

Name: _____

Due: _____

Tales from the Odyssey
Book Three: Sirens and Sea Monsters
By: Mary Pope Osborne

Answer all questions at the end of each chapter. Make sure to **use complete sentences** and that you read the questions fully. You should highlight unknown words, new characters, and important or interesting points within the story when you are reading. **Write notes on the side - it lets me know what you're thinking when reading.** If you have questions that come up when reading, write them down on the right hand side - sometimes asking yourself questions when reading helps you better understand the text.

Chapter Five: Scylla

As the Greeks drew closer and closer to Scylla's lair, Odysseus glared fiercely at her mist-shrouded cave.

But suddenly Odysseus forgot all about Scylla, for his attention was seized by the roaring sea. Just off the bow of the ship, the whirlpool monster, Charybdis, was sucking up tons of black water and vomiting it out.

Spray from the monster's mouth rained down on the deck. The sea around the ship bubbled and churned like water roiling in a giant cauldron.

Odysseus could see into the center of the whirlpool -- a deep cavity filled with black ooze and mud. If his ship veered even slightly toward the swirling water, it would surely be sucked down into the darkness.

Odysseus dropped his spears. "Hold our course!" he shouted to his men. "Row with all your might toward the towering cliff!"

Odysseus' men cried out in fear. At that moment, Scylla stuck her hideous heads out of her cave.

In an instant, the monster's six long necks swooped down the sea. She grabbed Odysseus' best warriors in her six mouths. As she lifted the helpless Greeks high into the air, the men writhed like fish caught by a giant fisherman.

Questions/Comments/Vocab

Odysseus saw bloody hands and feet dangling from Scylla's mouths. He heard the men scream his name, begging for help.

The hideous monster devoured her victims before Odysseus' eyes. It was the most terrible sight of his life.

Odysseus knew now that Circe had been right. He had been foolish to think he could slay the monster. The only way to save the rest of his men was to speed away from her as swiftly as possible.

"Row! Row!" he shouted. "If you value your lives, row with all your strength!"

The men rowed frantically past the tall cliff. With Odysseus urging them on, they sped through the channel, until they were finally safe from both sea monsters, Scylla and Charybdis.

Questions:

1. Summarize what this chapter was about.

2. What does Scylla look like?

Chapter Six: The Island of the Sun God

Odysseus stood at the helm of his ship. He stared into the churning sea behind him, horrified by the cruel slaughter of his men. Their screams still rang in his ears. The sight of their bloody, struggling limbs was imprinted on his memory forever.

But Odysseus knew that the rest of his men needed him now -- their fear and trembling forced him to rally himself and take command.

“Row on!” he said, lifting his head in the wind. “Do not look back! Do not think about what you have seen, or we will never find our way home!”

Too stunned even to speak, the Greeks picked up their oars. Like obedient children, they rowed on.

The black ship sped across the wine-dark sea. Soon the Greeks saw a sun-drenched island in the distance. They heard the lowing of cattle and bleating of sheep.

Odysseus’ men rejoiced at the sounds. After their terrible ordeal, they yearned for rest and shelter and food.

“Soon we will feast on beef and mutton!” they exclaimed.

Odysseus did not rejoice. He knew that he and his men were approaching the island of the sun god. He remembered the stern warnings of the prophet Tiresias and the counsel of Circe.

“Heed what I tell you,” he said to his crew. “I know you crave food and rest. But the island ahead belongs to Helios, the sun god. We cannot seek provisions there. I have been warned by the prophet Tiresias and by Circe. They told me that the sun god adores his cattle and sheep, and that if one of you even dares touch them, you all will die.”

Upon hearing these words, the men nearly collapsed with weariness and anguish.

“Then let us die there,” said one, “for we will surely die at sea if we do not eat and rest soon.”

“Listen to me,” Odysseus said. “If we stop now, all our trials -- all our triumphs and all our losses -- will have been for naught. We must move past this island. We must keep rowing.”

The men protested again. When Odysseus would not hear their pleas, Eurylochus, the second in command on the ship, shouted at him in anger.

“Odysseus, you are too strong!” he said.

