

from the

# ODYSSEY

HOMER

translated by ROBERT FITZGERALD



PART 2

## The Return of Odysseus

### Review and Anticipate

*In Part 1 of the Odyssey, Odysseus and his companions face many perils on their voyage from Troy to Ithaca. At some moments, they are tempted to forsake their voyage; at others, their lives are endangered by powerful enemies. Ultimately, Odysseus' men bring about their own destruction at the hand of Zeus when they kill the cattle belonging to Helios.*

*As Part 2 begins, Odysseus is alone when he reaches Ithaca after a twenty-year absence. What do you predict will happen when Odysseus arrives home?*

"Twenty years gone, and I am back again . . ."

*Odysseus has finished telling his story to the Phaeacians. The next day, young Phaeacian noblemen conduct him home by ship. He arrives in Ithaca after an absence of twenty years. The goddess Athena appears and informs him of the situation at home. Numerous suitors, believing Odysseus to be dead, have been continually seeking the hand of his wife, Penelope, in marriage, while overrunning Odysseus' palace and enjoying themselves at Penelope's expense. Moreover, they are plotting to murder Odysseus' son, Telemachus, before he can inherit his father's lands. Telemachus, who, like Penelope, still hopes for his father's return, has journeyed to Pylos and Sparta to learn what he can about his father's fate. Athena disguises Odysseus as a beggar and directs him to the hut of Eumaeus, his old and faithful swineherd. While Odysseus and Eumaeus are eating breakfast, Telemachus arrives. Athena then appears to Odysseus.*

1. Eumaeus (yoo mə' əs)

► **Critical Viewing**

What can you tell about Eumaeus from this illustration? [**Infer**]

**Vocabulary**

**dissemble** (di sem' bel)  
v. conceal under a false appearance; disguise

. . . From the air  
she walked, taking the form of a tall woman,  
handsome and clever at her craft, and stood  
1000 beyond the gate in plain sight of Odysseus,  
unseen, though, by Telemachus, unguessed,  
for not to everyone will gods appear.  
Odysseus noticed her; so did the dogs,  
who cowered whimpering away from her. She only  
1005 nodded, signing to him with her brows,  
a sign he recognized. Crossing the yard,  
he passed out through the gate in the stockade  
to face the goddess. There she said to him:  
"Son of Laertes and the gods of old,  
1010 Odysseus, master of landways and seaways,  
dissemble to your son no longer now.  
The time has come: tell him how you together  
will bring doom on the suitors in the town.  
I shall not be far distant then, for I  
1015 myself desire battle."

Saying no more, . . .

she tipped her golden wand upon the man,  
making his cloak pure white, and the knit tunic  
fresh around him. Lithe and young she made him,  
ruddy with sun, his jawline clean, the beard

**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural Context** What do lines 1021–1029 suggest about the way ancient Greeks responded to the presence of a god?

2. **oblation** (áb lā' shen) *n.*  
offering to a god.

**Vocabulary**  
**incredulity** (in' krə dōō' lē tē) *n.* unwillingness or inability to believe

1020 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:

1025 "Stranger, you are no longer what you were just now! Your cloak is new; even your skin! You are one of the gods who rule the sweep of heaven! Be kind to us, we'll make you fair oblation<sup>2</sup> and gifts of hammered gold. Have mercy on us!"

1030 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."

1035 Held back too long, the tears ran down his cheeks as he embraced his son.

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

1040 "You cannot be my father Odysseus! Meddling spirits conceived this trick to twist the knife in me! No man of woman born could work these wonders by his own craft, unless a god came into it with ease to turn him young or old at will. I swear you were in rags and old, and here you stand like one of the immortals!"

1045 Odysseus brought his ranging mind to bear and said:

1050 "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 fortune and his wanderings are mine. Twenty years gone, and I am back again on my own island.

