **What have I seen that is formidable?**
  - Josh on football field
  - Emma in math class
  - volcano

- **What is not formidable?**
  - ant
  - baby
  - peaceful pond

Word Bank
- adversity
- formidable
- ravage
- profusion
- adversary
- rancor
- abominably
- andor
- tumult
- restitution

Figures of Speech—Homeric Similes

In a figure of speech, a writer compares one thing to something else, something quite different from it in all butt a few important ways. For example, Homer compares the army of the Cicones to "the leaves and blades of spring" (lines 163–164). He is saying that enemy soldiers suddenly appeared everywhere, as green grass and leaves do in spring. The comparison is surprising because a fierce army seems very different from the tender leaves and grass of spring.

The Homeric simile (also called epic simile) is an extended comparison between something that the audience cannot have seen (such as Odysseus boring out the Cyclops's eye) and something ordinary that they would know (such as a shipbuilder drilling a plank; see lines 379–381 on page 665).

**Practice 2**

1. Re-read lines 822–827 on page 683. Explain how this Homeric simile brings the audience into the story by comparing a strange, unfamiliar occurrence to something familiar.

2. Make up three Homeric similes of your own, in which you compare something strange or unfamiliar to something ordinary and familiar. (Remember that a simile makes a comparison using a word such as like, as, or resembles.) You might consider describing one of the following things:
   - a space launch
   - the surface of the moon
   - something you see through a microscope
Before You Read

from the Odyssey, Part Two

Make the Connection

Quickwrite

Imagine that someone has been absent from home for many years. What might that person think or feel upon returning home? Make a list of possible reactions, and save your notes.

Literary Focus

Living Characters

Odysseus is brave and clever. Penelope is faithful—and clever, too. Circe is lovely and bewitching. Homer has depicted his characters—mortal gods, goddesses, and monsters alike—with bold, vivid strokes.

Storytellers reveal character traits in many ways. As you read, look carefully at what characters say and do and think. Note how they interact and how they are described. Then, think about what all this information tells you. Is a character noble or evil? wise or foolish? arrogant or humble? Does the character possess a combination of both positive and negative traits?

Part Two of the Odyssey contains the climax of the epic. Suspenseful and exciting, it is also deeply moving, as Odysseus returns home to Ithaca and is reunited with his wife, Penelope. As you read, think about what these characters are like and why they have lived in the imagination of readers for centuries.

Vocabulary Development

candor (kan'dor) n.: honesty; frankness.
disdainful (dis-dán'fəl) adj.: scornful; regarding someone as beneath you.
adorn (ə-dōrn') v.: add beauty to; decorate.
revelry (rev'əl-rē) n.: merrymaking; festivity.
glowered (glou'ərd) v.: glared; stared angrily.
avails (ə-välz') v.: is of use; helps.
lavished (lav'əsh) v.: gave generously.
alooof (ə-lōof') adj.: at a distance; unfriendly.
pliant (pli'ənt) adj.: flexible.
tremulous (trem'yūləs) adj.: trembling; shaking.
PART TWO: COMING HOME

In Book 13, Odysseus, laden with gifts, is returned in secret to Ithaca in one of the magically swift Phaeacian ships. In Ithaca, Athena appears to the hero. Because his home is full of enemies, she advises him to proceed disguised as a beggar. Now, Odysseus must succeed not only by physical power but also by intelligence.

In Book 14, Odysseus, in his beggar’s disguise, finds his way to the hut of Eumaeus, his old and trusty swineherd. Eumaeus is the very image of faithfulness in a servant—a quality much admired by Homer’s society. The introduction of members of the so-called servant class as important actors is unusual in epic poetry, and it indicates Homer’s originality. Odysseus is politely entertained by Eumaeus, but the king remains disguised from his old servant.

