



PREPARING to Read

from the *Odyssey*

Epic Poetry by HOMER

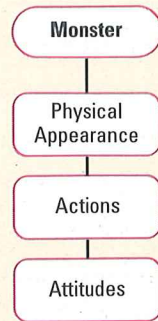
Translated by ROBERT FITZGERALD

“I am Laertes’
son, Odysseus.
Men hold me
formidable for
guile in peace
and war.”

Connect to Your Life

Heroic Adversaries Who is your favorite monster? What science fiction or horror creature do you think is the most unusual or frightening? Using a chart like the one shown, list the characteristics of this creature. Then briefly explain why you think it is the best—or perhaps the worst—monster ever created.

In Books 9–12 of the *Odyssey*, the poem’s hero, Odysseus (ō-dī’s’ē-ēs), runs into several kinds of monsters. How he deals with them is part of what makes him a hero. After you read each episode, list the characteristics of any new monsters Odysseus encounters. Think of what heroic qualities Odysseus shows as he battles each of them.



Build Background

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* contain timeless portraits of several heroes, including Odysseus, king of Ithaca, and they present plots, characters, and themes that have been echoing throughout Western literature ever since. Although these epics are an artful blend of mythology and legend, they are based on an event that may actually have happened. This was a war waged by the combined forces of a number of Greek city-states against the walled city of Troy. For centuries Troy was thought to be imaginary. In 1871, however, an archaeologist began unearthing the remains of nine ancient cities—each built on the ruins of the last—in northwestern Turkey, near where the *Iliad* places Troy. One of those cities may have been the legendary city of the Trojan War.



LaserLinks:
Background for
Reading
Historical
Connection

WORDS TO KNOW Vocabulary Preview

adversary	formidable
appalled	guile
avenge	indifferent
disdain	ponderous
entreat	whim

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS EPIC HERO The **hero** of an **epic** is a larger-than-life figure who embodies the ideals of a nation or race. Epic heroes take part in long, dangerous adventures and accomplish great deeds that require extraordinary courage and superhuman strength. Odysseus is such a hero, and the *Odyssey*, as its opening lines announce, is his story:

*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.*

As you read the episodes that follow, consider what qualities the Greeks seemed to regard as heroic. Ask yourself how well Odysseus lived up to these standards.

ACTIVE READING PREDICTING **Predicting** is the skill that helps you use clues in a text, along with your prior knowledge and experience, to make reasonable guesses about what will happen later in a story. Good readers make and revise predictions almost unconsciously as they read.

READER'S NOTEBOOK As you follow Odysseus' adventures, look for clues that seem to **foreshadow** future events. These might be remarks that hint at things to come, or they could be decisions that Odysseus makes at crucial moments. Jot down the clues, together with your predictions.



THE WANDERINGS OF ODYSSEUS

from
THE ODYSSEY

HOMER

Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

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

He saw the townlands
and learned the minds of many distant men,
and weathered many bitter nights and days
in his deep heart at sea, while he fought only
10 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,
15 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.

IN THESE OPENING LINES *of the Odyssey, the poet invokes or calls upon the Muse—the goddess of poetry—to give him inspiration in telling the story of Odysseus. During seven of Odysseus' ten years on the Mediterranean Sea, he is held captive by the goddess Calypso. With Athena's help, Odysseus finally persuades Calypso to let him go, and she helps him build a raft to leave her island. After Odysseus sails away, his raft is destroyed by storms.*

Alone and exhausted, Odysseus is washed up on the land of the Phaeacians, where Alcinous is king. Alcinous gives a banquet in honor of Odysseus and asks him to reveal who he is and where he came from. Odysseus relates to the king his adventures up to that time. His account makes up Books 9–12 of the Odyssey.



BOOK

NEW COASTS AND POSEIDON'S SON



NINE



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

I am Laertes' son, Odysseus.

Men hold me
 formidable for guile in peace and war:
 this fame has gone abroad to the sky's rim.
 10 My home is on the peaked sea-mark of Ithaca
 under Mount Neion's wind-blown robe of leaves,
 in sight of other islands—Dulichium,
 Same, wooded Zacynthus—Ithaca
 being most lofty in that coastal sea,
 15 and northwest, while the rest lie east and south.
 A rocky isle, but good for a boy's training;
 I shall not see on earth a place more dear,
 though I have been detained long by Calypso,

Guide for Reading

3 tried: tested.

7 hold: regard.

