

The *Odyssey*

as told by Homer
translated by
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English I

Odyssey



Zeus from Otricoli, 3rd AD. Photo © Maicar Förlag - GML.

"Now I will avow that men call me Odysseus, Sacker of Cities,
Laertes' son, a Prince of the Achaeans," said the Wanderer.

What IS this story—*Odyssey*?

- Sequel to the *Iliad* (900 and 700 BC)
- The *Iliad* focuses on the days toward the end of the Trojan War (mid 1200s BC)
- The *Odyssey* focuses on one of the soldiers who fought in the Trojan War returning home 19 years after the war—Odysseus
- The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* together were considered sacred to the Greeks—much like the *Bible* to many people today.
- Neither books were originally written down.
- Both were originally recited orally.

1. GREECE IS CIRCLED
2. EUROPE IS LIGHT GREEN
3. GREECE IS DARK GREEN



The Trojan War

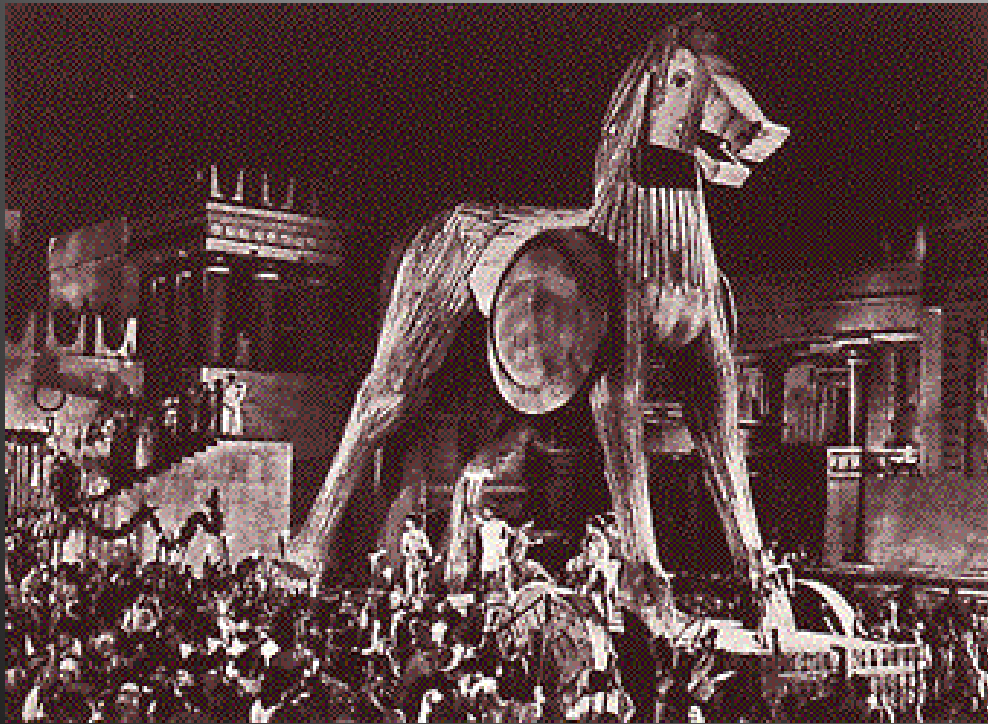
- Spartan King Menelaus' wife Helen (the face that launched a thousand ships) left him for the young Prince Paris of Troy.
- Greeks attacked Troy
- Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, led the siege.
- Odysseus (main character in the *Odyssey*) was another hero of the war.
- Odysseus was known not only for being a strong hero, but also for being a wise/smart hero.
- Another hero, Achilles, died in the final year of the war.
- Greek forces were victorious!



Odysseus: Hero of the *Odyssey*

- Wife: Penelope
- Son: Telemachus
- Great soldier of the war
- Originally tried to get out of going to the war—pretended he was crazy
- Came up with the wooden-horse trick that led to Troy's collapse.
- The *Odyssey* is the account of Odysseus' journey home after the war.

