

PART ONE: THE WANDERINGS OF ODYSSEUS

BOOK 1:

A Goddess Intervenes

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story
of that man skilled in all ways of contending,
the wanderer, **harried** for years on end,
after he plundered the stronghold
5 on the proud height of Troy.

He saw the townlands
and learned the minds of many distant men,
and weathered many bitter nights and days
in his deep heart at sea, while he fought only
to save his life, to bring his shipmates home.
10 But not by will nor valor could he save them,
for their own recklessness destroyed them all—
children and fools, they killed and feasted on
the cattle of Lord Helios, the Sun,
and he who moves all day through heaven
15 took from their eyes the dawn of their return. **A**

Of these adventures, Muse, daughter of Zeus,
tell us in our time, lift the great song again. . . .

The story of Odysseus begins with the goddess Athena's appealing to Zeus to help Odysseus, who has been wandering for ten years on the seas, to find his way home to his family on Ithaca. While Odysseus has been gone, his son, Telemachus, has grown to manhood and his wife, Penelope, has been besieged by suitors wishing to marry her and gain Odysseus' wealth. The suitors have taken up residence in her home and are constantly feasting on the family's cattle, sheep, and goats. They dishonor Odysseus and his family. Taking Athena's advice, Telemachus travels to Pylos for word of his father. Meanwhile, on Ithaca, the evil suitors plot to kill Telemachus when he returns.

1 Muse: a daughter of Zeus, credited with divine inspiration.

harried (hă'r'êd) *adj.* tormented;
harassed **harry** *v.*

11–13 their own recklessness . . . the Sun:
a reference to an event occurring later
in the poem—an event that causes the
death of Odysseus' entire crew.

A EPIC HERO
This invocation (lines 1–15)
introduces us to Odysseus,
“that man skilled in all ways of
contending.” What **traits** is he
shown to have?

ANALYZE VISUALS

This 1930s print, *The Ship of Odysseus*, is part of an *Odyssey* series by Francois-Louis Schmied. What qualities of this ship has Schmied emphasized with his use of color and shape? Explain.

The Ship of Odysseus, Francois-Louis Schmied. From *Homer the Odyssey*, published Paris (1930–1933). Color lithograph. The Stapleton Collection. © Bridgeman Art Library. © 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.