11–13 Mount Neion's (nē'ōnz') . . . Dulichium (dōō-līk'ē-əm) . . . Same (sā'mē) . . . Zacynthus (zē-sīn'thes).

WORDS
TO
KNOW

formidable (fôr'mī-dē-bəl) *adj.* inspiring admiration, awe, or fear
guile (gīl) *n.* skillful slyness; craftiness

loveliest among goddesses, who held me
20 in her smooth caves, to be her heart's delight,
as Circe of Aeaea, the enchantress,
desired me, and detained me in her hall.
But in my heart I never gave consent.
Where shall a man find sweetness to surpass
25 his own home and his parents? In far lands
he shall not, though he find a house of gold.

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

18–22 Odysseus refers to two beautiful goddesses, Calypso and Circe, who have delayed him on their islands. (Details about Circe appear in Book 10.) Notice, however, that Odysseus seems nostalgic for his own family and homeland. At this point in the story, Odysseus has been away from home for more than 18 years—10 of them spent in the war at Troy.

28 weathered: survived.

S OON AFTER LEAVING TROY, *Odysseus and his crew land near Ismarus, the city of the Cicones. The Cicones are allies of the Trojans and therefore enemies of Odysseus. Odysseus and his crew raid the Cicones, robbing and killing people, until the Ciconian army kills 72 of Odysseus' men and drives the rest out to sea. Delayed by a storm for two days, Odysseus and his remaining companions continue their journey.*

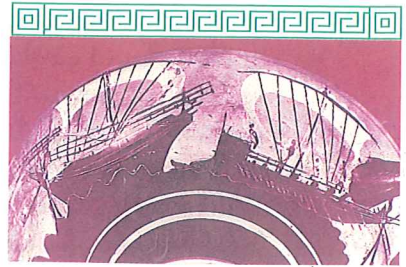
“I might have made it safely home, that time,
30 but as I came round Malea the current
took me out to sea, and from the north
a fresh gale drove me on, past Cythera.
Nine days I drifted on the teeming sea
before dangerous high winds. Upon the tenth
35 we came to the coastline of the Lotus Eaters,
who live upon that flower. We landed there
to take on water. All ships' companies
mustered alongside for the mid-day meal.
Then I sent out two picked men and a runner
40 to learn what race of men that land sustained.
They fell in, soon enough, with Lotus Eaters,
who showed no will to do us harm, only
offering the sweet Lotus to our friends—
but those who ate this honeyed plant, the Lotus,
45 never cared to report, nor to return:
they longed to stay forever, browsing on
that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland.

38 mustered: assembled; gathered.

41–47 How are the Lotus Eaters a threat to Odysseus and his men?

I drove them, all three wailing, to the ships,
tied them down under their rowing benches,
50 called the rest: ‘All hands aboard;
come, clear the beach and no one taste
the Lotus, or you lose your hope of home.’
Filing in to their places by the rowlocks
my oarsmen dipped their long oars in the surf,
55 and we moved out again on our sea faring.

In the next land we found were Cyclopes,
giants, louts, without a law to bless them.
In ignorance leaving the fruitage of the earth in mystery
to the immortal gods, they neither plow
60 nor sow by hand, nor till the ground, though grain—
wild wheat and barley—grows untended, and
wine-grapes, in clusters, ripen in heaven’s rain.
Cyclopes have no muster and no meeting,
no consultation or old tribal ways,
65 but each one dwells in his own mountain cave
dealing out rough justice to wife and child,
indifferent to what the others do.”



57 louts: clumsy, stupid people.

58–67 Why doesn’t Odysseus respect the Cyclopes?

ACROSS THE BAY *from the land of the Cyclopes is a lush, deserted island. Odysseus and his crew land on the island in a dense fog and spend several days feasting on wine and wild goats and observing the mainland, where the Cyclopes live. On the third day, Odysseus and his company of men set out to learn if the Cyclopes are friends or foes.*

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

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

68 This use of “with fingertips of rose” to describe the personified Dawn is a famous epithet—a descriptive phrase that presents a trait of a person or thing. Watch for reappearances of this epithet in the poem, and be on the lookout for other epithets.

