

## Study Material on the poem "Ulysses" by Alfred Tennyson , CC-5, 3rd Semester, English Honours

### Alfred Tennyson:

Alfred Tennyson (6 August 1809 – 6 October 1892) was a British poet. He was the Poet Laureate during much of Queen Victoria's reign and remains one of the most popular British poets. In 1829, Tennyson was awarded the Chancellor's Gold Medal at Cambridge for one of his first pieces, "Timbuktu". He published his first solo collection of poems, *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* in 1830. "Claribel" and "Mariana", which remain some of Tennyson's most celebrated poems, were included in this volume. Although decried by some critics as overly sentimental, his verse soon proved popular and brought Tennyson to the attention of well-known writers of the day, including Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Tennyson's early poetry, with its medievalism and powerful visual imagery, was a major influence on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Tennyson also excelled at penning short lyrics, such as "Break, Break, Break", "The Charge of the Light Brigade", "Tears, Idle Tears", and "Crossing the Bar". Much of his verse was based on classical mythological themes, such as "Ulysses", although "In Memoriam A.H.H." was written to commemorate his friend Arthur Hallam, a fellow poet and student at Trinity College, Cambridge, after he died of a stroke at the age of 22. Tennyson also wrote some notable blank verse including *Idylls of the King*, "Ulysses", and "Tithonus". During his career, Tennyson attempted drama, but his plays enjoyed little success.

A number of phrases from Tennyson's work have become commonplaces of the English language, including "Nature, red in tooth and claw" (*In Memoriam A.H.H.*), "'Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all", "Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die", "My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure", "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield", "Knowledge comes, but Wisdom lingers", and "The old order changeth, yielding place to new". He is the ninth most frequently quoted writer in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*.

### Complete Text of "Ulysses"

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink

Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those  
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when  
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known; cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades  
For ever and forever when I move.  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life  
Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,  
And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
Of common duties, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:  
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,  
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—  
That ever with a frolic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;  
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.  
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep  
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,  
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.  
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

#### Literary and Historical Context of "Ulysses"

In this poem, written in 1833 and revised for publication in 1842, Tennyson reworks the figure of Ulysses by drawing on the ancient hero of Homer's *Odyssey* ("Ulysses" is the Roman form of the Greek "Odysseus") and the medieval hero of Dante's *Inferno*. Homer's Ulysses, as described in Scroll XI of the *Odyssey*, learns from a prophecy that he will take a final sea voyage after killing the suitors of his wife Penelope. The details of this sea voyage are described by Dante in Canto XXVI of the *Inferno*: Ulysses finds himself restless in Ithaca and driven by "the longing I had to gain experience of the world." Dante's Ulysses is a tragic figure who dies while sailing too far in an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Tennyson combines these two accounts by having Ulysses make his speech shortly after returning to Ithaca and resuming his administrative responsibilities, and shortly before embarking on his final voyage.

However, this poem also concerns the poet's own personal journey, for it was composed in the first few weeks after Tennyson learned of the death of his dear college friend Arthur Henry Hallam in 1833. Like

In Memoriam, then, this poem is also an elegy for a deeply cherished friend. Ulysses, who symbolizes the grieving poet, proclaims his resolution to push onward in spite of the awareness that “death closes all” (line 51). As Tennyson himself stated, the poem expresses his own “need of going forward and braving the struggle of life” after the loss of his beloved Hallam.

The poem’s final line, “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield,” came to serve as a motto for the poet’s Victorian contemporaries: the poem’s hero longs to flee the tedium of daily life “among these barren crags” (line 2) and to enter a mythical dimension “beyond the sunset, and the baths of all the western stars” (lines 60–61); as such, he was a model of individual self-assertion and the Romantic rebellion against bourgeois conformity. Thus for Tennyson’s immediate audience, the figure of Ulysses held not only mythological meaning, but stood as an important contemporary cultural icon as well.

