

Y12 Classics Summer Work

Miss S.Thomas

1. Read Book 9 of *The Odyssey* by Homer.
2. Think carefully about Odysseus' leadership in this Book. Construct a table of both good and bad examples of his leadership. Include as much detail as possible, at least two sides of writing. I want to see which parts/quotes particularly stand out to you and your personal evaluation of Odysseus' leadership. I will be taking in this work to assess your initial understanding of the text on your own and how much effort you put in. We will review your notes in Term 1.

THE CYCLOPS

In answer to the King, this is how Odysseus, the man of many resources, began his tale:

'King Alcinous, most illustrious of all your people, it is indeed a lovely thing to hear a bard such as this, with a voice like the voice of the gods. I myself feel that there is nothing more delightful than when the festive mood reigns in the hearts of all the people and the banqueters listen to a minstrel from their seats in the hall, while the tables before them are laden with bread and meat, and a steward carries round the wine he has drawn from the bowl and fills their cups. This, to my way of thinking, is perfection.

'However, your heart has prompted you to ask me about my troubles, and that intensified my grief. Well, where shall I begin, where end, my tale? For the list of woes which the gods in heaven have sent me is a long one. I shall start by giving you my name: I wish you all to know it so that in times to come, if I escape the evil day, I may always be your friend, though my home is far from here.

'I am Odysseus, Laertes' son. The whole world talks of my stratagems, and my fame has reached the heavens. My home is under the clear skies of Ithaca. Our landmark is Mount Neriton with its quivering leaves. Other islands are clustered round it, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus. But Ithaca, the farthest out to sea, lies slanting to the west, whereas the others face the dawn and rising sun. It is a rough land, but nurtures fine men. And I, for one, know of no sweeter sight for a man's eyes than his own country. The divine Calypso was certainly for keeping me in her cavern home because she yearned for me to

be her husband and with the same object Circe, the Aeaeon witch, detained me in her palace; but never for a moment did they win my heart. So true it is that a man's fatherland and his parents are what he holds sweetest, even though he has settled far away from his people in some rich home in foreign lands. However, let me tell you of the disastrous voyage Zeus inflicted on me when I started back from Troy.

'The same wind that wafted me from Ilium brought me to Ismarus, the city of the Cicones. I sacked this place and destroyed its menfolk. The women and the vast plunder that we took from the town we divided so that no one, as far as I could help it, should go short of his proper share. And then I said we must escape with all possible speed. But my fools of men refused. There was plenty of wine, plenty of livestock; and they kept on drinking and butchering sheep and shambling crooked-horned cattle by the shore. Meanwhile the Cicones went and raised a cry for help among other Cicones, their inland neighbours, who are both more numerous and better men, trained in fighting from the chariot and on foot as well, when the occasion requires.

'At dawn they were on us, thick as the leaves and flowers in spring, and disaster, sent by Zeus to make us suffer, overtook my doomed companions and me. They fought a pitched battle by the swift ships and exchanged volleys of bronze spears. Right through the early morning and while the blessed light of day grew stronger we held our ground and kept their greater force at bay; but when the sun began to drop, towards the time when the ploughman unyokes his ox, the Cicones gained the upper hand and broke the Achaean ranks. Six of my strong-greaved comrades from each ship were killed. The rest of us eluded our fate and got away alive.

'We sailed on from Ismarus with heavy hearts, grieving for the loss of our dear companions though rejoicing at our own escape; and I would not let the curved ships sail before each of our poor comrades who had fallen in action against the Cicones had been three times saluted with a ritual call. Zeus, who marshals the clouds, now sent my fleet a terrible gale from the north. He covered land and sea alike with a canopy of cloud; darkness swept down on us from the sky. Our ships pitched and

plunged in the wind, and the force of the gusts tore their sails to shreds and tatters. With the fear of death upon us, we lowered them on to the decks, and rowed the bare ships to the land with all our might.

