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Bk I:1-21 Invocation and Introduction

Tell me, Muse, of that man of many resources, who wandered far and wide, after sacking the holy citadel of Troy. Many the men whose
cities he saw, whose ways he learned. Many the sorrows he suffered at sea, while trying to bring himself and his friends back alive. Yet despite his wishes he failed to save them, because of their own un-wisdom, foolishly eating the cattle of Helios, the Sun, so the god denied them their return. Tell us of these things, beginning where you will, Goddess, Daughter of Zeus.

Now, all the others, who had escaped destruction, had reached their homes, and were free of sea and war. He alone, longing for wife and home, Calypso, the Nymph, kept in her echoing cavern, desiring him for a husband. Not even when the changing seasons brought the year the gods had chosen for his return to Ithaca was he free from danger, and among friends. Yet all the gods pitied him, except Poseidon, who continued his relentless anger against godlike Odysseus until he reached his own land at last.

Bk I:22-43 Zeus speaks to the Olympians.
Now, though, Poseidon was visiting the distant Ethiopians, the most remote of all, a divided people, some of whom live where Hyperion sets the others where he rises, to accept a hetacomb of sacrificial bulls and rams, and there he sat, enjoying the feast: but the rest of the gods had gathered in the halls of Olympian Zeus. The Father of gods and men was first to address them, for he was thinking of flawless Aegisthus, whom far-famed Orestes, Agamemnon’s son had killed. And, thinking of him, he spoke to the immortals.

‘How surprising that men blame the gods, and say their troubles come from us, though they, through their own un-wisdom, find suffering beyond what is fated. Just as Aegisthus, beyond what was fated, took the wife of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and murdered him when he returned, though he knew the end would be a complete disaster, since we sent Hermes, keen-eyed slayer of Argus, to warn him not to kill the man, or court his wife, as Orestes would avenge Agamemnon,
once he reached manhood and longed for his own land. So Hermes told him, but despite his kind intent he could not move Aegisthus’ heart: and Aegisthus has paid the price now for it all.’

Bk I:44-95 Athene seeks help for Odysseus.

Athene, the bright-eyed goddess, answered him at once: ‘Father of us all, Son of Cronos, Highest King, clearly that man deserved to be destroyed: so let all be destroyed who act as he did. But my heart aches for Odysseus, wise but ill fated, who suffers far from his friends on an island deep in the sea. The island is densely wooded and a goddess lives there, a child of malevolent Atlas, he who knows the depths of the sea, and supports the great columns that separate earth and sky. It is his daughter who detains that unlucky, sorrowful man: she lulls him, always, with soft seductive words, intending him to forget Ithaca. But Odysseus, who yearns for the mere sight of the smoke rising from his own country, only longs to die.
Yet, Olympian, *your* heart is unmoved. Did he win no favour with the sacrifices he made you, by the *Argive* ships, on the wide plains of *Troy*? Why do you will this man such pain, *Zeus*?*

Cloud-Gathering Zeus answered her then: ‘My child, what words escape your lips? How could I ever forget godlike Odysseus, who exceeds all mortals in wisdom, and also in sacrifice to the deathless gods who inhabit the broad heavens? It is *Poseidon*, the Earth-Bearer, who is always filled with implacable anger against him, because of godlike *Polyphemus*, the strongest *Cyclops* of all, whom Odysseus blinded. The nymph *Thoosa* bore him, daughter of *Phorcys* who rules the barren sea: she slept with Poseidon in the hollow caves. Since that blinding, Poseidon, the Earth-Shaker, though he will not kill him, keeps Odysseus far from his native land. Come, let all here plan how he might come home: then Poseidon will relent, since he’ll not be able to contend, alone, against all the deathless gods together.’
The goddess, bright-eyed Athene, answered him: ‘Father of us all, Son of Cronos, Highest King, if it truly pleases the blessed gods for wise Odysseus to return home, let us send Hermes, the Messenger, Slayer of Argus, to the isle of Ogygia, so he can tell the Nymph with the lovely tresses of our unalterable decision, that long-suffering Odysseus may come home. Meanwhile I will go to Ithaca, to stir his son, and encourage him to call the long-haired Achaeans together, and speak his mind to the Suitors who slaughter his flocks of sheep, and his shambling cattle with twisted horns. Then I will lead him to Sparta and sandy Pylos to gain news of his loyal father’s return, if he can, and so win praise.’

Bk I:96-155 Athene visits Telemachus.

So saying, she bound to her feet her beautiful sandals of imperishable gold that would carry her over the waves, over the wide lands, as swiftly as the wind. And she took her heavy
spear, great and strong, with its tip of sharpened bronze, with which she destroys the ranks of men, and heroes, when that daughter of a mighty father is angered. Then she flew down from the heights of Olympus, and reaching Ithaca stood at Odysseus’ gate, at the threshold of the court. She appeared as a visitor, Mentes, chief of the Taphians, bronze spear in hand. There she found the insolent suitors, sitting in front of the doors, on ox hides from beasts they had slaughtered themselves, playing at counters: their pages and squires were busy mixing water and wine in bowls, others were wiping tables with sponges then laying them, while others were setting out plentiful servings of meat.

Godlike Telemachus, sitting troubled among the suitors, imagining how his noble father might arrive from somewhere, throw the suitors from the palace, win honour and rule his own again, was first to see her. Thinking of it, sitting among the suitors, he saw Athene, and went straight to the doorway, ashamed a
stranger should wait so long at the gates. Approaching her, he clasped her right hand, took her spear of bronze, and spoke to her winged words: ‘Welcome, stranger, here you will find hospitality, and after you have eaten you may tell us why you are here.’

At this, he led the way, and Pallas Athene followed. Once inside the high hall, he took the spear and set it in a polished rack by a tall pillar, with other spears that belonged to loyal Odysseus. He led Athene herself to a handsome, richly carved chair, spread a linen cloth over it, and seated her there with a footstool for her feet. He drew up on ornate stool for himself, as well, away from the Suitors, lest the stranger should shun the food, annoyed by the din, finding himself in a crowd of insolent men: and so he might ask news of his absent father. Next a maid brought water in a fine gold jug, and poured it over a silver basin, so they could rinse their hands: then drew up a polished table. The housekeeper silently brought them bread, and various delicacies,
drawing liberally on her store. And a carver lifted plates of different meats, and set them down with gold cups beside them, while a steward, constantly walking by, poured the wine.

The insolent Suitors entered and sat in rows on stools and chairs. Squires poured water over their hands, while maids piled bread in baskets beside them, and pages filled bowls with wine: and they reached for the good things spread before them. Then when the Suitors had satisfied hunger and thirst, their thoughts turned elsewhere, to song and dance, since these things crown a feast. A herald placed a fine lyre in the hands of Phemius, whom the Suitors had forced to sing for them: and he struck the chords to begin his pleasant song.

Bk I:156-212 Athene introduces herself as Mentes.

Then Telemachus spoke to bright-eyed Athene, his head close to hers, so the others could not
hear: ‘My friend, will you be angered at what I say? These men amuse themselves with music and song, freely, since they consume another’s wealth without repayment, one whose white bones are tumbling in the waves, or rotting in the rain on some far shore. If they saw him here in Ithaca they would pray for swifter feet, rather than rich clothes and gold. But now he is dead of an evil fate, and we have no comfort, even if someone on Earth were to claim he would return, the day he could is past. But tell me this, and speak truly: who are you and where do you come from? What city is yours, who are your parents? What kind of vessel brought you, and whom did the sailors say they were, and how did they land you on Ithaca, for I doubt you came on foot? And tell me this, too, is this truly your first visit here, or are you a friend of my father’s? Many are those who entered our house as guests, for he too travelled widely among men.’

Then the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, answered: ‘Well I will tell you all, openly. I am
Mentes, wise Anchialus’ son, lord of the sea-going Taphians. Now, as you see, with my ship and crew I beach here, in my journey over the wine-dark sea to foreign-speaking Temese, trading for copper and carrying glittering iron. My ship lies over there, away from the city, next to open land, in Rheithron Harbour, and below wooded Neion. Let us call each other friend, as our fathers did, friends of old. Go and ask that old hero, Laertes, if you like, who no longer comes to the palace they say, but endures his sorrows far off in the fields with an aged woman for servant, who serves his food and drink when weariness grips his limbs, as he toils among the slopes of his vineyard. I came, because men said that Odysseus was here among his people, but the gods seem to have prevented his returning, since he has not vanished from the earth yet. I imagine he’s alive and a prisoner on some island in the wide sea, held by cruel and savage folk, who keep him there by force. Though I am no seer, nor trained in augury, I will prophesy to you what
the immortal gods put in my mind, and what I believe will be. Though iron shackles hold him, he will not be kept from his own land much longer. A man of many resources, he will find a way to return. But tell me truly if you, tall as you are, are really **Odysseus**’ son. Your head and your fine eyes are amazingly like him, for we were often together before he set out for **Troy**, where the bravest of the **Argives** sailed in their hollow ships. But I have never seen Odysseus since that day, nor he me.’

Bk I:213-251 Telemachus complains of the Suitors.

Wise **Telemachus** answered: ‘I will speak honestly. My mother says I am his son, but I do not know, for none can be certain of his own parentage. If only I had been the son of some lucky man who spent old age among his own possessions! As it is, they say, since you ask, that I am born of the unluckiest of mortal men.’
Then the goddess, bright-eyed **Athene**, replied: ‘Yet with **Penelope** for your mother the gods have ensured your line will not be unknown. But tell me, in truth, what is this feast, these folk? Why is this needed? Is it a banquet or a wedding celebration? It’s clearly not one where each brings his own provisions, since imperiously, insolently, they feast in your house. Any man of sense who mixed with them would be angered at the sight of these shameful actions.’

Then wise Telemachus answered: ‘Stranger, since you ask the question, our house once seemed made for wealth and honour, when **Odysseus** was with his people. But the gods have willed otherwise since then, with their dark designs, for unlike other men they have made him vanish. If he had been killed among his friends at **Troy**, or died in the arms of friends with the war ended, his death itself would grieve me less. Then the **Achaean** host would have built his tomb, and he would have won a fine name for his son to inherit. In fact
the Harpies have snatched him, without trace: he is beyond sight and hearing, and leaves me in sorrow and tears: nor do I sigh and groan for him alone, for the gods have granted me other painful troubles. All the princes who rule the islands, Dulichium, Same, and wooded Zacynthus, and all the lords of rocky Ithaca court my mother and consume my wealth with their feasts: soon they will destroy me, too.’

Bk I:252-305 Athene advises Telemachus to seek news.

Moved to anger, Pallas Athene spoke: ‘Ah, you have dire need of lost Odysseus, to set hands on these shameless Suitors. If only he were standing at the palace gates now, with his helmet and shield and twin spears, just as when I first saw him at my house, drinking joyously, on his way home from Ephyre, after his visit to Ilus, Mermerus’ son. Odysseus went there as well, in his swift ship, in search of a deadly poison to smear on the tips of his bronze-
headed arrows. Ilus was in awe of the deathless gods and refused him, but my father who loved him dearly did not. If only Odysseus, I say, as he was, could confront the Suitors: they would meet death swiftly, and a dark wedding. But, indeed, it lies in the lap of the gods whether he will return and take vengeance in his palace, or not: but I urge you yourself to plan how to drive these Suitors from the house.

Come, listen, and note my words. Call the Achaean lords together tomorrow: speak to them all, with the gods for witness. Tell the Suitors to disperse, each to his home: and if your mother’s heart urges her to marry, let her go back to her great father’s house, where they will ready a wedding feast, and a wealth of gifts, fitting for a well-beloved daughter. And I will give you good advice, if you will hear me. Man the best ship you have with twenty oarsmen, go and seek news of your absent father. Some mortal may tell you, or perhaps a rumour sent by Zeus to bring news to men. Go to Pylos first, and question the noble Nestor:
then to Sparta to yellow-haired Menelaus, last of the bronze-clad Achaeans to reach home. If you hear your father is living, and sailing home, then however troubled you are, endure for another year. But if you hear he is dead, return to your own land, build a mound, with all the funeral rites, generous ones as is fitting, and give your mother away to a new husband. When you have settled and done all this, use heart and mind to plan how to kill the Suitors in your palace, openly or by guile: since it is not right for you to follow childish ways, being no more a child. Perhaps you have not heard what fame Orestes won among men, destroying his father’s murderer, cunning Aegisthus, for killing his noble father? You too take courage, my friend, since I see you are tall and fine, so that many a man unborn will praise you. But now I must go to my swift ship, and my crew who will be weary of waiting. Take note yourself of my words, and consider them.
Bk I:306-324 Athene departs like a bird.

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘Stranger, truly, you speak kindly like a father to his son, and I will never forget your words. But stay a while, though you are eager to be gone, so that when you have bathed and eased your heart, you can go to your ship in good spirits, taking a rich and beautiful gift from me as a keepsake, such as stranger gives to stranger in friendship.’ Then the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, answered him: ‘Do not detain me longer, since I am eager to go, but whatever gift your heart prompts you to send home with me, give it to me when I return, choosing one of the loveliest, and it will bring you good value in exchange.’

So the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, spoke, and vanished, soaring upwards like a bird. In his heart she had stirred fortitude and daring, and made him think of his father even more. He felt what had passed in his spirit, and was awed, realising a god had been with him, and godlike himself he at once rejoined the Suitors.
Bk I:325-364 Telemachus rebukes his mother Penelope.

As they sat listening in silence, the famous minstrel sang to them of the Achaean’s troubled return from Troy, inflicted by Pallas Athene. Wise Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, heard his marvellous song from her chamber, and descended the stairs, accompanied by her two maids. As she neared the Suitors she drew her shining veil across her face, and stopped by the doorpost of the well-made hall, a loyal handmaid on either side. Then, with tear-filled eyes, she spoke to the divine bard:

‘Phemius, you know many another tale of men and gods, that the bards made famous, with which to charm us mortals. Sing one of those while you sit here, as they drink their wine in silence, but end this sad song that always troubles the heart in my breast, since above all women I bear a sadness not to be forgotten. I ever remember my husband’s dear
face, he whose fame resounds through Hellas to the heart of Argos.’

Wise Telemachus answered her: ‘Mother, why grudge the good bard his right to please us as the spirit stirs him? Bards are not to blame, surely: it is Zeus we must blame, who deals with each eater of bread as he wishes. No one can be angry if this man sings the Danaans’ dark fate: since men always praise the most the newest song they hear. Suffer you heart and mind to listen, for Odysseus was not alone in failing to return from Troy, many another perished too. So go to your quarters now, and attend to your own duties at loom and spindle, and order your maids about their tasks: let men worry about such things, and I especially, since I hold the authority in this house.’

Seized with wonder she retired to her own room, taking her son’s wise words to heart. Up to her high chamber she went, accompanied by her maids, and there she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, till bright-eyed Athene veiled her eyelids with sweet sleep.
Bk I:365-420 Telemachus speaks with the Suitors.

But throughout the shadowy hall the Suitors created uproar, with each man praying he might bed her. Wise Telemachus was then the first to speak: ‘My mother’s Suitors, proud in your insolence, let us enjoy the feast for now, but without disturbance, since it is a lovely thing to listen to such a bard as this, with his godlike voice. Then, in the morning, let us take our seats in the assembly, so I can declare to you all you must leave the palace. Feast elsewhere, move from house to house, and eat your own provisions. If it seems preferable, more profitable to you, to waste one man’s estate without restitution, then do so, but I meanwhile will call on the eternal gods hoping that Zeus might grant a day of reckoning. Then you will be wasted in my halls, without restitution.’

So he spoke, and they bit their lips, amazed at Telemachus’ bold speech. Then Antinous,
Eupeithes’ son, replied: ‘Telemachus, the gods themselves must have taught you this bold, high style. May the son of Cronos never make you king of Ithaca’s isle, though it is your heritage by birth.’

Then wise Telemachus answered him: ‘Will it anger you, Antinous, if I say that I should be pleased to accept it from Zeus’ hand. Do you think, in truth, it is the worst fate for a man? It is no bad thing to be a king. At once your house grows rich, and you are held in higher honour. But there are many other kings for the Achaeans, young and old, in Ithaca’s isle. Perhaps one of them will have the honour, since noble Odysseus is dead. But I will be master of my own house, and of the servants noble Odysseus gathered for me.’

Then Eurymachus, Polybus’ son, replied: ‘Surely, Telemachus, the question of who will be king, in Ithaca’s isle, is in the lap of the gods: and as for your possessions, keep them, and be master in your own house. While men live in Ithaca, let no man come and snatch your
possessions from you, violently, or against your will. But I am prompted to ask, dear sir, where has that stranger come from? What country does he claim as his? Where are his kin, and native land? Does he bring news of your father’s arrival, or did he come here on his own account? How he leapt up and vanished! He would not wait to be known, though he seemed no common man.’

Wise Telemachus answered him, saying: ‘Eurymachus, surely my father has lost his chance to return. I no longer put my faith in rumours, wherever they come from, nor do I note the prophecies my mother may hear, from some diviner she has called to the palace. The stranger is a friend of my father’s from Taphos. He announced he is Mentes, the son of wise Anchialus, lord of the sea-going Taphians.’

So Telemachus spoke, yet in his heart he knew it was the deathless goddess.

Bk I:421-444 Telemachus and Eurycleia.
Now they turned to dancing, heart-felt song, and enjoyment, till nightfall. Then each went to his house to rest. But Telemachus went to his bed with his mind full of thoughts, to his room high above the fine courtyard, with its clear view: and faithful Eurycleia, daughter of Ops, Peisenor’s son, carrying a blazing torch, waited on him. Laertes had bought her himself long ago, when she was still quite young, at the cost of twenty oxen, and honoured her in his palace as he honoured his loyal wife, never lying with her for fear of his wife’s anger. Now she carried the blazing torches for Telemachus, since of all the women it was she who loved him most, having nursed him as a child. He opened the door to the well-made room, and sitting on the bed took off his soft tunic, and placed it in the wise old woman’s hands. Folding and smoothing the tunic, she hung it on a peg by the wooden bedstead, and went out of the room, closing the door by its silver handle, shooting the bolt by means of its leather thong. There, all night long, wrapped in a woollen fleece,
Telemachus planned in his mind the journey **Athene** proposed.

Bk II:1-34 The Assembly convenes

As soon as rosy-fingered **Dawn** appeared, **Odysseus**’ steadfast son rose from his bed and dressed. He slung his sharp sword from his shoulder, bound fine sandals on his gleaming feet, and strode from his room like a god. Immediately he commanded the clear-voiced heralds to call the longhaired **Achaeans** to assemble. The heralds gave their cry and the Achaeans soon gathered. When the assembly had convened **Telemachus** walked there, bronze spear in hand, followed by two hunting dogs, and **Athene** endowed him with such grace that all marvelled at him as he arrived. The elders gave way, and he took his father’s seat.

Noble **Aegyptius** was the first to speak, a man bent with age, but profoundly wise. He spoke because his dear son, **Antiphus**, a spearman, had sailed in the hollow ships with
godlike Odysseus, to Ilium, famous for its horses. The savage Cyclops killed Antiphus in his echoing cave, and made a meal of him. He had three more sons: Eurynomus had joined the Suitors, while two of them worked their father’s estate. Yet, sad and grieving, he could not forget the other: and on his account he spoke to the assembly:

‘Listen to my words, men of Ithaca. We have not held a council or assembly since the day good Odysseus left in the hollow ships. Who calls us now? Who of the young men or the old has that need? Has he had news of the returning army and, first to hear, can give us a firm report? Or is there some other issue, a public matter, he wants to discuss? A good and blessed man he appears to me. Whatever he wishes, may Zeus grant him some good.’

Bk II:35-84 Telemachus states his case

So he spoke, and Odysseus’ steadfast son was delighted by his auspicious words: eager to
speak he rose from his seat. Taking his stand in the middle of the assembly, he received the staff from Peisenor, the wise herald. Then he addressed old Aegyptius:

‘Venerable man, he who called this meeting is here: I did so, since on me above all trouble falls. I have no news of the returning army, nor am first to hear, nor can give a firm report. Nor is it an issue of public concern I want to discuss. The need is personal: twin evils have befallen my house. Firstly I have lost my noble father, who was once your king, kindly as a father. And then, there is a far greater evil that robs me of my estate, and will utterly destroy my house. My mother has attracted Suitors, without wishing to do so, sons of the noblest men here. They shun the house of Icarius her father, where he himself might give her away as he wishes, to whoever meets his favour, and arrange her dowry. Instead they frequent our house day after day, slaughter our oxen, sheep and goats, feast themselves, and drink wildly of our glowing wine: most of our stores are
already gone. There is no one like Odysseus here to prevent the ruin of our house. We are not strong enough: we could only prove how weak we are, inexperienced in a fight. Yet I would honestly defend myself if I had the power: since things are done that cannot be endured, and the destruction of my house reveals injustice.

You should be ashamed yourselves, feel shame before our neighbours too, and fear the gods’ anger, lest they turn on you in fury at evil actions. By Olympian Zeus, and by that Themis who joins and dissolves the councils of men, prevent it, my friends, and let me nurse my bitter grief alone, unless you think my father, good Odysseus, was so hostile to the bronze-greaved Achaians and did them evil, that you, hostile to me, repay it with evil, by encouraging these Suitors. I had rather you yourselves consumed my wealth, my herds. If it were you, there might some day be compensation: we could go up and down the island pressing our claim, asking for our goods till all was repaid.
But the sorrows you trouble my heart with are past cure.’

Weeping with anger, he hurled the staff to the ground: and they were seized with compassion. Everyone was silent, and none of them had the desire to answer Telemachus with angry words, until the lone voice of Antinous replied:

Bk II:85-128 Antinous justifies the Suitors’ behaviour

‘Telemachus, great orator and bold spirit, how you put us to shame, pinning the blame on us! Yet it is not the Achaean Suitors who are at fault, but your own mother, cleverest of women. Three years, almost four, she has misled our Achaean hearts. She holds out hope to all, sends messages of promise to every man, but her mind is fixed on other things. She contrived this piece of cunning, too, in her mind: she set up a great web in her hall, and began weaving with long fine thread. She said
to us: ‘My lords, my Suitors, though Odysseus is dead and you are eager for me to marry, have patience till I complete this work, I do not want it wasted, this shroud for noble Laertes, ready for when pitiless death’s cruel end overtakes him: since I fear some Achaean woman of this land would blame me, if he who won great wealth lay there without a shroud.’

So she said, and though proud we agreed. Then day after day she wove the great web, but at night, by torchlight, she unmade it. So for three years she cunningly kept the Achaeans from knowing, and so tricked them. But when the fourth year began, as the seasons rolled by, one of her women, knowing all, told us, and we caught her unravelling its fineness. Then she was forced, unwillingly, to complete it.

Here is the Suitors’ answer, for you and the Achaeans to keep clearly in mind: order your mother to marry whomever her father dictates, or whoever pleases her, but send her away. As long as she continues to frustrate the young Achaeans – given her mental powers that
Athene granted her above other women, her knowledge in skilful work, sound sense, and intelligence such as we never heard of women of old, Tyro, Alcmene, or Mycene, of the lovely crown, none of them equal to Penelope in clever schemes, though this one was wrongly devised – so long will men consume your goods and livelihood, as long in other words as she keeps to this plan the gods suggest. She is winning great fame for herself, but brings to you regret for your vanishing wealth. And we will not go to our own estates, or anywhere else, until she marries whichever of the Achaeans she chooses.’

Bk II:129-176 The Eagles’ omen, Halitherses prophesies

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘Antinous, there is no way I would drive the mother that bore me, and reared me, from my house against her will, while my father perhaps still lives in some far land. It would be wrong for me to repay the
bride price to Icarius, as I must if I choose to send my mother away. I would suffer at her father’s hands, and the gods would send other sufferings, since my mother would call to the avenging Furies on leaving, and men would blame me. I will never command it. If you are angered about all this then leave the palace, and feast elsewhere, move from house to house, and eat your own provisions. If it seems preferable, more profitable to you, to waste one man’s estate without restitution, then do so, but I meanwhile will call on the eternal gods hoping that Zeus might grant a day of reckoning. Then you will be wasted in my halls, without restitution.’

So Telemachus spoke, and Far-Seeing Zeus sent out two eagles from a high mountain peak. They flew for a while with outspread wings, side by side in the currents of air, but when they were above the voice-filled assembly they swiftly slanted their wings, circling round, gazing down on the heads below, and death was in their gaze. Then they clawed at each other’s
head and neck with their talons, and soared away eastward over the roofs of the town. The people saw them and wondered, and considered what this might foreshadow. Then the old hero Halitherses, Mastor’s son, spoke out, for he was the wisest man of his day in bird-lore and prophecy. With goodwill in his heart he addressed the assembly:

‘Men of Ithaca, listen to me: and I say these words to the Suitors especially, since disaster approaches them. Odysseus will not be far from his friends much longer, and I believe even now he is near, sowing the seeds of dark death for all these men. Yes, and he will bring trouble to many another of us, who live in clear-skied Ithaca. Let us think in advance how we might prevent all this, or let them prevent it of their own accord, easily their best option. I am not unskilled in prophecy, but have true knowledge. I say that all things for that man will be fulfilled, just as I told him when the Argives sailed for Troy, he among them, resourceful Odysseus. I declared that, suffering many
troubles, losing all comrades, he would return in the twentieth year, unknown to all: and now it is coming to pass.’

Bk II:177-223 Telemachus proposes to search for news

Eurymachus, Polybus’ son, replied: ‘Go home, old man, and prophesy to your children, in case they suffer harm in days to come. I am better at prophecies than you. Many birds fly here and there in the sunlight, and not all are fateful. As for Odysseus he has died far off, as you should have died. Then you would have less to say about omens, and not be fuelling Telemachus’ anger, in hopes of him making a gift to your house. Now I will prophesy to you, and this will happen. If you, with the wisdom of old-age, seduce a younger man to anger with your chatter, it will be all the worse for him, for one thing, and for another these men here will obstruct him, while we will impose a fine on you, old man, that it will break your heart to
pay, that will fill you with bitter pain. Here, among you all, I offer Telemachus my advice. Let him send his mother home to her father’s house, where they will ready a wedding feast, and a wealth of gifts, fitting for a well-beloved daughter. Till then, I think, the Achaean youth will not end their constant wooing, since we fear no man, certainly not Telemachus despite his many words, nor do we listen to any prophecy of yours, old man. It will disappoint, and you will be the more hated. And his goods will be ruthlessly wasted, without restitution, so long as Penelope denies herself to the Achaeans in marriage. For our part, we remain, day after day, in rivalry for that excellence, and we will not seek other women whom we might wed.’

Telemachus answered: ‘Eurymachus, and all you noble Suitors, I will ask no longer, nor speak of it, since the gods and the Achaeans now know. Instead, give me a fast ship and twenty friends to further my travels here and there. I shall go to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to search for news of my long-lost father’s return,
in hope some mortal man may know, or of a rumour perhaps sent by Zeus that often brings news to men. If I hear he is alive, and on his way, then troubled though I am I could suffer one more year. But if I hear that he is dead and gone, I will return to my own land, build a mound, with all the funeral rites, generous ones as is fitting, and give my mother away to a new husband.’

Bk II:223-259 Mentor defends Telemachus

Having spoken he sat down again, and Mentor, a friend of faultless Odysseus, rose to speak. On leaving, Odysseus had entrusted his whole house to him: they to obey the old man, he to keep all things safe. With goodwill in his heart he now addressed the assembly:

‘Men of Ithaca, hear my words. From now on let the king who wields the sceptre never show goodwill by being kind and gentle, or take justice to heart: let him instead be unjust and harsh forever, since none of the people whose
king he was remember divine Odysseus, though he was kind as a father to them. In truth, it is not so much that I condemn the acts of violence the proud Suitors contrive in their dark minds, since they risk their own lives if their rapaciousness wastes the house of a man they say will never return. Rather the rest of you stir my indignation, sitting there silently, speaking no word of rebuke to make them stop, even though they are few and you are many.’

Then Leocritus, Euenor’s son, replied: ‘Mentor, you troublemaker, your wits are wandering: what are these words about ordering them to stop! However many you are, it would be hard to justify fighting over a meal. And if Odysseus himself returned to Ithaca, ready to drive away the noble Suitors dining in his palace, then his wife would have no joy of it, however much she had longed for him, since he would come to a wretched end there and then, fighting while outnumbered. Your speech has missed its mark. But disperse now, all you people, return to your
own homes. Let Mentor and Halitherses speed this fellow on his way, since they are his father’s friends from long ago, though I believe he will never make the journey, but sit here in Ithaca forever, listening to rumours.’

So speaking, he concluded the assembly, brief though it had been. The people dispersed to their homes, while the Suitors returned to divine Odysseus’ palace.

Bk II:260-295 Athene, as Mentor, offers to prepare a ship

But Telemachus walked to the shore, alone, and washing his hands in the grey salt water prayed to Athene: ‘You, Divine One, who yesterday came to my home, and suggested I sail over the misty sea to search for news of my long-lost father’s return, hear me. The Achaeans obstruct me, the evil and insolent Suitors most of all.’

He prayed, and Athene approached him, in the form and with the voice of Mentor: and she spoke to him winged words: ‘Telemachus, if
your father’s fine spirit is found in you, you will be neither a fool nor a coward in the time to come, and this journey of yours will be no idle failure. But if you are not Odysseus’ and Penelope’s son, then I have no hopes of you achieving your end. There are not many sons, indeed, who resemble their fathers: most are worse, and only a few are better. But since you will be neither a fool nor a coward in the time to come, nor are you wholly lacking in Odysseus’ wisdom, there is every hope of you achieving your goal. So forget the Suitor’s plans and intentions, they are fools, neither sensible nor just, nor are they thinking of death and the dark fate that is truly near, and will one day strike them. Nor will the journey you set your heart on be delayed, since I a true friend of your father’s house will ready a swift ship and sail with you. Go home now, and join the crowd of Suitors: then assemble provisions: the wine in jars, the barley meal, that nourishes men’s marrows, in tough skins. Meanwhile I will gather a volunteer crew in town. And there are
plenty of ships, old and new, in sea-faring Ithaca. I will choose one of the best for you, and we will prepare her swiftly, and launch her in open water.’

Bk II:296-336 The Suitors mock Telemachus

Athene, daughter of Zeus, spoke, and Telemachus did not linger when he had heard the goddess’ voice, but with a troubled heart set off for home. There he found the palace full of insolent Suitors, some skinning goats and singeing hogs in the courtyard. Antinous, laughing, came and clasped his hand straight away, saying: ‘Telemachus, noble orator, high in courage, empty your heart of violent words and deeds. Rather, eat and drink as before, I urge you. A ship and a choice crew, all those things, the Achaeans will certainly provide, so you can sail swiftly to sacred Pylos, to search for news of your noble father.’

But wise Telemachus answered him: ‘Antinous there is no way I can savour the feast
quietly, or enjoy myself with an easy mind, among this arrogant crowd. Is it not enough that you Suitors once robbed me of many fine possessions, when I was a child? Now I am older, and have learned from other men’s words, now my powers grow, I will find a way to hasten your fates of dark death, whether by going to Pylos or staying here. But go I will, and the journey will be not wasted, even if I sail in another man’s ship, since I know it suits you better not to allow me ship or crew.’

He spoke, and easily freed himself from Antinous’ hand, while the Suitors were busy feasting throughout the hall. Talking, they mocked and jeered him, and some insolent youth said: ‘Telemachus plans to murder us, for sure. Perhaps he will gather men from Sparta or sandy Pylos to help him in his deadly intent. Or perhaps he will head for Ephyre’s fertile land, to bring back fatal drugs to drop in the wine bowl, and end us all.’

Again, another of the insolent youths, said: ‘Who knows? He might vanish himself in his
hollow ship, far from friends, wandering as Odysseus did. That would make more trouble for us, since we would have to divide his goods ourselves, give his mother the palace as hers, and his who marries her.’

Bk II:337-381 Telemachus gathers the provisions

These were their words, but Telemachus went down to his father’s storeroom, a wide tall chamber piled high with gold and bronze, with chests full of clothing, and jars of fragrant oil. There too in rows along the wall, waiting for Odysseus to return, if ever, after his many sufferings stood huge jars of sweet unmixed wine, of pure vintage. The double doors were tightly closed: and a clear-minded stewardess guarded it all, Eurycleia, daughter of Ops the son of Peisenor. When Telemachus had summoned her to the storeroom, he said: ‘Draw me wine in jars, Nurse, sweet wine of the choicest, only bettered by that which you save
in case divine Odysseus, that man of ill fortune, escapes from death and fate and returns from who knows where. Fill twelve jars and stopper them, and pour barley-meal into tightly sewn skins, twenty measures from the grinding mill. Keep it to yourself. Get all this together and I will come for it this evening, when my mother has gone to her bedchamber. I am going to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to seek for news, in case I may hear something of my loyal father’s return.’

At this, faithful Eurycleia gave a loud cry, and spoke winged words of lament to him: ‘Dear child, what thought has entered your mind? Where are you off to, over the wide earth, you an only and a well-beloved son? Divine Odysseus has died far from his country, in a foreign land: and as soon as you are gone these men will plot evil towards you: you will be killed by cunning, and they will divide what is yours. Stay here, and rule your own: there is no call for you to go wandering, suffering sorrow on the barren waves.’
Wise Telemachus answered her: ‘Courage, Nurse, for this the gods intend. But swear not to tell my mother of it, till eleven or twelve days hence, or till she misses me, and hears I have gone, so she does not spoil her beauty with weeping.’

At this, the old woman swore by all the gods to say nothing. When she had sworn her oath, she drew the wine in jars for him, and poured barley meal into tightly sewn skins, while Telemachus strode to the hall, and joined the crowd of Suitors.

Bk II:382-434 Athene and Telemachus depart

Now the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, had another idea. Disguised as Telemachus she went through the town telling the men she chose to gather by the swift ship that evening. The ship itself she asked of Noemon, the famed son of Phronius, and he promised it to her willingly.
At sunset, when the tracks were darkened, she drew the swift ship down to the sea, and stowed in her all the gear that large ships carry. Then she moored her at the harbour mouth, and the noble crew gathered round, and she encouraged each man.

Now, the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, had another idea. She made her way to divine Odysseus’ home, and poured sweet drowsiness over the Suitors, clouding their minds as they drank, striking the cups from their hands. Eyelids heavy with sleep, they did not linger, but rose and went to their beds in town. But bright-eyed Athene, disguised as Mentor in voice and form, called Telemachus out of the noble palace, and spoke to him:

‘Telemachus, your bronze-greaved friends will be waiting for you, at their oars. Come now, so we no longer delay our journey.’

With this, Pallas Athene quickly led the way, and he followed the goddess’ footsteps. When they came down to the sea and the ship,
they found their longhaired crew ashore, and royal Telemachus spoke to them:

‘Friends, let us bring the stores, collected at the palace. My mother and her maids know nothing: there is only one I have told.’

So saying, he led the way, and they followed. They brought down and stowed everything in the large ship, as Odysseus’ steadfast son commanded. Then Telemachus boarded the ship, Athene going before him. She took her seat at the stern, and he beside her, while the crew loosed the hawsers, and climbed on board, and took their place at the oars, along the benches. And bright-eyed Athene called up a strong and favourable westerly breeze that went singing over the wine-dark sea. And Telemachus shouted to his crew to lay hold of the tackle and, obeying, they raised the pine mast, set it in its hollow box and rigged the stays, and with plaited ox-hide ropes they hoisted the white sail. It bellied in the wind, and the dark wave hissed loud at the keel, as she gathered way over the water. When all was
made fast in the swift black ship, they prepared brimming bowls of wine, and poured libations to the deathless gods, above all the bright-eyed daughter of Zeus. And all night long and into the dawn the ship ploughed her way.

Bk III:1-50 Telemachus and Athene reach Pylos

And now the sun sprang from the eastern waters into the brazen firmament, bringing light to the deathless ones, and to mortal men on earth the giver of grain, and they reached Pylos, Neleus’ well-ordered city. Here on the shore the people were sacrificing black bulls to the dark-tressed Earth-Shaker, Poseidon. Nine companies of five hundred men sat there, each with nine bulls prepared for the sacrifice. They were tasting the innards, and burning the thigh-pieces to the god, as the travellers headed straight for shore, brailed up and furled their sail, moored the ship and disembarked. Athene led the way, and Telemachus followed, but first bright-eyed Athene, the goddess, spoke to him:
‘Telemachus, you have no need for diffidence here. You have sailed the sea for this, to search for news of your father, what earth covers him, and what fate he met with. Go straight to Nestor, now, to the tamer of horses: let us find what wisdom he keeps in his heart. Beg him yourself to speak the honest truth. He is truly wise and will not utter a lie.’

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘Mentor, how can I go and greet him? I am inexperienced in the subtleties of speech: more than that, a young man is shy of questioning his elders.’

Then the bright-eyed goddess, Athene, answered him: ‘Telemachus, part your own mind will devise, and heaven will prompt the rest. You were not born or reared, I think, without divine favour.’

With that, Pallas Athene quickly led the way, and he followed in the goddess’ footsteps. So they reached the gathering, the companies of the men of Pylos. There sat Nestor with his sons, and round them his people preparing the feast, skewering meat on spits, and roasting it.
But when they saw the strangers, they crowded round them, clasped their hands in welcome, begging them to be seated. Nestor’s son, Peisistratus, was first to approach and took them both by the hand, and made them sit on soft fleeces spread on the sand, beside his father, and brother, Thrasymedes, so they could feast. Having done so, he served them inner portions, poured wine in a golden cup, and drinking her health, spoke to Pallas Athene, the aegis-bearing daughter of Zeus:

‘Stranger, pray to the lord Poseidon whose feast you have chanced on here. And when you have poured libations and prayed, as is right, pass your friend the cup of honeyed wine so he may pour. I expect he too prays to the deathless ones: since all men need the gods. But as he is the younger, and of my own age, I will first give the golden cup to you.’

Bk III:51-101 Telemachus declares himself to Nestor
He placed the cup of sweet wine in her hand, as he spoke, and Pallas Athene was delighted by his wisdom and politeness, in giving the golden beaker first to her: and at once she made a heartfelt prayer to the Lord Poseidon:

‘Hear me, Poseidon, Earth-Bearer: do not begrudge fulfilment of what we ask, and answer our prayer. Firstly, grant fame to Nestor and his sons. Then, graciously repay all the men of Pylos for this sumptuous offering. Then, grant that Telemachus and I accomplish the task that brought us here in our swift black ship, and let us reach home again.’

So she prayed and fulfilled it all herself. Next, she handed Telemachus the fine two-handled cup, and Odysseus’ steadfast son repeated her prayer. After roasting the outer flesh and removing it from the spits, they divided the portions and ate of the rich feast. And when they had sated their appetite for food and drink, the horseman, Gerenian Nestor, spoke:
‘Now that our visitors have eaten well, it is fitting to question the strangers and ask them who they are. Friends, who are you? Where do you sail from over the sea-roads? Are you on business, or do you roam at random, like pirates who chance their lives to bring evil to others?’

Then wise Telemachus plucked up courage to answer, inspired by Athene, so as to ask about his lost father, and retain the respect of his men:

‘Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaeans, you ask where we come from, and I will tell you. We are from Ithaca, below Mount Neion: and what I speak of is private business. I come in hopes of hearing some rumour of my father, steadfast Odysseus, who, they say, fought at your side, and sacked the city of Troy. For we have heard of every man who met a sad end, among those who fought the Trojans, but as for Odysseus, the Son of Cronos allows even his death to go unreported, and no one can say for certain where he died, whether conquered by enemies on land, or at sea among
Amphitrite’s waves. So I come to clasp your knees, and ask you to speak if you can, and will, of his sad death, a death you may have seen yourself, or heard tell of from other travellers: for he was a man whom his mother bore to sorrow beyond all men. And do not speak soothing words out of concern for me, or pity, but tell me, in truth, what news you have. If ever my father, good Odysseus, promised you word or action and fulfilled it, on that field of Troy where Achaean suffered, I beg you, remember it now: tell me the whole truth.

Bk III:102-147 Nestor’s return: the Atrides quarrel

The horseman, Nestor of Gerenia, answered him: ‘Friend, you bring to mind the pain we suffered there, we sons of Achaea, great in courage: all that suffering of ours aboard ship, sailing the misty deep after plunder wherever Achilles led, and all our battles around King Priam’s mighty city, where the best of us died.
There lies Ajax, beloved of Ares: there lie Achilles and Patroclus, equal to the gods in counsel. There lies my own dear son, Antilochus, strong and faultless, swift of foot, and great in battle. Who among mortal men could tell all the evils we suffered? If you remained here five or six years, and heard of the troubles the noble Achaeans endured there you would be weary before the end, and go home. For nine years we were busy planning their destruction with all known stratagems, but Zeus, the son of Cronos, made it hard to achieve. No man there dared to compete in counsel with Odysseus, your father if you are truly his son, since noble Odysseus was supreme in all known stratagems. I wonder as I gaze at you: your speech is exactly his, and one would hardly expect a younger man to speak so. Throughout those years, Odysseus and I never spoke on opposite sides, in council or assembly, but with one mind advised the Argives, wisely and shrewdly, how to achieve success. But when we had sacked Priam’s high citadel, and
sailed away, and a god had scattered the fleet, then Zeus planned a grievous journey for the Argives, because some had behaved incautiously and unjustly. Many came to a dark fate, through the fierce anger of the bright-eyed goddess, daughter of a mighty father, stirring a quarrel between Atreus’ two sons. Hastily and informally, they called the Achaeans to an assembly at sunset, and because of it the sons of Achaea arrived sodden with wine. Then they spoke, and explained why they had gathered the host. Menelaus suggested they made their return over the wide sea the priority, but this displeased Agamemnon, who wished to delay them there, and to offer holy sacrifice to appease Athene’s deadly anger, not knowing foolishly that she would not listen, since the will of the everlasting gods cannot be swiftly altered. So the two of them stood there, exchanging harsh words, until the bronze-greaved Achaeans, divided in opinion, broke up in almighty uproar.’
Bk III:148-200 Nestor’s return: the journey

‘That night we rested, each side nursing harsh thoughts against the other, for Zeus was preparing a deadly blow. In the morning half of us launched our ships on the glittering sea, stowing away our goods, loading the captive women in their low-necked robes. Half of the army held back, supporting Agamemnon, Atreus’s son, the shepherd of the flock, while the rest of us embarked, then gathered way.

The ships sailed swiftly, for a god had smoothed the sea that nurtures monsters. Making Tenedos, and desirous of reaching home, we sacrificed to the immortals, but Zeus, that recalcitrant deity, did not wish us to return yet, and stirred another bitter quarrel. At that point one squadron, under the wise and cunning Lord Odysseus, who once morefavoured Agamemnon, Atreus’ son, swung their curved prows about, and turned back. I, with a massed fleet of ships following me, sailed on, knowing the god intended trouble. Diomedes, Tydeus’
son, beloved of Ares, likewise drove his crews onward, and behind us sailed yellow-haired Menelaus. He caught us at Lesbos as we argued whether to head out west from rugged Chios, towards the island of Psyria, keeping it to larboard, or to sail south, landward of Chios, past Mimas’ windy promontories. We asked the god for a sign, and the god made it clear we should cut across open sea, westward to Euboea, to escape from trouble most quickly. A fierce wind blew, and the ships ran swiftly over the teeming deep, and that night put in to Geraestus. There we laid many a bull’s thigh on Poseidon’s altar, to give thanks for our crossing. On the fourth day from then Diomedes, Tydeus’ son, tamer of horses, and all his company, beached their fine ships at Argos, but I sailed on for Pylos, and the wind never dropped from the moment the god first made it blow.

So, dear boy, I reached home without news of the others, knowing nothing of which Achaeans were saved, and which were lost. But
you have a right to all the news I have heard as I sit here in my palace, and I will keep nothing back. They say that the Myrmidons returned safely, those fierce spearmen that Achilles once led, and Philoctetes returned too, Poias’ brilliant son. And Idomeneus brought those of his troops who escaped the war back to Crete, and none were lost at sea. As for that son of Atreus, Agamemnon, you will have heard, far off though you were, of his homecoming, and of how Aegisthus plotted his sad end. Yet he too paid a terrible price, showing how good it is that a man leaves a son behind to take vengeance on his murderer. For Orestes took vengeance on his father’s killer, crafty Aegisthus, for all his treachery. You too, friend, a fine tall man as I see, take courage, so that many a man of generations yet to be born shall praise you.’

Bk III:201-252 Telemachus asks about Agamemnon’s death
Wise Telemachus replied: ‘Nestor, son of Neleus, great glory of the Achaeans, his son indeed took vengeance, and the Achaeans will noise his fame abroad, so that generations yet to be born will hear. Would that the gods would grant me such power, that I might exact a like revenge on the Suitors for their heavy sins, and the wilful wrongs they perpetrate against me. But the gods weave no such joys for me, or my father: I must simply endure.’

Nestor, the Gerenian charioteer, replied: ‘Friend, your words remind me: they say a crowd of Suitors courting your mother commit evils in your palace against you. Tell me, do you submit to this willingly, or is it that the people of Ithaca have turned against you, spurred on by the voice of some god? Who knows whether Odysseus may not return one day, alone or with an Achaean host, and take vengeance on them for their violence? If only bright-eyed Athene would choose to love you, as she once cherished noble Odysseus on the Trojan fields where we Achaeans suffered. I
have never seen a god show love so openly, as Pallas Athene showed to him, standing there by his side. If she delighted in loving you like that, and cared deeply for you, then the whole crowd of them could forget about marriage.’

Wise Telemachus answered him: ‘Venerable Lord, I doubt that what you say could ever be. You speak of something too wonderful. There is no hope of it, even if the gods so willed it.’

Then the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, spoke to him: ‘Telemachus, what are you saying? A god who wills it can easily bring a man safely home, from however far away. I would rather endure great suffering, myself, before I reached home, than be killed at my own hearth later, as Agamemnon was killed by the cunning of Aegisthus, and his own wife. But still the gods themselves cannot keep death, the common fate, from a man they love, when the deadly hand of merciless destiny fells him.’

‘Mentor,’ said wise Telemachus, ‘let us be silent now about these grievous things. He can
no longer return: on the contrary the deathless ones have brought death’s dark fate to him. But there is another question I would ask of Nestor, since he above all understands wisdom and judgement: men say he has been king for three lives of men, and he seems to me one of the immortals. Nestor, son of Neleus, tell me truly how that great king, Agamemnon, son of Atreus, was killed? Where was Menelaus, then? How did crafty Aegisthus plan to kill the king, a man far stronger than himself? Was Menelaus not home in Achaean Argos, but roaming abroad, that Aegisthus had the courage to commit the murder?

Bk III:253-312 Menelaus’ wanderings, Orestes’ revenge

Nestor, the Gerenian charioteer, replied: ‘I will tell you truly, my child, as you ask. You can guess yourself how it would have ended if yellow-haired Menelaus, Atreus’ son, returning from Troy, had found Aegisthus alive in the
palace. None would even have heaped a burial mound for him: dogs and birds would have torn his flesh on the plain, far outside the city, and no woman of Achaea would have mourned him, because of his monstrous crime. We played our part at Troy completing our many tasks, but he idled in that haven of Argos, the horse-pasture, seducing Agamemnon’s wife with his chatter. At first the noble Clytaemnestra, in her wisdom, shunned the base act: and besides she had a minstrel with her to whom Agamemnon had given strict orders to guard his wife, when he left for Troy. But when the gods at last destined that Agamemnon should be destroyed, Aegisthus took the minstrel to a desert isle, and left him there as a gift for the birds of prey: and as he wished, and she wished, led her to his own house. And he burned great heaps of thigh-pieces on the gods’ holy altar, and hung up rich offerings of fine fabrics, and gold, when he had accomplished that dreadful murder, which in his heart he had never thought could succeed.
For Agamemnon and I had sailed, in friendship, together from Troy: but when we came to sacred Sunium, the cape south of Athens, Phoebus Apollo killed Menelaus’ helmsman with a painless arrow, while his hands gripped the tiller of the speeding craft. And Phrontis, son of Onetor, had been first among men at steering a ship when the storm winds blew. So, though Menelaus was anxious to sail on, he waited to bury his friend, and offered the funeral rites. Then when he got away in his hollow ships, over the wine-dark sea, and ran downwind to Malea’s steep headland, Zeus of the far-reaching voice destined a troubled course for him, and engulfed him in a roaring gale, swelling the waves to the height of mountains. Then he split the fleet apart, carrying some ships to Crete and the Cydonian lands on the River Iardanus. There is a sheer cliff, falling to the sea, in the misty waves on the borders of Gortyn, where the southwest winds drive great breakers against the western headland near Phaestus, and
a slender reef stems their flow. Reaching it, the waves smashed the ships against the rocks, and the men barely escaped destruction.

However, wind and wave had carried five of the blue-prowed vessels to Egypt. So Menelaus cruised there with his ships among men of foreign tongue, gathering goods and gold. Meanwhile Aegisthus plotted his tragic action at home, murdering Agamemnon, and then controlling his people. He ruled gold-rich Mycenae for seven years, but the eighth brought Orestes his doom from Athens, come to slay his father’s murderer, crafty Aegisthus, in revenge. And when he had slain him, he called the Argives to a funeral feast, over the bodies of his vile mother and cowardly Aegisthus: and on that very day Menelaus of the loud war cry returned, bringing rich treasure, all that his ships could carry.’

Bk III:313-355 Nestor advises Telemachus to see Menelaus
'So do not wander far from home, yourself, my friend, leaving your wealth behind, and insolent men in your palace, for fear they share out your riches and consume them, making your journey worthless. I urge you to visit Menelaus, since he returned later from those distant parts, that region from which one might fear never to return, being driven by storms into the wide sea that birds cross only twice a year, so vast it is, and dangerous. Go with your ship and crew, or if you prefer the land here is a chariot and team, and my sons are at your service, that can guide you to lovely Lacedaemon, where yellow-haired Menelaus lives. Ask for the truth from his lips, yourself. He, being wise, will not deceive you.’

As Nestor ceased, the sun dipped and darkness fell. Then the goddess, bright-eyed Athene spoke to them: ‘Venerable Lord, you have said truly. But come, cut up the tongues, and mix the wine, so that we may pour the libations to Poseidon and the other gods, then think of sleep. It is time, since the light fades
into darkness, and we should not sit too long at the gods’ feast, but go to our beds.’

So the daughter of Zeus spoke, and they paid attention to her words. Squires poured water over their hands, while young men filled the brimming bowls, and after sprinkling a few drops into the wine-cups, as a libation, handed them round. Then they placed the tongues in the fire, and rising to their feet poured libations on them. But when they had offered the wine and drunk deep themselves, Athene and godlike Telemachus were ready to return to their hollow ship. Nestor, though detained them, saying:

‘May Zeus and the other immortals forbid this, that you should leave me and go to your swift ship, as if I were a beggar in rags, who lacks soft cloaks and blankets in plenty on which his guests might sleep. I have both, and the steadfast son of Odysseus shall not sleep on his ship’s deck while I am alive, or sons survive me here, to welcome strangers who reach my door.’
Bk III:356-403 Athene departs, and Nestor prays to her

Bright-eyed Athene said: ‘You have spoken well, my Lord, and Telemachus should stay: that will be best. But while he follows you, and shall sleep in your palace, I will go to the black ship to explain, and to reassure our crew. For I am the oldest among them: they are youths, friends of like age to the great-hearted Telemachus they follow. I will sleep there, by the black ship’s hull, tonight. And in the morning I will head for the great-hearted Cauconians, who owe me a heavy and long-standing debt. Then, since this young man is your guest, send him on his way, by chariot, with your son beside him, and let his horses be the strongest and swiftest you have.’

So the goddess spoke, bright-eyed Athene, and flew off in the form of a sea eagle: and all were amazed at the sight. The old man marvelled when he saw, and clasping Telemachus’ hand he said: ‘Friend, you will
prove neither a fool nor a coward since the gods go with you to guide you, and you so young. For this was none other of the gods that live on Olympus but the lady of Lake Tritonis, the glorious virgin daughter of Zeus, who granted your noble father honour too among Argives. Queen, be gracious to me, and let them speak well of me and my sons, and the wife I revere: and in return I will offer a wide-browed yearling heifer, not yet broken to the plough. I will gild her horns and sacrifice her to you.’

He prayed, and Pallas Athene heard. Then the horseman, Gerenian Nestor, with his sons, and sons-in-law, led the way to his lovely home. And, reaching the king’s fine palace, they seated themselves in rows on the chairs and stools: and the old man mixed them a sweet bowl of wine, from a sealed jar the housekeeper opened, now, in its eleventh year. Mixing a bowl of the vintage, the old man poured libations, and prayed intently to Athene, the daughter of Zeus, who wears the aegis.
After pouring libations, and drinking their fill, they each went off to rest, while Nestor, the horseman of Gerenia, arranged for the steadfast son of divine Odysseus to sleep on a wooden bed in the echoing portico, with Peisistratus, of the ash spear, leader of men, and the only unmarried son left in the palace, beside him. But Nestor himself slept in the innermost room of the tall building, and with him his lady wife for love and comfort.

Bk III:404-463 Nestor’s sacrifice to Athene

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Nestor the Gerenian horseman rose from his bed: went out, and seated himself on the smooth stone bench, white and gleaming as though with oil, that stood in front of the high doors. Neleus had once sat there, as wise as a god in counsel, but he had long since been felled by fate and gone down to Hades’ Halls. Now Gerenian Nestor sat there in his turn, a Warden of the Achaeans, with the sceptre in his hand. His sons
gathered round him, as they came from their rooms, Echephron and Stratius, Perseus, Aretus, and godlike Thrasymedes. The warrior Peisistratus made a sixth, and they seated godlike Telemachus beside him. Nestor, the Gerenian horseman, spoke first:

My dear sons, be quick to do my will, so that I can propitiate Athene above all, who came openly in person to the god’s rich feast. Let one of you go to the meadow for a heifer, and let the cowherd drive her swiftly: let another go to great-hearted Telemachus’ black ship and bring his friends, all but two: and let a third call Laerces the goldsmith here to tip the heifer’s horns with gold. The rest of you stay here, and tell the women to prepare a feast in the palace, and seats, and firewood, and fresh water.’

They set about their tasks, as ordered. The heifer arrived from the meadow, and great-hearted Telemachus’ crew from the fine swift ship: the smith brought bronze tools in his hands, anvil, hammer and well-wrought tongs,
the instruments of his gold-working craft: and Athene too arrived to witness the sacrifice. Then old Nestor the charioteer gave the smith gold to gild the heifer’s horns, so the goddess would delight in the offering. Then Stratius and noble Echephron led the heifer by the horns, and Aretus came from the palace bringing water in a flowered bowl for them to wash with, and a basket of barley meal, in his other hand. Thrasymedes, stalwart in fighting, stood there, gripping a sharp axe to strike the heifer, and Perseus held the dish for the blood. Then old Nestor the charioteer opened the rites by washing his hands and scattering barley grains, and prayed intently to Athene, cutting hair from the victim’s head as a first offering, and throwing it into the flames.

When they had prayed, and scattered the barley grains, Thrasymedes, Nestor’s high-spirited son, approached and struck the blow. The axe severed the sinews of the heifer’s neck, and crippled her strength, and the women raised the ritual cry, all the daughters, and daughters-
in-law, and Nestor’s honoured wife, Eurydice, Clymenus’ eldest daughter. Then the men raised the heifer’s head from the trampled earth, and held it while Peisistratus, that leader of men, slit its throat. When the black blood had flowed, and life had left its body, they dismembered the carcass, cut out the thigh pieces accordingly, wrapped them in layers of fat, and covered them with raw meat. Then the old king burned them on the fire, and poured glowing wine over them, while the young men waited beside him, five-pronged forks in hand. When the thigh pieces were burned, then they tasted the inner parts, carving the rest, skewering and roasting it, holding the sharpened skewers in their hands.

Bk III:464-497 Telemachus departs

Then lovely Polycaste, Nestor’s youngest daughter, bathed Telemachus. And when she had bathed him and rubbed him with oil, and dressed him in tunic and fine cloak, he emerged
from the baths like an immortal, and seated himself by Nestor, the people’s shepherd.

When they had roasted the outer flesh and stripped it from the skewers, they sat down to eat, with squires in attendance to fill their wine-cups. After they had sated themselves with food and drink, Nestor, the Gerenian horseman was first to speak: ‘Now, my sons, harness horses with flowing manes to Telemachus’ chariot, so he may start his journey.’

He spoke, and they eagerly heard and obeyed: rapidly harnessing swift horses to the chariot. The housekeeper stocked it with bread and wine, and delicacies, such as kings eat whom Zeus favours. Then Telemachus mounted the fine chariot, and Peisistratus, leader of men, Nestor’s son, climbed up beside him and grasped the reins in his hands. He flicked the team with his whip to start them, and the willing pair took to the plain, and left the high city of Pylos behind them. And all day long they strained at the yoke across their necks.
Now the sun dipped and the roads grew dark. And they came to Pherae, to Diocles’ house, Ortilochus’ son whom Alpheius bore. There they passed the night, and he welcomed them, as strangers should be welcomed.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, they harnessed the horses, mounted the ornate chariot, and drove past the echoing portico out of the gate. Then Peistratus flicked the team with his whip to start them, and the willing pair flew onwards. So they came to plains of wheat, and pushed on towards journey’s end, drawn by their fleeting horses. And the sun dipped down and all the roads grew dark.

Bk IV:1-58 Telemachus and Peisistratus arrive in Sparta

So they came to the hill country of Lacedaemon, with its deep gorges, and reached glorious Menelaus’ palace. They found him at home feasting a crowd of his kin, celebrating the coming marriages of his faultless son and
daughter. He was sending Hermione as bride to Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, that breaker of ranks of men, for he had promised her to him, and sworn an oath at Troy, and now the gods brought it about. He was to send her with chariots and horses to the Myrmidons’ glorious city, whose king would be her lord. But to his son, the steadfast Megapenthes, he was bringing Alector’s daughter from Sparta: his son the dearly beloved child of a slave, for the gods gave Helen no more issue, once she had borne that lovely girl Hermione, whose beauty was golden Aphrodite’s. They were feasting then, happily, in the vaulted hall, glorious Menelaus’ neighbours and family, while a minstrel, inspired, sang to the lyre, and two acrobats whirled about in dance through the midst of them.

Meanwhile Telemachus the hero, and Nestor’s noble son, reined in their horses at the palace gates. Lord Eteoneus, great Menelaus’ zealous squire, came out to see them, and went off through the halls to carry the news to the
shepherd of the people. He approached him and spoke with winged words: ‘Menelaus, favourite of Zeus, two strangers are here, two men of mighty Zeus’ divine seed. Tell me, shall we unharness their swift horses, or send them on to some other host who will give them hospitality?’

Yellow-haired Menelaus, replied, in intense annoyance: ‘You were never a fool before, Eteoneus, Boethus’ son, but now you are babbling like a child. Both of us ate at other men’s tables on our way home, hoping that Zeus would free us from trouble some day. Unharness the strangers’ horses, now, and bring them to join our feast.’

At that, Eteoneus ran through the halls, calling the rest of the zealous squires to follow. They lifted the yoke from the sweating horses, and tied them to their stalls, then flung them a mix of wheat and white barley. They tilted the chariot against the gleaming wall of the court, and led the strangers into the goodly palace. They in turn wondered as they passed through
the house of this king, favoured by Zeus: since a light like the sun or moon shone on the vaulted halls of noble Menelaus.

When they had feasted their eyes with gazing, they entered the gleaming baths and bathed, and when the maids had washed them and rubbed them with oil, and dressed them in fleece-lined tunics and cloaks, they seated themselves on chairs near Menelaus, son of Atreus. Then a maid brought a golden ewer, and poured water over a silver basin, while they rinsed their hands, and she drew a gleaming table to their side. The faithful housekeeper brought bread, and set it before them with heaps of delicacies, giving freely of her stores. And a carver served choice meats, setting the plates down before them, with gold cups beside.

Bk IV:59-112 Menelaus speaks of Odysseus

Then yellow-haired Menelaus greeted the two of them, saying; ‘Eat and be glad, and when you have eaten we will ask who you are, since
your fathers’ lineage is evident in you: you are of the race of sceptred kings favoured by Zeus, no common men could get such sons as you.’

So saying he lifted the roasted meat, the same fat chine of ox served to him as a mark of honour, and set it before them. And they stretched out their hands to the good things placed there. When they had quenched their hunger and thirst, Telemachus leant close to Nestor’s son, so that the rest could not hear, saying: ‘Son of Nestor, dear to my heart, see the flashes of bronze in this echoing hall, the gleams of electrum, gold, silver, and ivory. The courts of Olympian Zeus must look like this, filled with such wealth: I am awed at the sight.’

Yellow-haired Menelaus overheard him, and spoke to them winged words: ‘No mortal man can compete with Zeus, my boy, of that you can be sure: his house and possessions endure forever. As for men, maybe someone somewhere can match me, or maybe no. After great suffering and many wanderings, in truth, I returned home with my riches in the eighth
year. To Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, I strayed: visited the Ethiopians, Sidonians, and Erembians, and Libya where the newborn lambs have horns. There the ewes lamb thrice a year: master or shepherd never lacks meat, sweet milk, and cheese, for the ewes give milk all year round.

Yet while I travelled there, garnering riches, my unsuspecting brother was killed by a murderer’s cunning, and the treachery of an accursed wife. So I take no joy in owning all this wealth, and, as you may have heard from your fathers, whoever they may be, I have had sorrows, and seen the ruin of one noble house already, filled with great treasure. I could be happy to live here with a third of this, if those men who died on the wide plains of Troy, far from the pastures of Argos, were still alive. And though I often sit here mourning and sorrowing for them, now easing my heart by weeping, now ceasing since men grow weary of cold sadness, I grieve for one more than all, nevertheless, thinking of whom makes me lose
sleep and appetite: none of the Acheaeans laboured like Odysseus or endured so much. But it seems his only reward was misery, and mine the endless sorrow for him, through his long absence, not knowing if he is alive or dead. Old Laertes must grieve for him, and loyal Penelope, and Telemachus whom he left a newborn baby in his palace.’

Bk IV:113-154 Helen guesses Telemachus’ identity

His speech prompted Telemachus to weep for his father. Tears from his eyes fell to the ground at his father’s name, and he held his purple cloak before his eyes, in both hands. Menelaus marked him, and debated in his mind whether to let him speak of his father first, or whether to question him closely.

While he deliberated, from her tall, scented room came Helen, like Artemis of the golden spindle: and her companion Adreste placed a finely-wrought chair for her, Alcippe brought a
soft wool rug, and Phylo a silver basket, a gift from Alcandre, wife of Polybus in Egyptian Thebes, where men own homes that reveal the greatest wealth. He had given Menelaus two silver baths, two three-legged cauldrons, and ten golden talents. And his wife had also offered beautiful gifts to Helen: a golden spindle, and a silver basket on wheels, with a golden rim. This was what Phylo, her maid, brought, placing it beside her. It was full of fine-spun yarn, and the spindle was laid across it, charged with dark purple wool. Helen was seated on the chair, with a footstool for her feet, and she quickly began to question her husband:

‘Menelaus, favoured by Zeus, do we know who these men, in our house, claim to be? Shall I suppress my thoughts, or speak truly? My heart says speak. For I have never seen such a likeness before in man or woman, it stuns me to look, as the likeness of this man to great-hearted Odysseus: surely this is the son whom he left at home, a newborn babe, when you
Achaeans came to the walls of Troy, meditating war, for me to my shame.’

Yellow-haired Menelaus replied: ‘I see the likeness now, wife, as you do: the hands and feet, the cast of his eyes, his head and hair. I swear, just now, when I spoke of Odysseus, and told of what he had done and suffered for me, the young man shed a bitter tear, and held his purple cloak to his brow, to veil his eyes.’

Bk IV:155-219 Peisistratus explains

Then Peisistratus, Nestor’s son, spoke to Menelaus: ‘Son of Atreus, favoured by Zeus, leader of armies, this young man is indeed his son, as you have said. But he is modest, and at this first visit is shy of speaking without invitation in the presence of one whose voice, like a god’s, delights us. As he was eager to see you, Gerenian Nestor sent me with him as guide, so that you might help him to word or action. For, as with Telemachus, when his father is absent a son has many sorrows at
home, with no one to help him. His father is absent, and among his people there is no one to defend him from ruin.’

Yellow-haired Menelaus replied: ‘Well now: here in my house is the son of a man truly loved indeed, who suffered many troubles for my sake. I had thought, when he came back, to welcome him more than any other Argive: if Zeus of the far-reaching voice, that is, had allowed us to return together in our swift ships over the waves. I would have given him a city in Argos: I would have built him a palace, and brought him from Ithaca with all his possessions, his son and his people: emptied, indeed, some neighbouring city that obeyed me as its lord. Then we might have lived here together, with nothing to part us, loving, delighting in one another, until death’s black cloud covered us. But I think the god himself was jealous, and denied that man alone his homecoming.’

So he spoke, and prompted them to tears. Argive Helen, daughter of Zeus, was weeping,
and Telemachus wept, and Menelaus, Atreus’s son, and the son of Nestor could not keep a dry eye, for he remembered faultless Antilochus, whom the Dawn’s glorious son, Memnon, had slain. Thinking of him he spoke with winged words: ‘Son of Atreus, old Nestor used to say you were the wisest of men, when we mentioned you and asked about you in the palace. So now, grant us a respite if you would. I take no delight in tears after eating, and soon the dawn will break: though there is nothing wrong in weeping for any mortal man who dies, and fulfils his fate. There are no greater tributes we can pay the sad dead, than a lock of our hair, and a tear from our eye. My brother too, not least of the Argives, is dead, a man you may well have known. I never saw him or met him, but they say Antilochus was swiftest of all afoot, and the best of warriors.’

‘My friend,’ answered yellow-haired Menelaus, ‘you have spoken like a wise man, and one of greater years: and are sprung from just such a father as your thoughtful words
reveal. There is no hiding the man for whom the son of Cronos spins a thread of good luck at his marriage, and in his children’s birth, and he has done so for Nestor all his life, granting that he should attain a comfortable old age in his palace, and that his sons should be wise, and brave with the spear. So we will cease weeping, and let them pour water over our hands, while we think of supper. In the morning Telemachus and I will talk more fully.’ So he spoke, and then Asphalion, glorious Menelaus’ zealous squire, poured water over their hands. And they reached for the good things spread before them.

Bk IV:220-289 Helen and Menelaus speak of Odysseus

Then Helen, daughter of Zeus, thought to slip a drug into the wine they drank, one that calmed all pain and trouble, and brought forgetfulness of every evil. Whoever tasted it mixed with the wine would shed no tears that day, not though his mother and father lay there dead, not though
they put his dear son or his brother to the sword, before his very eyes. The daughter of Zeus had these powerful healing drugs as a gift from Polydamna, Thon’s wife, a woman of Egypt, as the fertile soil there is rich in herbs, many of them curatives when compounded, many of them, also, harmful. Everyone there is the wisest of physicians, since they are of Paeeon’s race.

When she had mixed the drug, and ordered the wine to be poured, she spoke again, and said: ‘Menelaus, son of Atreus, favourite of Zeus, and all you others, sons of noblemen, though Zeus brings good or ill to one or another since he can do all things sit here in the hall and feast for now, and delight in the tales that are told, and I myself will relate something fitting. I cannot give you, or even number, enduring Odysseus’ adventures, but what a wonderful thing it was that the great man undertook and survived at Troy where you Achaeans suffered! Lacerating his body with fierce blows, and with a miserable rag about his shoulders, he entered
the enemy’s broad flagged streets, looking like a slave. In that beggarly disguise, he was not the Odysseus of the Achaean ships, and all in the Trojan city were deceived. I alone recognised and questioned him, and he cunningly tried to deceive me. But when I had bathed him, anointed and clothed him, and solemnly sworn not to name him in Troy as Odysseus before he reached camp and the swift ships, he revealed the Achaean plans. And after slaying many Trojans with the long sword he returned to the Argive host with a wealth of information. While the rest of the Trojan women were wailing their grief, my spirit was glad, since my heart was already longing for home, and I sighed at the blindness Aphrodite had dealt me, drawing me there from my own dear country, abandoning daughter and bridal chamber, and a husband lacking neither in wisdom nor looks.’

Yellow-haired Menelaus continued: ‘Wife, indeed you have told it all as it was. I have known before now the thoughts and judgements
of many heroes, as I wandered the wide earth, but I have never seen so great hearted a man as enduring Odysseus. That episode too, of the Wooden Horse, how the great man planned it, carried it through, that carved horse holding the Argive leaders, bringing the Trojans death and ruin! Then, summoned it may be by some god who thought to hand victory to the Trojans, you arrived, with godlike Deiphobus on your heels. You circled our hollow hiding-place, striking the surface, calling out the names of the Danaan captains, in the very voices of each of the Argives’ wives. Diomedes, Tydeus’ son, and I, and Odysseus were there among them, hearing you call, and Diomedes and I were ready to answer within, and leap out, but Odysseus restrained us, despite our eagerness. The rest of the Achaeans kept silent too, though Anticlus wanted to call out, and reply, till Odysseus clapped his strong hands over his mouth, saving all the Achaeans, and he grasped him so till Pallas Athene led you away.’
Menelaus, son of Atreus, favourite of Zeus, leader of armies’ said wise Telemachus, ‘it seems so much worse that nothing protected him from sad ruin, not even his iron will. But come, order us to retire, so that we may be lulled by sweet sleep, and delight in rest.’

At this, Argive Helen told her maids to set up two beds in the portico, and cover them with fine purple blankets, with covers on top, and fleecy cloaks for warmth. Torch in hand, the maids went out of the hall. They made up the couches, and a squire led the guests there. So brave Telemachus and Nestor’s glorious son spent the night in the palace forecourt, but Atreus’ son slept in the innermost room of the tall palace, and beside him Helen, in her long robes, loveliest of women.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Menelaus of the loud war cry rose from his bed and dressed. He slung a sharp sword from his shoulder, bound fine sandals on his shining feet,
and went out of the room looking like a god. He seated himself by Telemachus, and addressed him: ‘Brave Telemachus, what brings you to lovely Lacedaemon, over the sea’s broad path? Is it public or private business? Tell me now.’

And wise Telemachus replied: ‘Menelaus, son of Atreus, favourite of Zeus, leader of armies, I came hoping for news of my father. My house is being ruined, and my rich lands destroyed: my home is filled with enemies, who kill my herds of sheep and shambling cattle with spiral horns: men who are my mother’s Suitors, proud in their insolence. So I come to clasp your knees, and ask you to speak, if you can and will, of his sad death, a death you may have seen yourself, or heard tell of from other travellers: for he was a man whom his mother bore to sorrow beyond all men. And do not speak soothing words out of concern for me, or pity, but tell me, in truth, what news you have. If ever my father, good Odysseus, promised you word or action, and fulfilled it on that field of
Troy where Achaeans suffered, I beg you, remember it now: tell me the whole truth.’

Yellow-haired Menelaus expressed his deep indignation: ‘Rogues, men without courage, they are, who wish to creep into a brave man’s bed. Odysseus will bring them to a cruel end, just as if a doe had left twin newborn fawns asleep in some great lion’s lair in the bush, and gone for food on the mountain slopes, and in the grassy valleys, and the lion returned to its den and brought them to a cruel end. By Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo, I wish he would come among those Suitors with that strength he showed in well-ordered Lesbos, when he rose to wrestle with Philomeleides, and threw him mightily, to all the Achaean’s delight. They would meet death swiftly, and a dark wedding. But concerning what you ask of me, I will not evade you, or mislead you: on the contrary, I will not hide a single fact of all that the infallible Old Man of the Sea told me.’
Bk IV:351-397  Menelaus tells of his delay at Pharos

‘Though I was anxious to return, the gods kept me in Egypt, because I failed to offer the right sacrifice, and they want men ever to remember their commandments. Now there is an isle in the sea-surge off the mouth of the Nile, that men call Pharos, a day’s run for a hollow ship with a strong wind astern. There’s a good anchorage there, a harbour from which men launch their trim ships into the waves, when they have drawn fresh black water. The gods kept me there for twenty days, with never a sign of wind on the sea to speed our ship over the wide waters. All my stores, and my crew’s strength would have been lost, if a divinity had not pitied me and saved me. Eidothee, it was, the daughter of mighty Proteus, Old Man of the Sea, because I stirred her heart most of all. She met me as I walked alone, far from my men, who, pinched by hunger, roamed the shore fishing with barbed hooks.
She approached me, saying: “Stranger, are you a fool and slow-witted, or willingly trapped, and happy to suffer? You have been penned here so long you can see no end to it, and your men are losing heart.” So she spoke and I replied: “Whichever of the goddesses you are, I assure you I am not willingly trapped here, but it seems I have sinned against the deathless ones who hold the wide heavens. Tell me, since you gods know everything, which of the immortals holds me here, hindering my path, and tell me how to return over the teeming sea.”

I spoke, and the lovely goddess quickly answered: “Stranger, I will tell you truthfully all you ask. This is the haunt of the Old Man of the Sea, Proteus of Egypt, immortal seer, who knows all the ocean depths, and serves Poseidon. They say he is my true father. If you could lie in wait and trap him somehow, he will give you the course, and duration, and say how you may return over the teeming sea. And if you wish it so, favoured of Zeus, he will tell
you the good and evil done in your house while you have been on your long and troubled passage.”

At this, I said: “Find me a way to lie in wait for this ancient god in case he sees me first, and avoids me. It is hard for a mortal man to defeat a god.”

Bk IV:398-463 Menelaus and Eidothee trap Proteus

‘She replied: “Stranger, I will tell you truthfully all you ask. When the sun is at the zenith, the wise Old Man of the Sea emerges from the brine, masked by the dark wave, while the west wind blows. Once risen, he lies down and sleeps in an echoing cave, and the seals, the daughter of the sea’s children, slithering from the grey water, lie down around him in a slumbering herd, breathing out the pungent odour of the deep. Choose three of your friends, the best you have in the oared ships, and at dawn I’ll lead you there and place you among
their ranks. Let me tell you the old sorcerer’s tricks. First he will go round counting the seals, and when he has looked them over, and tallied them in fives, he will lie down among them like a shepherd with his flock. When you see him settled, summon your strength and courage, and grasp him, however hard he struggles and tries to escape. Try he will, taking on the forms of everything on earth, of water and glorious blazing fire. But hold him bravely and grip him all the tighter. When he is finally willing to speak, and assumes the original shape in which you saw him resting, and questions you, then cease your violence, set the old man free, brave hero, and ask what god it is you have angered, and how you might return over the teeming waves.”

With that she plunged beneath the surge, and I went to where my ship lay on the shore, and my mind was filled with dark thoughts as I went. Then, when I had reached the ships and the waves, and we had prepared our supper, and deathless night descended, we lay down to
sleep at the water’s edge. And as soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I walked along the shore of the wide seaway, praying devoutly to the gods: and three of my friends, on whom I could most rely, went with me.

She, meanwhile, plunging beneath the sea’s wide back, brought four sealskins up from the deep, freshly flayed, and plotted her father’s capture. She scooped out hiding places for us in the dunes, and sat there waiting: then, when we arrived, she made us lie in a row, and threw a seal skin over each. Our waiting would have been dreadful, so dreadful was the stench of the briny seals. Who would want to sleep with a beast from the sea? But her gift saved us: she applied ambrosia to each man’s nostrils, and its sublime fragrance killed the stench. There we waited, patiently, all morning, and herds of seals came up from the sea. They lay down in rows along the beach, and at noon the old man emerged and found the sleek ranks. He looked them over, and tallied them, and not expecting our deceit, counted us among the first. Then he
lay down to sleep. With a shout we rushed at him, and grappled him, but he forgot none of his crafty tricks. First he turned to a bearded lion, then a snake, and a leopard: then a giant boar: then he became rushing water, then a vast leafy tree: but we held tight with unyielding courage. When at last that old man, expert in magic arts, grew tired, he spoke to me, saying: “Son of Atreus, which of the gods told you to lie in wait for me, and hold me against my will? What is it you wish?”

Bk IV:464-511 Proteus speaks: the fate of Ajax

‘At this, I answered: “Old man, why prevaricate, you know how long I have been penned in this isle, with no sign of an end to it, and how I lose heart. Tell me, since you gods know everything, which of the immortals holds me here, hindering my passage, and tell me how to return over the teeming sea.”

He replied at once: “Surely you should have made rich sacrifice to Zeus and the other
gods before you left, so as to return home faster, crossing the wine-dark sea. It is not your fate to reach your native land, and see your fine house and friends again, until you have sailed the waters of the Nile once more, Aegyptus, the heaven-fed river, and made holy offerings to the deathless gods who hold the wide heavens. Then, at last, the gods will let you return as you wish.”

At this my spirits fell, since he directed me to sail the long and weary way over the misty deep to Aegyptus. Even so I answered: “I will do all this, old man, as you suggest. But tell me this, in truth. Have all the Achaeans whom Nestor and I left behind, as we sailed from Troy, reached home in safety with their ships? Or have any died a wretched death at sea, or in the arms of friends, though the war was over?”

“Son of Atreus”, he replied swiftly, “why do you ask me this? There is no benefit to you in knowing what I know, and when you have heard the truth, your tears will not be long in flowing. Many were killed, many were spared:
yet only two of the bronze-clad Achaeans were lost on the homeward journey, and as for the fighting you were there. And a third I think is alive still, but a prisoner somewhere on the wide seas.

Ajax the Lesser, first, was lost, with his long-oared ships. Poseidon wrecked him on the great cliffs of Gyrae, but rescued him from the waves. He would have avoided death, regardless of Athene’s hatred, if he had not boasted blindly. He claimed he had escaped the sea’s vast gulf despite the gods, and Poseidon heard his boast. Seizing his trident in his mighty hands the god struck the rock of Gyrae and split it apart. One part stood firm, but the shattered half, where Ajax had crouched when his judgement was blinded, toppled into the sea, and drove him down into the vast surging tide. So he drank the salt waves, and died.”

Bk IV:512-547 Proteus speaks: the fate of Agamemnon
“But your brother escaped that fate, and slipped by with his hollow ships, protected by Lady Hera. Yet, as he neared the heights of Cape Malea, a tempest caught him and drove him, groaning deeply, over the teeming waves, to the edge of that land where Thyestes once ruled, and at that time his son Aegisthus. But there the gods altered the wind’s course: a fair breeze blew and showed him the safe path home. Agamemnon was overjoyed to set foot again on his native soil, lying down he kissed the ground, and the tears streamed from his eyes, at the sight of his own land. Now a lookout saw him from the watchtower, a man appointed by cunning Aegisthus, who had promised him two golden talents. There he had watched for a year, fearful lest Agamemnon should pass unnoticed, and employ his strength in swift anger. He ran to the palace to carry his news to the usurper, and Aegisthus at once devised an ambush. He picked twenty of his best men, who lay in wait in the palace, while he ordered a feast prepared on the far side of
the hall. Then, his mind plotting murder, he set out in his chariot to welcome Agamemnon, shepherd of the people, and drew him unsuspecting to his doom. When he had feasted him, he killed him, like an ox felled at the manger. And none of the followers of Atreus’ son were spared, and none of Aegisthus’ men, but all were killed in the palace.”

At this my heart was broken, and I fell to the sands and wept. I no longer wished to live, to see the sun. But when I was weary of weeping and clutching the ground, the wise Old Man of the Sea said: “Son of Atreus, enough of this endless grieving that gains you nothing. Better to head for your native land as fast as you can, and you will either find Aegisthus still alive, or Orestes will have killed him ahead of you, and you can join the funeral rites.”

Bk IV:548-592  Proteus speaks: the fate of Odysseus
‘My spirits rose and my heart was comforted by this, despite my sorrow, and I spoke to him with winged words: “I know now about these two, but what of the third? Name the man who still lives somewhere in the wide sea: or is he too dead? Despite the pain, I wish to know.”

I spoke, and he at once replied, saying: “He is Odysseus, Laertes’ son, whose home is on Ithaca. I saw him shedding great tears in the island haunt of the Nymph Calypso, who keeps him captive there, far from his native land, since he has no oared ship, no crew, to carry him over the wide waters. But because you are Helen’s husband, and therefore the son-in-law of Zeus, it is not ordained that you, Menelaus, favoured by Zeus, should meet your end in Argos, the horse-pasture. Instead the immortals will bear you to the Elysian Fields, at the world’s end, where yellow-haired Rhadamanthus dwells, and existence is best for men. There is no snow there, no rain, or fierce
storms: rather Ocean brings singing breaths of the West Wind, to refresh them.”

With this, he sank into the billowing sea, and I returned to my ships with my brave friends, thinking dark thoughts as I went. Then, when I had reached the ships and the waves, and we had prepared our supper, and immortal night descended, we lay down to sleep at the water’s edge. And as soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we dragged our ships to the glittering water, and set up masts and sails in the trim craft, and the crews went to their oars, and sitting in rows struck the grey sea with their blades. So I sailed again to the heaven-fed waters of Nile, and moored the ships, and offered true sacrifice. Then, when I had appeased the wrath of the ever-living gods, I heaped up a mound to Agamemnon, so his fame might endure. When all was done I headed home, and the immortals sent me a following wind, and brought me quickly to my own beloved country.
But stay here in the palace, till the eleventh or the twelfth day, and I will send you off with honours, and fine gifts, a shining chariot with a trio of horses, and a glorious cup with which to pour libations to the deathless gods, while remembering me all your days.’

Bk IV:593-624 Telemachus prepares to leave Sparta

Then wise Telemachus replied: ‘Son of Atreus, do not delay me here. Truly I could be happy to stay a year in your palace, without desiring home or parents, so great is the pleasure I take listening to your speech, your tales. But my friends will be anxious in sacred Pylos while you detain me. If you make me a gift, let it be something precious. But I will not accept horses for Ithaca, I will leave them here for you to enjoy, since you are lord of a wide land, where lotus and sedge, and wheat and rye, and broad-eared white barley grow, while in Ithaca there are no broad plains or meadows at all. It is goat-
pasture, though more varied than fields for horses. None of those islands that slope sheer to the sea are rich in meadows fit for herding them, Ithaca least of all.’

So saying, Menelaus of the loud war cry smiled, and patted him with his hand, and answered: ‘Dear boy, you are of noble blood, to speak so. Well, I will alter the gifts, as I may. I will give you one of the richest and loveliest treasures of my house, a finely fashioned mixing bowl. It is solid silver with a rim of gold, the work of Hephaestus himself. Phaedimus, the hero, King of Sidon, made me a present of it, when his house gave me shelter on my way home, and now I wish to present it to you.’

While they conversed, the guests were arriving at the sacred king’s palace. They drove in their sheep, and brought unmixed wine, and their elegantly veiled wives sent bread. So they prepared the feast in the hall.
Bk IV:625-674 The Suitors plot an ambush

But in front of Odysseus’ palace the Suitors, insolent as ever, were amusing themselves hurling the discus and javelin across the level space. Antinous and noble Eurymachus, their leaders, were there, the most able of them all. Noemon, Phronius’ son, approached with a question for Antinous:

‘Do we know or not when Telemachus is due back from sandy Pylos? He has taken a ship of mine, and gone, and I need her to cross to the wide plains of Elis, where I have twelve brood mares, and sturdy mules that are not yet weaned or broken. I need to cut one out, and train him.’

They were amazed at this, not thinking Telemachus had gone to Neleian Pylos, but that he was in the field, among the flocks perhaps, or with the swineherd.

Then Antinous, Eupeithes’ son, said: ‘Tell me the truth now, when did he go, and who went with him? Were they picked men of Ithaca, or slaves and servants of his own? He
might have so decided. And tell me so as to convince me. Did he take the black ship from you against your will, or did you agree willingly when he asked you?’

‘I gave it him freely.’ said Noemon, ‘What else can one do when a man like him, burdened with care, makes a request? It would be hard to refuse the gift. And the best of the island’s young men, next to us, went with him. I saw Mentor take command of them on board, or a god perhaps who looked like Mentor. I wonder at it, since I saw noble Mentor here, yesterday, at dawn: yet earlier he had embarked for Pylos.’

With that Noemon left for his father’s house, leaving the two proud lords enraged. They insisted the Suitors leave their games, at once, and sit down together, while Antinous, Eupeithes’ son, vented his anger. His dark spirit was filled with fury, and his eyes blazed with fire.