“Ulysses,” like many of Tennyson’s other poems, deals with the desire to reach beyond the limits of one’s field of vision and the mundane details of everyday life. Ulysses is the antithesis of the mariners in “The Lotos-Eaters,” who proclaim “we will no longer roam” and desire only to relax amidst the Lotos fields. In contrast, Ulysses “cannot rest from travel” and longs to roam the globe (line 6). Like the Lady of Shallot, who longs for the worldly experiences she has been denied, Ulysses hungers to explore the untraveled world.

### “Ulysses” Summary

Ulysses expresses frustration at how dull and pointless his life now seems as king of Ithaca, trapped at home on the rocky island of Ithaca. His wife is old, and he must spend his time enforcing imperfect laws as he attempts to govern people he considers stupid and uncivilized. In Ulysses’s eyes, all his people do is try to store up wealth, sleep, and eat. They have no conception of who Ulysses really is or what his life has been like. Ulysses still yearns to travel the world like he used to do. As long as he’s alive, he doesn’t want to stop doing the things that, in his eyes, make life worth living. He found joy, he claims, in every moment he spent traveling, even at the times when he was suffering. He found joy both when he was with his faithful crew members and when he was by himself; both when he was on land and when he was sailing the sea through rainstorms. He has become famous throughout the world as an explorer who was continually traveling and yearning to know more. Ulysses reflects that he has seen and learned a great deal about all the places where people live, about their lifestyles, cultures, and ways of governing themselves. Everywhere he went, he was shown honor and respect. Ulysses also found joy fighting alongside his fellow soldiers, men he honored and respected, when he fought in battles far from home in the Trojan War. Ulysses feels that each person and place he has encountered has been changed by the encounter, as has he himself. But all these experiences have not satisfied his desire for travel; rather, each encounter has only whetted his appetite to see more of the world. No matter how much of the world he sees, there is always still more to see, and it is these unseen regions that he always tries to pursue. Ulysses exclaims that it is boring and unsatisfying to stay in one place and stop doing the activities that defined your life, comparing himself to a sword that has been allowed to rust uselessly away rather than being used gloriously in battle. Merely being alive doesn’t mean you are truly living. Ulysses feels that multiple lifetimes would still have been too little time to do all he wishes to do, and he is almost at the end of the one lifetime he has. Still, every hour that he has left to live before he dies has

the potential to bring new opportunities for action. It would be disgraceful, he feels, to sit tight at home and just try to eat and stay alive for a few more years, when, even as an old man, his greatest desire is still to explore the world and keep learning more. He wants to go beyond the limits of what humans have seen and known, the way a shooting star seems to go beyond the horizon when it falls and disappears from sight.

Ulysses then starts to describe his son, Telemachus, who will inherit Ulysses's role as ruler of the island when Ulysses dies. Ulysses affirms that he loves his son, who is conscientious and thoughtful about how he will best carry out his responsibilities as ruler. With patience and judgement, Telemachus will work to civilize the fierce, wild people of Ithaca and make them more gentle, and gradually teach them to devote their lives to productive civic activities. Ulysses cannot find any faults in Telemachus; he devotes his life to the responsibilities of his role, he pays proper respect to his people and his parents, and after his father dies, he will continue offering appropriate sacrifices to the gods that Ulysses most honored. Telemachus is well suited for the role of ruler—just as Ulysses is well suited for a different role, the role of explorer.