‘We rested on land for two days and two nights on end, with exhaustion and anxiety gnawing at our hearts. But on the third morning, which bright-haired Dawn had ushered in, we stepped the masts, hauled up the white sails, and took our places in the ship. The wind and the helmsmen kept our vessels straight. In fact I should have reached my own land safe and sound, had
80 not the swell, the current and the North Wind combined, as I was rounding Malea, to drive me off my course and send me drifting past Cythera.¹

‘For nine days I was chased by those accursed winds across the teeming seas. But on the tenth we reached the country of the Lotus-eaters, a race that eat the flowery lotus fruit.² We disembarked to draw water, and my crews quickly had a meal by the ships. When we had eaten and drunk, I sent some of my followers inland to find out what sort of human beings might
90 be there, detailing two men for the duty with a third as herald. Off they went, and it was not long before they came upon the Lotus-eaters. Now these natives had no intention of killing my comrades; what they did was to give them some lotus to taste. Those who ate the honeyed fruit of the plant lost any wish to come back and bring us news. All they now wanted was to stay where they were with the Lotus-eaters, to browse on the lotus, and to forget all thoughts of return. I had to use force to bring them back to the hollow ships, and they wept on the way, but once on board I tied them up and dragged them under the
100 benches. I then commanded the rest of my loyal band to embark with all speed on their fast ships, for fear that others of them might eat the lotus and think no more of home. They came on board at once, took their places at their oars and all together struck the white surf with their blades.

1. Malea and Cythera are the last places on Odysseus' journey that can be found on a map. Scholars have naturally enjoyed speculating about the rest of his journey.

2. A mythical fruit.

‘So we left that country and sailed with heavy hearts. And we came to the land of the Cyclopes, a fierce, lawless people who never lift a hand to plant or plough but just leave everything to the immortal gods. All the crops they require spring up unsown and untilled, wheat and barley and vines with generous clusters
110 that swell with the rain from heaven to yield wine. The Cyclopes have no assemblies for the making of laws, nor any established legal codes, but live in hollow caverns in the mountain heights, where each man is lawgiver to his own children and women, and nobody has the slightest interest in what his neighbours decide.

‘Not very far from the harbour of the Cyclopes' country, and not so near either, there lies a luxuriant island, covered with woods, which is the home of innumerable goats. The goats are wild, for the footsteps of man never disturb them, nor do hunters
120 visit the island, forcing their way through forests and ranging the mountain tops. Used neither for grazing nor for ploughing, it lies for ever unsown and untilled; and this land where no man goes supports only bleating goats. The Cyclopes have nothing like our ships with their crimson prows; they have no shipwrights to build merchantmen that could give them the means of sailing across the sea to visit foreign towns and people, as other nations do. Such craftsmen would have turned the island
130 into a fine colony for the Cyclopes.

‘It is by no means a poor country, but capable of yielding any crop in due season. Along the shore of the grey sea there are lush water-meadows where the grapes would never fail; and there is land level enough for the plough, where they could count on cutting a tall-standing crop at every harvest because the subsoil is exceedingly rich. Also it has a safe harbour, in which there is no need of moorings – no need to cast anchor or make fast with hawsers: all your crew need do is beach their ship and wait till the spirit moves them and the right wind
140 blows. Finally, at the head of the harbour there is a stream of fresh water, running out of a cave in a grove of poplar-trees.

‘This is where we came to land. Some god must have guided us through the murky night, for it was impossible to see ahead. The ships were in a thick fog, and overhead not a gleam of light

came through from the moon, which was obscured by clouds. Not a man among us caught sight of the island, nor did we even see the long breakers rolling up to the coast, before our good ships ran aground. It was not till they were beached that we
 150 lowered sail. We then jumped out on to the shore, fell asleep where we were and so waited for the blessed light of day.

‘As soon as Dawn appeared, fresh and rosy-fingered, we were delighted with what we saw of the island, and set out to explore it. Presently the Nymphs, those children of Zeus, set the mountain goats on the move to ensure my companions a meal. Directly we saw them we fetched our curved bows and our long spears from the ships, separated into three parties, and began shooting at the goats; and in a short time the god had sent us plenty of game. When it was shared out, nine goats were allotted to each
 160 of the twelve ships under my command, but to me alone they made an allotment of ten.

‘So the whole day long till the sun set we sat down to rich supplies of meat and mellow wine, since the ships had not yet run dry of our red vintage. There was still some in the holds, for when we took the sacred citadel of the Cicones, every member of the company had drawn off a generous supply in jars. There we sat, and as we looked across at the neighbouring land of the Cyclopes, we could see the smoke from their fires and hear their voices and the bleating of their sheep and goats. The sun went down, night fell, and we lay down to sleep on the sea-shore.

