The Odyssey Part 2

Homer

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?

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Motivation
Prepare an Anticipation Guide (General Resources, pp. 8–10) with the following statements:

• People anxiously await for their family members to return home.
• The important things in one’s home will never change, no matter how long you stay away.
• You should never trust people to remain faithful to your memory if you have been gone for a long time.
• You can never go home again.

Give students copies of the prepared Anticipation Guide. Have students mark their responses in the Me column. Then have students discuss the statements in pairs or groups and mark the Guides again, this time in the Group column.

Concept Connector
Students will return to the Anticipation Guide after completing the Odyssey, Part 2.

Learning Modalities
Interpersonal Learners
Key scenes in the Odyssey, Part 2 focus on tests—Odysseus tests people to see whether they have remained faithful to him. Penelope tests Odysseus to see whether he is truly who he claims to be. Ask these students to consider the unstated rules that govern interactions between people, especially in relationships that require trust. Have students describe an encounter in which people have tested one another to find out what they know, who they are, or whether they should be trusted.

Differentiated Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

Support for Below-Level Students [L1, L2]
Unit 6 Resources
Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists, p. 36
Vocabulary Warm-up Practice, p. 37
Reading Warm-up A, p. 38
Selection Test A, pp. 48–50
Graphic Organizer Transparencies
Reading Skill Graphic Organizer
Transparency B, p. 204
Reader’s Notebook: Adapted Version
Adapted Reader’s Notebook Audio CD

Support for English Learners [EL]
Unit 6 Resources
Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists, p. 36
Vocabulary Warm-up Practice, p. 37
Reading Warm-up A, p. 38
Reader’s Notebook: English Learner’s Version
Listening to Literature Audio CD
About the Selection

Of the two great epic poems attributed to Homer, the *Iliad* has been called a war poem, and the *Odyssey* has been called a postwar poem. The wanderings of Odysseus after his victory at Troy and the difficulties of readjusting to a civil society upon his eventual return home have helped make the themes of the *Odyssey* relevant to many generations of readers. The theme of the returning veteran, with the struggles to reestablish relationships with spouses and friends (and perhaps with a child for the first time) add a human poignancy to this epic adventure. Discuss with students the difficulties and emotions that Odysseus is likely to face after twenty years away.

Reading Check

Answer: Athena tells Odysseus that there are many suitors at the palace trying to persuade Penelope that Odysseus is surely dead after all this time, and so she must marry again. Each wants to be her new husband. Athena tells Odysseus that it is time he put an end to all this.

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.

... 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.

Vocabulary Builder
dissemble (di sim” bal) v. conceal under a false appearance; disguise

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

Vocabulary Development

Think-Aloud: Context

Direct students’ attention to the dogs’ behavior at the appearance of Athena on this page: they cowered at the sight of the goddess. Using a think-aloud process, model how to use context to infer the meaning of an unknown word.

The dogs cowered because they see Athena. In the same sentence, they also whimper, or cry, and seem to run away from her. Are there any more clues? Well, Athena is a goddess and very powerful. The dogs might be afraid and run away from a powerful person. I think that to cower means to show fear before a powerful person or thing.
Eumaeus, the Swineherd, by N.C. Wyeth

This illustration, like many for this selection, was among the sixteen paintings N.C. Wyeth, America’s foremost illustrator of children’s books and classics, painted for a 1929 edition of the Odyssey. Use the following questions for discussion:

1. In the Odyssey, Eumaeus is characterized as being loyal and noble. How does Wyeth’s painting convey these traits?
   Possible response: Eumaeus is pictured as tall, straight, and sturdy. He looks like a man who will not be easily moved. This firmness of his stance makes him look trustworthy.

2. Which dog in the illustration might be Argus?
   Possible response: Argus is described in lines 1163–1168 as “an old dog lying near.” Argus would be the dog on the left, lying down.

5 Critical Viewing
Possible Response: Eumaeus appears to be patient, loyal, and practical. The pigs in the sty behind him are a clue to his profession.

Strategy for Less Proficient Readers
Have partners paraphrase the opening passage that describes the entrance of Athena. A possible paraphrase might be: “The goddess Athena, looking like a beautiful, intelligent woman, appeared to Odysseus. Telemachus, however, could not see her.”

