

350 then he set up a howl for Cyclopes  
who lived in caves on windy peaks nearby.  
Some heard him; and they came by divers<sup>35</sup> ways  
to clump around outside and call:

‘What ails you,  
Polyphemus?<sup>36</sup> Why do you cry so sore  
in the starry night? You will not let us sleep.  
355 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<sup>37</sup> reply:

360 ‘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.’

25 | So saying  
365 they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter  
to see how like a charm the name deceived them.  
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—  
370 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,  
375 until a trick came—and it pleased me well.  
The Cyclops’ rams were handsome, fat, with heavy  
fleeces, a dark violet.

Three abreast

380 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.

35. **divers** (dī vērz) *adj.*  
several; various.

36. **Polyphemus** (pāl’ i fē’  
məs)

37. **sage** (sāj) *adj.* wise.

### Literary Analysis

**Epic Hero** What does  
Odysseus’ gleeful  
response to his success-  
ful trick reveal about his  
character?



What do the other  
Cyclopes think Polyph-  
emus is saying when he  
says, “Nohbdy’s tricked  
me”?



385 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.

390 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<sup>38</sup> fleece  
395 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:

400 '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.  
405 Why, now, so far behind? Can you be grieving  
over your Master's eye? That carrion rogue<sup>39</sup>  
and his accurst companions burnt it out  
when he had conquered all my wits with wine.  
Nohbdy will not get out alive, I swear.  
410 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.'

415 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,  
420 and drove them down to where the good ship lay.

38. **pectoral** (pek' tə rəl) *adj.*  
located in or on the chest.

39. **carrion** (kar' ē ən) **rogue**  
(rōg) repulsive scoundrel.

### Literary Analysis

**Epic Hero** What details of this speech show that Polyphemus is far less clever than Odysseus?

29 ◀ **Critical Viewing**  
How does this image compare with your mental picture of the Cyclops? **[Analyze]**

30  **Reading Check**

How do the men escape from the Cyclops' cave?

**31** ► **Critical Viewing**

Odysseus and his surviving men escape in their ship as the blinded Cyclops hurls boulders and curses. How does this illustration compare to your mental image of the scene? **[Analyze]**

**Literary Analysis**

**Epic Hero** Despite his heroism, what human weaknesses does Odysseus reveal as he sails away?

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,  
425 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 off shore as shouted words would carry,  
430 I sent a few back to the adversary:

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

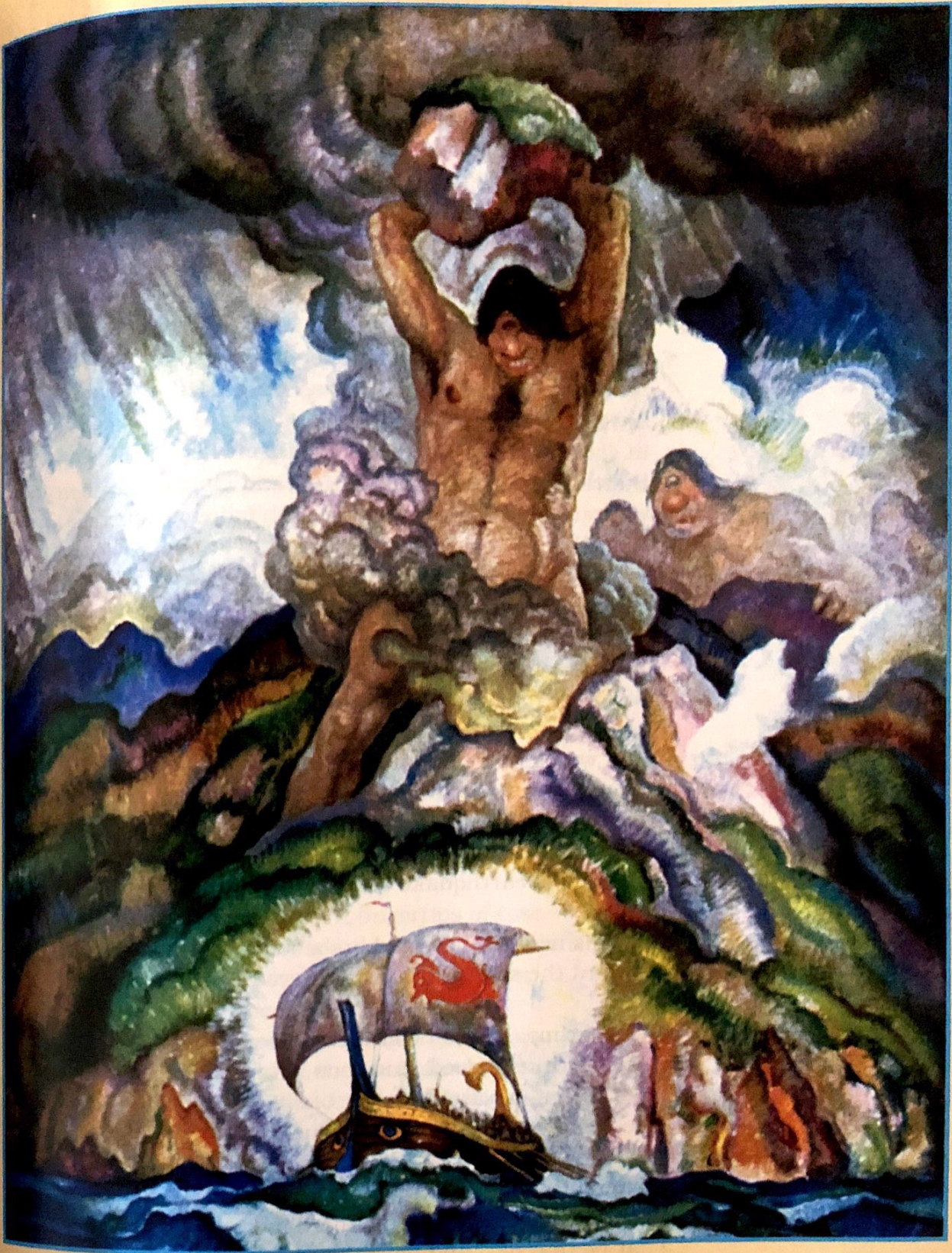
The blind thing in his doubled fury broke  
a hilltop in his hands and heaved it after us.  
Ahead of our black prow it struck and sank  
whelmed in a spuming geyser, a giant wave  
440 that washed the ship stern foremost back to shore.  
I got the longest boathook out and stood  
fending us off, with furious nods to all  
to put their backs into a racing stroke—  
row, row, or perish. So the long oars bent  
445 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:

**32**

'Godsake, Captain!  
Why bait the beast again? Let him alone!'  
450 '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 a boulder.'

'Aye  
He'll smash our timbers and our heads together!'  
455 I would not heed them in my glorying spirit,



Polyphemus, The Cyclops N. C. Wyeth, Brandywine River Museum

from the Odyssey, Part 1 1061

Differentiated  
Instru

40. weird (wird) *n.* fate or destiny.  
 41. Telemus (tel e' mäs)  
 42. Eurymus (yoo rim' əs)

43. god of earthquake  
 Poseidon.

**Reading Skill**  
**Historical and Cultural Context** What do lines 472–493 suggest about ancient Greek beliefs about the gods' involvement in the mortal world?

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!'

460

At this he gave a mighty sob and rumbled:  
 'Now comes the weird<sup>40</sup> upon me, spoken of old.  
 A wizard, grand and wondrous, lived here—Telemus,<sup>41</sup>  
 a son of Eurymus;<sup>42</sup> 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.

465

But this, but you—small, pitiful and twiggy—  
 you put me down with wine, you blinded me.  
 Come back, Odysseus, and I'll treat you well,  
 praying the god of earthquake<sup>43</sup> 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.'

470

475

34

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!'

480

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

485

490

'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 father land,  
 far be that day, and dark the years between.

34 Let him lose all companions, and return  
under strange sail to bitter days at home.  
In these words he prayed, and the god heard him.  
495 Now he laid hands upon a bigger stone  
and wheeled around, titanic for the cast,  
to let it fly in the black-prowed vessel's track.  
But it fell short, just aft the steering oar,  
and whelming seas rose giant above the stone  
500 to bear us onward toward the island.

There  
as we ran in we saw the squadron waiting,  
the trim ships drawn up side by side, and all  
our troubled friends who waited, looking seaward.  
We beached her, grinding keel in the soft sand,  
505 and waded in, ourselves, on the sandy beach.  
Then we unloaded all the Cyclops' flock  
to make division, share and share alike,  
35 only my fighters voted that my ram,  
the prize of all, should go to me. I slew him  
510 by the seaside and burnt his long thighbones  
to Zeus beyond the stormcloud, Cronus<sup>44</sup> son,  
who rules the world. But Zeus disdained my offering:  
destruction for my ships he had in store  
and death for those who sailed them, my companions.  
515 Now all day long until the sun went down  
we made our feast on mutton and sweet wine,  
till after sunset in the gathering dark  
we went to sleep above the wash of ripples.

When the young Dawn with fingertips of rose  
520 touched the world, I roused the men, gave orders  
to man the ships, cast off the mooring lines;  
and filling in to sit beside the rowlocks  
oarsmen in line dipped oars in the gray sea.  
So we moved out, sad in the vast offing,<sup>45</sup>  
525 having our precious lives, but not our friends.

### Literary Analysis

**Epic Hero** What admirable quality does Odysseus show by dividing the sheep among his men?

**44. Cronus** (krō' nēs)

Titan who was ruler of the universe until he was overthrown by his son Zeus.

**45. offing** (ōf' in) *n.* distant part of the sea visible from the shore.

**36**  Reading Check

What does the Cyclops ask for in his prayer to Poseidon?