***The Odyssey***

**Guided Reading**

**Book 9:**

*For seven of the ten years Odysseus has spent wandering the Mediterranean Sea, he has been held captive by the goddess Calypso on her island. In Book 5, Zeus sends the god Hermes to tell Calypso to release Odysseus; she helps him build a raft on which he can sail to his next destination. He must sail for 20 days before landing on the island of Scheria, where he will be helped in his effort to return home. In Books 6–8, Odysseus is welcomed by King Alcinous, who gives a banquet in his honor. That night the king begs Odysseus to tell who he is and what has happened to him. In Books 9–12, Odysseus relates to the king his adventures.*

I’m not sure where to start my story. They gods have been messin’ with me and there’s so much to tell. Let’s start with my name. I am (the great) Odysseus. If I survive and get home, we will remain friends.

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| **TEXT FROM EPIC** | **SUMMARY** | **IMPORTANCE/ ANALYSIS** |
| “What shall I say first? What shall I keep until the end? The gods have tried me in a thousand ways. But first my name: let that be known to you, and if I pull away from pitiless death, friendship will bind us, though my land lies far.  I am Laertes’ son, Odysseus.  Men hold me formidable for guile in peace and war: this fame has gone abroad to the sky’s rim. My home is on the peaked sea-mark of Ithaca under Mount Neion’s wind-blown robe of leaves. Ithaca,  being most lofty in that coastal sea, and northwest, while the rest lie east and south. A rocky isle, but good for a boy’s training; I shall not see on earth a place more dear, though I have been detained long by Calypso, loveliest among goddesses, who held me in her smooth caves, to be her heart’s delight…  But in my heart I never gave consent. Where shall a man find sweetness to surpass his own home and his parents? In far lands he shall not, though he find a house of gold.  What of my sailing, then, from Troy? What of those years of rough adventure, weathered under Zeus?”  The wind that carried west from Ilion[[1]](#footnote-1) brought me to Ismaros, on the far shore, a strongpoint on the coast of the Cicones. I stormed that place and killed the men who fought. Plunder we took, and we enslaved the women, to make division, equal shares to all—but on the spot I told them: ‘Back, and quickly! Out to sea again!’  My men were mutinous, fools, on the stores of wine. Sheep after sheep they butchered by the surf, and shambling cattle, feasting—while fugitives went inland, running to call to arms the main forces of Cicones. This was an army, trained to fight on horseback or, where the ground required, on foot. They came with dawn over that terrain like the leaves and blades of spring. |  |  |

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| **TEXT FROM EPIC** | **SUMMARY** | **IMPORTANCE/ ANALYSIS** |
| So doom appeared to us, dark word of Zeus for us, and our evil days. My men stood up and made a fight of it—backed on the ships, with lances kept in play, from bright morning through the blaze of noon holding our beach, although so far outnumbered; but when the sun passed toward unyoking time, then the Achaeans, one by one, gave way.  Six benches were left empty in every ship that evening when we pulled away from death. And this new grief we bore with us to sea: our precious lives we had, but not our friends. No ship made sail next day until some shipmate had raised a cry, three times, for each poor ghost unleashed by the Cicones on that field.  Now Zeus the lord of cloud roused in the north a storm against the ships, and driving veils of squall moved down like night on land and sea. The bows were plunging at the gust; sails cracked and lashed out strips in the big wind. We saw death in that fury, dropped the yards[[2]](#footnote-2), unshipped the oars, and pulled for the nearest lee[[3]](#footnote-3): then two long days and nights we lay offshore worn out and sick at heard, tasking our grief, until a third Dawn cam with ringlets shining. Then we put up our masts, hauled sail, and rested, letting the steersmen and the breeze take over.  I might have made it safely home, that time, but as I came round Malea the current took me out to sea, and from the north a fresh gale drove me on, past Cythera. Nine days I drifted on the teeming sea before dangerous high winds.  Upon the tenth we came to the coastline of the Lotus Eaters, who live upon that flower. We landed there to take on water. All ships’ companies mustered alongside for the mid-day meal. Then I sent out two picked men and a runner to learn what race of men that land sustained. They fell in, soon enough, with Lotus Eaters, who showed no will to do us harm, only offering the sweet Lotus to our friends— but those who ate this honeyed plant, the Lotus, never cared to report, nor to return: they longed to stay forever, browsing on that native bloom, forgetful of their homeland. I drove them, all three wailing, to the ships, tied them down under their rowing benches, and called the rest: ‘All hands aboard; come, clear the beach and no one taste the Lotus, or you lose your hope of home.’ Filing in to their places by the rowlocks my oarsmen dipped their long oars in the surf, and we moved out again on our sea faring. |  | **What do you think of the way Odysseus and his men behave toward the Cicones? Do armies behave like this in modern times?** |

1. **Ilion—**Troy [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **yards—**rods supporting the sails [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **lee—**place of shelter from the wind [↑](#footnote-ref-3)