Strategy for English Learners
Students may find the appearance of a goddess in this scene challenging. Explain that gods and goddesses often appear in human form in Greek literature. Tell them that readers would be familiar with this convention, as well as with the Telemachus’ inability to see the god, although his father sees her plainly. Ask students to identify details that emphasize Athena’s godlike qualities—for example, her height and the dogs’ fear of her—and the details that make her seem more like a human being.
• Tell students that the Greeks believed their gods often intervened in the affairs of human beings, taking an interest in their welfare and helping or hindering them. Remind them of the gods who have made Odysseus’ journey back to Ithaca so difficult.

• Ask students the Reading Skill question: What lines 1021–1029 suggest about the way ancient Greeks responded to the presence of a god?

Possible response: Taking the transformed Odysseus for a god, Telemachus shows awe, fear, and reverence. However, he also speaks freely to the “god,” and makes requests. These lines suggest that Greeks responded to the gods as higher, but approachable, beings.

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 incredulity, 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!”

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.”

Vocabulary Builder

incredulity (in′krē də lē′) n. unwillingness or inability to believe

Word Forms

Two of the Vocabulary Builder words for the Odyssey can form other parts of speech by adding suffixes. Give students a blank Word Form Chart (General Resources, p. 16) with dissemble and incredulity in the correct columns. Work with the class, or have students work with a partner, to determine the related forms. The final chart should look like the one shown.

Hold students accountable for integrating the related forms of the words into their speaking and writing.

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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 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 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, 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:

3. cutter (kut’er) 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?

Literary Analysis
Epic Simile
To what are Odysseus’ and Telemachus’ cries compared in the epic simile in lines 1063-1065?

Answer: The cries of Odysseus and Telemachus are compared to those of a hawk that has lost its nestlings to a farmer.

Reading Check
Answer: Telemachus is initially doubtful because of the change in Odysseus’ appearance, which leads Telemachus to assume he is a god.
• Remind students that Athena was the goddess of wisdom. Then ask students why she might be particularly interested in helping Odysseus.

Possible response: Odysseus is known for his wit and cleverness. Athena, the goddess of wisdom, may admire his intelligence.

• Then ask students the Reading Skill question: What does Odysseus’ statement in lines 1109–1111 suggest about ancient Greek beliefs about the gods’ interest in human affairs.

Possible response: Odysseus’ response indicates that the Greeks believed they could depend on the gods to help them in very specific ways in time of need.

• Discuss with students how Homer’s story shows the Greek gods responding to humans’ material needs in very active ways. In this section, for example, Athena has disguised Odysseus and then restored him to his youthful appearance.

“O Father, all my life your fame as a fighting man has echoed in my ears—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? For I must tell you this is no affair 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, 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 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:

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.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary Builder Reinforcement

Students will benefit from additional examples and practice with the Vocabulary Builder words. Reinforce their comprehension with “show-you-know” sentences. The first part of the sentence uses the vocabulary word in an appropriate context. The second part of the sentence—the “show-you-know” part—clarifies the first.

Model the strategy with the example for bemusing:

The bemusing air in the garden made us sleepy with its odor of sweet flowers.

Then give students these sentence prompts and coach them in creating the clarification part.

1. The bemusing singer drew us in with her amazing voice;

Sample answer: her songs lulled us into forgetting all our troubles.

2. We questioned the equity of the law;

Sample answer: it seemed to favor one group of people over another.
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 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, 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. Temper your anger, temper 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.

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 shirkers who take you lightly, as alone and young.”

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 (bè’møōz’ in) v. stupefying or muddling
shirkers (shir’kərz) n. people who get out of doing what needs to be done.

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

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Critical Viewing
Answer: Students may say that the Greeks incorporated worship of their gods into everyday events. The scenes on the pottery show the importance to the Greeks of honoring and commemorating significant events in Greek history and mythology.

Humanities
Greek vessel
This vessel is one of several being used to illustrate this edition of the Odyssey. The Greeks used this vessel to store or transport liquids such as oil or wine. Greek artists used several methods to decorate these vessels. In the "black figure" technique, color is applied to the figures, with the background taking the natural color of the clay. The vessel on p. 1000 is an example this style. In the "red figure" technique, the process is reversed; the background is painted black. The krater, or bowl, on p. 972 is an example of the "red figure" process.

