

The Homecoming *from the Odyssey*

Epic Poem by Homer

Translated by Robert Fitzgerald

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML9-1240

How does it feel to come **HOME** again?

COMMON CORE

RL 2 Determine a theme of a text; provide an objective summary of the text. **RL 4** Determine the connotative meaning of words as they are used in a text. **RL 5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text create tension. **L 4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words.

If you spend enough time at any airport or bus station, you're bound to witness an emotional scene. A long-awaited homecoming can touch us more deeply than almost anything. Imagine a traveler who's been away for years, whose family thought he might never return. What kind of scene might you expect at his homecoming?

QUICKWRITE Recall a time when you or someone you know returned home after some time away. Write a brief description of the scene, and explain the emotions that went along with it.



● TEXT ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EPIC

In the simplest terms, an epic is a long adventure story. An epic **plot** spans many years and involves a long journey. Often, the fate of an entire nation is at stake. An epic **setting** spans great distances and foreign lands. Epic **themes**—the underlying messages in an epic—reflect timeless concerns, such as courage, honor, life, and death.

Epics also contain **archetypes**, or patterns found in works across different cultures and time periods. As explained in Part 1, the epic hero is an archetype. So is the notion of a heroic journey. Other archetypes found in the *Odyssey* include intervention by gods, floods and storms, descent into the underworld, and heroic battles against monsters. As you read the second part of the epic, look for these and other archetypes. Consider where else you might have encountered them in literature, art, or film.

● READING STRATEGY: SUMMARIZING

Writing a **plot summary**—a brief retelling of a story—is a good way to make sure you’re following the events of a narrative. An epic consists of many episodes, each with its own set of characters, conflicts, and resolution. As you read, record information that will help you summarize each episode. Remember that a summary should be **objective**. It should include only what happens in the text, not your personal opinions.

<i>Episode: Father and Son</i>	
<i>Characters: Odysseus, Eumaeus</i>	<i>Setting: Ithaca, Odysseus’ homeland</i>
<i>Conflict:</i>	<i>Resolution:</i>

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Replace the words in bold with synonyms from the word list.

WORD LIST	adversity	desolation	revulsion
	aloof	implacable	tremulous
	commandeer	restitution	
	contemptible	revelry	

1. It’s **disgusting** to be **shaky** in the face of **hardship**.
2. He felt an **unforgiving hatred** for his captors.
3. Don’t act **distant**; forget **sorrow** and join the **celebration**!
4. He could **seize** enemy ships as **repayment** for wrongs.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Book 16: Father and Son

Sent safely on his way by King Alcinous, Odysseus reaches Ithaca. The goddess Athena disguises him as an old man so that he may surprise the evil suitors who are courting his wife, Penelope. Odysseus greets Eumaeus, his faithful swineherd, and Telemachus, his own son, returned home after many years abroad.

Book 17: The Beggar and the Manor

Disguised as a beggar, Odysseus returns to his home.

Book 21: The Test of the Bow

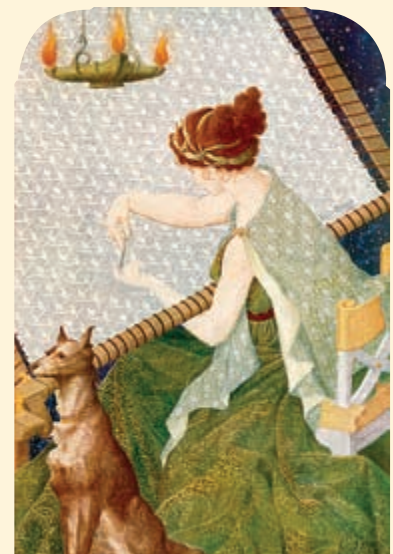
Not recognizing the beggar as her husband, and weary from grief and waiting, Penelope proposes an archery contest to the suitors, with marriage to her as the prize. Still disguised as an old man, Odysseus beats them all in the contest.

Book 22: Death in the Great Hall

With Telemachus and Eumaeus at his side, Odysseus sheds his disguise and does battle with the suitors, showing them no mercy.

Book 23: The Trunk of the Olive Tree

Hardened by years of waiting, Penelope is not convinced that this man is really her husband. She tests him, playing a trick that only Odysseus would recognize. Odysseus passes the test, and husband and wife are reunited.



Penelope weaving at her loom.

PART TWO: THE HOMECOMING

BOOK 16:

Father and Son

In Books 13–15, King Alcinous and his friends send Odysseus on his way home. Odysseus sleeps while the rowers bring him to Ithaca. When he awakens, he fails to recognize his homeland until Athena appears and tells him that he is indeed home. She disguises him as an old man, so that he can surprise the suitors, and then urges him to visit his faithful swineherd, Eumaeus. The swineherd welcomes the disguised Odysseus and tells him about what has been happening in Odysseus' home. Athena goes to Telemachus and tells him to return home. She warns him of the suitors' plot to kill him and advises him to stay with the swineherd for a night. Telemachus does as she bids.