In Book 15, Athena appears to Odysseus’s son, Telemachus. The young man has gone to Pylos and Sparta to talk to old comrades of his father’s to try to discover if Odysseus is alive or dead. Athena advises him to return to Ithaca. His home—the palace of Odysseus—has been over-run by his mother’s suitors. These arrogant men are spending money from Telemachus’s inheritance on feasting and drinking, and they are demanding that his mother, Penelope, take one of them as a husband. Athena warns Telemachus that the suitors plan to ambush him. Telemachus boards a ship for home, lands secretly on Ithaca, and heads toward the hut of the swineherd.

As father and son move closer and closer together, the suspense becomes great. Now Homer is ready to recount what could be the most dramatic moment in the epic. Remember that Odysseus has not seen his son for twenty years. Telemachus has been away from Ithaca for a year.

Penelope at Her Loom (detail), from The Story of Virtuous Women series (c. 1480–1483). Wool tapestry.
THE MEETING OF FATHER AND SON

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 in the tall timber.

935 When Telemachus came, the wolfish 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, here is one of your crew come back, or maybe another friend: the dogs are out there sniffing belly down; not one has even growled. I can hear footsteps—”

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

The swineherd

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.

940 Think of a man whose dear and only son, 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 and covered him with kisses—for he knew the lad had got away from death. He said:

“Light of my days, Telemachus, you made it back! When you took ship for Pylos⁰ I never thought to see you here again. Come in, dear child, and let me feast my eyes; here you are, home from the distant places! 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!”

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⁰ Pylos (πυλός): home of Nestor, one of Odysseus’s fellow soldiers in the Trojan War. Telemachus had gone to see if Nestor knew anything about Odysseus’s whereabouts.
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 Odyssey’s bed 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 he took the bronze-shod lance, and the young prince entered the cabin over the worn door stone. Odyssey moved aside, yielding his couch, but from across the room Telemachus checked him:

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

The swineherd, when the quiet man sank down, built a new pile of evergreens and fleeces—a couch for the dear son of great Odyssey—then gave them trenchers of good meat, left over 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 Odyssey, their hands went out upon the meat and drink as they fell to, ridding themselves of hunger. . . .

Not realizing that the stranger is his father, Telemachus tries to protect him as best he can. He says that the beggar cannot stay in the palace hall because he will be abused by the drunken suitors.

The swineherd is sent to Penelope with news of her son’s return. Now even Athena cannot stand the suspense any longer. She turns to Odyssey, who is still in beggar’s rags:

...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,
ruddy with sun, his jawline clean, the beard
no longer gray upon his chin. And she
withdrew when she had done.

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

"Stranger,
1000 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^ 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."

Held back too long, the tears ran down his cheeks
as he embraced his son.

1010 uncomprehending, wild
with incredulity, cried out:

"You cannot
be my father Odysseus! Meddling spirits
congeal this trick to twist the knife in me!

1015 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,
and here you stand like one of the immortals!"

1020 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,
for he and I are one, the same; his bitter
1025 fortune and his wanderings are mine.
Twenty years gone, and I am back again
on my own island. . . ."

Then, throwing
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, whose nestlings farmers take before they fly. So helplessly they cried, pouring out tears, and might have gone on weeping so till sundown. ...

(from Book 16)

THE BEGGAR AND THE FAITHFUL DOG

Telemachus returns to the family compound and is greeted tearfully by his mother, Penelope, and his old nurse, Eurycleia. A soothsayer has told his mother that Odysseus is alive and in Ithaca. However, Telemachus does not report that he has seen his father. The suspense builds as Odysseus, once again disguised as a beggar, returns to his home, accompanied only by the swineherd. He has been away for twenty years. Only one creature recognizes him.

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,
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
upon a mass of dung before the gates—manure of mules and cows, piled there until field hands could spread it on the king's estate. Abandoned there, and half destroyed with flies, old Argos lay.

But when he knew he heard

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 hid this from Euryclea. 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
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
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
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
half the manhood of a man, that day
he goes into captivity and slavery."

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

(from Book 17)
The Epic Continues

In the hall the “beggar” is taunted by the evil suitors, but Penelope supports him. She has learned that the ragged stranger claims to have news of her husband. Unaware of who the beggar is, she invites him to visit her later in the night to talk about Odysseus.

