

### 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/](http://www.mythweb.com/odyssey/)
- Designing a mythological 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 (Doubleday, 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](http://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, comprehension questions, and glossaries.
- Odysseus is a strong and clever hero, but he is far from perfect and causes problems for himself. How would he fare in a contemporary setting? Have your students place Odysseus in a modern setting like a mall or amusement park and create dialogue and action-packed adventures for this clever Greek hero. Have students act out these scenes between Odysseus, monsters, and sorceresses of today.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.timelessmyths.com/classical/odyssey.html](http://www.timelessmyths.com/classical/odyssey.html)  
Great details from "Timeless Myths" about characters and events in the *Odyssey*.

(Continued)

- [www.mythman.com](http://www.mythman.com)  
A humorous homework help site for students with classical myth retellings.
- [www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/ulysses/ulyssg1.htm](http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/ulysses/ulyssg1.htm)  
The San Diego County Office of Education offers four detailed student activities for learning about the lands, sailing vessels, and other topics from *The Journeys of Odysseus*.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Galloway, Priscilla. *Aleta & the Queen: A Tale of Ancient Greece*. Annick Press, Limited, Toronto, Ontario; 2003. The story takes place in Penelope's court a few weeks before Odysseus returns.
- Harris, John. *Greece! Rome! Monsters*. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; 2002.
- McLaren, Clemence. *Waiting for Odysseus*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, New York, NY; 2000. Penelope, Circe, and Athena share their story.
- Osborne, Mary Pope. *Tales from the Odyssey Series*. Hyperion Books for Children, New York, NY; 2002. This four-book series retells Homer's *Odyssey*. Titles include: *The One-Eyed Giant*, *Land of the Dead*, *Sirens and Sea Monsters*, and *The Gray-Eyed Goddess*.
- Yolen, Jane. *Odysseus in the Serpent Maze*. HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY; 2001. Our hero, portrayed during his adolescence, goes on exciting adventures.

### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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- |                             |                          |
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## THE JOURNEYS OF ODYSSEUS

### Grades 4–8

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Greeks created a galaxy of myths to explain the mysteries and complexities of the world around them — the seasons, stars and planets, human society, war and peace, feast and famine, good luck and bad — even the creation of the world itself. They believed gods and goddesses, each with special powers, controlled and protected all humans. Many colorful stories about heroes, gods and monsters were memorized and sung by traveling poets long before they were ever written down. As they were passed down from generation to generation, aspects of the stories sometimes changed. These myths provide insight into the history, legends and religion of an ancient civilization, but also highlight fundamental similarities between modern people and those who lived long ago.

This guide provides a summary of classical retellings of Greek and Roman mythology, vocabulary, discussion questions, activities, and print and Internet resources for students and teachers to explore.



## 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 place as king and husband. Dressed as a beggar, he participates in an archery contest to win Penelope's hand. He is the only suitor capable of stringing his great bow and shooting his arrow through twelve golden rings. Penelope realizes that the beggar is Odysseus. The couple is finally reunited, and Odysseus' twenty-year odyssey is finished.

## 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.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- What is an odyssey? Have you ever been on one? What was your purpose? Were you able to complete it?
- 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.
- This tale incorporates the theme of patience and persistence overcoming all obstacles. What stories do you know that have similar themes? Who are the main characters and what motivates them to continue against all odds?

## 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?