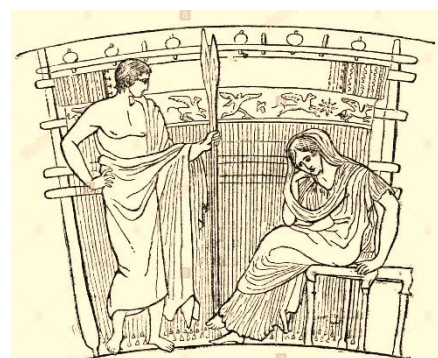


An Overview of the **ODYSSEY**



PART ONE OF THE ODYSSEY

The *Odyssey* focuses on the journey home of the King of Ithaca. The story begins ten years after the fall of Troy, as a result of the Trojan War. This in total, 20 years after Odysseus first sets foot to a journey to Troy to fight alongside the other Greek heroes. Odysseus, still has not returned to his kingdom in Ithaca. Unfortunately, during his absence in his kingdom, people assumed that he is already dead except his faithful wife Penelope and their 20-year-old son, Prince Telemachus, who had to deal with 108 suitors who have overrun Odysseus's palace, plagued his land, consumed his wealth, and continued to court Penelope. Despite the events, Penelope has remained faithful to Odysseus. Because of this, Prince Telemachus desperately wants to draw them out of the palace but he is neither confident nor experienced enough to be able to do that. Antinous, one of Penelope's suitors, plans on assassinating Prince Telemachus, getting rid of the sole hindrance to their dominion over Odysseus's palace.



The suitors have no knowledge of Odysseus still being alive. His journey home was hindered by the angered Poseidon, the god of the sea. Poseidon holds a grudge against Odysseus since the Greek hero blinded his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus, in his earlier travels. Despite being alive, Odysseus has been imprisoned in the island of Ogygia by Calypso, a beautiful nymph possessed by her love for Odysseus. Odysseus longs to return to his kingdom, wife, and son but he has no ship and crew, and other means of escape. While the Olympian gods and goddesses argue about Odysseus's fate, Athena, the goddess of wisdom and Odysseus's strongest supporter among the gods, convinces Zeus to allow Odysseus to venture back home and finally resolves to help Prince Telemachus in Ithaca.

Disguised as Laertes, a friend of the Prince Telemachus's grandfather, Athena persuades the prince to look for news about his father and to call for a meeting of the assembly and the people of Ithaca where they would plan about reproaching his mother's suitors, especially Antinous, Eurimachus, and Leocritus, who continue to disrespect him and their leads. The disguised Athena also prepares him for a great journey to Pylos and Sparta. Finally, she accompanies Telemachus to reach King Nestor and from there, they traveled to Sparta to ask help from the then reconciled Menelaus and Helen. The couple decided to help Prince Telemachus find his father because they consider Odysseus as a great friend and ally.



On the island of Pharos, the old sea-god Proteus, tells Menelaus that Odysseus is a captive of the nymph Calypso. Incidentally, Prince Telemachus's conversation with Menelaus and Helen lead him to find out about the faith of the former's brother, Agamemnon who was murdered by his wife Clytemnestra and

lover Aegisthus on his way home. The story now shifts to the suitors of Penelope and how they noticed that Prince Telemachus was missing, and thus planned to murder him as he sails back home. Overhearing this, the poor Penelope had no choice but to worry for the safety of her son.

PART TWO OF THE ODYSSEY



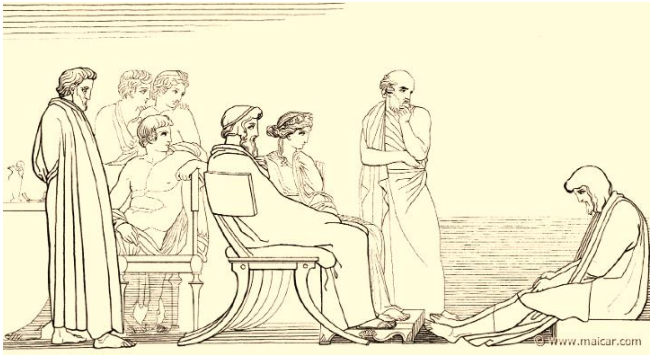
The second part of the epic brings the spotlight to Odysseus and his seven years of captivity in the hands of Calypso who has fallen deeply in love with him in the Island of Ogygia. The nymph wants Odysseus to become her husband in exchange for immortality. The nymph’s desire shattered when she received a message from Zeus, delivered by Hermes, the messenger of the gods. In the message, Zeus ordered Calypso to release Odysseus as response to the plea of Athena.

