

The Odyssey

Book Twenty-Four Zeus and Athena End the Fighting

[Hermes conducts the shades of the dead suitors down to Hades, where they meet Achilles, Patroclus, Antilochus, and Agamemnon; Agamemnon and Achilles talk; Agamemnon gives details of Achilles' burial; Amphimedon complains to Agamemnon about his death at Odysseus' hands; Agamemnon pays tribute to Odysseus and Penelope; Odysseus goes out to find his father; Laertes and Odysseus talk in the vineyard, and Odysseus tests his father with a false story and then reveals his identity; the two men return to Laertes' house, where Eumaeus, Philoetius, and Telemachus have prepared dinner; Laertes' appearance is transformed; Dolius and his sons arrive; the men in Ithaca hear about the slaughter and collect their dead; Eupeithes urges action against Odysseus; Medon and Halitherses advise against such action; the majority decide to follow Eupeithes; Athena questions Zeus about his intentions regarding Odysseus; Zeus tells her to deal with the situation; Odysseus and his followers arm themselves and go out to meet the Ithacan army; Athena urges Laertes to throw a spear; Laertes kills Eupeithes; Athena stops the Ithacan army and sends it back to the city; a thunderbolt from Zeus stops Odysseus; Athena establishes a lasting oath between both sides.]

Meanwhile Hermes of Cyllene summoned up
the spirits of the suitors. In his hand he held
the beautiful gold wand he uses to enchant
the eyes of anyone he wishes or to wake
some other man from sleep. With it he roused and led
these spirits, who kept squeaking as they followed him.
Just as inside the corners of a monstrous cave
bats flit around and squeak when one of them falls down
[10] out of the cluster on the rock where they cling
to one another, that how these spirits squawked
as they moved on together. Hermes the Deliverer
conducted them along the murky passageway.¹
They went past the streams of Ocean, past Leucas,
past the gates of the Sun and the land of Dreams,
and very soon came to the field of asphodel,
where spirits live, the shades of those whose work is done.²
Here they found Achilles' shade, son of Peleus,
and of Patroclus, too, noble Antilochus,
and Ajax, who had the finest form and shape

[20] of all Danaans, after the son of Peleus,
who had no peer. These shades were gathered there,
in a group around Achilles. Then to them came
the spirit of Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
full of sorrow. Around him were assembled shades
of all those who'd been killed with him and met their fate
in Aegisthus' house. The son of Peleus' shade
was the first to speak to him:
"Son of Atreus,
we thought of you as one well loved by Zeus,
who hurls the thunderbolt, for all your days,
[30] more so than every other human warrior,
because on Trojan soil you were the king
of many powerful men, where we Achaeans
went through so much distress. And now it seems
destructive Fate was destined to reach you,
as well, and far too soon, the mortal doom
that no man born escapes. O how I wish
you'd met your fatal end in Trojan lands,
still in full possession of those honours
you were master of. Then all Achaeans
[40] would have made a tomb for you—for your son
you'd have won great fame in future days.
But as it is, your fate was to be caught
in a death more pitiful than any."

The shade of Atreus' son then answered him:
"Godlike Achilles, fortunate son of Peleus,
killed in the land of Troy, far from Argos.
Other men fell round you, the finest sons
of Trojans and Achaeans, in the fight
above your corpse. You lay in the swirling dust,
[50] a great man in your full magnificence,
with your skill in horsemanship forgotten.
As for us, we fought there all day long.
We never would have pulled back from the fight,
if Zeus had not brought on a storm to end it.

We took you from the battle to the ships,
laid you on a bier, and with warm water
and oil we cleaned your lovely skin. And then,
standing around you, the Danaans wept,
shedding plenty of hot tears, and cut their hair.

[60] When your mother heard the news, she came
with immortal sea nymphs up from the sea.³
An amazing cry arose above the water—
all Achaeans were then seized with trembling.
They would've all jumped up and run away
to the hollow ships, if one man, well versed
in ancient wisdom, had not held them back.
I mean Nestor, whose advice in earlier days
had seemed the best. Using his wise judgment,
he addressed them all and said:

'Hold on, Argives.

[70] You young Achaean men, don't rush away.
This is his mother coming from the sea
with her immortal sea nymphs to look on
the face of her dead son.'