“You are made of iron; the rest of us are not! We are only human. These men need rest from their labor and time to mourn their losses. They cannot row through the night. Let us heed the darkness. Let us stop on the island to rest. We will cook our own food and sleep on the sand. We will set sail again at dawn without even laying eyes upon the precious cattle and sheep of the sun god.”

Then men cheered the plan put forth by Eurylochus, but Odysseus’ heart was filled with dread. Even though the plan seemed sound, Odysseus felt as if some angry god were plotting against him. Still, he knew there was no way now he could convince his men to row on.

“You force me to surrender to your will,” he said. “I cannot fight you all. But if we do as Eurylochus asks, you must swear an oath -- you must promise not to touch a single head of the sun god’s cattle or sheep. You must be satisfied only with the food that Circe has given us.”

The men swore to do as Odysseus commanded. Soon they dropped anchor in a sheltered bay of Helios’ island.

Near the shore, the Greeks found a spring of fresh water. They set up camp and made a meal from Circe’s gifts of meat and bread and wine.

Once the men had satisfied their hunger and thirst, painful memories swept over them. They wept for their six comrades eaten alive by the monster Scylla. Her victims had been the strongest and best of Odysseus’ warriors.

The Greeks wept also for the others on their voyage who had been slain by monsters and giants. They mourned their losses deep into the night, until sleep mercifully overcame them.

Questions:

1. Summarize what this chapter was about.

2. Do you think that Odysseus is changing or learning from his past mistakes?

Chapter Seven: The Tempest

In the darkest period of the night, just before the dawn, Zeus sent a terrible storm to the island of the sun god. Fierce winds shook the trees. Cold rain poured down from the heavens.

The Greeks scrambled into a huge cave near the shore. They huddled together, listening to the roar of the storm. At the first light of dawn, as the wind and rain raged on, Odysseus ordered his men to drag their ship ashore and pull it into the cave with them.

Once the ship was safely in the cave, Odysseus gathered his crew around him.

“Friends, we cannot leave the island this morning,” he told them. “So I command you again: do not touch the sheep or cows that belong to Helios, the sun god. He sees all and he hears all. He will know at once if you try to feast upon his treasures. We have all the food we need now in our ship. As soon as this tempest ends, we will sail on.”

The Greek warriors promised to do as Odysseus commanded. But day after day, fierce storm winds from the south and east pummeled the sun god’s island. The days grew into weeks, and still the tempest did not end. Never did the storm cease long enough for the Greeks to set sail.

For over a month, Odysseus and his men remained stranded on the island. At first, they ate only the food given them by Circe. But when those provisions were gone, the men were forced to roam the stormy coast, spearing fish and birds and anything else they might eat.

As the tempest raged on and on, Odysseus and his men could not find enough food. Each day, they ate less. Each day, they grew weaker. Hunger gnawed at their bellies and despair seized their souls.

Odysseus grew more and more frightened that the men would lose control of themselves. He feared their hunger would eventually drive them to slay the cattle and sheep of the sun god. And he knew that the sun god’s anger would bring death upon them all.

Early one morning while the others were still sleeping. Odysseus slipped from the cave. He ran through the storm and took shelter in a solitary outcropping of rock near the shore.

Odysseus knelt on the ground. He raised his arms and called out to the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus. He begged them to show pity: "Give us courage to withstand our hunger and despair," he prayed. "Send us fair weather so we might sail away soon. Help us follow the counsel of Tiresias and overcome temptation. . ."

As Odysseus prayed, a great drowsiness overtook him. He closed his eyes. His head fell forward and he sank into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Questions:

1. Would you eat the cattle? Why or why not?

2. What does "tempest" mean?

Chapter Eight: Punishment of the Gods

Odysseus woke with a start. He could tell from the morning light that several hours had passed since he had fallen asleep. With a feeling of dread, he leapt from the ground and started running back to his men.

As Odysseus neared the cave, his heart sank. The smell of burning meat filled the air.

Odysseus was seized with rage and horror. Rushing into the cave, he grabbed the first man he came upon. "What have you done?" he demanded. "Have you disobeyed my orders and defied the gods?"