But there were two men in the mountain hut—
Odysseus and the swineherd. At first light
blowing their fire up, they cooked their breakfast
and sent their lads out, driving herds to root
5 in the tall timber.

When Telemachus came,
the wolvisb troop of watchdogs only fawned on him
as he advanced. Odysseus heard them go
and heard the light crunch of a man's footfall—
at which he turned quickly to say:

“Eumaeus,
10 here is one of your crew come back, or maybe
another friend: the dogs are out there snuffling
belly down; not one has even growled.
I can hear footsteps—”

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

Analyze Visuals ►

Review the information given in the summary at the top of this page. What do you think Marc Chagall wanted to capture in this painting?

Athene and Telemach, from *Odyssey II* (1975), Marc Chagall. Lithograph on Arches paper. 16.9" × 13". Photograph by Gregory R. Staley. Courtesy of the Georgetown Frame Shoppe. © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



The swineherd

15 rose in surprise, letting a bowl and jug
tumble from his fingers. Going forward,
he kissed the young man's head, his shining eyes
and both hands, while his own tears brimmed and fell.
Think of a man whose dear and only son,
20 born to him in exile, reared with labor,
has lived ten years abroad and now returns:
how would that man embrace his son! Just so
the herdsman clapped his arms around Telemachus **A**
and covered him with kisses—for he knew
25 the lad had got away from death. He said:

“Light of my days, Telemachus,
you made it back! When you took ship for Pylos
I never thought to see you here again.
Come in, dear child, and let me feast my eyes;
30 here you are, home from distant places! **B**
How rarely anyway, you visit us,
your own men, and your own woods and pastures!
Always in the town, a man would think
you loved the suitors' company, those dogs!”

35 Telemachus with his clear candor said:

“I am with you, Uncle. See now, I have come
because I wanted to see you first, to hear from you
if Mother stayed at home—or is she married
off to someone and Odysseus' bed
40 left empty for some gloomy spider's weaving?”

Gently the forester replied to this:

“At home indeed your mother is, poor lady,
still in the women's hall. Her nights and days
are wearied out with grieving.”

Stepping back

45 he took the bronze-shod lance, and the young prince
entered the cabin over the worn door stone.
Odysseus moved aside, yielding his couch,
but from across the room Telemachus checked him:

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

A EPIC

Reread lines 19–23. What **theme** is being developed in this **epic simile**?

27 when you took ship for Pylos: Ten years earlier, Telemachus went to Pylos (pī'lās') in search of knowledge about Odysseus' whereabouts.

B EPIC

Reread lines 26–30. How do these lines indicate an epic **setting**?

The swineherd, when the quiet man sank down,
built a new pile of evergreens and fleeces—
a couch for the dear son of great Odysseus—
then gave them trenchers of good meat, left over
55 from the roast pork of yesterday, and heaped up
willow baskets full of bread, and mixed
an ivy bowl of honey-hearted wine.
Then he in turn sat down, facing Odysseus,
their hands went out upon the meat and drink
60 as they fell to, ridding themselves of hunger. . . .

*Telemachus sends the swineherd to let his mother know he has returned safely.
Athena appears and urges Odysseus to let Telemachus know who he really is.*

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



Detail of *Goddess Athena Disguises Ulysses as Beggar* (18th century), Giuseppe Bottani. Civiche Racc d'Arte, Pavia, Italy. Photo © Dagli Orti /The Art Archive.

COMMON CORE L 4

Language Coach

Fixed Expressions Some verbs have a special meaning when followed by a certain preposition. What does the expression *left over* mean in line 54? What common compound word is related to this expression?

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

“Stranger,
you are no longer what you were just now!
Your cloak is new; even your skin! You are
one of the gods who rule the sweep of heaven!
Be kind to us, we’ll make you fair oblation
75 and gifts of hammered gold. Have mercy on us!”

The noble and enduring man replied:

“No god. Why take me for a god? No, no.
I am that father whom your boyhood lacked
and suffered pain for lack of. I am he.”

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

C EPIC

What supernatural event is described in lines 61–67?

74 oblation: sacrifice

**▼ Analyze
Visuals**

This detail of an ancient Roman mosaic shows Odysseus (Ulysses) and Telemachus. How does the technique of clustering colored tiles together affect the kind of image that can be created? Be specific.



Ulysses and His Son Telemachus (A.D. first century). Mosaic, 31.5 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

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

“You cannot
be my father Odysseus! Meddling spirits
85 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,
90 and here you stand like one of the immortals!” **D**

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,
95 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. . . .”

Then, throwing
100 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,
105 whose nestlings farmers take before they fly.
So helplessly they cried, pouring out tears,
and might have gone on weeping so till sundown. . . . **E**

Telemachus lets Odysseus know that they face more than 100 suitors. Odysseus tells Telemachus to return home. He will follow—still disguised as an old man—and Telemachus must pretend not to know him. He must also lock away Odysseus’ weapons and armor.