"That's what Nestor said,
and the brave Achaeans stopped their running.
Then the daughters of the Old Man of the Sea
stood round you in a piteous lament,
as they put immortal clothing on you.⁴
And Muses, nine in all, sang out a dirge,
their lovely voices answering each other.

[80] You'd not have seen a single Argive there
without tears, their hearts so deeply moved
by the Muses' clear-toned song. We mourned you
for seventeen days and nights together,
both mortal humans and immortal gods.
On the eighteenth we gave you to the fire.
Around you we killed many well-fed sheep
and bent-horned cattle. You were cremated

in clothing of the gods, with sweet honey
and much oil. Many Achaean warriors
[90] moved around the funeral pyre in armour,
as you were burning, both foot soldiers
and charioteers, making an enormous noise.
And then, Achilles, once Hephaestus' flame
was finished with you, we set your white bones
in unmixed wine and oil. Your mother gave
a two-handled jar of gold. She said it was
a gift from Dionysus, something made
by illustrious Hephaestus. In this jar,
glorious Achilles, lie your white bones,
[100] mixed in with those of dead Patroclus,
son of Menoetius.⁵ Separate from these
are Antilochus' bones, whom you honoured
above all the rest of your companions
after Patroclus.⁶ Then, over these bones
we raised a huge impressive burial mound,
we—the sacred army of Argive spearmen—
on a promontory projecting out
into the wide Hellespont, so that men,
those now alive and those in future days,
[110] can view it from a long way out at sea.
Your mother asked the gods for lovely prizes
and set them out among the best Achaeans
for a competition. In earlier days
you've been present at the funeral games
of many warriors, when, once a king dies,
the young men, after tying up their clothes,
prepare to win the contests. But if you'd seen
that spectacle you'd have truly marveled—
the goddess, silver-footed Thetis, set
[120] such beautiful prizes in your honour.
The gods had that much special love for you.
So even in death, your name did not die.
No. Your glorious fame, Achilles, will endure
among all men forever. As for me,

I finished off the war, but what pleasure
does that give me now? When I got back home,
Zeus organized a dreadful fate for me,
at Aegisthus' hands and my accursed wife's."7

As they talked this way to one another, Hermes,
[130] killer of Argus, came up close to them, leading down
the shades of suitors whom Odysseus had killed.
When they observed this, the two, in their amazement,
went straight up to them. The shade of Agamemnon,
son of Atreus, recognized the well-loved son
of Melaneus, splendid Amphimedon,
a guest friend of his from Ithaca, his home.
The shade of Atreus' son spoke to him first, saying:
"Amphimedon, what have you suffered,
all of you picked men of the same age,
[140] to come down here beneath the gloomy earth?
If one were to choose the city's finest men,
one would not select any men but these.
Did Poseidon overwhelm you in your ships
by rousing violent winds and giant waves?
Or did hostile forces on the mainland
kill you off, while you were taking cattle
or rich flocks of sheep, or were they fighting
to protect their city and their women?
Answer what I'm asking. For I can claim
[150] I am your guest friend. Don't you remember
the time I made a visit to your home
with godlike Menelaus—to urge Odysseus
to come with us in our well-benched ships
to Ilion? It took us an entire month
to cross all that wide sea, and it was hard
to win Odysseus, sacker of cities,
over to our side."

Amphimedon's shade
then answered him and said:

“Noble son of Atreus,
Agamemnon, Zeus-fostered king of men,
[160] I do remember all these things you say,
and I’ll describe for you every detail,
the truth of how we died, a wicked fate,
and how it came about. For many years,
Odysseus was away from home, so we
began to court his wife. She did not refuse
a marriage she detested, nor did she
go through with it. Instead, she organized
a gloomy destiny for us, our death.
In her heart she thought up another trick.
[170] She had a huge loom set up in her rooms
and on it wove a delicate wide fabric.
And right away she said this to us:

‘Young men,
my suitors, since lord Odysseus is dead,
you’re keen for me to marry—you must wait
until I’m finished with this robe, so I
don’t waste this woven yarn in useless work.
It’s a burial shroud for lord Laertes,
for when the lethal fate of his sad death
will seize him, so no Achaean woman
[180] in the district will get angry with me
that a man who’d won much property
should have to lie without a death shroud.’

