

Book report for the odyssey essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Odyssey is an epic poem written in a series of 24 books. It is one of two epics written over 2500 years ago by the Western European poet, Homer. This epic joins Odysseus 10 years after the Trojan War. The story follows him as he attempts to return to his home in Ithaca where he reigns as King.

I am wiser after having read this book because this story taught me about some of the social practices of the Greeks. It taught me that men were dominant and women played a submissive role in their society. The themes in the story interest men: war, hunting, and problems of warriors while the things that interest women are left out completely or are dealt with briefly. In the Greek society, women were valued but participated in worldly affairs only with open approval from the men who directed their lives. Penelope, Odysseus' wife, waited 20 years for his return. Her patience and respect for her husband shows marriage fidelity. She is depicted as the perfect wife and mother.

The best aspects of The Odyssey are the exciting adventures Odysseus goes through and the explanations and descriptions of the conditions and scenery. Homer did not explain or describe things as clear as he could have; however, this was a good thing. It served to leave something up to the imagination and creativity of the reader. Odysseus struggles with extremely menacing foe such as a giant cyclops, Polyphemus, who eats Odysseus' men like bite-size candy and a six headed beast, able to devour men whole. Homer allows the imagination of the reader to come up with the details like the color and size of the creatures and what the surroundings look like.

Odysseus was away at Troy for 10 years fighting a long, difficult war.

Unfortunately for Odysseus the war was just the beginning of his adventure.

His journey home turned out to be filled with mishaps.

First, his ship was separated from the rest of the other ships in a furious storm causing him to wash up in the land of the Lotus eaters (perhaps Libya). Eating the lotus-fruit would make you forget everything except a desire to stay on the island. Some men had to be dragged back to the ship to overcome their desires. Next they went to the island of the Cyclops (huge, one-eyed giants). A cyclops by the name of Polyphemus spotted the sailors, captured them, and kept them in his cave so he could eat them later.

Odysseus told the giant his name was " Nobody." Each morning the cyclops let his sheep out to graze, but never did he let a man escape. He ate all those who tried! Eventually, the men who were still alive devised a plan to escape. Odysseus first found a stick big enough to damage the Cyclops' eye and, the minute Polyphemus fell asleep, stabbed the stick into the giant's eye. When anyone asked him what happened and who did it he told them " Nobody" did it and so no one helped him. The next morning when the sheep went out, the men clung to the sheep's bellies so when the blind Cyclops felt them he wouldn't be able to discover the men. When Polyphemus discovered the trick, he asked Poseidon to avenge what had happened to him. Poseidon agreed and blew Odysseus off course on his voyage home making this a much longer and more difficult task. The men were then confronted by the god Aeolus, the keeper of the wind. He tied the storm winds in a bag and gave them to Odysseus to keep so the crew would face only fair wind.

Unfortunately for Odysseus, his men opened the bag thinking it was full of

treasures, and when the storm winds escaped they were thrown off course, again, to the island Aeaëa, home of the witch Circe. She turned unwanted visitors into pigs, and this was the fate of the first men sent for help from her by Odysseus. The god Hermes found and helped Odysseus by giving him a flower that would immunize him from Circe's spells. Knowing Circe would be unable to harm him, he went straight up to the witch and demanded the release of his men. Circe was quite impressed by Odysseus's boldness and fell in love with him. She released his men, yet they all stayed there for a while before returning on their journey home. She had three kids with Odysseus, but he was still determined to go home. As they were leaving, Circe sent the men to the underworld to consult Tiresias about their future. Tiresias was an old mortal who can see the future. He was known to give good advice. When Odysseus consulted with Tiresias, the old man warned him that when he got home he would find men fighting over his goods. After consulting with Tiresias the men set sail once again. They got safely past the Sirens by blocking their ears with wax, except for Odysseus who wanted to hear their voices. He had himself tied down so he could not be lured to them. The dangers did not end here. They had to travel down a narrow channel between two monsters which was impossible to avoid. One was Scylla, who had six heads and snapping dogs at her waist. The other was the whirlpool Charybdis which sucks ships to the bottom of the ocean and to their doom. Odysseus chose to pass nearer Scylla. They barely made it through, although she did kill and eat a few men. On Sicily the sailors killed and ate cattle in a violent and hungry rage, ignoring the warnings of Odysseus and Tiresias. Tiresias had warned Odysseus not to harm these sacred animals and the angry gods sank his ship, drowning all of his men. Odysseus survived by

holding to the mast of the ship. Eventually he was washed up on the island of Ortygia, where Calypso ruled. Calypso is a nymph who is good at getting her own way, and has the power to make mortals do what she wants. When she found Odysseus she fell in love keeping him for seven years against his will. The god Zeus finally made Calypso let Odysseus go or he would never have returned home. When Odysseus finally returned home he found everything as Tiresias had predicted. The nobles were trying to get Odysseus's wife, Penelope, to remarry and they were all squandering his wealth. Odysseus posed as a beggar and only revealed his true identity to his son, Telemachus, and they secretly removed all the other nobles' weapons from the hall. Penelope at this time had no idea that Odysseus had returned home. She was too busy deciding who should be her new husband. Penelope knew if Odysseus were dead then it would be wise for her to accept a new husband. Her new husband had to be the best, so she made up a task for the men. Penelope said she would marry the man who could string the bow Odysseus left behind and shoot an arrow through the handles of twelve axes. She was sure no one could do it. The suitors all tried but not one of them succeeded at even stringing the bow. Odysseus then stepped forward in a disguise. All the men laughed at the old man but he was the only one who could string the bow and shoot the arrow, which went right through all twelve axe handles. Realizing who he was, the men quickly went to get their weapons, only to find they were gone. Odysseus showed no pity and killed all the men. He and his family were united once again.