‘Well now, Telemachus has carried this out, insolently indeed, a journey we thought he would never manage. The lad went swiftly, in
spite of us, and launched his ship, with a hand picked crew. Given time he will start to cause us problems: may Zeus humble him though, and destroy him before he reaches manhood. But come, grant me a fast ship and a crew of twenty, and I’ll lie in wait for him in the straits as he makes his solitary passage between Ithaca and rocky Samos, and his voyage in search of his father will end sadly.’

They praised his speech, and seconded his plan. Then they quickly rose and went off towards Odysseus’ palace.

Bk IV:675-720 Medon tells Penelope of the plot

Now Penelope was not long in ignorance of what the Suitors were secretly plotting, for Medon, the herald told her, having heard their plans as he stood outside the court where they were weaving their mischief. He set off through the palace, to carry the news to Penelope, and she spoke to him as he crossed her threshold:
‘Why have the noble Suitors sent you, Herald? Is it to tell divine Odysseus’ maids to forgo their tasks, and prepare them a feast? May this be their latest feast and their last, so they will never woo or gather anywhere else again. They are always crowding in here, wasting our stores, and wise Telemachus’ inheritance. They could never have listened when they were children, and their fathers talked of how Odysseus treated them, never unjust to any man in word or action, as sacred kings often are: disliking one man, while favouring another. He never dealt unfairly with anyone. But their thoughts and shameful actions are evident, and gratitude for past goodness is now forgotten.’

Then thoughtful Medon replied: ‘My Queen, I wish that was the worst of it. But the Suitors are planning a greater evil, one I pray the Son of Cronos may never allow. They plan to put Telemachus to the sword as he returns from his journey to sacred Pylos and noble Lacadaemon, seeking news of his father.’
At this her knee-joints slackened, and her heart melted. For a while she could not speak: her eyes filled with tears, her voice was stilled. At last she could reply: ‘Why did my son go there, Herald? He had no need to sail the swift ships, those chariots of the deep, and cross the wide ocean waves. Is not even his name to be left among men?’

Thoughtful Medon answered her: ‘I do not know whether a god drove him, or whether his own heart sent him to Pylos to learn of his father’s death or return.’ So saying he walked off through Odysseus’ palace, while a cloud of all-consuming anxiety cloaked her, such that she had no strength to seat herself on one of the many chairs in the room, but sank down on the threshold of her well-made chamber, grieving pitifully, while all the maids of the household, young and old, wept around her.

Bk IV:721-766 Penelope and Eurycleia
Sobbing with grief, Penelope spoke to them: ‘Listen, my friends, for Zeus has charged me with sorrow beyond all the women of my generation. Long ago I lost my great and glorious, lion-hearted husband, first among the Danaans in every virtue, whose fame resounds through Hellas to the heart of Argos. Now the storm wind has swept my beloved son from our door without trace, and I never even knew he had gone. Cruel ones! None of you thought to wake me from sleep, though you must have known he was boarding his hollow black ship! If I had known he planned this voyage, every means would have been used to keep him here, however ready he was to be off, or he would have left me here dead. So now one of you run and call old Dolius, my servant. My father offered his service to me, when I came here, and he tends my well-stocked orchard. He can go and sit with Laertes, and tell him of this. Perhaps Laertes may think of some scheme, and show himself to the people, and beg them with
tears not to destroy his and Odysseus’ sacred line.’

Then Eurycleia, the loyal nurse, replied: ‘Odysseus’ bride, dear lady, whether you let me live on in this house, or kill me with a pitiless knife, I cannot hide the truth from you. I knew all, and I gave him whatever he asked for, bread and pure wine. But he made me swear solemnly not to tell you, till eleven or twelve days hence, or till you missed him and heard he was gone, so as not to spoil your beauty with weeping. Go and bathe, and dress in fresh clothes, then go to your high chamber with your maids, and pray to Athene, daughter of Zeus, who wears the aegis: even now she may save your son from death. And don’t add to the old man’s troubles, since I hardly think the blessed gods hate the sons of Arceisius’ line, and they will surely leave one to rule the vaulted halls, and all the rich far-flung land.’

So speaking, she soothed Penelope’s grief, and stemmed her tears. And the Queen bathed, and dressed in fresh clothes, and went to her
high chamber with her maids, and filling a basket with barley grains she prayed to Athene. ‘Hear me, Atrytone, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus! If ever resourceful Odysseus burnt the fat thigh joints of ewe or heifer here in his palace for you, remember it now, I beg, and rescue my dear son, and prevent the Suitors in their insolent wickedness from harming him.’

Bk IV:767-794  The Suitors set their trap

She cried it aloud, and the goddess heard her prayer, but the Suitors caused uproar in the shadowy halls, and one of the arrogant youths called out: ‘The much-courted Queen is surely preparing herself for marriage, without knowing the death that awaits her son.’ So he spoke, yet none of them foresaw the outcome. Then Antinous addressed them: ‘What possesses you? Avoid these boastful words, lest your speech is reported elsewhere in the palace. Rise silently, and execute the plan we all agreed on.’
He chose the twenty best men and they went down to the shore and a swift vessel. They drew it out into deep water, set up the mast and sails in that black ship, fixed the oars in their leather straps, in their rows, and raised the white sail. Noble squires brought them their weapons. Then they moored the vessel well out in the channel, and returned on shore. There they ate supper and waited for evening.

But wise Penelope lay in her high chamber, without touching food, tasting neither meat nor drink, wondering whether her faultless son would escape death, or be killed by the insolent Suitors. Like a lioness, seized by fear, troubled by the tightening ring of cunning men around her, so she was troubled till sweet slumber captured her. She sank back, as all her limbs relaxed, and fell asleep.

Bk IV:795-847  Athene sends a phantom to Penelope
Then the goddess, bright-eyed \textit{Athene}, had an idea. She created a phantom, in the likeness of \textit{Penelope}’s sister, \textit{Iphthime}, that other daughter of great-hearted \textit{Icarius}. \textit{Eumelus} had married her, and she was living at \textit{Pherae}. Athene sent the phantom to noble \textit{Odysseus}’ palace, to the weeping, grieving Penelope, to tell her to stop her crying, her tear-filled lament. It entered her room past the strap of the bolt, stood by her head, and spoke to her: ‘Anxious Penelope, are you asleep? The gods, themselves untroubled, do not wish you to weep with distress, since your son will return: in their eyes he has done no wrong.’

Wise Penelope answered her from her sweet sleep at the Gate of Dreams: ‘Sister, why are you here? You are not used to visiting us, living so far away. Do you tell me to dry my tears, and forget the pain in my mind and heart? Long ago I lost my great and glorious, lion-hearted husband, first among the \textit{Danaans} in every virtue, whose fame resounds through \textit{Hellas} to the heart of \textit{Argos}. Now my beloved
son, a mere child, untried in action and debate, has left in a hollow ship. I grieve for him more than the other, and tremble with fear lest anything harms him in the land he travels to or at sea. So many enemies plot against him, eager to kill him as he returns to his native isle.’

The shadowy phantom replied: ‘Be brave and do not fear overmuch, since he is guided by one whose power men pray to have at their side: it is Pallas Athene herself, who pities you in your grief, and has sent me with this message.’

Then wise Penelope answered once more: ‘If you are truly divine, and have heard her divine voice, tell me also whether his father, that man of sorrows, is still alive and sees the sun, or is dead in the House of Hades.’

But the shadowy phantom said to her: ‘No, I will speak no word of him, alive or dead: it is wrong to utter words idle as the wind.’ With this, it slipped away past the bolt, into the breeze. And Icarius’ daughter woke from sleep
with a start, her heart comforted by the bright vision that had come to her in the dark of night.

The Suitors though had embarked, and were sailing the paths of the sea, intending secretly to murder Telemachus. In the open sea, midway between Ithaca and rugged Samos, there is a rocky islet, Asteris, where, despite its size, lies a good harbour with twin entrances. And there the Achaeans waited in ambush for Telemachus.

Bk V:1-42 Zeus sends Hermes to Calypso

Now Dawn rose from her bed beside renowned Tithonus, bringing light to the deathless ones and to mortal men. The gods were seated in council, Zeus the Thunderer, greatest of all, among them. Athene was speaking of Odysseus’ many sufferings, recalling them to their minds, unhappy that he was still a prisoner in Calypso’s isle:

‘Father Zeus, and all you blessed ever-living gods, may sceptered kings never be kind
or gentle, or think of justice, from this time on: let them be arbitrary and cruel, since not one of the race that divine Odysseus ruled remembers him, though he was tender as a father. He suffers misery in the island home of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him captive there. He cannot head for home without oared ship or crew to carry him over the sea’s wide back: and men plot to murder his beloved son who is journeying home from sacred Pylos and noble Sparta, where he went seeking news of his father.’

Cloud-Gathering Zeus replied: ‘My child, what words escape your lips? Was this not of your own devising, that Odysseus might return and take vengeance on them all? As for Telemachus, direct him wisely, since you have the power, so that he may reach home safely, while the Suitors return, their purpose thwarted.’

Then he instructed Hermes, his faithful son: ‘Since you are ever our messenger, Hermes, tell the nymph of the lovely tresses of our resolve,
that enduring Odysseus shall return without help of gods or mortal men, but with great suffering he shall come, on a close-knit raft, on the twentieth day, to Scheria’s rich soil, the land of the Phaeacians, kin to the gods. They will honour him from the heart, as if he were divine, and send him on board ship to his native land, gifting him piles of gold, and bronze and garments, more than he could ever have won from Troy if he had reached home safely with his fair share of the spoils. This is the way he is fated to see his people again, his vaulted palace, and native isle.’

Bk V:43-91 Hermes visits Calypso

He spoke, and the messenger god, the slayer of Argus, promptly obeyed. He quickly fastened to his feet the lovely imperishable golden sandals that carry him swift as the flowing wind over the ocean waves and the boundless earth. He took up the wand as well, with which he lulls men to sleep, or wakes them from slumber, and
the mighty slayer of Argus flew off with it in his hand. He stepped out of the ether onto the *Pierian* coast then swooped over the sea, skimming the waves like a cormorant that drenches its dense plumage with brine, as it searches for fish in the fearsome gulfs of the restless ocean. So Hermes travelled over the endless breakers, until he reached the distant isle, then leaving the violet sea he crossed the land, and came to the vast cave where the nymph of the lovely tresses lived, and found her at home.

A great fire blazed on the hearth, and the scent of burning cedar logs and juniper spread far across the isle. Sweet-voiced *Calypso* was singing within, moving to and fro at her loom, weaving with a golden shuttle. Around the cave grew a thick copse of alder, poplar and fragrant cypress, where large birds nested, owls, and falcons, and long-necked cormorants whose business is with the sea. And heavy with clustered grapes a mature cultivated vine went trailing across the hollow entrance. And four
neighbouring springs, channelled this way and that, flowed with crystal water, and all around in soft meadows iris and wild celery flourished. Even an immortal passing by might pause and marvel, delighted in spirit, and the messenger-god, the slayer of Argus, stood there and wondered. But when he had marvelled at all he saw, he quickly entered the wide-cave-mouth, and Calypso, the lovely goddess knew him when she saw his face, since the deathless gods are not unknown to each other, however far apart they live. Of Odysseus there was no sign, since he sat wretched as ever on the shore, troubling his heart with tears and sighs and grief. There he could gaze out over the rolling waves, with streaming eyes.

When the lovely goddess, Calypso, had seated Hermes on a bright gleaming chair, she questioned him: ‘Why are you here, Hermes of the golden wand, an honoured and welcome guest? You rarely visit me. Speak whatever is in your mind: my heart says do it, if do it I can,
and if it can be done. But follow me now, so I can offer you refreshment.’

Bk V:92-147 Hermes explains his mission

With this the goddess set ambrosia on a table in front of him, and mixed a bowl of red nectar. So the messenger-god, the slayer of Argus, ate and drank, and when he had dined to his heart’s content, he replied to her question: ‘Goddess to god, you ask why I am here, and since you ask I will tell you clearly. Zeus it was who sent me, unwillingly. Who would choose to fly over the vast space of the briny sea, unspeakably vast? And no cities about: no mortals to sacrifice to the gods, and make choice offerings. But no god can escape or deny the will of Zeus, the aegis bearer. He says that you have here a man, the most unfortunate of all those warriors who fought nine years round Priam’s city, and sacked it in the tenth, then left for home. Setting out, having offended Athene, she raised a violent storm and towering seas.
All the rest of his noble friends were drowned, but the wind and the waves that carried him brought him here. Zeus commands you to send him swiftly on his way: it is not his fate to die here far from his friends: he is destined to see those friends again, and reach his vaulted house and his native isle.’

At this, the lovely goddess, Calypso, shuddered, and spoke to him winged words: ‘You are cruel, you gods, and quickest to envy, since you are jealous if any goddess openly mates with a man, taking a mortal to her bed. Jealous, you gods, who live untroubled, of rosy-fingered Dawn and her Orion, till virgin Artemis, of the golden throne, attacked him with painless arrows in Ortygia, and slew him. Jealous, when Demeter of the lovely tresses, gave way to passion and lay with Iasion in the thrice-ploughed field. Zeus soon heard of it, and struck him dead with his bright bolt of lightning. And jealous now of me, you gods, because I befriend a man, one I saved as he straddled the keel alone, when Zeus had blasted
and shattered his swift ship with a bright lightning bolt, out on the wine-dark sea. There all his noble friends were lost, but the wind and waves carried him here. I welcomed him generously and fed him, and promised to make him immortal and un-aging. But since no god can escape or deny the will of Zeus the aegis bearer, let him go, if Zeus so orders and commands it, let him sail the restless sea. But I will not convey him, having no oared ship, and no crew, to send him off over the wide sea’s back. Yet I’ll cheerfully advise him, and openly, so he may get back safe to his native land.’

‘Then send him off now, as you suggest’, said the messenger god, the slayer of Argus, ‘and be wary of Zeus’ anger, lest he is provoked and visits that anger on you some day.’

Bk V:148-191 Calypso promises to free Odysseus
With this the mighty slayer of Argus departed, and the lovely Nymph, mindful of Zeus’ command, looked for valiant Odysseus. She found him sitting on the shore, his eyes as ever wet with tears, life’s sweetness ebbing from him in longing for his home, since the Nymph no longer pleased him. He was forced to sleep with her in the hollow cave at night, as she wished though he did not, but by day he sat among rocks or sand, tormenting himself with tears, groans and anguish, gazing with wet eyes at the restless sea.

The lovely goddess spoke as she approached him: ‘Be sad no longer, unhappy man, don’t waste your life in pining: I am ready and willing to send you on your way. Fell tall trees with the axe, make a substantial raft, and fasten planks across for decking, so it can carry you over the misty sea. And I will stock it with bread and water, and red wine to your heart’s content, to stave off hunger and thirst, and I’ll give you clothing too. And I’ll raise a following wind, so you reach home safely, if that is the
will of the gods who rule the wide heavens, since they have more power than I to fulfil their purpose.’

At this noble enduring Odysseus shuddered, and he spoke to her winged words: ‘Goddess, you must mean something other, suggesting I cross the dangerous, daunting sea’s vast gulf on a raft, where not even the fine swift sailing ships go, enjoying the winds of Zeus. I will not trust myself to a raft when you do not wish it, unless you, goddess, give me your solemn word that you are not planning something new to harm me.’

Calypso, the lovely goddess, smiled at his words and, stroking his arm, replied: ‘What a rascal you are, with a devious mind, to think of speaking so to me? So let Earth be my witness now, and the underground waters of Styx, this the blessed gods’ greatest most dreadful oath, that I will not plan anything new to harm you. Rather my thoughts and advice are like those I would have for myself if I needed them. My
intentions are honest ones, and my heart is not made of iron. It too can feel pity.’

Bk V:192-261 Odysseus builds his raft

With this, the lovely goddess swiftly walked away, and he followed in her footsteps. Man and goddess reached the hollow cave, and he sat down on the chair that Hermes had used. Then the Nymph set all kinds of food and drink before him, those that mortals consume. But before her the maids set ambrosia and nectar, as she sat facing divine Odysseus. So they reached for the good things prepared for them. And when they had finished eating and drinking, Calypso, that lovely goddess, spoke first: ‘Son of Laertes, scion of Zeus, Odysseus of many resources, must you leave, like this, so soon? Still, let fortune go with you. Though if your heart knew the depths of anguish you are fated to suffer before you reach home, you would stay and make your home with me, and be immortal, no matter how much you long to see
that wife you yearn for day after day. I am surely no less than her, I contend, in height or form, since no woman can reasonably compete with the gods in form or face.’

Then resourceful Odysseus replied to her: ‘Great goddess, do not be angry at what I say. I know myself that wise Penelope is less than you, it’s true, in looks and stature, being a mortal, while you are immortal and ever young. Even so I yearn day after day, longing to reach home, and see the hour of my return. And if some god should strike me, out on the wine-dark sea, I will endure it, owning a heart within inured to suffering. For I have suffered much, and laboured much, in war and on the seas: add this then to the sum.’

As he spoke the sun dipped, and darkness fell. And the two of them found the deepest recess of the hollow cave, and delighted together in their lovemaking.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Odysseus dressed in tunic and cloak, and the Nymph clothed herself in a long white robe,
lovely and closely woven, and fastened a fine gold belt around her waist, and covered her head with a veil. Then she began to prepare valiant Odysseus’ departure. She gave him a bronze double axe that fitted his hands well, one with its blades both sharpened, its fine olivewood handle firmly fixed, and a polished adze as well. She led the way to the fringes of the island where stands of alder, poplar, and fir rose to the sky: dry, well-seasoned timber that would ride high in the water. When she had shown him where the tall trees stood, Calypso, the lovely goddess, turned for home, while he began felling timber, making rapid progress. He cut down twenty trees in total, trimming them with the axe: then he smoothed them dextrously, and made their edges true. Meanwhile Calypso, the lovely goddess, brought him drills, and he bored through the timbers then joined them, hammering the mortice and tenon joints together. Odysseus made his raft as wide as a skilled shipwright makes the hull of a broad-beamed trading
vessel. And he placed the decking, bolting the planks to the close-set timbers as he worked, completing the raft with long gunwales. He fixed up a mast and yardarm, and a steering oar for a rudder. Then he lined its sides from stem to stern with intertwined willows, as a defence against the sea, and covered the deck with brushwood. Meanwhile Calypso, the lovely goddess, had brought him the cloth for a sail, and he skilfully fashioned that too. Then he lashed the braces, halyards and sheets in place, and levered it down to the shining sea.

Bk V:262-312 Poseidon raises a storm

By the fourth day all his work was done, and on the fifth lovely Calypso bathed him and dressed him in scented clothes, and watched him set out. The goddess had placed a skin filled with dark wine on board, and a larger one of water, and a bag of provisions, full of many good things to content his heart, and she sent a fine breeze, warm and gentle. Odysseus spread his
sail to the wind with joy, and steered the raft cleverly with the oar as he sat there. At night he never closed his eyes in sleep, but watched the Pleiades, late-setting Bootes, and the Great Bear that men call the Wain, that circles in place opposite Orion, and never bathes in the sea. Calypso, the lovely goddess had told him to keep that constellation to larboard as he crossed the waters. Seventeen days he sailed the seas, and on the eighteenth the shadowy peaks of the Phaeacian country loomed up ahead, like a shield on the misty sea.

But now Lord Poseidon, the Earth-Shaker, returning from visiting Ethiopia, saw him far off from the Solymi range, as he came in sight over the water: and the god, angered in spirit, shook his head, and said to himself: ‘Well now, while I was among the Ethiopians, the gods have certainly changed their minds about Odysseus! Here he is, close to Phaeacian country, where he’s fated to escape his trials and tribulations. But I’ll give him his fill of trouble yet.’
With that, he gathered the cloud, and seizing his trident in his hands, stirred up the sea, and roused the tempest blast of every wind, and hid the land and sea with vapour: and darkness swooped from the sky. The East Wind and South Wind clashed together, and the stormy West Wind, and the heaven-born North Wind, driving a vast wave before him. Then Odysseus’ knee-joints slackened and his heart melted, and deeply shaken he communed with his own valiant spirit: ‘Oh, wretch that I am, what will become of me? I fear the goddess spoke true when she said I would know full measure of suffering at sea before I reached my own country: now all is coming to pass. Zeus has covered the wide heavens with cloud, and troubled the sea, and the tempest blast of every wind sweeps over me: now I am doomed for sure. Thrice blessed, four times blessed those Danaans who died long ago on Troy’s wide plain working the will of the sons of Atreus. I wish I had met my fate like them, and died on that day when the Trojan host hurled their
bronze-tipped spears at me while we fought for the corpse of Achilles, son of Peleus. Then I would have had proper burial, and the Achaeans would have trumpeted my fame, but now I am destined to die a miserable death.’

Bk V:313-387 Leucothea lends Odysseus her veil

Even as he thought this, a great wave, sweeping down with terrible power, crashed over him, and whirled his raft around. Loosing the steering oar, he was thrown far from the raft, while a savage blast of tempestuous wind snapped the mast in two, and yardarm and sail fell far off in the sea. Long the wave held him under, for the clothes Calypso gave him weighed him down, and he could not surface from under the great wave’s flow. At last he rose, and spat out bitter brine that ran too in streams from his hair. Labouring as he was, he still remembered the raft, lunged after it through the breakers, holding tight clambered to
its centre, and sat there, trying to escape a
deadly fate: and the heavy seas carried the raft
to and fro in their path. Just as in autumn the
North Wind blows a ball of thistle tufts,
clinging together, over the fields, so the winds
drove the raft to and fro over the sea. Now the
South Wind flung it to the North Wind to be
played with, then the East Wind gave it to the
West Wind in play.

But Leucothea, the White Goddess, saw
him, she who once had mortal speech as Ino
of the slender ankles, Cadmus’ daughter, but now
in the deep is honoured by the gods. She pitied
Odysseus, driven on, surrounded by dangers,
and she rose from the waves like a sea mew on
the wing, settled on the close-knit raft, and
spoke to him:

‘Poor wretch, why has Poseidon, the Earth-
Shaker, dealt you such fierce suffering, sowing
the seed of endless misery for you? Yet for all
his anger he shall not destroy you quite. You
seem a man of sense, so do as I tell you. Strip
off these clothes, and let the wind take your
raft, while you swim hard towards the Phaeacian coast, where you are destined to escape the waves. And take this veil, and wind it round your waist. It has divine power, and you need not fear injury or death. But when you clasp the land, unwind it once more, and cast it far out onto the wine-dark sea, and turn your eyes away.’

With this, the goddess gave him the veil, and like a sea mew dived at the stormy sea, and the dark wave covered her. Then long-suffering noble Odysseus thought long and hard, and, deeply shaken, communed with his valiant spirit: ‘Oh, let this not be one of the deathless ones, weaving a net for me, telling me to abandon the raft. I will not obey her yet, since the land, she said I would escape to, was far away when I saw it. This I shall do, and this seems best, to wait here as long as the timbers hold, and endure in misery, then if the seas beat the raft to pieces, swim, for want of a better plan.’
While he reflected in mind and heart, Poseidon, Earth-Shaker, raised another fearsome, threatening wave, arched above Odysseus, then hurled it down on him. Like a strong wind catching a pile of dry straw, scattering the stalks here and there, so the breaker scattered the raft’s timbers. But Odysseus straddled a plank, like a horseman, and stripped off the clothes lovely Calypso had given him. Then he wound the veil round his waist, and arms outstretched plunged into the sea, prepared to swim. Lord Poseidon saw him, and shook his head, saying to himself: ‘Well then, after all that, you can drift through the sea till you come to men favoured by Zeus. Still I don’t think you’ll find it easy.’ And with that he lashed his horses, with beautiful manes, and headed for his glorious palace at Aegae.

But Athene, daughter of Zeus, had an idea. She checked the winds in their course, and ordered them all to stop, and sink to rest, except for the swift North Wind, and him she commanded to smooth the waves ahead of the
swimmer, so that Odysseus, scion of Zeus, might escape from fate and death, and reach the Phaeacians, who love the oar.

Bk V:388-450 Odysseus tries to land

Two nights and days he was tossed about on the swollen sea, and many a time he thought himself doomed. But when Dawn of the lovely tresses gave birth to the third day, the wind dropped, and there was breathless calm. Glancing ahead as a long breaker suddenly lifted him, he glimpsed the shore nearby. Just as a father’s recovery is welcome to his children when, to their joy, the gods free him from sickness, from the grip of some evil force that caused great pain, and long wasted him, so the wooded shore was welcome to Odysseus. He swam on, eager to reach solid ground. But, within shouting distance of the land, he heard the thunder of surf on rock, as powerful waves battered the coast, veiling the sea with spray. There was no safe harbour, no roadstead for
ships to ride in, only jutting reefs and rocky cliffs and headlands. Then Odysseus’ knee-joints slackened and his heart melted, and deeply shaken he communed with his valiant spirit:

‘Oh, now Zeus has allowed me to reach land, beyond all expectation, and I have managed to carve my way across the deep, there seems no way to escape the grey waters. Offshore are pointed reefs that the waves roar over, foaming: the rock is sheer, and the water deep close in, so a man can’t find his footing and escape from danger. If I try to get ashore a breaker may catch me, and dash me against the jagged rocks, and my labours will be in vain. If I swim on in hope of finding a shelving beach and a natural harbour, I fear a squall may strike again and carry me groaning out to sea, into the teeming deep, or some god may raise a monster from the void, like those herds great Amphitrite breeds. I know the Earth-Shaker means me harm.’
As he considered all this in heart and mind, a large wave drove him towards the splintered shore. There his skin would have been stripped, and his bones shattered, if the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, had not given him an idea. Rushing by he clung to a rock with both hands, and hung there, groaning, till the wave had passed. So he survived, but with its backflow the wave caught him again, and took him, and drove him far out to sea. Just as pebbles stick to an octopus’ suckers when it is dragged from its crevice, so pieces of skin stripped from his sturdy hands stuck to the rock, and the wave swallowed him. Then wretched Odysseus would surely have come to a premature end, if bright-eyed Athene had not sharpened his wits. Freeing himself from the surge breaking on shore, he swam outside it, staring towards the land, hoping to find a shelving beach or a natural harbour. Then, swimming, he came to the mouth of a swift-running river that seemed a good place, free of stones, and sheltered from
the wind. He felt the current flowing, and prayed to the river god:

‘Hear me, Lord, whoever you might be. I come to you, as to one who is greatly longed for, as I try to escape the sea and Poseidon’s menace. Even to the eyes of the deathless gods that man is sacred who comes as a wanderer, as I come to your stream, to your knees, after many trials. Pity me, Lord, I am your suppliant.’

Bk V:451-493 Odysseus reaches shore

As he ended, the god stemmed the current, held back the waves, and smoothed the water ahead, so bringing him safely to the river mouth. His knees gave way, and his arms fell slack, his strength exhausted by the sea. All his flesh was swollen, and streams of brine oozed from his mouth and nostrils. So he lay there, breathless, speechless, with barely energy enough to stir. But as he revived his spirits rose, and he unwound the goddess’s veil and dropped it into
the ocean-bound flow: the current sweeping it downstream, so it was soon in Ino’s hands. Odysseus turned from the river, sank into the reeds and kissed the earth, giver of crops: and deeply shaken he communed with his valiant spirit:

‘Oh, what will become of me? What is my fate? If I lie awake in the riverbed here, through the weary night, I fear the bitter cold and the dewfall may conquer my labouring heart, weak as it is, and river breezes blow chill at dawn. But if I climb the slope to the shadowy wood, and lie down in a dense thicket, hoping to lessen the cold and fatigue, and fall softly asleep, I fear to become the prey of wild beasts.’

Still as he thought about it, the latter seemed best: he headed for the wood, and found a place near the water by a clearing: there he crept under a pair of bushes, a thorn and an olive, growing from the same spot. They grew so closely twined together that the force of the damp breeze, and the bright sunlight, and the
driving rain failed to penetrate. Under these Odysseus crept. He quickly made a wide bed with his hands from the heaps of fallen leaves, enough there to cover two or three men from the bitterest winter weather. Gazing at it, long-suffering Odysseus was relieved, and lay down in the centre, and covered himself with the fallen leaves. As a farmer on a lonely farm buries a glowing log under the blackened embers, to preserve a spark of fire, so that he need not light it again from somewhere else, so Odysseus buried himself in the leaves. And Athene poured sleep into his eyes, so as to close his eyelids, and free him quickly from utter weariness.

Bk VI:1-47 Athene visits Nausicaa

So noble long-suffering Odysseus lay there, conquered by weariness and sleep, while Athene came to the island and city of the Phaeacians. They had once lived in broad Hypereia, neighbours to the Cyclopes, arrogant
men, more powerful than they, who continually attacked them. Godlike Nausithous led the Phaeacians from there to settle in Scheria far from men. He ringed the city with a wall, built houses and temples for the gods, and divided the land into fields, but he had long since died and gone to the House of Hades, and now Alcinous was king, his wisdom inspired by the gods. Bright-eyed Athene came to his house, planning valiant Odysseus’ return. She went to the richly-made room where a girl like an immortal goddess in looks and form, Nausicaa, daughter of noble Alcinous, slept, with her two handmaids by her, blessed with beauty by the Graces, one on each side of the doorway, and the shining doors were closed.

The goddess flew to the girl’s bed like a breath of air, and taking the form of the famed ship owner, Dymas’s daughter, a girl of similar age to Nausicaa, and dear to her heart, she leant over her, and said: ‘Nausicaa, how come your mother bore such a careless daughter? Your lovely clothes are neglected, yet your marriage
will soon be here, when you’ll not only need to be dressed in lovely clothes yourself, but provide for those who accompany you. From such things we gain good reputation among men, and our father and dear mother rejoice. Let’s go and wash the garments at daybreak: I will go with you to help, so you can have it done without delay, for you won’t be long unwed. Even now you have suitors, the noblest of Phaeacians, men of your own lineage. Come, early in the morning: ask your noble father to order a mule team and wagon for you, to carry the robes and sashes and bright coverlets. And you yourself should ride rather than travelling on foot, since the washing-pools are far from the city.’

With this, the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, left for Olympus, where they say the gods have their everlasting home. No winds blow there, no rain wets it, no snow falls, but the wide air is clear and cloudless, and over it shines a radiant brightness: there the blessed gods are always
happy. There the bright-eyed goddess went, after speaking to the girl.

Bk VI:48-109 Nausicaa and her maids wash the clothes

Dawn came, lovely and enthroned, and woke Nausicaa of the beautiful robes who wondering at her dream set off through the palace to tell her dear father and mother. She found them both there, her mother sitting with her handmaids by the hearth, spinning purple-dyed yarn, while Nausicaa met her father about to go and join the noble princes in the council place, called there by the Phaeacian lords. She approached him and said: ‘Dear Father, would you please order them to fetch me a high-sided, strong-wheeled wagon, so I can take my soiled finery lying here to the river for washing? You yourself too really need clean clothes for your councils with the princes, and you have five sons in the palace, two married while three are free and unwed, who always want fresh clothes
to wear for the dancing. I have to think of all this.’

She said this, being too shy to speak to her father about the possibility of marriage, but he understood it all and answered: ‘My child I don’t grudge you mules or anything else. Go, and the servants will ready a high-sided strong-wheeled wagon with a hood above.’ So saying he called to the servants, and they obeyed. They readied the smooth-running mule cart outside the palace, led up the mules and harnessed them, and the girl brought the bright clothes from her room, and packed them into the gleaming wagon, while her mother put up a box of food, with everything to content the heart. There she packed delicacies, with wine in a goatskin bag: the girl climbed up, and her mother handed her a gold flask of olive oil, so that she and her maids could use it after bathing. Then Nausicaa took up the whip, and the smooth reins, and flicked the mules to start them. With a clatter of hooves they moved off
smartly, carrying the girl and the clothing, and
the maids too, to keep her company.

When they came to the river, lovely with
streams, and never-failing pools, with enough
clear water bubbling up and brimming over to
wash the dirtiest clothes, they un-harnessed the
mules and drove them along the bank of the
swirling river to graze on the honey-sweet grass
of the water meadows. They lifted armfuls of
clothes from the wagon, carried them down to
the clear black water, and trod them thoroughly
in the pools, vying with one another. When they
had washed the load and rinsed away the dirt,
they spread the garments in lines on the beach,
where the breaking waves wash the shingle
cleanest. After bathing and rubbing themselves
with oil, they ate their meal on the riverbank,
and waited for the clothes to dry in the sun.

When they had enjoyed the food, Nausicaa
and her maids threw off their headgear and
played with a ball, white-armed Nausicaa
leading the accompanying song. As Artemis
with her bow wanders the high mountain ridges
of **Taygetus** and **Erymanthus**, delighting to chase wild boar and the swift deer, while the **Nymphs**, daughters of aegis-bearing **Zeus**, join in the sport, and **Leto** her mother is glad because Artemis is a head taller than they are, and easily known, though all are lovely, so this unwed girl shone out among the maids.

**Bk VI:110-148 Odysseus emerges from hiding**

Now when she was about to yoke the mules, and fold the fine clothes, and start for home, the goddess, bright-eyed **Athene**, had a different idea, that **Odysseus** should wake, and see the lovely girl, who would lead him to the **Phaeacian** city. When the **princess** threw the ball to one of her maids, she missed the maid, and it landed in deep water. At their cry, noble Odysseus woke, sat up, and thought: ‘Oh, what mortal place have I reached this time? Are they cruel and merciless savages, or god-fearing people, generous to strangers? The noise in my ears sounded like girls shouting, nymphs who
haunt the high mountain passes, tributary streams, and grassy meadows. Am I near creatures with human speech? Let me look, and see.’

With this noble Odysseus emerged from the bushes, breaking a leafy branch from the thicket with his strong right hand, with which to hide his manhood. He advanced like a mountain lion, sure of its strength, that defies the wind and rain with blazing eyes, leaping among the sheep and cattle, or following the wild deer’s trail, or even, driven by hunger, attacking the flocks in the strongly-built fold. So Odysseus, in his need, would have faced the crowd of girls with flowing hair, naked as he was. But, streaked with brine, he terrified them so, that they fled in fear, at random, over the sand spits.

Only Alcinous’ daughter stood her ground, since Athene inspired her, and drove the fear from her body. She stood and faced Odysseus, and he debated whether to clasp the knees of this lovely girl, as a suppliant, or whether to keep his distance and try her with courteous
words, in hopes she might give him some clothes, and show him the road to the city. As he debated, he thought it better to hold off, and try her with courteous words, in case she should take offence if he clasped her knees: so he spoke to her promptly, with charm and subtlety’

Bk VI:149-197 Odysseus and Nausicaa speak

‘Princess, see me at your feet. Are you mortal, or a goddess? If a goddess, one of those who keep the wide heavens, you seem to me most like Artemis, great Zeus’ daughter, in beauty, stature and form. But if you are an earthbound mortal, three times blessed is your dear father and mother, and three times blessed are your brothers. How their hearts must glow with pleasure when they watch so sweet a flower join the dancers. But the man most blessed is he who shall woo and conquer you with his gifts, and lead you homewards. For my eyes have never looked on such a mortal woman or man as you. Only in Delos once I saw the like, a
tender palm shoot springing up by Apollo’s altar, for I have been there as well, and an army with me, on that voyage where evil sorrows were my share. Just so I marvelled when I saw it, for never did such a tree grow on earth. And now I marvel at you, lady, in wonder, and am afraid to clasp your knees, though my troubles are harsh enough. Yesterday, the twentieth day, I escaped the wine-dark sea: and all that time the turbulent wind and waves carried me here from Ogygia’s isle. Now fate drives me on shore, so that I may suffer harm here too, no doubt. I don’t expect my sufferings to end yet: the gods will inflict many more before that moment comes. But, Princess, pity me: since I come to you first of all, after my heavy labours, and I know none of the people of this land or its city. Show me the way to town, and give me some rags to throw over me, perhaps whatever wrapped the clothes you brought. And may the gods grant you all your heart’s desire, a husband and a home, and mutual harmony, in all its beauty. Since nothing is finer or better
than when a man and a woman of one heart and mind stay together, a joy to their friends, a sorrow to their enemies: their own reputation of the very highest.’

Then Nausicaa of the white arms answered: ‘Stranger, you seem neither unknowing nor ill intentioned: it is Olympian Zeus himself who brings men good fortune, to the virtuous or not as he wills, and since he has brought you this, whatever it may be you must endure it. But, now you are come to our land and city, you shall not go short of clothes or anything else a hard-pressed suppliant deserves from those he meets. I will show you the way to town, and tell you whom we are. This is the Phaeacians’ country and city, and I am the daughter of valiant Alcinous, in whom the Phaeacians vest their majesty and power.’

Bk VI:198-250 Nausicaa’s hospitality

With this she called to her lovely maids: ‘Stop, girls, why do you shun the sight of a man?
Surely you don’t imagine he’s unfriendly? There will never be mortal man so contrary as to set hostile feet on Phaeacian land, for we are dear to the gods. We live far-off, over the turbulent sea, the remotest of races, and deal with no other peoples. This man must instead be some luckless wanderer, landed here. We must care for him, since all strangers and beggars come from Zeus, and even a little gift is welcome. So bring him food and drink, girls, and bathe him in the river wherever there’s shelter from the wind.’

They halted, then, and called out to each other. As Nausicaa, daughter of valiant Alcinous, commanded, they found Odysseus a sheltered spot. They set out a tunic and cloak for him to wear, and smooth olive oil in a golden flask, and invited him to bathe in the running stream. But noble Odysseus spoke to them, saying: ‘Ladies, stand over there, since I need to wash the salt from my shoulders, and rub myself with oil, since it’s long since oil came near me, but I will not bathe with you
here, and I am ashamed to stand naked among lovely women.’

At this they went off to inform the princess, while noble Odysseus with fresh water washed the brine that coated his broad shoulders and back from his skin, and scrubbed his head free of scurf from the barren sea. And when he had washed all over, and rubbed himself with oil, and put on the clothes the virgin girl had given him, Athene, daughter of Zeus, made him seem taller and stronger, and made the locks of his hair spring up thickly like hyacinth petals. As a clever craftsman, taught his art by Hephaestus and Pallas Athene, overlays silver with gold to produce a graceful finish, so the goddess graced his head and shoulders. Then he went some way off and sat on the shore, alight with that grace and beauty: and the girl gazed at him admiringly, and said to her lovely maids:

‘Listen to what I say, my white-armed girls. This man does not come to the godlike Phaeacians without the gods willing it. He seemed rough to me before, but now seems like
one of the gods who rule the wide heavens. I wish such a man might be my husband here, if he remains. But come, girls, give the stranger food and drink.’

They listened to her, and readily did as she asked, placing food and drink before Odysseus. Then noble and long-suffering Odysseus ate and drank eagerly, for it was a long time since he’d tasted any food.

Bk VI:251-315 Nausicaa gives Odysseus direction

Now Nausicaa of the white arms had another idea. She folded the clothes, and loaded her fine wagon with them, harnessed the strong-hooved mules, and climbed up, herself. Then she called to Odysseus and spoke to him: ‘Stranger, prepare to leave for town, and I will direct you to my wise father’s house, where you will meet the noblest Phaeacians I can assure you. But be sure to do as I say, as you seem an intelligent man: while we are in the country and among
ploughed fields, walk quickly behind the mules and wagon with my maids. I will lead the way. But on the approach to the city, which is ringed by a high wall, there’s a fine harbour on both sides, and the causeway between is narrow, and the curved ships are drawn up to the road, each man having his own mooring. There’s a meeting place, as well, next to Poseidon’s fine temple, paved with huge stones bedded deep in the earth. Here the crews are busy with the black ships’ tackle, with cables and sails, and here they carve the their thin oar blades. For Phaeacians are indifferent to bows and quivers, caring only for the graceful ships they delight to sail over the grey sea.

I wish to avoid evil gossip, or anyone’s taunts later, since there are insolent men in the crowd, and one of the cruder sort might say if he saw us: ‘Who is that tall and handsome stranger who trails after Nausicaa? Where did she find him? It’s her future husband no doubt! She must have found some shipwrecked traveller, a foreigner from far off, since we have
no neighbours. Or maybe a god has come down from the sky to answer her endless prayers, to make her his forever! Better that she has gone and found a husband from abroad, since she despises the Phaeacians here, that’s clear, and all her noble suitors!’ So they will chatter, and blacken my name. I would blame any other girl, too, who did the same, who with her mother and father still alive, kept a man’s company before the wedding ceremony. So listen, now, to my words, stranger, so you can win my father’s help to return to your land.

You will find a fine grove, near the road, sacred to Athene, a cluster of poplar trees. A spring wells up in the centre, and there’s a meadow round about. My father has his estate there, his fertile vineyards, within shouting distance of the city. Sit there, and wait till we have reached the city and my father’s palace. When you think we are there, enter the Phaeacian city, and ask for my valiant father Alcinous’ palace. It’s easy to recognise, a child, a mere infant, could show you, for noble
Acinous’ palace is nothing like the Phaeacians’ houses.

When the courtyard and palace enclose you, go straight through the great hall, till you come to my mother, who sits at the hearth in the firelight, spinning purple yarn marvellous to see, her chair against a pillar, he maids behind here. My father’s throne rests against the very same pillar, where he sits like a god and drinks his wine. Stride by him, and throw your arms around my mother’s knees, if you want see the day of your return come quickly and joyfully, no matter how far away your home may be. If you win her favour, you may hope to see your friends, and reach your fine house in your own country.’

Bk VI:316-331 Odysseus prays to Athene

So saying she gave the mules a flick of her shiny whip, and they soon left the flowing river behind. They trotted briskly, legs flickering away, and she drove carefully so that Odysseus
and the maids could follow on foot. As the sun was setting they reached the famous grove, sacred to **Athene**. There, Odysseus quickly sat down, and prayed to the daughter of mighty **Zeus**: ‘Hear me, **Atrytone**, child of aegis-bearing Zeus, and listen to my prayer, for you failed to listen when the great Earth-Shaker wrecked my raft. Grant I may come before the **Phaeacians** as one to be helped and pitied.’

So he prayed, and **Pallas** Athene heard, but did not show herself, from respect for her uncle, **Poseidon**, who would still rage wildly at godlike Odysseus, till he reached his own land.

**Bk VII:1-77** Athene leads Odysseus to the palace

So noble long-suffering **Odysseus** prayed there, while the pair of sturdy mules drew the girl to the city. When she had reached her father’s great palace, she halted the mules at the gate, and her brothers, godlike men, crowded round her. They unhitched the mules from the cart,
and carried the clothing inside, while she went to her room. There her waiting-woman, **Eurymedusa**, an old **Aperaean** woman, lit a fire. Curved ships had brought her from Aperaea long ago, and she had been chosen from the spoils as a prize for **Alcinous**, king of all the **Phaeacians**, considered a god by the people. She had reared **Nausicaa** of the white arms in the palace, and now she lit the fire, and prepared supper in the room.

It was then Odysseus started for town, and **Athene**, showing her kindness, veiled him in dense mist, so that none of the brave Phaeacians meeting him, would challenge him, or ask who he was. And as he was about to enter the fine city, the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, met him, disguised as a young girl with a pitcher, and stopped in front of him. ‘My child,’ said noble Odysseus, ‘can you guide me to the house of him they call Alcinous, lord of this people? I come as a long-suffering stranger from far off, and I know none of the people of this land or its city.’
The goddess, bright-eyed Athene answered: ‘Sir stranger, I will show you the place you ask for, since Alcinous lives near my good father’s house. Only walk quietly, and I will lead the way: look at nobody and ask no questions, for these people are intolerant of strangers, and do not welcome people from abroad. Trusting to their fast ships, they cross the wide gulfs of sea, and Poseidon allows it: and these ships are as quick as a bird in flight, or a thought.’

With this, Pallas Athene promptly led the way, and he followed in the goddess’ footsteps. The Phaeacians, so proud of their ships, failed to see him as he crossed the city, since dread Athene prevented it, veiling him in a magic mist, because of her concern for him. And Odysseus marvelled at the harbour and the fine vessels, at the meeting place where the nobles gathered, and the long high walls topped with palisades, wonderful to see. When they reached the king’s fine palace, the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, said: ‘Here, sir stranger, is the house you asked me to show you. You will find the
princes, favoured by Zeus, feasting there, but go in and have no fear. For a man is best to be bold, even a stranger from a foreign land. The first person you will approach in the palace hall is the queen: Arete is her name, of the same lineage as the king, Alcinous. Nausithous was founder, born of Earth-Shaker Poseidon and Periboea, loveliest of women, youngest daughter of valiant Eurymedon once king of the insolent Giants. He brought destruction on his reckless race, and was destroyed. But Poseidon lay with Periboea, and bore a son, valiant Nausithous, who ruled the Phaeacians, and Nausithous had two sons, Rhexenor and Alcinous. Rhexenor, who was married without a son, Apollo of the silver bow struck down in his hall, leaving a daughter, Arete. Alcinous married her, and honours her above all those women on earth who keep house at their husband’s command. Such is the heartfelt honour she ever enjoys from her children, and Alcinous, and the people, who think of her as a goddess, greeting her as she walks through the
city. For she is no less wise, and settles the disputes of those she favours, men or women. If she looks kindly on you, there is hope you may see your friends again, and return to your vaulted hall in your own land.’

Bk VII:78-132 The Palace of Alcinous

With this, bright-eyed Athene left lovely Scherie, and vanished over the barren sea. She reached Marathon, and the wide streets of Athens, and entered Erectheus’ palace, while Odysseus approached Alcinous’ glorious halls. He stood there reflecting, before crossing the bronze threshold, since the radiance of sun or moon shone over the vaulted halls of valiant Alcinous. The walls that ran from the entrance to the innermost room were topped with a frieze of blue enamelling. Gold doors fronted the well-built house, with silver doorposts set in the bronze sill. The lintel above was silver too, and the door-handle of gold. Gold and silver dogs stood either side, fashioned by Hephaestus with
consummate skill, to guard valiant Alcinous’ palace. They were ageless and immortal. Inside, seats were fixed along the walls from the entrance to the innermost room, covered with cleverly woven fabrics worked by the women. There the Phaeacian princes would sit, eating and drinking, living lavishly. Golden statues of youths on solid pedestals stood there, with flaming torches in their hands, to light the banqueting hall by night.

And Alcinous had fifty housemaids, some of whom ground golden corn on the millstone, others wove fabric, or twisted the yarn, hands flickering like the leaves of a tall poplar, while the smooth bleaching olive oil dripped down. As the Phaeacian men are skilled at handling ships on the sea, so the women are clever workers at the loom, for Athene has given them knowledge of beautiful arts, and great application.

Beyond the courtyard, near to the doors, lies a large four-acre orchard, surrounded by a hedge. Tall, heavily laden trees grow there,
pear, pomegranate and apple, rich in glossy fruit, sweet figs and dense olives. The fruit never rots or fails, winter or summer. It lasts all year, and the West Wind’s breath quickens some to life, and ripens others, pear on pear, apple on apple, cluster on cluster of grapes, and fig on fig. There is Alcinous’ fertile vineyard too, with a warm patch of level ground in one part set aside for drying the grapes, while the labourers gather and tread others, as the foremost rows of unripe grapes shed their blossom, and others become tinged with purple. Beyond the furthest row again are neat beds with every kind of plant, flowering all year round, and there are two springs in the orchard, one flowing through the whole garden, while the other runs the opposite way, under the courtyard sill, near where the people of the city draw their water, towards the great house. Such were the gods’ glorious gifts to Alcinous’ home.
Noble, long-suffering Odysseus stood and gazed around. When he had wondered deeply at it all, he crossed the palace threshold swiftly. There he found the Phaeacian leaders and counsellors pouring libations from their cups to keen-eyed Hermes, the slayer of Argus, to whom they would pour the last of the wine before retiring to rest. But noble long-suffering Odysseus traversed the hall, veiled in the dense mist Athene had shed around him, till he came to Arete and Alcinous the king. Odysseus clasped Arete’s knees, and the magic mist melted away, and all in the room were silenced at the sight of this man, and marvelled as they gazed. Then Odysseus made this prayer:

‘Arete, daughter of godlike Rhexenor, after many labours I come as a suppliant to your knees, at your husband’s feet and your guests’, and may the gods bring them happiness in life, and may each leave the wealth of these halls, and his honours from the people, to his
children. But let me be returned quickly to my own land, for I have long suffered trouble far from my friends.’

With this he sat down in the hearth’s ashes, close to the fire, and all remained silent. At last one of the Phaeacian elders, noble Echeneus, eloquent and wise, spoke to them. Helpfully, he addressed the gathering, saying: ‘Come, Alcinous, it is not right and proper that a stranger should sit there in the ashes of the hearth, while we all hold back awaiting your lead. Raise the stranger to his feet, and seat him on a silver-embossed chair, and let the heralds mix the wine, so that we may pour libations to Zeus as well, who hurls the lightning and follows the footsteps of holy suppliants. And let the housekeeper feed him supper from her store.’

When royal Alcinous had listened, he clasped the wise and clever Odysseus by the hand, raised him from the hearth, and seated him on a shining chair, from which he moved his son, kindly Laodamas, his favourite, who
sat beside him. A maid brought water to wash his hands in a fine gold pitcher, and poured it over a silver basin, and drew up a polished table beside him. And the well-respected housekeeper brought bread and set it before him, with many delicacies, giving freely of her store. So noble long-suffering Odysseus ate and drank. Then royal Alcinous spoke to his squire and said:

‘Pontonous, mix and serve the wine to everyone in the hall, so we can pour libations to Zeus who hurls the lightning, since he follows the footsteps of holy suppliants.’

Bk VII:182-239 Arete questions Odysseus

At this, Pontonous mixed the honeyed wine, and poured the first drops into every cup. When they had poured their libations and drunk what they wished, Alcinous addressed the gathering, saying: ‘Leaders and Counsellors of the Phaeacians, listen while I speak what is in my heart. Now you have dined, go to your homes
and rest, and in the morning we will call a wider assembly of elders, and entertain this stranger, and offer sacrifices to the gods. After that we can think about his quick and happy return, without pain or effort, to his native land, however far he may have come. And he shall not suffer accident or harm till he sets foot in his own country: though afterwards he must fulfil whatever thread of destiny the Dread Fates spun for him at birth. But if he is one of the immortals come down from heaven, then this is some new project of the gods, since they always appeared plainly to us before, after we had offered them rich sacrifice, and they sat and feasted among us. Even if one of us walking the road alone were to meet them, they used no disguise, since we are next of kin to them, like the Cyclopes and the wild tribe of Giants.’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke to him, saying: ‘Do not imagine so, Alcinous, since I have neither the looks nor stature of the immortals who inhabit wide heaven, but those of mortal men. Whoever you know that bear the
heaviest burden of suffering, I might compare myself to them in sorrow. Yes, and the tale of all the troubles that by the gods’ will I have endured, would be longer. But despite my grief, let me eat, since there is nothing more shameful than the wretched stomach that demands a man’s attention however deep his distress, or heavy his heart, and my heart is heavy now, yet my stomach goes on insisting I eat and drink, making me forget what I suffered, demanding its fill. Then at daybreak, indeed, hurry to return me to my native soil, wretched as I am, and after all my troubles. Then, let me die, having seen again my goods, my servants, my vaulted halls.’

He spoke, and they all praised his speech, and proposed to send the stranger on his journey home, since he had spoken well. When they had poured libations, and drunk their fill, each man went home to rest, while noble Odysseus was left behind in the hall, seated beside Arete and godlike Alcinous, as the maids cleared the dishes from the feast. Arete of the
white arms was first to speak, since as soon as she saw his fine clothes she recognised them as ones she and her women had made. She spoke to him with winged words: ‘Stranger, I will be the first to ask who you are and where you are from. Who gave you those clothes? Did you not say you reached here wandering the sea?’

Bk VII:240-297 Odysseus tells of his arrival

Resourceful Odysseus replied, saying: ‘My queen, it would be difficult to recount the story of my sufferings from start to end, since the gods in heaven have inflicted so many on me. But I will say this in answer to your question. There is an isle, Ogygia, far across the sea, where artful Calypso of the lovely tresses, the daughter of Atlas, lives, and neither gods nor mortals approach her, but Fate brought me alone to her in my misfortune, for Zeus had struck my ship with his bright lightning, and wrecked it far out on the wine-dark sea. There my loyal friends were drowned, but I grasped
the keel of my curved ship, and drifted for nine
days, till on the tenth night of darkness the gods
washed me shore on Ogygia, where lives that
dread goddess Calypso of the lovely tresses.
She welcomed me to her home with kindness,
fed me, and promised to make me ageless and
immortal, but she never reached my heart.
Seven whole years I stayed there, soaking the
everlasting garments Calypso gave me with my
tears. But when the eighth year came round, she
urged me to go, because of some message from
Zeus, or because her feelings had changed. She
sent me off on a tight-bound raft, with a wealth
of provisions, bread and glowing wine, and
gave me everlasting garments to wear, and sent
a following wind, warm and gentle.

So I sailed the sea for seventeen days, and
on the eighteenth the shadowy mountains of
your land appeared, and I was joyful, but ill
fated, since I was still to be a friend of great
suffering, that Poseidon Earth-Shaker brought
me. He roused the winds against me, blocked
my path, and raised huge waves, so the sea
refused to leave me alone as I sat there groaning ceaselessly aboard my raft. Instead the storm wrecked it, and I reached here, swimming the great gulf till the wind and waves carried me to your shore. When I tried to gain the land, the breakers dashed me against a dangerous stretch of cliff, but I backed away, and swam till I came to a river mouth, where there was a likely place, free of rocks and sheltered from the wind. I staggered clear, and lay there, gasping for breath, while deathless night fell. Then I climbed from the bed of the heaven-fed river, and, gathering leaves around me, lay down to rest in a thicket. Then a god shed boundless sleep upon me. So I slept all night through, exhausted, among the leaves, through morning and till noon, and the sun began to set before sweet sleep released me. Then I saw your daughter’s maids playing on the sand, and she among them looking like a goddess. I made my prayer to her, and she was full of understanding, in a way you would not expect from one so young, since the young are ever
thoughtless. She gave me plenty of bread and glowing wine, bathed me in the river, and gave me these clothes. This is the truth I tell, regardless of its pain.’

Bk VII:298-347 Odysseus sleeps in the palace

Then **Alcinous** replied: ‘Indeed, Stranger, my daughter was at fault in this, that she failed to lead you to our house with her maids, though it was her to whom you first prayed.’

But shrewd **Odysseus** answered: ‘Lord, do not criticise your daughter, who is flawless, I beg you. She did ask me to follow her and her maids, but I refused out of shame and fear, thinking your mind might cloud with anger when you saw us, since the peoples of earth are quick to anger.’

‘My friend,’ Alcinous replied, ‘my character is not one to take offence without cause. In all things moderation is best. By **Zeus**, the Father, **Athene** and **Apollo**, given the sort of man you are, similar to myself, I wish you
would wed my daughter, be my son, and stay. I would give you a house and wealth if you chose to remain here, but no Phaeacian would detain you against your will, may Father Zeus forbid. So you can be certain of beginning your homeward voyage, I appoint tomorrow as the day. While you sleep they will row you over calm seas, till you come to your own house and country, or wherever else you wish, even if it lies beyond Euboea. Those of our people who took yellow-haired Rhadamanthus to visit Tityus, son of Earth, saw that place and call it the world’s end. They sailed there, without effort, completed their task, and returned home the selfsame day. So you see for yourself that my ships are of the best, and my young men supreme at driving oars through the brine.’

At this, noble long-suffering Odysseus was pleased, and he raised his voice in prayer, saying: ‘Father Zeus, let Alcinous achieve all he has said. Then his fame will be inextinguishable on the fruitful earth, and I will reach my native shore.’
While they spoke, Arete of the white arms told her maids to place a bed in the portico, and cover it with fine purple blankets, with covers on top, and fleecy cloaks for warmth. Torch in hand, the maids went out of the hall. But when they had quickly covered the well-made bed, they came and called Odysseus saying: ‘Stranger, come and rest, your bed is made.’ The thought of sleep was welcome to him. And the noble long-suffering Odysseus lay there on the wooden bed in the echoing portico. But Alcinous himself slept in the innermost room of the tall building, and with him his lady wife for love and comfort.

Bk VIII:1-61 The Phaeacians ready a ship

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, royal Alcinous left his bed, and so did Odysseus, scion of Zeus, sacker of cities. Then royal Alcinous led the way to the Phaeacians’ gathering place, laid out there by the ships. There they sat on the polished seats next to each
other, and Pallas Athene, planning great-hearted Odysseus’ return, traversed the city, disguised as wise Alcinous’ herald. She approached the nobles, and spoke these words: ‘Leaders and Counsellors of the Phaeacians, come with me to the assembly, and hear of the stranger, driven to wander the sea, who has come to wise Alcinous’ palace, a man like the immortals.’

With her words she roused their hearts and minds, and the gathering place was quickly filled with those arriving. Many wondered at the sight of Laertes’ wise son. Athene invested his head and shoulders with grace, and made him taller and stronger, so that the Phaeacians would all welcome him with awe and respect, and he might perform the many tasks with which they might test him. When they were all together in the assembly Alcinous addressed them:

‘Leader and Counsellors of the Phaeacians, listen while I speak as my feelings prompt me. This stranger, whose name I do not know, has come to my house in his travels from east or
west. He asks for his passage home, and seeks our confirmation. Let us further his going, as with others in the past. For no one who comes to my house waits here long, grieving for lack of help. So, let us run a black ship down to the glittering waves for her maiden voyage, and choose fifty-two young men from the town, who have proved themselves before. And when they have duly lashed the oars in place, come ashore quickly to my house and ready a feast: I will provide enough for all. These are my orders for the crew, and you sceptered Princes come on now to the fair palace, and let us entertain the stranger there: let no one refuse. And summon, Demodocus, the divine bard, for a god has given him supreme powers of song, to give delight, in whatever form his spirit prompts him to sing.’

With this he led the way, and the sceptered Princes followed, while a herald went to bring the divine bard. And the chosen fifty-two went, as ordered, to the shore of the barren sea. And when they had reached the ship and the shore,
they drew the black vessel down to the deep water, and set up mast and sail in her, and fitted the rows of oars through their leather straps, and raised the white sail. They moored her well out in the roads, then made their way to shore and the great palace of wise Alcinous. The courts and halls and porticoes were full of the gathering, a crowd of young men and old. Alcinous had twelve sheep slaughtered for them, eight white-tusks boars, and two shambing oxen. They flayed the carcasses, dressed them, and prepared a tempting feast.

Bk VIII:62-103 The bard Demodocus sings of Troy

The herald returned, leading their skilful bard, whom the Muse loved more than other men, though she gave him both good and evil: she robbed him of his sight, but gifted him the power of sweet song. Pontonous, the herald, placed a silver-embossed chair in the midst of them all, with its back against a high pillar, and
hung the ringing lyre on a peg above his head, and showed him how to find it with his hands. And he set a handsome table by his side, with a basket of bread, and a cup of wine to drink if he was so minded. Then they all stretched out their hands to the fine feast spread before them.

When they had satisfied their need for food and drink, the Muse inspired her bard to sing of the heroes’ glorious deeds, part of that tale whose fame had risen to high heaven, the quarrel between Achilles, Peleus’ son, and Odysseus, who argued fiercely at the gods’ rich festival, though Agamemnon, king of men, was secretly pleased to see a dispute between the Achaeans’ finest. For Phoebus Apollo had prophesied, at sacred Pytho, where Agamemnon had crossed the stone threshold to consult the oracle, that after a quarrel sorrow would begin to overtake the Trojans, though by Zeus’ will it was the beginning of sorrow for the Greeks as well. This was the bard’s song, and Odysseus clutched at his long purple cloak with his great hands, and dragged it over his
head to hide his handsome face, ashamed lest the Phaeacians see the tears pouring from his eyes. Whenever the divine bard stopped singing, Odysseus wiped the tears away, drew the cloak from his head, and reaching for his two-handled cup made libations to the gods. But when the bard began again, prompted by the Phaeacian lords who enjoyed his song, Odysseus covered his head once more and groaned.

He hid the falling tears from all except Alcinous, who, aware because he sat by him, noticed all, and heard him sighing deeply. And he spoke, quickly, to the sea-faring Phaeacians: ‘Leaders and Counsellors of the Phaeacians, hear me. We have enjoyed sharing our rich feast and the music of the lyre, its companion. Now let us go outside and try our skill in various sports, so this stranger when he is home can tell his friends how much better we are than other men in boxing, wrestling, running, and leaping.’
With this he led the way and all followed. The herald hung the ringing lyre on the peg, and led Demodocus by the hand from the hall along the same path the Phaeacian nobles had taken to see the games. They headed for the gathering place, and a countless throng went with them. Many fine young men rose to compete: Acroneos and Ocyalus, Elatreus, Nauteus, Prymneus, Anchialus and Eretmeus, Ponteus and Proreus, Thoon, Anabesineos, and Amphialus, son of Polyneus, Tecton’s son. Euryalus too, the equal of Ares, destroyer of men, and son of Naubolus who in looks and form was the finest of all the Phaeacians after peerless Laodamas. And flawless Alcinous’ three sons as well, Laodamas, Halius and godlike Clytoneus.

The first trial was a foot race: they all sped from the mark along the course set out, raising the dust from the ground. Faultless Clytoneus was quickest, and taking the lead he reached the
crowd, leaving the rest behind by as much as a furrow’s length in mule-ploughed land. Then they tested each other in painful bouts of wrestling, where Euryalus beat the best. Amphialus then leapt furthest, while Elatreus conquered with the discus, and Laodamas, Alcinous’ fine son, won in the boxing. When they were all satisfied with the contest, Laodamas, said: ‘Friends, let’s ask the stranger whether he’s practised in any familiar sport. He’s a fine build in thighs and calves, with two strong arms, a stout neck, plenty of strength. Nor has he lost the power of youth, he is only wearied with suffering. There’s nothing like the sea to sap a man’s strength, however tough he might be.’

Euryalus replied: ‘Laodamas, what you say is right. Go and challenge him yourself, and make the challenge a public one.’

At this Alcinous’ fine son came to the centre, and spoke to Odysseus: ‘Sir stranger, come, enter the contest too, if you have any skill as seems likely, since there is no greater
glory for a living man than that which he wins with his own hands and feet. Come, prove yourself, and throw off your cares. Your journey will soon start. The ship is launched now and the crew are ready.’

Bk VIII:152-198 Odysseus enters the Games

‘Laodamas’ replied resourceful Odysseus, ‘why provoke me with a challenge? My mind is on trouble not on play, since I have toiled and suffered greatly in the past, and now I long only to return home, and so I sit in your gathering and plead with your king and people.’

Euryalus answered then, mocking him to his face: ‘Indeed, stranger, you look like a man unused to manly sports, more like the captain of a merchant crew, trading to and fro in a sailing ship, careful for his cargo, keeping a greedy eye on freight and profit. You are no athlete.’

With a dark look, resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘Stranger, you speak unwisely, you are a man blinded by foolishness. How true it is
that the gods seldom grace men equally with their gifts, of mind, form or speech. One man is meagre in appearance, but the gods crown his words with beauty, and men delight in him as he speaks sweetly in modest eloquence, conspicuous in a crowd, and looked on like a god as he crosses the city. Another seems an immortal, but his words lack grace. You too have exceptional looks a god could not better yet your mind is crippled. You have roused my spirit by speaking rudely. I am no novice in your sports: indeed I was one of the best when I had my youth, and strength lay in my hands. While now I’m constrained by pain and suffering, since I have endured many things in my passage through mortal warfare and hostile seas. And yet, though I’ve suffered deeply, I will join your contest, since your speech has stung me, and your words have riled me to the heart.’

With this he leapt to his feet, still wrapped in his cloak, and seized a discus bigger than the rest, thicker and heavier by some way than
those the Phaeacians normally used in competition. Spinning around, he sent it from his huge hand, and it hummed as it flew: the Phaeacians cowered, those lords of the ship and the long oar, beneath the flying stone. Flung smoothly from the hand, it sailed past all their marks, and Athene, in human likeness, pegged the distance, then, spoke to him: ‘Stranger, even a blind man, groping with his hands, could find your mark, by far and away the furthest, and separate from the cluster. You can take heart from this, at any rate: none of the Phaeacians will meet or pass it.’

Bk VIII:199-255 Odysseus declares his skill

Noble and long-suffering Odysseus was pleased by her words, happy to find a genuine supporter at the games. He spoke to the Phaeacians now with a lighter heart.

‘Match that, you youngsters: I expect I’ll send another along, as far or further, in a moment. As for the rest, since you’ve angered
me deeply, if anyone has the courage and the spirit, let him come and prove himself, in boxing, wrestling, running, it matters not: let any of you Phaeacians try, except Laodamas. For he’s my host, and who would quarrel with the one who shows him hospitality? Only a worthless idiot would challenge the man who welcomes him to a foreign land. He would ruin his own good luck. But the rest of you I’ll not deny or disdain, wishing to know your skill and be matched with you. I am no lightweight in any of the sports men practice. I know how to handle a polished bow with skill, and I was always first to pick off a man in the enemy ranks, however many comrades stood with me to shoot at the foe. When we Achaeans fought at Troy only Philoctetes surpassed me. But I count myself the best by far of all the other mortal men on earth, who eat their bread. Still, I would not claim to compete with Hercules, or Oechalian Eurytus, archers who vied with the gods. That’s why great Eurytus died swiftly, and never reached old age in his halls, because
Apollo, challenged to an archery contest, killed him in anger. And the spear I hurl further than others can shoot an arrow. Only in running I fear one of you Phaeacians might best me, since I’ve been thrown about by the waves, and on my raft I could not exercise, and my legs are weakened.’

They all stood silent at his words. Only Alcinous answered, saying: Stranger, since you are not ungracious, but wish to emphasise the skills you possess, and were angered because this man taunted you at the games, making light of your powers, in a way that none would who rightly knew how to speak; come, listen to what I say. Then you may recount it to some other hero, as you feast in your home with your wife and children, remembering our skill, the talents Zeus endowed us with from our forefather’s days. We may not be the greatest boxers or wrestlers, but we run fast in the race, and we are the finest sailors: and ever the feast is dear to us, the dancing and the lyre, fresh clothes, warm baths, and bed.
So come, you finest dancers among us Phaeacians, perform for this stranger, so he can tell his friends when he reaches home how we excel not only in swiftness of foot, and seamanship, but in dancing too, and in song. Let someone go quickly, and fetch Demodocus his ringing lyre that is somewhere in the palace.’

Bk VIII:256-366 Demodocus sings of Ares and Aphrodite

The herald rose at godlike Alcinous’ words and brought the hollow lyre from the king’s hall. Then nine elected officials, who organised the games, cleared a space, and marked out a wide arena for the dance. Next, the herald came forward carrying Demodocus’ ringing lyre. The bard stood in the centre and round him a group of dancers, boys in the first flush of youth, skilled in dancing, and Odysseus marvelled as he gazed at their flashing feet, striking the sacred dancing floor.
Then the bard struck the chords that began his sweet song, and told of the love of Ares and Aphrodite of the lovely crown, how they lay together in secret in Hephaestus’ house, and how Ares gave her a host of gifts while dishonouring the Lord Hephaestus’ bed. But Helios, the sun god, who had spied them sleeping together, came to tell him. When Hephaestus had heard the sour tale, he went to his smithy his heart set on evil, and set up his huge anvil on its block, and forged a net of chains, firm and unbreakable. And when, furious with Ares, he had made the snare, he went to his room and marriage bed, and fastened the netting to its posts, and hung its links above from the roof beams, fine as a spider’s web, and so cunningly made it was invisible even to the blessed gods.

When he had spread his net over the bed, he pretended to leave for Lemnos, that well-ordered citadel, dearest of all the islands, to his eyes. Nor was Ares of the Golden Reins blind to the master-craftsman Hephaestus’ going, but
went straight to his house, hot for the love of Cytherea of the lovely crown. She had scarcely left her father’s presence, that of mighty Cronos’ son, and seated herself on arriving, when Ares entered and took her hand and spoke to her: ‘Sweetheart, come, let us to bed, and take delight in mutual love. Hephaestus has left, for Lemnos no doubt, to visit the barbarously spoken Sintians.’

As he spoke it seemed a pleasant thing to her to lie with him. So they went to the bed and lay down. Then clever Hephaestus’ cunning net fell all around them, and they were unable to move or raise themselves. They soon realised there was no escape. Now the great lame god approached, for Helios had kept watch and carried the word, and Hephaestus returned before ever reaching Lemnos. He came home, troubled in mind, and as he stood in the gateway a terrible anger seized him. And he cried out fiercely to all the gods:

‘Father Zeus, and all you other blessed and immortal gods, come, see something laughable,
and intolerable, how Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, scorning me for my lameness, makes love with hateful Ares because he is straight-limbed and handsome while I was born crooked. My parents alone are to blame for that: I wish they had never made me! Look how these two usurp my bed and sleep together, while I am filled with pain to see it. Yet they won’t want to lie like this much longer, I think: no, not for an instant, however much they are in love. They’ll soon lose their urge for bed, the net and its links will hold them instead till her father repays me all the gifts I gave him while wooing this shameless hussy, a beautiful daughter indeed but faithless.’

At this the gods came crowding the bronze threshold: Poseidon, Earth-Bearer, Hermes the messenger, and Lord Apollo who strikes from afar. The goddesses stayed at home from modesty, but those deathless ones, givers of good, stood in the entrance, and when they saw clever Hephaestus’ snare, unquenchable laughter flowed from the blessed gods. One
would glance at his neighbour and say: ‘Ill deeds don’t prosper. The slow catch the swift, as Hephaestus here, slow as he is, has netted Ares the swiftest of all the Olympian gods. He has trapped him by cunning, though lame. Ares must pay the fine for adultery.’

Such were the comments, then Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, said to Hermes: ‘Guide and Giver of Good Things, Hermes, Zeus’ son, would you not care to lie in bed beside golden Aphrodite, even though you were snared by unbreakable chains?’

The Messenger-God, Slayer of Argus, replied: ‘Lord Apollo, Far-Shooter, three times as many inescapable links could hold me, and you gods could be watching, and yes, all the goddesses too, if only I might sleep with golden Aphrodite.’

At this, laughter rose from the group of immortal gods. But Poseidon was unsmiling, and kept begging Hephaestus, the master craftsman, to set Ares free, speaking with winged words: ‘Set him free, and I promise
what you ask, that he’ll pay what’s owed in the presence of the deathless gods.’

The illustrious lame god replied: ‘Poseidon, Earth-Bearer, don’t ask this of me. It’s a sad mistake for sure, to stand surety for a sad rogue. Will I bind you with chains, in the presence of the deathless gods, if Ares shrugs off both chains and debt, and escapes?’

But Poseidon, said again: ‘If Ares shrugs off the debt and escapes, Hephaestus, I will pay it myself.’

To this, the illustrious lame god replied: ‘Well, I can’t refuse you, it wouldn’t be right.’ And he loosed the net, and the two of them, free of the chains, leaped up in a trice and fled. Ares headed for Thrace, but laughter-loving Aphrodite to Paphos in Cyprus, where she has a sanctuary and fragrant altar. There the Graces bathed her, and anointed her with such heavenly oil as gleams on the limbs of the gods who live forever. And they dressed her in beautiful clothes, marvellous to behold.
This was the song of the famous bard, that delighted Odysseus and the Phaeacians famed for their long-oared ships. Next Alcinous asked Halius and Laodamas to dance by themselves, since no one else could compete with them. Having taken a lovely purple ball, which clever Polybus had made, one leant back and threw it high towards the shadowy clouds, while the other leapt and caught it again before his feet touched the ground. When they had repeatedly shown their skill at hurling it high, they threw it to and fro as they danced on the rich earth, while the other youths stood round the arena beating time amidst loud applause.

Then noble Odysseus spoke: ‘Lord Alcinous, most renowned of men, you claimed your dancers were best, and see, your word is good: I’m amazed at the sight.’

Royal Alcinous was delighted at this and at once he spoke to the seafaring Phaeacians:
‘Leaders and Counsellors of the Phaeacians, hear me. This stranger seems a man of the highest discernment. Let’s give him a friendly gift as is only right. Twelve illustrious princes rule our land, and I am the thirteenth. Let each of you twelve bring him a fresh tunic and cloak, and a talent of rich gold, and let us all arrange it swiftly, so the stranger may go to his supper with a happy heart having our gifts to hand. And let Euryalus make amends with a gift and an apology, for his unfortunate words.’

They praised his speech, and endorsed his thought, and each sent a squire to fetch the gifts. Then it came to Euryalus to reply, saying: ‘Lord Alcinous, most renowned of men, I will make amends as you command. I will give him this bronze sword with a silver hilt, and a scabbard for it of fresh-cut ivory: it will be of great value to him.’

With this he placed the silver-embossed sword in Odysseus hands, and spoke to him winged words: ‘Sir stranger, I salute you, and if harsh words have been said, may the storm
winds take them and blow them away. As for yourself may the gods grant you see your wife once more, and your native land, since you’ve suffered endless trouble, far from your friends.’

Resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘I salute you, too, my friend, and may the gods give you joy, and may you never have cause to miss the sword you give me with these words, which indeed make amends.’ So saying he hung the silver-embossed sword from his shoulder.

**Bk VIII:416-468 Nausicaa’s good wishes**

As the sun set the splendid gifts arrived. The noble squires carried these to Alcinous’ palace. There, the sons of faultless Alcinous took them and placed them before their beloved mother. And royal Alcinous leading the way they all entered and sat on raised seats. Then mighty Alcinous said to Arete: ‘Wife, have a fine coffer, the best you have, brought here, and place a fresh tunic and cloak in it yourself, and heat a cauldron of water over the fire, so that
when he has bathed, and seen stored away all these gifts the noble Phaeacians have brought, he can take pleasure in the feast and the singing. And I will give him this fine gold cup, so he may remember me forever when he pours libations, at home, to Zeus and the other gods.’

At this, Arete ordered her maids to place a large cauldron on the fire, for the bathwater. They filled it then piled firewood underneath. Flames licked around the cauldron’s belly, and the water was heated. Meanwhile Arete had a strong coffer from the treasure chamber brought for the stranger, and filled it with the Phaeacians’ fine gifts of clothes and gold. She added a lovely tunic and cloak herself then spoke to Odysseus winged words: ‘See to its lid, and knot the cord yourself, now, lest someone rob you on the journey as you lie in sweet sleep aboard the black ship.’

Attending to her words, noble long-suffering Odysseus quickly closed the lid, and tied its cords with a subtle knot that Lady Circe had taught him. Then the housekeeper invited
him to take his bath, and the sight of it delighted him, since comforts like these had been scarce once he’d left the home of Calypso of the lovely tresses, where he’d been cared for like a god. When the maids had bathed him, and rubbed him with oil, and had clothed him in a fine tunic and cloak, he left the bath and joined the men at their wine.

Nausicaa, graced by the gods with beauty, was standing by a door-post of the well-built hall, and when her eyes fell on him she marvelled, and she spoke to him with winged words: ‘Joy to you, stranger, and may you remember me sometimes even in your own country, since you owe your life indeed to me.’

And resourceful Odysseus replied, saying: ‘Nausicaa, daughter of brave Alcinous, by this token may Zeus the Thunderer, Hera’s husband, grant me my homecoming, and may I see that day. Then I will pray to you there too, as a divinity, all my days, since you, girl, have given me life.’
Bk VIII:469-520 Demodocus sings of the Fall of Troy

With that he seated himself next to King Alcinous, since they were already serving the food and mixing the wine. Then the herald approached leading good Demodocus the bard, whom all honoured, and seated him in the midst of the throng, on a chair that leant against a tall pillar. Resourceful Odysseus, first cutting slices from the chine of a white-tusked boar rich with fat on either side, of which there was plenty left, spoke to the herald: ‘Take this portion of food to Demodocus, Herald, and let me welcome him, despite my grief. Bards are honoured and revered by every man on earth, for the Muse has shown them the path to poetry, and loves the tribe of poets.’

He finished, and the herald took the food and handed it to noble Demodocus, who was delighted. So they stretched out their hands to the good things before them, and when they had sated their desire for food and drink,
resourceful Odysseus spoke to the bard, saying: ‘Demodocus, I praise you above all mortal men, one taught by the Muse, Zeus’ daughter, or perhaps by Apollo, for you sang the Achaeans’ fate with truth and feeling, all of their actions and their suffering, all the efforts they exerted, as if you had been there, or heard it from one who was. Now, come, change your theme, and sing of the making of the Wooden Horse, that Epeius fashioned with Athene’s help, that noble Odysseus contrived to have dragged inside the citadel, filled by cunning with warriors who then sacked Troy. Tell the tale as it happened, and I will say to all mankind that the god has given you freely of the power of divine song.’

At his words the bard, inspired by the god, began, and raising his voice picked up the tale at the point where the Argives had burned their camp, boarded their oared ships, and sailed some way off, leaving glorious Odysseus and the rest sitting inside the Horse, at the Trojan’s meeting place. The Trojans themselves had dragged it into the citadel. There it stood, while
the people sat round it, discussing it endlessly to no conclusion. Three suggestions found favour: to cut through the hollow timber with pitiless bronze, or drag it to the edge of the rock and over the cliff, or let it stand there, as a grand offering to the gods, in propitiation, which is what happened in the end. For it was their destiny to be destroyed when the city accepted that huge horse of wood, where the best of the Argives lay hidden, bringing death and ruin to Troy.

Then he sang how the Achaeans left their hollow hiding place, and poured from the horse, to sack the city. He sang how the other warriors dispersing through the streets, laid waste high Troy, but Odysseus, the image of Ares, together with godlike Menelaus, sought Deiphobus’ house. There, said the tale, Odysseus fought the most terrible of fights, but conquered in the end, with the help of great-hearted Athene.

Bk VIII:521-585 Alcinous questions Odysseus
So sang the famous bard. And Odysseus’ heart melted, and tears poured from his eyes. He wept pitifully, as a woman weeps who throws herself on her husband’s dying body, fallen in front of his city and people, trying to ward off that evil moment from the city and his own children: watching him gasping for breath in dying, she clings to him and screams aloud, while behind her the enemy beat her back and shoulders with their spears: then she is led into captivity to endure a life of toil and suffering, her cheeks wasted pitifully with grief. He hid the falling tears from all except Alcinous, who, aware because he sat by him, noticed all, and heard him sighing deeply. At one he addressed the sea-faring Phaeacians:

‘Leaders and Counsellors of the Phaeacians, hear me, and let Demodocus still his ringing lyre, since his song fails to give pleasure to all alike. From the moment of our feast when our divine bard was inspired to sing, this stranger has never stopped his sad grieving, his heart must surely be overflowing with
sorrow. Let the bard refrain, and let us enjoy ourselves, hosts and guest alike: that would be better. We prepared all this for the sake of a sacred stranger after all, this farewell and the gifts of friendship we give with love. To a man of any intelligence, a stranger, a suppliant, is dear as a brother.

Now, sir, for your part: don’t mask the answer to what I ask with clever subterfuge: plain speaking serves us best. Tell us the name you go by at home, the name your mother and father, and the rest, in the town and countryside, give you. No one who’s born into this world, whether high or low, goes nameless: our parents give us all a name once we are born. Name your country, your people and your city, so our ships may take you home, steering a course by means of their own intelligence. Phaeacian ships have no helmsman or steering oar, for the ships themselves know our thoughts and wishes, and the cities of men, every fertile country, and hidden by mist and cloud they speed over the sea’s wide gulf, and never fear
damage or shipwreck. Though I heard a story once from my father Nausithous, who used to say that Poseidon was angry with us because we conveyed all men, in safety. He claimed that some day, when a well-built Phaeacian ship was crossing the misty sea, returning from such a journey, Poseidon would strike her, and then ring our city with a mountain chain. That is what the old king claimed, and the god can do it, or leave it undone, as he wishes.

But tell me this, and speak true, where have your wanderings taken you, what countries of men have you seen? Tell me of those peoples, and their crowded cities, the cruel, savage and lawless races, and those who are good to strangers, and in their hearts fear the gods. And tell me why you weep, and sorrow in spirit, when you hear of the Argives’ fate, of Troy and the Danaans. The gods engineered it, weaving the web of mortal ruin, to make a song for those as yet unborn. Perhaps some kinsman died at Troy, some good and loyal man, your son-in-law or your wife’s father, dearest to a man after
his own flesh and blood. Or a sure friend, for such is as good as a brother.’

Bk IX:1-62 Odysseus tells his tale: The Cicones

Resourceful Odysseus answered the king, saying: ‘Lord Alcinous, most illustrious of men, it is a fine thing, in truth, to hear a bard such as this, with a godlike voice. I say myself there is nothing more delightful than when all the people feel this joy, and the banqueters sit in their rows, listening to the minstrel in the hall, tables in front of them laden with meat and bread, while the steward pours wine from the bowl, and carries it round and fills the cups. It seems the loveliest thing of all to me.

But your heart prompts you to ask of my sad troubles, and make me weep and groan the more. How shall I start and end my tale? First let me give you my name, so you all know, and if I escape from pitiless fate later, I will play host to you, though I live far off. I am Odysseus, Laertes’ son, known to all for my
stratagems, and my fame has reached the heavens. My home is under Ithaca’s clear skies: our Mount Neriton, clothed with whispering forest is visible from afar: and clustered round it are many isles, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus. Ithaca itself lies low in the sea, furthest towards the west, while the others are separate, towards the dawn and the rising sun. It’s a rugged land, but nurtures fine young men: and speaking for myself I know nothing sweeter than one’s own country. Calypso, the lovely goddess, kept me there in her echoing caves, because she wished me for her husband, and in the same way Circe, the Aeaean witch, detained me in her palace, longing to make me hers: but they failed to move my heart. Surely nothing is sweeter than a man’s own parents and country, even though he lives in a wealthy house, in a foreign land far from those parents. But let me tell you of my sad voyage back from Troy, that Zeus had willed.

The wind carried me from Ilium to Ismarus, city of the Cicones. I sacked the city and slew
the men, and the women and riches we split between us, so that as far as I could determine no man lacked an equal share. Then as you might imagine I ordered us to slip away quickly, but my foolish followers wouldn’t listen. They drank the wine, and slaughtered many sheep and shambling cattle with twisted horns. Meanwhile the Cicones rounded up others, their neighbours further inland, more numerous and braver, men skilled at fighting their enemies from chariots and on foot, as needed. At dawn they came, as many as the leaves and flowers of the spring: and disaster sent by Zeus overtook us, doomed, as we were, to endless trouble. Drawing up their ranks by the swift ships, they fought us, each side hurling bronze-tipped spears at the other. Through that morning, while the sacred light grew stronger, we held our ground and kept their greater force at bay. But as the sun fell, at the time when oxen are unyoked, the Cicones succeeded in routing the Acheans, and six of my well-armoured comrades died from each
ship, but the rest of us cheated death and evil fate.’

Bk IX:63-104 Odysseus tells his tale: The Lotus-Eaters

‘From Ismarus we sailed, with heavy hearts for the loyal friends lost, though happy to have escaped death ourselves: nor would I let the curved ships leave till we had called three times in ritual to each of our luckless comrades, who died there on the plain, at the hands of the Cicones. But Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, stirred the north wind against our ships, in a blinding tempest, hiding the land and sea alike in cloud, while darkness swept from the sky. Headlong the ships were driven, sails torn to shreds by the force of the gale. In terror of death we lowered the masts on deck, and rowed the vessels wildly towards land.

There we stayed for two days and nights, troubled at heart with weariness and grief. But when Dawn of the lovely tresses gave birth to
the third day, we upped masts, hoisted the white sails, and took our seats aboard, and the wind and helmsman kept us on course. Now I would have reached home safely, but as I was rounding Cape Malea, the north wind and waves and the ocean currents beat me away, off course, past Cythera.

For nine days I was driven by fierce winds over the teeming sea: but on the tenth we set foot on the shores of the Lotus-eaters, who eat its flowery food. On land we drew water, and my friends ate by the ships. Once we had tasted food and drink, I sent some of the men inland to discover what kind of human beings lived there: selecting two and sending a third as herald. They left at once and came upon the Lotus-eaters, who had no thought of killing my comrades, but gave them lotus to eat. Those who ate the honey-sweet lotus fruit no longer wished to bring back word to us, or sail for home. They wanted to stay with the Lotus-eaters, eating the lotus, forgetting all thoughts of return. I dragged those men back to the shore
myself by force, while they wept, and bound them tight in the hollow ships, pushing them under the benches. Then I ordered my men to embark quickly on the fast craft, fearing that others would eat the lotus and forget their homes. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars.’