WORDS
TO KNOW **indifferent** (ĭn-dĭf’er-ənt) *adj.* having no interest in or concern for

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

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

A prodigious man
slept in this cave alone, and took his flocks
to graze afield—remote from all companions,
knowing none but savage ways, a brute
90 so huge, he seemed no man at all of those
who eat good wheaten bread; but he seemed rather
a shaggy mountain reared in solitude.
We beached there, and I told the crew
to stand by and keep watch over the ship;
95 as for myself I took my twelve best fighters
and went ahead. I had a goatskin full
of that sweet liquor that Euanthes' son,
Maron, had given me. He kept Apollo's
holy grove at Ismarus; for kindness
100 we showed him there, and showed his wife and child,
he gave me seven shining golden talents
perfectly formed, a solid silver winebowl,
and then this liquor—twelve two-handled jars
of brandy, pure and fiery. Not a slave
105 in Maron's household knew this drink; only
he, his wife and the storeroom mistress knew;
and they would put one cupful—ruby-colored,
honey-smooth—in twenty more of water,
but still the sweet scent hovered like a fume
110 over the winebowl. No man turned away
when cups of this came round.

A wineskin full
I brought along, and victuals in a bag,
for in my bones I knew some towering brute
would be upon us soon—all outward power,

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

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

84 **sheepfold:** a pen for sheep.

86 **prodigious** (prə-dīj'əs):
enormous, huge.

91–92 **What does Odysseus' meta-
phor imply about the Cyclops?**

97–98 **Euanthes'** (yōō-än'thēz) . . .
Maron (mār'ōn').

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

112 **victuals** (vīt'lz): food.

115 a wild man, ignorant of civility.

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

‘Why not

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

Ah,

130 how sound that was! Yet I refused. I wished
to see the caveman, what he had to offer—
no pretty sight, it turned out, for my friends.
We lit a fire, burnt an offering,
and took some cheese to eat; then sat in silence
135 around the embers, waiting. When he came
he had a load of dry boughs on his shoulder
to stoke his fire at suppertime. He dumped it
with a great crash into that hollow cave,
and we all scattered fast to the far wall.
140 Then over the broad cavern floor he ushered
the ewes he meant to milk. He left his rams
and he-goats in the yard outside, and swung
high overhead a slab of solid rock
to close the cave. Two dozen four-wheeled wagons,
145 with heaving wagon teams, could not have stirred
the tonnage of that rock from where he wedged it
over the doorsill. Next he took his seat
and milked his bleating ewes. A practiced job
he made of it, giving each ewe her suckling;
150 thickened his milk, then, into curds and whey,
sieved out the curds to drip in withy baskets,
and poured the whey to stand in bowls
cooling until he drank it for his supper.

115 **civility:** polite behavior.

120 **kids:** young goats.

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

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

129 **good salt water:** the open sea. (The men want to rob the Cyclops and quickly sail away.)

130–132 **Why does Odysseus refuse his men’s “sound” request?**

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

137 **stoke:** build up; feed.

144–147 Notice the size of the rock that closes the entrance of the Cyclops’ cave.



155 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 sea ways—a fair traffic?
Or are you wandering rogues, who cast your lives
like dice, and ravage other folk by sea?’

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

165 ‘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, son of Atreus—
the whole world knows what city
he laid waste, what armies he destroyed.

170 It was our luck to come here; here we stand,
beholden for your help, or any gifts
you give—as custom is to honor strangers.

175 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:

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

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

157–159 The Cyclops asks whether the seafaring men are here for honest trading (“fair traffic”) or are dishonest people (“rogues”) who steal from (“ravage”) those they meet.

163 Achaeans (ə-kē’ənz): Greeks.

167 Agamemnon (äg’ə-mēm’nŏn’): the Greek king (Menelaus’ brother) who led the war against the Trojans; Atreus (ā’trē-əs).

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

176 ninny: fool.

178–182 What is the Cyclops’ attitude toward the gods?

185–190 Why do you think Odysseus lies about his ship?

WORDS **entreat** (ĕn-trēt’) *v.* to ask earnestly; beg
TO **avenge** (ə-vĕnj’) *v.* to take revenge on behalf of
KNOW **whim** (hwĭm) *n.* a sudden impulse or notion; fancy

‘My ship?’

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

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

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

193–196 The two similes in this passage emphasize the helplessness of the men (“like squirming puppies”) and the savagery of the Cyclops (“gaping and crunching like a mountain lion”).

203–210 Why doesn’t Odysseus kill the Cyclops at this time?



215 dispatched: completed.

216 brace: pair.

