In ancient Greece, heroes in epic poems like the *Odyssey* represented the highest values of Greek civilization. In Homer’s day, heroes were thought of as a special class of men, somewhere between the gods and ordinary human beings. As you read “The Cyclops,” see how Odysseus uses his special qualities to save himself and his men from becoming a monster’s meal.

**LITERARY FOCUS: HEROES AT LARGE**

**Epics** are long narrative poems that tell of the great deeds of a hero. In an epic, the **main character** is the hero. (In many epics the hero’s enemy is also a major character.) **Heroes** usually represent qualities that their society admires. Some people today, for example, see sports stars, popular singers, great scientists, or firefighters as their heroes. In epics told long ago, the heroes are often superhuman warriors, who set off on journeys to win something of great value for themselves and for their people.

The **conflicts**, or struggles between opposing forces, in an epic are usually external, as the heroes battle armies, monsters, or the forces of nature. Epic heroes can also face **internal conflicts**—caused by fear, doubt, weakness, and so on.

- First, read “The Cyclops” for enjoyment. Then, consider what the adventure reveals about the values of the ancient Greeks.

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Good readers pause occasionally to make sure they understand what they have read. When you read a long, action-filled poem such as this one, it is important to stay on top of events—to understand what is happening.

Pause during your reading to ask yourself the following questions:

- What has happened so far?
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- What are the most important events in this episode?
- When do the events take place?
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**PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY**

The following words appear in “The Cyclops.” Become familiar with them before you begin reading.

- **ravage** (rav'ij) v.: destroy violently; ruin.
  
  *The Cyclops planned to *ravage* Odysseus and his men by eating them.*

- **adversary** (ad'vər-ser'e) n.: enemy; opponent.
  
  *Odysseus had to find a way to defeat his *adversary*, the Cyclops.*

- **profusion** (prō-fyōō'zhən) n.: large supply; abundance.
  
  *With such a large flock of sheep, the Cyclops had a *profusion* of milk, cheese, and wool.*

**WORDS FROM GREEK AND ROMAN MYTHS**

Many words we use in English today come from Greek and Roman myths. For example, a journey or quest is often called an *odyssey*, named for the *Odyssey*, the epic poem from which “The Cyclops” is taken. Other words from “The Cyclops” that have been handed down are *ambrosia*, meaning “food of the gods,” and *nectar*, meaning “drink of the gods.” Look at the chart below to learn of other words handed down from Greek and Roman myths.

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THE CYCLOPS

from the Odyssey

Homer

translated by Robert Fitzgerald

The Odyssey is the story of the attempt of a Greek soldier, Odysseus, to return to his home following the Trojan War. An epic, the Odyssey is composed of many different stories, or episodes, in which the hero, Odysseus, faces all sorts of challenges.

In this adventure, Odysseus describes his encounter with the Cyclops, Polyphemus (pāl’i-fē’məs), Poseidon’s one-eyed monster son. Polyphemus may represent the brute forces that any hero must overcome before he can reach home. To survive, Odysseus must rely on the special intelligence associated with his name. Odysseus is the cleverest of the Greek heroes because he is guided by the goddess of wisdom, Athena.

It is Odysseus’s famed curiosity that leads him to the Cyclops’s cave and that makes him insist on waiting for the barbaric giant.

Odysseus is speaking to the court of King Alcinous (al’sin’ō-as).
“We lit a fire, burnt an offering, and took some cheese to eat; then sat in silence around the embers, waiting. When he came he had a load of dry boughs on his shoulder to stoke his fire at suppertime. He dumped it with a great crash into that hollow cave, and we all scattered fast to the far wall. Then over the broad cavern floor he ushered the ewes he meant to milk. He left his rams and he-goats in the yard outside, and swung high overhead a slab of solid rock to close the cave. Two dozen four-wheeled wagons, with heaving wagon teams, could not have stirred the tonnage of that rock from where he wedged it over the doorsill. Next he took his seat and milked his bleating ewes. A practiced job he made of it, giving each ewe her suckling; thickened his milk, then, into curds and whey, sieved out the curds to drip in withy baskets,¹ and poured the whey to stand in bowls cooling until he drank it for his supper. When all these chores were done, he poked the fire, heaping on brushwood. In the glare he saw us.

‘Strangers,’ he said, ‘who are you? And where from? What brings you here by seaways—a fair traffic? Or are you wandering rogues, who cast your lives like dice, and ravage other folk by sea?’