As for my change of skin,  
that is a charm Athena, Hope of Soldiers,  
uses as she will; she has the knack  
1055 to make me seem a beggar man sometimes  
and sometimes young, with finer clothes about me.  
It is no hard thing for the gods of heaven  
to glorify a man or bring him low."

When he had spoken, down he sat.

Then, throwing  
1060 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,  
1065 whose nestlings farmers take before they fly.  
So helplessly they cried, pouring out tears,  
and might have gone on weeping so till sundown,  
had not Telemachus said:

"Dear father! Tell me  
what kind of vessel put you here ashore  
1070 on Ithaca? Your sailors, who were they?  
I doubt you made it, walking on the sea!"

Then said Odysseus, who had borne the barren <sup>sea</sup> ~~stead~~

"Only plain truth shall I tell you, child.  
Great seafarers, the Phaeacians, gave me passage  
1075 as they give other wanderers. By night  
over the open ocean, while I slept,  
they brought me in their cutter,<sup>3</sup> set me down  
on Ithaca, with gifts of bronze and gold  
and stores of woven things. By the gods' will  
1080 these lie all hidden in a cave. I came  
to this wild place, directed by Athena,  
so that we might lay plans to kill our enemies.  
Count up the suitors for me, let me know  
what men at arms are there, how many men.  
1085 I must put all my mind to it, to see  
if we two by ourselves can take them on  
or if we should look round for help."

*M*

**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural**  
**Context** Lines 1063–  
1065 contain an epic  
simile. How might this  
figurative language relate  
to the historical and cul-  
tural setting of the text?

3. **cutter** (kut'ər) *n.* small, swift ship or boat carried aboard a large ship to transport personnel or supplies.

**Reading**  
**Check**

Why is Telemachus initially doubtful that the man before him is Odysseus, his father?

replied:

“O Father, all my life your fame  
 as a fighting man has echoed in my ears—  
 1090 your skill with weapons and the tricks of war—  
 but what you speak of is a staggering thing,  
 beyond imagining, for me. How can two men  
 do battle with a houseful in their prime?<sup>4</sup>  
 For I must tell you this is no affair  
 1095 of ten or even twice ten men, but scores,  
 throngs of them. You shall see, here and now.  
 The number from Dulichium alone  
 is fifty-two picked men, with armorers,  
 a half dozen; twenty-four came from Same,  
 1100 twenty from Zacynthus; our own island  
 accounts for twelve, high-ranked, and their retainers,  
 Medon the crier, and the Master Harper,  
 besides a pair of handymen at feasts.  
 If we go in against all these  
 1105 I fear we pay in salt blood for your vengeance.  
 You must think hard if you would conjure up  
 the fighting strength to take us through.”

Odysseus

who had endured the long war and the sea  
 answered:

“I’ll tell you now.  
 1110 Suppose Athena’s arm is over us, and Zeus  
 her father’s, must I rack my brains for more?”

Clearheaded Telemachus looked hard and said:

“Those two are great defenders, no one doubts it,  
 but throned in the serene clouds overhead;  
 1115 other affairs of men and gods they have  
 to rule over.”

And the hero answered:  
 “Before long they will stand to right and left of us  
 in combat, in the shouting, when the test comes—  
 our nerve against the suitors’ in my hall.  
 1120 Here is your part: at break of day tomorrow  
 home with you, go mingle with our princes.  
 The swineherd later on will take me down

4. **in their prime** in the best  
 or most vigorous stage of  
 their lives.

**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural**  
**Context** What does  
 Odysseus’ statement in  
 lines 1109–1111 suggest  
 about ancient Greek  
 beliefs about the gods’  
 interest in human affairs?

the port-side trail—a beggar, by my looks,  
 hangdog and old. If they make fun of me  
 1125 in my own courtyard, let your ribs cage up  
 your springing heart, no matter what I suffer,  
 no matter if they pull me by the heels  
 or practice shots at me, to drive me out.  
 Look on, hold down your anger. You may even  
 1130 plead with them, by heaven! in gentle terms  
 to quit their horseplay—not that they will heed you,  
 rash as they are, facing their day of wrath.  
 Now fix the next step in your mind.