"We were following Eurylochus!" the man said. "He told us that starvation was the most terrible of all deaths! He urged us to slay the cattle of the sun god! He said we could appease Helios by building a great temple in his honor when we return to Ithaca."

Odysseus nearly wept with despair.

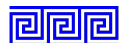
“We were so hungry, we could not stop ourselves,” the man said. “We killed the best of the cattle and roasted them over the fire.”

Odysseus cried out in agony. He fell to his knees and called to the gods: “Zeus and all immortal gods, why did you allow me to fall asleep? I begged you to give my men strength and courage! Now they have defied my command and slain the cattle of Helios! Have mercy on us! Have mercy on us all!”

But Odysseus knew his prayers were in vain. The rage of Helios was surely more powerful than the anguished pleas of a mere mortal. Odysseus imagined that the sun god might threaten never to shine upon the earth again unless the gods helped him take his revenge.

Odysseus rose to his feet and looked about the cave. The scene was horrible and unnatural. The hides of the slain cattle crawled across the ground. On the spits, the roasting meat bellowed like living beasts.

Odysseus’ men cowered before him. As he glared at their terrified faces, the rage drained from his heart. It was too late for rage now. The cattle of Helios were dead, and the men who had slain them would soon die also. Nothing less, Odysseus knew, would appease the sun god’s anger.



For the next six days, as the winds blew harshly outside the cave, Odysseus’ men feasted on the sun god’s cattle.

Finally, on the seventh day, the storm abruptly ceased.

At Odysseus’ command, the Greeks pulled their ship from its shelter and pushed off into the water. A gentle west wind caught their sail, and they headed once again for the distant shores of Ithaca.

For a time, it seemed possible that the sun god’s rage had been forgotten. But once the black ship had sailed onto the open sea, Odysseus’ worst fears were realized. Helios had indeed turned all the other gods against the Greeks. And together, the gods took their revenge.

First, mighty Zeus sent a black storm cloud across the sky, darkening the waters and turning the day into night.

Then Poseidon, god of the seas, sent tumultuous waves crashing over the sides of the ship.

Then Aeolus, the wind god, sent a howling wind that blew with such fury that it cracked the ship's mast. The mast and rigging fell on top of the helmsman, crushing his skull.

Zeus shook the sky with thunder and hurled down a blazing bolt of lightning. The lightning struck the ship's hull, spinning it around and around on the water. All of Odysseus' men were thrown from the deck into the dark, angry sea.

Watching helplessly from the ship, Odysseus saw his men tossed on the waves like sea birds. He watched as, one by one, they sank beneath the water and drowned.

Finally all of Odysseus' men had disappeared under the waves. And Odysseus was completely and terribly alone.

Questions:

1. What was strange about Helio's cattle?

2. What was Eurylochus' plan to make Helios not angry with them?

3. Do you think it will be easier for Odysseus to travel alone? Why or why not?

Chapter Nine: Only Odysseus

Odysseus clung to the lurching ship until the storm began to rip it apart. Then, as the rest of the ship was torn to splinters, he lashed the mast and keel together, making a raft.

For hours, Odysseus clung to the raft for dear life as wild winds tossed him over the waves.

Darkness soon covered the ocean. As the sea grew calmer, Odysseus feared his raft might be drifting back toward the cave of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis. All through the night he prayed to the gods to spare him from the monsters.

But as dawn broke, Odysseus saw Scylla's cliff rising from the sea -- and he heard the awful roar of Charybdis. He could feel the black waters of Charybdis' whirlpool begin to pull at his raft.

Odysseus' prayers had been in vain. His raft was being sucked into the black, swirling mouth of Charybdis. His body would soon join those of all the other sailors who had drowned in the terrible whirlpool.

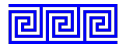
But just as he was about to be sucked into the monster's mouth, a mighty wave swept Odysseus from his raft. The wave carried him away from the whirlpool -- over the sea -- onto the shores of Scylla's cliff.

Odysseus flung himself from the water and grabbed the trunk of a huge fig tree. He clung to the tree like a bat. Holding on with all his strength, he waited for the whirlpool monster to vomit up his raft.