We felt a pressure on our hearts, in dread of that deep rumble and that mighty man. But all the same I spoke up in reply:

‘We are from Troy, Achaeans, blown off course by shifting gales on the Great South Sea;

¹ withy baskets: baskets made from willow twigs.
homeward bound, but taking routes and ways uncommon; so the will of Zeus would have it.

35 We served under Agamemnon, son of Atreus—
the whole world knows what city
he laid waste, what armies he destroyed.
It was our luck to come here; here we stand,
beholden for your help, or any gifts
you give—as custom is to honor strangers.
We would entreat you, great Sir, have a care
for the gods’ courtesy; Zeus will avenge
the unoffending guest.’

He answered this
from his brute chest, unmoved:

‘You are a ninny,
or else you come from the other end of nowhere,
telling me, mind the gods! We Cyclopes
care not a whistle for your thundering Zeus
or all the gods in bliss; we have more force by far.
I would not let you go for fear of Zeus—
50 you or your friends—unless I had a whim to.
Tell me, where was it, now, you left your ship—
around the point, or down the shore, I wonder?’

He thought he’d find out, but I saw through this,
and answered with a ready lie:

‘My ship?

55 Poseidon Lord, who sets the earth atremble,
broke it up on the rocks at your land’s end.
A wind from seaward served him, drove us there.
We are survivors, these good men and I.’

Neither reply nor pity came from him,

but in one stride he clutched at my companions

2. Agamemnon (ag’ə-mem’nān’); Atreus (a’tre-as).
and caught two in his hands like squirming puppies
to beat their brains out, spattering the floor.
Then he dismembered them and made his meal,
gaping and crunching like a mountain lion—
everything: innards, flesh, and marrow bones.
We cried aloud, lifting our hands to Zeus,
powerless, looking on at this, appalled;
but Cyclops went on filling up his belly
with manflesh and great gulps of whey,
then lay down like a mast among his sheep.
My heart beat high now at the chance of action,
and drawing the sharp sword from my hip I went
along his flank to stab him where the midriff
holds the liver. I had touched the spot
when sudden fear stayed me: if I killed him
we perished there as well, for we could never
move his ponderous doorway slab aside.
So we were left to groan and wait for morning.

When the young Dawn with fingertips of rose
lit up the world, the Cyclops built a fire
and milked his handsome ewes, all in due order,
putting the sucklings to the mothers. Then,
his chores being all dispatched, he caught
another brace of men to make his breakfast,
and whisked away his great door slab
to let his sheep go through—but he, behind,
reset the stone as one would cap a quiver.
There was a din of whistling as the Cyclops
rounded his flock to higher ground, then stillness.
And now I pondered how to hurt him worst,
if but Athena granted what I prayed for.
Here are the means I thought would serve my turn:

3. brace (bræs) n.: pair.
4. quiver (kwivər) n.: case for arrows.
a club, or staff, lay there along the fold—an olive tree, felled green and left to season for Cyclops’ hand. And it was like a mast a lugger\(^5\) of twenty oars, broad in the beam—a deep-seagoing craft—might carry: so long, so big around, it seemed. Now I chopped out a six-foot section of this pole and set it down before my men, who scraped it; and when they had it smooth, I hewed again to make a stake with pointed end. I held this in the fire’s heart and turned it, toughening it, then hid it, well back in the cavern, under one of the dung piles in *profusion* there.

Now came the time to toss for it: who ventured along with me? Whose hand could bear to thrust and grind that spike in Cyclops’ eye, when mild sleep had mastered him? As luck would have it, the men I would have chosen won the toss—four strong men, and I made five as captain.

At evening came the shepherd with his flock, his woolly flock. The rams as well, this time, entered the cave: by some shepherding whim—or a god’s bidding—none were left outside. He hefted his great boulder into place and sat him down to milk the bleating ewes in proper order, put the lambs to suck, and swiftly ran through all his evening chores. Then he caught two more men and feasted on them. My moment was at hand, and I went forward holding an ivy bowl of my dark drink, looking up, saying:

---

5. *lugger* (lug’or) *n.*: type of sailboat.
‘Cyclops, try some wine.

Here’s liquor to wash down your scraps of men.

Taste it, and see the kind of drink we carried under our planks. I meant it for an offering if you would help us home. But you are mad, unbearable, a bloody monster! After this, will any other traveler come to see you?’

