

PEOPLE AND PLACES IN THE ODYSSEY

The following cast of characters lists some of those who take part in the sections of the *Odyssey* included in this book. Note that the Greeks in the *Odyssey* are often referred to as **Achaeans** (ə·kē'ənz) or **Argives** (är'gīvz'). *Achaeans* is the most general term, which also includes the people of Ithaca, the island off the west coast of Greece where Odysseus ruled. The word *Achaeans* is taken from the name of an ancient part of northeastern Greece called Achaea. The name *Argives* usually refers to the Greeks who went to fight at Troy.



The De Morgan Foundation, London, UK.

Penelope by John Roddam Spencer Stanhope.

THE WANDERINGS: CHARACTERS AND PLACES

Aeaea (ē·ē'ə): home of Circe, the enchantress and goddess.

Alcinous (al·sin'ō·əs): king of Phaeacia. Odysseus tells the story of his adventures to Alcinous's court.

Calypso (kə·lip'sō): beautiful nymph goddess who keeps Odysseus on her island for seven years.



National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

Circe hands the magic potion to Odysseus. Detail from a lecythus, a vase used for oils and ointments (5th century B.C.).

Charybdis (kə·rib'dis): female monster who sucks in water three times a day to form a deadly whirlpool. (Scholars believe the character is based on a real whirlpool in the Strait of Messina.)

Cicones (si·kō'nēz'): people living on the southwestern coast of Thrace who battled Odysseus and his men on their journey.

Circe (sur'sē): enchantress and goddess who turns Odysseus's men into swine.

Cyclops: See **Polyphemus**, below.

Erebus (er'ə·bəs): dark area of the underworld where the dead reside.

Eurylochus (yōō·ril'ə·kəs): a member of Odysseus's loyal crew.

Lotus Eaters: people who feed Odysseus's men lotus plants to make them forget Ithaca.

Phaeacia (fē·ā'shə): island kingdom ruled by King Alcinous. The Phaeacians are shipbuilders and traders.

Polyphemus (päl'i·fē'məs): son of the sea god Poseidon and blinded by Odysseus. Polyphemus is a **Cyclops** (sī'kläps'), one of a race of brutish one-eyed giants, the **Cyclopes** (sī·klō'pēz'), who live solitary lives as shepherds, supposedly on the island now known as Sicily.



Athens Museum.

Poseidon. Detail from a bronze statue. (5th century B.C.).

Scylla (sil'ə): female monster with six serpent heads, each head having a triple row of fangs. (Scholars believe this character is based on a dangerous rock in the Strait of Messina.)

Sirens: sea nymphs whose beautiful and mysterious music lures sailors to steer their ships toward dangerous rocks.

Teiresias (tī·rē'sē·əs): famous blind prophet from the city of Thebes. Odysseus meets him in the Land of the Dead.

Thrinakia (thri·nā'kē·ə): island where the sun god Helios keeps his cattle.

ITHACA: THE PEOPLE AT HOME

Antinous (an·tin'ō·əs): one of Penelope's main suitors; an arrogant and mean young noble from Ithaca.

Eumaeus (yōō·mē'əs): swineherd, one of Odysseus's loyal servants.

Eurycleia (yōō'ri·klē'yə): Odysseus's old nurse.

Eurymachus (yōō·rim'ə·kəs): suitor of Penelope.

Eurynome (yōō·rin'ə·mē): Penelope's housekeeper.

Penelope (pə·nel'ə·pē): Odysseus's faithful wife.

Philoeteus (fi·lē'shē·əs): cowherd, one of Odysseus's loyal servants.

Telemachus (tə·lem'ə·kəs): Odysseus's son.

THE GODS

Apollo (ə·pāl'ō): god of poetry, music, prophecy, medicine, and archery.

Athena (ə·thē'nə): favorite daughter of Zeus; the great goddess of wisdom as well as war and peace. She favored the Greeks during the Trojan War. She is often called Pallas Athena.

Cronus (krō'nəs): Titan (giant god) who ruled the universe until his son Zeus overthrew him.

Helios (hē'lē·ās'): sun god.

Hephaestus (hē·fes'təs): god of metalworking.

Hermes (hər'mēz'): messenger god.

Poseidon (pō·sī'dən): god of the sea; brother of Zeus. Poseidon is called Earth Shaker because he is believed to cause earthquakes. He is an enemy of Odysseus.