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

223 Odysseus calls on his protector, the goddess Athena, for help as he forms a plan.

WORDS
TO
KNOW
appalled (ə-pôld') *adj.* filled with dismay; horrified **appall** *v.*
ponderous (pŏn'dər-əs) *adj.* heavy in a clumsy way; bulky

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

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

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

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

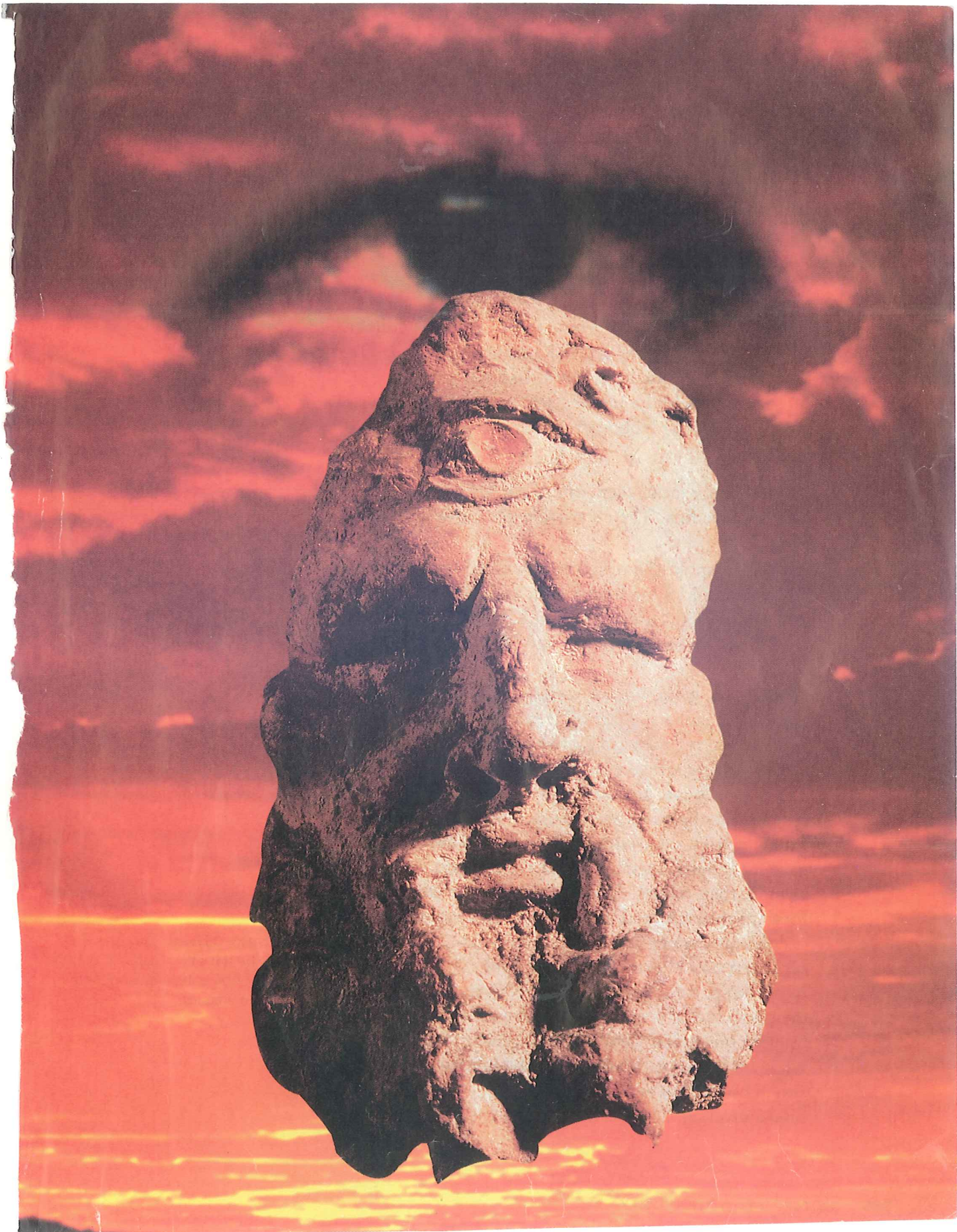
228 lugger: a small, wide sailing ship.

233 hewed: chopped.

237 profusion: abundance.

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

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



265 '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!'

270 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,
275 everyone calls me Nohbdy.'

