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TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

The Odyssey

based on the epic work by  
Homer

Written by

Barbara M. Linde & Mary B. Collins

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ISBN 978-1-58337-247-0  
Item No. 306389

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## A FEW NOTES ABOUT HOMER AND HIS WORKS

HOMERIC LEGEND. Apart from the historical writings of ancient Israel, the two major pieces of epic literature in Western civilization are the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey', two books ascribed to the ancient Greek poet Homer. For audiences today these two works represent a brilliant retelling of myths and legends. For the Greeks of the 7th century BC, however, these books were their history. Their past had been obliterated by the destruction of Mycenaean Civilization. The tales that came down to the Greeks from Homer and other storytellers were regarded by them as authentic narratives of a past they could not otherwise recover.

The individual who has traditionally been credited with putting the ancient Greek legends into writing is Homer. About him nothing certain is known. The later historian Herodotus (5th century BC) said that Homer was a Greek from Ionia on the west coast of Asia Minor. He was perhaps a native of the island of Chios and supposedly lived around 850 BC. Other historians place him closer to 750 BC.

Tradition depicts Homer as a blind minstrel wandering from place to place reciting poems that had come down to him from a very old oral tradition. Many scholars believe that the books as they exist today were not written by a single person and were not put in writing until centuries after they took their present form.

It is probable that much of the epic tradition of the two books was formed in the 200 or 300 years before an alphabet reached Greece in the 9th or 8th century BC. If so, it is possible that Homer used earlier writings to help him, or he could have dictated his poems to someone else because of his blindness or because he was illiterate.

### BACKGROUND TO THE 'ILIAD'

The 'Iliad' is a summary in verse of what was apparently a very long war conducted against Troy by the Greeks. As in much myth, there is a kernel of reality behind it. That there was such a war is quite likely. It would have made sense for predecessors of the ancient Greeks to conduct a war against the city in order to gain control of the Dardanelles, the water passage between the Mediterranean and Black seas. Had Troy, located near this waterway, been a hostile power, the destruction of it might have enabled the Greeks to colonize the west coast of Asia Minor. The war probably took place sometime between 1250 and 1185 BC.

For many centuries it was believed that the 'Iliad' was a piece of imaginative and inventive fiction. In 1870, however, the German scholar Heinrich Schliemann began excavations at the place where Troy was believed to have stood. He satisfied himself, and eventually the rest of the world, that there had actually been a war fought there. The excavations revealed that several cities had stood on the spot before the one Homer celebrated.

Altogether, Schliemann and his successors found the ruins of nine cities built atop one another over a period of 3,500 years. Homer's Troy was the seventh city. Ruins of its great walls, 16 feet (5 meters) thick, and flanking towers still remained.

## STORY OF THE 'ILIAD'

The 'Iliad' is an amazing tale of heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses. But most of all it is the story of Achilles, his anger and determination, and of his slaying of the Trojan hero Hector.

The purpose of the war was to recover the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. She was the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. But she had been carried off to Troy by Paris, son of King Priam of Troy. Menelaus, naturally, swore vengeance. He called upon the kings and princes of Greece to help him. Among those who responded were Achilles, Ajax, Diomedes, Odysseus, and Nestor. Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and brother of Menelaus, was chosen commander in chief.

After two years of preparation, the Greek fleet of more than 1,000 ships and an army of 100,000 men assembled at the port of Aulis in northeastern Greece. Hence the saying that Helen had the face that launched 1,000 ships.

The fleet was detained at Aulis by a calm sea. Seeking the reason for the delay, they were told by a soothsayer that Agamemnon had killed a stag sacred to the goddess Artemis (or Diana). The wrath of the goddess could only be appeased by the sacrifice of the offender's daughter. Agamemnon was forced to consent. His daughter Iphigenia was led to an altar. The goddess relented at the last minute and snatched Iphigenia away, leaving a deer in her place. Iphigenia became a priestess in the temple of Artemis at Tauris.