Ulysses looks out towards the port, where the wind is blowing in the sails of his ship and where he can see the wide, dark sea. He now addresses his former crew, the men who worked alongside him and explored the world and gained new knowledge with him. He reminds them that they always accepted joyfully whatever their travels would bring, whether trouble or good luck, and proudly faced every obstacle with resolution and bravery. Ulysses then acknowledges that both he and they have grown older, but insists that even as old men, they can still work do hard work and earn respect. Soon they will die and their chance to do great deeds will be over; but before they die, they can still accomplish something heroic, something fitting for men that once battled the gods. The people of Ithaca are beginning to light lamps in their homes; night is falling; the moon is rising in the sky; the waves of the sea are murmuring almost as if they are speaking to Ulysses. Ulysses urges his crew, as his friends, to join him on one last voyage—even now, they're not too old to explore some unknown region of the world. He invites them to board a ship, push away from shore, and man the oars so they can beat the waves; because Ulysses still has the goal of sailing past the horizon, as far as he can go, before he ultimately dies. He acknowledges that the waves may sink their ship; but they may also find their way to the place where the souls of the blessed go after death. There, they might even see their old companion, the accomplished warrior Achilles. Many of their heroic qualities have been diminished by old age, but they haven't been lost completely. They don't have the same strength or physical prowess they possessed as younger men fighting epic, world-changing battles; but inside, Ulysses declares, they are ultimately the same men they always were. Their minds and hearts are still brave and composed in the face of danger and obstacles. Their bodies have been weakened by old age, something all human beings are destined to face, but their spirits are as strong as ever. They remain determined to work hard, to pursue their goals and accomplish them, and to never give up.

Line-by-Line Explanation of “Ulysses”

### **Summary for 1 to 5 lines (It little profits..... and knows not me)**

Ulysses is the king of Ithaca. After great journey, which includes wars, has come his own city. After his advent, he tries to stay in his home kingdom. But the adventurous life, he lived is contrary to the present life. In this kingdom, he has to sit idle and stay with his wife Penelope. He is administering the people and judging them. But, people do not know the Ulysses as he is always on adventurous wars and voyages. He thinks this life is waste when compared with the previous life. He also complains that the people are savage and they only eat and sleep.

### **6 to 10 lines (I cannot rest from travel..... the rainy Hyades)**

Ulysses here decides that he cannot rest and wants to travel beyond. He does not want to live his life staying idle but to enjoy his life in adventurous way even in old age. He wants to live in that way till his last breath. He remembers the great life which is surrounded with joys and sufferings. He waded through his life with his loved ones and sometimes he has to face it alone. He uses "Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades" to speak about his coming out of the storms and obstacles over the sea.

### **11 to 15 lines (Vext the dim sea.....but honoured of them all)**

Through these lines, Ulysses is saying of his own travels and knowledge gained through it. He says that he has got name and fame through his adventures. He has also come into contact with cities, manners of them, climates, governments, councils. He insists that he still has hungry heart to quench the thirst. He says he is respected as he journeyed most parts of the world.

### **15-20 lines (And drunk delight .....Whose margin fades)**

Ulysses is turned towards the war experiences, he has in his life. He also remembers his war participation on plains of Troy in Trojan War and he is delighted with peers in the war field. He declares that he is part of all he has met. Even though he affirms that he has seen is letting him know that there is more to be known. In these lines, he speaks again about untraveled world.

### **21 to 25 lines (Forever and forever.....and of one to me)**

Ulysses through these lines speaks of his wastage of time in Ithaca where he could not satisfy the heart thrust of adventurous journey life. He says he moves often but he does not like staying in one place and wants to move on further. In his opinion, to rest is to rust. He wants to shine in use rather than being rusted. He shows his hurry through these words that even our life is blessed with multiple lifetimes, time will be insufficient to touch all places of the world. Thus these lines show the tiredness of monotonous life of Ithaca for him.

### **26-30 lines (Little remains..... gray spirit yearning in desire)**

Here, Ulysses begins to decide how his life should be in remaining time. He quotes of his death and the time towards it. The remaining time should provide more energetic new exploration and enjoyment. He remembers that he has already wasted the time to be in Ithaca rather than enjoying the old way of life.

He uses 'gray spirit' to remind us that he is old and near to death, but not to his will power. Thus these lines refer his death thoughts, remaining life time and finding knowledge.