Athena,

1135 counseling me, will give me word, and I  
 shall signal to you, nodding: at that point  
 round up all armor, lances, gear of war  
 left in our hall, and stow the lot away  
 back in the vaulted storeroom. When the suitors  
 miss those arms and question you, be soft  
 1140 in what you say: answer:

‘I thought I’d move them  
 out of the smoke. They seemed no longer those  
 bright arms Odysseus left us years ago  
 when he went off to Troy. Here where the fire’s  
 hot breath came, they had grown black and drear.  
 1145 One better reason, too, I had from Zeus:  
 suppose a brawl starts up when you are drunk,  
 you might be crazed and bloody one another,  
 and that would stain your feast, your courtship.

Tempered  
 iron can magnetize a man.’

Say that.

1150 But put aside two broadswords and two spears  
 for our own use, two oxhide shields nearby  
 when we go into action. Pallas Athena  
 and Zeus All-Provident will see you through,  
 bemusing our young friends.

Now one thing more.

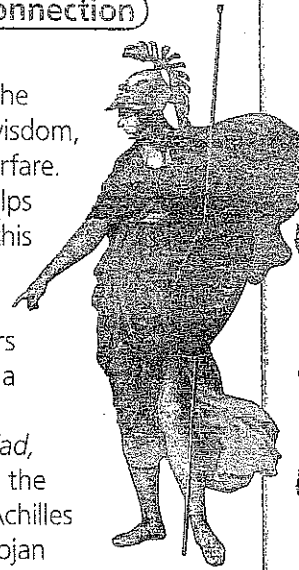
1155 If son of mine you are and blood of mine,  
 let no one hear Odysseus is about.  
 Neither Laertes, nor the swineherd here,  
 nor any slave, nor even Penelope.

LITERATURE IN CONTEXT

Cultural Connection

Athena

Athena was the goddess of wisdom, skills, and warfare. When she helps Odysseus in this epic, it is not the first time that she offers assistance to a Greek hero. In Homer’s *Iliad*, Athena helps the Greek hero Achilles defeat the Trojan warrior Hector. Athena favored Achilles for his unmatched skill in battle, but Odysseus was her favorite among the Greeks. He displayed not only skill in warfare, but also ingenuity and cunning.



Connect to the Literature

Which of Odysseus’ deeds in the *Odyssey* might have helped him to earn Athena’s favor? Explain.

Vocabulary

**bemusing** (bē myōōz’ in) v. stupefying or muddling

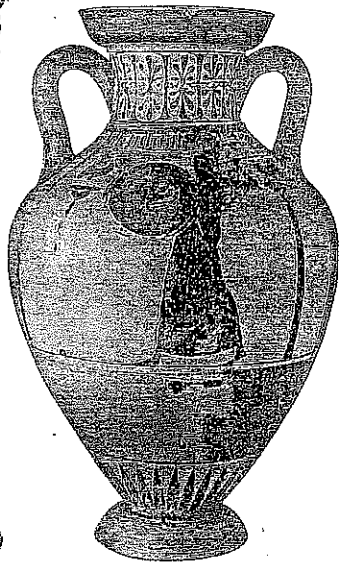
Reading Check

How does Odysseus tell his son to respond if the suitors “practice shots” on Odysseus?

5. *shirkers* (shurk' ərz) *n.*  
people who get out of  
doing what needs to be  
done.

▼ **Critical Viewing**

What can you infer about the ancient Greeks based on the fact that they depicted their gods on everyday objects like this urn? [Infer]



1160 But you and I alone must learn how far  
the women are corrupted; we should know  
how to locate good men among our hands,  
the loyal and respectful, and the shirkers<sup>5</sup>  
who take you lightly, as alone and young.”

