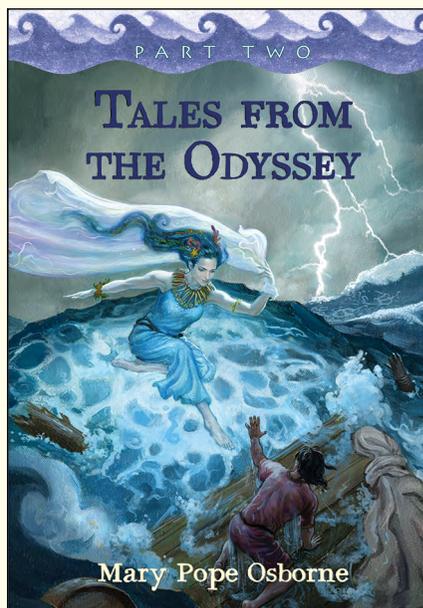
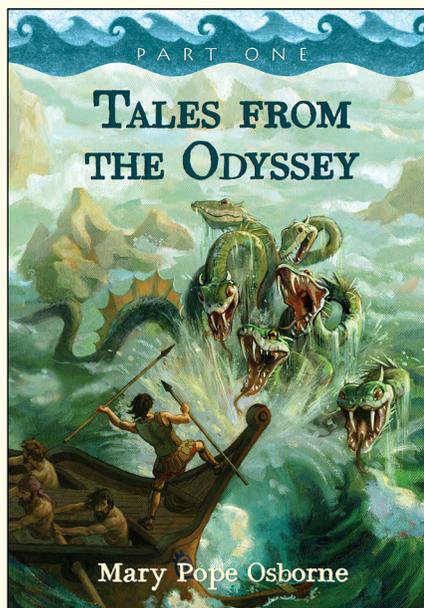


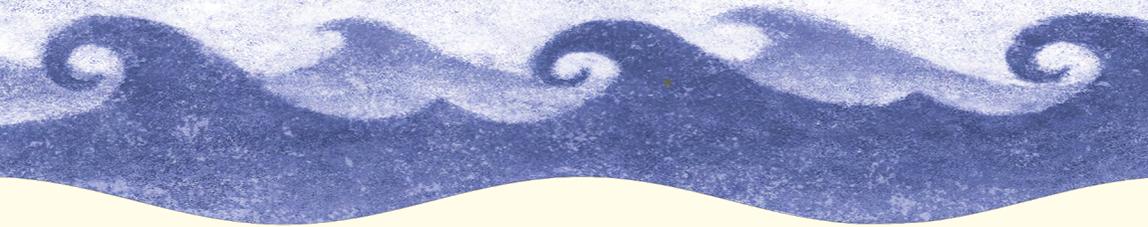
TALES FROM THE ODYSSEY



This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Literature, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening. The broad CCR standards are the foundation for the grade level–specific Common Core State Standards.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS



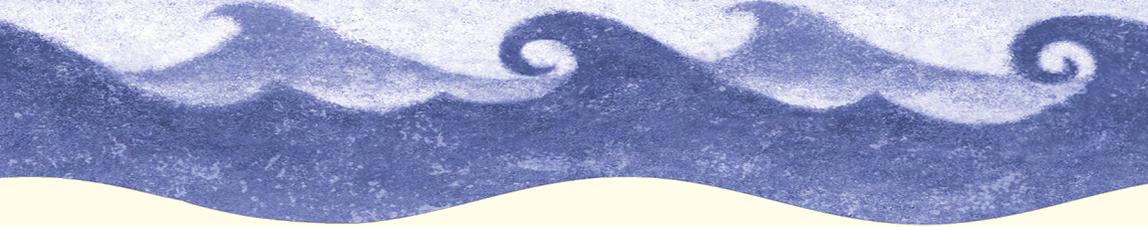
About This Guide

The *Tales from the Odyssey* stories have such rich symbolism, amazing action, and extraordinary characters that there seem to be limitless activities teachers can use to enhance their students' reading and learning. This guide will give focus and direction to teachers, so they can lead and mentor their students in the particular areas that reflect their students' needs and abilities. There are whole-group activities and discussion questions, activities for small groups, and activities for independent, individual student efforts. The suggested activities focus on various learning modalities so that teachers can select the activities that best fit their students' learning styles and strengths.

Pre-reading Activities

What is an epic?