In Book 18, Penelope appears among the suitors and reproaches Telemachus for allowing the stranger to be abused. She certainly must have warmed her husband’s heart by doing this and by singing the praises of her lost Odysseus.

In Book 19, the suitors depart for the night, and Odysseus and Telemachus discuss their strategy. The clever hero goes as appointed to Penelope with the idea of testing her and her maids. (Some of the maids have not been loyal to the household and have been involved with the suitors.) The faithful wife receives her disguised husband. We can imagine the tension Homer’s audience must have felt. Would Odysseus be recognized?

The “beggar” spins a yarn about his origins, pretending that he has met Odysseus on his travels. He cannot resist praising the lost hero, and he does so successfully enough to bring tears to Penelope’s eyes. We can be sure that this does not displease her husband.

The storytelling beggar reveals that he has heard that Odysseus is alive and is even now sailing for home. Penelope calls for the old nurse and asks her to wash the guest’s feet—a sign of respect and honor. As Eurycleia does so, she recognizes Odysseus from a scar on his leg.

Quickly Odysseus swears the old nurse to secrecy. Meanwhile, Athena has cast a spell on Penelope so that she has taken no notice of this recognition scene. Penelope adds to the suspense by deciding on a test for the suitors on the next day. Without realizing it, she has now given Odysseus a way to defeat the men who threaten his wife and kingdom.

In Book 20, Odysseus, brooding over the shameless behavior of the maidservants and the suitors, longs to destroy his enemies but fears the revenge of their friends. Athena reassures him. Odysseus is told that the suitors will die.
Penelope to Ulysses

Penelope, distressed by the suitors' demands that she marry one of them, plays a trick on them. She has told them that she is weaving a shroud (a cloth used to wrap a body for burial) for Laertes, her father-in-law. She promises that she will choose a husband when she has completed the work. "So every day I wove on the great loom, but every night by torchlight I unwove it..." With this simple trick she has deceived her suitors for three years. What do this trick and this poem reveal about Penelope? As you read the Odyssey, look for places where she displays these same traits.

Like a spider committing suicide each night I unweave the web of my day.
I have no peace.
About me the insistent buzz of flies
5 drones louder every day.
I am starving.
I watch them, always, unblinking stare.
All my dwindling will
I use in not moving, not trying, unweaving.
10 I pull in my empty nets
eating myself, waiting.

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An Ancient Gesture

Edna St. Vincent Millay

I thought, as I wiped my eyes on the corner of my apron:
Penelope did this too.
And more than once: you can't keep weaving all day
And undoing it all through the night;
5 Your arms get tired, and the back of your neck gets tight;
And along towards morning, when you think it will never be light,
And your husband has been gone, and you don't know where, for years,
Suddenly you burst into tears;
There is simply nothing else to do.

10 And I thought, as I wiped my eyes on the corner of my apron:
This is an ancient gesture, authentic, antique,
In the very best tradition, classic, Greek;
Ulysses did this too.
But only as a gesture,—a gesture which implied
15 To the assembled throng that he was much too moved to speak.
He learned it from Penelope...
Penelope, who really cried.
THE TEST OF THE GREAT BOW

In Book 21, Penelope, like many unwilling princesses of myth and fairy tale, proposes an impossible task for those who wish to marry her. By so doing, she causes the bloody events that lead to the restoration of her husband. The test involves stringing Odysseus’s huge bow, an impossible feat for anyone except Odysseus himself. Odysseus had left his bow home in Ithaca twenty years earlier.

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
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—
a bellow like a bull’s vaunt⁰ in a meadow—

1091. vaunt (vōnt) n.: boast.
followed by her light footfall entering over the plank floor. Herb-scented robes lay there in chests, but the lady's milk-white arms went up to lift the bow down from a peg in its own polished bow case.

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 tremendous bow in hand, and on her shoulder hung the quiver spiked with coughing death. Behind, her maids bore a basket full of ax heads, bronze and iron implements for the master's game.