## Argus

*Odysseus heads for town with Eumaeus. Outside the palace, Odysseus' old dog, Argus, is lying at rest as his long-absent master approaches.*

While he spoke  
an old hound, lying near, pricked up his ears  
1165 and lifted up his muzzle. This was Argus,  
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,  
1170 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  
fieldhands could spread it on the king's estate.  
1175 Abandoned there, and half destroyed with flies,  
old Argus 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.  
1180 And the man looked away,  
wiping a salt tear from his cheek; but he  
hid this from Eumaeus. Then he said:

“I marvel that they leave this hound to lie  
here on the dung pile;  
1185 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:

1190 "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  
1195 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  
1200 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  
1205 into the megaron<sup>6</sup> among the suitors:  
but death and darkness in that instant closed  
the eyes of Argus, who had seen his master,  
Odysseus, after twenty years.

## The Suitors

*Still disguised as a beggar, Odysseus enters his home.  
He is confronted by the haughty<sup>7</sup> suitor Antinous.<sup>8</sup>*

But here Antinous broke in, shouting:

"God!

1210 What evil wind blew in this pest?

Get over,

stand in the passage! Nudge my table, will you?

Egyptian whips are sweet

to what you'll come to here, you nosing rat,

making your pitch to everyone!

1215 These men have bread to throw away on you  
because it is not theirs. Who cares? Who spares  
another's food, when he has more than plenty?"

**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural Context** How do Eumaeus' beliefs about servitude and slavery compare with those of your own culture?

6. **megaron** (meg' ə rōn) *n.*  
great, central hall of the house, usually containing a center hearth.

7. **haughty** (hōt' ē) *adj.*  
arrogant.

8. **Antinous** (an tin' ō əs)

**Reading Check**

How does Antinous react to Odysseus, who is disguised as a beggar?



**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural**  
**Context** What conflicting values does this exchange between Antinous and Odysseus reveal?

9. **impudence** (im' pyoo dens) *n.* quality of being shamelessly bold; disrespectful.

**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural**  
**Context** What values regarding the use of physical force are evident in this speech?

10. **Furies** (fyoor' eez) *n.* three terrible female spirits who punish the doers of unavenged crimes.

With guile Odysseus drew away, then said:

1220 "A pity that you have more looks than heart.  
You'd grudge a pinch of salt from your own larder  
to your own handyman. You sit here, fat  
on others' meat, and cannot bring yourself  
to rummage out a crust of bread for me!"

1225 Then anger made Antinous' heart beat hard,  
and, glowering under his brows, he answered:

"Now!

You think you'll shuffle off and get away  
after that impudence?<sup>9</sup> Oh, no you don't!"

1230 The stool he let fly hit the man's right shoulder  
on the packed muscle under the shoulder blade—  
like solid rock, for all the effect one saw.  
Odysseus only shook his head, containing  
thoughts of bloody work, as he walked on,  
then sat, and dropped his loaded bag again  
upon the door sill. Facing the whole crowd  
1235 he said, and eyed them all:

1240 "One word only,  
my lords, and suitors of the famous queen.  
One thing I have to say.  
There is no pain, no burden for the heart  
when blows come to a man, and he defending  
his own cattle—his own cows and lambs.  
Here it was otherwise. Antinous  
hit me for being driven on by hunger—  
how many bitter seas men cross for hunger!  
If beggars interest the gods, if there are Furies<sup>10</sup>  
1245 pent in the dark to avenge a poor man's wrong, then may  
Antinous meet his death before his wedding day!"

Then said Eupheithes' son, Antinous:

1250 "Enough.  
Eat and be quiet where you are, or shamble elsewhere,  
unless you want these lads to stop your mouth  
pulling you by the heels, or hands and feet,  
over the whole floor, till your back is peeled!"

But now the rest were mortified, and someone spoke from the crowd of young bucks to rebuke him:

1255 "A poor show, that—hitting this famished tramp—  
bad business, if he happened to be a god.  
You know they go in foreign guise, the gods do,  
looking like strangers, turning up  
in towns and settlements to keep an eye  
on manners, good or bad."