An epic is a long narrative poem that recounts the deeds of legendary or historical heroes. The Greek epics were originally part of a purely oral tradition. They were sung by wandering entertainers called *rhapsodes*, who improvised performances of their tales using a special verse form called *epic meter* and accompanying themselves on a simple harplike instrument called the *cithara*. In those days, every sung version of an epic was different. But at some time, probably beginning in the eighth century BCE, as the practice of singing the epic tales was beginning to die out, the epics were written down. Two of the most famous Greek epics are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which were originally part of a vast cycle of similar poems, most of them now known only in fragments. The *Iliad* tells the story of the Trojan War, and the *Odyssey* recounts the adventures of Odysseus, king of the island of Ithaca, on his long journey home from that war. The Greeks loved the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which became central to their literary education.



What is a Greek myth?

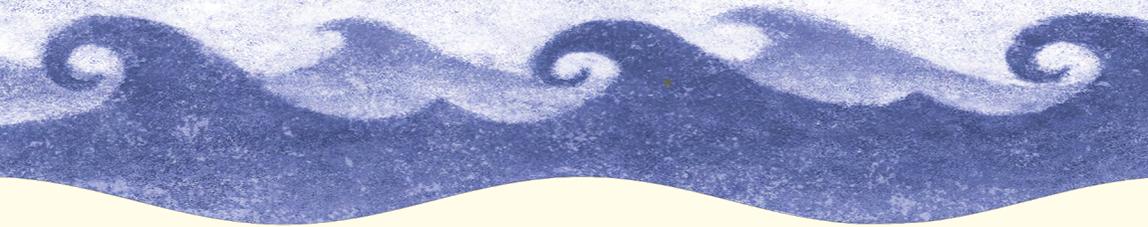
A Greek myth is a story about the powerful gods and goddesses of ancient Greece. Some of these stories were first told to explain natural phenomena like the weather, volcanoes, and the constellations. Others were an important part of the ancient Greeks' religion. These stories later became important sources for Greek poetry, art, and theater. They have continued to inspire writers and painters up to the present day. The oldest written versions of the Greek myths are found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Who was Homer?

Homer is the name traditionally given to the composer of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as they have come down to us. Scholars are not sure if Homer was a real singer or a legendary one, or if there were several singers who shared that name. Many scholars believe that Homer was a famous rhapsode who lived around 850 BCE—nearly three thousand years ago. Like many other famous epic singers, he is said to have been blind.

What was the Odyssey's original written form?

The *Odyssey* was composed in a dialect of ancient Greek. It was originally written down in twenty-four parts, or books, in long flowing lines that did not rhyme at the end, in the special rhythm called epic meter. Technically, this meter is called dactylic hexameter. The *Odyssey* has been translated into many languages, in both verse and prose.



The Ancient Greeks

The ancient Greeks were *polytheists*, people who believed in many gods and goddesses, each of whom ruled over a particular aspect of the world. There was a god of the sea, a god of war, a god of love, and so forth. But the god believed to be the most powerful of all was Zeus. Zeus was the god of thunder, and he was said to rule the entire mortal world and the heavens. The Greeks believed that Zeus lived on Mount Olympus and that all the other gods and goddesses were his relatives. He also had a wife, Hera, the queen of the gods and goddesses. The Greeks also believed that these gods and goddesses visited the earth, and that they became involved in people's daily lives. A list of the Greek gods and goddesses will help you become familiar with their names and domains.

Greek Gods and Goddesses

Zeus: king of the gods and goddesses, god of thunder

Poseidon: brother of Zeus, god of seas and rivers

Hades: brother of Zeus, king of the Land of the Dead, the Underworld

Hera: wife of Zeus, queen of the gods and goddesses

Hestia: sister of Zeus, goddess of the hearth

Athena: daughter of Zeus, goddess of wisdom, war, and arts and crafts

Demeter: goddess of crops and the harvest, mother of Persephone

Aphrodite: daughter of Zeus, goddess of love and beauty

Artemis: daughter of Zeus, goddess of the hunt

Ares: son of Zeus, god of war

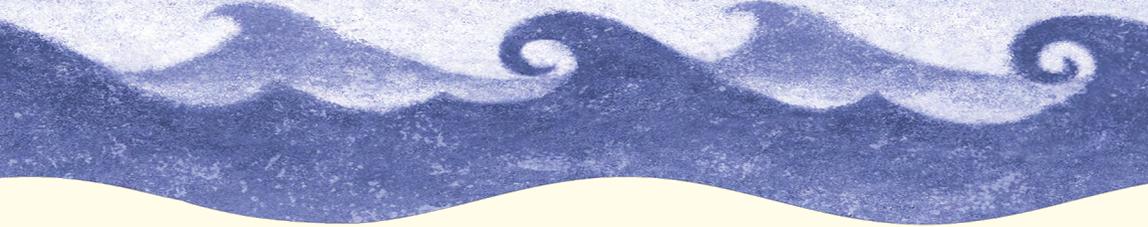
Apollo: god of the sun, music, and poetry

