

# Athena Mentors Telemachus in the *Odyssey*

The following commentary identifies key passages in the opening books of the *Odyssey* regarding Athena's mentorship of Telemachus.

[N.B., the following translation is by James Huddleston and is taken from the Chicago Homer website (<http://homer.library.northwestern.edu/>). The *Odyssey* is an oral epic poem (c. 600 BCE) composed in the meter known as dactylic hexameter. Here the vertical lines divide each line of poetry. The numbers in red correspond to the lines. All commentary in the **Key Passages** below is by me unless otherwise cited--Norman Sandridge]

## Scroll One [technically, ancient literature was written on scrolls, not books]

Tell me, Muse, about the wily man who wandered | long and far after he  
sacked the sacred citadel of Troy. | He saw the cities and knew the minds  
of many men, | but suffered at sea many sorrows in his heart, | struggling  
for his life and comrades' return home. | But he didn't save his comrades,  
much though he wanted to, | for by their own recklessness they perished,  
| childish fools, who devoured the cattle of the Sun, Hyperion, | who then  
deprived them of their homecoming day. | Tell us also, goddess, daughter  
of Zeus, of sundry things. (10)

Then all the rest, all who had escaped sheer destruction, | were home  
and had escaped both war and sea. | Him only, yearning for his wife and  
return home, | the nymph, lady Calypso, a goddess divine, | detained in  
hollow caves, eager that he be her husband. | But as the years went  
round, there came a year at last | when the gods spun his destiny to  
return home | to Ithaca, but he wasn't safe from trials there, | even  
among his loved ones. All the gods felt pity for him | except Poseidon. He

was incessantly incensed (20) | at godlike Odysseus until he reached his own land.

But Poseidon had gone to visit the far-off Ethiopians, | the Ethiopians, most remote of men, who are divided in two, | some at Hyperion's setting, others at his rising, | to partake of a hecatomb of bulls and rams. | He sat there enjoying himself at the feast. The others by now | were together in the halls of Olympian Zeus. | The father of men and gods began speaking to them, | for in his heart he recalled noble Aegisthus, | whom far-famed Orestes Agamemnonides had slain. (30) | Remembering him, he addressed these words to the immortals:

"Humph! How mortals now blame gods, | for they say that evils are from us. Yet they themselves | have woes beyond their lot by their own recklessness, | as even now, beyond his lot, Aegisthus | married Atreides' wedded wife and killed him when he came home, | sure of sheer destruction, after we told him beforehand, | sending Hermes, sharp-sighted Argeiphontes, | to neither woo his wife nor kill him, | for there'd be revenge, from Atreides' son Orestes, (40) | when he came of age and longed for his own land. | So Hermes said, but he didn't win over the mind of Aegisthus, | though he meant well. Now he's paid for it all all together."

Then bright-eyed goddess Athena answered him: | "Our father Cronides, your highness most supreme, | just as that one lies in fitting destruction, | may also any other one who does such things so perish! | But my heart is troubled about skilled Odysseus, the ill-fated one, | who, away from his loved ones a long time already, suffers misery | on a sea-girt island, where the sea's navel is. (50) | The island is forested, and on it a goddess makes her home, | the daughter of malign Atlas, he who knows the

depths | of every sea and by himself holds the tall pillars | that hold apart heaven and earth. | His daughter detains the unfortunate lamenter, | and ever with soft and wheedling words | enchants him in such a way that he'll forget Ithaca. | But Odysseus, eager for even the sight of smoke rising | from his land, longs to die. But there's now no care at all for him | in your dear heart, Olympian. Did not Odysseus (60) | please you he when he offered sacrifice beside the Argive ships | in wide Troy? Why now, Zeus, are you so incensed with him?"

Cloud-gatherer Zeus said to her in reply: | "My child, what kind of talk has fled your wall of teeth? | How could I ever forget godlike Odysseus, | who is superior among mortals in mind and in giving sacrifice | to the immortal gods who hold wide heaven? | But earth-embracing Poseidon is ever relentless | in his rage because of the Cyclops whose eye Odysseus blinded, | godlike Polyphemus, whose strength is greatest (70) | of all Cyclops. The nymph Thoosa bore him. | Daughter of Phorkys, ruler of the barren sea, | she joined in hollow caves with Poseidon. | Earth-shaker Poseidon does not kill Odysseus on his account, | but does drive him away from his father's land. | But come, let all of us contrive his return for him, | as he wishes. Poseidon will let go | of his anger, for he'll no way be able to contend | alone, opposed to all immortals, against the will of the gods."

Then bright-eyed goddess Athena answered him: (80) | "Our father Cronides, your highness most supreme, | if this is now pleasing to the blessed gods, | that ingenious Odysseus would return to his home, | then let's dispatch Hermes, the runner Argeiphontes, | to the island of Ogygia, to clearly speak | most quickly to the fair-haired nymph our will, | the return home of steadfast Odysseus, so that he may go.

---

### Key Passage One: 1.88-95

Athena announces to Zeus, king of the gods, that she will put courage (Greek *menos*) in Telemachus, to assert himself before the suitors who are courting his mother Penelope. She will also send Telemachus the homes of two of Odysseus' closest allies, Nestor in Pylos and Menelaus in Sparta. These visits will increase Telemachus' reputation (*kleos*).

Then I'll go to Ithaca, to spur his son on | more, and I'll put the  
courage [*menos*] in his heart | to call the hairy-headed  
Achaean to assembly | and speak out to all the suitors, who  
are always slaughtering | his thick-thronging sheep and  
shambling curved-horned cattle. | I'll send him to Sparta and  
to sandy Pylos, | to learn of his dear father's return home, in  
hope he'll somehow hear | and so he'll have good repute  
[*kleos*] among men."

Greg Nagy on *menos*: "At the council of the gods, Athena lays out her intent, saying that she will put *menos* into Telemachus. It's a Greek word that's usually translated as "heroic strength." But really, *menos* is not just strength of any kind—it is mental strength. And by that, I mean the kind of surge of power you feel in being able to put things into action. You can see the connection between *menos* and "mentor." *Menos* is mental strength, and a mentor is someone who gives mental strength to someone else"

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/10/the-odyssey-mentorship/542676/>).

---

So saying, beneath her feet she tied fine sandals, | ambrosial, golden  
ones, that bore her over water | and boundless land, with the breezes of  
the wind. | She grabbed a sharp spear, edged with sharp bronze, | heavy,

long, and thick, with which she routs regiments of men, (100) | heroes against whom the great father's daughter bears resentment. | In a rush she came down from the peaks of Olympus, | and in the kingdom of Ithaca stood at the doorway of Odysseus, | at the courtyard's threshold. She held the bronze spear in her palm, | disguised as a stranger, the Taphian chief Mentès. | Next she found the manly suitors, who were then | amusing their hearts with pebbles in front of the gate, | sitting on hides of oxen that they'd killed. | They had heralds and deft henchmen, | some who mixed wine and water in mixing bowls, (110) | while some, with sponges full of holes, cleaned | and set the tables and others cut up lots of meat.