But at this notion

1260 Antinous only shrugged.

Telemachus,

after the blow his father bore, sat still  
without a tear, though his heart felt the blow.  
Slowly he shook his head from side to side,  
containing murderous thoughts.

Penelope

1265 on the higher level of her room had heard  
the blow, and knew who gave it. Now she murmured:

"Would god you could be hit yourself, Antinous—  
hit by Apollo's bowshot!"

**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural**  
**Context** What ancient  
Greek belief is conveyed  
in this suitor's speech?

**Reading**  
**Check**

How does Penelope  
regard Antinous?



from the *Odyssey*, Part 2—1099

her housekeeper, put in:

"He and no other?

1270 If all we pray for came to pass, not one  
would live till dawn!"

Her gentle mistress said:

"Oh, Nan, they are a bad lot; they intend  
ruin for all of us; but Antinous  
appears a blacker-hearted hound than any.

1275 Here is a poor man come, a wanderer,  
driven by want to beg his bread, and everyone  
in hall gave bits, to cram his bag—only  
Antinous threw a stool, and banged his shoulder!"

So she described it, sitting in her chamber  
1280 among her maids—while her true lord was eating.  
Then she called in the forester and said:

"Go to that man on my behalf, Eumaeus,  
and send him here, so I can greet and question him.  
Abroad in the great world, he may have heard

1285 rumors about Odysseus—may have known him!"

English 1 :

Begin close reading questions here, starting with the section, "Penelope," until the end of Part 2.



# from the *Odyssey*, Part 2

Homer

Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

## TAKE NOTES

### Activate Prior Knowledge

Describe the characteristics of a hero.

### Penelope

In the evening, Penelope interrogates the old beggar.

"Friend, let me ask you first of all:  
who are you, where do you come from, of what nation  
and parents were you born?"

And he replied:

1290 "My lady, never a man in the wide world  
should have a fault to find with you. Your name  
has gone out under heaven like the sweet  
honor of some god-fearing king, who rules  
in equity over the strong: his black lands bear  
1295 both wheat and barley, fruit trees laden bright,  
new lambs at lambing time—and the deep sea  
gives great hauls of fish by his good strategy,  
so that his folk fare well.

O my dear lady,

this being so, let it suffice to ask me  
of other matters—not my blood, my homeland.  
1300 Do not enforce me to recall my pain.  
My heart is sore; but I must not be found  
sitting in tears here, in another's house:  
it is not well forever to be grieving.  
One of the maids might say—or you might think—  
1305 I had got maudlin over cups of wine."

And Penelope replied:

"Stranger, my looks,

my face, my carriage,<sup>1</sup> were soon lost or faded  
when the Achaeans crossed the sea to Troy,  
Odysseus my lord among the rest.  
1310 If he returned, if he were here to care for me,  
I might be happily renowned!  
But grief instead heaven sent me—years of pain.  
Sons of the noblest families on the islands,

### Literary Analysis

An **epic simile** is an elaborate comparison that may extend over several lines. Read the bracketed passage. To what is the old beggar comparing Penelope's name or reputation?

### Reading Skill

The **historical and cultural context** of a work is the details of the time and place in which the work is set or was written. Penelope takes a stranger into her home. What does this tell you about her culture?

### Reading Check

What reason does the beggar give Penelope for his silence about himself and his past? Underline the text that tells the answer.

### Vocabulary Development

**equity** (EHK wit ee) *n.* fairness; justice

**maudlin** (MAWD lin) *adj.* tearfully and foolishly sentimental

1. carriage (KAR ij) *n.* posture.



# TAKE NOTES

## Reading Skill

The **historical and cultural context** of a work becomes more clear when you **identify influences on your own reading and responses**. How do the ancient Greek ideas in Penelope's speech about honoring the dead compare with modern ideas?

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## Stop to Reflect

Penelope succeeds in tricking her suitors and avoiding marriage for three years. What do her actions tell you about her?

