

Level  
3

## Penguin Young Readers Factsheets

# Stories from the Odyssey

Teacher's Notes

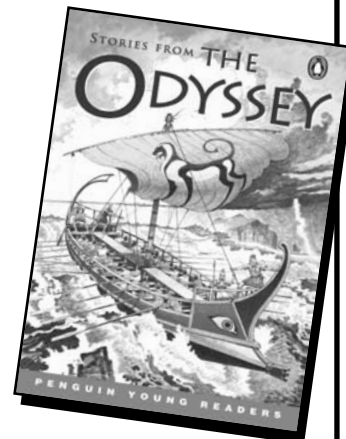
### Summary

*Stories from the Odyssey* relates three adventures of Odysseus and his crew on their ten-year journey home to Ithaca (off the western coast of mainland Greece) after the Trojan War of around 1200 BC.

In the first story they are in great danger from the man-eating giant, the Cyclops. Odysseus is clever, plays a trick on the Cyclops and they escape.

In the second story, Odysseus and his men must sail past the Sirens, who are beautiful creatures half-female, half-bird with magical singing voices. Their beauty draws men to them, but when the boats get close they break against the rocks, and the men drown.

In the third story Odysseus and his men have their most dangerous part of the journey. Many men are lost, eaten by a sea-monster, and the rest lose their lives by disobeying their leader and making the Sun-god angry. Finally, Odysseus arrives home, where his wife Penelope has been waiting for him.



### Background to the Reader

Homer's *Odyssey* is one of the greatest stories of a journey of all time. It is a story, in verse, of a man's struggle against natural and supernatural forces. It may have been written as long ago as 800 BC, and was probably a handwritten book. The Greeks believed that the *Odyssey* was composed by a poet called Homer. Nothing is known about Homer and seven cities claim to be his birthplace.

### Topics and themes

**Magic:** The gods have special powers, especially with wind, and the sea. Spend time talking about Poseidon the sea god, and the Sun-god. What do the pupils think they look like? How does their magic work?

**Monsters:** The Cyclops is a one-eyed giant; the Sirens are half-human, half-bird; Scylla is a man-eating monster who lives in a cave in the cliffs; Charybdis is a monster in the form of a giant whirlpool. Do pupils think they really existed?

**Time:** The story of the *Odyssey* is a very old one: it was probably written as early as 800 BC. An easy way to help pupils understand the concept of BC and AD is by drawing a timeline. (See activity 1.) BC stands for Before Christ. AD is Latin for Anno Domini, translated as In The Year of our Lord.

Odysseus' journey took 10 years, the time span of the Penguin Young Reader stories is 7 years.

**Travel:** Sailing boats relied on the winds for movement. Sailors knew how to understand the wind, and use the sails to get up good speeds. When there was no wind, they had to row. The sea around the Greek Islands was sometimes rough or very quiet, and rocks made the journey dangerous as boats could easily be destroyed.

### Making use of the Reader

**Find the hero:** Look at the illustrations. Pick out Odysseus on all the pages. On how many pages does he appear? What is he doing? What is he wearing?

**Monsters:** Choose one of the monsters: the Cyclops, Sirens or Scylla. Describe it/them and say why it is/they are frightening. Make up a monster of your own. How big is it? Where does it live? How does it catch people or food?

**Card game:** Trace Odysseus on page 14 and the three monsters: the Cyclops on page 6, a Siren on page 18, and Scylla on pages 24–25. Photocopy the pictures and paste them onto cards. Make enough sets of four cards for each pair or group of

pupils. One pupil chooses a card from the set. The other pupil or rest of the group must ask questions and from the answers, which can only be 'yes' or 'no', decide who is on the card. 'Has it got one eye?' 'How many heads has it got?', etc.

**Drama activity:** Clever Odysseus fooled the Cyclops by telling him his name was Nobody. It may need some time to explain that the Cyclops didn't recognise that the word 'nobody' means 'no one' and really thought it was a name like John, Fred, Mary, etc. Make a short play on this. One pupil is the Cyclops, one, Odysseus, and the rest play the part of the Cyclops' friends. Make up the dialogue first (or see activity 2, on page 3 of this Factsheet).