---

### Key Passage Two: 1.113-143

Telemachus has fantasies of his father's return to avenge himself against the suitors. And he shows Athena thoughtful hospitality.

Godlike Telemachus was first by far to see her, | for he sat among the suitors, dear heart grieving, | seeing in his mind his good father, in hope he'd come from somewhere, | make a scattering of the suitors throughout the house, | and himself have honor and rule over his possessions. | Sitting among the suitors thinking this, he caught sight of Athena. | He made straight for the front doorway, displeased at heart | that a stranger stand a long time at the door. He stood close, | took her right hand, and accepted her bronze spear. | And, voicing winged words, he said to her: | "Welcome, stranger, you'll be treated kindly by us, then | when you've eaten supper, you can tell us what you need." | So saying, he led the way, and Pallas Athena followed. | When they were inside the lofty

dwelling | he stood the spear he carried against a tall pillar, |  
inside a well-wrought spear rack, where many spears | of  
steadfast Odysseus stood as well. | He led her to a fine  
ornamented chair, spread a cloth beneath her, | and sat her  
down. There was a footstool underneath her feet. | He set  
himself a variegated couch beside her, apart from the others, |  
the suitors, lest the stranger, distressed by the din | and  
coming among the haughty, not be satisfied with supper | and  
so he could ask her about his absent father. | A handmaid  
brought water for washing in a | fine golden pitcher and  
poured it above a silver basin | so they could wash, then  
pulled a polished table beside them. | A venerable  
housekeeper brought bread and set it before them | placing  
many foods on it, pleasing them from her stores. | A carver  
raised and placed before them platters of meats | of all kinds  
and put golden cups beside them. | A herald came often and  
poured wine for them.

Telemachus is practicing here the ancient Greek custom known as *xenia*, which we sometimes translated as “hospitality”, though this word does not easily communicate all that *xenia* entails (whence the English word “xenophobia,” the fear of foreigners or foreign customs). *xenia* could be translated as “foreign relations” in the sense that it was a custom practiced reciprocally among elite families in ancient Greece and even throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. It involved familiar gestures of hospitality (e.g. offering food, clothing, shelter) as well as an exchange of gifts. These gifts themselves often had a “pedigree” in the sense that they may have been handed down for generations across several families (see the silver bowl that Menelaus gives to Telemachus at *Odyssey* 15.111-119). Whoever happened to be the current possessor

of the gift could use the gift to signal his alliance with the giver of the gift and speak of the glory (*kleos*) of its past possessors. Ties of *xenia* were so important that they could be inherited and might even transcend the hostility that comes with being on opposite sides of a war (cf. the inherited *xenia* relationship between Diomedes and Glaucus in the *Iliad* 6.212-236).

Beyond the political elites it was important to show *xenia* to any and all strangers who came to one's community, as it demonstrated one's awareness of the trials faced by weary travelers and the vicissitudes of fortune (cf. Odysseus' speech to the suitor Antinous at *Odyssey* 17.415-444). The gods themselves were thought to take the disguise of beggars in order to test a community's commitment to *xenia* (cf. *Odyssey* 17.483-487).

Telemachus' exhibition of *xenia* to Athena-Mentes signifies at least his partial readiness to take over his father's household, as he is someone who is conscientious (he notices Athena before anyone else) and who is attentive to the needs of others. We might compare this readiness with *xenia* to a contemporary person's ability to "network" today.

In this scene Telemachus also fantasizes about his father's return. This fantasy will be made more vivid in the course of his mentoring from Athena (cf. *Odyssey* 1.321-322).

---

In came the manly suitors. Then, as they | sat down in rows on chairs and couches, | heralds poured water on their hands, | slaves heaped bread in baskets beside them, | and boys filled mixing bowls to the brim with drink. | They threw their hands on the good things laid ready before them. | Then after the suitors had dispatched desire for food (150) | and

drink, other things caught their minds' attention, | the performance and  
the dance, for they accompany a feast. | A herald placed a gorgeous  
cithara into the hands | of Phemius, who sang, under duress, for the  
suitors.

Playing the lyre, he began to sing beautifully, | but Telemachus said to  
bright-eyed Athena, | holding his head close so others couldn't hear him:  
| "Dear stranger, will you resent me for what I'm going to say? | These  
things, the cithara and song, interest them | easily, since they eat without  
payment the substance of another, (160) | of a man whose white bones  
rot somewhere in a storm, | lying on dry land or rolling in the waves of  
the sea.

---

### Key Passage Three: 1.163-177

Telemachus expresses doubt of Odysseus' return and then interrogates  
Athena-Mentes.

If they saw that one [Odysseus] returning home to Ithaca, | all  
would pray to be lighter on their feet | than to be richer in  
raiment and gold. | Now he's perished by an evil fate, and we  
have no | comfort, even if some earthly man | tells us he will  
come. His day of homecoming is done for. | But come, tell me  
this, and recount it exactly. | What man and from where are  
you? Where are your city and parents? | In what kind of ship  
did you arrive and how did sailors | bring you to Ithaca? Who  
did they claim to be? | For I don't at all think you reached here  
on foot. | And speak this truly to me, so I may know well |  
whether you're just visiting or are also a hereditary |  
guest-friend [*xeinos*], since many other men used to come to

our house | when that one too was one who had dealings with  
mankind."

Telemachus demonstrates a skepticism or caution about his father's return. While this may seem like childish despair, it is a trait that both Odysseus and Penelope exhibit, which marks them out as wise through their suffering. As such, they are less vulnerable to the duplicity and trickery of their enemies (or anyone who might try to take advantage of them).

Telemachus further demonstrates the networking aspect of *xenia* by trying to learn everything he can about Athena-Mentes, including whether he/she is a guest friend. Note also that what the translator has rendered as "hereditary guest-friend" is in Greek *patroios xeinou*, literally "a guest friend of my *father's*". This may be a good opportunity to point out the patriarchal nature of *xenia* and also raise questions about the extent to which contemporary networking (e.g., in business, politics, the tech world) is done primarily through male relationships, even inherited male relationships.