D EPIC

Reread lines 61–90. What central **conflict** is beginning to find resolution in this scene? What elements indicate the importance of this moment?

91 brought his ranging mind to bear:
took control of his wandering thoughts.

E EPIC

Reread lines 99–107. What striking **character trait** is emphasized in both Odysseus and Telemachus? Why is this unusual?

BOOK 17:

The Beggar at the Manor

*Telemachus returns home, and Odysseus and the swineherd soon follow.
Odysseus is still disguised as a beggar.*

While he spoke

Analyze Visuals ►

This illustration of Odysseus and his dog comes from the late 19th or early 20th century. Compare it with the scene depicted on the clay urn shown on page 1193. What elements do the two pieces have in common?

an old hound, lying near, pricked up his ears
and lifted up his muzzle. This was Argos,
trained as a puppy by Odysseus,
5 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
10 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 Argos lay.

But when he knew he heard

15 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
20 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
25 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

COMMON CORE RL.4

Language Coach

Denotation/Connotation A word's context can usually help you distinguish its **connotation**, the feelings associated with the word, from its **denotation**, or dictionary meaning. *Marvel* denotatively means "to be amazed or filled with admiration." Reread lines 1–27. How does the connotation of *marvel* in line 21 differ from the word's denotation?



Ulysses and His Dog (c. 1900). © Bettman/Corbis.

30 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
35 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
40 half the manhood of a man, that day
he goes into captivity and slavery." **F**

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

*Odysseus enters his home as a beggar, and the suitors mock and abuse him.
Penelope asks to speak with the beggar, but Odysseus puts her off until nightfall.*

COMMON CORE RL 5

F EPIC

Reread lines 28–41. Eumaeus still does not know that he is speaking to Odysseus in disguise. This is known as **dramatic irony**—a plot device in which the reader knows more than the character knows. Dramatic irony can create **suspense** (a feeling of tension or excitement) as the reader anticipates what might happen. What event does this speech cause you to anticipate?

43 mégaron: the main hall of a palace or house

BOOK 21:

The Test of the Bow

In Books 18–20, Odysseus observes the suitors and finds that two in particular, Antinous and Eurymachus, are rude and demanding. Penelope asks Odysseus the beggar for news of her husband. He says he has heard that Odysseus is on his way home. Penelope, however, has given up hope for Odysseus' return. She proposes an archery contest to the suitors, with marriage to her as the prize. She enters the storeroom and takes down the heavy bow that Odysseus left behind.

Analyze Visuals ►

This is a detail from an 18th-century portrait of Penelope. What qualities are emphasized in this portrait, and how do they compare with qualities emphasized in the text on this page? Explain.

G ARCHETYPE

Reread lines 8–10. What archetypal image do you recognize in these lines? Explain how this image helps to build **suspense**.

15–18 Notice that Penelope still grieves for Odysseus, even after 20 years.

21 quiver (kwĭv'ər): a case in which arrows are carried. *What is meant by "the quiver spiked with coughing death"?*

22–23 axeheads ... game: metal heads of axes (without handles) that Odysseus employs in a display of archery skill.

Detail of *Penelope Weeping Over the Bow of Ulysses* (c. 1779), Angelica Kauffmann. Wolverhampton Art Gallery (OP 531), Wolverhampton, United Kingdom.

Now the queen reached the storeroom door and halted.
Here was an oaken sill, cut long ago
and sanded clean and bedded true. Foursquare
the doorjambs and the shining doors were set
5 by the careful builder. Penelope untied the strap
around the curving handle, pushed her hook
into the slit, aimed at the bolts inside
and shot them back. Then came a rasping sound
as those bright doors the key had sprung gave way—
10 a bellow like a bull's vaunt in a meadow— **G**
followed by her light footfall entering
over the plank floor. Herb-scented robes
lay there in chests, but the lady's milkwhite arms
went up to lift the bow down from a peg
15 in its own polished bowcase.

Now Penelope

sank down, holding the weapon on her knees,
and drew her husband's great bow out, and sobbed
and bit her lip and let the salt tears flow.
Then back she went to face the crowded hall,
20 tremendous bow in hand, and on her shoulder hung
the quiver spiked with coughing death. Behind her
maids bore a basket full of axeheads, bronze
and iron implements for the master's game.
Thus in her beauty she approached the suitors,
25 and near a pillar of the solid roof



she paused, her shining veil across her cheeks,
her maids on either hand and still,
then spoke to the banqueters:

“My lords, hear me:

- suitors indeed, you **commandeered** this house
30 to feast and drink in, day and night, my husband
being long gone, long out of mind. You found
no justification for yourselves—none
except your lust to marry me. Stand up, then:
we now declare a contest for that prize.
35 Here is my lord Odysseus’ hunting bow.
Bend and string it if you can. Who sends an arrow
through iron axe-helve sockets, twelve in line?
I join my life with his, and leave this place, my home,
my rich and beautiful bridal house, forever
40 to be remembered, though I dream it only.” . . .

