

The Suitors

Still disguised as a beggar, Odysseus enters his home. He is confronted by the haughty⁷ suitor Antinous.⁸

But here Antinous broke in, shouting:

“God!

1210 What evil wind blew in this pest?

Get over,

stand in the passage! Nudge my table, will you?

Egyptian whips are sweet


to what you'll come to here, you nosing rat,

making your pitch to everyone!

1215 These men have bread to throw away on you
because it is not theirs. Who cares? Who spares
another's food, when he has more than plenty?”

7. **haughty** (hôt' ē) *adj.*
arrogant.

8. **Antinous** (an tin' ō es)

14  Reading
Check

How does Antinous react to Odysseus, who is disguised as a beggar?

With guile Odysseus drew away, then said:

1220 "A pity that you have more looks than heart.
You'd grudge a pinch of salt from your own larder
to your own handyman. You sit here, fat
on others' meat, and cannot bring yourself
to rummage out a crust of bread for me!"

1225 Then anger made Antinous' heart beat hard,
and, glowering under his brows, he answered:

"Now!

You think you'll shuffle off and get away
after that impudence?⁹ Oh, no you don't!"

1230 The stool he let fly hit the man's right shoulder
on the packed muscle under the shoulder blade—
like solid rock, for all the effect one saw.

15

Odysseus only shook his head, containing
thoughts of bloody work, as he walked on,
then sat, and dropped his loaded bag again
upon the door sill. Facing the whole crowd
1235 he said, and eyed them all:

"One word only,

my lords, and suitors of the famous queen.

One thing I have to say.

1240 There is no pain, no burden for the heart
when blows come to a man, and he defending
his own cattle—his own cows and lambs.

Here it was otherwise. Antinous
hit me for being driven on by hunger—

how many bitter seas men cross for hunger!

If beggars interest the gods, if there are Furies¹⁰

16

1240

1245 pent in the dark to avenge a poor man's wrong, then may
Antinous meet his death before his wedding day!"

Then said Eupheithes' son, Antinous:

"Enough.

1250 Eat and be quiet where you are, or shamle elsewhere,
unless you want these lads to stop your mouth
pulling you by the heels, or hands and feet,
over the whole floor, till your back is peeled!"

Reading Skill

Historical and Cultural Context

What conflicting values does this exchange between Antinous and Odysseus reveal?

9. **Impudence** (im' pyoo dens) *n.* quality of being shamelessly bold; disrespectful.

Reading Skill

Historical and Cultural Context

What values regarding the use of physical force are evident in this speech?

10. **Furies** (fyoor' eez) *n.* three terrible female spirits who punish the doers of unavenged crimes.

But now the rest were mortified, and someone spoke from the crowd of young bucks to rebuke him:

1255
⑦ "A poor show, that—hitting this famished tramp—bad business, if he happened to be a god. You know they go in foreign guise, the gods do, looking like strangers, turning up in towns and settlements to keep an eye on manners, good or bad."

1260 Antinous only shrugged.

But at this notion

after the blow his father bore, sat still
Telemachus,
without a tear, though his heart felt the blow.
Slowly he shook his head from side to side,
containing murderous thoughts.

Penelope

1265 on the higher level of her room had heard
the blow, and knew who gave it. Now she murmured:

"Would god you could be hit yourself, Antinous—
hit by Apollo's bowshot!"

Reading Skill
Historical and Cultural Context What ancient Greek belief is conveyed in this suitor's speech?

18 **Reading Check**
How does Penelope regard Antinous?



from the *Odyssey*, Part 2 1099

And Eurynome¹¹

her housekeeper, put in:

“He and no other?

1270 If all we pray for came to pass, not one
would live till dawn!”

Her gentle mistress said:

“Oh, Nan, they are a bad lot; they intend
ruin for all of us; but Antinous
appears a blacker-hearted hound than any.

1275 Here is a poor man come, a wanderer,
driven by want to beg his bread, and everyone
in hall gave bits, to cram his bag—only
Antinous threw a stool, and banged his shoulder!”

1280 So she described it, sitting in her chamber
among her maids—while her true lord was eating.
Then she called in the forester and said:

1285 “Go to that man on my behalf, Eumaeus,
and send him here, so I can greet and question him.
Abroad in the great world, he may have heard
rumors about Odysseus—may have known him!”