The Odyssey Background Notes

Homer and the Epic

* An \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is a long, narrative poem about a national or legendary hero.
* Ancient Greece produced two epics: **The Iliad** and **The Odyssey** (900-700 B.C.). Both written by **Homer**
* Homer: Blind; No official information has been found regarding his birthdate or birthplace, although it has been said he was born in 850 BC.

The Trojan War

* Trojan War ( \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ B.C.)
* Legend: war began after \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (prince of Troy) kidnapped \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (most beautiful woman in the world) from her husband, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (king of Sparta)​
* Menelaus built an army to get back his wife and restore his pride​
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was a soldier in this army
* The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ battled the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years with little success
* A soldier named Odysseus came up with a plan to make the Trojans think the Greeks had forfeited
* Odysseus = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Odysseus thought of a plan to trick the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ into thinking that the Greeks forfeited​
* Men hidden in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which gave Greeks access into the city​
* It worked! The Greeks \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Trojans.

Ancient Greek Values

* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Equivalent to FAME
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Helping Others
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: to Family, Community, and Gods
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The Odyssey

* In *The Odyssey,* Homer starts by telling the last days of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* The man responsible for the fall of Troy is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Odysseus was instrumental to the fall of Troy, so he \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the gods who were sympathetic to Troy (the Gods vowed he’d have a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ journey home).
* This journey takes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years and is the subject of *The Odyssey*
* Odysseus and his men encounter many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which makes their return to Ithica difficult (monsters, and you know, women who try to keep him from his wife)
* Somehow Odysseus always finds a way out of difficult situations (using his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_).

Gods and Goddesses

* Greeks believed completely in existence of gods and goddesses (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)
* Believed gods took active interest in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Gods behaved in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ways (had human characteristics)
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the gods was essential to survival
* Greek Culture known for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (Hero might be the town’s founder or a historical figure who played a major role in an important battle).
* Greeks also believed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The Odyssey Vocab

**Epic Poetry**

*Definition:* a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that usually contains the heroic deeds and events significant to a particular culture or society. ​

*Example:* *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Characteristics:*Begins “in medias res” (in the middle of things); Has a vast setting; Features lengthy, formal speeches; Contains divine interventions—THE GODS!; Features heroes that embody the values and morals of the civilization; The protagonist descends into the underworld/hell

**Epic Hero**

*Definition:*the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of an epic poem; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Admired for great achievements; Affected by great events ​

*Example:*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Epic Hero Characteristics:* Super-human qualities (stronger/braver than others); Still human, so has a flaw/weakness; Must conquer many difficult tasks; On a quest for something of great value (to him or his people); Villain(s) try to keep the hero from his quest; Knows that the Gods come first, then heroes, then humans; Physically beautiful

**Epic Simile**

*Definition:*an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that is elaborated in great detail and usually runs over several lines; Still uses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; Often contains thoughts that do not relate directly to the plot; Used for **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

*Cyclops​:* "...its crackling roots blazed and hissed - as a blacksmith plunges a glowing ax or adze in an ice-cold bath and the metal screeches steam and its temper hardens - that's the iron's strength - so the eye of Cyclops sizzled round that stake.“

**Oral Tradition**

*Definition:* stories that were told and retold \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from one generation to another ​

Many ancient Greeks were not literate unless their profession required them to be; Women didn’t have jobs, so most were illiterate; Men who partook in business professions (trading, selling goods) were literate​

**Protagonist:** The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in a story​

**Hubris:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Tragic Flaw:** the character defect that leads to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the protagonist in an epic or tragedy

**Epic Journey:** The adventures of a hero through exotic lands; he/she often faces extreme \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Polytheistic:** A society which believes in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ different gods/goddesses.

**Patriarchy:** a form of social organization in which the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (or men in general) is/are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the family, clan, or tribe

**Misogynistic:** reflecting or exhibiting hatred, dislike, mistrust, or mistreatment of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Imagery:** Visual or descriptive language that gives readers a vivid picture in their mind​

**Conflict:** A fight, battle, or struggle – with oneself, nature, or another character.

**Epithet:** A brief phrase that points out characteristics or traits associated with a person or thing

Example: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Allusion:** An \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to a famous person, place, event, or other literary work.

**Archetype:** Characters, situations, and images that are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in many different times and cultures (typical, recurring narrative design)

**Flashback:** An account of something that happened \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the beginning of the story. A flashback usually \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the story

**Characterization:** How an author reveals character traits and personalities in the story. ​

* *Indirect:* personality of a fictitious character is revealed through the character's speech, actions, appearance, etc.​
* *Direct:* author specifically reveals traits about the character in a direct, straightforward manner

**Figurative Language:** Language that uses words and phrases that are not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.