

'Great captain,

620 a fair wind and the honey lights of home
are all you seek. But anguish lies ahead;
the god who thunders on the land prepares it,
not to be shaken from your track, implacable,^o
in rancor for the son whose eye you blinded.
One narrow strait may take you through his blows:
625 denial of yourself, restraint of shipmates.
When you make landfall on Thrinakia first
and quit the violet sea, dark on the land
you'll find the grazing herds of Helios
by whom all things are seen, all speech is known.
630 Avoid those kine,^o hold fast to your intent,
and hard seafaring brings you all to Ithaca.
But if you raid the beeves, I see destruction
for ship and crew. Though you survive alone,
bereft of all companions, lost for years,
635 under strange sail shall you come home, to find
your own house filled with trouble: insolent men
eating your livestock as they court your lady.
Aye, you shall make those men atone in blood!
But after you have dealt out death—in open
640 combat or by stealth—to all the suitors,
go overland on foot, and take an oar,
until one day you come where men have lived
with meat unsalted, never known the sea,
nor seen seagoing ships, with crimson bows
645 and oars that fledge light hulls for dipping flight.
The spot will soon be plain to you, and I
can tell you how: some passerby will say,
“What winnowing fan^o is that upon your shoulder?”
Halt, and implant your smooth oar in the turf
650 and make fair sacrifice to Lord Poseidon:
a ram, a bull, a great buck boar; turn back,
and carry out pure hecatombs^o at home
to all wide heaven's lords, the undying gods,
to each in order. Then a seaborne death
655 soft as this hand of mist will come upon you
when you are wearied out with rich old age,
your countryfolk in blessed peace around you.
And all this shall be just as I foretell! . . .”

(from Book 11)

WORDS TO OWN

rancor (ran'kōr) *n.*: bitter hate; ill will.

622. **implacable**: unyielding; merciless.

630. *Kine* and *beeves* (see line 632) are old terms for “cattle.”

648. **winnowing fan**: device used to remove the useless dry outer covering from grain. (These people would never have seen an oar.)

652. **hecatombs**: sacrifices of one hundred cattle at a time to the gods.



What prophecy does Odysseus receive? Take notes on how you might dramatize this important scene in the underworld. How many actors would you need? What props would you use? You might sketch the scene as you visualize it.