Calypso followed Zeus’s orders and released Odysseus and gave him clothing, food, and drink. The Greek hero who was now released built a raft as means of returning to home. Poseidon learns about this and wrecked the raft but the Greek hero managed to survive because of the protective veil given by Ino, a sea nymph. Odysseus swims and found himself on the shore of Scherie where the Phaeacians live. He falls asleep naked in a pile of leaves.

When Odysseus awoke, he saw Nausicaa, the Phaeacian princess, and asked her for help. Odysseus then took refuge in the maiden’s home with the consent of Arete and Alcinous. Without even asking his name, Alcinous promised him a ship to sail with on his way back home. Odysseus remains for several days and then travels back in time as he narrated his story to the Phaeaceans, who begged to hear the story of his adventures. Odysseus then spends the night narrating the fantastic adventure which he had before reaching the Phaeacians.

ODYSSEUS’S ADVENTURE AS HE NARRATED TO THE PHAEACEANS

His recount begins with the story about how his twelve ships were driven off course by storms and that afterwards, he and his men encountered the Lotus eaters who offered his men a fruit which could erase their memories about coming home and how he dragged his men back to the ship by force.



The next adventure took place as they landed on a deserted island near the dwelling of the Cyclopes. Then, Odysseus and his men entered the cave of Polyphemus which was abundant of mouthwatering cheese and meat. Polyphemus trapped Odysseus and his men, and decided to eat them. Cleaver as he is, Odysseus devised a plan to fool the Cyclopes by naming himself “nobody”. He got the Cyclopes drunk with wine and then pierced the monster’s eye with a wooden stake. In agony, Polyphemus yelled out to his neighbors for help, shouting that “nobody” had attacked him. As expected, nobody came to rescue the Cyclopes giving Odysseus and his men a chance to escape. However, before leaving the injured Polyphemus, Odysseus got carried away by his hubris and told the Cyclopes of his real name. Knowing Odysseus’ real name, the Cyclopes seek help from his father Poseidon. Polyphemus’ story angered the God of the sea and cursed Odysseus to wander in the sea for ten years.

Odysseus and his men stayed with Aeolus who gave them a bag containing all winds, except the west wind. This gift should have been able to ensure the safe return of Odysseus to his kingdom. However, while Odysseus was fast asleep and as they near Ithaca, the greedy men opened the bag thinking that it contained gold. As soon as the bag was opened, all winds came bursting out, sending Odysseus and his men back to where they came from. Aeolus was disappointed and rejected to assist Odysseus any further.

Odysseus and his men, sets foot to re-embark on their journey towards home. They encountered the *Laestrygonians* and as they entered the enemy's island, all of their ships were destroyed except for the ship boarded by Odysseus. They continued sailing and reached the Island of Aeaea where the witch-goddess Circe resided. Circe turned his men into swines after letting them eat cheese and drink wine which were poisoned. Hermes came to their rescue and gave Odysseus an herb called "moly". Odysseus then succeeded to convince Circe to return his men back to their human forms.



After a year, they were guided by Circe and reached the western edge of the world where Odysseus seek help from the dead as he summoned the spirit of the prophet Tiresias. He asked advice from the spirit on how he could appease Poseidon. The prophet told Odysseus to go to the island of Thrinacia and resist the temptation of eating the livestock of Helios. Odysseus also met the spirit of his mother Anticlea who told her of the current status of his household in Ithaca. Following the advice of Tiresias, Odysseus and his men sailed back to Aeaea, they buried the body of Elpenor, a ghost they met in the western edge of the world. Circe then guided Odysseus' crew in the remaining junctures of their journey.

The next journey of Odysseus and his crew was as they passed by the Sirens, whose songs cause ships to hit the rocks and sink. To avoid such dreadful scenario, all the men except Odysseus who wanted to hear the voice of the sirens, plugged their ears with beeswax. To ensure his safety, Odysseus was tied up. He was careful enough to instruct his men to never untie him for fear of him, drowning himself. Next, was their encounter with the six-headed monster, Scylla and the whirlpool Charybdis. Although Odysseus and his men survived, six men was taken by Scylla.

