Follow-up Activities

• The Journeys of Odysseus shares just a few of the many adventures Odysseus faces during his trip home. Students can read more about how our hero handles the bag of winds, Calypso, and the Lotus-eaters at www.mythweb.com/odyssey/

• Designing a mythical game gives students an opportunity to put their creative imagination to work to add details and alternate endings to Odysseus’ adventures. Have them create a board game based on his adventures. Encourage them to use the people, places and monsters cited in this myth.

• Develop comprehension and expressive writing skills by placing students into cooperative learning groups. Their goal is to write an epic about Odysseus after his return to Ithaca. Encourage students to use characters from Homer’s Odyssey as well as other Greek locations, mortals, and gods.

• Have students research the background of the Cyclops. Students will discover that, in Greek mythology, the original group of Cyclops were involved at the beginning of creation and were highly valued for their skill and knowledge. Compare these two groups of Cyclops — the original group versus the man-eating, violent shepherds whom Odysseus encountered. Use D’Aulaire’s Book of Greek Myths by Ingrid and Edgar Parin D’Aulaire (Doubldeay, 1962).

• Poseidon is god of the sea and often uses his powers with sea nymphs, sorceresses, winds, and monsters to control the lives of mortals who sail upon his waters. Have students use www.classicalmythology.org/chaptertopics/07/summary.html to learn about all of the deities and beings associated with the sea. They can follow links to student activities for learning about the lands, sailing vessels, and other topics from The Journeys of Odysseus.

Suggested Print Resources


Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

• www.timelessmyths.com/classical/odyssey.html

Great details from “Timeless Myths” about characters and events in the Odyssey.

(Continued)
Vocabulary

epic — A long, narrative poem recounting the heroism and adventures of legendary and historical characters.

mortal — A human being.

Olympian gods — A group of immortal supreme beings who, according to ancient mythology, dwelt on Mount Olympus and ruled the world during ancient times.

Cast of Characters

Includes phonetic spelling in parentheses.

Athena (a-THEE-na) — Goddess of wisdom, justice, battle, and crafts; known as Minerva in Roman mythology.

Charybdis (kar-IB-dis) — Daughter of Poseidon and Gaia; she was once a beautiful sea nymph until Zeus turned her into a monster; she lives in a cavern by the Strait of Messina and sucks sailors and ships into her deadly whirlpool.

Circe (SUR-see) — Daughter of the sun god, Helios; she is a beautiful sorceress best known for her ability to turn men into animals.

Cyclops (SY-klahps) — Semi-human, giant monsters having a single eye in the center of their foreheads; in Greek mythology they were man-eating shepherds living on the coast of Sicily.

Hermes (HER-meez) — Messenger of the gods; known as Mercury in Roman mythology.

nymphs (nimfs) — Beautiful immortal maidens who live in mountains, forests, and water.

Odysseus (oh-DIS-see-us) — The brave and clever king of Ithaca; he is married to faithful Penelope and is one of the greatest of Greek heroes; he is best known for devising the Trojan Horse which ended the war between Sparta and Troy; known as Ulysses in Roman mythology.

Penelope (puh-NEL-uh-pee) — Clever daughter of Icarius and cousin to Helen; best known for her patience and faithfulness to her husband, Odysseus.

Poseidon (puh-SY-dun) — God of the sea; brother to Zeus and Hades; known as Neptune in Roman mythology.

Scylla (SIL-uh) — A frightful sea monster with twelve feet and six heads; she lives across the water from Charybdis and destroys all men and ships that pass near her.

Sirens (SY-rens) — Beautiful sea nymphs with a song so mesmerizing that sailors are lured to their death by crashing against the jagged rocks of the islands where they live.