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## Reading Check

Circle the passage that tells why Penelope no longer fights her suitors.

1315 Dulichium, Same, wooded Zacynthus,<sup>2</sup>  
with native Ithacans, are here to court me,  
against my wish; and they consume this house.  
Can I give proper heed to guest or suppliant  
or herald on the realm's affairs?

1320 How could I?  
wasted with longing for Odysseus, while here  
they press for marriage.

1325 Ruses<sup>3</sup> served my turn  
to draw the time out—first a close-grained web  
I had the happy thought to set up weaving  
on my big loom in hall. I said, that day:  
Young men—my suitors, now my lord is dead,  
let me finish my weaving before I marry,  
or else my thread will have been spun in vain.  
It is a shroud I weave for Lord Laertes  
when cold Death comes to lay him on his bier.  
1330 The country wives would hold me in dishonor  
if he, with all his fortune, lay unshrouded.  
I reached their hearts that way, and they agreed.  
So every day I wove on the great loom,  
but every night by torchlight I unwove it;  
and so for three years I deceived the Achaeans.

1335 But when the seasons brought a fourth year on,  
as long months waned, and the long days were spent,  
through impudent folly in the slinking maids  
they caught me—clamored up to me at night;  
I had no choice then but to finish it.

1340 And now, as matters stand at last,  
I have no strength left to evade a marriage,  
cannot find any further way; my parents  
urge it upon me, and my son  
will not stand by while they eat up his property.

1345 He comprehends it, being a man full-grown,  
able to oversee the kind of house  
Zeus would endow with honor.

But you too  
confide in me, tell me your ancestry.  
You were not born of mythic oak or stone."

*Penelope again asks the beggar to tell about himself. He makes up a tale in which Odysseus is mentioned and declares that Penelope's husband will soon be home.*

1350 "You see, then, he is alive and well, and headed  
homeward now, no more to be abroad  
far from his island, his dear wife and son.  
Here is my sworn word for it. Witness this,  
god of the zenith, noblest of the gods,<sup>4</sup>

2. Zacynthus (za KIHN thuhs) n. a Greek island.

3. ruses (ROOZ ihz) n. tricks.

4. god of the zenith, noblest of the gods Zeus.

1355 and Lord Odysseus' hearthfire, now before me:  
I swear these things shall turn out as I say.  
Between this present dark and one day's ebb,  
after the wane, before the crescent moon,  
Odysseus will come."

### The Challenge

*Pressed by the suitors to choose a husband from among them, Penelope says she will marry the man who can string Odysseus' bow and shoot an arrow through twelve axhandle sockets. The suitors try and fail. Still in disguise, Odysseus asks for a turn and gets it.*

1360 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!"

1365 "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!"

1370 But the man skilled in all ways of contending,  
satisfied by the great bow's look and heft,  
like a musician, like a harper, when  
with quiet hand upon his instrument  
he draws between his thumb and forefinger  
1375 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.

1380 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 Cronus had flung that omen  
down.

## TAKE NOTES

### Reading Skill

Read lines 1356–1359, in which the beggar predicts when Odysseus will return. He predicts the time based on the phases of the moon. How is this an example of the **historical and cultural context** of the story?

### Literary Analysis

Underline the **epic simile** in the bracketed passage. Which of Odysseus' qualities is highlighted in this epic simile?

### Reading Check

What test does Penelope decide she will use to choose a husband? Underline the sentence that tell you.



## TAKE NOTES

### Stop to Reflect

Why do you think Penelope set this test for her suitors?

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### Reading Skill

Odysseus passes Penelope's test. Consider the **historical and cultural context** of this detail. What does Odysseus' success tell you about Greek values?

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### Reading Check

Read Odysseus' words to Telemachus. What time does he say has arrived? Underline the answer in the text.

1385 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 nocked<sup>5</sup> 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.

1390 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:

1395 "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."

1400 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.