Bk IX:105-151 Odysseus tells his tale: The Land of the Cyclopes

‘From there we sailed with heavy hearts, and came to the land of the Cyclopes, a lawless, aggressive people, who never lift their hands to plant or plough, but rely on the immortal gods. Wheat, barley, and vines with their richly clustered grapes, grow there without ploughing or sowing, and rain from Zeus makes them flourish. The Cyclopes have no council meetings, no code of law, but live in echoing caves on the mountain slopes, and each man
lays down the law to his wives and children, and disregards his neighbours.

A fertile island lies slantwise outside the Cyclopes’ harbour, well wooded and neither close to nor far from shore. Countless wild goats inhabit it, since there is nothing to stop them, no hunters to suffer the hardship of beating a path through its woods, or to roam its mountaintops. There are no flocks, and no ploughed fields: but always unsown, and untilled it is free of mankind and nurtures only bleating goats. The Cyclopes have no vessels with crimson-painted prows, no shipwrights to build sound boats with oars, to meet their need and let them travel to other men’s cities, as other races visit each other over the sea in ships, no craftsmen that is who might also have turned it into a fine colony. For this island is by no means poor, but would carry any crop in due season. There are rich well-watered meadows there, along the shore of the grey sea, where vines would never fail. There is level land for the plough with soil so rich they could reap a
dense harvest in season. And there’s a safe harbour where there’s no need for moorings, neither anchor stones nor hawsers: you can beach your ship and wait till the wind is fair and the spirit moves you to sail.

Now, at the head of the harbour a stream of bright water flows out from a cave ringed by poplars. We entered, and some god must have guided us through the murky night, since it was too dark to see, a mist shrouded the ships, and the moon covered with cloud gave not a gleam of light. No one could see the land, or the long breakers striking the beach, until we had run our oared ships aground. Once they were beached we lowered sail and went on shore, then we lay down where we were to sleep, and waited for the light of dawn.’

Bk IX:152-192 Odysseus tells his tale: The Cyclops’ Cave

‘As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we explored the island, marvelling at what we saw.
The **Nymphs**, daughters of aegis-bearing **Zeus**, disturbed the mountain goats, driving them towards my hungry comrades. Quickly we brought our curved bows and long spears from the ships, and splitting three ways began to hunt them, and the god soon gave us a fine enough kill. Nine goats were given to each of the twelve ships in my command, and there were ten left for me.

So all day long till the sun set we sat and feasted on copious meat and mellow wine, since each of the crews had drawn off a large supply in jars when we took the **Cicones’** sacred citadel, and some of the red was left. Looking across to the land of the neighbouring **Cyclopes**, we could see smoke and hear their voices, and the sound of their sheep and goats. Sun set and darkness fell, and we settled to our rest on the shore.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I gathered my men together, saying: “The rest of you loyal friends stay here, while I and my crew take ship and try and find out who these
men are, whether they are cruel, savage and lawless, or good to strangers, and in their hearts fear the gods.”

With this I went aboard and ordered my crew to follow and loose the cables. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars. When we had reached the nearby shore, we saw a deep cave overhung with laurels at the cliff’s edge close to the sea. Large herds of sheep and goats were penned there at night, and round it was a raised yard walled by deep-set stones, tall pines and high-crowned oaks. There a giant spent the night, one that grazed his herds far off, alone, and keeping clear of others, lived in lawless solitude. He was born a monster and a wonder, not like any ordinary human, but like some wooded peak of the high mountains, that stands there isolated to our gaze.’
Then I ordered the rest of my loyal friends to stay there and guard the ship, while I selected the twelve best men and went forward. I took with me a goatskin filled with dark sweet wine that Maron, son of Euanthes, priest of Apollo guardian god of Ismarus, had given me, because out of respect we protected him, his wife and child. He offered me splendid gifts, seven talents of well-wrought gold, and a silver mixing-bowl: and wine, twelve jars in all, sweet unmixed wine, a divine draught. None of his serving-men and maids knew of this store, only he and his loyal wife, and one housekeeper. When they drank that honeyed red wine, he would pour a full cup into twenty of water, and the bouquet that rose from the mixing bowl was wonderfully sweet: in truth no one could hold back. I filled a large goatskin with the wine, and took it along, with some food in a bag, since my instincts told me the giant would come at us
quickly, a savage being with huge strength, knowing nothing of right or law.

Soon we came to the cave, and found him absent, he was grazing his well-fed flocks in the fields. So we went inside and marvelled at its contents. There were baskets full of cheeses, and pens crowded with lambs and kids, each flock with its firstlings, later ones, and newborn separated. The pails and bowls for milking, all solidly made, were swimming with whey. At first my men begged me to take some cheeses and go, then to drive the lambs and kids from the pens down to the swift ship and set sail. But I would not listen, though it would have been best, wishing to see the giant himself, and test his hospitality. When he did appear he proved no joy to my men.

So we lit a fire and made an offering, and helped ourselves to the cheese, and sat in the cave eating, waiting for him to return, shepherding his flocks. He arrived bearing a huge weight of dry wood to burn at suppertime, and he flung it down inside the cave with a
crash. Gripped by terror we shrank back into a deep corner. He drove his well-fed flocks into the wide cave, the ones he milked, leaving the rams and he-goats outside in the broad courtyard. Then he lifted his door, a huge stone, and set it in place. Twenty-two four-wheeled wagons could not have carried it, yet such was the great rocky mass he used for a door. Then he sat and milked the ewes, and bleating goats in order, putting her young to each. Next he curdled half of the white milk, and stored the whey in wicker baskets, leaving the rest in pails for him to drink for his supper. When he had busied himself at his tasks, and kindled a fire, he suddenly saw us, and said: “Strangers, who are you? Where do you sail from over the sea-roads? Are you on business, or do you roam at random, like pirates who chance their lives to bring evil to others?”

Bk IX:256-306 Odysseus tells his tale: Trapped
‘Our spirits fell at his words, in terror at his loud voice and monstrous size. Nevertheless I answered him, saying; “We are Achaeans, returning from Troy, driven over the ocean depths by every wind that blows. Heading for home we were forced to take another route, a different course, as Zeus, I suppose, intended. We are followers of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son, whose fame spreads widest on earth, so great was that city he sacked and host he slew. But we, for our part, come as suppliant to your knees, hoping for hospitality, and the kindness that is due to strangers. Good sir, do not refuse us: respect the gods. We are suppliants and Zeus protects visitors and suppliants, Zeus the god of guests, who follows the steps of sacred travellers.”

His answer was devoid of pity. “Stranger, you are a foreigner or a fool, telling me to fear and revere the gods, since the Cyclopes care nothing for aegis-bearing Zeus: we are greater than they. I would spare neither you nor your
friends, to evade Zeus’ anger, but only as my own heart prompted.
But tell me, now, where you moored your fine ship, when you landed. Was it somewhere nearby, or further off? I’d like to know.”

His words were designed to fool me, but failed. I was too wise for that, and answered him with cunning words: “Poseidon, Earth-Shaker, smashed my ship to pieces, wrecking her on the rocks that edge your island, driving her close to the headland so the wind threw her onshore. But I and my men here escaped destruction.”

Devoid of pity, he was silent in response, but leaping up laid hands on my crew. Two he seized and dashed to the ground like whelps, and their brains ran out and stained the earth. He tore them limb from limb for his supper, eating the flesh and entrails, bone and marrow, like a mountain lion, leaving nothing. Helplessly we watched these cruel acts, raising our hands to heaven and weeping. When the Cyclops had filled his huge stomach with
human flesh, and had drunk pure milk, he lay down in the cave, stretched out among his flocks. Then I formed a courageous plan to steal up to him, draw my sharp sword, and feeling for the place where the midriff supports the liver, stab him there. But the next thought checked me. Trapped in the cave we would certainly die, since we’d have no way to move the great stone from the wide entrance. So, sighing, we waited for bright day.’

Bk IX:307-359 Odysseus tells his tale: Offering the Cyclops wine

‘As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Cyclops relit the fire. Then he milked the ewes, and bleating goats in order, putting her young to each. When he had busied himself at his tasks, he again seized two of my men and began to eat them. When he had finished he drove his well-fed flocks from the cave, effortlessly lifting the huge door stone, and replacing it again like the cap on a quiver. Then whistling loudly he
turned his flocks out on to the mountain slopes, leaving me with murder in my heart searching for a way to take vengeance on him, if Athene would grant me inspiration. The best plan seemed to be this:

The Cyclops’ huge club, a trunk of green olive wood he had cut to take with him as soon as it was seasoned, lay next to a sheep pen. It was so large and thick that it looked to us like the mast of a twenty-oared black ship, a broad-beamed merchant vessel that sails the deep ocean. Approaching it, I cut off a six-foot length, gave it to my men and told them to smooth the wood. Then standing by it I sharpened the end to a point, and hardened the point in the blazing fire, after which I hid it carefully in a one of the heaps of dung that lay around the cave. I ordered the men to cast lots as to which of them should dare to help me raise the stake and twist it into the Cyclops’ eye when sweet sleep took him. The lot fell on the very ones I would have chosen, four of them, with myself making a fifth.
He returned at evening, shepherding his well-fed flocks. He herded them swiftly, every one, into the deep cave, leaving none in the broad yard, commanded to do so by a god, or because of some premonition. Then he lifted the huge door stone and set it in place, and sat down to milk the ewes and bleating goats in order, putting her young to each. But when he had busied himself at his tasks, he again seized two of my men and began to eat them. That was when I went up to him, holding an ivy-wood bowl full of dark wine, and said: “Here, Cyclops, have some wine to follow your meal of human flesh, so you can taste the sort of drink we carried in our ship. I was bringing the drink to you as a gift, hoping you might pity me and help me on my homeward path: but your savagery is past bearing. Cruel man, why would anyone on earth ever visit you again, when you behave so badly?”

At this, he took the cup and drained it, and found the sweet drink so delightful he asked for another draught: “Give me more, freely, then
quickly tell me your name so I may give you a
guest gift, one that will please you. Among us
Cyclopes the fertile earth produces rich grape
clusters, and Zeus’ rain swells them: but this is
a taste from a stream of ambrosia and nectar.”

Bk IX:360-412 Odysseus tells his tale: Blinding
the Cyclops

‘As he finished speaking I handed him the
bright wine. Three times I poured and gave it to
him, and three times, foolishly, he drained it.
When the wine had fuddled his wits I tried him
with subtle words: “Cyclops, you asked my
name, and I will tell it: give me afterwards a
guest gift as you promised. My name is
Nobody. Nobody, my father, mother, and
friends call me.”

Those were my words, and this his cruel
answer: “Then, my gift is this. I will eat
Nobody last of all his company, and all the
others before him”.

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As he spoke, he reeled and toppled over on his back, his thick neck twisted to one side, and all-conquering sleep overpowered him. In his drunken slumber he vomited wine and pieces of human flesh. Then I thrust the stake into the depth of the ashes to heat it, and inspired my men with encouraging words, so none would hang back from fear. When the olivewood stake was glowing hot, and ready to catch fire despite its greenness, I drew it from the coals, then my men stood round me, and a god breathed courage into us. They held the sharpened olivewood stake, and thrust it into his eye, while I threw my weight on the end, and twisted it round and round, as a man bores the timbers of a ship with a drill that others twirl lower down with a strap held at both ends, and so keep the drill continuously moving. We took the red-hot stake and twisted it round and round like that in his eye, and the blood poured out despite the heat. His lids and brows were scorched by flame from the burning eyeball, and its roots crackled with fire. As a great axe
or adze causes a vast hissing when the smith dips it in cool water to temper it, strengthening the iron, so his eye hissed against the olivewood stake. Then he screamed, terribly, and the rock echoed. Seized by terror we shrank back, as he wrenched the stake, wet with blood, from his eye. He flung it away in frenzy, and called to the Cyclopes, his neighbours who lived in caves on the windy heights. They heard his cry, and crowding in from every side they stood by the cave mouth and asked what was wrong: “Polyphemus, what terrible pain is this that makes you call through deathless night, and wake us? Is a mortal stealing your flocks, or trying to kill you by violence or treachery?”

Out of the cave came mighty Polyphemus’ voice: “Nobody, my friends, is trying to kill me by violence or treachery.”

To this they replied with winged words: “If you are alone, and nobody does you violence, it’s an inescapable sickness that comes from Zeus: pray to the Lord Poseidon, our father.”
Bk IX:413-479 Odysseus tells his tale: Escape

‘Off they went, while I laughed to myself at how the name and the clever scheme had deceived him. Meanwhile the Cyclops, groaning and in pain, groped around and laboured to lift the stone from the door. Then he sat in the entrance, arms outstretched, to catch anyone stealing past among his sheep. That was how foolish he must have thought I was. I considered the best way of escaping, and saving myself, and my men from death. I dreamed up all sorts of tricks and schemes, as a man will in a life or death matter: it was an evil situation. This was the plan that seemed best. The rams were fat with thick fleeces, fine large beasts with deep black wool. These I silently tied together in threes, with twists of willow on which that lawless monster, Polyphemus, slept. The middle one was to carry one of my men, with the other two on either side to protect him. So there was a man to every three sheep. As for me I took the pick of the flock, and curled
below his shaggy belly, gripped his back and lay there face upwards, patiently gripping his fine fleece tight in my hands. Then, sighing, we waited for the light.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, the males rushed out to graze, while the unmilked females udders bursting bleated in the pens. Their master, tormented by agonies of pain, felt the backs of the sheep as they passed him, but foolishly failed to see my men tied under the rams’ bellies. My ram went last, burdened by the weight of his fleece, and me and my teeming thoughts. And as he felt its back, mighty Polyphemus spoke to him:

“My fine ram, why leave the cave like this last of the flock? You have never lagged behind before, always the first to step out proudly and graze on the tender grass shoots, always first to reach the flowing river, and first to show your wish to return at evening to the fold. Today you are last of all. You must surely be grieving over your master’s eye, blinded by an evil man and his wicked friends, when my wits were fuddled
with wine: Nobody, I say, has not yet escaped death. If you only had senses like me, and the power of speech to tell me where he hides himself from my anger, then I’d strike him down, his brains would be sprinkled all over the floor of the cave, and my heart would be eased of the pain that nothing, Nobody, has brought me.”

With this he drove the ram away from him out of doors, and I loosed myself when the ram was a little way from the cave, then untied my men. Swiftly, keeping an eye behind us, we shepherded those long-limbed sheep, rich and fat, down to the ship. And a welcome sight, indeed, to our dear friends were we, escapees from death, though they wept and sighed for the others we lost. I would not let them weep though, but stopped them all with a nod and a frown. I told them to haul the host of fine-fleeced sheep on board and put to sea. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars. When we were
almost out of earshot, I shouted to the Cyclops, mocking him: “It seems he was not such a weakling, then, Cyclops, that man whose friends you meant to tear apart and eat in your echoing cave. Stubborn brute not shrinking from murdering your guests in your own house, your evil deeds were bound for sure to fall on your own head. **Zeus** and the other gods have had their revenge on you.”

Bk IX:480-525 Odysseus tells his tale: Telemus’ prophecy

‘He was enraged all the more by my words, and shattering the crest of a tall cliff, he hurled it at us, so that it fell seaward of our blue-prowed vessel, and almost struck the steering oar. The water surged beneath the stone as it fell, and the backwash like a tidal swell from the open sea, carried the ship landward and drove it onto the shore. But seizing a long pole in my hands, I pushed the boat off, and rousing my men ordered them with urgent signs to bend to the
oars and save us from disaster. They bent to their oars and rowed, but as soon as we had put water behind us and doubled our distance I began shouting to the Cyclops, though the men round me called out on every side, trying to deter me with their appeals: “Why provoke the savage to anger in this stubborn way? The rock he threw into the sea just now drove the ship back on shore, and we thought we were done for. If he had been able to hear us speak but a word, he would have hurled another jagged stone, and crushed our heads and the ship’s timbers with the power of his throw.”

So they argued, but could not daunt my ardent spirit, and I shouted to him again in anger: “Cyclops, if any man asks how you came by your blindness, say that Odysseus, sacker of cities, Laertes’ son, a native of Ithaca, maimed you.”

At this he groaned, and said in answer: “Alas! The truth of that prophecy spoken long ago is fulfilled! Telemus, the seer, son of Eurymus, a tall fine man, lived here once, the
greatest of prophets, and grew old here as soothsayer among the Cyclopes. He told me that all of this would come to pass one day, and I would lose my sight at Odysseus’ hands. But I always expected some tall fine man, one of great strength, and now a puny good-for-nothing weakling blinds my eye, after plying me with wine. Come here, Odysseus, nevertheless, so that I might grant you guest gifts, and urge the great Earth-Shaker to see you home, since I am his son, and he says he is my father, and he, of his will, can heal me, where no other of the blessed gods or men can.”

I replied, saying: “I wish I could rob you of life and spirit, and send you to the House of Hades, as surely as the Earth-Shaker will fail to heal your eye.”

Bk IX:526-566 Odysseus tells his tale: Polyphemus’ curse

‘At my words, he stretched out his hands to the starry heavens, and prayed to the Lord
Poseidon: ‘Hear me, Poseidon, dark-tressed Earth-Bearer, if I am your son, if you say you are my father, let Odysseus, sacker of cities and son of Laertes, never reach his home on Ithaca: yet if he is destined to see his friends and his fine house in his own country, may he come there late and in sore distress, in another’s ship, losing all comrades, and let him find great trouble in his house.”

So he prayed, and the dark-tressed god heard him. Then the Cyclops lifted an even larger rock, swung it in the air, and hurled it, with all his strength. It fell not far behind our blue-prowed ship, narrowly missing the tip of the steering oar, and the sea surged up around the falling stone, and its wave carried the ship forward and drove it to the far shore.

So we reached the island where our other oared ships lay, with our friends round them, watching for us, and weeping. There we beached our vessel, and went on shore. We landed the Cyclops’ flocks from the hold and divided them among us, so that as far as I could
determine no man lacked an equal share. The ram my comrades in arms granted to me, as a separate gift, and when the flocks had been divided there on the shore I sacrificed to Zeus of the dark clouds, son of Cronos, lord of all, and I burned the thigh pieces. But he ignored my sacrifice, planning instead the destruction of my oared ships and my faithful friends.

All day long till sunset we sat feasting on our plentiful supplies of meat and sweet wine, and when the sun was down and darkness fell we settled to sleep on the sand. As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I roused my men, and ordered them to embark and loose the hawsers. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows struck the grey water with their oars.

So we sailed on, with heavy hearts for the loyal friends lost, though happy to have escaped death ourselves.’
Bk X:1-55 Odysseus tells his tale: The Bag of Winds.

‘So we came to the floating island of Aeolia, where Aeolus lived, son of Hippotas, dear to the deathless gods. A wall of unbroken bronze surrounds it, and the cliffs are sheer. In those halls his twelve children live as well, six daughters and six fine sons, and he has given his daughters to his sons in marriage. They are always feasting with their brave father and good mother, with endless good food set before them. All day long the house is full of savoury smells, and the courtyard echoes to the banquet’s sound, while at night they sleep by the wives they love, on well-covered well-strung beds.

We came, then, to their city with its fine palace, and Aeolus entertained me there for a month, questioning me on everything: Troy, the Argive fleet, and the Achaean return. And I told him the whole tale in order. When I asked, in turn, to depart with his help, he too denied me nothing. He gave me a leather bag, made from
the flayed hide of a nine-year old ox, and imprisoned all the winds there. The son of Cronos had made him the winds’ keeper, able to raise or calm them as he wished. He placed the bag in my hollow ship and tied it tight with shining silver wire, so not even the smallest breath might escape. But he first called on the West Wind to blow and set my ships and their crews on our homeward course, though it was not to benefit us, ruined by our own foolishness.

Nine days and nights we sailed, and on the tenth our own land was in sight, near enough to see men tending fires. Then sweet sleep came to me in my weariness, since I had hauled on the sheets ceaselessly, handing over to none of my crew, in order to reach home more swiftly. Now my men talked among themselves, speculating about the treasures of gold and silver that Aeolus, mighty son of Hippotas, had given me. As they exchanged glances they said: “How honoured and loved Odysseus is by the men of every land and city! He carries home fine things
from the spoils of Troy, while we who went the same journey return empty-handed. Now Aeolus, for love alone, gives him all these gifts. Come on, let’s see how much gold and silver there is in the bag.”

Among them, talking like this, wicked thoughts prevailed. They opened the bag and all the winds rushed out. Then a tempest seized us, and carried us out to sea away from our own land. Then I woke, and debated in the depths of my heart whether to hurl myself from the ship and drown, or suffer in silence among the living. I stayed and suffered: wrapping my head in my cloak, I lay down on the deck. So, as my men groaned, the ships were carried back to the Aeolian island by a wicked gale.’

Bk X:56-102 Odysseus tells his tale: The Laestrygonians.

‘We went ashore and replenished our water, my men eating a meal quickly by the swift ships. When we had eaten and drunk, I set out for
Aeolus’ fine palace, taking with me a herald and one other of my men. I found the king feasting with his wife and children. We entered and sat down at the threshold by the doorposts. They were amazed, asking me: “Odysseus, how do you come to be here? What cruel god opposed you? We sent you off with care, heading for your home and country, as you wished.”

Sad at heart, I answered: “Sleep and my foolish crew brought me harm, but you, my friends, have the power to set all to rights.” They were silent at my speech, despite its flattering words. Then the father replied, saying: “Leave our island, now, lowest of living men. It would be against religion for me to set a man on his course when the blessed gods revile him. Go, for you come as one the immortals hate.”

With this, he dismissed me from his palace, I groaning deeply. Grieving at heart, we sailed away. The men’s spirits were depressed by the heavy work of rowing, since never a breeze
came to help us on our way, because of their foolishness.

Six days and nights we sailed, and on the seventh we reached **Telepylus**, the great **Laestrygonian** citadel of **Lamus**, where the herdsman driving in his flock at the day’s end calls to the herdsman driving his out as the day begins. There night and day is one, and a man who needs no sleep could earn a double wage, one for herding the cattle, one for grazing the white sheep. We reached a fine harbour, with a stretch of sheer cliff on both sides, and narrow access between the opposing headlands, jutting out at its mouth. My captains took their curving ships inside, and moored them close together in the cavernous harbour, since all around us was shining calm, with never a wave, great or small. But I, alone, moored my black ship outside, near the cliffs, making fast to a rock. Then I climbed the rugged headland, and stood there to look out: no cattle could be seen or buildings, only a trace of smoke rising inland. So I sent a party of my men to find out what sort of beings
lived there. I chose two to go and a third as herald.’

Bk X:103-132 Odysseus tells his tale: Escape from the Cannibals

‘Once ashore, they found a well-worn track down which wagons carried wood to the city from the mountain heights. Near the citadel they came across a girl drawing water, the sturdy daughter of Laestrygonian Antiphates. She had come to Artacia’s flowing stream, from which the city drew its water. They approached her and asked who was the king of her people, and who the people were whom he ruled. She pointed at once to her father’s lofty house.

On entering his fine palace, they found his wife there, massive as a mountaintop, and they were shocked. She called her husband, mighty Antiphates, straight from their gathering place, and he embarked on their cruel destruction. He promptly seized one of my men, and prepared to eat him, while the other two sprang up and
fled to the ships. Then Antiphates roused the city, and hearing his cry the huge Laestrygonians crowded in from all sides, a countless host of Giants not men.

From the cliffs they pelted us with the largest rocks a man could lift, and from all the ships there rose the groans of dying men and the splintering of timbers. Spearing the men like fishes, they carried them off to their loathsome feast. While they were killing those in the harbour’s depths, I drew my sharp sword and cut the cable of my dark-prowed vessel. Then calling to my men I ordered them to the oars, so we might escape from danger. With the fear of death on them they thrashed the sea with their blades, and to our joy the ship shot away from the towering cliffs, leaving the rest to founder where they were.’

Bk X:133-197 Odysseus tells his tale: Circe’s Island
‘So we sailed on, with heavy hearts for the loyal friends lost, though happy to have escaped death ourselves, and came to the island of Aeaea, where Circe of the lovely tresses lived, a fateful goddess with a human voice, sister to dark-minded Aeetes: both children of the Sun that lights the world, and Perse, daughter of the Ocean. Here our ship closed the shore in silence, entering a harbour fit for vessels, guided by a god. When we had gone ashore we lay there for two days and nights consumed by weariness and grief.

But when Dawn of the lovely tresses gave birth to the third day I took my sharp sword and spear and climbed swiftly from the ship to a high lookout point, hoping to see signs of men, and hear their voices. I reached a rocky height with a wide view, and standing there I saw smoke rising through thick scrub and woodland, from the wide clearing where Circe’s halls lay. Seeing that smoke from a fire, I pondered whether to go and explore, but it seemed better
to return to the ship and the shore, and allow my men a meal, then send them to investigate.

Then as I neared the swift ship some god took pity on me in that solitude, and sent a huge stag with great antlers right across my trail. The power of the sun had troubled him and sent him down from his woodland pasture to drink at the river’s edge. As he came from the water I struck him on the spine with my bronze-spear, in the centre of his back, and it pierced right through, so he fell in the dust with a groan, and his spirit passed. Then I planted my foot on his carcass, drew the bronze spear from the wound, and laid it on the ground while I gathered willow shoots then wove a rope, six foot long, by splicing them together end to end. Next I tied the great creature’s feet together, and carried him down to the black ship on my back, using my spear to lean on, since he was too large to sling over my shoulder and steady with my hand. I threw him down in front of the ship and cheered my crew with comforting words, tackling each man in turn:
“We’re not bound for the Halls of Hades ahead of time, my Friends, despite our troubles. Come, while there’s still food and drink in our swift ship, let’s think about eating, not waste away with hunger.”

They soon responded to my words. They drew their cloaks from their faces to marvel at the stag’s huge size, as he lay on the barren shore. When they had sated their sight with gazing, they washed their hands and readied a fine feast. All day long till the sun went down we sat and feasted on meat in plenty, and drank sweet wine. But once the sun had set and darkness fell, we lay down on the sand to sleep. When rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I called the men together and addressed them all:

“Listen, Friends, and understand our plight. We have no idea how far East or West we are, how far it is to where the light-giving sun rises or where he sinks below the earth. Though we should consider what options we have left, I suspect we have few. I climbed to a rocky lookout point and could see that the island is
low-lying, ringed by the boundless waves. And in the centre I saw smoke rising through thick scrub and woodland.”’

Bk X:198-250 Odysseus tells his tale: The Magic Spell

‘At this, their hearts sank, remembering Laestrygonian Antiphates, and the fierce violence of the man-eating Cyclops. They groaned aloud, and wept great tears. But all their lamentation did no good.

I split my armed comrades into two groups, each with its own leader. I took command of one, and the other was led by noble Eurylochus. Then we shook lots in a bronze helmet, and brave Eurylochus’s lot leapt out. Off he went with twenty-two tearful men, leaving us behind with our grief. They found Circe’s house of polished stone, in a clearing in the forest glades. Round it wolves and mountain lions prowled, bewitched by Circe with her magic drugs. Instead of rushing to attack my men, they rose
on their hind legs and wagged their tails. Like dogs fawning round their master, back from a feast, bringing them the titbits they enjoy, the wolves and sharp-clawed lions fawned round my men, while they seeing these dread creatures were gripped by fear. They stood there at the gate of the goddess with lovely tresses, and they could hear Circe’s sweet voice singing inside, as she went to and fro in front of a vast divine tapestry, weaving the finely-made, lovely, shining work of the goddesses.

Then Polites, the dearest and most trusted of my friends, a man of initiative, spoke: “Friends, a woman, a goddess perhaps, is singing sweetly within, walking to and fro in front of a great tapestry, and the whole place echoes. Let’s call out to her, now.”

At that, they shouted, and called to her, and Circe came to open the shining doors, and invite them to enter: and so they innocently followed her inside. Eurylochus alone, suspecting it was a trap, stayed behind. She ushered the rest in, and seated them on stools
and chairs, and mixed them a brew of yellow honey and **Pramnian** wine, with cheese and barley meal. But she mixed in wicked drugs, as well, so they might wholly forget their native land. When they had drunk the brew she gave them, she touched them with her wand, and herded them into the pigsties. Now they had the shape and bristly hide, the features and voice of pigs, but their minds were unaltered from before. There they wept in their pens, and Circe gave them acorns, beech mast, and cornel fruit to eat, such as pigs feed on as they churn the mud.

But Eurylochus ran back to the swift black ship, to convey the news of his friends and their sad fate. Much as he wished to, he could not speak a word, his heart was so full of anguish, and his eyes filled with tears, and his mind with sorrow. Only when we questioned him, amazed, did he manage to say what had happened to his friends:'
Bk X:251-301 Odysseus tells his tale: Help from Hermes

““We went through the woods, noble Odysseus, as you ordered. In a clearing in the forest glades we found a fine palace built of cut stone. Someone inside, a woman or a goddess, was singing in a clear voice as she walked to and fro, in front of a huge tapestry. The men shouted and called to her, and she came to open the shining doors, and invited them to enter: and so they innocently followed her inside. But I, suspecting it was a trap, stayed behind. Then they all disappeared, and no one emerged again, though I sat a long time watching.”

At Eurylochus’ words, I slung my great bronze silver-embossed sword over my shoulders, and my bow as well, and told him to take me there by the selfsame road. But he clutched at me with his hands, and clasped my knees, and spoke winged words, through his tears: “Favourite of Zeus, leave me here: don’t force me to return unwillingly. I know you and
our comrades will never come back. Let us escape quickly with those who are still here, and we may still evade the day of evil.”

I replied: “Eurylochus, by all means stay here by the black ship’s hull, eating and drinking, but I, bound by necessity, will go.”

With this I climbed away from the ship and the shore. But as I walked through the sacred grove, towards the great house of Circe, a goddess skilled in magic potions, Hermes of the Golden Wand, in the likeness of a young man at that charming age when down first covers the cheeks, met me as I approached. He clasped me by the hand and spoke to me:

“Wretched man, where are you off to, wandering the hills of an unknown island all alone? Your friends are penned in Circe’s house, pigs in close-set sties. Have you come to free them? I tell you, you won’t return, you’ll end up like the rest. But I will save you and keep you free from harm. You must take a powerful herb with you, and go to Circe’s house, and it will ward off the day of evil. I will
tell you all Circe’s fatal wiles. She will mix a drink for you, blending drugs with the food, but even so she will fail to enchant you: the powerful herb I will give you will prevent it. Let me tell you the rest. When Circe strikes you with her length of wand, draw your sharp sword and rush at her, as if you intend to kill her. She will be seized with fear. Then she’ll invite you to her bed, and don’t refuse the goddess’ favours, if you want her to free your men, and care for you too. But make her swear a solemn oath by the blessed gods that she won’t try to harm you with her mischief, lest when you are naked she robs you of courage and manhood.”

Bk X:302-347 Odysseus tells his tale: Encountering Circe

‘With this the Slayer of Argus pulled the herb from the ground, and gave it to me, pointing out its features. It was black at the root with a milk-white flower. Moly the gods call it, difficult for mortals to uproot, though the gods of course
can do anything. Hermes headed off through the wooded isle to high Olympus, while I approached the house of Circe, thinking black thoughts as I went along.

There I stood, at the gate of the goddess of the lovely tresses, and I called to her and she heard my voice. She came out straight away to open the shining doors, and invited me to enter. I did so, with a troubled heart. Once inside she brought me a beautiful silver-embossed chair, richly made, and with a stool for my feet. Then she mixed me a drink in a golden cup, and with evil intent added her drugs. When she gave it me, and I drank it down, though without feeling its enchantment, she struck at me with her wand, and cried: “Off to your sty now, and lie there with your friends.”

At this, I drew my sharp sword and rushed at her, as if I meant to kill her, but with a cry she slipped beneath the blade to clasp my knees, and weeping spoke to me with winged words: “What man are you, and where are you from? What city is yours? And who are your
parents? I wonder that you drank my potion, and were not bewitched. No other man when once he drank, and swallowed it, has ever withstood the spell. Surely your mind is not one to be swayed. You must be Odysseus, that man of many resources whom the Slayer of Argus, with the Golden Wand, told me would come from Troy here, travelling homewards, in his swift dark ship. Come, sheathe your sword, and let us two go to my bed, so we may learn to trust one another by twining in love.”

Those were her words, and I replied: “Circe, how can you demand that I be tender to you, you who have turned my friends to animals in your house, and now detain me, drawing me to your room, to your bed, with cunning intent, to rob me of courage and manhood when I am naked. I have no desire to go to bed with you, goddess, unless you swear a solemn oath by the blessed gods not to try and harm me with your mischief.””
Bk X:348-399 Odysseus tells his tale: Circe Frees the Crew

‘When I had done, she quickly swore an oath not to harm me, as I required. And when she had sworn the oath I went with Circe to her fine bed.

Meanwhile her four handmaids, who serve her round the house, were busy in the hall. One of those children of springs, groves and sacred rivers that run to the sea threw linen covers over the chairs and spread fine purple fabrics on top. Another drew silver tables up to the chairs, and laid out golden dishes, while a third mixed sweet honeyed wine in a silver bowl, and served it in golden cups. The fourth fetched water and lit a roaring fire beneath a huge cauldron. When the water boiled in the shining bronze, she sat me in a bath, and bathed me with water from the great cauldron mixed with cold to suit, pouring it over my head and shoulders till she drew the deep weariness from my limbs.
When she had bathed me and rubbed me with oil, and dressed me in a fine tunic and cloak, she led me into the hall, and seated me on a beautiful silver-embossed chair, richly made, and with a stool for my feet. Then a maid brought water to wash my hands in a lovely golden jug, and poured it out over a silver basin so I could rinse them, and drew up a shining table beside me. The faithful housekeeper brought bread, and set it before me with heaps of delicacies, giving freely of her stores. Then she begged me to eat, though I had no heart for eating. My mind was full of other thoughts and my spirit was full of forebodings.

When Circe saw me sitting there, not stretching out my hands to the food, but weighed down with sorrow, she approached and spoke with winged words: “Odysseus, why do you sit as if you were dumb, eating your heart out, not touching the food or drink? Are you suspicious of some new ruse? Have no fear, I have sworn you a solemn oath already not to do you harm.”
To this I answered: “Circe, what decent man could bring himself to eat and drink before he had freed his men, and seen them face to face? If you wish me in truth to eat and drink as you ask, then set them free and let me see my loyal friends with my own eyes.”

At this, Circe, taking her wand, went out of the hall and opened the gates of the sty, and drove out what seemed to be full-grown pigs. They stood there and she went among them smearing each one with a fresh potion. Then the bristles, that Circe’s previous hateful spell had made them sprout, fell from them, and they became men again, younger and handsomer and taller by far than they were before. They knew me now, and each man clasped my hands, and all were wracked with weeping, till the walls echoed, mournfully, and even the goddess was moved to pity.’

Bk X:400-448 Odysseus tells his tale: He Gathers his Men
‘Then the lovely goddess drew near, and said: “Odysseus, of many resources, scion of Zeus, Laertes’ son, go now to your swift ship and the shore. Drag your ship on land: store your tackle and goods in the caves. Then return with your loyal friends.”

To this my proud heart consented, and I went down to the swift ship and the shore, and there by the speedy vessel I found my faithful comrades, lamenting and shedding tears. Like calves in a farmyard that frisk around the herd of cows that return from grazing, free from their pens and gambolling together, lowing constantly round their mothers, so those men, at the sight of me, crowded round weeping, and in their hearts they felt as though they were home again in rugged Ithaca, in the town where they were born and bred. Still grieving, they spoke with winged words: “We are as happy, favourite of Zeus, as though we were back in Ithaca, but tell us the fate of the rest of our friends.”
I replied with calming words: “First drag the ship on land, and store our tackle and goods in the caves, then hurry, follow me, and you’ll see your friends eating and drinking in Circe’s halls, where there’s enough food and drink to last for ever.” They quickly responded to my words. Only Eurylochus of all my friends hung back. And he spoke to them with winged words: “Wretched fools, where are you off to? Are you so in love with trouble you’ll visit Circe’s house, she who will change you all to pigs, or wolves, or lions to guard her great hall under duress? Remember how Cyclops too behaved, when our friends entered his cave with reckless Odysseus, this man through whose foolishness they died.”

Those were his words, and I felt like drawing the long sword strapped to my sturdy thigh and striking his head to the ground, though he was a kinsman of mine by marriage, but my friends each checked me with soothing words: “Scion of Zeus, let’s leave him behind,
if you will, to stay and guard the ship, while you lead us to Circe’s sacred house.”

So we left the ship and shore, but Eurylochus did not stay behind by the hollow hull, he came with us, fearing my stern rebuke.’

Bk X:449-502 Odysseus tells his tale: He Seeks to Leave

‘Meanwhile my friends had been bathed in Circe’s house, through her kind ministrations, and had been rubbed with rich oil, and dressed in tunics and fleece-lined cloaks, and we found them feasting happily in the hall. When my two companies saw each other face to face, they wept and moaned in recognition, and the whole house echoed. Then the lovely goddess approached me, saying: “Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, calm this outpouring of grief. I know myself all you have suffered on the teeming waves, and all the wrongs that enemies have done to you on land. But, come now, eat my food and drink my
wine, till you each regain the spirit you had when you left your homes on rugged Ithaca. You are spiritless, and drained by endless thought of your harsh journey, and your hearts are always joyless, for in truth you have suffered.”

Our proud hearts yielded to her words. And so we stayed there, day after day, eating food in plenty, and drinking the sweet wine. But when a whole year had gone by, as the months and seasons passed, and the longer days had returned my loyal friends took me aside and said: “Man who is kin to the gods, remember your native country, now, if it is still your fate to escape, and reach your lofty house, and your own land.”

My proud heart yielded to their words. A further long day, till sunset, we feasted on meat in plenty and drank sweet wine. When the sun sank and darkness fell, they settled down to sleep in the shadowy hall, but I went to Circe’s lovely bed, and clasped her knees, and the goddess listened as I spoke winged words:
“Circe, keep the promise you gave and send me on my way, since my spirit is eager for home, and so too are my friends’, who weary me with their grief whenever you happen to be absent.”

To this the lovely goddess replied swiftly: “Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, don’t stay here a moment longer against your will, but before you head for home you must make another journey. You must seek the House of Hades and dread Persephone, and consult the ghost of the blind Theban seer, Teiresias. His mind is still unimpaired, for even in death Persephone grants him mental powers, so that he alone has wisdom, while the others flit like shadows.”

At her words my spirits fell, sitting there on the bed I wept, and I no longer wished to live, and see the sunlight. But when I was wearied with weeping and wringing my hands, I answered her, saying: “Circe, who will guide us on the way? No man yet has ever sailed to Hades in a black ship.””
Bk X:503-574 Odysseus tells his tale: The Death of Elpenor

‘The lovely goddess replied swiftly: “Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, don’t think of finding a pilot to guide your vessel, but raise your mast and spread your white sail, and take your seat aboard, and the North Wind’s breath will send her on her way. When you have crossed the Ocean stream, beach your ship by the deep swirling waters on a level shore, where tall poplars, and willows that shed seed, fill the Groves of Persephone. Then go to the moist House of Hades. There is a rock where two roaring rivers join the Acheron, Cocytus, which is a tributary of the Styx, and Pyrrophlegethon. Draw near then, as I bid you, hero, and dig a trench two feet square, then pour a libation all around to the dead, first of milk and honey, then of sweet wine, thirdly of water, sprinkled with white barley meal. Then pray devoutly to the powerless ghosts of the departed, swearing that when you reach
Ithaca you will sacrifice a barren heifer in your palace, the best of the herd, and will heap the altar with rich spoils, and offer a ram, apart, to Teiresias, the finest jet-black ram in the flock.

And when you have petitioned the glorious host of the dead, with prayers, sacrifice a ram and a black ewe, holding their heads towards Erebus, while you look behind towards the running streams. Then the hosts of the dead will appear. Call then to your comrades, and tell them to flay and burn the sheep killed by the pitiless bronze, with prayers to the divinities, to mighty Hades and dread Persephone. You yourself must draw your sharp sword and sit there, preventing the powerless ghosts from drawing near to the blood, till you have questioned Teiresias. Soon the seer will come, you leader of men, and give you your course, and the distances, so you can return home over the teeming waters.”

Circe finished speaking, and with that came golden-throned Dawn. Then the Nymph dressed me in a tunic and cloak, and clothed herself in a
beautiful long white closely-woven robe, and clasped a fine belt of gold around her waist, and set a veil on her head. Then I walked through the halls, rousing my men with cheerful words, speaking to each in turn: “My lady Circe has explained what I need to know: don’t lie there culling the flower of sweet sleep: let us be on our way.”

Those were my words, and their proud hearts yielded. But even now I could not get my men away unscathed. The youngest of all was Elpenor, not one of the cleverest or bravest in battle. Heavy with wine he had climbed to the roof of Circe’s sacred house, seeking the cool night air, and had slept apart from his friends. Hearing the stir and noise of their departure, he leapt up suddenly, and forgetting the way down by the long ladder, he fell headlong from the roof. His neck was shattered where it joins the spine: his ghost descended, to the House of Hades.

My crew were already on their way, as I addressed them: “No doubt you think you are
heading home, but Circe has set us on a different course, to the House of Hades and dread Persephone where I must consult the ghost of Theban Teiresias.” At this their spirits fell, and they sat right down where they were and wept, and tore at their hair. But their lamentations served no purpose.

While we made our way to our swift vessel and the shore, grieving and shedding tears, Circe went on ahead of us, and tethered a ram and a black ewe by the black ship. She had easily slipped by us: who can observe a goddess passing to and fro, if she wishes otherwise?’

Bk XI:1-50 Odysseus tells his tale: Ghosts out of Erebus

‘On reaching the shore, we dragged the vessel down to the glittering sea, and set up mast and sail in our black ship. Then we hauled the sheep aboard, and embarked ourselves, weeping, shedding huge tears. Still, Circe of the lovely tresses, dread goddess with a human voice, sent
us a good companion to help us, a fresh wind from astern of our dark-prowed ship to fill the sail. And when we had set the tackle in order fore and aft, we sat down, and let the wind and the helmsman keep her course. All day long with straining sail she glided over the sea, till the sun set and all the waves grew dark.

So she came to the deep flowing Ocean that surrounds the earth, and the city and country of the Cimmerians, wrapped in cloud and mist. The bright sun never shines down on them with his rays neither by climbing the starry heavens nor turning back again towards earth, but instead dreadful Night looms over a wretched people. There we beached our ship, and landed the sheep, and made our way along the Ocean stream, till we came to the place Circe described.

Perimedes and Eurylochus restrained the sacrificial victims while I drew my sharp sword from its sheath, and with it dug a pit two foot square, then poured a libation all around to the dead, first of milk and honey, then of sweet
wine, thirdly of water, sprinkled with white barley meal. Then I prayed devoutly to the powerless ghosts of the departed, swearing that when I reached Ithaca I would sacrifice a barren heifer in my palace, the best of the herd, and would heap the altar with rich spoils, and offer a ram, apart, to Teiresias, the finest jet-black ram in the flock. When, with prayers and vows, I had invoked the hosts of the dead, I led the sheep to the pit and cut their throats, so the dark blood flowed.

Then the ghosts of the dead swarmed out of Erebus – brides, and young men yet unwed, old men worn out with toil, girls once vibrant and still new to grief, and ranks of warriors slain in battle, showing their wounds from bronze-tipped spears, their armour stained with blood. Round the pit from every side the crowd thronged, with strange cries, and I turned pale with fear. Then I called to my comrades, and told them to flay and burn the sheep killed by the pitiless bronze, with prayers to the divinities, to mighty Hades and dread
Persephone. I myself, drawing my sharp sword from its sheath, sat there preventing the powerless ghosts from drawing near to the blood, till I might question Teiresias.’

Bk XI:51-89 Odysseus tells his tale: The Soul of Elpenor

‘The first ghost to appear was that of my comrade Elpenor. He had not yet been buried beneath the broad-tracked earth, for we left his corpse behind in Circe’s hall, unburied and unwept, while another more urgent task drove us on. I wept now when I saw him, and pitied him, and I spoke to him with winged words: “Elpenor, how came you here, to the gloomy dark? You are here sooner on foot than I in my black ship.”

At this he groaned and answered me, saying: “Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes some god’s hostile decree was my undoing, and too much wine. I lay down to sleep in Circe’s house, and
forgetting the way down by the long ladder fell headlong from the roof. My neck was shattered where it joins the spine: and my ghost descended, to the House of Hades. I know as you go from here, from Hades’ House, your good ship will touch again at Aeaea’s Isle, and I beg you, by those, our absent ones we left behind, by your wife, by your father who cared for you as a child, by your only son Telemachus forsaken in your halls, I beg you, my lord, remember me. When you sail from there, do not leave me behind, unwept, unburied, and turn away, lest I prove a source of divine anger against you. Burn me, with whatever armour I own, and heap up a mound for me on the grey sea’s shore, in memory of a man of no fortune, that I may be known by those yet to be. Do this for me and on my mound raise the oar I rowed with alive and among my friends.”

He spoke, and I replied: “Man of no fortune, all this I will remember to do.” So we sat, exchanging joyless words, I on one side of the trench, holding my sword above the blood,
my friend’s ghost on the other, pouring out his speech.

Then there appeared the soul of my dead mother, Anticleia, daughter of noble Autolycus: she who was still alive when I left to sail for sacred Troy. I wept at the sight of her, and my heart was filled with pity, yet I could not let her approach the blood, despite my grief, till I had questioned Teiresias.’

Bk XI:90-149 Odysseus tells his tale: The Ghost of Teiresias

‘Then the ghost of Theban Teiresias appeared, carrying his golden staff, ad he knew me, and spoke: “Odysseus, man of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, how now, luckless man? Why have you left the sunlight, to view the dead in this joyless place? Move back from the trench and turn aside your blade so I may drink the blood, and prophesy truth to you.”

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At this, I drew back and sheathed my silver-embossed sword. When he had drunk the black blood, the infallible seer spoke and said: “Noble Odysseus, you ask about your sweet homecoming, but the god will make it a bitter journey. I think you will not escape the Earth-Shaker, who is angered at heart against you, angered because you blinded his son. Even so, though you shall suffer, you and your friends may yet reach home when you have sailed your good ship to the island of Thrinacia, and escaped the dark blue sea, and found there the cattle and the fat flocks of Helios, he who sees and hears everything, if only you can control your own and your comrades’ greed. If you keep your hands off them, and think only of your homeward course, you may yet reach Ithaca, though you will suffer. But if you lay hands on them, then I foresee shipwreck for you and your friends, and even if you yourself escape, you will come unlooked-for to your home, in sore distress, losing all comrades, in another’s vessel, to find great trouble in your
house, insolent men who destroy your goods, who court your wife and offer gifts of courtship.

Yet, I speak truth, when you arrive there you will take revenge on them for their outrages. When, though, you have killed the *Suitors* in your palace, by cunning or openly, with your sharp sword, then pick up a shapely oar and travel on till you come to a race that knows nothing of the sea, that eat no salt with their food, and have never heard of crimson-painted ships, or the well-shaped oars that serve as wings. And let this be your sign, you cannot miss it: that meeting another traveller he will say you carry a winnowing-fan on your broad shoulder. There you must plant your shapely oar in the ground, and make rich sacrifice to Lord Poseidon, a ram, a bull, and a breeding-boar. Then leave for home, and make sacred offerings there to the deathless gods who hold the wide heavens, to all of them, and in their due order.
... And death will come to you far from the sea, the gentlest of deaths, taking you when you are bowed with comfortable old age, and your people prosperous about you. This that I speak to you is the truth.”

He finished, and I replied, saying: “Teiresias, no doubt the gods, themselves, have spun this fate for me. Come tell me the truth of this now. Here I see my dead mother’s ghost: she sits beside the blood silently, and cannot look on her own son’s face or speak with him. Tell me, my lord, how she may know it is I.”

Swiftly he answered my words: “It is a simple thing to explain to you. Whoever of the dead departed you allow to approach the blood will speak to you indeed: but whoever you deny will draw back.”

Bk XI:150-224 Odysseus tells his tale: The Spirit of Anticleia

‘With this the ghost of Lord Teiresias, its prophecy complete, drew back to the House of...
Hades. But I remained, undaunted, till my mother approached and drank the black blood. Then she knew me, and in sorrow spoke to me with winged words: “My son, how do you come, living, to the gloomy dark? It is difficult for those alive to find these realms, since there are great rivers and dreadful waters between us: not least Ocean that no man can cross except in a well-made ship. Do you only now come from Troy, after long wandering with your ship and crew? Have you not been to Ithaca yet, not seen your wife and home?”

To this I replied: “Mother, necessity brought me to Hades’ House, to hear the ghost of Theban Teiresias, and his prophecy. No, I have not yet neared Achaea’s shores, not set foot in my own country, but have wandered constantly, burdened with trouble, from the day I left for Ilium, the city famous for horses, with noble Agamemnon, to fight the Trojans. But tell me now, in truth, what pitiless fate overtook you? Was it a wasting disease, or did Artemis of the Bow attack you with her gentle arrows,
and kill you? And what of my father and son I left behind? Does my realm still rest with them, or has some other man possessed it, saying I will no longer return? And tell me of my wife, her thoughts and intentions. Is she still with her son, and all safe? Or has whoever is best among the Achaeans wedded her?"

So I spoke, and my revered mother swiftly replied: “Truly, that loyal heart still lives in your palace, and in weeping the days and night pass sadly for her. No man has taken your noble realm, as yet, and Telemachus holds the land unchallenged, feasting at the banquets of his peers, at least those it is fitting for a maker of laws to share, since all men invite him. But your father lives alone in the fields, not travelling to the city, and owns no bed with bright rugs and cloaks for bedding, but sleeps where serfs sleep, in the ashes by the hearth all winter through, and wears only simple clothes. When summer comes and mellow autumn, then you will find his humble beds of fallen leaves, scattered here and there on the vineyard’s
slopes. There he lies, burdened with age, grieving, nursing great sadness in his heart, longing for your return. So too fate brought me to the grave. It was not the clear-sighted Goddess of the Bow who slew me in the palace with gentle arrows, nor did I die of some disease, one of those that often steals the body’s strength, and wastes us wretchedly. No, what robbed me of my life and its honeyed sweetness was yearning for you, my glorious Odysseus, for your kindness and your counsels.”

So she spoke, and I wondered how I might embrace my dead mother’s ghost. Three times my will urged me to clasp her, and I started towards her, three times she escaped my arms like a shadow or a dream. And the pain seemed deeper in my heart. Then I spoke to her with winged words: “Mother, since I wish it why do you not let me embrace you, so that even in Hades’ House we might clasp our arms around each other and sate ourselves with chill lament? Are you a mere phantom royal Persephone has sent, to make me groan and grieve the more?
My revered mother replied quickly: “Oh, my child, most unfortunate of men, Persephone, Zeus’ daughter, does not deceive you: this is the way it is with mortals after death. The sinews no longer bind flesh and bone, the fierce heat of the blazing pyre consumes them, and the spirit flees from our white bones, a ghost that flutters and goes like a dream. Hasten to the light, with all speed: remember these things, to speak to your wife of them.”"

Bk XI:225-332 Odysseus tells his tale: The Ghosts of Famous Women

‘So we talked together, and then the women, the wives and daughters of heroes came, sent by royal Persephone. A crowd they thronged around the black blood, and I considered how best to question them, and this was my idea: to draw my long sword from its sheath, and prevent them drinking of the blood together. Then each came forward, one by one, and declared her lineage, and I questioned all."
Know then, the first I saw was noble Tyro, who told me she was peerless Salmoneus’ daughter, and wife to Cretheus, Aeolus’ son. She fell in love with the god of the River Enipeus, most beautiful of Earth’s rivers, and used to wander by its lovely waters. But the Earth-Shaker, Earth-Bearer Poseidon, took Enipeus’ form, and lay with her at the eddying river-mouth. A dark wave, mountain-high, curled over them, and hid the mortal woman and the god. There he unclasped the virgin’s girdle, and then he sealed her eyes in sleep. When he had finished making love to her, he took her by the hand, and said: “Lady, be happy in this love of ours, and as the year progresses you will bear glorious children, for a god’s embrace is not without power. Nurse them and rear them, but for now go home and keep silent, and know I am Poseidon, the Earth-Shaker.” With this he sank beneath the surging sea. Tyro conceived, and bore Pelias and Neleus, two mighty servants of great Zeus. Pelias, rich in flocks, lived in spacious Iolcus, while Neleus
lived in sandy Pylos. This queen among women bore other children to Cretheus: Aeson, Pheres and Amythaon, filled with the charioteer’s delight in battle.

Next I saw Antiope, Asopus’ daughter, who claimed she had slept with Zeus himself. She gave birth to two sons, Amphion and Zethus, who founded Seven-Gated Thebes, ringing it with walls, since powerful as they were they could not live in a Thebes vast but unfortified.

Then came Alcmene, wife of Amphitryon, who conceived Heracles, lion-hearted, fierce in fight, when she lay in great Zeus’ arms. And I saw Megara, proud Creon’s daughter, who married that same indomitable son of Amphitryon.

Then Oedipus’ mother came, the beautiful Jocasta, who unknowingly did a monstrous thing: she wed her own son. He killed his father and married his mother: only then did the gods reveal the truth. By the gods’ dark design despite his suffering he still ruled the Cadmeans in lovely Thebes, but she descended to the
house of Hades, mighty jailor, tying a fatal noose to the high ceiling, hung by her own grief, leaving endless pain for Oedipus, all that a mother’s avenging Furies can inflict.

And lovely Chloris I saw, youngest daughter of Amphion, son of Iasus once the great Minyan King of Orchomenus. Neleus wooing her gave her countless gifts, marrying her because of her beauty: and she was Queen in Pylos. She bore her husband glorious children, Nestor, Chromius, and noble Periclymenus, and the lovely Pero, she a wonder to men, so that all her neighbours tried for her hand, but Neleus would only give her to the man who could drive great Iphicles’ cattle from Phylace: a broad and spiral-horned herd, and hard to drive. The infallible prophet, Melampus, alone, agreed to try, but the gods’ dark design snared him, and the savage herdsmen’s cruel bonds. Only when days and months had passed, the seasons had altered, and a new year came, did mighty Iphicles release
him, since he had exhausted all his prophecies, and Zeus’ will was done.

Leda, I saw, Tyndareus’ wife, who bore him those stout-hearted twins, Castor, the horse-tamer, and Polydeuces, the boxer. Though they still live, they have even been honoured by Zeus in the underworld, beneath the fruitful Earth. Each alternately is alive for a day, and the next day that one is dead: they are honoured as if they were gods.

Next I saw Iphimedeia, Aloeus wife, who claimed she had slept with Poseidon. She too bore twins, short-lived, godlike Otus and famous Ephialtes, the tallest most handsome men by far, bar great Orion, whom the fertile Earth ever nourished. They were fifteen feet wide, and fifty feet high at nine years old, and threatened to sound the battle-cry of savage war even against the Olympian gods. They longed to add Ossa to Olympus, then Pelion and its waving woods to Ossa, and scale the heavens themselves. They would have done it too, if they had already reached manhood, but Apollo,
Zeus’ son, born of lovely Leto, slew them both, before the down had covered their faces, and their beards began to grow.

And Phaedra too I saw, and Procris, and fair Ariadne, daughter of baleful Minos. Theseus tried to carry her off from Crete to the sacred hill of Athens, but had no joy, for Artemis, warned by Dionysus, killed her on sea-encircled Dia.

And Maera came, and Clymene, and hateful Eriphyle, who sold her own husband’s life for gold.

I cannot count or name all the wives and daughters of heroes I saw there, or all this immortal night would be gone. And it is time for me to sleep, here in the palace, or with my crew by the swift ship. My journey home is in your hands, and in the hands of the gods.’

Bk XI:333-384 Alcinous asks Odysseus to continue his narration
So **Odysseus** spoke. Spellbound at his words, all had fallen silent in the darkened hall. White-armed **Arete** was the first of the gathering to speak: ‘**Phaeacians**, what do you think of this man’s looks, his stature, and judgement? He is my guest, as well, though you all share in that honour. So don’t be in a hurry to send him on his way, nor fail in generosity to one who stands in need, for favoured by the gods your homes are full of treasures.’

Then a Phaeacian elder, the aged hero **Echeneus**, said: ‘Friends, our wise queen’s words are fitting and match our thoughts. Respond to them, though words and actions here are still subject to **Alcinous**.’

‘Her word is good,’ Alcinous replied, ‘as long as I live and rule the sea-loving Phaeacians. Yet our guest must stay until tomorrow, despite his longing for home, while we add to our gifts. The men shall concern themselves, all of them, with his passage, I most of all, since the power here rests with me.’
Then resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘Renowned Alcinous, my lord, if you further my passage and offer me glorious gifts, though you commanded me to stay, even for another year, I would accept it. It would be better to reach my country with full hands. I would win more honour and love from those who witness my return to Ithaca.’

Again Alcinous spoke: ‘Odysseus, when we gaze at you, we certainly do not think of you as one of those liars and cheats the black earth breeds in such numbers among the ranks of humankind, men who fashion falsehoods out of things beyond experience. You have a wise and eloquent heart, and have told us your adventures and of the Argives’ sad misfortunes with the skilfulness of a bard. But tell me the truth of this, in Hades did you see any of your godlike comrades, warriors who travelled to Troy with you, and met their death there? The night is long, and it cannot be time to sleep yet, not on such a marvellous night as this. Tell me the wondrous things you have done. I could
stay awake till shining dawn, listening as long as you are willing to speak of your misfortunes.’

To this resourceful Odysseus answered: ‘Lord Alcinous, most renowned of men, there is a time for words, and a time for sleep. But if you long to hear I cannot refuse to speak of a sadder thing than these, the fate of friends who escaped the dread ranks of the Trojans only to die later, to die on their return through an evil woman’s wiles.’

Bk XI:385-464 Odysseus tells his tale: The Ghost of Agamemnon

‘When sacred Persephone had dispersed the female spirits, the ghost of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, came sorrowing, and other ghosts were gathered round him, those who met their fate alongside him, murdered in Aegisthus’ palace. Drinking the black blood he knew me, and wept loudly, shedding great tears, stretching his hands out in his eagerness to touch me. But all
his power and strength was gone, all that vigour his body one possessed.

I wept when I saw him, and pitied him, and spoke to him with winged words: “Agamemnon, king of men, glorious son of Atreus, what pitiless stroke of fate destroyed you? Did Poseidon stir the cruel winds to a raging tempest, and swamp your ships? Or perhaps you were attacked in enemy country, while you were driving off their cattle and fine flocks, or fighting to take their city and its women?”

He answered my words swiftly: “Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, Poseidon stirred no cruel winds to raging tempest, nor swamped my ships, nor was I attacked in enemy country. Aegisthus it was who engineered my fate, inviting me to his palace for a feast, murdering me with my accursed wife’s help, as you might kill an ox in its stall. I died wretchedly, and round me my companions were slaughtered ruthlessly, like white-tusked swine for a wedding banquet in
the hall of some rich and powerful man, or at a communal meal, or a great drinking session. You yourself have witnessed the killing of men, in single combat or in the thick of the fight, but you would have felt the deepest pity at that sight, the floor swimming with blood where our corpses lay, by the mixing bowl and the heavily-laden tables. But the most pitiful cry of all came from Cassandra, Priam’s daughter, whom treacherous Clytemnestra killed as she clung to me. Brought low by Aegisthus’ sword I tried to lift my arms in dying, but bitch that she was my wife turned away, and though I was going to Hades’ Halls she disdained even to close my eyelids or my mouth. Truly there is nothing more terrible or shameless than a woman who can contemplate such acts, planning and executing a husband’s murder. I had thought to be welcomed by my house and children, but she with her mind intent on that final horror has brought shame on herself and all future women, even those who are virtuous.”
To this I answered: “Indeed, from the very beginning, Zeus the Thunderer has tormented the race of Atreus, through women’s machinations! So many men died for Helen’s sake while Clytemnestra plotted in your absence.” I spoke, and he made answer swiftly: “So don’t be too open with your own wife, don’t tell her every thought in your mind, reveal a part, keep the rest to yourself. Not that death will come to you from wise Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, she who is so tender-hearted, and circumspect. A newly wedded bride she was when we left for the war, with a baby son at her breast who must be a man now and prospering. His loving father will see him when he returns, and he will kiss his father as is right and proper. But that wife of mine did not even allow me to set eyes on my son before she killed me. Let me say this too, and take my words to heart, don’t bring your ship to anchor openly, when you reach home, but do it secretly, since women can no longer be trusted."
Come tell me, in truth, have you heard if my son is still alive, maybe in Orchomenus or sandy Pylos, or in Menelaus’ broad Sparta: that my noble Orestes is not yet dead?” To this I answered: “Son of Atreus, why ask this of me? I cannot tell if he is dead or living, and it is wrong to utter empty words.””

Bk XI:465-540 Odysseus tells his tale: The Spirit of Achilles

‘So we stood, exchanging words of sadness, grieving and shedding tears. And now the spirit of Achilles son of Peleus appeared, and the spirits of Patroclus and peerless Antilochus, and Ajax who for beauty and stature was supreme among the Danaans, save only for Peleus’ flawless son. And the ghost of swift-footed Achilles, grandson of Aeacus, knew me, and spoke through the tears: “Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, what could your resolute mind devise that exceeds this: to dare to descend to Hades, where live the
heedless dead, the disembodied ghosts of men?”

So he spoke, and I replied: “Achilles, son of Peleus, greatest of Achaean warriors, I came to find Teiresias, to see if he would show me the way to reach rocky Ithaca. I have not yet touched Achaea, not set foot in my own land, but have suffered endless troubles, yet no man has been more blessed than you, Achilles, nor will be in time to come, since we Argives considered you a god while you lived, and now you rule, a power, among the un-living. Do not grieve, then, Achilles, at your death.”

These words he answered, swiftly: “Glorious Odysseus: don’t try to reconcile me to my dying. I’d rather serve as another man’s labourer, as a poor peasant without land, and be alive on Earth, than be lord of all the lifeless dead. Give me news of my son, instead. Did he follow me to war, and become a leader? Tell me, too, what you know of noble Peleus. Is he honoured still among the Myrmidons, or because old age ties him hand and foot do
Hellas and Phthia fail to honour him. I am no longer up there in the sunlight to help him with that strength I had on Troy’s wide plain, where I killed the flower of their host to defend the Argives. If I could only return strong to my father’s house, for a single hour, I would give those who abuse him and his honour cause to regret the power of my invincible hands.”

To this I answered: “Truly, I have heard nothing of faultless Peleus, but I can tell you all about Neoptolemus, your resolute son, since you command me. I myself brought him from Scyros, in my well-made hollow ship, to join the bronze-greaved ranks of the Acheans. When we debated our plans before Troy he was always first to speak and his words were eloquent: only godlike Nestor and I were more so. And when we fought with our bronze spears on the plains of Troy, he never lagged behind in the crowded ranks but always advanced far in the lead, yielding to no one in skill. Many were the men he killed in mortal combat. I could not count or name them, all those victims of his,
killed as he fought for the Argives, but what a warrior that hero Eurypylus, son of Telephus was, who fell to his sword, and Eurypylus’ Mysian comrades slain around him, all because of a woman’s desire for gain.

Next to noble Memnon, he was the handsomest man I ever saw. Then again, when we Argive leaders climbed into the Horse that Epeius made, and it fell to me to open the hatch of our well-made hiding place, or keep it closed, the other Danaan generals and counsellors kept on wiping the tears from their eyes and their limbs trembled, but he begged me endlessly to let him leap from the Horse, toying with his sword hilt and his heavy bronze spear, eager to wreak havoc on the Trojans. And when we had sacked Priam’s high city, he took ship with his share of the spoils and a noble prize, and never a wound, untouched by the sharp spears, unmarked by close combat, something rare in battle, since Ares, the God of War, is indiscriminate in his fury.”
When I had spoken, the spirit of Achilles, Aeacus’ grandson, went away with great strides through the field of asphodel, rejoicing at my news of his son’s greatness.’

Bk XI:541-592 Odysseus tells his tale: The Ghost of Ajax and others

‘The other ghosts of the dead departed stood there sorrowing, and each asked me about their dear ones. Only the spirit of Ajax, Telamon’s son, stood apart, still angered over my victory in the contest by the ships, for Achilles’ weapons. Achilles’ divine mother, Thetis, had offered them as a prize, with the Trojan prisoners and Pallas Athene herself as judges. I wish I had never won the reward for that debate, that armour that caused the earth to close over so noble a head as that of Ajax, who in beauty and martial action was supreme among the Danaans, save for that faultless son of Peleus. I spoke to his ghost in calming words: “Ajax, son of faultless Telamon, even in
death can you not forget your anger with me, over those fatal weapons? The gods themselves must have cursed the Argives with them. In you a tower of strength was lost to us, and we Achaeans never cease to share as great a grief for you, as we do for Achilles, Peleus’ son. But Zeus alone is to blame whose deadly hatred for the Danaan host hastened your doom. Come closer to me, my lord, so you can hear my speech. Curb your wrath: restrain your proud spirit.”

He chose not to give a single word in answer, but went his way into Erebus to join the other ghosts of the dead departed. For all his anger he might still have spoken to me, or I to him, but my heart desired to see other ghosts of those who were gone.

Know that I saw Minos there, Zeus’ glorious son, seated with the golden sceptre in his hand, passing judgement on the dead as they sat or stood around him, making their case, in the broad-gated House of Hades.
I next saw great **Orion**, carrying his indestructible bronze club, driving the phantoms of wild creatures he once killed in the lonely hills over the fields of asphodel.

I saw **Tityos**, son of glorious **Gaea**, spread out over a hundred yards of ground, while a vulture sat on either side tearing his liver, plucking at his entrails, his hands powerless to beat them away. He is punished for his rape of **Leto**, Zeus’ honoured consort, as she journeyed to **Pytho** through lovely **Panopeus**.

I saw **Tantalus** in agonising torment, in a pool of water reaching to his chin. He was tortured by thirst, but could not drink, since every time he stooped eagerly the water was swallowed up and vanished, and at his feet only black earth remained, parched by some god. Fruit hung from the boughs of tall leafy trees, pears and pomegranates, juicy apples, sweet figs and ripe olives. But whenever the old man reached towards them to grasp them in his hands, the wind would sweep them off into the shadowy clouds.’
Bk XI:593-640 Odysseus tells his tale: The Ghost of Heracles

‘And I saw Sisyphus in agonising torment trying to roll a huge stone to the top of a hill. He would brace himself, and push it towards the summit with both hands, but just as he was about to heave it over the crest its weight overcame him, and then down again to the plain came bounding that pitiless boulder. He would wrestle again, and lever it back, while the sweat poured from his limbs, and the dust swirled round his head.

Then I caught sight of mighty Heracles, I mean his phantom, since he joys in feasting among the deathless gods, with slim-ankled Hebe for wife, she the daughter of great Zeus and golden-sandalled Hera. Round Heracles a clamour rose from the dead, like wild birds flying up in terror, and he dark as night, his bow unsheathed and an arrow strung, glared round fiercely as if about to shoot. His golden
shoulder-belt was terrifying too, where marvellous things were wrought, bears, wild boars, lions with glittering eyes, battle and conflict, murder and mayhem. I hope that whatever craftsman retained the design of that belt he never made another, and never will.

When he saw me, he in turn knew me, and weeping spoke in winged words: “Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, wretched spirit are you too playing out your evil fate such as I once endured under the sun? A son of Zeus, Cronos’ son, I still suffered misery beyond all measure, since I served a man far inferior to me, and he set me difficult tasks. He even sent me here to bring back the Hound of Hades, unable to think of a harder labour. I carried off the creature too, and led him away. Hermes and bright-eyed Athene were my guides.”

With this he departed into Hades’ House, but I stood fast, hoping some other heroic warrior of ancient times might still appear. And I might have seen those men of the past I
longed to see, Theseus and Peirithous, bright sons of the gods. But long before that the countless hosts of the dead came thronging with eerie cries, and I was gripped by pale fear lest royal Persephone send up the head of that ghastly monster, the Gorgon, from Hades’ House.

So I hastened to the ship, and ordered my friends to embark, and let loose the cables. Swiftly they climbed aboard, and took their seats at the oars, and as we rowed the force of the current carried her down the River of Ocean, till afterwards a fair breeze blew.

Bk XII:1-35 Odysseus tells his tale: Return to Aeaea

‘Leaving the River of Ocean, and crossing the wide sea waves, we came again to the Isle of Aeaea, where Eos the Dawn has her House and Dancing Floor: to the place where the sun rises. There we beached our ship on the sand and
leapt to the shore, and there we slept until bright day.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I sent my men to Circe’s house to recover Elpenor’s corpse. Then swiftly cutting logs of wood we performed the funeral rites, grieving and in tears, on the furthest point of the headland. When the body had burnt, and with it the dead man’s armour, we heaped a mound, and raised a stone on top, and at the summit we fixed his well-shaped oar.

Circe was well aware of our return from Hades’ House, and while we were busy with our tasks she adorned herself and hastened to us, her handmaids bringing plenty of bread and meat, and glowing red wine. She stood there in the centre, and addressed us: “Resolute men, to have gone down living to Hades’ House, you who will meet death twice, while others die only once. Eat then and drink here today, but when Dawn comes set sail, and I will show the way and explain the course so you can avoid
pain and suffering on sea or land for lack of a decent plan.”

To this our proud hearts yielded, and all day long till the sun set we feasted on ample meat and wine. When the sun went down and darkness fell, my men lay down to sleep by the ships’ cables, but Circe took my hand and led me apart from my friends, and made me sit down and tell the tale, as she lay there beside me. I related it all in proper sequence.’

**Bk XII:36-110** Odysseus tells his tale: Circe’s advice

‘Then royal **Circe** said: “So, it all came to pass. Well listen now to what I tell you, and let some god remind you of it. Next you will come to the **Sirens** who beguile all men that approach them. Whoever encounters them unawares and listens to their voices will never joy at reaching home, his wife and children to greet him. Instead the Sirens’ tempt him with their limpid song, as they sit there in the meadow with a vast heap of
mouldering corpses, bones on which hangs the shrivelled skin. Plug your comrades’ ears with softened beeswax lest they listen, and row swiftly past. And if you must hear, then let them first tie you hand and foot and stand you upright in the mast housing, and fasten the rope ends round the mast itself, so you can delight in hearing the Sirens’ voices. And should you beg your crew to free you, let them only bind you more tightly.

Once your comrades have rowed you beyond those creatures I cannot advise you of the best course to take. I will tell you the choice, but you must decide. One leads to sheer cliffs, against which green-eyed Amphitrite hurls her vast roaring breakers, the blessed gods call them the Wandering Rocks. Not even birds can pass between them unscathed, not even the timorous rock-doves that bring ambrosia to Father Zeus. The slippery rock always takes one, and Zeus must send another to complete their number. Crews that reach the rocks can never escape, instead ships’ timbers and human
corpses are tossed by the waves or in gushers of cruel fire. Only one ocean-going vessel has passed between them, the celebrated Argo fleeing from Aeetes, and the waves would have quickly broken her on the massive crags, if Hera had not seen her through, because of her care for Jason.

The other course leads to two cliffs, one whose sharp peak towers to the wide heavens. A dark cloud caps it that never vanishes to leave clear skies, even in summer or at harvest. No mortal could climb it and set foot on the summit, not though he had twenty hands and feet: the rock is smooth as if it were polished. In the centre of this cliff-face is a dark cave, facing West towards Erebus, on the path your hollow ship will take, glorious Odysseus, if you listen to my advice. Even a man of great strength could not shoot an arrow from your vessel as far as that arching cavern. Scylla lives there, whose yelp it is true is only that of a newborn whelp, yet she is a foul monster whom not even a god could gaze at with pleasure. She has
twelve flailing legs and six long thin necks, each ending in a savage head with a triple row of close-set teeth masking death’s black void. She is sunk to her waist in the echoing cave, but extends her jaws from that menacing chasm, and there she fishes, groping eagerly round the cliff for her catch, dolphins and seals or one of the greater creatures that Amphitrite breeds in countless numbers in the moaning depths. No crew passing by in their ship can boast it has ever escaped her unscathed, since each head snatches a man, lifting him from his dark-prowed vessel.

Odysseus, you will notice the other cliff is lower, only a bow-shot away, and a great fig-tree with dense leaves grows there. Under it divine Charybdis swallows the black waters. Three times a day, she spews them out, and three times darkly sucks them back again. No one, not even Poseidon, could save you from destruction if you are there when she swallows. Hug Scylla’s cliff instead, and row your ship
past swiftly, since it its better to mourn six men than your whole crew.””

Bk XII:111-164 Odysseus tells his tale: Leaving Aeaea once more

‘So she spoke, but I replied: “Goddess, I beg you to tell me truly why I cannot both escape deadly Charybdis and yet defeat Scylla when she tries to attack my crew?” To this the Goddess answered: “Resolute man is your heart set again on the toils of battle? Will you not even bow to the deathless gods? Scylla is not mortal. She is immortal evil: a dire, ferocious thing of dread. You cannot fight her, there is no defence: the only course is flight. If you pause by the rock to arm yourselves, I fear she will dart out and strike you with all six heads again, and seize as many men as at first. Row past at full speed instead, and call to Cratais, Scylla’s mother, who bore her to be the bane of mortal men. She might keep her from darting out once more.
Journeying on you will reach the island of Thrinacia, where the Sun-god’s cattle and rich flocks graze: seven herds of kine and as many of sheep, with fifty head per herd. They bear no young, but never die, and the goddesses with lovely tresses, the nymphs Phaethusa and Lampetia, the daughters of Neaera and Helios Hyperion, are their shepherdesses. When noble Neaera had borne and nursed them, she sent them to remote Thrinacia, to tend their father’s sheep and spiral-horned cattle. If you avoid harming the herds, and head straight for home you will suffer yet still see Ithaca. But if you harm them, I prophesy shipwreck for you and your friends, and even if you yourself escape, you will come unlooked-for to your home, in sore distress, losing all comrades.”

As she finished speaking, golden-throned Dawn appeared. Then the lovely goddess left for home, but I went to the ship and roused my men, and ordered them to embark and loose the hawsers. They boarded swiftly and took their place on the benches then sitting in their rows
struck the grey water with their oars. **Circe** of the lovely tresses, dread goddess with a human voice, sent us a good companion to help us, a fresh wind from astern of our dark-prowed ship to fill the sail. And when we had set the tackle in order fore and aft, we sat down, and let the wind and the helmsman keep her course.

Then, troubled at heart, I spoke to the crew: “Friends, it is not right that only one or two of us should know the prophecies of the lovely goddess, Circe. I will tell all, so that escaping fate and death or no, at least you are forewarned. First she advised us to evade the voices of the marvellous Sirens in their flowering meadow. She commanded me alone to listen. You are to tie me hand and foot and stand me upright in the mast housing, and fasten the rope ends round the mast itself, and if I beg you to free me, bind me yet more tightly.””
So I explained everything to my friends, while our well-built vessel, borne on a gentle breeze, quickly neared the island of the Sirens. Suddenly the wind dropped, and a breathless calm followed, as some god lulled the waves. My comrades rose and furled the sail, then stowed it, then sat to their oars and thrashed the water with the blades of polished pine. I, in the meantime, sliced a large cake of beeswax with my sword-edge, and kneaded the slivers in my strong hands until the pressure and the rays of Lord Helios Hyperion heated it. Then I plugged the ears of each of my friends, and they tied me hand and foot and stood me upright in the mast housing, and fastened the rope ends round the mast itself. Then sitting down again, they struck the grey water with their oars.

We drove past swiftly, but when we were within hail of the shore, the Sirens could not fail to see our speeding vessel, and began their
clear singing: “Famous Odysseus, great glory of Achaea, draw near, and bring your ship to rest, and listen to our voices. No man rows past this isle in his dark ship without hearing the honeysweet sound from our lips. He delights in it and goes his way a wiser man. We know all the suffering the Argives and the Trojans endured, by the gods’ will, on the wide plains of Troy. We know everything that comes to pass on the fertile Earth.”

This was the haunting song the Sirens sang, and I longed to listen, commanding my crew by my expression to set me free. But they bent to their oars and rowed harder, while Perimedes and Eurylochus rose and tightened my bonds and added more rope. Not till they had rowed beyond the Sirens, so we no longer heard their voices and song, did my loyal friends clear the wax that plugged their ears, and untie me.’

Bk XII:201-259 Odysseus tells his tale: Scylla and Charybdis
‘No sooner had we left the isle behind than I
saw spray, and huge breakers, and heard their
thunder. The oars springing from my crew’s
grasp in their terror slid into the sea, and the
ship lost way without my comrades’ arms
tugging at the tapered blades. Still I paced up
and down the deck encouraging them with calm
words, speaking to every man in turn: “Friends,
we are not unused to trouble: and this hardship
is no worse than when the Cyclops used brute
strength to pen us in his echoing cave. I used
my courage, intelligence and tactics, to get us
out of there, and some day these dangers too
will be only a memory. Now listen to my orders
and all obey. Stick to your oars and smite the
deep sea breakers, and pray that Zeus may
allow us to run from death. Steersman, here are
my orders, and take them to heart, since the
hollow ship’s steering oar is in your control.
Keep the ship out of the surf and spray, and hug
the cliff, or before you know it the ship will
veer to the far side, and plunge us to
destruction.”
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They quickly responded to my words. I chose not to speak of the intractable problem of Scylla, lest gripped by terror they left the oars to huddle in the hold. And now I forgot Circe’s stern command not to arm myself, instead I donned my splendid armour and grasped two long spears in my hand. Then I ran to the foredeck, expecting to see rock-bound Scylla first from there bringing disaster to my comrades. But I could not sight her and my eyes grew weary searching the mist-draped cliff face.

So we sailed on through the narrow straits, crying aloud for fear of Scylla on the one hand while divine Charybdis sucked the sea in terribly on the other. Whenever she spewed it out again, it bubbled and seethed in turmoil like a cauldron on a vast fire, and high overhead the spray rained down on the crags on either side. When she swallowed the seas, her inner vortex could be seen, and the rock echoed savagely round about, while below the seabed showed its dark-blue sand. My crew turned pale as we
gazed at her, fearing destruction, but even as we did so Scylla seized six of my strongest and ablest men from the deck. As I looked along the swift ship towards my friends I saw their arms and legs dangling above me. In anguish they cried my name aloud one last time, then each of Scylla’s heads dragged a man writhing towards the rock, as a fisherman on a jutting crag casts his bait to lure small fish, lowers an ox-horn on a long pole into the sea, and catching a fish flings it ashore. There at the entrance to her cave she devoured them, as they shrieked and reached out their hands to me in their last dreadful throes. It was the most pitiable sight of all I saw exploring the pathways of the sea.’

Bk XII:260-319 Odysseus tells his tale: Landing on Thrinacia

‘When we had left the cliffs behind, and Scylla and Charybdis, we came swiftly to Helios Hyperion’s lovely island, where the sun-god grazed his fine broad-browed cattle, and his
flocks of sturdy sheep. I could hear the lowing of cattle as they were stalled and the bleating of sheep from my black ship while I was still at sea, and the blind seer Theban Teiresias’ words came to mind, with those of Aeaean Circe, who both warned me to avoid the isle of Helios who gives mortals comfort. Then troubled at heart I spoke to my men: “Listen, Friends, to words that will distress you. Let me tell you the prophecies of Teiresias and Aeaean Circe. They clearly warned me to avoid the isle of Helios, who comforts mortals: here the greatest danger would lie. So, row the black ship on past the island.”

My men’s spirits fell at this, and Eurylochus replied at once, with fateful words: “Odysseus, you are stronger than us all, with limbs that never weary. It seems you are made of iron and would prevent your friends, exhausted with their efforts and lack of sleep, from landing and making a decent meal on this sea-encircled isle. Instead you order us to travel on through advancing night, driven from this
island into the misty deep. Night bears the fierce winds that wreck ships. How would we escape total destruction if a southerly or a fierce westerly gale sprang up, those that most often sink vessels despite the omnipotent gods? No, let us give way to dark night, and take our supper on shore by the swift ship, then embark in the morning, and put out once more into the wide waters.”

Eurylochus spoke, and the rest of my crew concurred. Then I knew some god was set on working harm, and I replied with winged words: “Indeed, you have conquered my lone voice, Eurylochus. But let all of you swear me a solemn oath that none of you, his mind clouded with error, will kill a cow or sheep of any herd of cattle or flock we find, but only eat the food deathless Circe gave us.”

They quickly swore they would do as I commanded. And when they had sworn their oath, we moored our fine ship in a deep cove with a spring of sweet water, and the crew went ashore and swiftly prepared a meal. When they
had quenched their hunger and thirst, they began to grieve for their dear friends whom Scylla snatched from the hollow ship and devoured, and as they grieved sweet sleep came upon them. But in the third watch of night, when the stars had begun their descent, Zeus the cloud-gatherer stirred a tempestuous wind, and veiled the land and sea with cloud, and all was darkness. As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we hauled up our ship and made her fast in a flooded cave, where the Nymphs had their seats and a dancing place. Then I gathered the men together and addressed them.’

Bk XII:320-373 Odysseus tells his tale: His crew break their oath

“‘Friends, since we have food and drink on board our swift ship let us keep our hands off those cattle lest we come to grief. They are the sturdy sheep and cows of Helios, a great god, who sees and hears everything.’"
Their proud hearts conceded me this. But a southerly wind blew for a whole month, and then every breeze was from the east or south. As long as my crew still had bread and red wine they kept their hands from the cattle, valuing their lives. But when all the ship’s stores had gone and they had to hunt for whatever game they could find, even fishing with curved hooks their hunger gnawed them so: then I went inland alone to pray to the gods hoping that one would show us how to leave. And when I was far enough away from my crew, I cleansed my hands in a place on the island sheltered from the wind, and prayed to all the gods of Olympus. But they shed sweet sleep over my eyelids, while behind me Eurylochus was giving my comrades bad advice. “Listen to me, comrades in distress”, he said. “Every form of death is vile to us wretched mortals, but the most wretched way to die is by starvation. So, let us cut out the finest of Helios’ cattle, and sacrifice to the gods of the wide heavens. And if we return to Ithaca, our own land, let us build a
fine temple to Helios Hyperion, and fill it with precious gifts. And if he is angered at the loss of his long-horned kine and chooses to wreck our ship, the other gods’ agreeing, well for myself I would rather die quickly in the waves, than waste away slowly on a desert island.”

The rest of my crew agreed with Eurylochus. They swiftly corralled the best of Helios’ cattle since the fine spiral-horned broad-browed cows were grazing not far from our blue-prowed ship. They gathered round them, and prayed to the gods, scattering the new leaves of a tall oak, since they had no white barley left aboard the oared vessel. And when they had prayed they slit the cows’ throats, flayed them and cut out pieces of thigh which they wrapped in a double layer of fat, laying raw meat on top. As they had no wine to pour on the burning sacrifice, they made libations with water, roasting the entrails on the fire. When the thighs were burnt, and they had tasted the inner parts, they carved the rest and spitted it on skewers.
Only then did sweet sleep leave my eyes, and I headed back to the swift ship and the shore, but as I drew near the curved vessel the rich scent of hot fat wafted to me, and I groaned aloud and called to the deathless gods: “Father Zeus, and you other gods, immortally blessed, you lulled me with cruel sleep to bring about my ruin, so my friends left behind could plan this monstrous crime.”

Bk XII:374-453 Odysseus tells his tale: Punishment from Zeus

‘Now Lampetia of the trailing robes sped swiftly to Helios Hyperion with the news we had killed his cattle, and deeply angered he complained to the immortals: “Father Zeus and you other gods, immortally blessed, take vengeance on the followers of Odysseus, Laertes’ son. In their insolence, they have killed my cattle: creatures I loved to see when I climbed the starry sky, and when I turned back towards earth again from heaven. If they do not
atone for their killing, I will go down to Hades and shine for the dead instead.”

