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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 fast  On the Sirens’ island, when the breeze we’d had  Tailed off…  My men got up and furled the sails, Stowed them in the ship’s hold, then sat down  At their oars and whitened the water with pine.  Myself, I got out a wheel of wax, cut it up  With my sharp knife, and kneaded the pieces  Until they were soft and warm, a quick job  With Lord Helios glaring down from above.  Then I went down the rows and smeared the wax  Into all my men’s ears. They in turn bound me  Hand and foot upright to the mast,  Tied the ends of the rope to the mast, and then  Sat down, and beat the sea white with their oars.  We were about as far away as a shout would carry  Surging ahead, when the Sirens saw our ship  Looming closer, and their song pierced the air:  “Come hither, Odysseus, glory of the Achaeans,  Stop your ship  So you can hear our voices. No one has ever sailed  His black ship past here  Without listening to the honeyed  Sound from our lips.  He journeys on delighted  And knows more than before. For we know everything  That the Greeks and Trojans  Suffered in wide Troy  By the will of the gods.  We know all that happens  On the teeming earth.”  They made their beautiful voices carry  And my heart yearned to listen. I ordered my men  To 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’ song  Had faded on the waves, only then did my crew  Take the wax from their ears and untie me.   |  | | --- | | **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? | |