### Odysseus' Revenge

Now shrugging off his rags the wiliest<sup>6</sup> 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:

1410 "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:

5. nocked (nahkt) set an arrow into the bowstring.

6. wiliest (WY lee uhst) *adj.* craftiest; slyest.

## TAKE NOTES

1415 the wine was even at his lips: and did he dream of death?

How could he? In that revelry<sup>7</sup> 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

1420 and punched up to the feathers through his throat.

Backward and down he went, letting the winecup fall from his shocked hand. Like pipes his nostrils jetted crimson runnels, a river of mortal red,

and one last kick upset his table

1425 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,

1430 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!"

1435 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

1440 home from the land of Troy. You took my house to plunder. . .

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."

### Reading Skill

When you **identify influences on your own reading and responses**, you can better understand the **historical and cultural context** of a work. Read the passage in which Odysseus kills Antinous. Does the way in which Odysseus kills Antinous agree with your idea of a "fair fight"? Explain.

### Literary Analysis

Circle the passage that describes Antinous as he is dying. Is this an **epic simile**? Why or why not?

### Reading Check

At first, do the young men think Odysseus killed Antinous on purpose or not? Underline the text that tells you.

### Vocabulary Development

**contempt** (kuhn TEHMPT) *n.* disdain or scorn

7. revelry (REHV uhl ree) *n.* noisy festivity.

# TAKE NOTES

## Reading Skill

Eurymachus blames Antinous for what happened at Odysseus' home. Consider the **historical and cultural context** of this work. Do you think this behavior of blaming another person is valued by the ancient Greeks? Why or why not?

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## Stop to Reflect

Odysseus does not accept Eurymachus' apology. Would you accept it? Why or why not?

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## Reading Check

What items does Eurymachus offer Odysseus to try to calm his anger? Underline the text that tells you.

1445 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<sup>8</sup> alone could speak. He said:

1450 "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  
1455 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  
1460 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."

1465 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,  
1470 or run for it, if you think you'll escape death. I doubt one man of you skins by."

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

1475 "Friends," he said, "the man is implacable. Now that he's got his hands on bow and quiver he'll shoot from the big doorstone there until he kills us to the last man.

Fight, I say,  
let's remember the joy of it. Swords out!  
Hold up your tables to deflect his arrows.  
1480 After me, everyone: rush him where he stands. If we can budge him from the door, if we can pass into the town, we'll call out men to chase him. This fellow with his bow will shoot no more."

He drew his own sword as he spoke, a broadsword of fine bronze,

8. Eurymachus (yoo RI muh kuhz)

1485 honed like a razor on either edge. Then crying  
hoarse and loud  
he hurled himself at Odysseus. But the kingly man  
let fly  
an arrow at that instant, and the quivering  
feathered butt  
sprang to the nipple of his breast as the barb stuck  
in his liver.

The bright broadsword clanged down. He lurched  
and fell aside,  
1490 pitching across his table. His cup, his bread and  
meat,  
were spilt and scattered far and wide, and his head  
slammed on the ground.  
Revulsion, anguish in his heart, with both feet  
kicking out,  
he downed his chair, while the shrouding wave of  
mist closed on his eyes.

Amphinomus now came running at Odysseus,  
1495 broadsword naked in his hand. He thought to make  
the great soldier give way at the door.  
But with a spear throw from behind Telemachus  
hit him  
between the shoulders, and the lancehead drove  
clear through his chest. He left his feet and fell  
1500 forward, thudding, forehead against the ground.  
Telemachus swerved around him, leaving the long  
dark spear  
planted in Amphinomus. If he paused to yank it out  
someone might jump him from behind or cut him  
down with a sword  
at the moment he bent over. So he ran—ran from  
the tables  
1505 to his father's side and halted, panting, saying:

"Father let me bring you a shield and spear,  
a pair of spears, a helmet.  
I can arm on the run myself; I'll give  
outfits to Eumaeus and this cowherd.  
1510 Better to have equipment."