At that Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, answered: “Helios, don’t stop shining for us immortals, or for mortal men on the fertile Earth. As for those culprits I will quickly strike their swift ship with my bright lightning bolt, and shatter it to pieces out on the wine-dark sea.” This is what I heard from Calypso of the lovely tresses, who said that she herself had heard it from Hermes the Messenger.

When I reached the ship and the shore, I rebuked my men one by one, but things were beyond remedy, the cattle were already dead. The gods at once showed my men dark omens. The ox-hides crawled about, raw meat and roast bellowed on the spit, and all around sounded the noise of lowing cattle. Nevertheless my faithful comrades feasted for six days on the pick of Helios’ cattle they had stolen. And when Zeus, Cronos’ son, brought the seventh day on us, the tempest ceased, and we
embarked, and, raising the mast and hoisting the white sail, we put out into open water.

It was not till the island fell astern, and we were out of sight of all but sky and sea, that Zeus anchored a black cloud above our hollow ship, and the waves beneath were dark. She had not run on for long before there came a howling gale, a tempest out of the west, and the first squall snapped both our forestays, so that the mast toppled backwards and the rigging fell into the hold, while the tip of the mast hitting the stern struck the steersman’s skull and crushed the bones. He plunged like a diver from the deck, and his brave spirit fled the bones.

At that same instant Zeus thundered and hurled his lightning at the ship. Struck by the bolt she shivered from stem to stern, and filled with sulphurous smoke. Falling from the deck, my men floated like sea-gulls in the breakers round the black ship. The gods had robbed them of their homecoming. But I ran up and down the ship till a surge ripped the sides from the keel, and drove her on naked, snapping the mast
close to the keel. The backstay of ox-hide rope lay across the mast, and with it I lashed the keel and mast together, and sitting astride I was carried before the driving wind.

Then, would you know, the westerly wind dropped, and a southerly rose swiftly, galling me to the heart lest I retrace our course to meet the whirlpool’s terror. All night I was swept along, and at sunrise was back at Scylla’s rock, and dread Charybdis, who swallowed the water round me, but I leapt up, caught at the tall fig tree, and hung there like a bat. I could find no foothold, nor climb the tree as its roots were far below me, and its great solid branches that cast shadows on Charybdis were out of reach above. There I clung grimly, till she spewed out mast and keel again. She did, to my delight, but not till that time of day when a judge who handles young litigants’ endless quarrels rises from court to find his supper. At that hour the timbers emerged from Charybdis. Then I let go with hands and feet, and plunged into the water clear of the long spars. Then clambering astride
them I paddled along with my hands. The Father of men and gods prevented Scylla noticing me, or I would never have escaped utter disaster.

I drifted from there for nine days, and on the tenth night the gods washed me ashore on Ogygia, the home of Calypso of the lovely tresses, that dread goddess with a human voice, who cared for me and loved me. But why repeat the story? Only yesterday it was I told it, here in the hall, to yourself and your noble wife. It’s a tedious thing to re-tell a plain-told tale.”

Bk XIII:1-52 Odysseus begs Alcinous to let him depart

Odysseus finished speaking. Spellbound at his words, all had fallen silent in the darkened hall. Then Alcinous addressed him once more, saying: “Odysseus, now you have set foot on the bronze floor of my high hall, I suspect, though you have suffered greatly, you will not be driven back on your course again as you sail
home. Now I give this command to every man who drinks the Elders’ glowing wine and listens to the bard. Clothing, and finely wrought gold, and all the other gifts the Phaeacian counsellors brought here for our guest are already laid up in the polished chest. But now let each offer him a cauldron and a large tripod. We in turn will impose a levy on the people to recoup the cost, since it would be hard on any man to give so generously without repayment.”

Alcinous’ words pleased them, and each man went to his house to sleep, but when rosy-fingered Dawn appeared they hastened to bring the articles of bronze that add to a man’s power, to the ship. And royal Alcinous himself went up and down the deck, stowing them carefully under the benches, so they would not hamper the crew when rowing, as they sweated at the oars. Then they went to Alcinous’ halls to ready a feast, and Alcinous sacrificed a bull on their behalf to Zeus, the lord of all, the god of the dark clouds, Cronos’ son.
When they had burned the pieces of thigh, they made a fine and joyful feast, and the divine bard Demodocus, honoured by the people, sang to the sound of his lyre. But Odysseus kept turning his head to see the shining sun, impatient for its setting, more than eager to be on his way. He was as glad to see the light vanish as a ploughman, longing for his supper, whose team of black oxen has pulled the share through unturned soil all day, and whose legs are weary as he goes home to his meal. Then he addressed the Phaeacians, lovers of the sea, Alcinous above all: “Lord Alcinous, famous above all men, and all you other noblemen, pour your libations now, and send me on my way in peace. And farewell, to you all! Now everything I could wish has been achieved: a ship to take me home, and friendly gifts. May the gods in heaven bless them both, and when I reach home let me find my faultless wife and my loved ones safe, and may you I leave behind bring joy to your wives and children, and may
the gods grant you every excellence, and may no evil come to your people.”

They all praised his words, and urged the departure of this guest who spoke so eloquently. Then mighty Alcinous called to his herald, saying: ‘Mix the wine, Pontonous, and serve it through the hall, so that once we have prayed to Father Zeus we can send our guest on his way to his own country.’”

Bk XIII:53-95 The journey home

At this, Pontonous mixed the honey-sweet wine, and served them all in turn, and they poured libations, where they sat, to the gods who are blessed and rule the wide heavens. Then noble Odysseus rose to his feet, and placed his two-handled cup in Arete’s hands, and addressed her with winged words: “Fare well through all the years, Queen, till our mortal fate, old-age and death, shall come. I go my way, now, but may you take joy in your
children, your people, and Alcinous, your king.”

So spoke noble Odysseus, and crossed the threshold. And mighty Alcinous sent a herald with him to lead the way to the swift ship and the shore. And Arete sent a serving-woman to carry a fresh tunic and cloak, and another in charge of the stout chest, and another with bread and red wine.

As soon as they reached the ship and the sea, the noble youths who escorted him stowed everything in the hollow ship, down to the food and drink. Then they spread a rug with a linen sheet on deck, at the stern of the hollow ship, so he could sleep sound, and he went on board and quietly lay down. They sat to their benches, each in his place, and the hawser was loosed from the stone mooring ring, and as soon as they leant into the stroke and struck the brine with their blades sweet sleep fell over his eyelids, a deep sweet sleep like death.

Like a team of stallions, a four in hand, that leap forward together over the plain at the lash
of a whip, and with heads held high forge their way, so the ship’s stern leapt in the water, and the glittering wave of the breaking sea foamed violently in her wake. Safe and sure she sped on her way, and not even the wheeling falcon, the swiftest winged creature, could have caught her. So she cut quickly through the waves, carrying a man wise as the gods, who had suffered many heartfelt sorrows in war and on the surging waves, but now he slept, at peace, his mind empty of all his troubles.

And now, as the brightest planet rose, the first to herald dawn’s early light, the sea-going vessel approached Ithaca.

Bk XIII:96-158 The landing on Ithaca

One of the island’s coves is that of Phorcys, the Old Man of the Sea, with its mouth between two projecting headlands: both are sheer cliffs to seaward, but slope down towards the harbour on the landward side. They restrain the huge breakers raised by strong winds outside, while
oared ships can ride unmoored once they have reached their anchorage. A long-leafed olive tree grows at the head of the cove, and nearby is a pleasant, shadowy cave sacred to the Nymphs called Naiads. There are stone mixing-bowls and jars inside, where the bees have their hives. And there are great stone looms in the cave, on which the Nymphs weave wondrous purple fabrics, and also there are never-failing springs. The cave has two mouths, one facing the North Wind by which men enter, while the other facing the South Wind is the immortal gods’ sacred portal that men do not use.

The Phaeacians landed here, knowing the place, and the ship, driven by the muscles of her crew, was running so fast in her swift passage that she beached by half her length. They leapt on shore from the oared vessel, and began by lifting Odysseus from the deck, glossy rug, linen sheet and all, and laying him down on the sand, still fast asleep. Then they lifted out all the gifts that the noble Phaeacians, prompted by great-hearted Athene, had sent with Odysseus.
These they stacked by the trunk of an olive-tree, away from the path, in case some passer-by found them and stole them before he woke. Then they turned for home.

But the Earth-Shaker had not forgotten his past threats against godlike Odysseus, and he asked what Zeus intended: “I, even I, Father Zeus, will no longer be honoured by the deathless gods, since mortals honour me not at all, Phaeacians too who, as you well know, are descended from me. I said not long ago that Odysseus should suffer before he reached home, though I never denied he might return once you promised it and confirmed so with a nod. But these men have carried him over the sea in their swift ship, and set him down on Ithaca, and given him countless gifts, gold and bronze and woven fabrics, even more than he would have brought from Troy if he had returned directly with his due share of the spoils.”

Cloud-Gatherer Zeus replied: “Oh, what a thing to say, my powerful Earth-Shaker! The
gods never fail to honour you: it would be a wretched thing indeed to lack respect for the oldest and the greatest. But if any man, intoxicated by his strength and power, fails to honour you in any way you are free to take your revenge hereafter. Do what you wish, and as it pleases you.”

Then Poseidon, the Earth-Shaker, answered him: “God of the dark clouds, I would have done as you say already, but I dreaded and sought to avoid your anger, as ever. Now though, I intend to strike the Phaeacians fine ship as she returns from her voyage on the misty deep, to warn them to stop transporting strangers. And I’ll ring their city with a vast mountain chain.”

“Dear brother, listen to what I think is best,” Cloud-Gatherer Zeus replied. “Wait till all the eyes of the city are on her as she sails swiftly to port and turn her to stone close to shore, a reef in the shape of a passing ship, so all of them are amazed, then ring their city with that vast mountain chain.”
When Poseidon, Earth-Shaker, heard this, he headed for the Phaeacian land of Scheria, and waited as the sailing ship, speeding swiftly on her course, neared the shore. Then the Earth-Shaker approached and with one blow from the flat of his hand turned her to stone, and rooted her in place. Then he was gone. The Phaeacians, those men of the long oars famed for their seafaring, spoke with winged words to each other, each man glancing at his neighbour, saying: “Oh, who has fixed our swift ship in the sea as she was sailing home, in plain sight of us as well!” They spoke about it, but failed to comprehend it, until Alcinous addressed them: “Ah, it is my father’s prophecy of long ago, returned in truth to haunt us. He said that Poseidon was angry with us because we transported strangers in safety, and that one day he would strike one of our fine ships as she returned from her voyage over the misty deep,
and he would ring our city with a vast mountain chain. So my aged father said, and now it has all come true. Now hear what I command. No longer give transport to our city’s guests, and let us sacrifice twelve choice bulls to Poseidon. He may take pity on us, and not ring our city with a great mountain range.”

They were gripped by fear, at his words, and swiftly readied the beasts. There all the counsellors and leaders of the Phaeacians stood, close to the altar, praying to Lord Poseidon. Meanwhile in his own country Odysseus woke, and after his long absence failed to recognise where he was. For the goddess Pallas Athene, Zeus’ daughter, had veiled him in mist, so she might make him seem like a stranger, and be his guide, while his wife, his neighbours and his friends still knew him not, till the Suitors had paid the price of their crimes. So everything looked strange to their king, those long ridge-tracks, the safe anchorages, the sheer cliffs and verdant trees.
He leapt to his feet, and stood staring about him at his native land. Then he struck both thighs with the flat of his hands and groaned aloud, speaking sadly to himself: “Alas, what mortal country have I reached? Are they lawless, cruel, uncivilised people here, or are they kind to strangers, minds fearful of the gods? Shall I carry these riches with me, or merely explore? I wished I had stayed with the Phaeacians, and then travelled on to some other great king’s palace, where I might have been a guest, then been helped on my homeward path. Now where can I hide this wealth of things? If I leave it here it will be lost as spoil to others. Oh, those Phaeacian counsellors and leaders were not quite so wise and just as they seemed. They said they would take me to clear-skied Ithaca, but they lied and brought me here to this strange land. May Zeus, the god of suppliants, who watches over us all and punishes transgressors punish them. But I had best check my goods now and tally them, in case they carried some off in their hollow ship.”
Bk XIII:216-255 Athene in disguise

With this he began checking the fine tripods, the cauldrons, the gold and the lovely woven fabrics, and found nothing missing: then he dragged himself along beside the sounding waves, groaning deeply, longing for his native land. Soon Athene appeared, disguised as a young shepherd, yet as refined as a prince’s son. A fine cloak hung in a double fold from her shoulders, and she wore shining sandals on her feet, and held a spear in her hand. She was a welcome sight to Odysseus and he approached her and spoke with winged words: “Hail to you, Friend, the first person I have come across, and I hope you have no malicious intent against me, but will help protect me and this treasure, since I beg you as I would a god, and kneel at your knees in friendship. Tell me clearly so I can be certain what country this is, what race, what kind of men live here. Is this some offshore island or a fertile headland sloping to the sea?”
The goddess, bright-eyed Athene, replied: “Stranger, you must be from some far-off place, or else be stupid, if you have to ask its name. It is by no means unknown. Many have heard of it, many of those who live toward the rising sun, and those who live toward the dark of evening. It is a rugged place, yes, unfit for herding horses yet narrow as it is, not destitute. It carries crops in plenty and good vineyards too, and it never lacks copious dew and rain. A fine land it is for grazing goats and cattle as well, with every kind of tree, and never-failing springs. So Ithaca’s name has spread even as far as Troy, Stranger, and they say that is a long way from our Achaea.”

Noble long-suffering Odysseus was overjoyed at her words, delighting in being back on his native soil, and he answered Pallas Athene, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, with winged words. But he concealed the truth, smothering certain words before they were spoken, choosing what he said artfully.
“Even in spacious Crete, over the water, I heard of Ithaca, and now I have brought myself and my wealth here. As much again I left behind with my children, fleeing that land after killing Orsilochus the swift-footed, the brave son of Idomeneus. In spacious Crete he could run faster than any other eater of bread. He it was who tried to steal those hard-won spoils from Troy I suffered for, enduring the wars of men and the wretched waves, simply because I would not obey his father, and serve under him at Troy, but led my own company there. So I lay in wait for him by the roadway with one of my men, and struck him with a bronze spear as he returned from the fields. Dark night veiled the sky, and no one saw us, so I took his life in secret. Then, having killed him, I made for a Phoenician ship, and giving them goods enough to satisfy them, I asked those lords of the sea to take me on board and land me at Pylos or lovely Elis, where the Epeians rule.
But the power of the winds sent them off course, against their will since they had no wish to cheat me and, driven from there, at night we reached this land. We rowed swiftly for the harbour, and not thinking of supper though we needed food, we all leapt ashore and lay there, just as we were. Then I slept out of weariness, but while I was asleep they brought my goods from the hollow ship and set them down on the sand where I lay. Then they embarked and sailed for the thriving port of Sidon, leaving me here, troubled at heart."

The goddess, bright-eyed Athene, smiled at his words, and touching him with her hand altered her form as she did so to that of a tall and lovely woman, accomplished in every glorious art. And she addressed him with winged words: “Even if a god encountered you he would need to be wily and devious to outdo you in cunning. Resolute man, subtle in counsel, never tiring of intrigue, even in you own country you will always be full of guile and the lying tales you love so much. But let us
talk of other things. We are well-matched in these arts, you being the most eloquent and practical of men, and I known among the gods for my wisdom and subtlety. Still you failed to know me, Pallas Athene, Zeus’ daughter: she who is ever by your side to protect you in all your adventures. It was I who made the Phaeacians kind to you. And once again I’m here to help you plan ahead, and before you start for home to hide the treasure the noble Phaeacians gave you since I wanted it so and prompted them, and to tell you all the tale of woe you are fated to enact in your fine palace. Be strong, for you must bear it. Tell no one, man or woman, that it is you, back from your wanderings, but suffer your troubles in silence, and endure the insults some will offer.”

Bk XIII:311-365 They hide the Phaeacian treasure

Then wily Odysseus replied: “Goddess, it is hard for a man to recognise you when he meets
you no matter how clever he is, since you take what shape you will. But this I do know, you were kind to me, back then when we Achaeans fought on the plains of Troy, but once we’d sacked the high citadel of Priam and our ships had sailed away, only to be scattered by a god, I never saw you again, Zeus’ daughter: I never caught sight of you there, on the deck of my vessel, helping to shield me from danger. No, I had to travel on, heart labouring in my breast, till the gods rescued me from trouble. Only there in the comfortable land of the Phaeacians did you appear, it’s true, to encourage me with words, and lead me to their city. Still, I ask you now in your Father’s name to tell me – since no, I don’t believe I’ve reached clear-skied Ithaca, and this is some foreign land I travel, and you are making mock of me trying to confuse my mind – tell me whether I’m truly back in my own country.”

“That’s the way you always think,” bright-eyed Athene replied, “that must be why I don’t abandon you to your sorrows: you are always
so courteous, so intelligent, and so cautious! Any other man back from his wanderings would have rushed to his palace to see his wife and children, but you don’t care to know a thing until you’ve tested your wife further. She is still there in the palace, weeping, while the sad days and nights wane. As for me, I knew beyond doubt you would reach home, losing all companions. But know this. I was not prepared to fight my own uncle Poseidon, whose heart was filled with anger when you blinded his son. Come then, I’ll show you the island of Ithaca, so you will know. There is the harbour of Phorcys, the Old Man of the Sea, and there at its head is the long-leaved olive tree, with that lovely shadowy cave nearby, sacred to the Nymphs they call the Naiads. That indeed is the echoing cavern where you once offered the Nymphs many fine sacrifices, and over there is Mount Neriton, clothed in forest.”

With this the goddess dispersed the mist, and revealed the island. Noble, long-suffering Odysseus was overjoyed, delighted to see his
own country, and he kissed the fertile ground. Then he prayed swiftly with outstretched arms, to the Nymphs: “Naiads, daughters of Zeus, I never thought to see all this again, but I greet you now with loving prayer. And I will offer gifts, as before, if this daughter of Zeus, who guides armies, will let me live and help my brave son reach manhood.”

Then the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, answered him in turn: “Be reassured, let nothing trouble your heart. We must go now and pile your goods in the innermost angle of the cave, where they can stay secure. And let’s think how to make certain everything turns out for the best.”

Bk XIII:366-415 Athene promises her help

With this the goddess entered the shadowy cave, and searched for its hidden angles, while Odysseus carried all his goods inside, the gold the enduring bronze, and the finely woven clothes the Phaeacians had given him. He hid
them away carefully, and Pallas Athene, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, closed the cave-mouth with a rock.

Then they both sat down by the trunk of the sacred olive-tree to plan the insolent Suitors’ deaths. Bright-eyed Athene was first to speak: “Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, think about how you can come to grips with those shameless Suitors, who have been lording it in your halls for three whole years, paying court to your goddess of a wife, and offering marriage-gifts. She, while she longs for your return, never fails to nurse their hopes, and send each of them promising messages, her mind elsewhere.”

Resourceful Odysseus replied: “Oh, goddess, if you had not revealed all this clearly to me, I might have met the same evil fate in my palace, as Agamemnon, Atreus’ son, did in his. Come now, weave some plot by which I might repay them, and be with me, and fill me with indomitable courage, as you did when we loosed Troy’s shining crown. If you with your
glittering eyes are with me, inspiring me as you did then, helping me with a ready heart, you and I, great goddess, could tackle three hundred men.”

The goddess, bright-eyed Athene, answered: “Of course I will be with you. I shall not forget you in the thick of the action, and I think more than one of those Suitors who swallow your possessions will stain the wide earth with his blood and brains. But come now, and I will make you unrecognisable to them all. I will wrinkle the smooth skin on your supple limbs, and thin the fine hair on your scalp, and clothe you in rags to make a man shudder. And I will dim the beauty of your eyes, till you seem repulsive to all the Suitors, and to the wife and son you left behind. Then go first and find the swineherd, who may be only a keeper of your pigs but feels well-disposed towards you, and loves your son and loyal Penelope. You will find him with the swine that feed their rich flesh by Raven’s Crag, near the Spring of Arethusa, eating their fill of fattening acorns, and drinking
the clear black water. Sit with him, there, Odysseus, and question him fully, while I go to Sparta, the country of lovely women, to summon your brave son Telemachus who journeyed to wide Lacedaemon, to the palace of Menelaus, to seek any news of your being still alive.”

Bk XIII:416-440 Athene disguises Odysseus

Resourceful Odysseus replied: “Why did you not inform him, then, you whose mind is all-knowing? Did you want him too to suffer dangers, wandering the restless waves while others consumed his inheritance?”

Then Athene, of the flashing eyes, answered: “Don’t trouble your heart too greatly over him. I guided him, so he would win fame for travelling there, and he has no problems, sitting at ease in Menelaus’ palace, with all the luxuries he needs before him. Yes, those young men in their black ship wait to ambush him, keen to murder him before he reaches home,
but that will not happen I think. The earth will close over those Suitors who steal your possessions, long before then.”

So saying, Athene touched him with her wand. She wrinkled the smooth skin on his supple limbs, and thinned the fine hair on his scalp, and gave him the body of an old man. She dimmed the beauty of his eyes, and dressed him differently, in a wretched cloak and ragged tunic, of tattered filthy smoke-grimed cloth. Then she flung a large deerskin, devoid of hair, over his shoulders, and handed him a staff, and a sorry-looking leather pouch, punctured here and there, hanging from a piece of braided cord.

When the two of them had made their mutual plans, they parted: and the goddess left for glorious Lacedaemon, to bring back Odysseus’ son.

Bk XIV:1-47 Odysseus finds Eumaeus

Odysseus followed a rough track from the harbour, leading through the woods and over
the hills, to the place where **Athene** had said he would find the faithful **swineherd**, the most loyal of all the servants Odysseus had acquired. He found him indeed, sitting in the yard in front of his hut which was built high up, on a site with a wide view, in a broad yard in the centre of a clearing. The swineherd had constructed it himself to hold his absent master’s swine, without his **mistress’** or old **Laertes’** knowledge. He had laid huge stones and topped the walls with a hedge of thorn. Beyond them he had set large close-set stakes along each side, oak stakes split to the black heart of the tree, then he had built twelve sties close together inside the yard to hold the pigs, and there were fifty breeding sows penned, wallowing there, in each. The boars slept outside, and there were far fewer of these since the noble **Suitors** had thinned out their numbers with their feasting, the swineherd sending them the pick of the fatted hogs. There were three hundred and sixty, guarded by four hounds
fierce as wolves, reared by the master swineherd.

He himself was trimming a piece of well-tanned ox-hide, and shaping a pair of sandals for his feet while three of his men had gone out in different directions driving the swine and a fourth delivered a boar to the arrogant Suitors so they might slaughter it and enjoy the flesh.

Suddenly the dogs bayed at the sight of Odysseus, and rushed at him barking loudly, but he had the wit to sit down and drop his staff. Even then he might have been badly mauled in his own farmyard if the swineherd had not followed them swiftly, the leather falling from his hand, and hurried to the gateway, calling out to his dogs and scattering them with a shower of stones. Then he addressed his disguised master: ‘Old man, these dogs could have torn your flesh in a moment, and you would have blamed me! As if the gods had not given me pain and grief enough. Here I am, fattening swine for other men to eat, while the godlike master I mourn for may be
wandering in hunger through foreign cities and lands: that is if he’s still alive under the sun. But come to the hut with me, old man, and when you have quenched your hunger and thirst you can tell me where you come from, and all the troubles you’ve suffered.’

Bk XIV:48-108 Eumaeus’ hospitality

With this the faithful swineherd led the way to the hut, and ushered Odysseus in, then sat him down after making a pile of thick brushwood and spreading the large and shaggy skin of a wild goat on top, that served him for a bed. Odysseus was glad of his reception, and thanked him, saying: ‘May Zeus and the other gods give you your heart’s desire, sir, since you welcome me so warmly.’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you it was who answered Odysseus, saying: ‘Stranger, it would be wrong for me to turn a guest away, even one in a worse state than you, since every beggar and stranger is from Zeus, and a gift, though
small, from such folk as us is welcome. Small it must be, since that is the servants’ lot, always living in fear of the masters who lord it over them, I mean young masters like ours. The gods have thwarted my old master’s homecoming. He would have cared for me with kindness, and given me things of my own, a hut and a piece of land, and a wife worthy of having been courted by many men, things a kind master grants a servant who has laboured on his behalf and whose efforts the gods favour, just as they further my efforts here. My master would have rewarded me well, indeed, had he grown old here in Ithaca. But he has perished, as I wish Helen and all her race had utterly perished, since she was the death of many a fine warrior. He went to Ilium, famed for its horses, with all the other warriors to fight those Trojans, on Agamemnon’s voyage of vengeance.’

Saying this, he fastened his tunic with a belt, and went off to the sties where the pigs were penned. Picking two, he dragged them in, slaughtered and singed them both, then jointed
and spitted them. When all was roasted, he served it to Odysseus piping hot on the skewers, sprinkling the meat with white barley meal. Then he mixed honey-sweet wine in an ivy-wood bowl, and sat down himself opposite Odysseus, saying invitingly: ‘Eat, the food, Stranger, that a servant can provide, sucking pig, since the pitiless Suitors, careless of the gods’ anger, take my fatted hogs. Yet the blessed gods do not approve of such wanton acts: they honour justice and decency. Even men who set foot on hostile soil, owing their enemies nothing, whom Zeus allows to gather spoils, to fill their ships and head for home, even in their hearts the fear of divine anger stirs. But these men here must have heard the voice of some god announcing my master’s sad death, seeing they neither pay genuine court, nor return to their homes, but waste our possessions arrogantly, as they wish, sparing nothing. They slaughter the beasts every night and day that Zeus sends, and not just one or
two, and they draw what wine they need and more.

My master was truly rich: no warrior on Ithaca or the dark-soiled mainland could compete, not twenty put together. I’ll describe it all: twelve cattle herds and as many flocks of sheep and droves of swine, there on the mainland, and as many roving herds of goats, all tended by locals or by foreign herdsmen. And on the shores of Ithaca here, eleven herds of goats graze, guarded by faithful men. And each day every man has to send the fattest of his goats along to the Suitors, while I the swineherd pick out the best of the boars for them.’

Bk XIV:109-164 Odysseus ‘prophesies’ his own return

While he spoke, a grateful and ravenous Odysseus ate the meat and drank the wine, planning trouble for the Suitors. When he had sated his hunger and was done with eating, the
swineherd filled his own drinking bowl again and offered it brimming with wine, and Odysseus took it gladly, and addressed him with winged words: ‘Who was this rich and powerful man, Friend, who bought you with his wealth? You say he died winning vengeance for Agamemnon: name him, perhaps I might remember him. I may have seen him and have news of him: heaven knows, I’ve wandered far enough.’

The master swineherd replied: ‘Old man, no traveller’s tale will satisfy his wife or his brave son: in fact every beggar in need of a meal invents some lie at random, not caring if it’s true. Whoever reaches Ithaca in his wanderings goes to my mistress and deceives her with his stories. She welcomes them all in her kindness, shows them hospitality, and questions them endlessly, while she weeps as women do when their husband dies far off, the tears streaming from her eyes. You too would invent a tale fast enough, old man, if it brought you a tunic and cloak. As for my master, his
spirit has flown by now, and the dogs and birds have stripped the flesh from his limbs, or the fishes have had him, and his bones are veiled in sand on some deep shore. He has perished far off, and left his friends to grieve, I most of all, since however far I travel I’ll never find so good a master, not even if I reached my parent’s house, that place where I was born and where they reared me. Much as I grieve for them, eager though I am to see them, and visit my native land again, longing instead for the lost Odysseus grips me. Even though he is not here, Stranger, I am ashamed to merely name him, so greatly did he love me and care for me. Rather I will call him ‘noble friend’, though he cannot hear me.’

Then noble long-suffering Odysseus replied: ‘Friend, since you deny the fact, and declare he will never return, since your mind refuses to accept it, I will not merely say it I will swear that Odysseus shall come home. And when he does, let me have my reward then for bringing good news, and dress me then in fine
clothes, tunic and cloak. But until that day despite my need I will take nothing: for that man is as hateful to my eyes as the Gates of Hades who is driven to tell a lying tale because of poverty’s burden. Now Zeus above all the gods be my witness, and this hospitable table, and this hearth of good Odysseus I have come to, that in truth all this will happen as I say. This very month, between the old moon and the new, Odysseus will be here. He will return, and revenge himself on those who dishonour his wife and his noble son.’

Bk XIV:165-234 Odysseus pretends to be a Cretan

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you answered him then, saying: ‘There’s no way I’ll ever be able to reward you for that good news, old man: Odysseus will never return. Drink in peace, and let’s turn our thoughts to other things instead: stop reminding me of it all. My heart grieves so whenever anyone speaks of my good master.
As for your oath, let it rest, and may Odysseus return, as I desire, I and Penelope and Laertes that old man, and divine Telemachus. Telemachus, the son, he is the one I grieve for endlessly now. The gods made him grow like a young sapling, and I thought he’d be like his brave and handsome father in action, but some man or god addled his mind, and foolishly he went to sacred Pylos seeking news. The princely Suitors will ambush him on his way home and godlike Arceisius’ race will vanish from Ithaca, without a trace. Whether he’s taken or escapes there’s nothing we can do though: may Zeus, son of Cronos, reach out a hand to save him.

But tell me of your own troubles, old man. Tell me in truth, so I may clearly know it, who you are and where you come from. Who are your parents and where’s your city? What sort of ship was it that brought you to Ithaca, since one can’t get here on foot? Where did its crew claim to be from?’
Resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘I will tell you the plain truth, and though we had food and sweet wine for a year, so we could feast in your hut while others did the work, I would still not have time to tell all my sorrows, all I have suffered by the gods’ will.

I am the son of a wealthy man, and a native of Crete’s broad island. He had many other sons, born and bred in his house, legitimate sons of his lawful wife, while my mother was his bought concubine. But Castor son of Hylax, my father, treated me the same as his other sons. He was honoured like a god by the Cretans for his wealth, position, and splendid children, but fate took him, death carried him off to Hades’ House, and his proud sons cast lots for their portions of his estate. They granted me a tiny share, with a hut to match. But by my courage I won a wife from a wealthy house, since I was no coward or weakling in battle. All that strength has gone, now, for truly I have met with my full measure of sorrows, but maybe you can judge the harvest from the stubble.
Ares and Athene gave me courage then, and power to break the enemy ranks, and whenever I sowed trouble, picking the best of my men for an ambush, my proud spirit never thought of death. I was ever the first to attack, and kill with my spear whichever of the enemy ran from me. I was a fighting man. A life of labour on the land would never have suited me, nor would a house, even if it was full of handsome children. I loved war, and the oared ships, shining spears and arrows, fateful things that make others shudder. But I suppose a god set the love of all that in my heart, since different men take delight in different occupations.

I had led men and swift ships nine times in foreign expeditions, before ever the Sons of Achaea set foot on the soil of Troy, and always treasure came to my hands. I would take what pleased me: and more still fell to me by lot. So my wealth grew, and I was honoured and feared by the Cretans.’
Bk XIV:235-292 The Cretan’s adventures in Egypt

‘But when far-thundering Zeus plotted the fatal voyage that meant the death of so many fighting men, they asked glorious Idomeneus and myself to lead their ships to Troy, and the people clamoured so, there was no way to refuse. For nine years we Sons of Achaea fought there, and sacked the city of Priam in the tenth, then we sailed for home but a god scattered the fleet. Wretch that I am, Zeus the counsellor planned trouble for me. I only had a month to enjoy my children, wife, and wealth, before the idea took me to fit out my ships in full, and sail to Egypt with noble friends. I readied nine vessels, and the company soon gathered. Then I offered my comrades suitable victims so they could sacrifice to the gods, and feast, and the feasting lasted six days. On the seventh we boarded and sailed from broad Crete, with a fresh and fair North Wind behind, and ran on swiftly like boats sliding
downstream. Our ships came to no harm, and unscathed, untouched by illness, we sat on deck while the wind and the helmsman guided them.

On the fifth day we reached the great Egyptian river, and there in the Nile I moored my curved ships. Then I told my loyal companions to stay and guard them, while I sent scouts to find the highest ground. But my crews, feeling confident, and succumbing to temptation, set about plundering the Egyptians’ fine fields, carrying off women and children, and killing the men till their cries reached the city. Hearing the shouting the people poured out at dawn and filled the plain with infantry, and chariots, and the gleam of bronze. Zeus who hurls the lightning bolt filled my men with abject fear, and not one had the courage to face the enemy who threatened us on all sides, or hold his ground. Then they killed many of us with their bronze weapons, and dragged the rest off to the city as slaves. As for myself, Zeus inspired me – though it would have been better
to die in Egypt, since sorrow was waiting for me.

I swiftly doffed my fine helmet, and shield, and let the spear drop from my hand, and ran towards the King’s chariot. There I clasped his knees and kissed them, and he took pity on me and saved me, taking me weeping into his chariot and driving off. As you might imagine, many men lunged at me with their ash-wood spears, eager to kill me in their great anger, but he kept them away, for fear of the wrath of Zeus the god of strangers, who is most indignant of all the gods at cruel deeds.

I remained there seven years and became wealthy, since the Egyptians were generous in their gifts. But during the eighth year I met a wily Phoenician, a greedy rogue, who had already caused much trouble in the world. His cunning deceived me, and he took me with him to Phoenicia, where he owned a house and goods, and there I stayed a whole year.’
‘But when days and months had passed, and the year had rolled round with its seasons, he took me aboard a seagoing ship bound for Libya, on the pretext that I was needed to help him with the cargo, but in reality to sell me for a good price when he arrived. Though suspecting his evil intent, I had no choice but to embark.

She ran before a fine fresh northerly, over the wide seas south of Crete, while Zeus planned our destruction. When we had left Crete behind and could see nothing but waves and sky, the son of Cronos covered the hollow ship with black cloud, so that the sea beneath her grew dark. And then Zeus thundered and hurled his lightning at the vessel, so that she quivered from stem to stern at the stroke, and filled with sulphurous smoke, while all were thrown overboard. The others floated round the black ship like gulls, and the god denied them their homecoming. But as I struggled,
surrounded by disaster, Zeus himself flung the storm-tossed mast of the dark-prowed ship within my reach, so I might escape death again. I clung to it, driven by the strong winds. Nine days I drifted, but on the tenth night of darkness a huge breaker drove me onto Thesprotia’s shore. The King of the Thesprotians, Pheidon the hero, received me and demanded no ransom. His brave son had found me, overcome by cold and weariness, and taking me by the hand led me to his father’s palace, where he clothed me in a tunic and cloak.

It was there I heard of Odysseus. The King said he had welcomed him and shown him hospitality as he headed for home. And he showed me the wealth Odysseus had garnered, gold and bronze and forged iron, so great a pile that what was stored in the King’s treasury would feed a man and his heirs to the tenth generation. Odysseus, he said, had left for Dodona, to learn Zeus’ will from the great oak tree sacred to the god, as to how he should return, openly or in secret, to Ithaca’s rich isle,
after his long absence. Moreover as he poured libations in his house, in my presence, he swore that a ship and crew were standing by to carry Odysseus to his native land. But he sent me off first since a Thesprotian vessel was setting out for corn-rich Dulichium. He ordered the crew to treat me with kindness, and take me to Acastus, its king.

But they were possessed of an evil thought, and the result to me was utter misery. When the seagoing ship was far from land, they set about reducing me to slavery. They stripped me of my tunic and cloak, and gave me a ragged shirt, all the tattered garments you see before you. At evening we reached the cultivated fields of bright Ithaca. Then they tied me fast to the benched ship with a coil of rope, and went ashore to make a quick meal by the water. But the gods untied the rope, and wrapping myself in the tattered cloak, I slid down the gangplank and breasted the waves, striking out with both hands, till I could leave the water and escape. Then I found a leafy thicket inland, and
crouched there. They searched here and there, shouting, but deciding nothing would be gained by prolonging the search, they went back on board the hollow ship. The gods kept me easily concealed, and led me to a good man’s farm, since it seems it’s my fate to stay alive.’

Bk XIV:360-408 Eumaeus doubts the news

_Eumaeus_, the swineherd, you answered him, saying: ‘My poor man, you have moved my heart deeply with this tale of your hardships and travels. But I don’t think what you say of _Odysseus_ can be true, and it won’t convince me. Why, given your circumstances, do you lie, pointlessly? As far as my master’s homecoming is concerned I know the gods hated my master utterly, not letting him die fighting the Trojans, or in the arms of his friends when the war had ended. Leaving his son a famous name the whole _Achaean_ army would have built his tomb. But the powers of the tempest have swept him ingloriously away.
I live far-off here with the swine and never go near the city, unless news comes to wise Penelope, and she asks me there. Then a crowd gathers round the news-bearer, questioning him closely, all who grieve for their long-absent lord, and all who joy in consuming his wealth un-punished. But I have ceased to probe and enquire, ever since an Aetolian who wandered the wide world came to my hut one day. I showed him hospitality and he deceived me with tales. He said he had seen Odysseus among those same Cretans, in Idomeneus’ palace, while his storm-beaten ships were being repaired. He claimed Odysseus would be here by summer harvest, along with his comrades, weighed-down with treasure. So don’t you try to reassure me and get round me with your lies too my long-suffering friend, whom some god has brought here to my house. That won’t make me show you respect and kindness, while fear of Zeus the god of strangers, and pity for you, will.’
Subtle Odysseus replied: ‘That heart in your breast is hard to convince, that’s for certain, seeing not even my oath could sway or persuade you. But now, let us strike a bargain, and let the Olympian gods be our witness in time to come. If your master returns home clothe me in tunic and cloak, and send me on to Dulichium, my destination. But if he should not return despite my prophecy, set your men on me and hurl me from the cliffs, so the next beggar takes care not to try and deceive.’

‘Oh yes, Stranger,’ the honest swineherd said in answer: ‘that would be a fine way indeed to win everlasting fame and honour among men, to turn murderer, and rob you of your precious life, after I’ve taken you into my house and played the host! I could pray to Zeus, son of Cronos, with a light heart after that! Come, it is time to eat, and I trust my friends will be here soon, so we can make a pleasant meal of it in my hut.’
As they spoke to each other, the herdsmen arrived with their swine. They drove the sows, grunting loudly, into their sties to sleep, as usual, and the honest swineherd shouted to his men: ‘Bring the best hog, so I can slaughter it for a guest who has come from afar. We can enjoy it too, we who have toiled long and hard for the sake of these white-tusked boars, while others consume the results of our efforts for free.’

Saying this, he began to split wood with his sharp bronze axe, while the rest dragged a fat five year old hog up to the hearth and held it there. The good-hearted swineherd remembered the gods, and threw bristles from the white-tusked boar’s head into the fire as a first offering, while he prayed that wise Odysseus might return home in safety. Then he drew himself up and struck the boar with an un-split billet of oak to kill it. Then the others slit its throat, singed it, and swiftly butchered the
carcass. The swineherd cut flesh from each of the limbs as first offerings, and wrapped the pieces in rich fat, sprinkled them with barley meal, and threw them into the flames. The rest they jointed, and roasted carefully on spits, drew the meat from the skewers and piled it on great platters. The swineherd, a stickler for fairness, stood up and divided it into seven portions, setting one aside with a prayer for the Nymphs, and for Hermes, Maia’s son, and distributing the rest, honouring Odysseus with the white-tusked boar’s long chine.

Resourceful Odysseus, his master, was touched by this and said: ‘Eumaeus, may Father Zeus be as kind to you as you are to me, since you honour me with the prime cut, wretch though I am.’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you replied: ‘Eat, my pious guest, and enjoy whatever is here. The god it is who gives us one thing, and holds back another, since he has the power to do as he wishes.’
With this, he offered the first portion to the eternal gods, and making a libation of glowing wine, placed the cup in the hands of that sacker of cities, Odysseus, and sat down to his own meal. Bread was served out by Mesaulius, a slave the swineherd had acquired himself in Odysseus’ absence, without Penelope’s or old Laertes’ knowledge. He had bought him from the Taphians with his own assets. Then they all reached for the good food set before them. When they had quenched their hunger and thirst, Mesaulius removed what was left, and having eaten and drunk their fill they readied themselves for sleep.

Bk XIV:457-506 Odysseus’ tale of Troy

Night came on, moonless and stormy. Zeus sent a strong, rain-bearing West Wind, and it poured the whole night through. Odysseus thought to test the swineherd, and see, since he showed such care for his guest, whether he would give him his cloak, or ask one of his men
to do so. ‘Eumaeus,’ he said, ‘and all you men, listen while I tell you a brave tale: the wine it is that prompts me, wine that makes a fool of the wise and sets a man to singing or laughing stupidly, drags him to his feet for a dance, or makes him blurt out words that are better left unspoken. Well, I’ve started to speak, so I’ll not stifle them.

How I wish I were young and strong as I was when we set out to spring an ambush under the walls of Troy. We were led by Odysseus, and Menelaus, Atreus’s son, and I was ordered to be the third in command. We crouched there behind our weapons in thick brush among swamps and reeds, near to the high-walled city. The North Wind dropped and the night grew fiercely cold, and snow like hoar-frost settled on us, with a bitter chill so the ice formed thick on our shields. Now, all the others had tunics and cloaks, and slept easily with their shields protecting their shoulders, but I’d stupidly left my cloak behind when I set out with my men,
taking only my gleaming metal belt and my shield, not thinking then I would be cold.

But in the third watch of night, when the stars had passed the zenith, I nudged Odysseus who lay next to me, with my elbow, and he listened while I spoke: ‘Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, I am not long for this life: I’ve no cloak, and the cold is killing me. Some god persuaded me to wear a tunic only, and there’s no escaping this frost.’

Hearing this, and being a great schemer as well as fighter, he hit on an idea, and speaking softly said: ‘Quiet now, lest one of our Achaeans realises you are awake.’ And with this he raised himself on his elbow, and called out: ‘Friends, I have had a dream that the gods sent in my sleep. They warned me we are dangerously far from the shore. We need someone to alert Agamemnon, Atreus’ son and our commander, in the hope he will order more men here from the ships.’

At this, Thoas, Andraemon’s son, leapt up, flung off his purple cloak, and ran for the camp.
I lay there, snugly wrapped in his garment, till golden-throned Dawn appeared! Oh, I wish I were young and strong as I once was: then perhaps some swineherd would present me with a cloak, out of kindness and respect for a fine man. As it is they scorn me and my rags.’

Eumaus, the swineherd, you answered him then, saying: ‘A good tale, old man, and there’s nothing wrong with its message: it wasn’t lost on us. You won’t lack clothing, or anything else a weary supplicant deserves from those he meets, tonight at least. But in the morning you’ll have to engage with those rags of yours. We’ve no spare cloaks here or changes of tunic: each has just the one. But when Odysseus’ brave son returns he’ll give you a tunic and cloak to wear, and send you on wherever your heart and mind desire.’

With this he leapt up and made a bed for Odysseus nearer the fire, throwing sheep and goatskins over it. Then Odysseus lay down again, and the swineherd covered him with a
big thick blanket, that he kept there for a dry covering after a fierce storm.

There Odysseus could sleep, next to the younger men. But the swineherd was averse to staying there away from his hogs, and prepared to go outside. Odysseus was delighted to see him take such care of his master’s herd in his absence. He watched Eumaeus sling a sharp sword over his sturdy shoulders, wrap himself in his thick cloak against the wind, pick up the fleece of a well-fed full-grown goat, and a spear to drive off dogs and men, and go out to sleep where the white-tusked boars slept, under an overhanging rock, sheltered from northerly winds.

Bk XV:1-55 Athene visits Telemachus

Meanwhile  Pallas Athene  sped to broad Lacedaemon to remind great-hearted Odysseus’ noble son that it was time to head for home, and to hurry his departure. She found  Telemachus and Peisistratus, Nestor’s noble son, in their
beds in the porch of great Menelaus’ palace. Nestor’s son was fast asleep, but sweet sleep eluded Telemachus, kept awake by anxious thoughts of his father, all that eternal night. Bright-eyed Athene stood by his bed, and spoke to him, saying: ‘Telemachus, it’s wrong to linger here far from home, leaving your wealth behind, with your house full of insolent men, lest they divide your goods and devour them, and your voyage proves worthless. Rouse Menelaus of the loud war-cry to send you on your way, instead, if you hope to find your peerless mother still in the palace. Her father and brothers are urging her to marry Eurymachus: he courts her with more and better gifts than the other Suitors. And have a care she doesn’t take a share of your wealth, despite your wishes. You know how women think: they want to add to a new husband’s glory, forgetting a faithful former partner once he’s dead, and no longer asking after their children by him. Go home, and put the best of your
women servants in charge of your possessions, until the gods send you a worthy bride.

And here’s another thing for you to consider. The leading Suitors lie in wait for you, in the strait between Ithaca and rocky Samos, ready to kill you before you reach your native island. I think the earth will cover those who waste your wealth long before that day comes, but keep your fine ship far from the strait, and sail by night as well as by day, and that divine power that guards and protects you will send a following breeze. Land at the first place you can on Ithaca, then send the ship and crew round to the harbour, but you yourself must find the swineherd who guards your pigs. He is well disposed towards you. Spend the night there, and send him to the city to tell wise Penelope you are back safely from Pylos.’

With this she left for the heights of Olympus, while Telemachus woke Nestor’s son from his sweet sleep with a nudge of his foot, and said: ‘Wake now, Peisistratus, son of
Nestor, and harness your well-shod horses to the chariot, so we can be on our way.’

Peisittratus, waking, answered: ‘Telemachus, however eager you are we can’t drive in pitch darkness: dawn is not far off. Wait till Menelaus, the heroic spearman, Atreus’ son, can bring his gifts and put them aboard the chariot, and send us on our way then with a kind farewell. A guest should always remember a host who shows him kindness.’

Bk XV:56-119 Gifts from Menelaus

Soon golden-throned Dawn appeared, and Menelaus of the loud war-cry rose from where he slept, beside Helen of the lovely tresses, and approached them. When Odysseus’ brave son, the hero, saw him he swiftly dressed in his shining tunic, flung a great cloak over his sturdy shoulders, and went to greet him, saying: ‘Menelaus, leader of men, son of Atreus, favoured of Zeus, send me on my way home, I am eager to return.’
And Menelaus of the loud war-cry said: ‘Telemachus, I’d never keep you here if you wish to leave, quite the opposite. I blame any host who yields or resists too much: moderation in all things. It’s as bad to hurry off a departing guest as to hold back one who’s anxious to go. One should give a warm welcome to the newcomer, and say a fond farewell to the man who’s leaving. Nevertheless, there’s time for me to load your chariot with fine gifts while you watch, and for me to have the servants find you a meal in the hall from all the plenty there. There’s a double benefit in a traveller feeding before he drives off into the wide open spaces, honour and glory to me, sustenance to you. If you want to see Hellas and central Argos, fine, I’ll travel with you, harness my horses and lead you to all the cities of men. They’ll not send us away empty-handed. They’ll give us some gift at least to take away, a solid bronze tripod or cauldron, a pair of mules, or a golden cup.’

‘Menelaus, leader of men, son of Atreus, favoured of Zeus’, wise Telemachus replied, ‘I
would rather go straight home, since I left no one in charge back there, and in seeking my godlike father I fear I may lose my own life, or some of my house’s valued treasures.

When Menelaus of the loud war-cry heard this, he asked his wife to have her servants prepare a meal in the hall from the plenty there. Eteoneus, Boethous’ son, who lived nearby and was fresh from his bed, arrived at that moment, and Menelaus asked him to light a fire, and roast some meat. He heard and obeyed, while Menelaus went off to his scented treasure room, taking Helen and Megapenthes with him. When they reached the store-house Menelaus chose a two-handled cup, and told his son Megapenthes to take a silver mixing-bowl, while Helen went to the chests holding richly-embroidered robes she had made herself. That most beautiful of women lifted out and carried off the largest and most beautifully worked of all. It had lain beneath the rest, and now glittered like a star. Then they walked back through the palace to
Telemachus, and yellow-haired Menelaus spoke to him:

‘Telemachus, may Zeus the Thunderer, Hera’s husband, grant you the homecoming you desire. The finest most precious of all the treasures in my store is the one I will give to you. This sweetly-made mixing bowl is solid silver rimmed with gold, and Hephaestus was its creator. Phaedimus the hero, the Sidonian King, gave it to me when his house sheltered me as I journeyed home, and now I give it to you.’

Bk XV:120-182 Telemachus leaves Sparta

With this the heroic son of Atreus held out the two-handled cup to Telemachus, while mighty Megapenthes brought the silver mixing-bowl and placed it before him. Then Helen approached holding the robe, and addressed him: ‘Dear child, I too give you a gift to remember Helen by, made by her own hands, for your bride to wear when the longed-for
wedding day arrives. Let your dear mother keep it by her in the palace until then. As for yourself I wish you a joyful return to your own home and country.’ Then she placed it in his hands, and he received it with pleasure.

Peisistratus, the hero, stowed the gifts in a chest inside the chariot, examining them admiringly. Then yellow-haired Menelaus led the way to the house, and they sat down on stools and chairs. A maid brought water in a fine golden jug so they could rinse their hands, pouring it over their hands into a silver basin. Then she brought a gleaming table, and the loyal housekeeper set bread and dishes of meat before them, giving freely of her stores. Eteoneus carved, and served the portions, and Megapenthes poured the wine. And they helped themselves to the meal. But once they had quenched hunger and thirst, Telemachus and Peisistratus harnessed the horses and mounting their inlaid chariot drove through the gate with its echoing portico.
The son of Atreus, yellow-haired Menelaus, followed, carrying a golden cup of honeyed wine in his right hand, so they could pour a final libation. Standing beside the horses he pledged them, saying: ‘Farewell, youngsters, and greet Nestor, the shepherd of his people, for me. He was like a father to me when we Achaeans fought on the plains of Troy.’

‘Rest assured we will do so, as soon as we arrive, favoured of Zeus.’ said courteous Telemachus. ‘If only Odysseus were there at home in Ithaca too, and I returning to tell him of all the kindness I’ve met with at your hands while I was here, and of the many fine gifts I carry.’

As he was speaking an eagle flew over them to their right, gripping a large white goose in its talons, a tame bird snatched from the yard. Behind it men and women ran shouting, but the eagle still approached them and veered to the right in front of the horses, gladdening the hearts of those who saw it, and raising their spirits. Peisistratus, Nestor’s son, spoke first:
‘Menelaus, leader of men, favoured of Zeus, do you think the god sends this omen for you or for us?’ At this Menelaus took thought as to how the sign should be interpreted, but Helen of the long robe pre-empted his words, saying: ‘Listen and I will prophesy at the gods’ prompting and as I am certain it will come to be. As the eagle flew from the mountain where he was born among his kin, and seized the goose bred for the table, so Odysseus will return to his house after much effort and wandering and take revenge: maybe he is there even now planning disaster for the Suitors.’

‘May Zeus the Thunderer, Hera’s husband, make it so,’ replied wise Telemachus, ‘and then when I’m there I’ll pray to you as a goddess.’

Bk XV:183-221 Return to Pylos

With this, Telemachus flicked his whip at the horses. They flew swiftly and eagerly through the town towards the plain, and all day long they strained at the yoke across their necks.
Now the sun dipped and the roads grew dark. And they came again to Pherae, to Diocles’ house, Ortilochus’ son whom Alpheius bore. There they passed the night, and he welcomed them, as strangers should be welcomed.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, they harnessed the horses, mounted the ornate chariot, and drove past the echoing portico out of the gate. Then Telemachus flicked the team with his whip to start them, and the willing pair flew onwards. Soon they reached the high citadel of Pylos, and turning to Peisistratus, he said: ‘Because of our father’s friendship we are friends, and we are of like age, and moreover this journey has united our hearts. Will you make me a promise, and execute it just as I say? Favoured of Zeus, don’t drive on past my ship, but drop me off there, lest your father keeps me there at the palace against my will, keen to display his hospitality, when I need to head for home.’
Peisistratus asked himself if he could fulfil such a promise in all good conscience. After reflection, it seemed the right thing to do. So he turned the horses towards the swift ship and the shore, and there he unloaded Menelaus’ fine gifts of clothing and gold, and stowed them in the vessel’s stern. Then he urged Telemachus on, with winged words: ‘Hurry and climb aboard, and have your crew embark as well, before I reach home and tell my father. I know in my heart and head that his spirit is such he will try to stop you leaving, and he’ll come himself to ask you to the palace, and I don’t think he’ll go back alone. Either way, he’ll be furious.’

Then he turned his long-maned horses towards the city of Pylos, and soon reached the palace, while Telemachus stirred his companions, and gave them his orders: ‘Board the ship, and clear the tackle, so we can be under way.’ They quickly obeyed and leapt on board, then sat to the oars.
While Telemachus stood on shore, by the stern, busy praying and sacrificing to **Athene**, a stranger from a distant land approached, who was fleeing **Argos** after killing a man. He was a seer, a descendant of that **Melampus** who once lived in **Pylos**, the land of sheep.

Melampus was rich, with a fine house, but had to flee to a foreign country, to escape great **Neleus**, lord of men, who seized his wealth while Melampus was forcefully held in the palace at **Phylace**. He suffered all this grief and pain, and the terrible blindness of spirit that the avenging **Furies** brought him, because of Neleus’ daughter, **Pero**. Nevertheless he won free of fate, and drove **Iphicles’** cattle back to Pylos. Then he took vengeance on godlike Neleus for all his cruelty, and saw the girl married to his brother. As for himself, he went to another country, Argos the land of horses, where he was destined to live and rule a host of Argives.
There he married and built a high-roofed hall, and had two strong sons, Antiphates and Mantius. Oicles was Antiphates’ son, and the great military leader Amphiaraus in turn was his, whom aegis-bearing Zeus and Apollo loved in every way. Even so he failed to make old bones, dying at Thebes, because of his wife’s greed. Alcmæon and Amphilochus were his sons.

Mantius for his part was father of Polypheides and Cleitus. Golden-throned Dawn won by his beauty carried of Cleitus to live with the immortals, while Apollo made noble Polypheides his prophet, the greatest of all after Amphiaraus died. He quarrelled with his father and went to Hyperesia to live, where he prophesied to all.

It was Theoclymenus, his son, who now found Telemachus pouring libations in prayer by the swift black ship. He addressed Telemachus with winged words: ‘Friend, since I find you making sacrifice, I beg you by the god you pray to, and by those offerings, and by
your own life and those of your comrades, to answer my questions truly, without concealment. Who are you, and where do you come from? Which city is yours, and who are your parents?’

And courteously Telemachus answered: ‘Well, stranger, I will give you an honest reply. I am from Ithaca, the son of Odysseus, as once was perhaps, for now he has surely met with some sad fate. Still, I launched a black ship with my friends and came here seeking news of my long-absent father.’

Bk XV:271-300 Telemachus sails for home

‘I too,’ said noble Theoclymenus, ‘I too have left my native place, because I killed a relative of mine. Argos, the horse country, is full of his kith and kin, and they have power in Achaea. I fled to avoid death’s dark fate at their hands: it seems it’s my destiny to be a wanderer among men. But I beg you: since they are on my trail, take me aboard your ship so they can’t kill me.’
‘If you want to sail with us, I won’t say no,’ wise Telemachus replied, ‘come with us and accept what hospitality we can offer.’ With this he took Theoclymenus’ bronze spear from him, and stowed it on deck, then they went aboard and he took his seat in the stern with Theoclymenus beside him, and the crew cast off the hawsers. Telemachus ordered his men to the tackle and they quickly obeyed, raising the pine mast and stepping it in its socket, making fast the forestays, then hoisting the white sail by its twisted ox-hide ropes. Bright-eyed Athene it was who sent them a following wind that gusted through the sky, so the ship would be quick to complete her journey over the brine. On they sailed by Crouni, and past Chalcis of the lovely streams.

The sun dipped, and the waves grew dark. The ship reached Pheae driven by a wind from Zeus, and on past glorious Elis, where the Epeians rule. Telemachus set a course from there for the nearby islands, wondering whether he would escape ambush or be killed.
Bk XV:301-350 Odysseus wishes to leave for town

Meanwhile Odysseus and the good swineherd were eating their supper in the hut, with the other men. When they had quenched their hunger and thirst, Odysseus sounded out Eumaeus, to see if he would extend his generous hospitality and ask him to stay on at the farm, or whether he would send him on to town. ‘Eumaeus, and the rest of you, listen a moment. I think in the morning I’ll go off to town to beg, so as not to burden you all. Give me your best advice now, and a guide I can trust to show me the way. Once there I must wander about by myself, and hope they’ll give me water and a crust of bread. I could go to noble Odysseus’ house, and take wise Penelope my news, mingling with that crowd of insolent Suitors, and see if they’ll spare me dinner, since they don’t go short of good things. I could serve them too in any way they wish, for I’ll have you
know, and mark this well, by the grace of Hermes the Messenger, who lends fame and accomplishment to a man’s work, no one else can compete with me in splitting firewood, setting a proper fire, roasting and carving meat or pouring wine, all those acts by which lesser men serve the high-born.’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you were taken aback at this. ‘Stranger, what put such a thought in your mind? You must be keen to die, if you really intend to join that crowd of Suitors, whose waywardness and violence echo to the heavens. Men like you are not the ones that serve them, they employ youngsters in smart tunics and cloaks, faces and hair gleaming with oil, to wait at their shining tables laden with bread and meat and cups of wine. No one is bothered by your presence here: I am certainly not: so stay. When Odysseus’ noble son arrives he will give you a tunic and cloak to wear and send you on to whatever place you wish.’

Then noble long-suffering Odysseus answered: ‘Eumaeus, may you be as dear to
Father **Zeus** as you are to me, since you have saved me from wandering on in pain and hardship. Nothing is worse for men than homelessness, and when suffering and sorrow overtake them in their wanderings, they will try anything on behalf of an empty stomach. But since you bid me stay, and wait for your young master, tell me about godlike Odysseus’ parents, whom he left behind in the fullness of their years. Are they still living, under the sun, or are they dead in **Hades’** House?’

Bk XV:351-402 Eumaeus tells of Odysseus’ parents

‘Stranger, ‘**Eumaeus** replied, ‘I will tell you plainly. **Laertes** lives, but prays endlessly for life to leave his body. He mourns his lost son deeply, and his **wife**, that wise lady, whose death hurt him most and aged him prematurely. She died a wretched death, grieving for her noble son, a death I would wish on no kind friend of mine living here. I always delighted in
asking after her while she was still alive, despite her sadness, because she raised me alongside noble Ctimene her youngest daughter. The mother brought me up with her, and treated me as scarcely inferior to her own children. When we both reached youth’s sweet prime they sent her to Same to be wed, and earned countless marriage gifts, while the lady gave me a fine tunic and cloak, and sandals for my feet, and sent me to the fields, though in her heart she loved me no less. All that is done with now, though the blessed gods crown my labour with success. It provides me with meat and drink, and the means to welcome honoured strangers. But a plague of arrogant men has descended on my mistress’ house, and prevents me receiving a single pleasant word or a kindness from her, though servants long to talk face to face with the mistress, and eat and drink and hear the news, and carry off some small gift to the farm, all the things that warm a servant’s heart.’
‘Eumaeus, you must have been very young when you were separated from your far-off parents and your own land,’ Odysseus replied. ‘Tell me, in truth, was it a city of broad streets that men sacked, where you honoured father and mother lived, or did raiders catch you tending the sheep and cattle alone, and carry you off in their ship to be sold to this master of yours for a good price?’

‘Stranger,’ the master swineherd answered, ‘since you ask, well, enjoy your cup of wine and listen quietly to my tale. The nights are longer than even a god could tell. There is a time to sleep, and a time to delight in hearing a story. No need for you to sleep before you are ready: too much sleep can even weary us. As for you others, if anyone has a mind to rest, let him do so outside, and breakfast at dawn, and follow our master’s swine, but we two will eat and drink here in the hut, and savour each other’s memories of trouble and sadness, since a man who has suffered deeply and travelled far relishes even his sufferings in after days. Let
me tell you, then, the answers to your questions.’

Bk XV:403-492 Eumaeus’s story.

‘There’s an island called Syrie, you may have heard of, beyond Ortygia, where the sun turns in its course. It is sparsely populated, yet a fine land, rich in flocks and herds, yielding plenty of wine and wheat. Famine is unknown there, and the people are free of the dreadful sicknesses that plague wretched mortals. As the generations of men grow old, Apollo of the Silver Bow visits their cities, with Artemis beside him, and strikes and slays them with gentle arrows. There are two cities, dividing the island between them, and my father, Ctesius, son of Ormenus, a godlike man, was king of both.

Sea-faring Phoenicians came to trade there, greedy rogues bringing a cargo of trinkets in their black ship. A Phoenician woman lived in my father’s house, tall and handsome and
skilled in fine handiwork. The cunning Phoenicians seduced her. One lay with her by the hollow ship where she was washing clothes: such love beguiles the minds even of virtuous women. He asked who she was and where she came from, and she pointed to my father’s high-roofed house, saying: “I am from Sidon, rich in bronze, the daughter of wealthy Arybas. But Taphian raiders caught me as I came from the fields, brought me here and sold me into that man’s household, he paying a fine price.”

The man who had lain with her secretly said: “Do you wish to go home with us, and see your parents and their high-roofed house again? They are still living, truly, and counted among the wealthy.”

“I might,” the woman said, “if you sailors would swear on oath to take me home in safety.” They all pledged to do as she asked, and when they had sworn their oath, the woman cautioned them: “Don’t any of you speak to me if you meet me at the well or in the street. Be silent, lest someone go the palace and tell the
old king. If he suspects he will bind me tight and plan your deaths. Keep my words in mind, instead, and go off and barter your goods. Then, when your ship’s cargo is loaded, send a message quickly to me at the palace, and I will bring whatever gold is to hand. And I’ll gladly add something else to pay for my passage. I am nurse to a child of my master’s there in the house, a clever child who accompanies me everywhere. I’ll bring him on board, and he’ll fetch a great price in any foreign city where you land.” With these words she returned to the palace.

They stayed in the country a whole year, and acquired a ship’s full of cargo in trade. When the hollow ship was loaded, ready for sailing, they sent a messenger to the woman to tell her the news. The man was an expert in deceit, and he came to my father’s house bringing a necklace strung with gold and amber beads. While my dear mother and her maids examined and handled it, haggling over the price, he nodded silently to the woman. After
his signal to her, he slipped away to the hollow ship, while she took me by the hand and led me from the house. In the portico she came across tables and drinking cups set out for those who attended on my father. They had gone to the council meeting in the debating hall, so she hid three of the goblets among her clothes, and took them with her, and I followed in all innocence.

The sun dipped and the streets grew dark. We hurried down to the fine harbour, where the Phoenicians’ swift vessel waited. They embarked, taking us on board as well, and sailed away over the sea, on a favourable wind from Zeus. Six days and nights we journeyed on, but when Zeus the son of Cronos brought the seventh day, Artemis the Archeress struck the woman who fell with a thud like a sea-bird into the hold. They tossed her overboard to feed the seals and fishes, and I was left heart-sick and alone. Then the wind and waves carried them here to Ithaca, where Laertes’ wealth purchased me. That’s how I came to set eyes on this land.’
Odysseus, scion of Zeus, said then: ‘Eumaeus, you have stirred my heart deeply with all this sad tale of trouble. Yet in your case, surely, Zeus has dealt you good with evil, since you reached the house of a generous man after all your suffering, who is kind enough to provide you with food and drink, so that you live well, while I have wandered through all the cities of men to reach this place.’

Bk XV:493-557 Telemachus lands on Ithaca

They talked together and then lay down to sleep for a while, though not for long since Dawn, of the lovely throne, approached. Meanwhile Telemachus was drawing near to the shore, and his crew were striking the sail. They swiftly dropped the mast, and rowed the ship to her anchorage. Then loosing the mooring stones they made the hawsers fast, and leapt on shore. There they prepared a meal and mixed the glowing wine, and when they had quenched hunger and thirst, wise Telemachus spoke first,
and issued his orders. ‘Row the black ship to the city harbour, while I visit the herdsmen in the fields, and I will join you this evening when I’ve inspected my estate. Tomorrow morning I’ll set before you a sumptuous feast with meat and sweet wine, to thank you for your journey.’

‘Dear boy, where am I to go?’ said godlike Theoclymenus. ‘Of those who reign in rocky Ithaca, whose house shall I visit? Or should I go straight to your and your mother’s house?’

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘At another time I’d invite you home as a matter of course. There’s no lack of hospitality towards strangers here. But it would be worse for you, since I shall be absent and my mother will avoid you, for she seldom shows herself to the Suitors in the hall, and works at her loom apart, in her room upstairs. But there is someone else whose house you can go to, Eurymachus, the noble son of wise Polybus. In Ithaca men consider him a god. He is the best of them: keenest to marry my mother and inherit Odysseus’ power. But Olympian Zeus, the sky-dweller, alone
knows whether he’ll bring a judgement or a wedding day.’

Even as he spoke a bird flew past on his right. It was a hawk, Apollo’s swift messenger, holding a dove in its talons, plucking the feathers that fluttered to earth half way between Telemachus and the ship. Theoclymenus drew him apart from his crew, and grasped his hand, saying: ‘Surely that bird flew past on the right at a god’s command. I knew when I saw him he was a bird of good omen. None are of more royal descent than you in Ithaca: you and your line will hold power forever.’

‘Stranger, may that prove so,’ wise Telemachus replied. ‘Then you shall have many a gift and act of kindness from me, so that any man who meets you will call you blessed.’

Then he turned to Peiraeus, a loyal friend, saying: ‘Peiraeus, Clytius’ son, who journeyed with me to Pylos, and have always been a most faithful friend to me, welcome this stranger to your house, I beg you, and show him honour and kindness till I come.’
‘Telemachus,’ that great spearman Peiraeus answered, ‘I shall entertain him however long you delay and he won’t lack for the hospitality due to strangers.’ With this he went aboard, and told his friends to embark and then cast off. They climbed on deck, and the oarsmen took their seats. Then they loosed the cables, thrust her off, and rowed for the city as Telemachus, divine Odysseus’ loyal son, had ordered. But he had already fastened fine sandals on his feet, and taken his strong sharp bronze-tipped spear from the deck. Now, striding quickly, his feet carried him towards the farm where the worthy swineherd, loyal to his masters, slept among a host of swine.

Bk XVI:1-59 Telemachus at Eumaeus’ hut

Back at the hut, Odysseus and the noble swineherd had lit a dawn fire, and were making breakfast, after sending the other herdsmen off with the swine. As Telemachus approached, the guard dogs failed to bark, instead they fawned
around him. Odysseus, hearing the sound of footsteps and realising the dogs were silent, spoke to *Eumaeus* with winged words: ‘This must be some friend of yours, Eumaeus, or an old acquaintance. I hear footsteps, but the dogs are quiet, fawning round your visitor.’

He had barely finished speaking when his own brave son stood on the threshold. The swineherd leapt up in amazement, and the bowls he was using to mix the glowing wine fell from his hands. He ran to meet his master, and kissed his forehead, his sparkling eyes, and his hands, while the tears ran down his cheeks. The worthy swineherd clasped godlike Telemachus in his arms and kissed him endlessly as if he were back from the dead, as a loving father greets a son returned from a far-off land after a nine-year absence, a dear and only son for whom he has suffered much pain. And, in tears, he spoke to him with winged words: ‘

‘Telemachus, sweet light of my eyes, you are here! And I thought I would never see you
more, after you sailed for Pylos. Come in, dear boy, and let me gladden my heart by gazing at you, home now from distant lands, and here, in my house. You seldom visit the herdsman and the farm: you are always in town: I think you must enjoy watching that hateful crowd of Suitors.’

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘If you say so, old friend. I came here to see you, though, with my own eyes, and ask you whether my mother is still at home, or whether some man has married her leaving Odysseus’ bed un-slept in, hung with foul cobwebs.’

‘Truly,’ the master swineherd replied, ‘she still suffers patiently in the palace, and while she weeps the nights and days pass by in sadness.’ With this he took the bronze spear from Telemachus, who crossed the stone threshold. His father, Odysseus, rose at his approach to relinquish his chair, but Telemachus stopped him with a sign, and said: ‘Sit down, friend, and I’ll find a seat here elsewhere. Here’s a man who’ll find one for
me.’ With this, Odysseus sat down again, while the swineherd threw a fleece over a pile of brushwood so that Odysseus’ steadfast son could be seated. Then the swineherd set out plates of roast meat from the previous day’s meal, and baskets piled with bread, and mixed honeyed wine in an ivy bowl, before sitting down opposite godlike Odysseus.

They stretched out their hands to the good food in front of them, and when they had quenched their hunger and thirst, Telemachus asked the worthy swineherd: ‘Where does this stranger hail from, old friend? What ship brought him to Ithaca and who did the sailors claim to be, since he couldn’t get here on foot?’

Bk XVI:60-111 Odysseus expresses his opinion

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you answered him, saying: ‘I’ll tell you all about it, my boy. He says he was born on Crete’s broad island, and has roamed through all the cities of men: such is the fate a god has spun for him. Now
he’s escaped a Thresprotian ship and found his way to the farm. I’ll entrust him to you, to do as you wish, as he is your suppliant.’

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘Eumaeus your words cut me to the quick. How can I welcome a stranger to my house? I am still young, and not strong enough to defend myself against anyone who picks a quarrel at random. And my mother’s mind sways this way and that, whether to stay and keep house for me out of respect for her husband’s bed and for public opinion, or to go with whoever proves best of the Achaean suitors, and offers the finest marriage gifts. In truth, regarding this stranger, since he has come to you I will give him a fine tunic and cloak, a double-edged sword and a pair of sandals, and send him on wherever he’s minded to go. Or you might wish to keep him on at the farm, and take care of him: I’ll send you clothes and sufficient food, so his presence doesn’t ruin you. But I’ll not let him mix with the crowd of Suitors, whose mindless insolence runs to excess, lest they taunt him, and distress
me. It’s hard for one man alone to do anything in a crowd, however brave he is. They have the greater strength, in truth.’

‘Friend,’ said noble long-suffering Odysseus, ‘it is surely right for me to speak. It pains my heart to hear you describe the outrage these Suitors commit in your house, to spite you, a fine man. Do you accept it? Do the people here hate you, because of some oracle? Or is it the fault of some brother, whom a man should trust to fight for him in troubled times. I wish I had the youth to match my present feelings, or were myself a son of peerless Odysseus, or even Odysseus himself returned from his travels, of which there’s always hope. Then some stranger would be welcome to take my head if I failed to prove their bane when I reached the palace of Laertes’ son. And if they proved too many for a lone fighter, then if it were me I’d rather die the death in my own palace, than have to gaze forever at wickedness, strangers maltreated, the maids shamefully manhandled in those fine halls, wine wasted,
and men gorging themselves on my food, endlessly, without care or restraint.’

Bk XVI:112-153 Telemachus sends Eumaeus to Penelope

‘Stranger,’ wise Telemachus replied, ‘let me confess the truth of the matter. On the whole the people have no hatred for me or grudge against me, nor is it the fault of any brother a man should trust to fight for him in troubled times. Zeus has preserved our house in a strict line. Laertes was Arceisius’ only son, Odysseus in turn was his, and I am Odysseus’. He had little joy of me, leaving me behind, a child, in his palace. As a result the house is full of enemies. All the princes who rule the islands, Dulichium, Same, and wooded Zacynthus, and those here in rocky Ithaca, all of them court my mother, and plunder my house. She neither rejects their wooing outright, nor chooses to accept re-marriage, the idea of which she hates, while they consume my stores in feasting, and
will ruin me before long. Yet all that’s in the lap of the gods, old friend: go quickly and tell faithful Penelope that I am safely back from Pylos. I will wait here till you have told her your news, in private, and returned. No one else must hear it, since many of them are hostile to me.’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you answered him then, saying: ‘I hear you, and I’ll bear it in mind, you are speaking to one who understands. But tell me, now, shall I visit Laertes at the same time. That man of ill fate continued to manage the estate for a while, and ate and drank with the men, when the spirit took him, though grieving deeply for Odysseus. But since you left in your ship for Pylos they say he no longer eats or drinks, or oversees the work, but sits there groaning and weeping, nothing but skin and bone.’

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘We’re the sadder for that, but nevertheless we will let him alone, regardless of our sorrow. If it were possible for us mortals to have every wish
fulfilled, our priority should be my father’s return above all. No, speak your message and hurry back, and don’t wander the fields in search of Laertes. Tell my mother instead to send her maid to him, quickly and secretly: she can take the old man the news.’

Bk XVI:154-212 Odysseus reveals his identity to Telemachus

He sent the swineherd on his way, then picked up his sandals and bound them to his feet, and headed for town. Athene, aware of Eumaeus’ departure from the farm approached in the form of a tall, beautiful woman, skilled in fine handiwork. She stood by the entrance to the hut and was visible to Odysseus, but Telemachus failed to see or be aware of her: since the gods do not show themselves openly to all. The dogs, as well as Odysseus, saw her though, and slunk away whining, not barking, to the far side of the yard. She raised her eyebrows and seeing her signal Odysseus went out past the wall of the
court and stood there, facing her. Then Athene spoke to him: ‘Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes, tell your son who you are no longer hide it, and when you have planned how to kill the Suitors, go on towards town. I will not be far from you, I am eager for the fight.’

Saying this, Athene touched him with her golden wand. She clothed him in a clean tunic and cloak, increased his stature, and restored his youthful complexion. His colour returned, his cheeks filled out, and his beard darkened. Then she departed, leaving Odysseus to return to the hut. There his son was amazed, and troubled, dropping his gaze, fearing he was in the presence of a god. He spoke with winged words: ‘Stranger, you seem different now than you were a moment ago. Your clothes are new, and your complexion has changed. Surely you are one of the gods that rule the wide heavens? Be gracious, and spare us, and let us offer you fitting sacrifice, and fine gifts wrought with gold.’
Noble long-suffering Odysseus replied: ‘I am no god: why compare me with the immortals? I am your father, on whose account you endure many a sorrow that makes you groan, and suffer men’s violence.’ So saying, he kissed his son, and shed the tear he had curbed till then. But Telemachus, unable to believe as yet that it was his father, addressed him again, saying: ‘You cannot be my father, Odysseus. Some god is deceiving me to make me suffer more. No mortal man could achieve all this himself, but only if a god came to him and willed him easily young or old. In truth, a moment ago you were an old man in rags, and now you are like one of those gods who rule the wide heavens.’

‘Telemachus,’ resourceful Odysseus replied, ‘you shouldn’t be so surprised that your father is here, and so astounded. No second Odysseus will ever show himself here, that you can be sure of. Here I am, before your eyes, back in my own country again after nigh on twenty years of wretched wandering. Athene
the leader of armies has worked all this, making me appear as she wishes. She it is who has the power to make me look like a beggar one minute, a well-dressed youngster the next. It’s no problem for the gods who rule the wide heavens to glorify a man or to humble him.’

Bk XVI:213-257 Odysseus and Telemachus make plans

With this he sat down, and Telemachus flung his arms around him and wept, and the longing to express their emotion rose in both their hearts. They keened aloud, and their cries rose, louder and more frequent than those of birds of prey with curved talons, vultures or sea-eagles, whose nests have been robbed of their unfledged chicks by country folk. Tears streamed piteously from their eyes. And sunset would have found them still weeping, if Telemachus had not suddenly asked his father: ‘What ship brought you to Ithaca, dear father,
and who did the sailors claim to be, since you can’t have arrived on foot?’

Noble, long-suffering Odysseus answered him: ‘My boy, rest assured I will tell you exactly how it was. Phaeacians brought me here, famous seafarers, who provide passage for any strangers who reach them. While I slept they carried me in their swift ship over the sea, then set me ashore on Ithaca, with the fine gifts they gave me, bronze and gold items, and woven fabrics. That wealth, by the grace of the gods, is hidden in a cave. Now I am here at Athene’s prompting to plan how we will kill our enemies. Run through the list of Suitors for me, and give me the count, so I know who they are and how many, and can judge with a clear mind whether we can handle them alone, or whether to seek for help.’

Wise Telemachus answered: ‘Father, I know of your great fame, as a mighty spearman and a great strategist, but I am amazed at what you are considering. Two men cannot fight so many brave opponents. There are not merely
ten or twenty Suitors, but far more. Let me number them for you now. Fifty-two picked men, with their six servants, from Dulichium. Twenty-four from Same, and twenty Achaean youths from Zacynthus. Then from Ithaca itself there are twelve noblemen, not counting the herald, Medon, and the divine minstrel, and the two men who carve their meat. If we come upon them all in the palace, your path of vengeance will prove a fierce and desperate one. No: think about anyone who might help, who would fight for us heart and soul.’

Bk XVI:258-320 Odysseus gives Telemachus his orders

Noble, long-suffering Odysseus replied: ‘Well: let me tell you: listen and pay attention: don’t you think Athene and Father Zeus will be help enough? Do I really need to think of other allies?’ And wise Telemachus answered: ‘High in the clouds sit those two helpers you speak of,
and they are powerful indeed. Between them they rule mankind and the deathless gods.’

‘They won’t hold back from a fierce fight,’ said the noble, long-suffering Odysseus, ‘not when the issue between us and the Suitors is decided in my palace. Firstly however, go to the house at dawn, and mingle with the insolent Suitors. The swineherd will lead me to the city later, disguised as a wretched old beggar. If they mishandle me in the halls, steel your heart to their evil treatment. Endure the sight of it, even if they haul me outside, and hurl things at me. Just try to dissuade them with soothing words, and tell them to stop their foolishness. They’ll not pay any attention, though, for their day of judgement is nigh.

Remember too, what I say next. When Athene, ripe in judgement, tells me, I will nod to you, and when you see my signal, take all the weapons in the hall, and put them away in the darkest corner of the high storeroom. If the Suitors miss them and question you, deceive them with placatory words, and say: “I’ve
moved them out of the smoke from the fire, since they no longer look as they did when Odysseus left them behind and sailed for Troy, but are all grimy where the draught from the hearth has reached them. Zeus, son of Cronos, has filled my heart with an even greater fear, that you might start a quarrel amongst yourselves, and wound each other, and so bring shame on the feast and your cause. Iron itself draws a man towards it.”

But leave a couple of swords and spears, and a pair of ox-hide shields, ready for us to run and seize them, while Pallas Athene and Zeus the Wise distract the Suitors. Remember too, what I say next. If you are the son of my blood in truth, let no one know Odysseus is back, not Laertes or the swineherd, nor anyone of the household, not even Penelope herself. We ourselves will judge the mood of the women, and sound out the men, and discover who honours us and fears us, and who gives nothing for us, and scorns your manhood.’
‘Father,’ ‘his splendid son replied, ‘you’ll know I’m not short of spirit, later, and you’ll see no lack of will on my part. But I ask you to re-consider: I don’t see that idea will benefit us. You’ll waste a deal of time sounding out men on the farms, while the insolent Suitors waste your wealth, at their ease, sparing nothing. Yes, find out which of the women are disloyal and which are honest, but forget about proving the men, we can do that later, if you have indeed been shown the will of aegis-bearing Zeus.’

Bk XVI:321-392 Telemachus’ ship makes harbour

So they debated, while the good ship that carried Telemachus and his friends from Pylos, made Ithaca. When its crew had navigated the deep harbour and drawn the black ship on shore, their squires took their equipment, and carried the fine gifts proudly to Clytius’ house. At the same time they sent a herald to Odysseus’ palace, to give Penelope news of
Telemachus’ arrival in the island and his order to sail round to the city, in case the noble queen grew anxious, and took to weeping. And so this herald and the noble swineherd met, as each, on the same errand, carried the news to Odysseus’ wife. When they reached the royal palace the herald spoke in the presence of her handmaids, saying: ‘My queen, your dear son has just returned.’ But Eumaeus approached Penelope and gave her the words of her loyal son, as he had been commanded. When he had relayed the whole message he left the hall and court and returned to his swine.

The Suitors were surprised and troubled, and they went out of the hall, past the high courtyard wall, and sat down in front of the gates. There Eurymachus, Polybus’ son, was first to speak: ‘My friends, Telemachus has accomplished something great in his arrogance, a journey we never thought to see him complete. Come, let us launch a black ship, and crew it with oarsmen, so we can send word to the others to return swiftly,’
His words were hardly out, when Amphinomus, turning round, saw a ship enter the harbour, men at the oars, and others furling sail. He laughed gaily, and addressed his friends: ‘There’s no need for a message, here they are! Either a god told them, or they saw Telemachus’ ship sail by and failed to catch her.’

They all rose at this, and went down to the shore. The crew quickly dragged the black ship on land, and their proud squires removed the equipment. Then the Suitors went in a crowd to the meeting place, and prevented anyone else attending, young or old. Antinous, Eupeithes’ son spoke: ‘Alas, the gods have rescued that man from destruction. Day after day, men were at watch on the windy heights, and at sunset we headed offshore for the night, and waited out at sea for gleaming Dawn, hoping to catch and kill Telemachus: meanwhile some god has seen him home. Don’t let him slip through our hands: let us plan a sad death for him here, since I say while he lives our business will fail. He is wise
and shrewd, and the people no longer support us. Let us act before he calls on the Achaeans to assemble. I don’t believe he’ll wait a moment, but he’ll tell them all in his anger how we planned his utter ruin, then failed. We’ll get no praise for it when they hear of the evil we plotted: take care they don’t offer us harm, and drive us into exile in some foreign land. No: we must act first: take him in the fields outside the city, or on the road, then divide his wealth and possessions fairly between us, leaving his mother and whoever marries her with the palace. If this idea displeases you, and you decide to let him live and allow him to keep his ancestral wealth, then I suggest we disperse, and stop consuming his store of luxuries, and let each man woo her and try to win her from his own house: then she can marry the one that offers most, and is fated to be her husband.’

Bk XVI:393-451 Penelope rebukes the Suitors
They were all silent when his speech ended. Then **Amphinomus**, the glorious son of prince **Nisus, Aretias’** son, addressed the gathering. He was the leader of the suitors from **Dulichium**’s wheat and grasslands, whose conversation pleased **Penelope**, because of his understanding heart. He spoke to the meeting, with good intent, saying: ‘Friends, I would not be one to decide on killing **Telemachus**; it is a fearful thing to murder a king’s son. No, let us first consult the will of the gods. If **Zeus’** oracle approves it, I will urge it on others, and destroy him myself. But if the gods advise against the action, I ask you to hold off.’

So said Amphinomus, and the idea pleased them. They rose at once and went to **Odysseus’** palace, and once across the threshold sat at their gleaming benches.

It was then a thought occurred to wise Penelope, to show herself to the **Suitors** in all their arrogance. She knew of the death threats to her son, since **Medon** the herald had overheard the plans and warned her. Now she
led her handmaids to the hall, and drawing her shining veil across her face, placed herself by a door pillar of the splendid room, near to the Suitors. From there she aimed her rebuke at Antinous: ‘Filled with violence, Antinous, you plan your wickedness! Yet they call you the most eloquent and intelligent man in Ithaca. That seems wrong to me. A madman, you are, plotting Telemachus’ death, and trampling on suppliants Zeus vouches for! It’s impious to plot against others. Are you ignorant of that occasion when your father fled to this house, in terror of the mob? They were wild with anger against him because he was in league with the Taphian pirates, harrying the Thesprotians, our allies. They meant to offer him violence, kill him and seize the whole of his vast and delightful property. Odysseus it was who restrained them, and turned them away despite the passion they were in. Now you waste his wealth without compensation, court his wife, and plan to murder his son. I, who am in great distress, beg you, and all the rest of you: desist.’
It was Eurymachus, Polybus’ son, who answered her: ‘Wise Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, let me reassure you, and don’t be anxious about these things. No man lives or shall live, no man shall ever be born, who dare lay hands on Telemachus, your son, while I exist to gaze on the light of day. I say it to you, and time will prove it so. That man’s black blood will coat my spear. For when I was a child Odysseus, sacker of cities, often set me on his knee, and fed me roast meat, and wetted my lips with wine. So, Telemachus is dearest of all men to me, and he need not fear death at the Suitors’ hands: as for the gods, none can escape them.’

His words were designed to placate her, yet in his heart he plotted Telemachus’ death. Then Penelope climbed the stairs to her shining chamber, and there she wept for Odysseus her dear husband, till bright-eyed Athene sealed her eyelids in sweet sleep.
Bk XVI:452-481 Eumaeus brings Telemachus the latest news.