And he said:

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

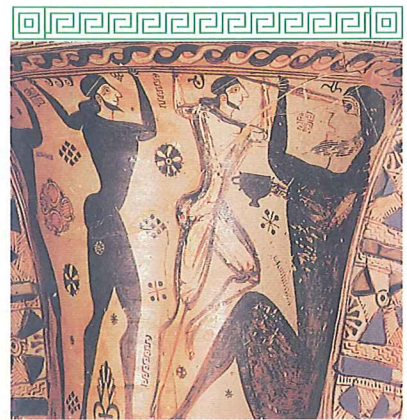
280 Even as he spoke, he reeled and tumbled backward,
his great head lolling to one side: and sleep
took him like any creature. Drunk, hiccupping,
he dribbled streams of liquor and bits of men.

285 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
290 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
295 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.

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

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

274–275 Say the name *Nohbdy* out loud and listen to what it sounds like. **What might Odysseus be planning?**



286 the pike: the pointed stake.

292–295 Odysseus compares the way he stabs the Cyclops in the eye to the way a shipbuilder drills a hole in a board.

In a smithy

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

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

Out of the cave
the mammoth Polyphemus roared in answer:

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

To this rough shout they made a sage reply:

320 ‘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

they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter
to see how like a charm the name deceived them.
325 Now Cyclops, wheezing as the pain came on him,
fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone
and squatted in the breach with arms thrown wide
for any silly beast or man who bolted—
hoping somehow I might be such a fool.
330 But I kept thinking how to win the game:
death sat there huge; how could we slip away?
I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics,
reasoning as a man will for dear life,

299 smithy: blacksmith’s shop.

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

310 divers: various.

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

318 sage: wise.

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

327 breach: opening.

330–334 Notice Odysseus’ great
mental struggle and, as you read
on, the clever plan he has man-
aged to come up with on the spot.

until a trick came—and it pleased me well.