Despite heating and greasing the bow, the lesser suitors prove unable to string it. The most able suitors, Antinous and Eurymachus, hold off. While the suitors are busy with the bow, Odysseus—still disguised as an old beggar—goes to enlist the aid of two of his trusted servants, Eumaeus, the swineherd, and Philoetius, the cowherd.

- Two men had meanwhile left the hall:
swineherd and cowherd, in companionship,
one downcast as the other. But Odysseus
followed them outdoors, outside the court,
45 and coming up said gently:

“You, herdsman,
and you, too, swineherd, I could say a thing to you,
or should I keep it dark?

- No, no; speak,
my heart tells me. Would you be men enough
to stand by Odysseus if he came back?
50 Suppose he dropped out of a clear sky, as I did?
Suppose some god should bring him?
Would you bear arms for him, or for the suitors?”

The cowherd said:

“Ah, let the master come!

- Father Zeus, grant our old wish! Some courier
55 guide him back! Then judge what stuff is in me
and how I manage arms!”

commandeer (kŏm’ən-dîr’) *v.* to take control of by force

35–37 Note that the contest has two parts: first the suitor must bend the heavy bow and string it—a task that requires immense strength and skill—and then he must shoot an arrow straight through the holes in 12 axe heads set up in a row.

COMMON CORE L4

Language Coach

Etymology A word’s **etymology** is its history. You can usually guess the etymology of compound words like *downcast* (line 43): The word *down* became attached to the word *cast*, meaning “thrown.” Do you think the two herders have literally been “thrown down”? Explain.

Likewise Eumaeus

fell to praying all heaven for his return,
so that Odysseus, sure at least of these,
told them:

“I am at home, for I am he.

- 60 I bore **adversities**, but in the twentieth year
I am ashore in my own land. I find
the two of you, alone among my people,
longed for my coming. Prayers I never heard
except your own that I might come again.
65 So now what is in store for you I'll tell you:
If Zeus brings down the suitors by my hand
I promise marriages to both, and cattle,
and houses built near mine. And you shall be
brothers-in-arms of my Telemachus. **H**
70 Here, let me show you something else, a sign
that I am he, that you can trust me, look:
this old scar from the tusk wound that I got
boar hunting on Parnassus. . . .”

Shifting his rags

- 75 he bared the long gash. Both men looked, and knew,
and threw their arms around the old soldier, weeping,
kissing his head and shoulders. He as well
took each man's head and hands to kiss, then said—
to cut it short, else they might weep till dark—
80 “Break off, no more of this.
Anyone at the door could see and tell them.
Drift back in, but separately at intervals
after me.

Now listen to your orders:

- when the time comes, those gentlemen, to a man,
85 will be dead against giving me bow or quiver.
Defy them. Eumaeus, bring the bow
and put it in my hands there at the door.
Tell the women to lock their own door tight.
Tell them if someone hears the shock of arms
90 or groans of men, in hall or court, not one
must show her face, but keep still at her weaving.
Philoetius, run to the outer gate and lock it.
Throw the cross bar and lash it.” . . . **I**

adversity (ăd-vûr'sĭ-tē) *n.* hardship;
misfortune

H ARCHETYPE

Identify the **trait** that Odysseus values so highly in these two servants. Where else in film or literature have you encountered these archetypal characters?

73 Parnassus (pār-nās'əs): a mountain in central Greece.

I EPIC

Identify the **plot stage** in lines 84–93. What do you think is about to happen?

Odysseus the beggar asks the suitors if he might try the bow. Worried that the old man may show them up, they refuse, but Penelope urges them to let Odysseus try. At Telemachus' request, Penelope leaves the men to settle the question of the bow among themselves. Two trusted servants lock the doors of the room, and Telemachus orders the bow be given to Odysseus.



◀ Analyze Visuals

How does 20th-century-artist N. C. Wyeth show suspense in this detail from the painting *The Trial of the Bow*? Be specific.

Detail of *The Trial of the Bow* (1929), N. C. Wyeth. Illustration from *The Odyssey of Homer*, translated by George Herbert Palmer. © 1929 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

And Odysseus took his time,
 95 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!”

100 “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!”

1 EPIC

What is the primary **conflict** in lines 94–104?

105 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
 110 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

115 and all their faces changed. Then Zeus thundered
 overhead, one loud crack for a sign.
 And Odysseus laughed within him that the son
 of crooked-minded Cronus had flung that omen down.
 He picked one ready arrow from his table
 120 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

125 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.

130 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,
 135 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
 140 stood by his chair, in the forefront near his father. **K**

106 heft: weight.

107–111 In this epic simile, Odysseus' stringing of the bow is compared to the stringing of a harp. *What qualities of Odysseus does this comparison emphasize?*

114 smote: struck; affected sharply.