**30-35 lines (To follow knowledge..... discerning to fulfill)**

Ulysses speaks that he wants to follow knowledge like sinking star. This does mean two things. He himself might have compared himself like a sinking star which means he is about to die. At the same time, we can understand knowledge should be caught as if it is going to be missed, if you do not act quickly. These lines introduce the character of his son Telemachus. He declares that he is giving the authority on Ithaca to his son in these lines. He says that he loves his son. Hence, he is ready to give the scepter, the authority to his son.

**36-40 lines (This labor.....decent not to fail)**

Ulysses describes his son Telemachus efficiency in ruling. He declares that his son is spotless in character. He describes his character and his ability to administer the savage people and he hopes he can set them right through his patience. He suggests his son to utilize them for the good. He also opines that his son will not step back for any good work.

**41-45 lines (In offices of tenderness..... My mariners)**

In these lines, the continuation of character description takes place. As well as Ulysses gets ready to start his journey. He opines his son will adore the household gods. In the end of his parting with Ithaca, he says that now he has his duty and his son has the duty of ruling the kingdom in fair manner. After completion of description of his son's character, now his eyes fall on readily set vessels for his journey at port. It becomes evening when he is at port. There he remembers his old adventure hunger mates who have died.

**46-50 lines (Souls that have toiled.....honor and its toil)**

Ulysses after worrying of his stay in Ithaca, he bends on to leave for his journeys. Later, he explains the son's ability and starts towards the port. After reaching the port he recollects his passed away mariners who have worked hard, thought and acted upon his word. He recollects that they are with him in not only good times but also in bad times. He affirms that the mariners with him faced hardships as free and self reliant men. They have never turned back in the adventurous world. But, at the end of these lines he comes to sense that he is old now. Not only that, but also he says that the mariners also have come to old age. But, this does not give despair to him because he is in opinion that every age has its work together with the honor.

**51-55 lines (Death closes all.....the slow moon climbs: the deep)**

Ulysses opines that death is end to all. One cannot escape it. One has to live life and at the end he is to face it and will be absorbed into it. But, before the death engulfs him, he wants to do something great which can outweigh his previous achievements. He wants to achieve before his death. He remembers that they have fought with gods in Trojan War. Actually in this war, gods occasionally took turns and



fight on the sides of either Trojans or Greeks. Such achievement is being aspired before his last breath. That is why he starts his journey to gain the indented success. He says to his mariners not to forget that they have fought with the gods and they are the same persons who are now going for an adventure. He says that ' lights begin to twinkle from the rocks'. It means it is getting night and stars are coming out. It is time they started their journey. He also says the moon is appearing. Thus, through these lines, he inculcates confidence among his old warriors to get them ready for fresh knowledge and adventure.

#### **56-60 lines (Moans round with many voices.....sunset and the baths)**

Ulysses engulfs in praising his old warriors and infuses a new spirit saying it is not too late to get to a newer world. He encourages them to go fast by slashing the waters with their oars. He quotes the destiny and shows the target to be achieved through their journey to his journey mates. He inspires them to reach the beyond of sunset or may be another world. He refers baths which are in the view of Ulysses where stars sink when they are set.

#### **61-65 lines (Of all western stars....., much abides and though)**

Ulysses begins to think the outcome of journey in two ways. In his words to the mariners, it is clear that he has a destination. He says the whirlpools in seas may devour them. Another way is that they may reach happy isles which can be assumed as heaven. There, he has ambition to meet his co- warrior in the war of Trojan. The warrior he wants to meet is Achilles. All warriors who are presently sailing knew Achilles very well. Later, he comes to think of the age and says that the most of the life is over. There is a bit remaining part.

#### **66-70 lines (We are not now strength.....not to yield)**

Ulysses, in its previous words can help in conclusion that he has a destiny and he is towards it. At the same time he agrees that now they are not strong. They have their old age with feeble bodies. Once they had shaken the heaven and earth and fought against the will of gods in the wars. But, now they have no strength as earlier. He resumes his flashback that the warriors fought as a single heart beat and never turned back. Later he agrees that they are as they are and time and fate has taken their strength and vigor. But, still they are strong in their will even though they are not as strong as earlier physically. He affirms that they are to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.