---

Bright-eyed goddess Athena said back to him: | "So then, I'll tell this to  
you quite exactly. | I claim I'm Mentes, son of skilled Anchialus, (180) |  
and I rule over the oar-loving Taphians. | I've come this way now with  
my ship and comrades, | sailing on the wine-dark sea to men of another  
language, | to Temese, after copper, and I bring gleaming iron. | My ship  
stands over there, in the country, away from the city, | in Rheithron  
harbor beneath wooded Neion. | We claim that we're hereditary  
guest-friends of each other | from of old. Just go and ask the old man, |  
hero Laertes, whom they say no longer comes | to town, but suffers  
misery on his farm far away, (190) | with an old woman handmaid who

puts food and drink | beside him whenever exhaustion takes hold of his limbs, | as he crawls up the hill of his wine-bearing plot.

---

#### Key Passage Four: 1.195-212

Athena-Mentes announces that Odysseus will be returning home and she raises the question of whether Telemachus is indeed Odysseus' son, noting their physical resemblance.

Now I've come, for they said your father was at home, | but, indeed, the gods impede him on his path. | For divine Odysseus has not yet died on land, | but still alive somewhere, he's held back by the wide sea | on a sea-girt island. Hard men hold him, | savages, who detain him against his will. | But I'll now prophesy to you, as the immortals | put it in my heart and as I think that it will happen, | though I'm neither a seer nor clearly know about birds of omen. | He surely won't be away much longer from his beloved | fatherland, not even if bonds of iron hold him. | Since he's resourceful, he'll figure out how to return. | But come, tell me this, and recount it exactly, | whether, big as you are, you're the son of Odysseus himself. | You're terribly like him in your head and fine eyes, | since we every so often got together with each other | before he went to Troy, where the rest | of the best of the Argives went in their hollow ships. | Since then, I've not seen Odysseus nor has he seen me."

Athena-Mentes gives Telemachus confidence in himself by drawing natural, hereditary comparisons between him and his father.

---

Astute Telemachus said back to her in answer: | "Well then, I'll tell you, stranger, quite exactly. | My mother says I'm his, but I don't know, | for no one ever knows for sure his parentage. | Would that I were the blessed son of some man | whom old age came upon among his possessions. | But, he who's been the unluckiest of all men, | his they say I am, since you ask me about this." (220)

Bright-eyed goddess Athena said back to him: | "The gods did not establish your line to be nameless | hereafter, since Penelope gave birth to such as you. | But come, tell me this, and recount it exactly. | What meal, what gathering is this? What has it to do with you? | A banquet or a wedding, since this is not a meal hosted by many? | They seem to me to dine haughtily, like wantons, | throughout the house. Any sensible man who came to visit | would be outraged seeing these many shameful deeds!"

Astute Telemachus said back to her in turn: (230) | "Stranger, since you question me and ask about this, | once upon a time this house was going to be | rich and noble, when that man was at home. | Now the gods, scheming evil, have willed otherwise; | they've made him the most invisible of all | men. I wouldn't grieve so for him even if he'd died, | if he'd been tamed among his comrades in the Trojans' land | or in the hands of loved ones after he wound up the war. | The Panachaeans would have made a grave mound for him | and he'd have won great fame hereafter even for his son. (240) | But now the Snatchers have snatched him without tidings. | He goes, unseen, unheard of, and has left me pain | and lamentation. But I don't only lament and grieve for him | now, since the gods have made other evil troubles for me, | for all the nobles who rule over the islands | of Doulichion, Same, and wooded Zacynthus, | and all who hold sway throughout rugged Ithaca, | all these woo my mother

and consume my house. | She neither refuses hateful marriage nor can  
make | an end of it. They, by their eating, are wasting away (250) | my  
house. Quite soon they'll smash me to pieces, too."

---

### Key Passage Five: 1.252-305

Athena-Mentes activates Telemachus' sense of shame (in Greek *aidōs*) by pointing out how he is falling short of the nature he has inherited from his father, and she gives him specific instructions for dealing with the suitors.

Finding this intolerable, Pallas Athena said to him: | "Humph! You  
fall far short of absent Odysseus, | who'd lay his hands on  
shameless suitors, | if he came and stood now in the front door | of  
his home, holding a helmet, a shield and two spears, | as he was  
when I first saw him | drinking and enjoying himself in our house, |  
on his return from Ephyre and Ilus Mermerides. | For he'd gone  
there in a swift ship | searching for a man-killing drug, to have it |  
to rub on bronze-tipped arrows. Ilus didn't | give it to him, since he  
feared the gods who are forever, | but my father gave it to him, for  
he loved him terribly. | Should such an Odysseus engage the  
suitors, | all would be bitterly betrothed and swiftly doomed. | But  
indeed, these things lie on gods' knees, | whether he'll return, and  
make them pay in his palace, | or he won't. I urge you to consider |  
how to drive the suitors out of the palace. | Come now, hear and  
heed my words. | Tomorrow, call the Achaean heroes to assembly, |  
declare your will to all, and the gods will be witnesses to it. | Order  
the suitors to disperse to their own places, | and order your  
mother, if her heart moves her to marry, | to go immediately to her  
powerful father's great palace. | They'll arrange the wedding and  
assemble many bride gifts, | just as many as should follow a dear

daughter. | I'll advise you shrewdly, if you'll trust me. | Rig a ship,  
the best you can, with twenty oars, | and go inquire about your  
father, so long on his way. | Perhaps some mortal may tell you, or  
you may hear a rumor | from Zeus, which very often carries news  
to men. | First go to Pylos and ask divine Nestor, | and from there  
go to Sparta, to blond Menelaus, | for of the bronze-clad Achaeans  
he was last to come home. | If you hear of your father's survival and  
return, | though you'd be impoverished, you should still hold out a  
year, | but if you hear he's dead and no longer alive, | you should  
then return to your beloved fatherland, | pile up a barrow for him  
on which to pay his last rights, | as many, very many, as are fitting,  
and give your mother to a husband. | But once you've carried these  
things out and done them, | consider then in your mind and heart |  
how to slay the suitors in your palace | by guile or openly. You must  
not in any way indulge | in childish ways, since you're no longer of  
an age for that. | Haven't you heard what kind of fame divine  
Orestes won | among all mankind, after he slew his father's killer, |  
cunning Aegisthus, who'd slain his famous father? | You too, my  
friend, for I clearly see you're big and handsome, | be staunch, so  
those born after will speak well of you. | But I'll go down to my  
swift ship and comrades, | who are likely quite impatient waiting  
for me. | Keep this in your mind and heed my words."

Athena-Mentor models proper behavior for Telemachus by using the traditional story of Orestes, who slayed his father's (Agamemnon) murderer Aegisthus, after Aegisthus had seduced Orestes' mother, Clytaemnestra, while Agamemnon was away leading the Trojan War.

