

gorge<sup>68</sup> 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,<sup>69</sup> 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?

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  
835 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,  
840 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  
845 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,  
850 hunger drove them to scour the wild shore  
with angling hooks, for fishes and seafowl,  
whatever fell into their hands; and lean days  
wore their bellies thin.

The storms continued.

So one day I withdrew to the interior  
855 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  
860 to the gods who own Olympus,<sup>70</sup> 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:

‘Comrades,’ he said,  
‘You’ve gone through everything; listen to what I say.  
865 All deaths are hateful to us, mortal wretches,  
but famine is the most pitiful, the worst  
end that a man can come to.

**Reading Skill  
Historical and  
Cultural Context**

Which details here suggest that ancient Greeks believed the gods controlled the weather?

**Reading Skill  
Historical and  
Cultural Context**

How does this passage show that ancient Greeks believed their gods had human-like emotions?

70. **Olympus** (ō lim’ pēs)  
Mount Olympus, home of the gods.

**Vocabulary Builder**  
**insidious** (in sid’ ē əs)  
*adj.* characterized by craftiness and betrayal

 **Reading Check**

Who owns the heifers and sheep on the island?

Will you fight it?

Come, we'll cut out the noblest of these cattle  
for sacrifice to the gods who own the sky;  
870 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.<sup>71</sup>  
But if he flares up over his heifers lost,  
875 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!'  
880 trooping away at once to round up heifers.  
Now, that day tranquil cattle with broad brows  
were gazing near, and soon the men drew up  
around their chosen beasts in ceremony.  
They plucked the leaves that shone on a tall oak—  
885 having no barley meal—to strew 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.  
890 Then, as they had no wine, they made libation  
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,  
895 and I went down the seaward path. No sooner  
had I caught sight of our black hull, than savory  
odors of burnt fat eddied around me;  
grief took hold of me, and I cried aloud:

'O Father Zeus and gods in bliss forever,  
900 you made me sleep away this day of mischief!  
O cruel drowsing, in the evil hour!  
Here they sat, and a great work they contrived.'<sup>72</sup>

Lampetia<sup>73</sup> in her long gown meanwhile  
had borne swift word to the Overlord of Noon:

71. Lord of Noon Helios.

**Literary Analysis**  
**Epic Hero** How are the values of Eurylochus different from those of Odysseus?

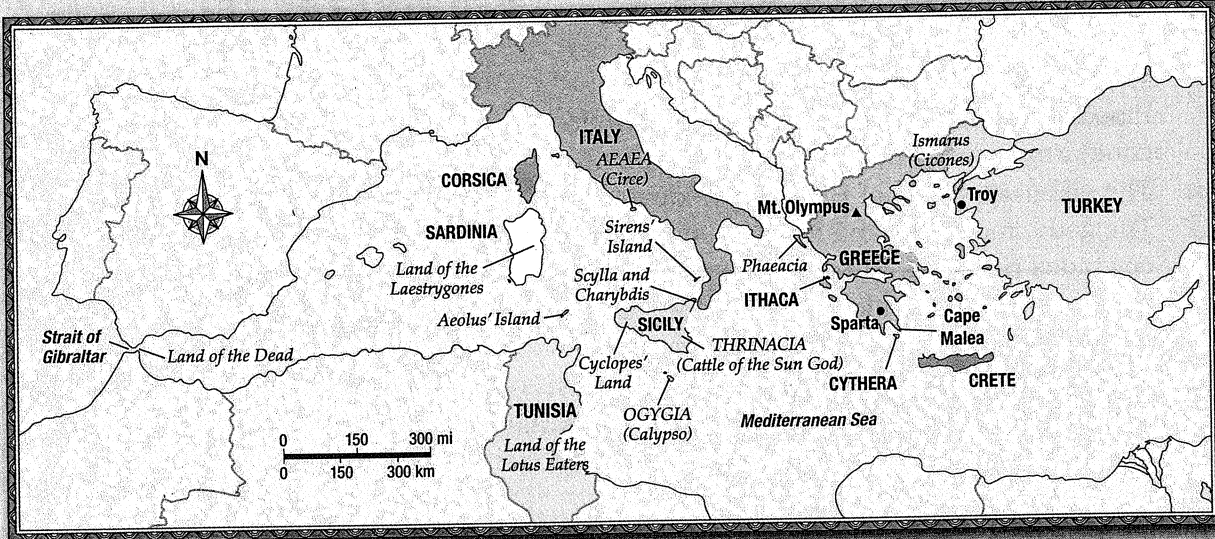
72. **contrived** (kən trɪvd')  
v. thought up; devised.

73. **Lampetia** (lam pē she) a nymph.

## Literature in Context Geography Connection

### Real Places and Imaginary Events in the *Odyssey*

Odysseus' journey carries him to real places, including Troy, Sparta, and the Strait of Gibraltar. However, in the story, many of these real places are populated by imaginary creatures, such as the Cyclops and the Sirens. The combination of real places and fantastic events is part of the story's appeal.



**Connect to the Literature** Why does the inclusion of real places make the story's imaginary events more believable?

905 '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  
910 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.'

915 Then Zeus who drives the stormcloud made reply:

### ✓ Reading Check

What do Odysseus' shipmates do while he is sleeping?

'Peace, Helios: shine on among the gods,  
shine over mortals in the fields of grain.  
Let me throw down one white-hot bolt, and make  
splinters of their ship in the winedark sea.'