These artifacts have survived for thousands of years—a durable art form that is not only intrinsically beautiful, but that presents a detailed picture of the life and culture of ancient Greeks. Use the following question for discussion:

- In a thousand years, what objects from our own culture might reveal our values to the people who find them?

Possible response: Our televisions, computers, and musical equipment might indicate our culture’s interest in entertainment.

Argus

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:

“A hunter owned him—but the man is dead in some far place. If this old hound could show the form he had when Lord Odysseus left him, going to Troy, you’d see him swift and strong. He never shrank from any savage thing

he’d brought to bay in the deep woods; on the scent
no other dog kept up with him. Now misery has him in leash. His owner died abroad, and here the women slaves will take no care of him. You know how servants are: without a master they have no will to labor, or excel.

For Zeus who views the wide world takes away half the manhood of a man, that day he goes into captivity and slavery."

Eumaeus crossed the court and went straight forward into the megaron among the suitors: but death and darkness in that instant closed the eyes of 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 suitor Antinous.

But here Antinous broke in, shouting:

"God!

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!

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?"

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, and, glowering under his brows, he answered:

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

Reading Check

Answer: Antinous berates Odysseus and throws a stool at him.

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

7. haughty (hô’t’ ə) adj. arrogant.

8. Antinous (an tin’ ə s)

Reading Skill

Historical and Cultural Context

• Discuss with students how many cultures have practiced slavery, often enslaving people that were captured in war. Slavery based on race was practiced in American colonies and in the United States until the Civil War.

• Then ask the Reading Skill question: How do Eumaeus’ beliefs about servitude and slavery compare with those of your culture?

Sample responses: Eumaeus believes that slaves will not do good work if they are not supervised. My culture believes that enslaving people is morally wrong and that no one should be subjected to slavery, even if it is under a “good” master such as Odysseus.

Reading Check

Answer: Antinous berates Odysseus and throws a stool at him.
Reading Skill
Historical and Cultural Context
- Remind students of Greek culture’s emphasis on hospitality. Point out also that Antinous is an unwanted guest in another person’s home, and that he has been treated with courtesy.
- Ask students how they think a polite guest would treat the entrance of a beggar.
  Possible response: Students may say that a more polite guest could have offered food to the beggar and asked him to leave. An even more gracious guest would offer to share his meal and find the beggar a seat.
- Ask students the first Reading Skill question: What conflicting values does this exchange between Antinous and Odysseus reveal?
  Possible response: Odysseus practices the values of the gods and treats strangers with courtesy. Antinous is not only rude, he also violates his culture’s rules regarding hospitality.

Reading Skill
Historical and Cultural Context
- Review the exchange between Antinous and Odysseus, beginning with the suitor’s insult of the disguised Odysseus.
- Ask students why Antinous becomes so angry with the beggar. Answer: The disguised Odysseus points out Antinous’ selfish and inappropriate behavior.
- Ask the second Reading Skill question: What values regarding the use of physical force are evident in this speech?
  Possible response: Odysseus’ speech indicates that physical force is appropriate when defending one’s property. Antinous, however, used force for an inappropriate reason.

Expressive Vocabulary
As students are discussing Odysseus’ encounter with the suitors, encourage them to use the expressive vocabulary presented earlier. You might encourage them with sentence starters like these.
1. Odysseus practiced deception when he . . .
2. The suitors’ behavior made Odysseus furious because . . .
3. The Greek culture required that hosts extend courtesy to . . .
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 Eurynome her housekeeper, put in:

“He and no other?” 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

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

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Strategy for Advanced Readers

On his arrival, Odysseus is greeted with insults: “pest,” “nosing rat,” and “famished tramp.” Have students record the insults on a Cluster Diagram (Graphic Organizer Transparencies, p. 235) and see whether they can find any common elements in these insults. Suggest that students begin by looking for references to animals and to poverty. Ask students to write an essay analyzing the insults, showing how they reveal what Greeks despised—and, by implication, what they valued and esteemed.

Reading Check

Answer: Penelope regards Antinous as the worst suitor.
Epic Simile

• Read aloud lines 1290–1297 and tell students it is an example of an epic simile.

• Ask students to draw the Literary Analysis graphic organizer on p. 1014, or give them a copy of Literary Analysis Graphic Organizer A (Graphic Organizer Transparencies, p. 203). Have students write down the two items that are being compared in this epic simile, and the details that are included in the comparison.