That evening the worthy swineherd returned, while Odysseus and his son were busy making supper, having killed a yearling pig. Athene approached Odysseus, Laertes’ son, once more and touched him with her wand, disguising him again as an old man, clothing him in foul rags, to prevent the swineherd recognising him on sight and running to loyal Penelope with the news, instead of keeping it secret.

Telemachus greeted him first: ‘Worthy Eumaeus, here you are! What news from the city? Are those proud Suitors back from their ambush, or are they still out there lying in wait for me on my way home?’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you answered then, saying: ‘I didn’t have time to enquire about it, in the city: my heart was urging me to hurry back here after delivering my message. But I met a herald, a speedy messenger sent by your friends, who broke the news to your
mother. And one thing more I did see with my own eyes. From high above the city, on Hermes’ Hill as I came back, I saw a swift ship making harbour, filled with men, glittering with shields and two-edged spears. I thought that might be them, but I’m not sure.’

At this, royal Telemachus glanced towards his father with a smile, while avoiding the swineherd’s eye.

When they had finished preparing the meal, they sat and ate, and were not disappointed by their shared supper. Then, having quenched hunger and thirst, they thought of their beds, and sought the gift of sleep.

Bk XVII:1-60 Telemachus goes to the palace

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, godlike Odysseus’ steadfast son Telemachus, eager to leave for the city, strapped on his fine sandals, picked up his sturdy spear, one comfortable to hold, and said to the swineherd: ‘Old friend, I’m off to town to find my mother:
she won’t stop her sad weeping, her tearful grieving, till she sees me in the flesh. Here are my orders for you. Guide this unfortunate stranger to the city, so he can beg for food there: someone may decide to give him a crust and a cup of water. With all my troubles I can’t bear everyone’s burden myself. So much the worse for him if that should make him genuinely angry. I would rather speak the truth.’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke up, saying: ‘Friend, I no more wish to be left here myself. It’s better for a beggar to beg in town than in the country: someone may decide to give me food. I’m too old to live on a farm at some master’s beck and call. Go ahead, and this man will take me there as you command, when I’ve warmed myself at the fire and the sun has some heat, since the rags I wear are wretchedly thin, and I fear the morning frost might prove too much for me, given that you tell me it’s a long walk to town.’
At this, Telemachus strode off quickly through the farm, planning disaster for the Suitors. When he reached the royal palace, he leant his spear against a tall pillar, and crossed the stone threshold.

The nurse, Eurycleia, who was spreading fleecy covers on the fine-wrought chairs, was first to see him. She rushed towards him, in floods of tears, while noble Odysseus’ other maids gathered round him, welcoming him lovingly with kisses on head and shoulders.

Soon wise Penelope, the image of Artemis or golden Aphrodite, came from her room, and weeping threw her arms round her dear son, kissing his face and his fine eyes, and sobbed out winged words: ‘Telemachus, light of my eyes, here you are. I thought I would never see you again when you left in your ship for Pylos to seek news of your brave father, secretly and against my wishes. Come tell me what news you have of him.’

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘Mother, don’t rouse my tears, don’t stir my emotions: I’ve
barely escaped from total ruin. Bathe, and dress yourself in clean linen, then go to your room upstairs with your women, and promise the gods a perfect offering, hoping that Zeus might bring about a day of judgement. I will go to the gathering place and invite a guest to our house, a stranger who returned from Pylos with me. I sent him on ahead with my noble friends, and told Peiraeus to take him home and welcome him, and show him kindness and honour till I came.’

To these words of his she made no reply, but went and bathed, and dressed in clean linen, and promised the gods a perfect offering, hoping that Zeus might bring about a day of judgement.

Bk XVII:61-106 Telemachus finds Theoclymenus

Then Telemachus, spear in hand, with two swift hounds at his heels, left by way of the hall. And Athene granted him such miraculous grace that
every face turned to him in wonder as he passed. The noble Suitors crowded round him speaking words of respect while plotting evil in the depths of their hearts. But he evaded the dense throng, and took his place alongside Mentor, Antiphus and Halitherses, his father’s friends of old. As they questioned him, Peiraeus, famous with the spear, approached leading the stranger, Theoclymenus, through the city to the gathering place. Telemachus did not pause for long before he rose and went to meet them. Piraeus it was who was first to speak: ‘Telemachus, send your women to my house, without delay, to collect Menelaus’ gifts to you.’

Wise Telemachus replied: ‘Peiraeus who knows what may happen. If the arrogant Suitors murder me behind the closed doors of the house, and split my fathers’ wealth between them, I would rather you kept the things yourself to enjoy. If instead it is I who sow the seeds of death for them, bring it all to the palace, and I will share your pleasure.’
With this, he guided his long-suffering guest to the house. When they reached the noble halls, they hung their cloaks on bench and chair, and entered the gleaming baths to bathe. When the women had washed them, rubbed them with oil, and dressed them in tunics and fleecy cloaks, they left the baths and were seated. A maid brought water in a fine golden jug so they could rinse their hands, pouring it over their hands into a silver basin. Then she brought a gleaming table, and the loyal housekeeper set bread and dishes of meat before them, giving freely of her stores. Telemachus’ mother sat opposite by a pillar, leaning from her chair to spin her delicate yarn, while they reached for the good food before them. When they had quenched their hunger and thirst, wise Penelope was first to speak: ‘Telemachus, I will go to my room, there to lie down on my bed, that has become a bed of tears indeed, ever since the day when Odysseus left for Troy with the Atreides. It seems you do not care to tell me the truth, though the Suitors are
absent, as to whether you’ve heard anything of your father’s return.’

Bk XVII:107-165 Theoclymenus prophesies Odysseus’ presence

‘Mother,’ wise Telemachus answered, ‘be assured I’ll tell you all. We went to Pylos, to Nestor, the shepherd of his people, who gave me a kind welcome, receiving me in his great palace as a father might welcome his own son back from a distant journey. He and his glorious sons were as kind to me as could be. But he’d heard not a word from anyone of brave Odysseus, whether living or dead. So he sent me on in a well-made horse-drawn chariot, to Sparta, to Menelaus, the famous warrior, the son of Atreus. There I met Argive Helen, for whose sake they and the Trojans laboured by the gods’ will. Menelaus of the loud war-cry asked me straight out what I sought in lovely Lacedaemon, and I told him the truth.
Then he cried out in answer: “Rogues, men without courage, they are, who wish to creep into a brave man’s bed. Odysseus will bring them to a cruel end, just as if a doe had left twin newborn fawns asleep in some great lion’s lair in the bush, and gone for food on the mountain slopes and in the grassy valleys, and the lion returned to its den and brought them to a cruel end. By Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo, I wish he would come among those Suitors with that strength he showed in well-ordered Lesbos, when he rose to wrestle with Philomeleides, and threw him mightily, to all the Achaeans’ delight. Then they would meet death swiftly, and a dark wedding. But concerning what you ask of me, I will not evade you, or mislead you: on the contrary, I will not hide a single fact of all that the infallible Old Man of the Sea told me. He said he saw him shedding great tears in the island haunt of the Nymph Calypso, who keeps him captive there, far from his native land, since he has no oared ship, no crew, to carry him over the wide waters.”
Those were the words of Menelaus, famous warrior, son of Atreus. Afterwards I set out for home, and the immortals sent a helpful breeze, and carried me swiftly home.’ So spoke Telemachus, and troubled her heart.

Then godlike Theoclymenus spoke out too, saying: ‘Honoured wife of Laertes’ son Odysseus, Menelaus has no true knowledge: but listen to me, and I will prophesy with truth and openness. Let Zeus above all be my witness, and this welcoming table and hearth of peerless Odysseus that I have reached: in truth Odysseus has reached this island even now, and waiting or reconnoitring he gains knowledge of their crimes, and sows the seeds of trouble for all those Suitors. I noted a bird of omen clearly as I sat on the oared ship, and told Telemachus so.’

‘Ah, stranger,’ wise Penelope replied, ‘if only your words should prove true. Then you will swiftly know such kindness and gifts from me that all who meet you will call you blessed.’
While they were speaking, the arrogant 
Suitors were enjoying themselves as usual, hurling the 
javelin and discus over the flat ground in front of the palace. At the dinner hour, when the 
drovers brought home their flocks from the fields, 
Medon, most popular of the heralds, who was always there at the feasts, said: ‘Now you 
youngsters have delighted your hearts at your sports, come to the hall so we can prepare the 
meal: there’s a right time for dining too.’

At this, obeying his words, they stood, and went towards the royal palace, where they threw their cloaks over seats and benches, and prepared the feast by slaughtering well-fed sheep and goats, fatted pigs, and a heifer from the herd.

Meanwhile 
Odysseus and the worthy swineherd were making ready to travel to the city. The master swineherd was first to speak: ‘Stranger, since you are keen to go to the city as my master said – as for me I’d rather have left
you here to watch the farm, but I respect him and fear he would scold me later, and a master’s rebuke is chastening – well, come, let’s be off. The day is nearly done, and you’ll find the evening cold.’

Resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘I listen and hear, and you speak to a man who understands you. Let’s go, and you can show me the whole path. But give me a stick to lean on, if you have one trimmed, since you say the track is truly treacherous.’

So saying, he slung his wretched torn leather pouch over his shoulder by its twisted strap, and Eumaeus gave him a staff that suited him, and off they went, leaving the herdsmen and the dogs to guard the farm. So the swineherd led his master to the city, him leaning on a stick, like a beggar, old and wretched, his body draped in miserable rags.

Bk XVII:204-253 Melanthius taunts Odysseus
Along the rocky path, near to the city, they came to a clear, stone-lined spring where the townspeople drew their water. Ithacus, Neritus and Polyctor had dug it, and a grove of water-loving poplars ringed it round. The cold water fell from the cliff above, and over the spring they had built an altar to the Nymphs, where passers-by left offerings. There they met Melanthius, Dolius’ son, with his two herdsmen, driving the pick of his she-goats to the Suitors’ feast. When he set eyes on them he abused them, with a flood of coarse and hostile words, and stirred Odysseus’ anger.

‘Here comes vice leading vice, indeed! The god matches like with like, as always. You miserable swineherd you, tell me I pray where you’re taking this vile pig, a beggarly nuisance that ruins feasts? He’s no man to whom swords and cauldrons are due. He’s one who’ll scratch his back on every pillar, begging for scraps. If you give him to me to tend the farm, muck out the pens, and hump fodder for the goats, he’d maybe fatten his thighs drinking whey. But
since he only knows mischief, he’ll not deign to look for work. He’ll skulk around, and beg, to feed that bottomless gut of his. But I tell you how it will be, for certain, if he reaches noble Odysseus’ palace, his ribs will shatter many a footstool hurled at his head by the hands of real men who’ll pelt him through the halls.’

With this, the fool barged Odysseus as he passed, but failed to knock him from the path. Odysseus stood there, unmoved, debating whether to leap at him and beat him to death with his stick, or take him by the ears and thump his head on the ground. He endured it however, restraining himself, while the swineherd looked Melanthius straight in the eyes, and rebuked him. Lifting his hands in prayer **Eumaeus** cried: ‘Daughters of **Zeus**, Nymphs of the Fountain, if ever Odysseus burned lambs’ and kids’ thigh-pieces folded in fat on your altars, grant me this wish, that my master might return, with a god to guide to him. Then he’d cure you, Melanthius, of your
insolent ways, roaming arrogantly through the city, while useless herdsmen spoil your flock.’

The goatherd, Melanthius, answered him back. ‘How the cur whines, bent on mischief! Some day I’ll take him far from Ithaca, on a black oared ship, and sell him for a price. If only Apollo of the Silver Bow would strike Telemachus down in the hall today, or the Suitors kill him, as certainly as Odysseus’ chance of return has been ended in some far land.’

Bk XVII:254-289 Odysseus reaches the palace

With that he strode past them, as they walked slowly on, and quickly came to the royal palace. There he went straight in and seated himself among the Suitors opposite Eurymachus, who of them all liked him most. The servants placed meat for him, and the faithful housekeeper brought him bread to eat.

When Odysseus and the worthy swineherd arrived, they halted, with the sound of the lyre
ringing in their ears, since Phemius was striking the chords of a song for the Suitors. Odysseus took the swineherd by the arm, saying: ‘Surely this is Odysseus’ house, Eumaeus. It would be easy to recognise among a thousand. There’s building after building. The courtyard wall’s complete with coping, and the gates are well-protected. No one could disregard it. And I see the house is full of men feasting: you can smell the meat roasting, and hear the sounds of the lyre that the gods created to accompany a feast.’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you replied, saying: ‘You are quick-witted as always and easily found it out. But now let’s think what to do. You could go first, enter the palace, and join the Suitors, while I stay here, or you could stay here if you prefer, and I’ll go on before you. But don’t wait about, if you do, since someone may see you, and hurl something at you, or chastise you. Please decide.’

Then noble long-suffering Odysseus answered: ‘I listen and hear: you speak to a man who understands you. Do you go first, and I
will remain behind: I’m used to missiles and blows. My heart knows how to suffer, after the pain I’ve endured in war and at sea: just add this to all that’s gone before. But one thing no man can hide is ravening hunger, a cursed plague that brings men plenty of trouble. Oared ships are even launched because of it, bringing evil to enemies on the waves.’

Bk XVII: 290-327 The death of Odysseus’ dog, Argus

So they spoke. And a dog, lying there, lifted its head and pricked up its ears. Argus was the hound of noble Odysseus, who had bred him himself, though he sailed to sacred Ilium before he could enjoy his company. Once the young men used to take the dog out after wild goat, deer and hare, but with his master gone he lay neglected by the gate, among the heaps of mule and cattle dung that Odysseus’ men would later use to manure the fields. There, plagued by ticks, lay Argus the hound. But suddenly aware
of Odysseus’ presence, he wagged his tail and flattened his ears, though no longer strong enough to crawl to his master. Odysseus turned his face aside and hiding it from Eumaeus wiped away a tear then quickly said: ‘Eumaeus, it’s strange indeed to see this dog lying in the dung. He’s finely built, but I can’t tell if he had speed to match or was only a dog fed from the table, kept by his master for show.’

Then, Eumaeus, the swineherd, you replied: ‘Yes this dog belongs to a man who has died far away. If he had the form and vigour he had when Odysseus left for Troy you’d be amazed by the speed and power. He was keen-scented on the trail, and no creature he started in the depths of the densest wood escaped him. But now he is in a sad state, and his master has died far from his own country, and the thoughtless women neglect him. When their masters aren’t there to command them, servants don’t care about the quality of their work. Far-voiced Zeus takes half the good out of them, the day they become slaves.’
With this he entered the stately house and walking straight into the hall joined the crowd of noble suitors. As for Argus, seeing Odysseus again in this twentieth year, the hand of dark death seized him.

Bk XVII:328-395 Odysseus among the Suitors

Now, godlike Telemachus was the first to notice the swineherd as he entered the hall, and with a nod he called him swiftly to his side. Eumaeus looked round then picked up a stool nearby, where the carver sat when slicing the joints of meat for the Suitors at the feast. He took the stool and set it down at Telemachus’ table, opposite him, then seated himself there. A steward brought him a portion of meat, and helped him to bread from a basket.

Odysseus entered close on Eumaeus’ heels, in his beggar’s disguise, looking old and wretched, leaning on his staff, and clothed in miserable rags. He sat down on the ash wood sill of the doorway, leaning on the doorpost
made of cypress that had been carefully planed and trued to the line by some carpenter of old.

Telemachus called the swineherd, and taking a whole loaf from the fine bread basket, then adding as much meat as his hands could hold, he spoke to him, saying: ‘Take this food to the stranger, and tell him to do the round of the **Suitors** one by one, as well. It doesn’t do for a man in need to be shy.’

At this, the swineherd went over to Odysseus, and as he approached him spoke with winged words: ‘Stranger, this is from Telemachus, who suggests you do the round of the Suitors one by one, and says that a man in need should not be shy.’

Resourceful Odysseus spoke in return: ‘Lord **Zeus**, I pray, grant that Telemachus may be blessed among men, and receive all that his heart desires.’ Then he took the food with both hands and set it down in front of him on his shabby leather bag. While the minstrel sang in the hall he ate, and ended his meal as the bard was finishing the song, whereupon the Suitors
filled the hall with their noise. Now Athene appeared at Odysseus’ side, close to that son of Laertes, and prompted him to go and gather scraps among the Suitors, and find out which were decent men and which were wild, not that she meant to save a single one from death. So round he went, starting on the right, proffering his hand on every side like a true beggar. They wondered who he was, and asked each other where he had come from, giving him food out of pity.

Then up spoke Melanthius the goatherd: ‘Suitors to our noble queen hear me on the subject of this stranger, since I’ve seen him before. The swineherd brought him here, though I don’t know for sure what native country he claims.’

At this, Antinous rounded on the swineherd: ‘Eumaeus, the famous, why on earth did you drag this fellow here? Haven’t we vagrants enough already, beggarly nuisances to ruin our feasts? Isn’t it enough for you that they
all crowd in here, swallowing your master’s stores, without you inviting this wretch too?’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you answered him then: ‘Antinous, noble as you are your words sound ill. Who searches out foreigners himself, and invites them home, unless they are masters of some universal art: a seer, or physician, or architect, or perhaps a divine minstrel who delights men with song? Such men are welcome throughout the boundless earth, but no one would invite a burdensome beggar. You are the harshest Suitor where Odysseus’ servants are concerned, harshest of all to me: but I don’t care as long as loyal Penelope, my lady, and godlike Telemachus live here.’

But wise Telemachus spoke to him: ‘Silence now: don’t waste words answering Antinous: it’s ever his way to employ harsh language and with trouble in mind stir men to anger, encouraging others to do the same.’

Bk XVII:396-461 Antinous is angered
He added winged words for Antinous himself: ‘Antinous you show your concern for me indeed, like a father for a son, advising me to drive that stranger by force of words from the palace. No, no, may the gods forbid such a thing. Give him some food yourself, since I don’t begrudge it, but tell you to do so, rather, paying no attention to my mother, or any of the servants in Odysseus’ palace. But you are minded quite differently in truth, preferring to dine yourself rather than give to another.’

‘Telemachus,’ Antinous retorted, ‘brave spirit and noble orator, what are you saying? If every Suitor gave him as much as I would, he’d avoid this house for a full three months.’ And with that he snatched up a stool from under the table where it stood, the one he propped his bright-sandal feet on during the feast, and flourished it. Nevertheless all the others gave something, and Odysseus filled his leather pouch with scraps of bread and meat. Odysseus was heading back to the threshold having sounded out the Achaeans scot-free, when he
paused near Antinous and spoke to him: ‘Give me something, Friend, since you seem to me the best and not the least of the Achaeans here. You look every inch a king, and therefore it is right you should give me a better portion than the others and I will sound your name throughout the boundless earth. I too once had a house of my own among men. I too lived in riches in a fine palace, and often gave gifts to the stranger, whoever he might be, whatever his needs were. I had servants too without number, and an abundance of all that counts as wealth and allows a man to live well.

But Zeus the son of Cronos ended that – such was his pleasure – when he prompted me to my ruin, sailing the long voyage to Egypt, as a wandering corsair. There in the Nile I moored my curved ships. Then I told my loyal companions to stay and guard them, while I sent scouts to find the highest ground. But my crews, feeling confident, and succumbing to temptation, set about plundering the Egyptians’ fine fields, carrying off women and children,
and killing the men till their cries reached the city. Hearing the shouting the people poured out at dawn and filled the plain with infantry, and chariots, and the gleam of bronze. Zeus who hurls the lightning bolt filled my men with abject fear, and not one had the courage to face the enemy who threatened us on all sides, or hold his ground. Then they killed many of us with their bronze weapons, and dragged the rest off to the city as slaves. As for myself, they handed me over to a friend of theirs, Dmetor son of Iasus, mighty ruler of Cyprus, who took me there, and from there I reached here, in much distress.’

‘What god is it,’ Antinous said, ‘who brings this creature here to blight our feast? Get away from my table, stand over there in the middle, you insolent and shameless beggar, lest you end up in a place more bitter than Egypt or Cyprus. Every man in turn you try will no doubt give to you without conscience or restraint, since there’s never a thought of holding back when
there’s plenty to hand, and they’re making free with another man’s wealth.’

Resourceful Odysseus drew back and answered: ‘How’s this? It seems your brains don’t match your looks! If you can’t bring yourself to break off a piece of bread, when there’s plenty here, and give it to a suppliant at another man’s table, is it likely you would give even a grain of salt from your own?’

At this, Antinous glowered, angered the more, and spoke winged words with a dark look: ‘Now you’re truly casting aspersions I doubt you’ll get out of this hall unscathed.’

Bk XVII:462-504 Odysseus is struck on the shoulder

And with that he grasped the stool and threw it, striking Odysseus on his back, under the right shoulder. But Odysseus stood firm as a rock, and did not reel at the blow. He merely shook his head in silence, thinking dark thoughts in the depths of his mind. Then he returned to the
threshold, sat down with his well-filled bag, and addressed the **Suitors**.

‘Hear me, you Suitors of the noble Queen, while I say what my heart feels. When a man is struck, fighting for his own possessions, his cattle or his white sheep, there’s no reason for shame or grief: but **Antinous**’ blow was on account of my ravening hunger, a cursed plague that brings men plenty of trouble. If there are gods and **Furies** even for beggars let Antinous find death before he can marry.’

Antinous, **Eupeithes**’ son, retorted: ‘Stranger, sit quiet and eat, or go elsewhere, lest the young men drag you by hand or foot through the house, and scrape off all your skin.’

Such were his words, but the others were indignant, and one proud youth said: ‘Antinous, you were wrong to strike at a wretched vagrant. What if he chanced to be some god from heaven? You’d be a doomed man. The gods put on all kinds of disguises, and in the form of wandering strangers do indeed visit our cities observing human virtue and vice.’
So the Suitors murmured, but Antinous ignored their words, and though Telemachus nursed great grief in his heart at the blow to his father, he shed not a tear, but shook his head in silence, thinking dark thoughts in the depths of his mind.

But wise Penelope, hearing of Antinous’ striking the beggar in the hall, cried out so her handmaids heard: ‘I hope Apollo the keen Archer strikes you in the same way!’ And her housekeeper, Eurynome, added: ‘If only our prayers might be fulfilled, not one of those men would see the Dawn, golden-throned.’

‘Nurse,’ wise Penelope replied, ‘they are all hateful, plotting evil but Antinous above all is a man dark as death. See now, when a wretched beggar goes through the hall asking alms out of need while all the rest fill his bag generously Antinous hurls a stool at his back and strikes him on the shoulder.’
While she sat in her room talking with her maids, noble Odysseus was eating his meal. Penelope then summoned her loyal swineherd, and said to him: ‘Worthy Eumaeus, go and ask the stranger to come to me, so I can welcome him and ask if he has seen or heard anything of my steadfast Odysseus. He has the look of a much-travelled man.’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you answered her, saying: ‘My Queen, I only wish the Achaeans would cease their noise, since his speech is entrancing. He stumbled upon me first after he’d escaped from a ship by stealth. Three days and nights he stayed with me in the hut, but even then the story of his sufferings was incomplete. Sitting in my house, he held me entranced, like a man gazing at a bard who sings songs of longing the gods have taught him, to mortal ears. He claims he is an old family friend of Odysseus, and hails from Crete.”
where Minos’ people live. He arrived here in his wandering far from that island, always dogged by suffering. And he swears he has heard news of Odysseus, that he is alive and nearby in the rich Thesprotian country, and is bringing home a fortune in treasure.’

‘Go and summon him here,’ said wise Penelope, ‘so that he can tell me so, face to face. As for those Suitors, let them have their sport, outside or in the hall below, light-hearted because their own stores of bread and mellow wine are safe at home with only their servants to taste them, while they crowd our house day after day, killing our sheep and oxen and well-fed goats, feasting and wasting our glowing wine: squandering our wealth, because there is no Odysseus here to stave off ruin. But if Odysseus comes home to his own country, he and our son will take revenge on these men for their rapacity.’

As she finished, Telemachus sneezed loudly in the echoing hall, and Penelope laughed, and said to Eumaeus with winged
words: ‘Go, please, and summon the stranger to me. You see my son sneezed at my words? So will death strike the Suitors, every man, not one will escape their fate. And remember this that I say as well: if I find that he speaks the truth I will fit him out in handsome clothes, a tunic and a cloak.’

Bk XVII:551-606 Odysseus declines to see Penelope

Hearing this promise, the swineherd went to find Odysseus, and spoke aloud to him with winged words: ‘Old man, wise Penelope, the mother of Telemachus, wishes to see you. Sorrowful as she is, her heart prompts her to ask for news of her husband. If she finds that you speak the truth, she will give you what you need most, a tunic and cloak, since as for food you can beg throughout the island to feed your belly, and anyone will give it to you.’

Noble long-suffering Odysseus answered: ‘Eumaeus, I will tell the whole truth to wise
Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, shortly. I know all about Odysseus: he and I have suffered alike. But I fear this harsh crowd of Suitors, whose violence and irreverence reaches the adamantine heavens. Just now when that man struck me a blow and hurt me, as I wandered harmlessly round the hall, no one including Telemachus did a thing to prevent it. So ask Penelope, even though she is eager to see me, to wait until sunset darkens the hall, then she can give me a seat nearer the fire and ask me about her husband and his homecoming, for my clothes are ragged as you know, you whom I first asked for help.’

Hearing this, the swineherd returned, and as he entered the room, Penelope said: ‘Eumaeus, you fail to bring him here. What does the stranger mean by it? Is he more afraid than he should be of something, or does he hesitate for some other reason? A shy beggar makes a poor one.’

Eumaeus, the swineherd, you answered her then, saying: ‘He is right, anyone would agree,
in wanting to avoid the insolence of arrogant men. So he asks you to wait till sunset, which is a more fitting time for you too, my Queen, to speak to a stranger alone, and hear what he has to say.’

Wise Penelope answered: ‘The stranger is not devoid of judgement in guessing how things might be, since I don’t believe there are any men on earth who plot such wicked and insolent games as these men do.’

When she had finished speaking, and he had said all he had to say, the worthy swineherd left to rejoin the crowd of Suitors. At once he sought Telemachus, and holding his head close whispered winged words to him in secret: ‘Dear master, I will go and protect the farm and the pigs, your livelihood and mine. You must be in command here. Above all consider your own safety, be alert for any threat against you, since many of the Achaeans are planning evil. And may Zeus destroy them before they can strike at us.
‘May it be so, old Friend, have your supper and go. Return in the morning with some fine animals for the slaughter. Leave all here in my hands and the gods’.

At this the swineherd seated himself again on the gleaming bench, and when he had quenched his hunger and thirst, he went off to the farm, leaving the courts and halls filled with the revellers, who were enjoying the dancing and singing now that evening had fallen.

Bk XVIII:1-49 Irus the beggar

Now, a common vagrant arrived at the palace, one who was used to begging his way through the Ithacan city, and known for his ravenous belly, eating, drinking but never satisfied. He was bulky to look at, but lacking in power and strength. Arnaeus was the name his mother had honoured him with at birth, but all the young men called him Irus, because he ran errands on demand. Once he arrived he was all for driving Odysseus out of his palace, and began to abuse
him with a flight of words: ‘Get away from the threshold, old man, before you have to be dragged away by the feet. See how they all give me the nod, telling me to haul you out? Still, I’m ashamed to stoop to that. So, up with you, before we quarrel and come to blows.’

Then resourceful Odysseus glowered and answered him with a dark look: ‘God-crazed man, I’m not hurting you whatever I do or say. I don’t begrudge what they might give you, however big the portion. This step will hold us both. You’ve no need to be jealous of what others get, since you’re a beggar like me. We must look to the gods for any riches we obtain. But take care how you threaten me with your fists, lest you rouse my anger. Old though I am, I’d drench your mouth and chest with your blood. Then I’d have greater peace and quiet tomorrow. I doubt you’d return, a second time, to the halls of Odysseus, Laertes’ son.’

Irus, the beggar, reacted angrily: ‘Well now! How glibly the filthy swine chatters, like an old woman at her cooking. But I’ll make
trouble for him, a right and left that’ll scatter his jaw full of teeth on the ground, like an old sow punished for eating the crop. Gird your loins, and let all these men see us fight: if you dare fight a younger man?’

So, at the gleaming threshold in front of the high doorway they goaded each other mercilessly. And princely Antinous, hearing them both, burst out laughing, and called to the Suitors: ‘Friends, the gods have never brought us such sport as this. Irus and the stranger are rousing for a fight. Quickly let’s set them a prize.’

At this, they all leapt up grinning, and crowded round the ragged beggars. ‘Listen.’ Antinous, Eupeithes’ son, proclaimed, ‘Listen to what I have to say. There are goats’ paunches filled with blood and fat, there by the fire ready for roasting, waiting for our dinner. Now, whichever of the two proves the better man, and conquers, let him come and take his pick of them. And more, he shall always dine with us.
And we’ll not let anyone else mingle among us and beg.’

Bk XVIII:50-116 Odysseus and Irus fight

They were all pleased at Antinous’ words. Resourceful Odysseus then made a clever request: ‘Friends, there’s no way an old man weakened by suffering can take on a younger. Nevertheless this hungry belly of mine, always creating trouble, prompts me to try and last out his blows. So, come now, swear a binding oath, that none of you will side with Irus, heavy-handedly deal me a foul blow, and by violent means make me lose to this fellow.’

They all took the oath, as he requested, not to strike him, and when they had finished pledging their word, royal Telemachus spoke again: ‘Stranger, if your courage and noble spirit prompt you to defeat this man, have no fear of the Achaeans: whoever strikes you will have to deal with more than just you. I am your
host, and the Lords Antinous and Eurymachus, men of judgement, concur.’

They all praised his speech, so Odysseus girded his rags about his loins, baring his solid well-made thighs, showing his broad shoulders, and his muscular chest and arms. Athene herself drew close, and enhanced the limbs of the shepherd of his people. All the Suitors marvelled greatly, and with a glance at their neighbour they commented: ‘Irus will soon reap his own reward, and be un-Irused, given the thighs that old man shows under his rags.’

Irus’ heart was shaken as they spoke, but the servants hitched up his clothes, and pushed him forward, the flesh on his limbs quivering with fear. So much so that Antinous abused him, shouting: ‘You Windbag! It would be better if you were dead or had never been born, if you’re going to tremble like that, and be so afraid of this fellow, an old man with the weight of suffering on him. I’ll tell you straight. It will be like this. If he beats you and proves the better man, I’ll hurl you into a black ship’s
hold, and pack you off to King Echetus over on the mainland. That maimer of men will trim your nose and ears with the pitiless bronze, and rip away your genitals too, and throw them raw to the scavenging dogs.’

At this Irus’ limbs quivered all the more, as they prodded him into the ring, where both raised their fists. Then noble long-suffering Odysseus debated whether to strike him dead on the spot, or deal him a soft blow but still lay him flat on the ground. Throwing a softer punch seemed best, he thought, seeking to deceive the Achaeans. As they stood up to each other, Irus let fly at Odysseus’ right shoulder, but Odysseus struck him on the neck under the ear, crushing the bone, so the blood ran red from his mouth, and he pitched in the dust with a groan, gnashing his teeth and flailing the ground with his feet. At this the noble Suitors threw up their hands and nearly died of laughter. Then Odysseus grabbed him by the foot, and dragged him out of the door, into the courtyard and up to the portico gates. There he propped him, sitting,
upright against the wall with his stick in his hands, and spoke to him winged words: ‘Now sit there, you wretch, and scare off pigs and dogs, and stop lording it over strangers and beggars, lest you end in a worse plight.’ So saying, he slung his wretched torn leather pouch over his shoulder by its twisted strap, returned to the threshold and sat down, while the Suitors went past, laughing loudly, and congratulating him: ‘Stranger, may Zeus and the other gods grant you your heart’s dearest wish, your fondest desire, since you’ve ended that greedy fellow’s begging here. We’ll soon pack him off to King Echetus, the maimer of men, over on the mainland.’

Bk XVIII:117-157 Odysseus warns Amphinomus

Odysseus was delighted at these words of good omen. Antinous now presented him with the large paunch swollen with blood and fat, and Amphinomus took two loaves from a basket
and placed them before him, pledging him from a golden cup: ‘Health, old Stranger, and may good fortune be yours in future, despite your present sorrows’

Resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘Amphinomus, you seem to be a sensible man, as I have heard your father, Nisus of Dulichium, was too. I have heard him named as a wealthy man and a brave one. You are his son it seems, a man of quiet speech. So mark my words, listen to what I say. Of all the creatures that breathe and move on Earth, there is none as powerless as man. As long as the gods grant him success and strength he thinks he will never know future suffering. Yet when the blessed gods instead bring trouble on him, he must endure the pain with whatever patience he can. Men’s spirits on this Earth depend on the fate the Father of gods and men decrees.

I too once had a measure of prosperity among men, but I was seduced by strength and power to many wanton acts, relying on my father and my brothers to help me. Let me be a
lesson to men not to be lawless, but to enjoy the gifts of the gods in peace. Here I see the Suitors wantonly wasting the possessions and demeaning the wife of one who will not be away much longer from his friends and his native land. I tell you, he is near, and may some god prompt you homewards, so you need not face him on his return. He and the Suitors will not part without bloodshed, I think, once he is under his own roof.’

He spoke, and poured a libation, then drank the honeyed wine, and returned the cup to the young nobleman’s hands. But Amphinomus went back through the hall with a heavy heart, with his head bowed, foreseeing trouble. That did not save him from his fate. Athene had already bound him hand and foot, marking him for swift death from a spear at the hands of Telemachus. Now he sat down once more on the chair he had risen from.
Now the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, prompted wise Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, to show herself to the Suitors, so she might stir their hearts, and also enhance herself in her husband’s and son’s eyes. With a forced laugh she spoke to her housekeeper: ‘Eurynome, my heart prompts me to show myself to the Suitors, though it has never done so before, and though I detest them. Also I wish to speak to my son for his own good, and tell him not to mix endlessly with those arrogant men, who speak to him respectfully while plotting trouble.’

‘Indeed, Child,’ Eurynome replied, ‘what you say make sense. Go and speak to your son, be open with him. First wash yourself and smooth your cheeks, since it is wrong to weep endlessly without cease. As you know, your son is of age now and to see him bearded, and a man, was always your dearest prayer.’
‘Eurynome,’ said wise Penelope in answer, ‘Don’t tempt me, out of love for me, to wash my body and smooth my cheeks. The gods who rule Olympus robbed me of all the beauty that was mine the day when he left in the hollow ship. Yet tell Autonoe and Hippodameia to come and attend me in the hall. I will not appear before all those men alone: modesty forbids it.’

At this the old woman went off through the house to summon the maids. Meanwhile the goddess, bright-eyed Athene, had another idea. She shed sweet sleep over Penelope, so that she leaned back, her limbs relaxed, and fell asleep on her couch. Then the lovely goddess endowed her with immortal gifts, so the Achaeans would wonder at her. First she cleansed her lovely face with beauty itself, ambrosial beauty such as Cythereia of the lovely crown anoints herself with when she joins with the Graces in their sweet dance. She made her taller and statelier too, and whiter of skin than new-cut ivory. As the lovely goddess left, the white-armed maids
came from the hall, chattering together. Then Penelope woke from sleep, and smoothed her hands over her face, saying: ‘Oh, soft slumber wrapped me round despite my misery. If only chaste Artemis would grant me a death as gentle, and stop me wasting my life on heartfelt sorrow, longing for my dear husband and all his virtues that made him supreme among the Achaeans.’

Bk XVIII:206-283 Penelope speaks to Telemachus and Eurymachus

With this she left the bright room upstairs, not alone but with her two maids. When the lovely lady neared the Suitors, she drew her shining veil across her face, and stood by a pillar of the great hall with a faithful maid on either side. The Suitors limbs trembled, their minds were intoxicated with desire, and every one of them prayed he might bed her. But she turned to her brave son Telemachus, saying: ‘Your ideas and judgement are not as sound as they were,
Telemachus. Even as a child you showed more wisdom than now. Though mature and on the verge of manhood, so tall and handsome any stranger from abroad would judge you a rich man’s son, your ideas and judgement are not as they were. How can you let such a thing happen, a stranger abused in our house! If a stranger, seated in our home, comes to harm through their violence, public shame and disgrace would fall on you.’

‘Mother,’ wise Telemachus answered, ‘I cannot blame you for being angered. I am aware of it all myself, and do know right from wrong. My childishness is of the past. But I cannot always plan as I wish, without help, troubled by these men who surround me with their evil thoughts. But the fight between Irus and the stranger, I tell you, did not go as the Suitors intended, and the stranger proved the better man. Father Zeus, Athene, Apollo, oh, how I wish the Suitors were beaten too, scattered around the courtyard and halls, limbs slack and heads lolling, like Irus who sits out
there by the yard gate, head rolling like a drunkard, unable to get to his feet and find his way to wherever he lives with those slackened limbs.’

So they conversed, and Eurymachus spoke to Penelope, saying: ‘Wise Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, if all the Achaeans in Iasian Argos had sight of you, even more Suitors would feast in your halls tomorrow. In beauty, form and intellect you exceed all other women.’

‘Eurymachus’, wise Penelope replied, ‘all my excellence of form and beauty the gods robbed me of that day when the Argives sailed for Ilium, my husband Odysseus with them. If only he might return and cherish this life of mine, I might deserve a greater and more glorious fame. But so many are the troubles a god has heaped upon me, I only grieve. When he sailed away, forsaking his own land, did he not take me by the wrist of my right hand and say: “My wife I think not all the bronze-greaved Achaeans will get home safe and unharmed from Troy. They say the Trojans are
true warriors, good with both spear and bow, charioteers whose swift horses soon tip the balance in the thick of a fight. So I cannot tell if the god will bring me home, or whether I’ll die on the plains of Troy. Therefore you must take charge here. Look after my father and mother in the palace as at present, or more so as I am far away. But when my son reaches manhood, marry whoever you wish, and leave home.”

Now all is happening as he foresaw. A hateful wedding night will be my cursed fate, I whose happiness Zeus has destroyed. And in all of this, bitter trouble fills my heart and soul: Suitors like you have never been known before. Those who desire to wed a noble lady, a rich man’s daughter, compete to bring cattle and fine sheep to make a feast for the lady’s friends, and they give her splendid gifts. They do not consume another man’s wealth without payment.’

Those were her words, and noble long-suffering Odysseus was pleased, because she elicited gifts from them, deceiving them with
subtle words while her mind was fixed elsewhere.

Bk XVIII:284-339 The Suitors bring gifts

Antinous, Eupeithes’ son, it was who replied, saying: ‘Wise Penelope Icarius’ daughter, accept the gifts we Achaeans may wish to bring you. It would be wrong to deny you gifts. As for us, we will not leave for home or elsewhere until you wed the best Achaean here.’

Antinous’ speech pleased the rest, and they each sent a squire to fetch gifts. Antinous’ squire presented a fine long richly-embroidered robe, pinned by a dozen golden brooches, with curved clasps. Eurymachus’ squire brought a cleverly made golden chain, strung with amber beads that shone like the sun. His two squires brought Eurydamas a pair of earrings, each earring a triple cluster of mulberry-shaped drops, gracefully glowing. And from the house of Lord Peisander, Polyctor’s son, his squire carried a necklace, an adornment of great
beauty. So the Achaeans offered her gift after gift, and the lovely lady withdrew to her room above, her maids carrying the charming gifts for her.

Then till dusk the **Suitors** delighted themselves with dances and songs to stir the heart, and they were still enjoying themselves when darkness fell. Swiftly they set up three braziers in the hall to shed some light, and stacked dry kindling beside them, hard and seasoned and freshly split, and set up torches in the gaps between them, and enduring **Odysseus**’ maidservants fed the fires. Then it was that resourceful Odysseus, scion of **Zeus**, spoke to them, saying: ‘Servants of Odysseus, your long-absent master, go to the room of your beloved Queen, sit there and cheer her spirit, carding wool by her or spinning yarn. I will shed light on all these men. If they choose to lie in wait for **Dawn** of the lovely throne they’ll not outdo me. I am a man who can take a great deal.’

The maids laughed outright at his words, exchanging glances. **Melantho** of the lovely
cheeks upbraided him mercilessly, Melantho, Dolius’ child, whom Penelope had reared and loved as her own, giving her every plaything she desired. Nevertheless she had no sympathy for Penelope. Instead she slept with Eurymachus whom she loved. She it was who jeered at Odysseus, with shameful words: ‘You must be mad, you wretch, to stand here, talking shamelessly, in the company of great men, and not feel afraid, when you should be off to sleep in the smithy, or some other place where common people go. The wine must have addled your brain, Stranger, or else your mind is always like this, making you babble endless nonsense. Have you got above yourself, because you thrashed that beggar Irus? Take care that some better man than Irus doesn’t stand against you, thump your head with heavy fists, cover you in blood, and send you packing.’

Resourceful Odysseus glowered at her, and answered angrily: ‘I’ll be off soon, but only to Telemachus, to let him know what kind of
words you bitches use, and then he’ll flay you to pieces where you stand.’

Bk XVIII:340-393 Eurymachus taunts Odysseus

His words sent the women scattering through the hall, their limbs trembling in terror, believing he meant it. But Odysseus took up his stand by the burning braziers, to tend the lights while watching the Suitors. His mind was full of other plans that would not fail to come to fruition.

Athene, meanwhile, would not allow the arrogant Suitors to curb their bitter insults: that the pain might sink deeper to the heart of Odysseus, Laertes’ son. Eurymachus, son of Polybus, began to taunt Odysseus, rousing his friends’ laughter:

‘Listen, you Suitors of the glorious Queen, let me speak as my heart prompts me. This man must come to Odysseus’ palace as a gift of the gods: the torch glare shines from his head at
any rate, since there’s never a trace of hair.’ Then he called out to Odysseus, the sacker of cities: ‘Stranger, how would you like me to hire you. You could collect walling stone and plant tall trees on a remote farm of mine – all for a fixed wage? I’d provide food all year too, and clothes and sandals. But I doubt you’d care for hard work, since you’ve learned bad ways. You’d rather skulk about, begging to feed your greedy belly.’

‘Eurymachus,’ resourceful Odysseus answered, ‘I wish the two of us could compete as reapers in the hayfields, in late Spring when the days are longer, I with a curved scythe in my hand, you with the same, and a rich crop of grass to make us labour, without pause for food, till evening. Or in a four-acre field with teams of oxen, big and tawny, the best there are, well-fed on grass and matched in age and strength under the yoke, powerful beasts, and loam nice and yielding under the plough. Then you’d see if I could cut a straight furrow’s length. Or I wish Zeus, the son of Cronos, would start a war
somewhere, for us, I with a shield and twin
spears and a bronze helmet clapped on my
head. Then you’d find me in the front rank, and
you’d not make speeches about this belly of
mine. But you’re arrogant at heart and mean-
spirited, thinking you’re a great and powerful
man because you mingle with a few weaklings.
Ah, if Odysseus came back to his own land,
those doors, wide though they are, would prove
all too narrow for you as you fled the
threshold.’

At this, Eurymachus flared up even more,
and with a lowering glance, spoke winged
words at him: ‘I’ll soon punish you, you
wretch, for talking shamelessly, in the company
of great men, and not even looking scared. The
wine must have addled your brain, Stranger, or
else your mind is always like this, making you
babble endless nonsense. Have you got above
yourself, because you thrashed that beggar
Irus?’
Bk XVIII:394-428 Telemachus quiets the Suitors

With this he grabbed a stool, But Odysseus, fearing attack, squatted at the knees of Amphinomus of Dulichium, and Eurymachus’ missile struck a cup-bearer on the right hand, so that his wine jug fell to the floor with a clang, and he fell back in the dust. The shadowy halls broke out in uproar, and the Suitors looked at each other, saying: ‘Better this stranger had died elsewhere on his travels, before he got to us, then we would have been spared all this annoyance. Here we are, fighting over beggars, and the pleasure of our rich feast will be spoiled by all this trouble.’

Now royal Telemachus called out: ‘Sirs, you are touched by the gods with madness, and show the extent of your drinking: surely a god has stirred you. You have dined well, so go to your homes and rest: as the spirit takes you, since I’ll drive no one away.’
They could only bite their lips at this, and wonder at Telemachus’ boldness. Then Amphinomus, son of noble Nisus, Aretias’ son, addressed them: ‘Friends, anger and carping words are a poor answer to a fair speech. No more abuse of the Stranger, or any of the servants of noble Odysseus’ house. Come, let the steward fill each man’s cup so we can pour a libation, then go home and rest. As for the Stranger, leave him to Telemachus’ care in Odysseus’ hall, since it is to his house he came.’

His words pleased them all, and noble Mulius, Amphinomus’ squire, of Dulichium, mixed wine in a bowl, and served each man in turn. They poured libations to the blessed gods, and drank the honeyed wine, and when they had all made their offering, and drunk to their heart’s content, they went off, each to his own house, to take their rest.
Bk XIX:1-52 Odysseus and Telemachus hide the weapons

So, noble Odysseus remained in the hall, planning with Athene’s aid how to kill the Suitors. At once he spoke to Telemachus winged words: ‘We must hide the weapons away, all of them, Telemachus. If the Suitors miss them and question you, deceive them with placatory words, and say: “I’ve moved them out of the smoke from the fire, since they no longer look as they did when Odysseus left them behind and sailed for Troy, but are all grimy where the draught from the hearth has reached them. Zeus, son of Cronos, has filled my heart with an even greater fear, that you might start a quarrel amongst yourselves, and wound each other, and so bring shame on the feast and your cause. Iron itself draws a man towards it.”’

Telemachus responded to his brave father’s words, and called for Eurycleia, the nurse, saying: ‘Nurse, I want the women shut in their rooms, while I store my father’s weapons away,
fine weapons that have lain around the hall, neglected and darkening with the smoke, ever since he left in my childhood. Now I wish to store them where the draught from the fire won’t reach them.’

‘Yes child,’ Eurycleia, the loyal nurse, replied, ‘and I wish you’d always show such care for the house, and look after its treasures. But who is to fetch and carry a light for you, since you won’t have the maids here who might have done so?’

‘The Stranger, here, will do it,’ wise Telemachus replied, ‘since I’ll not have a man idle who eats from my table, now matter how far he’s travelled.’

Silently then she locked the doors of the great hall. At once, Odysseus and his fine son began carrying away the helmets, the bossed shields, and the sharp spears. Pallas Athene herself, carrying a golden lamp before them, shed a beautiful light. Seeing it, Telemachus, said: ‘Father, what wonder is this I see? The walls, and the fine panelling, the pine-wood
beams, and the tall pillars shine to my eyes as if in the light of a blazing fire. One of the gods who rules the wide sky must surely be here.’

Resourceful Odysseus answered him: ‘Silence, and let such thoughts go by without question: this is the way of the gods who rule Olympus. Go and sleep and leave me here to rouse the curiosity of your mother and her maids: in her sorrow she will ask me everything.’

At this, Telemachus went off through the hall and the glow of the blazing torches, to rest in his room where sweet sleep would usually come to him. There he lay now till bright Dawn, while noble Odysseus remained in the hall, planning with Athene’s aid how to kill the Suitors.

Bk XIX:53-99 Penelope prepares to question the Stranger

Now wise Penelope came down from her chamber, looking like Artemis or golden
Aphrodite, and they placed a chair by the fire for her in her usual place, one inlaid with whorls of ivory and silver, that Icmalius the craftsman had created. He had fastened a foot-rest beneath it too, and a thick fleece covered it. Wise Penelope sat down, and the white-armed maids came from their hall to clear away the remains of the meal, the tables and the noblemen’s drinking cups. They raked the ashes from the braziers onto the ground, and heaped them with fresh wood for light and warmth.

But Melantho began to abuse Odysseus again, saying: ‘Stranger, will you stay and plague us all night long, roaming the house, spying on us women? Get out, you wretch, and be glad of what supper you had, or you’ll soon be on your way with a blazing torch behind you.’

Resourceful Odysseus glowered at her, and replied: ‘God-crazed woman, why attack me in your anger? Is it because I’m grimy and dressed in rags, a beggar who wanders the island? Well, needs must: beggars and travelling folk are all
like this. I too once had a home of my own, I was a wealthy man with a fine house, and I gave hospitality to every wanderer who came, whoever he was, whatever his needs. I had countless servants too, and everything else that lets men live in comfort, and be called rich. But Zeus, the son of Cronos, brought me down, as he wished to do no doubt. So beware, woman, lest your mistress is angered and disgusted with you or Odysseus returns, of which there is still hope, and you lose all your beauty and pre-eminence among the maids. Even if he is dead, as seems likely, and will never return, he has a son Telemachus like himself, by Apollo’s grace. And the sins of the women in this palace don’t escape his notice: since he’s no longer a child.’

Wise Penelope heard his words, and turned on the handmaid: ‘Bold, and shameless creature, be sure your wild behaviour’s evident to me. Be it on your own head: you yourself will cleanse its stain. You know perfectly well, you heard me say, that I wish to question this
Stranger, here in my house, about the husband I sorrow for.’

Bk XIX:100-163 Penelope and Odysseus converse

At this, Eurynome swiftly brought a gleaming chair and set it down, throwing a fleece across it. Noble long-suffering Odysseus sat there, and listened as wise Penelope spoke: ‘Stranger, I must first ask you. Who are you, and where do you come from? What is your city, and who are your parents?’

‘Lady,’ subtle Odysseus replied, ‘there isn’t a mortal being on the wide earth who could find fault with you. Your fame rises to high heaven, like the fame of a peerless king, who, fearing the gods, rules many brave men and upholds the law. The people prosper under his leadership, and the dark soil yields wheat and barley, the trees are heavy with fruit, the ewes never fail to bear, and the sea is full of fish. Question me then in your house about anything, but don’t
ask about my people or native country, lest you pain my heart more with thinking of them. I am a man of many sorrows. Nor is it right for me to sit wailing and crying in another’s house, endless grief is wearisome. I don’t want you or your maids to lose patience with me, and say that my tears flow from a mind clouded by wine.’

Wise Penelope answered: ‘Stranger, all my excellence of form and beauty the gods robbed me of that day when the Argives sailed for Ilium, my husband Odysseus with them. If only he might return and cherish this life of mine, I might deserve a greater and more glorious fame. But so many are the troubles a god has heaped upon me, I only grieve. All the princes who rule the islands, Dulichium, Same, and wooded Zacynthus, and those who live round me, on Ithaca open to the view, all court me without my wishing it, and ruin my house. So I neglect strangers and suppliants, and heralds on public business, and waste my heart instead in longing for Odysseus. They urge me to wed,
and I weave a web of deceit. For a god first inspired me to set up a great loom in the hall, and begin weaving with long fine thread. Then I said to the Suitors: “My lords, my Suitors, though Odysseus is dead and you are eager for me to marry, have patience till I complete this work, I do not want it wasted, this shroud for noble Laertes, ready for when pitiless death’s cruel end overtakes him: since I fear some Achaean woman of this land would blame me, if he who won great wealth lay there without a shroud.”

So I spoke, and though proud they agreed. Then day after day I wove the great web, but at night, by torchlight, I unmade it. So for three years I cunningly kept the Achaeans from knowing, and so tricked them. But when the fourth year began, as the seasons rolled by, and the months passed, and the endless days ran their course, through the fault of my shameless, irresponsible maids, they caught me at my unravelling, and reproached me angrily. So unwillingly I was forced to finish the web. Now
I can neither escape marriage, nor find a reason for delay. My parents urge me to wed, and my son frets as these men openly consume his wealth. He is a man now, and capable of running a house that Zeus honours. But tell me of your family, since you did not spring from a tree or a stone as in the ancient tales.’

Bk XIX:164-219 Odysseus tells a false tale

Resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘Honoured wife of Odysseus, Laertes’ son, must you ask me of my lineage? Very well, I will tell you, though you only add more pain to that I already suffer, as is ever the case when a man has been as long away from home as I have, roaming sadly from city to city. Nevertheless I will answer your questions.

Out in the wine-dark sea lies a land called Crete, a rich and lovely island. It is filled with countless people, in ninety cities. They are not of one language, but speak several tongues. There are Achaeans there, and brave native
Cretans, **Cydonians**, three races of **Dorians**, and noble **Pelasgians** too. One of the ninety cities is mighty **Cnossus**, where **Minos** ruled, and every nine years spoke with mighty **Zeus**. He was brave **Deucalion**’s father, and so my grandfather. Deucalion had two sons, Lord **Idomeneus** and me. Idomeneus, my older brother, and a better man than I, sailed with the sons of **Atreus** in the curved ships to **Ilium**, so I the younger, **Aethon** is my name, was left behind, there to meet and entertain Odysseus. The wind had driven him to Crete as he headed for **Troy**, and blew him off course by Cape **Malea**. He anchored at **Amnisus**, a tricky harbour, near the cave of **Eileithyia**, and barely escaped shipwreck.

He came straight to the city, asking for Idomeneus, calling him his beloved and honoured friend. But it was now the tenth or eleventh morning since Idomeneus had sailed for Troy, so I invited him to the palace, and wined and dined him from the house’s rich store. I doled out barley meal and glowing
wine, and bulls for sacrifice to his friends too, out of the public stores, to their hearts content. Those noble Achaeans stayed twelve days, hemmed in by a northerly gale sent by some hostile god that blew them off their feet as they walked the shore. But on the thirteenth day the wind dropped, and they put out to sea.’

He made this pack of lies so convincing, that tears ran down Penelope’s cheeks as she listened. As the snow that the West Wind pours on the high mountains melts when the East wind thaws it, and fills the streams with its water till the rivers overflow, so her lovely cheeks were drenched as she sorrowed and wept for her husband, who was even then sitting by her side. But though Odysseus pitied his wife’s distress, he gazed steadily from beneath eyelids that might have been made of horn or iron, and deceitfully repressed his tears.

When she had finished weeping, and could speak, she said in answer: ‘Now Stranger, I am forced to test you, and find out if you really entertained my husband and his godlike friends
in your house, as you say. So describe what he was wearing, and what sort of man he seemed, and tell me about the comrades who were with him.’

Bk XIX:220-307 Odysseus prophesies his own return

Resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘My Lady, it is difficult to recall, especially for someone who has been wandering so long. It is twenty years now since he sailed from there, and left my island. But I will picture him to you as far as I can remember. Noble Odysseus wore a purple cloak, fleecy and doubly-folded, and its golden brooch was pinned with double clasps. There was a curiously made device on the face: a hound holding a fawn under its paws, tearing at it as it writhed. Everyone marvelled at how the hound seemed to throttle and tear the fawn, and how the fawn seemed to writhe at its feet trying to escape, though they were only made of gold. I noticed his tunic too, gleaming like the sheen
on a dried onion’s skin, smooth and sleek, glistening like the sun. All the women were fascinated. You may know whether Odysseus dressed like this at home, or whether some friend gave him the tunic when he took ship, or whether it was some stranger’s gift, since Odysseus had many friends, and few Achaeans ranked as high. I gave him a bronze sword myself, and a fine purple cloak, doubly-folded, and a fringed tunic, when I saw him off with full honours, aboard his oared ship. Then there was a squire who served him, a little older than himself, and I’ll describe him to you. He was dark-skinned, curly-haired, and round-shouldered. Eurybates was his name, and Odysseus honoured him above the rest, because they were of one mind.’

His words only made her want to weep the more, recognising as she did the truthfulness of what he said. When she had finished crying, she turned to him: ‘In truth, my Friend, though I pitied you before, now you shall be loved and honoured in my house. I myself gave him those
clothes you described. I took them folded from the store-room, and pinned the golden brooch there to delight him. Now I will never welcome him home to his own country. It was an evil fate that sent him off in the hollow ship to Ilium the Evil, that it would be better not to name.’

‘Honoured Lady, wife of Odysseus, Laertes’ son, do not spoil those lovely cheeks now, or pain your heart weeping for your husband. Not that anyone should blame you: any woman would weep at losing her man, whom, wedded to, she has lain with, and whose children she conceived, though he be a lesser man than Odysseus, whom they liken to the gods. But dry your tears, and hear me, because I speak the truth, without concealment.

Not long ago I heard that Odysseus is alive, and has returned. He is nearby, in the rich Thesprotian land, and is bringing back great treasures, gifts to him as a guest wherever he goes. His faithful friends and his hollow ship were lost on the wine-dark sea, as he sailed from Thrinacia. Zeus and Helios wished him
harm because his men killed Helios’ cattle, and so they drowned his friends in the raging sea, though he clung to the keel of his ship and was thrown on-shore by the waves in the land of the Phaeacians, who are kin to the gods. The Phaeacians honoured him like a god, and showered him with gifts, and they themselves were glad to be sending him home unharmed. Odysseus would have been home long ago indeed, but it seemed to him wiser to roam the wide world and gather riches, and who knows better how to do that than him. Pheidon, the Thesprotian king, told me all this. And as he poured libations in the palace, he swore to me the ship was launched, and the crew ready to bring him home. But he sent me on ahead, because a Thesprotian vessel happened to be heading for Dulichium’s wheat country. He showed me the treasures Odysseus had garnered too, enough in truth to feed his descendants to the tenth generation, all that great wealth heaped up there in the King’s house. But he said Odysseus had gone to
Dodona, to hear Zeus’ will from the god’s high-crowned oak-tree, as to how he should return to his own country after such an absence, openly or in secret.

So he is safe, as I say, and will soon be here: he is close by, and won’t be far from friends and his native land much longer. Even so, I’ll swear it on oath as well. Zeus, the greatest and best of gods, be my witness, and peerless Odysseus’ hearth to which I have come: all I have said shall truly come to pass. Odysseus will be here this month, between this moon’s wane and next moon’s waxing.’

Bk XIX:308-360 Penelope offers hospitality

‘My friend,’ wise Penelope replied, ‘How I wish your words might prove true! Then you would have kindness and many a gift from me, so that everyone you meet would call you blessed. But my heart is filled with foreboding that in truth Odysseus will not return, and you will not gain your passage from here, for there
are no leaders of men like Odysseus, as was, to welcome strangers and help them travel onwards. But, come, my maids, wash the strangers’ feet and make his bed, with blankets and bright rugs over the bedstead, so he may rest till golden-throned Dawn in warmth and comfort. In the morning early, bathe and oil him, so he is ready to breakfast in the hall, sitting by Telemachus’ side. And if any man vexes him and pains his spirit, so much the worse for that man’s prospects: he’ll gain nothing here, rage as he might. How can you know, Stranger, whether I truly surpass other women in intellect and careful judgement, if you’re forced to sit and eat in my house bedraggled, and clothed in rags? Man’s life is short. To him who is harsh, and hard-hearted, all living men wish suffering till he dies, and mock him when he’s dead. But the fame of a good man, with a kind heart, his guests spread far and wide among men, and people sing his praise.’
Then resourceful Odysseus answered her, saying: ‘Honoured wife of Odysseus, Laertes’ son, bright rugs and blankets have been hateful to me since I first left Crete’s snow-covered peaks behind in the wake of my long-oared ship. I am happy to lie as I did through all those past sleepless nights. Many’s the time I’ve lain on a wretched pallet waiting for bright-throned Dawn. And having my feet washed by one of the serving-women in your palace would give me no pleasure: none of them shall touch my feet, unless there’s some loyal old woman whose heart has known as much suffering as mine. I’d have no objection to her.’

To this wise Penelope replied: ‘Dear Friend, of all the strangers from afar, never has my house welcomed a more discerning guest, so wise and thoughtful are your words. I have just such a servant here, an old woman of great discretion, my poor husband’s nurse, who held him in her arms as a new-born babe, and nursed him tenderly and reared him. Weak with age though she is, she shall wash your feet. Come
now, wise Eurycleia, kneel here and wash the feet of a man of your master’s age. No doubt Odysseus’ hands and feet look like his now, since men age quickly when times are hard.’

Bk XIX:361-475 Eurycleia recognises Odysseus

At this, the old woman hid her face in her hands and shed hot tears, voicing her grief: ‘Oh, Odysseus my child, I can be no help to you. Zeus must have hated you more than other men, though you were pious. No mortal ever offered the Thunderer so many fat thigh-pieces, such choice sacrifices, praying that you might reach a ripe old age and rear a noble son. Yet you alone he denies a homecoming!

Perhaps the women of some great house mocked at him in a far-off foreign land, just as these shameless hussies here mock you, sir. You will not let them wash your feet, for fear of their insults, but wise Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, knowing my willingness, has asked
me to wash them. So I shall wash your feet for Penelope’s sake and yours, while my heart is stirred with sadness. But listen to one thing I must say. Many a long-suffering traveller have we welcomed here, but never a man resembling another as you resemble Odysseus in looks and voice – even your feet.’

Then resourceful Odysseus answered her, saying: ‘That is what everyone says who has met us both, old woman, that we are very alike, as you remark.’

With this, the old woman, preparing to wash his feet, poured cold water into the shining basin then added hot. Odysseus swiftly sat down by the hearth, and turned towards the shadows, though he had a sudden premonition that as she handled him she would notice his scar and the truth would be out. As she approached and began to wash him, so it was: she immediately knew the scar Odysseus had received from a white-tusked boar, while hunting on Parnassus, when visiting his mother’s father, noble Autolycus, the greatest
of all in thievery and oath-making. This Autolycus owed to the god Hermes himself, to whom he made favourable offerings, the thighs of lambs and kids, so that Hermes acted as his willing friend.

Now Autolycus once visited wealthy Ithaca, to find that his daughter had just produced a son. Eurycleia placed the baby on his knees as he was finishing supper, and said to him: ‘Autolycus, you must give a name to your grandchild: he has been long desired and prayed for.’

‘My son-in-law, my daughter,’ Autolycus replied, ‘here’s a name for you. Since I am one who’s wished suffering to many men and women on this fertile earth, then let the child be named Odysseus, man of suffering. And for my part, when he is a man and comes to the great house of his mother’s kin on Parnassus, where my wealth lies, I will give part to him, and send him home happy.’

So Odysseus went there, to receive Autolycus’ promised gift. And Autolycus and
his sons grasped his hands, and welcomed him with warm words. Amphithea, his maternal grandmother, clasped him in her arms, kissing his brow and gleaming eyes. Then Autolycus called on his fine sons to prepare a meal, and they responded. In they brought a five-year old bull, which they slaughtered, and flayed, butchered and dressed. They pierced the neatly jointed meat with spits, roasted it carefully, and served the portions. Then they feasted all day long till sunset, sharing everything and delighted by it all. And when the sun vanished and darkness fell, they lay down and received the gift of sleep.

As soon as rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Autolycus and his sons went hunting with hounds, and noble Odysseus went too. They climbed the thickly-wooded slopes of Parnassus, and were soon deep among its wind-blown valleys. Just as the sun, rising from the smooth-sliding, deep-flowing Ocean, lit the fields, the beaters reached a certain glade. The hounds swarmed ahead, following the scent,
with the sons of Autolycus in hot pursuit, among them Odysseus, close behind the pack, brandishing his long spear. A wild boar lay in his lair nearby: a thicket so dense the power of the wind, rain, and bright sunlight could never enter, deep in fallen leaves.

Then the sound of the men and dogs as they urged the chase reached the boar, and he stormed from his lair, back bristling and eyes aflame, then stood at bay facing them. Odysseus was first to attack, his long spear raised in his great hand, eager to strike, but the boar was too swift for him, charging sidelong, catching him above the knee, and tearing a long gash in the flesh with its tusk, though it failed to reach the bone. Odysseus’ blow stabbed it deep in the right shoulder, and the point of the gleaming spear went clean through, bringing the boar to earth with a grunt, and ending its life. Autolycus’ brave sons bound up peerless, godlike Odysseus’ wound, staunching the flow of dark blood with an incantation, then busied
themselves over the carcass, and headed straight back to their noble father’s house.

When Autolycus and his sons had ensured Odysseus’ recovery, and loaded him with fine presents, they sent him back joyful to Ithaca, his own land, with speed. His father and dear mother were happy on seeing him again, and questioned him about his journey, and how he had incurred his wound. He explained how the boar had gashed him with its white tusk, as he hunted Parnassus with Autolycus’ sons.

It was this scar the old woman felt as she passed her hands over his leg, and recognising it she let his leg fall. The bronze rang as his foot struck the basin, upsetting it, and spilling the water on the ground. Joy and pain filled her heart at the same moment, her eyes filled with tears and her voice caught in her throat. She touched Odysseus’ face and said: ‘It is Odysseus, it must be. Child, I did not know you, until my hands had touched my master’s limbs.’
Bk XIX:476-507 Odysseus tells Eurycleia to conceal his identity

As she spoke, she glanced towards Penelope, ready to tell her that her dear husband was home. But Penelope failed to meet her look with recognition, because Athene had distracted her attention. At the same instant Odysseus’ felt for the woman’s throat and gripped it with his right hand, while he drew her closer with the other, and whispered: ‘Nurse, will you destroy me, you who suckled me at your breast? I am home indeed after twenty years of toil and sorrow, but now a god has inspired you and you have found me out be quiet and keep it from all the rest of the house. Otherwise I say, and it shall be so, that if a god delivers the noble Suitors into my hands, I will not spare you, though you nursed me, when I kill the other serving women in the palace.’

‘My child’, wise Eurycleia replied, ‘what are you saying? You know how strong and steady my spirit is. I will be silent as solid stone
or iron. And I will say this, and do you remember. If a god delivers the noble Suitors into your hands, I will pick out the women in the palace who have been disloyal from those who are innocent.’

Resourceful Odysseus answered: ‘Nurse, why speak of that? There is no need for your involvement. I will find out about each one, and take good note. Keep all this to yourself, and leave the outcome to the gods.’

At this, the old woman went off through the palace to fetch water for his feet, since what was there had been spilt. When she had washed them, and rubbed them with oil, Odysseus pulled his stool to the fire to warm himself again, covering the scar with his rags.

Bk XIX:508-553 Penelope’s dream

Wise Penelope was first to break the silence: ‘Friend, I have one more thing to ask you, a little thing since it will soon be time for soothing sleep, at least for those who can find
rest despite their grief. Some god brings me instead measureless sorrow. My only pastime day after day is weeping and sighing, while I tend to my household chores and those of my maids, and when night comes and others sleep, I lie awake, and bitter cares crowd thick upon my beating heart, troubling my sadness.

As Pandareus’ daughter, the nightingale in the greenwood, sings sweetly in early spring, perching in the dense leaves, pouring out her intricate trills, in sorrow for her child Itylus, King Zethus’ son, whom she mistakenly killed with a sword: so my heart quivers, with uncertainty. Should I stay with my son and protect my servants, my belongings, and this great high-roofed house of ours, respecting my husband’s bed, deferring to popular feeling, or should I go with the best of the Achaeans, one of the Suitors in the palace who offer countless wedding gifts? So long as my son was too young to take on responsibility, I could not leave my husband’s house and marry: but now my child has reached manhood, he himself
urges me to leave the palace, concerned at how
the Achaeans squander his inheritance.

But hear this dream of mine, and interpret it
to me. A great eagle with curving beak flew
down from the mountain and broke the necks of
twenty geese I keep, whom it warms my heart
to see, who leave their pond to eat the grain.
There they lay dead, piled in the yard, while he
was carried up through the clear sky. Though it
was a dream, I wept and cried out, and the
lovely-tressed Achaean women gathered, to
find me sobbing piteously because the eagle
had killed my geese. But the bird returned and
perched on a jutting roof-beam, and checked
my tears with mortal speech. “Be happy,
daughter of famous Icarius; this was no dream,
but a true vision of justice that is to come. The
geese are the Suitors, and I, your husband, the
eagle, have returned once more now to prepare
a dark fate for them all.”

With his words sweet sleep left me, and
gazing round I saw the geese feeding on grain,
by the trough in the yard, as ever.’
Bk XIX:554-604 Penelope proposes a challenge for the Suitors

‘Lady,’ resourceful Odysseus replied, ‘there is no way of twisting this dream to give some other meaning. Odysseus himself has told you how he will bring it about, for sure. The Suitors’ destruction is plainly intended. All of them will be killed: none of them shall escape the death which is their fate.’

Wise Penelope replied: ‘My friend, dreams are puzzling things whose meaning is obscure, and what is in them does not always happen to us mortals. There are two gates that open for shadowy dreams: one is made of horn, the other of ivory. Dreams that come through the gate of carved ivory deceive us with promises that are unfulfilled. But those that come through the gate of gleaming horn tell the dreamer of what will come to pass. I fear my strange dream did not come that way. If it had, how welcome it would be to me and my son!’
Let me tell you something else for you to note. The day of evil is drawing near that will sever me from the house of Odysseus. I will declare a contest. Odysseus used to set up a line of axes in the hall, a row of twelve like the props under a ship being built. Standing some way off he would shoot an arrow through them all. That can provide a test for the Suitors. Whoever makes the best attempt at stringing Odysseus’ bow, and shooting an arrow through the twelve axes, is the one I will go with, leaving this house where I was first a wife, this lovely house filled with riches, a house I know I will always remember in my dreams.’

‘Honoured wife of Odysseus, Laertes’ son,’ resourceful Odysseus replied, ‘don’t delay this contest in the palace, since Odysseus will be here, full of resource, before these men can string the polished bow in their hands, or shoot an arrow through the iron.’

‘My friend,’ said wise Penelope, ‘if you were to sit here and speak such words of joy forever, sleep would never touch my eyelids.'
But no man can do without sleep, and the deathless ones appointed a time for everything on the fertile earth. For myself, I must go to my room, and lie down on that bed which has become a bed of tears to me, always damp with my weeping, since the day Odysseus left for Ilium the Evil, that it would be better not to name. I will lie there, and you shall lie here in the hall. Spread bedding on the floor, or let the maids set up a proper bed for you.’

With this she went to her brightly-lit room, and not alone but with her maids. When she and her maids had gone to that upper chamber, she wept there for Odysseus, her dear husband, till bright-eyed Athene closed her eyes in sleep.

Bk XX:1-55 Athene visits Odysseus

Noble Odysseus lay down to sleep in the hallway of the house. He spread an un-tanned ox-hide on the floor and covered it with a pile of fleeces, from the sheep the Achaeans killed each day. When he had settled down, Eurynome
threw a cloak over him. There the sleepless Odysseus lay, planning trouble for the Suitors. Out from the hall poured the women who slept with the Suitors, giggling and joking among themselves. His anger was roused, and he pondered in his mind, whether he should chase them down and kill them, or leave them to sleep with the arrogant Suitors one last time. He growled inside, like a bitch guarding her vulnerable pups, ready to fight on seeing a stranger. He growled inside with anger at their evil ways, but striking his chest he restrained his heart, saying: ‘Patience, my heart. You endured worse than this when the Cyclops, with his huge strength, ate my loyal friends: yet you held firm until your cunning released you from that cave where you faced death.’

Such were his words of self-rebuke, and his heart obediently steeled itself to patience, but he still lay tossing this way and that. Like a paunch filled with fat and blood turning in front of a blazing fire, twisted about by the man who roasts it, eager to see it done, so Odysseus
turned from side to side, considering how to tackle the shameless Suitors, one man against many. Then it was that Athene descended from heaven, and approached him in the form of a mortal woman. She stood by his head and spoke to him, saying: ‘Why are you awake still, most ill-fated of men? This is your house, and here is your wife and child, a son such as any man might pray to have.’

‘Goddess,’ resourceful Odysseus answered, ‘all you say is true indeed, but my mind is considering how to tackle the shameless Suitors on my own, if they are crowded together as usual in the palace. And there’s a second more difficult issue I’m thinking of: even if I kill them, with Zeus’ help and yours, how can I escape vengeance? I ask you to think of that.’

Bright-eyed Athene replied: ‘You are never satisfied. Many a man puts his faith in some mere mortal, a weaker ally than me, without my wisdom. I am a goddess, and never cease to protect you in all your labours. I say clearly, if fifty ranks of mere mortals surround us, ready
to kill us in battle, you would still drive off their fat sheep and cattle. Now, go to sleep. Staying awake all night will add to your weariness, just when you are about to shake off your troubles.’

With this the lovely goddess closed his eyes in sleep then she herself returned to Olympus.

Bk XX:56-119 Zeus sends favourable omens

As sleep gripped him, easing his heart’s care, sleep that slackens men’s limbs, his loyal wife woke, and sitting on her soft bed she wept. Then when she had finished crying, her first thought was to pray to Artemis: ‘Artemis, great Goddess, daughter of Zeus, if you would only pierce my breast with an arrow, and take my life this very hour: or let the storm wind snatch me up, carry me over the darkened ways, and abandon me at the mouth of Ocean’s backflow, as the winds once carried off Pandareus’ daughters. The gods had killed their parents, and left them orphans in the palace, but lovely Aphrodite fed them cheese, sweet honey, and
mellow wine, while Hera gave them greater beauty and wisdom than other girls, you, chaste Artemis made them tall, and Athene taught them how to create beautiful things. But on the very day when lovely Aphrodite went to high Olympus to ask Zeus the Thunderer, who knows the fate of all things mortal, happy or unhappy, to grant the girls joyful marriages, the Harpies snatched them away, and handed them over to the dread Furies. If only the dwellers on Olympus would hide me from sight like that, or you, Artemis of the lovely tresses, would strike me dead, so I might descend beneath the hateful earth with Odysseus in my thoughts, rather than gladdening a lesser man’s heart. Painful things can be endured if one sleeps at night, even if by day one weeps with an aching heart – sleep makes us forget all things, joy and pain, when it weighs on our eyelids – but a god makes my dreams painful too. This very night it seemed Odysseus lay by my side once more, looking as he did when he left with his army, and my heart leapt thinking it was the truth and no dream.’
As she spoke, golden-throned Dawn appeared, and noble Odysseus heard her voice amidst the tears, and thinking of her it seemed to him as though she stood by his head and recognised him. He swept up the cloak and fleeces from his bed, and dropped them on a chair in the hall, carrying the ox-hide outside and throwing it down. Then he lifted his hands in prayer to Zeus: ‘Father Zeus, if indeed it is with goodwill that you gods have brought me home over land and sea, after persecuting me so harshly, let someone waking in the palace speak a word of good omen for me, and Zeus, show me a sign here as well.’

So he prayed, and Zeus the All-Knowing heard him. At once the god thundered from shining Olympus out of a cloudless sky, and noble Odysseus rejoiced. Then a woman grinding corn at the mill in a building nearby, that housed all the mills belonging to the shepherd of the people, spoke a word of omen from within. Twelve women laboured at these mills, grinding meal that nourishes men from
wheat and barley. The other women were still asleep, having ground their quota, but she, not having their strength had not yet finished. Now she stopped her mill, and uttered words of good omen for her master: ‘Father Zeus, Lord of gods and men, how you thunder from the starry sky, and never a cloud in sight. It must be an omen you send someone. Make even my words come true. Today let the **Suitors** delight in feasting for the very last time in Odysseus’ palace. Let those who have bowed my limbs in hard labour grinding barley, now eat their last meal.’

Bk XX:120-171 The servants prepare the house

Those were her words, and noble **Odysseus** was delighted with the omen and that of **Zeus’** thunder, as he planned his vengeance on the sinners.

By now the rest of the maids in Odysseus’ glorious palace were about, kindling the dormant fire on the hearth, and **Telemachus**
rose from his bed, looking like a god, and put on his clothes. He slung his sharp sword from one shoulder, fastened a fine pair of sandals on his shining feet, picked up his tough, sharp bronze-tipped spear, took up his stand at the threshold, and spoke to Eurycleia.

‘Nurse, my dear, have you taken proper care with the stranger’s food and bed, or has he had to make the best of it? That is the sort of treatment my mother allows, despite her wisdom: it is sad how she will honour a worse man, and send a better away disregarded.’

‘Child,’ wise Eurycleia replied, ‘you should not blame one who is blameless. The stranger sat drinking wine as long as he wished, but when she asked about food, he said he wasn’t hungry. When he felt it was time to sleep, she told the maids to make up a bed, but he, like the sorry unfortunate he is, chose not to sleep on a bed with blankets, but lay down on an untanned ox-hide with sheepskins over him, in the hallway, and we covered him with a cloak.’
At this, Telemachus left the hall, spear in hand, followed by a pair of hounds, and made his way to the gathering place to join the crowd of Achaean nobles. Meanwhile good Eurycleia, the daughter of Ops, Peisenor’s son, called her orders to the maids: ‘Some of you sweep the hall thoroughly, and sprinkle the floors, and spread the purple covers over those good chairs. Others, sponge the tables down, rinse the mixing bowls, and the fine two-handled cups. The rest of you go down to the well for water: bring some back here quickly. The Suitors will soon be back in the palace, earlier than usual, since it’s a feast day for us all.’

The girls paid attention and obeyed her orders. Twenty of them went off to the well of clear black water, while the others exercised their skill in the household tasks.

The Achaeans’ menservants then appeared, and while they were still splitting logs for firewood, neatly and skilfully, the girls returned from the well, followed by the swineherd driving three hogs, the pick of the herd. He left
them to feed in the magnificent courtyard, while he spoke warmly to Odysseus: ‘My friend, do these Achaeans treat you any better, here, or do they still behave badly towards you?’

‘Ah, Eumaeus,’ resourceful Odysseus replied, ‘if only the gods some day would take revenge on these insolent and shameless men for the outrage they commit, acting out their evil games in another man’s house.’

Bk XX:172-239 Philoetius the loyal cowherd

As they spoke Melanthius the goatherd arrived, bringing in the best she-goats of the herd for the Suitors’ feast, and two herdsmen followed on behind. They tethered the goats under the echoing portico, and Melanthius began taunting Odysseus again.

‘Are you still plaguing us, Stranger, begging in the hall? Isn’t it time you were off and away? Whatever happens, I suspect we won’t part till we’ve had each others’ fists in
our faces, since you beg in so vile a manner. There are other places to eat among the Achaeans, for sure.’ Resourceful Odysseus made no reply to this, merely shaking his head in silence, plotting vengeance in his heart.

Then there came a third arrival, Philoetius, the master-cowherd, driving a barren heifer and plump she-goats for the Suitors. They had been brought from the mainland, by the ferrymen who give passage to anyone who appears. He carefully tethered the animals under the echoing portico, then approached the swineherd and questioned him: ‘Who is this new arrival, this stranger, Eumaeus? What ancestry does he claim? Where are his people and his country? An unlucky wretch! He carries himself like a king, but the gods bring trouble on wanderers, kings or no, when they spin the threads of sorrow for them.’

Saying this, he went over to Odysseus and stretched out his hand in greeting, speaking winged words as he did so: ‘Well met, old man! You’re in the grip of misery now, but good luck
to you in future. Father Zeus, you are the most pitiless of gods, without compassion for men who owe their existence to you, bringing us wretchedness and fierce suffering. When I saw you, Stranger, I broke into a sweat, and my eyes filled with tears, thinking of Odysseus, who must be dressed in rags like yours, a wanderer too among men, if he still lives at all and sees the sunlight. If he’s already dead, and in Hades’ House, then alas for peerless Odysseus who put me in charge of his cattle in Cephalenian country, when I was just a lad. And now the herd’s increased past counting. Never have broad-browed cattle swelled their numbers more readily for any mortal man. But now strangers order me to bring them for their feast, indifferent to the son of the house, fearless of the gods’ anger, ready to parcel out our long-absent master’s possessions. I keep turning the thing over and over in my mind: it would seem wrong for me to take my own cattle and go abroad, among an alien people, yet it’s worse still to stay here and suffer, in charge of cattle
others appropriate. It’s so bad here, I’d have been off ages ago, off to some other powerful prince, if it wasn’t for thinking still about that unfortunate man, wondering if he might still return from who knows where, and drive the Suitors from his house.’

‘Cowherd,’ resourceful Odysseus answered, ‘since you seem a good and intelligent soul, and I see your heart is full of understanding, I will speak plainly, and swear a binding oath I speak true. By Zeus above all, and by this hospitable table, and by faultless Odysseus’ hearth I have reached, I swear Odysseus will return while you are here, and if you choose to do so, you will see clearly with your own eyes the slaughter of these Suitors who play the master here.’

‘Ah, Stranger,’ the master herdsman replied, ‘if only Zeus, the son of Cronos, would make your words come true! Then you would see the strength I can still show in my hands.’ And likewise Eumaeus added a prayer to all the gods for wise Odysseus’ safe return.
So they talked. Now, as the assembled Suitors were once more plotting Telemachus’ death, a bird appeared on their left, an eagle high in the air grasping a dove numb with fear. Amphinomus rose and addressed them: ‘Friends, this plan of ours to kill Telemachus isn’t workable. We should think for now about feasting instead.’ They all agreed, and entering godlike Odysseus’ palace they threw their cloaks over stools and chairs, and began slaughtering well-fed sheep, fat goats, and swine, and a heifer from the herd. They roasted and served the innards, and mixed wine bowls, and the swineherd handed round the cups. Philoetius, the master cowherd, served bread in a well-crafted basket, while Melanthius poured the wine. Then they helped themselves to the good food in front of them.

But Telemachus, cleverly, placed a shabby stool and a small table for Odysseus near the
stone threshold inside the great hall. He served him a portion of the innards, and poured him some wine in a gold cup, saying: ‘Sit here, among the noble Suitors, and drink your wine, and I will protect you from any insults and violence. This is no common house, but Odysseus’ palace, and destined to be my inheritance. And you Suitors can keep words of abuse and blows from your thoughts, and make sure there’s no sign of a quarrel or a brawl.’

They all bit their lips at this, amazed at Telemachus’ boldness, and Antinous, Eupeithes’ son, called out: ‘Achaeans, let us do as Telemachus says, hard though it is to take when he threatens us so aggressively. Zeus son of Cronus forbade it, or we would have silenced him before now, loud as he is.’ But Telemachus paid no attention to what Antinous said.

Heralds were leading a hecatomb of sacrificial victims through the town, as the long-haired Achaean townsfolk gathered in Apollo the Archer’s shadowy grove, while in the palace the roast meat drawn from the spit
was served, and fuelled a noble feast. The serving men gave Odysseus the same-sized portion as those the Suitors themselves received, so Telemachus decreed, godlike Odysseus’ own son. But Athene had no intention of preventing the arrogant Suitors from hurling bitter insults, so that Odysseus, Laertes’ son, might experience deeper heart-ache.

One of the Suitors, named Ctesippus, who came from Same, a man who cared nothing for the law, was courting the wife of the long-absent Odysseus, trusting in the power of his own vast wealth. He it was who now addressed the insolent Suitors. ‘Pay attention to me, you noble Suitors, and hear what I have to say. The Stranger has received a fair share, as is fitting, since it is right not to fail in hospitality to Telemachus’ house-guests, whoever they may be. Come, I too will give him a guest-gift, and he can give it as a present to a bath-girl or one of godlike Odysseus’ other slaves.’
With this, he laid his strong hand on an ox’s hoof in the basket, and hurled it at Odysseus, who avoided it with a swift movement of his head, stifling a grim sardonic smile as the hoof struck the wall with a thud. Telemachus turned on Ctesippus, saying: ‘Lucky for you indeed Ctesippus that the stranger dodged your missile and you failed to hit him. If you had I would have run you through with my sharp spear, and your father would have been planning a funeral, not a wedding feast. I warn you I’ll have no displays of violence in my house, I am aware of everything now, the good and the bad, and am no longer a child. I am forced nonetheless to view these things, the slaughtered sheep, the wine and bread consumed, because it is hard for one man to set himself against a crowd. Hostile you may be, but do me no harm, or if you are so keen to murder me with your bronze blade, even that would be better, dying would be preferable than to look on endlessly at
disgraceful actions, guests maltreated and maids handled shamefully in this great palace.’

They all fell silent at his words, until at last Agelaus, Damastor’s son, spoke out. ‘My friends, no man should show anger or reply with carping words to what has been fairly said. No more violence against the stranger, or any servant of godlike Odysseus’ house. And I would say this, gently, to Telemachus and his mother, hoping it might seem good to them. So long as you had hope in your hearts that wise Odysseus would return home, no one could blame you for waiting, and discouraging Suitors. It would have proved the right thing if Odysseus had indeed come home. But now it is clear he won’t be back, sit by your mother, Telemachus, and explain that she should marry the best of us, the one who offers her most, and you can enjoy your inheritance from your father, in peace, the food and wine, while she tends another man’s house.’

‘Not so, Agelaus,’ subtle Telemachus replied, ‘I swear by Zeus and my father’s
sufferings, he being dead or wandering, far from Ithaca, that I pose no obstacle to my mother’s marrying. I rather urge her to wed whoever she wishes, and with countless gifts from me. But I’d be ashamed to drive her from the palace against her will and at my command. May the gods always prevent such actions.’