170 ‘As soon as Dawn appeared, fresh and rosy-fingered, I assembled my company and spoke to them. “My good friends,” I said, “for the time being stay here, while I go in my ship with my crew to find out what kind of men are over there, and whether they are aggressive savages with no sense of right or wrong or hospitable and god-fearing people.”

180 ‘Then I climbed into my ship and told my men to follow me and loose the hawsers. They came on board at once, took their places at the oars and all together struck the white surf with the blades. It was no great distance to the mainland. As we approached its nearest point, we made out a cave close to the sea, with a high entrance overhung by laurels. Here large flocks

of sheep and goats were penned at night, and round the mouth a yard had been built with a great wall of quarried stones and tall pines and high-branched oaks. It was the den of a giant, who pastured his flocks alone, a long way away from anyone else, and had no truck with others of his kind but lived aloof in his own lawless way. And what a formidable monster he was! He was quite unlike any man who eats bread, more like some
 190 wooded peak in the high hills, standing out alone apart from the others.

‘At this point, I told the rest of my loyal companions to stay there on guard by the ship, but I myself picked out the twelve best men in the company and advanced. I took with me in a goatskin some dark and mellow wine which had been given to me by Maron son of Euanthes, the priest of Apollo, the tutelary god of Ismarus, because we had protected him and his child and wife out of respect for his office. He lived in a wooded grove
 200 sacred to Phoebus Apollo. This man had given me some fine presents: seven talents of wrought gold, with a mixing-bowl of solid silver, and he drew off for me a dozen jars of mellow unmixed wine as well. It was a wonderful drink. It had been kept secret from all his serving-men and maids, in fact from everyone in the house but himself, his good wife and a house-keeper. To drink this red and honeyed vintage, he would pour one cupful of wine into twenty of water, and the bouquet that rose from the bowl was pure heaven – those were occasions
 210 when abstinence could have no charms.

‘Well, I filled a big goatskin with this wine and also took some food in a bag with me; for I had an instant foreboding that we were going to find ourselves face to face with some barbarous being of colossal strength and ferocity, uncivilized and unprincipled. It took us very little time to reach the cave, but we did not find its owner at home: he was tending his fat sheep in the pastures. So we went inside and looked in amazement at everything. There were baskets laden with cheeses, and the folds were thronged with lambs and kids, each group – the spring
 220 ones, the summer ones, and the new-born ones – being separately penned. All his well-made vessels, the pails and bowls he used for milking, were swimming with whey.

'To start with my men begged me to let them take away some of the cheeses, then come back, drive the kids and lambs quickly out of the pens down to the good ship, and so set sail across the salt water. But though it would have been far better so, I was not to be persuaded. I wished to see the owner of the cave and had hopes of some friendly gifts from my host. But when he did
230 appear, my men were not going to find him a very likeable character.

'We lit a fire, made an offering to the gods, helped ourselves to some of the cheeses, and when we had eaten, sat down in the cave to await his arrival. At last he came up, shepherding his flocks and carrying a huge bundle of dry wood to burn at supper-time. With a great crash he threw this down inside the cavern, giving us such a fright that we hastily retreated to an inner recess. Meanwhile he drove some of his fat flock into the wider part of the cave – all the ones he was milking – the rams
240 and he-goats he left out of doors in the walled yard. He then picked up a huge stone, with which he closed the entrance. It was a mighty slab; twenty-two four-wheeled waggons could not shift such a massive stone from the entrance, such was the monstrous size of the rock with which he closed the cave. Next he sat down to milk his ewes and his bleating goats, which he did methodically, putting her young to each mother as he finished. He then curdled half the white milk, collected the whey, and stored it in wicker cheese-baskets; the remainder he left standing in pails, so that it would be handy at supper-time
250 when he wanted a drink. When he had efficiently finished all his tasks, he re-lit the fire and spied us.

"'Strangers!" he cried. "And who are you? Where do you come from over the watery ways? Is yours a trading venture; or are you cruising the main on chance, like roving pirates, who risk their lives to ruin other people?"