Hermes: son of Zeus, messenger god

Hephaestus: son of Hera, god of the forge

Persephone: daughter of Zeus, wife of Hades, queen of the Land of the Dead, the Underworld

Dionysus: god of wine and madness



Common Core Connections

The discussion questions and activities in this guide are designed to promote literacy skills that correlate with the following Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts:

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details, RL.3.1–6.1, R.L.3.2–6.2, RL.3.3–6.3; Craft and Structure, RL.3.4–6.4, RL.3.5–6.5, RL.3.6–6.6; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, 3.7–6.7; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration, SL.3.1–6.1, SL.3.3–6.3; Writing, W.3.2–6.2, W.3.3–6.3, W.3.7–6.7.

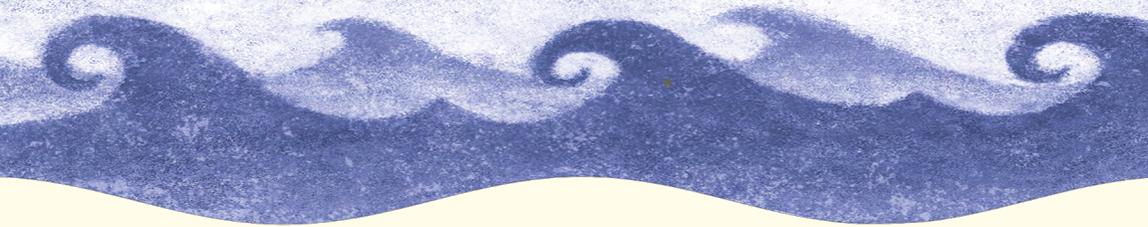
Discussion Questions

When sharing the following activities with students, encourage them whenever possible to refer to specific passages from Mary Pope Osborne’s *Tales from the Odyssey*.

Helping Students Understand a Writer’s Research

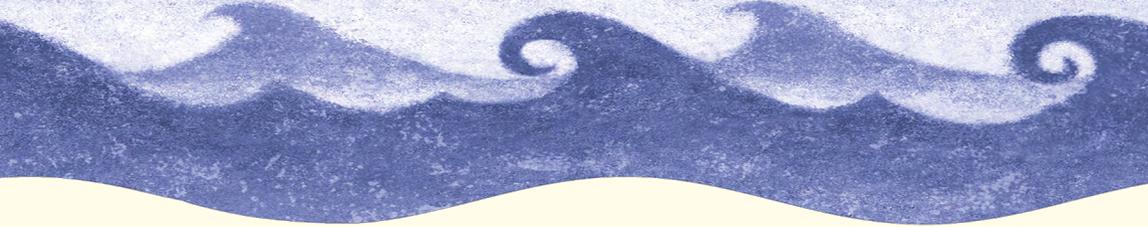
The *Odyssey* was written down more than three thousand years ago. Many people have retold this famous story. Mary Pope Osborne read and referred to many retellings of the *Odyssey* as she researched and prepared to write.

- 1 Why would someone consult numerous translations?
- 2 What happens when people translate from one language into another?
- 3 Why would one writer choose different words from another in describing and telling the same story?
- 4 Why would different writers create and allow differences in interpreting a story?



Expanding Comprehension for Students

- 1 After a student, small group, or entire class has read both volumes of Mary Pope Osborne's *Tales from the Odyssey*, have them outline the stories, first focusing on plot and action. As they outline the action, have them create a flow chart, showing how the action moves from one location or situation to another. The start and stop points should take them to and from Ithaca, Odysseus' home. Then, together or individually, students can analyze the characters.
- 2 In the *Odyssey* and in Greek myths, the gods and goddesses can come to earth as mortals and can also stay on Mount Olympus as gods or goddesses.
 - How is this an advantage for the gods and goddesses?
 - What do these "creatures" look like when they come to earth?
 - Why do they look that way?
- 3 Odysseus reveals both his humor and his cleverness when he tells the giant Cyclops that his name is "No One." How does Odysseus's quick thinking help him and his men?
- 4 Have each student choose a Greek god or goddess to read about. After they have finished their research, have them write a paragraph to share with their classmates.
- 5 Have students research the names of the Greek gods and goddesses and also the names of the Roman gods and goddesses. Then, as a class project, make a chart that compares the names of the Greek and Roman gods.
- 6 Using the map that is inside the *Tales from the Odyssey* books, have students trace and annotate the path that Odysseus followed on his lengthy voyage. Students should then present their findings, along with relevant paper or digital images.
- 7 Advanced students and more able readers can study the text and identify key idioms, phrases, or figurative language. Ask the students whether they ever hear these idioms or phrases in their daily life. If so, what are the sources of