115–116 The thunder, a sign from Zeus, indicates that the gods are on Odysseus' side.

118 Cronus (krō'nēs): Zeus' father.

122 nocked it: placed the arrow's feathered end against the bowstring.

127 brazen: made of brass.

contemptible (kən-těmp'tə-bəl) *adj.*
 deserving of scorn; despicable

K EPIC

Book 21 ends with the image of father and son standing side by side facing more than 100 enemies. How can this be considered an epic moment?

BOOK 22:

Death in the Great Hall

Now shrugging off his rags the wildest fighter of the islands
leapt and stood on the broad door sill, his own bow in his hand.
He poured out at his feet a rain of arrows from the quiver **L**
and spoke to the crowd:

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

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

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:

10 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

15 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

20 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,

25 not a good ashen spear was there for a man to take and throw.

All they could do was yell in outrage at Odysseus:

Analyze Visuals ►

What stylistic elements of Wyeth’s *The Slaughter of the Suitors* emphasize the conflict? Explain.

L GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Identify the **metaphor** in line 3.
What does this detail add to the description of Odysseus as a warrior?

M EPIC

Note that Odysseus calls upon the help of the god Apollo, who was, among other things, the supporter and protector of archers. The bow was his sacred weapon.

revelry (rěv’əl-rē) *n.* noisy merrymaking; festivity

18 runnels: streams.

7–20 *Why does Odysseus kill Antinous first? Why does he do it in such a sudden, terrible way?*

23–25 Earlier, in preparation for this confrontation, Odysseus and Telemachus removed all the weapons and shields that were hanging on the walls.



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

“Your own throat will be slit for this!”

“Our finest lad is down!

You killed the best on Ithaca.”

“Buzzards will tear your eyes out!”

30 For they imagined as they wished—that it was a wild shot,
an unintended killing—fools, not to comprehend
they were already in the grip of death.
But glaring under his brows Odysseus answered:

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

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:

45 “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
50 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
55 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.” **O**

60 Odysseus glowered under his black brows
and said:

N EPIC

Paraphrase Odysseus’ speech in lines 34–40. What reasons does he give for killing the suitors?

42 entrails: internal organs.

47 rash: foolish; thoughtless.

51 Cronion (krō’nē-ōn’): Zeus, the son of Cronus.

restitution (rēs’tī-tōō’shən) *n.* a making good for loss or damage; repayment

57 tithe: payment.

O EPIC

What is Eurymachus’ **motivation** in lines 45–59? What is his strategy for achieving his goal?

“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.
65 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.

70 “Friends,” he said, “the man is **implacable**.
Now that he’s got his hands on bow and quiver
he’ll shoot from the big door stone there
until he kills us to the last man.

Fight, I say,

let’s remember the joy of it. Swords out!
75 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.”

80 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.
85 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.

90 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
95 clear through his chest. He left his feet and fell
forward, thudding, forehead against the ground. **P**

61–67 *Why do you think Odysseus rejects Eurymachus’ explanation and offer of restitution?*

67 skins by: sneaks away.

implacable (ĩm-plăk’ə-bəl) *adj.*
impossible to soothe; unforgiving

COMMON CORE L 4

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes A word’s root often suggests its meaning. The Latin root *flect* (no relation to the Spanish *flecha*, “arrow”) means “to bend.” What do you think *deflect* means in line 75? What mental image can help you remember its meaning?

revulsion (rĩ-vũl’shən) *n.* a sudden feeling of disgust or loathing

88–89 Eurymachus’ death is physically painful, but he also has “revulsion, anguish in his heart.” *What do you think causes this emotional pain?*

90 Amphinomus (ăm-fĩn’ə-məs): one of the suitors.

93–100 Telemachus proves to be a valuable help to his father.

P EPIC
How has the battle with the suitors taken on epic proportions?

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

100 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,
a pair of spears, a helmet.
I can arm on the run myself; I’ll give
105 outfits to Eumaeus and this cowerd.
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

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

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

The suitors make various unsuccessful attempts to expel Odysseus from his post at the door. Athena urges Odysseus on to battle, yet holds back her fullest aid, waiting for Odysseus and Telemachus to prove themselves. Six of the suitors attempt an attack on Odysseus, but Athena deflects their arrows. Odysseus and his men seize this opportunity to launch their own attack, and the suitors begin to fall. At last Athena’s presence becomes known to all, as the shape of her shield becomes visible

