

An Introduction to the *Odyssey*

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(Note: This PowerPoint was created by Danielle Luongo from the Advanced Math & Science Academy)



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An Introduction to the *Odyssey*



"Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story of that man skilled in all ways of contending, . . ."



An Introduction to the *Odyssey*

The *Odyssey* is a tale of a hero's long and perilous journey home. ▾



But, it is also the story of a son in need of his father and of a faithful wife waiting for her husband's return.

[End of Section]



The War-Story Background

The *Iliad* provides the background for Odysseus's story and tells the tale of a ten-year war fought outside the walls of Troy. In Homer's *Iliad* ▾

- the Trojan War is in its tenth and final year ▾
- the people of Troy are fighting an alliance of Greek kings because the world's most beautiful woman, Helen, abandoned her husband, Menelaus (a Greek king) and ran off with Paris, a prince of Troy



The War-Story Background

The *Iliad* provides the background for Odysseus's story and tells the tale of a ten-year war fought outside the walls of Troy. In Homer's *Iliad*

- the Greeks won the war, reduced the city of Troy to smoldering ruins, and butchered all the inhabitants, except for those they took as slaves back to Greece

[End of Section]



Odysseus: A Hero in Trouble

Odysseus is not a typical epic hero. He is faced with ▼

- difficult choices ▼
- post-war disillusionment ▼
- disrespect from the people of his homeland



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Odysseus: A Hero in Trouble

Before the Trojan War, Odysseus ▼

- married the beautiful and faithful Penelope ▼
- had one son, Telemachus



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Odysseus: A Hero in Trouble

When called to serve in the Trojan War, Odysseus ▾

- pretended to be insane so he wouldn't have to go (he dressed as a peasant, plowed his field, and sowed it with salt) ▾
- revealed his sanity to save his son's life (who was placed in front of the plow)



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The Wooden-Horse Trick

During the Trojan War, Odysseus ▼

- performed extremely well as a soldier and commander ▼
- thought of the famous wooden-horse trick that lead to the defeat of Troy



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The Wooden-Horse Trick

- Odysseus's plan was to build an enormous wooden horse and hide Greek soldiers inside. ▾
- The horse was left outside the gates of Troy, and the Greeks "abandoned" their camp.



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The Wooden-Horse Trick

- The Trojans thought the horse was a peace offering and brought it into the walled city. ▾
- At night, the men hidden in the horse came out and opened the gates to the entire Greek army.

[End of Section]



The Ancient World and Ours

- Odysseus's world is harsh, violent, and primitive. ▼
- The "palaces" that he and his men raid might have been nothing more than mud and stone farmhouses. ▼
- The "worldly goods" they carry off from town might have been only pots and pans, cattle and sheep.

[End of Section]



A Search for Their Places in Life

The Theme of the *Odyssey*

Odysseus and his family are searching for ▾

- the right relationships with one another and the people around them ▾
- their proper places in life



A Search for Their Places in Life

The Structure of the *Odyssey*

The story begins with Telemachus, Odysseus's son. Telemachus is searching for his father because he ▼

- is being threatened by rude, powerful men who want to marry his mother and rob Telemachus of his inheritance ▼
- needs his father to return home and restore order



A Search for Their Places in Life

The Structure of the *Odyssey*

Readers learn that Odysseus ▾

- is stranded on an island, longing to get home ▾
- has been gone for twenty years—he has spent ten years at war and ten years trying to get home ▾
- is in the middle of a midlife crisis and searching for inner peace

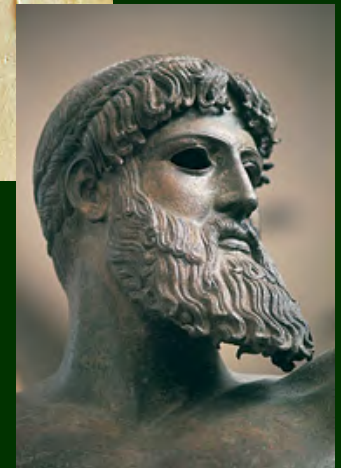
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Relationships with Gods

In Homer's stories, a god can be an **alter ego**—a reflection of a hero's best or worst qualities. ▼

- Odysseus is known for his mental abilities, so he receives aid from Athena, the goddess of wisdom. ▼
- Odysseus can also be cruel and violent. Odysseus's nemesis is Poseidon, the god of the sea, who is known for arrogance and brutishness.