these words? Have them begin to collect data on how, when, and how often they hear them. They can display their results in a chart or in a PowerPoint presentation with accompanying images.

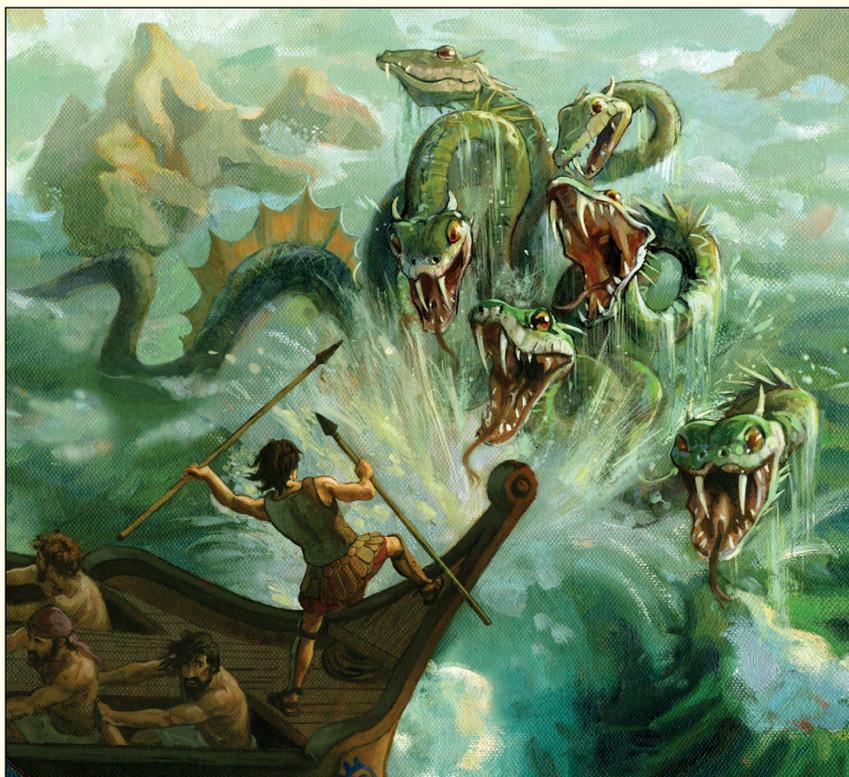
- 8 In *The Final Battle*, book six of *Tales from the Odyssey*, Odysseus tells Euryclea to “make a fire to purify the house.” Are there any similar things in your culture that are used to purify a place (incense, blessing, washing, etc.)?
- 9 Odysseus had to wander for many years before he was finally able to return to his home in Ithaca. Have students write or discuss their responses to the following: Have you ever felt as if you were on a journey towards one goal or event, but along the way you had many unexpected detours?
- 10 In *Tales from the Odyssey* books, Odysseus explains storms and other violent occurrences as a result of the anger of the gods. How do we explain storms today? Why is it different today than it was in ancient times?