He seized and drained the bowl, and it went down so fiery and smooth he called for more:

‘Give me another, thank you kindly. Tell me, how are you called? I’ll make a gift will please you. Even Cyclopes know the wine grapes grow out of grassland and loam in heaven’s rain, but here’s a bit of nectar and ambrosia!’

Three bowls I brought him, and he poured them down. I saw the fuddle and flush come over him, then I sang out in cordial tones:
'Cyclops, you ask my honorable name? Remember the gift you promised me, and I shall tell you. My name is Nohbdy: mother, father, and friends, everyone calls me Nohbdy.'

And he said:

‘Nohbdy’s my meat, then, after I eat his friends. Others come first. There’s a noble gift, now.’

Even as he spoke, he reeled and tumbled backward, his great head lolling to one side; and sleep took him like any creature. Drunk, hiccuping, he dribbled streams of liquor and bits of men.

Now, by the gods, I drove my big hand spike deep in the embers, charring it again, and cheered my men along with battle talk to keep their courage up: no quitting now. The pike of olive, green though it had been, reddened and glowed as if about to catch. I drew it from the coals and my four fellows gave me a hand, lugging it near the Cyclops as more than natural force nerved them; straight forward they sprinted, lifted it, and rammed it deep in his crater eye, and I leaned on it turning it as a shipwright turns a drill in planking, having men below to swing the two-handled strap that spins it in the groove. So with our brand we bored that great eye socket while blood ran out around the red-hot bar. Eyelid and lash were seared; the pierced ball hissed broiling, and the roots popped.
In a smithy one sees a white-hot axhead or an adze plunged and wrung in a cold tub, screeching steam—the way they make soft iron hale and hard—just so that eyeball hissed around the spike.

The Cyclops bellowed and the rock roared round him, and we fell back in fear. Clawing his face he tugged the bloody spike out of his eye, threw it away, and his wild hands went groping; then he set up a howl for Cyclopes who lived in caves on windy peaks nearby. Some heard him; and they came by divers ways to clump around outside and call:

‘What ails you, Polyphemus? Why do you cry so sore in the starry night? You will not let us sleep. Sure no man’s driving off your flock? No man has tricked you, ruined you?’

Out of the cave the mammoth Polyphemus roared in answer:

‘Nohbdy, Nohbdy’s tricked me. Nohbdy’s ruined me!’

To this rough shout they made a sage reply:

‘Ah well, if nobody has played you foul there in your lonely bed, we are no use in pain given by great Zeus. Let it be your father, Poseidon Lord, to whom you pray.’

So saying they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter to see how like a charm the name deceived them.

---

6. smithy (smith’ē) n.: blacksmith’s shop, where iron tools are made.
7. adze (adz) n.: axlike tool with a long, curved blade.
8. divers (di’varz) adj.: diverse; various.
9. sage (sāj) adj.: wise.
Now Cyclops, wheezing as the pain came on him, fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone and squatted in the breach with arms thrown wide for any silly beast or man who bolted—hoping somehow I might be such a fool. But I kept thinking how to win the game: death sat there huge; how could we slip away? I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics, reasoning as a man will for dear life, until a trick came—and it pleased me well.

The Cyclops’ rams were handsome, fat, with heavy fleeces, a dark violet.

Three abreast

I tied them silently together, twining cords of willow from the ogre’s bed; then slung a man under each middle one to ride there safely, shielded left and right. So three sheep could convey each man. I took the woolliest ram, the choicest of the flock,
and hung myself under his kinky belly, pulled up tight, with fingers twisted deep in sheepskin ringlets for an iron grip. So, breathing hard, we waited until morning.

215 When Dawn spread out her fingertips of rose the rams began to stir, moving for pasture, and peals of bleating echoed round the pens where dams with udders full called for a milking. Blinded, and sick with pain from his head wound, the master stroked each ram, then let it pass, but my men riding on the pectoral fleece\(^\text{10}\) the giant’s blind hands blundering never found. Last of them all my ram, the leader, came, weighted by wool and me with my meditations. The Cyclops patted him, and then he said:

‘Sweet cousin ram, why lag behind the rest in the night cave? You never linger so, but graze before them all, and go afar to crop sweet grass, and take your stately way leading along the streams, until at evening you run to be the first one in the fold. Why, now, so far behind? Can you be grieving over your Master’s eye? That carrion rogue\(^\text{11}\) and his accurst companions burnt it out when he had conquered all my wits with wine. Nohbdy will not get out alive, I swear. Oh, had you brain and voice to tell where he may be now, dodging all my fury! Bashed by this hand and bashed on this rock wall his brains would strew the floor, and I should have rest from the outrage Nohbdy worked upon me.’