'Our hearts sank. The booming voice and the very sight of the monster filled us with panic. Still, I managed to find words to answer him. "We are Achaeans," I said, "on our way back
260 from Troy – driven astray by contrary winds across a vast expanse of sea – we're making our way home but took the wrong way – the wrong route – as Zeus, I suppose, intended

that we should. We are proud to say that we belong to the forces of Agamemnon, Atreus' son, who by sacking the great city of Ilium and destroying all its armies has made himself the most famous man in the world today. We find ourselves here as suppliants at your knees, in the hope that you may give us hospitality, or even give us the kind of gifts that hosts customarily give their guests. Good sir, remember your duty to the
270 gods; we are your suppliants, and Zeus is the champion of suppliants and guests. He is the god of guests: guests are sacred to him, and he goes alongside them."

'That is what I said, and he answered me promptly out of his pitiless heart: "Stranger, you must be a fool, or must have come from very far afield, to order me to fear or reverence the gods. We Cyclopes care nothing for Zeus with his aegis, nor for the rest of the blessed gods, since we are much stronger than they are. I would never spare you or your men for fear of incurring Zeus' enmity, unless I felt like it. But tell me where you moored
280 your good ship when you came. Was it somewhere along the coast, or nearby? I'd like to know."

'His words were designed to get the better of me, but he could not outwit someone with my knowledge of the world. I answered with plausible words: "As for my ship, it was wrecked by the Earthshaker Poseidon on the borders of your land. The wind had carried us on to a lee shore. He drove the ship up to a headland and hurled it on the rocks. But I and my friends here managed to escape with our lives."

'To this the cruel brute made no reply. Instead, he jumped up, and reaching out towards my men, seized a couple and dashed their heads against the floor as though they had been puppies. Their brains ran out on the ground and soaked the earth. Limb
290 by limb he tore them to pieces to make his meal, which he devoured like a mountain lion, leaving nothing, neither entrails nor flesh, marrow nor bones, while we, weeping, lifted up our hands to Zeus in horror at the ghastly sight. We felt completely helpless. When the Cyclops had filled his great belly with this meal of human flesh, which he washed down with unwatered milk, he stretched himself out for sleep among his flocks inside the cave.

‘On first thoughts I planned to summon my courage, draw
 300. my sharp sword from the scabbard at my side, creep up to him,
 feel for the right place with my hand and stab him in the breast
 where the liver is supported by the midriff. But on second
 thoughts I refrained, realizing that we would seal our own fate
 as well as his, because we would have found it impossible with
 our unaided hands to push aside the huge rock with which he
 had closed the great mouth of the cave. So with sighs and groans
 we waited for the blessed light of day.

‘As soon as Dawn appeared, fresh and rosy-fingered, the
 Cyclops re-lit the fire and milked his splendid ewes and goats,
 all in their proper order, putting her young to each. Having
 310 efficiently completed all these tasks, he once more snatched up
 a couple of my men and prepared his meal. When he had eaten,
 he turned his plump flocks out of the cave, removing the great
 doorstone without an effort. But he replaced it once more, as
 though he were putting the lid on a quiver. Then, with frequent
 whistles, he drove his plump flocks off towards the mountain,
 and I was left, with murder in my heart, scheming how to pay
 him out if only Athene would grant me my prayer. The best
 plan I could think of was this.

‘Lying by the pen the Cyclops had a huge staff of green
 320 olive-wood, which he had cut to carry in his hand when it was
 seasoned. To us it looked more like the mast of some black ship
 of twenty oars, a broad-bottomed merchantman such as makes
 long sea-voyages. That was the impression which its length and
 thickness made on us. Standing beside this piece of timber I cut
 off a fathom’s length, which I handed over to my men and told
 them to smooth it down. When they had done this I stood and
 sharpened it to a point. Then I hardened it in the fire, and finally
 I carefully hid it under the dung, of which there were great heaps
 330 scattered throughout the cave. I then told my company to cast
 lots for the dangerous task of helping me to lift the pole and
 twist it in the Cyclops’ eye when he was sound asleep. The lot
 fell on the very men that I myself would have chosen, four of
 them, so that counting myself we made a party of five.