That’s what she said, and our proud hearts agreed.
So day by day she’d weave at that great loom.
At night she’d have torches placed beside her
and keep unraveling it. She tricked Achaeans
for three years with this scheme—they believed her.
But as the seasons changed and months rolled on,
and many days passed by, the fourth year came.
[190] Then one of her women, who knew the plan,
spoke out, and we came in and caught her

undoing the lovely yarn. So after that
we made her finish it against her will.
Once she'd woven it and washed the fabric,
she displayed the robe—it shone like the sun
or like the moon. Then some malignant god
brought Odysseus back from some foreign place
to the borders of the field where the swineherd
has his house. And there, too, came the dear son
[200] of godlike Odysseus, once he'd returned
in his black ship, back from sandy Pylos.⁸
The two hatched a plan against the suitors,
to bring them to a nasty death, then left
for the well-known city. Telemachus
made the journey first, whereas Odysseus
got there later. The swineherd led his master,
who wore shabby clothing on his body—
he looked like an ancient worn-out beggar
leaning on a stick, rags covering his skin.
[210] So none of us could recognize the man
when he suddenly showed up, not even
older men. We pelted him with insults,
hurled things at him, but for a little while
his firm heart kept enduring what we threw
and how we taunted him in his own home.
But when aegis-bearing Zeus aroused him,
with Telemachus' help he took away
the fine weapons, put them in a storeroom,
and locked the bolt. Then, with his great cunning,
[220] he told his wife to place before the suitors
his bow and gray iron axes, a contest
for those of us who bore an evil fate,
the prelude to our death. None of us
could stretch the string on that powerful bow.
We weren't nearly strong enough. But then,
when the great bow was in Odysseus' hands,
we all called out to say we should not give
that bow to him, no matter what he said.

Telemachus alone kept urging him—
[230] he told him to do it. Once lord Odysseus,
who had endured so much, picked up the bow,
he strung it with ease and shot an arrow
through the iron axes. Then he went and stood
inside the doorway with a fearful glare
and kept shooting volleys of swift arrows.
He hit lord Antinous and went on shooting,
aiming at other men across the room,
letting lethal arrows fly. Men collapsed,
falling thick and fast. Then we realized
[240] some god was helping them, when all at once
they charged out in a frenzy through the house,
butchering men everywhere. The screams
were hideous, as heads were smashed apart.
The whole floor swam with blood. That's how we died,
Agamemnon, and even now our bodies
are lying uncared for in Odysseus' house.
Each man's friends at home don't know what's happened,
the ones who'd wash the black blood from our wounds,
then lay our bodies out and weep for us,
[250] the necessary rites for those who've died."

The shade of Atreus' son then answered Amphimedon:
"O son of Laertes, happy Odysseus,
a resourceful man, who won himself
a wife whose excellence was truly great.
How fine the heart in faultless Penelope,
daughter of Icarius! She remembered well
the husband she was married to, Odysseus.
The story of her excellence will not die—
immortal gods will make a pleasing song
[260] for men on earth about faithful Penelope.
Tyndareus' daughter acted differently,
when she planned to carry out her evil acts
and killed her wedded husband—among men
there'll be a hateful song for her.⁹ She gives

all women an evil reputation,
even one whose actions are done well.”

So these two talked to one another, as they stood
in the house of Hades, deep beneath the earth.

Once Odysseus and his men had left the city,
[270] they soon reached Laertes’ fine, well-managed farm,
which Laertes had once won by his own efforts,
working really hard. His house was there, with sheds
surrounding it on every side, where his servants,
bonded slaves who worked to carry out his wishes,
ate and sat and slept. An old Sicilian woman
lived inside his house, looking after the old man,
caring for him at the farm, far from the city.

Odysseus then spoke to his servants and his son:

“You should go inside the well-built home.

[280] Hurry up and kill the finest pig there is,
so we can eat. I’ll sound out my father,
to find out if he can recognize me,
see who I am, once he’s laid eyes on me,
or if he doesn’t know me any more,
since I’ve been away so long.”

Odysseus spoke,

then gave his battle weapons to his servants.

They quickly went inside the house. Then Odysseus,
walking out to test his father, came up beside
the fruitful vineyard and from there continued down

[290] to the extensive orchard, where he failed to find
Dolius or any sons of his father’s slaves.