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Relationships with Gods

Myths in the *Odyssey*

Greek myths plays an important role in the *Odyssey*. ▼

- Homer is concerned with the relationship between human and gods. ▼
- For Homer, the gods control all things, including Odysseus's fate.

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Epics and Values

Epics are long narrative poems that tell of the adventures of heroes who in some way embody the values of their civilization. ▼

- The Greeks used Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, to teach Greek virtues.

[More about Epics](#)

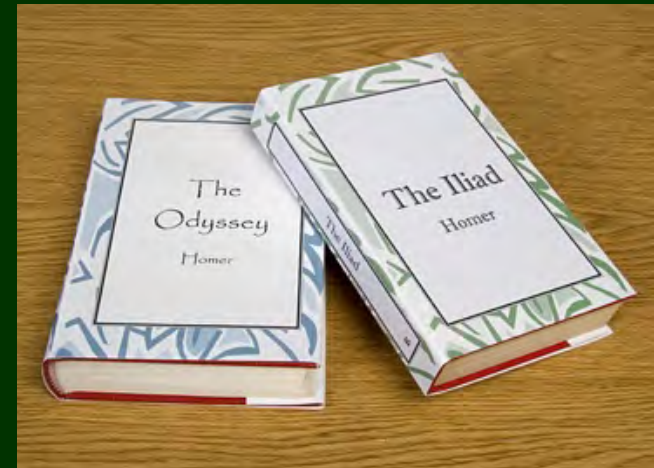


Epics and Values

The Epic Tradition

All epic poems in the western world owe something to the basic patterns established in Homer's epics. ▼

- The *Iliad* is the primary model for an epic of war ▼
(*kleos*).
- The *Odyssey* is the model for an epic of the long journey home (*nostos*).



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The Telling of Epics

Epics and other tales were probably told by wandering bards or minstrels called **rhapsodes**. Rhapsodes were ▼

- the historians, entertainers, and mythmakers of their time ▼
- responsible for spreading news about recent events or the doings of heroes, gods, and goddesses



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The Telling of Epics

Epics such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were probably told over a period of several days. ▼

- Singers might have summarized part of the tales, depending on how long they stayed in one community.

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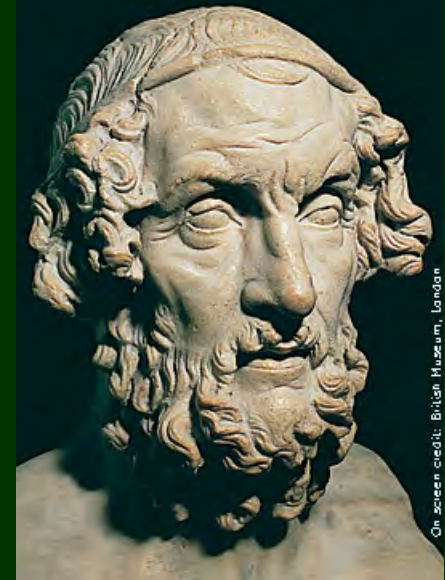
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Homer

No one knows for sure who Homer was.

- Later Greeks believed he was a blind bard, or singer, from the island of Chios.
- One scholar suggests Homer was a woman because home and hearth played such an important role in his stories.
- Some scholars think there were two Homers. Some think he was just a legend.
- This is called the **Homeric Question**



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Writing Prompt

On the back of your paper,
answer the following question:

What most surprised you
about the information you
just learned? Have your
expectations of *The
Odyssey* changed?



Learning Cool Greek Terms

Using context clues, what do you think the following term means?: **Hubris**

*“Despite Penelope’s pleas, the obnoxious suitors wouldn’t leave Odysseus’s kingdom. They continued to party and drink wine. Plus, they exhibited **hubris** and were rude to the old man.*

To gain a deeper appreciation of the ancient Greek culture and Homer’s epic poem, *The Odyssey*, it’s now your turn to create flash cards of a list of cool Greek terms.