---

**Key Passage Six: 1.306-313**

Telemachus acknowledges the kind (=fatherly) intention behind Athena-Mentes' admonition and instruction, and he continues to perform gestures of *xenia* to her, promising a gift to her.

Astute Telemachus said back to her in answer: | "Stranger, truly, you say these things with kindly thought, | like a father to his son, and I will never forget them. | But come now, stay a while, though you're eager for your journey, | so that bathed and with dear heart at ease, | you'll go to your ship glad at heart, with a gift, | a precious, very fine one, that you'll have as a keepsake | from me, the kind dear guest-friends give to guest-friends."

---

Then bright-eyed goddess Athena answered him: | "Detain me now no longer, as I do want to be on my way. | Whatever gift your dear heart bids you give me, | give it, to be taken home, on my way back, | and pick a very fine one. You'll get one worth it in exchange."

---

**Key Passage Seven: 1.319-324**

Telemachus observes Athena-Mentes' departure and realizes that he has been visited by a divinity.

"So saying, bright-eyed Athena departed, | as a bird flies up and away, and she put in his heart | confidence and courage [*menos* again!], and caused him to think of his father | even more than before. When he thought it over in his mind | he

was astounded in his heart, for he supposed it was a god. |  
The godlike man at once approached the suitors.”

Athena-Mentes’ placement of courage (*menos*=“mental activation”) into Telemachus has caused him to envision his father’s return even more than before (cf. his fantasy of his father’s revenge on the suitors when Athena first encounters him, *Odyssey* 1.115-117).

Telemachus’ awareness of Athena-Mentes’ divinity sharply contrasts with that of the suitors, who regularly fail to heed prophecies or notice the involvement of the gods. They fail to “read the writing on the wall,” as it were. They are referred to by the poet as *nēpioi* (*nēpios*, in the singular), which means “disconnected in a social, religious, or moral way.” After his maturation process Telemachus by contrast will later acknowledge that he had been *nēpios*, but is no longer (for more on the significance of the word *nēpios*, see the work of Susan Edmunds: <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/6444>).

---

The far-famed singer sang to them, and they sat | listening in silence. He  
sang of the Achaeans' | sad return from Troy, that Pallas Athena imposed.  
| From an upper chamber, Icarus' daughter, prudent Penelope, | heard in  
her heart his wondrous song. | She descended her home's high staircase,  
(330) | not alone, but two handmaids followed with her. | When the  
woman divine reached the suitors, | she stood beside a column of the  
densely-built roof, | holding a shiny veil against her cheeks, | and a  
devoted handmaid stood on either side. | Then, in tears, she said to the  
godlike singer:

"Phemius, since you know many other things that enchant mortals, | the  
deeds of men and gods that singers celebrate, | sing one of those, as you

sit beside them, and let them drink | their wine in silence. Cease this sad song (340) | that ever distresses the dear heart in my chest, | since sorrow not to be forgotten comes especially upon me, | for I always long for such a head, when reminded of my husband, | whose fame is wide from Hellas to the middle of Argos."

---

### Key Passage Eight: 1.346-359

Telemachus "owns the room." In his first act since his encounter with Athena-Mentes, Telemachus asserts his preeminence (*kratos*) over the household by admonishing his mother Penelope for complaining about the singer Phemius' choice of song.

Astute [*pepnumenos*] Telemachus said back to her in turn: | "My mother, why do you begrudge the trusty singer | entertaining whatever way his mind is spurred? Singers | are not at fault, but Zeus is probably to blame, who gives | to men who work for bread, to each one, however he wishes. | This one's singing Danaans' evil doom is no cause | for reproach, for people more applaud the song | that's newest to float about the hearers. | Let your heart and soul endure the hearing of it. | For Odysseus was not the only one to lose his day of homecoming | in Troy, but many other men also perished. | So go into the house and tend to your own work, | the loom and distaff, and bid your handmaids | go about their work. Speaking [*mythos*] is of concern to men, | to all, especially to me, for the power in this house is mine."

The word being translated here as "astute" is *pepnumenos*, which is the perfect participle of the verb, *pepnumai*, "to be conscious, in full possession of one's faculties" (*LSJ*). It may also be a "diachronic etymology" that means something along the lines of "having had *menos*

(note the ending of the word) breathed into him (from Athena)” (see <https://kosmosociety.chs.harvard.edu/?p=45054>).

Telemachus’ self-assertion here requires that he simultaneously clarify gender roles: it is Penelope’s place to focus on weaving fabrics for the household, while it is the responsibility of *men* to engage in speech (*mythos*; on which see Clark, M. 2001. “Was Telemachus Rude to His Mother? *Odyssey* 1.356-59” *Classical Philology* 96.4: 335-354).

---

Astonished, she went back to the house, (360) | for she put in her heart the astute words of her son. | When she'd gone up to the upper floor with her handmaid women, | she then wept for Odysseus, her beloved husband, | until bright-eyed Athena cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

The suitors raised an uproar throughout the shadowy palace, | and all prayed to lie in bed beside her.

---

### Key Passage Nine: 1.368-380

Following Athena’s instructions, Telemachus continues to assert his authority over his house by criticizing the suitors for preying upon Odysseus’ resources, and he announces an assembly on the following day (Ithaca has not had an assembly since Odysseus left for Troy twenty years ago). He then threatens the suitors with death.

Then astute Telemachus was first to speak among them: |  
"Suitors of my mother, with your arrogant wantonness, | let's  
now enjoy our feasting, and let there be no uproar, | since it is  
a fine thing, listening to a singer | such as this one is, in voice  
just like the gods. | But at dawn let's go and sit down in

assembly, | all of us, so I may declare outright my will to you, |  
that you leave my palace. Find other meals, | and eat your  
own possessions, and take turns at your houses. | But if this  
seems more desirable and better to you, | to destroy one  
man's substance without compensation, | then consume it. I'll  
cry out to the everlasting gods, | in hope that somehow Zeus  
grant that there be deeds of requital. | Then, without  
compensation, inside this house you'll perish!"

---

So said he, and all bit their lips and marveled | at Telemachus, because he  
spoke undaunted.

Eupeithes' son Antinous said back to him: | "Telemachus, it must be that  
the gods themselves teach you | to be a bold talker and to speak  
undaunted. | Let Cronion not make you king in sea-girt Ithaca, | which is  
hereditary to your family!"

Astute Telemachus said back to him in turn: | "Antinous, even if you'll be  
offended by what I say, | I'd be willing to take this for myself, if Zeus  
should give it. (390) | Do you think this the worst thing in the world that  
can happen? | For there's nothing bad in being king. Suddenly, one's  
house | becomes wealthy and oneself more esteemed. | But, there are  
indeed Achaean kings, and also many | others in sea-girt Ithaca, young  
and old, | any of whom may have this, once divine Odysseus has died. |  
But I'll be lord of our house and of the slaves | whom divine Odysseus  
took by pillage for me!"