The Trojan Horse

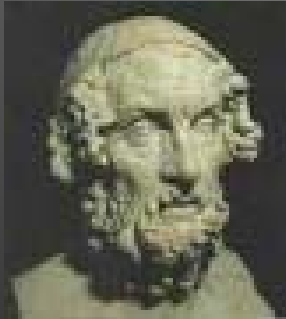


Odysseus' Journey



Homer

- Blind
- Minstrel/Singer from the island Chios
- Homer was a Rhapsode or singer of tales.
- All historians/entertainers of Homer's time did not write their stories/facts down.



This
Homer



Not This
Homer...

What is an epic?

- An Epic is a long narrative **poem**
- Tells about the adventures of a hero
- Epics usually embody the values of the cultures for which they are written
- The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were used in schools to teach Greek virtues.
 - Values: honor, bravery, hospitality, intelligence, respect for the gods, loyalty to home and family
 - Major faults: disrespect for the gods, lack of hospitality, excessive pride—"HURBIS"
- *Iliad* is the primary model for epic of war
- *Odyssey* is the primary model for epic of the long journey

Epic

The term *epic* is also applied to novels, dramas, and films which are grand in the scale of their action or importance of their subject matter --- with important themes and heroes.

Characteristics of the Epic

- Long, narrative poem
- Relates the deeds of an epic hero
- Incorporates myth, legend, folk tale, and history
- Reflects the values of the society from which they originate
- Tone is usually grand
- Heroes and adventures appear larger than life

More Characteristics of an Epic

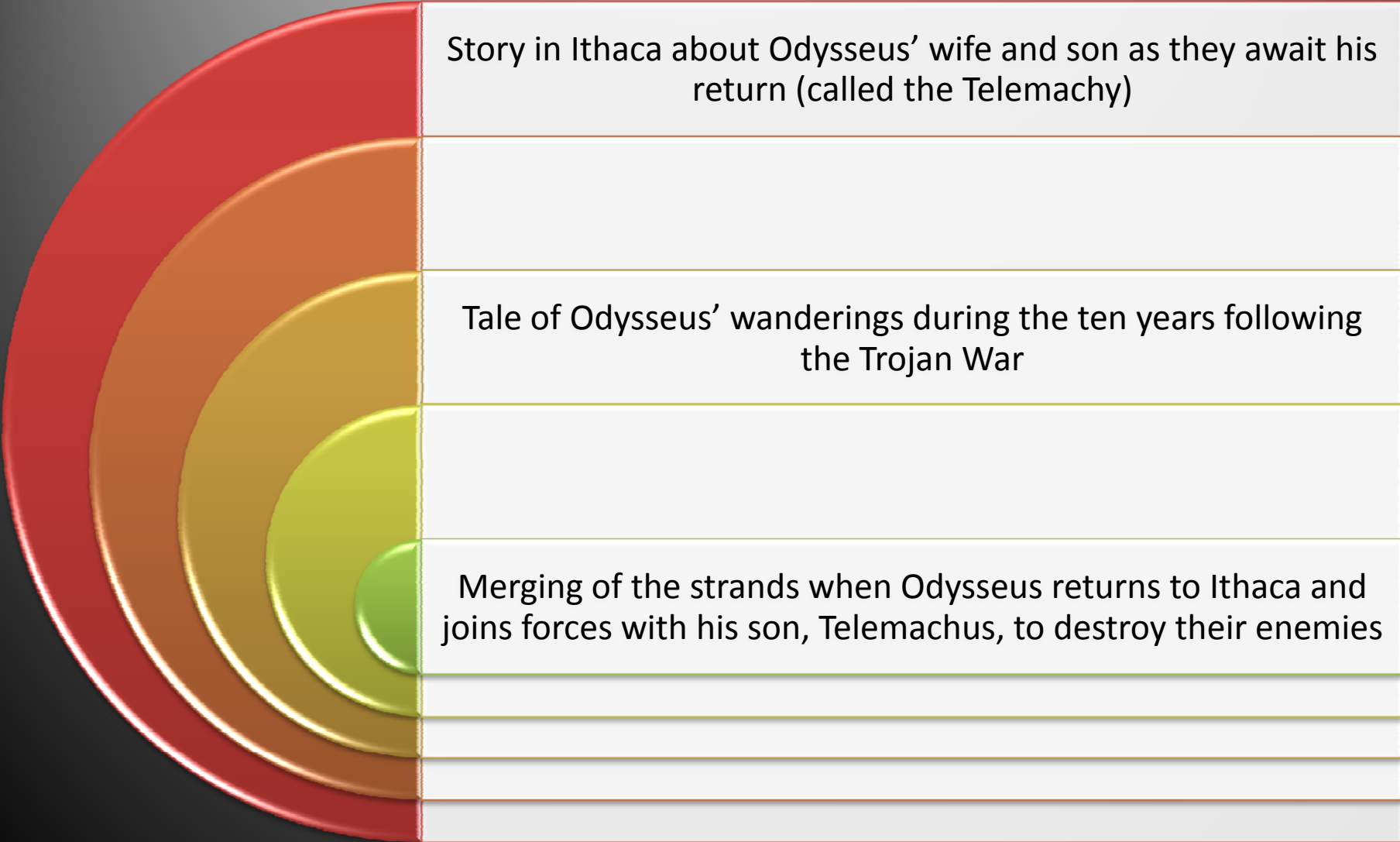
- Begins *in medias res* (Latin for “it begins in the middle of things”), then flashes back to explain action leading up to that point
- Begins with an invocation or prayer to a god or gods
- Always begins with a statement of theme
- Contains many epithets
- Contains long, formal speeches by many characters