• Discuss with students Odysseus’ reasons for drawing this extended comparison and point out that he is avoiding Penelope’s question about his homeland. Then ask what they think Odysseus’ comparison reveals about his feelings toward his wife.

Possible response: The epic simile indicates that Odysseus believes that Penelope has been faithful to him.

• After students have discussed Odysseus’ comparison, ask them to fill out the “Purpose” section of their graphic organizers.

Monitor Progress: Review students’ graphic organizers to ensure that they understand the items being compared in the epic simile and the purpose of the comparison.

Reteach: If necessary, review with students the trick that Odysseus is playing on Penelope by hiding his identity. Discuss how the epic simile is a way of testing her faithfulness.

Vocabulary Builder
equity (ek’ wit é) n. fairness; justice

Vocabulary Builder
maudlin (môd’ lin) adj. tearfully and foolishly sentimental

12. carriage (kar’ ij) n. posture.

13. Zacynthus (za sin’ thus)

14. ruses (rûz’ iz) n. tricks.

Word Analysis
Call students attention to the word equity and its definition. Tell students that the Latin root –equi- means “same” or “equal.” Ask students to think of other words that contain this root, and ask a volunteer to list them on the board.

Possibilities include equidistant, equilateral, and equivalent.

Have students look up the listed words in a dictionary to clarify the definitions. Then have students use each word in a sentence that illustrates its meaning.
‘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. 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.

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.

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 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, 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.”

Reading Check

Answer: Penelope said that she could not marry until she completed weaving her dead husband’s shroud. She wove the shroud by day and unraveled it each night.

Reading Skill

Historical and Cultural Context

How do the ancient Greek ideas in Penelope’s speech about honoring the dead compare to modern ideas?

Possible response: Students may say that both the Greeks and people in modern times have rituals that honor the dead. They may observe that modern society does not always follow a strict set of burial customs as people did in ancient Greece.

Reading Check

Answer: Penelope said that she could not marry until she completed weaving her dead husband’s shroud. She wove the shroud by day and unraveled it each night.
The Trial of the Bow, by N.C. Wyeth

N.C. Wyeth studied with Howard Pyle, an illustrator famous for his work on children’s classics such as the tales of Robin Hood. Pyle encouraged Wyeth to use make his paintings dramatic and to paint from his own experience.

In The Trial of the Bow, Penelope promises that she will marry the man who can string Odysseus’ bow and shoot an arrow through twelve ax handle sockets. In this painting, Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, has succeeded in the first part of this challenge. Use these questions for discussion:

1. Why do you think Wyeth chose to illustrate this particular moment in the story?
   Answer: This is an especially dramatic moment because Odysseus is about to win the contest, reveal his true identity to the suitors, and then take his revenge.

2. Why didn’t the artist illustrate the scene a few moments later, when the arrow goes through the ax handles?
   Answer: At that point, Odysseus would no longer be focusing on the target, but would be giving instructions to Telemachus. This moment shows Odysseus at his best—muscles flexed and his attention fixed on his target.

Critical Viewing

Answer: The emotional tension is captured in the physical tension of Odysseus’ arm and leg muscles and the taut bowstring. In addition, everyone else is focused on the targets. Additional suspense comes from the point in time the picture captures: The arrow has not been released, and the viewers, like the people in the painting, wait in expectation.
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 ax-handle 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!”

“Dealer in old bows!”

“Maybe he has one like it at home!”

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

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

And one disdainful suitor added this:

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

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

In the hushed hall it smote the suitors and all their faces changed. Then Zeus thundered overhead, one loud crack for a sign. And Odysseus laughed within him that the son

Literary Analysis
Epic Simile
Which of Odysseus’ qualities is highlighted in the epic simile in lines 1372–1379?

Possible response: The epic simile highlights Odysseus’ skillfulness with the bow. The comparison with a musician shows the grace and ease he brings to archery.

Reading Check
Answer: Penelope says that she will marry whoever can string Odysseus’ bow and shoot an arrow through twelve ax-handle sockets.

Strategy for Special Needs Students
Students may need help to understand the comparison made by the epic simile. Have students use a Venn Diagram (Graphic Organizer Transparencies, p. 244) to see the major similarities and differences in the comparison between the bow and the harp. After students have made these broad distinctions, discuss with them how the long list of details in the comparison makes up the literary form called the epic simile.