#### **Long Questions and and answers**

#### **Tennyson's Philosophy of Life as Reflected in the Poem "Ulysses"**

Few poets have produced acknowledged masterpieces in so many different poetic genres as Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892); he furnished perhaps the most notable example in English letters of the eclectic style. His consummately crafted verse expresses in readily comprehensible terms the Victorian feeling for order and harmony.

Tennyson, like Browning, is the great literary titan of Victorian Age whose philosophy of life is expressed again and again through his poetry.

Tennyson was devout Christian and ardent believer in God;

“That God, which ever loves and loves  
One God, one law, one element,  
The one far off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves”.

He was not a religious fanatic and ultra-modern. He, therefore, equally welcomed the influence of historic Christianity and modern scientific thought. His philosophy was practical. In Ulysses his philosophy and personality both are seen to be merged. Tennyson himself said that Ulysses which was written shortly after Hallam’s death (September-1832), gave his “feeling about the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life, perhaps more simply than anything in In Memoriam (1850)”. Ulysses (published in 1842) is one of his massive pillars on which Tennyson’s fame mainly rests. It embodies “the modern passion for knowledge, for the exploration of its rimitess fields, for the annexation of the new kingdom of science and thought”. [Prof Hales]. Ulysses a dramatic monologue spoken by the hero of The Iliad and The Odyssey is the characteristic of strong meter and well-placed consonance and assonance, with the excellent bold message of navigation.

Ulysses finds the meaninglessness of life, which he has been enjoying in his hilly kingdom in the company of old wife and ruling over the savage people – who do not know him. He wants to drink life to the less as a typical Victorian would have done. A life of indolence is no more than death. It is a life in death. A life of rest from all toils and moils is not desired. He has seen much and known much but is not satisfied with what he gained. For him as to the Victorians;

“All experience is an arch where through  
Gleams that untravelled world whose mergin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move”.

The adventurous spirit in Ulysses does not allow him – , “to pause, to make and end, to rust unburnished, not to shine in use!” The unquenchable desire seized him “to follow knowledge like a sinking star/ beyond the utmost bound of human thought”.

Ulysses’ energy is inexhaustible. Man’s life is short. To Ulysses a little life is left. But old age does not mean, for him the end of life. He is firmly determined to make the best use of every hour of life. To remain inactive means an end of life. So to Ulysses ceaseless activity and motion and not “to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield” are ought to be ever remembered as even in old age. “Some work of noble note may yet be done”. Till one’s death every hours should be spent in actively.

The high spirit and energy and resolution of Victorian Age are fully celebrated in Ulysses. Ulysses like a typical Victorian is fired with energy to grasp the unattainable and the infinite. With his old mariners he is extremely eager to go out a new voyage in search of undiscovered shores and fresh adventures;

“To sail beyond the sunset and the bathes

Of all the western stars until I die”.

It is true that though the mariners are not in full strength of young, though they are “made weak by time and fate” but they have the will and the determination to touch the untouchable.

The robust vigorousness of Ulysses is expressed again and again. The personality of the poet and the philosophy both seem to be merged. What the poet feels, expresses through lips of Ulysses. Ulysses' own idea and ideals, his own thrust for knowledge, his desire to see the unseen, to know the unknown and to touch the untouchable are basically the ideals and desire of the poet.

Thus Tennyson's Ulysses is a superb creation of artistic excellence. With Keatsian pictorial quality and his astonishing command of musical resources of language is blended so accurately that it becomes a landmark in English literature. It expresses the philosophy (attitude towards life) of the poet as well as energy and resolution of his age. Tennyson's attitude towards life here is in sharp contrast to the attitude revealed in *The Lotos-Eaters*.

“Surely, Surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore

Than labour in the deep mid-Geon, wind and shore the wave and oar;

Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more”.

They find no meaning in toil in view of the fact that death closes all.

