

## TELL THE STORY

Homer opens with an invocation, or prayer, asking the Muse<sup>o</sup> to help him sing his tale. Notice how the singer gives his listeners hints about how his story is to end.

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story  
of that man skilled in all ways of contending,<sup>o</sup>  
the wanderer, harried for years on end,  
after he plundered the stronghold  
on the proud height of Troy.

5 He saw the townlands

and learned the minds of many distant men,  
and weathered many bitter nights and days  
in his deep heart at sea, while he fought only  
to save his life, to bring his shipmates home.

10 But not by will nor valor could he save them,  
for their own recklessness destroyed them all—  
children and fools, they killed and feasted on  
the cattle of Lord Helios, the Sun,  
and he who moves all day through heaven  
15 took from their eyes the dawn of their return.

Of these adventures, Muse, daughter of Zeus,  
tell us in our time, lift the great song again.  
Begin when all the rest who left behind them  
headlong death in battle or at sea  
20 had long ago returned, while he alone still hungered  
for home and wife. Her ladyship Calypso  
clung to him in her sea-hollowed caves—  
a nymph, immortal and most beautiful,  
who craved him for her own.

25 And when long years and seasons  
wheeling brought around that point of time  
ordained for him to make his passage homeward,  
trials and dangers, even so, attended him  
even in Ithaca, near those he loved.  
Yet all the gods had pitied Lord Odysseus,  
30 all but Poseidon, raging cold and rough  
against the brave king till he came ashore  
at last on his own land. . . .

(from Book 1)

<sup>o</sup>The Greeks believed that there were nine Muses, daughters of Zeus, the chief god. The Muses inspired people to produce music, poetry, dance, and all the other arts.

2. **contending** (kən·tend'ɪŋ) *v.* used as *n.*: fighting; dealing with difficulties.



### Oral presentation.

1–32. Read this prayer to the Muse aloud. (You and a partner could read it as a chorus, or you could alternate with single voices.) What does Homer tell you about the hero and about what is going to happen to him?