Polybus' son Eurymachus said back to him in turn: | "Telemachus,  
indeed, these things lie on gods' knees, (400) | whichever Achaean will  
be king in sea-girt Ithaca, | but may you yourself have your property and

rule over your house. | For let the man not come, to take by force against your will | your property from you, while Ithaca is still a place to live in. | But I want to ask you, most noble sir, about the stranger. | This man, where is he from, from what country does he claim to be, | where is his father's farm and family, | and did he bring some news of your father's coming, | or did he come here wanting to do business of his own? | How quickly he sprang up and left and didn't hang around (410) | to be recognized, for he seemed nothing like a coward to my eye."

---

### Key Passage Ten: 1.413-420

Even though Telemachus has had assurances from Athena-Mentes (whom he recognizes as a divinity) that Odysseus is coming home, he pretends to the suitor Eurymachus that he doubts Odysseus' return and he claims that Mentes is merely a family friend.

Astute Telemachus said back to him in turn: | "Eurymachus, my father's return home is surely done for. | So, I neither believe news, if it comes from anywhere, | nor attend to prophecy, whatever my mother | may ask about when she calls a prophet to our hall. | This stranger is of my father's family friend from Taphos | and claims he's Mentes, son of wise Anchialus, | and that he rules the oar-loving Taphians." | So said Telemachus, but in his heart he recognized the immortal goddess."

Telemachus here is exhibiting Odysseus' (and Penelope's) ability to be wily or "of many turns" (*polytropos*; cf. *Odyssey* 1.1) by saying one thing but knowing another, in order to get the advantage over his enemies.

---

Turning to dancing and delightful song, | they enjoyed themselves and waited for evening to come. | Dark evening came upon them as they enjoyed themselves. | Then each went home to rest. | Telemachus, where a chamber had been built for him | in an open place high above the gorgeous courtyard, | went to bed, and in his mind he pondered many things. | Devoted Eurycleia, daughter of Ops Peisenorides, | carried burning torches by his side. | Laertes had bought her with his own possessions once upon a time, (430) | when she was still in the bloom of youth. He'd given twenty oxen, | and in his palace valued her as equal to his devoted wife, | but he avoided his wife's anger and never took her to bed. | She carried burning torches by his side. Of the bondswomen, | she had loved him the most and nursed him when he was little. (435) | He opened the door of the carefully made room, | sat down on the bed, took off his soft tunic, | and dropped it into the crafty old woman's hands. | Smoothing and folding his tunic, | she hung it on a peg beside the perforated bedframe, (440) | made her way from the room, pulled the door closed | by its silver handle, and shot the bolt by its strap. | There through the night, wrapped in sheep's wool, | he considered in his mind the path Athena had shown him.

---

## Scroll Two

When early-born rose-fingered Dawn appeared, | Odysseus' beloved son arose from bed, | put on his clothes, slung a sharp sword around his shoulder, | tied fine sandals beneath sleek feet, | and made his way from the bedroom looking like a god. | At once he bid his clear-voiced heralds | to summon to assembly the hairy-headed Achaeans. | They summoned, and they assembled very quickly. | Then after they assembled and were together, | he made his way to the assembly holding a bronze spear in his

palm, (10) | not alone; flashing-footed dogs followed with him. | Athena poured abundant grace upon him, | so all men gazed at him as he approached. | He sat in his father's seat as the old men gave way. | The hero Aegyptius, who was bent with old age | and had seen countless things, was the first of them to speak, | for his beloved son had gone with godlike Odysseus | in the hollow ships to fine-foaled Ilium, | the spearman Antiphus, whom the savage Cyclops killed | in his hollow cave, the last he made a meal of. (20) | He had three others, and while one, Eurynomus, consorted | with the suitors, the other two always kept their father's farm, | but even so, in grief and lamentation, he did not forget him. | Shedding tears for him, he spoke and said:

"Hear me now, Ithacans, hear what I say! | Neither an assembly or session of ours has ever occurred | from when divine Odysseus left in his hollow ship. | Who's gathered us this way now? On whom has such a need come, | either of the young men or of those who are older? | Or has he heard a message of the army on the way, (30) | which he might clearly tell us, that he'd heard before us? | Or does he declare and speak about some other public matter? | He seems a good one, a blessed one, to me. Would that Zeus | accomplish good for him, whatever he has on his mind."

So said he, and Odysseus' dear son rejoiced at the omen, | and did not stay seated long. He meant to speak, | and stood in the middle of the assembly. The herald Peisenor, | wise in astute counsel, put a scepter in his hand. | Then he addressed the old man first and said to him:

"Old man, this man is not far off, as you'll soon know yourself. (40) | I'm the one who gathered the men, and sorrow comes especially to me. | I neither heard any message of an army on the way | that I could tell you

clearly, that I'd heard before you, | nor do I declare or speak about some  
other public matter, | but of business of my own, that evil has befallen my  
house, | in two ways. I've lost my good father, who once upon a time |  
was king among you here and was kind as a father to you. | Now an even  
much greater evil will soon dash my entire house | completely to pieces  
and completely destroy my substance. | Suitors harass my mother, who  
doesn't want them, (50) | beloved sons of the men who are the best here,  
| who've shrunk shivering from going to the house of her father | Icarius,  
so he could accept bride gifts for his daughter | and give her to whom he  
wished, the one who came and pleased him, | but they come and go every  
day to our house, | and slaughter our cattle and fat goats and sheep, | and  
drink our sparkling wine in revelry with reckless abandon. | These many  
things are wasted, for there's no man here, | such as Odysseus used to be,  
to keep this curse from our house. | We're not, in any way, such as to  
ward it off. Yes, in that case (60) | we'll be pitiful, not even trained in  
martial prowess. | Yes, I'd ward it off myself, if the power were in me, |  
for deeds bearable no longer have been done, and more unfairly, | my  
house has been destroyed. You yourselves should be indignant too, | and  
be ashamed before the other neighbor men | who live around you and  
cower in dread of the gods' wrath, | lest they in some way turn in anger  
to punish evil deeds. | I beg you, by both Olympian Zeus and Themis, |  
who both seats and breaks up men's assemblies, | check them, friends,  
and let me be afflicted by wretched sadness (70) | by myself, unless by  
chance in some way my good father, | Odysseus, in ill will did evil to the  
well-greaved Achaeans, | for whom you take revenge on me and in ill will  
do me evil | by urging on those men. It would be better for me | that you  
yourselves eat both my treasures and my herds. | If you were to eat  
them, there'd sometime soon be compensation too, | for we'd accost you  
throughout the city with words, | demanding our possessions until all  
were given back, | but now you cast impossible pains upon me!"