### 'Ulysses' by Tennyson as a Dramatic Monologue

A dramatic monologue is a lyric poem in which a single imaginary speaker or a historical personage expresses his thoughts and feelings to an imaginary silent audience. The distinguished features of dramatic are as follows.

In this kind of poem a single person, who is apparently not the poet, utters the entire poem in a specific situation at a critical moment. This person addresses and interacts with one or more other people, but we know of the presence of the audience and its reaction from the clues in the utterance of the speaker. A dramatic monologue concentrates on the idiosyncrasies of the speaker.

Tennyson like another Victorian genius Robert Browning is good at composing dramatic monologues. His well known poem Ulysses is an excellent example of dramatic monologue in which he adopts a classical hero Ulysses or Odysseus as the main character for his work. Here he tries to focus on the adventurous as well as knowledge seeking spirit of Ulysses. But the philosophy of life given through the mouth of Ulysses is actually Tennyson's own philosophy.

In the poem Ulysses, Ulysses is supposed to be speaking and expressing his thoughts and feelings to the silent listeners. He is standing before the royal palace of Ithaca and speaks before the mariners, who had

been his fellow sojourners during his long journey to Troy. The monologue begins with his cynical remarks towards life. .

"It little profits that an idle king

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,...

. . . . .

That hoard and steep and feed and know not me."

Ulysses, the man of nimble wit, is not satisfied with his life among his subjects, who are unaware of his heroic mould. His aged wife ( Penelope) also cannot understand his heroic soul. But his intention is not clear until he says-"I cannot rest from travel, I will drink /Life to the lees."

Here by the word 'travel' he means the journey which he made to rescue Helen from Paris and the perilous journey after the destruction of Troy. But he refuses to take rest and is determined to take a life of adventure to the very end. He compares life to a cup of wine. Just a man drinks till he has reached the sediment at the bottom, Ulysses also will taste all aspects of life without leaving anything behind. Through these words, Ulysses' insatiable passion for knowledge is expressed. He is the man who can never take rest from the pursuit of knowledge.

Ulysses has become old but it is the knowledge and experience which he has gathered so long urges him on even in the old age to sail in quest of knowledge. He knows that a life spent in idleness is no life at all. Just a sword loses its polish and gets rusty when it is kept out of use for long time, so also vigor and energy will be dulled and blunted if we do not exercise them always. He is perfectly aware that knowledge is vast and unlimited and our life on earth is too short to learn everything. Even a number of lives taken together would be too short for gaining all knowledge. So far he is concerned he has a single life to live. And of this single life too a greater part has already been spent. Only a few years of life are left to him. Hence he is determined to make the best of every moment of the remaining years of his life. To him an hour spent in some profitable work means an hour saved from the silence of death.

But the monologue of Ulysses reaches to the point of climax, when he inspires his sailors and makes an appeal to them to enter upon a life of exploration with great courage. He says...

"Death closes all, but something ere the end

Some work of noble note, may yet be done".

Ulysses knows that he and his sailors, being old are nearer death, but he has not given up hope and believes that old men also can earn great glory and achieve great deeds. So, he inspires his sailors to achieve some great deeds even in their old age before they die. The paths of knowledge may be full of dangers, but he is strongly determined. And finally he makes a noble resolution to carry on his quest. He is not upset by the passing away of his youth and bodily strength. He knows that even old age cannot rob great men of their courage, bravery and other spiritual qualities. Therefore, he asks his sailors to

show the same courage that they had in youth. He reminds them that everyone of them is brave and strong willed, everyone of them knows how to labor, how to struggle hard and how to pursue a great aim. Everyone of them will tough out any bad situation and never bow his head before hardships or troubles.

Thus, by the monologue Tennyson portrays the character of Ulysses. His portrayal of the character Ulysses deserves huge appreciation for there is a consonantal movement of thought, pervading the character Ulysses from beginning to the end. Every word Uttered by Ulysses helps to constitute the idea that life is short and knowledge is unlimited, so we must not stop from pursuing knowledge.

.