Zeus (zōōs): the most powerful god. His home is on Olympus.



Acropolis Museum, Athens.

Athena mourning the death of Achilles at Troy. Detail from a marble stele, or pillar.

Before You Read

from the *Odyssey*, Part One

Make the Connection

Quickwrite

What makes a hero? Write down the names of people, real or fictional, whom you consider heroic. Then, list character traits that you think a hero should have. Are these traits universal, or do they reflect only our own culture? Add to your notes as you read the *Odyssey*.

Literary Focus

Heroes at Large

We admire them in books and movies, on TV shows, and in the news, and if we look closely, even in our own lives. They're our heroes—real or fictional.

In fiction, as in real life, heroes often set off on a journey that we're all on: the quest to discover who we are and what we can do. Encountering challenges and dangers, heroic characters face **external conflicts**—struggles with other characters (these are often **subordinate characters** who play a secondary role in the story) or with the forces of nature.

Whether heroes fail or succeed on their journeys, they do it on a grand scale, giving us new perspectives on our own lives. As you read these tales of Odysseus's wanderings, think about how he overcomes his conflicts. What makes him heroic?

Reading Skills

Monitor Your Comprehension

As you read this epic, stop now and then to ask yourself questions and to sum up what you've read. Ask:

- What has happened so far?

- Why did it happen?
- What are the important events in this episode?
- When do the events take place?
- What might happen next?
- Can I visualize what is being described?
- What is my evaluation of the characters' decisions and actions?
- What connections can I make between what I've read and my own life?

The questions at the open-book signs will help you monitor your comprehension. If you can't answer the questions, go back through the text to find the answers.

Vocabulary Development

adversity (ad·vər'sə·tē) *n.*: hardship; great misfortune.

formidable (fôr'mə·də·bəl) *adj.*: awe-inspiring by reason of excellence; strikingly impressive.

ravage (rav'ij) *v.*: destroy violently; ruin.

profusion (prō·fyōō'zhən) *n.*: large supply; abundance.

adversary (ad'vər·ser'ē) *n.*: enemy; opponent.

rancor (ran'kər) *n.*: bitter hatred; ill will.

abominably (ə·bäm'ə·nə·blē) *adv.*: in an extremely unpleasant or disgusting manner.

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

tumult (tōō'mult) *n.*: commotion; uproar; confusion.

restitution (res'tə·tōō'shən) *n.*: compensation; repayment.



INTERNET

Vocabulary Practice

• More About Homer

• Keyword: LE5 9-10

SKILLS FOCUS

Literary Skills

Understand characteristics of epic poetry, including heroes and their external conflicts.

