The Odyssey Part 2

Homer

DART 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?

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

Odusseus 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, 1 his old and faithful swineherd. While Odysseus and Eumaeus are eating breakfast, Telemachus arrives. Athena then appears to Odysseus.

. . . From the air

she walked, taking the form of a tall woman, handsome and clever at her craft, and stood 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 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,

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

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, 1. Eumaeus (yoo me' əs)

Vocabulary Builder

dissemble (di sem´ bəl) v. conceal under a false appearance; disquise



What does Athena reveal to Odysseus about the situation he will find at home?

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A Critical Viewing What can you tell about Eumaeus from this illustration? [Infer]

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

as though it were a god, and whispered:

Then Lord Odysseus reappeared—and his son was thunderstruck. Fear in his eyes, he looked down and away

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"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 oblation² 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."

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

Only Telemachus,

uncomprehending, wild with <u>incredulity</u>, cried out:

"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:

"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.

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 (äb lā' shən) *n.* offering to a god.

Vocabulary Builder

incredulity (in kradoo late) n. unwillingness or inability to believe

As for my change of skin, that is a charm Athena, Hope of Soldiers, uses as she will: she has the knack to make me seem a beggar man sometimes 1055 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

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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, had not Telemachus said:

"Dear father! Tell me

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

Then said Odysseus, who had borne the barren sea:

"Only plain truth shall I tell you, child. Great seafarers, the Phaeacians, gave me passage as they give other wanderers. By night over the open ocean, while I slept, they brought me in their cutter,³ set me down on Ithaca, with gifts of bronze and gold and stores of woven things. By the gods' will 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. 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."

Telemachus

replied:

Literary Analysis

Epic Simile To what are Odvsseus' and Telemachus' cries compared in the epic simile in lines 1063-1065?

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



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

"O Father, all my life your fame

as a fighting man has echoed in my earsyour skill with weapons and the tricks of war— 1090 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?⁴ For I must tell you this is no affair of ten or even twice ten men, but scores. 1095 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, twenty from Zacynthus; our own island 1100 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 I fear we pay in salt blood for your vengeance. 1105 You must think hard if you would conjure up the fighting strength to take us through."

Odvsseus

who had endured the long war and the sea answered:

"I'll tell you now.

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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; 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.

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 the port-side trail—a beggar, by my looks, hangdog and old. If they make fun of me
in my own courtyard, let your ribs cage up

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?

1 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 plead with them, by heaven! in gentle terms to guit 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.

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Athena.

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 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. 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.

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.

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. 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 shirkers⁵ who take you lightly, as alone and young."

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 Builder

bemusing (bē myooz' in) v. stupefying or muddlina

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



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

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
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,
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.

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.

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;

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:

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"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

12 ▼ 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]

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. 1200 14 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 megaron⁶ 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 haughty⁷ suitor Antinous.⁸

But here Antinous broke in, shouting:

"God!

What evil wind blew in this pest?

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Get over.

Egyptian whips are sweet to what you'll come to here, you nosing rat, making your pitch to everyone! 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?"

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

With guile Odysseus drew away, then said:

"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!"

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

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 rön) n. great, central hall of the house, usually containing a center hearth.

7. haughty (hôt' ē) adi. arrogant.

8. Antinous (an tin' ō əs)



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

"Now!

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

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 he said, and eyed them all:

"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 hungerhow many bitter seas men cross for hunger! If beggars interest the gods, if there are Furies¹⁰

pent in the dark to avenge a poor man's wrong, then may

Antinous meet his death before his wedding day!"

Then said Eupeithes' son, Antinous:

"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:

"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 eve on manners, good or bad."

But at this notion

Reading Skill

Historical and **Cultural Context**

What conflicting values does this exchange between Antinous and Odvsseus reveal?

9. impudence (im' pvoo dens) n. quality of being shamelessly bold: disrespect-

Reading Skill

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

10. Furies (fvoor ez) n. three terrible female spirits who punish the doers of unavenged crimes.

Reading Skill Historical and

Cultural Context What ancient Greek belief is conveyed in this suitor's speech?

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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

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!"

And Eurynome¹¹

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.

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 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 rumors about Odysseus—may have known him!"

Penelope

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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 11. Eurynome (yoo rin' əm ē)



How does Penelope regard Antinous?

and parents were you born?"

And he replied:

"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 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.

Vocabulary Builder equity (ek' wit ē) n. fairness; justice

O my dear lady, being so, let it suffice to ask me

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, 12 were soon lost or faded when the Achaeans crossed the sea to Troy, Odysseus my lord among the rest.

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, Dulichium, Same, wooded Zacynthus, 13
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?

How could I?

wasted with longing for Odysseus, while here they press for marriage.

Ruses¹⁴ 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:

Vocabulary Builder

maudlin (môď lin) adj. tearfully and foolishly sentimental

carriage (kar' ij)n. posture.

13. Zacynthus (za sin' thus)

14. ruses (rooz' iz) n. tricks.

'Young men-my suitors, now my lord is dead, let me finish my weaving before I marry, 1325 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. The country wives would hold me in dishonor if he, with all his fortune, lav 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. But when the seasons brought a fourth year on, as long months waned, and the long days were spent, 2 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. 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. 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.

"You see, then, he is alive and well, and headed 1350 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, 15 and Lord Odysseus' hearthfire, now before me: 1355 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."

Reading Skill

Historical and **Cultural Context** How do the ancient Greek ideas in Penelope's speech about honoring the dead compare to modern ideas?

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



How was Penelope able to delay marriage for three years?

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Critical Viewing The winner of the archery contest will win Penelope's hand in marriage. What details or artistic techniques capture the tension in this scene? [Interpret]

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.

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!"

a swallow's note.