With the anger of Artemis appeased, the wind proved favorable and the fleet set sail. They arrived to find the Trojans well prepared. King Priam was too old to fight. He had assembled supplies for a long siege, however, and formed alliances with neighboring princes and chieftains. The city was also protected by impenetrable walls. Its defenders included Hector, Aeneas (of whom the Roman poet Virgil wrote much later), Sarpedon, and other warriors.

For more than nine years the Greeks besieged Troy unsuccessfully. Then Achilles quarreled with Agamemnon and refused to take further part in the conflict. It was the slaying of his friend Patroclus about two thirds of the way through the book that brought Achilles back to the action. He killed Hector in battle, but later he was himself killed-driving the Greeks to despair of ever winning.

It was then that the crafty Odysseus stepped forward with a stratagem. Aided by the goddess Athena, he planned the construction of a huge wooden horse with enough room to contain 100 warriors. Secretly the best warriors were hidden inside. Then the rest of the Greeks boarded ship as though to sail home in defeat. The Trojans thought the horse was a peace offering to Athena. One of the Trojan priests, Laocoön, warned against "Greeks, even bearing gifts." Cassandra, daughter of King Priam, also predicted disaster. She had been given the gift of prophecy but had then been

cursed-her prophecies, though always true, would never be believed. Their warnings were shouted down, and a breach in the wall was made to allow the horse to be dragged in.

As the Trojans slept that night, the Greek warriors emerged and signaled the waiting ships to bring back the rest of the Greeks to Troy. Soon thousands of Greeks were swarming into the city. By morning only a mass of ruins remained. Nearly all the inhabitants were slain. Helen returned to her husband, and the Greeks sailed for home. The one whose voyage home took the longest was Odysseus. The adventures of his return trip were told in the second Homeric epic.

## THE 'ODYSSEY'

Odysseus, who was later called Ulysses by the Romans, was king of Ithaca, a small island on the west coast of Greece. When summoned to join his fellow chieftains in the war against Troy, he could not bear to leave his young wife, Penelope, and their son, Telemakhos. He therefore pretended to be insane. To convince everyone of his madness, he plowed the sand along the seashore as though it were a field. But Prince Palamedes, who came for him, recognized this as a trick. To prove it, Palamedes placed little Telemakhos in the path of the plow. When Odysseus quickly turned the plow aside to avoid striking his son, all saw that his madness was a pretense. Odysseus could no longer refuse to go to war. Odysseus fitted 12 ships and went to Troy.

By the war's end he had been away from home for ten years. He filled his ships with treasure taken from the Trojans and set sail. Ordinarily the trip from Troy to Ithaca would have taken only a short time. The Greek gods, however, decided that it should take Odysseus ten years to reach his wife and son. During those years he and his men endured a series of hazardous and reable adventures.

Soon after leaving Troy the ships ran into a raging storm. For nine days the winds drove the ships past Ithaca and far off course. On the tenth day they reached the island of the Lotus-Eaters. When a party of men went ashore, they ate of the lotus plants. This magic food made them forget all longing for home. Odysseus had them dragged back to the ships, and again they set sail.

They arrived at the island of the Cyclopes, a race of fierce one-eyed giants. The ever-curious Odysseus set out with 12 men to explore the island. They entered the cave of Polyphemos, the most ferocious of the Cyclopes. He kept them prisoners and devoured six of the men. While the giant slept, Odysseus stole his staff and sharpened it. With this weapon, heated red-hot, he burned out the giant's eye. Odysseus and his men escaped the giant's fury by tying themselves underneath some sheep.

Their next stop was at the Aeolian Isle, a peaceful land where Aeolus, Keeper of the Winds, lived. When they left after a month of relaxation, Aeolus gave them a favorable wind to speed them on their way. The other winds he bound into a leather bag and put on board Odysseus's ship.

The ships sailed smoothly for nine days until Ithaca was in sight. While Odysseus was sleeping his men determined to open the leather bag because they believed it was filled with gold. Upon doing

so, the winds were released. They drove the ships back to the Aeolian Isle. This time, however, they were not welcomed. Aeolus believed that men so unlucky must be hated by the gods.

