

"Penelope and Odysseus just want to be together,
so I think it's great that they find each other
in the end." Penny, 11

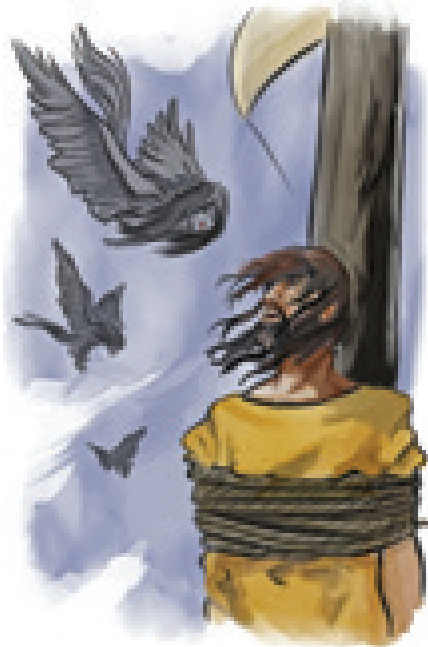


THE ODYSSEY

After ten long years of war and the fall of Troy, the Greek hero Odysseus sets sail for his homeland. His voyage, however, is destined to take much longer than he expects.

During his eventful journey Odysseus comes across all sorts of monsters and mythical creatures, and loses his ships and crew. When he finally reaches his beloved island he finds his queen besieged by suitors who claim his throne. What tricks will Penelope resort to in her effort to avoid them? And how does Odysseus get rid of the impudent suitors and regain his wife and kingdom?

The amazing adventures of the legendary hero come alive in this masterful retelling of Odysseus's epic voyage.



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THE ODYSSEY
Homer

Homer



Retold by Beatrice Sampatakou
Illustrated by Thanos Tsilis



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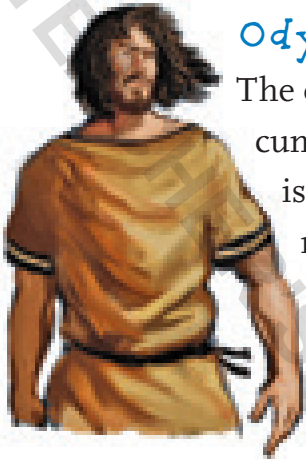
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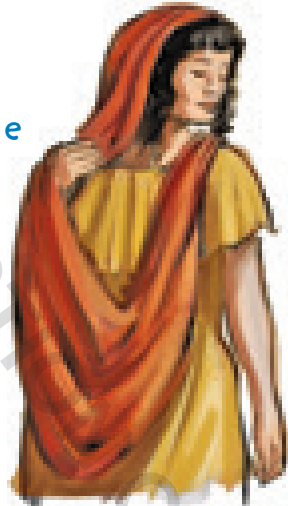
THE CHARACTERS



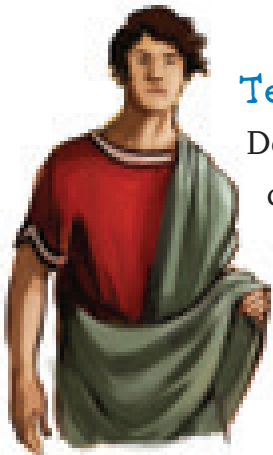
Odysseus

The craftiest of the Greek heroes, his cunning trick won the Trojan War. He is finally sailing home for Ithaca. How many obstacles must he face, and will he ever see his home again?

Faithful Penelope has waited for years for her husband Odysseus, and still hopes for his safe return. What ploy can she think of to put off having to commit herself to a new husband?

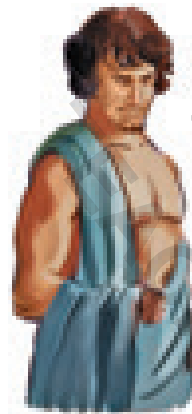


Penelope



Telemachus

Despite his youth, Odysseus's son is determined to deal with the rowdy suitors who are destroying his father's estate. Is he yet man enough, and are the gods on his side?

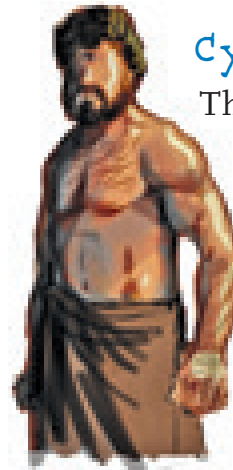
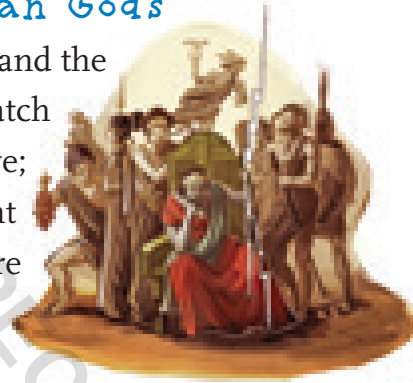


Antinoos

The arrogance of the most outrageous of Penelope's suitors threatens to be his undoing. Will he ever get his hands on Odysseus's estates and his beautiful wife?