Bk XX:345-394 Theoclymenus’ vision

Pallas Athene now provoked the Suitors to uncontrollable laughter at Telemachus’ words, and addled their wits. They laughed with strained expressions, and as blood spattered their food their eyes filled with tears, and they seemed to themselves to be grieving. Then it was that godlike Theoclymenus called out: ‘Oh, you luckless men, what evil is this you suffer? From head to toe you are shrouded in darkness. The sound of weeping rises and your cheeks are bathed in tears, while the walls and panelling are soaked with blood. And the porch and the court are filled with ghosts, ghosts hurrying to
Erebus by night: the sun has vanished from the sky, and a foul mist blankets all.’

The whole crowd roared with delight at his words, and Eurymachus, Polybus’ son, spoke out: ‘Our new arrival from overseas is mad. Quick boys, pack him off to the gathering place outside, since he finds it so dark in here.’

But godlike Theoclymenus answered: ‘I need no helpers of yours to show me the way, Eurymachus. I have ears and eyes and feet enough, and a sound head on my shoulders. They will guide me past the doors, since I foresee evil coming to you, that none of you Suitors can evade or escape, not one of you who display violence, and plan your mindless wickedness in godlike Odysseus’ house.’ With this he left the great palace, and sought out Peiraeus who gave him a fine welcome.

The Suitors meanwhile, egging each other on, tried to provoke Telemachus by mocking his guests. Such were the proud youths’ comments: ‘No one is more unlucky with guests than you, Telemachus, seeing you are
host to such a lousy beggar as this, always after
the bread and wine, and without a job in peace
or war, an encumbrance on the earth. And now
this other leaps up to prophesy. You’d be better
to take my advice, and clap these strangers
aboard an oared ship heading for Sicily, and
make a worthwhile profit from them.’

Telemachus paid no attention to the
Suitor’s gibes, but kept his silence and an eye
on his father, waiting for the moment when
Odysseus would attack those shameless men.

Wise Penelope, Icarius’ daughter, seated
opposite in her lovely chair, was obliged to
listen to everything that was said. The Suitors
had slaughtered cattle in large numbers, and
prepared their meal amid gales of laughter, a
fine banquet to ease the heart. But no dinner
could be less appetising than the one a goddess
and a mighty hero would soon set before them.
Yet it was the Suitors who had begun it all, with
their unacceptable actions.
Now, the goddess, bright-eyed **Athene**, prompted wise **Penelope, Icarius’** daughter, to confront the **Suitors** in **Odysseus’** palace with his bow and the grey iron axes, as a challenge and a means to their destruction. Penelope climbed the high stair to her room, and with a firm hand, took up a bronze key, finely-shaped with an ivory handle. She made her way with her women to the distant storeroom, where her husband’s treasure lay, gold and bronze and hammered iron. There lay the curved bow, and quiver full of fatal arrows, given him when he visited **Lacedaemon**, by godlike **Iphitus, Eurytus**’ son.

They had met in **Messene**, at the house of wise **Ortilochus**. Odysseus was there to collect a public debt, because Messenians had stolen three hundred sheep and their shepherds too from **Ithaca**, loading them aboard their oared ships. Odysseus had been sent by his father and other elders to resolve the matter, though he
was still quite young. Iphitus was there in search of a dozen brood mares he had lost, along with the sturdy little mules they were suckling. But his search caused his death, when he came upon Heracles, Zeus’ lion-hearted son, well-versed in mighty labours. Ruthless Heracles killed him, though he was a guest in his house. Careless of the gods’ anger and the sanctity of the dinner-table, he killed him there and then, and hid the heavy-hoofed mares in his own stables.

But back when Iphitus was searching for them, he had met Odysseus, and given him the bow that mighty Eurytus carried of old, and that, dying in his palace, he had left to his son. And Odysseus had given Iphitus in return a sharp sword and a fine spear as a token of the start of a loving friendship. But before they could meet again at table, Zeus’ son had killed godlike Iphitus, Eurytus’ son, the giver of the bow that noble Odysseus had never taken with him aboard his black ship to war, leaving it
behind in his palace as a memento of a good friend, to use only at home.

Now Penelope, that lovely woman, reached the storeroom and set foot on the oaken sill, once skilfully planed and trued to the line by some carpenter of old, who also set the doorposts in it, and hung the gleaming doors. Quickly she unhooked the thong, slid in the key and with a sure touch shot back the bolt. With a groan like a bull bellowing in a grassy meadow, the polished doors flew open at the touch of the key. Then she mounted to the high platform loaded with chests of fragrant clothes. Here, reaching up, she lifted the bow, in the gleaming case, from its peg. Then she sat down with the case on her knees, and weeping aloud drew out her husband’s bow. Yet once her tears and sighs were done, she went to the hall and the crowd of noble Suitors, carrying the curved bow and the quiver full of fatal arrows. And the maids followed with a chest full of bronze and iron won by her man. When the lovely woman reached the Suitors, she stood by a pillar of the
great hall, with a shining veil in front of her face, and a loyal maid stood on either side. Then she issued her challenge.

‘Noble Suitors, listen to me. You have battened on this house, with its master long gone, eating and drinking endlessly, and you could find no better excuse to offer than the desire to win me as a wife. Well come now, my Suitors, your prize stands here before you, clear to see. Godlike Odysseus’ mighty bow is the test. Whoever makes the best attempt at stringing the bow and shooting an arrow through the rings of a dozen axes, with that man I will go, and leave this house that saw me a bride, this lovely and luxurious house, that I will always remember in my dreams.’

Bk XXI:80-135 Telemachus sets up the axes

With this she ordered Eumaeus the master-swineherd to set out the bow and the axes with their handle-rings of grey iron for the Suitors. Eumaeus was in tears as he laid them down,
and the cowherd wept too, at the sight of his master’s bow. Antinous turned on them in anger: ‘Stupid yokels, living in the past! Your tears, you wretches, lower your mistress’ spirits, as though her heart wasn’t already troubled by her husband’s loss. Sit and eat in silence, or go outside and snivel, and leave the bow here to test us, her Suitors: I doubt this gleaming bow will be easy to string, since I once saw Odysseus, and there’s no man here to equal him. Yes, I remember him, though I was but a child.’

Such were his words, but he nursed the hope in his heart that he himself would string the bow and shoot an arrow through the iron rings. Yet in truth he was to be the first to feel the blow of an arrow from peerless Odysseus whom he was now abusing in the palace, while urging on his friends to do the same.

Then royal Telemachus intervened: ‘Zeus must have addled my wits, indeed! My dear mother, in her wisdom, says she will take another husband and leave this house, and I
laugh like a happy idiot! Come, my lords, since your prize is here, a lady who has no equal in all Achaea, not in Pylos, Argos, or Mycenae, nor in Ithaca itself, nor on the dark mainland. You know that yourselves, what need have I to sing my mother’s praises? No excuses now: let’s have no delay in stringing the bow, and then we’ll see. I might even try the bow myself, later. If I can string it and shoot an arrow through the iron rings, I shan’t be so upset by my dear mother’s departure for another house, seeing I myself will be a man capable of winning fine prizes like my father.’

Saying this, Telemachus threw off his purple cloak, and springing up removed the sharp sword slung from his shoulder. Then he set all the axes in a long trench, in a straight line, stamping the earth in around them. The onlookers were amazed that never having seen them before he arranged them so correctly. Then he took up his stand on the threshold and tried the bow. Three times it quivered in his hands as he made a fierce effort to string it, and
three times he had to relax his grip, though he had hoped deep down to succeed and shoot an arrow through the iron handle-rings. Now exerting all his power he might have strung it at the fourth attempt had Odysseus not shaken his head, and checked his eagerness.

‘Alas’ royal Telemachus exclaimed, ‘it seems I shall always be a coward and a weakling. But perhaps I am still too young, and haven’t the strength yet to defend myself against whoever picks quarrels for no reason. You then, who have more strength than I, try the bow, and decide the contest.’

Bk XXI:136-185 The Suitors try the bow

With this, he placed the bow on the ground, leaning it against the gleaming panels of the door, and the feathered arrow against the door-handle, and then resumed his seat. Antinous, Eupeithes’ son, called out: ‘Come forward, all of you Suitors, one by one, from left to right, beginning from where the wine-steward sits.’
They welcomed his words, and the first to rise was Leodes, Oenops’ son, their seer, who always sat by the huge mixing bowl in the depths of the hall: he alone despised the Suitors’ acts of wantonness, and they filled him with indignation. Now he was first to take up the feathered arrow and the bow, stride to the threshold, and try to string it. But he failed, his smooth and delicate hands quickly drained of strength. He spoke to the Suitors, saying: ‘My Friends, I cannot do it: let someone else try. This bow will break the heart and spirit of many a man here. Still, it is better to die trying, than live on without winning the prize that brings us here each day, in endless expectation. Many must hope and long to wed Penelope, Odysseus’ wife, but when they have tried the bow, and failed, let them go woo some other Achaean woman in her lovely robe, and try and win her with their gifts. And let Penelope wed the man who offers her most, and is destined to be her husband.’
With this, he set the bow aside, leaning it against the gleaming panels of the door, and the feathered arrow against the door-handle, and then resumed his seat. But Antinous criticised him, saying: ‘Leodes, what dark and monstrous words have crossed your tongue! I’m angered by your suggestion that “this bow will break the heart and spirit of many a warrior here”, merely because you failed to string it. Your dear mother didn’t bear you for drawing a mighty bow, and shooting arrows, perhaps, but others of the noble Suitors will soon succeed.’

Then he called to the goatherd, Melanthius: ‘Quick, light a fire in the hall, Melanthius, and put a large fleece-covered chair beside it, and bring a big piece of tallow from the stores, so that we youngsters can heat the bow and grease it, before we try it and settle the contest.’ Melanthius, swiftly obeyed. He revived the glowing fire, put the large fleece-covered chair beside it, and brought a big piece of tallow from the stores. The youths then warmed the bow
and tried to string it, but those who tried were too weak to succeed.

Bk XXI:186-244 Odysseus reveals himself to Eumaeus

Antinous and godlike Eurymachus, however, the leaders of the Suitors, and the most capable, continued the contest. Meanwhile noble Odysseus’ cowherd and swineherd slipped out of the hall together, and Odysseus followed them. When they were beyond the courtyard gates he sounded them out carefully:

‘Cowherd, swineherd, Can I share something with you or should I keep it to myself? My heart tells me to speak. If Odysseus suddenly returned, brought by some god, would you be the men to fight for him? Would you be for the Suitors or Odysseus? Say what your heart and spirit tell you.’

‘Father Zeus,’ the cowherd prayed, ‘may that come true! May the hero return, with a god’s guidance! Then you would see the
strength I can still show in my hands.’ And Eumaeus also prayed, to all the gods, that wise Odysseus might come home.

Once Odysseus was sure, he opened his mind to them, saying: ‘Well, I am home. Here I stand before you, I myself, back in my own country in the twentieth year after many painful trials. I know that of all my servants you both welcome my return, but I’ve not heard a single one of the others praying I might reach home. I’ll tell you truly what I intend for you. If a god brings the noble Suitors down, I’ll find you each a wife, give you goods, and build you a house near mine: and I’ll always regard you as friends and brothers of Telemachus. Now, so you can be certain in your hearts that it is I, let me show you a sign you’ll know, the scar from the wound the white-tusked boar gave me, when I hunted Parnassus with Autolycus’ sons.’

So saying, he drew his rags apart to show the long scar. When the two had examined it carefully, they clasped their arms about wise Odysseus’ neck, and weeping kissed his head.
and shoulders in loving recognition. Odysseus likewise kissed their heads and hands. And the twilight would have seen them still weeping if Odysseus had not restrained them: ‘Stop wailing now, in case someone comes from the house and sees us, and tells those inside. Let’s go back in, now, one after the other, not together. Follow me, and here’s the signal we will act on. The others, the noble Suitors, will refuse to allow me to handle the bow and quiver, but as you carry the bow round the hall, Eumaeus, set it in my hands, and tell the women to shut their hall doors tight. Say that if any of them hear men shouting or groaning in here, they are not to rush out, but to stay there and silently carry out their tasks. And good Philoetius, I charge you with barring the gate of the courtyard, and lashing it tight.’

With this, he entered the royal palace, and resumed his seat. And the two servants followed.
Bk XXI:245-310 Odysseus seeks to try the bow

The bow had reached Eurymachus, who was turning it in his hands before the fire to warm it. But despite that he failed to string it, and groaning inwardly he said, in anger: ‘Oh, I’m not just bitter about this myself, but for all of you, too. It’s not that I’m bothered about the marriage, though it grieves me. There are plenty of other women in Achaea, in Ithaca’s isle, and in other places. No, it’s more that our strength falls so short of godlike Odysseus’ that we can’t even string his bow. It’s a disgrace that posterity will hear of.’

‘No, Eurymachus,’ Antinous, Eupeithes’ son, replied, ‘that’s not so, and do you know why? Today is the feast of Apollo, throughout the island, his holy day. Should we be bending bows? Set it aside, softly. As for the axes, why not leave them there? No one will steal them: not from a house owned by Odysseus, Laertes’ son. Come, let the steward pour wine for libations, and put the bow down. In the morning
tell the goatherd, Melanthius, to bring us the best she-goats in the flock, so we can lay thigh-pieces on Apollo’s altar, the famous Archer, then try the bow, and decide the contest.’

They all agreed with Antinous. So, while the squires sprinkled water over their hands, pages filled the mixing bowls and served them all, first pouring a few drops of wine for libation into each man’s cup. When they had made their libations and quenched their thirst, resourceful Odysseus spoke with subtle intent: ‘Suitors of the glorious Queen, hear me, so I might express what is in my mind. I aim my plea primarily at Eurymachus, and godlike Antinous, who made such a good suggestion, to forget the bow for today, and leave the issue to the gods. Come morning the god will grant victory to whoever he wishes. So, lend me the polished bow, and I can see what strength is in my hands, and if I still possess the power I used to have in limbs once supple, or whether poor nourishment and endless wandering has reduced it.’
The **Suitors** were greatly angered by his words: all afraid he might string the gleaming bow. Antinous addressed him with scorn: ‘Wretched beggar, you’re out of your mind. Isn’t it enough for you we allow you to dine in peace in our noble company, letting you share in what’s on the table, privileged to listen to our talk, unlike other beggars and strangers. The wine, the honeyed wine, has addled your brain as it does others who gulp it down without restraint. It was wine that maddened **Eurytion**, the famous **Centaur**, in brave **Peirithous**’ palace, when he visited the **Lapithae**. Crazed with drink he caused uproar in Peirithous’ own house. The outraged hosts leapt to their feet, and dragged him through the gate then cut off his nose and ears with the cruel bronze, leaving him to wander off, bearing the burden of tragic error caused by his foolish urge. So began the feud between the Centaurs and men, but he was the first to meet disaster, drunk with the wine. I promise you the same, if you string the bow. You’ll find no help from anyone here. We’ll
pack you off in a black ship to King Echesus, the maimer of men, and you’ll not escape with your life. So, have done, and drink your wine, and don’t try and compete with younger men.’

Bk XXI:311-358 Telemachus asserts his authority

But wise Penelope intervened: ‘It is neither right nor just, Antinous, to deny his due to a man who came to Telemachus’ house as a guest. Do you really think that if the stranger, trusting in the strength of his hands, strings Odysseus’ bow, he will take me home as his wife? He could never harbour such a hope. So let none of you sit at this feast in trepidation: that would be wrong.’

Eurymachus, Polybus’ son, answered her: ‘Icarius’ daughter, wise Penelope, we had no thought of his taking you home, that would certainly be wrong, but we shudder at the thought of idle gossip, of some wretch among the Achaeans saying: “Those are weaklings that
woo the wife of a peerless man. They can’t even string his gleaming bow, though a wandering beggar did so easily, and shot an arrow through the axes.” So they would say, and shame us.’

‘Eurymachus’ said wise Penelope, ‘no one thinks well, in any case, of men like you who ruin and dishonour a King’s house, so why worry about further shame? The stranger is tall and well-built, and says he comes of good stock. Well then, hand him the gleaming bow, and let us see. Hear what I say, and I’ll surely do this too: if Apollo brings him glory and he strings the bow, I’ll dress him in a fine new cloak and tunic, and give him a sharp spear to keep off dogs and men, and a double-edged sword, and sandals for his feet, and help him travel wherever his heart and mind dictate.’

It was wise Telemachus who spoke to her then: ‘Mother, none of the Achaeans – those who rule in rocky Ithaca or in the islands seaward of the horse pastures of Elis – have more right than I to give or refuse the bow to
whoever I wish. None of them can challenge my will even if I choose to give the bow to the stranger, here and now, to take away with him. So go to your quarters now, and attend to your own duties at loom and spindle, and order your maids about their tasks: let men worry about such things, and I especially, since I hold the authority in this house.’

Seized with wonder she retired to her own room, taking her son’s wise words to heart. Up to her high chamber she went, accompanied by her maids, and there she wept for Odysseus, her dear husband, till bright-eyed Athene veiled her eyelids with sweet sleep.

Bk XXI:359-403 Odysseus receives the bow

Meanwhile the worthy swineherd had picked up the curved bow and was walking off with it, when the Suitors cried out in protest. One proud youth called out: ‘Where do you think you’re going with that, you wretch, your mind must be addled? If Apollo and the rest of the gracious
gods are good to us, the hounds you’ve bred yourself will finish you off, out there alone, far from men, among the swine.’

At this, Eumaeus dropped the bow he was carrying, on the spot, terrified by the uproar in the hall. But Telemachus shouted harshly at him from the other side: ‘Stick to the bow, old man – you’ll be full of regret if you listen to them all – or, young as I am, I’ll shower you with stones, and chase you through the fields. My strength is greater than yours. I only wish the power of my hands was greater than the Suitors’ in my hall, then I’d soon send a few of them off in a way they wouldn’t enjoy, the trouble makers.’

On hearing this, the Suitors laughed out loud at Telemachus, and so blunted the edge of their anger, while the swineherd carried the bow through the hall, and reaching wise Odysseus, set it in his hands. Then Eumaeus spoke softly to the nurse Eurycleia, saying: ‘Wise Eurycleia, Telemachus orders you to shut the hall doors tight, and if any of the women
hear men shouting or groaning in here, they are not to rush out, but to stay where they are and silently carry out their tasks.’

So he spoke, and without a word she went and locked the doors of the great hall. At the same time, Philoetius slipped out quietly to bar the gates of the courtyard. He lashed them to, with a ship’s cable twined from papyrus reed that was lying beneath the portico, then slipped back inside, and resumed his seat, keeping his eyes fixed on Odysseus. He meanwhile was handling the bow, turning it this way and that, fearing the pieces of horn bound to the wood might have become worm-eaten while he was away. The Suitors glanced at each other, and one commented: ‘This fellow must be an expert, or a cunning dealer in bows. Or if he hasn’t got bows like this stored away at home, the wretched beggar must be setting out to make one: he studies it so carefully.’

Another arrogant youth replied: ‘I’d guess he’d have as much luck at that as he will at trying to string this bow.’
So they chattered, but once wily Odysseus had flexed the great bow and checked it all over, he strung it easily, as a man skilled in song and the lyre stretches a new string onto its leather tuning strap, fixing the twisted sheep-gut at either end. Then grasping the bow in his right hand, he plucked the string that sang sweetly to his touch with the sound of a swallow’s note.

The Suitors were mortified, and their faces were drained of colour, while Zeus sounded a peal of thunder as a sign. Noble long-suffering Odysseus was pleased at this omen from the son of devious Cronos, and he picked up the feathered arrow that lay alone on the table next to him, while the others the Achaeans were destined to feel were still packed in their hollow quiver. He set it against the bridge of the bow, drew back the notched arrow with the string, and still seated in his chair let fly with a sure aim. The bronze-weighted shaft flew through the handle hole of every axe from first to last without fail, sped clean through and out at the
end. Then he turned to Telemachus saying: ‘The guest in your hall has not disgraced you. I have not missed the target, nor did it take me long to string the bow. My strength is undiminished, not lessened as the Suitors’ taunts implied. Well now it is time for the Achaeans to eat, while there is light, and afterwards we shall have different entertainment, with song and lyre, fitting for a celebration.’

As he spoke he gave the signal, and Telemachus, the godlike hero’s steadfast son, slung on his sharp-edged sword, grasped his spear, and stood beside his father, armed with the glittering bronze.

Bk XXII:1-67 The death of Antinous

Throwing off his rags, resourceful Odysseus sprang to the wide threshold with the bow and the full quiver, poured the arrows out at his feet, and addressed the Suitors: ‘Here is a clear end to the contest. Now I’ll see if I can hit another
target no man has as yet, and may Apollo grant my prayer!’

So saying, he aimed a deadly shaft at Antinous, who was handling a fine golden two-handled cup, about to raise it to his lips and sip the wine, his thoughts far from death. How should he guess among the feasting crowd, that one man however powerful he might be could dare to bring a vile death and a dark doom on him? But Odysseus took aim and shot him through the neck. The point passed clean through the tender throat, and Antinous sank to one side, the cup falling at that moment from his hand, while a thick jet of blood gushed from his nostrils. His foot kicked the table away, dashing the food to the floor, and the bread and meat were fouled.

When the Suitors saw the man fall, there was uproar throughout the hall, and they leapt from their seats in fear, running to the walls to find a shield or a stout spear of which there were no sign. Then they turned on Odysseus angrily: ‘Stranger you’ll pay for choosing a
man as your target: no more contests for you, your time is up. You have killed the best of Ithaca’s young men, and now the vultures will have you.’ They imagined in truth that he had killed Antinous by accident, not realising that the net of fate had been thrown over them all. Resourceful Odysseus, glowered at them, and answered: ‘You dogs! You thought I’d never return from the land of Troy, so you laid waste my house, forced my maids, and wooed my wife in secret though I was still alive, without fearing the gods who rule the wide sky, or that mortal vengeance would find you. Now the net of fate is thrown over you all.’

Fear blanched their cheeks at his words, and every man glanced round, looking to escape death’s finality. Only Eurymachus replied, saying: ‘If you are truly Odysseus of Ithaca come home, then what you say of the Achaeans is true – many foolish and wanton things have been done here and in your fields. But now Antinous is dead, and he was to blame for it all: he initiated it, not primarily through
desire or need to wed, but with another aim that the son of Cronos thwarted: to be king in Ithaca’s peaceful land. So he lay in wait for your son, to kill him. Now he is dead, as he deserved. Spare your people, then, and we will travel the island and organise recompense for everything we have eaten and drunk in your house, and each of us will make amends to the value of twenty oxen, and repay you with gold and bronze until you are satisfied. Until then, no one could blame you for being angry.’

Resourceful Odysseus glowered, and gave a fierce reply: ‘Eurymachus, even if you Suitors handed over your inheritances, everything you own and whatever might come to you after, even then I’d not keep my hands from slaughter until you’ve all paid the price. Now you can choose to stand and fight or run, if you think a single one of you can cheat death and fate. I don’t think you’ll escape death’s finality.’

Bk XXII:68-115 The battle begins
At this, their hearts trembled and their knees shook, but Eurymachus spoke again, saying: ‘Friends, since this man will not restrain his hands, but with the gleaming bow and quiver in his hands intends to fire from the smooth sill till he kills us all, to battle! Draw your swords, and use the tables as shields against his death-dealing arrows. Then let’s rush him together, and try and push him from the threshold, run to the city and raise the alarm: then he’ll have shot his bolt.’

With this he drew his sharp bronze two-edged sword, and sprang at Odysseus with a great cry. But at that very moment noble Odysseus let fly an arrow that struck him in the chest below the nipple, and the swift shaft pierced his liver. Eurymachus let the sword drop from his hand. Sprawling across the table he doubled over and fell, spilling the food and the two-handled wine-cup to the floor. His forehead beat the ground in his last agony, his feet kicked out and rattled the chair, and the mist poured over his eyes.
Amphinomus, now, rushed at glorious Odysseus, attacking him with drawn sword, to force him somehow from the door. But before he could reach him Telemachus quickly threw his bronze-tipped spear, striking him behind between the shoulders, and driving it through his chest. He fell to the ground with a thud, striking his forehead full-on. Telemachus leapt back, leaving the long spear fixed in Amphinomus’ body, fearing that if he stopped to pull the spear free, one of the Achaeans might rush him, and stab him with his sword, or catch him as he stooped over the corpse. So he ran swiftly to his steadfast father’s side, and standing by him spoke with winged words: ‘Father, I’ll bring you a shield, two spears, and a helmet that fits you, arm myself and return with weapons for the swineherd and cowherd there: we would all be better armed.’

‘Run’ said resourceful Odysseus, ‘bring them quickly, while I still have arrows left, lest they push me from the door while I’m alone.’
Telemachus obeyed his father, and hurried to the storeroom with its piles of armour. He chose four shields, eight spears, and four bronze helmets with thick horsehair plumes, and brought them swiftly back to his steadfast father. Then he clad his body in bronze, and the two servants likewise donned the fine armour, and stood either side of wise and cunning Odysseus.

Bk XXII:116-159 Melanthius raids the storeroom

He, meanwhile, kept shooting steadily at the Suitors, killing them one by one, as long as he had arrows left, till the dead were heaped high. But when the arrows were gone, he propped the bow by the doorpost of the great hall against the gleaming wall of the entrance. Then he slung a shield, with four layers of hide, across his shoulders, set a strong helmet on his proud head, its horsehair plume nodding
menacingly, and picked up two sturdy spears with bronze tips.

Now there was a raised entrance in the solid wall, closed by tight-fitting doors, providing access to a passage at the back of the great hall. Odysseus ordered the worthy swineherd to guard it closely. It allowed space for only one man at a time. Only after he had done so did Agelaus call out loud to the Suitors: ‘Friends, someone must clamber through that door, raise the alarm and alert the people. Then this fellow will soon have fired his last shot.’

But Melanthius the goatherd said: ‘It’s impossible, Agelaus, favourite of Zeus, since the great door into the courtyard is dreadfully near, and the passage is narrow-mouthed. One brave man could stop us all from entering. Let me bring armour from the storeroom though, since I think Odysseus and his fine son have hidden the arms inside not outside.’

With this, Melanthius climbed the steps to Odysseus’ storeroom, and came away with a dozen shields and spears, and as many bronze
helmets with thick horsehair plumes and carrying them quickly brought them to the Suitors. Seeing them donning the armour and brandishing long spears in their hands, Odysseus’ heart trembled and his knees shook, and the task ahead seemed huge. He spoke swiftly to Telemachus, with winged words: ‘Telemachus, one of the women servants has stirred up trouble for us, or perhaps it was Melanthius.’

‘Father’ wise Telemachus replied, ‘It is my fault, and no one else’s. I left the door of the storeroom unlocked, and they kept a closer eye than I did. Worthy Eumaeus, go now, and close the storeroom door, and find out whether it is one of the women or Melanthius, Dolius’ son, as I would guess.’

Bk XXII:160-199 Melanthius is captured

As they were speaking, Melanthius the goatherd returned to the storeroom to fetch more fine armour. The worthy swineherd spotted him, and
immediately told Odysseus nearby: ‘Resourceful Odysseus, scion of Zeus, Laertes’ son, the lethal wretch we suspected is there again, on his way to the storeroom. Should I kill him if I can, or bring him here, so he can pay for all the crimes he’s perpetrated in your house?’

‘Telemachus and I will keep the noble Suitors in the hall,’ resourceful Odysseus replied, ‘however fiercely they fight, while you two tie Melanthius’ arms and legs behind his back, and throw him into the storeroom, then strap him to a board, fasten him to a coil of rope and hoist him up by a roof-beam to the top of a tall pillar, and let him hang there a while in torment.’

They eagerly obeyed, setting off for the storeroom, unknown to Melanthius, who was inside searching for armour in the depths of the room. The two of them lay in wait on either side of the door. When Melanthius, the goatherd, was about to cross the threshold, carrying a fine helmet in one hand, and in the
other an old wide mildewed shield – that belonged to Laertes in his heroic youth, but had lain there neglected with the seams of its straps decayed – the two of them sprang at him and seized him. They dragged him inside by the hair, and threw the terrified man to the floor, then tied his hands and feet behind his back with cruel knots, as noble long-suffering Odysseus, Laertes’ son, had told them. Then they fastened a coil of rope to his body and hoisted him up by a roof-beam to the top of a tall pillar. There you, Eumaeus, the swineherd, taunted him, saying: ‘Now you can keep watch all night, lying on the soft bed you deserve, then you won’t miss the coming of golden-throned Dawn, rising from Ocean’s streams, at the hour when you usually drive in the she-goats for the Suitors’ feast in the hall.’

Bk XXII:200-240 Athene intervenes

Putting on their armour, they left Melanthius there in his cruel bonds, locked the door and
returned to wise and cunning Odysseus. There the four of them stood on the threshold, breathing defiance against the many braves in the hall. It was then that Athene, daughter of Zeus, appeared, with Mentor’s voice and looks. Odysseus saw her, and was glad, and spoke to her saying: ‘Mentor, help fight against disaster: remember me your steadfast friend, one who stood by you, often. You and I were once young together.’

He spoke so, believing it was in truth Athene, the stirrer of armies, while the Suitors for their part shouted abuse, and Agelaus, Damastor’s son, was the leader in rebuking her, saying: ‘Mentor, don’t let Odysseus seduce you with his words to help fight against us. Here is how we would end this business. When we’ve killed this father and son, you will be next to die for your eagerness in action. You’ll pay the price with your life. And when we’ve rendered the five of you powerless, we’ll lump all your possessions, Mentor, together with those of Odysseus, bar your sons from your house, and
your good wife and daughters from the streets of Ithaca.’

His speech angered Athene even more deeply, and she exhorted Odysseus with fiery words: ‘Odysseus, your courage is wavering. Where is that brave spirit you displayed when you fought the Trojan for nine long years, all for Helen of the white arms, killing a host of men in cruel conflict, planning the capture of Priam’s city of wide streets? Now when your own house and goods are at stake you tremble at the thought of showing your strength against these Suitors! No, dear friend, come take your stand by my side, and watch how I behave, so you know how Mentor, Alcimus’ son, repays past kindness in the heart of the enemy ranks.’

Yet despite her words she still withheld from him the power to determine the course of the fight, and continued to test the strength and courage of Odysseus and his noble son. She herself now took the form of a swallow, and flew up to perch on the roof beam of the smoke-darkened hall.
Now Agelaus, Damastor’s son, Eurynomus and Amphimedon, Demoptolemus, Peisander, Polyctor’s son, and wise Polybus rallied the Suitors, being the best and bravest still alive, and it was their lives they fought for. All the rest had been toppled by the shower of arrows from the bow. Agelaus called out urgently to them: ‘Friends, this man’s invincible grip is weakening now. Mentor has fled after uttering his empty boasts. They are isolated at the threshold. Don’t hurl your long spears together, but let six of you throw first in hopes that Zeus will let Odysseus be hit, and us win glory. The rest won’t matter, once he’s down!’

When he had ceased, the six hurled their sharp spears fiercely, but Athene deflected most of them. One hit the doorpost of the great hall, another lodged in the door, and a third man’s ash spear tipped with solid bronze struck the wall. All four being untouched by the Suitors’
spears, noble long-suffering Odysseus spoke promptly: ‘Comrades, let’s hurl our spears too, at this crowd of Suitors who hope to add to their other crimes by killing us.’

Taking careful aim, they hurled their spears together, on his command. Odysseus struck Demoptolemus; Telemachus killed Euryades; the swineherd hit Elatus; and the cowherd Peisander. All four bit the dust together snapping at the wide earth and the Suitors retreated to the depths of the hall, while Odysseus and the rest leapt forward to retrieve their spears from the corpses.

Once more the Suitors hurled sharp spears fiercely, and Athene again deflected most of them. One hit the doorpost of the great hall, another lodged in the door, and a third man’s ash spear tipped with solid bronze struck the wall. But Amphimedon hit Telemachus a glancing blow on the wrist, and the bronze tip grazed the skin, while Ctesippus’ long spear flew over Eumaeus’ shoulder above his shield, scratching him, then falling to the ground. Then
wise and cunning Odysseus gave the word for his comrades to hurl their sharp spears once more into the crowd of Suitors. Odysseus, sacker of cities, struck Eurydamas; Telemachus killed Amphimedon; the swineherd hit Polybus; and lastly the cowherd skewered Ctesippus through the chest, and exulting over his enemy, shouted: ‘You prince of foul abuse, Polytherses’ son, you’ll never speak your foolish boasts again. Leave fine words to the gods, since they are greater than us by far. Take that as a guest gift, a match for the hoof you threw at godlike Odysseus when he begged through the hall!’ So said the herdsman of the spiral horned cattle.

Now Odysseus wounded Agelaus, Damastor’s son, with a thrust of his great spear at close range, while Telemachus hurt Leocritus, Evenor’s son, thrusting his bronze-tipped spear straight through his groin, so that he fell face forward, striking the ground with his forehead. Now from high in the roof Athene held out her fatal aegis, and the Suitors’ minds
were filled with panic. They fled through the hall like a herd of cattle goaded and stung by the darting gadflies in spring, when the long days arrive. Odysseus and the others, set upon them, like vultures from the mountains, with crooked talons and curving beaks, swooping on smaller birds that skim the plain beneath the clouds. The birds have no defence or means of escape, and men exult at the chase. So they set about the Suitors, striking left and right through the hall. Hideous groans rose from them, as heads were cleft, and the floor was drenched with blood.

Bk XXII:310-377 Leoides and Phemius

But Leodes ran forward and clasped Odysseus’ knees, and begged with winged words: ‘Odysseus, respect the suppliant at your knees: I ask for mercy. I swear I have never wantonly wronged a woman of your house, in word or deed. Instead I tried to restrain others from doing so. But they would not listen, or keep
their hands from evil, and so through foolish wantonness they meet a cruel fate. And I, though I am only their innocent priest, will die with them. It is true one gets no thanks for good deeds.’

Resourceful Odysseus gave him an angry look and said: ‘If you were really their priest you must often have prayed that the day of my joyful return would be long delayed and that my loyal wife would go with you and bear you children. For that you will not escape a sorry death.’

With this he grasped the sword in his strong hand that Agelaus had dropped on the ground nearby as he fell, and struck Leodes hard on the neck, so that while he was still trying to speak his head bit the dust.

And now the minstrel, Phemius, Terpius’ son, whom the Suitors forced to sing, tried to flee his dark fate. He stood by the side door, with the clear-voiced lyre in his hands, uncertain whether to slip from the hall, and seat himself by the massive altar of Zeus, God of the
Court, where Laertes and Odysseus had burned so many offerings, or whether to run forward and clasp Odysseus round the knees in supplication. He decided the better course was to clasp the knees of Odysseus, Laertes’ son, so he set the pyre on the ground between the mixing-bowl and the silver-embossed chair, and rushing forward gripped Odysseus by the knees, and entreated him in winged words: ‘Odysseus, respect the suppliant at your knees: I ask for mercy. Sorrow will come to you later if you kill a minstrel who sings for gods and men. I am self-taught, and the god has filled my mind with every kind of song. I am worthy of singing for you, as for a god. Don’t be eager to cut my throat. Telemachus, your brave son, is my witness, too, that I never came to sing in your house willingly, but the Suitors dragged me here by force of numbers.’

Royal Telemachus heard his words, and spoke swiftly to his father nearby: ‘Wait, don’t put an innocent to the sword: and we should spare Medon, the herald, too, who used to care
for me as a child in this house. Unless that is Philoetius or the swineherd has already killed him, or he has met with you as you raged through the hall.’

Medon, the wise, heard his words where he lay, covered in a newly flayed ox-hide, trying to evade his fate, by cowering beneath a chair. He rose at once and threw off the hide, then dashed forward and clasped Telemachus round the knees, and entreated him with winged words: ‘Here I am, dear boy: stay your hand, and persuade your father to restrain his, lest he wounds me with that sharp bronze in an excess of strength, enraged by the Suitors who ravaged his house and foolishly denied you honour.’

But resourceful Odysseus smiled at him, saying: ‘Be calm! My son has saved you so you might know in your heart, and say to others, how much better it is to do good than evil. Now go outside, and sit in the courtyard away from the killing, you and the versatile singer, till I have done what I must in this house.’
At this command, the two of them left the hall, and sat down by the altar of mighty Zeus, glancing from side to side, expecting death any moment. Odysseus too was gazing round the hall to see if any survivors were hiding, trying to escape their dark fate. But he saw that the whole crowd lay covered with blood and dust, like fish, enmeshed in a net the fishermen have dragged from the grey tide, onto the shore of the bay. There they all lie heaped on the sand, gasping for salt water, while the hot sun takes their life. So the Suitors lay there, piled on one another.

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke to his son: ‘Telemachus, call Eurycleia, the nurse, here so I can give her my orders.’ Telemachus quickly obeyed his brave father, and rattling the door, shouted to Eurycleia: ‘Get up, old woman, and come here. You are in charge of
the serving-women in this palace. My father has something to say to you. Come, to his call.’

She gave no reply but opened the doors of the great hall at once, and followed Telemachus. She found Odysseus standing among the corpses, spattered with blood and gore, like a lion come from feeding on a farm bullock, his face and chest drenched with blood, a gruesome spectacle. Odysseus was stained like that from head to foot. Yet she, on seeing the pile of bodies weltering in their blood, was ready to shout aloud in exultation at what had been done. Nevertheless Odysseus restrained her eagerness, and spoke to her winged words: ‘Old woman, feel joy in your heart, but control yourself, don’t shout it out. It is impious to rejoice at the sight of dead men. These men were destroyed by the gods and their own wicked deeds, respecting no one on earth, noble or base, who mingled with them. So by their foolish indulgence they brought on their shameful death. Now, though, name me the
women in the halls, and say which ones are faithless and which are innocent.’

Then loyal Eurycleia replied: ‘I will tell you it all as it is, my child. You have fifty women serving the palace that we trained to slave away at their duties, and carding the wool. Twelve of them behaved shamelessly, without respect for Penelope or for me. Telemachus is only now a man, and his mother would not let him command the women. But let me run to the shining room above, and carry the news to your wife, whom some god has lulled to sleep.’

But resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘Don’t wake her yet. First, tell the women who behaved shamelessly to come here.’

Bk XXII:433-501 Telemachus executes the serving-women

With this, the old woman went through the hall to tell the women the news and order them to appear, while Odysseus called Telemachus, and the cowherd and swineherd, to him, and spoke
with winged words: ‘Begin carrying out the bodies and tell the women to help, then sponge down the tables and good chairs. When the hall is straight, lead the women out of the house to the place between the round house and the solid wall of the court, and let your long sword take their lives, and their memories of the secret delights of Aphrodite among the Suitors.’

He spoke. Then the women flocked in together, weeping and wailing loudly. They carried the corpses out, and set them down under the portico of the walled yard, propping one against another. Odysseus himself commanded them, and urged them on, forcing them to the work. Then they sponged the tables and good chairs clean. Telemachus, and the cowherd and swineherd scraped the floors of the great hall with spades, and the women threw the refuse outdoors. But when they had set the hall in order, they lead the women out of the great hall to the place between the round house and the solid wall of the court, and penned them up in that narrow space from which none could
escape. Then wise Telemachus spoke: ‘These women who poured scorn on my mother’s head and mine, while they slept with the Suitors, shall not die cleanly.

So saying, he took a cable from a dark-prowed ship, tied it to a tall pillar, high-up, and noosed it over the round house, so that their feet would not reach the ground. The row of women held up their heads, and the rope was looped round their necks so they might die pitifully, like long-winged thrushes or doves, that are caught in a snare as they try to roost in their thicket, and are welcomed to a grimmer nest. For a little while their feet twitched: but not for long.

Next they dragged Melanthius through the door and into the yard, cut off his nose and ears with the cruel bronze, ripped away his genitals as raw meat for the dogs, and lopped off his hands and feet in their deep anger. Finally, after washing their feet and hands, they returned to Odysseus with the business done.
Odysseus himself spoke to Eurycleia, his faithful nurse: ‘Old woman, bring some sulphur, and make a fire, so I can purge the hall from this pollution. And tell Penelope and her maids to come here, and all the palace women.’

‘My child,’ the loyal nurse replied, ‘all you say is fitting. But let me bring you a tunic and cloak to wear. It would be wrong to stand there in your hall with your broad shoulders clothed in rags.’

Resourceful Odysseus answered: ‘Let me have that fire in the hall first.’ Eurycleia, the loyal nurse, obeyed, and brought sulphur and made a fire. Then Odysseus purged the hall, the yard and the whole palace thoroughly.

The old woman went away then, back through the royal palace, to carry the news to the women and tell them to appear. Out of their hall they ran with torches in their hands. They crowded round Odysseus and embraced him. They clasped his head and shoulders and hands, and kissed them in loving welcome, so that a
sweet desire to weep seized him, because he remembered them all in his heart.

Bk XXIII:1-84 Eurycleia tells Penelope the news

The old woman clambered upstairs, chuckling aloud as she went, to tell her mistress her beloved husband was home. Her knees were working away, though she tottered as she went. She stood at the head of the bed and spoke to her lady, saying: ‘Penelope, dear child, wake and see with your own eyes what you’ve longed for all this time. Odysseus is here, he is home after so many years. He has killed all the proud Suitors who plagued the house, wasted his stores, and bullied his son.’

Then wise Penelope woke and answered: ‘My dear nurse, the gods who can make fools of the wisest, and give insight to the simple-minded, have crazed you and led your wits astray, you who were always so sensible. Why do you mock me, whose heart is full of tears,
with this mad tale? You woke me from sleep, sweet sleep that closed my eyelids and wrapped me round. Never have I slept so sound, since Odysseus sailed to Ilium the Evil that it would be better not to name. Go downstairs again, back to the servant’s hall! If any other of my women had woken me to tell me this, I’d have sent her back there with a flea in her ear, but your old age spares you.’

‘Dear child, I wouldn’t mock you,’ faithful Eurycleia replied, ‘it is true, Odysseus is here, he is home, just as I said. He’s the stranger they all insulted in the hall. Telemachus knew long ago he was here, but he managed to keep his father’s plans hidden, till he could revenge himself on those violent and arrogant men.’

At this, Penelope leapt from her bed in joy, and threw her arms about the old woman, with tears springing from her eyes. Then she spoke to her with winged words: ‘Dear Nurse, come now, tell me truly, if it really is him come home as you say: how could he tackle the shameless
Suitors single-handedly, with them always crowding in the house in a pack?’

‘I couldn’t see and didn’t ask, but I still heard the groans of dying men,’ loyal Eurycleia replied. ‘We women sat there, terror-stricken, in the furthest depths of our thick-walled quarters, with the doors shut tight, until the moment when your son called to me from the hall, as his father had told him. There I found Odysseus standing over the corpses, lying piled around him on the solid floor. It would have gladdened your heart to see him: all spattered with blood and gore like a lion he was. Now the dead are heaped together at the courtyard gate, and he has had a great fire made, and is purifying our fine house. He sent me to call you, so come with me now, so your hearts may rejoice together, you who have known such suffering. What you long desired has happened at last. He has come home, alive, to his own hearth, to find you and his son here in the palace, and in his own house again he has taken revenge on the Suitors who did him harm.’
But cautious Penelope replied: ‘Dear nurse, don’t exult over them so soon. How welcome the sight of Odysseus here would be to everyone, above all to me and our son, you know. But this tale must be false. Surely one of the gods has killed the noble Suitors in anger, enraged by the depths of their insolence and their wickedness. They showed respect to never a man on this earth whether those they met were good or evil. So now they have suffered for their own foolish excess. Odysseus though has lost his life far away, and with it the chance of his coming home.’

‘My child,’ the loyal nurse replied, ‘what are you saying? That your husband will never return, when he’s here at his own hearth! You never believe a thing! Well, let me tell you of something else that proves it: the scar from the wound the wild boar’s white tusk gave him long ago. I saw it when I washed his feet, and wanted to tell you then, but he clapped his hand over my mouth, and refused to let me speak.'
Come with me now. I’ll stake my life on it, and if I lie deal me a cruel death.’

‘Dear nurse,’ cautious Penelope replied: ‘wise though you are you cannot fathom the minds of the immortal gods. But, let us go to my son, so I can see the bodies of the Suitors, and the man who killed them.’

Bk XXIII:85-140 Penelope’s uncertainty

So saying, she left her room, and went downstairs, considering whether to remain distant, and question the man who was said to be her dear husband, or whether to approach him, clasp his head and hands and kiss them. But when she had crossed the stone sill, she sat down by the far wall in the firelight, opposite Odysseus, while he sat by a tall pillar, his eyes on the ground, waiting to see if his wife would speak as she looked at him. She sat there silently for a long time, wondering, gazing intently at his face: often failing to recognise this man dressed in foul rags. Then it was that
**Telemachus** spoke his criticism of her behaviour: ‘My mother, un-motherly and hard-hearted, why do you distance yourself from my father like this, instead of sitting by his side, plying him with questions? No other woman would steel her heart like this, and sit apart from a husband who had just returned to her and his native land, after twenty years of bitter toil. But your heart is always harder than flint.’

‘My child,’ cautious **Penelope** answered, ‘my mind is lost in wonder, and I feel powerless to speak and question him, or even look long at his face. But if it is really Odysseus come home, we two have a better way of recognising one another, because there are secret tokens that only the two of us know.’ And noble long-suffering Odysseus smiled at this, and spoke to Telemachus winged words: ‘Telemachus, leave your mother to put me to the proof, in this, her house: she will soon be enlightened. For now, since I’m covered in dust, and dressed in rags, she thinks me unworthy and won’t concede I am Odysseus.'
But let us consider what to do for the best. Whatever the country, whoever kills even a single man, even one that dead leaves few behind to avenge him, must go into exile, abandoning his native land and kin, while we have killed the noblest youth of Ithaca, the core of its defence. Take thought of that.’

‘Do you take thought, dear father,’ wise Telemachus replied, ‘since they say you are the most resourceful of men, without a mortal equal. We are eager to follow you, and I know we won’t fail to support you to the best of our powers.’

Resourceful Odysseus answered him, saying: ‘Then I’ll tell you the plan that seems best to me. Bathe first, and dress, and order the palace servants to choose fresh clothes. Then let the divine minstrel play us a lively dance on his sweet-toned lyre, so that anyone outside who hears, neighbour or passer-by, will take it for a marriage feast. That way there’ll be no rumour of the Suitors’ deaths put abroad in the town, before we can reach our densely-wooded farm.'
Once there we can plan to take advantage of whatever the Olympians send us.’

Bk XXIII:141-204 The Marriage-Bed

They listened readily to his orders and obeyed. The men bathed and dressed, while the women adorned themselves. The divine minstrel took up his sounding lyre and stirred their desire for sweet music and pleasant dance. The great hall echoed to the footsteps of dancing men, and elegantly dressed women, and hearing the noise outside passers-by said: ‘Ah, surely someone has married our much-wooed Queen. She was too hard-hearted to tend her husband’s great palace to the end, in hopes of his return.’ So they talked, not knowing what was really happening.

Meanwhile the housekeeper, Eurynome, bathed great-hearted Odysseus, there in the house, rubbed him with oil, and dressed him in a fine tunic and cloak. Athene then clothed him in beauty, making him seem taller and stronger,
and making the locks of his hair spring up thickly like hyacinth petals. As a clever craftsman, taught his art by Hephaestus and Pallas Athene, overlays silver with gold to produce a graceful finish, so the goddess graced his head and shoulders. He left the bath looking like an immortal. Then he returned to the chair, opposite his wife, and spoke to her, saying: ‘Lady, you must have been touched by the Olympian gods: they have given you a harder heart than any other woman, one that nothing can soften. No other woman would steel her heart like this, and sit apart from a husband who had just returned to her and his native land, after twenty years of bitter toil. Come, Eurycleia, make me up a bed to sleep in alone, since my wife’s heart is as hard as iron.’

And cautious Penelope answered: ‘Sir, you must have been touched by those same gods. I am not proud and scornful of you, nor am I confused. I know well how you looked when you sailed from Ithaca in your long-oared ship. Come then, Eurycleia, and have the great bed
dragged from the fine bridal chamber he built himself, and cover it with rugs and fleeces and brightly coloured blankets.’

These were words to test her husband. But Odysseus, angered, rounded on his loyal wife: ‘Lady, those are truly bitter words you speak. Who has moved my bed? That would be hard, even with the greatest skill, unless perhaps some god arrived who could easily choose to set it down somewhere else. But no mortal man alive however young and strong could easily shift it from its place, since a great secret went into its making, and it was my work and mine alone. A long-leafed olive tree, strong and vigorous, and thick as a pillar, grew in the courtyard. I built my room of solid stone around it, finished it off with a fine roof, and added tight-fitting timber doors. I trimmed the trunk from the roots up, after cutting off all the long-leaved olive branches, smoothed it off skilfully and well, and trued it to the line: that was my bedpost. I drilled holes with the auger, and with this for its beginning fitted all the smooth
timbers of my bed until it was complete. I inlaid it with ivory, silver and gold, and stretched shining purple straps of ox-hide across. That was its secret, as I say: but lady, I no longer know if the bed I made is still in place. Perhaps some man has chopped through the olive-trunk, and shifted it elsewhere.’

Bk XXIII:205-246 Penelope is convinced

As he spoke, revealing the unchanged truth she knew, her knees gave way and her heart melted. Bursting into tears she ran to Odysseus, flung her arms about his neck, and kissing his face cried: ‘Odysseus, don’t be angry with me, you who in everything were always the most understanding of men. Our sorrows came from the gods, who begrudged our enjoying our youth and reaching old age together. Don’t be angry, or upset, because I didn’t give you this welcome the moment I saw you. My heart was always full of fear that some man would come and cheat me with words. Many men are only
out for profit. Helen of Argos, Zeus’ daughter, would never have slept with a stranger from abroad, if she’d known the warrior sons of Achaea would come to fetch her home. A god it was truly that drove her to commit that act of shame: only then did she contemplate the fatal madness that brought us, too, such sorrow. Now you have told me the true secret of our marriage bed, that no other mortal knew but you and I and a single maidservant, Actoris, who was my father’s gift before I came to you, and guarded the door of our fine bridal chamber – Now, you convince my stubborn heart.’

Her words stirred his heart to a greater longing for tears: and he wept, clasping his beloved, loyal wife in his arms. As welcome as the sight of land to the few surviving sailors, who swim to shore escaping the grey breakers, when their solid vessel driven over the sea by wind and towering waves has been shattered by Poseidon, who, saved from drowning, are overjoyed when their brine-caked bodies touch the land: welcome as that was the sight of her
husband, as Penelope gazed at him, never unwinding her white arms from round his neck.

Rosy-fingered Dawn would have risen while they wept, if the bright-eyed goddess Athene had not thought otherwise. She held back the long night at its ending, and golden-throned Dawn by Ocean’s stream, not letting her yoke the swift-hoofed horses, Lampus and Phaethon, the colts that draw her chariot, bringing light to men.

Bk XXIII:247-299 Odysseus recounts Tiresias’ prophecy

Resourceful Odysseus said to his wife at last: ‘Dear wife, we have not yet reached the end of our troubles. I still have a long hard labour to perform before I reach my end: or so the spirit of Teiresias prophesied when I descended to Hades’ House to ask how my comrades and I might return home. But come to bed now, wife, so we may delight in rest, soothed by sweet sleep.’
‘Your bed is ready for you whenever you wish,’ wise Penelope answered, ‘now the gods have brought you home to your own country and this fine house. But since a god has put the thought in your mind, tell me about this fresh trial, since I’ll only learn of it later, and it is better to know now.’

‘Lady, the gods have touched your mind,’ resourceful Odysseus said, ‘why be so eager to know? Still, I will tell you, hiding nothing, though your heart will gain no pleasure from it, and nor does mine. Teiresias told me to travel through many cities of men, carrying a shapely oar, till I come to a race that knows nothing of the sea, that eat no salt with their food, and have never heard of crimson-painted ships, or the well-shaped oars that serve as wings. And he gave me this as a sign, one I could not miss, and now I tell it you. When I meet another traveller who says that I carry a winnowing-fan on my broad shoulder, there I must plant my shapely oar in the ground, and make rich sacrifice to Lord Poseidon, a ram, a bull, and a
breeding-boar. Then leave for home, and make sacred offerings there to the deathless gods who hold the wide heavens, to all of them, and in their due order.

And death will come to me far from the sea, the gentlest of deaths, taking me when I am bowed with comfortable old age, and my people prosperous about me. All this he said would come true.”

‘If the gods really intend a more pleasant old age for you,’ said wise Penelope, ‘there is hope this will set an end to all your troubles.’

So they conversed, and as they spoke Eurynome and the nurse made up their bed with soft bedclothes, by the light of a blazing torch. When the two servants had fussed over the coverings of the great bed, the old nurse returned to her room to sleep, and Eurynome the chambermaid lit them on their way, and took her leave of them in the bridal chamber. Joyfully they re-enacted the rites of their own familiar bed. And Telemachus, and the cowherd and swineherd, stilled their dancing feet,
dismissed the women, and lay down to sleep themselves in the darkened hall.

Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells Penelope his tale

When Odysseus and Penelope had their fill of love’s joys, they took comfort in telling each other their tale. The lovely Queen told him all she had suffered at home, watching the detestable crowd of Suitors, who on her account slaughtered many cattle and fat sheep, and emptied whole jars of wine. And Odysseus, scion of Zeus, told her of all the pains he had endured in his labours, and all the pain he had inflicted on men, and she loved to hear it all, and sweet sleep failed to drown her eyelids until his tale was done.

First he told of his victory over the Cicones: and how he came to the fertile Land of the Lotus-Eaters: and of what the Cyclops did, and how he had made him pay the price for those brave comrades who were eaten without pity.
Then he told of **Aeolus’** friendly welcome and how he had seen him on his way, but, not being destined to reach his dear homeland yet, how the gale took him and drove him, groaning aloud, over the teeming sea. How he came to **Telepylus** next, where the **Laestrygonians** destroyed all his ships and his fighting men, and how his was the only vessel to escape.

He told her about **Circe**’s cunning, and her wiles: and how he had gone to the dank Halls of **Hades** to consult the spirit of **Theban Teiresias**, and had seen his comrades again, and the mother who had borne him and nursed him as a child. Then of the **Sirens**’ voices, and their endless singing: how he had passed the **Wandering Rocks**, dread **Charybdis** and **Scylla** whom no ship passed by unscathed. Then how his crew had slaughtered the cattle of the **Sun**, and how Zeus the mighty Thunderer struck his swift ship with a fiery lightning bolt, so that his noble comrades died together, though he alone escaped their dreadful fate.
Then he told how he came to Ogygia, the Nymph Calypso’s isle, and how she longed for him to wed her and imprisoned him in her echoing cave, and cared for him and swore to make him ageless and immortal, though she could never touch his heart: and how after many trials he came to the Phaeacians, who honoured him readily like a god, and sent him home in their ship to his beloved island, after giving him piles of gold and bronze and fabrics. He had reached the end of his tale when sweet sleep came to him, relaxing his limbs, and soothing the cares of his heart.

Now another thought occurred to the goddess, bright-eyed Athene. When she considered Odysseus had filled his heart enough with the joys of love and sleep in his wife’s arms, she roused golden-throned Dawn from Ocean’s stream, to bring light to the world. Then Odysseus rose from his soft bed and gave his wife his orders, saying: ‘Wife we have had enough of trouble, you and I: you, weeping here over the many sufferings caused
by my long journey home, and I, caught in a net of sorrow by Zeus and the other gods, far from my own country, and longing to return. But now we are back together in our own wished-for bed, you must take care of my wealth here in the palace, while I will seize flocks to replace those the Suitors consumed, and the Achaeans will give me the rest till the folds are full. I must go now to our wooded farm to find my good father, who is suffering because of me. And I ask this of you, dear wife, knowing your wisdom. When the sun is up, rumours of the Suitors’ deaths in the palace will be rife. So go to your room upstairs with your maids, and stay there: don’t see anyone and ask no questions.’

So saying, he clad his shoulders with fine armour, and roused Telemachus, and the cowherd and swineherd, and told them to take their weapons in their hands. They obeyed, donning bronze armour, and opening the doors followed Odysseus outside. Light flooded the earth, but Athene hid them in darkness, and soon led them clear of the town.
Meanwhile **Cyllenian Hermes** was summoning the ghosts of the **Suitors**. In his hands he held his lovely golden wand with which he can lull men’s eyelids or wake them from sleep: and with this wand he called the ghosts and led them, and they followed him gibbering. Like bats that flit about and gibber in the depths of an eerie cave, after one falls from the hanging cluster where they cling to the rock and one another, so they went gibbering behind Hermes the Helper, down the dank way. Past **Ocean**’s stream, and the **White Rock**, past the Gates of the **Sun** and the place of dreams, they soon reached the meadows of asphodel where the ghosts abide, the phantoms of men whose work is done.

Here they met with the ghost of **Achilles**, **Peleus**’ son, and that of **Patroclus**, of flawless **Antilochus**, and **Ajax** whose form and beauty were greatest of the **Danaans**, except for the
matchless son of Peleus. And these crowded around Achilles. Then the sad ghost of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son, drew near and round him thronged others: the ghosts of all those who met their fate and died with him in Aegisthus’ house. And the ghost of Achilles spoke first to him, saying: ‘Son of Atreus, we always thought you, above all others, were ever dear to Zeus the Thunderer, being the head of our army on the fields of Troy, where we Achaeans suffered. But it seems you too were doomed to an early death: death that none of all who are born evade. How much better it would have been if you’d been fated to die at Troy, still enjoying the honour you commanded! Then the whole Achaean host would have built your tomb, and increased your son’s glory in future days: but now we know it was your fate to meet a pitiful death.’

And the ghost of Atreus’ son replied: ‘Godlike Achilles, son of Peleus, happy to have died far away from Argos at Troy, where round you those others, the best of Trojans and
Achaeans were killed, fighting for your corpse, while you in all your greatness lay there in the dust, your horsemanship forgotten. All day long we fought, and would never have ceased, if Zeus had not stopped us with a mighty storm. After we carried you out of the ranks and back to the ships, we laid you on a bier and bathed your flesh with warm water and unguents. Many were the hot tears the Danaans shed over you, many the locks of your hair they cut.

And out of the sea came your mother, Thetis, on hearing the news, with her immortal nymphs, and a miraculous cry echoed over the deep, and made all the Achaeans tremble. Then they wanted to leap up and run to the hollow ships, but Nestor, a man wise in ancient wisdom, whose counsel had often prevailed, held them back. With good intentions he called to them, saying: ‘Stop, you Argives. Achaean youths stand fast! This is his mother come from the sea with her immortal nymphs to gaze on her dead son’s face.’
At his words the brave Achaeans checked their flight. The daughters of the Old Man of the Sea stood around your corpse lamenting bitterly. They wrapped your body in an imperishable shroud. And the nine Muses chanted your dirge, responding each to each in their sweet voices. There was not a single Argive to be seen without tears in his eyes, so moving was the clear song of the Muse. Immortal gods and mortal men, we mourned for you, seventeen days and nights, and on the eighteenth we delivered you to the flames, sacrificing herds of fatted sheep and spiral-horned cattle round you. You were burnt clothed as a god, drowned in unguents and sweet honey, and a host of Achaean heroes streamed past your pyre as you burned, warriors and charioteers, making a vast noise. And at dawn, Achilles, when Hephaestus’ fires had eaten you, we gathered up your whitened ash and bone, and steeped
them in oil and unmixed wine. Your mother gave us a gold two-handed urn, saying it was the gift of Dionysus, and crafted by far-famed Hephaestus himself. There your ashes lie, my glorious Achilles, mixed with the bones of the dead Patroclus, Menoetius’ son, but separated from those of Antilochus, who next to dead Patroclus you loved most among your comrades. And on a headland thrusting into the wide Hellespont we, the great host of Argive spearmen, heaped a vast flawless mound above them, so it might be seen far out to sea by men who live now and those to come.

Then you mother set out beautiful prizes she had begged from the gods, in the middle of the arena, to award to the best of the Achaeans. You were present yourself at the funeral games for royal heroes, when young men gird their loins and try to win the prizes, but even you would have wondered at the sight, such lovely prizes Thetis, the silver-footed goddess, set out in your honour: for you were the beloved of the gods. So your name was not lost, Achilles, in
death, and you will be famous indeed forever among men. As for me what pleasure should I take in having wound up the skein of war? When I returned, Zeus had planned a bitter end for me at the hands of Aegisthus and my accursed wife.’

Bk XXIV:98-204 Amphimedon’s ghost relates the fate of the Suitors

So they talked, while the messenger god, Hermes, slayer of Argus, approached, leading the ghosts of the Suitors Odysseus had killed down to Hades. Astonished at the sight, the two went straight towards them. The ghost of Agamemnon, Atreus’ son recognised noble Amphimedon, the brave son of Melaneus, who had played host to him at his home in Ithaca. The ghost of Atreus’ son was first to speak: ‘Amphimedon what disaster sends you all under the dark earth, choice men, and of an age? If one picked the best men from a city they would be like you. Did Poseidon raise cruel
winds and tall waves and overwhelm your ships? Or perhaps your enemies slew you when you tried to cut out their cattle and fine flocks, or when they fought to defend their towns and women? Tell me: I am a friend to your house, I swear. Surely you remember when I visited your home, I and godlike Menelaus, to urge Odysseus to sail with us in the oared ships to Ilium? A whole month it took us to cross the open sea, and a hard task it was to win Odysseus, sacker of cities, to our cause.’

The ghost of Amphimedon replied: ‘Agamemnon, son of Atreus, glorious king of men, I remember all of it, favourite of Zeus, as you say: and I will you tell truly how we came to a bitter end. We courted Odysseus’ wife, he being long away, and she would neither refuse the marriage she detested nor bring things to a conclusion, instead she planned a dark fate for us, and contrived a cunning scheme in her heart. She set up a great web on her loom in the palace, and began to weave a wide fabric with fine thread. She said this to us too: “My lords,
my Suitors, though Odysseus is dead and you are eager for me to marry, have patience till I complete this work, I do not want it wasted, this shroud for noble Laertes, ready for when pitiless death’s cruel end overtakes him: since I fear some Achaean woman of this land would blame me, if he who won great wealth lay there without a shroud.”

So she spoke, and though proud we agreed. Then day after day she wove the great web, but at night, by torchlight, she unmade it. So for three years she cunningly kept us Achaeans from knowing, and so tricked us. But when the fourth year began, as the seasons rolled by, and the months passed, and the endless days ran their course one of her women who was in the know told us all, and we caught her in the act of unravelling her weaving. So unwillingly she was forced to finish the web.

No sooner had she shown us the robe complete, woven and washed and gleaming like sun or moon, than some malign god brought Odysseus from wherever it might be to the
shore of the island where the swineherd lived. And divine Odysseus’ brave son landed there too from his black ship, on his return from sandy Pylos, and after plotting a cruel death for us Suitors they both made their way to Ithaca’s famous city, Telemachus first with Odysseus following later. The swineherd brought his master along, dressed in rags, looking the image of an old, wretched beggar, leaning on his staff. He was so miserably dressed that when he suddenly arrived none of us knew it was he, not even the elders. Quite the opposite: we pelted him with missiles and evil words. But he, with his brave heart, endured being pelted and mocked in his own palace, until at last aegis-bearing Zeus willed him to stir. He and Telemachus took all the fine weapons, piled them up in the storeroom and bolted the door. Then he cunningly told his wife to place his bow and the iron-ringened axes in front of the Suitors, and set a test for us ill-fated youths, that led to our deaths.
None of us could string the great bow: we fell far short of that. When the powerful weapon reached Odysseus, we all demanded it not be given into his hands, however much he desired it. Telemachus alone urged him on, telling him to take it. Then noble long-suffering Odysseus grasped it firmly, strung it easily, and fired an arrow through the iron rings. He moved to the threshold, and standing there, glowering fiercely, he poured out a stream of swift shafts, and so killed Lord Antinous. After that he let his well-aimed darts, death-dealers, fly at the rest of us, and men fell thick and fast. It was clear that some god was on their side: because, in a moment, they had charged through the hall in their fury, slaying men left and right. As they struck at our heads, a hideous groaning ensued, and the floor swam with blood.

So we died, Agamemnon, and our bodies still lie uncared-for in Odysseus’ great hall since the news has not yet reached our homes and summoned our friends to wash the black
blood from our wounds, and lay out our bodies, grieving as befits the dead.’

Then the ghost of Atreus’ son cried out: ‘Odysseus, son of Laertes, how resourceful, and how truly fortunate to have won so excellent a wife. What depth of wisdom there is in flawless Penelope, Icarius’ daughter! How faithfully she kept her husband’s image in her mind! So the glory of her excellence will not fade, instead the gods will create a song of delight for mortal ears, in honour of loyal Penelope. How different the ways of Clytaemnestra, Tyndareus’ daughter, plotting evil, murdering her husband. Her tale will be a hateful one to mankind, and she brought odium on her sex, even those of them who do right.’

So, these two spoke together: where they stood, in the House of Hades deep under the earth.

Bk XXIV:205-301 Odysseus finds Laertes
Now Odysseus and his comrades had left the town, and had soon come to Laertes’ rich and well-run farm, that he had won for himself with great effort long ago. The farmhouse was surrounded by buildings where the slaves who laboured for him sat and ate, and took their rest. A kind old Sicilian woman cared for the aged man, there on his farm far from the town.

Once there Odysseus said to his servants and son: ‘Go into the farmstead and kill the best pig you can find for our meal. Meanwhile I’ll go and see if my father recognises me on sight or not, since I’ve been so long away.’

With this he handed his armour to his men, and they went off to the farm, but Odysseus approached the fertile vineyard to test his father. As he went through the great orchard he failed to come across Dolius, his sons, or his slaves, since as it happened that led by the old man they had gone to gather stone for the vineyard wall. So he found his father alone in the well-tended vineyard, hoeing round a vine, and nursing his sorrows. He was dressed in a
wretched filthy patched tunic, with a pair of stitched ox-hide leggings strapped round his shins to avoid scratches, gloves on his hands to protect against thorns, and a goatskin cap on his head. When noble long-suffering Odysseus saw how old and worn and burdened with grief he looked, he halted under a tall pear-tree, tears in his eyes. He debated in heart and mind whether to clasp his father to him with kisses, and tell him the whole story of his return home, or whether to make trial of him with questions. On reflection he thought the latter was best, to try him with testing words. So with this in mind, noble Odysseus went straight up to him. His father had his head down, hoeing the vines, as his glorious son approached him, saying: ‘Old man, you show no lack of skill in your gardening: in fact you care for it all so well there’s nothing, fig, vine, olive, pear, no planted patch in the whole field that lacks attention. But don’t be offended if I say that you yourself are uncared for: you suffer a sad old age, unkempt and dressed in rags. It can’t be laziness that
makes your master neglect you, and you don’t look like a slave in form or manner. You seem more like royalty, like a man who when he has had his bath and dined, should sleep on a soft bed, as indeed old men should. But tell me this in truth, whose slave are you, and whose land do you tend? And tell me in truth as well whether this is really Ithaca I have reached, as someone I met on the way here said just now? He was somewhat obtuse, since he couldn’t bring himself to listen or give me a proper answer when I asked after a friend. I want to know if Odysseus is still alive, or has gone to Hades’ House.

I’ll ask you again, please listen and reflect. I once entertained a guest, in my own land, and never a far-travelled stranger was more welcome. He said that he was born in Ithaca: and that his father was Laertes, Arceisius’ son. So I took him to the house and treated him well and with kindness to the rich stores I had, giving him fitting tokens of friendship. There were seven talents of finely wrought gold, a
silver mixing bowl embossed with flowers, twelve singly-folded cloaks, and as many robes and tunics and coverlets, as well as four fine women skilled in perfect handiwork, whom he chose himself.’

‘Stranger,’ Laertes answered, weeping, ‘you have indeed reached the country you said, but it’s in the hands of wild and reckless men. You gave those countless gifts in vain, though if you had found him alive in Ithaca he would have entertained you equally with good cheer, and sent you onwards with ample gifts, as is due in return for a kindness first offered. But tell me truly how long ago you entertained my son, that unlucky guest – if indeed he can ever have existed – my poor son, whom the deep-sea fish have eaten, or who has become a prey to birds and beasts on some far-flung shore. I and his mother who bore him had no chance to wrap him in his shroud and lament for him. Nor was his wife, faithful Penelope, whom he wooed with many a gift, allowed to weep for her
husband on his bier after closing his eyes, though that is owed the dead.

Tell me though, truly, about yourself, so I may know who you are, and where you hail from. Where is your city, and who are your parents? Where is the swift ship moored that brought you and your godlike comrades here? Or were you a passenger on board, and did it sail on when you had landed?’

Bk XXIV:302-355 Odysseus makes himself known to Laertes

Resourceful Odysseus replied: ‘I will tell you all, quite openly. I hail from Alybas, and my House is famous. I am the son of Apheidas, Lord Polypemon’s son, and I am called Eperitus. A god drove me here, from Sicania, against my wishes, and my ship is anchored opposite the fields some way from the town. As for Odysseus, it is five years since that ill-fated man left my country. Though when he left the omens were good, birds flying from the right. I
was glad to see them at parting, and he too, as he boarded ship, and our hearts were full, hoping to meet again as guest and host, and exchange glorious gifts.’

So he spoke, and Laertes was enveloped by a dark cloud of sorrow. Groaning heavily, he filled his hands with black dust and poured it over his grey head. Then Odysseus’ heart was deeply moved, and gazing at his dear father pain filled his nostrils. He rushed forward, caught him in his arms, and kissed him, saying: ‘Father, it is I. I am the man you asked about, home in my ancestral land in the twentieth year. No more sorrow, no more tears of grief. I have things to tell you, and there is little time. I have killed every Suitor in the palace, in revenge for their crimes and their outrageous insults.’

‘If you are indeed Odysseus, my son, Laertes replied, ‘give me some proof of it that will convince me.’

‘See this scar first,’ resourceful Odysseus answered, ‘dealt by the white tusk of a wild boar when I hunted on Parnassus. You and my
dear mother had sent me to her father Autolycus to secure the gifts he had promised when he came to visit us. And then, I can list the trees in our fine garden you once gave me. I was just a child and I followed you through the orchard asking about this and that. As we walked through these very trees you named them and told me about each kind. Thirteen pear trees you gave me, ten apple-trees and forty figs. And you promised me fifty rows of vines, ripening at intervals, weighed down by the various bunches of grapes in Zeus’ season.’

At this, Laertes knees grew weak, and his heart melted, knowing the true tokens Odysseus offered. He flung his arms round his dear son’s neck, and noble long-suffering Odysseus caught him as he fainted. When life and consciousness returned he spoke to his son, saying: ‘Truly, Father Zeus, if the Suitors have paid the price for their wanton damage, you gods have power still on high Olympus. But I fear greatly that the men of Ithaca will soon be upon us. They will
send for help to all the towns of Cephalenia too.’

Bk XXIV:356-411 Dolius recognises Odysseus

‘Take courage,’ resourceful Odysseus answered, ‘and don’t let that distress you. Let’s go through the orchard to the farmhouse, since I sent Telemachus and the cowherd and swineherd there, to prepare food for us all as quickly as possible.’

So they spoke and walked to the fine farmhouse, where they found Telemachus and the cowherd and swineherd carving meat, and mixing the glowing wine.

There, great-hearted Laertes was bathed by his Sicilian maid, and rubbed with oil, and she wrapped him in a fine cloak. Then Athene approached and filled out his limbs, and made the shepherd of his people look taller and stronger. He came from the bath and his dear son wondered at his godlike appearance, and he
spoke to him winged words: ‘Father, surely an immortal god has made you seem taller and more handsome.’

Wise Laertes replied: ‘By Father Zeus, Athene and Apollo, I wish I’d been standing by your side yesterday in the palace, armour on my back, and driven off the Suitors with the strength I had when I ruled the Cephallenians and captured Nericus that great citadel on the mainland coast. I’d have loosened their knees, then, in the hall, and gladdened your heart!’

So they talked, while the others finished their work of preparing a meal. Then they sat round on chairs and stools, helping themselves to the food, when old Dolius and his sons arrived, tired from their labour in the fields. The old Sicilian woman, their mother, had gone to call them, she who made their meals and looked after the old man in her kindness, now old age had gripped him. When they saw Odysseus, they recognised him, and stood there lost in wonder. But Odysseus spoke to them pleasantly, saying: ‘Sit down to dinner old man,
all of you, and stop looking so amazed. We’ve been waiting for you to arrive for ages, despite our desire to eat.’

At this, Dolius rushed towards him with open arms, grasped Odysseus’ hand, kissing him on the wrist, and his words had wings: ‘Dear master, you return to us. We longed for you, but never thought to see you again. Welcome to you, greetings: the gods themselves have brought you back, and may they grant you joy. But tell me this, for certain, does wise Penelope know you are home, or shall we send to tell her?’

‘Old man,’ said resourceful Odysseus, ‘she knows already, you need not trouble. At this, Dolius sat down on a polished bench, while his sons crowded round glorious Odysseus, greeting him and grasping his hands. Then they too sat down next to their father.

Bk XXIV:412-462 The Ithacans gather
While they were busy eating, Rumour, the messenger, flew through the town with news of the Suitors’ dreadful fate. Wailing and grieving the people gathered in front of Odysseus’ palace, as soon as they heard. They brought out their dead, and carried them away for burial. Those who had been from foreign parts they sent home on swift ships with a full crew then they made their way to the meeting-place. When all had gathered, Eupeithes rose, and spoke, his heart heavy with inconsolable sorrow for his own son, Antinous, the first to die at noble Odysseus’ hands. With tears in his eyes he addressed the assembly: ‘Friends, this man has done terrible things to us Achaeans. He took many brave men with him aboard his ships, and lost every vessel and their men. Now he has killed more, among them the best of the Cephallenians. Come, let us act, before he runs for Pylos or noble Elis, where the Epeians rule, or we will be ashamed forever. Unless we avenge the deaths of our brothers and sons, we shall be disgraced in the eyes of posterity. I
would take no delight in being alive: I would rather end it at once, and go to join the dead. Let us make a move before they flee overseas.’

He spoke and wept, and the Achaean pitied him. Then Medon and the divine bard appeared, having just woken in Odysseus’ Palace. All wondered as they took their stand in the centre. Medon, the wise, spoke, saying: ‘Hear me, men of Ithaca. Odysseus has not worked all this without the immortal gods willing it. I saw a deathless one stand at Odysseus’ side, in the very likeness of Mentor. Now the divine one went before him, now raged through the hall, terrifying the Suitors while they fell thick and fast.’

At his words they all grew pale with fear. Then the old hero Halitherses, Mastor’s son, who alone saw past and future, addressed them with good intent, saying: ‘Listen now, Ithacans, to my words. These things have happened through your own reluctant. You wouldn’t listen to me or Mentor, he an elder of the people, and put a stop to your sons’ foolishness.
Claiming he would not return, they wasted the king’s goods, and failed to honour his wife, a disgrace brought about by blind and sinful recklessness. Now listen to what I say and act accordingly. Let us make no move, in case we bring disaster on ourselves.’

Bk XXIV:463-501 Athene questions Zeus

When he had finished speaking some remained in their seats, but the majority rose with loud cries, and rushed for their weapons, rejecting his speech, persuaded by Eupeithes. When they had donned the gleaming bronze, they gathered in a crowd in front of the spacious town. Eupeithes foolishly led them, thinking to avenge his son’s death, but he was doomed himself not to return alive.

Now Athene spoke to Zeus, son of Cronos, saying: ‘Son of Cronos, Father of us all, lord of lords, tell me, I beg you, what is your secret intent? Will you encourage vile war and the
terrible din of battle, or will you make peace between these two opponents?’

And Zeus the Cloud-Gatherer replied: ‘My child, why ask me? Wasn’t it you who invented this plan, for Odysseus to exact vengeance when he returned? Do as you wish, but I will tell you what is right. Now noble Odysseus has exacted revenge, let them swear a solemn oath that he shall be king till he dies, and let us help the memory of their sons’ and brothers’ deaths to fade. Let them love one another as before, and let peace and plenty hold sway.’ And his words spurred the eager Athene to swoop down from the heights of Olympus.

Meanwhile noble long-suffering Odysseus began to speak, now they had sated themselves with the pleasant meal, saying: ‘Someone should go and find out if they are closing in on us.’

At this command, one of Dolius’ sons went out, and standing on the threshold he saw them nearby, and spoke winged words to Odysseus: ‘Quick, to arms, they are here already.’
They rose at his words and donned their armour. Odysseus and his comrades made four, and the sons of Dolius were six, and Laertes and Dolius wore their armour too, forced to fight despite their grey hairs. When they had all protected their bodies with gleaming bronze they opened the doors and ran out, Odysseus in the lead.

Bk XXIV:502-548 Athene brings peace

Now Athene, Zeus’ daughter, approached them, in the form and with the voice of Mentor, and noble long-suffering Odysseus was overjoyed to see her, and spoke instantly to his brave son Telemachus: ‘Telemachus, now you have come to a place where the battle shows who is bravest do not disgrace your ancestors’ house. We have always been first in strength and courage.’

‘Dear father,’ wise Telemachus replied, ‘in the mood I am in, you shall see me, as you say and wish, bring no disgrace to our lineage.’ So he declared, and Laertes was pleased, and said:
‘What a day this is for me, dear gods! I am all joy to see my son and grandson argue as to who is bravest.’

Then bright-eyed Athene approached him, saying: ‘Son of Arceisius, dearest of all my friends, pray to the bright-eyed maiden and Father Zeus, then raise high your long spear as you finish, and throw hard.’ With this, while he prayed to the daughter of Zeus, she breathed great power into him. He raised his long spear high as he finished and threw, striking Eupeithes on the bronze-guarded helmet. The spear was not deflected, however, and travelled right through. Eupeithes fell with a thud and a clang of armour. Then Odysseus and his glorious son attacked the leading men, thrusting at them with their swords and double-edged spear-blades. They would have killed the lot, and ended their hopes of returning home, if Athene, Zeus’ aegis-bearing daughter, had not shouted loudly, and restrained the combatants, crying: ‘Men of Ithaca, cease your fight, so that
you may part without shedding each others’ blood.’

They grew pale with fear at Athene’s call. The weapons flew from their hands in their terror, and fell to the ground, as they turned towards the town, eager to save their lives, eager to fly from the voice of the goddess. Then noble long-suffering Odysseus gave a chilling cry, and gathering himself he swooped on them, like an eagle from the heights, just as Zeus, son of Cronos, let fly a gleaming lightning bolt that fell at the feet of the bright-eyed daughter of that mighty Father. And bright-eyed Athene said to Odysseus: ‘Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of Laertes hold back your hand and stop this warring among you, lest Zeus the Thunderer grows angry.’

Odysseus obeyed Athene’s words, delighted at heart. Then Pallas Athene, Zeus’ aegis-bearing daughter, in the form and with the voice of Mentor, forged a solemn truce between the warring sides.
The End of the Odyssey
The Index

Acastus
King of Dulichium.
Bk XIV:293-359 Mentioned.

Achaea
A name for the Greek mainland, derived from a region in the northern Peloponnese. Hence the Achaeans, for the name of the people who fought against Troy in Homer’s Iliad.
Bk XXIV:98-204 The women of Achaea.
Bk XII:165-200 Odysseus is the glory of the Achaeans.
Bk XV:271-300 Argos and its territory is within Achaea.
Achaeans
The inhabitants of Achaea. The Greeks generally. (Historically of unknown origin they appeared in the Peloponnese in the 12th and 13th centuries BC, and became the ruling class circa 1250.)

Bk I:44-95  Bk I:252-305  Bk I:365-420  Bk II:1-34  Bk II:85-128
Bk II:177-223  Bk II:260-295  Bk II:296-336  Bk IV:795-847
Bk XI:150-224  Bk XVI:60-111  Bk XVI:321-39
Bk XVII:396-461
Bk XVIII:284-339  Bk XIX:220-307  Bk XIX:508-553
Bk XX:1-55  Bk XX:120-171  Bk XX:172-239
Bk XX:240-298
The inhabitants and rulers of Ithaca and its neighbourhood. Described as ‘long-haired’ The Suitors included.


The Greeks at Troy. They are described as ‘bronze-clad’, ‘well-greaved’.

Bk I:325-364  Bk IV:464-511

Their troubled return from Troy.

Bk III:404-463  Nestor is a Warden of the Achaeans.

Bk XI:465-540  Achilles  the greatest of the Achaean warriors.
Bk XIX:164-219  There are Achaeans living on Crete.
Bk XXIV:412-462  Eupeithes argues that Odysseus has harmed the Achaeans.

Acheron
Bk X:503-574  A river of Hades.

Achilles
The Greek hero of the Trojan War. The son of Peleus, king of Thessaly, and the sea-goddess Thetis (See Homer’s Iliad).
Bk III:102-147  He led the Greeks in plundering cities on their journey to Troy, and was killed by Paris at Troy.
Bk III:148-200  His troops the Myrmidons.
Bk IV:1-58  His son Neoptolemus (Pyrrhus).
Bk V:262-312  Odysseus and the Greeks fought for his corpse at Troy, after he had been killed by Paris.
Bk VIII:62-103 His quarrel with Odysseus at a feast.
Bk XI:465-540 His ghost appears to Odysseus.
Bk XI:541-592 Ajax and Odysseus contested in debate for the arms of Achilles.
Bk XXIV:1-56 His ghost in Hades.
Bk XXIV:57-97 Agamemnon describes Achilles’ funeral.

Acroneos
A Phaeacian.
Bk VIII:104-151 He competes in the Games.

Actoris
A maidservant of Penelope.
Bk XXIII:205-246 She knew the secret of Odysseus’ marriage-bed.

Adreste
A maidservant of Helen.
Bk IV:113-154 Mentioned.

Aeacus
The son of Zeus and Aegina, grandson of Asopus, the river-god of the north-eastern Peloponnese. He named his island in the Saronic gulf Aegina after his mother. The father of Peleus and grandfather of Achilles. The father of Telamon, and grandfather of Ajax. Bk XI:465-540 Achilles was his grandson.

Aeaea
The ‘island’ home of Circe. Cape Circeo the headland at the northern end of the Gulf of Gaeta on the western coast of Italy, once separated by marshes from the mainland. Bk IX:1-62 Bk XII:260-319 Circe’s island. Bk X:133-197 Odysseus and his crew reach the island. Bk XI:51-89 Odysseus is destined to return there after his visit to Hades. Bk XII:1-35 Odysseus returns to the island.

Aeetes
King of Colchis, brother to Circe (and father of Medea).
Bk X:133-197 He and his sister are children of the Sun.
Bk XII:36-110 Jason fled from his court after winning the Golden Fleece.

Aegae
The city of Euboea on the Euboean Gulf, sacred to Poseidon.
Bk V:313-387 Poseidon’s underwater palace there.

Aegisthus
The lover of Clytemnestra who murdered her husband King Agamemnon on his return from Troy. He was the son of Thyestes, and carried on the blood-feud between Thyestes and Atreus the sons of Pelops.
Bk I:22-43 An example of hubris, having been warned by the gods not to commit his fatal deeds.
Bk I:252-305 Bk III:148-200 Bk III:201-252 Bk III:253-312
The murderer of Agamemnon, subsequently killed in revenge by Orestes.

Aegyptus
The River Nile in Egypt.

Menelaus is forced to return there before he can sail home.

Aegyptius
An aged Ithacan noble, the father of Eurynomus and Antiphus.

He opens the assembly.

Aedon
The daughter of Pandareus, wife of Zethus, and mother of Itylus. In an alternative myth to the Procne-Tereus story, Aedon envied her sister Niobe her twelve children and killed her own son Itylus in error while trying to murder the eldest Sipylus. Zeus transformed her into the nightingale, who in early summer, mourns her murdered child.
Bk XIX:508-553 Her quivering song with its intricate trills.

Aeolia
The island of *Aeolus*, king of the winds. (For a discussion of the various claims of Ustica or islands of the Lipari group to be the island, see Ernle Bradford’s ‘Ulysses Found’ Chapter 9.)

Bk X:1-55 *Odysseus* and his ships land there.

Aeolus (1)
King of the winds.
Bk X:1-55 He gives *Odysseus* gifts, including the winds in a bag.
Bk X:56-102 He sends Odysseus away on his return.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale.