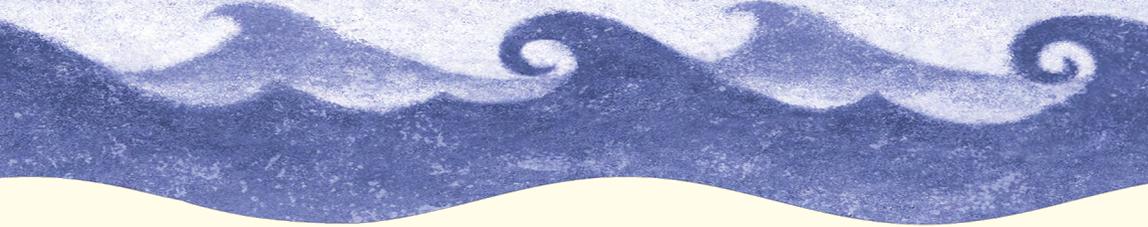
Character Development

- 1 After they’ve read some or all of Mary Pope Osborne’s *Tales from the Odyssey*, let students select a character. Have the students dress up as that character and tell their classmates about themselves. Be sure to have students focus on personality or character descriptors, such as determination, loyalty, perseverance, etc., rather than physical attributes.
- 2 As students read, or after they’ve finished, have them create character maps and analyses to help them understand the characters. Ask them to use examples from the story as evidence. In the map, they should list the characters and then have columns for characteristics or ways to view that character, such as
 - Character says . . .
 - Character thinks . . .
 - Character sounds like . . .
- 3 Ask students to describe the heroism or heroic characteristics of Odysseus.

Conflict Resolution

After escaping the Cyclops, Odysseus felt compelled to call back to the giant. If he had not called back to Polyphemus, Odysseus and his men could possibly have escaped with no further problems. Likewise, we often are tempted to call back to an enemy when we succeed in escaping. We sometimes hear people taunt their enemies in these situations. What are some better ways to resolve our conflicts? Give some examples and some suggestions for better ways to resolve such situations.





Building Vocabulary

In each of the *Tales from the Odyssey* books, there are words that may be new to the reader. Usually, they can be figured out by using context clues, but it is also helpful to look those words up and use them in other contexts. Here are some words that may be new or unfamiliar to your students:

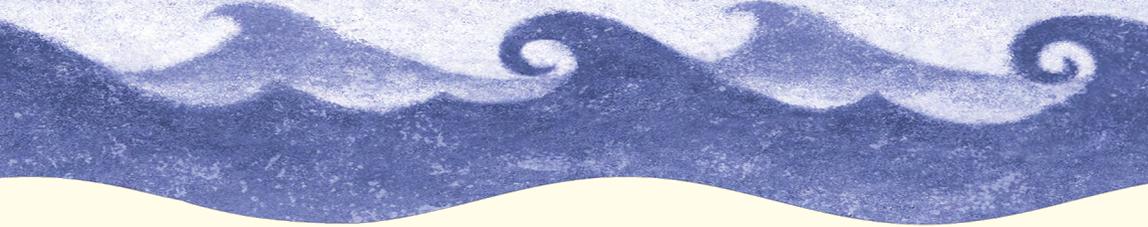
Tales from the Odyssey, Part One

dread	flailing	desperately	thickets
yoking	hideous	furrows	gruesome
despaired	heave	slew	distraught
sleek	bleating	valiantly	beckoned
provisions	lumbered	famished	yearning
cast lots	raze	dismay	comrades
cannibals	hearth	harbor	quest
frantically	enchantress	foreboding	swine
moor	curse	scout	anguish
hurled	gnarled	stunned	disembark
hoisted	craggy	shrouded	roused
resolve	impending	soothsayer	condemned
wily	ghastly	swooped	yelps
cawed	monstrous	billowed	slaughtered
hull	helmsman	wistfully	ferocious
unfathomable	lair	prophecies	emerge
ominously	roiling	eerie	cauldron
waft	writhed	lilting	naught
translucent	pummeled	yearned	appease
defied	tumultuous	cowered	lurching

Tales from the Odyssey, Part Two

swagger	implored	defiling	guise
dashed	grievous	vehemence	suitors
heed	deception	bade	throng
cunning	vagabond	evaporate	haggard
passionately	minstrel	wretched	wondrous
boar	summon	ambush	lured
handmaidens	harness	despair	tunic
lunged	nymph	unkempt	pelted
suspicious	archaeological	poplar	splendor





Word Origins

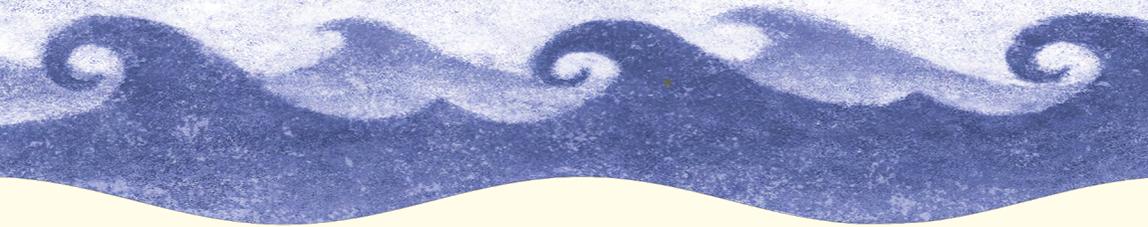
There are many words in the English language that derive from Greek. Several examples are given here. Have students look up the words in a dictionary and note their Greek origins and component meanings.