So said he in anger and threw the scepter to the ground, (80) | breaking out in tears. Sympathy seized each and every man. | Then all the rest were silent, and none dared | answer Telemachus with harsh words, | but only Antinous said to him in answer:

"Telemachus, you blowhard, unrestrained in fury, what kind of thing | you've said, defaming us, as you wished to fasten blame. | But the Achaean suitors aren't at all at fault regarding you, | but your beloved mother is, who exceedingly knows wiles. | For it's the third year already, and the fourth is coming soon, | since she's wronged the heart in the Achaeans' chests. (90) | She offers hope to all, and makes promises to each man, | sending messages, but her mind is intent on other things. | In her mind she devised this other trick. | She set up a great web in the palace, delicate and long-threaded, | started to weave, then soon said among us:

"Young men, my suitors, since Odysseus has died, | wait, though eager for my wedding, until I can complete | this cloth, lest my weaving be ruined and in vain, | a burial cloth for hero Laertes, for the time when | baneful doom, of death that brings long woe, takes him down, (100) | lest any Achaean woman throughout the kingdom resent me, | should he who won many things lie without a shroud.' | So said she, and our manly spirit yielded in turn. | Then by day she wove her great web, | but at night, when she had torches placed beside it, she unraveled it. | Three years she went unnoticed in her trick, and so persuaded | the Achaeans, but when a fourth year came, and seasons came round, | right at that time, one of her women who knew it clearly told us, | and we discovered her unraveling the splendid web. | So, she finished it, albeit unwillingly, under compulsion. (110) | The suitors answer you this way, so you yourself

know it | in your heart, and all Achaeans know. | Send away your mother,  
and order her to marry | whomever her father bids her, who also pleases  
her. | But if she annoys the son of the Achaeans much longer, | though  
she knows in her heart what Athena has given her | exceedingly, skill in  
making gorgeous works, a good disposition, | and cunning wiles, such as  
none we've ever heard of, not even | of the ancients, who were  
fair-haired Achaean women of old, | Tyro, Alcmene, and fair-crowned  
Mycene, (120) | none of whom knew thoughts like those of Penelope, |  
but in this, at least, she has not rightly thought. | For they'll therefore eat  
your substance and possessions | as long as that one holds to this idea,  
that certain one the gods | place in her chest now. She makes great fame  
for herself, | but the loss of much substance for you, | and we won't go  
back, either to our fields or anywhere else, | until she gets married to the  
Achaean she wishes."

Astute Telemachus said back to him in turn: | "Antinous, it's not possible  
to drive away unwilling from our home (130) | she who bore me, who  
raised me. My father, whether he's alive or dead, | is somewhere else on  
earth. It would be bad, for me to pay much back | to Icarius, if I myself of  
my free will sent my mother back. | For I'll suffer evils from her father,  
and a divinity will give me others, | after my mother has prayed to the  
loathsome Furies | when she leaves our house. There'll be righteous  
anger | for me from men. So, I'll never speak this command to her. | If  
your heart feels indignation at your own conduct, | leave my palace. Find  
other meals | and eat your own possessions, as you take turns at your  
houses. (140) | But if this seems to you more desirable and better, | to  
destroy one man's substance without compensation, | then consume it.  
I'll cry out to the everlasting gods, | that Zeus somehow grant that there  
be deeds of requital, | then, without compensation, inside this house  
you'll perish!"

So said Telemachus, and far-seeing Zeus sent two eagles | for him from on high, flying from a mountain peak. | The two flew a while with the breezes of the wind, | with outstretched wings, next to each other, | but when they reached the middle of the loud-voiced assembly, (150) | they whirled around, flapping their thick wings, | then came toward the heads of all, and foreboded destruction. | Tearing about with their talons at their cheeks and throats, | they shot off to the right, across the homes and city of the men. | They were astounded at the birds when they saw them with their eyes, | and pondered in their heart just what was going to happen. | And among them spoke an old man, the hero Halitherses | Mastorides, for he uniquely surpassed those of his generation | in understanding birds and explaining omens. | With good intent, he spoke and said to them: (160)

"Hear me now, Ithacans, hear what I say! | I speak mostly to the suitors when I declare these things, | since great trouble rolls toward them, for Odysseus | will not long be far from his loved ones, instead, he's likely near | already, planting death and doom for all of them. | There'll be evil too, for many others of us | who live in clear Ithaca. So, long before then | let's consider how we can stop them. But let them rather stop | themselves, for right now that is even better for them. | For I don't prophesy unproven, but I know it well. (170) | For I say to him that each and every thing has been fulfilled, | as I told him when the Argives went up into Ilium | and resourceful Odysseus went with them. | I said that after he suffered many evils and lost all his comrades | he'd come home in the twentieth year, | unbeknown to all. All this is now coming to pass."

Eurymachus, the son of Polybus, said back to him in turn: | "Come on, old man, go home and prophesy to your children, | lest they by chance suffer

any evil in the future. | I'm much better than you in prophesying this.  
(180) | Many birds go to and fro beneath the bright rays of the sun, | but  
not all are ominous. Odysseus, though, has perished | far away, and how I  
wish that you had perished with him! | You wouldn't speak so many  
oracles, | nor incite Telemachus this way in his anger, | looking to get a  
gift for your house, if he'll give one. | But I'll speak out to you, and it'll be  
fulfilled too. | If you, knowing things ancient and many, advise a younger  
man | and spur him on with words to be violently angry, | first, for him  
himself it will be more distressing, (190) | but all the same, he won't be  
able to do anything because of them, | and on you, old man, we'll set a  
penalty that you'll be grieved | at heart to pay and hard will be your  
sorrow. | I myself, among you all, admonish Telemachus. | Let him order  
his mother go back to her father's. | They'll arrange the wedding and  
assemble many bride gifts, | just as many as should follow a dear  
daughter. | For I don't think the sons of the Achaeans will cease from |  
grievous wooing beforehand, since we fear no one, at any rate | not  
Telemachus, though he's very full of words, (200) | nor do we care about  
an oracle that you, old man, | may tell of, that won't happen, as you  
become hated still more. | His possessions will still be cruelly eaten, and  
things will never be | equal as long as she puts off the Achaeans | from  
her marriage and we in expectation vie every day | for the sake of her  
excellence and don't go after others | whom it's suitable for each of us to  
marry."