They’d gone off to gather large rocks for the wall
around the vineyard, with the old man in the lead.

In the well-established vineyard he found his father.

He was digging round a plant, all by himself,
dressed in a filthy, shabby, patched-up tunic.

Around his legs he’d tied shin pads stitched from ox-hide
to protect himself from scratches, and on his hands

- he had on gloves, since there were thistles in that spot.
- [300] On his head he wore a goatskin hat. In these clothes
he was dealing with his grief. When lord Odysseus,
who had endured so much, saw him worn down with age
and carrying so much heavy sorrow in his heart,
he stood under a tall pear tree and shed a tear,
debating in his mind and heart whether he should
embrace and kiss his father or describe for him
in detail how he got back to his native land
or start by questioning him, to test him out
on every point. As he thought about his options,
- [310] the best decision seemed to be to test him first,
using words which might provoke him. With this in mind,
lord Odysseus went straight up to his father,
who was digging round a plant with his head down.
His splendid son stood there beside him and spoke out:
“Old man, from the way you tend this orchard
you’ve no lack of skill. No. Your care is good.
There’s nothing here—no plant, fig tree, vine,
olive, pear, or garden plot in all the field—
that needs some care. I’ll tell you something else—
- [320] don’t let this make you angry in your heart—
you yourself are not being well looked after.
Along with your old age, you’re filthy dirty,
and badly dressed in those disgusting clothes.
Surely it can’t be because you’re lazy
your lord refuses to look after you.
In appearance you don’t seem to be a slave,
not when one sees your stature and your shape.
You’re like a king, the kind of man who bathes
and eats and goes to sleep in a soft bed,
- [330] as old men should. So come now, tell me this,
and speak out candidly—Whose slave are you?
Whose orchard are you tending? And tell me
the truth about this, too, so I understand—
Is this place we’ve reached really Ithaca,
as some man I just met on my way here

told me. His mind was not too clever—
he didn't try to tell me any details
or listen to my words when I asked him
about a friend of mine, if he's still alive
[340] or is in Hades' home, already dead.
I'll explain it to you. Listen to me,
and pay attention. In my dear native land,
I once entertained a man, someone who'd come
to my own home. No other human being
from far away has visited my house
as a more welcome guest. He said he came
from Ithaca. He told me his father
was Laertes, son of Arcesius.
I took him to the house, entertained him
[350] with generous hospitality, and gave him
a kind reception with the many things
I had inside my home, providing him
appropriate friendship gifts. I gave him
seven talents of finely crafted gold,
a silver mixing bowl etched with flowers,
twelve cloaks with single folds, twelve coverlets,
as many splendid cloaks, and, besides these,
as many tunics and, what's more, four women
skilled in fine handicrafts and beautiful,
[360] the very ones he wished to choose himself."

Then his father shed a tear and answered him:
"Stranger, yes indeed, you've reached the country
which you asked about. But it's been taken over
by arrogant and reckless men. Those presents,
the countless gifts you freely gave, are useless.
If you'd come across him still living here,
in Ithaca, he'd have sent you on your way
after paying you back with splendid presents
and fine hospitality—that's the right
[370] of him who offers kindness first. But come,
tell me this, and make sure you speak the truth.

How many years ago did you welcome him,
that unlucky guest, my son, if, indeed,
such an ill-fated man ever was alive?
Somewhere far from native land and friends
the fish have eaten him down in the sea,
or on land he's been the prey of savage beasts
and birds. Neither his father nor his mother,
we who gave him birth, could lay him out
[380] for burial or lament for him. Nor did
the wife he courted with so many gifts,
faithful Penelope, bewail her husband
on his bier, closing up his eyes in death,
as is appropriate, though that's a rite
we owe the dead. And tell me this, as well—
speaking the truth so I can understand—
Among men who are you? Where are you from?
What is your city? Who are your parents?
Where did you and your god-like companions
[390] anchor the swift ship that brought you here?
Or did you come on other people's ship
as passenger, men who let you disembark
and then set off again?"