---

10. **pectoral fleece**: wool on an animal’s chest.
11. **carrion rogue**: rotten scoundrel. *Carrion* is decaying flesh.
He sent us into the open, then. Close by,
I dropped and rolled clear of the ram's belly,
going this way and that to untie the men.

With many glances back, we rounded up
his fat, stiff-legged sheep to take aboard,
and drove them down to where the good ship lay.

We saw, as we came near, our fellows' faces
shining; then we saw them turn to grief
tallying those who had not fled from death.

I hushed them, jerking head and eyebrows up,
and in a low voice told them: 'Load this herd;
move fast, and put the ship's head toward the breakers.'

They all pitched in at loading, then embarked
and struck their oars into the sea. Far out,
as far offshore as shouted words would carry,
I sent a few back to the adversary:

'O Cyclops! Would you feast on my companions?
Puny, am I, in a Caveman's hands?
How do you like the beating that we gave you,
you damned cannibal? Eater of guests
under your roof! Zeus and the gods have paid you!'

The blind thing in his doubled fury broke
a hilltop in his hands and heaved it after us.

Ahead of our black prow it struck and sank
whelmed in a spuming geyser, a giant wave
that washed the ship stern foremost back to shore.

I got the longest boathook out and stood
fending us off, with furious nods to all
to put their backs into a racing stroke—
row, row or perish. So the long oars bent
kicking the foam sternward, making head
until we drew away, and twice as far.

Now when I cupped my hands I heard the crew
in low voices protesting:
'Godsake, Captain!
Why bait the beast again? Let him alone!'

‘That tidal wave he made on the first throw
all but beached us.’

‘All but stove us in!’

‘Give him our bearing with your trumpeting,
he’ll get the range and lob\(^12\) a boulder.’

‘Aye
He’ll smash our timbers and our heads together!’

I would not heed them in my glorying spirit,
but let my anger flare and yelled:

‘Cyclops,
if ever mortal man inquire
how you were put to shame and blinded, tell him
Odysseus, raider of cities, took your eye:
Laertes’ son, whose home’s on Ithaca!’

At this he gave a mighty sob and rumbled:

‘Now comes the weird\(^13\) upon me, spoken of old.
A wizard, grand and wondrous, lived here—Telemus,\(^14\)
a son of Eurymus;\(^15\) great length of days
he had in wizardry among the Cyclopes,
and these things he foretold for time to come:
my great eye lost, and at Odysseus’ hands.

Always I had in mind some giant, armed
in giant force, would come against me here.
But this, but you—small, pitiful, and twiggy—
you put me down with wine, you blinded me.

---

12. lob (lāb) v.: toss.
13. weird (wird) n.: fate.
14. Telemus (tel’ə-məs).
15. Eurymus (yōō’rē-məs).
Come back, Odysseus, and I’ll treat you well,
praying the god of earthquake to befriend you—
his son I am, for he by his avowal
fathered me, and, if he will, he may
heal me of this black wound—he and no other
of all the happy gods or mortal men.’

Few words I shouted in reply to him:

‘If I could take your life I would and take
your time away, and hurl you down to hell!
The god of earthquake could not heal you there!’

At this he stretched his hands out in his darkness
toward the sky of stars, and prayed Poseidon:

‘O hear me, lord, blue girdler of the islands,
if I am thine indeed, and thou art father:
grant that Odysseus, raider of cities, never
see his home: Laertes’ son, I mean,
who kept his hall on Ithaca. Should destiny
intend that he shall see his roof again
among his family in his fatherland,
far be that day, and dark the years between.
Let him lose all companions, and return
under strange sail to bitter days at home.’ . . .”
The Cyclops

**Hero Chart** What makes a hero? Listed in the left-hand column of the chart below are some heroic traits. Give examples from “The Cyclops” to show whether or not Odysseus displays these traits. At the bottom of the chart is a row for weaknesses. If you find weaknesses in Odysseus, cite details from the story to support your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Traits of a Hero</th>
<th>Details from “The Cyclops”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence and resourcefulness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
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The Cyclops

Complete the sample test item below. The box at the right explains why three of the choices are not correct.