"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, 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

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

Literary Analysis Epic Simile Which

of Odysseus' qualities is highlighted in the epic simile in lines 1372–1379?





What means does Penelope decide she will use to choose a husband?

of crooked-minded Cronus had flung that omen down. He picked one ready arrow from his table 1385 where it lay bare: the rest were waiting still in the quiver for the young men's turn to come. He nocked¹⁶ 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 1390 through every socket ring, and grazed not one, to thud with heavy brazen head beyond.

Then quietly

Odysseus said:

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"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. 16. nocked (näk'd) set an arrow into the bowstring.

27 A Critical Viewing

Does the hunter pictured here show the same race as does Odysseus in lines 1370-1392? Explain. [Compare and Contrast]

Thinking About the Selection

- 1. **Respond:** If you were Telemachus or Penelope, how would you react to the stranger's arrival? Why?
- 2. (a) Recall: Who does Telemachus think Odysseus is when they first reunite? (b) Compare and Contrast: Compare Odysseus' emotions with those of Telemachus at their reunion.
- 3. (a) Recall: Describe Antinous' treatment of Odysseus. (b) Analyze Cause and Effect: Why do you think Antinous treats Odysseus as he does?
- **4.** (a) Recall: What does Odysseus tell Penelope about himself? (b) Infer: Why do you think Odysseus chooses not to reveal his identity to his wife? (c) Take a Position: Is it wrong for Odysseus to deceive Penelope? Explain.

Odysseus' Revenge

Now shrugging off his rags the wiliest¹⁷ 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 revelry¹⁸ amid his throng of friends who would imagine a single foe—though a strong foe indeed—

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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 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

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

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

17. wiliest (wīl' ē əst) adj. craftiest; slyest.

18. revelry (rev' əl r \bar{e}) *n.* noisy festivity.

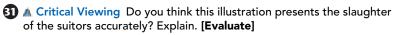
Reading Skill

Historical and Cultural Context

Does the manner in which Odysseus kills Antinous agree with your idea of a "fair fight"? Explain.



Whom does Odysseus kill first?



they were already in the grip of death. But glaring under his brows Odysseus answered:

"You vellow dogs, you thought I'd never make it home from the land of Troy. You took my house to 1440 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."

32

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. Eurymachus¹⁹ alone could speak. He said:

"If you are Odysseus of Ithaca come back, all that you say these men have done is true. 1450 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 1455 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. 1460 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: 1465

> "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."

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

Vocabulary Builder

contempt (ken tempt') n. disdain or scorn

Reading Skill

Historical and Cultural Context What cultural values are revealed by Odysseus' explanation for his anger in lines 1441-1444?

19. Eurymachus (yoo ri' mə kəs)



What does Eurymachus offer Odysseus to try to calm his anger?

"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.

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.

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.

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,
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
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 to his father's side and halted, panting, saying:

*Father let me bring you a shield and spear,

Literary Analysis

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

1505

1485

a pair of spears, a helmet. I can arm on the run myself; I'll give outfits to Eumaeus and this cowherd. Better to have equipment."

Said Odysseus:

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

Quick

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. 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.

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, 1525 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, 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.

Think of a catch that fishermen haul in to a half-moon bay in a fine-meshed net from the whitecaps of the sea: 36 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.

Reading Skill Historical and

Cultural Context What cultural values are reflected in Telemachus' behavior toward his father?

Literary Analysis

Epic Simile Which aspects of the slain suitors' appearance does the epic simile in lines 1535-1539 emphasize?



Who helps Odysseus defeat the suitors?

1535

33

38

Penelope's Test

Penelope tests Odysseus to prove he really is her husband.

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 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 Hephaestus²⁰ 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." 1560

1555

1565

Penelope

spoke to Odysseus now. She said:

"Strange man,

if man you are . . . This is no pride on my part nor scorn for you—not even wonder, merely. 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."

With this she tried him to the breaking point,

Literary Analysis

Epic Simile Which details in the epic simile in lines 1547-1551 compare Odysseus' hair to a work of art?

20. Hephaestus (hē fes' təs) god of fire and metalworking.



How does Odysseus describe Penelope's attitude toward him? 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!

42

1590

1595

1575

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 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 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
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—

Literary Analysis

Epic Simile Explain why the simile comparing the olive trunk to a pillar is not an epic simile.

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 sunwarmed earth is longed for by a swimmer

spent in rough water where his ship went down **3**3 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 abyss²¹ behind: and so she too rejoiced, her gaze upon her husband, her white arms round him pressed as though forever. **Literary Analysis** Epic Simile In what way does this epic simile recall the dangers Odvsseus faced on his journey

home?

21. abyss (ə bis') n. ocean depths.

The Ending

1615

Odysseus is reunited with his father. Athena commands that peace prevail between Odysseus and the relatives of the slain suitors. Odysseus has regained his family and his kingdom.

Thinking About the Selection

- 1. **Respond:** Do you think Odysseus acts heroically in this section of the Odyssey? Why or why not?
- 2. (a) Recall: How does Odysseus respond when Eurymachus offers to repay Odysseus for what the suitors have taken from his house? **(b) Infer:** What does Odysseus' response reveal about his character?
- 3. (a) Recall: How does the fight turn out? (b) Analyze: Why does Odysseus take equal revenge on all the suitors?
- 4. (a) Analyze: What does Penelope's doubt about her husband's return suggest about her character? (b) Draw Conclusions: Given Odysseus' reputation for guile, in what way is Penelope an appropriate companion for Odysseus?
- 5. (a) Summarize: During Odysseus' long absence, how does Penelope handle the problem of the suitors? (b) Summarize: How does Odysseus handle the problem upon his return? (c) Make a **Judgment:** Do you think their means of handling the problem is appropriate? Why or why not?