Aeolus (2)
King of Thessaly, and father of *Sisyphus* (so reputedly the grandfather of *Odysseus*), and *Cretheus*.
Bk XI:225-332 Mentioned.
Aeson
Son of Cretheus and Tyro. His throne was usurped by his half-brother Pelias, who imprisoned him. The father of Jason, the Argonaut.
Bk XI:225-332 Mentioned.

Aethon
A fictitious name assumed by Odysseus.
Bk XIX:164-219 Supposedly a son of Deucalion.

Aetolia
A region in central Greece.
Bk XIV:360-408 Eumaeus mentions an Aetolian visitor.

Agamemnon
The king of Mycenae, son of Atreus, brother of Menelaüs, husband of Clytaemnestra, father of Orestes, Iphigenia, and Electra. The leader of
the Greek army in the Trojan War. See Homer’s Iliad, and Aeschylus’s Oresteian tragedies.

Bk IV:512-547 Murdered by Aegisthus, and avenged by his own son Orestes.

Bk III:102-147 Quarrelled with Menelaus, wishing to delay the return after Troy and propitiate Athene.

Bk IV:548-592 Menelaus having learnt of his death from Proteus builds a mound for him in Egypt.

Bk VIII:62-103 His visit to Apollo’s oracle at Pytho, which prophesied the defeat of Troy after a quarrel of the finest among the Greeks. Agamemnon mistook the quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus as a fulfilment of the prophecy that was actually fulfilled by his own quarrel with Achilles.

Bk IX:256-306 Bk XIV:48-108 His fame as the conqueror of Troy.
The leader whom Odysseus followed to Troy.

His ghost appears to Odysseus.

Odysseus is glad to escape Agamemnon’s fate.

His ghost in Hades celebrates Achilles.

His ghost in Hades hears the fate of the Suitors.

Agelaus

A Suitor, the son of Damastor.

He offers placatory words.

He suggests the alarm should be raised outside.

He rebukes Mentor (the disguised Athene).

Wounded by Odysseus.

Odysseus uses his abandoned sword.

Ajax (1)
Ajax the Greater, a hero of the Trojan War, the son of Telamon and grandson of Aeacus.  
**Bk III:102-147** He is described as ‘beloved of Ares’. He committed suicide at Troy after not being awarded the arms of Achilles.  
**Bk XI:465-540**  
**Bk XXIV:1-56** His ghost accompanies Achilles’ ghost in the Underworld.  
**Bk XI:541-592** Odysseus speaks with his ghost.

Ajax (2)  
Ajax the Lesser, a warrior at Troy, the son of Oileus. He raped Cassandra in Athene’s temple at Troy, and incurred the goddess’ enmity.  
**Bk IV:464-511** Poseidon wrecked him at Gyrae, and he was drowned.

Alcandre  
A lady of Thebes in Egypt. The wife of Polybus.  
**Bk IV:113-154** Her gifts to Helen.

Alcimus
The father of Mentor.
Bk XXII:200-240 Mentioned.

Alcinous
The king of the Phaeacians, and son of Nausithous, husband of Arete, and father of Nausicaa.
Bk VI:1-47 Bk XIII:53-95 Present king of the Phaeacians.
Bk VI:48-109 Nausicaa seeks him out in the palace.
Bk VII:1-77 Honours his wife Arete. Eurymedusa was given to him as a spoil of war.
Bk VII:78-132 His palace and gardens.
Bk VII:133-181 Bk VII:182-239 His hospitality to Odysseus, the unknown stranger.
Bk VIII:62-103 Bk VIII:521-585 He is aware of Odysseus’ tearful reaction to the tale of Troy.
Bk VIII:104-151  His sons, Laodamas, Halius, Clytoneus.
Bk VIII:199-255  Bk VIII:256-366  He praises his people’s skills and summons the bard. Note that the fifty-two youths chosen, and Alcinous’ later comment that he is the thirteenth of the princes who rule the country, suggests that he is a solar king, like Heracles.
Bk VIII:469-520  Odysseus sits next to him, to listen to the bard.
Bk IX:1-62  Odysseus replies to his questions.
Bk XI:333-384  He asks Odysseus to continue his narration.
Bk XIII:159-215  He recalls his father’s prophecy.

Alcippe
A maidservant of Helen.
Bk IV:113-154  Mentioned.

Alcmaeon
A son of **Amphiaraus**.
**Bk XV:222-270** Mentioned.

Alcmene
The daughter of Electryon of **Mycenae**, and mother by **Zeus** of **Heracles** (Hercules).
**Bk II:85-128** A famous woman of early Greece.
**Bk XI:225-332** The wife of **Amphitryon**. She was seduced by Zeus who extended the length of one night to three in order to make love to her. Her ghost appears to Odysseus.

Alector
A **Spartan**.
**Bk IV:1-58** His daughter married **Megapenthes**.

Aloeus
King of Boeotian Asopia.
**Bk XI:225-332** The husband of **Iphimedeia**.

Alpheius
The river and river-god of Elis. Father of **Ortilochus**, and grandfather of **Diocles**.
Bk III:464-497  Bk XV:183-221 MENTIONED.

Alybas
An unknown city.
Bk XXIV:302-355  Odysseus pretends to hail from there.

Amnisus
The harbour of Cnossus on Crete. A Minoan settlement has been excavated on the eastern slope of the hills.
Bk XIX:164-219  Odysseus supposedly landed there on his way to Troy.

Amphialus
A Phaeacian.
Bk VIII:104-151  He competes in the Games, and wins the long-jump.

Amphiaraus
The seer, husband of Eriphyle. The grandfather of Theoclymenus.
He was killed in the war of the Seven against Thebes, struck by a lightning bolt of Zeus’ so that he vanished with his chariot and horses into Hades, where he reigns, alive, among the dead.

Amphilochus
A son of Amphiaraus.
Bk XV:222-270 Mentioned.

Amphimedon
A Suitor.
Bk XXII:241-309 Killed by Telemachus.
Bk XXIV:98-204 He relates the fate of the Suitors, in Hades.

Amphinomus
Leader of the Suitors from Dulichium. The son of Nisus.
Bk XVI:321-39 He sees the Suitors’ ship returning.
Bk XVI:393-451 He suggests they consult the oracle regarding the killing of Telemachus.
Bk XVIII:117-157 Odysseus warns him of trouble to come. But Athene has already marked him out for death.
Bk XVIII:394-428 Bk XX:240-298 He quietens the Suitors.
Bk XXII:68-115 Killed by Telemachus.

Amphion (1)
The son of Zeus and Antiope, who founded lower Thebes.
Bk XI:225-332 Brother of Zethus. Amphion lifted the blocks of stone that built the walls of Thebes with the music of his lyre.

Amphion (2)
King of Orchomenus. Son of Iasus.
Bk XI:225-332 The father of Chloris.

Amphithea, Ampithee
The wife of Autolycus and mother of Anticleia.
Bk XIX:361-47 The grandmother of Odysseus.

Amphitrite
A sea-goddess, the daughter of Nereus and wife of Poseidon. She was the Nereid whom Poseidon married, here representing the sea. He had courted Thetis another of the Nereids but desisted when it was prophesied that any son born to her would be greater than his father. Thetis bore Achilles. 

Bk III:51-101  The sea, hence blue or green-eyed.

Bk V:388-450  Bk XII:36-110  She breeds the monsters of the deep.

Amphitryon
King of Troezen, husband of Alcmene. He was banished and fled to Thebes. 

Bk XI:225-332  Cuckolded by Zeus.

Amythaon
Son of Cretheus and Tyro. 

Bk XI:225-332  Mentioned.

Anabesineos
A Phaeacian.
**Bk VIII:104-151** He competes in the Games.

Anchialus (1)
The father of **Mentes**.
**Bk I:156-212**  **Bk I:365-420** Mentioned.

Anchialus (2)
A Phaeacian.
**Bk VIII:104-151** He competes in the Games.

Andraemon
The father of **Thoas**.
**Bk XIV:457-506** Mentioned.

Andromache
The wife of Hector.
**Bk XI:465-540** She was claimed by **Neoptolemus** after the sack of **Troy**.

Anticleia
The mother of **Odysseus**, and wife of **Laertes**.
**Bk XI:51-89** Her ghost appears to Odysseus.
Her ghost cannot know or speak to him until he allows it to approach the blood in the trench he has dug.

Odysseus speaks to her ghost.

Eumaeus speaks about her.

She was the daughter of Autolycus.

Anticlus
A Greek warrior inside the Wooden Horse at Troy.

Odysseus restrained him from speaking.

Antilochus
The son of Nestor. Achilles’ favourite after Patroclus he was killed by Memnon at Troy.

Remembered by his father.

Mourned by his brother Peisistratus.

His ghost accompanies Achilles’ ghost in the Underworld.
Bk XXIV:57-97 His ashes are not mixed with those of Achilles.

Antinous
‘Anti-mind’, the son of Eupeithes, and one of the leading Suitors.
Bk I:365-420 He hopes Telemachus will never be king of Ithaca.
Bk II:35-84 He alone replies to Telemachus’ case against them.
Bk II:129-176 Telemachus rejects Antinous’ argument.
Bk II:296-336 Antinous tries to placate Telemachus.
Bk IV:625-674 Bk IV:767-794 He plots to waylay Telemachus.
Bk XVI:321-39 He suggests further alternative actions.
Bk XVI:393-451 Penelope rebukes him.
Bk XVII:328-395 He attacks Eumaeus verbally.
Bk XVII:396-461 He refuses to give alms to Odysseus.
Bk XVII:462-504 He hurls a stool at Odysseus.
Bk XVIII:1-49  Bk XVIII:50-116  He incites Irus and Odysseus to fight.
Bk XVIII:117-157  He rewards the winner, Odysseus.
Bk XVIII:284-339  His gift to Penelope.
Bk XX:240-298  He speaks against Telemachus.
Bk XXI:80-135  He anticipates the difficult of stringing Odysseus’ bow. He will be the first of the Suitors to die.
Bk XXI:136-185  He rebukes Leodes.
Bk XXI:186-244  He continues the contest to draw the bow.
Bk XXI:245-310  He rebukes Odysseus.
Bk XXI:311-358  Penelope rebukes him.
Bk XXIV:412-462  His father urges revenge for his death.

Antiope
The daughter of the River Asopus.
Bk XI:225-332 Raped by Zeus she gave birth to Amphion and Zethus the founders of lower Thebes. Her ghost appears to Odysseus.

Antiphates (1)
The chief of the Laestrygonians, a cannibal race.
Bk X:103-132 He attacks Odysseus’ men.
Bk X:198-250 Odysseus’ men remember his savagery.

Antiphates (2)
The son of Melampus and father of Oicles.
Bk XV:222-270 Mentioned.

Antiphus (1)
The son of Aegyptius, who sailed with Odysseus to Troy.
Bk II:1-34 He was eaten by the Cyclops.

Antiphus (2)
An Ithacan elder.
Bk XVII:61-106 Telemachus recognises him as an old friend of Odysseus.

Aperaea
Location unknown.
Bk VII:1-77 Native place of Eurymedusa.

Apheidas
Bk XXIV:302-355 The name assumed by Odysseus for his fictitious (?) father.

Aphrodite
The divine daughter of Zeus, and wife of Hephaestus. The Goddess of Love, noted for her beauty.
Bk IV:1-58 Hermione has her beauty.
Bk IV:220-289 Helen blames Aphrodite for blinding her with desire for Paris.
Bk VIII:256-366 Called Aphrodite of the lovely crown. The bard sings her adulterous love for Ares. Paphos on Cyprus was sacred to her, and contained a famous sanctuary of her worship.
Penelope’s beauty compared to hers.

She fed the daughters of Pandareus.

The goddess of sexuality and illicit love.

Apollo

Phoebus Apollo, son of Zeus and Latona (Leto), brother of Artemis, born on Delos. God of poetry, art, medicine, prophecy, and of the sun. (See the Apollo Belvedere, sculpted by Leochares?, Vatican: the Piombino Apollo, Paris Louvre: the Tiber Apollo, Rome, National Museum of the Terme: the fountain sculpture by Tuby at Versailles – The Chariot of Apollo: and the sculpture by Girardon and Regnaudin at Versailles – Apollo Tended by the Nymphs – derived from the Apollo Belvedere, and once part of the now demolished Grotto of Thetis)

The God of the Silver Bow. Killed Menelaus’ steersman, Phrontis, among others with his arrows
(possibly a euphemism for heart failure). His arrows are said to be gentle, painless.  
**Bk IV:290-350  Bk XVII:107-165**  Menelaus swears by him.  
**Bk VI:149-197**  His altar in **Delos**.  
**Bk VII:1-77**  His arrow killed **Rhexenor**.  
**Bk VII:298-347**  **Alcinous** invokes him.  
**Bk VIII:62-103**  His oracle at **Pytho** visited by **Agamemnon**.  
**Bk VIII:199-255**  He killed **Eurytus** in anger.  
**Bk VIII:256-366**  He who strikes from afar (the ‘Far-Darter’).  He jokes with **Hermes** about **Ares’** and **Aphrodite’**s predicament.  
**Bk VIII:469-520**  He inspires bards, as a god of music and poetry.  
**Bk IX:193-255**  **Maron** was his priest at **Ismarus** indicating his worship by the Thracian **Cicones**. A mountain in Thessaly in Northern Greece.  
**Bk XI:225-332**  His arrows killed **Ephialtes** and **Otus**.  
**Bk XV:222-270**  He favoured **Amphiaraus**, and made **Polypheides** his priest.  
**Bk XV:493-557**  The hawk is his messenger.
Bk XVII:204-253 Melanthius invokes him, impiously.
Bk XVII:462-504 Penelope invokes him against Antinous.
Bk XVIII:206-283 Telemachus invokes him.
Bk XX:240-298 The Ithacans gather in his sacred grove.
Bk XXI:245-310 Antinous suggests it is unwise to attempt to string the great bow on the Archer’s holy day.
Bk XXI:311-358 He can bring a man glory with the bow.
Bk XXI:359-403 The Suitors invoke him.
Bk XXIV:356-411 Invoked by Laertes.

Arceisius
Son of Zeus, and father of Laertes.
Bk XIV:165-234 His race will die out on Ithaca if Odysseus and Telemachus are both lost.
Laertes was his only son.

Ares
The god of war, son of Zeus and Hera.

Ajax the Greater as a mighty warrior is ‘beloved of Ares’.

Diomedes, the warrior, is also ‘beloved of Ares’.

Euryalus compared with him.

Called Ares of the Golden Reins. The bard sings of his love for Aphrodite. Thrace was sacred to him.

Odysseus looked like him during the sack of Troy.

The confusion of battle is caused by him.

He grants courage in battle.

Arete
The wife of Alcinous and mother of Nausicaa.

Nausicaa seeks her out in the palace.
Bk VII:1-77  The only daughter of Rhexenor. Honoured by Alcinous her husband. Respected for her wisdom.

Bk VII:133-181  Odysseus clasps her knees, as a supplicant.

Bk VII:182-239  She questions Odysseus.


Bk XIII:53-95  Odysseus takes leave of her.

Arethusa
A Naiad, traditionally one of the naiads of Tempe.

Bk XIII:366-415  A spring named for her on Ithaca.

Aretias
The father of Nisus, and grandfather of Amphinomus.


Aretus
A son of Nestor.  
**Bk III:404-463** He helps his father with the sacrifice.

Argives
The inhabitants of Argos (especially of Sparta and Mycenae) in the Peloponnese, but extended to cover all the Greeks who sailed for Troy.  
**Bk I:44-95**  
**Bk I:156-212**  
**Bk II:129-176**  
**Bk III:102-147**  
**Bk III:356-403**  
**Bk IV:155-219**  
**Bk IV:220-289**  
**Bk VIII:469-520**  
**Bk VIII:521-585**  
**Bk X:1-55**  
**Bk XI:333-384**  
**Bk XI:465-540**  
**Bk XI:541-592**  
**Bk XII:165-200**  
**Bk XVIII:206-283**  
**Bk XIX:100-163**  
**Bk XXIV:1-56**  
**Bk XXIV:57-97**  
The Greeks at Troy.  
**Bk III:253-312** The inhabitants of Argos called to the funeral feast of Aegisthus.  
**Bk IV:290-350**  
**Bk XVII:107-165**  
**Bk XXIII:205-246** Helen is an Argive.

Argo
The ship of Jason and the Argonauts. The first ocean-going vessel.  
**Bk XII:36-110** Jason fled from the court of King **Aeetes** in the ship.

**Argos**
The city and district in the north-west Peloponnese, or a general term for southern Greece. **Agamemnon** was king of the region.  
**Bk III:148-200 Diomedes** returns home there.  
**Bk III:201-252** Described as ‘Achaean’.  
**Menelaus** was not in Argos when Agamemnon was murdered.  
**Bk III:253-312 Bk IV:59-112** Famed for its horse-pastures.  
**Bk IV:155-219** Menelaus intended to give Odysseus a city near to him.  
**Bk IV:548-592** Menelaus will not meet his end in the Argolis.  
**Bk XV:56-119** Menelaus offers to show **Telemachus** the Peloponnese.
Theoclymenus is fleeing from Argos. Melampus went to live there.
Theoclymenus is being pursued for killing a man there.
Described as Iasian.
A major city of Achaea, noted for its women.
Where Agamemnon was murdered.

Argus
The many-eyed monster that guarded Io, whom Hera had changed into a heifer. Hermes lulled him to sleep and then killed him. Also the name given to Odysseus’ guard dog.
The monster killed by Hermes.
The name of Odysseus’ old hound, that dies after seeing him once more.
Ariadne

Arnaeus, see Irus

Artacia

Artemis
Bk VI:149-197 Nausicaa’s beauty compared to hers.
Bk XI:150-224 Bk XV:403-492 She kills mortals with her bow, and her ‘gentle’ arrows. (Possibly a euphemism for heart-failure.)
Bk XI:225-332 She killed Ariadne on Dia.
Bk XVII:1-60 Bk XIX:53-99 Penelope’s beauty compared to hers.
Bk XX:56-119 Penelope prays to her. She once blessed the daughters of Pandareus.

Arybas
A rich merchant of Sidon.
Bk XV:403-492 Father of the Phoenician woman in Eumaeus’ story.

Asopus
The river and river-god of the north-eastern Peloponnese.
Bk XI:225-332 The father of Antiope.

Asphalion
A squire of Menelaus.
Bk IV:155-219 Mentioned.

Asteris
An island between Ithaca and Samos. (probably the modern Daskalio in the channel between Ithaca and Cephallonia, see Ernle Bradford ‘Ulysses Found’ Appendix II.)

Bk IV:795-847 The Suitors plan to ambush Telemachus there.

Astyoche
The mother of Eurypylus. Priam offered her a golden vine for her son’s allegiance, and betrothed him to Cassandra.

Bk XI:465-540 Her greed for gain, caused her son’s death.

Athene
The virgin goddess of Mind, the Arts, and War. The daughter of Zeus. The patroness of Athens, and protectress of Odysseus. Plato identified her with the Libyan Goddess, Neith.
She persuades Zeus to allow Odysseus to return home, and proposes to visit his son Telemachus on Ithaca and send him for news of his father.

She visits Telemachus on Ithaca disguised as Mentes.

She prophesies Odysseus’ survival.

She questions Telemachus.

She suggests Telemachus seeks news of his father.

She inspires Telemachus with courage and then departs like a bird.

Athene made the return from Troy difficult for the Greeks. She closes Penelope’s eyes in sleep, as protectress of Odysseus and his family.

She endows Telemachus with grace.

She has endowed Penelope with exceptional mental powers.
Bk II:260-295  Bk II:296-336 Disguised as Mentor she offers to prepare a ship for Telemachus.
Bk II:382-434 Disguised as Telemachus she prepares the ship and crew, then, disguised as Mentor, she sets sail with Telemachus.
Bk III:1-50  On reaching Pylos she advises Telemachus to approach Nestor directly. She is described with Zeus as a wearer of the aegis, a protective sacred ‘goatskin’ breastplate.
Bk III:51-101 As Mentor, she purports to pray to Poseidon, fulfilling the prayer herself.
Bk III:102-147 Bk V:92-147 Angered with the Greeks after the sack of Troy. (See Cassandra)
Bk III:201-252 As Mentor she rebukes Telemachus.
Bk III:313-355 As Mentor she advises Telemachus to accept Nestor’s offer of hospitality.
Bk III:356-403 She flies off in the likeness of a sea-eagle. (*Haliaeetus albicilla* the white-tailed sea eagle or *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*, Pallas’s sea eagle, now found further east than Greece.)
Nestor prays to her. She was born (as Neith) beside Lake Tritonis in Libya.

**Bk III:404-463** Nestor sacrifices to her.

**Bk IV:220-289** She led Helen away from the Greeks concealed inside the Wooden Horse, to preserve the secret.

**Bk IV:290-350** Menelaus swears by her.

**Bk IV:464-511** Her enmity towards Ajax the Lesser because of his rape of Cassandra in the goddess’ temple.

**Bk IV:721-766** Penelope prays to her.

**Bk IV:795-847** She sends a phantom to Penelope.

**Bk V:1-42** She tells the gods of Odysseus’ sufferings, and successfully asks for him to be freed from Calypso’s isle.

**Bk V:313-387** She calms the sea to enable Odysseus to swim to Phaeacia.

**Bk V:388-450** **Bk IX:307-359** She sharpens Odysseus’ minds and inspires him with ideas.

**Bk V:451-493** She brings Odysseus sleep to ease his weariness.
Bk VI:1-47 Disguised as the daughter of Dymas, she prompts Nausicaa to go to the shore.
Bk VI:110-148 She has Odysseus wake, and inspires Nausicaa.
Bk VI:198-250 Bk XXIII:141-204 She beautifies Odysseus. She inspires craftsmen with ingenuity and artistic cleverness.
Bk VI:251-315 Bk VI:316-33 The grove in Scherie sacred to her.
Bk VII:1-77 She leads Odysseus to Alcinous’ palace, while disguised as a young girl, and veils him in a magic mist.
Bk VII:78-132 She leaves Scherie and travels to her city of Athens. She has gifted the Phaeacian women with knowledge of arts and crafts.
Bk VII:133-181 The magic mist disperses.
Bk VII:298-347 Alcinous invokes her.
Bk VIII:1-61 She gathers the Phaeacians, and makes Odysseus stronger and taller.
Bk VIII:152-198 In human disguise, she marks the fall of Odysseus’ discus.
Bk VIII:469-520  She helped Epeius make the Wooden Horse, and inspired Odysseus in battle.
Bk XI:541-592  She judged the debate between Odysseus and Ajax.
Bk XI:593-640  She guided Heracles in Hades.
Bk XIII:96-158  She prompted the Phaeacians to bring Odysseus gifts.
Bk XIII:159-215  She veils Odysseus in a mist on his return to Ithaca.
Bk XIII:216-255  She appears to Odysseus disguised as a shepherd boy.
Bk XIII:256-310  She reveals herself as Odysseus’ protectress.
Bk XIII:366-415  She promises Odysseus her help.
Bk XIII:416-440 Bk XVI:213-257  She disguises Odysseus as an old beggar and sets off for Sparta to bring Telemachus home.
Bk XIV:1-47  Odysseus finds Eumaeus the swineherd where she had said.
Bk XIV:165-234  She grants courage in battle.
Bk XV:1-55  She tells Telemachus to return home, and of the Suitors’ ambush.
Bk XV:222-270 Telemachus sacrifices to her.
Bk XV:271-300 She sends Telemachus a favourable wind.
Bk XVI:154-212 She transforms Odysseus again and tells him to reveal his identity to Telemachus.
Bk XVI:258-320 She will fight on Odysseus’ side.
Bk XVI:393-451 Bk XIX:554-604 Bk XXI:311-358 She closes Penelope’s eyes in sleep.
Bk XVI:452-481 She disguises Odysseus as a beggar again.
Bk XVII:328-395 She prompts Odysseus to beg among the Suitors.
Bk XVIII:50-116 She enhances Odysseus’ strength.
Bk XVIII:117-157 She has marked out Amphinomus for death.
Bk XVIII:158-205 She prompts Penelope to go into the hall, and enhances her beauty.
Bk XVIII:206-283 Telemachus invokes her.
Bk XVIII:340-393 She prolongs the Suitors’ insults.
Bk XIX:1-52 She lights the hall.
Bk XIX:476-507 She distracts Penelope’s attention.
Bk XX:1-55 She visits Odysseus in sleep to encourage him.
Bk XX:56-119 She blessed the daughters of Pandareus with skill in handiwork.
Bk XX:240-298 She ensures Odysseus is tested by the Suitors.
Bk XX:345-394 She addles the Suitors’ wits.
Bk XXI:1-79 She prompts Penelope to challenge the Suitors.
Bk XXII:200-240 She appears disguised as Mentor. She later takes the form of a swallow.
Bk XXII:241-309 She raises her aegis and causes panic among the Suitors.
Bk XXIII:205-246 She holds back the Dawn.
Bk XXIII:300-372 She rouses the Dawn.
Bk XXIV:356-411 She enhances Laertes’ looks.
Bk XXIV:463-501 Zeus advises her to make peace.
Bk XXIV:502-54 Athene ends the conflict.

Athens
The chief city of Attica, sacred to Pallas Athene.
Bk III:253-312 Sunium to the south.
Bk VII:78-132 Athene travels there.
Bk XI:225-332 Theseus was king there. The sacred hill of the Acropolis.

Atlas
Originally a Titan who ruled the Moon with Phoebe the Titaness. Leader of the Titans in their war with the gods. The son of Iapetus by the nymph Clymene. His brothers were Prometheus, Epimetheus and Menoetius. Represented as Mount Atlas in North-western Africa, holding up the heavens. Father of the Pleiades, Hyades and Hesperides.
Bk I:44-95 Bk VII:240-297 Father of Calypso, the Nymph of Ogygia.
Atreus
King of Mycenae, the son of Pelops. The father of Agamemnon and Menelaüs. His feud with his brother Thyestes led to a chain of fatal events.

Bk XXIV:98-204 The father of the ill-fated Agamemnon.

Bk III:102-147  Bk V:262-312  Bk XVII:61-106
Bk XIX:164-219 The father of the Atreides, Agamemnon and Menelaus. They quarrelled over the return journey from Troy.

Atrytone
A title of Athene, its meaning unknown.
**Bk IV:721-766** Used by Penelope.
**Bk VI:316-33** Used by Odysseus.

Autolycus
The grandfather of Odysseus. He was a master trickster and thief, son of Hermes and Chione, and father of Anticleia, Odysseus’ mother.
**Bk XI:51-89** Mentioned.
**Bk XIX:361-47**  **Bk XXI:186-244**  **Bk XXIV:302-355** He named Odysseus (There is a play on the verb ὀδύσσασθαι, ‘to wish suffering upon’, and the name Ὄδυσσεύς, suggesting ‘man of suffering’.) Odysseus was wounded by a wild boar when hunting with Autolycus’ sons. Autolycus has a special relation ship with Hermes.

Autonoe
Penelope’s maid.
**Bk XVIII:158-205** Penelope summons her.
Bear
The Great Bear, The Waggon (plaustra), The Wain, The Plough, The Big Dipper. The constellation of Ursa Major. It represents Callisto turned into a bear by Zeus, or the plough or waggon or cart of Bootës. The two stars of the ‘bowl’ furthest from the ‘handle’, Merak and Dubhe, point to Polaris the pole star. The ‘handle’ points to the star Arcturus in the constellation Bootës, who is the Waggoner or Herdsman or Bear Herd (Arcturus means the Bearkeeper) or Ploughman. The Great Bear is circumpolar and never dips below the horizon. Bk V:262-312 Odysseus steers his raft, using the constellation.

Boethus

Bootes
The constellation of the Waggoner, or Herdsman, or Bear Herd. The nearby
The constellation of Ursa Major is the Wain, Waggon, Plough, or Great Bear. He holds the leash of the constellation of the hunting dogs, Canes Venatici. Bk V:262-312 Odysseus uses the constellation to steer by.

Cadmeians
The descendants of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes. Bk XI:225-332 The Thebans.

Cadmus
The son of the Phoenician king Agenor. He searched for his sister Europa stolen by Zeus. The founder of Thebes in Boeotia. Bk V:313-387 Ino was one of his children.

Calypso
Bk V:1-42  Zeus sends Hermes to tell her to release Odysseus from her island.
Bk V:43-91  She welcomes Hermes to her island.
Bk V:92-147  She agrees reluctantly to release Odysseus.
Bk V:148-191  She tells Odysseus to build a raft and leave.
Bk V:192-261  She helps Odysseus prepare for his voyage.
Bk V:262-312 Bk VII:240-297  She sees him off from the island.
Bk V:313-387  The clothes she gave Odysseus weigh him down as he tries to swim.
Bk VIII:416-468  Odysseus had been well cared for on her island.
Bk XII:374-453  She tells Odysseus about the Sun-god’s complaint to the gods, after he is washed up on her island.
Bk XXIII:300-372  Odysseus tells the tale.

Cassandra
The daughter of Priam and Hecuba gifted with prophecy by Apollo, but cursed to tell the truth and not be believed. Her rape by Ajax the Lesser caused Athene’s anger to fall on the returning Greeks. Taken back to Greece by Agamemnon. (See Aeschylus: The Agamemnon) Bk XI:385-464 Murdered by Clytemnestra.

Castor (1)
The divine son of Zeus and Leda, brother of Pollux. Bk XI:225-332 Famous for his skill with horses.

Castor (2)
A fictitious Cretan. Bk XIV:165-234 Odysseus pretends to be his son.

Cauconians
The Cauconians were one of the peoples inhabiting the Peloponnesus in early times,
perhaps in Elis, perhaps in Arcadia, or perhaps between Pylus and Lacedaemon, in Triphylia, near Messenia. On the other hand the race of the Cauconians was also found in the northern coast of Asia Minor in the area close to that of the Mariandynians.

Bk III:356-403 Athene is to visit them.

Centaur
Creatures, half-man and half-horse living in the mountains of Thessaly, hence called biformes, duplex natura, semihomines, bimembres. They were the sons of Ixion, and a cloud, in the form of Hera.

Bk XXI:245-310 Eurytion, was a Centaur.

Cephallenians
The people of the island of Cephallenia, probably identical with Same, modern Cephalonia.

Bk XX:172-239 Philoetius tended cattle among them.
Laertes anticipates an alliance between enemies on Ithaca and the men of Cephallenia.

Laertes once ruled Cephallenia.

Eupeithes claims Odysseus has killed the best of the Cephalenians.

Chalcis
A town in western Greece (Not the Chalcis in Euboea).

Passed by Telemachus on his way home.

Charybdis
The whirlpool between Italy and Sicily in the Messenian straits. Charybdis was the voracious daughter of Mother Earth and Poseidon, hurled into the sea, and thrice, daily, drawing in and spewing out a huge volume of water.

Circe warns Odysseus to avoid her whirlpool.
Bk XII:201-259  Bk XII:260-319  Odysseus passes the whirlpool.  
Bk XII:374-453  Odysseus is driven back to the whirlpool and wrecked there.  
Bk XXIII:300-372  Odysseus tells the tale.  

Chios  
The island (modern Khios) in the northeastern Aegean off the coast of Turkey, and separated from it by a narrow strait.  
Bk III:148-200  Nestor’s fleet decided to sail westwards from the northern cape of Chios straight across the Aegean to Euboea, rather than sail down the southern strait between Chios and the mainland, before turning west.  

Chloris  
The daughter of Orchemenian Amphion, and wife of Neleus.  
Bk XI:225-332  The mother of Nestor.  Her ghost appears to Odysseus.  

Chromius
Bk XI:225-332 The son of Neleus and Chloris.

Cicones
A Thracian tribe living in Ismarus.
Bk IX:152-192 Their wine taken by Odysseus and his men.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale.

Cimmerians
People living near the entrance to Hades, beyond the river of Ocean.
Bk XI:1-50 Mentioned. Herodotus places them in Scythia, and the modern name Crimea is perhaps derived from these sources. But Homer may have used the name to encompass all the peoples of Northern Europe.

Circe
The sea-nymph, daughter of Helios and Perse, and the granddaughter of Ocean. (Kirke or Circe means a small falcon) She was famed for her beauty and magic arts and lived on the
‘island’ of Aeaea, which is the promontory of Circeii. (Cape Circeo between Anzio and Gaeta, on the west coast of Italy, now part of the magnificent *Parco Nazionale del Circeo* extending to Capo Portiere in the north, and providing a reminder of the ancient Pontine Marshes before they were drained, rich in wildfowl and varied tree species.) Cicero mentions that Circe was worshipped religiously by the colonists at Circeii. (‘On the Nature of the Gods’, Bk III 47)

(See John Melhuish Strudwick’s painting – Circe and Scylla – Walker Art Gallery, Sudley, Merseyside, England: See Dosso Dossi’s painting - Circe and her Lovers in a Landscape-National gallery of Art, Washington)

**Bk VIII:416-468** She had taught *Odysseus* a subtle knot.

**Bk IX:1-62** She detained Odysseus on her island.

**Bk X:133-197** Odysseus reaches her island.

**Bk X:198-250** She changes Odysseus’ men into swine.
Odysseus approaches her house. Odysseus uses the magic plant *moly*, and escapes her spell. She invites him to sleep with her. Circe frees Odysseus’ crew. She advises Odysseus that he must visit the House of Hades and what to do there. She sends a favourable breeze to help Odysseus on his way. Elpenor fell from the roof of her house. She advises Odysseus concerning his onward voyage. Her warning concerning the sun-god’s cattle and flocks. Odysseus tells the tale.

Cleitus
A son of Mantius.
He was carried off by Eos, the Dawn, who fell in love with his beauty.
Clymene
The mother of Iphiclus.
Bk XI:225-332 Her ghost appeared to Odysseus.

Clymenus
The father of Nestor’s wife Eurydice. Possibly a king of Elis.
Bk III:404-463 He is mentioned.

Clytemnestra
The wife of Agamemnon, daughter of King Tyndareus of Sparta, and Leda. Sister or half-sister of Helen, and of the Dioscuri. Mother of Orestes, Electra (Laodice), and Iphigenia.
Bk III:253-312 Bk XI:385-464 Bk XXIV:98-204 She was the lover of Aegisthus and conspired with him to murder her husband, Agamemnon.

Clytius
An Ithacan noble, the father of Peiraeus.
Bk XV:493-557 Mentioned.
Bk XVI:321-39 Telemachus’ gifts are taken to his house.

Clytoneus
A son of Alcinous.
Bk VIII:104-151 He competes in the Games, and is the fastest runner.

Cnossus, Knossos
The principal city of Minoan Crete, near present day Heraklion. The site was mainly occupied between about 2500 and 1200BC.
Bk XIX:164-219 Minos ruled there.

Cocytus
A river of Hades (The River of Lament), a tributary of the Styx.
Bk X:503-574 Odysseus must consult the spirits there.

Cratais
The mother of **Scylla**. Perhaps an incarnation of Hecate. **Bk XII:111-164** Circe suggests **Odysseus** invoke her.

**Creon**
King of **Thebes**. **Bk XI:225-332** Megara was his eldest daughter.

**Crete**
The island in the eastern Mediterranean. Cradle of the ancient Minoan civilization. **Bk III:148-200** Idomeneus was its king at the time of the **Trojan** War. **Bk III:253-312** Part of Menelaus’ fleet driven there. **Bk XI:225-332** Theseus killed the Minotaur there, and carried off **Ariadne**. **Bk XIII:256-310**  **Bk XIV:165-234**  **Bk XIV:235-292**  **Bk XVI:60-111**  **Bk XVII:505-550** Described as broad, spacious. **Odysseus** pretends he is a Cretan. (Possibly
intended ironically since ‘all Cretans are liars’ as the old proverb has it.)

**Bk XIV:293-359** Odysseus sails north-west from southern Crete to reach Epirus.

**Bk XIV:360-408** Eumaeus has been told of Odysseus in Crete.

**Bk XIX:164-219** Odysseus pretends to Penelope that he is a Cretan. The island contains a mixture of races in ninety cities and was once ruled by Minos.

Cretheus
The founder of Iolcus, and uncle of Tyro, whom he married. She bore him Aeson, the father of Jason the Argonaut.

**Bk XI:225-332** He adopted Pelias and Neleus as his sons.

Cronos
The father of Zeus, and son of Uranus, whom Zeus himself dethroned.

**Bk I:44-95**  **Bk I:365-420**  **Bk III:51-101**  **Bk III:102-147**  **Bk IV:155-219**
Bk XIII:1-52  Bk XIV:165-234  Bk XIV:293-359  Bk XIV:360-408
Bk XV:403-492  Bk XVI:258-320  Bk XVII:396-461  Bk XVIII:340-393
Bk XXI:359-403  Described as devious (crooked in counsel).

Crouni
A location on the west coast of Greece. Modern Krouni in Olympia province.
Bk XV:271-300  Telemachus passes it on his way home from Pylos.

Ctesippus
A Suitor from Same
Bk XX:240-298 He pretends to give a gift to Odysseus.
Bk XX:299-344 He hurls an ox-hoof at Odysseus.
Bk XXII:241-309 He is killed by Philoetius.

Ctesius
King of Syrie, father of Eumaeus.
Bk XV:403-492 Mentioned.

Ctimene
Youngest daughter of Laertes and Anticleia.
Bk XV:351-40 Brought up with Eumaeus, she was sent to Same to wed.

Cyclopes
One-eyed Giants living in Sicily.
Bk I:44-95 Polyphemus is the strongest of them.
Bk II:1-34 Antiphus killed by the Cyclops (Polyphemus).
Bk VI:1-47 The Phaeacians once lived near them.
Bk VII:182-239 Kin to the gods like the Phaeacians.
Bk IX:105-151 Odysseus arrives off Sicily. The small island where the ships beached was probably Favignana once called Aegusa, Goat Island, and part of the Aegadian Islands. The harbour was possibly Cala Grande. See Ernle Bradford’s ‘Ulysses Found’ Chapters 6 and 7.

Bk IX:152-192 The Cyclop’s cave on Sicily.

Bk IX:256-306 They have no reverence for Zeus.

Bk IX:307-359 The fertility of Sicily.

Bk IX:360-412 Poseidon is their father.

Bk IX:480-525 Their soothsayer, Telemus.

Cydonians
A Cretan people, living in the area of modern Khania, its main city on the northern coast of Crete also being Khania (Canea). According to Herodotus it took its name from Cydon, the son of Apollo and Akakallis daughter of Minos.

Bk III:253-312 Bk XIX:164-219 Mentioned.

Cyllene
A mountain in Arcadia: Hermes’ birthplace, hence Cyllenius, an epithet for him. (Pausanias, VIII, xvii, noting it as the highest mountain in Arcadia mentions the ruined shrine of Hermes on its summit, and says it got its name from Cyllen son of Elatus. Hermes’ statue was of juniper (thuon) and stood eight feet tall. Pausanias says that Cyllene was famous for its white, albino? blackbirds.)

**Bk XXIV:1-56** An epithet of Hermes.

Cyprus
The island in the eastern Mediterranean, sacred to Aphrodite.

**Bk IV:59-112** Visited by Menelaus in his wanderings.

**Bk VIII:256-366** Aphrodite flees there.

**Bk XVII:396-461** Ruled by Dmetor. Odysseus claims to have been taken there.

Cythera
The island near Cape Malea off the south-western tip of the Peloponnese, sacred to Aphrodite who emerged from the sea there. Bk IX:63-104 Odysseus is driven past it by the gale.

Cytherea, see Aphrodite Bk XVIII:158-205 Aphrodite of the lovely Crown, from her birthplace the island of Cythera. She dances with the Graces.

Damastor

Danaans
Dawn (Eos)
Eos the goddess of the dawn.

Described as ‘rosy-fingered’ and ‘the goddess of the lovely tresses’.

Memnon was her son.

Her husband is Tithonus.

She loved Orion, whom Artemis killed with an arrow, perhaps unintentionally at Apollo’s instigation.
Bk V:388-450 She gives birth to the days.
Bk X:503-574 Bk XII:111-164 Bk XIV:457-506 Bk XV:56-119
Bk XII:1-35 Aeaeas’s Isle is her house, and dancing floor. In other words Aeaea is well east of the River of Ocean.
Bk XV:222-270 She loved Cleitus for his beauty.
Bk XXIII:205-246 Athene holds back the Dawn.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Athene rouses the Dawn.

Deiphobus
A son of Priam of Troy, who forcibly married Helen after Paris was killed.
Bk IV:220-289 He was with Helen, by the Wooden Horse.
Bk VIII:469-520  Odysseus and Menelaus attacked his house at the fall of Troy. Deiphobus was killed and his corpse mangled.

Delos
The Greek island in the Aegean, one of the Cyclades, birthplace of, and sacred to, Apollo and Artemis, hence the adjective Delian. (Pausanias VIII xlvii, mentions the sacred palm-tree, noted here in Homer’s Odyssey, and the ancient olive.)
Bk VI:149-197 The palm tree by Apollo’s altar seen by Odysseus.

Demeter
The goddess of harvests, sister of Zeus, and mother of Persephone.
Bk V:92-147 She fell in love with Iasion, the Titan, at the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia, and lay with him in a thrice-ploughed field.

Demodocus
The blind bard of Alcinous’ palace.
Bk VIII:1-61 He is summoned to entertain Odysseus.
Bk VIII:62-103 He sings of a quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus.
Bk VIII:104-151 The herald leads him to see the Games.
Bk VIII:199-255 He is asked to sing.
Bk VIII:256-366 He sings the love of Ares and Aphrodite.
Bk VIII:469-520 He sings of the Trojan Horse, inspired by the god.
Bk VIII:521-585 Alcinous commands his silence.
Bk XIII:1-52 He sings again at the feast.

Demoptolemus
A Suitor.
Bk XXII:241-309 Killed by Odysseus.

Deucalion
King of Crete, the son of Minos, and father of Idomeneus.
Bk XIX:164-219  Odysseus pretends to be his son.

Dia (Naxos?)
An island sacred to the Goddess in the Aegean. Possibly Naxos.
Bk XI:225-332  Sacred to Artemis who killed Ariadne there.

Diocles
The Lord of Pherae, and son of Ortilochus.
Bk III:464-497  Bk XV:183-221  He offers Telemachus and Peisistratus hospitality.

Diomedes
The son of Tydeus king of Argos, and a Greek hero in the war against Troy. See Homer’s Iliad.
Bk III:148-200  Returned home safely to Argos.
Bk IV:220-289  One of the Greek captains inside the Wooden Horse.

Dionysus
The ‘twice-born’, god of the vine. The son of Zeus and Semele. His worship was celebrated with orgiastic rites borrowed from Phrygia. His female followers are the Maenades. He carries the *thyrsus*, a wand tipped with a pine-cone, the Maenads and Satyrs following him carrying ivy-twined fir branches as *thyrsi*. (See Caravaggio’s painting –Bacchus – Uffizi, Florence)

**Bk XI:225-332** He warned Artemis that Theseus was carrying off Ariadne.

**Bk XXIV:57-97** Thetis says that Achilles’ funeral urn is a gift of the god.

Dmetor
Son of Iasus, King of Cyprus.

**Bk XVII:396-461** Odysseus claims to have been handed over to him.

Dodona
The town in Epirus in north western Greece, site of the Oracle of Zeus, whose responses were delivered by the rustling of the oak trees
in the sacred grove. (After 1200BC the goddess Naia, worshipped there, who continued to be honoured as Dione, was joined by Zeus Naios. The sanctuary was destroyed in 391AD.)

**Bk XIV:293-359 Bk XIX:220-307** Odysseus pretends he has been there.

Dolius
An old servant of Penelope.
**Bk IV:721-766** He tends her orchard. Sent to talk to Laertes.
**Bk XVII:204-253 Bk XXII:116-159** The father of Melanthius.
**Bk XVIII:284-339** The father of Melantho.
**Bk XXIV:205-30** Odysseus fails to meet with him.
**Bk XXIV:356-411** He arrives and recognises Odysseus.
**Bk XXIV:463-501** He dons armour to fight for Odysseus.

Dorians
Their name supposedly deriving from Dorus son of Hellen, the Dorian people invaded Greece from Epirus/Macedonia between 1100 and 950BC, displacing the Achaeans, and penetrating Sicily, Italy, Crete and Asia Minor. 

Bk XIX:164-219 One of the races inhabiting Crete.

**Dulichium**

Doulichion, an island near Ithaca. Its identification is problematic. Logically it would be the modern Levkas given the identification of the other major islands.

Bk I:213-251  Bk XVI:112-153  Bk XIX:100-163 Ruled by princes.

Bk IX:1-62 Mentioned by Odysseus.

Bk XIV:293-359  Bk XIX:220-307 Described as corn-rich.

Bk XIV:360-408 Odysseus in disguise as a beggar pretends it is his destination.

Bk XVI:213-257 It provides fifty-two of the hundred and eight Suitors.
Amphinomus is the leader of the Suitors from there.

The home of Nisus.

Dymas
A shipowner of Scherie.

Athene takes the form of his daughter, a friend of Nausicaa.

Earth, Gaea
Mother Earth, the personification of the planet.
Mother of the Giants

Mother of Tityus.

Echeneus
A Phaeacian elder.

He advises Alcinous to show hospitality to the stranger.

Echephron
A son of Nestor.
He helps his father with the sacrifice.

Echetus
A King of North-Western Greece.

Noted for his cruelty.

Egypt
The country of North Africa.

Menelaus was driven to its coast from Cape Malea.

Visited by Menelaus (and Helen) during his wanderings.

The Egyptians noted for their medical knowledge.

Menelaus delayed on Pharos.

Odysseus pretends to be a Cretan who has been in Egypt.

Eidothee
A sea goddess, ‘Divine Form’, the daughter of Proteus.
She helps Menelaus capture her father.

Eileithyie
A goddess of childbirth, possibly an epithet of Artemis. She was apparently worshipped in her cave near Amnisos on Crete. Cave sites near Amnisos have yielded evidence of Neolithic habitation, and Homer is possibly evoking memories of worship of the Great Goddess of Neolithic times through into the later Bronze Age.

Homer mentions it in connection with Amnisos.

Elatreus
A Phaeacian.

He competes in the Games, and wins in the discus.

Elatus
A Suitor.

Wounded by Eumaeus.
Elis
A city and country in the western Peloponnese.  
**Bk IV:625-674**  Its wide plains.  **Noemon**  is breeding horses there.  
**Bk XIII:256-310**  **Odysseus** uses it as a possible destination. It is ruled by the **Epeians**.  
**Bk XV:271-300**  Passed by **Telmachus** on his way home. Note the issue over Homer’s use of the description ‘swift’ islands (line 299) for Telemachus’ destination of the Ithacan island group. I have taken ‘swift’ in the OED sense of ‘soon coming/not long delayed’, i.e. the islands are imminent, not far off, nearby.  
**Bk XXI:311-358**  Its horse pastures on the mainland east of the islands.  
**Bk XXIV:412-462**  **Eupeithes** suggests **Odysseus** may flee there.

Elpenor
The youngest member of **Odysseus’** crew.  
**Bk X:503-574**  Killed by falling from the roof of **Circe**’s palace.
Bk XI:51-89 His ghost appears to Odysseus, and he begs for proper burial.
Bk XII:1-35 Odysseus and his men return to cremate him.

Elysian Fields
The eternal home of the blessed.
Bk IV:548-592 Menelaus will go there after death. It is a place of eternal spring and sunlight.

Enipeus
A Thessalian river and its river-god.
Bk XI:225-332 Poseidon disguised himself as the river-god and raped Tyro in his stream.

Epeians
The rulers of Elis, the people of King Epeius of Olympia.
Epeius
The son of Panopeus, a Phocian from Parnassus. He was water-bearer to the House of Atreus and brought thirty ships to Troy from the Cyclades.
Bk VIII:469-520  Bk XI:465-540 He built the Wooden Horse, of fir-wood, with Athene’s help.

Eperitus
Bk XXIV:302-355 A name assumed by Odysseus.

Ephialtes
The giant son of Iphimedeia and Poseidon, who made war on the gods.
Bk XI:225-332 With his brother he piled Mount Pelion on Ossa. They were killed by Apollo.

Ephyre
An unknown district in western Greece.
Bk I:252-305 The home of Ilus, visited by Odysseus.
Bk II:296-336 Described as fertile. The source of deadly poison.

Epicaste, Jocasta
The wife of Laius, King of Thebes, and mother of Oedipus.
Bk XI:225-332 Her ghost appears to Odysseus.

Erebus
The Underworld. The realm of Hades.
Bk X:503-574 Odysseus must sacrifice towards it, while looking away.
Bk XI:1-50 The ghosts of the dead swarm up from there.
Bk XI:541-592 The ghost of Ajax departs into Erebus.
Bk XII:36-110 It lies to the far west.
Bk XX:345-394 Theoclymenus sees ghosts in his vision hurrying towards it.

Erectheus
Legendary hero-king of Athens, son of Pandion, father of Orithyia and Procris.
**Bk VII:78-132**  Athene travels to his palace in Athens.

Erembians
Probably a people of North Africa.

**Bk IV:59-112** Visited by **Menelaus** in his wanderings.

Eretmeus
A Phaeacian.

**Bk VIII:104-151** He competes in the Games.

Erinyes, See Furies

Eriphyle
The wife of **Amphiaraus.** Bribed by Polyneices, **Oedipus’** son, with the famous necklace of Harmonia (Given to Harmonia on her marriage to **Cadmus,** by **Aphrodite**) she persuaded her husband to join the war of the Seven against **Thebes.** He was subsequently sent down to the Underworld there by **Zeus.**
Her ghost appeared to Odysseus.

Her betrayal of Amphiaraus.

**Erymanthus**
A mountain range in the north-western Peloponnese, east of **Elis**.

**Eteoneus**
The son of **Boethus**, and squire to **Menelaus**.

**Ethiopia**
The regions furthest from Greece where the sun rises and sets. The opposite side of the Earth. Vaguely, the country in North Africa.

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This text seems to be a fragment from a larger work, possibly an English translation of *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*. The snippet includes references to specific characters and locations, along with page numbers indicating where these references are located in the original Greek text.
Euanthes
The father of **Maron**.
**Bk IX:193-255** Mentioned.

Euboea
The large island (modern Evvoia) close to eastern Greece separated from it by the Euboean Gulf. Also called Euripos, and Negropont. It contained Eretria and Aegae. Anthedon was on the mainland across the Gulf from Euboea.

**Bk III:148-200** **Nestor** heads there during the return from Troy.
**Bk VII:298-347** The Phaeacians consider it the most remote of lands. They carried **Rhadamanthus** there to visit **Tityus**.

Euenor, Evenor
The father of **Leocritus**.
**Bk XXII:241-309** Mentioned.

Eumaeus
Odysseus’ swineherd.

**Bk XIII:366-415** **Athene** tells **Odysseus** to seek him out.

**Bk XIV:1-47** Odysseus meets him, in disguise.

**Bk XIV:48-108** He describes the **Suitors’** ravages to **Odysseus**.

**Bk XIV:109-164** **Eumaeus** assumes **Odysseus** is dead.

**Bk XIV:165-234** He questions **Odysseus** as to his origins.

**Bk XIV:360-408** He is unconvinced by the tale of **Odysseus** being alive.

**Bk XIV:409-456** He provides supper for **Odysseus**.

**Bk XIV:457-506** He makes up a bed for **Odysseus**.

**Bk XV:301-350** He asks **Odysseus** to stay on in his hut.

**Bk XV:351-40** He speaks about **Odysseus’** parents.

**Bk XV:403-492** He tells his life story.

**Bk XVI:1-59**  **Bk XVI:60-111** He greets **Telemachus**.
Bk XVI:112-153 Bk XVI:154-212 Telemachus sends him to his mother to tell of his return from Pylos.
Bk XVI:321-39 He gives Penelope the news of Telemachus’ return.
Bk XVI:452-481 He returns to his hut with the news from the city.
Bk XVII:166-203 Bk XVII:254-289 He leads Odysseus to the palace.
Bk XVII:204-253 He prays to the Nymphs.
Bk XVII:290-327 He tells Odysseus about the dog, Argus.
Bk XVII:328-395 He bandies words with Antinous.
Bk XVII:505-550 Penelope asks him to bring the stranger to see her.
Bk XVII:551-606 He explains the stranger’s delay to Penelope.
Bk XX:120-171 He asks Odysseus how he is being treated.
Bk XX:172-239 Bk XXI:186-244 He prays for Odysseus’ safe return.
Bk XXI:80-135 He sets out the bow and arrows.
Bk XXI:359-403 He takes the bow to Odysseus.
Bk XXII:68-115 Telemachus arms him.
Bk XXII:116-159 He is sent to close the storeroom door.
Bk XXII:160-199 He captures and taunts Melanthius.
Bk XXII:241-309 He wounds Polybus.
Bk XXII:310-377 He helps Odysseus in the fight.
Bk XXII:433-501 He helps to execute the faithless serving women.
Bk XXIII:247-299 He retires to rest.
Bk XXIII:300-372 He arms himself and follows Odysseus.
Bk XXIV:98-204 Odysseus first landed near his hut.
Bk XXIV:356-411 He helps prepare a meal.

Eumelus
The husband of Iphthime, Penelope’s sister.
Eupeithes
The father of Antinous.

Mentioned.

Bk XVII:462-504
Bk XXI:136-185  Bk XXI:245-310

Mentioned.

Bk XVI:393-451 Odysseus once saved his life.
Bk XXIV:412-462 He urges revenge on Odysseus for killing his son.
Bk XXIV:463-501 The crowd are persuaded to follow his lead.
Bk XXIV:502-54 He is killed by Laertes.

Euryades
A Suitor.
Bk XXII:241-309 Killed by Telemachus.

Euryalus
A Phaeacian, the son of Naubolus.
Bk VIII:104-151 He competes in the Games and wins the wrestling contest. Compared with Ares.

Bk VIII:152-198 He provokes Odysseus to compete.

Bk VIII:367-415 He apologises to Odysseus for the provocation and makes him a lavish gift.

Eurybates
Squire to Odysseus.

Bk XIX:220-307 He travelled to Troy with him.

Eurycleia
The nurse of Odysseus and Telemachus, and the daughter of Ops.

Bk I:421-444 Previously purchased by Laertes, and honoured in the palace.

Bk II:337-381 She guards the store room as stewardess, and prepares the provisions for Telemachus’ journey.

Bk IV:721-766 She advises Penelope.

Bk XVII:1-60 She sees Telemachus on his return.
Bk XIX:1-52 Telemachus summons her.
Bk XIX:308-360 Penelope asks her to wash Odysseus’ feet.
Bk XIX:361-47 She recognises Odysseus from the scar on his leg.
Bk XIX:476-507 Odysseus enjoins her to silence.
Bk XX:120-171 She defends Penelope to Telemachus.
Bk XXI:359-403 She locks the doors of the hall.
Bk XXII:378-432 She denounces the faithless serving women.
Bk XXII:433-501 She is sent to carry the news to Penelope.
Bk XXIII:1-84 She reveals Odysseus’ identity.
Bk XXIII:141-204 Odysseus asks her to make up his bed.
Bk XXIII:247-299 She helps make up Odysseus’ and Penelope’s bed.

Eurydamas
A Suitor.
Bk XXII:241-309 Wounded by Odysseus.

Eurydice
The daughter of Clymenus, and wife to Nestor. Bk III:404-463 She attends the sacrifice to Athene.

Eurylochus

Eurymachus
‘Broad-Fighter’, the son of Polybus, and one of the leading Suitors.

Bk I:365-420 He placates Telemachus and asks who Mentes is.

Bk II:177-223 He attacks Halitherses’ prophecy, and defends the Suitors.

Bk IV:625-674 Co-leader of the Suitors with Antinous.

Bk XV:1-55 Penelope’s father and brothers urge her to marry him, because his are the most generous gifts.

Bk XV:493-557 Telemachus calls him the best of the Suitors.

Bk XVI:321-39 He advises the Suitors to send word to their ship at sea.

Bk XVI:393-451 He hypocritically reassures Penelope.

Bk XVII:254-289 He favours Melanthius.

Bk XVIII:50-116 Telemachus seeks his support for a fair fight.

Bk XVIII:206-283 He praises Penelope.

Bk XVIII:284-339 His gift to Penelope.

Bk XVIII:340-393 He taunts Odysseus.
Bk XVIII:394-428 He attacks Odysseus but fails to harm him.
Bk XX:345-394 He taunts Theoclymenus.
Bk XXI:186-244 He continues the contest to draw the bow.
Bk XXI:245-310 He laments their inability to draw the bow.
Bk XXI:311-358 He argues against the stranger trying the bow.
Bk XXII:1-67 He blames Antinous and seeks unsuccessfully to placate Odysseus.
Bk XXII:68-115 Odysseus kills him.

Eurymedon
A Titan, ruler of the planet Jupiter.

Eurymedusa
A woman from Aperaea, a spoil of war.
Bk VII:1-77 Waiting woman to Nausicaa.

Eurymus
Father of Telemus.  
Bk IX:480-525 Mentioned.

Eurynome  
Penelope’s housekeeper.  
Bk XVII:462-504 She curses the Suitors.  
Bk XVIII:158-205 She endorses Penelope’s plan of action.  
Bk XIX:100-163 She brings a chair for the Stranger (Odysseus).  
Bk XX:1-55 She covers Odysseus with a cloak.  
Bk XXIII:141-204 She bathes Odysseus.  
Bk XXIII:247-299 She helps make up Odysseus’ and Penelope’s bed.

Eurynomus  
The son of Aegyptius, and one of the Suitors.  
Bk II:1-34 Mentioned.  
Bk XXII:241-309 He helps to rally the Suitors.

Eurypylus  
The son of Telephus. He fought at Troy with his Mysian army. Priam offered his mother
Astyoche a golden vine for his allegiance, and betrothed him to Cassandra.
Bk XI:465-540 He was killed by Achilles’ son, Neoptolemus.

Eurytion
A Centaur who tried to rape Hippodamia, so precipitating a fight between the Lapiths and Centaurs. (Note: Ovid in the Metamorphoses calls him Eurytus)
Bk XXI:245-310 His crime was the result of drink.

Eurytus
The King of Oechalia in Messenia, and father of Iphitus. He was a fine archer, taught by Apollo himself. He competed with Hercules who subsequently killed Iphitus.
Bk VIII:199-255 According to Homer, Apollo killed him in anger.
Bk XXI:1-79 The father of Iphitus.

Fates
The Three Goddesses, The Moirai, The Parcae. The three Fates were born of Erebus and Night. Clothed in white, they spin, measure out, and sever the thread of each human life. Clotho spins the thread. Lachesis measures it. Atropos wields the shears. 

Bk VII:182-239 They determine human destiny.

Furies
The Erinys, Erinnys, or Eumenides. The Three Sisters were Alecto, Tisiphone and Megaera, the daughters of Night and Uranus. They were the personified pangs of cruel conscience that pursued the guilty. (See Aeschylus – The Eumenides). Their abode was in Hades by the Styx. 

Bk II:129-176 Telemachus anticipates his mother might call on them to avenge his actions. 

Bk XI:225-332 Jocaste committing suicide effectively sends the Furies to torment her son Oedipus.
Bk XV:222-270 They pursued Melampus.
Bk XVII:462-504 Odysseus invokes them against Antinous.
Bk XX:56-119 The daughters of Pandareus are handed over to them.

Geraestus
The south-western promontory of Euboea near modern Karistos.
Bk III:148-200 Reached by Nestor’s ships.

Giants
Monsters, sons of Tartarus and Earth, with many arms and serpent feet, who made war on the gods by piling up the mountains, and overthrown by Zeus. They were buried under Sicily.
Bk VII:1-77 Eurymedon their king.
Bk VII:182-239 Kin to the gods like the Phaeacians.

Gorgon, Gorgo, Medusa
Medusa was the best known of the Three Gorgons, the daughters of Phorcys. A winged monster with snake locks, glaring eyes and brazen claws whose gaze turned men to stone. Her sisters were Stheino and Euryale. 

Bk XI:593-640 Odysseus fears lest Persephone sends the head to him.

Gortyn
The ancient city in south central Crete, on the plain of Mesara, in modern Iraklion (near the village of Agioi Deka). Probably also the region around.

Bk III:253-312 Mentioned.

Graces (Charites)
The goddesses of beauty, the daughters of Eurynome and Zeus. Their names are Pasithea, Cale, and Euphrosyne. In the Renaissance conceit they represent Giving, Receiving and Thanking.

Bk VI:1-47 They gifted beauty to Nausicaa’s handmaids.
They bathe and anoint Aphrodite.

Aphrodite dances with them.

Gyrae
A rocky island in the Aegean.

Poseidon wrecked and drowned Ajax the Lesser there.

Hades
The Halls of the Dead, in the underworld, and their god.

Neleus is there.

Penelope fears Odysseus may be there.

Nausithous is there.

Odysseus wishes Polyphemus there.

Mentioned.

Circe advises Odysseus he must visit Hades.
Bk XI:1-50 Odysseus invokes the divinities of the underworld.
Bk XI:51-89 Elpenor’s ghost is there.
Bk XI:150-224 Teiresias’ ghost returns there after prophesying.
Bk XI:225-332 Jocaste’s ghost appears to Odysseus from there. She had hung herself.
Bk XI:385-464 Agamemnon is there.
Bk XI:465-540 Achilles admires Odysseus’ descent there.
Bk XI:541-592 Minos is judge there.
Bk XI:593-640 Heracles dragged off the hound of Hell, Cerberus.
Bk XII:1-35 Odysseus returns from there to Circe’s island.
Bk XII:374-453 The Sun-god threatens to go there.
Bk XV:301-350 Odysseus asks if his parents are there.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale of his visit there.
The Suitors’ ghost arrive there.

Halitherses
An Ithacan prophet, the son of Mastor, friendly to Odysseus.
Bk II:129-176 He prophesied Odysseus’ return after twenty years.
Bk XVII:61-106 Telemachus recognises him as an old friend of Odysseus.
Bk XXIV:412-462 He advises the Ithacans not to attack Odysseus.

Halius
A son of Alcinous.
Bk VIII:104-151 He competes in the Games.
Bk VIII:367-415 One of the best dancers.

Harpies
The ‘Snatchers’, Aellopus and Ocypete, the fair-haired, loathsome, winged daughters of Thaumas and the ocean nymph Electra, who snatched up criminals for punishment by the
**Furies.** They lived in a cave in Cretan Dicte. They plagued Phineus of Salmydessus, the blind prophet, and were chased away by the winged sons of Boreas. An alternative myth has Phineus drive them away to the Strophades where Ovid has Aeneas meet the harpy Aëllo, and Virgil, Celaeno. They are foul-bellied birds with girls’ faces, and clawed hands, and their faces are pale with hunger. (See Ovid’s Metamorphoses Bk VII:1-73 and Bk XIII:705-737. Virgil’s Aeneid III:190-220)

**Bk I:213-251 Telemachus** imagines the Harpies have snatched **Odysseus**.

**Bk XX:56-119** They snatched away the daughters of **Pandareus**.

Hebe
The daughter of **Zeus** and **Hera**, and wife of **Heracles**. Cup-bearer to the gods.

**Bk XI:593-640** Mentioned.

Helen
The daughter of Leda and Zeus (Tyndareus was her putative father), sister of Clytemnaestra, and the Dioscuri. The wife of Menelaüs. She was taken, by Paris, to Troy, instigating the Trojan War, which she survived.

Bk IV:1-58 Hermione was her only child, by Menelaus.

Bk IV:113-154 Helen, likened to Artemis, sees Telemachus’ resemblance to his father.

Bk IV:155-219 She weeps for the dead Greeks.

Bk IV:220-289 She laces the wine with a beneficial drug, and speaks about Odysseus in disguise at Troy.

Bk IV:290-350 Helen has beds made up for Telemachus and Peisitratus.


Bk XI:385-464 Bk XXII:200-240 The cause of so many Greek deaths.

Bk XIV:48-108 Eumaeus wishes she had perished since she was the cause of so many deaths.
Bk XV:56-119  She chooses a gift for Telemachus.
Bk XV:120-182  She prophesies Odysseus’ return.
Bk XXIII:205-246  Penelope claims her as an example of a woman led astray by the gods.

Helios, see Hyperion
Bk XXIV:1-56  The Gates of the Sun, on the path to Hades. Perhaps a reference to the Pillars of Hercules, i.e. the gateway to the west.

Hellas
Greece, perhaps northern Greece. In the Iliad it refers to Achilles’ territory in Thessaly.
Bk I:325-364  Bk IV:721-766  Bk IV:795-847 Odysseus’ fame is widespread there.
Bk XI:465-540  Northern Greece, containing the land of the Myrmidons.
Bk XV:56-119  Menelaus offers to show Telemachus northern Greece.

Hellespont, Dardanelles
The straits that link the Propontis with the Aegean Sea. Named after Helle, and close to the site of Troy. Helle was the daughter of Athamas and Nephele, and sister of Phrixus. Escaping from Ino on the golden ram, she fell into the sea and was drowned, giving her name to the straits.

**Bk XXIV:**57-97 Achilles’ tomb on a headland jutting into the straits.

Hephaestus
The son of Zeus and Hera, and blacksmith of the gods. The husband of Aphrodite.

**Bk IV:**593-624  **Bk XV:**56-119 He made the silver bowl that Menelaus gave Telemachus.

**Bk VI:**198-250  **Bk XXIII:**141-204 The teacher of clever craftsmen.

**Bk VII:**78-132 Maker of the gold and silver dogs that magically guard Alcinous’ palace.

**Bk VIII:**256-366 He snares Ares and his own wife Aphrodite while they are making love. He frees them at Poseidon’s request.
Bk XXIV:57-97 The god of fire. The maker of Achilles’ funeral urn.

Hera
The Queen of the Gods, and wife of Zeus.

Bk IV:512-547 She protected Agamemnon, at sea.

Bk VIII:416-468 Bk XV:56-119 Bk XV:120-182 Zeus is her husband.

Bk XI:593-640 Mother of Hebe.

Bk XII:36-110 She helped the Argo pass the Wandering Rocks because of her care for Jason.

Bk XX:56-119 She blessed the daughters of Pandareus with beauty and wisdom.

Heracles, Hercules
The hero, son of Zeus and Alcmena, the wife of Amphitryon. Called Alcides from Amphitryon’s father Alceus. Called also Amphitryoniades. Called also Tirynthius from Tiryns his home city in the Argolis. Zeus predicted at his birth that a scion of Perseus would be born, greater than all other
descendants. Hera delayed Hercules birth and hastened that of Eurystheus, grandson of Perseus, making Hercules subservient to him. Hercules was set the famous twelve labours by Eurystheus at Hera’s instigation.

**Bk VIII:**199-255 Noted for his archery.

**Bk XI:**225-332 His parentage.

**Bk XI:**593-640 Odysseus meets his ghost in Hades. His labours, including dragging Cerberus the hound out of Hell. His wife was Hebe.

**Bk XXI:**1-79 He killed Iphitus and stole he mares.

Hermes

The messenger god, son of Zeus and the Pleiad Maia, the daughter of Atlas. His birthplace was Mount Cyllene. He had winged feet, and a winged cap, carried a scimitar, and had a magic wand, the caduceus, with twin snakes twined around it, that brought sleep and healing. The caduceus is the symbol of medicine. (See Botticelli's painting Primavera.) He was
summoned by Zeus to lull Argus, the many-eyed monstrous guard of Io, to sleep and killed him.

**Bk I:22-43** Sent to warn Aegisthus.

**Bk I:44-95** Athene suggests he be sent to Ogygia to tell Calypso that Odysseus must return home.

**Bk V:1-42** Bk V:43-91 Bk V:92-147 Zeus sends him to Calypso to tell her that Odysseus must be released from her isle.

**Bk V:148-191** Bk V:192-261 He leaves Calypso’s isle.

**Bk VII:133-181** The Phaeacians pour libations to him (as god of trade?)

**Bk VIII:256-366** He jokes with Apollo at Ares’ and Aphrodite’s predicament.

**Bk X:251-301** Bk X:302-347 Called the god ‘of the Golden Wand’. He helps Odysseus by giving him the magic herb, moly. (*Moly* has been variously identified as ‘wild rue’, wild cyclamen, and a sort of garlic, *allium moly*. John Gerard’s Herbal of 1633 Ch.100 gives seven plants under this heading, of which the
third, *Moly Homericum*, is he suggests the *Moly* of Theophrastus, Pliny and Homer – and he describes it as wild garlic.  

**Bk XI:593-640** He guided *Heracles* in *Hades*.  
**Bk XII:374-453** He told *Calypso* about *Helios*’ complaint to the gods.  
**Bk XIV:409-456** *Eumaeus* sets aside a portion of meat and prays to him. (As a god of herdsmen)  
**Bk XV:301-350** Odysseus invokes him.  
**Bk XVI:452-481** The Hill of Hermes on *Ithaca*, implying his worship there.  
**Bk XIX:361-47** He favours *Autolycus*.  
**Bk XXIV:1-56**  
**Bk XXIV:98-204** *Cyllenian*, from Mount Cyllene. He conducts the ghosts of the *Suitors* to *Hades*. He is the Helper or Deliverer, so beneficent.  

**Hermione**  
The daughter of *Menelaus* and *Helen*.  
**Bk IV:1-58** She is said to have *Aphrodite*’s beauty, and is to be married to *Neoptolemus*.  

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Hippodameia
Penelope’s maid.
Bk XVIII:158-205 Penelope summons her.

Hippotas
The father of Aeolus, king of the winds.
Bk X:1-55 Mentioned.

Hylax
A fictitious Cretan.
Bk XIV:165-234 The father of Castor(2).

Hypereie
Somewhere close to Sicily, probably southern Italy, where the Phaeacians lived before migrating to Scherie.
Bk VI:1-47 Mentioned.

Hyperesia
Modern Egira in Achaia in Western Greece.
Bk XV:222-270 The home of Polypheides.

Hyperion, Helios
A name used for the sun god, and his father. Created by Eurynome, the Goddess of All Things. Also called Helios.

**Bk I:1-21** His cattle eaten by Odysseus’ followers, causing him to take revenge by denying their return home.

**Bk I:22-43** The sun sets and rises at the two remote extremities of the Earth, to east and west, inhabited by ‘Ethiopians’.

**Bk VIII:256-366** He tells Hephaestus of his wife Aphrodite’s infidelity.

**Bk X:133-197** The father of Circe and Aeetes, by Perse.

**Bk XI:90-149** His sacred cattle on the island of Thrinacia. Teiresias warns Odysseus not to touch them.

**Bk XII:111-164** Circe repeats the warning.

**Bk XII:165-200** The heat of the sun.

**Bk XII:260-319** Odysseus reaches his island of Thrinacia.

**Bk XII:320-373** Bk XIX:220-307 Odysseus’ crew steal his cattle.
Bk XII:374-453 He complains to the gods about the theft of his cattle.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale.

Iardanus
A river in Cydonia (Khania in Crete).
Bk III:253-312 Mentioned.

Iasion
A Titan.
Bk V:92-147 Loved by Demeter. Killed by her brother Zeus.

Iasus (1)
King of Orchomenus.
Bk XI:225-332 The father of Amphion (2).

Iasus (2)
King of Cyprus, father of Dmetor.
Bk XVII:396-461 Mentioned.

Iasus (3)
The legendary son of Phoroneus. When he died Phoroneus’ sons, Pelasgus, Iasus, and Agenor divided the Peloponnese between them. **Bk XVIII:206-283 Argos** is described as Iasian.

Icarius
The father of **Penelope**.


Mentioned as Penelope’s father.

**Bk II:35-84** He has the right to marry her off if **Odysseus** is dead.

**Bk II:129-176** If Penelope remarries, **Telemachus** must repay the bride price from her marriage to Odysseus.

**Bk IV:795-847** The father of Penelope’s sister, **Iphthime**.
Icmalius
A craftsman.
Bk XIX:53-99 He made Penelope’s inlaid chair.

Idomeneus
King of Crete, leader of the Cretan contingent fighting against Troy.
Bk III:148-200 He returned safely from Troy.
Bk XIII:256-310 Odysseus pretends to have killed his son Orsilochus.
Bk XIV:235-292 Odysseus pretends to have been a Cretan who went to Troy with Idomenues.
Bk XIV:360-408 Eumaeus has heard of Odysseus being in Idomeneus’ palace.
Bk XIX:164-219 He was the son of Deucalion.

Ilium, Ilios, Troy
The citadel of Troy, named after Ilus son of Dardanus.
Bk II:1-34 Famous for its horses.
Bk IX:1-62 The citadel destroyed at the end of the Trojan War.
Odysseus fought there. Penelope calls it ‘Ilium the Evil’.

Ilus
The son of Mermerus.
Odysseus visited him seeking poison for his arrow-heads.

Ino, Leucothoe
The daughter of Cadmus, and wife of Athamas, and sister of Semele and Agave. She fostered the infant Dionysus. She incurred the hatred of Hera, and maddened by the Fury, Tisiphone, and the death of her son Learchus, at the hand of his father, she leapt into the sea, and was changed to the sea-goddess Leucothoë by Poseidon, at Aphrodite’s request.
Bk V:313-387 As Leucothea, she aids Odysseus by lending him her veil.
Bk V:451-493 Odysseus returns her veil.

Iocasta, Jocasta, see Epicaste

Iolcus, Iolchos, Iolciacus
A seaport town in Thessaly from which the Argonauts sailed.
Bk XI:225-332 Pelias was its king.

Iphiclus, Iphicles
King of Phylace.
Bk XI:225-332 Bk XV:222-270 The son of Phylacus. Melampus stole his cattle in order to win Pero for his brother Bias.

Iphimedea
The daughter of Triops, seduced by Poseidon.
Bk XI:225-332 The mother of Ephialtes and Otus, the Aloeids. Her ghost appeared to Odysseus.
Iphitus
The son of Eurytus.
Bk XXI:1-79 He gave Odysseus a bow. He was killed by Heracles.

Iphthime
Daughter of Icarius, wife of Eumelus, and sister to Penelope.
Bk IV:795-847 Athene sends a phantom in her likeness to Penelope.

Irus
An Ithacan beggar.
Bk XVIII:1-49 He threatens Odysseus.

Ismarus
The wine-growing region of the Thracian coast, north of the island of Samothrace.
Bk IX:1-62 Bk IX:63-104 The Cicones lived there.
Bk IX:193-255 Apollo was its guardian god.

Ithaca
The island home of Odysseus, off the coast of Greece, in the Ionian Sea (to the west of mainland Greece, traditionally accepted as the modern Thiaki).

Bk IX:480-525 Bk IX:526-566 Bk X:503-574
Bk XI:1-50
Bk XI:90-149 Bk XI:465-540 Bk XII:320-373
Bk XIV:109-164
Bk XIV:293-359 Bk XVI:1-59 Bk XVIII:1-49
Bk XX:299-344
Bk XXI:245-310 Bk XXII:1-67 Bk XXIII:141-204
Bk XXIV:205-30 Odysseus’ homeland.
Bk I:44-95 Athene proposes to visit Telemachus there.
Bk I:96-155 Bk I:156-212 Athene visits Ithaca disguised as Mentes.
The island is the power center for the *locale*, and supports a local aristocracy, and potentially a ‘king’.

Called ‘clear-skied’ (clearly-seen).

An island of sea-farers.

Nestor asks if a god has turned its people against Telemachus.

The island is goat-pasture, with steep cliffs, unsuitable for horses.

The straits between Ithaca and rocky Samos, containing the island of Asteris.

A problematic statement that Ithaca is low in the sea and furthest west. For a discussion on identification problems see Ernle Bradford’s ‘Ulysses Found’ Appendix II.

Anticleia’s ghost asks whether Odysseus has yet been home to Ithaca.

The Phaeacian ship carrying Odysseus reaches the island.
Bk XIII:159-215 Odysseus wakes and fails to recognise the island.

Bk XIII:216-255 A description of the nature of the island. Rugged, unsuitable for horses, rich in crops and vineyards, good goat and cattle pasture, wooded and well-watered.

Bk XIII:256-310 Its name is widely known because of Odysseus.

Bk XIII:311-365 Odysseus fails to recognise the island at first.

Bk XIV:48-108 Bk XVII:204-253 The goat herds grazed on the island.

Bk XIV:165-234 The home of Arceisius’ race.

Bk XV:222-270 Telemachus’ homeland.

Bk XV:403-492 Eumaeus explains how he comes to be on Ithaca.

Bk XV:493-557 Telemachus reaches home.

Bk XVI:213-257 It provides twelve of the hundred and eight Suitors.


Bk XVI:393-451 Antinous has a high reputation on the island.
Bk XIX:361-47  Autolycus once visited the island.
Bk XXI:1-79  The Messenians stole sheep from the island.
Bk XXI:80-135  Penelope is the most beautiful of its women.
Bk XXIV:98-204  Amphimedon had hosted Agamemnon on his visit there.
Bk XXIV:302-355  Laertes anticipates revenge by the men of Ithaca.
Bk XXIV:412-462  The Ithacans gather at the meeting-place.
Bk XXIV:502-54  Athene orders the Ithacans to cease fighting.

Ithacus
A co-builder of the Fountain of the Nymphs on Ithaca.
Bk XVII:204-253  Mentioned.

Itylus
The son of Zethus and Aedon.
Bk XIX:508-553  Killed accidentally by Aedon.
Jason
The son of Aeson, leader of the Argonauts, and hero of the adventure of the Golden Fleece. The fleece is represented in the sky by the constellation and zodiacal sign of Aries, the Ram. In ancient times it contained the point of the vernal equinox (The First Point of Aries) that has since moved by precession into Pisces. Bk XII:36-110 Hera assisted him.

Lacedaemon
Bk XV:1-55 Athene travels there to prompt Telemachus to return home.
Bk XXI:1-79 Visited by Odysseus as a youth, when he met Iphitus.

Laerces
The goldsmith in Pylos.
Bk III:404-463 He gilds the horns of the sacrificial heifer.

Laertes
The father of Odysseus, and son of Arceisius.
Bk I:156-212 He is living a rural existence on Ithaca, in self-imposed exile from the royal palace.
Bk I:421-444 He purchased Eurycleia as a slave, but honoured her in the palace.
Bk II:85-128 Bk XIX:100-163 Bk XXIV:98-204 Penelope weaves a shroud for him.
Bk IV:59-112 Menelaus imagines he must be grieving for Odysseus.
The father of Odysseus.

Penelope sends Dolius to him.

The ghost of Anticleia, his wife, describes his sad life on Ithaca.

Eumaeus built his hut and yard without Laertes knowledge.

Like Eumaeus he desires Odysseus’ return.
Bk XIV:409-456 Eumaeus has purchased a slave without his knowledge.

Bk XV:351-40 Eumaeus speaks about him.

Bk XV:403-492 His wealth originally purchased Eumaeus.

Bk XVI:112-153 He is an only son with an only son. He is grieving for Odysseus, and for Telemachus’ absence.

Bk XVI:258-320 Telemachus is not to tell him about Odysseus’ return.

Bk XXII:160-199 His old shield stored away among the weapons.

Bk XXII:310-377 His sacrifices to Zeus at the great altar in the courtyard.

Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus decides to head for the farm to see him.

Bk XXIV:205-30 Odysseus tests his ability to recognise his own son.

Bk XXIV:302-355 Odysseus reveals himself to him.

Bk XXIV:356-411 His Sicilian maid bathes him.
Bk XXIV:463-501  He dons armour to fight for Odysseus.
Bk XXIV:502-54  He is delighted by his son’s and grandson’s courage.

Laestrygonians
A race of giant cannibals.
Bk X:56-102  Odysseus reaches their harbour.
Bk X:103-132  Antiphates their chief attacks Odysseus’ men.
Bk X:198-250  Odysseus’ men remember their savagery.
Bk XXIII:300-372  Odysseus tells the tale.

Lampetia, Lampetie
Bk XII:111-164  A shepherdess of Hyperion’s herds.
Bk XII:374-453  She tells Hyperion about the theft of his cattle.

Lampus
One of the horses that pulls Dawn’s chariot.
Bk XXIII:205-246 Held back by Athene.

Lamus
An ancient king of the Laestrygonians.
Bk X:56-102 His citadel.

Laodamas
Son of Alcinous.
Bk VII:133-181 Described as ‘kindly’: Alcinous’ favourite son.
Bk VIII:104-151 Bk VIII:152-198 Bk VIII:199-255 The finest of the Phaeacians. He competes in the Games, wins the boxing contest, and challenges Odysseus to compete also. He is Odysseus’ host at the Games.
Bk VIII:367-415 He is a fine dancer.

Lapithae
An ancient people of south western Thessaly. The marriage of Peirithoüs and Hippodameia was disrupted by Eurytion one of the Centaurs invited to the feast, leading to the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs. (See the
sculpture from the west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia – e.g. the detail, Lapith Woman and Centaur)

**Bk XXI:245-310** The battle between Lapiths and Centaurs.

Leda
The daughter of Thestius and wife of the Spartan king **Tyndareus**. She had twin sons **Castor** and Polydeuces (Pollux), the Tyndaridae, following her rape by **Zeus** in the form of a swan. Castor and Pollux are represented in the sky by the two bright stars in the constellation of Gemini, the Twins. They were the protectors of mariners appearing in the rigging as the electrical phenomenon now known as St Elmo’s fire. Gemini contains the radiant of the Geminid meteor shower. (See the painting Leda, by Gustave Moreau in the Gustave Moreau Museum Paris)

**Bk XI:225-332** Her ghost appears to Odysseus.

Lemnos
The northern Aegean island. The home of **Hephaestus** the blacksmith of the gods.  
**Bk VIII:256-366** Hephaestus journeys there.

Leocritus  
A Suitor, the son of **Evenor**.  
**Bk XXII:241-309** Wounded by **Telemachus**.

Leodes  
A **Suitor**. The son of **Oenops**.  
**Bk XXI:136-185** He attempts to string **Odysseus**’ bow.  
**Bk XXII:310-377** He is killed by Odysseus.

Lesbos  
The island (modern Lesvos) in the eastern Aegean off the west coast of Turkey. Among its cities were Mytilene and Methymna. Famous as the home of Sappho the poetess, whose love of women gave rise to the term **lesbian**.  
**Bk III:148-200** Passed by **Nestor**’s fleet during its return from Troy.

Leto
Daughter of the Titan Coeus, and mother of Apollo and Artemis by Zeus. Pursued by a jealous Hera, she was given sanctuary by Delos, a floating island. There between an olive tree and a date-palm she gave birth to Apollo and Artemis, by Mount Cynthus. Delos became fixed. A variant has Artemis born on the nearby islet of Ortygia.
Bk VI:48-109  The mother of Artemis, proud of her daughter’s beauty.
Bk XI:225-332  The mother of Apollo.
Bk XI:541-592  Tityos attempted to rape her at Delphi.

Leucothoe, Leucothea, see Ino
The White Goddess, the sea-goddess into whom Ino was changed. She is a manifestation of the
Great Goddess in her archetypal form. (See Robert Graves’s ‘The White Goddess’)  
**Bk V:313-387** She aids **Odysseus**.

**Libya**  
The country in North Africa.  
**Bk IV:59-112** Visited by **Menelaus** in his wanderings.  
**Bk XIV:293-359** **Odysseus** pretends to have visited there.

**Lotus-Eaters**  
A people who live on the fruit of the ‘lotus’. Based on the sailing time, Ernle Bradford speculates that they lived on the island of Jerba, off the coast of Libya (See ‘Ulysses Found’ chapter 5). The ‘lotus’ itself was possibly *cordia myxa*, which has a sloe-like fruit. The current inhabitants are Berbers, a possible source of the Greek word ‘Barbaros’ for a barbarian, one whose language was unintelligible.
**Bk IX:63-104** Odysseus rescues his men from their lotus-induced lethargy.
**Bk XXIII:300-372** Odysseus tells the tale.

Maera
A heroine who served Artemis and was killed for her unchastity.
**Bk XI:225-332** Her ghost appeared to Odysseus.

Maia
A daughter of Atlas, a Pleiad, and mother of Hermes by Zeus.
**Bk XIV:409-456** Hermes’ mother.