Analyze Visuals ►

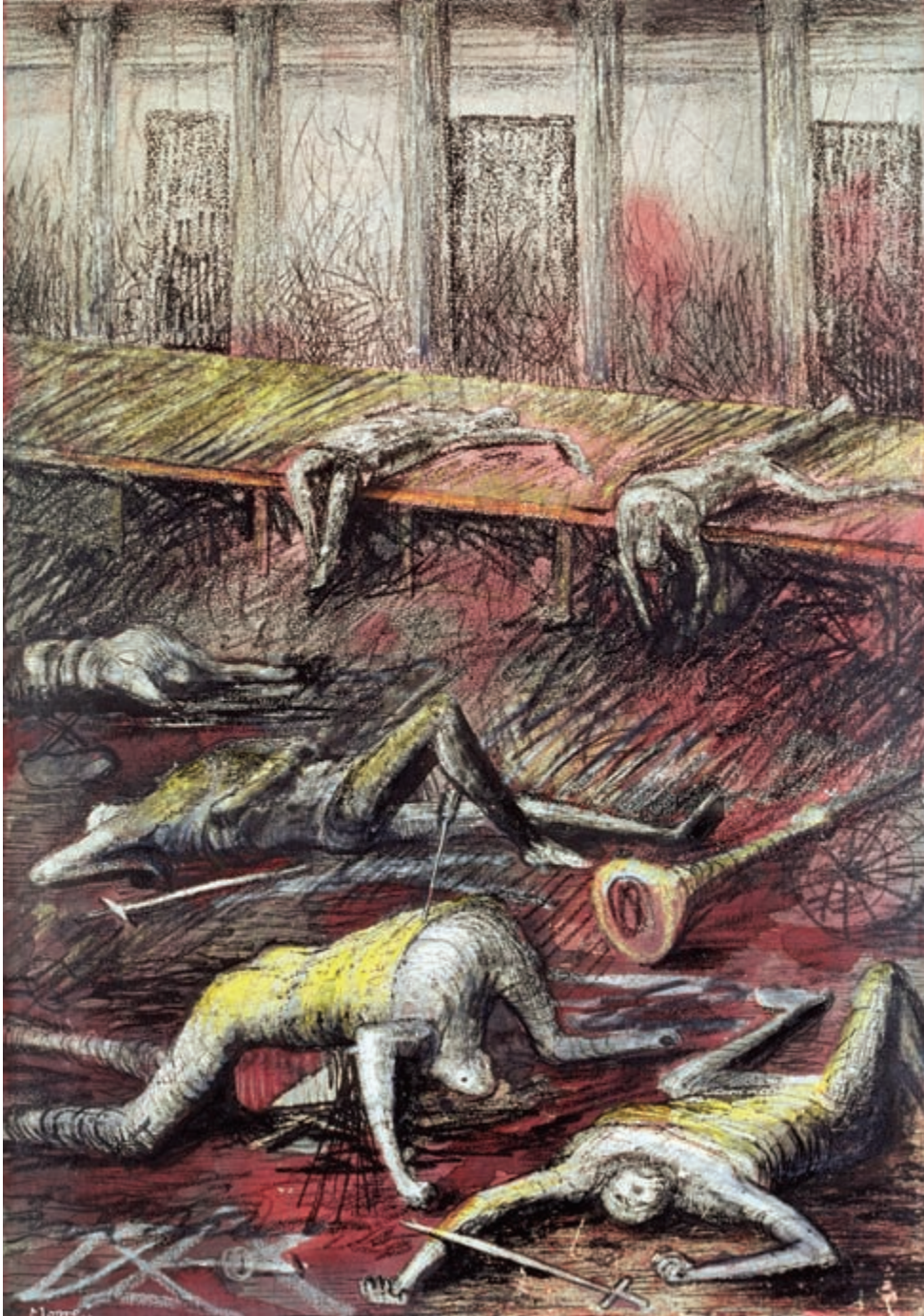
Describe the **mood** of this 1944 chalk and ink drawing. How has the artist’s use of color and black line contributed to this mood?

113 **helms:** helmets.

Q EPIC

How does Telemachus conduct himself in this **conflict** with the suitors?

above the hall. The suitors, recognizing the intervention of the gods on Odysseus' behalf, are frantic to escape but to no avail. Odysseus and his men are compared to falcons who show no mercy to the flocks of birds they pursue and capture. Soon the room is reeking with blood. Thus the battle with the suitors comes to an end, and Odysseus prepares himself to meet Penelope.



Death of the Suitors: The Odyssey (1944), Henry Spencer Moore. Black chalk, wash and ink on paper, 13.3 × 28.8 cm. Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford, Bedfordshire, United Kingdom. © The Henry Moore Foundation. Photo © Bridgeman Art Library.

BOOK 23:

The Trunk of the Olive Tree

Analyze Visuals ►

This terracotta plaque from ancient Greece depicts Odysseus pleading with his wife. What can you tell about this moment in the story from looking at this image? Explain.

2 Eurynome (yŏŏ-rĭn'ə-mē): a female servant.

10 Hephaestus (hĭ-fēs'təs): the god of metalworking.

11 lavished: showered.

15 immortals of Olympus: the gods, who live on Mount Olympus.

aloof (ə-lŏŏf') *adj.* distant; remote; standoffish

Greathearted Odysseus, home at last,
was being bathed now by Eurynome
and rubbed with golden oil, and clothed again
in a fresh tunic and a cloak. Athena
5 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
10 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,

15 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?