A week later the ships beached at the island of the Laestrygonians, a country of cannibals. Huge men hurled rocks and destroyed 11 of the ships. The crews of all 11 ships perished. Only Odysseus and his ship's crew survived to continue their journey.

Their next stopping place was the island home of Circe, the enchantress. She cast a spell on Odysseus's men, changing them into swine. Odysseus himself was protected by an herb given to him by Hermes, messenger of the gods. When Circe realized he was protected by Hermes, she changed the swine back into men and prevailed upon them all to remain for a year at her palace.

When they decided to leave, she said they must first journey to Hades, the dwelling place of the dead. When they reached Hades, Odysseus met many of his departed comrades, including Achilles. He and his companions were told that many perils still awaited them. There was a chance of reaching home. If they were to do so, however, they must curb their greed when they came to the place where the sun-god Helios pastured his herds. If a single beast were harmed, they would all be doomed.

As they continued their journey, they were forced to sail past the dwelling place of the Sirens, sea nymphs whose singing lured men to certain death. To prevent this from happening, Odysseus had his men put wax in their ears. He had himself tied to the mast so he could listen to the singing.

Once this danger was bypassed, a more ominous one lay ahead. The ship had to sail between Scylla and Charybdis. On one side of a narrow strait Charybdis pulled everything nearby into a vast whirlpool. On the other side Scylla, a six-headed monster, waited to devour anyone who passed by. The ship succeeded in getting through with a burst of speed but not before losing six sailors to the jaws of Scylla.

Those who survived reached the pleasant Isle of the Sun, where Helios pastured his animals. Odysseus wished to sail past it, but the men feared the night seas. They disembarked and were held there for a month by strong winds. As their food supply ran out, the sailors decided they had to kill one of the animals. While Odysseus slept they did so. They were able to sail away without problems, leading them to think they had escaped the wrath of Helios. But Zeus, highest of the gods, replied to the sun-god's request for vengeance by sending a hurricane. It destroyed the ship and crew, leaving Odysseus alone in the sea, clinging to the mast. Ten days later he was carried ashore on the island of Calypso. She kept him prisoner for seven years before he was released through the aid of Athena and Hermes. He made a raft, and after a series of other adventures he finally reached Ithaca.

His problems were not over. He had been gone for 20 years, and no one believed he could still be alive. It was dangerous for him to make himself known because several men were waiting to wed Penelope and gain the kingship. Athena changed Odysseus's appearance and hid in a cave his treasure that he had brought with him from his last stopping place.

Penelope's suitors were staying at the palace, wasting the kingdom's wealth and trying to make the queen choose among them. Telemakhos, the son and heir to the throne, had grown up and spent his time vainly trying to rid the palace of the suitors. Penelope herself put them off by a ruse. She insisted she could not marry anyone until she had finished weaving a shroud for Laertes, the aged father of Odysseus, who was near death. What she wove by day she unraveled each night, so the cloth was never finished. Servants finally gave away her secret to the suitors, however, and they hounded her for an answer.

Odysseus meanwhile found shelter in the hut of his former swineherd. There Telemakhos appeared, having escaped the plan of the suitors to kill him. Odysseus revealed himself to his son, and together they plotted what they would do. Telemakhos returned to the palace, bringing along Odysseus disguised as a beggar. No one recognized Odysseus except his nurse and his aged dog Argos. The animal was too weak to do more than wag its tail before dying.

Penelope did not recognize her husband, but she made him welcome and prepared a room for him. She had by this time decided finally to choose one of the suitors. She decided to make the choice on the basis of a contest among them. The next evening she brought out the great bow Odysseus had left at home, along with its quiver full of arrows. She announced she would marry the man who could drive an arrow through holes in the blades of 12 axes set in a row.