Focus Questions

1. What is an epic?
2. How are the men trapped in the Cyclops’ cave?
3. How does Odysseus use his cunning to escape from the Cyclops?
4. Who is Nobody?
5. Why does Poseidon send bad weather and calamities to Odysseus and his crew?
6. Who is Circe?
7. How is Odysseus able to negotiate with Circe regarding a safe return of his men?
8. Why does Circe give advice to Odysseus?
9. How do Odysseus and his men escape the Sirens, Charybdis, and Scylla?
10. How does Penelope manage to trick her suitors?
11. What is Penelope’s final challenge to her suitors?
12. How does Penelope discover her returned husband?

Discussion Questions

• Why is Odysseus considered a hero? He is mortal and has no superhuman abilities or qualities. Discuss the heroic qualities he displays during his journey.
• Do you think Penelope is heroic? Why or why not?
• Many events during Odysseus’ journey center upon the hospitality of a host and the behavior of guests. Discuss the importance of sharing meals and homes in ancient Greek times. Use examples from Odysseus and the Cyclops, Circe and the crew, and Penelope and her suitors.
• What do the manners of the host and guests reveal about their personalities?
• The goddess, Athena, plays an important part in Odysseus’ life. Why does she favor him? What events would be changed if he didn’t receive her help?

Focus Questions

1. What is an odyssey?
2. Have you ever been on one?
3. What was your purpose? Were you able to complete it?
4. Who do you consider to be a hero? What qualities does that person exhibit? Can a person be a hero without being famous? Give examples to support your opinion.
5. This tale incorporates the theme of patience and persistence overcoming all obstacles. What stories do you know that have similar themes?

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Program Summary

One of the greatest of the Greek heroes was Odysseus, the ruler of Ithaca, whose invention of the Trojan Horse ended a long war with Troy and provided a victory for Greece. After the war — which dragged on for ten years — Odysseus and his men set sail to return home. Yet the journey home turned out to be another ten-year struggle, as told by Homer in the epic poem the Odyssey. It is such a dramatic life-and-death story that even today, when someone takes an amazing journey it is called an ‘odyssey.”

Every hero is on a quest; in Odysseus’ case, the object of the quest is home. Like all heroes, Odysseus shows great courage in the face of many disasters on his treacherous journey homeward. Unfortunately, many of the disasters are caused by his arrogance and pride. Thankfully for Odysseus, in addition to bravery and strength (typical hero qualities), he also possesses intelligence and faith. These characteristics help him through some very hard times. This version of his journey highlights a few of his most adventurous and bravest encounters with sorceresses, monsters, and angry gods.

Part I begins at the start of Odysseus’ journey home. A wind blows his ships off course and the warriors end up on a strange island. They become trapped in a cave owned by a monstrous, man-eating, one-eyed giant known as a Cyclops. Odysseus devises a plan to escape. He lulls the giant to sleep with wine, blinds his single eye, and his men cling to the bellies of the sheep as they pass before the sightless Cyclops to graze on the mountainous pastures. Odysseus’ boastfulness about besting the Cyclops angers the giant’s father, Poseidon, and the sea god sends calamities and great storms which destroy all but one of Odysseus’ ships.

Part II finds Odysseus and his crew washed ashore on Circe’s island. The beautiful sorceress turns many of his men into pigs because of their slovenly table manners. Odysseus takes a magical herb to make him immune to Circe’s sorcery. She agrees to change his crew back to men if Odysseus stays with her for a year. She advises him on how to handle the many perils he will encounter on his way home. Following her advice, he sails safely past the Sirens with their mystical, bewitching songs, passes perilously close to the deadly whirlpool of the Charybdis, and loses many men as they sail past the six-headed sea monster known as Scylla.

In Part III, Odysseus finds himself back in Ithaca after a twenty-year absence. He discovers that his wife, Penelope, is being forced to choose a new husband. Athena warns Odysseus to disguise himself in order to win back his wife. She advises him on how to handle the many perils he will encounter on his treacherous journey homeward. Unfortunately, many of the disasters are caused by his arrogance and pride. Thankfully for Odysseus, in addition to bravery and strength (typical hero qualities), he also possesses intelligence and faith. These characteristics help him through some very hard times. This version of his journey highlights a few of his most adventurous and bravest encounters with sorceresses, monsters, and angry gods.

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