



10: The Odyssey

The Trojan wars had ended. Odysseus, Greek hero and the King of Ithaca, was desperate to return home to his wife, Penelope, and their son Telemachus, who he had not seen for ten long years.

Odysseus and his fleet of ships set sail. The journey did not quite go to plan. First off, huge storms forced them to land on the Island of the Lotus Eaters.



Odysseus' men ate delicious fruit from the lotus trees that made them all forget about home, and lounge around in a daze.

Odysseus forced them back on to the ships and they set sail again.



Next, running out of food and water they landed on what seemed like a nice quiet island and Odysseus took twelve men to explore. They found a cave, with cheese and meat. Jackpot! The men started to eat, but the owner of the cave, a giant one-eyed Cyclops called Polyphemus - who'd have guessed that - returned with his herd of sheep.

The Cyclops gobbled down two men...then trapped the others in the cave with a massive boulder.



Odysseus needed an escape plan.

The next day, the Cyclops gobbled down two more of Odysseus' men.

Odysseus offered the Cyclops some delicious wine he had carried from the ship

The Cyclops drank it in one gulp... then collapsed to the floor, asleep. It was very, very strong wine.





Odysseus and his men charged at the sleeping giant, jabbing a long spiky stick into his eye, blinding him.



Odysseus and his men attached themselves to the bellies of Polyphemos' sheep and when the Cyclops let his herd out the next morning, the men escaped back to their ships and set sail once again.

Unfortunately for Odysseus, Polyphemos was actually the son of Poseidon, God of the sea. When Poseidon found out what had happened, he vowed to prevent Odysseus from getting home to Ithaca for another ten years.



Big trouble lay ahead. Their next hiccup was resting for the night near an island populated by man-eating giants called the Laestrygonians. They pelted Odysseus' fleet with rocks, sinking eleven of the twelve ships. So now it was just Odysseus and the crew of his own ship.



They sailed on and reached the island of Aeaea where the powerful witch Circe lived.

She put on a huge feast for them, but had drugged the food, so that half of the crew were turned into pigs.





Odysseus had been warned what Circe might do and ate some special herbs that stopped her magic.



Next, they sailed past the Sirens who sang a song so beautiful it forced men to steer their boats toward them, only to be shipwrecked on the rocks.

Circe had warned Odysseus about the Sirens and their song, so his crew put beeswax in their ears to avoid hearing it. But Odysseus, for some reason, wanted to hear it, and ordered his men to strap him to the mast of the ship so he wouldn't steer it onto the rocks.



Then came the violent whirlpool - Charybdis. They made it through.

Only for some of the remaining crew to be munched on by the six-headed monster, Scylla, who was waiting round the corner. Bad luck!

A pretty hectic trip so far!



Odysseus then landed the ship on the island of Thrinacia where the hungry crew found a herd of cattle and slaughtered them for food. Oh dear! The cattle belonged to Helios - God of the sun. Oops!





The gods punished Odysseus again by sending a storm that shipwrecked his last boat and drowned all his remaining crew.

After ten long years fighting at Troy, and another ten years of extraordinary adventures, Odysseus finally made it home to Ithaca, disguised as a beggar...



...only to find that his wife and son had been fighting off other men who wanted to take his throne.

But Odysseus wasn't a man to mess with. He threw off his disguise and killed all the competition.



Happy ending...for Odysseus and Penelope at least.