Resourceful Odysseus
then answered him:
"All right, I'll tell you everything
quite truthfully. I come from Alybas,
where I have a lovely home. I'm the son
of Apheidas, lord Polypemon's son.
My name's Eperitus. But then some god
made me go off course from Sicania,
[400] so I've come here against my will. My ship
is anchored over there, close to the fields
far from the city. As for Odysseus,
this is the fifth year since he went away
and left my country. That unlucky man!
There were auspicious omens from some birds

flying on the right, when he departed.
So when I sent him off, I was happy,
and so was he. The hearts in both of us
hoped we'd meet again as host and guest,
[410] and give each other splendid presents."

As Odysseus said these words, a black cloud of grief
swallowed up Laertes. With both hands he scooped up
some grimy dust and dumped it over his gray hair,
moaning all the time. He stirred Odysseus' heart.
Already, as he looked at his dear father, sharp pains
were shooting up his nostrils. He jumped over,
embraced Laertes, kissed him, and then said:
"Father,
I'm here—the very man you asked about.
I've returned here in the twentieth year,
[420] back to my native land. Stop your grieving,
these tearful moans. I'll tell you everything,
though it's essential we move really fast.
I've killed the suitors in our home, avenged
their heart-rending insolence, their evil acts."

Laertes then answered him and said:
"If that's true,
if you are indeed my son Odysseus
and have come back, show me some evidence,
something clear so I can be quite certain."

Resourceful Odysseus replied to him and said:
[430] "First, let your eyes inspect this scar—a boar
inflicted that on me with its white tusk,
when I went to Parnassus, sent there
by you and by my honourable mother,
to her cherished father, Autolycus,
so I could get the gifts he'd promised me,
what he'd agreed to give when he was here.
Come, I'll tell you the trees you gave me once

in the well-established vineyard—back then
I was a child following you in the yard,
[440] and I asked about each one. It was here—
we walked by these very trees. You named them
and described them to me. You offered me
thirteen pear trees and ten apple trees
along with forty fig trees. In the same way,
you said you'd give me fifty rows of vines,
bearing all sorts of different types of grapes,
when Zeus' seasons load their tops with fruit."

As Odysseus spoke, his father's fond heart and knees
gave way—he clearly recognized the evidence
[450] Odysseus had presented. He threw both his arms
around the son he loved and struggled hard to breathe.
Lord Odysseus, who had endured so much, held him.
After he'd revived and his spirit came once more
into his chest, Laertes spoke again and said:
"Father Zeus, it seems you gods are still
on high Olympus, if it's true those suitors
have paid the price of their proud arrogance.
But now my heart contains a dreadful fear—
all the men of Ithaca will soon come here
[460] against us, and they'll send out messengers
all through Cephallenia, to every city."

Resourceful Odysseus then answered him and said:
"Take courage, and don't allow these things
to weigh down your heart. Let's go to the house,
the one close to the orchard, where I sent
Telemachus, together with the swineherd
and the keeper of the goats, so they could
prepare a meal as soon as possible."

After they'd talked like this, they went to the fine house.
[470] Once they reached Laertes' well-furnished home, they found
Telemachus with the swineherd and goat keeper

carving lots of meat and mixing gleaming wine.
Inside the home the Sicilian servant woman
gave great-hearted Laertes a bath, then rubbed him
with oil and threw a lovely cloak around him.
Athena then approached and fleshed out the limbs
on that shepherd of his people. She made him
taller than before and sturdier to the eye.
When he left the bath, his dear son was astonished—
[480] as he looked at him he seemed like the immortals.
Odysseus spoke to him—his words had wings:
“Father, surely one of the eternal gods
has made you handsomer to look at—
both your form and stature.”

Wise Laertes
then answered him and said:
“By Father Zeus,
Athena, and Apollo, I wish I were
just like I was when I took Nericus
on the mainland coast, that well-built fortress,
when I was king of Cephallenians.
[490] With strength like that, I could’ve stood with you
yesterday, my armour on my shoulders,
and driven off the suitors in our home.
I’d have made many of their knees go slack
inside the hall—I’d have pleased your heart.”

In this way, the two men conversed with one another.
Meanwhile, the other men had finished working
Dinner was prepared. So they sat down one by one
on stools and chairs. As they were reaching for the food,
old Dolius appeared. With him came his sons,
[500] tired out from work. The ancient Sicilian woman,
their mother, had gone outside and summoned them.
She fed them and took good care of the old man,
now that his age had laid its grip on him. These men,
once they saw Odysseus and their hearts took note of him,

stood in the house astonished. Then Odysseus
talked to them with reassuring words and said:
“Old man, sit down and have some dinner.
Forget being so amazed. For some time now
we’ve been keen to turn our hands to dinner,
[510] but we kept expecting you’d be coming,
so we’ve been waiting in the house.”