Thus in her beauty she approached the suitors, and near a pillar of the solid roof 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 recommended this house 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. Here is my lord Odysseus' hunting bow. Bend and string it if you can. Who sends an arrow through iron ax-helve sockets, twelve in line? I join my life with his, and leave this place, my home, my rich and beautiful bridal house, forever to be remembered, though I dream it only." . . .

Many of the suitors boldly try the bow, but not one man can even bend it enough to string it.

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, and coming up said gently:

"You, herdsman, and you, too, swineherd, I could say a thing to you, or should I keep it dark?"
my heart tells me. Would you be men enough
to stand by Odysseus if he came back?
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
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.

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.
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.

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 — . . ."

Shifting his rags
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—

"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:

1135. courier (koo'ör-ë) n.: guide
or messenger.

1122–1140. How does Odysseus test the loyalty of the
swineherd and the cowherd? How
do they prove that they can be
trusted?

1154. Parnassus (pär-nas'as): As a
young man, Odysseus had gone
hunting on Parnassus, his mother's
home, and was gored above the knee
by a boar.
when the time comes, those gentlemen, to a man,
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
or groans of men, in hall or court, not one
must show her face, but keep still at her weaving.
Philoeteus, run to the outer gate and lock it.
Throw the crossbar and lash it." . . .

Now Odysseus, still in his beggar's clothes, asks to try the bow. The
suitors refuse to allow a mere beggar to try where they have failed,
but Penelope insists that the stranger be given his chance. The sus-
pense is very great—by this act, Penelope has accepted her husband
as a suitor.

Eumaeus, the swineherd, hands Odysseus the bow and tells the
nurse to retire with Penelope and the maids to the family chambers
(the harem) and to bolt the doors. Odysseus had earlier told
Telemachus to remove the suitors' weapons from the great hall.
Now he takes the bow.

And Odysseus took his time,
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!"

"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!"

But the man skilled in all ways of contending,
satisfied by the great bow's look and heft,

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like a musician, like a harper, when
with quiet hand upon his instrument
he draws between his thumb and forefinger
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
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 Cronus⁶ had flung that omen down.
He picked one ready arrow from his table
where it lay bare: the rest were waiting still
in the quiver for the young men's turn to come.
He nocked⁷ 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
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.

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,
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
stood by his chair, in the forefront near his father.

(from Book 21)

Vocabulary

adorn (ə-ˈdɔrn) v.: add beauty to; decorate.
The climax of the story is here, in Book 22. Although Odysseus is ready to reclaim his rightful kingdom, he must first confront more than a hundred hostile suitors. The first one he turns to is Antinous. All through the story, Antinous has been the meanest of the suitors and their ringleader. He hit Odysseus with a stool when the hero appeared in the hall as a beggar, and he ridiculed the disguised king by calling him a bleary vagabond, a pest, and a tramp.

Now shrugging off his rags the wiliest fighter of the islands leapt and stood on the broad doorsill, his own bow in his hand.

He poured out at his feet a rain of arrows from the quiver and spoke to the crowd:

"So much for that. Your clean-cut game is over. Now watch me hit a target that no man has hit before, if I can make this shot. Help me, Apollo."

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-handled, golden: the cup was in his fingers, 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
and punched up to the feathers through his throat.

Backward and down he went, letting the wine cup fall from his shocked hand. Like pipes his nostrils jetted crimson runnels, a river of mortal red,
and one last kick upset his table

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,
not a good ashen spear was there for a man to take and throw.
All they could do was yell in outrage at Odysseus:
"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!"
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 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.
Your last hour has come. You die in blood."
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:
"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 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 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."
Odysseus glowered under his black brows
and said:

"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.

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." . . .

Telemachus joins his father in the fight. They are helped by the
swineherd and cowherd. Now the suitors, trapped in the hall with-
out weapons, are struck right and left by arrows, and many of them
lie dying on the floor.

At this moment that unmanning thundercloud,
the aegis, Athena's shield,
took form aloft in the great hall.