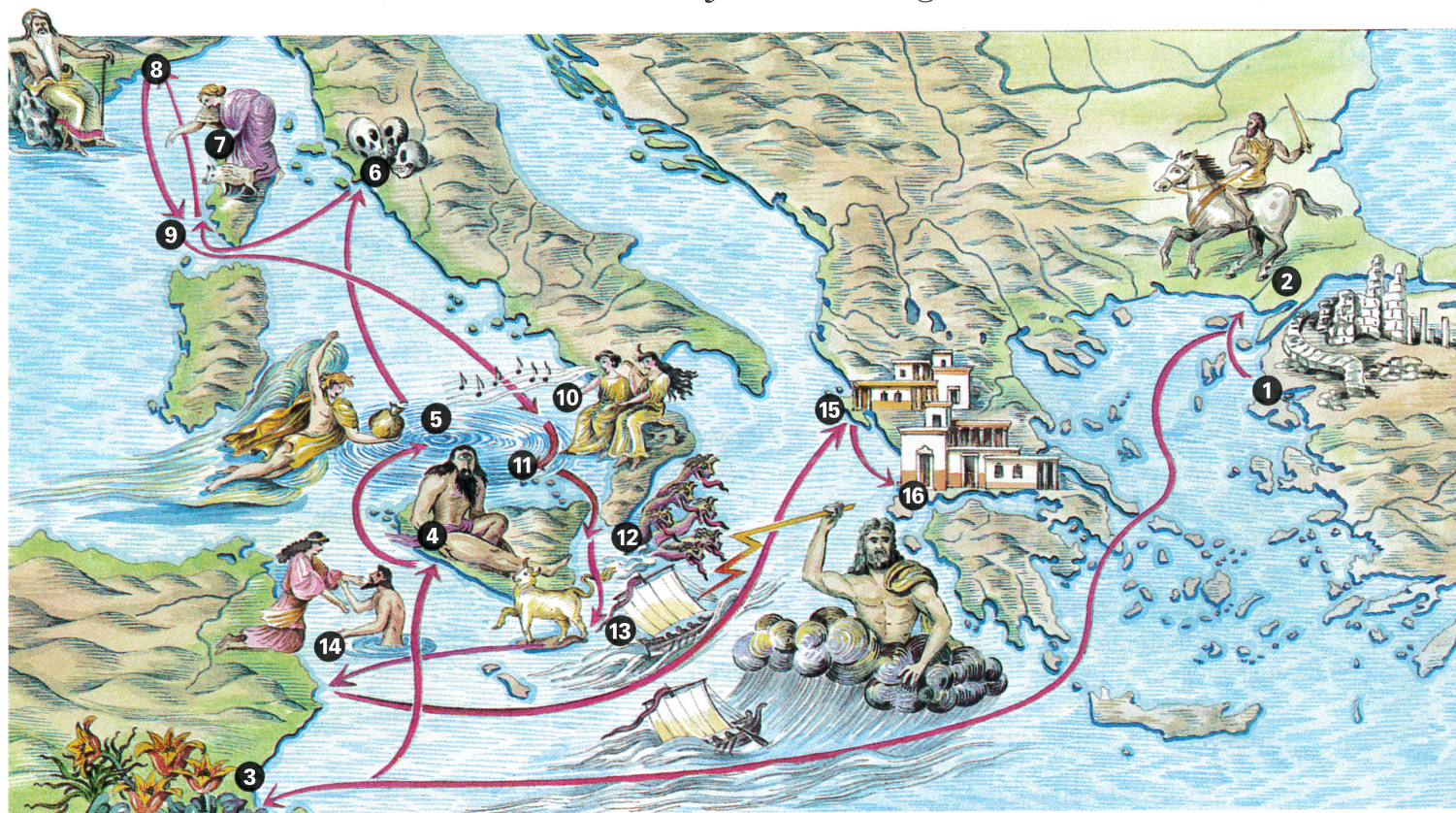
Reading Skills

Monitor your comprehension.

O from the DYSSEY

Homer

translated by Robert Fitzgerald



- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ① Troy | ⑤ Island of Aeolia | ⑨ Circe | ⑬ Thrinakia |
| ② Cicones | ⑥ Laestrygonians | ⑩ Sirens | ⑭ Calypso |
| ③ Lotus Eaters | ⑦ Circe | ⑪ Charybdis | ⑮ Phaeacia |
| ④ Cyclops | ⑧ Teiresias and the Land of the Dead | ⑫ Scylla | ⑯ Ithaca |

Homer opens with an invocation, or prayer, asking the Muse^o to help him sing his tale. Notice how the singer gives his listeners hints about how his story is to end.

And when long years and seasons
25 wheeling brought around that point of time
ordained for him to make his passage homeward,
trials and dangers, even so, attended him
even in Ithaca, near those he loved.
Yet all the gods had pitied Lord Odysseus,
30 all but Poseidon, raging cold and rough
against the brave king till he came ashore
at last on his own land. . . .

• The Greeks believed that there were nine Muses, daughters of Zeus, the chief god. The Muses inspired people to produce music, poetry, dance, and all the other arts.

 *Oral presentation.*

1–32. Read this prayer to the Muse aloud. (You and a partner could read it as a chorus, or you could alternate with single voices.) What does Homer tell you about the hero and about what is going to happen to him?

PART ONE: THE WANDERINGS

CALYPSO, THE SWEET NYMPH

Books 1–4 of the epic tell about Odysseus’s son, Telemachus. Telemachus has been searching the Mediterranean world for his father, who has never returned from the ten-year Trojan War. (Today, Odysseus would be listed as missing in action.)

When we first meet Odysseus, in Book 5 of the epic, he is a prisoner of the beautiful goddess Calypso. The old soldier is in despair: He has spent ten years (seven of them as Calypso’s not entirely unwilling captive) trying to get home.

The goddess Athena has supported and helped Odysseus on his long journey. Now she begs her father, Zeus, to help her favorite, and Zeus agrees. He sends the messenger god Hermes to Calypso’s island to order Odysseus released. Although Calypso is not described as evil, her seductive charms—even her promises of immortality for Odysseus—threaten to keep the hero away from his wife, Penelope.