20 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.

25 I know so well how you—how he—appeared
boarding the ship for Troy. But all the same . . . **R**

R EPIC

Reread lines 22–26. What do you think is the **motivation** for Penelope's skepticism about this man who claims to be the husband she hasn't seen in 20 years? Consider her experiences in his absence.

Plaque with the return of Odysseus (c. 460–450 B.C.). Classical Greek. Melian. Terracotta, height 7 3/8". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1930. (30.11.9) © 1982 The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, New York.



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

27–30 The bed, built from the trunk of an olive tree still rooted in the ground, is actually unmovable.

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

“Woman, by heaven you’ve stung me now!
Who dared to move my bed?
35 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
40 and no one else’s!

 COMMON CORE L4

Language Coach

Synonyms Words with the same or similar meanings are **synonyms**. Sometimes writers use two synonyms when one word would be sufficient. What synonyms appear in lines 38–40? What do the words mean? Why do you think the poet/translator uses both words?

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.
45 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,
50 and stretched a bed between—a pliant web
of oxhide thongs dyed crimson.

50–51 a **pliant web** . . . **crimson**: a network of ox-hide straps, dyed red, stretched between the sides of the bed to form a springy base for the bedding.

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
55 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, **S**
murmuring:

tremulous (trēm’yə-ləs) *adj.* marked by trembling or shaking

S ARCHETYPE

How has Penelope tricked Odysseus into proving his identity? What do her actions suggest about archetypal characters?

“Do not rage at me, Odysseus!
No one ever matched your caution! Think
60 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

65 long ago against the frauds of men,
 impostors who might come—and all those many
 whose underhanded ways bring evil on!
 Helen of Argos, daughter of Zeus and Leda,
 would she have joined the stranger, lain with him,
 70 if she had known her destiny? known the Achaeans
 in arms would bring her back to her own country?
 Surely a goddess moved her to adultery,
 her blood unchilled by war and evil coming,
 the years, the **desolation**; ours, too.
 75 But here and now, what sign could be so clear
 as this of our own bed?
 No other man has ever laid eyes on it—
 only my own slave, Actoris, that my father
 sent with me as a gift—she kept our door.
 80 You make my stiff heart know that I am yours.” **T**

Now from his breast into his eyes the ache
 of longing mounted, and he wept at last,
 his dear wife, clear and faithful, in his arms,
 longed for

as the sunwarmed earth is longed for by a swimmer
 85 spent in rough water where his ship went down
 under Poseidon’s blows, gale winds and tons of sea.
 Few men can keep alive through a big surf
 to crawl, clotted with brine, on kindly beaches
 in joy, in joy, knowing the abyss behind:
 90 and so she too rejoiced, her gaze upon her husband,
 her white arms round him pressed as though forever. . . . **U**

Odysseus and Penelope tell each other about all that happened to them while Odysseus was away. Then Odysseus visits his father, Laertes, to give him the good news of his safe return. Meanwhile, the townspeople, angry about the deaths of the young suitors, gather to fight Odysseus. In the end, Athena steps in and makes peace among them all.

68 Argos (är’gōs); **Leda** (lē’də).

desolation (dēs’ə-lā’shən) *n.* lonely grief; misery

78 Actoris (äk-tôr’is).

T EPIC

Reread lines 58–80. What **traits** of Penelope’s does this speech reveal?

U EPIC SIMILE

What is Penelope compared to in these final lines?

Connect: Poem

Dorothy Parker, an American writer of the early 20th century, wrote many poems offering a woman's perspective on life. In "Penelope," Parker imagines what Odysseus' wife might have thought about his journeys.



DOROTHY PARKER

In the pathway of the sun,
In the footsteps of a breeze,
Where the world and sky are one,
He shall ride the silver seas,
5 He shall cut the glittering wave.
I shall sit at home, and rock;
Rise, to heed a neighbor's knock;
Brew my tea, and snip my thread;
Bleach the linen for my bed.
10 They will call him brave.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why is Telemachus fearful when his father first reveals his identity?
2. **Recall** How does Odysseus react when Argos recognizes him?
3. **Recall** Who helps Odysseus fight the suitors?
4. **Clarify** Why does Penelope test Odysseus?

COMMON CORE

RL 2 Determine a theme of a text; provide an objective summary of the text. **RL 9** Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific text.