335 The Cyclops' rams were handsome, fat, with heavy
fleeces, a dark violet.

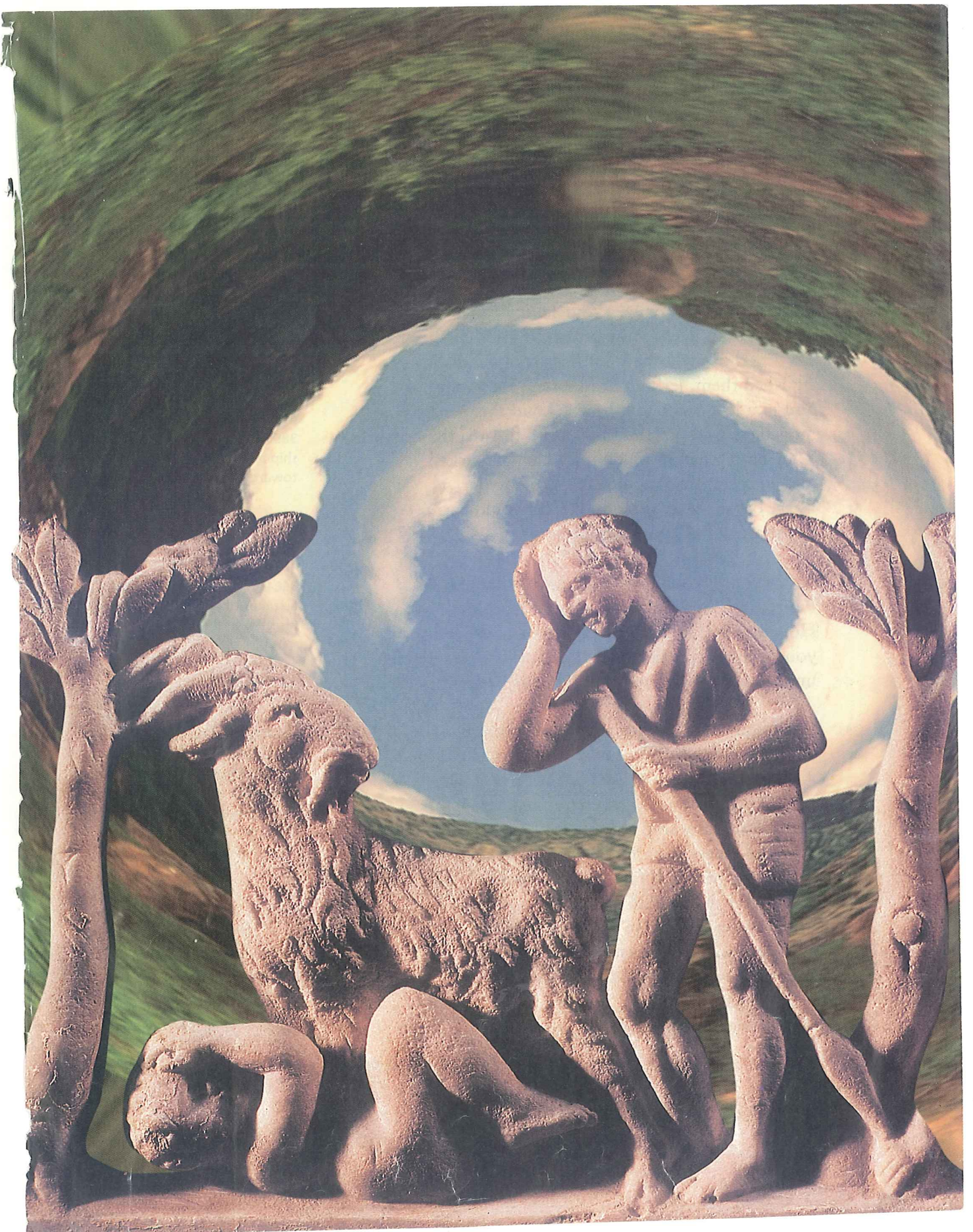
Three abreast

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

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

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

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



his brains would strew the floor, and I should have rest from the outrage Nohbdy worked upon me.'

375 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.
380 We saw, as we came near, our fellows' faces
shining; then we saw them turn to grief
tallying those who had not fled from death.
I hushed them, jerking head and eyebrows up,
and in a low voice told them: 'Load this herd;
385 move fast, and put the ship's head toward the breakers.'
They all pitched in at loading, then embarked
and struck their oars into the sea. Far out,
as far off shore as shouted words would carry,
I sent a few back to the adversary:

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

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

'Godsake, Captain!



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

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

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

WORDS
TO
KNOW

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

Why bait the beast again? Let him alone!

410 '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.'

l 'Aye
he'll smash our timbers and our heads together!'

415 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!'

420 At this he gave a mighty sob and rumbled:

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

Few words I shouted in reply to him:

407–413 The near disaster of Odysseus' boast has frightened the crew. As earlier, in the cave, the men make reasonable appeals.

415–419 Odysseus uses the warlike epithet "raider of cities" in his second boast to the Cyclops. *Why do you think he reveals so much about himself?*

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

422 Telemus (těl'ə-məs): a magician who could predict the future for the Cyclopes.

427–430 Polyphemus is not blind to the irony of being beaten by someone only about one-eighth his size.

432 the god of earthquake: Poseidon.

433 avowal: honest admission.

‘If I could take your life I would and take
your time away, and hurl you down to hell!
440 The god of earthquake could not heal you there!’

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

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

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

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

443–452 Note the details of Polyphemus’ curse on Odysseus. As you read on, you’ll find out whether the curse comes true.

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

457 **aft:** behind.

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

WORDS
TO **disdain** (dī’s-dān’) *v.* to refuse or reject scornfully
KNOW

475 we made our feast on mutton and sweet wine,
till after sunset in the gathering dark
we went to sleep above the wash of ripples.

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

483 in the vast offing: toward the
open sea.




Connect to the Literature

1. **What Do You Think?**
What is your general impression of Odysseus, based on his adventures with the Cyclopes?

Comprehension Check

- What is Odysseus' ultimate destination?
- What does Odysseus think of the way the Cyclopes live?
- How does Odysseus injure Polyphemus?

Think Critically

2. **ACTIVE READING PREDICTING** What **predictions** did you make in your  **READER'S NOTEBOOK** as you read this episode? Discuss with a classmate the clues that prompted your predictions.

3. What positive and negative qualities of Odysseus' **character** are revealed by his behavior in the land of the Cyclopes?

THINK ABOUT

- why he insists on seeing the Cyclops in the first place
- how he defeats Polyphemus
- why he taunts Polyphemus and reveals his real name as he sails away

4. Do you consider Polyphemus a **villain**? Do Odysseus' actions toward him seem justified? Explain.
5. From the **characterization** of Polyphemus, what **conclusions** can you draw about the qualities that ancient Greek society considered barbaric or monstrous? Use specific examples from the excerpt to support your ideas.