Odysseus spoke.
Dolius went straight up to him, both arms outstretched,
grabbed Odysseus’ hand and kissed it on the wrist.
Then he spoke to him—his words had wings:
“My friend,
you’re back with us, who longed for your return
but never thought to see it! The gods themselves
must have been leading you. Joyful greetings!
May gods grant you success! Be frank with me
and tell me so I fully understand—
[520] Does wise Penelope now know for certain
you’ve come back here, or should we send her
a messenger?”

Resourceful Odysseus answered him
and said:
“Old man, she already knows.
Why should you be so concerned about it?”

Odysseus spoke, and Dolius sat down again
on his polished stool. Then Dolius’ sons
also came up around glorious Odysseus,
clasping his hands with words of welcome. Then they sat
in a row alongside Dolius, their father.
[530] So these men occupied themselves with dinner
inside the house.
Meanwhile, Rumour the Messenger
sped swiftly through the entire city, speaking
of the suitors’ dreadful death, their destiny.

People heard about it all at once and came in
from all directions, gathering with mournful groans
before Odysseus' home. Each one brought his dead
outside the house and buried them. All the men
from other cities they sent home, placing them
aboard swift ships to be escorted back by sailors.

[540] Then, with sorrowful hearts, they went in person
to meet in an assembly. Once they'd got there
together in a group, Eupeithes rose to speak.
Constant grief lay on his heart for his own son,
Antinous, the first man killed by lord Odysseus.
Weeping for him, he spoke to the assembly:
"My friends, this man has planned and carried out
dreadful acts against Achaeans. He led
many fine courageous men off in his fleet,
then lost his hollow ships, with all men dead.

[550] Now he's come and killed our finest men by far
among the Cephallenians. So come on,
before he can quickly get to Pylos
or to holy Elis, where Epeians rule,
let's get started. If not, in future days
we'll be eternally disgraced, since men
yet to be born will learn about our shame,
if we don't act to take out our revenge
on those murderers of our sons and brothers.
As far as I'm concerned, the life we'd live

[560] would not be sweet. I rather die right now
and live among the dead. So let us go,
in case those men have a head start on us
and get across the sea."

As Eupeithes said this,
he wept, and all Achaeans were seized by pity.
Then Medon and the godlike singer, released
from sleep, approached them from Odysseus' house,
and stood up in their midst. They were astonished.
Then Medon, a shrewd man, spoke out.

“Men of Ithaca,
now hear me. Odysseus didn’t plan these acts
[570] without the gods’ consent. I myself observed
an immortal god who stood beside him,
looking in every detail just like Mentor.
The deathless god appeared before Odysseus
at that time to spur him on to action,
and, at another time, charged through the hall,
terrifying the suitors. They collapsed in droves.”

As Medon spoke, pale fear gripped them all. And then,
old warrior Halitherses, son of Mastor, addressed them.
He was the only man who could see past and future.
[580] Bearing in the mind their common good, he spoke out,
saying these words:

“Men of Ithaca,
listen to me now, hear what I have to say.
What’s happened now, my friends, has come about
because of your own stupidity.
You just would not follow my instructions
or Mentor’s, that shepherd of his people,
and make your sons stop their reckless conduct,
their monstrous acts of wanton foolishness,
squandering a fine man’s property and then
[590] dishonouring his wife, claiming the man
never would come back. So now, let that be,
and agree with what I’m going to tell you—
we should not move out, in case some men here
run into trouble they’ve brought on themselves.”

He ended. Some men stayed together in their seats,
but others, more than half, jumped up with noisy shouts.
Their hearts had not responded to what he’d just said.
They’d been won over by Euphithes. And so,
they quickly rushed away to get their weapons.
[600] Once they’d put gleaming bronze around their bodies,
they gathered in a group on the spacious grounds

before the city. Eupeithes was the leader
in this foolishness. He thought he could avenge
the killing of his son, but he would not return—
that's where he was going to meet his fate.
Then Athena spoke to Zeus, Cronos' son, saying:
“Father of us all and son of Cronos,
highest of all those who rule, answer me
when I ask this—What are you concealing
[610] in that mind of yours? Will you be creating
further brutal war and dreadful battle,
or bring both sides together here as friends?”