Strategy for Less Proficient Readers
Students may have difficulty understanding how the epic simile fits into the plot of the Odyssey. For support, show them Literary Analysis Graphic Organizer B (Graphic Organizer Transparencies, p. 206) Use the completed graphic organizer to demonstrate how the simile reveals more about Odysseus’ character.
Critical Viewing

The hunter’s posture on the pottery portrait of a hunter might be somewhat stylized and artificial in contrast to the easy grace that Odysseus displays.

Themes in Literature: Heroism

...of crooked-minded Cronus had flung that omen down. He picked one ready arrow from his table where it lay bare: the rest were waiting still in the quiver for the young men’s turn to come. He nocked it, let it rest across the handgrip, and drew the string and grooved butt of the arrow, aiming from where he sat upon the stool.

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

Then quietly Odysseus said:

“Telemachus, the stranger you welcomed in your hall has not disgraced you. I did not miss, neither did I take all day stringing the bow. My hand and eye are sound, not so contemptible as the young men say. The hour has come to cook their lordships’ mutton—supper by daylight. Other amusements later, with song and harping that adorn a feast.”

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

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.

Vocabulary Development

Archery Terms

Have students identify the words used to describe Odysseus’ bow. Ask them to fill in a Web (Graphic Organizer Transparencies, p. 245) with the archery terms used in the selection. Students can write the words used to describe the bow, the arrow, or the act of shooting web. Examples of this special vocabulary would include arrow, quiver, nocked, handgrip, string, and twanging. Have students use the web to show the relationships between the words and how they explain the act of shooting an arrow.
Odysseus’ Revenge

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

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

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

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

He drew to his fist the cruel head of an arrow for Antinous just as the young man leaned to lift his beautiful drinking cup.

embossed, two-handled, golden: the cup was in his fingers: the wine was even at his lips: and did he dream of death?

How could he? In that revelry amid his throng of friends who would imagine a single foe—though a strong foe indeed—could dare to bring death’s pain on him and darkness on his eyes?

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

Backward and down he went, letting the 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 throw.

All they could do was yell in outrage at Odysseus:

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

“You are a villain; we will slit your throat!”

“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 Odysseus’ house.

Reading Skill
Historical and Cultural Context

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

Strategies for English Learners

Students may need help reading and understanding Odysseus’ battle with the suitors. Before addressing the Reading Skill question, preview the bracketed passage with Listening to Literature Audio CDs. Have students read along as they listen. They may need particular help understanding how the descriptions break into the action. For example, explain that lines 1415–1418 break to show that Antinous did not dream that he had a deadly enemy in Odysseus’ house.

Enrichment for Advanced Readers

To enrich the Reading Skill exercise, encourage students to research rules of warfare. For example, students might find information about ancient Greek customs that were observed during wartime, the various customs that once applied to dueling, or the Geneva Convention guidelines that apply to the treatment of prisoners today. Have students share their research with the rest of the class.

Reading Check

Who does Odysseus kill first?
**Humanities**

**The Slaughter of the Suitors,**
by N.C. Wyeth

In this painting of Odysseus’ revenge, Wyeth adds drama and animation to an already exciting story. His depiction includes several pieces of Greek armor; the fighters’ helmets and armor would likely have been made of bronze. Use the following questions for discussion.

1. Which lines from the *Odyssey* does this painting illustrate?
   **Answer:** It illustrates lines 1521–1530.

2. Who are the four figures on the right side of the painting? How do you know?
   **Answer:** They are Odysseus, Telemachus, Eumaeus, and the cowherd. They are wearing armor, have weapons, and are obviously winning the battle.

3. What details make the painting exciting?
   **Possible responses:** The flung spear, the spears about to be thrown, the position of the men’s bodies, or the dust of battle make the painting exciting. The giant columns in the background create a heroic mood for the scene.

**Critical Viewing**

**Answer:** Students may say that the suitors were sitting at tables. Others may say that Odysseus’ bow and arrows should have been represented.

**Critical Viewing** Do you think this illustration presents the slaughter of the suitors accurately? Explain. **[Evaluate]**
they were already in the grip of death. But glaring under his brows Odysseus answered:

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

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

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

Odysseus glowered under his black brows
and said:

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

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

Vocabulary Builder

contempt (kən 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?

Possible responses: Odysseus is angry because the suitors have plundered his house and tried to claim his wife while he was gone. He also is angry because the suitors have dishonored the Greeks’ religious laws regarding hospitality and the authority of the gods.