And the suitors mad with fear
at her great sign stamped like stung cattle by a river
when the dread shimmering gadfly strikes in summer,
in the flowering season, in the long-drawn days.
After them the attackers wheeled, as terrible as falcons
from eyries in the mountains veering over and diving
down
with talons wide unsheathed on flights of birds,
who cower down the sky in chutes and bursts along the
valley—
but the pouncing falcons grip their prey, no frantic wing
avails,
and farmers love to watch those beaked hunters.

So these now fell upon the suitors in that hall,
turning, turning to strike and strike again,
while torn men moaned at death, and blood ran smoking
over the whole floor. . . .

(from Book 22)

Vocabulary

glomerated (glo'ar'it) v.: glared; stared angrily.
avails (a-vails') v.: is of use; helps.
Odysseus and Penelope

Odysseus now calls forth the maids who have betrayed his household by associating with the suitors. He orders them to clean up the house and dispose of the dead. Telemachus then "pays" them by hanging them in the courtyard.

Eurycleia tells Penelope about the return of Odysseus and the defeat of the suitors. The faithful wife—the perfect mate for the wily Odysseus—suspects a trick from the gods. She decides to test the stranger who claims to be her husband.

Crossing the doorsill she sat down at once in the firelight, against the nearest wall, across the room from the lord Odysseus.

leaning against a pillar, sat the man and never lifted up his eyes, but only waited for what his wife would say when she had seen him.

And she, for a long time, sat deathly still in wonderment—for sometimes as she gazed she found him—yes, clearly—like her husband, but sometimes blood and rags were all she saw. Telemachus’s voice came to her ears:

"Mother, cruel mother, do you feel nothing, drawing yourself apart this way from Father? Will you not sit with him and talk and question him? What other woman could remain so cold? Who shuns her lord, and he come back to her from wars and wandering, after twenty years? Your heart is hard as flint and never changes!"

Penelope answered:

"I am stunned, child. I cannot speak to him. I cannot question him. I cannot keep my eyes upon his face.

If really he is Odysseus, truly home, beyond all doubt we two shall know each other better than you or anyone. There are secret signs we know, we two."

A smile came now to the lips of the patient hero, Odysseus, who turned to Telemachus and said:

"Peace: let your mother test me at her leisure. Before long she will see and know me best."
These tatters, dirt—all that I’m caked with now—
make her look hard at me and doubt me still.

Odysseus orders Telemachus, the swineherd, and the cowherd to
bathe and put on fresh clothing.

Greater 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
lent him beauty, head to foot. She made him
taller, and massive, too, with crisping hair
in curls like petals of wild hyacinth
but all red-golden. Think of gold infused
on silver by a craftsman, whose fine art
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,
the immortals of Olympus made you hard,
harder than any. Who else in the world
would keep aloof as you do from her husband
if he returned to her from years of trouble,
cast on his own land in the twentieth year?

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

spoke to Odysseus now. She said:

“Strange man,

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

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

Vocabulary

lavished (lav‘ish) v.: gave generously.
aloof (ə-lōf) adj.: at a distance; unfriendly.
With this she tried him to the breaking point, and he turned on her in a flash, raging:

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

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

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

Their secret! as she heard it told, her knees grew tremulous and weak, her heart failed her.

With eyes brimming tears she ran to him, throwing her arms around his neck, and kissed him, murmuring:

"Do not rage at me, Odysseus! No one ever matched your caution! Think what difficulty the gods gave: they denied us life together in our prime and flowering years, kept us from crossing into age together. Forgive me, don't be angry. I could not welcome you with love on sight! I armed myself long ago against the frauds of men, impostors who might come—and all those many

---

**Vocabulary**

*pliant (pl'ant) adj.: flexible.*

*tremulous (trem'yoʊ-ləs) adj.: trembling; shaking.*
whose underhanded ways bring evil on! ... 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.
You make my stiff heart know that I am yours."