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<td>The best description of an epic poem is a —</td>
<td>The correct answer is D; it offers the most information about what an epic poem is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poem that tells a story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A is incorrect; many poems, even very short ones, tell stories. Epics are not lyric poems, as B claims. Epics are serious, not humorous, as C states.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B lyric poem that reveals emotions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C wildly exaggerated, humorous poem</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D long narrative poem about the deeds of a heroic character</td>
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DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of each correct answer.

1. When he first speaks to the Cyclops, Odysseus warns him that —
   - A the Greeks will kill him
   - B the Greeks want his land
   - C Zeus will avenge the Greeks if Cyclops is not courteous
   - D Zeus will kill the Cyclops if he doesn’t give them money

2. The interaction between Odysseus and the Cyclops is —
   - F an external conflict
   - G not important to the story
   - H a universal theme
   - J part of the setting

3. How does the Cyclops treat the Greeks?
   - A He devours some of them.
   - B He opens his home to them.
   - C He helps them on their way.
   - D He kills all of them.

4. How does Odysseus win the battle with the Cyclops?
   - F He tricks the Cyclops.
   - G He kills the giant.
   - H He calls on Zeus to help him.
   - J He betrays his men.

Literary Skills
Analyze characteristics of epic poetry, including heroes and their external conflicts.
Words from Myths

Myths often attempt to explain the mysteries of nature, the origins of rituals, and the relationships between gods and humans. Many words from Greek and Roman myths live on in the English language. For example, some common English words are derived from the names of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses.

DIRECTIONS: Match each Greek or Roman god’s or goddess’s name or home with the English word that is derived from it.

1. _____ Vulcan
   a. Olympics
2. _____ Ceres
   b. tantalize
3. _____ Mount Olympus
   c. titanic
4. _____ Titans
   d. cereal
5. _____ Tantalus
   e. volcano

Vocabulary in Context

DIRECTIONS: Complete the paragraph below by writing a word from the word box to fit each numbered blank. Use each word only once.

As the epic poem the Odyssey reveals, Odysseus had more than one (1) ________________. In fact, he had a (2) ________________ of enemies, both monsters and men—and even gods. Some of his enemies hated Odysseus so much they actually wanted to (3) ________________ him and his men, while others were content to prevent him from reaching home.
Before You Read

“The Cyclops” from the *Odyssey*

by Homer

In ancient Greece, heroes in epic poems like the *Odyssey* represented the highest values of Greek civilization. In Homer’s day, heroes were thought of as a special class of men, somewhere between the gods and ordinary human beings. As you read “The Cyclops,” see how Odysseus uses his special qualities to save himself and his men from becoming a monster’s meal.

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Epics are long narrative poems that tell of the great deeds of a hero. In an epic, the main character is the hero. (In many epics the hero’s enemy is also a major character.) Heroes usually represent qualities that their society admires. Some people today, for example, see sports stars, popular singers, great scientists, or firefighters as their heroes. In epics told long ago, the heroes are often superhuman warriors, who set off on journeys to win something of great value for themselves and for their people. The conflicts, or struggles between opposing forces, in an epic are usually external, as the heroes battle armies, monsters, or the forces of nature. Epic heroes can also face internal conflicts—caused by fear, doubt, weakness, and so on.

- First, read “The Cyclops” for enjoyment. Then, consider what the adventure reveals about the values of the ancient Greeks.

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- What are the most important events in this episode?
- When do the events take place?
- What might happen next?

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**VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT**

**PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY**

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- **ravage** (rav¬j): v. destroy violently, ruin.
  - The Cyclops planned to *ravage* Odysseus and his men by eating them.

- **profusion** (pr£·fyº√¤¥n): n. large supply; abundance.
  - With such a large flock of sheep, the Cyclops had a *profusion* of milk, cheese, and wool.

- **adversary** (ad√v¥r·ser≈≤): n. enemy; opponent.
  - Odysseus had to find a way to defeat his *adversary*, the Cyclops.

**WORDS FROM GREEK AND ROMAN MYTHS**

Many words we use in English today come from Greek and Roman myths. For example, a journey or quest is often called an *odyssey*, named for the *Odyssey*, the epic poem from which “The Cyclops” is taken. Other words from “The Cyclops” that have been handed down are *ambrosia*, meaning “food of the gods,” and *nectar*, meaning “drink of the gods.” Look at the chart below to learn of other words handed down from Greek and Roman myths.

