



Lesson Plan: Who Was Odysseus?

OVERVIEW

Dana Wilson's *Odysseus and the Sirens* evolved from an episode in the *Odyssey*, the story of Odysseus ten-year journey from Troy to his home on the island of Ithaca. If students know and understand the story of Odysseus' epic journey, they will better understand the music and the composer's intentions. The *Odyssey* is often cited as an example of a story pattern known as the Hero's Journey. Information about the Hero's Journey is included in the Extension Section.

LEARNING GOAL

Students will create a snapshot for Odysseus when they share prior knowledge about the hero of the *Odyssey*, read an article, and summarize the facts on a graphic organizer.

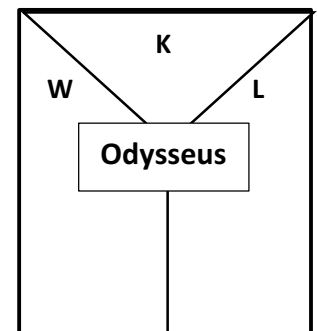
MATERIALS

- A large Y chart for collecting responses
- Student copies or web posting of the article "Odysseus and His Epic Journey"

PROCESS

In preparation, ask your school's language arts teachers if the *Odyssey* is addressed in their middle or high school language arts curriculum. This will provide some clues as to how much prior knowledge students might or might not have.

1. Focus student's attention on the title of the piece, "Odysseus and the Sirens." Write **Odysseus** in the center of a Y chart and ask students to reflect, then respond with what they might already know about Odysseus. Write responses in the top "K" section of the chart. Do not worry if they have little or nothing to say. The *Odyssey* may not be taught in your district's curriculum.
2. Read the contents of the "K" section out loud. Ask if they have questions, the things they might want to know, and add them to the "W" section of the chart.
3. Distribute copies of the article "Who Was Odysseus?" After reading, ask them to discuss what they learned with a partner and select one fact or idea of interest to share with the class.



Connections to the National Core Anchor Standards in the Arts

Connect #11

Relate musical ideas and works with varied context to deepen understanding.

Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts and daily life.

4. Reconvene and ask each pair of students to articulate their selected fact/idea. Add their comments to the “L” section of the chart. Keep the chart visible so students can continue adding information as they learn more.

ASSESSMENT

The lesson activities serve as a pre-test of prior knowledge. An option is to use the same activity after rehearsing and performing *Odysseus and the Sirens* to measure new knowledge and concepts.

EXTENSIONS

- Ask students why they think Homer’s stories about Greek (respected today? Why are they still important? What connections do students see within their own lifetime?)
- Ask students to name other fictional epic heroes (in this century, the single term is used for all genders) from literature and films. (For example: *Star Wars*’ heroes, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, and Hans Solo, Robin Hood, Harry Potter, Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games*, and Wonder Woman.)
- Who are today’s real-life heroes? Can students name some heroes who have done epic deeds?
- If time is short, post the reading on the band website or make copies for students and assign the reading as homework.
- Learn more about the story pattern called The Hero’s Journey using the information on the next page.

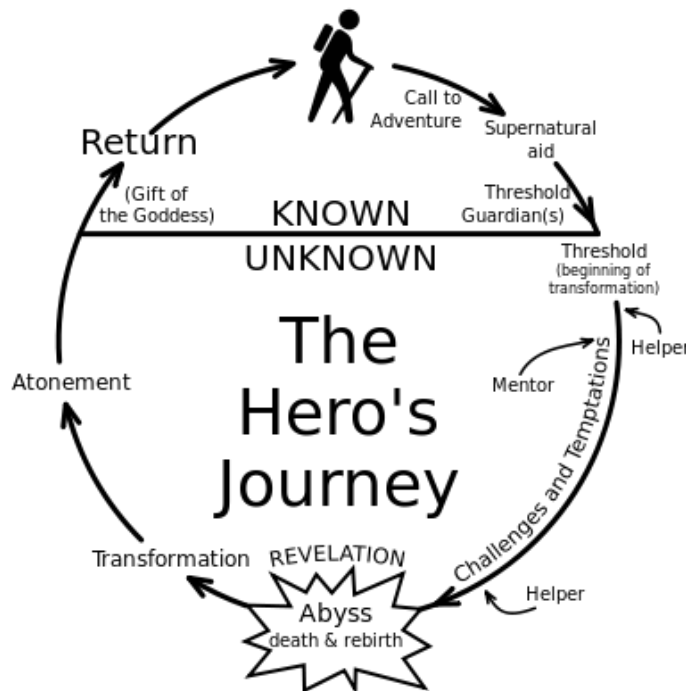
Epic heroes are larger-than-life figures who are strong, brave, ready to save the world but who also flawed in some way. Epic heroes play out their destiny when they embark on a great quest or journey.

The Hero's Journey

Heroes (non-gender-specific) are lead characters in ancient stories, novels, plays, and Hollywood's latest blockbuster movies. Across many eras and cultures, their adventures and challenges often follow a specific story pattern called the Hero's Journey. This pattern has been around for thousands of years, but it was not known by the name, Heroes Journey, until the 20th century when a scholar named Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) coined the phrase. Intrigued by mythology, Campbell crafted a now famous claim that nearly all myths, and some other story genres, take a similar path. The heroes' adventures are almost identical in how they unfold. Campbell called this overarching cycle of the journey a monomyth, or single myth. His book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, articulates the stages of the Hero's Journey monomyth.

If you wish to extend your students understanding of the Hero's Journey in the *Odyssey*, view the excellent TED Ed video "What Makes A Hero," then have a conversation about how Homer's tales about Odysseus fit Campbell's stages. Students will notice that Odysseus didn't have a single challenge and temptation, but many. The video may be found [here](#).

You can find Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey diagram [here](#).



For Further Discussion

Ask students to apply the idea of a monomyth not only to Odysseus, but to other heroes such as Harry Potter, Frodo, Katniss Everdeen, and Wonder Woman.

OPTIONAL Provide paper copies of the Y chart for students to use to record what was shared in class, or to use to record information if the work is assigned as a homework activity.

What do we already KNOW about Odysseus?

WHAT do we want to know?
What are we curious about?

What did we LEARN from the article?

Odysseus

Name(s) _____ Date _____