Said Odysseus:

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

Quick

1515 upon his father's word Telemachus  
ran to the room where spears and armor lay.  
He caught up four light shields, four pairs of spears,  
four helms of war high-plumed with flowing manes,  
and ran back, loaded down, to his father's side.

## TAKE NOTES

### Literary Analysis

Why is the comparison of  
Eurymachus' sharp sword to a  
razor only a simile and not an  
**epic simile**?

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### Reading Check

How does Odysseus kill  
Eurymachus? Underline the text  
that tells you.

### Reading Skill

Consider the **historical and  
cultural context** of this work.  
What cultural values are  
reflected by Telemachus when  
he helps his father by gathering  
weapons and by fighting?

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# TAKE NOTES

## Reading Skill

Read the first bracketed passage. What do the contrasting descriptions of Odysseus' and the suitors' actions tell you about the **historical and cultural context** of this epic?

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## Literary Analysis

Read the description of Odysseus in the second bracketed passage. Which details in this **epic simile** compare Odysseus' hair to a work of art?

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## Reading Check

Who helps Odysseus defeat the suitors? Underline the text that tells you.

1520 He was the first to pull a helmet on  
and slide his bare arm in a buckler strap.  
The servants armed themselves, and all three took  
their stand  
beside the master of battle.

1525 While he had arrows  
he aimed and shot, and every shot brought down  
one of his huddling enemies.  
But when all barbs had flown from the bowman's  
fist,  
he leaned his bow in the bright entryway  
beside the door, and armed: a four-ply shield  
hard on his shoulder, and a crested helm,  
horsetailed, nodding stormy upon his head,  
1530 then took his tough and bronze-shod spears. . . .

*Aided by Athena, Odysseus, Telemachus, Eumaeus, and other faithful herdsmen kill all the suitors.*

And Odysseus looked around him, narrow-eyed,  
for any others who had lain hidden  
while death's black fury passed.

In blood and dust  
he saw that crowd all fallen, many and many slain.

1535 Think of a catch that fishermen haul in to a  
half-moon bay  
in a fine-meshed net from the whitecaps of the sea:  
how all are poured out on the sand, in throes for  
the salt sea,  
twitching their cold lives away in Helios' fiery air:  
so lay the suitors heaped on one another.

## Penelope's Test

*Penelope tests Odysseus to prove he really is her husband.*

1540 Greathearted Odysseus, home at last,  
was being bathed now by Eurynome  
and rubbed with golden oil, and clothed again  
in a fresh tunic and a cloak. Athena  
lent him beauty, head to foot. She made him  
1545 taller, and massive, too, with crimping 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<sup>9</sup> taught him, or Athena: one  
1550 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:

9. Hephaestus (heh FEHS tuhs) god of fire and metalworking.

1555 "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?

1560 Nurse, make up a bed for me to sleep on.  
Her heart is iron in her breast."

Penelope  
spoke to Odysseus now. She said:

1565 "Strange man,  
if man you are . . . This is no pride on my part  
nor scorn for you—not even wonder, merely.  
I know so well how you—how he—appeared  
boarding the ship for Troy. But all the same . . .

Make up his bed for him, 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."

1570 With this she tried him to the breaking point,  
and he turned on her in a flash raging:

1575 "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!

1580 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.  
1585 Then I lopped off the silvery leaves and branches,  
hewed and shaped that stump from the roots up  
into a bedpost, drilled it, let it serve  
as model for the rest. I planed them all,  
inlaid them all with silver, gold and ivory,  
and stretched a bed between—a pliant web  
1590 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?"

Stop to Reflect

Penelope tests Odysseus by  
telling the servant to move the  
bed out of her room, even  
though Odysseus has already  
revealed himself. Would you test  
him if you were Penelope?  
Explain.

Reading Check

How does Odysseus describe  
Penelope's attitude toward him?  
Underline the text that tells you.

Literary Analysis

Why is the simile comparing the  
olive trunk to a pillar not an **epic  
simile**?