- Frequently has **epic digressions**

The Epic Hero



Three Major Plot Strands



Story in Ithaca about Odysseus' wife and son as they await his return (called the Telemachy)

Tale of Odysseus' wanderings during the ten years following the Trojan War

Merging of the strands when Odysseus returns to Ithaca and joins forces with his son, Telemachus, to destroy their enemies

What Is a Myth?

- A Myth is a traditional story from a particular culture
- It usually explains a belief of that culture, a ritual of the culture, or a mysterious natural phenomenon
- A Myth deals with humans and the unknown
 - or, humans and gods
- Many times the god is an alter ego, or a reflection of the hero's best or worst characteristics

Myths

- Relates: how the world began and how humans and animals were created along with certain customs and gestures
- Emphasized the weakness of humans: cruelty, greed and pride; showed human feelings.
- Greek Mythology
 - No revelations: of spiritual teachings; Pre-Christian era
 - Polytheistic: belief or worship of more than one god; a combination of many tribes/myths.
 - Cities devoted to one or many Gods: built temples and had priests to protect, festivals, oracles.

Epic Literary Terms (no pun intended)

The Epic

- Long narrative poem about the deeds of an epic hero

Epic Hero

- The central figure of an epic
- Actions are inspiring or noble

Epic Simile/Homeric Simile

- An ELABORATE comparison of unlike subjects

Tragic Flaw

- A weakness in the hero's character

Symbolism

- Frequent use of words, places, characters, or objects that mean something beyond what they are on a literal level

Irony

- Indicating through character or plot development an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually stated

Epic Literary Terms (no pun intended)

Imagery

- The "mental pictures" that readers experience with a passage of literature
 - Often appeals to senses

Foreshadowing

- Hints of future events in a piece of literature

Flashback

- Writers' technique in which the author interrupts the plot of the story to recreate an incident of an earlier time (goes back in time; like giving the reader a memory).

In Media res

- The classical tradition of opening an **epic** not in the chronological point at which the sequence of events would start, but rather at the midway point of the story.