- alphabet
- autograph
- crisis
- museum
- patriarch

Now have students add to their list of Greek derivatives, noting their origins and current meanings.

Visually and Verbally Describing an Image

- 1 In book two, *The Land of the Dead*, Mary Pope Osborne writes about a “she-monster”. Ask students to draw a picture of what they think a “she-monster” would look like and then write a paragraph describing the monster.
- 2 In book three, *Sirens and Sea Monsters*, Mary Pope Osborne describes the monster Scylla. Using her description, have your students draw a picture of what they think Scylla would look like.
- 3 Odysseus has a continuing vision of returning to Ithaca, his home. His vision helps him be strong and eventually attain his goal. Ask students to write a paragraph (or have a small group discussion) about how they establish goals for themselves. Then have them write down some of their goals.



Understanding Figurative Language

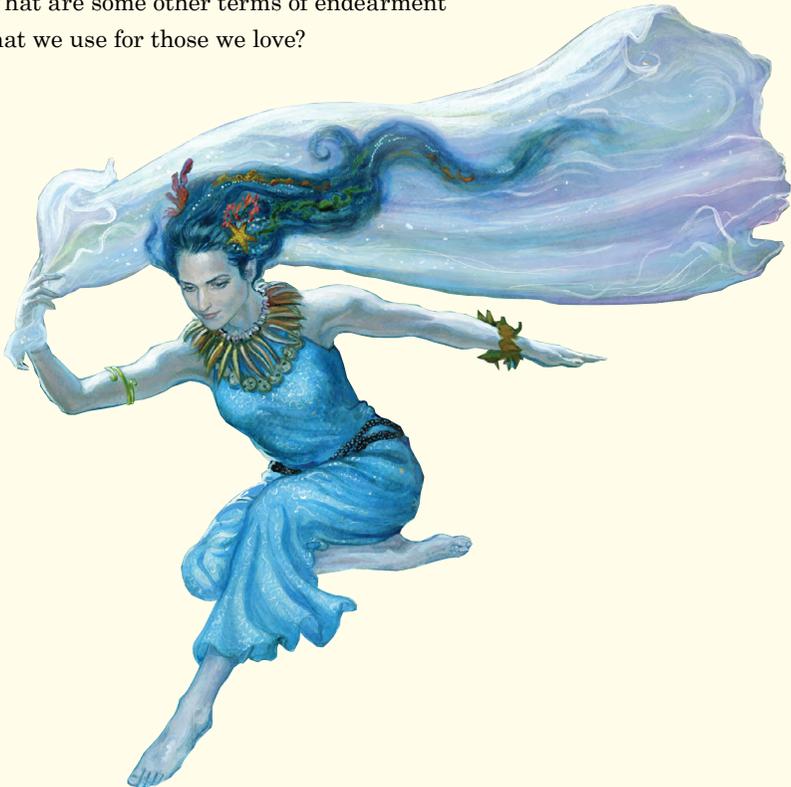
- 1 Mary Pope Osborne utilizes metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech. Ask students in their own words to describe or restate the comparisons that are made in the *Tales from the Odyssey*. Here are two examples:
 - As Penelope hears a story about her lost husband, she is brought to tears: “Just as the snows melted by the east wind run down the mountainside, so did the tears run down her lovely cheeks” (book six)
 - “I promise,” Euryclea whispers, “I shall be as silent as a stone” (book six)
- 2 In book four, *The Gray-Eyed Goddess*, the White Goddess tells Odysseus, “Take my veil, for it is enchanted. You will come to no harm as long as you possess it”.
 - What do people carry for good luck?
 - Do you have anything that you believe brings you good luck?
 - How do good-luck charms or tokens work or affect people?
- 3 Sometimes people think certain objects or happenings are signs of bad luck or omens. In book six, *The Final Battle*, the sight of “an eagle [soaring] overhead, gripping a dove in its talons” is seen by Penelope’s suitors as an ominous warning.
 - What are some things people associate with bad luck or omens today?

4 In the prologue to *Tales from the Odyssey*, Mary Pope Osborne writes about the “mysterious world called Mount Olympus.” Either in words or with pictures, describe the following phrases about Mount Olympus:

- hidden behind a veil of clouds
- never swept by winds
- no rain
- inhabitants never age
- inhabitants never die

5 When Penelope sees that Telemachus has returned to the palace, she calls him “sweet light of my eyes” (book six).

- What are some other terms of endearment that we use for those we love?