Finally the raft was hurled from the black abyss and sent swirling over the waves. When it was within reach, Odysseus let go of the tree and plunged into the sea.

He grabbed the edge of the raft and heaved himself aboard. Then he began rowing madly with his hands. He rowed and rowed. He rowed

away from Charybdis. He rowed past the cliff of Scylla. He rowed until he was safe from both dreaded sea monsters.



For nine days and nine nights, Odysseus drifted on his raft. He had no food and no water. He had no idea where he was going -- or how he would ever get home.

As he drifted over the open sea, he mourned the loss of all his comrades. He grieved for the family he feared he would never see again.

Finally, on the tenth day, the waves tossed Odysseus and his raft onto the shore of a mysterious island.

Questions:

1. Why do you think Odysseus was able to get past Scylla without being noticed this time?

2. Make a prediction for what will happen on the "mysterious island".

Chapter Ten: Calypso

Odysseus lay on the sandy beach, tired to the bone and filled with despair. He had not slept in ten days. Now that he was safe on shore, he was tortured by visions of his men dangling from the mouths of the monstrous Scylla. Over and over he saw his comrades devoured by monsters or drowned in the waves, bobbing like sea birds, then

vanishing, one by one. Friends and warriors, men he had journeyed with for twelve long years -- they were now gone. He had lost them all.

Only the last words of Tiresias, the blind prophet, were yet to come to pass: *"You alone might escape. But if you do, you will be a broken man. You will find great trouble in your house."*

Odysseus could not bear the thought that Penelope, his wife, and Telemachus, his son, might be suffering in Ithaca. He desperately wanted to protect them. In spite of his despair, he still felt a fierce determination to return home.

Nearly blind with exhaustion and grief, Odysseus pulled himself up from the sand and began walking in search of help.

He had not gone far before he came upon four streams. The bubbling waters wound through lush green meadows filled with violets, parsley, and wild celery.

Just beyond the streams was a rocky hillside. Set deep in rocks was a huge cave. Long vines trailed around the mouth of the cave. Clusters of ripe grapes hung from the vines.

Beautiful trees grew along the path that led to the cave -- alder, aspen, and sweet-smelling cypress. Owls, falcons, and sea ravens had built their nests in the boughs of the trees.

Odysseus smelled the sweet scent of burning cedar and sandalwood.

Like someone lost in a dream, Odysseus stumbled slowly toward the cave's entrance. When he peered inside, he saw a great fire blazing in the hearth.

Beside the hearth sat a beautiful woman at a loom. She shone with the light of a goddess. She was weaving and singing in a lovely voice.

As her song ended, the goddess turned and smiled at Odysseus.

"Hello, Odysseus," she said. "I am Calypso, daughter of Atlas. Hermes told me that you might come."

Odysseus was surprised that the goddess knew his name. But he was too weary even to speak.

Calypso looked at Odysseus for a long time. Then she continued in her calm, lovely voice: "I know what has happened to you," she said. "Your men killed the cattle of the sun god. In a rage, Helios threatened to take away his light forever, from men and from the gods. Zeus and the other gods of Mount Olympus were forced to take revenge against you. Zeus smashed your ship with a thunderbolt and hurled your warriors into the sea. They drowned before your eyes."

Odysseus nodded.

"You must be very tired, Odysseus," Calypso said kindly. "Come inside. Rest here in my home."

Without a word, Odysseus stepped into the cave of the beautiful goddess.

He stumbled to the hearth and lay down close to the fire. After the terrible journey, he was indeed a broken man. His heart and body ached almost more than he could bear.

As Odysseus stared at the fire in the hearth, the goddess began to sing her song again. Odysseus was reminded of the singing of the Sirens. But Calypso's song did not make him go mad or lure him to a watery death.

Instead, as Odysseus listened, all the pain and horror of his journey slowly dissolved around him. He felt peaceful and calm for the first time in many weeks.

Odysseus closed his eyes. And in the peaceful warmth of Calypso's cave, he finally fell asleep.

Questions:

1. What "great trouble" do you think Odysseus will find if he makes it back to Ithaca?

2. What does Odysseus see on the island when he wakes up?

3. What is your first thoughts of Calypso?