No words were lost on Hermes the Wayfinder
who bent to tie his beautiful sandals on,
35 ambrosial,^o golden, that carry him over water
or over endless land in a swish of the wind,
and took the wand with which he charms asleep—
or when he wills, awake—the eyes of men.
So wand in hand he paced into the air,
40 shot from Pieria^o down, down to sea level,
and veered to skim the swell. A gull patrolling
between the wave crests of the desolate sea
will dip to catch a fish, and douse his wings;
no higher above the whitecaps Hermes flew
45 until the distant island lay ahead,
then rising shoreward from the violet ocean
he stepped up to the cave. Divine Calypso,
the mistress of the isle, was now at home.
Upon her hearthstone a great fire blazing
50 scented the farthest shores with cedar smoke
and smoke of thyme, and singing high and low
in her sweet voice, before her loom aweaving,
she passed her golden shuttle to and fro.
A deep wood grew outside, with summer leaves
55 of alder and black poplar, pungent cypress.
Ornate birds here rested their stretched wings—
horned owls, falcons, cormorants—long-tongued
beachcombing birds, and followers of the sea.
Around the smooth-walled cave a crooking vine
60 held purple clusters under ply^o of green;

35. **ambrosial** (am·brō'zhəl) *adj.*: fit for the gods; divine. Nectar and ambrosia are the drink and food that kept the gods immortal.

40. **Pieria** (pī·ir'ē·ə): place in central Greece not far from Olympus; a favorite spot of Hermes.



Man with a headband. Detail from a bronze statue (c. 460–450 B.C.).

60. **ply** (plī) *n.*: twisted strands.

Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Reggio Calabria, Italy.

and four springs, bubbling up near one another
 shallow and clear, took channels here and there
 through beds of violets and tender parsley.
 Even a god who found this place
 65 would gaze, and feel his heart beat with delight:
 so Hermes did; but when he had gazed his fill
 he entered the wide cave. Now face-to-face
 the magical Calypso recognized him,
 as all immortal gods know one another
 70 on sight—though seeming strangers, far from home.
 But he saw nothing of the great Odysseus,
 who sat apart, as a thousand times before,
 and racked his own heart groaning, with eyes wet
 scanning the bare horizon of the sea. . . .

*Hermes tells Calypso that she must give up Odysseus forever.
 Now we are directly introduced to Odysseus. Notice what this
 great warrior is doing when we first meet him.*

75 The strong god glittering left her as he spoke,
 and now her ladyship, having given heed
 to Zeus's mandate, went to find Odysseus
 in his stone seat to seaward—tear on tear
 brimming his eyes. The sweet days of his lifetime
 80 were running out in anguish over his exile,
 for long ago the nymph had ceased to please.
 Though he fought shy of her and her desire,
 he lay with her each night, for she compelled him.
 But when day came he sat on the rocky shore
 85 and broke his own heart groaning, with eyes wet
 scanning the bare horizon of the sea.
 Now she stood near him in her beauty, saying:
 "O forlorn man, be still.
 Here you need grieve no more; you need not feel
 90 your life consumed here; I have pondered it,
 and I shall help you go. . . ."

*Calypso promises Odysseus a raft and provisions to help him
 homeward without harm—provided the gods wish it. Now
 Odysseus and Calypso say goodbye.*

Swiftly she turned and led him to her cave,
 and they went in, the mortal and immortal.
 He took the chair left empty now by Hermes,

 **33–66.** There is a great deal of nature **imagery** in this episode. Jot down some of the images that help you see Hermes' flight. What images describing Calypso's island appeal to your senses of sight, hearing, and smell? How does the natural beauty of Calypso's island compare with the reality of Odysseus's situation?



National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

Hermes. Bronze statue (5th century B.C.).

 **88–91.** Zeus ordered Calypso to free Odysseus, but the nymph claims that the idea is her own. Why do you think she does this? What is your opinion of her deception?

95 where the divine Calypso placed before him
 victuals and drink of men; then she sat down
 facing Odysseus, while her serving maids
 brought nectar and ambrosia to her side.
 Then each one's hands went out on each one's feast
 100 until they had had their pleasure; and she said:

“Son of Laertes,^o versatile Odysseus,
 after these years with me, you still desire
 your old home? Even so, I wish you well.
 If you could see it all, before you go—
 105 all the adversity you face at sea—
 you would stay here, and guard this house, and be
 immortal—though you wanted her forever,
 that bride for whom you pine each day.
 Can I be less desirable than she is?
 110 Less interesting? Less beautiful? Can mortals
 compare with goddesses in grace and form?”

