

NOTE: If you're not very familiar with word processing, remember to read the lesson plan for Lessons 19 and 20 soon to make sure you understand what you'll be doing. If you are already familiar with word processing, you should look at it just to check how you'll be introducing it to the students.

TITLE OF LESSON

English 1 Unit 1 Lessons 12 and 13 – Mythology: *The Odyssey*

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TIME ESTIMATE FOR THIS LESSON

Two class periods

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ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

California – Eng 9-10: R1.0-1, 1.3, 3.0, 3.3-7, 3.9, 3.12; L/S1.1

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MATERIALS

copies of Book 1 (and possibly Book 2) of *The Odyssey* – enough for one for each student

(We're recommending the Perseus Project's online version of *The Odyssey*. It would be very worth your while to explore, and encourage your students to do the same, the whole Perseus Project whose homepage is <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu> The exact address (URL) of the complete text of The Odyssey at the Perseus Project is <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0136>) Should you choose to use the Samuel Butler translation which is also available on this web page, you will be reading a Greek text with Roman names, not a very logical read.

**Plot Diagram** – Student Page (one for each student)

**Background Information, The Odyssey** – Teacher Page (use these if you would like to provide more information for your students)

butcher paper cut into poster-sized sections

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LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To look at the components of stories
  - To recognize patterns in literature
  - To determine meaning based on context and their own experiences
  - To practice summarizing as a means of improving comprehension
  - To read and listen to reading for enjoyment
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FOCUS AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS

- 1) Homework Check – Pick up the final draft of students' creation myths with both the first and second drafts stapled to the back. Grade them and hand them back to students tomorrow. Make sure when you hand them back to students and that they put them in their permanent portfolios which are never to leave the classroom. Pass back the Greek Society Chart.
- 2) **Agenda** – Have students copy the agenda you have posted on the front board.
- 3) Mini Lecture – Remind students of the oral tradition of the myths and explain that *The Odyssey* is part of the same tradition. Homer, the presumed author, was known as a great *rhapsode*, a traveling oral poet, known in many other cultures as a *griot*. His job was to tell stories and in his day he is said to have been a more important cultural figure than Shakespeare was in his day.

Homer traveled through Greece with a stock of the favorite stories of the day – somewhat the way band or musician going on tour, playing everyone's favorite song, does today. Ask the students to imagine that they're going to hear their favorite band or musician play. Aren't there specific songs they would want or expect to hear? What is the response of the audience when a group starts to play a popular song, even if they've all listened to the CD 4,000 times? Does everyone in the audience already know all the words and music?

It was very much the same thing with Homer. When he told a story, most of his audience already knew a

good bit of the story or stories. These were normally stories of events from almost 500 years before Homer's time. The exciting parts for the audience were being able to hear *Homer*, the famous Homer, live, and getting to hear the twist he would put into the stories in each particular new telling. Ever hear a friend say "That was the best version of \_\_\_\_\_ I have ever heard?" Did you wish you had been there? Were you there? Homer's audience too wanted to be there to hear the best version of, for example, Odysseus's ten-year struggle against monsters and vixens, gods and hell, to get back home after the Trojan War.

The biggest difference between today's traveling poets/musicians and Homer is that Homer's 'songs' – which he spoke or said to music (an early rapper?) – were hundreds of pages long. The theory is that instead of going to one show, one night, people would go every day for several days, even a week or so, whatever it took to hear the whole story. Although primarily it was the wealthy who had that kind of time, it is possible others were able to participate, especially in light of the agrarian nature of most of the Greek society.

\*A note about spelling terms and names in *The Odyssey*: Many people use *k*'s where the most common spellings of the same words use *c*'s. Some examples are Telémakhos for Telemachus, Akhilleus for Achilles, Kyklops for Cyclops. We have pretty much stuck with the most common spellings. Because pronunciation is easier with the *k*'s, since our *c* and *ch* are pronounced as *k* in Greek (for example, Achilles is pronounced a-kill-ees), you may choose to use the *k* spellings. This will probably depend upon the edition of *The Odyssey* you decide to use.

Also, you will probably come across versions of *The Odyssey* with the Roman names in place of the Greek names (e.g. Ulysses for Odysseus, Jove for Zeus). We always refer to characters by their Greek names.

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#### ACTIVITIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP

1. Lecture – (See Homework Assignment below for note about beginning of second day of *The Odyssey*, Lesson 13.) Again, you will decide how much background information you need to provide and how much you have time for. But at least briefly, explain to the students that:

Homer was a Greek poet who lived in about the 8th century BC (or BCE). He was supposed to have been blind, but don't bring that up yet – you'll tell them that when they do a visualization exercise.