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“The Cyclops” from the *Odyssey* by Homer
"We lit a fire, burnt an offering, and took some cheese to eat; then sat in silence around the embers, waiting. When he came he had a load of dry boughs on his shoulder to stoke his fire at suppertime. He dumped it with a great crash into that hollow cave, and we all scattered fast to the far wall. Then over the broad cavern floor he ushered the ewes he meant to milk. He left his rams and goats in the yard outside, and swung high overhead a slab of solid rock to close the cave. Two dozen four-wheeled wagons, with heaving wagon teams, could not have stirred the tonnage of that rock from where he wedged it over the doorstep. Next he took his seat and milked his bleating ewes. A practiced job he made of it, giving each ewe her suckling; thickened his milk, then, into curds and whey, sieved out the curds to drip in withy baskets, and poured the whey to stand in bowls cooling until he drank it for his supper. When all these chores were done, he poked the fire, heaping on brushwood. In the glare he saw us. 'Strangers,' he said, 'who are you? And where from? What brings you here by seaways—a fair traffic? Or are you wandering rogues, who cast your lives like dice, and ravage other folk by sea?' We felt a pressure on our hearts, in dread of that deep rumble and that mighty man. But all the same I spoke up in reply: 'We are from Troy, Achaeans, blown off course by shifting gales on the Great South Sea.'
and caught two in his hands like squirming puppies to beat their brains out, spattering the floor. Then he dismembered them and made his meal, gaping and crunching like a mountain lion—everything: innards, flesh, and marrow bones.

We cried aloud, lifting our hands to Zeus, powerless, looking on at this, appalled; but Cyclops went on filling up his belly with manflesh and great gulps of whey, then lay down like a mast among his sheep.

My heart beat high now at the chance of action, and drawing the sharp sword from my hip I went along his flank to stab him where the midriff holds the liver. I had touched the spot when sudden fear stayed me: if I killed him we perished there as well, for we could never move his ponderous doorway slab aside. So we were left to groan and wait for morning.

When the young Dawn with fingertips of rose lit up the world, the Cyclops built a fire and milked his handsome ewes, all in due order, putting the sucklings to the mothers. Then, his chores being all dispatched, he caught another brace of men to make his breakfast, and whisked away his great door slab to let his sheep go through—but he, behind, reset the stone as one would cap a quiver.

There was a din of whistling as the Cyclops rounded his flock to higher ground, then stillness.

And now I pondered how to hurt him worst, if but Athena granted what I prayed for. Here are the means I thought would serve my turn:

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3. brace (br†s) n.: pair.
4. quiver (kwivôr) n.: case for arrows.
'Cyclops, try some wine.
Here's liquor to wash down your scraps of men.
Taste it, and see the kind of drink we carried
under our planks. I meant it for an offering
if you would help us home. But you are mad,
unbearable, a bloody monster! After this,
will any other traveler come to see you?'

He seized and drained the bowl, and it went down
so fiery and smooth he called for more:
'Give me another, thank you kindly. Tell me,
how are you called? I'll make a gift will please you.
Even Cyclopes know the wine grapes grow
out of grassland and loam in heaven's rain,
but here's a bit of nectar and ambrosia!'

Three bowls I brought him, and he poured them down.
I saw the fuddle and flush come over him,
then hid it, we'll back in the cavern, under
one of the dung piles in profusion there.

Now came the time to toss for it; who ventured
along with me? Whose hand could bear to thrust
and grind that spike in Cyclops' eye, when mild
sleep had mastered him? As luck would have it,
the four strong men, and I made five as captain.

At evening came the shepherd with his flock,
his woolly flock. The rams as well, this time,
entered the cave by some shepherding whim—
or a god's bidding—none were left outside.
He hefted his great boulder into place
and sat him down to milk the bleating ewes
in proper order, put the lambs to suck,
and swiftly ran through all his evening chores.
Then he caught two more men and feasted on them.
My moment was at hand, and I went forward
holding an ivy bowl of my dark drink,
looking up, saying:

'Cyclops, try some wine.
Here's liquor to wash down your scraps of men.
Taste it, and see the kind of drink we carried
under your planks. I meant it for an offering
if you would help us home. But you are mad,
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but here's a bit of nectar and ambrosia!'

Three bowls I brought him, and he poured them down.
I saw the fuddle and flush come over him,
then I sang out in cordial tones:

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Profusion (prə-fyú′shən) n.: large supply; abundance.