About the Author

Mary Pope Osborne is the author of the best-selling The Magic Tree House series. She has also written many acclaimed historical novels and retellings of myths and folktales including *Kate and the Beanstalk* and *New York's Bravest*. She lives with her husband in New York City and Connecticut.

An Interview with Mary Pope Osborne

1 What were your favorite types of books when you were a child?

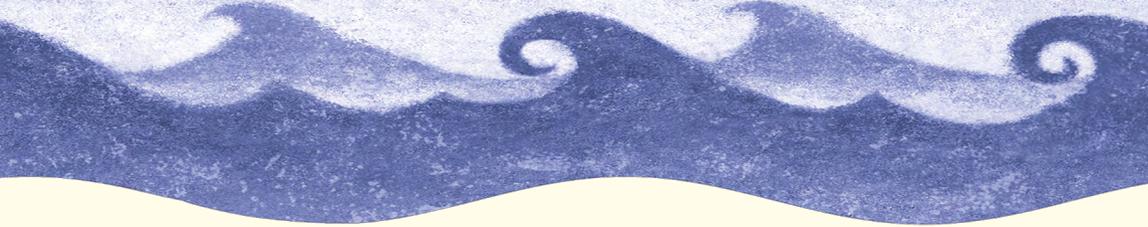
I loved the great stories of the world—deep, dramatic tales that involved adults as well as children. My favorite childhood book was *Egermeier's Bible Story Book* by Elsie E. Egermeier, which I read over and over again. I also loved *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and the stories of Hans Christian Andersen.

2 Did you like to read Greek myths when you were growing up?

Surprisingly, I was not exposed to many Greek myths. The one I most remember reading—and loving—was the story of the Trojan Horse. My first deep exposure to Greek myths came after college, when I was camping in a cave on the island of Crete. I had a book of Greek myths with me and read them by the light of a kerosene lamp.

3 What is your favorite aspect of Greek mythology?

I especially love the aspect of metamorphosis—people changing into animals—and the Greek gods and goddesses changing into mortals and visiting people on earth.



4 You majored in religion in college. How does that play into your interest and writing about Greek mythology?

I loved studying the sacred stories at the core of the different “living” religions of today’s world. Likewise, I enjoy reflecting upon the fact that the Greek myths were once the sacred stories of ancient Greece. The Greeks prayed and made sacrifices to their gods and goddesses, for they believed the gods were instrumental in determining the events of their daily lives.

5 What kind of research did you do before writing *Tales from the Odyssey*?

I read about ten different translations of the *Odyssey*. I had a number of book stands on my desk—in each was a different translation—so I would look at a passage in one book and compare it to the translation of the same passage in other books. After comparing and contrasting translations, I would write my own words—words I thought were faithful to the story told by Homer—and at the same time were the most understandable to young readers.

6 Was there anything that was especially difficult about writing *Tales from the Odyssey*?

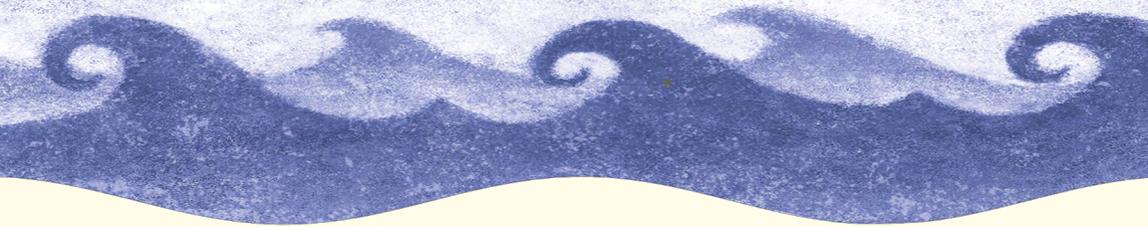
Sometimes it was a big challenge to decide what to cut out of the original and what to include.

7 When you were writing *Tales from the Odyssey*, did you create visual images or draw pictures before you wrote your descriptions?

A few times, I drew little maps to try to figure out landscapes and locations.

8 Did you read about hurricanes or other storms before you wrote about the fury of the seas?

I did read about storms—but mainly I trusted Homer’s images to help me “feel” the atmosphere. I love the simplicity of Homer’s writing: Just a few strokes of description can ignite your imagination and lead you to fill in the rest.