To this the strategist Odysseus answered:

“My lady goddess, there is no cause for anger.
 My quiet Penelope—how well I know—
 115 would seem a shade before your majesty,
 death and old age being unknown to you,
 while she must die. Yet, it is true, each day
 I long for home, long for the sight of home. . . .”

*So Odysseus builds the raft and sets sail. But the sea god Poseidon
 is by no means ready to allow an easy passage over his watery
 domain. He raises a storm and destroys the raft. It is only with the
 help of Athena and a sea nymph that Odysseus arrives, broken
 and battered, on the island of Scheria (skē'rē • ə). There he hides
 himself in a pile of leaves and falls into a deep sleep.*

A man in a distant field, no hearth fires near,
 120 will hide a fresh brand^o in his bed of embers
 to keep a spark alive for the next day;
 so in the leaves Odysseus hid himself,
 while over him Athena showered sleep
 that his distress should end, and soon, soon.
 125 In quiet sleep she sealed his cherished eyes.

(from Book 5)

Vocabulary

adversity (ad • vūr' sē • tē) *n.*: hardship; great misfortune.

101. Laertes (lā • ər'tēz').



Calypso and Odysseus. Detail from
 a red-figured vase (5th century B.C.).

 **101–118.** According to
 Calypso, what would Odysseus
 gain by staying with her? What
 does Odysseus's response tell you
 about his feelings for his wife? How
 has Odysseus managed to say no to
 Calypso and still not offend her?

120. **fresh brand:** burning stick.

Calypso

Suzanne Vega

My name is Calypso
And I have lived alone
I live on an island
And I waken to the dawn
5 A long time ago
I watched him struggle with the sea
I knew that he was drowning
And I brought him into me
Now today
10 Come morning light
He sails away
After one last night
I let him go.

My name is Calypso
15 My garden overflows
Thick and wild and hidden
Is the sweetness there that grows
My hair it blows long
As I sing into the wind
20 I tell of nights
Where I could taste the salt on his skin

Salt of the waves
And of tears
And though he pulled away
25 I kept him here for years
I let him go.

My name is Calypso
I have let him go
In the dawn he sails away
30 To be gone forever more
And the waves will take him in again
But he'll know their ways now
I will stand upon the shore
With a clean heart
35 And my song in the wind
The sand will sting my feet
And the sky will burn
It's a lonely time ahead
I do not ask him to return
40 I let him go
I let him go.



The Whitworth Art Gallery, the University of Manchester.

The Departure of Ulysses from the Isle of Calypso (1848–1849) by Samuel Palmer.

“I AM LAERTES’ SON. . . .”

Odysseus is found by the daughter of Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians. That evening he is a guest at court (Books 6–8).

To the ancient people of Greece and Asia Minor, all guests were godsent. They had to be treated with great courtesy before they could be asked to identify themselves and state their business. That night, at the banquet, the stranger who was washed up on the beach is seated in the guest’s place of honor. A minstrel, or singer, is called, and the mystery guest gives him a gift of pork, crisp with fat, and requests a song about Troy. In effect, Odysseus is asking for a song about himself.

Odysseus weeps as the minstrel’s song reminds him of all his companions, who will never see their homes again. Now Odysseus is asked by the king to identify himself. It is here that he begins the story of his journey.

Now this was the reply Odysseus made: . . .

“I am Laertes’ son, Odysseus.

Men hold me

formidable for guile in peace and war:
this fame has gone abroad to the sky’s rim.

- 130 My home is on the peaked seamar of Ithaca
under Mount Neion’s windblown robe of leaves,
in sight of other islands—Doulkhion,
Same, wooded Zakynthos—Ithaca
being most lofty in that coastal sea,
135 and northwest, while the rest lie east and south.
A rocky isle, but good for a boy’s training;
I shall not see on earth a place more dear,
though I have been detained long by Calypso,
loveliest among goddesses, who held me
140 in her smooth caves, to be her heart’s delight,
as Circe of Aeaea, the enchantress,
desired me, and detained me in her hall.
But in my heart I never gave consent.

- Where shall a man find sweetness to surpass
145 his own home and his parents? In far lands
he shall not, though he find a house of gold.