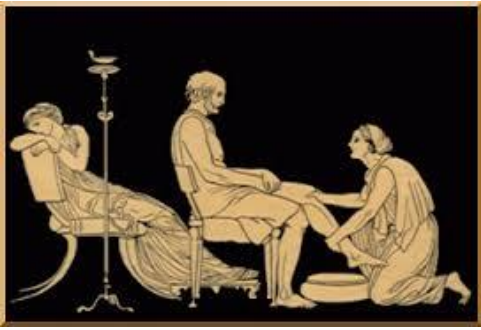
Finally, they landed on Thrinacia, an Island which they should have never stepped foot on. Zeus then prevented Odysseus and his men to leave the Island causing them to consume all the food provided by Circe for their journey. Although warned by the spirit of the prophet Tiresias, the men hunted the sacred cattle of Helios while Odysseus was away praying. As punishment, Zeus wreck their ship causing all, except Odysseus to drown as they were driven towards Charybdis. Odysseus then found himself in Ogygia where he was held captive by Calypso until the latter was ordered by Zeus to release Odysseus through the messenger, Hermes. This concluded Odysseus's narration of his journey to the Phaeacians.

Hearing Odysseus's story, the Phaeacians decided to give the hero treasure and help him go back home. They delivered the treasure and Odysseus while the hero was fast asleep at night to a harbour near Ithaca. This offended Poseidon causing him to lay his wrath upon the Phaeacians. Poseidon wrecked their ship and made their island suffer. Odysseus wakes up in the morning and saw Athena who confirmed that he was indeed in Ithaca. Odysseus hid his treasures in a cave and then disguised himself as an old beggar. Telemachus then returns from his journey to Sparta and meets with the beggar in Eumaeus' hut. Odysseus secretly introduced himself only to Telemachus. The father and son then planned to murder all the suitors. To put their plan in action, Telemachus was sent home first.

ODYSSEUS'S RETURN TO HIS KINGDOM ITHACA

Odysseus and Eumaeus went to the former's home with Odysseus still disguised as a beggar. The first one to recognize Odysseus was his dog, which is now old after waiting for his master's return. It showed its excitement but then eventually dies of old age. Odysseus could not even pet his dog during its last moments because of the risk of blowing his cover. As Odysseus arrives in his own home, he was immediately mocked and abused by the suitors, especially the quick-tempered Antinous, but he was able to endure it. Disguised as a beggar, he eventually sees Penelope and tested her intentions by telling her stories about Odysseus himself.

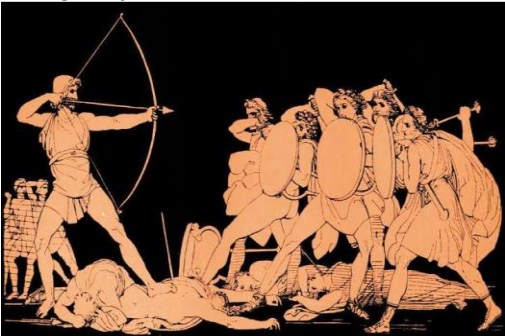




Eurykleia, Odysseus's housekeeper and nurse, uncovers the identity of Odysseus after recognizing a scar on his foot as she was washing his feet. Thrilled by the news of Odysseus's return, Eurykleia tried to send the word to Penelope, but she was silenced by Athena. She then swore to Odysseus to keep his return a secret to everyone.

The next day, Penelope urged the suitors to compete for her hand through a competition on archery, using Odysseus's bow. The mechanics

of the competition were far from simple, the man who can string and shoot the arrow through 12 axe heads will be the winner. The task was herculean to everyone, except for Odysseus, who of course joined the competition. As expected, all the suitors fail until the last participant came and accomplished the task effortlessly. Odysseus then reveals himself and pointed the arrow toward the suitors. With the help of his son Prince Telemachus and his trusted men, they killed all the suitors. Finally, Penelope and Odysseus were reunited, bringing peace to Ithaca.



Source:

<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/odyssey/summary/>