



The Odyssey (Illustrated)

Homer

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The Odyssey recounts the adventures of Odysseus on his way home to Ithaca after the Trojan War.

Although originally written in heroic verse, it has been called the first novel because of its exciting use of narrative and the effective use of flashbacks to heighten the dramatic action. While *The Iliad* is a collection of mythical material that grew up about an event that seems actually to have occurred toward the end of the Mycenaean era, **The Odyssey** is largely a collection of folk tales, many of which are easily recognizable in the legends of other lands.

We know very little about the author of **The Odyssey**. Scholars disagree on when Homer lived or when he might have written his works. No one, however, disputes the fact that **The Odyssey** arose from oral tradition. Stock phrases, types of episodes, and repeated phrases -- such as *early, rose-fingered dawn* -- bear the mark of epic storytelling. Scholars agree, too, that this tale of the Greek hero Odysseus's journey and adventures as he returned home from Troy to Ithaca is a work of the greatest historical significance and, indeed, one of the foundations of Western literature.

Image gallery includes:

Greek text of The Odyssey's opening passage

Charles Gleyre, Odysseus and Nausicaä

Odysseus Overcome by Demodocus' Song, by Francesco Hayez, 1813–15

Odysseus and the Sirens, eponymous vase of the Siren Painter, ca. 480-470 BC

Calypso receiving Telemachus and Mentor in the Grotto by William Hamilton

Hermes Ingenui. Roman copy of the 2nd century BC after a Greek original of the 5th century BC.

Pentheus torn apart by Agave and Ino. Attic red-figure lekanis

Odysseus and Nausicaä, by Charles Gleyre

Nausicaa, Frederic Leighton

Odysseus and Penelope by Francesco Primaticcio

Telemachus departing from Nestor, painting by Henry Howard

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