What of my sailing, then, from Troy?

What of those years
of rough adventure, weathered under Zeus?

Vocabulary

formidable (fôr’mə·də·bəl) *adj.*: awe-inspiring by reason of excellence; strikingly impressive.

εἴμι’ Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης,
ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί
μεν κλέος οὐρανὸν
ἵκει. ναιετάω δ’
Ἰθάκην εὐδείελον·
ἐν δ’ ὄρος αὐτῇ,
Νήριτον εἰνοσίφυλλον
ἀριπρεπές· ἀμφὶ δὲ
νῆσοι πολλαὶ
ναιετάουσι μάλα
σχεδὸν ἀλλήλησι,
Δουλίχιόν τε· Σάμη
τε καὶ Ὑλήεσσα
Ζάκυνθος.

The passage beginning “I am Laertes’ son” in Greek.

The wind that carried west from Ilion^o
 150 brought me to Ismaros, on the far shore,
 a strongpoint on the coast of the Cicones.
 I stormed that place and killed the men who fought.
 Plunder we took, and we enslaved the women,
 to make division, equal shares to all—
 155 but on the spot I told them: 'Back, and quickly!
 Out to sea again!' My men were mutinous,
 fools, on stores of wine. Sheep after sheep
 they butchered by the surf, and shambling cattle,
 feasting—while fugitives went inland, running
 160 to call to arms the main force of Cicones.
 This was an army, trained to fight on horseback
 or, where the ground required, on foot. They came
 with dawn over that terrain like the leaves
 and blades of spring. So doom appeared to us,
 165 dark word of Zeus for us, our evil days.
 My men stood up and made a fight of it—
 backed on the ships, with lances kept in play,
 from bright morning through the blaze of noon
 holding our beach, although so far outnumbered;
 170 but when the sun passed toward unyoking time,
 then the Achaeans, one by one, gave way.
 Six benches were left empty in every ship
 that evening when we pulled away from death.
 And this new grief we bore with us to sea:
 175 our precious lives we had, but not our friends.
 No ship made sail next day until some shipmate
 had raised a cry, three times, for each poor ghost
 unfleshed by the Cicones on that field.
 Now Zeus the lord of cloud roused in the north
 180 a storm against the ships, and driving veils
 of squall moved down like night on land and sea.
 The bows went plunging at the gust; sails
 cracked and lashed out strips in the big wind.
 We saw death in that fury, dropped the yards,^o
 185 unshipped the oars, and pulled for the nearest lee:^o
 then two long days and nights we lay offshore
 worn out and sick at heart, tasting our grief,
 until a third Dawn came with ringlets shining.
 Then we put up our masts, hauled sail, and rested,
 190 letting the steersmen and the breeze take over.

149. Ilion (il'ē·än'): another name
 for Troy.

 **152–160.** What do you think
 of the way Odysseus and his men be-
 have toward the Cicones? Do armies
 behave like this in modern times?

184. yards (yărdz) *n.*: rods support-
 ing the sails.

185. lee (lē) *n.*: place of shelter from
 the wind.

I might have made it safely home, that time,
but as I came round Malea the current
took me out to sea, and from the north
a fresh gale drove me on, past Cythera.^o
195 Nine days I drifted on the teeming sea
before dangerous high winds.”

(from Book 9)

194. Cythera (si·thir'ə).

THE LOTUS EATERS

“Upon the tenth
we came to the coastline of the Lotus Eaters,
who live upon that flower. We landed there
200 to take on water. All ships' companies
mustered^o alongside for the midday meal.
Then I sent out two picked men and a runner
to learn what race of men that land sustained.
They fell in, soon enough, with Lotus Eaters,
205 who showed no will to do us harm, only
offering the sweet Lotus to our friends—
but those who ate this honeyed plant, the Lotus,
never cared to report, nor to return:
they longed to stay forever, browsing on
210 that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland.
I drove them, all three wailing, to the ships,
tied them down under their rowing benches,
and called the rest: ‘All hands aboard;
come, clear the beach and no one taste
215 the Lotus, or you lose your hope of home.’
Filing in to their places by the rowlocks
my oarsmen dipped their long oars in the surf,
and we moved out again on our seafaring. . . .”

(from Book 9)

201. **mustered** (mus'tərd) v.:
gathered; assembled.



204–215. Why does
Odysseus tie down the three men?
What does this action tell you about
him?