‘Evening came, and with it the Cyclops, shepherding his
 plump flocks, every one of which he herded into the broad cave,

leaving none out in the walled yard, either because he suspected
 something or because a god had ordered him to. He lifted the
 great doorstone, set it in its place, and then sat down to milk his
 340 ewes and bleating goats, which he did methodically, giving each
 mother its young one in due course. When he had efficiently
 completed all these tasks, he once more snatched two of us and
 prepared his supper. Then with an olive-wood bowl of my dark
 wine in my hands, I went up to him and said: “Here, Cyclops,
 have some wine to wash down that meal of human flesh, and
 find out for yourself what kind of vintage was stored away in
 our ship’s hold. I brought it for you as an offering in the hope
 that you would take pity on me and help me on my homeward
 way. But your savagery is more than we can bear. Hard-hearted
 350 man, how can you expect ever to have a visitor again from the
 world of men? You have not behaved rightly.”

‘The Cyclops took the wine and drank it up. And the delicious
 drink gave him such exquisite pleasure that he asked me for
 another bowlful. “Give me more, please, and tell me your name,
 here and now – I would like to make you a gift that will please
 you. We Cyclopes have wine of our own made from the grapes
 that our rich soil and rains from Zeus produce. But this vintage
 of yours is a drop of the real nectar and ambrosia.”

‘So said the Cyclops, and I handed him another bowlful of
 360 the sparkling wine. Three times I filled it for him; and three
 times the fool drained the bowl to the dregs. At last, when the
 wine had fuddled his wits, I addressed him with soothing
 words.

““Cyclops,” I said, “you ask me my name. I’ll tell it to you;
 and in return give me the gift you promised me. My name is
 Nobody. That is what I am called by my mother and father and
 by all my friends.”

‘The Cyclops answered me from his cruel heart. “Of all his
 company I will eat Nobody last, and the rest before him. That
 shall be your gift.”

‘He had hardly spoken before he toppled over and fell face
 upwards on the floor, where he lay with his great neck twisted
 to one side, and all-compelling sleep overpowered him. In his
 drunken stupor he vomited, and a stream of wine mixed with
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morsels of men's flesh poured from his throat. I went at once and thrust our pole deep under the ashes of the fire to make it hot, and meanwhile gave a word of encouragement to all my men, to make sure that no one would hang back through fear. When the fierce glow from the olive stake warned me that it was about to catch alight in the flames, green as it was, I withdrew
 380 it from the fire and my men gathered round. A god now inspired them with tremendous courage. Seizing the olive pole, they drove its sharpened end into the Cyclops' eye, while I used my weight from above to twist it home, like a man boring a ship's timber with a drill which his mates below him twirl with a strap they hold at either end, so that it spins continuously. In much the same way we handled our pole with its red-hot point and twisted it in his eye till the blood boiled up round the burning wood. The scorching heat singed his lids and brow all round, while his eyeball blazed and the very roots crackled in the flame.
 390 The Cyclops' eye hissed round the olive stake in the same way that an axe or adze hisses when a smith plunges it into cold water to quench and strengthen the iron. He gave a dreadful shriek, which echoed round the rocky walls, and we backed away from him in terror, while he pulled the stake from his eye, streaming with blood. Then he hurled it away from him with frenzied hands and raised a great shout to the other Cyclopes
 400 who lived in neighbouring caves along the windy heights. Hearing his screams they came up from every quarter, and gathering outside the cave asked him what the matter was.

"What on earth is wrong with you, Polyphemus? Why must you disturb the peaceful night and spoil our sleep with all this shouting? Is a robber driving off your sheep, or is somebody trying by treachery or violence to kill you?"

"Out of the cave came mighty Polyphemus' voice in reply: "O my friends, it's Nobody's treachery, not violence, that is doing me to death."

410 "Well then," came the immediate reply, "if you are alone and nobody is assaulting you, you must be sick and sickness comes from almighty Zeus and cannot be helped. All you can do is to pray to your father, the Lord Poseidon."

"And off they went, while I laughed to myself at the way in

which my cunning *notion*¹ of a false name had taken them in. The Cyclops, still moaning in agonies of pain, groped about with his hands and pushed the rock away from the mouth of the cave. Then he sat himself down in the doorway and stretched out both arms in the hope of catching us in the act of slipping out among the sheep. What a fool he must have thought me! Meanwhile I was cudgelling my brains for the best possible
 420 course, trying to hit on some way of saving my friends as well as myself. I thought up plan after plan, scheme after scheme. It was a matter of life or death: we were in mortal peril.