# Stories from the Odyssey

## Chants

Chants help pupils become familiar with the sounds and rhythm of English in a fun way. The language in each chant recycles language from the story. Pupils listen to the chant a few times, clapping in time with the rhythm. Then they say the chant, verse by verse, with the cassette, beating out the rhythm as they say it. A possible activity with the chants, is to split the class into groups and get each group to say one verse.

## Using the accompanying audio cassette

Photocopy the dialogue of one story and hand copies out to pupils. Play the tape and pupils listen to the dialogue. Then play the tape again and ask pupils to number their photocopies according to who spoke first. For example, from The Cyclops, the first dialogue is the line starting with 'Come on friends'. The second is 'They look over here'.

## Notes on using the activities in the Factsheet

**Activity 1** The higher the number in front of BC, the nearer it should be to the left hand side. For AD it is the opposite.

**Activity 2** The sentences are from the story on pages 10–11. Pupils should read the story first, then try the activity without the book.

**Activity 3** Pupils find the right word for each sentence.

**Activity 4** The game requires a dice and counters. Pupils can play in pairs or small groups. To make the game last longer, pupils can only move forward the relevant number of spaces if they throw a 1, 2 or 3.







## Answers to the activities

### In the back of the Reader

#### Before you read

- Greek
  - It's in Europe.
  - A very long time ago.
  - Boat breaking up, getting lost, running out of food, becoming ill.
- page 4: 18 men, pages 16–17: 14 men  
page 26: 8 men, page 29: 1 man

#### After you read

- (i) knife , (ii) stick , (iii) rope   
(iv) wine , (v) beeswax , (vi) tree 
  - knife, to make a sharp stick to hurt the Cyclops
    - stick, to hurt the Cyclops in the eye
    - rope, to stop Odysseus trying to reach the Sirens
    - wine, to make the Cyclops sleepy
    - beeswax, to stop Odysseus's sailors hearing the singing of the Sirens
    - tree, on page 28, saves Odysseus from going down into the whirlpool and drowning
- Places: beach, cave, cliff, island  
Animals: bee, bird, cow, sheep  
Body parts: leg, neck, stomach

### In the factsheet

#### Activity 1



#### Activity 2

- What is your name?
- Odysseus thought fast.
- My name is Nobody, he said.
- All right then, Nobody, this is my present to you.
- I'll eat you last.
- Quick, get the stick!
- Help! Help!
- Is anything wrong?
- Nobody is hurting me.
- That's all right then, we'll go away.

#### Activity 3

- Ships SAIL in stormy seas.
  - In the cliffs are cold CAVES.
  - Sleepy SHEEP eat their supper.
  - The MAGIC music made the men move.
  - On the broken BOATS are bits of bodies.
- All the sentences have lots of words beginning with the same letter.



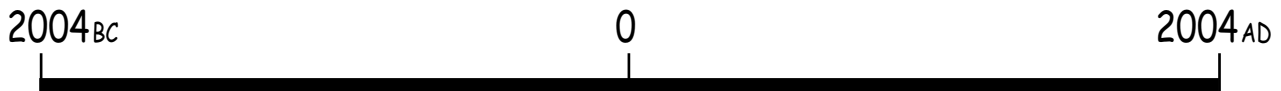
### Stories from the Odyssey

Name: .....

#### Activity 1

Fill in the dates:

1. 500 BC
2. 500 AD
3. 1000 BC
4. 1000 AD
5. 1900 AD
6. Your year of birth



#### Activity 2

What happens?

Cut out the sentences and put them in order.

Nobody is hurting me.

Quick, get the stick!

I'll eat you last.

All right then, Nobody, this is my present to you.

What is your name?

Odysseus thought fast.

Help! Help!

That's all right then, we'll go away.

Is anything wrong?

My name is Nobody, he said.



# Stories from the Odyssey

Name: .....

### Activity 3

a Make sentences. Write in the missing words.

caves magic sail boat sheep

1. Ships \_\_\_\_\_ in stormy seas.
2. In the cliffs are cold \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Sleepy \_\_\_\_\_ eat their supper.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ music made the men move.
- 5.

b What do you notice about the sentences?

### Activity 4

Play the game.

Start here

You can ride on a sheep. Go forward two spaces.

There is a rock in front of the cave. Miss a go.

The Sirens are singing. Go back 2 spaces

The wind blows the ship. Go forward four spaces.

There is a whirlpool. Go back to the start!

Finish

