

730 *From her throat and my throat,
Who lies a-pining?*

*Sea rovers here take joy
Voyaging onward,
As from our song of Troy
Graybeard and rower-boy
735 Goeth more learnèd.*

*All feats on that great field
In the long warfare,
Dark days the bright gods willed,
Wounds you bore there,*

740 *Argos' old soldiery⁶³
On Troy beach teeming,
Charmed out of time we see.
No life on earth can be
Hid from our dreaming.*

745 The lovely voices in ardor appealing over the water
made me crave to listen, and I tried to say
'Untie me!' to the crew, jerking my brows;
but they bent steady to the oars. Then Perimedes
got to his feet, he and Eurylochus,
750 and passed more line about, to hold me still.
So all rowed on, until the Sirens
dropped under the sea rim, and their singing
dwindled away.

My faithful company
rested on their oars now, peeling off
755 the wax that I had laid thick on their ears;
then set me free.

Scylla and Charybdis

But scarcely had that island
faded in blue air than I saw smoke
and white water, with sound of waves in tumult—
a sound the men heard, and it terrified them.
760 Oars flew from their hands; the blades went knocking
wild alongside till the ship lost way,
with no oar blades to drive her through the water.

Literary Analysis

Epic Hero Which details in the Sirens' song are designed to flatter the epic hero?

63. Argos' old soldiery soldiers from Argos, a city in ancient Greece.

Vocabulary Builder

ardor (är' dər) *n.*
passion; enthusiasm

Well, I walked up and down from bow to stern,
trying to put heart into them, standing over
765 every oarsman, saying gently,

‘Friends,
have we never been in danger before this?
More fearsome, is it now, than when the Cyclops
penned us in his cave? What power he had!
Did I not keep my nerve, and use my wits
770 to find a way out for us?’

Now I say
by hook or crook this peril too shall be
something that we remember.

Heads up, lads!
We must obey the orders as I give them.
Get the oar shafts in your hands, and lay back
775 hard on your benches; hit these breaking seas.
Zeus help us pull away before we founder.
You at the tiller, listen, and take in
all that I say—the rudders are your duty;
keep her out of the combers and the smoke;⁶⁴
780 steer for that headland; watch the drift, or we
fetch up in the smother, and you drown us.’

That was all, and it brought them round to action.
But as I sent them on toward Scylla,⁶⁵ I
told them nothing, as they could do nothing.
785 They would have dropped their oars again, in panic,
to roll for cover under the decking. Circe’s
bidding against arms had slipped my mind,
so I tied on my cuirass⁶⁶ and took up
two heavy spears, then made my way along
790 to the foredeck—thinking to see her first from there,
the monster of the gray rock, harboring
torment for my friends. I strained my eyes
upon the cliffside veiled in cloud, but nowhere
could I catch sight of her.

And all this time,
795 in travail,⁶⁷ sobbing, gaining on the current,
we rowed into the strait—Scylla to port
and on our starboard beam Charybdis, dire

Literary Analysis
Epic Hero What parts
of Odysseus’ speech
demonstrate his
strength as a leader?

64. the combers (kōm’ ərs)
and the smoke the large
waves that break on the
beach and the ocean spray.

65. Scylla (sil’ ə)

66. cuirass (kwi ras’) *n.*
armor for the upper body.

67. travail (trə vāl’) *n.* very
hard work.

 **Reading Check**

What demand does
Odysseus make of
his men as they
approach the rough
waters?

gorge⁶⁸ of the salt seaside. By heaven! when she vomited, all the sea was like a cauldron
800 seething over intense fire, when the mixture suddenly heaves and rises.

The shot spume soared to the landside heights, and fell like rain. But when she swallowed the sea water down we saw the funnel of the maelstrom,⁶⁹ heard
805 the rock bellowing all around, and dark sand raged on the bottom far below. My men all blanched against the gloom, our eyes were fixed upon that yawning mouth in fear of being devoured.

Then Scylla made her strike,
810 whisking six of my best men from the ship. I happened to glance aft at ship and oarsmen and caught sight of their arms and legs, dangling high overhead. Voices came down to me in anguish, calling my name for the last time.

815 A man surfcasting on a point of rock for bass or mackerel, whipping his long rod to drop the sinker and the bait far out, will hook a fish and rip it from the surface to dangle wriggling through the air:

820 were borne aloft in spasms toward the cliff. so these

She ate them as they shrieked there, in her den, in the dire grapple, reaching still for me— and deathly pity ran me through at that sight—far the worst I ever suffered,
825 questing the passes of the strange sea.

We rowed on.
The Rocks were now behind; Charybdis, too, and Scylla dropped astern.

The Cattle of the Sun God

In the small hours of the third watch, when stars that shone out in the first dusk of evening
830 had gone down to their setting, a giant wind

68. **gorge** (gôrj) *n.* throat or gullet.

69. **maelstrom** (māl strəm) *n.* large, violent whirlpool.

Literary Analysis
Epic Hero What quality of heroic leadership does Odysseus show in lines 823–825?