One suitor after another tried, but none could even bend the bow. Odysseus, still clothed as a beggar, stepped forward and asked to test his strength. The suitors thought the idea ridiculous, but Telemakhos gave him the bow. Snatching an arrow, he sent it flying straight through the 12 axe blades. After Odysseus had shown who he was, he and Telemakhos killed all the suitors. The kingdom of Ithaca was restored to him.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE 'ODYSSEY'

Although set within the circumstances of the Trojan War, the 'Odyssey' is a far different book. With the 'Iliad', from the book itself as well as the archaeological excavations that support it, it is reasonable to infer a real historical event as background. With the 'Odyssey' such an assumption is impossible.

The book is a tale of adventure at sea and of homecoming after a long absence. These two themes have pervaded Western literature ever since the Homeric epic was written, and the story may well have proved a popular one well before Greek history began. The story could just as well have stood on its own without any relation to the conflict of the Greeks with Troy.



The vividly fictional characteristics of the story have not prevented critics, past and present, from seeking to place it in a specific geographic context. Hesiod, who wrote later than Homer, believed that Odysseus and his ships sailed around in the general area of Italy and Sicily, to the west of Ithaca. Later analysts tried to set the wanderings within the Mediterranean Sea generally, while others suggested the Atlantic Ocean as more likely.

The ancient astronomer Eratosthenes (2nd century BC) regarded all such speculations as foolish. For him the world of Odysseus was a completely imaginary one. Indications of this are found within the text itself. Some of the hero's wanderings could well have been based on the even older story of Jason and his Argonauts, who sailed east in search of the golden fleece. It is quite likely that several ancient legends were woven into one continuous epic.

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## INTRODUCTION

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *The Odyssey* by Homer. It includes twenty-five lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to the idea of dialects through a game-type activity. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the book they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 8 to 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes. If your school has the appropriate equipment, it might be a good idea to make transparencies of your answer keys for the overhead projector.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for approximately 8 to 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have a thorough understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the vocabulary review, a lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

There is a **group theme project** in this unit. Students are divided into groups, one group for each major theme in the novel. Each group then has a series of assignments to do, all of which lead up to a class-period-long multi-media presentation about that theme. The actual presentation will have three parts: the theme in the novel, the theme in real life today, and a conclusion in which the first two parts are linked together if possible.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to inform: students write compositions about their themes in the novel, based on the research they have done so far. The second assignment is to express personal opinions: students review the personality traits of the characters, pick which character they think they personally are most like, and write a composition explaining how they are like that character. The third assignment is to persuade: students evaluate the group theme projects and decide which they think was the best presentation. They then write a composition persuading the teacher that that presentation was, in fact, the best one.

The **nonfiction reading assignment** is tied in with the Group Theme Project. Students must read nonfiction articles, books, etc. to gather information about their themes in our world today. The information gathered while doing this reading is then incorporated into the students' theme presentations.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **extra activities section** includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra vocabulary worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The student materials may be reproduced for use in the teacher's classroom without infringement of copyrights. No other portion of this unit may be reproduced without the written consent of Teacher's Pet Publications, Inc.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

## UNIT OBJECTIVES - The *Odyssey*

1. Through reading Homer's *Odyssey*, students will learn about the epic form of literature.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical and personal.
3. Students will learn about Greek mythology and Greek gods and goddesses.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
7. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *The Odyssey* as they relate to the author's theme development.
8. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the novel through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the novel.
9. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
  - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas  
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
  - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
  - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the novel
  - d. To encourage logical thinking
  - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
10. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET - *The Odyssey*

Date Assigned	Books Assigned	Completion Date
	I-II	
	III-IV	
	V-VI	
	VII-VIII	
	IX	
	X-XII	
	XIII-XIV	
	XV-XVI	
	XVII	
	XVIII-XX	
	XXI-XXII	
	XXIII-XXIV	