Malea
Cape Malea, the southeastern tip of Lakonia in the southern Peloponnese.
**Bk III:253-312** Menelaus’ fleet meets with a gale there.
**Bk IV:512-547** Agamemnon’s ship is carried from there towards the Argolis.
Bk IX:63-104  Odysseus is driven south past the nearby island of  Cythera and away from his homeward route to the west.
Bk XIX:164-219  Odysseus was supposedly blown off course here, to  Crete on his way to  Troy.

Mantius
The son of  Melampus, father of  Polypheides, and grandfather of  Theoclymenus.
Bk XV:222-270  Mentioned.

Marathon
A town and plain on the east coast of Attica. Site of the famous Greek victory in the war against Persia (490BC).
Bk VII:78-132  Athene passes it on her way to  Athens (south-west of Marathon).

Maron
A priest of  Apollo at  Ismarus.
Bk IX:193-255  He gave  Odysseus gifts and wine in return for protection.
Mastor
The father of Halitherses.
Bk II:129-176 Bk XXIV:412-462 Mentioned.

Medon
A herald in Odysseus’ palace, sympathetic to Penelope.
Bk IV:675-720 He tells Penelope that Telemachus has gone to Pylos.
Bk XVI:213-257 Mentioned by Telemachus.
Bk XVI:393-451 He had warned Penelope of the Suitors’ plot.
Bk XVII:166-203 He calls the Suitors to dinner. He is the most popular of the heralds.
Bk XXII:310-377 Spared by Telemachus.
Bk XXIV:412-462 he speaks to the Ithacans.

Megapenthes
The son of Menelaus by a slave woman.
Bk IV:1-58 He is betrothed to Alector’s daughter.
Bk XV:56-119 He helps Menelaus choose gifts for Telemachus.
Bk XV:120-182 He presents his gift to Telemachus.

Megara
The eldest daughter of King Creon of Thebes.
Bk XI:225-332 Heracles married her, after defeating the Minyan assault on Thebes. Her children by him were the Alcaids. Her ghost appears to Odysseus.

Melampus
The Minyan seer, grandon of Cretheus, who lived at Pylus in Messene. The first mortal to be granted prophetic powers, and practice as a physician.
Bk XI:225-332 Bk XV:222-270 He stole the cattle of Iphiclus, to help his brother Bias win the hand of Pero. Theoclymenus is his descendant.

Melaneus
The father of Amphimedon.  
Bk XXIV:98-204 Mentioned.

Melanthius  
A hostile goat-herd, the son of Dolius.  
Bk XVII:204-253  Bk XX:172-239  He abuses Odysseus.  
Bk XVII:254-289  He sits among the Suitors.  
Bk XVII:328-395  He associates Odysseus with Eumaeus.  
Bk XX:240-298  He serves at the feast.  
Bk XXI:245-310  Appointed to bring the best she-goats for the feast.  
Bk XXII:116-159  He raids the storeroom to bring the Suitors weapons.  
Bk XXII:160-199  He is captured by Eumaeus and Philoetius.  
Bk XXII:200-240  He is left hanging, tied up in the storeroom.  
Bk XXII:433-501  He is mutilated.

Melantho
A treacherous maidservant, the daughter of Dolius. Eurymachus’ lover.

Memnon
The son of the Dawn, who fought for Troy in the Trojan War with Greece.
Bk IV:155-219 He killed Antilochnus, Nestor’s son.
Bk XI:465-540 His great beauty, compared to Neoptolemus’.

Menelaus
King of Sparta. The younger son of Atreus, brother of Agamemnon, hence called Atrides minor. Paris’s theft of his wife Helen instigated the Trojan War.
Bk I:252-305 Athene suggests Telemachus visit him to seek news of his father.
Bk III:102-147 Quarreled with Agamemnon, recommending a speedy return from Troy.
Bk III:148-200 His ships joined Nestor’s during the return from Troy.
Bk III:201-252 Telemachus asks about Menelaus’ return from Troy.
Bk III:253-312 Menelaus returned safely by way of Crete and Egypt.
Bk III:313-355 Nestor advises Telemachus to visit him. Described as ‘yellow-haired’.
Bk IV:1-58 Bk XVII:107-165 Telemachus arrives at his palace, and Menelaus offers hospitality.
Bk IV:59-112 His wanderings. He grieves for Odysseus.
Bk IV:113-154 He recognises Telemachus must be Odysseus’s son once Helen has acknowledged the resemblance.
Bk IV:155-219 He attests his love for Odysseus.
Bk IV:220-289 He speaks about the Wooden Horse.
Bk IV:290-350 He promises to tell Telemachus all he knows of Odysseus.
Bk IV:398-463 He captured Proteus.
Proteus advises him that he must return to Egypt before sailing home and relates the fate of Ajax the Lesser.

Proteus tells Menelaus of his fate.

Telemachus seeks to leave Sparta. He gives him gifts.

He and Odysseus attacked Deiphobus’ house at the fall of Troy.

King of Sparta. Agamemnon’s ghost mentions him.

Athena goes to seek Telemachus at his palace.

Odysseus invents a tale of himself and Menelaus at Troy.

Athena finds Telemachus in Menelaus’ palace.

He chooses gifts for Telemachus and sees him off.

Peiraeus is custodian of his gifts to Telemachus.
He visited Ithaca with Agamemnon.

Menoetius
The son of Opus, and father of Patroclus.
Mentioned.

Mentes
King of the Taphians, a friend of Odysseus.
Athene disguises herself as him to visit Telemachus.

Mentor
An Ithacan friend of Odysseus, whom Odysseus left in charge of his house when leaving for Troy.
He supports Telemachus in the assembly.
Athene assumes his form to aid Telemachus.
Athene still assumes his form at Nestor’s court.
Bk IV:625-674  Noemon is confused by Mentor’s presence in two places at once.
Bk XVII:61-106  Telemachus recognises him as an old friend of Odysseus.
Bk XXII:200-240  Bk XXII:241-309  Athene assumes his form to help Odysseus. He is the son of Alcimus.
Bk XXIV:412-462  Medon claims to have recognised Athene in disguise.
Bk XXIV:502-54  Disguised as Mentor, Athene makes peace.

Mermerus
The father of Ilus.
Bk I:252-305  Mentioned.

Mesaulius
A slave belonging to Eumaeus.
Bk XIV:409-456  Purchased from the Taphians.

Messene
A region of south-western Greece.
Bk XXI:1-79  Odysseus met Iphitus there.
Mimas
The large peninsula on the west coast of Turkey opposite Chios.
Bk III:148-200 A possible route for Nestor’s ships, but rejected.

Minos
King of Crete. A son of Zeus.
Bk XI:225-332 Father of Ariadne.
Bk XI:541-592 Zeus made him a judge of the dead in the Underworld.
Bk XVII:505-550 The Cretans are his descendants.
Bk XIX:164-219 Her ruled Crete from Cnossus, and Homer implies some kind of nine-year cycle associated with divine kingship.

Mulius
Squire to Amphinomus of Dulichium.
Bk XVIII:394-428 He mixes wine for the Suitors.
Muse
The daughter of Mnemosyne, goddess of Memory, and Zeus. Patroness of poetry and literature.

Bk I:1-21 Invoked by Homer.
Bk VIII:62-103 She loves and inspires the bard Demodocus. She robbed him of sight but gave him the gift of song.
Bk VIII:469-520 The daughter of Zeus.
Bk XXIV:57-97 Here the Muse is both one and nine-fold. The nine Muses sing the dirge for the dead Achilles.

Mycenae
The royal city in the Argolis, near the cities of Argos and Tiryns. Excavated by Schliemann who opened the beehive tombs of the royal tomb circle. Famous for its Lion Gate once topped perhaps by a statue of the Cretan Great Goddess.
Bk III:253-312 Ruled by King Agamemnon. Aegisthus usurped the throne after murdering
Agamamenon, but was in turn killed by Orestes.
Bk XXI:80-135 A major city of Achaea, noted for its women.

Mycene
An ancient heroine.
Bk II:85-128 A famous woman of early Greece.

Myrmidons
The Myrmidons, a race of men led by Achilles to the war against Troy. The name presumably derived from the Greek word for ant, μύρμηξ. In later mythology said to be a race created from ants.
Bk III:148-200 They returned safely from Troy.
Bk IV:1-58 Ruled by Achilles’ son Neoptolemus after the Trojan war.
Bk XI:465-540 Once ruled by Peleus, then his son Achilles.

Naubolus
The father of Euryalus.
Bk VIII:104-151 Said to be the finest of the Phaeacians after Laodamas.

Nausicæa
Daughter of Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, and Arete his wife.
Bk VI:1-47 Athene prompts her to go and wash clothes by the shore.
Bk VI:48-109 She goes to the river and shore.
Bk VI:198-250 She offers Odysseus hospitality.
Bk VI:251-315 She gives Odysseus directions.
Bk VII:1-77 She reaches the palace. Her maidservant Eurymedusa.
Bk VIII:416-468 She hopes Odysseus will remember her for saving his life.

Nausithous
The father of Alcinous, who led the Phaeacians to Scherie.
Bk VI:1-47 Mentioned.
The son of Poseidon and Periboea. Founder of Alcinous’ line.

His tale of Poseidon’s anger with the Phaeacians, and his prediction.

Nauteus
A Phaeacian.
He competes in the Games.

The mother of the nymphs Phaethusa and Lampetia by the Sun-god.
She sent them to guard his flocks.

Neion, Mount Nerithon
A prominent peak on Ithaca.
Mentioned.

King of Pylos, son of Poseidon and the nymph Tyro. Father of Nestor, and his eleven brothers including Periclymenus.
Bk III:1-50  Bk III:51-101  Bk III:201-252  
Mentioned as father of Nestor.

Bk III:404-463  Bk IV:625-674  
Once the king of Pylos.

Bk XI:225-332  
Neleus drove the Lelegians out of Pylos and became its king.

Bk XV:222-270  Melampus  
won Neleus’ daughter Pero for his brother Bias.

Neoptolemus (Pyrrhus)
The son of Achilles.

Bk IV:1-58  
He married Hermione.

Bk XI:465-540  
His presence at Troy. Praised by Odysseus to his father Achilles’ ghost. 
Andromache was his ‘noble prize’.

Nericus
A citadel on the coast of mainland Greece.

Bk XXIV:356-411  
Taken by Laertes.

Neriton
A mountain on Ithaca.

Bk IX:1-62  
Mentioned by Odysseus.
Bk XIII:311-365  Athene points it out to Odysseus.

Neritus
A co-builder of the Fountain of the Nymphs on Ithaca.
Bk XVII:204-253 Mentioned.

Nestor
King of Pylos, and son of Neleus. Noted in the Iliad for his wisdom and eloquence.
Bk I:252-305  Athene suggests Telemachus visit him to seek news of his father.
Bk III:1-50  Called ‘the tamer of horses’, noted for his wisdom and honesty. Athene advises Telemachus to approach him directly.
Bk III:51-101  Called Gerenian, from Gerenia. The grandson of Poseidon to whom Athene, as Mentor, purports to pray, for his and his sons’ glory.
Bk III:102-147  He describes the Atreides quarrel.
Bk III:201-252  He answers Telemachus.
He advises Telemachus to seek out Menelaus. He displays his hospitality.

He recognises Athene’s presence, and offers prayers to her.

He sacrifices to Athene.

His youngest daughter Polycaste.

His son Peisistratus.

He initially sailed home with Menelaus, but their ships were separated.

The son of Neleus and Chloris.

Famous for his eloquence and wisdom.

Nisus
The father of Amphinomus.

Mentioned. A nobleman with a reputation for good sense and peaceful ways.

Noemon
The son of Phronius, an Ithacan.  
**Bk II:382-434** He provides a ship for Athene and Telemachus.  
**Bk IV:625-674** He reveals Telemachus journey to the Suitors, and is puzzled by Mentor’s presence in two places at once.

Nymphs  
Lesser female divinities of streams, water, hills, trees etc.  
**Bk VI:48-109** Followers of Artemis.  
**Bk IX:152-192** Daughters of Zeus.  
**Bk XII:260-319** Their cave and dancing place on Thrinacia.  
**Bk XIII:96-158  Bk XIII:311-365** The Naiads, or sea-nymphs. Their cave on Ithaca. (Note the later use of the imagery here in a Neo-Platonic symbolic context, e.g. Plotinus, Blake)  
**Bk XIV:409-456** Eumaeus sets aside a portion of meat and prays to them.  
**Bk XVII:204-253** The Fountain of the Nymphs on Ithaca.
Ocean, Oceanos
The river encircling the world. The Ocean, personified as a sea-god, son of Earth and Air, and husband of Tethys his sister. Oceanus and Tethys are also the Titan and Titaness ruling the planet Venus. Some say from his waters all living things originated and Tethys produced all his children.

Bk IV:548-592 The encircling sea.
Bk X:133-197 The father of Perse.
Bk XII:1-35 Bk XXIV:1-56 Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. lies beyond the River of Ocean. (Perhaps beyond the Pillars of Hercules in the Atlantic.)
Bk XIX:361-47 The eastern sea from which the sun rises in western Greece.
Bk XX:56-119 Beyond its mouth is the region where the Furies live.
Ocyalus
A Phaeacian.
**Bk VIII:104-151** He competes in the Games.

**Odysseus (Ulysses)**
The son of [Laertes](#) (son of [Arceisius](#)), husband of [Penelope](#), and hero of the Odyssey.
**Bk I:1-21** The subject of [Poseidon](#)’s hostility.
**Bk I:44-95** [Bk V:1-42](#) [Athene](#) pleads for him to be allowed to return home from the island of [Ogygia](#) where [Calypso](#) detains him. He has been noted for his sacrifices to [Zeus](#) and the gods at [Troy](#).
He has vanished, seemingly without trace, on the way back from Troy.

Bk I:252-305 His weaponry: helmet shield, twin spears, poison tipped bronze-headed arrows. The revenge he will take on the suitors if he returns.

Bk II:85-128 Penelope assumes he is dead.

Bk II:129-176 Halitherses prophesies his return.

Bk II:177-223 Eurymachus claims he is dead.

Bk II:223-259 He is described as ‘divine’ and ‘faultless’. He left Mentor in charge of his house.

Bk II:337-381 His store room in the palace, and his nurse Eurycleia.

Bk III:102-147 A friend and ally of Nestor, he was supreme in counsel.

Bk III:148-200 Separated from Nestor on the return journey.

Bk III:201-252 He is cherished by Athene.

Bk IV:59-112 Menelaus mourns his absence.
Bk IV:220-289 Helen and Menelaus tell of his exploits at Troy.
Bk IV:290-350 A friend of Menelaus at Troy.
Bk IV:548-592 Proteus says he is imprisoned on Calypso’s isle.
Bk IV:721-766 His sacred line descended from Arceisius.
Bk V:43-91 He is captive on Calypso’s isle, but Zeus orders her to release him.
Bk V:148-191 Calypso tells him to build a raft, and leave.
Bk V:192-261 He builds the raft.
Bk V:262-312 Bk V:313-387 He is caught in a storm sent by Poseidon and helped by Leucothea, the White Goddess.
Bk V:388-450 He tries to reach the land.
Bk V:451-493 Bk VI:1-47 He comes ashore on Phaeacia and sleeps in a bed of leaves.
Bk VI:316-33 He prays to Athene.
Bk VII:133-181  Bk VII:182-239 He comes to Arete and Alcinous as a suppliant.
Bk VII:240-297 He recounts his arrival to Arete and Alcinous.
Bk VII:298-347 He spends the night in the palace of Alcinous.
Bk VIII:1-61 He attends the gathering of Phaeacians.
Bk VIII:62-103 Moved when the bard sings of his quarrel with Achilles.
Bk VIII:152-198 Bk VIII:199-255 He competes in the games, throwing the discus. He asserts his prowess.
Bk VIII:367-415 He receives gifts, and an apology from Euryalus.
Bk VIII:469-520 He praises the bard, Demodocus, and asks him to sing.
Bk VIII:521-585 He is moved by the tale of the Wooden Horse.
Bk IX:1-62 He begins to relate his voyage from Troy. The Cicones.
Bk IX:152-192 Bk IX:193-255 He reaches Sicily and the Cyclops’ cave.
Bk IX:360-412 Bk IX:413-479 He blinds the Cyclops and escapes from the cave tied underneath a ram.
Bk IX:480-525 He flees from Polyphemus.
Bk IX:526-566 Polyphemus prays to his father Poseidon to oppose Odysseus’ homecoming.
Bk X:1-55 Aeolus gives him gifts including the bag of winds.
Bk X:56-102 He is driven back to Aeolia when his crew open the bag of winds. He subsequently reaches the land of Laestrygonians.
Bk X:103-132 He escapes from the Laestrygonians.
Bk X:133-197 He investigates Circe’s island.
Bk X:251-301 He is helped by Hermes.
Bk X:302-347 He evades Circe’s magic spell, with the magic plant moly.
Bk X:348-399 He persuades Circe to free his crew.
Bk X:400-448 He gathers his men together in Circe’s hall.
Circe advises him that he must visit the House of Hades, and tells him what to do there.

He summons the spirits of the dead. He speaks with the ghost of Elpenor.

Teiresias prophesies his homecoming, the slaying of the Suitors, his old age and death.

He speaks with his mother Anticleia’s ghost.

Alcinous asks him to continue his narration.

He speaks with the ghost of Agamemnon.

He speaks with the ghost of Achilles.

He speaks with the ghosts of Ajax and Heracles.

He returns to Circe’s island.

Circe advises him on his route.

He passes the Sirens’ island.
Bk XII:201-259 He passes Charybdis and Scylla.
Bk XII:260-319 He argues for not landing on Thrinacia.
Bk XII:320-373 Odysseus discovers his men have stolen Helios’ cattle.
Bk XII:374-453 Zeus punishes him for the theft, and he is driven ashore alone on Ogygia.
Bk XIII:1-52 He asks Alcinous for leave to travel home.
Bk XIII:53-95 He journeys home to Ithaca.
Bk XIII:96-158 The Phaeacians land him on the island.
Bk XIII:159-215 Waking on Ithaca, he fails to recognise it.
Bk XIII:216-255 He meets Athene disguised as a shepherd boy.
Bk XIII:256-310 He tries to deceive Athene as to who he is.
Bk XIII:311-365 Odysseus complains about Athene’s neglect of him.
Bk XIII:366-415 He asks Athene’s help.
Bk XIII:416-440  Athene disguises him as an old beggar.
Bk XIV:1-47  Odysseus finds Eumaeus the swineherd where Athene had said.
Bk XIV:48-108  Eumaeus describes the Suitors’ ravages to him.
Bk XIV:165-234  Bk XIV:293-359  He pretends to be a Cretan and to have visited Egypt, Phoenicia and Thesprotia.
Bk XIV:360-408  He fails to convince Eumaeus that he is still alive.
Bk XIV:409-456  Eumaeus provides him with supper.
Bk XIV:457-506  He invents a story of himself at Troy.
Bk XV:120-182  Telemachus wishes him home in Ithaca.
Bk XV:301-350  He tests Eumaeus’ hospitality.
Bk XV:351-40  He enquires about his parents.
Bk XV:403-492  He listens to Eumaeus’ tale.
Bk XV:493-557 His lineage represents the royal line of Ithaca.
Bk XVI:1-59 He tries to give up his seat to Telemachus.
Bk XVI:60-111 He expresses his wish to deal with the Suitors.
Bk XVI:112-153 He is an only son with an only son.
Bk XVI:154-212 He reveals his identity to Telemachus.
Bk XVI:213-257 He explains his arrival, and asks about the Suitors.
Bk XVI:258-320 He and Telemachus make plans.
Bk XVI:393-451 He once saved the life of Antinous’ father.
Bk XVI:452-481 Eumaeus returns to him and his son with news.
Bk XVII:1-60 He elects to go as a beggar to the palace.
Bk XVII:107-165  Theoclymenus prophesies his return.
Bk XVII:166-203  He sets out for the palace.
Bk XVII:204-253  Melanthius attacks and abuses him.
Bk XVII:254-289  Odysseus reaches the palace.
Bk XVII:290-327  The death of his hound, Argus.
Bk XVII:328-395  Bk XVII:396-461  He begs among the Suitors.
Bk XVII:462-504  Antinous hurls a stool at him.
Bk XVII:505-550  Penelope summons him to see her.
Bk XVII:551-606  He declines to see Penelope until later.
Bk XVIII:1-49  He responds to Irus the beggar’s challenge.
Bk XVIII:50-116  He defeats Irus.
Bk XVIII:117-157  He warns Amphinomus.
Bk XVIII:284-339  He threatens the maids with reprisals.
Bk XVIII:340-393  He responds to Eurymachus’ taunts.
Bk XVIII:394-428 He avoids Eurymachus’ attack on him.
Bk XIX:1-52 He and Telemachus hide the weapons.
Bk XIX:53-99 Melantho abuses him again.
Bk XIX:100-163 Penelope questions him.
Bk XIX:164-219 Odysseus give Penelope a false history of himself.
Bk XIX:220-307 He prophesies his own return.
Bk XIX:308-360 He asks for an old woman to wash his feet.
Bk XIX:361-47 Eurycleia, the old nurse, recognises him.
Bk XIX:476-507 He enjoins Eurycleia to secrecy.
Bk XIX:554-604 He assures Penelope that Odysseus will soon return.
Bk XX:1-55 Athene visits him in sleep to encourage him.
Bk XX:56-119 He seeks omens from Zeus.
Bk XX:120-171 He is delighted by the omens sent him.
Bk XX:240-298 He sits among the Suitors.
Bk XX:299-344 Ctesippus throws an ox-hoof at him.
Bk XXI:1-79 Penelope brings out his bow.
Bk XXI:80-135 Antinous met him when Antinous was a child.
Bk XXI:136-185 Penelope, his wife.
Bk XXI:186-244 He reveals his identity to Eumaeus and Philoetius.
Bk XXI:245-310 Bk XXI:311-358 He seeks to string the great bow.
Bk XXI:359-403 He strings the bow and succeeds with the test.
Bk XXII:1-67 He kills Antinous.
Bk XXII:68-115 He kills Eurymachus.
Bk XXII:116-159 He slaughters others of the Suitors.
Bk XXII:160-199 He orders his men to capture Melanthius.
Bk XXII:200-240 He welcomes the help of Athene, disguised as Mentor.
Bk XXII:241-309 He fights with the Suitors, wounding Demoptolemus, Eurydamas, and Agelaus.
Bk XXII:310-377 He kills Leodes and spares Phemius and Medon.
Bk XXII:378-432 He gives his orders to Eurycleia.
Bk XXII:433-501 He purges the palace, and sends for Penelope.
Bk XXIII:1-84 Eurycleia reveals his identity to Penelope.
Bk XXIII:85-140 He meets with Penelope who is uncertain of his identity.
Bk XXIII:141-204 Tested by Penelope he reveals the secret of their marriage-bed.
Bk XXIII:205-246 He and Penelope weep together.
Bk XXIII:247-299 He tells Penelope of Teiresias’ prophecy.
Bk XXIII:300-372 He tells Penelope the tale of his wanderings.
Bk XXIV:98-204 The ghost of Agamemnon praises his good fortune.
Bk XXIV:205-30 He tests his father’s ability to recognise him.
Bk XXIV:302-355 He makes himself known to Laertes.  
Bk XXIV:356-411 He makes himself known to Dolius.  
Bk XXIV:412-462 The Ithacans gather to discuss revenge on Odysseus.  
Bk XXIV:463-501 He leads his men against the approaching Ithacans.  
Bk XXIV:502-54 He obeys Athene’s order to end the conflict.

Oedipus, Oidipodes
King of Thebes. He killed his own father Laius, and married his mother, Jocaste.  
Bk XI:225-332 Jocaste’s ghost appears to Odysseus.

Oenops
The father of Leodes.  
Bk XXI:136-185 Mentioned.

Ogygia
The island home of **Calypso** the Nymph. (Possibly Malta, see Ernle Bradford’s ‘Ulysses Found’, despite Malta being part of a cluster of islands.)

*Bk I*:44-95  **Odysseus** is detained there.

*Bk VI*:149-197  **Bk VII**:240-297  Odysseus drifts for eighteen days between Ogygia (Malta?) and **Phaeacia** (Corfu?). Including the days of departure and arrival, his journey takes twenty days.

*Bk XII*:374-453  Odysseus is washed ashore there.

*Bk XXIII*:300-372  Odysseus tells the tale.

**Oicles**

Tha father of **Amphiaraus**.

*Bk XV*:222-270  Mentioned.

**Olympus**

The mountain in northern Thessaly supposed to be the home of the gods.

*Bk I*:22-43  **Bk II**:35-84  **Bk IV**:59-112  **Bk VI**:1-47  **Bk VI**:149-197  **Bk XII**:320-373
The home of Zeus, and the assembly halls for the gods. It is described as free from wind, rain and snow, and shines with radiant light.

Athene descends from there.
Hermes returns there.
Assaulted by Otus and Ephialtes. 
Aphrodite goes there to ask Zeus to grant joyful marriage to the daughters of Pandareus.

The gods are called the Olympians.

Orchomenus
A city of the Minyans in Phocis, in east-central Greece. Bk XI:225-332 Iasus and Amphion(2) were kings there. Bk XI:385-464 Agamemnon’s ghost asks if his son is perhaps still alive there.

Orestes
Orion
A hunter from Boeotian Hyria, renowned for his beauty. He was loved by Eos and killed by Artemis, perhaps unintentionally, while swimming near Ortygia to escape the scorpion Apollo sent to attack him. The brightest constellation in the sky, it is an area of star formation in a nearby arm of the Galaxy centred on M42 the Orion Nebula, which marks Orion’s sword. He is depicted as brandishing a club and shield at Taurus the Bull. He was stung to death by a scorpion, and now rises when Scorpio sets and vice versa. His two dogs are Canis Major, which contains Sirius the brightest star in the sky after the sun, and Canis Minor, which contains the star Procyon, forming an equilateral triangle with Sirius and Betelgeuse the red giant in Orion.

Bk V:92-147 The gods were jealous of Eos, the Dawn, and her love for him.
Bk V:262-312 Visible on the opposite side of the sky from the Great Bear.
Bk XI:225-332 His height and handsomeness.
Bk XI:541-592 Odysseus meets his ghost in Hades.

Ormenus
The father of Ctesius.
Bk XV:403-492 Mentioned.

Orsilochus
The son of Idomeneus, King of Crete.
Bk XIII:256-310 Odysseus pretends to have killed him.

Ortilochus
The father of Diocles.
Bk III:464-497 Bk XV:183-221 Mentioned.
Bk XXI:1-79 His house was in Messene.

Ortygie, Ortygia
A small islet close to Delos, where Leto gave birth to Artemis and Apollo. There was a second Ortygia off the coast of Sicily, on which
Syracuse was founded. The two were probably linked by the worship of Artemis.

**Bk V:92-147** The scene of *Orion’s* death.

**Bk XV:403-492** Mentioned.

Ossa
A mountain in Thessaly in Northern Greece.

**Bk XI:225-332** Ephialtes and *Otus* piled Mount *Pelion* on Ossa.

Otus
The giant son of *Iphimeidea* and *Poseidon*, who made war on the gods.

**Bk XI:225-332** With his brother he piled Mount *Pelion* on *Ossa*. They were killed by *Apollo*.

Paeeon
A god of medicine.

**Bk IV:220-289** A god in Egypt (Thoth), and in Greece. Apollo later had the epithet of Paeon the Healer, taken from the earlier god.

Pallas
The ‘Maiden’. An epithet of **Athene**.

**Bk I:96-155**  **Bk I:252-305**  **Bk I:325-364**  **Bk II:382-434**  **Bk III:1-50**  
**Bk III:51-101**  **Bk III:201-252**  **Bk III:356-403**  **Bk IV:220-289**  
**Bk IV:795-847**  **Bk VI:198-250**  **Bk VI:316-33**  
**Bk VIII:1-61**  **Bk XI:541-592**  **Bk XIII:159-215**  
**Bk XIII:216-255**  **Bk XIII:256-310**  **Bk XIII:366-415**  
**Bk XV:1-55**  **Bk XVI:258-320**  **Bk XIX:1-52**  
**Bk XX:345-394**  **Bk XXIII:141-204**  **Bk XXIV:502-54**  

**Athene.**

**Pandareus**
The son of Merops and father of **Aedon**, who stole the golden mastiff and was punished for his crime.

**Bk XIX:508-553**  His daughter Aedon became the nightingale.

**Bk XX:56-119**  His orphaned daughters Merope and Cleothera, were blessed and protected by goddesses, but the **Harpies** snatched them away and handed them over to the **Furies**.

810
Panopeus
A city and region in Phocis.
**Bk XI:541-592** Leto travelled through it to Delphi.

Paphos
A city on the island of **Cyprus**, sacred to **Aphrodite**.
**Bk VIII:256-366** Aphrodite flees there.

Parnassus
A mountain in Phocis sacred to **Apollo** and the **Muses**. Delphi is at its foot where the oracle of Apollo and his temple were situated. **Themis** held the oracle in ancient times.
**Bk XIX:361-47**  **Bk XXI:186-244**  **Bk XXIV:302-355**  Odysseus hunted there with Autolycus’ sons, and was wounded by a wild boar.

Patroclus
Achilles’ beloved friend, whose death, at the hands of Hector, caused Achilles to re-enter the fight against the **Trojans**.

**Bk III:102-147** Killed at Troy.

**Bk XI:465-540** **Bk XXIV:1-56** His ghost accompanies Achilles’ ghost in the Underworld.

**Bk XXIV:57-97** His ashes are mixed with those of Achilles.

Peiraeus
A loyal **Ithacan** friend of **Telemachus**. The son of **Clytius**.

**Bk XV:493-557** **Bk XVII:1-60** He takes command of the ship, and agrees to look after **Theoclymenus**.

**Bk XVII:61-106** He leads Theoclymenus to meet Telemachus.

**Bk XX:345-394** Theoclymenus finds sanctuary with him.

Peirithous
Son of Ixion. King of the Lapithae in Thessaly and friend of Theseus. He married Hippodameia, the daughter of Butes. 

Bk XI:593-640 Odysseus would have wished to meet his ghost in Hades. 
Bk XXI:245-310 Eurytion the Centaur attempted to rape Hippodameia at her wedding feast.

Peisander 
A suitor. The son of Polyctor. 
Bk XVIII:284-339 His gift to Penelope. 
Bk XXII:241-309 Killed by the cowherd Philoetius.

Peisenor (1) 
The father of Ops. 
Bk I:421-444 Bk II:337-381 Bk XX:120-171 Mentioned.

Peisenor (2) 
The herald of the assembly in Ithaca.
Bk II:35-84 He gives the speaker’s staff to Telemachus.

Peisistratus
One of Nestor’s sons.
Bk III:1-50 He greets the travellers.
Bk III:356-403 He is unmarried, and a spearsman. He sleeps beside the guest Telemachus in the echoing portico.
Bk III:404-463 He helps his father with the sacrifice.
Bk III:464-497 He acts as charioteer to Telemachus on the journey to Sparta.
Bk IV:1-58 Bk IV:59-112 They arrive in Sparta.
Bk IV:155-219 Peisistratus explains to Menelaus who they are. He weeps for his dead brother Antilochus.
Bk IV:290-350 Bk XV:1-55 He sleeps alongside Telemachus in Menelaus’ portico.
Bk XV:120-182 He stows away the gifts, and queries the meaning of the omen.
**Bk XV:183-221** He returns to **Pylos** after dropping **Telemachus** by his ship.

**Pelagius**
The father of the Pelasgian people, apparently a name for the pre-Hellenic inhabitants of Northern Greece and Macedonia as far as Thrace. Mythologically Pelagius was the son of Phoroneus.

**Bk XIX:164-219** They are one of the races inhabiting **Crete**.

**Peleus**
The father of **Achilles** by **Thetis**.


**Bk XI:465-540** The ghost of Achilles asks **Odysseus** for news of him.

**Pelias**
King of **Iolcus**. Son of **Poseidon** and **Tyro**, brother of **Neleus**.
Bk XI:225-332 He seized the throne of Iolcus from his half-brother Aeson.

Pelion
A mountain in Thessaly in Northern Greece.
Bk XI:225-332 Ephialtes and Otus piled Mount Pelion on Ossa.

Penelope
The wife of Odysseus, and daughter of Icarius and the Naiad Periboa.
(See J. R. Spencer Stanhope’s painting – Penelope – The De Morgan Foundation)
Bk I:213-251 Bk II:260-295 The mother of Telemachus. Athene stresses the nobility of Penelope’s own line.
Bk I:325-364 She complains at the bard’s sad song of the return from Troy, but is rebuked by Telemachus.
Bk IV:59-112 Menelaus imagines she must be grieving for Odysseus.
Bk IV:675-720 She learns of Telemachus’ departure.
Bk IV:721-766  Bk IV:767-794  She prays to Athene to save Telemachus.
Bk IV:795-847  Athene sends a phantom of her sister Iphthime, to Penelope.
Bk V:192-261  Odysseus acknowledges Calypso’s superiority of form, but longs to return to Penelope.
Bk XI:51-89  Elpenor’s ghost mentions her implying that she is still alive.
Bk XI:385-464  Agamemnon praises her virtues.
Bk XIII:366-415  Athene portrays Penelope’s loyalty during Odysseus’ absence.
Bk XIV:1-47  Eumaeus built his hut and yard without her knowledge.
Bk XIV:165-234  Like Eumaeus she desires Odysseus’ return.
Bk XIV:360-408  She summons Eumaeus to the palace whenever there is news of Odysseus.
Bk XIV:409-456  Eumaeus has purchased a slave without her knowledge.
Bk XV:1-55  Her father and brothers are urging her to marry Eurymachus.
Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, proposes to take her news of himself. Telemachus asks after her on his return. Telemachus describes her as uncertain what to do. Telemachus sends Eumaeus to tell her of his return. Telemachus is not to tell her about Odysseus’ return. She receives the news of Telemachus’ return. Amphinomus’ conversation pleases her. Athene wishes to keep the news of Odysseus’ return from her. She greets Telemachus and asks for news. She sits spinning, and again asks for news. Telemachus tells her of his visit to Sparta.
Eumaeus regards her as a protectress.
She rails against Antinous’ behaviour.
She asks Eumaeus to bring the stranger to see her.
Eumaeus explains why the stranger will not see her yet.
Athene prompts her to enter the hall, and enhances her beauty.
Odysseus’ orders to her on leaving for Troy.
The Suitors bring her gifts.
She prepares to question the Stranger.
She speaks with Odysseus in disguise.
She weeps at Odysseus’ fictitious tale.
She offers Odysseus hospitality.
She insists that Eurycleia washes his feet.
Bk XIX:476-507  **Athene** prevents her noticing Eurycleia’s glance.
Bk XIX:508-553  She tells her dream of the eagle and the geese.
Bk XIX:554-604  She proposes a contest for the **Suitors**.
Bk XX:299-344  **Telemachus** pretends to accede to her marrying.
Bk XX:345-394  She is obliged to listen to the Suitors’ rowdiness.
Bk XXI:1-79   She initiates the challenge to the **Suitors**.
Bk XXI:311-358  She argues that the guest should attempt the bow.
Bk XXII:378-432  **Odysseus** insists she be left to sleep.
Bk XXII:433-501  **Eurycleia** is sent to bring her to Odysseus.
Bk XXIII:1-84   Eurycleia identifies the stranger to her as Odysseus.
Bk XXIII:85-140 She meets with Odysseus but is uncertain of his identity.
Bk XXIII:141-204 She tests Odysseus.
Bk XXIII:205-246 She and Odysseus weep together.
Bk XXIII:247-299 Odysseus tells her of Teiresias’ prophecy.
Bk XXIII:300-372 She tells Odysseus of her life among the Suitors.
Bk XXIV:98-204 The ghost of Agamemnon praises her faithfulness.
Bk XXIV:205-30 Laertes claims she has been prevented from mourning Odysseus, because his fate is unknown.

Periboea
The daughter of Eurymedon.
Bk VII:1-77 Mother of Nausithous by Poseidon.

Periclymenus
Bk XI:225-332 The son of Neleus and Chloris.
Perimedes
A companion of **Odysseus**.
**Bk XI:1-50** He assists in the sacrificial rites.
**Bk XII:165-200** He tightens Odysseus bonds to help him resist the **Sirens**.

Pero
**Bk XI:225-332 Bk XV:222-270** The daughter of **Neleus** and **Chloris**. She married her cousin Bias through the good offices of his brother **Melampus**.

Perse
Daughter of **Ocean**, and wife of the **Sun**.
**Bk X:133-197** The mother of **Circe** and **Aeetes**.

Persephone
The daughter of **Zeus** and **Demeter**. The wife of **Hades**. Abducted from Enna, and raped by him, she was forced to remain in the Underworld for half the year. Her story formed the basis of the ritual worship at Eleusis, where she was revered as Kore, the Maiden.
Bk X:449-502 Odysseus must visit her in Hades.
Bk X:503-574 Her Groves of poplar and willow, sited beyond the Ocean stream, i.e. beyond the Pillars of Hercules perhaps on an Atlantic shore.
Bk XI:1-50 Odysseus invokes the divinities of the underworld.
Bk XI:150-224 She is able to send phantoms to the living.
Bk XI:225-332 She sends the ghosts of famous women to meet Odysseus.
Bk XI:385-464 She disperses the women’s ghosts again.
Bk XI:593-640 Odysseus fears lest she send the Gorgon’s head.

Perseus
A son of Nestor.
Bk III:404-463 He helps his father with the sacrifice.

Phaeacians
The people of the island of Scherie (modern Corfu).

Bk V:1-42 Zeus predicts Odysseus will land among them, and they will send him home aboard one of their ships.

Bk V:262-312 Odysseus sees their country from his raft, but is driven away by Poseidon’s storm. The land is described as lying ‘like a shield on the sea’.

Bk V:313-387 Odysseus swims towards their country.

Bk VI:1-47 Bk VII:1-77 They settled in Scherie (after moving from southern Italy?). Alcinous is their king.

Bk VI:48-109 Bk VI:251-315 The lords call Alcinous to council.

Bk VI:110-148 Bk VI:149-197 Bk VII:78-132 The city of Alcinous is their capital.

Bk VI:198-250 They are dear to the gods.

Bk VI:316-333 Odysseus prepares to meet them.

Bk VII:133-181 Their leaders offer libations, before retiring to rest, to Hermes (presumably as a god of trade?).
Alcinous addresses them. They respect a guest’s freedom to leave.

Odysseus attends their gathering.

Their sports contest.

Their talents at seamanship, running, dance and song, and the arts of good living.

The princes give Odysseus gifts.

Their ‘intelligent’ ships that need no helmsman.

They are exhorted to deal well by Odysseus.

They land Odysseus on Ithaca.

Poseidon turns their ship to stone.

Their ship that brought Odysseus to Ithaca mentioned.

Odysseus reminds Athene of their meeting there.
Bk XIII:366-415 Odysseus hides their gifts in the Cave of the Nymphs.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale of his visit to them.

Phaedimus
King of Sidon.
Bk IV:593-624 Bk XV:56-119 He gifted the silver bowl of Hephaestus to Menelaus, when Menelaus touched there on his journey home.

Phaedra
The daughter of King Minos of Crete and Pasiphaë, sister of Ariadne. She loved Hippolytus her stepson, and brought him to his death. (See Racine’s play – Phaedra).
Bk XI:225-332 Her ghost appeared to Odysseus.

Phaestus
The ancient city of southern Crete, near the modern coastal resort of Matala, and the Bay of Mesara.
Bk III:253-312 Part of Menelaus’ fleet was driven round western Crete (Khania) and wrecked on the headland near Phaestus, presumably modern Cape Lithinon.

Phaethon
One of the horses that pulls Dawn’s chariot. Bk XXIII:205-246 Held back by Athene.

Phaethusa

Pharos
An Egyptian island off the mouth of the Nile (at Alexandria). The famous lighthouse was later built there. Bk IV:351-397 Menelaus delayed there. A haunt of Proteus.

Pheae
A town in western Greece. Modern Fias in Ilia province.  
**Bk XV:271-300** Passed by Telemachus on his way home.

Pheidon  
King of Thesprotia.  
**Bk XIV:293-359** Bk XIX:220-307 Odysseus pretends to have met him.

Phemius  
The bard in the palace at Ithaca.  
**Bk I:96-155** He has been forced by the Suitors to entertain them.  
**Bk I:325-364** Penelope objects to his singing the return from Troy.  
**Bk XVI:213-257** Mentioned by Telemachus.  
**Bk XVII:254-289** He plays for the Suitors.  
**Bk XXII:310-377** He begs for his life and is spared.  
**Bk XXIV:412-462** He accompanies Medon to the meeting-place.
Pherae (1)
The home of Eumelus in Thessaly.
Bk IV:795-847 Mentioned.

Pherae (2)
An ancient city (near modern Kalainai on the Gulf of Messinia) between Pylos and Sparta.

Pheres
Son of Cretheus and Tyro.
Bk XI:225-332 Mentioned.

Philoctetes
The son of Poias. He lit Heracles’ funeral pyre and received from him the bow, quiver and arrows that would enable the Greeks to finally win at Troy, and that had been with Hercules when he rescued Hesione there. Bitten by a snake on Lemnos, he was abandoned there on Odysseus’ advice. Odysseus subsequently brought Philoctetes and the weapons to Troy.
Bk III:148-200 He returned safely from Troy.
Bk VIII:199-255 Odysseus acknowledges him as the greatest archer at Troy.

Philoetius
A master cowherd.
Bk XX:172-239 He displays his loyalty towards Odysseus and prays for his safe return.
Bk XX:240-298 He serves at the feast.
Bk XXI:186-244 Odysseus gives him his orders.
Bk XXI:359-403 He bars and lashes the courtyard gates.
Bk XXII:68-115 Telemachus arms him.
Bk XXII:241-309 He kills Ctesippus.
Bk XXII:310-377 He helps Odysseus in the fight.
Bk XXII:433-501 He helps to execute the faithless serving women.
Bk XXIII:247-299 He retires to rest.
Bk XXIII:300-372 He arms himself and follows Odysseus.
Bk XXIV:356-411 He helps prepare a meal.
Philomeleides
A wrestler.
**Bk IV:290-350 Bk XVII:107-165** Defeated in a wrestling match with **Odysseus** on **Lesbos**.

Phoebus
A familiar name for **Apollo** as the sun-god, and so the sun itself.
**Bk III:253-312 Bk VIII:62-103** An epithet of Apollo.

Phoenicia
The modern Lebanon. Its great cities were **Sidon** and Tyre (famous for is purple dyes and cloth). The Phoenicians explored, traded with, and colonised the western Mediterranean and North Africa.
**Bk IV:59-112** Visited by **Menelaus** in his wanderings.
**Bk XIV:235-292** **Odysseus** pretends to be a **Cretan** who falls in with a wily Phoenician and travels to Phoenicia.
Phoenicians carried Eumaeus to Ithaca.

Phorcys
The Old Man of the Sea. A demi-god, father of Thoosa, and grandfather of Polyphemus in some variants of myth. 
Bk I:44-95 Mentioned. 

Phronius
The father of Noemon, an Ithacan. 
Bk II:382-434 Bk IV:625-674 Mentioned.

Phrontis
The son of Onetor, and helmsman to Menelaus. 
Bk III:253-312 Killed by Apollo’s arrow and buried at Cape Sunium.

Phthia, Phthie
A city in Thessaly, birthplace of Achilles, and ruled by his father Peleus.
Phylace
A city in Thessaly, founde by Phylacus.
Bk XI:225-332  Bk XV:222-270  Ruled by Iphiclus.

Phylo
A maidservant of Helen.
Bk IV:113-154  Mentioned.

Pieria
The mountainous region containing Olympus, on the Greek mainland bordering the north-eastern Aegean (Myrtoan Sea).
Bk V:43-91  Hermes descends to the Pierian coast before skimming out over the Aegean to reach Calypso’s isle of Ogygia (Malta?, hence a long journey).

Pleiads, Pleiades
The Seven Sisters, the daughters, with the Hyades and the Hesperides, of Atlas the Titan.
Their mother was Pleione the naiad. They were chased by Orion rousing the anger of Artemis to whom they were dedicated and changed to stars by the gods. The Pleiades are the star cluster M45 in the constellation Taurus. Their names were Maia, the mother of Hermes by Zeus, Taýgeta, Electra, Merope, Asterope, Alcyone (the brightest star of the cluster), and Celaeno. Bk V:262-312 Odysseus uses the star cluster to steer by.

Poias, Poeas

Polites
A friend and companion of Odysseus. Bk X:198-250 He encourages the men to enter Circe’s house.

Polybus (1)
The father of Eurymachus.
Polybus (2)
A lord visited by Menelaus and Helen in Egyptian Thebes.
Bk IV:113-154 His gifts to them.

Polybus (3)
A Phaeacian craftsman.
Bk VIII:367-415 He fashions a purple ball that the young men use in their dance display.

Polybus (4)
A Suitor.
Bk XXII:241-309 Killed by Eumaeus.

Polycaste
Nestor’s youngest daughter.
Bk III:464-497 She bathes Telemachus.
Polyctor (1)
A co-builder of the Fountain of the Nymphs on Ithaca.
Bk XVII:204-253 Mentioned.

Polyctor (2)
The father of Peisander, possibly identical with Polyctor (1).

Polydamna
An Egyptian woman, the wife of Thon.
Bk IV:220-289 She gave Helen gifts of powerful drugs.

Polydeuces, Pollux
The divine son of Zeus and Leda, brother of Castor.
Bk XI:225-332 Famous for his skill in boxing.

Polyneus
The father of **Amphialus.**
**Bk VIII:** **104-151** Mentioned.

Polypemon
**Bk XXIV:** **302-355** The fictitious (?) father of **Apheidas.**

Polypheides
Priest of **Apollo,** father of **Theoclymenus.**
**Bk XV:** **222-270** A son of **Mantius.**

Polyphemus
The son of **Poseidon.** One of the **Cyclopes,** one-eyed Giants, living in Sicily.
**Bk I:** **44-95** Blinded by **Odysseus.**
**Bk IX:** **152-192**  **Bk IX:** **193-255** His cave on Sicily.
**Bk IX:** **256-306** He attacks and eats two of Odysseus’ crewmen.
**Bk IX:** **307-359** Odysseus plys him with wine.
**Bk IX:** **360-412** Odysseus blinds him.
**Bk IX:** **480-525**  **Bk IX:** **526-566** He pursues the fleeing Greeks.
Odysseus’ men remember his savagery.

Odysseus recalls their predicament to his crew.

Odysseus recalls his own resilience and cunning.

Odysseus tells the tale.

Polythères
The father of Ctesippus.

Ponteus
A Phaeacian.

Pontonous
Alcinous’ herald or squire.

He is ordered to mix and serve the wine.

He guides the bard, Demodocus.
Poseidon
The god of the sea, earthquakes and other natural forces. The son of Cronos and brother of Zeus.

Bk I:1-21 Bk I:44-95 He was angered by Odysseus’ blinding of his son, Polyphemus, the Cyclops, and pursued a vendetta against Odysseus. Called ‘the Earth-Bearer’.

Bk I:22-43 He visits the Ethiopians (i.e. visits the remotest place on Earth) to receive sacrifice from them.

Bk III:1-50 Bk III:51-101 The father of Neleus, and grandfather of Nestor, which is why Nestor and his sons are sacrificing to him especially. Called ‘the Earth-Shaker’ and described as having dark tresses (the waves of the sea). Athene, as Mentor, purports to pray to him.

Bk III:148-200 His altar on Euboea. Nestor sacrificed there.

Bk III:313-355 Nestor and his guests sacrifice to him.
Bk IV:351-397 Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, serves him.
Bk IV:464-511 He wrecked Ajax the Lesser at Gyrae, and then drowned him for his hubris.
Bk V:262-312 Bk V:313-387 Bk V:388-450 Bk VII:240-297 He sees Odysseus, while returning from Ethiopia, and sends a violent storm that wrecks Odysseus’ raft.
Bk VI:316-33 The brother of Zeus, and uncle of Athene. He continues to persecute Odysseus until he reaches home.
Bk VII:1-77 The father of Nausithous, by Periboea. He favours the sea-faring Phaeacians his descendants.
Bk VIII:256-366 Asks Hephaestus to free Ares.
Bk VIII:521-585 Nausithous predicts the result of his anger with the Phaeacians.
Bk IX:256-306 Odysseus ascribes his fictitious shipwreck to Poseidon, who is the Cyclop’s father.
Bk IX:360-412 Bk IX:480-525 Father of all the Cyclopes, specifically Polyphemus.
Bk IX:526-566 Polyphemus prays to him.
Angered by Odysseus’ blinding of Polyphemus his son, Poseidon will pursue Odysseus across the seas.

He slept with Tyro, and Iphimedeia.

Odysseus asks if he has pursued Agamemnon too.

Charybdis is too powerful even for Poseidon to counter.

He plans to punish the Phaeacians.

He turns the Phaeacian ship to stone.

He causes shipwrecks.

Odysseus is to sacrifice to him.

Pramnian

Wine from an unidentified location (Pramnos).

Circe mixes it into her brew.

Priam
The King of **Troy** at the time of the Trojan War, the son of Laomedon, and husband of Hecuba, by whom he had many children including Hector, Helenus, Paris, Polydorus, **Deïphobus**, **Cassandra** and Polyxena.

Bk XIV:235-292 Bk XXII:200-240 The doomed last King of Troy.

**Bk XI:385-464** Father of Cassandra.

**Procris**
The daughter of **Erectheus** king of **Athens**. Married happily to Cephalus, the grandson of Aeolus. Cephalus was unfaithful and tempted her into unfaithfulness but they were reconciled. She gave him a magic hound and a magic javelin, gifts of **Artemis**. Through an error she was killed by Cephalus, with the spear that was her gift to him.

**Bk XI:225-332** Her ghost appeared to Odysseus.
Proreus
A Phaeacian.
Bk VIII:104-151 He competes in the Games.

Proteus
The shape-changing (‘protean’) Old Man of the Sea. A sea-god.
Bk IV:290-350 Menelaus has had contact with him.
Bk IV:351-397 His daughter Eidothee. He haunts Pharos.
Bk IV:398-463 Bk XVII:107-165 He is captured by Menelaus.
Bk IV:464-511 He tells Menelaus how to return home, and relates the fate of Ajax the Lesser.
Bk IV:512-547 He relates Agamemnon’s fate.
Bk XXIV:57-97 His daughters the sea-nymphs.

Prymneus
A Phaeacian.
Bk VIII:104-151 He competes in the Games.

Psyria
An island (modern Psara) due west of Chios. Nestor’s fleet sailed to the north of it when sailing west across the Aegean. Bk III:148-200 Nestor’s ships kept it to larboard (south).

Pylos
The city in Elis (modern Pilos, in Messinia) in the western Peloponnese, the home of Nestor the wise.

Bk I:44-95 Bk I:252-305 Athene proposes to send Telemachus there for news of his father. Pylos is called ‘sandy’.

Bk II:177-223 Bk II:296-336 Bk II:337-381 Telemachus proposes to travel there. Pylos described as ‘sacred’.

Bk III:1-50 Telemachus and Athene reach Pylos.

Bk III:51-101 The home of Nestor and his people.

Bk III:148-200 Nestor reaches home after the Trojan war.

Bk III:464-497 Telemachus leaves for Sparta.
His friends remain there, with his ship.

He travels back home from there.

Neleus became its king, after driving out the Lelegians.

Agamemnon’s ghost asks if his son is perhaps still alive there.

Odysseus uses it as a possible destination.

Eumaeus tells Odysseus that Telemachus has gone there.

Athene urges Telemachus to return home from Sparta via Pylos.

Telemachus returns there and boards his ship.

Melampus once lived there.

Peiraeus accompanied Telemachus there.

Eumaeus welcomes Telemachus back from there.

Telemachus sends Eumaeus to his mother to tell of his return from Pylos.
Bk XVII:1-60 Bk XVII:107-165 Telemachus is returned from there.
Bk XXI:80-135 A major city of Achaea, noted for its women.
Bk XXIV:412-462 Eupeithes suggests Odysseus may flee there.

Pyriphlegethon
A River of Hades (The River of Blazing Fire)
Bk X:503-574 Odysseus must visit it.
Bk XI:385-464 Agamemnon asks if his son is perhaps still alive there.

Pytho
The sanctuary and oracle of Apollo on Mount Parnassus, at Delphi.
Bk VIII:62-103 Visited by Agamemnon.
Bk XI:541-592 Tityos attempted to rape Leto there.

Raven’s Crag
The Rock of Corax on Ithaca, a crag near Eumaeus’ hut.  
Bk XIII:366-415  Athene directs Odysseus to go there.

Rhadamanthus  
Brother to Minos of Crete. Appointed one of the three judges of the dead by Zeus, with Minos, and Aeacus.  
Bk IV:548-592  He dwells in the Elysian Fields.  
Bk VII:298-347  Taken by the Phaeacians to see Tityus. The associated myth is obscure.

Rheithron  
A harbour on Ithaca.  
Bk I:156-212  Athene as Mentes purports to have landed there.

Rhexenor  
Son of Nausithous, father of Arete.  
Bk VII:1-77  Slain by Apollo’s arrow.  
Bk VII:133-181  Father of Arete.
Rumour
A personification of Zeus’ messenger.
Bk XXIV:412-462 The rumour of the Suitors’ deaths spreads through the town.

Salmoneus
The son or grandson of Aeolus and Enarete. King of Salmonia in Elis, husband of Alcidice. Zeus destroyed him with a lightning bolt for his arrogance and hubris.
Bk XI:225-332 Father of Tyro.

Same
An island near Ithaca, ruled by princes. Modern Cephellonia.
Bk IV:625-674 Bk IV:795-847 Bk XV:1-55 The straits between Ithaca and ‘rocky’ Same containing the island of Asteris.
Bk XV:351-40 Ctimene sent there to be wed.
Bk XVI:213-257 It provides twenty-four of the hundred and eight Suitors.
Bk XX:240-298 Ctesippus comes from there.

Scherie, Scheria
The land of the Phaeacians. Usually taken to be Corcyra, modern Corfu. (See Ernle Bradford, ‘Ulysses Found’)

Bk V:1-42 Zeus predicts Odysseus will land there.

Bk VI:1-47 The Phaeacians migrated there from somewhere near Sicily.

Bk VII:78-132 Athene leaves the land.

Bk XIII:159-215 Poseidon travels there.

Scylla
The daughter of Phorcys and the nymph Crataeis, remarkable for her beauty. Circe or Amphitrite, jealous of Poseidon’s love for her changed her into a dog-like sea monster, ‘the Render’, with six heads and twelve feet. Each head had three rows of close-set teeth. Her cry was a muted yelping. She seized sailors and cracked their bones before slowly swallowing them. Her rock projects from the Calabrian
coast near the village of Scilla, opposite Cape Peloro on Sicily. See Ernle Bradford ‘Ulysses Found’ Ch.20)

Bk XII:36-110  Bk XII:111-164 Circe tells Odysseus to pass close to her rock, as the least harmful route for his ship to follow, and gives him further advice.

Bk XII:201-259 Scylla devours six of Odysseus’ men.

Bk XII:260-319 Odysseus passes her by.

Bk XII:374-453 Odysseus is driven back towards her.

Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale.

Scyros
An island in the central Aegean off the coast of Euboea, ruled by Pyrrhus.

Bk XI:465-540 Neoptolemus (Pyrrhus) recruited for Troy by Odysseus.

Sicily, see Thrinacia
The Mediterranean island.

Bk XX:345-394 A slave trading post.
Bk XXIV:302-355 Called Sicania by Odysseus. He claims to have sailed from there.  
Bk XXIV:356-411 Laertes’ Sicilian servant.

Sidon  
The coastal city of the Phoenicians in the Lebanon.  
Bk IV:59-112 Visited by Menelaus in his wanderings.  
Bk IV:593-624 Bk XV:56-119 Phaedimus was its king.  
Bk XIII:256-310 Odysseus uses it as a possible Phaeacian destination.  
Bk XV:403-492 Home of the Phoenician daughter of Arybas.

Sintians  
The islanders of Lemnos.  
Bk VIII:256-366 Described as speaking a barbarous tongue, probably influenced by their proximity to Thrace.

Sirens
The daughters of Acheloüs, the Acheloïdes, companions of Persephone, turned to woman-headed birds, or women with the legs of birds, and luring the sailors of passing ships with their sweet song. They searched for Persephone on land, and were turned to birds so that they could search for her by sea. Their island lay between the Aeolian Islands and Cumae. This was traditionally Capri or more likely one of the five Galli islets, the Sirenusae, at the entrance to the Gulf of Salerno. See ‘Ulysses Found’ Chapter 17. (Homer implies there are only two Sirens, though I have translated this as a simple plural. There are various lists of their names. Ernle Bradford suggests two triplets: Thelxinoë, the Enchantress; Aglaope, She of the Beautiful Face, and Peisinoë, the Seducress: and his preferred triplet Parthenope, the Virgin Face; Ligeia, the Bright Voice; and Leucosia, the White One – see ‘Ulysses Found’ Ch.17. Robert Graves in ‘The Greek Myths’ adds Aglaophonos, Molpe, Raidne, Teles, and Thelxepeia.) (See also Draper’s painting –

**Bk XII:36-110** Circe tells Odysseus his course must take him past their island, and that he must have himself tied to the mast and plug his mens’ ears with beeswax.

**Bk XII:165-200** Odysseus passes their island.

**Bk XXIII:300-372** Odysseus tells the tale.

Sisyphus
The son of Aeolus, and brother of Athamas, famous for his cunning and thievery. He was punished in Hades, continually having to push a stone to the top of a hill, and then pursuing it as it rolled down again.

**Bk XI:593-640** Odysseus sees him tormented in Hades.

Solymi
A range of mountains in Lycia in Asia Minor.

**Bk V:262-312** Poseidon sees Odysseus from there.
Sparta
The chief city of Laconia on the River Eurotas, in the southern Peloponnese, also called Lacadaemon. The home of Menelaus and Helen.
Bk I:44-95  Bk I:252-305  Athene proposes to send Telemachus there for news of his father.
Bk II:177-223  Bk II:296-336  Bk II:337-381  Telemachus proposes to travel there.
Bk IV:1-58  Alector’s city.
Bk XI:385-464  Agamemnon’s ghost asks if his son is perhaps still alive there.
Bk XIII:366-415  Athene proposes to summon Telemachus home from there.

Stratius
A son of Nestor.
Bk III:404-463  He helps his father with the sacrifice.
Styx
A river of the underworld, with its lakes and pools, used to mean the underworld or the state of death itself.  
**Bk V:148-191** The gods swear on it, as their form of binding oath.

Suitors
The suitors for the hand of Penelope, lords of the lands neighbouring on Ithaca.  
**Bk I:44-95** They are consuming Odysseus’ flocks and cattle.  
**Bk I:96-155** They abuse Telemachus’ hospitality.  
**Bk I:252-305** Athene suggests Telemachus disperses them.  
**Bk I:325-364** Penelope shows herself among them.  
**Bk I:365-420** They wish to bed Penelope. Telemachus explains that he wants them to leave.  
**Bk II:1-34** Eurynomus is one of them.
Bk II:35-84 Telemachus states his case against them.
Bk II:85-128 Antinous represents them. Penelope has deceived them.
Bk II:129-176 Halitherses prophesies their downfall.
Bk II:177-223 Eurymachus defends their position.
Bk II:260-295 Telemachus complains of their obstructing his journey.
Bk II:296-336 They mock and jeer at Telemachus.
Bk II:337-381 Telemachus prepares to leave despite their obstructing him.
Bk II:382-434 Athene makes the Suitors drowsy so they are unaware of Telemachus’ departure.
Bk III:201-252 Telemachus complains of them to Nestor.
Bk IV:290-350 Menelaus condemns their behaviour, and prophesies their doom.
They plot to waylay Telemachus as he sails home.

Zeus tells Athene to thwart their plot.

Teiresias prophesies that Odysseus will kill them.

Athene intends that they will be punished.

Athene and Odysseus plan the Suitors’ deaths.

Eumaeus has been sending them the pick of the boars.

Eumaeus describes their ravages.

Odysseus plots their downfall.

Eumaeus is aware of their potential ambush of Telemachus.

Athene tells Telemachus of their ambush.

Odysseus proposes to mingle with them, disguised as a beggar.
Bk XVI:1-59 Eumaeus expresses his distaste for them.
Bk XVI:60-111 Telemachus condemns their behaviour.
Bk XVI:213-257 Telemachus lists the origin of the one hundred and eight Suitors.
Bk XVI:258-320 Odysseus and Telemachus plot their downfall.
Bk XVI:321-39 Bk XVI:393-451 Surprised at Telemachus’ return they debate the next step.
Bk XVI:452-481 Telemachus asks whether their ship has returned yet.
Bk XVII:1-60 Telemachus plots their downfall.
Bk XVII:61-106 They continue to plot against Telemachus.
Bk XVII:166-203 Their sports in front of the palace.
Bk XVII:204-253 Melanthius the goat-herd provides meat for them.
Bk XVII:254-289 Melanthius sits among them.
Bk XVII:328-395 Odysseus begs amongst them.
Bk XVII:462-504  They abhor Antinous’ behaviour.
Bk XVII:505-550  Penelope prophesies their fate.
Bk XVII:551-606  Penelope and Eumaeus condemn them.
Bk XVIII:50-116  They laugh at Irus’ defeat.
Bk XVIII:117-157  Odysseus condemns their behaviour.
Bk XVIII:158-205  Penelope prepares to show herself to them.
Bk XVIII:206-283  She condemns their meanness.
Bk XVIII:284-339  They bring gifts for Penelope.
Bk XVIII:340-393  Odysseus tend the lights for them.
Bk XVIII:394-428  Calmed, they disperse to their homes for the night.
Bk XIX:100-163  Penelope tells Odysseus (in disguise) how she has deceived them with her spinning.
Bk XIX:508-553 They are the geese in Penelope’s dream.
Bk XIX:554-604 Odysseus confirms the dream’s interpretation.
Bk XX:56-119 An omen foretells their fate.
Bk XX:120-171 Bk XX:172-239 The feast-day preparations for them.
Bk XX:240-298 Odysseus sits among them.
Bk XX:240-298 Telemachus warns them to behave.
Bk XX:299-344 Agelaus suggests that the delays they have incurred were reasonable as long as Odysseus might return.
Bk XX:345-394 Athene addles their wits.
Bk XXI:1-79 Penelope issues her challenge to them.
Bk XXI:80-135 Telemachus sets out the axes for them.
Bk XXI:136-185 Antinous invites them to compete.
Bk XXI:186-244 Antinous and Eurymachus are their leaders.
Bk XXI:245-310 They are angered by Odysseus’ request to be allowed to try the bow.  
Bk XXI:359-403 They are stunned when Odysseus strings the bow and fires the arrow through the axe-rings.  
Bk XXII:1-67 Odysseus threatens to kill them all.  
Bk XXII:116-159 Odysseus begins the slaughter.  
Bk XXII:160-199 Melanthius tries to arm them.  
Bk XXII:200-240 Athene exhorts Odysseus to conquer them.  
Bk XXII:241-309 They fight with Odysseus and his comrades.  
Bk XXII:310-377 They had press-ganged Phemius and Medon into service.  
Bk XXII:378-432 Their corpses are piled high in death.  
Bk XXII:433-501 The faithless serving women are executed for their relations with them.  
Bk XXIII:1-84 All the Suitors were slain by Odysseus, his son, and their comrades.
Bk XXIII:85-140  **Odysseus** seeks to conceal news of their deaths, for fear of vengeance.
Bk XXIII:300-372  **Penelope** tells Odysseus of her life among the Suitors.
Bk XXIV:1-56  **Hermes** summons their souls to Hades.
Bk XXIV:98-204  **Amphimedon** relates their fate.
Bk XXIV:302-355  **Laertes** celebrates their deaths.
Bk XXIV:356-411  **Laertes** wishes he had helped fight them.
Bk XXIV:412-462  The news of their deaths spreads through the town.

Sun-god, see **Hyperion**

Sunium
Cape Sunium, modern Sounion, the southern tip of Attica, south of **Athens**.
Bk III:253-312  **Menelaus’** steersman killed there by **Apollo**.
Syrie
An unknown island. The ‘turning place’ of the sun.
**Bk XV:403-492** The birthplace of *Eumaeus*.

Tantalus
The king of Phrygia, son of *Zeus*, father of Pelops and Niobe. He served his son Pelops to the gods at a banquet and was punished by eternal thirst in *Hades*.
**Bk XI:541-592** *Odysseus* sees him tormented in the Underworld.

Taphians
The people of Taphos, location unknown.
**Bk I:96-155** **Bk I:156-212** **Bk I:365-420** *Mentes* is their King.
**Bk XIV:409-456** *Eumaeus* has purchased a slave from them.
**Bk XV:403-492** They appear as raiders in Eumaeus’ story.
**Bk XVI:393-451** *Antinous*’ father was one-time in league with them.
Taygetus
The mountain range west of Sparta, in the southern Peloponnese.
Bk VI:48-109 A haunt of Artemis.

Tecton
The father of Polyneus and grandfather of Amphialus.
Bk VIII:104-151 Mentioned.

Teiresias
The blind prophet of Thebes.
Bk X:449-502 Circe advises Odysseus that he must consult Teiresias in Hades.
Bk X:503-574 Bk XI:1-50 Odysseus must offer Teiresias a black ram on returning to Ithaca.
Bk XI:51-89 Odysseus waits to question Teiresias.
Bk XI:90-149 Bk XI:150-224 Bk XXIII:247-299 The seer prophesies Odysseus’ return to Ithaca, the slaying of the Suitors, and Odysseus’ old age and death.
Bk XI:150-224 His ghost returns to Hades
Bk XI:465-540 Odysseus explains his quest to see Teiresias to Achilles.
Bk XII:260-319 His warning concerning the sun-god’s cattle and flocks.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells Penelope of the prophecy.

Telamon
The son of Aeacus. A companion of Heracles.
Bk XI:541-592 The father of Ajax the Greater.

Telemachus
The son of Odysseus and Penelope.
Bk I:96-155 He welcomes Athene disguised as Mentes.
Bk I:156-212 Bk I:213-251 He complains of the Suitors and quizzes Athene.
Bk I:306-324 He is inspired by Athene, and recognises that Mentes is a divinity in disguise.
Bk I:325-364 He rebukes his mother for her criticism of Phemius, the bard.
Bk I:365-420 He insists on his rights with the Suitors.
Bk I:421-444 He plans the journey proposed by Athene.
Bk II:1-34 He convenes the assembly on Ithaca.
Bk II:35-84 He makes his case against the Suitors.
Bk II:85-128 Antinous rejects his case.
Bk II:129-176 Telemachus refuses to accept that Odysseus is dead.
Bk II:177-223 He proposes to travel to Sparta and Pylos for news.
Bk II:260-295 He prays for divine help.
Bk II:296-336 He declares his intent to Antinous.
Bk II:337-381 He instructs Eurycleia to prepare the provisions.
Bk II:382-434 He sets sail with Athene (disguised as Mentor).
Bk III:1-50 He reaches Pylos.
Bk III:51-101 He requests information of Nestor.
Bk III:201-252 He complains of the Suitors to Nestor and asks about Agamemnon and Menelaus.
Bk III:313-355 Bk III:356-403 He accepts Nestor’s hospitality.
Bk III:404-463 He attends Nestor’s sacrifice to Athene.
Bk III:464-497 He is bathed by Polycaste, then leaves Nestor’s house with Peisistratus to visit Menelaus.
Bk IV:1-58 He arrives in Sparta, and meets Menelaus.
Bk IV:59-112 He admires Menelaus’ palace. Without yet recognising him Menelaus imagines the distant Telemachus must be grieving for Odysseus.
Bk IV:113-154 He weeps when his father’s name is mentioned.
Bk IV:155-219 He is made known to Menelaus and Helen.
Bk IV:290-350 He asks Menelaus for news of his father.
Bk IV:593-624 He seeks to leave Sparta.
He is travelling back to Ithaca. The Suitors plan to ambush him on the way.

Zeus tells Athene to guide him home safely.

Elpenor’s ghost mentions him implying he is still alive.

Anticleia confirms to Odysseus that his son is still alive.

Athene sets off for Sparta to bring Telemachus home.

Like Eumaeus he desires Odysseus’ return.

Athene tells Telemachus to return home, and about the Suitors’ plot.

He prepares to leave Sparta.

He reaches Pylos and his ship.

He sacrifices to Athene, and meets Theoclymenus.

He takes Theoclymenus aboard and sails for Ithaca.
He returns to Ithaca and goes to visit Eumaeus.
He meets his father, Odysseus, disguised as a beggar.
He sends Eumaeus to tell his mother of his return.
Odysseus reveals his identity to him.
He enumerates the list of Suitors.
He and his father plan their campaign.
The news of his arrival home spreads.
The Suitors debate murdering him.
Eumaeus returns to him and his father with news.
He goes to meet Penelope.
He guides Theoclymenus to the palace.
Bk XVII:107-165 He tells Penelope of his visit to Sparta.
Bk XVII:204-253 Melanthius wishes his death.
Bk XVII:462-504 He keeps silent when Odysseus is struck by a stool.
Bk XVII:505-550 Penelope takes his sneezing as an omen.
Bk XVII:551-606 He agrees that Eumaeus should return to the farm.
Bk XVIII:50-116 He supports a fair fight between Odysseus and Irus.
Bk XVIII:206-283 Penelope speaks about the Suitors’ behaviour to him.
Bk XVIII:284-339 Odysseus uses the maids’ fear of Telemachus to warn them.
Bk XVIII:394-428 Telemachus tells the Suitors to disperse for the night.
Bk XIX:1-52 He and his father hide the weapons.
Bk XIX:53-99 He is like his father.
Bk XX:120-171 He enquires if Odysseus has been treated well.
Bk XX:240-298 He warns the Suitors to behave.
Bk XX:299-344 He discusses his mother’s marrying.
Bk XX:345-394 He ignores the Suitors’ gibes, and waits for Odysseus’ signal.
Bk XXI:80-135 Telemachus sets out the axes for the contest. (I have followed the view that the axe heads were buried in the ground, and the arrow was fired through the iron rings at the end of their wooden handles, by which they were usually hung on the wall.)
Bk XXI:186-244 Odysseus promises that Eumaeus and Philoetius will be regarded as blood-brothers of Telemachus.
Bk XXI:311-358 He asserts his right to dispose of the bow as he wishes.
Bk XXI:359-403 Bk XXII:160-199 He stands by his father.
Bk XXII:68-115 He kills Amphinomus, then goes to the storeroom for weapons.
Bk XXII:116-159  He has left the storeroom door unlocked.
Bk XXII:200-240  Athene tests his strength and courage.
Bk XXII:310-377  He intercedes on behalf of Phemius and Medon.
Bk XXII:378-432  He calls Eurycleia to his father.
Bk XXII:433-501  He executes the faithless serving women.
Bk XXIII:1-84   He had concealed his father’s identity and plans.
Bk XXIII:85-140  He criticises his mother’s uncertainty.
Bk XXIII:247-299 He retires to rest.
Bk XXIII:300-372 He arms himself and follows Odysseus.
Bk XXIV:356-411  He helps prepare a meal.
Bk XXIV:502-54   He affirms his courage.

Telemus
Prophet to the Cyclopes.
Bk IX:480-525 He prophesied Polyphemus’ blinding by Odysseus.

Telephus
King of Mysia, son of Heracles and the nymph Auge. He was wounded and healed by the touch of Achilles’ spear at Troy.
Bk XI:465-540 The father of Eurypylus.

Telepylus
The harbour of the Laestrygonians. Possibly Bonifacio on Corsica (See Ernle Bradford’s ‘Ulysses Found’ Chapters 11 and 12.)
Bk X:56-102 Odysseus arrives there.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale.

Temese
A place famous for its copper mines, the copper being used in the manufacture of bronze articles. It is mentioned in Ovid’s Metamorphoses and elsewhere, and was possibly in Southern Italy.
Bk I:156-212 Athene, as Mentes, purports to be trading there.

Tenedos
An island in the Aegean near the Trojan coast. (See Homer’s Iliad).
Bk III:148-200 Passed by Nestor on the return journey.

Terpius
The father of Phemius the bard.
Bk XXII:310-377 Mentioned.

Thebes (1)
The city in Egypt, on the Nile.
Bk IV:113-154 Visited by Menelaus.

Thebes (2)
The city in Boeotia in north-central Greece, founded by Cadmus.
Odysseus tells the tale. The home city of Teiresias the seer.

The lower city was founded by Zethus and Amphion who lifted the blocks of stone that built the walls of Thebes with the music of his lyre.

Ruled by Oedipus.

Amphiaraus died there in the War of the Seven against Thebes.

Themis

The goddess of justice and law. In Greek mythology also a Titaness, co-ruler of the planet Jupiter, daughter of heaven and earth. Her daughters are the Seasons and the Three Fates. She is the Triple-Goddess with prophetic powers.

Telemachus invokes her name in pleading his cause.

Theoclymenus

A seer, the son of Polypheides, priest of Apollo.

He meets Telemachus.
Bk XV:271-300 He asks to be taken aboard.  
Bk XV:493-557 Reaching Ithaca he asks whose house he should go to.  
Bk XVII:61-106 Peiraeus leads him to Telemachus.  
Bk XVII:107-165 He prophesies Odysseus’ presence on Ithaca.  
Bk XX:345-394 He sees a vision of the Suitors’ fate.  

Theseus  
King of Athens, son of Aegeus. His mother was Aethra, daughter of Pittheus king of Troezen.  
Bk XI:225-332 The Athenian hero. He killed the Minotaur on Crete with Ariadne’s help.  
Bk XI:593-640 Odysseus would have wished to meet his ghost in Hades.  

Thesprotians  
A people of north-western Greece, inhabitants of Epirus.  
Bk XIV:293-359 Bk XVI:60-111 Bk XVII:505-550 Odysseus pretends to have visited them.
Bk XVI:393-451 One-time allies of Odysseus.
Bk XIX:220-307 Odysseus is claimed to be there, and about to return home.

Thetis
The Nereid and the wife of Peleus. Mother of Achilles.
Bk XI:541-592 She gave Achilles’ weapons as a prize for the debate between Odysseus and Ajax.
Bk XXIV:1-56 She rose from the sea to mourn her dead son.
Bk XXIV:57-97 She gave the prizes for Achilles’ funeral games.

Thoas
Son of Andraemon, and a warrior at Troy (The King of Calydon with Odysseus in the Wooden Horse?).
Bk XIV:457-506 Odysseus invents a tale of him.

Thon
An **Egyptian**, the husband of **Polydamna**.  
*Bk IV:220-289* Mentioned.

Thoon  
A Phaeacian.  
*Bk VIII:104-151* He competes in the Games.

Thoosa  
The daughter of **Phorcys**, and mother of **Polyphemus**.  
*Bk I:44-95* Mentioned.

Thrace  
The country bordering the Black Sea, and the northeastern Aegean.  
*Bk VIII:256-366* A country sacred to **Ares**.

Thrasymedes  
One of **Nestor**’s sons.  
*Bk III:1-50* Mentioned.  
*Bk III:404-463* He helps his father with the sacrifice.
Thrinacia, Thrinacie
The island of the sun-god, where he kept his sacred cattle. (Possibly identified with Sicily: Trinacria in Classical times. For a discussion of this attribution see Ernle Bradford’s ‘Ulysses Found’ Chapter 22)

Bk XI:90-149 Teiresias prophesies Odysseus’ journey there.
Bk XII:111-164 Bk XIX:220-307 The land where the sacred cattle of Helios graze.

Thyestes
The son of Pelops and brother of Atreus. The blood feud between Thyestes and Atreus led to a fatal chain of events.

Bk IV:512-547 Father of Aegisthus who murdered Agamemnon.

Tithonus
The son of Laomedon, husband of Eos, the Dawn, and father of Memnon.

Tityus, Tityos
One of the Giants, the son of Zeus and Earth, who tried to rape Leto and was killed by Apollo and Artemis, her children. He was punished by being stretched out on the ground in Hades, where vultures ate his liver.

Bk VII:298-347 Visited by Rhadamanthus on Euboea. Possibly Euboea contained one of the entrances to the underworld.

Bk XI:541-592 Odysseus sees him tormented in Hades.

Trojans, Troy
Troy is the district named after Dardanus’s son Tros, in northern Asia Minor, modern Turkey. The name is commonly used for the city of Ilus, Ilium, named after Ilus the son of Dardanus. The site (Hissarlik) near the northern Aegean Sea and the entrance to the Hellespont, was excavated by Schliemann.

Bk I:1-21  Bk XIV:165-234  Bk XVII:107-165
Sacked by the Greeks at the end of the Trojan war, as recounted in Homer’s Iliad.
Its wide plains where the Greeks landed.

Odysseus was a member of the Greek army at Troy.

The Greeks had a difficult return journey from Troy.

A place where the Achaean Greeks suffered.

Menelaus had promised his daughter Hermione to Achilles’ son there.

The Greeks attacked it as a result of Helen’s abduction.
The Greeks shared the spoils of the ransacked city.

Troy’s defeat prophesied.

Philoctetes the greatest Greek archer there.

The Wooden Horse.

Its destruction engineered by the gods.

Hermes had told Circe that Odysseus would be returning home from there when he visited her island.

Anticleia asks Odysseus whether he has come from Troy.

Neoptolemus at Troy.

The Trojan captives judged the debate between Odysseus and Ajax.

The Sirens know of the sufferings of the Greeks and Trojans at Troy.

Athene helped Odysseus at the taking of the citadel.

Idomeneus fought there with his Cretan contingent.
Bk XVIII:206-283 The Trojans had a high reputation as warriors and charioteers.
Bk XXIV:1-56 The Greeks and Trojans fought over the dead body of Achilles.

Tydeus
King of Argos, father of Diomedes by Deipyle.

Tyndareus
King of Sparta, husband of Leda.
Bk XI:225-332 Cuckolded by Zeus.
Bk XXIV:98-204 The father of Clytaemnestra.

Tyro
The mother by Poseidon of Pelias and Neleus.
Bk II:85-128 A famous woman of early Greece.
Bk XI:225-332 Salmoneus’ daughter, and wife of Cretheus. Poseidon raped her in the form of the River-god Enipeus. Her ghost appears to Odysseus.

Wain
The Waggon. A name for the constellation of the Great Bear.
Bk V:262-312 Mentioned.

Wandering Rocks, Planctae
Two rocky islands, clashing rocks according to the fable, crushing what attempted to pass between them. The Argo had to avoid them.
Bk XII:36-110 The ‘islands’ are most likely the cliffs of volcanic Stromboli and its attendant islet Strombolicchio, a marker leading to the west of Sicily in one direction, and to the Messina Straits on the other. See Ernle Bradford ‘Ulysses Found’ Chapter 19. The Argo’s journey however was towards the Black Sea and the connection is therefore tenuous since it would place the rocks traditionally in the Euxine Sea.
Bk XXIII:300-372 Odysseus tells the tale of his passage by them.

White Rock
A landmark rock on the way to Hades.
Bk XXIV:1-56 Mentioned.

Zacynthus
An island near Ithaca, ruled by princes. Modern Zante, twenty miles south of Ithaca (Thiaki).

Bk XVI:213-257 It provides twenty of the hundred and eight Suitors.

Zethus (1)
The son of Zeus and Antiope, who founded lower Thebes.
Bk XI:225-332 Brother of Amphion.

Zethus (2)
The father of Itylus, and husband of Aedon.
Bk XIX:508-553 Mentioned.

Zeus
The King of the Gods. His wife is Hera. Zeus, a sky-god, was worshipped at Dodona, in the sacred oracular oak grove, where his cult
succeeded the earlier cult of the Great Goddess, as Dione.

Bk I:1-21  Bk VIII:469-520  The *Muse* is his daughter (by Mnemosyne, goddess of memory).

Bk I:22-43  His palace is on Mount *Olympus*.

Bk I:44-95  Called Cloud-Gathering. He grants *Athene*’s request to allow *Odysseus* to return home.

Bk I:252-305  Bk II:177-223  He sends rumours to men to bring them news.


Bk XX:172-239  He determines men’s fates.

Bk I:365-420  *Telemachus* hopes Zeus may bring a day of reckoning.

Bk II:35-84  Bk XV:120-182  Bk XVIII:206-283

*Telemachus* invokes him.

Bk II:129-176  Called the Far-Seeing. He sends two eagles as an omen.

Bk II:296-336  Bk II:382-434  Bk III:1-50  Bk III:313-355
Athene is his daughter. He wears the *aegis*, as does she (see *Athene*).

The son of *Cronos*. He punished the Greeks after the sack of Troy.

Zeus ‘of the far-reaching voice’ splits Menelaus’ fleet.

He favours certain individuals.

He favours Menelaus as his son-in-law.

He was the father of *Helen* by *Leda*.

Menelaus failed to sacrifice fittingly to him, and his journey home was thereby delayed.

Invoked by *Antinous*.
Invoked by Medon. The Thunderer and Cloud-Gatherer. He sends Hermes to visit Calypso. He commands Calypso to release Odysseus.

Ancestor of Odysseus through Arceisius and Laertes.

Odysseus thinks he has raised the storm against him.

The mountain nymphs are his daughters. Artemis is his daughter.
**XIV:360-408** Strangers and beggars are ‘sent by Zeus’. He is the god of the lightning bolt.  
**Bk VII:298-347** Alcinous invokes him.  
**Bk VIII:62-103** He willed sorrow on Greeks and Trojans alike.  
**Bk VIII:199-255** He blessed the Phaeacians with their skills.  
**Bk VIII:256-366** Hephaestus invokes his justice.  
**Bk IX:63-104** Bk IX:256-306 He sends a storm to drive Odysseus off course.  
**Bk IX:105-151** Bk IX:307-359 Bk XII:260-319 As a sky god he brings the rain.  
**Bk IX:360-412** Illness comes from him.  
**Bk IX:413-479** He initiates divine vengeance.  
**Bk IX:526-566** Odysseus sacrifices to him.  
**Bk XI:150-224** Persephone is his daughter by Demeter.  
**Bk XI:225-332** Pelias and Neleus worshipped him. He slept with Alcmene, Antiope and Leda.
Bk XI:541-592 His antipathy to the Greeks, and support for the Trojans.
Bk XII:36-110 The rock doves bring him ambrosia.
Bk XII:374-453 Bk XIX:220-307 He punishes Odysseus and his crew for the theft of the Sun-god’s cattle.
Bk XIII:1-52 Alcinous sacrifices to him.
Bk XIII:96-158 He endorses Poseidon’s action against the Phaeacians.
Bk XIV:457-506 He brings the storms and rain.
Bk XV:222-270 He favoured Amphiaraus.
Bk XV:271-300 He sends Telemachus a favourable wind.
Bk XV:403-492 He sends the Phoenicians a favourable wind.
Bk XVI:112-153 He has preserved Odysseus’ line with only sons.
**Bk XVI:258-320** He will fight on Odysseus’ side.
**Bk XVI:393-451** The **Suitors** plan to consult his oracle.
**Bk XVII:107-165** Menelaus invokes him as witness.
**Bk XVII:290-327** He takes half the good from those who become slaves.
**Bk XVIII:340-393** Odysseus wishes he would instigate a war.
**Bk XIX:100-163** He honours a well-run household.
**Bk XIX:164-219** Minos spoke directly with him (presumably as a divine king with prophetic powers?)
**Bk XIX:361-47** Odysseus had shown his piety towards Zeus in the past.
**Bk XX:1-55** Odysseus anticipates his help.
**Bk XX:56-119 Bk XX:120-171 Bk XXI:359-403** He sends Odysseus favourable omens.
**Bk XX:240-298** Guests and strangers are under his protection.
Bk XXI:1-79  The father of Heracles.
Bk XXI:186-244  Invoked by Philoetius.
Bk XXII:241-309  Invoked by Agelaus.
Bk XXII:310-377  Bk XXII:378-432  His great altar in the courtyard of Odysseus’ palace.
Bk XXIV:1-56  Bk XXIV:98-204  He was thought to favour Agamemnon. Bk XXIV:57-97  Agamemnon considers Zeus doomed him to be murdered.
Bk XXIV:302-355  He determines when crops are in season.
Bk XXIV:356-411  Invoked by Laertes.
Bk XXIV:463-501  He advises Athene to make peace.
Bk XXIV:502-54  He marks the end of the conflict with a lightning-bolt.

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