9 Do you think there are any character or personality similarities between Odysseus and people in the world today?

It may sound strange, but I did not really “connect” to the challenges that Odysseus faced until after 9/11. When I worked on the *Odyssey* before that event, I had a hard time identifying with the terror and catastrophe that Odysseus and his men had to endure. After 9/11, however, I not only identified with their feelings of terror, but I understand the value of keeping one’s head and braving the unknown. I felt that our country collectively behaved as Odysseus.

10 Why did you decide to write *Tales from the Odyssey*?

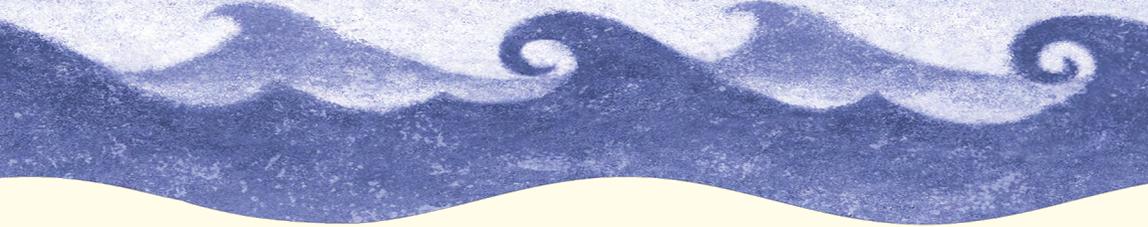
After the stories of the Old and New Testaments, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are arguably the most significant stories in the literature of the Western world. It’s essential to know them if you want to understand literary and philosophical references. For years I’ve wanted to retell the *Odyssey*—not only to help young people know and enjoy the story, but so I could become deeply involved with it.

11 Why did you decide to write a series of books instead of one large book?

Retelling the *Odyssey* in six books instead of one allowed me to linger over the many astonishing episodes of the epic. I also thought that the adventure series format would make a long and difficult story more accessible to young readers.

12 If someone asked you to discuss the violence in the *Odyssey* and the Greek myths, what would your response be?

The violence of the *Odyssey* is shocking. But it is no more horrific than the violence that takes place in our world today—or the violence of the wars of the twentieth century. Perhaps studying the *Odyssey* can lead to classroom discussions about war and peace and about how we can work together to make the world less violent.



13 Where do you do most of your writing?

I'm a vagabond writer—I write on a laptop, in many different places at our home in Connecticut. On chilly days I might settle near the woodstove in our bedroom. On warm days I might sit outside on the deck. On rainy days I like to be upstairs in my office. If I'm staying in our second residence in the Berkshires, I work on the front porch or in the living room. I work on the train to New York. I work in restaurants. And I work in public libraries.

14 Once you start writing a story, how much do you end up changing later?

Most of it. I rewrite, rewrite, and rewrite. Then I rewrite some more.

15 You acknowledged Frederick J. Booth, PhD, at the beginning of each book. How did he help you?

Dr. Booth read all my manuscripts and fact-checked them. He also helped me interpret certain events that I found hard to understand.

16 When you are writing a book, like the ones in this series, do you ever get frustrated and want to quit or start over?

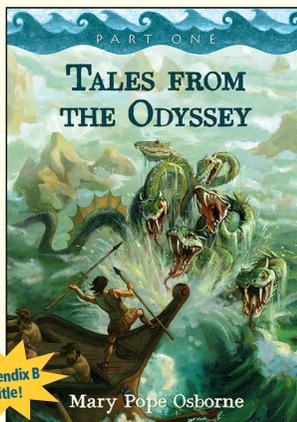
Not really—because I spent a huge amount of time planning the first book, knowing that the other five books would depend on many of the decisions I made up front.

17 Can you offer any insights or ideas that might be helpful to children who also want to be writers one day?

Write and rewrite and rewrite. But all the time you're working, try to have fun.

This guide was created by Donna L. Knoell, an educational consultant who works with schools and school districts worldwide to help them improve their instructional programs in reading/language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics. She is a former classroom teacher and has also taught at the university level. She lives in Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

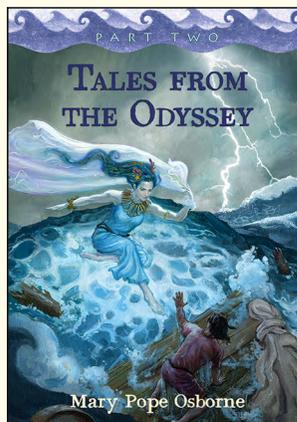
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Appendix B
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