"This was the scheme that eventually seemed best. The rams of the flock were of good stock, thick-fleeced, fine, big animals in their coats of black wool. These I quietly lashed together with the plaited willow twigs which the inhuman monster used for his bed. I took them in threes. The middle one was to carry one of my followers, with its fellows on either side to protect him.
 430 Each of my men thus had three rams to bear him. But for myself I chose a full-grown ram who was the pick of the whole flock. Seizing him by the back, I curled myself up under his shaggy belly and lay there upside down, with a firm grip on his wonderful fleece and with patience in my heart. In this way, with sighs and groans, we waited for the blessed Dawn.

"As soon as she arrived, fresh and rosy-fingered, the he-goats and the rams began to scramble out and make for the pastures, but the females, un milked as they were and with udders full to bursting, stood bleating by the pens. Their master, though
 440 tortured and in terrible agony, passed his hands along the backs of all the animals as they stopped in front of him; but the idiot never noticed that my men were tied under the chests of his own woolly rams. The last of the flock to come up to the doorway was the big ram, burdened by his own fleece and by me with my thoughts racing. As he felt him with his hands the great Polyphemus broke into speech:

"Sweet ram," he said, "why are you the last of the flock to

1. The Greek for 'no one' is *me tis*, but run together as *metis* it means 'wily scheme, resourcefulness'. Odysseus laughs to himself because *metis* (no one/resourcefulness) has foiled the Cyclops. 'Notion' is an attempt to get the pun.

pass out of the cave like this? You have never before lagged behind the others, but always step so proudly out and are the first of them to crop the lush shoots of the grass, first to make
 450 your way to the flowing stream, and first to want to return to the fold when evening falls. Yet today you are the last of all. You must be grieved for your master's eye, blinded by a wicked man and his accursed friends, when he had robbed me of my wits with wine. Nobody was his name; and I swear that he has not yet saved his skin! Ah, if only you could feel as I do and find a voice to tell me where he's hiding from my fury! I'd hammer him and splash his brains all over the floor of the cave, and my heart would find some relief from the suffering which that
 460 nothing, that Nobody, has caused me!"

'So he let the ram pass through the entrance and when we had put a little distance between ourselves and the courtyard of the cave, I first let go my ram and then untied my men. Then, quickly, though with many a backward look, we drove our long-striding sheep and goats – a rich, fat flock – right down to the ship. My dear companions were overjoyed when they caught sight of us survivors, but broke into loud lamentations for the others. With nods and frowns I indicated silently that they should stop their weeping and hurry to bundle the fleecy sheep
 470 and goats on board and put to sea. So they went on board at once, took their places at the oars, and all together struck the white water with the blades.

'But before we were out of earshot, I shouted out derisive words at Polyphemus. "Cyclops! So he was not such a weakling after all, the man whose friends you meant to overpower and eat in your hollow cave! And your crimes were bound to catch up with you, you brute, who did not shrink from devouring your guests. Now Zeus and all the other gods have paid you out."

480 'My words so enraged the Cyclops that he tore the top off a great pinnacle of rock and hurled it at us. The rock fell just ahead of our blue-painted bows. As it plunged in, the water surged up and the backwash, like a swell from the open sea, swept us landward and nearly drove us on to the beach. Seizing a long pole, I pushed the ship off, at the same time commanding

my crew with urgent nods to bend to their oars and save us from disaster. They leant forward and rowed with a will; but
 490 when they had taken us across the water to twice our previous distance I was about to shout something else to the Cyclops, but from all parts of the ship my men called out, trying to restrain and pacify me.

"'Why do you want to provoke the savage in this obstinate way? The rock he threw into the sea just now drove the ship back to the land, and we thought it was all up with us. Had he heard a cry, or so much as a word, from a single man, he'd have smashed in our heads and the ship's timbers with another jagged boulder from his hand. We're within easy range for him!"

'But my temper was up; their words did not dissuade me, and
 500 in my rage I shouted back at him once more: "Cyclops, if anyone ever asks you how you came by your blindness, tell him your eye was put out by Odysseus, sacker of cities, the son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca."