UNIT OUTLINE - *The Odyssey*

<b>1</b>  Introduction	<b>2</b>  PVR I-II	<b>3</b>  Study ?s I-II PVR III-IV & V-VI	<b>4</b>  Study ?s III-VI PVR VII-VIII & IX	<b>5</b>  Study ? VII-VIII Library for Nonfiction Reading
<b>6</b>  Study ?s IX PVR X-XII & XIII-XIV	<b>7</b>  Project Assignment	<b>8</b>  Study ?s X-XIV Project Work PVR XV-XVI	<b>9</b>  Study ?s XV-XVI PVR XVII & XVIII-XX	<b>10</b>  Writing Assignment #1
<b>11</b>  Study?s XVII-XX PVR XXI-XXII & XXIII-XXIV	<b>12</b>  Vocabulary	<b>13</b>  Study ?s XXI- XXIV Assign Extra ?s	<b>14</b>  Writing Assignment 2	<b>15</b>  Discussion
<b>16</b>  Nonfiction Reports	<b>17</b>  Group Activity	<b>18</b>  Reports & Discussion	<b>19</b>  Writing Assignment #3	<b>20</b>  Review
<b>21</b>  Test				

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R= Read

## LESSONS ONE AND TWO

### Objectives

1. To introduce the *Odyssey* unit
2. To give students some background information about Homer and *The Odyssey*
3. To associate prior knowledge with new information about *The Odyssey*
4. To preview the study questions and vocabulary for Books I-II
5. To read Books I-II

NOTE: This introductory lesson requires that you have acquired a film or filmstrip about Homer and *The Odyssey*. If you are not able to find a film, use the introductory materials found in “A Few Notes about Homer....” at the beginning of this unit plan.

### Activity #1

Create a wordstorm! Write the word "odyssey" on the board and ask students to call out any related words that they think of. Record all of them on the board. Have one student copy the list so you can refer to it at a later date.

### Activity #2

Distribute the materials students will use in this unit. Explain in detail how students are to use these materials.

Study Guides Students should read the study guide questions for each reading assignment prior to beginning the reading assignment to get a feeling for what events and ideas are important in the section they are about to read. After reading the section, students will (as a class or individually) answer the questions to review the important events and ideas from that section of the book. Students should keep the study guides as study materials for the unit test.

Vocabulary Prior to reading a reading assignment, students will do vocabulary work related to the section of the book they are about to read. Following the completion of the reading of the book, there will be a vocabulary review of all the words used in the vocabulary assignments. Students should keep their vocabulary work as study materials for the unit test.

Reading Assignment Sheet You need to fill in the reading assignment sheet to let students know by when their reading has to be completed. You can either write the assignment sheet up on a side blackboard or bulletin board and leave it there for students to see each day, or you can "ditto" copies for each student to have. In either case, you should advise students to become very familiar with the reading assignments so they know what is expected of them.

Extra Activities Center The resource pages of this unit contains suggestions for an extra library of related books and articles in your classroom as well as crossword and word search puzzles. Make an extra activities center in your room where you will keep these materials for students to use. (Bring the books and articles in from the library and keep several copies of



## WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 - *The Odyssey*

### PROMPT

An opinion is a belief that you hold about a certain topic. Opinions cannot be proved and are therefore contrasted with facts, which can be proved. Adjectives are often used when giving opinions. ("That's a beautiful coat," or "what a boring lecture.")

No doubt you have opinions about many of the characters and events in *The Odyssey*. Choose four characters or events from the story and give your opinions about each.

### PREWRITING

Think about the characters and events you have read about in *The Odyssey*. Refer to your study guides or the text to refresh your memory. Which ones do you have the strongest opinions about -- which did you like the best or least, think the most interesting or most ridiculous, etc.? Jot down the four characters and/or events about which you have definite opinions.

### DRAFTING

Write your composition in the form of a chart. Briefly summarize the facts in a left-hand column, and then write your opinion in a right-hand column. Use complete sentences.

### PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask a student who sits near you to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary. Ask your classmate what he/she thought of each of the characters/events you chose for your assignment.

### PROOFREADING

Do a final proofreading of your paper double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.