920 —Calypso later told me of this exchange,  
as she declared that Hermes<sup>74</sup> had told her.  
Well, when I reached the sea cave and the ship,  
I faced each man, and had it out; but where  
could any remedy be found? There was none.

925 The silken beeves<sup>75</sup> of Helios were dead.  
The gods, moreover, made queer signs appear:  
cowhides began to crawl, and beef, both raw  
and roasted, lowed like kine upon the spits.

Now six full days my gallant crew could feast  
930 upon the prime beef they had marked for slaughter  
from Helios' herd; and Zeus, the son of Cronus,  
added one fine morning.

All the gales

had ceased, blown out, and with an offshore breeze  
we launched again, stepping the mast and sail,  
935 to make for the open sea. Astern of us  
the island coastline faded, and no land  
showed anywhere, but only sea and heaven,  
when Zeus Cronion piled a thunderhead  
above the ship, while gloom spread on the ocean.  
940 We held our course, but briefly. Then the squall  
struck whining from the west, with gale force, breaking  
both forestays, and the mast came toppling aft  
along the ship's length, so the running rigging  
showered into the bilge.

On the afterdeck

945 the mast had hit the steersman a slant blow  
bashing the skull in, knocking him overside,  
as the brave soul fled the body, like a diver.  
With crack on crack of thunder, Zeus let fly  
a bolt against the ship, a direct hit,  
950 so that she bucked, in reeking fumes of sulphur,  
and all the men were flung into the sea.  
They came up 'round the wreck, bobbing awhile  
like petrels<sup>76</sup> on the waves.

74. **Hermes** (hər' mēz') *n.*  
god who serves as herald and  
messenger of the other gods.

75. **beeves** (bēvz) *n.*  
alternate plural form of "beef."

### Literary Analysis Epic Hero and Flashback

What details in  
lines 920–921 clarify  
the flashback  
presented here?

76. **petrels** (pe' trēlz) *n.*  
small, dark sea birds.

No more seafaring  
homeward for these, no sweet day of return;  
955 the god had turned his face from them.

I clambered  
fore and aft my hulk until a comber  
split her, keel from ribs, and the big timber  
floated free; the mast, too, broke away.  
A backstay floated dangling from it, stout  
960 rawhide rope, and I used this for lashing  
mast and keel together. These I straddled,  
riding the frightful storm.


Nor had I yet  
seen the worst of it: for now the west wind  
dropped, and a southeast gale came on—one more  
965 twist of the knife—taking me north again,  
straight for Charybdis. All that night I drifted,  
and in the sunrise, sure enough, I lay  
off Scylla mountain and Charybdis deep.  
There, as the whirlpool drank the tide, a billow  
970 tossed me, and I sprang for the great fig tree,  
catching on like a bat under a bough.  
Nowhere had I to stand, no way of climbing,  
the root and bole<sup>77</sup> being far below, and far  
above my head the branches and their leaves,  
975 massed, overshadowing Charybdis pool.  
But I clung grimly, thinking my mast and keel  
would come back to the surface when she spouted.  
And ah! how long, with what desire, I waited!  
till, at the twilight hour, when one who hears  
980 and judges pleas in the marketplace all day  
between contentious men, goes home to supper,  
the long poles at last reared from the sea.

Now I let go with hands and feet, plunging  
straight into the foam beside the timbers,  
985 pulled astride, and rowed hard with my hands  
to pass by Scylla. Never could I have passed her  
had not the Father of gods and men,<sup>78</sup> this time,  
kept me from her eyes. Once through the strait,  
nine days I drifted in the open sea  
990 before I made shore, buoyed up by the gods,

**Literary Analysis**  
**Epic Hero** Which of  
Odysseus' heroic  
qualities does he  
demonstrate in this  
passage?

77. **bole** (bōl) *n.* tree trunk.

78. **Father . . . men** Zeus.

 **Reading Check**  
How is Odysseus' ship  
destroyed?

upon Ogygia<sup>79</sup> Isle. The dangerous nymph  
Calypso lives and sings there, in her beauty,  
and she received me, loved me.

But why tell

995 the same tale that I told last night in hall  
to you and to your lady? Those adventures  
made a long evening, and I do not hold  
with tiresome repetition of a story.”

79. Ogygia (o jĭj' īə)

**Literary Analysis**  
**Epic Hero and**  
**Flashback** In what  
way do lines 994–997  
remind you that  
Odysseus is telling his  
story to an audience?

## Thinking About the Selection

1. **Respond:** In which adventure in this section do you think Odysseus acts most heroically? Explain.
2. (a) **Recall:** How do the Sirens lure travelers to their destruction?  
(b) **Compare and Contrast:** How does the danger posed by the Sirens compare to that posed by the Lotus-Eaters?
3. (a) **Make a Judgment:** Was Odysseus right not to tell his men about his decision to sail toward Scylla? (b) **Hypothesize:** What might have happened if Odysseus had told them everything?
4. (a) **Recall:** What does Eurylochus say to persuade the crew to kill the cattle of the sun god? (b) **Analyze:** After all the men have experienced, why do you think they still disobey Odysseus' command? (c) **Relate:** If you had been in their position, do you think you would have eaten the cattle? Why or why not?
5. **Make a Judgment:** Do the members of the crew deserve the punishment they receive for killing the cattle? Explain.