Now from his breast into his eyes the ache of longing mounted, and he wept at last,
his dear wife, clear and faithful, in his arms,
longed for
as the sun-warmed earth is longed for by a swimmer spent in rough water where his ship went down under Poseidon's blows, gale winds and tons of sea.
Few men can keep alive through a big surf
to crawl, clotted with brine, on kindly beaches in joy, in joy, knowing the abyss behind:
and so she too rejoiced, her gaze upon her husband, her white arms round him pressed, as though forever ...
Tate Gallery, London.
When you set out for Ithaca,
pray that your road’s a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
5 angry Poseidon—don’t be scared of them:
you won’t find things like that on your way
as long as your thoughts are exalted,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.

Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won’t encounter them
unless you bring them along inside you,
unless your soul raises them up in front of you.

Pray that your road’s a long one.
15 May there be many a summer morning when—
full of gratitude, full of joy—
you come into harbors seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading centers
and buy fine things,
20 mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfumes of every kind,
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
may you visit numerous Egyptian cities
to fill yourself with learning from the wise.

Keep Ithaca always in mind.
Arriving there is what you’re destined for.
But don’t hurry the journey at all.
Better if it goes on for years
so you’re old by the time you reach the island.
30 wealthy with all you’ve gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.
Ithaca gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you wouldn’t have set out.
She hasn’t anything else to give.

35 And if you find her poor, Ithaca won’t have
fooled you.
Wise as you’ll have become, and so
experienced,
you’ll have understood by then what an
Ithaca means.
The Sea Call

Nikos Kazantzakis
translated by Kimon Friar

When Odysseus meets Teiresias in the underworld, the prophet tells him that he will reach home but will then take yet another journey to a land where people live who know nothing of the sea. (See pages 676–677.) In this excerpt from a modern sequel to the Odyssey by the twentieth-century Greek poet Nikos Kazantzakis, Odysseus has returned to Ithaca. Sitting by the hearth with his family, his eyes alight with excitement, he relates his adventures. But then . . .

Odysseus sealed his bitter lips and spoke no more, but watched the glowing fire fade, the withering flames, the ash that spread like powder on the dying coals, then turned, glanced at his wife, gazed on his son and father, and suddenly shook with fear and sighed, for now he knew that even his native land was a sweet mask of Death. Like a wild beast snared in a net, his eyes rolled round and tumbled down his deep eye-sockets, green and bloodshot. His tribal palace seemed a narrow shepherd's pen, his wife a small and wrinkled old housekeeping crone, his son an eighty-year-old drudge who, trembling, weighed with care to find what's just, unjust, dishonest, honest, as though all life were prudence, as though fire were just, and logic the highest good of eagle-mounting man! The heart-embattled athlete laughed, dashed to his feet, and his home's sweetness, suddenly, his longed-for land, the twelve gods, ancient virtue by his honored hearth, his son—all seemed opposed now to his high descent. The fire dwindled and died away, and the four heads and his son's smooth-skinned calves with tender softness glowed till in the trembling hush Penelope's wan cries broke in despair like water flowing down a wall. Her son dashed and stood upright by his mother's throne, touched gently with a mute compassion her white arm, then gazed upon his father in the dim light, and shuddered, for in the last resplenence of the falling fire he could discern the unmoving eyes flash yellow, blue, and crimson, though the dark had swallowed the wild body. With silent strides Odysseus then shot back the bolt, passed lightly through the courtyard and sped down the street. Some saw him take the graveyard's zigzag mountain path, some saw him leap on rocks that edged the savage shore, some visionaries saw him in the dead of night swimming and talking secretly with the sea-demons, but only a small boy saw him in a lonely dream sit crouched and weeping by the dark sea's foaming edge.
Response and Analysis

from the Odyssey, Part Two

Reading Check
1. Describe Argos's condition when Odysseus sees him.
2. What is the contest of the bow, and how will Penelope reward the winner?
3. Just before trying the bow, Odysseus reveals himself to two people. Who are they? Why does he confide in them?
4. List at least five images or events from Odysseus's battle with the suitors.
5. How does Penelope test Odysseus after the battle?

