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| Thematic Focus: Leadership and Rule |
| **Odysseus and the Sirens*** The *Odyssey*, Book XII, lines 173-208
* Translator: Stanley Lombardo

Meanwhile, our good ship was closing fastOn the Sirens’ island, when the breeze we’d hadTailed off…My men got up and furled the sails,Stowed them in the ship’s hold, then sat downAt their oars and whitened the water with pine.Myself, I got out a wheel of wax, cut it upWith my sharp knife, and kneaded the piecesUntil they were soft and warm, a quick jobWith Lord Helios glaring down from above.Then I went down the rows and smeared the waxInto all my men’s ears. They in turn bound meHand and foot upright to the mast,Tied the ends of the rope to the mast, and thenSat down, and beat the sea white with their oars.We were about as far away as a shout would carrySurging ahead, when the Sirens saw our shipLooming closer, and their song pierced the air:“Come hither, Odysseus,glory of the Achaeans,Stop your shipSo you can hear our voices.No one has ever sailedHis black ship past hereWithout listening to the honeyedSound from our lips.He journeys on delightedAnd knows more than before.For we know everythingThat the Greeks and TrojansSuffered in wide TroyBy the will of the gods.We know all that happensOn the teeming earth.”They made their beautiful voices carryAnd my heart yearned to listen. I ordered my menTo untie me, signaling with my brows But they just leaned on their oars and rowed on.Perimedes and Eurylochus jumped up,Looped more rope around me, and pulled tight.When we had rowed past, and the Sirens’ songHad faded on the waves, only then did my crewTake the wax from their ears and untie me.

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| **PASSAGE QUESTIONS** |
| * Why does Odysseus want to hear the sirens?
* What values of Odysseus’ do the sirens appeal to?
* Is Odysseus demonstrating effective leadership by choosing to listen to the sirens? Why/not?

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