Text Analysis

5. **Summarize the Plot** Review the chart you created as you read these episodes about Odysseus' homecoming. Use the chart to write an objective **plot summary** of Part 2; feel free to use the overview on page 1241 as a starter.
6. **Analyze Character** Why do you think Penelope devises the contest with the bow? What does this contest reveal about her character?
7. **Examine Archetypes** Think about other contests you have encountered in literature or film. Would you say that the contest of the bow is archetypal? Explain why or why not.
8. **Analyze Universal Theme** The *Odyssey* has themes reflecting timeless and universal concerns, such as courage and honor, good and evil, life and death, and the importance of home. Choose one of these topics. What message about this topic does Homer convey? Give evidence from the text to support your answer.
9. **Evaluate Epic Characteristics** One thing that all epics have in common is tremendous **scale**. Everything about an epic is big: an extended and complicated plot, a long journey over great distances, powerful gods and horrible monsters, and major universal themes. Identify one aspect each of epic **plot**, **setting**, **character**, and **theme** in the *Odyssey*. Which do you consider most impressive? Give reasons for your choice.
10. **Compare and Contrast Texts** In Dorothy Parker's poem "Penelope," is the attitude toward Odysseus similar to or different from Penelope's attitude in the *Odyssey* excerpts you have just read? Cite evidence to support your answer.

Text Criticism

11. **Social Context** Assume that Odysseus represents the ancient Greeks' ideal of a man and that Penelope represents their ideal of a woman. In what ways are the characters similar to and different from the ideal man and woman of today?

How does it feel to come **HOME** again?

In what ways is home more than just a place?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether each item is true or false. If you need to reread the definitions of the boldfaced vocabulary words, consult the Glossary of Vocabulary on page R123.

1. A person making **restitution** is trying to get revenge.
2. If I **commandeer** your boat, I have asked your permission before taking it.
3. A person who acts **aloof** often is unwilling to make friends.
4. One might feel **desolation** at the death of a close relative.
5. If I feel **revulsion** for you, I enjoy spending time with you.
6. **Adversity** is a serious skin condition.
7. A **tremulous** person tends to have very steady hands.
8. If my anger is **implacable**, I am not going to get over it soon.
9. New Year's Eve is a common night for **revelry**.
10. Being kind to a pet is **contemptible** behavior.

WORD LIST

adversity
aloof
commandeer
contemptible
desolation
implacable
restitution
revelry
revulsion
tremulous

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

• demonstrate • emphasis • ideology • monitor • undertake

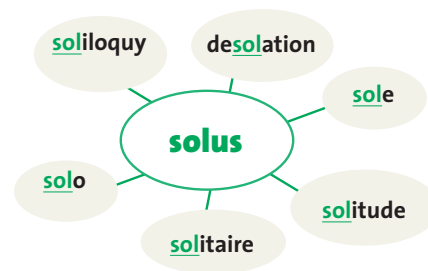
The goddess Athena **monitors** Odysseus' journey and attempts to help him return home. With a partner, discuss why Athena **undertakes** this responsibility. What is her motivation? What does it tell us about the ancient Greeks and their religion? Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your discussion.

COMMON CORE

L 4c Consult reference materials to determine or clarify a word's meaning or etymology.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE LATIN WORD ROOT *solus*

The vocabulary word *desolation* contains a form of the Latin root *solus*, which means "alone." This root is found in numerous other English words used in everyday language as well as a variety of academic disciplines. To understand the meaning of words formed from *solus*, use context clues as well as your knowledge of the root.



PRACTICE Insert the word from the word web that best completes each sentence. Use context clues to help you or, if necessary, consult a dictionary.

1. After months of training with an instructor, he was ready for his first ____ flight.
2. Jeannette often plays a game of ____ on her computer.
3. Rupert lived on a desert island because he wanted ____.
4. The ____ requirement for joining the club is that you are 13 or older.
5. An actor delivering a ____ generally stands on the stage alone.

Interactive
Vocabulary



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Language

GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Add Descriptive Details

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 1256. In line 3, Homer uses an interesting metaphor to describe the image of a Greek warrior. Similes and metaphors are types of **figurative language**—they communicate ideas beyond their literal meaning. A **simile** is a comparison that uses the **prepositions** *like* or *as*. A **metaphor** directly compares two things by saying or suggesting that one thing is another. Using figurative language can make your readers see things in a new way. Here are two more examples.

*“Like pipes his nostrils jetted
crimson runnels, a river of mortal red. . . .”* (simile, Book 22, lines 17–18)

“Her heart is iron in her breast.” (metaphor, Book 23, line 21)

Notice how the revisions in blue use figurative language to add interesting descriptive details to this first draft. Similarly, you can revise your response to the writing prompt below by incorporating different types of figurative language.

STUDENT MODEL

We have missed one another for many years.

Like two pieces of the same puzzle,

*W*e have been separated

and then joined again.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Engage with the main characters in the *Odyssey* by responding to the prompt below. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Short Constructed Response: Monologue

What do you think Penelope’s hopes for the future might be after Odysseus’ **homecoming**? Write a **stanza** (at least ten lines) in the style of the *Odyssey* in which Penelope expresses her dreams for her future years with Odysseus.

REVISING TIP

Review your response. Did you mimic the style of Homer’s writing? Does your stanza include figurative language? Revise your response by adding another interesting simile or metaphor.

COMMON CORE

L3 Apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for meaning or style.

Interactive
Revision

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