Extend Interpretations

6. **Critic's Corner** Odysseus tells King Alcinous of his fame "for guile." According to critic Bernard Knox, Odysseus tries to preserve his reputation for "successful courage and intelligence." These are "values for which he stands, and to which he must be true." From what you have read about Odysseus so far, do you think this reputation is deserved? Support your opinion.
7. **Connect to Life** What qualities do people in today's society consider barbaric or monstrous? What qualities do we think of as civilized?
8. **Connect to Life** Look over the characteristics of your favorite monster that you recorded for the chart on page 893. How does Polyphemus compare with your monster?

Literary Analysis

EPIC HERO The larger-than-life central figure or "superhero" of an epic is known as the **epic hero**. Usually a male figure, he is a person of imposing stature who stands for the ideals of a nation or race. He performs deeds of great valor that require superhuman courage. Sometimes he is assisted by supernatural forces.

Paired Activity With a partner, create a two-column chart to evaluate the extent to which Odysseus acts like an epic hero in Book 9. In the first column, list the larger-than-life qualities and actions that show Odysseus to be an epic hero. In the second column, list Odysseus' human weaknesses and unwise actions that do not seem to fit the ideal of an epic hero. After you complete your chart, discuss with your partner the ways in which you think Odysseus' character needs improvement. As you read more of the *Odyssey*, you'll be able to decide whether Odysseus changes for the better.

Heroic Qualities of Odysseus	Weaknesses of Odysseus

Choices & CHALLENGES

Writing Options

1. Diary Entries Write one or two diary entries in which one of Odysseus' crew describes the events of this episode.

2. Cyclops' Story How might the Cyclops have viewed the events? Experiment with writing a draft of the episode as Polyphemus might tell it.

Writing Handbook

See page 1153: Narrative Writing.

Activities & Explorations

1. Dramatized Scenes With the class divided into small groups, act out scenes from Book 9 of the *Odyssey*. (Scenes could include Odysseus and his crew in the land of the Lotus Eaters, the

attack on the Cyclops, the escape from the Cyclops' cave, and the departure from the land of the Cyclopes.) Focus on portraying the character of Odysseus.

~ PERFORMING

2. Escape Plan If Polyphemus had not brought the rams into the cave, how might Odysseus and his men have escaped? With a partner, devise an escape plan and explain it to your classmates.

~ SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Inquiry & Research

Classical Influences The lasting effects of classical Greek culture extend beyond literature. In a small group, find out more about ancient Greek civilization and its impact upon later cultures of the world. Each group member may

want to research a different aspect of the subject, such as religion, the arts, government, or technology.



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LaserLinks: Background for Reading
Art Gallery

Art Connection

Look again at the image on page 910. This painting from a 6th-century krater—a wide-necked, two-handled jar used as a mixing bowl by the ancient Greeks—depicts Odysseus hidden beneath the Cyclops' largest ram. How successful is this painting at illustrating the difficulty of Odysseus' feat?

Vocabulary in Action

EXERCISE A: ASSESSMENT PRACTICE For each group of words below, write the letter of the word that is an antonym of the boldfaced word.

1. ponderous: (a) dainty, (b) careless, (c) intelligent

2. adversary: (a) partner, (b) guarantee, (c) obstacle

3. avenge: (a) dare, (b) resist, (c) forgive

4. disdain: (a) stop, (b) accept, (c) scorn

5. formidable: (a) shapeless, (b) unimpressive, (c) likely

3. ENTREAT : RESPOND ::

(a) speak : shout (c) reject : refuse

(b) throw : catch (d) suggest : recommend

4. APPALLED : AWFUL ::

(a) bored : amusing (c) tortured : helpful

(b) surprised : predicted (d) interested : fascinating

5. INDIFFERENT : SHRUG ::

(a) rebellious : nod (c) enthusiastic : sigh

(b) sleepy : yawn (d) startled : groan

Building Vocabulary

For an in-depth lesson on analogies, see page 641.

Read On

As you read the next adventure, pay attention to Odysseus' weaknesses as well as his strengths. Compare him with his loyal but cautious officer Eurylochus.

EXERCISE B: ANALOGIES Write the letter of the word pair that expresses the relationship most similar to that expressed by the capitalized pair.

1. GUILE : FOX ::

(a) loyalty : squirrel (c) timidity : mouse

(b) wisdom : sparrow (d) courage : sheep

2. WHIM : NOTION ::

(a) request : plea (c) letter : invitation

(b) idea : emotion (d) separation : link