Astute Telemachus said back to him in turn: | "Eurymachus, and the rest  
of you illustrious suitors, | I no longer beg you and speak of these things,  
(210) | for the gods and all Achaeans know them already. | But come,  
give me a swift ship and twenty comrades | to take me on a voyage there  
and back. | For I'm going to Sparta and sandy Pylos, | to inquire about the  
return of my father, so long on his way. | Perhaps some mortal may tell

me or I'll hear a rumor | from Zeus, which very often carries news to men. | If I hear of my father's survival and return, | yes, though I'd be impoverished, I'd still hold out a year, | but if I hear he's dead and no longer alive, (220) | I'd then return to my beloved fatherland, | pile up a barrow for him on which to pay his last rights, | as many, very many, as are fitting, and give my mother to a husband."

So saying, he sat down, and up among them rose | Mentor, who was a noble comrade of Odysseus, | and to whom, when he went in his ships, he handed his entire house, | that it obey the old man and that Mentor preserve everything intact. | With good intent he spoke and said among them:

"Hear me now, Ithacans, hear what I say! | Let no sceptered king ever be earnestly (230) | gentle and kind or know justice in his mind, | but may he always be hard and do injustice, | seeing that none of the people whom he ruled | remembers godlike Odysseus, who was kind as a father to them. | But in truth I don't at all begrudge the manly suitors | their doing deeds of violence in the evil scheming of their mind, | for they place at risk their own heads and violently devour | the house of Odysseus, whom they say returns no more. | Now I hold it against the rest of the kingdom, how all of you sit | in silence and don't with words in any way accost (240) | the few suitors and restrain them, many as you are."

Leocritos Eunorides said to him in turn: | "Mentor, mischief maker, crazed in mind, what a thing | you've said, urging them to stop us. It's difficult | to battle with more men than you about a feast. | For if even Ithacan Odysseus himself came, | eager in his heart to drive from his hall | the illustrious suitors who are dining in his home, | his wife, despite her

great longing, would have no joy | at his coming, but right where he was  
he'd meet unseemly fate (250) | if he battled with a greater number. You  
have not duly spoken. | But come, people, scatter, each one to his fields, |  
then Mentor and Halitherses will speed this one on his journey, | who are  
comrades of his father from the start. | But I think he'll sit quite a long  
time, learning things | from messages in Ithaca, but he'll never make that  
journey!" | So said he, and immediately broke up the assembly. | Then  
while they scattered, each to his own house, | the suitors went to the  
house of godlike Odysseus.

---

#### Key Passage Eleven: 2.260-295

After the assembly Telemachus prays to Athena for aid, and she,  
disguised as Mentor, gives him instructions on what to do next. She will  
help him assemble his team of sailors. She again challenges him to live up  
to the example of Odysseus, who is kind of a role model (note that  
mentors themselves need not be role models according to the mentoring  
template set by the *Odyssey*).

Telemachus went far off to the sea's shore, | washed his  
hands in the gray water, and prayed to Athena: | "Hear me,  
you who came yesterday to our house as a god, | and bid me  
go in a ship upon the misty sea, | to find out about the return  
of my father, long on his way. | But the Achaeans hinder me in  
all of this, | especially the suitors, evilly wanton in their  
arrogance!" | So said he in prayer, and Athena came near him,  
| disguised as Mentor both in form and voice, | and voicing  
winged words, she said to him: | "Telemachus, you'll be  
neither a coward nor a dolt hereafter, | if your father's spirit  
is well instilled in you, | such a man was he in fulfilling word  
and deed, | then your journey will be neither in vain nor

without result. | But if you're not the offspring of him and of Penelope, | then I don't suppose you'll accomplish what you mean to. | For few sons are truly like their father. | A few are better than their father; the majority are worse. | But since you'll be neither a coward nor a dolt hereafter, | and the shrewdness of Odysseus has not completely failed you, | then there's hope you'll accomplish these deeds. | So, let the plan and purpose of the senseless suitors be, | since they're not at all thoughtful or just | and know nothing of the death and black doom | that's near them, that they'll all perish in a day. | You won't much longer be without the journey that you're bent on, | for I'm surely such a comrade of your father | that I'll equip a swift ship for you and come along myself. | But, you, go home and mingle with the suitors, | prepare provisions, and store them all in containers, | wine in two-handled jugs and men's marrow, barley, | in thick leather bags. I'll go through the kingdom and quickly | gather comrades, volunteers. There are many ships | in sea-girt Ithaca, new ones and old. | I'll look at them for you, for the one that's best, | then we'll quickly stow things and launch her on the wide sea."

---

So said the daughter of Zeus, Athena, and Telemachus | delayed no longer when he heard the goddess's voice. | He made his way to his house, his dear heart sorrowing, | and found the manly suitors in his palace | flaying goats and singeing hogs in the courtyard. (300) | With a laugh, Antinous went straight for Telemachus, | put his hand in his, called out his name, and said:

"Telemachus, you blowhard, unrestrained in fury, don't let any | other evil, either word or deed, concern you in your chest, | but eat and drink with me, as we used to before. | The Achaeans will very fully make these things happen for you, | a ship and chosen oarsmen, so you can the more quickly | go to sacred Pylos after news of your illustrious father."

Astute Telemachus said back to him in turn: | "Antinous, it's no way possible to dine in silence (310) | and make merry at my ease among you haughty ones. | Suitors, isn't it enough that in the past you wasted my possessions, | good and many, when I was still a child? | Now, when I'm big, and learn by listening to the words | of others, and my temper grows inside me, | I'll try to loose the evil spirit of death upon you, | either by going to Pylos or in this kingdom here. | I'm going, and the trip I speak of won't be without result, | as a passenger, for I don't have at my disposal oarsmen | or a ship, as no doubt seemed better to you." (320)

He spoke and drew his hand easily from the hand of Antinous, | as throughout the house the suitors worked at getting dinner ready.

---

### Key Passage Twelve: 2.323-330

One of the suitors notes the military significance of Telemachus' plan to visit Nestor in Pylos or Menelaus in Sparta (as Athena has arranged). The suitor also references the "man-killing" drug that Odysseus himself had sought in Ephyre and later received from Mentès' father (*Odyssey* 1.258).

They taunted and mocked him with their words, | and one of the wantonly arrogant young men kept saying so: | "Very surely, Telemachus plans murder for us. | Either he'll bring some supporters from sandy Pylos | or even from Sparta,

since he's so grimly eager for it, | or he wants to go to Ephyre,  
the rich farmland, | so he can bring life-destroying drugs from  
there, | to throw them in the mixing bowl and destroy us all!"

The suitor's remark here highlights the military alliance that may be assumed in ties of *xenia*.

---

Another of the wantonly arrogant young men kept saying back: | "Who knows? If he himself goes on a hollow ship far from his loved ones, | he too may wander and perish, just like Odysseus. | That way he'd make our hard work even harder, | for we'd have to divide his possessions and give his house back | to his mother, and whoever marries her, to have."

So said they, and Telemachus went down to the high-roofed chamber | of his father, the wide one where gold and bronze lay piled, | and clothing in chests, and fragrant olive oil in abundance. | Jars of vintage wine, sweet to drink, stood in there, (340) | holding the unmixed divine drink inside, | fastened in rows against the wall, in case Odysseus should ever | return home even after suffering many sorrows. | There was a double door that could be fastened tightly to close it, | a doubly-folding one, and a housekeeper woman stayed in it | night and day, who guarded everything with the wisdom of her mind, | Eurycleia, the daughter of Ops Peisenorides. | Telemachus then called toward the chamber and said to her:

"Madam, come, draw wine for me into two-handled jars, | sweet wine, the best tasting after that which you guard (350) | with that ill-fated one in mind, in hope he'll come from somewhere, | Zeus-born Odysseus, escaping death's spirits and death. | Fill twelve, and fit each and every one with covers, | then pour barley for me into well-stitched leather

bags, | and let there be twenty measures of mill-ground barley meal. |  
But only you must know. Let all this be brought together, | for I'll pick it  
up this evening when my mother | goes to her upper chamber and has  
her mind on bed. | For I'm going to Sparta and sandy Pylos, to inquire |  
about the return of my dear father, in hope I'll hear of it somewhere."  
(360)

So said he, and dear nurse Eurycleia shrieked | and spoke winged words  
to him in lamentation: | "Dear child, why has this thought come into your  
mind? | Where on the wide earth do you want to go, | alone and beloved  
as you are? He perished far from his fatherland, | Zeus-born Odysseus, in  
a foreign kingdom. | They'll devise evils for you, as soon as you go, for  
later, | so you'll be killed by guile and they'll divide all of this themselves.  
| Sit right here upon your own things instead. There's no need at all | that  
you wander the barren sea and suffer evils!" (370)

Astute Telemachus said back to her in turn: | "Take heart, madam, since  
this plan of mine is not without a god's | approval. But swear to not tell  
these things to my dear mother | at least until the eleventh or the twelfth  
day comes | or she misses me and hears that I've departed, | so she won't  
mar her fair flesh with weeping."

So said he, and the old woman swore a great oath on the gods. | Then  
after she'd sworn and completed the oath, | she then at once drew wine  
for him into jars with two handles | and poured barley groats for him  
into well-stitched leather bags. (380) | Telemachus now went into the  
house and joined the suitors. | Then bright-eyed goddess Athena thought  
of something else. | Disguised as Telemachus, she went throughout the  
city, everywhere, | and to each man she stood beside she spoke a word, |  
and ordered them to gather at the swift ship in the evening. | Then she

asked Noemon, the brilliant son of Phronius, | for a swift ship, and he in earnest promised it to her.

And the sun went down, and all the ways were dark. | Right then she hauled the swift ship to the sea and stowed | in it all the gear that well-benched ships carry. (390) | She moored it at the edge of the harbor, then the good comrades | gathered together around her, and the goddess spurred each on. | Then bright-eyed goddess Athena thought of something else | and made her way to the home of godlike Odysseus. | There she poured sweet sleep upon the suitors, | dazed them as they drank and knocked cups from their hands. | They got up to go to sleep throughout the city and didn't stay seated | much longer, once sleep fell upon their eyelids. | Then bright-eyed Athena said to Telemachus, | when she called him out of his well-placed palace, (400) | disguised as Mentor both in form and voice:

"Telemachus, your well-greaved comrades sit | already at their oars and await your signal to start, | so let's go, let's not long delay our journey!" | So saying, Pallas Athena led quickly | and he followed in the footsteps of the goddess. | Then after they'd gone down to the ship and sea, | they then found their hairy-headed comrades on the shore. | The sacred force of Telemachus spoke among them:

"Come, friends, let's fetch our provisions, for they're all (410) | already gathered in my hall and my mother knows nothing of it, | nor do the rest of the slave women, but only one has heard my word." | So saying, he led, and they followed with him. | They fetched everything and stowed it | on the well-benched ship, as Odysseus' dear son ordered. | As Telemachus went aboard the ship, Athena led | and sat down in the ship's stern, then Telemachus sat | near her. They freed the stern cables, | then went

aboard and sat down at the oarlocks. | Bright-eyed Athena sent them a favorable fair wind, (420) | steady West Wind, blustering over the wine-dark sea. | Telemachus urged his comrades on and bid them | secure the rigging. They heard his urging, | raised the fir mast, set it inside the hollow mast box, | tied it down with the forestays, | and hoisted the white sail with the well-twisted ox-leather halyards. | The wind swelled out the middle of the sail, the waves | splashed loudly about the prow of the ship as she went on her way, | and she sped through the waves and completed her voyage. | When they'd secured the rigging | throughout the swift black ship, (430) | they set up mixing bowls filled to the brim with wine | and made libation to the immortal everlasting gods, | but most of all to Zeus's bright-eyed daughter. | She cleaved her way all night and through the dawn.

## Scroll Three

Leaving the gorgeous surface of the sea, the sun rose | into the coppery sky to shine for immortals | and mortal men upon grain-giving farmland. | They'd now reached Pylos, the well-built citadel | of Neleus. On the sea's shore some were making sacrifice | of pitch-black bulls to the dark-haired Earthshaker. | There were nine companies, and five hundred sat in each, | and at each place they had nine bulls before them. | While these tasted the entrails and burned the thighs to the god, | they made straight in, raised and furled the balanced ship's sail, (10) | moored her, and went ashore themselves. | Telemachus stepped from the ship, and Athena led him. | Bright-eyed goddess Athena spoke to him first:

---

### Key Passage Thirteen: 3.14-30

At the palace of Nestor in Pylos Athena-Mentor gives Telemachus instruction and confidence on how to converse with the wise king.

"Telemachus, you need no longer feel bashful, not a bit, | for you've sailed upon the sea just for this, to find out about | your father, where the earth covered him and what fate he met. | But come now, go straight to Nestor, the tamer of horses. | Let's see what counsel he has hidden in his chest. | Entreat him yourself, so he'll speak infallibly. | Since he's very astute, he will not tell a lie." | Astute Telemachus said back to her in turn: | "Mentor, how should I go to him, how should I greet him? | I've never had any experience with cunning words, | and it's disgraceful for a young man to interrogate his elder." | Bright-eyed goddess Athena said back to him: | "Telemachus, you'll figure out some of this yourself, in your own mind, | and a divinity will advise you on the rest, for, no, I don't think | that you were born and raised against the will of the gods." | So saying, Pallas Athena led | quickly, and he followed in the footsteps of the goddess.

---