

"THE ODYSSEY" BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We are about to start our voyage amongst the homeric ship! We are traveling all over in the Mediterranean during our epic quest to get home! Before we are able to make it home safely, we have to make several stops along the way. During those stops, we will gain the background information necessary to understand the odyssey, and make it back alive.



Stop 1: Epic Poetry. (Place to go: 1040F in the textbook)

1. What is an epic?

2. List **four** literary devices and/or characteristics of an epic poem. Explain.
 - a.
 - i. Explanation:
 - b.
 - i. Explanation:
 - c.
 - i. Explanation:
 - d.
 - i. Explanation:
3. List three other Epic Poems influenced "The Odyssey" and its author Homer.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Got it? Good! Now, for the next stop, we have to stay in the book. While there is a lot we do not know, everyone knows that there's no place like Home(r). You can also use 1040E in the textbook.

1. Was there really a Homer? When was he born? (No, not Homer Simpson.)

2. What epic poem has similar traits to "The Odyssey"? What are those similarities?

3. What group of people greatly respected "The Odyssey"? What things did they do with it?

Even though we know that there's no place like Home(r), we are about to learn what it will take to get back! First, we have to understand why Odysseus left in the first place! While it might seem like quite a bore, Odysseus left to fight in the _____. (Go to page 1043 for the answer).

CHARACTERISTICS OF EPIC HEROES

Most epic heroes possess most or all of 7 general characteristics you can use to help you decide if a character is, indeed, an epic hero or heroine.

Trait 1: A Noble Birth

- Most epic heroes will have an above average station in life.
- They will be kings, princes, or nobles of some sort.
- Commoners usually do not become epic heroes.

Trait 2: Capable of deeds of great strength and courage

- Basically, this means the hero has the potential for great deeds.
- The magnitude of these actions are well above and beyond what the commoner does.
- While most epic heroes are good, not all are.

Trait 3: Great Warrior

- Before the hero of an epic does his business in the epic, he has usually established himself in combat during a war.
- Sometimes, as in *The Iliad*, we see the hero at war.
- In most, like *Beowulf* and *The Odyssey*, the hero has spent much time in battle.

Trait 4: Travels Over a Vast Setting

- Simply put, you cannot be an epic hero if you stay in your village your whole life.
- The more countries or areas traveled to, the better.
- The farther away from your own country, the better.
- Distance makes the hero's actions greater because they aren't selfish; they are for another country or people.

Trait 5: National Heroism

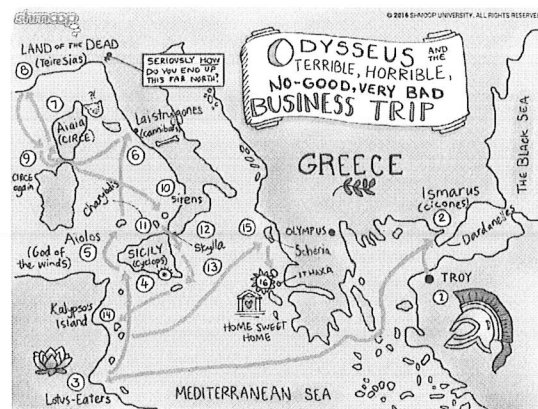
- Before a hero can be celebrated by countries the world over, he must first be recognized in his home country as a great and heroic person.

Trait 6: Humility

- Even as the rest of the world recognizes the great deeds of the hero, he is never a braggart or even willing to take applause.
- He commits his deeds because he knows they need doing, and the fame and rewards that he receives are only a matter of course, not the reason for completing his quests.

Trait 7: Faces Supernatural Foes and/or Receives Supernatural Help

- Most epic heroes either receive aid from a god or goddess or battle some superhuman enemy.
- This is what makes a hero's action epic: they fight something mere mortals cannot battle. *Beowulf* has his Grendel; *Odysseus* his Cyclops.
- For each hero, the enemy is unique. You won't see two heroes battling the same foe.



Guided Reading Questions of *The Odyssey*

Section 1: "Sailing from Troy"

Part of Hero's Journey: _____

Plot Summary: What happened?

Section 2: "The Lotus Eaters"

Part of Hero's Journey: _____

Plot Summary: What happened?

Character Summary: What did Odysseus and his crew do? Did anyone die or get left behind? What actions were taken during this section?

The Prophecy: How does this part of the journey relate to Teiresias' prophecy? Is Odysseus trying to fight fate? Is the prophecy coming true?

Section 3: "Cyclops"

Part of Hero's Journey: _____

Plot Summary: What happened?

Character Summary: What did Odysseus and his crew do? Did anyone die or get left behind? What actions were taken during this section?

The Prophecy: How does this part of the journey relate to Teiresias' prophecy? Is Odysseus trying to fight fate? Is the prophecy coming true?

Section 4: "The Land of the Dead"

Part of Hero's Journey: _____

Plot Summary: What happened?

Character Summary: What did Odysseus and his crew do? Did anyone die or get left behind? What actions were taken during this section?

The Prophecy: How does this part of the journey relate to Teiresias' prophecy? Is Odysseus trying to fight fate? Is the prophecy coming true?

Section 5: "The Sirens"
Plot Summary: What happened?

Part of Hero's Journey: _____

Character Summary: What did Odysseus and his crew do? Did anyone die or get left behind? What actions were taken during this section?

The Prophecy: How does this part of the journey relate to Teiresias' prophecy? Is Odysseus trying to fight fate? Is the prophecy coming true?

Section 6: "Scylla and Charybdis"
Plot Summary: What happened?

Part of Hero's Journey: _____

Character Summary: What did Odysseus and his crew do? Did anyone die or get left behind? What actions were taken during this section?

The Prophecy: How does this part of the journey relate to Teiresias' prophecy? Is Odysseus trying to fight fate? Is the prophecy coming true?

Section 7: "The Cattle of the Sun God"
Plot Summary: What happened?

Part of Hero's Journey: _____

Character Summary: What did Odysseus and his crew do? Did anyone die or get left behind? What actions were taken during this section?

The Prophecy: How does this part of the journey relate to Teiresias' prophecy? Is Odysseus trying to fight fate? Is the prophecy coming true?