Thinking Critically
6. What Homeric simile in lines 1031–1033 describes the feelings of Odysseus and his son as they embrace after twenty years? How would you describe exactly what the father and his son are feeling here?
7. Situational irony occurs when what happens is different from what we expect. Why is it ironic that Odysseus returns to his kingdom dressed as a beggar?
8. Dramatic irony refers to a situation in which readers know more than the characters know. Where in the scene in the swineherd's hut is there dramatic irony?
9. In epics it is rare for heroes to have relationships with ordinary people, but in the Odyssey, servants play important roles. How does Odysseus treat Eumaeus and the cowherd? What values might Homer be trying to teach through that treatment?
10. What character traits does Penelope reveal in her interactions with Odysseus disguised as a beggar?

11. What does the interaction between Odysseus and Penelope in lines 1348–1418 tell you about their relationship? Calypso wondered what it was about Penelope that drew Odysseus homeward (see page 654). Now that you've met Penelope, how would you answer Calypso?

12. The Odyssey is many centuries old. Do you think the feelings and needs shown by the people in the Odyssey are shared by people today? Which feelings does the speaker in "An Ancient Gesture" identify with (see the Connection on page 697)? Which experiences or people in this story did you identify with most? Why?

13. Suppose a modern general, like Odysseus, had fought a war for ten years and was missing for another ten years. What emotions might he (or she) have experienced upon returning home? What changes might he (or she) have found at home after twenty years? (Check your Quickwrite notes for page 689.)

14. In "Ithaca" (see the Connection on page 711), a modern Greek poet uses Ithaca as a symbol, a place that functions as itself in the poem but also stands for something beyond itself. Explain what you think "arriving in Ithaca" could mean for all of us.

Extending and Evaluating
15. Do you think Odysseus's revenge on the suitors and maids is excessive or too brutal? Explore this question from Odysseus's viewpoint (remember that he is the rightful king) and from your own modern viewpoint.
WRITING
Choose from among the following assignments to respond to the Odyssey:

1. Noble or Not?
In a brief essay, discuss at least four of Odysseus's character traits. Find situations in the epic that reveal each trait. In your final paragraph, sum up your opinion of Odysseus's character. Do you think he is totally admirable? To what extent would he be considered a hero today?

2. Prophetic Puzzler
In Part One, lines 639–658 (page 677), Teiresias makes a famous prophecy: Odysseus will take off on yet another journey after he returns home. (For part of one writer's extension of the Odyssey, see "The Sea Call," the Connection on page 712.) What do you think happens to Odysseus after he takes back his kingdom? Write your own continuation of Odysseus's story based on Teiresias's prophecy.

3. Her Odyssey
Write a story plan showing how an odyssey could have a woman as its voyaging hero. You may set your story in any time and place, from Odysseus's Greece to your hometown today to a distant galaxy in the future. Consider these points in your plan:

- occupation of the hero; her reason for being away from home; her situation at home
- trials of her journey; how she deals with the "monsters" she meets
- what happens when she returns home

4. And Now—The Movie
Write a proposal in which you suggest ways that the Odyssey could be made into a movie—set in contemporary times. In your proposal, written for the people who will produce the movie, you will have to explain how you would modernize the Odyssey.

Write two or three paragraphs. Use a chart like the one below to organize your ideas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1200 B.C.</th>
<th>Today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Trojan War as a background</td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hero is soldier who fought in war</td>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Hero journeys home around Mediterranean and down to the underworld</td>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Hero uses ships with oars and sails</td>
<td>d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Hero meets Lotus Eaters, Sirena, Scylla, and Charybdis</td>
<td>e.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Hero is tempted by Circe and Calypso</td>
<td>f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Fortune hunters at home hound hero's wife</td>
<td>g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Hero's son is insulted</td>
<td>h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Gods dominate the action</td>
<td>i.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Timeless Messages
A work of literature becomes important to us when we feel that it relates to our lives. In a brief essay, discuss at least three ways in which the Odyssey relates to life today. You might consider what it says about these values:

- courtesy and respect for all groups of people
- courage, trust, and discipline
- loyalty to family and community
- obedience to law—human or divine
Vocabulary Development

Synonyms

**PRACTICE 1**

Synonyms are words with similar meanings, such as *beast* and *monster*. You have to use synonyms with care since they do not always mean exactly the same thing. Create a chart like the one here, listing synonyms for each Word Bank word. Can you substitute the synonyms in the original sentence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>candor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disdainful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glowered</td>
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<tr>
<td>avail</td>
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<tr>
<td>lavished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afoof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tremulous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>candor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Original Sentence:</strong> “Telemachus with his clear candor said…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synonyms:</strong> honesty, frankness, fairness, impartiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response to Substitutions:</strong> Here, candor describes a way of expressing oneself. Frankness works best. Honesty could also apply. Judgment is not involved, so fairness and impartiality don’t work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Epithets

An èpìthet (ep’ a-thet’) is an adjective or phrase used to characterize someone. *Catherine the Great* and *baby boomers* are epithets used to characterize an empress and a generation. Homer uses epithets as formulas to characterize places and people. The epithet “faithful Penelope” instantly reminds us of Penelope’s outstanding character trait.

**A Famous Epithet Mystery**

One of Homer’s famous epithets is “the wine-dark sea.” Since wine is red or white or yellowish, and the sea is none of these hues, the description is puzzling. Some say that the ancient Greeks diluted their wine with water and that the alkali in the water changed the color of the wine from red to blue. Others think the sea was covered with red algae. Robert Fitzgerald, the great translator of the *Odyssey*, thought about the question when he was sailing on the Aegean Sea:

“The contrast of the bare arid baked land against the sea gave the sea such a richness of hue that I felt as though we were sailing through a bowl of dye. The depth of hue of the water was like the depth of hue of a good red wine.”

**PRACTICE 2**

1. Odysseus is called “versatile Odysseus,” “wily Odysseus,” “the strategist,” and “the noble and enduring man.” What does each underlined word mean?
2. Telemachus is called “clearheaded” Telemachus.” How would you define clearheaded? What is its opposite?
3. Dawn is described as “rosy-fingered.” What does this epithet help you see?
4. Make up your own epithets for these characters: the Cyclops, Circe, Argos, Penelope, and the suitors.
**Vocabulary Development**

**Words from Greek and Roman Myths**

Myths are stories associated with a particular society that are essentially religious. Myths often explain the mysteries of nature, the origins of rituals, and the relationships between gods and humans. Myths taught Homer’s audiences important lessons about religion and conduct. The Greek and Roman myths live on in the English language, as the charts below show. As we read the Iliad and the Odyssey, we come across names of gods, goddesses, mythical heroes, human heroes—and monsters and villains. Many English words have their origins in these names. For example, a long, difficult journey in search of something of value is called an odyssey, whether it be Alex Haley’s odyssey in search of his African roots or a scientist’s odyssey in search of the secrets of DNA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names from Greek and Roman Myths (and English Words That Derive from Them)</th>
<th>Planets Named for Gods from Greek and Roman Myths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>English Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aegis</td>
<td>aegis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceres</td>
<td>cereal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hector</td>
<td>hector</td>
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<td>Jove</td>
<td>jovial</td>
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<td>Mars</td>
<td>martial</td>
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<td>Mentor</td>
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<td>Mercury</td>
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<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
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<td>Venus</td>
<td>Uranus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Neptune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Pluto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice**

Read the following information, and answer the questions about words derived from the Greek myths and epics. To help you answer, look up the underlined words in a good dictionary.

1. Homer opens his epic poems with a prayer to the Muse. In mythology the nine Muses were goddesses who inspired people working in the arts and sciences. One word derived from the name Muse is music. **How is the meaning of our word museum related to the Muses?**

2. **The Sirens** were island creatures with enchanting female voices who lured sailors to steer their ships toward dangerous rocks. Why do you think the horn of an ambulance is called a siren?

3. The aegis (ʔe'jis) was the great shield of Zeus, king of the gods. Anyone who acted “under the aegis” had Zeus’s power and support. Athena later carried the aegis (see the Odyssey, line 1289). **What do we mean today when we say we live under the aegis of the Constitution?**