Reading Check

Answer: He offers to make restitution of all the meat and wine consumed, plus gifts of oxen, bronze, and gold.
Have students review the Literary Analysis section of the Build Skills page, p. 992. Ask them to compare a typical simile with an epic simile and to give and example of each.

Possible response: A typical simile makes a comparison to one thing, for example, “The arrow flew like a hawk.” An epic simile is longer and more complex. A possible example is, “The arrow flew like a hawk. Its feathers glinted in the sun, and it point bit like a hawk’s beak. It attacked its victim as a hawk clutches its prey.”

Stress to students that not all similes in the Odyssey are epic similes.

Then ask students the Literary Analysis question: Why is the comparison of Eurymachus’ sharp sword to a razor only a simile and not an epic simile?

Possible response: This is a simile because it compares a sword to a razor. An epic simile, however, is an elaborate comparison that can run across several lines. Here, the comparison is mentioned once and is not sustained.

Monitor Progress: Review students’ graphic organizers to ensure that they understand the comparison and why it is not an epic simile.

Reteach: Work with students to expand this simile into an epic simile. Brainstorm words that might be used to extend the simile, including blade, slice, sever, slash, and cut.

"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.
1510
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 
rushed 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. 
1525
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, 
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. 

Who helps Odysseus defeat the suitors? 

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

*The Fall of Troy*, by Romare Bearden

Born in North Carolina, African American artist Romare Bearden grew up in New York. His work is most remarkable for its sophisticated use of the idiom of Cubism to portray the everyday realities of African American life. *The Fall of Troy* is a collage from a series done by Bearden on the adventures of Odysseus. The large white horse to the right is the Trojan horse; the boats in the harbor are waiting to carry Odysseus and his men from Troy to numerous adventures. Use these questions for discussion:

- Which aspects of the collage recall what you have read from the Odyssey? Which aspects of the collage reflect a modern mind at work?
  
  **Answer:** Students should recognize epic references such as the Trojan Horse, the burning towers of Troy, and the sea and ships. Modern references include the collage technique; the flat, childlike style of the cutouts; and the whimsical inclusion of dolphins and other sea creatures.

**Critical Viewing**

**Answer:** Students should compare their impressions of such specific details as the Trojan Horse, the burning towers, and the waiting ships.

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**Vocabulary Development**

*Deceptive* Terms

Odysseus' return is full of the idea of secrets and deception. Review with students the words that Penelope uses on p. 1015 here to describe this deception:

*frauds*: means of deceiving people

*impostors*: cheaters, people who assume false disguises

*underhanded*: secret, not straightforward
Greatesthearted Odysseus, home at last, was being bathed now by Eurynome and rubbed with golden oil, and clothed again in a fresh tunic and a cloak. Athena lent him beauty, head to foot. She made him taller, and massive, too, with crisping hair in curls like petals of wild hyacinth but all red-golden. Think of gold infused on silver by a craftsman, whose fine art Hephaestus taught him, or Athena: one whose work moves to delight: just so she lavished beauty over Odysseus' head and shoulders. He sat then in the same chair by the pillar, facing his silent wife, and said:

"Strange woman, the immortals of Olympus made you hard, harder than any. Who else in the world would keep aloof as you do from her husband if he returned to her from years of trouble, cast on his own land in the twentieth year? Nurse, make up a bed for me to sleep on. Her heart is iron in her breast."

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 (hè fës' tas) god of fire and metalworking.

Reading Check

Answer: Odysseus describes Penelope as hard and aloof.
and he turned on her in a flash raging:

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

An old trunk of olive 
grew like a pillar on the building plot. 
and I laid out our bedroom round that tree, 
lined up the stone walls, built the walls and roof, 
gave it a doorway and smooth-fitting doors. 
Then I lopped off the silvery leaves and branches, 
hewed and shaped 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—"
The Ending

**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 Eumachus 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?

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**Literary Analysis**

**Epic Simile**

In what way does this epic simile recall the dangers Odysseus faced on his journey home?

Possible response: Odysseus longs for his wife as a drowning person longs for dry land. The comparison to “rough water,” “gale winds,” and “tons of sea” recall the many times that Odysseus faced and that Odysseus was nearly drowned before he could return home.

21. abyss (ə bīs) n. ocean depths.