The Olympian Gods

King Zeus and the Olympian deities do not simply watch Odysseus's exploits from above; they also intervene in his turbulent journey. Which of the gods are friendly, and which hostile?



Cyclops

This fierce and savage one-eyed giant traps Odysseus in his cave. How will Odysseus manage to save himself?

Calypso

This beautiful nymph captures Odysseus and wants to keep him with her forever. Will he accept her gift of immortality?





THE ODYSSEY

His fists clenched, Telemachus stood and watched from the shadows. Though it was a familiar scene that he had to endure every single day, it never failed to anger him. The fawning aristocrats who came courting his mother, Penelope, Queen of Ithaca, hoping to win her hand and the throne, had descended upon the palace yet again, and were shamelessly living it up at his father's expense. Oh, if only his father would return! Where was he? The war in Troy had ended years ago, and no one knew whether Odysseus was still alive or whether his bones were rotting on some distant shore.

Meanwhile, far away on Mount Olympus, all the gods – except for Poseidon, who had business at the ends of the earth – were assembled to discuss the ways and woes of mortal men.

‘Dearest father and king of the gods,’ said Athena to Zeus, ‘many men suffer just hardships, but some endure much more than they deserve. Take wise Odysseus – for years he has been battling the seas, and is now the captive of the nymph Calypso on a remote island. He is far away from the wife he loves, and whom the devious nymph wants him to forget. But Odysseus does not care for Calypso, and longs either to return home or to die.’

Zeus pondered a while before answering. ‘You are right. Poseidon, god of the oceans, has punished him enough. It’s time to help Odysseus return home. Hermes shall visit Calypso and bid her release him, and you, Athena, shall offer guidance to his son in preparation for his return.’

So the blue-eyed goddess Athena donned her golden winged sandals and flew as fast as the wind to Ithaca. Reaching the palace, she took the form of Mentor, Odysseus’s old friend. Telemachus, ever the perfect host, sat Mentor down straight away and offered him food and wine.

‘Take this tip from me,’ said Mentor, looking with contempt upon the brazen revelry of the suitors, ‘you need to think seriously about how you can rid your home of these wretched leeches. I believe that your father is alive and will soon return. If you want to learn what has befallen him, you should journey to see Menelaus, who has recently returned from Troy and may well have news of him.’

Telemachus felt heartened, and looked Mentor up and down. He was not quite as he remembered him of old; could he be more than a mortal?

The next morning Telemachus called a public assembly. With all the men of Ithaca gathered round, he addressed them. ‘A double woe has befallen my household! It was enough to lose my father, your worthy king, but worse are the impertinent scoundrels who court my mother, running through my property and my fortune until there is almost nothing left. It is an intolerable situation!’

and its customs. It is thought that Odysseus may well have been a real person. But this poem is not a chronicle: its fantastical content shows how, as they were told and retold, with all the many elaborations that people added, these stories were meant to entertain. Nevertheless, it does offer value as a historical resource, in the way it depicts the 8th century BCE world of the poet.

At this time the old, rigid system of kingship was being replaced by an emergent class system, where ultimately, many years still down the line, the people themselves would have a voice.

Through the poem's detailed descriptions there emerges a world on which are embossed its social mores, religious beliefs, codes of honour, and the daily lives of the people. We learn about the habits of the people and of the rulers, their means of mobility, the sacredness of hospitality, and how they honoured their dead and the gods.

We also learn about the role of women in that society. The tricks used by heroines such as Circe and Calypso (and even Penelope) in

The Odyssey show how women had to resort to using their powers of seduction to get what they wanted. Usually a man was at the helm of the family: Telemachus, although he is young and his mother is queen, has the authority to send her from the room. The characteristics considered desirable in a woman were beauty, modesty, perseverance and faith. Penelope is held up to us as a shining example.

We can see, too, in the way the gods seem to dominate every decision made by the characters, how central they were to the everyday lives of people in Homer's time. Every house, from the humblest home to the most glorious palace, had an altar, and before every major life event, people would offer up prayer and seek the gods' favour.

The Greek gods

Also known as 'The Olympians' because their home was the high Mount Olympus, the Greek gods were imagined as super-humans who could control the lives of ordinary mortals. Of the twelve gods of Mount Olympus, these are the ones who appear most often in *The Odyssey*: