

Teacher Guide

Grades 9–12

The Odyssey

Homer

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THE ODYSSEY

by
Homer

Teacher Guide

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Note

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ISBN 978-1-60878-335-9

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Publisher Information

For a complete catalog, contact—

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P.O. Box 97
Bulverde, TX 78163-0097

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Table of Contents

Overview	3
Plot Summary	3
Initiating Activities	12
Anticipation Guide, Recommended Videos, Log, Brainstorming, Role Play, Freewriting, Discussion Topics, Geography, Related Reading, Preparation for Dramatization, Listening, Choral Reading, Overview, Oral Reading	
Discussion Questions, Vocabulary, Writing Ideas, Activities	16
Book I	16
Book II	17
Book III.....	18
Book IV.....	19
Book V	20
Book VI.....	21
Book VII.....	22
Book VIII.....	23
Book IX	24
Book X	25
Book XI	26
Book XII	27
Book XIII.....	28
Book XIV	29
Book XV	30
Book XVI	31
Book XVII	31
Book XVIII	32
Book XIX	33
Book XX	34
Book XXI	35
Book XXII	36
Book XXIII	37
Book XXIV.....	38
Post-reading Extension and Assessment Activities	40

3. Why did Poseidon stir up a storm? (He was still angry with Odysseus about Polyphémus.) How did the storm affect Odysseus? (He nearly drowns in the stormy sea.)
4. How did the nymph, Ino, help Odysseus survive? (She gave him a magic shawl which he was to throw aside once he made it to shore.)
5. Does this part of the story remind you of any other stories you know?

Research

Tithónus is mentioned in the Book's opening lines, page 95. Find the most famous version of the myth in which the goddess of the dawn wins him the gift of immortality but forgets to ensure that he never grows older. (See Tennyson's poem "Tithónus.")

Literary Analysis: Homeric Epithet

A **Homeric Epithet** is an adjectival phrase so often repeated in connection with a person or thing that it almost becomes a part of the name, like "stout Hermes" (page 97). Have students make a list of other epithets they find in the *Odyssey*.

Writing Activity

Write an alternative ending for the Book. What do you think would have happened if Odysseus hadn't tossed away the shawl the nymph had given him?

Book VI, Pages 113–127

Vocabulary

domineering	indignant	immaculate	indecence
astute	incomprehensible	felicity	base
plenitude	incredulously	insolent	

Discussion Questions

1. Who was Nausícaa? (daughter of Alcóon, King of Phaeácia) Why did she decide to go to the riverbank? (Athena planted the idea in her mind that she should wash the family's clothes, especially her own wedding finery.)
2. Who woke up Odysseus? (Nausícaa and the girls playing ball and shouting) Why did they run off when he appeared? (He was naked and covered in brine.) Why did they come back? (Athena gave Nausícaa courage, and she measured her maids.)
3. Why did Nausícaa trust Odysseus? (He explained that a god had cast him into a stormy sea.) How did his appearance change? (He bathed himself, applied the oil the girls gave him, and was enhanced in appearance by Athena.) What line reveals that Nausícaa wouldn't have minded having Odysseus for a husband? ("Would that my husband were a man like him" page 124)

4. How did Odysseus find the town? (He followed Nausícaa’s wagon on foot.) Why didn’t he sit with Nausícaa? (She told him she didn’t want the townfolk to talk.) What instructions did she give about how to approach her parents? (She advised Odysseus to go to her mother and ask for help.)
5. Did anything in Book VI make you smile or laugh?

Research

Who are the Graces mentioned on page 115 (goddesses who personify grace and beauty)?

Writing Activity

You are Nausícaa. Write a description of Odysseus in your private journal. What does he look like? How do you feel about him? What plans do you have for the next day?

Book III, Pages 129–142

Vocabulary

prodigious	naughty	revered	friend
azurite	consignmate	edifice	venerable
propitious	tempest		

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Athena wrap Odysseus in mist? (She didn’t want anyone to insult or accuse him.)
2. What did Odysseus ask Nausícaa for? (A crew to take him home.) Do you think she found him rather boring for a stranger who had just come to her door? Have she and her husband agreed to give him what he wants? (They agree to give him a crew and ship.)
3. Did Odysseus tell Nireus and Alcínoüs the truth about how he met their daughter—and about his past? (Yes—he told them about Calypso, the storm, and meeting Nausícaa on the beach.) Did they trust him? (They seem to.) What about the Phaeácians, in general?
4. Alcínoüs said, “I would that such a man so worthy, might prove to be my son-in-law” (page 141). Why do you think this father considered a stranger good marriage material? (In part due to Athena’s influence, Odysseus appeared and sounded worthy.) Do you think Odysseus will be tempted to stay and marry Nausícaa? Do you think Alcínoüs will pressure Odysseus?

Language Study

1. Make a list of your favorite “Homeric similes” from the *Odyssey*.
2. Make a list of common words or expressions that have their origins in the names of Greek gods or goddesses or other characters found in the *Odyssey*. (for example hermetically—Hermes; a mentor, teacher—Mentor; tantalize—Tantalus) A helpful resource for this project: *Dictionary of Word Origins* by Joseph T. Shipley.
3. Find another translation such as the one by E. V. Rieu or Lattimore. Compare a parallel passage in both translations. Which do you prefer—and why?

Drama

Choose your favorite scene from the *Odyssey*, create some simple costumes/props, and stage a “tableau vivant” (with actors frozen in place). Photograph group tableaux and create a bulletin board display. (Some scenes that would work well include: Book VI—Odysseus awakened by the shouts of the girls; Book VII—Odysseus meets various characters in Ithaca; Book XIX—the washing of Odysseus’ feet.)

Art

1. Illustrate one of the weapons or other objects described in the poem, such as Odysseus’ bow or his and Penelope’s olive-tree bed.
2. Create a mobile of items from the *Odyssey* (e.g., Ino’s shawl, Aegle’s brood, the stake used to blind the Cyclops, the bag of winds, etc.). Describe the significance of each item. This can be done by writing a one-paragraph caption to be posted on the wall near the display, or by labeling each item on a tag.
3. Create a symbol for each of the major characters and gods in the *Odyssey*. For example, Zeus’ symbol might be a thunderbolt and Penelope’s might be her loom.
4. Draw a political cartoon that makes a parallel between a current event and the *Odyssey*. For example, HomeLink modern-day researchers in the field of alcohol abuse, points out the dangers of drinking too much.
5. Design a mask for your favorite character (complete with picture and saying).
6. As a group project, create a story map/mental that traces Odysseus’ journey. (This could be linear, zigzag, circular—not necessarily transposed on the geographical route.) Caption and illustrate each key incident as Odysseus makes his way from Troy to Ithaca.
7. Imagine that you are a travel agent. Design a brochure about trips to the places Odysseus visited. (Do some research to find out about places tourists can actually visit, such as the caves in Ithaca where Odysseus supposedly hid his treasure before returning home.)
8. Show major events in the *Odyssey* on an illustrated timeline.

Music

Homer probably told the *Odyssey* with the accompaniment of music. What sorts of music/instruments did a typical Greek bard of his time play? Choose your five favorite scenes and (a) locate recordings of music like that which you think Homer might have used to accompany these scenes and (b) find five pieces of contemporary music which Homer might use today to capture the mood of these scenes.