The Trojan War is said to have taken place about 1250 BC (BCE), so Homer was re-telling a very old story from the glory days.

As far as the rest of the history surrounding *The Odyssey* goes, you have to decide what you want to tell them now and what you'll bring up as you read. If you give them the story of Helen and Paris or tell them about events from the war itself, events that aren't recounted in *The Odyssey*, be sure to point out that it is all background and not part of *The Odyssey* itself. Homer – we'll refer to the author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* as Homer, though there are those who don't believe it was he, or contend even that Homer never existed – collected centuries of stories and consolidated them into many works. Two of his most famous are *The Iliad*, which tells the story primarily of the last year or so of the Trojan War between the Trojans (of modern day Turkey) and the Greeks, and *The Odyssey*, which tells the story of Odysseus's efforts to return home from the Trojan War and the obstacles he encountered. (We are not going to consider the question of authorship of *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*, though it is a point worth mentioning. If you're interested in investigating this possibility with your class, there are many resources available.)

2. Read Book 1 – Pass out the **Plot Diagram** to be used for Book 1 and explain to students they should fill it out as you are reading. Begin reading. Again, you should model summarizing for the class. Because this is a 600 or so page epic poem, instead of a three to five page short story, you can read larger sections before you have to do a summary. But you'll also notice that some sections of the book are denser and require more frequent summarizations. See if the students notice these things, or mention them to them.
3. Poster Summaries – Since you have 2 class periods for this, don't rush. Take your time reviewing with students.

Summarize as frequently as they need to. Large charts for the walls help students keep people and places organized. Have butcher paper on hand and a willing student to record things like names and descriptions of characters – mortal, immortal, and in-between – familial relationships, and places.

As students create the posters to keep track of the characters, have them try to determine or, at this point guess, which Greek values, dangers, or fears each character represents.

4. **Plot Diagram** – At the same time, students should be keeping track of all of these things on their plot diagrams.
5. **Evaluation** – As students go through this process, introduce to them the idea of evaluation. Explain that you don't mean evaluation in terms of grades and tests, but in terms of assessing the *value* of things. Whenever they say they like a movie, they have, probably subconsciously, evaluated it to a degree, though they most likely cannot form an argument for or against the director's use of certain camera angles, dialogue techniques, and so on, unless they've studied cinematography. As they develop their reading and writing skills, they will also be developing skills to evaluate writing. A true, educated evaluation of something like *The Odyssey* would not be "It's a good book, but it's pretty long." A true evaluation would include discussion of the character and plot development, the use of meter, similes, and so on. In order to evaluate the whole or parts of any work, experiment, argument, etc., students need a fairly strong mastery of, if not the techniques themselves, then at least the concepts involved. That's what they're in the process of forming.
6. **Book 2** – Once students have finished reading Book 1 they should make sure they've completed the **Plot Diagram**. Time permitting, continue on to Book 2.
7. **Folder** – Students should put these completed **Plot Diagrams** into their classroom folders.
8. **Homework Assignment** – For Lesson 12 – FUN! Explain:  
You've just come home 20 YEARS late. You are challenged with coming up with a story for your mother/grandmother/husband/wife.... to explain your delay. This better be good or you're out on your ear.

You can make adjustments here. The students could pretend to be hours or days late if you prefer. The idea, as you should tell them, is to consider *The Odyssey* as Odysseus's way of trying to explain his way out of being 20 years late so Penelope will welcome him back.

Students can work together on this homework assignment. If students want to illustrate their stories, great. Some students may prefer to do this as a storyboard, in the form of a comic strip. If they do this, insist that they use dialogue to some extent. This way you can encourage those who are not as strong writers to imagine a full story without having to write one. At the same time, they have to include some dialogue since, if you're not very good at something, you're never going to get better if you never do it. And, since this is a fun assignment, they can write the way they speak and they don't have to worry so much about grammar and vocabulary issues. Sometimes writing has to just be for fun with no consequences attached (except maybe getting kicked out of your house if the story's not good enough!) They'll have plenty of time in other lessons to work on both their story writing and essay writing skills in assignments designed specifically for that. This assignment is founded on fostering creativity and reinforcing understanding of story components.

At the beginning of class for Lesson 13 (the second of these two *Odyssey* lessons), have any students who want to read their stories to the class do so. Encourage creativity and absurdity. Remember: the Cyclopes, the Laistrygones, Odysseus's men being turned into swine. Reality is NOT the objective here. No one would believe it anyway.

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#### GROUP ROLES

Everyone in the class will be acting as summarizers for this class period.

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#### DOCUMENTATION FOR PORTFOLIO

Creation Myth