'The Cyclops gave a groan. "Alas!" he cried. "Those ancient prophecies have come back to me now! We had a prophet living with us once, a great and mighty man, Eurymus' son Telemus, the best of soothsayers, who grew old as a seer among us
 510 Cyclopes. All that has now happened he foretold, when he warned me that a man called Odysseus would rob me of my sight. But I always expected some big handsome man of tremendous strength to come along. And now, a puny, feeble good-for-nothing fuddles me with wine and then puts out my eye! But come here, Odysseus, so that I can give you some friendly gifts and prevail on the great Earthshaker, Poseidon, to see you safely home. For I am his son, and he is proud to call himself my
 520 father. He is the one who will heal me if he's willing – a thing no other blessed god nor any man on earth could do."

'To which I shouted in reply: "I only wish I could make as sure of robbing you of life and breath and sending you to Hell, as I am certain that not even the Earthshaker will ever heal your eye."

'At this the Cyclops lifted up his hands to the starry heavens and prayed to the Lord Poseidon: "Hear me, Poseidon, Sustainer of the Earth, god of the sable locks. If I am yours indeed and

530 you claim me as your son, grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities
and son of Laertes, may never reach his home in Ithaca. But if
he is destined to see his friends again, to come once more to his
own house and reach his native land, let him come late, in
wretched plight, having lost all his comrades, in a foreign ship,
and let him find trouble in his home."

'So Polyphemus prayed; and the god of the sable locks heard
his prayer. Once again the Cyclops picked up a boulder – bigger,
by far, this time – and hurled it with a swing, putting such
tremendous force into his throw that the rock fell only just
540 astern of our blue-painted ship, narrowly missing the tip of the
rudder. The water heaved up as it plunged into the sea; but the
wave that it raised carried us on towards the further shore.

'And so we reached our island, where the rest of our good
ships were all waiting for us, their crews sitting round disconsolate
and keeping a constant watch for our return. Once there,
we beached our ship, jumped out on the shore, and unloaded
the Cyclops' flocks from the hold. We then divided our spoil so
that no one, as far as I could help it, should go short of his
proper share. But my comrades-in-arms did me the special
550 honour, when the sheep and goats were distributed, of presenting
me with the big ram in addition. Him I sacrificed on the beach,
burning slices from his thighs as an offering to Zeus of the
Black Clouds, the Son of Cronos, who is lord of us all. But
Zeus took no notice of my sacrifice; his mind must already have
been full of plans for the destruction of all my fine ships and of
my loyal band.

'So the whole day long till sundown we sat and feasted on
our rich supply of meat and mellow wine. When the sun set and
darkness fell, we lay down to sleep on the sea-shore. As soon as
560 Dawn appeared, fresh and rosy-fingered, I roused my men and
ordered them to go on board and cast off. They climbed on
board at once, took their places at the oars and all together
struck the white surf with the blades. Thus we left the island
and sailed on with heavy hearts, grieving for the dear friends we
had lost but glad at our own escape from death.'

10 CIRCE

'We next came to the floating island of Aëolia, the home of
Aeolus son of Hippotas, who is a favourite of the immortal
gods. All round this isle there runs an unbroken wall of bronze,
and below it the cliffs rise sheer from the sea. Aeolus shares his
house with his family of twelve, six daughters and six grown-up
sons; and he has given his daughters to his sons in marriage.
With their father and their estimable mother they are always
feasting. Countless delicacies are laid before them, and all day
long the house is filled with the savoury smell of roasting meat,
and the courtyard echoes to the sounds of banqueting within. 10
At night they sleep, each with his loving wife, on ornate beds,
with plenty of rugs.

'To this domain of theirs and this magnificent palace we now
came. For a whole month Aeolus entertained me and questioned
me on everything – Troy, the Achaean navy and our return –
and I told him everything, exactly as it was. When it came to
my turn and I asked him whether I might now continue my
journey and count on his help, he gave it willingly. He made
arrangements for my journey and presented me with a leather 20
bag, made from the flayed skin of a full-grown ox, in which he
had imprisoned the boisterous energies of all the winds. Zeus
had put him in charge of the winds, with power to lay or rouse
them each at will. This bag he stowed in the hold of my ship,
securing it tightly with a burnished silver wire to prevent the
slightest leakage. Then he called up a breeze from the West to
blow my ships and their crews across the sea. But his measures
were doomed to failure, for we came to grief, through our own
senseless stupidity.