Pause at line 111. Apparently, it was the custom among the
ancient Greeks for men to toss coins, dice, or something
else for the honor of participating in a dangerous task. Why is Odysseus happy with the outcome?

The men he would have chosen won the toss.

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In a smithy
one sees a white-hot axhead or an adze plunged and wrung in a cold tub, screeching steam—
the way they make soft iron hale and hard—
just so that eyeball hissed around the spike.
The Cyclops bellowed and the rock roared round him, and we fell back in fear. ... he set up a howl for Cyclopes who lived in caves on windy peaks nearby. Some heard him; and they came by divers ways to clump around outside and call:

'What ails you, Polyphemus? Why do you cry so sore in the starry night? You will not let us sleep. Sure no man's driving off your flock? No man has tricked you, ruined you?'

Out of the cave the mammoth Polyphemus roared in answer:

'Nohbdy, Nohbdy's tricked me. Nohbdy's ruined me!' To this rough shout they made a sage reply:

'Ah well, if nobody has played you foul there in your lonely bed, we are no use in pain given by great Zeus. Let it be your father, Poseidon Lord, to whom you pray.'

So saying they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter to see how like a charm the name deceived them.

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6. smithy (smi’ò) n.: a blacksmith's shop, where iron tools are made.
7. adze (adz) n.: adze tool with a long, curved blade.
8. divers (d°v¥rz) adj.: diverse; various.
9. sage (s†j) adj.: wise.
Now Cyclops, wheezing as the pain came on him, fumbled to wrench away the great doorstone and squared in the breach with arms thrown wide for any silly beast or man who bolted — hoping somehow I might be such a fool. But I kept thinking how to win the game:
dead sat there huge, how could we slip away?
I drew on all my wits, and ran through tactics, reasoning as a man will for dear life, until a trick came — and it pleased me well.
The Cyclops’ rams were handsome, fat, with heavy fleeces, a dark violet.
Three abreast
I tied them silently together, twining cords of willow from the ogre’s bed; then slung a man under each middle one to ride there safely, shielded left and right.
So three sheep could convey each man. I took the woolliest ram, the choicest of the flock,
and hung myself under his limy belly, pulled up tight, with fingers twisted deep in sheepskin ringlets for an iron grip. So, breathing hard, we waited until morning.

When Dawn spread out her fingertips of rose the rams began to stir, moving for pasture, and peals of bleating echoed round the pens where dams with udders full called for a milking. Blinded and sick with pain from his head wound, the master stroked each ram, then let it pass, but my men riding on the pectoral fleece the giant’s blind hands blundering never found.

Last of them all my ram, the leader, came, weighted by wool and me with my meditations. The Cyclops patted him, and then he said:

‘Sweet cousin ram, why lag behind the rest in the night cave? You never linger so, but graze before them all, and go afar to crop sweet grass, and take your stately way leading along the streams, until at evening you run to be the first one in the fold. Why, now, so far behind? Can you be grieving over your Master’s eye? That carrion rogue and his accurst companions burnt it out when he had conquered all my wits with wine. Nobody will not get out alive, I swear. Oh, had you brain and voice to tell where he may be now, dodging all my fury! Bashed by this hand and bashed on this rock wall his brains would strew the floor, and I should have rest from the outrage Nobody worked upon me.’
He sent us into the open, then. Close by, I dropped and rolled clear of the ram's belly, going this way and that to untie the men. With many glances back, we rounded up his fat, stiff-legged sheep to take aboard, and drove them down to where the good ship lay. We saw, as we came near, our fellows' faces shining; then we saw them turn to grief tilling those who had not fled from death. I bushed them, jerking head and eyebrows up, and in a low voice told them: 'I load this herd, move fast, and put the ship's head toward the breakers.' They all pitched in at loading, then embarked and struck their oars into the sea. Far out, as far offshore as shouted words would carry, I sent a few back to the adversary:

'O Cyclops! Would you feast on my companions? Puny, am I, in a Caveman's hands! How do you like the beating that we gave you, you damned cannibal? Enter of guests under your roof! Zeus and the gods have paid you!' The blind thing in his doubled fury broke a hilltop in his hands and heaved it after us. Ahead of our black prow it struck and sank, whelmed in a spuming geyser, a boiling wave, a tidal wave. And we rowed, rowed or perish. So the long oars bent kicking the foam sternward, making head until we drew away, and twice as far. Now when I cupped my hands I heard the crew in low voices protesting:

Say, how do you like that?
The Cyclops

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Come back, Odysseus, and I'll treat you well,
praying the god of earthquake to befriend you—
his son I am, for he by his own
fostered me, and, if he will, he may
heal me of this black wound—his and no other
of all the happy gods or mortal men.”

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Few words I shouted in reply to him:

“Ye gods, and ye goddesses, it is not good
if I should serve the Cyclops in his home;
I must keep a safe space to enter, and you
must stand near me, for I shall not
be able to carry you out of the house.

But if I can take your life I would and take
your time away, and hurl you down to hell!
The god of earthquake could not heal you there!”

At this he stretched his hands out in his darkness
and spoke thus, as I heard:

“O hear me, lord, blue girdler of the islands,
if I am thy true son and thou art father:
grant that Odysseus, raider of cities, never
see his home.Laertes’ son, I mean,
who kept his hall on Ithaca. Should destiny
intend that he shall see his roof again
among his family in his fatherland,
far be that day, and dark the years between.
Let him lose all companions, and return
under strange sail to bitter days at home.”

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**Skills Practice**

**The Cyclops**

**Hero Chart**

What makes a hero? Listed in the left-hand column of the chart below are some heroic traits. Give examples from “The Cyclops” to show whether or not Odysseus displays these traits. At the bottom of the chart is a row for weaknesses. If you find weaknesses in Odysseus, cite details from the story to support your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Traits of a Hero</th>
<th>Details from “The Cyclops”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence and resourcefulness</td>
<td>He withholds information about his ship. He tells the Cyclops that his name is Nobody. He thinks up a plan of escape. He forges a stake from an olive tree. He gets the Cyclops drunk. He uses the rams to carry his men out of the cave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>He stabs the Cyclops with the huge stake. He pushes the ship out of danger with a boathook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bravery and loyalty</td>
<td>He stabs the Cyclops in the eye. He speaks up to the Cyclops and threatens him. He promotes and fights for the reputation of his gods. He tries to rescue as many of his men as he can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
<td>He is proud and vengeful. He gives in to bullying and taunting the giant, causing the Cyclops to put a terrible curse on him and his men.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Pause at line 308.** The Cyclops has asked Odysseus to come back and says he’ll treat him well. Underline Odysseus’s reply. Then, read on and underline the Cyclops’s curse on Odysseus and his men.

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**Review the Cyclops’s curse. What might happen next?**

The curse may indeed come true. Odysseus may still have a long and hard journey home to Ithaca; he may find troubles when he gets home.
Skills Review

Test Practice

The Cyclops

Complete the sample test item below. The box at the right explains why three of the choices are not correct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Test Item</th>
<th>Explanation of the Correct Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The best description of an epic poem is a —</td>
<td>A: poem that tells a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Vulcan</td>
<td>a. Olympics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mount Olympus</td>
<td>b. tantalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Titans</td>
<td>c. titanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tantalus</td>
<td>d. cereal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of each correct answer.

1. When he first speaks to the Cyclops, Odysseus warns him that —
   A. the Greeks will kill him
   B. the Cyclops wants his land
   C. Zeus will avenge the Greeks if Cyclops is not courteous
   D. Zeus will kill the Cyclops if he doesn't give them money

2. The interaction between Odysseus and the Cyclops is —
   F. an external conflict
   G. not important to the story
   H. a universal theme
   J. part of the setting

3. How does the Cyclops treat the Greeks?
   A. He devours some of them.
   B. He opens his home to them.
   C. He helps them on their way.
   D. He kills all of them.

4. How does Odysseus win the battle with the Cyclops?
   A. He tricks the Cyclops.
   B. He defeats the giant.
   C. He calls on Zeus to help him.
   D. He betrays his men.

Vocabulary in Context

DIRECTIONS: Complete the paragraph below by writing a word from the word box to fit each numbered blank. Use each word only once.

As the epic poem the Odyssey reveals, Odysseus had more than one adversary. In fact, he had a profusion of enemies, both monsters and men—and even gods. Some of his enemies hated Odysseus so much they actually wanted to ravage him and his men, while others were content to prevent him from reaching home.
Epic Hero Map

An epic is a narrative told in elevated language, which relates the great deeds of a hero who embodies the values of a society. In the map below, write the name of the epic hero. Then, write examples of the hero’s deeds. Finally, explain what values the deeds reveal.

**Hero:**

**Deeds:**

**Values:**