Odysseus urges his exhausted crew to bypass Thrinakia, the island of the sun god, Helios. When the men insist on landing, Odysseus makes them swear not to touch the god's cattle. Odysseus is still speaking to Aclinus's court.

"In the small hours of the third watch, when stars that shone out in the first dusk of evening had gone down to their setting, a giant wind blew from heaven, and clouds driven by Zeus shrouded land and sea in a night of storm; so, just as Dawn with fingertips of rose touched the windy world, we dragged our ship to cover in a grotto, a sea cave where nymphs had chairs of rock and sanded floors. I mustered all the crew and said:

'Old shipmates, our stores are in the ship's hold, food and drink; the cattle here are not for our provision, or we pay dearly for it.

Fierce the god is who cherishes these heifers and these sheep: Helios; and no man avoids his eye.'

To this my fighters nodded. Yes. But now we had a month of onshore gales, blowing day in, day out—south winds, or south by east. As long as bread and good red wine remained to keep the men up, and appease their craving, they would not touch the cattle. But in the end, when all the barley in the ship was gone, hunger drove them to scour the wild shore with angling hooks, for fishes and sea fowl.

whatever fell into their hands; and lean days were their bellies thin.

The storms continued.

So one day I withdrew to the interior to pray the gods in solitude, for hope that one might show me some way of salvation. Slipping away, I struck across the island to a sheltered spot, out of the driving gale.

I washed my hands there, and made supplication to the gods who own Olympus, all the gods—but they, for answer, only closed my eyes under slow drops of sleep.

Now on the shore Eurylochus made his insidious plea:

"You've gone through everything; listen to what I say. All deaths are hateful to us, mortal wretches, but famine is the most pitiful, the worst end that a man can come to. Will you fight it?

Come, we'll cut out the noblest of these cattle for sacrifice to the gods who own the sky, and once at home, in the old country of Ithaca, if ever that day comes—we'll build a costly temple and adorn it with every beauty for the Lord of Noon.

But if he flares up over his heifers lost, wishing our ship destroyed, and if the gods make cause with him, why, then I say: Better open your lungs to a big sea once for all than waste to skin and bones on a lonely island!"

Thus Eurylochus and they murmured 'Aye!' trooping away at once to round up heifers. Now, that day tranquil cattle with broad brows were grazing near, and soon the men drew up around their chosen beasts in ceremony. They plucked the leaves that shone on a tall oak—having no barley meal—to stew the victims, performed the prayers and ritual, knifed the kine and flayed each carcass, cutting thighbones free to wrap in double folds of fat. These offerings, with strips of meat, were laid upon the fire. Then, as they had no wine, they made libation."

The Companions of Ulysses Slaying the Cattle of the Sun God Helios (14th century) by Pellegrino Tibaldi. Pinacoteca, Bologna, Italy.
with clear spring water, broiling the entrails first; and when the bones were burnt and tripes shared, they spitted the carved meat.

Just then my slumber left me in a rush, my eyes opened, and I went down the seaward path. No sooner had I caught sight of our black hull, than savoury odors of burnt fat eddied around me; grief took hold of me, and I cried aloud:

'O Father Zeus and gods in bliss forever, you made me sleep away this day of mischief! O cruel mourning, in the evil hour! Here they sat, and a great work they contrived.'

Lampetia in her long gown meanwhile had borne swift word to the Overlord of Noon: 'They have killed your kine.'

And the Lord Helios burst into angry speech amid the immortals: 'O Father Zeus and gods in bliss forever, punish Odysseus! men. So overweening.'

now they have killed my peaceful kine, my joy at morning when I climbed the sky of stars, and evening, when I bore westward from heaven. Restitution or penalty they shall pay—and pay in full—or I go down forever to light the dead men in the underworld.'...

(from Book 12)

When Odysseus and his men set sail again, they are punished with death—a thunderbolt from Zeus destroys their boat, and all the men drown. Only Odysseus survives. Exhausted and nearly drowned, he makes his way to Calypso's island, where we met him originally, in Book 5.

Odysseus has brought us up to date. He can now rest and enjoy the comforts of Alcinous's court—but not for long. Aeaide lies his most difficult task: reclaiming his own kingdom. At this moment of suspense, Homer might have put aside his harp until the next night.

Vocabulary
restoration (res-tor-a-shun) n.: compensation; repayment.

906. entrails (en'tralz) n.: intestines, guts.
908. tripes (trip'z) n.: stomach parts.


2. What does Odysseus learn about his future from blind Teiresias in the Land of the Dead?

Three Critically
1. "Nobody" in Greek is outis, which sounds like Odysseus. In his conflict with the Cyclops, how does Odysseus overcome the monster through a clever use of language? What curse at the end of this adventure foreshadows trouble?
2. What conclusions about the deceptive nature of beauty can you draw from the Circe episode?
3. Book 5 of the Odyssey focuses on Odysseus's captivity on Calypso's island. Suzanne Vega (see the Connection on page 755) expresses Calypso's view of the affair. How does her song compare with Homer's story? Whom do you sympathize with—Odysseus or Calypso?

From what you've observed of Odysseus, how would you describe what the Greeks valued in a hero? Do we value these same traits today? Check your Quickwrite notes for page 749.

Extending and Evaluating
7. How many of the monsters or threats to Odysseus in this part of the epic are female? What do you think of the way women are portrayed so far?

Response and Analysis

6. From what you've observed of Odysseus, how would you describe what the Greeks valued in a hero? Do we value these same traits today? Check your Quickwrite notes for page 749.

Writng
It's Alive!
In "The Cyclops in the Ocean" (see the Connection on page 772), the modern poet Nikki Giovanni personifies a tropical storm—that is, she describes the storm as if it were a living creature. Write a paragraph personifying some other violent force of nature. Describe how it looks and sounds and what it does with its victims.

Cause and Effect
Characters in the Odyssey often use cause-and-effect arguments when they try to persuade. For example, when Odysseus asks the Cyclops for help, he warns the Cyclops of the effects of offending the gods by harming a guest. Calypso tries to persuade Odysseus to remain with her by mentioning the effects he will suffer if he leaves her. Choose one argument from the epic, and describe why it is persuasive or how you think it could be strengthened.

Use "Persuading with Cause and Effect," pages 834-841, for help with this assignment.

Literary Skills
Analyze the characteristics of epic poetry, including heroes and their external conflicts.

Reading Skills
Monitor your comprehension.

Writing Skills
Write a paragraph with personification. Analyze a persuasive argument.