

## Connect: Poem

Dorothy Parker, an American writer of the early 20th century, wrote many poems offering a woman's perspective on life. In "Penelope," Parker imagines what Odysseus' wife might have thought about his journeys.



DOROTHY PARKER

In the pathway of the sun,  
    In the footsteps of a breeze,  
Where the world and sky are one,  
    He shall ride the silver seas,  
5           He shall cut the glittering wave.  
I shall sit at home, and rock;  
Rise, to heed a neighbor's knock;  
Brew my tea, and snip my thread;  
Bleach the linen for my bed.  
10           They will call him brave.

### Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why is Telemachus fearful when his father first reveals his identity?
2. **Recall** How does Odysseus react when Argos recognizes him?
3. **Recall** Who helps Odysseus fight the suitors?
4. **Clarify** Why does Penelope test Odysseus?

### Literary Analysis

5. **Summarize the Plot** Review the chart you created as you read these episodes about Odysseus' homecoming. Use the chart to write a plot summary of Part 2; feel free to use the overview on page 1141 as a starter.
6. **Analyze Character** Why do you think Penelope devises the contest with the bow? What does this contest reveal about her character?
7. **Examine Archetypes** Think about other contests you have encountered in literature or film. Would you say that the contest of the bow is archetypal? Explain why or why not.
8. **Analyze Universal Theme** The *Odyssey* has themes reflecting timeless and universal concerns, such as courage and honor, good and evil, life and death, and the importance of home. Choose one of these topics. What message about this topic does Homer convey? Give evidence from the text to support your answer.
9. **Evaluate Epic Characteristics** One thing that all epics have in common is tremendous **scale**. Everything about an epic is big: an extended and complicated plot, a long journey over great distances, powerful gods and horrible monsters, and major universal themes. Identify one aspect each of epic **plot**, **setting**, **character**, and **theme** in the *Odyssey*. Which do you consider most impressive? Give reasons for your choice.
10. **Compare and Contrast Texts** In Dorothy Parker's poem "Penelope," is the attitude toward Odysseus similar to or different from Penelope's attitude in the *Odyssey* excerpts you have just read? Cite evidence to support your answer.

### Literary Criticism

11. **Social Context** Assume that Odysseus represents the ancient Greeks' ideal of a man and that Penelope represents their ideal of a woman. In what ways are the characters similar to and different from the ideal man and woman of today?