Cloud-gatherer Zeus then answered her and said:
“My child, why are you asking this of me?
Why these questions? Were you not the one
who devised this plan all on your own,
so Odysseus could take out his revenge
against these men, after he got back?
Do as you wish. But I'll lay out for you
[620] what I think is right. Since lord Odysseus
has paid back the suitors, let them swear
a binding oath that he'll remain their king
all his life, and let's make them forget
the killing of their sons and brothers.
Let them love each other as they used to,
and let there be wealth and peace in plenty.”

His words stirred up Athena, who was already keen.
She swooped down from the heights of Mount Olympus.
Meanwhile, once his group had eaten their hearts' fill
[630] of food as sweet as honey, lord Odysseus,
who had endured so much, was the first to speak:
“Someone should go outside to look around,
see whether they are getting close to us.”

Once he said this, a son of Dolius went out,
as he had ordered. He stood in the doorway

and saw all those men approaching. At once
he called out to Odysseus—his words had wings:
“They’re here, close by. Let’s get our weapons—
we’d better hurry!”

At these words, they leapt up
[640] and put on their armour. Odysseus and his men
were four, the sons of Dolius six, and with them
Dolius and Laertes, though they had gray hair,
were dressed in armour, too, forced to be warriors.
When they’d put glittering bronze around their bodies,
they opened up the doors and went outside. Odysseus
led them out. But then Athena, Zeus’ daughter,
with the shape and voice of Mentor, came up to them.
When lord Odysseus, who’d endured so much, saw her,
he was glad and quickly spoke up to Telemachus,
his dear son:

[650] “Telemachus, now you’ve reached
the field of battle, where the finest men
are put to the test. Soon enough you’ll learn
not to disgrace your ancestral family—
for in earlier times we’ve been preeminent
for strength and courage everywhere on earth.”

Shrewd Telemachus then answered him and said:
“Dear father, if that’s what you want, you’ll see
that I, with my heart as it is at present,
won’t shame your family. I’ll do what you say.”

[660] When he said this, Laertes felt great joy and said:
“You dear gods, what a day this is for me!
I’m really happy when my son and grandson
compete for excellence with one another.”

Then Athena with the glittering eyes came up,
stood by Laertes, and said to him:
“Child of Arcesius,

by far the dearest of all those I cherish,
pray to the young girl with the flashing eyes
and to Father Zeus, then without delay
raise that long spear of yours and throw it.”

- [670] Pallas Athena spoke and then breathed into him
enormous power. Laertes said a prayer
to great Zeus’ daughter, and quickly lifting up
his long-shadowed spear, he threw it. It hit home,
through the bronze cheek piece on Eupeithes’ helmet,
which didn’t stop the spear—the bronze point went on through.
Eupeithes fell down with a thud, his armour
crashing round him. Odysseus and his splendid son
charged at the fighters in the front, striking them
[680] with swords and two-edged spears. They’d have killed them all,
cut them down so none of them returned, had not
Athena, daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, cried out—
her voice held back every man in that whole army.
“Men of Ithaca, stop this disastrous war,
so you can quickly go your separate ways
without spilling any blood.”

Athena spoke,
and pale fear gripped the men. They were so terrified
they dropped their weapons and all fell on the ground,
at that goddess’ resounding voice. They turned round,
back towards the city, eager to save their lives.

- [690] Then much-enduring lord Odysseus gave out
a fearful shout, gathered himself, and swooped down
like an eagle from on high. But at that moment,
Zeus, son of Cronos, shot a fiery thunderbolt.
It struck at the feet of the bright-eyed daughter
of that mighty father. And then Athena,
goddess with the glittering eyes, said to Odysseus:
“Resourceful Odysseus, Laertes’ son,
and child of Zeus, hold back. Stop this fight,
this impartial war, in case thundering Zeus,

[700] who sees far and wide, grows angry with you.”

Once Athena spoke, Odysseus obeyed,
joy in his heart. And then Pallas Athena,
daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, in shape and form
looking just like Mentor, had both parties swear
a solemn pact designed to last forever.